



The Peace Corps Experience Through the Eyes of a St. Android

David Parsons-Foresi

David Parsons-Foresi graduated in 2005 with a major in Philosophy. Foresi was actively involved within the St. Andrews community serving as SGA President and was part of the St. Andrews Campus Lions Club. Foresi has been overseas serving in the PeaceCorps. For more information, David Parsons-Foresi can be reached via email at david.parsons.foresi@gmail.com



David Parsons-Foresi at Opening Convocation. Picture courtesy of Communications.

A St. Android and Peace Corps; Dr. Dick Prust requested I pen an article for your enjoyment to clarify what Peace Corps is like from the eyes of a recent St. Andrews grad. I am happy to do that for you.

I finished my degree in Philosophy with a minor in Economics in May of 2005. I left for Romania in May of 2006 the year between graduation and arriving in Romania was spent partly in Washington DC, where I interned for a congressman and in my home town Raleigh, where I tutored kids at a local elementary school and coached a soccer team. My decision to join Peace Corps was spurred on by a few things, the most prominent was my reflection on St. Andrews and the education I earned there where ideas and classroom discussion take apart, dissect and then rebuild thoughts and ideas about what is: good, right, moral, pure, authentic and just.

I realized that I had this wonderful classroom knowledge but no real world experience to put these ideas to use, where the rubber meets the road if you will. Also, as a recent college grad I had not yet developed the relations or become encumbered in all the things that people are typically too afraid to put down to go off and try something new. My biggest responsibility is college loan payments. Peace Corps has paperwork to fill out that will defer the loans so they are not a factor in your service.

I live in Targoviste, Romania in the South East corner of the

country about 90 minutes from the Capital of Bucharest. There are about 100,000 people in my city. It is the home to Chinda Town, which was Vlad the Impaler's home and kingdom for a few decades in the 14th century. Every morning I sit, drink my coffee and look out my kitchen window at Chinda Tower. Targoviste is also the city where Elena and Nicolae Ceausescu were executed on Christmas Day 1989 following the overthrow of the communist regime. Targoviste is also home to Colegiul National Inachita Vacarescu the high school where I teach.

At Inachita Vacarescu I teach literature, history, culture and civilization and geography. The Romanian school system is far different from any school system in the States. Students stay in the same classroom all day long and the teachers move about the building between classes. For the first few months, I would be in class on time and ready to start. I very much ran my classroom like any classroom in the states would be run. This also precluded me interacting with

my colleagues in the teachers lounge. I wondered at first why the teachers did not talk to me in the lounge. I figured it was just cultural and they'd come around. Nope.

During communism one in seven people worked for the securitate (the secret police) so if you did not know someone you did not talk or even look at them for fear of their being securitate or reporting you to a securitate officer. Romania was the most repressive communist country- they cut off relations with China because china was too liberal.

After I realized that I was going to continue to be ignored unless I changed something. I spoke with a few fellow older PCVs (older- having been in country longer than I have) and they said just kick it in the teachers lounge between classes and then when the majority of teacher head out to class- leave when they do. Since then I have demystified most of the differences and otherness that is inherent when dealing with people and things of a very different nature than you're used to

dealing with. America and Americans are most often perceived one way: rich and inconsiderate. My not sitting in the smoky teacher lounge and enjoying a terrible cup of luke warm coffee during the break between classes was viewed only as inconsiderate.

My days are spent at school teaching, and drinking luke warm coffee and teaching. At first lesson planning was very difficult, and teaching was difficult as well. Like anything you find a rhythm and learn what works and what does not.

I have interpreted living in the city where Ceausescu was executed, and teaching at Inachita Vacarescu in my own very literary way. Vacarescu is a famous Romanian poet, he wrote in the late 1700s this was about the time that the root of the Romanian language changed from Slavic to Latin—its current root. Vacarescu is famous for being one of the first writers to produce his work in the 'new' Romanian language; he is a national hero. I look at the death of Ceausescu as the shedding of some of my

past, naïve beliefs. Most of my beliefs are the same, but the ones that have changed, have changed because I always understood them in a place and in a way where they were reasonable there was no reason to challenge them.

Now; however, some thoughts have been challenged and a few don't 'hold water' so I am in the process of changing them. These old beliefs and ideas are developing into new, more mature beliefs and ideas. This is an out with the old and in with the new process, but the new is genuine and better than the old. That is what a Liberal Arts education is about, developing as a person in an ever changing and dynamic world and having the development of you as a person and the manifestation of your actions come from a foundation plush with good, right, moral, pure, authentic and just causes and ideas that are learned in the classroom and applied in the world.

I hope this finds everyone who reads it well and in good health and spirit. Feel free to contact me for any reason.

Gaijin License

Kime Neal

Stationed in Hirakata, Japan

our customs, and outrage that they would travel in our country yet not take the time to learn our ways. Usually I hear the snide remarks of those in the anger column of the chart, even here I have encountered study abroad students who criticize the way the Japanese live, and I cannot understand how this comes about.



Housing in Japan. Picture courtesy of Kime Neal.

I sympathize more with the Japanese who have differing approaches: sternly, in a parental manner, explain as best they can what the gaijin did wrong so as not to have it happen again, laughingly point out what happened to the slight embarrassment of the foreigner, or most Japanese pretend they did not see or

hear anything, and the one who committed it usually finds out later from friends that an error was occurred.

If you want to easily spot a foreigner go to a fast food restaurant and sit where you can observe the register. Here it is easy to discover a gaijin (in any country) because they will point to what they want, perhaps muttering a few words with a pleading and confused look on their face as they order. If you want to narrow the margin even more, tread to your local McDonalds because when everything is different from home there's always one place you can go to and know that you will find something you can eat and will taste close enough to home that if you avoid the windows you could almost be there.

There are those that know of this license, and choose to use it to their benefit. I was recently told the story of a few gaijin

(Continued on page 2.)

Contents

Lance News- 2

St. Andrews Academics-3

Student Life -4

Health and Wellness- 5

Equestrian - 6

Knights Athletics -7

Editorials- 8-9

Entertainment- 10-11

Announcements- 12