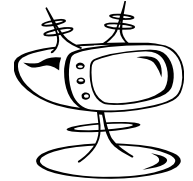




# Senior Network Action Committee U.S. PEACE CORPS - UKRAINE



News, Spring 2010

## SNAC Spring Meeting in Kiev Invites Reflection & Renewal

*photos & blog by Fran Cary, Group 36-CD, Starobilsk, Luhansk oblast*

April 12, 2010.... We were in Kiev over the weekend for a meeting of the over-50-year-old PCVs. It was great to be with close friends. We had our SNAC (Senior Network Action Committee) meeting at Peace Corps headquarters. We learned that the newest PST Group 38, now in training in Chernigov, has many more seniors, many more over-70, than our group and previous groups did. Lillian Carter would be pleased! So are we.

After the meeting we had a grand tour of Kiev given by Dr. Valeriy Gontarenko, who grew up in Kiev, and shared the glories and stories of his historic Podil neighborhood, one of the oldest in Kiev. We went to other sites: a neighborhood of craftsmen and artisans; to Parliament, the President's House, and majestic government buildings near bustling Khreshchatik Street, the heart of the city; and St. Cyril's Church Museum, adorned with beautiful paintings. We also went to the Holocaust memorial at Babi



Babi Yar Holocaust Memorial

Yar (left), the large ravine outside of Kiev where over 33,000 Jews were rounded up and killed in cold blood on September 29-30, 1933 ... perhaps the largest two-day massacre of the Holocaust. Dr. Sasha Gonta met us there to share more information

about this tragic event, one which the Soviet government didn't acknowledge and is only relatively recently being uncovered and discussed publicly. The Holocaust tragedy is also told in the documentary *Babi Yar* by Anatoly Kuznetsov, based on the chilling and horrific experience of a survivor, the artist Dina Pronicheva, who played dead on top of thousands of corpses of loved ones and friends. I cannot imagine the horror. I cannot imagine surviving.



photo by Dr. Valery

*The Kiev Weekend group of Peace Corps Volunteers, all of the over-50 vintage, and now fortified for their walking tour.*

We walked the grounds aware that we were treading on a huge cemetery with thousands and thousands of unmarked graves, the voices of the massacred silenced, but not forgotten.

We also remembered another atrocity, the Holodomor, the starvation of 8-10 million Ukrainians in 1932-33 who, by order of Stalin, were forced at gun point, torture and threat of death or exile to Siberia, to give up their grain, all of it, their grinding wheels, their food. Controversy surrounds the details of this tragedy, and some deny it, but modern scholars have placed it in the



Holodomor Monument

context of Ukrainian resistance to Stalin's forced collectivization of their farms.

Our PCV friend Ilse, whose mother was born in Ukraine and fled with her husband to America in the 1940's (Ilse's not sure how, but with the help of friends), says her mother told many stories about this famine and her own tragic loss of several family members. It was good to have Ilse



Ilse, Jud, Carl

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# THE CHAIR'S CORNER!

by Frank Kersting, SNAC Chairman,  
and Group 35 TEFL, Krivoi Rig

There are many new initiatives for SNAC 2010. We are building on previous efforts, seeking to codify and expand our important PC-U group. The Spring meeting in Kiev went a long way in meeting those ambitious efforts. The group unanimously passed the first reading of the SNAC Bylaws and they are now on to the last reading, discussion and final approval at the Summer meeting. As a result of our Mission statement, SNAC has also expanded into broader areas from our founding intent of a social network. Recognizing our unique capabilities and expertise, we have adopted a mission of offering that professional experience to both PC- Ukraine and Washington through an appropriate committee structure.

What all SNAC members should be justly proud of is our concerted effort to collaborate with other groups. See, old dogs know valuable tricks! We are actively involved in collaborating with the IT and Tourism groups, as we have mutual interests. If this is a sustainable trend, then SNAC can be a model for intergroup collaboration throughout PC-Ukraine to the benefit of all.

For the departing Group 34's, *thanks* for all the work you have done to give the current SNAC volunteers a platform to launch it as a viable PC-U group capable of making social and programmatic contributions to an organization we all love: Peace Corps. From all of us, "All The Best" as you continue on your most interesting life journey! Keep informed through our new SNAC Newsletter! Eventually, we will all meet again, sooner or later, in Friends of Peace Corps. ☺

Our next meeting: a "spasiba balshoi" or "dyakuyu" to Ilse Whisner who has volunteered to find us lodging and rooms for our late summer meeting in Odessa on Sept 4-5. There will be much more information on that in future e-mails. Besides discussing the SNAC Bylaws, at that meeting we will also be welcoming a large Group 38 over-50 contingent to our merry band of fellow sojourners! It promises to be a memorable meeting, so mark your calendars and plan to attend. ☺ *Frank*

## S.N.A.C. Senior Network Action Committee

A Working Group for Peace Corps Volunteers serving in Ukraine, over age 50.

### MISSION

SNAC's Mission is two-fold.

The first mission is to fulfill its founding intent of a social venue for older volunteers by having meetings in different Ukrainian cities, as well as offering camaraderie and support.

The second mission is to support Peace Corps efforts both in Ukraine and in Washington by offering our expertise through various SNAC committees, as well as collaborating with other Peace Corps groups to enhance the volunteers' service experience and that of our host institutions and sites.

### Newsletter Editor:

Barbara Trecker, Group 36 Community Development  
[barbaratrecker@gmail.com](mailto:barbaratrecker@gmail.com)

The activities and views expressed in this publication are the volunteers' own personal statements and do not reflect or represent any official position of the Peace Corps.

## THE CHANGING OF THE 'GUARD'

On behalf of the SNAC membership, THANKYOU Diana Schmidt for your dedication and service to the volunteers and citizens of Ukraine. You made a difference: a job well-done! To our new director Douglass Teschner, WELCOME as you leave your former post where the temperature varied from warm to stifling! You are now responsible for guiding the largest program in Peace Corps. We wish you well as you begin your tour in a country with four distinct seasons and in the midst of preparing for a mega-growth in the PC-U program. The SNAC membership wishes you *all the best*, as you meet with volunteers and staff to continue to formulate strategies to make volunteer service meaningful for volunteers and our counterparts' sites, schools, and institutions.



**HELLO to New Friends, and to  
Future Fellow Volunteers, Group 38:  
Welcome to Ukraine & Peace Corps!**

There is a group specifically designed for the '50+' volunteer:



**Senior Network Action Committee**

*(We older volunteers know a good deal when we see it: snacks!)*

Seriously, SNAC is for the Over-50 Peace Corps Volunteers who seek camaraderie, support, and opportunities to meet in different scenic Ukrainian venues. We are looking forward to meeting you, during your arduous training and as volunteers.

*Remember, training is NOTHING like service! ☺*

My e-mail address is: [frank.kersting@wku.edu](mailto:frank.kersting@wku.edu)

**Senior Network Action Committee (SNAC)**  
**Meeting Minutes: 10 April 2010 • Peace Corps Headquarters, Kiev**

SNAC Chairman Frank Kersting called the meeting to order about 9:30 am. Fourteen (14) PCVs present: Fran Cary, Pat Combs, Jud Dolphin, Carol Kersting, Frank Kersting, Ken Mattingly, Peter McGuire, Ed Novick, Ellie Rafferty, Larry Rafferty, Barbara Trecker, Barb Weiser, Ilsa Whisner, Carl Whisner. Also present: Dr. Valeriy Gontarenko of PCMO.

**Old Business:**

Permanently tabled, unanimously, after motion made and seconded.

**New Business:**

Frank offered a vision of broader relevance for SNAC, to fulfill a social need for over-50 volunteers, using our expertise to fill a larger organizational role relating to the Birthday celebration committee and to ramp up seniors' input in terms of recruiting, training, placement and support. A wider role as a mentoring group also discussed. Jud noted the large number of over-50s in the new PST group.

**Officers:**

Nominated:

1. Vice president: Jim Eleazer
  2. Secretary: Fran Cary. This position was later approved as Communications Coordinator, to indicate a communications role as well as note taking and record keeping (see below).
  3. Financial Officer: Carol Kersting until August, then Patricia (Pat) Combs. To collect money for tours and SNAC special events.
- Motion made and seconded; officers elected unanimously.



*Carol Kersting: still holding the Money Bag till August*

**Committees:**

- A. 21st Century. Coordinate with PC Ukraine's IT committee, which needs more members. Don't duplicate; have a SNAC liaison.
  - B. Meetings and Nominations. Determine meeting dates and slate of officers.
  - C. Older PCV initiative
  - D. Ad Hoc 50th Birthday. Jud reported. Still planning.
- Some discussion of a Tourism committee, but SNAC should link with existing PC-Ukraine Committee.

**Discussion of Bylaws:**

After discussion and thanks to Bylaws Committee, the following revisions made:

- 1) Change "Secretary" to "Communications Coordinator"
  - 2) Add "training" to "recruitment and placement" in description of Older PCV Initiative Committee
  - 3) Meetings: Change language to: "SNAC will usually meet three (3) times per year."
- Motion made to accept Bylaws with revisions; seconded, and carried unanimously.

**Communications:**

Frank suggested the consideration of Facebook for SNAC communications, updates, and a SNAC newsletter. Pros and cons discussed. It was decided not to use Facebook, but email. We should also use PC-Ukraine website as portal for SNAC news, and keep it linked and updated. New Group 38 will be added to new Excel membership format.

**Next Meeting:**

After discussion, it was decided to meet September 4-5 in Odessa. Ilse and Carl will help plan.

**Guest speaker:**

After a coffee break, new PC Ukraine director Doug Teschner joined the meeting and discussed his background, plans and goals. "This is an exciting time for PC-Ukraine," he said; Ukraine is the largest PC post and high profile. He talked about expansion, mega-growth, increased demand for teachers of English. He talked about a fourth goal of PC, being the personal and professional development of the volunteers.

Meeting adjourned about 11:50, followed by lunch and Dr. V's excellent Tour of Kiev, which included a tour of Podil, his old neighborhood, and Babi Yar with Dr.Sasha.

*— Submitted by Fran Cary, communication coordinator*

# Kiev Weekend

*continued from page 1*

and her husband Carl with Jud and me on this visit.

It was president Yushchenko who had the Holodomor Park Memorial built to the victims in 2007-8. It includes a modern obelisk, along with the bronze statue of a starving young girl and a circle of grinding wheels. Very moving. It is set in a beautiful park near the Kiev Pediersk Lavra (the Monastery of the Caves) the oldest orthodox Christian monastery, started in 1015. The old and the new. Good and evil. Sacred history and holocaust history.

The Holodomor is one of the newest memorials in the capital city of Kiev, and it is filling the need to remember. Thousands of daily visitors and hundreds of flowers and lighted candles placed at the site attest to its power to move us. Yushchenko, I think, was right about this.

President Yushchenko's obsession with historical truth and remembrance became unpopular, however, and he was accused, for example, of favoring history over present-day problems. Still, I think he will go down in history as a good president. I agree. Not soon, not now, but in time.

He will be, perhaps, the Ukrainian equivalent of Turkey's Ataturk, who instituted a republic on the foundation of preserving the past. Istanbul is now a tourist attraction for millions of visitors from all over the world because of it. It can happen here.

The generation that witnessed the Holocaust and Holodomor is fast disappearing, so first-hand accounts of these tragic stories will be lost if they are not told, collected and preserved now, and if we do not have ways to remember them. We need to be the voices of the dead, a community of memory.

We need our memorials not only to celebrate our heroes and heroines, but also to remember the dark moments in our history, to remember the losses, the killing of the spirit. Scholars remind us time and again that if we don't remember our history, we are doomed to repeat it.

Uncovering the secrets and lies of the past is difficult, but it can be a positive first step toward the future. It can be part and parcel of plans for social action, economic development, and social change, in Ukraine as elsewhere. In time, all these goals will converge.

Istanbul is a great contemporary example of such convergence. Ukraine will one day use its history to illuminate a vibrant present. It will become, like Istanbul, a destination for honoring the past and looking with hope toward the future. History and hope.

In time, Ukraine, in time.

— Fran Cary

**BRAVO!**  
**WELL DONE!**  
**МОЛОДЕЦЬ!**  
👍  
**THANKS!**  
**СПАСИБО!**  
**ДЯКУЮ!**

*photos from Frank Kersting*



Special thanks and loud applause to **Dr. Valeriy Gontarenko** (above, gesturing) for his fact-filled guided tour of Kiev, along with his interesting personal perspectives on the many wonderful sites of his beautiful and historic native city.

Also, major kudos to **Dr. Oleksander Gonta** (left, with papers) for his informative and insightful tour of the Babi Yar area, which gave us such pause for reflection.

Thank you also to Country Director Douglass Teschner (above, left) for joining us on the tour and adding to the spirit of camaraderie!

**NEXT MEETING: SEPT 4-5**  
**Spend Labor Day weekend**  
**with us in ODESSA!**



**Mark your calendar ...**  
**and stay tuned for details!**



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### The SNAC Spring Meeting / Weekend in Kiev ...

... included great extracurricular activities, good company and good cheer! (1, and pg 1) We saw “Highlights of Kiev” with Dr. Valeriy as tour guide (2), with a walk-through of his historic boyhood neighborhood, parks, monuments, churches—and leading up to the House of Chimeras *a.k.a.* where the politicians hang out. (Note the interesting thematic decorative features, pix 3,4.) Dr Sasha led us through the Babi Yar area, still haunted by the souls and memories of so many murdered people. (5,6.) In the evening, a whirlimagig-table full of delicious Chinese food (7) presented the opportunity for discussion of the day. Sunday was the day for sightseeing on one’s own (8), or a group walk through Pirohova Cultural Park to see the extensive grounds and examples of traditional Ukrainian structures and regional lifestyles (9,10).



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