



Maurice (Moe) Pare sits for a photo in front of some of his memorabilia, some of which he brought back from his time in Ecuador in the early 1960s.

Ecuador sojourn planted the seeds of a family

By **BRIAN BEESLEY**
Of the Lewiston Tribune

OROFINO — Most Peace Corps volunteers return from their tours carrying mementos of their time spent abroad.

Maurice (Moe) Pare brought home substantially more than that — a family.

Pare, 76, a retired forester living in this Clearwater River hamlet, was among the first wave of Peace Corps volunteers sent to be development workers. It turned out to be uncharted territory, for all involved.

“Looking back, we were kind of the guinea pigs,” he says. “They didn’t know quite how to train us

or what to do with us. And then we created a problem for them when everybody started getting married and having kids.”

More on this in a moment. First, some backstory.

In 1962, after finishing a two-year hitch in the military, Pare was looking for something interesting to do. Fascinated by President John F. Kennedy’s creation of the Peace Corps, he decided to sign up rather than begin a full-time career.

Armed with a degree in forestry from the University of Maine, Pare was assigned to Ecuador, a South American country in need of such expertise. After a three-month training period that included a month of

rigorous survival-skill instruction in Puerto Rico — “The people there thought we were training to invade Cuba,” he says with a laugh — he was posted to Ibarra, a market town in northern Ecuador.

His central mission was to help organize local forestation cooperatives, in an effort to build and sustain timber in the otherwise bare countryside. Most of these would turn out to be fast-growing eucalyptus trees, which could provide the wood needed for construction and fuel in a relatively short period of time.

Working with landowners and Catholic church leaders, Pare set up partnerships that, as an ancillary



Peace Corps forestry volunteer Maurice (Moe) Pare stand next to a eucalyptus tree in this photo taken in 1963.

benefit to creating resources, also put the local people to work.

“The government would supply the trees and the hacienda owners, who were rich in terms of land but not very rich in terms of money, would hire the people, mostly Otavalo Indians, to plant the trees.”

He also had other side projects, including working with the Heifer Project, an international nonprofit group that works to end poverty and hunger, and organizing a cultural center in Ibarra.

There, he got to know a volunteer named Joan Hopkins, a onetime airline attendant and the woman who would soon become his wife.

“I was from Lewiston, Maine, and she was from Port Angeles, Wash., on the opposite side of the country,” Pare says. “She was an outdoor

person, just like most of the people who survived the training. She was very athletic, she enjoyed camping and swimming. She was really into that.



Joan Pare

“I kind of noticed her during training, and after our posting, we started to exchange letters. The letters started getting warmer and warmer, but I was never serious about getting married, even though I liked her a lot.”

That changed about halfway through their first year in country.

“There was another gal there in Ibarra, she was an artist from Seattle. One night, we were drinking wine and smoking cigars and she gave me a royal ass-chewing. ‘You’ll never find anybody as wonderful in your whole life as Joan,’ she told me, and she was right. That’s what clinched it.”

So, about a year after arriving in Ecuador, Moe and Joan were married. They continued to work as volunteers, Joan setting up school lunch and home economics programs and Moe overseeing rural tree-planting.

Roughly nine months later, things got even more challenging when they had a son, Shawn, born in Quito, the capital. He was later baptized in a big ceremony at a cathedral there.

“It was a really big extravaganza — the bishops don’t do anything simple,” Moe says. “Well, we got to the cathedral and walked in and there were all kinds of people there, the church was chock full. The godparents took Shawn up front, and just as the bishop was about to baptize him, the lights in the church went out. The bishop says, ‘It’s a miracle! It’s a miracle!’ It was a wonderful thing to watch.”

But the Pares weren’t the only volunteers putting pressure on neophyte Peace Corps administrators trying to set policy.

“What was interesting was, we had quite a few other couples who got married in Ecuador,” he says. “Six of us had kids down there, and it was really a headache for the Peace Corps because they didn’t know what the hell to do with us.”

Despite the turmoil, all the couples were allowed to stay in Ecuador with their children, and Joan saw it as an opportunity to educate other new mothers in the importance of hygiene and nutrition.

At the end of their second year there, with a growing infant to care for, Moe and Joan decided to return to the United States.

They eventually settled in Orofino in 1974 where Moe worked on the Clearwater National Forest. Together they raised Shawn and had two other children — a son, Tom, and a daughter, Michele, who would do a Peace Corps tour of her own (Michele’s story will be published Monday).

Joan died of breast cancer on Jan. 10, 2003. She was 64.

“I think most Peace Corps volunteers that I’ve been associated with, they really felt they got more out of the experience than what they gave,” Moe says. “And of course, with me, I gained a lot because I gained a family and a wonderful wife. I never would have met her if I hadn’t been in the Peace Corps.”

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Michele Magera poses for a snapshot with some of the Mali people she worked with as a Peace Corps volunteer from 1991-93.

For former Orofino woman, the Peace Corps is a family tradition

By **BRIAN BEESLEY**
of the **Lewiston Tribune**

Michele (Pare) Magera, the daughter of returned Peace Corps volunteers Joan and Maurice Pare, followed in their footsteps when she served in Konna, Mali, from 1988 to 1990.

Like her father, she worked with reforestation programs and community garden projects in the West African country.

Magera, a 1983 graduate of Orofino High School and a 1988 graduate of the University of Idaho, now lives in Alice Springs, Northern Territories, Australia, where she is a nurse with the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress. She and her husband, Andy, have a son and a daughter.

She answered a few questions via email:

Q. What was the impact of having parents who’d served in the Peace Corps?

A. I grew up with my parents’ Peace Corps stories. I think that, since they

served together and were right at the start of the program, they had a lot of energy and enthusiasm about their experiences.

A very fond childhood memory of mine, is watching the slideshow my father put together about their time in Ecuador. It seemed that every time we had guests for dinner, the slideshow was the after-dinner entertainment. I never grew tired of hearing the stories - I could recite them to this day.

I think what impressed me the most was not only the positive attitude they had, but the adventure of serving at that time, in the early ‘60s. Stories of their training sounded more like boot camp in those days - repelling, survival swimming in the ocean with a flight suit on, and having to spend three nights in the jungle with nothing but their wits. And even stories of headhunters!

My parents were also married in Ecuador and my brother was born there. There were no telephones - if urgent communication was needed, it was done through telegraph. In the ‘60s the Peace Corps was truly off the map!

I think I always knew then that joining the Peace Corps was always going to be in my future. An inevitable result of my parents' enthusiasm and love of their experience.

Q. What was your primary motivation for joining?

A. My motivation ... came from several places.

First was the fact that I knew I wanted to join since I was a child, and that desire didn't fade as I grew up.

I think it was also about timing: I was living in Seattle after college and really felt I had no clear direction in which I was headed; I was floating a bit. I ended up working with someone who had just returned from Niger - we had a lot of time during work to talk - so we talked about the Peace Corps, and that just tipped the decision to go. He had had a tough but positive experience.

The whole idea of the Peace Corps always appealed to me, not only the idea of service to improve people's lives but to the "adventure" involved.

Q. Any funny and/or profound stories to share?

A. During 2½ years in a Third World country, every day had a story, and profound things happened frequently. So much of it runs together. ...

A story that I still remember fondly and that brings a chuckle is, one day I was sitting with another volunteer - we both had been in country for quite some time. A camel came trotting by with two white tourists riding on top. We sat and stared at them for a while, until they went out of sight, then looked at each other and laughed hysterically. We couldn't get over how funny "white people" looked. We had grown accustomed to seeing only black Africans, and seeing other white people seemed very bizarre. I think that's what the Peace Corps does - it changes your vision. We were actually looking at the tourists through different eyes!

Before I went to Africa I was worried about being among all "black" people. Having grown up in Idaho and having spent most of my life in the Northwest, I didn't have many chances to get to know many folks of different skin color. What was interesting though, after I had been in Mali, West Africa, for a while, was yes, they were all black but I was white ... I was the different one. I was the one they all had preconceived ideas about. It was sometimes a hard position to be in, but one that taught me not to judge others.

Q. How has your PC experience affected your life since?

A. I think that, as a volunteer, going to a Third World country and living as a "local" - learning the language, culture, living without running water, telephones, toilets, computers, electricity - you learn much more about yourself than anything else. You also learn from the people of your host country: They teach you more than you can ever teach them.

The Peace Corps does change your life and has different meaning for each volunteer. For me, not only was it the fulfillment of a dream but also the start of another: It gave me a tremendous sense of self-confidence and the ability to pursue a career in nursing. I was guided by my experiences in Africa, and knew it was the direction I wanted to go.

Since completing my nursing degree, I have worked with underserved populations - I worked 10 years with migrant farm workers in the Yakima Valley, and am currently working with Aborigines in Australia.

Everyone on the planet deserves access to health care. Everyone deserves to be treated with kindness and respect regardless of background. I learned this from my parents and the Peace Corps.

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