

Marjie Mascarinas Joins the Peace Corps

■ Two years in Turkmanistan ought to fulfill her wanderlust.

By Ron Karten

Marjie Mascarinas is packing her books and movies and heading out to Turkmanistan. The madcap (also called, autocratic) president of this former Soviet satellite has recently been in the news for renaming months and even days after himself, but Mascarinas reports that current Peace Corps workers in the country tell her he's kind of a joke. She's not laughing yet.

As nurse practitioner for the Tribe for the last two years, Mascarinas will serve as the Medical Officer in charge of the health clinic that cares for some 80 other Peace Corps volunteers in the country. In addition, she said, the clinic may contract to take care of State Department employees as well.

From what she's heard, the main health care issues in this mostly desert country bordering Iran and Afghanistan, may be alcoholism and depression, but she would not be surprised if she also sees some gastrointestinal problems brought on by "weird parasites." She'll have to decide whether to treat patients in the field or have them life-flighted to city facilities, and she is going to have to be good at her job, because nobody gets out of their Peace Corps assignment until any illnesses they have contracted are stabilized.

She will be on call twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

This assignment is a long standing and long delayed ambition for Mascarinas. Even growing up in Virginia, she said, she has always wanted to leave the country on an adventure. "And now I am," she said.

For a long time, she said, "I wasn't brave enough. I didn't have enough confidence." But this desire "to live beyond the creature comforts" stuck with her, and she ran into people who had been in the Peace Corps. Ultimately, it was not any one thing that spurred her to go after this job, she said, but she inquired about it last October, sent in her application in February, and heard the good news in August.

Her background always has been something of an exploration. Her first schooling and employment came in the field of international business. She worked as a financial analyst with a contractor for the Department of Defense. "But I was not getting something," she said. "I was not satisfied. I felt like a paper pusher and wanted to do something else."

Both of her parents are in the medical field, so of course she shunned it

in the beginning. "I ended up coming back to it, anyway," she said. She went back to school for nursing at George Mason University in Virginia, and came west to Oregon Health Sciences University for graduate school.

Her medical choice has always been primary care because it provides more challenges, she said. "You have to know a little about a lot of things." And benefits: "You have a chance to build relationships with patients."

She also has built relationships with her co-workers, but did not realize how much she valued them until she wrote her letter saying goodbye. Then, she suddenly felt sad. "I am just feeling like I'm part of this community," she said, "and now I'm leaving."

But she really seems on track as far as having found her way. Her interest remains working with the under served, and whether she goes on to continue with the Peace Corps or return to the U.S. to work



Photo by Ron Karten

Marjie Mascarinas

in public health, she said that this niche has been satisfying.

She leaves from Washington, D.C. on October 25 and assumes her new duties on October 28. ■

New Mental Health Therapist At the Heath & Wellness Center

■ Joseph Cook brings his experience and professionalism to the job.



Photo by Ron Karten

Joseph Cook

By Ron Karten

Headline -

Teaser - He sees rage turned inward

By Ron Karten

Joseph Cook, an Ojibwa (Check Spelling) Indian, has allotments from three Tribes - Bad River in Wisconsin, Grand Portage in Minnesota and Lac LaCroix in Ontario, Canada, but he brought his

family to Grand Ronde last year for even better opportunities.

Dr. Joseph Stone, the Tribe's Behavioral Health Director, recruited Cook, who graduated among the top three percent of counseling psychology students in the nation.

Cook considered his many opportunities and decided Stone and the Tribe's Mental Health Therapist Sidney Brown - both nationally known and respected Indian psychologists - were the best bet. Stone saw in Cook a "personable and well-prepared" professional who seemed as if he would fit well with the behavioral group's "collaborative team approach" to mental health.

That is, although counselors see patients individually, the team of counselors get together regularly to evaluate the work and help clients "get past sticking points" in therapy. In addition, Stone saw in Cook a potential to do some written advocacy for the Tribal community. Cook, meanwhile, said that he also wanted to work in a place with as much potential as the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde.

"Most Tribes are not like this," he said. "They don't have medical buildings or community centers, or build homes for their Elders. To see

what they've done in such a short time, it's really quite remarkable." Averaged over the year, Cook estimates that he sees 20-25 people a week for counseling. As an adjunct to his work, he would like to see an appeal to parents that provides the signs of drug and alcohol abuse, of depression and anxiety. The vast majority of referrals for kids, he said, come from parents and the courts. Even when he gets the kids in, however, he doesn't insist that they immediately stop destructive behavior. He gives them "powerful choices."

"They can take what they want and leave what they want," he said. In ways, Cook's family history mirrors the horrors reported in one of the books on his shelf: *Native American Post Colonial Psychology*. He described how his father quit school in the sixth grade leaving behind the notorious Jesuit School in Port Arthur, Ontario. He described how his father landed in a YMCA in Arkansas after the war. He described how his father was a by-product of the Truman administration's 'assimilation' policy. "They taught him how to order in a restaurant, leave a tip, and read a bus schedule," said Cook.

"You can't have a socialization process forced on you and not have a backlash," said Cook about post-colonial Indian psychology. "What we've noticed is an anger turned inward, toward a family structure where we now see neglectful or abusive families."

"For a lot of Native people, the goal is to resolve the anger instead of internalizing it."

Cook knows that there is a way through this anger, where you can acknowledge it and accept it as an appropriate response to an abusive society and move on with the knowledge but without turning the anger inward.

He knows because of the life he has built over the years. There is his wife, Paula, (administrative assistant in the Community Fund office, profiled in *Smoke Signals* 7/15/02) his three children, Jennifer, Nathan, and Jessica, all succeeding in their worlds, two horses, two dogs and now a fine, big place in McMinnville to hold them all.

His private life revolves around family, he said. They ride horses together; attend athletic events like football games where his son excels. And of course, eating is a family affair. Cook is a specialist ("if you could call it that") in Italian food, making spaghetti, ravioli, and