

Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.

-Theodore Roosevelt

Greetings from Mission Control Hayastan!

The other day I was thinking, "When I was kid I was told that if I dug a hole in the ground, I'd pop out in China". Who the heck thought up that one? Looking on a map it's obvious that from the bay area you'd end up in Armenia or close to it. There's my random thought of the day.



Istanbul, Turkey in front of the Red Mosque

Our summer has ended and the rain has arrived to let us know that autumn has arrived. Each evening the rains have arrived and our power has been out for 40 hours. The summer was a very busy time for us as you may have read in the last newsletter. It began with our clubs and remodeling a classroom last June. July was our vacation time. My mother and oldest brother came to visit. The month ended with one training seminar and August began with another training seminar. We finished August by helping out at an eco camp. It's nice to be back in school and on a regular schedule. The children's faces are always a delight to see each day. Here's the summary.

July was a great month. My mom and brother Mark came to experience a little bit of Armenia with us. They spent a week here where we had the opportunity to show them around Yerevan, our town in the north, and a little time in Dilijan with our host family from PST. It was very exciting for us to not only have them here but to have someone we know to come and experience this country with us.

They met our friends, saw the sites, had animals killed in their honor, were stared at, heard more Armenian than they ever had or would want, and experienced a former communist country in the midst of rebuilding itself.

After their time in Armenia, we all flew to Turkey and Greece for a week. We spent some time in Istanbul, the Ephesus area, and the Greek Island of Salmos. The change of countries was much needed. The easement of getting around and accessibility of necessities was a relief compared to what we deal with in Armenia. We had wonderful customer service and relatively cheap prices. While in Istanbul we saw the Blue and Red Mosques, the Topkapi Palace, took a boat trip around the Bosphorus, experienced a Turkish bath (that was different!@#?), made a couple shopping trips to the Grand and Covered Bazaars, and enjoyed the unique culture. The Ephesus area was a great lesson in the history of human civilization. It was amazing to be standing in the midst of these ruins that had stood for thousands of years (granted they were under soil for some of them). One of the best peaches that we have ever eaten was fresh from the tree in that area. Juicy! After Ephesus, we took a boat ride to the nearest Greek Island of Salmos. We did nothing but sleep, read, eat, swim, and relax. It was well deserved after the constant site seeing. The food in Greece is wonderful. The feta cheese was scrumptious. After a couple of days on the island we went our separate ways. Mom and Mark headed to Athens where they flew back home and we made our way back to Istanbul for our flight to Armenia. It was a great time and we highly recommend Turkey and Greece as countries to visit.

We just finished writing a \$500 grant for our school. After returning from Turkey, we completed a three day Peace Corps sponsored seminar on developing community projects. This is a pre-requisite if we want to apply for Peace Corps grants. If our grant is approved, we will be able to help remodel the school kitchen, which hasn't been touched in over 30 years

and is unusable. The grant will also help to replace 50 new windows. The school has seen some transformation over the summer. Along with the classroom that was remodeled, the first floor hallway has been repaired, painted, and curtains hung. The school director is really pushing for the school to be completely remodeled in the next 5 or 10 years. She has been applying for other grants as well as allocating school budget funds to be used for repairs. Though the materials are always paid for, she doesn't always pay the workers their proper payment. This is because the workers are the school janitors who don't have much room to complain. While it won't be a problem to pay them with our grant, we really hate to see that happen, because we want the director to be an example (even just for this grant) of good ethics. We just try to remember that it's for the children, despite what may happen.



August 17 Laura's new haircut

Laura got a new haircut! Hot!

The computer lessons were a success over the summer and will definitely continue throughout the school year. I was able to teach 40 hours of lessons to five students. I am looking at increasing the number of students by five. While many of the students love to learn WORD and other programs, Ashot, a 7th grader, is asking about drive sizes and how to connect different external drives and components. He has the potential to be a computer engineer. I have the students learning how to actually type which has been difficult, but after some progress, exciting for them. The internet offers some wonderful, and free, programs to learn typing.

In mid-August, we spent a week in Yerevan where we saw the new Volunteers swear-in and embark on their new adventure. It was interesting to sit and watch since we were in their spot a year ago. So much has been learned in the last year that we can only wonder what the next will bring. After the ceremony, everyone went to the Peace Corps office for pizza and coke and then we headed to the bars to party.

Later in the week, Laura and I were part of a conference on teaching environmental education. The conference was sponsored by the Armenian Tree Project (ATP) and the Center for Agribusiness and Rural Development (CARD). Adult and Youth leaders from 12 CARD clubs came to Yerevan to learn how to teach environmental education to their club members. The curriculum we were using was just developed by ATP. It was a great opportunity to have the curriculum tested. We taught ten different lessons with the help of Power Point and visiting our local park. Along with our presentations, the participants were taught how to develop lessons and present them. It's difficult for many Armenians to teach without just lecturing. Asking questions, doing group work, and engaging the audience is slowly becoming the standard here. The conference was good experience in doing teacher training that we both hope to do again in Armenia.



Brett's Eco Camp group "The Pine Trees"

Our birthdays came and went during the summer. Laura reached the old age of 26, while I, along with my nagging shoulder, turned 31. Laura was able to celebrate her day on Salmos Island. We spent the day window browsing, eating, and saw the movie "Mr. and Mrs. Smith". That was the movie of the week on the island. My day was spent in Yerevan where in the evening we ate at the Studio Café and saw a music and dance group from Ghana perform at a nearby club. Laura was dragged into the act at one point and thrown around a bit by the dancers. Though not the type to enjoy the spotlight, she was good sport about it.

August ended with our time helping at an eco camp in Tatev Village. Tatev is located about 6 hours south of Yerevan on top of a beautiful, rugged canyon that offers spectacular views. The camp was put on by Peace Corps, WGWG (organization from Yerevan), and Tatev Secondary School. This camp was the fifth, and last, camp for the summer that Peace Corps and WGWG had organized. We had 40 children attend and about 20 adults helping with various duties. The children were able to learn about Armenia's



Tatev Monestary

natural environment through many organized activities and discussions. The week didn't go by without its flaws as it became difficult to work with WGWG. Let's just say that by the end of the week, Laura had been kicked out of the kitchen and not given any appreciation for her hard work with cleaning and organizing by WGWG and I had told the organization director that her organization sucks. All summer, and prior, there were problems with WGWG and this camp just brought everything to the open. At Peace Corps' discretion, WGWG won't be a part of the eco camp program next year. The children did have a great time and we were able to teach them "Simon Says" which they just loved to play.

In the last newsletter, we talked about our friends Mher and his family. They were in the process of trying to get to Russia to seek a better life with relatives who lived there. Well, Mher's mother and sister did leave three weeks ago. Mher and his grandma are now waiting for their plane tickets but it may be a couple months.



Laura's Column Brett says my fans are calling, so here I am sitting at the computer writing a little something. School has started and I have been very busy. All those little germ covered fingers are just calling to new teachers like me. So once again, I have a cold. This school year I will not be working with the same English teacher, instead I will be team teaching with two other part-time English teachers. I have eight after school club that I am excited to be working with. I have opened the lessons to anyone who wants to learn, but as expected, the student who come are some of the brightest and most motivated students in the school. I feel very lucky to have the opportunity to work with these kids. Today, I had such great lessons that I might be exaggerating a little but I feel like I am the luckiest teacher in Armenia.

Today, when Brett and I finally got home around 5:15, we sat down on the couch and began telling each other about our day. Within five minutes, we had a neighbor girl show up early for her computer lesson. Then about ½ hour later another student just stopped by to visit, soon after another neighbor came to get extra help with his English. This is how our entire evening went. In the states Brett and I would be bothered and just want some quiet time together, but here, we are thinking to ourselves wow, what a successful day!

Well, that's about all from me. I hope all is going well. America is in our thoughts these days and we are sorry for the current troubles. Best wishes.

We want you to meet our neighbors The Mosinyan Family. They live in our building and through their children, Riveta and



Mosinyan Family

Haik, we have become quite close since returning from America. We first met Riveta, 13 years old, when she came to our clubs last year. She has been very active in our clubs and has a desire to learn English. Quite often, she will come to our home to borrow UNO, Skipbo, or to read a children's English book. Haik is now old enough, 10 years old, to attend our clubs. He loves to play his Nintendo Gameboy with Mario Brothers and soccer. Most of his time is spent outdoors with his friends. Aravik is a homemaker and spends her time taking care of her family. She is a busy woman preparing meals, cleaning, and helping her children with their homework. To help



Haik and Armen

financially she makes doilies and hot pads to be sold at nearby churches. Armen, the father, is a busy man. He spends a lot of time carving wood crosses that are then sold at the churches. His craftsmanship is excellent, as some of you may have seen from the crosses that my mother and brother purchased. When he is not busy carving crosses he is working doing odd jobs here and there. He is one of the easiest Armenian men to get a long with. If you have seen the crosses and are interested in purchasing one, we'd be glad in getting an order processed. The crosses range from \$8 to \$30 and are individually made, no two are the same. Please see the bottom of this newsletter for photos of his past work.

I finished reading Colin Powell's autobiography and found it to be quite interesting. I don't read much about military leaders but found it to be intriguing because of his role in the current Iraq War. I recommend that you try it, if anything, to see what decision processes occur when the leaders of our country try to lead with their best intentions.

I thought I'd give you a shoulder update. The shoulder isn't doing any better since returning from America. The muscle tissue around the scapula and top of the shoulder capsule has deteriorated. Every so often when I move my shoulder, I can feel the bones scrap. I don't have any pain; I just lack any substantial strength to lift objects more than 5 pounds with that arm. I've decided to see a physical therapist in Yerevan. I had consulted another Volunteer, a physical therapist, for advice but she has since finished her service. The advice from our Armenian friends, though well intentioned, has been amusing. I have been told to just keep taking more medicine, visit the hot springs in southern Armenia for a month to ensure it to get better, and to rub vodka on the shoulder, and drink it for good measure. I hope the physical therapist's advice in Yerevan isn't the same. Maybe he'll prescribe a hot brick.

That's all for this newsletter folks. Thanks for tuning in again. We look forward to hearing back from you!

- Brett & Laura

ARMENIAN RECIPES

Armenian Style Coffee

1 Armenian coffee cup full of water (very small cup)
1 t sugar
1 t Armenian style coffee (grounded coffee)

Add 1 t coffee and 1 t sugar for each cup of coffee you want; bring water, coffee and sugar to a boil, but watch carefully, to make sure your coffee doesn't boil over (otherwise it will lose its flavor).



Examples of his projects



Armen working on his latest project