

Donna Stern Slocum Oral History Interview
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Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Donna Stern Slocum served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Honduras from June 1978 to June 1980 as a community health nurse.

Access

Open.

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Oral History Interview

with

Donna Stern Slocum

May 6, 2018
Hutto, Texas

By Barbara Kaare-Lopez

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

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:00:06] Okay. Good evening. Today is Sunday, May 6, 2018. We've got the recorder between us and I am in Hutto, Texas. That's H-U-T-T-O, Texas. My name is Barbara Kaare K-A-A-R-E hyphen Lopez, and I am interviewing Donna Stern Slocum, who was a Peace Corps volunteer in Honduras from June 1978 until I guess it was July 1980. No, yeah, July 1980. And she worked in the Ministry of Health as a nursing supervisor, etcetera, or as she has told me, as a doctor. Dr. Stern also. Okay. So how are you doing today, Donna?

SLOCUM: [00:00:58] I am fine.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:00:59] Okay. Okay. We're going to start with the questions. And this like I said, this should be between us. And there's 13 questions that we use as a guideline. So some of them might be a little bit redundant, but we're ready to go, okay? So I would, if you could start with describing your present situation, your family, work, where you

live, interests. We'll get to the Peace Corps stuff after that, okay? So what would you like to tell us about your family?

SLOCUM: [00:01:33] I am, I live in Hutto, Texas, and I'm married to Dennis Slocum now for 30 years. We have one daughter who's 28, and I have just recently retired. I worked for 43 years as a registered nurse in various different capacities. And my interests, such as hobbies, would be my, my primary interest is piano. I also play the organ. I was an organist for a little over 20 years for a church, played the pipe organ. I'd love to get better at the violin. I read a lot. Cook. Would love to start traveling again. Was interested, I was on the Historic Preservation Commission for over four years in the town that I was in. And, um, that kind of sums it up.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:02:28] Okay. Think back to the year before you joined the Peace Corps. That would be 1977. And what can you remember about your life then? You know, then they give other examples too about if you want to talk a little bit about your childhood, education. But, um, what were you doing the year before Peace Corps?

SLOCUM: [00:02:51] The year before I was in the Peace Corps, I lived in Austin, Texas, and I was a nurse at that time working on a surgical floor. And I had been thinking about doing this ever since I was very young so.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:03:08] Like how young?

SLOCUM: [00:03:10] I remember when Kennedy was president and the Peace Corps was formed and seeing the advertisements for it on TV. I just said, I have to do that someday or something similar to it. So it was something I had longed to do for a long time, for many reasons. And so I felt that that was the right time to make a move. I had a cousin who was dying of cancer, so I quit my job and went to South Texas and helped take care of him for about three months. So it was a good time to do that because I had signed up for the Peace Corps and I had that break time before I was going to leave in June.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:03:44] Hmm. Okay. What do you want to tell us anything about your education?

SLOCUM: [00:03:49] I went to the University of Texas at Austin and did my pre reqs there. I was actually going to go to their nursing program, but my family doctor talked me into going to a diploma school program that was a very good program in town at the time. So I went for a year and a half to do my pre reqs there and then I went to a diploma school in Austin.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:04:11] And the name was?

SLOCUM: [00:04:12] It was Brackenridge School of Nursing.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:04:14] Could you spell that for us?

SLOCUM: [00:04:16] B-R-A-C-K-E-N-R-I-D-G-E.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:04:19] Okay. Was it two years? Three years?

SLOCUM: [00:04:23] Three.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:04:24] Three years. Okay. What year did you graduate in?

SLOCUM: [00:04:28] In '74.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:04:28] '74 from Brackenridge. Okay. Any other experiences you might want to share about why you became a Peace Corps volunteer?

SLOCUM: [00:04:37] I, for one thing, being a nurse, I just wanted to see in other countries, undeveloped countries, underdeveloped countries rather, um, how medicine operated, just how different it might be somewhere else. And I just, it sounded like a decent thing to do also. And I was brought up in the church and of course, we had visitors at times that were missionaries. And so that had an influence on me too, just seeing what they had done. And I mean, there's this big world out

there, and that was one way to see it. Plus, I had traveled some and I thought, you know, you go on a trip for 1 to 2 weeks and it's just too fast and it's too artificial. You really need to live there. So I said, if I would go live somewhere else, why don't I do this? Because I always wanted to do it.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:05:34] Okay. Like I said, the second question is, why did you join the Peace Corps? You sort of touched on that. Was there anything else you might want to add about why you joined the Peace Corps?

SLOCUM: [00:05:46] I think I, yeah, I think I probably answered that question. Yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:05:49] Okay. We'll go to the third question. How did you hear about the Peace Corps?

SLOCUM: [00:05:53] When I was a kid. TV.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:05:55] TV. Okay. And what made you decide to apply? Anything else you might want to add to that?

SLOCUM: [00:06:02] No, I mean, I knew that when you're young and you're unencumbered and you're not married and you don't have children and bills, you have to do these things. You have to make that decision to do it. And, uh, I just felt like it would be a great adventure on top of everything.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:06:17] Okay. How did you apply? Meaning like, did you have to go somewhere to interview?

SLOCUM: [00:06:23] There was an office in Austin, so I applied at the office and was interviewed there.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:06:28] Okay. How long did it take you to be accepted?

SLOCUM: [00:06:31] I don't remember. It was, it was quick. I remember it was pretty quick because there were three groups that were going to be

leaving just months after I decided to do it. I really wanted to go to Africa. That was my first choice, but there were no groups being formed for that.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:06:50] Okay. The other part of the question, did you have a specific country? And you just said Africa.

SLOCUM: [00:06:57] Yeah, just the continent of Africa. Probably just whatever would have been available and the. Yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:07:04] Did you have a specific project? I mean, you wanted to be a nurse, I'm assuming.

SLOCUM: [00:07:08] I wanted to work in community health.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:07:12] Okay, community health. Yes. Okay. Good. The fourth question, what were your friends and your family's reactions when you were accepted?

SLOCUM: [00:07:23] The truth?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:07:25] Yeah. Well, I told the truth in mine. And then you can add along that, you know, was there any hesitation or reservation on your part, your family and friends' part? How do they react when you were accepted?

SLOCUM: [00:07:39] Well, some of my friends thought I was odd to want to do that. My father didn't understand why I wanted to volunteer two years of my life and not get paid really for it.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:07:56] Mm hmm.

SLOCUM: [00:07:56] He thought that was not a good choice of, um, of a way to spend your, your time. And what was the rest of the question?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:08:07] Okay, your, you talked about your. How about your mom? How did she react?

SLOCUM: [00:08:12] She was pretty noncommittal.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:08:14] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [00:08:14] Yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:08:15] How about your brother and sisters?

SLOCUM: [00:08:17] They thought it was cool. They were little kids.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:08:19] Okay. How about your friends? How did they react?

SLOCUM: [00:08:23] Some of my friends thought it was a great thing, especially my nurse friends, and other friends didn't understand. They, you know, they didn't understand. They thought there were, you know, safety issues, health issues. There were risks involved with it. And then some thought that it was just, you know, could be just a great adventure. So was it mixed, a lot of mixed.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:08:43] Yeah. Do you remember any particular remark, you know, that pro or con, that has stuck with you?

SLOCUM: [00:08:50] My father's, that I wouldn't get paid.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:08:54] Yeah. Okay.

SLOCUM: [00:08:54] That it was just not a sound decision in that respect.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:08:58] Okay. We'll move on to the fifth question. What project were you invited to join? Oh, and, you know, I'm sort of interrupting because I kind of remember you went to Choluteca first. Okay. So we'll start with, Donna, am I correct, you had two different sites?

SLOCUM: [00:09:15] I, I only lived in one site, but I was offered two sites.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:09:20] Let's talk about the first site you were offered, which you have told me in the past was Choluteca.

SLOCUM: [00:09:28] I didn't remember the name, but now that you reminded me. Yeah, I believe that was it.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:09:32] I think it was. Okay. What were you supposed to do when you went there? Well, not that it happened, but.

SLOCUM: [00:09:41] What they were looking for was literally just some more manpower, or woman power rather. They were looking for a night supervisor, a night shift supervisor in the hospital.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:09:55] Okay.

SLOCUM: [00:09:56] And I did turn that down because I, for one thing, was not interested in working in a hospital, and I was not interested in working the night shift. And I felt that what I really wanted to do was teach work in an outpatient community. And I felt that that was going to probably have a bigger impact than. That there was other nurses that could fill that open slot for a nursing supervisor on the night shift.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:10:23] Okay. So that's what you thought initially that you were going to be doing?

SLOCUM: [00:10:29] Yes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:10:29] And I know we'll talk later on about your, the site you really did go to. Okay. Let's go to the sixth question. Training, where did you train? And then you could add things like if you want to say about the faculty, if there was a syllabus, you know, technical studies, other factors. And then there is another part of it that talks about the language training. So tell us first about where you were trained. Where did you live?

SLOCUM: [00:10:57] I was trained in Tegucigalpa at the training center, it was called, and I lived with a host family in the suburbs of Tegucigalpa. I

was their first volunteer trainee that they'd ever had. And sadly, either they misunderstood their, um, their role, or I'm not sure what happened there, but I really never, I had very little contact with them. I ate by myself. They put the food on the table and I ate and then they ate later. They didn't interact with me. They didn't, I very rarely was invited into the living room with them to watch, they had a TV, and I was sad and disappointed about that.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:11:54] Oh, yeah. Yeah.

SLOCUM: [00:11:56] Because I didn't get to speak Spanish either. I lost that opportunity.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:12:00] Mm hmm. Okay. Tell us about your, the faculty at the training center.

SLOCUM: [00:12:04] The faculty was lovely. They were, they were so nice. The women, they were mainly women that were teaching the courses, and they were very, very good teachers, very good educators. I thought that the training language course was so good. I really love the format of that. And I went to Honduras really with no, um, no grasp of the language at all. And I felt that I came out. I was, I was scored zero.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:12:34] Oh, in Spanish? Didn't they say los cero?

SLOCUM: [00:12:36] Los cero.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:12:38] Did you study Spanish in Hutto?

SLOCUM: [00:12:42] I did in high school. But that had been probably, what, six years prior to that? And it was a high school Spanish course. I learned how to say *hola Paco que tal* and that was about it.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:12:54] Okay, I've heard that before. I think I know Paco myself. Um, technical studies during training. What did you learn technically?

SLOCUM: [00:13:06] Hmm. In as far as my job or my?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:13:13] Just because we were in the same group, remember we would go visit a hospital or?

SLOCUM: [00:13:18] We observed, but we didn't get training. I mean, we weren't really training in anything.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:13:23] We did observation.

SLOCUM: [00:13:23] Yeah, we just observed and we got to just tour the big *maternelle infantile* hospital.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:13:29] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [00:13:29] And someone fainted there. I remember one of our colleagues.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:13:34] Yes. One did faint when.

SLOCUM: [00:13:36] Fainted when we saw some of the things that we saw there. But I don't recall having been given any training that would have had anything to do with skills or actual on the job tasks.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:13:54] Yeah. What I remember were the observations.

SLOCUM: [00:13:56] Yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:13:58] Okay. What did you think about the other people in your training group?

SLOCUM: [00:14:01] Oh, it's a great bunch of people. We had a great group.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:14:05] Uh huh.

SLOCUM: [00:14:05] Made friends with some of them that I'm still friends with. Including you.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:14:09] Yeah, that's true. For the listener, Donna and I have known each other since 1978.

SLOCUM: [00:14:14] 40 years.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:14:17] Good Lord. Okay. Do you want to say anything else about the language training before we move on? You thought it was good?

SLOCUM: [00:14:25] I thought it was really good. I really did, because I've subsequently taken other language courses and nothing compares to as good as that was. I mean, I remember having a headache at the end of every single day, but the drills that they put you through and the fact that it was all oral.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:14:41] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [00:14:42] All oral. You just sat there and talked and talked and talked. And you did get to see it written on the blackboard, but it was oral. It was a great, for me at least, the way I learn it was perfect for me.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:14:52] Yeah. Okay. Selection. Well, I know you were selected, but were you surprised by anything with the selection process or disappointed? I don't know, that might. Yeah, I mean, we were all selected.

SLOCUM: [00:15:08] Yeah, I was going to say no.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:15:09] Okay. I think we'll skip that part. Um, hindsight. Did training prepare you? Was it useful to your Peace Corps service, the training that you had?

SLOCUM: [00:15:20] Well, the language prep was really good. But as far as the individual aspects of each person, what they were going to end up doing, I didn't really have any training at all for that.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:15:35] Okay.

SLOCUM: [00:15:36] I don't know if you want me to talk about that later. Do you want me to talk about that now?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:15:39] If you want to say anything, yeah, anything that, um, I mean, I do know like where you did end up. Um. Do you feel like you were prepared when you went to your site? Did the training prepare you?

SLOCUM: [00:15:55] No, not for what I needed and what I ended up having to do there. I wasn't prepared at all.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:16:02] Mm hmm. Okay. If you had gone to Choluteca and stayed there, do you think you might have been prepared?

SLOCUM: [00:16:06] Yes, because I was, I had experience in hospitals. I was a hospital nurse. But what I ended up doing, I'll just go into it.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:16:13] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [00:16:14] Was I was in a clinic on the Bay Islands off the north coast of Honduras. When I arrived there, they did have a physician and a dentist, but the physician only stayed for about five months and she was never replaced. So for the rest of the.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:16:31] Never?

SLOCUM: [00:16:31] Yes, for the rest of the year and a half that I was there, I was, doctors thought I was the doctor. They called me *doctora*.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:16:37] Okay.

SLOCUM: [00:16:38] Even though I corrected them every time. I said, I'm sorry, I'm not a doctor, I'm a nurse. They'd say, that's okay *doctora*.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:16:45] Uh huh.

SLOCUM: [00:16:46] But so what I was left with was no physician to, no resource person, no physician to have as a backup. And tropical diseases that I was not familiar with at all. And there were some protocols in the clinic for malaria and dengue and things like that. But there were so many things that I was just so unfamiliar with. Fortunately, I received from two physicians that, early on when I was there, had come to the islands for a visit and they visited the clinic and they saw the situation that I was in. And when they got home, they sent me four books on tropical medicine.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:17:28] Oh, really?

SLOCUM: [00:17:29] Yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:17:29] Okay.

SLOCUM: [00:17:29] And they also sent me information on treatments and drugs and disease recognition, and those books were so valuable to me.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:17:38] Wow.

SLOCUM: [00:17:39] I was so tempted to take them back to the States with me, but I left them there because they were wonderful. And that was a real godsend.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:17:45] Yes.

SLOCUM: [00:17:46] But I did things that, I mean, I functioned as a physician in so many respects. And I remember thinking, I'm going to get sued. But then I thought, well, I don't think so.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:17:55] Yeah, right, right.

SLOCUM: [00:17:56] Probably not. But I delivered babies and I was taught by the dentist how to suture. I sutured a lot of wounds.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:18:02] The dentist taught you?

SLOCUM: [00:18:04] The dentist taught me how to suture.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:18:05] What was the dentist's name?

SLOCUM: [00:18:06] I don't remember.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:18:07] Okay.

SLOCUM: [00:18:08] It was just, it's been, what? How long has it been since then, 39 years?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:18:11] Yeah, yeah.

SLOCUM: [00:18:13] I don't remember. I know what she looks like, but I don't remember her name. But she was great and she did help me how to suture. And I did a lot of machete wounds, especially in children. I took care of a lot of asthmatics, delivered babies, as I said, um, and of course, the usual. Malaria, dengue, parasites, amoebas, worms, you know, accidents, seizures.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:18:38] Yeah, I think.

SLOCUM: [00:18:40] I learned a lot.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:18:41] Yeah, you have, you have a wealth of stories that you could tell.

SLOCUM: [00:18:45] Mm hmm.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:18:47] Which we will continue with. Just thinking about, can you remember when you arrived in country? How did you feel? You know, like observing the people, listening, smelling even? I mean, how did you feel when you arrived in Honduras?

SLOCUM: [00:19:03] Well, being in a country, of course, I'd been in a foreign country before, but just being there for days, which turned into weeks, and not understanding the language, because I arrived with such little grasp of Spanish, that was something that I found to be very disconcerting. I knew it would get better, but that was hard. Um. Things were different, obviously, you're in another country. Things were different. I don't remember feeling lonely or feeling that I'd made the wrong decision. I was very excited about being there and just, you know, getting on with the whole experience.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:19:41] Okay. Anything that you remember that you might want to share about the people when you arrived?

SLOCUM: [00:19:47] The Hondurans?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:19:48] The Hondurans.

SLOCUM: [00:19:48] Or the other Peace Corps?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:19:50] The Hondurans.

SLOCUM: [00:19:51] Well, at that point honestly, we didn't have a lot of, you know, it was mainly walking in the street, going into shops. The only, the only real contact we had with Hondurans was mainly with the training center at that point. And then my host family.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:20:09] Yeah. Who did not include you.

SLOCUM: [00:20:11] Who, very sadly, yeah. Just kind of, you know. And my friend who's sitting right here.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:20:16] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [00:20:17] She had a lovely host family and I loved to go to her house because they all ate meals together and laughed and talked and.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:20:24] They included me.

SLOCUM: [00:20:25] And they included you on everything. And I was kind of sad that I had that. At the same time, I was just glad I had your house to go to.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:20:33] Okay. We've already touched on your assignment, but let's see what else we might talk about with your assignment. So you never, you did make a visit to Choluteca I believe.

SLOCUM: [00:20:46] I did.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:20:47] And did you know right from the get-go, this is not for me?

SLOCUM: [00:20:51] Immediately.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:20:52] Okay. How did Peace Corps react when you told them, I can't go there, or whatever words you used?

SLOCUM: [00:20:58] They were fine.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:20:59] They were? Okay.

SLOCUM: [00:21:00] Yeah, my, uh, the manager, the program manager was.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:21:07] Ione.

SLOCUM: [00:21:07] Ione, Ione Adams, yeah. She was, she just said, okay, you know, we don't, if this isn't going to fit you. And she also, I don't know that she really understood that they wanted me to work the night shift.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:21:18] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [00:21:18] I think that that really wasn't an understanding that they had had. And I said, if I work the night shift, I'll go back to the States where there's air conditioning. I can sleep during the day and.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:21:29] Yeah, and if I remember right, did she say something like was it the nurse supervisor that worked there, kind of operated vending machines?

SLOCUM: [00:21:37] Oh, my gosh. Yeah. That the director of nursing.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:21:40] Director of nursing.

SLOCUM: [00:21:41] Had in the courtyard of the hospital a little kiosk, and she sold sodas there and candy. And so that's kind of what she did during the day.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:21:51] Did she direct the nursing department, as far as you know?

SLOCUM: [00:21:54] I don't. I can't see how, but I don't know. I wasn't there long enough to find out. One thing I did feel a little sad about was after the fact, I did wonder if I could have impacted it at all, because, you know, I was concerned about things like maintaining sterility and understanding just basic concepts of, you know, modern day concepts of care. They had Foley catheters dripping urine into coffee cans on the side of the bed. There were dogs running in and out of the ward.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:22:23] Oh, there were? Okay.

SLOCUM: [00:22:24] Yeah, the linens didn't look very clean. It was a very, very sad hospital. No, of course, no air conditioning.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:22:31] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [00:22:32] And the patients.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:22:33] Very hot.

SLOCUM: [00:22:33] Yes, extremely hot. And no one ate unless family brought them food. Very, very sad. And I after I said I couldn't do it, I felt. I felt

bad. I really did. To this day, when I think about it, I wonder did I make the right decision? However, where I did go, they didn't have a doctor, so they really kind of needed.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:22:52] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [00:22:52] They needed someone there. So. And the fact was they just needed a nurse to work the night shift, is what they needed.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:23:02] Yeah. Okay, well, let's talk more specifically than about your life in Roatan, one of the Bay Islands. And, you know, you went back and told the program manager for health, lone Adams, you couldn't go to Choluteca. She seemed fine with it. How did you end up in Roatan?

SLOCUM: [00:23:22] Well, she, when I went back to Tegucigalpa and I told lone that I just felt that this, this was not the reason I came. She said, well, guess what, we've got something. We haven't had a volunteer in the Bay Islands in years, in many years, and something's coming up in the clinic there, in an outpatient clinic. And I said, that is exactly what I was hoping to have.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:23:44] And I forgot you said you want community health.

SLOCUM: [00:23:46] Yeah, I really, really, really wanted community health. And so that is how I ended up there. So I made the visit, and the minute I was there, I said, this is exactly what I want. There was a physician there at the time, and so my role was going to be more of a teaching capacity, especially in perinatal, handwashing, hygiene, boiling water, that kind of thing. So, um, that's how it started. And then the doctor was gone.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:24:14] In five months.

SLOCUM: [00:24:14] In five months.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:24:15] And they never replaced the doctor?

SLOCUM: [00:24:18] They replaced the, they, we did get a physician for a very short amount of time, but he actually also had a karate studio. And so he spent a really large amount of his time in his karate studio.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:24:33] I don't remember that, but that's very interesting.

SLOCUM: [00:24:35] He did.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:24:36] Okay. Listener, I'm sorry I'm laughing, but okay, so we're talking about the doctor's karate studio.

SLOCUM: [00:24:43] He also had a wife that was always at the clinic, Betty.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:24:49] I don't remember her.

SLOCUM: [00:24:51] Remember me telling you?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:24:52] I think, you could tell me more because actually it was quite an interesting story.

SLOCUM: [00:24:56] She was kind of running the clinic and then even when he wasn't there, she was running the clinic when he was at the karate studio. And he also had some very dubious practices. He did a DNC in the clinic with unsterile equipment without the patient's permission. And I went to the Ministry of Health and along with the dentist, she went with me, and we talked to the head, the head, she was the manager or whatever they're called.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:25:32] At the Ministry of Health.

SLOCUM: [00:25:33] Yeah. And, um, and I had kind of a laundry list of things that were, plus some equipment that was disappearing from the clinic. So he was removed.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:25:43] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [00:25:43] So he was removed and which was okay. But then we'd never got a physician again. So that's how I ended up pretty much for a year and a half not having a doctor there.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:25:56] Wow. Okay. Can you explain a typical day, and maybe there wasn't a typical day, but what comes to your mind when I ask you that question? A typical day at that *centro de salud*, I'm guessing.

SLOCUM: [00:26:10] Yeah, well, Monday through Friday I was there by 8:00. And of course, we shut down for, was it an hour or 2 hours? I can't remember. But so we shut down.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:26:21] At lunchtime, I'm guessing.

SLOCUM: [00:26:22] For the mid time, for lunch. And then we were there till 5:00 or 6:00, and we just saw a slew of patients. And I did have what would be the equivalent of an American LVN nurse who helped me.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:26:35] And was is LVN, Donna, for the listener?

SLOCUM: [00:26:37] An LVN is a licensed vocational nurse who doesn't have as much education as a registered nurse. And their role is very different. And she was a great nurse, so she was really good. She taught, she did teach me a lot. Thank goodness for her.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:26:52] She did, good.

SLOCUM: [00:26:53] She did. And we would usually spend the end of each day washing gloves, turning them inside out, drying them, wrapping them in brown paper bags, and then sterilizing them the next morning in the pressure.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:27:07] In the autoclave, yes.

SLOCUM: [00:27:08] No, no. The pressure cooker.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:27:09] Oh, pressure cooker? I thought you had an autoclave.

SLOCUM: [00:27:12] We put it on the kerosene stove.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:27:13] Yes, absolutely.

SLOCUM: [00:27:15] And then we boiled the needles.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:27:17] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [00:27:17] We boiled the needles.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:27:18] And use them again.

SLOCUM: [00:27:20] We'd use them until you could no longer see the markings on the side, so you were kind of guessing at the dosage. Dosing them out, as sad and as scary as that is, I mean, thank goodness we didn't have anything greater than a three CC syringe. So you could kind of, most of them were used for giving penicillin. So. And I didn't even have a magic marker to mark them on the sides. So you would just kind of guess from whatever other syringes you had. So we had to prepare a lot of equipment. And order supplies, do that kind of thing. But I also often had patients come to me in the evening and it was usually.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:28:00] They knew where you lived.

SLOCUM: [00:28:00] They knew where I lived and it was mainly kids that came and. But at the clinic, kids came without their parents. I mean, it was very unusual for kids to show up with their parents.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:28:12] With their parents.

SLOCUM: [00:28:13] With their parents. And often they came in for something like an injury, usually a machete injury, and I had to suture it, clean it up and suture it.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:28:22] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [00:28:23] So, uh, but at my house, I had one little patient. His name was Tony. He was a doll. He had bad asthma. So I kept aminophylline at my house.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:28:34] Because of him.

SLOCUM: [00:28:35] Because of him. So I had syringes and tourniquets and all the equipment that needed to give him aminophylline. And that was all I had, aminophylline, that was it. But it would usually, it would fix it. And then he would stay for a while. And I'd give him a peanut butter sandwich. And he liked to sing. So once he could breathe again, he would sit on my porch and sing.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:28:55] Really? That's a lovely story.

SLOCUM: [00:28:56] He was so adorable. He was. I heard down the road that he died of an asthma attack. So. Yeah, but he was, he was such a doll.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:29:07] Yeah. I'm assuming that you could tell many, many stories about your time as Dr. Stern. Oh, excuse me, La Doctora Stern in Roatan. Now, what was the name of the town you lived in?

SLOCUM: [00:29:20] Coxen Hole.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:29:20] Could you spell that for us?

SLOCUM: [00:29:22] C-O-X-E-N.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:29:26] Hole. H-O-L-E. And that was the town in Roatan, the island of Roatan, where you lived. And other stories may come to mind or anything else you might want to share about a typical day at your assignment in Coxen Hole?

SLOCUM: [00:29:41] Well, initially when we had a physician, my typical day was mainly doing classes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:29:46] Okay.

SLOCUM: [00:29:46] And I would go to.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:29:47] Who did you teach for?

SLOCUM: [00:29:48] So I started by trying to teach some prenatal classes, pregnant moms, and those were so interesting. I learned more than I taught.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:29:58] Okay. Oh, and I'm interrupting myself. What language did you speak in?

SLOCUM: [00:30:01] Oh, English. Everything, almost everything was in English.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:30:04] Yes.

SLOCUM: [00:30:04] Unless someone from the Ministry of Health came. And then I had to find, I did find out that my regular English wasn't going to work because it was Caribbean English.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:30:13] Yours, for what?

SLOCUM: [00:30:14] My English. For example, they didn't understand me, the way I spoke. For example, it was a Caribbean English.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:30:22] Oh, okay, Caribbean, that they spoke?

SLOCUM: [00:30:24] That they spoke. For example, I remember the first time someone came in and said to me, I said, I said, what's going on? And they said, I got one open belly mon.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:30:33] Okay, hold on. For the listener, I didn't get that. Can you repeat that once again, Donna?

SLOCUM: [00:30:40] I got one open belly mon.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:30:42] I got one open belly mon. Okay, could you tell us what that means?

SLOCUM: [00:30:45] That means I have diarrhea. I have an open belly, man.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:30:50] Okay, I never would have guessed that one.

SLOCUM: [00:30:52] In other words, your belly is open and everything's coming out. You have diarrhea.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:30:57] Oh.

SLOCUM: [00:30:58] Or I remember one.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:30:59] How did you find that out?

SLOCUM: [00:31:00] I had to keep asking the question. But they, that's how they would describe diarrhea. And I remember one fellow that came in that was injured, and I said, what happened? He said, I fell off she moto. I fell off of her motorcycle.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:31:16] Yeah, yeah. That one kind of made sense. Okay. But did you say she moto?

SLOCUM: [00:31:21] She moto. Her motorcycle.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:31:24] Oh. Her.

SLOCUM: [00:31:25] Her motorcycle. Yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:31:27] Really. Okay. Okay.

SLOCUM: [00:31:30] So, yeah, so language was, um, my Spanish sadly did not improve a lot the two years that I was here because I spoke English. So then when people that did speak Spanish came in, which was not very often, I really struggled. I really struggled a lot. I did, I mean, I

did learn some. I mean, there was enough spoken that I got to practice some and the LVN spoke Spanish only.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:31:55] Okay.

SLOCUM: [00:31:56] But the rest of us. I had a couple of other helpers that helped in the, and they spoke, they spoke English, the Caribbean English.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:32:04] She moto.

SLOCUM: [00:32:05] She moto.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:32:05] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [00:32:07] So, uh, yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:32:09] Okay. Tell us about your living conditions. Where did you live in Coxen Hole?

SLOCUM: [00:32:16] I lived in a wooden structure that was made out of plywood sheets on pier and beam.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:32:25] On what?

SLOCUM: [00:32:25] Pier and beam, just up off the ground.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:32:28] Oh, okay.

SLOCUM: [00:32:28] And there weren't any windows, there weren't any screens. There were just wooden shutters that opened and closed.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:32:34] So an opening, I mean.

SLOCUM: [00:32:35] Just an opening with a wooden shutter I could close. Yeah. And then the walls.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:32:40] Any screens on your windows?

SLOCUM: [00:32:41] No screens. And the walls did not meet the roof. So there was about maybe a 4 to 5 inch opening. Which kind of was good.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:32:51] For ventilation.

SLOCUM: [00:32:52] Air path. However, everything, every varmint in the world came in too.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:32:56] Can you tell us the varmints that came in?

SLOCUM: [00:32:59] Yes. Well, I had a terrible rat problem for a while, and I had to hire some guys that were coming through town that said they were exterminators to get rid of my rats. It was good timing.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:33:10] Yes, okay.

SLOCUM: [00:33:10] And when they came into the house to get rid of the rats, a bunch of snakes slithered out of the house.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:33:17] Do you know what kind of snakes?

SLOCUM: [00:33:19] They were black. And I'm not sure. I don't think they were poisonous. But I didn't even know I had the snakes. But I had a semblance of a kitchen. There were these, there was a little row of cabinets, and they were underneath these cabinets.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:33:32] The snakes were under the cabinets, okay.

SLOCUM: [00:33:34] So there was a snake nest under there. So whatever poison they used got rid of the snakes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:33:39] Also.

SLOCUM: [00:33:39] And also some spiders came out too. And then that night the rats commenced to rattle around on the rafters. And I didn't have

a ceiling, it was just rafters. And these rats were big and they were really, really bold. I remember playing a flashlight on them. You could see their red reflex in their eyes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:33:59] Really?

SLOCUM: [00:33:59] And they just stared at me. It was like, I dare you.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:34:02] Could you guess how long they might have been?

SLOCUM: [00:34:04] Oh my gosh, 12 inches? They were so huge.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:34:08] Oh my gosh.

SLOCUM: [00:34:08] And they would there was at least four, maybe five of them, that walked across the rafters. One night one fell. And I said, that's it. And so I got the exterminators.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:34:17] Did it ever fall on you or?

SLOCUM: [00:34:19] No, thank God. I got the, I found the exterminators. They'd gone to the other end of the island. They came back and I told them, the rats are still in the house. And they were so hilarious. They said, you know, I think we need Kill Rat.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:34:32] Is that like rat kill, would you say so?

SLOCUM: [00:34:35] It's some kind of.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:34:35] Kill Rat.

SLOCUM: [00:34:36] It was called Kill Rat and it literally was in English and it said Kill Rat on it. So they ran out and bought Kill Rat.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:34:42] Okay.

SLOCUM: [00:34:44] Put it in the house. But in the meantime, I had to sleep on my neighbor's porch and I remember hearing them rattling around and putting the flashlight over to my house at night and I'd see them walking around.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:34:56] Oh, the rats?

SLOCUM: [00:34:57] Yes, but they put the Kill Rat out and within about a week they were gone. And I got to go back to the house.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:35:05] Oh my goodness.

SLOCUM: [00:35:06] Yes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:35:06] Snakes.

SLOCUM: [00:35:07] Snakes, spiders, rats.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:35:09] How about bats?

SLOCUM: [00:35:11] Nope, no bats.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:35:13] No bats.

SLOCUM: [00:35:14] No bats.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:35:15] Okay. Did you have a big mosquito problem?

SLOCUM: [00:35:16] Yes. Yes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:35:17] Inside the house, I mean?

SLOCUM: [00:35:18] In the house, out of the house. And initially, I didn't realize how bad the mosquitoes were on the island, and I was just eaten alive on my arms and lower legs. And I found out that I either had to wear repellent all the time or long sleeve everything, and it was too hot to wear long sleeves. So I did the repellent and I initially had

infected mosquito bites on my arms. To this day, I'm scarred from it. They got so infected.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:35:44] Really?

SLOCUM: [00:35:44] Well, it's fading. A little bit dramatic over that.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:35:50] Did you ever get malaria or dengue fever?

SLOCUM: [00:35:54] Well, I didn't get dengue, but I, when I returned to the States, I had symptoms of malaria. I started having cyclic fevers. And of course, when I went to the doctor, they did the blood test. It was negative because you have to be febrile basically.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:36:09] Okay.

SLOCUM: [00:36:10] But it only, it only happened once and then it was over. And I don't know, I don't know if it was malaria or not. I really don't know. I did. There was a PhD student from Princeton who was there when I was there and he.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:36:21] In Roatan, in Coxen Hole?

SLOCUM: [00:36:22] Yes. Well, yeah, he was working on, um. There was a different language spoken on the other end of the island that he was writing.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:36:30] And what was that?

SLOCUM: [00:36:31] It was Garifano [Garifuna].

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:36:32] Okay. And for the, for the listener, would you spell Garifano?

SLOCUM: [00:36:36] Well, I don't know that there is a spelling.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:36:39] I think.

SLOCUM: [00:36:39] G-A-R. Garif?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:36:41] I-F-U-N-A.

SLOCUM: [00:36:43] I-N-O. Garifino?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:36:45] Oh. Oh yeah. Okay. What is, what is Garifuna?

SLOCUM: [00:36:50] It is, uh, Garifuna. It was a language spoken by the inhabitants of the opposite end of the island that I was living on. And it was supposedly a combination of. I don't know if I'm remembering.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:37:06] An African dialect, wasn't it?

SLOCUM: [00:37:08] Yes. Because they were, um.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:37:11] Had been slaves I think.

SLOCUM: [00:37:12] They had been. They came from the Mosquitia and then they were also from, they were also Black.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:37:19] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [00:37:20] So it was like an Indian and a Black combination and they had their own language. And so he was working on this. And the reason I'm bringing him up is he got a terrible case of dengue fever. Terrible. And he came to my house and we had some IVs and actually they sold IVs you could buy for your own use at the local pharmacy. So I went and got some IVs and I let him stay in my house and I gave him IV fluids and medication for the fever and whatever I had at the time. And he improved enough to go home, to get a plane and get home. So and he didn't come back for the duration that I was there. He wasn't finished. So I don't know if he ever came back. It was, he was pretty sick.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:38:05] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [00:38:05] And, you know, this was so long ago that I may not be remembering correctly. He may have been in a hospital on the mainland for a while. I would imagine, because he was really sick.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:38:13] Yeah. Okay.

SLOCUM: [00:38:14] Yeah, but I never got dengue.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:38:17] Okay. How was your relation with the people of Coxen Hole?

SLOCUM: [00:38:23] It was good. It was good, yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:38:25] Did you make friends?

SLOCUM: [00:38:26] I did. They were friendly and they were nice and being that we all spoke English, it was easier to get to know people and they were accustomed to, since it was an island, there was this, there was a resort on the other side of the island. So they were accustomed to seeing Americans and people from other countries come through off the little DC-3s that brought in the tourists.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:38:48] DC-3s, yes.

SLOCUM: [00:38:49] DC-3s.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:38:49] Yeah. Those are rather old aren't they?

SLOCUM: [00:38:51] Yes. We, the only thing that came to the island was DC-3s and they had a caliche landing strip.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:38:58] Say that again, they had a what?

SLOCUM: [00:38:59] Caliche. Caliche is.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:39:01] What is that?

SLOCUM: [00:39:01] It's like the thing that's used for pavement in countries, for country roads. It's kind of dusty, it's a compressed gravel, and there's probably a better explanation for what it is.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:39:11] Do you know how to spell caliche?

SLOCUM: [00:39:12] I don't. It's with a C, I think, caliche. But it was a short runway and I remember many times being on the plane, the DC-3, and I pretty much knew from the landmarks when we needed to get lifted and sometimes thinking, oh my God, but.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:39:29] Otherwise you'd be in the water.

SLOCUM: [00:39:31] Otherwise you'd be in the water, but nothing ever happened. Those were amazing planes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:39:35] So I was like a gravel like.

SLOCUM: [00:39:37] Yeah, yeah. It was, it wasn't pavement, and it wasn't smooth because it was caliche so.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:39:43] Okay, I never heard that word. Okay. Were there other Peace Corps volunteers in your town?

SLOCUM: [00:39:48] No.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:39:48] Were there other Peace Corps volunteers on the island of Roatan?

SLOCUM: [00:39:51] No.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:39:52] How about Utila or Guanaja?

SLOCUM: [00:39:55] No, no.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:39:55] You were it.

SLOCUM: [00:39:55] That was it on the whole thing.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:39:57] For the whole time you were there.

SLOCUM: [00:39:58] The whole time, yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:39:59] Okay. Now this, I'm not sure why this is here. This is talk about the Peace Corps staff and this is assignment. Um. I'm going to skip that part. Tell us about your leisure time. What did you do when you weren't working at the clinic?

SLOCUM: [00:40:16] I play the piano and of course I couldn't bring a piano with me. I play the piano, but I couldn't take a piano with me. So I took my, I bought a guitar and took it down there.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:40:28] Did you know how to play the guitar?

SLOCUM: [00:40:30] No, but I learned there because I knew I had to play something musical so, and I bought a chord book, so I learned how to play.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:40:37] You taught yourself.

SLOCUM: [00:40:38] Yeah, it's not that hard, the guitar. So with the chord book, I learned how to play the guitar.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:40:44] Okay.

SLOCUM: [00:40:44] Not that I play it now, but I did then. I played pretty well for about 20 years.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:40:49] And what else did you do with your leisure time?

SLOCUM: [00:40:50] And I read a lot. That was hard though, because I had to read around a candle or a kerosene lamp and it was really hot. And I usually didn't have time in the day to read. And then on the

weekends, fortunately I did have a fair amount of visitors. I didn't know most of them. They came to see me.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:41:12] Well, who come to visit you?

SLOCUM: [00:41:13] Peace Corps volunteers. And so because it was an island, you know, people wanted to come to the island, so they would come and I would always let anyone stay with me that was a Peace Corps volunteer. So I had.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:41:25] Was there people you really had no idea who they were?

SLOCUM: [00:41:27] Oh, yeah. Yeah. I usually got a telegram though or. Now, some people showed up and I knew them. I knew who they were.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:41:35] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [00:41:36] And but there were some, or I would know one person in a group and I'd say, okay, you're going to sleep on the floor, but you can stay here. I've got some sheets. And I remember these two guys, oh my God. They were sleeping on the floor. I think I had ten people in the house that day, and I heard nothing but whining and complaining all night about not having a bed. And I'm like, I have one bed.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:41:57] Yeah, yeah.

SLOCUM: [00:41:58] And it's a single. So that's all I've got.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:42:00] Yeah. Huh. If I may ask, okay, is your house sounds very simple. Did you have a toilet or did you have to use an outhouse?

SLOCUM: [00:42:10] Well, they. I lived next door to my landlord and my landlord, he was a sailor. He was gone most of the time. But he did have enough of the resources and funds to build a bathroom.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:42:23] Inside your house?

SLOCUM: [00:42:25] Yeah, it was, it was attached to the house. So there was a toilet and there was a concrete shower, but there was no water in the house pumped in, but it was hooked to a septic. So what I did, I could use the toilet and I could stand there and take a bath or a shower with like cups. I paid children to go fetch water for me.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:42:45] And where did they go?

SLOCUM: [00:42:47] There, you could go down the hill, down the road. And there were some faucets down there, and they would bring buckets of water to my house. And so I had this big tin that I'd bought, or I had the kids go get for me, and I kept it full of water. And with that, I could bathe every day. And I stood there and just bathed.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:43:06] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [00:43:06] And I could do it with, like, a cereal bowl. I mean, I got so good at it.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:43:10] And you mean like a?

SLOCUM: [00:43:12] A cereal bowl of water, yeah. Two cereal bowls.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:43:15] There was no cereal in there.

SLOCUM: [00:43:16] Not usually.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:43:19] Okay.

SLOCUM: [00:43:19] But then I had to use a fair amount, of course, to flush the toilet. And honestly, thank gosh, it usually flushed. It really did. I was, I was lucky on the, in that respect. I didn't have electricity. I didn't have any running water. I didn't have a way to cook. I did buy a kerosene burner with the kerosene bottle. And that kind of blew up and smoked and almost burned. And I just said, to heck with that and

kind of just lived on sandwiches. I'd go to a restaurant every now and then.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:43:49] Okay. Was there, I know some of us on the mainland would go eat, um. I mean, we would pay them.

SLOCUM: [00:43:56] In homes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:43:56] In homes. And they would call it a *comedor*, C-O-M-E-D-O-R, which was like a dining room. Did they have stuff like that in Coxen Hole?

SLOCUM: [00:44:03] I had asked my landlady if she would be interested in letting me buy dinner every night or at least five nights a week. And she wasn't interested in that, for whatever reasons. I think, I don't know. She was busy and she just wasn't always home to cook. And we really on that island, we didn't have *comedors*, we had restaurants.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:44:23] Okay.

SLOCUM: [00:44:23] And people just didn't really do that. They didn't really have people go to their house and eat. So I would just go to a restaurant or I'd make a sandwich. And one of my favorite things was smoked oysters and sardines. I just loved them.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:44:34] Really?

SLOCUM: [00:44:35] Yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:44:35] Like you would buy them at the store?

SLOCUM: [00:44:36] I would buy them at the store and I would eat them. And there was a man who was of the Baha'i faith who one night in a dream received this wonderful recipe from God for bread. And I'm not kidding. His bread was divine. And so I bought bread from the Baha'i

guy every day and I made sandwiches with that. It was delicious bread. I think it just had coconut milk in it.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:45:00] I wonder, yes, yeah. Cause I.

SLOCUM: [00:45:02] But it was really good. Yeah. So yeah, that's kind of how I ate.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:45:07] Since I know that you, living on the island, that people would go there to snorkel, scuba dive, swim, you know. Did you, were you able to do any of these activities on the weekends?

SLOCUM: [00:45:18] I did. I befriended some people who were in other ministries, agriculture, fisheries. And so I became friends with them. So we would snorkel together. I never scuba dived, but I did snorkel and we would swim. And sometimes, you know, other Peace Corps volunteers, of course, you know, go swimming with them. Most of that did not occur in Coxen Hole. That was not a good beach there. It really wasn't a beach as a matter of fact. It was filled with outhouses over the water. So you didn't do that there.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:45:50] Yeah, okay.

SLOCUM: [00:45:50] Yeah. I mean that was just.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:45:52] Outhouses over the water.

SLOCUM: [00:45:52] Outhouses over the water for as far as you could see. So you did not get in the water there. So you had to go walk to a beach. Of course I had a bicycle, but, uh. Or you would take a *busito* to the other side of the island where there was a resort.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:46:07] A *busito* was a little bus?

SLOCUM: [00:46:08] It's a little bus, yes. And hopefully it had brakes. I remember several times being on the bus and the fellow driving the

bus kept downshifting when we went downhill. I remember one time I was sitting at the front. I said, why do you keep downshifting?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:46:22] No brakes?

SLOCUM: [00:46:23] And he said, *no hay frenos*.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:46:24] Which, and tell us what *no hay frenos* means?

SLOCUM: [00:46:27] No brakes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:46:28] No brakes.

SLOCUM: [00:46:29] I'm like, oh well, *dios mio*. He's not going fast. We'll be fine.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:46:37] How often do you think you would have Peace Corps volunteers just show up to stay with you?

SLOCUM: [00:46:42] Well, you know, around the holidays, I would have a number of them and then I could go for a couple of months without anyone coming.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:46:48] Okay. It wasn't like every week?

SLOCUM: [00:46:49] No, no, no. It was a real hit and miss thing. Yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:46:54] Okay. Did you, were there dances?

SLOCUM: [00:46:57] No, no.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:46:59] Movie theater?

SLOCUM: [00:47:01] Yes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:47:02] Did you go?

SLOCUM: [00:47:03] Sometimes. It was, it was, it. Pretty much when you went, the reels usually broke.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:47:11] Okay.

SLOCUM: [00:47:11] But it was still fun to go. And of course, there were dogs running in and out of the movie theater. There were ladies that were always selling sandwiches out front. You could buy beer inside. And if the movie wasn't good from the balcony, the beer bottles hit the screen.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:47:24] Okay.

SLOCUM: [00:47:25] Sometimes beer came over the side of the balcony.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:47:28] Yeah, okay. That's really interesting.

SLOCUM: [00:47:30] Yeah, it was. It was.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:47:32] Yeah. Oh, how about, I know in some communities, church life is important.

SLOCUM: [00:47:37] Yes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:47:38] Was there a church, churches in your town? Did you go? What faiths were there?

SLOCUM: [00:47:44] There was a Baptist church and, um, I did go initially.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:47:52] To the Baptist church.

SLOCUM: [00:47:53] To the Baptist Church, and they had a piano they let me play there. So they would let me go and play the piano.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:47:59] Okay.

SLOCUM: [00:48:00] I have to, I have to be honest and say as the two years marched on, I didn't go as often as I did initially. But I did get to know a lot of people in the community by doing that. And I did play for their choir at times.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:48:12] Oh, did you? Okay.

SLOCUM: [00:48:13] Yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:48:13] Good, good. Did they have other denominations there?

SLOCUM: [00:48:19] Not in Coxen Hole. It was just the Baptist Church. Yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:48:23] Okay, well, let's go on to the ninth question. The end of your first year, can you think back and what notable events transpired? What were your reflections after a year? Then it's going to ask about health problems and stuff like that. So anything that you can think about. Can you remember how your life was after a year in Coxen Hole?

SLOCUM: [00:48:47] After a year in Coxen Hole, I was pretty happy. I mean, one thing I was, was I was busy. I was very busy. I mean, I worked every day, sometimes even on Sundays. Sometimes people came to my house.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:49:00] Oh.

SLOCUM: [00:49:01] So I was busy. I mean, they came to me in the middle of the night if they had an emergency. And which was not very often, I have to admit, that was not very often. But they did. The kids would come. I think the kids just liked peanut butter sandwiches.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:49:15] That's possible. Okay.

SLOCUM: [00:49:18] They'd have an itch or they'd have a, they'd have a scratch or something. I had a little girl who lived with her sister and they were obviously so poor and she was so skinny. She had a terrible case of

worms and I let her become my maid. And so she would come and sort of sweep the floor. She was so tiny and she wore these huge, huge, like evening gown sort of dresses that she had gotten. The boat would come with donated clothes and she loved beautiful net dresses or ballerina type dresses. And they were, of course, never fit her. She was so tiny. But she would come and clean my house.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:49:55] Okay, sweet.

SLOCUM: [00:49:56] And then I would always give her a loaf of bread and maybe some sardines or something. She got some Baha'i bread. And so I was busy. I was really busy. I have to say, even though I was busy and I was friendly with many of the islanders, I was, it was, it was lonely because I was the only American there. I was the only one, you know, there was no one to really share that experience with me that I could directly relate to. So I do remember being, just getting really lonely.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:50:29] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [00:50:30] Just getting really, really lonely.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:50:31] Yeah. Okay. Which I think happens to many of us.

SLOCUM: [00:50:35] Yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:50:38] Any unexpected events or relationships that happened around that time, a year into your service?

SLOCUM: [00:50:46] Well, no. Later maybe.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:50:49] Okay. Later. Okay. Health problems?

SLOCUM: [00:50:52] I was really healthy, unbelievably healthy. As a matter of fact, I used to get a lot of headaches in the two years I was down there. I had brought a huge bottle of aspirin because it's kind of all we had back then. I barely touched it the two years I was there, I was so

healthy. I did get amoebas once, but that was easily fixed with some Flagyl.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:51:09] What did you do about drinking water?

SLOCUM: [00:51:13] There was no potable water there.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:51:15] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [00:51:15] And you could boil it, but it still didn't look very good and there were no filters to filter it with. And it was usually pretty hazy and I just couldn't make myself drink it. And then of course, my stove blew up and I never bought another one.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:51:26] Okay.

SLOCUM: [00:51:28] So I drank rum and Coke or juice or Coke. Or beer.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:51:33] No water. So you really didn't drink water?

SLOCUM: [00:51:34] I didn't. I, listen, I cannot tell you how much I love water from that experience. Oh my gosh. There's nothing like really good water.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:51:43] I know. Yes.

SLOCUM: [00:51:44] And just not ever having it. And we didn't have bottled water back then either.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:51:47] Yeah, I know. Yeah. And any travel, did you travel anywhere?

SLOCUM: [00:51:53] I was on the island quite a bit. Of course I would go periodically to the capital, Tegucigalpa. But in that year, you and I.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:52:01] Yes, I remember.

SLOCUM: [00:52:02] My good friend Barbara here, we took a trip. We were a little over a month. We went through, uh, we went to, we went to the Mayan ruins in northern Honduras and we went through Guatemala. We hit all the hotspots in Guatemala.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:52:13] By bus.

SLOCUM: [00:52:15] By bus, and sometimes foot.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:52:17] And sometimes foot.

SLOCUM: [00:52:18] And then we came back through El Salvador. And I'll never forget that because we were in this little cheap hotel at night and there was like a gunfight in the street right in front of the hotel. Do you remember that?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:52:28] No, but I remember staying a night, I think it was the Hotel Bruno, if I remember right.

SLOCUM: [00:52:32] You don't remember the gunfight?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:52:33] I don't. I don't.

SLOCUM: [00:52:34] I'll never forget that.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:52:36] Tell me. Sorry, we're laughing listener. Okay. I don't remember that.

SLOCUM: [00:52:45] Yeah. And then we got on the bus the next day. We went through the northern portion of Nicaragua. You remember that? All those Nicaraguan young students were on the bus with us and they were so articulate. They had read Mein Kampf, they'd read all these political, philosophical books, and I was just so amazed. And there was the, you know, there was a revolution going on then and the guerrilla warfare, and we weren't supposed to go to Nicaragua. We kind of went through just a little bit of it and then we went back up to Honduras. So that was fun.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:53:18] Yeah. I don't remember that part, but I remember being in El Salvador for a short time. The gunfight, no.

SLOCUM: [00:53:24] You don't remember the kids on the bus? Talking to them?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:53:26] No.

SLOCUM: [00:53:26] Yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:53:27] No, I don't.

SLOCUM: [00:53:27] They were like older teenagers. They were young.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:53:30] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [00:53:30] And some of them had, their families had sent them away during all the fighting and they were coming back. So yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:53:38] But you know, we all remember different things.

SLOCUM: [00:53:40] We do, don't we? We really do.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:53:42] Now I know you've got many more stories you could tell. I don't want to finish the interview yet. Can you think of any other stories about your life and Coxen Hole? Because I've heard other stories I'm trying to think of.

SLOCUM: [00:53:58] You mean just things that happened?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:53:59] Yeah. Okay, more stories about the clinic if we're doing okay with time.

SLOCUM: [00:54:04] Yeah, we're fine. One night I was sleeping and some kids came and pounding on the door and they told me I had to go help a young lady who was having a baby. And I have to admit, I knew nothing about birthing babies.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:54:19] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [00:54:20] I didn't. I was a med surg nurse, and I didn't have any perinatal experience. I mean, I could teach, but as far as skills for that. I had never delivered a baby in my life nor seen a lot of deliveries. But anyway, I grabbed a medication that I had in the house called Methergine, which helps to contract the uterus and stop bleeding after a birth, and some syringes and some other things. And I didn't have any IVs, I remember, but so I ran down to the house and when I got there there were a few candles on and a kerosene lamp, and there was a 14 year old girl on the floor under newspapers with a baby that was, um, just the legs had been delivered.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:55:04] Okay.

SLOCUM: [00:55:04] And she was, I just, the thing, the main thing I remember about her was she was so stoic. Everyone else was hysterical in the house, but she was so stoic. She wasn't crying. She didn't talk. She was, she was probably petrified.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:55:19] Mm hmm.

SLOCUM: [00:55:20] But for a young teenage girl, I just, that just really struck me. I just remember how quiet she was. But I put gloves on and I couldn't get the baby out. I couldn't do it. And so I told the kids to go to, down the street. There was a man there who owned the pharmacy and he was known for being able to deliver babies. And I'm not sure why they didn't get him the first time instead of me.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:55:47] But he was a pharmacist?

SLOCUM: [00:55:48] He was a pharmacist, but he also had delivered a lot of babies on the island, and they called him Doc Polo because of it.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:55:53] Polo, P-O-L-O?

SLOCUM: [00:55:56] P-O-L-O.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:55:57] Okay.

SLOCUM: [00:55:57] And, um, he came and he twisted the baby around. And if I recall correctly, something cracked. And he got the baby out. Of course, it was dead.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:56:09] By using a lot of force.

SLOCUM: [00:56:11] Yeah, and he kind of had to. We didn't have a way except airplanes to get to the mainland, and they didn't fly at night.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:56:18] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [00:56:18] So he did get the baby out and he did force the placental delivery. He just pulled it out. I remember being petrified that she was going to hemorrhage, but she didn't. And I did give her some Methergine and stayed for a while, cleaned her up. And it was just so, it was just so sad. That's one of the biggest things I remember.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:56:40] And the baby died of course.

SLOCUM: [00:56:41] The baby was dead, yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:56:42] And how did the mother do?

SLOCUM: [00:56:44] The mother was okay. I was so afraid that she was going to hemorrhage. I was just so afraid that she's going to hemorrhage or have a fever later or. And I told her to come to the clinic the next day and she didn't.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:56:54] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [00:56:55] And I had heard that they did get her to the mainland later, is what I had heard. I hope they did, but, uh, anyway.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:57:05] You know, one thing I was going to ask, were there, was there a hospital on the island?

SLOCUM: [00:57:09] No. Just the clinic.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:57:11] Okay. The one of, the Ministry of Health clinic?

SLOCUM: [00:57:14] Yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:57:16] Any other stories that come to your mind?

SLOCUM: [00:57:19] Well, another one was, um, there was a. I was going to the clinic one day and a man walked up to me and his arm was wrapped in a towel and he said, can you fix this? I cut myself. And I opened the towel and he had almost cut his arm off. And I was like, well, no, I can't fix this. And what are we going to do? You know, and I, I actually, I was able to stop some people, and there was a physician who was on sabbatical from the United States.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:57:48] Did you know that?

SLOCUM: [00:57:49] Yes, I knew him. On the other side of the island at the time. And he had brought supplies and he had things with him. And so, fortunately, I was able to get a truck and get him over to the physician and he was able to at least stabilize him until we got him on a plane and got him to the mainland. And that was so scary. And what was so amazing was how, again, very stoic this fellow was. I mean, I would have been hysterical.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:58:12] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [00:58:13] I mean, he had, it was a machete wound. There were so many machete wounds. And yeah, that was a very bad one also.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:58:22] And you said almost severed.

SLOCUM: [00:58:24] Well, to me, yeah. I doubt it was because, you know, he really wasn't bleeding that badly.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:58:31] Okay. Okay.

SLOCUM: [00:58:33] Otherwise, I would have had to have applied a tourniquet. He was not dripping blood. It was bad though.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:58:37] Wow.

SLOCUM: [00:58:37] It was more of the muscle that was so, that had been cut into. Yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:58:43] It sounds like you learned a lot. Now, some of your counterparts. I know the doctor left after five months. Sounds like the LVN, the licensed vocational nurse, was a help. You had a good relationship.

SLOCUM: [00:58:55] Yes, she was good. She was good.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:58:56] The dentist also?

SLOCUM: [00:58:57] Yeah, the dentist helped me so much. So much. And she also provided some friendship too. She was a really, you know, she was a very nice, happy, bouncy person. And she was only there six months though.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:59:08] Oh, she wasn't there the whole time?

SLOCUM: [00:59:10] No, she wasn't there the whole time.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:59:11] Did a dentist come to replace her?

SLOCUM: [00:59:13] No, no, no.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:59:15] Oh, you really were alone.

SLOCUM: [00:59:16] Yeah. Thank goodness for the LPN.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:59:18] Okay.

SLOCUM: [00:59:20] Yeah, yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:59:21] Was your clinics? This is something I just thought of. Was your clinic stocked with some medications for the folks?

SLOCUM: [00:59:28] Yes. We had penicillin because, um, gonorrhea and syphilis were big problems. And I knew if a man came to the clinic, I knew what he was there for because otherwise they didn't come in.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:59:41] Yeah. Yeah.

SLOCUM: [00:59:42] And, um.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:59:43] And a vaccine of penicillin, I mean, a vaccine. A shot of penicillin.

SLOCUM: [00:59:49] One in each hip.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:59:49] For one of those venereal diseases.

SLOCUM: [00:59:51] Yeah, for those venereal diseases. And we had worm medicine and we had Flagyl for amoebas. And we had, um, we had some.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:00:01] Aralen for malaria?

SLOCUM: [01:00:02] Yes, yes. Primaquine and chloroquine. We had them. Aralen. I don't think, I don't remember having Aralen. That was a preventative.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:00:08] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [01:00:09] But primaquine and chloroquine. And we had some other PO antibiotics. At this time, I don't remember what they were, but we didn't have a lot and we ran out at times too so.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:00:23] And you mentioned that there was a pharmacist. I mean, he had his own private pharmacy. Doc Polo?

SLOCUM: [01:00:29] Doc Polo, yeah. But, but he was not affiliated with the clinic. And at his pharmacy you could buy syringes, antibiotics, IVs, and find someone that could give you a shot of whatever you thought you needed or to give you some IV fluids and.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:00:45] Wow.

SLOCUM: [01:00:46] I really didn't have people come to me for that. You know, there were other ladies that, there were houses that said, *se inyecto aqui*.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:00:53] Tell us what that means, Donna.

SLOCUM: [01:00:55] That means "I give shots here."

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:00:57] Yeah. *Se inyecto aqui*.

SLOCUM: [01:00:59] So. Yeah. But I can't remember anyone even coming to me and asking me at my house. It was always in the clinic setting, to give them like a penicillin shot or.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:01:11] Yeah. So the kids, the people who came to your house sometimes on Sundays, as you said, were often little kids.

SLOCUM: [01:01:17] They were usually kids. They were usually kids. It usually wasn't adults. The adults would come to the clinic on clinic hours, but the kids would just kind of show up and it was kind of fun.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:01:26] You know, I know that this is not part of the questions, but I remember you telling a story before. Didn't you even have a radio

program? Did you? Sorry, listener for just, excuse us while we laugh a little bit. Wasn't there a radio program that you were on?

SLOCUM: [01:01:43] You know, I kind of forgot that. Now that you mention it.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:01:46] Can you tell us about the radio program?

SLOCUM: [01:01:47] Well, let me try to remember what that was.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:01:51] It was a local station.

SLOCUM: [01:01:53] I think it was health tidbits and just some health teaching. Like I believe I was just doing like little things like this is how you boil water. This is why you do it. This is why you wash your cabbage. And this is, you know.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:02:08] Did you come up with the topics yourself or did they say, I want you to talk about drinking safe water?

SLOCUM: [01:02:14] I don't, I don't recall doing it that many times and I believe I came up with the topics.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:02:19] Okay.

SLOCUM: [01:02:20] Yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:02:20] Yeah. Do you remember the radio station?

SLOCUM: [01:02:22] Radio Roatan.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:02:24] Okay. What does that mean in English?

SLOCUM: [01:02:25] Radio Roatan.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:02:26] Okay. Radio. I sorry listener, I can't roll my Rs. Radio Roatan. I kind of did that right now.

SLOCUM: [01:02:33] You did great.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:02:34] Okay. Was there, were there other activities that you did, um, you participated in that come to your mind now in the clinic?

SLOCUM: [01:02:44] Oh, in the clinic?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:02:45] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [01:02:45] One thing I did that I really was happy to do. The inside of the clinic needed to be painted so badly. And they, there was no money for it. The, I had written to the ministry to see if they would get someone to paint it and they didn't. The outside and the inside needed it. There was mold on the walls and there was, I mean, it was, it was dirty. It was really dirty. But I was able to go around and collect enough contributions from some of the businesses to buy paint. And there was a son of one of the patients who always kind of needed work. So he came and painted the whole inside of the clinic. We didn't get the outside painted, we've got the inside, and most of it at least. And then myself and two of the young ladies that worked there, we painted a really cute mural in the, on the wall in the waiting room. Yeah, it was a picture of the island with coconut tree and a rainbow.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:03:43] Say that again?

SLOCUM: [01:03:45] It was like, it was like a picture of the island beach, with the coconut trees and then a beautiful rainbow.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:03:50] Okay.

SLOCUM: [01:03:51] Yeah. It was fun.

SLOCUM: [01:03:55] But as small as that sounds, it was a huge, huge deal, getting people to see the wisdom in making that place look clean. And we cleaned the floors and everything. And to get it painted, it just looked so much better.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:04:10] Yeah, right. You know, another question I just thought of too. When women were pregnant, who delivered their babies generally?

SLOCUM: [01:04:18] Midwives.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:04:18] Oh, so they had midwives.

SLOCUM: [01:04:19] There were a lot of midwives on the island and they were very good. And then Doc Polo.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:04:22] Were they trained?

SLOCUM: [01:04:24] They were, they went to the mainland to get some training. They, they weren't nurses. They were just lay midwives, yeah. And then I'm not sure where Doc Polo got his training, but evidently he was pretty good and pretty, he delivered a lot of babies also.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:04:42] Was he a man from Roatan?

SLOCUM: [01:04:45] Yes. Yes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:04:46] Okay.

SLOCUM: [01:04:48] And actually, I became really good friends with his daughter, who had married a Canadian, and they had children and they lived not too far from my house. We became really good friends and I hung out with them a whole lot.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:04:58] Okay, good.

SLOCUM: [01:04:59] Yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:05:00] Good. Let's see. Oh. Did you have any other jobs when you were in Roatan besides the clinic job?

SLOCUM: [01:05:10] Well, that was a really full time job. However, I have to say that after I'd been there about a year and a half, I was really, as I said, very lonely. And I was working really hard too. I mean, I really worked. And there was a little yacht club that opened up not far up the road where.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:05:31] A Honduran yacht club?

SLOCUM: [01:05:33] It was Honduran owned.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:05:34] Oh, it was Honduran owned, okay.

SLOCUM: [01:05:35] But there were some, I think some other foreign investments in it too, but it was run by Hondurans. And so I knew a few of the fellows that were going to work there on the boats. And so I kind of went down there and hung out and I said, gosh, do you know what? I think I'm really sick of doing what I'm doing, so I'm going to have to quit the Peace Corps now.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:05:57] Okay.

SLOCUM: [01:05:58] And so they gave me a job at the yacht club.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:06:00] Oh, what did you do?

SLOCUM: [01:06:01] Hostess.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:06:03] Hostess, okay.

SLOCUM: [01:06:03] I was going to be the hostess.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:06:04] Okay.

SLOCUM: [01:06:04] So I sent the ministry of, I mean, I sent lone, who was.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:06:09] Our program manager.

SLOCUM: [01:06:11] Health program manager, a telegram. Everything was telegrams back then. And told her that I just couldn't continue in the Peace Corps. It was just, I was too lonely and I thought I would be less lonely working at the yacht club, I suppose. And so I sent her the telegram. I didn't hear back from her, and I started working at the yacht club. And as I was telling Barbara earlier.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:06:34] And you didn't show up for work at the clinic then?

SLOCUM: [01:06:37] No. I just, I think I gave them a week's notice or so.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:06:40] Okay.

SLOCUM: [01:06:41] But actually the LVN took over.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:06:45] Okay.

SLOCUM: [01:06:46] So now she didn't know how to suture, but she could do a lot of things. But so I was working in the yacht club and it just hit me like a ton of bricks that that probably wasn't my cup of tea.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:06:57] May I ask why?

SLOCUM: [01:06:57] There was, well, there were mainly Americans that were coming down to rent the yachts and sail. And I literally all I heard was complaining, like the lemons weren't fresh enough or they needed more limes or it was hot or the bed was uncomfortable. It was just, I just said, what am I doing?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:07:16] Yes. Okay.

SLOCUM: [01:07:18] So I telegram lone back within like a week and a half, two weeks, something like that. And I said, you know what, I'm not going to quit the Peace Corps. And she telegraphed me back and said, oh, I was just waiting for that. I knew that you would come around and you had your little vacation.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:07:32] She did say that?

SLOCUM: [01:07:34] Yeah. You had your vacation. And I said, yeah. I said, and I, and I think probably at that time I just needed a real vacation. I mean, we all do.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:07:41] Oh yes.

SLOCUM: [01:07:41] We all need breaks, and the loneliness was the hardest part of being in the Peace Corps. Even though I was around people that spoke English, it was still. It's hard to explain, but it was just I wasn't around my peer group.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:07:53] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [01:07:54] And I really missed that.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:07:55] Yeah. When you had the Peace Corps volunteers come to stay with you, was that a big boost?

SLOCUM: [01:08:00] It would help, but it would just only be for a day or two. And they were gone most of the time snorkeling while I was at the clinic.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:08:07] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [01:08:08] You know, and I was very fastidious about the fact that I had a job and I couldn't just not show up.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:08:13] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [01:08:13] Because the clinic would be full of people with worms and amoebas and venereal.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:08:22] Venereal disease, yeah, okay.

SLOCUM: [01:08:23] And I probably didn't take as many breaks as I needed to. I felt just that they didn't have a doctor, so I needed to stay. And I remember lone visited me and she said, you're taking this a little too seriously. You need more breaks, you need to take care of yourself too. And I knew, and I knew that, but I guess I needed someone to say the world is not going to fall apart if there's no one to take care of these patients this day, as long as it's not emergencies. And besides that, we didn't have a hospital. We didn't have an ER. You know, I just did the best I could so.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:08:56] I think it's amazing.

SLOCUM: [01:08:57] Yeah. So, yeah, I had a little, uh.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:09:02] Break.

SLOCUM: [01:09:02] Detour. A little detour in the yacht club. I have to say, it was kind of fun sailing on the yachts because I could sail on the yachts as much as I wanted.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:09:11] Okay. Oh, you have a wonderful collection of stories. I'd encourage you to write a book about this.

SLOCUM: [01:09:18] Oh, okay.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:09:19] Yes, just.

SLOCUM: [01:09:20] I'll get right on that.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:09:22] Okay.

SLOCUM: [01:09:23] Before I, you're going to have to really be the one to the impetus to help me remember these stories so.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:09:28] Okay, um. I just have a few more questions, but if you, um, are you doing okay?

SLOCUM: [01:09:35] Uh huh.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:09:35] Okay. The end of your tour, okay. You went home, you said July of 1980. So including training, you were there?

SLOCUM: [01:09:46] Two years and a month, yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:09:47] Okay.

SLOCUM: [01:09:48] Because they had the option for leaving a couple of months early and still being given completion of service.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:09:54] Right. Yeah. Why did you decide to leave maybe a little bit early?

SLOCUM: [01:10:00] Enough was enough.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:10:01] Enough was enough.

SLOCUM: [01:10:02] Enough was enough.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:10:02] Okay. Yeah. Okay.

SLOCUM: [01:10:03] Two years, I was. Yeah. I was good. And I always wonder what it would have been like, though, to have been in a town or in a place where there were some other Peace Corps volunteers.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:10:12] Yes.

SLOCUM: [01:10:13] I always wonder how I would have fared. I mean, I made it to two years, but it was, it was lonely.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:10:19] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [01:10:19] And I was pretty emotionally drained after the end of that too. I mean, I really worked hard also.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:10:24] Yeah.

SLOCUM: [01:10:25] I loved what I did and I learned a lot. And I, and I will say this, I have never laughed as much in my life as I did the two years I was there. It was just, people just said exactly what they thought in a very funny way.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:10:39] Yes.

SLOCUM: [01:10:40] People did. There was nothing politically correct about anyone there. I mean, it was just. It was just, it was, it was a non-stop comedy really. We had, for example, the suicide dog, the village suicide dog. Evidently.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:10:57] I don't. That sounds interesting. Can you tell us about that?

SLOCUM: [01:11:00] Well, he, it was a little doggie who had been hit by a car and was paralyzed from the waist down. So whenever he heard a car coming, he would drag himself into the road again. And so everyone said, he's trying to commit suicide or kill himself, whatever they said.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:11:14] Aww.

SLOCUM: [01:11:14] It was so sad. But everyone, you know, it was kind of funny in a way that they saw it that way.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:11:19] Ah.

SLOCUM: [01:11:20] Not like, uh, it was odd.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:11:23] Okay.

SLOCUM: [01:11:23] And I'll never forget. And actually, I have a picture of you with me walking in a parade during one of the elections that we had down there.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:11:33] In Roatan?

SLOCUM: [01:11:34] Yes, I'm pretty, I'll have to show you the picture. But we had an election and I'll never forget it. You had to vote or you were to get arrested. Remember? It was mandatory.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:11:45] To vote, or otherwise you'd get arrested. I kind of forgot that myself.

SLOCUM: [01:11:49] And I'll never forget there were busses picking people up to vote. I remember I was downtown watching the busses pass by. So you'd see a bus go by with people on it that I knew, and they would give them chicken and beer and everything in the bus, and then they'd vote. And then a little bit later you'd see them on another bus voting again, going to vote again.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:12:14] Okay.

SLOCUM: [01:12:14] Or trying to vote again, getting more chicken and beer.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:12:17] Okay.

SLOCUM: [01:12:17] And we had a parade. And I remember Bruno, the town drunk, was in front of the parade.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:12:24] He was the leader.

SLOCUM: [01:12:25] With the banner of that party. I forget the name of the party.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:12:28] Yeah. Liberales, I think.

SLOCUM: [01:12:30] Probably, yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:12:31] Yeah. And I forgot the other one.

SLOCUM: [01:12:33] Yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:12:33] Nacionales? I'm not sure.

SLOCUM: [01:12:35] I don't remember. I'd have to look it up. But Bruno was leading the parade.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:12:41] Yes. Okay.

[END OF INTERVIEW]