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"The people didn't have a lot of material wealth, but they did have a lot of old-fashioned spirit," he said. They made $12 to $20 a month from the government, not enough to buy a decent meal or even cheap clothes, Gunderson said. It was not uncommon for the average Cuban to spend three or four hours a day in a store doing menial labor in order to get food. Gunderson said that he thought it was unfair that the United States had so much waste, including food, where "they were burning it." He said that there was a sense of being unappreciated for the sacrifices made by the Cuban people.

"We stopped at a farmer's market and we saw a guy with a stall whose job was to refill what we call disposable plastic light bulbs," Gunderson recalled. "Here you buy a light and when it burns out, you throw it away, and we saw a lot of that."

"They joked about having problems with the political differences between the two countries. They said that they had found Cubans who were open and normal in Cuba, whereas in the United States, some of the Cubans were open to Cuba, but others were not," Gunderson said. "The contrast was there. What we asked, they didn't seem to answer, and some of them would tell us that if they had family living in America, they would move there."

Dean Gunderson, first from the left, together with other students and faculty from SIUE while in Cuba.

Gunderson said that he was most surprised by how open Matanzas, a little town northwest of Havana, was. "There wasn't a huge number that said, 'We don't believe it would be right to simply discontinue the service.' They wanted to communicate. People were very friendly and enough that we could get by and communicate. That service was never discontinued and today it has become an essential service for the village."

In January, the Village Board adopted new regulations which state that yard waste must be set out by the second Tuesday of each month, while the new rule says, "Will not collect yard waste at a central location for disposal."

Committee member Mary Ann Smith believes that this is part of a trend where people are no longer concerned with yard waste collection. Gunderson said the village doesn't have the facilities to offer a service like this. "I don't think we should do away with it altogether," Smith said. "It's a service that the people need."

Now that he's completed a marathon on every continent, he said, "I'm not sure what I'll do with the knowledge he earned from this experience, but it's interesting to see in a few years. I'm not exactly sure what I'll do with the knowledge. It's been interesting to see what things I might do in the future that we never thought of."

"Some of the sections were as slippery as could be," David said. "Getting to Antarctica proved to be as much of a journey as the marathon itself. That service was never discontinued and today it has become an essential service for the village."

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