

**Scott Zoromski Oral History Interview**  
Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** Scott Zoromski  
**Interviewer:** Phyllis Noble  
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**Biographical Note**

Scott Zoromski served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Honduras from 1978 to 1980 as an industrial arts teacher.

**Access**

Open.

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Oral History Interview

with

Scott Zoromski

April 8, 2016  
Tomah, Wisconsin

By Phyllis Noble

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

NOBLE: [00:00:04] Today is April 8th, 2016. This is Phyllis Noble. I'm interviewing Scott Zoromski, who was a Peace Corps volunteer in Honduras in Central America from 1978 to 1980. Scott was a volunteer in secondary education. He worked as a teacher of industrial arts in Honduras. Scott, how old were you when you joined the Peace Corps?

ZOROMSKI: [00:00:34] My early twenties.

NOBLE: [00:00:36] Okay, right out of college?

ZOROMSKI: [00:00:38] Didn't graduate.

NOBLE: [00:00:39] Okay, so you went in without a degree?

ZOROMSKI: [00:00:41] Yes.

NOBLE: [00:00:42] Yes. Okay, terrific. And let's talk about who you were. Let's back up.

ZOROMSKI: [00:00:48] I was in college.

NOBLE: [00:00:49] You were in college?

ZOROMSKI: [00:00:50] Yes, I was in college at the time. And after a couple of years of college, I realized I needed to find some direction. So I took a break from college and joined the Peace Corps.

NOBLE: [00:01:06] What an interesting way to take time out and figure out what's important to you.

ZOROMSKI: [00:01:10] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:01:10] We'll get back to that.

ZOROMSKI: [00:01:11] Okay.

NOBLE: [00:01:12] Where did you grow up? Where were you born?

ZOROMSKI: [00:01:14] I was born in Appleton, Wisconsin. At age six, we moved to a small town called Thorpe, Wisconsin?

NOBLE: [00:01:22] Near Appleton?

ZOROMSKI: [00:01:22] No, it's more near Eau Claire.

NOBLE: [00:01:26] Okay. Actually, I might mention that we're doing this interview in a place where neither one of us lives. We each drove 2 hours to a central meeting point, and we are in Tomah, Wisconsin, which is quite new to me.

ZOROMSKI: [00:01:40] Okay.

NOBLE: [00:01:40] Drove through sleet and snow in April.

ZOROMSKI: [00:01:46] Exactly. Yeah, you never know up here.

NOBLE: [00:01:48] That's right. That's right. Okay. So you grew up in Thorpe.

ZOROMSKI: [00:01:54] Thorpe, Wisconsin, yes.

NOBLE: [00:01:55] And talk a little bit about your family. What did your parents do?

ZOROMSKI: [00:02:00] Well, my dad was a insurance salesman. He had his own office and he sold for independent line, or he was independent and sold for other lines. My mother was a Catholic school teacher. I think she pretty much taught like sixth, seventh, eighth grade throughout her career. So the upper grades, the grades were one through eight there. Then she became principal of the school after a while and then she retired.

NOBLE: [00:02:32] All right. Ah, I can't even imagine it would be like to be the kid of the principal.

ZOROMSKI: [00:02:37] I was pretty old by then. I was now nowhere near school age then.

NOBLE: [00:02:41] Okay. You didn't have to.

ZOROMSKI: [00:02:44] No, no. She was my teacher in fourth grade.

NOBLE: [00:02:46] Oh, my goodness. You must have been proud.

ZOROMSKI: [00:02:50] Yeah. Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:02:52] And you had siblings?

ZOROMSKI: [00:02:53] Yes, I have two brothers and two sisters.

NOBLE: [00:02:56] Where are you in the lineup?

ZOROMSKI: [00:02:57] I'm the oldest.

NOBLE: [00:02:58] You're the oldest.

ZOROMSKI: [00:03:00] Yes, I'm the oldest.

NOBLE: [00:03:01] Yeah. So you went to, then did you go to, you went to the Catholic school where your mother taught?

ZOROMSKI: [00:03:06] In Thorpe. Until eighth grade.

NOBLE: [00:03:08] Right, right. And then?

ZOROMSKI: [00:03:10] High school in Thorpe.

NOBLE: [00:03:12] Uh huh. Public high school?

ZOROMSKI: [00:03:13] Yeah, public high school.

NOBLE: [00:03:15] And I'm thinking about a family with five kids. Could you all cram into one car? Pretty tight.

ZOROMSKI: [00:03:22] We had two cars.

NOBLE: [00:03:22] You had two cars. Were you, did you take family vacations?

ZOROMSKI: [00:03:26] Once in a while, yeah.

NOBLE: [00:03:27] Yeah, yeah. And, um. Oh, the light just went off.

ZOROMSKI: [00:03:33] That's okay. It's because nobody's moving around I guess.

NOBLE: [00:03:36] We can.

ZOROMSKI: [00:03:37] It's okay.

NOBLE: [00:03:37] It's all right. We're sitting by a window here. I'm glad we chose the seat by the window.

ZOROMSKI: [00:03:41] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:03:44] I'm wondering if you ever had a chance to do any international travel with your family?

ZOROMSKI: [00:03:49] Not with my family, no. I went to Germany on a semester abroad program when I was at Stevens Point in college.

NOBLE: [00:03:57] Yeah. And what did you, when you were in high school, did you study Spanish?

ZOROMSKI: [00:04:03] No.

NOBLE: [00:04:04] No. Did you have any foreign language at all?

ZOROMSKI: [00:04:06] None.

NOBLE: [00:04:06] No. And your parents spoke only English?

ZOROMSKI: [00:04:09] Yes.

NOBLE: [00:04:09] Yeah, yeah, yeah. So what kind of kid were you in high school? Did you play sports? Did you?

ZOROMSKI: [00:04:17] I played sports. I was an average student, you know, the normal, pretty much whatever normal kid is.

NOBLE: [00:04:25] Regular kid, yeah, yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:04:27] I played football, yeah.

NOBLE: [00:04:29] Oh, yeah. I'm looking at your shirt. Is that a G for the Green Bay Packers?

ZOROMSKI: [00:04:32] Yes.

NOBLE: [00:04:32] All right, so sports are still important.

ZOROMSKI: [00:04:35] Well, the Packers are anyway.

NOBLE: [00:04:36] Yes, of course. We are in Wisconsin.

ZOROMSKI: [00:04:38] Yeah. Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:04:39] And I'm wondering, when you had, did you do summer jobs when you were high school?

ZOROMSKI: [00:04:49] Oh, yes. I worked for my dad's friends who owned farms. And so we did, I did, made hay and took care of cattle, planted crops.

NOBLE: [00:04:58] Oh, that's terrific. So you knew.

ZOROMSKI: [00:05:00] During the summers in high school.

NOBLE: [00:05:01] How to move around the farm.

ZOROMSKI: [00:05:03] Yeah, I learned it. By the time I was a senior I could do quite a few things, but when I was a freshman, I couldn't do that much.

NOBLE: [00:05:10] But you learned on the job.

ZOROMSKI: [00:05:12] Yeah, I learned on the job.

NOBLE: [00:05:13] Good for you. That's great. That's a rich background.

ZOROMSKI: [00:05:16] Yeah, definitely.

NOBLE: [00:05:17] So then you went to, you left Thorpe and you went to Stevens Point, Wisconsin. Went to the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point for a couple of years.

ZOROMSKI: [00:05:26] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:05:27] And did your study abroad experience happened then before you join the Peace Corps?

ZOROMSKI: [00:05:31] Yes, it did.

NOBLE: [00:05:31] Talk about that a little bit. You went to Germany?

ZOROMSKI: [00:05:34] Yes. Well, it was kind of a last-minute decision. I heard a friend or two of mine were going and then I inquired to see if there was any openings left. And there were. And then I decided to go through the interview process to go on the semester abroad.

NOBLE: [00:05:49] Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:05:50] Because I was interested in traveling and learning in a different country and seeing what that was like.

NOBLE: [00:05:56] Good for you. So even at that early age of probably what, 18, 19?

ZOROMSKI: [00:06:00] I was a sophomore.

NOBLE: [00:06:00] Yeah, yeah. You already had this curiosity about other places.

ZOROMSKI: [00:06:05] Oh yeah, much earlier than that.

NOBLE: [00:06:06] Did you have, earlier than that you were into travel.

NOBLE: [00:06:09] Curious.

ZOROMSKI: [00:06:10] Did not travel but, yeah.

NOBLE: [00:06:11] Yeah. Did you speak German when you went there?

ZOROMSKI: [00:06:15] No, it wasn't a requirement. The teachers we had at that time spoke English and taught in English.

NOBLE: [00:06:20] Where in Germany?

ZOROMSKI: [00:06:22] We stayed in Munich and then we took classes in Munich and on weekends we had Eurail passes and we could travel.

NOBLE: [00:06:31] Wonderful.

ZOROMSKI: [00:06:31] Yeah, so that was nice.

NOBLE: [00:06:33] That's a good education.

ZOROMSKI: [00:06:34] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:06:34] So you traveled to other countries in Europe?

ZOROMSKI: [00:06:36] I traveled to the next-door countries. We tried to go to Italy, but there was a train strike, so we had to turn around and come back. And then I did make it into Austria just fine. Um, I think Austria is the only one really. We went, did go to East Germany for one day, so we crossed through Checkpoint Charlie. We could stay there one day. We had to take a certain amount of money and spend it there. So most of us just spent it at restaurants.

NOBLE: [00:07:05] But how interesting that you got over to East Germany. The wall was still up then.

ZOROMSKI: [00:07:10] Oh, yeah. So that was pretty amazing to have to go through that screening process at Checkpoint Charlie by the East German officials.

NOBLE: [00:07:21] Yeah. Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:07:22] It was serious business. No fooling around. No. Ask the, answer the question and move on when they tell you to. that's about it.

NOBLE: [00:07:30] Yes, sir.

ZOROMSKI: [00:07:31] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:07:32] And then, um, and then you went back to Stevens Point. Or was that your last semester?

ZOROMSKI: [00:07:38] It was only like a few months. It was like from August until beginning of December, one semester.

NOBLE: [00:07:46] Right. Then you finished up that year at University of Wisconsin?

ZOROMSKI: [00:07:51] I did finish the year, yeah.

NOBLE: [00:07:52] And were you studying any foreign languages at University of Wisconsin?

ZOROMSKI: [00:07:56] No, I didn't, no.

NOBLE: [00:07:57] Okay. All right. So you got, you got it into your head to join the Peace Corps, did you know? Did you know any other people who were in the Peace Corps?

ZOROMSKI: [00:08:05] No. There were a couple of us. My group of friends, there were two others who wanted to join the Peace Corps. They had just graduated from college, and they suggested that I do that too, to apply, because maybe it would be an option for me since they knew I wasn't going to continue. So then I applied and they were accepted to go to Guatemala and I was accepted to go to Honduras.

NOBLE: [00:08:31] How interesting. Were you disappointed that you didn't get to go with them?

ZOROMSKI: [00:08:34] No, not at all. No.

NOBLE: [00:08:36] What, did the application process have any, uh, were you given the option of saying where you wanted to go?

ZOROMSKI: [00:08:44] Where you didn't want to go.

NOBLE: [00:08:45] Where you didn't.

ZOROMSKI: [00:08:46] Yeah. Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:08:47] Were there places that you didn't want to go?

ZOROMSKI: [00:08:49] Too far away.

NOBLE: [00:08:50] Okay. All right.

ZOROMSKI: [00:08:51] I didn't want to be that, way on the other side of the world. Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:08:54] Yeah. So you're quite a, quite far away when you're in Central America, but you can still get there from here.

ZOROMSKI: [00:09:00] Oh, yeah. One day travel you can get back to Wisconsin if you do it right. Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:09:06] So I'm thinking this was, this would have been 1978.

ZOROMSKI: [00:09:11] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:09:12] What time of year?

ZOROMSKI: [00:09:14] Well, we went to training. There were seven of us, are you talking about training?

NOBLE: [00:09:19] Well, yeah. What time did you leave? What time of year was it when you had to say goodbye to your family?

ZOROMSKI: [00:09:25] Oh, okay. The summer of 1978, myself and six others from, six other men, young men from around the country, met at UW-Stout in Menomonie, Wisconsin. We had all applied to the Peace Corps, didn't know each other, of course. And the trainers in Washington wanted us to, because of our backgrounds, wanted us to teach industrial arts in one of eight or ten U.S. AID schools that were built in Honduras. They had built them and equipped the woodshop and metal shop area. So that's the industrial arts part. They had equipped also the home economics area of the high school, in country high schools, those dozen or so high schools that they had built. And they also equipped the science labs. So they were looking for, at that time, teachers for industrial arts.

NOBLE: [00:10:34] Mm hmm. And so you and the other six or seven guys were all going to be doing industrial art.

ZOROMSKI: [00:10:40] We were taken, yes, we were taken from our homes, flown to UW-Stout, Menomonie, Wisconsin.

NOBLE: [00:10:47] Flown?

ZOROMSKI: [00:10:48] Well, like if you traveled from California.

NOBLE: [00:10:51] That's right.

ZOROMSKI: [00:10:52] Or Louisiana, which one man was.

NOBLE: [00:10:54] Oh, so these other guys were not all Wisconsinites?

ZOROMSKI: [00:10:57] Oh, no.

NOBLE: [00:10:57] Even though you were meeting right here.

ZOROMSKI: [00:10:58] People from all over the United States apply for the Peace Corps.

NOBLE: [00:11:01] Right. Yes.

ZOROMSKI: [00:11:02] So they gathered those applications that thought they matched. I don't know how they did it. They got us seven together.

NOBLE: [00:11:09] Yeah. Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:11:09] And we, they, we went to UW-Stout. Of course, I didn't have to fly, but that's a detail because I live close. Yeah. For that summer, we attended classes to learn how to become industrial arts teachers.

NOBLE: [00:11:24] Okay. Here in Wisconsin?

ZOROMSKI: [00:11:25] Yes, all in English, all with English professors. And so in August, we completed that program, of '78. Then we were, then we went to Miami, Florida, for what they called staging. And staging was three days in Miami at a hotel. And we attended many meetings and got our shots.

NOBLE: [00:11:47] Your shots.

ZOROMSKI: [00:11:47] And then we flew to Honduras from there.

NOBLE: [00:11:50] Before we fly Honduras, what's happening back home here? What are your parents, your mom, your dad? You've got four siblings. What did they think of what you were doing?

ZOROMSKI: [00:12:03] I don't really remember.

NOBLE: [00:12:04] Do they seem supportive?

ZOROMSKI: [00:12:05] It was, it was a decision that I made. And my dad I remember saying, well, that's great. And my siblings, I don't know, they just weren't around. I mean, we were all in different places at different schools doing different things.

NOBLE: [00:12:18] Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:12:19] Our lives were not connected very well at that time. We're all out of the house and.

NOBLE: [00:12:25] Yeah, yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:12:27] So I imagine they thought it was great. I don't know. I never really asked them.

NOBLE: [00:12:33] But you were your own.

ZOROMSKI: [00:12:34] 33 years ago.

NOBLE: [00:12:35] Yeah, yeah, that's a while.

ZOROMSKI: [00:12:36] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:12:36] Okay, so you're finished with staging in Miami and they fly you to Honduras. Just how many, did you say there were seven of you?

ZOROMSKI: [00:12:45] In our, no. See, our seven joined the other volunteers for that group.

NOBLE: [00:12:49] In Miami.

ZOROMSKI: [00:12:50] Yes.

NOBLE: [00:12:51] Okay. Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:12:52] And then we were a little over 50 people in our group, I think 52 or 53.

NOBLE: [00:12:57] Okay.

ZOROMSKI: [00:12:58] And we were the largest group to come into Honduras at, up to that date. And so we were known as the big one.

NOBLE: [00:13:05] Uh huh.

ZOROMSKI: [00:13:07] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:13:08] And up until now, there's been no training in Spanish? It's strictly teaching methods and techniques of industrial art.

ZOROMSKI: [00:13:19] Oh, up until then, up until we got into country? Right, exactly.

NOBLE: [00:13:23] Yeah, yeah, yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:13:24] Exactly.

NOBLE: [00:13:25] So you knew what to do in an industrial arts classroom.

ZOROMSKI: [00:13:29] Right.

NOBLE: [00:13:29] Did they do any practice teaching here in Wisconsin in high schools with industrial arts?

ZOROMSKI: [00:13:34] They do, but you have to be enrolled in their program. And this was only to train us in a short amount of time.

NOBLE: [00:13:40] Yeah. So. So you didn't get any hands-on experience here before going down to Honduras.

ZOROMSKI: [00:13:47] In my past, I had done some things that were similar to teaching.

NOBLE: [00:13:52] Yeah. But I mean, Peace Corps training did not include practice teaching.

ZOROMSKI: [00:13:55] Peace Corps training for us seven included training from the professors and teachers at UW-Stout. Then we went to staging. Then from staging we went to Tegucigalpa, Honduras, and we immediately began a ten week training program. Language and cross cultural. The

language training was 6 hours per day. Cross cultural was 2 hours per day. The language training was one professor per three students or four students at the most for that whole day.

NOBLE: [00:14:32] Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:14:33] They were from the university in Tegucigalpa. They were teachers there but, and they knew, so they knew English just fine, but they did not use English in the classroom at all or any time we saw them in the building halls, anything like that. So we were, we learned it by immersion. Yes. There were many of us in our group, however, who were fluent in Spanish for whatever reason. They took it in college. They grew up in a Hispanic family.

NOBLE: [00:15:02] Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:15:03] For whatever reason. And they did not have to join in on the language training. So what they did was do other, they started their jobs pretty much right away.

NOBLE: [00:15:15] Ah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:15:16] They stayed with us the ten weeks in Tegucigalpa, but they were working on their programs wherever they were stationed.

NOBLE: [00:15:24] During your training in Tegucigalpa, where were you living? Were you in a dorm?

ZOROMSKI: [00:15:27] I was living with a family.

NOBLE: [00:15:29] A family.

ZOROMSKI: [00:15:30] We each got placed in a family. Only one volunteer per family.

NOBLE: [00:15:34] Oh, excellent. And I'm assuming that nobody in that family spoke English.

ZOROMSKI: [00:15:38] Nobody did.

NOBLE: [00:15:39] Okay, so 6 hours a day in the classroom as a group of three or four students.

ZOROMSKI: [00:15:43] Correct.

NOBLE: [00:15:44] And then you're placed with the family.

ZOROMSKI: [00:15:46] Yeah. And this was done by a private company that Peace Corps had contracted with.

NOBLE: [00:15:52] Did you find it, did you, did you find it good in terms of language learning?

ZOROMSKI: [00:15:56] I was, I was very interested in learning another language. I always had been. So, um, I was, for me the classes were great. For others, maybe they were a little bit tedious. But I, I enjoyed them a lot.

NOBLE: [00:16:10] Oh, good, wonderful.

ZOROMSKI: [00:16:10] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:16:11] So. And that lasted for ten weeks.

ZOROMSKI: [00:16:14] Ten weeks, yes.

NOBLE: [00:16:15] Yeah. What was the family like that you were living with during training?

ZOROMSKI: [00:16:19] They were very nice. Nice, open, warm, friendly people. A grandmother was there, a grandfather, and granddaughter. And those three lived in the house. Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:16:35] Middle class family?

ZOROMSKI: [00:16:37] You know, there really isn't a middle class there, so I don't know how to label the class. I just tell you what they did. She had a job at a bank, and I don't know what exactly she did there, but teller or whatever they do. And his, her grandparents just stayed home and ran the household. So it must have been her mom and dad probably was, her mom and dad, not grandparents. Her mom and dad, her parents.

NOBLE: [00:17:06] And you ate with the family?

ZOROMSKI: [00:17:08] Oh, yeah. They would get up, come down for breakfast. It was a, three levels. It was in the city on one of those triangle type buildings that point out to a plaza like you see in Madison, a round nose on it. You know what I'm talking about?

NOBLE: [00:17:22] Oh. Very nice. Yes.

ZOROMSKI: [00:17:24] Three stories. Yeah. So the first story was basically an entry way. Then the second story was where the kitchen, dining, living room was, or kitchen dining, and then third story was open, a patio and a small little room at the back where I stayed.

NOBLE: [00:17:42] So you had your own room, a little privacy?

ZOROMSKI: [00:17:44] Yeah, I did then. Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:17:46] Yeah, yeah. During training, did you have, did Peace Corps issue you a computer, a telephone?

ZOROMSKI: [00:17:55] No.

NOBLE: [00:17:55] How did you stay in touch with your family?

ZOROMSKI: [00:17:58] We would have to find a place that had telephones and then we would use the telephone. We'd have to pay for it, you know, and use it there. It was at the major cities' post offices.

NOBLE: [00:18:09] Uh huh. Like a pay phone kind of thing.

ZOROMSKI: [00:18:11] Yeah. It was a payphone at a major city post office.

NOBLE: [00:18:15] How often did you find yourself calling home?

ZOROMSKI: [00:18:17] I called home one time in the two years.

NOBLE: [00:18:19] Just once?

ZOROMSKI: [00:18:21] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:18:21] Yeah, yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:18:23] Well, letters were more convenient and didn't cost us much.

NOBLE: [00:18:26] That's right. That's right.

ZOROMSKI: [00:18:27] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:18:27] So different today when kids are texting their mom and dad every day.

ZOROMSKI: [00:18:32] I just visited Honduras a few weeks ago and I was able to call up here, no problem. And I still call my friends there from here with my cell phone now.

NOBLE: [00:18:43] Good. I look forward to talking more about your continuing contacts.

ZOROMSKI: [00:18:47] Okay, sure.

NOBLE: [00:18:50] Let's see. During training, this was late 1970s. Did the concept of deselection exist? Did they tell you when you started training that a certain number of you were not going to make it through to the end of training?

ZOROMSKI: [00:19:07] No.

NOBLE: [00:19:08] No. So you didn't have that.

ZOROMSKI: [00:19:11] They wanted us to get an FSI of two or above in language. The need was high and people who got ones were allowed to work. If you got a zero, you had to go a couple more weeks of language training.

NOBLE: [00:19:23] Language training.

ZOROMSKI: [00:19:23] And so we just got that one so you could survive.

NOBLE: [00:19:25] So language was the determining factor there?

ZOROMSKI: [00:19:29] Yeah, but you could make it up.

NOBLE: [00:19:31] You could do it.

ZOROMSKI: [00:19:31] It was your choice if you wanted to leave.

NOBLE: [00:19:34] Yeah, okay.

ZOROMSKI: [00:19:35] They didn't say, oh, you have to leave because you have a zero. They said, oh, you if you want to work in your place where you are assigned, you need to get at least a one so you can be able to take a bus and. So we, they will set you up with more training. So everybody who went through language training ended up working.

NOBLE: [00:19:58] Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:19:59] There were a couple of people that dropped out, but it wasn't for reasons of language. It was other personal reasons.

NOBLE: [00:20:04] Yes. And you didn't have, um, then interviews with psychologists?

ZOROMSKI: [00:20:10] No, not like the early sixties, not the first group kind of thing.

NOBLE: [00:20:14] Right.

ZOROMSKI: [00:20:15] No, we just, we got back from a, uh, I just got back from a conference, Peace Corps Honduras reunion.

NOBLE: [00:20:23] Yes.

ZOROMSKI: [00:20:23] And they had the, uh, in New Orleans. And there were two women there from the very first group that went to Honduras. And what you're talking about is what they went through.

NOBLE: [00:20:33] That's right. Yeah. And what I went through in Nigeria.

ZOROMSKI: [00:20:36] Oh, okay. What year was that then?

NOBLE: [00:20:37] Oh, '65.

ZOROMSKI: [00:20:39] Yeah, we didn't do any of that. They were describing what they went through, not knowing none of that.

NOBLE: [00:20:43] It was very different by '78.

ZOROMSKI: [00:20:44] Didn't do anything they did, didn't, yeah, nothing. Get on the plane. Go down there. Go through training.

NOBLE: [00:20:51] Learn language.

ZOROMSKI: [00:20:51] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:20:52] Yeah. How was your health during training?

ZOROMSKI: [00:20:56] Well, it was excellent during training, I thought. Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:21:00] Was there any, um, in the classroom parts were, when you talked about culture, was there discussion about political things, United States involvement in Honduras?

ZOROMSKI: [00:21:10] No, it wasn't about that at all. It was about the culture of the people of Honduras.

NOBLE: [00:21:16] Okay. So then the ten weeks are up and there must have been some kind of ceremony. Was there a swearing in?

ZOROMSKI: [00:21:25] There was a little swearing in ceremony, yeah. There was a nice little ceremony we went to, sure. Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:21:33] And then they told you, or at some point you were told where in Honduras you were going to?

ZOROMSKI: [00:21:38] Well, yeah, during the training. We would meet with our heads of the departments and because, of course, they wanted to meet with us and work with us. So that was their job. So they steered us in the right direction.

NOBLE: [00:21:49] Mm hmm. Where did you wind up? Where were, where did they send you?

ZOROMSKI: [00:21:53] Well, at first, the seven industrial arts teachers and one or two science teachers, we really didn't have anything to do because it was on school break for summer break.

NOBLE: [00:22:05] Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:22:05] Which, um. So what, what we ended up doing is going to La Mosquitia in Honduras. It would be the, the place where it's the most remote. It has a border with Nicaragua. And then the border of, the northern border would be the Caribbean Sea. And it's all jungle. The people that live there are called Misquitos [Miskito]. That's M-I-S-Q-U-I-T-O. Has nothing to do with the bug. That's just their name of their, the name of the Indians there. So that would be in the east. And then in the west, of course, is the Lenca Indians. But that's another story and I don't know much about them.

ZOROMSKI: [00:22:55] But anyway, we went there because we didn't have school to teach and somebody came up with an idea that we were going to build a raft, raft it down a major river system to the mouth where it met the sea, to go out to a ship, to put lumber on the raft from the ship, and then take the lumber back to the mainland and rebuild a small village that had been devastated by a hurricane.

NOBLE: [00:23:24] Well, how fascinating.

ZOROMSKI: [00:23:26] Fascinating, yes, but seven people can't do that. How are seven people going to build a town? I mean, that. And I didn't see this project through to the end. I mean, it was a lot of fun. We were in a different place completely from where we grew up or anything. It was just amazing. The people were amazing. It was like being in a National Geographic movie.

NOBLE: [00:23:51] I can, yes.

ZOROMSKI: [00:23:52] But I, I wanted to get back to my school. I wanted to start working, get ready for the year. So I stayed out there probably three or four weeks. The other guys did complete the barge. USAID supplied two out, twin, two outboard motors for it. They did go to the mouth.

NOBLE: [00:24:13] Did you get as far as that?

ZOROMSKI: [00:24:15] The ship did not arrive.

NOBLE: [00:24:15] Oh.

ZOROMSKI: [00:24:16] And I always questioned that part. You know, that's, it's the Caribbean, but it's not just gentle seas. I mean, there's storms and everything there and there's sandbars and reefs and stuff. So a big ship can't get into shore. But I never could figure out why they just didn't fly it in and. But anyway, it didn't, doesn't matter, because I didn't stay. And the guys that went had a great time.

NOBLE: [00:24:43] I bet.

ZOROMSKI: [00:24:43] They got some kind of, they did some surveying and put some couple huts up or something. I don't really know what they ended up doing there as a final result of the project. I just knew that I was getting kind of worried that I wouldn't be ready for school. So I just, and my, my, uh, what do you call? I want to say jefe because that's the head of our education department. She really wanted us to go do that. She didn't really care for us being out in the jungle so.

NOBLE: [00:25:14] She was happy to see you come back.

ZOROMSKI: [00:25:15] Yeah, she was happy to see us come back and get started.

NOBLE: [00:25:18] So up there in the jungle there, La Mosquitia?

ZOROMSKI: [00:25:22] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:25:23] Um, what? Describe the people who live out there.

ZOROMSKI: [00:25:26] Oh, boy.

NOBLE: [00:25:27] Are they?

ZOROMSKI: [00:25:28] Garifuna.

NOBLE: [00:25:29] Garifuna. So they're African in origin?

ZOROMSKI: [00:25:32] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:25:33] Going back centuries.

ZOROMSKI: [00:25:35] Yeah. Many Garifuna live there.

NOBLE: [00:25:38] Speaking some kind of English?

ZOROMSKI: [00:25:39] They speak Miskito.

NOBLE: [00:25:40] Miskito.

ZOROMSKI: [00:25:41] That's the difference, because I don't think Garifuna speak Miskito.

NOBLE: [00:25:44] Right.

ZOROMSKI: [00:25:45] So believe it Miskito is more indigenous.

NOBLE: [00:25:50] Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:25:51] Instead of somebody from the outside settling in like Garifunas did. So yeah. There is a difference. And where, back then, where we were, there really weren't any Garifuna. They were all Miskitos. Nowadays on the north coast, the Garifunas have expanded from Trujillo towards the, towards La Mosquitia and have, you know, they're settled. They've got towns there now where they didn't used to have, just because like every place else, everything's growing.

NOBLE: [00:26:24] Yeah. Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:26:24] So I believe that the people we worked with and spent our time with there were Miskito Indians.

NOBLE: [00:26:32] Yeah, yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:26:33] Their language was never written down. There was a compound there with some people who were doing religious work and nursing medical work combination. They, I believe they were from Canada and one of the guys had sat down and made a Miskito dictionary by hand.

NOBLE: [00:26:56] And that was the first orthography they ever had of that language?

ZOROMSKI: [00:26:59] As far as I know, you know? That's what they told us. I don't know.

NOBLE: [00:27:05] Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:27:06] But I had, we did have an interesting thing. A professor came by one day and somebody said, hey, can you teach us some Miskito? One of the guys that was with us was fluent in Spanish. He had grown up in El Paso and, you know, from with Latin, Latin parent, gringo mother or whatever, and uh, Latin dad and gringo mother. And he found out through the grapevine that there was this teacher around. And so he got a hold of this teacher. And so the teacher came to our house one day with a portable blackboard, and he set it up and he started teaching us Miskito in Spanish.

NOBLE: [00:27:56] Oh, wow.

ZOROMSKI: [00:27:57] So that was pretty neat.

NOBLE: [00:27:58] Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:27:59] Um. And so I still have the notebook from that day. And so I've got like a page of Spanish words and Miskito words. Definitions and Miskito words with Spanish definitions.

NOBLE: [00:28:11] How interesting.

ZOROMSKI: [00:28:12] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:28:12] Even though this was a very short time you were there.

ZOROMSKI: [00:28:15] I know.

NOBLE: [00:28:15] It opened your eyes to an aspect of Honduras you wouldn't have seen.

ZOROMSKI: [00:28:19] Right. Yeah. Like I said, just like out of a National Geographic movie. They just discovered the White City there. It was, it was. It was a legend when I was there, but I think about a year ago

they discover, somebody discovered it, and who knows what they'll find there. It's an archeological type site, you know.

NOBLE: [00:28:41] So you had that experience and you left to enter what was going to be your real.

ZOROMSKI: [00:28:47] I went to Olanchito.

NOBLE: [00:28:49] Olanchito. And where is Olanchito?

ZOROMSKI: [00:28:52] It's in the Aguan Valley and the Department of Yoro.

NOBLE: [00:28:58] And I'm writing this down so that we can figure out how to spell these things. Where in Honduras is Olanchito?

ZOROMSKI: [00:29:07] Olanchito would be, well, La Ceiba is on the north coast and it is towards the. I believe it's towards the eastern. See, east and west befuddle me there.

NOBLE: [00:29:24] Yeah. Because Central America swings.

ZOROMSKI: [00:29:26] So if you would say that like Amapala is more southwestern than I would say that La Ceiba would be northeastern. And it's 60 kilometers south of La Ceiba. It was a city of about 30,000 when I worked there.

NOBLE: [00:29:46] Olanchito?

ZOROMSKI: [00:29:47] Yeah. Olanchito about 30,000 population in '78 and now it's over 300,000.

NOBLE: [00:29:54] Oh my goodness. Ten times bigger.

ZOROMSKI: [00:29:56] Yeah. It's in the Aguan Valley where Standard Fruit has its banana farms. So a lot of people who live in Olanchito also work in the banana farms.

NOBLE: [00:30:10] And it's a town that, with 30,000 people, had a secondary school.

ZOROMSKI: [00:30:16] One. Now there's several. Oh, now there's one, but there's a couple of universities there now.

NOBLE: [00:30:22] But at the time you were there, that secondary school might have been.

ZOROMSKI: [00:30:26] No universities, it was the only one. It was built by, with AID funds. Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:30:31] So let's talk about your personal life in Olanchito, where you lived. Did you live with a family as you did in training?

ZOROMSKI: [00:30:38] No, I lived with, uh, I lived with a volunteer for a few months. And then she was, she wanted to work in a different town up the road called Tocoa. Wasn't too far away then, it was probably an hour away, and now it's about 20 minutes away because there's a paved road there now.

NOBLE: [00:30:54] Yeah. Oh, so there was not a paved road going into Olanchito?

ZOROMSKI: [00:30:57] No. No, in fact, we had to go on La Culebra over the mountains and it was named La Culebra after, that's the word for snake.

NOBLE: [00:31:05] Snake.

ZOROMSKI: [00:31:06] Because it was a two track road snaking through the mountains, very steep. So to go 60 kilometers took about four, four and a half hours.

NOBLE: [00:31:14] It's a dirt road. So when it rains it would be.

ZOROMSKI: [00:31:18] Yeah, it was a treacherous road, yeah, definitely. We would go in small pickup trucks and we'd be standing room only in the back. And there they would go. If we got to a river, they had to take the fan belt off the engine, put the exhaust on the manifold and try to make it across.

NOBLE: [00:31:34] Wow.

ZOROMSKI: [00:31:35] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:31:35] Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:31:35] So that was pretty amazing. It was a great trip if you're the explorer or adventure type, but it was also dangerous at the same time.

NOBLE: [00:31:44] So getting there on your very, when you first arrived in Olanchito.

ZOROMSKI: [00:31:48] Took a flight from Tegucigalpa to Coyoles, which was where the airstrip was. And then from there, taxi to Olanchito.

NOBLE: [00:31:57] And were you alone in that taxi going to Olanchito, or did somebody from the school or Peace Corps accompany?

ZOROMSKI: [00:32:03] No, I think there were other people in it because to go to Olanchito from Coyoles was probably about, you know, five or ten miles. So they wouldn't just go for one person, they'd fill the taxi. Or there might even have been a pickup truck, I don't recall. But it was ground transportation for that a little bit.

NOBLE: [00:32:21] But Coyoles was big enough to have an airport?

ZOROMSKI: [00:32:24] Coyoles was very small, but it's right where Standard Fruit had built their airport.

NOBLE: [00:32:28] Therefore the airport. Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:32:29] And now it doesn't exist and they don't have an airport in, in Olanchito. But there's talk of building one again.

NOBLE: [00:32:36] Uh huh, uh huh. So you get there and how did you find a place? Oh, was there already a volunteer there? You said that you.

ZOROMSKI: [00:32:46] Barbara was there.

NOBLE: [00:32:46] Barbara was already there. So there was a house identified as the Peace Corps house, I guess.

ZOROMSKI: [00:32:52] She was living with a family.

NOBLE: [00:32:54] Uh huh.

ZOROMSKI: [00:32:55] So it wasn't identified as a Peace Corps house. It was the gringo that lived with the family, I guess. Um, no. It was, I know what you mean. In the bigger cities, there's usually a house that kind of, you know, just like college. You know, people keep using it, new groups keep using the same place. But no, Olanchito didn't have that many volunteers. I think Barbara was like the third. I might have been the fourth or fifth.

NOBLE: [00:33:19] And while you were there, there was just the two of you.

ZOROMSKI: [00:33:22] For a few months. She was a nurse. I was a teacher.

NOBLE: [00:33:27] So you lived with her for a while and then?

ZOROMSKI: [00:33:32] Her, the family she was staying with had an extra room in back. And since I didn't have any place to stay, the wife of the family, the mom of the family, well, they didn't have kids. They were just two, young couple. So the lady, she invited me to stay in the back room, and so I paid her rent. And then Barbara had her bedroom up in front and, yeah, we stayed together in that house.

NOBLE: [00:34:01] Yeah, yeah, yeah. Did you eat?

ZOROMSKI: [00:34:02] But that didn't last very long because Barbara and I found a place, a house that was big enough and had enough bedrooms and stuff so that we could share it. And so we shared that house for I don't remember how long. It wasn't real long though, three or four months. She wanted to move because at her place where she worked, the health building, her counterpart and she, um. Barbara was really trying, but her counterpart was not giving her enough. I don't know what you want to call it. Enough sympathy, I guess, because Barbara, of course, like most of us, came out of the language training with a basic knowledge of Spanish but, and most of the people there would be patient with that. But she found that her counterpart really wasn't patient enough. And after a while, Barbara decided to try a different place.

NOBLE: [00:35:00] A different workplace?

ZOROMSKI: [00:35:01] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:35:01] Yeah. In a different town?

ZOROMSKI: [00:35:03] Yes. Yeah. But I don't even know if I should be telling that story, because that's not my story.

NOBLE: [00:35:08] Okay, so let's hear.

ZOROMSKI: [00:35:08] That's the story of Barbara.

NOBLE: [00:35:10] Right.

ZOROMSKI: [00:35:10] You asked me a few times, you know, how many times, how long we lived together and all that and why she left. So I explain, that's the only way I can explain it is to tell her story, and I'm not really sure that she would want me to have this on there. So I don't have her permission to tell it, but to explain to you that's what happened. So

after that, I found a house to rent, a small one room, one bathroom house to rent, and I stayed there the rest of my time.

NOBLE: [00:35:38] So you had to do your own shopping, your own cooking?

ZOROMSKI: [00:35:42] Yes. Yes.

NOBLE: [00:35:44] And was that okay with you?

ZOROMSKI: [00:35:47] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:35:47] Having to do all that? Had you cooked for yourself before?

ZOROMSKI: [00:35:50] Oh yeah. I'd camped. My mom taught me how to cook because I was always in the kitchen and finally she said she might as well put me to work. So I learned to cook from my mom and I'm an outdoor person. So we did a lot of camping. Yeah, cooking. And I was in college living on my own too, so cooking was never a problem for me.

NOBLE: [00:36:09] Okay. And when you went to shop for food, describe the market situation in Olanchito. Where would you buy?

ZOROMSKI: [00:36:15] Well, basically you have a market and you go to the market, buy what you need. If you want fresh meat, at that time, you had to get up early on a certain day when they butchered it.

NOBLE: [00:36:27] Uh huh. There was one day a week they would be butchering.

ZOROMSKI: [00:36:30] Something like that. I, I didn't, I really didn't buy a lot of fresh meat because they had some stores there with the refrigeration and freezers and they had frozen chickens. And so I usually went for frozen chickens if I wanted meat.

NOBLE: [00:36:47] Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:36:47] Or I went and bought something at a restaurant or a tienda that had maybe ground meat in it. I ate a lot of meals at a family's house where I would pay them and other people ate there too. Not just me. There were other people who passed that way on their way to work or whatever would stop in and eat there too. There were some places like that where a family would just open up their house to people who needed breakfast and lunch and dinner. And so that's where I ate most of my meals. So really my shopping, I didn't shop very much at all. By the time you buy all that stuff and you don't have a place to store it properly, it's more of a headache than it was just to do it this way.

NOBLE: [00:37:32] Sure. So in your little, very small apartment, did you have electricity?

ZOROMSKI: [00:37:37] It was a house. It had electricity. It had a bedroom, a living room, and a bathroom shower.

NOBLE: [00:37:44] Ah, running water.

ZOROMSKI: [00:37:45] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:37:46] Yeah. Oh, that's, that's quite comfy.

ZOROMSKI: [00:37:48] It had a little screen porch on the back.

NOBLE: [00:37:50] Very nice. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:37:52] It was very nice.

NOBLE: [00:37:54] And there weren't other Peace Corps volunteers in the area.

ZOROMSKI: [00:37:57] Not when I was there.

NOBLE: [00:37:58] Not, not while you were there.

ZOROMSKI: [00:37:59] Towards the end, another one came. Lawrence is his name. He came towards the end of my stay. He taught science in the.

NOBLE: [00:38:08] In the same school?

ZOROMSKI: [00:38:09] Yeah, in the same school.

NOBLE: [00:38:10] So for most of the time that you were there, if you needed to socialize with people and hang out with people, you were hanging out with Hondurans.

ZOROMSKI: [00:38:19] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:38:19] And you were, and it was all happening in Spanish.

ZOROMSKI: [00:38:22] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:38:22] Yeah. How was that for you in the beginning? Um, like everybody else there who didn't grow up speaking Spanish, your Spanish was basic.

ZOROMSKI: [00:38:33] Well.

NOBLE: [00:38:34] In the beginning.

ZOROMSKI: [00:38:34] Well, Barbara and I knew English. She introduced me to a man that had, uh, a businessman who knew English and another businessman who knew English. And I met a guy my age who knew English. But outside of those five people, I don't recall anybody else, speaking English with anyone else.

NOBLE: [00:38:57] Yeah. Yeah. Let's go to work. You, then you settle in your little house, and then you go to the secondary school. What was the name of the school?

ZOROMSKI: [00:39:12] Francisco Mejia.

NOBLE: [00:39:16] Uh huh. And who was it, is that some person?

ZOROMSKI: [00:39:21] I don't remember. You know, when we went back there, I took a. Last month I took a picture of his bust at the school. There was no descriptive plaque or anything, and Martine told me, but I forgot! It's not important I guess.

NOBLE: [00:39:36] I guess not. What was the school? The school you were saying had been built with USAID funds.

ZOROMSKI: [00:39:43] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:39:44] And equipped, the industrial arts area.

ZOROMSKI: [00:39:46] Those three areas.

NOBLE: [00:39:47] Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:39:48] Industrial arts, science, and home ec.

NOBLE: [00:39:51] Yeah, yeah, yeah. How many students? How big was the school?

ZOROMSKI: [00:39:56] Oh, gosh. It was big. How many students I couldn't even guess. I see, I saw up to 50 in the shop.

NOBLE: [00:40:05] Wow.

ZOROMSKI: [00:40:06] But not all day long.

NOBLE: [00:40:07] Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:40:09] So I never really. There was a lot of kids.

NOBLE: [00:40:13] You had 50 at a time?

ZOROMSKI: [00:40:13] I don't know.

NOBLE: [00:40:15] Oh, okay.

ZOROMSKI: [00:40:15] It just was a full shop.

NOBLE: [00:40:17] Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:40:17] Next hour would come, it wouldn't be that full. And then the next hour would come, it would be fuller. I had a, I didn't count on it. I have no idea.

NOBLE: [00:40:23] Yeah. How many, how many classes a day?

ZOROMSKI: [00:40:27] There were morning and afternoon classes I would get. I don't recall, but I'm guessing there were probably 6 to 8. I'm guessing. I don't recall.

NOBLE: [00:40:39] That's a really full day.

ZOROMSKI: [00:40:40] The shop was separated from the main school, so I don't know what the heck they did up there.

NOBLE: [00:40:44] Oh, yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:40:45] I just knew that kids were coming out of the shop to make their, work on their projects. And I really, all the details were up to my counterpart who I worked with.

NOBLE: [00:40:55] Ah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:40:55] He knew the system, he knew the school. So I was there helping him.

NOBLE: [00:40:59] Yeah, yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:40:59] Every morning when I woke up, I thought, I'm going to help my counterpart. I'm going to help my, that's my job.

NOBLE: [00:41:04] Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:41:04] And so that's what I did. And all that other stuff to do with teaching and all this, you know, all the things a teacher does up here that doesn't have to do with teaching, or maybe is for preparation for teaching for the next day or the next week or whatever. He did all that.

NOBLE: [00:41:25] Ah, okay.

ZOROMSKI: [00:41:26] So I was just there to help.

NOBLE: [00:41:27] Yeah. Yeah. Well, that sounds pretty ideal. You weren't alone with the kids. You didn't have to worry about discipline.

ZOROMSKI: [00:41:33] Oh, no, they wouldn't do that because Peace Corps wants you to work with the with a counterpart. They would never put you alone there.

NOBLE: [00:41:39] Yeah. Yeah. What kind of projects?

ZOROMSKI: [00:41:43] Well, I, he did the woodworking projects. I taught them a couple of metal working projects because metals wasn't his thing. He was a, he's a, he's an artist actually. I call him an artist. I don't know if he is an artist, but he would make those carved doors, the doors for somebody's home with relief figures. The Mayan relief figures. I don't know. I don't see them around anymore. But back then they were popular. They were popular in the United States too then. And so that was his thing. So he would teach the woodworking. And he's still doing wood carving today.

NOBLE: [00:42:21] Huh.

ZOROMSKI: [00:42:22] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:42:22] What's his name?

ZOROMSKI: [00:42:23] Israel.

NOBLE: [00:42:27] Uh huh. And you would work with metals.

ZOROMSKI: [00:42:31] Yeah. The sheet metal. We made a dustpan and some funnels and stuff like that. So they would learn how to work with sheet metal and sheet metal tools. And let's see, what else did I have them do? Oh, leather working. We made belts.

NOBLE: [00:42:45] And this is stuff you had learned about up here in Wisconsin in that earliest part of your training? Sheet metal, leather.

ZOROMSKI: [00:42:53] Basically, we knew how to. Basically, yeah, we did do projects at Stout but their main emphasis was how to be a teacher.

NOBLE: [00:43:02] Uh huh. Okay. Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:43:06] Training us to be teachers. We already had the carpentry and metal skills, you know. We, we, they would review them with us in the shop and teach us new things. But basically they were more concerned that we knew how to teach as a teacher would instead of somebody who's a carpenter coming in and doesn't have any idea about teaching methods.

NOBLE: [00:43:27] Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:43:28] What a teacher does, but can teach, can show somebody how to build a house, you know, or show somebody how to build a cabinet, but they don't know the other part.

NOBLE: [00:43:37] Did you find that useful when you were there in the classroom in your school in Olancho? Did you find that the training you had been given in Wisconsin up here for teacher training, that that was useful? Were you able to actually use any of that training?

ZOROMSKI: [00:43:54] Yes, it was very useful. None of us were teachers.

NOBLE: [00:43:57] Yeah. Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:43:59] So only one was a teacher. Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:44:03] Yeah. Oh, well good.

ZOROMSKI: [00:44:04] So it was very useful for us. Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:44:07] I'm wondering why, why do you think U.S.? Why do you think USAID put all that effort into building these schools?

ZOROMSKI: [00:44:16] And I don't know. It happened before. I mean, the school was not brand, brand new. It had happened in the past. I don't know when and I don't know why.

NOBLE: [00:44:26] But Standard Oil had their.

ZOROMSKI: [00:44:28] Standard Fruit.

NOBLE: [00:44:29] Standard Fruit, rather, and they had a big, they grew bananas around there.

ZOROMSKI: [00:44:33] That's a cautionary phrase, too, because it's changed hands so many times, those corporations. So if it was Standard Fruit then, it could be Dole now, it could be, I don't know.

NOBLE: [00:44:43] But probably an American corporation.

ZOROMSKI: [00:44:46] I don't know. There's a lot of international investment in what they call developing nations now, and not just the U.S.

NOBLE: [00:44:53] Yeah. It can get complicated.

ZOROMSKI: [00:44:58] I imagine so. Yeah. Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:45:02] So you, it's. I'm picking up that this was pretty satisfying, that you had a good relationship with the kids. It was, you enjoyed. You're smiling.

ZOROMSKI: [00:45:11] I enjoyed my work. Definitely. Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:45:14] Yeah. And then at the end of the school day, you'd come home.

ZOROMSKI: [00:45:18] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:45:20] Um, how did you fill your after school hours?

ZOROMSKI: [00:45:23] I would stop by at my friend's house and we'd talk about what happened in town that day. Or he'd, he really likes to read the newspapers. He reads three or four of them a day.

NOBLE: [00:45:33] Now, is this an American friend or a Honduran?

ZOROMSKI: [00:45:35] He is Honduran.

NOBLE: [00:45:36] Uh huh.

ZOROMSKI: [00:45:38] So I'd stop by his house and his wife would be there and his two children would be there, and we would visit. And sometimes he would invite me for supper and sometimes I would go to the *comedor* for supper.

NOBLE: [00:45:52] Uh huh. Uh huh. Sounds very friendly.

ZOROMSKI: [00:45:54] It was very friendly, yes. And those are the same people I went back to visit.

NOBLE: [00:45:58] To visit. You're still in touch.

ZOROMSKI: [00:45:59] Yeah, yeah.

NOBLE: [00:46:00] After all those years.

ZOROMSKI: [00:46:01] Oh, yeah. We kept in touch. We were very good friends.

NOBLE: [00:46:03] Terrific.

ZOROMSKI: [00:46:04] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:46:06] I'd like to talk more about your current connections with Honduras, but let's, let's finish up talking about when you were there as a Peace Corps volunteer.

ZOROMSKI: [00:46:13] Sure.

NOBLE: [00:46:13] Were you expected then to have other volunteer projects outside of your main teaching job?

ZOROMSKI: [00:46:20] We were not expected to, but I fell into one. There was a volunteer man and woman that were on that La Culebra road in a little town called Las Flores Este. But they were not assigned there for two years. They were just there to help build a three room schoolhouse. So they, uh, I went and helped them and there's where we did the mix, mixing of concrete by hand.

NOBLE: [00:46:49] Oh, boy.

ZOROMSKI: [00:46:50] And all the, all the hard labor work to build the schoolhouse. But the village men and women pitched in. So Carlos and Vicky basically had the job of coordinating the village to build this school, and it was done through the partnership program, a school in the United States. They would have fundraisers and stuff and they'd send the money to Las Flores Estes, go to Peace Corps, to that that department of Peace Corps that was doing those things. And that would be that, it was called School Partnership back then. And I don't even know if they do it anymore. But then, and then. So what the school in the States got was pictures and stuff of the progress of this building of the school sent

to them. And then Vicky would write up, you know, Honduran cultural whatever things.

NOBLE: [00:47:41] Yeah, it's very nice.

ZOROMSKI: [00:47:43] So that was the exchange. The Las Flores would get the money and have the school and well and then the school in the States would learn about the culture. And they built a school and got it done and it didn't take that long, probably took three or four months, and then they went off to wherever their assignments were. And so I helped them a little bit. On weekends, I would go up there and help.

NOBLE: [00:48:09] Did you stay pretty healthy for the whole two years?

ZOROMSKI: [00:48:12] Yeah, I think so. I was probably in the best physical condition I've been in in many years. You don't, I don't know about building muscle and all that stuff, but I felt healthy. I went in overweight and I came back right in my normal weight height ratio. But that was because I think we ate so much protein and little starch. So I don't know really. Hot weather, walked everywhere. Meals were just not big meals like we have here. Yeah. So all that stuff combined.

NOBLE: [00:48:53] Yeah. Yeah. Sounds good.

ZOROMSKI: [00:48:55] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:48:56] You, uh, eventually there was a school holiday somewhere in that two years.

ZOROMSKI: [00:49:01] Semana Santa, for sure.

NOBLE: [00:49:03] Holy Week.

ZOROMSKI: [00:49:04] Yeah. Christmas.

NOBLE: [00:49:05] Yeah, yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:49:06] Yeah, there's holidays. Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:49:08] What did you do when there was a, when you had a week off?

ZOROMSKI: [00:49:11] I would celebrate with my friends in Olanchito.

NOBLE: [00:49:15] You stayed there?

ZOROMSKI: [00:49:16] Well, if it was Semana Santa, yeah. Celebrate with them.

NOBLE: [00:49:19] Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:49:19] I never really took any vacations to anyplace exotic.

NOBLE: [00:49:23] You didn't ever leave Honduras?

ZOROMSKI: [00:49:24] I went to Utila, which is an island off the north coast of Honduras, which is part of Honduras, for a few days, because I'd never been to a tropical island before. But other than that, I didn't. Oh, I went to Guatemala one, one week to visit my friends. That was the first, the second Christmas I was there.

NOBLE: [00:49:46] Oh, these are the Wisconsin guys that?

ZOROMSKI: [00:49:49] Yeah, I went to visit them. So I did leave the country for that. And Utila I didn't leave the country because that was part of it. So yeah. Mm hmm. So that was the two times I left. Otherwise, I stayed in town.

NOBLE: [00:50:05] Is there anything else you'd like to talk about regarding the time that you were there as a Peace Corps volunteer? Are we leaving out anything?

ZOROMSKI: [00:50:12] Well, I think one of the most significant things that happened there, at least the most significant thing was the military was in power. Policarpo Paz Garcia, the president at that time, was a general in the

military. So when we went to La Mosquitia, for example, we would have to go to the Air Force Base and an Air Force pilot would fly us out there. So there weren't any commercial airlines. The military owned a lot of things in Honduras. So Policarpo, what's significant about him was, he's the last military president because the second year I was there, his term was up and they were, for the first time ever in the history of the nation, having general elections.

NOBLE: [00:51:01] Oh, boy.

ZOROMSKI: [00:51:02] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:51:03] What was that like?

ZOROMSKI: [00:51:04] That was different. What I remember of it was people were very excited about it. Of course, sides were formed quickly and there was a lot of healthy and positive banter between the groups, you know, just like here, in the old days anyway. So I thought it was a very exciting time. An interesting thing that they did was if you voted for the Liberal Party, you would get a red paint, red fingernail paint on your little pinky. And if you voted for the National Party, you'd get blue.

NOBLE: [00:51:47] Oh, so there's no secrecy about where you stand.

ZOROMSKI: [00:51:48] Well, I guess you went in, yeah, I guess when you went in there, you didn't, they weren't colored. But when you came out. I don't remember how it worked. I just remember my friends going, look, I got a pink one. I got a blue one.

NOBLE: [00:52:00] Oh.

ZOROMSKI: [00:52:00] And that doesn't happen anymore. It was for some kind of vote counting. Not vote counting, but they wanted to know. I don't remember. Honest, I don't. I'd have to ask my buddy again if he remembers. But that was exciting. I mean, the other thing that was really exciting was I think the U.S. played them in soccer for the World Cup.

NOBLE: [00:52:26] Oh my goodness.

ZOROMSKI: [00:52:27] And they lost.

NOBLE: [00:52:28] And the game was there, in Honduras?

ZOROMSKI: [00:52:30] I don't know where it was, but Honduras lost. And I didn't go out that night.

NOBLE: [00:52:36] I was going to say.

ZOROMSKI: [00:52:37] Oh, the guy down the street was kicking in his wagon wheel and. Yeah. So that was, that was different. That was pretty unique. They are, people in Latin America love soccer, just like we love football.

NOBLE: [00:52:53] Oh, that's right. It's the big thing. Yeah. Very emotional connections.

ZOROMSKI: [00:52:57] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:52:59] During those two years that you were up in Olanchito, did anybody from Peace Corps come up to visit you, see how you're doing?

ZOROMSKI: [00:53:10] Hmm. I don't think so. My friend. Oh, yeah. Anna Rossar, our director of education, she sent my friend Kip to see how I was doing. Yep, she did. She paid for his trip to see how things were going, because she couldn't make it out there when she was supposed to. So she sent him.

NOBLE: [00:53:28] And you didn't make trips down into Tegucigalpa?

ZOROMSKI: [00:53:32] I did once in a while, not too often. It was an awful long ride.

NOBLE: [00:53:35] Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:53:35] Eight or 12 hour ride. So I didn't go often.

NOBLE: [00:53:40] Were you summoned for Peace Corps meetings or something?

ZOROMSKI: [00:53:43] One time we went to a, uh, twice. We went to, once each year we went to a Department of Education meeting. One was in Tela on the north coast and then another one was down, uh, down the south end of Honduras doesn't have much of a coastline, but it was done in that area. San Lorenzo, I think. I don't recall. Yeah. So yeah, a couple of times. And we, oh, we also had one. Yeah, we had one in western Honduras too, in a small town in the mountains. Santa Barbara.

NOBLE: [00:54:20] Hmm.

ZOROMSKI: [00:54:21] Yeah. So three times I remember we went for professional development things.

NOBLE: [00:54:29] As you got towards the end of your two years, were things sort of changing for you in terms of your relationship to your job or your, were you starting to turn and look, look forward more towards coming home? What was it like towards the end?

ZOROMSKI: [00:54:45] It was raining a lot.

NOBLE: [00:54:46] It was?

ZOROMSKI: [00:54:47] Yeah. I was leaving during the rainy season. I remember that. I also remember having a hard time deciding whether or not I wanted to return home.

NOBLE: [00:54:54] Ah. Were you offered the opportunity of extending for a third year?

ZOROMSKI: [00:54:59] No, but I was trying to think of a way to stay. I just really loved Olanchito and my friends so much. I did not want to leave them.

NOBLE: [00:55:06] Oh.

ZOROMSKI: [00:55:07] Yeah, but, you know, I just let things go along. I couldn't really think of a reason that I should stay for Peace Corps. I thought about maybe teaching English but, you know, people really didn't do that then. Now you go there, there's English schools everywhere.

NOBLE: [00:55:23] Uh huh. Uh huh.

ZOROMSKI: [00:55:24] English language schools. Most people who can afford to go to school, they'll have, they'll be in a bilingual school where they'll teach English half the day and Spanish half the day. I mean, this is at very young ages, kindergarten and up.

NOBLE: [00:55:37] Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:55:38] But then there was nothing like that. I don't know if people were that interested in learning it then. I don't think they were, or they just didn't have an opportunity to get it. No one ever came to me and said, hey, will you teach me English?

NOBLE: [00:55:51] It wasn't their top priority.

ZOROMSKI: [00:55:52] No.

NOBLE: [00:55:53] Right. Not then.

ZOROMSKI: [00:55:54] And I knew a lot of people by then.

NOBLE: [00:55:55] Sure, sure.

ZOROMSKI: [00:55:57] Yeah. And their children and their families and extended families.

NOBLE: [00:56:00] Yeah. Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:56:01] It was amazing.

NOBLE: [00:56:02] So saying goodbye must have been.

ZOROMSKI: [00:56:04] Very difficult.

NOBLE: [00:56:05] Difficult. Did they have a big send off for you?

ZOROMSKI: [00:56:08] Oh, yeah. I had a *despedida*.

NOBLE: [00:56:10] What was that like, your *despedida*?

ZOROMSKI: [00:56:12] I don't remember.

NOBLE: [00:56:14] I guess you had a good time.

ZOROMSKI: [00:56:15] Yeah. It was with family and friends that we hung around, that I hung around with for two years. So it was a very nice time. Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:56:25] Yeah. And then you had to pack up your suitcase. You have a big trunk or?

ZOROMSKI: [00:56:30] No, I just had one of those backpacks with the internal frame.

NOBLE: [00:56:34] Uh huh. Uh huh. So you had to stuff things in there. Did you, did you bring home things from Honduras?

ZOROMSKI: [00:56:41] Just.

NOBLE: [00:56:41] Artifacts or weavings or?

ZOROMSKI: [00:56:45] Nothing to speak of, no. I wasn't interested in that.

NOBLE: [00:56:48] Had you already decided to go back and finish your degree at University of Wisconsin? You left, you left here after two years.

ZOROMSKI: [00:56:56] Yeah, that's where, that's what I did. I went back to finish my degree.

NOBLE: [00:56:59] Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [00:57:00] I wasn't going to, but then another volunteer talked me into it. That was another one of my friends from the original group of seven shop teachers. He was at the time was in Puerto Cortes. And we both were in the same group and that whole thing. So he went to Menomonie and got enrolled and called me up and asked me if I want to do that. And I says, yeah. He says, I really can't think of anything else. So he goes, oh good, I need a roommate so.

NOBLE: [00:57:31] All right. So this is not Stevens Point now, it's a different.

ZOROMSKI: [00:57:36] UW-Stout.

NOBLE: [00:57:36] UW-Stout, okay.

ZOROMSKI: [00:57:38] Yeah. Where we went for our training.

NOBLE: [00:57:39] Right. So you went back there to finish up?

ZOROMSKI: [00:57:42] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:57:43] Yeah. And was this buddy the one who went to the Peace Corps in Guatemala? Or somebody else?

ZOROMSKI: [00:57:51] No. The seven of us all went to Honduras. None of us went anywhere else.

NOBLE: [00:57:55] Okay, yeah. So you finished up two years back at the University of Wisconsin.

ZOROMSKI: [00:58:05] Yeah, took about two years.

NOBLE: [00:58:05] You got a degree in what?

ZOROMSKI: [00:58:07] Industrial, at that time, what the heck did they call it? They changed the name. They called it, they changed it to industrial education. And now it's called tech ed, technology education.

NOBLE: [00:58:18] Oh, sure. That's right. Yes. Yeah. So you were teaching industrial ed or tech ed in public high schools in Wisconsin.

ZOROMSKI: [00:58:28] Um, not all in Wisconsin. One week. Let's see. A combination of in rehab, rehabilitation places, and high schools in Florida and Wisconsin.

NOBLE: [00:58:45] Uh huh. Uh huh. Yeah. You came back speaking Spanish.

ZOROMSKI: [00:58:52] Yeah, I did.

NOBLE: [00:58:52] Just an extra skill that you wouldn't have had otherwise.

ZOROMSKI: [00:58:56] Right.

NOBLE: [00:58:57] Yeah. Have you found ways to use that up here?

ZOROMSKI: [00:59:00] Never really used it to, for a job. Or I, I had a couple of students who only spoke Spanish throughout my career, so I used it then. I can remember two occasions.

NOBLE: [00:59:15] Spanish speaking students up here in the States.

ZOROMSKI: [00:59:17] Yes. Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:59:22] You've maintained your contact with your friends, your Honduran friends, over all these years.

ZOROMSKI: [00:59:28] Yeah. Yeah, I have.

NOBLE: [00:59:31] It's been, uh.

ZOROMSKI: [00:59:33] 33 years.

NOBLE: [00:59:34] 33 years.

ZOROMSKI: [00:59:36] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:59:37] Yeah. Or more even actually, if you finished in 1980.

ZOROMSKI: [00:59:41] Yeah. We are, we were saying 33 years in February. But I don't know. It could be 34. Yeah. Maintain contact with them.

NOBLE: [00:59:52] How often have you been back?

ZOROMSKI: [00:59:54] That one time just last month.

NOBLE: [00:59:55] Just last, oh, so that was. You hadn't been back to Honduras in.

ZOROMSKI: [00:59:59] 33 years.

NOBLE: [00:59:59] 33 years when you went back there just a few months ago.

ZOROMSKI: [01:00:04] Right, right.

NOBLE: [01:00:05] Oh my goodness. Did you recognize people, places?

ZOROMSKI: [01:00:08] Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

NOBLE: [01:00:09] They recognized you?

ZOROMSKI: [01:00:11] Oh, yeah. And honestly, I've never felt so loved.

NOBLE: [01:00:14] Oh, oh, wonderful.

ZOROMSKI: [01:00:15] It was just wonderful, yeah. I have 1,000 pictures on my camera and probably 50 little videos.

NOBLE: [01:00:21] Yeah, yeah. Oh, what a beautiful thing.

ZOROMSKI: [01:00:24] Yeah. We did a lot of things. We, we went, you know, we walked around town. We drove out to my friend's banana farm. Checked that out. We went to see his, his granddaughter, who lives on the island of Roatan. She's four years old. When I saw, last time I saw his daughter, she was one year old.

NOBLE: [01:00:46] Oh, boy.

ZOROMSKI: [01:00:47] His son was two years old. He lives in La Ceiba and he's married. I think they had children. I'm not sure. So yeah. Just really got a, really I did not go sightseeing. I went to see friends and family.

NOBLE: [01:01:04] Yeah, yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [01:01:05] Yeah. And there's, you, you can't imagine, I guess, I couldn't imagine how many people did remember me. It just wasn't that core family, it was their friends, families of friends. And it was an incredible experience, as it was in '78 and '80.

NOBLE: [01:01:23] Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [01:01:23] Yeah. So I can't wait to go back again.

NOBLE: [01:01:26] Ah, terrific.

ZOROMSKI: [01:01:27] Yeah.

NOBLE: [01:01:29] Would you say that your experience in Honduras has affected your life post Peace Corps? Has it pointed you in directions you might not have gone in, other than visiting Honduras?

ZOROMSKI: [01:01:41] Teaching.

NOBLE: [01:01:41] Teaching?

ZOROMSKI: [01:01:42] Yeah.

NOBLE: [01:01:43] Mm hmm.

ZOROMSKI: [01:01:44] I probably would have gone into business with my dad.

NOBLE: [01:01:46] Uh huh. Okay. But you got a taste of teaching and you liked it?

ZOROMSKI: [01:01:50] Yeah. It gave me more independence than I knew. Being in business with my dad in a small town, I wouldn't be that independent.

NOBLE: [01:01:57] Yeah, right. Yeah.

ZOROMSKI: [01:02:00] So I liked that part of it.

NOBLE: [01:02:02] Would you recommend Peace Corps to young people today?

ZOROMSKI: [01:02:05] Yes, I would. I really would. It, uh, it really turned things around for me. I discovered a career because of it. I was successful at that career, and just really, really enjoyed meeting the people that I did in Honduras. And they're still friends today. So, you know, it can't get much better than that, you know.

NOBLE: [01:02:29] It's a very happy story.

ZOROMSKI: [01:02:30] Yeah.

NOBLE: [01:02:31] Is there anything else you'd like to say?

ZOROMSKI: [01:02:35] Hmm. Not really, no.

NOBLE: [01:02:37] Okay. Thank you very much. It's been a very interesting interview.

ZOROMSKI: [01:02:41] Well, thanks. Thank you, Phyllis.

[END OF INTERVIEW]