

**Terry Vogt Oral History Interview**  
Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection  
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**Creator:** Terry Vogt  
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**Biographical Note**

Terry Vogt served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Brazil from 1968 to 1971 on community development and rural electrification projects.

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Oral History Interview

with

Terry Vogt

February 5, 2002  
San Francisco, California

By Robert Klein

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

KLEIN: [00:00:00] It is February 5th, 2002. The interview is with Terry Vogt, volunteer in Brazil, 1968 to '71. He was with the Harvard group in community development. Let's start by having you go back perhaps six months to a year before you joined and what was going on in your life?

VOGT: [00:00:22] Sure. I was an undergraduate at Harvard studying history, but sort of creating my own major in Latin American studies. So my whole interest was surrounded in terms of getting back to Latin America, to be involved in Latin America one way or another. I'd spent two summers traveling about Latin America.

KLEIN: [00:00:44] While you were in college?

VOGT: [00:00:45] While I was in college and discovering Brazil, which for me, I was. I really had only known Mexico and Guatemala before that. And then I took a tour around Latin America, went to Brazil for three days and just

loved the place and ended up spending three weeks that particular first summer I went down, of '66. Summer of '67, I arranged for an internship with a Brazilian politician who was running for president at the time. So I spent three months with him as he was traveling around on his still undeclared unofficial campaign. His name was Carlos Lacerda, and he's a very, very well-known political figure in Brazil from those years.

KLEIN: [00:01:25] Back up to where had the initial interest in Latin America come from?

VOGT: [00:01:31] Oh, good question. I had been raised as a child in Mexico in the summers. My father is an anthropologist, and so most summers from when I was about age of 10 on, we would spend in Chiapas, Mexico, in the highlands, where he was doing a long term project studying the Mayan Indians there, the Tzotzil and Tzeltal Indians. And so as a kid, I was raised essentially in between the Indian villages and then in or the main town there, San Cristobal de la Casas. So when I got to college.

KLEIN: [00:02:08] Well, let me again. Did you learn Spanish at that point?

VOGT: [00:02:11] Yeah. I started learning Spanish when I was about six. It got fairly fluent by the time I was in high school because we were spending every summer in Mexico. And then while I was at Harvard before I went down, I guess it must have been after that first summer when I discovered Brazil. I'm trying remember exactly the case. Coming back, I started taking Portuguese, so I already spoke Portuguese by the summer of '67 when I went down to work for this Carlos Lacerda, the Brazilian politician.

KLEIN: [00:02:47] Ok. And that was just a summer internship?

VOGT: [00:02:50] Yeah, just a summer.

KLEIN: [00:02:52] You were still an undergraduate at Harvard.

VOGT: [00:02:53] Right. And then my senior year was '67-'68. A wonderful year for the annals of student unrest and for all sorts of. I did everything that everyone was supposed to do at that age.

KLEIN: [00:03:10] Ok, where had you grown up?

VOGT: [00:03:13] My parents, as I say in the winters, would be in in the Boston area. My parents at that point lived, we had a home in Weston, Massachusetts, which is about 12 miles outside of Boston. And in summers in between southern Mexico and New Mexico, where my father is from. We have a family ranch, so we would spend time on the family ranch every summer as well.

KLEIN: [00:03:39] Any particular recollection starting in '61 and going forward of Kennedy?

VOGT: [00:03:45] Oh, certainly. I mean, we were from his state. And clearly he was an actor in our lives, perhaps a different way that than from people in other states.

KLEIN: [00:03:59] How old were you when the Peace Corps first started, '61?

VOGT: [00:04:01] In '61, I would have been fifteen.

KLEIN: [00:04:05] At what point did you become aware of the Peace Corps?

VOGT: [00:04:10] I think I really became aware of it when the headmaster at my prep school.

KLEIN: [00:04:16] Who was?

VOGT: [00:04:17] Who was Bill Saltonstall, announced. It must have been my junior year, which would have been '62-'63 in high school, that he was leaving his whole career teaching at Exeter and being the headmaster. And he and his wife were going to Nigeria to be country director. So it really, you know, clearly we paid more attention to it. I paid more attention to it then. My decision process regarding Peace Corps had relatively little to do, I think, with any sense of public service and much more was sort of there were two parts to this. Three, actually. First is I really wanted to get back to Brazil. I'd essentially fallen in love with the people in the country by

my senior year in college. Secondly, I knew I had to do something that would keep me somewhat insulated from the draft. And in any case, although there was no deferment for Peace Corps, it was something that was certainly a public service. And, you know, I figured I'd rather do that than hang around and go to graduate school and get drafted.

KLEIN: [00:05:38] It went board by board.

VOGT: [00:05:40] Absolutely.

KLEIN: [00:05:41] If they offered. It was in a sense a deferment, but it wasn't automatic.

VOGT: [00:05:44] Well, in fact, later on, as I anecdotally learned more and more about draft boards as it became more and more important to our lives by 1970, it was clear to me that there were certain, it seemed to me that there were certain draft boards in Texas that if you hinted you were considering the Peace Corps, you would be drafted. Whereas my draft board in Framingham, Massachusetts, you know, I suppose it was more favorable in any case. In terms of my draft ability, I got a lousy draft number. I ended up getting number 64 and I did, again anecdotally, I asked someone if they knew how the draft board had drafted, and they said they drafted up to 62 or 63. Yeah, so it was nothing to do with Peace Corps. In the end, I was just dumb luck. In any case, that was the second clear motivation it was to find something to do that that might be somewhat insulating right from the draft.

VOGT: [00:06:42] And then thirdly, it became a much easier decision because there was a special program, and I don't know how this got put together, where a group of us were essentially recruited on campus at Harvard for a Brazilian program. So what could have been better for me? I mean, I wanted to go. I wanted to go to Brazil, number one. Peace Corps sounded like a great way to get there, and there was on campus training and I didn't have to go to the training because I already spoke Portuguese. So it's not that I blew it off. It's just I was sort of excused. In fact, from three quarters of the actual this was during our spring term we actually had, I think it was probably three sessions a week, which were usually two. My memory is it

was two in language and maybe a third and some sort of cross-cultural training.

KLEIN: [00:07:34] So it's a very different kind of project because most projects the group would gather go to a campus or a training, then go overseas.

VOGT: [00:07:44] Correct. But I'm trying to remember what the number were there. There are about 10, 10 or 12 of us, maybe 10 of us. We were all Harvard undergraduates, with the exception of one spouse who was graduating from Tufts. And she and her husband, her husband was a Harvard undergraduate. They had gotten married either that spring or just before they got on the plane to go down to Brazil.

KLEIN: [00:08:09] So this was going to be the first unit of the Harvard Peace Corps commandos.

VOGT: [00:08:14] It may have been, I believe it was first. I don't know if it was ever duplicated. But it'd be interesting to know if there was a strategy at that time to try to see if they could cherry pick in this way and work this way.

KLEIN: [00:08:27] So when did you complete your degree?

VOGT: [00:08:30] June of 1968. And I believe we left, I probably got on a plane a week later and we all met at Boston airport, essentially, and flew all flew down to Rio.

KLEIN: [00:08:43] Now, the whatever training you were going to get had already occurred, and it was primarily language and area studies.

VOGT: [00:08:49] No, this was sort of a taking advantage of the fact that we were all together, I think. And they wouldn't have to pay for the training or they wouldn't have to. How was the training during that time? We did, in fact, have another, I'm going to say, perhaps eight weeks of training in country, which is interesting because I think this is one of the first in-country training groups as well.

KLEIN: [00:09:09] Let's stay on the period while you were still at Harvard. You must have had to fill out the application and do the recommendations. And was there any kind of selection process screening by psychologists?

VOGT: [00:09:27] Yes. And I know there was some vetting as well.

KLEIN: [00:09:34] Background checks.

VOGT: [00:09:35] A background check. My roommates were, and I don't know how much was tongue-in-cheek. They kept on saying these guys in suits with black shoes and white socks that kept on lurking around our entry, asking people about did this guy vote and whether he, you know, smoked dope or whether he was a, you know, you know, did good things or bad things or all this sort of stuff.

KLEIN: [00:09:55] Were any of the group, that you know, publicly known political activists?

VOGT: [00:10:02] No. None of us, I think we were all anti-war. Stridently anti-war, but not in the sense of being great actors. I know I certainly turned in my bursar's card and sympathy to one particular event on campus. And I think because I was at one of the protests, I was actually on some form of probation during my senior year for a month or so.

KLEIN: [00:10:29] But that was no bar to your going.

VOGT: [00:10:31] No, no, it was. It was one where I sort of volunteered myself for probation rather than. It wasn't really. It was the fact that I had turned in my bursar's, my identification card, and announced that I'd been at this protest that that put me on a list rather than anything else.

KLEIN: [00:10:47] How would you characterize the others in the group with motivation? Background?

VOGT: [00:10:54] I think most of us had a very similar motivation from the standpoint of trying to do something to insulate ourselves from the draft. A couple of, there were two couples that I remember and both the guys in

the couples. Actually those marriages didn't last much longer, much beyond Peace Corps is my memory. But anyway, those guys were both very interested in rural development and agricultural development. And certainly, I believe I'm right in saying that one of the couples, one of the guys, Frank Hansen, I believe, did in fact move back and have a farm and, you know, essentially be a real working farmer and a schoolteacher. And the other person, I believe, got advanced degrees in forestry development or something of that nature and I believe is still active in Latin American resource questions.

KLEIN: [00:11:51] Going in, was there a sense that this would be, even though you may not have defined a career goal, that this would help in your lifetime career, whatever that would be?

VOGT: [00:12:00] I was completely pushed by any question of that. Turns out it ended up being a wonderful preparation for me. It gave me the language and cultural skills. And actually, Peace Corps, interestingly enough, really gave me an appreciation for developmental economics in the sense of that things, things can progress. And I was lucky to be in a program where we were bringing electricity to the farms and we could rapidly see the difference there.

KLEIN: [00:12:37] How would you compare the language skills of the others in the group to your own? I assume you were pretty well, pretty fluent.

VOGT: [00:12:45] Yeah, I remember. When we flew down to Brazil, went to spend a couple of days in Rio, and I guess we were probably a sort of a special group because I know we were sort of feted by the ambassador for a day or so.

KLEIN: [00:13:00] You remember who the ambassador was?

VOGT: [00:13:04] I should because I dated his daughter the year before, but it may come back. I just don't remember. I do remember that was a difficult time politically in Brazil. It was.

KLEIN: [00:13:17] Can you characterize it?

VOGT: [00:13:18] Sure. In 1964, there was a counterrevolution of the military, essentially throwing out a central leftist president, and the military had been begun beginning to figure out how to govern. And there was a lot of student protests and a lot of, more student protests than worker protests of any sort, that was going on, a lot of activity. Some peasant leftist groups up in the area that I was being sent in the Northeast were very active also. So it was one of these interesting combinations where you had student and some peasant revolt. And at the same time, a military government and anti-American sentiment all throughout. So in fact, I believe it was. It may have been that week that we arrived in. I'm getting things mixed up. I do know at one point there was an office, a Peace Corps office in Rio that had a bomb that went off and subsequently years later, in fact, I did, four or five years later, I did go to a, um, Peace Corps party in Rio, and I met one of the workers who, in fact, had lost his arm in that particular explosion.

KLEIN: [00:14:41] Do you remember who had developed the program and who was staff at that point?

VOGT: [00:14:46] I don't know who the real architects, who really developed the program in terms of bringing these this group of students down, keeping us together, training us partially during the spring. We had an intense eight-week session in Recife in the northeast of Brazil. I don't know who it was. I remember some of the names of the people we dealt with once we got in country.

KLEIN: [00:15:05] Yeah. Well, I'm curious as to the when you got to Recife, to whom did you relate? Was it a Brazilian official or was an American official or one of each?

VOGT: [00:15:15] There were American officials who were in charge of the training. And I think there was two or three Brazilian women who were the language teachers, and at least I remember one of them was in fact married to the head of our program, the head of our training program. His name was, was Jim LaFleur. And I can't remember. He had a very bright and attractive wife who did most of the language training. She, in fact, had

been the personal assistant to a to don elder comida, who was the cardinal for Northeast Brazil and was sort of a controversial figure.

KLEIN: [00:16:02] Now with these three AID people?

VOGT: [00:16:06] No, this LaFleur was a former Peace Corps volunteer who was either on staff of Peace Corps because I believe it was in-house Peace Corps training. I don't believe it was one of these where they had farmed out the training yet to third party company. So I believe he was in charge of the training program. And there were maybe, I think, four language teachers. There was Jim LaFleur. And then Recife was really a very large center for Peace Corps activity. It had an office that covered the whole northeast of Brazil, which was maybe eight or 10 states. And so it had a superstructure of it, had a program officer for the Northeast. It had a head of the Pernambuco program, which was the state Recife was in, and it had the head of the whole Northeast region. I'm guessing there were probably eight to 10 staff people in that office.

KLEIN: [00:17:14] All Americans?

VOGT: [00:17:16] Yes, at that point, all Americans, there was some support staff of that eight or nine, there are probably three support staff secretaries, et cetera, who were who were, and maybe a driver, who were Brazilian.

KLEIN: [00:17:27] So what did you do during the 10 weeks or eight weeks of training?

VOGT: [00:17:31] It was pretty. It was one of these, you know, you remember what it was when you're trying to really work on a language, it's absolutely tiring. You just so. The language is paramount. Language was paramount. We on a couple of occasions, we were sort of given weekend field trips where we would go off with other volunteers and just see what their life was like. So we'd probably go out for to spend all day Friday and Saturday with them, was my memory, because I remember being part of the deal was working with them out there at their projects.

KLEIN: [00:18:02] And were they doing what ultimately you were expected to do or?

VOGT: [00:18:07] Sort of. The particular group that I remember being associated with during training was an interesting group. Most of them were either MBA students or MBA graduates or lawyers or people sort of somewhere in the legal process. And it was a group that was designed to develop co-op agricultural cooperatives in mainly in the sugar cane growing area and in the other agricultural areas within one hundred or two hundred miles of Recife. So they tended to be volunteers, most of them male, with one step above of training than the rest of us. I mean, they really, the business people, knew a little bit about business, much more than us liberal arts graduates, and the legal types clearly had a different viewpoint and had training in the legal structures, et cetera.

KLEIN: [00:19:09] Were they working for a Brazilian ministry or agency?

VOGT: [00:19:14] Yeah. What I'm going to guess that it was probably a state secretariat of agriculture and the cooperative program that was within that.

KLEIN: [00:19:29] Did you have this thinking back in your program and the other did it operate autonomously? I mean, sometimes, you know, with. One criticism of aid programs is they come in with their own package and they get validated by a ministry, but they don't really.

VOGT: [00:19:47] This cooperative program, it would be interesting. I mean, there are there are people who can talk more about it. I never really knew how to measure it, never know what they do. But from the outside, it seemed to me that these volunteers had a relatively clear mission and objectives, and they seemed to have pretty good support from their government counterparts. Oh yes.

KLEIN: [00:20:07] You're concentrating on language eight weeks. But where we are staying?

VOGT: [00:20:13] They had us staying in a little sort of residence hotel, which was, you know, like most Peace Corps hotels around the world, I suppose,

you know, bathroom down the hall. Clean, nothing sumptuous. It was fine. You know, we'd have a few nights, maybe in the weekends we'd get to go out and have dinner and carouse together a little bit. But it was we were fairly, you know, we did a bunch of study and we were fairly dedicated trainees. I think of that because in fact, I believe there was the possibility of being, as they used to say, deselected.

KLEIN: [00:20:49] Still?

VOGT: [00:20:50] Still. We were still sort of on probation from that sense.

KLEIN: [00:20:54] And what would it be, LaFleur who would call the shots?

VOGT: [00:20:57] Probably, probably. Yeah, he would certainly be the main filter there.

KLEIN: [00:21:02] During the eight weeks, did you begin to get a definition of what it is your job would be as you went out in the field?

VOGT: [00:21:10] I knew that it was highly likely from very early on that I'd be going up to the next state north named Paraiba, and it would be doing something in rural development.

KLEIN: [00:21:21] How did you know that?

VOGT: [00:21:22] Well, I think I've been told this is what we think you're going to be doing. And in fact, that's in those days. It was interesting. What they started working on actually was almost questions of succession when you think about it. Many of the volunteers who had arrived in '66, which was probably the, you know, essentially the equivalent of the third or so program in many of those areas, had really take their programs had taken root and they knew what they were doing and they needed successors. And so there was as though it was a little fiefdom that you passed along. I was designated to go out to Hank and Marilyn Atha's town, which was a town called Sao Bento, about four hundred kilometers from the capital of the state of Paraiba. And I think a lot of these assignments were, in some

in retrospect, unfair in the sense that. We spent most of our time in defining what we're doing, floundering.

KLEIN: [00:22:32] This is after you're out there.

VOGT: [00:22:33] Yeah, while we're out there. There was never really any clear training of the type I would be doing today for someone if people were still doing this type of community development or cooperative development. Whole idea in this particular area was that there was a possibility of doing some agricultural cooperative development where you would get the farmers with smaller plots of land less access to capital only labor they had was basically their own backs, plus maybe borrowed hawks. And to get these people together, at least for a buyers group, for either staples or for agricultural chemicals or fertilizers. And there were some shining examples of how people have been able to put that together.

KLEIN: [00:23:25] People being?

VOGT: [00:23:27] People, volunteers. Volunteers had been able to be positive actors and putting these types of right of co-ops together. But from my point of view, it was not institutionalized. There was no clear. These are the steps that you got to do, and this is sort of the time frame that you ought to work on. And here's the support you need from different parts of society within your community to make sure it works right. Hank Atha had had been very successful, trying to get a small group of maybe 10 farmers together to and what he was doing, it was essentially agricultural extension. As far as I could tell, he had the background in it. He knew what he was doing. He was trying to. I mean, he was one of the first persons to bring soy into as a crop, which you know you'd think about today in Brazil is one of the largest growers of soy products and processors of soy products in the world. But then no one even knew what soy was.

KLEIN: [00:24:28] Well, I'm curious as to, as you're making the transition, you're in the training program, are you getting a sense of where you're going? You may have even visited it. Did you have any apprehensions on what you

had a degree in history, Latin America history, Latin American studies and you're going to be.

VOGT: [00:24:48] You know, I guess I was sort of overly confident, not particularly worried about, you know, the unknown. And what I did in the end was to realize that I didn't have the, I didn't think I had the personal resources to individually create one of these, you know, agricultural co-ops. And within a few months of being out there after I've been told, yeah, I'd passed and I was not going to no longer be deselected. It was about that time we had a new state director with whom I became very close, named Hugh Smith. And he had earmarked me to be the sort of the leader of some rural electric cooperative development work. And had asked me then to sort of put the ag stuff on hold while I, and do whatever I could do for the community while we waited for the volunteers who are going to be doing this to come in-country the next season. So in fact, here it is like September of '68 and I was basically told, well. And so then I said, well, great. And I signed up for the local school and I ended up being a school teacher. I ended up teaching more hours a week than I had taken the previous year. I was teaching for four classes every night in the local equivalent of junior high school. And it was a great, that was a great experience.

KLEIN: [00:26:15] It take me from Recife, where training's finished. You've been selected. Do they simply point you in the direction?

VOGT: [00:26:26] Yeah, they told me, well, you know, go up to João Pessoa, the capital of Paraíba, the next state up. Meet the people in the office there and they'll put you on a bus to Sao Bento. And that's essentially what they did. Or actually, it's possible that I actually met this couple in either Recife or João Pessoa. They took me out with them and I had a stay of about, I'm going to say, two weeks overlapping with them at this point.

KLEIN: [00:26:53] Did you move into the house that they had?

VOGT: [00:26:54] And I did, in fact move into their house, took it over from them and it was, you know, a nice, easy transition from that point of view.

KLEIN: [00:27:05] Peace Corps was paying all the allowances and all the rents and everything, you didn't do it?

VOGT: [00:27:09] It all came out of what they gave me.

KLEIN: [00:27:12] It was a lump sum.

VOGT: [00:27:13] Yeah, lump sum. My memory is they paid us in those days, maybe a little bit over a hundred bucks a month. And to get that, in fact, I had to designate a bank where it would be sent and that was actually sort of nice. It meant every month I had to figure out how to get to this town about 50 kilometers away that I wouldn't have gotten to otherwise, where there are other volunteers as well. And some of them, some of my fellows from this group were there.

KLEIN: [00:27:38] So what'd you do, get a basket full of money and take it back?

VOGT: [00:27:41] Oh, absolutely. You'd cash it. You'd come back with your hundred dollars worth of local currency and you just actually sometimes, you know, depending where I was, sometimes I'd leave it with the. Clearly very early on as a bachelor, I was not about to do my own cooking on a wholesale scale, so I figured out, well, unless I'm not going to starve. And so I made a deal with a hotel where I had rights to bath and soap and towel and three meals a day.

KLEIN: [00:28:12] Oh, that's an interesting.

VOGT: [00:28:15] It's good. It sort of gave me a bit of a community too, of Brazilians, the Portuguese speaking community.

KLEIN: [00:28:20] So you got up to the town. You're in your position. Your job has shifted not to the ag co-ops, but toward rural electricity.

VOGT: [00:28:32] That's right. And then I end up, as I say, a teacher, and that's really took up most of my.

KLEIN: [00:28:36] Take me from, how did you get to being a teacher? I mean, what were the steps? You want to stop?

VOGT: [00:28:42] No, it's OK. I don't know exactly. I can't remember, that's a good question. How did it turn out that they recruited me? I think I went out of my way to go meet the people and say, hey, look, you know, I can teach English, I can teach French, I can teach history. And they said, great, we'll have you do all three. And they said, oh by the way, here's a fourth course that we need teaching, which is called, uh, what was it called? Social and political organization. Which in retrospect, about a year later, I found out that it was illegal for a non-Brazilian to be teaching that course in Brazil at the time.

KLEIN: [00:29:21] Now what level was it?

VOGT: [00:29:22] This is equivalent to junior high school, so it was actually the beginning English, beginning French and, you know, history. I don't know. I mean, we had just a standard history textbook.

KLEIN: [00:29:35] It may have been world history.

VOGT: [00:29:37] Yes, it was. It was world history.

KLEIN: [00:29:40] And in your own mind, you were doing this as part of the process of community development, it's a way of getting to know the community.

VOGT: [00:29:49] In retrospect, it's sort of interesting to think about because there was clearly no obligation for me to do this.

KLEIN: [00:29:54] Were you paid?

VOGT: [00:29:55] They did pay me the equivalent of about 12 bucks a month. So it was it wasn't a question of needing the extra money. I mean, that paid for a beer every once in a while.

KLEIN: [00:30:02] Yeah, but what about the rural electrification project?

VOGT: [00:30:05] Well, that that that that really wasn't going to even start at all until the following June, when the volunteers, the next crop was coming down from the States. So I knew that that was going to happen and I was basically given the leeway. So well do what you can on these other areas of, but we really want you to save your powder essentially for this next program.

KLEIN: [00:30:28] So in effect, what Peace Corps staff sort of gave you a blank check.

VOGT: [00:30:34] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:30:34] It was go and do something, do something good. And that didn't disturb you or didn't disturb them.

VOGT: [00:30:45] Apparently not.

KLEIN: [00:30:46] And there must have been large numbers of volunteers.

VOGT: [00:30:50] Yeah, my sense is that in, my memory is the following, that the state of Paraiba at that point, I remember doing the count. I think there were 152 townships in the state. And the year I arrived there were probably 120 volunteers, and it fell that year. I think that by the time my group came in and others had left, there were like only 60. So for one reason or another, that state had maybe they changed the direction of how they were doing programing. I wasn't really involved in understanding how this occurred.

KLEIN: [00:31:26] But then it seems to me that the whole Harvard project.

VOGT: [00:31:33] Oh, it never had a singular focus at all.

KLEIN: [00:31:38] In country.

VOGT: [00:31:39] Right, in-country. As far as I know, I think it was taken. Here's great raw material.

KLEIN: [00:31:49] We're talking about the Harvard group.

VOGT: [00:31:52] Right. We ended up, I believe, in being in three different states. There was no single program. A lot of I think all of us ended up initially substituting for people who had been in the particular communities before. I know that the Redwoods took over from another volunteer. The Antonsons, who were in Catolé do Rocha, took over Joyce, Joyce and Frank. Joyce actually went to substitute her sister, who had been in that community. So talk about some nepotism. And then there were three other guys. Is that our number one two three four five six seven eight. I can't remember, maybe there were only eight of us, I should make a list at some point. Then three guys ended up all in the state of Rio Grande do Norte, just north of us all doing agricultural related types of activities. All, I believe, sort of co-op development was the main thing.

KLEIN: [00:32:59] But the idea of handing over then, I mean, what the Athas had built must have been dissipated then because.

VOGT: [00:33:08] Yeah, I tried to continue to work with the main. Hank Atha had identified this really nice farmer who was really helping him meet other people and doing the soy projects. But that was clearly not my bag. I mean, I had none of the technical background, nor quite frankly, the interest in working on it. So I continued to work with this particular Brazilian farmer named Mondico, but more with the eye of the fact that his farm was on the river and therefore would be somewhere that would be electrified in the future. So I knew that that would be something to work on, upcoming.

KLEIN: [00:33:44] Did you report back to Peace Corps on any regular basis or did they just assume?

VOGT: [00:33:51] Hugh Smith would come around every few months. We would get into Recife and Joao Pessoa again, probably every month or two as well, for some form of some reason it was norm. We usually just didn't get off, you know, take a long weekend because it would take you about two days to get there anyway. So my memory is there were either specialized

training programs in irrigation, for example, which we many of us took, that sort of thing.

KLEIN: [00:34:26] Within the community where you finally were teaching, what kind of acceptance was, what kind of reaction was there to you? How did people, who were you as far as they knew?

VOGT: [00:34:41] Well, I think I think we learned to sort of get along pretty well. It was a bit lonely for the first five months because after about five months, or less than that, four months. Another project appeared out of nowhere and one guy was sort of slotted to come work with me. And he actually ended up doing a lot more work in irrigation. He was a guy who actually had knew something about irrigation and industrial design, and so he was. He moved in with me, essentially, and that was nice. But it was a bit lonely at the beginning. But as I, you know, I'm a very social animal and I got to know the people very well, and I started having no problem whatsoever fitting in. But, you know, it took a while. There's a period of just understanding who's who and what's what. Teaching was very important to get me into the community, though.

KLEIN: [00:35:31] How did you figure out how to teach?

VOGT: [00:35:35] I guess it's just in my blood. Again, here, think about this, what a great opportunity to teach people how to do a lesson plan, how to approach things. Since this wasn't my program, none of these were available to me, but I basically winged it. And I, you know, I come from my father, a teacher. So I guess maybe it's osmosis or something.

KLEIN: [00:35:56] Well, in fact, learning to teach may be simpler than some people make it. Was there any suspicion of you, resistance to your being there?

VOGT: [00:36:09] There was a little bit of suspicion, only from the standpoint that the cooperative movement was seen as some parts of northeastern Brazil as a sort of a Worker's Party leftist idea. But in fact, we were, most of the work that we were doing was in conjunction with a state sponsored group, and there was clearly sort of an agricultural and development approach

that was being supported by the state government and the federal government. So we didn't, you know, we had to basically prove ourselves in the sense that we weren't out there trying to be actors of a leftist politics.

KLEIN: [00:36:49] So there weren't the accusations of being CIA.

VOGT: [00:36:52] And no, I mean, there were students coming back from the capital who, you know, would want to do that. But then the friends would tell them that didn't work with me and I was sort of a member of the community already.

KLEIN: [00:37:04] Because the Vietnam thing was blowing up more and more to what extent people in that community were informed about it.

VOGT: [00:37:12] I don't know. Well, actually, it was. We were fairly way out. I mean, one of my better stories is about going to Fair Market Day in a neighboring community. And a little kid walked up to me and said in Portuguese, mister, are you Chinese? And I said, no, why do you ask? He said, well, I've heard that that the Chinese are very different from people. And the word people is the same as us, but it's where this is people. Rather, instead of using the word for us, he said, than us people. And he said, you're the most different guy I've ever seen in my life. It was about that time I developed my James Bond theory. And that was that people expected me to be different in some respects. And so it was OK to be different. It really was helpful for me psychologically to make that realization that, to the extent that I felt more comfortable and people felt more comfortable when I was able to have the stimulus and response be something they expected, that was very good. But when it wasn't, it was OK because they didn't expect it always to be the same. So that was a very, very helpful.

KLEIN: [00:38:26] And you must have had a clear sense that no matter what, you were not going to become a Brazilian.

VOGT: [00:38:31] Right. Except that nowadays people think I'm Brazilian. In fact, I became a Brazilian over time. I mean, I speak perfect Portuguese, and when I'm in Brazil, they can't tell. They know I'm not from their state, so

they think I'm either from further north or further south. And I can sustain that maybe for five or 10 minutes. It's not a, I couldn't blend in.

KLEIN: [00:38:56] Within the community and while you were teaching, this is still just the first four months of your service.

VOGT: [00:39:01] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:39:03] Were there Brazilians who became closer friends, mentors? Sometimes you meet someone who sort of becomes a bridge into the culture.

VOGT: [00:39:14] Well, this this farmer who'd been introduced to me by Hank Atha was one of my closer contacts. His name was Mondico. A very, very nice gentleman. He was sort of, he was not in the center of things, clearly he wasn't a part of the local superstructure. He had a group of people who would listen to him as he tried to be helpful with the ideas that Hank had been doing with respect to introducing soy and other things like that. But no, I think I think where I built my contacts was really with the students, more with the students and with my fellow professors. I was I always felt I was a little bit. They were, the professors tended to be, or the professional people in town, and this is a small town. Probably two thousand people living actually in the community and another three thousand within, oh, 10 kilometer radius who were in the same township.

KLEIN: [00:40:16] It wasn't a boarding school.

VOGT: [00:40:18] Oh no, no. But it was an it was an evening school. Classes started at around 6:00. So it was a six o'clock, seven o'clock, nine o'clock. There were four classes a night, usually 6:00 through 10:00, so the kids could work during the day.

KLEIN: [00:40:33] It was a public school, not church run?

VOGT: [00:40:36] Yes. It was the local state-owned school.

KLEIN: [00:40:40] So who would you go to if you observed or heard of local customs, observations, celebrations that you didn't, you couldn't quite figure out?

VOGT: [00:40:53] Well. Having been brought up a son of a of an anthropologist, I did have some investigatory techniques that I learned, just asking. But quite frankly, the other person who helped me the most was another the closest volunteer who was about 15 kilometers away in a town called Brejo do Cruz. A guy named Bob Krasnow, who in fact today lives just across the river from where I was living in Sao Bento. He still, he stayed on, married a Brazilian, and continued to turn himself into a farmer, essentially. And I've traded phone calls with him the last few years, but never quite. In fact, I should just call him up again, try to reach him. He was one of these guys who had all of the things that you needed to be an actor of and make things happen. He was one of the ones that you know by himself, and working with this lower class of poor farmers put together a very successful buying cooperative. And he ran into a lot of entrenched interests, against a lot of entrenched interests, in the little town he was in, particularly the merchants, because essentially what they were doing was radically reducing the cost of basic foodstuffs for this group of people.

KLEIN: [00:42:09] If school didn't start until the evening, what did you do for the whole day?

VOGT: [00:42:14] That's when I would be about two days a week. I'd probably be with Mondico or working with him on figuring out what of Hank's programs, what to do about the soy program, the next planting season. Otherwise, you know, basically I hung around, I did lesson plans, I graded papers and I was a bit of loose ends.

KLEIN: [00:42:40] Learning to teach.

VOGT: [00:42:41] Well, teaching myself how to teach.

KLEIN: [00:42:45] You knew another group of volunteers was due in. You remember approximately when?

VOGT: [00:42:51] When I learned about that, I was probably in the fall of that year. So probably September or October.

KLEIN: [00:42:57] It was still in '68?

VOGT: [00:42:58] Still in '68. I said, Look, in June of '69, we've got 11 to 15. something like 15 volunteers coming in. They're going to be kids with business background and engineering backgrounds. And we've developed this program with the State Department of Rural Electrification and we're going to do a pilot program. And you know, that's the idea. What it developed into was part of the program was doing economic slash agricultural feasibility studies of the areas that were earmarked for electrification. And then actually working with the engineers to plant to plot the lines.

KLEIN: [00:43:33] Was all this development driven by the Brazilian government officials at some level or other?

VOGT: [00:43:39] Oh yeah, there this was a program where at some level I'm sure there was some U.S. aid money, but at the level that we saw it, we were essentially free, specialized labor for the states run.

KLEIN: [00:43:52] But there was no sense, no idea of having counterparts?

VOGT: [00:43:58] We did have. We did have a few counterparts. For example, in this whole area of the rural electrification. When that started the next year, essentially we spent something like, it was almost like going through training again. We spent about, I'm going to say, two months working in the state capital with the directorship of rural electrification and in that there were two main counterparts, an engineer and an economist who basically formed our teams and got us ready to go out in the field again to work on this rural electrification program. I was slated to go back and be in charge of the efforts out in that same town that I'd started out in, Sao Bento.

KLEIN: [00:44:53] So by then, you'd given up your teaching.

VOGT: [00:44:56] That was actually during the summer. So there was there was. Let me think about this. I remember there being a problem in that I was able to finish the year with teaching through June, somehow give the exams and then there was at least a month off. And I think it may be I was back in time to start working on that. I remember that last semester I taught, which would have been, I believe during the second half of '69, there was a problem of both getting the exams to the kids and having them taken without me there and then grading them and get the grades back. I remember that was a problem because at that point I had, I was spending a lot of time our time in the capital city.

KLEIN: [00:45:46] Oh, OK. Yeah, so you really taught about almost a year.

VOGT: [00:45:51] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:45:51] As you were making the shift into the quote the real project, did you have any sense of time or question, you know, what am I doing here? Where am I going? What do I project as a successful Peace Corps career?

VOGT: [00:46:08] Not really, I sort of kept on falling into things. I mean, I unofficially sort of became one of the semi managers of that program.

KLEIN: [00:46:16] Now what?

VOGT: [00:46:17] The rural electrification project, probably this probably by the end of 1969, which was about six months after it, because at that point, then I moved in. Well, maybe I'm a year off, maybe was a little bit later. I think my sense is then I know that. Well, the main thing that started happening in.

KLEIN: [00:46:41] Let's move ahead to savagery.

VOGT: [00:46:45] During early 1970, I had decided to re-up for an additional year. The draft pressures were such that I wanted to keep there. And secondly, I had more of a commitment to this program, where all the other volunteers were only one year into it, and I decided I might as well do the

second year with them as well. And so in June of '70, actually, I went home for a home leave, which coincided, I was able to go to my brother's graduation from college, was able to hook up again with my girlfriend, who had been. She'd spent the year '68-'69 in, half of '68, I think all of '69, pretty much in Venezuela, on a Fulbright. And then we hooked up again and eventually ended up getting married that year of 1970, although that was a saga in itself with respect to Peace Corps bureaucracy. In those days, every other volunteer in my situation that I'd heard about in the northeast of Brazil, who wanted to get married to a, I love this, non-matrix non-host country national spouse, was thrown out. And I didn't want to get thrown out because of the pressures of the draft. And it was one of these epiphanies where I remember sitting in Sao Bento on a Sunday afternoon, which was market day and my friend Bob Krasnow from Brejo, the successful agricultural cooperative, had come down for the market day to sell tomatoes. I probably helped him selling tomatoes. That's also the other thing I used to do when I didn't have anything else going on. I would often go up and spend two or three days working with Bob Krasnow, selling tomatoes. It was one of the things, I enjoyed it.

KLEIN: [00:48:40] Yeah.

VOGT: [00:48:43] And Bob got into this spiel about free will and that how he was, he always knew that this was working out fine for him right now, and he decided to stay in Brazil. But part of this man and Superman. So I think he always knew that one day for another, if he decided that this was not for him, he could pick up and go back to Long Island. And, you know, it was his free will and his decision. He could do that. I was sort of sitting there and it was sort of a different type of day. We hadn't. I can't remember exactly what it was. For some reason, Sundays had become a much bigger market day in that town. And in fact, such that a new little bar had started that actually sold the national drink of Brazil, which was a caipirinha, which no one had ever seen in that part of Brazil. So we were all sitting around having a few drinks, and I was sitting here listening to Bob talk about this. It was probably six o'clock in the evening. And I said, Bob, you're right. I got up, went back to the little house that I had, packed a bag. It was also one of the first months that they actually had a bus leaving from our town, going all the way to the capital of Joao Pessoa. So

it used to be used to take me two days to get there because I could take a bus within about a half day jeep ride, and then I had to rent a jeep or wait for a market jeep to take the last leg.

VOGT: [00:50:06] But this one, I was actually able to get on a bus at 10 o'clock that night that went all night and at, oh, 7:00 in the morning or so drop me off. And then I had to wait around till evening and evening I went down to the beach area where there were more prosperous residences and I would look around. Found a house with an antenna, a ham radio. Knocked on the door said, would you allow me to try to patch into a phone? I need to talk to someone in the United States. And he said, fine, and I went in there and I called Mary and, had to be evening, I knew she'd be home then. And basically, I said, you know, I love you and I want to get married. Will you marry me, over? And she said, no, I'll come down and live with you though, over. And I said, well, OK, well, that probably may be easier for Peace Corps. And then we discussed this back and forth over a couple of days, and then it was clear that if we did this, all of our all of our parents and their friends would want to come down to Brazil for a for a wedding. And we said, well, maybe we ought to just get married.

VOGT: [00:51:11] So we did end up, this would have been the end of August, and we got married end of September. And before leaving for that trip, I walked in and the head of Peace Corps in the Northeast was a very reasonable, very bright, nice guy named Chuck Bosley. He was away for some reason. And so the only guy I could talk to was this guy named John Burns, another long term, very effective Peace Corps administrator type in the area. He was in fact a, not a defrocked, but an unfrocked priest I believe, one who had taken his frock off by himself. And I said, John, you know, here's the story. I have a commitment to Peace Corps for another eight months for this program or longer. No reason for me to want to leave this program, but I do. I'm going home, getting married. And I said, you know, these other people have heard about always get kicked out. I said, what's your sense? He said, well, just don't say anything. Just go get married and come on back. I said, you know, I don't think anything's going to happen. And the one thing, of course, was it did. It did make us. It was a little bit of a stretch because we never had any money to begin with as

Peace Corps volunteers and then to have two people on it was a little bit more of a stretch.

KLEIN: [00:52:18] There was no way to make your wife a Peace Corps volunteer on the spot?

VOGT: [00:52:23] There was no sense of wanting to cooperate there. No.

KLEIN: [00:52:27] But they let you raise the issue.

VOGT: [00:52:29] It would seem to be for the better. In fact, they were very recalcitrant at even helping her get a visa. Yeah, it was until, of course, after I'd. I had a couple other iterations as Peace Corps in '70 and '71 and as I finally was leaving, then the last time we were leaving, they said they were starting to be cooperative because they wanted me to stay on little more. I said, no, it's too late. But essentially just to sort of do. And there are a couple of other overviews I'd like to mention. One is in terms of what I did. After we had, our rural electric program was in full bloom by then, the fall of 1970. This group of volunteers had been in for a year and three months. They were again kids that enjoyed the challenge of the project. You know, the business guys actually were great at doing the surveys. The engineers were great at doing the engineering and we, you know, we actually got along very quite well. Were always some hiccups between their counterparts and ours. But we really worked pretty well as a team. And I think on average people were quite happy with the with the program that we were involved in because we clearly see that things were happening, that we were helping make a difference and we had support.

VOGT: [00:53:54] And in terms of expense money, if we had to go spend. At one point, I'd have to go spend three or four weeks in another town where I didn't have my own little house and I'd have to pay for meals and they'd pick those up and they'd give us vehicles to move around in to do this work. And so it was it was good. But I got a call from, I think it was the Chuck Bosley, the guy who was in charge of the northeast of Brazil and said, look, the I've given your name to the head of Peace Corps, and he needs he needs some assistant to work on a couple items in terms of speechwriting and of, you know, other. And he might want to just get to

know you to make, you know, turning you into sort of, they were at that point using volunteer programmers. And in the end, I did go to live in Brasilia for a couple of months and after that was assigned to.

KLEIN: [00:54:49] Who was the director?

VOGT: [00:54:50] The director was Steve Daichi. Fascinating guy. Multiculturalist. I believe he was ethnically slash culturally Czech and had an American citizen. He was a, either a periodontist, I mean, essentially someone who had a.

KLEIN: [00:55:10] Let's continue with your story.

VOGT: [00:55:12] No, but he was a fascinating guy, fascinating guy, who, in fact, after this Peace Corps experience, he was a really great hard charging director, very controversial, just because he bruised a lot of skins on the way, but he got what he wanted. He ended up joining the State Department, and at one point he in fact, he was the consul of the United States in Sao Paulo, Brazil, later. But he clearly responded well to this being international. So I worked for him for a period of time. Then I ended up moving to the city of Belem at the mouth of the Amazon, and was charged with helping develop new Peace Corps programs throughout the Amazon region.

KLEIN: [00:55:49] You were considered still a volunteer?

VOGT: [00:55:53] I was still a volunteer. I was sort of a super volunteer. My memory at that point is they upped my monthly pay to about three hundred a month, which was.

KLEIN: [00:56:00] I think they had a category called volunteer leader.

VOGT: [00:56:03] Yeah. And that was I think that's the rubric that they put me under. But that allowed us actually to for the first time, not have to, you know, take money out of my readjustment allowance to pay for food. And it was exciting to be in a different part of Brazil. The Amazon is always a

great place. So, so personally, we really enjoyed that ability of that experience.

KLEIN: [00:56:23] And you were doing program development, which is kind of a fun thing to do because you go in and, you know, learn as much as you can about the place.

VOGT: [00:56:33] Right, and again, there were strong government agricultural extension programs that we could lever off of, and part of what I ended up doing was I did about 15 site visits to in every little town we would go to, we'd meet, we'd go with a volunteer who had actually been there before, probably not living there. We would meet the government agricultural extension person, if he were in that town. We'd meet the local banker, we'd meet the local mayor. We just sort of get a feel and do it a writeup about the site as to whether we thought it would be a productive place to put volunteers and we were looking at that point. Peace Corps had shifted gears at that point. They were really bringing in much more people with more dedicated skill level.

KLEIN: [00:57:15] Specific skills.

VOGT: [00:57:15] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:57:17] That was your last position as a volunteer?

VOGT: [00:57:21] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:57:21] And then you find finally?

VOGT: [00:57:23] Then I finally left and we decided we.

KLEIN: [00:57:25] After how much service?

VOGT: [00:57:26] This would have been October of '71. I finally.

KLEIN: [00:57:29] Ok. All right. Yeah.

VOGT: [00:57:31] September, October '71.

KLEIN: [00:57:32] Any intent at that point to try to work for Peace Corps in Washington?

VOGT: [00:57:37] No. I'm trying to remember the way, something's coming through here. I believe I may have spent a month or so at that point. I was sort of asked to go spend some time with a training program. By this time, training programs were being done by third party companies. And it was a Colorado based company whose name I could probably come up with if I, creative something or cognitive learning or something like that. Bunch of good people and I don't really remember why I was called down there, whether it was to be a give some aspects of talks for a period of time on the Peace Corps process. That's what my memory was. So we spent a short period time, which is great for us because it got us sort of halfway down Brazil and to Belo Horizonte, and we wanted basically to travel home by land at that point. But because of that relationship, about a year and a half later, I got a call. The people that were able to track me down somewhere. At that point, no, it wasn't a year and a half later, it was a little under a year later we got a call. We were working on a dude ranch in Wyoming at that point, and they needed a cross cultural trainer. And so I went back and worked one program with them.

KLEIN: [00:58:57] In Brazil?

VOGT: [00:58:58] In Brazil, and Mary was sort of the administrative assistant to the director of the training program. So we went back to Brazil. You know, it was something we wanted to do, so was good. That was my last Peace Corps experience.

KLEIN: [00:59:08] Just a quick. Maybe we can. How did the Peace Corps experience then sort of change the career paths, your life?

VOGT: [00:59:22] It got me interested in two things. For a period of time, we sort of toyed with doing more public service type of work, and we investigated whether either or both of us wanted to do social work or hospital administration. In the end, after I talked around the and tossed the ball

around with a bunch of friends, I decided the heck with it. What I really learned about the Peace Corps was seeing what living poor was like and seeing what, you know, adding electricity did to the lives of these farmers. And I said, no, I'll go to business school. So I end up going to business school. And then as I tried to peddle my services in operations research was what I really loved at business school and statistics. Every place I went to would hand me over to their international department. So I ended up becoming a a banker working for Wells Fargo Bank on Brazilian projects and went down for five years as a banker in Brazil running their offices, at that point.

KLEIN: [01:00:22] Ok, any other Peace Corps comments you'd like to make?

VOGT: [01:00:28] Yeah, I think. There was a tendency in the first year and a half, that there was always this interplay between are you there, the reason that you were there for was often talked about. I mean, there was a lot of political angst because of the times. There was a lot of anti-war sentiment as well and a lot of draft dodging, sort of, not draft dodging. But you know, gosh, you know, I can't afford to leave Peace Corps right now. And despite that, the people who went, that self-selection process, were really pretty neat people who really did the job that they were asked to do. There was a small number of real complete fuck-ups who clearly shouldn't have been there, and I think in different times might not have even applied. But it is impressive to see the caliber of the people that came through.

KLEIN: [01:01:28] You think Peace Corps is still valid today?

VOGT: [01:01:30] Oh, definitely, definitely. The program that we went back to do the training on, just so the antithesis of the types of programs that I came in under. We had a program in Belo Horizonte. This would have been in 1972, I think, where, um. It's about 30 people, and of which about 25 were people from the U.S. postal system and most of their wives. Many of them from of the postmaster level at very small places or the assistant postmaster at big places. I remember we had the former assistant postmaster from Oklahoma City and we had the postmaster from Coos Bay, Oregon. Most of them, I think, the oldest may have been 60, which meant, you know, there was a lot of experience, I think the youngest of the

postal types was probably mid-30s. Preponderance there was sort of around probably median age was around 50 of that group, so it's a very different group. But it was a group that I hear, in retrospect, they were difficult to train. I mean, they were. It was hard having them get the language. It was harder to work with them on my side, which is a cross cultural line. But I understand, and it'd be interesting to see how tracking has been done. That you know, that program was very positive for Brazil as well. I mean, you can't say that for a lot of Peace Corps programs, but it certainly helped modernize their post office.

KLEIN: [01:02:58] I mean, you were the generalists who branched out and these were the those who came in with very specific skills.

VOGT: [01:03:06] The old Nixon volunteers.

KLEIN: [01:03:07] Yeah, I assume that this room in Peace Corps for both.

VOGT: [01:03:12] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:03:12] But it seems to have the higher level of motivation.

VOGT: [01:03:15] Right. But on the other hand, I think. But I did feel that this lack of institutional memory on the Peace Corps was really bit it in ass every, every few years.

KLEIN: [01:03:28] Oh yeah.

VOGT: [01:03:29] You know, I'd say.

[END OF INTERVIEW]