

Courtney Roberts Arnold Oral History Interview
Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Courtney Roberts Arnold served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Ethiopia from 1964 to 1966 as a secondary school teacher.

Access

Open.

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Oral History Interview

with

Courtney Roberts Arnold

September 3, 2018
Washington, D.C.

By Patricia Wand

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

ARNOLD: [00:00:01] It's only because I've been watched so closely when I've been recording that I would even notice or care.

WAND: [00:00:09] Today is September 3rd, 2018, and this is Patricia Wand. I am interviewing my friend Courtney Roberts Arnold, who was a Peace Corps volunteer in Ethiopia from 1964 to 1966. She was in a teaching project in Ethiopia. Thank you, Courtney, for agreeing to be interviewed today. I very much appreciate being able to talk with you about your Peace Corps story. So let's start with the question why did you enter the Peace Corps? Why did you decide to join the Peace Corps?

ARNOLD: [00:00:49] Well, that's, it's very interesting to think about because I grew up in Liberty, Missouri, went to college in Virginia, transferred to the University of Missouri. Was studying history, cultural and intellectual history, was interested in the rest of the world, but didn't really know how I was going to have this wonderful love and adventure in my life. So I was

graduated from the University of Missouri in 1963 and spent a year after I was graduated working in a bookstore in Kansas City, Missouri, thinking about how I was going to actually see the rest of the world.

ARNOLD: [00:01:42] So I thought about joining the American Red Cross, which sounded very interesting to me. And the other thing that was very interesting for me was a young person who I was in love with, that I was thinking about getting married to. So I was thinking, how am I going to work this out? I looked into the Delta Airlines because I thought, well, maybe it would be kind of exciting to be an airline hostess and go around the world. And of course, I filled out an application and I got that and I was supposed to go there and.

WAND: [00:02:19] You were supposed to be an airline hostess?

ARNOLD: [00:02:22] Yes. So I took the test in Atlanta in their area, and that was really great. And they said to me, I got a letter and they said, yes, you can do that. And then some kind of sad things happened in my life for me, but not so much for me, but for my person I was in love with.

WAND: [00:02:46] And who was that?

ARNOLD: [00:02:47] That was David Arnold, whom I met at the University of Missouri. And the very day in November that his father died. I got a call from him at the bookstore, and he said my father died. I'll be there, I said, I'll be there on the bus.

WAND: [00:03:09] How far away was that?

ARNOLD: [00:03:10] And as I arrived, I was just about four hours on the bus, but I got on the bus and when I arrived, David met me and on the radio he was hearing that President Kennedy had been assassinated. That he was thinking, they didn't know, but he hadn't died yet. They were unsure.

WAND: [00:03:32] So this was November.

ARNOLD: [00:03:33] So this was in November of 1963 and I was arriving for David's father's funeral. So there was a mixture of a lot of sadness there. And of course, we were very all, you know, because we knew where you were when that happened, when Kennedy was shot. And so those few days were around the television, feeling sad about two deaths. But everyone in the whole world and the whole country was sad about that time. So we're thinking about all of these things. Within six weeks after that or maybe, no, wait a minute. Maybe it was two months. David came to visit me in Kansas City. I'd gone back and I was continuing to work, and he arrived and he arrived with a beautiful diamond ring. And we became engaged.

WAND: [00:04:28] Was this a surprise or had you talked about it?

ARNOLD: [00:04:30] It was a surprise I think. Somehow he'd asked for a ring size. And the only reason I know that is because I reread an old letter recently and I saw that. But at that point I thought, hmm, what am I going to do? I'm not going to probably go into the airlines if I'm going to think about getting married. And we started talking about what we wanted to do together. And I put some of my plans aside, and then I started thinking and we thought, hmm, maybe they, um, I think it was the American Field Service, the Quaker group. That would be kind of interesting. That is someplace where we could go together. We applied, but then we thought, no, we can't afford it. Because you had to have money to do that. We didn't have any at all. And we were thinking about what to do.

ARNOLD: [00:05:20] And then it was my father who said to us, have you thought about the Peace Corps? And we thought that, no, but that sounds interesting. We will look into that. So, you know, this was in December. And so in February, we went to Columbia, Missouri, in the snowstorm. Sat by side by side and took a very interesting test to see if we could get into the Peace Corps. And I remember so well the test and what was on that test, and it was a very, several pages of a very unusual, made-up language. And you had to learn and try to see if you could say those words and what it would be like to use those words. And it was complete, a complete exercise of, I think, how you could learn another language and how you could do that.

ARNOLD: [00:06:21] Well, anyway, we waited, but that was it. Plus the fact that Sargent Shriver had been in Missouri and my, you know, future husband had heard him speak. And we knew from my father that he was thinking it would be a good idea. And we knew from President Kennedy that this was something very special. So we went in and did the test. Didn't hear, didn't hear, waited and waited. This was on Valentine's Day in 1964. We were going to get married in June. Waited and waited and waited. And my husband was, my future husband was going to look for some kind of job. Of course, you need to do that, you know.

WAND: [00:07:07] Was he still a student at that time?

ARNOLD: [00:07:09] He was still a student. He was graduated in 1964, so I was graduated a year before he was. So he went to New York and talked to book publishers, and he got several offers. But they didn't sound very interesting, because what they had offered was to sell textbooks going up and down the East Coast, which didn't sound that interesting. So he came to Washington, D.C. to see where were our Peace Corps applications and what was going on. And he found out that, um, talked to a person I think that we'd known or my parents had known from Kansas City, who was working in the Peace Corps office. And he said, we want to know what's going on here. So she flipped through a bunch of things and she said, how would you like to go to Ethiopia? So he called me a week before our wedding, and he said, I'm in Washington, D.C. He said, they want to know if we want to go to Ethiopia and the Peace Corps. And I thought for a minute and I thought to myself, where is Ethiopia?

ARNOLD: [00:08:09] So I said, it sounds very interesting. I think that would be exciting. And I will go look it up on the map. And I quickly told my parents and my grandfather, and my grandfather said Haile Selassie. He came before the League of Nations way back when he needed help that he didn't get. So my grandfather knew about Ethiopia and he knew who Haile Selassie was, who was the emperor. So that was reassuring. And but my mother quickly stretched out on the floor on her back, and I thought she was never going to get up. Here was a wedding and we were going to leave the country for two years maybe. And what and what would happen? And oh my goodness, and I've never heard anything like this,

and I won't see you for two years if you go. And I just don't, I don't, I don't know. So she was just overwhelmed. Didn't know what would happen.

ARNOLD: [00:09:09] So here was a wedding coming up. My father was out of the country. He was working for a newspaper and here was mother with my cousin, who was here from Singapore living with us at the time, and my brother was graduating from high school. And her daughter was getting her wedding dress and all these gifts coming in and she was going to leave the country. So that's what happened there, and we decided to do that and were in training three days after our wedding.

WAND: [00:09:41] When was your wedding?

ARNOLD: [00:09:42] Our wedding was on January 20th of 1964.

WAND: [00:09:46] January or June?

ARNOLD: [00:09:47] I mean, excuse me, June. Sorry. June 20th. And three days later, we flew to UCLA for our training.

WAND: [00:09:56] And so let's stop there for just a minute, making sure that we've got this straight. So in June of that year, you heard that you were invited by Peace Corps to go to Ethiopia.

ARNOLD: [00:10:13] Yes.

WAND: [00:10:14] David was about to graduate or had just graduated from the University of Missouri.

ARNOLD: [00:10:18] From Washington University in St. Louis. We met at the University of Missouri, but he was graduated. He went later to Washington U. and was graduated there.

WAND: [00:10:26] In what area?

ARNOLD: [00:10:29] It was in. What was it in? I think English literature.

WAND: [00:10:33] OK. And so then you got married.

ARNOLD: [00:10:35] He had several majors so I don't know. When I met him, it was French history. Later it became.

WAND: [00:10:40] Right, right. So OK, so then you were. He graduated, you were married. And then three days later, June 23rd, you went to UCLA.

ARNOLD: [00:10:54] UCLA in Los Angeles.

WAND: [00:10:57] Right. So before we get you into training, because we want to hear about that, what about your family? You mentioned a brother, so you have, and your father was in journalism?

ARNOLD: [00:11:13] Yes, he was in journalism. He worked for the Kansas City Star and he was a reporter and then an editor.

WAND: [00:11:22] And then, uh.

ARNOLD: [00:11:24] And my mother. My mother didn't work outside of the home, but she was for a number of years a freelancer. And she did a number of articles on women, and she freelanced to a number of newspapers in the United States. She loved to do research, and she had a wide circle of friends in the small college town where we grew up. And was very good as a volunteer and excellent hostess, loved to have her friends over and had lots of friends. So yeah, we had an interesting.

WAND: [00:12:00] You were exposed to a lot of people.

ARNOLD: [00:12:00] We were exposed to a lot of people and to a lot of teachers from the college because my mother had gone to William Jewell college where she met my father and she absolutely loved poetry and literature. And so she had a lot of friends who were professors at the college that would come over and they would sit and talk. And many, several years later, she established a little short story group and they had the Shorty's, and she was very, very involved and active in the community.

WAND: [00:12:32] She was a model for involvement. So what was the town where you grew up in?

ARNOLD: [00:12:35] Liberty, Missouri. It's just north of Kansas City, Missouri, a small college town.

WAND: [00:12:40] And you said that you went to a college in Virginia initially. What one was that?

ARNOLD: [00:12:47] I went to a two-year college for women called Sullins College in Bristol, Virginia. It is no longer an active college, they, you know, like a lot of two-year women's colleges, they either didn't have the funding or they changed or they sold or something. But it was there that actually, I think in that college it was great because I really learned to study. There weren't a whole lot of distractions. We had a lot of good friends, but we also I spent time in the library and I did a lot of research there and I liked. I think that's where I really learned to study. But it's also where there was really one outstanding course called comparative religions. And it was really, I think, maybe the first time that I was really introduced to many different kinds of religions, to Buddhism, to Muslim, to Islam, all the different cultures.

ARNOLD: [00:13:45] And I think having that and then transferring to the University of Missouri, and that was something that I carried in my mind that I also had when I went into the Peace Corps. Because we were in a community there where there were students and people of many different religions. And I always felt that it gave me a little bit of a background.

WAND: [00:14:09] Right.

ARNOLD: [00:14:09] But not what I, not enough. Not what I learned when I was there, but some.

WAND: [00:14:15] It opened the door.

ARNOLD: [00:14:16] It opened the door.

WAND: [00:14:16] Right, right. OK, and you have a brother?

ARNOLD: [00:14:19] I have a brother, yes.

WAND: [00:14:21] And was he younger or older?

ARNOLD: [00:14:23] My brother is younger and he went to the University of Missouri, and then he came to Washington, D.C., to George Washington University for law school. So my brother is a practicing lawyer, lives in Arlington, Virginia. He's retired, but he still does some work as an estate planning lawyer. So he's nearby and it's wonderful that he's here. Yeah, he wrote me many letters in the Peace Corps. I wrote him many letters in the family, and it was really interesting. I was sorry I wasn't around to see him through his college years, but it was still exciting to hear from him.

WAND: [00:15:02] Right. So let's take you to training now. You land in Los Angeles. You go to UCLA for training. And tell us about what you did in training and how many were you in your group?

ARNOLD: [00:15:19] Well, I think there were a little over 200. There were between two or three hundred in our group and there were probably about maybe 10 or maybe more married couples in our program. We left Kansas City on an airplane at midnight and of course arrived early in the morning in Los Angeles, and it was morning. And that was exciting. We'd never been to California. First of all, we were just so intrigued with the campus and all of the plants and everything that we just walked around for hours. And we stayed overnight and then the very next day we were lined up to sign in to get ready for training. And we looked at each other and we said, hmm, we're going to do this as long as we can be in the same town. We aren't ready to go into separate villages. And of course, they didn't separate us and we didn't separate any married couples.

ARNOLD: [00:16:22] But we signed up. We lived in Mira Hershey dorm. We were on, I think, the third floor. Most all the married couples were on one floor. There were single men on the top, I think, and single women on the bottom. And we lived next to, our room was next to a fire escape so there was a lot of activity all night long of people going up and down the fire escape by us. So that was interesting. But that's where we began our

marriage, in the dorm of Mira Hershey Hall in Los Angeles, was the most interesting situation.

WAND: [00:16:56] That was your honeymoon.

ARNOLD: [00:16:59] Our honeymoon. But we met several very good. We made good friends with the other couples and we all shared the same bathroom and have to take turns, you know, going in and out and doing things and showers and things like that. But we also had our classes. We had extensive classes in Amharic, the language of Ethiopia, the one that's been accepted as a major language. There are many other languages, but that was what was being taught in our program. And a number of Ethiopian professors from around the country and teachers and graduate students and everything were our professors. So we had extensive training, not much conversation in those days. It was a lot of grammar. It was a lot of study and a lot of kinds of things that not necessarily that you could just jump into the country and be able to, you know, be able to speak and use conversation. That was difficult.

ARNOLD: [00:18:00] But we did know pronunciation, we knew the alphabet. We learned a lot of history, a lot of Ethiopian history. We did what I think was called the Kennedy Fitness Program, where we did a lot of soccer and running and exercises and swimming. We did a lot of things like that and then ate a lot of food in the cafeteria to keep it up. But I'm thinking about the training and to think we at the time we thought there were we had some criticism. Each one of us was assigned to a psychologist and we had to go in periodically so that they could evaluate us. And we took a lot of tests, personality tests, psychological tests. They did try to do a lot of screening, but our psychologist we felt, was just, I don't know, we spent more time listening to her and her problems in her nylon stockings and all our things. And David and I thought, this is ridiculous. What is this? She must not think there's anything wrong with us.

ARNOLD: [00:19:02] And then, of course, in training, we had to line up and have all kinds of shots which, oh my gosh, we had to get in a line. And the most interesting one we received was an experimental rabies vaccine. And we were told, now we're giving you this. And if you are allergic to duck eggs,

you will know because you will probably end up in the hospital. So we felt kind of like we're guinea pigs, so we went all the way through here and then they took our blood at the end of the line and there'd be a whole pint. I thought I would never make that. That would be awful. But anyway, we knew we were building up to the final shot that if we were selected and we were all worried about being selected in or selected out which they called it then. We were just so scared about that. But when they would get ready to send us home, they would give us our final shot of gamma globulin and we would all know that we would be on an airplane with very sore bottoms.

WAND: [00:20:11] So the reputation of gamma globulin was preceded it.

ARNOLD: [00:20:15] Preceded it. Yes, exactly. And we also, as teachers, we were teaching in the community to practice teaching English as a second language. That was the other thing we were trained to do, to teach English as a second language. And so we had a lot of classes to learn how to do that. And we went into classroom of students from other countries and we practiced how to do that, which was really very helpful. I'm thinking about other things about the training program. It was strange to be in Westwood Village with all the very beautifully manicured and everything lawns and gorgeous houses and fruit like we had never seen in our lives and enjoy that. And then go to Ethiopia, one of the most, you know, difficult countries and. But later I could talk about that, but much, much better than Los Angeles, because we loved where we went. It was a very different experience.

WAND: [00:21:25] Yes. So there was quite a contrast between your training. And then of course, in later you realized when you got to Ethiopia the contrast that you were experiencing. So in training, and you mentioned the history of Ethiopia. Now isn't this about the time that Ethiopia became independent or was it not a colony?

ARNOLD: [00:21:48] It was, it was not a colony.

WAND: [00:21:50] Never a colony.

ARNOLD: [00:21:51] Ethiopia and Liberia. There's only two countries in Africa that were not colonized. They were occupied a bit by the Brits and the Italians, but never become a colony. Never was a colony.

WAND: [00:22:02] So what did you learn about your role in the nation building of Ethiopia?

ARNOLD: [00:22:14] We learned a lot about the history. Some of that has, you know, been reinterpreted in recent years, but we learned a lot about the history, the culture, the story of Haile Selassie, what is considered by some reality and others a myth, of the fact that he was a descendant of Solomon and Sheba in a long line the elect of God, King of Kings. We learned that. We learned about the Gallas, which we heard about so much, which are now of course the Oromina [Oromo] group and that is the background of the new leader. So they don't talk about Gallas like that anymore. So there were terms and names for tribes that we were learning that have changed since then, but we learned a lot about the history.

ARNOLD: [00:23:06] We had many good professors who had written many books on Ethiopia, who were there and teaching. And you know, that was just to give us a good idea and a good background of where we were, even though we didn't know what city or what town or what village we would be in or what mixture of tribes there would be. But they wanted us to have sort of an overview and an idea of what to expect in that way. There are other things that would be, we wouldn't know about.

WAND: [00:23:40] Right, right.

ARNOLD: [00:23:41] We also in training, we were shown a lot of films, anything that we could find. And then I remember one particular film in training that we saw on how to deliver a baby, which we both felt a little bit nervous about. But they thought maybe you might be in a situation where you would have to do that in one of the villages, so that was very interesting. But there are so many things that I think about now that in a minute, it seems like there would be a flashback to something else that we learned at the time. But it was, the training was very intense, I thought, and everybody was just a little nervous about what would happen. One of the persons in our group

was selected out that we thought was very good. And he appealed it and later was accepted. It was in the day when, you know, if anyone knew that you had been living with anyone of the opposite sex, that that was off.

WAND: [00:24:46] That you were then deselected?

ARNOLD: [00:24:49] Deselected. There were just things like that. But some of it's kind of vague in my mind because we mixed up training with our, you know, our seven dollars a week allowance and we did enjoy some of the wonderful theater at UCLA and enjoyed. But mostly we were pretty focused. And I was also very busy writing thank you notes for all the gifts from our wedding. So it was kind of a mixture in training of learning about another country and also figuring out how to leave another one graciously.

WAND: [00:25:27] Exactly, because you had just been inundated with wedding gifts.

ARNOLD: [00:25:31] Yes.

WAND: [00:25:32] As you were leaving, as you were packing to go to training. Right.

ARNOLD: [00:25:36] That were wrapped up in Saran wrap, which I learned later, is not a good idea, but they were stored for a couple of years in my parents' attic. And so coming home, it was interesting to see things that, you know, stupid glass and electric toothbrushes and things like that that, you know, we couldn't have used there. We did take a few things like blankets and so on. But yeah.

WAND: [00:26:00] Mostly not. So in your, um, were there already Peace Corps volunteers in Ethiopia when you were getting trained? And if so, did you have any of those returned volunteers as part of your training staff?

ARNOLD: [00:26:17] You know, I don't think so, because we were in a pretty early group. We were the third group to go to Ethiopia. So there was the Ethiopia I, Ethiopia II, and then we were three. So we met a lot of the Ethiopia I and II people when we got there to Ethiopia, because they were

just sort of coming home. I don't recall that we had any returned volunteers in our training.

WAND: [00:26:41] When did the first group go to Ethiopia?

ARNOLD: [00:26:44] They, gosh, if they went about three years before, they must have gone right away.

WAND: [00:26:50] In like maybe '61 or '62?

ARNOLD: [00:26:53] Well, it was 3/1/61 was when the Peace Corps was signed.

WAND: [00:26:57] Yes.

ARNOLD: [00:26:58] So it must have been '61 or '62.

WAND: [00:27:00] The first volunteers went into country in August of 1961 and that was the Ghana group and the Colombia group. Both went then.

ARNOLD: [00:27:09] And so Ethiopia is just right around that time too.

WAND: [00:27:12] So very early, right. All right. Well, let's.

ARNOLD: [00:27:17] And Harris Wofford was there.

WAND: [00:27:18] He was the country director in Ethiopia.

ARNOLD: [00:27:22] Right.

WAND: [00:27:23] Yes. When you went?

ARNOLD: [00:27:24] No, he had just left.

WAND: [00:27:25] Ah, right. He opened the country. Senator Harris Wofford who is, uh, who helped Shriver, Sargent Shriver, found the Peace Corps.

ARNOLD: [00:27:39] Right.

WAND: [00:27:44] All right, so let's think now. You're coming. How long were you in training?

ARNOLD: [00:27:52] We were in training from June to September. So what was that, about two or three? Two months. Because we left for Ethiopia in September 1964.

WAND: [00:28:05] And did you go home between the time you trained and went?

ARNOLD: [00:28:08] Yes, we did. We did. We went back to Missouri. A little home leave. Went back to Missouri and went back to St. Louis. And I think, how did we do that? I think we sold the car and then we flew, I believe, from St. Louis to New York City. And that's where all of us were before we left the country, New York. We did go to Boston during that time to eat Parker House rolls, then we flew back. I guess we thought that would be our real part of a honeymoon. And then we went back to New York. And then our group boarded the airplanes and we flew to Greece, and from Greece, we went to Ethiopia.

WAND: [00:28:55] OK, so what month did you? Did you go to Ethiopia in September then?

ARNOLD: [00:29:02] Yes, September of '64.

WAND: [00:29:07] All right, and you went through Greece because that seems to be the best way to get there, probably, huh?

ARNOLD: [00:29:15] Yeah. And we stopped there and we stood with the Greeks for hours to see the king and his wife as they went through. And I was looking this morning at a letter and it said, well, we've touched, we saw the arm waving or something like that. Yeah, but that was it. But yes, and then we got, you know, on the plane and and flew right to Addis Ababa.

WAND: [00:29:37] Mm hmm, OK.

ARNOLD: [00:29:38] We stopped, I think, in Cairo for a few minutes, but we didn't really get off the plane. We didn't deplane. And then we went on to Ethiopia, I think with Ethiopian Airlines, which was really quite good.

WAND: [00:29:50] OK, so now we're in Addis Ababa. And what happens?

ARNOLD: [00:29:57] Well, we flew in and looking down on Ethiopia, it was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen. It was so luscious and so green, and all the yellow flowers you could see were blooming. It was that Meskel time they call it in September, just a beautiful time in the beginning of the rainy season. And it was just so lovely. And we arrived in Ethiopia and were immediately taken to the dorms at Haile Selassie University, where we would stay for some orientation, some orientation training. And we were the very first day we were to have dinner with one of the local families. Invited to dinner. And of course, we'd been told in training and there that, you know, you had to try something of everything. Not to worry, it would, even if it was something you were worried that you might that might not agree with you. You should be polite enough to try to take things.

ARNOLD: [00:30:54] So we did. So we ate with a family. I think the men worked for the transportation department in Ethiopia. But they had a big basket with injera, the bread that they serve, and the stews all laid on top. And we had learned a little bit about that. I don't know that we even sampled any injera and wat when we were in Peace Corps training, I just think we were told about it. We might have, but I didn't know. But that's the standard food of the country. And I just remember sitting around this large basket and eating, picking off pieces of the bread and dipping it into the stew and enjoying it and eating it and whatever. But I think we didn't drink the water. I think they did have some bottled water that was good, because we drank that the whole time we were there.

ARNOLD: [00:31:53] But we had a kind of an orientation in training while we were in Addis Ababa and we got papers that said told us where we were going to go. We didn't know what town or anything where we would be. And it said that we were going to a town in Harar province called Asebe Teferi, and that we would be getting on a train to go to Dire Dawa, which was in our province. And from there we would meet the Peace Corps doctor, Dr.

[Edwin] Fuller Torrey, and he would take us by car and truck with furniture and whatever to our town that we were going to live in for two years. And my husband and I and two other women were assigned to Asebe Teferi. No Peace Corps volunteers had been there. This was very new for us, very new for the people that you know, that lived in in the town.

ARNOLD: [00:32:56] And we, I rode with the Peace Corps doctor, and we ate lots of yummy bananas that he had tucked under the floor that were very good. And David rode in the truck. And the girls, I think, rode. I don't know where they rode. Maybe they rode in the truck too. I can't remember how they got there. But we all arrived in this small town and there were no lights when we got there. And I remember going into a restaurant and sitting around and we ate some food in the dark. Dr. Torrey.

WAND: [00:33:28] Because it was night by this time.

ARNOLD: [00:33:28] It was night, and we can talk a little bit later. There was a generator for electricity in the town that was working for about maybe a month that we were there. And then for the rest of the two years, it didn't work. So we had electricity from 6:00 until midnight for maybe one month and then never again. And of course, it wasn't working the night we arrived. But we all four, the two girls, two women I guess I should say, but they were girls at the time. We went to live in this house that the doctor had selected ahead for us to live in. And we lived together for about a month and then another house was built and the girls they moved to another house, and David and I lived there. Later another Peace Corps volunteer, Peace Corps volunteer from the fourth group came and lived with us for a while, and then he moved to another house too.

WAND: [00:34:23] Before we get into the village life here and your teaching, I want to go back to your first experience of eating the bread and the stew. You said you picked up the bread and tore it apart and so.

ARNOLD: [00:34:36] That's what you do.

WAND: [00:34:37] OK, so was this your first experience then of not using utensils, no fork, no knife?

ARNOLD: [00:34:43] I think maybe it was. I do not recall. Maybe there was an Ethiopian restaurant, I don't think so, at UCLA. Maybe my husband would remember. I don't remember that, but it was, it was new and it was hot and it was spicy and we sampled different kinds of food. But yes, I think it was the first time to use, um.

WAND: [00:35:04] Your fingers.

ARNOLD: [00:35:05] The fingers for food.

WAND: [00:35:07] Had they told you that that's what you were going to be doing?

ARNOLD: [00:35:09] Yes, we knew that. We knew that would happen. We knew that, you know about some experiences that some former volunteers had that were somewhat critical of the food, but we didn't think about that. We just were thinking very nicely about being courteous and grateful to be there and have a whole family sitting around a big basket and entertaining us. But yes, that was the first time I could remember. And I think it may have been the first time, it may not have been the first time, but my husband was. Every time he ate the spicy food, he was in tears. I mean, you know, that was just so spicy. We had never tasted anything as spicy hot, hot pepper.

WAND: [00:35:55] And he had some kind of reaction.

ARNOLD: [00:35:56] He really did have a reaction to it.

WAND: [00:35:59] Almost an allergic reaction.

ARNOLD: [00:35:59] It was just really interesting. But yeah, it was just very, very intense. But yes, we did that. But I just remember that and I. But the colors in the basket, that's a beautiful basket that's woven. And, you know, just to see the food and see everybody nice being so pleasant to us was a very good feeling. And then to go to there into the dormitory for about a week. I don't remember very much about what we actually learned in that, just what I mentioned earlier about where we were going to go. Because I

think that was mostly in our minds, most of us wanted to know where we were going to be and what that would involve. And we were very fortunate to be in a very beautiful, lovely place surrounded by small mountains, and it seemed like perpetual spring green. Lovely place.

WAND: [00:37:02] And how far was that from Addis?

ARNOLD: [00:37:05] It's about a seven hours drive from there and it's a long train ride from there. I think it's, well, maybe it's seven hours on the train. Yeah.

WAND: [00:37:15] And that's how you went?

ARNOLD: [00:37:16] And that's how we went to Addis.

WAND: [00:37:17] You went by train.

ARNOLD: [00:37:18] Yeah. And if we wanted to go to the capital city, we would need to go by train. Yeah. Once we went with, I think with Dr. Torrey in a Land Rover over a very, very rough road and in the rainy season it was almost impassable. But we, our town was on a main road because Asebe Teferi was a model town. Haile Selassie. The country had made it, called it kind of a model town. And so people would come through on the road.

WAND: [00:37:56] Where you lived?

ARNOLD: [00:37:57] Haile Selassie came through. Yes. And we would have visitors because sometimes people could get there by road. You could get from our town if you wanted to Addis on the road, which really wasn't very easy, but you could also get Land Rover or truck. We didn't have a Land Rover or a truck, but I know David hitchhiked once on a Coca-Cola truck. He could tell about that if he's ever interviewed, which he will probably be in the future. But I was thinking that we drove to, um, we could drive to Harar. We could drive to Dire Dawa, in the province, in Harar province. Those towns have different names. Now they have Oromo names. They are no longer, Asebe Teferi is no longer called Asebe Teferi. I think it's called Chiro. And so some of those places have been renamed, but I think

Dire Dawa is still the same, and I don't think Harar has changed, but I could be wrong. But I think that that's not the case.

WAND: [00:38:56] OK, so you've now landed in your village, your assigned village, and you're sharing a house initially with two other women volunteers. And so how did you ease into your teaching assignment and what you remember about that?

ARNOLD: [00:39:23] I remember that we lived just a short walk behind the school so we could just walk through some fences and things and get to our school from our house, which was very convenient because in the first year the classes would end at about. We'd have morning classes that would end around 2:00 I think, and then we'd leave and come back at 3:00 and then teach to 4:30. So it was kind of long day. They did away with the break the second year. But we did that. But I remember that we met our students, and I was just trying to recall. It just seems like we just sort of eased into that. But the shock was there were no books, no textbooks to use, and we were supposed to be teaching. So we had some materials that we had brought from training and so on, at least for teaching English as a second language.

ARNOLD: [00:40:27] But discovered that we were going to have very large classes. And that I would be teaching seventh and eighth grade English and ninth grade geography, which I hadn't known that I was going to do, and hoping that I could do that with absolutely no textbooks or any books to use at all. None of the students had them. We didn't have any either. And I had about 90 students, 45 students in one class. And so over a 150 students. I mean, it was very large. But our assignment was to start the ninth grade, because we were assigned to start the first secondary school in Ethiopia. There were none others. There was one Russian school, I think, in Ethiopia, a secondary school.

WAND: [00:41:26] Right. Was your school then, the building itself new?

ARNOLD: [00:41:31] I don't know how new it was. I don't think it was really very new. It went up to eighth grade. There was a six through eight and we were moving on. And so our job was to add seventh, uh, ninth and 10th grades.

And then the following, the volunteers to come after us would be adding the 10th and 11th grades.

WAND: [00:41:53] So you were really expanding the depth of education.

ARNOLD: [00:41:55] We were expanding the depth, yes. And the long name [inaudible]. It's a long name for that school. But yes, and the students in Ethiopia were to start learning in seventh grade. They were supposed to start learning everything in English, all their classes. So this was a huge transition for them. They'd had some introduction to English, probably in sixth grade or something, but by Ethiopian teachers and any English they knew, if any at all, was more British English. So they had a big adjustment trying to get used to the American English, our accents and so on, which they caught onto pretty quickly. One of the students loved to learn idioms. That was one of his things that he wanted to learn.

ARNOLD: [00:42:46] But they were fascinated. The students were fascinated with our house and, you know, we were issued a kerosene stove and some kind of refrigerator of which they took out. The Peace Corps ended those after certain, I mean, the stove and everything. I mean, refrigerator. But we had a kerosene stove and they wanted to come see this modern stove. For us, it was kind of an antique, but for them it was new. So we got to know our students very well and very fast, and they, many of them came to our house. We had two students actually living in one of the rooms of our house in the back. Then we had a whole lot of rooms in the back of our house for students who are coming in from other villages, because this was the only school that they could attend that would go up and add any more grades past sixth grade.

ARNOLD: [00:43:44] And so some were coming for seventh and eighth grade and their parents or families would have to send them somehow, and they just needed to live there and find a place to live. So we had a number of students that lived in the back of our house.

WAND: [00:43:58] And did they have like rooms that they entered from behind, from outside your house? Or did they go through your house to get to their rooms?

ARNOLD: [00:44:05] Outside. They had sort of separate rooms. The two Muslim students that lived with us had a room just right off of what became a kitchen. It wasn't a kitchen, but we made it into a kitchen. And then in the back, those were storage areas for the colonel that owned our house, and he kept his coffee, because we were in the coffee area. And so he would store his coffee back there. Well, there were a couple of empty rooms that didn't have his coffee in it, even though we wish it hadn't been there, for students. And so we had some younger students that would live there.

WAND: [00:44:39] And how did they eat?

ARNOLD: [00:44:41] They would eat, probably they. They didn't eat at our house. They ate in the, I think they ate in the village. They had some help with that. But we didn't, we didn't feed the students. We would give them things. I mean, we gave them treats and things like that, and cookies, but I don't remember their actually eating with us. But the two Muslim students were in our classes. They were in our 9th grade class.

WAND: [00:45:09] So if they were, you had Muslim students. What were the religion of the other students?

ARNOLD: [00:45:14] Some of them were Amharas and probably. A couple of them were probably the Amhara tribe, and another was, which is Christian. I mean, you know, they're. Amhara, most of them are Orthodox, Ethiopian Orthodox Christians, I believe. And then some were Oromo I think. Yeah. And then there were, the Amharas were. We did have another student who lived with us for a while later, and he was an Amhara and he had a Christian background. So there were those religions and a mixture because our town was so close to the Somali border. And Harar. And there are a lot of Muslims in that area. So there was a mixture of a number of different religions.

ARNOLD: [00:46:07] In fact, there were a lot of essays that the students would write in English classes and everything. They would like to write about what is a Muslim, what is a Christian? And they were writing a lot of things understanding each other. And we'd talk about that because they were all

together, but they had some religious background in common, but not. But they were different.

WAND: [00:46:32] So the curriculum now, for example, essays where they might write about other people's religion. Who determined that curriculum?

ARNOLD: [00:46:41] The curriculum was, we would just sort of incorporate that into our essays and so on. But the curriculum for the school was mostly it was British. It was, you know, from that that era. And the students were supposed, had to take the British leaving exams. I mean, there were leaving exams at eighth grade, so they would have to take exams at eighth grade in various subjects in order to move to the next level. And it was very interesting because like, for example, the 9th grade geography and 10th grade, they had to study all of the different continents of the world. I mean, I was teaching European geography, I was teaching Australian geography, United States geography, you name it. Fortunately for the physical geography part, I'd had a course in college which was really helpful in geology, you know, because I knew a little bit. Things are, nothing is permanent. Things are always changing. Which we sort of built everything around as far as the physical part of geography. But they had to learn a lot of political stuff. These are all things that were going to be on their exams that they were going to have to take.

WAND: [00:47:51] OK, so you're living. This is in the sixties. There was no internet. There was no telephone. There were very few books, if any books. So how did you get the content for you to help teach these students in geography, for example?

ARNOLD: [00:48:12] That's very interesting. We did several things. My husband had made contacts with some of the publishers in the United States when he was interviewing for jobs. And so we were able to get some publishers to send us some books, at least what we needed, you know, to to use. That happened. We constantly wrote to our parents and our families for materials, for math books, for science books, for things that we needed to use for the curriculum. We also used the USIS library in Addis Ababa, and I got a number of kind of paperback books when I had to teach the United States geography that had been published and were available through

USIS library. And I had enough of those that I could give enough to the students. I wish I'd had things like that for other countries, but I really didn't. So I would use the USIS library. Anything we could do to get our hands on books that that we could use to help us teach, and maps and all kinds of things.

ARNOLD: [00:49:16] My husband's very good at drawing, so he drew a lot of maps for my geography class too. And we had a mimeograph machine in our house that all the teachers used and they would come and then we would run off things. And so we had this mimeograph thing. We would type up our stencils and everything so that we could do our lessons. And so a lot of it was written. We just handwrote it. We would study and write things up and do handouts. And that's what we did, we had to do.

WAND: [00:49:44] And you had, you did have paper that you could copy onto?

ARNOLD: [00:49:49] We had the stencils and I think, I don't know where we got those. We may have gotten those, and maybe Peace Corps issued those. I don't know. Because we had that. And then we of course, had a book locker that was given by the Peace Corps. But the book locker was great. The book locker had mostly novels. I mean, it was good literature and reading. It didn't have the substantial materials that we would need, so we were pretty lost. I mean, we thought, there was, I got something on Australian geography and it was so good that I got a letter from a student that I had way back in the sixties. I mean, I got, I heard from him just about a year ago. I mean, somehow he found me on the internet and he was talking about the Snowy River project in Australia. He just remembered some of the things that we had talked about in geography and which was kind of interesting to me to see that a couple of things that had stuck out in someone's mind way back.

WAND: [00:50:42] Fifty years later.

ARNOLD: [00:50:43] Fifty years later. But yeah, there were books in our school, but they were locked up. No students were allowed to have them. Those were not textbooks or anything we really needed, but they were literature books. And most of those books had, many of those books had been donated by

Great Britain, and many of them were old. We did have a social studies text that was so dated and pictures and things that would be very insulting almost to the people we were teaching because of their race, the racist concept. But there were some good books in that library. And we got books from home. We got Winnie the Pooh, we got Christopher Robin. We got different things that we'd known as children sent to us.

ARNOLD: [00:51:32] But the big thing that we did and the project that we spent a lot of time on in two years, David and I and Pat and Eileen. Eileen, who later married another Peace Corps volunteer from another city who came there. So there were five of us teaching and then one more who came in later. But we actually talked the director into letting us catalog the library. So we spent all this time learning the Dewey Decimal System, and we did. We put the Dewey. We did a Dewey Decimal System and we cataloged every single book and worked really hard on it. And you'd appreciate this, Pat, as a librarian. We had a card, you know, they had cards where they could check out things. And the director was terrified thinking that he would lose the books. And the children could, the students couldn't believe that they were going to be able to take a book home and read it and bring it back. That whole concept was just, it just didn't exist.

WAND: [00:52:35] Brand new.

ARNOLD: [00:52:36] Brand new.

WAND: [00:52:37] OK, so you. The books that the UK had given them had been locked up. You talked the director into letting you catalog them, and so you did that. Then what happened? Did they let the children read them and take them home and return them?

ARNOLD: [00:52:53] Yes, that they did.

WAND: [00:52:56] That's a major accomplishment.

ARNOLD: [00:52:57] That is a major accomplishment. And you know, we have photographs, I have one photograph of Pat. It was Pat Swetis, that was her last name at the time, sitting there checking out books. You know, they

had their little cards and everything. So yes, and I don't know. I assume that the volunteers after us kind of kept that project going. We did meet the ones that came after us once, but that was some other time. They were in Addis, David. It was later in our lives, but we didn't talk about that. The main thing we talked about that when their names came up was the fact that they had our same cook that I had trained to cook. And I got a letter from that cook later. Her husband was one of our students, didn't lived with us, ended up marrying our cook, who is Somali. Both of them were Somalis.

WAND: [00:53:51] Mm hmm.

ARNOLD: [00:53:53] And they were very sad because they thought that she, some of her things she made were rather dry and not good, and they had criticized her cooking. So I felt kind of sad because she and I did a lot together and she could do fried chicken, she could make bread, she could do pies. I mean, she and I learned how to use the Joy of Cooking cookbook together.

WAND: [00:54:16] Right. You taught her enough English so that she could read it.

ARNOLD: [00:54:19] Actually, I learned a lot in Amharic, and it was interesting because when I came back, I was cooking using a different language. She knew, I think Ammina knew four languages, Arabic and Armenia. I think maybe some Amharic, one other, and she knew no English at all.

WAND: [00:54:44] And she didn't learn English but you taught her how to use the Joy of Cooking by helping her translate?

ARNOLD: [00:54:50] Right. Yeah. And so she learned some English and some Amharic. But it was an opportunity for me to learn a different language, really, because all the students wanted to learn English, and that's why we were there. But so we didn't have the kind of opportunity that some volunteers may have had to teach in the language. So anyway, every way we could figure out how to learn it, we did. And we wanted to talk to the guard and wanted to talk to the cook. And you know, when I measure now, I can say *anda maki sucor*, which is one teaspoon of sugar. I mean,

and I just, you know, did that for years after I came back, all the terminology for cooking, I was either. And we called it Kitchen Amharic because we made up some words and it was fun. And in a letter she told me, you know later that, she said. No, she told me, and I think I wrote in a letter that she said that we had moved beyond just demonstrating. We could actually speak and talk about how to do things.

WAND: [00:55:52] The two of you could?

ARNOLD: [00:55:53] The two of us in a language. We had a very close relationship. And it was great. She was just 14 years old. And, you know, here I was 22. But she was learning and I was learning. And she would come in the morning and the first several months we were there I tried to do all of the cooking. But the teaching load was so vast, it was so demanding, and there was just no time to do everything. On the weekends I would cook and I loved it and I was learning how. But I needed the help and she needed the money and she had a large family and she was helping to care for her brothers and sisters. So it turned out to be a very mutual relationship for us. Very positive.

WAND: [00:56:39] Right. Very positive. So I want to catch the names of the Peace Corps volunteers, the two women who were in your village first. What were their names?

ARNOLD: [00:56:51] Pat Swetis and her last name now is Ziklay. Pat Swetis S-Z-I-A-L-A-I. Pat Swetis Ziklay. And Eileen Sonata, who is now Eileen Sonata Saracen. So and I suppose I could tell them too if they ever listen to this, but it was quite interesting to be in another country and actually having one person who was a Catholic and another person who was a second generation Jewish from Alabama. And it was just. And then Eileen Sonata, who was second generation Japanese. She had been born in Tule Lake camp.

WAND: [00:57:39] Oh.

ARNOLD: [00:57:40] So here were four of us with very different backgrounds living together. But there really were five because I mentioned Howard Saracen,

who married. He and Eileen were married, and when they got married, he was working in another. He was a volunteer in another city. We knew him in training. And when they were married the second year, he came to our town and was teaching there, teaching math. So that was nice. They got married in Ethiopia. So they have an Ethiopian marriage license.

WAND: [00:58:21] Fun. Wow. So yes, you overcame a lot of challenges going into a school where you were expanding the curriculum grade by grade and with no textbooks and no resources. So you had to figure out how to put each lesson together and what to do.

ARNOLD: [00:58:41] Oh yes. Mm hmm.

WAND: [00:58:42] And none of you, neither you nor David had had any education training in college, right?

ARNOLD: [00:58:49] No. Right.

WAND: [00:58:50] So you had to learn how to be teachers while you were in Peace Corps training.

ARNOLD: [00:58:54] Exactly.

WAND: [00:58:55] And then figure it out on your own when you got into the village.

ARNOLD: [00:58:58] Exactly. And the younger students were really excited. Most of them really wanted to learn everything. And you know, of course, the families all thought we were sent by God. They were so happy to have us there to teach their children. They really thought that this was a miracle so that we were well received. The older students, you know, ninth and tenth grade, they weren't the ages that you might think of as ninth and 10th graders. Many of them started much later. Some were older than we were. You know, some might have been 25, 30, and were needing, you know, to get in some kind of education. And they had either had to help their families who were farmers or whatever and hadn't had that opportunity.

ARNOLD: [00:59:46] I do remember in teaching geography and my husband was teaching social studies. First math, but then he didn't teach math after the two men from East India came, who were very good in math, and so they took over the math courses. But talking with the students out under the trees because they were very concerned about us because of Vietnam, and they wanted to talk about it. And it was interesting and we needed to talk and we were representing our country. But we also had been told in training that we were not supposed to get involved in any politics. Nothing political. But when you're teaching geography, you're teaching social studies, you're teaching subject areas, and things come up. They want to know about government, they want to know about our country, what's going on, why are you there? They were upset about Ian Smith going into, where was it, Rwanda or wherever.

ARNOLD: [01:00:40] These were things that were concerning them. They were thinking about things and they wanted to talk. And we would listen. We did a lot of listening and it was quite interesting. One of the volunteers who was with us women was teaching English, and she introduced her class to Shakespeare. They absolutely loved it and they acted it out. They felt like they were living their own culture when they were acting out some of Shakespeare's plays. I forget which one now it was that she did, but um. My husband might remember. But it was just amazing.

WAND: [01:01:19] That was a Peace Corps volunteer?

ARNOLD: [01:01:20] Yeah, a Peace Corps volunteer did it. Yeah. We had a wonderful, wonderful group. And what is interesting is that we still keep in touch with each other and we see each other at conferences. We've seen each other when we've traveled. We do keep in touch from time to time, and that's been very good. But yeah, I just think that our experience there was absolutely incredible. And we just kept getting a new appreciation for our own country in many ways and a deep appreciation for the one we were in. We were learning a lot from the students and our interaction. Some things good, some things not so good. It was a mixture of affection and also a lot of feelings and sometimes misunderstandings.

ARNOLD: [01:02:30] But we seemed to be sharing a lot about our cultures, and they were very interested in hearing from us. They really wanted to learn. They wanted to learn from us. I felt that was pretty strong and we wanted to learn from them. We were told in Peace Corps training that if you just don't, don't feel like you're going to change the world, don't feel like you're there to change the culture. Just feel good if you make a few friends. I mean, that's important. So I think we just carried that kind of with us and there were frustrations with our jobs. It was really hard and we were very tired. I guess the old phrase is the toughest job you'll ever love. It was the toughest job and we did love it. We loved being there and we loved getting to know our students and our teachers. But it was hard. It was really difficult.

ARNOLD: [01:03:25] And, you know, I just think back, I mean, we got used to feeling what it was like, as I wrote my family a lot. It was like living in the United States 50 years ago maybe. And my grandparents, I think we had more in common with them. You know, we're heating water to take baths on the weekends. We're doing things that I imagined that people did a long time ago in our country, but they weren't doing now.

WAND: [01:03:51] And you had not had to do before you went into Ethiopia.

ARNOLD: [01:03:57] We had not had to do that before. And we kept needing things from home. And letters. Fortunately, in our town, we were able to receive letters and send out letters. Not everybody was. So that was a good way that we could communicate. They took a little while to get there. It kind of depended on what postage, where it was coming from. But we did receive some things from home that we needed for us to teach.

WAND: [01:04:24] And the packages went through? They weren't confiscated at the border?

ARNOLD: [01:04:28] The packages went through. No. They were opened. They came to our city and they would open all the packages and look at them. Most of the things, like a package of Jell-O mix or something like that or pudding or, they weren't too interested in. I mean, they were looking for something valuable. I think they would have loved, probably, oh, this looks

kind of interesting. Maybe they would. Maybe they wouldn't. I don't know. But nothing was ever really taken.

WAND: [01:04:52] Right.

ARNOLD: [01:04:52] So that was, you know, our first first year of teaching. And then of course, we had summer projects.

WAND: [01:04:59] Before we talk about that, I'm wondering in the school where you were teaching, were there Ethiopian teachers as well?

ARNOLD: [01:05:07] Yes.

WAND: [01:05:08] So what was the proportion of Peace Corps volunteers by, say, the second year and Ethiopian teachers? And what was your relationship with the other teachers?

ARNOLD: [01:05:22] Well, we got along pretty well with the woman who taught economics and there was also, they had a garden at the school. They just grew some green things. We didn't have vegetables until we had our own garden, really, or we had to get them from another city.

ARNOLD: [01:05:42] But what you asked is the ratio. I'm trying to think because the first year there were four of us. Within to that year, though, the Ethiopia IV volunteer came to our town. So there were five of us and then one of the women got married. So that's six. So there were, um. Let's see. Yeah, one, two, three, four, five of us, I guess. So and the rest of them were, well, there was one French teacher, a person from France. And two from East India. They had come with their families. One of them didn't come with his family. The other one did. Mr. Dige and Mr. Corian, who were there, and they would take the bus to Dire Dawa to get vegetables because they were vegetarians. It was kind of hard to be there for them. And the rest were Ethiopian teachers.

WAND: [01:06:45] So were there maybe 20 other non-Peace Corps volunteer teachers?

ARNOLD: [01:06:48] Maybe so. I'm trying to think how many classes. Maybe so, maybe 20. I've never really stopped to count them all. I'd have to go through and think about that.

WAND: [01:06:59] But you were covering how many grades then? Seven through twelve eventually?

ARNOLD: [01:07:03] English of seventh and eighth grade, social studies of seventh and eighth grade, geography of the ninth and tenth grade. And then I think Howard was doing math and science. And I forget what John Timmons was teaching, science. He was a biology teacher, and of course, the East Indians were teaching math and Eileen was teaching history. So we had history, Ethiopian history. She was teaching Ethiopian history.

WAND: [01:07:37] Right, right.

ARNOLD: [01:07:39] And she was very good at it. She knew it very well.

WAND: [01:07:42] Yeah, yeah. So you had counterparts then that you could interact with? Did these, the counterparts, the other English or the other teachers were in your school?

ARNOLD: [01:07:57] They didn't teach with us.

WAND: [01:08:00] No, no. But you were in the same school.

ARNOLD: [01:08:02] Yes.

WAND: [01:08:02] And you did you share ideas about teaching? Did you consult with one another about the curriculum or about methodology or assignments or anything like that?

ARNOLD: [01:08:16] Not so very much.

WAND: [01:08:18] Not so much. You were more separate, huh?

ARNOLD: [01:08:20] Yeah. Not so much. But we did do things like, you know, the Boy Scouts, they had Boy Scouts and the troops. And so we had several teachers who were managing the Boy Scouts. And that was a requirement. They could count their Boy Scout service toward military service in their country. But we did have uniforms and scouting equipment and books and everything sent from Missouri.

WAND: [01:08:47] Oh interesting. Well, were the Ethiopian teachers overseeing Boy Scouts and you were helping?

ARNOLD: [01:08:52] Yes, Ethiopian teachers were doing that. I think I had a science club and a health club, and David had another club, and so we had different clubs that we were in charge of, that we just were doing. And we would meet about different things. And we also, let's see, what else do we do? Oh, we got lots of things from USIS equipment. We got moving picture kind of machines that we could use and use with the generator. So we showed the story of Helen Keller and a bunch of different stories for them. But as far as collaborating with the teachers, we would invite them over. We had them to our house on New Year's Eve, and we served food and they brought food and we fixed things. Socially we would do some things with them. But I don't remember doing much curriculum planning with the other teachers.

WAND: [01:09:47] More social.

ARNOLD: [01:09:51] Mm hmm, more social.

WAND: [01:09:53] So we've really, in a sense, we've moved through kind of transition from the first year in well into the second year. But is there anything in particular that stands out about the second year?

ARNOLD: [01:10:07] Well, in between the second year, we had projects and I had a kind of a health project for young women. And it was designed to talk about childcare and diseases and so on. And so we did that for several weeks in the summertime, I did actually. My husband had another project that he was working on. But I did that and I got a little help from the Peace Corps doctor with some ideas. But we were making puppets and little

puppets to be able to. Our goal was in this group would be to have a play written in the two different languages so that we could take the puppets to explain some of these health issues to the village. Unfortunately, we never got to that point. We did a lot of discussion and a lot of talking and making the puppets and so on. But by the time we got enough girls involved and everything, it was time to end the project.

ARNOLD: [01:11:09] And we left for Kenya because we were supposed to travel. They gave us an allowance for travel in the Peace Corps. They wanted us to see some of the other countries, either Ethiopia or another country in Africa, so that we would have some experience there to bring back, I guess, to the students. And so we did that. So that project and I vaguely remember it. I know the girls asking questions. I know I learned a lot about the kinds of medications that they use, what they use for tapeworm, and what kinds of, and it was called a coso kind of thing. They had certain herbs and things that they would use for different kinds of things. So we talked about that and some other things, but it's just I've forgotten a lot about that.

WAND: [01:11:55] Mm hmm. But so you had a special project for that part of the summer break and then you traveled. For how long did you travel?

ARNOLD: [01:12:04] Traveled for about a month in Kenya and Uganda, which was amazing to go to Nairobi and to some places like that, even Addis. But Nairobi was amazing, and even Kampala, the big cities were, had everything. You know, movies and hamburgers and all kinds of things. We made our own hamburgers, we ground our own meat. We had a meat grinder in our house and we did a lot of interesting cooking, but it was fun to do that, you know, and we enjoyed it. And it was interesting being in Kenya not too long after independence and the currency, the queen was still on all the currency. And it was just interesting to be in a country that had been colonized after being in Ethiopia and seeing the difference. Of course, the Ethiopians we knew and everyone there, they're very proud and wonderful people. And it was very, it's true in Kenya too, but it was a different feeling from being a colonial, previously colonial country.

WAND: [01:13:08] Right.

ARNOLD: [01:13:09] But yes, that we did, and then we came back the second year. And I think at one of the Christmases, we went to Djibouti to kind of see what was going on there. So we did just a little bit of traveling when we were there. Interesting in Uganda, there's so many stories to tell, but it would go on forever about all the different kinds of stories and things that we encountered there, as well as in Ethiopia, among the teachers. And different things had happened and things that didn't work out for the French teacher and so on. But those details, I think, are really not necessary for this kind of an interview. But there are stories, they're background stories, but I think everyone and every Peace Corps volunteer has little side stories.

WAND: [01:13:58] Absolutely, right. And maybe there's a side story that comes to mind. We have time if you want to share one.

ARNOLD: [01:14:06] Well, just see where we are. I'm trying to think of some other stories. A lot of them were doing things together, just kind of funny stories. I mean, climbing up Jelo Mountain, which was in our town, and riding a mule and going up with students and taking our chickens and, you know, killing our chickens and roasting our chickens.

WAND: [01:14:32] Butchering. So you learned to do that.

ARNOLD: [01:14:33] We learned to do that, yeah.

WAND: [01:14:34] Did the Ethiopians teach you how to butcher?

ARNOLD: [01:14:37] Yeah, actually we did the chickens and we, I don't know if I did it or David did it. But because we had a Muslim cook, it was easier for her to cook Muslim meat or meat that was killed by.

WAND: [01:14:52] With halal?

ARNOLD: [01:14:53] Yeah. So you would put the chicken on the ground and face it toward Mecca and pop the chicken's neck. So at first when we were there, we were buying some food from the Christian market, but they had so

many fasting days it wasn't as fresh. And the Muslims were doing it, their meat was always very, very fresh, freshly cut. So we ate. And our cook was Somali and Muslim, and she felt much more comfortable because she couldn't. She couldn't taste anything that was made with Christian meat. So some of her food was so over spiced. I mean, it was just so spicy. I mean, you couldn't. She would spice it just put it in there because she thought that's what she should do and we couldn't eat it. So when we started getting meat that was slaughtered at the Muslim slaughter places in town, it was good.

WAND: [01:15:50] By the butcher?

WAND: [01:15:51] Yeah, and then we had, by the butcher. And well, actually there were slaughterhouses, really. And then we got some meat from the butcher, and we knew, we learned what part was tender and what parts weren't. And so really all that. But yeah, and then I'm trying to think of the funny stories on the mountain where, you know, we were. It was cold. We had monkeys, all kinds of monkeys flying through the trees all around us. And so we all slept in our sleeping bags by the fire.

WAND: [01:16:22] Oh, this was a camping trip.

ARNOLD: [01:16:22] This was a camping trip up into the mountains and the mule that we rode up there, one of us rode, got loose and it was running all around. It was interesting and the students were saying, stop, stop, stop, trying to get that mule corralled. And finally, David put down a rope loop on the ground and the mule stepped into it and he quickly pulled the noose, I mean the rope, and it captured the mule. But there are other funny things. I mean, just little things like the chicken that we thought was lost and a live one. And it was finally found inside the oven that had opened and it was not getting cooked. But it was hiding in there. We found that. And then, you know, the times that the dog chased the turkey all around the house. We had chickens in our house. We had cattle grazing in the front yard. We had hyenas at night.

ARNOLD: [01:17:27] We had beautiful stars. I mean, I've never seen such beautiful things, so we would watch what I think might have been a satellite going

through the sky. And I kept thinking that that was Echo going by, I don't know if that was the right year, but whatever it was moving and I was just imagining all the people in the hills, the mountains and so on, developing folktales about that because I bet they wondered what it was.

WAND: [01:17:51] It was a new light in the sky, yeah.

ARNOLD: [01:17:54] So that was nice. And then, you know, there are other kind of funny things, but I think that, you know, I think that that's about.

WAND: [01:18:05] You're about at the end of the stories for Peace Corps. So how about going, getting ready to go home?

ARNOLD: [01:18:13] Well, that was exciting. Just about the time, you know, we were ready to go home, we were feeling very settled. It was interesting because we were ready for the next thing. And so the next adventure would be to figure out where we were going to go on the way home, which was something very interesting. And so we planned a trip. We were sad to leave. It was very, very sad. And the teachers had a very lovely party for us and we were given lovely Ethiopian dresses and it was very sentimental and we were sad to leave. But we were also anticipating going home again and what would we do next.

ARNOLD: [01:18:59] And actually, we had been asked by the Peace Corps if we would consider doing a second tour in Micronesia because they wanted to open up Micronesia. We thought about it and we kept thinking about what we wanted to do. And of course, I was thinking about Australia too, because I got so interested in it when I was teaching it in geography. But we decided that, no, we thought we might like to come home and have a family.

WAND: [01:19:26] Mm hmm.

ARNOLD: [01:19:28] So that's really one of the things we were thinking about. But we planned a wonderful trip in Europe. We went to, you know, went to Rome. We went to Turkey. We spent some time in Germany. We bought a car. We traveled all around. I think now if we had gone there to all those

countries from here in the United States, some we have been there, we may have appreciated more than just basic civilization. But we were so thrilled to be able to eat food and do things, go to movies. And we were young enough that it was so exciting to come back and do that.

WAND: [01:20:12] To do that in Europe.

ARNOLD: [01:20:13] In Europe.

WAND: [01:20:14] After being after living in the village in Ethiopia.

ARNOLD: [01:20:18] To be quite honest with it. About that. But we had friends and we knew we would probably keep in touch, which we did over the years with students and, um. But we were sad to leave, but that was great. And we told ourselves before we left that we had read stories that it would be very difficult for Peace Corps volunteers when they come back, that there may be a thing called reverse culture shock. They had talked to us in training about culture shock, and then they talked about a reverse culture shock. And we thought that will not happen to us. We will go back. It'll be OK. But when we got back, yeah, we were back in the United States and we were trying to think about the next step in our lives. What were we going to do with what we had learned in the Peace Corps? Well, we'd been teachers. My husband had been writing and sending stories and having stories published. He was thinking about newspapers. I was thinking about maybe teaching. We're both thinking about that.

ARNOLD: [01:21:16] But of all the things, the grocery stores, the things that people were doing, everything seemed like, I can't believe this, because we had been in an environment where so many things were restricted and they didn't have things. That was kind of a shock. But fortunately, on the return home we came to Washington, went to the Peace Corps office, I think, and kind of checked in a little bit. But then went to New York waiting for our car to be shipped and trying to find another, trying to find a job. So my husband noticed something in Norwalk, Ohio, for this Sandusky Register, and he was looking at different things and got an answer, went through editor and publisher and got an answer for that. And I thought, what am I

going to do? Story of my life. It was just, OK, what am I going to do next, you know?

ARNOLD: [01:22:16] So he got an interview. So we drove. When we got the car, we drove, we watched. We did a little time in New York, going to theater and doing standing room tickets and waiting for the car. Then we drove to Norwalk, Ohio. He had an interview at the Sandusky Register. He got a job. I had an interview for a second grade classroom, but actually it wasn't for second grade. It was for teaching students who were hard of hearing and they were starting a new little group. Well, they knew and I knew that I had worked in my college, that I had taken a course and I had worked in the Tennessee State School for the Deaf as a little bit of part of my courses. And I told them that and they said, OK, you've been in the Peace Corps and you've done this. We're going to hire you to teach this special class.

ARNOLD: [01:23:14] So I thought, great, we're back, we're both getting jobs. We drove back to Missouri, went visiting, went into complete shock. We talked to our families. It was almost like we hadn't been anywhere. I mean, we were hearing about everything we'd heard in letters, but it was like, it was so different. It was, they didn't really want to hear our stories. I guess we'd written enough, I don't know. But we felt so strange. And we were going to unpack wedding gifts and we were going to move to Ohio. So we ended up doing that. But when I got back to Ohio, they said the parents decided they didn't want the children in this class. They're going to have them do something. They're not going to put them in a special class. But we would like for you to teach second grade. So I said, OK. And so I started teaching second grade.

ARNOLD: [01:24:06] But what was wonderful is that I had so much rich stuff to share with all these darling young minds. I love teaching science. I like sharing things. I was learning the curriculum. I didn't have any background really in teaching elementary, except that I did teach a summer class of little young children in Ethiopia. I did a little summer English class for them and we did a lot of oral English. I'd forgotten about that. But then what was surprising to me was to be in a second grade classroom in the United States and be

able to speak English. They seemed like they were brilliant. They seemed like they were singers because they knew English.

WAND: [01:24:51] The whole vocabulary.

ARNOLD: [01:24:52] The whole vocabulary! And I was just floored. But it was very, very cold in Ohio. I got a very heavy coat for the playground. Some of the children liked to stay in. So what do I have but a wonderful audience to share all of the slides from Ethiopia and Kenya. So they would stay in and we would see animals, we would see people when they stayed in at recess. And so I had a little bit of an outlet. From there, I was asked to give a talk at the Grange in Ohio. So here I was talking to farmers about how they harvest wheat in Ethiopia. So my feeling was that we were, what we'd like to think about as the third goal, bringing the world back home. So to me, those initial experiences and even with my own children growing up, being asked to go to their classroom and share the stories.

ARNOLD: [01:25:55] Being asked to go to my Kappa sorority and being able to tell them stories, and they say, this is better than a lot of the trips we have been on. But I said, this is interesting, but I, you know, I did it that way. And to me, that was very, very special. And for a long time, we went into schools and did different kinds of things to bring our experience back home. So, um, I suppose that when people ask us questions and I'm really interested to see if our grandchildren will want to know the stories. I need to ask our children, do you remember any of these stories? You didn't join the Peace Corps. Why not? Some families do, some go on, but they did other very interesting things. But now, as a grandmother, I'm wondering, you know, which one of those four little people might be thinking about the Peace Corps?

ARNOLD: [01:26:59] Because I think it has value, more value than anything I can think of that I've really ever done. And so when I think about how did it change my life or what did I carry with me, I think I almost have to verbalize it more because I have to. A lot of it is tucked inside and the sharing of it is important. But not everybody wants to hear those stories and I can understand that because it's different. It's not something they experienced. But now that so many people travel, more and more people

travel around the world. There is so much connection through the internet and through technology that there must, there has to be more of a connection. There just has to be.

WAND: [01:27:53] The one difference though, there is travel when you spend a few weeks maybe or even just a few days in a place, it's very different than what you did where you went to a community and you lived as a member of that committee for two years. You lived side by side. You did the same things. You cooked the same meals. You learned about the way of life and how those people farmed and how those children played and how they went camping. And all of those things that.

ARNOLD: [01:28:26] Exactly. And their music and their songs.

WAND: [01:28:29] And their food.

ARNOLD: [01:28:30] And the food. I mean, all of those things.

WAND: [01:28:32] It's different. You totally immersed yourself in that community, which you can't do when you're traveling.

ARNOLD: [01:28:37] And I think that's why now, if we are not good travelers, and I think the reason is that we want to go and stay in a place, and I think that's what it did for us. We've been back to Pakistan. We wanted to work and be there. We've been to Kenya and have stayed there. Even now, when we talk about wanting to travel, we want to go to someplace. We want to know the people. We want to be there, we want to go to where they eat, we want to do that. And I think that we haven't wanted to just hop around in different places. We would love to be settled and have that same kind of feeling. And even going to Pakistan many years later, my husband had a Fulbright. I was teaching. We arrived in that country. We hadn't been out of the country for a long time, out of the United States, and we were treating it like a Peace Corps experience.

ARNOLD: [01:29:37] I mean, what we were doing, we were buying things in the local markets. This is what we thought you had to do. They actually had frozen food in some of the grocery stores. But you know, it was a culture that that

seemed very ancient to me. I mean, Lahore, Pakistan, has many people and it's very dusty. And there's the old, old city and there's a big contrast. So it was another feeling because we were going to live there, so we wanted to settle like we had in Peace Corps. But I think that this is a very interesting thing to do, to really think about. And it was a long time ago. I mean, you think about 50 years ago, it's not that long in a person's life. But when you're thinking, you know, OK, so it's, you know, 54 years ago we were married and all of this happened. But you know, I think about it and even thinking about this interview, I realized that I do hear from one of the children of our cook and the student who are married. They had eight children.

WAND: [01:30:39] Wow.

ARNOLD: [01:30:40] One of them writes in and asks about it and his parents, they're retired now. Seven boys and a girl. Ammina, my cook, who asked me about these little pills that I was taking every day, would say, what? These are birth control. What does that mean?

WAND: [01:31:02] Uh huh.

ARNOLD: [01:31:04] Well, obviously.

WAND: [01:31:06] She didn't practice.

ARNOLD: [01:31:07] She didn't practice.

WAND: [01:31:08] No, she didn't have access to those pills.

ARNOLD: [01:31:09] But those were things that we shared about, you know, they were interested in that.

WAND: [01:31:14] So we need to bring this to a close.

ARNOLD: [01:31:17] Yes.

WAND: [01:31:17] But tell me, have you been back to that village where you taught and lived?

ARNOLD: [01:31:22] Well, I was thinking about that. I have been back to Ethiopia, been back to the capital city. Have traveled into cities there that I haven't seen before, but could not go back because of the unrest in the country. It wasn't safe to go back to our town. So I've not been back to where we taught.

WAND: [01:31:43] Is it safe now to do that?

ARNOLD: [01:31:45] It is safe now. I'm pretty sure it's safe because things are changing in Ethiopia now, with our fingers crossed we will see this wonderful new leader and it's the, the dissidents are happy. Everybody's feeling good about it, the good relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea and what's happening. We have our fingers crossed.

WAND: [01:32:03] So was your village in Eritrea?

ARNOLD: [01:32:05] It was in Ethiopia. It's in Ethiopia. But it's by train. But what happened when we went back to Ethiopia is that our students, our closest students, came to see us. One of them was in the capital city and the others came in. They came in from Dire Dawa. They felt that they were safe. And it was Mohammed and Ammina and their children.

WAND: [01:32:31] Ah, your cook and.

ARNOLD: [01:32:33] And not only that, but our children went too and so they came over when we were in Kenya. And so that's when I went back to Ethiopia, when we were in Kenya. And so they got to go with our wonderful student who, Menghesha, who became a lawyer in Ethiopia and they went with him to see him at a trial, which was great. They said they'd never driven a car as fast as they were there. They were thinking it was amazing. But so they got to see some of the culture, which was wonderful because I think they always felt like we'd almost had another family. Because they heard the stories and we were close to this student and we were sending, kind of helping him through school. He went on through school. He was in and out

of school. It was, there's a long story associated with that student, who actually died, you know, in the early nineties.

ARNOLD: [01:33:30] But we did see him and so we didn't get to go back to our town. My husband did. He went another time, but he went with this particular student who was very ill at the time. And so they didn't get to do as much sightseeing or going around as they wanted. But no, but we have been able to keep in touch with some. And then there's one student in the United States that David could probably tell about because he found out about Amadi, who was in our classes. He is now a professor in North Carolina, and he has written a dictionary for the Aroma language, which is not, it isn't possible. There was no written language, and he's written this. So my husband's been in touch with him. I've been in touch with a few others.

ARNOLD: [01:34:24] But it is interesting to have an individual interview because a lot of our lives, David's and mine, are intertwined because we were also starting a new marriage, as well as learning a new culture and sharing our own cultural backgrounds from different families, as well as learning another one. So we learned a lot about each other in those two years, and I think that was great and strengthening. But part of what we were able to share, because we shared a lot of stories about it. But we also had our individual experiences.

WAND: [01:35:01] Exactly. You were teaching separately.

ARNOLD: [01:35:03] And teaching separately. So even though we were there, it was. But it was good and I'm glad that that our marriage lasted. And it's good. I think about that.

WAND: [01:35:19] Right. You were blessed.

ARNOLD: [01:35:21] Yeah.

WAND: [01:35:22] So we need to end this wonderful time and thank you very, very much for all of your reflections. It's very important that we record these

reflections and that you, um. I'm very glad to hear that it's possible you might be able to go back to your village and do that.

ARNOLD: [01:35:43] I would like to do that too. I would like very much to do that because, you know, we probably, we're older now. I don't know that we would see many people there that we knew.

WAND: [01:35:51] But there will be some.

ARNOLD: [01:35:52] There will be some. Well, the students. And actually we even met one of our students in Washington, D.C., coming off a plane, who works for the World Bank.

WAND: [01:36:02] By chance?

ARNOLD: [01:36:03] By chance.

WAND: [01:36:03] Oh my gosh.

ARNOLD: [01:36:04] It was amazing. Her husband was there to meet David, who was coming in, and oh my gosh, yeah.

WAND: [01:36:11] Wow.

ARNOLD: [01:36:11] So she's worked for the World Food Program and the World Bank.

WAND: [01:36:15] It's a small world.

ARNOLD: [01:36:16] Outstanding girl. Yeah, she was in David's social studies class.

WAND: [01:36:19] Wow. Well, once again, Courtney, thank you very much.

ARNOLD: [01:36:23] Oh, you're welcome.

[END OF INTERVIEW]