



**Rule of Law Venture Buoy's Global Adventure**

Former Peace Corps Volunteers Turn World Service  
Into Thriving Business

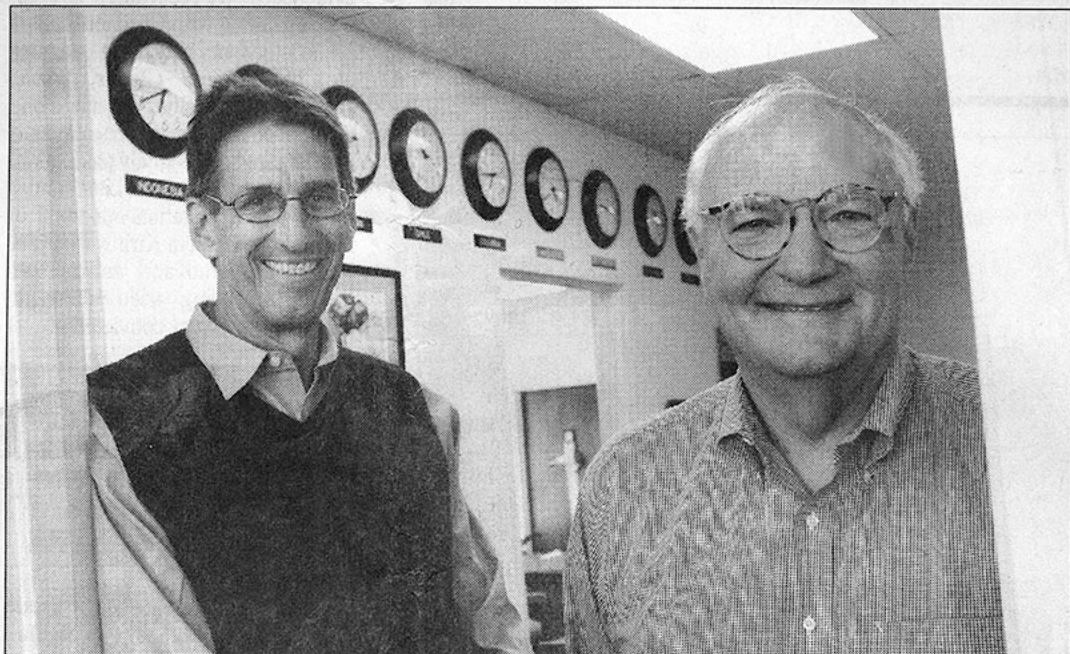
San Francisco Daily Journal

July 21, 2008  
VOL 114 NO. 138

## Rule of Law Venture Buoys Pair's Global Adventures

### Former Peace Corps Volunteers Turn World Service Into Thriving Business

By **Amelia Hansen**  
Daily Journal Staff Writer



S. TODD ROGERS / Daily Journal

"The Peace Corps changes your life. Whether you become involved with rule of law, health, housing. Somehow the experience sticks with you," said Bob Page, left, who started international justice administration firm DPK Consulting with Bill Davis, whom he met on a Peace Corps assignment in South America.

The American Bar Association's Rule of Law Initiative, for instance, has more than 400 staffers and volunteers working in more than 40 countries.

As legions of legal professionals are lining up to do this kind of work for free, DPK has become one in a handful of private firms to turn international judicial consulting into a profitable business — to the tune of \$16 million a year.

With heavy hitters such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and The World Bank as their primary clients, Davis and Page have no shortage of work. The firm has an international staff of 130 — plus local experts hired for specific jobs — working on projects in more than 20 nations. They have secured long-term contracts in

several places, including Macedonia, the West Bank and Gaza and Kyrgyzstan.

Their achievements have included everything from setting up an automated notary system in the West Bank city of Ramallah to rebuilding courthouses in Quito, Ecuador, to assessing the needs of judges in Nairobi, Kenya.

But the success of a firm like DPK points to a tension that has emerged between for-profit and nonprofit rule of law groups.

Nonprofits and individuals who have volunteered in the field point out that they are more able to work free of government influence.

Elizabeth Andersen, executive director of the American Society of International Law in Washington, D.C., said organizations like the ABA prefer to receive govern-

ment funding through grants or "cooperative agreements." Private firms, on the other hand, are willing to accept funding in the form of contracts — a more restrictive legal arrangement that allows the government to direct the work quite closely, Andersen said.

That can create a conflict, she said, when legal groups are trying to promote democracy and judicial independence in developing countries.

"Nonprofit organizations have argued — convincingly, I think — that in order to do so effectively, they need to be perceived themselves as independent of the U.S. government," Andersen said.

Davis said there is no evidence that non-governmental organizations have any better record doing

SAN FRANCISCO — Bob Page road into San Francisco on a motorcycle he bought in Panama.

Bill Davis, leaving behind a small town in New Mexico, arrived in the family car.

The two men, one from Massachusetts and one from Kentucky, first crossed paths as Peace Corps volunteers in South America in the late 1960s.

Years later, with established careers in judicial administration, they both ended up in California. Davis' accomplishments included serving as chief administrative officer for the 9<sup>th</sup> U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals; both he and Page worked at the California Administrative Office of the Courts.

But they continued to share a deeper bond: An expansive world view and commitment to service.

In 1993, Davis and Page founded DPK Consulting, an international justice administration firm.

"The Peace Corps changes your life," said Page. "Whether you become involved with rule of law, health, housing. Somehow the experience sticks with you."

Certainly, international rule of law work has struck a chord among many free spirits with legal skills.

Over the last four decades it has become increasingly popular for judges, lawyers and law school professors to participate in legal assistance programs with courts around the world.

# Partners Succeed in Rule of Law Niche

Continued from page 1

what DPK does.

"I am fully cognizant that I am working on behalf of my government," Davis said. "It has never been my experience that anything negative has resulted because of that."

A potential downside for organizations that rely on volunteers, as many nonprofit agents do, is that their workers are likely to work short stints.

Rick Messick, co-director of the World Bank's law and justice group in Washington, D.C., said Davis and Page's extensive experience gives them a "tremendous advantage" in the field.

"They're some of the few people working in this area that have institutional memory," said Messick, who has referred the firm to multiple clients. "They have developed real in-house expertise."

DPK has also developed a reputation for working well within other cultures.

Gladys Alvarez, a retired appellate justice from Argentina, has worked with the firm on numerous projects.

"DPK has been able to work successfully in Latin America because it has not sought to impose any models," she wrote in an e-mail. "Rather it has worked with Latin professionals to identify appropriate responses to the needs of the situation."

Alvarez first met Davis on a cruise on the Tigre River in Peru. She and two other judges talked at length with Davis about developing an alternative dispute resolution program for the region. Davis sketched out his ideas on a napkin that Alvarez still keeps.

"We accomplished every one of the items on the napkin," she wrote.

## Globetrotters

Cross-cultural understanding was not necessarily something Davis learned at home.

Son of a Kentucky coal miner, Davis was the second person in the state to sign up for the Peace Corps.

"I didn't tell a soul after I made my application," said Davis, 65.

But word got out soon enough. Davis was assigned to Chile, where he learned Spanish and developed a passion for the culture. It's also where he met his wife, Connee,

and business partner, Page, fellow Corps volunteers.

"You are never who you once were," Davis said of his experience.

Davis returned to the states and graduated from University of Kentucky Law School in 1972. With the dream of being a "benevolent dictator in a small town," he set up a law practice in Truth or Consequences, New Mexico. Six months of handling divorces and probates, however, proved to be more of a nightmare.

"I thought, 'If this is the rest of my life, I will die,'" Davis said.

He packed up his family and headed for San Francisco.

In the 30-plus years since then, Davis has held a number of high-level judicial administrative positions that have served as a foundation for his work at DPK.

## Administrating for Justice

From 1981 to 1986, for example, he served as chief administrative officer of the 9th Circuit. Under the charge of then-Chief Judge James R. Browning, Davis developed a proposal for decentralizing the management of funds appropriated for federal courts. That plan was ultimately adopted by the U.S. Judicial Conference.

As director of California's Administrative Office of the Courts, from 1987 to 1991, Davis spearheaded the largest statewide family dispute resolution program in the country and developed a criminal defense program for the appellate courts.

Davis' resume also includes a stint in Israel, where he served as director of the Bahai'i World Center. Davis and his wife are followers of Bahai'i, a 19th Century Persian religion that emphasizes the spiritual oneness of humanity. Page links Davis' work to his faith.

"Bill is interested in promoting peaceful resolutions in the world," said Page. "I have more of the entrepreneurial spirit."

Whatever their ambitions, the two appear to have complementary talents.

A Boston-area native, Page studied architecture and urban planning at Dartmouth College. Later, he earned a master's degree in regional planning from the University of North Carolina and public administration from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.

In the course of his career, he has taken senior positions at the

U.S. District Court in the Southern District of New York and the City of New York Department of Sanitation.

Page, a bachelor until just a few years ago, admits he's a "restless guy."

"This is the only job I have been able to hold down," the 63-year-old said smiling.

Like Davis, Page became involved in international rule of law work because of his connection to Latin America. As the two were called on to give talks and visit foreign judiciaries — often at the request of the U.S. State Department — Page's entrepreneurial spirit kicked in.

"I thought maybe Bill and I can market our own services," he said.

The two started DPK in the bedroom of Page's San Francisco apartment.

Also fluent in Spanish, Page has directed projects in rule of law and open government throughout Latin America as well as in Jordan, Macedonia, and the West Bank and Gaza.

In Ecuador, for example, he supervised a project to improve the operation of trial courts by redesigning and rebuilding the physical structures.

"Each judge was his or her own universe," Page said, describing the previous design of the courts. Building courthouses with chambers for multiple judges improved efficiency; building courtrooms with partitions separating judges from attorneys improved judicial integrity, Page said.

The firm's current projects include a two-year plan to improve efficiency and combat corruption in the judiciary of Kyrgyzstan. While Page already visited the country once — and a local team has been assembled — the judges are wondering when he's going to return.

But Page isn't as footloose and fancy free as he was in his younger days: he and his wife have an 18-month-old son, Nathaniel.

Nevertheless, DPK remains a way for him and Davis to stay connected to their personal and professional passions.

"I do think for anyone who has been in the Peace Corps there's a longing to re-tie to that experience," said Page. "We're just fortunate that we've been able to tie it all together."

[amelia\\_hansen@dailyjournal.com](mailto:amelia_hansen@dailyjournal.com)