

## **Did I really make a difference?**

On a flight recently from NYC to NC, I sat next to a young lady who was on her cell phone, chatting away in Ukrainian, having a great time. Then, the next call she made was in GOOD English and she finally hung up and turned off the cell when asked to by the flight attendant.

“Hello,” she said.

I greeted her, and asked where you from are in Ukraine?

“Wow how did you know?”

“Well,” I said, “you have been shouting in my ear on your cell phone, for the past 15 minutes.” and laughed.

“I am from Kiev. I am here in NYC working as an au pair.”

“Have you got nice family?”

“Yes they are very nice and I look after 2 small children. I am going to visit a friend in NC.”

“Your English is very good.” I said,

“Thank you. I had this very good teacher- a Peace Corps Volunteer. Do you know about the Peace Corps?”

“Well, yes.” I said.

“They helped us so much and we all love the Volunteers. I and my friends wouldn’t have gotten where we have without them.”

She was so happy to tell me and went on about a lot of different topics.

About half way to NC she said, “How did you learn Ukrainian / Russian?”

“Well I was in Peace Corps in Ukraine.”

I thought she would explode.

She hugged me and was so happy.

I spoke in my poor Ukrainian and she thought I had been very brave to have gone, taught, lived and returned here, at ‘my age’ as she put it. See, I was one of those golden Volunteers.

She asked advice about several things in the USA and chatted freely the entire way home.

She had been to University but there were no jobs to be had there so she got a special visa and came to this job for one year.

Oxanna had done well and will go home and make something of her life, this was a chance meeting and I was delighted to have spent the flight in her presence.

On landing she gave another hug and said,

“If it wasn’t for Peace Corps I wouldn’t be here now.”

“Thank you.”

One never knows if one is really making a difference. It is times like this that shows just what impact we all have, in so many different ways through those that we live , share and work with in many distant lands,

Yes it may be the toughest job one will ever love, but it was well worth it.

Thanks for the experience and the chance to encourage, care and share.

Felicity Gatchell

UKRAINE 1999-2001

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