

3-16-2011

## Better Angels of Our Nature

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news\\_rls](https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls)

---

### Recommended Citation

"Better Angels of Our Nature" (2011). *News Releases*. 969.  
[https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news\\_rls/969](https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/969)

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Marketing and Communications at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in News Releases by an authorized administrator of eCommons. For more information, please contact [frice1@udayton.edu](mailto:frice1@udayton.edu), [mschlangen1@udayton.edu](mailto:mschlangen1@udayton.edu).

# University of Dayton, Ohio (url: <http://www.udayton.edu/index.php>)



## Better Angels of Our Nature

03.16.2011 | Service and Giving

*The following are remarks from former Ohio Governor Bob Taft at The Ohio State University's Peace Corps anniversary commemorative salute, March 1, 2011. Gov. Taft is a distinguished research associate in the University of Dayton's School of Education and Allied Professions.*

The Peace Corps was only two years old when I signed up. President John F. Kennedy, who had inspired me and many other volunteers, was still living at the time.

As a newly elected Republican Congressman, my father wasn't exactly thrilled I was enrolling in a program created by a Democratic President — although his view changed a year later when he and my mother visited me at my school and were greeted with great excitement by my students.

I served in a village in Tanzania, 20 miles south of Lake Victoria. I was one of six teachers running a seventh- through eighth-grade boarding school. I taught English, math, geography and art and coached the girls' basketball team.

For me, the Peace Corps was the experience of a lifetime. I developed a lifelong interest in education, which carried over into my years as governor. And my Peace Corps experience is certainly one reason I am enjoying teaching at the University of Dayton.

Living in Tanzania, I learned about a very different part of the world where most people lived on one dollar a day and where only one out of every five eighth-graders had the chance to go on to high school, much less college.

I experienced the hospitality of peoples who had little by way of worldly possessions. One of my students invited me to visit his home, which was accessible only on foot or by bicycle. It was a circle of huts with thatched roofs, and of course they insisted I sleep in the only bed they owned. As I was leaving, they presented me with a live chicken — for them, a significant gift. I wasn't prepared with a gift of my own, so I parted with the only item of value I had brought with me, my Swiss army knife. And you can imagine, it was quite an experience riding my bike back to school with a live chicken squawking in its cage tied on right behind my seat.

Living in a poor African country under one-party rule also helped me appreciate all we take for granted in the U.S., not just our standard of living, but also our vibrant democracy and our fundamental freedoms of speech and religion, press and assembly.

The experience also taught me that we in this country have a responsibility to respond to the needs of people elsewhere, whenever and wherever we can.

The Peace Corps has truly stood the test of time. It is all about people to people, creating opportunities for Americans to serve and learn and grow — and just as important, giving people around the world an authentic, face-to-face view of what we are really like, in contrast to the stereotypes purveyed by movies and TV shows.

Although even back then, before cell phones and the Internet, it was remarkable how fast culture traveled. We had a school dance one evening, and I was amazed to see the students doing "the Twist," the dance that had taken the U.S. by storm not long before.

In concluding, I would like to observe that we live in a state and a country where most people are caring, giving and hopeful. Those are the character traits I have encountered among so many students at Ohio State and the University of Dayton, and also among men and women all across our state. And those are the personal qualities the Peace Corps communicates to the world. The Peace Corps embodies and expresses the better angels of our nature. In a world still wracked by violence and upheaval, we should rejoice that the Peace Corps is going strong in its 50th year.

**For more information, contact Cameron Fullam, assistant director of media relations, at 937-229-3256 or [fullam@udayton.edu](mailto:fullam@udayton.edu).**