

**Jean Parcher Oral History Interview**  
Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection  
Administrative Information

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**Biographical Note**

Jean Parcher served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Costa Rica from 1980 to 1983 in a community development and health education program.

**Access**

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Oral History Interview

with

Jean Parcher

February 16, 2019

Washington, D.C.

By Evelyn Ganzglass

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

GANZGLASS: [00:00:03] This is Evelyn Ganzglass. I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Somalia from 1966 to 1968. I am interviewing Jean Parcher, who was a Peace Corps volunteer in Costa Rica from 1980 to 1983. She was in the community development and health education program. Today is February 16th, 2019. So, Jean, why did you join the Peace Corps?

PARCHER: [00:00:34] That's a great question. I think a lot of things aligned to give me interest in working overseas or in helping people in less developed countries or less fortunate areas. So I grew up where we always had a world map in our hallway, looked at it all the time. My grandfather was a shipping merchant, but I actually never knew him. So when I was 17, my girlfriend and I graduated early from high school, six months early, and I read the book Michener's book *The Drifters* and I wanted to go to Europe. But in the meantime, we met a Brazilian exchange student and he said, why don't you come to Brazil and stay with my family? And that was not what I wanted, but my girlfriend talked me into it. So

off we went to Sao Paulo, Brazil. This was 1974. I had no idea. I didn't know what to expect.

PARCHER: [00:01:35] And we spent five months traveling in Brazil or living with a family. We had different experiences in terms of the family didn't really want to put us up. We got to, you know, we traveled around. So the end of our trip, we had this flight back to the States and it's. We got to stop in Caracas, Venezuela, and then we decide to go to Margarita Island or Isla Margarita. And there we met this woman and I remember her name, Stacy, but that's all I remember. And she was a Peace Corps volunteer working with fisheries and with the Venezuelans. And then she took us to meet this other couple that were living on the beach and they were Peace Corps volunteers. And I don't know what project they were in, but I was like, wow, this is what I want to do. And not only because of the travel, I will admit that was a big part of it.

PARCHER: [00:02:24] But the other part is when we were traveling in Brazil, I remember we were on a bus from Brasilia to Rio de Janeiro and, you know, this was not a tourist bus or anything. And this guy got on and sat next to me and he smelled like death. I mean, he just, you know, maybe never didn't bathe for a while or was very sick. And I thought, how can I help these people? You know, this is really sad, to have nothing. This guy, you know, he might die next to me. So here then I meet Peace Corps volunteers and I learn what they're doing. So I came back to the States, went off to college, met my future husband, then was my boyfriend, and convinced him to go to South America with me for four, four or five months. So we traveled around and then I told him, I really want to do Peace Corps. And we went and met with Peace Corps recruiters on campus and they said, you've got to get a college degree. We're not taking you. It's not a vacation, you know. So that helped me focus on getting a college degree because I was enamored with Peace Corps. I mean, that's all I could see in my future.

GANZGLASS: [00:03:37] Where did you go to college?

PARCHER: [00:03:39] I went to college at first at UC San Diego, and then I was a math major and that didn't work out. So I ended up going to University

of Montana because they had a geography program there, and I said, geography, I love to travel. This all fits. Let's go to, let's go there. So Mike Parcher, he came with me and he worked. He didn't want to go to school. And I finished college. But it took a long time because I kept taking off to travel. So we did Central America for nine months. So finally, you know, I was graduating. I met with Peace Corps recruiters. And Mike wasn't so, he wasn't enamored with Peace Corps. So it was like, oh no. And they said, you know, we really want you both to go in or if you're not going. I mean, we were married by then. So it was like, if only one of you, if only you're going to go in, Jean, your husband has to sign something saying, you know, he will not be. I can't remember. You're not responsible for him financially, medically, or whatever.

PARCHER: [00:04:49] So we talked it over and he was very nervous, my husband. And so I said, I'm sorry, this is my dream for life. I'm filling out the application. I gotta go to class tonight. Here's your application. When I came home, he had filled it out, thank God. So then started the process of getting the, you know, the. At that time, Peace Corps would send you these kind of like volunteer announcements. Country, type of work, living conditions, like two pages. And we learned real quickly not to say, I don't like that country. We learned to say, I can't, I don't know if I can do that job. One was to Tuvalu in the South Pacific, which I would have loved to live on, but we had had a reality check about living on, a spending time on an island in Central America and the Bay Islands. And we realized that island life can look really romantic and great. But if you can't get off the island when you need to, you know, I mean, you are trapped. And we said, nope, can't do a tiny little island where highest elevation is 10 feet. And I just can't do that.

PARCHER: [00:06:01] So finally, Costa Rica came up and we had been to Costa Rica. Loved the country. I wanted more of a like an Africa experience. But this experience was to work for the Costa Rican National Indigenous, National Bureau of Indian Affairs, CONAI. That's the acronym. And it was all married couples and it was, um, we were going to live in a very rural area. It said that you might have to hike for six to eight hours to get to your site. No electricity, no running water, no transportation. And you might have to build your own house. And we

looked at each other and said, oh, shoot. But wow, what a wonderful experience. Because we had talked about living off the land, you know, in the States and all this. And so it's like, well, why don't we try it in Peace Corps? So they accepted us. My husband, Mike, didn't have a college degree, so they were kind of worried about that. But he had all this construction experience and they thought, and we convinced him, like, wait, we might have to build a house. I want somebody with construction experience, not a college degree necessarily, you know? So they accepted us and we went there.

GANZGLASS: [00:07:23] Where was your training?

PARCHER: [00:07:24] Our training. We did a month in the States, in Kingsville, Texas, at the university there. And it was all of us going to Costa Rica, the married couple group, and a group going to Paraguay. And that was in the summer of 1980, and the training was, it was actually pretty good. It was focused on community development, which we had no idea what that means.

GANZGLASS: [00:07:56] What does it mean?

PARCHER: [00:07:58] How do you facilitate helping the community to what they want to do to improve their lives? Not what I think they should do to improve their lives. Big distinction. So in the training, we learned to listen, observe, and not make any moves, not suggest anything, or start any projects until we really understood what the community wants to do. And then how could we facilitate that. Not do the work, but facilitate it and help organize or get them materials or get them a grant. So it was a real step back of, like, we do not jump in as an American and do it. We let the community to decide. So we had a month of playing different role playing and everything.

PARCHER: [00:08:55] And also, I think the hardest day almost in the entire Peace Corps was they took us down to the border of Mexico in the U.S. We were on the U.S. side. We were in, I think, McAllen. And we had to knock on the doors of everybody, of different people. Try to speak, it wasn't that I had to speak Spanish, but just to introduce ourselves and

ask them some questions about the community. That wasn't so hard. But then we had to sleep in a, it was a senior citizen's place where they served them like meals, and all we could bring was a sheet to sleep with. And we slept, um, we slept on the floor and there were cockroaches everywhere and that weeded some people out after that.

GANZGLASS: [00:09:45] So I assumed you spoke Spanish by this time.

PARCHER: [00:09:49] Yes, yes.

GANZGLASS: [00:09:49] All of your travel in South America.

PARCHER: [00:09:51] Yeah, I had actually minored in Spanish at the University of Montana and I also spoke some Portuguese from living in Brazil. So my language skills were decent.

GANZGLASS: [00:10:03] And your husband's?

PARCHER: [00:10:04] And he actually, even though he had not studied, he is really good at picking up languages. So he had a decent Spanish too. So that made him more comfortable going to a country where he felt he could speak the language. So we finished training there, shipped us off to Miami to go down to Costa Rica to do three months of training, and a big hurricane hit Texas. So we were delayed getting out of there. But you know, we made it. And so we arrived in Costa Rica. You know, we had been there before, so it wasn't a shock, but when they took us. The training was outside of San Jose in an area called was near Alajuela called La Garita. And you know, we arrived in the evening, spent the night in a hotel. The next morning after work, you know, they introduced us to the training center and then we were all sweaty and tired at noon and we had to meet our families. And it was really hard because we.

GANZGLASS: [00:11:04] You were going to live with families?

PARCHER: [00:11:05] Yeah, we were going to live with families for three months and we were sweaty, tired. You know, it was not a nice way to meet

people, but it's reality. So we lived with a family. They, in my opinion, they did it for the money, not for making us feel warm and cozy. OK. So, you know, whatever.

GANZGLASS: [00:11:29] And where did you live with them? Was it in La Garita?

PARCHER: [00:11:35] La Garita, yeah.

GANZGLASS: [00:11:35] So the site of where you lived with a family was the same place as where you were in training.

PARCHER: [00:11:39] Where we had the training, yeah. So we would walk every morning up this beautiful road with exquisite views. And I remember the diesel of the trucks and I, for a while, whenever I smelled diesel I remembered those views, which is like, you would think not. So the, you know, the training was pretty good. You know, we had to learn how to, you know, grow school gardens, how to raise chickens and kill them because we needed food. We didn't have restaurants, we weren't going to have restaurants and stores where we were. You know how to cook a lot of things like plantains, cooking plantains, you know, prepare Costa Rican dishes. We also, because we were going to have horses, we asked them for some horseback training. I'm trying to think. Well, you know, we learned simple things about health. And I'm very squeamish about medical stuff. So it was, that part was tough for me. And when we originally read the announcement of the job, they left off the second page about health. So I didn't know I was getting into that.

GANZGLASS: [00:12:57] In health, in what way? Because I see this is health education. So your own health care or health education?

PARCHER: [00:13:04] Health education. So you know, I mean, I can, you know, things about, you know. I'm sorry, I just lost the word. But like, you know, your sanitation, you know, washing and, you know, clean water. But it was also maternal child health, which I knew nothing about. Because we were living with indigenous where they had no access to, you know, OB-GYN, midwives, hospital or anything. So, you know, in training, they didn't teach us a lot about maternal and child health.

They basically said a lot of the stuff you're going to teach them is what you already know. You know, wash your hands after you use the bathroom, you know, get water from a clean drinking source. You know, talk about microorganisms, talk about your, you know, proper diet, you know, things like that.

PARCHER: [00:14:02] So in training our Costa Rican, I guess, project manager, I guess it's called. She came and her name was Mary Helen, and she described to us all the different sites we had, because we were all going to live on indigenous reservations or very close to them. In Costa Rica, they have these set-aside pieces of land for the indigenous, and they're usually very small in terms of population of the people. So some are very small areas. We were working with the Bribri, which even for my audience, I'll spell as B-R-I-B-R-I. And they're the largest indigenous in Costa Rica. And so she described all of the sites and then had us list our choices one through nine or something. Well, we all wanted the one on the beach in the Caribbean, OK? We got our last choice, but it ended up being great. You know, that's the neatest thing about Peace Corps. It was in the Talamanca Valley on the Caribbean side of Costa Rica, near the border of Panama. And there were two sites there, so that helped out.

GANZGLASS: [00:15:30] Meaning that there was another couple somewhere?

PARCHER: [00:15:34] Another couple near us, about an hour and a half walking. So the way to get there, the easiest way, was to take a bus to Limon and in Limon, they have a, you know, airport. And once a day there was a small one propeller plane that would fly into Amubri, which was one of the sites. And we could fly in in that small plane, and that's where this one couple lived, or that was their site. And for Mike and I, our site was to walk or go by horseback about an hour and a half or two hours. When I say go by horseback was because there's rivers, it's a huge floodplain. There's big rivers and you have to ford the rivers, which is really hard to do with a backpack. They were not sandy bottoms, they were rocky bottoms. Or you had to get somebody to cross you in a boat, which was not like. It wasn't like it was set up where you just ring a bell and they come out. So communication was



tough and all of that. So we ended up with, I think Mike and I were the most, um, the site that was most isolated, less resources, the people.

GANZGLASS: [00:16:50] So you just set out. How did you find this place? Did somebody take you there?

PARCHER: [00:16:56] Yeah. So our very first site visit, Mary Helen told us she arranged with CONAI, the Commission for National Indigenous Affairs, that somebody would meet us. Instead of us flying in, that was too easy she thought, in some respects, we needed to see the whole thing. We took a bus all the way to this town called Bribri, which is near the border of Panama. For people have been to Costa Rica, it's past, you know, Cahuita National Park past Puerto Viejo. And then from there we were supposed to either walk or take get another vehicle ride to this place called Bambu that was on the river. And she informed us we were supposed to carry like eight gallons of gas, which weighed a lot. OK. So we didn't carry any gas. Food was more important to me at that point. And somebody came in a canoe, dugout canoe, with a motor on it to pick us up. And he, this was one of our counterparts that worked for CONAI. He was indigenous.

GANZGLASS: [00:18:09] And how did you speak to these people, in Spanish?

PARCHER: [00:18:13] In Spanish. Yeah, yeah. They spoke fairly good Spanish. Bribri is still their first language, but Spanish. They all went to school in Spanish so. So he picked us up and then he took us upriver to where we could then hike to a Amubri. And in Amubri, there's a Catholic mission with two priests from Germany, originally from Germany, that had been there many, many years. And that's where the one couple, George and Joan, were going to stay. And then I think we spent the night there. And that Catholic mission had set up a radio station called Voz de Talamanca, or Talamancan Voice. So on that radio station every night, starting at about five o'clock till about eight o'clock at night, they transmitted. And they would do music and, you know, educational programs, you know, religious programs.

PARCHER: [00:19:10] But they also had messages. So on that, one of the nuns put a message saying, you know, Peace Corps volunteers Juanita and Miguel -- I was referred to as Juanita, my husband was Miguel -- have arrived. Hernan Segura, which was our counterpart, please come and get them tomorrow. So he came and got us, Hernan, our counterpart. He heard that. The next morning, he came over walking. I don't know if he brought a horse. I don't remember. And we met him and he said, OK, we're going off to Coroma. Coroma is the name of our village we're going to live in. So, you know, we had our backpacks for the week-long visit and filled full of.

GANZGLASS: [00:20:00] So this was only a week-long visit that you are taking.

PARCHER: [00:20:03] Yeah, so this was still in training. So we were doing our site visit. So, you know, I had a backpack with food and some clothes and I don't know, toiletries. And we started off and of course, they walk really fast because that's all they do. I mean, they do, I mean, they're really good at it. And I'm trying to keep up and we get to the river. And actually, the river has lots of different branches, so you're always fording. And I was like, I can't do this, you know? And so he stopped and helped me, and I think we got a boat to go across, you know, he realized, I mean. It's so interesting because you've got this, you know, this is his lifestyle. And so for him, all of this is normal and this is none of my lifestyle. And for me, it's so different and difficult. Now, if he, if Hernan had been dropped in the middle of the Metro station in Washington, D.C., you know.

GANZGLASS: [00:20:59] He'd have a problem too.

PARCHER: [00:21:00] He'd have a huge problem. So anyways, we made it to the site. They gave us a little hut to live in for the week. We had to meet with the elders of the Bribri indigenous for them to accept us, to live in the village. So we had no idea. They were speaking Bribri. We just sat there and they accepted us. We stayed for about a week and I remember I turned to my husband at some point of that and I said, I really want to do this, but I realize I absolutely cannot do it alone. So if you cannot do this, then we need to go home because I can't stay here

by myself. And he said, no, I'll stay. So during that site visit, there was somebody that came up. He was, um, he worked for the health department and he was a what they call a *promador*, go out to do health promotion. And he had a really nice horse and he asked me if I wanted to ride it. And I'm always been in love with horses, but I really don't know how to ride very well. So I jumped on it and that horse took off and I fell and hurt myself.

PARCHER: [00:22:09] So when we came back to our training, I said, we need some horseback training. So they gave it to us. So in retrospect, the site had tons of rivers, beautiful rivers to swim in. I love swimming. That was one reason why they selected me. They thought I could teach swimming to the indigenous because some of them drowned in the rivers. Well the reality is usually it was the adults that were drunk and they drown. So and they all really knew how to swim. And then they had horses. I knew I had to get a horse because that was one way to get around, you know, and it was beautiful. It's hot, beautiful. But you know, it was.

GANZGLASS: [00:22:50] Do they have schools in these towns?

PARCHER: [00:22:52] Yes, they had elementary schools. So, um.

GANZGLASS: [00:22:58] In Spanish?

PARCHER: [00:22:59] In Spanish, yeah. So we went back and then we were assigned, you know, we got sworn in, we were assigned, you know, to our sites and, you know, somehow we got moved in with, you know, pots and pans and all this kind of stuff and set up, you know. And it took a while to set up with, you know, I couldn't cook over wood all the time. One reason why we were all married couples in this group was because they realized it was going to take, just living was going to take a lot of work. So if you sent a single volunteer, they're just, they're living, cooking, washing, you know, supplies would take three quarters of their day, so they couldn't work. And it wasn't like I had to do all the work, but at least we could split it. The indigenous all cooked off of wood fires. That didn't work for me.

GANZGLASS: [00:23:48] Why not?

PARCHER: [00:23:50] It was hard to keep, it took a long time to boil the rice and everything. And it was hard to keep the fire going, especially if I had to go off for the day and work in a school or something and come back and then start a fire from scratch and be starving. There was no restaurants you could go to. So we finally bought a gas stove, a tropic gas stove. So you know, that made life a little easier.

GANZGLASS: [00:24:16] And how did you get that? Did you go back into town?

PARCHER: [00:24:18] Then we had to go to a town and then we put the gas container on the front of a horse and rode on the horse holding on to it, which was not easy. So whenever we ran out of gas, it was a sad day. So we got settled in, tried to do the community development. I mean, we were loaned a house to live in, or paid the rent. But it wasn't much. One of the things with these indigenous, the Bribri, and I want to always call them indigenous, not Indians. I see a very different, you know, connotation in those words. Um, is that, you know, they had their little banana, banana or plantain farms. They had their cacao farms. So they had houses in different areas, depending where they were working, or huts or whatever. So one guy, Daniel, rented us a big house, wood house up on stilts. Everything was on stilts because if it flooded and also to keep the bugs, less bugs in and snakes out, OK? So, you know, we started to get settled. Our jobs were to work in the schools with school gardens, teach, you know, sanitation and, you know, proper health hygiene.

GANZGLASS: [00:25:40] Did you have a curriculum that was given or you just made it up as you went along?

PARCHER: [00:25:44] We made it up. I mean, we knew how to plant school gardens. That was about all. We were not in charge of the entire school. There were school teachers, but we would come and do these programs and there were three schools we went to. And then nutrition and then, you know, community development, which the community

wanted to build a health post to store all the medicines and to have a place where when the doctor came once a month, people could go and have consultation. And then I wanted, I realized that women's groups would be a way for me to get into the community. And, you know, I was supposed to teach nutrition and maternal and child health, which I realized they would know in a minute that I didn't know anything about it. So let's not go there until necessary.

PARCHER: [00:26:36] So, you know, we started working in the schools. Interesting thing was the school teacher in our, it was a married couple in our community, Coroma. They were from the capital, San Jose. They had learned Bribri and they thought they should teach all of the kids in Bribri. The kids, when they were born. Actually, the parents who were our age, in their 20s when they had their kids, they said, wow, we need to teach them Spanish so they can do well in school. Because these parents, when they started school, had to do it in Spanish, so they didn't teach their kids Bribri. So these kids got to school and the teacher got very mad at them because they didn't speak their own language. Now they understood it, but that was.

GANZGLASS: [00:27:30] Were the teachers also Bribri?

PARCHER: [00:27:31] No, they were from the capital. They were Spanish or Costa Rican Spanish, white we called them. So there was a conflict there of like, why don't you know your own language? And the kids had this shame of like, oh my gosh. So I was sad. You know, I think the teacher could have handled it differently. But anyway, so we would arrive and, you know, do our little part. School gardens, hygiene. I mean, one time a lot of kids had lice, so we got from Peace Corps lice shampoo and we took them all to the river and washed their hair, you know, I mean. And then, you know, nutrition. But I realized right away that I couldn't stand up there and say, there's four food groups. You've got to eat protein at every meal, you've got to eat two vegetables and two fruits and, you know, limit your starch. Because they didn't have it. If they got protein, it was when somebody killed a pig and then, you know, everybody would buy a couple kilos. There was no refrigeration, so you ate pork.

GANZGLASS: [00:28:40] Right away.

PARCHER: [00:28:40] Right away. There was, it wasn't like, well, I think I'll save that for next week, you know. And their staple, just like we would say, you know, our staple for a meal, their staple is rice and boiled plantains, cooking bananas, which are starch heavy. We tried to do school gardens. Tomatoes don't grow there very well. It's very hot. Broccoli, all of our vegetables that we love here in the northern climates don't do well there. Okra did great. Peppers, some peppers do well, hot peppers. Because one, you have all these insects, you have the heat, and then you have the leaf cutting ants. So once they discovered the plants in the garden, they'd be gone in a second or overnight.

GANZGLASS: [00:29:28] And nobody said that in training, of course.

PARCHER: [00:29:30] No. Well, they did give us training in different pesticides and stuff, but we realized that the indigenous really couldn't. I mean, that wasn't something that they could afford. And, you know, it wasn't that important to them. So I decided to do cooking classes with the women. Let's try to vary their diet, but not sit there and tell them they got to do this and that and that. So they had lots of bananas. So I would, you know, there were some small stores where you could get things like flour and sugar and lard and cans of tuna fish, you know, things that wouldn't spoil. So I called the woman together. They brought me a bunch of bananas. I bought stuff for, you know, the flour and sugar, and we baked banana bread on top of my stove. We also did it over a wood fire and they went, wow, this is really good. So they didn't do that like on a daily basis. But what they would do is if the woman wanted to earn money and there was like a soccer game going on, they would bake some banana bread and go sell it. This was great. I taught him how to make brownies because they grew cacao, chocolate. They said, no, you don't eat chocolate with flour, I'm sorry, you eat it in water only. So I made my brownies all the time. But that was not a hit.

GANZGLASS: [00:30:47] They didn't like it.

PARCHER: [00:30:48] No. Other interesting stories about cooking.

GANZGLASS: [00:30:52] Wait, wait, just on cooking. Did you teach them anything nutritious? Banana bread and brownies are not exactly nutritious.

PARCHER: [00:31:02] Um, let me think. OK, so this is getting to my cooking story. So, you know, I couldn't teach them much about killing a chicken because I didn't know how to kill one, so that was out the window. You know, I did talk about how you should eat pork and chicken and fish, you know? But then, you know, I said, wow, there's fruits that would get ripen all at once, and one of them is called water apple, *manzana de agua*. And when the tree, they kind of look like pears, but they kind of have an apple taste. But they're very, they have a lot of liquid in them. So when the tree has everything ripe, there's a million apples and then you don't see apples for another year. So I said, let's make jelly out of this, because then you can spread it on or, you know, and then you would have some fruit with your meal, whatever you want to do. So I told them, I said, I'll get the jars, I'll get the paraffin. You know, we can jointly buy the sugar. And then, you know, you guys bring me the *manzana de agua*, the water apples.

PARCHER: [00:32:09] And they all said, oh, OK. They weren't enthusiastic. And, you know, I'm like, OK, so who's going to bring me apples? Nobody would volunteer. So finally, I talked to one of my closer friends and I said, you know, why can't we go get apples? And she says, because I am. She said, well, we're all busy, but I'll loan you my son, and he can go out with you. So he and I went out and I kept saying, there's a tree. He said, no, no, no, no, we can't go there. There's a tree. No, no, no. So we went really far. Finally found a tree, harvested the apples, brought them back. So the day of the class, only three women showed up. Normally I'd have like, you know, six, seven or eight. And I said, what's the matter? And they said, we believe if you cook the apple, the tree dies. So I went, oh, OK, won't do that one. So that one didn't go over so well. We did do ketchup.

GANZGLASS: [00:33:07] Which is very counterproductive culturally. You would think that they over the centuries would have cooked apples, made applesauce sauce, whatever.

PARCHER: [00:33:18] No, no. That's what they believed.

GANZGLASS: [00:33:20] Yeah.

PARCHER: [00:33:22] There was a tree next to us that was breadfruit that I love because if you can fry it and it tastes like French fries and stuff. They believe if you fry the bread fruit, you can boil it, the tree dies. So we came back, I've come back there and that tree is still alive. But one of the things about we learned about, you know, we have beliefs in the U.S. or my family passed it down to me. These indigenous have beliefs. If somebody asked me, why do you believe that if you go outside with your hair wet when it's cold, you'll get a cold. I said, because my mother told me. OK, but well, why? Well, it happened one time. Why? The indigenous explained to us they had anthropologists come in and ask them questions like that of why they believe this. And they finally, they were too embarrassed to always say, because my grandmother or grandfather. They finally made up stories.

GANZGLASS: [00:34:20] Hmm.

PARCHER: [00:34:20] So now I wonder about reading some of those stories. So they didn't always have answers. I taught them how to make ketchup. That was really good. And I don't like ketchup, but we had fresh tomatoes and we had, you know, spices, that was good. Taught them how to bake bread in a can and, you know, over oven. We didn't. Oh, we did cheese. That was one healthy thing. So we got some milk and we actually made cheese. So we did those. You know, it was difficult. For example, water. We obviously didn't have, you know, very clean water. There were creeks everywhere. There were rivers everywhere. But there were, you know, people had pigs and some people had cows. And, you know, we weren't sure where people's latrines were because they were pretty hidden in the jungle. So whenever we, you know, got water from the creek, we boiled it. Finally, we started



catching rainwater and filtering it. So then we didn't have to boil the water.

PARCHER: [00:35:24] And we tried to explain that to, you know, the kids, the adults, that there's microorganisms in the water and they looked at us like, you're the one getting sick, not me. You know, why should I worry about those? And I've never seen them under a microscope? So, you know, we finally had to give up on that. But the very last like week or two we are there, I went to go visit this family that we had known and they were catching rainwater. And I said, fantastic, this is great. I said, isn't that so much better to drink? And she looked at me and she said, I wouldn't dare drink that stuff. It tastes terrible. I use it for washing. Like, OK! What can you do?

GANZGLASS: [00:36:06] Were you the first Peace Corps volunteers in this town?

PARCHER: [00:36:08] Yes, we were the first and the only other ones were sent there about three years ago when I visited them there. Now there's a rumor there was one other volunteer there, a woman by herself, but I actually think she was a missionary, but I'm not sure.

GANZGLASS: [00:36:26] And what did your husband do while you were doing all of this?

PARCHER: [00:36:29] He helped the community organize to build a health post. They had to get the lumber. They had to go cut down a tree, use an Alaskan chainsaw and cut it into planks, let the planks dry, haul the wood down, pour the concrete. They got concrete in. And then put a, we had the zinc or that. What do you call that? Well, I call them zinc roof, you know? So did that, that's what he, one thing he did.

GANZGLASS: [00:37:02] So he worked with the men and you worked with the women.

PARCHER: [00:37:05] Yeah. And then we lived in Coroma and up the path about another, excuse me, half an hour an hour walk, was another town called Boca Uren. And so we, um, that little village had a one room

schoolhouse with a thatched roof. And it was falling apart, so they wanted to see if they could build a new school with a zinc roof, wood. So we worked to help them write a proposal with USAID, and we got money to build a school. Now, you know, so we filled it out about, you know, in-kind work. The villagers were going to do da da da da da. And then we got money for the cement and the zinc and so on and so forth, so that that came to fruition. It was good.

PARCHER: [00:38:03] The other thing that Mike did, um, we had other Peace Corps volunteers that were in the tilapia fish program. So we wanted to improve their nutrition and they love fish. But their practice had been where they, there were like lots of rivers. And what they would do during kind of a dry season, which didn't last very long, is they would take one of the like branches of the river and block it off with banana leaves so it would dry up and then they would catch all the fish. And so that was one way they got some protein. Well, that, you know, the fish, there weren't that many fish. So we just, Mike said, well, let's try tilapia. So he spent a lot of time on his own building a tilapia pond, which was not easy. But he got, we got another volunteer to come in, put the fingerlings in. You know, we would go up there and, you know, feed them, well, actually, horse manure, which is going to shock people that eat a lot of tilapia. But the horse manure would create algae in the pond and the fish would eat the algae and they would grow, OK. Other thing we could feed them is corn.

PARCHER: [00:39:15] So that was the end of our two years. So we extended three more months so that we could harvest the fish. So, you know, when we were living there, I was hungry too. And so I'd say, let's go catch a fish for lunch, so we go up there and catch a fish for lunch, you know? And at the end, when we harvested the pond, because it wasn't right next to our house, it was up in the hills. There were very few fish and we were like shocked. And all the villagers were around to see this. And we're like, oh no. And they all said, no, we ate very well, thank you very much.

GANZGLASS: [00:39:52] So they ate them?

PARCHER: [00:39:53] They ate them. They knew it was a success, you know.

GANZGLASS: [00:39:56] Did they continue it?

PARCHER: [00:39:58] Yes and no, they didn't immediately. But when I went back a few years ago, there was a woman that had continued it. But no longer is it happening right now. It would have been great if Peace Corps had sent a volunteer in there to continue it. Because you need the fingerlings, you need the pond, so on and so forth.

GANZGLASS: [00:40:20] Do you need the fingerlings each time or they just ate too many of the fish? Would they have? Would it have perpetuated itself?

PARCHER: [00:40:28] I'm not sure. I think it would have if there had been more fish. So but, so the other success that we had. You know, I did women's groups and at first, this woman said, I want to learn. They said, I want to learn how to knit or crochet, and I said, great, but I don't know how to. So I found a woman to teach it and I would facilitate going to the to either the capital, San Jose, or Limon, the port, and get the yarn or the wool and the utensils she needed, the knitting hooks. So we did that, and then we also did sewing. Well, after about a year, I had learned. Well, I had learned in my previous travels in Guatemala how to weave. So I was at the Peace Corps office in San Jose, and this volunteer was leaving. And she said, I have this loom that I built and you know how to weave. You want to take it back to your site? And I said, great because that'll give me something to do.

PARCHER: [00:41:26] So I took it back to the site and I was just weaving because it's a nice thing to do on the hot afternoon. And a woman came by and said my grandmother used to do that and I want to learn. And I said, whoa, OK. Now this was made out of plywood, which we couldn't get there. So we went back to the capital, San Jose. We'd go back about every six weeks and we bought.

GANZGLASS: [00:41:50] Walking basically, walking back or going by horse?

PARCHER: [00:41:53] No, we would go. To get to the capital, we would go from our village usually by horse to Amubri, wait for the plane, which could land anywhere from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. because it was doing a delivery from Limon. And it just depended if they had other things they had to do that day. So you had no communication. You sat on the airstrip and waited. Then we would fly to Limon and hopefully get a bus up to San Jose. That was our best route. Our hardest route was a boat all the way to Bambu and then take several, take a truck and a bus and another bus.

PARCHER: [00:42:30] So we got this book about how to build different types of looms because I'd done a back strap in Guatemala, but it's really hard especially to keep things even and neat. So we found a Navajo loom, a diagram of it, where you could build in a door frame and most of the houses had a door frame. And so you hang it and you had the, you know, the weaving sticks and everything. So we started teaching weaving and the women loved it. We even went over to Amubri where the nuns were and we did a whole class there with people. The nuns learned to weave. I actually still have a bag they wove for me.

GANZGLASS: [00:43:11] This was made, you were weaving cotton?

PARCHER: [00:43:15] Cotton. And because it was very hot there and we're like, well, what are we going to do with this stuff? And then the indigenous at Bribri said, oh, we want belts and we want bags. They wanted bags to carry their stuff. And even the men, you know, they're going, whatever. They're harvesting, hunting, whatever they need their tools, their, you know. So we just kept teaching weaving, you know, my husband learned too and so we would teach the classes. And that was a success that we never thought would happen. And so when we, that did remain in some form or another. So that was a success. The other thing.

GANZGLASS: [00:44:00] Did they have their own patterns or what did they weave?

PARCHER: [00:44:05] So it was very interesting because I like to weave like kind of earth tones. And they said, oh, we see that every day. We want

bright, bright colors. And then they started saying, oh, up in the mountains, there's these etchings or, you know, paintings from our ancestors. Can we copy their stuff? And I said, yes, yes. So later this family started doing that and selling it. Monica, who was the wife of our counterpart, she actually got a few years later money to teach in this town that was off the reservation how to weave. And that was, you know, a success. She could earn some money on her own, you know, so that was really good.

GANZGLASS: [00:44:58] That's great.

PARCHER: [00:44:59] The house thing that we did that was interesting, and it got me over my fear of shots, was one of the diseases they have there is called, in English leishmaniasis. And it's where a type of fly will bite you and injects into your bloodstream something that will start a sore on you. And that sore gets bigger and bigger and bigger, so it can cover half a cheek on your face. And it takes like two or three years for it finally to go away. So all of the indigenous had these big scars on their cheeks. And so, you know, that fly is everywhere, so of course, we got it. My husband got it several places, you could see where it was coming out, so he had to go through the series of 24 injections, 12 days of two injections a day. I had just one local area and the doctor in San Jose said, oh, we can just inject that. So I was OK.

PARCHER: [00:46:09] Now Mike had to go through these injections and we said to Peace Corps, can we stay in the capital while he does that? And they said only he can. You have to go back on your own, Jean. And I was afraid to go back on my own, life was hard there. Not afraid of the people, just life was hard. There were poisonous snakes, you know, all this kind of stuff. So they said, well, if you can learn to inject, Mike can go back with you. So I had to learn to inject him. I had to inject him twice a day. So we ended up getting additional, you know, whatever it was, the medicine and additional syringes. So when kids would have this, I'd ask their parents if they wanted me to inject. Because once you go through the injections, you are immune to it for life.

GANZGLASS: [00:46:53] Oh.

PARCHER: [00:46:54] So I started injecting kids and I felt, oh, terrible. But I gave them a candy every time and they lined up for their injections. That pain was nothing compared to the candy. So we had these syringes. We also had the Peace Corps giving us anti-venom against this one type of snake called fer-de-lance or terciopelo. That is very venomous, venomous, kind of like a rattlesnake. So one night we got a knock on our door and they said, come quick. Somebody's been bitten. My daughter's been bitten by a terciopelo. We think poisonous. Can you bring your anti-venom? So we went to their hut. All they had, I mean, we had flashlights, kerosene lantern. And what they said was. What we had learned in training, I mean, Peace Corps gave us training for this stuff, is that some people are deathly allergic to it. So you can't just start injecting. You need to drop a couple drops of the anti-venom in their eye, wait 30 minutes, and see if they have a reaction.

PARCHER: [00:48:01] We're waiting in the dark and they're like, inject her, inject her! I'm like, no, I'm waiting. So finally, I decided, OK, I'll inject her. And it was like 24 cc's. So you had to just, you know, I think it was four syringes worth. And I was freaked out she was going to die. So we left, you know, did the work, went back. Next morning, I came and they're raking leaves. I'm thinking, oh God, they're digging a grave. No, she survived. Well, fast forward, I went back three years ago to the village because these other Peace Corps volunteers that had started there, they were hearing about Miguel y Juanita Parcher, and they looked me up on the internet. They found me, Jean Parcher, and he sent me email and I just flipped. It was four years ago and I said, Patrick, give me your cell phone number, because he was in the capital. I can call you. I'm going to call you, please. I've got to talk to you. Because I've been back two other times and there'd never been a Peace Corps volunteer. So I talked to him and I decided, by then I was divorced, and I decided I really wanted to go and go back there with them.

PARCHER: [00:49:15] So that was in September. I retired in November, and in February I took off for Costa Rica. And so he and his wife met me in Puerto Viejo, helped me to get in. Things have changed, but not that much. There's a wonderful high school there. They teach in Bribri. All

the teachers have to teach in Bribri. They know Spanish. And all the kids before they graduate have to know English, and they are good. So anyways, I stayed with them for a few days. And to fast forward to my snake story, when I wanted to leave I asked around. I said, I want to go out by boat. It's so beautiful. The rivers are beautiful. So they said, oh, Anselmo lives in Suretka and he takes, he has a nice boat, so we'll call him on the phone. By then, people are having cell phones. Coverage wasn't very good, but they had cell phones. And we'll call them and he'll come pick you up. So he came and picked me up. We had to hike for about a half an hour and Patrick and his wife came with me. And I got in the boat and Anselmo says, you must come and see my wife. And I'm like, well, who's your wife, you know? And then he told me, she is the one that you saved. I didn't even remember her name, you know? So when we got to Suretka.

GANZGLASS: [00:50:33] So you were remembered in the town.

PARCHER: [00:50:35] I was definitely remembered. So when we got there, there's a road in the town that he lives in now, and so I went to her house. And, you know, I just couldn't believe it. We have selfies, you know, and I met her kids and everything, and it was like, wow, you know?

GANZGLASS: [00:50:50] So did they get venom to have on their own or was it just lucky that you had it?

PARCHER: [00:50:55] That was part of the health post, but it was just kind of by luck, you know. They had some of their own, you know, you know, traditional medicine, but no. What they would do sometimes is in Amubri, where they had the Catholic mission, there was an airstrip. And the younger, which I think now is deceased, priest, Bernardito, had his own airplane and he was a pilot. So he could fly people out in an emergency.

GANZGLASS: [00:51:26] Yeah, but when you have a snake bite, you know, that has to happen really quickly.

PARCHER: [00:51:32] Well, it could be 12 to 24 hours with that type of snake. There are coral snakes and coral snakes are you need to get out quick. But coral snakes, we learned, because they wouldn't. Peace Corps couldn't give us anti-venom for that because it has to be refrigerated. Coral snakes can't open their mouths very wide, so they have to bite like in between your fingers or between your toes. So it's real rare to get bitten by one. But I have to say I went to this, into Peace Corps, deathly afraid of spiders, deathly afraid of snakes. I'm better now.

GANZGLASS: [00:52:09] So you went really fast through all of this. Talk, uh, you said a long time ago at the beginning, the difference between Indians and indigenous people. What's the difference, from your point of view?

PARCHER: [00:52:23] My point of view is Christopher Columbus came over here thinking he was discovering India, and he called them Indians. And they actually, to me, they're indigenous. They are actually our true natives, and there are different nations or tribes, and they're not all the same. They're different and they want to be thought of as different. So I prefer to refer to them as indigenous. To me, Indians has a bad connotation.

GANZGLASS: [00:53:00] And are they maintaining their culture? You've been back several times.

PARCHER: [00:53:05] Yes. And that is so exciting. Like I told the story of the schoolteacher getting mad at the kids because they didn't speak their native language or their parents' language. So fast forward, when I went back, when my kids were, we took our kids back when they were three and six. And we noticed that there was a restaurant in a town called Bribri, which is not on the reservation, and it had, the menu was in Bribri. We were like, fantastic. Spanish and Bribri. And then, you know, when I went back three years ago, the schools, all the school teachers had to speak Bribri. So they all had to be indigenous or have learned Bribri, and they taught half in Bribri and half in Spanish. So yes, they're embracing their culture, which is phenomenal.



PARCHER: [00:54:00] And the Peace Corps volunteers, Kirsten and Patrick that were there. Her job, Kirsten, was to teach, help with the English teaching. Because every kid that graduates from high school in Costa Rica has to speak a certain level in English now. They, she and some other volunteers, had taken some of these Bribri to a, the high school kids, to like a contest for the nation of who spoke spelling and who spoke better English. The kids, the indigenous, won. One of them did, because here this is their third language. It's not easy, but much easier than somebody learning a second language, you know.

PARCHER: [00:54:44] The other thing that was really interesting about this. They're, the Bribri area is close to the Caribbean coast, where in Costa Rica, a lot of, um, they import a lot of Jamaicans to build the railroads. So English is well spoken on the Caribbean coast. So when we were there in the eighties, many of the older, older people spoke English and we didn't realize that. We would go to, be invited to somebody's house and we'd be sitting there while they're making food, and we would start talking to each other in English. You know, they were out of the picture. Maybe an older grandmother would be in the corner and she would come out with some English and we're like, wow. Because that's how they did their trade with the Jamaicans. So they learned English.

GANZGLASS: [00:55:33] I didn't realize that.

PARCHER: [00:55:34] Yeah, yeah. It's a fascinating culture, actually.

GANZGLASS: [00:55:37] Did you travel around the country at all or did you stay in your area?

PARCHER: [00:55:40] Yeah, we did. We did. It was hard to get out and usually when we, like every six weeks, we would go to San Jose and, you know, have three or four days where we would eat. And I say drink beer and buy supplies. So but we did one vacation, we went to the Corn Islands, which is.

GANZGLASS: [00:56:02] Corn?

PARCHER: [00:56:02] Islas del Maíz, which belonged to, I always get this wrong. I think they belong to Colombia. But they're close to Nicaragua. One or the other. Yeah. So we did that. On one of our, when we were in training, we went to the Osa Peninsula on the Pacific side. We had traveled a lot in Costa Rica before that, so we kind of knew the country. So we weren't like, we've got to go see everything. Went to Guanacaste. When we finished Peace Corps, there was a previous volunteer who had decided to stay in Costa Rica, and he had rented a house on the beach in Puerto Viejo. And his name was Keith, and we, when we were. Puerto Viejo was on the Caribbean coast. So when we were in our site and we wanted to get out of our site for like a weekend, he would invite us. We would go to his house and we would stay there.

PARCHER: [00:57:02] So when we finished Peace Corps, he said, I want, I'm going back to the states, do you want to take over my rental? And we said, yes. Beautiful ocean right there. And so we took over his rental, and it was a very tiny little place. And, you know, his stove and his bed and stuff like that, bought all that from him. So we stayed there three months. And every day we said, do we go to the States or do we stay here? I don't know, the beach looks great. So we did that for three months and then we came home.

GANZGLASS: [00:57:30] What made you decide to come home?

PARCHER: [00:57:34] I didn't. I wanted to stay there. Puerto Viejo at that time had only one very low-class hotel, had a great restaurant, and I thought, this is a great tourist mecca. We could do a hotel and bed and breakfast. But Costa Rica had, at that time, was debating a law whether in that area they were going to make all of that a national park and not allow people to build within three hundred meters of the ocean. So, you know, insecurity. And then I also, part of the Peace Corps experience, you have one year of noncompetitive status. And I knew being a geographer, a cartographer, that my line of work would be to work for the federal government, so I should go home and get a job. But I tell you, we debated it back and forth.

GANZGLASS: [00:58:27] And you did use your noncompetitive status?

PARCHER: [00:58:30] I did. I did. And I got a job with the U.S. Geological Survey in Denver. And you know, it was, I thought. I went from living with no electricity out in the jungle, always being outside, to making topographic maps where you're in a dark room all day. I thought, woah, is this a change. But it was a career, and I eventually got to do some international work and ended my career doing a lot of international work for the Department of Interior here.

GANZGLASS: [00:59:04] As a geographer?

PARCHER: [00:59:05] As a geographer, yeah. So Peace Corps, I remember, you know, you asked or that sheet talks about how do I, you know, have I incorporated Peace Corps in my life afterwards?

GANZGLASS: [00:59:19] That's my next question. You beat me to it.

PARCHER: [00:59:24] I did, because I think it's the most, you know, wonderful experience. So when we moved to Denver, we learned about this returned Peace Corps volunteer group, the Denver Peace Corps RPCVs. We joined up and it's Peace Corps volunteers from served all over. But we have something in common. We know what it's like to live in another culture, to not understand things and to live, to realize that it's, not everybody has everything we have. So if I'm not dressed right for a party, it's not the end of the world. If I don't bring the right dish to the party or I don't even own china. So I, you know, it's OK to have a Christmas dinner without china, you know? So we lived there 15 years and did a lot of stuff with them and, you know, really enjoyed it and I was on the board. And then we moved to Austin. Austin, Texas.

PARCHER: [01:00:17] And then while I was working in Denver for the USGS, they had a project on the Mexico border, with Mexico, and I jumped up and said, please, please, please, can I do that? So since I had my Spanish, they put me as lead on that project and I made wonderful friends in Mexico from it. So then I had the opportunity to start an office in Austin,

Texas. So we moved down to Austin when the kids were in their preteens and we joined their returned Peace Corps group, HoTPCA. And then I had, at the end of my career, the opportunity to move here to Reston, Virginia. And there was no, there was a RPCVW, which is a wonderful group.

GANZGLASS: [01:01:04] Washington.

PARCHER: [01:01:06] Washington. But it's a totally different atmosphere, has many young people. And by when I moved here, I was 50 or something, you know, and it's all in D.C., which is a little far from Reston. So their activities are different. The population is different. So for Peace Corps' 50th anniversary, Lynn Lilienthal put on an event in Reston, and I realized there's a lot of returned Peace Corps volunteers there. So between Lynn, Steve Christopher, and myself, we started NoVA RPCV and then they all nominated me as president. And I said, what the heck? And of all the volunteer stuff I do, it's the most wonderful.

GANZGLASS: [01:01:49] That's great. That's great.

PARCHER: [01:01:51] Yeah.

GANZGLASS: [01:01:51] So I know you've been back it sounds like quite a few times. What impact do you think Peace Corps had on the town you were in? Clearly, you saved a kid's life, which was incredible.

PARCHER: [01:02:05] You know, I wish I could say, oh, they have all this clean water and great food and great education from our experience. No, nothing like that. But I think what the impact is, they saw what Americans are like, or a couple was like. Like Mike would do the dishes and they would see him doing the dishes. And, you know, the men would never have done the dishes, you know, so we would joke about that. And you know, maybe I did some things that they might quote as men's, you know, men's work. You know, we found out later that some of them had traveled to the States with special indigenous conferences. So I think we opened up their eyes to the world instead of

just being very small. We highly respected them. And so that respect, I think, I hope it helped. And like I said, you know, there were some women that got money to teach weaving. You know, we did teach at the very end, they asked us to teach some about birth control. Because they had really not a lot of information, so that might have helped.

GANZGLASS: [01:03:18] Was Costa Rica OK with that as a Catholic country?

PARCHER: [01:03:23] We never asked permission. It was our last month.

GANZGLASS: [01:03:26] Got it.

PARCHER: [01:03:27] Yeah. So and they came to us to ask, not the other way. When our counterpart's wife was pregnant, Monica, with her second child. Her first child was born and he was missing fingers and stuff like that. And he was very sick. I gave her a bunch of my prenatal vitamins. Her second child is big. And I got to see him. The difference between the two, whether that was in vitamins or not, I think that's one part of it. You know, I think just knowing Americans. For me, what did it do for me? It one gave me a great appreciation for farmers, for people living off the land. When people say, oh, let's go live off the land, I say, do you know how hard it is to eat only what you grow? Very very hard.

GANZGLASS: [01:04:19] So it cured you of that idea.

PARCHER: [01:04:22] Cured me completely of that idea. I do not want to grow. I mean, we had gardens in Denver and Austin, but I don't grow my own food, you know, building my own house. It also cured me of owning a horse. We own two horses and we had to take care of them. I love riding horses, but they are a lot of work. So my sister owns horses. She can have them. I go ride them, but I never want.

GANZGLASS: [01:04:47] Where did you, you talked about your grandfather in shipping, but where did you grow up?

PARCHER: [01:04:53] Palo Alto, California.

GANZGLASS: [01:04:55] So not exactly rural.

PARCHER: [01:04:57] No, not rural at all. So yeah. So, you know, and the other thing, you know, that opened my eyes is. Well, I would say in my career, I got involved with a group out of the Organization of American States called the Pan American Institute of Geography and History, and it's a specialized organization of OAS, the Organization of American States, and it's been around since 1927 or something. So through my work with the U.S. Geological Survey and my Spanish and everything, I finally got the opportunity to participate with this group. And so they, you know, it's very bureaucracy, bureaucracy and high level, but they do science and history. And so by the end of my career, I ended up being one of the authorities. So I was appointed by our U.S. ambassador to the OAS to be in this position, which meant, you know, I have to go to the directing council, the General Assembly. I have oversight and decide what projects are going to be funded and so on and so forth.

PARCHER: [01:06:08] And then I retired and the position is for four years. So at the end of four years, I asked my deputy, my vice president, to flip with me because we wanted to continue for eight years. And she is so innovative and she's still working. So I'm the vice president now. She's the president, and so we're working with scientists and geographers, cartographers, geophysicists, and historians from all over Latin America. And so it's a totally different global population.

GANZGLASS: [01:06:38] That's great.

PARCHER: [01:06:39] But, it's knowing all these countries in Latin America, they're all different. You know, it's not, you know, just because I speak Spanish. Yeah, just like you in Africa.

GANZGLASS: [01:06:52] Yeah. Very different. Very different.

PARCHER: [01:06:54] Right. So but, you know, I wish that we could have had more of an impact on them. But I think Peace Corps decided that it

was too isolated of a site to send anybody back again for many years. And this couple that was there three years ago, Patrick and Kirsten, she got really bad asthma and Peace Corps said, you have to leave. So they were very sad.

GANZGLASS: [01:07:16] But nothing is as isolated as it used to be. Everybody has cell phones.

PARCHER: [01:07:21] They had cell phones, yeah.

GANZGLASS: [01:07:23] It has changed the world completely.

PARCHER: [01:07:25] It has, yes. And the internet. They didn't really have internet, but they had cell. Yes. Yeah.

GANZGLASS: [01:07:32] So it's a whole, Peace Corps is a totally different experience as well now.

PARCHER: [01:07:36] Exactly.

GANZGLASS: [01:07:37] Just by the communication.

PARCHER: [01:07:38] Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

GANZGLASS: [01:07:40] And we were in the Peace Corps, we had little blue aerogram letters that we mailed back and forth. Different form of communication.

PARCHER: [01:07:49] Yes, yes. I remember getting that. We would actually get letters and National Geographic at our site.

GANZGLASS: [01:07:55] That's right. Great. Well, are there any, I guess I wanted to ask you one other question because you talked about being a married couple.

PARCHER: [01:08:04] Mm hmm.

GANZGLASS: [01:08:05] I was married, I was part of a couple as well. How do you think being a married couple impacts your Peace Corps experience?

PARCHER: [01:08:15] I think that we relied on each other, so we actually didn't make as good of friends in the community as we would have if I'd been by myself. It made it easier because, you know, we had each other to bounce off our, you know, our failures, frustrations, whatever, and to do things together. So it wasn't lonely, as lonely. By the same token, I think my Spanish would have been better, and my Bribri would have been better, if I'd been single.

GANZGLASS: [01:08:51] But you might not have done it.

PARCHER: [01:08:52] I probably wouldn't have done it. Exactly. You know, it would have been. I know it would have been too hard for me.

GANZGLASS: [01:08:59] And has there been an impact on your kids of your Peace Corps experience?

PARCHER: [01:09:03] I wish there had been. I wish they had jumped up to do Peace Corps, but they are far from it. And when they were younger, they used to say, Mom. I have two daughters. Mom, I have nothing to wear. And I said, nothing to wear means you have two outfits. One's on you and the other one's wet. And they'd say, shut up.

GANZGLASS: [01:09:28] So didn't quite take.

PARCHER: [01:09:30] No, no, it didn't. It didn't click. So my older daughter Amber has traveled, did semester in Madrid, did almost a year in Taiwan, and now she's a Washington Post reporter. My younger daughter really does not like travel. I mean, she does like travel, but it's got to be at the very high level. So they are way far from Peace Corps.

GANZGLASS: [01:09:52] Very different.

PARCHER: [01:09:53] Yeah, yeah.



GANZGLASS: [01:09:54] Well, this has been a really good interview. Are there any other stories you'd like to tell that you haven't told so far?

PARCHER: [01:10:03] Um, let me think for a minute.

GANZGLASS: [01:10:07] Well, let me ask you one more. So the impact of Peace Corps, the third goal coming home, you've talked about your Peace Corps involvement. Do you think there's been an impact in the United States of Peace Corps?

PARCHER: [01:10:23] Yes.

GANZGLASS: [01:10:24] How do you think? What do you think that impact has been?

PARCHER: [01:10:30] Well, countries of service like Iran and Liberia and others have actually done advocacy on the Hill and improved our relations with countries that are having, we're having a difficult time with, or are at war like Liberia. I do advocacy with the National Peace Corps Association. I think right now, you know, my understanding of what climate change is doing to, you know, these communities that don't have irrigation, don't have, you know, all the stuff we can have to import food or water. You know, that has really pushed me to do more work on, you know, global warming and conservation. So, yeah, I definitely think Peace Corps has a huge impact. It's just we need more volunteers, we need more people that have done it, and the budget is limited.

GANZGLASS: [01:11:32] At least, it hasn't gone down of late.

PARCHER: [01:11:35] Hasn't gone down. Yeah.

GANZGLASS: [01:11:37] Which is a negative way of saying it. But at least you have some of that.

PARCHER: [01:11:41] Yeah, yeah.

GANZGLASS: [01:11:43] So are there any other things you'd like to say?

PARCHER: [01:11:48] Um, I think that's all.

GANZGLASS: [01:11:49] This was a lot of fun. Thank you.

PARCHER: [01:11:51] Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]