

MONTEREY INSTITUTE

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discourse & repartee

Graduate School of Language and Educational Linguistics

CURRENT PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS

By Kristin Rock MATESOL Candidate 07

The Peace Corps Masters International (PCMI) TESOL program at the Monterey Institute offers students the incredible opportunity to enrich their graduate studies with two years of Peace Corps service. PCMI candidates complete their first two semesters at the Monterey Institute, then serve twenty-seven months before returning for a final semester to complete the MATESOL degree. In Fall 2006 there were eleven Monterey Institute PCMI TESOL candidates working around the world. Excerpts from the correspondence of three of these amazing individuals will provide first-hand accounts of the challenges and rewards of teaching in developing countries. From Mauritania to Ukraine to China, their experiences are both unique and inspiring.

Writing from Mauritania, **Stephanie Farrell** shares about her return to teaching after summer vacation and local elections.

"Last year I had a hard time controlling my classes. I did have a couple good students, but for the most part, it seemed that students were there just because they didn't want to be at home and be made to work. English wasn't really important for them, since they were science students, and most of them probably will end up working where Arabic is the language of choice. It was difficult communicating with them, since they knew no English, little French, and I knew very little Hassaniya Arabic. This year, I got the students whose main focus is literature so for them, English grades count more. They are bright, motivated to learn, and that makes me motivated to teach. I think that the other English teachers at the lycee think it unfair that I got the cream of the crop, but I remind them about my situation last year—then they can't really say anything...

... Elections are going on here in Mauritania. There was a coup d'etat in Mauritania last year, where the old president was ousted while he was away to another country on a visit. There is lots of talk about whether

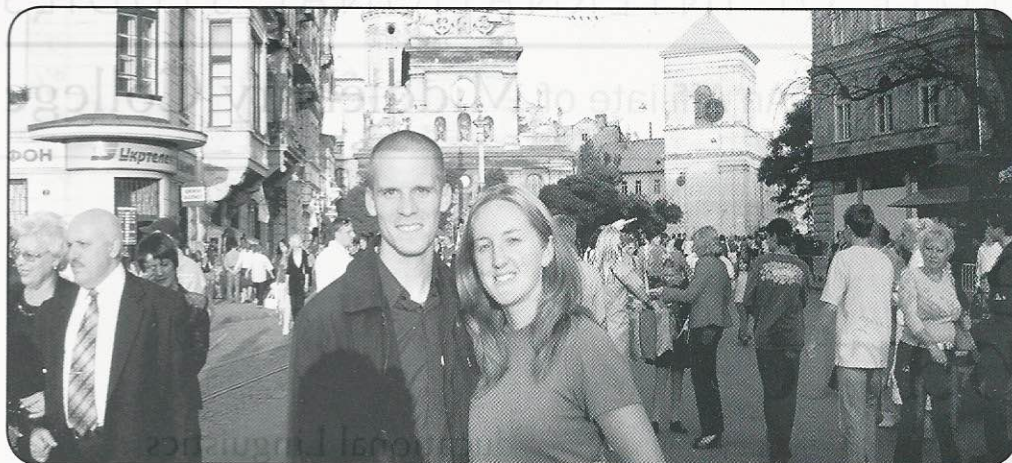
"I feel very fortunate to go to work every day at the Pedagogical College, where my students appreciate the opportunity to work with a native speaker, and my colleagues go out of their way to make me feel welcome."

this new president will be any better. Some are pessimistic and think that all presidents are the same... There are tents set up all over town, and it comes VERY alive at night with loud rap music booming everywhere. This is the Mauritians' idea of 'campaigning.' Everyone is excited and some spot campaign t-shirts and caps with the candidate's picture on them. Young boys drive through town in big groups, screaming their party's name, with fire crackers. I see girls walking around in pretty dresses. Campaigning is a very social event..."

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Peace Corps volunteers Larry Lawson and Karen Hamilton serving in Lviv, Ukraine

Writing from Ukraine, **Karen Hamilton** – serving with her husband, PCMI-TESOL candidate, Lawrence (Larry) Lawson - shares about her daily life, the college where she works, and a game of Uno.

"The 3rd of October was our one year anniversary in Ukraine. I have finally established a routine in my daily life here in Lviv. I can speak enough Ukrainian to shop at the market, ride the *marshrutka*, and hold simple conversations, but I still struggle with language every day. It's the endings of the words that really baffle me, the grammatical case-endings, and I have grown to accept the fact that I will probably never master this aspect of the language.

I feel very fortunate to go to work every day at the Pedagogical College, where my

students appreciate the opportunity to work with a native speaker, and my colleagues go out of their way to make me feel welcome. I am gaining a new perspective about how Ukrainians view the world and approach life, and my students are learning that not all Americans are like what you see on television and in films. I am continually impressed by students' abilities to participate in thoughtful discussions in English, and their willingness to take a different approach to learning.

...This weekend was really nice. Larry's colleague, Ihor, invited us over for dinner.

He and his wife and their two boys treated us to a delicious meal of many salads, chicken and mashed potatoes, and a yummy cake for dessert...After dinner we played a family game of Uno, and the boys even taught us a new variation on the game they learned this summer in Germany. One interesting fact I'd like to mention about our Uno game. The two boys, Roman and Yaroslav are only one year and four months apart, ages ten and twelve, I think. Like siblings I've never met in the U.S., these boys would work together. They would glance at each others' cards and help the other person. For example, at the end of the game, one boy had just one card left. His brother had a 'Wild' card and therefore could pick any color he wanted. If I were him, I would have chosen one of the three colors he didn't have, but Roman (the older brother) glanced at his younger brother's card and chose that color...This sense of working together and helping each other out is really something we aren't taught, especially in schools. We would call it cheating in most cases. It's something many volunteers really struggle with, teaching in Ukrainian schools and giving tests to kids who work together."

NEW ONLINE COURSE

By *LaTesha Charbonnet* MATESOL Candidate 07

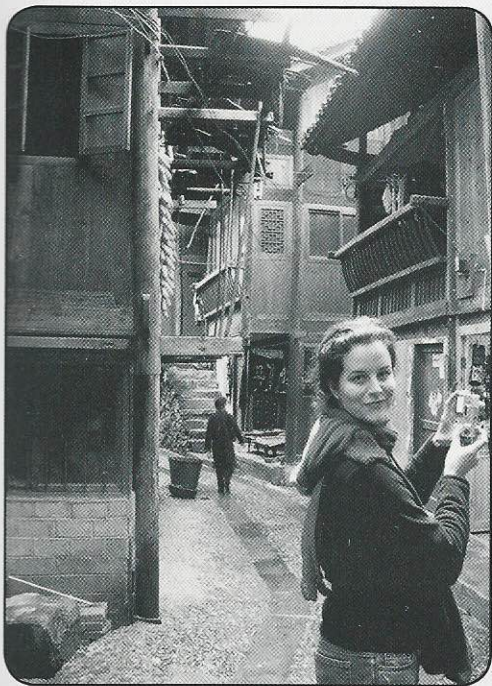


Monterey Institute course participants

During the Fall 2006 Semester, Professor Leo van Lier helped to facilitate a new online class at Monterey Institute about intercultural communication. A combined total of forty-four students from Monterey Institute and Kassel Universitat in Kassel, Germany participated in an interactive class though the Internet. Dr. Claudia Finkbeiner, a professor at Kassel Universitat and an instructor of the course explained that "a key feature of the class is the collaboration with partners about issues of importance to our own and others' personal

and professional lives." The students are able to correspond with each other in order to compare and contrast these important issues in their respective countries. Dr. Finkbeiner concluded: "Together we will be exploring important aspects of life, identity, beliefs, and culture in order to gain a deeper understanding of who we are as individual selves, as well as who we are as people from one culture or another, how we understand the self and the other, and how these understandings can enrich us as teachers and students."

Writing from China, **Mariah Schuemann** shares about her town, KaiLi, "Rockstardom", and her teaching responsibilities.



Peace Corps Volunteer Mariah Schuemann in KaiLi, China

"It is month three for me in China and I have finally settled in my small town (pop. 400,000) named KaiLi /Kye'Lee/. The city is a magnificent blend of contrasts: ancient vs. modern, wealth vs. deprivation, and above

all, nature vs. man. I feel that what surrounds me is a mosaic of what might be perceived as 'the best of both worlds,' however, as one who has ever carefully looked at a mosaic knows, what you perceive on any given day is all dependent upon what side of the bed you woke up on that morning! That is to say, the conveniences of modern day that I am afforded in KaiLi provide me with the ease and instant gratification that most Americans are accustomed to. Yet, those conveniences also make my Peace Corps experience a very different experience than the one our grandparents might have had. The days that I am reminded of how unique my PC experience is in comparison, are the days I long for the countryside village with no supermarkets or Internet access and no stream of blowing car horns that awake me at dawn and sing me to sleep at dusk.

Don't get me wrong, this PC China thing does come with its own set of very particular challenges, one being the amount of work involved and the students' never-ending dependence on me to be the one that they practice their spoken English with. Working in China is instant 'Rockstardom,'- everyone wants a part of you. Couple that with a language and culture barrier and by the end of the day I am exhausted. But as my father

said last night as he was comforting me over the phone, 'It is like kayaking in a head wind, you have to keep pushing through because in the end, you are only stronger because of your efforts.' So I keep on, knowing that he is right and these challenges will soon become easier.

I am teaching at KaiLi College in GuiZhou province, the southwest of China. The province is luscious and green and the air is clean and the skies are blue. I teach over 350 students; I have seven different classes a week (fourteen hours): six classes are 2nd and 3rd year oral English and one is 3rd year English literature with a 'wonderful' textbook that I can barely follow let alone my students! In total, I have four separate classes to prepare for and an English Corner and movie night to lead with my site mate Monica. Not to mention an additional secondary project that we will be heading shortly. Now this might not sound like a lot to you extremely hard-working corporate lawyers, business owners, therapists and commercial artists, but I promise you it is taxing! And I am sure that you teachers out there reading this know what I mean."

MATESOL STUDENT NOMINATED FOR PUSHCART PRIZE

By Kristin Rock MATESOL Candidate 07

In October 2006, Lawrence Lawson, a current Peace Corps Masters International TESOL candidate serving in Ukraine, was nominated for the Pushcart Prize. The Pushcart Prize is a respected and coveted award, which only the best writers and poets receive. Larry was nominated for a piece he wrote about his Peace Corps experience entitled "Mirrors Finding Floors." The piece can be found at perigee-art.com. Perigee was only able to choose six pieces out of their entire stock of published works for 2006, and Larry's piece was the only work of prose selected. The Pushcart Panel will choose the recipient of the prize—which includes publication in the annual Pushcart Prize Anthology sometime this year. Larry commented that he was extremely honored for having been considered for the prize. Congratulations Larry and good luck!

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