

**Rose Van Epps Boice Oral History Interview**  
Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** Rose Van Epps Boice  
**Interviewer:** Sharleen Hirschi Simpson  
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**Biographical Note**

Rose Van Epps Boice served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Bolivia from 1962 to 1964 as a teacher and researcher (Bolivia II).

**Access**

Open.

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Oral History Interview

with

Rose Van Epps Boice

January 26, 2011  
Gainesville, Florida

By Sharleen Hirschi Simpson

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

SIMPSON: [00:00:00] Ok, let's just. Ok, let me see the one I really want to be sure to be able to get is the one for the library. So. So what's going on, Rose, right now, huh?

BOICE: [00:00:18] With me?

SIMPSON: [00:00:18] Hear the point. I just want to hear the voice.

BOICE: [00:00:21] Yeah, OK. I'm sick right now and going to the doctor's.

SIMPSON: [00:00:37] I'm gonna start this cassette tape. OK, this is Sharleen Hirschi Simpson, and this is January 26, 2011, and I'm interviewing Rose Boice, who was a Peace Corps volunteer in Bolivia, the Bolivia II group. And so then let's just go ahead and can you tell us a little bit about what you're doing now?

BOICE: [00:01:15] Ok, what I'm doing now is being retired happily and I am volunteering at the school that I just retired from. I do that a half a day, a week and one evening a week I go and volunteer at a friend's house who is sponsoring a group of Turkish refugees, and I help them with their homework and high school work. I also work at my local church and work with the teenagers for the confirmation program, particularly the social justice projects and helping neighbors, friends and the community. I also babysit for my grandkids and have fun to work with.

SIMPSON: [00:02:15] Can you think about way back when you were getting ready, when you joined the Peace Corps? What were you doing at the time that you learned about the Peace Corps and what made you decide to join it?

BOICE: [00:02:31] I was in college. I was a senior. I was looking for a job. I was thinking that it would be totally moral to do something like the Peace Corps. And I specifically wanted to help America because I wanted to use my Spanish. I had a couple of years of high school, but I loved it. Definitely not fluent, but I, I was not finding anything that was significant for me. I was a teenager and that's kind of a hard person to place. And I thought maybe the Peace Corps would have a better idea what to do with the sociology majors. And I would in twenty one, I said to myself, I want to do something with my life that's significant at this point in my life to see who I am and what I can do. And I thought this would be a great chance.

SIMPSON: [00:03:29] Great. So that's kind of why you did join the Peace Corps, right?

BOICE: [00:03:36] Right. And a lot of advertising on TV, which people have mentioned that they don't do anymore. And I think the advertisers swayed me differently.

SIMPSON: [00:03:48] So did you, so when did you apply?

BOICE: [00:03:57] I applied to February of my senior year, 1962, OK. And quite quickly. And I was going to be a professor in Cleveland.

SIMPSON: [00:04:14] Well, you were OK. So what did your family think when you decided to go into the Peace Corps?

BOICE: [00:04:27] I forgot in my family for guidance when I was trying to decide and they said, you know, I don't really want to. But later I realized because of me that they were so positively sure that I would not. And that's why they said what they did. My father got for a whole year and begged me not to go because he was sure I would be killed. And my mother was terribly disappointed that she had messed with me so well. She thought she knew me better than that. My brothers and sisters didn't care one way or the other because the school were shocked that I had really lost my mind so I couldn't get in the car, which made me feel that I was doing the right thing.

SIMPSON: [00:05:18] Well, we were in the same boat with her, OK, and you did talk about being asked to join the Bolivia to project. What did you do to get yourself ready? When you knew you were going to go into the Peace Corps, did you do anything special?

BOICE: [00:05:40] I went to a map and found Bolivia and beyond that, I did nothing to get ready. I do remember something amusing and my parents that they were called for graduation and then we got a fuller brush and we had a court. In our case, I think it was insect repellent. So, you know, going to the tropics first, what you would need, I would terribly accessible to in effect like that. That's all I can remember doing to prepare it was the fact that there was no there was very little preparation or any other way. So what you're getting into

SIMPSON: [00:06:34] Is we didn't really know too much, did we? We can. OK. Can you talk a little bit about the training that would have been your first experience.

BOICE: [00:06:45] How long would you like that to be? You have every one of the hardest things I've ever done.

SIMPSON: [00:06:55] Well, the training for Peace Corps.

BOICE: [00:06:57] And the Peace Corps, the Peace Corps or outside the Peace Corps, I found it psychologically very, very depressing. I felt that they were trying to break up, turn on each other so they could get rid of people and find a good excuse to so I can feel the support. But I expected to feel during the training, the training itself was very rough getting up at 3:00 in the morning and doing a mile. I thought the calisthenics were kind of fruity. They were weak. It wasn't really now that I have experienced physical strength, etc., etc. I know that what we did in Peace Corps was just, you know, jumping jacks and that was about it running around. Right. The training didn't apply to me or what I was doing or in any way prepare me for what I was about to go into. So, I mean, I can't I can't fathom that at all.

SIMPSON: [00:08:14] Can you can you talk about being on the Arizona State campus?

BOICE: [00:08:23] That was wonderful. I loved it. I didn't know anything about the and the campus is beautiful. The air conditioning in the classroom, as long as there are sleeping quarters on the football stadium. And I couldn't believe that that's where they put the front. And that's what we heard. And I thought the protesters were about as good as they could get. Not having anything to compare it to. How about that? I have a project. Oh, I don't really know what it's doing.

SIMPSON: [00:09:08] He's probably one of the few that give it to me. OK, so what did you think when you could you talk a little bit about going out to the Pima Maricopa Indian Reservation?

BOICE: [00:09:26] Ok, I hated it. I do not like heat. And here I was going to a southern country, in the tropics. We had heard from there. So that said, I spent a year in Honduras and being here is nothing like you find in South

America. So I think it is. And that kind of for me, she would have thought of my roommate. She was 65 years old at the time anyway. It was not a good experience with the really good part was I survived and. I thought it would be the chicken coop and we serve breakfast, the fact that I can't remember a whole lot that we get there for the Indian tribe, my Indian tribe.

SIMPSON: [00:10:34] What about the Peace Corps volunteers that you met?

BOICE: [00:10:40] I couldn't understand.

SIMPSON: [00:10:41] What about the Peace Corps volunteers that you met in training?

BOICE: [00:10:49] Peace Corps volunteers that we met?

SIMPSON: [00:10:50] Yeah, your fellow Peace Corps volunteers. Trainees.

BOICE: [00:10:53] We were an extremely young group and they help young people and they wanted to be honest and want Peace Corps with our data. And everything was an experiment, in my opinion. And I thought they did a good job. I you know, I don't know how to say it, but we worked. So we sang songs and we work them and we did our time of Puerto Rico now. And I like that America

SIMPSON: [00:11:29] Will move on to Puerto

BOICE: [00:11:32] We walked around in irrigation ditches. And once a week we get together. And I think with our great psychology day and we talked about civil rights to I think it's interesting.

SIMPSON: [00:11:49] What about the you what do you remember about that pilgrimage that we made to Puerto Rico?

BOICE: [00:11:59] You want me to say I got sick on the plane?

SIMPSON: [00:12:01] No, I don't care what you say. I'm just asking what you remember about it.

BOICE: [00:12:07] Lot of people saying that I was at that time and so was he. And he said in Arizona, you had a six foot pole and then put your cigarette in it and then pile the sand back in. And Puerto Rico, you threw it out the window. So that was the difference in the weather as well from the minute I got there of Puerto Rico. And it was cold and wet and we were in the middle of the rainy season. So we also about it. But I had a really good roommate who took off a good care of me and cut my hair and everything. There was a real camaraderie then in our group as much as the fact that we we were together and in Puerto Rico, the number of people that we were there with, the Dominican Republic group and I can't remember who, but several who were there, we had heard about our training in Phoenix and the Maricopa Indian Reservation, I should say, happy and they heard about us. And they were just dying to meet people who would actually survive that. And we thought everybody was going through that train, the same kind of training that they weren't at that left the three day love the overnight. I love the feeling of, hey, these are things I've never done before in my life and I can do it. Give me a confidence that I think that was the whole reason for it, is that when you got to Bolivia and you were around like I was in a in a community, you take care of yourself and you wouldn't be you wouldn't be fearful. But I guess that's what I have to say.

SIMPSON: [00:14:13] What do you remember the 40 mile hike that we had to take from one side of the island to the other there at the end?

BOICE: [00:14:25] Yes, I remember that my blisters were so bad because they gave us didn't fit. And I survived a day and a half and they called and got up and sent me home. I mean, took me back to where we started. I never finished that huge hike because I couldn't work for days. I couldn't move.

SIMPSON: [00:14:51] Well, I think I built into the real total group, which was the last. Well, yeah. Okay. So

BOICE: [00:15:03] I remember a variety of something

SIMPSON: [00:15:06] And then we went to my group

SIMPSON: [00:15:11] That that was yeah. That was a very nice, very nice family. And I went to the ocean and my favorite story of that is that we went to the ocean and we were saying to each other, branch of water just like that. And a lot of our guys were swimming. They were wonderful athletes and they came out. And so what happened to the man who owned the house on the ocean? And we said, fire to reconsider. And you remember that. And then we went to the guy and I remember getting hit with a jellyfish. That process. I can't even imagine what a shark would be like.

SIMPSON: [00:16:17] Before we found out that there was a packing plant just around the point that destroyed some of their stuff into the water. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

BOICE: [00:16:32] Minor detail that the girls at the university would bring their dresses and hang them in the way you I've always been in the ladies room and then they would change it now because they were perspiring, they didn't show up, they conspired. And I thought, oh my goodness, I just can't be Puerto Rican, you know, because of being from New York. My idea of a Puerto Rican was probably different than what I encountered in Puerto Rico. So it was a wonderful again attack on my I and what I thought was reality then by the beginning of my immersion into diversity. There we go.

SIMPSON: [00:17:25] That's a fancy term there. OK, so let's go back to when you were we you remember when we met in Miami ready to go to Bolivia?

BOICE: [00:17:39] Oh, yes. And my father being so hysterical about me going in the first place. Well my private joke for that day is as I went to, and he took me to the airport to fly to Miami, he said, Now, have you got money? And I said, yes, Dad. OK, show it to me. I have five dollars. You're going to Bolivia with five dollars? And I said, you know, money just did not mean



that much to me, it didn't then and doesn't now. And I said, this will be enough. You know, they will feed us, take care of us, and this is all I need. And he handed me money and blessed himself cause I was a such a hopeless case. When we got to Miami and found out that they were we were not leaving that day, all I could think was my father is going to have a heart attack. I hope they don't tell them that there's a revolution in Bolivia and people are in the street fighting. And this would not be a good time. But I do remember them telling us that we had to watch the TV at seven o'clock at night. So we figured something big. You know, the president was addressing the country and so we all crowded in and I think we were all in one room. They put us up in the hotel, of course, because we were they didn't know what to do with us because they didn't know what the president was going to say was both at Kennedy and we thought he was going to declare war and the boys would immediately be soldiers. And instead of that, he talked about the blockade, the Cuban blockade. Everybody was running around the way from Miami at that point because we were so close to Cuba and they mentioned it before the hotel for half price, et cetera. So they kept us there in Miami until they could figure out what to do with us and where to send us, because they couldn't send us to Bolivia and we couldn't stay in Miami. We knew then we were so happy that we went to the international

SIMPSON: [00:20:05] Experiment in International Living.

BOICE: [00:20:10] Anyway, the international help, and spent another month learning the language and trying to learn the language anyway.

SIMPSON: [00:20:18] Yeah, that was a nice respite I think.

BOICE: [00:20:22] I think it was good, but it was nice. We came with clothes for warm weather. And here we were in Vermont in

SIMPSON: October!

BOICE: [00:20:35] October. It was October and and the people in the neighborhood and they gave up everything, things. I remember the weekend and after that they said so we wouldn't corrupt group coming in.

SIMPSON: [00:20:58] I remember that there were some threats about boycotting that, but I've never been to. But I wasn't about to boycott course.

BOICE: [00:21:08] I would never boycott like that. Yeah.

SIMPSON: [00:21:12] Okay, well let's talk about when you go to Bolivia, when you up with your problem, when you got to the process of getting into whatever you were going to do,

BOICE: [00:21:28] It's going to be long and complex.

SIMPSON: [00:21:33] I got lots of tape.

BOICE: [00:21:35] Ok? I am I was a teenager and there's not much you can do as a sociology major. I had my thoughts during training. I told everyone that was listen that I could not do social work. I didn't have the. Which I didn't have the new one, but you need the body language. I was not aware of any of that and you need all of that to be a counsellor, a social worker. And my job is we got to grab it off the sugar mill town or to a social work center for the workers at the sugar mill. And I did I was with the back of the sugar mill Bolivian. And I'm saying to him, I am not going to do it. I don't know how to be a social worker and I don't know the language. And he said, well, that's what I wanted. And I said, well, you didn't get it. And I said, Is there anything else that you want me to do for you? And and I said I could do a study and he said, OK, go do a study, find out what the major health problems are and that, you know, that the workers see. So I went to my little house that I shared with you and I got my dictionary out and I wrote out questions that I would ask to get the information I needed. And I took a great deal of courage to start knocking on doors and saying, hello, my name is I'm from the Peace Corps and I'm here doing study, etc. And the amazing thing is that there's a word called feature and it means a

parasite. And it did in that community. It meant parasites. And we knew that was a large problem. The health center, the little clinic that we had there, you know, that people were coming in, for instance, who were dying because they had parasites and they were drinking the bad water. So as I met the people and talked my really lousy Spanish to them, going door to door was the number one problem. I wrote it all up. I gave it to the boss and he said, Now, is this parasite or is this insect? Oh, dear God, I'm asking this particular question. And I don't even remember the answer, because at that point it really didn't matter, because to me, parasites was the biggest problem that they had insects, yet they were insects. We talk I wrote about how the problem could be solved. It started screaming if they would dry up some of the potholes and some of the little marshes that they had there.

BOICE: [00:25:11] We were now in the tropics and I went back and my family came and nothing else. He could suggest I was Peace Corps and I had to do something. So I went to the local Latino community. They had priests and nuns. And Monteiro, it was a priest town. And the nun suggested I start a women's group and maybe anything I could do with the teenagers, especially the girls. And I said, OK, we'll talk it out. So I got some women together and asked them what they wanted to do. That was one thing I remember from our Peace Corps training that was huge. And that was you do not walk in with a preset plan when you're doing community building like I was talking out and doing. Yeah, yeah. That's what they want. And then you work, you know, I don't want to use the word manipulate, but if you don't know what they want it, then you talk about what you think they need. For example, if you think they need to be drinking water, decent, clean drinking water, they want a soccer field. So you have them with a soccer field and then you work on the clean drinking water. I'm not where I want to spend a lot of my time talking about what I did in.

SIMPSON: [00:26:57] Ok, well, let's get move on to when you when you moved up to what made you decide to go on up to Cochabamba?

BOICE: [00:27:09] Or you wanted me to move out of my school and.

SIMPSON: [00:27:11] No, no, no, you can do that now. That wasn't

BOICE: [00:27:17] So. Like I said, this is going to be long and it can. In the meantime, I really wanted a social worker. So they got a social worker had to come down and open the social work office and and and you had gone to write them. I am OK. Came and she lived with me and I knew that I couldn't keep doing this forever. If it is not what I consider that I should be doing in Peace Corps, I have to say one thing. I did start a school basketball team and then when I moved back to Vancouver, I had I started a girls basketball team and we actually took them over to grab it and play with the team I had created and what we do. And at the end of the game, the score was two, I so did nothing about my baskets, but I guess they worked as a team anyway,

SIMPSON: [00:28:31] Don't you remember? They told us not to bring any shorts or anything when the first group came around. We wanted to play basketball and.

BOICE: [00:28:43] In shorts. Yeah, but I remember that. Yeah. Yeah I know. I would think if you wanted to dress me up, all Spanish words are jumping into my head, and took it to a seamstress and told her what you wanted and she made you a dress, kind of wonderful, the way things were there. When, when we were, when we were in, we started by cooking ourselves and we would buy a whole tree branch of bananas and we run that for two days, then we make chocolate pudding and mix it with the cooking. And the cooking was hard to figure because you had to go to wherever they were selling food that day and you'd get a prime of meat and you look at it and you didn't know what part of the cow it came from or how to cook it. Maybe it should be boiled, maybe fried, maybe. It was very difficult to cook. And we became pension and we went and got a food from the local restaurant. So every day and I like that system very much, and it was a great deal cheaper than trying to cook bad food for ourselves. OK, so brought her sister down and I moved down to Mineros when I heard they

SIMPSON: [00:30:36] Weren't you in Saavedra? Yeah, was in Mineros. You were in Saavedra.

BOICE: [00:30:48] Right. And I and I lived with my first and only Bolivian sister and her family. And I grew up at the local school. And when I was talking to the director, who I think was between 80 and 90 years old, I I said to him, I will be happy to teach English or he wanted things that I thought I can do that I can do. I can teach English. I have to make it worth Peace Corps time. And I will have no curriculum, no paper trail, pencils, visual aids, nothing. I walk into the sixth grade and.

SIMPSON: [00:31:44] Ok, so you were teaching health and PE.

BOICE: [00:31:49] And a lot of really funny stories, but I'd really rather get to Cochabamba.

SIMPSON: [00:31:53] Ok, let's move on.

BOICE: [00:31:55] The school year ended and I went in to Mineros, why do I keep doing this, and talk to, um, the Mariners there. And they set me up with a summer program, and we were going to run it like a playground camp where morning and afternoon sessions and we have the kids that were going to help lead it. And we were training them. And we were we had already started collecting money from the parents get supplies that we needed. And some guy from Washington, D.C., Peace Corps comes down.

SIMPSON: Oh, yes, it was Derrick Singer.

BOICE: OK? And he said to me and he said to all of us, he took us out to dinner and he said, Well, what are you doing? What are you doing? So I told him what I was doing. And he says, and you're working with a man on a bicycle is not going to like that. You're working with the man when you have other options. And I said, I don't really see any other options because my boss cannot solve anything for me to do and from my own

jobs. And so he said, well, if you can't stop working with the church people with the religious orders and I'm going to put you in Cochabamba. So this is a Friday night, he says to me, I will see you in Cochabamba in my office Monday morning.

SIMPSON: [00:33:37] Wow.

BOICE: [00:33:37] Oh, yeah. It was quite a shock. I had to get rid of everything that I had gotten from my room in Saavedra, which wasn't much, but it still had to go and give back the money to all the cars to pay for the camp. And I got up about six o'clock and with my little suitcase full of my clothes and I went over the hill to provide a ride to Cochabamba if I got in it to clock in the morning or something. And I, I went to see Mr. Singer and he and I said, you have a job for me. And he said, No, Lois will have a job. And she was in Bolivia, one project we were Bolivia two, meaning the second project in the country into the country. I went to Lois and Nancy. And so I knew that here we were again and I better go looking for a job. And I said, well, give me an I'm 22 years old, right. Maybe still 21. I don't know. And they said, go to the department. So I walked over to the health department and I said, here I am. I'm Peace Corps, is there anything you want me to do? And they said, go on over there and work with those people. So I go over across the hall and they're drawing blood from prostitutes. Once a week. They do this. And so the prostitutes sufficiently clean. It was legal apparently there. And the prostitutes come in every Monday and have a blood test to make sure they were still free of any diseases.

BOICE: [00:35:34] And this was before AIDS. And so they can they handed me an orange and they said just a few times, you know, and you'll be doing that after lunch. And I hand it over to the ranch. And I handed them the needle and they said, no, I won't. I'm going home now. And I went home and I walked around and talked to people. And finally, by the end of the week, I had put together a job. In the morning, I'd be working with the Methodists and the afternoon I'd be working with somebody else, but not Catholics. I stayed away from Catholic schools. That obviously upset. Let's just say at the end of the week I went in and I said, OK, I'm off, but I'm going to do

this with these people. I met with a little. And he said, and if you can't find a job and working with a religious, I will send you the Sucre. And I really didn't know anybody in Sucre, so I knew I had to go and come up with something really good. So I said, what do I even know how to do? And what I had done in college is a project for something would compare to children's institutions that I had worked in on in Syracuse and Rochester. They were both institutions for children. That's all I'm going to say, because we used to call orphanages. So I went back to the health department, went to the director and said, Can I do what you need a study like this done? I could tell you how many kids were there and lots of details that you might not have, but if you have it, that's fine.

BOICE: [00:37:25] And they said, no, we don't have a study like that. We have no idea. And I said, well, give me a list of the orphanages, because they weren't real orphanages, a state where people actually dropped the babies or the children's door and walked away. And you said, well, I don't know, we have nothing whatsoever on them. And they said and he said, well, I know there's this orphanage. Maybe they can get you in touch with the other one. OK, so little by little, I started and what I found was atrocious. It was really atrocious. They were receiving very little help financially and any other way. Every orphanage was run by a different group of no. So I went home from Germany. I can't remember the other countries, but they were not they were not Spanish. They used to come from the country for their school so that when the child had gone through eighteen years in the institution, they were considered illiterate because they had a degree, you know, her degree from Ireland or Germany or whatever. And so they were they were every single one of those girls, both either put in or the boys orphanage, whatever was put in a homemaker, they weren't married off. They were just called illegitimate and therefore they couldn't become known. They couldn't stay there and help the nuns in recruiting its housekeepers.

BOICE: [00:39:34] And that's the word I'm looking for. And babysitters and. That's a they became people. They never went to from school, they never learned the trade. No, when people heard about that and some of the

people supporting the orphanages for Peace Corps, they were raising funds and buying like a record player for certain, you know, orphanages. They didn't even know where they were. And one of them said, well, why don't you try to be somebody else? So I knock on the door of the second and I and the guy says hello. And he was taking this. And of course, it was the Salvation Army. So I went in and he didn't know of any institution, so he couldn't help me. But at least he told me what they did and I could anyway. It was fabulous. And what we did, which was the best part of thing, was a group of Bolivian teenagers and young adults that were group. They wanted to be peaceful people, and they hung out in the little camps, in the cafes, you know, at 4:00, 5:00. And I said, okay, we've got a bunch of orphanages in this town and these kids never walked outside the door. You don't know anybody except the people in the orphanage. They get up at seven, six o'clock in the morning church at in Rapid City. And then they go and they go to their room with their clothes, but they start embroidering until 3:00 in the afternoon. The children, five and six years old,

SIMPSON: [00:41:28] Making a little claim probably.

BOICE: [00:41:31] And then at three o'clock in the afternoon, they start school, they break for dinner, they have one hour of rest and they go to bed. Unbelievable and unbelievable. And all the Peace Corps guys and the volunteers, you know, the teens got together. They they said there's a swimming pool. So we went we got these kids out of their orphanages all over the place. And the teams would go in at such and such a time. And and I'm reporting this to the people who donated the record players and for example, and they said, well, when do they pull it out? I said, well, on Saturday they're around for an hour to play the record player. And so that changed immediately because those people marched in and started talking to the nuns in charge. And you're obviously, I consider my best work. And then I took it to Catholic Catholic Relief Services and they went, oh, my gosh, it's never been done. We want this. And they had and I have been lied to, you know, and I have to go back and back to the institute and say, well, wait a minute. Catholic Relief said you did this this year. Well,



OK, you know, this kind of thing we got it is of course, the truth is we could if I could possibly get it. And then the Catholic Relief Services asked me to come back, you know, after I left Peace Corps to come back and look for them and they would pay for my master's degree, they wanted me to come back to us in the same study in the US. And I was even tempted. But because I was about to go home and get married, but that's when they said, oh, they sent a woman and she wants to continue to volunteer. They had never heard the word volunteer for nobody except the Americans knew what the word volunteer meant. And so this woman came in to work with and implement the volunteer program that we had started. And that's what I did in Peace Corps.

SIMPSON: [00:44:08] Great. That's a pretty big job. I had no idea what you did up there.

BOICE: [00:44:12] I was going to say that you never knew.

SIMPSON: [00:44:15] Well I was buried in my own issues down here in Santa Cruz, you know, I'm doing

BOICE: [00:44:25] So I don't know what you did when when I left and went to Cochabamba.

SIMPSON: [00:44:34] But we did kitchen table surgery. All kinds of things that are discussed on my tape.

BOICE: [00:44:46] I'll have to go get your tape someday.

SIMPSON: [00:44:49] I'll send a copy to you.

BOICE: [00:44:51] I would love to hear.

SIMPSON: [00:44:55] So tell me, you talked about all the things you did. What did you do in your free time?

BOICE: [00:45:04] But I got engaged to one of the volunteer and the weather in Cochabamba, they call it the paradise of the South. Right. Meaning South America. But I'm sure there are other places. But I would get up to go walk in the morning and put on a sweater and then walk in the sunshine part of the street and it was about 50, 60 degrees. And by afternoon it was 70, maybe for everyone above 80. Never went below 50. Well, it was paradise. Nobody had nobody that nobody had furnaces or any that any means of heating their house, but never got cold enough to worry about it. Yeah, we would go to the plaza and and have a beer and salteñas and then the pole would come with their care. I didn't see this the way I saw it in Cochabamba. The children begging, begging the outside, you know, eating your dinner. And this person will come up with this oilcan. You know, it was hanging by ropes and scrape the rest of your dinner plate into their can and then the way come out and chase him away and they come back and get the next person. You know, I think we're used to it there. But I wasn't I never did get used to it. The church was another whole issue in itself. It was run by some of it. Then there were no women on the altar. There were no men in the pews. And people would come up to me and say, if that's your boyfriend, that goes to church, for your husband, that goes to church with you every week. And I said, yes. And they said, oh, wonder if I want to see him in church. And I said, yeah. And I said that there were a few men that he wouldn't work, except that you would recognize the person that was there for other things to do. And there was dancing. But it was inappropriate. And I my my fiancée at the time, well, my fiancé's parents didn't dance. So I have to give some of the other volunteers to dance, to go to the movies and spend a lot of time with their kid and all the guys, but. One big thing happened when we got out with the four guys that afternoon in the Jeep because there was an exhibit and we had taken.

SIMPSON: [00:48:14] You heard what?

BOICE: [00:48:17] We are taking pictures. I just got to be fair, sorry, we have taken lots of pictures of for this rapid, et cetera, of the Florida politics and on the

way into the city, one of our volunteers ran up instead of pounding on our window to say that President Kennedy had been shot.

SIMPSON: [00:48:38] Oh, yeah. Yeah.

BOICE: [00:48:41] So we parked car. This is crazy. You know what can't be happening. Have heard it correctly. And we drove on and then we all got out of the jeep. You know, everybody went their own way. And I went in to get a Coke from one of the little corner stores. And as I walked in the door, everybody looked at me, which isn't really uncommon, I guess. And because they were always looking at us, because we were different. And so I ordered my Coke and I stood there drinking because it was in the shade drinking by coke. And I heard the radio President Kennedy shot and he is dead. He has been assassinated. So I put the book down and went all the way to my house and woke up my housemates. And they didn't believe it, of course. And they called the embassy and the embassy confirmed it. And then the people in the community started knocking on the door and coming back to tell us they were sorry about our president. And we thought that was so funny. And we didn't know who our friends or anything. It was just people. We would go out the street and people would come up to us and say, you know, we're really sorry. They have the flags at half mast, people, black armbands, they tied black, you know, whatever, ribbons around everything. They could be really wrong. That man,

SIMPSON: [00:50:18] The same the same thing happened in Santa Cruz on the same thing happened in Santa Cruz. People came to say they were sorry about what had happened.

BOICE: [00:50:34] Right, it was it was touching, very, very touching. And that's all I can remember. Beautiful swimming pool, all the stuff you didn't have in Santa Cruz.

SIMPSON: [00:50:53] So as you look back, did you do any traveling outside of Bolivia when you were there?

BOICE: [00:51:02] No, I didn't, but we did get up to like Titicaca and La Paz. Well, that's all I never got so far. I didn't even get around inside Bolivia very much and I didn't know outside Bolivia.

SIMPSON: [00:51:22] So looking back now, what what do you think you achieved there? What do you think were the pluses and minuses in terms of working there during your Peace Corps experience?

BOICE: [00:51:42] You can look at this from so many different angles. But the thing that's stayed with me the most is my experience in all these are actually with the women's group that we made a cake one day. And you know how you make a cake in the United States. And when you grew up here and live here, this is how you think it should be done. Well, they started out by mixing the flour and the baking soda and the salt. And I thought, oh, you can't do it that way. And I'm looking at myself at 20, but I'm saying that to a bunch of 40, 50 year old women. And I said, maybe I better shut up. So I did, thankfully. And we did it completely backwards to the way we did it. And it came up just fine. And that was my first and biggest lesson in Bolivia is there's lots of different ways to do something and the diversity and how beautiful some of these people were, and how rotten some of these people were, and how nice they were and how nasty they were. And, you know, I remember in Florida, you and I were invited. No, no, no. In Saavedra. My Bolivian sister and I were invited to this party. So we got dressed up and we went to a party or people at the party room. And as we walked in the door, they handed both of us a shot glass of pure alcohol. So I said, you know, I'm not really a worldly person, but this looks really bad to me so we laughed and went home. What were they thinking? And I mean, you know, we had lots of different experiences that I would likely never have had here in the States and I found my strength from the strength that I had in myself. I loved the experience and I hated the experience all at the same time. I remember sitting at a table and the sweat was dripping onto the letter I was writing home so uncomfortable. And I was writing, tears in my eyes, sweat dripping on paper and writing oh this is so much fun, you can't believe how wonderful this is, you don't have anything to worry about. You know, my father, if I ever told him the

truth they would have come down on the next plane and taken me home. I was strong enough to stay, yeah, and that that was big for me because I didn't have a job and I didn't think there was anything I had to contribute. And I learned that doctors are nice, but they're not essential.

SIMPSON: [00:55:12] Well, you know, the thing is

BOICE: [00:55:14] I do want to say something about the health care that was mentioned in the emails that I was telling you about earlier when I went to Bolivia. Have the records somewhere. When we arrived in Santa Cruz and went to orientation at Santa Cruz, we went to a hotel, the Hotel Santa Cruz. And I think that's where I picked up a parasite.

SIMPSON: [00:55:47] Really?

BOICE: [00:55:48] Very, very seriously ill when we were getting to Guabira, I was feverish for two days, I think. And then it took me a week to get over it. The following year, doctors came down and did stool samples and they found and they said, you've had this a long time. And I went, oh, what is this mean for my future? Five years later, they're discovering Crohn's disease that I've been battling Crohn's ever since. If they had caught that a little earlier. So I don't think I would have had the problems that I've had. Yeah, but I just wanted that on record. They need those doctors to stay in Cochabamba all the time. They could have visited us more than once a year.

SIMPSON: [00:56:50] Well they came down and did all that kind of thing when we were about to leave and they discovered that I had hookworm. But it was fairly nascent. But I had to do the whole cure thing, which was not easy.

BOICE: [00:57:09] Mine was easy. It took two pills. That's all I had was two pills. And hopefully they were gone.

SIMPSON: [00:57:16] Yeah, what kind of damage did they do? Ok, so if would you if you were to do it again, would you do it again?

BOICE: [00:57:30] No, no, I would not have done it again. And some people came to me and I dissuaded them. I said when they get their act together and they they they accept people in the Peace Corps, I will have something that the natives need. You know, there were the nurses running around crazy because there weren't enough nurses and there weren't enough beds and there weren't enough that we needed more nurses there. We just need teachers. We needed nurses. We needed we needed civil engineers to be digging. Well, yeah, we didn't need teachers to educate for, you know, the average people. But I don't even know that we need it because I wasn't that smart and I'm still not that smart. But they didn't need a bunch of kids going down like we did. We managed and a complaint I've heard from many, many others except the teachers who were sent to a school or the nurses who were sent to a hospital. You know, I understand why they don't take the kids anymore. I understand why they want somebody who's got a profession and can actually do something. I do think that they've got to concentrate on language. I would say my first year was because of the language. It's truly insulting to a country that came to 21 years old who can't speak the language and say here she's going to teach you all you need to know about X, Y, Z, I'm sorry, that's the problem. And one of the Bolivians said to me it was a young man. He said, although we have arrived as a nation, when, just give me one second to take control? When we can send our kids to other countries to teach them how to live, and I thought, oh, that hurt. You know what he was saying, you know, I mean, and here somebody is a veteran. You know, we no education because, you know,

SIMPSON: [01:00:02] They had a lot of common sense.

BOICE: [01:00:05] They're the ones that thought me about Big Brother. And they said, you know, Uncle Sam. And they said, we hate him. We don't want to be a charity case. It's like the people are there. But one thing we appreciate the fact he's helping us at the other end of the point, you know, so. But I want to say, has influenced my entire life, yes. Am I glad I did it? Yes.

SIMPSON: [01:00:44] Do you think that you helped the people there that you worked with understand the US better?

SIMPSON: [01:00:51] Yes, no question. Absolutely. I just could not figure out boys in Cochabamba. They would tell me they would say that Americans smoke cigars and cigarettes and they drink whiskey. But I don't think I'm going to go to church and they would give people the right to me. They came one with the people. They weren't separated, even though they live in nice houses, they were healthy and they eat good food. They didn't have to live in shacks out in the country to do that. Yeah, I couldn't have done my work in Saavedra without being in my house on the corner. So. But. Anyhow, in so many ways to do Peace Corps, but I think by now they should have it figured out that people don't just get sent someplace and say, good luck find a job.

SIMPSON: [01:02:13] Yeah, well, I think there was a period of time when they had that, but I'm not sure if it's still there now.

BOICE: [01:02:21] Yeah, I don't know either. We have a returned Peace Corps volunteer group here in Rochester and, oh my goodness, a lot of them are the young ones just coming back. Yeah, and they're saying exactly the same thing we did, you know, back in our day.

SIMPSON: [01:02:45] And yeah, because I know what they wanted me to do needed somebody with more experience. I had only been a nurse working two years. And it really needed somebody, you know, like I said, ten years later, I could have done it better knowing what I was doing.

BOICE: [01:03:06] Well, I could never have done the job I was supposed to do. Yeah, but it's it's interesting. I was 40, no that's not true.

SIMPSON: [01:03:27] It needs a little lead time. OK, now tell me what you had started to say about getting a job at this church.

BOICE: [01:03:36] I got a job in an inner city Spanish speaking church. It was for Hispanic and well, you know, there was a mix, but it was considered a Spanish speaking church and it was like going home. And it's an amazing experience. My Spanish came right back to me. I had the sensitivity that the people could pick up on immediately. And they went, oh, like, you know, like the other ones have come here. And it was it was pretty amazing. And then and after that, a couple of years after that, I got a degree in English as a second language and went back to school forty eight and got my masters degree for teaching and English as a second language. And my friend said, please come walk with me as a person. I have learned to work at a prison in my life. I like to work at a prison and that I went up just to make her stop asking me. And there were all these Hispanic women in the classroom and I thought, oh, oh, it was again, it was like coming home and I took the job and do a few years to learn how to speak, you know, learn how to teaching with ESL. And then I went to I got a job, which is what I originally wanted in the city, teaching English as a second language to adults. And it was mostly Puerto Rican welfare. But again, I had this sensitivity that I picked up in the Peace Corps. Sure. Where else would I have gotten it? And it just it made my life so easy. And I was I was continually fighting for them, you know, because people would say, oh, you can come in and said, speaking Spanish. I should look at the people in Spanish when we talk English to each other. Care. We talked English to each other. So they were like, oh, come on, you know how many people have never learned another language? They don't realize how hard it is anyway.

SIMPSON: [01:06:19] Well I was thinking about Tom Stachelek. You remember, Tom?

BOICE: [01:06:25] Yes.

SIMPSON: [01:06:25] He worked in the prison system for like 30 years. And when I was in prison, they didn't know that. Yeah. And when I was interviewing him, he said that his Peace Corps experience was extremely valuable for



him to do the job that he did. I guess he got in some kind of administrative position, you know, so I

BOICE: [01:06:48] He'd be good, wouldn't he?

SIMPSON: [01:06:50] Yeah, I think you were probably. Well, yeah. Can you can you think of any kind of experience that you haven't mentioned yet that stands out in your mind about your piece?

BOICE: [01:07:12] Well there is this one in Cochabamba and I was becoming I was becoming the person who knew about these orphanages and this one woman wanted to meet me and she was somebody. It was through June Wolf, and she was somebody the council or elected city council to pass on anyway. And I you know, I didn't have any idea what I was walking into. I was going to converse, you know, and I walk in and I sat down and she was afterward and she hasn't arrived yet. I thought, oh, my gosh. And, you know, she came down. It was it was like something in the movie, especially after what I was used to. And she came in and was like, you know, well, I understand you've been doing this, Elizabeth. Can you tell me about it? Can you tell me what you need to do? Can you tell me where we should go from here? And I'm going, oh, my God. It's just such it was a. Let me be happy that I had done it before. Well, that somebody who was looking to me to tell them what to do about the situation. And I thought. What experiences I've had, you know, we come from the lowest and the highest, I guess I could think of at the time, you know, and I thought that I would do so. I would like to go back just to see how things are in the orphanages now. And I don't know what to ask and I don't know how to get the information. And nobody that goes back, everybody's with that, you know, probably not.

SIMPSON: [01:09:15] I, I found it. It's hard to go back because when we were in Paraguay in 68 to 70, we did go back to Bolivia and we went to ended up in Santa Cruz. Of course, there what happened is that they kept the clinic. I thought from they decided that I just kind of kept it up, helped keep it open until the community took an interest, because then they had several

doctors, a bunch of nurses, and they and they build on to it the hospital there in Ontario. But I never have been sure really what I contributed, you know, because it wasn't really anything that there were things that I did. But, you know, long term, it's really hard to know. I'm sure you probably read into the same kind of feeling.

BOICE: [01:10:13] Yeah, I when I left, I felt I had to there was a question we were asked when they were debriefing us. And it was I don't feel that you've done everything you could possibly do. And I said, absolutely, I couldn't work anymore. I couldn't have done more if I had stood on my head. Well, and you know what's funny? Because I thought, oh, my God, nobody else is saying that. And I thought, but I'm not going to change my mind.

SIMPSON: [01:10:45] No.

BOICE: [01:10:46] Well, I could work some days, I guess.

SIMPSON: [01:10:49] You know, I felt like I had worked very hard, but I would have never sure if I met the objective they had because, you know, there was this gap between what the Bolivians wanted you to do and what you already you were prepared to do, you know? And so, you know, when I just try to be philosophical about it because, I mean, they were still functioning. So I guess and they had and they had increased in size and all that kind of stuff. So I guess they must have worked.

BOICE: [01:11:27] I remember the training telling us and I said I never finished it. One of my problems, if I have, I will be taking over for us when we leave. I will have done a good job, because that's about whether or not it's the same as the people you said, because I was I said to myself, I wonder whether. But that's what I work for all the time and that's what I work for. Well, you know, I create a position that can't be so Bolivian and

SIMPSON: [01:12:07] That that ability to keep it going, what they call it.

BOICE: [01:12:11] Yeah. And you did it and you did it. That and I don't know if people are still paying attention to the energies, but I did what I could and I walked out the door and I can't go back overseas. There's no way. They haven't told me you want to die because I went back to Venezuela or we went to Venezuela or caught here three times. Amoebic dysentery. Oh, my goodness. Every time someone here came back and had a mammoth operation, they almost lost me. I had the three kids and I just said I had a chance again in my own cooking, we drink bottled water. You know, it's a very advanced country. And I got dysentery three times.

SIMPSON: [01:13:02] So it sounds like through the years, although you haven't had any additional involvement with Bolivia, you have continued to be in a service kind of position doing things like what would have been described as Peace Corps activities?

BOICE: [01:13:24] I saw that. I thought it that thing, you know, have you continued have any involvement with. No, but I have had plenty of involvement with Hispanics.

SIMPSON: [01:13:34] Yeah, yeah. Yeah, that's right. I haven't really had continued involvement with Bolivia except for that trip we took. But I mean, nine years in South and Central America, you know, since. And probably the reason I went into to an apology when I got back and all the other stuff, but who knows? Anyway.

BOICE: [01:14:00] Yeah, I think we a tremendously influenced by our experience. Tremendously.

SIMPSON: [01:14:07] Know, I know maybe this isn't the place to put that in, but I went and watched those that 20, 20 thing on the Internet. And, you know, they're saying, you know, because they've made a big ballyhoo about how Peace Corps training was now mostly done in country. And and we we did we it's not done like we did it. But, you know, from what it sounds like, maybe it sounds like they're not really doing much training anymore.

BOICE: [01:14:38] I don't think they are.

SIMPSON: [01:14:41] Because, you know, they talk to us about how to present yourself to people and about where not to go and all the things you should and shouldn't do. And listening to what people there tell you, I mean, I was thinking about because they were talking about these volunteers that have been raped and they were talking about just arriving in this girl saying she was walking out. This was in Bangladesh. And all these guys that will you know, we would not have even gone out by ourselves. Because we were told that this wasn't cool to do, you know?

BOICE: [01:15:22] And so we are in a generation. And if you told us that we didn't do it. Yeah. I remember being in a classroom in Ballport where this girl had gone to Egypt and they told her not to go out and then they go on because the other women in the community would stop her and she went out and got stoned to death. But I had to run back to the hotel. Yeah. From the past to come out. Right. Right. Well, I did it anyway.

SIMPSON: [01:16:01] Well, the other thing I was I was thinking that was different for us and for some of the more recent groups is that very few of the volunteers really live by themselves. A lot of them live with family or, you know, they had roommates or whatever, you know, and I it was Latin America really wasn't the place that you could put women alone.

BOICE: [01:16:30] I loved the 20-20 thing. I thought she slept in there by herself and I would make sure that at the end of, well I don't know.

SIMPSON: [01:16:44] Well Rose, do you have anything else that you would like to say?

BOICE: [01:16:50] I think I said everything and I appreciate the chance to say it. I wanted to say that spite of the project, I'm so grateful to you for that. Well, I mean, I will be I think that over here is really, really important. Yeah, well, want know I was just dying right now just before I saw and I thought, oh

yeah. I mean, right in the center of the fiftieth anniversary. Well next year. Right.

SIMPSON: [01:17:24] Yes, yes it is. Well, the thing that I have been so impressed with is the esprit de corps with our group.

BOICE: Oh yeah.

SIMPSON: [01:17:37] Forty years later and when we had that last reunion, there were like almost twenty people that were the former volunteers that were there excluding that other people, you know. Oh that's amazing.

BOICE: [01:17:53] I think so.

SIMPSON: [01:17:59] All right.

BOICE: [01:18:01] And again, I'm not going to any I'm so sorry. I got everything right working at the at the place so I'm going to end it all up around here. I got go home and I thought I would past the people. I want it back.

SIMPSON: [01:18:20] Well that was that was different for me because I didn't go to her. I went to a show before the volunteers got there because I but I tried to interview all the guys I could get. So I pretty much stayed in my hotel room and interviewed people, which was really interesting because I didn't know a lot of the things they had been doing either, you know, so.

BOICE: [01:18:45] Or what they've done since. They really don't talk about that much.

SIMPSON: [01:18:50] No, they don't. All right. Well, I'm going to I'm going to cut this off now.

BOICE: [01:18:58] Ok.

[END OF INTERVIEW]