

Jeanette Grayson Gottlieb Oral History Interview
Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection
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Creator: Jeanette Grayson Gottlieb
Interviewer: Evelyn Ganzglass
Date of Interview: August 25, 2018
Location of Interview: Shawnee on Delaware, Pennsylvania
Length: 39 pages

Biographical Note

Jeanette Grayson Gottlieb served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Iran from 1965 to 1967 as an English teacher.

Access

Open.

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Suggested Citation

Jeanette Grayson Gottlieb, recorded interview by Evelyn Ganzglass, August 25, 2018, page #, Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.

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Oral History Interview

with

Jeanette Grayson Gottlieb

August 25, 2018

Shawnee on Delaware, Pennsylvania

By Evelyn Ganzglass

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

GANZGLASS: [00:00:02] This is Evelyn Ganzglass. I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Somalia from 1966 to 1968. Today is August 25th, 2018, and I'm interviewing Jeanette Grayson Gottlieb, who was a Peace Corps volunteer in Iran from 1965 to 1967, and she was in a TEFL, teaching English as a foreign language program. Jeanette, welcome to the interview.

GOTTLIEB: [00:00:31] Thank you.

GANZGLASS: [00:00:32] So let's start by asking you, why did you actually join the Peace Corps?

GOTTLIEB: [00:00:38] I joined the Peace Corps because before Kennedy ever announced the Peace Corps, I had a desire to serve and as a desire to travel. And when he announced it, it was like the perfect answer. Because I'm of that generation. I had read *The Ugly American*. I

wanted to go out into the world and show that not all Americans were ugly and consumer oriented and disregarding of other people.

GANZGLASS: [00:01:17] Where did you grow up?

GOTTLIEB: [00:01:18] I grew up in a little town in western North Carolina, right at the foot of the mountains, the town of Spindale. I always said it's 70 miles west of Charlotte and 26 miles straight down from Asheville.

GANZGLASS: [00:01:35] So your family had, had you traveled at all? Your family traveled?

GOTTLIEB: [00:01:41] No. We went to my mother's home in Virginia and back, and that was it. But both of my parents had served during World War II, and both of them sort of imbued a worldview of, you know, everybody's equal and you have to give back to the world.

GANZGLASS: [00:02:04] That's great. How old were you when you applied for the Peace Corps?

GOTTLIEB: [00:02:09] I was at the beginning of my senior year in college and, um.

GANZGLASS: [00:02:19] Well, so, yeah, whatever that is, 20, 21.

GOTTLIEB: [00:02:22] I was, I think I had just turned 20 because I didn't turn, I turned 21 in Iran. I was accepted before the end of the semester and assigned Iran. And so I went to my advisor and I switched my senior research for my second semester of my senior year from India to Iran.

GANZGLASS: [00:02:53] Mm hmm. And what, where did you go to school?

GOTTLIEB: [00:02:56] It was the Women's College of the University of North Carolina, now the University of Greensboro.

GANZGLASS: [00:03:02] And were you an international relations major or what was? Switching from India to Iran, what was that?

GOTTLIEB: [00:03:10] I was history and international affairs. And I had a particular advisor and I had an independent study and that was. And, uh. So it was very easy to go to him and say, this is what's going to happen. And he was thrilled. He was a, this professor of history, was my professor for world history. And then I took other courses with him because he taught East Asia and the Middle East.

GANZGLASS: [00:03:51] So a real mentor for you?

GOTTLIEB: [00:03:53] A real mentor. And, and I, I was very much interested in Asia and the Middle East.

GANZGLASS: [00:04:00] So you applied for the Peace Corps and you were accepted pretty quickly, was it?

GOTTLIEB: [00:04:05] Yes.

GANZGLASS: [00:04:06] How do, you got a letter saying, look, we're sending you to Iran?

GOTTLIEB: [00:04:11] We got a letter saying you have been accepted, and if you accept this assignment, you'll be going to Iran.

GANZGLASS: [00:04:20] Very good. So what, what did your friends think about all of this?

GOTTLIEB: [00:04:24] Oh. I had several friends in my class who also joined the Peace Corps.

GANZGLASS: [00:04:31] Ah.

GOTTLIEB: [00:04:32] So I think we were simply of that, that generation, that that was a very exciting thing to do. If you weren't getting married immediately.

GANZGLASS: [00:04:44] So it was marriage or Peace Corps, is that it?

GOTTLIEB: [00:04:46] But, you know, you have to stop and think about what attitudes were. You know, I was the first person in my family to go to college. And, you know, the question was, oh, you're going to college? What are you going to teach? And I rebelled. I wasn't going to teach because I ended up spending my life teaching in one form or another.

GANZGLASS: [00:05:11] What did you think you were going to do?

GOTTLIEB: [00:05:14] I didn't, I didn't know. I also went to college with the attitude that you get an education, you learn how to think, and then you look for the opportunity.

GANZGLASS: [00:05:27] Which is what life is all about.

GOTTLIEB: [00:05:29] Right.

GANZGLASS: [00:05:30] So where was your training?

GOTTLIEB: [00:05:32] Our training was in Austin, Texas, at the University of Texas, and we spent one week in Mexico City honing our TEFL skills, our English as a second language skills.

GANZGLASS: [00:05:46] Before you went to Austin or?

GOTTLIEB: [00:05:48] No.

GANZGLASS: [00:05:48] That was part of the training?

GOTTLIEB: [00:05:49] That was part of our training. We loaded on busses and went from Austin to Mexico City, and that was probably one of the most realistic pieces of training that we had since we traveled all over Iran on busses. And while we were in Mexico City doing our teaching, they had a significant earthquake.

GANZGLASS: [00:06:14] Oh my goodness.

GOTTLIEB: [00:06:15] So all of us got to experience an earthquake, which we then experienced in Iran too.

GANZGLASS: [00:06:21] Probably hadn't planned that part of it.

GOTTLIEB: [00:06:23] I don't think they planned that part.

GANZGLASS: [00:06:25] And that's not a short trip from Austin to Mexico City. That's a long bus ride.

GOTTLIEB: [00:06:30] It was a long bus ride, but it was just, you know, back then it was, it was nothing. I mean, this is just what you did. And it was a wonderful piece of the training.

GANZGLASS: [00:06:43] So, so talk a little bit about what the training was like. Let's start with language training.

GOTTLIEB: [00:06:49] We had.

GANZGLASS: [00:06:50] What did you learn, Farsi?

GOTTLIEB: [00:06:51] We learned Farsi and we learned by the aural-oral method where you repeat the words and try to make sense out of it. Um. And most of our trainers were Iranian students. Men.

GANZGLASS: [00:07:17] At UT?

GOTTLIEB: [00:07:19] At UT. And they pretty much stuck to the program until we were getting close to the end. Then I can remember the particular trainer I was with sitting a group of us down and he said, now these are words you need to know and they're not in your curriculum. You know, bathroom. And how do I get from here to there? And what is, what's polite and what's not polite to say.

GANZGLASS: [00:07:54] The more valuable things.

GOTTLIEB: [00:07:56] Really important pieces.

GANZGLASS: [00:08:00] How, how were your language skills leaving, leaving Texas?

GOTTLIEB: [00:08:09] Uh, that, not wonderful. I never made it. They were adequate for me to say hello, introduce myself, and ask basic directions. I remember getting to Iran and once I had my assignment, the way things work in the classrooms there was you taught a class and then there was a break after class and everybody went to the principal's office and drank a cup of, a small cup of tea.

GANZGLASS: [00:08:50] You mean the teachers did?

GOTTLIEB: [00:08:51] All the teachers. And then you go back and teach another class and you come and drink another cup of tea. And I remember just sitting in the, with the teachers, and this waterfall of language. And one day I'm sitting there and all of a sudden I realize that everybody is ordering oranges from one of the other teachers, that he had an in at the, at the research station. And so everybody was ordering their oranges. How many kilos of oranges he was going to bring them the next day.

GANZGLASS: [00:09:27] So you understood that? That's great.

GOTTLIEB: [00:09:29] It just all of a sudden started clicking in my head. So.

GANZGLASS: [00:09:35] Did you order oranges as well?

GOTTLIEB: [00:09:37] No. One person living alone, it's very hard.

GANZGLASS: [00:09:47] Yeah. So let's, let's stick with training a little bit. What was the cultural orientation like?

GOTTLIEB: [00:09:53] We had wonderful cultural orientation. First of all, we had the Iranian students who were good at talking to us about things. We had Richard Frye, who was incredible, sort of.

GANZGLASS: [00:10:14] Who was Richard Frye?

GOTTLIEB: [00:10:15] He was a professor who was an Iran expert. He just died a few years ago. And he brought, he came and talked to us about the culture. And we also saw the movie Grass, which is just a classic of Iran and. I thought we had very good cultural orientation, but I also already had a fairly strong background because of the research I had done my senior year. It was more a history and political paper, but you learn a lot about the culture when you start doing that. So I thought we had a strong cultural.

GANZGLASS: [00:11:13] And then had you, what was the technical training? The TEFL training.

GOTTLIEB: [00:11:21] Um, Gertrude Nye-Dorry came over. She was the one that coordinated the program. And a lot of our technical training was in our own language training because the methods that we used to learn the Farsi were also the methods that we used to teach English. And we had the books that we would be using, the standard textbooks that were being used in Iran.

GANZGLASS: [00:11:55] For TEFL?

GOTTLIEB: [00:11:57] For TEFL, yeah.

GANZGLASS: [00:11:57] And what kind of textbooks were those? Were those government issued?

GOTTLIEB: [00:12:02] Yes. And they were a little bit like the Spot and Jane, but, um, very simple sentences, words that you could identify so that if you wanted to teach somebody table, what you did was you said this is a table and everybody would repeat.

GANZGLASS: [00:12:33] Point to it.

GOTTLIEB: [00:12:33] This is a table. This is a chair.

GANZGLASS: [00:12:37] And whom were you? This, was this an elementary school program or second year?

GOTTLIEB: [00:12:45] It was elementary and middle school. Iran had switched from French as a second language to English as a second language. And.

GANZGLASS: [00:13:05] So. So talk a little bit about your trip to Mexico City. What was that like?

GOTTLIEB: [00:13:12] It was very interesting. I just remember sitting on that, that bus. A couple of the guys had gotten very experimental and coming back suffered from Montezuma's revenge. We stayed in a, a hotel. I have no real memory of where we stayed. It was just. But I, uh. The schools in Mexico City went in two shifts, morning and afternoon. So half of us had morning classes and half of us had afternoon classes. And I was assigned afternoon classes. And I worked with a, a teacher. And she was very wonderful, very gracious in accepting me into her classroom and letting me practice with her students.

GANZGLASS: [00:14:09] So she was an English speaker.

GOTTLIEB: [00:14:10] She was a, yes. And she was the English teacher for that class.

GANZGLASS: [00:14:14] Right. So was it a good bonding experience for your group as well, this field trip? To get to know people?

GOTTLIEB: [00:14:21] I think we were pretty well bonded by then.

GANZGLASS: [00:14:24] How many people were in your group, about?

GOTTLIEB: [00:14:29] I think about 60, and I'm not sure how many actually went over.

GANZGLASS: [00:14:35] I was going to ask how many made it through. Was there big attrition?

GOTTLIEB: [00:14:42] Uh. It wasn't huge, but it would. It would. The deselection was painful. You probably had deselection in your group too.

GANZGLASS: [00:14:51] Do you want to talk about deselection? That's, that's a term from our era, not.

GOTTLIEB: [00:14:58] It's a term of our era.

GANZGLASS: [00:14:59] Not from other eras.

GOTTLIEB: [00:15:01] Deselection. There was a psychologist who most of us thought was totally crazy, uh, who was supposed to determine our mental and emotional fitness to serve as volunteers. And deselection was sort of something that hung over all of us during training, and we tried to put it aside, but all of the deselection was not due to mental or emotional fitness. I mean, a few people turned up with health problems because we had, the health exams were part of training. Our inoculations. How many of us were inoculated for bubonic plague? That was the one that laid most people down on the floor when we got that shot.

GOTTLIEB: [00:16:09] Um. I think the most painful selection that happened in our group was Mrs. Potter and, as near as we could tell her, her deselection was political because her son was Paul Potter, the head of SDS.

GANZGLASS: [00:16:29] Wow.

GOTTLIEB: [00:16:30] And why they put her through the pain if they weren't going to let her serve, uh, because of her son's activities was just something.

GANZGLASS: [00:16:45] But you don't know that, you're just surmising?

GOTTLIEB: [00:16:46] We don't know that. But since she was in my suite of rooms, we had a pretty close. And intense.

GANZGLASS: [00:16:59] So she was clearly an older volunteer.

GOTTLIEB: [00:17:01] She was an older volunteer. We had one older volunteer who was absolutely delightful. She had her. She was a retired English teacher from New England. Alice Finney. She was wonderful. I, my language skills never got really great because I was a teacher of English and everybody wanted to practice their English with me. From what I hear, Alice's were minimal, but they said she and the older women in her town would just chat away and she was talking. She would speak English and they would speak Farsi, and they seemed to know exactly what each other were saying all the time. She, she was beloved where she went.

GANZGLASS: [00:17:46] That's great.

GOTTLIEB: [00:17:47] So we had the range. We had retirees, we had active professionals. One of my better, my best friends was a college professor who was taking two years off in Peace Corps. And, um, then all of us AB generalists, as we were called then.

GANZGLASS: [00:18:17] And mid-career people. Great. So you finished training, you came back from Mexico City. Was that, that was the culmination of the training?

GOTTLIEB: [00:18:26] We had, we had another week or so after that. That was when they set us down and said, these are what you need to know. Don't go without these words. And then we had a break to go home and pack, and then we all got ourselves to New York City and from there to JFK and off we went.

GANZGLASS: [00:18:56] And off you went, and you flew. How did, how did one go to Iran in those days? Air what?

GOTTLIEB: [00:19:03] Pan Am.

GANZGLASS: [00:19:04] No, Pan Am from New York to Iran direct or did you to go via Europe somewhere?

GOTTLIEB: [00:19:10] Well, we weren't allowed out of the airport, but we stopped at Orly. We stopped in Rome and we stopped in Lebanon.

GANZGLASS: [00:19:20] So, a long trip.

GOTTLIEB: [00:19:23] But we were allowed to walk out of the plane and walk back on. You didn't go outside the gate.

GANZGLASS: [00:19:31] Okay, so you got to Iran. Where did you fly to?

GOTTLIEB: [00:19:35] We flew to Tehran, and I think we had about a week in Tehran, as, uh, with some orientation there until we were sent out on our assignments.

GANZGLASS: [00:19:52] What was your impression of Tehran?

GOTTLIEB: [00:19:59] Hot and dry. I just, I don't really. That's sort of the blur in my memory. I don't have a strong memory of that week. It was just, we're here. It's exciting. We'll try a little few of our words here and there. You know, this is the Peace Corps office. These are your field officers, you know.

GANZGLASS: [00:20:20] Let's go.

GOTTLIEB: [00:20:21] And of course, we all had jet lag and everything else. So.

GANZGLASS: [00:20:26] So where were you assigned?

GOTTLIEB: [00:20:28] I was assigned to Nowshahr, which is directly north of Tehran on the Caspian Sea, and it's 100 feet below sea level. And when I was initially deposited, I was housed with a volunteer from Norway who was actually a Yugoslavian forestry volunteer. And she was in the, she was living in a compound at the Forestry Research Center. And it was really a very good initial thing. We got along well and she had already figured out a lot of the things about living, so that helped me a lot.

GANZGLASS: [00:21:20] Were you the first Peace Corps volunteer in this town?

GOTTLIEB: [00:21:23] Yes.

GANZGLASS: [00:21:24] So, and she had been stationed, how had she been stationed there?

GOTTLIEB: [00:21:29] She had gotten there like a month before I did.

GANZGLASS: [00:21:32] Oh, yeah.

GOTTLIEB: [00:21:32] And it was, it was a Norwegian program that had to do with forestry and, um. That was, that lasted about six weeks or so. And then the forestry department realized that they had an education department person living on their property, and that was a no-no. So then I was placed in a house by myself, and that was really an extraordinarily difficult situation. Um, I coped. I had made friends with the English teachers. We were assigned not to teach, but to help the English teachers, uh, improve their English and to, you know, bring this these new books and new methods up. And so basically, I went to class with the English teacher, listened to their lessons. We talked and sometimes, you know, I did the English practice with the students. And then I also organized an adult English class, which was men, and it was in the early evening. They were basically shopkeepers who wanted to improve their English for tourists. And the chief of police.

GANZGLASS: [00:23:22] Well, so you said it was really difficult being placed by yourself.

GOTTLIEB: [00:23:26] Yes.

GANZGLASS: [00:23:27] Is that because you hadn't lived alone before, or what was difficult about it?

GOTTLIEB: [00:23:32] Well, it was true that I hadn't lived alone before. What was difficult about it is I was working in two towns. I was assigned to both Nowshahr and Chalus. So every other day I, you know, we worked six days a week. So I did three days in Chalus and three days in Nowshahr. And it was an every other day type of thing, where I took the, the carrier, the, a VW bus that carried 20 people between the towns. And I was doing all my own shopping. I had a single burner kerosene Aladdin heater for my cooking. I had a well. I was trying to do all my own laundry.

GANZGLASS: [00:24:39] Did you have electricity?

GOTTLIEB: [00:24:41] I had electricity when it was working. I had a single 75 watt bulb in each room and I had an outlet. And electricity was an off and on thing.

GANZGLASS: [00:24:55] Mm hmm.

GOTTLIEB: [00:24:56] So, uh.

GANZGLASS: [00:24:57] But you had water in the house?

GOTTLIEB: [00:24:58] No, no, I had a well.

GANZGLASS: [00:25:00] Oh, a well outside.

GOTTLIEB: [00:25:01] And my well was fine until the cat fell in and died or whatever. Fell in and died and contaminated the well. And then I had to carry water from the river. Um. The biggest part of living alone is

you don't have a mentor, you don't have somebody. So when a bunch of the teenagers came and wanted me to go bicycling with them, I didn't have any quick ready reference because it was something that didn't get covered.

GANZGLASS: [00:25:32] Yeah.

GOTTLIEB: [00:25:33] Uh, and I didn't have anybody that I could ask quickly, you know.

GANZGLASS: [00:25:41] Is this a good idea? Right.

GOTTLIEB: [00:25:42] You know, am I going to create all kinds of problems if I do this? And I had an incident where it was a holiday and I was trying to do laundry, and one of the teachers and his whole family came to visit, which is, you know, a typical kind of thing. You go to visit people to show them that. And here I was out in the yard with this, it was called a hose. It's a, it's a little tank that you put water in and it looks like a little square pond and trying to wash sheets and hanging them on my wall that surrounded my house.

GOTTLIEB: [00:26:34] So that, that is a difficult kind of, of life when you have, when you have no one to. I mean, friends. I had friends, they had me over, but it was a very formal type of relationship. And, uh, I remember going after a few months to visit one of my Peace Corps friends down the coast, and she finally said to me, Jeanette, you've been here 8 hours and you haven't shut up, because it was just all pouring out.

GANZGLASS: [00:27:09] Yeah.

GOTTLIEB: [00:27:10] I mean, it's a level of loneliness that you learn a lot about yourself. It was a very great growing experience. I read all 300 books in my book locker. That's because you didn't go out at night. You didn't go out after sundown.

GANZGLASS: [00:27:28] And why was that? Just people didn't do it or was it dangerous?

GOTTLIEB: [00:27:33] People didn't do it. And you don't put yourself in, at risk. There were no streetlights. You know, you went home into your compound and that was the end of the day.

GANZGLASS: [00:27:47] But were people generally friendly to you or was it really?

GOTTLIEB: [00:27:50] People were very friendly. And one of the best books they gave us in training was a book called The Silent Language. Because, um, we have a distance, you and I are sitting, oh, about a yard apart. And this is a comfortable distance for us to speak to each other. In Iran, the personal distance is much shorter, and until you realize what you're doing, they are usually within a foot to 18 inches for a conversation. And I can remember backing into a wall and then having that aha moment. Aha! This is what the book said. This is the difference between my personal space and their personal space.

GOTTLIEB: [00:28:45] And that book is, it's an excellent book even now, because to read the things that people say with their bodies instead of with their words. Not necessarily even facial expressions, but things like comfort. I've got my legs crossed. This is a comfort sign, that I'm comfortable in your presence. And so that was another piece of really lifelong value out of my Peace Corps training.

GANZGLASS: [00:29:18] So, so what, what, did you visit people's houses or they came to visit you? Was it mostly with women?

GOTTLIEB: [00:29:25] I visited, I visited people's houses. They invited me. Students invited me to meet their families. The English teachers, one of them, I got particularly close to her family and spent quite a lot of time with them. In fact, when they went on a trip, they asked me to come stay in the house and babysit the grandmother.

GANZGLASS: [00:29:47] Ah.

GOTTLIEB: [00:29:47] That, that was a phenomenal experience because this was a woman who was married to a subchief of the Bakhtiari tribe, and she was telling me all about living under Reza Shah, the, the father of the Shah that was in power when we were there. And camping in the desert and, and, you know, coping with scorpions and just an absolutely fascinating kind of thing. She taught me how to roll cigarettes too.

GANZGLASS: [00:30:27] Which is also a lifelong skill, right?

GOTTLIEB: [00:30:30] Well, it's one that, it's one that I parked and decided we didn't need that one. But that was just.

GANZGLASS: [00:30:39] That's great. An opportunity to meet someone like that.

GOTTLIEB: [00:30:41] It was. And some of my best memories in terms of people. This was a family. I was close enough that they allowed me to go out to the, it's, they had a separate house for cooking. You didn't cook in your main house generally. So I would go out with their *bagi* and that's how I learned to. She taught me how to cook.

GANZGLASS: [00:31:14] What is the *bagi*?

GOTTLIEB: [00:31:15] A *bagi* is sort of a maid of all work. Does cooking and laundry. Some of them lived in. Most of them were day workers. And that was another issue. I should have had a *bagi* but I didn't really know how to go about hiring a *bagi*. And I had a teenage girl offer to be my *bagi*, but if I had hired her, she would have dropped out of school. Now, it might have been a good thing, but once again, I didn't have a.

GANZGLASS: [00:31:46] Somebody to ask.

GOTTLIEB: [00:31:47] Right. And even my friends. Just an example of not, of the cultural issues. You went to a public bath, to the *hammam*, to take a bath because you didn't have bathing facilities in the homes. And those were words we didn't get in training. So I went to my English

friend, my friend, and I said, what do I say when I go to the *hammam*? And they said, you go to the *hammam*. And I said, what are the words in Farsi that I need? You just go. Well, I knew I was going to be dealing with people who had no English at all, and I was trying to find out what, what were the proper phrases to use. And they finally said, well, you ask for a room. Aha. This is what I needed to know. This was the word, the set of words I needed. [speaks Farsi] I want, I want a room. And then I said, well, what happens in the *hammam*? You know, because I had never been in one.

GANZGLASS: [00:33:10] Yeah.

GOTTLIEB: [00:33:10] But to them, it was such a common thing. It was like, why is she asking these questions, you know? So a lot of times trying to find, find out what was appropriate was a, an interesting challenge.

GANZGLASS: [00:33:29] How was that experience going by yourself to the *hammam*?

GOTTLIEB: [00:33:33] It was the first time I was very timid. I was very tentative about it, and then I became very comfortable with it. And I had a chador made. I didn't wear it all the time. My modern, uh, my up-to-date friends, Iranian women, the only time they wore a chador was when they were coming back from the *hammam* because it covered up their wet hair and they could, they could put on some loose, comfortable clothing. One of the other things that occurred to me early on in Iran. In the sixties, and I went to a woman's school, so we were not allowed to wear pants on front campus. We always had to wear skirts, and all of us had our London Fog raincoats.

GOTTLIEB: [00:34:42] And if you wanted to wear your jeans across front campus, you simply rolled them up to your knees and threw your London Fog raincoat on. If you wanted to wear your pajamas to breakfast, which was not allowed, you threw your London Fog raincoat over your pajamas and it covered up the world. And I got to Iran and everybody's going about how oppressed these Iranian women are having to wear their chadors. And I looked around at what they were

wearing under their chadors, and I said, ah, London Fog raincoat. I mean, it, the more modern, the professional women tended to wear skirts, blouses, sweaters.

GANZGLASS: [00:35:35] Long skirts? Or just regular?

GOTTLIEB: [00:35:39] Moderately long. Not, not to the ankles, but they wore hose. Miniskirts were just coming in in this country. I did not take anything that did not come below my knees. Many of them wore scarves.

GANZGLASS: [00:35:59] Head scarves?

GOTTLIEB: [00:36:00] Head scarves, but not the hijab. They wore head scarves the same way we wore head scarves in this country in the fifties and early sixties.

GANZGLASS: [00:36:09] Did you wear a headscarf there?

GOTTLIEB: [00:36:12] Frequently.

GANZGLASS: [00:36:13] Not required?

GOTTLIEB: [00:36:14] Not required. But I wore it to certain places, you know, when I was in the vicinity of a mosque or something. I always wore a headscarf just the same way that women who go into Catholic churches put those little lacy things on their heads. It's a lot of what we view as foreign is a matter of stepping back and trying to see it in terms of the context of where we came from. It's a little like women don't wear hats now, but I can remember when my mother never went out without putting on a hat and she had several hats. Women wore hats. Women wore gloves when they went out in the fifties. We don't wear gloves anymore.

GOTTLIEB: [00:37:10] So a lot of customs, we say we don't do things like that. You sit down and think about it, we do. We have lots of these little unwritten laws and customs that are there. They had something in

Iran called parti. And it's, and it was like, oh, how awful. You have to have parti to get a visa. You have to have.

GANZGLASS: [00:37:44] What is parti?

GOTTLIEB: [00:37:45] Well, parti is basically who do you know? You have to know somebody. And it's like, yeah, if you want to get something done, it helps to know somebody. It's, it's a little more formal there. It's a little more out in the open. We have a lot of the same things. We just don't, we're not as open about it. It's not as formalized.

GOTTLIEB: [00:38:17] There's *taarof* in Iran, and *taarof* is a, it's a system of manners. And it's, if somebody offers you something, they have to offer it to you three times in order for you to know that it's a sincere offer. Um. And. We have, we just don't acknowledge it as the same. But if somebody says, oh, let's get together, and you say, sure, you know that that's not real. It's not until you do something more concrete. Or drop by my house any time. Those are, that's, that's what *taarof* is about. But it's just a little more formalized than what we do here.

GANZGLASS: [00:39:12] Were, you are in an all girls school?

GOTTLIEB: [00:39:16] Yes.

GANZGLASS: [00:39:16] Was there a nearby boys school?

GOTTLIEB: [00:39:19] Yes. And I actually was invited to the boys school too, as a guest for the English classes to come in and talk and speak.

GANZGLASS: [00:39:31] Was it always separate?

GOTTLIEB: [00:39:34] Yes.

GANZGLASS: [00:39:35] Gender separate education. At all levels?

GOTTLIEB: [00:39:39] The very youngest children were in mixed classes, but basically, uh, you know, like kindergarten. But then once they got into school, it was separate.

GANZGLASS: [00:39:54] Did you, talk a little bit more about just the gender roles in the community. Were they, were they very separately defined? I mean, we think of Iran as having these very strict rules. Was that the case in the sixties as well?

GOTTLIEB: [00:40:11] Yes. Uh. Women were basically expected to have a male member of their family go with them. And that was one of the things that made me an anomaly. Questions. And the town, the small town I was in the first year, and I did transfer after my first year. The people got together and they said, you know, you're here by yourself. There were two ag volunteers, and occasionally they would come to my house. And they said.

GANZGLASS: [00:40:56] Male?

GOTTLIEB: [00:40:58] Men. And they said, these are your brothers, because they come from the same place that you come from and your family couldn't come with you. So they assigned them the roles of my brothers, and my field officer was assigned the role of my father by the town. And so when my field officer came to visit, the kids would come running down the *kucheh* saying, your father is here, your father is here! And my field officer got a great kick out of that because Bernie was Black. But he was assigned the role of my father coming to visit me.

GANZGLASS: [00:41:47] But when they were not around, or your brothers, were you able to go places?

GOTTLIEB: [00:41:52] Yes, I did.

GANZGLASS: [00:41:54] And men felt comfortable, the Iranian men? Did they have a problem with that?

GOTTLIEB: [00:42:00] I, no one seemed to have a problem with it. They, they accepted me very readily. And, um, you know, I basically talked to shopkeepers on the street. I had a. You know, it didn't really bother me. One of the things I realized from when I was living by myself and I could listen to the conversations across the wall, because the walls of the houses run together or across the *kucheh* is that the women ruled inside the walls. They may have walked behind their husbands outside the walls, and he may have come home and been king of the roost. But he better bring the money home. And it was very much a female dominated inside the walls kind of thing.

GANZGLASS: [00:43:12] And you don't learn that until you get close.

GOTTLIEB: [00:43:14] Oh, no. You have to get close to see that that, that, you know, the public face is always male. And there are many restrictions on the women. But they have a lot of power once they get behind the walls.

GANZGLASS: [00:43:31] Was there anything memorable about your teaching experiences? In this first town. I guess we'll talk about the second in a moment.

GOTTLIEB: [00:43:43] Um, the teaching experiences with the students and the classrooms were very routine, and because I was working with teachers as opposed to teaching myself, that was not very. Uh. There aren't a lot of memorable things. The things that are memorable is that I started a crafts club. I did a summer day camp type of program, uh, for the girls where we practiced our English and we did sort of crafts. They were better craftsmen than I, but it was just fun to, I got them together and we spoke English and did things, made things.

GANZGLASS: [00:44:41] So you got closer to them that way.

GOTTLIEB: [00:44:43] Right. And then I had an adult class at the big hotel in Chalus. It was at the end of the Tehran or the jasmine Chalus Road, which is, goes over the mountains. It's, it's quite an exciting road to travel, zigzags all the way. And that was a really interesting English

class because these were people who dealt with foreign tourists. And most of the people that I had were their waitstaff, and they were trying to learn English words for foods. So we're going out in their garden and trying to identify the foods. So it was a very stretching experience for me because here I was with my English Farsi and my Farsi English as well as everything I could find on botany, because I grew up in western North Carolina. I didn't know what a Jerusalem artichoke was.

GANZGLASS: [00:46:05] The harder you learn the English as well.

GOTTLIEB: [00:46:08] Right. I learned a whole lot, you know. And then it was, they took me down to the kitchens and showed me how they prepared the, the sturgeon. And so it was a wonderful learning experience. But it was a real challenge. And I can remember asparagus was like one of the hardest words for them to learn.

GANZGLASS: [00:46:32] Yeah, it's hard to pronounce, right?

GOTTLIEB: [00:46:33] Right.

GANZGLASS: [00:46:34] So how big was this town and how many, did lots of tourists come there?

GOTTLIEB: [00:46:40] Well, it was right on the coast. Um. It was not as big a tourist area as some of the places further down which had beautiful beaches like Babol. And Nowshahr was about 4,000. Chalus was in the same, same range. They were, they were relatively small towns with a lot of agriculture. They grew rice and oranges at 100 feet below sea level and on the latitude almost of Labrador.

GANZGLASS: [00:47:22] Hmm.

GOTTLIEB: [00:47:23] We don't think about that. Tehran's on the latitude of New York City. We think of it as being some way out there in the south and all that kind of stuff.

GANZGLASS: [00:47:32] That far north.

GOTTLIEB: [00:47:32] But it's just the orientation and, um.

GANZGLASS: [00:47:39] But yet they were able to grow oranges?

GOTTLIEB: [00:47:41] Well, it's 100 feet below sea level, so it.

GANZGLASS: [00:47:43] So it's warmer.

GOTTLIEB: [00:47:44] Yes. And, um. That particular class. Well, actually, the adult classes were very open with me because I had Baha'is and Jews and Zoroastrians, and they talked to me about the fact that they were different. And maybe it was because I was different that people opened up and told me about being different.

GANZGLASS: [00:48:15] Hmm.

GOTTLIEB: [00:48:15] I had two friends who were nurses and they, they lived at the hospital in Chalus and once again, these were two young women and they were there without their family. So they lived in the hospital compound. And when one of them left, the other one and I would get together regularly. And when I talked to you about loneliness, she was so lonely that she made pets out of the mice in the wall.

GANZGLASS: [00:48:51] And what nationality was she?

GOTTLIEB: [00:48:54] She was Iranian.

GANZGLASS: [00:48:54] She was Iranian.

GOTTLIEB: [00:48:56] But she, she fed the mice and had a whole mouse family that was in the wall.

GANZGLASS: [00:49:03] That's kind of sad.

GOTTLIEB: [00:49:04] It is. But, uh. And she basically did her job. But she was confined to the hospital compound because she didn't have her family there.

GANZGLASS: [00:49:19] Because she couldn't go out without men?

GOTTLIEB: [00:49:21] Right. So I guess I was just a little bit more daring and I just went. I like I said, I have many wonderful memories of my time in Nowshahr and Chalus, but I realized that, uh, I was having issues with coping with being alone and also coping with the fact that at 100 feet were sea level, you have very little sunshine. It's always moist and damp and rainy.

GANZGLASS: [00:50:02] Oh.

GOTTLIEB: [00:50:05] Yeah, I had, I had exciting experiences. I have a wonderful story that I like to tell about making, trying to make cream puffs at 100 feet below sea level. We succeeded, but it was a challenging experience.

GANZGLASS: [00:50:21] It needs more, uh, what is that called? Of tartar or whatever? Cream of tartar?

GOTTLIEB: [00:50:27] I didn't know enough. I had never had a cream puff in my life. So this was not part of my cuisine growing up. And, uh, but they decided that since I was an American and they had an American cookbook and they loved cream puffs, that surely I could make cream puffs. And this is where you get into the challenges. First of all, it was a Good Housekeeping cookbook. None of their measurements are in cups and ounces, so all of it had to be converted to metric. The stove was in Centigrade, not in Fahrenheit, so we had to do.

GANZGLASS: [00:51:08] It became a math problem.

GOTTLIEB: [00:51:09] It became a math problem. The first time we tried, they came out as goo because of the moisture in the, in the flour. When we, they realized that that was the problem. So one of the husbands

went to Tehran, got flour in a sealed container, and brought it back. And there were two women. One had the stove, the other had a large enough space for us to work, for three of us to work together. So we go to the house where we can all work together and we follow the recipe and we make the cream puffs. We put them on the baking sheet, and the houseboy for the other woman is there on his bicycle. He grabs the sheet, holds it up in one hand above his head, tools his bicycle over to the other house where, and I'm running. And we pop them in the oven.

GANZGLASS: [00:52:11] Wow.

GOTTLIEB: [00:52:12] That has been set. While we are waiting for the cream puffs to bake, he then tells me about his introduction to the House of Strength, which is a gymnastics. It's sort of a. It's a, it's a big macho man thing, I guess. And then they bake. He takes the tray again, hops on his bicycle, goes back. We run, all run back to the other house. Open them up. Take the inside out. Make the cream. Put it in. He's sent to get the husbands from work because we've got the cream puffs right here. And the husbands come home from work and we all sit down and have tea and cream puffs before they collapse.

GANZGLASS: [00:53:07] It's a wonderful story. That's really. It takes a village to, to make cream puffs. Right?

GOTTLIEB: [00:53:12] Right.

GANZGLASS: [00:53:13] That's great.

GOTTLIEB: [00:53:14] And it was one of those, oh, you're an American. You can do this. Huh?

GANZGLASS: [00:53:19] Have you ever made a cream puff since?

GOTTLIEB: [00:53:22] No.

GANZGLASS: [00:53:24] Were they any good?

GOTTLIEB: [00:53:25] They were wonderful. They were really delicious.

GANZGLASS: [00:53:28] That's great.

GOTTLIEB: [00:53:29] They had to be with all the work we put into it. I transferred to Hamadan after the first year.

GANZGLASS: [00:53:36] At your request?

GOTTLIEB: [00:53:37] At my request. Part of it was there were two girls schools. There were at least six boys schools, and the high schools. And the reality was a male English teacher was, had, would have much more impact in terms of the education.

GANZGLASS: [00:54:01] So you taught and you worked in a male, in a boys school then?

GOTTLIEB: [00:54:06] I, no, I didn't. I, I went as a guest on occasion to.

GANZGLASS: [00:54:13] Oh, so in Hamadan you were in a girls school as well?

GOTTLIEB: [00:54:17] I was also in a girls school. I have one more story from Nowshahr that's, if you have time.

GANZGLASS: [00:54:23] Sure.

GOTTLIEB: [00:54:25] When I was invited to the boys high school to give my lecture or to practice English with them, we did this thing where you go to the principal's office and drink your tea. Well, each of the schools had a religious teacher, an imam, or a mullah. And so we're in the principal's office at the boys high school. And there were a couple of women teachers there, more traditional. And the mullah would say to the English teacher, ask her where she comes from. And I would answer in Farsi, and then the English teacher would have to repeat my Farsi because the mullah pretended he didn't understand my Farsi. So we had this wonderful three way

conversation. Ask her. I would answer in Farsi, and the English teacher would repeat my Farsi. And there we'd go again.

GANZGLASS: [00:55:36] Do you think he really didn't understand or he didn't want to deal with a?

GOTTLIEB: [00:55:40] He didn't want to deal directly with me.

GANZGLASS: [00:55:42] With you. And the teacher was a female or male?

GOTTLIEB: [00:55:46] Male.

GANZGLASS: [00:55:47] Male. Were you ever challenged because of your religion?

GOTTLIEB: [00:55:54] No.

GANZGLASS: [00:55:55] Nobody talked about that?

GOTTLIEB: [00:55:57] No, nobody. They wanted to marry me off to, everybody wanted, thought I should be married. I mean, this was typical. I finally got around that by telling them they had to find me somebody who was over six feet tall.

GANZGLASS: [00:56:13] And nobody in town.

GOTTLIEB: [00:56:15] There weren't any people over six feet tall.

GANZGLASS: [00:56:19] That worked.

GOTTLIEB: [00:56:20] That way they weren't offended. It wasn't, I don't like your people. I need, I just need somebody who's six feet tall.

GANZGLASS: [00:56:26] That's great. That's great. So talk about the second town and the.

GOTTLIEB: [00:56:31] All right. I went to.

GANZGLASS: [00:56:32] The school you went to.

GOTTLIEB: [00:56:33] Hamadan. And Hamadan is 6,000 feet above sea level. So I went from 100 feet below sea level to 6,000 feet above sea level. In Hamadan, I lived with another Peace Corps volunteer. We lived in a family compound. We had a *bagi* that was shared, the various Peace Corps volunteers, and there were several of us in that town. Plus there was a Scottish Presbyterian hospital there. And. So we had a *bagi* that we shared. And that way we could afford to pay her. She worked for us one day and then she would work for the guys one day. And it worked out well.

GOTTLIEB: [00:57:30] And they had a shortage of English teachers. So I ended up teaching my own classes and they were middle school age girls. I had classes of 65 students. And the. One day I got really frustrated and I kicked 15 kids out of class, which is like the ultimate punishment because they have to go stand outside in the courtyard.

GANZGLASS: [00:58:02] What were they doing to deserve that?

GOTTLIEB: [00:58:08] Uh. They were talking and giggling and making rude noises. And I just.

GANZGLASS: [00:58:14] They were being teenage girls.

GOTTLIEB: [00:58:15] Yes. And I had just had it up to my eyebrows and said, okay, that's it. Out. And it was so easy to teach 50. But I think part of that was the shock effect that I had actually done something. The big disappointment there. I mean, my classes went well. I had, I had after school, I had an after school crafts class. I had an after school first aid class. I was a first aid, a Red Cross first aid instructor when I went over. And I connected with the Iranian Red Cross and I taught first aid after school. And so I had several opportunities there that were very, you know, just to interact with the students.

GOTTLIEB: [00:59:20] I also taught in the adult evening classes that we had organized in the town, and we had several classes there at several

different levels of English. And, uh, the living situation was much easier. I also taught what they called a *mele* school. It was a, um. This one was sponsored by a group from France. They sort of like charter schools, I guess you would say. Um. And those students were really good. So it was very exciting and very challenging teaching, particularly since I was on my own in the classroom and really working with the skills that I'd been trained to use.

GOTTLIEB: [01:00:35] And I wasn't, I wasn't in a situation where I was working with a teacher who had 20 years of experience and I'm supposed to tell them how to teach when I had, wet behind the ears. That was, the people in Nowshahr and Chalus were wonderful to me. But the. It was trying to, trying to advise people that, that had many more years of teaching experience than me. It was not a great situation.

GANZGLASS: [01:01:12] Yeah, yeah.

GOTTLIEB: [01:01:13] So being on my own, teaching my own classes, that was challenging and very rewarding until it got to the final exams. And I gave them. I told them, you know. You're going to have to translate from English to Farsi and from Farsi to English. And here are the sample sentences. And I literally gave them like ten, ten sentences for each set. And then I randomly took a set from those. So, you know, if they had memorized those ten, no problem. Most of the kids flunked. Even though I knew they knew it.

GANZGLASS: [01:02:10] Hmm.

GOTTLIEB: [01:02:10] They could talk to me in English. So I said to the student, what? What did you study for the? No, why, why didn't you study what I gave you for the exam? It wasn't what my brother was studying. And I said, am I your brother's teacher? Get a. That was still another piece of culture, that they would study what their brother was studying rather than what.

GANZGLASS: [01:02:50] The teacher said.

GOTTLIEB: [01:02:51] Or what they were assigned. And it just. So I can't say I ended on a high note, but I did have very positive experiences, and if I had it to do over again, I probably would have stuck it out in Nowshahr by myself. But it's very difficult to go straight from college into a foreign country and be able to say this living situation that, that is being paid for by somebody else. You know, it was provided by the Department of Education, to find a living situation that's appropriate. I finally, after I had been given the transfer, I finally met up with someone who had a compound with a separate house in it, and it would have been perfectly fine.

GOTTLIEB: [01:04:02] But I had already made the transfer. They had already assigned a new volunteer. I had already introduced him and oriented him to the town and to the schools. And so that was not the time for me to say, okay, I found the right living situation.

GANZGLASS: [01:04:21] I'm staying after all.

GOTTLIEB: [01:04:22] Yeah, but, but once again, you know, when they started putting volunteers with host country nationals as part of their training, you know, what that did is gave people that link, somebody who could tell them what was acceptable, what wasn't acceptable, that they could refer to. But, you know, we were in that early period when they were still experimenting and they were still, you know, taking volunteers out and saying, okay, here's your site. Do something wonderful.

GANZGLASS: [01:04:58] See ya. Yes, exactly. So as you think back, what, what are the highlights for you of your experience?

GOTTLIEB: [01:05:15] My highlights, uh. They're mostly from Nowshahr. But.

GANZGLASS: [01:05:25] Cream puffs.

GOTTLIEB: [01:05:26] Cream puffs. A long bus ride in which I exchanged, I spent hours talking to other women on the bus and being accepted. They were curious about me and I was curious about them. And we talked

about their lives, you know, just these long bus rides. I had a mountain climbing experience in which I climbed with a group of male volunteers and we came to a Kurdish camp. And because I was a female, the woman, the mother, allowed us to take pictures of me with her, which frequently they didn't, you know, and they, because they had a female with them. She opened up to us and invited us.

GANZGLASS: [01:06:25] So it sounds like your Farsi really got pretty good.

GOTTLIEB: [01:06:29] My Farsi, well, one of the other volunteers said I spoke tea talk. He came back with an FS seven. I came back with a FS two. But I could talk to people about children and household things and. I wasn't really literate. I could read at first grade level, um, because I didn't, I didn't really have time to study Farsi. The people who were in colleges, they had time to take, hire tutors and study Farsi. I was, I was on the go until dark, from early morning until dark every day. And even though we, you always went home for lunch, you had an hour, an hour or an hour and a half break in the middle of the day for rest. Um. You know, there just was not a lot of time to sit down and be a, a student myself.

GANZGLASS: [01:07:41] Did you, what did you do during vacations?

GOTTLIEB: [01:07:44] During vacations, um, I traveled in Iran. I travel to see other volunteers. My long vacation, my month off, I went with another volunteer and we went to. We went to Istanbul. We went to, um, to Athens. We went to Cyprus and we went to Beirut and traveled together and. That was, she was the college professor that I told you about who took off two years to do Peace Corps. And then, uh. I met my husband. I met him in that, oh, interval when I was making the change, and I wanted to go to the Tehran bazaar. We were both at Peace Corps headquarters and.

GANZGLASS: [01:08:59] Was he a volunteer as well?

GOTTLIEB: [01:09:00] He was a volunteer. He was in Shiraz, about 1,000 miles from me in any direction.

GANZGLASS: [01:09:07] He was in the same group with you or a different group?

GOTTLIEB: [01:09:09] Oh no, he was in a different group. His group ended a few months after my group. They came later and ended later. We got married after we got back.

GANZGLASS: [01:09:20] So what kind of romance was it with 1,000 miles apart? How did, how did that work out?

GOTTLIEB: [01:09:27] Uh, it worked out well. We've been married for 51 years, so that's, that's pretty good. That's good. But that was, uh. He and I traveled together the second Nowruz vacation that we had, went to visit southern parts of Iran that neither one of us had seen.

GANZGLASS: [01:09:53] Mm hmm.

GOTTLIEB: [01:09:53] Really got into some of the history and looking at things from the different dynasties. A lot of things are open now that were not open then, even, or you, you had to be in the know to know where they were. And now they're.

GANZGLASS: [01:10:10] You mean ruins?

GOTTLIEB: [01:10:12] Yeah, ruins. Buildings even. People ask me if I did this or that in Hamadan. It wasn't even something on the horizon to do when we were there. Nobody went into the caves unless you were a spelunker.

GANZGLASS: [01:10:33] Yeah.

GOTTLIEB: [01:10:34] And now they take tours and.

GANZGLASS: [01:10:37] And after Peace Corps, did you travel to other countries or did you come straight home?

GOTTLIEB: [01:10:41] Yes. No. I fulfilled a lifelong wish and said, I'm halfway around the world, I'm going to see the other half. There's a good chance I'll get back to Europe. Who knows when I can get back to Asia. So I went overland from Iran through Afghanistan. Steve went with me, my husband, he took his leave and we traveled together overland. And across Afghanistan. Then we flew into Amritsar in India. And saw the Taj Mahal, did Delhi and Agra. Then he had to go back and finish his service. And I took, I went on, took the train across India and then went up to Nepal, to Thailand, to Hong Kong, to Taiwan.

GANZGLASS: [01:11:40] By yourself?

GOTTLIEB: [01:11:41] By myself. California, Honolulu, Hawaii. And California. And then home.

GANZGLASS: [01:11:50] And home was North Carolina?

GOTTLIEB: [01:11:52] North Carolina.

GOTTLIEB: [01:11:53] So you did go all around the world.

GOTTLIEB: [01:11:56] I went to Japan. Yes. Yes, I had, uh. By then I had learned a whole lot about being alone and being on my own and being able to travel on my own. But it was, it was a growing experience and, uh. You know, I hooked up with various people. I met up with some American teachers who were in Thailand, and we traveled around together and, uh. I really had learned how to, to be alone and still have a, oh, a positive experience. But it was a, it was a long growing period.

GANZGLASS: [01:12:51] And what happened when you got back to North Carolina?

GOTTLIEB: [01:12:56] Oh. I was glad to see everybody. I gave a bunch of talks to local groups about what I had been doing. Ran around and visited all the relatives. Went to New York and started job hunting and, uh, met Steve when he came home.

GANZGLASS: [01:13:18] Why New York? Was he from New York?

GOTTLIEB: [01:13:19] He's from Brooklyn.

GANZGLASS: [01:13:20] Oh.

GOTTLIEB: [01:13:22] That was our standing joke. How does a guy from Brooklyn meet a girl from the hills of North Carolina? In Tehran.

GANZGLASS: [01:13:30] Obviously.

GOTTLIEB: [01:13:33] And, um. So I found a job working at the Jewish Guild for the Blind. They needed a communication skills instructor, not something that anybody trained for. And they said, ah, you were in the Peace Corps. I bet you can do this. And I said sure. So I learned how to teach typing to people who had no sight and of a group of. It was a, an interesting, also an interesting challenge because basically what you were doing was working with people so that they could function. You know, how to turn on their radios, how to, how to use a template to sign a check.

GANZGLASS: [01:14:21] So they were all blind?

GOTTLIEB: [01:14:23] They were blind. And the most challenging client I had was deaf and blind.

GANZGLASS: [01:14:30] Wow.

GOTTLIEB: [01:14:30] And I had to teach her how to type. But what they were looking for was somebody who was willing to accept a challenge.

GANZGLASS: [01:14:40] And it was a perfect training. It was perfect training.

GOTTLIEB: [01:14:44] Then we got married and then I moved with him. We moved from New York to Saint Louis, and I taught in an inner city enrichment program as a volunteer. I taught about Iran. I taught

these kids in the inner city how to make how to make Iranian rugs. We used greeting card boxes and created many miniature rugs. And I taught them about the alphabet and found one child. One of the classes there was this totally disruptive child, and the teacher was telling me she was about ready to pull her hair out. This child could read Farsi. And I realized he's dyslexic. Because Farsi is written.

GANZGLASS: [01:15:39] Oh.

GOTTLIEB: [01:15:40] From right to left.

GANZGLASS: [01:15:42] Right to left.

GOTTLIEB: [01:15:43] Yeah. And so when I put the stuff up, you know, it fascinated the kids. But he, he grabbed, he got into it. It was like, okay, I think somebody needs to do some testing here. Uh.

GANZGLASS: [01:15:58] Great.

GOTTLIEB: [01:15:59] So and from there, we went back to New York City. And I volunteered. By then, we had one child and I volunteered in a nursery school. And then from there we went to West Virginia and I worked, I volunteered in the schools there. And then we came to Albany, New York, and serendipity. I just decided to renew my lifeguarding because it was a good way to challenge me myself. And then I picked up my WSI, which I had.

GANZGLASS: [01:16:47] What is WSI?

GOTTLIEB: [01:16:48] It's water safety instructor for Red Cross. And then the, uh, the director of the program went on maternity leave and they asked me if I would sub for six months and she didn't come back. So 16 and a half years later, I retired from that job.

GANZGLASS: [01:17:07] Great.

GOTTLIEB: [01:17:07] It was like, you know, you're just prepared to take on whatever comes along.

GANZGLASS: [01:17:13] People who always plan their careers, I tell them, don't get too hung up on that. It may not happen.

GOTTLIEB: [01:17:20] Right. And the thing is, our Iran experience has colored our lives throughout. I still cook Iranian food regularly. We celebrate Nowruz, the New Year. We, uh, we also have been very active since 1981. We've been active with the returned Peace Corps volunteer group that's in the Albany area. That's when Peace Corps tried, decided they were going to try to get volunteers together. It was a genesis. And then I'm now the president of the board of the Peace Corps Iran Association. Newly elected.

GANZGLASS: [01:18:11] Congratulations. And what does that group do?

GOTTLIEB: [01:18:17] It's a group that formed 2011. There have been groups off and on but. And we are. I don't have the mission statement right in my head. But we, we are making an effort to locate all the people that served in Iran. We're trying to preserve the legacy of what Peace Corps did in Iran because Peace Corps left Iran in 1976. So we're all.

GANZGLASS: [01:18:50] When the Shah was overthrown?

GOTTLIEB: [01:18:51] No, he wasn't overthrown at that point.

GANZGLASS: [01:18:54] Okay.

GOTTLIEB: [01:18:54] But the unrest and turmoil was beginning. And, uh, we advocate for better relations between the American people and the Iranian people, the people of Iran.

GANZGLASS: [01:19:12] So you have a real challenge at the moment.

GOTTLIEB: [01:19:15] Yes, we have a very great challenge at the moment, but we have, we have several strains. And we are, we have someone

that's writing a history of our group of Peace Corps in Iran. We're working with professors who are doing research on it. And we have a conference every two years that's a reunion and a, you know, let's update our knowledge kind of thing.

GANZGLASS: [01:19:48] Excellent. So you've brought Peace Corps back to the United States, clearly.

GOTTLIEB: [01:19:53] Yes. Oh, I've done, I've done lots of schools program. And I brought back, I brought back a mullah's robe, a Kurdish turban, and a chador. And the kids love to see what it's like to dress up. And I have a whole box of, not your grand art. I have a pair of shoes that were made out of recycled rubber tires. I have a set of donkey beads, and I always put it out and say, you know, what is this? You know, who would wear this? And the kids, you know, I have. What is this? Where did it come from? Kind of thing set that.

GANZGLASS: [01:20:38] That's great.

GOTTLIEB: [01:20:40] Kids, even adults, enjoy looking at their, their ordinary day to day. I didn't have a lot of money. I mean, there are people that came back with wonderful carpets and things. I came back with an inexpensive tribal carpet, but I came back with a lot of these sort of daily life kind of things, which are a lot of fun for kids.

GANZGLASS: [01:21:06] That's great. So you've carried the spirit of Peace Corps forward?

GOTTLIEB: [01:21:11] I try.

GANZGLASS: [01:21:12] That's, that's all we can do. Anything else you want to say before we conclude the interview?

GOTTLIEB: [01:21:20] I would. I would like to go back to the training. I think that when we went through our exit interviews, I think that it was significant that I was the only one that I know of in my group who was by myself. All the other women were with other women. And I think

we, we made it fairly clear that there were lots of issues that, that they needed to take into consideration when placing women. It wasn't that we couldn't do the job or didn't do the job. It was that, you know, just plunking a woman down by herself without a support group, without some kind of support, was very difficult. The guys, guys ended up pretty much, some of them were by themselves. But what happened with the men is a family would absorb them. Somehow we didn't get absorbed into a family the way the guys did.

GANZGLASS: [01:22:36] And that's probably cultural.

GOTTLIEB: [01:22:38] It's very cultural. And, and of course, they could easily go out to, for dinner. It was much harder for us to go to a restaurant and there were very few and far between, at least in the small towns where I was. And in the, when I got to a city, women didn't go out by themselves to eat. It just wasn't done. So there were changes that came down because I, I think our group was fairly articulate about some of the issues that we faced. I think we were articulate about the fact that don't tell us to change your culture.

GANZGLASS: [01:23:29] Well, one of the people I've interviewed has said that Peace Corps is a learning organization. Sometimes it takes a while to learn, but over time has changed a lot with each experience. So I'm sure your, your experience fed into that as well.

GOTTLIEB: [01:23:47] I'm sure it did. And, um, and Peace Corps today is so different from, from what we did. And you were in the same era as me. So I called home, in order to call home, I had to make a journey to, to Tehran, sign up to make a phone call, wait for two days, get in line for my time.

GANZGLASS: [01:24:17] No satellite phones.

GOTTLIEB: [01:24:18] No satellite phones, no digital age, no Skype, no Zoom.

GANZGLASS: [01:24:24] It was not only in the developing world, it was just a different time.

GOTTLIEB: [01:24:28] It was a different time. And so we have letters. We have letters home. We have written documents.

GANZGLASS: [01:24:37] Yeah.

GOTTLIEB: [01:24:37] And a lot of people I'm wondering today what kind of documentation they're going to have of their service.

GANZGLASS: [01:24:43] That's why we're doing these interviews as well.

GOTTLIEB: [01:24:46] Right. Well, also, there are an awful lot of us that are aging. We're looking at it. That was part of the impetus for the Peace Corps Iran group, I've talked forever, was that we realized that we are aging out and this is our opportunity to tell our story and get our legacy on record.

GANZGLASS: [01:25:08] It's important.

GOTTLIEB: [01:25:09] And right now, we're, we're starting to look for a place to archive the writings and things that we have. So I think the interviews are really important, but they're only one piece of trying to archive the experience.

GANZGLASS: [01:25:24] Definitely. Great. So, excellent interview.

GOTTLIEB: [01:25:28] Thank you.

GANZGLASS: [01:25:28] Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]