

Sharleen Hirschi Simpson Oral History Interview
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Biographical Note

Sharleen Hirschi Simpson served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Bolivia from 1962 to 1964 as a nurse.

Access

Open.

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Oral History Interview

with

Sharleen Hirschi Simpson

November 30, 2009
Gainesville, Florida

By Barbara Lutz

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

LUTZ: [00:00:02] I'm interviewing Sharleen Hirschi Simpson for the Peace Corps interviews, and so I'm going to start by asking you just to talk about sort of your private life, your family, your work interests, those kinds of things. And then we'll talk a little bit about the Peace Corps.

SIMPSON: [00:00:21] OK, well, I'm currently living in Gainesville, Florida, and after the Peace Corps, I went I got a master's in nursing at the University of California, San Francisco. And then I ended up finishing up a Ph.D. in anthropology at the University of Florida. And I ended up here on the faculty of the College of Nursing at the University of Florida and women's health and other areas.

LUTZ: How long have you been teaching here?

SIMPSON: Uh, 24 years. It'll be 25 next year.

LUTZ: [00:00:55] All right. So think back to the year or so before you joined the Peace Corps and just talk a little bit about your life experiences prior to joining the Peace Corps.

SIMPSON: [00:01:08] Well, I joined the Peace Corps right out of college. I got my bachelor's and then I went into the Peace Corps. I was already a nurse, though, because I had gone through a junior college program. So I was working and going to school at the same time. I'm from Idaho, Rexburg, Idaho, and I was going to school at the University of Utah. And I ended up spending a summer in Mexico during my junior senior year and learning Spanish. And on the way back from Mexico on the Greyhound bus, which would have been about '61, 1961, I heard about Peace Corps. So when I got back, I went down and got the application and sent it in. And so then right away they had me come down at the courthouse or wherever it was and take this exam. And they were like a whole bunch of guys and me. Because it wasn't exactly, you know, Utah's not exactly an area where they expect women to go out and do a lot of independent things, I guess. But then they didn't. I told them I couldn't go into the Peace Corps until June because that's when I was going to graduate. And I did not want to spend all that time in school and then not graduate. So in June, after I graduated, I had pretty much figured that they weren't going to do anything and that I was kind of aggravated at them.

LUTZ: At the Peace Corps?

SIMPSON: [00:02:39] Yeah, in usual government, you know, the way the government works. They weren't very communicative. But I think it was a week after I graduate, I get this telegram in the mail or letter says you're supposed to, you're going to be going to Bolivia and you need to report to Peace Corps training in Tempe, Arizona, in like three days.

LUTZ: [00:03:05] Not much notice.

SIMPSON: [00:03:07] Oh my word. Yeah, that was a little difficult. I walked around it for a day or so trying to decide if I was too pissed off to go. If I should go. And finally I decided that, you know, I would regret it if I didn't. And so I went ahead and I asked for a little extra time because I want to give the

hospital a little time, because I was working at the hospital. And but I think I got there a couple of maybe three or four days later than most of the other people.

LUTZ: [00:03:39] What was it about? I mean, you said you heard about it on the bus, on the way back from.

SIMPSON: [00:03:43] Well, it was kind of people talking about it. It was right about the time, I guess, that Kennedy had made that speech, because that was early in the class when he talked about Peace Corps. And, you know, the buzz was on, I guess it might have been in some newspapers. But people, you know, there were a lot of younger people on the bus and they were talking about it and that. So then I went and looked it up.

LUTZ: [00:04:06] But there were a lot of people who didn't join, I'm sure. So what was it about that program that made you interested in joining, or about you that you think made you interested in joining?

SIMPSON: [00:04:18] Well, I had always been interested in international travel and I was especially interested in Latin America, hence the reason I was down in Mexico trying to learn Spanish. But I didn't ever see that there was going to be any way that I could do those things because I didn't have any money, you know, and my family didn't have any money. So then Peace Corps came out and they said, well, you know, you can go out and help out. At the same time, you might be able to travel a little bit. And so it was kind of a combination of altruism, sort of, and being helping somebody and also seeing part of the world that you hadn't seen before.

LUTZ: [00:04:59] So you talked a little bit about the process, you thought they didn't they weren't going to respond to your application, and here you get a letter and they wanted you to report three days later. Can you talk a little bit about once you did finally report a few days later? What the training was like and just what that process from the time you got the letter through to going to where to your assignment?

SIMPSON: [00:05:24] Well, when I found out, I had indicated I wanted to go to Latin America and since I had a lot of Spanish, I thought they might send me.

So when I finally decided I was going to go, then I took all my wool clothes and gave them to the Foundation Army. Because it's hot down there and I couldn't see taking those clothes because I was supposed to be in this area of Bolivia where it's very hot. And then when I got to Tempe, we came in Phoenix and they picked us up, took us over to Tempe. We stayed underneath the bleachers at the Arizona State Sun Devil Stadium. At that time, it wasn't really big like it is now.

LUTZ: You stayed underneath, like in tents?

SIMPSON: [00:06:12] They had dorms. They had dorms under the bleachers.

LITZ: Under the bleachers.

SIMPSON: Yeah, it was like a little stadium. Probably they were athletic dorms. Haigler Hall, that's what we call it, the hallowed halls of Haigler. And first, they first started us out, we're getting up at 3:00 in the morning because we would do a run and then we would do all these exercises. And then we had classes, you know, language and area studies and all that. And then supposedly we were supposed to be able to take a nap when it was really hot, because this was in July, you know. But what happened was, you know, then you had to go to the dentist. You had to go get immunizations. So, you know, you ended up not getting much sleep in the middle of the day and they were getting you up in the. And the Indians. They moved us out of that, after about the first week, we moved down onto the Maricopa Indian reservation, out from under the bleachers. And so we had this really, it was a sort of an Outward Bound kind of physical. It was like what the military, that they were using in the military.

LUTZ: [00:07:25] Sounds like a military style training.

SIMPSON: [00:07:27] And I finally asked them if they couldn't let us use the 10BX, the women's. That's the Royal Canadian Air Force women's version of some of those exercises, because it was ridiculous. But the Indians thought we were absolutely nuts. You can imagine, you know, here we are. We're staying in these trailers. They put up these trailers out on the reservation. And I guess they must have paid them, you know, to be able to put them

there. So they were they tolerated us. You know, I think we probably entertained them, is what I think happened. But I did you know, we had all kinds of classes. In the afternoon, they would have like area studies where they talked about the culture of Bolivia and then they talked about politics and how, because of the anti-American sentiment in those days.

LUTZ: That hasn't changed.

SIMPSON: [00:08:18] Well, there's probably more right now than there has been for a while. But so we talked about how to deal with those kinds of things. And they were very, they wanted to be sure, because this is new program. They wanted to be sure that that you were going to be able to deal with this, that they didn't want to send you as a representative of the U.S. over to someplace like Bolivia. And so but in the afternoon, I mean, mostly everybody got sunglasses because they were sleeping behind the sunglasses because nobody could stay awake. And we had the Indian ladies cooked for us and we had, you know, we had our meals out there in their tribal center. They had like a meeting place that had a kitchen. And it was kind of interesting. And they had Spanish class, a lot of intense Spanish classes. Well, I was way ahead of most of the people there. So mostly what happened is the instructor would end up using me to help teach the class. So I kind of got tired of that after a while. Finally I started cutting out and I went to work with some of the Indian ladies and they taught me how to make those big flour tortillas.

LUTZ: [00:09:36] Which probably helped when you were down in South America.

SIMPSON: [00:09:40] Yeah, but you know, because it was like the training was, everything was so new to everybody that nobody knew really how to do it and now they do it very differently.

LUTZ: Because it was such a new program.

SIMPSON: [00:09:52] It was a new program and they did not know. And now they do most of the training in country, you know, which would have made a lot more sense.

LUTZ: [00:10:01] Now, is everybody going to Bolivia, or were they going different in your group?

SIMPSON: [00:10:05] They're all going to Bolivia, but half of the group was supposed to go to Cochabamba and it was sort of managed by the Heifer Project. And then the other half were supposed to go down to Santa Cruz, which was the low, in the tropical area. And that was supposed to be the National Farmers Union was providing the leadership for that. Well, I didn't fit any place because I was the only nurse. Because they had a hospital there and they thought if they put a nurse in there that, you know. So it was an interesting. We started about 64 or 65 people and we ended up with like 42 or 43.

LUTZ: [00:10:46] What was the mixture of men to women?

SIMPSON: Oh mostly men.

LUTZ: Mostly men. Mostly white men?

SIMPSON: [00:10:54] Yeah. At that time, we had one black guy, and that's when I discovered, because we were going around after training, we went out from the bars and restaurants and stuff when we had an opportunity. And there were places that wouldn't let him in. This was in 1962.

LUTZ: [00:11:12] You don't think of Arizona as being that way.

SIMPSON: [00:11:14] You don't think of it but what would happen is by that time, we're all pretty much getting, you know, how you develop esprit de corps whenever you have a group like that. So we just all would take off if we couldn't all go in, none of us would.

LUTZ: [00:11:30] How long was training?

SIMPSON: [00:11:32] Well, my group had a little bit extra longer training.

LUTZ: [00:11:39] Because you were so good or cause you?

SIMPSON: [00:11:42] No, we were. We were about a little maybe six weeks in Arizona. And then they took us to Puerto Rico. Arecibo, Puerto Rico, and Camp Crozier was where we were. And that was these tent cities out in the jungle, out in the jungle, well, jungle in Puerto Rico. It has jungle but there's people everywhere you look. Not as many then as there are now.

LUTZ: [00:12:09] Why did they move you over there?

SIMPSON: [00:12:11] Well, they wanted to work on the language and they also wanted us to do this Outward Bound program. So we did. We had to spend, we had to do an all-day overnight hike. We stayed by ourselves out in the jungle with our poncho and our blanket or whatever. And then we had an obstacle course we had to get through. We had drown proofing, they taught the drought proofing.

LUTZ: What does that mean?

SIMPSON: [00:12:48] It means they taught you how to swim in choppy water so you could stay afloat if you had any injuries or whatever. So, you know, the test was to learn how, not every. You had to try it. Not everybody was successful. I was actually quite successful. But, you know, like they would tie your hands behind your back. You're supposed to float with just your feet loose. And they would tie the feet and you'd just have your hands and all that kind of stuff. And the idea was to be comfortable enough that you could float and stay afloat in the water. And then we also had, they took us out in the bay and we had to jump in with our clothes on. You know, we had our swimsuits on of course, and then we had to take our clothes off and like put air in the trousers. And all these survival things is what it was, basically. And then we rappelled, we did climbing, rock climbing, and then we rappelled down the dam.

LUTZ: [00:13:47] I had no idea what's that. It's probably not like that anymore.

SIMPSON: [00:13:52] It's not like that anymore. But that's how they started, you know, in the first year. And there were some other groups that trained in it. And it depended on, they contracted out with the institutions to do the training,

and it kind of depended where they were because there were groups from New England and places like that that didn't do anything like that.

LUTZ: [00:14:12] So it was a private group that trained you that they paid to train?

SIMPSON: [00:14:16] Well, it was Arizona State.

LUTZ: [00:14:18] Oh, Arizona State. Now, were they the ones that took you to Puerto Rico? Arizona State?

SIMPSON: [00:14:25] Yeah. The various universities like Columbia, I think, did some training and different other training. And people were, you know, they had some guidelines I guess. A lot of people did the Outward Bound thing, you know, because they were, they wanted you to think that you can accomplish anything. And let me tell you, after you've rappelled down a dam when you've never done it before in your life, you know, you kind of start thinking, well, gee, I guess I could do more things that I thought.

LUTZ: [00:14:54] That's pretty awesome. So it was in total about nine or ten weeks? Six weeks in Arizona?

SIMPSON: [00:15:01] It was probably about three months.

LUTZ: [00:15:04] Three months, OK. And how many of your group ended up finishing the training?

SIMPSON: Thirty-three.

LUTZ: So only half of that. Wow.

SIMPSON: [00:15:12] Yeah, we did also had a 40-mile hike we had to do across the island.

LUTZ: [00:15:19] And how many days?

SIMPSON: Three days.

LUTZ: Wow. A lot of hiking there.

SIMPSON: [00:15:25] Well they had, I was in the all-female group, the rest were guys. And we had one guy that wanted to marry us off to all his friends. And then we stopped at one place because we were just kind of going, they had given us this map that was so old, we're just tromping through wherever. And we went and came into this *cafetal* place, this coffee plantation. And so the lady felt sorry for us, so she made coffee and served it.

LUTZ: [00:15:54] Oh nice. So that was your survival hike huh?

SIMPSON: [00:15:58] It was. They said you can't bring any money, but I brought money anyway, because we did find a couple of little stores.

LUTZ: For food and stuff?

SIMPSON: To get milk and bread. Yeah. You know, there's no way I can make any of that, lighting fires and cooking on it.

LUTZ: [00:16:18] Now, you come from a large family, don't you? What did your family think of this? And did they think you were nuts? Did they think this was a great idea?

SIMPSON: [00:16:26] No, no. I think they I'm pretty sure they were convinced I was nuts. But I'm the oldest and I'm a pretty dominant personality. So they've always kind of been in awe, if you want to say it like, because I pretty much knew what I wanted to do, where I wanted to go. And so they just said, well, it's not hurting anybody, you know, what can we do?

LUTZ: So how old were you?

SIMPSON: Twenty-two.

LUTZ: [00:16:51] Ok, pretty young, though. It's even young now, but in the sixties, that's pretty young for a woman especially to venture out something that exotic and unknown.

SIMPSON: [00:17:03] Yeah, I was one of the youngest women. Now we have some younger guys in our group because they were ag guys out of FFA. And so we had some 18 and 19 year olds.

LUTZ: [00:17:15] Oh, they weren't all college students?

SIMPSON: [00:17:17] Because they are the ones that went off to work with the field plant. And they were, you know, had been working in agriculture and stuff like that, FFA and Future Farmers and all. Oh, I should tell you, since you asked about it, might as well get it on tape here. After we finished our training in Puerto Rico, they sent us home. We were supposed to get ready. You had to pack, they had all kinds of things you had to pack, and then ship our luggage. And we were supposed to re-meet again in Miami. So we met at the international airport in Miami, it was in October. And it was the very night that Kennedy did that put up or shut up speech about the Cuban Missile Crisis.

LUTZ: Oh man, in Miami.

SIMPSON: [00:18:07] Everybody was leaving Miami. They moved us out of the airport hotel onto the Miami beach because there was nobody there. Everybody had kind of left because people were expecting the missiles to go off any time. And then at the same time, the first day, something was wrong with the flights. But then what happened is there was a miners strike in Bolivia. They didn't want to bring us in because when they what would happen when they had a mines strike in Bolivia is that they would arm all the miners and bring them in and have all these demonstrations. So they didn't really want to bring us in. So we did this little detour up to Brattleboro, Vermont, to Experiment in International Living.

LUTZ: [00:18:54] That's quite a detour. The experiment, what it that?

SIMPSON: [00:18:59] It was a liberal sort of organization that had been working on trying to encourage international collaboration and exchange for a long time. And so we went up there, the idea was until it all settled down. And they had a new group coming in, and by this time, we were kind of cynical. We said, well, really, we're not ever going to go to Bolivia, we're just going to move around the United States, move around looking at airports. And so they decided to get us out of the way so that we wouldn't infect this new group. And they said, we'll need to take you into Boston. And some of the people were saying, I'm not going to go, blah blah blah, you know? And I said, well, I've never been to Boston.

LUTZ: [00:19:51] Might as well go.

SIMPSON: [00:19:53] Bring it on. So then about a week after that, we finally left.

LUTZ: So from the time you started, you started training in June, right?

SIMPSON: In June.

LUTZ: [00:20:02] And when did you finally get to Bolivia?

SIMPSON: [00:20:04] We got to Bolivia. It was almost Thanksgiving.

LUTZ: [00:20:10] So five or six months. Did you get back home any time during that? You said you went home after training though, right?

SIMPSON: Yeah, after training.

LITZ: Which would be August or thereabouts, August, September, for a couple of weeks?

SIMPSON: Just a week.

LUTZ: So was it hard to really leave once you?

SIMPSON: [00:20:28] Well, not really. It was like, you felt like you need to be moving on and getting to do what. You were ready. And it was very frustrating, all

these things that we kept running into. I don't think any other group had this unique experience.

LUTZ: [00:20:44] Or what kinds of things besides the sort of Outward Bound stuff, the survival stuff, and the language skills. What did they teach you? You were a nurse. So did they teach you like farming skills?

SIMPSON: [00:21:00] No, they had me working with the midwifery people. Because in Bolivia, most of the babies are delivered by midwives and most of them were midwives, like lay midwives, or they had some training. And so they had me working. There was a nurse, a midwife from Norway or somewhere like that, to work with me. But I think she kind of was a little frustrated with me because I was so young and she was pretty much older, you know, and at 22 you just think you know everything.

LUTZ: [00:21:41] Right. Yeah, yeah. We experience that a lot with our students.

SIMPSON: [00:21:46] Yeah. I actually when we were in Puerto Rico I just got fed up with that. I said I'm not sitting in anymore Spanish classes. So I went down to the local hospital and I said, I'm going to hang around here and see what goes on and see if I can't pick up some medical Spanish. And so that's what I did. Plus the beaches there in Mayaguez. We went to Mayaguez after we were at Arecibo, which is where they have the most beaches and stuff. So we did spend some time on the beach, which is probably why my group bonded so tightly that we kept in touch all these years. There was just all these crazy things that we were.

LUTZ: [00:22:29] Now, were you a labor and delivery nurse? So you just worked in a hospital prior to this? Woman's health wasn't your area till you sort of got pegged for that for this?

SIMPSON: [00:22:43] Right, right.

LUTZ: [00:22:44] And most of the trainees, you said, were men, but there were other women.

SIMPSON: Yes.

LUTZ: What did they do? What were their skills?

SIMPSON: [00:22:50] Well, there was the one that was a roommate with me in Guabira in the Santa Cruz area had a degree in sociology. So she was a quote a social worker. But didn't really have a social work degree. So then there was a social worker and she and her husband both joined and he was an entomologist and they were in the Santa Cruz area. They lived out at the experiment station. And then there were some other people that I can only think of as wheeler dealers. Our group had some people who worked with the experiment station, myself, and then they had other people doing what they called community development, which was always a very.

LUTZ: Nebulous.

SIMPSON: Nebulous kind of thing. And so I don't know, I worked personally 8 to 18 hours a day because I worked in the hospital, trying to, well, yeah, I guess we're almost to that.

LUTZ: [00:23:51] Well, I'm curious. So you're beginning to talk a little bit about what you got when you got to the country. And so how, you know, talk about, you were working with a midwife in Puerto Rico, right, who was teaching you?

SIMPSON: [00:24:11] Actually, that was in Arizona.

LUTZ: [00:24:13] In Arizona.

SIMPSON: [00:24:14] In Puerto Rico I was hanging around the hospital.

LUTZ: [00:24:16] So you were getting to trying to get health related skills. Did you know what? So when you got to Bolivia, then your first day, there you are. So talk about sort of what it was like when you got there and that first week or two once you got there, what that was like.

SIMPSON: [00:24:33] When we came into La Paz and of course, there's always pomp and ceremony. I got to give the speech in Spanish.

LUTZ: Because you spoke the best Spanish.

SIMPSON: Right, to the president and all these people that were there. There's a big picture in the paper, and right in the center, me. Well, I'm sure nobody ever knew who it was, but it was like, what? You want me to do what? But, you know, I was probably best prepared to do it. Then we went from there to Cochabamba and part of the group stayed in Cochabamba and then the people going to Santa Cruz went on to Santa Cruz.

LUTZ: [00:25:15] Did your group split in about half? Half and half?

SIMPSON: [00:25:18] Yeah, roughly. And we got down to Santa Cruz and then they took everybody out to where they were going to be. And they took me out to this place called Guabira, which was a sugar mill clinic, at the little settlement around the sugar mill. And they were good orientation. But I, and of course, we went, when we got there, we went over to look at the clinic and all that kind of stuff, and I thought it looked pretty dirty. So, of course, we cleaned it, which was not the thing to do. You know, you learn that. I learned all those kinds of things in this process of trying to be a Peace Corps volunteer. And while we were there, there was, you know, here this goat comes wandering in. Well, it's the doctor's goat, I guess, might have some milk or whatever. But right away I knew we were not in Kansas anymore.

LUTZ: [00:26:17] We're not in Kansas or Arizona.

SIMPSON: [00:26:20] Yeah. So it was interesting. And so mostly in the beginning, I had to, I was getting oriented to the place and I was the only registered nurse, but nobody thought I knew anything because they didn't know me. And the way most of the people that worked in the clinic got their training was they started out washing walls and floors and graduated to giving shots. And so, you know, that was kind of what you were up against. And so I had to. And some of the things they were doing, I didn't know how to

do because we had stopped doing them, you know, 20 years before. So anyway, anyway, so I had, it was a real period of orientation and.

LUTZ: [00:27:10] By immersion.

SIMPSON: [00:27:11] By immersion, yeah. And also got my roommate and I, Rose, we got elected to be candidates for the *madrina*, for the local soccer team, which meant we had to.

LUTZ: Were you a soccer player?

SIMPSON: [00:27:30] No, the *madrina* was like the homecoming queen. And we had this, I remember that we had this parade. We had to give them some gifts, I think we gave them a ball, new ball. It was really nothing. But they had this big ceremony and we were going out there. There was a local couple of local girls and us. And as we get out there, on the way, we're all dressed up. There was a cloudburst. We just got drenched. I have a picture, it looks pretty bad. But what I ended up doing, I had to, um, I had not given that many IVs. They did a lot of stuff IV push.

LUTZ: [00:28:16] And it was clinic, right? It was in like, so it wasn't hospital?

SIMPSON: [00:28:18] No, it was a clinic. And then so I had to learn how to do all this. But I mean, IV push. You have to sit there for a long time.

LUTZ: You can't just push it in. Yeah.

SIMPSON: [00:28:32] Right. Yeah. And all kinds of stuff like that, which you know, I was working with this Bolivian doctor but everything was so different. I remember I was, we had done some surgery on this one woman one time and I was staying late, watching when she came out of the anesthesia and helping her out and stuff. And I remember walking her up to the bathroom and she gets, they were so proud of these flush toilets they had. And so she gets there to the bathroom and then she climbs up on top of the flush toilet, on top of the seat, and squats. Because that's what she was used to doing. And it was so much harder for her to climb up.

LUTZ: [00:29:16] Because it used to be a hole in the floor probably, right? How interesting.

SIMPSON: [00:29:23] Oh yeah. It was just one thing after another.

LUTZ: [00:29:29] So would you say that there was some culture shock?

SIMPSON: [00:29:31] Oh absolutely. Absolutely. For one thing, there's no way. They had these anthropologists who were male and they could talk about the culture, but they weren't very good for preparing women to go down there. First they said don't make your skirts too short and don't bring any pants and no shorts. The first day we were there, a bunch of girls came around and said, don't you want to come play basketball with us? They all had shorts on.

LUTZ: Oh interesting, yeah.

SIMPSON: [00:30:06] What they did is they made their own clothes, but they'd get these magazines like Elle, these European fashion magazines. So, I mean, they were as fashionable as they could be, you know, with what they had to work with.

LUTZ: [00:30:24] So it with sounds like in your training, they maybe didn't they prepare. They taught you language, but you already knew that. And they taught you survival skills. But the day-to-day living stuff like maybe you didn't get so much of that. And then for you, particularly, because of your health care, you didn't get training in that.

SIMPSON: [00:30:42] No, well, they didn't really have anybody who was prepared to tell you how to deal with an antiquated health care system and these kinds of things. I mean, I adapted. Thank God. I was in, the program I was in was a two-year program first, and we had to do our time in central supply and our time in surgery and our time in, in my nursing program. OK, so because eventually I ended up having to do a lot of that stuff. Or I wouldn't have known that.

LUTZ: [00:31:17] What do you think the people in Bolivia thought of you young girls? I don't know how young the other one was. But you were a young girl and then your roommate was young too. What did they think of you coming down there?

SIMPSON: [00:31:30] They didn't know what to do with that. I didn't do a whole lot there because I moved from Guabira very soon. So I was really taking the job away from a Bolivian nurse.

LUTZ: Oh, I see.

SIMPSON: [00:31:50] So I said to our Peace Corps leader, I said, you know, I really shouldn't be here. This is good for orientation. But, you know, they can pay to hire somebody. I don't want to take a job right away from a Bolivian nurse because there weren't all that many jobs that paid. So then the Ministry of Health opened up this hospital, Ministry of Health hospital, in Montero, Bolivia. And so the minister of health sent his son who was a physician down to open up the hospital. So they sent me in to work with him to help set up that hospital. And of course, we didn't have beds. The beds were supposed to be coming. So we had pallets in the beginning and they didn't fund it very well. So the doctor essentially had clinics and charged people a small sum so we could at least buy some of the supplies. And then we got the Maryknoll nuns had their late mothers' groups make sheets out of the, you know, they have those. It wasn't USAID then, it was for the food supplies that they give. They come in these sort of bags, not burlap, but cloth bags. And so they made sheets out of all that. And then they got another group, the Lions, Ladies Lions Club, because the doctor wanted to open surgery.

LUTZ: [00:33:16] The Ladies Lions Club?

SIMPSON: There's a Ladies Lions Club.

LUTZ: In Bolivia?

SIMPSON: In Bolivia.

LUTZ: Like the Lions Club here, in 1961?

SIMPSON: [00:33:24] Las Leonas.

LUTZ: [00:33:25] That's amazing. That's amazing.

SIMPSON: [00:33:27] Anyway, so they made, the doctor wanted to open the surgery. So we needed drapes and things cause you want to be able to do emergency surgery. So I think you could earn some money that way. So they made a couple of sets of drapes. They had this big presentation. I'll never forget that. They gave me all the pictures and they brought out these sheets and they showed us, you know, I had to eventually wrap them up in some kind of sterile pack so we could. Well, they had put this Lions Club plastic, which didn't last long once it was in heat.

LUTZ: [00:34:09] In the autoclave.

SIMPSON: [00:34:10] Yeah, it was. I couldn't believe it. But, you know, you couldn't say anything, you know, thank you very much. So but yeah, one of the things, one of the big things that he wanted to do, was open a surgery that could do emergency surgery because it was hard for local people to get things like that done because they were just another poor peasant. And so they had this ancient autoclave. It must have been made in the 1800s, I don't know. I don't know how we didn't explode everything. But I had this little sort of kerosene sort of hot plate thing that I put that put it underneath there and heated it up, you know, put the pressure. It was like a pressure cooker. And I got it as hot as I could. But there was no control. I had no way of knowing how hot it was. But it was it got pretty hot. And that's how I sterilized the, you know, and we patched the gloves and we used the reusable noodles. And we had to, you know, take the hooks off of them. Like we used to a few years ago. And so, you know, but we did 147 surgeries.

LUTZ: [00:35:23] In how long?

SIMPSON: In a year.

LUTZ: In a year. Were you only there in that part a year?

SIMPSON: [00:35:28] Yeah. Because then they pulled me into the main Santa Cruz because they wanted to improve the quality of their nurses in the hospital and so they wanted somebody to come and do in-service. And by that time, see one of the things that I think I did was they sent some student nurses down to do their *año de provincia*, you know, the year of service that they have to do. And so I think it made a difference having somebody there who could be supportive. And so they weren't absolutely scared out of their minds so they could, you know.

LUTZ: [00:36:02] So you were pretty close to their age.

SIMPSON: [00:36:04] Yeah. And eventually there were a number of those. They had another nurse that came to be the administrator kind of and some of these other folks. And I think what I did eventually was just help keep it open until the community was able to get a hold of it.

LUTZ: [00:36:20] But so you moved around a little bit. You had this roommate. Did she move with you or did you then not have a roommate or what were your living conditions like?

SIMPSON: [00:36:30] Well, first I was living with her in this sugar mill community. Then when I moved to Montero, I moved in with the doctor and his family and then he was having marital problems, and I felt like I was right in it because I was training these girls to help in surgery and he was fell for one of them. So I said, excuse me, I think I'll find another place to live. So I went to live with another family. The thing is there I would take some of my meals with them and stuff, but what it was, I had to have a chaperone to go out.

LUTZ: [00:37:09] I wondered about that because, well even now, but women aren't safe a lot of places and especially in 1961.

SIMPSON: [00:37:17] Essentially, as long as you followed it that you were trying to, and the community kind of adopted me. And so I really had to follow all the rules. And so if we went to a dance, I had to go with a group that, you

know, they were kind of taking care of me, looking out for me. But, you know, the other option would have been to not follow the rules and then you would have been regarded as some kind of loose woman, you know, essentially.

LUTZ: [00:37:45] Probably put yourself in danger.

SIMPSON: [00:37:48] Absolutely. Yeah. On a lot of fronts.

LUTZ: [00:37:52] So chaperone would be somebody assigned to you or you just had to go out with other people?

SIMPSON: [00:37:58] It was pretty much just other people or maybe the family. The last family I lived with, they were very focused on making sure that I had the right kind of people looking after me.

LUTZ: [00:38:12] Oh, that's good. Because, yeah, you could have gotten into a situation.

SIMPSON: [00:38:16] There was a local politician who kind of took a liking to me. And of course, he was already married and all that kind of stuff. I wasn't interested at all. But, you know, you had to be careful of those kinds of things.

LUTZ: [00:38:27] Right. Right. Well, that's what I'm thinking. I mean, you could have found yourself in all kinds of uncomfortable situations.

SIMPSON: [00:38:34] Well, that's why I lived with the families and I followed what they, if they said. You know, even when I moved in to Santa Cruz, I moved in with a family.

LUTZ: [00:38:41] Oh, did you? Was that pretty typical of most of the Peace Corps volunteers or not necessarily?

SIMPSON: [00:38:47] Not necessarily. Some of them. The younger ones up in Cochabamba lived with families and they were the 18, 19 year olds. But

most of the women were older than me that went. One was a schoolteacher. One was a former professional basketball player.

LUTZ: [00:39:05] I didn't know they had professional basketball then.

SIMPSON: [00:39:06] Semi-professional basketball player. So, you know, they were kind of on their own or they might room with each other, but I was pretty much the younger one. And so and what I was doing, because I would end up seeing a lot of these people in the clinic, cause they'd, you know, come down to see the doctor. So they were very and I was open. I was willing to try stuff like the food they ate and all this different stuff. And so they pretty much adopted me.

LUTZ: [00:39:38] So you worked in the clinic. You worked for, did you. I'm trying to think how to word this. Did you do what I would consider typical RN duties, or was your role expanded because it was a nurse and a doctor practice? Did you do more things that it may be like an NP would do now?

SIMPSON: [00:39:59] Yeah, well, we delivered babies.

LUTZ: And you did that?

SIMPSON: Yeah, we went and made house calls.

LUTZ: [00:40:06] Like the old visiting nurse.

SIMPSON: [00:40:07] Yeah, and then they had a diphtheria epidemic while I was there. So they got a vaccine from Brazil. And so then we, the doctor and I and one of the other aides, would usually go out and we'd give all these shots. We did it with, I always say, we had ten needles and five syringes because it's when we use the multi-dose. You know, I used to do that on a campfire. We boiled them, you know, and just kept reusing them because they were out in the jungle part where people were beginning to settle and they didn't want them to be catching the diphtheria. And then we also did some immunization with smallpox. So, you know, that was a drop on and a little kid to make the scratches like you would have done years ago.

LUTZ: Yeah, right, right.

SIMPSON: So and the interesting thing there is that those people always want to pay us some way. They don't have any money and I don't want them to, you know, I'm fine. OK, so I remember going out one time and of course they brought all these grapefruits and they always wanted to feed you.

LUTZ: [00:41:23] That's pretty universal, I think, whenever you work in communities. That's pretty universal they want to feed you.

SIMPSON: [00:41:30] Exactly. Well, I wasn't sure what the water was like. So I really I would ask them if they wouldn't mind making me some coffee, because then I knew that they would boil the water. And they usually were very happy to do it, you know, and that way I got through without really any major problems. I did have hookworm, I think, when I came, when they tested me. That was because of the dust bowl. It wasn't really because of what I was eating. And then one time we went out there and everybody brought an egg. This whole thing of eggs, because those were very precious, you know, chickens and eggs out there in that area. And you couldn't not take it.

LUTZ; No, no, that's right. That's true.

SIMPSON: And you couldn't not eat stuff. So I just stopped asking what we were eating when it was hot. I'm sure we had alligator or kimon tail and who knows what else we had.

LUTZ: [00:42:32] I don't know if they serve guinea pig in Bolivia. I know they do in other parts of South America.

SIMPSON: [00:42:37] Yeah, *tepezcuintle*. Yeah, well that's Central America more. But they do, they probably had different things. I just didn't ask.

LUTZ: [00:42:45] So you said earlier that you worked about 18 hours a day. Did you really?

SIMPSON: We did.

LUTZ: Any leisure? It sounds like you had a little bit of leisure time but what would you say the balance was like?

SIMPSON: [00:42:58] Well, sometimes it was pretty intense, but usually you had to do your social life with people who were there because that's all who was there. So all your socializing had to be in Spanish, you know. So I did Carnival and then some of the other Peace Corps volunteers were around, but they weren't close. So sometimes they would come in. We'd go in to Santa Cruz and try to find ice cream, which is hard to find. It was hard to find then. But yeah. And one of the reasons we worked so long is that they didn't have electricity in that community. So if we wanted to do surgery, use this big surgery light, we had to wait till they turned the electricity on. So our surgeries were all scheduled for the evening, seven o'clock, is when we would.

LUTZ: [00:43:56] So you did clinic stuff during the day and then did surgery at night.

SIMPSON: [00:43:58] That's right. And if we had an emergency then they'd have to go run down and ask somebody to turn the electricity on. So everybody knew there was something going on.

LUTZ: HIPAA.

SIMPSON: Nobody had heard of HIPAA then.

LUTZ: [00:44:14] Were you comfortable with your language skills when you first got there? Because I know you said you lived in or you went to Mexico for a summer or something. I know sometimes when you first go someplace, even if you think your skills are pretty good, you realize how you're kind of a fish out of water.

SIMPSON: [00:44:30] I think I did pretty well, but I just had, like, headaches, because you have to listen so hard. You have to listen so closely.

LUTZ: Because you're thinking in English still.

SIMPSON: You're thinking and I remember the first time I dreamed in Spanish. Or I got so comfortable I could go to the movies. And they were all in Spanish, you know, stuff like that.

LUTZ: [00:44:52] Yeah. That's interesting because you don't think about that. My son was in Germany for a year and said the same thing. When you start thinking in the language, that's a real shift. That's when you realize you really sort of made that leap. And that's, I would think, would have been a lot harder for some of the other volunteers who didn't have language skills.

SIMPSON: [00:45:11] I think it took me probably about three or four months to get pretty comfortable, but it would have taking a lot longer had I now already known Spanish.

LUTZ: [00:45:19] And you were there two years?

SIMPSON: Two years.

LUTZ: And was that the extent of your Peace Corps service, two years? Or did you?

SIMPSON: [00:45:26] No, now they, you have to do the training and then they add the two years, but then it was all included there. Some people extended, but I had, I was ready to go back to school, so I didn't stay.

LUTZ: [00:45:41] Well then you went back for your master's degree after that. Well, you had delivered babies by then, so you kind of did it backwards, did the clinical part first.

SIMPSON: [00:45:50] You know, we did. And they expected the nurses to do minor surgery and all that kind of stuff. But I didn't ever really feel that comfortable with that kind of stuff. But it was a lot of, a lot of negotiating. A lot of, the midwife there really taught me a lot. She really knew the people. She delivered most of the babies and was godmother to most of them.

LUTZ: [00:46:18] Was she a midwife in the clinic or a community midwife that people knew?

SIMPSON: [00:46:22] She was, her headquarters were in the hospital, but she actually was not hired by the hospital. She was hired through the Ministry of Health, but as part of like the public health department.

LUTZ: [00:46:35] She was part of the community.

SIMPSON: Part of the community, yeah.

LUTZ: But what was the worst part of doing this or the worst experience you had?

SIMPSON: [00:46:48] Really bad? Well, the worst experience I had is what we had. We did an emergency C-section on this lady who was actually my laundry lady. You know, she used to iron my underwear. No, but she had like, this was her eleventh child. We didn't get her until she'd been in labor for about three or four days.

LUTZ: Oh my gosh.

SIMPSON: And she just could not. It was a huge kid. She probably was a diabetic by that time or gestational diabetes at least. And so they did this. And then, of course, we did classical C-section because, you know, we didn't have.

LUTZ: [00:47:27] What does that mean?

SIMPSON: [00:47:28] I mean, the big, the straight up, the vertical scar. Because they're easier to get in and get out. And, um, so she died on the table.

LUTZ: Oh my gosh. Wow.

SIMPSON: Yeah. I subsequently I really think it was probably an amniotic embolus, which probably wouldn't, we wouldn't have been able to do anything about anyway. But it was, I was devastated, you know.

LUTZ: [00:47:55] Wow.

SIMPSON: [00:48:01] But yeah, it was, that was really. Then the other thing that I really didn't like was these little kids that you would maybe we'd deliver and send them home and then they'd come back in six months later, you know, and their big bellies, malnourished and all that. And that was before oral rehydration. So the only thing that you could do was try to get some kind of intravenous or some kind of hydration into them.

LUTZ: [00:48:31] And so, again, for the tape, talk about the difference. So if anybody listening doesn't know about oral rehydration.

SIMPSON: [00:48:37] Well, oral rehydration now, which came out where they were developing it at that time, but not in Bolivia, in other places. So it's a way that they can actually give oral fluids. It has the salt and three fingers of sugar, four fingers of sugar, two fingers of salt, or whatever.

LUTZ: In developing countries.

SIMPSON: In developing countries, and it will stay down if you just do it gradually with even a little cup or a spoon. It's very intensive. But back then we only thought that the only way you could rehydrate these kids would be starting by an IV or something. So we didn't really have the equipment we needed.

LUTZ: [00:49:22] Did you feel like the Peace Corps could have prepared you better to handle some of these situations?

SIMPSON: [00:49:28] I, yeah, I think. I don't know if there was a better way to do it because they, you know, everybody was. The big thing was the lack of supplies and lack of expertise. I mean, we did what we call hypodermic plicis where we just put the needle in underneath the skin because we'd have kids that we could not find a vein line even on the head or wherever, you know. And so that's one reason I never did do pediatrics after that, because that was really too hard to take. But anyway. Yeah. So I think one of my comments when I finished was the problem I thought, is that you really need, you can't be a nurse playing Schweitzer in the jungle. Now I wasn't, I was with. You needed to be attached to some organization or

university or hospital or whatever. And everything was so and I was attached to a hospital, but there was just no infrastructure.

LUTZ: [00:50:34] Yeah. Well it was a new hospital, right?

SIMPSON: [00:50:36] Yes, it was a new hospital. And what they wanted me to do, ten years later I was maybe prepared to do. I was too new. I was too new now. Probably ten years later, I would have said, are you crazy? I'm not doing this! Because, you know, that's who goes. Usually either people who are older or people who are young and don't know any better.

LUTZ: [00:51:03] What was the best thing? Either one experience or overall.

SIMPSON: [00:51:08] I don't know, um. The interesting thing was just how the people took to you. There were a lot of anti-American sentiment, but on an individual basis, it depended what you did. And I didn't have any problem, you know. I had my little ukulele.

LUTZ: Why did you have a ukulele?

SIMPSON: Because I played it.

LUTZ: Oh, so you brought that with you?

SIMPSON: [00:51:37] Yeah. They'd play their guitars and I'd play some of the things I knew, stupid stuff, you know, but it's apparently an icebreaker. I thought one of the really neat experiences I had was when I moved in Santa Cruz, I had my twenty-first birthday there. And at that time, um.

LUTZ: [00:52:00] So you must have been 22 when you got out then?

SIMPSON: [00:52:02] No, it wasn't my twenty-first. It was my twenty-fourth.

LUTZ: [00:52:05] OK. Because you had a birthday there.

SIMPSON: [00:52:09] So they had a big party for me. And even though there had been a death in the family, they had been planning this. And they wouldn't

normally do it but they did it and they allowed me to invite all these people I knew. And so it was just, the family was really nice. You know, they really did kind of take you under their wing. And, of course, you know, that's kind of what happened. I think what I did learn, um, I was surprised. I kept counting the days until I was going to be gone. And then all of a sudden it was coming up and I didn't want to leave.

LUTZ: [00:52:51] So initially you were kind of saying, I only have to, you know.

SIMPSON: [00:52:56] I've only got however many.

LUTZ: [00:52:59] Six hundred and 66 days or whatever.

SIMPSON: [00:53:02] Yeah. Really. Because, you know, you are in this culture, in this culture shock. And then the irony, even though they talked about it, you knew it was going to happen. You can see it kind of happening and there doesn't seem to be a lot you could do about it.

LUTZ: [00:53:20] Right. You have to work through it.

SIMPSON: [00:53:22] Yeah. And but fortunately, I thought the carnivals that they had. My first experience with the carnival, Bolivian carnival in Santa Cruz, that was 11 days and nights.

LUTZ: Sort of like Mardi Gras?

SIMPSON: Yeah, it's like Mardi Gras. It's like Brazil. They have the Carnival.

LUTZ: [00:53:42] Yeah, I've heard of it.

SIMPSON: [00:53:42] And they dance in the streets in the day and then they dance at night and, you know. And the stores practically, everything closed down because nobody did anything during that. But I think they reduced it now so it's not nearly as long, you know, might be three or four days or something like that. But then it was 11 days and nights.

LUTZ: [00:54:04] Wow. So I think we've addressed a lot of these and I'll go back. But I want to get this on the tape for sure. Overall evaluate your service in light of the three goals of the Peace Corps, which were to provide technical assistance where requested, to promote better understanding of the U.S., to promote better understanding of other people by Americans. So based on your service, did you feel like you were able to do those three things?

SIMPSON: [00:54:32] To some extent. I did train these people, these young girls, to be sort of paramedical, to help with surgery. And of course, the big deal was understanding sterile technique. Because if you don't understand the whole germs theory, you know, you just can't understand. So I had to teach it like a ritual. So this is a ceremony. This is how you do it. I didn't say that's a ceremony.

LUTZ: [00:55:03] But that's really interesting because you got the culture.

SIMPSON: [00:55:06] Yeah, because if you didn't teach, it always has to be like this. Like this. Like this. Like they'd boil up the tubing that we use for the IV and they boil and then they'd go in and touch it with their hands that were unsterile or something like that. So you have to teach it all like this is how you always do it, which is probably why we ended up in the beginning doing things that way. Because they don't know where to cut corners and they cut corners at the wrong places if they don't understand the underlying theory. So I don't know. I guess I added some technology. I mean, I managed to do what they wanted me to do. But I think the biggest thing I probably did was I certainly learned a lot about Bolivia and about and I think that people learned more about the U.S. I did talk to, they were always asking me to come talk, do talks, like at the Ladies Lions Club or the whatever other group they had or so. And so I went to a lot of places like that because I did have passable Spanish. So and I think just the fact that they saw what kind of person I was, that I was not, you know, that I was willing to try what they had and I did what they did and live like they did.

LUTZ: [00:56:41] You tried to fit in, rather than.

SIMPSON: [00:56:44] Right, but because all they had seen before was people from like the oil drilling people or some of the real big diplomatic type people. So but I think some of those goals at that time were pretty hard to attain by, you know, by an individual.

LUTZ: [00:57:05] Certainly by an individual, right. How does it change your life, looking back on it? What do you think? How did it change your life? And how did it maybe influence your career?

SIMPSON: [00:57:16] I probably wouldn't have been an anthropologist. I wouldn't have gone back. I wouldn't have probably. I went into public health. You know, I studied community health at University of California.

LUTZ: [00:57:27] Oh, you did? Where did you do your women's health, here at UF [University of Florida]? Or did you do the women's health there?

SIMPSON: [00:57:31] I did. Part of what I did there was well baby clinics and maternity clinics.

LUTZ: [00:57:40] I knew you were a public health nurse. I didn't realize you trained in public health.

SIMPSON: [00:57:43] The master's says it was in community health.

LUTZ: [00:57:50] Oh, I didn't know that. But you're a women's health nurse practitioner? So where?

SIMPSON: [00:57:53] Yeah, but I had to piece that together, because really weren't many programs. But they were doing prenatal clinics, nurse run prenatal clinics and nurse run well baby clinics in California when I came back. And of course they gave me East San Jose, which was all Spanish speaking. So yes, I think it really changed the trajectory quite a bit, you know, and then subsequently I did a lot of other international stuff.

LUTZ: [00:58:26] Do you think you would have gotten a Ph.D. in something else or you might have?

SIMPSON: [00:58:31] I think I would have gotten a Ph.D. and I might have gotten that even in anthropology, because I was kind of looking at that when I got out, before I graduated at University of Utah. But I don't know if I would have done the international piece. And I don't know. It's hard to say, but I think it definitely changed what I.

LUTZ: [00:58:58] Well, I can't imagine that it wouldn't have had a huge impact on you. I'm just looking to see if there's anything else that I didn't do. It says in first year end of tour, notable events, reflections, joys and woes, unexpected events, relationships, health problems. So were there notable events besides the one we've already talked about in that first year? And then in the second year, the one thing you did say was that transition from counting the days to go home to not wanting to leave. When did that occur about that, was that near the end?

SIMPSON: [00:59:34] And yeah, you just didn't realize it crept up on you. But one notable thing happened at the end is that I was all prepared to go and the plane never left Santa Cruz on time. And this time they said, just call, don't go out there, just call. Well, I got out there and they wouldn't let me get on because I wasn't there an hour.

LUTZ: [00:59:59] Because you were late?

SIMPSON: [01:00:00] It hadn't left and it didn't leave for another 30 or 40 minutes, but they wouldn't let me get on, which meant they probably sold my seat to somebody else. But so I missed all my flights.

LUTZ: [01:00:12] Oh my gosh.

SIMPSON: [01:00:13] So I had to stay extra days in Lima, Peru, which I wasn't planning on. And then when I finally got to Miami, I was going to go to the World's Fair because it was 1964 and it was up in New York or somewhere up there. And I got to Miami and I said, eh, I don't think so. So I changed my flight and I went by way of Las Vegas to Salt Lake City. And then I took the train home.

LUTZ: [01:00:40] And then went home. Did you stay at home for a while?

SIMPSON: [01:00:43] And I couldn't stay home very long because I had to go to summer school at Berkeley, the University of California Berkeley.

LUTZ: [01:00:49] So you'd already applied while you were there?

SIMPSON: [01:00:53] I applied and they told me I could have, you know, an assistantship because they were trying to, you know, they were really interested in some of these people coming out of the Peace Corps at that time.

LUTZ: [01:01:01] Wow. That's really fascinating. Are there any other things that you can think of that we didn't cover?

SIMPSON: [01:01:13] One of the interesting things when I was in Santa Cruz was the fact that you could go out in the boonies to the Okinawan colony or one of these other Chinese colonies.

LUTZ: Chinese?

SIMPSON: Well, they had Chinese, they had Okinawans. Because they came in and they settled and they raised all these vegetables. So you could go out the middle of the boonies and you could go to a restaurant that had excellent Oriental food.

LUTZ: Interesting. That's terrific.

SIMPSON: I did go over one Christmas to Argentina and Uruguay because I went with one of the ladies I knew who lived in Argentina. And then I just went on over to Uruguay because I wanted to look around there.

LUTZ: [01:02:03] Were you able to come home at all during the two years? You stayed down there the whole time? Wow, that is an immersion experience.

SIMPSON: [01:02:08] Pretty much. And the interesting thing was I had got a bunch of clothes made because you'd get them made pretty cheap. But then I got to San Francisco and I realized that my tastes, because they were

influenced by Bolivia, it was so garish you could not wear these shiny. I mean, nice fabrics. But they're way too lavish for San Francisco at the time. And the other thing I didn't realize, the reverse culture shock was very difficult. I actually felt very insecure if I didn't have a chaperone.

LUTZ: [01:02:51] Oh that's interesting too. I never thought about that. But there was a reversal.

SIMPSON: [01:02:57] Well they talked to us about it. But, you know, it's one of those things that you don't realize it until you're through just about. And then always said, oh, that's what happened. I did have some problems in school though, because I had a family that was. They were in East San Jose and they had, the little boy had a tetralogy of hello. And they wanted to get him in to get his surgery. And they kept the mother bringing him into the well baby clinic and they'd talk to her and explain. And she was a. [tape break] In Peace Corps that the only way I was going to get this kid there is if we talked to the dad. And he worked in an auto plant, you know, there in Milpitas, they have auto assembly plants out there. So I went after five because then I knew he would be home. And so over coffee with talking with he and his wife, I explained really why it was that they needed to keep this appointment at Stanford Children's Hospital. And then I offered to go with them. He could actually speak pretty well so I didn't really translate for him. But I said, I'll go with you. And so I did. And we got him right in there. And but, you know, I got called down for that because it was after 5:00 and that was a no-no.

SIMPSON: [01:04:17] But, you know, and I got called down for a number of other things that I did that were the result of me having been in Bolivia and having had this sort of alternative experience. But the interesting thing was later that same professor that had not given me a very good grade, well she gave me a B, but I did better than that. But she went to Venezuela or Colombia or somewhere and was working, and she wrote me this letter when I was in Tucson, Arizona, in the doctoral program, and it had an apology. And she was apologizing for how she treated me because she didn't understand where I was coming from.

LUTZ: [01:05:11] Wow. That's pretty good, though.

SIMPSON: [01:05:13] I thought maybe it was, I thought maybe it was just me, you know, but because it was like she was deliberately not, just didn't seem to get what. Because I was doing some alternative kinds of things, because I was working with the Hispanic population, Mexican population, and it didn't, um.

LUTZ: [01:05:34] That's the definition of cultural competence though, when you know how to do that, I mean.

SIMPSON: [01:05:39] Well, I mean, what they were concerned about me going there and having coffee and talking to people after hours. Well, how else are you going to talk to the dad? And if you go to somebody's house, they offer you things like that. If I had not had coffee or whatever, they would have not been as, you know, compliant and we wouldn't have been able to communicate as well. And I did get him there.

LUTZ: [01:06:07] I mean, that's such a public health concept that you have to fit into their realm of what's acceptable.

SIMPSON: [01:06:14] I was taken aback because I was expecting a little bit more understanding.

LUTZ: [01:06:20] I would have expected that too, especially from that university.

SIMPSON: [01:06:22] Yeah, yeah. Well, it was different. I don't know. But in all and all, I wouldn't trade the experience of the Peace Corps.

LUTZ: [01:06:34] I mean, I always thought it would be a neat experience. I never had the guts. I think you have to be somebody who is a risk-taker to do that. And it sounds like you were.

SIMPSON: [01:06:43] Yes, I guess I probably still am a risk-taker to a certain extent. But I really wouldn't change it. And it's interesting because when I get together with my Peace Corps volunteer friends, you know, we did last year. I think we had 20 some.

LUTZ: Of the 30? Wow. That's pretty amazing.

SIMPSON: [01:07:04] Yeah. After all these years and, you know, they're just kind of like they were they were then. Most of them were working in a service kind of thing like teaching or they had their own business, they were farmers or whatever. And the interesting thing was to me, when I was interviewing the guys in my group, is like they couldn't really understand. You know, they would tell me. I said, just tell me what happened. And they didn't really see what they were doing, which was great. I mean, you know, they were doing great things, but they never did really think it. I had to pull it out of them. But, you know, it's very interesting. Well, I think that's probably about enough.

LUTZ: OK.

SIMPSON: Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]