

Report of India III Reunion
at Shawnee Inn on the Delaware
June 19-21, 2016



A group of eight of us (Chromy's, Bette's, Slattery's and Andrews') met just after the Hankin's Juneteenth Party at a golf resort in the Pocono Mountains of eastern Pennsylvania, Shawnee Inn. Our main reason for choosing this location was that the Inn was owned by a Returned Volunteer from Turkey and later PC Director in Thailand whom John Chromy had worked with while serving on the staff of Special Olympics. It was also relatively close to Baltimore. Ginney Kirkwood and her

husband Charles purchased the resort and golf courses in 1977. It was once owned by the famous Fred Waring of the Big Band era. It is located on a stretch of the Delaware River and includes two golf courses and a ski area.

Although the resort offered a number of activities in addition to golf, our group mainly sat around and talked! The main attraction was the wide veranda furnished with a row of rocking chairs. We made good use of them! The setting was spectacular—green lawns, the lazy Delaware River, tall hills, and bright flowers. The



weather cooperated with hot sunny days and full-moon- lit nights.

We spent hours sitting at the breakfast, lunch or dinner table sharing stories of our days in India or events in our lives since. Actually it was fun learning that we had so much in-common although we lived very different lives. Did you know that Jack and Cynthia put their house in Wilmington, NC on the market and purchased a condo in Florida, stayed less than a month, and returned to

Wilmington to their original home? Or that Joe and Linda just purchased a one-bedroom condo in a retirement community in Southbury CT, the same development in which Joe has been selling units through his real estate business? They will keep their winter home in Puerto Rico as well. The Chromy's just celebrated 30 years of marriage—the time does fly. And the Andrews' have a grandson looking at colleges—he will graduate high school next year. Harry and Mary also shared their adventures of coordinating a study abroad program to India for Michigan State University. The program has been running for nearly twenty years (1998-2016) and they have been traveling to India every one of those years!



We did do something while there—we had two topics of business that needed to be done. One was the response to the National Peace Corps Association. They had asked Jack if they could highlight India III on their webpage during the month of July 2016. In order to do this they asked us to respond to a number of questions. We really didn't think the questions provided much information

about us...but we tried to respond. They are also requesting 3-5 good digital pictures to illustrate our work in India. None of us have really sharp photos...most are fading. But we agreed to look in our files. So look for our feature on the website <http://www.peacecorpsconnect.org> in July.

As we were discussing our responses to the NPCA, we realized that we had some really unique experiences to report (although no way to really highlight them). For instance Joe Bette reported about the unique work of Lila Schoenfeld. She was a skilled operating room nurse and had trained under the pioneer open-heart surgery team in Houston. While in Ludhiana she trained the operating team to assist with open-heart surgery, thus opening the doors for already trained doctors to actually perform open-heart surgery! WOW! And although we don't have all of the details, a number of India III volunteers stayed in India to join the Peace Corps administration or to provide training for additional groups. Donna Anderson trained additional volunteers in Nutrition in Andhra and John Briscoe stayed to set-up poultry programming in Kerala.



A number of the India III volunteers became key players in the expansion of the PC in India that reached its peak in 1967-69 when more than 1500 Volunteers were serving in the country. Ernie Petersen went directly from his volunteer service to a PC/Staff position as Associate Director and eventually Deputy Director of the North India Regional Office. Gary Harms followed a similar path developing and managing PC programs in West Bengal and Orissa and eventually serving as Deputy Director of the Eastern Regional PC Office based in Calcutta. Tom Arens became Associate Director in Hyberabad (part of the southern office) in 1966 and later moved to the Bangalore office.

And the player who made the biggest impact of all was Jack Slattery who not only became the Deputy Director of the Southern Regional Office in Bangalore but he pioneered two key concepts which became standard in India and eventually much of PC world-wide:

a) Placing whole groups of volunteers in Village Level Food Production (VLFP) programs designed to significantly boost local agriculture production by the demonstration of the ability of hybrid wheat, rice and grain sorghum to double its production under intensive agriculture practices

b) Designing and implementing 8-10 week in-country training programs which featured the Volunteers living with host farmer families in villages around a training center and periodic 3-5 day stays in their actual projected village assignments.

Jack's leadership in this new approach to the training and placement of PC Volunteers had an impact all over India and many other PC countries. Jack also served as PC Training Officer in Western Samoa. In 1969 Jack went onto a 25 year career with USAID playing a key role in both East and West Africa and the Middle East.

John Chromy followed in Jack's footsteps in the South India Regional Office of Peace Corps, managing three PC programs with about 105 Volunteers in Mysore, and Madras states. In subsequent years (1976) chaired the task force that re-designed the world-wide Peace Corps system of developing future programs (based on the ideas learned from Jack Slattery), then became Country Director in the Eastern Caribbean islands (1977-79) and eventually Associate Director for Volunteers in PC/Washington (1979-81) where he managed the recruitment/selection/placement of new Volunteers and oversaw the medical services, emergency services and pay-rolling of Volunteers worldwide.

In the summer of 1965 Tom Arens, Donna Anderson and John Chromy served as Technical staff at the U. of California/Davis for the training of the India 13 and 14 groups of Volunteers headed for Andhra Pradesh. John Chromy and John Briscoe were Training staff at Brattleboro, Vermont in the summer of 1966 for India 29, which were headed to Mysore to serve as trainers for Village Level School teachers. Briscoe also worked at PC Headquarters in DC overseeing training programs. Gary Harms trained a well-drilling group destined for India and another group going to South America.*

John Reid and Hal Marz worked for USAID in Southeast Asia. Ken Lyvers eventually spent a 40 year career with USAID, first in Vietnam and then in at least eleven countries and USAID headquarters in DC. Tom Arens never left SE Asia—at first he worked for World Neighbors (WN) supporting programming in Kerala, Tamilnadu, Maharashtra and Karnataka and later opened the WN office in Kathmandu. Currently he manages a small NGO that provides reproductive health services in small villages of Nepal. Hal Willson returned to India with the Ford Foundation and continued his international work while at Cornell and Ohio State. We really made a difference not only as volunteers but as professionals in the region and the world!

Our second topic of business was planning for future reunions. Donna had admonished us to make plans for the next reunion before we left Shawnee. So we were trying to follow her directives! Seated in the picture below were the planners (including Mary who was taking the picture). A summary of those discussions has been sent to everyone, but here is a synopsis.



1. We need to meet more often because of our age and failing health. In our 50 some years of camaraderie we think we have had five reunions (Kentucky for the 25th, in DC twice in about 2003 and 2011 for the PC 50th, in Puerto Rico in 2013 for our 50th and now in Baltimore and Shawnee in 2016.)

2. If it turns out that the winter months are easier to gather people together—we can't beat Puerto Rico as a destination! It is warm, friendly, reasonable on the pocket book and with easy access.

3. Our only “live-outside-the-USA” member is Ken Lyvers. So we decided to check with him to see if he has plans to visit the USA within the next year and perhaps that would be the impetuses for us to meet. *(Yes, he is coming to a family reunion on Sept 9, 2017. So look for information from us about an India III reunion in mid-sept 2017 in the Minneapolis area.)*

4. We can sort of count on the four couples here plus Connie and Donna to be willing to meet—so now we need to recruit others. We know that Larry Brown, Jay Buffenmyer, Bob Geissel and Tom Arens are able to travel, but others such as Ernie Petersen, Gordon Loudon, Gary Harms, MaryAnn Dombkowski Chalmers and perhaps others cannot travel...but maybe would attend if our reunion was closer to their locations. So if that is the case, we are willing to host an event in Florida, the midwest or west to involve them.

5. Lastly, we need for all of us to reach out to each other in order to keep-in-touch. For instance Chromy talked to Loudon just recently and had a good family update. Bette and Anderson visited Harms last summer that was really our first face-to-face contact with Gary since India! Donna and Chromy met Tom Arens at a reunion of a training group at Davis CA and since then, the Bette's and Andrews' have visited him in Santa Rosa. So our circle is growing. Keep it going!

6. In planning our 50th in Puerto Rico, we reached out to those who were in training with us, but did not go to India (like Guy Clark). There are many more of those folks who we really have no way of contacting. So if you know how to reach any of them, let us know but also try to involve them. We also want to keep involving any widows or widowers of India III.

So that was what we did during our brief fifth India III reunion! It was a relaxing time of sharing and renewing friendships. We all agreed that it is worth getting-together and that we should try to involve more of us. Come join us at future get-togethers! To keep-in-touch and share our experiences go to our own “Friends of India” website that Jack Slattery started;

www.ganga633.squarespace.com Post your stories and view reports of India III activities.

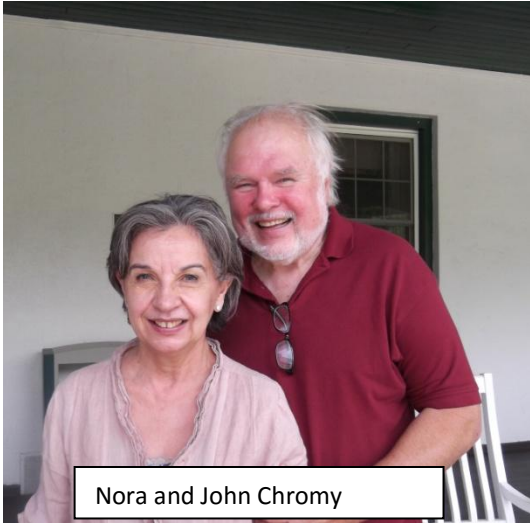
*John Chromy supplied much of the history of India III involvement in PC after our service.



Harry and Mary Andrews



Joe and Linda Bette



Nora and John Chromy



Jack and Cynthia Slattery



Visit with Ginny and Charles Kirkwood, owners of the Shawnee Inn.