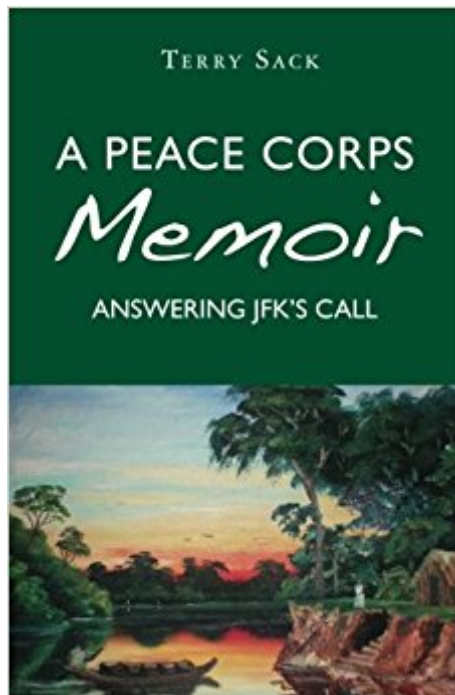




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A Peace Corps Memoir: Answering JFK's Call



Synopsis

As one of the first Volunteers in the early years of the Peace Corps, author Terry Sack had his work cut out for him—as well as his passions. In *A Peace Corps Memoir: Answering JFK's Call*, he reminisces about the organization's early years; surviving a very demanding training program, and then finding his niche in a strange culture as a newly minted Peace Corps Volunteer in a small town in the basin of Bolivia in the early 1960s. In fifty-two well-considered and thoughtfully penned chapters like "Progress at Last," "Government Ousted," "Plane with PC Workers Missing," and "Trinidad Farewell," Sack takes an easy-to-read chronological approach. He thoughtfully blends romance and humor to recall the enormity of what it was like to endure selection and training and ultimately become a Peace Corps Volunteer after having witnessed JFK's call to arms in a speech at the University of Michigan in 1961.

Book Information

Paperback: 458 pages

Publisher: BookSurge Publishing (December 21, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1439257280

ISBN-13: 978-1439257289

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 1 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 4 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,780,876 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #61 in Books > Travel > South America > Bolivia #9178 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Travelers & Explorers #42964 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Memoirs

Customer Reviews

This Peace Corps volunteer was in group #5, one of the early groups to go and work in Bolivia. You get a good sense of what it was like to be in the Peace Corps in the "early days." During his time in Bolivia, with his work, making friends, and extensive travel, he has a very special experience. Nick Royal, volunteer in the Philippines, group #2

A Peace Corps Memoir is an enjoyable read and captures the feel of the early days of the Peace Corps. If you want to know what life was like in the mid-1960s for a young gringo living on the eastern frontier of Bolivia in a relatively small town, this is a book for you. (In the interests of full

disclosure, I served with the author in Bolivia and can vouch for the book's authentic flavor.) Terry takes you on a journey from Peace Corps training in Seattle to life in Trinidad, the town where he was assigned. Along the way, you meet a cast of characters ranging from the locals to other volunteers he lives and works with. It is a lively adventure interrupted by bouts of boredom, confusion and, of course, dysentery. What are you to do when resources are scarce, communication is difficult, the townspeople are bemused with your presence, and you are on a constant search for clean drinking water? Terry writes with an honesty and self-deprecating humor while facing these dilemmas and many others. He shares the joy and frustration of meeting and living with people with vastly different cultural backgrounds. He reveals what he learns about them and himself as he struggles to live up to his principles and those of the Peace Corps. Many authors have reflected that, in the end, it is not the destination as much as the journey itself that matters most. In this sometimes tender and often hilarious memoir and coming of age story, we learn of a journey where idealism confronts reality, determination runs into doubt, and efforts to contribute to the development of a community and its people end up with, perhaps, limited tangible results (a bridge across an arroyo, a small school and English classes) but with unexpected and enduring friendships and understanding. In the end, the journey mattered most.

A Peace Corps Memoir is a very readable and enjoyable book - perfect for summer or vacation or even a relaxing weekend (or two) reading! Rather than following a diary or journal approach to relating his experiences, thoughts, and impressions of his time in Bolivia with the Peace Corps, the author introduces themes which are interwoven together in such a way that I found myself caught up in the story (sometimes accidentally reading late into the night!). There is enough detail to meet the needs of the story but not so much that one feels bogged down in minutia. I came away with a good sense of the surprises and struggles of a young 1960's American set down into a totally different culture and environment where he hopes to make a positive difference in the lives of people around him. I think that anyone interested in the 1960's era, concepts of cultural intersections, and the idealism of volunteers will find this memoir a most interesting and worthwhile read.

As a former PC volunteer, this was a great story about what it was like to be in the first group of PCVs. I could relate in many ways, but was also intrigued by the extreme differences in our experiences, and the changes that the Peace Corps has made over the years. Thanks for giving me another adventure!

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