

Margaret Taylor Oral History Interview
Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection
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Creator: Margaret Taylor
Interviewer: Phyllis Noble
Date of Interview: June 6, 2014
Location of Interview: Ann Arbor, Michigan
Length: 100 pages

Biographical Note

Margaret (Eger) Taylor served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Korea from 1968 to 1970 as an English teacher.

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Suggested Citation

Margaret Taylor, recorded interview by Phyllis Noble, June 6, 2014, page #, Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.

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Oral History Interview

with

Margaret Taylor

June 6, 2014
Ann Arbor, Michigan

By Phyllis Noble

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

NOBLE: [00:00:03] Today is June 6th, 2014. This is Phyllis Noble. I am interviewing Margaret Eger Taylor, who was a Peace Corps volunteer in Korea, 1968 to 1970, in a TESL project, Teaching English as a Second Language. Margaret, do you want to say hello and make sure that it picks up your voice too?

TAYLOR: [00:00:28] Hello, this is Margaret Taylor.

NOBLE: [00:00:30] Okay. So, Margaret, tell us about who you were before you joined the Peace Corps. Where did you grow up?

TAYLOR: [00:00:41] Many places. My family was living in Seattle when I was born. My father had just come back from the Philippines after World War II, and he was there. We were there for a year while he did a graduate program in business administration. And then we moved when I was about a year to

Harvard, where my father continued his education in the economics department.

NOBLE: [00:01:18] So you lived in Cambridge?

TAYLOR: [00:01:21] We lived apparently in Quonset huts on the Harvard Yard.

NOBLE: [00:01:26] Wow.

TAYLOR: [00:01:26] This was a lot of World War II vets coming back, back to school.

NOBLE: [00:01:33] Did you have siblings?

TAYLOR: [00:01:35] I had a brother who was a year and a half older, Jim, and he's still living and he is a radio astronomer at the University of Virginia.

NOBLE: [00:01:48] Oh, interesting.

TAYLOR: [00:01:49] But we moved four times.

NOBLE: [00:01:51] Yes. What did your, your dad was in, in school there at Harvard. And what was your mom doing?

TAYLOR: [00:01:57] She was being a housewife and taking care of the two kids. They were living on the GI Bill. They, I think it was about two years that we were there. And my father finished a master's degree and was ABD and decided that the infighting in academic departments was not his cup of tea.

NOBLE: [00:02:24] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:02:24] And especially, I think he was, he thought it was pathetic given that he had been in World War II, where he saw real fighting and was aware that what was going on in academics wasn't for him. So he then got a job with Continental Cab Company and they placed him in Seattle. So we went back to Seattle.

NOBLE: [00:02:53] Back to Seattle.

TAYLOR: [00:02:55] And we were there for another year, I think. And then the company moved him to Syracuse, New York, when I was about four, and we stayed in Syracuse for a year and then the company promoted him to their headquarters in New York City on Wall Street. So we moved to White Plains, New York. And I was of, I must have been five. I started school in White Plains and went through fourth grade in White Plains. And I think the White Plains experience was maybe formative in ways that I hadn't understood for a long time. But we were living in a neighborhood that was at least 50 percent Jewish and we were Christian.

NOBLE: [00:03:58] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [00:04:00] And all I understood about that is my neighbors that we played with had different holidays and different rituals. And we had Christmas, they had Hanukkah, and it didn't seem to make any difference. But I was very aware that other people that I knew well and played with and enjoyed and that were neighbors had different ways of, uh, marking, marking important holidays and religious beliefs.

NOBLE: [00:04:31] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:04:32] From the beginning.

NOBLE: [00:04:33] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:04:34] When I was nine, the summer I was nine, which was after fourth grade, my father began a job with Whirlpool Corporation in St. Joseph, Michigan. He was not happy with having to commute into the city every day and wanted a different pace of life. And so we moved to St. Joseph, Michigan, which was very different than White Plains.

NOBLE: [00:05:10] Oh yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:05:12] It was about 99.5 percent white. Anglo-Saxon primarily, I mean, I don't think there was any strong ethnic group. Maybe, maybe Dutch. A lot of southeast, I'm sorry, southwest Michigan is, is Dutch.

NOBLE: [00:05:42] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:05:43] Which is why we have Holland.

NOBLE: [00:05:45] Holland and the tulip, right.

TAYLOR: [00:05:46] Holland and the tulip. But the, there is a conservative Anglo-Saxon northern European bias. And I found that very difficult even as a, even as a ten year old.

NOBLE: [00:06:02] Yeah. Well, and you might not have found it difficult had you not lived in White Plains where you were interacting with kids of a slightly different culture.

TAYLOR: [00:06:09] Right. And I enjoyed them.

NOBLE: [00:06:11] Yeah, sure.

TAYLOR: [00:06:12] I enjoyed that. And so when I got to St. Joe, it was painful.

NOBLE: [00:06:15] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:06:15] The first year especially, I was very, very unhappy.

NOBLE: [00:06:21] And it was still just you and your older brother?

TAYLOR: [00:06:23] Yes. And there weren't really relatives around. We had grandparents that lived in New York State. My father was an only child, so there were no uncles on that side. My mother had one sister who lived in Ohio, so we were very much a nuclear family.

NOBLE: [00:06:38] Yeah. Did you travel with your parents, the four of you?

TAYLOR: [00:06:43] Well, there's this schlepping back and forth across the country, which I think was formative because I do have memories of all of those places except Harvard. But so the idea of moving was fundamental to our family, probably in the same way it might have been to a military family. I mean, it just happens. You do it.

NOBLE: [00:07:07] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:07:07] And you go to the new place and you adjust.

NOBLE: [00:07:11] That's right. Yeah. Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:07:14] And I thought that that was normative, that everybody moved every couple of years or less.

NOBLE: [00:07:20] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:07:21] And when I moved to St. Joe, I found out it was not normative, that people had lived there and their parents had lived there and they had no idea or interest in going other places. And I thought that was strange and, and I felt sorry for them.

NOBLE: [00:07:38] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:07:42] For not having had these opportunities.

NOBLE: [00:07:44] Of course.

TAYLOR: [00:07:46] I did adjust to St. Joe obviously, and made many good friends and remained in St. Joe through high school.

NOBLE: [00:07:53] Through high school. So when you were in high school, did you study a foreign language?

TAYLOR: [00:07:58] French.

NOBLE: [00:07:58] Uh huh.

TAYLOR: [00:07:59] And I was middling at it, I would say.

NOBLE: [00:08:03] And were you involved in extracurricular activities as a high school kid? What was fun?

TAYLOR: [00:08:10] I had a fair artistic talent and so I took art classes when I could and also had special classes on Saturday. My mother arranged for me to go to a Saturday art class that was taught by the art teacher in the high school who actually was the mother of one of my classmates. And she had a group on Saturday morning, so I had that training.

NOBLE: [00:08:44] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [00:08:44] I also, when I was 15, went to Chicago to the School of the Art Institute for six weeks, and that involved my taking a train from St. Joe to Chicago and then a cab and going up to, uh, a place for single women comparable to the Barbizon Hotel. I'm a little surprised in retrospect my parents let me do that, but they did it because of a family friend who was four years older. Their daughter was also doing this, so they knew I had some supervision and I was in a supervised residence.

NOBLE: [00:09:36] And when you are on the train and then having to hail a cab to take you up to the residence, were you all by yourself or you with your friend?

TAYLOR: [00:09:44] I was with my friend.

NOBLE: [00:09:46] And she had done it before?

TAYLOR: [00:09:47] Yeah, well, actually, she had not done it before, but I was not alone. The two of us did it together and she was four years older so I had some guidance.

NOBLE: [00:09:58] Sure.

TAYLOR: [00:10:00] And then we would take the train back.

NOBLE: [00:10:03] What was the distance between the Art Institute and the women's residence?

TAYLOR: [00:10:10] You know, I think it was several miles. The women's residence was in a part of Chicago called Old Town.

NOBLE: [00:10:16] Oh, yeah, sure.

TAYLOR: [00:10:17] North Avenue. Well, very nice.

NOBLE: [00:10:19] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:10:21] I do remember. I do remember taking a subway ride because I would come home on Fridays separately from her. And I remember one time taking the subway from Old Town, and I was going into downtown Chicago, and I had never taken a subway before.

NOBLE: [00:10:46] And you were alone.

TAYLOR: [00:10:47] I was alone. And I wasn't that familiar with the place names along the way. And I had never been in a subway, so I had no way of judging how fast we were going or where we were in relation to my goal.

NOBLE: [00:11:03] Yes.

TAYLOR: [00:11:04] That was a little unnerving. It was terrifying.

NOBLE: [00:11:07] I can just imagine, so every time the subway train stopped you were craning your neck to see what's the name of the stop? Is this where I'm supposed to get off?

TAYLOR: [00:11:14] And it's all going very fast because everyone knows what they're doing. I think actually I got off at the wrong stop because it seemed like we were going so fast that I had the feeling that we were farther along than we were. But, you know, I figured out I got off at the wrong stop and

figured out how to get back on so I could go to the right stop. And, and so that problem was solved.

NOBLE: [00:11:41] That's great. At age 15.

TAYLOR: [00:11:42] I was 15.

NOBLE: [00:11:43] You figured out that you can get lost and then found again.

TAYLOR: [00:11:47] Right. Uh. So back to the, this is all part of the art training.

NOBLE: [00:11:55] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:11:59] So I was used to being gone from home for a period of time and to be on my own pretty much in a.

NOBLE: [00:12:05] In a big city.

TAYLOR: [00:12:06] In a, in a big city, but in a, in a supervised environment.

NOBLE: [00:12:11] Yeah, perfect.

TAYLOR: [00:12:12] Where I had a place to live that was supervised. And then of course, I had the structure of the art classes, which were all day long, plus then just the fun of exploring. I mean, I enjoyed, I enjoyed exploring around Old Town, you know, figuring out where to eat and taking in the neighborhood and. And then in my senior year, I was president of the art club for the, for the high school.

NOBLE: [00:12:47] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [00:12:49] That was my real primary interest. This was before girls did sports. And I was not musical at all. So outlets that other girls had like band or orchestra were not something that I could accomplish. So I made the best of what I could do with art.

NOBLE: [00:13:15] And then you finished high school?

TAYLOR: [00:13:16] Finished high school.

NOBLE: [00:13:18] Any family vacations? Did you ever travel for fun with your mom and dad?

TAYLOR: [00:13:23] My father liked fishing probably more than anything else. And so the family vacations were always organized around a fishing trip. And the one I remember in particular was when we were 13. When I was 13, I'm sorry. The vacation was to drive from St. Joseph, Michigan, out west to Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

NOBLE: [00:13:57] Wow. That's a long drive.

TAYLOR: [00:13:58] Long drive. This is in a 1956 station wagon with no air conditioning and no radio. And it's a three day drive. And it's summer. So I remember seeing a lot of countryside out the window and being bored and hot and. I think it was an introduction to how large America was. This huge central section that.

NOBLE: [00:14:32] Went on forever.

TAYLOR: [00:14:33] Went on forever. And then the Jackson Hole was gorgeous, and we spent quite a bit of time. And we camped also, begin to camping.

NOBLE: [00:14:46] And did you fish, too, alongside your father and your brother?

TAYLOR: [00:14:53] Well, my brother spent his time with his nose in a science fiction book. He would have no part of this. I had my drawing materials along, some watercolors. So I spent, I spent time doing that. And I don't think I fished. My father's idea of fishing was to go to a trout stream in a remote location as possible and commune with nature. So having a kid along was, uh, did not facilitate his goal.

NOBLE: [00:15:30] So he was just as happy that you stayed back?

TAYLOR: [00:15:32] Yes.

NOBLE: [00:15:32] Did your watercolors.

TAYLOR: [00:15:33] That I did my watercolors. It was just fine.

NOBLE: [00:15:36] And did he catch fish that you'd bring back to camp and then you and your mom would cook them up?

TAYLOR: [00:15:44] Oh, yeah, he was, he was very good. And we ate a lot of trout.

NOBLE: [00:15:48] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:15:48] And my mother was the perfect '50s wife, I guess. And she would, he'd clean them. I remember that. I watched him clean fish. And then she'd cook them and we'd have dinner. And after dinner we'd play cards or games, you know, around the, around the Coleman lantern.

NOBLE: [00:16:13] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:16:14] And that would be repeated the next day. So we had a very nice time.

NOBLE: [00:16:22] It sounds idyllic.

TAYLOR: [00:16:24] Yeah. So again, the idea of moving, moving, going somewhere, was part of my upbringing. It was normal.

NOBLE: [00:16:34] Yeah, yeah, yeah. But not internationally. You didn't like all pack up and go to Paris?

TAYLOR: [00:16:39] No. It wasn't until I was in college. My freshman year of college, and also my sophomore year in the spring, on the spring break, my parents took my brother and I to the Virgin Islands and we stayed on Saint John two years, which was absolutely glorious environment. But the thing that struck me among other parts of those trips were the fact that, A, it was outside of the United States. It was English speaking, but it was a patois English. It wasn't English that was the kind of English I was used to.

NOBLE: [00:17:36] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [00:17:37] But the airplane landed. These were propeller planes, and it landed in St. Thomas. And then we took a boat over to St. John. And St. Thomas is a duty-free port. And it was full of tourists from all over the world. And it also had, um, a wide range, a wide economic range. I could see that even as an inexperienced young person, that there were people that were living in shanties and there were people who were living in these gorgeous homes on the hillside and everything in between.

NOBLE: [00:18:19] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [00:18:20] And the shops had very expensive watches and jewelry and trying on anything you wanted. And yet people in the street seemed to be living at subsistence or slightly above subsistence level. So these economic contrasts with people side by side were, that made a powerful impact, a powerful impression on me.

NOBLE: [00:18:47] And so where did you go to college?

TAYLOR: [00:18:50] I went to Cornell University.

NOBLE: [00:18:51] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [00:18:53] That was part of, I think, the heritage that I grew up with. Both parents had gone to Cornell.

NOBLE: [00:19:00] Ah. And your brother too?

TAYLOR: [00:19:01] And my brother also. And I was competitive. I hate to admit it, but I was competitive. And I remember thinking, I'm going to do this too, because if my brother can do it, I can do it. And so I did.

NOBLE: [00:19:22] And what were you studying? What was your major?

TAYLOR: [00:19:24] I started out as a freshman, we had to declare majors, I declared sociology because I was, I knew I was interested in people in the broad sense of the word. And it turned out that sociology was, to my way of looking at it, statistics. They were dealing with large aggregates. They were not dealing with individuals. It was large demographic and economic and social movements and that did not interest me at all. So then I was in a position of having to rethink what my major would be.

NOBLE: [00:20:01] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:20:02] I decided as a default, and this was a very common default in the mid sixties, on English literature. English Department.

NOBLE: [00:20:13] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [00:20:13] And then I had, as a minor, I took studio art classes as a minor.

NOBLE: [00:20:18] Did you have any, were you thinking about career at that time? Did you have any idea of what your life's work might be, or were you just still kind of searching?

TAYLOR: [00:20:28] I had no idea. And, and the expectation in my family, even though it was a highly educated family, was that I would go to college and repeat my mother's footsteps and meet and marry a Cornellian. And be a homemaker.

NOBLE: [00:20:51] So it didn't matter.

TAYLOR: [00:20:53] It didn't matter. I was there to, to get an education. And I remember them saying this because I said, why? Why are you sending me if you are expecting me to get married at the end of it? And the answer was, well, it will make you a better wife and mother.

NOBLE: [00:21:09] Okay.

TAYLOR: [00:21:10] Okay. And I remember very clearly one spring, it must have been at the end of the academic year. My brother at that point had a car

and he drove us home from Ithaca to St. Joe, it was a 12 hour drive. And we talked.

NOBLE: [00:21:33] Just the two of you?

TAYLOR: [00:21:34] Just the two of us. And we'd always gotten along well so it was a comfortable experience. And I remember asking him, because he had just graduated, I remember asking him what he was going to do.

NOBLE: [00:21:48] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:21:48] And he said, with complete matter-of-factness, I'm going to be an astronomer. And I said, well, when did you decide you're going to be an astronomer? And he said, well, I've known that for years. And I said, well, how did you come to know that? And he said that that was his interest. And people had supported him. And people had asked him growing up what he wanted.

NOBLE: [00:22:16] What are you going to be when you grow up?

TAYLOR: [00:22:18] What do you want to be when you grow up? And a light bulb went off. And I thought, and I said to him, no one has ever asked me that question.

NOBLE: [00:22:29] Right, cause you're just a girl.

TAYLOR: [00:22:31] I'm just a girl. So that question was never asked. And I thought, how stunning that that's a question.

NOBLE: [00:22:36] Yes.

TAYLOR: [00:22:37] That's a question. And it's a question that nobody's asked me and probably nobody will. But I'm going to ask myself. It, it made that question a pivotal, uh, it was a pivotal realization for me that, in fact, not only were girls treated differently, which I knew in many ways. Girls had curfews, girls had, were expected to do this kind of activity and not that kind of activity. But that there was this huge divide in terms of a boy would

be asked, what do you want to do? And a girl would be told, you can go to college. We expect you to go to college. We even are happy to send you to an Ivy League college. So you can get the best husband possible.

NOBLE: [00:23:31] Yeah, right.

TAYLOR: [00:23:33] I was offended.

NOBLE: [00:23:34] Of course you were. And you probably understood that you were the intellectual equal of your brother.

TAYLOR: [00:23:40] Yes, Well, not quite. He's very smart. He's, he's, he's in a category by himself. And I knew that for a long time, but I figured that I was at least good enough. I was good enough that I could do something. I could ask myself the question.

NOBLE: [00:23:57] Yeah. So you're in college, you graduate from Cornell. Are you studying languages at Cornell?

TAYLOR: [00:24:05] We had a requirement for French, a certain number of credits.

NOBLE: [00:24:09] And you had your high school French.

TAYLOR: [00:24:11] And I had my high school French.

NOBLE: [00:24:12] To build on.

TAYLOR: [00:24:13] So I knew enough about other languages. But I must say I was never fluent and I never spoke it and I, I never was around native speakers.

NOBLE: [00:24:22] Right, right.

TAYLOR: [00:24:22] So I didn't really understand the function of other languages, that people actually use these to communicate, to communicate with.

NOBLE: [00:24:31] You would have had to zoom up to Quebec or something.

TAYLOR: [00:24:33] Yeah, right.

NOBLE: [00:24:33] And what did you do in the summers? Did you, did you have a summer job?

TAYLOR: [00:24:40] Yes. Summers, the summer was important. The summer after my sophomore year, I went to the University of Michigan by myself and took a summer program for six weeks in the School of, I think at that time it was called Art and Architecture. But I took, again, studio art classes, two studio art classes. Lived with some people that were advertising a room in a basement near campus and got a job for a few hours a week working in a Hallmark store near the campus to make some spending money.

NOBLE: [00:25:43] Yeah. Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:25:44] And again made new friends and, or new acquaintances. And I think I stayed there most weekends, I didn't come home. I only came home once. Then my.

NOBLE: [00:26:04] So working in the Hallmark store, you would have sort of gotten an idea of what the life is like of people who do that every day, all year round, selling, selling things in the card shop.

TAYLOR: [00:26:16] I knew from the first hour that, A, I wasn't good at it because I was bored and I didn't know the stock and I was getting paid minimum wage and I did not like it at all. So that was a strong motivator.

NOBLE: [00:26:37] Go back to Cornell.

TAYLOR: [00:26:38] To go back to Cornell, because I was, I had no skill for that kind of work.

NOBLE: [00:26:49] And it was boring.

TAYLOR: [00:26:50] And it was boring and it didn't pay well.

NOBLE: [00:26:51] That's right.

TAYLOR: [00:26:52] The summer after my junior year, I went to Rome and took again a six week summer art program for credit that was offered by Temple University. And that was a very interesting and informative experience for me because, again, I went by myself. I got on a plane in New York, got off in Rome, and didn't speak a word of Italian.

NOBLE: [00:27:27] Right. But you heard people speaking Italian to one another all around you.

TAYLOR: [00:27:30] Everybody was chattering away and I was in this bubble of, of incomprehension.

NOBLE: [00:27:37] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:27:38] And I had, uh, I don't know what I had. Perhaps gumption. I didn't have, I didn't have much knowledge. I had no knowledge. But I thought, you know, I've got to figure this out. I guess that was the bottom line. I'm here. I chose this. I want to do this. I've got some material here. I have an address or two, so I just have to go figure it out. So. And I don't remember how I figured it out, but I ended up going to a pensione that had been recommended by the Temple University program where people could stay, you know, rent a room and stay. The lady that owned the pensione was very nice and she spoke Italian and a little bit of French and I had a little bit of French.

NOBLE: [00:28:44] Right.

TAYLOR: [00:28:45] So we communicated in this pastiche of her, her French as a second language, my French as an almost no language, and I would say probably no English. And over time I picked up a little Italian.

NOBLE: [00:29:11] Lots of sign language, drawing pictures?

TAYLOR: [00:29:15] Lots of sign language, uh, and not too much drawing pictures. But I realized that, again, people who didn't speak the same language,

who had a completely different cultural background, different ages, different everything, in fact, could communicate and, and you really needed to communicate. It wasn't, it wasn't an option. I remember going for several days without eating when I got there because I had no idea how to order off a menu. And I didn't even really understand how the restaurants were set up or where to get food.

NOBLE: [00:30:04] Oh.

TAYLOR: [00:30:04] And after three days, you get pretty hungry.

NOBLE: [00:30:05] Well, no kidding.

TAYLOR: [00:30:06] So that's a, that's a strong motivating motivator. So after.

NOBLE: [00:30:11] There was other American students at the school that you?

TAYLOR: [00:30:14] Well, I arrived a little early, so I eventually had a roommate in this pensione. We shared a room. She was in the same program. But the first three days I was pretty much on my, I was on my own.

NOBLE: [00:30:25] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:30:26] And I kept thinking, well, I'll figure this out. But I kept getting hungrier and hungrier. And finally after the third day, I thought, you know, it doesn't matter that I don't understand a word of Italian and I can't read the menu and I don't even know how to order or anything. I just have to eat.

NOBLE: [00:30:44] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:30:45] So I went to a restaurant and muddled my way through somehow and had eggplant parmesan.

NOBLE: [00:30:52] Oh, very nice.

TAYLOR: [00:30:53] Which was delicious. And it was an outdoor restaurant that I remember. And then I went to a coffee shop and ordered myself a cappuccino, even though I didn't know what a cappuccino was. And so I guess it was just a step by step process. A lot of hit and miss, sort of bumbling around. When I got to the program, the art program, the actual classes, then of course it was an American speaking population of students and teachers.

NOBLE: [00:31:34] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:31:36] And that was helpful because then I could get information in English about things that were of interest to see, places to go. [tape break] Yes, it's still going.

NOBLE: [00:31:47] We might have to wait for, if there's a little lead tape in here. Not sure, but I think we can just keep on going.

TAYLOR: [00:31:55] Now, part of that experience was that the roommate that I had was somebody that was part of the Temple program, she and I just had met and decided to buddy up. Um. She had a friend who was coming back from Africa and coming through Rome on her way back to the United States. And this friend had just completed two years of service in the Peace Corps.

NOBLE: [00:32:29] Ah, so you're, now you're meeting somebody who is a Peace Corps volunteer.

TAYLOR: [00:32:33] So here's the flesh and blood. And it was a young woman and she was a couple of years older than I was, but she wasn't markedly different. In other words, there was an analog, I could see an analog. You know, she's female, she's single. She did this.

NOBLE: [00:32:50] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:32:52] And that means that, at least hypothetically, I could do the same thing.

NOBLE: [00:32:58] That's right. And you, wait, you were in Rome when you met her?

TAYLOR: [00:33:01] Yes.

NOBLE: [00:33:01] And she was traveling through. Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:33:05] And it just so happened that her, my roommate at that point was her friend. So she came and stayed for a couple of days.

NOBLE: [00:33:11] Yeah, yeah, yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:33:12] And so I ended up meeting her and talking to her about her experience. She was very enthusiastic and I thought, you know, that's fabulous that you can do this.

NOBLE: [00:33:27] Yes.

TAYLOR: [00:33:29] And it seemed to me like it was, again, a step beyond what I had already done, because I had been in Chicago and I'd been in Ann Arbor and then I'd been now in Rome. So, you know, Africa was a big step.

NOBLE: [00:33:48] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:33:49] But it was a step that was at least imaginable.

NOBLE: [00:33:52] Yes.

TAYLOR: [00:33:53] It made, it made it imaginable. It made, it made something that had been a kind of a thought in the back of my mind, uh, visible. Here's, here's.

NOBLE: [00:34:08] Here's a person who actually.

TAYLOR: [00:34:09] Here's a representation. This person is a living, breathing confirmation that this can be done.

NOBLE: [00:34:15] And she's not exactly Superman. She's an ordinary person.

TAYLOR: [00:34:18] She's an ordinary person.

NOBLE: [00:34:19] Yes.

TAYLOR: [00:34:21] So I had growing up in St. Joe, Michigan, been aware in 1961 of Kennedy's speech, I was in the ninth grade, of Kennedy's speech. And I remember hearing this proposal about a Peace Corps and what it would be like, loosely speaking. And thinking to myself, and I didn't say it to anyone, but thinking to myself, I'd like to do that.

NOBLE: [00:34:56] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:34:59] Really with no background information other than that sounds like something I'd like to do.

NOBLE: [00:35:05] Sure.

TAYLOR: [00:35:07] So that's ninth grade. And then when I finished my junior year of college and then I meet an actual Peace Corps volunteer who is female coming back from Africa.

NOBLE: [00:35:18] But you have another year at Cornell left before you can do anything?

TAYLOR: [00:35:22] I have another year at Cornell, so I.

NOBLE: [00:35:23] Go back to Cornell.

TAYLOR: [00:35:24] Go back to Cornell. It's the height of the anti-war era.

NOBLE: [00:35:33] So where are we now, 1967?

TAYLOR: [00:35:37] Fall of '67.

NOBLE: [00:35:38] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:35:42] I know I'm going to graduate in June, I guess, of '68. I have no idea what I want to do with my life. Other than I do not want to be the things that my parents thought would be my future.

NOBLE: [00:36:06] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:36:07] My father, even though he was an executive, his career consultation, if one can call it that, with me was that I would be a right hand gal to an executive. And he had a high regard for these right hand gals because he was an executive and they made his life possible.

NOBLE: [00:36:31] Yes.

TAYLOR: [00:36:32] So it wasn't for him denigrating. He, he had tremendous regard for these women. But it offended me, again, because our whole life, when I say our I mean my whole family life, up until that point had been dictated by his, his choices. His career choices. Every single move we made, that's predicated on decisions that involved.

NOBLE: [00:37:08] Right. And your mother was willing to say.

TAYLOR: [00:37:11] Yes, dear. Of course we'll move to St Joseph, Michigan. I don't think she was a yes, she wasn't a yes woman. But on the other hand, she fully embraced her role.

NOBLE: [00:37:24] Yes.

TAYLOR: [00:37:27] That was available to her as an educated woman at that time.

NOBLE: [00:37:30] At that time and in that age, yes.

TAYLOR: [00:37:32] At that age. And she never complained about it. I mean, it was, it was clearly a volitional. And all of our vacations, or almost all of our vacations, were based around my father's wanting to go somewhere where he could fish.

NOBLE: [00:37:50] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:37:50] And she was fine with that.

NOBLE: [00:37:52] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:37:55] Uh, it offended me. And I think partly it offended me because I had a brother who was 18 months older and I could see that there really wasn't that much difference between us.

NOBLE: [00:38:05] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:38:06] Not as people.

NOBLE: [00:38:07] Yes.

TAYLOR: [00:38:08] As people there was no difference other than he was a boy and I was a girl. And so I became more and more offended.

NOBLE: [00:38:16] Yeah, yeah, yeah. Did you mention to your parents after you got back from Rome that you were thinking about Peace Corps?

TAYLOR: [00:38:23] No, not yet. Not yet. No. I don't even think I was thinking consciously about it as a, as a, as a goal at that point. It was still there, but it wasn't that I was thinking of it as a goal. I met a young man right at the beginning of the year who was a graduate student, uh, first year graduate student in philosophy, and um, we spent quite a bit of time together.

NOBLE: [00:38:57] And this would be David Eger?

TAYLOR: [00:38:58] Yes, this is David Eger. We spent a lot of time together. We had a lot in common. And somewhere around the middle of the year, around wintertime, um, discussions arose about what I was going to do and so forth when I graduated. I knew that I didn't want any more academic schooling at that point. But that didn't answer the question of what I did want to do, because mostly at that point I knew what I didn't want to do. I

didn't want to go to, uh, through more schooling. Uh, I did not want to become somebody's right hand gal and I did not want to work in a Hallmark card shop.

NOBLE: [00:39:49] Right. But you might want to join the Peace Corps.

TAYLOR: [00:39:52] But I might want to join the Peace Corps. And, and then the events of the late 1967 and early 1968, the political turmoil, the social turmoil was very apparent not only nationally, but at Cornell. That was a very active campus.

NOBLE: [00:40:15] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [00:40:18] I knew that I also didn't want to protest the war by getting on a bus in Ithaca and driving all night on the bus and getting out in Washington, D.C. and participating in a march. That wasn't my style. I just didn't feel like that was an expression of who I was.

NOBLE: [00:40:47] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [00:40:48] And so then the question became for me, what is the expression of who I am? Because now I've got all these expressions of who I am not. So David and I began to talk about ways to make a contribution because he had been involved also in an anti-war summer program at Wesleyan where he had graduated. So he, he had a strong anti-war agenda too, but again in an affirmative direction, which is to say education and voter registration and trying to change people's hearts and minds, if you will, rather than protesting in large demonstrations.

NOBLE: [00:41:46] Uh huh.

TAYLOR: [00:41:46] And so in this context, I said, well, how about we consider the Peace Corps?

NOBLE: [00:41:52] Yes. Something else occurs to me. In 1967, 1968, David was very much eligible for the draft.

TAYLOR: [00:42:02] Yes.

NOBLE: [00:42:03] And Peace Corps would serve a purpose for him in a way that it wouldn't for you, that it would give him two years' time.

TAYLOR: [00:42:12] Right. I think the announcement about the draft didn't come until early '68. We had been talking in general about affirmative ways to address our antiwar sentiments.

NOBLE: [00:42:25] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:42:26] But when the announcement came that there would be a draft and that everybody would have a number and the number would be drawn on a lottery basis, so you had no say so. And if you hadn't completed two years of graduate school by that point, you would be eligible for the draft. So we knew that he would be eligible for the draft. He had only, by the end of that year would have only completed one year.

NOBLE: [00:42:58] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [00:43:00] That galvanized, I think, our thinking into what are the affirmative ways that we can address the larger issue of our antiwar sentiments, but also the very specific issue of your draft eligibility. Because he, he was, he eventually became a conscientious objector.

NOBLE: [00:43:28] Uh huh.

TAYLOR: [00:43:29] But that way of thinking was already well established in him.

NOBLE: [00:43:34] Yeah, he had to document it.

TAYLOR: [00:43:34] And I understood fully. I mean, if I had been a male, that would have been a position I would have taken. A lot of people from Cornell at that point were going to Canada. They were sort of disappearing, if you will, into the woods. I don't know. You know, building a yurt in the, in the woods. People sort of vanished who might be eligible. Our thinking then was, okay. And at that point, I proposed the Peace Corps. I said, I've

thought about this in the back of my mind since I was in ninth grade, and he had not ever thought of it. But I said, let's think about it seriously. Let's find out more.

NOBLE: [00:44:21] And the, but the other thing that you haven't mentioned is that you're also talking about getting married and spending your lives together.

TAYLOR: [00:44:27] Well, this is where the cart and the horse get a little confounded. We were thinking about getting married, and I think I might have even been at that point had moved on to an engagement.

NOBLE: [00:44:50] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [00:44:51] But there was no point that we had identified that we would get married. Things changed dramatically with the decision to pursue a Peace Corps experience.

NOBLE: [00:45:07] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:45:10] The Peace Corps. When we applied, we applied separately as individuals because we were not married. And the Peace Corps position at that time was if you apply as an individual, we will treat you as an individual and we can send you or offer you placements anywhere in the world. And it's completely autonomous from this other person.

NOBLE: [00:45:38] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:45:40] David Eger, that you are applying in effect with, that you want to be placed with. They said we.

NOBLE: [00:45:48] They can't promise to give you the same placement.

TAYLOR: [00:45:50] Well, it wasn't even a promise. It was just like, you know, sort of, you're an individual, he's an individual, and that's that.

NOBLE: [00:45:57] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:45:58] So once that became clear, because we decided we wanted to be together, I mean, we had already decided to be together.

NOBLE: [00:46:06] Yes.

TAYLOR: [00:46:10] It became quite clear that we needed to be married if we wanted to end up in the same place, which is what we wanted to do. So this is where the cart gets a little before the horse, and that is that we got married right after I graduated. So it would have been late May of 1968. I think we would have married eventually, but it would not have been necessarily that soon.

NOBLE: [00:46:41] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:46:42] We stayed the summer at Cornell. Now, once we had applied to and let the Peace Corps know that we were getting married, then they did process our applications together.

NOBLE: [00:46:55] And I have to ask you, at this point, did your Peace Corps application ask you a question about if you had a preference for any particular country or any particular part of the world?

TAYLOR: [00:47:05] It did. And I think what I recall the preference is that we put down, one was Asia and one was, uh, South America.

NOBLE: [00:47:21] Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [00:47:23] I was much more interested in Asia, and I have no idea why. I just felt that somehow that was more, was a better fit for me than a Latin culture.

NOBLE: [00:47:40] And David?

TAYLOR: [00:47:41] I don't think he had a preference.

NOBLE: [00:47:45] Okay.

TAYLOR: [00:47:46] We were offered a opportunity to go to Korea. That was an offer that they made, that we join this TESL program in Korea that would start training in early October. I didn't know anything about Korea other than that there had been a Korean War.

NOBLE: [00:48:12] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:48:14] Cornell had a very extensive Southeast Asian Department. And I went to that department and I said, do you have anything about Korea?

NOBLE: [00:48:27] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [00:48:28] And that shows my naivete right there, because they said, well, I'm sorry, but Korea is in East Asia, but not Southeast Asia. And we only are devoted to Southeast Asia.

NOBLE: [00:48:40] Well, Cambodia.

TAYLOR: [00:48:41] So that was a big education in geography.

NOBLE: [00:48:44] There you go.

TAYLOR: [00:48:44] And you know, that the world, at least as far as humans were concerned in terms of studies, was divided up into regions and that didn't communicate. So they were of no help. So we went to the library and looked up Korea, and there were a couple of books on the Korean War. That was it. This is, this is an Ivy League library in 1968. And there was nothing.

NOBLE: [00:49:13] Nothing about Korea.

TAYLOR: [00:49:14] Nothing. Nothing about the people, nothing about the culture, nothing about the language, nothing about anything other than the Korean War.

NOBLE: [00:49:23] The war. And the United States involvement?

TAYLOR: [00:49:25] And the United States involvement. So it was only military discussion. And so we could not educate ourselves as to whether or not we wanted to go to Korea because we couldn't learn anything about Korea. On the other hand, it was like, well, why not?

NOBLE: [00:49:40] Yes.

TAYLOR: [00:49:41] You know, why not? So we said, yes, we'll go. And we spent the summer in Ithaca. Maybe a month into the fall. And then we. By this point, the Peace Corps was sort of in loco parentis. In other words, they told us you need to be in Los Angeles on this flight at this time, and then you need to be going with your group of other trainees to Hilo, Hawaii, for this period of time. And then you will be placed in country at this period of time.

NOBLE: [00:50:30] So somewhere around here you have told your, your parents and your brother that you and your husband, David, had applied to the Peace Corps. What was their response?

TAYLOR: [00:50:42] I have no recollection at all.

NOBLE: [00:50:45] Because you and, you are totally deviating from their program and what all their assumptions about what your, the trajectory of your life would be like.

TAYLOR: [00:50:53] You know, I have, I have no recollection, so it must not have been either strongly favorable or strongly negative. My brother is a very scientifically minded person and very practical. And I think his reaction probably would have been, if that's what you want to do, go ahead and do it. My parents, I don't remember, and I'm not sure at that point that I was even listening.

NOBLE: [00:51:31] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:51:31] I probably was not listening because I think I had stopped listening a long time earlier.

NOBLE: [00:51:37] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:51:42] Um.

NOBLE: [00:51:42] Did you, um, did, there was some sort of going away party for you before you left to go to Hawaii?

TAYLOR: [00:51:50] I don't, I don't think so. I just remember feeling I think that my parental family was, uh, I'm tempted to say toast, but that sounds much too harsh. That I had moved beyond that.

NOBLE: [00:52:13] Yeah. Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:52:15] And that we had made friends, David and I had made friends in Ithaca, a couple that I had mentioned to you, the Darling. The Darlings, Ruth and Doug Darling.

NOBLE: [00:52:26] Oh, these are more or less your parents age, right?

TAYLOR: [00:52:28] They were our parents' age.

NOBLE: [00:52:30] But thinking in a different way.

TAYLOR: [00:52:32] Very, very different thinking, especially Ruth, who was the dean of students at the time at Cornell. And she became, I think, my mother surrogate model. And even before we went into the Peace Corps, because David was supporting himself through graduate school by working in the Dean of Students office. So he worked with her every day and we got to know them quite well. And I just admired her tremendously. So, and she was another example of a woman who had not been, if you will, deviant, but had nevertheless shaped a career for herself that she was very happy with and that she was very good at.

TAYLOR: [00:53:32] So she was a role model and a very encouraging role model. Uh, I don't remember any particular hoopla about leaving. It was more like we were on an adventure that we had no way of imagining beyond showing up at the appointed places at the appointed times.

NOBLE: [00:53:57] That's right. That's right. Yes, exactly.

TAYLOR: [00:54:01] Which was okay. We had signed up for that.

NOBLE: [00:54:04] So that's part of it, I think, you let go of all expectations.

TAYLOR: [00:54:08] Right.

NOBLE: [00:54:08] So you, you arrived in, you all got your training group gathered in, was it San Francisco did you say?

TAYLOR: [00:54:16] The first meeting point was Los Angeles.

NOBLE: [00:54:19] Los Angeles. And that would have been in 1968. Did you say October?

TAYLOR: [00:54:26] '68 October. Right. It was, it was the, uh. You know, we were instructed very specifically to show up in Los Angeles and that we would be departing from Los Angeles as a group. What to bring, what not to bring.

NOBLE: [00:54:42] Yes.

TAYLOR: [00:54:42] We had had at that point already many shots. We had quite a number.

NOBLE: [00:54:49] Oh, you had to get that on your own before training, those shots?

TAYLOR: [00:54:53] As I remember a lot of them, yes. I think we may have had additional shots, but we came inoculated. And so then we just, I think there were about 80 of us in this group of seven, K-7 and 8. Got on the plane in L.A., got off in Hawaii.

NOBLE: [00:55:15] You just said something interesting. This was group seven and eight.

TAYLOR: [00:55:19] Right.

NOBLE: [00:55:19] What was the difference between seven and eight? It sounds like two groups together with different objectives once they got to Korea maybe?

TAYLOR: [00:55:27] The Korean government had requested of the Peace Corps English language teachers.

NOBLE: [00:55:37] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [00:55:37] Which was something I didn't fully understand why they would have cared. You know, in a, in a third world country, why do you care about learning English? It seems like you've got a lot of other issues that might be more important. And in fact, the Korean government did have other issues they thought were important, including TB eradication.

NOBLE: [00:55:57] Oh yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:55:58] There were, there were Peace Corps groups in Korea already who had been organized around rural health projects as well as TESL.

NOBLE: [00:56:15] Uh huh.

TAYLOR: [00:56:15] And I was a little puzzled about the TESL. But if that's what they wanted and that's what I could do, that's fine with me. The difference between the seven and eights were that, I think, and this is foggy because we were treated very much, by the Peace Corps we were really treated as a group.

NOBLE: [00:56:37] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:56:37] But I think the sevens were originally requested for, uh, middle, middle school, high school, and possibly college placements. The K-8s, there were very few K-8s and they, relative to the sevens, the eights had

more specialized training. They were not immediately out of college. The several of them had law degrees.

NOBLE: [00:57:17] Ah.

TAYLOR: [00:57:18] A number of them had master's degrees and had already had fluency or training overseas in Asian countries.

NOBLE: [00:57:34] Ah.

TAYLOR: [00:57:35] One gentleman had, I think, spent part of his childhood in Korea. Another volunteer had a law degree and or had at least, uh, completed about half of a law degree, but had lived in China and Japan for a while, Taiwan. So there was a group of slightly older volunteers who had more specialized backgrounds as opposed to just a general college education. That group was supposed to be dedicated to teaching professionals in Korea, for example, teaching Korean lawyers English that would be useful to them.

NOBLE: [00:58:21] A specific.

TAYLOR: [00:58:22] As lawyers. Yes. I don't know if there were, uh, there was a comparable program with doctors or not, but it was directed not at the college level, but at a, a professional or business level.

NOBLE: [00:58:40] Yes.

TAYLOR: [00:58:41] And that was the difference between the two groups.

NOBLE: [00:58:43] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:58:46] We were trained the same. The two groups were trained the same up until the last maybe, uh, three weeks or a month of the training program.

NOBLE: [00:58:58] And then you went sort of into two different paths. But let's, we're still in Los Angeles.

TAYLOR: [00:59:05] Yes.

NOBLE: [00:59:05] How long are you in, how long were you in Los Angeles before you flew to Hawaii?

TAYLOR: [00:59:10] I don't know. Probably just an overnight or a day. I mean, we didn't do anything in Los Angeles. It was just to meet each other. It was a jumping off point.

NOBLE: [00:59:18] Yeah, yeah.

TAYLOR: [00:59:19] It was where we aggregated.

NOBLE: [00:59:20] Right. And then you off you went. So there are, there are about 80 of you all together and, and so you've already described the difference between seven and eight. Were the Korea seven people pretty much like you and David, quite recently out of college?

TAYLOR: [00:59:37] Yes. Yes. Most of us were fairly recently out of college. Maybe, maybe some people were one or two years out of college.

NOBLE: [00:59:47] Uh huh. And were there other married couples?

TAYLOR: [00:59:51] Yes, there were other married couples. Our program had for some reason, and I'll explain the reason because I think I understand it, a higher number of married couples than, than maybe most programs would have had.

NOBLE: [01:00:07] Uh huh.

TAYLOR: [01:00:07] Or that programs prior to our program had. And this was a highly self-selected group. I mean, that we had self-selected ourselves individually in making the decision to go to Korea, to go to Korea at this time. Um. Or really to be in the Peace Corps at this time. The number of couples that thought the way David and I thought was very high.

NOBLE: [01:00:45] Meaning your views about the war, Vietnam War?

TAYLOR: [01:00:50] Views about the Vietnam War, views about susceptibility to the draft, views about wanting to make an affirmative contribution.

NOBLE: [01:00:58] Yes.

TAYLOR: [01:00:59] While also opposing, opposing the war. If you think of war as a militaristic engagement with the world, that we were opposed to a military engagement and wanted to have an affirmative engagement.

NOBLE: [01:01:21] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:01:22] And so the group was highly self-selected. And I've made, you know, we made many friends among, mostly among the couples, because we just socialized more easily among couples.

NOBLE: [01:01:35] And were you, um, staying in dorm rooms? Where were you in Hawaii?

TAYLOR: [01:01:46] When we got to Hawaii, we were taken to, um, well, we flew in on a smaller plane eventually. I think we, I think we originally landed in Honolulu and then were taken in smaller prop planes because we're still talking about propeller airplanes.

NOBLE: [01:02:11] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:02:12] To Hilo, that had a small airport. And then we were bussed up to, uh, a little outside of Hilo, a small town, small city, to a wooden, long wooden building, white clapboard building that had been once upon a time a hospital. And I don't remember for whom. I don't remember if it was for like people with TB or leprosy or something. But it had been a hospital and was no longer being used as a hospital. And so it had many, many rooms. It was set up with large common areas, but also then rooms which would have been patient rooms. And so we were assigned, married couples were assigned to a room in this building. And we ate in the common areas

and had classes in the common areas. And did everything in that building, all of our training. [tape break]

NOBLE: [01:03:32] So this is Phyllis Noble interviewing Margaret Eger Taylor. We're at the beginning of tape two. We're talking about the training program which was taking place in Hilo, Hawaii. And you were describing your living arrangements. You were in a big building, white clapboard, where you lived and you had your meals and your classes there.

TAYLOR: [01:03:57] Right. And we had classes, uh, really all day. We had, um, I think breakfast was at 8:00, and then we had classes from approximately 9:00 to 12:00. We had a break for lunch and I think resumed again at 2:00 and had classes till 5:00. And then we had a break until 7:00, and then we had classes from 7:00 to 10:00.

NOBLE: [01:04:28] Oh my goodness.

TAYLOR: [01:04:29] Long day, long day. And it was, as I recall, six days a week.

NOBLE: [01:04:34] Wow. And what were these classes?

TAYLOR: [01:04:37] There were classes of Korean language instruction.

NOBLE: [01:04:44] Mm hmm. How many hours a day was language?

TAYLOR: [01:04:48] It was at least three and possibly more.

NOBLE: [01:04:52] Were you in small groups?

TAYLOR: [01:04:53] And we were broken up into smaller groups. And then there were classes in Korean culture or Korean history.

NOBLE: [01:05:05] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [01:05:08] Korean arts. Taught by Korean instructors. Some men, some women. We were introduced to Korean music and we were introduced to cultural concepts. We were taught how to behave appropriately. And we

also were given a number of, and I'm going to use quotation marks around it, but cross cultural experiences beyond the cross cultural experiences that were inherent in, in having half the training staff be Korean.

NOBLE: [01:05:51] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:05:53] And that was that Hawaii wasn't exactly mainland United States.

NOBLE: [01:05:57] That's true.

TAYLOR: [01:05:58] And was really as foreign to me in terms of its geography, its climate, its, uh, its inhabitants, which were quite a racial mixture.

NOBLE: [01:06:19] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [01:06:19] And the Peace Corps made use of that environment by taking us on trips. And they must have been either a Saturday afternoon or Sundays. But we, they would take us to places that we would not have been able to get to by ourselves. We were taking busses to, uh, the ocean at different points along the coast, to very, very, very deep valleys that cut through the island and would have precipitous drops of hundreds of feet onto the beach. We were at one point given a very small amount of money for a three day immersion, which I think was an effort to see how we coped with being on our own, comparable to the three days that I had in Rome.

NOBLE: [01:07:35] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:07:37] And we were sent out. The married couples went as couples.

NOBLE: [01:07:39] Oh, good.

TAYLOR: [01:07:40] The individuals went as individuals. But we were taken and dropped off somewhere on the island. I mean, just dropped off, like, hello, this is where you are and don't come back until Sunday night. This was Friday.

NOBLE: [01:07:52] I would think it'd be very nice to have a spousal one.

TAYLOR: [01:07:55] Yeah, it was.

NOBLE: [01:07:56] Instead of being totally alone.

TAYLOR: [01:07:57] Yeah. So, um.

NOBLE: [01:08:03] And were there certain things you had to accomplish during that time?

TAYLOR: [01:08:06] No, not really. I mean, you just had to figure out how to survive and get back on, back where you belonged on Sunday night.

NOBLE: [01:08:16] Uh huh.

TAYLOR: [01:08:16] I don't even know if we had a map. If we did, it was a very rudimentary map.

NOBLE: [01:08:24] But by now you had, now you weren't studying Hawaiian language.

TAYLOR: [01:08:28] No.

NOBLE: [01:08:29] You could, you could communicate in English with most of the people, right? Or maybe not.

TAYLOR: [01:08:34] Not really. Not really. And it was a very unpopulated island at that time. It was significantly rural. Cars were rare and few and far between. There were little sort of farmsteads in the middle of a field, a sugar field or a cane field or, or. Certainly not an urban center until you got up to the north side of the island, which was at that point being developed.

NOBLE: [01:09:14] Mm hmm. Were there dangers, were there snakes and scorpions and things?

TAYLOR: [01:09:18] You know, I don't remember.

NOBLE: [01:09:21] Well, you would, I would imagine you would if that's what you were most terrified about.

TAYLOR: [01:09:25] Yeah. I think some people encountered animals like raccoons and dogs and so on. But.

NOBLE: [01:09:35] Well, so what did you have to, what did you wind up having to do to get back?

TAYLOR: [01:09:39] Well, it's a big island and we ended up having to hitchhike because there was no other transportation.

NOBLE: [01:09:49] So you had to find a road?

TAYLOR: [01:09:51] Yeah, we were dropped off on a road, but the roads were, you know, small, maximum two lane roads.

NOBLE: [01:09:58] Dirt roads?

TAYLOR: [01:09:59] Some were dirt. I think mostly we tried to stay on at least a two lane road that belted the island. Because the island in the middle is a volcano so there isn't a lot of cross traffic.

NOBLE: [01:10:13] Ah. Yeah. Okay.

TAYLOR: [01:10:14] And then on the outer perimeter, it's ocean.

NOBLE: [01:10:18] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:10:18] So you really are in, on a loop.

NOBLE: [01:10:22] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:10:22] A circular loop. And the climate changes tremendously from, from arid to, to rainforest quality, depending on where you are on the island.

NOBLE: [01:10:36] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [01:10:36] So we hitchhiked, and we spent a lot of time standing on the roadside watching people drive by who were not interested in picking us up. And we got finally a ride, I remember. And it was a single guy, maybe middle aged, who, whose, who we had trouble communicating with because his English and our Hawaiian did not meet in the middle. But he seemed enthusiastic, and we were tired of being in the same place for several hours. And it turned out that he lived by himself and I think he was into pornography.

NOBLE: [01:11:28] Hmm.

TAYLOR: [01:11:29] So once we realized that, uh, we excused ourselves and, you know, made it back to the main road. But that was an interesting lesson because I had no experience with that side of life.

NOBLE: [01:11:49] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:11:50] None. I mean, I think I almost didn't even recognize what it was. I just knew that it wasn't something I wanted to find anything more out about. And that seemed to be this gentleman's agenda. So we, we.

NOBLE: [01:12:04] I can only imagine.

TAYLOR: [01:12:05] Understood it was time to leave.

NOBLE: [01:12:07] I could only imagine a woman alone hitchhiking in that situation and finding myself in such a place. Yikes.

TAYLOR: [01:12:13] I don't know what the women did. Right. Then we, we made it to the top of the island, the north side. If you think of the island as a clock,

Hilo was at about, I'm guessing, between 3:00 and 4:00. The north side of the island being around midnight.

NOBLE: [01:12:35] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:12:36] Yeah, 12:00. Um, it was a resort. That area had been developed as a resort. And so there were these expensive hotels.

NOBLE: [01:12:51] Which you couldn't afford, which you probably were on a very tight.

TAYLOR: [01:12:54] Yeah, I think we had \$10 between us for everything.

NOBLE: [01:12:59] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:13:00] And the first night I know we slept outside all of the nights because we didn't have, there was nowhere to stay really. And we had no money. We couldn't afford anything. And I remember, I think it was by Sunday morning we ended up on the north side, or maybe Saturday morning. But, you know, we were hungry, we were tired, we slept outside, and we were walking along the beach and became aware of these hotels. And we could see from the beach where we were walking that people were dining outside and well dressed and it looked quite elegant and some beautiful brunch was being served. We were so hungry. We were so hungry.

TAYLOR: [01:13:48] And I don't think I appreciated that we probably looked pretty ratty at that point because I was still thinking of myself as a, as a, as a white, middle class, educated person. And apparently we did not look the part. And we attracted the attention of a waiter because we thought, well, we might as well spend our money and at least have a tremendous brunch. So we attracted the attention of a waiter who came over, or a manager who came over and we said, you know, we've got \$10 and we'd love some brunch. And he said, no, can't do it. We can't serve you. And we said, well, why not? We've got the money. We're here. And he said, no, we can't serve you. And I did not understand at the time enough about

social class to realize that we presented ourselves as being of an unacceptable social class.

NOBLE: [01:14:53] Aha.

TAYLOR: [01:14:54] We were, we were beach bums. And I didn't think of myself as a beach bum. So when we were treated as beach bums, I was dumbfounded, just dumbfounded.

NOBLE: [01:15:06] This must be, you must have been feeling what African Americans were feeling when they were denied a Coca Cola at the lunch counter.

TAYLOR: [01:15:12] It was obviously a pivotal learning experience for me, which is, you can be as human as the next guy and if you are in the wrong socioeconomic class or do not have the right, do not have the right appearance or haven't entered through the front door, because the beach was the back door.

NOBLE: [01:15:34] Right.

TAYLOR: [01:15:35] If you haven't entered through the front door, you can be denied service.

NOBLE: [01:15:40] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:15:40] And it doesn't matter if you're hungry and it doesn't matter if you have money.

NOBLE: [01:15:43] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:15:45] They just won't engage with you. So we continued, um, and I think we spent another. It must have been a Saturday. I think we spent another night, um, I know we spent another night out. I remember sleeping on a picnic table because there were things on the ground. I'm not sure what, but the better place to sleep seemed to be a couple of feet off the

ground. It was chilly. It was damp. We didn't have any blankets or clothing other than what we had on our backs.

NOBLE: [01:16:20] Oh, no sleeping bags or air mattress?

TAYLOR: [01:16:23] Nothing. No, no, no, no. Nothing. And so we made it back, I guess, late afternoon on Sunday, hitchhiking some more. Many people had much more exciting adventures than we did. Ours was relatively tame.

NOBLE: [01:16:42] But that must have been really an awakening experience to get back together with your peers and hear, listen to each other's stories.

TAYLOR: [01:16:49] Right.

NOBLE: [01:16:50] And why do you think they did that? Why, why? What was the purpose of that three day exercise in survival?

TAYLOR: [01:16:57] I think it was to see how we would cope in a completely uncharted environment with minimal amount of money. It was, you know, from the point of view of a psychologist now, it was functionally a projective test. In other words, if you dump these people into a blank environment where they do not have the resources that they are used to depending upon and are left to their own devices, which means that they have their minds and their bodies and the clothes on their back. How will they fare? Will they be able to tolerate it? It wasn't so much a test of, I think, whether we had a wonderful experience or not. It was, can you take this? Maybe that was it. Can you stomach it?

NOBLE: [01:18:00] Yes. Are you strong enough to go through this challenge? Were, was there the threat of deselection over your heads?

TAYLOR: [01:18:09] Yes, that was always there.

NOBLE: [01:18:10] Yeah. So maybe this was the ultimate deciding factor in who would go on to Korea?

TAYLOR: [01:18:16] I don't think, I don't. I don't think it was the ultimate. We were never told what the deciding factors were, but we knew from the beginning that we could be deselected.

NOBLE: [01:18:25] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:18:26] But what those deselection criteria were, we did not know.

NOBLE: [01:18:28] That's right.

TAYLOR: [01:18:31] So all we knew was that everything we did was being evaluated.

NOBLE: [01:18:35] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:18:36] Or everything we didn't do was being evaluated. And that we just were cognizant that there was deselection. And in fact, I remember one gentleman was deselected at the very end and the volunteers really liked him. He, I remember he was Polish and.

NOBLE: [01:18:59] Polish American?

TAYLOR: [01:19:01] Polish American. He was, um, he was gregarious. He was a musician. He was, he was a little bit on the loud side, but he was great fun. And all the volunteers liked him. He was deselected and it came as a disappointment and a blow to the rest of us because we liked him very much.

NOBLE: [01:19:24] Did you get to talk to him or did he just disappear?

TAYLOR: [01:19:27] They gave him very short notice, functionally he disappeared.

NOBLE: [01:19:32] Did he have any inkling about why?

TAYLOR: [01:19:34] I have no idea. I have no idea. I thought a lot about it, and I think we all did because we were puzzled.

NOBLE: [01:19:41] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:19:41] And what I realized later, once we were in Korea, is that parts of his personality would have been just fine in Korea. But the, the way he was, he was a little, a little bit. He would have been a bull in a china shop, not because he was a bull in a china shop, but because the, of a mismatch between his physical and social gregariousness.

NOBLE: [01:20:20] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:20:20] And the Korean culture, which was a very, is a very refined, um, conservative, um, traditional Confucian hierarchical culture. And that, I think, was what my hypothesis is, and it's only a hypothesis, is that the Korean staff understood that that he would be perhaps not, not suitable for adaptation to becoming Korean.

NOBLE: [01:21:15] Yeah. Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:21:16] I mean, that to succeed in Korea, you sort of had to at least be able to adopt enough of Korean mannerisms and behavior that you could not offend people.

NOBLE: [01:21:32] Exactly. Exactly right.

TAYLOR: [01:21:33] And I think probably just his, his, his native humanness as a person and maybe from his culture was, it was too loud.

NOBLE: [01:21:43] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:21:43] His, his body language was too gregarious.

NOBLE: [01:21:47] Well, now I hope that he was, that such a great guy would have been given another chance to train for a different program in a different culture where loud, gregarious behavior would be okay and not offensive.

TAYLOR: [01:21:59] Right. And that may have happened.

NOBLE: [01:22:01] I hope so.

TAYLOR: [01:22:01] Yeah. We were not allowed to, I mean, it was, it wasn't something we were informed about to process but.

NOBLE: [01:22:08] Were you and David pretty confident, confident that you were going to be accepted or was it, were you worried about deselection?

TAYLOR: [01:22:15] There was a worry I think in everyone's mind because it was a possibility. I don't think I took it personally. I don't think I thought that it was likely because I understood that we had many of the same mannerisms that with refinement, considerable refinement, would make us acceptable.

NOBLE: [01:22:45] Yeah. Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:22:47] That we could, that we could behave appropriately. And to some extent I was wrong, but that's further down into the story.

NOBLE: [01:22:54] Did you have psychologists coming to interview you?

TAYLOR: [01:22:58] Yes.

NOBLE: [01:22:58] Did you have personal, individual interviews with psychologists?

TAYLOR: [01:23:00] Yes. And, uh, this is a pivotal point in, I think it was the point where I thought perhaps I would be deselected, in which case we would both be deselected. We had an interview, I think more than one actually, but I remember one in particular with the psychologist.

NOBLE: [01:23:18] You by yourself or you and David together?

TAYLOR: [01:23:21] Separately.

NOBLE: [01:23:21] Separately.

TAYLOR: [01:23:23] Individually. And the question was. And here's this guy that we don't know, that everybody thinks is a little, I think people were very ambivalent about him.

NOBLE: [01:23:34] Mm hmm. The psychologist?

TAYLOR: [01:23:37] Yes.

NOBLE: [01:23:37] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:23:41] And he seemed to operate on a set of principles that were not available to us. And we didn't know what his expectations were or what he was looking for. It was, he seemed opaque.

NOBLE: [01:23:58] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [01:23:59] And I remember he was sitting in a chair, and I came in and sat down and he said, well, tell me about yourself. That's all he said. No guidance.

NOBLE: [01:24:15] Where do you begin?

TAYLOR: [01:24:16] Where do you begin? And I really stumbled. I really stumbled on that one. I didn't want to talk to him. I didn't want to tell him anything. Like, if you're not going to give me any guidance, I'm not just going to talk.

NOBLE: [01:24:27] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:24:29] And so there was sort of a stalemate. And I thought maybe that was it for me, but I didn't know what he was looking for. But I didn't want to play, you know, it was like, I'm not. I'm not. No, no. I'm not going to tell you anything about myself because I have no way of judging anything about what you are looking for or how you're going to treat it or what you think I'm supposed to say or not say. I found out years later when I was in graduate school in psychology that this guy, whose last name was Exner, went on. He was at that point doing research for his dissertation in

psychology. And this was sort of his summer gig or his seasonal gig to get himself through graduate school.

NOBLE: [01:25:27] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:25:27] His last name was Exner, and he ended up writing a seminal textbook on the Rorschach. He had developed his own scoring method for scoring the responses on the Rorschach. And the Rorschach is inkblots.

NOBLE: [01:25:45] Yes.

TAYLOR: [01:25:46] And it's an entirely projective test. In other words, somebody looks at the blot and then says what comes to mind. And it's all scored very meticulously. That was what he was doing. He was writing that system. He was creating his own system of scoring the inkblots. And that was exactly, then I understood. Once I understood that that was his book and it was the same guy, because he came at one point and talked at the University of Michigan about his scoring system. And I went up to him, and because somehow I put two and two together, and I thought this must be the same guy.

NOBLE: [01:26:33] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:26:33] And I said, were you ever in, were you ever a psychologist for a Peace Corps training program in Hawaii? And he said yes. He did not want to, he stopped the conversation. I mean, he was not interested. I thought maybe he'd say, oh, well, you know, what did you do and how did it go and blah blah blah?

NOBLE: [01:26:49] And how fascinating it was and all he learned from it. No?

TAYLOR: [01:26:51] No. He was absolutely not interested in pursuing that line of conversation. So I thought, well, that's interesting. He's confirmed that it's the same person.

NOBLE: [01:26:59] Yes.

TAYLOR: [01:26:59] So my question is answered and this is not a person that I'm comfortable with. I wasn't then. I'm not now. So, yes, that was the psychology question.

NOBLE: [01:27:13] Yeah. And I'm thinking about this. I'm also wondering whether in training you were given teacher training? You had cultural studies, language studies. But what about?

TAYLOR: [01:27:25] Yes, we were.

NOBLE: [01:27:26] How to, how to teach?

TAYLOR: [01:27:27] Yes, we were. And that was the TESL part, which is to learn how to teach, period. And then I guess learn how to teach a foreign language.

NOBLE: [01:27:46] Again, TESL is Teaching English as a Second Language.

TAYLOR: [01:27:49] Right.

NOBLE: [01:27:50] It used to be TEFL, T-E-F-L, Teaching English as a Foreign Language. Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:28:00] Um. I. Because it, because we were teaching English conversation. That was really our function. Um. That as an English major, it didn't seem to me very hard to teach language. I had had a lot of education in that, including lots of education and diagramming sentences and parts of speech and gerunds and adjectives and verbs. And so I was quite at home with that. I had not taught, but I don't remember that being an issue. It obviously didn't make a big impression on me. So it must have been a compatible enough experience that it didn't really register.

NOBLE: [01:28:54] On the whole, did you think that your training was done well, that the information was conveyed in in a good way?

TAYLOR: [01:29:05] I think so. Uh, the days were long. We got, at least I did, got tired. I had no ear for picking up a language orally, and so I struggled

whereas other people just, who are good at mimicry or music or had some auditory recall did much better.

NOBLE: [01:29:35] So their method of teaching Korean was entirely oral?

TAYLOR: [01:29:39] It was.

NOBLE: [01:29:39] You didn't have a textbook to talk about grammar?

TAYLOR: [01:29:41] Everything was immersion. The whole, the whole, the whole training program was immersion.

NOBLE: [01:29:46] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:29:46] Which is we're going to put you in it.

NOBLE: [01:29:49] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:29:49] And see how you do. And the way to learn a language is that you are spoken to in Korean and, and we'll repeat it for you, but you've got to figure it out.

NOBLE: [01:30:04] Of course, we now know that people learn languages in many different ways. If you're a visual learner, you're going to need some visual, visual cues.

TAYLOR: [01:30:12] And we did have to learn the alphabet.

NOBLE: [01:30:15] The alphabet, yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:30:16] And we had to learn how to read basic, basic words.

NOBLE: [01:30:20] Yes. Very difficult.

TAYLOR: [01:30:22] Yeah. And it's a completely foreign alphabet, but it's a wonderful alphabet. But that's a whole different story.

NOBLE: [01:30:28] Yeah. Did you, um, did you feel that you were given all the training you needed? Was the training adequate for what you then were faced with once you got to Korea?

TAYLOR: [01:30:44] The answer is yes. Uh. I don't think. I don't think that there would ever be fully adequate training because fully adequate training would be that you would end up being Korean.

NOBLE: [01:31:00] Oh yeah, okay.

TAYLOR: [01:31:01] And obviously that was not possible. So at some point they had to say, you've got enough, you have enough under your belt here that, that you can survive.

NOBLE: [01:31:13] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:31:14] And then it's up to you while you're in Korea, you know, you keep learning.

NOBLE: [01:31:20] Yeah, that's right.

TAYLOR: [01:31:21] You keep learning.

NOBLE: [01:31:22] So you're in Hawaii for? How long did the training last, two or three months?

TAYLOR: [01:31:27] We were in Hilo, uh, October and November. And I think about part of December. And then we were taken to Honolulu. And in Honolulu the group was split. The seven and eights were split for the first time. And so I don't know exactly what the eights did, um, and I don't even remember exactly what we did.

NOBLE: [01:32:01] It was practice teaching as part of that?

TAYLOR: [01:32:03] You know, I'm, I'm blank on it. Um. I do remember that we spent a Christmas with a family that we didn't know who had just, you know, opened their house to us.

NOBLE: [01:32:16] A Hawaiian family?

TAYLOR: [01:32:21] Um, well, I mean, it was, it was Honolulu, but I think they were more Anglo than Hawaiian.

NOBLE: [01:32:28] Uh huh. But not a Korean immigrant family?

TAYLOR: [01:32:30] No, not a Korean immigrant family. I don't know why I'm drawing such a blank on that. But I am. Uh. It was an urban. Oh, maybe this was the part. It was an urban environment. So we were, we were learning how to get around in a large urban environment where maybe we didn't have. It wasn't a totally foreign culture, but it certainly wasn't a familiar culture.

NOBLE: [01:33:03] Yeah. And then did training continue a bit in Korea, or did you have your big swearing in ceremony in Hawaii?

TAYLOR: [01:33:13] We had it in Hawaii. By that time, anybody that was being deselected had been deselected. So before shipping us off to Korea, we had the swearing in ceremony in Hawaii.

NOBLE: [01:33:29] Meanwhile, you're writing it to your parents, to your brother maybe, from Hawaii?

TAYLOR: [01:33:35] I don't particularly remember writing that much from Hawaii. I don't know. I don't know why.

NOBLE: [01:33:41] Well, they were keeping you pretty busy.

TAYLOR: [01:33:42] Yeah, we were busy, very busy.

NOBLE: [01:33:45] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:33:47] And I think that if I had free time, I probably would just socialize with the other volunteers and the staff.

NOBLE: [01:33:56] Before we get on that plane and go to Korea, is there anything else you'd like to say about training?

TAYLOR: [01:34:07] Yes, two things. One is that the Korean staff gave us all Korean names before we left.

NOBLE: [01:34:17] Ah.

TAYLOR: [01:34:18] And so we were presented with our Korean names, and my Korean name was Lee Mi Hae. Lee is the surname, the family name, and Korea has a finite number of surnames, unlike the United States. I think around 200, 250. And Lee and Kim are among the most common. So it was a very common surname.

NOBLE: [01:34:47] Oh, so Lee would be spelled?

TAYLOR: [01:34:49] Well, it depends on how it's transliterated. Syngman Rhee spelled at R-H-E-E because the L and the R sound are ambiguous. So and E in English doesn't mean anything. I mean, you can't just have like a capital E. So, so when it's. [tape break]

NOBLE: [01:35:15] Two.

TAYLOR: [01:35:16] One of the solutions is what Syngman Rhee did, R-H-E-E, which is very uncommon. The most common solution is L-E-E.

NOBLE: [01:35:24] Lee.

TAYLOR: [01:35:25] Lee.

NOBLE: [01:35:28] So your family name was Lee or E?

TAYLOR: [01:35:31] Well, it was, because I wasn't writing it in English.

NOBLE: [01:35:35] Yes.

TAYLOR: [01:35:35] And because it was a Korean name, it was pronounced E.

NOBLE: [01:35:39] Just E.

TAYLOR: [01:35:39] E. Yeah.

NOBLE: [01:35:42] That's it.

TAYLOR: [01:35:43] But if it had to be written out, it would have been, you know, probably Lee or Mi.

NOBLE: [01:35:50] Uh huh. Okay. So you were Lee and then Mi.

TAYLOR: [01:35:54] Mi, mi. Uh, in English it would be M-I.

NOBLE: [01:35:59] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [01:36:01] And then Hae, H-A-E.

NOBLE: [01:36:05] H-A-E.

TAYLOR: [01:36:07] Mi means beautiful. I mean, it can mean a number of things because the sound itself means a number of different words. And Koreans can figure it out by context. Or if it's written, they can figure it out because Chinese characters are used to clarify. So if there are five ways of understanding the phonetics of Mi, the Korean can decipher it linguistically by understanding the context, although there still can be ambiguity, which is the fun of poetry.

NOBLE: [01:36:49] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [01:36:49] Or by, in a print form, if the person has been educated to the point where they understand Chinese characters. The Chinese character that's selected clarifies what the meaning is. And I have, I am sorry to say, forgotten the meaning of Hae.

NOBLE: [01:37:09] But that's all right. So during training, you were Lee Mi Hae.

TAYLOR: [01:37:16] The names were given to us, actually, I think fairly far into the training. So by the time we got the names, the Korean staff knew us. So these names meant, these, these were non random names.

NOBLE: [01:37:31] Ah, they chose something.

TAYLOR: [01:37:32] They chose something.

NOBLE: [01:37:33] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:37:36] And I thought it was a lovely name and so.

NOBLE: [01:37:40] Yeah. Did you keep it?

TAYLOR: [01:37:40] Yes. I mean, we kept it for the duration of being there.

NOBLE: [01:37:44] Being in Hawaii or in Korea.

TAYLOR: [01:37:47] Uh, in Korea. Not that anybody called us that for real, but we had, many of us had dojangs made up. Dojang is the, is a seal, a Chinese seal. And when we had them made up, we had them made up with our Korean names.

NOBLE: [01:38:06] Which you had acquired in Hawaii.

TAYLOR: [01:38:09] Which we had acquired in Hawaii.

NOBLE: [01:38:10] And there was something else you wanted to say about training.

TAYLOR: [01:38:19] Now I've forgotten. Um. Sorry, I've forgotten.

NOBLE: [01:38:28] Why don't we move on to Korea? And if that in the context of talking about Korea, if, if it pops back into your mind we can.

TAYLOR: [01:38:37] Okay.

NOBLE: [01:38:38] Go back to that.

TAYLOR: [01:38:39] Okay.

NOBLE: [01:38:40] Okay. So I'm sorry if I'm rushing you along.

TAYLOR: [01:38:45] No.

NOBLE: [01:38:45] But I want, I want to make sure we have enough time to talk about your experience in Korea.

TAYLOR: [01:38:49] No, I'm relying on your guidance.

NOBLE: [01:38:50] Okay. So, um, you don't have time to, they don't send you back to United States to say goodbye to your families. You go from Hawaii directly to Korea. There's a flight. And you all land, I suppose, in Seoul?

TAYLOR: [01:39:10] Yes. Actually, we landed in Incheon, which is maybe an hour by bus outside of Seoul to the west, which was where the airport was. There was an airport in Incheon.

NOBLE: [01:39:25] Was there a welcoming party? Were there people there to meet you at the airport?

TAYLOR: [01:39:31] Yes. We were met with busses and we were met by, I believe, the Peace Corps director.

NOBLE: [01:39:42] The country director?

TAYLOR: [01:39:42] The country director named Kevin O'Donnell and maybe some of the office staff. But principally by Koreans and also the staff that we had trained with, the Korean staff that we had trained with. I don't remember.

NOBLE: [01:40:05] Had they accompanied you?

TAYLOR: [01:40:06] I don't know if it was every one of them, but it seemed to me that there was some overlap.

NOBLE: [01:40:11] Oh, good. Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:40:13] And I just remember being totally flummoxed.

NOBLE: [01:40:18] By what?

TAYLOR: [01:40:18] Well, we got off and, I mean, you get on in Honolulu.

NOBLE: [01:40:24] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:40:25] And you get off in Seoul. And for one thing, we got on where it was summer.

NOBLE: [01:40:31] Oh.

TAYLOR: [01:40:32] We're now talking, we're into deep January at least. And we got off in this winter.

NOBLE: [01:40:40] Uh huh.

TAYLOR: [01:40:43] Everything is gray. It's snowy, it's cold, it's barren looking. It's not urban. It's very rural. The airport is tiny. And we're put on busses that were standard Korean busses.

NOBLE: [01:41:04] Had you been warned about the change in, the radical?

TAYLOR: [01:41:07] Yes.

NOBLE: [01:41:08] Change in temperature. So you had socks on, for example?

TAYLOR: [01:41:10] Yes, we were prepared. I mean, we were told, and it was a climate that I was used to.

NOBLE: [01:41:15] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:41:15] It was just a big shock.

NOBLE: [01:41:17] Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:41:17] From summer to winter.

NOBLE: [01:41:19] The opposite of those of us who flew from New York to Lagos, Nigeria, in January.

TAYLOR: [01:41:26] Right. Went from winter to summer. So you understand.

NOBLE: [01:41:29] Yes.

TAYLOR: [01:41:30] We were put on busses, and I don't remember how we were divided up, but we were put on busses and driven into Seoul, which was urban and sprawled out because it was mostly buildings that were under, I would say, five stories. There were no elevators.

NOBLE: [01:41:53] You're talking about all of Seoul?

TAYLOR: [01:41:54] Yes. No elevators, no heat.

NOBLE: [01:41:58] No heat?

TAYLOR: [01:41:58] No heat. There was electricity, but no heat. Running water maybe. Flushing toilets never. A hole in the floor always.

NOBLE: [01:42:13] The bathroom was a hole in, the toilet was a hole in the floor?

TAYLOR: [01:42:16] Yeah. Even, even in this urban environment.

NOBLE: [01:42:19] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:42:21] Private homes had outhouses. And which was a hole in a little enclosure of some kind. What I have as the strongest memory is being on the bus as we drove into Seoul and looking out the window. And to me, it was like a kaleidoscope. It was a riot of color and imagery and shapes and costumes and conveyances that I could not make sense of. It was like I

had been born again. Like, where am I? And what is all of this? Not, not what is that? But what is everything.

NOBLE: [01:43:19] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:43:20] Total stimuli overload. Um, now I had been in Rome, which by comparison was a little tiny bit of stimuli overload. This was 100 percent stimuli overload.

NOBLE: [01:43:37] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:43:40] And I think because I'd been through it with these earlier experiences, I knew that if I just stayed calm and paid attention, that it would begin to precipitate out that, you know, I would begin to understand one thing and then I would begin to understand another thing, that it would precipitate out and it would no longer seem what is the most profound experience of disorganization. I mean, culture shock is not, is not a metaphor. It is a shock. It's like being dropped into ice water.

NOBLE: [01:44:28] Mm hmm, mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [01:44:29] So but I knew it would pass.

NOBLE: [01:44:30] So you didn't panic because you knew that eventually you would, this would all begin to make sense.

TAYLOR: [01:44:35] Right.

NOBLE: [01:44:36] How about, how did your spouse do? You were married to David, who was also must have been going through some similar.

TAYLOR: [01:44:42] Right. I think it was harder on him and, uh, and I, and I'm not sure why. I think our personalities are, just a difference in personality maybe. He had traveled overseas so that would not have been the deciding factor. But.

NOBLE: [01:45:08] But you were adjusting a little bit more easily?

TAYLOR: [01:45:11] Yeah, I think so.

NOBLE: [01:45:12] When you, you were taking the bus into Seoul and then where, did you stay together as a group?

TAYLOR: [01:45:18] We stayed together as a group for a couple of days.

NOBLE: [01:45:22] In a dorm thing or what?

TAYLOR: [01:45:25] I don't remember exactly where we stayed, and maybe it wasn't even a couple of days. We were, we all were conveyed in several busses because there were enough, enough of us, at least two busses, to the Peace Corps headquarters in Seoul on the main sort of drag in the city. And at that point, we were, we were given an address of where we would be living. And it was given to us. We didn't have any say so in it. A lot of people who were not going to be teaching in Seoul were dispersed to wherever their assignment was.

NOBLE: [01:46:13] Oh, but you were actually going to be teaching and living in Seoul as a volunteer?

TAYLOR: [01:46:18] Right.

NOBLE: [01:46:19] Ah, okay.

TAYLOR: [01:46:19] So we, we understood that when we got to Seoul, that's where we were going to be staying.

NOBLE: [01:46:23] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:46:24] Which was fine by me. I mean, I was perfectly, I was happy. And I had been assigned to teach at Ewha Womans University, which in Korean culture, then and now, is the Radcliffe of Korea.

NOBLE: [01:46:43] So you had a rather elite group.

TAYLOR: [01:46:45] I was very pleased and flattered and honored to have had that placement. And it was in the, uh, Ewha had a College of Education. Within the College of Education, there was a department at that time called the Department of Teaching Foreign Languages.

NOBLE: [01:47:06] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [01:47:07] And the foreign language that was being taught was English.

NOBLE: [01:47:11] English, sure.

TAYLOR: [01:47:12] Among others, French was one of them. And possibly German. I don't remember.

NOBLE: [01:47:16] But your function was.

TAYLOR: [01:47:17] My function was to teach English, conversational English.

NOBLE: [01:47:20] So, um, I'd like to get back to that in a minute, but let's talk about where you were living.

TAYLOR: [01:47:26] Okay.

NOBLE: [01:47:29] At some point here, you're saying goodbye to all the other people in, I want to say all the other kids in your group, and you and David go off to a place where you're going to live.

TAYLOR: [01:47:39] Yes. So we're conveyed to, uh, *yong guan*. That's the Korean word. A *yong guan* is like a boarding house. Uh. The particular one that we were conveyed to was in a neighborhood called Pukayan-dong, and the *yong guan* was operated by a Korean woman, middle age. There was no male around. So she was supporting herself with this business. It was in a colonial style Japanese house. So this would have been a house that would have been built during the Japanese occupation of Korea. And I found it immensely uncomfortable because the Korean houses have heated floors that are heated from below with charcoal briquettes called

ondol. And the Japanese house was constructed, I think, for really a milder climate, the Japanese climate.

TAYLOR: [01:49:12] It did not have any floor heating. It had a long, dark hallway. It was very dark. I remember it was very dark. Dark wood. And electricity was available, but not used unless absolutely necessary. And we were given a room, like a bedroom sized room with a sliding paper door. So very little, no, no sound privacy whatsoever. The room had a window. It had some, um, tired looking wallpaper as I remember. I think it had one ceiling fixture with a string pull, and it had a potbelly stove and a double bed. That was about it.

NOBLE: [01:50:11] No desks, no writing surface?

TAYLOR: [01:50:13] Nothing.

NOBLE: [01:50:13] Ah.

TAYLOR: [01:50:13] Nothing. Nothing.

NOBLE: [01:50:15] And no, no cooking? So you couldn't cook for yourself?

TAYLOR: [01:50:18] No. So across the hallway from our room, which was in kind of a noisy area, because right across the hallway was, uh, if you will, the kitchen. The kitchen had a sink with a cold running spigot and some cookware. And I think the heat, the cooking heat, was provided with a propane canister. There was a young girl from the countryside, Kyung Jah, who was about 16 years old, who had come up from the countryside because there was really no future for her there.

NOBLE: [01:51:18] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [01:51:18] And her wages, I think, were sent back to some extent to her family.

NOBLE: [01:51:24] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [01:51:26] She had had chickenpox as a child and had a deeply pocked face, which really reduced her marriage opportunities.

NOBLE: [01:51:38] It might have been smallpox.

TAYLOR: [01:51:40] Smallpox?

NOBLE: [01:51:41] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:51:42] Well, I don't know what kind of pox it was, but it was certainly pox.

NOBLE: [01:51:45] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:51:46] And it was very distressing to her.

NOBLE: [01:51:48] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:51:51] But she was, you know, a rock solid person and very nice and kind to us. And cooked all the meals for everyone who lived in the *yong guan*, which were a number of people. I think there was one other volunteer that we really never met because he was single and single volunteers that were male spent their time when they were not teaching at their college, and he was at a different college, drinking. That was the traditional male activity, going to a wine house and drinking and singing songs from dinnertime until midnight.

NOBLE: [01:52:40] It sounds great, but that was just a guy thing?

TAYLOR: [01:52:43] That was a guy thing. Absolutely a guy thing.

NOBLE: [01:52:45] Yeah. And so who were the other people living in this boarding house with you? Were they Americans? Were they, were they Koreans?

TAYLOR: [01:52:54] They must have been Koreans. But we really didn't, with the exception of the American, but we really didn't see anybody because everybody was on their own schedule. And we didn't eat together.

NOBLE: [01:53:07] You didn't. So the 16 year old had to prepare meals.

TAYLOR: [01:53:11] For everyone.

NOBLE: [01:53:11] At staggered times, not all one meal that you'd all sit down and eat. Huh.

TAYLOR: [01:53:16] And she, she prepared our, our breakfast and she prepared, prepared our dinner.

NOBLE: [01:53:23] Mm hmm. And dinner being the evening meal?

TAYLOR: [01:53:26] Yes.

NOBLE: [01:53:26] Uh huh.

TAYLOR: [01:53:27] And it was traditional Korean food. And it was, you know, it was very, very tasty. She did a great job. And she would bring it in on a tray, or low tray, and we'd sit on the floor on a cushion and eat Korean style food.

NOBLE: [01:53:47] But the floor was cold.

TAYLOR: [01:53:49] The floor was cold, the bed was freezing, and the stove was not heated during the day because there's no way you're going to be putting wood into a stove if the occupants are gone from the room.

NOBLE: [01:54:00] Yes.

TAYLOR: [01:54:01] Because they're at their universities.

NOBLE: [01:54:03] So when you came home, you came to a very cold.

TAYLOR: [01:54:06] It was extremely cold.

NOBLE: [01:54:08] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:54:08] I have no idea how cold, but, you know, no heat and the outside temperature is 20, if you're lucky.

NOBLE: [01:54:14] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:54:16] And so by the time the heat. It was almost not worth even putting wood in the stove, because by the time the stove was heated, it was time to go to bed.

NOBLE: [01:54:31] Right. And there wasn't anything else to do because you didn't have desks. You couldn't sit and write letters or prepare lessons or do anything.

TAYLOR: [01:54:41] Not in your room. Not there, no. I did all of the lesson preparation at Ewha.

NOBLE: [01:54:49] At school. Yeah. So you and David went off to different schools?

TAYLOR: [01:54:52] He went to a different school. He went to, he was assigned to Sungkyunkwan, which is a Confucian college, and he was assigned to, I believe, their English department. And it was in the opposite direction from, from mine.

NOBLE: [01:55:11] So your work lives were totally separate?

TAYLOR: [01:55:13] Right.

NOBLE: [01:55:13] And you came back together. What, in what situations, since you were teaching English, did you need to use Korean in the course of teaching or did, was your need to use Korean mostly outside, like with the cook and as you traveled between home and school?

TAYLOR: [01:55:33] Right. The use of Korean was as you've described it for me. Now, for volunteers who were out in the countryside, they used Korean because nobody spoke any English, and so they learned differently. And

also for the men, it was a very different experience than for the women. I think for the single women, it was terribly isolating.

NOBLE: [01:55:58] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:55:59] I don't know how they did it because the culture was totally bifurcated on gender lines.

NOBLE: [01:56:06] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:56:07] And in fact, the Korean word for a wife, loosely translated, means in person. In other words, the person who is inside the house, who doesn't leave.

NOBLE: [01:56:19] Oh, the in person, and the man is the out person.

TAYLOR: [01:56:20] And the man is the out person. And the in person is quite literal because they're either in a house or in a compound and you don't leave.

NOBLE: [01:56:32] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:56:36] And most people had, of any means, had a servant, excuse me, like this country girl, because everything had to be done by hand. All the laundry was done by hand, all the cleaning was done by hand, all the cooking was done by hand. There were no refrigerators, so food had to be bought every day and prepared fresh. And so it was very labor intensive and people really needed a servant or a country girl or some such person. Um. At Ewha where I was placed.

NOBLE: [01:57:22] Should we just stop this for a minute?

TAYLOR: [01:57:23] Yeah. [tape break]

NOBLE: [01:57:27] Okay, we stopped the tape and we're back. We were talking about your situations in which you would need to use your Korean. And how did that go?

TAYLOR: [01:57:37] Yes, uh, that went fine. I was able to do basic transactions. I was able to buy food in a market and negotiate price because Koreans had no pricing. It was all haggling. And haggling was considered a necessary and socially mandatory thing to do.

NOBLE: [01:58:03] Sure. And you were a fool if you paid the first price.

TAYLOR: [01:58:05] You were an absolute fool if you paid the first price. And in fact, you know, it was rude not to haggle and not to negotiate.

NOBLE: [01:58:13] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:58:14] And it was sort of a game, you know?

NOBLE: [01:58:16] And you'd be, were you buying food that your 16 year old cook would then prepare? Or were you buying other fruits and things that you'd snack on?

TAYLOR: [01:58:26] Well, for lunch. The food example I'm giving is when we lived in our second residence, which was within a compound.

NOBLE: [01:58:38] Oh, you didn't stay in that?

TAYLOR: [01:58:39] We stayed in the, in the yong guan for about six months. And because I found it not the most comfortable environment.

NOBLE: [01:58:51] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [01:58:52] And in that environment also, I, I did our own washing and in unheated water. So it was cold, cold, ice cold water. And I remember washing socks out in this cold water and my arms aching all the way up to my elbows and beyond. The teacher in the department I was placed at Ewha, we were assigned, um. I was assigned to a room that had four other, three other people in it. One was another volunteer. One was a woman named Kim Jung Sook. And one was a man. And he, again, because of these gender differences and maybe age differences, he was

older, was polite and put up with our chattering, but he didn't really participate.

TAYLOR: [02:00:14] Kim Jung Sook deserves a tremendous amount of credit in my life because she was, and she's still alive. I still communicate with her. She's 13 years older than I am. She was widowed at the time that I met her and had a four year old daughter. And in Korean society at that time a widow, and it may still be true, was henceforth unmarriageable.

NOBLE: [02:00:44] Oh.

TAYLOR: [02:00:44] So she was a young woman.

NOBLE: [02:00:45] Oh.

TAYLOR: [02:00:47] She had studied in the United States after her husband died. She lived with her parents and her parents took care of her daughter from the time her daughter was quite young for two years, so maybe from 2 to 4. And she got a master's degree in linguistics at the University of Indiana in Bloomington.

NOBLE: [02:01:12] Wow.

TAYLOR: [02:01:13] So she was very accomplished herself. And had, had broken out of, and because of the death of her husband, in a way, had been forced out of a traditional Korean marriage.

NOBLE: [02:01:24] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:01:26] So she was unique. She also understood what it was like to be in a foreign country because she had lived in the United States.

NOBLE: [02:01:32] That's right.

TAYLOR: [02:01:33] In the middle of the heartland, you know, so.

NOBLE: [02:01:39] And experienced heat in winter. So she would understand your discomfort in not having heat in winter.

TAYLOR: [02:01:45] She, she fully, uh, fully understood.

NOBLE: [02:01:49] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:01:49] And I took to her immediately and she was extremely helpful and kind to both the other volunteer and myself. But I felt a strong affinity for her.

NOBLE: [02:02:06] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [02:02:06] And she. Her English was good enough that we often ended up talking in English because we really wanted to talk to each other. And my Korean was not anywhere near as adequate as her English. Um, so unlike some volunteers who were forced to speak in Korean, I was not forced to.

NOBLE: [02:02:33] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:02:35] Um. She was assigned to be my *chido kiosu* and it took me a long time to understand what that actually meant. But in terms of the Korean language, it means *chi* is life and *do* is school and *kiosu* is two different words loosely meaning guide. So if you, if you translate it into English, it's something like guide on how to live, which is much more than mentor. I mean, the word mentor in English just pales by comparison. Her, her, her role was to, in effect, guide me on how to live well and to be socialized properly as a Korean and not make gaffes.

NOBLE: [02:03:45] Oh, yeah. How wonderful to have your training continued in the form of this person.

TAYLOR: [02:03:52] She was immensely helpful. And I made a terrible gaffe, which I will never forget, and to her actually. And that was, um. She came one day to our office and said that there would be an event that the volunteers were invited to and knowing that we were married, she said, and knowing that we had been taught that married volunteers did not, in Korean society

the men and women did not socialize. But in this particular event, the Koreans were making an exception, if you will, and the married volunteers were invited to bring their spouse.

NOBLE: [02:04:44] Uh huh.

TAYLOR: [02:04:45] And I knew she had a daughter. So I asked her if she would be coming with her spouse because I was trying to gauge how.

NOBLE: [02:04:55] Oh, if her daughter would be coming with her?

TAYLOR: [02:04:57] No, her daughter was a child. If she, Kim Yung Sook, would be coming with her spouse. I knew she had this, there had been a man in her life because she had a child.

NOBLE: [02:05:07] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:05:09] Are you following me?

NOBLE: [02:05:10] I am, yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:05:13] So.

NOBLE: [02:05:14] But you didn't yet know that she was a widow?

TAYLOR: [02:05:15] I did not know she was a widow. And this is how I found out.

NOBLE: [02:05:18] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:05:20] In trying to ascertain how far the Koreans were deviating from their cultural norm by inviting us with our spouses to accommodate our cultural norm, I asked her if she would be bringing her spouse.

NOBLE: [02:05:38] Yes.

TAYLOR: [02:05:40] In other words, was the deviation such that a Korean could bring their spouse?

NOBLE: [02:05:44] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:05:46] And she just looked at me. She didn't say a word. Her face was impassive. And she just looked at me. Uh, I had no idea. I had no idea what was happening.

NOBLE: [02:06:08] Right. How confusing.

TAYLOR: [02:06:11] I understood that it was a question that was not going to be answered. But she wasn't going to tell me. It wasn't going to be answered. It was just not going to be answered. And so the moment passed, and that was the end of that encounter. But it was a critical encounter because the, I should not have asked the question. In other words, I should not have asked a personal question. And in particular, because that's intrusive. I mean, that was, that was an American thing to do and it was not a Korean thing to do.

NOBLE: [02:06:50] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:06:52] So I had violated a norm and. [tape break]

NOBLE: [02:06:59] The leader's come through. This is Phyllis Noble interviewing Margaret Eger Taylor. And this is tape, we're beginning tape three. We're talking about Kim Jung Sook.

TAYLOR: [02:07:12] So, um, that, that moment moved on to some other moment. I found out later, because I inquired of another Korean teacher, uh, what, what had transpired, because I didn't understand it. And I was told that, in fact, her husband had died unexpectedly. He had been studying in the United States and the circumstances were not explained to me. But he died and left her a widow with a very young child in a culture where widows are not marriageable. So she was stuck, probably at age 30, I think, to fabricate a life for herself.

NOBLE: [02:08:19] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:08:19] Quite unexpectedly. And that her response to me was a, an appropriate Korean response to an inappropriate question.

NOBLE: [02:08:34] Uh huh.

TAYLOR: [02:08:34] And the appropriate Korean response was not to distress me, not to distress the other person. So I asked her a terribly distressing question, which I should not have asked, but her response is to maintain a neutrality so that I don't feel distressed. Had she told me that her husband had died, obviously I would have realized that I had asked a very painful question.

NOBLE: [02:09:11] And then you'd be embarrassed.

TAYLOR: [02:09:13] And then I'd be embarrassed. So. And the injunction against embarrassing the other person is so great that her primary goal is not to cause me distress. So she's absorbing the distress, but she's dedicated to not causing me distress.

NOBLE: [02:09:33] Such an incredible difference in cultures.

TAYLOR: [02:09:37] Totally different.

NOBLE: [02:09:38] That you're learning through personal experience, not out of a textbook.

TAYLOR: [02:09:42] Right. And so that was a lesson I never forgot, and she never explained it to me. I heard this.

NOBLE: [02:09:50] From somebody else.

TAYLOR: [02:09:51] From somebody else. She came and visited me sometime in the mid '90s. She was in the United States visiting a number of people, and she purposely came to visit me. And I was very flattered and delighted. At about 10:00 at night on one of the nights she was staying after my kids were in bed, she said to me, I never told you about my husband, did I?

NOBLE: [02:10:22] Ah.

TAYLOR: [02:10:22] And I thought, I've been waiting 30 years for this, 25 years for this. And she's about ready to tell me.

NOBLE: [02:10:32] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:10:32] I didn't ask. She's about ready to answer. My phone rings.

NOBLE: [02:10:35] Oh, no!

TAYLOR: [02:10:38] And I go to get the phone. And it was brief. But whatever magic bubble, the meniscus on that bubble, it broke. I mean, there was no way to get back to.

NOBLE: [02:10:53] The moment.

TAYLOR: [02:10:53] The moment.

NOBLE: [02:10:54] Of sharing this.

TAYLOR: [02:10:55] Of sharing that information, so I will never know, ever. But I thought it was an interesting bookend that at a point many, many years later, when I'm married, have young children, and my husband is at that point, the father of my children has become ill and it's not an illness he's going to recover from. So we had that in common.

NOBLE: [02:11:25] Yes.

TAYLOR: [02:11:28] So my story had a happy ending because of her. And she, that's just an example of, of how she guided me. Now, in that case, she couldn't guide me because I stepped right into it. But in every other situation, she offered a guidance and would explain to me how to behave and where pitfalls would be and how to negotiate and.

NOBLE: [02:11:54] How marvelous. Every Peace Corps volunteer should have.

TAYLOR: [02:11:57] Every Peace Corps volunteer.

NOBLE: [02:11:59] Such a person.

TAYLOR: [02:12:00] Every human being should have such a person.

NOBLE: [02:12:03] Yes, please. And so was she instrumental in helping you find your second living arrangement?

TAYLOR: [02:12:07] Yes, she was. So she knew that we were not, you know, that it was sort of an uncomfortable, cold, difficult place to live in and that I wanted to be able to do some cooking and shopping and so forth.

NOBLE: [02:12:23] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:12:24] So she, in her usual very kind way, saw to it that a distant, I think a cousin of hers or some not immediate relative, she had shared this information with him. And I'll never forget his name because we thought it was, even she thought it was an interesting last name. His last name was Bu and so his name was Ha To Bu. Oh, I'm sorry. His last name was Ha and his given names were To Bu.

NOBLE: [02:12:59] But so his family name, the family name comes first?

TAYLOR: [02:13:01] The family name comes first. But the ending with the Bu in English sounds silly, you know. Ha To Bu, you know. So, so, we, you know, she, her English was such that she understood that this was.

NOBLE: [02:13:16] The humor.

TAYLOR: [02:13:16] The humor. So Ha To Bu knew a Korean family that he, I don't know if he, I don't know if there was. Somebody was related to somebody, but I don't remember exactly what the relationship was. But this other Korean family had lived in a traditional Korean house in a compound in another neighborhood called Kayun-dong, and the family's last name was Chung. And they had within their compound, as was common for

compounds of that type, a two room Korean structure with heated floor, ondol floor, that was I think originally part of, would have been a servant's quarters.

NOBLE: [02:14:22] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [02:14:23] Where the servant actually or a servant's family actually lived in this two room house that was in the corner of the compound. And they asked us if we would like to live there. And I was delighted. The Korean architecture I think is just stunning. And, um, the traditional architecture. And it had this heated floor, which was the difference, all the difference in the world.

NOBLE: [02:14:57] No kidding, yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:14:57] And it had a little unheated sort of porch, a summer kind of a porch extension, that I was able to, um. It was quite a tiny room, but I was able to make a kitchen out of it with a table. I got a propane gas burner and tank. There was no running water except in the courtyard. There was a common courtyard, there was a pump, a hand pump, and the courtyard also had outhouse, plus their main house. And, um, I was so happy to be able to do that. And in the context of my Korean language, then I was responsible for, for buying all the food and preparing all the food, because again, that's, that was a gender distinction. My then husband David would not have been, it would have been inappropriate for him to do the shopping or the cooking.

NOBLE: [02:16:02] Right. Oh, and so, but you are cooking only for yourself and David, not for the family?

TAYLOR: [02:16:09] Correct. We were only cooking for ourselves. Yeah.

NOBLE: [02:16:11] Yeah. Had they offered to cook for you or?

TAYLOR: [02:16:13] No, no. They, you know, the families were autonomous in the sense that we came and went as we wished.

NOBLE: [02:16:24] And you paid them some rent?

TAYLOR: [02:16:26] We paid them rent. They had four children, one, the oldest of whom was a son. They had three sons and a daughter, but the oldest son was maybe a year or two younger than we were, maybe a couple of years younger than that. But I think what they were hoping was that it would give him, this older son, an opportunity to speak a little English and to be around Americans.

NOBLE: [02:16:56] Mm hmm, mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [02:16:56] And so, uh, it, it had advantages for both families.

NOBLE: [02:17:03] Sure. Sure.

TAYLOR: [02:17:06] And actually, the oldest son did come visit us when we were living in Ithaca. Now back to the Kim Jung Sook story. I want to give you the, the side of the experience that I had where the guidance that I got, which made all the difference in the world, was either not given or was not picked up on. And it led eventually to our leaving Korea.

NOBLE: [02:17:47] Hmm.

TAYLOR: [02:17:47] And that was that David at Sungkyunkwan was placed in an English department which I don't think was part of a college of education. So it was professors teaching English who were considered to have mastered the English language enough that they could be teaching college students.

NOBLE: [02:18:16] Uh huh.

TAYLOR: [02:18:17] The circumstances of this, I don't know, but after he had been there about a year, uh, I became aware that something had happened. And what that something was, I think David had a hard time explaining because he didn't know what it was, just like I didn't know what I did.

NOBLE: [02:18:45] So mysteries about the differences in the culture where you can offend somebody and not know that you did and not know what's going on.

TAYLOR: [02:18:53] Not know what's going on. And offend in a way that causes that person to lose, in Kim Yung Sook's case, she didn't lose face. I just asked a very, very inappropriate question that caused her then to have to behave the way she did so that she would not cause me discomfort.

NOBLE: [02:19:10] Right.

TAYLOR: [02:19:11] In his case, uh, the, the gaffe, which is, you know, I think he was just behaving in an American way and so he was unaware that he was making a gaffe.

NOBLE: [02:19:25] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:19:29] Not totally unaware, but I think totally caught off guard by this particular one. The gaffe was that he caused, or as a result of something he did, one of his Korean colleagues, one of these professors, lost face in such a way that it was irrecoverable. I mean, there was no way to undo it.

NOBLE: [02:19:58] Did he correct the guy's English or what?

TAYLOR: [02:20:01] I'm not exactly sure what. Apparently, there was a discussion. You know, he was in, two or three of the Korean teachers were talking. I think one of them might have been the department chairman. And somehow David, in speaking English, said something that the chairman, I think it was the chairman of the department, did not understand and that this. That itself would have been difficult. But it occurred in front of two other or three other faculty so that the lack of the, the department chairman's capacity to process what David was saying in English revealed a deficiency in the department chairman's comprehension or use of the English language.

NOBLE: [02:21:12] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:21:12] In front of colleagues, which was, you know, it would have been embarrassing probably in any context. But in this particular context, not, it caused a loss of face that was not repairable. Because the, someone in the university, I don't know who it was, at the end of the semester reported back to the Korean Peace Corps office because the office director stayed in touch with the placements. And so that we would sort of give them feedback on us, came back, and the feedback came back that they didn't want him back.

NOBLE: [02:22:07] Oh.

TAYLOR: [02:22:08] That this event.

NOBLE: [02:22:09] That they didn't want your husband back or they didn't want the chair?

TAYLOR: [02:22:11] They didn't want my husband back.

NOBLE: [02:22:13] Oh.

TAYLOR: [02:22:15] The chair stayed and the.

NOBLE: [02:22:17] The guy who caused the embarrassment had to go.

TAYLOR: [02:22:21] I mean, it was, it was untenable to have him stay there.

NOBLE: [02:22:24] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:22:26] He, he was devastated. He didn't understand.

NOBLE: [02:22:28] Right.

TAYLOR: [02:22:29] He certainly didn't intend it and, and, um, and was devastated that he had caused, you know, this level of distress to the chairman, but then also devastated that the level of distress that he caused was such that he was expelled, if you will, from, from that placement. Because I

think otherwise he was quite happy in the placement. And, but he did not have this *chido kiosu* in the way that I did.

NOBLE: [02:23:03] *Chido kiosu* again is?

TAYLOR: [02:23:04] This is the guide in the way of living.

NOBLE: [02:23:08] Oh, that's right.

TAYLOR: [02:23:10] Guide in the school of way of.

NOBLE: [02:23:11] That's right. Yes.

TAYLOR: [02:23:12] In the school.

NOBLE: [02:23:14] Yes, yes, yes.

TAYLOR: [02:23:17] He may have had one, but he didn't have one that was able to help him navigate or avoid this, the shoals of this particular disaster.

NOBLE: [02:23:29] If there was any way to navigate it once it's been said.

TAYLOR: [02:23:33] Once it's out, it's out.

NOBLE: [02:23:34] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:23:34] Once it's out, it's out. And Kim Yung Sook, I mean, in my case it was out, but I didn't embarrass her in front of any colleagues. I wasn't embarrassing her in the context of her, uh, her professional credentials.

NOBLE: [02:23:46] Right. It was just, there was no face losing.

TAYLOR: [02:23:48] It was uncomfortable, but there was no loss of face.

NOBLE: [02:23:54] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:23:55] And, uh, but in David's case, there was loss of face and it was irreparable because apparently the Peace Corps office, the director tried to sort of work it through with the English department at Sungkyunkwan.

NOBLE: [02:24:13] The Peace Corps director of Korea?

TAYLOR: [02:24:16] Yes. Because Sungkyunkwan said, you know, we do not want this volunteer next year, which would have been year number two.

NOBLE: [02:24:27] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:24:29] Can you send us somebody else? And the Peace Corps director's response was to try to resolve the problem. And several weeks went by. I don't, we were not privy to what the resolution efforts were but.

NOBLE: [02:24:51] Meanwhile, you're continuing to teach because the semester is not over?

TAYLOR: [02:24:55] Excuse me. I'm going to have to have some water.

NOBLE: [02:24:57] Yeah, yeah, yeah. [tape break]

TAYLOR: [02:25:01] Um, I don't remember the exact sequence, which really doesn't matter in terms of, of whether the semester was over or not over. But by the time it was over, it was clear that this situation was not reparable. And it just was not reparable, which was almost incomprehensible to an American. But on the other hand, in the context of the culture was understandable. So we have a cultural gap here that cannot be bridged. That meant that he didn't have, David didn't have a place to teach because his assignment had been removed by the Korean.

NOBLE: [02:25:48] And could the Peace Corps not simply have found a different school for David?

TAYLOR: [02:25:53] They tried.

NOBLE: [02:25:54] To start all over again?

TAYLOR: [02:25:54] They tried. That was, that was the thought. Well, we'll look for another placement. But it was the Korean Ministry of Education, I think, that was involved in negotiating with the schools that would be interested in having an American Peace Corps volunteer there in the capacity of a TESL teacher. There were not. The way we understood it was that there were not placements that would be available to begin the next semester, which would have been coming up quickly. That they, in fact, could not place him. They certainly couldn't place him in Seoul and they couldn't place him at a university because there just were not any available placements. I'm not sure if there was discussion about, well, maybe he could be placed in a middle school.

NOBLE: [02:27:13] Or as a tutor?

TAYLOR: [02:27:14] No, that, private tutoring would not have been an issue. He would have had to have had a placement in some educational institution.

NOBLE: [02:27:27] Ah.

TAYLOR: [02:27:28] And I don't remember the specifics as to whether or not maybe there was an offer of a middle school, maybe there was an offer of something not in Seoul, but since I was in Seoul, they really couldn't offer him something not in Seoul.

NOBLE: [02:27:42] That's right.

TAYLOR: [02:27:43] And, you know, the middle school or high school question, I don't remember the details one way or the other, so I can't, I can't comment. But the bottom line was that he didn't have a placement anymore.

NOBLE: [02:27:57] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:27:59] And he was devastated. I think in many ways he felt humiliated because he had inadvertently done something that had been so egregious that he was disinvited. And, um, I think that it was such a stressful

experience that it caused him to be depressed as a reaction to this whole event and the weeks that dragged on while it was trying to be resolved. And when it didn't appear that there was any ready placement, he said, I think I want to go home.

NOBLE: [02:28:43] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:28:44] Which I understood. I did not want to go home. I was extremely happy where I was in. I had obviously a very competent *chido kiosu* who I liked very much as a person as well. So, um. We had a break. The Korean calendar, school calendar is different. They have a long break during the cold winter months because at least at that time there was no heat.

NOBLE: [02:29:19] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:29:20] So we had about a month and we traveled to Southeast Asia, and when we came back, things still had not been resolved. We still didn't have a placement. And they, he said, I'm, I'd like to go home. And I approached the Peace Corps office after he and I had talked. I said, you know, I don't want to go home, but if you want to go back to Ithaca, you know, I'll meet you in a year and we'll pick up from there.

NOBLE: [02:29:56] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:29:58] And I proposed this to the Peace Corps office. I think we did together. And the Peace Corps response was, and this was official doctrine at that time, you cannot do that. You can stay in country together or you can leave in country together, but you can't one of you stay and one of you leave. You came married and you were going to have to either stay or leave married.

NOBLE: [02:30:21] Hmm.

TAYLOR: [02:30:21] And so and we said, well, we're happy to stay married, but, you know, I'd like to stay.

NOBLE: [02:30:27] Yeah. Finish out your, yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:30:29] And they said, no, you can't do that. So at that point, it seemed to me that there really was no option other than to leave because he had nothing to do. He was miserable. And I couldn't stay and have him leave. And so I said, okay, I will also go. It's the only way that this can be resolved.

NOBLE: [02:31:00] How painful.

TAYLOR: [02:31:00] It was very painful. And it was painful for both of us, but painful for us, I think, in different ways. And for me, it left this huge chasm of unfinished experience. A lack of closure.

NOBLE: [02:31:25] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:31:29] Because I was being given in Korea an opportunity that I would not have been given in the United States. In other words, somebody that's fresh out of college to be able to teach at the finest university, women's university in Korea, in a, in a setting where I had a wonderful guide who had gone out of her way to help us find housing that we were very happy with and, uh, you know, where I had an opportunity. She did other things, too. She took me, she knew I was interested in Korean arts of various kinds. And she took me to neighborhoods, old neighborhoods, where they had Korean artifacts that were old enough that they could be deemed antiques or antiquities and leave the country.

NOBLE: [02:32:29] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [02:32:33] And so I felt like I was just losing an opportunity that I would never be able to replace.

NOBLE: [02:32:40] Yeah. I'm sorry that happened.

TAYLOR: [02:32:42] Yeah, it was, it was a problem. Now, the upshot of that is that, uh, in terms of how it affected me going forward in my life, and I mentioned this to you yesterday I think, that when I was working in a maximum security psychiatric hospital with male inpatients who had been

found not guilty by reason of insanity for crimes that were sort of minor to very major, murder and rape and so forth, that when I was told precipitously that I had to conduct psychosocial rehabilitation groups with this population, the model that I used to help me do something that I had no experience in and no training in, was to go back to being that 22 year old volunteer in Korea.

TAYLOR: [02:33:59] Remind myself that I had been able to deal cross-culturally with populations that were not native English speakers, did not share my culture any more than these psychiatric inpatients. These male psychiatric inpatients, for the most part, did not speak English the way I speak English. They had grown up in the inner city, inner cities in Michigan for the most part, and had a very different language, which I, I don't think I fully even understood at the time how different. Not only a different language, but a different way of, they were socialized differently. They saw the world differently. They might have, they, they were in, in terms of their cultural backgrounds or linguistic background as foreign to me as these Korean students.

NOBLE: [02:34:55] Yeah. Yeah. So you were able to tell yourself, well, I've been in something like this before. I can do this.

TAYLOR: [02:35:01] I pulled that out of the bag.

NOBLE: [02:35:04] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:35:04] And I thought, I'm going to pretend I'm Kim Jung Sook and I'm going to pretend I can do this, and I am going to pretend that I have her, uh, her qualities, her, her ability to be a guide in the school of life. Because what was I doing? I was assigned psychosocial rehabilitation. What is that?

NOBLE: [02:35:31] How do you act appropriately?

TAYLOR: [02:35:33] How do you act appropriately in this culture? Because you wouldn't be in this facility if you had acted appropriately in this culture. You wouldn't have ended up here.

NOBLE: [02:35:44] And you had a really unique experience in having a very clear transfer of what you learned in Peace Corps then being applicable in a really quite different situation later here in the United States.

TAYLOR: [02:35:54] Right, it was a direct transfer.

NOBLE: [02:35:57] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:35:57] And after a couple of weeks of, of, you know, actively pretending that I was her, I realized that in fact, I didn't have to pretend anymore, that something was happening and something was working and it was working in a, in a positive sense.

NOBLE: [02:36:13] Within you.

TAYLOR: [02:36:15] And within them too. I mean, that this exchange was working. And I remember one time being, uh, reprimanded by one of the inpatients who was a middle aged African American male from the inner city of Saginaw and had, was quite psychotic, but also at times quite lucid. And he was very interested in learning, although I think his education had ended in eighth grade and the offense was a serious offense and he was there as not guilty by reason of insanity.

NOBLE: [02:37:08] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [02:37:09] And in terms of the psychosocial rehabilitation and my role as the teacher, the guide in the school of life, like if you want to leave this facility, you need to understand that the courts are going to be looking at aspects of your behavior here in this facility and making judgments about whether or not, uh, you are a danger to self and others. That's the, the statutory criteria. Uh, and if you are, what level of confinement is required to keep you from being an active danger to self and others? And in Michigan the statute is that the level of confinement has to be the, quote, least restrictive, and the least restrictive in Michigan would have, or the next step from maximum security, would have been a psychiatric hospital.

NOBLE: [02:38:13] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [02:38:14] Would be to a regional psychiatric hospital where there would be a high level of supervision, but no trained security staff, and it would not be a locked facility. The forensic center is an absolutely locked down facility the same way you would expect in a prison. Even though it was a hospital. Um. [tape break]

NOBLE: [02:38:45] Okay. I've got lots more questions.

TAYLOR: [02:38:47] Oh, dear. Oh, dear, dear. Um. I said something about socialization and trying to model what he would need to understand he needed to do to go to a less restrictive facility. And he shot back with, we were socialized, just not like you.

NOBLE: [02:39:13] Oh.

TAYLOR: [02:39:15] Bingo. He got me.

NOBLE: [02:39:17] An intelligent guy.

TAYLOR: [02:39:18] Very smart.

NOBLE: [02:39:20] He's aware of the very different cultures.

TAYLOR: [02:39:23] Street smart.

NOBLE: [02:39:23] Yeah. Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:39:24] Okay. More questions?

NOBLE: [02:39:27] I would like to go back to Korea a little bit more.

TAYLOR: [02:39:29] Sure.

NOBLE: [02:39:30] And to talk more about your, um, your teaching, your sense of being a teacher. And we haven't really spent a lot of time talking about

what your life was like within the university in terms of being in the classroom. Your students were university students. They were the elite women of Korea.

TAYLOR: [02:39:50] Right.

NOBLE: [02:39:51] And your job was to teach them a conversational English.

TAYLOR: [02:39:54] Correct.

NOBLE: [02:39:55] So who, um, were there other Americans on the staff? Were there other native American teachers? Were you the only one? Well, I mean, native speakers of English.

TAYLOR: [02:40:06] There was this other volunteer that, a woman volunteer who did it too. But we were assigned, we had responsibilities individually. So I was assigned to conduct, plan and conduct and grade students in a classroom setting at a college level.

NOBLE: [02:40:31] Yeah, yeah. Had the other Peace Corps volunteer been there before you got there, was she the?

TAYLOR: [02:40:38] No, no. She came, she came with me. We were in the same training group.

NOBLE: [02:40:42] Had there been other Peace Corps volunteers in that university before you got there?

TAYLOR: [02:40:48] Uh, possibly. I don't know for sure.

NOBLE: [02:40:51] So you didn't overlap. So there wasn't anybody in your own culture who could guide you into doing this?

TAYLOR: [02:40:58] That's correct.

NOBLE: [02:41:00] Yeah. Were you the only two non Koreans?

TAYLOR: [02:41:06] In the department of teaching English as a foreign language, yes.

NOBLE: [02:41:13] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:41:15] There were non Koreans. There was a woman, a French woman, who was teaching French, and I imagine there were some others too. But I specifically remember her.

NOBLE: [02:41:30] Yeah. So in your classes, how, how big, how many students were in a room?

TAYLOR: [02:41:36] Probably 30.

NOBLE: [02:41:37] Oh, and you're supposed to do conversational English among, in a class of 30?

TAYLOR: [02:41:42] In a class of 30.

NOBLE: [02:41:43] How did you do that? The class would last, what, an hour or so?

TAYLOR: [02:41:48] Yeah. A standard maybe 50 minutes.

NOBLE: [02:41:50] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:41:53] It was not easy partly because these women were socialized to be extremely polite and to do what the teacher wanted rather than be spontaneous and, uh, and strike out on their own, if you will, linguistically.

NOBLE: [02:42:17] Did you have text books that you were expected to follow chapter by chapter?

TAYLOR: [02:42:22] No. We were expected to come up with our own. Our own system. There might have been textbooks, but they certainly weren't. I don't remember following a textbook. It might have been there as a guide.

NOBLE: [02:42:40] So you had to create your own curriculum, prepare your own materials?

TAYLOR: [02:42:46] Yes.

NOBLE: [02:42:46] Yeah. Had Peace Corps training prepared, prepared you to do that?

TAYLOR: [02:42:52] Not quite, um. And I'm trying to, I mean, your question is a good one. And I don't know why I don't have a clear sense of this, but I certainly got guidance from, from Kim Yung Sook about what to do. She might have guided me toward, you know, certain lesson objectives.

NOBLE: [02:43:17] Were you given a chance to observe her teaching class?

TAYLOR: [02:43:22] No, no. No. I mean, we were, we were put in with the understanding that we had enough competence that we could perform this task.

NOBLE: [02:43:32] Yes.

TAYLOR: [02:43:34] And that expectation is, is a, is a formative expectation, because even if you don't know how to perform that task, you make sure that you look like you know how to perform that task. And if you do that long enough, eventually you're performing that task.

NOBLE: [02:43:54] So did you divide them up into small groups within the classroom of 30 or?

TAYLOR: [02:43:58] That was not possible.

NOBLE: [02:43:59] It had to be whole group conversation?

TAYLOR: [02:44:01] Well, the idea, unfortunately, because of the Korean schooling system, what they were used to was resuscitation and memorization.

NOBLE: [02:44:10] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:44:10] They could memorize huge chunks of text.

NOBLE: [02:44:13] Yes. So you maybe would.

TAYLOR: [02:44:17] They could memorize Shakespeare.

NOBLE: [02:44:18] You'd have a dialog or something that you'd think up and have them?

TAYLOR: [02:44:23] It was very hard to engage them in a dialog. They, they were, they would have been happy if I had handed them, you know, a first act of a Shakespearean play and told them to memorize it and come back the next day and recite it. They would have been able to do that excellently.

NOBLE: [02:44:41] But that's not going to help them along in conversational English.

TAYLOR: [02:44:44] No. So I was bucking all of their socialization.

NOBLE: [02:44:47] No kidding.

TAYLOR: [02:44:48] Yeah. Which was, you know, you don't say, you, you do, but you learn what the teacher tells you and you repeat it back like a parrot.

NOBLE: [02:44:59] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:45:00] And you don't ask questions and you don't set out on your own.

NOBLE: [02:45:05] Yes. But knowing how to ask a question is paramount in a conversation.

TAYLOR: [02:45:11] Yes. So you can see, you can see what, what the problem is.

NOBLE: [02:45:16] No kidding.

TAYLOR: [02:45:17] And to be willing to make mistakes. And of course, if you make a mistake, you lose face. And that is a serious, serious problem. And I think, uh. And I think it's a problem that is so culturally embedded that it persisted long after I left and to some extent may still be there.

NOBLE: [02:45:47] I could imagine that had you been able to stay for years, you could then have been the person who'd write the teacher training manual of how to teach conversational English in Korea. You would have figured it out. You obviously figured out something because you felt good about your work. You were comfortable and you would have liked to have stayed longer. So you were figuring it out.

TAYLOR: [02:46:11] Yeah. I mean, I figured out that they weren't going to volunteer.

NOBLE: [02:46:14] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:46:14] So, you know, I had a class list with all their names on it, and, um, and I would call on them, and I'm sure that was exquisitely painful for them. But in the absence of their volunteering, I had, I had really no, no recourse. And I was mindful of how hard it was, that, that they were, that they wanted more than anything to be very good students.

NOBLE: [02:46:46] Yes.

TAYLOR: [02:46:47] And unfortunately, their notion of how to be a very good student was almost antithetical to my notion of how to engage in teaching English at a conversational level, which is very much like a child learns a language. You make all sorts of mistakes. You have to make mistakes. There's no way not to make mistakes. And if you don't open your mouth and try to mimic what's being said or be more than willing to make a mistake, it's very hard to learn.

NOBLE: [02:47:28] That's right. That's right. I'm assuming you had no discipline problems. You, first of all, you're in a university. You're not in a middle school. And the everything you've said would lead me to think that you didn't have to cope with discipline issues.

TAYLOR: [02:47:42] Discipline was a problem, but again.

NOBLE: [02:47:48] In the opposite.

TAYLOR: [02:47:49] In an opposite way, they were too disciplined.

NOBLE: [02:47:51] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:47:52] They were too disciplined.

NOBLE: [02:47:53] Did you have any supervision from Peace Corps staff? Did you have Peace Corps, uh, people from Peace Corps coming out to observe you teach or to give you suggestions or to answer questions?

TAYLOR: [02:48:05] No.

NOBLE: [02:48:06] Did anybody ever come out to visit you to see if you were doing okay?

TAYLOR: [02:48:09] No.

NOBLE: [02:48:09] Either in your living situation or at school?

TAYLOR: [02:48:11] No. No. And I don't think I expected it. I mean, we were treated as competent.

NOBLE: [02:48:22] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:48:22] Until proven otherwise.

NOBLE: [02:48:24] Yeah. Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:48:25] And that.

NOBLE: [02:48:25] Were you called in to Seoul for Peace Corps conferences?

TAYLOR: [02:48:30] Yes.

NOBLE: [02:48:30] Or continued training of some sort or other?

TAYLOR: [02:48:32] We did. There were times when we assembled ourselves in the Peace Corps office and people came in from the country too. I mean, we did have to sort of report in, uh, I don't have a clear idea of what we did. I just remember that, you know, there would be something that we would all have to be processed through. I don't know if it was inoculations or medical exams. We had, we had to check in, I guess, and maybe be asked about how things were going. Nobody came to our sites. Nobody came to my site.

NOBLE: [02:49:22] Yeah. Yeah. And did you, did you get some feedback from Peace Corps or was there any sort of evaluation summary process? You left after a year. You didn't leave at the end of the full two years. So where's the, was there any opportunity for you to reflect on what your experience had been while you were still in Korea?

TAYLOR: [02:49:45] Yes. Um. There was, in effect, an exit interview.

NOBLE: [02:49:51] Oh, yeah. An interview?

TAYLOR: [02:49:53] Well, not, maybe an interview is too strong a word, but, you know, we had to in effect write a statement as to why we were leaving.

NOBLE: [02:49:59] Uh huh.

TAYLOR: [02:50:01] Uh, and that we were leaving voluntarily.

NOBLE: [02:50:03] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:50:04] Uh, you know, I think it was more of a bureaucratic necessity. And, um, and I was given and I still have a copy that was prepared by the Peace Corps office in Korea, partly in Korean and partly in English of exactly what I had taught, the classes I had taught, and the number of hours I taught in the year that I was there at Ewha.

NOBLE: [02:50:38] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [02:50:38] So that was documented.

NOBLE: [02:50:41] Mm hmm.

TAYLOR: [02:50:43] And then we got on a plane and left. And it was very sad.

NOBLE: [02:50:46] Yeah. Yeah. Would you, um, do you find yourself recommending to young people today that they join the Peace Corps on the whole? Would you recommend it as an experience for a young college graduate, or for an older person?

TAYLOR: [02:51:07] Uh, older person I can't really speak to because that wasn't my experience. And as far as a younger person, in one way, my answer would be an unqualified yes. Do it, or at least consider it seriously, um, because it will be a life changing event. And I suppose the younger you are, the more life you have yet to live so that there's more to change.

NOBLE: [02:51:40] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:51:43] And that you will not understand for a long time how life changing it was. That while you're in the country doing something as mundane as speaking your native language, you'll wonder what good am I and who cares? And why is this important enough? And how many lives am I going to impact or change? Um. And you'll ask yourself. My advice would be you'll ask yourself those questions. Your peers will be asking themselves those questions and you'll be asking them when you get together of each other.

NOBLE: [02:52:22] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:52:24] Forget it. It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter if you, if you think you've done anything, you'll probably leave thinking you accomplished nothing, and you'll think you had an opportunity that was remarkable and you won't understand for a long time how, in fact, remarkable that opportunity was.

NOBLE: [02:52:52] Yes.

TAYLOR: [02:52:55] But don't worry about it, because that seems to be a universal experience. Things are so different now in terms of communication that I can't even begin to imagine what a current Peace Corps experience would be like.

NOBLE: [02:53:10] Yeah. Skyping home.

TAYLOR: [02:53:13] Right. What I remember is standing out one winter night in the courtyard of the, of the Korean compound that we lived in, looking at the moon. And thinking, because I had had to go to the *piantso* at night.

NOBLE: [02:53:28] Yes.

TAYLOR: [02:53:29] Go to the outhouse.

NOBLE: [02:53:30] The *piantso* being the outhouse. Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:53:32] Coming back and I'm looking up and it's winter and this moon is very, very bright. And the landscape below, in other words, everything below the moon, all the horizon. And it's all Korean. Thinking, how did that moon that I saw in the United States, how did that moon make its way over Korea so that it's the same moon?

NOBLE: [02:53:59] The very same one.

TAYLOR: [02:54:00] Over this completely alien landscape.

NOBLE: [02:54:03] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:54:03] And that image remains with me, and the communication available to us at that time was. We were halfway around the world.

NOBLE: [02:54:27] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:54:27] And the world was a very big, very round place. So halfway around the world meant if you sent out a letter, an airgram, it took six weeks to get there.

NOBLE: [02:54:38] Six weeks to get there, so another six weeks to get, for a reply to get back to you wherever.

TAYLOR: [02:54:44] Right. There was no phone. You didn't call home. There was no Internet. There was no radio. The family we stayed with had a TV. And I remember they watched the moon landing in '69 and they invited us to watch it. And I wasn't interested for some reason.

NOBLE: [02:55:11] Did you, did you have American? Did the Peace Corps provide you with a book locker?

TAYLOR: [02:55:16] Yes.

NOBLE: [02:55:16] Or with a subscription to Time magazine or something so that you could stay abreast of current events?

TAYLOR: [02:55:22] Yes, there were, there were book lockers in the office, the main Peace Corps office in Seoul. People swapped out stuff. We could get redacted copies of magazines like The New York Times, like Time magazine, but they were redacted. In other words, the Korean government, it was still a military dictatorship and there was censorship. So, you know, large quantities of the magazine would be redacted out, missing, blacked out.

NOBLE: [02:55:57] Huh.

TAYLOR: [02:55:59] So it was censored.

NOBLE: [02:56:00] Censored mail. Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:56:02] Yeah.

NOBLE: [02:56:03] Did, did your time in Korea affect your views about your own country, about the United States?

TAYLOR: [02:56:14] Uh, yes. When we came back to the United States, I found that a lot of what I thought Americans did was crude, rude, impolite, sloppy, lackadaisical. Vain. Sort of aimless. I mean, the Korean culture is very cohesive as a culture at that time. Very homogeneous racially, um, and very much smaller than the United States. I think the land mass is about that of Indiana with a high density of population. So, um, America just seemed sprawling and unkempt and disorganized and all the things that immigrants come over here for, to, to get out of the strictures of their own small overpopulated, or even large overpopulated, but highly, highly, either caste regulated or culturally regulated.

NOBLE: [02:57:45] So now you can look at your own culture somewhat through the eyes of another culture.

TAYLOR: [02:57:50] Yes.

NOBLE: [02:57:51] And which is a unique.

TAYLOR: [02:57:54] Right.

NOBLE: [02:57:54] Which, which most Americans are incapable of doing.

TAYLOR: [02:57:56] That's right. You become bifocal.

NOBLE: [02:57:58] Yes.

TAYLOR: [02:57:59] And that bifocal quality never leaves you because you've, you've seen a different perspective.

NOBLE: [02:58:08] Have you ever gone back to Korea? You left Korea in 1969?

TAYLOR: [02:58:12] '70.

NOBLE: [02:58:13] 1970. Have you gone back?

TAYLOR: [02:58:13] I have not. The Korean government, uh, some years ago, ten or so, invited the Peace Corps volunteers that had served to come back for a week and, uh, to, to be sort of hosted and feted as a group by the Korean government.

NOBLE: [02:58:41] Oh, how very special.

TAYLOR: [02:58:44] It was very special. I think.

NOBLE: [02:58:45] They were going to pay for?

TAYLOR: [02:58:47] Well, they paid for, for, they didn't pay airfare, but they paid for everything.

NOBLE: [02:58:51] Once you're in Korea.

TAYLOR: [02:58:53] The week you were in Korea. And they made an effort to, a big effort to have you revisit your site.

NOBLE: [02:59:01] Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:59:03] I very much wanted to do that. But because of personal circumstances of my working, my family, health circumstances, I was never able to leave, I was never able to do it.

NOBLE: [02:59:17] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:59:18] And the last opportunity to do it was October of 2013. So that's an opportunity I missed.

NOBLE: [02:59:26] Yeah. Sorry. But might you go back on your own sometime?

TAYLOR: [02:59:31] It's always there in the back of my mind, and I think it's always been there in the back of my mind since the day we left.

NOBLE: [02:59:37] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [02:59:39] Um, I. Korea has changed so much now. It went from a third world country to a first world country.

NOBLE: [02:59:46] Right. And Peace Corps for that reason is no longer there.

TAYLOR: [02:59:49] And hasn't been there for over 30 years. So the country that I would go back to is not the country that I left.

NOBLE: [02:59:56] That's true. That's true.

TAYLOR: [02:59:58] No way, shape, or form.

NOBLE: [02:59:59] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [03:00:01] And I'm ambivalent about going back to a country that isn't the country that I left, because the country that I left is the country that I miss.

NOBLE: [03:00:11] That's right. And that you loved.

TAYLOR: [03:00:13] And that I loved. And that country is now only existing in my 35 millimeter slides and in my mind's eye.

NOBLE: [03:00:24] Yeah, yeah.

TAYLOR: [03:00:25] But it doesn't exist anymore. And, and the globe has gotten very tiny. And communications can be instant across thousands of miles. So it's a, there would be no way to, to revisit what I left.

NOBLE: [03:00:43] Have you maintained contact with people who were in your training group?

TAYLOR: [03:00:46] Yes.

NOBLE: [03:00:47] You have?

TAYLOR: [03:00:47] Yes.

NOBLE: [03:00:48] Good.

TAYLOR: [03:00:48] Yes, I have very close friends that I have kept up with for the last 45 years, including their families and, you know, I would count them among my best friends. These are people that I could call up and say I'm coming and they would have a place for me to sleep.

NOBLE: [03:01:12] Yeah. Yeah.

TAYLOR: [03:01:12] Might be on the floor, just like in Korea.

NOBLE: [03:01:14] Their door is open.

TAYLOR: [03:01:15] But their door is open.

NOBLE: [03:01:16] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [03:01:17] And if I needed anything, they would come. And a group of us, actually, about 13 of us, got together last, over Labor Day weekend, long Labor Day weekend, five or six days in 2013. Four or five couples. Two of us were divorced, so it was just the women, but, um. And we had a wonderful time in Wisconsin. The couple that was the host had a family cottage on a small freshwater lake in Wisconsin, in Minnesota. And we had a wonderful time.

NOBLE: [03:02:04] That's great. That's great. And then there's Friends of Korea, and you're connected with them in some way.

TAYLOR: [03:02:09] Yes, I, I'm, you know, I follow that website and I know a number of the people. And the Korean, this group of us are, uh, this, some subset of the group comes together around events, like one of the couples that we were close to very tragically had an adult son die under tragic circumstances last July. And, um. It's making me cry.

NOBLE: [03:02:46] Sorry. Shall I turn this off? [tape break] Um, you were talking about the point of the tragedy.

TAYLOR: [03:02:56] Right.

NOBLE: [03:02:57] The PCV family.

TAYLOR: [03:02:59] The son of one of the couples that we were friends with all these years drowned tragically and, uh, in his early forties. And a lot of the couples and also single people who, who had been in this group who, who knew the family and had kept up with the family went to the visitation and the funeral.

NOBLE: [03:03:37] Yeah, yeah, yeah. So you've become almost like family with one another, with these people who are your fellow Peace Corps volunteers?

TAYLOR: [03:03:44] Very close. Yeah.

NOBLE: [03:03:46] Yeah.

TAYLOR: [03:03:47] No, they are like family. Yeah.

NOBLE: [03:03:50] Thank you very much. It was a most interesting experience, one that's affected all of your life. Thank you very much.

TAYLOR: [03:03:58] You're welcome.

[END OF INTERVIEW]