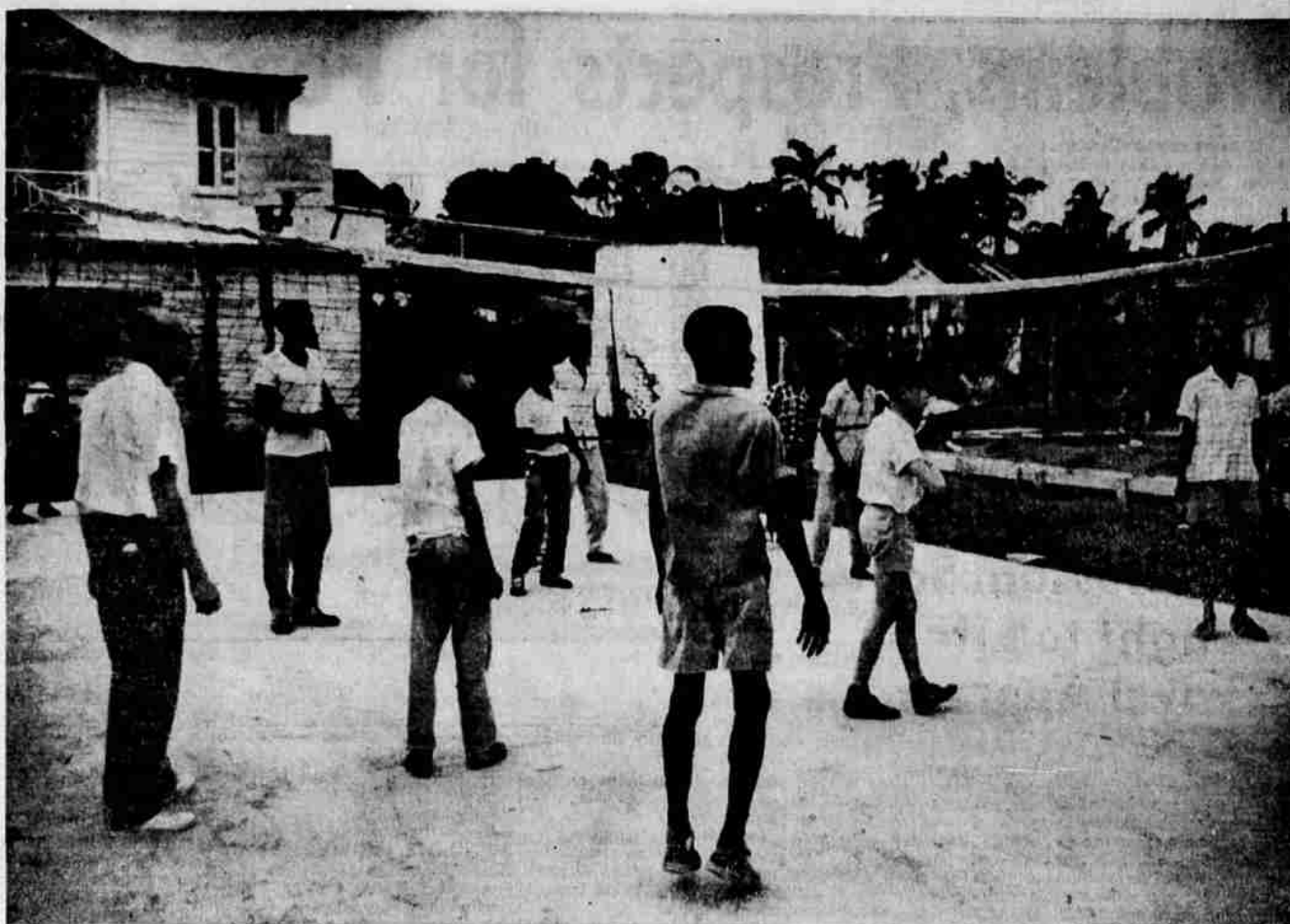


Medford Volunteer Illustrates Peace Corps in Action



Volunteer Irvan Guss, 24, of Medford, teaches math, general science, biology, history and speech at a parochial secondary school in Punta Gorda, a fishing village on the southern coast of British Honduras. Punta Gorda can be reached only by sea and air and is the most isolated spot in Central America where volunteers are stationed. Here Guss supervises a volleyball game behind the school.

Punta Gorda, British Honduras—A young Medford teacher is helping raise the level of instruction in the schools of this small central American colony of Great Britain. He is 24 year-old Irvan H. Guss, one of 33 Peace Corps volunteers who have been working in British Honduras since last September.

About one-twelfth the size of Oregon, British Honduras is a tropical country of 93,000 people. It has been promised its independence as soon as it can staff its civil service with its own people, replacing the expatriates who are now on the government payroll. Education, then, is viewed as a basic means of achieving the goal of self-government.

Eighteen of the volunteers are stationed in Belize, the country's hot, steamy capital. The others, including Guss, are scattered throughout the country in rural districts. They teach a variety of subjects: English, science, biology, chemistry, math, physical education, metal working, shorthand, typing and bookkeeping.

In addition, 10 volunteers act as teacher-trainers who visit schools and help local teachers to become more effective in the classroom.

As is true in most undeveloped countries, British Honduras suffers from an acute shortage of skilled teachers. So great is the need here that apprentice teachers often start when they are only 14 and fresh out of the eighth grade. When the plane carrying the contingent of volunteers touched down at Belize airport, the number of people in the country with university degrees was more than doubled.

Guss lives in Punta Gorda, a fishing community of 1,600 people on the southern coast of the country a few miles north of the Guatemalan border. Punta Gorda can be reached only by air, and with the Heron, an antiquated boat which makes weekly trips between Punta Gorda and Belize 100 miles to the north. This part of the coast has a hot-house climate and an annual rainfall of 180 inches.

A quiet, friendly person, Guss shares a white frame house on the edge of the Caribbean with Erwin and Taeko Wong, a volunteer couple from Honolulu. The Wongs are teacher-trainers and spend much of their time traveling in the back country visiting rural schools.

Right next door to his house, is the parochial high school in which Guss teaches math, general science, biology, history and speech. It is an arduous schedule, and one night a week he teaches an adult science class, and four nights helps students with their home work.

The school was so short of staff that it would have been unable to open last fall had it not been for Guss and the Wongs. The Heron brought them to Punta Gorda on a Sunday morning. They unpacked, had a short meeting with the principal and the next morning were already in the classroom.

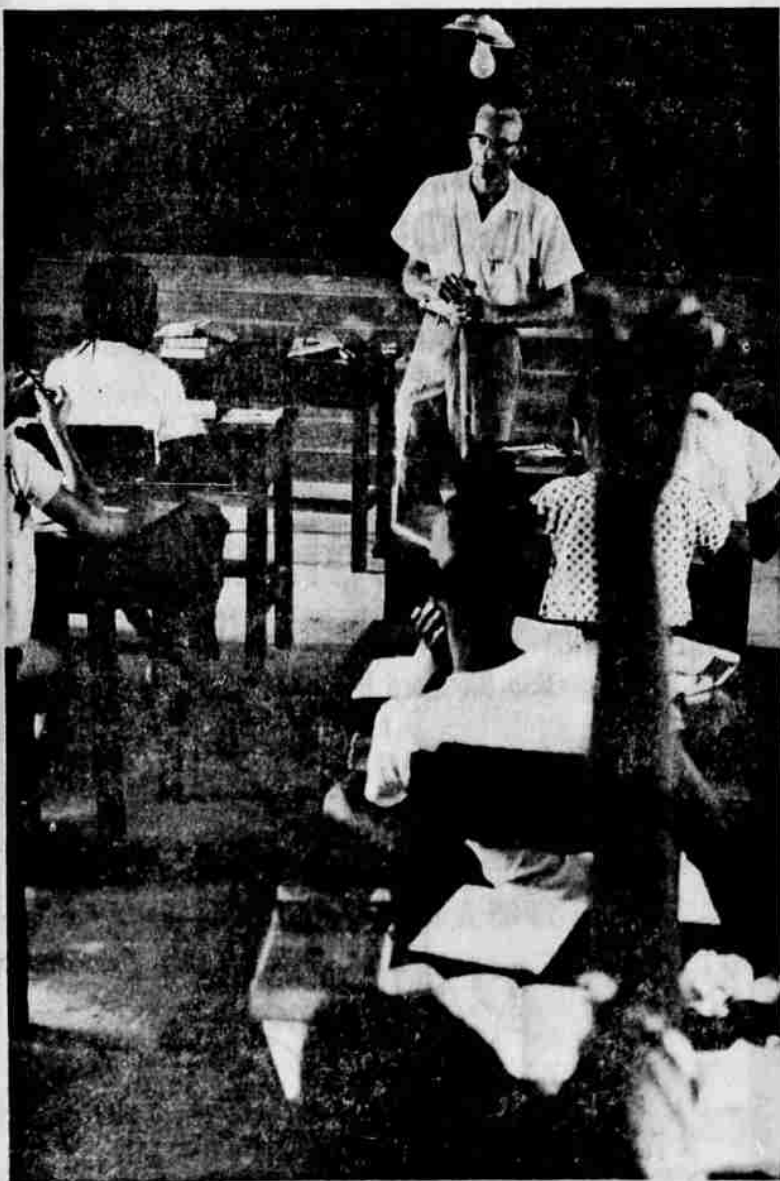
Life in Punta Gorda has an unhurried, sleepy quality to it. There is not much to do at night except attend a mosquito performance at an outdoor movie theater which shows ancient American films. Usually Guss just manages to get his papers graded and his next day's lessons prepared before the local generator runs out of gas and the lights go off about 10 p.m.

Says Guss, "I've adjusted to the slow pace of life here and the isolation. Often in the evening I'll just sit out in front of the house and watch the moon come up out of the sea. It's the first time in my life that I know exactly when the moon comes up."

Guss was a student at Southern Oregon college for two years and then earned his BA in education at Oregon State university in 1961. The next year he taught math and chemistry at Adrain High school. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Guss, 1041 Mt. Pitt ave., Medford.



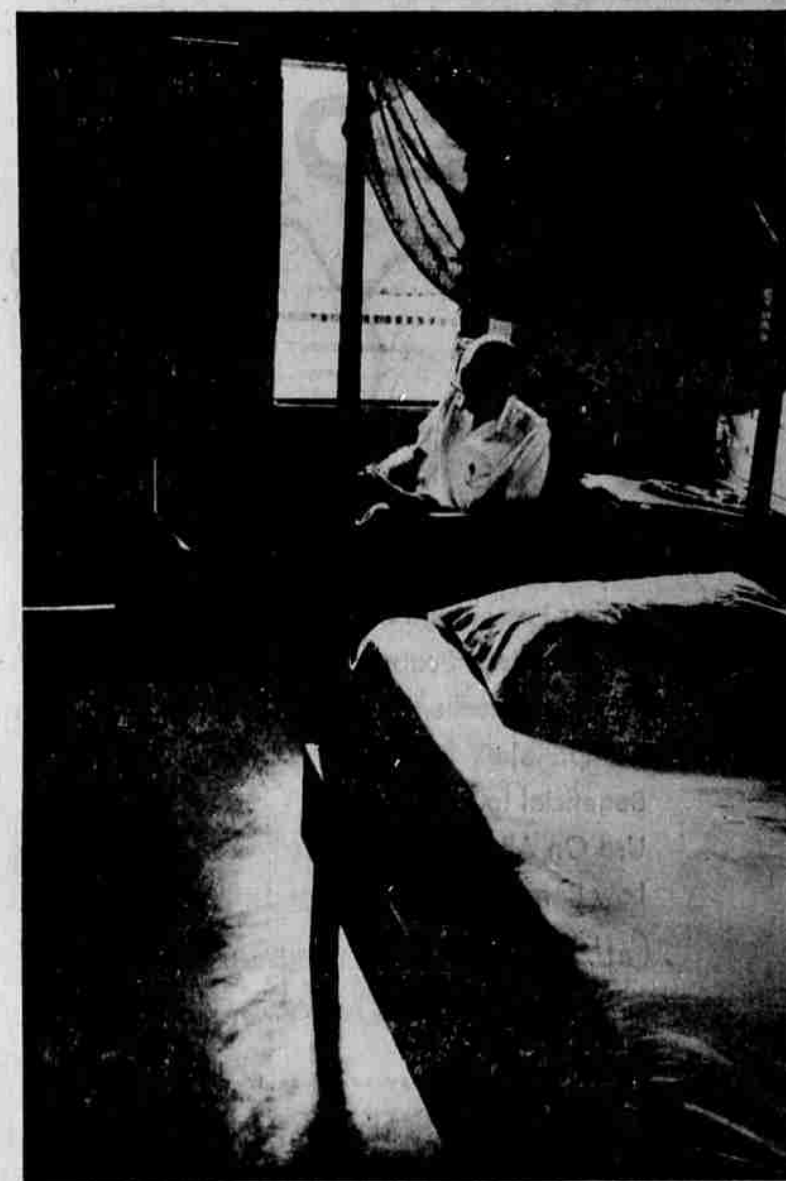
The house he shares with Hawaiian couple.



Irvan Guss shown in his Punta Gorda classroom.



Walking with Erwin and Taeko Wong in rain.



Medford volunteer prepares mornings work.