

Ann Diliberti Oral History Interview
Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection
Administrative Information

Creator: Ann Diliberti
Interviewer: Paul Kinsley
Date of Interview: December 7, 2010
Location of Interview: Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Length: 25 pages

Biographical Note

Ann Diliberti served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Chile from July 1969 to July 1971 as a community service worker.

Access

Open.

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Suggested Citation

Ann Diliberti, recorded interview by Paul Kinsley, December 7, 2010, page #, Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.

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Oral History Interview

with

Ann Diliberti

December 7, 2010
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

By Paul Kinsley

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

KINSLEY: [00:00:03] Today is December 7th, 2010. This is Paul Kinsley, and I'm interviewing Ann Diliberti, who was a Peace Corps volunteer in Chile from July 1969 to July 1971 as a community service worker. Ok, I guess we'll start out if you can kind of describe your present family, work, residence, interests.

DILIBERTI: [00:00:41] I'm married to the man I had just recently married when I entered the Peace Corps, and we have three grown children. I worked as a bilingual school social worker for the Milwaukee public schools for 22 years and have just recently retired from that. So I'm looking around to see what this next phase of life will bring.

KINSLEY: [00:01:06] Okay. Let's see. Kind of think back to the year before you joined the Peace Corps and talked about what life was like then. You can include childhood, education and other experiences that maybe led you to become a volunteer.

DILIBERTI: [00:01:28] I grew up in a family in Milwaukee and one of six children and was definitely wanted some sort of adventure for my life. I was not impressed with my mother's life as a homemaker and had thought I would like to do something, although I hadn't defined what. At one point I thought about joining the convent and that didn't pan out. And I met my husband early in my college career, and he eventually said, boy, I'd sure like to go to the Peace Corps. In fact, he had applied after high school, but of course they said, you know, wait till after college. So we had these plans to do that even before we had plans to marry. And actually the year before going to the Peace Corps, I joined the North-South Student Exchange and attended a semester of school at North Carolina A&T, which is an African-American university. And had a really eye opening and enriching experience there. So I thought, well, I have to prove to myself that I have some independence and I'm not just going on his coattails. So we headed off for two weeks after we got married in July of 1969, you know, sort of fresh from the decade of the sixties in Milwaukee and just out to see what we could see. We had been students of Latin American history and were really not under any illusions as to what we were going to accomplish for Chile, but just really grateful for the opportunity to, you know, to be ambassadors and to enjoy that experience.

KINSLEY: [00:03:23] Ok, I guess, well, that pretty much answers why you joined and is that right or unless you want to add to that? And so you mentioned a little about the, you know, the social and political climate in the late sixties. And so that contributed to it then probably?

DILIBERTI: [00:03:46] It did. It did. And we're very humble about what we might accomplish and arriving in Chile, of course, in the climate of those years, you know, we were under suspicion. There had been, you know, a couple of weeks after our arrival in Chile, there had been sort of an incident at our training site where local political party and newspaper person, I believe, had sort of snuck onto the premises and taken some pictures or just whatever wrote a story about the school of spies that was in the Lincoln out of the my pool where we were training. And so from then on, we were very sort of on guard for when people would say, well, are you American? And so we're very careful about anyone talking to us about that sort of

thing. And of course, that tapered off as we became involved at our regular site and became just, you know, warm friends with lots of different people.

KINSLEY: [00:05:02] You know, let's go back just a little. How did you hear about the Peace Corps? Was that through your husband or did you have all that?

DILIBERTI: [00:05:11] I had a cousin who was actually in the first Peace Corps group and he went to Ghana in, I believe, 1960, and actually he met his wife there. She was, I think, another volunteer in another site or whatever. So I had heard about it and it was always interesting, something that he had done. I never envisioned myself doing it, but certainly the adventure was something that was interesting.

KINSLEY: [00:05:38] Ok, now kind of describe the process and the timing of the journey. You finish college and then?

DILIBERTI: [00:05:45] Well, in about January of our senior year, we talked to a recruiter and started filling out papers and taking the medical exams and things like that. And they said the training is going to be in Chile. So we, you know, two weeks after we got married, we were three days in Washington, D.C., and then went off to Santiago, which was the middle of winter there, not a good time of the year to go to Chile. And so we just jumped in with both feet, you know?

KINSLEY: [00:06:17] Now, where did you go to school? The college?

DILIBERTI: [00:06:22] I was at University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, for my last year.

KINSLEY: [00:06:25] Okay, so that's where you came out of university. Okay. Did you have a specific country or project in mind when you applied?

DILIBERTI: [00:06:37] We were focused on South America. We had done some study of South America. I had just studied four years of French, so I thought, well, we'll see. But I was pretty clear we weren't going to a French country, and Daniel had, my husband, had taken some Spanish, but we were really wanting to do something in South America, or Central America.

KINSLEY: [00:07:02] So you expressed that desire when you applied and it worked out. That's good. Ok, what were your friends' and families' reactions when you were accepted? You know, were there any hesitation or reservation on your part or their part?

DILIBERTI: [00:07:21] I think for the most part, people were happy for us that it sounded like a neat thing to do. I'm not sure my mom was particularly joyful about me going off so far. But she didn't really make that known. You know, she was good about it. So it wasn't a conflict.

KINSLEY: [00:07:42] Okay, well, it's good. Now what project were you invited to join?

DILIBERTI: [00:07:49] It was a self-construction project. People who had lived in very temporary homes in riverbanks or under bridges or wherever they could set up housekeeping. Were given the opportunity to have a low interest loan and buy construction materials from the project, from the government project, and then Daniel, my husband, worked alongside Chilean construction and inspection instructors to work with teams of people putting these houses together. And they clearly wanted a married construction worker. A previous couple of years, they had had a young single man doing this job and working, you know, sort of, you know, very closely with so many families, that just wasn't helpful to have a single man on their team. So I was sent with the idea of working with the social worker. But the truth was the social workers were spread so thin and had pretty much just official things that they were doing. She visited the project very seldom, and I lived at the project. She lived uptown in a little better real estate, and so I was on hand a lot. And so there was just wonderful opportunity for me to connect with the people of the what we call población, which is an area of people that, you know, usually low income. I spend a lot of time with young mothers and families and set up a bit of a playground program that I had experienced myself growing up in Milwaukee, at home, on a playground where you could just go down there for a couple of hours in the afternoon and they would have materials and games and a supervisor. So that was one of the things I did to keep myself busy.

KINSLEY: [00:09:52] Ok. Did you do anything to prepare yourself for being gone two years at all?

DILIBERTI: [00:09:59] No, when you're 22, you know, there's not much to prepare. You're pretty much a rolling stone at that point, you know, no property, no possessions to speak of. So it was a good time, you know? And as you know, looking back at this point, it was just a wonderful time to go and have fun.

KINSLEY: [00:10:20] Ok, now are you say your training was all in Chile then?

DILIBERTI: [00:10:24] Absolutely. They had done a little testing, I think, for three days in Washington, D.C. Of course, we're all very nervous. We don't want to be bumped out. And then they shipped us down there on a very slow plane to, 15 hours to get from here to Santiago. We stopped at every major city. We were so sick by the time we got there, oh my gosh.

KINSLEY: [00:10:47] Now how many were there in your group?

DILIBERTI: [00:10:49] We are a group of, it was like 11 couples.

KINSLEY: [00:10:53] So it was all couples?

DILIBERTI: [00:10:55] And seven single men who were caught who were going to preparing to work in the forests. They were forest management. And so we're, you know, roughly 30 people.

KINSLEY: [00:11:05] Oh okay. Can you tell me something about like the faculty, the syllabus, technical studies, reaction to the other trainings that you have?

DILIBERTI: [00:11:15] It was an immersion training experience and they had a man from Spain running the program, and he had hired mostly *providores*, young, not necessarily men, young men, but men from the working class of Chile to be our teachers. And so we were learning, you know, we had no books, we were just learning from their mouths to our mouths. And of course, we were divided into groups where if you had previous language experience and you haven't and my language experience had not been in

Spanish, so I was in a different group than my husband. So it was interesting. So you found yourself mostly getting to know the people who were in your same language group. And of course, you're quite limited. You know, they're really asking us to speak Spanish all the time. So it would, you know, in the bathroom and stuff, you would speak English because of course, you're dealing with all sorts of adjustments intestinally to the food, which was sort of developed at. My husband talks about a camaraderie in the bathroom in the middle of the night.

KINSLEY: [00:12:33] Okay. What was your reaction to the other trainees or? I guess you said that the people you knew most were the ones in your language group.

DILIBERTI: [00:12:44] Right. Well, then as you got better and as the training developed, you got to know more of them. One of the jokes was that, you know, after we'd had this experience with people saying that we were spies. After a couple of weeks, the people who were working with us said, well, this is definitely not a group of spies. This is likely the clip of de paseo, it looked like we were all on honeymoon because 90 percent of us had within the previous month or so had been married. We were just a bunch of young couples. So there was lots of, uh, camaraderie in that sense.

KINSLEY: [00:13:24] Okay, what about the selection process? Were there surprises, disappointments as far as, were people selected or taken out of the program?

DILIBERTI: [00:13:37] Early on, even in Washington, D.C., I think somebody just didn't quite make it onto the plane with, you know, and I don't know, it was a bit mysterious. They didn't say, you know, he's out. Of course, by then, we didn't really know people either. And actually, there was one young man who got down there and was there for about a day, and I think he just got some clarity within himself and said, no, this is not what I want. I think he returned and joined the ministry or something. But while we were there, no, everyone stayed. Except for the young man who left right away.

KINSLEY: [00:14:13] So that was a real contrast to mine. We started out with 100 and we trained one month in Portland, Oregon, and then they like two days before we were leaving they made the cuts and we lost half of our group. And so and we didn't have a chance to go home or anything. And so we had to buy all our equipment, you know, for the next two years and like one day, which was pretty ridiculous. How about psychologically? Was it, did you have a thorough psychological or physical regimen in your training?

DILIBERTI: [00:14:51] There was no stamina sorts of training. We were not preparing for a physical. We weren't killing chickens, you know? We were going to towns and city. I was in a city of three million people, albeit on the very edges. So that sort of thing wasn't present, and what they had said was, you know, they had to, they had pretty much said there is no selection. You know, we brought you here. You know, you are all in as far as we're concerned. So we didn't have that overlay of not making it. Except, you know, I think, you know, our own personal cautiousness about, you know. They could send you home. Watch your P's and Q's. That sort of thing.

KINSLEY: [00:15:42] Ok. Did the training program prepare you and was it useful for your Peace Corps service?

DILIBERTI: [00:15:51] The training was mostly the language program for me. They had some other sorts of things. The truth was they really did not know what the women, you know, us what 11 or 12, 11 women were going to be doing. So, you know, they had a little smattering of cooking and maybe talked about the mothers' groups or. I can't remember the other things they did, but they were pretty insignificant in terms of the training for that. The men's training was different, you know, they took them out to sites and they talked about the different, you know, laying the plumbing. And the electrical work and what was all involved, so that was more focused. It's a good question. If I scratched my head, would I be able to think of what we do in these hearings when they were doing all that stuff?

KINSLEY: [00:16:45] So a lot of it was language then.

DILIBERTI: [00:16:47] Yes.

KINSLEY: [00:16:48] What about your initial entry into the country and your reaction to it?

DILIBERTI: [00:16:54] Well, my ignorance was just like, I had arrived there and I thought, this looks like Europe. Not that I'd been to Europe, but I thought it was all going to look like northern Mexico. I just was just astonished. It was like a major city, you know?

KINSLEY: [00:17:11] Now you went where? Did you go to Santiago?

DILIBERTI: [00:17:14] Yes. We all flew into Santiago, and then you go to your other places. So it was, you know, and it was, oh, the middle of winter. It was dark. It was rainy. You know, no central heating, so those sorts of comforts were not there. But you know that, I think I was. It was pleasant to see that it wasn't, you know, northern Mexico, but that was good. I just had to adjust to the weather.

KINSLEY: [00:17:54] Let's see now. So once you got there, you were sent to a site.

DILIBERTI: [00:17:59] Well, so we had the three months of training which was a good thing, and the weather eventually warmed up. And we have said, you know, we've had this experience that, you know, the folks here that think we're spies and we do not want to be sent to a site, you know, with one mark against us. So please be sure that the folks want us. So in time to go to the sites, we packed up our stuff, somebody is taking us out on a truck. Got to the site. The social worker at the site said, what's this about? And they said, well, you know, you said you wanted to, you know, you voted to have a social worker. Not social worker, I'm sorry, Peace Corps couple. And she said, yes, we did vote, but we voted not to have them. That was just rankled us and we weren't real tickled with the folks of the Peace Corps office. We said, because he had said something like, well, they're certainly going to accept you. You know, we can make them accept you. Oh, sorry. No, thank you. We don't want them to make our house accept us. And so apparently somebody knew some other project head who said, oh yeah, I'd love to have another pair of hands over here. And then we got directed to another site.

KINSLEY: [00:19:32] Ok, now where did the training actually take place?

DILIBERTI: [00:19:36] We started our training in a place called Rinconada de Maipú, which was a Chilean technical school.

KINSLEY: [00:19:42] Is it in Santiago?

DILIBERTI: [00:19:44] It's in like a little suburb of Santiago, which was, you know, out the door. There was, you know, sheep and goats, and we could take lovely walks in the country. It was neat. I don't know if it was politically motivated or the fact that they want give him this very good food to eat, but after several weeks, we got moved to a like a retreat house and then we spent the next two months there. And so, you know, we had basic things and, you know, meals, which, you know, we don't always recognize, but it was a good experience. Always, always good wine.

KINSLEY: [00:20:34] Uh, let's see. Okay, now when you went out to your sites, was there more? Was there just like one couple at each site pretty much?

DILIBERTI: [00:20:47] Yes.

KINSLEY: [00:20:47] And it was rural or city or?

DILIBERTI: [00:20:51] Well, we're talking about, you know, building on the edges of towns. So where we were on the outskirts of Santiago, where it was sort of pushing up against the lovely hills and. It's probably like a suburb, you know? And then shortly after we went there, there was in the next bit of land, the next section of land, they had what was called a *toma de terreno*, where a group of people organized themselves. Walked in under the, holding the Chilean flag and set up housing, you know, just tents and whatever and sort of said, this land is not used. We are people that need housing and they have been nicely organized. And know the local leadership knows eventually these people are going to be voters. So he's not necessarily interested in booting them out. So they were so nicely organized. They were able to get some services and, you know, like the plumbing and electrical and whatever the basic services need. To get in

there even before our housing establishment did, just because they were so well organized.

KINSLEY: [00:22:19] So these people wanted to do this and then they got you kind of help them out?

DILIBERTI: [00:22:25] Well, now, I wasn't around for the beginnings of our project. Our project was sort of well underway when we got there. We had had a, you know, a Peace Corps volunteer there before us. And so, um, and I don't know the circumstances at which it might have been more well more official and not a *toma*. *Toma* means take. So it was just a, you know, politically just so interesting to see how it was done. They were in the middle of, you know, these are our work crews. These are the hours you come, you have to volunteer so many hours a week in order to sort of get to your house.

KINSLEY: [00:23:12] Now, was it just the people who were going to live in the house that volunteered to work or did? Were there other teams that came in?

DILIBERTI: [00:23:21] It was most of the people are going to volunteer to work, but you could you could hustle up somebody to do it, like if you have a, you know, a widow and a child, she wants to find someone who can do her portions for her. Or she may be, you know, the women did some of the work and I know. And then even some of the finishing stuff that a man might do in its own house. They had asked my husband if he would go help this widow with her this or that. You know, getting it finished up.

KINSLEY: [00:23:54] So were all the houses pretty much the same kind?

DILIBERTI: [00:23:57] Yeah. And then depending upon your, what you could afford, you could outfit them with the little comforts or, you know, little extra woodwork or and then, you know, who was the first one to get a couch or something like that because those were all luxury items. You know, it was beds and toilets and just the basic things.

KINSLEY: [00:24:20] So what about your assignment? Were there any, you know, specifics of the job that you were assigned to or what were the living conditions, typical day, and so on?

DILIBERTI: [00:24:32] Because our house was temporary, we were in a wood, just a wood. Wood walls, which you slap up, prefab wood walls. And they would put us in the bodega area, the warehouse area where they kept all the supplies and so on a daily basis, we would be friendly with the guards who would come and watch the bodega. We loved the dog who was in charge there. We were great friends with him. Because sometimes if we came back from downtown in the middle of the night he was guarding, we'd have to tell him who we were, so he wouldn't chew our leg off. Cause our place, you know, if we forgot our key, we'd have to break into the front door. But also in that area was a prefab house that was set as the mothers' center. And so he was a lovely little space where women gathered. They had some women who, you know, ran a group and brought resources and, you know, talked about community and what we could they could do for each other. The name of the mothers' center was Mothers Center Rose Kennedy. And we said, Oh, Rose Kennedy, that's very interesting. They said, do you know Rose Kennedy? Because of course, we were from the United States. They said, we wrote to her but she did not write back. So had to sort of smile at that.

DILIBERTI: [00:26:11] They only used the center, the mothers' center, for maybe a couple hours a week, and so here it was, you know, just practically next door to my house, so I could use that center to run what essentially was a little recreation playground program, you know, with children in the neighborhood. So I set up a group in the morning and in the afternoon. I'm hustled, you know, odds and ends things to use materials, so we could do art and crafts and do little things, sing songs, like that.

KINSLEY: [00:26:45] Was there any like organized sports at all?

DILIBERTI: [00:26:48] Well, of course, soccer was the big thing. On Sunday afternoons, the men would go off and play soccer and some of the families would go watch. And that didn't happen locally, and then the kids would, you know, kick a ball around in the neighborhood quite a bit, but not a

whole lot of organized sports and very little for women, nothing for women. Nothing except the *centro de madres*.

KINSLEY: [00:27:18] Now, what was the population, mostly Catholic?

DILIBERTI: [00:27:24] I believe so, but it did not seem to be a big rush to church. The church, there was not a church in our población. And you had to get on a bus to get to it. And it is quite a conservative church and the minister was from Spain. So he definitely seemed foreign to me. Although, you know, we went a couple of times but they had pretty many folks. You know, the most present, um, presence was the evangelicals, who, is it the Pentecostal religion? I'm not real familiar, but we called them the evangelicals, and they would come on Saturday evenings and, in the line and stand, maybe ten of them, and sing songs. Maybe there was a little preaching at that, but they were sort of very welcoming and they were very of-the-people. Or as the other church had referred to as the Catholic church and it definitely seemed like a bit of a foreign. You know, run by someone from outside the country.

DILIBERTI: [00:28:44] The one really memorable religious experience was the week after, the Sunday after Easter. The idea was that Christ rose on Easter and then went out to the countryside. So anyone who had a horse would dress themselves up and dressed the horse up as much as they could and put a veil on their heads, the men and the women. And it was sort of an Arabian look. And they would ride and process and take the Eucharist in. The priest and the lot of folderol parade around in the country and in the little town. Now I'm blocking on the name of it. It was just, it was an all-out holiday. It totally made the actual Easter sort of a non-plus and even Christmas wasn't all that exciting. I mean, this was the major holiday.

KINSLEY: [00:30:06] Ok. What about your relations with the people of the country? Maybe some talk about some individuals. What about other PCVs or the PC staff?

DILIBERTI: [00:30:19] We were very, um, we just felt wonderfully blessed that very welcomed in the community and got to know some neighbors quite closely. I would go and just hang out with an elderly couple quite a bit. And

then there was another neighbor who was across the street, trying to keep an eye on me like, you know, so I wouldn't just kill myself eating the wrong thing. Or I was always asking and, you know, I was 22 at the time and so I'm just beginning to feed myself, you know, so that's lots of challenges there. Just lots of opportunity for interaction. Very, very rarely, anyone made any sort of a negative comment. Our door was, you know, the kids in the neighborhood would come into our door and just sort of watch us, you know, and that was fun for, it just made us feel very welcome.

KINSLEY: [00:31:20] So you cooked your own food, did you?

DILIBERTI: [00:31:22] We did. We did. And we had sort of, you know, we had heard that, you know, some folks, you know, just hang around the Peace Corps culture. And it was real clear to us that we just wanted to immerse ourselves. So we went into town on Monday. So office of the Peace Corps, because we were sort of too embarrassed to ask anyone in the neighborhood and from the central office of the Peace Corps. They probably sent it out to a neighborhood just like ours, where a lady would wash and dry out and send it back. But, you know, somehow we needed that distance. We really wanted to feel sort of shoulder to shoulder. We did most of our, you know, shopping and cooking as close to the neighborhood as we could.

DILIBERTI: [00:32:09] One of my neighbors told me a story. She said she was on the bus and there was a young American girl trying to say something to the bus driver. And she understood her because she'd been, you know, spent the last six months trying to understand my rudimentary Spanish. So she got up and explained to the bus driver what this young woman was trying to say. So whereas I thought I was getting better at speaking as we were going along, it's like, who knows how much of it the people around me were just getting better at interpreting what I was trying.

KINSLEY: [00:32:46] Yeah. So how did you feel about the language or did you have problems, you know, learning it or how long did it take you to get comfortable?

DILIBERTI: [00:32:58] We were fortunate in that we were, you know, studying the language. So they knew it'd be helpful to us later on, especially in my area of social work. I, not having any other formal Spanish training, went into the city and took a language class, so I was able to write a little bit. And I thought we were doing fine. We always thought the real test was when one day we woke up and said, oh I understand what they're saying on the radio now. It's a good thing.

KINSLEY: [00:33:35] Now, did you and Dan speak just Spanish when you were alone?

DILIBERTI: [00:33:40] Absolutely not. I think that would have been the fast road to divorce.

KINSLEY: [00:33:45] Yeah.

DILIBERTI: [00:33:45] No, you had to take your comfort where you could.

KINSLEY: [00:33:48] Yeah, well, I know with us, you know, in our training program, we could always talk to the other volunteers. And, you know, it wasn't until I got in the village when, you know, well, I had another volunteer there. But, you know, in order to communicate, you had to do the language. It took me about six, I had a headache every night for like six months.

DILIBERTI: [00:34:11] Oh my gosh. Challenging. I think my ignorance gotten through because I was, people were so accepting. And as my husband said, he would just look at me because, you know, I was very new with this language and he'd say, she's pretty happy and she thinks she's getting over to them. But you know, I'm not going to step on her parade. But then occasionally later he pulled me aside and say, you know, you got to say it this way if you really want him to understand it.

KINSLEY: [00:34:37] What about your uh, did you have much contact with the Peace Corps staff there at all?

DILIBERTI: [00:34:45] You know, we came in and connected with them, and occasionally they'd have a party. They had American holiday parties and

things like that and connect with others. The Peace Corps staff, it was good to talk to them. I felt like we had really good medical back up. You know, we would get shots and this and that. So that was a good thing. Besides that blip at the beginning of our program, when they sent us someplace where they weren't wanted, but things went. Things went well, we felt a warmth there and being in the major city, you know, they were fairly available to us.

KINSLEY: [00:35:28] So did they come out to see you or like supervisors or whatever?

DILIBERTI: [00:35:30] One time one of them came out for dinner.

KINSLEY: [00:35:36] OK. What about your work time versus your leisure time? If you could maybe describe how that worked.

DILIBERTI: [00:35:45] The construction programs was sort of an after work program, so Daniel went to work maybe at 3:00 in the afternoon and worked till dark because they were building houses.

KINSLEY: [00:35:58] So most of the people had jobs during the day and then they started that after?

DILIBERTI: [00:36:04] Yes. And I was relating more to the women and children, so my things I would do during the day. I would have classes. At one point I had a cooking class for some young girls. At another point, I had volunteered to work with the Estefan, if I would help with some vaccination things, they were doing oral vaccine in schools and this was with a couple of, I believe, nurses from that public health department so that there was another little experience and actually what it was, was more of a peek into the middle class in Chile for me, just seeing what these women were talking about. We'd also helped a little bit in a local school in the sort of the country area, you know, their school had been damaged by the earthquake in 1960 and still they hadn't sent enough help there to repair it. But they were still using it, and we had helped to get some supplies for this school and, you know, did sort of a visiting teacher of English for a day or so. But boy, seeing that

school and the little heat they had for the kids and the enthusiasm of the teacher the children. It was heartening to see that.

KINSLEY: [00:37:28] Well, what was the weather like there? Was it pretty much like it is here?

DILIBERTI: [00:37:33] No, so it's chilly. Santiago, which is about the same latitude as San Francisco. So, you know, it's a cold, rainy winter and it's a pleasant summer, although it would get quite hot in the summer because we weren't but maybe two hundred kilometers but maybe close to a hundred miles from the sea, so we weren't like warmed by the sea, but the summers would get hot. To heat themselves in winter, they would have these. They would get heating fuel in a big, huge five, 10-gallon thing and hook it up, you know, if they could afford it to a heater. And you know, the fumes from this were not good, so they really had to use them sparingly. And so you sort of waited for the sun to come up and when the folks could, a lot of times they would work by a sunny window or maybe even in their backyard, they'd sit in the sun.

KINSLEY: [00:38:40] Did they use wood fire at all?

DILIBERTI: [00:38:42] Yep, they would. Well, a lot of them had, most of them had stoves. Sometimes they've had more in the country. A little charcoal things that, you know, that was the smell you could smell going through the roads. And if you bought, you know, blankets from the country, you know they would have the smell of this charcoal fire.

KINSLEY: [00:39:05] What about your leisure time, how was that spent?

DILIBERTI: [00:39:07] We did a lot of reading, a lot of reading.

KINSLEY: [00:39:12] Did you have a Peace Corps trunk of books or something?

DILIBERTI: [00:39:18] No, but you know, we could take books out of the central office and bring them back. That was nice. Probably my biggest reading experience. And, you know, and once we'd go into town on our day off on Mondays, we'd go into town and look around. Occasionally we'd go sneak

up, we'd go off to a movie now. Let's try the movie and so that meant bolting our dinner, catching the bus, getting downtown, you know, riding a downtown traffic on our feet, you know, running to this. But you know, but a lot of the movies were in English with Spanish subtitles, so that's just speaking our language. But I remember early on when we were in training, it was like that first weekend off, we went into town to a movie and was just like, oh my gosh, this movie was so comforting, to watch a movie in English, that you just didn't want to leave the theater and go back to all that Spanish.

KINSLEY: [00:40:21] Now you say you only got one day off a week. So does that mean that, like Dan was scheduled to work every day?

DILIBERTI: [00:40:30] No, probably not. We didn't work Sundays, and so we were probably home and around the house or. You know, I think Saturdays, they maybe worked till noon or something. Because we did take weekend trips to visit other Peace Corps folks in other small towns, which was interesting because that just hearing how sort of the same training and the same background interpreted into a totally different experience. So we had some just lovely weekend trips, nice, you know, bus system we could get on a bus and get off to a different places.

KINSLEY: [00:41:03] But he was on a regular schedule pretty much to work like from certain hour to a certain hour.

DILIBERTI: [00:41:10] Right.

KINSLEY: [00:41:11] Okay. That doesn't seem to happen very much. At least it didn't with us.

DILIBERTI: [00:41:16] Well, see the other the other instructors would come from other places and, you know, gather, have the evening cup of coffee or. And then decide what was going on there.

KINSLEY: [00:41:32] Ok. How did your life and work change over the months when you started out?

DILIBERTI: [00:41:38] Um, I think it just became more involved and connected with more folks. Daniel got involved in a sort of a young men's group he organized. The government had set up national work days to clean up the area. He said, well, we can do that here, you know, which meant he's the one that had to get the connection with the, you know, the municipal truck was going to come and then you do this and this. And then the morning of the event, you know, nobody's anywhere to be found, would go knocking on doors. Are you coming, are you coming? And then by the end of the day, everyone was so proud that they had done this to help their community. It was just basic community organizing.

KINSLEY: [00:42:34] Ok, what about like at the end of the first year, what were some of the notable events and reflections looking back, joys and woes, unexpected things, relationships?

DILIBERTI: [00:42:49] As I look back, I just look at, you know, the strangeness and sort of the otherness that we felt in the beginning and then, you know, as we got comfortable there, you know, whereas they were just other and then us. By the time you are there a while, it's oh, well, here's my friend, and here's the worrisome guy, and here's the jovial guy. Here's the guy who is struggling with alcoholism. And here's the woman who just takes care of everybody. You know, they had become people, individuals to us, and that was wonderful. And we also at the end of the first year, we were delighted to hear that there was, we had some weeks off, and then we could plan a vacation. It was wonderful to sort of go visit other countries in South America.

KINSLEY: [00:43:45] Mm hmm. What about health problems?

DILIBERTI: [00:43:51] We each had a difficult bought with some dysentery sorts of things, but for the most part, we are doing our own cooking and we stayed pretty healthy. You know, I think I would. I think it was something I was doing with my pizza sauce that was really throwing us into a bad state sometimes. Some of our own ignorance there.

KINSLEY: [00:44:15] The only time I get sick was, we had some friends that, uh, in the capital city, Ankara, that worked for the military family and we, my

partner and I went to visit them for, I don't know, Thanksgiving or something, and they had some food from the PX and I got sick on that. Other than that, I never, never got sick at all on any of the, you know? Ok. Yeah, do you want to say anything about your travel or your vacation?

DILIBERTI: [00:44:54] The travel was just incredible. You know, and I guess that I was pretty limited in what I understood, or, you know, someone said, are you going up to Machu Picchu? And I said, well, sure, that sounds all right. Well, I didn't know what Machu Picchu was. So we have this lovely trip and you have to go in this British rail car across the Altiplano in Bolivia and arrive in La Paz and down to Cusco. It was just magic, to walk the streets and have those experiences.

KINSLEY: [00:45:39] Okay. What about the end of your tour? What was your sense of achievement, failure or, you know, pluses and minuses? You know, regrets, satisfactions.

DILIBERTI: [00:45:55] We went there with very few expectations about what we might want to accomplish. I think we connected. We were able to have lots of just really meaningful experiences. It was a very active time politically because it was a time when there was a major election. The country elected a communist. Salvador Allende, definitely from the left, and he was counted in. We saw some wonderful national programs he put into place. We saw them put public vacations where, you know, sort of inner city folks, poor folks would come out and be by the seaside, sleep in a school and just have a vacation that they might not have ever had. There was a free powdered milk program and just other things that we could see just beginning to go. It was a flowering time, a lovely time. So we felt, you know, of course, we were ready to go home, you know, we had made good friends and it was hard to leave, but we were ready. There was a bad earthquake not too far from us, about two weeks before we left. And I remember waking up with this earthquake thinking, oh no, I don't want to die here, I go home.

KINSLEY: [00:47:33] Did you have any plans for the future or while you were there or?

DILIBERTI: [00:47:37] Well, we just thought we'd go back to graduate school. Yeah, so that was pretty. And apparently I had done some writing. That went quite smoothly, just to slip back into that.

KINSLEY: [00:47:52] Did you have anybody come and visit you at all?

DILIBERTI: [00:47:56] A couple. It was, strangely enough, the Republican governor at the time did some sort of a trade mission, and some mother and father of a former boyfriend of mine was headed down there. So they came and stayed at the fancy hotel downtown and came out to the población and invite us downtown to eat with them. So that was fun. Other times when the volunteers would be coming through the area, a lot of times they would say, you might want to go out to see them. And that was always fun to show them around. It was a lovely area. There was a nice climbing hill that you could just take a refreshing walk up the hill nearby.

KINSLEY: [00:48:45] So you stayed in the same place for?

DILIBERTI: [00:48:49] Yeah, it was a very, that was a really positive thing.

KINSLEY: [00:48:52] And how did that place compare to the ones that you were building?

DILIBERTI: [00:48:58] Well, the ones we were building were nicer because they were a little more insulated. We had, uh, in training they taught us how to make plaster panels with hemp rope and plaster. So we made, tried to put some plaster panels on our house. But it was a bit of a challenge to make them in one site and transport them on a jiggly truck. And there were only a few that made it up without cracks, major cracks. And there was no insulation in the roof. So, you know, our temperature had a lot to do with what the temperature was outside. But their houses were a lot more insulated.

KINSLEY: [00:49:34] And how did you heat, did you say you heated with that fuel?

DILIBERTI: [00:49:39] Right, we did, that you wanted to be real careful about how much you did and you would never have it on when you go to sleep at night. And then the hot water was a contraption with, a metal contraption

with a pipe in the middle of it, so the idea was that the water would go slowly in circles around this pipe and in the middle of this metal contraption you started a fire, you put some fuel and then started the fire. So this fire is supposed to heat this water. And of course, the faster it goes, the cooler it comes out. So if you really want hot water, it's just barely dripping out of the cellar. So, and you know, we showered like once a week, if you can believe it. And it was an event. Yeah, it's like, we heat up the bathroom and the bathroom was, you know, my husband taking regular garden hoses and running it from some spigot someplace into the house and into the bathroom and into the kitchen. And then, you know, several times it would spring a leak. And so I think what would happen, I think the local cats would hear something happening in the pipe, in the rubber hose and start digging at it. And then it goes.

KINSLEY: [00:51:01] So what about your toilet facilities?

DILIBERTI: [00:51:04] We had a nice toilet. It worked. When the water was running it flushed down. If the water, we'd bucket flush it. So for the most part.

KINSLEY: [00:51:15] And where did it go? Was there?

DILIBERTI: [00:51:18] Oh, there's a great picture of my husband digging the black hole outside this little wooden shack. He must have made it, you know, nine feet deep. He said, I am not re-digging this. And it would be all the one people from the neighborhood would look down him. It's going to be enough, you don't have to worry. He was a sort of a laughingstock with this huge hole.

KINSLEY: [00:51:47] You know, we had one guy on in our group, he was pretty good at construction. He built a, you know, a bathroom. And they don't have seats there, they have those foot stools, you know? Well, he's got it all. And he did a great job and he was great, but he didn't realize until after he got done that when you squatted, you were facing Mecca, you know, and so he had to take the whole thing down and turn it around. So. You make a lot of mistakes to learn a few things. Ok, let's see, I think we're going to try to evaluate your service in light of the three goals of the Peace Corps.

The first one is to provide technical assistance where requested. How do you think you did in that area?

DILIBERTI: [00:52:47] I think Daniel was able to do that in terms of his instruction things and just helping out the widow and whoever else he was asked to help. Mine was such a loose assignment. I certainly felt like it was helpful in terms of people, you know, seeing sort of a generosity of spirit and sharing and coming together.

KINSLEY: [00:53:23] I think with me, it was kind of, you know, I didn't do that much physically. I think it was just making friends and learning their style and, you know, enjoying it. I didn't build any lasting.

DILIBERTI: [00:53:41] That's interesting. Just that phrase, because we had gone back in '96 to visit. And we're just swept away. You know, we had made a phone call. We had written somebody and we hadn't really had kept close, kind of. We had written somebody. She called us and she said, Ann, you're still as skinny as you always. I mean, this is after like 40 years. I mean, she could still joke with me about that. Called us and we just felt like we had been dead and we'd come back to life. You know, it was just such a warm welcome. And as all the physical, so much of the physical things that had been done maybe never got finished or whatever. It was the relationships.

KINSLEY: [00:54:32] Ok, and the second goal is to promote better understanding of the United States. How do you think you did on that?

DILIBERTI: [00:54:43] Well, I think, you know, they certainly learned that the people of the United States are just folks, whereas there was just lots of stuff happening with the government that was very ugly. So that was a good thing. One incident happened. Someone had gotten a hold of a Time magazine and there was a picture of a slum, an American slum. And he says, I don't know if this is propagation, propaganda or not but are there slums in America? And it's like he was almost embarrassed to ask my husband. He says, you betcha, you know. And then we started looking through our magazines and there was very little that would indicate that there was, you know, everything wasn't just hunky-dory in America.

KINSLEY: [00:55:32] Ok, and the third goal is to, excuse me, promote better understanding of other peoples by Americans. How do you think you did there?

DILIBERTI: [00:55:48] I can just, it speaks to the personal enrichment. You know, people are folks. People want the same things. My husband was able to, or we were able to, be involved in some community education efforts. Bringing some films to some areas, Peace Corps movie set, and bring some drums.

KINSLEY: [00:56:24] Ok, let's see. Through the years, have you continued any kind of involvement with your country of service and or contact with people from that country?

DILIBERTI: [00:56:36] Well, shortly after we left, a year and a half after maybe two years, there was a horrible coup d'etat in Chile. The newly elected president was killed and we were at UWM at the time. So we definitely made it very clear that we were not in favor of this and we did some organizing around those issues. We had some loose connections with folks. This is a sort of pre-email. Eventually, we were able to get an email of somebody. So it's been quite limited, although when we visited 30 years later, there was one of the other construction workers that, you know, had a house and family and invited us to meet with them.

KINSLEY: [00:57:33] So you went back in '96, and that was the only time?

DILIBERTI: [00:57:38] Well, actually went back again in, I believe it was '99, maybe 2000, with our children, and so then. Us with our three children and a good friend of ours stayed at the house. So here my three girls are in one double bed, in this unheated room, just really it's having the Peace Corps experience and talking about how we can fit if the one in the middle would just raise their arms above their head to sleep. It was just sweet to see them dealing with this and putting up with it. We had the fortune of good fortune to have them go into the Spanish immersion school here, so they all had some Spanish, so they could feel connected.

KINSLEY: [00:58:25] Let's see. Have you had any continuing Peace Corps involvement?

DILIBERTI: [00:58:29] Well, we're part of the group that meets although we don't do a whole lot with them but we love connecting at least once a year.

KINSLEY: [00:58:37] Okay. Have you been involved in any third goal activities like, you know, presenting to the people in the U.S. what Chile was like?

DILIBERTI: [00:58:48] You know, I think my husband has done that, one of those teach-ins with the Peace Corps. But, not so much. And that might be an idea for me in retirement.

KINSLEY: [00:59:06] Yeah, because people are always looking for something like that. Ok, I guess I want to try to see what effect you thought your Peace Corps service had on you, either an immediate effect or change in yourself, career plans, long term, whatever.

DILIBERTI: [00:59:28] You know, it really gave me a sense of who I was and who I wasn't. Coming of age in the sixties, you know, I wasn't so proud to be an American. I was a little guarded about that sometimes, would try to pass ourselves off as Canadians. But going to and seeing the folks there and just really realizing what their values were and who they were and how they thought. I thought I am different, and I'm different because this is where I come from, and that's OK. That's who I am. It was just a real inner knowing something that I didn't know before. And I wouldn't have ever known it unless I was able to see that contrast.

KINSLEY: [01:00:20] Did it change your career at all?

DILIBERTI: [01:00:24] It didn't. It was a boost for me because now I was a Spanish speaking social worker and I could head into my graduate studies and get to work. So that was a good thing.

KINSLEY: [01:00:38] Ok. Are there any like words of wisdom or anything that you'd like to pass on to people who might be listening to you?

DILIBERTI: [01:00:47] You know, I think the words that were shared with us before we went, is that you are going to see things, you're not going to, um. Whatever you may leave there is certainly insignificant. The greatest gift is what those folks give to you. And when you think about all the patience they had putting up with us, our 22 year old selves, as we make it through life. They must have had great laughs as they saw us etching out our life on the corner of that.

KINSLEY: [01:01:22] I think, like you said, uh, the fact that you didn't have those expectations and just kind of took it as it was and realized that you're going to get more out of them than they ever get out of you. I think once I made that mental adjustment, things went, you know, I think a lot of people came in with, I'm going to do this, I'm going to do that. And it was hard for, you know, they got frustrated and you just have to slow down a little.

DILIBERTI: [01:01:53] Occasionally, we'd have a visit from somebody, a technical person who was not a Peace Corps, but somehow employed, a Chilean American. And folks were doing a special project with oysters, and they came back with so many resentments and, you know, it wasn't going right, and, you know, lots of complaints about how things were. And I think that speaks to what you just said that they had expectations. And you know, you're not in Kansas anymore.

KINSLEY: [01:02:23] Right, right. Ok. Anything else you'd like to add?

DILIBERTI: [01:02:30] I just I'm very grateful for this opportunity to share. Even just pulling out my album was sort of a spiritual journey. You realize that just lots of things are really precious to you. Don't want to lose them.

KINSLEY: [01:02:48] Ok, well, thank you very much.

[END OF INTERVIEW]