

Betsy Markland Schwartz Oral History Interview
Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Betsy Markland Schwartz served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Guatemala from 1963 to 1965 in the rural community development program.

Access

Open.

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Oral History Interview

with

Betsy Markland Schwartz

March 1, 2008
Capitola, California

By Robert Klein

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

KLEIN: [00:00:07] This is Bob Klein. And today is March 1st, 2008. I'm introduced interviewing Betsy Markland Schwartz, who was a Peace Corps volunteer in Guatemala in 1963 to '65 in a community development project. Let's start. We'll go back, oh, maybe a year before you join the Peace Corps and talk about what was going on.

SCHWARTZ: [00:00:35] I was a senior in college at Penn State University, having fun attending classes and riding my bicycle through campus.

KLEIN: [00:00:42] Yes.

SCHWARTZ: [00:00:44] And I used to eat lunch in the cafeteria and I found a table with new people. They were young Peace Corps volunteers in training. They were training at Penn State University. And they would always eat their lunch in the cafeteria the same time I did. And so I would eat with them and talk with them and chat with them and ask them what

were they doing, where were they going, and were they excited? And they all were very excited and curious about what was going to be happening to them during the next couple of years. And I thought, wow, Peace Corps sounds really neat.

KLEIN: [00:01:16] Good, let's stop there for a moment. What was your major in college?

SCHWARTZ: [00:01:19] Okay. My major in college was general arts and letters. It was a very general, um, it was liberal arts with the name of the major was general arts and sciences, which meant I could pretty much take any classes that I wanted to, so I would take courses that sounded interesting to me, like ornithology and parasitology and different science courses. And it was a very general liberal arts major, so I didn't feel I was very prepared for anything.

KLEIN: [00:01:55] Yeah, well, during the four years had you studied a foreign language?

SCHWARTZ: [00:01:58] Yeah, I had always studied Spanish. I started Spanish, well, I started with Latin in seventh and eighth grade and then Spanish through high school and Spanish through college. And I also took a semester of Italian, so I liked languages a lot.

KLEIN: [00:02:11] And during your four years of college, did you do any kind of volunteer work, any kind of travel, domestic, foreign?

SCHWARTZ: [00:02:20] Yeah, I. No travel. And I didn't, I didn't travel at all because my family didn't have any money. Actually, in my sophomore year, I did travel. That's right. I got on a plane and came from Philadelphia out to California to visit a relative. And that was a really scary experience because I never been on a plane before and I'm sitting next to the wing looking out the window and I see fire coming out of it. And I say to the man next to me, I think the plane is on fire. I think the plane is on fire. And he looked out the window and he said, no, that's just, that's just the engine. I was so embarrassed. That was my first real travel was to California.

KLEIN: [00:03:00] Did you do anything special in the summers while you're in college?

SCHWARTZ: [00:03:03] Yeah. I got different jobs. I worked down in the, um, the Jersey Shore. I worked in a Dairy Queen, and I rode my bike from where a little apartment I rented. And I could ride my bike to the Dairy Queen to work and then ride back to the little apartment I rented. And it was a great job for me because I've always had a tremendous appetite and I could eat as much as I wanted in this Dairy Queen, which also sold hamburgers and hot dogs and a lot of things other than ice cream. So that was a fun job. I worked there several summers.

KLEIN: [00:03:39] Well, let's go back even before college. Where did you grow up?

SCHWARTZ: [00:03:45] I grew up outside of Philadelphia in a small suburban town called Secane. It's kind of near Swarthmore, near Swarthmore College. I was raised from the time I was four years old until I graduated from high school in Quaker schools.

KLEIN: [00:04:00] Okay.

SCHWARTZ: [00:04:00] So from four years old to graduating from sixth grade was Lansdowne Friends School, and from seventh grade through 12th grade was Grand Central School in Philadelphia.

KLEIN: [00:04:10] Was that because you were part of the Quaker church?

SCHWARTZ: [00:04:13] No, we weren't. We weren't Quaker. But the Quaker schools are always known to be very good schools. And my parents and aunts who lived in the area didn't like the schools where we lived. And so my aunts would help my parents support the three of us, our education in a private school.

KLEIN: [00:04:32] Any siblings?

SCHWARTZ: [00:04:33] I have a brother and a sister, both older.

KLEIN: [00:04:35] Okay. And during your high school years, any travel, any special volunteer work?

SCHWARTZ: [00:04:42] No travel. I did, I did a lot of volunteer work. At a Quaker school, usually you have to do service projects. And so we, I chose to work at a hospital that was right very close to our school and served food to the patients. And whenever there was leftover food from, I would always finish it for them.

KLEIN: [00:05:07] So you were very healthy teenager.

SCHWARTZ: [00:05:08] I was very healthy with a very healthy appetite.

KLEIN: [00:05:12] Let's go forward now. When you're in college, other than meeting with the trainees, do you recall when you first heard of the Peace Corps?

SCHWARTZ: [00:05:22] No, that's the first time. That's really the first I knew of it. Meeting those trainees at lunch and just seeing their excitement and enthusiasm and sense of adventure, which just really blended with mine.

KLEIN: [00:05:38] But as you were going into your senior year in college, what was the kind of career path you decided for yourself, or had you?

SCHWARTZ: [00:05:46] Well, I was going to go to San Francisco and try and find some sort of a job.

KLEIN: [00:05:51] This was after you got your degree?

SCHWARTZ: [00:05:51] It was definitely not. It was definitely not going to be teaching because everybody had always told me that they thought I'd be a really good teacher.

KLEIN: [00:05:58] Okay.

SCHWARTZ: [00:05:58] So I knew the one thing I wouldn't do was going to be a teacher. I wasn't sure what I was going to do, but I was going to go to San Francisco because that sounded really exciting. And being from Philadelphia it was a long way away. And I needed to go. I needed to experience the world.

KLEIN: [00:06:16] Do you remember the process? You remember getting the application for the Peace Corps and filling it out?

SCHWARTZ: [00:06:20] I remember filling it out and it was a very long application and I remember that we had to have a lot of, um, people.

KLEIN: [00:06:29] Six references.

SCHWARTZ: [00:06:31] A lot of references. And I remember it taking a long, long time. And I remember when I did get accepted into the Peace Corps at the very, I think May, at the end of my senior year, it was May and I was so excited. I was, there was an article in the Penn State paper about me because I was the first student from Penn State University to go into the Peace Corps. And so they wrote an article and put it in the Penn State paper, and I was always very proud of that.

KLEIN: [00:07:02] Do you recall in the application, there used to be a place where you could indicate a preference for assignment. I'd like to go to this area, I wouldn't. Do you recall that?

SCHWARTZ: [00:07:13] Yeah, I recall that area.

KLEIN: [00:07:14] And?

SCHWARTZ: [00:07:15] I put, I don't care. Anywhere, anywhere that's necessary that you need to send me is fine.

KLEIN: [00:07:20] Do you recall if you indicated any proficiency in Spanish?

SCHWARTZ: [00:07:24] I probably did. I probably did because I was, I mean, I had taken Spanish for three years in high school and four years in college. So I'm sure I did.

KLEIN: [00:07:34] And at the point you sent in the application, did you have any other career options? I mean, you didn't know it was a done deal.

SCHWARTZ: [00:07:41] I didn't really know what I was going to do. I didn't, you see, when I was going to. I graduated, I was to graduate in June. And my two aunts were going to give me a six week trip to Europe. And so my sister, who had graduated three years before me, my aunt, the two aunts, were going to give it to both of us. And so I was very looking forward to the six week trip in Europe after immediately after college graduation. And then I was going to figure out what I was going to do.

KLEIN: [00:08:10] Oh, okay.

SCHWARTZ: [00:08:11] You know, I was 21 years old. You know?

KLEIN: [00:08:14] Oh, yes.

SCHWARTZ: [00:08:14] You kind of plan things day by day.

KLEIN: [00:08:17] And when you filled out the application, had you discussed it with your family or your friends?

SCHWARTZ: [00:08:25] I don't remember if I discussed it with my family. I'm sure I must have. I must have told them that I was sending in an application to join the Peace Corps.

KLEIN: [00:08:35] Yeah. So you don't off-hand remember their reaction initially?

SCHWARTZ: [00:08:38] I don't remember the reaction. I remember their reaction when I was accepted. Their reaction was they were very pleased for me because I was a very outdoor person all my life. I was never in the house. I was always outside, climbing trees, riding the horse next door,

milking cows next door, shoveling manure out of the barn. I was always outside working with the farmer next door and did not like to be inside much at all. And they knew that I had a very strong sense of adventure and I think were very pleased.

KLEIN: [00:09:08] In filling out the application, you had indicated that you grew up on a farm?

SCHWARTZ: [00:09:12] No, because I didn't. I grew up next to one.

KLEIN: [00:09:15] Okay. All right. And you received an invitation to training.

SCHWARTZ: [00:09:22] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:09:22] Do you recall what it said?

SCHWARTZ: [00:09:24] Yeah, I recall that it said your, you've been accepted for service in the country of Guatemala. And I remember thinking, Guatemala? Where's Guatemala? Where's the map? Before I can tell anybody, I need to know where Guatemala is. So it was, it was very exciting. And once I found out where Guatemala was, I was thrilled. It wasn't very far away. But I mean, that was okay. I kind of in my head, I thought I would be going somewhere further away.

KLEIN: [00:09:55] Yeah.

SCHWARTZ: [00:09:56] But, but it was okay. It wasn't, it wasn't a disappointment. It was okay. Any place was going to be okay.

KLEIN: [00:10:02] And was this before graduation or about the same time?

SCHWARTZ: [00:10:08] No, it was about a month before graduation. I received, I received the information in May and I graduated in June.

KLEIN: [00:10:13] And what was, where were you to report?

SCHWARTZ: [00:10:16] We were, we were going to go to Puerto Rico at the end of August.

KLEIN: [00:10:21] Directly?

SCHWARTZ: [00:10:21] To Puerto Rico for training. We were going to go to Puerto Rico for training. We're going to train in Puerto Rico. And then we were going to go to Guatemala.

KLEIN: [00:10:28] Okay.

SCHWARTZ: [00:10:28] But what happened was there was an epidemic of dengue fever in Puerto Rico in August. So the day before we were to leave to go to Puerto Rico, we received a cable.

KLEIN: [00:10:41] Telegram.

SCHWARTZ: [00:10:41] A telegram that said, do not go to Puerto Rico, epidemic dengue fever, wait for further instructions.

KLEIN: [00:10:48] And your reaction at that point?

SCHWARTZ: [00:10:50] I went, dengue fever, what's that? And darn. Darn, you know. We had made it home from Europe. We had taken the six week trip from Europe.

KLEIN: [00:11:01] Oh, you had done the six week?

SCHWARTZ: [00:11:02] Yes. So we did the six week trip in Europe and got home in mid-August. And I think I was supposed to go something like August 24th or 25th, something like that. So we got home in time, we're all ready to go, and then got this cable telegram that said, no, don't go. And then very soon we got another one that said, you'll be reporting in Las Cruces, New Mexico. And that was kind of a disappointment from Puerto Rico to New Mexico. I thought, oh, darn.

KLEIN: [00:11:31] Yeah, yeah.

SCHWARTZ: [00:11:31] But, you know.

KLEIN: [00:11:32] So you made the sacrifice I thought you were sacrificing by giving up the Europe trip, but you did the Europe trip.

SCHWARTZ: [00:11:37] No, no. Yes, we did the Europe trip.

KLEIN: [00:11:40] Was your sensitivity to being in another part of the world heightened because you were about to go in the Peace Corps, do you recall?

SCHWARTZ: [00:11:47] I don't think so. I was just so excited to be on the road.

KLEIN: [00:11:50] Oh, okay.

SCHWARTZ: [00:11:51] And that trip to Europe with my sister at 21 and a 24 year old, you know, two young women on the loose. We had been in private schools all our life, very small classes. And here we are in all of Europe on our own. And it was a really fun, fun trip and I was very excited about to be coming home from that also because then I'd be going to Guatemala, so it would be a continuation.

KLEIN: [00:12:16] Yeah. And were there any great departing parties by your peers? By your families?

SCHWARTZ: [00:12:24] Not that I recall.

KLEIN: [00:12:25] Okay. So you then flew from Philadelphia to Las Cruces.

SCHWARTZ: [00:12:34] Las Cruces, New Mexico, and we trained there.

KLEIN: [00:12:37] Where, at the University of New Mexico?

SCHWARTZ: [00:12:40] Yes, the University of New Mexico.

KLEIN: [00:12:41] Do you recall?

SCHWARTZ: [00:12:42] No. Is it New Mexico State University? I think it's New Mexico State University.

KLEIN: [00:12:46] Could be, yeah, but it's in Las Cruces.

SCHWARTZ: [00:12:48] In Las Cruces, yeah.

KLEIN: [00:12:49] Usually when you first arrived, there's a general orientation and a gathering of people. Do you recall your reaction to this group? I mean, now you're in the midst of all these.

SCHWARTZ: [00:12:59] Yes, I recall we, uh, I flew into, um.

KLEIN: [00:13:10] Albuquerque?

SCHWARTZ: [00:13:10] Probably Albuquerque and took a bus from Albuquerque to Las Cruces, and we were supposed to meet in the student union in the, at the university. And I remember on that bus ride getting off the plane, going on the bus, there was another young person and it turned out he was going to be a Peace Corps volunteer also, Dave Siebert. And he was adorable. He was from, he was from California, from San Diego, California. He was a surfer. He was all tanned. And he was just, he was just fresh graduated from college and he was so cute. And I thought, wow. This is neat.

KLEIN: [00:13:51] So you spoke to him on the bus?

SCHWARTZ: [00:13:53] So, yeah, so we spoke to him. Somehow we connected that we were both going to the Peace Corps.

KLEIN: [00:13:59] So your first impression was highly favorable?

SCHWARTZ: [00:14:00] My first impression was highly favorable. And then when we got to the university and went down into the student union, there was this other really cute man, and he was sitting there drinking a chocolate milkshake. And I walked over to him totally not knowing who he was,

but he was sitting at the Peace Corps area and I said, can I have a sip of your milkshake? And he said, yes. Nine months later, I married him.

KLEIN: [00:14:26] That's foreshadowing.

SCHWARTZ: [00:14:28] Right.

KLEIN: [00:14:29] About approximately how many people were in the training program?

SCHWARTZ: [00:14:33] I think there was 62 of us. I think there was 62 of us in our group. And so we started.

KLEIN: [00:14:40] All for Guatemala?

SCHWARTZ: [00:14:40] All for Guatemala. Guatemala III. We were the third group to go to Guatemala.

KLEIN: [00:14:44] Yeah.

SCHWARTZ: [00:14:45] And I think that there were 62 of us.

KLEIN: [00:14:48] Men, women, 50-50?

SCHWARTZ: [00:14:50] Yeah, men and women, maybe 50-50. There was one couple in their sixties. There was a single woman who was 63.

KLEIN: [00:14:59] Right.

SCHWARTZ: [00:15:00] There was a man, Doug, who was in his early thirties.

KLEIN: [00:15:03] Okay.

SCHWARTZ: [00:15:04] And most everybody else was fresh out of college or maybe had one year out of college.

KLEIN: [00:15:11] But and most has a similar background to yours, a liberal arts college degree?

SCHWARTZ: [00:15:17] Yeah, yeah. Because we were all community development, so we were all a group of people that didn't really know.

KLEIN: [00:15:20] Didn't know anything.

SCHWARTZ: [00:15:21] Anything. I know. And I was wondering, what am I going to do? I don't really know anything, but everybody kept saying community development. That's okay. You don't really need to know anything.

KLEIN: [00:15:33] So training now begins in Las Cruces and generally has several components, one of which would be area studies, another technical studies, another language. So let's talk about.

SCHWARTZ: [00:15:47] Home ec.

KLEIN: [00:15:47] Okay. Talk about how that was organized.

SCHWARTZ: [00:15:50] Okay. I'll tell you.

KLEIN: [00:15:51] Home ec, obviously, you still, talk about that.

SCHWARTZ: [00:15:54] First, let me talk about home ec because our teacher was Mrs. Cabeza de Vaca, head of a cow, Mrs. Cabeza de Vaca, and she was a tiny woman. She looked to me very old, remember I was 21 years old. She looked to be very old. She probably wasn't more than 45 or 50, but she looked to be really old and she was very mean and strict. And I had never sewed anything in my life because my mother hated sewing. And our first project that we had to do in home ec class was we had to make a piece of clothing for ourself without a pattern, and I had not a clue what to do.

KLEIN: [00:16:33] It was from early on in training?

SCHWARTZ: [00:16:36] Right, from early on in training.

KLEIN: [00:16:37] I'm curious, what was the class for both men and women?

SCHWARTZ: [00:16:40] Yes, for men and women. Everybody. Everybody had to sew. You had to sew a piece of clothing. And I didn't have a clue what to do.

KLEIN: [00:16:50] Yes.

SCHWARTZ: [00:16:51] Let me think about that again. Maybe men, maybe men weren't there, because I was really the only one that was so overwhelmed by this. It seemed all the other women knew how to run a sewing machine, how to thread it and do all that stuff, and they knew how to cut stuff.

KLEIN: [00:17:09] It seemed that way.

SCHWARTZ: [00:17:10] It seemed that way. And I mean, I was almost in tears most of the days because Mrs. Cabeza de Vaca, we had to call Senora Cabeza de Vaca, was not at all friendly and she did not like me at all because I didn't know how to sew. And so I ended up making a blouse that was like just cut square. So it just had a bottom. And then it came up and then it went out and had arms and then it came straight across her neck. And I cut out two pieces of material from red and white gingham, red and white gingham checkered material, and sewed them together and turned it inside out and put it on. And I passed the project, but it was a very frustrating experience.

KLEIN: [00:17:49] And was there any, within the whole context of training, was there any rationale for teaching home economics?

SCHWARTZ: [00:17:57] Yeah, because, because we were women and I thought they thought probably, you know, we might want to make some of our own clothes down there or teach some of the native people how to make some clothing.

KLEIN: [00:18:08] Even though you didn't know how to sew.

SCHWARTZ: [00:18:09] Even though I didn't know how to sew, but many of the other people did. So it was just a component. It was, it was the most challenging for me. It was very difficult.

KLEIN: [00:18:16] Let's jump to probably one of the key parts of training, which would be language. How was the language training?

SCHWARTZ: [00:18:23] It was great. We had, we had to speak Spanish at all meals. We had, I think it was about 4 hours a day of Spanish language training and at the meals. And that was fun for me because I had studied Spanish a lot. And so I liked that. But for a lot of people, that was very challenging.

KLEIN: [00:18:43] So many in the group had never spoken Spanish?

SCHWARTZ: [00:18:44] Right. Many in the group had never spoken Spanish. The man whose milkshake I'd shared, he had never done Spanish before. He had studied French in high school, in college.

KLEIN: [00:18:55] And did the training staff indicate that you would be expected to be working in Spanish?

SCHWARTZ: [00:19:01] Yes, when we got to Guatemala, absolutely.

KLEIN: [00:19:04] That was clear?

SCHWARTZ: [00:19:04] That was very clear. Absolutely.

KLEIN: [00:19:06] The second part of that was, was it implied that you had to get to a certain level in Spanish or you might not go?

SCHWARTZ: [00:19:14] No, it was not implied, to my knowledge. To my knowledge, because that was never an issue with me.

KLEIN: [00:19:21] Yeah.

SCHWARTZ: [00:19:23] But I don't remember. And when people were, quote, selected out, they weren't selected out because of insufficient language.

KLEIN: [00:19:30] We'll get to selection. Another area tends to be area studies, to learn something about Guatemala.

SCHWARTZ: [00:19:38] The history, the culture.

KLEIN: [00:19:40] How was that?

SCHWARTZ: [00:19:40] It was all very interesting.

KLEIN: [00:19:42] Who was teaching it?

SCHWARTZ: [00:19:44] People from the university.

KLEIN: [00:19:46] Were there any Guatemalans involved in the program?

SCHWARTZ: [00:19:54] There was Tony. But Tony was. He was from the States. He was Mexican-American but living in the States. He did some stuff with us. I don't remember that there were any people from Guatemala there. I don't remember that.

KLEIN: [00:20:10] And the project had already been in Guatemala for a few years?

SCHWARTZ: [00:20:15] Yes, for two years, I think.

KLEIN: [00:20:17] Okay. Were there any people, returned volunteers, at the training?

SCHWARTZ: [00:20:22] No.

KLEIN: [00:20:22] So you didn't.

SCHWARTZ: [00:20:23] No.

KLEIN: [00:20:24] At any point in the training, did anyone come out from Washington?

SCHWARTZ: [00:20:28] I believe so, yes.

KLEIN: [00:20:30] Do you recall who?

SCHWARTZ: [00:20:31] No, I don't recall who, but I believe they did. When we. When we talk about the selection out, I think that's when they came out, at that time.

KLEIN: [00:20:40] Oh, okay. Okay, we'll get to that.

SCHWARTZ: [00:20:43] That's, that's, I think that's the only time I remember that.

KLEIN: [00:20:47] Uh, and as far as technical studies are concerned, other than home ec, did anyone in training try to define what it is you would be doing when you got to Guatemala?

SCHWARTZ: [00:21:01] They taught, we had a lot of like animal husbandry. They taught us how to kill a lot of animals because they wanted us to raise animals. They said that in Guatemala, people's income is very, very low and they encouraged especially the men to get involved with raising chickens. So they taught a lot about chickens and pigs and they showed us how to kill a pig to cook it. And they talked about raising rabbits. One man in our group, the older man who was 65, I think 65 or 67 maybe, and his wife was 65. They were rabbit raisers from somewhere in the States. They may have come from Texas. And that was going to be their assignment. They were going to be raising rabbits for meat, a source of protein. So we were, we were to try and get people to raise animals as a source of protein and to better their income.

KLEIN: [00:21:55] You must have had some inhibitions about killing animals.

SCHWARTZ: [00:21:58] I didn't have to do it. The men did it.

KLEIN: [00:22:00] Okay.

SCHWARTZ: [00:22:01] They were teaching. I think while we women were in there sewing, yeah, the men were learning how to kill the pigs and raise chickens and kill the rabbits. And proper concentrate, proper feed for the, whatever animal.

KLEIN: [00:22:23] You don't recall that as part of your training?

SCHWARTZ: [00:22:25] No, I don't think it was part of my training. I remember being involved in it because everybody was kind of talking about.

KLEIN: [00:22:30] Oh, sure. Sure.

SCHWARTZ: [00:22:31] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:22:32] And was there anything about the theory and practice of community development?

SCHWARTZ: [00:22:39] Um, yes. They told us about. What we needed to do when we got there was learn to know who were the leaders in the town. And once we could figure out who the leaders were, then we needed to get a betterment committee together with these leaders. And then we were to set up meetings so that this committee would meet once a week or once every ten days or once every two weeks. And then we were to find out what kinds of things they wanted to do to better their village and what kinds of things we might slip in seeing from our point of view, what might be some of the things that would help their community.

KLEIN: [00:23:18] But at this point in training, were you at all intimidated with the idea that you were going to go and do all this?

SCHWARTZ: [00:23:26] No. I was young.

KLEIN: [00:23:27] But you felt you could.

SCHWARTZ: [00:23:28] I could do anything.

KLEIN: [00:23:29] You felt the process was valid that you're describing?

SCHWARTZ: [00:23:30] Yeah, yeah, I felt it was okay. It seemed okay. You find the community leaders and you set up a committee. That all sounded doable. It sounded doable.

KLEIN: [00:23:43] Let's go to, before we go to selection. Was the training seven days a week or did you have a chance?

SCHWARTZ: [00:23:52] I think Sunday we didn't. Yeah, Sunday we didn't because we would take trips together. Groups of us would go. We'd go to the White Sands and yeah.

KLEIN: [00:24:02] Were you encouraged to go in to Las Cruces and seek out Spanish speakers?

SCHWARTZ: [00:24:06] And we all went in to Las Cruces to the bars.

KLEIN: [00:24:10] The bars. Yeah.

SCHWARTZ: [00:24:11] Right. But no, we weren't necessarily encouraged to seek out Spanish speakers and speak Spanish. We were so tired of speaking Spanish after 4 hours every day and at all the meals.

KLEIN: [00:24:24] Were you tested midpoint as they sometimes they use the Foreign Service Reserve test?

SCHWARTZ: [00:24:29] We were only tested at the end.

KLEIN: [00:24:33] And did you get an FSR number?

SCHWARTZ: [00:24:35] Yeah, I got FS-3. Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:24:36] That which is quite high.

SCHWARTZ: [00:24:38] Right.

KLEIN: [00:24:38] Yeah. That was yours?

SCHWARTZ: [00:24:40] That was mine.

KLEIN: [00:24:40] Okay.

SCHWARTZ: [00:24:41] So everybody was tested. And then we were tested again at the end of Peace Corps training.

KLEIN: [00:24:48] Oh, okay. Okay.

SCHWARTZ: [00:24:50] I feel like we were.

KLEIN: [00:24:51] Could be. Now, let's talk about the selection process.

SCHWARTZ: [00:24:56] The selection out process. I hated that expression, going to be selected out.

KLEIN: [00:25:04] Right.

SCHWARTZ: [00:25:04] It was a very stressful time. People, a group of people came from Washington. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

KLEIN: [00:25:09] Yeah. Were you, did you have to go through psychiatric interviews?

SCHWARTZ: [00:25:13] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:25:14] Everyone in the group?

SCHWARTZ: [00:25:14] Everyone in the group.

KLEIN: [00:25:15] And your reaction? I mean, I mean, it must have been somewhat new.

SCHWARTZ: [00:25:20] Yeah, it was all those inkblot, inkblot tests, the inkblot things. They show you an inkblot and tell you what it reminds you of.

KLEIN: [00:25:29] Yeah. Okay.

SCHWARTZ: [00:25:31] We had a lot of things like that.

KLEIN: [00:25:33] You get an interview about why do you, why do you want to do this?

SCHWARTZ: [00:25:36] What I remember most are the inkblot tests.

KLEIN: [00:25:38] Okay.

SCHWARTZ: [00:25:40] I remember, yeah. They asked us a lot of questions. It's really hard to remember.

KLEIN: [00:25:46] That's okay.

SCHWARTZ: [00:25:46] I haven't thought about it. Yeah, no, but they, they did. They asked, they asked us a lot of questions because I remember that, because I was really silly. I had a lot of energy and I was very silly and I knew everybody said these people are serious and I knew I had to be kind of serious. I couldn't just be myself. I had to be well behaved. And it was scary. I mean, it was a scary thing. I don't remember exactly what questions they asked.

KLEIN: [00:26:18] Yeah.

SCHWARTZ: [00:26:19] But I remember talking with them for a while. More than anything I remember the inkblot tests and I kept being afraid of, God, am I seeing something wrong in this ink?

KLEIN: [00:26:30] And did they ask you to do peer ratings, where you'd indicate who you'd like to be assigned with? Or who you thought wouldn't be good in the project? Did they do it? It wasn't in every program.

SCHWARTZ: [00:26:45] Um. I told them that I wanted to be assigned with Mike.

KLEIN: [00:26:48] Oh, okay.

SCHWARTZ: [00:26:48] That man with the milkshake.

KLEIN: [00:26:50] The milkshake guy?

SCHWARTZ: [00:26:50] Yeah, milkshake guy. And they said, absolutely not. We are separating you two as far as we can.

KLEIN: [00:26:57] This is near the end of training?

SCHWARTZ: [00:26:59] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:27:00] Was it? So now the training program is coming to an end. And so the final selection occurred?

SCHWARTZ: [00:27:09] Well, before the training process came to the end, we went to Mexico for two, for two weeks I think we went.

KLEIN: [00:27:17] How was that structured?

SCHWARTZ: [00:27:20] We were sent in groups to different areas. And Mike and I were in the same group and Mike was a size 15 shoe. And one thing I remember is in Mexico, being in a central square in this little, in very far in the state of Chihuahua in northern Mexico. We were in a little town and all these children came running over and they're all standing around pointing at Mike's feet because he has these great big shoes.

KLEIN: [00:27:49] What's the Spanish word for Big Foot?

SCHWARTZ: [00:27:51] Yeah. And so that's a very vivid memory of our time.

KLEIN: [00:27:58] You were taken to the village and you would be there for two weeks?

SCHWARTZ: [00:28:01] We were to stay there, right, for two weeks.

KLEIN: [00:28:03] Any particular agenda?

SCHWARTZ: [00:28:03] We stayed, we stayed with, um. Yeah. We were supposed to learn the language. We were supposed to practice. That's where we were to practice our Spanish. Not in Las Cruces in the bar, but in northern Mexico, in the state of Chihuahua.

KLEIN: [00:28:18] So you were given families?

SCHWARTZ: [00:28:19] Yeah, we were given, we were given families to stay with. And I, I don't remember. I don't. I don't remember. I don't remember so much.

KLEIN: [00:28:29] That's alright. So two weeks in Mexico.

SCHWARTZ: [00:28:35] Right.

KLEIN: [00:28:35] Now you're back to Las Cruces.

SCHWARTZ: [00:28:36] Went back to Las Cruces.

KLEIN: [00:28:38] And training is coming to an end.

SCHWARTZ: [00:28:41] The training was coming to an end. But before the training comes to an end, we have JFK's assassination.

KLEIN: [00:28:46] Ah, okay. Yeah, tell me about that.

SCHWARTZ: [00:28:48] So JFK's assassination happened. They announced on the loudspeaker at New Mexico State University.

KLEIN: [00:28:56] Right. Yeah. That must have had an incredible impact.

SCHWARTZ: [00:29:01] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:29:02] Okay. You want to stop for a minute?

SCHWARTZ: [00:29:04] Mm hmm. [tape break]

KLEIN: [00:29:06] Talk as much as you want about the assassination.

SCHWARTZ: [00:29:09] Right. Well, I'll talk about what I, what I remember most was it was between classes. So a group of us, Mike, myself, Tim Craft, a really good friend of ours, Stu Ogletree, the four of us were walking together across the lawn, going to our next building, which I think was the culture class. And they announced on the loudspeaker that John F. Kennedy has just been shot. And I remember we just all dropped, just dropped right down there on the grass on the lawn, and so did so many other people. Just sat down and went, what, what? You know? And then it was just everybody was going crazy, well, what's happening, what's happening? And I mean, it was a really very emotional time for all of us.

KLEIN: [00:29:58] Was training suspended for a while or did it continue?

SCHWARTZ: [00:30:00] It wasn't suspended. No, it was not suspended at all. But instead of being the culture, we all were venting our feelings and discussing that. So actually, it was, it was a very good thing for us because we could be together and we could talk with a mature adult who could help, could help us a bit, you know, guide our thoughts and our reflections and our feelings and what was happening.

KLEIN: [00:30:29] Do you recall if you were in touch with your family at this point?

SCHWARTZ: [00:30:32] I don't remember.

KLEIN: [00:30:33] Okay.

SCHWARTZ: [00:30:33] I don't remember. It was much more important to me being in touch with our other, our group of trainees, because we were the

ones who were so moved by JFK that inspired us to be there in the first place. And those were the best people to be together with.

KLEIN: [00:30:49] Yeah. And then the training continues then?

SCHWARTZ: [00:30:53] And then training continued, right.

KLEIN: [00:30:55] And we come up to the excruciating final selection.

SCHWARTZ: [00:30:59] Right, which was terrible, which was just before Christmas. We, we finished our, our session. Our training session finished in December, somewhere around December 15. And then we were all on two weeks vacation. We all went home to our families. And then after Christmas on January 1st or January 2nd, we then went to Guatemala. So our training. [tape break] Was when they told us some of the people that were selected out and we could not believe it. One of our, Mike's and my very best friend, was selected out. Stu Ogletree from Chicago, a wonderful guy. And we never, never, never understood why he was selected out. We had no reason at all. Some other people were selected out and we, I mean, that seemed okay. We could see something. But Stu, he was just great and that was it.

KLEIN: [00:32:00] Were you aware that in '63, were they still doing FBI background checks as part of?

SCHWARTZ: [00:32:07] Yes, they were. They were.

KLEIN: [00:32:10] Did friends of yours call your family or?

SCHWARTZ: [00:32:13] Yes, they did. They, all of my references were checked. Every person that I had put down was checked. It took almost a full year for the selection process from, I mean, it was almost a full year from when I sent in that application to May of 1963 when I was accepted. Almost a full year.

KLEIN: [00:32:31] And you were aware that you were being checked on?

SCHWARTZ: [00:32:34] Yes, because I asked my people and they said, oh yes. So they were checking on everybody.

KLEIN: [00:32:39] They didn't find out anything?

SCHWARTZ: [00:32:41] It was all well-hidden.

KLEIN: [00:32:45] So you made it through selection.

SCHWARTZ: [00:32:49] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:32:49] As did the chocolate sipper?

SCHWARTZ: [00:32:52] The chocolate milkshaker and the surfer.

KLEIN: [00:32:56] Oh, okay.

SCHWARTZ: [00:32:57] He didn't make it through the two years, but he made it through that.

KLEIN: [00:32:59] At that point, about how many were left in the group?

SCHWARTZ: [00:33:05] I think.

KLEIN: [00:33:06] You said you started with 62.

SCHWARTZ: [00:33:07] Yeah, I think, I think there were about five or six people that were selected out. So we had about 57.

KLEIN: [00:33:18] At the point, now you're going home for two weeks of leave. Did you have any clear idea of what you would be doing once you got to Guatemala?

SCHWARTZ: [00:33:27] No. Well, all we knew is community development.

KLEIN: [00:33:31] Theoretically.

SCHWARTZ: [00:33:32] Right.

KLEIN: [00:33:32] Nobody had come out from Peace Corps, Washington Peace Corps, Guatemala to?

SCHWARTZ: [00:33:37] Other than the psychologists?

KLEIN: [00:33:39] Yeah. Yeah.

SCHWARTZ: [00:33:41] You know, not that I remember, Bob. Some people's memories are much better than mine. I've been filled with 128 countries in my head and filled with 60 different slideshows. And I've pushed out a lot of stuff from the older days.

KLEIN: [00:33:57] Two weeks at home.

SCHWARTZ: [00:33:58] Two weeks at home.

KLEIN: [00:34:00] And then?

SCHWARTZ: [00:34:02] Parties. Seeing lots of people who lived in New York came down to meet my parents and spend a little time in my house.

KLEIN: [00:34:08] Were you engaged?

SCHWARTZ: [00:34:09] No, we weren't engaged, but we were seeing each other a lot. At one time, you see, I liked both the surfer and Mike.

KLEIN: [00:34:16] Oh, okay.

SCHWARTZ: [00:34:16] And at one time Mike said to me, look, who's it going to be, Dave or me? And I said, I don't know. And he said, well, you need to decide. And I said, okay, let me walk around the block this way, and you walk around that block that way. So we walked around and then we met on the other side of the block and I said, it's you. And he said, okay, then you need to tell Dave. I said, okay.

KLEIN: [00:34:41] So the two weeks at home were kind of fun.

SCHWARTZ: [00:34:45] It was really fun. It was really fun to see Mike, see some of my friends, and have Mike come down and meet my parents. And it was, yeah, it was. It was fun and exciting. I thought we finished that part of it. I'm filled with Spanish and Guatemalan culture. And I think I know a little bit about the country.

KLEIN: [00:35:04] About how to sew a dress.

SCHWARTZ: [00:35:05] Yeah, yeah, a little bit about some of the cultural things.

KLEIN: [00:35:09] And then up to the point when you're getting on the plane to fly down there, any second thoughts about maybe I shouldn't be doing this?

SCHWARTZ: [00:35:17] No, not at all. Absolutely no second thoughts at all.

KLEIN: [00:35:19] And nobody tried, your family didn't try to say?

SCHWARTZ: [00:35:22] No, they were very, they were very happy for me. My parents were always very happy for me throughout my exploits.

KLEIN: [00:35:30] So now you fly down to Guatemala. Did the whole group go together?

SCHWARTZ: [00:35:35] Mm hmm. The whole group together went on a plane?

KLEIN: [00:35:37] Chartered flight or just a regular flight.

SCHWARTZ: [00:35:39] No, a regular flight. We have a photo somewhere of all of us standing on the steps, coming down the plane, all of us there together.

KLEIN: [00:35:47] Was anyone there to greet you?

SCHWARTZ: [00:35:49] Yeah, there were, there were a few people there to greet us. The director of the country, the, yeah, I think the ambassador, the

director of the Peace Corps, director of the country. Um. There were, there were a few people. Who else might have been there?

KLEIN: [00:36:03] Oh, that's about it. Some Guatemalan officials?

SCHWARTZ: [00:36:06] Yeah. The director of the, Peace Corps director of the country. And also there were a few other reps that handled the different areas of Guatemala. They were all there.

KLEIN: [00:36:15] Remember who the director was?

SCHWARTZ: [00:36:17] Yeah. Andy Hernandez.

KLEIN: [00:36:18] Okay. And the ambassador?

SCHWARTZ: [00:36:21] The ambassador, I can't remember. I want to say John Bell, but I think that was when I was in Quito, Ecuador. There's been too many ambassadors in my life.

KLEIN: [00:36:30] Yeah. You get off the plane, what happens next?

SCHWARTZ: [00:36:37] We get off the plane and we go in and we talk and then they say, okay, we're going to divide you up and we're going to send you around the country. Everybody is going to go get on a bus and go take a trip around the country.

KLEIN: [00:36:50] Just like that.

SCHWARTZ: [00:36:52] Well, it was pretty soon after. I mean, it wasn't just like that.

KLEIN: [00:36:55] I assume you had a few days?

SCHWARTZ: [00:36:55] We went, we checked into the hotel. We always stayed at the Palace Hotel in Guatemala City. And whenever we were called in for things, it was always the Palace Hotel. So we were all checked into the Palace Hotel for the first day or maybe two days, and we had some meetings and discussions and stuff. And then they said, okay, we think

the best way for you all to get familiar with your new country is to get on a bus and go travel around. So Mike and I went together.

KLEIN: [00:37:20] Oh, okay.

SCHWARTZ: [00:37:21] So we got on a bus together and traveled around the countryside and we had a very interesting cultural experience.

KLEIN: [00:37:30] Which was?

SCHWARTZ: [00:37:31] Which was, they have what are called the chicken busses in Guatemala, where everything is thrown on top. Everything, everything, everything. And Mike and I were sitting in these little old rickety busses. We were sitting in a seat and he was next to the window. And I was inside and the window was open. And we're going through some town and all of a sudden all this water comes into our window and we jump up and move, and it's coming into our window and the window in front of us where a little indigenous couple is sitting. And they just sit there. And what the water is, it's the pig up top is urinating and it's pig pee coming into the window. And the little couple sitting in front of us just sat right there, and we of course, just jumped up and got out of the way. So that was that was a very early memory in our trip by bus ride around Guatemala.

KLEIN: [00:38:31] So you were gone how long on this bus ride?

SCHWARTZ: [00:38:32] Uh, not very many days, I think like two days or three days. They just stuck us all out there and said, go get on the bus and go somewhere.

KLEIN: [00:38:40] Do you recall your initial reaction to being in Guatemala?

SCHWARTZ: [00:38:43] Um.

KLEIN: [00:38:46] And your use of language?

SCHWARTZ: [00:38:49] Yeah, uh. It was, I was struck by its beauty. It's a very beautiful country with beautiful volcanoes and really quite lovely. So I was struck by the scenery of it.

KLEIN: [00:39:06] Did you immediately begin using your language?

SCHWARTZ: [00:39:09] I hope so. I better. I like to talk a lot. I'm sure I must have.

KLEIN: [00:39:14] Okay, okay.

SCHWARTZ: [00:39:15] English wouldn't have done very well with people. I'm not at all shy with people. I talk to anyone and everyone.

KLEIN: [00:39:22] Right.

SCHWARTZ: [00:39:23] So I think I was much better at it than Mike, who it was. It was, he was still learning Spanish and I was much more advanced than he. So I would have done all the initiating and talking.

KLEIN: [00:39:35] Were there any inhibitions about talking politics, taking photos?

SCHWARTZ: [00:39:43] Well, they told us not to talk politics. In Peace Corps training, we were told not to talk politics and not to talk religion. So that was fine for me, since I didn't usually ever talk about either of those things anyway. I was not very much into politics. Never have been. Nor religion.

KLEIN: [00:40:03] Now when you get back from the bus ride or the bus tour or whatever, what's the next phase of being in Guatemala?

SCHWARTZ: [00:40:10] Then we were assigned to our communities.

KLEIN: [00:40:13] Did you have any opportunity to give input as to your preference?

SCHWARTZ: [00:40:17] Yeah, I said I wanted to be assigned with Mike and that's when they said absolutely not. You two are much too affectionate a couple. You're going to be split up, sent on different ends of the country.

KLEIN: [00:40:26] The implication being that the relationship was somehow not?

SCHWARTZ: [00:40:30] Yeah, they were afraid that we were going to be too, too much in love with each other and not do work.

KLEIN: [00:40:36] Okay.

SCHWARTZ: [00:40:36] Not develop our communities. I know, but it was, it was fine. It was good. Our relationship was really too fast.

KLEIN: [00:40:42] So your initial response to that was, well.

SCHWARTZ: [00:40:46] Well, I wasn't happy. Neither one of us were happy, but it was okay. And I think it was a wise decision on the part of the Peace Corps staff.

KLEIN: [00:40:54] Now so you weren't too long in Guatemala City?

SCHWARTZ: [00:40:58] No, we're not very long in Guatemala City before we were assigned to our sites.

KLEIN: [00:41:02] And to, uh, where were you assigned? Was it with anybody else and had been Peace Corps there before you got there?

SCHWARTZ: [00:41:12] Okay. I was assigned to Quezaltepeque, which is a little village in the, in the far. I have to look at the country. By Salvador. What's that? East. In the eastern part, on the eastern part of Guatemala, near the Salvador border, in a mountainous area, very kind of dry desert mountainy. There had been no Peace Corps volunteers there before, and I was assigned with a woman and a man. Three of us were assigned together. In 1963 in Guatemala, they were

assigning mixed couples because at that time they thought it was better for women not to be alone.

KLEIN: [00:41:47] Okay.

SCHWARTZ: [00:41:48] Soon after that, they again changed the course of direction and they did not put men and women together at all. It caused a problem in our village. The village said, who is the wife? There's one husband and two women living with him, because we lived in one house, and the people in the village could not understand. None of you are married to that man? Men and women. You are from the States and men and women are living together and you are not married? We didn't think that happened in the States. We thought you didn't live together until you were married. So it caused a problem and they stopped doing that maybe a year later or maybe two.

KLEIN: [00:42:30] How did the three of you sort through this?

SCHWARTZ: [00:42:32] Um, we just kept laughing and saying, no, it's not my husband. And Ginny would say, he's not my husband because Doug was very lazy and Doug always had amoebas. And when it was time to get on the mules and go out to the little schools way out, far away, Doug always said, oh, my stomach hurts. I'm having an amoeba attack. You girls go ahead. You'll be fine without me.

KLEIN: [00:42:55] Yeah. Now, in initially coming into the village, had someone arranged housing for you?

SCHWARTZ: [00:43:03] Yes, they had found housing for us.

KLEIN: [00:43:05] Who was the "they" in this case, Peace Corps?

SCHWARTZ: [00:43:07] I think it was the rep in our part of the country.

KLEIN: [00:43:10] So there was a regional Peace Corps rep?

SCHWARTZ: [00:43:12] Had gone ahead of us, yes. Right.

KLEIN: [00:43:13] An American?

SCHWARTZ: [00:43:15] An American guy. Sklar. Joe Sklar was our guy, Joe Sklar. And I think there may be had been like three, three reps.

KLEIN: [00:43:27] Could be.

SCHWARTZ: [00:43:27] The country was kind of divided up and they each had, were assigned those volunteers in that.

KLEIN: [00:43:31] So let's talk about your initial being in the village.

SCHWARTZ: [00:43:36] It was wonderful.

KLEIN: [00:43:38] Did you have any?

SCHWARTZ: [00:43:40] I loved it.

KLEIN: [00:43:41] Did you have anybody to whom you were?

SCHWARTZ: [00:43:43] I taught girls basketball.

KLEIN: [00:43:46] But before you got there, to whom did you initially relate? I mean, you had housing arranged for you.

SCHWARTZ: [00:43:52] And we had a house.

KLEIN: [00:43:53] But day one of being a Peace Corps volunteer there, where do you go? I mean, what did you do?

SCHWARTZ: [00:43:58] That's why I went out and played basketball with the girls.

KLEIN: [00:44:00] Just from the get-go?

SCHWARTZ: [00:44:02] Yeah, just from the get-go. I made friends with the kids. What they said to us in Peace Corps training was make friends with the kids.

KLEIN: [00:44:09] Yes.

SCHWARTZ: [00:44:09] If parents, if you do something good for a kid, you're going to get the parents on your side.

KLEIN: [00:44:15] Right.

SCHWARTZ: [00:44:15] And being that I love kids, I went out, and I loved sports. So I went out and I would play basketball with the girls and the boys, and I made friends with the kids. And you know what? I hadn't been there more than two weeks and there was a knock at our door and I opened the door and here are four little kids standing there with a little puppy. Dona Betsy, would you like this puppy? We thought you might like this puppy. It was a little white dog that I named Sam, Samuela. She was a she, but I called her Sam for short. And the kids loved this little dog that they gave me. So it was, it was a real in to the town, because now the kids gave me a dog, and I had this dog to walk around with me.

KLEIN: [00:44:57] These children's families and others in the village must have known you were there. Who did they think you were?

SCHWARTZ: [00:45:04] That was very difficult to explain that. Yeah. Peace Corps volunteer. Well, what do you do? What is your job? Well, our job is, um, well, we're to come here and we're to help you develop your village. Oh, you are? Oh, well. Now you see before, now here's another thing I forgot. We were also assigned to work with CARE, and that was to be our first in to the village.

KLEIN: [00:45:34] Ah, okay.

SCHWARTZ: [00:45:35] CARE. And CARE had hot lunch programs going on and school gardens. And so in our village, in Quezaltepeque, which was a big town. It was a big town, not a little village, but a big town. The three

of us were to go out to all these different schools all out in the aldeas outside of the town of Quezaltepeque and start hot lunch programs and start care of gardens. So we had seeds and we had dry milk and bulgur wheat, all the CARE products.

KLEIN: [00:46:07] Was there a CARE official who sort of got this thing going?

SCHWARTZ: [00:46:10] Yes. And the head of CARE, we were like 21 and 22 years old. The head of CARE was 28 years old. And we thought he must have been at least 40. He was so organized and knew everything, what to do, and we could always ask him questions and problems and he always could help us. And we thought he was way older than we are because he seemed to know so much.

KLEIN: [00:46:35] But he wasn't a Guatemalan?

SCHWARTZ: [00:46:36] Kenny Kent. No, Kenny Kent. Yeah. He was from the States. He was from California.

KLEIN: [00:46:40] Yeah. Was he resident in the same town?

SCHWARTZ: [00:46:43] No, no, no, no, no. He was in Guatemala City. He was in Guatemala City.

KLEIN: [00:46:48] But accessible to you?

SCHWARTZ: [00:46:49] He. Yeah. So he was accessible to us and he gave us a lot of assistance and support and encouragement and ideas on how we should go about doing what we were doing. So we worked with a priest in Quezaltepeque. There was a priest, Padre Antonio. And Padre Antonio liked Jennie and me very much. And he would, he would be responsible for finding mules for us to go on these long journeys out to the schools. And he accompanied us many of the times.

KLEIN: [00:47:21] Did you ever spend nights out or were you always back in?

SCHWARTZ: [00:47:24] No, we always came back. We'd go out and come back. I don't remember ever spending a night out. I remember always going out in the early morning and coming back and it was a long day. And that's why Doug's amoebas always were bothering him and he didn't want to go.

KLEIN: [00:47:36] So within the first six months, you had a clear role and part of it related to the CARE program you were?

SCHWARTZ: [00:47:47] Well, but I didn't last in that village six months.

KLEIN: [00:47:50] Okay, go ahead.

SCHWARTZ: [00:47:50] Because you see, because they separated Mike and me. And so in order to see each other, we would have to meet in Guatemala City. So on weekends we would leave our villages and go into Guatemala City and be together.

KLEIN: [00:48:02] Right.

SCHWARTZ: [00:48:03] And so after January, February, March, April. We got married at the end of April because it got just ridiculous going and coming and going and coming. So we decided to get married.

KLEIN: [00:48:14] Did you have to ask for permission of the country director?

SCHWARTZ: [00:48:17] And our parents. We had to have permission of the country director and permission from our parents.

KLEIN: [00:48:23] Documented?

SCHWARTZ: [00:48:24] Well, we had to send them a cable and wait for a cable to come back. So the Peace Corps said we cannot allow anybody's status to change while you're a Peace Corps volunteer without permission from your parents.

KLEIN: [00:48:37] How old were you?

SCHWARTZ: [00:48:37] 21. And Mike was 22. And so we sent telegrams to our parents, and both parents sent a telegram back that it was okay.

KLEIN: [00:48:47] They were totally aware of the relationship?

SCHWARTZ: [00:48:49] They were, yeah, because they had met. I hadn't met Mike's parents, but my parents had met Mike.

KLEIN: [00:48:54] Okay.

SCHWARTZ: [00:48:55] So they were aware of the relationship. So they said, yes, that we could get married. So we got married in Guatemala City and the CARE director walked me down the aisle and gave me away. Kenny Kent, who was only a few years older than me, and when I last saw him a few years ago, he said, Betsy, I was shaking as much as you were walking down that aisle.

KLEIN: [00:49:14] So did any of the family come?

SCHWARTZ: [00:49:18] No, in neither family. Both parents. His father was a doctor. My father was working. Nobody could get. That was, this is in 1963, '64.

KLEIN: [00:49:26] Did the Peace Corps country director go?

SCHWARTZ: [00:49:28] Oh, yeah. And the Peace Corps volunteers did. Yeah, we had a lovely little church wedding and reception. My dress cost \$5. The whole wedding cost about \$10.

KLEIN: [00:49:35] You didn't sew it yourself?

SCHWARTZ: [00:49:37] I didn't sell it myself, no. I bought material and took it to a woman. I paid her \$5 and she sewed it. Yeah. Didn't sew it myself.

KLEIN: [00:49:47] So did you have a chance, a break there to go on a honeymoon?

SCHWARTZ: [00:49:52] Yeah, we did. We had, I think we had about.

KLEIN: [00:49:59] You had leave coming to you?

SCHWARTZ: [00:49:59] Yeah, we had. Yeah, we had, we had a few days because we went to Lake Atitlan and Sam Green, who was an American living in Guatemala, had a lot of money and a lot of houses, and he was always in touch with young people. He gave us his house to have our honeymoon in on the lake, but he was there also and he was snooping around the house.

KLEIN: [00:50:26] Yes.

SCHWARTZ: [00:50:26] Yes. He was a dirty old man.

KLEIN: [00:50:29] Must have been a little uncomfortable.

SCHWARTZ: [00:50:29] Yeah. Yeah, it was. We didn't know that at the time. Yeah. So anyway, so we had a honeymoon on Lake Atitlan and then we went back and as a married couple. Now so I left my little village.

KLEIN: [00:50:43] Sure.

SCHWARTZ: [00:50:45] But before I left the village, I have to tell you an incredible story that happened with my little dog, Sam. Well, Sam grew up. Now Sam has, I've had Sam for four months, and Sam's probably about six or seven or eight months old by now because Sam was already a couple of months old when they gave him to me. And Sam is a great little dog and everybody, the whole town knows Sam is my dog and everybody loves this dog. And one day Sam's, somehow Sam got into poison and ate poison and died. And the neighbor who lived across the street from me, who thought I was very cute and had given me his horse. I didn't realize that either, but he gave me his horse, so I was keeping his horse in my yard. But the neighbor took a rock to make sure that Sam was dead, took a rock and threw it on Sam's head, to smash his head, to make sure he was dead, because he didn't want to

bury a dog that wasn't dead. So he and Doug, the guy with the amoebas in my house?

KLEIN: [00:51:45] Right.

SCHWARTZ: [00:51:45] Doug and my neighbor took my little Sam down the street to the cemetery and buried Sam in the cemetery. And I was. I was crushed. And the children in the village were crushed, and everybody was very sad.

KLEIN: [00:51:57] Yeah.

SCHWARTZ: [00:51:59] Two weeks later. Two weeks later, I'm in my house doing something, and I hear the kids yelling, Dona Betsy, Dona Betsy, Dona Betsy? *Aquí viene Sam, aquí viene Sam, aquí viene Sam!* Here comes Sam. Here comes Sam. Here comes Sam. And I threw open the door of my house and looked at the dirt road that went out to the end of the town where the cemetery was. And there's this little white, dirty, dirty, blood mangled in white coat fur, slowly dragging himself down the street. And the children are standing there just screaming at me. *Sam, aquí esta Sam, aquí esta Sam!* Here is Sam, here is Sam. And it was my little dog. Sam had come back to life. And so I was now the hero of the village. My dog, who had died and been buried for two weeks, came back to life and lived, then lived many more months with me.

SCHWARTZ: [00:52:51] So that was an incredible story, an incredible story of how that little dog. Obviously, they must not have buried her. They must have just thrown her in the thing and the poor little thing healed herself, somehow survived and came back to me. So that was an incredible story. So then, then I left the village, got married, and then we were sent to up to Flores, Petén, in Petén, near Tikal. And the city of Flores.

KLEIN: [00:53:20] Had Mike been there before?

SCHWARTZ: [00:53:22] No, Mike was assigned to the other side of the country in a place called Barberena.

KLEIN: [00:53:25] So for both of you, it was a totally new assignment.

SCHWARTZ: [00:53:27] It was a totally new site. But there was another Peace Corps volunteer already up there in our group, Tim and Carol. Carol Bellamy, who later became the director of Peace Corps, and Tim Kraft, who always was very political and worked with Jimmy Carter in his campaign.

KLEIN: [00:53:45] So there were two volunteers there.

SCHWARTZ: [00:53:46] Those two volunteers were there.

KLEIN: [00:53:47] And you joined them.

SCHWARTZ: [00:53:49] And Mike and I joined them.

KLEIN: [00:53:51] Had they, were they pursuing the CARE program as well?

SCHWARTZ: [00:53:55] No, there we weren't so much doing the CARE program. I don't know what we were doing. We're making gardens. We were digging gardens. Because then I got pregnant and then I got horrible morning sickness.

KLEIN: [00:54:09] Yes.

SCHWARTZ: [00:54:10] So I was throwing up everywhere. I was always throwing up all the time. So I'd go out to dig and work in this big garden that we were building and I'd just start throwing up and I'd go here. And then our dog, Mike's dog, which was a German shepherd, a little German shepherd, and my dog Sam. So Mike's dog somehow got bitten by a rabid dog and got rabies and started running around Flores Petén biting everybody. Bit Mike in the nose, which is a very bad place for a rabid dog to bite. Bit me. Bit a whole bunch of children so.

KLEIN: [00:54:46] And you're three months pregnant?

SCHWARTZ: [00:54:46] And I'm three months pregnant and so we contact the Peace Corps.

KLEIN: [00:54:52] This is not good community development.

SCHWARTZ: [00:54:53] This is not good community development. We contact the Peace Corps and we say, um, we think our dog might have rabies. Rabies. It used to be very timid and now it's going around biting everybody. And the Peace Corps doctor says, well, kill the dog, cut its head off and send it down to the lab so we can check it. So because I was pregnant, I got left out of this. But between Mike, Carol, and Tim, they had to draw straws as to who is going to kill the dog and cut its head off. Mike won. So Mike had to kill his own dog and cut his head off and then we had to get it down to Guatemala City. Well, the only way you can get from Flores to Guatemala City was by plane, but there was only a plane like once or twice a week.

SCHWARTZ: [00:55:39] So we had this head. So we put it in a brown paper bag and took it to the only place that had a freezer and asked if we could just put this brown paper bag in your freezer. And the guy said sure. So we put the brown paper bag in the freezer until the plane was coming, and then we sent it down. And so our Peace Corps doctor, Nick Fortescue, got the head, took it into the lab, examined and found, yes, it was rabid, it did have rabies. And he said, um, he's talking to Mike on the phone. He goes, Mike, I don't want you to die under my, under my service. So we're going to send you out of here right away. We're going to send you to New Orleans, to the military hospital in New Orleans.

KLEIN: [00:56:21] Right.

SCHWARTZ: [00:56:21] And so I said, what about me? And they said, well, you can just stay there. And I said, but if he's going to die, shouldn't I be with him? And they said, no, no, no, we can't afford to send you. You just stay there. So Mike was sent away to New Orleans, and very soon after that, a telegram came in from Dean Rusk saying, send Mrs. Schwartz to her husband in New Orleans. And we never found out how

that happened. But I think Mike's father, who was a doctor in New York?

KLEIN: [00:56:59] Yeah.

SCHWARTZ: [00:57:00] I think he was horrified about that. And I think he contacted Washington. He said, I don't know. Nobody ever, nobody would ever say.

KLEIN: [00:57:09] But it must have had an incredible impact on you to get a telegram saying you should fly to New Orleans.

SCHWARTZ: [00:57:14] Yeah, well.

KLEIN: [00:57:15] You didn't know, did you know Mike's condition at that point?

SCHWARTZ: [00:57:17] Well, I knew that he had rabies and that he was going to go, he was going to New Orleans. And I don't, I just, I don't know. So I said, thank you. Let me go. And so they said, well, we don't know how much money to give you. I didn't have any money. So they gave me a whole lot of money. And when we came back, they said, we gave you the wrong amount. You have to give us all that money back. But I had already spent it on buying some pregnant clothes. So they sent him to the hospital. So I went to the hospital there where he was.

KLEIN: [00:57:52] In New Orleans? Yeah.

SCHWARTZ: [00:57:52] And they let him out of the hospital by day. They told him not to spit on the floor anywhere.

KLEIN: [00:58:00] That's great. Now in the meantime were you tested? I mean, because you had been bitten too.

SCHWARTZ: [00:58:05] Well, I didn't want to tell. Well, you know what they gave to him? They gave him horse serum shots in the stomach, 21 of them.

KLEIN: [00:58:09] Yes, I know.

SCHWARTZ: [00:58:11] Do think I wanted that? I had a baby in there. I didn't want that.

KLEIN: [00:58:14] Yeah, but you might.

SCHWARTZ: [00:58:15] I know, but I just said, he didn't. The dog didn't bite me very bad. I didn't want the shots. I was terrified of them. And the other people that the dog bit, nobody else got the horse serum shot except for Mike because he had gotten bitten right on the nose, which is the face and the hands are the two worst place for rabies.

KLEIN: [00:58:35] So you have this New Orleans interlude. You're both there. Mike recovered.

SCHWARTZ: [00:58:42] He's allowed out of the hospital. He just has to go back into the hospital each day to check. But we stayed in a hotel with my big per diem. They gave me. They gave me the per diem, instead of for a Peace Corps volunteer, they gave it for a staff. For a staff person.

KLEIN: [00:58:54] Did anyone at this point from Peace Corps suggest that maybe you terminate your service?

SCHWARTZ: [00:58:59] No. They never suggested that.

KLEIN: [00:59:00] So with all the medical care, your expectation was that you were going back?

SCHWARTZ: [00:59:06] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:59:07] Now as far as.

SCHWARTZ: [00:59:08] They never suggested that. If he was going to die, they just, you know, they didn't want it happening down there. Right.

KLEIN: [00:59:15] Yeah. When you were married, when you asked the permission of country director to be married, did anyone imply or suggest that perhaps it would be good if you not have children while you were there?

SCHWARTZ: [00:59:30] No, they didn't say that. Already two. No, they hadn't been born yet. There were to be three babies born in that group, mine and two others. Mine was the second. First, second and third.

KLEIN: [00:59:40] All married couples?

SCHWARTZ: [00:59:41] All married couples.

KLEIN: [00:59:42] Okay.

SCHWARTZ: [00:59:42] Yeah, they didn't. They did not suggest that at all. As a matter of fact, Andy Hernandez was great. And every time a couple went to him and said, we're pregnant, he said, that's fine. You know, use this baby to show your village how to bring up a baby.

KLEIN: [00:59:59] Was there any, was there any sense that you would best to have the child you should return to Guatemala City?

SCHWARTZ: [01:00:07] Yeah. They never suggested anything. Oh. Oh, return, go to Guatemala City?

KLEIN: [01:00:12] To have the baby.

SCHWARTZ: [01:00:12] Yes, that's right. I was brought. All the people, all the three of us, the three couples who had a baby, all were in or near Guatemala City.

KLEIN: [01:00:24] Okay.

SCHWARTZ: [01:00:24] Moved there close to the time.

KLEIN: [01:00:27] Oh, okay. But when Mike is recovered from the rabies, you then go back to the village where Carol and Tom were?

SCHWARTZ: [01:00:38] Um, Tim. Carol and Tim. No, actually, when we came back to Guatemala from there, then they said, since you're pregnant, we're going to move you closer to Guatemala City.

KLEIN: [01:00:48] Oh, okay.

SCHWARTZ: [01:00:48] And that's when they moved us to there, Aldea Lo De Bran, which is kilometer 16 out of Guatemala City.

KLEIN: [01:00:54] And that was your third assignment?

SCHWARTZ: [01:00:55] That was my third assignment.

KLEIN: [01:00:56] Okay. And you're still in your first year as a volunteer.

SCHWARTZ: [01:00:59] But there's something I have to tell you about when we lived up in Flores Petén. There was this old American man who came drive from Maryland, the state of Maryland. He came driving in his four wheel drive vehicle down to Guatemala, came up into the Petén, into Flores where we were, and goes around town. I hear there's Peace Corps couple here. I hear there's a Peace Corps couple. I need some help. So they directed him to Mike and me and he said, ah, you're the Peace Corps couple here? And we said, yeah. Tim and Carol lived not in Flores but in Santa Elena, which was a little ways away. So he goes, you're the Peace Corps couple here? And we go, yeah. And he goes, you know, I want to drive my, my four wheel drive vehicle up to Tikal, but I hear there's a lot of road cut down, a lot of trees down over the road. I was wondering if you could come with me and cut the tree so I can get through.

SCHWARTZ: [01:01:46] And Mike and I said, yeah, we'd love to. Now, this is in 1964. This is when the University of Pennsylvania has just recently, I think they began in 1963 doing their excavations in Tikal.

KLEIN: [01:02:02] Oh, okay.

SCHWARTZ: [01:02:03] And there is just a dirt road that gets there. It's a long dirt road. And there were all these trees falling all over the road. And he, this man had brought a chainsaw. And you know how men love chainsaws. He brought a chainsaw and a winch. And so they would cut. Mike and this guy would cut all these things and we'd drag them away and put them on the winch and haul them out of the road and clear, clear the road. It was a wonderful trip up to Tikal. It was totally memorable. That was my first visit to the ruins at Tikal in 1964.

KLEIN: [01:02:40] So did you settle into any kind of? The pregnancy must have been somewhat unsettling. Any kind of community development role?

SCHWARTZ: [01:02:49] Well. [tape break]

KLEIN: [01:02:50] Okay. Go ahead.

SCHWARTZ: [01:02:51] So what I, what I remember. We weren't really working so much in community development there as we were working with projects that Tim and Carol had already started. And so we supported them in their projects. And some of them were these building these gardens, digging these gardens. And that's what was difficult for me.

KLEIN: [01:03:12] Were you close to the capital city?

SCHWARTZ: [01:03:14] No, this is in Petén. This isn't. This is in Flores Petén, which is a long way away from the capital city. But when we came back from the rabies incident and came back into Guatemala City, then the director, who was a new director now. Andy Hernandez has left and a new director is there, whose name I don't recall. And they decided that we needed to be close to the city.

SCHWARTZ: [01:03:38] So we were sent to a little aldea called Aldea Lo De Bran, which was on kilometer 16 outside of Guatemala City, outside of Guatemala City. And this was a little totally indigenous community,

very tiny. It had no running water. It had no electricity. It had very, very poor people. It had no sanitation at all. People just went potty in the cornfields. And so it was suggested to us that one project we might want to do would be help people build latrines. And that another project the government wanted us to do was to begin teaching Spanish literacy, because the Indian people, there are all these different dialects all over the country, and the government wanted everybody, all indigenous groups, to be able to read and write and speak Spanish.

KLEIN: [01:04:33] In this new environment you're in, are there any Guatemalan counterparts you worked with? You mentioned the government programs.

SCHWARTZ: [01:04:42] Yes. Yes. We worked with the reading program, the Alfabetización. How do you say that word in English? Alpha-. Literacy. Literacy classes.

KLEIN: [01:04:53] And that was the Guatemalan?

SCHWARTZ: [01:04:54] That was a Guatemalan agency. We worked with a lot of Guatemalan agencies here because here's where we really did the crux of our community development. This little, this little village already had some clearly established leaders. They already had what was called a betterment committee. And so we stepped in and went to work with this betterment committee.

KLEIN: [01:05:19] Had any volunteers been there before?

SCHWARTZ: [01:05:22] No.

KLEIN: [01:05:22] So it was fresh.

SCHWARTZ: [01:05:25] We were, yeah, and again, we had to go through the thing with, who's paying you? What is your job? You do what? So that was always very, no matter where we stayed, it was always difficult for the native people to understand. Your government is paying you to come live here and do what? To do this?

KLEIN: [01:05:45] What did people make of the fact you were walking around four or five months pregnant?

SCHWARTZ: [01:05:50] They thought that was great. We were a married couple. You're supposed to have a baby as soon as you get married in Guatemala. That was really cool. That was good.

KLEIN: [01:05:56] And nobody thought you could take to the house.

SCHWARTZ: [01:05:59] Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no. No, that was. That was fine. So we had this betterment committee, and they, the betterment committee, they wanted to have running water in their town and they wanted to have electricity, which are two huge projects for 16 kilometers out of the city. They were out of the extent of electricity and running water. So it took years. We started on that. And when I went back. Oh, Mike and I went back in, uh, '65. In '73, eight years later, and they had just finished the project of the water and the electricity, but they carried it through to the end. It was wonderful.

KLEIN: [01:06:45] Let's stick to your time there.

SCHWARTZ: [01:06:45] Yeah. So while we were there, so we got all that stuff started and there were commissions that went in every week to the city to talk to the electricity company and the water company. And we kept inspiring them to keep going. Things, it's going to take a long time. Things are going to happen slow. And they would go, sometimes Mike would go with them, sometimes they'd go on their own. Mike also began this raising chickens, and we had this wonderful little house that did have electricity. They found a nice little house for us in this little village because we were going to have a baby. So it did have electricity. We didn't have to use candles like we've done in all the other houses. But it had electricity. And what was the point of that? Um. It's a great little house.

SCHWARTZ: [01:07:33] Mike had started some working, getting the men to raise chickens from two day old chicks to supplement their income and get

more protein into their diet. And also, we started these literacy classes. And every evening Mike and I would walk from our house about a mile down the dirt road to the school where we would teach Spanish reading and writing to the native indigenous population of our village.

KLEIN: [01:08:05] Was it just adults?

SCHWARTZ: [01:08:05] And that is perhaps the most frustrating thing I have ever done in my life. Yes, they were adults and they could speak Spanish, but they had never read or written anything and trying to teach them that required the most patience that you could ever come up with. It was very, very difficult.

KLEIN: [01:08:26] What was the setting? Was it a school?

SCHWARTZ: [01:08:29] Yeah, it was the school. It was the elementary school for the village. And at nighttime we would.

KLEIN: [01:08:33] Was it the parents of students who came?

SCHWARTZ: [01:08:35] Yeah, they were just the people. A lot of them were older people. They didn't have kids in the school. They were the leaders. They were some of the leaders of the, of the community that hadn't learned to read and write Spanish yet. And they would try so hard. And we had a bodyguard that walked us every night and waited for us and walked us home. Don Anselmo, he lived across the street. That was the husband of Mrs. Victor. She was called Mrs. Victor because her son's name was Victor. So we called her Mrs. Victor.

KLEIN: [01:09:07] Why?

SCHWARTZ: [01:09:07] We had a bodyguard because he didn't want anything to happen to us. And one day, one night we were walking to school and somebody with a machete came out and got him, sliced his head in the back. And we couldn't understand why. We, first of all, we didn't understand why he thought it was necessary to protect us. But he did. He thought it was necessary to protect us. And so we let him walk with

us every night. And then that one night they came out and macheted him in his head and we were just really upset. He was okay, didn't, I mean, he was bleeding a lot.

KLEIN: [01:09:45] Just attacked him and ran away?

SCHWARTZ: [01:09:46] Right.

KLEIN: [01:09:46] Was it politically motivated or no idea?

SCHWARTZ: [01:09:48] You know, I don't know. We never. Nobody. No, I don't know.

KLEIN: [01:09:53] Well, you mentioned a lot of.

SCHWARTZ: [01:09:55] He was not a very popular man. He was not. He had some money.

KLEIN: [01:09:59] The guy who was the bodyguard?

SCHWARTZ: [01:09:59] Yeah. Don Anselmo, our bodyguard. He had some money. He and his wife had a whole little farm with a lot of cows, and they had a little bit of money. And I think he must have had some enemies for some reason. I don't know why.

KLEIN: [01:10:15] You mentioned a lot of what Mike was doing. In the meantime, you were six, seven, eight months pregnant.

SCHWARTZ: [01:10:22] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:10:22] And were you working mostly with the women?

SCHWARTZ: [01:10:25] Yeah, I was working all the time. Um.

KLEIN: [01:10:27] More with the women?

SCHWARTZ: [01:10:28] Yeah, I was doing. I was doing more stuff like teaching them to boil the water because the water that they were pumping out of the well was like the *desagua*, the sewer water from La Florida, which was the neighboring, that was the last zone in the city of Guatemala. And they had all this horrible water, and that's kind of the water that they were drinking. It was horrible water. And so I was teaching them about boiling water. I was trying to do sanitation and health.

KLEIN: [01:10:57] What was the, what was the structure you were working at? I mean, you simply appear at the well?

SCHWARTZ: [01:11:02] No, no. We would meet. I would meet with the women at somebody's house, at one of the women's house.

KLEIN: [01:11:10] How was that? Who invited whom?

SCHWARTZ: [01:11:11] How was that set up? Who invited whom? I think. Um, who invited whom? It's, it's hard to remember. We were involved with so many different projects.

KLEIN: [01:11:27] Was there any Guatemalan community development officer within the town or?

SCHWARTZ: [01:11:33] No, no.

KLEIN: [01:11:35] Or any department of social welfare?

SCHWARTZ: [01:11:35] No. No. It was pretty much us.

KLEIN: [01:11:38] Right. I gather that people tended to accept that you were volunteers.

SCHWARTZ: [01:11:44] People tended to accept us. You know, they liked us. We did things for their children. When Christmas came, um, before Christmas, Mike was very good in art. We made a lot of big pinatas and filled them with things and then took them to the school. And we had three legged races for the kids and then we had the kids break

open the pinata and get little things. So people liked us because we were always doing things with the kids. I loved to play sports with the kids and there was always a basketball hoop up at the school and Mike liked sports with kids also. So we were very popular as young people living there. They liked us. They couldn't understand why we were there, but they liked us. Unlike one other couple in our country.

KLEIN: [01:12:32] Were you aware at all of local politics or in the village?

SCHWARTZ: [01:12:39] We were a little, we were a little bit aware. We realized that these were indigenous people and they were very low on the totem pole. And we knew it was going to be very difficult for them to be able to fulfill their projects of water and electricity. And so we worked very hard with them at the meetings. We would talk with them and just help inspire them and encourage them to keep going back. You've got to keep going back when they tell you no, you've got to go back when they say they can't do this, you've got to ask again. And so we tried to give them a confidence in themselves and hope.

KLEIN: [01:13:12] Do you want to talk about the pregnancy and the birth of your child?

SCHWARTZ: [01:13:18] Well, um.

KLEIN: [01:13:19] I'm almost afraid to ask.

SCHWARTZ: [01:13:21] Yeah. No, it was very. We had a very nice doctor. Actually he's the, was the doctor of my son's little girl when she was first born. He was the pediatrician for Chris when he was born. I want to mention what one person said. I lost a lot of weight during my pregnancy. I was very, very thin. And when Chris was born, he was a very little baby, he was just six and a half pounds. So he was very thin and wrinkled. And a lot of the other Peace Corps volunteers came into the hospital to visit me. And Dave Smith came in and Dave Smith and his wife, Sue, had had the first Peace Corps baby there, and his baby came out round and beautiful. And he came in and looked at my little skinny son and they said, well, he won't get any uglier. And I thought that was such a

terrible thing to say here. This is my baby. He's like, well, he won't get any uglier.

KLEIN: [01:14:23] So you were able to get into Guatemala City.

SCHWARTZ: [01:14:26] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:14:26] In time and.

SCHWARTZ: [01:14:27] Right. They gave us about three weeks before my due date.

KLEIN: [01:14:32] Okay.

SCHWARTZ: [01:14:32] They assigned a vehicle to us. They gave us a jeep.

KLEIN: [01:14:35] Oh, great.

SCHWARTZ: [01:14:35] So we had a way to get into the city at any time of the day or night. Yeah, right. That was great.

KLEIN: [01:14:39] And it went smoothly?

SCHWARTZ: [01:14:41] And it went smoothly.

KLEIN: [01:14:41] Yeah.

SCHWARTZ: [01:14:42] Well, birth didn't. It took forever.

KLEIN: [01:14:44] Yeah. And after the birth of your child, did you get maternity leave of any sort?

SCHWARTZ: [01:14:51] No, no, you don't get any leave, but you don't need any leave in Peace Corps. I mean, you just, you know. But it was really great because the town, the village, was so excited about my having a baby and he had red hair. He was this white baby with red hair. And they called him El Nino Jesus, the little baby Jesus. El Nino Jesus. So they called him the baby Jesus and they loved him.

KLEIN: [01:15:18] Were there any ceremonies in the village when you came back with the baby?

SCHWARTZ: [01:15:23] No, there weren't any ceremonies. But my neighbor, Mrs. Victor, the woman and her husband, Don Anselmo, they were great. She would offer to take baby Chris after he was a couple of weeks old. I just put him on my back in that thing and I'd throw that on my back and carry him wherever I needed to go and do whatever work I needed to do. But when sometimes if I needed to go do something more than that, she would take him and keep him over at her house. And she fed him coffee and beans and he didn't throw it up. The Gerber baby food company was at our doorstep and they delivered us tons of Gerber baby food because it was an advertisement for them. We were to show all the villagers how baby food, Gerber's baby food, was going to make this baby grow big and strong. And you know what our baby did with baby Gerber's food? Threw it up. Especially when it came time to eating spinach. He was always throwing up dark green spinach.

KLEIN: [01:16:19] Did you, was it with your agreement or did some Gerber representative suddenly appear at the doorstep?

SCHWARTZ: [01:16:26] Gerber appeared at the doorsteps of all three babies. They thought that was a great.

KLEIN: [01:16:29] With the approval of Peace Corps?

SCHWARTZ: [01:16:29] Yeah. With cases and cases of baby food and they said.

KLEIN: [01:16:34] Was there a photographer?

SCHWARTZ: [01:16:34] No, just cases and cases of baby food. Because they knew the villagers would see how big and healthy the baby would grow eating this baby food instead of coffee and beans, which all the other people fed their baby.

KLEIN: [01:16:48] Did you have some mixed feelings about the gift from Gerber?

SCHWARTZ: [01:16:53] Um, no, I thought it was very nice that they did that.

KLEIN: [01:16:55] Oh, okay.

SCHWARTZ: [01:16:56] You know, here we didn't have much money. We were very poor. And, you know, I thought it was very nice that they did that. And I thought, wow, we've got all this food. Well, here, I'll just start feeding him.

KLEIN: [01:17:07] Now, but now you're in your second year of service, I think.

SCHWARTZ: [01:17:10] Yes.

KLEIN: [01:17:11] And did any of the family come out to see the baby?

SCHWARTZ: [01:17:14] Yes, my sister did.

KLEIN: [01:17:16] Okay.

SCHWARTZ: [01:17:16] My sister and her friend drove down to visit us. They drove all the way from, she was living in Milwaukee, in Wisconsin. And she and another teacher friend on their summer vacation drove in, Carol, her friend's little Volkswagen, their little bug all the way down.

KLEIN: [01:17:32] That must have been a good time.

SCHWARTZ: [01:17:33] Yeah. It was, it was great. It was really fun. They loved it. They loved their drive down and they loved being with us in the village and seeing, my sister seeing her little nephew.

KLEIN: [01:17:42] And then she could go back and report to your family that all was well.

SCHWARTZ: [01:17:46] That all was well. Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:17:49] Now so talk about sometimes although so much accomplishment already in your life, sometimes as people are getting near the end of their second year, they want to be sure that before they leave, they've achieved something. Particularly in a community which is different from teaching, teaching, teachers. So you want to see this project in place or this project done, or was there any of that?

SCHWARTZ: [01:18:21] We felt pretty good. I felt. Well, Mike felt pretty good about his chicken project because that had been very, very difficult to get people to put out money to buy these baby chicks before you're getting any money from them.

KLEIN: [01:18:36] Right.

SCHWARTZ: [01:18:36] And so he felt very good about that. I felt good about some of the progress that I had made in, first in my first site and in this site. In this site, I was pretty far pregnant. And then I had a baby. So it was, I was scattered. I had more to take care of than just being a Peace Corps volunteer. But I felt really good about I had learned to make adobe blocks and I built a lot of latrines for people.

KLEIN: [01:19:05] Oh.

SCHWARTZ: [01:19:05] And I felt I felt really good about that because here the people were just going potty in the corn fields. And I mean, the water they were drinking was so awful in this our last site. And I felt really good about that project. I felt good about working with the women and trying to teach them some things about just basic health and sanitation and boiling your water. So in the first site with the school lunches and going out to all those schools, I had some satisfaction there in setting up some hot lunch programs for children.

KLEIN: [01:19:38] During your two years, generally, you've already characterized the role that Peace Corps staff played, which for the most part was supportive, other than the initial business of separating

you and Mike in assignment. What were your plans as you came near the end of your tour?

SCHWARTZ: [01:19:59] Um, what were my? Well, we knew that Mike. We knew that Mike wanted to go back to school and get a graduate degree. We both decided that we loved. We both decided that we loved, um, we loved living and working in other countries. And that was our goal was to get back into other countries. We were both very saddened by the lack of Spanish skills of many of the American government people workers in the city of Guatemala. Nobody seemed to know how to speak Spanish. They were in charge of this, that, and the other thing. And they couldn't even speak Spanish. And a lot of our volunteers in our group felt that way as did we.

KLEIN: [01:20:43] Did you have much contact with the American community in Guatemala City?

SCHWARTZ: [01:20:48] Um. Some people, yeah, some people were really nice. Like on Thanksgiving. There were some, some families that would invite Peace Corps volunteers to their home to have a Thanksgiving dinner. So we had some there. There were a couple of fun American owned restaurants that when we felt rich, we'd go into Guatemala City to this nice restaurant and meet a couple of our other friends who'd come in there and gather together.

KLEIN: [01:21:14] Did the ambassador's wife have a baby shower for you?

SCHWARTZ: [01:21:17] No. Certainly didn't. Nobody had a baby shower for me.

KLEIN: [01:21:21] Was she even aware, I mean?

SCHWARTZ: [01:21:23] I don't think so.

KLEIN: [01:21:24] Was the official community aware that you were?

SCHWARTZ: [01:21:27] I don't recall anything ever being done. I, I didn't, you know, my pregnant clothes consisted of a couple of things that I bought when

I was in New Orleans. And our Peace Corps skirts, the dungarees skirts, opened as wide as possible with a big safety pin.

KLEIN: [01:21:42] Okay.

SCHWARTZ: [01:21:43] So, no, I don't remember anybody really helping me very much.

KLEIN: [01:21:48] So coming to the end of your tour.

SCHWARTZ: [01:21:50] It was a difficult, it was a very difficult delivery. I was, I was very sick for a while. So it was very difficult in the beginning.

KLEIN: [01:21:58] But this almost carried to the end of the second year then.

SCHWARTZ: [01:22:01] Yeah, yeah.

KLEIN: [01:22:03] So at the end of the second year, you're ready to terminate as volunteers.

SCHWARTZ: [01:22:07] Right. But I want to tell you a little a little incident that goes back to our Peace Corps training that we got to use here in our third site, Aldea Lo De Bran, outside of Guatemala City, which we were there the longest. So that's, that has the most memories for me. One day we saw a man walking down the street with a bunch of pigs on a leash, and we thought, oh, let's buy a pig. We can raise this pig and show the neighbors how to raise a big, healthy pig, and then we can kill it and eat it and have a big party. So we bought this pig from the man walking down the street and Mike built a little pen for him in our back yard. So we had a pig pen and a pig, but we kept forgetting to feed the pig. So fortunately, Mrs. Victor, the woman across the street, named the pig Peggy. Peggy, she called, Peggy, Peggy. You forget to feed Peggy!

SCHWARTZ: [01:22:55] So she would always come over every day with scraps from her house and feed the pig. And we go, oh yeah, that's right, we've got to feed a pig. So one day the pig kept getting smaller instead of bigger.

So we decided on my birthday on February 2nd, my birthday, we would kill the pig and have a party. So Mike's trying to remember, now how did they teach us to kill an animal in Peace Corps training? Ah, yeah. Okay, so we got to, we've got to hang it up by its legs and slit his throat. That's right. He forgot the part that you first have to knock it on its head and knock it out. So, Mrs. Victor, our neighbor who's been feeding this pig diligently for months, hears the piggy squeak, squeak, squeak, squealing like crazy. And she comes running over and sees piggy hanging upside down by his back legs from the tree and Mike there with a knife slitting open the poor pig's throat and she just almost has a fit.

SCHWARTZ: [01:23:50] She goes, you forgot to knock the pig out! I mean, everybody knew that except us. So, so poor Mike then, you know, smashes the pick on the head, knocks it out, and then opens up it's stomach and out of its stomach falls just a whole huge amount of great big white worms. Oh, that's why our pig was getting so little and skinny. It was riddled with worms. We had not given it any worming medication. We had not given it much of anything, Mrs. Victor did. Anyway, we cooked that pig in our, we got all the worms out of it, and cooked the pig in our oven. We had a little oven in our house and we invited all the neighbors to come over for dinner and eat Peggy, as Mrs. Victor would call her. Peggy, poor Peggy. Ate Peggy. And that night I got so sick. I have never been so sick in all my life. Diarrhea, vomiting, everything. I was so sick.

SCHWARTZ: [01:24:51] The next day, Joe Sklar, our rep, came out to see us, and I was just like dying on my deathbed. And he goes, what's the matter? I go, I'm just like dying on my deathbed. They said, what's the matter? I said, I don't know. And then I told about how we had killed the pig. And all the worms go out and he goes, oh, that's it. Infected meat. How come you're not sick, Mike? So anyway, nobody else got sick except me. But that was just quite a little incident. We also raised a lot of rabbits. We raised a lot of rabbits, and Mrs. Victor and the children named all the rabbits, which made it very hard to kill them. So we just kept growing more and more rabbits until we finally decided not to raise anymore because we were getting too many of them. And so

then we started killing them and they'd all go, you couldn't kill Anita. You're going to kill them. Go through the names of them. But so we were just trying to show people other sources of protein to eat that could give them a little more protein in their diet.

KLEIN: [01:25:50] So you finally come to leave Guatemala.

SCHWARTZ: [01:25:53] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:25:54] And what was the next step?

SCHWARTZ: [01:26:00] When we left Guatemala, we left in August of '65, and we had to go through some sort of an exit, an exit interview. I believe that's where we took the GSF. GS, G?

KLEIN: [01:26:20] FSR? The Foreign Service?

SCHWARTZ: [01:26:22] Language. I think we took that again.

KLEIN: [01:26:24] That's very, very possible.

SCHWARTZ: [01:26:25] But I'm not positive on that. Okay. So yeah. And had some sort of an exit interview and left came back to the States and Mike had applied to graduate school in Worcester, Massachusetts.

KLEIN: [01:26:36] Was there a termination conference where you all, the training group, all got together before you left?

SCHWARTZ: [01:26:41] We all went on the same plane home.

KLEIN: [01:26:43] You did? Okay.

SCHWARTZ: [01:26:45] Except those of us who stayed. A couple extended for a year. A couple got married to Guatemalans, and several people had not made it through the two years. They had left.

KLEIN: [01:26:54] As you were leaving, was there any thought that you're trying to extend for a third year? How old was Chris at that point?

SCHWARTZ: [01:27:03] No. Chris was nine months old. Eight and a half months old. No, we didn't want to. Mike realized now that he wanted to get into some sort of foreign service work. He wanted to go back and get some more degrees and come back. We both decided our goal was to get back to Latin America. So we wanted to get on and get home and get started.

KLEIN: [01:27:21] Yeah. And what kind of reception when you came home from the family and?

SCHWARTZ: [01:27:28] Well, um, everybody was happy to see us.

KLEIN: [01:27:32] What was your own sense of yourself? I mean, well, innocent from Penn State to going into the Peace Corps now.

SCHWARTZ: [01:27:41] And coming back a mother.

KLEIN: [01:27:42] Two years later, mother, child, with all these experiences. Did you have any feeling about what it had been, what it meant?

SCHWARTZ: [01:27:50] Um, I loved Peace Corps. I loved my experience. So we signed up to be speakers, so we would go around to different places when they were looking for speakers to talk about.

KLEIN: [01:28:02] Recruiters?

SCHWARTZ: [01:28:02] About, no, to groups of people, not recruiters. When I remember going one time to a holiday and there was a group of people there, they wanted to hear about Peace Corps and Peace Corps experiences. And I remember the marquee said, Welcome, Mike and Betsy.

KLEIN: [01:28:15] Oh, okay.

SCHWARTZ: [01:28:16] So we did, we did a bit of that for a while, talking to groups of people, and that felt very good. We wanted to share our story. We wanted to share our experience. It was such a, you know, it was such a great experience for both of us. It was certainly different than how we had anticipated. I certainly didn't expect to come home with a baby, but I did. And it was, it was just kind of a really neat experience.

KLEIN: [01:28:44] And I believe you had continuing involvement in Guatemala?

SCHWARTZ: [01:28:50] Yes.

KLEIN: [01:28:51] Through the years.

SCHWARTZ: [01:28:51] Uh huh. Yeah. And we went back for the first time.

KLEIN: [01:28:54] We being?

SCHWARTZ: [01:28:56] Mike and myself, from, we lived. After he got his degrees, we then went back to live in South America. One year in Bogota, Colombia, and five years in Quito, Ecuador. And we returned to Guatemala.

KLEIN: [01:29:10] Your main role was mother and?

SCHWARTZ: [01:29:13] No.

KLEIN: [01:29:13] You were working too?

SCHWARTZ: [01:29:14] Yeah, I was working also in Bogota, Colombia. We still had just the one son, Chris, who was now five. And I was a teacher in the English school. I was a PE teacher to high school girls in the English school outside of Bogota, Colombia. And in Quito, Ecuador, when we moved to there, we then had two, three children. Right? Oh, that's right. And in Bogota, Colombia, I had two. That's right. Oh, sorry. I forgot Eric was born then. And then we went to Quito, we had three. So we had three sons. And I was running a cooperative nursery school

for expat children, two, three, and four years old, where the all the mothers helped. We all ran it and I kind of directed it.

KLEIN: [01:30:03] Did you maintain your fluency in Spanish?

SCHWARTZ: [01:30:06] Yeah, because we were living in Ecuador and Colombia, yeah. We continued speaking Spanish for a lot of years. And then I managed a cruise ship in the Galapagos Islands, which was a really fun year.

KLEIN: [01:30:19] During these seven, eight years after, were you able to maintain contact with people in Guatemala?

SCHWARTZ: [01:30:26] No. Very little. As I said, we returned to Guatemala in, we left there in 1965. We returned in 1974 from Quito, Ecuador, because we came to the States and bought a vehicle and decided to drive it down to Ecuador. So we left our kids with some friends and came up and drove back to Ecuador, stopping in Guatemala, going to our village. And we stopped there and people were thrilled to see us. They remembered us. Don Mikey, Dona Betsy. They call him Don Miley and me Dona Betsy. Oh, come look at our chicken projects. The chickens are still doing the chicken projects. Come look at the electricity that we now have in our houses. Come look at our running water. So they remembered so well how those projects started.

KLEIN: [01:31:13] Had the political trouble started by then?

SCHWARTZ: [01:31:15] Oh, yes, the political trouble started in the sixties. It started before we left in 1965.

KLEIN: [01:31:20] What was your awareness?

SCHWARTZ: [01:31:21] Very little awareness of it. We were told just to be careful when we were in Guatemala City. But it was very minimal. It was just starting in the sixties. But we were told to be careful. And I remember there were always, everywhere, all over the place, there were always

these young military people with their, you know, AK-47 type of gun standing on every corner. This was in the sixties.

KLEIN: [01:31:48] Any incidents you encountered?

SCHWARTZ: [01:31:50] Yeah. Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:31:52] Any particular anti-American?

SCHWARTZ: [01:31:56] No.

KLEIN: [01:31:57] At least not in the village?

SCHWARTZ: [01:31:58] Not in the villages, not in Guatemala City, no.

KLEIN: [01:32:00] So you had a chance to visit back?

SCHWARTZ: [01:32:02] Yes. A visit back.

KLEIN: [01:32:06] Any further involvement in Guatemala beyond that?

SCHWARTZ: [01:32:09] Uh, yes. Then in 1995, I went back. I wanted my, my son Chris was already living in Guatemala. And so I was on my way to South America and Antarctica. So I wanted to stop in Guatemala first.

KLEIN: [01:32:27] Everybody does.

SCHWARTZ: [01:32:27] Yeah, one stop. Right, everybody. I wanted to stop in Guatemala first. So I had my friend and my other two sons were down visiting their dad because Mike, my ex-husband, now we're split up and divorced. And Mike is now living in Guatemala also, doing a coffee *beneficio*, a coffee plantation thing. So I stopped there because I wanted to take my three sons to where their mother and father had been Peace Corps volunteers. Their father, oddly enough, had never done that. But I wanted to do that. And it was really hard to find where Aldea Lo De Bran was, because by 1995, Guatemala City has grown and expanded and it's huge and there's more roads and it's so much

traffic and nobody knew how to find it. And Chris, who was living in Guatemala City, didn't know how.

SCHWARTZ: [01:33:18] But I knew the road. I knew the way to begin. I knew that wouldn't change. It was the road to Aslan. So we started out that road and then we had to take some turns and we would just keep stopping and ask people, ask people, ask people. And eventually we found our way. And when we got there into to the village. And I said to Mrs. Victor, who came running to throw her arms around me, and I said to Mrs. Victor, I said, Mrs. Victor, this is El Nino Jesus. Here is, here is the little baby Jesus, now grown up. And she goes, ah! And she was just amazed that that little baby that she had put coffee and beans into had grown up into this very big, handsome man who at that time, he was 33 years old.

KLEIN: [01:34:02] Still redheaded?

SCHWARTZ: [01:34:02] Still redheaded, and his younger brother was redheaded also. And then she met the two other brothers and was just, was just thrilled.

KLEIN: [01:34:08] Yeah.

SCHWARTZ: [01:34:09] We walked back. [tape break] Very old by now. He was older. She was 83. Don Rafa, who had been one of the people in the betterment committee, was probably about 85 by now. He remembered me, Dona Betsy, Dona Betsy. I mean, it was absolutely amazing to return so many years later. And the little girl, Anna Banana, who had been six years old when Mike and I left the village so long ago in 1965. Anna Banana saw me and she said, Dona Betsy. And she was now a woman of 40 years old. And she came running down the street and jumped into my arms, almost knocking me over. And she goes, I'm Anna, I'm Anna Banana! And I go, Anna Banana!

KLEIN: [01:34:51] Yeah, yeah.

SCHWARTZ: [01:34:52] So it was, it was thrilling to see that people were still in their same houses and many people were doing okay.

KLEIN: [01:35:02] Did any of your children think of joining the Peace Corps?

SCHWARTZ: [01:35:06] No, they didn't. Both their parents, I can't imagine why they didn't. Well, the one, the one son, the oldest son, chose to go back to Guatemala and is living, is living there.

KLEIN: [01:35:20] Uh, that's pretty much it, unless there's anything else you'd like to say about the Peace Corps experience.

SCHWARTZ: [01:35:24] I would just, I would just like to mention that Peace Corps had a very profound impact on my life. And since Peace Corps, I have traveled to over 100 countries, over 60 of them on my bicycle. I have put together probably at least 50 slide presentations and for the last 20 years have educated students in the middle school where I teach about the world. So I feel that I have been doing a really excellent job of bringing the world back home, which was the third goal of the Peace Corps.

KLEIN: [01:35:57] Yes, very much so.

SCHWARTZ: [01:35:57] As a matter of fact, I won an award for the United States and Canada, for North America, for being a global teacher. And my award was I was allowed to choose six students and take them anywhere in the world that I wanted to take them for ten days, total paid. And so I chose six, five migrant students and one not migrant student, because I always worked with migrant kids. Had a huge contest at my school. They were all eighth graders, and took them to Spain, where Spanish is the number one language, not a second language. And we had an incredible trip.

KLEIN: [01:36:29] That's great. That's great. That's a wonderful place to stop.

SCHWARTZ: [01:36:32] Yeah.

[END OF INTERVIEW]