

Karen Pedersen Oral History Interview
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Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Karen Pedersen served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Malaysia from 1962 to 1965 as a science teacher.

Access

Open.

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Oral History Interview

with

Karen Pedersen

September 1, 2016
Arvada, Colorado

By Barbara Kaare-Lopez

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

PEDERSEN: [00:00:02] Well, look at this.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:00:02] Hello. Karen Pedersen is sitting down. This is Barbara Kaare, K-A-A-R-E hyphen Lopez. I live in Denver, Colorado, and I'm going to start a basic Peace Corps interview with Karen Pedersen, who was in Malaysia. Or actually, she would say Malay, I think.

PEDERSEN: [00:00:28] Malaya.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:00:29] Malaya, 1962 to 1965. Um, she was there for 29 months. Okay. And, and today is September 1st, 2016. So, Karen, maybe I'll just ask you, um, how would you describe your, uh. You need to sit down, if that's okay. Your family situation right now, who do you live with?

PEDERSEN: [00:01:01] Okay, I am. Family situation. I am retired.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:01:08] Uh huh. What did you used to do?

PEDERSEN: [00:01:11] Uh, from teaching high school at Arvada West High School.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:01:20] Arvada West High School. Uh huh.

PEDERSEN: [00:01:22] Which I taught for 28 years.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:01:24] Oh, my gosh, 28 years.

PEDERSEN: [00:01:26] And then I bought, at that point in time, there was, the U.S. was so short of money, they wanted to save money by retiring, uh, people early from, um, whatever government positions.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:01:44] Yes.

PEDERSEN: [00:01:44] So they paid you to retire.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:01:46] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:01:47] And so I was paid two years salary, and I think I received \$5,000.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:01:55] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:01:55] Or six, five or 6,000.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:01:57] Okay. And what did you teach?

PEDERSEN: [00:01:59] I was ashamed of myself later because I intended to put that in my savings. But 20 years later, I look back and say, ack, where's that savings?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:02:10] Uh huh.

PEDERSEN: [00:02:11] It never happened.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:02:12] Oh, it didn't happen.

PEDERSEN: [00:02:13] Okay, this is word to the wise.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:02:14] Okay. Save your money. What subject did you teach in that high school?

PEDERSEN: [00:02:19] I taught biology. That would be sophomore biology. Um, but they threw in juniors and seniors who didn't pass.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:02:29] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:02:30] Uh, any of those years. And so I had some of those. And that's the same thing I did in Peace Corps.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:02:37] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:02:38] But I taught not juniors and seniors and sophomores, but I got some, six through eighth graders.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:02:46] Okay. In Malaysia?

PEDERSEN: [00:02:47] Yeah, because in Malaysia, it's a educational system based on the English system of education. And they do, they do exams and those exams are given, since it's a former English colony, in English, which stretched around the world. So a whole bunch of countries were in there, and a whole bunch, bunch of people speak English because the English were there.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:03:15] Yes.

PEDERSEN: [00:03:15] And to this day they have an English accent, which is kind of fun.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:03:19] Really?

PEDERSEN: [00:03:19] What, how many, 70, 150 years later? They have an English accent.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:03:25] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:03:25] Temuantu Malay or, or, I don't know, Spanish. Carolina would have, my daughter would have to answer that, but, um, uh, it tails on to whatever language they spoke.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:03:38] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:03:38] That would be, uh, Malay. What do you call it? Idioms or Malay speech patterns or Malay words?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:03:47] Okay, good. You know, the year before.

PEDERSEN: [00:03:49] Oh, can I add one thing?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:03:51] Sure.

PEDERSEN: [00:03:52] When Peace Corps. Uh, that was in '62, so I was test. Um, we're not sure between the three of us, at what point Kennedy was assassinated and when the Peace Corps was started. We agree on Sargent Shriver was in there someplace, and President Kennedy was in there at some time interval. That's it. So, um. It was in the newspaper that somebody called Marie, question mark, dropped a postcard in which she said the truth, but it happened to be bad stuff about the country. She was the.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:04:38] The country of Malaysia?

PEDERSEN: [00:04:39] No, this is a country. This was in the newspaper. And this lady was a Peace Corps, an early first Peace Corps volunteer into that country or into that continent. And she sent a postcard out

saying, oh my goodness, you should see the garbage in the canals. You should see the water.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:05:00] In Malaysia?

PEDERSEN: [00:05:01] Open, open pit, carrying nothing much, because I saw it myself and it wasn't anything to be ashamed of, but it an open pit, whatever. And you just toss stuff in, your sandwich.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:05:16] Is that, was that true? Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:05:17] Yeah, but it certainly to me wasn't offensive at all.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:05:21] Yeah, yeah. Okay. Um, do you remember much about the year before you joined the Peace Corps, which for you would have been 1961? 1961. Because you went in '62. You were one of the first volunteers?

PEDERSEN: [00:05:38] Uh, I think I was the second group to go in to Malaysia.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:05:43] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:05:44] But I don't know about overall volunteers.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:05:46] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:05:47] I was second group to go into Malaysia.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:05:49] Yes. Okay, okay. Um, where did you grow up?

PEDERSEN: [00:05:53] In Grinnell, Iowa.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:05:55] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:05:56] Uh. Uh, County Poweshiek. And the only reason I know that because all of the forms, driver's license, whatever, bicycle, you always have to put your county. And Poweshiek was a tough

one to spell. And Poweshiek, all of the, for some reason, our country must have been, I'm just making this up, felt very guilty about the way they treated Indians. And so Indian names are everywhere.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:06:23] Yes.

PEDERSEN: [00:06:24] You know, counties in Iowa are named after Indians. Lake Wobegon.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:06:29] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:06:30] Is an Indian name.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:06:31] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:06:32] Um, and I'm sure we could think of something in Colorado that has an Indian name.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:06:36] Yeah. And in Michigan, it's, we have Indian names. Nothing comes to me at the moment, but. Okay. Um, describe what's your educational background? Um, you went to college in Iowa? Oh, no, no, no, I think you went to Minnesota. Um.

PEDERSEN: [00:06:56] St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:06:58] Okay. What is your degree in?

PEDERSEN: [00:07:02] Um, I'm like the lady who was on what TV program? She's a comedian. And she used to pretend that she was from St. Olaf.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:07:15] Oh, really? I don't remember that program.

PEDERSEN: [00:07:18] It was the, um. She was matched up with another lady who, was three ladies, and she was one of them. The second lady was, um. I don't know, they were three comedians.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:07:33] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:07:34] I think they have all died by now. But one of their jokes, the one lady who was from, she said she was from Minnesota, and she said she went to St. Olaf College.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:07:43] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:07:44] So anything dumb that had to do with stupid Norwegians.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:07:48] Right.

PEDERSEN: [00:07:48] Or forgetful Norwegians or Norwegians that were sailors or Norwegians that, um, made their living off of fishing boats.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:07:57] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:07:58] The jokes were.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:07:59] Yeah. Because you're Norwegian American.

PEDERSEN: [00:08:01] Yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:08:01] Yeah. Right. Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:08:02] I'm third generation because my, let's see, my mother. My grandmother came from Norway. He settled, married a lady. She died in childbirth. Very traumatic for him. He remarried my grandmother.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:08:20] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:08:21] And I remember this story. This is not important. But it's an interesting thing that he, apparently, no one ever said this. But from what they said, he must have been very much in love with her

because when the grandmother, um. My grandmother lived in the house, which still is, they haven't turned it down today. And there's reason for that, because of asbestos making up the, they use asbestos in part of the building materials.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:08:59] Yes.

PEDERSEN: [00:09:00] And they don't try to tear down today any buildings, um, without inspecting it first. If it has asbestos, they can't take it down.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:09:11] Yeah, yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:09:12] It has to be destroyed. And it's terribly expensive to tear down a building, could cost \$10,000.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:09:18] Right.

PEDERSEN: [00:09:19] Because they have to bag the whole house in bags and be careful that asbestos doesn't get into the air.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:09:25] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:09:26] Sorry about the aside.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:09:27] That's alright. Yeah. That's okay. Um. Another question, the second actually, is why did you join the Peace Corps? So that's a very basic question.

PEDERSEN: [00:09:38] My sister was responsible for that. She said to me one day out of the blue, I don't know when and where, but she was wandering around my house or wandering around some house we were in together. And she said, if I were 21 or 22, if I was single, if I was free to travel, I would join the Peace Corps. And so I looked at me, at her, and I remember thinking, I'm that, I'm that, I'm that. I'm going to join the Peace Corps.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:10:11] But it was your sister saying that, and she was already married, I'm guessing?

PEDERSEN: [00:10:15] Yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:10:16] Okay, she's your older sister?

PEDERSEN: [00:10:17] Right.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:10:17] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:10:18] And because she said that and I repeated it to myself and said, that's me, that's me, that's me, I decided to join the Peace Corps.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:10:26] Okay. Um, did you hear about the Peace Corps in any other, uh, fashion? Which, and I'm just making up examples, because I remember this. TV, um, radio announcements, newspapers. Or was it only your sister telling you about the Peace Corps?

PEDERSEN: [00:10:45] I only remember the incident with my sister.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:10:48] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:10:48] But, you know, I may later on come back with you with more information on that.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:10:53] Okay. Um, now, when you did decide to join, did you have a specific country you wanted to go to?

PEDERSEN: [00:11:02] No.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:11:03] Okay. Any country you would have gone to. Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:11:07] But I think I had an interest somewhere buried in my head to go to Asia.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:11:13] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:11:14] Because when, my first ever, my first invitation was from Borneo, North Borneo.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:11:24] Oh, okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:11:24] North Borneo. And they wanted me. And I was teaching in the middle of the school year and school teachers do not quit their jobs in middle of the school year. I mean, that's foreboding.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:11:38] Yes.

PEDERSEN: [00:11:38] You don't do that to school district or to your students, put anyone, unless you are fired, in which case it makes sense, um, or you're dying of some disease.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:11:53] Yes. Yeah. So. Okay. Um, how did your family react when you told them you were joining the Peace Corps?

PEDERSEN: [00:12:03] Uh, my sister made the famous statement, which I remember now because I don't remember how I found out about it, but she remembered that statement, and I answered back to myself, that's not, that's you, that's you, that's you.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:12:18] Yes.

PEDERSEN: [00:12:18] And I said, okay, I'm going to join.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:12:20] How did your mom and dad react?

PEDERSEN: [00:12:23] Uh, they were typical Norwegians.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:12:25] Sorry. Laughed.

PEDERSEN: [00:12:28] And when Norwegians don't know what to say, they keep their mouths shut. Don't say anything, or there's something else they do. But I can't remember what it is.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:12:39] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:12:39] Typical Norwegian.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:12:40] Yeah. Don't say much. Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:12:42] Don't say much.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:12:43] Um.

PEDERSEN: [00:12:44] It's that, um, if you, if you can't say something good, what do you do?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:12:50] Don't say anything at all.

PEDERSEN: [00:12:51] Okay, that's, that's what I was brought up with.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:12:54] Yeah, yeah. And I think you're not the only ethnic group that thinks that, you know. Um, was there any, let's say, hesitation or reservations on your part to join the Peace Corps?

PEDERSEN: [00:13:12] No.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:13:13] None?

PEDERSEN: [00:13:13] None.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:13:14] Were you nervous?

PEDERSEN: [00:13:15] No.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:13:17] Not at all?

PEDERSEN: [00:13:17] No.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:13:18] My goodness, you're brave. Okay, um, how many different countries were, did you receive an invitation from? Because you've mentioned Borneo. Was Malaysia your second invitation?

PEDERSEN: [00:13:35] Definitely had Borneo. And I couldn't do it, as I just explained. So it must have been.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:13:41] Malaysia was probably your second. Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:13:43] And it wasn't Malaysia at that point.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:13:45] Oh, yes.

PEDERSEN: [00:13:46] It was Malaya, because it had not formed an alliance and became, um, Malaysia.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:13:53] Yes.

PEDERSEN: [00:13:54] Which at the beginning was made up of Malaya, Indonesia, Sarawak, and Brunei.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:14:03] And what were those?

PEDERSEN: [00:14:04] Those were islands nearby.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:14:06] Islands nearby. Mm hmm. Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:14:08] And in order to have a fist and the world power struggle, um, they united together to form Malaysia.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:14:20] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:14:20] So they could have, uh, formed trading partners so they could.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:14:26] Would you.

PEDERSEN: [00:14:27] And that's how you made money in those days.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:14:29] Would you repeat those islands once more? It was Malaya.

PEDERSEN: [00:14:33] Malaya.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:14:33] Malaya.

PEDERSEN: [00:14:35] Uh, Sarawak. Borneo. North Borneo, no, South Borneo. And Brunei.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:14:44] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:14:47] I didn't know where North, oh, North, oh. North Borneo became united under, um, Australian configuration really, and became part of that group. And I can't explain that because my brain just popped out and it doesn't remember that.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:15:06] Okay. Very good. Okay. Um. I know I already asked you, but it's interesting to me that you didn't have any reservations, so. Okay. Uh, this is actually the fifth question. What project were you invited to join?

PEDERSEN: [00:15:26] Can I make a comment about no reservations?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:15:29] Yes. Sure.

PEDERSEN: [00:15:30] No reservations because I have this quirk. I'm sure it has to do with some part of my heredity that my father was Norwegians. And Norwegians way back when a rumored to be seafarers and explorers of the world.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:15:48] Yes, Vikings, remember? Vikings.

PEDERSEN: [00:15:50] That's what. And now I don't claim for all the brutality because they're supposed to be brutality and slaying and rope and pillage.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:16:02] Yeah. Pillage. Yes, that's a good word.

PEDERSEN: [00:16:04] So I won't claim to be for that. But the exploring part, I'm swear I have a couple genes attached to one chromosome someplace in my body, and they're exploring genes. Adventure, adventure and sporting genes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:16:17] Okay, it's adventure and exploring genes. Yeah. You know what? Maybe you are. Let me take a good look at you. Maybe you really are a Viking from the past. How? We won't go into your age right now, then. But jeepers creepers, you must be a Viking.

PEDERSEN: [00:16:36] I'm a, I'm old enough that there might be something to that.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:16:40] Yes.

PEDERSEN: [00:16:41] No, I'm just kidding.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:16:42] No, I think. Well, I won't go into it because I don't need to talk about myself on this. Um, we'll go back to the question. What project were you invited to join, you know, Peace Corps project? What was your job?

PEDERSEN: [00:16:55] I was originally.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:16:56] In Malaya.

PEDERSEN: [00:16:57] Okay. Yeah, I was originally North Borneo, Brunei, and I hesitated there. You asked for a hesitation. Now, I remember they were, um. Oh, they were rumored to be because this. I don't know if I read this, I heard about it or what, but there were. Oh, okay. I did

read about it. Fijians were headhunters and they did, they did, uh, knock people over the head and they liked to, uh, boil them in a pot of oil.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:17:30] I'm sorry. I'm sorry I laughed on the recording. Okay, so the Bornean or the Fiji were headhunters?

PEDERSEN: [00:17:38] Fijians were.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:17:40] To hit you over the head and boil you in a pot of water.

PEDERSEN: [00:17:43] To eat you.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:17:45] Okay. Well, I guess you did not get eaten because here you are today.

PEDERSEN: [00:17:48] No, no.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:17:49] Did anybody hit you over the head?

PEDERSEN: [00:17:50] Nobody hit me over the head.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:17:52] Okay. That's, that's very good.

PEDERSEN: [00:17:53] I can't remember even stumbling.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:17:56] Yeah. That's, yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:17:58] And I never was sick.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:17:58] And if somebody asked me about that story, I've heard that but I forgot it. Yes, but I forgot which tribe or nation was rumored to.

PEDERSEN: [00:18:08] Oh, it was um. Oh, and I can tell you what they sold.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:18:14] Oh, wait, hold on. The Fiji folks or the?

PEDERSEN: [00:18:18] The British Empire was part of the Fiji, uh, was part of the Fiji. Uh, the British Empire and their, one of their trading biggies. It wasn't gold, silver, beef. Uh, it was sea cucumber.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:18:37] A sea cucumber?

PEDERSEN: [00:18:38] A sea cucumber is not an urchin, a sea urchin, which is the prickly one, crawls across the ocean floor. Um, and it is. I could I used to know what filaments in, now I've forgotten, but it has little suction feet that comes down out of the shell. And it has a mouth. And the mouth and the anus and they're very, uh, simple creatures from a biology point of view, serve the same important function. A second food, get rid of it, and not at the same time they have this sort of system that so and they also have little two feet that they stick out. And these little tube feet look like what you'd think of as an octopus. Except an octopus is very, that's a chordate. And it has a spinal tube running down its back. So it belongs to, any of us who live and work with the spinal column running down her back.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:19:43] Yeah. Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:19:44] So they're very advanced.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:19:45] Wow.

PEDERSEN: [00:19:46] But now a sea urchin is very simple creatures. But it's the first chordate, and their spinal column was just a line running down their back. They would later, uh, evolutionary wise, be connected to the chordates. So it's a primitive chordate.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:20:05] Yeah. Now, did you teach biology in Malaya?

PEDERSEN: [00:20:09] Yes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:20:09] Okay. And tell me again, what age group did you teach to, or did you teach?

PEDERSEN: [00:20:15] Um. Uh, let's see, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh graders, perhaps.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:20:20] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:20:21] I'm not sure about eighth because I think under the British system of education, they were given exams in third grade, and if they flunked them, they were out and.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:20:33] Wait. Let me interrupt you.

PEDERSEN: [00:20:34] Stopping school.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:20:35] They stopped school?

PEDERSEN: [00:20:36] Yes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:20:36] Did they have any alternative, like a trade school?

PEDERSEN: [00:20:39] Um, there might have been.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:20:40] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:20:41] There were some.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:20:41] But as far as you?

PEDERSEN: [00:20:42] It was pretty much.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:20:43] They were out after third grade.

PEDERSEN: [00:20:45] Right. And that's pretty much up for grabs then. They had to find their own way. If their parents were there, they would continue to support them. They can live at home. If their parents weren't there and they were orphans on the street, then they became beggars and they're on their own.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:21:05] Yeah. That's sad. Beggars on the street.

PEDERSEN: [00:21:07] That's life.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:21:08] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:21:09] In third world countries.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:21:10] Yes. Yes, it is. Um, what language did you speak there?

PEDERSEN: [00:21:15] I spoke Malay, and this is the funny.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:21:17] M-A-L-A-Y?

PEDERSEN: [00:21:19] M-A-L-A-Y. Malay. The language of Malaysia, but Malay.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:21:27] Uh huh.

PEDERSEN: [00:21:28] And I have to make a joke out of it because I took a, Peace Corps gave a, you may remember, Peace Corps gave a language test.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:21:43] Yes.

PEDERSEN: [00:21:44] To ascertain your ability to learn languages and remember. And your ability to pronounce and speak syllables that weren't necessarily syllables or the way to pronounce things in English that you, that you knew.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:22:04] Now, where did you get the test?

PEDERSEN: [00:22:06] Peace Corps gave that test.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:22:07] Okay in, um, in Malaysia. And I keep saying Malaysia.

PEDERSEN: [00:22:11] In the training camp.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:22:12] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:22:13] In the training facility. I went to the facility.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:22:16] Yeah, where was your facility?

PEDERSEN: [00:22:18] I went to DeKalb, Illinois.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:22:21] DeKalb, Illinois.

PEDERSEN: [00:22:22] DeKalb. C-A-L-B [sic]. That's a, um.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:22:27] I've heard of it.

PEDERSEN: [00:22:27] DeKalb is a generic name for. No, no, it's not a generic name. It is a company that produces seed corn.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:22:35] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:22:36] And they, they own big. Caroline may know this. Caroline? No. Oh, they own big, um, silos and put them up throughout Iowa. And they the, sour, silos, the silo are places where you store grain.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:22:58] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:22:58] And that's corn, wheat, grain. And in some place, no, it would just have silos.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:23:07] But your training was in DeKalb.

PEDERSEN: [00:23:09] DeKalb.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:23:09] DeKalb, Illinois.

PEDERSEN: [00:23:11] DeKalb. C-A-L-U-B [sic], I think.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:23:16] Okay. Um, what did you learn in DeKalb, DeKalb? I'm sorry, I'm not even saying it right. I mean, did they, uh, do. Okay. You talked about a language test?

PEDERSEN: [00:23:28] A language test.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:23:29] Aptitude test?

PEDERSEN: [00:23:30] Correct. That's a good point. Aptitude test. They give you a physical test.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:23:36] Physical test.

PEDERSEN: [00:23:37] So that would be, um, they gave you, uh, they went over your health records to have, make sure that you didn't have anything congenital, like a heart murmur, or blah, blah, blah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:23:52] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:23:53] Um, they gave you a series of every shot imaginable known to mankind that you could be.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:24:02] That's a lot.

PEDERSEN: [00:24:03] Exactly. Uh, vaccinated for.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:24:05] Right.

PEDERSEN: [00:24:06] So you didn't get chicken pox, uh, whatever. Measles. Okay. Polio. You know, so you had all those shots. And then I mentioned, they didn't know your conditioning, so all of us would, did. And I remember doing this. Push ups, and they counted them in so many minutes. Push ups, so many minutes. Running in place, so many minutes. And they gave, then they gave a swimming test.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:24:36] Uh huh.

PEDERSEN: [00:24:37] And then you were. You were asked to write, um, swim so many laps.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:24:45] Wow. Huh.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:24:48] I just, uh, I'm not trying to talk about myself, but we didn't have a physical test. Interesting.

PEDERSEN: [00:24:54] Really?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:24:54] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:24:54] So, see, that was early on, so maybe they decided that wasn't important.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:24:59] Yeah. Do you remember how many weeks you had your training?

PEDERSEN: [00:25:03] I think it was either six to nine weeks.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:25:08] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:25:08] Or maybe a couple months, but I don't know which. Yeah, maybe, I think it was nine weeks.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:25:12] Yeah. Did you learn about biology there? I mean, you already graduated from college, but did you have any specific training to what you were going to be doing in Malaya? Malaya.

PEDERSEN: [00:25:24] I was unusual in that I was already trained as a teacher.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:25:28] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:25:29] Now what I don't remember because of my memory, um, is whether. I was trained as a teacher. Yes, I went as a teacher. Ah, I did have two years experience before I went.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:25:47] As a teacher?

PEDERSEN: [00:25:47] Yes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:25:47] Wow, okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:25:48] And that teaching, that training, that experience was at William Horlick High School in Racine, Wisconsin.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:25:57] Racine, Wisconsin.

PEDERSEN: [00:25:59] And Horlick's was, this is not important at all, but Horlick's company was a malted milk company and they make Horlick's malted milk. Have you had it?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:26:08] Uh, maybe decades ago.

PEDERSEN: [00:26:11] They have melted, malted milk balls.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:26:13] Oh, yes. I've had malted milk balls.

PEDERSEN: [00:26:15] Okay. And that company made that. And then they made a carton that was dark brown, brownish black and, with gold or silver trim. And they produced the malted milk, which you could take as a tablespoon, put in a glass, and it had milk and malted milk powder. And then you could have a malted milk shake, which you could go to the what they call five and ten or dime stores.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:26:45] Yes, yes, that's old.

PEDERSEN: [00:26:47] And have a Horlick's malted milk shake.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:26:51] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:26:51] And you added, when they made that up, you could, they added scoops of ice cream to it to make a malted milk shake.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:26:59] Sounds good. Wow. Wow. Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:27:02] Now when, when my relatives and I went to Iowa, you could buy malted milk powder, which was what the original malted milk shakes were from. So you could take that home and have, have the original.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:27:20] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:27:21] And I assume now you can. And the, um, in Iowa, in a town of three to 7,000 now, two to 3,000 originally.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:27:34] The town you're from, Grinnell?

PEDERSEN: [00:27:34] To 2,000 originally, now five, probably seven to ten to 15,000.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:27:40] Uh huh.

PEDERSEN: [00:27:41] You could go to a drive in and you could get a malt, malted milkshake made from Horlick's malted milk powder.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:27:50] Really?

PEDERSEN: [00:27:51] Isn't that stupid information?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:27:53] Yes. Yeah. You know, it's interesting listening to you because you talk like a science teacher.

PEDERSEN: [00:27:58] I do?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:27:58] Well, that's interesting to me. Because teachers, you think differently, you know. Like I said, I'm not going to talk about myself, but I'm a nurse. I work with teachers. But I'm not a teacher.

PEDERSEN: [00:28:08] But you don't talk like I do.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:28:09] Well, no, you have great detail. You know, like teachers.

PEDERSEN: [00:28:13] If I make a statement, I hope I follow it up with something.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:28:16] Well, you're talking that has.

PEDERSEN: [00:28:17] To do with the statements.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:28:18] You're interested in all the nitty gritty. I mean, you expand on it.

PEDERSEN: [00:28:23] Oh, details.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:28:24] Like teachers do. So that's good.

PEDERSEN: [00:28:26] Oh, that's interesting.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:28:28] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:28:28] Someone said I talked as a teacher. I once took a course, and I don't know why I did, but I took a course on how to walk, uh, so that you look like you weren't going to fall over. Uh, whatever. It wasn't, I was not a model. I never wanted to be a model, but somehow I took a course in that, and I have no idea why.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:28:50] Yeah. Can't tell you. I can't help you. Going back to the Peace Corps training. Um, do you think the training was helpful that you received? I know you were in Illinois for it, and I know that goes way back.

PEDERSEN: [00:29:06] I think my training as a teach, Peace Corps, my training. As a college graduate with a biology degree in teaching enabled me to be useful as a trainer, trainee, and I wasn't scared at all to be a Peace Corps volunteer because I had good training because of

my teacher education background from St. Olaf College as a teacher.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:29:33] Yeah. What year did you graduate from St. Olaf?

PEDERSEN: [00:29:37] Um. I started in '60, so I graduated in '65 because I got a master's degree from DeKalb, Illinois. And, um, so I was. I came out having done practice teaching in Racine, Wisconsin, public schools, at Racine High School. And so I'd already been in the classroom, had someone.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:30:11] You had experience.

PEDERSEN: [00:30:12] Yeah. Someone had come from St. Olaf College to watch me as a trainee and said, yes, um. Here's what you did wrong. Here's what you did right.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:30:26] You got some feedback.

PEDERSEN: [00:30:27] Good luck. You're certified.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:30:30] Yeah. Um, when did you start the language training? I know you said you had the aptitude test in DeKalb.

PEDERSEN: [00:30:39] In the training program.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:30:40] In the training program? Uh, what kind of language is Malaya? Like is it in that Indo European group, or do they use the Roman alphabet or characters?

PEDERSEN: [00:30:56] Yes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:30:57] They use the Roman alphabet?

PEDERSEN: [00:30:58] Yeah, because it was a former English colony.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:31:01] Oh yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:31:01] Therefore they read and write, wrote everything in English and spoken English.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:31:09] Okay. Oh, but now when you taught, did you say you taught in Malaya or you taught in English?

PEDERSEN: [00:31:14] The Peace Corps taught me. They brought in, um, instructors and people from Malaysia who spoke Malay, and they taught us Malay to speak.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:31:26] So how was your language skills?

PEDERSEN: [00:31:28] Oh, this is what, this is what I'm embarrassed about. My language skills were awful.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:31:37] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:31:38] And when I spoke Malay, um, is it. First of all, it was a struggle for me to learn language, and I'm not sure if this is true or not, but I think I put it on. You know how you make, because it's something I used my entire life. I made cards at a, cards at an index, and I put the Malay in one side and the English on the other.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:32:03] Yeah, yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:32:04] And a fistful of those. And I remember on the plane going over there, going through that, and then I got off the plane and I had prepared a little from the Malay skills. Hmm. Okay, this is after I finished my training and went home to say goodbye to my parents. Got on the plane. I remember practicing with my mother from my Malay course, um, my Malaysian words, so I could greet somebody when they came to get me when I got off the plane, pick me up, and take me to the place where I was going to live, introduce me to who was going to be in charge of me as a Peace Corps volunteer and say, good luck.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:32:57] Yes. Yeah. Okay. But then I'm kind of I'm wondering, did you teach in English then?

PEDERSEN: [00:33:03] I taught in English because.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:33:05] Okay, I wondered that.

PEDERSEN: [00:33:06] My training was so limited.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:33:07] Yes.

PEDERSEN: [00:33:08] And leaving a former British colony, there was no need to teach Malay because the British did such a good job of teaching and organizing, and they were there for 150 years.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:33:24] Okay, you mentioned 150 years. Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:33:27] There was no need for an English language.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:33:30] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:33:30] And what I suspected was that I scored so low on my ability to learn a foreign language, they said put her in an English speaking country.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:33:44] Okay. That was the interviewer laughing on the tape. Excuse me. Okay. Um, do you remember when you landed in Malaya? What were your impressions when you arrived? Not just the landing, but your first few days, weeks in Malaya?

PEDERSEN: [00:34:05] Well, my initial impressions were, uh, we were met by the, uh, premier of Malaysia. That would be like the president of the U.S.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:34:21] So was the premier, okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:34:23] And he spoke to us in English. But we sang. I don't know where this memory's coming from. We sang to him the Malaysian national language in Malay.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:34:39] Did you? So you must have learned that in training.

PEDERSEN: [00:34:41] I learned that in training. I practiced it at home washing dishes, I remember that, and sang it for my mother until I got it perfect.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:34:52] Do you remember any of the words?

PEDERSEN: [00:34:56] No.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:34:57] Okay. That's fine.

PEDERSEN: [00:34:58] But if someone sang the national anthem, I would be able to sing along. In other words, it's tucked away in my brain someplace.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:35:04] Somewhere.

PEDERSEN: [00:35:04] I could sing along.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:35:05] Okay, I can't help you because I don't speak it. Okay. Um, where did you live in Malaya? Like the capital, one of the outlying islands? Where did you live?

PEDERSEN: [00:35:17] I lived in Johor Bahru, which is.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:35:22] Can you spell that?

PEDERSEN: [00:35:24] J-O-H-O-R-E.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:35:26] Okay. Another time.

PEDERSEN: [00:35:27] Johore. J-O-H-O-R-E. That is the state.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:35:33] That's a state.

PEDERSEN: [00:35:34] Of Malaysia.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:35:36] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:35:36] And I should know this. And the name, the, um, word seven pops into my head, but I'm not sure if there were seven states in Johor or not.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:35:50] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:35:50] In other words, uh, that would be like, these again popped into my mind. Kelantan would be one state. Uh, Johor would be another.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:36:00] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:36:03] Um. Kotabaru. Oh, that's a city, that is not a state. Okay, that's all that states that.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:36:18] Okay. Do you did you live in a city or a small town?

PEDERSEN: [00:36:23] I lived in the city of Johor Bahru.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:36:27] Okay, so Johor was a state and also a city?

PEDERSEN: [00:36:32] The second name was the rest, with Bahru was the name of the city.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:36:38] Well, how do you spell?

PEDERSEN: [00:36:41] Bahru? B-A-H-R-U.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:36:46] B-A-H-R-U. Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:36:50] Yes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:36:50] Okay, so I'm just repeating this. You lived in the state of Johor and you lived in the city of Johor Bahru. Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:36:59] And it. Oh, boy.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:37:01] Was it on the mainland or was it an island?

PEDERSEN: [00:37:06] That's a good question. Um.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:37:09] Just because you mentioned island before.

PEDERSEN: [00:37:13] Okay. I have a world map here.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:37:15] Yes, she definitely does.

PEDERSEN: [00:37:18] Um, this is.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:37:19] Cambodia. Is this?

PEDERSEN: [00:37:20] This is Malaysia here. Okay. Uh, so this is Indonesia.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:37:26] Right.

PEDERSEN: [00:37:26] This is Borneo. Uh huh. Uh, Borneo is, uh, North and South Borneo. North Borneo was at, uh. Um. We are, North Borneo is associated with these islands here. So, um, I was aware of those islands. I'm not sure. I think I forgot your question, right?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:37:57] Were you on the mainland?

PEDERSEN: [00:37:59] No.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:38:00] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:38:01] I was on South Borneo.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:38:02] Okay. And so this here was in.

PEDERSEN: [00:38:05] Oh, I was invited to South Borneo.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:38:07] And that's where you lived?

PEDERSEN: [00:38:08] I was, uh, but I didn't end up there.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:38:11] Oh, okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:38:11] Because the invitation came out, came in the middle of the year.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:38:15] Uh huh.

PEDERSEN: [00:38:16] And you don't quit.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:38:16] Middle of the school year, right, right. You did say that. Got it. Okay. Got it. Okay. Um, uh, what was your impression of the local people when you first arrived? Or the early part of your stay?

PEDERSEN: [00:38:34] First impressions?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:38:34] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:38:35] Um, the, I already said the president of Malaysia.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:38:39] The premier.

PEDERSEN: [00:38:40] Premier, premier. Right. Uh, welcomed us, and I had memorized the national anthem.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:38:47] Yes. You said that.

PEDERSEN: [00:38:49] So we all sang it to him.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:38:50] Right, right.

PEDERSEN: [00:38:51] The poor thing. And, uh, I assume he was pleased by it, and probably a little surprised.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:38:58] Yes, yes. Uh huh.

PEDERSEN: [00:39:01] That's all I remember.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:39:02] Okay. What kind of house or hut or where did you live?

PEDERSEN: [00:39:08] Um, okay, the first thing comes to mind. I lived in Johor Bahru. I stayed with a, um, an Indian and Chinese couple. The man, his name was. His last name was Paul. And the, um, his wife. Um. Dorcas. His wife's name was Dorcas Paul. And they, she was Chinese and he was Indian. Now, in 1960, for two people of different nationalities to marry each other was fairly unusual.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:39:58] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:39:59] So he was a six foot three Indian man.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:40:03] Uh huh.

PEDERSEN: [00:40:04] And she was this little tiny Chinese lady.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:40:07] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:40:08] And she wore, um, the dress for Chinese was either, well, what I remember was called. I'm not sure about this either. The name that pops into my mind was *kumsong*, and a *kumsong* was a sari like this, which you.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:40:32] Watch out for the bed so you don't fall.

PEDERSEN: [00:40:33] And hand-printed.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:40:36] Uh huh.

PEDERSEN: [00:40:37] Cloth. Uh, the sari was hand-printed with, um, iron, it's an iron. Uh, uh, that was, uh. I would guess put in a, formation is the wrong word. Um, folded and melted and molded by fire. Holding this thing in a fire into.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:41:16] The cloth?

PEDERSEN: [00:41:18] No. An iron.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:41:19] Okay. The iron. Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:41:21] An iron stamp. Yeah. And it was welded together and molded and folded into something that printed if you dipped into ink. You dipped into ink and you'd print on this cloth. Now, whether they got this cloth, I don't know, unless it was originally I know where it was.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:41:43] Where?

PEDERSEN: [00:41:44] Uh, flour sacks. And so grain was shipped to these countries. And the original. Um, and I. That pops in my mind too. I don't know where I got that information, but. It was originally made into cloths, and you put them around your waist and you tucked in the edge into your underwear or pants, whatever you had under your saris. And then.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:42:19] And this is what the Chinese lady wore?

PEDERSEN: [00:42:21] This is what the Malay ladies.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:42:24] Oh, the Malay. Since the, since the person listening can't see what we're doing. Karen's, uh, demonstrating, wrapping a cloth around.

PEDERSEN: [00:42:35] A sarong.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:42:35] Around her waist. Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:42:37] And finger pleating the sarong.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:42:41] Finger pleating the sarong.

PEDERSEN: [00:42:43] So the sarong is eight, eight feet of material and I'm, I'm finger printing it, pleating it so the pleats cover up the ragged edge of the strong.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:42:56] Oh, so you won't see it.

PEDERSEN: [00:42:57] It's just not been hemmed. And that, those pleats then are, I have five pleats and this will come. This will look like, uh, folded, sewed edges of a hemmed skirt. So it will. Okay. So this falls in. And if this was. Saris are. I assume, now I'm not sure about this part. I assume they're, uh. Ah. They're made of material that actually when they're folded, this will be the same color as that. This is a printed material.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:43:43] And so you don't see the rough edge either?

PEDERSEN: [00:43:45] No, you don't see the rough edge. And if it's folded on one side and not printed on the other, you don't see that either. So.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:43:53] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:43:54] The saris are, they, uh. Not the saris. The sarongs are made in such a way that they are the same material on both sides.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:44:04] Yeah. Karen, you want to have a seat and we'll continue talking about your work. Just because the people can't see what you're doing.

PEDERSEN: [00:44:11] Oh, I know.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:44:12] So, um. Okay, have a seat, please.

PEDERSEN: [00:44:16] Here's an example of a sarong. This is printed on both sides.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:44:22] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:44:22] So that didn't matter if it tucks in here in your waistband. You see folds, decorated folds like this. It shows off the edge of this room comes all the way around. Your top is. Um, the top is hooked into whatever folds you have underneath your garment. And then you have a blouse, if it's a sarong kebaya that fits over the top and goes with your waist.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:45:00] Yeah, okay. Have a seat. Yeah. And then we're going to continue. Because you, you're on a roll. Okay. So have a seat please. Uh huh.

PEDERSEN: [00:45:14] And that's, that's where it'd be worn.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:45:16] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:45:17] See.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:45:17] Yeah. Very nice. Just that people can't see what you're doing.

PEDERSEN: [00:45:21] I know.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:45:22] Yeah. Okay. Can you describe a typical day teaching?

PEDERSEN: [00:45:31] I stayed. Peace Corps arranged for us to stay with, um, local families.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:45:38] Yeah, they arranged it.

PEDERSEN: [00:45:40] They arranged it, so I, I stayed with an Indian and Chinese family. Dorcas Paul. Dorcas, and, uh. And I've forgotten what. Robinson. His name was Robinson Paul. And I stayed with them, I lived with them.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:45:59] Yes.

PEDERSEN: [00:46:01] Peace Corps paid them. Um, they deposited in a bank in Johor Bahru, uh, either \$250 or \$350 a month.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:46:15] Dollars?

PEDERSEN: [00:46:15] That was the Peace Corps salary.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:46:16] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:46:17] \$250.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:46:18] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:46:19] I think it's about two, \$250 or \$300 a month. That's my Peace Corps salary.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:46:25] Yeah. Okay. Um, was it a public school you worked in or a private school?

PEDERSEN: [00:46:31] Public.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:46:31] Public. Okay. And you already told us the grades and things like that. Um, were you the only Peace Corps volunteer in town, or were there others?

PEDERSEN: [00:46:40] Oh, I think there were about five others.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:46:42] Five. Okay. Um, so. Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:46:46] Um, all were in different occupations.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:46:48] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:46:50] Um, I was a teacher. Uh. There was a Peace Corps volunteer who, there was an English college. An English college is in the English system of education. English college started at, college started at, um, 10th grade.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:47:13] College?

PEDERSEN: [00:47:13] Yes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:47:14] Like for us university?

PEDERSEN: [00:47:15] Yes. So they were essentially two years ahead of us. So I was teaching fourth, what was it, fourth through eighth grade.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:47:25] Yes.

PEDERSEN: [00:47:25] Ninth grade was college.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:47:28] Really?

PEDERSEN: [00:47:28] Ninth grade would be college, 10th, 11th and 12th.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:47:31] Okay. And this is part of the British system?

PEDERSEN: [00:47:33] Right. And so that I had a friend, David, who was teaching at an English college, um. Uh, upper grades. He was teaching, uh, college classes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:47:48] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:47:49] And I was teaching high school. No, I was teaching middle school.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:47:55] Yeah, because you said fourth grade.

PEDERSEN: [00:47:57] Fourth, not fourth. I would say sixth through, um, six to eighth grade.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:48:04] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:48:04] And when you get into ninth, 10th, that would be high school, the college.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:48:08] Okay. What would you do in your leisure time when you weren't working? What did you do?

PEDERSEN: [00:48:14] Grade papers.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:48:15] I'm sorry, I should, I'm sorry listener that I laughed, uh, I cackled. Yes. Okay. That sounds like teachers here in the United States too. You graded papers.

PEDERSEN: [00:48:25] Always.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:48:25] Okay. Now, when you were not grading papers and you were not at the school, what did you do?

PEDERSEN: [00:48:31] Three-quarters of my time was grading papers.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:48:33] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:48:33] I graded papers wherever I went. I'd take my, I took my papers with me.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:48:37] Yes.

PEDERSEN: [00:48:38] So, because otherwise I didn't never able to do, have any life if I didn't take the papers. So I would go to, um. I would go to Singapore. I went to sit down to lunch at a place. This is a British colony and they had these traditions like, um, ice cream parlors.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:49:05] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:49:06] And there's a name for those, but I can't remember. And we would sit down and we'd have hot fudge sundaes and we'd.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:49:13] Oh, that sounds wonderful.

PEDERSEN: [00:49:14] We would let a volunteer in the area know that we'd be down to Singapore, and we would meet them at so-and-so place. And there was a the, it was a syndicate that had ice cream parlors. And we would meet in there for ice cream and.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:49:34] Now, how did you get to Singapore?

PEDERSEN: [00:49:36] Uh.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:49:39] Because I think, is Singapore, correct me if I'm right or wrong, is Singapore at the end of Malaysia?

PEDERSEN: [00:49:44] Right, it is.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:49:44] The southern tip or something?

PEDERSEN: [00:49:49] Yes, right here.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:49:49] And for the listener, we have the globe out again and we're looking at the globe.

PEDERSEN: [00:49:54] Yeah. And so here's Malaysia and then here's Indonesia.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:50:00] Yes.

PEDERSEN: [00:50:01] So you can see it's right across the causeway.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:50:03] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:50:04] You can see it from. So you can see it from Singapore.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:50:09] Was it difficult to get to Singapore from Malaysia?

PEDERSEN: [00:50:13] No. They are connected by what they call a causeway, which is a broad highway that existed in 19, probably '60, when the British were there, being 150 years of colonies. They had the time to build a bridge, um, that connected, uh, Malaysia to Singapore.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:50:38] Okay. When did, uh.

PEDERSEN: [00:50:40] You know, a 2.5 hour bus ride.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:50:42] Bus ride, okay. You, um, I, I want to ask you a little.

PEDERSEN: [00:50:46] It went three times a day.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:50:47] Oh, my gosh. Um. Let's see. Okay, now, you've mentioned a few times that Malaysia.

PEDERSEN: [00:50:53] Sometimes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:50:53] Was part of the British Empire. When did Malaya become Malaysia?

PEDERSEN: [00:51:00] Uh, in, let's see, I would say maybe 1964.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:51:06] Okay. So while you were there?

PEDERSEN: [00:51:07] In 1963. Yes. Because there was a celebration to, when Malaysia became a part of a union with Sarawak, Indonesia, Brunei.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:51:23] And Borneo?

PEDERSEN: [00:51:24] Mm hmm.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:51:25] Can you spell that first name you said, sar?

PEDERSEN: [00:51:28] Sarawak.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:51:28] How do you spell that?

PEDERSEN: [00:51:29] S-A. S-A-R-W-A-K [sic].

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:51:38] Okay, I don't know if I've heard of that.

PEDERSEN: [00:51:41] Sarawak is.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:51:42] Was it like an island before it became part of Malaysia?

PEDERSEN: [00:51:48] Yes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:51:49] Why did they change their name from Malaya to Malaysia?

PEDERSEN: [00:51:55] Uh, so here's Singapore right here.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:51:57] I see it.

PEDERSEN: [00:51:58] And this is, uh. Let's see. Okay. This whole island here is Indonesia.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:52:09] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:52:10] Um, because you have the great United States mass, you have China mass, you have Europe mass, and then you have Indonesia and you have Malaysia. So they felt they needed world power. And if they could combine together and form a federation of some type, they would have more buying power. In the UN [United Nations], they'd had more votes. And um, so it made sense that they banded together with other small little countries that had no power.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:52:44] And became Malaysia.

PEDERSEN: [00:52:46] Malaysia. Makes sense.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:52:47] Yeah. Okay. Yeah. And as a quick aside, it's not part of the interview. But I had a couple people from South Africa live with me years ago from the, through this Denver International program. I mentioned that because they said they were Malay and I would say, you mean Malaysia? But they'd say, I'm Malay.

PEDERSEN: [00:53:08] No, that means they originally came from the country of Malaya. And Malaya is part of this confederation.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:53:16] That became Malaysia.

PEDERSEN: [00:53:18] That includes all of these other countries.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:53:20] Yeah. Was there a revolt? Was there a coup or was it peaceful?

PEDERSEN: [00:53:32] It was not a coup. It was not a revolt. I think it was, um, uh, a bid to be more powerful as a group of single countries so that they could get trading partners.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:53:47] Yes.

PEDERSEN: [00:53:48] And they could throw their weight around.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:53:50] Yeah, yeah. Um, here's another question. Oh, did you have any health problems while you were there?

PEDERSEN: [00:53:56] No.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:53:57] None, really? Okay. Were you able to drink the water?

PEDERSEN: [00:54:02] Um.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:54:02] Or did you have to boil it?

PEDERSEN: [00:54:05] Iodine?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:54:06] Or use iodine?

PEDERSEN: [00:54:08] Um, I think in Malaysia the water was such that we could. After we've been there a while, you could, you could, um, actually drink it.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:54:17] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:54:17] But when I first arrived, I remember for some reason I was by myself. And I went out to eat. Oh, I was in Kuala Lumpur. I'd arrive by plane and all the volunteers, um, then scooted off to various parts of the country. And why I was by myself, I don't know. And I went out to eat and I went into a restaurant and it was Chinese. Uh, but I wasn't aware there was such a thing as hot food because I only had Chinese food before. So I sat down and they gave me a bowl of soup.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:54:58] Mm hmm.

PEDERSEN: [00:54:59] And it had green chili in it.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:55:01] Green chili?

PEDERSEN: [00:55:02] Yeah. And green chili paste in a little bowl that was red. The chili paste was mashed up. And so you could just scoop a cup, a scoop a spoonful and throw it into your bowl.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:55:16] Was it real hot?

PEDERSEN: [00:55:18] Very, very hot. And that was the point of my story. I started this, I started eating my soup, and suddenly I was overcome by the power of this chili paste. And I felt my head, I felt my head was going to blow off. It was so hot.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:55:36] I can see you still have your head card. For the listener, she did not have her head blown off.

PEDERSEN: [00:55:43] That's Barbara's sense of humor.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:55:46] Yeah. So that's, that's head blown off. Okay, good. It did not blow off.

PEDERSEN: [00:55:50] It did not blow off.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:55:51] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:55:51] But it felt like it. And I was so embarrassed and I didn't know what to do. And I don't know if you've ever had the experience of having something hot, being in a foreign culture, having, tasting food, their food for the first time.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:56:07] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:56:08] And then covering up your reaction to that food. That was my, uh, you are now living in Malaysia feeling. You are here.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:56:19] Yeah. Was the food typically spicy or only if you added that paste?

PEDERSEN: [00:56:26] It depends. To me, uh, probably all spice, all food was a little bit spicy because I wasn't used to the food. But in reality.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:56:35] It's not like the food in Iowa.

PEDERSEN: [00:56:37] No. Okay, okay. Yes, I would say it is not like the food in Iowa.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:56:43] Sorry I'm laughing. Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:56:45] Compared to that, it was very full bodied.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:56:50] Okay, okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:56:51] Which meant that on a regular basis, when you have a scoop or a bite or a bowl full of, spoon of Malaysian food, you probably are getting a lot of chili paste in there.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:57:06] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:57:07] But not necessarily.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:57:08] Yeah. Um, were you able to take vacations? Because I'm sure. Okay. Oh, let me backtrack. How long was the school year?

PEDERSEN: [00:57:15] Oh, the school year. This is the fun part. The school year, uh, had, um, now I'm not quite sure because the memory is going on that. Maybe three big vacations a year.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:57:27] Three big vacations.

PEDERSEN: [00:57:28] And these vacations lasted then 3 to 4 weeks.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:57:33] Very nice. Very nice. So did you travel? I'm guessing you did not bring your papers to grade, if you traveled.

PEDERSEN: [00:57:41] Yes, I. If I had, no. I would have finished grading papers, turn them in, issued grades before I was allowed to leave the school parking lot.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:57:53] Really? Okay. Um, let me see. Where did you travel to when you were in Peace Corps Malaya?

PEDERSEN: [00:57:59] I went, um, let's see. I lived in Malaysia, so, uh, I was, I was.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:58:06] Yeah, we looked at the global already.

PEDERSEN: [00:58:08] Johor Bahru was right at the tip of Malaysia, right here. So, uh, Singapore is right across. And on the globe, you can't see. There would be, um, a portion of my black globe that would show it, that would separate Malaya from Singapore.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:58:28] Okay, I see Singapore. Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [00:58:30] And they, they blend in the two because this globe is so small.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:58:34] Yeah. Well, it has the whole world on it.

PEDERSEN: [00:58:36] Yeah, that's right.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:58:37] So yeah. That's right. It'd be pretty humongous otherwise. Yeah. Okay. So you would go to Singapore for a vacation?

PEDERSEN: [00:58:44] Yes, I would go there, uh, to shop.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:58:48] Oh yes.

PEDERSEN: [00:58:49] Johor Bahru is, it was about 50,000 people. Singapore was probably, I would say at least a million. Wow.

[UNKNOWN]: [00:58:58] Did you go to Vietnam and Cambodia?

PEDERSEN: [00:59:00] Yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:59:01] Okay. So tell us again, all the different countries you went to on vacation when you, when you were Peace Corps.

PEDERSEN: [00:59:09] Okay.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:59:09] Not in your life, when you were Peace Corps.

PEDERSEN: [00:59:11] In the Peace Corps, um, I would, we. Oh, boy. This is a hard one because I have to picture myself back. Um. Okay, so on vacation. Singapore, I went on a daily basis if I needed something because there were busses and they run round about, what, \$3? Uh, and it took an hour and a half, or 3 hours.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:59:39] Three hours round trip?

PEDERSEN: [00:59:40] Yeah, I would say an hour and a half, uh, an hour and a half to go to Singapore.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:59:46] One way. Okay.

PEDERSEN: [00:59:48] Could be 45 minutes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:59:50] Okay. Well, I know this is a long time ago, I know that.

PEDERSEN: [00:59:54] Yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:59:54] But you were on such a roll with your answers, I thought we.

PEDERSEN: [00:59:57] Sixty-five years.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:59:58] Yeah, we'd record it. Yes. Okay. Yeah. She started talking a lot. Okay. The different countries or places you went to on vacation.

PEDERSEN: [01:00:08] Okay. Uh, on a daily basis, I would go to.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:00:12] Singapore.

PEDERSEN: [01:00:12] Singapore because it was a such a short distance and it was very cheap. And all of the goods in Singapore, since it's, uh, British colony port, um, would be cheaper than buying them in a store in Malaya, uh, by an individual owner that set the price. That individual owner would be competitive, but in Singapore, you're

competing with thousands of, of goods spread out on the sidewalk, uh, for sale, and you get a better deal.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:00:47] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [01:00:48] But you'd still have to bargain.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:00:49] You have to bargain. Were you good at bargaining?

PEDERSEN: [01:00:52] I got good at bargaining.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:00:54] Yeah, okay.

PEDERSEN: [01:00:55] But it's tricky because you're caught in, in between. You represent the U.S., and so you have to be. No, no, you don't want to be too careful to get your money's worth.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:01:13] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:01:13] Because then you might possibly inadvertently cheat somebody out of money that are their hard earned money, that they were paying some goods for.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:01:23] Yeah. Oh, uh, what kind of currency did you use?

PEDERSEN: [01:01:26] Um, Malaysian dollars.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:01:28] The Malaysian dollar.

PEDERSEN: [01:01:29] It would be, uh, three Malaysian dollars to one U.S.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:01:32] Oh, okay. Three Malaysian dollars to 1 U.S. dollar. Okay. Oh, going back to other countries you visited while, I know Barb, the other Barb, asked you about Vietnam. Did you go there while you were?

PEDERSEN: [01:01:45] I went to Vietnam. I went to South Vietnam because they were still fighting, uh, the communists and North Vietnam.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:01:53] Yes.

PEDERSEN: [01:01:53] And so I could only go. Let's see. Yeah, only South Vietnam.

[UNKNOWN]: [01:02:00] Hanoi?

PEDERSEN: [01:02:01] So I couldn't go into Hanoi or any of those places because the communists were.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:02:07] Right. Yeah. Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:02:09] And I could only go, when I was in Malaysia, I could go across the border. It was hooked up, um, south. Malaysia's hooked up to, uh.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:02:24] On the north?

PEDERSEN: [01:02:25] North to Thailand. So there's a border.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:02:29] We're looking at the globe now, listeners. We're looking at the globe again.

PEDERSEN: [01:02:32] So there's a border. Uh.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:02:35] Here, here we are. Here's Malaysia. There's Thailand.

PEDERSEN: [01:02:38] Okay, so this border here, I could go across there, and then I would travel by train from there all the way. I could go all the way up into, um, Thailand. And you can see I could go right here, this way.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:02:55] Uh huh.

PEDERSEN: [01:02:56] Because Thailand came around this way.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:02:58] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:02:58] And at a point, any point in time, there were, there was towns there that I could stop, stay overnight. Peace Corps had a system where the volunteers. I did this myself. If you were on a route, uh, which is a route for world travelers.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:03:19] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:03:19] Peace Corps world travelers. You could stop in any town and you could stay overnight with Peace Corps volunteers.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:03:27] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [01:03:27] And, uh, you could expect a floor to sleep on. They wouldn't necessarily, uh, serve you food.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:03:35] Yeah. But you had a place to sleep.

PEDERSEN: [01:03:36] You had a place and shower and go to the bathroom.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:03:39] Yeah, had that for support. Yeah. Okay.

PEDERSEN: [01:03:41] Going the bathroom wasn't that important in the sense that there were no, it was only important in the sense that there were no public restrooms.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:03:50] Oh, yes, I didn't even think of that.

PEDERSEN: [01:03:52] Even if you're wandering around a city.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:03:55] No public bathrooms.

PEDERSEN: [01:03:56] No public restrooms. So that means that you had to enter a quite a nice establishment, like, um.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:04:03] A hotel?

PEDERSEN: [01:04:05] Uh, for, um, uh, this is, would be Denver. A long time famous, uh, department store.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:04:12] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:04:13] And then you walked in the doors and you could use your restroom because you were a shopper there. But if you didn't wander in there, you would have no place to go.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:04:20] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:04:21] So if you.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:04:22] And I wonder about the toilets, were they the squatting hole in the ground toilets?

PEDERSEN: [01:04:27] Now, if they're open to the general public, they were, um, they were the squatting type that anyone off the street could use. So it was a cubicle of four walls. They could be made of, what is that, tin roof? That, um.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:04:49] Zinc corrugated roof type thing?

PEDERSEN: [01:04:51] Yeah, zinc corrugated roof. They were made of four walls of that. There would be a cement.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:04:59] Uh, floor?

PEDERSEN: [01:05:00] Yes. And there would be holes in the floor, which somebody obviously sort of pounded in, um, because there'd be dirt.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:05:09] Through the concrete?

PEDERSEN: [01:05:10] Yeah, through the concrete.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:05:11] Got it.

PEDERSEN: [01:05:12] And that would hold it in place so that over time people, uh, urinating would not wash the, the, the edges of the hole would not be washed in. So the hole would get wider and wider and wider.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:05:25] Ah.

PEDERSEN: [01:05:26] So that was a safety thing.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:05:28] Yeah. Yeah. Now you said like, if you went to a, uh, nice department store or something to use a toilet, would it be a Western toilet that we're used to where you could sit?

PEDERSEN: [01:05:38] Yeah, except the only difference is the toilet always had the, the tank. It was not like our toilets have the tank associated, what, behind the toilet,?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:05:54] Right. Yes.

PEDERSEN: [01:05:55] These toilets would be, um, hanging on the wall above your head. And the, they would be filled with water and they would have a chain from.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:06:13] Somewhere.

PEDERSEN: [01:06:13] It would have a chain from the handle. Uh, I remember always gold chains, and copper. There was probably be copper. Brass. There would be brass. Brass chains that would be located and hang hanging from a porcelain handle. It was always a portion handle on these toilets, and it would hang from that and you'd pull down. And then you'd be standing on little pads inside a big toilet bowl. And the pads would be, there would be printed places that look like the bottom of your foot.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:06:53] And that's where you would place your feet.

PEDERSEN: [01:06:54] So it would be a foot mark where you would plant your foot. And they planted so that on one edge. Oh, this is really odd to remember. On one edge you would know you should turn around one way if you wanted to defecate, and the other way if you wanted to urinate.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:07:12] For a man?

PEDERSEN: [01:07:13] Yeah. Right.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:07:15] Oh, okay.

PEDERSEN: [01:07:16] Oh, women too.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:07:16] Now let me ask, yeah. Oh, okay. I have to, hard to imagine that.

PEDERSEN: [01:07:20] Because you had a hole for defecation.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:07:24] Uh huh.

PEDERSEN: [01:07:25] And a hole for you. I'm not quite sure.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:07:28] Yeah. Okay. So were there public, you know, holes in the ground type toilets that people could use if needed? Or because you just said there weren't public toilets, but then there were some that were that corrugated tin?

PEDERSEN: [01:07:46] Okay. Yes, there were both. There were nice toilets in the department stores.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:07:52] Correct.

PEDERSEN: [01:07:52] Okay. Which looked like ours. In the streets there were tin, tin corrugated.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:07:59] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:07:59] Which anyone would step in.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:08:01] Yeah. Anybody could use.

PEDERSEN: [01:08:02] And then it was quite primitive inside.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:08:05] Yeah, I can imagine, I can imagine some of them.

PEDERSEN: [01:08:07] Some of them were just, um. It would be like what you see if you used outhouses.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:08:13] Yeah, which I have, yes.

PEDERSEN: [01:08:14] Without. So you'd look down the outhouses. That would be what would be like you'd see from.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:08:20] Okay. And you said you never got sick?

PEDERSEN: [01:08:22] No.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:08:22] Just listening to you, I think, gee, I would guess you could have some kind of gastrointestinal problem at times.

PEDERSEN: [01:08:30] I didn't consider what I got sick. I would say it would be, um, typical anytime you go. [to other person] Are you going home?

[UNKNOWN]: [01:08:42] I'll come back in to give you a check, but I've got to go.

PEDERSEN: [01:08:44] Okay. At any time, you could go. Um, I lost my track.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:08:50] Okay. We talked about the bathrooms. We're going to move on. Let's stop with the bathrooms. Did you travel? Um.

PEDERSEN: [01:08:58] This is important because you didn't know the language.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:09:02] Yes.

PEDERSEN: [01:09:02] In the country you were, so knowing the looks, where they're usually located. Um, how you would ask for a bathroom when you didn't know the language.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:09:16] Yes.

PEDERSEN: [01:09:16] It was as important as where to go to buy food.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:09:20] Yeah, yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:09:21] And that's hard to believe, isn't it?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:09:22] Right.

PEDERSEN: [01:09:23] That would be that important.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:09:24] Yeah. Is there anything else about your working as a teacher there that you'd like to share? We already know the grades you taught. And you taught biology.

PEDERSEN: [01:09:35] Right.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:09:36] Yeah. Um, which you had taught before in Racine, Wisconsin. And you were trained to be a teacher. Anything memorable about your time teaching as a Peace Corps volunteer?

PEDERSEN: [01:09:47] What was remember, what was memorable is I wasn't aware of the English system of education, and they had a syllabus for junior high. And the syllabus, the biology part of the syllabus. The syllabus was physics, chemistry, and biology, and I taught the biology part of it. My biology part was equivalent to.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:10:10] Keep talking.

PEDERSEN: [01:10:11] High school sophomore biology that we teach in the States. And um, the syllabus went on to cover junior and senior biology that junior, especially the senior, would be high school, uh, college first, second year.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:10:35] Uh huh.

PEDERSEN: [01:10:37] So the biology I taught was, instead of high school biology, it would have been junior high biology. And they were two years ahead of us in a school system.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:10:49] The British system was?

PEDERSEN: [01:10:51] Yes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:10:51] Oh my gosh.

PEDERSEN: [01:10:52] So that means that, uh, essentially the U.S. was two years behind all other countries in the world, British Empire.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:11:03] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:11:04] In what they were teaching.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:11:06] Uh huh. Interesting.

PEDERSEN: [01:11:08] Yeah. Which doesn't put us behind, but it gives you an idea how far we were, in the, in the British Empire catch up system in terms of education.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:11:19] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:11:19] And what, what was available. My junior high biology was equivalent to, um, junior high. And in the British system, the biology that some of my college was teaching was high school biology.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:11:36] Okay. Got it. Uh, what other languages did the people speak? Malay?

PEDERSEN: [01:11:41] Uh, Malay.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:11:42] Any others?

PEDERSEN: [01:11:43] The Malay, who were the indigenous people. they lived there. And then the English came in as colonies, colonists, and they started, uh, rubber plantations. Uh, this would be.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:12:02] Ah, the rubber plantations.

PEDERSEN: [01:12:04] Done in World War, I'm not sure about One, but for sure Two. Rubber was what the ingredient rubber was what helped us win the war, um, against the Japanese and.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:12:22] The other Axis powers.

PEDERSEN: [01:12:24] Yes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:12:24] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:12:25] Because the rubber made tires, and the tires could be put, instead of on ox carts. Once we had the first kind of motor and we developed past the, a couple of wheels and a spark for the engine and we could add fuel to it, gas or oil. We could make it into a motorized vehicle that could be powered with, um, what we use, use pumps, a motorized vehicle, and the pumps are compressed, uh, moved compressed air. And the compressed air runs along tubes into a steam engine.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:13:12] Yes. She's on a roll.

PEDERSEN: [01:13:13] And it runs a, uh.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:13:16] [to someone else] So I changed my plan.

PEDERSEN: [01:13:17] Uh, it runs, um, a fire engine.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:13:23] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:13:24] And that gets you someplace.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:13:26] Yeah. Okay. Um, at the end of your service there, I know you signed up for a few more months too, um. Did you feel, how, what was your sense of achievement, accomplishment, or failure? That's a tough question.

PEDERSEN: [01:13:47] I felt a sense of achievement.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:13:50] You did? Good. What did you achieve?

PEDERSEN: [01:13:54] Did you ask me those same questions? Because I, uh, I set up a system. Okay. They had three, three months off a year divided into three vacations.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:14:08] Yes.

PEDERSEN: [01:14:09] The kids had nothing to do.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:14:11] Yeah, on their time off.

PEDERSEN: [01:14:12] Nothing.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:14:12] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [01:14:13] There was no school program, no, no. Um. No town recreational programs set up. So there's nothing for them to do.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:14:25] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [01:14:26] So I said there's a gap there that, I thought there's a gap there that needs to be filled. Well, I should, I should dream up something to fill that gap.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:14:36] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [01:14:37] And I came up with a system of day camps. And these day camps could be run, um, for a day, seven days a week. They could be one week, two weeks, or three weeks. And the reason I didn't limit them, because Peace Corps volunteers were being paid by U.S. government, and they were only available on their vacations during the school holidays, which would be those three times a year, six weeks or three weeks, four weeks, vacation periods at a time. So the day camps had to be set up. They weren't longer than, say, three weeks or two weeks.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:15:14] During the vacation?

PEDERSEN: [01:15:15] During the vacation, yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:15:17] During the kids' school vacation.

PEDERSEN: [01:15:18] But they had, they had to be. What would you say? Um. They had to be able to be, to be usable, they had to be able to be held any time during the year.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:15:33] Okay. What do the children do? Okay.

PEDERSEN: [01:15:36] So that's easy in Malaysia because it's a tropical country, tropical country, it's 80 degrees year round. So you don't have to worry about winter, okay? So in the hotter, um, parts of the year it'd get to 85 or 90 and people thought they were going to die of heat stroke.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:15:58] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:15:59] That, because they're range. They're, as long as they lived and they were native or had been someplace in that region, they were used to tropical weather. So to them, 80s was normal temperature. If you're hot, you got into hot time of the year, that was 85 to 95.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:16:29] And how was the humidity?

PEDERSEN: [01:16:31] 100 percent.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:16:32] Oh gosh.

PEDERSEN: [01:16:33] So every time that it rained, when it rained you had tropical. And this is a term that was used in Malaysia, but it hasn't been used in newscasts, um, until the last twenty years or ten years, this monsoon season.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:16:53] Oh, that wasn't used way back?

PEDERSEN: [01:16:55] No. Monsoon was a tropical time for what happens in the tropics, and it still throws me when over the broadcast in Denver, Colorado, they said, well, we have monsoon season coming. To me, that was tropical 80 degree rain that fell only during the winter months. January, February, March. Um. and, uh, maybe a month or two before January. Um, that was a rain soon, it was rain season.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:17:35] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:17:35] And if you were in Denver, Colorado, that would be snow season.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:17:38] Right. Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:17:39] So that transfers, that translates when you're in the tropics instead of rain. Um, if you're in Denver you'd have snow.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:17:49] Right. Right.

PEDERSEN: [01:17:50] You, you'd either have rain or snow depending upon what is your altitude, longitude.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:17:56] I know what you're saying. Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:17:58] Um, whatever it is.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:17:59] I think it's latitude.

PEDERSEN: [01:18:00] Latitude.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:18:01] I believe it's latitude.

PEDERSEN: [01:18:02] So that's this thing here.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:18:03] The lines going from east to west.

PEDERSEN: [01:18:05] Oh, east to west. Yes. Okay, so that's this thing. Okay.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:18:10] And going from north to south, longitude. Okay.

PEDERSEN: [01:18:13] Yeah. That's right.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:18:14] Um, tell me a little. Okay. What did the children do at these day camps?

PEDERSEN: [01:18:22] Oh, because.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:18:24] And so you were able to develop some, I'm assuming?

PEDERSEN: [01:18:28] Right. Day camps.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:18:29] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:18:30] Yeah, I made them up. Yeah. I made the concept up to fill out the vacation patterns. Could see as a teacher, they had nothing to do during their vacations.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:18:42] Yeah. And so, and they were actually able to be built or created?

PEDERSEN: [01:18:47] I created them.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:18:48] Yeah. Okay.

PEDERSEN: [01:18:49] I created them.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:18:50] Okay. Um, where were the day camps, like throughout the country, mainly in your city, Johor?

PEDERSEN: [01:18:58] Johor Bahru.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:18:59] Yeah. Baru, or where were they?

PEDERSEN: [01:19:02] They originally were in Johor Bahru, because that's where I was located and that's where I found the need for. During my vacations, I'd get out and wander around and my students would say, hi, you know?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:19:16] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:19:17] Um, I live here, over there. And very often they'd say, come on over and have a, have tea.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:19:24] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:19:25] Um.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:19:26] And they'd be speaking English to you? Yeah. Okay. And were you in Johor Bahru for two years?

PEDERSEN: [01:19:33] Two and a half.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:19:34] Two and a half. Okay. You stayed in that city. Got it. Okay. Now going back to.

PEDERSEN: [01:19:38] Three years probably.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:19:39] Yeah. What would the children do? Were there swimming opportunities? Reading, sports, um, art opportunities?

PEDERSEN: [01:19:49] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [01:19:50] This is, that's a good question because this is what I said of day camps. They didn't have anything to do.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:19:56] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:19:56] And it wasn't in their culture, like our young people, they go and get a job for the summer, right?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:20:04] Yeah. If they can.

PEDERSEN: [01:20:05] Yeah. Right. Uh, that wasn't available to them. Summer jobs were not filled by teenagers.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:20:13] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:20:14] They were filled by needy adults that didn't have the education.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:20:19] Yeah, yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:20:20] To work, uh, throughout the year at a regular job. They may be, um, a vendor who had bags of peanuts, uh, in gunnysacks, and they had, they're sitting beside a vending machine on wheels, and the vending machine had peanuts in it, and they would take from the wastepaper baskets of the schools, the school. The school

knows, the school. The old papers that the students and teachers threw away.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:21:00] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:21:01] Ripped out of their, uh.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:21:03] Notebooks?

PEDERSEN: [01:21:04] Notebooks.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:21:05] Okay. What would they do with the papers?

PEDERSEN: [01:21:08] They'd roll them up in, in cylinders, and they would use them to fill up a cone with peanuts.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:21:19] Got it. Yes. Now I know what you're.

PEDERSEN: [01:21:21] They'd show from their bags of peanuts.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:21:24] Right.

PEDERSEN: [01:21:25] And, uh, they would sprinkle salt over them if they needed them.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:21:29] Yes, yes.

PEDERSEN: [01:21:29] And they would hok those or that would be, um, uh, a Malaysian term that, hoking is a firm that the Hokkiens use, a group of people from, uh, Hokkien, Hokkien province [in China] who spoke um, Hokkien language. That's what it would be, a Hokkien language. It might be a province, I'm not sure. And they would speak a certain dialect. And those people, then the students, going back to this little coin, cone rolled up of a newspaper filled with peanuts. They would sell that to the students coming out of the classrooms for 10 cents.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:22:12] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [01:22:13] And that was very typical. And students would come out during their free time for a snack and they would buy these. Everybody bought those.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:22:25] Yeah. Yeah. Um.

PEDERSEN: [01:22:26] And that was considered a legitimate form of living.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:22:34] Yeah, okay.

PEDERSEN: [01:22:35] For people who sell peanuts in cups from the students', uh, papers. And those cups of peanuts is what people depended upon for snacks.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:22:48] Yeah, well, it's a good snack. I eat peanuts.

PEDERSEN: [01:22:49] So instead of going to the cafeteria, we have manufactured bags of crinkly plastic.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:22:58] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:22:59] With some peanuts, some paper chips or some paper, some potato chips. Um, uh, candy bars already in wrappers.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:23:09] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:23:10] He would be selling that peanuts and uh, let's see, salted peanuts. They had salted dried chickpeas. They put water with, um, not water, salt with.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:23:25] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:23:26] They would have some seed that had, was a little sweet. They, they would throw that in and so you could have some other seed, um, that was kind of sweet as a snack.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:23:40] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:23:40] And this served as a lunch.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:23:43] Huh.

PEDERSEN: [01:23:44] For the students and I didn't, I'm, this just pops out of my mind and I don't know if this is true or not, but I think it is. If students didn't have enough money in their pocket to go to the cafeteria to buy food, they could go to these vendors and get snacks for their lunch.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:24:08] Oh, really? Okay.

PEDERSEN: [01:24:09] Does that makes sense?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:24:10] Yeah, it seems funny though. My opinion about, with public school, though, that because you said you taught in the public school, that, um, they wouldn't have free lunch, but they, it sounds like they did not have free lunch for the kids.

PEDERSEN: [01:24:25] You know, that's a good question. I don't think they did.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:24:27] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:24:27] I, in fact, I'm, I'm quite sure they did because.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:24:30] Did or did not?

PEDERSEN: [01:24:31] Did not.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:24:32] Did not.

PEDERSEN: [01:24:32] Because and this is why I'm quite sure. There was a way you got to free college in Malaysia, free college, the country paid for your college and the way you got free college. This is open to

everyone. And there's a very, um, horrible and yet strict and yet when your country has only so much money to pay for things and buy and support things, you use it to benefit the most, the brightest?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:25:08] Yes, yes.

PEDERSEN: [01:25:09] The brightest of your population, the most talented, the most aggressive, the people who are going to make it.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:25:17] Yes.

PEDERSEN: [01:25:18] That, it goes toward their education. And the people who aren't in that group fall by the wayside.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:25:26] Yes.

PEDERSEN: [01:25:27] And those people were the people that the Peace Corps came over to help, the people who fell by the wayside.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:25:35] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:25:36] So that means that. Now, this is the hard part about Peace Corps, that most of us weren't trained or couldn't do too much about the ones that fell by the wayside. We didn't have that much in common with the peanut sellers.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:25:57] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:25:57] The guys who was dressed that look pretty much like a diaper was, was a, um, a typical Indian piece of garment that men ran, uh, around their waist and up in between their legs and ran around again at the waist and tucked under their waistband.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:26:19] What would you call that?

PEDERSEN: [01:26:19] That was, um, I think maybe a *dhobi*?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:26:24] Dhobi?

PEDERSEN: [01:26:25] Yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:26:25] Okay. D-O-B-Y?

PEDERSEN: [01:26:28] D-O-B. Yes, it could be a Y.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:26:33] Yeah, I'll just write question mark.

PEDERSEN: [01:26:36] And that's.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:26:36] So does it mean an Indian, a man's garment, right? Indian man's garment like a diaper.

PEDERSEN: [01:26:41] Right, a diaper. And also at night you'd use that as a sleeping garment to cover your body as you slept on the sidewalk if you were a street beggar.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:26:55] Yeah. Were there many street beggars?

PEDERSEN: [01:26:57] Yes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:26:58] Yes. Okay.

PEDERSEN: [01:26:59] But you didn't think of them as street beggars because they had cover. They had covering that covered all their important parts.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:27:10] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:27:11] Uh, often the covering was beautiful. It was like saris.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:27:16] Uh huh.

PEDERSEN: [01:27:17] Um, that were hand printed, hand loomed. If it was males and they were very, the males tend to as a group because the British with 150 years wore pants, um, Westernized pants with a belt, shoes, and socks.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:27:32] The people with education.

PEDERSEN: [01:27:33] Yes. And socks, no. Uh, they would wear sandals.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:27:38] Sandals. Yes. Yes, that would make sense.

PEDERSEN: [01:27:40] Yes. And, uh, so that means that, um, they could stand in the shower. They could jump in the shower. And that came out of a spigot that ran up a pole of a pipe and was attached at the top, and the water came out over their head. And anyone walking along the street could stand in that shower and use the shower.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:28:05] Oh, was there a wall around it?

PEDERSEN: [01:28:07] No.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:28:07] Okay. Huh.

PEDERSEN: [01:28:09] Uh, but.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:28:09] Did they have soap?

PEDERSEN: [01:28:11] Uh, I don't think so.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:28:14] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [01:28:15] I think they did, because the British were there 150 years, so they had little samples in their bathrooms and like a little cub, uh, like a shell.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:28:26] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:28:27] You might find a little thing. Oh, I know what, okay. They had little soap somewhere around, but they didn't have. If they didn't have, they would have this arrangement in the bathroom, this tin hut. Uh, four sides. There would be a bucket. A bucket of water. And that bucket would be a kerosene can. A kerosene can was, um, the tip, was a typical way of carrying things. In other words, used over kerosene cans were then taken by the poor, the cut, the top cut off, and the size held, had a handle on it. And that handle would then, would be scoop, and you could use that scoop out of a water barrel when you bathe to.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:29:28] Oh, scoop the water over your head.

PEDERSEN: [01:29:29] And that would become a shower.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:29:31] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:29:31] For you.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:29:32] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:29:32] And the same thing would be happen. They would do the same thing. They would take a tin can which they would remove the lid from, and the tin can would be laying, sitting on the ground in a bathroom and you have a hole and cement so the structure would not collapse on you. And that, that you would use that as a shower, that you would use a cup to ladle the water over yourself. And that was your shower.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:30:07] Yeah. Good. Boy, you're, you're, I like your stories. You have shared a lot.

PEDERSEN: [01:30:13] Um, I don't know where they came from. They just poured out.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:30:15] Yeah. Um. Through the years. Actually, we're just about through. Through the years, have you continued any involvement

with the formal Malaysian, Malay or Malaysians, folks that you lived with, worked with?

PEDERSEN: [01:30:33] Um.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:30:34] Or people from, other people from that country?

PEDERSEN: [01:30:38] Yes, I have, and it's kind of unusual because I had no intention to do. I am not a keep track of person or people in my past, and I don't in my future set things up so I'm your friend for life. You'll, you'll never remember my name. That, that type of person. You'll never forget my name.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:30:57] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:30:57] I'm not that way at all.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:30:58] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:31:00] But yes, I have, but I can't account for it.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:31:03] Yeah. Who have you kept up with?

PEDERSEN: [01:31:05] In other words, I could get in the phone right now. I could go to information and say, give me the country code for Malaysia.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:31:15] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:31:15] I would remember that much. And then they would give me the country code. I'd dial it in and I'd go, information Malaysia. They would answer Malaysia and they'd say, give me the telephone number of Dorcas.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:31:30] Paul?

PEDERSEN: [01:31:31] And Robinson Paul.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:31:32] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:31:33] And they would say, here's the number in Malaysia. Oh, but it's no longer Dorcas and Robinson Paul, because I suspect that he has died.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:31:42] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:31:42] And I think, it's a mixed couple. And he was older and I think he would have died, the man, and there would be only her. And she had two, three kids.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:31:54] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:31:54] And two of them, I was there, I was there for their marriage. Doris and Robinson Paul, I went to their wedding. They had. Uh, right then, uh, Malaysia had, uh, that had housing in which there was a ground floor as you walked in the door and you walked right into your apartment, but, and there was a door that you opened the door to walk into your apartment, but there was a stairway that also went up at that door to the top floor apartment. Now, now the top floor apartment I don't think had a door that separated. No, there wasn't a door. You just went up to the top floor. This is the way apartments were run. And people turned the residence into a first floor and a second floor apartment.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:32:49] Separate apartments?

PEDERSEN: [01:32:51] Yeah. Now what I don't remember just talking off the top of my head whether they rented this out for first and second floor or not. Peace Corps rented out my apartment to me. I had both, I had first and second floor. Ah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:33:07] But you lived with them?

PEDERSEN: [01:33:08] But I had a couple who lived over a second floor, so somehow I'm not quite sure how that ended up like that.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:33:17] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:33:17] But I did have a couple that lived up there.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:33:20] Huh.

PEDERSEN: [01:33:20] That's all I remember.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:33:21] Yeah. But am I correct? You don't really write to anybody anymore or email them any more?

PEDERSEN: [01:33:28] No. Yeah, but I was thinking about it the other day, that I should. First of all, I have lifelong friends in Hawaii that I consider my best friend in the whole wide world. That would be, uh, Pauline and, Matayoshi, and her husband, Shin. S-H-I-N. Shin Matayoshi. And when I was, Peace Corps had programs, training programs in Hawaii in which they trained, uh, people to be volunteers.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:34:03] Before they went to their country.

PEDERSEN: [01:34:05] Right. And I was one of those trainers. And I ran.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:34:08] After Peace Corps?

PEDERSEN: [01:34:09] After Peace Corps. And I ran 2 or 3 programs out of Hawaii, the Big Island, Hilo. And my trainees from the Peace Corps program, which I ran, those trainees I placed as public school teachers after I trained them in the Hilo public schools. And then I went back in as a teacher supervisor to see how they were doing, took notes, watched them, gave them suggestions, wrote up the thing, and then they were, what would you say, certified.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:34:52] Uh huh.

PEDERSEN: [01:34:53] As trained public school teachers.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:34:56] Wow. Huh. Yeah. That's interesting, I didn't. Yeah. Um, everybody's training is different, but I know years ago lots of folks were trained before they got to their country. I was trained in the country, but that's, I'm not talking about myself.

PEDERSEN: [01:35:13] That's true. They changed it.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:35:15] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:35:15] They changed it from my DeKalb, was at DeKalb University, and the instructors from the university that had brought in and volunteers that could speak on Malaysia and people from Malaysia, and they trained the volunteers. Later on, it was economically feasible, more feasible to hold it within the country. So you're right on the spot. You could say, there's downtown, here's here, here's here, the bus stops here.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:35:50] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:35:51] There's just where you start. You take that bus to go there and you'll be at your school.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:35:56] Right, right.

PEDERSEN: [01:35:56] The name of it is. You take, um, the bus stop here, you end up in a shopping area.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:36:02] I have one more question then I'm going to finish.

PEDERSEN: [01:36:04] Okay.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:36:06] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:36:06] And you'd go there.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:36:07] Um, you know, am I correct? Kuala Lumpur is the capital of Malaysia. Was it a huge city when you were there?

PEDERSEN: [01:36:16] Yes, it was huge.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:36:16] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:36:17] They had busses. Uh, they didn't have busses. Now I've heard the word trams. Trams would be trains like on an elevated track.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:36:30] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:36:31] I think they might have that now.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:36:32] Okay. Have you been back to Malaysia since you left?

PEDERSEN: [01:36:37] Yes, three times.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:36:38] Three times. Did you look up the folks you lived with, worked with?

PEDERSEN: [01:36:43] Yes, we just stayed with them and, uh. Uh. They met and got married. I was in their wedding party group. They have the reception. Okay, this is a little vague. It was at the Episcopal Church in Singapore and there's something about my basement and the wedding party. But that's it, that's it.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:37:09] Yeah. Okay. But you went back three times. Correct me if I'm wrong. I think you really love Asia, don't you?

PEDERSEN: [01:37:16] I love Asia.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:37:17] Yes. I mean.

PEDERSEN: [01:37:19] It's, um. Not only do I love it, but I swear that part of my genetic heritage.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:37:26] When you were a Viking.

PEDERSEN: [01:37:27] When I was a Viking going back to Leif Erikson.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:37:31] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:37:31] Who was a famous.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:37:33] Explorer.

PEDERSEN: [01:37:34] Group marauder and.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:37:36] Yes, I've heard of him.

PEDERSEN: [01:37:37] Invader, yeah, of all sorts of places in the world.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:37:40] Uh huh.

PEDERSEN: [01:37:41] I have to be part of the Mongolian contingent, uh, of his little force that stormed through Europe and took it over.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:37:50] You never know. Just real quick, because, you know, I'm Finnish American, and they say we're 25 percent Mongolian from Genghis Khan. I mean, he got to the Ural Mountains.

PEDERSEN: [01:37:59] Genghis Khan? Yeah, that's Genghis Khan.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:38:01] So I'm related to Genghis, like a couple thousand years ago.

PEDERSEN: [01:38:05] Okay, so my, I don't know how the Norwegians did, um. How would we have fit in there? Did the Norwegians got going on?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:38:14] Well, I know they went out the, I can't tell you.

PEDERSEN: [01:38:17] They were before the British Empire.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:38:19] Right. Oh yes. Yes. The Vikings.

PEDERSEN: [01:38:21] Who was, who was out there before, after the, before the British. Oh, the Chinese.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:38:26] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:38:26] The Chinese were out there as traders connecting the world. Yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:38:31] So much to learn about the world. Karen, you're such a wealth of information. I have one last question, because I didn't think we were going to be able to do this, but it looks like, you know, we did. Um, the question has to do with what's the effect of Peace Corps, your Peace Corps service on you? How has your Peace Corps service affected you or changed you?

PEDERSEN: [01:39:01] I think it makes me feel when I meet never, ever or immediately when I meet people and their nationalities are Malay, Chinese. Malay would be Islamic background.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:39:17] Oh, okay.

PEDERSEN: [01:39:17] Islam.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:39:18] I was going to ask you that.

PEDERSEN: [01:39:19] So I would have a, an, an understanding of the Quran. I would understand the calls to Mecca because I heard them every day, uh, through, in the streets, the calls of Mecca from the Quran. In Egypt, I heard them especially, I remember traveling through Egypt. And here's the call to, from Mecca, call to prayer, which was prayed to Mecca, which was get on and get down on your prayer mat. Uh, which was mainly to men. And they would put it down in a certain way that faced Mecca. And then they would say their prayers, and those prayers would be like what we as Christians, uh, this is a guess, okay? This is not for real. This is a guess, which we have learned, uh, Apostles Creed.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:40:20] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:40:20] Lord's Prayer.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:40:22] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:40:22] All our Bible verses.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:40:24] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:40:24] That is essentially, I'm making this up. I don't know. This is just coming out of nowhere.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:40:29] Your opinion.

PEDERSEN: [01:40:31] Um, this is a. There's this prayer that came out and broadcast to the state. It was the most wonderful thing I've ever heard in my life, these calls to prayer.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:40:44] Huh.

PEDERSEN: [01:40:45] Um, in Egypt, walking around and then seeing everyone go and grab their paramount, their prayer mats and, and lay down. Not lay down, and kneel down.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:40:57] Kneel down.

PEDERSEN: [01:40:58] And kneel toward Mecca.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:40:59] Now, you saw that in Malaysia also?

PEDERSEN: [01:41:02] Oh, yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:41:02] Yeah. So are the people of Malaysia mainly, uh, Muslim?

PEDERSEN: [01:41:09] No.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:41:10] Religion wise? Are there Buddhists, Christians?

PEDERSEN: [01:41:12] I'm not sure about numbers, but I just.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:41:15] Majority.

PEDERSEN: [01:41:16] Remember slightly. The numbers would be, um. The country itself was Malaya and those people. Their religion was religion was Islam.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:41:35] Islam.

PEDERSEN: [01:41:36] Islam came originally from India and it is predominantly. Uh. Let's see. Let's see. We have Tibetan Buddhist. Buddhist, Buddhist. They would have been, it would have been Buddhist and it would have been brought to India from Nepal?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:42:04] Uh huh. So the people of Malaysia or Malaya were Islam.

PEDERSEN: [01:42:10] And Buddhist.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:42:11] And Buddhist.

PEDERSEN: [01:42:12] And one more.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:42:15] Uh. Oh. My mind is blank. Uh, Hindi. Hindi.

PEDERSEN: [01:42:20] Hindi would be, yeah, Hindi would be a religion. Hindi. Hinduism.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:42:25] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:42:25] So Buddhist. English.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:42:30] Hindi, I mean.

PEDERSEN: [01:42:31] Hindi.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:42:31] And Islam.

PEDERSEN: [01:42:32] Yes. Okay. Yeah. There's three religions.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:42:35] Okay. Um.

PEDERSEN: [01:42:36] Represented by three different languages, three different sets of customs, three different national dress, and three different kinds of food.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:42:47] Okay. What were the three languages? Malay.

PEDERSEN: [01:42:50] Chinese.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:42:51] Oh, Chinese.

PEDERSEN: [01:42:51] And the Chinese that came to Malaysia would be Cantonese.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:42:57] From the south, am I correct?

PEDERSEN: [01:42:59] Yes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:42:59] From the south.

PEDERSEN: [01:43:00] Canton.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:43:01] Canton.

PEDERSEN: [01:43:01] Canton, uh, would be, over on the south of Canton. Uh, here's. Canton would be, uh, China.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:43:18] Yeah, yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:43:19] And Canton is on the coast of China, and it would be a former English seafaring trading colony, Canton.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:43:29] Yeah. Yeah. so what was the third language? Malay, Chinese and English?

PEDERSEN: [01:43:35] English.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:43:36] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [01:43:36] British English.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:43:37] Yes. British English. Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:43:39] There's a difference.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:43:40] Yes, yes.

PEDERSEN: [01:43:42] Um, accent and words.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:43:43] Yeah. Has been, uh, being a Peace Corps volunteer many years ago, um, affected your career? I mean, I know you were a teacher in Jefferson County schools. Did you bring any of that experience back to United States with you as a teacher?

PEDERSEN: [01:44:05] Not much, because I don't, I've never felt I was a natural teacher.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:44:10] You didn't?

PEDERSEN: [01:44:11] No. I felt, I considered natural teachers who were half comedians, half show offs.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:44:20] Uh huh.

PEDERSEN: [01:44:21] And what else? Reciters.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:44:27] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [01:44:28] And a good teacher is a combination of a comedian, a showoff, and a reciter with a syllabus in the back of the head that they follow religiously.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:44:40] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:44:40] Because every once in a while, uh, and this is part of our national. Hierarchy.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:44:50] Okay.

PEDERSEN: [01:44:51] That we are a states governed by systems which can control which school systems are controlled by the individual divisions that each stage is divided into, in this case their counties. I think maybe there were counties in every country, in every state.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:45:15] Yeah, I don't know.

PEDERSEN: [01:45:17] Jefferson County, Iowa.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:45:19] In Louisiana, they have parishes.

PEDERSEN: [01:45:20] Okay. That's right. That's parish. And in Iowa they're called counties.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:45:26] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:45:26] But you're right.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:45:27] Michigan, counties.

PEDERSEN: [01:45:28] I love that. Parishes because parishes in Louisiana, that's French.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:45:31] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:45:32] And that's where that word comes. I don't know what it is in French, but that is French because of the French that settled from, they originally settled in Newfoundland.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:45:46] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:45:47] New Wales. No, no. That's England. No. The Superior Lake, the Superior Lakes come together. And people from Canada, if they knew their way, could travel across the lakes and grind their way down. Okay, eventually they think that those people from there. Oh, I don't know where all this information is coming from.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:46:17] Yeah, you're a teacher.

PEDERSEN: [01:46:18] And they found their way down to New Orleans. And so the New Orleans people, they, um, their native language. Let's see. That would be French.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:46:32] Yeah. If they were from the.

PEDERSEN: [01:46:33] They say if you hear New Orleans French, you would be able to, the French would understand it.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:46:41] Huh. Creole.

PEDERSEN: [01:46:43] Creole. Yes, Creole.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:46:45] Yeah, yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:46:46] And, uh, don't you think that's astounding that someone from Canada, New Orleans, uh, Canada area, the, the lakes could speak a language could be understood in New Orleans.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:47:03] Yeah, I know.

PEDERSEN: [01:47:04] Louisiana.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:47:04] Yeah.

PEDERSEN: [01:47:05] Don't you find that astonishing?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:47:07] Yes, yes. Okay. Any other thing you'd like to add about your Peace Corps service? How it affected you?

PEDERSEN: [01:47:15] So. So if I see people from those countries that I visited, I do right away feel like they were my first cousins.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:47:25] Really? I like how you say that. Your first cousins.

PEDERSEN: [01:47:28] Yeah. That they were my relatives.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:47:31] Uh huh.

PEDERSEN: [01:47:32] And that I would feel. Now, I know the situation never comes up, but if I needed a parked car payment, or if they needed a ride to the hospital, or if they needed a lawyer's name, or if they needed some personal information that I could share that keeps my life structured and holding together in one part, I would not only feel I should, I would be morally obligated to give that information to them.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:48:11] Okay. Wow, that was eloquent.

PEDERSEN: [01:48:15] Where did that come from?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:48:17] I don't know.

PEDERSEN: [01:48:17] All that information.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:48:18] Yes, I don't know. Thank you, Karen Pedersen. Yes. And I'm going to finish, this is, this is it. Thank you so much. And the interviewer was Barbara Kaare, K-A-A-R-E hyphen Lopez. And I

interviewed Karen K-A-R-E-N Pedersen P-E-D-E-R-S-E-N,
September 1st, 2016, in Arvada, Colorado.

PEDERSEN: [01:48:43] A middle initial B because there's a name, there's another Karen Pedersen with my name and middle initial in Arvada, Colorado.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:48:53] Good. Thank you. I'm going to turn this off.

PEDERSEN: [01:48:55] And the hiccups belonged to my.

[END OF INTERVIEW]