

Judith Howard Whitney-Terry Oral History Interview
Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Judith Howard Whitney-Terry served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Honduras from September 1987 to December 1988 in a small business program.

Access

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Oral History Interview

with

Judith Howard Whitney-Terry

August 23, 2018

Shawnee on Delaware, Pennsylvania

By Evelyn Ganzglass

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

GANZGLASS: [00:00:02] This is Evelyn Ganzglass. I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Somalia from 1966 to 1968. And today is August 23rd, 2018. And I'm interviewing Judith Howard Whitney-Terry, who was a Peace Corps volunteer in Honduras from 1987 to 1988, not a full tour. So let me ask you, why did you join the Peace Corps?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:00:33] It was something I had always wanted to do. But at the time the Peace Corps was founded in 1961, I was married with one baby and one on the way. And I, my husband at that time was not a person who volunteered for anything. He felt that volunteering was worth exactly what you were paid for it. He didn't consider it. So it was something I always wanted to do. In 1986, the tax laws changed and I knew it was going to take a while for people to figure out how to do real estate investments with the new tax laws, which is what I did for a living. I was a real estate

investment broker. I thought this is my chance to join the Peace Corps. And I did.

GANZGLASS: [00:01:36] And how old were you then?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:01:38] I actually turned 50 in the Peace Corps, so I was 49 when I entered.

GANZGLASS: [00:01:43] And you had grown kids by that time?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:01:45] Yes.

GANZGLASS: [00:01:45] Were you married?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:01:46] No. No, I was not. I had been divorced for several years, I don't know. I guess I had, well, I had been separated at least for about six years so.

GANZGLASS: [00:02:01] I usually ask, what did your parents think about you joining the Peace Corps, but I'll ask you what did your kids think about you joining the Peace Corps?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:02:11] All of my family, both parents and kids, were supportive of it. So it was not a problem. It was not a problem. It was my best friend that was, practically had a heart attack. She didn't think it was a good idea.

GANZGLASS: [00:02:28] So you joined because you had always wanted to do it and that was just a good time to do it. So you applied and did you have a preference for part of the world or?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:02:41] I didn't have any preference. I was supposed to go to Fiji as a business volunteer and they had a coup. And so while they didn't pull anybody out of Fiji, they didn't send anybody new in at that time. Then they offered me to go teach English in Morocco, and I said, why would you take a person with 18 years of business experience who barely passed their English SATs to

teach English in Morocco? And they said, well, we're opening a new business program in Honduras. Would you be? I think they suggested Morocco because I spoke French. And they said, would you be interested in going to Honduras? And I said sure. So I went.

GANZGLASS: [00:03:35] So you went to Honduras.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:03:35] I did not speak Spanish.

GANZGLASS: [00:03:37] So how long was it, the whole application process? How long did that take?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:03:44] About a year.

GANZGLASS: [00:03:44] Took about a year.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:03:45] Yeah, it was in 1986. And I was, I was supposed to leave for Fiji, I believe that was in May, and as I said, that got kiboshed so.

GANZGLASS: [00:03:59] And then the reassignment happened fairly quickly?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:04:02] Yes.

GANZGLASS: [00:04:03] Oh, okay.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:04:03] Yeah. Right away. They kept trying to find a spot.

GANZGLASS: [00:04:07] So you were part of a business program. What was the program aimed to do?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:04:13] Well, they had a women in development program, but they didn't have a program for business plans. So such as, you know, going into a, for instance, a shrimp farm and setting up an actual business plan for them. So and that's what I eventually started doing.

GANZGLASS: [00:04:41] So how many of you were in this group that were being sent over to Honduras?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:04:47] I think I believe there were about 60 of us. Honduras at that time had many volunteers. I think they were probably 400 of us in Honduras at that time.

GANZGLASS: [00:04:59] Wow.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:05:00] There was, it was a, basically it was a counter to the number of Americans. You have to remember, this is the era when we have Nicaragua and the Contras and, um, going over the border.

GANZGLASS: [00:05:22] So trying to, to promote capitalism in Honduras while that was going on in Nicaragua?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:05:31] Right.

GANZGLASS: [00:05:32] And all, all 60 of you in this group were all part of the business program?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:05:39] No, no, no, no.

GANZGLASS: [00:05:39] What were the others?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:05:40] There was section of women in development. There was a section for nurses, and there was a section for teaching, education, teaching English as a second language. Although all of us taught at that time, all of us taught English as a second language. So when I first started out, I was down in Choluteca in the south and I was teaching English at night while I was working with business, uh, rural business development in, during the daytime and doing quite a bit of traveling around actually.

GANZGLASS: [00:06:22] Well, before we get into your whole service, let's talk a little bit about the training. Where, um, so by '86, all the train, was all of the training in-country?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:06:36] Yes.

GANZGLASS: [00:06:37] So you, where did you all meet up in the States? Did you all meet up in the States and fly down?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:06:42] In Miami.

GANZGLASS: [00:06:43] In Miami. And then you flew down to?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:06:45] Yeah, we were all in Miami for one, I think we were actually there for two days because our flight was canceled for some reason, I don't remember. And they had to put everybody up overnight instead of flying everybody out. And then we flew out and we went to, we all met first in a place called Jícaro.

GANZGLASS: [00:07:15] Jícaro. And that was the training place?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:07:21] Yeah, that was. We were there all for about a week and that was where they did a lot of the projects, like games. Playing games where you would have to try to convince somebody to do something and you didn't speak the language or whatever. So it was.

GANZGLASS: [00:07:45] I haven't heard about that. Was this a regular part of training?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:07:48] Apparently. It was to, I think it was to.

GANZGLASS: [00:07:51] Non-verbal communication.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:07:54] Right, I think it was to acclimate people to Honduras. And in fact, basically, we landed in Tegucigalpa. Now I had been traveled, I had traveled to Central America several times because

I owned property in Costa Rica. So, um, there was. We landed in Tegucigalpa and there was one young man and he took one look at Toncontín Airport and the, and the kids begging. And we knew he wasn't going to last and he didn't. He lasted about three days and asked to go home.

GANZGLASS: [00:08:40] Oh, really?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:08:41] He was horrified. He was just horrified. He was not used to that sort of thing at all, the begging. And he just couldn't take it.

GANZGLASS: [00:08:51] So you arrived at the airport and then where was, um.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:08:57] Jícaro.

GANZGLASS: [00:08:57] Jícaro. Was that close to?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:09:00] We were just bused down there. It wasn't terribly far away.

GANZGLASS: [00:09:03] And how long did you stay there?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:09:07] I would say maybe four or five days.

GANZGLASS: [00:09:10] And that was the game playing and what else took place there?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:09:13] Just getting acquainted with the whole group.

GANZGLASS: [00:09:16] Uh huh.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:09:17] And so because once we got into, uh, Valle de Angeles, which is where we lived with our families, then we sort of all got kind of separated out. So it was, it was an attempt to get people to bond. And they would do things like, you know, put. You had five sections. And wherever you came from, if you came from

the Northeast, you had to get in that section. If you came from the Southeast, the Midwest, or West, North. And then all the oddballs had one little place.

GANZGLASS: [00:10:02] The oddballs, meaning they didn't come from one part of the country?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:10:05] Well, I came from both New England and Florida.

GANZGLASS: [00:10:07] Oh, okay.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:10:09] So I was an oddball. One of the kids came from Mexico. Not really. He was an American, but he'd been raised in Mexico. So. And he was, he had just graduated from, I guess it was Stanford. So it was sort of interesting. I don't remember a lot about it. It was 30, you know, 30 years ago.

GANZGLASS: [00:10:36] So you had a couple of days of bonding, I guess.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:10:40] Right.

GANZGLASS: [00:10:41] And then you went to this other city for?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:10:45] Right.

GANZGLASS: [00:10:45] For the home stays?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:10:46] Yes. And that was called Valle de Angeles. A-N-G-E-L-E-S. And it was up in the mountains about probably about 20 miles from Tegucigalpa. Um, and that's where we would do our training. That's where our families were, and that's where we did.

GANZGLASS: [00:11:10] So all of you in the business development part?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:11:14] I was the only person from the business.

GANZGLASS: [00:11:16] Oh, you were the only person? Oh.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:11:17] At that point. They had a couple of other volunteers there, in the city, but they didn't have very many. That's one reason why they, they were really open, just opening the program.

GANZGLASS: [00:11:29] Oh, okay. So you were the only one out of the 60?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:11:33] No, I was training with the women in development.

GANZGLASS: [00:11:35] You were training with women in development.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:11:38] Right.

GANZGLASS: [00:11:38] And so what was your training like? What, I guess there was language training?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:11:43] Yeah, that was the majority of it. Obviously, I did not. I spoke a little Spanish, but I didn't speak very much. Um. I remember the first. We were there ten days and they sent us off into the mountains, and they sent me with a girl from Michigan who was a veterinarian. And she did not speak any Spanish. I did speak some. And, uh, I, I tried to find my photograph album and I couldn't find it. It's buried somewhere. And there's a wonderful picture of the two of us and a horse. And the horse has his head inside a window, and the caption underneath it is, "even the horses don't understand us."

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:12:40] Um, but I knew, I knew enough to say, you know, *donde está el restaurante o servicio*. I mean, I knew enough to ask. And so we went. At one point I just had this brilliant idea and I said, *donde está el gringo?* And sure enough, there was one.

GANZGLASS: [00:13:07] Ah.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:13:08] There was one there. And he was a dentist. And we went and we talked with him. And that was one way that we found

out, it was a way. And that was a little aldea that was way up in the mountains. So it was fun. I mean, I enjoyed that.

GANZGLASS: [00:13:32] So you had the language training and was there business development training?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:13:38] No, because I was.

GANZGLASS: [00:13:39] Well, you had it. But the rest of you, did you take part in the women in development?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:13:45] Well, the women in development, sure. We went, we built a latrine. That was one thing that we did. We went down to the finca, or the farm, and we, you know. We learned how to basically throw a floor on a, for a house. And some vegetables.

GANZGLASS: [00:14:14] So women in development was really not business at all. It was building a house and doing things like that?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:14:21] It was, yeah. The training was kind of odd as I remembered it. And I remember thinking after about ten weeks, which would be halfway through the training, I remembered thinking that this was a very odd way to do a training if you were supposed to be helping people to develop. There again, because I wasn't in the nursing end of it and I wasn't in the education end of it, I don't know what they did. And it could be because they didn't have a real business development at that point. And then we were assigned, after we got out of the training, we were assigned to places like CARE, Save the Children, or whatever, and those people were the ones that sent us out on projects.

GANZGLASS: [00:15:21] Ah, okay. Well, let me ask some more. So you are about 50. What age were the other volunteers, were they?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:15:31] Um, we had, uh, one gal was 64 and she went home early. She missed her grandchildren and so forth. And there was a couple that was my age. They came from Maine. So we actually

remained friends for many, well, until she died. And I, we still, Bob and I saw Arnold last year, last summer. And then there was, I would say probably four or five that were in their thirties and most of the rest of them were, um. BAGs. BA generalists.

GANZGLASS: [00:16:21] Yeah. So was that an issue in training, the age difference?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:16:27] No, not at all.

GANZGLASS: [00:16:29] Did people look up to you because you were older?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:16:32] Yes.

GANZGLASS: [00:16:32] Then you were a mother figure?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:16:34] One of the most interesting things is that, for me anyway, no matter what I said, the Hondurans always referred to me as *doctore*. And I said, I'm not a doctor, you know. But they always.

GANZGLASS: [00:16:51] Because you were wise.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:16:53] Right, I was older and wise. And in that sense I did get, as did Rosie and Arnold and the older volunteers, they did get more respect.

GANZGLASS: [00:17:10] From the Honduras?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:17:12] From the Hondurans.

GANZGLASS: [00:17:12] What about from other volunteers?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:17:16] Well, they sort of treated us like their parents. That was a little. The young, the young ones, the ones that were in their very early twenties sort of treated us like the parents.

GANZGLASS: [00:17:31] Didn't want to deal with you, was that?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:17:35] Well, they were reserved. They were more reserved. And they would do things, actually, that they weren't supposed to be doing. Like they would go out and then they'd get sick because they, they'd say, oh, you know, I've been here for a while. I'm going to eat.

GANZGLASS: [00:17:52] Whatever.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:17:53] You know, street food. And then they'd end up being very sick. So, you know, um. And we had one other fellow. This is very good. He was very interesting. I've often wondered what happened to him. He was a veterinarian and he came from the, originally, from the hills of Kentucky. And he had the most God awful, thick Southern accent. He was brilliant and he learned Spanish, could read it, could write it, and would speak it rapidly, and no one could figure out. The Hondurans had no idea what he was saying.

GANZGLASS: [00:18:42] Had too much of a Southern accent.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:18:44] He had such a heavy accent and he was brilliant. I mean, he was really a very brilliant man, but he couldn't get rid of that accent.

GANZGLASS: [00:18:53] What was your home stay like?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:18:57] Well, of course, we were supposed to call our parents, the parents. We were supposed to call them, well, Don, Don Roberto. And I guess, um, the *madre*. And Maria would not let me, because she was younger than I.

GANZGLASS: [00:19:17] Oh.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:19:18] And that was the end of that. They always called me *senora*, and I, I called her *senora*, and she would keep saying,

you know, please call me Maria, because I was quite a bit younger [older]. And when Bob and I went, that's just a little aside. But when Bob and I went back in 2004, we went back to see the family. And I was amazed. You know, I thought Don Roberto was fairly old and he was quite a bit younger than I was.

GANZGLASS: [00:19:54] Even at that.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:19:56] Right, I was really.

GANZGLASS: [00:19:58] So you've stayed in touch with the family all these years?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:20:02] Yes. We went back.

GANZGLASS: [00:20:04] But did you stay in touch with them?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:20:06] Not really. I mean, I sent them Christmas cards and so forth, because it's very interesting that, you know, the, and all the Christmas cards were there. That sort of thing. Pictures were very important to them, and I suppose because they were expensive. And when we came back in 2004, I was interested to see how well the family had done. They had a real modern kitchen. They were no more cooking on a rented stoves and so forth.

GANZGLASS: [00:20:41] Well, what did they, what did they do?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:20:44] Hmm?

GANZGLASS: [00:20:44] What did the couple do?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:20:45] He was a farmer. He raised vegetables and they had a big vegetable garden beside the house. And then he would go up into the mountains and farm, I guess, and not sure what he did. And she was just a housewife. She stayed there with all the kids. She had five kids, including a brand-new baby. And when we came back, they sent, they sent one of the gals down to get the

brand-new baby who was now 17 or so, who was at school. They dragged her out of the school.

GANZGLASS: [00:21:22] So the fact that their kitchen was new and all of that, was that just economic growth in Honduras? Or were they particularly well off?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:21:32] I think they had, they had Peace Corps volunteers for years until it was stopped, until they stopped doing it. And I think that that had helped their economic status a great deal. And then, of course, they had one son who did work. He was in the military, and they had one daughter that was married. And they had two other, but lived with them. They all lived there in that one compound. And then, of course, I had a separate room. It was very, very nice. Um. It was, it was a lovely family. I mean, they were very, they did not speak any English at all.

GANZGLASS: [00:22:26] Were you the first volunteer to stay with them or had they had?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:22:29] I was the second. I was the second volunteer to stay with them.

GANZGLASS: [00:22:33] And then others came after.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:22:35] And others were, yeah. And. I think I was the second. I might have been the first, but I think I was the second. But I remember one thing that, um. I, they came, the staff came and asked if there was any problems and so forth. And I said, well, one of the problems is I can't study at night because I have no light. And they said, well, they don't, they just don't have any lights.

GANZGLASS: [00:23:09] So there was no electricity in this town?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:23:11] Not at that time. But later on they had electricity.

GANZGLASS: [00:23:14] Well, '86 is pretty late not to have electricity. So this, they were way up in the mountains?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:23:20] They were pretty much up in the mountains. They were on the edge of the town and, um. So it was quite a, it was quite a walk down. And it was a very poor village. It wasn't a very, you know. And actually our training, our training center, the school itself was in the next town over which I, if I remember correctly, it was called Santa Barbara. And that's where the school was. When we went back in 2004, the school had been moved up to Comayaguela, so it had been moved completely out of there, away from Tegucigalpa completely. So.

GANZGLASS: [00:24:05] So now talk a little bit about or talk as much as you want about your job. You finish training and then where were you assigned to, to work?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:24:14] The first place I was assigned was to work with rural technical projects in Comayaguela. No, that's not right, correct. I'll think of it in a minute. In the south. Oh dear.

GANZGLASS: [00:24:38] Choluteca? You mentioned that. Okay, it doesn't matter what.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:24:47] I'll think of in a minute. That's trouble when you get to be 80, you know, you don't remember these things. Choluteca.

GANZGLASS: [00:24:56] Choluteca.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:24:59] Okay, so we were in Choluteca. I lived with a widow who had a very nice ranch house and made very good friends with another couple who, Peace Corps couple who were there. Um, and I don't remember what they did, but.

GANZGLASS: [00:25:28] Who were there, but not in your group, who were already there?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:25:33] No, they were already there. And while I was there, I worked on setting up accounting. My degree is in finance and accounting, and then I have a B.S. degree in finance accounting. And I went out to various different projects. Also, I also worked with a couple of banks. So I was working, setting up business plans, for a fish farm, a shrimp farm, a garlic farm. There were two different banks. Um. And that's all I did down there. That's. And my office was attached to Plan [International] in Honduras, which is now called.

GANZGLASS: [00:26:50] What was it called, Plan?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:26:51] Plan. Plan in Honduras. And it's now called Childreach, I think, it's, the name has changed.

GANZGLASS: [00:27:05] And this was an NGO that was there?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:27:10] Yes.

GANZGLASS: [00:27:10] And you did all of this in Spanish or in English or how did you do this?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:27:16] Most of, most of it, except for, um, I was doing some training programs too. And in fact, I was in. I was in Tela in the north at a training program when my mother died, and they called me there. And that program I was teaching in English to, um, government people. Government workers.

GANZGLASS: [00:27:58] So when you went in to do business, a business plan, did they not have any business plan or you help? They'd just started?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:28:07] I mean, something like, you know. Well, I got to be friends, for instance, with a little corner store and they had no idea how to even. They didn't even have an idea of how to plan what you should be ordering. You know, if the Coca-Cola man came and he delivered Coke and orange and ginger ale and whatever,

and they didn't have a plan to say, we don't need any more orange, because I still, we still have boxes and boxes of orange. So I, I, you know, set up for them how to establish an order.

GANZGLASS: [00:28:56] An inventory.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:28:57] An inventory order, so that they wouldn't overbuy in some things and underbuy in others. And the other thing is they had no idea how they made money. You know, they, they'd say, well, we've, we made some money today or we didn't make money. But they weren't educated enough to really be, you know, have a sophisticated accounting system. And basically one of the, one of the little, not that particular group, but another one that was way out in an aldea, I just taught them the red box and the blue box system. And that was every morning you started with 20 pesos in the red box. And at the end of the night, you took everything out of out of the red box except the 20 pesos, and you put it in the blue box. And that was yours. And then.

GANZGLASS: [00:29:53] That's how much you made.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:29:54] That's how much you made. And then for, to teach them to do inventory, we did one more box. So whatever they, they had had to pay, to buy for inventory. They had to, they had to take it out of the blue box, put it into the yellow box and record it. And that was, that was, it was a very simple system. But because they couldn't, they didn't have a system any other way to do it.

GANZGLASS: [00:30:30] Were these concepts totally new or they?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:30:33] Yeah.

GANZGLASS: [00:30:33] Totally, they hadn't even thought about it?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:30:34] No. They just, they would just have a basket of money. And the money would come in and the money would go out. They

never knew how much money they had or if they were making a profit or losing money.

GANZGLASS: [00:30:49] Do you think they made more money after they had their inventory?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:30:53] Yeah, because they, they began to realize. You know, they didn't know what to do with all this extra stuff. And, you know, to me, I couldn't believe that they, and they thought that they had to have it.

GANZGLASS: [00:31:08] The extra stuff meaning?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:31:11] Meaning that when the delivery man came and delivered.

GANZGLASS: [00:31:14] Oh, the extra product.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:31:14] Six boxes of this and six boxes of that and six boxes of something else, that they had to take all six boxes. And they did because they didn't order. They didn't tell the man.

GANZGLASS: [00:31:25] What they needed.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:31:26] That they needed. If they had an order for it. And once they did that, they found that was, that worked very well.

GANZGLASS: [00:31:32] Yeah.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:31:32] And so they began to learn some business principles. They just, you know, it's like a. When you talk about a mom and pop store, these little rincons, that's really exactly what they were. They were, okay, we have some extra groceries and we'll sell those. But they never had an idea of how much money they were making or whether it was working or whether they were losing money. So.

GANZGLASS: [00:32:03] So that's the small. What about the shrimp and the fish farms?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:32:07] Oh, those, those are. I taught.

GANZGLASS: [00:32:10] Accounting?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:32:10] Right. Taught them.

GANZGLASS: [00:32:12] And had they had any accounting at all?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:32:15] Not really. But, um, but they all had, actually the shrimp farm. I was offered the job of running. It was a big, big shrimp farm there. And it's owned by a consortium from Kansas. And they offered me a job at \$50,000 a year, which was a lot of money in 1986.

GANZGLASS: [00:32:40] Huh.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:32:41] And, uh, and when I moved up to Tegucigalpa, that's, I lived in one of their apartments up there.

GANZGLASS: [00:32:51] So this was an American company running a?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:32:55] Yeah.

GANZGLASS: [00:32:55] A shrimp farm. A fish farm?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:32:57] Yes. Shrimp.

GANZGLASS: [00:32:58] A shrimp farm. And Peace Corps helping that company. Now, you would have expected a Kansas based company to have an accounting system.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:33:09] Well, they did. They did in the States, but they didn't have anything there. Didn't have anything there.

GANZGLASS: [00:33:18] Okay. So you, first you worked in the south and then?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:33:21] And then.

GANZGLASS: [00:33:22] Then you went to the north?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:33:24] No, then I went to Tegucigalpa.

GANZGLASS: [00:33:25] Oh, yeah.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:33:26] I, what happened was I developed an allergy to the dust and my legs turned all red. I developed an allergy. So they moved me up. And at that point, I moved up to the city, and that's when I started to work with the banks. And I also started to do a lot of traveling. I went up to La Esperanza. I mean, all over. I was going all, all over everywhere. And that was very interesting to me because I got to see a lot of the country. And I worked for the radio station. It was actually up in Roatan and, um.

GANZGLASS: [00:34:20] This is all with the same NGO that you were assigned to?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:34:24] Mm hmm. Yeah. And the radio station was English speaking because Roatan was English speaking.

GANZGLASS: [00:34:34] Why was Roatan English speaking?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:34:36] It was used to be British Honduras. It was originally part of what is now Belize.

GANZGLASS: [00:34:45] Ah.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:34:45] But when they divided that all up and the British left, got out of there, Roatan ended up. The three little, they call them three Bay Islands. Roatan, Utila, and Guanaja. And they, they ended up belonging to Honduras because they were closer and they had resorts out there. They had a resort out there. And that's

where I was the first Christmas that I was out there. I had gone up to Roatan and I went to the resort. And they, you know, you have to remember this time we didn't have telephones. Never mind, never mind smartphones. We didn't even have telephones. If you wanted to make a call, you had to go to a telephone company. And they, you would be assigned a booth. And when that booth became open, they would then connect you. But when we were up in Roatan, all they had was, uh, the CB radios, the, uh.

GANZGLASS: [00:35:57] Shortwave.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:35:57] Shortwave radios, and they couldn't get through to the States. And it was Christmas Day. And so I asked if I could use their CB and try to call my home. And they said, well, you can try, but nobody can get through. Nobody's had any luck. And I sat down and I hit the thing and I got right through. And there were about 20 people that came flying in. Don't hang up! And I got a connection into Florida.

GANZGLASS: [00:36:29] Wow.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:36:30] Somehow I got the connection. And so it was the last time I talked to my mom. She died a couple of months later.

GANZGLASS: [00:36:39] Oh, well, it's good that you had that call. So did you make friends while you were there with Hondurans?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:36:46] Yes. Yeah, yeah.

GANZGLASS: [00:36:49] With people you were working with, or what was your social life like?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:36:54] Well, I didn't have. I wouldn't say that I had much of a social life at all, but I did have friends. And then when I moved up to Tegucigalpa, one day I was coming up from town and there was a couple sitting over on the, obviously Americans, sitting on the steps looking very bereft. And I said in English, do you have a

problem? And they said, yes, we can't find our way back to our hotel. So I asked them where they were and I said, well, come on, I'll take you back up there. And they had just arrived and she was a secretary to the Marines.

GANZGLASS: [00:37:44] Oh.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:37:45] So she was, you know, she was in the compound and she spoke no Spanish at all and never did learn any Spanish all the time she was there. Didn't have to, because she was in the American compound. And the house right next door to her was a Contra house. And she didn't know that. And I'd come down and they had this.

GANZGLASS: [00:38:08] But you knew that.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:38:09] I knew it. I knew the guy. I would talk to them because I was speaking Spanish by that time, of course. So I talked to them and they had this dog that was absolutely ferocious. And he also thought I was the best thing since canned beer. He loved me.

GANZGLASS: [00:38:25] The dog?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:38:26] The dog. And he would come running out. The first time he did it, you know, he came running out. And the first time I did it, I just looked at him and I said, sit down. And he did. And I said it in English. I didn't even say it in Spanish. And he sat down and it was just a very, very funny thing. They said, how, you know, how did you do it? Because they came running out right away. And after that, the dog would just watch for me to come if I was going to come over to see Roseanne.

GANZGLASS: [00:38:54] So what conversations did you have with the Contras?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:38:58] Well, I knew that they were Contras and they knew I knew. But we avoided it because they knew I was Peace Corps and they didn't want to. That was a very interesting thing. While I

was there, they blew up the consulate, the consulate, whatever. They blew up one of the buildings and burned a whole lot of the cars, the American embassy. And the night that happened, all of the Peace Corps people had been invited to another area away from that area.

GANZGLASS: [00:39:35] By the Contras?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:39:37] By Hondurans. They knew. They knew what was going on. Somebody set it up so all of the Peace Corps volunteers were not anywhere near the embassy the night that happened. So who invited us? It was a party. It was, you know. And that was probably one of the more interesting. We couldn't prove it. But how come we were all somewhere else?

GANZGLASS: [00:40:19] And the Americans didn't even know that the building next to the compound was, uh, were Contras?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:40:29] They didn't. Certainly Roseanne and Max didn't. They had no idea at all. Whether the military did, I would suspect not. They just, they. That was the thing that I noticed, because I got to know the Marines, some of the Marines, and I got to know a number of the people who worked in the embassy through Roseanne, who became a good friend. It's very interesting. I had actually known Roseanne. I had met her when she was in Switzerland years before, when she was with. And it was just by chance that she happened to be here. And that's why when I saw them, I kept thinking she looked familiar. But I didn't remember at that time. I didn't remember that she, that I had known, that I had met her.

GANZGLASS: [00:41:30] So you were friends and you were friends with people in the embassy. Did you socialize with them?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:41:37] Only once. And that was I remember going to a Halloween party, again with Roseanne, but not.

GANZGLASS: [00:41:45] And did you live by yourself or did you live?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:41:47] Yes, I lived by myself.

GANZGLASS: [00:41:49] In both places? In the original in the south?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:41:52] No, not in Choluteca. I lived with the widow.

GANZGLASS: [00:41:55] Oh, that's right. With a Honduran widow.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:41:58] Yes.

GANZGLASS: [00:41:58] And you had found that place by yourself?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:42:00] Yes.

GANZGLASS: [00:42:01] It wasn't a Peace Corps place.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:42:03] No, it wasn't. No, they didn't place me there. I found that when I went down there.

GANZGLASS: [00:42:07] And what about the people in the NGO you worked with? Did you become friends with them?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:42:15] Well, no, not really. We were friendly at work.

GANZGLASS: [00:42:21] Yeah.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:42:22] But, no.

GANZGLASS: [00:42:23] Were you lonely? Did you feel isolated or did you have plenty of contact?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:42:27] Yeah, I guess I did, but I was used to being alone. By that time, I was kind of used to being alone. Um. And I would read. I have always been a big reader, so I would read and I. You have to remember that when I was in Choluteca, that five nights a

week I was teaching English. So I was tired. I was working all day and teaching English at night. Um, and there was one other girl from California that came and she was posted to Choluteca, but she went home very early. Um, I think she became ill. I've, I've kind of forgotten what happened to her, but she, she was one of the very first people that left the group. We lost a lot of people out of our group.

GANZGLASS: [00:43:26] Why?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:43:29] Um. Well, Rick had a Honduran girlfriend and she was killed and he didn't want to stay after that.

GANZGLASS: [00:43:40] So random things?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:43:42] Random things. Yeah. Well, Rosie and Arnold went home early because Arnold was injured, severely injured, and Peace Corps did not do much for him. He had, they had a hell of a fight to get medical help. And she came back briefly. They went home and then she came back briefly. But he was, he was never, for instance, able to really travel in an airplane again. And he was, ruined his back. He was doing something with ponchos, and I've forgotten, you know, what he was working with.

GANZGLASS: [00:44:28] And you said that you had to leave early because your mother died.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:44:32] Yeah. What happened was, my mother died. I went home for the funeral and came back. So I was only gone a couple of weeks. And I came back and I worked. That was, that was in March. And then I came back and then the summer, my office closed down. And so I, I came home.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:45:03] Your office in Honduras?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:45:05] In Honduras, closed down. And I came home for two weeks, um, just to try to help my father get adjusted and so forth.

And then I went, I came right back. And then in late November, early December, I guess it was, my daughter called. And she said, Mom, you have got to, she got hold of me. And she said, you've got to come home and take care of Grandpa. He's just fallen apart completely. So I had been there since, you know, I've been there, what? 16 months. And I wanted to come back. But at that point, my dad, um, he was diagnosed with macular degeneration, and he started to just go right downhill.

GANZGLASS: [00:46:03] So you really couldn't come back.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:46:05] So I never, I never went back. But everybody said, you know, anytime you want to come back, come on back so.

GANZGLASS: [00:46:14] So thinking of your time there, how do you, how do you think about it?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:46:21] Um.

GANZGLASS: [00:46:21] What influence has it had on you?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:46:25] Well, I was, for one thing, I would say it changed my life completely.

GANZGLASS: [00:46:32] Even in midlife, it changed your life?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:46:35] Yeah. Oh, yeah.

GANZGLASS: [00:46:35] How did it change your life?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:46:38] Well, I think. I had had a very privileged background, very, very privileged as a child. I had gone to private schools and, you know, college and so forth. And I think that I was probably much more, although I'd had a very, very rough marriage, which was not, not good. Not a good marriage at all. But I think that I was much more centered on me. And after living in a country like that, I became much more world conscious. I had traveled. I

mean, I owned property in Costa Rica and I traveled a lot, and I traveled a lot on business. But I didn't, I didn't relate to what I was seeing around me much. After I came home, for instance, Rosie and I went to, um, Tanzania.

GANZGLASS: [00:47:51] Rosie was your friend from Peace Corps?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:47:54] Right.

GANZGLASS: [00:47:54] Yeah.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:47:54] And by that time, of course, as I said, Arnold no longer could travel. And she and I went to Tanzania, and we were driving from the airport to the hotel that, this was with a tour. And we said at the same, that we drove into this little kind of little village, and both of us at the same time said, this looks like Honduras. So, you know, we were much more aware. I became very much more aware of the poverty, um. And also became aware that people are also very much alike all over the world. Maybe our governments aren't, but people are. Um.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:48:48] And the Hondurans were, many of them were very, very generous with nothing to give basically. And they were kind and they were very, many of them, very happy people. The thing that I remember more than anything else was how loving they were to their children.

GANZGLASS: [00:49:09] Mm hmm.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:49:10] And the Mexicans are, too, because Bob and I have lived in Mexico. So, um. And that's, that.

GANZGLASS: [00:49:19] So changed your whole outlook. Have you, have you? How have you acted on that?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:49:26] I married a Peace Corps volunteer who'd become Peace Corps staff.

GANZGLASS: [00:49:29] So very different outlook on the world.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:49:33] Well, when I came back, when I realized I couldn't go back, I did. I did apply. I joined the Boston area returned Peace Corps volunteer group. And at that point, they were falling apart. They were falling apart financially, completely financially. They didn't have any idea how to do a budget. They were, they.

GANZGLASS: [00:49:55] Business plan!

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:49:56] Business plan. They didn't have a business plan. I became the treasurer. We started out with, we had an angel who gave us \$600 to restart. She was, she was a doctor, and she is a doctor. And, um, she gave us \$600 to restart. And when I left that job, five years later, they had \$12,000 in the kitty. So they had a business plan. And they, you know, we raised money and we, and they continued to be a very good and active group. So but through, through that, I met Bob Terry. And Bob Terry was one of the original staff that, uh, basically he had known or he knew Sarge [Shriver], I guess, through the Experiment for International Living.

GANZGLASS: [00:51:01] Uh huh.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:51:02] And Sarge I guess I called him up and said, you know, we're starting something called the Peace Corps. Come on down to Washington and help start it. And he will tell you that they were on the floor with telephones, no furniture at all, and calling around and raising. He raised 30 volunteers and took them off to. And that's how I met him. It was, we were. Um. He came, he was a, he was on the National Peace Corps Association board.

GANZGLASS: [00:51:36] Uh huh.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:51:37] And he was the fundraising chairman. And he came up to speak with Mark Gearan. And that was the first time I ever saw

him. And at that time, he was still married. They weren't really living together, but he was still married. And I knew, and I thought all the good ones are always taken. But a few years later, a few years, maybe seven or eight years later, and he was then single.

GANZGLASS: [00:52:12] So then you got married.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:52:13] And I was, by that time I was on the board of the National Association.

GANZGLASS: [00:52:18] So this is a real NPCA marriage?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:52:22] Yeah, it's an NPCA marriage.

GANZGLASS: [00:52:25] And when you think back of your work in Honduras, do you think it had an impact on the, on the companies you worked with? Were you able to?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:52:39] I know a couple of them failed anyway. I know later on that they failed. I have no idea what would have happened with the fish farm. I imagine they probably are more or less still in existence. But Honduras, as you know, Honduras is in, it is still the second poorest country in this hemisphere, Haiti beating it out for the winning spot. The murder rate is incredible. The government is unbelievably corrupt. And I have no idea. When we went back, the only organization that I knew was still in existence was the radio. The radio station, which was up in Roatan, was not on the mainland. It was up in Roatan.

GANZGLASS: [00:53:35] Was there as much violence when you were there or not? That all happened later?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:53:39] No, that started happening later. There was some. There were people that disappeared. And there were. There were people that would get, you know, that they might be riding their motorcycles and they get picked off. But it was not directed against, absolutely not directed against foreigners at all and

certainly not against Peace Corps volunteers. Later on, we had volunteers that were injured, but not when I was in. San Pedro Sula was not a very safe place to be. And there was an area of Teguc that was not a safe place to be. But basically, you know, you don't go into Roxbury either in Boston, it's not a very safe place to be.

GANZGLASS: [00:54:35] Yeah.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:54:36] So, you know, you used to not go to Bedford-Stuyvesant in New York.

GANZGLASS: [00:54:42] And you just know that. But it wasn't, it wasn't as widespread as it became later on.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:54:47] No, now it's not safe. And.

GANZGLASS: [00:54:49] And did the Peace Corps leave Honduras because of the violence?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:54:53] Yes.

GANZGLASS: [00:54:54] When did the Peace Corps leave Honduras?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:54:56] I think about four or five years ago. Yeah, they had two, I think they had two incidents. One was a woman that was injured on a bus. And another, another one was another incident. Anyway, they determined it was getting too dangerous. They had also changed a lot of things. When we, when we were there, for instance, you could, you could walk into the Peace Corps buildings. When we came back in 2004, there was a wire mesh gate. You had to have a passport. You had to have, you know.

GANZGLASS: [00:55:41] So it was within the official American compound by that time.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:55:47] Well, it still had its own, no. It still had its own office.

GANZGLASS: [00:55:51] But it had all that security as well.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:55:53] Right. It had all that security, which we didn't have at all. None of it. We just, you know. It was, you know, there was a man at the gate because he knew all the volunteers.

GANZGLASS: [00:56:06] Yeah.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:56:07] And so, you know, he'd just open the gate and it wasn't. But boy, this was, this was not a gate. This was an enclosed mesh wiring. And they had had incidences there. And then they moved. They moved the office up to Comayagua. And one of the fellows that had been in my group had become the Peace Corps director there. And he was married to a Honduran. And they, um, they moved, they had moved the school, excuse me, not the office, but the school. They had moved the school up there away from Tegucigalpa. Because it was, because the area there was just becoming too dangerous.

GANZGLASS: [00:57:00] So do you have any other, any other stories you'd like to tell about Honduras or your time in Honduras?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:57:10] What am I telling you? What are some of the other stories? Riding on the back of a cabbage truck to get to one of my sites. That was rather interesting.

GANZGLASS: [00:57:20] Was it a bumpy ride?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:57:22] It was a bumpy ride. But oftentimes we would bum rides. We were not allowed to be on the back of motorcycles. So, or to have motorcycles. By that time, motorcycles had been banned as a means of transportation. And so the only way you could get up into a lot of these *aldeas* was on the back of a truck that might be going up there. So. So we did that. I remember walking up into one *aldea* that I was going, and I don't remember why I was going up to that particular *aldea*, but having to walk up

the riverbed to get there, that was the only place you could get. And when the rains came, they did not have any way to get out of there. That might have been, I. I worked as a translator for Doctors Without Borders. They came and that might have been why.

GANZGLASS: [00:58:28] In Honduras?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:58:29] Yeah.

GANZGLASS: [00:58:30] So your Spanish was good by that time?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:58:33] Yeah, it was pretty good by that time. And, um. It's very hard trying to explain to an American doctor why the kid just got bitten by a pig, because they ran in the streets. The doctor would look at the kid and say, what is this? I'd say, it's a pig bite. And he'd say, well, how does he get a pig bite? I said, well, they run around the street all the time. What are they doing running around the street all the time? I said, because they don't have any fences.

GANZGLASS: [00:59:06] Those are the things you learn in Peace Corps.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:59:08] Those are the things you learn in Peace Corps. And so I did act a couple of times as a translator, which was very, was very nice.

GANZGLASS: [00:59:19] That's great. Well, it sounds like you learned a lot.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:59:22] I did. I have, most of my memories there are pretty, pretty pleasant. It was, as I said, I was sorry that I couldn't stay, or couldn't go back. But I am, my brother died young, so I'm an only, I was then.

GANZGLASS: [00:59:45] An only child.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:59:46] Only child. So there was nobody else really to take care.

GANZGLASS: [00:59:49] But you sounded like you were a really good sport at 50 as well. So your living conditions were not what you were used to at home, but you were.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [00:59:57] Absolutely not.

GANZGLASS: [00:59:59] But you made do.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [01:00:00] I made do.

GANZGLASS: [01:00:02] Did you had, did you have indoor plumbing?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [01:00:05] Oh, yes. And particularly, I did have a fairly nice, you know, relatively nice apartment in Tegucigalpa. The house in, the house in Choluteca, that, Choluteca had a severe water problem. So you, you had to have somebody. That's why I lived with somebody. You had to have somebody that could collect the water. The clothes got washed in a *pila*, you know, they got washed in the outside sink. And you took *pila* baths, you took.

GANZGLASS: [01:00:42] Bucket?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [01:00:43] Bucket baths, because there was no real running water. And when I first came home when my mother died, and I first came home, we had a bathroom in the front of the house. And Dad said something about, are you getting any hot water? Because the furnace was in the back. And I looked at him, I said, I don't know. I never turned the hot water on. Because we never had any hot water, so I never turned it on. So he was very amused by that.

GANZGLASS: [01:01:19] Yeah. That's great.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [01:01:20] So there were some things that I got pretty used to, I guess. I never got, I guess I never got really used to the food because I lost a lot of weight. I came home, I was very thin. My cousin, who was a doctor, said, if you don't gain 10 pounds, I'm not letting you go back.

GANZGLASS: [01:01:39] And that's because you were sick or?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [01:01:41] No. No, I wasn't sick, I just. You know, how much beans and rice can you eat? We had almost a steady diet of beans, rice, bananas, and petit pans, little breads. And that's, that's just all.

GANZGLASS: [01:01:56] No, no vegetables?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [01:01:58] No vegetables, unless we were near. And there was, um, an advent group of religious Seventh Day Adventists, and they grew vegetables. And if I could get near them, I would buy vegetables, of course. But that was very rare. I had.

GANZGLASS: [01:02:26] But you were out in the countryside and you assume there were lots of vegetables growing in the country.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [01:02:31] They didn't grow vegetables. They, they didn't have very good diets. They ate a lot of, you know, tortillas. And, um, I don't eat meat.

GANZGLASS: [01:02:50] Oh, okay.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [01:02:51] So I didn't eat the beef and so forth. And I never drank the milk, because it was, the milk was not, uh.

GANZGLASS: [01:03:00] Pasteurized?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [01:03:01] Pasteurized at all. And of course, I didn't drink because, number one, liquor was very expensive. They only had, mostly they only had beer. You couldn't find wine or liquor like

that. And I don't like beer very well, so I never drank anything.
And so I guess kept losing weight.

GANZGLASS: [01:03:27] It's a good way to go on a diet.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [01:03:28] That's a good way to go on a diet.

GANZGLASS: [01:03:31] Because so often Peace Corps, well, you know, the story is always that women gain weight and men lose weight.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [01:03:38] Right. Yes. And one of the other gals who was, uh, also she was in her forties and she gained a lot of weight. And I'm not sure. I'm not quite sure why. Now, Rosie didn't either. Rosie and Rosie and Arnold didn't gain weight, but I got really skinny, so I just kind of would eat enough to not be hungry.

GANZGLASS: [01:04:06] It just wasn't interesting enough for you.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [01:04:08] But then I found out, you know, and I sort of, when I finally came home, I thought, oh, this is going to be great. Took me about two weeks to be, before I started to crave beans and rice. I missed it.

GANZGLASS: [01:04:23] You never know. Okay, well, it's been a good interview. Thank you.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [01:04:28] I loved it, and I really.

GANZGLASS: [01:04:30] Good.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [01:04:31] And if I hadn't gotten into the Peace Corps, I'd have never met Bob. And we've had a wonderful, wonderful 17 years together.

GANZGLASS: [01:04:38] So. So that's great. And you're still involved with the Peace Corps?

WHITNEY-TERRY: [01:04:42] Oh, yes. Yeah. Actually, I, uh, eventually I, my dad lived on Cape Cod, which is where we live now. And I eventually restarted or started a group down there, Cape Cod RPCVs, which were sort of associated with the Boston area group for a little while. And now that's been taken over by younger people. So, yeah.

GANZGLASS: [01:05:12] That's good.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [01:05:13] Yeah, I enjoyed it.

GANZGLASS: [01:05:15] Excellent. Thank you.

WHITNEY-TERRY: [01:05:18] You're welcome.

[END OF INTERVIEW]