

Richard Johnsen Oral History Interview
Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection
Administrative Information

Creator: Richard Johnsen
Interviewer: Robert Klein
Date of Interview: May 30, 2002
Location of Interview: Tucson, Arizona
Length: 87 pages

Biographical Note

Richard Johnsen served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Philippines from 1962 to 1964 as an educational aide (Philippines IX).

Access

Open.

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Suggested Citation

Richard Johnsen, recorded interview by Robert Klein, May 30, 2002, page #, Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.

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Oral History Interview

with

Richard Johnsen

May 30, 2002
Tucson, Arizona

By Robert Klein

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

KLEIN: [00:00:01] This is Bob Klein. Today is May 30, 2002, and I'm interviewing Richard Johnsen, who was a volunteer in the Philippines, 1962 to 1964.

JOHNSEN: [00:00:18] Good morning.

KLEIN: [00:00:19] And usually we start with go back to before you joined the Peace Corps or even had heard about it and give a little bit of your background.

JOHNSEN: [00:00:27] Oh, okay.

KLEIN: [00:00:27] And we'll go from there.

JOHNSEN: [00:00:29] Well, I was in school, in undergraduate school at the University of California in Northridge, and I heard about the Peace

Corps. In fact, I saw the TV program that President Kennedy gave the speech, you know, about.

KLEIN: [00:00:45] The inaugural?

JOHNSEN: [00:00:46] The inaugural, well, the speech. Yes. That was the inaugural. When he said.

KLEIN: [00:00:50] Ask not, right.

JOHNSEN: [00:00:51] What you can do for your country.

KLEIN: [00:00:52] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:00:52] And so I teared up and thought, yes, that's what I really want to do.

KLEIN: [00:00:57] Okay. What was, what had you been studying at Northridge?

JOHNSEN: [00:01:01] Oh, psychology. That was my major for a two year, I mean, four year degree.

KLEIN: [00:01:07] And when were you due to get your degree?

JOHNSEN: [00:01:09] In 1960. Let's see. '62 I got the degree.

KLEIN: [00:01:17] June of '62.

JOHNSEN: [00:01:18] June, uh huh. And went in, by the November I went to training.

KLEIN: [00:01:23] Okay. Where had you grown up?

JOHNSEN: [00:01:26] Mostly in California, in Los Angeles, around the San Fernando Valley. That's where my, I grew up. And, you know, from teenage years through.

KLEIN: [00:01:34] Okay.

JOHNSEN: [00:01:35] And high school.

KLEIN: [00:01:36] Through high school and college, had you done any kind of international travel or service work or?

JOHNSEN: [00:01:46] No service work. But I had a good friend that was bilingual from birth because his parents were from Mexico. And we went to elementary school together and grew up together. And he's still a good friend, and he was bilingual. And so at age 18, after high school, I went to visit him in, in Mexico. And that was my first out of country experience.

KLEIN: [00:02:07] And was it a reasonably affluent family or modest?

JOHNSEN: [00:02:12] I'd say middle class family in Chihuahua, Mexico.

KLEIN: [00:02:15] Uh huh. And did you try to speak Spanish while you were there?

JOHNSEN: [00:02:19] Oh, yes. I had been learning Spanish in high school due to this Edward, Eduardo, he knew Spanish, you know, perfectly. And I thought, why don't I? So I really tried. And he was my mentor and my ideal of, you know, to learn a second language.

KLEIN: [00:02:34] And you actually did. You were?

JOHNSEN: [00:02:36] I was getting to be fluent. I mean, I was starting to understand very rapidly and, you know, and talk back rapidly.

KLEIN: [00:02:43] And how long did you stay in Chihuahua? Was it just a?

JOHNSEN: [00:02:47] Just a summer, I think it was less than a month.

KLEIN: [00:02:50] Okay. And then finished high school?

JOHNSEN: [00:02:53] And that was after I had finished high school.

KLEIN: [00:02:56] Oh, okay.

JOHNSEN: [00:02:56] And then after that I did just some traveling for family reasons to Chicago, and moved my aunt and uncle back to Los Angeles and so on. But then I started college after that.

KLEIN: [00:03:09] Okay, so you were actually in your fourth year of college when Kennedy became president?

JOHNSEN: [00:03:16] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:03:17] And, uh, you said you mentioned that you remembered the inaugural address.

JOHNSEN: [00:03:23] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:03:24] At that point, what did you do, I mean, during that fourth year of college?

JOHNSEN: [00:03:27] Well, as you know, Vietnam was heating up at the time, and I was draftable and had signed up for the draft and had been given a, you know, that I could be drafted. So I had also, as well as applying to the Peace Corps, applied to the Air Force. And I wanted to get in graduate or not graduate school, but a program, a four year program for officers training in Langley, Texas, I think it was. And so those two applications were being processed during this time when I was a senior in college.

KLEIN: [00:04:00] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:04:00] And so I didn't know which would come first, I really didn't. But fortunately, the Peace Corps sent me a telegram and said respond with a telegram within three days if you would accept going to the Philippines, the Philippine project. And I had to scramble to look up where the Philippines was.

KLEIN: [00:04:18] Uh huh, okay.

JOHNSEN: [00:04:19] And you know, what the languages were and everything.

KLEIN: [00:04:21] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:04:21] And I took the full three days to decide between the two, because there were advantages of being in the Air Force, you know.

KLEIN: [00:04:28] Right.

JOHNSEN: [00:04:28] So it came up that the Peace Corps had the most advantages to me personally, because I just thought that would be the ideal situation to be in.

KLEIN: [00:04:36] Do you remember filling out the application and taking the entrance exam? There was a long.

JOHNSEN: [00:04:41] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:04:43] At that time, did you indicate any preference?

JOHNSEN: [00:04:46] I said South America or a Spanish speaking country.

KLEIN: [00:04:50] Right.

JOHNSEN: [00:04:51] And when they said, you know, say yes or no to the Philippines. I thought, oh, that's a Spanish speaking country, from what I could read in the encyclopedia.

KLEIN: [00:04:58] Yes.

JOHNSEN: [00:04:59] But of course it wasn't. But officially a Spanish speaking country.

KLEIN: [00:05:04] Maybe Peace Corps didn't know either.

JOHNSEN: [00:05:05] Maybe by then. No. Not that early.

KLEIN: [00:05:08] So you had indicated, obviously, South America.

JOHNSEN: [00:05:10] I assumed it would be South America because I had some Spanish background.

KLEIN: [00:05:14] Okay. Telegram came. This must have been what, in June?

JOHNSEN: [00:05:21] Oh, it was later in the summer, I think. I don't exactly remember. Later in the summer.

KLEIN: [00:05:25] So you had graduated and you were just sort of waiting for an answer from either of these two?

JOHNSEN: [00:05:29] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:05:30] Had your draft board given you a, we're going to get you by such and such a date or?

JOHNSEN: [00:05:35] No, it hadn't come to that. And I was in the San Fernando Valley, which had a very large pool of young men.

KLEIN: [00:05:41] Okay.

JOHNSEN: [00:05:41] At that time. And so my number hadn't come up and probably didn't come up, I don't know.

KLEIN: [00:05:47] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:05:47] I don't think it did, because I heard that they drafted from Peace Corps in service, from men in the service already in country. They had drafted somebody in an earlier group in the Philippines.

KLEIN: [00:05:58] That was rare, very rare. Most boards accepted Peace Corps service at least as a deferment.

JOHNSEN: [00:06:07] Mm hmm.

KLEIN: [00:06:08] So what was your reaction, your family's reaction, your friends when?

JOHNSEN: [00:06:13] Oh, they thought this was something really good and they thought it would be a good thing to do. My parents, especially my mother, didn't cater to the Air Force very much. She didn't like military.

KLEIN: [00:06:26] Mm hmm.

JOHNSEN: [00:06:26] And she thought it would be better to do a civilian kind of job.

KLEIN: [00:06:30] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:06:30] Even though it was a couple of years.

KLEIN: [00:06:32] Did your friends think you were crazy or were they?

JOHNSEN: [00:06:35] Oh, I really never knew completely. They, they, you know, wished me well, I, there was never a big, oh, you're doing the right thing. It wasn't that kind of thing. It's more like, oh, you're going to do that, huh? Well, good luck.

KLEIN: [00:06:49] And you were pretty much convinced it was a good choice?

JOHNSEN: [00:06:51] Yes, I was convinced.

KLEIN: [00:06:53] Yeah, because everyone in California is crazy.

JOHNSEN: [00:06:56] Yeah. Oh, yeah.

KLEIN: [00:06:58] Sorry about that.

JOHNSEN: [00:06:59] And my friends were among them. The craziest.

KLEIN: [00:07:02] And so on, fairly short notice, you were ready to move.

JOHNSEN: [00:07:11] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:07:11] You got the telegram and how, how soon after did you have to report?

JOHNSEN: [00:07:14] I had to, it was late November I think that we started training in Hilo, Hawaii. So it must have been, you know, October or something that we all met, gathered in San Francisco and had some training meetings, you know, some preliminary meetings and told about deselection and all that. And you're not Peace Corps volunteers yet until you go through the training. That was a big, everybody was on edge about that. And then we, they flew us to Hilo or to Honolulu and then Hilo, and we stayed there for, I guess, two full months.

KLEIN: [00:07:47] How big a group was it, do you remember?

JOHNSEN: [00:07:49] We started out with 108 people and.

KLEIN: [00:07:52] Uh huh.

JOHNSEN: [00:07:53] And it was winnowed down to about, I think, what was it, 80 something. I think there was 40 percent deselection.

KLEIN: [00:08:04] Wow.

JOHNSEN: [00:08:04] And self deselection too.

KLEIN: [00:08:05] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:08:07] So it was, it was winnowed out quite, pretty well.

KLEIN: [00:08:10] And can you describe the training?

JOHNSEN: [00:08:15] We stayed in.

KLEIN: [00:08:17] Well, let's go, I'm sorry, let's go back. You, you had a few days in San Francisco. The group gathered. You then, was it a charter flight to Hawaii?

JOHNSEN: [00:08:26] Uh, probably, I don't really remember.

KLEIN: [00:08:28] Do you recall your reaction to the others in the group? You know, you had committed to doing this. You had some sense of, you know, it's what Kennedy had described and you felt you were doing it. Do you do you recall the others?

JOHNSEN: [00:08:43] Well, we were mostly 20 and 22 year olds and 23 year olds. So I just felt within a group that I could very much identify with because we were all very enthusiastic, idealistic, all with some background in college, most of us college graduates.

KLEIN: [00:09:01] Right.

JOHNSEN: [00:09:01] And I felt, you know, that there was no negativity. We were all just on edge to, to complete the service and do a good job of it and try to get in.

KLEIN: [00:09:11] And from the get-go, the, the staff had made it clear that training was a selection process?

JOHNSEN: [00:09:20] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:09:21] Which created a certain amount of tension.

JOHNSEN: [00:09:23] Yes. And I understood that they were also just learning how to do the training. I mean, I got the feeling that they were trying to get experts from various fields over there and they didn't know exactly what, you know, how to do it precisely. But they were working on setting up a scheduling and a, the right way to do it.

KLEIN: [00:09:44] So what were the components of training?

JOHNSEN: [00:09:46] There was WEOG. I remember WEOG. I don't remember exactly what it stood for. Something about learning to be a good volunteer. It turned out to be just how to be a good volunteer. There were many area studies. I remember that distinctly. We had language from the first day, language studies with native Filipino teachers, and they had already divided us into language groups, and they knew that some people were going to the northern part of the archipelago of the Philippines, and some were going to the middle or the southern.

KLEIN: [00:10:22] Okay. And what's the three? Are there three different languages?

JOHNSEN: [00:10:25] Oh, there were 70 something dialects.

KLEIN: [00:10:28] Right.

JOHNSEN: [00:10:28] And we, but we were divided into two major dialect regions, the Ilocano in the north and the Cebuano, or what was it called? It was another name, Hiligaynon, I think, for the southern part. [phone rings, tape break]

KLEIN: [00:10:48] Are both of those dialects of Tagalog, is that?

JOHNSEN: [00:10:53] Well, in a way, they're Malayan tongues. Malayan.

KLEIN: [00:10:56] Okay.

JOHNSEN: [00:10:56] Dialects, actually of Malayan, and Tagalog is sort of, well, the, became the most, the richest one and the one that most people learned because they had to in school. They learned their native dialect, they called it, and then Tagalog and then English also. So kids in elementary school learn three languages.

KLEIN: [00:11:16] What was the official language of the country?

JOHNSEN: [00:11:18] Tagalog. They call it Filipino.

KLEIN: [00:11:20] Oh, okay.

JOHNSEN: [00:11:21] That was the official language. But the unofficial lingua franca was English.

KLEIN: [00:11:26] How was the language training structured?

JOHNSEN: [00:11:29] In our training? Well, they had, as I said, native speakers come and at dinner time we had to eat in our dialect. You know, we had to try to talk while we were sitting there eating and not talking much at all. And then during the each day we had at least an hour. I don't remember the exact scheduling, but maybe an hour each day of intensive training in that language and sort of an immersion kind of program. The, usually they were, I think they were all women who were the teachers, and they would just sit there and talk to us and we would have, we would memorize dialogs that they passed out.

KLEIN: [00:12:07] So they create situations about going to the store and you'd.

JOHNSEN: [00:12:11] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:12:11] Memorize the dialog. Did you also have a chance to work in the language lab where you, you would speak and have it then?

JOHNSEN: [00:12:21] No, they didn't have a language lab at all.

KLEIN: [00:12:24] Oh, okay.

JOHNSEN: [00:12:24] They just had regular teachers.

KLEIN: [00:12:24] Where, where, where in Hilo was this going on?

JOHNSEN: [00:12:27] Oh, about I'd say five miles or 5 to 10 miles from the downtown section of Hilo, up sort of on a hillside next to, um, a very famous waterfall in that area that's called Rainbow Falls.

KLEIN: [00:12:40] What was the institution that was?

JOHNSEN: [00:12:42] It was a, it had been a hospital. And the dormitories for us were in the nurses quarters, which were dormitories formerly for the nurses.

KLEIN: [00:12:51] Right.

JOHNSEN: [00:12:52] And I had a room right overlooking the falls. I could hear it all night. Sometimes it kept me awake.

KLEIN: [00:12:57] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:12:59] It was a very beautiful campus, you might say.

KLEIN: [00:13:02] And so it was just a building and then the entire staff was imported to, to work there?

JOHNSEN: [00:13:09] Mm hmm. And I think there were several buildings, a main hospital building and several smaller buildings and then the dormitories, as I said. So it was really set up to be a hospital. And our training were in rooms, you know, they were possibly operating rooms or whatever. They looked like laboratories or large theaters of, you know, hospitals.

KLEIN: [00:13:29] Was there a, there was a training staff?

JOHNSEN: [00:13:33] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:13:34] Was there a permanent training staff that was with you the whole time or did people just come?

JOHNSEN: [00:13:38] Yes, there was a core staff that was always there, especially the psychologists. They watched us every minute and we thought they had, they had, you know, audio visual things all over the place to watch us, but they really didn't.

KLEIN: [00:13:51] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:13:52] And then they had invited staff from various, you know, all over the United States or other universities to tell about specific problems, about communism, for one thing. You know, about don't talk about communism. You know, that was a big thing that they stressed, and don't get into arguments with people. Just say you're here to do this job and whatever and pass it off that way.

KLEIN: [00:14:15] And you also did American Studies, where you studied about the structure of the United States Constitution and?

JOHNSEN: [00:14:21] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:14:22] You don't recall specifically any of the speakers that or faculty who did that?

JOHNSEN: [00:14:28] I have a lot of material that I could look up right now, but I don't recall out of my, just off of my head any names. Mr. Stalker is one of the top people, but I don't remember any specific speakers who came there.

KLEIN: [00:14:43] So did you have a sense, were you being tested at all about whether you were learning about communism, American institutions, and so forth?

JOHNSEN: [00:14:50] It seems that, not formal tests that I remember, but we had a periodic evaluations and it wasn't about subject matter. It was more about 1-to-1 interviews about how we were getting along and how you get along with other people. And then we had ratings within the group, say within one study group, if we were divided into several groups so they could schedule during the day, and so maybe 30 people would be in one room and that was considered a group, and they would ask everybody in the group to rate each person in the group on a, on a list, a checkoff sort of.

KLEIN: [00:15:29] Sociogram.

JOHNSEN: [00:15:30] Exactly.

KLEIN: [00:15:30] But you knew that that was part of selection?

JOHNSEN: [00:15:35] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:15:35] Was there any resistance to that sort of thing?

JOHNSEN: [00:15:37] Lots of resistance to that. I remember groups refusing and striking. They wouldn't evaluate each other. They would rather have themselves evaluated, but not each other.

KLEIN: [00:15:48] Were you in such a group?

JOHNSEN: [00:15:50] Yes. And I felt the same way.

KLEIN: [00:15:53] Were you threatened? I mean, did they say you can't do that? I mean, or did they simply?

JOHNSEN: [00:15:58] Well, I think maybe a few people did it, and from that they got some data. But not everybody turned in those papers. We would throw them away. We were a pretty independent group. And even then, even risking our own, you know, the psychologists were watching us and even risking that, we said no, we don't want to interview or to rate other people.

KLEIN: [00:16:23] What was the source of your independence? I mean, why do you think you were independent?

JOHNSEN: [00:16:28] Well, because, um, we had all been college graduates and learned, had learned to evaluate things and not be forced into things. I think that was the main thing.

JOHNSEN: [00:16:39] Was the group or the subgroup sort of developing its own esprit and?

JOHNSEN: [00:16:46] Only in reaction to that kind of thing. But as far as socially, we were all one group. We felt a strong, you know, oneness as a group.

KLEIN: [00:16:55] Was there anything at all like technical studies saying that when you get to the Philippines, this is the job you're going to be doing, and we're going to try to?

JOHNSEN: [00:17:08] Um, would you repeat that again, the first part?

KLEIN: [00:17:12] Technical training.

JOHNSEN: [00:17:13] Oh, the technical. Yes. I would say rate that as very good because we were just college graduates, you know, liberal arts people who had never taught, most of us.

KLEIN: [00:17:23] Right.

JOHNSEN: [00:17:23] And they said, you are now going to be teacher's aides, and you're going to be learning how to teach English as a second language and science, and you're going to be teaching Filipino teachers how to do that same thing. So they were very intense about that. And we even had to go to local schools and teach adults, Japanese Americans or Japanese immigrants, to speak English. And that was a big part of it. Every evening, about 3:00 or 4:00 in the afternoon, we would go to a school and the teachers would cooperate. The regular teachers in those schools cooperated with us to have us come in and teach for 20 minutes or something, and we had to plan lessons based on the, the daily lessons that we had, you know, in the, in the school.

KLEIN: [00:18:09] So someone, I mean, was defining a, the probable role for you when you got to the Philippines?

JOHNSEN: [00:18:17] Yes. And we had the name teachers aides, or I'm sorry, educational aides is what we were.

KLEIN: [00:18:23] Right.

JOHNSEN: [00:18:24] There was a running joke about that. What are we supposed to be doing being education aides? We didn't know exactly what that meant.

KLEIN: [00:18:30] Right. Did, um, did anyone come out from Washington during training? Do you recall any visitors?

JOHNSEN: [00:18:37] I remember Jay Rockefeller running and walking and hiking with us.

KLEIN: [00:18:42] Okay.

JOHNSEN: [00:18:43] He was a young man at that time, about 20, in his 20s, I think. And, uh, I don't specifically remember none of the, you know, top level people. We didn't have Kennedy. We didn't have Shriver. We didn't have any of the top people. There may have been some, a couple people from Washington who lectured about communism. I have a feeling, that's in the back of my mind.

KLEIN: [00:19:05] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:19:05] Somebody from Washington was there one day to lecture to the entire group about, you know, politics.

KLEIN: [00:19:12] Yeah. Were, uh, what was the physical ed program? How was it structured?

JOHNSEN: [00:19:20] Oh, I would say that was one of the best also, because it was the University of Hawaii athletic team and they were, you know, professors or instructors of PE.

KLEIN: [00:19:31] Uh huh.

JOHNSEN: [00:19:32] And every day for at least two hours, we would either be swimming or hiking or doing other calisthenics or whatever kind of physical training. And I've never felt, I never felt better, never felt as healthy as I was then. I never thought I could run a mile, although we

did, I did in high school, but I was the last one to come in, I think. But in the training, we ran a mile and we ran more than a mile. We hiked up to the top of Mauna Lea mountain, I'm sorry, Mauna Kea.

KLEIN: [00:20:03] Uh huh.

JOHNSEN: [00:20:04] And most, about 18 of them made it to the very top because they had been very athletic in college.

KLEIN: [00:20:10] Right.

JOHNSEN: [00:20:10] Most of the group didn't make it all the way to the very top, you know, lacking several hundred yards only. But there was no air.

KLEIN: [00:20:16] Right.

JOHNSEN: [00:20:17] So we just dropped.

KLEIN: [00:20:18] How high up is it, do you remember?

JOHNSEN: [00:20:19] I think it's 14,000 something. Yeah, it's very high.

KLEIN: [00:20:24] So selection was clearly a big thing. Were there different points in during the training? How long was the training program altogether?

JOHNSEN: [00:20:36] Two months.

KLEIN: [00:20:37] Eight weeks?

JOHNSEN: [00:20:38] Eight weeks.

KLEIN: [00:20:41] Uh, did, was there a mid selection process?

JOHNSEN: [00:20:45] Yes, a mid point deselection.

KLEIN: [00:20:47] How was that handled, do you recall?

JOHNSEN: [00:20:51] Well.

KLEIN: [00:20:51] Did they take people out and shoot them or?

JOHNSEN: [00:20:53] They took them out and tied them to poles. No. They gave us little pieces of paper that each person received a paper that was folded and had a number of a room, like a little office room number. There were several offices down the hallways. And I was to report to room two, for instance. And then the person in there said, you have not been deselected and you're going to continue on. But people who went down the hall to room number 13, they were told individually that they would be deselected and they would have to pack up and leave. And that was very difficult.

KLEIN: [00:21:28] When was this, on a Friday? Do you remember or, I mean?

JOHNSEN: [00:21:31] I don't remember what day of the week, but I really don't. Probably, could be a Friday.

KLEIN: [00:21:35] Do you remember the impact on the group?

JOHNSEN: [00:21:37] Oh, very tremendous impact because we were, as I said, you know, a strong, one group that we're all going to make it.

KLEIN: [00:21:44] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:21:44] And then when someone that you had gotten to know and eaten with and been in classes with and hiked on mountains with suddenly had to leave, it was quite stressful for everybody. There was a lot of tears.

KLEIN: [00:21:55] Any protest, any protests?

JOHNSEN: [00:21:58] Um, not directly that I remember to the administration, but there were, you know, lots of, lots of questioning. Why? How come?

Why would that be? She was fine. He always answered the right questions. He was a good guy.

KLEIN: [00:22:13] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:22:13] But they never really understood. And I still have that in my mind. I don't understand why a girl from California was deselected. She seemed just perfect.

KLEIN: [00:22:22] Your group was also early enough that they were doing FBI background checks on you.

JOHNSEN: [00:22:27] Oh, yes. I heard from family and neighbors even that they came down the street and talked to several neighbors around my parents' home.

KLEIN: [00:22:35] Okay. Um. So the midpoint of training, it was kind of traumatic. But in some ways, since you were a survivor, you could, you could deal with it. Did anyone ever at the beginning of training, midpoint, try to articulate the standards by which you were being judged?

JOHNSEN: [00:23:00] I believe they did. They, they mentioned sociograms, and they mentioned that there were several levels of, you know, evaluation, our psychological abilities to, you know, to be in a foreign country, you know, that there's been so much done about that, you know, in, in university studies that they pretty, they were pretty well aware of who could possibly stand culture shock and who couldn't. And we were evaluated, I'm sure, on, you know, knowing what they taught us. But I don't remember being tested directly about that.

KLEIN: [00:23:38] Mm hmm.

JOHNSEN: [00:23:38] But I think that would show up in in other ways. There was a large amount of trying to get us into smaller groups and interacting with the person who was lecturing and, you know, getting our ideas or what, what we would say in this situation, even some role playing, I remember. And, you know, individuals taken out of the group and sat in the front

and grilled in front of us, you know, in a mock kind of thing, you know, what would you say to this kind of thing? And there was a lot of talk about communism. And I just remember that, you know, what would you say in this situation if somebody had come up with you, to you and said something when. That actually happened to me on a bus in the Philippines near Manila.

KLEIN: [00:24:21] Oh, okay.

JOHNSEN: [00:24:21] Two students were behind me while my roommate and I were on a bus and the two students behind us were Filipinos, and they started sort of heckling us and saying, how come you're here? You're a Peace Corps. What does that Peace Corps mean? What do you mean? What are you doing here? What are you really doing? So we had to sort of calm it down because we could see it was getting pretty tense, and they were ready to either push us off the bus or start a fight or whatever. So we just sort of modulated that down.

KLEIN: [00:24:47] So once you got in the field, you realized that there was some value, although at the time it may have seemed awkward. I mean, role playing is not a.

JOHNSEN: [00:24:55] Right. And I thought the training was excellent to, in the face of what we faced over there.

KLEIN: [00:25:02] Do you recall the pen and pencil psychological test that you did?

JOHNSEN: [00:25:05] Vaguely.

KLEIN: [00:25:06] The MMPI [Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory] was one of them?

JOHNSEN: [00:25:09] I don't really remember, and I was, I had just finished a psychology degree.

KLEIN: [00:25:13] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:25:14] I possibly it was the MMPI.

KLEIN: [00:25:18] Uh huh.

JOHNSEN: [00:25:18] I think so. And then there were just check lists of, you know, this person, you know, does well under pressure. Yes or no?

KLEIN: [00:25:26] Oh, okay.

JOHNSEN: [00:25:27] I don't remember the names of the tests at all.

KLEIN: [00:25:29] Were there psychiatric interviews?

JOHNSEN: [00:25:31] Yes. There were psychologists and possibly psychiatrists.

KLEIN: [00:25:35] Uh huh. Did everyone get to see?

JOHNSEN: [00:25:37] Yes, everyone did.

KLEIN: [00:25:40] That must have shaken up the group, because most people at that point did not have experience of psychiatrists.

JOHNSEN: [00:25:46] That's right. And that sort of eased our mind because we thought, well, these people were deselected but probably for a good reason, because there was a psychologist there testing them.

KLEIN: [00:25:57] Okay.

JOHNSEN: [00:25:58] And interviewing them.

KLEIN: [00:25:58] Yeah. Coming near the end of the eight weeks is going to be another evaluation. Did people in the second half of training, did a certain number of people simply resign, I mean?

JOHNSEN: [00:26:11] There were several I remember, yes. Maybe, I don't remember the percentages, but I'd say at least 5 to 7 people just said, I've had it. That's it. I'm not going to continue with this.

KLEIN: [00:26:22] Okay.

JOHNSEN: [00:26:23] And they left.

KLEIN: [00:26:23] Yeah. Do you remember the approximate male female split in the group?

JOHNSEN: [00:26:28] About equal. I'd say it was about equal.

KLEIN: [00:26:30] And there were married couples?

JOHNSEN: [00:26:31] Several married couples in our group. And at least two, two couples I remember, you know, met there and subsequently got married.

KLEIN: [00:26:41] Yeah, yeah. Did anyone, either Filipino or American, who was working in the project in the field, come to training?

JOHNSEN: [00:26:52] Um, the language teachers did. They, they were from the Philippines. So they came to Hawaii and then went back with us.

KLEIN: [00:26:59] Oh, okay.

JOHNSEN: [00:26:59] They went back home as we were going to the Philippines.

KLEIN: [00:27:02] But, yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:27:03] And there were. Yes. I don't remember names or faces, but I remember one of the country reps was with us there and then went with us to the country. But he had been there before.

KLEIN: [00:27:16] Wasn't Larry Fuchs?

JOHNSEN: [00:27:17] Yes. It was Larry Fuchs.

KLEIN: [00:27:19] Yeah. Okay. Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:27:21] I, in fact, I knew him, uh, for, when we had a camp of brotherhood that was called Camp Brotherhood for children of the, of the workers of the field hands.

KLEIN: [00:27:31] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:27:32] And he was there to inaugurate a Kennedy statue one day.

KLEIN: [00:27:36] Okay.

JOHNSEN: [00:27:36] He and his wife. Did you know him, too?

KLEIN: [00:27:39] Yeah, some. I'll tell you later.

JOHNSEN: [00:27:41] Okay.

KLEIN: [00:27:44] Um, training is coming near an end. Just when you reported to training, had you been advised as to what to buy and to prepare yourself, you know, clothing and all the stuff?

JOHNSEN: [00:27:57] Yes. I remember a list, check list sort of thing. The things that would be recommended to take with you.

KLEIN: [00:28:05] So the point at which you left home to go into training, that was it? I mean, you know, the next you would be back two years later.

JOHNSEN: [00:28:14] Two years later. I assumed that would be true, and I intended to stay the two years at least.

KLEIN: [00:28:20] And at the end of the training program, what? What happened at that point then?

JOHNSEN: [00:28:27] At the end? Well, there were the final deselections. I think there were fewer people at the, at the second deselection time. And then

we were pretty happy. It was around Christmas and we spent New Years there and then.

KLEIN: [00:28:42] There being?

JOHNSEN: [00:28:43] In Hilo.

KLEIN: [00:28:44] Okay.

JOHNSEN: [00:28:44] And then soon after that went to Honolulu for, they called it R&R. For about a week we had.

KLEIN: [00:28:50] Wow.

JOHNSEN: [00:28:50] R&R. And then they said, get ready to go to Manila, where we're having further in-country indoctrination or whatever they called it, in-country service information.

KLEIN: [00:29:06] So did you go by charter?

JOHNSEN: [00:29:10] I really don't know. It seemed like we filled the plane, but I had a feeling there were other people on it too. It was a large, you know, big jumbo jet. Pan Am, I think.

KLEIN: [00:29:20] Okay.

JOHNSEN: [00:29:20] And we spent overnight in Tokyo.

KLEIN: [00:29:23] Oh, wonderful.

JOHNSEN: [00:29:24] I mean, it was a big hotel. The first time I'd ever tasted sushi and all that. And then the next morning to Manila.

KLEIN: [00:29:32] Uh huh. How about describing your arrival?

JOHNSEN: [00:29:36] It's vague in my mind. In Manila I don't remember too much. I just remember we.

KLEIN: [00:29:41] Was there a ceremony at the airport, do you recall that? You got off the plane?

JOHNSEN: [00:29:45] Not in Manila. No, I don't remember anything like that in Manila. There was further down when I got to my town. Or near my town.

KLEIN: [00:29:55] So arrival in Manila. Now it's time for the in-country training.

JOHNSEN: [00:30:00] We had training. It was just brief. I think it was about a week or so or less. We just went for daily, I think it was only mornings we had to talk about, you know, the places we were going, possibly going to, because they weren't organized well enough to find out, to know exactly where we were, each person was going. In fact, I remember distinctly at that point I didn't know if I would be alone in the place I was going to be, or with a roommate or with, you know, other people or near other people.

KLEIN: [00:30:26] Right.

JOHNSEN: [00:30:27] And then finally, by the end of that week, period, whatever it was, then I was paired with another Peace Corps man. And, and then we knew.

KLEIN: [00:30:37] During that time, were there Filipino educational officials who came and spoke to you?

JOHNSEN: [00:30:43] I believe there were. I just, that whole part of it doesn't even, it's not in part of my memory.

KLEIN: [00:30:49] Let's jump back briefly to training. Was there a final exam or a matching up of level with the language, at the end of language training?

JOHNSEN: [00:30:59] Yes. That seemed to be a big thing, that the people that did well in the language, um, possibly were paired with people who weren't, who didn't do as well. I have a feeling that was true in my case, and I know of one other possible case of that. Uh, two female volunteers near, well, maybe several hours away, but on the same island, who one was

strong and the other one was not. So I had a feeling that we were paired on the basis of that.

KLEIN: [00:31:27] Were you in the upper group in language?

JOHNSEN: [00:31:31] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:31:31] Yeah. When you, during even the first week in Manila, did you have a. [tape break] First week you tried, but without great success to use the language.

JOHNSEN: [00:31:43] We talked among ourselves, the ones who were in that same language group. We, I'm sure we did a lot of practicing, but in Manila, it's such a big city that we couldn't find anybody to talk to in that, in our dialect. Our dialect.

KLEIN: [00:31:56] Yeah. You, you met the Peace Corps staff when you got, while you were in Manila?

JOHNSEN: [00:32:03] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:32:04] And then you received your assignment?

JOHNSEN: [00:32:07] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:32:08] Did someone take you aside and said, this is where you're going and sort of brief you on it or?

JOHNSEN: [00:32:12] Yes. I remember somebody said, you're going to the southern central. You'll be on the island of Negros in the province of Negros Oriental. And I remember that distinctly. That was quite a big emotional moment for me to know exactly where I was going.

KLEIN: [00:32:29] Uh huh. And, uh. At, before you left Manila, it was, someone else was assigned with you?

JOHNSEN: [00:32:39] Yes. There was a whole group that got on the plane to go to Cebu. It was Cebu. Yes.

KLEIN: [00:32:47] And then tell me how you got from Manila to where you eventually ended up.

JOHNSEN: [00:32:52] They put us on a PAL plane, Philippines Airlines, and I think there, let's see, there were two, four, six, about eight of us, I believe, who were on this plane to land in Cebu City. And then, uh, two. One got off there and the rest of us went to Dumaguete Airport and where the University of Silliman, Silliman University is. And then this small group was met by the city officials and the mayor and several people from the university. It was a very warm hearted kind of welcoming. And then within about a day or so after that, I think it was just overnight, we stayed in one of the area rep's homes and then dispersed by bus to our locales.

KLEIN: [00:33:44] Was anyone assigned to the university?

JOHNSEN: [00:33:46] No.

KLEIN: [00:33:46] Oh, okay.

JOHNSEN: [00:33:47] We were all a rural group.

KLEIN: [00:33:48] So this was a, uh, but that was the regional center for the, for the. And what was the town that was the regional center?

JOHNSEN: [00:33:57] Dumaguete City, they called it.

KLEIN: [00:33:58] Dumaguete. Okay. I want to just jump back briefly to training period. As you were doing the technical studies, you know, to being prepared to become educational aides. Was it also, were you also trained or encouraged to expect to do community development? Was that ever explicit?

JOHNSEN: [00:34:24] No, not in our groups. We were specifically trained to be teachers, and language teachers specifically, plus some amount of

science teaching because the Filipino government had requested volunteers to upgrade the teaching of second languages, especially English, and to upgrade the science curriculum that they had in their own public schools.

KLEIN: [00:34:46] Okay. So now you're going out to the town. How did you get out there?

JOHNSEN: [00:34:55] Well, there was, I just remember we were several days in Dumaguete, but at least overnight, possibly two overnights. My roommate and I had to go to a smaller town nearby Dumaguete, maybe an hour away or less, to do a little, just an orientation to see what the schools were like there. You know, just to see what a rural school was like, because we knew we were going to a rural school. So we spent some time talking to the teachers. They encouraged us to talk to all the teachers, go through the school, be introduced around and meet the students and parents and whoever else was around in the local area. And so that was sort of to prepare us for what we were going to eventually see.

KLEIN: [00:35:40] So, and that was about a two week period?

JOHNSEN: [00:35:42] No, it was several, just a few days, maybe two days or not more than two days.

KLEIN: [00:35:47] Where did you stay?

JOHNSEN: [00:35:48] Um, I think we stayed in teachers' homes. We stayed, they had pre-arranged to have teachers accept, you know, a guest or two in their homes.

KLEIN: [00:35:59] So now what was the process of, uh, adjusting to the environment that you were going through at that point? You're still not at your assignment, but you're in the Philippines.

JOHNSEN: [00:36:10] Right. Well, I saw my very first free flowing sewer down the side of the road.

KLEIN: [00:36:17] Uh huh.

JOHNSEN: [00:36:17] In, in the town, in the city, you know, with the cars and busses going by. And here was an open sewer and the smell was just overwhelming. And I thought, wow, this is worse than they thought, than they taught us.

KLEIN: [00:36:30] Right, right.

JOHNSEN: [00:36:30] I didn't know that they had open sewers.

KLEIN: [00:36:32] Right.

JOHNSEN: [00:36:32] And already we were missing, I was missing milk and ice cream products because, you know, we hadn't had much of that. They, eventually in training, I mean, the first part of the training was very healthy American type meals, but then they were slowly getting us off onto rice every meal and lots of vegetables and fruits and less and less American food.

KLEIN: [00:36:57] Right.

JOHNSEN: [00:36:57] So we didn't have many. So by then, you know, almost three months into the thing, we were sort of missing having a glass of milk.

KLEIN: [00:37:06] Even spending the two nights in the, in the village, was that, was that difficult?

JOHNSEN: [00:37:14] For myself, it was not. I enjoyed it, but it was all new of course, and I was wondering if I would, if I could spend two years doing this. For other people, the females in the group, they were having somewhat of a problem with that. I know they were talking about a lot about it, and they didn't know if they could handle it.

KLEIN: [00:37:35] Just?

JOHNSEN: [00:37:36] Just with, among ourselves.

KLEIN: [00:37:37] Oh, okay. The, was there a big difference in the way, generally, culturally, in the way male and female are treated, I mean?

JOHNSEN: [00:37:47] In the Philippines culture, yes. And we were very well aware of that, made well aware of that, in training that the Filipino, you know, the women must be always modest and always sort of secondary, you know, in a very traditional culture.

KLEIN: [00:38:03] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:38:03] And even though they're American women, they had to cool it and be, you know, more modest in their clothing, especially wearing clothing, what they said, who they hung out with, and always being together with another, other females, whether Filipinos or Americans.

KLEIN: [00:38:20] Yeah. You, two days and then you go out and now you're going getting to the village where you're going to work.

JOHNSEN: [00:38:26] Finally, we took our nine hour bus ride up to Canlaon City.

KLEIN: [00:38:30] Conlon?

JOHNSEN: [00:38:31] Canlaon City. It was almost 2,000 feet up the side of a volcano, and the volcano was the predominant land, land form and behind the town. I mean, it was just always there and it was not dormant. In fact, recently I found out online that in 1998 it had a major explosion and killed several people.

KLEIN: [00:38:51] Huh.

JOHNSEN: [00:38:51] So it wasn't a dormant volcano, but there was always steam coming out of the top of it.

KLEIN: [00:38:55] It's something else to worry about.

JOHNSEN: [00:38:57] And there was this little, little town, but they called it a city. They called it Canlaon City because the mayor had great plans, and it was just a large marketplace, because it was a central area for farming. And all the farmers would come down twice a week and bring all of their goods to sell. And it was a market day twice a week, Sunday and Thursday, I think.

KLEIN: [00:39:18] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:39:19] And because we were the volunteers, they specifically made us be in that place because there was a central school. It was a very large school, maybe over 200 students.

KLEIN: [00:39:31] Okay. Uh, what? Yeah, do you have any idea what the approximate population of the city was?

JOHNSEN: [00:39:37] Oh, within the town itself, maybe 900 to 1,000 people actually lived within.

KLEIN: [00:39:43] But then there were all these satellite communities around it, little farming?

JOHNSEN: [00:39:47] Small farming. Just farms really.

KLEIN: [00:39:50] What did people farm?

JOHNSEN: [00:39:52] Um, vegetables. Lots of cabbage. Different kinds of fruit. Onions. Um. You know, staple crops.

KLEIN: [00:40:01] Do they grow rice?

JOHNSEN: [00:40:02] Right in that region, right where we lived, no. But the whole island of Negros was a major rice producing island of the whole country.

KLEIN: [00:40:12] Manioc, things like that?

JOHNSEN: [00:40:15] Manioc?

KLEIN: [00:40:16] It's a root.

JOHNSEN: [00:40:17] Yeah. I don't remember hearing or seeing that. There possibly was.

KLEIN: [00:40:22] Yeah. Had there been a volunteer in that, Peace Corps volunteer in that village?

JOHNSEN: [00:40:27] No, we were the first.

KLEIN: [00:40:29] So the two you were.

JOHNSEN: [00:40:30] We were the first.

KLEIN: [00:40:32] Oh, great.

JOHNSEN: [00:40:32] And apparently, you know, they had done some very, the Peace Corps had done some very good preliminary planning because the mayor of the town knew we were coming, and thereby the whole political structure of the town knew that.

KLEIN: [00:40:44] Right.

JOHNSEN: [00:40:45] One of his lower political people, I don't forget exactly what he did, but he had the only house that was actually painted. It was painted a yellow, it was a two story wooden home with just open windows, with blinds, you know, with wooden blinds, shutters. And they gave us, very kindly gave us, you know, two men, separate rooms in the upper story, just divided by one wall. And it was, you know, a very perfect place. And they had really thought about this, I got the feeling.

KLEIN: [00:41:19] And this had all been arranged?

JOHNSEN: [00:41:21] All prearranged.

KLEIN: [00:41:22] Running water?

JOHNSEN: [00:41:23] No, we had a.

KLEIN: [00:41:25] Outside latrine?

JOHNSEN: [00:41:26] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:41:27] And what about eating arrangements?

JOHNSEN: [00:41:30] It was not cold enough to have heat.

KLEIN: [00:41:33] No, I mean eating, not heating.

JOHNSEN: [00:41:34] Eating. I'm sorry. Eating. Oh, okay. Uh, we, they had told us we should hire a cook and a cleaning lady. So the same person did both. And she would cook for us every, two meals a day. And she was there to clean things and just be around. So we hired her at a very minimal wage per week or month, whatever it was, and she cooked for us every morning, and we would give her money to go to the market and buy whatever staples we needed.

KLEIN: [00:42:03] Can you describe your first week as you settled in and first met and encountered the school?

JOHNSEN: [00:42:12] Hmm, Some of that has left. This is 40 years ago almost.

KLEIN: [00:42:16] Yeah, yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:42:16] But it was so exciting to me. I just, I was so enthusiastic about getting to the school. I think the first day I was there, I went to the school. I don't remember if it was a school day even, but just going there to meet the principal. I think the principal met us when we got off the bus, in fact.

KLEIN: [00:42:33] Uh huh.

JOHNSEN: [00:42:34] And to meet the teachers. I remember meeting teachers and learning their names and trying to use the dialect as much as possible.

My roommate was struggling with it still, and so he would, he was mostly in English, but we were always together most of the time in the first part of the service and went to the school. It was just so exciting and so, all so new to me. And yet we had heard about it before. But the actual reality of being there was just overwhelming.

KLEIN: [00:43:04] Describe the school. You said it had 200 students.

JOHNSEN: [00:43:06] 200 students. It was a very large school with stairways on each side going, you know, maybe 30 steps up to the school. It was on a prominent hill overlooking the town. You know, schools are a big political thing in the country. The schools were set up pretty much like our schools were because the, in 1903 or something, they had a contingent of what would be called Peace Corps volunteers to us these days. But they were educators, and they went there from the Midwest and the East Coast and set up the school system. So it was well, well thought out. They had, you know, rooms, books, and everything all set up. And but the most important thing was the hierarchy of the school, the principal, the vice principal, the head teacher. And, you know, everything was already what we were familiar with from our own schooling.

KLEIN: [00:43:58] Uh, what was the school level, from kindergarten to eighth grade or?

JOHNSEN: [00:44:01] To sixth grade.

KLEIN: [00:44:02] To sixth.

JOHNSEN: [00:44:03] That was all free education. They didn't have to pay for it. But after sixth, only parents who could afford it to send their kids to high school or, you know, you know, from seventh through high school, could pay for it. The other kids, most of the kids in that school did not go to high school.

KLEIN: [00:44:19] Right. Uh, were there church run schools?

JOHNSEN: [00:44:24] No, they were Filipino. You know, political. Politically run schools.

KLEIN: [00:44:30] Was, were most people Catholic?

JOHNSEN: [00:44:32] Yes. Most of the country is Catholic.

KLEIN: [00:44:35] So in the town where you were living, there must have been at least one Catholic church.

JOHNSEN: [00:44:40] Oh, yes. One church. And they had a private high school there, you know, parochial high school where the mayor's children or other people who could afford it would go to send their students, their children.

KLEIN: [00:44:53] How did, how did you figure out what you were going to be doing at the school, I mean?

JOHNSEN: [00:44:58] That was the hardest part. We didn't know what educational aides, we still didn't know what they did, you know. They had given us whole reams of paper describing what the possibilities were. But we, we just had to sort of fit in. So we made our own curriculum. And what I mostly did was, um, stayed with one teacher, a sixth grade teacher, throughout the first year at least, and stayed, you know, went to, reported to her room every day as she did and either sat with her or planned lessons with her, or sat, you know, watching her teach to get familiar with her methods. And then sometimes she would let me take over and teach because she was a younger teacher and she spoke pretty good English, but she didn't know exactly techniques of teaching it.

KLEIN: [00:45:43] Right.

JOHNSEN: [00:45:44] So I would plan lessons to show her how, how we had been taught to do it. So we were, I was a minor expert in her room and she appreciated that. And I think you.

KLEIN: [00:45:54] Did you get? Oh go ahead, I'm sorry.

JOHNSEN: [00:45:55] This was going on in all of the schools from, that our group was in, were in.

KLEIN: [00:46:00] Did you, uh, did you get to meet with her outside the class?

JOHNSEN: [00:46:05] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:46:06] And she wasn't, school's over, I got to go home kind of thing?

JOHNSEN: [00:46:09] No. Most of the teachers were very dedicated. They'd stay at least an hour afterwards to finish up lessons, plan lessons or whatever. And at that time, that's what I used the time to plan with her. What are we going to do tomorrow? And, you know, it was.

KLEIN: [00:46:23] During the first year, did you work exclusively with the sixth grade teacher or did you?

JOHNSEN: [00:46:28] Not exclusively, but she was sort of what I considered my home teacher.

KLEIN: [00:46:32] Right.

JOHNSEN: [00:46:33] And I would go into other rooms. The other teachers would request me, you know, and so that was sort of the basis upon which I was in the school. I would say on Thursdays, for instance, I would be available in the afternoon to go to any teacher, and they would ask me to come in and teach this lesson or tell them how to do this or whatever.

KLEIN: [00:46:51] Did you get to do anything in the name of science?

JOHNSEN: [00:46:55] Yes, I remember teaching a lot of science in a third grade. There was another teacher that was, sort of adopted me, and she wanted to know what's going on in science. She had a very old curriculum where the kids just sat and memorized things. You know, you know, about magnetism or something. They would just memorize

magnetism is caused by blah, blah, blah and repeat it. But then they said, well, you can bring in magnets and you can show them how they work and what materials are magnetized and so on.

KLEIN: [00:47:22] Did you get any assistance from Peace Corps in this, with the science teaching? Like a science teaching kits or?

JOHNSEN: [00:47:29] Yes. Let's see. I remember some educational materials, but they were very limited. They were in small boxes and there wasn't much there. So I would supplement by buying things or making things. [phone rings, tape break]

KLEIN: [00:47:46] Okay. Go ahead.

JOHNSEN: [00:47:50] Yeah. And so I really enjoyed that part of it because it was, I could see that it was so different for the kids. You know, they, they were almost, they thought, well, what is, what is he doing that for? You know, I was doing experiments or I remember a small simple machines kind of experiments that each kid had to make a little simple machine or draw a picture of it or something. And they weren't used to that kind of teaching. They were used to sitting with something in front of them and memorize what the teacher was telling them to memorize.

KLEIN: [00:48:22] Mm hmm. Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:48:22] So it was a different kind of way of teaching to them.

KLEIN: [00:48:25] You must have been a real novelty anyway.

JOHNSEN: [00:48:27] Oh. Every, even in the town market on market days, I'd been there a year and a half, and I'd walk in and everybody would stop and just stare.

KLEIN: [00:48:35] Now the total non-Filipino population of the town was just the two of you or were there others?

JOHNSEN: [00:48:45] No, we were.

KLEIN: [00:48:47] No missionaries?

JOHNSEN: [00:48:48] No missionaries. Although the priest, I think, was the priest who ran the high school and never really got to know them very much, and they seemed to change often, but he was either a Spaniard or a German or something, but we didn't get to know him very much.

KLEIN: [00:49:02] What did you do for medical care?

JOHNSEN: [00:49:04] Uh, there was what they called a pure culture center there, but I never went there. It was mostly closed most of the time. I had some major medical problems while over there, so I would have to send a telegram, because there was a way to send a telegram from the town to the nearest big city. There was a Peace Corps doctor there. No. Let's see. There was a doctor, a Filipino doctor, who was connected with the Peace Corps, and I had to make arrangements to get there, which was a nine hour bus ride to have the problem solved.

KLEIN: [00:49:41] Yeah. Wow.

JOHNSEN: [00:49:42] So the medical care was almost nonexistent. There were, the, there was a doctor in the town, but I'd never really. I spoke to him, but never was treated by him.

KLEIN: [00:49:54] Did you lose much time through illness, say, during the first year?

JOHNSEN: [00:49:59] Not in the first year hardly, very much, not too much, although I had a lot of colds and things. But not too much time from teaching. But the second year, two months of my whole.

KLEIN: [00:50:09] Yeah. Was the climate tropical where you were?

JOHNSEN: [00:50:11] Yes. Tropical. And yet it was at 2,000 feet. So there was a lot of, when there was a rain, it was a two day rain. It was, you know, like a

tropical typhoon would be going by. So it was cool. We had to wear sweaters.

KLEIN: [00:50:23] Was there a rainy season, dry season, rainy season, dry season?

JOHNSEN: [00:50:27] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:50:27] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:50:28] So it was tropical, definitely.

KLEIN: [00:50:30] So you settled into this teaching, and there are two teachers particularly who you were able to work with. Did, were all the teachers female?

JOHNSEN: [00:50:43] No. There was several males, but mostly female.

KLEIN: [00:50:47] Okay. Did, did either of them become, you know, like a close friend or an informant about the bigger world that you were in where you could possibly joke or?

JOHNSEN: [00:51:00] Oh, yes. Well, not just those two teachers.

KLEIN: [00:51:02] Okay.

JOHNSEN: [00:51:03] Most of the teachers, several, I should say several of them were not from the town. They came from Dumaguete or the university, or they lived in other parts of the province.

KLEIN: [00:51:13] Right.

JOHNSEN: [00:51:14] But they stayed there for nine months of the year in a sort of a rooming house.

KLEIN: [00:51:19] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:51:19] And so they would have parties there, just the teachers and the Peace Corps.

KLEIN: [00:51:24] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:51:27] Peace Corps. And we would be invited always. You know, we were almost at an equal level with them. And they were, there was a lot of joking, a lot of, you know, partying and familiarity among us.

KLEIN: [00:51:39] Yeah. Was, um, the, uh, what was the educational background of the two teachers that you worked most with that first year?

JOHNSEN: [00:51:50] Just a typical, I guess, a four year college degree that they had in teaching. I'm not sure, I really.

KLEIN: [00:51:59] It probably would have been like our old normal school.

JOHNSEN: [00:52:01] Right, a normal school kind of training. And that was it. Probably at Silliman University too, because that was the teacher training normal school there too.

KLEIN: [00:52:11] Within the town, were they considered, were they looked up to?

JOHNSEN: [00:52:15] Yes, definitely. Oh, teachers had a great amount of respect.

KLEIN: [00:52:19] What, did you get involved at all in the life of the town?

JOHNSEN: [00:52:22] Oh, very much, very deeply.

KLEIN: [00:52:24] How, can you?

JOHNSEN: [00:52:25] The very first, uh, we got there in the, near the 1st of February to the actual location, and February 14th, which is our Valentine's Day, is the town Saint's Day. I think it was Saint Joseph, but I'm not sure. Anyway, they celebrated. That was the big festival of the year, where

people, all the people from around the area, would come and stay with each other and have this big all day, maybe all week affair with dances, all night dances sometimes and musicians, you know. And they had, they strung electric lights even, and had a generator for the thing.

KLEIN: [00:53:05] Uh huh.

JOHNSEN: [00:53:05] And that was a big thing because we had no electricity and, or only the mayor did. And, you know, they had dances and singing and special presentations and the queen, you know, the princess and the queen and her court of the, of the festival of the, of the town fiesta. And it was a very big thing. So I was immediately involved with that. Both of us were, we were sat on the stage and said, these are, you are the Peace Corps, and we are, you know, they made speeches. We had to make speeches. They made speeches about us. It was very good.

KLEIN: [00:53:35] Now, at this point at the fiesta, were you making a speech in the local dialect or?

JOHNSEN: [00:53:40] Mostly in English. Mostly in English.

KLEIN: [00:53:42] When you wanted to get a laugh, you would.

JOHNSEN: [00:53:44] Right, then try the dialect. Ha ha.

KLEIN: [00:53:46] Uh huh.

JOHNSEN: [00:53:47] At that point.

KLEIN: [00:53:48] So during the first year, most of the language exchanges between you and all the people around you were in English.

JOHNSEN: [00:53:58] For myself, I tried to do it only in the dialect. I was really, really trying.

KLEIN: [00:54:03] Oh, okay.

JOHNSEN: [00:54:04] I did most, except in school of course, I was committed to English, so I was teaching in English and trying to get the kids to hear it more. But off-time was I, you know, in the market, if I went down to buy something, it was always, I tried to do only in the dialect.

KLEIN: [00:54:21] Oh, okay.

JOHNSEN: [00:54:22] The other person I was with really didn't ever grasp it, did not have the interest or the whatever it takes to learn a second language. So he just functioned in English.

KLEIN: [00:54:34] What was his name, by the way?

JOHNSEN: [00:54:35] Roger.

KLEIN: [00:54:36] Roger. Okay. And was Roger working in the same school that you were?

JOHNSEN: [00:54:42] Yes. The first year.

KLEIN: [00:54:45] Okay. And without making unpleasant comparisons, did, what role did he end up playing for that first year?

JOHNSEN: [00:54:55] Um, similar to mine.

KLEIN: [00:54:57] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:54:58] He was adopted by several teachers and, and taught somewhat and went into classrooms. But then maybe it was within the first year he decided that that was my school, and he wanted to go to a barrio school, what they called a barrio, further down the road, about maybe a half hour walk to. He had his own school. He wanted to get more familiar with that principal and that group of teachers.

KLEIN: [00:55:22] In a much smaller school, I would think.

JOHNSEN: [00:55:24] And he, I don't know, really know what he did. I really don't know.

KLEIN: [00:55:28] Well, he did he move to that, to the barrio?

JOHNSEN: [00:55:32] No, he stayed in in our house, but he would go there many mornings.

KLEIN: [00:55:36] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:55:37] But you see, he was more involved with a larger scale thing. He had been, had some experience in community development, so he, he was very focused on creating a playground, an athletic ground with swings and a track and, you know, things like that. So he was working more with the mayor, doing sort of that kind of community development type of thing.

KLEIN: [00:56:01] Right.

JOHNSEN: [00:56:01] So he wasn't always at his school or even at the central school. He was more working the political angle and the, you know, community development.

KLEIN: [00:56:10] But for you, I mean, most of your, your work time was strictly at the central school.

JOHNSEN: [00:56:22] Mm hmm.

KLEIN: [00:56:23] Was it just by chance that you ended up close with a sixth and a third grade teacher or had?

JOHNSEN: [00:56:30] Oh, I don't, I think it was personality.

KLEIN: [00:56:32] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:56:34] We just clicked, you know. And she was quite astute. She was very well educated and probably from a higher family because she

wasn't from the town, you know, she was from a more middle class family and.

KLEIN: [00:56:46] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:56:46] And we just connected, you know. She knew what, she knew some techniques of teaching, but she was unfamiliar with others. And she wanted to pick my brain.

KLEIN: [00:56:55] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:56:55] So she sort of adopted me just so I could help her.

KLEIN: [00:56:59] Theoretically, you should have been working with all the teachers in the school.

JOHNSEN: [00:57:03] Yes, and I was aware of that. Very much so.

KLEIN: [00:57:06] Well, to whom were you accountable?

JOHNSEN: [00:57:08] To the principal of the school.

KLEIN: [00:57:09] And how was that, how did that play out?

JOHNSEN: [00:57:12] Um, he kept his distance in a way. He didn't know what our job was exactly. And he didn't want to be threatened, so he just kept his distance. But he would always, when we had teachers meetings with all the teachers in the school, you know, he would mention the Peace Corps and what we're doing, but that was a sideline to the main agenda of his agenda of we must do this now. We must do this now and this and that.

KLEIN: [00:57:39] Okay, so he never really quite figured out what you were all about.

JOHNSEN: [00:57:43] Not exactly.

KLEIN: [00:57:44] But he had, had he requested you being there or had the mayor or?

JOHNSEN: [00:57:51] I have a feeling the mayor may have gotten wind of this first and then talked to the principal and said, we are going to have two Peace Corps here.

KLEIN: [00:58:01] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:58:02] You know, I think it was very hierarchical. I could feel that always, extremely hierarchical.

KLEIN: [00:58:08] Again, sticking with the first year, can you describe a typical day? You know, what time do you get up and meals and?

JOHNSEN: [00:58:16] Oh, yes. This, uh, it was beautiful. Every day was beautiful because the kids, all 200 kids, would line up behind their teachers on the front sort of a lawn of this big school, with the steps going up, the rock steps, and the whole school was made of wood from the jungle up, you know, the rainforest up above us and, and stand in their uniforms because all the kids had to wear white shirts and blue pants. And the teachers always had their uniform. They were all standing in line. They had the flagpole up on the top of the steps, and the principal and the head teacher would always, they would have a little speech in, in Tagalog, not in the local language, not in English, but in Tagalog. And then they would raise the flag. All the kids would, would say a sort of a pledge of allegiance in their own, in Filipino, which was Tagalog, and then sing at least one song, the national anthem. And I learned it. I can still sing it. And, and we would stand there.

JOHNSEN: [00:59:20] It was very, a very wonderful moment to start the day.

KLEIN: [00:59:23] Uh huh.

JOHNSEN: [00:59:24] I think it was around 9:00 that it started.

KLEIN: [00:59:26] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [00:59:26] And it was usually always sunny, unless there was a typhoon going by. It was usually always sunny. Then he would dismiss all of the classes and everybody would go to class. The, of course it was open. All the rooms were divided, but the tops for air circulation were all open. So it was a very noisy place. If one class next door to you was memorizing something out loud, the whole class at once, and you were trying to do a quiet lesson of writing, you'd just hear this noise constantly, all day. And so the day wore on and you know, they would. All the children brought their own lunches in little sacks and little, not even sacks. They were little plastic things, and they would always have cold rice and either fish or something with it, and a vegetable and a fruit, cold. And the school provided water. I think they had a water, bottles of water there. And so then the afternoon would go on and then by.

JOHNSEN: [01:00:24] But the afternoon was divided. It started around 1:00. Everybody went home. And then it would rain. It would just pour every single day in the rainy season. And that was during the school year.

KLEIN: [01:00:35] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:00:36] It just poured. I mean mud, it was two inches thick on the streets, even though they had cobblestones everywhere, but mud everywhere. And the kids were either bare feet or wore just plastic shoes because there was no way to wear a regular shoe. It was just always muddy. And but for two hours, everybody had lunch at home. Oh, I said they brought their lunch. They would bring snacks and little things.

KLEIN: [01:01:02] Okay.

JOHNSEN: [01:01:02] That was it.

KLEIN: [01:01:02] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:01:03] Yeah, I messed that up. No, they would have to go home. But some kids didn't, couldn't go home because it was so far. So they did bring their lunch and they ate it at school. That was it.

KLEIN: [01:01:12] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:01:12] But the teachers would go home. I went home and we would have the big meal of the day.

KLEIN: [01:01:17] How far were you from the school?

JOHNSEN: [01:01:19] I was within visual distance, about less than a quarter mile.

KLEIN: [01:01:24] Okay. And you would then, what would be a typical lunch you'd get?

JOHNSEN: [01:01:28] Rice. We would buy canned goods because we were fortunate enough to have enough money to do that. So we would have, oh, I remember we had lots of, um, pork, like little hot dogs, but they're not called that. They're not sausages. They're a little like hot dogs called.

KLEIN: [01:01:46] Vienna Sausage?

JOHNSEN: [01:01:47] Yeah, something similar to that.

KLEIN: [01:01:48] Yeah. Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:01:49] Very salty. But they were good on rice, cut up on rice, and fresh vegetables. And lots of fruit. Papaya almost every day. Bananas every day. Some citrus fruits.

KLEIN: [01:02:02] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:02:02] Coffee, lots of coffee. And lots of Coca-Cola. That was, and, well. And you either drink Coca-Cola or San Miguel beer. And I think I lived on San Miguel beer.

KLEIN: [01:02:14] Where did they come from?

JOHNSEN: [01:02:16] From Manila.

KLEIN: [01:02:17] All the way? And the system was good enough that.

JOHNSEN: [01:02:20] Well, there was, I think in each city there was a bottling company.

KLEIN: [01:02:24] Okay.

JOHNSEN: [01:02:24] At least the major cities, the major city closest to us was not Dumaguete. It was Bacolod City, which was on the east coast. And it was, it was still nine hours to get there, but it was a better road than going to Dumaguete.

KLEIN: [01:02:37] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:02:37] And it was all, almost all paved when you got down to a certain, to a certain distance. But that's where I remember there was a bottling company of Coca-Cola and some other thing that. I think the main brewery of San Miguel beer, though, was in Manila.

KLEIN: [01:02:54] So generally the, there were food supplies available. I mean, it wasn't a prosperous setting, but the people weren't starving.

JOHNSEN: [01:03:04] No. Oh, it was, most people were pretty healthy.

KLEIN: [01:03:07] Okay. You've had lunch and a beer and siesta?

JOHNSEN: [01:03:13] Siesta.

KLEIN: [01:03:14] And then you have to get yourself back together.

JOHNSEN: [01:03:17] Right.

KLEIN: [01:03:17] When did you head? [tape break] Tape two. And we were sort of going through a typical school day.

JOHNSEN: [01:03:27] And we'd had lunch, and then it was time to go back to school for the afternoon.

KLEIN: [01:03:31] Around 3:00?

JOHNSEN: [01:03:32] Around 3:00, possibly 2:30. I'm not sure exactly, but it was early afternoon anyway. And we had to struggle through the mud to get back to school. Although there were rocks, you know, as I said, pebbles and cobblestones up part of the road, but the part of it was inundated with water.

KLEIN: [01:03:52] Did you dress the same style as the other teacher, as the male teachers?

JOHNSEN: [01:03:55] Yes. I didn't have my uniform, or a uniform. I just wore whatever was convenient. I just wore cotton clothes all the time.

KLEIN: [01:04:03] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:04:03] So I did, I didn't try to become part of the teaching staff in that way.

KLEIN: [01:04:08] Okay.

JOHNSEN: [01:04:08] I just wore American clothes. Um. And so the rain always stopped right at 2:30 or 3:00. And I have a little story about that, if we have time to do that.

KLEIN: [01:04:19] Sure.

JOHNSEN: [01:04:20] And so then back to school and the afternoon wore on, whatever I was doing. If there was a teachers meeting after school, then I would be there. And sometimes it was arranged that I would give a presentation. I don't remember any specific ones, but it was probably about language teaching, you know, general concepts.

KLEIN: [01:04:41] When did, for the children, when did the school day end?

JOHNSEN: [01:04:44] I'd say around 4:00.

KLEIN: [01:04:46] Okay. And the teachers tended to stay on for another hour?

JOHNSEN: [01:04:52] Yes.

KLEIN: [01:04:52] And occasionally you would make a presentation to the staff.

JOHNSEN: [01:04:56] Mm hmm.

KLEIN: [01:04:57] Were there extracurricular activities at the school?

JOHNSEN: [01:05:01] The major one was education related. The principal really wanted to have a very large garden, a vegetable garden, and he was stressing new ways of, of farming because it's a farming community. And his training, of course, was from, he was not from that area himself. So he was in a way a community development worker, you know. And the Filipino government knew this and used the school in that way to do community development and bring people up in education and health things and always. So his project, and therefore the school's project, was this big garden. It was part of, a whole part of a hillside where the kids, instead of having recess, they would go out and dig weeds. They would be planting. They, the children themselves, I remember the sixth graders who were, you know, they were already teenagers. Some of them were, you know, 13, 14 years old.

KLEIN: [01:05:58] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:05:58] They were building out of logs and bricks and rocks, a large garden, sort of like a greenhouse sort of effect, to keep, to grow little plants that they would replant out in the fields and so on. So they were actually learning about gardening and, you know, gardening techniques.

KLEIN: [01:06:17] Did you participate in that?

JOHNSEN: [01:06:19] Not at all. I wish I had now that I think about it. This is bringing back a lot of things that I could have done.

KLEIN: [01:06:24] Well.

JOHNSEN: [01:06:25] You know, and I wish I had, I have a lot of slide pictures of that because they were so proud of it. And they, they not only grew crops to eat, but flowers and all sorts of plants that were beautiful plants.

KLEIN: [01:06:38] Right. So on those days, if you weren't making a presentation to the staff, you still tended to stay an additional hour at school?

JOHNSEN: [01:06:49] Sometimes, depending on what was going on. If I was interested in the lesson for the next day, I would stay definitely to practice with the teacher or, you know, explain that with her.

KLEIN: [01:07:01] And then you head home. And what would be a typical, I guess, at leisure afternoon, evening?

JOHNSEN: [01:07:13] Well, then it was dinner time. We'd have a very small supper, usually. I was always writing things down, writing my diary, and expecting the mail which had come during the day.

KLEIN: [01:07:26] How did the mail get to you?

JOHNSEN: [01:07:27] It didn't get, no. We had to go down and get it. I'm sorry. We had to go down to, I don't remember if there was a post office. I don't think there was a post office. There was a building that the busses that came through daily would leave things off at. And you had to claim it there. It wasn't a post office, though. And so I was always looking for mail because, you know, just friends, family, or whoever would be sending me mail. Other Peace Corps volunteers in the field.

KLEIN: [01:07:55] Did you keep up a fairly regular correspondence with back home?

JOHNSEN: [01:08:00] Oh, yes. [tape break]

KLEIN: [01:08:01] And yeah, we're talking about Camp Brotherhood.

JOHNSEN: [01:08:06] Mm hmm. Yes. Okay. The camp was started by this, the group before us, and they wanted to see it continue. And it was in a large sort of combination dormitory and rec hall and eating hall. And the kids, there were, oh, a good many children, probably 150 to 200 children came during this summer time, which could have been as much as a month.

KLEIN: [01:08:40] Ages?

JOHNSEN: [01:08:41] Three weeks to a month. And they were, oh, I'd say 6 or 7 years old, up to 10 or 12.

KLEIN: [01:08:49] And where did they come from in relation to where the camp was?

JOHNSEN: [01:08:53] They were bused in. I mean, they came, the busses brought them from places all around the area within maybe 20 or 30 miles of the Camp Brotherhood site itself. And they were the children of *hacenderos*, or growers, of the sugar cane.

KLEIN: [01:09:13] Were they the, the field workers or the?

JOHNSEN: [01:09:18] I meant the, yes, they were the children of the field workers, of the laborers who worked the sugarcane.

KLEIN: [01:09:24] And who, did the owner of the, the plantation owners, would they, did they select who would go or?

JOHNSEN: [01:09:32] No, I don't think so. They just allowed them to go. They, they allowed the, the workers to send their children. I mean, it was more hierarchical in that sense too.

KLEIN: [01:09:42] Okay.

JOHNSEN: [01:09:43] Because, but these people were very, very, the *hacenderos* were very rich. I mean, they, they owned thousands of hectares of, of land. And sugar cane is one of the major, major exports of the Philippines. I mean, they, worldwide, it's a world class operation. I think it still is.

KLEIN: [01:10:02] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:10:02] And at that time they were at the height of it. And so the people who owned the lands had, you know, money, money, money. They would, they hobnobbed with the Marcos family.

KLEIN: [01:10:12] Right.

JOHNSEN: [01:10:13] I mean, they were all in that political hierarchy.

KLEIN: [01:10:15] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:10:15] That pyramid. And, uh, but they, they saw the good of it. I'm sure that having the children have an experience of, you know, good nutrition, learning crafts and things together, and having an experience out of the barrio. I think they saw that it was a good idea.

KLEIN: [01:10:35] No fears of the political implications of it, I mean?

JOHNSEN: [01:10:38] Not that I heard of. No.

KLEIN: [01:10:40] Okay. So, and the oldest, the children would be as old as 15 or 16?

JOHNSEN: [01:10:45] Well, maybe 12. 12 or 13. Pre-teens level.

KLEIN: [01:10:50] Did any of them work on the cane plantations?

JOHNSEN: [01:10:53] I'm sure a lot of the older kids did.

KLEIN: [01:10:56] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:10:57] But this was their sort of a summer break for them.

KLEIN: [01:10:59] So you had the camp, uh, staff. How many staff were there?

JOHNSEN: [01:11:05] Oh, maybe 30 to 40 people.

KLEIN: [01:11:08] Were they all Peace Corps volunteers?

JOHNSEN: [01:11:10] No, less than half of them were Peace Corps volunteers. There were many Filipino people that were teachers who weren't teaching, you know, regular school year teachers who came there, or interested Filipinos. Some of them were related to the families that owned the plantations possibly.

KLEIN: [01:11:29] Did, did the Filipino staff get paid for?

JOHNSEN: [01:11:33] Yes. They got, there was a stipend for everybody there except the Peace Corps people themselves.

KLEIN: [01:11:40] And how many children?

JOHNSEN: [01:11:43] I wish I could get it.

KLEIN: [01:11:44] Approximately?

JOHNSEN: [01:11:45] I'd say 150 to 200 children.

KLEIN: [01:11:49] Okay. And they were expected to stay 4 to 8 weeks?

JOHNSEN: [01:11:52] Yes. Well, four weeks probably. No longer than a month, I would think.

KLEIN: [01:11:57] Okay. Did it, did two groups come in? In other words, there was a session one and session two, or was it just?

JOHNSEN: [01:12:05] No, I think it was just one session. One full session.

KLEIN: [01:12:09] And what was your role in all this?

JOHNSEN: [01:12:12] Well, I came late after it had started already because I was still recuperating. And that was one thing I wanted to get out of the hospital to do was to get to Camp Brotherhood, because I had a commitment to it, and I'm trying to think of how that happened. I was still, I think, when it had already started, Roger and I had gone to Clark Air Force Base, back to Clark Air Force Base to get other supplies, to get more things for the camp. That's how that happened.

KLEIN: [01:12:44] Okay.

JOHNSEN: [01:12:45] And I was, I helped teach crafts. I was sort of overseeing the, the schedule. I was more like a scheduler, but I had contact with the kids too. And I remember making one little art project that a teacher had developed that they could all make out of a little wood. And then they painted things on it. They cut up tree limbs and cut them on an angle so it looked like a little frame. And then on the light piece in the middle, they would paint pictures. And it was, then they'd shellac it and they'd put a hole in it and hang it on the wall. It was sort of like a little gift. So, you know, I did things like that.

KLEIN: [01:13:26] But no, no background or training in crafts work?

JOHNSEN: [01:13:30] Just minimal. I'm an artist myself, so.

KLEIN: [01:13:33] Ah, okay.

JOHNSEN: [01:13:33] But yeah, but I just related to that. That's what sticks out in my mind.

KLEIN: [01:13:38] Right. And they were with the, the camp was broken into age groups and they had a schedule.

JOHNSEN: [01:13:46] Yes.

KLEIN: [01:13:46] And a range of activities each day.

JOHNSEN: [01:13:49] Right. Athletics and crafts and singing. Singing and dancing. Somewhat hikes. I remember going on a hike to a waterfall with one group.

KLEIN: [01:13:59] Were you near any swimmable water?

JOHNSEN: [01:14:01] Yes. They had a swimming pool there, a large swimming pool made of just rocks. It wasn't what we would consider, you know, a swimming pool by patio pools or something. But it was a slimy green thing that was made out of volcanic rock and, but smooth rock. And it was, uh, no filters or anything on it. So that's why it was slimy and you couldn't see to the bottom of it. But it was very cool and very nice.

KLEIN: [01:14:28] I trust you stayed out of the water coming off your hepatitis.

JOHNSEN: [01:14:32] I think I didn't go in.

KLEIN: [01:14:33] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:14:34] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:14:35] And what kind of experience was that as compared to, you know, your involvement at the school?

JOHNSEN: [01:14:41] Oh, it was a very patriotic feeling I had because it was Camp Brotherhood. And it was for, you know, the meeting of the American and Filipino cultures. And it was dedicated to John F. Kennedy. And there was, somebody had made a statue and there was a dedication day, in fact. And Fuchs, what was his name again?

KLEIN: [01:15:02] Larry.

JOHNSEN: [01:15:02] Larry Fuchs and his wife came down and spent the night and had the big celebration. The unveiling of the statue with an American flag pulled off of it, and speeches and music and dancing.

KLEIN: [01:15:15] Who had done the statue?

JOHNSEN: [01:15:17] A local artist from Bacolod City.

KLEIN: [01:15:19] Was it a woodcarving or?

JOHNSEN: [01:15:21] It was a plaster carving, a plaster casting.

KLEIN: [01:15:24] Oh, okay.

JOHNSEN: [01:15:25] Just in plaster. It should have been in bronze, but it was just a light gray color. Just a head down to the neck.

KLEIN: [01:15:32] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:15:32] But it was a good resemblance of him.

KLEIN: [01:15:36] Uh huh. And so there was recognition also, at least, with the country director coming.

JOHNSEN: [01:15:45] Yes.

KLEIN: [01:15:46] And it was the second year?

JOHNSEN: [01:15:48] It was the second year of our tour.

KLEIN: [01:15:50] Yeah. Did, were there, uh, cross-cultural activities planned, like celebration of American customs and Filipino customs?

JOHNSEN: [01:16:03] Uh, yes. They tried to work that in, I think, because it was a, you know, a dual cultural thing. I don't remember specifically anything except the singing. We taught them songs and I played the guitar at that time. I don't think I had my guitar with me, but several people played guitars and we'd share and taught them American songs. That was a big thing.

KLEIN: [01:16:25] Michael, row the boat ashore.

JOHNSEN: [01:16:26] Yes. Especially that one. Especially that one.

KLEIN: [01:16:32] So it was really just a four week period then?

JOHNSEN: [01:16:37] I believe it was only a month, yes.

KLEIN: [01:16:38] Yeah. At the end of the four weeks, your, how was your health?

JOHNSEN: [01:16:44] I was fine by then. So I remember going back to Manila and meeting a Peace Corps girl that I knew who was on our island also. Well, I didn't meet her there, but we had taken the same. We had the same idea to go on a, to Hong Kong for a week, and it was only across the strait of, the China Sea strait. So I took an overnight boat and she had flown over there. But there were several other people involved too, and we somehow met there. We didn't know we were both going, but we met on the streets in the shopping center anyway. But I went to Hong Kong for a week, just for my R&R.

KLEIN: [01:17:27] Mm hmm.

JOHNSEN: [01:17:28] And the very, when I, when my, um. Let's see. Did I fly there? How did that happen that I was at the airport? Somehow I was at the airport and the Beatles came the very same day that I was at the airport. And so there were these big crowds. I looked out of the, why was I on a plane if I took a boat? I may have flown over there.

KLEIN: [01:17:50] Maybe meeting her?

JOHNSEN: [01:17:51] No, I didn't know she was going to be there, but I must have taken a plane over and the boat back. I think that was it. I flew there and took a boat back. That had to have been, because I was at the airport when they came, and when I looked out the window and saw all these crowds of people all over the airport, and I thought, what would this be

about? Is it some national day of independence or something? And so when I got off the plane, then I could see the sign, Welcome Beatles.

KLEIN: [01:18:18] Mm hmm.

JOHNSEN: [01:18:18] And so it happened that I had prearranged the hotel right across the street from their hotel.

KLEIN: [01:18:25] Uh huh.

JOHNSEN: [01:18:25] And I had gotten in my hotel before they got there. And then I, when I looked down here where the Beatles, you know, crowds of people and cars and limousines and black limousines and the one that they were in pulled up right in front of the door on a red carpet. And I saw the tops of their heads as they went into the hotel. So that was a big thing to me.

KLEIN: [01:18:46] Yes.

JOHNSEN: [01:18:47] And so and then I did this shopping, and I ran into Linda Creamer, who was in my group. We had trained together, and we met, I don't remember, in a shopping center and she was buying a camera, and I already had my camera that I had bought on the way over, I bought it in Tokyo. So I took pictures of us, and I still have pictures of her buying a camera and trying to talk the guy out of how much he was selling it for.

KLEIN: [01:19:14] Yeah, yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:19:15] She was bargaining with him.

KLEIN: [01:19:16] Yeah. You were entitled to leave and you got leave pay, I think, for the.

JOHNSEN: [01:19:24] Yes, we got.

KLEIN: [01:19:25] There was a separate payment for that.

JOHNSEN: [01:19:28] Leave pay, right. A per diem kind of thing.

KLEIN: [01:19:30] Right. And so you spent a week in Hong Kong, having met the Beatles, the real historic moment in your two years.

JOHNSEN: [01:19:38] Right. And then and all the radios were playing their music too. But being a dedicated teacher at the time, I toured the rooftop schools that were in, in the Hong Kong. Well, their apartment buildings that are high rise with 20 stories. But on the tops of each of these, you know, many vast neighborhoods of these tall apartment buildings, they had schools on the top floor, in rooftop little rooms. They were covered rooms with glass windows, but they were sort of open on each end because it was pretty hot there.

KLEIN: [01:20:14] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:20:15] And I don't think they had air conditioning. And I went up there just on my own and toured and met a few Chinese teachers. We didn't, we couldn't communicate because they were not English speakers.

KLEIN: [01:20:27] Right.

JOHNSEN: [01:20:27] And I knew no Chinese, but I indicated I wanted to take pictures of them, and they said that would be fine. And I took several slides of them teaching Chinese to the, to little kids about 5 or 6 years old.

KLEIN: [01:20:41] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:20:41] And that was so fascinating to me that the way the Chinese did it, they had the school right in the place where the kids lived.

KLEIN: [01:20:47] Yes. Yes. Was it Peace Corps policy that you not travel to your, to the United States on leave?

JOHNSEN: [01:20:57] I don't remember anything about that, except it would have been too expensive, I think.

KLEIN: [01:21:01] Okay.

JOHNSEN: [01:21:02] And maybe some people who had independent money could have done that, but I don't know of anybody that did.

KLEIN: [01:21:07] Okay.

JOHNSEN: [01:21:07] But politically, we were advised not to go to Chinese, um, Communist China. But I defied that in a way. I took a train from, I went, well, I stayed in Kowloon, which is the mainland, right? Yeah, I think it was that way. And I took a train up to the border of Communist China and went right up to the border and took pictures of the signs that were in English and Chinese. And I guess those were the only two languages that said that you cannot pass this, you know, you can't go any further than this and so on. But that was a fascinating little day trip.

KLEIN: [01:21:44] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:21:44] To go to get that close to China, to Communist China. .

KLEIN: [01:21:48] Yeah. And, um, vacation's over and?

JOHNSEN: [01:21:54] Took my boat back. That's when I took the boat back and slept, it was the lowest class that I could pay for, and it was right next to the motor underneath, under, below water level, you know?

KLEIN: [01:22:08] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:22:09] Noisiest trip I've ever been on.

KLEIN: [01:22:11] How long is it, a day or two or?

JOHNSEN: [01:22:13] It seemed that it was overnight. I got in in the afternoon and got back, got in the morning. And the morning I got back there was a major typhoon in Manila that was inundated, the city of Manila is below

sea level. The most of the city, the major part is below sea level, and there are dikes along the bay.

KLEIN: [01:22:32] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:22:32] But the bay was flooded and everything was flooded 5 or 6 feet deep everywhere. I mean, you had to take a boat from, or walk up to your hips in most places.

KLEIN: [01:22:44] Yeah. Wow.

JOHNSEN: [01:22:45] It was a major disaster.

KLEIN: [01:22:48] And, but you, you were able to work your way through it.

JOHNSEN: [01:22:52] Somehow, yeah, I remember that even the Peace Corps building was flooded, although it was on the second floor. You had to go upstairs to get to the, the main offices of the Peace Corps. But the first floor was flooded and all.

KLEIN: [01:23:06] Yeah. Was there any talk of the Peace Corps trying to help with flood relief or does, I mean?

JOHNSEN: [01:23:13] I don't remember anything like that. It was so total all over the city that the whole city was just. No, I don't think that.

KLEIN: [01:23:19] How long did it take to dry out?

JOHNSEN: [01:23:22] I guess they have ways of letting the water flow off somehow. They have channels, but it was just inundated by that time.

KLEIN: [01:23:29] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:23:29] And there was just, they just waited until it just flowed away or sunk in.

KLEIN: [01:23:34] Yeah. So you got the Beatles on one side and then a typhoon.

JOHNSEN: [01:23:42] Mm hmm.

KLEIN: [01:23:42] And you didn't know, you figured you'd get back and the volcano would blow.

JOHNSEN: [01:23:46] Right. You never knew. Or what the next disease was going to be.

KLEIN: [01:23:50] Yeah. But you headed back to the village?

JOHNSEN: [01:23:53] Yes. After, soon after that. I spent just a few days in Manila. Oh, I went to Baguio City, which is an R&R place for Filipinos and Americans. It's very high in the mountains of Northern Luzon. And it's a, it's a very, sort of was then, it was a modern city. They had lots of movie theaters. And there was, I think, an Air Force base. Well, it was, it's close to our Clark Air Force Base. And that's where people went for R&R because it was cool. It was away from the coast, you know. And they had facilities there that Americans would like, you know, movie theaters and jazz bars and stuff, you know.

KLEIN: [01:24:32] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:24:32] And so that was a nice thing to see. And I met several people in my group there, and we had R&R together.

KLEIN: [01:24:39] Was there a midpoint conference then, or had you missed it because you were in the hospital?

JOHNSEN: [01:24:46] Uh, I don't remember that.

KLEIN: [01:24:48] Because your time is funny.

JOHNSEN: [01:24:49] I must have missed, yeah, I must have missed it.

KLEIN: [01:24:52] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:24:53] I don't remember a midterm. I think it was in the hospital then.

KLEIN: [01:24:56] Yeah. So another week of vacation or so, and.

JOHNSEN: [01:25:02] And then I flew back on PAL Airlines to, let's see, Bacolod City, right. That was the closest. And then took a bus. And I was so anxious to get back there. I really wanted to get back to see everybody.

KLEIN: [01:25:17] Now at that point, you were matching up to the beginning of another school year.

JOHNSEN: [01:25:21] Mm hmm. Right.

KLEIN: [01:25:23] And now we're in September of '64, I guess.

JOHNSEN: [01:25:28] Mm hmm. Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:25:29] Okay.

JOHNSEN: [01:25:29] Or maybe August because there were pre-school conferences and things.

KLEIN: [01:25:34] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:25:34] So I knew that I only had 2 or 3 months left.

KLEIN: [01:25:37] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:25:38] But I still wanted to get back and do things. And by that time, let's see. The playground had been built, the athletic field had been built. Kids had graduated from school. So I, you know, I didn't know the next crop of the early, you know, the kindergartners or whatever they were. They weren't kindergartners, first graders. And some of the teachers had changed or, you know, and but the same teacher I worked with was still there.

KLEIN: [01:26:07] The sixth grade teacher.

JOHNSEN: [01:26:09] Mm hmm.

KLEIN: [01:26:09] But it was a new class.

JOHNSEN: [01:26:12] Mm hmm.

KLEIN: [01:26:13] So you got back, and did the mayor?

JOHNSEN: [01:26:17] Oh, they were very welcoming to both of us.

KLEIN: [01:26:19] Did they know you were coming back?

JOHNSEN: [01:26:20] Oh, yes. We must have written or called or.

KLEIN: [01:26:23] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:26:24] Somehow communicated with them. Oh, in fact we had seen them somehow in Manila to send off one of their other daughters to study in the United States. She was going to study in California. In fact, she visited my parents, one of the older daughters of the mayor. So we saw her off and spend some time with the mayor in Manila during that same time.

KLEIN: [01:26:45] How did you communicate such information? I mean, you're in Manila. They're in, back in the village, how did?

JOHNSEN: [01:26:51] I think we sent letters. Somehow we kept in communication. I must have sent whole letters to them saying I was in the hospital, I was going to be in Manila at certain times, and they must have sent back, oh, we're going to be there.

KLEIN: [01:27:04] Oh, okay.

JOHNSEN: [01:27:04] To send off our, our daughter too. And we arranged to meet there. It must have been that way.

KLEIN: [01:27:09] Was it direct telephone service?

JOHNSEN: [01:27:12] I think, yeah, but it was expensive. I think there was the mayor. Let's see. I think they had a phone in their home, yeah.

KLEIN: [01:27:21] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:27:21] But that was the only phone available in the whole town. I mean, if there was any phone, it was in his house.

KLEIN: [01:27:27] Yeah. So you're starting this, another school year.

JOHNSEN: [01:27:33] Uh huh. But not fully, um, committed to what I was doing the first year because I knew it was going to be ending, you know. I don't remember spending as much time at school. It seems like I, I went there a lot, but there were other things that were going on with the mayor. They were planning a, oh, let's see. No, it couldn't have been February. When did I? There was a major, another major fiesta. And when was it? It was August, September. It couldn't have been their town fiesta. But I was a major part of the fiesta because I learned the *tinikling*, you know, this dance that you do between the bamboo poles?

KLEIN: [01:28:18] Oh, yes.

JOHNSEN: [01:28:19] And I learned it fully, just like a native person knew it, you know. I knew the entire dance. And I, and this teacher, the sixth grade teacher, was my partner. And she had known it before already, but she had to brush up on some of the dance steps. But we learned it so beautifully, so well. And I was the Peace Corps in the dance at midnight, and it had just started to rain a little bit. There was a little bit of rain at the time, and but we did the entire dance. And there was just an upsurge after, when the last strains of the music, which was live music with mandolins and, I mean, it was purely just classic old traditional Filipino everything with the native dance, you know, the dress and everything and.

KLEIN: [01:29:05] And you were in traditional dress?

JOHNSEN: [01:29:07] In traditional, well, the hoosee, it's called *barong tagalog*. It was a shirt made out, woven from pineapple fiber. And it's almost see through, but very formal. It's almost like the *guayabera* of Mexico.

KLEIN: [01:29:22] Yes, yes.

JOHNSEN: [01:29:22] It's like the Mexican wedding shirt and long sleeved with cufflinks, not buttons, but cufflinks, and double over sleeve and very elaborate, um.

KLEIN: [01:29:32] Embroidery?

JOHNSEN: [01:29:33] Hand embroidery, embroidered front, big collar, all the way down with a split on the sides all the way down to mid knee. I mean not mid knee, but mid thigh. Beautiful. It's a beautiful kind of shirt. And you have to wear that to do the dance. So.

KLEIN: [01:29:47] How long does the dance last, I mean?

JOHNSEN: [01:29:49] It seemed like it was endless. Oh, I'd say a good 10 minutes or 15 minutes even possibly.

KLEIN: [01:29:57] It's very intricate.

JOHNSEN: [01:29:58] Very intricate. You have to, it's not only dancing in and out, which is a major thing just to get that board in. But then you're dancing through, turning and circling back, going around, going around. There's about ten different pairs of sticks in a circle, sort of. And you dance, the whole group dances around the whole thing once, at one point. And beautiful music, I mean I love that music. It's a one, two, three beat and it's just wonderful.

KLEIN: [01:30:24] So that must have been kind of a high point.

JOHNSEN: [01:30:26] It was the high point of being in that town. I mean, I was, oh, I would say, you know, they just, the mayor congratulated me.

KLEIN: [01:30:34] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:30:34] For, for doing, doing it, you know, going through with it. Roger didn't, he didn't want to have anything to do with it. But I don't know why, but he wouldn't do it. But I wanted to do it. I just thought this would be so wonderful to learn this.

KLEIN: [01:30:49] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:30:50] And there are schoolchildren, American schoolchildren now, who will never forget it. Because I came back and I was a teacher, I have been a teacher for the last 30 years and, you know, every class that I could possibly fit it in, I would teach that dance to them.

KLEIN: [01:31:05] Uh huh.

JOHNSEN: [01:31:05] Or at least part of it, you know, at least 1 or 2 steps so they could learn that. So I have pictures of that, too, of kids, sixth graders in California and Mexican kids in Nogales, where I taught, learning the *tinikling*. It's quite important to me.

KLEIN: [01:31:22] Uh. It must have been downhill from there to, as you're getting near the end of your. Well, did you have any thought of extending, I mean?

JOHNSEN: [01:31:33] Well.

KLEIN: [01:31:34] I mean, I know mom was waiting.

JOHNSEN: [01:31:35] Yeah, my parents were waiting. I just, I thought, well, I've committed, I've succeeded in my commitment of the two years. I thought I can always come back to it or join another group. So, but I do want to go home. But the major thing was, I wanted to not just take the Peace Corps ticket from, on Pan Am, from Manila to Los Angeles or San Francisco or whatever.

KLEIN: [01:32:00] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:32:00] I traded in my ticket when I got to Manila, you know, after it was all over, after I left my town.

KLEIN: [01:32:06] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:32:06] And I remember distinctly going to the travel agent and saying, I want to apply this, whatever it was \$200 to, from here to Bangkok to blah, blah, blah, all the way. I wanted to go around the earth because I was so into traveling. So I did that. I went all the way around the other way and came back through New York. So that was the major thing in my mind. I didn't think of going back to the Peace Corps exactly. I wanted to travel. That was, that was my freedom there to travel and see more, because Hong Kong just tantalized me. I thought, Hong Kong, I got there, you know, I actually saw that place. So I want to see Bangkok and all these wonderful names I've heard about. I wanted to be there.

KLEIN: [01:32:49] Even though you had this incredible experience that very few people do of living in the village and.

JOHNSEN: [01:32:55] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:32:56] Was there talk of your being replaced, you and Roger, as you came near the end?

JOHNSEN: [01:33:03] No, they didn't. Nothing was said about that. I, in fact, I think we asked was somebody going to take our place, and the Filipinos asked, is somebody going to come here? And we didn't know, but we thought not.

KLEIN: [01:33:15] What, by, let's see, by '64. What had happened with the Peace Corps? Were the numbers continuing to grow?

JOHNSEN: [01:33:22] They were still having people in training, but they had changed. Let's see. The idea of the Peace Corps was not to train in

Hawaii or Waipio Valley or Hilo or whatever. They had in-service or in-country training, so they were bringing people to Manila to do training. But I never met anybody there.

KLEIN: [01:33:41] Right.

JOHNSEN: [01:33:41] But that's where they were doing it in, in country or even in, you know, close to the sites, closer to the sites.

KLEIN: [01:33:49] While you were a volunteer in '63, '64, do you have any idea of the total number of volunteers in the Philippines?

JOHNSEN: [01:33:59] It seems in the hundreds, I think 700 were there when I was there. It was the largest group of any country that they had sent people to.

KLEIN: [01:34:09] But you didn't feel that where every place you turned, you were bumping into volunteers?

JOHNSEN: [01:34:13] Not at all, not where I was stationed. I very seldom saw any unless we invited them to come, or in Manila.

KLEIN: [01:34:20] Yeah, yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:34:21] Sometimes in Bacolod, the Filipinos in stores or something would ask, are you Peace Corps? Are you the Peace Corps? You know, because they had seen so many coming through, but I never really bumped into many, except in Camp Brotherhood or in Manila.

KLEIN: [01:34:38] And do you have any sense of what the overall attitude of the Filipinos was toward Peace Corps? I mean, judging from your village and?

JOHNSEN: [01:34:46] The local people, they really loved us. You know, they, they got to really be friends with us. And. [tape break]

JOHNSEN: [01:34:58] The Philippine government, I think, got what they wanted. They got people to, almost free, teach their teachers, you know, upgrade their teaching skills over a period of time. I think that happened in many projects that I heard about that, you know, they had an in-depth teacher trainings and even some community development in some projects that were not in my project. And so the Philippines gained a lot, and I think the government was very favorable, favorable to the whole thing. The local people who understood what we were trying to do, like the teaching groups, were very favorable. I think we left with a good impression.

KLEIN: [01:35:37] In your two year experience, did you ever encounter someone who said, why don't you go home? You mentioned the one little incident on a bus.

JOHNSEN: [01:35:47] Never locally. I never met anybody who was antagonistic to me personally or to the idea of a Peace Corps. I never met anybody like that. Just, did I tell it already on tape about the bus situation?

KLEIN: [01:36:04] Yeah. You mentioned that. Before I forget it, you, when we were talking about the rainy season and the rains came at 2:00 in the afternoon, there was a, some incident or anecdote you wanted to?

JOHNSEN: [01:36:17] Oh, yes. Well, I was teaching science as part of my project, and this third grade teacher, um. Well, first of all, I had put up a weather station, and so I measured the rainfall and the wind flow and temperatures and kept records and took it into the classroom to show the kids and would bring them down to the weather station. It was down away from the school.

KLEIN: [01:36:38] Where did you get the equipment?

JOHNSEN: [01:36:41] I just made it. And I think part of the, uh, the science kit was a thermometer. So I incorporated whatever they sent us. And I made my own rain gauge, and there were some books that were sent to us about how to make things, and I was into that. So I made a weather station and, and so. Let's see. Oh, I was teaching, I was helping this teacher to teach about condensation. And you know, where, where the rain goes.

You know, if it falls, then where does it go? And it goes into the air. So the only place that had ice in the town was the mayor's house. They had a generated, you know, a generator powered refrigerator. So they had ice all the time. And so sometimes we would have ice cold beer there.

JOHNSEN: [01:37:26] So anyway, so I, during this noon break, I went to the mayor's house and requested a bag of ice. And rather than a bowl of ice, I wanted a bag of it, a plastic bag of some kind. And because I wanted to show the condensation. So by the time I had left the mayor's house, the rain had started and it was pouring rain. I mean, really pouring. And I had just a hat on and no coat or anything, and just I was just getting soaking wet. And it was about almost a mile from his house to the school. So I was, I had, but the only way to get there was through the main, you know, just the main crossroads of the town. And then that road led to the road up to the school. So all the people and the town just take their break and eat and sit around under big verandas and things to keep out of the rain and just watch the rain. And that's their, just their social time.

JOHNSEN: [01:38:18] So here was the Peace Corps guy with this bag of ice running through the rain through the main square of the town up to the school. And I didn't hear anybody laughing, but I thought, boy, what a fool I look like. I really must look like a real big fool. But I brought the ice to school and did my lesson and taught about condensation, and we poured it in the glass, into glasses or something, I think it was glass to show the condensation on the outside. And then we went into the rain cycle and the water cycle. But that was just a vivid memory of myself going through the town.

KLEIN: [01:38:53] Yes. Uh, can you describe your departure from the village at the end?

JOHNSEN: [01:39:02] Oh, you have done this before, I can tell, because this is an emotional moment. Yeah. It was November 2nd, and it was All Saints Day. All Souls Day, I'm sorry.

KLEIN: [01:39:14] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:39:14] And so it was almost a school holiday, I think. I mean, nobody was in, was go to school that day because everybody was at the cemetery and the whole town was there. All the kids that I had taught throughout the year, or the ones that I knew from the school, and the teachers and families that lived next door or around the area, were all there, and we had said our goodbyes. I had sent home a big thing, you know, shipment, you know, freight on freight, surface freight, of all my possessions and everything. Had my suitcase, got on the bus that takes nine hours to get to Dumaguete or, I'm sorry, Bacolod City. And the only way out of town was by the cemetery. And I was, let's see, was Roger with me? I think he was not with me. He had either gone ahead or I think he had gone ahead the day before.

JOHNSEN: [01:40:09] So I was alone on this bus with other Filipinos, though, and the bus went by this cemetery and all the people, you know, I was at the window and I was waving at them and they were waving at me. And they were, you could see they had food and they were dusting off the, the cemetery plots and things. And I just broke down. I just completely broke down.

KLEIN: [01:40:32] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:40:33] And then I had this nine hour ride to go through on bumpy rock roads, you know, they were rocks so they wouldn't erode away. And just so I had all that time to think about all the things that had passed the last two years.

KLEIN: [01:40:47] Had the mayor given a going away party?

JOHNSEN: [01:40:50] Oh, yeah. You bet. It was a two day affair almost.

KLEIN: [01:40:54] Uh huh.

JOHNSEN: [01:40:55] But the one evening that they invited all the teachers and all in native dress. They gave us mounds and mounds of presents, I mean, things to remember them by, you know, homemade things or things that

were typically Filipino, you know, carvings and homemade clothing for my, for parents and friends, you know, all, just all kinds of things. And it was, these fiestas seemed to last into all hours of the night always. And so this lasted well, well past midnight. Roger and I both, you know, being feted there. And they gave us each a, um, what do you call them? I'm giving my languages mixed up. Um, roosters, because a big thing in the Philippines is cockfighting. So they gave us cocks and we had to pretend to have them fighting, but they didn't have the knives on them. They would just wanted us to experience being the owners of the roosters, the cockfight.

KLEIN: [01:41:55] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:41:56] And we had to make speeches. We had to sing songs. We had to dance with every teacher, you know, the female teachers. They took pictures. The mayor gave a long speech, how important it was that we were there. And we had to give speeches of farewell and remembrance and all that, and they kept plying us with San Miguel beer the whole time. But that was quite a, quite a thing. Quite a farewell.

KLEIN: [01:42:22] Do you recall if there was a termination conference in Manila of your group as you finished up?

JOHNSEN: [01:42:30] Yes, there was. We had to report there by, you know, November 3rd or whatever it was, or sixth, and they de-, what do they call it? Not deselected but?

KLEIN: [01:42:42] Debriefed?

JOHNSEN: [01:42:42] Debriefed us, yes. And, you know, I don't know what they talked about, but it was a way of parting from that, from that experience.

KLEIN: [01:42:53] Had the group, uh, shrunk a lot? I mean, do you recall if many people hadn't completed the two years or?

JOHNSEN: [01:43:01] Most people did. One girl went home because of some harassment that she felt from one of, a Filipino man that was stalking her

or something, and she had to leave. That's the only one I particularly remember. I think maybe another person had gone home, but I don't know why.

KLEIN: [01:43:20] Yeah. Yeah. And the group getting back together, do you recall? Were you playing can you top this with stories or?

JOHNSEN: [01:43:32] I'm sure we did. I remember going to restaurants and bars with people in my group, you know, small groups, not the whole group.

KLEIN: [01:43:40] Right.

JOHNSEN: [01:43:40] Because we had already gone off into cliques by then. The people in the north were their group, and the southern people were our people, and we didn't know them as well as we did two years before. You know, they had totally different experiences.

KLEIN: [01:43:53] Yeah. So you then had your ticket to get you around the world.

JOHNSEN: [01:43:59] Mm hmm.

KLEIN: [01:44:00] At some point did you think about life after the Peace Corps, I mean, while you were still there?

JOHNSEN: [01:44:08] They had, uh, somehow we got information, I think from some government agency that the, in Vietnam they needed people, especially male people, who would be teachers in hamlets to do, it was a certain word they used. It was like teaching, cultural teaching of American ideals or something in hamlets around Vietnam.

KLEIN: [01:44:38] Huh.

JOHNSEN: [01:44:39] And they wanted volunteers to do that, but they would be paid. They weren't volunteers, but they wanted people to volunteer from the Peace Corps to go there, and then they would be paid by some salary. I don't know what agency it was.

KLEIN: [01:44:54] Oh, interesting.

JOHNSEN: [01:44:54] Was it American Information Agency?

KLEIN: [01:44:56] The USIS?

JOHNSEN: [01:44:58] It could have been that. Something related to.

KLEIN: [01:45:00] CIA.

JOHNSEN: [01:45:01] Could have been CIA related. It could have been. I'm not sure, but they. But I was.

KLEIN: [01:45:07] There was always supposed to be a separation.

JOHNSEN: [01:45:10] Mm hmm.

KLEIN: [01:45:10] But, okay.

JOHNSEN: [01:45:10] Between the Peace Corps and the CIA, you mean?

KLEIN: [01:45:12] Oh yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:45:13] Or between the USIA and the CIA?

KLEIN: [01:45:14] No, Peace Corps and the CIA.

JOHNSEN: [01:45:16] There was a separation, but because they made it very clear that it was, you would volunteer from the Peace Corps to do that. You would be, there would not be Peace Corps. I mean, it was definitely not Peace Corps. They just wanted people to do some information, you know, teaching, somehow giving Vietnamese people an idea about America.

KLEIN: [01:45:38] Right.

JOHNSEN: [01:45:40] That's all I knew about it, and I considered that. And I considered it. They said it would be a commitment of 14 months or something. And I thought, no, I want to go home. I want to take this trip first. That was primary in my mind. Go home. And then I would consider doing that. I actually considered doing that.

KLEIN: [01:45:55] Yeah. Did you, did you think about schooling or?

JOHNSEN: [01:45:58] But then after I got home, I was in America again, and I thought I'd better do something with this. I have two years of teaching, and I had heard by then that the Peace Corps counted as two years of teaching experience. So all I needed was a fifth year, you know, to get my certificate in California.

KLEIN: [01:46:19] Ah, okay.

JOHNSEN: [01:46:19] And so I immediately did that because I got home in December of '64. And by sixty, the September of '65, I was teaching in a regular American school then, in Los Angeles. So within a less than a year, I was, you know, I took that whole spring semester and summer and got a fifth year of a certificate.

KLEIN: [01:46:40] Did you get an MAT or?

JOHNSEN: [01:46:43] No, it was just a, they called it a fifth year of specialization in education. And so it wasn't even an advanced degree. It was just a graduate degree certification in California.

KLEIN: [01:46:56] State certification. I didn't know that.

JOHNSEN: [01:46:58] And I began teaching a sixth grade in Woodland Hills, California. And I didn't even think back to going to Vietnam. I thought by then it was really getting terrific over there, and I think I had advice from family and friends, don't even think of that, because there's a war over there. And I should have known that when I was in the hepatitis, hepatitis ward, because these guys were from the war and I got to see other wards where, you know, they had, they were, um.

KLEIN: [01:47:29] Amputees.

JOHNSEN: [01:47:30] Amputees and other things. So I knew there was something going on over there.

KLEIN: [01:47:34] Right. When you came back, you were 24, 25?

JOHNSEN: [01:47:40] I had just turned 25.

KLEIN: [01:47:42] Were you clear of the draft or were you still subject to the draft?

JOHNSEN: [01:47:45] I was still subject to the draft. But as a teacher, if I was full time teacher, I was still not draftable at that point.

KLEIN: [01:47:53] That's right, yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:47:53] So I was sort of safe in that sense. And that was a big reason why I went right into teaching.

KLEIN: [01:47:59] Was it a, was it a special program recruiting volunteers to come into urban schools?

JOHNSEN: [01:48:06] I was not in that program, no.

KLEIN: [01:48:09] This was just.

JOHNSEN: [01:48:10] I was on my own.

KLEIN: [01:48:11] On your own and.

JOHNSEN: [01:48:12] Applied to a district.

KLEIN: [01:48:14] And why did you pick Los Angeles?

JOHNSEN: [01:48:16] That's. That was where I had grown up.

KLEIN: [01:48:19] Oh, okay. Okay.

JOHNSEN: [01:48:20] And I, for some reason, let's see. I, I checked all of the school districts around, but this one seemed to be hiring. It was a new district, and they needed new teachers. [phone rings] Ken, are you there? Oh, he got it. Okay. And so I was immediately hired, conditional on getting that certificate in the mail, you know, that I had. Because it took them rigmarole and red tape in Sacramento to get it to you. But I was provisional until I got that certificate, and I had already started teaching.

KLEIN: [01:48:56] Did they give you salary credit for your two years in the Peace Corps?

JOHNSEN: [01:49:00] Yes.

KLEIN: [01:49:00] So you started at the third step then?

JOHNSEN: [01:49:02] Yes. So that was an advantage really.

KLEIN: [01:49:07] As you began, did you then expect teaching was going to be your career?

JOHNSEN: [01:49:12] I sort of thought it was.

KLEIN: [01:49:14] Yeah. I mean, sometimes we don't really choose careers, they happen.

JOHNSEN: [01:49:17] Right, they happen to you. But I enjoyed the process of teaching very much. And so I was a dedicated teacher already.

KLEIN: [01:49:24] Yeah. At did, or in your first months back, did you have it in the back of your mind that you might want to return to the Philippines sometime?

JOHNSEN: [01:49:37] Definitely. I was intending to go back. I still was corresponding with people through letters, and I wanted to go back. And eventually, you

know, within a short time frame, maybe within 5 or 10 years, I would go back.

KLEIN: [01:49:53] But the sense of going back on a visit, not going back.

JOHNSEN: [01:49:57] Right, just to visit. I was, I was already within the first few years of teaching, I knew that I was not going to be a Peace Corps volunteer again in, you know, strictly Peace Corps.

KLEIN: [01:50:10] Did you maintain communication with people from the village?

JOHNSEN: [01:50:15] Yes, for years.

KLEIN: [01:50:16] Did any of them come to the U.S.?

JOHNSEN: [01:50:20] Only the daughter of the mayor, and I had, I saw her one other time. She went to Chicago, but she came through Los Angeles on her way to the Philippines again. And I saw her. And I saw another person that I had known in the Philippines who came to Los Angeles just on a visit.

KLEIN: [01:50:37] When you initially came home, I mean, you, you had just had this incredible experience. It had some bumps along the way, but clearly you ended it on, with a, on a kind of high. How did that play back home with your family, your friends, and then when you went back to school?

JOHNSEN: [01:50:59] That is probably the most important Peace Corps related question, you know. I think I had more emotional stress over that than even that two month period of culture shock when I was over there.

KLEIN: [01:51:12] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:51:13] I just couldn't get back into American life totally. I was a full time teacher. Well, let's go back to that first summer I was back and taking classes. I remember walking along by a gas station. I, for some reason, I was just on a walk in North Hollywood, California, and the guy in the station, they still had people that serviced cars in those days. And

he, he waved at me and said hi. And I just broke down. I just completely broke down because that was the first American who had ever even tried to communicate with me aside from family people, you know.

KLEIN: [01:51:50] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:51:50] I thought, what is wrong with America? We don't talk to each other. We don't. They don't. You Americans are not like the Filipinos. You don't hug us. You know, you don't say, come over to my house and have a *merienda* and let's have something to eat. You know, Americans are very cold people, and I just couldn't get over that.

KLEIN: [01:52:08] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:52:09] You know, in my, in my viewpoint then, in my mind, we were cold, you know, money grabbing, cold, uncommunicative people. And I couldn't get over that. And I was here. I had 10,000 slides and diaries and all these clothes that they had given me and things to show off here's what the Philippines is like. And nobody wanted to listen. You know, they, their eyes would glaze over. And no, we don't have time to do any more slides. And, you know, I thought, there's something wrong here. What's wrong with me, or what's wrong with America, you know?

KLEIN: [01:52:41] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:52:42] That was an emotional low for me to try to get through. And that, and it still is. I'm still, you know, I am so happy to see you. This is 40 years later.

KLEIN: [01:52:58] But, uh, then as you began teaching. Did you teach, were you an English teacher?

JOHNSEN: [01:53:07] I was a sixth grade regular, you know, every, every subject. Spelling, from spelling through math, through social studies. Heavy on the social studies because I had lots to tell them about social studies.

KLEIN: [01:53:19] So you began finding ways to integrate your Philippine experience into your teaching.

JOHNSEN: [01:53:26] Yes, definitely.

KLEIN: [01:53:26] Whether it was, fit in the curriculum or not.

JOHNSEN: [01:53:28] Right. I just made it fit, you know?

KLEIN: [01:53:30] Yeah, well, I was a teacher.

JOHNSEN: [01:53:32] Right. Yeah. You just, there's so much you want to tell them and about the bigger world and, uh. Yes.

KLEIN: [01:53:42] Well, then talking, speaking 40 years after the fact, what do you think was the impact on your life of having been in the Peace Corps?

JOHNSEN: [01:53:55] I think getting to know the bigger, the broader world, that America is really a small place compared to how people really live in the rest of the world. The, you know, the, the things they don't have, or at least then, maybe it's all changed now. But, you know, just not having water running into your bathroom, or you don't even have a bathroom. So many people in the world don't have that, and that, that, just every day I'm so grateful.

KLEIN: [01:54:27] And has it, has it affected choices you've made in your life after?

JOHNSEN: [01:54:33] Mm hmm. Definitely. I somehow chose that district to teach in Los Angeles, that was Los Angeles County schools. I spent three years there, and by the third year I was having reverse culture shock. I couldn't take it anymore because the kids were all, it was a very high level area, doctors, entertainment people, dentists, very, pretty rich people and they all have, many of the kids had their own horses. They had acres of land, very nice homes.

KLEIN: [01:55:03] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:55:04] And here I was just coming from the Peace Corps where, you know, things were so different that I thought, I'm not doing anything for these kids, even though I'm teaching them the *tinikling* and telling them about the Filipinos. Their eyes glazed over too. They couldn't care less about how those people lived. I had to get back into something that was more meaningful to me and that wasn't it. So after, during the third year of teaching out there, I applied to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and I didn't care where it was. I didn't care where they sent me. I wanted the furthest out place you could find. And it turned out that they gave me that. I got into the BIA, took their tests, did all the things necessary. I was already a teacher, so.

KLEIN: [01:55:48] Right.

JOHNSEN: [01:55:49] They sent me to a new school that they had just opened way up in northern New Mexico, near the Colorado border that was way off, it was on. It was the Navajo Nation, but it was in the checkerboard area they call it.

KLEIN: [01:56:03] Right, yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:56:04] It was combined with the railroad. They had one square mile of railroad land that was federal government and one square mile of Navajo land every square mile along the road there. So and this, they had built a dormitory school, a huge school that was, oh, 5 or 600 kids.

KLEIN: [01:56:21] Name?

JOHNSEN: [01:56:22] First grade through sixth grade. You want to hear the name? Okay. Dzilh-Na-O-Dith-Hle. I'll say it again. Dzilh-Na-O-Dith-Hle.

KLEIN: [01:56:29] Okay.

JOHNSEN: [01:56:29] And it means the turning mountain, because it was built at the base of this mesa that was round like a horseshoe. And people in

Navajo, this is a whole other cultural thing in Navajo, when you ride by it on a horse, it looks like it's turning with you. So they gave it the name in Navajo, The Turning Mountain. So anyway, brand new school.

KLEIN: [01:56:49] Is it near Farmington?

JOHNSEN: [01:56:50] Yes, 40 miles south of Farmington on Highway 44.

KLEIN: [01:56:55] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:56:56] So I, I just, I was absolutely in glory again. I was in the Peace Corps again in my mind. I was teaching a fifth grade class, but it was teaching English as a second language, mostly.

KLEIN: [01:57:10] It was a boarding school?

JOHNSEN: [01:57:12] A boarding school. They would grab these sobbing five year olds away from their mothers almost in those days. This was in 1969, '70, the '69-'70 school year. They would. And I was a part of it that summer, going out with a teacher who had been in another school. Going out in a car on dirt, dirty, bumpy roads and going into very small areas where there were hogans and just a small group of people, which is the traditional way of living in Navajo. And they would ask how many children they have and any new children this year, and who's going to be five? And they would tell them, sign them up right there. And the parents had to bring the student to the school, leave them off, and say goodbye for until Christmas. Five year olds. And they would cry for two weeks. And they were in a dormitory with non Navajo people. Although some of the aides and people were Navajo, but they were completely different, no familiarity.

KLEIN: [01:58:16] Part of the idea was to deculturalize.

JOHNSEN: [01:58:19] Yes. And it was still going on in the early '70s. Can you imagine? So I was part of that for one whole year, and for personal selfish reasons, I loved it. I was at the end of a road. You couldn't get out of there. There were blizzards sometimes. It was wonderful. I was

teaching English as a second language. I was learning Navajo from a minister, what do you call him? A missionary. And I was just loving everything about it, except the BIA. I couldn't take the BIA and the principal. I hope he hears this somehow, or it gets back to the government, that he was a Mormon. He was narrow minded. He had been in the army and reached a certain GS level, like 14. So they put him in as a principal. He knew nothing about education, nothing about Navajos, nothing about children, nothing about anything. He was a miserable creep. And we all thought that. All of us teachers.

KLEIN: [01:59:11] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:59:12] And we couldn't wait to get out of there. I mean, I couldn't. 70 percent of the people left. This was the first year. It had started with all new teachers, 70 people, 70 percent left.

KLEIN: [01:59:22] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:59:22] And I did too. I couldn't take it.

KLEIN: [01:59:24] Yeah. So, next adventure.

JOHNSEN: [01:59:26] So then I went back to school myself and got a master's degree in education and went on from there, teaching and teaching and teaching in all different places.

KLEIN: [01:59:36] Yeah. And you did find a way to get back to the Philippines or?

JOHNSEN: [01:59:43] I never got back there.

KLEIN: [01:59:44] Oh, okay.

JOHNSEN: [01:59:45] I had sort of planned after retiring to do that. But then the whole world changed, and I don't think I'll ever get back there. I really do not see myself getting back there.

KLEIN: [01:59:55] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [01:59:55] I have changed. I mean, I have aged so much and they have changed so much that I wouldn't know anybody, even the mayor's son that I got along with pretty well who, we were pretty close buddies. And even that teacher I worked with, you know, they'd be 60 years old now or more.

KLEIN: [02:00:12] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [02:00:12] I wouldn't know them.

KLEIN: [02:00:14] And is it in the area where there have been serious political problems?

JOHNSEN: [02:00:18] No, pretty far from there. And that was in, for much further south.

KLEIN: [02:00:22] What would you, uh, what would you say to a young person today as far as joining the Peace Corps?

JOHNSEN: [02:00:29] Oh, I'd say do it. I would go for it. I would, yes, even though it's chancy to get on a plane even, if you're 20 years old or 22 and you're, you know, you want to see the world, I would say do that and learn something from the Peace Corps. I mean, you know, that they can train you to do something. Or maybe, I don't know how they're doing it now, but maybe you already have worked in computers for three years. Go teach somebody else in the world to do that.

KLEIN: [02:00:58] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [02:00:58] I would fully. I keep recommending people, you know, younger people to do that, even older people who have retired.

KLEIN: [02:01:07] Yeah.

JOHNSEN: [02:01:08] I told them, why don't you just think, consider that since you have nothing else to do and you're not going to play golf all your life.

KLEIN: [02:01:15] We can. Oh. Is there anything else you would like to add? And you know, the tape is going into the archive about your Peace Corps experience.

JOHNSEN: [02:01:25] I'd like to donate my, um, some pictures and my diaries to, to the effort.

KLEIN: [02:01:32] Good.

JOHNSEN: [02:01:33] And plus, I'm grateful for this man sitting in front of me, Mr. Bob Klein, for actually taking his time to go out and do this. And this is really important stuff.

KLEIN: [02:01:44] Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]