

About the BOOK

Title: Vipers and Geckos - Defining Friend, Foe, and Truth in an Alien Land

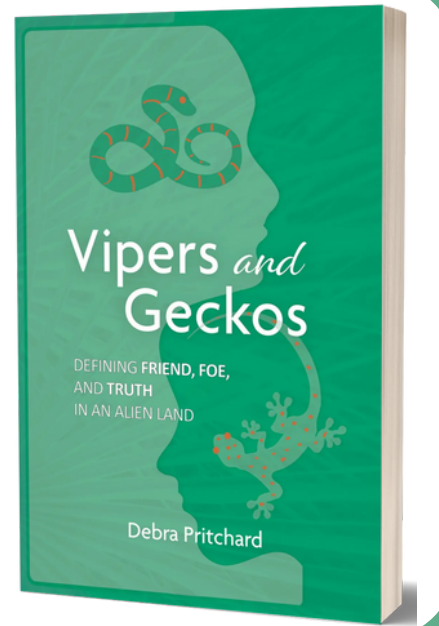
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“Anyone wanting a glimpse of trying to accommodate two cultures will enjoy Vipers and Geckos.”

Aaron Duff, pilot
and bicultural child
of the Philippines and
U.S.

“Those who have served in the Peace Corps will recognize and relive their ups and downs, frustrations, and rewards through Deb’s experiences.”

Jim Criste,
US Peace Corps
Country Director, Costa
Rica, 2002-2004

Community work is a tough challenge, especially when doing this on foreign soil.

Motives are questioned. Sincerity is doubted. But Debra survived all these challenges and was able to show that kindness and goodness rubbed off on others she touched.

Bobby L. Castro, founder
Palawan Group of
Companies

“Vipers and Geckos” is a captivating memoir of cultural adaptation and personal transformation. Deb finds herself at a crossroads after a life-altering divorce. She takes a daring leap into her childhood dream of joining the Peace Corps to serve in a foreign country. She is assigned to the enchanting, yet challenging culture of mythical Palawan.

The path she treads is strewn with trials - superstitions, religious dogma, cultural conflict, and allegorical Vipers that test her resolve. As Deb navigates these trials, she seeks allies in the form of friendly Geckos, hoping they might save her from failure.

This memoir is more than just a recounting of Deb’s experiences. It’s an invitation to readers standing at life’s crossroads to take their own leap into the unknown. It’s a call to emerge with a deeper understanding of the world’s diverse cultures, and to sow the seeds for a less polarized world. Are you ready to embark on this transformative journey?

Leap into the Unknown

Learn other Cultures to Understand

Empower Yourself and Embrace Change

LIVE and ACT with Empathy

About the Author

Debra Pritchard, survivor of cultural shocks, brings you ‘Vipers and Geckos – Defining Friend, Foe, and Truth in an Alien Land.’

Deb, a native Californian and risk-taker, has lived a life of adventure and transformation. From being the first woman promoted to management at Shell Chemical, to taking a hiatus to raise her two daughters, to starting her own enterprise, Deb’s journey held a variety of experiences..



Returning post-career and post-carer to academia, she earned degrees in Special Education and Educational Therapy, only to join the Peace Corps at 59. Her assignment? Special Education on the remote island of Palawan in the Philippines. There, she initiated major community projects, immersing herself (and making many faux pas) in the local culture for a decade.

With a career spanning marketing, special education, international consulting, and now authorship, Deb’s experiences are as diverse as they are rich. Her return from Palawan in 2020, coinciding with the pandemic lockdown, saw her settle in Avila Beach. Today, she can be found strolling Olde Port Beach with her loyal hound, Twix, or biking along the scenic coastal cliffs.

Her book, ‘Vipers and Geckos’ shows that old dogs CAN learn new tricks – and change into dogs with entirely new world views.

Sample Topics

The idea of taking a giant leap when you are at a Crossroads in Life. What made you leap?

Why the Philippines? Did your experience change your presumptions?

The acceptance of a foreigner into a new culture. Do you really think you were accepted?

Being a Savior vs. Listening to what is wanted. What’s wrong with trying to help others with their problems?

Are you relieved to be back home? How has the word “home” changed for you?

What’s the difference between a tourist and a traveler? Why are you so passionate about that?

How did living there for 10 years change you?

Book Excerpt

Chapter One

Adventure - Romance - Life-Changing Escapades!

It was time. My palm's lifeline looked shorter, and those familial ties that bind had been ripped away with obvious scars. The big door was closed, but that window was open, beckoning me. I was free in the Joplin definition - Janis, not Al. Nothing left to lose.

Failure had led me here and while others judged me and might be happy to see me fail again, I needed to get back to Janis' feeling good, without the drugs. I returned full circle to the possibility of a childhood dream. Why not? It was time to leap.

The significance of partying with the Silicon Valley millennials hit me on my long, slightly inebriated drive home. My conundrum was how I could leave behind this life that I'd built, but now was crumbling. Visions of my daughters laced my foggy brain as I continued driving, cautious and alert, up a fairly deserted El Camino Real toward home.

Where I'd had a family for 19 years in an affluent part of the San Francisco Bay Area, I now had a lovely home on the Peninsula, and lived alone, without even a pet, save the raccoons which came nightly to feast on my koi in my beloved pond in the back.

Craving that water feature since my childhood had proved less ideal in reality than my reverie and was the scene of mayhem and blood - for the koi I mean - I didn't kill the raccoons but wanted to.

The divorce had rocked my life and the ensuing anger from my daughters was crumbling even that relationship which I thought unassailable. My insecurities and life newly focused on myself were causing a widening rift, yet I couldn't imagine how significant it would become. Wasn't the bond between mother and child durable and forever?

That night, these thoughts splashed in the background of the overarching message from the group of people I'd just met, those who had taken that leap of faith in their youth to serve for Peace in a far-off land.

The bright, happy faces around the table cheered me on over our Thai sticky rice dessert.

"How did you decide? Why did you sign up?" I asked no one in particular as I looked down the long table.

Heard on the Street (well, Online)

Chatter about *Vipers and Geckos*

“Like sitting over a glass of wine (or two) and hearing your tales as they occurred. What an adventure I don’t have that kind of bravery. However in a strange way your book may have jump started my new reality.”

“First, I must tell you that it is an absolute privilege to be reading your memoir. I am nearing the end of Chapter 6 and have been mesmerized from page one. Your prose is so finely wrought that it is a wonder to me that your career has not been in the writing/editorial field. Additionally, your deep intelligence, exceptionally keen observations, and profound reflections give the book terrific texture, luster, and tremendous food for thought. I’m a grateful reader. “

“Honestly your book is absolutely riveting and I feel like I’m with you. Your honesty and descriptions are beautiful and heart wrenching.”

“How did you do it? Living in a world so foreign to where you grew up, lacking every convenience, and faced with people who need so much.”

“I am loving it. Learning a lot about life in the Philippines, culture and values. I feel like I am there with you as I read it.”

“I’m on my way back to Puerto and reading this. Chapter one is gripping. I can’t stop reading even if swaying back and forth in the van. I felt if Debra can plunge into an adventure at 59 wow! I have better chances as I am only 50!”

“Aside from all the manuscripts submitted by literary agents, [the magazine] used to receive up to 36,000 manuscripts annually, and every last one of them was read by myself, my staff, or freelance readers. I worked very long hours and even when finally back home, continued to read long into the night, every night. Finding gems was a rarity, but that search was a powerfully driving force and brought exquisite joy when they emerged from the piles.

Truth be told, your memoir is one such gem. It works on so many levels: a tale of a highly unusual experience; pitch-perfect prose; a portrait of a unique and little-known culture; the dissonance between expectation and reality; a “cast” of highly colorful characters; and your frank and unsparing self-reflections. It is informative, it is entertaining, it is harrowing, it is revelatory.”

“Your description brought back so many memories—I can almost smell the smells of home and streets, hear the sounds, and feel that humid exhausting heat. You’ve inspired me.”