

Nancy A. Kelly Oral History Interview
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Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Nancy A. Kelly served as a Peace Corps volunteer in South Korea from 1979 to 1981 on a maternal and child health project.

Access

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Oral History Interview

with

Nancy A. Kelly

December 10, 2019
Washington, D.C.

By Russell E. Morgan, Jr.

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

MORGAN: [00:00:03] Today is December 10th, 2019. This is Russell Morgan. And I'm interviewing Nancy Kelly, who was a Peace Corps volunteer in South Korea from April 1979 to September 1981. And during that period, she served as a maternal and child health worker. Welcome, Nancy.

KELLY: [00:00:22] Thank you.

MORGAN: [00:00:23] So, Nancy, tell us a little bit about where you're, where you were from in the United States and how did you hear about the Peace Corps?

KELLY: [00:00:31] Well, I was born actually just a few blocks from here over at GW. So I was.

MORGAN: [00:00:36] Here being D.C.?

KELLY: [00:00:37] D.C. My dad was with the State Department. And at the grand age of two, we moved overseas to Thailand. So that was the first of several countries that I lived in as a kid. And when I first heard about Peace Corps was overseas when we were actually living in Bogota. And my dad would occasionally bring Peace Corps volunteers home to dinner, he would see them in the embassy or wherever. And he always said they looked hungry. And so he would bring them home to dinner. And two or three that I remember having dinner with. And I just thought they were such interesting, wonderful people. And so at the grand age of eight or nine, I announced that I was going to grow up and be a Peace Corps volunteer. And my father said, well, that's a nice two year strategy. But, you know, it's not a lifetime career, which was a bit of a shock. And I said, oh, okay. So I have to have some other plans too.

KELLY: [00:01:36] So that's how I first heard about it. And I really was, it became a family joke, but I was really serious. I did want to do the Peace Corps from a very young age.

MORGAN: [00:01:48] So you finished undergraduate?

KELLY: [00:01:50] I finished undergraduate at the University of Virginia. One of my professors there was in what we call K-1. So we each had a group number. So he was K-1. He was in the first group to go to Korea, he and his wife. And he knew that I had lived in Korea as a kid. One of the other countries that I lived in was Korea. And so at the end of my time at UVA, I talked to him about whether I should do a Fulbright or join the Peace Corps. And he suggested that either would actually be fine. So I started out by applying to the Fulbright and getting rejected and, but I had my application into the Peace Corps the next day. So it all worked out.

MORGAN: [00:02:36] And what did you major in in undergrad or sort of undergraduate?

KELLY: [00:02:40] History.

MORGAN: [00:02:41] History?

KELLY: [00:02:41] Yeah.

MORGAN: [00:02:45] Ah. So what was your reaction when you were accepted?

KELLY: [00:02:48] Oh, I was delighted. Well, actually, I mean, it was a bit of a process because they kept calling me and offering me places in South America. I think Ecuador was one. I can't remember exactly where, they offered me a couple of postings. And I said, well, actually, I was really interested in going to Asia. I had, most of my history courses at UVA were Asian. So I'd taken every single Asian history course they had. And I really wanted to go back to Korea. In those days, you didn't really get to ask, but I basically told the recruiter at one point. I said, I'd really like to go to Korea. And he said, well, and he started looking at my list of countries that I lived in as a kid. And Korea was towards the end of the list. He said, oh my God, you lived there? I said yes. And he said and, you know I don't know that the Peace Corps would particularly like to hear this, but his comment was, well, no one wants to go to Korea. And I said, well, I do.

KELLY: [00:03:44] And he said, well, we have a group going in nine months. Can you wait? And I said, yes, I can. I had a job where they said, you know, stay as long as you want. So I, you know, six or seven months later, I got the call. Yes, they're putting together the group. It's going to be a health group. And they were going to put me in maternal child health. And so I thought, well, this is going to be a steep learning curve. Asian history to maternal child health. But I said yes. And, you know, and I was on the plane and out the door. And what's interesting is in my group, which I think we were about 50 people, there were five of us who lived in Korea as kids and all of us asked to go back.

MORGAN: [00:04:26] What do you think interested you when you were an undergraduate or before then in Korea and in Asian studies background? Can you, have you ever teased out?

KELLY: [00:04:37] Why? No, no. I always liked history as a kid. I mean, I was.

MORGAN: [00:04:43] Mm hmm.

KELLY: [00:04:43] I could tell you everything there was to know about the British monarchy. And then I branched out a little bit beyond that. Life was more interesting than Elizabeth and Mary, Queen of Scots. But, um, I don't know. I don't, I don't know that I could tell you. I know that I felt very, I mean, I lived in Cambodia, Thailand, Korea over the years, and I felt very comfortable in those countries. I didn't feel so comfortable in some of the other countries we lived in. For example, in Colombia, I didn't feel all that comfortable.

MORGAN: [00:05:16] Why so?

KELLY: [00:05:17] That was a security concern.

MORGAN: [00:05:18] Oh, it was security. Okay.

KELLY: [00:05:19] I mean, even back in the sixties, I was never allowed to be alone because of concern that I could be kidnapped so.

MORGAN: [00:05:28] This is drug cartel or that kind of?

KELLY: [00:05:29] It was really before the drug cartels.

MORGAN: [00:05:31] Really?

KELLY: [00:05:31] It was '60, '63, '64.

MORGAN: [00:05:35] Wow.

KELLY: [00:05:36] And there were embassy kids that were. I remember there was at least 18 year old boy that was kidnapped. So as you can imagine, a nine year old girl was not going to be left alone.

MORGAN: [00:05:46] Right.

KELLY: [00:05:46] So and that was oppressive. Whereas, you know, in Thailand now, I don't remember this, but the family story is that at three years of

age, I knew all the neighbors and I knew who was the good cook. And I would go visit in the afternoon for snacks.

MORGAN: [00:06:02] Smart.

KELLY: [00:06:03] Speaking Thai. And my parents had no idea I was doing any of it.

MORGAN: [00:06:08] Very smart. Very smart. So there were 50 people in your group when it first started out. Actually, where did you do your training?

KELLY: [00:06:16] We, we did three days in San Francisco, sort of what they call staging I think. And a few people were disinvited and then.

MORGAN: [00:06:24] Oh, they had deselected or whatever, disinvited was the term?

KELLY: [00:06:28] Disinvited. And then we got on the plane and flew to Korea. And we were trained in a town called Chuncheon, which is 3 hours east of, well, now it's an hour and a half. But in those days, it was 3 hours east of Seoul. Now, in the K-1 era, my professor, for him it was a three day trip. So he got there in 1966 and a trip from Seoul to Chuncheon was three days.

MORGAN: [00:06:56] Three days. Wow.

KELLY: [00:06:57] So what were the rest stops for us on the three hour trip were the places that you spent the night, which was really kind of amazing when I realized that.

MORGAN: [00:07:06] And so do you all live in family, with families, or how did that work?

KELLY: [00:07:09] We, most of us lived with families. I think there were, there were a couple of married couples who I think ended up staying in local inns, but we lived with families. Well, I did my training there for a month. And then the second part, the second eight weeks or something, those of us in maternal child health were moved to Seoul. And we went, we did our

training at the Family Planning Center in Seoul. We were the first maternal child health volunteers in many, many years. And so they, they, the training was brand new. And unfortunately, some of it was kind of irrelevant. We had a lot of sessions on malnutrition in Africa, which we found kind of confusing. But during that, when we were in Seoul, we actually lived in inns, local inns right near the.

MORGAN: [00:08:08] Neat.

KELLY: [00:08:08] The center. The inns, the local inns also had sort of business going on.

MORGAN: [00:08:19] Oh.

KELLY: [00:08:19] Short term, hourly kind of business. It was kind of interesting.

MORGAN: [00:08:23] You picked up on that.

KELLY: [00:08:23] Yes, we did. We picked up on it. We learned to play cards with these women. And, um, it was, it was an interesting sort of intersection of different lives.

MORGAN: [00:08:34] Well, I'm sure.

KELLY: [00:08:34] They were delightful. I mean, you know, you know, but it's sort of the strange thing where they couldn't quite figure out what the heck we were doing.

MORGAN: [00:08:43] Right.

KELLY: [00:08:43] I mean, why would we come to live in this place, you know, and, and we're sort of sitting there going, wow, figuring it out, you know.

MORGAN: [00:08:49] Why are we? Well, maybe you could practice some of your MCH skills there.

KELLY: [00:08:56] So anyways.

MORGAN: [00:08:58] So that was how long in total?

KELLY: [00:09:01] We had 12 weeks of training.

MORGAN: [00:09:02] Twelve weeks, okay.

KELLY: [00:09:03] One of the big challenges was because they hadn't been training maternal child health volunteers at all, if ever. I think they had some back in the sixties. But they gave us all the wrong language, so they trained us as though we were going to be interacting with well educated women in Seoul and we were being sent to the country. And so literally the language that we learned for interacting with women who are pregnant or with mothers about vaccinations for their children, the language was all wrong.

MORGAN: [00:09:37] So are there just different dialects?

KELLY: [00:09:39] No. It has to do with, um, status.

MORGAN: [00:09:46] Oh, really?

KELLY: [00:09:46] And status between the people who are speaking.

MORGAN: [00:09:49] Mm hmm.

KELLY: [00:09:49] So I was 23 years old and unmarried and female, so that was one level of influence on the language. And who I was speaking to, if it was an older man, that would necessitate certain language.

MORGAN: [00:10:07] Right.

KELLY: [00:10:07] If it was a younger girl, that would be different language. You know, so.

MORGAN: [00:10:11] Interesting.

KELLY: [00:10:11] So you have to learn all the honorifics and the high form and the low form. And then there is dialect, *satoori* they call it.

MORGAN: [00:10:19] Huh.

KELLY: [00:10:19] And when you're out in the country, you really have to be able to speak to the people in the language that they use. And we were totally unprepared.

MORGAN: [00:10:26] Is Korean difficult to learn? I mean, you had the background of having lived there, so you had a?

KELLY: [00:10:31] No, I mean, what I retained from having lived there as a kid was minimal. Hello. Thanks.

MORGAN: [00:10:37] So but as a group then, did your group pick up Korean and this, these subtleties you're talking about?

KELLY: [00:10:43] That was, that's 12 weeks of language training.

MORGAN: [00:10:46] Did it, huh, just like that?

KELLY: [00:10:48] Oh no, it was tough.

MORGAN: [00:10:50] It must have been very tough.

KELLY: [00:10:50] They used something called the silent method, which meant the teacher said nothing, which of course was a real challenge. We were not allowed to have paper, pencils, books, anything in the classroom. We had these little sticks called *mategis*, and they were different colors, different lengths, and the teacher would use them as sort of, um.

MORGAN: [00:11:18] Little props?

KELLY: [00:11:18] Props.

MORGAN: [00:11:19] Yeah, yeah.

KELLY: [00:11:20] Yeah. And believe it or not, we, we learned the language that way. Interestingly enough, my understanding is that this is now being used as language training even in the States now.

MORGAN: [00:11:31] No kidding.

KELLY: [00:11:31] Yeah, it's, um, very frustrating. But you do learn.

MORGAN: [00:11:36] It forces you. Yeah, I guess.

KELLY: [00:11:37] Yeah, exactly. It forces you. And of course, if you're living with families or hookers or whatever, every day you go home and you say something more and, and everyone was so excited to hear you start to put a sentence together.

MORGAN: [00:11:50] Right, right.

KELLY: [00:11:50] So it's all positive reinforcement.

MORGAN: [00:11:52] Oh, that's nice. So out of the 50 or so that started, do they all, did all those complete? Or what did it look like at the end of your training?

KELLY: [00:12:01] We probably had 25. I don't know at the end of two years. We had 25 at the end of training. We probably lost four.

MORGAN: [00:12:09] Oh, okay.

KELLY: [00:12:09] Four or five. Several of them were in maternal child health and they were the older women who just really couldn't handle the squat toilets.

MORGAN: [00:12:20] And the cultural stuff like that.

KELLY: [00:12:22] Sleeping on the floor. And the language, they just were blown away by the language. They were blown away by the silent method. Just I remember this one woman. I was in a class with her and she just, you

know, threw up her hands. I think she had a piece of paper and the teacher told her she couldn't have that. And she threw it up and she said, I don't know what I'm doing here. And she was gone the next day so.

MORGAN: [00:12:42] That clarified it for her. Well. So overall, you were pretty well trained. I mean, even though some things were for Africa and so on?

KELLY: [00:12:55] Um, well, I think we were well trained in that we, we had a basic language. We could get around, we could navigate. We had a lot of cross-cultural training, which I think was very, uh, very much on target. That was pretty much arranged and organized by volunteers who are finishing up their service.

MORGAN: [00:13:16] Mm hmm.

KELLY: [00:13:17] So they really had a good sense of what we needed as skill sets.

MORGAN: [00:13:20] Right. Right.

KELLY: [00:13:22] And, um, and then, you know, it was the luck of the draw in terms of where you were assigned.

MORGAN: [00:13:27] So where were you assigned?

KELLY: [00:13:29] I was assigned down on the south coast.

MORGAN: [00:13:31] Mm hmm.

KELLY: [00:13:31] Goseong.

MORGAN: [00:13:34] What was the name again?

KELLY: [00:13:35] Goseong.

MORGAN: [00:13:35] Goseong.

KELLY: [00:13:36] We spelled it in my day K-O-S-O-N-G. It's, they've changed all the transliteration. But anyways, a small town, basically the intersection of two dirt roads.

MORGAN: [00:13:49] How many people roughly?

KELLY: [00:13:51] 20,000.

MORGAN: [00:13:51] 20,000.

KELLY: [00:13:52] Now, my first site though, and I guess I should have said this first. I was, when we, when we get to town, there was another volunteer who was assigned to the same town. My maternal child health center was 13 kilometers outside of this Goseong, which was a two and a half hour bus ride on a really rough little road. And that was a really small little intersection. 70 people. And I remember, and it was a traditional Korean style house with a.

MORGAN: [00:14:24] Is the MCH center?

KELLY: [00:14:26] Yeah, the MCH center.

MORGAN: [00:14:27] What was the name of the town?

KELLY: [00:14:28] Uh, Sangni, S-A-N-G-N-I. And it was a town of 70 people.

MORGAN: [00:14:36] And that's where you basically spent your?

KELLY: [00:14:38] That's where I thought I was spending my two years.

MORGAN: [00:14:40] Oh, where you thought.

KELLY: [00:14:41] And I remember walking around. There was a little creek and these two dirt roads and a school and the maternal child health center. And that was about it. And I remember walking around thinking, what the hell have you done, Nancy?

MORGAN: [00:14:54] Yeah. Well, you didn't make the Fulbright.

KELLY: [00:14:58] And there was a doctor there at the center, at the, at the health center.

MORGAN: [00:15:04] Right. A Korean doctor?

KELLY: [00:15:05] Korean doctor, Dr. Kim and his wife. They were from Seoul. And they were as out, you know, to sea as I was. I mean, they were from Seoul. They, they were sitting there going, oh my God. You know, they had never been to the country.

MORGAN: [00:15:19] Was he a government doctor?

KELLY: [00:15:20] Government doctor. They all did a two year rotation training.

MORGAN: [00:15:25] Oh, okay.

KELLY: [00:15:25] Lovely couple, a little, two little kids. They had me over to dinner the first week and we had spam, fried spam and Johnnie Walker.

MORGAN: [00:15:37] Right at home.

KELLY: [00:15:39] And I didn't know it at the time, but that was actually a very expensive meal for them as it was, you know, all black market stuff.

MORGAN: [00:15:46] Wow.

KELLY: [00:15:47] But they were, they were really sweet. After about a month, I discovered that my health center was moving into Goseong, the main town.

MORGAN: [00:15:55] Mm hmm.

KELLY: [00:15:56] At the end of, in two more months. So I basically only spent three months out in this little place.

MORGAN: [00:16:03] So they reestablished it there?

KELLY: [00:16:05] Yes, the World Bank built a new maternal child health center.

MORGAN: [00:16:09] Oh.

KELLY: [00:16:10] In Goseong. And we moved in there and delivered babies.

MORGAN: [00:16:14] When you say we?

KELLY: [00:16:16] My, my coworker.

MORGAN: [00:16:17] Oh, so another Peace Corps volunteer or a Korean?

KELLY: [00:16:19] No, well, the other Peace Corps volunteer, Linda, who also had the same background I did. She was State Department and had lived in Seoul. So Linda was assigned in Kosong in the tuberculosis program. I was out in Sangni with the maternal child health program working with a midwife. So we actually delivered babies out.

MORGAN: [00:16:39] Oh, did you?

KELLY: [00:16:39] Yeah, out in the countryside. We delivered maybe 15 or 20 a month. When we moved into Goseong into our new delivery center, it got, it immediately went up to more like 30 to 40 a month. And then sometimes we had bumper months.

MORGAN: [00:16:54] 30 or 40 a month?

KELLY: [00:16:55] And then there were the months where we had 60. Mrs. Choe would always be really tired at the end of those months because she was on. She lived at the center.

MORGAN: [00:17:05] Mrs. Choe is who?

KELLY: [00:17:06] Mrs. Choe is the midwife.

MORGAN: [00:17:07] Oh, she's the midwife. You were under her supervision?

KELLY: [00:17:09] Yes.

MORGAN: [00:17:09] Or whatever. Okay.

KELLY: [00:17:11] Mrs. Choe, C-H-O-E. But spelled, but pronounced "che." She was a midwife. She was about 60 years old. She had been trained, um, by the Japanese during the occupation.

MORGAN: [00:17:29] Okay.

KELLY: [00:17:29] Yes. One of the interesting things that she said to me was, can you get me a book on midwifery in Korean? Because she only had books that were in Japanese.

MORGAN: [00:17:39] Yeah.

KELLY: [00:17:39] So, um, so anyways, I, you know, my language was pretty bad because I couldn't really talk to the women. I had to learn all the new language. But she was on 24/7, so she needed help. And she taught me how to assist her in the delivery room. She taught me how to do the intake interviews and the language. And I got better the more I did it. And then I finally got to the point where my language was good enough that I could go to all the schools in our county and do health education. So Linda, the other volunteer and I went out to all the schools, all the middle schools and all the high schools, and gave talks on health care, sanitation, nutrition. Linda would talk about tuberculosis and some of the symptoms. We'd make a pitch for the health centers as a place to go. And then, of course, we always had to do the English. They wanted to speak English.

MORGAN: [00:18:39] Did you do family planning?

KELLY: [00:18:41] We did. We were just really quite successful. We didn't do family planning as an explicit program, but within maternal child health.

MORGAN: [00:18:48] Right.

KELLY: [00:18:49] That was part of the discussion with the mothers.

MORGAN: [00:18:51] That was included?

KELLY: [00:18:52] Yes.

MORGAN: [00:18:52] And did you also hand out contraceptives or?

KELLY: [00:18:56] No, not at the maternal child health center.

MORGAN: [00:18:58] Where did the, I mean, if you educated them about this, where did they have to go then?

KELLY: [00:19:02] They probably went over to where Linda was, which had a broader range of services.

MORGAN: [00:19:06] Ah, okay.

KELLY: [00:19:07] So that was a half a block away. But now, of course, Korea. I was back there for a revisit that the Korean government sponsored and there was this joke about how you volunteers were too successful because, you know, they have a very steep decline in the birth rate.

MORGAN: [00:19:21] You got the message across.

KELLY: [00:19:24] They blame it all on Peace Corps.

MORGAN: [00:19:28] So you had a, when you were in the city there, did you have, stay with the family or do you? How was, what were your housing like?

KELLY: [00:19:36] The housing. So when I, when I was out in Sangni, out in the very tiny place, I lived at the center and I just had a room right there.

MORGAN: [00:19:45] And this Linda lived with you or nearby?

KELLY: [00:19:48] Well, Linda was in Goseong.

MORGAN: [00:19:49] Oh, she was. But when you came back in?

KELLY: [00:19:51] When I came back in, I was, I started. My first family was a Jehovah's Witness family, which didn't mean a thing to me, but it didn't work out well.

MORGAN: [00:20:02] Yeah.

KELLY: [00:20:02] Mainly because at some point we had this conversation and they told me I was a *sig-injong*.

MORGAN: [00:20:07] *Sig-injong*.

KELLY: [00:20:08] And so I'm sitting there with my dictionary. You never went anywhere without your dictionary. And I'm like, I must be, I must be misunderstanding. So I asked them to write the word for me, and I said, oh my God, I'm not misunderstanding.

MORGAN: [00:20:19] Were they Korean or?

KELLY: [00:20:20] They were Korean.

MORGAN: [00:20:21] They were Korean Jehovah's Witnesses. Okay.

KELLY: [00:20:23] And *sig-injong* means a cannibal.

MORGAN: [00:20:24] A cannibal?

KELLY: [00:20:25] Yes. So I'm like trying to figure this out. And then I realized that because I had said I was Catholic and you eat the body.

MORGAN: [00:20:34] The body of Christ.

KELLY: [00:20:35] And I was like, this isn't going to last. So I went to the.

MORGAN: [00:20:42] Clash of cultures.

KELLY: [00:20:43] Well, it was, it was, I felt uncomfortable, shall we say. And I think they did too as a matter of fact.

MORGAN: [00:20:48] I'm sure.

KELLY: [00:20:49] They were saying something by telling me that. So I, the next day at work, I said to Mrs. Choe, I'd like to move someplace. Do you have any suggestions? And I knew that Linda actually wanted to move as well.

MORGAN: [00:21:02] Ah.

KELLY: [00:21:03] So Mrs. Choe, being Mrs. Choe, picked up the phone and called people. And we had a place together with a family the next week or two. He worked for the government, so he was, worked for the city government.

MORGAN: [00:21:19] So he had access.

KELLY: [00:21:20] So that's how Mrs. Choe knew him. And basically we had two rooms off to the side of a house that's called the *chacheche*, which is a fairly common housing arrangement, or at least it was 35 years ago, where, you know, it's like a mother-in-law suite or something. So they had these two rooms that were to be let and we had a little kitchen area and that's where we lived.

MORGAN: [00:21:41] That's alright.

KELLY: [00:21:42] Yeah.

MORGAN: [00:21:43] So tell us. And you were there two years, correct?

KELLY: [00:21:48] Mm hmm.

MORGAN: [00:21:48] Were there some, or can you relate one or two really unusual experiences that you, that stand out during those two years?

KELLY: [00:21:58] Um. Yeah. I mean, it's. I remember the time that we were at home visiting. Linda and I did a lot of home visiting. There were these subcounty health workers. And so we would make arrangements to go out and meet a subcounty health worker. Family planning and tuberculosis were usually the two workers that we would go home visiting with. And then we would go generally to all the tuberculosis patients' houses. And then occasionally I'd see a pregnant woman, which would be very exciting.

KELLY: [00:22:28] But there was this one day that we were out walking along the street, and one street is more like is a dirt road. And all of a sudden these men came out of this warehousey looking kind of building, and they were, they were like, you're, you're from the health center, right? And we're like, yes. Well, come, come, come! Do you have a stethoscope? Yes. And I did. And so we go in and there's a man on the floor. Well, they said, you need to pronounce him dead. I'm like, okay. So I turned to the health worker and she looked at me. She said, you got a stethoscope, I'm not touching him. So I went over and took his blood pressure and he indeed had passed away.

MORGAN: [00:23:13] Oh, he in fact had?

KELLY: [00:23:14] He had. They wanted me to. So I actually.

MORGAN: [00:23:18] Well, this is odd.

KELLY: [00:23:19] We had to go to the county office before we left that day and I had to sign some papers saying that he was dead. That's kind of unusual for maternal child health.

MORGAN: [00:23:30] You try to bring them in, not take them out.

KELLY: [00:23:33] Then there were, I mean, home visiting was just wonderful. I mean, you just had these incredible opportunities.

MORGAN: [00:23:39] Mm hmm.

KELLY: [00:23:40] There was a woman, she was probably in her eighties, lived all by herself in the, on the side of a hill with an outhouse down the hill a bit. Her house was absolutely immaculate. Everything was immaculate. And she, she said, she told me to come and sit next to her on the, they have something called a *mattu*, which is a wooden floor. We might call it like a porch. And she said, come and sit by me. And then she just started talking about she couldn't believe I came all the way from America to see her. And I couldn't bring myself to tell her, well actually, you're not pregnant, so you're not the person I came to see. But, you know, she was just so excited that these two Americans had come and she just wanted to have a little social.

MORGAN: [00:24:32] Social. Yeah. Good for her.

KELLY: [00:24:33] And so we did for a little while.

MORGAN: [00:24:35] Great.

KELLY: [00:24:35] And so you had a lot of those kind of interactions. A lot of, I had a lot of times where when I did find a pregnant woman, I really needed to talk to the mother-in-law, because in Korea.

MORGAN: [00:24:49] The mother-in-law?

KELLY: [00:24:50] The mother-in-law traditionally births the babies.

MORGAN: [00:24:54] Oh, okay.

KELLY: [00:24:55] So what I needed to do was to convince the mother-in-law that our health center and our midwife was the best.

MORGAN: [00:25:02] Right, right.

KELLY: [00:25:03] And the good news was that my midwife was actually excellent. So I could do that with a with a clear conscience. And if I could tell that the mother-in-law wasn't being persuaded by my argument, then I would come back with a kit, a birthing kit, to make sure that everything was clean and

that she understood not to use the knife from the kitchen and that kind of stuff. But I persuaded a lot of mothers-in-law.

MORGAN: [00:25:33] Good.

KELLY: [00:25:34] They were like, you know.

MORGAN: [00:25:35] So over the two years, how many babies would you guess you delivered? Well, ballpark.

KELLY: [00:25:42] Oh. I would, I would phrase it that I assisted because Mrs. Choe took the lead, except for one time when we had three women delivering simultaneously. That was, that was a bad day. Um. I would say we averaged, what, between the 30 and the 60, probably go with 40 a month. So 24 months.

MORGAN: [00:26:06] What would that be? Uh, 12 months, four 12s, forty. Like 500? So if you double that, a thousand. So you figure there's 1,000 young people over there who can say.

KELLY: [00:26:17] Yes. When I went back, I took Michael and we went back in '80 just after HVO [Health Volunteers Overseas] got started. And I was walking down the streets of Goseong, and mothers were coming and picking up.

MORGAN: [00:26:33] And showing you their baby.

KELLY: [00:26:35] You delivered this one.

MORGAN: [00:26:36] How lovely. How lovely.

KELLY: [00:26:37] Yeah, that as really.

MORGAN: [00:26:38] That's very satisfying. I mean, that's the same as a doctor.

KELLY: [00:26:40] Yeah. And they remembered that I had been there. And Michael was, you know, he was kind of amazed.

MORGAN: [00:26:45] Blown away.

KELLY: [00:26:46] And I said, well, I was the only white woman in the room, you know.

MORGAN: [00:26:50] You stood out.

KELLY: [00:26:52] We had some interesting deliveries.

MORGAN: [00:26:54] I was going to say, do you have any like breaches or?

KELLY: [00:26:58] Well, yeah, we had, we had a woman who came in and she, she had a baby. And then I looked at Mrs. Choe and I said, well, she's still pregnant. And Mrs. Choe hauled off and slugged me and said, you, you fool. And I was like, well, what did I do wrong? She said, there's another one in there. I said, oh my God. The good news was that it wasn't breach so we got the second baby out. But that's always a problem with twins, is the possibility of breach.

MORGAN: [00:27:22] Yeah.

KELLY: [00:27:24] We did have a young lady and this was, this was a sad story. A young lady came in, she was probably 14, and she had been raped. Probably by someone in her family, that was never made clear to me.

MORGAN: [00:27:38] Right.

KELLY: [00:27:38] But she had hidden her pregnancy and she walked into the center with her very pregnant older sister. And I immediately went to get the older sister to take her into the examining room. And Mrs. Choe, years of experience, said, no, take the girl. And I looked at Mrs. Choe, like? And I was like, well, she knows what she's doing. So I took the girl in and then she started unwrapping. She had, she had wrapped.

MORGAN: [00:28:08] She had tied herself up that tightly?

KELLY: [00:28:09] Yes.

MORGAN: [00:28:09] Wow.

KELLY: [00:28:10] But Mrs. Choe could see it. I had no idea.

MORGAN: [00:28:12] Wow.

KELLY: [00:28:13] She delivered the next day.

MORGAN: [00:28:15] Holy mackerel.

KELLY: [00:28:16] Yeah, she was terrified.

MORGAN: [00:28:18] I'm sure she was. Yeah, yeah.

KELLY: [00:28:20] That was one of those things where I realized, wow, Mrs. Choe sees things at a level.

MORGAN: [00:28:25] No, no, it's many years of experience.

KELLY: [00:28:28] Yes.

MORGAN: [00:28:28] She's not seen at all, but seen more, more than others. Were there any young boys, not young boys, the young men in your group who were in the MCH program?

KELLY: [00:28:41] No, it was all female.

MORGAN: [00:28:42] It was all female?

KELLY: [00:28:43] All female.

MORGAN: [00:28:44] That's interesting.

KELLY: [00:28:44] And most there were in, there were ten of us in the end, and eight of them were in vaccination programs, and two of us worked with a midwife.

MORGAN: [00:28:53] Wow.

KELLY: [00:28:53] And I was always so happy that I worked with a midwife as opposed to the vaccination programs, because all, all that you did if you were in the vaccination program was go to the schools and have children start screaming as soon as they see you because they know it means shots.

MORGAN: [00:29:10] So while, every once in a while I'm sure you took some kind of time off. Did you have any interesting vacation experiences?

KELLY: [00:29:18] Oh, yes. Went to.

MORGAN: [00:29:20] Uh huh.

KELLY: [00:29:20] Oh, yeah. Planned those right away.

MORGAN: [00:29:22] Now, you were single at the time, right?

KELLY: [00:29:23] Yes. We went, Linda and I went over to Kyoto for the Cherry Blossom Festival.

MORGAN: [00:29:32] Oh, such a beautiful place.

KELLY: [00:29:34] Yeah. And that, you know what was interesting about that? We took the ferry from Pusan, and we met a Japanese student on the ferry, and he just couldn't believe that we were, what we were doing, you know?

MORGAN: [00:29:46] No kidding.

KELLY: [00:29:46] And when we got off the ferry, we were going to take the bullet train. Well, actually, we were going to take the regular train because we're Peace Corps volunteers.

MORGAN: [00:29:54] Of course.

KELLY: [00:29:54] To Kyoto.

MORGAN: [00:29:56] Right.

KELLY: [00:29:57] And he came back and he said, I got you tickets. And he said, it's my, my thank you for what you're doing.

MORGAN: [00:30:03] Oh wow.

KELLY: [00:30:03] And he gave us some tickets and he put us on the train and we're going along. And I, I looked at Linda and I said, I think this is the bullet train. And she said, no, he wouldn't have done that. And I said, well, we're going very fast. And it was a bullet train,

MORGAN: [00:30:17] How cool.

KELLY: [00:30:18] And then we went to the, in Kyoto we stayed at the youth hostel. And when we signed in we had Korean youth hostel cards and the guy looked at us and said, well, you're not Korean, how do you have Korean youth hostel cards? And we said, we're Peace Corps in Korea. So he gave us a private room. I mean, it was just amazing. So, it was very nice.

MORGAN: [00:30:36] Wow, the respect. Yeah, yeah.

KELLY: [00:30:39] Yeah, wonderful time. Then the second year, the second winter, we got smart and went down to Thailand.

MORGAN: [00:30:46] Oh, okay.

KELLY: [00:30:47] Spent a couple of weeks in Thailand.

MORGAN: [00:30:50] So no bad experiences and all that, everything was just perfect?

KELLY: [00:30:54] On the vacation?

MORGAN: [00:30:56] On vacations.

KELLY: [00:30:57] Yeah. No bad experiences. I mean, it was a little unnerving when I got on the bus in Bangkok to go down to Surat Thani or wherever we went. There were bullet holes, and you're kind of like, in the windows. I was like, okay. So what I decided to do, I had my backpack, which had everything of value. I had it in my lap and I said, okay, if the rebels come on with guns, I'm just handing it to them. You know, be done with it. I'm not making a fight. And there were no rebels that night. So it was good news.

MORGAN: [00:31:29] Great. So looking back on your two years, what do you think were your main accomplishments, if you had to sort of package it somehow?

KELLY: [00:31:37] Well, there was a moment when I just felt like, you know, this is why I came. Um. There was a young boy in our county who we met one time when we were out home visiting, and I said, a line I used a lot. Are there any children, any sick children? So they brought this little boy who had blue lips, blue fingertips, and he's obviously too small for his age. And the father came with him. And, you know, so I asked a few questions and they, they knew what he had, that he had a hole in his heart, but they just, that was it. They knew that, but they didn't know what else to do.

MORGAN: [00:32:21] Right.

KELLY: [00:32:22] So that was the beginning of a several month activity of going to Seoul and talking to people and figuring out what he needed and identifying a surgeon. Taking the family, the mother, the father and the five year old boy up to Seoul, which was an experience. I mean, we did the escalators dozens of times because they were so much fun. We did the elevator too. Anyways, we got an idea of what he needed and it was going to cost money. So we organized with some input from another volunteer who had this great idea. She said, I'm going to walk for Sung-mu. And I

looked at her and said, well, why don't we just have Peace Corps walk?
And she said, yes!

KELLY: [00:33:13] Well, so we had to walkathon. It was the first walkathon in Korea and it was a big deal. And the U.S. Marines at the U.S. embassy wouldn't allow you to go to work until you'd pledged. You know, they had a thing at the front and have you pledged for the walk?

MORGAN: [00:33:29] Perfect.

KELLY: [00:33:29] So we raised all the money. We raised more money than we needed. We had the walk. Some of the Marines came down. All the Peace Corps volunteers in the country came. The local alpine climbing club was there in full outfit. The mayor led off the parade. We got a lot of great press, raised way too much money.

MORGAN: [00:33:50] And what did that go for, the money?

KELLY: [00:33:52] For the surgery.

MORGAN: [00:33:53] Oh, it was specifically for this young boy.

KELLY: [00:33:56] It was a surgery for Sung-mu because there was a doctor at Severance who was American trained, could do the surgery, um, and he contributed his services. But there was all the, you know, the hospital bill, etcetera. So, um, it's a good news, bad news. The really bad news is that Sung-mu who did not survive.

MORGAN: [00:34:18] The operation or?

KELLY: [00:34:20] Yeah.

MORGAN: [00:34:20] Oh really.

KELLY: [00:34:21] He, his heart had, uh, atrophied too much. So that was devastating.

MORGAN: [00:34:30] Yeah, I'll bet that was.

KELLY: [00:34:31] And especially because this was on national news. So people actually saw this and knew this and that was not so pleasant. But as I said, we did raise a lot of money.

MORGAN: [00:34:43] Right.

KELLY: [00:34:43] With the rest of the money, we were able to fund three more children and they all lived. So. And it became an awareness on the part of the public that this could be done in Korea. I think there had always been the assumption that these kids had to go to the U.S.

MORGAN: [00:35:00] Oh, oh, interesting.

KELLY: [00:35:02] So it was a realization that the Korean medical.

MORGAN: [00:35:04] Had their own capacity.

KELLY: [00:35:05] Had their own capacity. And, um, so from that point of view, it was like, you know, we did, we did something that I think demonstrated to Korea that they had, they had this capacity. And the, the day of the actual walkathon where at the end of the day, when we were back at the health center, one of the health workers said, you know, we could organize something like this in the future if we needed to do that. And I thought.

MORGAN: [00:35:38] Ding, ding! Ding, ding!

KELLY: [00:35:39] That's what I said. That's it.

MORGAN: [00:35:41] I hear it.

KELLY: [00:35:43] That's it.

MORGAN: [00:35:43] We've done our thing.

KELLY: [00:35:44] That's success, we can go home now. And that was right at the end. It was.

MORGAN: [00:35:48] Oh, that's a nice way to sort of tie it up.

KELLY: [00:35:50] Yeah.

MORGAN: [00:35:50] So as you reflect back on this, um, that's a positive thing. Were there any failures or regrets that you have from your time in the Peace Corps?

KELLY: [00:36:05] Um, I think when I first came back, I felt I felt like I was out of step with all of my colleagues. I think we all do.

MORGAN: [00:36:13] Yeah, I think so.

KELLY: [00:36:14] Feel like that two years. Oh my God, everyone got married and finished their law degree and bought a house, for God's sakes, you know? And here I was still at the same place.

MORGAN: [00:36:23] Right, right.

KELLY: [00:36:23] So I think you feel a little out of sorts. Um. But what I've come to realize over time was that I had experiences that were, you know, incredible. And I caught up.

MORGAN: [00:36:37] Right, right, right.

KELLY: [00:36:38] So, no, I don't, I don't have any, any regrets. I think I learned, uh, I learned a lot about myself.

MORGAN: [00:36:46] Mm hmm.

KELLY: [00:36:46] I learned how to perhaps be a little bit more patient. You know, because you realize that getting mad or yelling, that's not going to get you what you want. So what do you have to do to get what you want? And,

you know, and I think that, that sort of skill and that sort of awareness has helped me a lot with HVO.

MORGAN: [00:37:11] Staff.

KELLY: [00:37:13] Right.

MORGAN: [00:37:14] As she runs out screaming. What would you say has been the big impact on your life if you can sort of package it in some way, of your experience in Peace Corps?

KELLY: [00:37:30] Well, I think it, it fundamentally changed what I thought I was going to do. I went into Peace Corps absolutely convinced that after my two years I would come back and, and pursue Asian studies, probably Korean history, and get a PhD. I mean, that was the plan.

MORGAN: [00:37:51] That was the plan, right.

KELLY: [00:37:52] And for me, going to Korea was part of that plan. This was going to give me an understanding of the culture, etcetera, to move me onto that path. About a year into the assignment, I realized I found this really interesting. And what I found interesting.

MORGAN: [00:38:11] This being what?

KELLY: [00:38:11] This working in the health center and working.

MORGAN: [00:38:14] Working with the people.

KELLY: [00:38:15] And what I found interesting was that what we were doing at the, at the field level, they didn't really know about at the, in Seoul, at the, at the ministry level. They didn't have a sense, I didn't think, of some of the issues that we faced. The Minister of Health at the time had a couple of lunches where he invited Peace Corps volunteers to come and have lunch with him because as he said, you'll tell me the truth. And he would just pepper us with questions about what we saw and what we thought the

issues were. And I found that really interesting, to realize that I was being a conduit of information as opposed to their having.

MORGAN: [00:38:55] His own.

KELLY: [00:38:56] His own system that he trusted.

MORGAN: [00:38:58] Right, right, right.

KELLY: [00:38:59] You know, we had a closet filled with prenatal vitamins that we never gave out because we had to have an inventory that showed we had this inventory. We weren't going to get new ones. So, you know, I mean, so it's this. You know, I mean, it's just not a working system like that. So, um.

MORGAN: [00:39:18] Right, right, right.

KELLY: [00:39:20] So I found it really interesting. How do you, how do you get that information? How do you plan a project at a community level when you're in Seoul? How do you find out what's happening, what's working, what's not working? And then I sort of realized at some point that that sounded a lot like public health. So I completely came back.

MORGAN: [00:39:39] Shifted gears.

KELLY: [00:39:40] Shifted, and I applied to, what, three or four schools that, the last one being Hopkins. And I, I had the application sitting on my desk for days. I didn't apply because I thought, well, there's just no way. There's absolutely no way someone with a BA in Asian history is going to get into Hopkins. The family I was living with, the gal picked it up, mailed it, because she saw it there. And I said, oh my God, why did you do that? And she said, well, just assumed, sorry. Well, then I got accepted. So.

MORGAN: [00:40:16] And did you major in maternal and child health there?

KELLY: [00:40:19] I did.

MORGAN: [00:40:19] Wow. So it just.

KELLY: [00:40:21] They did. They called me in for an interview.

MORGAN: [00:40:23] Yeah.

KELLY: [00:40:23] And it was a whole day. I met the entire department and they were going to start a new master's degree in the department. And in the end, they offered two of us openings. So myself and a woman named Donna Petersen, who is currently the dean at the School of Public Health at the University of South Florida. So the two of us started this program together, and she stayed on and got her ScD.

MORGAN: [00:40:52] Right, right.

KELLY: [00:40:53] Um, yeah. So we were the guinea pigs.

MORGAN: [00:40:55] Isn't that wonderful?

KELLY: [00:40:57] And it was definitely, they were aiming at people who weren't coming in with the usual.

MORGAN: [00:41:02] Right.

KELLY: [00:41:03] Public health background. She had a liberal arts degree and as well as me. And so that was what they were looking for.

MORGAN: [00:41:11] On the other hand, you had all that practical experience of having been in a country and seeing.

KELLY: [00:41:18] Right.

MORGAN: [00:41:18] Did you see yourself then not only going into public health but into the international health side of it?

KELLY: [00:41:23] Yes, I did. I was very interested in the international side of it. And as you know, I interned at NCIH [National Council for International Health].

MORGAN: [00:41:31] Yes.

KELLY: [00:41:31] Yes. That being part of my international interest.

MORGAN: [00:41:36] Right, right.

KELLY: [00:41:36] I also realized, though, at that time, partly with parents and their needs, etcetera, that I probably wasn't going to be going overseas and living. I think I knew that would be too challenging, especially for my mother. So I was trying to figure out a way where I could still be doing international but basically be stateside. And eventually what it evolved to was HVO, which worked out very nicely in terms of all my touch points. So.

MORGAN: [00:42:08] Just a little bit about Peace Corps having these three goals of providing technical assistance, which you've talked about a lot, and then to promote a better understanding of Americans. Do you think you're being in Korea and these rural areas help them understand Americans better?

KELLY: [00:42:26] I do. Do I think.

MORGAN: [00:42:28] I was that?

KELLY: [00:42:29] Well, you know, the joke was, you know how everyone thinks all Koreans look alike. The joke is the Koreans think we all alike. And I remember saying to one of my colleagues, how can you think that they're tall people, short people, red hair. And they said, no, you all look alike. He said, But. But this was the end of my service. He said, I've now met a lot of your friends and I know you. And he said, I now see you as people. So, I mean, he really he was being very sincere when he said. And I think that's that what is what happens. You become real and suddenly all the assumptions that people have. I remember inviting a whole group of women over to our little two room, and they come in and they're looking

through everything. They're looking to see how where the clothes are and, you know, opening things.

MORGAN: [00:43:28] Not modest.

KELLY: [00:43:29] No, not, not shy at all. And they were like, Oh, you're so clean. Well, yeah. What do you mean? Well, you fold things. Well, yeah. Would you expect that wasn't what they were? They would. They didn't know what to expect, but they we were more organized and cleaner and ready than they thought. And, you know, and it was kind of like you didn't you didn't know if you should be upset or happy. You know, you passed inspection. Why would they think we wouldn't be?

MORGAN: [00:43:58] Right. Right. So looking back now at Peace Corps and where you are now, what do you think have been some of the longer term impacts resulting from your being in the Peace Corps?

KELLY: [00:44:14] Um, for me personally?

MORGAN: [00:44:15] For you personally.

KELLY: [00:44:16] Oh, well, certainly my career choice. I think without Peace Corps, maybe the circumstances would have. Well, I would probably have never gone into public health and then that whole chain of activities wouldn't have happened. But I think that what I'm doing here at HVO is to a large extent impacted by the lessons I learned in Peace Corps. I think volunteers can be useful, but I think you can't just throw a volunteer out there. You have to, you have to get the right volunteer. You have to design the project. You have to know what is expected of them. You have to provide support to them.

MORGAN: [00:44:57] Mm hmm, mm hmm.

KELLY: [00:44:57] And it can be all kinds of different levels of support. But they can do a lot. If, if you've thought of all of that that goes around them. And that's probably the biggest takeaway that I had from my time as a volunteer. One of the things I find interesting when I talked to people who

served in other countries is how often they would talk about Peace Corps staff as being a hindrance or, or not helping. And one of the things about Peace Corps career staff was my country director was incredibly engaged and supportive and helpful. All the staff were there, were just really there to help you if you needed help and to give you feedback and guidance. And so I never had this sense of, you know, staff. And so I looked at the staff in Seoul as being our partners and our friends.

MORGAN: [00:45:53] Were they Americans or Koreans or a mix or how did that work?

KELLY: [00:45:56] Primarily Korean.

MORGAN: [00:45:57] Primarily Korean? Even the director?

KELLY: [00:45:58] No, the director was American, but all the director and then we had an APCD.

MORGAN: [00:46:04] Okay, right.

KELLY: [00:46:05] But then all the other staff were Korean.

MORGAN: [00:46:09] Were Korean. Interesting.

KELLY: [00:46:09] It's interesting now, all these years later, I see a lot of them. And I mean, Peace Corps was as important to them as it was to us.

MORGAN: [00:46:18] It was?

KELLY: [00:46:19] Yeah. The Peace Corps, the Korean Peace Corps staff.

MORGAN: [00:46:21] Oh, I see. Okay.

KELLY: [00:46:22] They love their affiliation and their time with Peace Corps. They love the volunteers. These are incredibly deep relationships.

MORGAN: [00:46:31] Have they come over to the United States or?

KELLY: [00:46:33] Oh yes, they come over to the States. They visit.

MORGAN: [00:46:36] Right. Right.

KELLY: [00:46:36] The Korean government has been doing a series of revisits.

MORGAN: [00:46:40] No kidding.

KELLY: [00:46:40] Where they have invited all former Peace Corps volunteers to come back. You have to pay your way to Korea. But then when you get there, they treat you for a whole week of basically a thank you trip.

MORGAN: [00:46:52] Really.

KELLY: [00:46:52] And they take you back to your site. They do a whole range of things. It's an amazing thing. I've, I've been on my thank you trip and I've helped organize five others at this point. And the Peace Corps language teachers and the Peace Corps staff, we always try and make sure that they're invited to one of the events. And when they see someone who was one of their students, or in the case of staff, someone that they worked with, I mean, it is, you would think that, you know, blood relatives or something.

MORGAN: [00:47:23] That's the first time I've heard about that. I don't know, do other countries do that?

KELLY: [00:47:28] Not that I know.

MORGAN: [00:47:29] I don't know, I've never heard that. I mean, I want to encourage my friends in Kenya do, do that.

KELLY: [00:47:35] No, it's, it's, it's an amazing thing.

MORGAN: [00:47:37] That's a very nice, it's a very nice acknowledgment.

KELLY: [00:47:40] Yeah.

MORGAN: [00:47:40] I mean, you would think they'd pick up that or pick that up. Um, my Pennsylvania Dutch came out the wrong way there, but you'd think they'd pick that up on the headquarters here as something to build relationships with the ambassador. And I mean, that's a nice ongoing package.

KELLY: [00:48:01] It's very nice.

MORGAN: [00:48:02] It's a really, very interesting. I've learned something. I mean, I've learned a lot, but I mean, I'd never heard that one before.

KELLY: [00:48:10] I think at this point we've had about 450 volunteers who have gone.

MORGAN: [00:48:15] Wow.

KELLY: [00:48:16] And it is, you know, even if you're a person, like this most recent trip, several of the people have made Korea their careers.

MORGAN: [00:48:24] Sure. Sure.

KELLY: [00:48:25] As a professor or whatever. So they've gone back on business trips. But even for them to go back in this.

MORGAN: [00:48:33] It's a different context.

KELLY: [00:48:34] Thank you context.

MORGAN: [00:48:35] Yeah. Yeah. I think that's what's nice. Wow.

KELLY: [00:48:38] And I was very sad this last trip that happened. I couldn't go, I just had too much going on. But I helped organize it. But my professor from UVA, K-1 and his wife, they were on the trip.

MORGAN: [00:48:52] Oh nice.

KELLY: [00:48:52] And I was like, ah, that would have been a great time to spend a few minutes with Jim Baxter 40 years on, you know.

MORGAN: [00:48:59] And how long are these? Is it a week long?

KELLY: [00:49:02] It's a week long trip.

MORGAN: [00:49:03] Event kind of thing.

KELLY: [00:49:04] Yeah.

MORGAN: [00:49:04] So you pay your way, and once you get there, they pick up a hotel.

KELLY: [00:49:08] And they put you up in this very nice hotel in Seoul, and then they arrange for you to go back to your town. So, like, for me, I, um, Linda and I were. And Linda's daughter came so.

MORGAN: [00:49:20] Oh, how nice.

KELLY: [00:49:22] So they flew us from Seoul down to Sacheon, and we're like, we're flying? We went with an interpreter and I thought, wow! We were picked up. And then they drove us all around and then we ended up in our town. And I realized later that why they did it that way. We said we really wanted to see some of the region around Goseong where we used to go home visiting because it was so beautiful, just stunning. So by picking us up in Sacheon they could do the coastal route.

MORGAN: [00:49:55] Huh.

KELLY: [00:49:55] And then take us into Goseong. And then we go to the health center, which has moved to a completely different part of town.

MORGAN: [00:50:01] Right.

KELLY: [00:50:01] And we walk in and the director of the health center looks up. My maternal child health center is gone. He looks up and he says, Linda

Nancy? And we said, yes, we're Linda and Nancy. And he thought Linda Nancy was one person. So here he had two and then a daughter. But we had brought some photo albums.

MORGAN: [00:50:25] Aw, how cute.

KELLY: [00:50:26] So we got the photo album out. He got a cell phone and he started calling. And within 20 minutes we had eight or nine people.

MORGAN: [00:50:33] A reunion, how nice.

KELLY: [00:50:34] Yeah, it was really something. You know, people were crying because they had no idea we were coming.

MORGAN: [00:50:41] What a pleasant surprise. Do you, on a regular basis, aside from a trip like that, do you keep in touch with a few people back there or?

KELLY: [00:50:50] Um, I keep in touch with a couple of former volunteers who are still there.

MORGAN: [00:50:57] Mm hmm.

KELLY: [00:50:57] People in my town, it's kind of hard. Well, they've all moved, so I do like WhatsApp occasionally. And you know, it's mainly photos.

MORGAN: [00:51:06] You didn't do any teaching of students or anything like that that would?

KELLY: [00:51:10] No. Yeah. No, I didn't.

MORGAN: [00:51:11] And how about your supervisor, Mrs. Choe?

KELLY: [00:51:14] Mrs. Choe passed away a few years ago, so she was, she was 60 at the time that I was there in '79 so. I did see her a couple of times after I finished.

MORGAN: [00:51:28] Do you continue your involvement with the Peace Corps?

KELLY: [00:51:31] Well, I'm very involved with the Friends of Korea.

MORGAN: [00:51:34] Oh, okay. The affiliate.

KELLY: [00:51:35] The affiliate group.

MORGAN: [00:51:37] Yeah. Right.

KELLY: [00:51:38] I was president. Yes, I was brought on the board and became president very quickly.

MORGAN: [00:51:45] I know that. They see a live, a live one.

KELLY: [00:51:49] Well, it was one of those things where I run an organization.

MORGAN: [00:51:54] Yeah, you had an.

KELLY: [00:51:55] I know.

MORGAN: [00:51:55] The intuitive.

KELLY: [00:51:56] Yeah, the nuts and bolts.

MORGAN: [00:51:57] You knew what needed to be done.

KELLY: [00:51:59] Right.

MORGAN: [00:51:59] Of course.

KELLY: [00:52:00] So, anyways, I was president, and then I became vice president. And I just became what they're calling the COO, which is the person who's making the things continue to, the wheels continue to turn. So I'm an ex-officio member of the board.

MORGAN: [00:52:16] Right.

KELLY: [00:52:17] Which takes me out of some of that stuff. But, you know.

MORGAN: [00:52:20] Yes.

KELLY: [00:52:20] The bank is across the street. The post office is down the way. I handle the website. So sort of, a lot of the things that just keep things running along.

MORGAN: [00:52:29] Nice.

KELLY: [00:52:30] I'm handling and I find that fun. And I also didn't, didn't want to see it sort of spin down.

MORGAN: [00:52:37] Right. Right. Well, look, just in wrapping it up then, are there any other things or any sort of overall thought you have about the value of Peace Corps and the future of the Peace Corps?

KELLY: [00:52:49] I think, I think the Peace Corps for individuals on both sides, I think it's, it's an amazing eye-opening experience, even for someone who'd lived overseas. I mean, I did 16 schools in 12 years, so I, I moved a lot. I went to a lot of countries and, you know, I did that kind of thing.

MORGAN: [00:53:10] Mm hmm.

KELLY: [00:53:10] But still, what you learn in the Peace Corps when you're there and you really have a role and you're, you're really working alongside people, be it in education or health or whatever, um, just gives you a completely different perspective. And I think, I think it helps. There's a whole set of cross-cultural skills and communication skills, etcetera, that that develops. I think the people to people thing, you know, is on both sides. I, I'm amazed sometimes. I met a Korean woman here who started to cry at the thought that I had done Peace Corps in her country. And I said, but, I said, except for the winters, which were kind of difficult, otherwise it was a wonderful, wonderful experience. And she said, but I'm crying because I can't believe, why would you come to our country when it was so poor?

MORGAN: [00:53:57] Hmm.

KELLY: [00:53:58] And I was like, well, you know, I did. I didn't even think about it that way.

MORGAN: [00:54:01] Right, right, right.

KELLY: [00:54:02] So it's just, it's good for people to have those conversations and be a little bit more open. I think in this world today, we're not, we're not all that embracing of other cultures and sort of being open minded. As to the future of the Peace Corps, I think it's going to go, well, I think it already has gone through a huge change. Just, you know, when I talk to some of the younger volunteers who have Facebook and Twitter and their cell phones, and they're, they're still so completely connected to the world, even though they're thousands of miles away. I think they've lost something in that.

MORGAN: [00:54:41] Mm hmm.

KELLY: [00:54:41] I'm probably sounding like an old fuddy duddy. But there is something about being completely on your own and.

MORGAN: [00:54:48] No technology.

KELLY: [00:54:50] Yeah. And you're just relying on those little blue aerograms that come in every now and then.

MORGAN: [00:54:56] Right.

KELLY: [00:54:56] So I think that that's changed and maybe, you know, maybe programmatically for the better. Maybe it's good to be more plugged in, etcetera. For the individual growth, I'm not so sure.

MORGAN: [00:55:07] Mm hmm.

KELLY: [00:55:07] I think the concept, though, I think still the, the people to people thing, as long as that's not getting lost in all the technology, etcetera, I

think that that will always be the major strength of Peace Corps. Um. I think it's been good for U.S. diplomacy to because, you know, if you go to Korea, all the people right now in the senior level of the government, they all had Peace Corps language teachers.

MORGAN: [00:55:37] No kidding?

KELLY: [00:55:37] No kidding.

MORGAN: [00:55:39] Wow.

KELLY: [00:55:39] I get emails from the website. I'm now Nanos, whatever, and my father had a Peace Corps language teacher. My father is now retired. He was the minister of dah, dah, dah. We get these emails a lot and I am usually successful in finding them. And it's, um, you know, there was actually a woman that applied for a job with another organization where I'm on the board. It turns out she's Korean. And during the interview, she was asked why she was interested in working for that organization, it was an international NGO.

MORGAN: [00:56:16] Right.

KELLY: [00:56:16] And she said, the most important person I ever met in my life was a Peace Corps volunteer, and he was my language teacher when I was in middle school. And she said, he opened my eyes to the world and to needs and to our obligation to help. And she said.

MORGAN: [00:56:33] Wow.

KELLY: [00:56:33] That's why she. And that was, that had to be 50 years ago.

MORGAN: [00:56:37] Right. Right.

KELLY: [00:56:38] And so the guy who did the interview called me up and said, you're going to love this story, Nancy. But I think that's true. I mean, there's, there are these, these moments that I think crystallize for people. I hope that this is transmitted to children. One of the women that I worked

with in Korea, there was a museum exhibit about Peace Corps Korea at the Museum of Contemporary History. So Kang Young, who was a health worker down in our town, she came with us to see the exhibit and brought her son, who was 32. He had no idea his mother had been a TB worker out in the country. He went through this exhibit and said, you did this? Because she was like, oh, here are the forms. This is, this is what Linda and I did, this is what Nancy did, you know. And he was just.

MORGAN: [00:57:32] Blown away.

KELLY: [00:57:33] Blown away.

MORGAN: [00:57:34] Isn't that interesting.

KELLY: [00:57:34] Yeah.

MORGAN: [00:57:36] Yeah. I tend to think that a lot of people aren't as familiar with the Peace Corps today.

KELLY: [00:57:42] I think that's true.

MORGAN: [00:57:43] And I don't know why. Well, I guess part of it, I don't see a lot of marketing.

KELLY: [00:57:48] You don't see the ads, yeah.

MORGAN: [00:57:50] No, I don't see.

KELLY: [00:57:51] The young people who rotate through here, um, Peace Corps is often on their radar.

MORGAN: [00:57:56] Yeah.

KELLY: [00:57:56] And we do, I have been very successful. Quite a few of them have gone on to be volunteers. Um. So, but, you know, that's a subset.

MORGAN: [00:58:07] Right. Right.

KELLY: [00:58:10] I, I don't know. I had a friend who was a country director. He was Peace Corps Korea with me and went on to a State Department career and then did a stint as country director. And he talked about, um, he was very concerned about the, the constant interaction of the volunteers with home.

MORGAN: [00:58:33] Oh.

KELLY: [00:58:33] And he talked about this technology piece and he felt it really was almost a hindrance to their really being in the here and now in Ethiopia, you know, because they were constantly tweeting and Facebooking or Instagramming or whatever. And I think, that is, as I said, that's the one thing that I, I don't see how you can change it.

MORGAN: [00:58:54] Right. Right. It's part of today's life.

KELLY: [00:58:56] But it is, it has an impact, I think, on the experience.

MORGAN: [00:59:02] Well, thank you very much, Nancy, and we appreciate this. And it will now go into the archives.

KELLY: [00:59:08] Well, thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]