



Name: Andrew Cote

Year of Graduation: 1997

All Degrees received: BA

All Awards/ Honors received:

SPELT Fellowship to Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1998, awarded by The Open Society Foundation. Taught English in Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina, for one year.

Fulbright Award. Received Fulbright in TEFL and taught for one year in The Republic of Moldova, Eastern Europe, 2003-2004. (Received Fulbright at age 31, more than two decades younger than the age of the average Fulbright recipient).

Why did you decide to attend the Friends World Program? How was the program different than others?

I wanted to be able to do graduate level type work at the undergraduate level. I did not want to be spoon fed textbooks to regurgitate verbatim later. I wanted a college that would encourage and assist me in finding and enhancing my own rhythm, abilities, and talents. I did not merely wish to process information, I wanted to learn how to apply what I learned and learn how to effectively seek out information and make a positive difference in the world. Also, I was a high-school drop-out, non-traditional, unconventional young man. I really had no better option than FWC, which would allow me to make (and learn from) my own mistakes while acquiring a lifelong education that would not end when the semester did.

What was your area of focus while in the program?

While in the program my area of focus was Japanese Literature and Japanese Martial Arts. I am still heavily involved in both. I now teach an Asian Literature course at the college level, and I still practice aikido as I did six days a week, eight hours a day, during my four year stint in Kyoto's FWC EAC. I still practice with my Japanese Master and my peers at least twice a year, either in Kyoto or when they make their annual martial arts expeditions to Mexico and Cuba. By living in Kyoto on my own, having to fend for myself with the gentle guidance of Barbara Stein and her team at FWC EAC, I learned self-reliance and an ability to adapt to any situation and make the most of it.

What are you currently doing (professionally)?

Currently I am a full-time Assistant Professor of English as a Second Language at Housatonic Community College in Bridgeport, Connecticut. This is an inner-city community college in a city with one of the highest per capita murder rates in the country, and an immigrant population of about 48%.

I am also a beekeeper, and help run a small family beekeeping business.

www.normsotherhoney.com

What additional things have you done in the past that you think readers may find interesting?

I have just returned from a summer in Iraq, where, under the auspices of the U.S. State Department, I traveled the country teaching beekeeping skills to Iraqis, particularly the Kurdish population.

www.wanderingbuddhist.com

Two years after leaving FWC, I was a writer for an educational web page called The Odyssey. Our mission was to promote global awareness among youth and involve them in activities to create positive change in the world. Our major project, the World Trek, began in January of 1999 and took students on an otherwise impossible field trip - a two-year Trek around the world. More than 1300 classes in over 80 countries are traveling the world via The Odyssey.

www.worldtrek.org And with them, I traveled through Turkey, India, and Nepal. In India I was granted private audiences with both HH the Dalai Lama and HH the Karmapa.

How have you been able to apply what you learned at Friends World to what you currently do?

Everything. I have learned critical thinking skills, all manners of problem solving techniques, how to identify and analyze situations and formulate responses based on experiential learning techniques. Through FWC I became even more self reliant and confident, learned to understand and appreciate all manners of learning, and overall, simply opened and stretched my mind further than I would have imagined possible.

Is there any additional information that you would like to share that you think would be beneficial to readers?

I was a high school dropout. For over a year I lived on the streets not knowing more than the crows what I would have for my next meal or where I would sleep for the night. After gallivanting literally around the world tinkering with mundane and pointless jobs, I finally recognized that a formal education is worth pursuing. This all through the firm but kind and extraordinarily patient guidance of Barbara Stein and FWC. Once I was armed with my BA, getting my MA was a breeze. All that was expected of us was to read, remember, and write. FWC had provided me with a much richer, more stimulating, and challenging learning environment, one which continues to benefit me today in all of my endeavors, academic and otherwise. I am one of very few, if there are any other, Fulbright Scholars who never finished high school. The point is: FWC and Barbara saw something in me, helped me to cultivate it, and set me on my path. I have been able, in my own small way, to give back to a world that has given so much to me. I continue to travel, to teach, and to learn. Learning is a lifelong adventure, and FWC helped me to take some of the biggest and most important steps.