

Jane Hale Oral History Interview
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Biographical Note

Jane Hale served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Chad from 1970 to 1972 as an English teacher.

Access

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Oral History Interview

with

Jane Hale

August 8, 2016
Marshfield, Massachusetts

By Phyllis Noble

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

NOBLE: [00:00:00] Let's just start again. This is Phyllis Noble. Today is August 8th, 2016. I am interviewing Jane Hale, who was a Peace Corps volunteer in Chad from 1970 to 1972. Jane was a teacher of English as a foreign language in a lycee, teaching in French in Chad. Hello, Jane.

HALE: [00:00:33] Hi. I was teaching in English.

NOBLE: [00:00:35] You were teaching in English. Ok, but you were teaching French.

HALE: [00:00:38] I was teaching English in English.

NOBLE: [00:00:41] Oh, OK. But in a French school?

HALE: [00:00:43] Yes.

NOBLE: [00:00:44] All right. I've got it. Ok. Oh, that's right. TEFL is teaching English as a foreign language.

HALE: [00:00:51] All this many years later, I don't want anybody to think that I was teaching in French because that was a no-no for Peace Corps volunteers.

NOBLE: [00:00:59] Oh was it really?

HALE: [00:00:59] I had to teach in English from the moment we started.

NOBLE: [00:01:03] Oh, how interesting. Ok, now that we've got that straight. Jane, tell us who you were before you joined the Peace Corps. Where did you? Where were you born? Where did you grow up?

HALE: [00:01:14] I grew up in Virginia, in Arlington, Virginia. And I spent two years in Hawaii, in my high school years. My parents transferred down there for a job, but I did graduate from Arlington High School.

NOBLE: [00:01:31] And then you came back to Arlington to finish high school.

HALE: [00:01:33] And then I went to William and Mary, College of William and Mary in Virginia.

NOBLE: [00:01:38] Did you have siblings?

HALE: [00:01:39] I had one sister, a year and a half older.

NOBLE: [00:01:42] Oh, OK. And so your family traveled together, then out to Hawaii. Did you do other things together as a family?

HALE: [00:01:51] Oh, we had wonderful trips. My parents were both from the South. My dad was from Texas and my mom from Mississippi. So every year just about, in the summer, we would go down there to visit their families. So we had these car trips, hot car trips through the South in the fifties, you know? It was fun. A lot of fun.

NOBLE: [00:02:11] Oh, good.

HALE: [00:02:11] But my father worked for the Federal Trade Commission, and when he retired. He was a consumer protection specialist, one of the early ones, and he was recruited by the Hawaii government when it had just become a state to come down and help them write some conforming legislation. So we got to go there for two years with them, and that was how.

NOBLE: [00:02:34] How delightful. And then you came back and you went to high school, and what kind of kid were you in high school? Did you do sports?

HALE: [00:02:46] No, I was really good conscientious student. I excelled in academics. That was my big thing from when I was in kindergarten, just about. I was very shy. And once you got to know me, you liked me. But I didn't have a lot of friends because I was very shy, shy. One thing I did do was I did theater, I did teen theater. So that was where I found my niche in my later high school years.

NOBLE: [00:03:19] Oh, that's great. Did you study French in high school?

HALE: [00:03:23] I started French. That's when I was in eighth grade was when they let us, that was when we began foreign language study and I took French and I went all the way through. I majored in French in college. I just loved it. I did really well in it. I loved it. There was no reason for it. You know, I don't have French people in my family or anything, but I just loved it. And it had this prestige at that time that I think it's kind of lost now. But you know, it was the language of the polished girl's education, and Paris is always there, you know, in the background. And so it would just have a certain cachet to it. And I loved it, but I also took Latin and then Spanish later on. But French was my love.

NOBLE: [00:04:12] Latin in high school?

HALE: [00:04:13] In junior high school. And then, yeah, junior high school for two years and then in college.

NOBLE: [00:04:20] Did you get a chance as a student to go to France

HALE: [00:04:23] When I was a sophomore in college?

HALE: [00:04:28] I went to France for a program between the two years in the summer. They didn't have a lot of junior year abroad things at my school didn't do, any of them, they do now. But so I went on a tour with another organization.

NOBLE: [00:04:50] During the summer of college?

HALE: [00:04:52] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:04:52] And in high school and college, did you have summer jobs that you need to work to earn some money?

HALE: [00:04:58] I didn't have to work in high school, although I did in my senior year of high school and the summer before I went to college, I did because I wanted to. I worked in a daycare center as an aide. And then when I was in college, I got a job working in the library at one point for not too many hours a week, and that was the worst job I ever had. I typed numbers on catalog cards and it was a four hour shift. And you got a 15 minute break in between the four hours, and that was it. The rest of the time, it's just the numbers. And it was terrible. When they told you, we don't have any today, you can go out and file cards in the card catalog, it was so wonderful. That was ecstasy.

HALE: [00:05:55] And then I also in the summers, I had a really nice job in Washington. I would go home to be with my parents and I had a job at the World Bank. It was in the Africa department and I worked in the French Francophone West Africa Department of the World Bank and I helped. We had people, economists and different professionals, all French speaking, and they would prepare missions and go on missions to these countries in Africa that I was very excited about. And that was the job I sought. I kind of made it up before I found it, and I was happy to help. Oh, it was a wonderful job.

NOBLE: [00:06:41] Excellent. So you were. Did you say what you majored in in college?

HALE: [00:06:46] I majored in French.

NOBLE: [00:06:47] You majored in French?

HALE: [00:06:48] Yeah, yeah.

NOBLE: And so eventually you graduated from college. You've got a degree, a bachelor's degree in French. And eventually you get this idea to join the Peace Corps. Did you do that right away, right out of college?

HALE: [00:07:03] Well, I was engaged to be married, and I had met this guy when I was a freshman and dated him throughout college and we were going to get married in May. I graduated a semester early, so I graduated in December. We're going to get married in May and move to California. He was going, he was an accountant and I was going to be a housewife. I don't know what. Maybe try to get a master's in French and teach somewhere I didn't have. It was just getting married was the plan. And it turns out it was. I could tell it wasn't going to be a good marriage and I was very, and as the time got closer, I was ambivalent about it. And so I had done an application to the Peace Corps when I graduated in December, and I just kind of kept both of those lines going. I hadn't told him about it, of course. And when I got accepted, I thought, well that's it. So I went, I decided I gave him back his ring. I went into the Peace Corps much to my. My parents weren't excited about my going away to Africa, but they were less excited about my marrying this guy. So that turned out to be good. And then he came over to visit me my first year there, and that was terrible. I kicked him out.

NOBLE: [00:08:33] You trusted your instincts.

HALE: [00:08:35] I'm so glad. Peace Corps saved me from a life of I don't know what.

NOBLE: [00:08:41] That's great. Let's go back to you. It's December and you're applying to the Peace Corps.

HALE: [00:08:47] I'll tell you why. You said when I got the idea.

NOBLE: [00:08:51] Yeah, yeah, yeah. What made you do it?

HALE: [00:08:53] When I was, 1960 was when Kennedy started it, wasn't it?

NOBLE: [00:08:59] It was '61.

HALE: [00:09:00] '61. So '48, I was 12 or 13. When he gave the speech where he started it, my family was watching TV and we heard him and I said to my mom and dad, I said, I want to do that and I want to go to Africa. And that came from nowhere.

NOBLE: [00:09:19] Wow.

HALE: [00:09:20] I have no. I mean, the idea of wanting to do something exciting came from being a person, you know, a kid. But Africa, there was nothing about Africa that was any different than any other place in the world to me, except for the fact that I was a big stamp collector and they had the most beautiful stamps, Africa did.

NOBLE: [00:09:41] Yes.

HALE: [00:09:41] And so maybe that was my mind was just dreaming on that, and the names were very exciting. But so I didn't have that like on the top of my head for that many years, but it had always kind of planted there at that time.

NOBLE: [00:09:56] In 1969 or '70 when you were filling out this application form, was there the question whether there was any place in the world that you would not want to serve in or was there? Did you have a favorite place that you hoped to be assigned to? Did they ask you if you wanted to go to Africa?

HALE: [00:10:17] I don't remember about anything I didn't want to go to, I don't know if they asked me now. I know that I did express a preference because I had been working in the World Bank and I had gotten to know these different Francophone African countries. I knew that I wanted to go to a place where they spoke French because that would be something that would be interesting to me, you know, to do that. And then also, I wanted to go to the poorest country. I wanted to go to the country where I could be the most use, you know. So this was very idealistic. So I asked my bosses in the World Bank, I asked because they knew all these countries and I said, where should I go? And they said, well, if you want an experience that is, I said, I want it to be very different. I don't want to go to a place that's a lot like where I lived, you know? And they said a place that would be very different and that would be a nice place to be and where the people are very poor, it would be either Cameroon or Chad, probably Chad. So I volunteered to go to Chad. And when I got the, I put that down as a preference. When I got off the plane at my training site, the people who met us, one of them said, where is Jane Hale? And I said, and they said, we just wanted to see you. You're the first person that ever volunteered for Chad. So, so I got what I wanted. But that was because there weren't a lot. There wasn't a lot of clamor. If I had volunteered for Nepal at that time, I probably wouldn't have gotten it. That was the place to be.

NOBLE: [00:11:58] That was the hot place.

HALE: [00:11:59] Yeah, for the drugs and stuff.

NOBLE: [00:12:00] Oh my! So you went to training about the time you would have been married, right? In May maybe?

HALE: [00:12:14] Probably, yeah, probably May or June. I don't remember.

NOBLE: [00:12:19] Where did you train?

HALE: [00:12:20] We had a staging in Philadelphia like three days. Everybody had that. I think at that time where you went to the dentist and you got a new pair of glasses and a second pair of glasses and you just got all your

medical check out there to make sure that you were in one piece to go on. And then we went. They took us to Canada, to Quebec, a little tiny town called Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pocatiere in rural Quebec. And it was a convent. It was a Catholic convent and I think a school. And in the summertime they rented it out to Peace Corps because they had these dormitory cells like, you know, and we'd had our immersion French immersion there for six weeks I think. I know it was one of those things. You know, you take the pledge not to speak any English, and it was a large group of people, all the Francophone Africa teachers work together.

NOBLE: [00:13:23] They're not necessarily going to Chad?

HALE: [00:13:25] No, there were in my group, there were 13, I think, going to Chad. But we had Ivory Coast, we had Senegal, we had Togo, Benin or Dahomey at that time, all of the various places.

NOBLE: [00:13:42] And did people know when they arrived in Canada which of those countries they were going to be going to?

HALE: [00:13:49] Yes. Because we stayed together as a group in our training, we met with for cross-cultural training with people from that country.

NOBLE: [00:14:00] Oh, fine. Yeah, OK.

HALE: [00:14:02] Because it was really a huge group.

NOBLE: [00:14:05] Senegal, for example, and Chad are going to be quite different.

HALE: [00:14:08] Right. And we did local language training too. It was a very good training program. We had people from, we had a Chadian, a couple of Chadians working with us, people who were teachers who knew Americans, but also knew Chad and they would teach us our the language. What we were learning was Chadian Arabic, and they would teach us and they would answer our questions and give us advice about, you know, things.

NOBLE: [00:14:38] Oh, that's terrific. Chadian Arabic?

HALE: [00:14:41] Oh yes. It was not. I was not a star at Chadian Arabic. My French served me very well.

NOBLE: [00:14:50] Well, when we when we get over to Chad, I'll ask you more about the languages there. How many people were in your training group all together?

HALE: [00:14:58] I really don't know. Over a hundred, I'm sure.

NOBLE: [00:15:02] Oh, huge.

HALE: [00:15:03] Yeah. But we did get to know each other because we were together all the time and we were speaking French all the time and going to and from the cafeteria eating together. They had a lot of social activities. They didn't give us any time to be, maybe we might have gotten a nap in the afternoon or something, but they didn't want us. It was sort of a it was pressured. It was high pressured. They wanted to make sure that I think we could stand it. My husband said, I hadn't been aware of this, but my husband, who had been a doctor in the Peace Corps, earlier said that they had some ideas that you had to put really pressure on the kids to try to make them break. And I don't think they did that. I don't think they were at that point with us. But they were they were very strict about everything. And so we all knew each other. We were kind of like all together in this, you know.

NOBLE: [00:15:58] Was there the process of deselection when you were in training? Did they call it that?

HALE: [00:16:06] No, I think that was part of what my husband had been talking about. Nobody that, I don't remember anybody being worried about not making it. We were worried about not getting a good enough score in our language. That was the main part of training. And for me, it was OK because I was a French major. But there were some people that were really struggling and there was there was a minimum score.

NOBLE: [00:16:32] In French?

HALE: [00:16:33] In French. Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:16:34] They weren't so worried about the Chadian Arabic.

HALE: [00:16:36] No, no. But the French. So they had to they had to have some, some score. And I think there were some people that didn't make it. There were people who were worried about not making it. And I think there were a couple who didn't. And then there were, there was one I remember who dropped out, who just went home, but mostly those who came did it.

NOBLE: [00:16:58] So you didn't have interviews with psychiatrists or psychologists?

HALE: [00:17:02] No, thank goodness. Apparently, they did do that earlier. Did you have that?

NOBLE: [00:17:07] Oh yes.

HALE: [00:17:10] I might not have gotten in!

NOBLE: [00:17:13] Oh my. We became very proficient in dealing with those interviews. Anyway, who ran, the person who was responsible for the academic portions of the training or content of it?

HALE: [00:17:34] I can't tell you because I experienced it as kid, as a volunteer. So I don't know all of the hierarchy, but I believe, I know we used FSI materials, Foreign Service Institute. We used their training program, and we use their grading scale of one plus, two plus, three minus, that kind of stuff. And I believe we might have had their people come in to do the testing. I don't know. The teachers. We would, most of the day was spent in going to classes from one class to another. There'd be maybe 40 minutes of class and you have a five minute break, then you go to another class. And most of them were language training. Some were cross-cultural training and some were teaching you about to be a teacher. But the language training classes were mostly run by people from the Francophone countries. There were a couple of French people and I think

they were all contract workers, but many of them did it a lot, so they knew each other. And then there were some former Peace Corps volunteers too, who were doing it. So it was a mishmash. In fact, when I finished Peace Corps, I became a trainer for about six months. It was a wonderful experience.

NOBLE: [00:18:57] Oh, good, we'll talk about that later.

HALE: [00:18:59] So I don't know. I wasn't aware of a university that did it, but I don't think so. But I don't know.

NOBLE: [00:19:06] Yeah. Were there courses about the history of, in your case, of Chad?

HALE: [00:19:13] Yes, I would say we had what we called cross-cultural training and that was there was some history involved, but the point of the training was to help us to be sensitive to another place, another culture when most of us had never been out of our own backyard, you know. And so they would try to teach us how people thought differently, how people acted differently than we might expect. And they would do that with historical and cultural roots. They wouldn't just say, well, these people are weird, they do this. This is how they came to speak French. This is how this is why they have this attitude towards school or something. So we would learn that. But it wasn't a history lesson, really. And we learned about the different regions of the country because we were allowed to choose where we wanted to go.

NOBLE: [00:20:17] This is fabulous, wonderful.

HALE: [00:20:19] That was one of the nice things about being in a small group of 13 people we got we really they treated us like individuals. And so, yeah, we learned, we learned as much as I think you can learn. And with that part was done by the Chadians. So they were very good at like saying, you can't say that if you're in Chad, Jane. And saying why, you know, and it would just be very they were very open with us and they knew how to chastise us for not being culturally sensitive.

NOBLE: [00:20:54] Can you give an example of something that an American might say or do that would be offensive in Chad?

HALE: [00:21:01] Oh my goodness. I can't think of it off the top of my head, I can think of. We were warned so often, and this was by the American Peace Corps people too, that we must not talk politics. And so there was a lot of political unrest in Chad then as there is now, and it was there was a virtual civil war starting in the country. And so they were very concerned that we not express an opinion in any political discussion and that we were kind of told that it's all, it's not any of your business, and it's all much more complicated than you can imagine. So as a teenager coming from the Vietnam War here, you're just going to want to jump right in and talk about what's fair and what's not. And these our Chadian teachers told us this, too. They said, you know, you just don't know how deeply the resentments lie and they're ethnic and they run along linguistic lines and racial lines. And you just you're going to be in a situation where people will want you to agree with them, and you just have to learn to listen politely and to answer noncommittally.

NOBLE: [00:22:36] Yes.

HALE: [00:22:37] And that was not something American students at that time knew how to do or even know now. But in the Vietnam era, it was. We were really activists.

NOBLE: [00:22:46] Yes. And so did they tell you how to respond if Chadians were to ask you your opinion about the war in Vietnam?

HALE: [00:22:58] That's interesting. I don't think so. I think that they told us. Hmm. I don't think they did because they were very careful. I always felt that Peace Corps was very careful to keep us from being pawns of American propaganda.

NOBLE: [00:23:20] Oh, good.

HALE: [00:23:21] And so they wanted, I think somehow we all knew that we shouldn't go around saying America was a terrible country. I don't think we

would have been in the Peace Corps if we had really thought that. But they didn't. They didn't mind. They didn't want us to be anything but honest about our experiences when I went. One of the reasons that I might not have gone was because at that time, the radical kids called the Peace Corps volunteers marines with velvet gloves. And I did not want to be a marine with a velvet glove. I was going because I was against the war, not because I was trying to further American interests and capitalist interests so that. They did teach us that when we were being criticized as as people, as a company, as a culture, as a country that we should be quiet. They didn't just say, here's what you say, but they said, you know, you're going to hear that and you have to learn to take it because you're going to be the one representative that they know of America and you're going to think this is not fair. And I did. I remember thinking, it's not fair to blame me for the Vietnam War or for colonialism or for whatever it is Americans do. But in fact, it's the only person that they know that is that person. So it's like now I knew when I was teaching college at Brandeis, I knew what people felt like when they were pointed to and say, well, what do Brazilians think about that? If you had one Brazilian in the class, like. I don't know, it's just me, you know? So I do remember on those same lines, this was later, I think in the country, they told us, if somebody comes to your town and it's an American, comes to your town and they start talking to you and they ask all kinds of questions and they want to get to know about you and your job, and they want to get to know what you know about the people. You should not talk to them.

NOBLE: [00:25:31] Good.

HALE: [00:25:32] And they didn't say it, but I'm sure that was about CIA.

NOBLE: [00:25:35] Sure.

HALE: [00:25:36] Yeah, yeah. We all knew that. So, but no Americans I didn't know came to my town. It was pretty remote.

NOBLE: [00:25:44] You've described a really excellent training program. What do you feel it gave you as much preparation as possible to do what you later did?

HALE: [00:25:54] I do. I really I really, really liked it. And I know training was very has been very uneven in different places over the years. This one was very well run it. It was out, it was out in the middle of nowhere, which is why they chose this place. It could have been. It was in Canada. Canada has nothing to do with Africa, but it's a French speaking country and it was very isolated. So we didn't have we didn't have a lot of distractions and we certainly didn't have any non-English speakers around aside from us later on. Then we did six weeks or two months of training in the country too. So we had this this language piece.

NOBLE: [00:26:46] And how long did that last in Quebec?

HALE: [00:26:49] Probably six weeks. And then I think there was, I think it was three months all together between Quebec and then we went into Africa. The bigger groups like when Ivory Coast went to Ivory Coast, but Niger and Chad went together and we went to Niger to do student teaching. And I think I think there was a month of that, maybe two months in Canada, a month in Niger.

NOBLE: [00:27:16] So in Canada, you were learning about methods of teaching?

HALE: [00:27:21] In Canada, we had, yeah. They had a Peace Corps method and the five point method all in English. They had it very well. They had very well organized. They knew that none of us were teachers or most of us and that we didn't have a clue. So they worked up this method that was based on oral proficiency, mainly because that's what they were into. But they did do all the four, reading, writing and everything. But it was taught to us by former volunteers who had taught. So I think it was a very practical introduction. It was a very good method because it was not dependent on materials on textbooks, and that was good because we didn't have any.

NOBLE: [00:28:13] You didn't have textbooks.

HALE: [00:28:14] No. But it was made to teach you how to take how to make a lesson from nothing.

NOBLE: [00:28:21] Oh, wonderful. Oh that's excellent.

HALE: [00:28:24] So I've always spent all my life as a teacher. People argue about textbooks and I just tune out, you know, give me whatever you want. I'll make. I'll do it.

NOBLE: [00:28:33] You're going to do what you know how to do. Your six weeks or so in Quebec comes to an end. Do you get to go home before flying overseas?

HALE: [00:28:44] We had a break. It's like three days. We were going out of New York, so they got us to New York and I met my family there. We could do what we wanted to do for three days in New York.

NOBLE: [00:28:56] Three days in New York. But this isn't going home to go shopping.

HALE: [00:29:00] Well, you could, I suppose, if that's what you wanted, if you had the funds to do it.

NOBLE: [00:29:04] So but you had arrived in Quebec with all the clothes you were going to take with you to Chad. Wow.

HALE: [00:29:10] Mm hmm. With everything. And so but in New York, my parents came up from Washington and they we stayed in a hotel and we went to see Fiddler on the Roof. We never went to New York. It was a big deal, so it was like a big kind of celebration to see me off, and that was nice.

NOBLE: [00:29:28] The boyfriend came too?

HALE: [00:29:30] Oh no, he was not. He was out of the picture.

NOBLE: [00:29:34] It was just you and your parent in New York together. Three days sounds about right.

HALE: [00:29:40] It was good. Yeah, I believe that at least one of those days I had bad diarrhea, which was kind of a thing. You know, showing what's going on, what lies ahead. I think I was sick for part of the time.

NOBLE: [00:29:57] And then you say goodbye to your parents and you go to the airport. Which airport would that have been?

HALE: [00:30:02] I have no idea. I didn't know New York. You could have taken me. I didn't know. I was at an airport with a bunch of kids. It was a full full of Peace Corps volunteers. The whole plane. And I know we saw Dr. Zhivago on the plane as the film and we had like an 18 hour stopover in Paris. And we got off the plane. We were dead tired. Nobody had slept the night before. Nobody had slept on the plane. We were dead tired, but we went out. I had something written in my diary about this. And we just went out through the town and went, saw everything, saw everything we'd ever heard of. And then we got back on the plane and went to Chad. Well, we went to Niger and then we stayed a month there.

NOBLE: [00:30:55] So in Niamey?

HALE: [00:30:57] Yeah, and we did student teaching there. They had a summer school session of English for the kids in the high school, the lycee there, and the Peace Corps volunteers taught it for a month and it was very good. We had other volunteers, as well as Nigerian and Chadian teachers, observing us and helping us and stuff like that. So we got a chance to be with real, real African kids that time. The first time we were in Quebec, we were with little children, little French speaking children. That was fun, but it wasn't very much like our situation. But this my biggest memory of that student, two big memories of student teaching time in Niamey. I loved the place. It was beautiful. My first was I went out to my first market visit with somebody. I think it was a former volunteer, a returning volunteer who knew the system, and I wanted to buy some cloth in the market, which set me off on a long, a lifelong buying spree of cloth in African markets.

NOBLE: [00:32:16] Describe the market in Niamey.

HALE: [00:32:18] It was. It was lively. To my eyes then, it was colorful, it was loud, it was outdoor, maybe partly indoor, but open air. And stalls with different merchandises but all the same merchandises were together. This is the, I'm describing any African or any West African market that I'm aware of. The stalls all sell the same things, like here you have this is the cloth area. So five different stalls with different people selling very similar types of cloth. So you pretty much buy from the person. It's a personal thing, you know, I want to go to that merchant. And then over here, there would be the beads and over here. These are the things that I noticed. Over here there would be underwear, on this side it would be fish, and then there'd be potatoes and there'd be everything. They would do. They had everything. It was like a flea market, almost. And I remember they had, you could weigh yourself there. They had people with scales and I think you paid one penny or whatever, one franc for to get weighed. And they had like seven people with the same scales there. And I always, from my American point of view, I wondered why they didn't put themselves at different spots in the market because it seemed to me that they would get different people that way and more. But they were all together. They weren't going to get as much money, but that's just the way they did it. Everybody did it together. You know, it's like, we don't want five McDonalds together in our country. We want them spaced out to get people, but everything, it's a more communal thing. It's like, this is the community of cloth merchants. And it was very interesting.

HALE: [00:34:17] But anyway, I did, I found my first cloth merchant. I loved the cloth. My friend gave me a few strategies and I started to bargain and I got the cloth for what I wanted and said, he said, I've never seen anybody do it better than you, Jane. You're a natural. And it turns out, yeah, that was one of my great strengths.

NOBLE: [00:34:37] Well, first of all, describe the cloth was it handwoven in Niger or was it from France?

HALE: [00:34:43] No, it's the what they call the vax, wax. I have a bunch of it in there I can show you. It's the same as in Nigeria I think. It's a print and it's done. The good ones were done at that time in Holland, and they were done with the same techniques that Indonesia used the wax, the wax

technique and that had been brought from Indonesia to Holland down to Africa. And so everybody wanted this one kind of material because it was well, it didn't run, you know. They were prints.

NOBLE: [00:35:27] Is it a kind of cotton?

HALE: [00:35:28] Yeah, it was all cotton.

NOBLE: [00:35:30] And what colors?

HALE: [00:35:31] Oh, bright, vibrant. Probably the same thing you were used to in Nigeria and a very, very beautiful patterns. A lot of geometric things, a lot of patterns. I loved it. I really loved it. And the ones that I thought were so were funny. I don't think I bought any. But every time they would have any kind of celebration or somebody would visit the country, they would make a special cloth with that person's name on it. So you would see them. And I just remember one time the Pope. This was on a later visit to Africa years later. But the Pope had visited Senegal, I think, and I saw a woman in the market and she had the Pope's face right on her. But, you know, and it was just so funny to me. I didn't say anything, but I was just I just loved it. I loved how people wore people's faces and things so well.

NOBLE: [00:36:35] Now, tell us how you bargained for it. You did an excellent job on your first, how did you do it?

HALE: [00:36:39] He told me, he said, first of all, you have to. I think I might have been with another African too. A Peace Corps returned volunteer who knew the deal and then another African, probably from Niger. And they told me they said, OK, you look at the cloth, but you don't zero in on anything, especially if you see something you like. Do not take any time to look at it. Just kind of it's there, but you can look at you can say, oh this is nice or that one's nice. Could I see this one? And meanwhile, you're getting an idea of what you're interested in and you start talking about the price. And you say, well, I don't have much money, but I think I would like to buy 500 meters of this and they would have. I don't know. And they say, oh well, what would you like to pay? So you're supposed to give the first price.

NOBLE: [00:37:39] Oh so you begin? Oh dear.

HALE: [00:37:42] And so they said, always begin with a ridiculously low price. And so I did. Because they told me about what it might cost. And so I did. And the guy started laughing at me, and he said, that's ridiculous. And I said, well, that's what I would like to pay. You asked me. And then he said, well, I can't. I wouldn't make any money that way. I'd lose money. So this this material goes for this amount of money. And I said, well, that's ridiculous. I can't do it. I don't have that kind of money. So we would we discussed back and forth a little. A little argumentative, but not really an argument. More of a discussion.

NOBLE: [00:38:21] Are you smiling at each other while you're doing this?

HALE: [00:38:24] Yeah. And then he got to where at some point I said, no, I don't really want that fabric. I think maybe let me look at that one. Maybe it's cheaper. And that would be the one that I really wanted. So we would have already bargained down to a certain price by that time. And then he would say, well that one, I maybe can let it go for a little bit less. And then because I would say a price and he would double the price and then we would try to come to the middle. And then I would say, no, I just can't do it, I'm sorry. And I would walk away. And it was the walking away that did it because then he would come and I had to keep walking. I wasn't just, you know, hanging around, just keep walking. And he came after me and said, you could have it for the price.

HALE: [00:39:11] So that's how I did it and it worked. It was very important to me to learn that it wasn't arguing. They called it discussing the price, because it wasn't, you might have sounded argumentative, but it was all part of the exchange, and the idea was that both people had to be happy at the end. And I think that's a lovely way to think about buying things.

NOBLE: [00:39:40] Well, it is. And so you were purchasing in the way that a Nigerian person on that day would have bargained.

HALE: [00:39:49] Maybe, except I would have they would have gotten a much better price than. I was sure. I always I knew that I was paying more, but I also knew that I had a lot more money than anybody else. But I just didn't want to be paying more than I needed to because I didn't have a lot of money.

NOBLE: [00:40:06] And all of this was part of training.

HALE: [00:40:08] Yes. Well, that's, it was all. We were surrounded by people with experience and who knew what we needed both. It was good to have American and African trainers, and they all worked together. They all we grew up, we grew together as a cross-cultural community and at nights we would, you know, sit around and ask each other questions that we knew we wouldn't be able to ask to anybody else, that we weren't close to us.

NOBLE: [00:40:39] So you were making good friends among the volunteers that you were training with?

HALE: [00:40:43] Yeah. But then we didn't see each other. We all went to separate town.

NOBLE: [00:40:48] Ok. Once training ended, you were spread out. When you were in Niamey for that part of training, where did you live?

HALE: [00:40:56] In the student quarters, in the lycee, in the school. So they weren't there during the summer. And so when we arrived at the quarters, I remember we were very upset at how dirty they were, especially the bathrooms. They were just awful and everybody was complaining. And I remember I just said, OK, stop it, let's organize. Let's go find buckets. And we did, and we just got stuff. We asked the people at the school to give this stuff. We just spent the whole day cleaning and it felt really good. And that turned out to be, that's the Peace Corps, that's the Peace Corps way to do it. You know, if it can be done. But that that felt good to solve the problem.

HALE: [00:41:44] And then I remember one other thing. I was there at dinner one of the first nights and we were eating outside and I picked up my drink and

there was a fly in it and I screamed, you know, because I was just about to drink. Aaaa! And people started laughing at me and everything. And then they all the older the former volunteers or the returning volunteers, said Jane, that's a novice reaction. They said the first year, the first time that happens, you do that. After the first year, you'll just take the fly out of the drink and throw it away and drink the drink. And after the third, after the second year, you'll drink the drink with the fly in it because you need the protein! So that was a fun piece of Peace Corps lore.

NOBLE: [00:42:38] At the end of your training in Niamey, was there a big ceremony of some kind? Do you remember anything about that?

HALE: [00:42:47] I remember we had a big ceremony for the end of the summer school for the kids, and it may have been altogether. I don't know. The one I remember was the prize giving ceremony, and it was really very nice. We gave them prizes and everybody spoke about how much we loved each other. And it was nice. Then I don't know about. I know, I know I was sworn in as a Peace Corps volunteer somewhere by somebody, but I don't know whether it was in Niger or in Fort Lamy. Fort Lamy was the name of the French name of the capital at that time.

NOBLE: [00:43:27] Of Quebec?

HALE: [00:43:29] Of Chad.

NOBLE: [00:43:31] Of Chad. Oh, that's right, because then you had to go on from Niamey to Chad.

HALE: [00:43:35] Well, then we had to go to Chad and we had like a week of staging there where we got to meet the director and the doctor and the different personnel. And then then we went up to our post. So it was probably, I think we met the ambassador during that time. I think that's when we were sworn in, but that was not a big deal. I, you know, that was maybe a big deal for them, but not for me. I mean.

NOBLE: [00:44:06] So this is the capital of Chad at that time, Fort Lamy.

HALE: [00:44:11] Now they call it N'Djamena. They've changed it. They Africanized it right after I left, but Fort Lamy was what I always knew it as. And the thing that impressed that I remember most, I don't remember the swearing in ceremony, but I remember the doctor we had. Back then they had a lot of resources. They had one doctor for, for the volunteers in the country. And he told us, he said, any of you girls who are not on birth control, I want you to take some pills with you. And he said, And I want you to, if you just let me know when you need them, we will make sure that you have them. And I was like, no, no adult had ever given me any kind of permission to like, even talk about sex up until then. Not that I hadn't done it, but this was not something that you, you know, that a person in authority offering me birth control pills was one of the biggest shocks of my life, but it was very smart.

NOBLE: [00:45:21] Smart and assuming and giving you credit for being a fully mature adult human being.

HALE: [00:45:27] He was way ahead of his time.

NOBLE: [00:45:29] You're not a teenager anymore.

HALE: [00:45:30] It was great and it was in the Peace Corps' best interest too, let me tell you.

NOBLE: [00:45:34] Of course. So then your staging time in Fort Lamy was finished and you moved to the place where you were going to spend two years working, living and working as a Peace Corps volunteer? What was that place?

HALE: [00:45:54] It was called Abéché.

NOBLE: [00:45:56] Abéché. And how did you get to Abéché?

HALE: [00:46:01] I took a plane. You had to.

NOBLE: [00:46:02] Oh, so it's pretty far away.

HALE: [00:46:06] It was far away and it was, there was danger at the time on the roads. There were armed marauders on the roads.

NOBLE: [00:46:17] Which is one of the reasons why you'd fly.

HALE: [00:46:19] They wouldn't let us go on the road.

NOBLE: [00:46:22] And Chad is a huge.

HALE: [00:46:23] Chad is a big country. It's huge. So it would take several days otherwise. Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:46:29] And where in Chad is Abéché?

HALE: [00:46:32] Abéché is right on the Sudanese border. It is right next to Darfur, Sudan, and in fact, it was a town of about fifteen thousand people at that time. And it has grown now since Darfur. It's because it was the place where they staged all of the refugees and the humanitarian things. So it's like three hundred thousand people and like they've ruined the town, I know. And but it was an absolutely magical place. I went there because our Chadian trainer from Quebec, Usman, was from there and he told me all about it and he loved it. And he built it up for me. And it was a very different place from other places in Chad because it was more northern and in southern Chad, where most of the population was in and most of the volunteers went, it was more like the place you were describing in Nigeria, where a lot of green, a lot of growing, of cotton and peanuts and things and the people were from the animist tradition, and a lot of them had become Catholics, and they accepted school early on. Where I was from was Muslim. They did not like the French colonization. They rebelled. They rejected the schools early on and the southerners were in power and had been since the independence 10 years before. And the northerners hated that and they were rebelling against the government. And so there was this north-south conflict, you know, very. It sounds similar to what happened in Sudan later. It was really hard and it was beginning to be quite, quite bad. In a few years after I left, they had to take the volunteers out, like they did with you, the Biafra time. And they never they didn't put them back in for years. I think they're back now.

NOBLE: [00:48:48] So were the people who, the people of Abéché. Were they ethnically different from the people in the south as well as religiously?

HALE: [00:48:57] Yes, they were. And it was a city. It was, fifteen thousand was a big place. Fort Lamy was bigger than that, but those were the two major population centers. The rest of the places were much smaller. And so this this was a city because it was really at the crossroads between Africa and the Middle East. And so people, it was people would come across the desert, the camel caravans would come and it was a trading city. We had a big, big market. It was a wonderful city to be in. We had a market where you could buy everything, including camels. And so people came from all over and people settled from all over too. There were a lot of nomads coming through, but there were a lot of different ethnic groups. So everybody wasn't of the same ethnic group. They weren't all of the same language. But the common language, the lingua franca was Chadian Arabic. And it was a just a form of Arabic. I'm not sure that people in the other Arab speaking countries really understood it. I don't know. But it was just a market language.

NOBLE: [00:50:13] So it sounds like maybe one of the big differences between that market in Abéché and the market that you had first bargained in in Niamey would have been different in the language in which you were bargaining. In Niamey, you might have been bargaining in French.

HALE: [00:50:29] Yeah. I was. That was all I had.

NOBLE: [00:50:31] Yeah, yeah. But when you got up to Abéché, you have to bargain in Chadian Arabic?

HALE: [00:50:36] That's the only Chadian Arabic I knew. I tried very hard to learn Chadian Arabic and I had a tutor come to my house and everything. But I just I just my tutor didn't know what I didn't know, wasn't trained as a teacher. And I didn't know. I didn't know what to do so. And the people who learned the Arabic were those who, the volunteers were, those who didn't come with very good French. But if you went with good French like I did everybody, everybody in my profession, if you're in schooling,

everybody spoke French, they could. So they would just speak French with you because it was easy. Nobody was going to take the time to to worry about, you know. So the only times that I was in only Chadian Arabic speaking groups was when I went to a colleague's house for dinner, say, and they would put me with the women to eat. And that's that was one of the big motivators for me because I wanted to speak to them. They usually would put me with the men at the beginning, and I'd say, you know, I'm not a man, you know, I feel funny in. But you're a teacher, right? You know, all of this. And so I felt like I had arrived when I got put with the women, but then I couldn't say anything. So I tried very hard to learn and I did. I did know, some and I certainly knew enough to bargain in the market.

NOBLE: [00:51:59] That's great.

HALE: [00:52:01] I think I've forgotten it all, but I was, yeah, I was able to do it.

NOBLE: [00:52:05] Well, let's talk about where you lived. And then later we'll go to school and talk about your job as a Peace Corps volunteer. But you took, you flew from Fort Lamy into Abéché. Did someone meet you at the airport?

HALE: [00:52:24] Yes, and I don't remember who. I imagine it was a government official. It might have been the prefect who was the like the governor of the area. I don't know. They were, they were very respectful and there it was an important thing to have a Peace Corps volunteer.

NOBLE: [00:52:39] But you flew alone. You weren't accompanied or chaperoned or something?

HALE: [00:52:44] No, it was a little DC-3. I loved that plane and it went once a week, I think, from Fort Lamy to Abéché. And they would put you on and then they would put, the last thing they loaded was a cooler full of beer and Coke and put a bottle opener on top. And that was it. There was no steward or anything like that. Like, here it is. And so that that plane brought the mail in once a week. So somebody got me at the airport and they took me to a guest house. The government had a guest house, a

very nice one, that they had just opened and it was on the main street and they settled me in and I was all alone. I don't believe there might have been a guard there, I don't know, but I just was all alone and they said, we'll come talk to you tomorrow morning. And I slept and it was my first. I just, I woke up, I went out and it was all sand in the streets, and the architecture was all these columns. I felt like I was in the Arabian Nights and I felt like I'd just gone into a fairy tale. They were donkeys and camels, and it was beautiful. It was a beautiful city.

HALE: [00:53:59] And so I stayed there for maybe a month, and then they decided that I had to. They had to find me a place. So then I went. So then I was invited by a couple, a French couple, who taught at the lycee. They were about my age. They were very nice. And they said, why don't you come stay with us till you find a place to live? And so I did. They didn't really have room for me, but they. I ate with them and they really were very, very kind to me. And then but then, you know, the government was, you know, dragging its feet and they finally said, Jane, you should probably go ask them to get you a house. So I did. And they found me a house. It was across from the market.

NOBLE: [00:54:40] They was who?

HALE: [00:54:41] The prefect's office, the government.

NOBLE: [00:54:45] OK.

HALE: [00:54:45] The governor's office, yeah. And found me a government house government owned house that was across from the market. It was very nice.

NOBLE: [00:54:55] So in town, you're not on the school compound, you're in town.

HALE: [00:54:58] Mm hmm. And I liked it. It had electricity. It had a sink with cold water. It, I think it had a shower. It didn't have. It had an outhouse in the back, but it was fine. I liked it. It was very loud because it was across, right across from the camel market. And, you know, camels are very loud. And

on the other side was a bar that played Arabic music all night long. So it was it was very loud, but otherwise it was. It was a good place to live.

NOBLE: [00:55:37] And did you do your own cooking?

HALE: [00:55:40] No, I that was one of the big shocks to me is that I didn't really know what I was going to do. They did provide you a refrigerator. That was one, they would let you have a refrigerator and Mobyette, a motorbike.

NOBLE: [00:55:55] Oh!

HALE: [00:55:56] Yeah, that was, those were the two things Peace Corps gave you.

NOBLE: [00:55:58] Oh, Peace Corps gave you them.

HALE: [00:56:00] And so we all could have that if we wanted. And when I got when I got up there, I had a note from somebody that said, the Peace Corps volunteer who was here before, Ed Lowe, said the refrigerator is at so and so's house and she knows she's supposed to give it to you. So I, you know, I don't know what to do about this, and he said, well, I'll ask her to come over. So she came over one day. It turns out she was a prostitute that he had been living with, and he left her the refrigerator.

NOBLE: [00:56:27] And this is a Chadian woman?

HALE: [00:56:29] Mm hmm. And so I didn't want to take a refrigerator from her. You know, it's like, Oh, it's also the last thing I was. But anyway, we wound up being pretty good friends. It turned out, actually, that the prostitutes in town were the ones that I could talk with because they had some French. They, you know, they worked with a lot. We had a lot of French soldiers in town. We had we had an army base, so. So anyway, they were real nice. I remember every once in a while my mother would say, What can I? What can I send you? And I'd say, send earrings, you know, because they were they were cheap and they're easy to send. So I always had earrings for my prostitute friends and it was fun. But anyway, I

don't think I ever got the refrigerator, but I did get a Mobylette and that was nice.

HALE: [00:57:15] And so that was the first year, the second year I was a little disappointed because I was living in by myself and I had to have a cook. I had to hire a cook.

NOBLE: [00:57:30] I was going to ask you, the first year too you hired a cook?

HALE: [00:57:32] Yeah, I didn't have a choice because I did. There was no, there were no appliances and there was a little place in the back that you could make a fire to do something. But I had no idea how to do that. And the marketplace was everything was fresh. There was no grocery store or anything. So I found out that if I waited to go to the market until after I taught that the meat would have been sitting out all morning. And so if I, you know, if I wanted a piece of beef, I had to have somebody who would go to the market for me while I was in school. And the same thing, like in the morning, it really took quite a while to build a little fire and heat up for tea. And the so and then people explained to me that if I did not hire somebody that I would be depriving a whole family of a living.

NOBLE: [00:58:28] Ok, there's that.

HALE: [00:58:29] And that that was what really did it for me. It's like they expect you. You are part of the economy here. They expect you to be supporting at least one family, if not more. And so I found somebody who was very good. He had been a cook for another family and for a French family, and he knew how to cook a lot of French food. He was good. So I had him for that year.

HALE: [00:58:51] So he shopped?

NOBLE: [00:58:53] He shopped, cooked.

NOBLE: [00:58:54] Did he do your laundry?

HALE: [00:58:58] I don't remember. I think so. I think so. But then the second year I was asked by a friend of mine, a Chadian friend who was a teacher. His family lived near the lycee and they had a compound. You know, a place where, you know, they had a, I don't know what you call them in Nigeria, a concession, a place where all the people live in different, different parts of it. And they had a room that was spare and they would rent it to me. And I said, I really want to do that. And because he said, I think you because I said, I want to live with the family and his family was a very, very well placed family. It was a nice compound. It was a nice family. They really were kind to me. And so I had to negotiate with the prefect to do this, though, because he, when I told him that I wanted to move, he didn't want me to. He said, he said people are going to say that we don't take care of you. People are going to they're going to say that that when Americans come here, they get they have to be in bad conditions. I said no. I said, it's exactly it's perfect. It's exactly what I want. And he said, but there's no running water, there's no electricity, that kind of thing. And I said, but I want to live with these people and I want to live the way they do and learn how they live. And so he finally said, he said, OK, but let me at least give you furniture. So he gave me a bed and a desk and those, I wouldn't have those things if he hadn't given me those. But it was very, it turned out to be wonderful. The second year I lived there and it was much better.

NOBLE: [01:00:50] So I'm wondering how you financed this. The first year, did you have to pay rent to someone?

HALE: [01:00:59] No.

NOBLE: [01:00:59] It was provided by the local government.

HALE: [01:01:02] Mm hmm.

NOBLE: [01:01:02] Ok. Peace Corps didn't pay for it either, right? It was part of the deal. You get a Peace Corps volunteer if you provide housing.

HALE: [01:01:10] I don't know if I think it might have been a different deal with every, every site. I mean, they probably had it. They negotiated whatever

it was and the second year, I'm pretty sure I paid something, but it was very small. I just looked up today. I was looking through some of my Peace Corps souvenirs before you came in. I found a letter that it said every month they sent me 30,000 francs from Peace Corps in the capital, and that is 50 dollars.

NOBLE: [01:01:40] That was at that time anyway, 50 dollars a month.

HALE: [01:01:42] Well, that's what it is now. So oh, so it would have been the equivalent.

NOBLE: [01:01:46] Yes, that's exactly what I got, the equivalent of \$50 a month, which was more than adequate.

HALE: [01:01:53] I had money left over to buy lots of cloth. I really did not, I wanted this life of voluntary poverty, but I didn't get it. It turns out it's hard for an American to become poor and in the rest of the, or at least at that time. It was hard for a middle class American to do it. So yeah, things didn't cost anything. And so I had quite a bit of money.

NOBLE: [01:02:21] So in in your second. Well, let's wait to talk about the second year. Let's begin. I have all kinds of questions I want to ask you about the family you were living with, but let's go to school now. You've arrived. When did you start teaching, when you were still living in the in the guest house or?

HALE: [01:02:40] I don't think so.

NOBLE: [01:02:42] Did you have some time to settle in kind of?

HALE: [01:02:43] It's vague in my mind. Since that time I have been involved in teaching in different places in Africa as well as in France. And the biggest difference in our system and those is that nobody quite knows when school starts. Even in France, I mean, I went there for graduate school for a year and I kept trying to find out where is the course and what am I going to take? When do the classes start? Nobody knew. Like, it just happens. So this was the French system in Africa which made it even

more informal. So it was like whenever the students show up or about this time.

HALE: [01:03:31] So I think I arrived probably in late August, early September, and I don't think school started until sometime in October, but nobody really knew it'll happen. But not today, maybe not tomorrow. So but it just somehow happened. And so I did have time to get acclimated to this, get to know people. It was good.

NOBLE: [01:03:58] So let's go to school. How far from your apartment, across the street from the market, to the lycee where you taught?

HALE: [01:04:08] I took my motorbike. It was walkable, but it would have been a 40 minute walk, maybe 30, five, 40 minute walk. And it was very hot, you remember? So the motorbike was a blessing. And the second year I was living right near it.

NOBLE: [01:04:35] So you get on your, what did you call it, a Mobylette?

HALE: [01:04:39] Mobylette.

NOBLE: [01:04:40] Your Mobylette and you arrive at the school, describe the school.

HALE: [01:04:45] The school was one of the most impressive buildings in town, I think, with next to the mosque and it was next to the mosque. It was the most impressive building in town. It was a school that served a wide area. People came from all over to go to this school and they had boarding there. They had some boarding students, but also a lot of families would send their kids to live with relatives in the town and go there, so it drew from a wide region. And it was called the Lycée Franco-Arabe d'Abéché. So it was French and Arabic, and it was half and half. They had different the different administrations on each side. They had different teaching staffs and they had different, I think the student bodies were different, too. I think there might have been some way that they took courses. Some of the students took courses in one part and the other, but they were pretty separate places. And in one place the teaching was all in Arabic and it

was done by people. I don't know, I don't really know who they were. We didn't know them. We didn't have much to do with them. They might have been some people from the Middle East and some people from Chad, but all the instruction was in Arabic and it was geared towards the Middle East like these students were if they went to college afterwards, they were going to go to Sudan or Egypt or someplace like that. And ours was geared towards France and they were going to go, if they went to college, they would go to France. We didn't have a college in our country.

NOBLE: [01:06:29] In Chad?

HALE: [01:06:30] They do now, but we didn't then.

NOBLE: [01:06:30] And these were all men or women or a mixture?

HALE: [01:06:35] The students? The students, they were mostly men. In the Arabic section, they probably were all men, I don't know. But in the in my section, I might have had one girl per class.

NOBLE: [01:06:44] Wow.

HALE: [01:06:45] And I would have a class of 45 or 50 students and there'd be one girl. That was very, very interesting because they tended to be the children of wealthy people and people who had probably had some Western education and wanted their kids to have education. It was a very hard thing for them because they were in an environment where, I mean, most of them, I think, were seen by the other kids as prostitutes. They were not well treated. And so a lot of them got pregnant early and they became a self-fulfilling prophecy that any time you send your girls to school, you ruin her. You know, she goes out, you send girls to school, they go out and then they get corrupted. And it would happen because that's the situation when you have one girl with 45 boys who aren't used to having a girl around.

NOBLE: [01:07:48] Yes. And so she was either living in a dorm or?

HALE: [01:07:51] She probably came from home. She would live with relatives.

NOBLE: [01:07:55] And the relatives may or may not feel parental responsibility.

HALE: [01:07:59] Well, even if they did, once you let them, they weren't prepared to let their girls out of the house. This society. The girls stayed home. And if they went out, it was accompanied by a family member, male usually, or maybe women would go to the market and things. But they didn't. A 13 year old girl, didn't walk around on her own. And these kids, they just they were put in a situation where they had no support. But I don't believe their families knew what to do or even knew what was going to happen to them. And I think it was probably one of the hardest situations. I'm not saying they all got pregnant, but they just were very much fish out of water.

NOBLE: [01:08:49] Yeah, yeah. And there was really no one in their family to guide them to tell them what sort of behavior was okay?

HALE: [01:08:58] None of the women had probably been to school, and you know, it's so different if you if you're in a place like, if even in the capital city, probably that would have been different. There would have been some women who had, would have been more women in the school and there would have been more guidance. But in Abéché, it was a very, very different kind of situation. And chances are, they may have been another north south thing. They may have been daughters of bureaucrats in town because those were mostly from the South. Those were people who had been educated in French when the French were there and were ready to take over those posts in independence. So like the postmaster's daughter, it might be her. And then she's not only the only girl, but the only person of her tribe, of her ethnicity. I mean, this is totally alone. Isolation, yeah. But anyway, I either did or didn't have one girl in a class.

NOBLE: [01:10:03] And so you step into the classroom and the kids are there, they stand up when you walk into the room.

HALE: [01:10:09] Well, see, I had been ready for them to be very passive and very, not passive, but very polite. Everybody had said this. They said, Jane, when you go to Chad, they are all going to stand up. They're going to call you Madame. They're going to just they're going to do everything to

please you. Turns out that's what the kids in the South did, but not in my town.

NOBLE: [01:10:31] Oh, so what was it like?

HALE: [01:10:34] It was horrible. It's everything they said it wasn't going to be. And I was five feet tall. I was 21 years old. And these kids were, the older ones were almost my age, you know, and they were tall and they were Muslim and they were. And they didn't have any idea who I was or what I was doing there. And I didn't know either. It's like, why am I teaching English to these kids? What the hell is this about, you know? But they told me to do it, and they told those guys to take it. So here we were, and so I tried. And it's very, the classroom management was a problem from the beginning because there's that many students, we had no materials and I did my best to give good lessons. But if somebody didn't want to listen or if somebody got up and walked around or did anything, I didn't I didn't have any authority. I didn't know how to do anything.

NOBLE: [01:11:33] And you're a woman.

HALE: [01:11:34] Of course.

NOBLE: [01:11:35] And you're speaking to them in the language that they don't understand.

HALE: [01:11:37] And they didn't have any idea why they were learning English, and a few of them did. I'm speaking in generalities. I had a few really wonderful students who were great, but it was a very bad discipline situation and I had a lot of problems. One time I walked, I went out to the parking lot to get my motorbike and somebody had slashed my tires. So I was really awful. I hated that.

NOBLE: [01:12:05] Oh! That was a bad day.

HALE: [01:12:07] And then one time I had a class go on strike. And that's big, big stuff. And they went on strike because they thought I had been unfair to one of the students who had been sick and I hadn't graded his test right or

something, I don't know. And so it was the head of the lycee told me to stay away from school for a while until they straightened it out. And so I did. I went home. I was scared to death. I didn't know what to do. And then they finally had me come in and meet with the representatives of the class. And it was kind of humiliating. But I got back, but my headmaster provisoire, they called him. He didn't like me from the beginning, so he was not very helpful in solving this. He was from India.

NOBLE: [01:13:01] Oy.

HALE: [01:13:01] And they had this, there's, I don't know if you had people like that in Nigeria, but there's a group of Indians who speak French from, I think, Pondicherry. It's a very small part of India that was colonized by the French, and they grow up learning in French and they're Indian. And so so they're very, they're more French than the French. Very, very proud of their achievements. And so he was in the French colonial system and he had a big post as a producer and he thought very well of himself. He was a big fish in a little pond and I was not probably as respectful. I'm sure I was not as respectful as I should have been or as he thought I should have been. And I didn't know all the etiquette. I was more concerned with etiquette with the Chadian people, and I didn't pay enough attention to this relationship. And so anyway, he didn't like me. But so that was that was hard. But I did wind up having overall a good experience in the classroom. It was just hard.

NOBLE: [01:14:05] How many different classes did you have to teach in a day?

HALE: [01:14:10] Probably five.

NOBLE: [01:14:11] Oh, that's a lot.

HALE: [01:14:12] Oh yeah.

NOBLE: [01:14:13] And the same, were the all five classes the same? Or were they different?

HALE: [01:14:17] No, there were different preparations. You know, the beginning and later and they had, I mean, they were all. It was quite a system. They had to follow the French curriculum. So in the French curriculum, everybody takes from the beginning of junior high school, they start a language, a foreign language. And they take it for three years and then they start second foreign language and they take that with the other foreign language for three years. So they have living language one and living language two. I think that's distinct from Latin and dead languages. But anyway, so so these kids came to school. When they came to school, they probably had six languages already, you know?

NOBLE: [01:15:05] My goodness.

HALE: [01:15:05] I mean, they were they were from a very cosmopolitan area and it was just a very, they knew a lot of different African languages. So they came and they knew Arabic very well. And then they learned in French. So that's not even a foreign language in this system because it's the French system. So then they have to take living language one, and that would be either English or Arabic, I guess. The literary Arabic. And then they would take foreign language two, and that would be either English or the literary Arabic. So I was teaching some kids that were in first year of living language two and first year of living language one. Those were different stages, different classes, and then up to terminal. We didn't have that, that was the last year. They had to go to the capital for that. But the last year we had, was last year of the lycee there. So I had from beginners to the ones who. The young ones were easier and the ones in the last class were easier, but the ones in the middle who were just starting, they were the first. They were horrible.

NOBLE: [01:16:24] I would think that the older ones towards the end there would realize they had a final exam coming up and that would be a motivator.

HALE: [01:16:32] They had exams. But see, it was so funny because when we taught to, they had to take these same exams that they had in France, right?

NOBLE: [01:16:44] Sure.

HALE: [01:16:44] And with the baccalaureate and so.

NOBLE: [01:16:47] Literature, French literature?

HALE: [01:16:49] Oh yeah. No, African literature, nothing. And so for the English in Chad, they had for the oral part, they had the Peace Corps volunteers giving the oral part of the English exam because we were the only people that could do, you know? So they had a written part. But the oral part counted a lot. And I got a nice trip up to a nice town to do it for a colleague and somebody came down to mine to do it for my students. And it turns out after that, after they had that exam, they came in and they said to me, Mademoiselle, they asked exactly the same questions you do. Because they thought that I was teaching them wrong because I was teaching this Aptiv method, oral. It wasn't like, sit down and copy this in your book.

NOBLE: [01:17:37] Right.

HALE: [01:17:38] They were really used to the old fashioned technique, and if I had done that, they probably would have behaved. But I was trying to get them to listen and participate. All the stuff, you know, so it was a losing proposition. But once they got the exam, they said, oh you were right. So yeah, that was the teaching.

HALE: [01:18:06] I remember when the when the headmaster took me around on a tour of the school, the first time I went in to see him and get acquainted. He took me around and he showed me. He said, OK, now here. And he opened this closet with the key. And he said, these are books, English books for the fourth level, and they were like a stack of books. And I said, wow, and I thought this is great. I'm going to have at least one level with books. And I said, well, can I give them to the students? And he said, no, because then we wouldn't have them. So that was kind of, that was the logic of the lycee. We could either have the books or use the books. We'd rather have them.

NOBLE: [01:18:54] They look so nice on the shelves.

HALE: [01:18:55] They gave me one copy so I could prepare.

NOBLE: [01:18:59] So how did you teach without books? You step into the classroom. There's a chalkboard and chalk.

HALE: [01:19:05] Yeah. Not chalk. You have to bring your chalk. But there's a chalkboard.

NOBLE: [01:19:08] And students have notebooks and pencils.

HALE: [01:19:11] They have notebooks and pencils. Yeah. And you, most of the teachers would write things on the board for them to copy down and that would be the lesson.

NOBLE: [01:19:22] But you using the method you had been taught in Canada. So what did you do?

HALE: [01:19:26] Ok. Today I'm teaching you a lesson. The five parts of it, one is there's a small text on your level, and we're going to prepare that text. So I pull out the vocabulary. I choose the text. I have a book at home that I choose something from. Whatever I use those, they gave me one of those fourth level books. I use that. But I had some other material.

NOBLE: [01:19:54] Would you copy that text onto the board or did you have a duplicating machine or something, a typewriter?

HALE: [01:19:58] No, I would decide like a paragraph. And so I would pull out the words from the paragraph in planning the lesson. I would say these are the words that they won't know. And then this is the grammar point that I'm going to. This is in this tense so we're going to work on this tense today. And so the five point lesson was introduction, where you warm them up and you review something from yesterday. Then you present the text, you write it on the board. No, you present the words. You work on the words. You write them on the board and then you present them and you get them. You don't give them the French equivalent. You act them out. You bring in visual aids.

NOBLE: [01:20:43] There's no translation here.

HALE: [01:20:45] No, you do whatever you can to get them to understand. And if they don't want to, they won't, right. So you do that and then you give them. The third point would be a grammar lesson using those words somehow with whatever grammar point you're doing. And the fourth part would be the text. You'd bring up the text, you'd write it on the board, they would write it in their books and then you would work on it and understanding and learning it. And then the fifth part would be review everything.

NOBLE: [01:21:19] OK. And at some point the kids have to read the text too and pronounce the English correctly. I suppose.

HALE: [01:21:24] Yeah, that's the fourth part. Yeah, but they were supposed to understand it too.

NOBLE: [01:21:30] Yeah. Well, this sounds extremely difficult. With the classroom management part being the hardest aspect of it. Were there times where you thought you would just quit and go home?

HALE: [01:21:45] I wasn't about to go home. Everybody had told me, you won't make it. You know, you'll never last.

NOBLE: [01:21:52] Really? Who?

HALE: [01:21:53] My parents, everybody.

NOBLE: [01:21:55] Not the Peace Corps.

HALE: [01:21:57] But no, not any Peace Corps people. But it was an unusual thing to do back then. And people thought I was crazy. And I think they. I found out later that people told my parents that they didn't think I'd last. My parents didn't dare say that to me because they knew that, you know, that would make me do something even crazier. They never told me they didn't like my boyfriend, but they were very glad when I got rid of him because, you know. So anyway, I really did feel like, I really felt miserable. I felt like I

was. I put it all on myself that I was not doing the right thing, and I just kept searching for how to do it better. It was also there were a couple of things that made it hard. One is I was very sick, a couple of times for periods. I had dysentery, I had amoebic dysentery. And that is just, just lays you out, so I missed some school. One time I had to fly down to the capital and I stayed at the Peace Corps doctor's house and his wife took care of me. So I was very weak. I lost a lot of weight and I was very weak from that. And what else? That made me miserable.

HALE: [01:23:26] One time I fainted in the classroom. Oh, that was very hard. But they were. They were nice to me then. So that I liked. It took that to get nice, OK? But I did have, one of the things that I did that kind of saved me was I set up an English library at the Catholic mission in town. And it was an after school project. I took my best English students from the list and we started an English lending library. And it was a place that Catholic priest was very, very nice and very happy to help us because these were all Muslim kids. He couldn't. He had a basketball court, but he let them play on and then he could get them in for the English library. That was about all that he could do with them, you know.

NOBLE: [01:24:17] And he's from France?

HALE: [01:24:18] Yeah, yeah. So he served the French people in the town. But anyway, he was happy to have these things and he gave me a beautiful room in the library and we set it up and I had books and I got USIA, I think whatever it was, U.S. Information Service or whatever, to send me some books from the capital. And then my mother started sending me book.

NOBLE: [01:24:43] Oh!

HALE: [01:24:44] And so we had a library and we had a date stamp and a little card index and everything. And the students that worked with me loved it, and they had a lot of responsibility and they really got the system down. They took out books and they would come and they would sit around and talk in the afternoons and they would talk English. They would. So it was like a teacher's dream. Maybe it's not working at the least, but the ones who want to are here do it.

NOBLE: [01:25:11] And it was the same kids from your lycee?

HALE: [01:25:14] Yes, but it was the ones who really wanted to learn.

NOBLE: [01:25:17] Right.

HALE: [01:25:18] And so I got to know them and then got to know me. And that helped a lot.

NOBLE: [01:25:23] No kidding.

HALE: [01:25:23] So that was one of the big, big good things.

NOBLE: [01:25:31] You mentioned having to fly to the capital city when you were really ill with dysentery one time. Was there no doctor in town?

HALE: [01:25:39] There were some. There was an Indian doctor and there was a French doctor. Both of them spoke French and worked at a hospital there. And I went to them. But it was too. It was more than they could, I was really sick. They wanted me, I was losing weight and they just wanted me to go out and get help.

NOBLE: [01:25:59] And you're the only Peace Corps volunteer in this whole city?

HALE: [01:26:02] For the first year, the second year they put another guy in.

NOBLE: [01:26:06] Ok. Was there a phone? If you were really in trouble, how would you communicate with the Peace Corps?

HALE: [01:26:18] There were phones. I didn't have a phone. There was one. There were phones in the lycee. I had a boyfriend who was French and he had a phone. He ran Alliance Francaise for the town, so I could use, I could ask him to make a call. There weren't many phones, but it was possible. It was possible.

NOBLE: [01:26:43] So you come to the end of your first year and there's probably school holidays.

HALE: [01:26:49] Yeah.

NOBLE: [01:26:51] How big a break did you have there?

HALE: [01:26:55] We had this is a very interesting question, because people, I have a letter in there from some volunteer that I trained talking about, well we have the summer off. We just got an official communique from Peace Corps saying that we have 48 days of vacation and not one more, but somebody never told, you know. Anyway, so we had the summer off. But I agreed to. They asked me to come down to this town in the south to be part of the training, in-country training program for the new volunteers.

NOBLE: [01:27:28] After you'd been there for one year?

HALE: [01:27:30] Uh huh. And so I did that for a month in the summer. But the previous part of the summer I planned a trip. All the expatriates in town went home for, all the French people went home for this summer and a lot of the students and teachers too, because they were not from that town. So it wasn't much point in sitting around the town, it wasn't anything going on.

NOBLE: [01:27:59] So their school vacation coincided with the European school vacation. June, July, August, sort of?

HALE: [01:28:05] Mm hmm. So I said, I'm going to see the rest of Africa, and I had a friend who I had met at the World Bank, who had gone over to become the secretary to the Africa mission in Abidjan, in Ivory Coast. And so she invited. She said, well, while you're over there you should come visit me. Chad to Ivory Coast is pretty far, a big distance. But I said, I'm just going to do this. So I got out the map and I started looking. And it's like all across the coast of West Africa. But I did it and I didn't occur to me that, you know, it was dangerous or whatever. I just said, this will work.

NOBLE: [01:28:47] Let's hear how you went.

HALE: [01:28:49] So I went from Fort Lamy to Cameroon. I actually don't remember. I probably took a bush taxi to that. And then I went through Cameroon on a train.

NOBLE: [01:29:06] So you're going from north to south in Cameroon?

HALE: [01:29:08] Yeah. I went to the coast on a train and that was lovely. And then when I was in Cameroon, they had told me that I would not be able to go through Nigeria because it takes. You could only get a 24 hour visa and it would take more than 24 hours to get across. And so I said, well, what can I do? And they said, well, you can fly, you can fly in and out, but you still have to get a visa. You can't get a visa from Chad, you have to get it from Cameroon. So I went to the whatever Nigerian embassy in Cameroon and I said what I was going to do and I said I was going to go and stay one night in Lagos and then take the plane.

HALE: [01:29:53] Take the plane in and take the plane out. And they said, OK, so they gave me the thing. So I went, I took a plane to Lagos, so I got to Lagos, didn't know anybody.

NOBLE: [01:30:07] Did you go to the Peace Corps office?

HALE: [01:30:10] No.

NOBLE: [01:30:10] Maybe there even wasn't one.

HALE: [01:30:11] I had no idea. I had no idea about any of that. I found a YWCA in Lagos.

NOBLE: [01:30:18] My goodness.

HALE: [01:30:19] And I met a cab driver at the airport. I mean, I got a cab driver at the airport, and it became clear to me after a while that he was not going to take me to the YWCA and he drove me all around. So I remember I got out my umbrella and I hit him and I got out of the car. That was the only bad thing that happened to me on the whole journey. Of

course, it had to be in Lagos. But anyway, I stayed overnight in the YWCA. I flew out. So I only got.

NOBLE: [01:30:43] You got into a different cab or something, right? You somehow got there.

HALE: [01:30:46] Yeah. So then the next place, what's on the other side?

NOBLE: [01:30:50] Dahomey.

HALE: [01:30:50] So I went to Dahomey and I stayed there, and I.

NOBLE: [01:30:54] We might mention that Dahomey is now Benin.

HALE: [01:30:58] Yes, but the people of Benin would like it to be Dahomey again, I think, because that was just perfectly good African name, it was. Anyway, so then I went to Togo.

NOBLE: [01:31:10] You're going along the coast?

HALE: [01:31:11] Yeah, I'm going along. And then it's all after Lagos, everything, well, Cameroon was beautiful. And then Togo, Dahomey, Ghana on the coast. It was like paradise. It was just beautiful. And it was very, it was very pristine at that time, you know, nothing was polluted and it was it was a beautiful place and it was very safe. What I was doing was very safe. I took bush taxis where you would get in a taxi and five other people would get in and you'd go from one point to the other. I met people at various points. There are a couple of Peace Corps volunteers I met in different places and they were going someplace, so I would go with them to that place, or sometimes I would stay in a Peace Corps volunteer's house, sometimes. I remember I spent one night up on the roof of one of those slave castles in Ghana. It was very beautiful and very, very lovely place. It was just it was let's just see what's next kind of thing.

HALE: [01:32:18] And then I went through Ghana and then up and down. I think there was some problem going across the border on the coast. So I went

up north and down south to Abidjan, and I stayed in Abidjan for two weeks.

NOBLE: [01:32:36] Oh boy.

HALE: [01:32:37] It took me, I think it took me about two weeks to get across and I stayed in Abidjan for almost two weeks and then I took the plane back.

NOBLE: [01:32:44] And of course, in Abidjan, you could speak French.

HALE: [01:32:46] My God, in Abidjan, it was like Paris. They called it the Paris of Africa. It was. And these people, the World Bank people, they were living the good life. I mean, they still do. But my boss from back in the States was the one in charge of the mission. So they treated me royally. They took me out every night to discotheques and I got all kinds of really pretty clothes made out of African fabrics and I just had the best time.

NOBLE: [01:33:18] So you're describing a vacation!

HALE: [01:33:21] It was, and it was like the absolute opposite of what I had just been living for a year.

NOBLE: [01:33:26] Right, right.

HALE: [01:33:26] And Patricia was a very, very nice woman, and I lived with her in a fancy apartment and air conditioning and everything. So then I went, I took a plane and I went back to Chad to teach this stage, this training group. And then I went back up to Abéché for the second year. Yeah, it was great. I'm really glad I took that vacation. I think I think it is a trip that you could not, nobody could take it right now.

NOBLE: [01:33:52] Right.

HALE: [01:33:52] It just wouldn't be. It wouldn't be fun. It wouldn't be feasible, particularly, and it would not be safe. It would not, not be safe.

NOBLE: [01:34:02] Especially for a woman traveling alone.

HALE: [01:34:04] Oh my god. Yeah, I mean, it's the kind of thing that my parents, I don't actually think I told them that I was doing it probably. I mean, I probably told them I was going to go see somebody, but I didn't tell them I was doing what I was doing, and it was the kind of thing that it was safe in Africa to do things that it wasn't safe in America to do at that point.

NOBLE: [01:34:24] That's right.

HALE: [01:34:25] Now, people. I mean, everybody was afraid when I went to Africa, oh my god, you're going to get eaten by tribes of this and you're going to have this and that. And it was like, it turned out to be like the nicest, safest place to be, didn't you find that?

NOBLE: [01:34:40] Yes, yes.

HALE: [01:34:41] And I've never felt safer in my life. So but now it's not that way. And I know from having gone back and I just would not do that. But I'm glad I did it when I could.

NOBLE: [01:34:54] When you could, right. The time was right. So eventually you go back up to Abéché and begin your second year and now you're living with in a family in there within their compound. Talk about that a little bit. You had your own little house within their compound.

HALE: [01:35:13] Yes.

NOBLE: [01:35:14] Describe that.

HALE: [01:35:14] The master of the compound, who was my friend, who was the teacher, he had gone to teach in the capital. And so his room, which was the best room, was empty and he gave it to me. He let me rent it.

NOBLE: [01:35:32] So it's a room.

HALE: [01:35:33] Well, it's yeah, the compound is built in a square and the rooms, I don't think they're not freestanding huts in there. They're like built onto the square. So it's like a room here and then they're in a room there.

NOBLE: [01:35:55] Is there an open air patio in the middle of the square?

HALE: [01:35:57] It is open there, but there was a privacy wall that went halfway down the middle. So he had that, that privacy and that was. I got the spot that was like the master spot. So I had I had some privacy. But they had to go into my part of the compound to get to their part around the wall. So I mean, I saw everybody. But it was a very good situation because they lived their life in their part of the compound outside, and I could go there and participate with them anytime I wanted to. But in my part of the compound, we didn't congregate a lot, so I had my bed outside.

NOBLE: [01:36:43] Outside?

HALE: [01:36:43] Yeah, it had a mosquito net.

NOBLE: [01:36:46] Oh, that would be cooler then.

HALE: [01:36:47] Yeah, it was very hot. I think I might have put it inside during or had. No, I think it was always outside.

NOBLE: [01:36:57] You have the Harmattan there, where dust would blow?

HALE: [01:37:01] I don't remember that. I remember that in Senegal, I don't remember storms in Chad. But no, I did have a bed inside too at some point during the year, but it was mostly outside that it was. And then I would sit in my part of the courtyard and prepare my lessons. I would sit outside. It was it was too hot to be inside anywhere.

NOBLE: [01:37:20] You said you had been given a desk or a table.

HALE: [01:37:23] I did have a table. It was inside. Yeah, but I would usually sit outside because I was or read or something because it was so hot. And so when people would come in, they would greet me and they would always.

It was so funny. They would always say, what's wrong, Jane? Why are you sitting here all alone?

NOBLE: [01:37:40] Oh, in Arabic, they would be saying this?

HALE: [01:37:42] No, this this family spoke French. Some of them spoke Arabic, but both. Some combination of it. They would be asking me, you know, what's up? Because there were a couple of them that were students at the lycee. Some of the women, I think, spoke some Arabic, and I don't remember all that. But I was learning some Arabic anyway. So why are you sitting all alone? And I would sometimes then go over and join them. But it was really clear to me that sitting alone to read or to write to my parents or so, that was an American thing, and I was happy. I was very happy doing that. But they thought I was just sad, so they felt really sorry for me. So that was a big cultural lesson to me. And so I would go over and somebody was always cooking something. There were always two or three babies walking around and running around, and there was somebody plaiting somebody's hair and it was just, you know, it was just a busy family compound.

NOBLE: [01:38:46] Sounds wonderful.

HALE: [01:38:47] It was wonderful.

NOBLE: [01:38:47] And you ate together with them?

HALE: [01:38:49] I'm trying to remember that. I think I did sometimes, and I think I had. No, I think I usually ate with them because I had I hired a woman to come and make me tea in the morning. Oh, and I think she did my laundry too. I'm not sure, but I didn't. I think I might have eaten. I didn't eat very well when I was in Chad. But yeah, I probably ate with them and they became friends. They were good friends of mine, all different generations. And I had to have a guardian. There was a cot inside the entrance, inside the door to the concession and a guardian slept on that cot and I hired him to watch out for the for me all night, you know? And the one thing that was funny about that was there was one holiday. I don't remember if it was the end of Ramadan or one of the big holidays where they do a three day

celebration. And he said, I'm going to go home and be with my family. And I said, no, you're not, because this was the time when they had these celebrations that everybody would drink. You know, it'll be crimes and everything.

NOBLE: [01:40:16] If ever you needed a guardian.

HALE: [01:40:17] I said, this is the night I need you. He said, no, I can't do it. So we had quite a discussion with the people in my family and he and I had a discussion and he arranged to get somebody else to come and do his job. And it was really it was really very interesting to me.

NOBLE: [01:40:35] Good for you for advocating for yourself.

HALE: [01:40:36] Oh my gosh. I was just like, this can't happen. But anyway, that though, so that was my and they built an enclosed outhouse and shower for me.

NOBLE: [01:40:51] Oh, very nice.

HALE: [01:40:53] I think there had been a hole in the ground before and they just enclosed it. So I had a hole in the ground. But I had and the shower was another separately half walled part that I took a tea kettle into and did this with. You know, it's just it was really nice. Yeah. So that was what I had.

NOBLE: [01:41:11] So here you are. You're not Muslim. You're living in an Islamic culture and now you're inside the family walls with an Islamic family. Were the women there veiled?

HALE: [01:41:29] They were, but they weren't. They called them veils, what they were. But what it was, was they were these beautiful silk scarves with beautiful, with gorgeous sequins and things on them. I mean, every holiday, the women were given a gift by the husband, and if there were three wives, there were three of equal value, of a scarf.

NOBLE: [01:41:55] Oh, this is a polygamist culture. Even inside your family where you live? Were there more than one wife?

HALE: [01:42:02] Yeah. Not in the compound where I was, but across the street with the patriarch and his wives. But so they wore these. They wore beautiful clothes and there was nothing. The veil was like the dance of the seven veils. You know, the veil is to make it mysterious and sexy. And they were just, it never occurred to me that they were being hidden by these because they were being enhanced.

NOBLE: [01:42:32] OK. And so there wasn't a hijab thing.

HALE: [01:42:37] Never saw that. Maybe today, today you would see it, I'm sure, but not then. More like Indian women, you know how they wear these beautiful? It was like that.

NOBLE: [01:42:49] You know, there's a loveliness. So you didn't find people somehow disrespecting you or something because you were not veiled?

HALE: [01:42:59] No.

NOBLE: [01:42:59] Did you find yourself putting on a veil, too?

HALE: [01:43:02] No. I think I would have stood out if I put on a veil. I think, it was a sophisticated enough town that they knew that they knew enough white people and had known enough white people, mostly French, that we did things differently. And if I had tried to look or act like them, I think they might have interpreted as, especially at the beginning, they might have interpreted as she's making fun of us or something.

NOBLE: [01:43:32] You would have to have it be given to you as a gift or something.

HALE: [01:43:35] But as time went by, yeah, I did. I did do things like that and I did as I became felt part of things. I felt that I could do things more in their way. But that was that was one of the big social aspects of my town, the distance between Europeans and Chadians. And it was very pronounced in my town because there were a number of French people and there was also an army base there that we didn't really associate with much.

NOBLE: [01:44:11] But this was Chadian Army?

HALE: [01:44:14] No, French.

NOBLE: [01:44:15] French? Still there?

HALE: [01:44:15] The French people didn't know. It turned out to be a scandal. They were based in Senegal and they would send people over to Abéché. But it was for this rebellion that was that was happening. And so they were there. I didn't know any of them, but the guys sometimes went over there to drink with them and stuff. But so they were very separate communities and the French made no. They were not interested in and they didn't make any effort to get to know Chadian people other than as their students or patients or cooks or whatever.

NOBLE: [01:44:52] But here you are, breaking that mold by moving in with a family.

HALE: [01:44:56] Exactly. And I was very, it was the hardest thing for me. The whole two years I was there, to negotiate those two communities because I didn't want to alienate either one. I wanted to know both of them. I knew that I had gone there to meet and work with the Chadians. But I also knew that from the moment I got in there that the Chadians expected me to be with the French, with the other white people. They didn't make that differentiation, American and French. And also that there were aspects of the French society that I liked and wanted to be part of. And, you know, I majored in French in college. You know, so that was something I didn't want to turn my back on that group. But it was like I had two lives. I would be invited here this night and here this night. And it was they didn't really intersect much and it was very, it was very difficult. It was mostly difficult to sit and listen to the French say horrible things about the Chadians.

NOBLE: [01:46:02] Oh yes.

HALE: [01:46:03] I just, that was, I had to hold my tongue a lot.

NOBLE: [01:46:06] So who did you hang out with to keep yourself sane?

HALE: [01:46:10] My boyfriend, this French guy.

NOBLE: [01:46:12] Oh, yes.

HALE: [01:46:13] He was the director of the Alliance Francaise in town, which was a good. It was a. I don't know if you know the Alliance Francaises in the world. They're like cultural centers, French cultural centers. And so he had a library and he taught classes in French for people who were not at the school, for people who either couldn't get into the school or whatever. The students were not as good as those in the lycee, but he had students every day come. And then once a week, he showed a French film. They would send him a French film and we went to this courtyard that had the projection, and it was always funny because the either the reels were mixed up and we'd see the beginning at the end or sometimes there would be three different reels for different films. There was always something, but he was very nice and he was very. He was my first one, well no, my fiance was my first real boyfriend, but we were very serious. For two years.

NOBLE: [01:47:24] Oh, the whole two years?

HALE: [01:47:25] Yeah. And I almost married him, but I didn't. I went home and then the next summer, I went to France to meet him. And went, we spent the summer in France. He met me in Paris and we spent a little time in Paris and then we went on a trip around France, visiting all of the people we knew in Chad that were home. We visited them in their houses and they treated us so well. And it was such a wonderful thing because I was able to be in French homes with French people and not feel uncomfortable. You know, I felt like I was in this culture in the place where this culture was supposed to be, you know?

NOBLE: [01:48:12] By you also knew, you had known each other in Chad.

HALE: [01:48:14] I knew these people and I cared a lot. We had a lot in common. And they, you know, they were in their family home. So we met their

mothers. They cooked us these big meals. It was just it was lovely. But I did decide after that summer that I didn't want to live with them.

NOBLE: [01:48:31] Uh-huh. And you had said that your former fiance from the states also came out to visit you.

HALE: [01:48:37] He came the first year. Yeah. I was not really pleased that he was coming, but I didn't tell him not to come. And that was a huge trip to make back then. Today it's not much, but I mean, it was really something. The thing that bothered me the most was when he got there, he said, your sister gave me some brownies and a teddy bear to bring you, and I just didn't have room for them. And that was the end. You know, you understand. I see you nodding. It was like, OK, that's that. So we wound up. I tried. And my boyfriend, who I didn't tell him was my boyfriend, tried to be nice to him and find people for him to play chess with while I was at school or something like that. We, you know, we tried, but it was just not working out and we had a couple of disagreements and I told him to leave and he said, well, my ticket isn't back isn't until this date. And I said, Well, go spend it down in the capital and just get out of here. So that was done.

NOBLE: [01:49:55] Very clear.

HALE: [01:49:56] Yeah, but it was good. So it was good.

NOBLE: [01:50:04] Is there anything else you'd like to say about your time right there up in Abéché? Have we covered all the important stuff?

HALE: [01:50:12] Well, with this group of French people, they took camping trips and they took me along on them and those were really wonderful. One of the people in town, a judge, had been there forever. He really lived there with a Chadian wife and he was in the French community, but also part in part of the Chadian community too. And he was a hunter and he had a Land Rover, and he would organize expeditions, kind of caravans of people. Different people had Land Rovers and stuff. So we'd get in three cars with provisions and we always had armed guards with us because there was there was stuff going on in the countryside. But these people, the French people, they loved to eat. So they took the best food of all

these things, and we would go and they would usually shoot a gazelle, which I tried to eat but didn't. I couldn't. I can't eat something that I've already met alive, you know, when it's so beautiful. So I would they would take a can of beans or something for me. And but I did enjoy the trips and there was one trip that they organized.

HALE: [01:51:33] The best one was on camels. We went for like a three day camping trip on camels. It was so lovely. I loved it. I had a horse. The French people had horses in my town, and so they talked me into trying it and I'd never gone horseback riding. But when I got there, my first year, I bought a horse and somebody else took care of it. People always in Africa, somebody else always takes care of everything, right? I didn't need to figure out where to put it or how to feed it or whatever. So I just paid somebody some money and they did it. And then I would go on horseback riding outings with these people, sometimes in the afternoons. And those were very nice. That was a good way to get out of town. Women, Chadian women did not ride horses and men did. So it was unusual. I felt very self-conscious. I had to put on a pair of pants to ride, and a woman with a pair of pants was not something. So I like kind of snuck out of town on my horse. But it was it was a very nice thing and I did learn to ride. I didn't. My horse threw me a few times. He was not very patient with me because I was afraid of him so.

NOBLE: [01:52:52] He could sense that.

HALE: [01:52:55] Yeah, but when I got on the camel on this camping trip, it was wonderful because the camel, once you get on them and get up, they don't want, they just go along. It's like being on a boat, you know, and even if they gallop, you're not very. They're, you're very secure. The camel saddles are very big and you're just secure. So I thought I wasn't worried about writing this camel as long as somebody would help me put him up and down. There was always somebody to do that, and it was just very, very nice. I loved it.

HALE: [01:53:27] And so those were those were a couple of things that were good for me during that time.

NOBLE: [01:53:34] Wonderful memories.

HALE: [01:53:36] I had a huge life there. There was a woman that lived in my town. She was a French woman, but she had been there for years and years and years. And she was kind of a recluse. But she had a compound with animals and she just loved animals. So she had you. If you went to see her, she had ostriches and she had lots of different geese and she had rabbits and ostrich was the most exotic thing she had. I'm not sure what else that would be really interesting. But I went to see her and I got her to give me two rabbits because I had always wanted to have rabbits as pets. So she did, and I took them home and it turned that rabbits are crummy pets.

NOBLE: [01:54:37] Well, they're messy and smelly.

HALE: [01:54:39] They put these little pellets all the house, and they scratched me. They didn't want me. I wanted to sit and pet them.

NOBLE: [01:54:45] Cuddle with them.

HALE: [01:54:47] That's a different kind of rabbit.

NOBLE: [01:54:49] That's called a bunny.

HALE: [01:54:50] Yeah. So anyway, they didn't last. I took them back and said thank you. But then she gave me a couple of geese. I put some geese in the yard. I don't know why I had those, but I did. And. They were okay, but they were kind of messy.

NOBLE: [01:55:04] And they can, geese can also be mean.

HALE: [01:55:06] Yeah, but somehow I kept them for a while and then I had a cat and then I had a dog, so I had a number of cats, I had four. So it was a very it was a very nice life. Teaching was the least good part of it. But it was good enough that when I came back here, I knew I wanted to be a teacher and I didn't. I didn't want to be a teacher before then because my mother had been a teacher and everybody thought that women should be

teachers. And I didn't know what I wanted to be, but I didn't want to be a teacher. So I went into the Peace Corps and they said, you're going to be a teacher because that's all I was. What did they call us? AB generalist. That means you can do nothing, right? You don't know how to do anything, so we'll make you be a teacher. So I said, OK. So that was when I learned that I loved teaching then, even though I knew I couldn't do it, it was like, damn, I'm going to get this right.

NOBLE: [01:56:07] But this is fascinating because the teaching part of your whole experience was the most difficult and the most frustrating. You had students who were not cooperative and yet you came home determined to be a teacher.

HALE: [01:56:25] I put it on myself. It was like I didn't know how to reach those kids. It was my, and I and I think it was, I mean, it wasn't their fault. They were in their country and I was just I couldn't do it. So I came back here and I said, all right, I'm going to try to save poor kids in America. I'll know their culture, right? So I went back to school after doing a bunch of stuff, including Peace Corps training, I went back to University of Chicago, got a master's in elementary education, and then I went to North Carolina, to the country, to a newly integrated school down there.

NOBLE: [01:57:07] This would have been 1973 or '74?

HALE: [01:57:11] '74, '76. Two years. And I taught second grade there.

NOBLE: [01:57:18] Where in North Carolina?

HALE: [01:57:19] Pleasant Grove, North Carolina. Central North Carolina, but really rural and the kids were quite poor and I liked it, but I still had classroom management problems. I mean, seven year olds, they're no better than that. Different problems.

NOBLE: [01:57:35] And did you have big, big numbers in the class?

HALE: [01:57:38] Twenty six. That was not too bad, but no aides or anything. But it was hard. It was very hard. But it was it was better. It was easy. You know, I knew where the problems were.

NOBLE: [01:57:53] And you maybe had some books.

HALE: [01:57:55] We did have books. We have books.

NOBLE: [01:57:59] So and then eventually you must have gone back to school. Eventually, you wound up as a professor at Brandeis.

HALE: [01:58:05] I did a bunch of things and then I went back to get my. I decided I wanted to be a professor. I did a lot of things in the teaching profession and some other things, but I said, I want to be a professor because I was tired of going to parties and somebody meeting somebody and they would say, what do you do? And I would say I'm a second grade teacher and they would turn around and walk away, you know, nothing to say. So I said, this is really interesting stuff, but I want people to recognize me. So I thought college. If I got a Ph.D. or if I taught in college, maybe they'd like it. And then I found out you had to have a PhD to get a good job in college. So I went to Stanford and I got a PhD. And then I got my job.

NOBLE: [01:58:47] In French?

HALE: [01:58:48] In French. And then I came here to Brandeis and taught for 30 years.

NOBLE: [01:58:51] 30 years.

HALE: [01:58:52] And I, I liked it. The first time I remember my first class at Brandeis. I got out of class and I looked and I said, I got through my whole lesson plan. That was the first time in my entire life that I had ever finished what I said I was going to do. Then I went to my office and on the way to my office, I went to the bathroom. And I said I can do this and I can spend as much time here as I want. Nobody's fighting out in the hallway. And then I went to my office and I fixed myself a cup of coffee and I put my feet up and I said, this is humane. I've been looking for it for half a century, but

it was like, it was the conditions, and I really appreciated that a lot. So I had the luxury teaching for my last 30 years.

NOBLE: [01:59:41] Wonderful, wonderful. And do you would you have wound up as a professor at Brandeis had you not gone into the Peace Corps? Do you think ultimately it would have come around to that?

HALE: [01:59:53] No. No. I don't think I would have been a professor. I don't know what I would have done. I mean, I don't know. I really don't know what would have happened, but it was a circuitous route. But I do think that I learned in Peace Corps that I love teaching. That I really loved it.

NOBLE: [02:00:14] Amazing. Any other things that you took away from Peace Corps?

HALE: [02:00:19] Oh, so many. I gained a lot of confidence in myself. A lot of confidence. And it's too much to just to answer a question like that, I can't. I took away so much of what I am from Peace Corps.

NOBLE: [02:00:49] You mentioned something about Senegal. I got the idea that you had gone. You've gone back to Africa.

HALE: [02:00:55] Yeah, I went. When I came back here, when I went to University of Chicago to get that master's degree. I met my first husband there and we taught in North Carolina, and we were married for like 11 years. We went different places and we wound up out in California for me to be at Stanford. And he was not a traveler and not interested in international stuff. So I didn't do much during that time. But then when I got my, when I started at Stanford doing my degree, I had the opportunity to go to France for a year to study as part of that. So I did that. And then I got interested in some of the Francophone African literature and cultures and things that were just beginning to be taught in the U.S. colleges. And I got my job at Brandeis and then we divorced.

HALE: [02:01:57] And then at Brandeis, they I wanted to do a course on African literature in French, but people told me, don't do that until you get tenure. They won't give you tenure if you get into those marginal fields. So I didn't,

six years I didn't do it. But in my sixth year, when I got the tenure, then I applied for a Fulbright grant to go to Senegal, to research, to do research for a course, to start a course in Francophone African culture and literature. And I taught that course forever. After that one, it was wonderful. And it really. And then I did some. I did a course on Haiti. I told you, I got to meet the Haitian students at Brandeis through some of that language foolishness and I worked with them and I went to Haiti and I worked in children's. I wound up doing, working in children's literacy projects in Haiti and in Lesotho, which is where my husband did a big project. So I've done a lot in Africa since then.

HALE: [02:03:08] But Senegal, Senegal, I was so excited to go because the people, the army people that were in my town in Chad, they had a base in Senegal. They would come over, you know, for a few weeks at a time for an assignment in Chad. And everything that they brought was so they would bring exotic things presents. And my boyfriend bought me a couple of things. He said, get her a necklace or something. So seeing these beautiful pieces of gold and things, so I had this vision of Senegal as being Shangri-La or something, I don't know, El Dorado. And so to go there 20 years later and have some money and be a professor and not a Peace Corps volunteer, it was just a really cool way of doing it.

NOBLE: [02:03:57] Very creative. Fun.

HALE: [02:03:59] Yeah. And I was able to. In addition to doing that course at Brandeis, I was able to facilitate students going to Africa to study abroad because we hadn't been doing and it was fairly new in the American Academy at that time and I sent the first students to Senegal. I was really pleased about that. In fact, one of them just came by here the other day with his fiancée to introduce her to me. He's 30, in his thirties now, but it's fun. I have a lot of a lot of good friends and I always when the African students would show up at Brandeis, I was always kind of mother hen to them.

NOBLE: [02:04:42] Would you advise a young woman today to join the Peace Corps?

HALE: [02:04:47] Yeah, if she wanted to. I mean, I think now Peace Corps is mainstream enough that the kids know. They know more about it, I mean, so I wouldn't say, oh yes, do it, I would want to know what she wanted out of it, I would want to know about her, her goals and whatnot. I have had a lot of students come to me at Brandeis and you know, what am I going to do and talk to me? And a lot of them wanted to work in international stuff. And when I would mention Peace Corps, they would say, oh yes, but two years. And I would say, you know, two years is really a huge long time at this point of your life because everything's been measured in, you know, first grade, second grade and do this next to you. But in retrospect, it goes by in a flash. And I said, I can tell you that I don't think that you could have an experience in less than two years that would be nearly as important as this one. This is just it was minimum amount of time to get anything. I mean, if I had left after one year, it just would have. I don't know what I would have brought back.

HALE: [02:06:03] I wanted to stay a third year but my health didn't really let me do it, but it was. It was just two years is, it's important to do it. So but a lot of the kids, you know, everything has to go so fast. And so they have these ideas of, well, I want to be, I want to work for an NGO. I want to be, you know, save the world and go give AIDS vaccines and do things. And they want to, they want to do the quick fixes, but they don't want to put in the time. And I have seen those people in country and I just I feel like our whole foreign aid thing is an international humanitarian stuff is so messed up because people want it to work fast. And Peace Corps, I think that may be one of the things I took from Peace Corps is things are slow with things that good things are slow and you don't even know until years later. And you may not even ever know what influence you've had, but you just I mean, teaching is certainly that way. I don't, I have no idea. I hope I've influenced more for the good, for the bad, but you don't really know. You leave them. And then and then there it is. But you just can't go in and fix a country. And I think Peace Corps knew that way back when and still knows that. But it doesn't seem to have gotten through to the Foreign Service or any of the USAID or any. I don't know.

NOBLE: [02:07:43] Well, Jane Hale, thank you very much.

HALE: [02:07:46] Good.

NOBLE: [02:07:46] It's been a great interview.

HALE: [02:07:48] Thank you.

NOBLE: [02:07:49] And I wish you well. And in your remaining years, there's lots more ahead.

HALE: [02:07:55] Oh yeah, I don't know what it is, but I'm sure there is.

NOBLE: [02:07:59] Thank you, Jane.

HALE: [02:08:00] Thank you. I have no idea how.

[END OF INTERVIEW]