

Mari-Jo Woolfe Oral History Interview
Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Mari-Jo (Decker) Woolfe served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Ecuador from 1964 to 1966 in a variety of roles, including as an English teacher, a nurse's aide, and an administrator of a knitting cooperative.

Access

Open.

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Oral History Interview

with

Mari-Jo Woolfe

May 20, 2002
Tucson, Arizona

By Robert Klein

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

KLEIN: [00:00:01] Klein. Today is May 20, 2002. I'm interviewing Mari-Jo Woolfe, who was Mari-Jo Decker, who was a volunteer in Ecuador, 1964 to '66 in an education program, secondary and university. So I usually start by just going back before.

WOOLFE: [00:00:24] OK, well, I graduated from the University of Vermont in 1959. English and speech.

KLEIN: [00:00:33] Where had you grown up?

WOOLFE: [00:00:34] In New Jersey.

KLEIN: [00:00:35] Oh, where?

WOOLFE: [00:00:36] Northern New Jersey, little town, Long Valley. I went to Hackettstown High School. We did not have a high school in the area at

that point. Now they do. And then I went to New York and I was working in advertising.

KLEIN: [00:00:49] Oh, wait. And you went to college?

WOOLFE: [00:00:52] After college.

KLEIN: [00:00:53] Where did you go to college?

WOOLFE: [00:00:54] University of Vermont.

KLEIN: [00:00:56] And what was your major?

WOOLFE: [00:00:58] It was English and speech.

KLEIN: [00:01:02] And what was your goal at that point?

WOOLFE: [00:01:06] Um, nothing much. I was interested in radio and television and advertising, but I didn't have any specific goals. I had taken some teaching courses, but I was not certified to teach in secondary English. But I had, you know, I had a few courses.

KLEIN: [00:01:21] Up to the point of graduation, either in your high school years or college years, had you done any kind of volunteer work or become involved in any, anything, any groups?

WOOLFE: [00:01:34] Not really that I think of. I worked, I had summer jobs and I was a waitress and I belong to the Republican Party, Eisenhower, in college. I wasn't old enough to vote, but I was, you know, out in the street with pamphlets. But that's about it.

KLEIN: [00:01:56] And had you done any travel within the United States or overseas?

WOOLFE: [00:02:00] Within the United States and in Canada, but that was it at that point.

KLEIN: [00:02:05] Family travel or?

WOOLFEE: [00:02:06] Family travel to Maine in the summers and down to visit a friend in Miami and up to Canada on a boat trip on the Saguenay, but not any real. No international travel, except for a couple of trips over the border in Canada and Montreal when I was in college. We used to go there for a weekend.

KLEIN: [00:02:25] Yeah. In college did you study a second language?

WOOLFEE: [00:02:29] Yeah, I had Spanish in college and I thought I was through with my requirement. And then I realized, or I was told, that I had to have an intermediate French, so I had French too. And so I had French and Spanish, but my Spanish was very elemental. And I remember when I got to Peace Corps, they were trying to figure out where to put me because I'd had high school Spanish and college Spanish. And they said, well, you're in a restaurant in Mexico and order breakfast.

KLEIN: [00:02:57] Yeah.

WOOLFEE: [00:02:58] And I managed to get out café, pan. They said, you're going to go hungry. So I was put in sort of the lowest level Spanish.

KLEIN: [00:03:10] But from college, you got a job in New York?

WOOLFEE: [00:03:14] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:03:14] New York City, obviously.

WOOLFEE: [00:03:15] I was head proofreader for Young and Rubicam advertising, all print copy, which sounds, you know, really kind of important. But it was sixty dollars a week.

KLEIN: [00:03:25] Yeah. OK. And lived in Manhattan?

WOOLFEE: [00:03:28] Yeah, I lived in Manhattan with roommates, friends that I had gone to college with, and I worked.

KLEIN: [00:03:34] East Wide, West Side, Village?

WOOLFE: [00:03:36] East Side, Northeast Side. In fact, it was a good group of young people who all lived in walk-ups. And Malachy McCourt, you may have read the McCourt's books? Frank McCourt's books anyway. He was in our gang, Malachy and Mike McCourt. And Frank, I didn't really know, but.

KLEIN: [00:03:59] And your gang essentially were people who were in the publishing?

WOOLFE: [00:04:02] Yeah, and young people mainly. So, you know, it was just, it was fun.

KLEIN: [00:04:07] All right. And you stayed with Young and Rubicam.

WOOLFE: [00:04:11] Oh, well, for a while. But then I reached the top of the ladder, my salary range, and I had to, at that point you had to move on someplace else because if you're a woman, that's, you know, that's very much a ceiling. So then I moved into a radio television representative as a statistical research analyst or something. It was fifteen dollars more a week, so I was. They said, do you like numbers? I said, oh yeah, I love them. So then I worked there for quite a while until I made a big mistake. Or they didn't pick up on one of my mistakes and one of my graphs that was completely wrong for the presentation. So then I was fired, and went to another radio TV representative who, the Katz agency, which was a very good outfit. And they, you know, they really told me how to work and I worked very hard.

KLEIN: [00:05:03] Now, a radio and TV agency?

WOOLFE: [00:05:05] They got the advertising for the stations that we represented. We represented radio and TV stations all over the country. And I was more in marketing and I would, you know, I had the responsibility of getting out this pamphlet every year that had all the rates for all the stations, for all the advertising, which was quite a big project. And it was interesting. But of course then you had two and three station markets. You

didn't have anything really, when you think about how we've evolved. So it was during that time that one of my friends that I went to college with, Danny Bignone, who in the Ethiopian or had just finished training with the Ethiopian group, called me. They were in New York on their way to Ethiopia. And said, come on over, we're all going out to dinner or something. And so I spent the evening with them and they were, you know, such a great group and it was good to see Danny again. So then.

KLEIN: [00:05:59] Well, let's go back to '60. You were aware of the Kennedy election, obviously.

WOOLFE: [00:06:05] Yeah, I worked for Nixon in that election.

KLEIN: [00:06:08] So didn't have any particular feeling about Kennedy, even when he was elected and the inauguration. I mean, what we now look back on is the, you know, sort of the excitement that grew around him.

WOOLFE: [00:06:21] No, I was New Yorkers for Nixon. And I remember seeing Kennedy in parades and handing out pamphlets for Nixon, and I was not that impressed. I was a Republican. I was not that impressed with Kennedy. And we had a big election night party at my apartment, which everybody was all for Nixon. And we were very upset when, you know, well, actually, the final results didn't come until the next morning. And but then after he was elected, the guy had so much charisma and the whole family and the whole thing. I try to tell, you know, my son now, he said, what? You know, his impression of Kennedy is that the guy was kind of a scumbag. I mean, he really. You know, I said, JJ, you had to be there. It really, they, you know, the White House years and Jackie and the kids and Ethel and the football business. It was just. And when he died, I mean, the whole country was just in a state of shock.

KLEIN: [00:07:22] Do you in those years, '60, '61, do you recall hearing the words Peace Corps?

WOOLFE: [00:07:30] Oh, yeah, yeah. In fact, I remember my mother saying, I don't know if it was right at that time, that it actually Hubert Humphrey. It was his idea. He came out with a speech at Cornell. My mother had graduated

from Cornell and it was in her alumni magazine. And then after Kennedy was elected and, you know, got the. Everybody always said, oh well, it was Kennedy's idea, but it really. Humphrey was the one that had the first.

KLEIN: [00:07:58] And there were others.

WOOLFE: [00:07:59] And there were others too. It was an idea, I think, that was brewing. And Kennedy was smart enough to pick up on it. I think that's the way it worked.

KLEIN: [00:08:08] But when it was first announced, which would have been about March of '61 when it was created by executive order. You didn't, you don't remember?

WOOLFE: [00:08:18] I thought, at the time, I thought it sounded fascinating because I was interested in travel. I took my first European trip in October of '62, and I just I've always loved to travel and I've just always wanted to go to Europe. It was just to me like something I remember. I was in tears when I got on the plane. I was so excited about going to Paris and going to Italy and all. And so when I came back from that, I thought, Oh gee, I'd love to work in Europe or work someplace. And New York was beginning to get to me too. That was such a rat race. And then after, as I said, after Danny and this.

KLEIN: [00:08:56] When the Ethiopia group, when was that?

WOOLFE: [00:08:59] That would have been.

KLEIN: [00:09:02] Was it '61?

WOOLFE: [00:09:02] Yeah, that was the first group. Yeah, I think it was '61. I'm pretty sure he was in the first group. Anyway, when I came back from, let's see, it was after I came back from Europe that I went to the library one day just to get some information on Peace Corps. And they at the time had recruiters right there. They said, we've got recruiters right here. You can take the exam right now. So I just went into the room where they were

giving the exam and I just clicked off a whole bunch of, you know, it was a multiple choice or something.

KLEIN: [00:09:43] It was a long exam, wasn't it?

WOOLFE: [00:09:43] Yeah, it was quite long, as I recall, and then I waited and I, uh.

KLEIN: [00:09:49] At the time, I think you may have also been asked to fill out an application when you took the exam.

WOOLFE: [00:09:54] Yes. Yes.

KLEIN: [00:09:55] Do you recall indicating a choice of field or area to go? Geographic area.

WOOLFE: [00:10:03] Yeah, I think what they did, there was a sort of a general application and then when they told. They wrote to me and said that I had been selected for training for Peace Corps. Then they said in that letter, they said, which, um. No, this would have been in 1964. Yeah, I'm getting the dates right. It was, I think it was '61 that I saw Danny, '62 I went to Europe and then got this job and then the Peace Corps thing. And they said, you have your selection of four parts of the world. Give us your first three choices and we will decide. And the four choices were Near East, Far East, Africa, and South America. Or Latin America, I should say.

KLEIN: [00:10:52] Yeah.

WOOLFE: [00:10:53] And so I picked, my first choice was Latin America, and mainly because I didn't. I thought Africa was pretty far away and I thought my parents would worry about me, they were very protective, if I were as far away as Africa. Would have been my first choice. But so I put Latin America and Africa my second choice. And then I think the Far East was my third, so it was a pretty general.

KLEIN: [00:11:17] But at the time this was going on, you were still working in New York.

WOOLFE: [00:11:20] Yes. Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:11:22] You weren't about to be fired or anything.

WOOLFE: [00:11:23] No.

KLEIN: [00:11:24] So it was a conscious choice if you were accepted to leave employment.

WOOLFE: [00:11:28] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:11:29] And you obviously, then you'd also had discussed it with your family.

WOOLFE: [00:11:33] Yeah, I mentioned to my family. And when they said you are accepted for training, I remember my father saying, I don't think you'd get in. They were very surprised.

KLEIN: [00:11:44] They were still living in Jersey?

WOOLFE: [00:11:45] Yeah, they were still in Jersey.

KLEIN: [00:11:46] Good Republicans, I assume.

WOOLFE: [00:11:47] Oh yes.

KLEIN: [00:11:48] They weren't skeptical about Kennedy's Peace Corps or?

WOOLFE: [00:11:51] No, they weren't. But they liked Kennedy, but they were Republicans.

KLEIN: [00:11:55] Do you recall Kennedy's death?

WOOLFE: [00:11:56] Oh, very vividly.

KLEIN: [00:11:58] You were still in New York then?

WOOLFE: [00:11:59] Yeah, I was working in my job at the Katz agency. And I had lunch with a friend down the street and, who was getting married and I was the maid of honor in her wedding. So we're talking all about the wedding and everything. And then I came back to work and they said, well, we're shutting down because the president's been shot. And I just couldn't believe it. And so I just, you know, it was such a shock. And my office was right across from St. Patrick's Cathedral. And I'm not Catholic, but I went. I mean, I feel torn up right now, just thinking about it. You know, I went into St. Pat's and then when I got home and my roommates, I lived with two other girls, and they were also, you know, we were just so shocked. And how was that? It was right before Thanksgiving. That was it. And I remember going home for the weekend and just the whole weekend sitting in front of the television set and crying. So that was what people did.

KLEIN: [00:13:07] Yeah.

WOOLFE: [00:13:08] And I was, that was the interesting thing. I was in the Hoboken station for the, waiting for the train, you'd take the subway over to Hoboken or the tubes I guess. And I was having a cup of coffee and they had the television up and I was looking at the television and they brought in Harvey Oswald and he got shot on, you know. And here I am sitting having my coffee and, you know, that's on television. And it was just so shocking. You know, when he got, oh, the whole, that whole period is very hard, you know, unless you've lived through it, to explain to people. I mean, it's sort of like 9/11. I mean, it's just one of those things.

KLEIN: [00:13:42] Yes. Yes.

WOOLFE: [00:13:43] That you remember where you were and your surroundings. It was, it was wild.

KLEIN: [00:13:50] I mean, the horror of it somehow fixes it in time in your mind.

WOOLFE: [00:13:56] Yeah. It's, uh.

KLEIN: [00:13:57] As you began, um, so now it's '64. You're beginning to work on the idea of joining the Peace Corps and application and you're getting an invitation at least to choose an area. What did your New Yorker friends think of all this?

WOOLFE: [00:14:13] Oh, my friends thought it was fine. I mean, I didn't tell anybody at work until, you know, until I really knew. And that was funny. My boss had an intercom system and he was tough and he'd say, Mari-Jo! You know and I'd have to go into his office. He said, Mari-Jo! And I went, this one day I walked into his office and he said, what's this crap about the Peace Corps? And I just looked at him and said, what Peace Corps? And then I told him, I said yes. Because they had, you know, they did security checks.

KLEIN: [00:14:50] FBI background.

WOOLFE: [00:14:51] FBI background check. And so that was where I worked. And they had, he didn't have a clue when this guy came in and said one of your employees, you know, applied for Peace Corps. So then I told him.

KLEIN: [00:15:00] But at that point you still hadn't gotten a specific invitation?

WOOLFE: [00:15:04] I didn't know where I was going to go at that point. And so then then I got the letter saying that I had been selected for Ecuador, with the Ecuador group. And if I did not want that, that I should write back and they would, you know, I would have to wait and they would find another right group for me to train with. But I thought, that's fine. I was very happy with that.

KLEIN: [00:15:26] And how much advance notice did you get?

KLEIN: [00:15:29] That was um.

WOOLFE: [00:15:30] You would begin training in June.

WOOLFE: [00:15:32] Yeah, I think it was some, like two months. It was not very, very much. So then I went into work and told them when I would be leaving and everything.

KLEIN: [00:15:44] And at work, what was their reaction to you?

WOOLFE: [00:15:47] Oh, they were. They were all very, very happy. They were. It was a Democratic. I was probably the only Republican in the group, so and I had been becoming more and more, what shall I say, moving more and more toward the Democratic Party anyway. But they were all very keen and thought that it was great and they gave me a big lunch and they gave me a lovely, it was, I think, was a Sony. A little shortwave radio. So I was very pleased and then I sent, when I got down to Ecuador, I sent back a couple of tapes to them on what I was doing and the whole setup.

KLEIN: [00:16:27] Family?

WOOLFE: [00:16:29] Oh, they were happy. They were very, very pleased. Very.

KLEIN: [00:16:31] And other friends?

WOOLFE: [00:16:33] Yeah, everybody seemed to, uh. I can't think of any real negative response that I got, although, you know, there may have been.

KLEIN: [00:16:43] Had anyone else in your circle joined other than your friend?

WOOLFE: [00:16:48] Only Danny Brignone that I knew. No, I didn't know anyone else.

KLEIN: [00:16:53] So in a sense, for you within your own setting, it made you exceptional.

WOOLFE: [00:16:58] Yeah. Well, I was the only one in my, yeah, my group of friends except for.

KLEIN: [00:17:01] Did anyone try to talk you out of it? Saying you're crazy, you've got to be out of your mind to be doing this? Or what about your career?

WOOLFE: [00:17:08] No, I was going out with a guy, but that was pretty well over at that point. So I remember when it first came up, he was a little surprised. But then we had, as I said, it was the beginning of the end there too. So it wasn't, I didn't have anything really going. So yeah.

KLEIN: [00:17:27] And at the time you joined, did you think beyond the two years, I mean, that where you would go once you would were done?

WOOLFE: [00:17:35] No, I really didn't. I just focused on that, and I was so thrilled. Of course, you know, I had never been to the West Coast and to be training at UCLA. I mean, this was just, just the training alone I thought was terrific.

KLEIN: [00:17:52] When you left, was it your impression you were going to go from training directly overseas?

WOOLFE: [00:17:57] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:17:58] So it was goodbye, mama.

WOOLFE: [00:18:00] And yeah, pretty much. I thought that way. Oh, I did have one friend who wanted to sort of discourage me and he, now that I think back on it, he said. I said, well, I said something. I had been putting him off for quite a while, although we were good friends, and I said, well, it's just two years and I'm too young to get married. He said, you're 27, you're not too young. But I said, no, I want to do this. And you know, when I come back, we'll get together or something. But we didn't, never did. That was the only person.

KLEIN: [00:18:35] Had you considered graduate school at any point?

WOOLFE: [00:18:40] No, because my grades weren't very good.

KLEIN: [00:18:43] So you were just in the work you were doing. You knew it was moving, you were getting experience.

WOOLFE: [00:18:47] Yeah, I didn't have any serious career. I mean, this is a different generation. Girls now go to college and they're very focused and they want their careers. I just wanted a few years doing something before I got married. It was mainly my thoughts.

KLEIN: [00:19:01] You were 27.

WOOLFE: [00:19:02] Yeah, I was 27.

KLEIN: [00:19:04] Was your family worried?

WOOLFE: [00:19:05] Oh yeah, I think they were. Yeah, at that point they were keeping quiet about it.

KLEIN: [00:19:10] So they never expressed or articulated any kind of concern that you would come back with an Ecuadorian husband.

WOOLFE: [00:19:17] No. I never, never thought. I think my father was still thinking I wouldn't make it through training. Because I remember him saying, yeah, well, the training will be terrific, you know?

KLEIN: [00:19:29] Do you have siblings?

WOOLFE: [00:19:32] Yeah, I have an older brother and he's still in New Jersey. He was a Navy pilot and then he's a retired captain with United Airways.

KLEIN: [00:19:44] Any reaction to your, do you remember his?

WOOLFE: [00:19:46] Oh yeah, he was interested because he also, he was flying at that point. He was recently married and he was flying with a small overseas cargo line, which I think went bust. But he enjoyed traveling too. I mean, he was back and forth to Europe and so he thought, he was intrigued by it. He thought it was interesting.

KLEIN: [00:20:08] So now you head for the great adventure. You fly out to Los Angeles.

WOOLFE: [00:20:14] Yeah, right out to UCLA.

KLEIN: [00:20:17] And take it from there.

WOOLFE: [00:20:18] Well, we arrived. And as soon as we arrived, it was just right into these heavy six, eight hour a day Spanish.

KLEIN: [00:20:30] Physically where was the training held?

WOOLFE: [00:20:31] It was on the campus at UCLA.

KLEIN: [00:20:34] Which is in the city?

WOOLFE: [00:20:36] Right in Los Angeles.

KLEIN: [00:20:37] And you stayed in a dorm?

WOOLFE: [00:20:39] And we were in a dorm. It was a coed dorm. We had the girls on one side and the guys on the other. This is 1964 so. And we were all in that. We trained with a group that was going to Ethiopia, actually. But they were a much bigger group than we were.

KLEIN: [00:20:57] How many were in your group?

WOOLFE: [00:20:59] We were, we started off with, I think, 60, 62. The Ethiopians were about 150. It's a big group.

KLEIN: [00:21:08] But you didn't train together did you?

WOOLFE: [00:21:10] No. We lived in the same dorm.

KLEIN: [00:21:13] Just physically.

WOOLFE: [00:21:13] Right. And I think actually they were in, uh, it was a huge dorm and they were on one side. But we got together with them. We ate with them and we had, you know, the dining hall. So we got to know them. But they were a much less intense group than we were because their

language wasn't as important as ours was. So we had six hours a day Spanish, and we were supposed to get to a certain level before or we wouldn't be able to go.

KLEIN: [00:21:39] And that was made clear?

WOOLFE: [00:21:41] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:21:41] That more than anything else.

WOOLFE: [00:21:43] Yeah, that was the main thing.

KLEIN: [00:21:45] It was about half and half men and women with two married couples?

WOOLFE: [00:21:49] Yeah, pretty much. Pretty fairly evenly divided. Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:21:52] Did you tend to be in the older side of the group?

WOOLFE: [00:21:56] Yeah. Most of the group had just graduated from college, was 21, 22, 23. There were some of these ladies, as I said, that were retired teachers in their sixties. And then there was a guy named Paul. I can't think of his last name. He was 37 and I was 27. And when you're 27, the difference between 27 and 22 is, and you've been working in New York, is quite a difference. I've never felt so old in my life. All these young fresh college kids, and I'd already been out for five years.

KLEIN: [00:22:26] Who was head of the faculty? Do you recall?

WOOLFE: [00:22:28] I don't recall the names at this point.

KLEIN: [00:22:31] During the first few days of training, were you given a sense of what it was you were going to be doing when you went to Ecuador?

WOOLFE: [00:22:40] Yeah, we were all.

KLEIN: [00:22:42] How was it described?

WOOLFE: [00:22:43] Set to teach English. English as a foreign language. They divided it at that point between English as a foreign, TEFL and TESL. And TESL was what the Ethiopians were heading for, English as a second language. Because I think English in Ethiopia is one of their official languages. And ours was English as a foreign language, which we would be teaching. But the idea was you're sent there to teach, but you're supposed to get into community development projects too.

KLEIN: [00:23:16] That was made explicit?

WOOLFE: [00:23:18] Yes, that this was our entree, but we would be looking around to see what else we could get into.

KLEIN: [00:23:28] Well, let's talk initially about the language training. How was that structured?

WOOLFE: [00:23:34] Oh, we was. Let's see. It was about six hours a day. We had two hours in the morning. We're all divided up into different groups. They tested us all.

KLEIN: [00:23:42] And you were in the bottom group.

WOOLFE: [00:23:43] I was, no, I wasn't quite in the bottom group, I guess because I did know a few words and I had had some. So I was in one of the lower groups.

KLEIN: [00:23:51] How many groups were there?

WOOLFE: [00:23:52] Oh, gee, there were. Let's see, there were. How did I say, there were 64 of us. There must have been about five groups. And they would after every two weeks, they'd have a reshuffling and they would move you up or move you down depending on how well you were doing. So there was, except for the very top group, there was quite a bit of movement. And I was doing very well to begin with. I was really. So they put me up into a higher level and I never did as well again. I really should have stayed at the level I was in.

KLEIN: [00:24:26] Was it completely conversational or was it grammar, culture?

WOOLFE: [00:24:30] It was grammar. Culture. But we had, let's see. We had two hours in the morning of a class with a teacher and there'd be about ten of us in each class. And then we would have an hour, I think, before lunch of conversation with headphones and in a lab. And then we'd have lunch. And then we'd have two more hours in the afternoon of class and then we would have supper and we would have small groups conversation. And then we would have a political talk in the evening on some phase of Ecuadorian history or geography or economics or something.

KLEIN: [00:25:13] In English or in Spanish?

WOOLFE: [00:25:14] In English. It was all in English. So it's a very full day. Oh, and then somewhere along the line we had physical training in the afternoon.

KLEIN: [00:25:22] Which consisted of?

WOOLFE: [00:25:24] Well, we had these guys from New Zealand teaching us soccer and all sorts of stuff. We had swimming and we had soccer. And as one friend of mine said, games of the British empire, you know, I mean, they were. I don't know if they taught the guys rugby or what, but they, you know, had all these different things. And then they had us running. We had running. I don't think we had gymnastics, but we had a pretty.

KLEIN: [00:25:52] The language instructors, were they Ecuadorian?

WOOLFE: [00:25:56] No, they were teachers of, let's see. Some of them were. I don't think we had anyone from Ecuador. In fact, we were all yearning after a few days and weeks to meet people from Ecuador. And we didn't. We had people from Mexico, we had people from the Caribbean, and then Central America. One of my teachers was from, um, where was she from? Costa Rica, I think. And then we had teachers from California who were Spanish teachers, but we didn't have any Ecuadorians.

KLEIN: [00:26:25] Was there any attempt during training to get, I mean, within the Los Angeles area, there must be major Spanish speaking areas, to have you go out and walk the streets or sit in a restaurant or?

WOOLFE: [00:26:37] No, we were sort of encouraged to go to Spanish movies sometimes, but we didn't have much time.

KLEIN: [00:26:44] Right. Was it seven day a week training?

WOOLFE: [00:26:47] It was, I think it was until Saturday noon. We would have Saturday afternoon and Sunday off, which was really all the time we needed to do washing and a whole bunch of stuff. But we did get down to the beach sometimes.

KLEIN: [00:27:04] Was there also? There must have been other studies such as area studies, American studies, world communism. How did they fit in?

WOOLFE: [00:27:15] Well, we had these evening lectures. And then it seems to me in the afternoon we had. The afternoon we had health and first aid and that kind of stuff. I think that was before the physical training. And I remember this one lady who was teaching us all about all sorts of things we had to worry about, insect bites and everything. And she said, eat or be eaten, kill to live. She was very intense. And we used to laugh and go out and, you know, we'd look at each other and we'd say, remember, eat or be eaten! And then all this stuff that just seemed so very foreign to us. I mean, you know, we thought about. And we weren't, we were going to teach mostly in cities. We weren't going to be out in the middle of the jungle, our group anyway.

KLEIN: [00:27:59] That was known?

WOOLFE: [00:27:59] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:27:59] What about preparation for the job you were going to do?

WOOLFE: [00:28:05] Uh, preparation for the job. I think we.

KLEIN: [00:28:09] That's why you were there.

WOOLFE: [00:28:09] We did have, yes, I think we did have some, a little teaching training, but not too much. I mean, we were supposed to all have had some teaching background. I did have, you know, I had nine credits in college. So we didn't have, we didn't have much in the way of, well, you're going to use this curriculum or whatever.

KLEIN: [00:28:30] But did you do any kind of practice teaching or?

WOOLFE: [00:28:34] Not really. No, we didn't.

KLEIN: [00:28:38] As you recall.

WOOLFE: [00:28:39] As I recall. I mean, we may have had, I'm sure it's somewhere along the line. We had teachers coming in and talking about it. Because the method that we were being taught Spanish was the method that we were supposedly going to teach English and we must have had certain papers and notebooks on the teaching of English.

KLEIN: [00:28:59] Of the group, were there many who were experienced teachers?

WOOLFE: [00:29:06] No, most of them had. We all were college graduates. At that point the Peace Corps took certain groups, the Heifer groups and everything that didn't have to go to college. So we were all college graduates, liberal arts graduates for the most part, although there were guys who were teaching science that would have been not, you know, in the group.

KLEIN: [00:29:26] You mentioned there were, some of you were going to secondary schools, some to uh.

WOOLFE: [00:29:33] Yeah, some to university.

KLEIN: [00:29:34] Were there some in the group with advanced academic credentials?

WOOLFE: [00:29:37] Yes. Yeah. There were a couple. And some of them did not have advance, but they had skills, I mean, that they were, you know, in scientific fields that even though they didn't have an advanced degree, they would certainly be at a university level in Ecuador. They'd be accepted because of their background.

KLEIN: [00:29:58] Did anyone from Washington come out during training, do you recall? Or anyone who was on the field staff in Ecuador?

WOOLFE: [00:30:05] Nobody who was on field staff came out. There were some people that came out from Washington a couple of times. And then at our final, we went to Puerto Rico for three weeks or four, I guess for a whole month after. Then we saw people from Washington.

KLEIN: [00:30:19] Oh, OK. So the UCLA phase of training was eight weeks?

WOOLFE: [00:30:26] It was more than that. It was more like, let's say, June, June 24th to September 4th. So it was like nine weeks really.

KLEIN: [00:30:37] And there must have been a mid-point in the training when there was what they called the mid-selection board?

WOOLFE: [00:30:43] Well, they had, we had, it was really kind of creepy. There were, in the middle of the night, you know, people would be whisked away. And you wake up the next morning and they'd say, well, so-and-so isn't here anymore. Or they came and got, you know, so-and-so and so-and-so last night. And that's the last you would ever see of them. And so it really, you were a little bit nervous.

KLEIN: [00:31:05] Who did you identify as the ones who were taking them away in the middle of the night?

WOOLFE: [00:31:09] Uh, that would have been staff or something. I mean, the people we had teaching us Spanish, they were not involved in this. But there was this other sort of staff that was running the program, like the head of the program.

KLEIN: [00:31:22] Right, right. Did they seem evil?

WOOLFE: [00:31:25] No! They seemed all right, but there were. We couldn't really figure out why certain people were being taken. And then there were people who. [tape break] There were some room changes, and we never could figure out how they found out about some of these parties or people that were partying with the Ethiopians or something. I wasn't in that group, but we figured that there was sort of a, what would you call it, a weasel or a squealer within the group itself. Who was probably not going to be a volunteer but was in there to learn as much as possible about everybody. And there might have been two or three. It was sort of like paranoia, I mean, that set in because.

KLEIN: [00:32:10] Did anyone ever mentioned the word CIA?

WOOLFE: [00:32:12] No. There was one guy who was a great guy, would have been a wonderful volunteer. But he, in the middle of the program, he was terminated because they found out that his uncle had worked for the CIA. So, boy, they got him out of there and they said, we don't want anybody. Because I remember being in Ecuador and having people say, well, you people are CIA. And I said, I was just. So they did the best they could to try to eliminate any possible connection.

KLEIN: [00:32:43] Do you recall if the group ever tried to take a stand or objected to this, you know, taking Louie away in the middle of the night?

WOOLFE: [00:32:50] Yeah, well, we did. There were some that we just, we uh, but what we said.

KLEIN: [00:32:54] It was never reversed?

WOOLFE: [00:32:55] No. And there were a couple of people in the training program that. The training program was physically and mentally tough. I mean, it was just a long day and a long week. So after a few weeks, there were a couple of people who obviously were not very stable and they were dropped. I mean, one of them, I remember sort of ranting and raving out in

the Quad about something. And, you know, he was just not. And it didn't come up at first. It came up after a number of weeks, this guy was.

KLEIN: [00:33:28] Do you know anyone who willingly, they simply resigned? They couldn't take the pressure of it.

WOOLFE: [00:33:34] I don't remember anybody resigning in training. In Ecuador, yes. But not in training.

KLEIN: [00:33:39] And how was all of this affecting you? Were you still committed to what you were doing? Did it seem like you were in the wrong place or the right place?

WOOLFE: [00:33:47] No, I was committed. I was just hoping that I wouldn't get pulled away in the middle of the night.

KLEIN: [00:33:52] Did you have cause to worry?

WOOLFE: [00:33:55] No. As I said, my Spanish, I wasn't doing as well as I had in the beginning, because I had been moved up. I should have just. One of the guys who was very bright. When they said, well, we're going to move you up into higher group. He said, no, I'm staying right here. And that's what I should have done, because it was a worry. It was.

KLEIN: [00:34:12] Did anyone say you have to get up to a FSR 3 level or you don't go?

WOOLFE: [00:34:17] No, they didn't say that. They just, the idea was you had to do as well as you could do. But that was one of the things that if you did not do well in Spanish that that would, you know, might be.

KLEIN: [00:34:27] In the whole group, where would you rank yourself in language? Sort of in the middle or at the bottom third or the top third?

WOOLFE: [00:34:33] I would say that I was probably in the lower half. Yeah, maybe inching toward the bottom third. But I was a little bit better than that. I did have, and I've learned a lot about teaching and language since then. We

had this. There were three of us that went with a girl from Costa Rica at night after supper, and this was supposed to be just sort of an informal conversation thing. And when I got into the group, I could string a few sentences together and say some simple things. But everything I said she would correct, whether it was my pronunciation or my tense or my form. And after a few nights of this, I got so I could not say anything. I was so tongue tied and miserable. And I think finally I did speak to one of the teachers and say, I've got to get out of that group because it's just. And I realized that since that she probably thought she was doing me, you know, a great favor telling me everything I was doing wrong. But that's not a good teacher.

KLEIN: [00:35:37] She was not a trained language teacher.

WOOLFE: [00:35:37] No, she wasn't trained. So that was, uh, but it was a good lesson for me when in my teaching, I never did that kind of thing. And I was, after Peace Corps, I taught in the U.S. thing in Peru, and I was supposed to be one of the better teachers in the group.

KLEIN: [00:35:56] Do you recall psychological testing and or psychiatric interviews?

WOOLFE: [00:36:02] Yes. We had one whole, or maybe two whole days, Minneapolis Multiphasic [Personality Inventory].

KLEIN: [00:36:06] Yeah, that was one. MMPI.

WOOLFE: [00:36:07] And so we all went through that. And then there were some people who, you know, who got called up on that.

KLEIN: [00:36:15] But did everyone have to go through at least one psychiatric interview?

WOOLFE: [00:36:20] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:36:21] Do you recall that particularly? I mean, most of us have not encountered psychiatrists at that point in our lives.

WOOLFE: [00:36:25] Yeah. Well, actually, I. And this is, I don't know how confidential this is. It really doesn't matter at this point. It was some years ago. But I had, I guess, it was a bout of depression when I was in high school. And at that point, they said it was sort of a nervous breakdown or something, but it really wasn't. It was, looking back on it, it was depression. So I had spent a couple of months in a rest home and I had had psychiatric treatment. And when my form came, it was a question on there. And I thought, you know, should I? Should I say no? Because I mean, this was high school and I had since gone on to college and everything had been fine. But I thought, no, I'd better be honest about it. So I was. And so after the Minneapolis Multiphasic and when they had this on, they sent me to see a psychiatrist.

KLEIN: [00:37:15] Right.

WOOLFE: [00:37:15] And I did see him. I had a couple of interviews with him. But I wasn't called out in the middle of the night or anything. And I was quite pleased that when we finally got through, I remember this party they had after we got through with Puerto Rico and we were heading down to Ecuador. And one of the guys from Washington, we got to talking and he said, you know, you are the first volunteer that we have accepted that has had some kind of psychiatric problems. And we feel that that this may open a door to other people. Because before this, they said, we just, you know, this would have been, um, you know, they would just dropped it immediately. So but I remember we used to kid about that Minneapolis Multi, I mean, that was just. I don't know if they still use that or if they still have a, but it was a lot.

KLEIN: [00:38:12] It certainly lends itself to making fun of. But at the same time, underneath it was serious.

WOOLFE: [00:38:17] But yeah, it is interesting because you get so, so into it. You're so worn out, you're answering, you know, all. They give you the same question sort of over and over again, so you can't really beat it.

KLEIN: [00:38:29] And so running the eight, nine weeks at UCLA. Did you, getting on to the second half of the training, were you feeling more confident? Do you begin to picture yourself in a job situation in Ecuador? I mean, could you look beyond the training itself?

WOOLFE: [00:38:55] Yeah, I thought that, you know, things seemed to be going pretty well, and I was looking forward to Ecuador and we were all looking forward to it. But we didn't have much, as you've been asking me, there weren't very many people from Ecuador, if any. Any time there was somebody that had even been to Ecuador, we would say, oh gee, what's it like? And we never got much feedback. I don't know why.

KLEIN: [00:39:16] Did the group or cliques within the group begin to form any kind of connection, esprit?

WOOLFE: [00:39:23] Yeah, we were all very close and we felt, because we were a smaller group and we kept getting smaller. We started out, I think, with 64 and wound up with 49. And we, in this constant, we were just constantly together all day long. We all felt we knew each other, probably as well as our best friends ever. You know, I mean, it wasn't like familial, but it certainly was. You knew everybody. And you knew. Oh, that was another thing. At night we had these sort of psychological group, like group therapy sessions where we'd sit around and they were. We got very close to the psychologist who was doing our group and we wanted to get together afterwards, and we really felt quite an esprit in the little group that we were in. Yeah, I'd forgotten about those. I think they were once or twice a week we'd get into these.

KLEIN: [00:40:16] Very group program.

WOOLFE: [00:40:18] And I think some of the people who were removed also, stuff might have come out in those because they were quite frank and open discussions. But uh, you could see how the people interact. There was one girl who really it became quite obvious that she really didn't have a clue of what she was getting into and that, you know, I think that she didn't make it all the way through. And I think that may have been one of the reasons.

KLEIN: [00:40:47] Were there any, using the language of the '60s, were there any Negroes or Hispanics in the training program?

WOOLFE: [00:40:56] Yeah, there were some Hispanics, and I think they were chosen. Oh well, I mean, they were college graduates, but probably because their Spanish background helped. I mean, they were in the right program.

KLEIN: [00:41:11] Were you the first group to go to Ecuador?

WOOLFE: [00:41:13] No, we were the, I think we were the fourth.

KLEIN: [00:41:16] So there were already Peace Corps in Ecuador.

WOOLFE: [00:41:18] There were three groups ahead of us. One of them was an agricultural group. And then a couple of others were, uh, they were. I think we were the first actual teaching, teaching English group. The other ones were community development.

KLEIN: [00:41:35] You mentioned in training that the expectation was built up, that not only would you be teaching, but that community development was going to be a distinct part of your time there. Was there anything in training to give you, provide you with the skills that you might need to do community development?

WOOLFE: [00:41:54] No, there really wasn't. There was, as I said, we had some lectures on things, but we didn't. We didn't get any basic courses in, you know, pumping water or anything like that. I don't know. I remember this, this health teacher.

KLEIN: [00:42:13] Or even community organizing, I mean?

WOOLFE: [00:42:15] No, not really. We got quite a few pamphlets and leaflets and stuff from the different lectures that we had. But nothing that would really would help. When I was in Ecuador, I remember going to a Heifer

conference in Quito, which was all about community development, but I was already in the country at that point.

KLEIN: [00:42:35] That's interesting. I don't know whether they assume that the Peace Corps volunteers like yourself were kind of super vols and simply.

WOOLFE: [00:42:48] I don't know.

KLEIN: [00:42:49] What you brought was so good.

WOOLFE: [00:42:52] Would be enough, yeah.

KLEIN: [00:42:52] That you could move in any direction.

WOOLFE: [00:42:53] Yeah, well, we're supposed to, with our physical training, we were supposed to learn all these sports so that we could help teach in that. But no, we didn't have anything else.

KLEIN: [00:43:06] There was a final selection at UCLA?

WOOLFE: [00:43:10] Uh, there was, no, the final selection was after Puerto Rico.

KLEIN: [00:43:14] But as you came to the end of the UCLA phase of the program, was there any kind of shuffling through or?

WOOLFE: [00:43:22] No, it had been going on all the way through. I think there were three. Yeah, there were three cuts really, three middle of the night things. And then we were going on to Puerto Rico, but we were still under the impression that we were still on trial. So that was.

KLEIN: [00:43:39] So the UCLA phase ended.

WOOLFE: [00:43:42] Ended, yeah, and then we all got on a plane and we didn't get home leave then.

KLEIN: [00:43:49] So as a group.

WOOLFE: [00:43:50] As a group, we flew to New York and then from New York, we flew down to Puerto Rico, and then we separated there into different towns, teaching English in the schools.

KLEIN: [00:44:03] Oh, interesting.

WOOLFE: [00:44:04] So I went out to a little place called Las Marías, and I was, they had an English teacher there, but I was to help him. It was practice teaching, basically.

KLEIN: [00:44:16] Oh, interesting.

WOOLFE: [00:44:16] And I lived with a family.

KLEIN: [00:44:19] Who arranged that?

WOOLFE: [00:44:21] That was all arranged for us. Yeah, we all, we landed in San Juan and we just were taken. Different people took us off different places.

KLEIN: [00:44:28] Did you know this was coming?

WOOLFE: [00:44:30] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:44:30] It had been.

WOOLFE: [00:44:30] We knew we were going to Puerto Rico.

KLEIN: [00:44:32] But the nature of the Puerto Rico training.

WOOLFE: [00:44:36] Pretty much, yeah, that we would be teaching. That was where the, you know.

KLEIN: [00:44:41] Because I thought you went to the Outward Bound camp.

WOOLFE: [00:44:44] No. Oh no, no. I think that they still had that for certain groups. But no, we just went, as I said, just living with families.

KLEIN: [00:44:54] So you were in. Tell me the name of the town.

WOOLFEE: [00:44:57] Las Marías. Up in the mountains. Beautiful part of the western part of Puerto Rico. We were near, what is it, San Cristobal I think? Because a couple of times, a couple of weekends, my trainer, Maureen, I can't think of her last name. We became very good friends and they had three or four trainers who went down and they would check on us at different times and see how we're doing.

KLEIN: [00:45:23] How many of you went to Las Marías?

WOOLFEE: [00:45:23] So what?

KLEIN: [00:45:24] How many of you went?

WOOLFEE: [00:45:25] Just me.

KLEIN: [00:45:27] Oh, OK. So you were in a village?

WOOLFEE: [00:45:28] Yeah, by myself. And most of them were just one or two people in the town.

KLEIN: [00:45:34] With whom did you stay?

WOOLFEE: [00:45:35] I stayed with a family, and I can't think of their names now, but it was. You know, it was a lovely family and they just, you know, I had my own little bedroom and they. The next door. Of course I was a curiosity, I mean, in this little town. The next door neighbors, you know, we got to be very friendly and the people were very gracious and hospitable and we used to. We had chicken, rice and beans and chicken, just about every single night. And we would sit. The window from our dining room or little place looked out on the window of the next-door neighbors. And all during dinner, when you finished your chicken, you'd flick the bone through the window to see if you could hit the neighbors. And they were doing the same thing to us. So that, you know, we had our little fun.

KLEIN: [00:46:29] Curious Puerto Rican custom.

WOOLFE: [00:46:30] Yeah, it's amazing, really. It was fun.

KLEIN: [00:46:35] Now, the family spoke both English and Spanish?

WOOLFE: [00:46:38] No, they only spoke Spanish. The father, he spoke some English. And so I could speak to him in English, but I had to speak Spanish to everybody else.

KLEIN: [00:46:49] And how'd you do?

WOOLFE: [00:46:50] I did OK, yeah. My Spanish certainly picked up. And in the school also, the English teacher did not speak very good English, but so of course, I was doing most of the teaching in that class. But yeah, it was good because it was really throwing you out into the, you know.

KLEIN: [00:47:09] Yeah. What was the level of the school?

WOOLFE: [00:47:12] It was a grade school, elementary school.

KLEIN: [00:47:14] And what grades did you work with?

WOOLFE: [00:47:15] This would have been, um. I worked with the seventh and eighth graders, mostly, but it was a nice size school. They had, you know, I think it was Kindergarten through eighth grade, something like that.

KLEIN: [00:47:28] Did you do most of your teaching in Spanish about English or did you do most of it in English?

WOOLFE: [00:47:35] Most of it in English. My Spanish was not that good to really use, do much in Spanish. And the way we were, actually the way we were sort of taught to teach, and we must have had, as you say, there teaching courses. Yes, there was. Now that I remember it. We had definitely a course in teaching English. Because if you took that course and took an exam and wrote a paper, you could get three credits. And I remember thinking at the time, gee, I really like to get those three credits because that would just add on so that I was hoping someday to come back and go

into teaching. But I realized with all the work that I had to do, I just didn't have the time for it. I couldn't. I didn't have the energy for it.

KLEIN: [00:48:19] Did that idea evolve after you joined the Peace Corps, that you will actually become a teacher?

WOOLFE: [00:48:25] Yeah, I thought of it before, when I was in college, a little bit. I took credits, but I did not, you know, I didn't do the whole full teaching thing because I was liberal arts. But I did think, well, maybe after I come back from Peace Corps, I'll go back to teaching. And actually, I finally, I did get my teaching certification here in Arizona in 1988, but so I still have it in my pocket. I've got the certification.

KLEIN: [00:48:49] You don't always do things.

WOOLFE: [00:48:50] No, it takes time, but yeah.

KLEIN: [00:48:54] So you're all by yourself in the village and coordinator, mentor did come out visiting?

WOOLFE: [00:49:00] Yeah, she came out once in a while. And as I said, I remember we got together sometimes in weekends down. I took the bus down to this one place where we all met. We were allowed to go off on weekends so that we didn't have the whole time be in this little town. But that was a charming place. And it was beautiful country. As I said, people talk about Puerto Rico, but Puerto Rico is really, at least then, it was just gorgeous. Wonderful.

KLEIN: [00:49:29] And this was a three-week phase.

WOOLFE: [00:49:31] This was a month.

KLEIN: [00:49:32] A month. OK.

WOOLFE: [00:49:33] Yeah, I thought it was three. It was actually a whole month of September we were there.

KLEIN: [00:49:38] Other than living with the family and the teaching? And teaching couldn't have taken up the whole day. Did you have any other agenda?

WOOLFE: [00:49:48] No, we were in. I was helping with the physical education in the little school. We had games and baseball and softball and stuff like that. So I helped out with that. And then after school, I would just sort of play games with the kids in front of the house and sort of, you know, just go to the market with the. I can't think of her name, the woman that was there. And then they had an election. And so I went around, they had a truck with a speaker and they wanted me to go with them. So they say, we have a Peace Corps volunteer here and all that stuff. So that was interesting because I got to see a lot of the countryside. We went all over the place, this whole day. And one of the girls in the group who was.

KLEIN: [00:50:37] Was Nixon running in Puerto Rico?

WOOLFE: [00:50:39] No, I forget what. This was a regular Puerto Rican election. And everybody was very much into it because some of them were *estavistas*, you know, they wanted to become a state. Other people wanted to become independent. And other people. And I forget. It was a regular election for the governor. And one of the girls in the group, who was down in Ponce, I think. And she got to meet the guy who was running for governor and she was on the dais with him and all this business. But I just got to get in the truck and, you know, go around to get people to vote. But it was a good experience. It's fun.

KLEIN: [00:51:19] And I think you said during this period, you also began to have contact with Peace Corps Ecuador staff, or not?

WOOLFE: [00:51:28] Uh, no.

KLEIN: [00:51:28] Just the Peace Corps Washington.

WOOLFE: [00:51:31] Yeah. And the mentors were from our UCLA.

KLEIN: [00:51:34] Oh, OK.

WOOLFE: [00:51:35] Yeah, they were all from UCLA.

KLEIN: [00:51:36] They had followed.

WOOLFE: [00:51:37] Yeah. They just joined us and went down. And we'd gotten pretty close to some of our teachers at that point. That was a good camaraderie. And Puerto Rico was, well, it was teacher training, but it was more a vacation, sort of, after that heavy duty UCLA experience.

KLEIN: [00:51:54] Were any of those staff former volunteers?

WOOLFE: [00:51:58] No.

KLEIN: [00:52:00] OK. It would have been just barely possible.

WOOLFE: [00:52:02] Yeah, no. We didn't have any. We did have a couple of people come and speak to us who had been in Ethiopia, in the same group that my friend had been in. And every once in a while, someone would come through who had just gotten out. And the Ethiopia program had former volunteers working. But the Ecuador, we had nobody from Ecuador.

KLEIN: [00:52:21] After the four weeks?

WOOLFE: [00:52:25] Then after the four weeks we got, I think it was a two week vacation home.

KLEIN: [00:52:30] Oh, nice.

WOOLFE: [00:52:30] And then we went down to Ecuador. We flew down from New York, everybody met in New York.

KLEIN: [00:52:38] As a group?

WOOLFE: [00:52:39] As a group.

KLEIN: [00:52:39] During the two weeks, any second thoughts? Did the local, did Long Valley put on a parade for, you know, the local hero?

WOOLFE: [00:52:48] Uh, no. I think people were quite pleased that I was going. And I think my parents, they did have a party for me, but that was about it.

KLEIN: [00:52:59] Do you remember being interviewed by the local paper?

WOOLFE: [00:53:02] I was interviewed after I came back, but not before I went.

KLEIN: [00:53:06] I'm just curious, do you remember? It may have been too early at this time. Any talk about Vietnam? It's hard to sort it out.

WOOLFE: [00:53:17] Uh, yeah, not. Not really during training. The whole time I was in Ecuador, of course, that was a main thing we talked about.

KLEIN: [00:53:27] But was there any sense that there were men who would join the Peace Corps in the hopes that they would be?

WOOLFE: [00:53:33] No, because at that point, the Peace Corps was not a way to get out of Vietnam. We had volunteers that went from Ecuador to Vietnam. And it was not, you couldn't dodge in '64.

KLEIN: [00:53:49] Depended on your local board.

WOOLFE: [00:53:49] Yeah, it was still, yeah, but we still had the draft and everything, and it was just that everybody was a college graduate. But they realized that they were, after they came back, they were going to have to.

KLEIN: [00:54:03] They were vulnerable.

WOOLFE: [00:54:03] Or find a way out of it.

KLEIN: [00:54:05] Yeah. Two weeks home. So no second thoughts?

WOOLFE: [00:54:11] No, I was really looking forward to getting to Ecuador.

KLEIN: [00:54:15] And you still hadn't met any Ecuadorian or anybody from Peace Corps in Ecuador?

WOOLFE: [00:54:21] No. Strange.

KLEIN: [00:54:21] So you didn't really have a sense of. You couldn't picture yourself in the environment because no one had really described it.

WOOLFE: [00:54:30] We had had some talk about the geography and all this. Everybody that talked to us would say, well, Ecuador is divided in three parts. Because you had the sea, the mountains, and the jungle. And we got really bored listening to that same old, same old stuff.

KLEIN: [00:54:45] Had you been asked at various points to choose who you might like to have as roommates or?

WOOLFE: [00:54:50] Oh yeah, before we left. It was before we left UCLA we were given that. Where we would like to be, whether we want to be on the coast or in the mountains, or where we were. They said that, you know, they couldn't guarantee that we'd get this and they couldn't guarantee we'd get the people we wanted to be with. And I know there was one girl who wanted to be with me and I liked her, you know, she was a nice person, and I years later caught up with her. But I did not want to be in the same town with her because I thought, you know, it'll just be too, too clingy or she'll be. She was younger and I just thought, no way. So I put on. I know she put on her paper, you know, I would like to be with Mari-Jo, but I definitely put on mine, no, that I did not want to be.

KLEIN: [00:55:36] At the point you were going, then you met in New York. You were flying down to Ecuador. What was your expectation as to what your tour of duty would be? You had already been in the Peace Corps then what, about four months or five months?

WOOLFE: [00:55:49] Yeah. Well, it was June, July, August, September. Four months. So we got down there in October.

KLEIN: [00:55:55] Twenty months, it was going to be determined by the cycle of the school year?

WOOLFE: [00:55:59] No, it was, we were going to be there and leave at the end of two years. So I went in the first part of June. I would be coming out sometime in June of 1966.

KLEIN: [00:56:13] You went into the Peace Corps in June.

WOOLFE: [00:56:14] Yeah, so I would not be in Ecuador for a full two years.

KLEIN: [00:56:17] So it would be 20 months.

WOOLFE: [00:56:18] Yeah, 20 months. That was, I mean, there were volunteers who stayed extra time because they finish up. But no, that was it.

KLEIN: [00:56:27] So now you finally arrive.

WOOLFE: [00:56:29] Yeah, I get to Ecuador.

KLEIN: [00:56:30] Was it a charter flight or just a commercial flight?

WOOLFE: [00:56:34] Uh, it was a charter flight. Yeah, I can't remember what the carrier was but. And it was prop. So we flew and flew and flew, and we flew overnight.

KLEIN: [00:56:47] There must have been a Peace Corps escort officer?

WOOLFE: [00:56:50] Oh yeah, there were. There were some people there. I don't remember, I don't think they were our trainers, but there were people with us. We definitely had, yeah, group people. And then we landed in Quito and the altitude. We were all a little. We were given a few hours just sort of to rest, and I think we were there a few days.

KLEIN: [00:57:14] What's the altitude in Quito?

WOOLFE: [00:57:16] Ten thousand feet. And we were told to take it easy. And we stayed at different small hotels. And then we had meetings with the different, what do you call them? The area people, reps.

KLEIN: [00:57:34] So the structure was there was a Peace Corps director and then there was a director for each of the areas.

WOOLFE: [00:57:39] Yes, right.

KLEIN: [00:57:39] And were there three areas? Did they match up to the?

WOOLFE: [00:57:41] There were. No, I think there were four areas. Oh, and something I forgot to mention. We had one boy in our group who was blind. And this was a big publicity. He was a wonderful guy. He was blind and he went through the program and he did have difficulty with Spanish because he, I mean, for some reason he didn't. But they definitely pushed him through because they wanted to be able to say, Peace Corps takes everyone and we have a blind volunteer. But I think it was really more trouble than it was worth, the whole thing. I think he did last the two years. But I think the problem was that he wanted to be in Peace Corps because he wanted to be a regular guy and do the Peace Corps things. He was a Texan and he was tough and he had been blinded in a hunting accident when he was 12 years old. I remember him saying, how would you feel if the only car you remember seeing was a, you know, a '52 Ford or something?

WOOLFE: [00:58:48] But I spoke to the representative and said, because he was not happy. They'd put him in Quito in a blind school and he did not want to work with blind people. He wanted to be out there doing things. So they did move him out with another volunteer.

KLEIN: [00:59:02] How did you come to speak on his behalf?

WOOLFE: [00:59:05] Well, we were pretty good friends and I knew he was very unhappy and I knew I could see that it was the dynamic that was wrong. He did not want to be a blind person. He wanted to be a regular guy in the Peace Corps.

KLEIN: [00:59:16] And you didn't hesitate.

WOOLFE: [00:59:17] And so, yeah, so I spoke to the rep and we sent him out with this guy out in the bush. Which really didn't work out so well either, because the guy he was sent with was somewhat hampered because his Peace Corps friend was blind. And even though he had a dog and he was quite capable, it's still. I don't know if they've had other blind people since then, but I don't think it was a good.

KLEIN: [00:59:45] Who was the rep? Do you remember his name?

WOOLFE: [00:59:46] Yeah, the rep in my area to start with was, oh God, it's a Spanish name. Very common Spanish name. Mike. Mike. Oh, it'll come to me. But anyway, he was rep in Cuenca, but then he got moved to Loja. We had about, I think we had five different areas.

KLEIN: [01:00:09] Who was the country director?

WOOLFE: [01:00:12] I don't remember the country. We had, we didn't have a country director. Oh yes, did we? Wait a second. Yes, we did. Tom Torres, I think, was his name. Yeah, he was a country director. And then we had this Mike, oh, and it's a simple.

KLEIN: [01:00:29] Who was for the region you're in?

WOOLFE: [01:00:31] He was for the region. And he had been there a couple of years. He'd been a volunteer in Peru and he was a great guy. He was really, really a lot of fun. And he had, as I said, this Mexican background, and he spoke good Spanish and everything. But then he went down to Loja and we got, our rep was Dwight Bookout, who was. He was a farmer from New Mexico. He'd been on the rodeo circuit and I think they had six or seven kids. A bunch of kids. And he just thought, well, this is a good deal, you know, to get down there. And he made a big hit with Shriver, and he and Shriver talked cattle because they were, you know, he's a rancher basically. But he was not a good representative because he just didn't have a feel for the Ecuadorians. He didn't really speak very good Spanish. He enjoyed getting together with the volunteers.

WOOLFE: [01:01:34] He was a guy, probably late thirties, early forties, but he really was not a very good representative because he did not. He didn't like the Ecuadorians. He thought of them as Mexicans. I mean, he had this, and it was southwestern kind of mentality. And so I think, you know, I think since then they probably have gotten onto what makes a good rep. But Dwight. Dwight actually was good to the volunteers. If you had a problem, you could go to him and he would help you with it. But he made no effort to really get to know the Ecuadorians or do anything. When he had a party at his house, it was all Peace Corps volunteers.

KLEIN: [01:02:16] So you arrived in Quito, adjusted to the altitude. Did you have, you had further meetings?

WOOLFE: [01:02:25] We had meetings a couple of days there in Quito, and then we were all.

KLEIN: [01:02:30] Were they run by the Ecuadorians or by the Peace Corps?

WOOLFE: [01:02:32] By the Peace Corps. Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:02:35] At what point did you get your assignment?

WOOLFE: [01:02:38] There in Quito. I was told that I was going to Azogues, a little town outside of Cuenca, a small town. And that I would be teaching there at blah blah high school. It's a girls school.

KLEIN: [01:02:53] Where was that in relation to Quito?

WOOLFE: [01:02:56] South. About eight hours drive. Eight hour flight. What am I saying? Eight hour bus trip. So we got on the bus and then we.

KLEIN: [01:03:08] Was that jungle, mountains, or?

WOOLFE: [01:03:10] Mountains. Yeah. And we were on the bus for a long time. [tape break]

KLEIN: [01:03:16] Tape two. And we were just getting you out of Quito.

WOOLFE: [01:03:20] Out of Quito. Yeah, we took the bus.

KLEIN: [01:03:23] Now who's the "we" in this case?

WOOLFE: [01:03:26] This was. Everybody in the group took different busses. And my group that was heading down in south, I mean, they would stop at certain places and somebody would get off and meet the representative there. I forget some of the, I'd have to look at a map, some of the different places. And then we.

KLEIN: [01:03:47] Was it a chartered bus then? It wasn't public transport.

WOOLFE: [01:03:50] I think it was a chartered bus, yeah. Yes, because it was full of us.

KLEIN: [01:03:54] Was there a wrench, as you saw, you know, that friend from training dropping off in this obscure place?

WOOLFE: [01:04:00] No, we all just figured we were going to get together and see each other and visit each other all the time at these different places. We were all excited about where we were going. And in Cuenca, there was a big group because we branched out from Cuenca. People branched out from Quito and then Cuenca. We also branched out. And I met the girl. Azogues was about an hour bus drive out of Cuenca. So I met the girl who was presently there, who I was going to be with my first month.

KLEIN: [01:04:28] Azogues?

WOOLFE: [01:04:28] Azogues. Yes. And so Wendy came and I drove back with her and I was going to be living with her for the first, I guess, the first month.

KLEIN: [01:04:40] And what had Wendy been doing in Azogues?

WOOLFE: [01:04:42] She's been doing community development. She was not a teacher, but she was.

KLEIN: [01:04:46] And where was she in her tour?

WOOLFE: [01:04:49] She had about a year to go. She was in the middle of her. She'd already been there a year.

KLEIN: [01:04:55] Had she been asked if she would help you or just?

WOOLFE: [01:04:59] Yeah, she had been asked and had said, yes, she would.

KLEIN: [01:05:06] So it's just the two of you now.

WOOLFE: [01:05:07] So it's just the two of us.

KLEIN: [01:05:09] In Azogues.

WOOLFE: [01:05:09] No, we went to Biblián, which was the little town she was in, which was like a half an hour from Azogues where I would be. And I, when I was, there was also a volunteer there, Bill, Bill Schneider, to get us. But I stayed with Wendy to get sort of settled and then moved to Azogues a little. It was a little house behind the house of people. It was just two rooms.

KLEIN: [01:05:37] Who arranged it?

WOOLFE: [01:05:38] Wendy. Yeah, Wendy. And with these people, they were good friends of hers.

KLEIN: [01:05:44] They were Ecuadorians?

WOOLFE: [01:05:45] Yeah, they were Ecuadorians.

KLEIN: [01:05:46] At last.

WOOLFE: [01:05:46] Yeah, at last we're getting some. Yeah, they were a lovely family. Some of them lived in Biblián and then some of them lived in Azogues. And so they were good. She was a good friend of theirs and she

said, well, if you like it, I found a place where you can live. And so I didn't look any further and it worked out very well.

KLEIN: [01:06:03] What was the school? Were you matching up to a school year, I mean, when you would?

WOOLFE: [01:06:08] Yeah, pretty much.

KLEIN: [01:06:10] So it was the beginning of a new school year.

WOOLFE: [01:06:11] Yeah, it had already started, but I was coming in to teach.

KLEIN: [01:06:17] Describe your village, the village you were in and a little bit about it.

WOOLFE: [01:06:21] Yeah, well, let's see. Biblián was a smaller, smaller village where Wendy was, um, but Azogues was pretty good size. We had a movie theater and had some restaurants and a market. It was a market town. And it was, um.

KLEIN: [01:06:40] How did people make a living?

WOOLFE: [01:06:41] People were farmers and tradespeople in the town. As I said, how big? Maybe what, six, five thousand people? Four thousand? Something like that. And the, let's see. The people I lived with, what did he do? I think he was a teacher, some kind of teacher, and the wife didn't work, but they had three children.

KLEIN: [01:07:10] Was it a freestanding little casita you had?

WOOLFE: [01:07:12] Yeah, they had just recently built this little casita. It was just two rooms, and I used the bathroom in their house, which was just across the courtyard.

KLEIN: [01:07:22] Indoor plumbing?

WOOLFE: [01:07:23] Yeah, they had indoor plumbing and a shower. But it was interesting there, and I've always thought of it since then. They had, during the day you had water and at 6:00 the water went off and the lights came on. So you had electricity at night and you had water during the daytime. That's the way you worked it. And it worked out, you know.

KLEIN: [01:07:51] What did you do for food?

WOOLFE: [01:07:53] There was a market there. I had a Coleman stove, two burner Coleman stove.

KLEIN: [01:07:58] And you expected then to be doing your own cooking?

WOOLFE: [01:08:00] Yeah. And Bill, he had a two burner Coleman stove. And so we would, we usually ate together.

KLEIN: [01:08:08] Bill was in Azogues?

WOOLFE: [01:08:10] He was in Azogues. He'd already been there a year. He was with the.

KLEIN: [01:08:13] And his program?

WOOLFE: [01:08:14] He was with school construction. I think that's what they called it. They were building schools.

KLEIN: [01:08:20] Were the houses concrete block, tin roof?

WOOLFE: [01:08:23] They were sort of Mexican style, Latin kind of thing. They were, I think, adobe. Most of them.

KLEIN: [01:08:32] Poor sections of town, better housing.

WOOLFE: [01:08:36] There were. Yeah. It stretched on with sort of indiscriminate housing.

KLEIN: [01:08:41] Paved streets?

WOOLFEE: [01:08:42] The streets were not paved. I mean, there may have been one paved street that went through sort of the highway.

KLEIN: [01:08:49] Medical facility?

WOOLFEE: [01:08:51] There was a clinic there, yeah. Oh, and there was a hospital. I worked at the hospital. Yeah. Yes.

KLEIN: [01:08:58] And what about the church?

WOOLFEE: [01:09:00] And there were churches. There was a big, big Catholic monastery on the hill overlooking the town. And then there was a big Catholic church in town. And there were Lutheran missionaries that were American. I met them and I tried not to have too much to do with them because it was not, you know, I didn't want to get involved with them, but they were very nice people. And once in a while, you know, I'd go over there for lunch on Sunday or something.

KLEIN: [01:09:29] Who ran the schools?

WOOLFEE: [01:09:30] The schools were all private.

KLEIN: [01:09:35] Church run?

WOOLFEE: [01:09:36] Church run.

KLEIN: [01:09:36] For the most part.

WOOLFEE: [01:09:37] For the most part.

KLEIN: [01:09:38] For the most part, Catholic church?

WOOLFEE: [01:09:39] Yeah, right. It was all very Catholic and all the Catholic holidays observed and everything.

KLEIN: [01:09:45] And you say the area was mountainous. Was it five, six thousand feet high?

WOOLFE: [01:09:49] We were in the Andes. We were not as high as Quito, but probably seven or eight thousand feet.

KLEIN: [01:09:58] Extremes of weather?

WOOLFE: [01:09:59] No, beautiful climate. It's just spring all the time. That's what they always say about Ecuador is eternal, the country of eternal spring.

KLEIN: [01:10:07] It's near the equator.

WOOLFE: [01:10:07] And we did get some heavy rains at times, but there was sort of a rainy season. But in general, it was beautiful.

KLEIN: [01:10:17] It was different than New York.

WOOLFE: [01:10:19] Yeah, it was a lot different than New York. And I remember at that point, too, and I looked back on it. We were not allowed to wear slacks because this was Latin America and we were Americans. And so most of the time, the weather, we wore sort of heavy sweaters and skirts, long skirts, and knee socks. Tights. And a good strong, I had an old pair of saddle shoes. And the other volunteers used to kid me about my saddle shoes, but they were good shoes to have for there because they didn't have the kind of, you know, Nikes and stuff like that. So, you know, you either had loafers or good lace up shoes. So I had my saddle shoes and I think shoes that I had worn when I was a waitress.

KLEIN: [01:11:12] So when you got, when you came into Azogues, you had a couple of weeks to settle in.

WOOLFE: [01:11:18] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:11:19] And get to know the family you were living with.

WOOLFE: [01:11:22] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:11:23] And did you meet the school people?

WOOLFE: [01:11:25] Yeah, I met the school people and it was, they were very nice. And it was a very good girls school, except that the discipline in the language classes was just awful. I mean, it was very difficult to, uh.

KLEIN: [01:11:37] They weren't boarding schools, were they?

WOOLFE: [01:11:39] No, no, they were. It was. I mean, the class was like something out of MAD comics. I mean, there are people sort of hanging off the rafters. I had this huge class of about 50 girls.

KLEIN: [01:11:51] Physically, what was the classroom like?

WOOLFE: [01:11:53] It was brick walls and it was painted. And the building had a courtyard. You'd meet in the morning in the courtyard and everyone would go to their classes. And it was one of the better schools, I would say.

KLEIN: [01:12:07] The students stayed in the room and teachers came to them for different subjects or did the kids go?

WOOLFE: [01:12:14] I think they stayed. They stayed in the room, yeah, and then I went to different rooms in there. And they had, well, they had like three to a desk. I mean, it was pretty cramped and crowded conditions, but they all had uniforms. And as I said, the principal kept pretty good discipline when they were all together. But when they were in the classroom, it was chaos.

KLEIN: [01:12:36] How did you first encounter the school?

WOOLFE: [01:12:41] How did? I was told what I was going to go there and I had.

KLEIN: [01:12:45] You were told by whom?

WOOLFE: [01:12:46] By the Peace Corps rep.

KLEIN: [01:12:48] OK, so you knew.

WOOLFEE: [01:12:49] I knew.

KLEIN: [01:12:50] Your destiny or your mission was to.

WOOLFEE: [01:12:52] To go to that school.

KLEIN: [01:12:53] Did the school have a name?

WOOLFEE: [01:12:55] Yeah, I can't remember the name of the moment.

KLEIN: [01:12:57] So Wendy helped you settle in and Bill was there. And then finally, one day you, on your own, walked over to the school?

WOOLFEE: [01:13:09] Well, I went when I first got there. I was told I had to go meet with the such-and-such, uh, the principal at the school. And then I met with the principal at the school, and we decided when I should start and who, you know, I would be working with and everything.

KLEIN: [01:13:25] And was that conversation conducted in Spanish?

WOOLFEE: [01:13:28] Yes. Yeah. I was getting more and more into the Spanish because down there, I mean, nobody. Once we really got to where we were, there was very little English going on.

KLEIN: [01:13:38] But what about regional variation? And this is Ecuadorian Spanish. It's not Puerto Rican Spanish.

WOOLFEE: [01:13:43] Well, Ecuadorian Spanish is pretty pure.

KLEIN: [01:13:46] Oh, OK.

WOOLFEE: [01:13:46] And actually the Spanish, I remember going down once to visit friends in Loja, where Mike had, uh. Mike Carsales, I think it was. Yeah, that was his name, Mike Carsales, where he had gone. I went down there for a weekend and the Spanish down there is so pure you'd think you were

in Spain because it hasn't been infiltrated. Well, this is 1964, but it was pretty pure. And uh, and the people were pretty white too.

KLEIN: [01:14:18] With the soft sounds?

WOOLFE: [01:14:20] The soft sounds and the whole thing. Cuenca was more, um, less of that, but it was also, it's a slower Spanish than you find in Puerto Rico.

KLEIN: [01:14:32] Which would be helpful.

WOOLFE: [01:14:33] Yes, it was. It was easier, much easier when we got there. Puerto Rico was difficult because of the accent.

KLEIN: [01:14:39] And this would match up more to the book Spanish you had learned.

WOOLFE: [01:14:42] Yes. Yeah. And they didn't have a lot of, uh, what you call *modismos*, or phrases that were their own, like in Puerto Rico and Cuba and Mexico. You have a lot of slang. But there wasn't slang in Ecuador. The Indians had their own language, their own, you know, form of. I forget the name for the Indian dialect there. Gosh, I can't think of. Anyway, but the Spanish was quite quite easy.

KLEIN: [01:15:17] So you met the principal and in Spanish you conducted this business. And what was it that you agreed on? Was he expecting you?

WOOLFE: [01:15:25] It was a she, and she was expecting me. And I was to teach. I had, I think I had three or four classes that I had to teach, of English.

KLEIN: [01:15:36] What levels?

WOOLFE: [01:15:38] Very, very primitive.

KLEIN: [01:15:40] But what was the class level?

WOOLFE: [01:15:41] Oh, the class level. This was high school.

KLEIN: [01:15:43] So you would have 10th, 11th, and 12th grade class?

WOOLFE: [01:15:46] Yes. And it was hard.

KLEIN: [01:15:50] Did the school have a full curriculum of all the courses they.

WOOLFE: [01:15:57] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:15:57] And was there a curriculum for English?

WOOLFE: [01:16:00] There was, but it was not, uh, not very well formed.

KLEIN: [01:16:06] Where did it come from?

WOOLFE: [01:16:08] They sort of made it up themselves. I mean, it was, for them, it was prestigious to be teaching English, but they didn't really know. Their English was not very good to begin with. And I remember suggesting that rather than have me teach the children, I should teach the teachers. And we could have a group and I could. But they were offended by that. They did not want that. They were English teachers and they knew English. And so I didn't get anywhere with that suggestion.

KLEIN: [01:16:39] How soon did you make that suggestion?

WOOLFE: [01:16:41] Oh, after I was there a few weeks. And I realized that these people were teaching English, but they really didn't know English.

KLEIN: [01:16:47] So you were not the only English teacher in the school?

WOOLFE: [01:16:49] No.

KLEIN: [01:16:50] There were three, four, five?

WOOLFE: [01:16:51] There were maybe four. Four other teachers.

KLEIN: [01:16:55] Was the entire staff female?

WOOLFE: [01:16:57] No, they had men and women teachers.

KLEIN: [01:17:00] It was an ordinary schedule like, I mean, any given day?

WOOLFE: [01:17:07] I would have like two classes in the morning and a class in the afternoon, say three hours.

KLEIN: [01:17:14] And either of the classes ran for about an hour?

WOOLFE: [01:17:16] And the classes ran for about an hour.

KLEIN: [01:17:17] How many times a week?

WOOLFE: [01:17:19] And that would be like five days a week kind of thing. So it was a pretty full schedule. And but then of course, I wanted to get into other things, to more community development.

KLEIN: [01:17:31] Well, I'm not going to let you out of the classroom yet.

WOOLFE: [01:17:34] Yeah, so I was there.

KLEIN: [01:17:35] And how far from the school, did you walk to work?

WOOLFE: [01:17:38] Yeah, I walked to, it was about a half a mile away, a mile away. It's, you know, right in the middle of town.

KLEIN: [01:17:44] What was the background of the students?

WOOLFE: [01:17:48] They were young girls who came from the upper class of people who lived in Azogues. You had the, you really had the whites and the Indians. And the white people were farmers or doctors or lawyers or whatever.

KLEIN: [01:18:06] They were the stronger Spanish ethnicity or background?

WOOLFE: [01:18:09] Yeah. And it was the private school. So this was, you know, they didn't have. The state schools, I think, just run through grade, at least in Azogues, just ran through grade school.

KLEIN: [01:18:22] What would the girls expect to do after?

WOOLFE: [01:18:27] Oh, nothing much. I think they were expected to get married.

KLEIN: [01:18:29] So it wasn't like there were.

WOOLFE: [01:18:31] There were no careers. I mean, if they wanted to become teachers or something, they would have had to go to Cuenca or to Quito because it was nothing in Azogues for them. So I don't think that any of them had many, much in the way of plans.

KLEIN: [01:18:45] The class size, I mean, how?

WOOLFE: [01:18:47] Yeah, the classes were like 40, 45 in a class. Huge.

KLEIN: [01:18:51] They would never stop talking.

WOOLFE: [01:18:52] Yeah, they just, it was.

KLEIN: [01:18:54] In Spanish.

WOOLFE: [01:18:55] Yeah, it was difficult. But they were enthusiastic and I would, you know, I'd be getting hoarse because I would have to be. The language, the way we were taught to teach language was listen and repeat, which they enjoyed. But then when you have 45 people all saying good morning and all this stuff, so it was hard to get much through to them.

KLEIN: [01:19:23] So you were really teaching English at a very basic level.

WOOLFE: [01:19:25] Yes, yeah.

KLEIN: [01:19:25] I mean, were you trying to bring them to reading literacy?

WOOLFE: [01:19:31] No, it was all spoken.

KLEIN: [01:19:32] It was simply to be conversational.

WOOLFE: [01:19:34] Yes. Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:19:35] Did you develop scripts for them to memorize?

WOOLFE: [01:19:39] I tried to, dialogs. For them to memorize the dialogs. And they did. You know, they would pick up on some things, but it was hard to get through really.

KLEIN: [01:19:50] Why?

WOOLFE: [01:19:51] Well, because it was just so much noise and so much going on. I couldn't keep discipline that well in that setting.

KLEIN: [01:19:59] Should have been a nun.

WOOLFE: [01:20:00] Yeah, that's where I failed.

KLEIN: [01:20:04] Was it typical of the school? I mean, if you went, observed, or walked by other classrooms?

WOOLFE: [01:20:08] Yeah, it was pretty typical.

KLEIN: [01:20:10] So it was not tightly run school.

WOOLFE: [01:20:14] No, not really. I guess some of the classes they might have, that were smaller might have had better control. But the fact that my Spanish was not that good at that point too, it was difficult. And I was a curiosity to them. That was, I mean, they. And I was not a good enough disciplinarian just to.

KLEIN: [01:20:35] But you hadn't taught before either.

WOOLFE: [01:20:37] Did I what?

KLEIN: [01:20:38] You hadn't taught before.

WOOLFE: [01:20:40] No, I really hadn't.

KLEIN: [01:20:41] So you didn't have the experience of classroom management.

WOOLFE: [01:20:43] I didn't have the experience really, you know, so it was difficult.

KLEIN: [01:20:48] So your first couple of weeks must have been very, very difficult personally.

WOOLFE: [01:20:52] Yeah, they were. Yeah, it was. Well, it was exciting, but it was. And uh, it didn't seem to. I mean, I was worried about it, but it didn't seem to matter that much to them, the teacher, the principal, that you know, that I wasn't really getting through to them. They were just very proud that they had an American teaching in that school.

KLEIN: [01:21:13] And how were you aware of that?

WOOLFE: [01:21:16] Well, because people would say to me, oh, you're teaching in such-and-such and you know, so-and-so told me and all this stuff.

KLEIN: [01:21:22] As you moved around town.

WOOLFE: [01:21:22] Yeah. And then the family I lived with was very proud to have me living with them. They had an American in their house, you know.

KLEIN: [01:21:30] Now you were the first Peace Corps teacher at that school.

WOOLFE: [01:21:34] Yes.

KLEIN: [01:21:34] And in that town?

WOOLFE: [01:21:35] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:21:37] What was the non-Ecuadorian population of the town?

WOOLFE: [01:21:40] There wasn't. Well.

KLEIN: [01:21:41] There was another Peace Corps volunteer.

WOOLFE: [01:21:43] Bill. And me. And the Lutheran missionary and his wife and two daughters. And that was it. So everybody else was Ecuadorian.

KLEIN: [01:21:52] And was there a traditional life of the village, holiday celebrations, things like that?

WOOLFE: [01:21:57] Oh yeah. It was mainly on the Catholic church.

KLEIN: [01:22:01] OK, based on Catholic tradition. Was the native population, the Indian population was separate? I mean, you didn't touch.

WOOLFE: [01:22:13] They came in. They had market days. Saturday and Sunday were market days and they would come in for that. And they also had, you know, they had their regular markets where they sold fruit and everything, and normally where they were there selling things. They'd come in from the mountains and sell their wares and go back.

KLEIN: [01:22:30] So they tended not to be part of the fabric, or the social fabric?

WOOLFE: [01:22:31] Not a part of the, apparently not.

KLEIN: [01:22:38] Well, what did you do when you realized that, I mean, teaching is impossible?

WOOLFE: [01:22:43] It was getting to be impossible, yeah. Then I went down, there was a hospital there and I thought, maybe I can get in there as sort of a nurse's aide. And then I wanted to get some of these young girls in as nurses' aides.

KLEIN: [01:22:58] Students of yours.

WOOLFE: [01:22:59] Students, yeah. So I went down and they were very happy to have me. I mean, I had first aid training, but nothing really, you know. Because they had a, there was one wing that that treated the Indians and it was strictly this, mostly inoculating them and helping them. And they would come in. It was free of charge. And they needed people to help there. So I went there to work with them and then I, as I said.

KLEIN: [01:23:31] Did you check in with the Peace Corps first to see if it was OK, or you just went ahead and did it?

WOOLFE: [01:23:36] I think I mentioned it to my rep and he said, yeah, that would be a good thing to do. Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:23:40] Did you share with him your disappointment in the teaching?

WOOLFE: [01:23:43] Yes. Yeah, I said the teaching isn't really going so well.

KLEIN: [01:23:46] What did he make of that?

WOOLFE: [01:23:48] He didn't seem to think anything of that. He thought it was pretty normal that, as I said, he was not. This was when I had Dwight Bookout over there, and he really just thought as long as his volunteers were happy, that was fine. And so I said, I'm going to cut back on my teaching at the school and I'm going to work at the hospital. So I did, and I don't know really how I managed that, but I did tell that the teacher or the principal that I could only work so many hours or something. So I cut back. I still taught there, but I did not teach the four classes or whatever I taught.

KLEIN: [01:24:27] But your sense is that the dominant view of the Peace Corps of what a volunteer in Ecuador should be doing is kind of this shotgun.

WOOLFE: [01:24:35] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:24:36] Moving in all directions, no matter what the job description.

WOOLFE: [01:24:39] Yeah, yeah.

KLEIN: [01:24:40] And that was expressed at different points by staff?

WOOLFE: [01:24:43] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:24:46] At the school, in the school setting, did you get to become closer friends with anyone on faculty or any of the students?

WOOLFE: [01:24:53] Some of the students, the girls I got to know, and I got them helping me at the hospital.

KLEIN: [01:24:57] Did they come visit you at the house?

WOOLFE: [01:24:59] And they would come visit me.

KLEIN: [01:25:00] Was that OK?

WOOLFE: [01:25:00] Yeah, that was fine.

KLEIN: [01:25:02] Of course you were female.

WOOLFE: [01:25:03] Yeah, so that worked out well. But it was just that classroom situation was just horrible.

KLEIN: [01:25:09] So if some girls came to visit you, would it be in the afternoon after school?

WOOLFE: [01:25:13] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:25:13] And what would you do?

WOOLFE: [01:25:14] Or they'd come on the weekends and sometimes, you know, I'd get a pounding on the door first thing in the morning, that kind of thing.

KLEIN: [01:25:21] And what would you do?

WOOLFE: [01:25:23] And well, sometimes we'd walk around the plaza or we, you know, we'd sit in. My house was kind of small, but we usually, when we

got together, we'd go out and then as I said, we'd walk, do something or go up in the hills, take a picnic or something.

KLEIN: [01:25:40] Did you end up with some favorites within the?

WOOLFE: [01:25:43] Um, yeah, there were a couple of girls and of course, the girls in the family where I was living, they were.

KLEIN: [01:25:48] What were their ages?

WOOLFE: [01:25:49] They were older. They were, uh, there was one that was about 15 and one that was 19. And then one who got married while I was there. So I was involved in going to the wedding and all the things with her.

KLEIN: [01:26:04] Do you have any sense that the girls were sort of, would like to emulate you? Become part of a bigger world?

WOOLFE: [01:26:11] Oh yeah. They asked about.

KLEIN: [01:26:12] And you were sort of a.

WOOLFE: [01:26:14] They'd ask questions and they were fascinated by the States. Everybody knew someone in the States. So yeah, and they were very, how shall I say, very pro-American. I mean, they were, you know, they liked us. And although Azogues itself was kind of a tough town, there was some anti-gringo feelings there.

KLEIN: [01:26:35] Historically?

WOOLFE: [01:26:37] Yeah, they were just, um. It was not big enough to be a city and it was not. It was just, it wasn't the friendliest town in the world. I mean, there was this great feeling between the, whether you were a Cuencano or you were an Azogueno, those two. That was fighting words.

KLEIN: [01:26:57] What's the difference?

WOOLFE: [01:26:57] Well, if you came from Cuenca or if you came from Azogues, it's like two different baseball teams. I mean, they were just very much feeling, well, I'm from Cuenca. Well, I'm from Azogues. And, you know, knock this chip off my shoulder kind of thing.

KLEIN: [01:27:09] Was there politics involved? Was it left wing?

WOOLFE: [01:27:12] No, no. It was just regional. Maybe regionalism or something?

KLEIN: [01:27:16] Yeah, yeah.

WOOLFE: [01:27:17] It was just.

KLEIN: [01:27:18] I mean, anti-gringo. But there were four gringos in town.

WOOLFE: [01:27:21] Yeah, no, they weren't. There were some people who just didn't, you know, welcome us with open arms. But for the most part, people were quite friendly.

KLEIN: [01:27:30] Did you ever have any negative experiences? Did anyone ever come up and say, go home, you shouldn't be here, or?

WOOLFE: [01:27:35] In Cuenca, I had some negative experiences, but not in Azogues.

KLEIN: [01:27:41] You were never based in Cuenca though?

WOOLFE: [01:27:41] Yes, I was. Yeah, I was in Azogues my first year. And then I moved to Cuenca my second year.

KLEIN: [01:27:46] We'll stay with the first year.

WOOLFE: [01:27:47] So the first year I was in Azogues, that's mainly what I did. I cut back on my teaching. Oh, and then they got me to teach. They wanted, the guy who was the head of the basketball team. They were they were big on basketball. Wanted me to, I was an American. I was supposed to, you know, help them. Well, I've always been terrible at basketball. And

they were. So I did. I used to go and help them and they'd practice, but they were so much better at basketball than I was, these girls were. I was, uh.

KLEIN: [01:28:19] Oh, this was a girls team.

WOOLFE: [01:28:20] Yeah, it was a girls team and they were good.

KLEIN: [01:28:22] Could Bill come and help or not?

WOOLFE: [01:28:24] No, he was busy with his school construction, so he didn't help. But yeah, I used to go and encourage them and we'd have, you know, they'd play different schools. And this was the school team. But I was sorry that I was not a better basketball player.

KLEIN: [01:28:44] So you weren't really part of the school life, but it was a day school anyway.

WOOLFE: [01:28:48] It was a day school, yeah.

KLEIN: [01:28:50] It was kind of you went, you did your work. They went home. You went home.

WOOLFE: [01:28:55] That's the way it worked out.

KLEIN: [01:28:57] Did you develop any close personal friends?

WOOLFE: [01:29:02] With the family I lived with? Yeah, I developed and then I had acquaintances.

KLEIN: [01:29:06] You were very comfortable with them?

WOOLFE: [01:29:07] Yeah, I was comfortable with them and also the family that Wendy was with in Biblián. And also the family that, there was another family that she lived with who, you know, I used to see and chat with, and they had us for dinner one night I remember, you know, they were very nice.

KLEIN: [01:29:24] So during through the first year, you're teaching on a reduced schedule now.

WOOLFE: [01:29:29] Yeah. And but I'm also working at the hospital.

KLEIN: [01:29:31] You're working at the hospital. At the hospital, you simply working as a nurse's aide?

WOOLFE: [01:29:35] Yeah. But I gave shots and everything. I mean, I was definitely, my shots weren't very good either. But they needed somebody to help. I mean, these people would come in.

KLEIN: [01:29:44] And you had a few students who actually joined you.

WOOLFE: [01:29:46] And I had some students that helped me, yeah, with different things. So that worked out pretty well.

KLEIN: [01:29:51] No attempt to begin teaching English to any of the hospital staff?

WOOLFE: [01:29:56] Oh, I did now that I think of it. We had, they had an American, um. They had a, what do you call it? A center, cultural center. And I taught English there at night to adults. And Bill helped too. He taught. I had forgotten about that.

KLEIN: [01:30:12] USIS, U.S. Information Service?

WOOLFE: [01:30:15] Yeah, that kind of thing.

KLEIN: [01:30:16] Library and?

WOOLFE: [01:30:17] And they had in Cuenca and then they had this little one. And it was really just sort of a recreation center for the kids.

KLEIN: [01:30:25] Was it staffed by an American?

WOOLFEE: [01:30:26] No, it was all Ecuadorian. That was a good project because it. But they were somehow affiliated to the one in Cuenca so we could get materials from there. And we also, yeah, there was a definite affiliation because somebody from Guayaquil came up one time and they gave us a donation. We had a ping pong table. The kids used to hang out there. Yeah, it's all coming back.

KLEIN: [01:30:51] But it was clearly an American enterprise?

WOOLFEE: [01:30:53] It was the, uh, yeah, what do they call that? The cultural center, American Ecuadorian.

KLEIN: [01:31:03] USIA?

WOOLFEE: [01:31:03] Yeah, that kind of thing. And we got, our books and stuff for teaching English were from them. And that was a wonderful course. I wish, I've always wished I could find that again because it was very good.

KLEIN: [01:31:15] And you were teaching people who'd just come in off the street?

WOOLFEE: [01:31:19] Yeah, we were teaching adults and they would pay, for a very nominal sum. And they were young people, mostly, teenagers.

KLEIN: [01:31:28] Did you get extra pay for that?

WOOLFEE: [01:31:29] No.

KLEIN: [01:31:30] How were you being paid?

WOOLFEE: [01:31:32] It was put once a month. What did I get? I got a hundred dollars a month living allowance and that was put into the bank and then I would draw on that, you know, in the Ecuadorian, the sucres. And there was some resentment there. I remember in Cuenca, the teller saying to me, that's too much money for a woman to be making, you know? So because it was supposed to be, you know, commiserate with the. But it was probably more than what the bank teller was making.

KLEIN: [01:32:06] Did you encounter role problems? I mean, assuming it's a male dominated society.

WOOLFE: [01:32:14] Yeah, it was. No, I was trying to be careful, to be.

KLEIN: [01:32:19] Because you were a nurse and a teacher.

WOOLFE: [01:32:21] In the proper, yeah, proper venue. And not give them anything to think about or talk about.

KLEIN: [01:32:27] But you didn't have young men chasing you down the street trying to date you.

WOOLFE: [01:32:30] No, all I did. We used to have lots of parties and dances and stuff.

KLEIN: [01:32:34] Who's "we", I mean?

WOOLFE: [01:32:35] Well, just the people there are very, very social. The Latin Americans are. And so there were always every. I've never danced so much in my life. It was so much fun. And of course, they're all about five foot. So, yeah, that was fun.

KLEIN: [01:32:51] During the first year, there must have been some vacations. Did you travel?

WOOLFE: [01:32:55] Yeah, I went down to Guayaquil and to Las Playas, which was this beach resort area, with friends for Christmas.

KLEIN: [01:33:05] Friends being Peace Corps friends?

WOOLFE: [01:33:07] Wendy, Peace Corps friends.

KLEIN: [01:33:10] You were writing home the whole time?

WOOLFE: [01:33:13] Yeah. I wrote home.

KLEIN: [01:33:16] What was, how was your family?

WOOLFE: [01:33:17] Oh, they, you know, were quite happy that everything was fine.

KLEIN: [01:33:21] Your father was finally convinced could make it?

WOOLFE: [01:33:22] Yeah, I could do it. And I remember I sent them a picture one time and they were worried I was gaining weight. But you know, it's, yeah. They were quite happy about everything.

KLEIN: [01:33:37] And was there, at the end or at the end of the first year, was there a Peace Corps meeting?

WOOLFE: [01:33:44] We would have various meetings in Cuenca, you know, every couple of months. Or the rep would come out and say, how are things going on and everything? Anyway, at the end of my first year in Azogues, there were some jobs that opened up in Cuenca, volunteers that were leaving. So I asked the rep if I could be transferred to Cuenca because I felt I could do more there and that, you know, I could find. As I said, I wasn't happy with the teaching situation and the little hospital work was so-so and the teaching English at night. So there was a guy who was leaving, who was running a blind school in Cuenca, and they said I could move into his position. And so I said, yeah, that sounds good.

KLEIN: [01:34:36] An Ecuadorian government blind school or?

WOOLFE: [01:34:41] It was a blind association and they got money from the government to make brooms.

KLEIN: [01:34:49] OK.

WOOLFE: [01:34:52] Well, the Peace Corps job mainly was to see that they were housed in a good place where they could work and do this. And they would get the money from the mayor to pay for the rent. It was a city deal. And then also we would get AID food for a lunch program. So and that was, we would apply for that. And then all the ingredients would come up

from Guayaquil. And so that was mainly the job. The teaching, well, there was a blind teacher who led most of the classes, and he looked after the curriculum and what they were doing. In the meantime, they were making brooms. They had this, it was a broom factory.

KLEIN: [01:35:44] Yeah. Let's go back to your first town. So you heard about the job. I'm bad on the names, but.

WOOLFE: [01:35:57] Yeah, in Cuenca.

KLEIN: [01:35:59] In Cuenca, and were going to leave. Was it arranged? Was it relatively simple?

WOOLFE: [01:36:08] It was relatively simple. And as somebody said later, they thought I worked out pretty well because you usually are supposed to stay where you're placed in Peace Corps.

KLEIN: [01:36:19] Were you replaced?

WOOLFE: [01:36:21] Yeah, there were new volunteers coming. So I was replaced. There was another girl who took my place in Azogues.

KLEIN: [01:36:28] So but the population remained two, of Peace Corps volunteers.

WOOLFE: [01:36:33] Well, Bill left. He left after just about the end of my year was the end of his. He had already been there a year. And so there were new volunteers that came while I was there and it was my job to show them around. They stayed. There were three guys that came and they were on a construction group and they stayed with Bill. And then this girl came to replace me. And I told my family that there was this job where they needed me in Cuenca and blah blah blah. And while I was in Cuenca, it was a short run to Azogues, so I could get back and forth and visit them on a weekend. And, you know, we kept up. In fact, I went back two years later to see them in the seventies.

KLEIN: [01:37:13] Just out of curiosity, the woman who replaced you. What role did she develop for herself in the town?

WOOLFE: [01:37:23] I'm not sure. She was supposed to be teaching, I think.

KLEIN: [01:37:26] Well, yeah. So were you.

WOOLFE: [01:37:28] I don't know, because there were different groups, whether they, you know, she was definitely a teacher or not. But she didn't last very long. She left after about four months, and I think she left the country. I don't think she stayed. So I don't know how, what happened after that, if anybody else stayed there or not. But it was not a very popular spot. But Cuenca was lovely and it was, you know, there was lots of things going on there and things that you could get involved in.

KLEIN: [01:37:59] Larger town.

WOOLFE: [01:38:00] Yeah. Cuenca is the third largest city in Ecuador, and it's where Panama hats are made. You'd think they come from Panama, but they come from Cuenca, Ecuador.

KLEIN: [01:38:09] Culturally, a more sophisticated place.

WOOLFE: [01:38:11] Yes.

KLEIN: [01:38:12] With a greater mix of people residentially.

WOOLFE: [01:38:16] Yeah, it was a very class-conscious city.

KLEIN: [01:38:20] And the classes being?

WOOLFE: [01:38:22] Well, being, you know, the sort of upper white Spanish roots kind of thing right to the mestizo.

KLEIN: [01:38:32] And then a large middle group.

WOOLFE: [01:38:33] Yeah. And then the large middle group. And then the Indians. They had a big Indian market from all the hills coming in there.

KLEIN: [01:38:44] Was anyone working in crafts development?

WOOLFE: [01:38:46] Yes. At that time in Cuenca, they had a sweater project and they also had, I can't think of it. It was Andina. They had a definite big group that was working with the Panama straw there, really the first group that got things made out of that and started putting dye in in the hats. And now you see these summer hats that are all different colors and stuff. That was the group that got that started. And other things they got. There was a big arts and crafts group there, but that wasn't my.

KLEIN: [01:39:23] Who did you live with when you moved, Wendy's family? When you moved to Cuenca?

WOOLFE: [01:39:29] When I moved to Cuenca, I had my own apartment. I moved into, with a family. I had the top floor and that was the apartment that this guy had, who I was replacing him. He and two other volunteers had this, and it was a very nice setup. It was a bedroom, living room, den. There was a little outside john. And then there was a kitchen sink and a sink. I didn't have a bathtub or a shower, but I had a nice little sink and my own toilet and my kitchen.

KLEIN: [01:40:05] At any point, either first year or second year, did you end up having a personal servant? Servant may be the wrong word. Someone working for you domestically?

WOOLFE: [01:40:13] No, I had one of the, this knitting group that I had. I had one of those girls and her mother would come in once a month and clean.

KLEIN: [01:40:24] You never had someone come live with you.

WOOLFE: [01:40:26] No, no. I never had any servants. As I said, once a month, they would come in and really mop the floors and do that, and it gave them some money and helped me. That was all.

KLEIN: [01:40:35] So you moved in with virtually no experience as an administrator.

WOOLFEE: [01:40:41] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:40:41] You moved into the blind school, essentially to supervise the AID lunch program. The broom factory. And the school.

WOOLFEE: [01:40:55] Yeah, but the guy who was the head of it really ran the school. I was more or less his assistant as far as running the school.

KLEIN: [01:41:01] Do you have a title? Did you have?

WOOLFEE: [01:41:03] No, I was just. I don't think I did have a title.

KLEIN: [01:41:07] All-purpose volunteer.

WOOLFEE: [01:41:09] Yeah, I was the volunteer that was working with the blind school. And mainly, as I said, it was to. He had the, oh, and I taught some English to the blind people. I mean, it was just. And I translated for him or I would. How was that? Whenever he had anything that needed to be read to the group, as a group, I would read it in Spanish to them because he couldn't.

KLEIN: [01:41:34] How many? What was the age range and how many?

WOOLFEE: [01:41:37] They were grown-ups and children. There were, let's see, maybe about 18 people altogether.

KLEIN: [01:41:46] Age range?

WOOLFEE: [01:41:48] Age range from about 14 to 35, 40.

KLEIN: [01:41:55] Did they live at the school?

WOOLFEE: [01:41:56] No, they lived. They had their own homes. Nobody lived at the school. They would come there in the mornings and then they had their

lunch there and then they'd have their little classes. And uh, they also, there also was a dentist who was affiliated with it, and he helped with it.

WOOLFE: [01:42:16] Not a blind dentist.

KLEIN: [01:42:16] He, for some reason, he had an interest in it and he helped with it. There were people who were involved, other people who were, you know, whether they were government people or what, I don't know.

KLEIN: [01:42:30] How did your life change in moving to Cuenca?

WOOLFE: [01:42:35] Well, it was. I found it was more interesting. And I had different work to do, but I felt more in charge, more capable of doing it. And then there were other volunteers in Cuenca, so it was more social. We got together. We tried not to get together too much so that people, you know, it wouldn't just be. And I had. And there were other young Ecuadorian people that I got to know. And there was sort of a group of young people and they were. We'd meet for tea in the afternoon at somebody's house or something. And they had parties. They always had lots of parties.

KLEIN: [01:43:15] Now with these people you work through, you met through work at the blind school or other ways?

WOOLFE: [01:43:20] I think, well, both. Through the blind school and through other volunteers. And they were just young. We were all about the same age. I mean, I was a little bit older than most of them. But most of them, they were young people in their early twenties and they were working or they were in college there.

KLEIN: [01:43:37] At any point did you develop a kind of informant mentor relationship? I mean, some people find a particular person in the country they live and work in, who kind of opens up a lot of the culture and society to them. You know, so you can joke in the middle ground. I don't know if that.

WOOLFE: [01:43:58] No, I don't think so. As I said, I got so that I did have good friends that were Ecuadorians. And a good young crowd that we did things

together. We went swimming and we played tennis and we just. And so that was very nice and I kept in touch. And then there were people when I got into the, when I took over on the knitting project and got to know quite a few of the women there that were doing the knitting on these sweaters I was selling. So that was good. I kept in touch with them after I got back to the States.

KLEIN: [01:44:31] Well, let's talk about how the knitting project came about.

WOOLFE: [01:44:33] Well, they had, uh, there were two people who were running it, or had started it, before I got there and their terms were over.

KLEIN: [01:44:42] Both Peace Corps volunteers?

WOOLFE: [01:44:43] Yeah, both Peace Corps volunteers. And they had started this knitting group. It was a group of women. And they got the, uh, I forget now how it worked. They got the wool and you paid for the wool, and then they made the sweaters, and then you sold the sweaters to Peace Corps people or whoever wanted to buy them. And or people would come, Americans would come through. And there was a little shop, sort of an aid shop in Cuenca, and they would have some of the sweaters there and they'd have other projects there. And people would make orders. I would take orders for the sweaters. And it was quite gratifying because a lot of these women, you know, they were single mothers. The husbands had left and they were there and this was money in their pocket.

KLEIN: [01:45:34] How did the women get to know of the project and how did they end up participating?

WOOLFE: [01:45:39] Grapevine kind of thing. Their friends were making sweaters and they'd come and they, you know, do things.

KLEIN: [01:45:46] But it was an informal program? It wasn't structured through the government or through any agency?

WOOLFE: [01:45:52] No, this was, um. Well, we worked.

KLEIN: [01:45:53] Where did they work?

WOOLFE: [01:45:55] In their homes. And then we'd get together at my house and they'd bring. And I'd give different, I had a whole list of the names and I would give different ones orders.

KLEIN: [01:46:06] But the skill of knitting is something they came with or already had?

WOOLFE: [01:46:10] Yeah, they knew how to do it. And I would just sometimes design a sweater or give them suggestions on what I would like or what the people would like. And they'd make it up.

KLEIN: [01:46:20] But did you learn how to knit?

WOOLFE: [01:46:22] I just, I've always known a little bit how to knit, you know, knit one, purl one. But quite fortunately that I didn't know that much about it, because they would come to me with their sweaters. And I would return some of them because they weren't, the quality wasn't good enough. And I would say, you know, this is not, you've got to redo these arms or something. And if I had known all of the effort that had gone in, I might have been nicer about it. But this was a business.

KLEIN: [01:46:46] Now what was the financial arrangement? Who paid for the wool?

WOOLFE: [01:46:51] We would. How did that work? I forget. I think we would pay. We got the money for the sweater. Or we had money already there that we would pay for the wool and then they would make the sweater. And then we would get the price and then they'd get the profit. So it was how much it cost. I mean, if the sweater was sold for 25 dollars, we'd take off the five dollars for the wool and the knitter would get the 20 bucks.

KLEIN: [01:47:19] And how many of you were doing this, running the project?

WOOLFE: [01:47:22] I was just running it.

KLEIN: [01:47:24] Just you.

WOOLFE: [01:47:24] Yeah. And then before I left, I had another girl who got involved. And she was Ecuadorian, so I passed it on to an Ecuadorian.

KLEIN: [01:47:29] And was all the marketing local?

WOOLFE: [01:47:32] Yeah, it was all local.

KLEIN: [01:47:34] And were there Ecuadorians as well as others who were buying the sweaters?

WOOLFE: [01:47:38] Yeah. Oh, there were Americans. They were very popular and it was. Andina had.

KLEIN: [01:47:43] Why did Americans come to Cuenca?

WOOLFE: [01:47:46] Oh, just tourists. They would be traveling through Ecuador. Most of them were embassy people and they'd be, they'd travel through and then they'd see these sweaters.

KLEIN: [01:47:55] The wool must be local.

WOOLFE: [01:47:56] And the wool was just local. It was natural wool. So they would get the wool. The women would buy the wool and they'd card it and they'd do the whole thing. We would pay for the wool and then the profit that we would get minus that would go to them.

KLEIN: [01:48:14] Do you know if at any point AID or Peace Corps or somebody threw in seed money, I mean?

WOOLFE: [01:48:20] Well, I think AID was involved somehow. Yeah, there was, I forget the different names because the names have changed. And there was this, as I said, with the craft program, all those people came down.

KLEIN: [01:48:35] The Alliance for Progress, was that?

WOOLFE: [01:48:37] Yeah, something. But it wasn't Alliance for Progress. It was, I think it was Andina. But I may be confused, but they came down. I remember they were working with the guys who were working on the crafts. And this one woman came and she was working on the program and it turned out she was somebody Barrymore. She had been John Barrymore's last wife. She was wanting to have coffee with it. She was quite a character, but she was in this artisan business and she was working for the government. It was a definite, I'm sorry, I don't remember that the governmental name. Because they did come down and they did get involved with the sweaters and with the other things.

KLEIN: [01:49:25] And you had gotten into it initially simply?

WOOLFE: [01:49:26] I just took over from the Peace Corps girl who was there before.

KLEIN: [01:49:30] And she was leaving, said here, it's yours.

WOOLFE: [01:49:32] She was leaving and she gave me, you know, the list of names and who makes sweaters and who does this and who does that. And so I would just sort of designate.

KLEIN: [01:49:39] So you must have been a busy person the second year.

WOOLFE: [01:49:41] Oh yeah, it was much, much more hectic than it had been in Azogues, but it was fun because I could see some progress. You know, you want to see results. And this I could see. Money was going into the hands of these women that were.

KLEIN: [01:49:55] The goal with the blind school was simply to keep it going?

WOOLFE: [01:49:58] Yes. Yeah. And we had support from, as I said, from the town and from the, uh, CARE. I think it was CARE. That was the food program. And my project mainly was that, as I said, they had this one guy who was really running it and teaching, and he was blind and then had the dentist that worked with it. Was to sit in that office, the CARE office, and say, when's our food coming? And it was all run by Ecuadorians and locals and lots of times you go through the market and you'd see CARE things that

were being sold. And they'd say, oh, it's at Guayaquil, it's coming. And then I'd go in the next day and I'd say, where's the food? And by badgering them, the food got to the people it was supposed to get to.

KLEIN: [01:50:42] Right.

WOOLFE: [01:50:42] And I've always thought since then, people ask me about Peace Corps and well what do they really do and everything? I say, it's a cheap way to make sure that the money that we are putting in these different programs gets to the people it's supposed to get to. And so that was a big part of my job was just sitting in that office. And then another part of it was sitting in the mayor's office waiting for him to give me the money for the, uh. It was in a convent where we had our rooms. And so then he'd give me the rent money every month and then I'd go and I'd pay the nun so we could stay there.

KLEIN: [01:51:20] Who marketed the brooms?

WOOLFE: [01:51:22] They did that through the town, the dentist. I wasn't involved with that, no. We had the equipment there and they made the brooms and then they would give them to the dentist and he would take it to. But it was, in Ecuador, and I think this is true in other countries. All brooms are made by blind people. That's just, you can't start a broom factory.

KLEIN: [01:51:46] That sounds familiar, even in Africa.

WOOLFE: [01:51:48] So yeah, they were very interesting projects. Both the, as I said, the sweaters. I went back in '70 and the sweater project was still going on with volunteers.

KLEIN: [01:51:59] As your second year was moving on and you're coming close to end of tour, did you have any particular goals or achievements you tried to want to get in place before you left?

WOOLFE: [01:52:14] Oh, mainly I wanted my programs to go on.

KLEIN: [01:52:16] OK, because they had an ongoing quality to them.

WOOLFE: [01:52:19] And so I wanted to find volunteers that would take over, and I did.

KLEIN: [01:52:23] How did you do that?

WOOLFE: [01:52:25] Well, there were new volunteers always coming. You know, it was a cycle. And there was a guy there who needed a job. Bill, I can't think of his last name. Anyway, he took over the blind. He was helping me with it the last few months.

KLEIN: [01:52:40] So you can go to the regional director and say, let me see who's coming in.

WOOLFE: [01:52:44] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:52:45] And I need some. And he would say, fine. Did you actually sit and interview people or recruit, I mean?

WOOLFE: [01:52:51] Well, I knew some of the volunteers. I think I mentioned it to him and he was the one that said, well, there's this one, that one coming. And he would assign me somebody. Bill was already there, so I knew him. But there was another girl who was coming in to work with the sweaters.

KLEIN: [01:53:09] Now by the, again as the second year was winding down, had you pretty much lost contact with the rest of the group you came with? Or I mean, you had refocused.

WOOLFE: [01:53:24] Yeah, we kept in contact a little bit. Yeah, people, when we took our vacations, we would. We'd wander around Ecuador and go places and go with people. So we'd see each other that way. Somebody would come through Cuenca on a vacation. You'd get together, that kind of thing. Or if I was in Quito, I'd look up friends in Quito.

KLEIN: [01:53:48] How did the experience of others in the group match up with yours?

WOOLFE: [01:53:55] Um, I was the only one. No, there were. Let's see. No, there were quite a few in our group, there were four of us that were in Cuenca after I got there. And we all had pretty favorable. One got, oh, there were. One guy got sick and he had to go home. But then there was another one who was actually from here in Tucson, Barry. I can't think his last name. Barry Hirsch. And he was teaching, but he stayed teaching. He was teaching at a boys school, and he became very popular with his students and he had a good teaching.

KLEIN: [01:54:32] I was going to ask whether any of them stuck within the teaching role.

WOOLFE: [01:54:36] He did, but it worked out well for him. I think he was, for whatever reasons he was able to keep it up and stay in his school and be in the same place for both years.

KLEIN: [01:54:49] What do you think the difference might have been?

WOOLFE: [01:54:51] I don't know. He might have just had better being a man, better discipline, perhaps, and maybe better prepared than I was.

KLEIN: [01:54:59] How about a better structure of the school?

WOOLFE: [01:55:01] Yeah, it could have been a better school setup. So he did, he did very well.

KLEIN: [01:55:07] So often as the termination conference comes, you know, your last conference, people are being asked, well, should you be replaced? But obviously that question. [phone rings]

WOOLFE: [01:55:18] Excuse me.

KLEIN: [01:55:18] You're coming to the end of the second year.

WOOLFE: [01:55:21] Yes, coming to the end and I'm getting somebody to replace me and get into the different, as I said, with the sweaters and in the blind school and everything, somebody to take my place.

KLEIN: [01:55:37] Then I'd ask about whether your experience matched up or how it compares with others in the group.

WOOLFE: [01:55:44] Others in the group. Well, I think pretty favorably.

WOOLFE: [01:55:48] Particularly on the issue of, I mean, you mentioned one guy who went in as a teacher, stayed as a teacher, and that was his role. But it had sort of been defined for you that you would be all purpose volunteer. Did other people have that, the all-purpose volunteer experience?

WOOLFE: [01:56:09] Yes, I think so. I know Barry, as I said, stayed as a teacher. I'm trying to think. But Al Shebbuck, who was in Cuenca, uh, he was. What was he? He was involved more in the crafts and business and of that, not teaching. I don't think he, I don't think Al ever taught.

KLEIN: [01:56:29] Although he came as a teacher?

WOOLFE: [01:56:30] Although he came as a teacher, right. Well, he, oh, I think he taught at the Peruvian or the Ecuadorian American center, that center that they had in Cuenca. So he taught some, that was sort of evening classes the way I had done in Azogues. But that wasn't mainly what he did. He was in the business end.

KLEIN: [01:56:55] And so there was a larger non-Ecuadorian population in Cuenca?

WOOLFE: [01:57:02] Uh no, there was a Peace Corps group. Trying to think of other Americans.

KLEIN: [01:57:07] Lutheran missionaries?

WOOLFE: [01:57:10] No, not necessarily. No, there were the ones in, just a couple. And I think they had a headquarters in Quito. They didn't have. There weren't very many Americans in Cuenca at all.

KLEIN: [01:57:22] No USAID presence or?

WOOLFE: [01:57:24] No, that was all in Quito and Guayaquil. Cuenca was the third largest city and we were pretty much it. Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:57:32] What was the political atmosphere?

WOOLFE: [01:57:35] Oh, we did have a revolution while we were there. They had a president and then they had this revolution and the junta took over, four army generals.

KLEIN: [01:57:48] Where was this in?

WOOLFE: [01:57:49] And this was going on over the whole country.

KLEIN: [01:57:52] During your second year?

WOOLFE: [01:57:53] Yeah, during my second year when I was in Cuenca.

KLEIN: [01:57:55] How did it directly impact you?

WOOLFE: [01:57:58] Well, our rep said that we could all, I think we all went to his house one night. But most of the time we just stayed in our own places and tried not to go out until it was over. It lasted about four days because there were.

KLEIN: [01:58:17] How did you get information about it?

WOOLFE: [01:58:19] Well, there was sort of a grapevine going around. The director. What?

KLEIN: [01:58:24] By phone or by just personal?

WOOLFE: [01:58:27] No, it was mostly just personal. We did, I did have a phone in the house that I lived in. The people had a phone. And once in a while I'd get calls. But this, it started off with a strike somehow. And then there was tear gas and riots.

KLEIN: [01:58:45] And this is in Cuenca?

WOOLFE: [01:58:47] Yeah. Well, it was all over the country.

KLEIN: [01:58:49] But I mean, the way it happened in your neighborhood.

WOOLFE: [01:58:52] We were told pretty much to stay in our own homes or keep close to our houses.

KLEIN: [01:59:00] Were people running through the streets? Was there gunfire?

WOOLFE: [01:59:03] Yeah, there was, as I said, there were some riots. And I think it was, uh. I don't know what started it, but there were definitely things going on. And there was, as I said, these riots and tear gas in the middle of town. And after four days, the army took over. And it was interesting to me that before when I had to go sit in the mayor's office, I had to sit. Sometimes he made me sit for hours before he would deign to come out and give me my money for my project.

KLEIN: [01:59:40] Right.

WOOLFE: [01:59:40] And the last few days I was, oh, that's one other group that was there was the Hope Project. And the last few days I was there after I had relinquished my apartment to the new volunteers that had come in, I stayed with the people at Hope, the Hope Project. And they were invited to dinner at this very nice Ecuadorian house. These people, upper class people, that we did not really, Peace Corps really didn't have anything to do with. But I said, yeah, fine, I'll come. And at the table, this big table, the present army officer who was in charge of things in Cuenca, who had replaced the mayor, was sitting up at the head of the table with people, and the mayor was down at the very end with me, sort of below the fault. And I thought, hey, you know, we're right at the same level, you know, at this point. Because he was very much persona non grata at that point. But I didn't feel worried or afraid or anything during the revolution. I mean, we were pretty safe. I don't think anybody got killed in Cuenca or anything.

KLEIN: [02:00:47] Did Ecuadorian friends come to you and say, don't worry.

WOOLFE: [02:00:51] The people I was living with, yes. And other people said, you know, you can always stay with us. And the head of the Communist Party in Cuenca came, and he said, this is dangerous times for you. You can come and stay with us. And I said, thank you very much and I thought, I'm not staying with that commie. That would be the last thing I'd want to do is have him say, well, you know, the American had to come stay with me. But so it was interesting. And the army, when they took over, they were very nice. I mean, I would go to get the rent check from the, oh I forget what position he was in the army. And he was very chatty and he said, you really should stay and find a better place. And he found me a better location for our little blind school.

KLEIN: [02:01:36] How many months was this?

WOOLFE: [02:01:38] They were. I'd say they were about five months, the last five or six months that I was there.

KLEIN: [02:01:47] The revolution.

WOOLFE: [02:01:47] Yeah.

KLEIN: [02:01:48] The coup had taken place.

WOOLFE: [02:01:49] The coup had taken place. And as I said, he was very helpful and the money was always there on time.

KLEIN: [02:01:55] Did you ever get any official communication from Peace Corps once the new government was in place, saying these are the changed circumstances?

WOOLFE: [02:02:03] No. Maybe our rep did. But the Peace Corps stayed in Ecuador. It was not a question of anybody being evacuated, like Afghanistan or anything. They always stayed right there. And they were, as I said, the army was very, very solid. They, you know, things ran well in this little junta. And they certainly ran well in Cuenca. There was no problem and anything that we had, any questions we had or anything, were looked

after. So yeah. And of course, since then there's been numerous coups and revolutions.

KLEIN: [02:02:41] And at one point when we first, when we were talking about training, we mentioned CIA. And you said there were some things that occurred, accusations once you were in the country.

WOOLFE: [02:02:54] Oh well, people would, you know, I mean, every once in a while you'd walk down the street and maybe kids would yell at you, gringa! Gringa go home! And then people would say, oh well, you know, you'd be out at a dinner party or something and somebody say, well, you people, you work for the CIA.

KLEIN: [02:03:13] And you would say?

WOOLFE: [02:03:14] And we would say no. I don't have anything to do with them, you know.

KLEIN: [02:03:18] Were the local newspapers?

WOOLFE: [02:03:20] Yep.

KLEIN: [02:03:21] Were you able to read them and did you?

WOOLFE: [02:03:23] They weren't really much to bother with. I mean, they had nothing really much in the way of news. Oh, Miss Cuenca became Miss Ecuador. That was the kind of news that they had.

KLEIN: [02:03:35] Radio, TV? Not yet?

WOOLFE: [02:03:38] No.

KLEIN: [02:03:38] Was there radio though?

WOOLFE: [02:03:40] Um, no, we had. Some of us had, as I said, shortwave. We'd get BBC or Voice of America or Radio Moscow.

KLEIN: [02:03:50] And you were allowed to have shortwave.

WOOLFE: [02:03:51] Yeah. Unfortunately, the one that my company gave me got stolen in the move. It was just a little thing and somebody grabbed it when I moved from Azogues to Cuenca, so I lost my shortwave. But that was, we found very interesting, because if, the people who had shortwave. You'd listen to BBC and then you'd listen or you'd listen to the Voice of America and then you'd listen to Radio Moscow and then you'd listen to BBC. And they'd all be different. But BBC, usually was we figured probably the truer message that was coming across.

KLEIN: [02:04:27] How did you get around in Cuenca? I mean, if you were going to a party or if you were.

WOOLFE: [02:04:31] Yeah, we either walked.

KLEIN: [02:04:33] Going to the mayor's office or.

WOOLFE: [02:04:33] I had a bicycle that I rode around on.

KLEIN: [02:04:37] You bought your own bicycle?

WOOLFE: [02:04:38] That was part of the Peace Corps office. They had some bicycles. I got it from them. And then busses. We'd use the local public bus if I wanted to go out to Biblián or Azogues or down to Guayaquil for vacation. We would always use bus.

KLEIN: [02:04:55] Volunteers never had motorcycles or motorbikes.

WOOLFE: [02:04:57] No, we never did have any. I don't think anybody did.

KLEIN: [02:05:05] Do you particularly recall again, coming to the end of the second year now? You've done 20 months.

WOOLFE: [02:05:11] As I said, mainly I was looking forward to getting home and I wasn't really thinking about, uh. When I look back on it, I've always kicked myself because there were a lot of opportunities I would have had to. I

went back to work in New York just because. But they gave us just before we left, we got the letter that a program in Micronesia was starting up. And, you know, if they had sent it to me six months later, I would have been gone in a flash. But at that point, I just wanted to get, you know, home and have a few months and just relax and sort of get back to the city.

KLEIN: [02:05:48] Hey, but now you're 29. Did you have any new plans or, I mean, was it?

WOOLFE: [02:05:56] No, I thought about teaching, but I didn't. I just wanted to take some time off, I think. And just as I said, just go back to New York and get back into the city and all the cultural things that I've been missing and, you know, that kind of see what was happening in the world kind of thing. I wasn't really making many plans. I did go back to New York and went back to work in advertising. So anyway, I went back to New York.

KLEIN: [02:06:30] How did you evaluate your two years? I mean, you're satisfied you've done it.

WOOLFE: [02:06:34] I was, I figured I could have done more. I could have done better.

KLEIN: [02:06:40] Were you ever tempted to stay on longer?

WOOLFE: [02:06:43] At that point, no, I was not. And there was nothing in my project that would require me to.

KLEIN: [02:06:50] Yeah. It was an ongoing thing. Not like.

WOOLFE: [02:06:53] I think I had just about had enough of it. But we would get these bulletins every month. And in fact, one of them had, my mother noticed it. They had an ad for a what do you call it, not a babysitter, but someone to sort of a live-in person. And it turned out it was Ethel Kennedy. And I thought that would have been an interesting, out at Hickory Hill or whatever it was. And one time in one of these, I think after about eight or

nine months in New York, I was already fed up with that again. I should never have gone back but.

KLEIN: [02:07:32] Did you go back to the same company or just?

WOOLFE: [02:07:33] No, I went to a different company, Ogilvy Mather.

KLEIN: [02:07:38] Yeah, and in job hunting going back, how did people who were interviewing you see and perceive your Peace Corps service?

WOOLFE: [02:07:46] Oh yeah, they were very favorable. Or it didn't matter. I mean, you know, in advertising, they could, a couple of places they couldn't have care less, you know?

KLEIN: [02:07:53] OK. Was that a letdown? I mean, you must have felt.

WOOLFE: [02:07:57] A little bit. And then there were some, there was a guy I was going out with who said, don't worry, I won't tell anybody you were in Peace Corps. And you know, that kind of mentality.

KLEIN: [02:08:04] That's a New York thing.

WOOLFE: [02:08:05] Yes. And there's still, of course, I remember going to a dinner with somebody I knew who worked for Pan Am. What was it? Some kind of political thing. And they said something about Jack Kennedy's kiddy corps. And I hissed in the middle of this, I think it was a Republican thing.

KLEIN: [02:08:25] At the end of the two years, how was your Spanish?

WOOLFE: [02:08:30] I was pretty good.

KLEIN: [02:08:30] You were semi-fluent?

WOOLFE: [02:08:33] Yeah, I was not as, there again, as fluent as I probably would like to have been because I did speak a lot of English in Cuenca. If I'd stayed in Azogues, I think it probably would be better. But they tested us at the end and I forget, I came out with a 3.5 or something. I don't know

what the thing is, but fairly fluent. So but then as I said, I saw this ad in the Peace Corps thing for a teacher in a mining company school in Peru and the address. I was on Park Avenue, it was right up the road from my advertising agency. So I called them up and I said, yeah, I'll come up and have an interview. So I went up and he said, yes, this is teaching dependent children in school in Peru. And I said, oh, well, I've been back from Peace Corps and I've been teaching for two years. And then we went out to lunch and the more he, and with this other guy.

WOOLFE: [02:09:29] And the more he got talking, the more I wanted to get back. I just couldn't wait to get back to Latin America. And we went back to his office. And then he said, well, you don't have your certification. And I said, no, I don't. But I said, I've been living in Latin America for two years and I've been teaching a lot, I said. And I've been teaching for two years and I said, you could get somebody with certification down there and they'd last two weeks. And so they were desperate for teachers. So he said, uh, we chatted a while and then he said, well, are you going? And I didn't know if he meant, was I going back to work or was I going to Peru or what? So I just said yes. He said, going to be ready in two weeks? I said yeah. So I managed to get back to South America. And then I taught for Cerro de Pasco Corporation.

KLEIN: [02:10:19] For?

WOOLFE: [02:10:19] The Cerro de Pasco Mining Corporation, their dependent school. I taught third grade.

KLEIN: [02:10:24] But essentially, who were the children?

WOOLFE: [02:10:27] The children were children of the people who had come to work there.

KLEIN: [02:10:34] The management class?

WOOLFE: [02:10:35] Yes. They were English speaking. They had two schools. They had Spanish speaking school for the Peruvians. And then they had this English speaking school for everybody else. And I had 15 kids in my class

and I had 12 different nationalities. But they all spoke English. And I was teaching in English and I had a regular third grade teacher. But I had a, they had a very well-set curriculum and.

KLEIN: [02:10:59] Usually it's the Carnegie points for the international schools as a way of getting a recognized diploma.

WOOLFEE: [02:11:07] Something, but um, but yeah, I really, and I look back on.

KLEIN: [02:11:13] And your pay and living circumstances must have changed dramatically.

WOOLFEE: [02:11:16] Oh yeah, it was not like Peace Corps. Well, we had company housing.

KLEIN: [02:11:23] Where in Peru did you go?

WOOLFEE: [02:11:24] I went to La Oroya, the smelter town, and that was quite an experience, too, but that's where I met my husband. And so it went on from there.

KLEIN: [02:11:35] But your life when going back to Peru is very different than the life you had led as a volunteer?

WOOLFEE: [02:11:40] Yeah.

KLEIN: [02:11:41] You were back in Latin America.

WOOLFEE: [02:11:42] Yeah. But I was definitely an American company employee, which was different.

KLEIN: [02:11:48] Did you have much chance to interact with people in Latin America?

WOOLFEE: [02:11:54] A little, yeah, because my Spanish was pretty good. And so, yeah, I got to know different Peruvians. I was, you know, their people that were working for the company and and the kids and the teachers. We had

Peruvian teachers, so I made good friends with them. And when I'd go down to Lima for the weekends, sometimes why I could, you know, go to different things. And when I left the company after two years, I went down to Lima and then I taught at one of those centers, the cultural center in Lima. I took sort of a working vacation and I taught there and they had such a good English program. I'm sorry that I didn't, you know, buy myself a program.

WOOLFE: [02:12:42] And then they wanted me to, which was quite flattering, they wanted me to teach there again. They had a junta, the generals have taken over in Peru, so it was another revolution while I was there. And they wanted someone to teach their army, some of the head guys English, and they wanted me to stay and do it. And it would have been, I would have loved to stay, but the pay was just not enough. I mean it was, most of the people that were working at the center were wives of diplomats and things. And I mean, it was just something to do and I couldn't support myself on it. But there again, I'm always sorry that I didn't get the chance to stay.

KLEIN: [02:13:19] By now your family must have been appalled by the fact that you weren't married.

WOOLFE: [02:13:23] They had given up years ago.

KLEIN: [02:13:26] Yes, I guess once you're 30.

WOOLFE: [02:13:28] Yeah, they finally, you know, this is the sixties. If you don't make it by the time you're 28, why you're finished, so yeah.

KLEIN: [02:13:34] I didn't get married till I was 39 so.

WOOLFE: [02:13:36] Oh well now, the thing was with me, and you probably noticed it too. By the time I got married, I was 34 when I got married. Most of my friends had been divorced by that point, who were marrying when I was in my early twenties. Ah, it's just a different world.

KLEIN: [02:13:51] Well, let's come back to a kind of a question, general question. What effect do you think Peace Corps had?

WOOLFE: [02:14:00] Oh, I think it's had a tremendous effect on my life. I think I learned more, probably in my two years in Peace Corps than I learned in my four years of college. And I went to a good college and I had some good courses and stuff. But the broadening of it, I mean, and the people you, I was with wonderful people, and the different things you're exposed to, the situations you're put into. I've always talked up Peace Corps because I think it's tremendous and I think it's the way our foreign policy should be. You've got people over there at a level where they can help and do something. And it's, I just, I was so glad I ran into this group here in Tucson.

WOOLFE: [02:14:47] I just, I was at a dinner party for some people I'd known from Peru who moved here. And they said, oh, there's a girl here who was in Ecuador in the Peace Corps. And it was Monica Mueller, and she had just come back and this was in '95 or something. And I said, oh, I would love to, you know, get in touch with people. And I would go to those meetings out there and it's nice because it's every other month. It's not anything that ties you down. But I always feel sort of uplifted when I come out of there because it's, you know, you get so depressed listening to the news and the whole thing. But there are people and, you know, they're doing something. It's nice.

KLEIN: [02:15:30] You mentioned that you had gone back to Ecuador.

WOOLFE: [02:15:33] Yeah.

KLEIN: [02:15:34] How many years later?

WOOLFE: [02:15:35] This was Christmas of '69.

KLEIN: [02:15:38] OK. So it was about, uh, five years?

WOOLFE: [02:15:41] I left in '66.

KLEIN: [02:15:41] Oh, three years or so.

WOOLFE: [02:15:44] Yeah, I was that. I was leaving Peru to go back to the States, and I met two friends who I'd been in Peace Corps, with Ed Glazier and Rich Edwards. They were in Vietnam and they, but they were not with the Army. They were with the aid project in Vietnam. And so they had a vacation and then we had corresponded the whole time I was in Peru and they said, let's get together in Ecuador. So I said, fine, I'm leaving Peru. So they flew over from Vietnam, and then I flew up and we met in Guayaquil. And we had a great time.

KLEIN: [02:16:20] In the three intervening years had you stayed in touch with any Ecuadorian friends?

WOOLFE: [02:16:26] Yeah, I stayed in touch with the woman and her daughter, who were in the knitting group. And I continued to get them knitting orders when I was back in New York. And then I would also send them, they'd want things from the States and I'd send them things down. And we kept correspondence for, oh, maybe three or four years. Well, we were still in touch when I went back, actually. So I did get to see them and I went out and visited my family in Azogues and Biblián.

KLEIN: [02:17:02] And was your impression of going back?

WOOLFE: [02:17:04] Oh yeah, they were all fine and they were pleased to see me and they were still doing pretty well.

KLEIN: [02:17:12] And all your work been obliterated or was it still ongoing?

WOOLFE: [02:17:16] My knitting group was still going. And the blind association had fallen apart at some point. I don't know what went wrong there. I think the major mover and shaker, this guy who really did the teaching and the organizing, had moved. He'd moved to Quito. And I don't think there was enough. There was another Peace Corps volunteer that helped me with that. I'd forgotten. Gus helped me with it. And then when I left, he was working with this other new guy, Bill. So I did have some help. And we did, when I was there, we went up one time by bus to Quito for a blind

convention. And Gus and I took, and that was quite a project, because of course everybody's blind. But he and I, and there might have been a couple of other people, went up. And so that was quite a good.

KLEIN: [02:18:11] When you went back after the three-year interval, and just on the visit, did you have any feeling that, gee, I'd like to continue or stay here or, you know, come back again on the?

WOOLFE: [02:18:26] No, I don't think. I mean, I was glad to be back and I enjoyed and I met some people in Peru who were from Cuenca that I also got in touch with. But I don't think I really wanted to be there again. I think, yeah, no, I don't think I really wanted to live there.

KLEIN: [02:18:47] So what is your take now on the issue of the APV, the all-purpose volunteer? Do you think someone who goes in now and goes to Romania, Afghanistan, Zambia should be?

WOOLFE: [02:19:04] I think, yeah, I think it's better if they are equipped in one specific area, or more than one. I think we were told when we, in our debriefing I think, that the plan was the early groups would be to go and to create a presence and get some things done and work with the people. But that the original plan with Peace Corps was, I don't know how many years it was, that eventually they would get to people who they could send over who were definitely qualified in more hardcore engineers and people like that. So I don't know now if they, what?

KLEIN: [02:19:50] That would be nice to themselves. There was no plan.

WOOLFE: [02:19:53] I mean, that was the five-year plan or something.

KLEIN: [02:19:55] It evolved that way. I mean, there was a long period when.

WOOLFE: [02:19:58] That's they said when we left in '66 that, well, this first group's. Because as I said, when I found out in the debriefing that they called us the Cuerpo de Paseo, that, you know, we had a good time and I think I could have worked a little harder. Although, you know, that was, it was Ecuador. I think the training really, we were in such intense training and

then when we got there and they said, well, just sit around and take your time with things.

KLEIN: [02:20:28] Yeah, interesting.

WOOLFE: [02:20:28] And uh, yeah, we did get kind of laid back, I think.

KLEIN: [02:20:34] Yeah. And how do you feel about now, if you want to comment on the idea that we should now expand the Peace Corps in 2002?

WOOLFE: [02:20:44] Yeah, well, I think we should keep it definitely expanded as much as possible. I don't, I think with everything you get to a certain point where it's not viable. I don't know whether, you know, having 10,000 volunteers is better than maybe having 15,000 if you can get the right people and the right projects and everything.

KLEIN: [02:21:07] So it isn't the numbers that make the difference.

WOOLFE: [02:21:09] No.

KLEIN: [02:21:09] It's the quality of the program.

WOOLFE: [02:21:10] It's the quality of the program. But I do, as I said before, I like having something like Peace Corps there because there's so many projects that do not have people looking after them. I mean, you know, it's, money goes into places, and I'm sure that it just gets siphoned off.

KLEIN: [02:21:27] What about the idea that ultimately, yeah, the responsibility for providing for blind people making brooms is an Ecuadorian responsibility?
[phone rings]

WOOLFE: [02:21:37] Yeah, that too. Excuse me.

KLEIN: [02:21:40] Oops. That's alright.

[END OF INTERVIEW]