

Linda Meinders Webb Oral History Interview
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Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Linda Meinders Webb served as a Peace Corps volunteer in India from 1966 to 1968 on a nutrition project.

Access

Open.

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Oral History Interview

with

Linda Meinders Webb

November 3, 2008
Baltimore, Maryland

By Robert Klein

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

KLEIN: [00:00:02] This is Bob Klein, and today is November 3, 2008. I'm interviewing Linda Meinders Webb, who was Peace Corps volunteer in 1966 to '68 in India in an applied nutrition project. Let's go back maybe a year before you joined the Peace Corps and talk about what was going on.

WEBB: [00:00:25] I was, I was in college. I was in college the year before. And when I was a sophomore in college, I took a test, the Peace Corps test, and was interested in joining then. I took the Peace Corps test and I said, I think I need to finish college.

KLEIN: [00:00:42] Where were you in college?

WEBB: [00:00:43] I was at Hamline University in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

KLEIN: [00:00:47] And what was your major or what were you studying?

WEBB: [00:00:50] Uh, I majored in history.

KLEIN: [00:00:52] And what was your intent? I mean, did you have a career goal at that point or?

WEBB: [00:00:58] No, I had no career goal, actually. When I was, I didn't. The spring of my senior year, I did not have a job and I wasn't successful applying for jobs. And so the Peace Corps recruiters came and it just sounded like a good deal to me.

KLEIN: [00:01:17] Okay.

WEBB: [00:01:18] I sent in my application and almost right away I got a telegram. I mean, I guess you don't send telegrams anymore, but I got a telegram. And it's saying I'd been accepted into, you know, Peace Corps in India, about less than a month after I applied. That was great. I knew what I was going to do for the next two years.

KLEIN: [00:01:36] Great. Well, let's go back. Where did you grow up?

WEBB: [00:01:40] I grew up on a farm in Wood, near Wood Lake, Minnesota. And I know I had that, some of the things, it actually prepared me for a lot in the Peace Corps.

KLEIN: [00:01:51] And large family, small family?

WEBB: [00:01:54] It was a large family. I have three sisters, three brothers and two sisters.

KLEIN: [00:02:00] And did you go, where did you go to high school?

WEBB: [00:02:02] I went to one school for 12 years, Wood Lake Public, and I had no kindergarten, just that's where I went to school. And then I went to Hamline.

KLEIN: [00:02:14] And during your high school, did you do any volunteer work?

WEBB: [00:02:19] Oh, yes. Yes, I was, I was active in my NYF youth fellowship and I was active in 4-H. I actually got a 4-H Key Club.

KLEIN: [00:02:30] This is in high school?

WEBB: [00:02:31] Yes, in high school. Right. Which, Key Club is as high as you can go in 4-H.

KLEIN: [00:02:37] Right.

WEBB: [00:02:38] And, uh, I helped publish the yearbook in high school. And also I was a yearbook editor in college too.

KLEIN: [00:02:48] In high school, were you able to do any travel?

WEBB: [00:02:51] No, my, we were on the farm. My parents didn't travel much. When I was in sixth grade, my neighbor invited me to go with their family to the Black Hills and I decided to go. And my sixth grade teacher did not like it because I was ruining my perfect attendance at school. But I said yes, I'm going.

KLEIN: [00:03:13] Okay, so that was it. But were you the first in your family to go to college?

WEBB: [00:03:18] Oh, no, my, I have an older sister. She graduated from Macalester and I went to Hamline.

KLEIN: [00:03:23] Okay.

WEBB: [00:03:24] My parents, my mother had gone to college for a couple of years.

KLEIN: [00:03:28] So when you finished high school, you would decide next step was college?

WEBB: [00:03:33] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:03:34] And you ended up studying history, not being quite sure what your goal was. Did you expect to be a teacher or?

WEBB: [00:03:43] At first, when I first went to college, I thought I would be a teacher, but and I thought I was going to major in English or math, which I had done well in high school. But I didn't, I took. What threw me off is I was put in advanced classes from tests in both English and math. And compared to people from big city schools, I shouldn't have been in advanced classes. And that hurt me. It threw me off. So it took a while to adjust to that.

KLEIN: [00:04:13] Yeah.

WEBB: [00:04:13] I mean, if I had just been in regular classes, I would have been fine. But trying to put me in advanced classes when I really wasn't prepared for it.

KLEIN: [00:04:21] During your four years of college, did you do any travel, any volunteer work? Did you study any foreign language?

WEBB: [00:04:29] Yes. In high school I studied German and in college I had, I studied German. We had a language requirement both places.

KLEIN: [00:04:38] Right.

WEBB: [00:04:39] Uh, I didn't travel around when I was in college. I had worked in the summers and I did do volunteer work when I was, uh, one of the first things, just community activist. I volunteered to, uh, go in. This was in, you know, in the sixties. Right when I was a freshman, '62 or '63, I volunteered to go into a suburban Minneapolis or a suburban neighborhood and ask them about a Black family. I think when one had moved in or done anything, that was my activist. And it was it was a little shocking to hear that. But I mean, Minnesota was like 98 percent white.

KLEIN: [00:05:24] Right.

WEBB: [00:05:24] It was a big deal.

KLEIN: [00:05:25] Right.

WEBB: [00:05:25] For someone doing that. I like I said, I published The Liner and I was in a sorority in college.

KLEIN: [00:05:34] Do you remember, do you remember when you first heard of the Peace Corps?

WEBB: [00:05:38] I think that I heard it right at the very beginning. Well, I mean, Minnesota. Hubert Humphrey was from Minnesota. And Hubert Humphrey got some credit for the Peace Corps, at least in Minnesota.

KLEIN: [00:05:51] Sure.

WEBB: [00:05:51] So, yes, we did hear about it at the very beginning and said I wanted to go into it.

KLEIN: [00:05:56] And as it developed to go in the Peace Corps, what was the reaction of your family and your friends?

WEBB: [00:06:02] Well, my friends, especially from college, thought it was great. My family, my father especially thought, what? You were raised on a farm. You went there. Now you go to college and now you want to go to India for two years and work in a, you know, you know, on a farm or do all that. And applied nutrition we were working with.

KLEIN: [00:06:28] And what did you say?

WEBB: [00:06:30] I said I was.

KLEIN: [00:06:32] I'm going.

WEBB: [00:06:33] I'm going. Right. So he didn't have much to say about it, but he didn't. He didn't, he thought I should be, you know, working, getting a job

or just something else. My mother thought it was great. My mother always wanted to travel, and she loved the fact that I could travel.

KLEIN: [00:06:47] Well, so as you came near graduation, you had already been accepted to the Peace Corps?

WEBB: [00:06:53] Yes, I applied in May. I graduated on 6-6-66 [June 6, 1966].

KLEIN: [00:06:58] Okay.

WEBB: [00:06:58] And I went into the Peace Corps about a week afterwards or ten weeks after was the first time I flew in an airplane. I flew from Minneapolis to Boston and we were supposed to fly to Lebanon, near where Hanover, where Dartmouth is.

KLEIN: [00:07:16] Yes.

WEBB: [00:07:17] But we couldn't, that was, visibility was poor. So they actually, we went by car from Boston.

KLEIN: [00:07:23] Yeah. So it was the first, your first time flying?

WEBB: [00:07:26] First time flying.

KLEIN: [00:07:28] But when you received the telegram from Peace Corps saying you've been accepted for training and India, at that point did you have any second thoughts? I mean, now the idea of Peace Corps has suddenly become a reality.

WEBB: [00:07:42] No, I didn't have any second thoughts. One thing, though, I did not know until I got to Peace Corps, until I got there, is that, I mean, I didn't have to do anything. I was, I was going straight out of college. I didn't own anything. I just, you know, if I go there and it didn't work out, I would get something else. But when I was in the Peace Corps, unlike what it is now I think, is we were at, there were 70 people invited for training or 75 or something and only 50 made it.

KLEIN: [00:08:12] Yeah.

WEBB: [00:08:13] So it was competitive. You didn't necessarily go to training and become a volunteer.

KLEIN: [00:08:18] Well, we'll talk about that. So, uh, you, you are accepted into a program in applied nutrition, but you had no background in studying nutrition?

WEBB: [00:08:32] No, but I think it's, I think it said something about it was an agriculture program or something. Because with the applied nutrition program, we started nursery schools with the mid-day meal, but there were people that were nurses and nurses and, you know, Peace Corps nurses and nurses, and there were people that worked with poultry and some people worked with eggs.

KLEIN: [00:08:56] So you think it was because you grew up on a farm?

WEBB: [00:08:58] Yes, it helped me. And I think there was something about the overall description. Yes.

KLEIN: [00:09:04] Okay. Now you report to Dartmouth, you flew, got into Boston and they took you up to and you're at Dartmouth College. Is that where the training is?

WEBB: [00:09:15] Well, that's where we were told. So we spent a whole week at Dartmouth and then we went to the hills of Vermont.

KLEIN: [00:09:22] Well, let's go back to just the very first getting together in Dartmouth. Now you're in the presence of, what, 70 other people who've joined the Peace Corps, and it's your first chance to look at others who made the same decision as you. Do you recall your reaction?

WEBB: [00:09:42] No.

KLEIN: [00:09:43] Okay.

WEBB: [00:09:44] Not really. Not my first reaction.

KLEIN: [00:09:46] You felt comfortable?

WEBB: [00:09:49] I think I was just, yeah, I was just taking it all in.

KLEIN: [00:09:54] Okay. Okay. And so you spent a week at Dartmouth, and what went on during that first week.

WEBB: [00:10:03] In the, we basically got settled into what we were doing, had some classes. I'm not even sure we spent a week, because we, right away they told us we would be going to a ski resort and we would be. The couple, there were some couples there. They would be building their own places to live for the evening, their cots, their little tents that they had. And we, uh, we were in more of the camping. The girls were all just.

KLEIN: [00:10:35] What time of year was it?

WEBB: [00:10:36] It was in the summer.

KLEIN: [00:10:38] Oh, okay.

WEBB: [00:10:38] It was a really, we went in June. We left in September, but it was very cold, wet summer.

KLEIN: [00:10:44] Yeah. Now, the group was mostly women?

WEBB: [00:10:48] No, no, no. Most, when I was there.

KLEIN: [00:10:52] In the training group?

WEBB: [00:10:54] Right. The training group was mostly men. Actually, I mean, this was in 1966 and there were just a lot of the men getting out of the, not going to Vietnam for the war.

KLEIN: [00:11:04] Right. Right.

WEBB: [00:11:05] And so, no, they were mostly, mostly men I recall.

KLEIN: [00:11:09] Yeah. Yeah. All right. So you then go from Dartmouth to the ski resort where you build your own?

WEBB: [00:11:21] Right. We, we didn't, the women didn't have to build our own, but we were pretty rustic and we had no heat. Like I said, it was cold. We slept in our sleeping bags. And in the end, because we were doing with the nursery school, they ended up bringing up some children, boys from the slum. I don't know if they were, I got, was assigned a boy. I think they were all boys from the slums in New Haven that they said, and we were supposed to practice with them and they absolutely wore us out.

KLEIN: [00:11:50] So what were you practicing? Just working with the child?

WEBB: [00:11:54] Just working with them. Right. And they thought it would be a good idea. But studying the language, learning everything else, it was hard.

KLEIN: [00:12:01] Now, who, do you remember who ran the program?

WEBB: [00:12:06] Uh, Wright. I forget his first name.

KLEIN: [00:12:09] Was it, was it under Dartmouth or was it some company or?

WEBB: [00:12:14] I think, no. I think that these people probably did. And they had it.

KLEIN: [00:12:23] Yeah,

WEBB: [00:12:23] They were the, Wright was the one who was in charge and did all that. He had some, he was more affiliated with Yale because that's where he came from, New Haven and everything. And a lot of the staff were all returned volunteers.

KLEIN: [00:12:39] From India?

WEBB: [00:12:41] A lot of them, it must have been in India, yes.

KLEIN: [00:12:43] Okay. Most training programs have several components. One is language. Language training.

WEBB: [00:12:50] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:12:51] Let's talk about the language training you had.

WEBB: [00:12:54] We learned Telugu and we did have English. I mean, Indian, you know, speaking who is native tongue was Telugu.

KLEIN: [00:13:04] Now where is Telugu spoken?

WEBB: [00:13:06] Telugu is spoken in the state of Andhra Pradesh which is in South India.

KLEIN: [00:13:11] Oh, in the south.

WEBB: [00:13:13] Yeah. It's, where we were as in the very south. Hyderabad is the capital of Andhra and we were closer by bus to either go to Madras or Bangalore.

KLEIN: [00:13:22] And was the entire group learning Telugu? And you are all going to?

WEBB: [00:13:29] All of us were going to Andhra. This was at a time when, after Indira Gandhi and Johnson had written, had a proposal, and the United States was giving money or something. And they had a lot of Peace Corps volunteers that went with it. We had, just in our state, we maybe had three or 400. I didn't even know all the volunteers in Andhra.

KLEIN: [00:13:52] It was an enormous project, India was.

WEBB: [00:13:55] India was enormous project. We had, every state had like two doctors assigned to, Peace Corps, doctors assigned to the Peace Corps there.

KLEIN: [00:14:05] Well, we'll get to, let's stay in training and then we'll get overseas. So there was language training. Were you told that you had to get up to a certain proficiency in language or you wouldn't go?

WEBB: [00:14:17] No, we really didn't, because one of the, this, the, at that time, the south wanted English as a national language and the northern India wanted Hindi as the language. And so a lot of people spoke English.

KLEIN: [00:14:33] So it was.

WEBB: [00:14:34] We learn Telugu, we were stressed Telugu, but I don't think it wasn't as important as maybe some other groups.

KLEIN: [00:14:40] Another component of training often is technical studies, whatever work you're expected to do. They try, the Peace Corps tries to prepare you.

WEBB: [00:14:51] Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

KLEIN: [00:14:52] What was that?

WEBB: [00:14:53] We had a lot of professors that would tell us about India. You know, we took history courses, geography courses, and also we worked with applied nutrition and. And so what, our job, our part of it was starting nursery schools and so we used a lot of the Head Start, which Head Start was just starting in the United States and we used a lot of the Head Start principles.

KLEIN: [00:15:16] Now, this was all while you were up in?

WEBB: [00:15:18] In training.

KLEIN: [00:15:19] In the ski resort area.

WEBB: [00:15:21] In Berkshire, Vermont.

KLEIN: [00:15:22] Okay. So did anyone from Peace Corps India or Washington say, well, when you get there, the job you're going to do is this? I mean, or was it left a little vague?

WEBB: [00:15:35] No, it was always left a little vague. I think that we would be doing community development and working with that so.

KLEIN: [00:15:42] Yeah. So there's language training, area technical, and also area studies. I gather the technical and area studies went together. You learned about India.

WEBB: [00:15:53] We learned about India. We also learned technical. We learned, even though mine was applied nutrition and I had that, oh, I had to learn about chickens, I had to take poultry exams and the other things. And we learned all about unfertilized eggs and everything.

KLEIN: [00:16:10] Oh, okay.

WEBB: [00:16:10] We had tests. So yes, they were serious. There were people that, I mean, as a matter of fact, I didn't do well on one test. I had to repeat it. And I was scared stiff that I wouldn't make it repeating the test. I mean, I studied and got everything there, and, I mean, I aced that test. Ooh.

KLEIN: [00:16:25] Even though you had grown up on a farm?

WEBB: [00:16:27] Even though I grew up on a farm, I think I thought I didn't have to study it so hard.

KLEIN: [00:16:30] Yeah. Yeah. Now, the other, the other major part of training is what's called selection. And it has been done in different ways, in different programs. Were you aware of the selection process?

WEBB: [00:16:48] Oh, yeah, they did tell us about that. We had.

KLEIN: [00:16:51] How did it go, how did it work?

WEBB: [00:16:52] We took the, uh, we had to do the Minnesota Multiphasical [Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory] which I had taken in high school and college. So I was used to it, but it scared other people. And my roommate actually did not make the training.

KLEIN: [00:17:07] Right.

WEBB: [00:17:08] And so we, at mid, we had sort of like a midterm. There were some people that were sent home right at midterm.

KLEIN: [00:17:14] Right.

WEBB: [00:17:15] And some people were just warned. My roommate was warned at midterm, not, she didn't have to leave then.

KLEIN: [00:17:21] What was the warning she got?

WEBB: [00:17:23] Well, she just needed to be stronger in, you know, in her subjects and doing all that.

KLEIN: [00:17:29] Okay. It wasn't she had to be stronger psychologically, I mean, because?

WEBB: [00:17:33] Well, maybe that too. But just, I mean, I, I don't really know because I was, I felt that I got strong encouragement that, yes, I was going to make it and doing everything. I, I know that she was a little worried. I listened to her there, but I guess it was so competitive that a lot of people just, you just didn't sit around and talk much about it and especially since you were living in, you know, and it was so cold and doing all that, it was more truly a survival. And you were, you were, you know, being kind to people, but you basically were worried about yourself.

KLEIN: [00:18:11] Yeah. Did. [tape break] Okay. So you mentioned in selection that actually your roommate was deselected or was warned at mid selection. Did you have, were you interviewed separately by a psychiatrist or psychologist?

WEBB: [00:18:32] Oh, yes. We all had separate interviews. We all were tested. We had separate interviews with psychiatrists, we had separate interviews with other staff.

KLEIN: [00:18:40] And did it shake you? I mean, I mean, most of us aren't accustomed to going, having psychiatric interviews and?

WEBB: [00:18:49] Well, not really. I just, I don't know. I guess I didn't know. I guess I didn't know enough not to know, not to be afraid or anything, but it didn't bother me.

KLEIN: [00:18:59] Yeah.

WEBB: [00:19:00] Other people talked about it and I guess I never, I really didn't know what a psychiatric interview was, except I, the only thing experience I had with is we had foster children in our home. And, you know, we had a boy that used to go to his, he would always see the psychologist to play games he would talk about.

KLEIN: [00:19:20] Mm hmm. So was there anything else about training? How long did it last?

WEBB: [00:19:28] It lasted three months. And one weekend we did get to go, I went with a group of other people. We went to Cape Cod.

KLEIN: [00:19:40] Just a break from training?

WEBB: [00:19:42] Just a break from training. A weekend, a couple of days.

KLEIN: [00:19:46] And were you working with a child for the whole training part or just a week or so?

WEBB: [00:19:53] It was just towards the end. They gave us different children. They assigned to us. And one of the things is we took the children on a field trip and I was driving. Another lady was with me, an older lady. And this is in Vermont, up and down the hills. And I was coming down the hill.

These were old cars. And I said, the brakes aren't working. Very quietly. And she said, well, use the handbrakes. And I said, I tried.

KLEIN: [00:20:30] And?

WEBB: [00:20:31] And we, I mean, I never used the, I never put my foot on the gas after that, just trying to see what we could do. And when we got down, since, you know, since we hadn't given it any gas, it was lower, but we just went around in circles and just stopped. And then she got out and called the camp. And the people at the camp thought we were wonderful, but the children thought we were terrible. And after that, the person that I was supposed to be taking care of didn't even want to talk to me.

KLEIN: [00:21:04] Huh. But that didn't affect the training as such?

WEBB: [00:21:07] No, not really. They, they asked me then if I wanted to be assigned to someone else. I said no.

KLEIN: [00:21:13] Yeah. So then were there any other components of training?

WEBB: [00:21:19] Well, we had a physical, this was a very much physical fitness. I mean, we had someone from the New York Times that came out and wrote it was the Fort Dix of the Peace Corps. And we had, we all had to do a ten minute mile or we couldn't make it. And I was, you know, study doing hard, staying up all night, running, chasing the kids. It was hard. But one morning, I got up, I did the ten minute mile. I made it and never got up again for any physical education. But we had to do a ten minute mile. Yeah, we had lots of.

KLEIN: [00:21:52] Did anyone try to justify why they were doing it, the physical training part of it? You weren't going to be going to India to climb mountains.

WEBB: [00:22:04] No, we weren't. And that's what some of the people were complaining about and talking. And we, I guess even more so when we got in the country, is that India is hot and it's hot, hotter, and hottest. And we were going in the south where it's hottest.

KLEIN: [00:22:20] Yeah.

WEBB: [00:22:20] And it was a cold summer. Temperatures weren't the same. We were not going to be walking up and down mountains.

KLEIN: [00:22:27] Right, right.

WEBB: [00:22:29] Doing all that. But they guess, they just, I mean, it was like the challenge. I mean, you it was we accepted whatever it was, you know, this process.

KLEIN: [00:22:37] Because you knew it was part of the selection process.

WEBB: [00:22:39] It was part of the selection process. And I mean, when if you went there, you really wanted to go to India. And I think that was what, just deciding to see if you really wanted to go. That was what they tested.

KLEIN: [00:22:50] Did you also have health training?

WEBB: [00:22:53] What?

KLEIN: [00:22:53] Health?

WEBB: [00:22:53] Well, we had, we had people that especially that were in nurses training. We all had to have a couple of health courses, yes.

KLEIN: [00:23:00] Yeah. And were there volunteers who had served in India who took part in the training?

WEBB: [00:23:05] Oh, yes. Most of the, most of our instructors had all been to India.

KLEIN: [00:23:09] So they, you could talk to them about.

WEBB: [00:23:13] We could talk to them. There also was one volunteer who had been raised in India with missionaries and she spoke Hindi, although we

were learning Telugu, and she had a hard time during training because they thought that she was just trying to get back to India. So even though she was good, but I mean, we would of course ask, she would tell us all kinds of stories about India. We liked that. It was easier to talk to her than, you know, some of the staff.

KLEIN: [00:23:42] Because they weren't, you weren't worried about selection with her.

WEBB: [00:23:45] Right. And with the other thing is that what we had to do to prepare us for India, I guess. But one day we had to cut up the chicken and then that evening was the first night that we had to eat without our without silverware, with our hands, because you didn't eat with the hands in India. And there were a lot of people that were hungry that night.

KLEIN: [00:24:11] Did, uh, did the group, if people with disappearing from training all the time, did the group protest at all? Did the group come together and say, what's going on here?

WEBB: [00:24:24] Oh, no, no. No. Because we knew at the very beginning that everybody would not make it.

KLEIN: [00:24:29] Okay.

WEBB: [00:24:30] And it was just the people were deselected, but there was only, it was just at the midterm and then at the final. But what was really almost unfair that people that would, we knew they had the deselection process. But in the end, and we even voted on the people.

KLEIN: [00:24:48] Oh, you did?

WEBB: [00:24:49] And we had to vote which team we, what people we'd want on our team to see who was liked by the other people, do a lot of other things. But the one thing that we didn't find out until the very final day is it didn't, they didn't exactly have a set number before. They still had to, talking to India, talking to some other place, and finding out that maybe this person could make it, maybe this person couldn't, or that they could

take that, because I mean, it found out later India had a lot of volunteers and I guess.

KLEIN: [00:25:23] Yeah. And the group didn't object to doing the rating? Well, my vote might get someone kicked out.

WEBB: [00:25:31] No.

KLEIN: [00:25:33] Okay.

WEBB: [00:25:33] Because in a way, it was just the way it was. We thought that that was what we were taught.

KLEIN: [00:25:39] Well, since it was the time it was, where was there any discussion about Vietnam?

WEBB: [00:25:48] This was in '66. So it was a little early.

KLEIN: [00:25:52] It was before the big buildup.

WEBB: [00:25:53] We were reading about Vietnam. We talked some about Vietnam. But really, I mean, I guess I don't remember much of the other discussion because it was, we were working and studying, you know, 12, 13 hours, and then trying to get our sleep. I don't remember, but I'm sure there might have been people that were talking about it because there were some guys in other groups I know, and probably in this group, who were in the Peace Corps instead of being drafted.

KLEIN: [00:26:21] And because you were going to India, which was known to be a third world leader, sort of a neutral, were the discussions of politics and how to talk when you met Indians?

WEBB: [00:26:37] Well, yes, there was, there was a politics, especially politics, where we learned a lot about the history of India in our training. Are we still talking about training?

KLEIN: [00:26:48] Mm hmm. Yeah.

WEBB: [00:26:49] And with the, with the Indians in training. Well, I think. I don't know, maybe just from my perspective, I was thinking more from the history than anything. I know afterwards, I was surprised to find that some of the volunteers were put in villages that were very socialist or, you know, everything. But we were, we were taught, of course, that the British had left India, and that was not, you know, and that India was going through its independence.

KLEIN: [00:27:23] You don't recall anyone saying, well, you're going to be, because you're American, you'll be attacked about Vietnam? And it was still early, so probably.

WEBB: [00:27:35] No, the other, what, no. We were Americans and what we were taught in training and we certainly did, is that the women were, we were dresses. We did not wear jeans. We weren't wearing slacks. You were doing that. And you were also supposed to be well dressed. You were not mistaken for all the people, the hippies that were in India that were, that were avoiding the draft or.

KLEIN: [00:28:05] Looking for ashrams or.

WEBB: [00:28:06] Right. So I remember more about talking about the hippies than about Vietnam. I became interested when I was in India about Vietnam but not before.

KLEIN: [00:28:17] Okay, so final selection and you're chosen. What happens at that point?

WEBB: [00:28:27] At that point, we were told. We were told about the team that we had and they combined our team with the other split training group that went, that was trained in Williams, Williams College. And I ended up, most of my, all of the people that I worked with had been trained in Williams College. So they weren't the people that I was trained with at Dartmouth. But then we went home. We were, we went home for a while, like about a week. And then we were supposed to all meet in New York.

KLEIN: [00:28:54] While you were home, was there a grand celebration going or is just quiet? And did you have any second thoughts?

WEBB: [00:29:04] No. I was just looking forward to the adventure.

KLEIN: [00:29:08] Did anyone and nobody tried to say, oh, please don't go?

WEBB: [00:29:13] No.

KLEIN: [00:29:15] Okay.

WEBB: [00:29:15] I don't think at that time.

KLEIN: [00:29:16] Yeah. So then you had the week home and you report to.

WEBB: [00:29:25] Well, then we were supposed to meet in New York and go out of there, but we ended up spending an extra couple of days in New York because they didn't have visas for us. We had a problem with the visas, and so we didn't know how long we'd be in New York, but we were. So we were put up in hotels for a couple of days in New York. We finally got to go, so we were tired.

KLEIN: [00:29:46] And that was your first time in New York City?

WEBB: [00:29:49] That was the first time in New York City.

KLEIN: [00:29:50] Did you have a chance to do a little tour?

WEBB: [00:29:52] Yes, we did. We did, we went to some of the things. Uh huh. But we also couldn't do a lot because we never knew, you know, in a couple hours we might get a visa and leave or whatever.

KLEIN: [00:30:06] Mm hmm. And talk about the trip, how you got to India and your initial reaction and arriving there.

WEBB: [00:30:12] Okay. So we, we then got our plane and because we had been held up a couple of days, I think we might have gone in different, different

routes. But we, we had a couple layovers. One was like in Holland actually, and in Belgium. And I remember and I went with some other people, we wanted to get our exercise, we had been sitting there, and I went to see Anne Frank's home.

KLEIN: [00:30:41] Oh, okay.

WEBB: [00:30:42] And then came back and we flew to Pakistan. But there we just were there in the airport for an hour or so. And oh, the heat, the heat, the heat was almost too much. The first time realizing we were, the heat was going to be a big, big factor.

KLEIN: [00:30:58] Right.

WEBB: [00:30:59] And then we went to Delhi and it wasn't the heat. It was the smell.

KLEIN: [00:31:04] Oh, okay.

WEBB: [00:31:04] It hit you.

KLEIN: [00:31:06] Yes. So you arrived, you arrived in India. You went into Delhi. Was there a reception or just?

WEBB: [00:31:15] Well, there was a. Well, actually, we stayed at a nice hotel in Delhi for a couple. [tape break]

KLEIN: [00:31:22] Okay. Yeah.

WEBB: [00:31:23] As opposed to Delhi, we went to. Yeah, we went, went to the embassy. We did that. That was kind of nice. And then we were divided into our groups and we took a long train ride and my. The train ride from Delhi to Hyderabad.

KLEIN: [00:31:45] Right.

WEBB: [00:31:46] We were told, do not drink the water. Do not drink the water. Even when you brush your teeth, do not drink the water. Well, I drink the water. I spit out, but I drank the water. I got dysentery. And I got sick.

KLEIN: [00:32:04] Yeah.

WEBB: [00:32:06] I, as a matter of fact, I ended up in the hospital. Then we went on a bus from there to go to our village.

KLEIN: [00:32:17] Right.

WEBB: [00:32:17] After that. And I ended up at the hospital for a few days before I went to my village.

KLEIN: [00:32:22] So you were in the hospital in Hyderabad?

WEBB: [00:32:24] No, not in Hyderabad. I was beyond that in, uh, near Bangalore. When I was out there, it was, it was a town that had, it was, had a lot of the big mission hospital and where they had a lot of leper colony. I don't remember the name of the town.

KLEIN: [00:32:50] So you mentioned, you mentioned that you became part of a team and most of the team trained elsewhere. What was the team concept? I don't, how is that supposed to work?

WEBB: [00:33:02] Right. The team concept was that one person was the *boahdi*, which is nursery school, to start the nursery school. But the reason to start the nursery school was not for education, but it was to feed with the mid-day meal. And so you had someone else that was the, was my roommate. Then later was the one who was working on community gardens. Someone else was raising poultry. And we had a nurse in the group.

KLEIN: [00:33:33] And on that team, who were you on the team? Which role were you playing?

WEBB: [00:33:38] I was, I was the starting nursery school.

KLEIN: [00:33:41] Oh, okay. And that had been part of your training?

WEBB: [00:33:44] That had been part of my training, right, with the Head Start, just doing that. It not as, I guess what I wasn't trained at and what I, or I don't remember being trained as much, but a lot of what we did was more for starting nursery schools, it's more community organization than working with our coworkers. And then there was money from CARE to get the money there that I was able to do that.

KLEIN: [00:34:10] Now, a lot of the program was based on distributing CARE food in a school lunch program?

WEBB: [00:34:16] No, it wasn't. It was, we got the UNICEF packets were the, for the garden, the beans, something else. And then someone raised the poultry and you had eggs with the poultry.

KLEIN: [00:34:30] Yeah.

WEBB: [00:34:32] And so for food for the community garden. So my part was just getting a teacher and getting the building and getting, you know, the part for the, for the nursery school.

KLEIN: [00:34:43] Yeah.

WEBB: [00:34:44] And so I spent a lot of time, I had a coworker and most of us had coworkers. I got along very well with my coworker.

KLEIN: [00:34:52] Yeah, well, let's, let's. So what's the name of the village you finally ended up in?

WEBB: [00:34:57] Chandragiri.

KLEIN: [00:34:58] Chandragiri. When you got to Chandragiri, you must have been a little late because you were in the hospital.

WEBB: [00:35:05] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:35:06] The others on the team had already been there? Were you the first Peace Corps to go into that village?

WEBB: [00:35:12] Yes, we were the first Peace Corps to go in that village.

KLEIN: [00:35:15] And was, had someone arranged housing for you?

WEBB: [00:35:19] Oh, yes. Yes. Or at least lately the way I've known it. But at that time, every volunteer was to be given a house, the village gave us the house. A very nice one that my roommate and I stayed there.

KLEIN: [00:35:35] Right.

WEBB: [00:35:35] It had electricity. And also we were given two Raleigh bicycles.

KLEIN: [00:35:44] Uh huh.

WEBB: [00:35:44] And we were given, they were supposed to be Raleigh. We had Raleighs. Some people didn't. But that we, because we were told, they were told that the Indian bicycles wouldn't hold Americans.

KLEIN: [00:35:55] Yeah.

WEBB: [00:35:56] So we had English, we got three speed bicycles.

KLEIN: [00:35:59] Yeah. Talk about your living arrangement. You first come into the village now. You're finally at the end of your Peace Corps journey in a way. I mean, because you've finally come to the point where you're going to work. Talk about your reaction and settling into the living arrangement, and then we'll talk about your work situation.

WEBB: [00:36:19] Okay, right. Well, we worked in groups, but Wendy Cutter and I were the only ones assigned to our village, were there. We were in a *mahila mandel*, it's an area group. So the other two people that were doing the chickens, as she was doing the garden. I was doing the nursery school.

KLEIN: [00:36:38] Wendy was doing the garden?

WEBB: [00:36:39] Two people that were in chickens were in a different village. But we could, with our bicycles, we could get there.

KLEIN: [00:36:45] Right.

WEBB: [00:36:46] In another village that was a little further off, a couple lived there and she was the nurse. I'm not sure his role.

KLEIN: [00:36:54] Right.

WEBB: [00:36:54] But they were, we had to go through. And Chandragiri is right at the foothills of Tirumala and Tirumala is a big shrine, a Hindu shrine and a temple. And it's, people go there when they thank for everything. And I mean, it's a very wealthy temple and they, they gave Nehru his weight in gold during the Crimean crisis. And so a lot of people would come up there. We would see a lot of, you know, Indian tourists that would go there or that would come from other states do that.

KLEIN: [00:37:35] But those weren't the people you were working with?

WEBB: [00:37:37] No, but we were, we were working with more than, I guess, the typical villagers. Almost all the people that we worked with spoke some English.

KLEIN: [00:37:47] Yeah.

WEBB: [00:37:48] Some of them were working with the temple in some way, doing that. There was a, a government compound that my coworker lived in. She lived there with her husband, and they would have some type of meetings in this compound that we would go to and do that, which is. And then, then I would. She would go out to different *mahila mandels*, which were women's groups, and just talking about different things, you know, for sanitation, for sewing, for different like that. And I would go with her to these different villages to do that.

KLEIN: [00:38:32] Now, what was the, the local government structure or organization with which you worked? I mean, you weren't working on your own. You must have been.

WEBB: [00:38:43] We were not, it were, right. It was this, a little area wide development that was the government compound that served that village that we lived in, plus other villages. And it was sort of like we have.

KLEIN: [00:39:00] Like a county government?

WEBB: [00:39:02] Like a county government and county, say, the county extension people that did everything. There wasn't a post office, but these were ones that were supporting the agriculture in the area.

KLEIN: [00:39:13] Mm hmm. And so you had a counterpart whose work was identical to yours?

WEBB: [00:39:22] No, her. Her work, her work.

KLEIN: [00:39:24] Yeah.

WEBB: [00:39:25] Was with the nursery school, was with the community groups, the women's groups in the different communities.

KLEIN: [00:39:32] Right.

WEBB: [00:39:32] And so I worked with her doing that. My job was to start the nursery schools and she sort of introduced me to people.

KLEIN: [00:39:40] Well, how in the world do you start nursery schools?

WEBB: [00:39:44] Well.

KLEIN: [00:39:45] Had they ever had them before?

WEBB: [00:39:47] Uh, yes. One of the, one of the villages had a school, but it wasn't just a nursery school. It was different levels.

KLEIN: [00:39:58] Yeah.

WEBB: [00:39:58] The grades. And we went there and it was so her. She just added younger children to her school. This was one that we sort of worked with and did that. I've kept in touch with her, you know, to this day.

KLEIN: [00:40:12] Right.

WEBB: [00:40:12] Do that. Another one, what we wanted to open a temporary one. And so we did it in what was a closed temple and.

KLEIN: [00:40:23] We being you and your counterpart?

WEBB: [00:40:26] Right. But so to start this. But one of the ways that was, that she said she really accepted me and felt that is because at the beginning of the, when the compound by where the temple was, there was a leper who was guarding it and doing that. And that didn't bother me. And she thought that was wonderful.

KLEIN: [00:40:49] Yes.

WEBB: [00:40:50] Because she, she, they were she was so afraid that American and being so clean and healthy and everything would say, oh, we can't, have to move to remove that person. But I didn't see any need to.

KLEIN: [00:41:02] You didn't have a problem with that?

WEBB: [00:41:03] I did not have a problem with it.

KLEIN: [00:41:04] In your first week there, did you have any chance to use your Telugu?

WEBB: [00:41:11] Yes. We tried to use some words, and also the most words that we had to use is we were given some extra money. And some of this because I was sick at the beginning, I didn't really understand. But my roommate then got the money and it was off to hire a cook.

KLEIN: [00:41:31] Yes.

WEBB: [00:41:32] And the cook, of course, would basically, didn't speak much English.

KLEIN: [00:41:36] Right.

WEBB: [00:41:38] And so we had a cook. But the cook, what the food this cook, this young man had, I don't think he'd ever cooked before. And he didn't last long but.

KLEIN: [00:41:51] Yes.

WEBB: [00:41:52] We had to use, yes, Telugu whatever. Right. My roommate actually, because she had been trained at Williams and I guess because she had more experience and was good with languages, she was, knew more Telugu than I did.

KLEIN: [00:42:09] Right. So let's talk about your domestic arrangements. So you had, you and your roommate had your own place?

WEBB: [00:42:21] Right. We had our own house. It was really quite nice.

KLEIN: [00:42:24] Yeah. And you had a steward who would take care of the house as well as cook?

WEBB: [00:42:32] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:42:33] So describe, in the first few months, describe, tell me about a typical day. You get up, you had breakfast.

WEBB: [00:42:42] Well, we, it did not take us long where we couldn't. We got very much. Breakfast was really hard because, I mean, we couldn't eat just what was cooked for us or anything. And I had been sick and lost more weight and needed something. So we, we, there was somebody that was

selling eggs and we would buy an egg. Oh, yes, this egg we could cook. We could cook an egg.

KLEIN: [00:43:08] Yeah.

WEBB: [00:43:08] And the other thing is somebody on the street sold buffalo milk and we got buffalo milk. We took a long time. I mean, even this, the cook we ended up having to fire and we spent a lot of time just feeding ourselves, especially at the beginning, getting food because we needed some food and it was hard for us to do everything. So we'd get the buffalo milk, we would get the eggs, and then we even found a bakery that was there that we could buy bread. The bread was expensive, but we could buy it, but we could have that.

KLEIN: [00:43:46] Yeah.

WEBB: [00:43:48] So yeah, we could, then after, after that, then we could go to the. With my coworker, then I might go with her and just go to a village.

KLEIN: [00:44:00] Right.

WEBB: [00:44:01] That we would walk to the village. I would go with her. My roommate would not.

KLEIN: [00:44:05] Yeah.

WEBB: [00:44:07] She was assigned a male who was harder for her to.

KLEIN: [00:44:13] And her field is what, your roommate?

WEBB: [00:44:16] She was supposed to start the community gardens and she had more trouble doing that, Wendy did.

KLEIN: [00:44:22] Yeah.

WEBB: [00:44:23] So I would go out or else, and us because we, we would use this CARE, this upma which was sort of like a grain, a cereal type, that we

would give right away and everybody that, they would have in the nursery school. So actually we would end up, maybe I would end up being around there at noon and that would be my lunch.

KLEIN: [00:44:49] Yes.

WEBB: [00:44:49] They would serve, get hot peppers to, Indian peppers, to make it tasty.

KLEIN: [00:44:56] Yeah. So over the first few months, there was one established school that you worked with and.

WEBB: [00:45:07] Right. There was one established school that we worked with that teacher and we had a couple other teachers. No, there were two. One other teacher did something else there. Yeah, I guess maybe one at the beginning.

KLEIN: [00:45:22] And did you actually start any nursery schools or work with the community to get one going?

WEBB: [00:45:28] To get a building, a permanent building?

KLEIN: [00:45:30] Yeah.

WEBB: [00:45:31] Well, we, I mean, we started the nursery school in what was the temple. I arranged with all the CARE people and everything for a building to be constructed. It was going to be constructed. We got the land, we had everything arranged. It was time for me to leave.

KLEIN: [00:45:46] Yeah.

WEBB: [00:45:47] I went back actually later and I'm not sure it was built. Or if it was built, it was not used for nursery school.

KLEIN: [00:45:53] Right. Right. Well, let's, let's talk about, oh, six months into your service. How did you feel about the work you were doing? Did you feel

there was something for you to do? It had shape. Could you, did it make sense?

WEBB: [00:46:15] Well, I mean, I think we understood that we were learning as much as they were, you know, as much as we were teaching them. And so to do that, trying to have an exchange with the other people and to do that. But we did, say every six months, we did then go in. We had conferences. So maybe after six months we all went to Hyderabad and we met with Peace Corps staff with everything there. They, we'd have to do that to keep up our shots, do everything else.

KLEIN: [00:46:45] Right.

WEBB: [00:46:46] But then we would have a chance to compare experiences with other people and to see exactly what we were able to accomplish. We realized that we were sort of lucky, being in a house by ourself, having electricity and a bicycle.

KLEIN: [00:47:01] Yeah. But as far as the work you were doing was, where others making the same kind of progress that you were or were you out ahead of it or?

WEBB: [00:47:11] Most, I think most others were not making as much progress. And some people even, I mean, were not accepted at all in the community. I mean, where, you know, didn't want Americans there.

KLEIN: [00:47:23] Who had decided to place you in that village and the people in the other villages?

WEBB: [00:47:29] Who assigned them?

KLEIN: [00:47:30] Yeah. I mean, Peace Corps couldn't simply say we're sending people into a village, was there?

WEBB: [00:47:36] No, no. I think because this was a government building, I think that there was probably some pressure for them to take some Peace Corps volunteers and they agreed and they found all the other things. And

so I think the same thing with some other villagers, they were, they might have been told, you're getting this and you're also getting volunteers with it. Maybe they didn't quite understand.

KLEIN: [00:48:00] No, was AID involved with food supplies or?

WEBB: [00:48:04] I don't think.

KLEIN: [00:48:06] It was CARE.

WEBB: [00:48:08] CARE and UNICEF. I don't remember AID at all.

KLEIN: [00:48:12] Oh, okay. So after six months, you, you met in Hyderabad?

WEBB: [00:48:19] Oh, yes. We met in a nice, nice hotel. And it was like culture shock.

KLEIN: [00:48:25] Yes.

WEBB: [00:48:26] We weren't dressed. What is this?

KLEIN: [00:48:28] Yeah. Yeah. While you were in the field during the first six months, were you reporting back to a Peace Corps office at all or how did they know what you were doing?

WEBB: [00:48:44] Uh, one time the Peace Corps director did come out.

KLEIN: [00:48:48] Mm hmm. Do you remember who it was?

WEBB: [00:48:51] We may have had to fill out some forms in order to get some money. My roommate did that. I don't remember having a lot of contact. I do remember Peace Corps doctors coming out once visiting our site and we had to get shots. And I remember the director coming to our village, which was a big thing.

KLEIN: [00:49:14] And the director was?

WEBB: [00:49:16] Joyce Russell was the director in Hyderabad. She came and I, one of the things that she was, that I couldn't believe is, she had this very nice jeep that she was there and she had a driver. But her theory was, you know, she didn't feel that she necessarily had to lock it, which I guess we locked everything. Our basic was in everything not being stolen, but. And she, she, she always wore *punjabis*. I mean, you know, every day.

KLEIN: [00:49:49] *Punjabis* are?

WEBB: [00:49:50] *Punjabis*, you know, as opposed to saris. Right. That were made of cotton and, you know, with the white pants on the legs and more like a skirt.

KLEIN: [00:50:01] Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

WEBB: [00:50:02] And then a scarf thrown around the top.

KLEIN: [00:50:04] Right. Right. Um. So during the six months, once after the bout of dysentery, your health was okay?

WEBB: [00:50:15] Well, it took me a while. I know it took me at least a month.

KLEIN: [00:50:18] So you must have lost a lot of weight and then you slowly began regaining?

WEBB: [00:50:22] Well, I lost the weight in the beginning. A lot of people that are, that I know who are volunteers either lost weight or gained weight. Didn't stay the same. I think my roommate may have gained weight. Actually, in the end I know she lost. But I had lost quite a bit.

KLEIN: [00:50:38] Yeah.

WEBB: [00:50:39] And I was, I didn't want to lose, keep losing that much. So then I just stabilized.

KLEIN: [00:50:43] Yeah. During, during the, when you were first there, were you writing home a lot?

WEBB: [00:50:50] I did. I wrote, I wrote home a lot. We had, uh, the air mail.

KLEIN: [00:50:57] Air letters.

WEBB: [00:50:58] Air letters that we would write. Yes. And I would write home a lot. I know I had, I started even when I just, you know, when we stopped when in Holland started sending postcards home. I would send those. I always sent postcards home and I, I wrote a lot. Yes. I had a friend that I wrote from college.

KLEIN: [00:51:21] Yeah.

WEBB: [00:51:21] And she didn't tell me afterwards till I came to visit her when she was in Washington. But she said it sounded like something out of National Geographic, which I liked. But yeah, I like to write to people.

KLEIN: [00:51:35] Yeah. So let me. During your first year, were you able to become personal friends with any of, any Indian counterparts, any people from the village?

WEBB: [00:51:56] I think my coworker I was the first a friend. Yes. We were.

KLEIN: [00:52:01] What was her job? Same as yours?

WEBB: [00:52:04] Well, she was, she was working with the community in the different villages. She was doing her community work, which was sort of the same as mine. She, her job wasn't to start the nursery school, but was to support me. So she was there. We did, because I guess we were Americans there. There was a college in Tirupati, which was about seven miles away. And we, some of the teachers there had been to the States. And we got to know some of those. And they also had a pork college.

KLEIN: [00:52:42] A what?

WEBB: [00:52:43] They raised. This was basically a Hindu population. And so they raised pork, which they had learned in the States. And we would sometimes go there and buy pork.

KLEIN: [00:52:55] Oh, okay.

WEBB: [00:52:56] It was, we didn't, didn't buy beef. It wasn't really sold. And we would go there. We felt at the college, it was better to buy the pork. And also, even though one of our members was Jewish, we would go to the Christian services with the Christian missionaries because of the meals.

KLEIN: [00:53:16] Yeah. Yes.

WEBB: [00:53:17] Again, we were all losing weight, anything, I mean.

KLEIN: [00:53:20] Now, in the village you were in, were there other non Indians, were there other Americans or the Europeans?

WEBB: [00:53:29] No, no. There was nobody in our village.

KLEIN: [00:53:32] And the missionaries you talk about, were they Indian missionaries?

WEBB: [00:53:35] No. The missionaries were from Canada.

KLEIN: [00:53:39] Okay.

WEBB: [00:53:39] They were Canadian. They had, they were in a village a couple of villages away. We would have to take busses to get there.

KLEIN: [00:53:48] Okay.

WEBB: [00:53:49] So they weren't in our village, but we would see them maybe once a month. They would invite us. We would go into Tirupati, go to the church, or go and visit them. We, there were some Indians, a young couple that their father had some business or something at the, in the town. And they were, they lived in Tirupati, but he was a medical student.

And his, I guess I think they might have gotten married. We went to their wedding. They were engaged at first. And they, a lot of the, some of the students would want to come and meet us and become friends and they would like to practice their English.

KLEIN: [00:54:30] Right. Right. Do you recall, sometimes it's a difficult time being the first Thanksgiving and the first Christmas while you were, when you were in India?

WEBB: [00:54:42] Well, I especially remember the first Christmas, because Wendy and I went to Madras and we walked on the sand. And that was the first, I guess I remember writing about the sand, I guess I thought instead of snow, I was walking on the white sand.

KLEIN: [00:54:58] Yeah.

WEBB: [00:54:59] But we thought that was very nice, going into Madras just for the day and spending that, doing that. I remember maybe, I don't know if that was the first Thanksgiving or another one, but anyway, of all the people I could cook more than some others and so we were. One of the volunteers asked me if we would cook a meal for Thanksgiving and they would bring some, they got some pork and did some other things, you know, what we could do. So we did eat that. Ah, but I remember one, maybe the first Thanksgiving we went with someone from a different village and someone else and it was a, we went to, there were some other volunteers that lived there at another town and they were living in an old palace.

KLEIN: [00:55:53] Old palace?

WEBB: [00:55:54] It was an old, it was definitely an old palace.

KLEIN: [00:55:57] Yeah.

WEBB: [00:55:58] And then there was. And the men went out hunting.

KLEIN: [00:56:04] Yeah.

WEBB: [00:56:05] And they were supposed to get the food for us to have for Thanksgiving. We did not have a lot of food that Thanksgiving, but we went there and stayed in this old palace.

KLEIN: [00:56:15] And these are the Peace Corps people?

WEBB: [00:56:17] These were the Peace Corps people, but the Indians were the ones that were taking them with them on hunting.

KLEIN: [00:56:22] Okay, okay.

WEBB: [00:56:24] And they didn't, you know

KLEIN: [00:56:26] They weren't very successful.

WEBB: [00:56:27] India has a different concept than we do of time. You don't have to do this. We didn't have deadlines. It becomes dark. You don't have food yet.

KLEIN: [00:56:38] Yeah. So it was a different Thanksgiving.

WEBB: [00:56:42] It was a different Thanksgiving, yes. And I remember that one Christmas, yes, walking on the white sand instead of white snow.

KLEIN: [00:56:50] Right. During your first year, I mean, you didn't spend all your time on the job. You know, at some point you come home from work, you had weekends. How did you spend your?

WEBB: [00:57:07] Well, weekends, I don't know that we really distinguish much with weekends, you know, then the rest of the week. But you're right, what we thought was in the evening was ours.

KLEIN: [00:57:19] Yeah.

WEBB: [00:57:20] That the day is sort of when we were working, doing all that. On Sunday mornings I do remember in town, we would go into Tirupati and

there would be English movies. Or sometimes English movies, but sometimes even Telugu movies, but for a Hindi movie. But we would always go to the cinema.

KLEIN: [00:57:39] Yeah.

WEBB: [00:57:40] We went to a lot of cinemas. We, it helped with the language, doing that. And they would have popcorn. No butter, pepper on the popcorn, but it was popcorn. So we would, we would, we would go to movies. Yes. And going into Tirupati, going to eat in a restaurant or eating food off there and, of course, talking like to the missionaries or to some of the friends that we'd met, going to their house was something that we did.

KLEIN: [00:58:10] So the restaurants were, would serve good food.

WEBB: [00:58:14] I mean, the ones in Tripathi were serving pretty good food. It was Indian food and there were separate restaurants that were. Most of the best restaurants were vegetarian because the temple, the Hindus were very, the good vegetarian foods with the different vegetables and the rice was always good. You could go in the, the ones that served meat were not as nice, the restaurants. They would serve meat and just chapati but you, that's all you would get, or maybe whatever there. So most, I didn't much go into restaurants that served meat.

KLEIN: [00:58:51] Yeah. Yeah. So coming on to the end of the first year, usually this you're entitled to some leave time, some kind of break, and sometimes a time of reflecting about, well, after a year, what have I accomplished? And as I look to my second year, what, what do I want to do before I go home? Do you remember that time and what you did on vacation?

WEBB: [00:59:21] Well, I remember that when we were in India, we could either take vacation in India. The only exception you could get with special missions, you could go and climb. If some people weren't go to Nepal, they could try to climb with the mountain I guess that was there. But most of us just traveled around India. And of course, India had a lot. I went to, to Kashmir.

KLEIN: [00:59:44] Right.

WEBB: [00:59:45] You know, and bought some. I was supposed to go with other friends and something happened that we didn't connect. It didn't work out. So I ended up by myself. But I, I met other Peace Corps volunteers who were traveling, you know, and so I'd be with these other friends at this place and someone else at this place or anything doing that. But yes, I went to Kashmir, went to Delhi, went to the Taj Mahal, went to Calcutta. Which Calcutta was really an eye opener, was quite different because it was, I mean, there were just so many people were in Calcutta and there was so much poverty and.

KLEIN: [01:00:22] Yeah.

WEBB: [01:00:23] You know, Benares and Calcutta was really, you know, it was just, there were, there are fewer people in the south.

KLEIN: [01:00:32] Mm hmm.

WEBB: [01:00:32] And there, you know, the pace maybe was a little slower and they were shorter. It just looked like, I mean, Calcutta was almost like, ooh, you were afraid to walk around, to do anything. But then and then just coming back.

KLEIN: [01:00:47] And during your time, your travels, and in your time in the village, did you have any problems of thievery or, you know, where you felt endangered or?

WEBB: [01:01:01] Well, some things were lost. I guess the only time. Well, Indians will even tell you now, if you can go, you're going to play with them or do anything. It's like, so the last bus leaving from Tirupati going to Chandigarh, everybody that wanted to get on couldn't go on it. Well, when we were still new, just there, we always got out of the bus. But after we'd been there for a while, forget it. They weren't nice to us.

KLEIN: [01:01:31] No special treatment.

WEBB: [01:01:33] We had to walk seven miles back home.

KLEIN: [01:01:35] Yeah.

WEBB: [01:01:35] But the time that I guess I was most afraid, and I was with some other volunteers, I was just supporting them. But there were just crowds of people that were just pushing and shoving in some of the festivals that we went to, like in Bangalore. And so there, yeah. And walking the streets at night, we did sort of feel danger, but also felt somewhat secure just because you were bigger than most of the other people.

KLEIN: [01:02:02] Right. Right. Did you encounter people who expressed anti-American feelings or said, what are you doing here and?

WEBB: [01:02:12] No, there were other people that had that. We didn't have as much anti-American feelings where we were in the community. Talking about being afraid. I guess the only thing is just being young and female. But anyway, my roommate and I, once there was this man who was, uh, I forget his title. But anyway, he was the government liaison over all of our area. He had some high powered anything and he. [tape break]

KLEIN: [01:02:42] Talking about the time you and your roommate were invited by this gentleman?

WEBB: [01:02:47] We were invited by his place. His place, which he lived in, sort of like an old palace or whatever. He was there. But it was sort of a higher power one. But I mean, I think he got the wrong impression. It was very hard for us. So we had to be very diplomatic to say that how we were not going to spend the night at his place, but we were going back to our place.

KLEIN: [01:03:07] Yes.

WEBB: [01:03:07] And we still. And we did it, I guess. And I don't know what some of the people in the village. We did come home kind of late, but that was more scared, more than anything else. And we, and for some reason in

the crowds, they would just grabbed you, like your boobs. People would be coming and then just walk away, like they did that like it was common.

KLEIN: [01:03:31] Yeah.

WEBB: [01:03:31] I mean, it just sort of, that way, I guess they were treating you, you know, you were an American and you just were sort of, you know, that's what were you doing there?

KLEIN: [01:03:39] Right.

WEBB: [01:03:39] That was, more than anything else, more than anything verbal.

KLEIN: [01:03:43] Right.

WEBB: [01:03:44] Or, uh, you know, I never, nobody expressed any anti-American or really discussed anything. But we did see it much more in the north. And that's, you know, it was, when I was there, it was before Bangladesh was ever formed.

KLEIN: [01:04:03] Ah, okay.

WEBB: [01:04:04] And you had East Pakistan and West Pakistan and everything. So there was a lot more people like in the south that you had and they accepted, that's where Christianity was still strong. They accepted that and.

KLEIN: [01:04:22] In the south?

WEBB: [01:04:23] Yes. And if you were converted or not converted, you know, it was okay.

KLEIN: [01:04:27] Yeah.

WEBB: [01:04:28] And you had the Hindus, you know, the religion was very strong. And in our village we also had Muslims and we went to one of their ceremonies too.

KLEIN: [01:04:38] Yeah. So one, one of the reasons some people join Peace Corps, or one of the things about Peace Corps service, is a chance to get to know another culture and to get to know another culture means a lot of different things. And do you recall having a sense that you were learning about India or becoming part of it or?

WEBB: [01:05:01] Well, yes. Well, I think, I think we ended up, you know, we had a temple.

KLEIN: [01:05:05] You keep saying we, is it you and your roommate for the most part?

WEBB: [01:05:09] Yes.

KLEIN: [01:05:09] You pretty much operated together.

WEBB: [01:05:12] Wendy Carter and I. Yeah, we would. And I guess Steve and there were a couple of, uh, some of the other. We'd usually. I guess we did things. I don't usually remember going just by myself, even into town. I'd either go with Wendy or with Steve, and I forget the name of the other guy that lived there. So someone, we would usually go biking or go to something together. Maybe the three of us, or with other people that lived there. Yes. I mean, it wasn't many individual things, but even to talk to. But at the end, we lived almost on the street. At the end of our street was the temple.

KLEIN: [01:05:51] Yeah.

WEBB: [01:05:52] And we would go to that and really felt, you know, and the people, you know, that brought us the milk every day. And we had our own. They had given us the yogurt culture, we had our yogurt every day. And we felt good in developing, even becoming. And we were eating rice and the yogurt and, you know, the vegetarian meal, this would be coming in, doing that. The other thing we did is we would chew *paan* after our meals, which included betel nut, which of course can turn your teeth red.

KLEIN: [01:06:28] Right.

WEBB: [01:06:29] And I mean, I even brought some betel nut home with me. I mean, you become sort of addicted to it but.

KLEIN: [01:06:37] Sometimes people are able to make a friend who becomes kind of an informant or a mentor about the other culture. And so will explain what a burial or a birth or a marriage or. Did you have, were you able to get someone who could explain what was going on?

WEBB: [01:06:57] Yes, I think, I think my coworker, she would do that. She, she had, she was Indian and she was a Christian. And she would but she still had family that were Hindus and would tell about the custom and everything. And or when we would go with some of the women's clubs, either she would try to explain or sometimes the other people would try to explain.

KLEIN: [01:07:22] Right.

WEBB: [01:07:23] And so and some of the other, uh, the same, we would meet with the same people in the villages, yes. And they would always like to, I mean, they would be. They wanted us to learn about their culture and they would be sharing their food or sharing this or giving us experience and teaching us. Yes.

KLEIN: [01:07:43] So most of your traveling around, it was you and Wendy who went to places?

WEBB: [01:07:46] Yes, either, yes, with Wendy, sometimes with Steve or.

KLEIN: [01:07:50] Let's now talk about going into the second year. In effect, your project was to create these, the schools, nursery schools. Did you project some kind of goal or?

WEBB: [01:08:15] Well, what my goal would have been to have actually got a new permanent building and got the school started.

KLEIN: [01:08:22] The one school?

WEBB: [01:08:22] That was just my goal. Yes. If you could just get that.

KLEIN: [01:08:25] Yeah.

WEBB: [01:08:25] So before I left, I never did see the school completed, but we had made all the arrangements that.

KLEIN: [01:08:32] Well, what did you do to make the school happen?

WEBB: [01:08:35] You know, working with the CARE people, then we would do that, and then working with the government, Indian government, villages there. And it was on that property that the school was going to be built. So I felt good that everything was coming together and doing that.

KLEIN: [01:08:53] Right. And were you working with people in the community?

WEBB: [01:08:57] Yes.

KLEIN: [01:08:58] Who in the community would you work with?

WEBB: [01:09:01] It was basically the community that we worked with were these government workers.

KLEIN: [01:09:05] Oh, okay. Okay.

WEBB: [01:09:06] In that they had this little government compound and that's where the school was going to be.

KLEIN: [01:09:11] Right.

WEBB: [01:09:11] So it was the government workers. And they, of course, it was easier to work with them because that was their job, to work with us.

KLEIN: [01:09:19] Yeah.

WEBB: [01:09:19] And also they spoke some English. And they had to do all that. So yeah, we worked with them.

KLEIN: [01:09:30] So as you're coming to the end of your tour. What was your sense of what you had accomplished? Were you satisfied, dissatisfied? I mean, you had just spent 16 months or more of your life. Did you have any sense of what it was about or?

WEBB: [01:09:51] Well, I think so. I had, I felt good about what I had done, everything. I did, uh, my time would have been up I guess in June, at the end of July. I spent one month afterwards in helping Peace Corps staff in Bangalore. And we, I went around with another Peace Corps staff person, and they were trying to find places where female volunteers could come, because at that time they were then getting more female volunteers. Or more females who were volunteering and they were trying to get places that were situated for them.

KLEIN: [01:10:34] So someone on Peace Corps staff must have considered you a very competent volunteer?

WEBB: [01:10:39] Yes, I could have stayed longer, but I didn't.

KLEIN: [01:10:42] Yeah. And so at the end of your tour, you spent the extra month helping Peace Corps?

WEBB: [01:10:49] Yes, I got paid for that.

KLEIN: [01:10:51] But you were content to leave the village and feel that, with the feeling that you had accomplished something or?

WEBB: [01:10:58] I left feeling that I had accomplished something. Yes. One, because I really felt the staff, the Indian staff that we worked with in the government compound, understood what we were doing and were doing good job themselves. And so we were all working together in doing, you know, doing that with a purpose. And so we didn't feel like they were fighting them, but still didn't feel like I needed to be there. I still felt like it was their job. It was their country.

KLEIN: [01:11:27] Yeah. During the second year, had additional volunteers come to the village?

WEBB: [01:11:34] Not in our village. Two additional village volunteers came to Tirupati. And before that, no volunteers had been in Tirupati, even though that was a bigger town.

KLEIN: [01:11:43] Right.

WEBB: [01:11:44] And, uh, we had a few problems with them. They were not interested in really working. They, they were seeing how much they could learn about India or anything, but they were two self-proclaimed people that were avoiding the draft.

KLEIN: [01:12:03] Yeah. Yeah. So, uh, leaving. As you were leaving, were there plans to be, for you to be replaced? Were other volunteers going to come to the village?

WEBB: [01:12:34] No, no other villagers were coming to the village. We, no. We were supposed to work with the community and doing that and the other volunteers were in Tirupati working. So that was in our immediate vicinity, but they were not doing the same project we were doing.

KLEIN: [01:12:55] Mm hmm. So as of the coming to the end of your Peace Corps service, what were your plans at that point? What did you feel you were going to do next?

WEBB: [01:13:06] Well, I don't know. I didn't know, I guess, what I thought I was going to do next. But I thought it was time to go back to the States and see, you know, pursue something. Otherwise, I might have stayed longer working at Peace Corps in India, which might have been a good idea. It was an option for me. But at that time I didn't.

KLEIN: [01:13:24] Well, I mean, yeah.

WEBB: [01:13:26] Not something I wanted to do.

KLEIN: [01:13:28] And if you can think in terms of '68 when you're coming back. Uh. What do you feel, what do you think was the impact of being in the Peace Corps had had on you as of that moment? That may have, may be different later.

WEBB: [01:13:51] Well, I think, I think what the Peace Corps really opened my eyes just to possibilities maybe that I could do, or even just opened my eyes to what more than what I had thought the United States was, you know, and then helping other. I mean, I had, before I had gone to the Peace Corps, one of the things I had thought about was, you know, maybe going just in a country, not really being a missionary, but sort of maybe teaching in another country. And I really felt like I had done some good, you know, in India. But I also felt that I certainly had learned a lot in what I could do and what I could accomplish. I almost felt like I had spent two years in graduate school and learned so much.

KLEIN: [01:14:41] And they paid you.

WEBB: [01:14:45] Not much.

KLEIN: [01:14:45] No. Did you come straight home?

WEBB: [01:14:47] No, I went home through Europe. And at that time when we were, we went to Delhi and they all gave us, they gave, we got to make a ticket out.

KLEIN: [01:14:57] Yeah.

WEBB: [01:14:58] With, uh, not United Airlines, an airline that's no longer.

KLEIN: [01:15:05] Pan American.

WEBB: [01:15:06] Pan American. And I had never traveled to Europe before. I guess people don't usually do that. They take the train. But anyway, I didn't know any better. So I had plane stops and I went to Moscow first and I had to get a separate visa to go to Moscow. You couldn't go with my

Peace Corps billet and you had to go in tours and everything. I spent a week there.

KLEIN: [01:15:27] Yeah.

WEBB: [01:15:27] And then I went to, I think it was Austria, Vienna.

KLEIN: [01:15:34] Yeah.

WEBB: [01:15:35] For a week. And I went to Berlin for a week. I went to Athens, I went to Paris and London and home.

KLEIN: [01:15:46] Yeah.

WEBB: [01:15:47] But so I spent a week in these different places and that's what I had. I mean, that's the way I came home.

KLEIN: [01:15:56] And talk about your homecoming and how you reacted to being back and how people dealt with you.

WEBB: [01:16:06] Well, my, my homecoming, I guess, was, uh, my home wasn't real happy. My father, I think, was still waiting for me to get a job, but he expected me to make payments at home. And I mean, with a farming, living, growing on a farm, in a farming community of about three, 400 people, there really wasn't a job for me there.

KLEIN: [01:16:30] Yeah.

WEBB: [01:16:31] So I didn't spend a whole lot of time home, but, uh, and the one, I did then go to Saint Paul, Minneapolis. I stayed with some friends and then I got a job just, it was over Christmas time, then just working in a department store. But one of my college friends was teaching and I went to her class and did give a talk.

KLEIN: [01:16:59] Right.

WEBB: [01:17:00] On the Peace Corps. And one of the things is because the same picture that had been used in The New York Times was picked up in Read magazine, which is a little.

KLEIN: [01:17:10] Yeah.

WEBB: [01:17:10] For children that you have to read. And so they liked it because I came and they could see that was my picture and I got to speak to them.

KLEIN: [01:17:19] Yeah. So you were a minor celebrity.

WEBB: [01:17:22] So, that. So I spoke there. But otherwise, I think my parents were just saying, when is she getting a job or doing all that? But I, when I got, I finally got back to the States and then decided, hey, I kind of liked it overseas. Why is this rush to come back, you know, and do anything? And then I went back to Hamline to the placement service there, and saw what was available. And one of the openings there was to go to, uh, to work with the Red Cross overseas in the Red Cross recreation program. You could go to Vietnam or Korea. And so I responded to that. And over Thanksgiving, I went to Saint Louis for an interview. And I had also applied for the Teacher Corps.

KLEIN: [01:18:15] Right.

WEBB: [01:18:15] And so I was accepted in Teacher Corps at University of Wisconsin at Madison, at Milwaukee.

KLEIN: [01:18:21] Yeah.

WEBB: [01:18:22] Madison, Milwaukee, one of the two. And, uh, and I was accepted with the Red Cross to go to Vietnam. So that was a big decision. But then I just decided, yes, I would go with the Red Cross to Vietnam instead of going into Teacher Corps.

KLEIN: [01:18:37] Was there any conviction, a special conviction about the idea of going to Vietnam?

WEBB: [01:18:42] No, I think the most, the biggest thing about going to Vietnam was, one, it was warm. I liked being in a warm country. It was kind of neat, being from Minnesota. And the other thing is, at that time, in '68 there was just, when I had been a Peace Corps volunteer, just talking then with other volunteers and everything. We just spent a lot of time talking about India and with the Indians and about there and what is America doing in Vietnam? And I just thought I would like to go and see what, see for myself.

KLEIN: [01:19:15] Yeah, great. And you had some confidence in going to another country because you had been in the Peace Corps.

WEBB: [01:19:23] Right. Oh, yes. Right. I didn't, I had no qualms about that. And I just, I mean, at that time, you still, in order to do the Red Cross recreation program, you had to be between ages of 22 to 24, college graduate, never been married. And I was just 24. I was ready. I had to go.

KLEIN: [01:19:43] Another thing is some people are able to stay in touch with the, some of the people they worked with or the village they worked with and through the years. Have you been able to maintain any contact?

WEBB: [01:20:02] Yes. I mean, I corresponded with the man we had worked with in another village for a long time and then he ended up dying.

KLEIN: [01:20:11] Yeah.

WEBB: [01:20:12] He was fairly young, but his daughter then started corresponding with me. So in 1989, at Christmas time, when I went back to India and I was her guest and so she, at her 25th birthday. I mean, I was there when I was 24. At her 25th birthday party, I was there and I, she showed me pictures. I was there at her first birthday party.

KLEIN: [01:20:36] Uh huh, yeah.

WEBB: [01:20:37] And so she showed me around Madras, these other relatives that were there, we went back to the village with her, so that was really nice. And then a couple of years ago, I received some candles that I still

have here and I, they were given to me by, the one, my coworker in India. And she said she bought those for me right before I left, but somehow or she couldn't give them to me and she never had my address before that. Or somehow they got mixed up or something and it was like out of the blue. I mean, just last year. It was just something. Yeah. So I do, and I send Christmas cards just a couple now to my, the one work teacher that was in there and she also went back to village when I went to Bangalore, when I went there in '89, Christmas time, came back in '90.

KLEIN: [01:21:40] Yeah. And do you recall your reaction in going back to the village where you had worked? I mean, this is, what, almost 20 years later?

WEBB: [01:21:51] Oh, it was so different. I went to a different village, which we ended up going, walking to. The one that we did with. There were televisions there.

KLEIN: [01:22:02] Yeah.

WEBB: [01:22:03] There were sinks there.

KLEIN: [01:22:05] Yeah. Did you have any sense that what you had done had had some impact on the development of the village?

WEBB: [01:22:13] Well, you know, not really. One thing.

KLEIN: [01:22:15] Yeah.

WEBB: [01:22:18] Nobody remembered the words Peace Corps.

KLEIN: [01:22:22] Huh. Interesting.

WEBB: [01:22:25] My roommate was named Wendy Cutter. And they always said, Wendy Cutter, Wendy Cutter, Wendy Cutter. And when I went back, they still remembered Wendy Cutter. But nobody knew, you know, even my name, maybe much less Peace Corps.

KLEIN: [01:22:39] Right. Right.

WEBB: [01:22:41] I do, I did go to this one teacher that I went and kept in touch with. I did go with her class. She was still at the same school.

KLEIN: [01:22:49] Right.

WEBB: [01:22:50] But she was in school before we came. Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:22:54] And, um. Uh.

WEBB: [01:22:59] Also the population of India had just doubled.

KLEIN: [01:23:03] Yeah.

WEBB: [01:23:04] So it was just so crowded.

KLEIN: [01:23:05] Oh, yeah. When did, when did Peace Corps come out of?

WEBB: [01:23:09] Peace Corps left India, I think it was in '72.

KLEIN: [01:23:13] Okay. So it wasn't too long after you were there?

WEBB: [01:23:16] No.

KLEIN: [01:23:16] Yeah.

WEBB: [01:23:17] They were, right. We were there in '66, '68. Right. There was, there were almost too many volunteers there. 1,500. And they just flooded the country. Most good, maybe some not so good. But I think India also has become much less a third world country.

KLEIN: [01:23:34] Oh, yeah.

WEBB: [01:23:35] You know, it was a second world country. I mean, think of all the Indians that are coming here, well-educated engineers, you know, living here. They just, there was no need for it. That's why we left India.

KLEIN: [01:23:45] But at the end of the second two years, was there a termination conference where your group came back together?

WEBB: [01:23:52] Yes, we had a termination conference, yes.

KLEIN: [01:23:56] Do you recall it at all?

WEBB: [01:23:58] Well, I remember we all got together in Hyderabad and maybe it was more social than anything. The biggest thing I remember is that I talked to the Peace Corps physician and had my ears pierced.

KLEIN: [01:24:11] Oh.

WEBB: [01:24:12] Right before I left India. And he just thought, he said, oh, they'd get dirty. You don't want to do this. I said, I don't have anything else to do, I'll keep my ears clean. So but I had bought some earrings, you know, I knew there were some nice gold earrings in India I wanted to buy, and they all had to have with pierced ears.

KLEIN: [01:24:28] Yeah. So you finally.

WEBB: [01:24:32] So I got that.

KLEIN: [01:24:34] With the Peace Corps doctor. Yeah. Uh, anything else you want to mention about your service?

WEBB: [01:24:42] Well, no, I. I did work, like I said, for one, you know, just one extra month in Bangalore. I maybe could have stayed longer, maybe would have wished to. I, when I did come back after Vietnam, I came back and I worked for VISTA recruitment and then for Peace Corps.

KLEIN: [01:25:04] Oh, okay.

WEBB: [01:25:04] Peace Corps and VISTA recruiting. So I recruited around in the Southeast and I was certainly very up about my experience and really felt

like, you know, it was easy to talk to people and doing that. One of the big things was we had a big Peter Max poster. Do you remember that?

KLEIN: [01:25:23] Yes.

WEBB: [01:25:23] But Peter Max actually came to Baltimore Inner Harbor, and I have his autograph. He is still going strong.

KLEIN: [01:25:31] Yeah, that's great. That's great.

WEBB: [01:25:33] So I've always, you know, and then when I, when I recruited, that's when I met my husband, which I'm divorced now, but my husband then. So I would say I recruited my husband.

KLEIN: [01:25:46] Yeah.

WEBB: [01:25:46] So, you know, Peace Corps has been good to me.

KLEIN: [01:25:49] Yeah. Good.

[END OF INTERVIEW]