

2011 History Notes: Correspondence

Chris Robinson, RPCV/W Communications Director

1972- 1979

Joel Hettger [personal info omitted] [via rpcvw.org](http://via.rpcvw.org)

Jan 26 (4
days ago)

to development

I moved to to Arlington, Virginia in June 1972 following my Peace Corps service in Iran. Rita Warpeha, RPCV, Malaysia, the Peace Corps librarian, let me use a phone to make contacts in the fed govt. I started at DOL in Aug. 1972. i did not meet another PCV until July 1979 when the Tiber Island Apts. were used as a meeting place. I have known another PCV, Iran, Yazd, 65-67 since 1987. He also served in the US Navy for three years. He was in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia for a year.

I donated 10 1/2 gallons to the Red Cross, 1976-20095. Type A+. I received a lapel pin and a 10 gallon certificate.

Two anecdotes attached.

1976- 1980s

kjkeefer@juno.com [personal info omitted]

Hi, Chris.

An RPCV/W friend sent me the latest newsletter showing that you would like to interview RPCVs who know about the history of RPCVs in DC in the 60s and 70s. I moved to DC in 1976 and started African Agenda in 1977. In May 1978, my group of about 50 members went to a meeting in S.W. called by 3 Latin American RPCVs who wanted to see if there was interest in a city-wide RPCV group. There were about 110 that showed up that evening. My group was already formed and the largest group, so we held sway. Anyways, we started Action Alumni Assn. of the Greater Wash. Area (AAAGWA). At first we had co-chairs of 6 different committees. The chair for each monthly meeting was the one who hosted the meeting that night. We also rotated secretary-ship, as nobody really liked taking minutes. In 1979, the group decided to become more formal and elected me as its first President. We also participated in the founding of the National Council of RPCVs that year, and I volunteered to be the 20th anniv. Coordinator on the NCRPCV behalf, as DC would be the host city. At that time we had about 550 members.

Anyways, in 2006, I retired and moved to Redwood City, CA. So unless you come out here to visit, I won't be able to meet you face-to-face to give you more info. However, I am available by phone: [personal info omitted]. Please feel free to call anytime between 8 a.m. and 11 p.m. PST. If I'm not home, please leave a message and I'll get back to you.

All the best,

Karen Keefer
RPCV/Nigeria & Liberia
X-Staff/HQ
Co-founder RPCV/W, NPCA, FON, NPCA MEP

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1979 – 1985

Joel Hettger [personal info omitted]

In July 1979, 150 rpcvs met at the Tiber Island apts. in SW. the first name was aagwa - Action alumni of greater washington area. Brian Moore and Steve Wolfe were active at the beginning. Abby Thomas and Karen Keefer were also early activists. Also Bill Wahl, David Hunsberger and Holland McKenna. I did an issues forum on land reform and one on Afghanistan in 1983. I had a speaker from VOA. Joanne Omang also did an issues form on the Middle East. It was quite good. Bob Carey, Bolivia, had many wonderful social events in 1985.

Sincerely,

Joel Hettger
Iran, 1970-72

1980 –

David Hunsberger [via rpcvw.org](http://rpcvw.org)

Chris -- Your questionnaire looks nice, and should work very well in building a historical map of what happened. Your vision of marches and community service projects and watching speeches is very good, but I think what we actually did initially was less dramatic. My recollection is that we first met to interact socially, to find employment after Peace Corps, and to hold policy forums. I recall helping organize a forum on aid to Central America, and we invited a speaker who was a published author in that field. I think we found a meeting space at American University, but others can correct my memory on this. There were probably events that preceded these policy forums but I am not recalling them and will need help here. I can think of some old timers in this area who could fill in some of the early history, aided by your questionnaire.

I would add this context for your questionnaire, especially question 3: The initial meetings of RPCVs living in the Washington area occurred spontaneously in several settings -- here are three to begin with. (1) at the Peace Corps office, where there was a room for RPCVs to visit and look at job listings, prepare resumes for employers, sign up for re-entry assistance, especially with job hunting, etc. (2) at small companies doing consulting work in the DC area, such as TransCentury Corporation headed by Warren Wiggins, one of the founders of the Peace Corps. I worked there right after returning from Peace Corps in 1969, and found that most of the employees of that firm were other former volunteers and former PC staff. (3) I believe there was a Hill presence -- an informal network of former Peace Corps people working for Congress -- but I was not involved with that so I am not sure.

Those are my opening thoughts, which may help you expand questions 5 and 6 in your questionnaire.

1983 – 1989

Debby Prigal [personal info omitted] [via rpcvw.org](http://rpcvw.org)

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Chris,

I joined RPCV/W when I was just back from Ghana in 1983. I was the treasurer in the late 1980s and got RPCV/W its 501(c)(3) status. I do not know if that is too late for you.

I have forwarded the newsletter to the first RPCV/W president Karen Keefer. She is retired and lives in San Francisco. She can probably point you to others.