

Preface

This book contains my impressions of Turkey, the Middle East, and the Peace Corps in the late 60s. Its story is derived from letters that I wrote home and the diary that I kept while I was a Peace Corps Volunteer teaching Mathematics at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara. It represents one of those elusive things that we talked about so much as Volunteers, an individual Peace Corps experience, and as such is a personal memoir. It should be obvious that the opinions expressed throughout are my own.

I wanted to be a Peace Corps Volunteer from the day it was proposed by John Kennedy. However, it took me seven years before I had something to offer to the Peace Corps. I knew, from my inability to memorize grade-school spelling lists and my struggles to satisfy my Bachelor of Arts language requirement at the University of Oregon, that I was not going to be allowed to be a Volunteer if I had to work in a foreign language. After I took the Modern Language Aptitude Exam (part of the Peace Corps application process), the Peace Corps also knew. They suggested programs in American Samoa, the Philippines, and Turkey, where I would be able to teach Mathematics in English. Before getting my Masters degree in Mathematics at the University of Kansas, I had flirted with the idea of getting a second Bachelors degree in Ancient History and Folklore. Therefore, teaching in Turkey was the obvious choice.

The draft board wasn't all that keen on giving me a deferment for a second Bachelors or a Masters, let alone for the Peace Corps, because, after I finished my Peace Corps service, I would be 27, and I would have turned a scholastic deferment into an exemption. The draft board and I had had issues, ever since I attempted to take a self-directed, Junior-year abroad. I was 21, when I left the University of Oregon for Europe in the fall of 1963, and the draft age was 23. President Kennedy decided that married men with children should be exempted, and the draft age immediately dropped two years. I was called back to America to take my physical; however, the draft board did let me go back to school.

I have edited the original texts in an attempt to correct the errors of grammar, spelling, and punctuation that typify my hurried style. I have also taken the opportunity to clarify situations and to correct inaccuracies in the text. I have

eliminated petty squabbles and oblique references that did nothing to advance the narrative or my reputation. However, I have made every effort to retain the tone of the original and the temper of my feelings, as I believe that they help to explain and define my experiences. As far as can be helped, nothing has been added or changed because of the softened perspective of forty years or the wisdom of hindsight.

Dick Janzig, 2010