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Susan Andros (left) of Walpole, New Hampshire, sees Italy through the eyes of her "sister," Silvana Sartori, as "An Experiment Comes to LIFE." (Story on page 2.)

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A BALANCE SHEET

ROBERT C. TERRY, JR., Overseas Representative, East Pakistan I

THE initial Peace Corps project in East Pakistan—also the first in Continental Asia—ended successfully this summer. Upon our return home, we met persistent questioning by fellow Americans: How do you feel about the Peace Corps idea now, after two years? How were you received there? Do you think that you accomplished something? Would you do it again? Separated now from East Pakistan by both space and time, we too are reviewing two years while trying to answer these questions for ourselves.

There has been relatively little U. S. experience in East Pakistan because, although important by reason of its proximity to India, China and Burma, so much of it seems inaccessible. Few Westerners speak Bengali, the language of its 50 million people; few can stomach for long its hot and humid climate. Travel amongst its villages, where 85% of the population dwells, is at best difficult and, during the seasons of monsoons, floods and recurring cyclones, impossible.

Yet Pakistan was one of the first countries in 1961 to request Peace Corps Volunteers. For its eastern province it sought nurses, engineers, teachers, agriculturists and mechanics. By August, 30 men and seven women had responded and reported to Putney for training.

The two-month project of training Volunteers of such diverse skills to serve in unknown conditions was an exceptional challenge, even for an organization accustomed to the unexpected. Because the Peace Corps was new and dynamic, all of us, Volunteers and staff alike, had strong notions about how it should be run—and no hesitancy in expressing them. We were a group of rugged individualists, but we developed a way of talking out problems which became a key to our strength and success during two frequently trying years. Thirty of us, including Experimenters Robert G. McGuire, III (U.S.S.R., 1960) and Rachel Schauffler (Great Britain, 1959), passed the final selection and flew to East Pakistan's capital, Dacca, where Dr. Watt had spent five weeks arranging homestays as part of our in-country training.

Almost immediately after reporting to

host institutions for our job assignments we faced two serious challenges. Civil disturbances in the two universities threw ten Volunteers out of work for several months. And, because the Peace Corps concept of living and working was so new, our jobs in many cases were poorly defined and organized. We were taxed to the limits of our strength and ingenuity, and more than a year was to pass before we were all properly settled in.

But this past August, as our two years of service ended, all thirty of us, contrary to some early predictions, were still on the job. Nobody quit. A few could show little tangible accomplishment in their work. Several could point to significant results. But all could justifiably share credit for establishing effective patterns of living and working—for creating a successful Peace Corps in East Pakistan. The 120 Volunteers there today consequently face fewer basic problems of living, can draw on more experience, and can produce more on the job than we did.

In trying to sum up the adventure, the following rough balance sheet emerges.

To speak Bengali is without question prerequisite to fulfilling Peace Corps goals in East Pakistan. The challenge is great, for we still lack adequate teaching materials to give Americans even a basic speaking knowledge after only three months of training. Our group made too little progress. Those thrown into daily working association with villagers and laborers were forced to learn rapidly, and did. Those with innate aptitude and strong motivation also learned well. But those who worked mainly with English-speaking Pakistanis know less Bengali now than in 1961.

However, we did measure the task. As an interim solution, we prepared some new materials for our successors who were trained at *Sandanona* this past spring; we selected two excellent instructors to fly from Dacca to Vermont to use them, and with good results. As a long-term solution, we urged that a full course be designed so that Volunteers, after arriving in host institutions where modern linguists are not available, can continue to learn. The University of Minnesota is now undertaking this task.

Family homestays as an integral part of Volunteer training is one Experiment offering to the strategy of Peace Corps training. East Pakistan, to which The Experiment had never before been introduced, presented particular problems. The position of women in Muslim society, secluded within the home, makes families prefer female over male Volunteers. The Peace Corps prefers Volunteers to live with middle- or lower-class families, but in these groups tradition is stronger than amongst urban upper-class families and doors open more reluctantly to Westerners.

Our Dacca homestays varied in success. But an independent Pakistani researcher, interviewing both families and Volunteers seven months later, found general support for them. Most of us felt we had gained a most helpful insight into Pakistani culture; we also witnessed how our presence in homes helped introduce the whole Peace Corps to East Pakistan during those critical early months. At least ten of us continued to

A Pakistani foreman watches PCV Roger Hord of Portland, Oregon, check steel reinforcing rods prior to pouring cement for a bridge. By training villagers in basic masonry, costs of the public works program were cut.



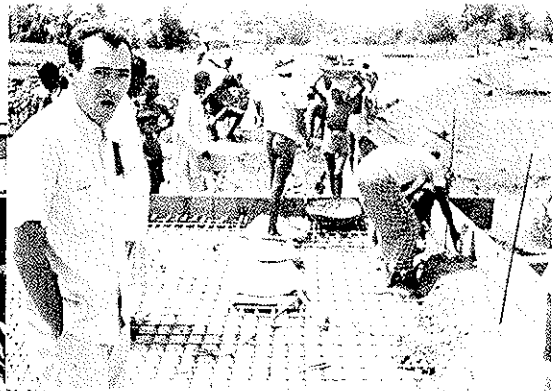


When Robert Taylor (right) married a Volunteer of a later Peace Corps group, he selected his host father, Sayed-ud-Dahar (left), to give the bride away.

visit our families regularly during the succeeding two years. The marriage of Judith Huneke to William Hein was celebrated not once, but twice—first in a Christian church and one week later according to Muslim custom in a ceremony arranged at the request of their two host families. When Robert Taylor married a Volunteer of a later group, he selected his host father to give the bride away. News travels far and wide on the Bengali grapevine; small wonder that we found it easier to arrange homestays in small towns this year for our successors than in Dacca in 1961.

In moving from homestays to jobs, we learned quickly that merely to state "Volunteers will work together with Pakistanis" is not necessarily to define a productive, needed and satisfying task.

Robert Burns, a civil engineer from St. Louis, supervises the pouring of cement by Pakistani co-workers. The rural works program carried on by Burns and Hord saved Comilla's rice crop from disastrous floods.



In many corners of the province not only were our Western faces unusual but our manners and style of work as well. Two situations highlight the factors which spelled success or failure.

Every year, crops in the Comilla area customarily suffer from floods or drought. The province's few engineers are usually occupied elsewhere on major projects, and the district lacks money to pay for construction at prevailing rates. But the director wondered whether local villagers would help build a network of small bridges, dikes, dams and canals around their fields if—the big if—they had good leadership, sound engineering guidance, and payment in the form of surplus American wheat. He wanted to try.

Robert Burns was lucky. He arrived at the right institution with the right skills and approach at the right time. His supervisor, the hard-driving, reform-minded director of the Academy for Rural Development, at once assigned his talents as a civil engineer to an experimental program of rural public works. The government contributed stocks of wheat; local village leaders surprised all by mobilizing labor efficiently, and the director pushed everyone to his limit. The result appeared later that year when disastrous floods ravaged East Pakistan but left Comilla and its rice crop untouched.

But Roger Hord, a brickmason assigned to a government department near Dacca, was less fortunate. An able official headed this department when Volunteers were first requested; but when they arrived several months later, he had been transferred. Hord found himself simply laying brick six hours daily, the normal working day. His supervisor seemed perplexed when asked for more work and for apprentices to train as masons, and could produce neither satisfactory.

Meanwhile in Comilla, the rural public works program expanded so much because of its success that the director clamored for Hord's services. By training villagers in basic masonry and by helping them to make their brick locally, costs of labor and transport could be sharply cut. Hord joined Burns, and thereafter his cheerful complaint was too much work. Following the Academy's pattern, Hord and Burns trained Pakistanis in new techniques as they were being developed.

In this manner, half of our group was transferred from their original assignments to more productive ones. These changes were hard to make, but in doing

so we learned how to judge the promise of job requests. We all took part in surveying requests for more PCVs, winning out the promising from the doubtful. As a result, Volunteers arriving after us found fewer problems.

Working at a job was only part of our mission. Setting up households, treating illnesses, and adjusting to a sometimes monotonous diet were not such great obstacles as we had anticipated in 1961; in fact, some felt disappointed in living a bit too well by local standards. More difficult was maintaining morale and enthusiasm throughout the two years, quite a different task from a two-month summer Experiment! Much about East Pakistan is monotonous—diet, climate, landscape. Each of us had to work out a way of coping, according to our job, our co-workers, our temperament and our luck.

One tempting solution was to bury oneself in work, seeking the satisfaction of tangible results. But sometimes the thing produced—the building, or the increased crop—was less important than the manner by which it was produced—the relationship between Volunteer and co-workers, or the attitude with which a Volunteer treated a subordinate.

Clearly, Experiment training gives no ready-made answers. But our experience in thinking about such questions helped. The Volunteers testified to it as they reviewed their training this summer. Perhaps it is significant that one-third of us remained in East Pakistan to work, or plan to return after a year of graduate training in the United States, while another third look forward to careers in international service.

We like to take pride in The Experiment's contribution to the Peace Corps—in our ideas, our flexibility, our style, and the Volunteers who have been asked to join the Peace Corps staff. But we must also acknowledge how much we have gained. We have been privileged to work together with outstanding men and women of the Peace Corps staff, and to share in the excitement of creating a successful venture in foreign policy. We have gained experience in the long-term field administration of a work program which has enriched our outlook and abilities, especially in training and in designing new Experiment programs. We have extended our knowledge about South Asia.

Finally, we have gained the approval of a remarkable group of Volunteers, two-thirds of whom have elected to become Experiment alumni.