

Lighting Millions of Candles

**How civic service and the Peace Corps
are transforming lives worldwide**

Book Proposal-in-process

by

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Prologue

Glimpse a Few Candles

Glimpse a few of my Peace Corps teammates' lives.

Engineer Bob Burns taught Bengali farmers how to drill small tube wells, helping to save their 1962 crop and then to design a province-wide rural public works program. He later led Peace Corps Volunteers in Micronesia and directed Oklahoma's Democratic Party. His son, Captain David Burns, is now a senior U.S. Coast Guard officer.

History teacher Chuck Hitchcock earned the acceptance of his Bengali colleagues by fasting with them during the Muslim month of Ramadan. He later became Professor of Sociology and Dean of Long Island University's East Hampton campus.

Robert G. McGuire III added international relations to Rajshahi University's curriculum. He later established the Black Studies program at Dartmouth College. A road accident ended Mick's promising academic career tragically. One son served as U.S. Director of The World Bank, and the other is a Captain in the District of Columbia's Fire Department.

4-H Club Leader Florence McCarthy tested a program to teach Bengali village women basic literacy, health, and economics. She returned to Bangladesh for six years to help spread this revolution nation-wide, and now helps Asian universities start service-learning programs.

Engineer Tom McMahan, barely accepted medically, became a Volunteer Leader. Later, after founding two companies and leading civic organizations, he served Reading, Pennsylvania, eight more years as its Mayor. Two daughters served as Peace Corps Volunteers.

Dr. David Miller, first Peace Corps Medical Director for South Asia, returned home to

Cleveland, Ohio, to pioneer its community health movement, serving as Medical Director of a family health care center for 28 years. One daughter is a physician; the other, an epidemiologist.

Deputy Country Director Paul Slawson wed a Volunteer, one of our team's four in-service marriages. He and Mary helped found Summerbridge for needy students. Paul headed three companies, chaired the American University of Paris, and was The Asia Foundation's Treasurer.

These glimpses are only a few examples of a million or more Peace Corps candles.¹

Candles signal information and hope. Lighthouse beams have long alerted seamen to shoals. Radio beacons now guide mariners and aircraft pilots. Our Statue of Liberty's "beacon-hand glows world-wide welcome" to "huddled masses yearning to breathe free."²

Candle flames inspire, flickering in Christian churches, Hindu homes at Divali, and Jewish homes at Hanukkah. Peter Yarrow sings "Light one candle to bind us together with peace as the song in our heart."³ A proverb advises "Better to light a candle than curse the darkness."⁴ A reporter recalls how John F. Kennedy declared, when inaugurated in 1961 as President, "the lamp of freedom shall never be dimmed by tyranny", and how his "lasting legacy, 'ask what you can do for your country' . . . led to creation of the Peace Corps."⁵

JFK's civic service legacy lasts. It also grows. Imagine it as an iceberg. Mariners see its tip but know that 90% spreads below the surface. Most people recall only the tip of JFK's legacy through old news reports. Too many are surprised to learn that the Peace Corps still thrives. They hardly know the other 90%, because its growing service story is scarcely reported.

* * * * *

Its full story includes three continuing legacies. The first continues in the 140 countries where the Peace Corps has served: women boosted into literacy, children screened from malaria,

and local leaders and presidents taught. The second legacy continues at home as Returned Volunteers serve in lives of consequence⁶ as teachers, college presidents, ambassadors, governors, senators, mayors, civil servants, model parents, company founders, and founders, staffers, and chiefs of countless NGOs. The third continues in countless service programs, domestic and international. Some are public, such as AmeriCorps and USA Freedom Corps. Others are private and growing faster, such as Teach for America, City Year, Atlas Service Corps, Indicoops, and IBM's Service Corps. Many countries now have similar programs. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 incorporate the role of volunteers.

The numbers are notable. Over 1.25 million Americans have served in such full-time long-term programs as Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, Teach for America, City Year, and USA Freedom Corps.⁷ More than 50,000 serve short-term and long-term abroad each year.⁸ Numerous countries offer similar public foreign programs, such as Norway's Peace Corps, and private domestic programs, such as France's *Unis-Cite* and Israel's *Sherut Leumi*. Worldwide, Lonely Planet's *Volunteer* reviews 159 organizations offering full- and part-time programs in 130 countries.⁹ American service-learning students serving part-time through thousands of school and university courses total perhaps 2 million.¹⁰ Worldwide, the Talloires Network of over 350 universities in 75 countries incorporate civic engagement and service in research and teaching for over six million students.¹¹ United Nations Volunteers number 7,500/year and 50,000 since 1971.¹² These numbers outline a movement far broader and larger than the modest number of Peace Corps Volunteers serving in 2015 — 6,919.

Thus while the American Peace Corps community numbers about one million, the transnational civic service movement numbers probably millions more.

Good fortune helped me glimpse this growth. I led the first Peace Corps team in mainland Asia.¹³ Later, I commuted for 20 years to South Asia to advise development managers. At home, I helped found the Massachusetts Service Corps, National Service Secretariat, and Oxfam America, and strengthen the National Peace Corps Association. Forays into politics and government added national perspective. Research in national archives fortified my field files.¹⁴ Teammates shared their life stories in oral histories.¹⁵ So I write now as both participant and analyst.

Valuable histories report a few of the first Peace Corps programs.¹⁶ I offer my team's stories more fully by adding earlier and later contexts:

Part I frames the story by showing how early reformers conceived the idea of full-time service, how pioneers then tested it in crises, and how JFK launched the Peace Corps.

Part II reports how our 30-person team in East Bengal tested several areas of service, with failures and successes. Our hosts then invited us to bring five times more volunteers.

Part III traces how our later careers helped to shape and grow the lasting legacies.

Peace Corps service is only one chapter, often transformative, in Volunteers' lives and in America's civic service history. But more important than serving two or three years long ago is how returnees focus their next 20-50 years helping to shape America and fulfill JFK's dream enshrined in the Peace Corps' third goal, educate Americans about other peoples.¹⁷

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Community volunteering part-time has always characterized American society; these "habits of the heart" distinguished America from Europe's autocratic societies and helped make it exceptional.¹⁸ Continuing this tradition are 62 million Americans yearly¹⁹, honored properly since 1989 when President George H.W. Bush created the Thousand Points of Light awards.

This book's stories illuminate the tale of three new paradigms. The first emerged as post-Civil War growth of technologies, industries, and large cities teaming with immigrants led social visionaries to create a model of intensive and full-time private social service. Kennedy and the Peace Corps introduced full-time service into the public sector with Presidential sponsorship, legal status, and Federal funding.

Success made the Peace Corps the gold standard which inspired both many more service programs and the second new paradigm. Service-Learning combines community service, part-time but regular, with academic credit courses. Service-Learning is so significant because it is domestic, transnational, wide-spread, and established. It educates and inspires youths early, and thus complements those institutions which were so formative for me and my teammates in our teen years, such as 4-H Clubs, Boy and Girl Scouts, and Future Farmers of America.

The third new paradigm, Service Year Alliance, is funded privately and just starting. Its bi-partisan leadership includes top educators, NGO leaders, and retired generals and admirals. They propose a new idea now as did General James M. Gavin in 1958-60.²⁰ They give equal value to civilian and military forms of service. They aim to create the common expectation that all young Americans should give back to their communities and nation at least a year of service.²¹

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Success of course requires skilled volunteers. All programs attract far more applicants than slots available. For example, to serve in the Peace Corps in 2015, about 25,000 applied, of which about 9,000 were qualified. But Congress's budget allowed for only about 4,000 to begin serving that year. This created two gaps — 5,000 Americans who could not serve abroad, and 5,000 communities in host countries which could not be helped.²² These are gaps of “democratic

energy wasted and a generation of patriotism needlessly squandered”²³. These typical numbers show that supplies of volunteers are large. This book shows how citizen demands to serve have sparked every stage of the service movement.

Also essential is skilled leaders. Top policy leaders need to champion policies, goals, and budgets. Field program leaders in agencies both sending and hosting volunteers need to translate these policy and budgets into daily action.

Today’s literature consists mainly of memoirs. Many Peace Corps returnees self-publish titles of their long-ago-far-away service. Alumni of other programs write few. Many service-learning teachers write technical titles. But few general titles exist for citizens and leaders. This book addresses top political leaders, business leaders, educational leaders, service-learning teachers, leaders of foundations and non-profit agencies, religious leaders, youth leaders, parents, and concerned citizens — think National Public Radio’s audience.

I hope these candlelight stories will inspire these leaders to encourage service by setting the essential tone at the top. Some stories should also inspire service-learning students and faculty, “millennials” and “boomers” seeking options for their next life chapters, and volunteers, both while in training and later when returning home and redefining their lives.

One motive for this book is pride. We did our jobs. Observers judged us “one of the great Peace Corps groups. Not one quitter when most of them had every reason to quit.”²⁴ A better motive is to help fill gaps. Since the best comprehensive history 30 years ago²⁵, Peace Corps legacies have grown dramatically. A few careers by one team can spotlight only a few of these legacies, but we can show the need and make a start. The best motive is that our stories can help keep

JFK's lasting and growing legacies alive. They are American contributions to a transnational cultural movement. Shared history will help create the norm of civic service by all.

Civic service can also help, especially during dark times, to light many more candles, to keep part of America's exceptional promise bright, and to share these values worldwide.

— Cambridge, Mass, May 2016

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- ¹ **million or more Peace Corps candles** —The Peace Corps and its support network, the National Peace Corps Association, cite the total of Volunteers who have served since 1961 as “more than 220,000”. But the whole community or Peace Corps extended family is larger by far. Formal members include US staffers (such as Directors Sargent Shriver, Loret Miller Ruppe, and Mark Gearan), who although paid were volunteers in spirit, and host country national Peace Corps staffers in 140 countries. Informal members include host country families, host supervisors and co-workers, friends in the US Foreign Service and local and international NGOs, and families and supporters at home. Many host country students and friends grow into local teachers and leaders (such as Alejandro Toledo of Peru, its first democratically elected President, 2001-06, of Indian ancestry).
 - ² **“huddled masses yearning to breathe free”** – Lazarus, Emma, "The New Colossus", 1883 sonnet commemorating the Statue of Liberty, *The Poems of Emma Lazarus* , Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1888.
 - ³ **Peter, Paul, and Mary sang “Light one candle . . .** – 1983 Hanukkah song written by Peter Yarrow of Peter, Paul, and Mary encouraging Jewish people to remember the history of the holiday and continue their heritage. <http://www.hebrewsongs.com/chanukahsongwords2.htm> .
 - ⁴ **“Better to light a candle than curse the darkness”** – *Why Curse the Darkness?*, Unitarian Universalist Church of Roanoke, Virginia, December 16, 2007, <http://uuroanoke.org/sermon/071216WhyCurse.htm>
 - ⁵ **“lamp of freedom shall never be dimmed by tyranny”** – Max Freedman, “Mr. Kennedy Sets his Sights”, *The Guardian*, January 20, 1961; <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jan/20/jfk-inauguration-speech-guardian-archive>. See also Clarke, Thurston, *Ask Not: The Inauguration of John F. Kennedy and the Speech That Changed America*, New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2004.
 - ⁶ **“lives of consequence”** — For this felicitous phrase, I thank Mark Gearan, former Peace Corps Director and now President of Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Geneva, New York.
 - ⁷ **total over 1.25 million.** — Peace Corps 220,000, VISTA ? , AmeriCorps 900,000, Teach for America 42,000, City Year 20,000, World Teach 7,000, USA Freedom Corps ? , FEMA ? , Atlas ? , Find ? totals.
 - ⁸ **more than 50,000 each year** — Lex Rieffel, *Sustainable development needs organized volunteers*, Brookings Institution, Sept. 30, 2015. <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/future-development/posts/2015/09/30-volunteer-sustainable-development-rieffel>

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- ⁹ **Many full- and part-time programs** — *Guides – for seekers: Volunteer: A Traveler's Guide to Making a Difference Around the World*, Lonely Planet, 3rd edition, 2013, 272 pp. *Green Volunteers: The World Guide to Voluntary Work in Nature Conservation*, Fabio Ausenda, Universe, 2009, 7th Ed., 256 pp. *Volunteer America: A Comprehensive National Guide to Opportunities for Service, Training, and Work Experience*, Harriet Clyde Kipps, Editor, Chicago, Ill.: Ferguson Publishing Company, 4th edition, 1997, 672 pp. *Make a Difference: America's Guide to Volunteering and Community Service*, Arthur I. Blaustein, Jossey-Bass, revised and updated, 2003, 160 pp. *Alternatives to the Peace Corps: A Guide to Global Volunteer Opportunities*, Food First, 12th Ed., 2008, Caitlin Hachmyer, 160 pp. *The Complete Guide to Service Learning: Proven, Practical Ways to Engage Students in Civic Responsibility, Academic Curriculum, & Social Action*, Cathryn Berger Kaye, Free Spirit Publishing, 2010, 256 pp.

Useful websites include: www.AmeriCorps.org ; International Volunteerism Resource Center, a project of idealist.org, is a free, comprehensive online source of information, tools, and strategies for making informed decisions about engaging in meaningful international service – www.idealists.org/en/ivrc/index.html . ; <http://servenet.org/> lists opportunities throughout the U.S., searchable by zip code, type of service, dates and times, and service type – a program of Youth Service America (YSA); Quaker Service Opportunities at <http://www.quakerinfo.org/service/index.html> .

Guides – for scholars: *Civic Service: What Difference Does It Make?* James L. Perry and Ann Marie Thomson, M.E. Sharpe, 2003, 248 pp. *Civic Service Worldwide: Impacts and Inquiry*, Michael Sherraden and Amanda Moore McBride, M.E. Sharpe, 2007, 272 pp.

- ¹⁰ **total perhaps 2 million** — For higher education, Campus Compact's 1,700 member universities offer multiple courses. For secondary and primary education, need summary numbers, from CNCS or ? Query Eric Mlyn, Andrew Furco, and others.
- ¹¹ **Talloires Network** — “The Talloires Network: A Global Coalition of Engaged Universities”, by Robert M. Hollister, John P. Pollock, Mark Gearan, Janice Reid, Susan Stroud, and Elizabeth Babcock, *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, Volume 16, Number 4, p. 81, (2012). <http://talloiresnetwork.tufts.edu>
- ¹² **UN Volunteers . . . 50,000 since 1971** — <http://www.unv.org/what-we-do.html>
- ¹³ **mainland Asia** — East Bengal in 1961 was East Pakistan, but in 1971 became Bangladesh. The Philippines received the very first team to all Asia two weeks earlier.
- ¹⁴ **Archives . . . research** — John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston MA; Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, Austin TX; Peace Corps Library; National Archives at College Park MD; Harvard University libraries, Cambridge MA; American University Library, Washington DC; US Information Service Library, Manila, The Philippines;
- ¹⁵ **oral histories** — 40 conducted in recent years in the USA, Australia, and Bangladesh. Detailed list available.
- ¹⁶ **a few of the first Peace Corps groups** — Morris I. Stein, *Volunteers for Peace: The First Group of Peace Corps Volunteers in a Rural Community Development Program in Colombia, South America*, New York: John Wiley, 1966; Robert Klein, *Being First: An Informal History of the Early Peace Corps*, Tuscon AZ: Wheatmark, 2010; Brent Ashabranner, *A Moment in History: The First Ten Years of the Peace Corps*, New York: Doubleday, 1971; Frances Hopkins Irwin and Will A. Irwin, *The Early Years of the Peace Corps in Afghanistan: A Promising Time*, Oakland, CA: Peace Corps Writers, 2014; Lawrence H. Fuchs, *Those Peculiar Americans: The Peace Corps and American National Character*, New York: Meredith, 1967; Parker W. Borg et al, editors, *Answering Kennedy's Call: Pioneering the Peace Corps in the Philippines*, Peace Corps Writers, 2011, 508 pp..

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- ¹⁷ **third goal, educate Americans about other peoples** — The exact text is . . . “to help promote a better understanding of . . . other peoples on the part of the American people.” (Pub. L. 87-293, title I, Sec. 2, Sept. 22, 1961, 75 Stat. 612; Pub. L. 95-331, Sec. 2, Aug. 2, 1978, 92 Stat. 414.) The Peace Corps community describes the Third Goal as “bringing the world back home”. Most efforts are designed and executed by Returned (not former) PCVs “continuing to serve”. Thousands of RPCVs apply their foreign experience in their own careers individually; while most work in the US, many build lives abroad.
- ¹⁸ **“habits of the heart”** — Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 1835-40. Robert N. Bellah, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.
- ¹⁹ **62 million Americans yearly . . . non-government organizations (NGOs)** — U.S. Census reports. Lester M. Salamon and his team at Johns Hopkins University’s Center for Civil Society Studies analyze the non-profit sector in the US and worldwide. See his *America’s Nonprofit Sector: A Primer* and many other reports.
- ²⁰ **General James M. Gavin in 1958-60** — Early proponent, with others, of full-time, long-term civilian service abroad which Senator Hubert H. Humphrey proposed formally as the Peace Corps. See my Chapter 3 and Coates Redmon, *Come As You Are: The Peace Corps Story*, San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986. My leader a decade later when I joined the management and technology consultancy Arthur D. Little, Inc.
- ²¹ **Service Year Alliance** — Managed by Aspen Institute, One Dupont Circle, Suite 700, Washington DC 20036. Facilitate rite-of-passage to adulthood by Americans age 18-28. Now applying modern information technology & concepts to create an on-line Service Year Exchange; recruit Employers of National Service from public, non-profit, and for-profit sectors; and design a Service Year Transcript which volunteers will receive at completion-of-service for building work resumes. Websites: http://www.franklinproject.org/service_year_alliance and <https://serviceyr.org> .
- ²² **25,000 Americans applied in 2015 to become Peace Corps Volunteers** — Peace Corps and National Peace Corps Association newsletter, May 2016; Glenn Blumhorst e-mail to author, May 5, 2016.
- ²³ **patriotism needlessly squandered** — General Stanley McChrystal, a leader with other generals, admirals, educators, and NGO leaders, of the Service Year Alliance.
- ²⁴ **“great Peace Corps groups”** – Charles Peters, Chief of Evaluation, Cover Memo to Director Sargent Shriver with Timothy Adams’s *Evaluation Report of the East Pakistan Program*, July 19, 1963; cited in Gerard T. Rice, *The Bold Experiment: JFK’s Peace Corps*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1985, p. 163, note 58.
- ²⁵ **best comprehensive history 30 years ago** — Gerard T. Rice, *The Bold Experiment: JFK’s Peace Corps*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1985. Several accounts of the early years, such as Coates Redmon, *Come As You Are: The Peace Corps Story*, San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986, are headquarters-centric. Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman’s *All you need is love: the Peace Corps and the spirit of the 1960s*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000, extends the account and adds essential international context; but its Beatles-inspired title is incomplete — Volunteers also need skills, hard work, and patience. Stanley Meisler’s *When the world calls: the inside story of the Peace Corps and its first fifty years*, Boston: Beacon Press, 2011, a Washington-centric review of headquarters hassles, gives scarce attention to Volunteers and their field impacts.