

AMERICAN PEACE CORPS

अमरीकी शान्ति सेना

TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS
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Dear Friends,

Quite a bit has happened since a bedraggled, frightened PC/Rep stepped off PanAm Two on October first 1962, feeling totally incompetent.

One Volunteer wangled a trip to Hong Kong to get his contact lenses fitted; others tried and failed to develop the same symptoms. The Chinese attacked and then retreated; a PCV was engulfed by an angry mob, till they found he was Peace Corps. Our program has grown from 25 in September 1962 to 233 today, 270 next month, and more than double this in 1965. One volunteer was bitten by a deadly scorpion; the scorpion died. The Russian Government fell while two nurses made wine on their porch. A Volunteer and his co-worker had to take guns to extract their tractor from a repair shop; two volunteers licked by a rabid dog almost failed to get their shots; three PCVs lost their passports and six others lost their girls back home. The PC Rep choked down a full glass of distilled homebrew thinking it was water.

Seven hundred and twelve PCVs wrote in stating that their subsistence was too low, and a beer can with built-in opener was marketed in the USA. A statician calculated that Peace Corps poultry in India was growing at a rate which would make chickens more numerous than people in June 1970; Delhi water was contaminated with cholera and typhoid during the worst of the floods. Gene almost drowned Glen by speeding past his tiny Volkswagen through flooded streets. One Volunteer wrote 167 poison pen letters to PC/Delhi but all attempts by others to imitate his style failed. Most of the teacher PCVs developed allergies to poultry in any form. We had eight evaluators, twelve visitors, 512 three AM arrivals, and 182 casuals who "just wanted to see Volunteers." My wife served 253 extra meals one month and said "I've had it" in stronger terms; the PC hostel shifted from bursati to ground floor with no improvement.

The Chinese exploded an A-H bomb and my two sons set off 500 fire-crackers. An Indian invented instant chupattis while another Hilton Hotel was opened, thus providing Instant America (at a price). Letters attacking PC/Delhi came from 246 Volunteers, but two guessed we were alright, sorta. The CHOWKIDAR tried to change its name, but managed to stay the same, with little help from contributors.

- Page 2 -

For the Houstons' it's been quite a tour. I don't think there's a better staff in the world than those who work for you in PC/Delhi, even if they sometimes do send out a single blank sheet of paper in the Friday mail. And a letter addressed to a State Governor was sent to a Volunteer by error; no one yet know what went to the Governor. The volume of paper coming and going in this office will make a pile two feet higher, but similar in shape to the Great Pyramid of Egypt. You don't know how much Terry, Pamar, and all the others do for you - but I urge that you think about them. And as for the staff - Brent, Glen, Fran, Bill, Bob and Gene - I don't ever expect to work with a better crew. They do more for you than you know, and it will be very very hard for me to leave them.

There isn't much of India I have not visited, bouncing about in the jeep or lolling in air conditioned splendor in an IAC plane, sipping bourbon and munching bonbons. I've been to all but a few of your houses, eaten too much or too little, drunk a lot of beer while we took rest and chalked out schemes. At last count I had examined 17,659 chicken coops, 456 schools, and had taken 11,687,433 cups of tea or coffee (I didn't differentiate).

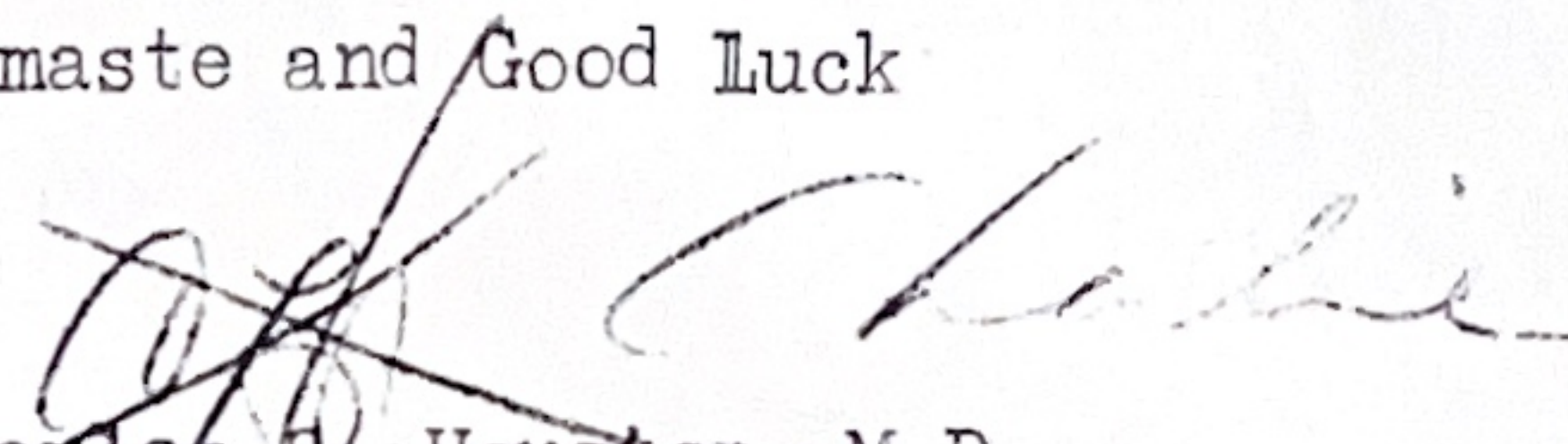
I've made some of my closest friends among the Indians I deal with, and I think some of you feel towards me as I feel towards you. I've come to hate and dread the Indian traffic, the incessant horns, indifferent cattle and pedestrians, wobbling cyclists loaded with everything from chupattis to charpoys. But I love the color, the life, the ever interesting landscape, birds and animals. I love the simple friendly hospitality, the colors, even most of the smells, and the throbbing vitality everywhere. I like the food - hotter the better - and I like buffalo better than steak (I think).

Most of all I love being a part of a bright new effort by our country to make the world a better place. I like the responsibility and the freedom, the imagination and the limitless chance to do something big and important. I like being in the Peace Corps and working for you.

In short, I hate to leave. I hate to leave India and I hate to leave the Peace Corps here. You have made it what it is - both good and bad, strong and weak. And you have given me the richest, most aggravating, busiest, most frustrating, most tiring and happiest two years of my life. I hope to meet you again - somewhere, someday.

Perhaps in the Mother Church - PC/Washington.

Namaste and Good Luck


Charles S. Houston, M.D.
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