

**Cindy Annchild Oral History Interview**  
Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** Cindy Annchild  
**Interviewer:** Ernest Zaremba  
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**Biographical Note**

Cindy Annchild served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Iran from 1968 to 1972 as an English teacher.

**Access**

Open.

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Oral History Interview

with

Cindy Annchild

August 27, 2004  
Ann Arbor, Michigan

By Ernest Zaremba

Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection  
John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum

ZAREMBA: [00:00:00] It's August 27, 2004. She was a Peace Corps volunteer in Iran as a?

ANNCHILD: [00:00:08] High school English teacher in a girls school in Arvada, Iran. And I, I was in Iran from 1968 to 1972, plus a few months because I worked, for training.

ZAREMBA: [00:00:30] Okay. And now let's hear about the past, by having you go back to the past, to the year before you joined the Peace Corps. What was going on in your life? What started the process that ended up with you joining the Peace Corps?

ANNCHILD: [00:00:44] I was a senior in college. It was the height, it was 1967. It was the height of the Vietnam War and the protest against the Vietnam War. We were. I joined the Peace Corps in 1968. So in 1967, I was a senior in college at Wagner College in Staten Island, New York. It was

the height of the Vietnam War and the protest against the war. And there was a lot of turmoil and controversy. I was a sociology major. I was also trying to figure out what to do after I graduated from college. And my mentor, Dr. Kessler, my favorite all time professor. And so I discussed going in the Peace Corps with him, and I applied for the Peace Corps, and I was accepted to Ethiopia. And he kind of took me under his wing and said he thought Ethiopia would be a pretty tough country for a single woman, and he had been there and Heidi Selassie was still in power at that time.

ANNCHILD: [00:01:53] So I kind of got cold feet and backed out and enrolled in my graduate school. And the man that I was dating, um, joined the Peace, joined the Peace Corps. Enrolled in the Peace Corps. And I think he was going to India. And. At that time then he went in the training program. He was calling me, I was in New York, and then he called me one night and he said, you know, this would really be a lot better as a couple. And so I said, does that constitute a proposal? And he said, it does. And I said, okay, we'll go. And so we joined the Peace Corps together. We spent a lot of our honeymoon week waiting for the call to find out what country we were going to go to. Many, many couples in our group. You had to be a couple to go to Iran. They were not allowing single women to go to Iran at that point.

ANNCHILD: [00:02:52] And many of the men in our group were against the war in Vietnam and saw this as an honorable alternative. So there was a lot of anti-Vietnam feeling and it was a lot of stress about whether you're going to be drafted before you got into the Peace Corps. And if there was any glitch in the timing, could you be drafted in between? It was very stressful, that part of it.

ZAREMBA: [00:03:18] And so the Peace Corps called said that you were accepted to Iran as a couple?

ANNCHILD: [00:03:21] Yes, mm hmm. And so we got married in December. And I forget when we actually went to our, our Peace Corps training. It was in Brattleboro, Vermont.

ZAREMBA: [00:03:32] Before that, what was your reaction of your friends and family when they found out you were accepted in the Peace Corps and going to Iran?

ANNCHILD: [00:03:38] I think they thought we were a little nuts. A little adventurous, but also they were glad that Bruce, my then husband, was not going to go to Vietnam. My mother probably was really, she was kind of very tied into me. And she was probably a little bit nonplused that I was going half the way around the world. I used to tell people that I had to go halfway around the world to cut her apron strings. It's kind of a family joke.

ZAREMBA: [00:04:12] So where did you go for training?

ANNCHILD: [00:04:14] We went to Brattleboro, Vermont, and I was really excited about the training. For the first time, you know, I learned about things like T groups or even I don't even know what a T group is now. But I remember it was kind of a quasi, you know, therapy or feedback group and we were discussing things and dealing with conflict, and that was very exciting to me. And we had a person in our training whose name was Terry O'Donnell, and he was a hardcore ex-pat and he was an author. And he wrote, um, he had been writing about Iran and living in Iran for 20 years. And he was kind of a, you know, hard boiled kind of guy. And he was one of the key people that would tell us about what life as an expat was going to be.

ZAREMBA: [00:05:04] Was he an American expatriate?

ANNCHILD: [00:05:05] I don't know if he was American or British, to tell you the truth, but he had a, had a gimpy leg, and he always used to. One of the stories that stuck with me was that he said that he preferred being a cripple in Iran than in Europe. So maybe he was British. But anyway, because he said in, in Europe, people avert their eyes. They would look at his legs and then just quickly look away as if they hadn't seen him, but that in Persia people would stare and then kind of take it in and then just go about their business. And it was, he felt it was a much more kind of organic, direct way. And at the end of training, I

remember he said to me, he said, I admire something about you, Cindy. And I said, oh, what's that? And he said, you're afraid of everything, and you do it anyway. And I, you know, it's been 33 years, and I still remember that. It's kind of, it was an important thing for me to hear. And then later in Iran, we lived in Shiraz and we went through [inaudible].

ZAREMBA: [00:06:08] Now your training was for how long about?

ANNCHILD: [00:06:12] Three months, I think. And some of the, the people who became most influential after I got to Iran were some of the staff who trained, trained us. At that point, they were not having in-country training. We did all our training at Brattleboro, Vermont, and then we flew.

ZAREMBA: [00:06:30] What was the typical day of training like in Vermont?

ANNCHILD: [00:06:33] Oh, well, I can't remember. And the reason I can't remember, Ernie, is because, um, I subsequently worked on two other trainings for the Peace Corps, and they sort of got more involved on my own, being staff and training than I had. I just remember it being really hard and they taught us to speak, but not to read and write. In those days they did not, uh, we were illiterate. We could speak fairly well, but we, they weren't attempting to teach us. Now, I believe they do.

ZAREMBA: [00:07:07] What's, your mention, how many hours a day was language training?

ANNCHILD: [00:07:12] Oh, I remember it was a lot. I remember, I think they said we had 300 hours of training at the time it was over.

ZAREMBA: [00:07:21] Was there any physical like some, some training groups got into the whole physical thing with ropes and all that?

ANNCHILD: [00:07:26] No, no. We didn't do, our training was not physical. It was like classroom and emotional. That was what I remember. Classroom

and emotional. And the Iranian men who were teachers. I think we even had two women maybe who were teachers, were very, uh. They were very kind and they made you want to get to know other Iranians. So they were a very good introduction to Iranians' temperament.

ZAREMBA: [00:07:54] And about how large was your group?

ANNCHILD: [00:08:00] Uh, maybe 20 couples. Half of them left maybe.

ZAREMBA: [00:08:04] It was all couples.

ANNCHILD: [00:08:05] Yes, I believe it was all couples.

ZAREMBA: [00:08:07] So no single men. No single women, you explained earlier. But no single men either?

ANNCHILD: [00:08:12] I don't think so. No, it was all couples. And that's what later I became very interested in the cross-cultural aspects of it. I mean, as I mentioned, I was a sociology major, so this really, I felt tied in to what I was interested in. I just began to see the whole world is just little subcultures and that continued on. You know, my job now, dyslexics are really a subculture and the way they learn is really just like a little pocket of how people are. So.

ZAREMBA: [00:08:41] What's fascinating is I've never heard of any other program that was all couples. Now, did that spread to other Peace Corps programs in Iran or just do you think it was that your, were you unique, do you think your group in that way or?

ANNCHILD: [00:08:55] I have no idea.

ZAREMBA: [00:08:57] How about other Iranian volunteers, were they? Peace Corps volunteers. I'm sure you must have met others over there. Were they mainly couples?

ANNCHILD: [00:09:05] Yeah, they were mainly couples. Definitely couples. I think there was one. I mean, I think there was a redheaded man named Kerry. Maybe he didn't have a wife but.

ZAREMBA: [00:09:15] Anything else? Any insights, again, into why that would be for Iran?

ANNCHILD: [00:09:22] No, I don't really know why that, why that was. I just, I mean, I remember some. I remember the Mantaucos story and Nick, for instance, they were Italian and they had gotten their wedding pictures stolen from their car when they got married. You know, we were all kind of young and we all had wedding stories to tell. It was sort of like The Newlywed Game. And none of us were, you know, experienced at being married or experienced at life really. It was a lot of fresh college graduates who were mostly, you know, couples out of college.

ZAREMBA: [00:09:54] Your guess is there were about 20 couples in training, something like that?

ANNCHILD: [00:09:57] I think so.

ZAREMBA: [00:09:59] Now were any deselected out in training that you remember?

ANNCHILD: [00:10:06] No, I know. But by the time we'd been there a year, half are gone.

ZAREMBA: [00:10:12] Any sense of why that might be?

ANNCHILD: [00:10:14] Well, that's why I got interested in the training program, actually. And my interest in that then became a kind of philosophical interest, which then I pursued for the next 20 years after I got out of Peace Corps, which was a kind of an esoteric interest in the critique philosophy who was. But because I would see these people leave and every one that left would say that this country, uh, is awful. You know, in stronger words than that. And they would always blame the country, you know, and I would, it always struck me like, but why was that?

Because, you know, millions of people live in this country. Yes, it is foreign to us. But, you know, what could be so terrible that you couldn't endure it for two years? You know, what? You know, what could be so awful that you couldn't endure for two years?

ANNCHILD: [00:11:06] So it occurred to me at the same time I was reading this esoteric philosophy that the difference between the people who stayed and the people who left were the people who stayed kind of took more responsibility for their own reactions and were more informed and chose to become more aware of their own reactions. And so then that was followed my own sort of interest. And then when I led the training, my training was the cross-cultural aspect. That's what I was doing. And they were all sort of exercises to make one become more aware. Like, what makes me angry? Okay, well, you know, it makes me angry that people don't hurry here because Iranians are generally kind of laid back and, you know, and maybe they don't get things done on deadlines.

ANNCHILD: [00:12:01] And your school, if you're in a school, maybe the teacher is going to tell you the test. The administration might say a test is one day and then the test is another day. You know, it just, people would become irate over these things, you know, like hurry. And it occurred, you know, I was trying to help people see that really it just was a situation. And the reaction was within them, and not to displace it like they are evil.

ZAREMBA: [00:12:31] Go back to your first training. Any particular anecdotes or memories come back from your first training?

ANNCHILD: [00:12:37] Just that one remark that I already mentioned, that was the pivotal thing for me.

ZAREMBA: [00:12:43] Now then, after training, did you go back home for a while before you went to Iran, as you remember it?

ANNCHILD: [00:12:51] You know, Ernie, I wrote my mother a letter every week, the whole entire period, all five years. And she saved all of them and she



Xeroxed them and she sent them all around the United States to her friends. It was like this round robin of Cindy's life in the Peace Corps. And I still have them all. But I'd have to go back and look at that, to get that information too. But then we left and we went to Tehran. I mean, we lived in. My real Peace Corps memories, I think, start from our village where we lived.

ZAREMBA: [00:13:21] So let's start first a little bit. Okay.

ANNCHILD: [00:13:23] Oh, we must have had some aspect of in-country training, because, I think we did, because I remember we had to take a bus trip. And so I was very nervous, you know. And we were, we were to dress very. We didn't wear the veil, but we wore headscarves and we had our wrist covered to our wrist bones and skirts that were below our ankle bone and covered shoes. That was the, you know, that was considered appropriate. So we're on this bus and it was 100 zillion degrees. And Bruce and I were getting on the bus and I remember we kind of sat in the front and it was hot. I thought I was going to die. And then we got to a stop or something and everybody was having ice cream. And I thought, ice cream, something familiar, something wonderful.

ANNCHILD: [00:14:20] And so I asked Bruce, you know, women, you weren't allowed to just march off and buy your own ice cream. So he said he would try to get us ice cream. Now, we had very limited language at this point, and he came back and he handed me the ice cream cone. And I had never been so happy. And I took a big lick and I thought I would just like puke because it was total rosewater. That's what they, it was like eating perfume. It was like eating cold perfume. And it was so terrible. And I just, I think I burst into tears. You know, I just wanted something familiar. And here was this thing that was like quasi familiar. And that's kind of was my, my feeling about a lot of things in Iran. They would look familiar, but they weren't.

ANNCHILD: [00:15:07] Or like car usage, for instance, you know, a car is a car. The starter, the key, you drive the car. Well, not in Iran because they tried to get as many people in the car as possible. So there were often like

six people in the front seat. There's somebody sitting on the left of the driver, and it's just like, it's like one of those commercials. How many people can you stuff in a Volkswagen, you know? But this is the car you're going everywhere in. And so it's like, this is a car, but it's not like a car that I know. Or busses, you know, pretty much all around in any part of the world is just like chickens. You're in there with the chickens and the hay and the goats and the. And it's like, okay, I have a ticket, I'm in the bus. But this is not like a bus that I'm familiar with.

ANNCHILD: [00:15:50] And so I. Oh, yes, we had to go to Azerbaijan, Bruce and I, our journey was to go to Azerbaijan, which is up by the Caspian Sea, and return in one piece. That was our, uh, that was our assignment.

ZAREMBA: [00:16:02] Was it a challenge that you had to get?

ANNCHILD: [00:16:03] Yes.

ZAREMBA: [00:16:03] And about how far away was it would you guess? How many hours would it take you?

ANNCHILD: [00:16:09] A lifetime. It took, I don't know. I think we were on the bus maybe 5 hours and maybe we had to change. And then we got to Azerbaijan. And then we were just, like, exhausted, just to like to be in the room. And then you were scared to go out and then you went out and then could you find your way back and everything? It was really like basic survival. And it was, I, yeah, I hadn't thought about that in a long time.

ZAREMBA: [00:16:35] So your task was maybe given a certain amount of money, get to Azerbaijan. Let's spend the night maybe?

ANNCHILD: [00:16:42] Spend the night and or two days even maybe, and then come back. Right. And so we were very proud that we made it back a lot. I mean, we weren't in any danger, but we felt everything was fine and we were trying out our Farsi for the first time, you know, without any instructors around. And not to try to. We were very, we'd been very, uh. It had been drilled into us that we shouldn't offend people,

you know, so we're trying to do everything right and not be offensive and. That was pretty intense. I remember just like sweating bullets, just like, I just tried to do it all right. And wondering if it was right or could we order food or you know.

ZAREMBA: [00:17:24] What, now, this was the bus stop that was the trip was so hot and with ice cream?

ANNCHILD: [00:17:31] Yes.

ZAREMBA: [00:17:31] And were there many people, did they have chickens and stuff on too?

ANNCHILD: [00:17:35] Yeah. I mean, this bus was, was very crowded and I was very conscious of being a, you know, a Western woman, was, you know.

ZAREMBA: [00:17:43] Were you the only Western woman on the bus?

ANNCHILD: [00:17:44] Yes. One of the things that really struck me was when I look at pictures of Iranians, I think I look just like they do. They have brown hair. I had brown hair at the time. You know, I have kind of olive skin. I have hazel eyes. I'm not like a Norwegian type. And so I thought, well, they won't even notice me. But they are a very homogeneous, or they were 30 years ago, a very homogeneous population. And so they really look alike. I mean, they know. They know that you're not one of them, whereas I wouldn't have thought they would know that. And it became really clear that I looked really different.

ZAREMBA: [00:18:25] On a bus how could you tell?

ANNCHILD: [00:18:26] Oh, everybody would just stare at you. And they, in those days they would say, hello mister, hello mister, hello mister. And so, you know, later we got a cat and named him mister because that's the word we heard the most. Hello mister. And then they would say to me, they'd say hello mister. They have no idea what, you know, mister is. And you got a lot of cat calls and little children goggling and ogling.

That kind of thing. But we had been moving as a group before. This was our first time moving out as a couple.

ZAREMBA: [00:18:59] And also, how was it on the bus? I mean, in some countries you hear about wild bus drivers and traffic problems.

ANNCHILD: [00:19:06] Yep, that's, yep. It was pretty, um. You just had to. The favorite thing they say there is *inshallah*. That means in the hands of God or God willing. So everything was *inshallah*. We're going to get there, *inshallah*. We're going to be alive, *inshallah*. And so, God willing, became a key thing. But it was very hot. I just remember it was hot. And you're so covered up, you know, it was just like ugh.

ZAREMBA: [00:19:31] Now all through training, you had to be covered up like that in public?

ANNCHILD: [00:19:35] In the country when there were, yeah. Not in class, not if we were having language class, because the Iranians who were our teachers were very Americanized.

ZAREMBA: [00:19:46] But if you went out in town?

ANNCHILD: [00:19:47] Into the street, into the bazaar or any, yeah, absolutely. You might go out and have. It's a kind of Mediterranean feel actually, you know in Iran it's you go out and you have cold yogurt, buttermilk kind of yogurt. And you might sit in a kind of vineyard type thing. I mean, it would have vines and maybe a dirt floor. So it was kind of cool against the hotness of the, of the outside baking practice. And if we ever went to anything like that, we'd be covered up.

ZAREMBA: [00:20:25] So the whole two years, you basically have to cover up. How about when you were teaching your class, did you?

ANNCHILD: [00:20:31] No, because I taught in a girls school. It was segregation of sexes in, um, in school, but not. I later lived in Saudi Arabia for two years as a teacher and one of the things the Peace Corps did for me was allow me to venture into Saudi Arabia. And I went there with kind

of what I call a Peace Corps mind, which is there's good here to be found. Let's find it. And Saudi Arabia really tested that. If you want to interview me about Saudi Arabia, I could do another interview. But their segregation is total. There are female bank machines, there are male bank machines. There's an iron partition in the bus and women are in the back, the men are in the front. There's, I mean, there are women travel agents for women going on trips there. You know, there are women photographers who photograph the bride. They are, you know, they are men to photograph, to photograph the groom. It's total. There's women's hospitals. There's men's hospitals. I mean, it is total.

ANNCHILD: [00:21:40] Iran was not like that at the time. The women were modest, but they were. They didn't have a special place to sit in the bus and nothing like Saudi Arabia.

ZAREMBA: [00:21:50] So women could sit in the front of the bus, for example?

ANNCHILD: [00:21:52] Yes, women could sit on, you were with your family, but it was not an oppression the way I experienced it in Saudi Arabia.

ZAREMBA: [00:22:03] Okay. So then about how long was your training in country, would you guess?

ANNCHILD: [00:22:10] I think we, I don't know, maybe had. I don't really know. Maybe several weeks. Six, four weeks maybe, two weeks, something. I remember we were three months in Vermont and then some period in Tehran.

ZAREMBA: [00:22:28] What stands out most about the one in Tehran is the little survival tips?

ANNCHILD: [00:22:32] That first little foray out. And that ice cream and the rose water. And the toilet. I think that was my first experience with a public toilet, which is your standard Middle East squat toilet with very, um. You know, they had, they have something called. I mean I don't know, I don't think toilet habits in countries are that essential but it was a shocker, you know. They don't use toilet paper, they use their left

hand. And they had this little bidet thing, which is a little water spout for it. You know, on your derriere, and then you use your hand to wipe yourself and then you pour the water. And so that's why you never eat with your left hand. Because your left hand is contaminated. So they, you know, they get often very grossed out by Americans who would travel in their country. And, you know, pick up a hot, you know, not a hot dog, what am I saying. Pick up a, anything, a piece of watermelon with their left hand, you know, and not understanding that we don't use our left hands the way they use their left hands. So that's.

ZAREMBA: [00:23:36] Now were you expected to use this toilet with those long dresses you're talking about?

ANNCHILD: [00:23:39] Yes. Uh huh.

ZAREMBA: [00:23:40] Didn't that make a mess or anything, was that fairly difficult?

ANNCHILD: [00:23:43] Well, it was fairly difficult to walk in because it was just like, the odor was, it was very odiferous. And, you know, and we all carry toilet paper, of course, because we, being good Americans. And so, you know, you had to make sure you had your toilet paper and your dress scooped up and those things. And you usually had diarrhea in the beginning. And, you know, I remember another time just really having to go to the bathroom really badly and being on a bus and just having to wait like hours. And I had really bad diarrhea. And you know how you get those stomach cramps and you just have to say, okay, I've just get through this somehow or another. And you did. But, you know, you really became inured to it after a while. You're just like, oh well.

ZAREMBA: [00:24:23] You were able to hold in that and you had diarrhea all that time?

ANNCHILD: [00:24:27] Yes. But I remember it. Um. So I think just your kind of basic survival, you know, toilet, eating, travel, that's, that's a shock from there.

ZAREMBA: [00:24:39] And then how did the assignment go to your site, was it given to you or did you pick it?

ANNCHILD: [00:24:44] No, it was given to us and I remember we went up on the bus. And it was very much like the first time we went, you know, it was like, okay, here we go. We're going off.

ZAREMBA: [00:24:58] And just the two of you?

ANNCHILD: [00:25:01] Yes. Yeah. We were in a town of about 20, I'd say 20,000 people. And it was, it was a beautiful town to be in because it was pure Persian. It was in between the two, it was in the Fars Province and Fars is what the word Farsi comes from, which is the language that they speak.

ZAREMBA: [00:25:25] Fars was north, east, west?

ANNCHILD: [00:25:27] Fars meaning Persian. And so it's sort of in the middle of Iran, very purely Iranian, because all around the edges you have, like Azerbaijan was near Russia and you had the Afghani border. And so all along the borders were tribal people. Excuse me, I dropped my glasses. All along the border. I don't know what that does to your taping.

ANNCHILD: [00:25:55] All along the border were multicultural influences. But in the heart of Iran was where we were, which was Abadeh. And it was a very, the language, the accent. They were very proud of. And I speak very limited Persian now. But then I was pretty good. And I remember we got tested at the end and we got a government rating, like a government employee. And I remember we got three point something, which I think was pretty good. And the man who tested us said, well, there's a debate in language among linguists, whether language is really correct grammar and syntax or whether language is communication. And so my husband spoke better, uh, syntax. But he said, you can't communicate. And so I, I did, I, I would say the wrong verb tense, but I'd just merrily go along and I have a good ability to communicate. And I felt really good about that.

ZAREMBA: [00:27:01] And I'm going back to the bus trip to where you were assigned. Any reactions? Your first impression of the town you were in? Well, Persian, you said that. And what about the school you were assigned to? Now, were you both at the same school?

ANNCHILD: [00:27:18] No, no. He would have been in the boys school. So totally different.

ZAREMBA: [00:27:21] Different part of town?

ANNCHILD: [00:27:22] Different part of town. Not nearby. I liked our house. It was kind of modern. And I said, you know, I felt that we were. I think they called our allowance a subsistence allowance. But I felt that we got a high-class allowance. We definitely lived better than, uh, we lived like professionals. We lived like the teachers and the doctors and the people in that town. We certainly did not live like the blue-collar workers of that town. And so that meant we had a brick house. It had no heat. Abadeh has certain mountains, so it got cold and we even had snow twice in the winter. I wore a wool skirt in the winter and I thought they were long because they were like about here, because miniskirts were really in when I, and they came to the top of my knee and I realized immediately they were not considered, they were not long. So.

ANNCHILD: [00:28:25] Had to readjust my definition of what was appropriate, you know, modest clothing. And never any, despite the heat, never anything sleeveless. They, they, for them the sexiest part of the body is your underarm. So like tourists who would come through with like standard sleeveless T-shirts, it was just like going bare chested down the street. And they would get a lot of flack and, you know, European girls who are traveling, tremendous amount of unwanted attention. Totally unaware that they are really like going topless. So. There was a miscommunication. And I always felt really bad and embarrassed, and I felt that Americans pretty much lived up to their Ugly American motto.

ZAREMBA: [00:29:17] Is there any specific anecdote that comes to mind?



ANNCHILD: [00:29:20] Well, just that kind of sleeveless thing was really terrible. I remember once even a girl wore shorts and they were probably okay modest shorts but in Iran, you just didn't wear shorts.

ZAREMBA: [00:29:34] Now, back to your house. Was it a one room, two room?

ANNCHILD: [00:29:37] No, it had a living room and a dining room and a bedroom. A kitchen, a bath. And a squat toilet. And also they had walled courtyards, so it had a walled courtyard and a little pool and.

ZAREMBA: [00:29:56] You mean like a fish pool?

ANNCHILD: [00:29:58] Yeah, a little fish pool. And the floors were marble. Cool. And my mother came and I have a picture of her. She died in January. And what we did, a life poster of her and one of the pictures we have is her taking a bath in my kitchen, sitting in a big tub of water and taking like a sit bath in the kitchen. And because our kitchen only had a shower and she didn't want a shower. I mean, our bathroom only had a shower. So, um, it was cold in the winter because there was no heat. And so there were these little propane heaters, like a camping heater you might put in your house. The house was really nice. I remember thinking it would be nicer than the house we had at home.

ZAREMBA: [00:30:52] Now was there was running water?

ANNCHILD: [00:30:55] There was running water.

ZAREMBA: [00:30:57] Electricity?

ANNCHILD: [00:30:58] Electricity. There was running water and electricity. It was really like I said, I said we were like the doctors of the town. And that was, um. That was great. I mean, there was no physical hardship at all. At least I don't think it was physical hardship at all.

ZAREMBA: [00:31:15] Many volunteers felt they were sort of adding to the economy to have like a cleaning person. Did you have anyone like that?

ANNCHILD: [00:31:21] No, we didn't. I didn't have any.

ZAREMBA: [00:31:27] Do you have any idea if other volunteers? [tape break] It's past the leader. Okay, go ahead.

ANNCHILD: [00:31:33] My experience wasn't so much physical danger, but more subtle adjustments in attitude. Which were internally volcanos, volcanic. You know, they changed who I was, but not so much from being frightened or harassed. My experience of Iran was they were the most, Iranians were the most hospitable, kind people I've ever met and had ever met. Mohammed was a traveler. So it was part of their religious belief that when a stranger came to your town, you were to treat them like Mohammed. And I believe that they actually did that. People went out of their way countless times to cook for us, help us find our house.

ZAREMBA: [00:32:34] I'll write that back to you. You started with how that changed you, how a momentous change inside of you.

ANNCHILD: [00:32:43] Well, I think Americans are rather abrupt as a nation and going to Iran and learning Persian. When you insult somebody in Persia, you have to be very savvy linguistically to do so. They don't have, or at least we weren't taught, and as far as it was explained to us, you know, a kind of fuck you attitude. They're not going to scream out of their cars, you asshole! They just don't do that. They are really polite. For instance, when I would sit, when you sit with your back to someone there's a phrase sort of like I think like more like the Oriental people, you know, where you say, there's a ritualized way you talk. So I sit with my back to you and I say, excuse me, my back is to you. And you say, a flower has your back.

ANNCHILD: [00:33:38] If I say that is a beautiful dress you have on, I, I would say to you. If you say that to me, then I would say to you, it's yours. If you like it, please, it's yours. And they would, they would give it to you. And there's a there's a, uh, an expression where they say *chashm* and it means you could have my eye.

ZAREMBA: [00:34:02] You know, getting back to the changes in you, how did that work to change you?

ANNCHILD: [00:34:07] Well, I don't know how it worked to change in me except that it made me more aware of my own culture and that made me realize that there are subtleties of communication that Americans can work on a lot. To be honest, Iranians are not necessarily what we would call honest. They are what we would call smooth. And so there is, there's a lot of learning to understand there. For instance, many, many teachers in the Peace Corps have a terrible time because there's no such word for cheating in the Persian language. And so if you're giving a test, the job of the smartest person in the class is to help everybody else. So there is no such thing as independent learning. There is sharing, meaning the smartest person is supposed to help.

ANNCHILD: [00:35:11] And so, you know, I think at least half of the people who quit quit because, you know, they had real vile reactions to this kind of what they call cheating, and they just couldn't get around it culturally that these kids are not cheating in the way that we think of cheating. You know, that every person is supposed to answer that test question to the best of their own ability. And if you're caught talking or you're caught passing notes or you're, you know, oh my God, we had so many conversations about what.

ZAREMBA: [00:35:44] I'd like to go back because your initial image was you had the physical danger. it's implied what you said you had quotes the putting words in your mouth. It was not physical danger. The parallel would be mental danger. And that's not the right words. But then you said you had this huge attrition. And so, again, hearing that about Persia or Iran, it's got to be something that some people couldn't handle.

ANNCHILD: [00:36:11] Right.

ZAREMBA: [00:36:12] And but at the same time, even though you could handle it, it had this impact on you. It's a change in some way. It sounds like

more than mental that, oh, they do this and that. But made you face yourself in a certain way or a bit more. How do you parallel with physical danger sense?

ANNCHILD: [00:36:31] I didn't think of it as dangerous, but I think of it as altering.

ZAREMBA: [00:36:36] Say more about the altering?

ANNCHILD: [00:36:37] Well, I don't know, except I just know how I am now. And, um, Bruce calls. I'm a tutor, and I encourage people who are quite discouraged. And Bruce calls me a professional liar in jest. But I don't consider it lying. I consider seeing what the potential is and manifesting that. So the child himself or herself can kind of hold on to that idea and pull themselves through some difficult times.

ZAREMBA: [00:37:08] Okay, then I'm wondering, it was something you said earlier. When you went to Saudi Arabia, it was difficult, but you kept sort of your Peace Corps mind of seeing the good in the situation. That sounds like what you're saying now. But now, do you think that came more from the Peace Corps or from Iran or a combination of the two?

ANNCHILD: [00:37:31] Well, I think Iran was very formative for me because it was the first time I'd ever left home. It was the first time I was on my own. It was the first real job I ever had. I mean, I had summer jobs, but it was the first real, real job I ever had. And it was the first place I kept house. So I really, I learned to cook there. I think I learned to think there. I think I learned to be hospitable there in a way that you know your house is open, what I have is yours, kill the fatted calf. That's.

ZAREMBA: [00:38:09] You're talking about learning how to cook. What kind of stove did you have?

ANNCHILD: [00:38:14] Well, learning to cook there is one of my favorite memories actually, which doesn't sound like, on the, on the, on the scale of things, you know, like climbing Mount Everest. But I had never boiled an egg. And so now, and I was a picky eater. I didn't eat tomatoes. I didn't eat cucumbers. I didn't eat, oh my goodness. I didn't eat so many

things. And here I was. And I couldn't talk either because I was in this town. And so the women would come over. This is the kind of thing that I think is incredibly hospitable. Here was this, I was like a giant baby, you know? I couldn't talk. I was basically nonfunctional. And the women would come over and they would, you know, knock on the door and there'd they'd be in their chador. And I would say, oh, come in, come in, you know. And they would come in and then like, now what? I can't talk, we can't talk. What are we gonna do?

ANNCHILD: [00:39:04] And so they would, they taught me how to cook because that's one thing they could do with minimal language. And so I learned to cook Persian food a lot. And I love Persian food and I cook it. You know, whenever I'm cooking, we usually cook Persian food. I have two grown sons. Their favorite foods are is *baghali polo*, which is lima beans and lamb and dill. And, you know, it became, you know, many 30 years later, it's still what I cook if I have to take something to a party. I cook Middle Eastern food. I cook Persian food.

ZAREMBA: [00:39:44] Now, how modern appliances did you have for cooking?

ANNCHILD: [00:39:46] I had, um, a electric frying pan with a transformer to convert it from. It was something I brought from home. I had a gas, two gas burner unit on a little table, a wooden table with a gas burner unit. And then somebody had made these metal boxes that you put over the two gas burners to make an oven. A questionable oven. So I couldn't really, you know, some women really got into trying to do American food with their utensils. You know, I couldn't do American food back in America. So I said, why? Why, like, why not just cook Iranian food? At least people around here know how to make it. And so we never had American food. We just made Iranian.

ANNCHILD: [00:40:39] And it was, it's basically. Their cuisine is, is very delicate. It's not curries. It's rice and saffron and fruit and chicken and yogurt sauces and beans and sometimes cinnamon. So really not like heavy, hot, fiery food, but more delicate and very, very good.

ZAREMBA: [00:41:11] You know, describe a typical teaching day.

ANNCHILD: [00:41:16] Typical teaching? I remember being very frustrated. And I'm a teacher now and I don't think I was a very good teacher then. I was enthusiastic and I had lesson plans and I, um. But they wouldn't necessarily listen to me. And I would have kind of, I would call having little showdowns with them, you know, like, please, you know, you will be quiet or I won't continue, you know, that kind of thing. And I would never do that now. I mean, not in a thousand years, but I don't know what. You know, when I think back, I was 22 years old, you know, and I'd never been a teacher before. And one thing they did do is give us good, very good - I'm just going back to training now - teacher training. That, that's what we did in the country. I recall now.

ANNCHILD: [00:42:07] And the wonderful woman named Dr. Gertrude Nye-Dorry, who I believe is still alive in her nineties and comes to the United States every year. She was an American married to an Iranian man. She gave us our teacher training and really she set us on the. She was tough, but she set us on the straight and narrow. And really, it was about taking control of your class and not, you know, Americans have this kind of let's be friends attitude because I think that's our way. Our education is less formal. The Iranian education was much more formal. So they expected us to be, I would say, more authoritarian. So many mistakes that people made with going in there, being like buddy-buddy. And then the kids were totally thrown off. They didn't know if this was their teacher or their friend. So then it was hard to backtrack. They were trying to get us to go in and be very strict. And then we wanted to ease up, to ease up.

ANNCHILD: [00:43:03] I just remember coming home and being like, feeling frustrated because I couldn't control my class. Nobody ever complained as far as I knew, but I was not.

ZAREMBA: [00:43:14] Couldn't control, what kinds of things would happen in the classroom?

ANNCHILD: [00:43:17] Just talking and giggling and not doing what I wanted them to do and being silly and. But then there was this group of girls.

ZAREMBA: [00:43:27] What age were they?

ANNCHILD: [00:43:29] My girls were high school students.

ZAREMBA: [00:43:32] And about how big a class did you have?

ANNCHILD: [00:43:40] Um, I'd say 15. And they had these, it was a kind of very barren looking room. I mean, it was stucco or mud or something and whitewashed. And then there was a blackboard and then wooden benches. The girls would sit on wooden benches and they all wore uniforms. Everybody wore a uniform. Not the teachers, but all the girls wore uniforms. Basically what really turned me on was a certain core group of girls. I have a whole picture of them. There were about ten of them and they really wanted to learn English. And they were probably the brightest and the best. And they were sort of, could pick up enough English that I could, we could communicate better. It's sort of like they would come into my class. And it was immersion for them because I couldn't speak Farsi very well, so they had to speak English.

ANNCHILD: [00:44:40] And so the ones who could or could try would, uh, would learn and learn a lot because I could speak English. That's all I could do was speak English. And the other girls would kind of flounder and get giggly and not pay attention and be lost basically. So I think I ended up teaching to the elite. But they wouldn't have gotten that otherwise. And one thing I remember was that we had to teach italic. That was the handwriting. And so I can still write very nice italic, although I don't. But I remember when I would write my mother, I forced myself to write in very formal italic. It was connecting italic. And so each one had a little tail that connected with everything else and, um. Italic was a big deal. So we were teaching them handwriting and.

ANNCHILD: [00:45:32] What I liked best actually was I taught them some songs. So they really kind of. Western music uses a different tonality than Eastern music so it's very different for them. They thought it was so.

ZAREMBA: [00:45:45] Do you remember some of the songs?

ANNCHILD: [00:45:47] Oh, just the little children's, you know, Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star and very, you know, Frere Jacques. Are You Sleeping, Brother John? And just, uh. It's kind of out of desperation, you know, like, what are you going to do? But then the girls who really wanted to learn and that was. They came over to my house a lot. I had a really very close group of students kind of acted, I think, sort of almost like strange mentor type of thing. Like this is how an American might be. This is who an American is. Oh, but one of the sad, sad things. They were required to take English at that time. And so they had taken English from people who really couldn't speak English for a long time by the time they got to high school. And some of them had been speaking, they said you couldn't understand at all. It was like fractured English. So they were really learning more American pronunciation and idioms and sentence flow.

ANNCHILD: [00:46:53] And then one girl said to me, well, how long do American children spend studying Farsi every day? And I just, my heart just broke. You know, I really couldn't give her an answer to that because they really thought. I mean, if you had told them that people had no idea even what continent Persia was in, um, it would have been devastating because these people really believed that we were spending as much time getting to know their culture as they were getting to know our culture and our language.

ANNCHILD: [00:47:31] And a very poignant thing happened. We had a, Bruce and I had a wonderful time and we decided we would stay another two years. And we, and we did. Toward the, but at the, when you re-up, you come back. You were allowed to come back to the United States, have a vacation, and then go back to see your family. So we did that. And so we had a couple that was particularly friendly with us. And we spent a lot of time with them as a couple.

ZAREMBA: [00:48:03] A couple of volunteers?

ANNCHILD: [00:48:04] No, a couple of. We had very little to do with other volunteers.



ZAREMBA: [00:48:09] A couple of Iranians?

ANNCHILD: [00:48:09] Yes, this was a couple, an Iranian teacher, two teachers, a man and a woman and their son. And she was my best friend and had been in Iran. And lived close and we were back and forth just sort of like suburban Americans would have been. And so I. We had some pictures that were taken back here. Now, these are pictures where I was not wearing a long skirt and a scarf. I was dressed as an American in America, but I was not dressed obscenely either. I was dressed conservatively, but not as conservatively. And so this is a person who knew me very, very well. I mean, like my sister over there. So I said, do you want to see our vacation? And she, oh, yes, yes, yes.

ANNCHILD: [00:49:02] And we were sitting around the table and we're eating. And so we're showing, you know, we're passing as you, if you have a deck of pictures, you know, you pass them along and they go along the table. And as I noticed that they're getting past like three people. And then my friend, my lady friend was sitting there, and she was slipping at least half of them, if not three quarters of them, into her sleeve because she didn't want, um, to embarrass me. She didn't want. You know, these were my most intimate friends now, these were not just casual acquaintances. But she thought that these pictures would reflect badly on my character. And so she didn't want anyone to see them. So she was slipping them in her sleeve.

ANNCHILD: [00:49:50] And I went home that night, because Bruce and I had been really considering, like living in Iran for a long time because we really loved it. But after that night, I thought, my friend, my very best friend over here, cannot understand who I am. I've been trying to understand who she is for four years, and I just wanted her to calmly look through these pictures, which were not so radical, at least in my opinion they were not. And she really couldn't say, this is how she is there in that country when it's okay. And I know she's a nice person because I have dinner with her every night. She could not make that bridge in her mind. And it was very devastating to me because I felt like our friendship was sort of a lie. I was going all out for her and I thought she

couldn't even take one step toward trying to understand who I truly was.

ANNCHILD: [00:50:44] And I talked about this with some Peace Corps staff and they said, well, you know, you really can't ask somebody to imagine an hippopotamus if they've never seen anything like this. But then I just felt, it was so clear to me that the cultural gap was so wide. could, to be an expat there meant that you would. People. You could only be an Iranian in Iran which I think is maybe, I guess that's true here. You know, people are, you can only be an American in America. And think of all the nationals we have here and we don't ever put much emphasis on trying to understand how they would be at home. But that was my experience of the shoe on the other foot, and it didn't feel very comfortable that she couldn't even try to think that I might dress differently in my home country and that it might be okay. And that it didn't, you know, that I might wear a sleeve that came down to my elbow. And that that did not mean that I was a harlot.

ANNCHILD: [00:51:47] And she should know, I mean, in my opinion, it would have been nice if she could have known that I wasn't a harlot if I had a sleeve to my elbow, but she couldn't. And she couldn't allow her brother or her husband or her sister to see me like that. So she was protecting me. She was shoving all these pictures in her veil. It was just, it was a weird, it was a very poignant moment for me in, kind of in the same way that that girl said, how much do Americans know about Iran.

ZAREMBA: [00:52:22] How about, now, you had a typical school day. Was there a lot of homework to do after school or practice things or did it? How much of your daytime hours did it absorb being a teacher?

ANNCHILD: [00:52:34] We had lesson plans. There was a lot of lesson planning. There was going to school. There was a lot of paper grading, but not. As a teacher now, I don't think there was very much. I think I do a lot more in America. We spent a lot of time socializing with other couples, Iranian couples. We did not spend a lot of time. We lived in the core of Iran, and so we were not close to any Peace Corps volunteers. And

that is really, I think, one of the reasons we had such a great time here. We totally immersed ourselves in the culture.

ZAREMBA: [00:53:12] That gets to the next question of leisure time, how you spend it?

ANNCHILD: [00:53:17] And so we, you know, we went on picnics. Picnics were huge. And they would take a great big brass samovar. An Iranian picnic is a, a world unto itself. You know, you take your rugs, you roll up your rugs. You have this big pot of food and the pots are shaped conically with a bigger bottom. And that is so that the, you cook the rice. And you steam it for the last 20 minutes in a cone shape with a large part on the bottom. So this part on the bottom of the pan gets crispy and it's called *tahdig*. And it's a delicacy because the amount to have, it depends on how big your pan is and everybody just gets a little bite. And so we would have one of those big copper pans and we'd have the big brass samovar and we'd have the glass teacups. And this is all to go on a picnic.

ANNCHILD: [00:54:20] Then you go, you put. You get a thousand people in one car and then you go off to, uh, not really a thousand, like nine people in one car and you, in a compact car, and then you, plus all this equipment and the babies and the. And you go out and the picnic would be like in somebody's field and there would be like a running water like irrigation ditch, by an irrigation ditch. And then you would, that's it. You would just sit there and listen to music and they would often play. They play something called an oud, which is a. It's sort of like a different. What does Ravi Shankar play?

ZAREMBA: [00:55:04] Sitar?

ANNCHILD: [00:55:05] Yeah, it's a cross between a sitar and a lute. And it's, I think it's unique to Persia. Some of our friends played that really well. Backgammon. You'd play backgammon forever.

ZAREMBA: [00:55:20] Now, you mentioned a samovar. What's that used for? How does that fit in?

ANNCHILD: [00:55:23] The samovar? Um, I was. I had one out there in the hall. You make the tea in that. I could bring it over, but it's, it's a round. It has, you put the water in the round part and then it has a cone in the middle. You put charcoal in and then it has a little smokestack that you put off and on to stoke the coals. And then you turn the spout and the water comes out and have these little. They drink tea in glass teacups with sugar cubes. And you suck the tea through the sugar. You hold the sugar cube in your mouth and then you suck the tea through the sugar cube.

ZAREMBA: [00:56:02] You mentioned unexpectedly you might play backgammon, for example. Would the women play, too?

ANNCHILD: [00:56:09] Yes, the women would play with the women usually, and the men would play with the men. Usually the women are taking care of the kids. They, they would. One thing that shocked my mother I remember is they breastfeed their children till they're around six. And so you have these really like large children wanting to be breastfed. And my mother is just like, I can't believe this. So, but that's just kind of normal.

ZAREMBA: [00:56:37] How about other things in leisure time? Picnics. What other things would you do?

ANNCHILD: [00:56:46] Picnics were about it for leisure. There was no movie theater. There was no TV. There was, uh.

ZAREMBA: [00:56:53] Would you go to somebody else's house and sit and visit?

ANNCHILD: [00:56:55] Yeah, we would. Visiting. Visiting. And dinners together, cooking, visiting, and picnics. Pretty much. And then Bruce and I would travel on the weekends. We would, because we were in between these two wonderful towns. They were about 3 hours away each. And so we could take the bus and explore Isfahan and explore Shiraz.

ZAREMBA: [00:57:15] Any exploring stories that happened?

ANNCHILD: [00:57:21] Um. Not, you know, too much in that. And, you know, it's interesting. We felt so at home there that I think now that I'm thinking about it, my adventures sort of go around and like we traveled for six months after and I sort of all through the east and we went to Burma and all these things and we went the Peace Corps route from one Peace Corps volunteer to the next. And I have many stories to tell you about, you know, like what I would call travel adventures. But when I think about Abadeh, it's like if you ask me what adventures I was having here in Ann Arbor. It was so, um, community and family oriented, you know. We were part of other people's families. We. You know, we just moved sort of as a teacher, like any other teacher in that community. And we did the things that other teachers were.

ZAREMBA: [00:58:24] You were really integrated.

ANNCHILD: [00:58:26] I think one thing that might have been a little different about us, we made friends with a family that was of the Baha'i religion. And they were not professionals. They were poor. I can't remember exactly what. Their. They. One of their daughters spoke a lot of English for some reason, and they were useful to us. And when we couldn't find the, you know, their daughter was always helping us and we got to know the parents and the brothers and sisters. And they were quite poor and they were in the minority religion because Shiites were the religious majority. And so they were, they were discriminated against. They were just poor. And I remember they had trouble with their house and their children didn't have advantages. And we, we were an asset, you know, to them to be friends with us was socially beneficial to them.

ANNCHILD: [00:59:29] You know, it's odd as I talk to you, because when I was in Iran, I was sure that I would be friends with these people for the rest of my life. But at the end, the Shah fell the year after we left, I believe. And the Ayatollah came in. So rather than continuing correspondence with these people and finding out how their lives played out, it was like the Iron Curtain just dropped down because if we had even so much as written them a letter, it would be life threatening. And of course, if you cared about somebody, you didn't want to do that. And so there

was. We went from feeling like we were brothers and sisters with these people to, um, you know, thinking if they got a letter with a United States stamp on it that they, you know, their brother would be killed. That's how serious we were told that it was.

ANNCHILD: [01:00:27] And so we, you know, I just like, I, it was and it was one of the most intense parts of my life. And then suddenly it was like somebody had taken an eraser, and it wasn't. And it's very sad because the girls that I taught, you know, I talked about them being the elite, meaning I think the brain pool. You know, they all wanted to be like doctors and they just had such aspirations for themselves, you know, literature teachers, poets. And as I understand it, when the Ayatollah came in, you know, women were just.

ZAREMBA: [01:01:06] Did you have a hunch? Did you have any sense that massive change was in the works at all?

ANNCHILD: [01:01:16] Well, I was very naive. I was, you know, I was born and raised in Mississippi. And where the emphasis was on being a little lady. And then I had gone to New York to college, just kind of as a fluke, probably part of their college diversity programs. And so I didn't really come with much of a sophisticated edge. And we were told not to discuss politics at all. I mean, that was. In terms of training, that's the only hard edge I remember like, that there is no room to maneuver about this. No if, ands, or buts. You are not to ever discuss politics. End of story. And I just kind of said, okay. You know, looking back, I wonder what that dictate was about and why I didn't question it.

ANNCHILD: [01:02:18] Um, I think one of the reasons I had such a good experience in the Peace Corps was I kind of suspend, it's like suspending belief. I just, you know, a lot of Americans I've heard often that, well, you know, how can you wear those clothes? Aren't you afraid you're just going overboard and you're being, you're going to be too Iranianized? I said, look, you could do everything you possibly could to be an Iranian and you would not be close to being an Iranian. Um, but I do think that that was my impulse was to try to be as Iranian as I could. And I think in a certain way that gave me a kind of. [tape break]

ZAREMBA: [01:02:58] The permissions of yours was.

ANNCHILD: [01:03:01] I just wanted to culturally understand as much as I could. I think it had, um, my husband and I divorced at the end of our Peace Corps life together. I believe that he was becoming more and more sort of Iranian and that it had kind of weighed on me in a way that I wasn't even aware of at the time. I have always been a. Um. People speak, you know, when you come back and you talk about Iran, Americans generally say, oh my God, the women are so oppressed and so on and so forth. But my experience was that, I mean, this is sort of what they say and I kind of guess I bought their line. But they. My, my feeling was that the Iranian women at that time were not as oppressed as they were separate.

ANNCHILD: [01:03:54] There were separate domains of power. And the women were the power of the household. And they had reversed the sex, what we would call the sex characteristics I think. Women were considered practical. Women were considered great with money. Women were considered the people you went to if you were going to make big household purchases. Women were considered the people who could bear pain easily. They didn't make much fuss about childbirth. They just went and did it. They were like concrete. And the men were considered poets. They turned their paychecks over to their wives. They walked down the street holding hands. They walked down the street with roses in their mouth, kind of, you know, dangling a rose out of their mouth. They would sit for hours in a cafe talking.

ZAREMBA: [01:04:52] Now, that's not metaphoric, it's actual roses in their mouth?

ANNCHILD: [01:04:55] Actual, actual roses. They would process up and down the streets. There was a kind of a evening stroll that men went on, and they would stroll up and down the streets at sunset quoting poetry. You know, so they were the romantics and they were the mysteries. And they, you know, and here when you think about what American men and women consider each other, it really struck me.

ANNCHILD: [01:05:26] And my husband was a very quiet person and not prone to excessive emotive demonstrations, and he really opened up in Iran. It was absolutely a wonderful place for him. He got in touch with his feelings and his ability to express, and it was great. I mean, so it was very interesting in that way to see men being romantic and poetic and the women being practical and sturdy. You know, it really makes you realize these things really are culturally determined, just like everything else. And then when we got divorced, he actually married an Iranian woman, interestingly enough. But so. You asked about politics and I ended up in marriage. I don't know how we did that, but I guess there's a politics of marriage.

ZAREMBA: [01:06:24] Another question would be, how did your role evolve or change over the four years? Well, actually, you might say a bit about the re-enlisting for another two years. How did that come about?

ANNCHILD: [01:06:37] I don't remember except that what I remember is, and the women's movement was happening in the United States while I was in Iran. And I remember my mother would send me issues from the Village Voice about the women's movement. And Gloria Steinem. And it was just so exciting to me. I just remember sitting around reading this, these things and just being like wow, wow, wow. And I remember that was just like, your life was sort of a little compartmentalized. Here I was going along in this track, and then there was this whole other track that was happening that was so exciting to read about. And that somehow I think that kind of played in when at the end of our spiel there, you know, we sort of. I was very drawn to kind of that activity, women's independence, and I think it was even more heightened having been in a culture where women were more behind the scenes power. So I just, I just remember being so excited about it. And writing my mother about the things she had sent.

ZAREMBA: [01:08:01] How does that relate to those, staying the extra two years?

ANNCHILD: [01:08:11] Yes. Um, well, I think. What I do remember about staying the extra two years is that we really wanted to live in a commune when we came home, because Iranians are very communal and, um. We



just couldn't understand why everybody in America had their own washer and dryer and everybody in America had their own car and everybody in America had their own vacuum because where in our town, you kind of like. It was more familial groups, but the family would have a whatever and everybody would use it. And the family would have a car and that's why there were 12 people in it. And the extended family. It just seems such a waste for everyone. So we, I remember we sent out this letter. And we had a typewriter, you know, like an old typewriter. I remember typing on this old typewriter.

ANNCHILD: [01:09:07] And we sent out this letter kind of expounding on these ideas about materialism. Why couldn't we do it differently? And we just expected everyone to say, yes, let's go all live together in wherever. And of course nobody did. And we were, we were really disappointed. I think when we came back, um, that I was, you know, fairly odd. I refused to have furniture in my house. But I had lunch on the floor and lived like an arrangement.

ZAREMBA: [01:09:42] Now again, did you come back in between or did you stay straight through four years?

ANNCHILD: [01:09:49] Straight through. We traveled. We came home to visit.

ZAREMBA: [01:09:53] Okay, but then why did you decide to stay on longer?

ANNCHILD: [01:09:56] We just didn't want to come home. We just really.

ZAREMBA: [01:09:58] So you had that sense of the materialism back here and you just wanted to be in that culture basically?

ANNCHILD: [01:10:02] Yeah, we just wanted to be there. We would have, actually, I think at certain points we wanted to just stay there forever. We were totally happy. And that's that story I told you before about kind of understanding that maybe we were totally happy, but we weren't totally being real. Was it kind of a jolt? Because I think we. You know, that they were never going to understand our needs. We might understand their needs better, but I'm not sure that they would have.

ZAREMBA: [01:10:34] Okay. So you were totally happy, wanted to live in this kind of culture versus the culture back in the States. But then there was that jolt at some point towards the end of that and realized, wow, there's this gulf between us.

ANNCHILD: [01:10:47] Yes, right.

ZAREMBA: [01:10:48] That doesn't seem to be a shortening.

ANNCHILD: [01:10:50] Right. It's kind of a puzzle.

ZAREMBA: [01:10:56] But then it's interesting is that, it gets into another question they had here about the impact the Peace Corps had on you first immediately and then long term. And it sounds like the immediate one you were answering, that the immediate effect of, if not the Peace Corps, living in Iran, was to try to bring Iran back to the States when you go back. And maybe that intensified your culture shock a bit, it sounds like? Talk about that immediate effect again.

ANNCHILD: [01:11:27] Well, the part, I just. Before we get back to the United States, I just want to say that one of the things I loved the most was doing the training for the Peace Corps, because we, we re-up for two years. And then we were director, uh, Bruce was the director, was the director of the training program. And I, in it, by this time they were doing the whole training program in the country, and I was the cross-cultural director. And that, those last six months of doing the training were just, um, I just loved it. I really love thinking up cross-cultural exercises for people.

ZAREMBA: [01:12:03] For example, what kind of?

ANNCHILD: [01:12:07] Oh, well, like when you go to an Iranian's home, the men are given pajamas to put on because you sit on the floor. And you can't sit on your floor, you can't sit comfortably on the floor in Western trousers. So they're given these like pajama bottoms. And, you know, it's very embarrassing for American men to, like, take their trousers off.

And these pajama bottoms is something you have to get used to. And so you would need, you know, we would arrange for them to be invited to homes. You know, you're, you are making arrangements for them to have the kind of experience they need to have to, to deal with all this. So you invite, you know, you'd have some one of the trainers or somebody in the community that was connected. Invite one of these young guys to like over for dinner and then, you know, he would have to. He would be faced with this cultural situation and then he would have a reaction and then he would come back and then we would talk about it. And so that might be.

ANNCHILD: [01:13:11] Or bargaining. You know, there's no such thing as a fixed price in Iran. And so some people get really get into it and some people feel it's a constant affront to them. You know, why can't they just tell you how much it is? And, you know, why does everybody want to haggle so much? So you would give them a, send them out to the bazaar to buy something. And then they would have to deal with the price discussion and then they'd come back and talk about it. You know, you might ask them to keep a little log of how many times they got annoyed and what annoys them. And then we can come back and compare.

ANNCHILD: [01:13:57] Which was different than the way we were trained. We were trained, we studied Persian history and, uh. In my training class, it was more facts about the country. And the one that I ran, it was more experiential. And what I do today, I am an experiential tutor. So I would say that's a pretty direct.

ZAREMBA: [00:00:00] Long term impact.

ANNCHILD: [00:00:00] Very long term. I'm not sure which came first, the chicken or the egg, but definitely interwoven there.

ZAREMBA: [01:14:26] Right. Now, you were there as a volunteer. Then you re-upped for 2 more years. Then you became a trainer. And then, uh, how did that come to an end that you didn't continue on more with Peace

Corps? Was there a decision point right at the end of the training period?

ANNCHILD: [01:14:44] Well, that's when Bruce and I were having marital difficulties. And so we had agreed that we were going to separate when we came back to the United States. But we also agreed that we were going to, uh, travel. We had arranged. We traveled for six months before we came back to the United States. And that was very exciting. And that was also Peace Corps related because we would go from one Peace Corps volunteer to another, and we ended up in some very obscure places because of that. And that was really fabulous. I mean, that was a little difficult that we weren't getting along, but we were basically, um, by that time quite accomplished travelers. When I think about that first little bus trip I told you about and what the six months.

ANNCHILD: [01:15:32] You know, we had agreed. Well, rather I had agreed. Bruce. We agreed to take this trip. And Bruce's stipulation was that I would take one shoulder bag only. And so, um, that's what, that's how we traveled for six months. And that was a good, I overpack now. I think it's because I was, for six months I always had to have such minimal stuff. So now I take a lot. But I did do that for six months. Only had a shoulder bag. Um, and which that meant that we were wearing the native costume wherever we went. So like in India, I just wore saris the whole time because I had no clothes in my, in my shoulder bag.

ZAREMBA: [01:16:10] Oh, did you buy a sari?

ANNCHILD: [01:16:12] Yeah, I'd buy a sari. And somebody would tell me how to wear it and I would wear it. You know, I bought two. And then when we left India I would ship them home. And then we'd go to Thailand and I would wear the wrap skirt with a silver belt that you put around it. And basically went native all the way. And so then when I got back to the United States, I had written my mother. So I was very, um. And so I was very adamant as well. So I said, I am never wearing Western clothes. I am only going to wear a sari because it's expandable. You can, if you lose 10 pounds or gain 40 pounds or get pregnant, you can still wear the same sari. And the Americans are so materialistic with all

their clothes. And in Thailand, you know, you have this skirt that's basically a bag with a cut top and you put, you step into it. And then depending on what size you are, you just fold it up. And then you have this belt and you bunch it up and you tie it over and that's it. So it never changes size or anything.

ANNCHILD: [01:17:12] And so, you know, I was pretty extreme when I came home. And I refused to have a telephone for a year. I would not have a telephone.

ZAREMBA: [01:17:21] The reason being?

ANNCHILD: [01:17:21] And I didn't want that kind of, um, you know, I had been living for five years with no telephone. Why did I have to have, you know, people be able to get hold of me every second? Now as I have a cell phone, you can never get away from the phone. I think I'd like to do it again. Um. We ate only Iranian, I only ate mostly Iranian food. I had, I had a bed. That was one concession. But the rest of the, I had carpets, one rolled carpet and these big sitting cushions that they would sit on. I made everybody take their shoes off because they never. Well, that's a, that's another funny thing. You know, they use the floor like we use a couch basically. And so they keep the floor immaculate because they're going to eat off of it. And so they never, you know, a good Iranian housewife cleans her whole floor six times a day. I mean, you just think it's always cleaning the floor.

ANNCHILD: [01:18:19] And so, you know, people have this idea that they're different or dirtier or something because they put their food on a tablecloth on the floor. It's just the opposite. They are incredibly clean and, you know, they probably, they think the way that we keep our floors are just disgusting. That we walk on them with shoes and.

ZAREMBA: [01:18:41] So then in your house, you didn't have tables?

ANNCHILD: [01:18:45] Nope. I had no table. My, my house, my apartment in New York City. This is now because that's where I came back to. So you went into your little Persian land, you know, you're left your shoes at

the door and there was no furniture and you laid on the floor and you had a good time.

ZAREMBA: [01:19:02] And so, again, back to your house in Iran. You had no furniture?

ANNCHILD: [01:19:07] No, we had no furniture. We had carpets. I think we had one little kind of loveseat, cushions maybe stacked up so that we weren't always sitting on the floor. But basically, you're always sitting on the floor and your back gets very strong. Because you sit, you sit cross-legged. Or if you have a long skirt, you're sitting with your legs to the side and your skirt is over your legs and, you know, but you never like put your knees up because your, your skirt might come up. So you really get, you get strong. Your back gets strong.

ZAREMBA: [01:19:42] What about the bed?

ANNCHILD: [01:19:44] They have bed rolls and they roll them up in the day because they basically have one room, or a big room, a family room, and then they roll them out at night. And they hate privacy. They're a very communal group. And so they think that the meanest thing you can do is send somebody to their room. And what they would always ask me was, how can your parents sent you here without? They thought like we were delinquents or something, young delinquent adults, that our parents didn't want to be around us, that they had allowed us to come half around the world and not. You know, because they live in multigenerational families and they live together. And the idea that, you know, one child per room, they just think is like torture. They think that's like prison.

ZAREMBA: [01:20:31] I'm curious, when you say they have no concept of privacy, think it's the worst thing you can do. A person we just interviewed in Nepal talked about a similar thing there, it appears it was the same with you, where they, the people seem to feel that he would be lonely if he was alone.

ANNCHILD: [01:20:48] Yes.

ZAREMBA: [01:20:48] So they would walk into his house any time and think they were doing him a favor. Even when he'd say, I really need some alone time. They wouldn't understand that. Was it similar in Iran that people could walk in any time?

ANNCHILD: [01:20:59] Well, because we were married. I don't know if he was married or not, but I think that, you know, they respected that kind of couple is a family kind of thing. So they never, never would walk in on us unexpectedly or anything like that. But they did always include us in all their outings. And, you know if, say, Bruce was going down to the store, the minute he stepped out of the house, somebody would come and walk with him down to the market or, you know, no such thing as going out for a evening stroll by yourself.

ZAREMBA: [01:21:31] And same for you, if you go out, somebody would join you?

ANNCHILD: [01:21:34] Yeah, but I wouldn't go out. I mean, women were a little bit more in. Not that I couldn't have gone out, but I got more attention when I went out. So I wouldn't just go strolling around by myself. I'd go out with him. And we had a cat. And they thought that was really weird. I mean, it was an alley cat, but we just.

ZAREMBA: [01:21:57] Thought it was weird because?

ANNCHILD: [01:21:58] They don't have.

ZAREMBA: [01:22:00] Pets?

ANNCHILD: [01:22:00] Pets. But I've always had a cat. So that's one weird Americanism.

ZAREMBA: [01:22:10] Before we close, are there any other stories that happened to you?

ANNCHILD: [01:22:17] Now I want to go back and reread my letters and, and I'm sure there are lots of stories.

ZAREMBA: [01:22:24] Any other health issues, if there was anything like that?

ANNCHILD: [01:22:27] No, but I would like to talk more about how it impacted me in my life. Is that, is that?

ZAREMBA: [01:22:34] That's fine.

ANNCHILD: [01:22:34] Because I, when I was thinking about you coming over, I thought that the most important thing was the impact it had on me later on. Immediately was how I lived, you know, that little period where I was neither, uh, you know, fowl, or what is it?

ZAREMBA: [01:22:53] Fish or fowl?

ANNCHILD: [01:22:54] Fish nor fowl. Right. But much more importantly. And then I had a business, a natural skin care business in New York for 20 years. And it was an international, uh, array. I went to all, a lot of trouble to find accouterment from all over the world, because I really wanted people to know that even being clean is. I used to say Mr. Clean is a cross-cultural gypsy. Because that was when that Mr. Clean, the bald man, was like a cleaning product. And so that was a direct impact. And then many, many years later, my son was dyslexic and was, he was a junior. He is dyslexic. And he was a junior in high school and was, I felt, becoming fatigued with his struggle with dyslexia and I wanted to enliven his education and encourage his hope.

ANNCHILD: [01:23:55] And I sent him around the world with a tutor and designed that curriculum. And had community service and adventure, education and academic. And I think that people said, well, how did you get that idea or how did you think of it? It just seemed like a, a broadening experience that imparts hope in a person. And I think that's what the Peace Corps did for me. And it's really nice to see it for my son, who's now 22. I feel like he's almost a second generation Peace Corps, even though he wasn't in the organization. I'd love to see him going into Peace Corps, and my other son as well. But I wonder if there are second generational Peace Corps families.



ZAREMBA: [01:24:42] There are some.

ANNCHILD: [01:24:42] I think I'm done.

ZAREMBA: [01:24:47] Done. Okay.

[END OF INTERVIEW]