

Joanne Powhida Roll Oral History Interview
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Biographical Note

Joanne Powhida Roll served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Colombia from 1963 to 1965 on a health education project.

Access

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Oral History Interview

with

Joanne Powhida Roll

June 18, 2005
Denver, Colorado

By Robert Klein

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

KLEIN: [00:00:12] Today is June 18, 2005. This is Bob Klein. I am interviewing Joanne Roll, who was a Peace Corps volunteer in Colombia, 1963 to '65, in a health education and rural CD project. So let's go back, you know, about a year before you joined and talk about what was going on in your life?

ROLL: [00:00:39] I was a senior. I was entering my senior year at the University of Colorado in Boulder. I was majoring in political science. My plan was law school. I very much wanted to go to law school, but I was burnt out on school and I was absolutely. The idea that you would sit in the UMC in Boulder and you'd solve all the world's problems, but nothing really happened, you know?

KLEIN: [00:01:07] This was '63 now?

ROLL: [00:01:07] This was '62-'63, yeah.

KLEIN: [00:01:09] Where did you grow up?

ROLL: [00:01:12] I'm an army brat, so I had grown up all over the world and Nuremburg High School was where I went to high school for about three years. And I come out of a time where we were, it was like we were all charged with the idea that you had a responsibility in the world and you had to make things better and you couldn't let what happened in Germany happen again. And you very much, you know, I.

KLEIN: [00:01:43] Was that part of the army milieu?

ROLL: [00:01:46] I think that was certainly, yeah, my father was a career military and he came out and he was a teacher and he worked with Model U.N. as a teacher. But yeah, I grew up with that, you know?

KLEIN: [00:02:02] And so when you went into college, you had decided, had you made a career choice?

ROLL: [00:02:08] No, not when I went into college. I started out as a math major, hit calculus and changed immediately. Then I was going to do an anthropology, which I found fascinating. But I was a scholarship student and I was afraid to take tough courses because of my average. And physical anthropology was real tough and I didn't want to risk it.

KLEIN: [00:02:34] During your high school years, did you do any kind of volunteer work, extracurricular things?

ROLL: [00:02:41] Junior Red Cross. But also when you're, I was a, you know, in the military and we were in Germany after the occupation officially ended and there was a big push to develop German-American relationships and friendships. And so in high school, we were part of, you know, you certainly got the idea that you had obligations, you know, whether it was to kids who were poor or whether, you know, yeah, that was very much part of growing up.

KLEIN: [00:03:13] Had you learned in the second language?

ROLL: [00:03:16] You know, it's real interesting. I studied German for three years and I could never speak or understand a word of it, but I could do the written part.

KLEIN: [00:03:23] Yeah, OK.

ROLL: [00:03:24] Whereas I could a little bit, but not very much.

KLEIN: [00:03:27] Then when you were in college, same thing. Extracurricular work?

ROLL: [00:03:31] Not really, because I worked. I put myself through college.

KLEIN: [00:03:34] So did you do any travel at all during your college years?

ROLL: [00:03:38] No, I did not.

KLEIN: [00:03:39] All right. So you're facing graduation in '63. And how had you become aware of the Peace Corps?

ROLL: [00:03:48] Well, I remember John Kennedy's speech. You know, I just. And my grandfather in Philadelphia was Irish Catholic, and he was a ward healer in Philadelphia, and he, to him, the fact that a Catholic Irish kid was president, you know. So how could I not know, you know? And I remember that speech and I remember thinking, wow, just wow. But I didn't think, I didn't think Peace Corps myself. I wasn't that focused at the time. And even in my senior year, it was, um. I wasn't. They were giving various tests, you know, and I probably would have taken the CIA test if that had been the Saturday I was off work, you know. I wished I had been more honest, but it just, you know. But certainly, that's not true. I would not have done the CIA. But I might have, well, I did have the possibility of being a clerk and the Land Management Bureau in Denver. That was because I was a poli sci major. And I wanted to go to law school, but I was not going to, I was burnt out and financially I was going to have to finagle

some stuff before I could go. And so I took the Peace Corps test and I still, there was.

KLEIN: [00:05:30] Do you recall the test?

ROLL: [00:05:30] I recall taking it. I don't recall anything about it.

KLEIN: [00:05:32] But usually you didn't take the test until you had applied, or not necessarily. Do you remember applying to the Peace Corps and filling out the application form?

ROLL: [00:05:42] I remember taking the test first.

KLEIN: [00:05:45] OK, OK.

ROLL: [00:05:46] I think they offered the test on campus, you know, in a basement, you know, kind of thing.

KLEIN: [00:05:51] And at that point after you took the test, was it just one of several possibilities of what you might do?

ROLL: [00:05:57] Yes. Yes.

KLEIN: [00:06:00] So it was still very theoretical.

ROLL: [00:06:03] Right.

KLEIN: [00:06:05] At what point did it become real?

ROLL: [00:06:07] Well. I tell this story because this is the way it happened.

KLEIN: [00:06:12] Sure.

ROLL: [00:06:13] I wrote a letter to Sargent Shriver and I said, no, don't. I said I understood that he was going to be sending a group of lawyers to one of the countries in Africa that had just come out from under colonial rule. And the idea was to codify tribal law. And I wrote and said that I would like to

go with that group of lawyers. And of course, at the time, they were all male. And I said I wasn't a lawyer, but I had helped in voter registration and I could type. And I swear I got a telegram back inviting me to join an all-female group going to South America. And I don't, I put the two together, but I think that they saw right through my thinking. And I need to say that I did not want to get married at the time, although most of my friends were and there was a relationship that might have developed that way. But I also felt the kind of men that I want to know are in the Peace Corps. And I think that came real clear, came through in my letter to Shriver.

KLEIN: [00:07:21] So you had graduated?

ROLL: [00:07:23] No, this was still.

KLEIN: [00:07:24] This was still before you graduated.

ROLL: [00:07:25] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:07:26] Do you recall the application? Because usually when you do fill the application out, you indicate country of interest that you'd like to go here.

ROLL: [00:07:34] I think that that was. I don't remember the, I think that came after the test. And I do remember, all kidding aside, thinking that Africa because the colonial era was ending, that that would be the most fantastic. That would be just the greatest place to be. And I did want to go to Africa. And as I say, this handwritten note about, please, I want to be with all those lawyers, you know? And I was disappointed when I got the assignment for health education.

KLEIN: [00:08:08] So you wrote to Shriver, the next thing you know, got a telegram saying you're invited to train.

ROLL: [00:08:15] Right.

KLEIN: [00:08:15] For Colombia.

ROLL: [00:08:18] Right. For health education. And it was all women.

KLEIN: [00:08:21] And where was the training?

ROLL: [00:08:24] University of New Mexico.

KLEIN: [00:08:26] At Las Cruces?

ROLL: [00:08:27] No. In Albuquerque.

KLEIN: [00:08:28] OK. And what was the time frame then?

ROLL: [00:08:34] Pretty quick. I remember I got the telegram it seems to me like in May and our training started July 7th.

KLEIN: [00:08:42] OK. And you had to fit graduation in there.

ROLL: [00:08:46] Right.

KLEIN: [00:08:47] What was your family's reaction?

ROLL: [00:08:54] My mother was appalled. And my father was more concerned about how was I going to support myself, you know. But my mother did not want me to go. It just did not, um. She was afraid for my safety, and um.

KLEIN: [00:09:16] That was when she knew you would likely to go to Colombia.

ROLL: [00:09:19] Right.

KLEIN: [00:09:22] How about your peers, your friends?

ROLL: [00:09:25] Well, they were excited for me, but they all were going to join the Peace Corps, but I was the only one who went. It was one of those things, you know, a year later, I would say they were still sitting in the UMC, you know, drinking coffee, smoking cigarettes, talking about saving the world. And I was there in the middle of nowhere, you know? Thanks.

KLEIN: [00:09:46] What was your initial reaction when you got the telegram? Cause all of a sudden, it's real.

ROLL: [00:09:52] Yeah. I was amazed they wanted me, and I did not want to go to Colombia with all women and do health education. But I didn't.

KLEIN: [00:10:03] Did you think to say no and see if they could offer you a better deal?

ROLL: [00:10:07] I did not. I really did not, because in those days, even getting, I mean, getting accepted for training was a big step and I didn't. I didn't think. I mean, we knew that that training was not any guarantee that you would go overseas. And I just, you know, I felt lucky to have gotten that far.

KLEIN: [00:10:33] Had you ever studied Spanish?

ROLL: [00:10:35] Yes, I had taken Spanish in college. I hadn't done real well, but yeah, I had.

KLEIN: [00:10:39] OK. So how did you, what happened? How did you get from Denver to Albuquerque?

ROLL: [00:10:50] It happened real quick. I mean, I was going to go visit a friend of mine who was in Mexico City, that was going to be my graduation trip, and I went for my initial evaluation, physical evaluation. I needed to have dental work done. So that cancels the trip, and I had to use money for dental work and people, dentists, people moved, well they didn't move heaven and earth, but people made accommodations. Dentists did, and I stayed with a friend's family so that I could get the work done in time to report to training. So there was a sense of, well, let us help you do this since you're, you know.

KLEIN: [00:11:38] Where was your family living?

ROLL: [00:11:39] In Canyon City, which is about 150 miles southwest of Denver.

KLEIN: [00:11:45] But do you remember at the goodbye, did you think next thing you'd be in Colombia?

ROLL: [00:11:52] No, I knew that there would be training and that we'd be home after training.

KLEIN: [00:11:55] Oh, OK.

ROLL: [00:11:56] So I knew that.

KLEIN: [00:11:57] So at that point it wasn't like.

ROLL: [00:11:58] No, no. And in those days it was the three months training or the 10 weeks or whatever. And then you came home and then you were gone for two years. And I saw it as an adventure, really, really an adventure. I wasn't at all sure that I would get through training.

KLEIN: [00:12:17] Now talk about first reporting to training in Albuquerque.

ROLL: [00:12:28] Um, I just, I remember getting off the plane and there was somebody waving a sign and a couple of us kind of gravitated towards, you know, kind of looking each other over, as I say, we were an all-female group. And uh, and we had a nickname for him, which I will not say, but he was part of the training, you know, he was a training coordinator and he was always waving signs and changing schedules and herding us to this place or that place. And so that was my first, uh.

KLEIN: [00:13:11] Now you're in the midst of, how many were in the training group?

ROLL: [00:13:15] OK, um, that was the summer. That was the summer of '63. And they used to talk about they were going to just parachute volunteers. There were 300 in training at UNM.

KLEIN: [00:13:28] Wow.

ROLL: [00:13:29] And we, our group, 42 went down and I think we were over 60, all women. But we trained concurrently with a group of men who were going to Ecuador and there were about 75 of them. And then there was a group going. There was a group that was four weeks ahead of us that was going to Colombia. There was a group going to Brazil, you know. And it just seemed like there were, the whole campus was Peace Corps trainees.

KLEIN: [00:14:05] But you could identify your own Colombia.

ROLL: [00:14:07] Oh, absolutely. Because we, yeah, we trained together. We roomed together. We were on the same schedule.

KLEIN: [00:14:13] What was your initial impression of the others in the group? I mean, you joined and now.

ROLL: [00:14:21] My first impression, which really turned out to be wrong, was they were all home ec majors. And what was I doing here, you know? And um, that changed.

KLEIN: [00:14:36] Yeah. For the most part, were they recent college graduates?

ROLL: [00:14:40] We were all college graduates. There were one or two women who had had two years of college, but everybody else was a college grad.

KLEIN: [00:14:47] Anyone over 30?

ROLL: [00:14:48] Yes. A woman named Olga, who was like in her sixties. And I think she was the oldest and by far and she did go overseas. She did.

KLEIN: [00:15:04] Were there any in that group who came from a Hispanic background?

ROLL: [00:15:08] Yes. And again, you know, it's only in retrospect that it registers. Two women who, one was the daughter of, her last name was Lara, and she was the daughter of, or she was the niece of a very famous songwriter in Mexico. And then another woman who came from California

and the very, the first day, either the first day we were there or the first Sunday, Maria Elena and three or four other women in my group went out to the Albuquerque airport and parachuted. They couldn't, I can't believe, because it's just coming to mind, because I remember she had these leather boots and they couldn't have parachuted. But I think they did. They did something.

KLEIN: [00:16:05] Skydiving?

ROLL: [00:16:05] They couldn't have skydived. Because I don't think we did. But it seems to me they, something just, they were tremendous women. They were just tremendous. Yeah. And I remember.

KLEIN: [00:16:18] Did you?

ROLL: [00:16:19] No! I wanted.

KLEIN: [00:16:22] Your feet were on the ground.

ROLL: [00:16:23] Yes. I wanted to sit and drink coffee and smoke cigarettes and save the world.

KLEIN: [00:16:29] Now, talk about the structure of training. It must have different phases.

ROLL: [00:16:38] It was very demanding physically. We had calisthenics every morning. We were told that we were American women and we didn't have upper body strength and that we had to, we did a lot of exercises to develop upper body strength. Climbing up ropes in the gym. We ran for a mile every morning. We had very intensive language training.

KLEIN: [00:17:07] Well, let's stay with the physical.

ROLL: [00:17:08] Oh, with the physical, OK.

KLEIN: [00:17:10] Was it just that 40, your health ed group that was doing this?

ROLL: [00:17:14] No, that was part of everybody. Everybody. We ran for a mile in the morning, and I think everybody was pretty much on the same schedule in terms of running in the morning, breakfast and lunch and dinner, so that all volunteers were, I mean, all trainees were in that thing.

KLEIN: [00:17:37] With the phys ed, did you have a feeling attendance was being taken and people were watching you?

ROLL: [00:17:41] Absolutely. Absolutely. And I was going to say we didn't miss anything, and that was the other part. And there was a real emphasis on you're American women and you're weak. And we're really going to see, you know, for us.

KLEIN: [00:17:55] Who's articulating this? Who are the trainers?

ROLL: [00:18:00] Later on, when we did survival training, we had ex Marines.

KLEIN: [00:18:05] But initially?

ROLL: [00:18:06] Initially they were the PE staff at UNM.

KLEIN: [00:18:09] But they had not been volunteers.

ROLL: [00:18:11] No, no, no, no. We did not. And we were Colombia 11. But Colombia I still was in the process of terminating and they did come back and train us, but not till further on in our training.

KLEIN: [00:18:23] Ok, now let's talk about the language training.

ROLL: [00:18:26] We had native speakers. It was audiolingual and it was five hours a day.

KLEIN: [00:18:33] Wow.

ROLL: [00:18:34] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:18:36] When you went into it, was there any implication that if you didn't learn the language at a certain level, you wouldn't go?

ROLL: [00:18:45] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:18:46] Did they give you a particular test you had to pass or?

ROLL: [00:18:52] We were tested all the time in class. I don't remember.

KLEIN: [00:18:56] OK. And how did you take to the language training?

ROLL: [00:19:02] I don't have a facility in language. I really don't. And I was in the third group out of five and five would have been bilingual and one would have been people had no language background at all. And I did a lot of memorizing because I couldn't verbalize very well. But one of the things that we, after a while we were just so tired because we went from 6:00 in the morning to maybe 9:00 or 10:00 at night. And I think that you get so tired that a lot of your resistance, you know, you're picking stuff up and you don't even realize it. Language was very important.

KLEIN: [00:19:47] What was your own feeling about language learning, that you were going to make it or this was going to be what did you in?

ROLL: [00:19:58] No, I was beginning to feel pretty, because I was in the third group.

KLEIN: [00:20:03] Right.

ROLL: [00:20:03] So I was beginning to feel. Plus, I just I had had Spanish in my senior year in college and I hadn't done that well. But it was like I was, now that was being a help. And I was not worried about the language. Perhaps I should have been, but I wasn't.

KLEIN: [00:20:19] Did you begin to have a sense of commitment was growing to being a Peace Corps volunteer? You must have been, you know, not sure at all.

ROLL: [00:20:28] I had. What happened. You develop the group. You know, you're bonding with these people that you're going through all this strenuous stuff with and you really care about them and you don't want to leave that. That was first thing. Second thing is, you already hate the Peace Corps staff. You know, you're just, you know, you can't wait. Yeah, yeah. Can't wait to get away from them. I had been and continue to have a lot of questions about the actual projects that we were doing and how comprehensive our training was.

KLEIN: [00:21:07] Well that will come later.

ROLL: [00:21:07] Yeah, but that was right on. That was from the very beginning.

KLEIN: [00:21:11] OK, so you had PE, you had the language. What else in training in the early phase?

ROLL: [00:21:17] OK, we had to have a course in American government because if, we did a lot of this, if the communists captured you, you have to be able to defend your country. We had a course in Russian history.

KLEIN: [00:21:31] Well, was it world communism?

ROLL: [00:21:33] No. It seems to me Russian history. Very good professor. And then we had a lot of cultural stuff about Colombia, history of Colombia, and then cultural things. We had very little training in health education, very little. And what we had.

KLEIN: [00:21:49] In the early phase then, did the those going to Colombia would, did you go to separate lectures on the history of Colombia? Or was everybody learning?

ROLL: [00:21:59] No, we were, because the training groups were staggered by training start date. And so every group was kind of going through its own stuff. And it seems to me that a lot of stuff was done in language groups so that there were maybe, maybe 15 in my, 10 or 15 in my language group. And we were, we would be tracked for some cultural education based on our language group.

KLEIN: [00:22:34] And how early did the technical training start, was that in the early phases too?

ROLL: [00:22:40] That was in the early phases at UNM.

KLEIN: [00:22:41] What did it consist of?

ROLL: [00:22:41] I think we had a first aid course, but no, we had a self-help medical course that was for everybody in the evening. The training was inadequate. That's all I can say. I remember at one point, we were taken down to Albuquerque's, the public health or the public utilities, and they gave us a demonstration on how to use an atomic stove, which was an early microwave. We visited some community centers. When we got up into Taos later on, we again, but the training from, in terms of health, was just inadequate. I think we studied the food groups and I remember my partner and I, we got to Colombia. We couldn't remember were there five food groups or eight? I mean, you know, it was truly, um, I kept waiting for training and it never came in the health part.

KLEIN: [00:23:49] Was there anyone in that phase of training who was defining what a health ed Peace Corps volunteer would likely be doing?

ROLL: [00:23:57] Absolutely not.

KLEIN: [00:23:59] OK, so it was all kind of generalized.

ROLL: [00:24:01] Right.

KLEIN: [00:24:03] At the time, if you can remember, did you have a sense that it was just very general and didn't relate to what you were going to do?

ROLL: [00:24:09] Yes, yes. We as a group had concerns.

KLEIN: [00:24:12] Another very big part of the training process is selection. Do you recall the selection process?

ROLL: [00:24:21] As if one could ever forget. Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:24:25] And how did it work?

ROLL: [00:24:29] We had two selection boards and then a final board. We had a selection, I think, training was 12 weeks, at the end. Some were an early selection that may have almost been a self-selection out. We had some people leave early on.

KLEIN: [00:24:48] Well, what did you have to go through in the selection process?

ROLL: [00:24:51] OK. I didn't have to go through. We were observed all the time.

KLEIN: [00:24:56] By who?

ROLL: [00:24:58] Our trainers, our teachers, everybody was making, observing what we were doing. We filled out questionnaires. We were tested all the time. We were given the Minnesota.

KLEIN: [00:25:11] Multiphasic.

ROLL: [00:25:12] Yeah. And I was called in because I had marked down that I thought my body was falling apart. And they asked about that and I said, probably because I had all this dental work done, you know?

KLEIN: [00:25:27] And was it a psychologist, a psychiatrist, who saw you?

ROLL: [00:25:30] I think it was a woman. I think it was a psychologist, and she asked me some questions. We did have a psychiatrist from Colorado, his name was Garcia, who was assigned to our group, who sat on it. We had selection boards that met in secret and we knew they were meeting, but that we didn't go before them or anything. This interview was the only thing that I remember and she asked me why I wanted to join. And I told her, you know, wanted to do something concrete. And there was just a lot of testing, a lot of background checks. We were very worried about.

KLEIN: [00:26:11] The FBI was doing background checks.

ROLL: [00:26:13] Background checks. What were they going to find?

KLEIN: [00:26:16] Did you have any concern on that score?

ROLL: [00:26:18] Yeah, I think, in the sense that you didn't know what was personal and what was not. You didn't know how, what people would say. You didn't know how your life would be evaluated. And certainly in those days in college, I mean, women had curfews and you couldn't do this and you couldn't do that, and a lot of us had done that. And what if that came up and, you know, all that kind of stuff? So there was more apprehension about the background check.

KLEIN: [00:26:52] Did you feel uncertain about the selection?

ROLL: [00:26:55] Oh, absolutely. And it was Orwellian in the sense that you really felt you were being watched all the time and that that wasn't fair.

KLEIN: [00:27:05] Did you do peer ratings also?

ROLL: [00:27:06] Yes. And we did peer ratings twice and the second time a lot of us declined to do them.

KLEIN: [00:27:13] Oh, I was going to ask about that, OK.

ROLL: [00:27:16] But you would, I would always remind myself that I volunteered for this, you know. And there was that, the worst, the only thing worse about being there was not being there, and that was Peace Corps. That was just Peace Corps.

KLEIN: [00:27:32] Did the group begin to coalesce against the process?

ROLL: [00:27:35] Very much so. Very strongly.

KLEIN: [00:27:38] I don't think that was a conscious thing on their part, but.

ROLL: [00:27:41] You know, sometimes I wonder. Because you never knew.

KLEIN: [00:27:45] So the first selection board occurred and?

ROLL: [00:27:50] Some women. I can't remember how we found out. People were called in for interviews and I was not called in for an interview. My interview had been earlier around the Minnesota test. They were called in for interviews and they were either told that we don't think this is right for you or they were told we have some concerns. And so we had people leave and the ones who left then, only a couple of women left. And I think young.

KLEIN: [00:28:24] You didn't have any explanations given to you.

ROLL: [00:28:26] Never. What would happen, we were never given anything, but the women would come and tell you. People would tell us why they were told that they were selected out. And then Peace Corps would tell us, discount what anyone is telling you because they, you know, they may choose not to tell you the real reason. So it was that kind of game playing.

KLEIN: [00:28:49] Yeah. Did the group disagree with any of the selection choices?

ROLL: [00:28:56] The first time?

KLEIN: [00:28:58] And did you do anything about it?

ROLL: [00:28:58] The first time, no. These are great questions. The selection at the end we did. If you want me to tell you about it.

KLEIN: [00:29:12] Sure.

ROLL: [00:29:12] Yeah. The last selection was the night before we left Taos. We'd been up there for a month and our boards met and then, I mean, it was tough. It was just awful. We have this big barbecue celebration. And then they said everybody would be given a piece of paper and it would have either a circle or an X and a circle meant one thing and an X meant something else. And of course, I couldn't remember which was which. And one was you were going and the other was you were not going. And we

were all there, bonded, with the guys from Ecuador, and it was god awful. And there was one woman who was selected out that night, and she was told that her parents had divorced and that she had not, hey didn't feel that she had handled it and that she was likely to have a problem when she got overseas. And we thought that was crazy.

ROLL: [00:30:07] And when it got time to get on the plane in New York, we staged, we refused to get on the plane until we were told that she'd have a chance to get, you know, to go. And it was a minor little, you know, we weren't very successful, but we felt that was incredibly unfair. And I still think it was unfair. With the men, there was somebody that they selected out and that night, when we went back to the ski lodge where we had been staying, the men of Ecuador V got up a petition right away because they thought it was so unfair. And I remember encouraging somebody that was a friend of mine at the time to sign the petition. They signed the petition. The guy got to go down to Ecuador and had a severe cultural shock reaction and had to be escorted home. So that. But yeah, the selection, the selection was, I don't. It was just really awful.

KLEIN: [00:31:11] The one effect tends to be to create group spirit.

ROLL: [00:31:16] Absolutely.

KLEIN: [00:31:19] Even if it's a negative motivation.

ROLL: [00:31:19] Absolutely. Right.

KLEIN: [00:31:22] Well, the initial phase of training was in Albuquerque.

ROLL: [00:31:27] Right. [tape break]

ROLL: [00:31:33] Language test.

KLEIN: [00:31:34] OK, so apparently you were learning it, and you were learning it somehow.

ROLL: [00:31:38] And I don't remember. I have a dear, dear friend of mine who was in the language, who had not had Spanish at all, and she was in the first group of, you know, and she got to go. So I don't remember people being selected out on the basis of language.

KLEIN: [00:31:55] Now what was the point of the Taos training?

ROLL: [00:31:59] We were rural community development and northern New Mexico has villages that were in those days, very, very, um. They were three and four hundred years old, and the people living there were Spanish speaking and culturally they had a lot in common with the people we would be working with in Latin America. And the University of New Mexico had been doing community development in northern New Mexico for about a year or so. And it was. Community development is almost cultish in the sense that they had preconceived notions about what these communities should do to develop. And that wasn't good. But we.

KLEIN: [00:32:51] So how did you spend your time when you were up there?

ROLL: [00:32:52] We went, we went up to the Taos ski lodge, Taos Ski Valley, and then we spent. We were there for a week and then we'd spend a week out in a site assignment and then we go back.

KLEIN: [00:33:03] Not the whole group.

ROLL: [00:33:04] No, OK.

KLEIN: [00:33:06] Talk about your own experience.

ROLL: [00:33:07] My own experience. I was in Peñasco, New Mexico, and there were.

KLEIN: [00:33:13] Alone?

ROLL: [00:33:13] No, no, no, no. There were Ecuador, men training for Ecuador and women in my group. We were about eight or 10 in Peñasco.

KLEIN: [00:33:23] Where did you stay?

ROLL: [00:33:23] We stayed in the theater. And the movie that was playing was called Lode Macho and we saw it all over Latin America. I think it's still playing in Peñasco and they would bring out, we had army cots. We slept in the lobby. And the food was just wonderful and there were some.

KLEIN: [00:33:48] Who were your hosts?

ROLL: [00:33:53] The people who owned the theater and the café associated to it. They really kind of were the people that took care of, that were, I guess, our host, but nobody had really invited us into the village because the village was not that, or this was before the War on Poverty. There really wasn't, you know. But the Colombian I volunteers were there and they took over our training when we went up to northern New Mexico. And they began, there was a Center for Community Development at the University of New Mexico, and they became employees of the center that had a contract to train us. And that's, they came on board and it was like, OK, we're here.

KLEIN: [00:34:39] When you're in Peñasco with the seven others, there's also a Colombia I volunteer?

ROLL: [00:34:44] Yes. Yes. And they had veto power over whether or not we went.

KLEIN: [00:34:50] Was it just one person?

ROLL: [00:34:51] We just had one trainer, yeah.

KLEIN: [00:34:52] In Peñasco?

ROLL: [00:34:53] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:34:54] You remember who it was?

ROLL: [00:34:55] His first name was Brad, and I don't remember his last name, and I think he had two or other, you know, a couple of other sites.

KLEIN: [00:35:01] And what did you do in that phase?

ROLL: [00:35:04] We visited the clinic.

KLEIN: [00:35:06] Did you do everything in a group?

ROLL: [00:35:09] Yeah. Not the men, the women. We went to a clinic and we assisted in the clinic. It was the first time we met with women who only spoke Spanish. You know, we.

KLEIN: [00:35:22] How'd you do? What was your?

ROLL: [00:35:24] I remember that I held a little boy, they were doing shots. And we did clerical stuff. We did assist. And I remember asking him, *quieres agua*, do you want some water? And he said, yes, and I thought, there you go, you know.

KLEIN: [00:35:40] Communication.

ROLL: [00:35:40] The other thing I remember is the nuns. They had some apples that they wanted us to sort into big apples and little apples, and they were like four of us. And I remember the smell of the apples and the four of us, all of us college graduates, going bananas. Is this a big apple or a little apple?

KLEIN: [00:36:02] The nuns, you said?

ROLL: [00:36:03] There were some missionary sisters in Peñasco who ran, no, they had a school. I guess they ran part of the school. Yeah. And that was what. And I remember thinking, you know, this does not bear well for.

KLEIN: [00:36:16] Were they just putting you down?

ROLL: [00:36:19] It was, well, I don't know. The apples needed to be sorted. And we were an extra pair of hands. And the other thing is that this, that was just beautiful. The Colombian volunteer, this one woman that we thought we were helping, she was she was a senior citizen and we thought we were helping her because we were going to convince her to build a latrine or get inside plumbing or something. And she saw herself as an American whose job it was to help these poor fools. You know, that she was helping us, and I remember she had this sense that she was, that we were like the last group through before the snow came. And she was kind of relieved because it had been a rough summer.

KLEIN: [00:37:08] Did she speak both English and Spanish?

ROLL: [00:37:09] No, she spoke Spanish.

KLEIN: [00:37:11] And she articulated this to you?

ROLL: [00:37:12] Yes, and my Spanish, I've always been able to understand much better than I could speak. But the thing is that we would share with each other, the group, we would share this stuff. So I remember us laughing about the apples. And I remember thinking this woman had this idea, you know, of course, and it was good for us to understand that. You know, because at first we thought, well, you know, she doesn't understand, we're here to help her.

KLEIN: [00:37:38] Now, the Colombia I volunteer, did he tried to introduce any reality checks? I mean, like this is what you're going to face when you get down there. Did he even know the project that you were going into?

ROLL: [00:37:54] No.

KLEIN: [00:37:57] What did he do?

ROLL: [00:37:57] He was community development, so he knew community development, but he didn't know health education. And they were very much like the top sergeants, like the kind of, you know, hey, I don't know whether you can make it or not. It was that kind of thing.

KLEIN: [00:38:15] Ok, so you couldn't go up and say, what am I going to be doing when I'm in Colombia or what's the expectation or what's the role of the Peace Corps?

ROLL: [00:38:24] No. They would tell us what they did, but Colombia I guys were kind of like demigods down in Colombia, you know what I mean? So it was more like, can you meet our standard?

KLEIN: [00:38:35] During the whole, all the training, did anyone from Peace Corps, either Washington or Colombia, speak to the group?

ROLL: [00:38:44] Sargent Shriver spoke to the group.

KLEIN: [00:38:46] OK, do you remember that?

ROLL: [00:38:47] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:38:47] How big?

ROLL: [00:38:49] The whole group.

KLEIN: [00:38:49] When you were in Albuquerque?

ROLL: [00:38:50] Yeah. Like all five hundred of us.

KLEIN: [00:38:53] What's your recollection of that?

ROLL: [00:38:54] It was kind of, by that time we were really just not, we didn't. He got some tough questions from the audience because we had a lot of questions about the training. Exactly what were we doing? And I remember he said, finally, to somebody, if you don't like this, I'll send you to the Philippines. And in those days, the Philippines was a real tough, tough assignment. You know, Latin America was a good assignment that, you know, and I remember whenever I see Arlene, I always think of that, Shriver saying, I'll send you to the Philippines. We were not, um, there's a lot of frustration about. And you would get this kind of stuff that if you

asked a question about what you were going to do, it might indicate that you could not tolerate what they called an unstructured situation. And it was kind of like a Catch 22, which is a book a lot of people were reading during training.

KLEIN: [00:39:51] Oh yeah. So you didn't, at no point in training did you have a clear sense of what it is you would be doing when you got to Colombia?

ROLL: [00:40:01] Well, yes and no. We did some community surveys. We were supposed to do that. What do people want?

KLEIN: [00:40:08] When you were up in Peñasco?

ROLL: [00:40:08] Peñasco. Felt needs. I remember we had a discussion about some things that had been done at the clinic and that I felt we should build on what people wanted. But we weren't really there long enough.

KLEIN: [00:40:22] You were there what, six weeks?

ROLL: [00:40:23] No, no, no. We were up in New Mexico for a month and only out in the villages for like a week, at a time, for two weeks. So it was very, very brief. It was just, it was more like an introduction to a culture rather than training.

KLEIN: [00:40:40] Did anyone within the training group of the women, did they have a background in social work or community development?

ROLL: [00:40:47] No. We had a couple of people who were, who had a degree in home economics. Most of us, yeah, but most of us were sociology, history, political science. We really and truly were the BA generalist.

KLEIN: [00:41:05] Did anyone in your group during the training simply say, well, this this is a lot of nonsense. I'm not going to do it. I'm going to resign.

ROLL: [00:41:14] Um, I tried to.

KLEIN: [00:41:17] Oh, OK.

ROLL: [00:41:18] And I, and this again, is another Peace Corps story, and I don't remember what, I think it was the atomic stove stuff. And I remember going over to Hokona Hall, which was where the Peace Corps administration was, and I said, I want to resign. And as it turned out, there was nobody there who was authorized to accept my resignation. And so they just kind of blew it off. But yeah, I felt very young.

KLEIN: [00:41:48] So it must have been personally very stressful, I mean, you and others as well.

ROLL: [00:41:53] But because it was that wanting to be with the group. Wanting to go, wanting very much to be a part of the whole effort and yet feeling very strongly that it didn't, what were we were being trained to do didn't make sense. You know that we didn't have, you know.

KLEIN: [00:42:15] Let me ask you, you mentioned that Shriver had come, but had anyone from staff of Peace Corps?

ROLL: [00:42:21] Yes, the head of Colombia came, Chris Sheldon. And in those days, it was sometimes I think of World War II and this kind of, you know, very cavalier. You know, we're all going over the, yeah, kind of thing. And he said he didn't know how many volunteers he had in Colombia, three hundred? And he was just, but that was Chris Sheldon. I mean, he was. And people liked him, you know, but he was not incompetent at all. But he was very casual and he wasn't making promises to anyone. He said, I've got volunteers in jail down there. You know, the Colombian law you, they had been out drinking and they wound up in jail and they were on their own. And that was, you know, and it was kind of like, I don't know what I'm going to put you and your helmet and you're doing. You know, it was just kind of a.

KLEIN: [00:43:08] That must have been frustrating.

ROLL: [00:43:11] Well, that wasn't that frustrating because it was kind of like, this is the persona. This is our leader, you know? And people had confidence in him, the Colombia I people had confidence in him, and he had the

feeling that he knew what he was doing. He might not share it with us, but you know. And he was funny. And so he was not. That's what I remember.

KLEIN: [00:43:42] OK. Let's go to, you're back in Albuquerque. You finish your training.

ROLL: [00:43:48] We finished training in Taos.

KLEIN: [00:43:50] Oh, OK. Now that was just the health ed group and the Ecuador.

ROLL: [00:43:54] Right.

KLEIN: [00:43:56] Did any of the health ed group marry any of the Ecuador group?

ROLL: [00:44:00] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:44:00] During training?

ROLL: [00:44:01] No, that was not allowed during training. It was not supposed to be in-country.

KLEIN: [00:44:07] Did anyone try to switch projects?

ROLL: [00:44:07] You couldn't because we were all women and they were all men.

KLEIN: [00:44:11] OK, so it happened later.

ROLL: [00:44:14] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:44:14] OK. So final selection, you mentioned that it was not easy. But at some point you, you know, you've been accepted, you are now a Peace Corps volunteer. Do you recall if there was a swearing-in ceremony?

ROLL: [00:44:34] There was. And it was at the barbecue. It was.

KLEIN: [00:44:42] When you're getting your little X's and O's.

ROLL: [00:44:44] Yes. And by that time, everybody was in love with somebody else. And I said that we were all computerized matched, you know, because everything. And I, of course, found the only other person by the time we got up to Taos, who was still real dubious about the whole thing. So and then I didn't know what his, whether he had an X or a zero. He didn't know whether I had an X, you know, show me yours. I mean, it's just madness. And I remember standing in this, at the D.H. Lawrence Ranch, which is where the barbecue was, being sworn in.

KLEIN: [00:45:27] By?

ROLL: [00:45:27] One of our trainers, one of the staff, I don't even know.

KLEIN: [00:45:30] So now it's for real, for real. What happened after Taos?

ROLL: [00:45:36] We went home for 10 days and then we.

KLEIN: [00:45:38] You, individually.

ROLL: [00:45:39] Oh, I lost. We were given \$200 clothing allowance, which I lost. Got home.

KLEIN: [00:45:48] You flew back from?

ROLL: [00:45:48] From Denver. Yeah, from Albuquerque to Denver. My parents met me at the plane and my father said, be careful, your mother, she's going to try and persuade you not to go. And I said something about I had taken an oath and my mother said, oh, you took an oath? And so finally, I got my clothing allowance. They had found that they had found it in Albuquerque and put it in inter-campus mail, so.

KLEIN: [00:46:14] So now you're preparing your shopping for two years?

ROLL: [00:46:20] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:46:21] And at that point, did you have any second thoughts about, you know, do I really want to go?

ROLL: [00:46:29] Absolutely not, because what I had decided. And somewhere along the way, you make the commitment. And I had decided that this was something I wanted to do and that I was totally committed to the idea and that it might not work and that I understood that and that I was willing to accept whatever came.

KLEIN: [00:46:53] But you didn't have a clear idea of what you would be doing once you got to Colombia.

ROLL: [00:46:57] No.

KLEIN: [00:46:58] But you felt it was still worth trying.

ROLL: [00:47:01] Yes. And trying is probably the word. It was worth the effort.

KLEIN: [00:47:07] Did you have any interaction with your peers during home leave?

ROLL: [00:47:11] No.

KLEIN: [00:47:12] So it was just pretty much family.

ROLL: [00:47:13] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:47:14] And your mom, because you took the oath, your mom stayed quiet. Do you have any siblings?

ROLL: [00:47:20] I have three sisters, three younger sisters.

KLEIN: [00:47:22] What did they think of you?

ROLL: [00:47:27] You know, I really don't remember. Because my dad had been in the Army, the idea of somebody leaving, packing up and going away,

was something that was real common. My baby sister was upset because I was 10 years older and I was kind of the person who would be, I was her guardian. And I told her not to worry and then I told her on my Peace Corps insurance she was the beneficiary. And I think my other two sisters were in college and had their own lives, you know.

KLEIN: [00:48:02] So they weren't preparing you for sainthood before you went.

ROLL: [00:48:04] No, absolutely not. No, no, no.

KLEIN: [00:48:09] So what next? You flew to New York.

ROLL: [00:48:12] Flew to New York.

KLEIN: [00:48:13] Was that, did you have any time in New York?

ROLL: [00:48:17] No, we got in like, I got in at 5:00 and we flew out the next morning about 10:00 or 11:00.

KLEIN: [00:48:25] And was that a charter plane?

ROLL: [00:48:29] No. We were on a plane with other people.

KLEIN: [00:48:34] At that point, who was it that was on the flight?

ROLL: [00:48:38] There were 42 of us. I know 42 went down and like, I think, 38 came back. That's my count.

KLEIN: [00:48:44] Forty-two, was that all the health ed?

ROLL: [00:48:46] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:48:46] OK, so the final selection was 42 women.

ROLL: [00:48:51] Right. And the Ecuador V boys were not there. They were on their own. Different.

KLEIN: [00:48:58] Flew to Miami and then?

ROLL: [00:49:00] Then to Bogota. Stopped in Panama. Got into Bogota.

KLEIN: [00:49:04] OK. Talk about your impression of arriving.

ROLL: [00:49:08] Well, we were all women and there was Colombia III waiting for us. We had many, there were many male volunteers.

KLEIN: [00:49:19] To greet you?

ROLL: [00:49:20] To greet us. And then we were in Bogota for three or four days.

KLEIN: [00:49:26] Where did you stay?

ROLL: [00:49:26] And we stayed, I can't think. Hotel San Francisco. And it's real important because what I was going to say is, I was blessed to be with a wonderful group of women who were so funny. And it turned out the Hotel San Francisco was number one, owned by communists, and number two, was known as a premier place for call, the Colombian equivalent of call girls. So that was.

KLEIN: [00:49:59] You only learned this later?

ROLL: [00:50:01] Later, yes, after we always made it a point to stay at the hotel.

KLEIN: [00:50:06] What was your initial response reaction to being in Colombia? I assume you tried to start speaking Spanish.

ROLL: [00:50:15] We were still then, we were still very much with the group getting our assignments, getting a whole lot of. The main concern we had was who are we going to be with?

KLEIN: [00:50:26] OK, so essentially you weren't ready to reach out.

ROLL: [00:50:30] There was very little contact, if at all.

KLEIN: [00:50:33] You got your assignment.

ROLL: [00:50:34] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:50:34] And with someone?

ROLL: [00:50:37] Yeah. What happened, and this is one of those things that I didn't understand at the time. My maiden name is Powhida and I'm not Native American, I'm Slovak. But I was assigned to one of the women in the group who was Native American, who was from the Taos Pueblo as a matter of fact. A brilliant, funny woman, and we were good friends and I just assumed we were assigned luck of the draw. There was another woman whose last name was Jackson, and she was assigned to the African American woman in the group.

KLEIN: [00:51:19] There was only one African American woman?

KLEIN: [00:51:22] Yes. Mm hmm. And the woman who was Jackson was very, very funny, but really high maintenance. She didn't want to really be in Peace Corps. She was very, she was high maintenance. And so that was the setup. And then they said if there were any complaints, they would change our assignments. Next day, there was a reassignment and I got Jackson and my friend, the Native American, got the African American woman. And those two women had nothing in common, and they were both very, very uncomfortable with that assignment.

KLEIN: [00:52:09] And there wasn't a re-reassignment.

ROLL: [00:52:11] No, no. And years later, my friend, the Native American. I said, I remember saying to her, Anne, do you think they assigned us together initially because?

KLEIN: [00:52:21] They thought you were Native American.

ROLL: [00:52:23] And she said, you don't get it, do you? You don't understand. Of course they did. You know?

KLEIN: [00:52:30] Yeah. Now during your stay at the Hotel San Francisco, there was Peace Corps Colombia staff? What was your reaction to them and what was their role?

ROLL: [00:52:46] Again, it was Sheldon and I think he was. And then there was like a secretary. And then I think the ambassador talked to us and the medical doctor. And the medical doctor, Dr. King, he was kind of like real important, you know, and they just talked to us very briefly.

KLEIN: [00:53:12] Was there a regional setup where there'd be regional directors or?

ROLL: [00:53:16] They were just getting, we, my project director, a woman social worker, came down like three or four months after we did. And they went to a regional system about two months after we were there.

KLEIN: [00:53:30] But she was supposed to be in charge of all health ed though?

ROLL: [00:53:34] Right. She wasn't there.

KLEIN: [00:53:36] Do you have any idea when you arrived, approximately how many volunteers were in-country?

ROLL: [00:53:41] Between three and five hundred.

KLEIN: [00:53:43] Wow, OK. So it was a big.

ROLL: [00:53:44] And the Peace Corps leaders were the infrastructure. That was our, that was our contact, the Peace Corps leader.

KLEIN: [00:53:53] Volunteers who were designated as leaders?

ROLL: [00:53:53] Third year volunteers. They were supposed to have completed successfully. And they were third year.

KLEIN: [00:54:01] But no one had been a woman's health ed volunteer.

ROLL: [00:54:06] No.

KLEIN: [00:54:06] So who was your leader?

ROLL: [00:54:09] For the project? We didn't have a leader when we first got down there.

KLEIN: [00:54:14] So you're finally, you and Jackson, are given your walking papers.

ROLL: [00:54:19] Yeah. Exactly.

KLEIN: [00:54:21] Exactly what was it, I mean?

ROLL: [00:54:23] We were assigned. We got a site description and it was a, we had a wonderful assignment. We were on the Pan-Am Highway. We were in southern Colombia and we were at about 7,500 feet. So the weather was beautiful.

KLEIN: [00:54:38] Who had prepared the site descriptions?

ROLL: [00:54:39] That's the other thing. There were male volunteers in the area and they knew that we were the first women volunteers to go into the campo. And so evidently male volunteers had all done site reports trying to get the female volunteers in and afterwards the guys in our area would say, you know, with chagrin, and we won, you know, because yeah, we had some trouble initially.

KLEIN: [00:55:07] So there's some creative descriptions.

ROLL: [00:55:09] Exactly, exactly. And we were anticipated. Yeah, that was.

KLEIN: [00:55:16] What's Jackson's first name?

ROLL: [00:55:18] Claudine.

KLEIN: [00:55:19] So you and Claudine now, how did you get from Bogota to? Tell me again where you were assigned?

ROLL: [00:55:23] We were assigned Piendamó, Cauca, Colombia, which was on the Pan-Am and it was south of Cali. We flew to Cali and our Peace Corps leader was supposed to meet us. Jim, and I think it was Jim Corbett, Jim. And he was, nobody was here. And that's when we asked. It was a Saturday. It was a Saturday. And we didn't know what to do, you know, and Claudine had already decided she was ready to go. Well, just a running commentary on how much she did not like this. But it was more, it was very funny. It was kind of like if you were in a World War II movie where the guy with the cigarette in his mouth was saying, you know, this sucks. That was Claudine. And she was funny. She was really, really funny.

KLEIN: [00:56:24] Where's she from?

ROLL: [00:56:24] Missouri. And there was nobody there. So we did get a car, you know, caught a cab and we said, take us to the Peace Corps, or *donde esta el Cuerpo de Paz?* And they took us to this barrio and dumped us. And that was a Peace Corps, you know, house in the barrio. And as I say, one of the volunteers, a woman volunteer, had married the mayor of Cali the night before and everybody had been partying, I guess, the whole weekend. So, you know, and it was kind of like, oh, you know, who or what? Nobody told us you were coming. So we spent, there was a hotel in Cali, we spent the night. And the next day, Jim showed up in the Peace Corps Jeep. It was a green jeep and in South America, every country's jeep was a different color so that you. I don't know if that was true in Africa or not. Colombia's jeeps were green and Ecuador's were kind of like light blue, and I think Venezuela was white. And I always used to say that was the Ethel Kennedy suggestion. She had so many kids that you just dress them each in their own color.

ROLL: [00:57:41] And our Peace Corps leader was there and he had his girlfriend with him, who was like the daughter of part of the American community in Cali. And he drove us down to the Pan-Am, drove us down to Piendamó, dumped us at the hotel. There was a hotel by the side of the road and, this

is true, left us with some Peace Corps stuff, including a film strip called "Earth Block House Building in Jamaica." And he said to us, get yourself settled and I'll be back and we didn't see him. And part of this is just funny and crazy and sad. I have, because I was going through my stuff for the archives in American University, and we have a note from him and it's dated November 21, 1963. And it says, hey, I'll be through your site tomorrow. For God's sake, for Christ's sakes, take a bath or take a shower. I mean, it was that kind of, you know? And it was like the last day that Peace Corps was that, hey, you know.

KLEIN: [00:59:02] Now you had come down, bag and baggage. You're in the village. You and Claudine had a hotel?

ROLL: [00:59:13] Yes, but it was just a cement block. You know, running water.

KLEIN: [00:59:18] Jim has disappeared.

ROLL: [00:59:18] Well, down the Pan-Am with his girlfriend. But now there were the male volunteers that lived out of the little village outside of Piendamó were there. And so we were not. And they introduced us to the priest and to the doctor, and the doctor said we were to be assigned. He was to be our Colombian supervisor.

KLEIN: [00:59:42] How did he know that?

ROLL: [00:59:43] That was because the program was coordinated with Salud Publica in Colombia. And so he had had to acquiesce to the volunteers coming. He knew we were coming. And so we were assigned to him. He was our Colombian.

KLEIN: [01:00:00] So some legwork had been done.

ROLL: [01:00:01] Oh, absolutely. Yeah. No, I'm sorry if it sounds. I should have been more. Yeah. And so the doctor told us he didn't want to see us for a month. He wanted us to get organized and get a place to live and get accustomed. And then he would.

KLEIN: [01:00:21] What was the deal with money? Did they just give you packs of money or did you have?

ROLL: [01:00:27] We were going to be paid once a month and the male volunteers took us into. They were they were really the ones who kind of got us situated and I still am in communication with one of them. They were just great.

KLEIN: [01:00:49] And you really had.

ROLL: [01:00:51] Yeah, we were not. But again, all of this is Peace Corps. It's not, you know, it's not, we're not really doing very much interaction at all with Colombians.

KLEIN: [01:01:03] Did they help you and Claudine find a place to stay?

ROLL: [01:01:07] Yes, they did. But we stayed at the hotel because the place where we were going to move in wasn't quite ready. And one of the things that they did then, the two male volunteers, is that they put barricades on the windows and the doors so that you could close the doors at night and then put a bar down so that you would really be safe. And the issue was not our safety as much as belongings, that there had been things stolen.

KLEIN: [01:01:37] What were the two? What had the two volunteers been doing?

ROLL: [01:01:39] They were both. One was community development, and he had been there about a year. The other was in a group called Colombia XIII, and he was just a month ahead of us. And originally, the plan was that at the time, our site description was there were going to be two women volunteers and a male volunteer assigned to clinics. And the male volunteer was like going to build the clinic or help build the clinic. And it's just crazy stuff. And Colombia XIII had both men and women in it, and we were supposed to be the third counterpart to that, and that didn't last very long, that particular setup. But we were assigned to the clinic.

KLEIN: [01:02:24] So you were at the hotel staying. Do you recall your initial impression of, you know, now you're really in the Peace Corps? You're

there, this is where you're going to be. What were you doing about food, about laundry?

ROLL: [01:02:41] Exactly. I felt. And this is where my partner was not helpful. She was helpful in the sense that we were real supportive of each other, we laughed all the time, we told a lot of jokes. We would tell Harry Truman stories. [tape break] Um, I didn't. We clung to the Peace Corps other volunteers. We kept trying to find a place where we were comfortable with things of our own, you know. Like we would want to go into the capital city and there was, which we did. We went into Popayán. There was a beautiful monasterial hotel there. We would stay there. It had hot water. We drank Pepsis. We were not. I felt like that we needed to reach out and begin to try and understand where we were living and that we just were not doing that. We were just really not doing that. The place was I felt like it was very, very dirty. I wasn't prepared for it.

KLEIN: [01:04:04] Was this the hotel?

ROLL: [01:04:06] This was Piendamó. This is when we go back to our site. And so many people and the poverty, even though at that time we weren't really talking to people, it was just physically it was just overwhelming. And yet at the same time, it was kind of like, well, we'll just, how are we going to, what are we going to do to get this cleaned up and straightened, you know, that kind of thing?

KLEIN: [01:04:31] What did you do?

ROLL: [01:04:33] Initially not very much. It was. And we didn't know how to relate to people. We had met the doctor and as I say, he said come back in a month. And it was the town was 3,000 people, which was, and we, of course, were very visible. Everybody was watching us all the time. We drank Pepsis. The kids would come up and we would send them out to buy us pineapple. And we were paying three dollars for pineapple, you know, and we each had. We each smoked Pall Malls and we each brought down a carton or two, whatever you were allowed to. And we were counting Pall Malls and we didn't know what to do. We didn't know what to do. We didn't know where to begin. And we didn't know. And we had kind

of developed this. We were making fun of Peace Corps. I mean, we were, you know, covered, you know, we just didn't know where to begin.

KLEIN: [01:05:40] On any given day during this time, what would you do? Where would you have breakfast?

ROLL: [01:05:47] We would have breakfast at the hotel, but outside there was, you know.

KLEIN: [01:05:54] And did you decide that today we're going to try to do this?

ROLL: [01:05:58] We would, yes. And we wouldn't get anyplace.

KLEIN: [01:06:00] Why not?

ROLL: [01:06:02] Well, there was, because we didn't. We were supposed to get settled and so we were waiting for. We had excuses not to do stuff and we kept wanting to go into town, into the capital city, which we did. We set up bank accounts so that we would get our money.

KLEIN: [01:06:20] How did you get to the capital city?

ROLL: [01:06:22] By bus. Well, now this is, that's real good. There was what they called, um, and I can't roll my, I can't trill my Rs, I never could. But an *autoferrial*, which was kind of like a light rail that would go from Piendamó down to the capital, and it was about an hour's drive. But there were also busses that came through like every 10 or 20 minutes. And we initially would ride the train because we just, the idea of getting on those busses with the chickens and, you know. And we were spending money, we had a housing furnishing allowance and we were spending, we weren't, because things are so much cheaper. We didn't realize we weren't. We were just, we were not doing well, OK, we were just not spending money appropriately. We were eating, you know, we were staying at the Monasterio and.

KLEIN: [01:07:20] That's when you go into the capital?

ROLL: [01:07:23] Yeah. And so it was only an hour to get to the capital. So we were in the capital too much.

KLEIN: [01:07:28] Ah, OK. This is all during the first?

ROLL: [01:07:31] Two or three weeks, OK? And then when we started riding the bus. That's when we realize we're spending too much money and we had to get. We did get the house that we were going to move into.

KLEIN: [01:07:50] Did you get it or?

ROLL: [01:07:51] The volunteers helped us. The male volunteers helped us do everything. And the four of us talked all the time, you know, we were.

KLEIN: [01:07:59] In English?

ROLL: [01:08:00] Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. And we had beds made because we didn't, you know, didn't have furniture. Well, we had army cots initially. And we didn't have beds made. We had something made. And the thing I remember is that the cabinet maker in the town was, he basically made coffins and there would be coffins in front of the shop. And he was the one that. And I forget what it was he made for us, if we had the army cots and either it was a table or something. The coffee maker, the coffin maker. But we were just, we were. And it was like we were invisible. We thought that people couldn't see us because we weren't that. Yeah. And I felt real guilty. And I think Claudine did too. But we laughed. Everything was a joke, and then it became black humor, you know, and but we were not. I mean, like, we weren't doing anything inappropriate, but we were just not getting things done. And then I was going to say, then the assassination.

KLEIN: [01:09:17] Oh, OK. During this time, did you think to yourself, I mean, this is nonsense, I might as well go home?

ROLL: [01:09:24] Never.

KLEIN: [01:09:25] OK, how about Claudine?

ROLL: [01:09:26] Wanted to go home every day.

KLEIN: [01:09:29] But that was her stance?

ROLL: [01:09:31] Yeah, that was. Yeah, yeah.

KLEIN: [01:09:36] Were you writing home at this time? Could you call home?

ROLL: [01:09:42] Oh no, no, no. I don't remember if I was, we were. We were trying to write to other volunteers, you know, in Colombia, in our group.

KLEIN: [01:09:55] Did you have a posting list where you knew?

ROLL: [01:09:58] I think that in those days it was real simple just to say Cuerpo de Paz and the name of the site in Colombia. And that, you know, but mail from the States was not reliable. Mail in country was not reliable.

KLEIN: [01:10:14] So initially, you're really sort of very much at loose ends.

ROLL: [01:10:18] Yes, that's kind.

KLEIN: [01:10:20] Now, at the same time, Kennedy was assassinated.

ROLL: [01:10:27] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:10:28] How did you first hear?

ROLL: [01:10:29] We were sitting, Friday afternoon, we were sitting on the patio in front of the hotel smoking cigarettes.

KLEIN: [01:10:36] In this village?

ROLL: [01:10:37] In the village, and it was Claudine's birthday. Or it was going to be her birthday and we were going into the capital that weekend to celebrate her birthday. And the kids in town all had transistor radios, and the kids were called Coca-Colas because they were just beginning to develop a teenage kind of thing. And so the Coca-Colas. And they came

and they said to us, Castro killed Kennedy, *Castro se mató a Kennedy*. Exactly. And we couldn't figure out what they were saying. And my father had given me a shortwave radio to take with me, and I had it and I went in and got it and we turned on the radio and were able pretty quickly to get radio. We got, there's a big Christian station in Quito, and it announced that Kennedy had been shot in Dallas. And then it said an update in a half hour. And then we got something called New York Worldwide. And they had the mikes open and so we could hear them talking, and we heard that he had been. We were listening to that before he'd been declared dead. So it was real quick.

KLEIN: [01:11:57] Yeah. OK.

ROLL: [01:11:58] And then before it faded out, the last thing we heard was that he had been declared dead. And that Johnson had been seen going into the hospital with his hand over his heart and we thought he'd had a heart attack. And our reaction, and again, was this black humor stuff that we spent a lot of time trying to say Castro didn't kill him, they didn't know who, you know. And my friend, and she's a wonderful woman, and she said, you know, now they're going to close the bars, just our luck. Then she said, well, there goes our career, because our whole, you know, part of our justification had been, well, we'll just link on to this charismatic family. And she said, there goes the career.

KLEIN: [01:12:53] So you're both 22?

ROLL: [01:12:54] Twenty two. Yeah, she was going to be 22. We didn't cry. And we did not express any fear about what was happening. And what we found out later was that the people in our village were very suspicious of us, they found our reaction was not OK. I was told a year later that there were people in the village who wanted to kill us because this is what the thinking was. First of all, we had not really, we had connected with the mayor, with the doctor and the priest, and we had kind of had their protection, if you will.

KLEIN: [01:13:41] Right.

ROLL: [01:13:41] But we had really not connected with anybody else in that village. And people in Colombia, the Bogotasso, there had been an assassination in '48 in Colombia that had thrown the country into the first episode of incredible internal violence. And we were not concerned for our families. They thought that was very suspicious. We didn't cry, and there were those who assumed that Castro was taking over the United States and that we were part of some kind of advanced guard that had been. And it sounds funny now and at that, I remember. And then there was a blackout in Piendamó, which happened a lot. And because it was Claudine's birthday, again, the male volunteers are coming down to celebrate. And they came into town on motorcycles and, yeah, and we went with them into the capital city and the priest told everybody that we needed to be with our compatriots and that's why we were going. And evidently we did not. I mean, people were very. Other women in our group were immediately embraced by their communities where, you know.

KLEIN: [01:15:06] You had made virtually no contact at that point.

ROLL: [01:15:07] Exactly, exactly.

KLEIN: [01:15:09] And so now I'm curious is, going ahead, you know, what happened, I mean, how did you phase into?

ROLL: [01:15:17] Well, because we kept. What happened was that our perception of what was going on in the United States and what we said to people was not to be afraid, the country is not going to riot, you know, that kind of stuff was then was then confirmed, by the way the people in the United States conducted themselves and the fact that that Jacqueline Kennedy had her children in public. You know, just reaffirmed that our reaction was normal and the country, our America, did not go into chaos. So that helped. And then.

KLEIN: [01:15:58] You know, I was thinking more about being a Peace Corps volunteer.

ROLL: [01:16:02] Because then we after like about a week or 10 days, then because we were volunteers, because we began to represent Kennedy,

then people reached out to us. And I think that that helped us become into the community.

KLEIN: [01:16:26] So the months must have been over and you went back to the doctor?

ROLL: [01:16:31] Right, right.

KLEIN: [01:16:33] What happened at that time?

ROLL: [01:16:34] He wanted us to do it. First of all, he had.

KLEIN: [01:16:38] You really hadn't accomplished anything as far as learning about the community.

ROLL: [01:16:39] Oh no. No.

KLEIN: [01:16:43] But you go back anyway.

ROLL: [01:16:45] Right. And it's like, you know, it was like half a block away. We were not, you know, we were not. And I think that he was disappointed that he was a young doctor and he was committed to the village. I think he was disappointed that we were not more confident that, you know, but he had CARE food and he wanted us to come up with a way of distributing the food in the village. And we did not do that. And I can't remember where our contact was, but it was like Peace Corps volunteers don't distribute food, you don't decide who gets the food. So we couldn't do that. But what he did want us to do and what we did do and which was consistent with community development theory and certainly health education, is that we did a survey of the community and we visited homes and we gathered data on who was living there.

KLEIN: [01:17:42] That's you and Claudine?

ROLL: [01:17:43] Claudine and I, yeah.

KLEIN: [01:17:45] With no official sanction to do so?

ROLL: [01:17:49] Other than the doctor, no. The doctor.

KLEIN: [01:17:50] How can you walk into a house and say, we want to know how many people?

ROLL: [01:17:54] Oh, no. Well, we knocked on the door and we introduced ourselves.

KLEIN: [01:17:58] As?

ROLL: [01:17:58] As Peace Corps volunteers. Yes, *Cuerpo de Paz*. And yeah, we were known, you know?

KLEIN: [01:18:04] Doing what?

ROLL: [01:18:08] We were doing a survey of what the people needed.

KLEIN: [01:18:12] And you would say this to the family?

ROLL: [01:18:13] Yeah, yeah.

KLEIN: [01:18:16] And they didn't throw you out?

ROLL: [01:18:17] No, no. And but by that time, everybody had a picture of, you know, torn from Life magazine or something of John Kennedy and Pope John the 23rd. And it was *Los Dos Juans*. And we were welcomed then or supported in that community because we were Peace Corps volunteers and because we were associated with Kennedy. That was absolutely, I mean, that's why I say that that made. They changed their attitude towards us based on their feeling about Kennedy. And we were the beneficiaries.

KLEIN: [01:18:56] Did the doctor try to have a counterpart to work with you?

ROLL: [01:18:59] There was a practical nurse at the at the clinic and we would help her, you know, but.

KLEIN: [01:19:09] To go out and do the survey?

ROLL: [01:19:11] We did not, no, we did the surveys on our own.

KLEIN: [01:19:15] And how did you collect the data?

ROLL: [01:19:21] We had, the priest in town had a ditto machine and mimeograph. It wasn't ditto, it was mimeograph. And he mimeographed out these surveys and we went and collected information and we asked everybody over and over. And what I remember is that women, when we would say how many children do you have, they would always tell us how many children they had living and how many children they had dead.

KLEIN: [01:19:45] Right, right.

ROLL: [01:19:46] And then when we say, what do you want? They wanted to keep their children alive and the main, what they needed most of all were medicines. They needed drugs that they just did not have. So we did identify a felt need in the community.

KLEIN: [01:20:01] How long did the survey go on?

ROLL: [01:20:02] Probably in probably mid January. So we had come in in October, November, this was the end of November. We started sometime in December. And then so we were on track. I mean, that was.

KLEIN: [01:20:18] You're doing all this under the direction of the doctor?

ROLL: [01:20:21] Absolutely.

KLEIN: [01:20:21] Who works at a government clinic.

ROLL: [01:20:23] Right. That had nothing. Nothing.

KLEIN: [01:20:28] Did he hope that you might be the hope for him to go and get someone to provide medicine and stuff?

ROLL: [01:20:36] Yeah, we because that then became our first goal, how do we get drugs? And we came up with the idea of having a drug co-op.

KLEIN: [01:20:47] Yeah. In doing the survey, had you identified the illnesses that polled for the particular drugs? I mean, how sophisticated was it?

ROLL: [01:20:57] It was not very sophisticated at all, but children were dying from fever and he didn't even have aspirin. Dysentery. And you know, there was, he didn't have anything to intervene.

KLEIN: [01:21:12] And the people you surveyed would say that?

ROLL: [01:21:14] That they needed drugs to keep the, for the babies and for the children.

KLEIN: [01:21:18] Or that a baby had died from a fever?

ROLL: [01:21:19] Oh yeah. Oh, oh yeah, yeah, yeah. And the children were dying from dysentery. A lot of whooping cough.

KLEIN: [01:21:28] And while you're doing the survey, during this time, how many hours a day? How many days a week did you put into it?

ROLL: [01:21:40] We would go out and maybe do it two or three hours a day. Not very much. It was hard work. It was hard work because our Spanish wasn't that good. Because we didn't always understand everything people were saying. And because it was hard for the two of us to get up and get going, you know, I mean, it was just real hard. And what I am amazed at, because I was trying to get some of these documents, as I say, ready for. I had forgotten that there was a logic to what we were doing. And we were going to do a drug co-op.

KLEIN: [01:22:21] Ok, now that was your decision or was it in talking with the doctor?

ROLL: [01:22:29] That was the two of us. We thought that would be, that would be.

KLEIN: [01:22:33] Did you then go to the doctor and say what do you think?

ROLL: [01:22:35] Yeah. And it was kind of like we were just beginning the discussion. We went to Cali. They were co-op volunteers in the area. And in Cali, there was a priest who had a marvelous drug co-op, and we visited there and we were just beginning. And then a co-op volunteer came down to Piendamó and he said, you need to look around. And they were like five or six pharmacies. And he said, have you thought about this? And the problem was the drugs there were very, very old because nobody could afford to buy them. But he said, if you do a drug co-op, how are you going to do that without being in competition? And so it was. And that was good. I mean, that was the next step. That's what we needed to think about, you know? And then there was a tragedy with Claudine's family and she had to go home.

KLEIN: [01:23:36] About when?

ROLL: [01:23:37] February. She got a, her father had given her two hundred dollars in American money to keep with her, in case you had to come home, he said. And she did not know that he had just been diagnosed with throat cancer. And stupid me. She had put her purse in the windowsill and we had been out for some reason and her purse was still in the windowsill and I had gone back and I'd opened the window to get some light in to do something, and I didn't lock it, and somebody had reached in and taken the two hundred dollars. So she got a letter from home saying, your father doesn't want you to know this, but he's going in for surgery. And if you ever want to talk to him again, you need to come home right now. And that's all she had, and Peace Corps did not really help her get home.

KLEIN: [01:24:28] It didn't?

ROLL: [01:24:29] It's nightmare stuff. Nightmare stuff.

KLEIN: [01:24:34] So what did she do, she packed it up and went to?

ROLL: [01:24:35] We collected all the money we had, we sent her to Cali. And in Cali, the Peace Corps, the new Peace Corps rep, who was the second cousin of some. I have to be careful. I don't want to be. He was really awful and he did one of these interrogations. How do we know somebody's sick? All you have is this letter. You're looking for a way out. We're not going to pay your way home, you know. And they couldn't get anybody, they couldn't confirm it because it was a weekend. And they finally, she finally arrived in Miami. They sent her home. She had 10 cents. She called home and nobody was there and she finally got to Missouri. But her father had been operated on and he was terminal. But he couldn't talk, you know, after the. It's just god awful.

KLEIN: [01:25:31] You only learned all this later?

ROLL: [01:25:32] No, she would write.

KLEIN: [01:25:35] OK, but at the time you left, she gets on a plane in Cali. And you're then faced with going back to the village alone.

ROLL: [01:25:45] Right. But she left from the village. I'd never come. She got on the bus in Piendamó and went, yeah. And we gave her, everybody got together and gave her all the money we could so she could afford to even get up to Cali.

KLEIN: [01:25:57] Well, how did you feel about? I mean, it was obviously dramatic and traumatic perhaps. Underneath it all, it means a significant change in your arrangement.

ROLL: [01:26:10] Right.

KLEIN: [01:26:10] What was your reaction?

ROLL: [01:26:11] Partly I felt relief because we were really weighing each other down, OK? And partly, I thought she was going to come back. That was the last thing she said to me, I'm coming back, you know. And it was rough because, and she was funny, but she's also brilliant.

KLEIN: [01:26:46] So Peace Corps in Cali at least knew that she was out of the country.

ROLL: [01:26:51] Well, she had to go to Cali. Because, you know, she couldn't get home on her own. They kept her passports.

KLEIN: [01:27:00] Yeah. So they knew she was going.

ROLL: [01:27:02] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:27:04] Did anyone from Peace Corps try to get back in touch with you?

ROLL: [01:27:08] No.

KLEIN: [01:27:08] And so you were sort of there in February. The survey's done. You have this idea of a drug co-op, which is a very sophisticated thing requiring money, if nothing else. I assume that the people in the village, for the most part, were relatively poor.

ROLL: [01:27:28] Oh, subsistence. They were, the poverty was god awful.

KLEIN: [01:27:31] So it wasn't an unrealistic thing to.

ROLL: [01:27:34] Well, the thing is that I abandoned it. And that's why. I mean, we had had a Peace Corps volunteer come down who was trained in co-ops and that he was beginning. And when I say Claudine was the brains behind it, she was really, really bright. And it was her idea to do a co-op and it was these people need drugs. I mean, she really. And I think if she had stayed, I don't know that we would have gotten a drug co-op, but we would have done something about the drugs. She would have done something about the drug problem. And I didn't. OK, that's what I mean.

KLEIN: [01:28:11] So how long were you alone?

ROLL: [01:28:13] About two months.

KLEIN: [01:28:16] Spinning your wheels?

ROLL: [01:28:17] No, no.

KLEIN: [01:28:18] You were working.

ROLL: [01:28:20] Then I started to accompany the doctor. Because he would, there were *veredas*. There were little communities outside and he would go on rounds and I would go with him and I would take babies' temperatures and I would do some histories. I would talk to the moms and just, you know. And again, and I would help out in the clinic. He was in the clinic in Piendamó on Wednesday and Saturday, and they had a triage system where all the moms would bring their sick babies and the nurse would decide which were the 20 sickest. It was a triage, it was just awful. And I would sometimes, I'd do a little *charla*, a little presentation about boiling water or washing hands.

KLEIN: [01:29:08] Was there a waiting room and everyone's there?

ROLL: [01:29:09] It was just a little two, a cement block two room clinic. Yeah. And I was occupied and I was learning, but I was not.

KLEIN: [01:29:23] You had all these mothers there with sick children who obviously are very concerned.

ROLL: [01:29:29] Exactly.

KLEIN: [01:29:29] You stand up and say, let me teach you about how to boil your water.

ROLL: [01:29:35] Yeah, just little, you know.

KLEIN: [01:29:38] It couldn't have been easy.

ROLL: [01:29:38] It was not easy and I was not very good at it.

KLEIN: [01:29:42] And your Spanish was not, you were not anywhere near bilingual.

ROLL: [01:29:46] Right. Oh no. And I was pretty good. I could take babies' temperatures. I could do that and I did that.

KLEIN: [01:29:51] But you had enough Spanish to be able to take medical history?

ROLL: [01:29:56] Well, it was very, very simple stuff, you know. Like, does anyone in the family have crosses in the blood? Was there a blood test? And that was, I think that was either TB or syphilis. You know, that kind of thing, you know? And again, always, how many children do you have and how many living and how many dead and what did they die of and have the babies been vaccinated? You know, that kind of stuff.

KLEIN: [01:30:25] At this time, all of that information then would go to the doctor?

ROLL: [01:30:28] Right.

KLEIN: [01:30:28] And he would try to see the 20.

ROLL: [01:30:30] He would see the 20.

KLEIN: [01:30:33] You didn't dispense any drugs or?

ROLL: [01:30:35] No, no. There was nothing.

KLEIN: [01:30:37] Yeah. All right. And then at the end of, this was for a couple of months?

ROLL: [01:30:44] Yeah, and then, I liked being alone. I just liked being alone.

KLEIN: [01:30:50] You weren't living in the hotel then.

ROLL: [01:30:52] No, we were in, I was in a house.

KLEIN: [01:30:53] Your own place.

ROLL: [01:30:54] Yeah, right. And then and again, there were the male volunteers that moved back into town, had moved into Piendamó. So I was alone, but I was not the only volunteer in town. And we would visit, you know. They were working on an irrigation ditch in one of the *veredas*, and we would visit and we would have meetings, and we were just. Nothing really got done. But we were moving and we were.

KLEIN: [01:31:26] Supporting each other.

ROLL: [01:31:26] Yeah, yeah. And I was, I really liked. And then there was a woman who was with the coffee confederation, and she was more like a home economist and she would go out and visit in the *vereda*.

KLEIN: [01:31:43] Peace Corps?

ROLL: [01:31:44] No, no, she was a woman that the *cafetarios*, the coffee growers, had an organization and they did work like 4-H work, and she was like a 4-H person and I would go out with her. All of these people, the 4-H woman and the nurse, were competent people and there were all kinds of people in the village who could have been doing what I was attempting to do so much better than I, you know, but that's what I was learning.

KLEIN: [01:32:18] So now you're still in your first year.

ROLL: [01:32:21] First six months.

KLEIN: [01:32:22] Yeah, wow. So another volunteer was assigned to you?

ROLL: [01:32:29] Well, Betty Hutchinson, who was our project director. I got word she was coming in the next, like the next day. And she showed up and she showed up with a man who was doing evaluations of programs in Colombia. He had been the Peace Corps director in Cyprus and had been, um, they closed the program. And so he was coming through to do evaluations, and I read his evaluations at College Park. They were brilliant. They were so good.

KLEIN: [01:33:03] Do you remember his name?

ROLL: [01:33:03] I can't remember his name. I have it at home and I can email it to you because he's not. He's one of the Peace Corps archetypes from that era. And she showed up and she told me that I was getting a partner that would be coming in in a couple of. And I was flabbergasted. I didn't know I was getting a partner, didn't want a partner, and the partner was like arriving the next day and I didn't like any of that.

KLEIN: [01:33:33] That was your first contact with Betty?

ROLL: [01:33:35] Oh yeah.

KLEIN: [01:33:36] How did Betty know? Did Betty know what was going on with you?

ROLL: [01:33:42] Peace Corps leader, Peace Corps leader.

KLEIN: [01:33:46] You had been reflecting back to the leader?

ROLL: [01:33:49] The leader was, like, we would see them maybe once a week. Yeah, the Peace Corps leader was on.

KLEIN: [01:33:55] So there was some leadership.

ROLL: [01:33:56] Oh, exactly. I'm sorry, I should have made that clear. Yeah, the Peace Corps leaders were kind of like, and by that time, the Peace Corps leader was the guy who had been a volunteer in the site, who had been in country like four weeks longer than I. And they made him a leader. The woman who was being assigned to my site. And then you get into all this stuff, what happened to women in Colombia. She and her partner had been on the Ecuadorian border, and they had closed their site because they said that there was a problem with her partner and they sent her home. And that kind of arbitrary. [tape break]

KLEIN: [01:34:38] Now this was a woman who would had trained with you?

ROLL: [01:34:44] She had trained in Colombia XIII, which was a group that was four weeks ahead of us in training, but we had had the same training and we had both come out of University of New Mexico.

KLEIN: [01:34:55] And she had been assigned with another woman at the border.

ROLL: [01:34:58] And they were closing the site and sending the other woman home, which was incredibly unfair. And my partner, Bev was her name, Makowski, and she didn't want to come to Piendamó. She was outraged that what had happened had been unfair, that they had been, they were deeply involved in their community. She's maintained ties with that community over the 40 years, you know? And so it was a wrench. It just, and I hadn't been told and it was just awful.

KLEIN: [01:35:33] So Betty appears, tells you, disappears. And Bev comes the next day.

ROLL: [01:35:39] Yeah. What I remember about the man who was doing the evaluation is that he was trying. We were, I was trying to impress upon him how desperate the situation was for so many of these women whose children were dying. And I remember he said to me in kind of like this Socratic sort of thing, he said, well, populations are real. You know, overpopulation is a real problem. So why are you even worried about saving these babies or something along those lines? And it was rhetorical, you know, he was trying to. And I remember along the lines of, well, you should have thought of that before you sent me here. So that was that.

KLEIN: [01:36:20] So when Bev comes?

ROLL: [01:36:24] Bev comes, and Bev was just, um, we were as different as night and day. She was very comfortable in country. Her Spanish was very good. She was interested. She really, really liked Colombian people and could relate to them in a way that I could not. And she danced. She could dance well and she loved the music. She loved the culture. And so she was a real addition to our site. And she was just competent, and she managed the household much better than I, you know, that kind of thing.

KLEIN: [01:37:00] Did you feel intimidated?

ROLL: [01:37:01] No, no. But she wasn't interested in what I was interested in. And what I was. She became, she did a lot of visiting, a lot of community, you know, trying to do the community development part. She was not interested in health education.

KLEIN: [01:37:18] Oh, OK.

ROLL: [01:37:19] And I was, but I was floundering. And what happened, because we did develop a project. We again, based on our.

KLEIN: [01:37:32] You being you and Bev?

ROLL: [01:37:33] Now Bev and I, yeah, we did work on something. And again, it was this logical progression. The doctor was real concerned that women would. When one of the things he would do is that if the babies were really needed to be hospitalized because they were dehydrated, or if a woman needed to be hospitalized to deliver, they would not go to the hospital in our village. We didn't have a hospital in our village. They would not go to the capital where there was a hospital, and the medical care there was free, but they wouldn't go because hospitals were places where people died. So what Bev and I did based on, that was a felt need, the doctor said, we need to educate them, is that we would take groups of women into Colombia, into Popayán and we would visit the hospitals. And Bev was just marvelous because of her ease and her sociability and her language facility. So we visited hospitals in order to help women understand that the hospital could be a healing place.

KLEIN: [01:38:36] How did you identify a group of women to take?

ROLL: [01:38:39] We had established what we call *clubs de madres*, well, mothers clubs, where we would, you know, give our little speeches. And it was very, very informal. But we would take women who wanted, anyone who wanted to go.

KLEIN: [01:38:58] And where did these meetings take place?

ROLL: [01:38:59] In the clinic.

KLEIN: [01:39:00] OK.

ROLL: [01:39:01] At that point. But we would pay their way on the bus.

KLEIN: [01:39:06] With money from?

ROLL: [01:39:07] Our Peace Corps money, because the bus fare was very cheap. But that was something that we did that theoretically we weren't supposed to do. But yeah. And that was again based on, you know, something the doctor felt that needed to be done. And we did that and that worked out well. Then I was attempting to give some kind of. At a Saturday morning clinic, and I was not there and I was supposed to, I came late and I was going, I was doing something with a doll and I was just really not doing well. And as it turned out, public health had sent a nurse up. The one registered nurse in the whole department, who had taught classes in Popayán, had come up to see the clinic and she was wonderful. She saw me and we smiled and she was very gracious and it was immediately apparent I didn't know what I was doing. But we were in the village, we had contact with women and women trusted us enough to visit the hospital. So what she did.

KLEIN: [01:40:12] She is Colombian?

ROLL: [01:40:15] The Colombian nurse, right. She said that she would come up to Piendamó every Saturday for 10 weeks and she would teach midwives. [tape break]

KLEIN: [01:40:25] You had connected with the Colombian nurse.

ROLL: [01:40:27] Right. And she made an agreement with the doctor that she would come up every Saturday morning and she would teach midwives. There was a UNICEF course on how to. These were indigenous midwives. They had no training at all, but they were the ones delivering babies in the area. And if we, our job, my job, Bev and I, if we would gather the

midwives to come to the clinic, she would give them this lecture on how babies developed and how to do the most basic things to ensure a safe delivery. And so we did that, because what we could contribute was we could, the midwives trusted us at that point and we could bring them in.

KLEIN: [01:41:15] So Bev was willing to go along with that even though she preferred doing?

ROLL: [01:41:21] Nutrition and just, you know, visiting. Yeah. And so we did that and the midwives, we had I think five midwives who completed the course, and when they completed the course, they got a U.N. kit and it had scissors in it. It had a little bowl that they could sterilize water so that they could sterilize. They could boil water so they could sterilize.

ROLL: [01:41:45] And then what we did, and then what I did after the course was completed, is that I would then go out to the *veredas*, the little villages where the midwives lived, and meet with the midwife and the women that they were going to deliver. And I would give exactly the same course that the midwives would have, so that we were coordinating. And then after the women delivered, I went out and talked to each woman and this is where I got into. What I thought I was doing was fine at the time. But in retrospect, I really was doing some clinic monitoring that probably wasn't appropriate. But they were real concerned to make sure that the midwives did not give injections because there were drugs available in the marketplace that could speed up labor that could cause ruptured uterus. And so that it was my job to make sure that things had gone well and that if there had been a problem, and this is crazy stuff, if there was a problem during labor, the midwives were instructed that they should take the woman to the hospital, which was impossible.

KLEIN: [01:42:56] Yeah, yeah.

ROLL: [01:42:57] You know, and then I was to make sure that. And I just would do a record that I would take back to the clinic.

KLEIN: [01:43:05] So this is sort of the second half of this year.

ROLL: [01:43:09] Yeah, into my second year.

KLEIN: [01:43:11] You're beginning to have a sense that there was a reason for you to be where you were.

ROLL: [01:43:15] Right, right.

KLEIN: [01:43:16] And was Bev going doing exactly the same thing? Or was she beginning to go off on her own?

ROLL: [01:43:23] She was beginning to go off on her own because I think I probably became fanatical about this stuff. And not fanatical, but I mean, you know, I was talking all the time.

KLEIN: [01:43:31] Single minded.

ROLL: [01:43:32] Yeah, single minded. This was really big stuff for me.

KLEIN: [01:43:35] And that essentially working with the midwives.

ROLL: [01:43:39] Yes.

KLEIN: [01:43:42] So during now you're, are you somewhat satisfied with being a volunteer, that you know, it's working out the way you like.

ROLL: [01:43:51] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:43:54] Were you able to feed this back to the Peace Corps?

ROLL: [01:43:59] Well, then we had all kinds of problems with the area director. The Peace Corps leaders. We went through a phase where, and this program was developing, and it was like after, you know, maybe five months, you could see what we had been doing and there was fruition. But while it was happening, it was like, well, they're just, you know, what are they doing? We can't, you know. We had a Peace Corps leader who Cali decided was too close to the volunteers, and he had a nervous breakdown. Had to be escorted home. Then Chris Sheldon came down in

December of '64 and talked to each volunteer to decide whether or not he was going to close out our site. And it was just, you know, and again, it was this anxiety what's going to happen? Somebody else is in charge, you know? And he came down and he decided that we all could stay, you know, which was real nice. But yeah, you know, we were. And then they got it, then they had a meeting. They called us all into.

KLEIN: [01:45:17] Mid-term conference?

ROLL: [01:45:18] No, no. This was just the volunteers in Cauca. There were about 15 of us and we didn't have a leader because our leader had had a nervous breakdown. So they said, the Peace Corps staff came down from Cali and said, we're going to have an election. We want you to, we're going to choose your own leader. It will be secret ballot. Please write down the person that you think would be the best volunteer leader. So we all did that. He said, I'm taking the ballots back to Cali. I'll let you know. So about two weeks later, we get a Peace Corps leader that it took us another two months to figure out we hadn't voted for him. And evidently, what they had done was chose the volunteer that got the least votes on the theory that he wouldn't have any trouble being close. And he turned out to be OK. He didn't have a nervous breakdown and he didn't harass us. But, you know, but by that time I was just, I was totally immersed in my midwife and I would talk about placentas, you know, at the drop of a hat and, you know, all this stuff.

KLEIN: [01:46:23] And so you're well into your second year now. Well, let's stay with this right through to the time you were about to leave. Was your role essentially the same for the entire period?

ROLL: [01:46:40] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:46:41] As you were coming near the end of that, do you know if you were going to be replaced?

ROLL: [01:46:53] We were not going to be replaced, but we knew that partly because in the last few months that I was in Cauca, violence, that the

violence that now plagues Colombia began to assert itself in Cauca. Cauca was off limits for other volunteers. We didn't even know that.

KLEIN: [01:47:16] Now, did you ever experience any?

ROLL: [01:47:18] Yeah, I did. Two things. In April of '65, market day. Outside our village, a market bus was attacked by guerrillas, bandits, and they machine gunned the bus and killed most of the people on the bus. They were barefoot peasants, and it was a terrorist attack. And we found out about it because the potatoes never showed up. The bus never came. And in our village, when we when it began the dimensions of what had happened, everybody was terrified. And us too. And I remember standing talking about this and saying to this, we had sisters in the village that ran the school, ran a school for girls. Saying, well, if the bandits come, we'll just run to the convent because it was the biggest place. And the Mother Superior who had been there for us said, no, you won't. That if the bandits come, or the guerrillas come, the first people they'll look for is the gringos. And if you're with us, you'll endanger our sisters. And then our landlord, who was like four or five, 4'5", real short guy said, don't worry, I'll take care of you. And we had no contact with Peace Corps at all. Peace Corps' whole thing was, you know.

KLEIN: [01:48:46] Did they know that the shooting at the bus had occurred?

ROLL: [01:48:48] Yeah, it was. And one of the things is that when the.

KLEIN: [01:48:52] How far away from, physically, from where you were when it happened?

ROLL: [01:48:57] It was about an hour and a half up. It was up in the mountains and they were coming down on this winding road. And I don't really, maybe 20, if that far. Very, very poor people. Yeah, everybody knew.

KLEIN: [01:49:12] You said there's another incident.

ROLL: [01:49:16] And this is what I call my cocktail party story. I was going up to Cali on my own. I had a medical thing that I had to do, and I got on the bus

in the middle of the night and then I went up to Cali. This was pretty, and it felt very safe. And we came up to Cali, and by that time there were kidnappings. The army was alert. I mean, it was, you know, and there was a military bus stop and they stopped the bus and they made all the men get off. And I was in the back of the bus and I was sitting on my purse because that's how I traveled. And my Peace Corps ID was inside my purse and I had my *rowana* around me and I didn't get off the bus. The men got off the bus. Well, I'm there, I'm wearing glasses. I didn't belong, you know, but and it was a campo bus. It was, you know, very, very poor people.

ROLL: [01:50:17] And this kid got on the bus with a rifle and he walked back and pointed the gun at me. And he said, *quién es*, who are you? And I was shaking so hard. I knew that I could never get to my Peace Corps card because if I made a move, I was afraid he'd shoot me. And I looked at him and I thought, this is it. You put it on the line. And I said, *Cuerpo de Paz*, which was Peace Corps. And he said, you know, he said, OK, and he turned around and walked down. I know. And I say, that's my cocktail story, you know, and because I was out of my site, I wasn't known. And I thought when I said *Cuerpo de Paz*, it was everybody who had ever served. Everybody that was known as Peace Corps, you know, their credibility. So that was my.

KLEIN: [01:51:03] But after this, weren't you ready to say, you know, I've got be out of my mind to stay here.

ROLL: [01:51:07] This was, I was weeks and Bev left four weeks before I did because she was in the group, you know.

KLEIN: [01:51:15] Right.

ROLL: [01:51:15] Yeah. And right before I left, there was a noise in the middle of the night and I lost it. And my landlord lived downstairs, and by that time I was alone. And he'd always said if you get scared, just bang on the door. So I banged on the floor. And he and his wife came up and I was shaking and it was nothing. There was, a horseman had run come through town. And I remember I was shaking so bad that they lit a cigarette for me and I

couldn't drink coffee. I was just, I just lost it. And I remember, I couldn't wait to get out, and when it was time for me to go, I left and I was so glad.

KLEIN: [01:51:58] The second bus incident occurred how close to the end of your service?

ROLL: [01:52:02] Sometime in May and I left like July 3rd or 4th.

KLEIN: [01:52:05] So it must have been a very, very difficult last few months.

ROLL: [01:52:09] I was scared.

KLEIN: [01:52:11] Were you still doing your work?

ROLL: [01:52:12] Yeah. And let me tell you about the incident when the bus where they shot everybody. I was going out to the *vereda* because that's where, the little villages, that's where I was meeting with the women who were delivering. And I was also taking CARE milk out because we had decided that when a woman delivered, we gave her two cartons of CARE milk or a carton of CARE milk, not for the baby, but for her and her family. And so taking the CARE milk out was important because that was a commodity thing. And people came into town to tell me not to come out because they had been escorting me sometimes back to the road or, you know, and they felt it wasn't safe. And they weren't concerned about me, they were concerned about the kid. No, no, not. I don't mean that facetiously. They have little, they had, you know, boys who would come with, who would escort me out to the road and then they would have to go back on their own. And they just felt it wasn't safe for anybody to be walking. And that happened. So there was about two weeks. It was around Easter time where everything kind of stopped because people were afraid. And then it was like, then things kind of picked up again.

KLEIN: [01:53:27] As you're coming to the end, did you have a sense of some kind of accomplishment for the time, the two years that you have been there?

ROLL: [01:53:39] I did about the midwives.

KLEIN: [01:53:40] At the time?

ROLL: [01:53:41] Yeah, yeah, that was. That was important. We, you know, the other thing is that we had done a school restaurant, a school lunch program, that we had finally got.

KLEIN: [01:53:52] You keep saying we. You and Bev did most of these things together?

ROLL: [01:53:52] Bev and Bob and I. Volunteers had been working on this school for like two years and we finally got that done. But the municipality really didn't want schools acting on their own, so they cut the water to the school and that stopped that program.

KLEIN: [01:54:13] Mm hmm. So. There's no major, the town doesn't turn out and have a parade and everything as you leave.

ROLL: [01:54:21] No, no, no.

KLEIN: [01:54:24] The only one you're really saying goodbye to is the doctor and?

ROLL: [01:54:27] Some of them, yeah, some of the people I'd worked with.

KLEIN: [01:54:31] What was your feeling when you were finally out of? It must have been relief.

ROLL: [01:54:36] There was. I had been so afraid. I was glad. And then I also remember saying to another volunteer, you know, I'm not going to forget this, and there's a whole list of things I'm going to do when I get back home and I never did them.

KLEIN: [01:54:51] Was there any kind of termination conference in Bogota?

ROLL: [01:54:54] Yeah. Yeah. But the termination conference in Bogota had been like that April or the end of April. Yeah, we had, even earlier. Maybe in March. Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:55:05] So you're leaving. It was just you.

ROLL: [01:55:08] Yeah. Meeting some of my group up in Cali and then we were all going to be terminated out of Bogota. But it wasn't a conference. It was a.

KLEIN: [01:55:17] Did you have any chance to feedback to Peace Corps staff what was going on in your area?

ROLL: [01:55:22] I had written a letter to Betty. Betty Hutchinson and I had been in correspondence because my big thing was we had not been trained, that we were dealing with desperate women whose babies were dying. These people needed, they need it. And their expectation was when we showed up, we were going to help them and we were not trained to meet that need. And I felt that was outrageous because we knew they were training a group with the same training we had to replace us, even though not in our site. And so Betty and I had gone back and forth about that, and it never.

KLEIN: [01:55:57] You knew that your site was going to be closed down?

ROLL: [01:56:00] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:56:01] Oh, OK. So because of the unrest.

ROLL: [01:56:06] That was my feeling. Yeah, it was off limits to people, you know, other volunteers couldn't come visit.

KLEIN: [01:56:11] Then you found out.

ROLL: [01:56:12] Yeah, yeah. One of the questions women in my group do have is whatever happened to our sites, we don't know. There was a replacement group with like five, four or five, maybe no, maybe two or three months.

KLEIN: [01:56:29] So it was '65 when you're leaving.

ROLL: [01:56:31] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:56:32] How much longer did Peace Corps stay?

ROLL: [01:56:34] In Colombia?

KLEIN: [01:56:35] At least another 10 years.

ROLL: [01:56:36] '81.

KLEIN: [01:56:37] Oh, OK.

ROLL: [01:56:38] They pulled out in '81.

KLEIN: [01:56:42] What happened? Tell me about leaving Colombia and where did you go?

ROLL: [01:56:46] And I had some medical problems that had, they'd started some treatment in Colombia, and so I went back to the States and that was supposed to be resolved and it was a hassle. And so I was preoccupied with getting that taken care of.

KLEIN: [01:57:01] Did Peace Corps provide the ongoing medical care?

ROLL: [01:57:04] Well, it was Peace Corps Colombia, said that they would. And I got to Peace Corps Washington, and they weren't comfortable. They didn't want to do anything because it was, I had some kind of adrenal problem. And so I wound up at NIH for an evaluation and it just colored. I was preoccupied with that. And of course, I've been so scared for so long.

KLEIN: [01:57:32] You didn't have to pay for that care.

ROLL: [01:57:33] No, I did not. No, I did not. But I didn't have to pay because I was a research patient, not because Peace Corps was paying for it.

KLEIN: [01:57:41] Oh interesting. Their record was not good during this period.

ROLL: [01:57:43] No.

KLEIN: [01:57:45] Well, when you finally get your head back, what was your initial reaction being back home, back in the U.S.? I mean, you weren't home yet, but.

ROLL: [01:57:54] I, and again, one of these stereotypical things. I remember before I went overseas that I had counted the different brands of hairspray. And of all the stupid, why? And one of the things I did when I came home was to go into drugstore and there were, instead of 17, there were like 25 different brands of hairspray. Now what? What are we doing here? What is going on?

KLEIN: [01:58:18] Right.

ROLL: [01:58:18] And I was in D.C. and the buildup was starting for Vietnam. Johnson was calling up. And everything for my whole life has always been ambivalent, because I had been afraid and I knew that that guerillas did exist and people, innocent people, got killed. And if that was what was going on in Vietnam, then I welcomed, you know, the troops. On the other hand, the whole point of Peace Corps was supposed to be so that we never had to do that.

KLEIN: [01:58:58] You finally left Washington.

ROLL: [01:59:00] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:59:00] And where did you go?

ROLL: [01:59:02] Well, Claudine was in Washington, she was going to Georgetown, and I stayed there for a couple of months. Could not stand Georgetown. I mean, couldn't stand Washington. I had a job.

KLEIN: [01:59:15] You hadn't seen your folks?

ROLL: [01:59:17] I had been home briefly and then I had had to come back.

KLEIN: [01:59:20] Oh OK. So you had touched base.

ROLL: [01:59:21] And I just, I couldn't. I couldn't do Washington. I just could not do it. And so a chance to be a substitute teacher in this little town where my parents lived opened up. And I just couldn't wait to get out of Washington. You know, because I just, I was, they didn't. Nobody understood. You couldn't talk about where you'd been or what you had seen. And it was all war and the excitement that comes with war. It was a war capital. And I didn't fit in. And I just didn't fit in.

KLEIN: [02:00:04] So you're back in Colorado?

ROLL: [02:00:06] Yeah.

KLEIN: [02:00:07] You started teaching.

ROLL: [02:00:08] I taught for half a year and then I went back to University of New Mexico to get a master's in Latin American studies. But I didn't get it.

KLEIN: [02:00:19] Oh, OK. And through the years, how do you think your Peace Corps experience affected what you've done in your career or your life?

ROLL: [02:00:31] Changed my whole life. Absolutely.

KLEIN: [02:00:35] How?

ROLL: [02:00:36] Because I'd wanted to go to law school and that was, you know what? I wanted to then understand what it is I had seen, what it is I had worked with. I was haunted by those women and their problems, and we weren't able to really help them. And we didn't have an answer then. We don't have an answer now, you know.

KLEIN: [02:01:00] You've mentioned that you weren't able or you haven't maintained any connection with people back in Colombia.

ROLL: [02:01:08] No, my partner did. Bev did and I did not. Partly, I tried to, and I didn't. Partly there was the fear because any kind of contact, you know, you just didn't know where it would go.

KLEIN: [02:01:26] Sure, sure. Well, sort of coming near the end. Anything else about the experience you'd like to mention?

ROLL: [02:01:37] I think that what we did was important. I think it's important to write down what we did that worked and what we did that didn't. And I, you know, I think that we should have learned from our mistakes and we should have had a technology or an approach or a strategy to help in particular that built on a cross-cultural understanding, that built on. The women that I worked with, those midwives. I mean, I learned so much from them, just their whole approach, their everything, their courage. You know that that should be, that should permeate what we do when we talk about health and we talk about education.

KLEIN: [02:02:27] And Peace Corps at that time certainly didn't have a long-term vision.

ROLL: [02:02:32] No.

KLEIN: [02:02:33] Or even a short-term strategy in relation to poverty. They were there and it was kind of.

ROLL: [02:02:40] Right. And the people were.

KLEIN: [02:02:41] And if you don't like it, we'll send you to the Philippines.

ROLL: [02:02:43] Exactly.

KLEIN: [02:02:44] Yeah. OK.

[END OF INTERVIEW]