



# Western Montana RPCV News

JUNE 2014

VOLUME 23 NUMBER 2

## Upcoming Events:

### JULY POTLUCK ON THE JOCKO!!!

Saturday, July 26, 3 PM, call 360-9938 for directions

### 2015 GOAT CHASE JUNE 12, 13 & 14!!!! 2015!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

### Flathead Lake!!!!

### August Potluck!!! TBA

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*The annual Goat Chase Retreat at the Flathead Lake camp*

## President's message:

*Dennis C. Bangs (Ecuador 70 -72)*

Summer is upon us in western Montana which means activities for the Western Montana RPCVs have taken a summer theme, starting with the annual "Goat Chase" retreat on the shores of Flathead Lake the second weekend of June. As witnessed by the above photo we had another good turnout this year. The weather didn't cooperate as much as it could have, but we didn't get rained on much and Friday evening especially was warm enough for an enthusiastic crowd around the bonfire.

The camp has so many nice facilities, including wi-fi for the World Cup fans, that a little cloudy weather didn't dampen the spirit of the group for the weekend. In addition to two amazing international potlucks, continuous connecting and reconnecting with friends a couple of special people showed up. Arvid Miller (Borneo 62-64) and his wife Angela, who have been coming off and on for many years, arrived with more stories and a special treat. Angela wrote a book about her life growing up in the jungles of Borneo and had it for sale. More can be seen about it on page 4.

We also conducted some official business by confirming the election of the slate of officers, which can be seen on the following page.

Before I get on to what is coming up I would like to thank Lynne and Otto Koester (Ethiopia-Eritrea/Ghana 68-70/69-70) for hosting the NOM party in April where we were able to wish 'bon voyage' to the newly nominated volunteers.

Don't forget the July potluck to be held on the banks of the Jocko River the 26th of July at Tony and Michelle's at 3 PM.

One final thing. The calendars are here now. The order form is on page 5 and they will be at the upcoming potlucks.

The WMRPCV Newsletter is published quarterly by and for the non-profit Western Montana Returned Peace Corps Volunteers. All dues paying members receive a copy and are encouraged to participate in it's creation by sending comments, articles or other submissions to:

Dennis Bangs 1729 North Ave. West, Missoula, MT 59801,  
<[wmrpcv@yahoo.com](mailto:wmrpcv@yahoo.com)>

All newly returned volunteers will receive two free copies before they are requested to join.

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## The Western Montana RPCVs welcome the following new members:

Jason Seagle from Atlanta, Georgia who was in El Salvador.  
Lane Coulston from Missoula who was in Brazil.  
Leea Pittenger from Missoula who was in Swaziland.

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*The following comes from the NPCA on June 24*



### **Fairer treatment for female Peace Corps Volunteers took a major step forward today!**

On a voice vote, the House Appropriations Committee approved an amendment to the State/Foreign Operations funding bill that inserts language related to the Peace Corps Equity Act. This legislation is designed to treat Peace Corps Volunteers the same as others serving our nation overseas when it comes to reproductive health options in the narrow instances of rape, incest or life endangerment. Currently, Peace Corps Volunteers who become pregnant in those instances are denied coverage should they decide to terminate a pregnancy. Others – including military servicewomen and foreign diplomats – do receive such coverage. The Peace Corps Equity Act provides the technical fix to bring volunteers in line with others.

At today's markup of the State/Foreign Operations bill, an amendment introduced by Ranking Member Nita Lowey (D-NY) would provide that fix. The Senate Appropriations Committee has already approved a State/Foreign Operations bill that includes a similar fix.

While a major step forward, this change is not yet law. While today's amendment was approved by an unrecorded voice vote, the vote was not unanimous. The full Senate and House will still need to approve their respective State/Foreign Operations bills and eventually compromise on any matters of disagreement.

However, the fact that both bodies of Congress now have the same language that addresses the Peace Corps Equity Act means there is a much stronger chance that the provision will win final approval later this year.

### **Press Release: Returned Peace Corps Volunteers Meet in Nashville to Unite the Peace Corps Community**

Washington, DC — June 17th, 2014 — Hundreds to gather for three-day event with presentations from national and global leaders

The National Peace Corps Association (NPCA), the leading nonprofit alumni association supporting Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and the Peace Corps community, together with the Tennessee Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (TNRPCV) will host over 300 former Volunteers and Peace Corps staff from around the country in Nashville from June 19-21 for a national gathering held each year called Peace Corps Connect.

"Peace Corps Connect really allows Volunteers to come together and bond through a special common denominator we all share: service in the Peace Corps," said Glenn Blumhorst, president of the National Peace Corps Association. "Serving in the Peace Corps is an experience that lasts a lifetime and this annual event is one way to share that experience with each other in a meaningful setting."

*The following was printed in the Philipsburg paper in 2013 and offered by Tony Hoyt (Liberia/Guatemala 67-69/74-75) and is printed with permission of the author.*

## **It's true, water doesn't freeze in Brazil**

By Dick Geary

The winter of 1971-72 was a bad one. For over two weeks the Ovando-Helmville road was closed by drifts more than 10 feet high. The snow was so deep we had to make trails so the cows could get to water, and I remember that I had to chop seven steps in the icy creek bank so that the cows could get down to the water. When the weather was especially bad, I performed that task two or three times in the course of a day. You don't forget things like that.

I was working on a small ranch, feeding 200 cows with small bales for \$250 a month. That pencils out to about \$1.25/cow/month--cheap labor, but that was the going rate in those days. I had no reason to complain, but I knew my lifestyle had no future.

One day, when I was in town to get my mail, I noticed some applications for the Peace Corps lying on the post office counter. On a whim I grabbed one and a few days later, with no hope of any response, I filled out the papers, adding an observation that I could be no use to anyone unless the work concerned cattle. I mailed the application, then forgot about it. Something as romantic as the Peace Corps was totally impossible at that stage of my life.

The winter dragged on, and I fed my cows and chopped my water holes. I think it was in March that I was surprised to get an envelope with the Peace Corps as the return address. Knowing that it was a laughing refusal of my application, I didn't even open it. Life was tough, and I didn't need another disappointment--my own pathetic existence was enough.

It took a few days for me to muster the courage to look at what I knew was a rejection of my attempt to escape the cold and snow. I had to read it a couple of times, but I eventually understood that the Peace Corps had accepted me. They wanted me to organize a cooperative for cashew growers in northern Brazil.

That was bad. I didn't have a clue about cashews. No one who lives more than 20 degrees on either side of the equator knows, even today. The ranch had a dated set of encyclopedias, so I looked up "cashew," only to find that they didn't know much either. Panic set in. I wanted to escape the wind and the cold, but didn't want to go to Brazil only to be sent home because I didn't know how to grow a cashew.

After a week of apprehension, I gathered the courage to call Peace Corps and admit failure. A chirpy young girl answered, and after we established who I was, I told her that I could only be of use to them and Brazil if they had a job that involved cows.

There was no hesitation from her. She responded, "That's fine. Do you want to go to Mato Grosso to work with cattle?" She could have asked if I wanted to go to hell and work with demons and I would have accepted. I gave her a quick, "You bet I do," amazed at my luck. I was then told that they would be sending me a ticket and instructions, and they'd see me in New Orleans on the 5th of July.

I had never heard the words "Mato Grosso." The term means "Thick Jungle" in English, but I didn't know that, so it was back to the old encyclopedia. The entry offered maybe a hundred words which described Mato Grosso as a state in western Brazil, composed mainly of a large flood plain which was under water a good portion of every year. It didn't sound good, but I knew it was better than chopping water holes in thirty below zero winds.

I later found that Mato Grosso was a state in western Brazil, with an area of over 700,000 sq. miles (Alaska is under 600,000 sq. miles). The massive swamp the encyclopedia told me about is the "Pantanal", a flood plain of roughly 54,000 sq. miles which is largely under water from water from December until May or June. That information was of only passing interest to me. I just wanted to be in a place where snow was a mystery and water holes never froze.

Hating goodbyes, I went to the airport alone on July 4th, and flew to New Orleans where I spent five days with 150 other volunteers for orientation and paperwork. Then it was to Sao Paulo, Brazil and six months of Portuguese study before I was sent to the small town of Barra do Burges, in the state of Mato Grosso. I lived 100 miles north of the geodesic center of South America.

The settlement had no electricity or running water. Malaria and murder were common, but for me it was a heaven on the banks of the Rio Paraguai. During my years in Barra, vampire bats and coral snakes came into my house on a couple of occasions; my ducks were eaten by an 18 ft. anaconda (I measured when it was finally killed), and I learned how to get a piranha off a fish hook. For two years I wore only flip flops, even when I worked with cattle. I spoke on a telephone maybe five times, and learned that if you're given the option of putting either electricity or running water in your house, choose the water. Electricity demands that you buy things that use electricity, and life gets complicated as well as expensive, but water is just there for you--waiting, like a good dog or horse.

I spent the next six years in Barra do Burges, coming back to Montana for only two weeks in 1974. I hope to go back, and would be there now, but my dog isn't up to the trip, and I won't leave him behind. He's old, as am I, so it's a macabre waiting game, I guess.

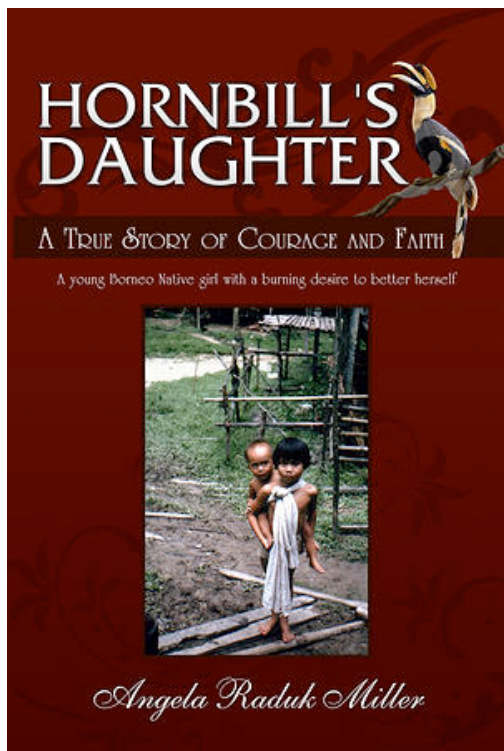
It's 15 below as I write this, and I'll be chopping water holes today. The irony.



Angela Miller, the wife Arvid Miller (Borneo 62-64) has been a regular at the Goat Chase for many years. The following book is her personal account of her life growing up in Borneo. She is telling her story in this self-published book which is available on Amazon. You can get more information from her website <[www.hornbillsdaughter.com](http://www.hornbillsdaughter.com)>



# HORNBILL'S DAUGHTER



Hornbill's Daughter is a description of an indigenous young girl who lives a life with determination and perseverance. It is an intriguing story of a long hard journey with many obstacles and challenges.

Raduk Biru, a young native girl growing up in a village on the island of Borneo, realizes that life is not all a paved road, but often a road with potholes and detours.

With all the hardships she encountered, she saw hope and focused on the solution not on the problem. As she goes through the experiences of life, she handles them with sense of sensibility and a speck of humor to balance out life's adversity. She painfully carried out her desire in silence to save face from her critics. This is an inspiring and heart warming book.



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## **Western Montana Returned Peace Corps Volunteers help plant the seeds for peace 365 days a year....**

The funds raised from the sale of the International Calendars developed by the Madison, Wisconsin RPCV group are directly donated to a variety of local and international humanitarian endeavors. If you have a project you would like considered please contact us at <[wmrpcv.com](http://wmrpcv.com)>. Cost is \$13 per calendar - shipping and handling included. Please complete the order form below and send it with your check payable to 'WMRPCV' to:

Mary Younger, WMRPCV Treasurer  
100 Erika Court  
Missoula, MT 59803

### 2015 International Calendar Order

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_  
Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ calendars @ \$13 each (shipping included)  
Included is my check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_, payable to 'WMRPCVs'

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1729 North Avenue West  
Missoula, MT 59801

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP IN WMRPCV OR NPCA**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Peace Corps country of service \_\_\_\_\_ Years \_\_\_\_\_  
Peace Corps job title \_\_\_\_\_

***\*\*Membership dues expire in June of each year unless you are an NPCA member through the Western MT RPCVs.\*\****

\_\_\_\_\_ WMRPCV only, \$15.00  
\_\_\_\_\_ National Peace Corps Association, includes WMRPCV \$50.00  
\_\_\_\_\_ WMRPCV Student/Low Income \$7.50  
\_\_\_\_\_ Free membership to all serving Peace Corps Volunteers – This membership, good for service  
\_\_\_\_\_ term plus one year after COS, can be activated online by PCVs in the field.  
\_\_\_\_\_ First time free - Any RPCV who has never been a member before may join for one year for  
\_\_\_\_\_ free.  
\_\_\_\_\_ **TOTAL ENCLOSED:**

**MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO THE WESTERN MONTANA RPCVs and send to:**  
**Mary Younger, 100 Erika Court, Missoula, MT 59803**