

Last November I turned 50. My daughter threw me a party with family and friends and I had a wonderful time celebrating my half century with the people I love. That was the end of the chapter of my life as caretaker of my children. My youngest was old enough to plan, cook for and host a party, my oldest is settled in school and I have some long awaited free time. Although the job of being a parent never really ends the intense daily involvement has. At this time in my life I am ready to turn my focus away from the family and to give back to the rest of the world.

My teen years were spent in the 70s but I am much more a child of the 60's than a child of the *ME* generation. I was 3 when JFK made his inaugural address but the spirit of that address has traveled through the the years to me.

"To those peoples in the huts and villages across the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required - not because the Communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right. If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich. " JFK 1/20/1961

We who have been given so much should help those who have less not because we are superior, not because we pity them but with a humble spirit because we know that "it is right".

I want to give something back. As I stated in my application I have lived quite a privileged life and now that I have the time, and I am in relatively good health I want to share my skills. My daughters call me, with affection of course, an old hippie who wants to save the world. I do agree but I would modify that with the Jewish proverb "If you save the life of one person, it is as if you saved the world entire."

My hopes for my teaching assignment are that I will teach my students how to learn through exploration and play. The technology field changes so frequently that if you don't know how to learn new applications and new concepts you will be left behind. I hope to teach them to learn from each other and other resources so they can be lifelong learners. My hope is that my students will learn that cooperating with one another will improve their education and increase their knowledge. In the library 2.0 world Michael Stephens coined the phrase "Together we are a genius". And I want to teach them that failure is part of the learning process. If you persist and you learn from your failure each failure can build to success.

This goes back to saving the world one life at a time. I hope that the person I am and that I will become will teach my students. I want to be a role model for my students as so many of my teachers have been for me. If I can assist even one student in her road to self discovery then I will feel my Peace Corps experience has been successful.

Many of my family and friends say that I am brave and selfless for joining the Peace Corps. And while that may be true in my heart I also know this decision is also a bit selfish. There are so many things I want from this experience. I want to face the challenges of living in another culture. Living in and immersing myself in another culture has been a dream of mine since I came home from my study abroad in Israel. I want to open my heart to new people and experiences. I want to reevaluate my beliefs and actions in the light of that new culture. I want to try living a simpler less consumerist lifestyle. I want a change in my routine. And I expect that I will learn much more from my host than I will teach them.

My career is at a crossroads. I am feeling that the American Dream of home ownership, a 9-5 job and all the goods you can afford, or as in many cases, cannot afford, is not really a dream. It may just be a nightmare for us and the rest of the world. I want to evaluate if is this what I want for the second half of my life. I can think of no better way than to get out of myself and help people. I joke with people that I am having a midlife crisis and joining the Peace Corps instead of buying a Harley! Like many jokes this one has some truth in it. I will use this time to think about the future direction of my life. People ask what will do when I get out of the Peace Corps. I don't know. For the first time in my life since Jr. High I don't know what i will do three years down the road. Maybe that is not a bad thing.

As I read this essay I worry that I come across as a wide eyed optimist or a naive idealist. I am an optimist and I am an idealist. My idealism and optimism are tampered with 50 years of life experience. I know life is full of setbacks and unexpected disappointments but I know how to harness my optimism and idealism to get me through the rough parts of life.