

**Robert Crisp Oral History Interview**  
Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection  
Administrative Information

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**Biographical Note**

Robert V. (Bob) Crisp served as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Dominican Republic from August 1962 to July 1964 on a rural community development project.

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Oral History Interview

with

Robert Crisp

November 22, 2019

Vienna, Virginia

By Randolph Adams

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

ADAMS: [00:00:04] Today is November 22nd, 2019. This is Randolph Adams, and I am interviewing Robert Crisp, who was a Peace Corps volunteer in the Dominican Republic from August 1962 till July 1964 as a rural community development volunteer. Bob, pleased to be able to talk with you today. I have a series of questions that I'm going to ask as sort of a stimulus to think about your Peace Corps service and history and if other things come to mind, you're free to expand. This is your story. Let's start with a little bit about what was your life like before joining the Peace Corps? Your childhood education, other experiences that might be relevant to having you finally become a volunteer?

CRISP: [00:01:04] OK, I grew up in rural Kentucky, in a very poor family. I went to high school in Pikeville, Kentucky, and luckily my grades were good. And so when I finished high school, I was awarded a one year scholarship to the University of Kentucky. Well, that was good for one year, and I struggled through two years of college before I completely ran out of

money and I had to drop out. And I'd dropped out to join the Army to get the GI Bill so I could return to college. And so I went into the military. I served three years. I was in the 11th Airborne Division. I went into the paratroopers because it paid more. And after my three years were up, I returned to the university, completed my university degree, and was awarded a free one year of graduate school year in international relations.

ADAMS: [00:02:46] And what was your undergraduate degree in?

CRISP: [00:02:49] It was also in international relations. That's why. I wrote an undergraduate thesis and based on my undergraduate thesis, that's why they awarded me the free one year of graduate school. They liked it. So I completed a year of graduate school and then I had two job offers, but my mother needed financial assistance. And she asked me if I would come to Toledo where she was living and help her with her finances. It was not my first choice, but I did go to Toledo and I worked for two years in technical development for a glass company, and I paid off all of my mother's debts. And then I joined the Peace Corps because I had heard about the Peace Corps as soon as it was announced by John Kennedy and Sargent Shriver. And I knew it was something I wanted to do because I had this great interest in international relations and travel abroad and work abroad. So I went into the Peace Corps. And that's pretty much what I did before joining.

ADAMS: [00:04:24] Very good. And as you say, your major interest in joining was because of your background in international relations and travel.

CRISP: [00:04:35] Uh huh. Plus, in the military, I served at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and also Munich, Germany, so my German experience really, really intensified my desire to see the world.

ADAMS: [00:05:03] How did you hear about the Peace Corps? You mentioned it was.

CRISP: [00:05:07] Yeah, when it was announced by Kennedy and Shriver, it was, I knew immediately that, I think that was in 1961. I knew immediately as

what I wanted to do, but I still had to help my mother get out of debt. So in 1962, with as I felt that I could leave and go into it.

ADAMS: [00:05:38] What was the process at that time for joining the Peace Corps? Do you remember the application process?

CRISP: [00:05:44] Not too much. I remember applying. And being notified that I was accepted and I was to report to, I think it was New York, for orientation. And then down to Puerto Rico for four months of training.

ADAMS: [00:06:20] How long did it take between your applying and your being accepted, was it drawn out or a fairly quick?

CRISP: [00:06:27] It was fairly quick. I don't recall. It's been 55 years or more, but I think it was fairly quick.

ADAMS: [00:06:40] Did you at the time have a particular area of the world or a country you were interested in serving in?

CRISP: [00:06:46] Yes, I was interested in the Far East and it was a surprise when I was offered the Dominican Republic.

ADAMS: [00:07:00] How did you react to that?

CRISP: [00:07:02] Well, I was a little disappointed, but still I thought, well, I've never been to Latin America before, except for northern Mexico. So, yeah, alright. I was willing to go and check it out.

ADAMS: [00:07:23] Had you had any language training before?

CRISP: [00:07:28] Not in Spanish. I'd taken a few courses in German, but not in Spanish.

ADAMS: [00:07:42] What about your friends and family, how did they react to the decision?

CRISP: [00:07:47] Well, it was just my mother and since her debts were paid, she had really no reason for asking me to stick around. And my brother and my brother-in-law and sister were living nearby, and they had their own life to live. So I was pretty much on my own.

ADAMS: [00:08:22] And giving you had been in the military and back to grad school, how old were you when you started Peace Corps?

CRISP: [00:08:31] I was, uh, just a minute. I was 28 years old.

ADAMS: [00:08:46] So you were a bit older than some of the others, or was there a range of age in your training class?

CRISP: [00:08:54] I would say most of them were younger than me because they were primarily fresh out of college. In fact, some had not even gone to college. And but yet we did have seniors in the group, older people. So I was. And we did have some older veterans in our group, military veterans. So but I was, I'd say, among the middle upper age group.

ADAMS: [00:09:30] Before we started the interview, you mentioned to me some rather unique trainees that were also there, through a judge, I guess, was given options. You mentioned a judge that gave some of the trainees an option to go to jail or go to the Peace Corps.

CRISP: [00:09:50] Oh yes. We had a variety of Peace Corps recruits and two men had been juveniles, and the court had to give them an option of going to jail, incarceration, or joining the Peace Corps. That's what I heard. So I can't vouch for that as being truthful, but this is what I heard. They did not last more than a week after we arrived in country.

ADAMS: [00:10:37] And the training you had in Puerto Rico was in the Outward Bound camps in the rainforest?

CRISP: [00:10:44] We had two months of Outward Bound training up in the mountains and then we had two more months at the University of Puerto Rico for our regular training. During the Outward Bound training, though, we did have classes in Spanish, but at the university we concentrated on

what we were supposed to do in country, which is, in my group, is being trained for rural community development. The other half of my group was being trained for English teaching.

ADAMS: [00:11:29] And the Outward Bound portion, I'm just curious, given there were veterans in the group versus younger people.

CRISP: [00:11:39] Yeah.

ADAMS: [00:11:41] How did that play out given your military experience doing Outward Bound versus some of the other members of the training class?

CRISP: [00:11:49] Oh, I loved, I loved the Outward Bound training. Some of the other people found it very, very challenging, but I had had airborne training and then I had had special forces training. In my two years of special forces active reserves, during which time we had skiing and whitewater experience and rappelling down cliffs and mountains and extensive explosion experience. And so this sort of prepared me for the Outward Bound training, and I loved the Outward Bound training. In Puerto Rico, we rappelled down the side of a very high dam, which was, I thought, a lot of fun. I think I was the fastest one to go down because of my previous experience. We rappel also down cliffs.

CRISP: [00:13:03] But the most challenging part was the swimming, because they would tie our arms behind our backs and we would swim for I think it was forty five minutes. They'd pull us out, untie our arms, tie our legs, throw us back in, and another 45 minutes. And then they'd pull us out and untie our legs and put us in heavy coveralls and throw us back in for another 45 minutes. And then we were asked to swim two lengths of an Olympic size swimming pool underwater. And I think I was one of the few people who made it. But that was a, that was the hardest thing I ever did.

CRISP: [00:13:51] Then they took us to the beach in Puerto Rico, where the waves were extremely high, and they had a raft out there and we had to make three passes around that raft before we could come into shore. And on my third pass, I was exhausted. I was crawling into shore and instructor told me that another trainee was having difficulty out at the raft and to go

out and rescue him. Oh, that was, that was something else. But I went out and I, since I had had Red Cross lifesaver training in college, I went out and grabbed him and pulled him into shore.

ADAMS: [00:14:43] Now you mentioned that during the Outward Bound portion, you were also given language training during that time.

CRISP: [00:14:51] Yes.

ADAMS: [00:14:52] Were your instructors Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Americans?

CRISP: [00:14:57] The instructors were good. But I am not talented when it comes to picking up languages. So I did the best I could. Other people, several people in our group could already speak Spanish before we even arrived. So for them, it was simple. For me, it was more challenging trying to learn the language.

ADAMS: [00:15:26] But did they bring Dominican instructors over or were using Puerto Rican?

CRISP: [00:15:31] No, all the instructors were local Puerto Ricans.

ADAMS: [00:15:42] What about the rural community development technical training? What was that like?

CRISP: [00:15:49] That was interesting. They sent half of our group, the English teachers, over to the country about two weeks before us, and they kept the community developers in Puerto Rico for additional community development training. And we went out and we met Puerto Rican professionals who were doing community development work in Puerto Rico. And basically, we'd sit with them in community circles when they were lecturing the local community and cooperating and in community development training. And so we listened in and we tried to learn as much as we could. And then we visited rural homes and people and talked to them to see if they could give us any suggestions and ideals and how to deal with the rural people when we were meeting with them to get acquainted. And it was a wonderful experience.

ADAMS: [00:17:14] Do you recall if there were any films or texts that were used or mostly lecture?

CRISP: [00:17:21] Mostly lectures and mostly on the job with the rural community developer in Puerto Rico.

ADAMS: [00:17:39] Do you feel that the training adequately prepared you for your assignment?

CRISP: [00:17:45] The training was what?

ADAMS: [00:17:47] If it prepared you adequately to do the work you were expected to do? Or what would you have liked in addition or there was something more that you would have in retrospect felt would have helped.

CRISP: [00:18:02] Here's my evaluation. We spent two months in Outward Bound training and two months at the university. And most of the training in the university was academic, and so the two weeks that we had of actual, you might say, on hands training with a Puerto Rican professional community development was basically all we had, and we did not experience enough to make us highly qualified to do the work. So I cannot say that the training, that I felt the training was adequate.

ADAMS: [00:19:01] During the training process, I know in your time period there was a selection process. Were trainees asked to leave during training or did some decide on their own to leave?

CRISP: [00:19:16] Oh. You know, we lost. Well, we lost a few in training. And most of them were asked to leave, during the training. And we lost a lot more once we got into country during the time there. And that was. Very few left on their own. They were asked to leave, told to leave.

ADAMS: [00:19:51] Interesting.

CRISP: [00:19:53] For one thing or another.



ADAMS: [00:19:55] And the ones that were leaving, was that earlier in the service or did it continue throughout your service?

CRISP: [00:20:05] It continued. Well, it was primarily early in the service, but it continued throughout the service. In fact, my. One year in service, my partner up in Constanza, his partner was told he had to leave. Because he was, had a racket. He was accepting cash that his group was earning, and he was accepting part of it for himself, and that was prohibited. So he was sent home, and it was after one year of service in the country.

ADAMS: [00:21:13] What was your initial entry like into Santo Domingo? Actually, you were sent to Constanza, right?

CRISP: [00:21:23] My first assignment was Hato Mayor, in the far eastern part. Very, very hot and humid.

ADAMS: [00:21:40] And what were you doing there?

CRISP: [00:21:44] I was dropped off by the Peace Corps. My partner, who was an English teacher, was already there because he'd already been in country. He was staying with the local priest. And so I was dropped off, and I was told that, you know, basically, this is your post. Do what you can. And I moved in with my partner and the priest and then my partner and I moved out and got our own little rental house. And so the first thing I did is try to get acquainted with the community and see if there's anything I could do. And I noticed that the local young people love to play sports but had no equipment.

CRISP: [00:22:47] So I wrote to the company that I had worked for before joining the Peace Corps, and that was Owens-Illinois in Ohio, Toledo. And I asked them if they could do a donation of used sporting equipment. And much to my surprise, they set down 11 cases of used sporting equipment. But it consisted of all kinds of sporting equipment, including ice skates, which there was no ice in the Dominican Republic. And it consisted of maybe hockey sticks or. But also there were baseballs, gloves, bats, cleats, uniforms. And so it was great. And I set up a system where one person would sign up for the equipment and issue it to the young people

who would play and turn it back in and that one person who would be responsible for turning it back in. And that way, I was trying to control so that the equipment did not disappear. And that was one of my first major projects.

CRISP: [00:24:31] And the second one was I noticed there was a severe shortage of chickens and only the wealthy could afford to buy chickens for food. And so I organized a group of young people and asked them to pool as much money as they could, and they did. And we went out into the campo and we climbed palm trees and we harvested palm leaves. And we brought everything back and we built a chicken house. And we used the palm trees for the roof, and we put chicken wire all around it and even a couple a foot down into the ground to keep rats from going in underneath the bottom of a chicken house and into the chicken house. And then the Peace Corps brought in two hundred baby chicks and transported them to Hato Mayor.

CRISP: [00:26:04] And so my group raised, we also, the money we raised in the group we used to buy chicken feeders, chicken feed, and chicken waters and vaccine. And we brought the chickens in. We had sawdust in the floor and we turned the two hundred chicks loose. And then we withheld their water for about a day to make them thirsty. And then we add the vaccine to the water. And then we gave them the water so that they would drink it and become vaccinated. And we did not lose a single of the two hundred chickens to disease. So that was great. The only problem is that after the two hundred chickens, after eight weeks, they were grown and ready to market, and that's when my group told me that, Roberto, Dominicans do not eat white chickens. They were all white. Two hundred of them. I thought, they never told me this in training.

CRISP: [00:27:25] It turned out that not only do Dominicans not like white chickens, they did not like white eggs, white onions. Anything white, they wouldn't eat. I didn't know that, and we were not told that. So fortunately, an American sugar company had once had a sugar plantation about 20 miles away, and they had set up schools and houses for their employees and the employees had become relatively Americanized. So I had the group load up our chickens. We had a Peace Corps truck pickup truck and

we loaded up a truckload of chickens at a time and we would drive them over to this adjacent town not far away, and we would drive up and down the street and sell the chickens. And that's the only way I was able to sell those two hundred chickens.

ADAMS: [00:28:42] But who got the chickens in the first place?

CRISP: [00:28:45] The Peace Corps had agricultural farms in the U.S. that donated the chickens, chicken farms, and they donated the chicks to the Peace Corps and shipped them down. Now the Peace Corps apparently didn't know that white chickens were not welcome. But anyway, we still with the money we made, we repaid every member of the association what they had contributed. We paid off the price of the waters and the feeders and the medicine that we had bought, and so we had a chicken house ready for more than two hundred chickens. And I met with a group and I explained that now we could bring in a much larger group of chickens. They would not be white. And then we would start, the association would start making some money. We had a meeting. They voted to stop the association, divide what's left, and quit, because they did not like to work.

CRISP: [00:30:14] I was so disgusted that I asked the Peace Corps country director for a reassignment. And so that's why I only spent one year in Hato Mayor. And then the Peace Corps country director, whom I had the greatest respect for, reassigned me up in the mountains to Constanza in the other end of the country.

ADAMS: [00:30:47] Was that Andy Hernandez?

CRISP: [00:30:50] Andy Hernandez, yeah.

ADAMS: [00:30:50] I met him, quite fascinating fellow.

CRISP: [00:30:53] Yeah. He had been in the military.

ADAMS: [00:30:56] Is the association, where they the youth or were they adults by then?

CRISP: [00:31:03] I'm sorry?

ADAMS: [00:31:04] The association, the members association that you said. I thought originally you said they were young people who were raising the chickens.

CRISP: [00:31:12] Yeah.

ADAMS: [00:31:13] So when you had your association, they were still the youth?

CRISP: [00:31:17] No. Well, not really young, moderate age, 20s.

ADAMS: [00:31:22] Okay. So they weren't children.

CRISP: [00:31:23] Yeah, no. Mostly the kids who were for the sports.

ADAMS: [00:31:30] Gotcha. OK.

CRISP: [00:31:31] But for the association, it was mostly young adults.

ADAMS: [00:31:37] OK, I misunderstood that one.

CRISP: [00:31:39] Yeah. I didn't understand, but looking back now, I know, because before I left, the Peace Corps assigned a third volunteer to our group and he had experience as an architect. And he organized a group before I left and asked them what they'd like to do. And they said, we would like to have our own community center. And he said, great, we will build it. And they said OK. So he designed it. He was, he knew what he was doing. He designed it. And then they all went out and they started working on it. And they put up the, they dug the foundation, they put up the cement pillars, and then all of a sudden it was abandoned because the people got tired of working. And so as far as I know, it might be still standing there after all these years, concrete pillars in the air, incomplete community center, because the people did not want to work anymore. So I don't know.

ADAMS: [00:33:03] Did you have any interaction with staff during this time period or were they of any assistance?

CRISP: [00:33:09] Peace Corps staff?

ADAMS: [00:33:09] Yeah.

CRISP: [00:33:12] Not really. They would visit maybe once every three or four months just to see what was going on and but with no consequence from any of the visits.

ADAMS: [00:33:40] And the assignment to Hato Mayor didn't include assigning you to any particular organization? It was just this is where you're going to live?

CRISP: [00:33:51] Yeah.

ADAMS: [00:33:51] This is what you figure out what to do.

CRISP: [00:33:54] Yeah. Well, see my partner up in Constanza had just lost his partner, who was sent home for corruption.

ADAMS: [00:34:05] Mm hmm.

CRISP: [00:34:06] And so he was up there alone. And so I was sent up with him. And so he already had a little house he was renting. So I moved in and that's where we lived until both of us completed our two years and went home.

ADAMS: [00:34:29] But in neither case, in Hato Mayor or Constanza, you weren't assigned to an organization to work with, no coworkers or counterparts in the work you were doing?

CRISP: [00:34:40] No, we were pretty much on our own. When I got to Constanza, I did the same thing I did when I arrived in Hato Mayor. I tried to get familiar with the community, talk to people and see how I could help.

ADAMS: [00:35:03] You mentioned Hato Mayor was quite hot environment.

CRISP: [00:35:08] Very hot and humid.

ADAMS: [00:35:10] And Constanza I know is up in the mountains, so quite a bit different.

CRISP: [00:35:14] Much cooler. And in fact, in the wintertime we had no heat in the house, but the water, if in a puddle outside, sometimes would freeze. It got that cold, never to snow, but the water would freeze.

ADAMS: [00:35:35] Any other issues with the environment in either place?

CRISP: [00:35:41] Just too hot and humid. It's sometimes it's understandable that people didn't want to work, it was too hot. But in Constanza, no, the weather was not really a problem. It was, our house wasn't heated, but, you know, we had warm clothes for the winter, bedding, blankets on the beds. We didn't have indoor plumbing. We couldn't didn't have a stove and couldn't cook our own food, but we would just go down the street to a cafe to eat every day. But it was not a bad life in Constanza.

ADAMS: [00:36:35] And what specifically was your job there or what did you decide to get involved with in Constanza?

CRISP: [00:36:43] In Costanza, again, I started working with first with youth groups and I would take them hiking in the mountains.

ADAMS: [00:36:53] And were the groups already formed or did you?

CRISP: [00:36:57] No, I would form the group and take them hiking in the mountains. And there was a hotel up the hill from Constanza, and in the back of the hotel was a field was full of rocks. And so I took the group up there. We tried to clear the rocks away to set up some kind of a sports field, like for baseball or softball or something. That's another thing we did. And then my partner and I worked together, because he was not an English teacher. He was also a community developer. So the two of us worked together to build an outdoor oven, because the people never

baked. They only cooked on top of their stove or top of the fires, but they couldn't bake. So we built this outdoor oven. And so they could use it for actually baking.

CRISP: [00:38:18] And then we saw that the women, when they wanted to wash their clothes, would go down to the creek and stoop down, and they would scrub their clothes on the rocks and things to clean the clothes. So we said, let's build them a concrete tub on stilts up the bank from the river, and they could, and we could make drains in the concrete sink so they could plug it up. Carry water from the creek, fill it up, do their laundry, unplug it. The water would run back down to the creek. They said, well, we'll see if it works. So we did, and we built this long cement tub on stilts. And not only did the women use it for their clothes, but they would wash their dishes and their children, everything in this sink, because they didn't have to bend over and go down to the creek and beat the clothes out on rocks and things like that. So they liked that. And also, we finished drilling a well for the people in the rural community. Those are some of the things that my partner and I accomplished together.

CRISP: [00:39:56] And then I decided to go with another chicken association. So I organized another group of young adults and there was this old, abandoned house. And so we went in and we rat proofed it by putting screens and things around so the rats couldn't get in. And we put sawdust all over the floors. And then I told the Peace Corps I was ready for another 200 chickens, but I did not want white. And then later I was told to come into the capital and pick up my chickens. Well, I had a Peace Corps truck at the time I drove into San Domingo and they said, you've got 800 chickens. And I said, I don't want 800 chickens, that's too many. And they said, we don't have anyone else to give them to. You have to take them. I thought, one problem right after another. So I had to get other volunteers with trucks and we put all of the 800 chickens. We drove them back to Constanza and we filled up that house with 800 chickens. And by the time I left my tour, when my two years were up, those chickens were healthy and almost grown and ready to market, and they were not white. So the thing is, I left the country and I don't know what happened after that. I hope those people marketed the chickens and kept the association going, but I don't know.

ADAMS: [00:42:09] I'll expand on that story after our interview because I do know some of the history.

CRISP: [00:42:14] OK.

ADAMS: [00:42:16] I have a question. What was the impetus for you to think about chickens in the first place? Was it you originally said something about?

CRISP: [00:42:24] We got chicken training.

ADAMS: [00:42:27] Oh, OK.

CRISP: [00:42:28] In Puerto Rico, part of our community development training was how to grow chickens, raise chickens. And so I was trained in how to vaccinate them, feed them, keep rats away. And how even how to kill the chicken humanely and not have them flop around and things like that. So I learned all of that in the Peace Corps before I started the chicken clubs.

ADAMS: [00:43:04] So it sounds like at least some of your training was quite relevant and useful.

CRISP: [00:43:08] That was, yes. I appreciated that.

ADAMS: [00:43:13] It's interesting to hear some of the beginnings of this project because I'll tell you later about the history. In both situations, apart from the work, did you have much interaction with Dominicans in more of an informal capacity or social capacity?

CRISP: [00:43:37] Yes. Good and bad. But most of the interactions were very friendly, very pleasant. In Hayo Mayor, there was a young group who were leftist and they did not like Americans, and they let it be known pretty quickly. And they referred to us as FBI-CIA. That's what they would call us when they would see us. Hey, FBI-CIA! And so no matter what you did with this group, you could not win their friendship. But other than that, most of the people. Also, I'm not religious. And so the Catholic priest asked me if I would get the Peace Corps to help them with their school.



And I told him, I don't know if they will help, you know, donate money to a religion like that. And then there was an evangelical group in the same town, Hato Mayor, and they wanted me to join and I told him I wasn't interested. So both groups asked the country director to have me removed. And he told them basically, no way, he stays, and I could have stayed as long as I wanted, because I had support from Andy Hernandez. But other than that, the people were friendly.

CRISP: [00:45:39] In Hato Mayor, I mean, in Constanza, the people were wonderful. But I did have a run-in with a Dominican officer, army officer, who was the doctor. And it's because he was on a motorcycle and I was driving a Peace Corps truck and he was in front of me and he was going very slow. And I passed him up in my truck and he felt that he had lost face. So he followed my truck to my house and pulled up alongside my truck and put his hand on his gun. And started berating me, the U.S., and anything else he could think about Americans. And I have to admit that I lost my temper. And so I eased out of my truck, I went in to the back, I took a hammer. I walked around the truck right next to his motorcycle and I started telling him what I thought of him. And his eyes got big when he saw this hammer, and he knew that if he tried to pull his gun, I'd knock him off the motorcycle. And so he roared away. And then I thought, geez, I really, really screwed up. I made an enemy.

CRISP: [00:47:37] But a couple of nights later, we were both in a bar. And he came over and apologized and asked me if he could buy me a drink. And he did. And we became friends. But I was a little concerned that I had really screwed up and made an enemy. But the thing is, he turned out to be a nice guy. Unfortunately, he and another officer, a police officer, both friends of mine, were killed in the revolution, along with my replacement. And other people, but these were things that happened. Now the. But all the other people were friendly and it's just an enjoyable experience.

ADAMS: [00:48:47] Those are fascinating stories. I do want to ask you, Trujillo had just been assassinated in 1961. So you were coming into an environment that had just gone through 30 years of dictatorship. How did you get a sense of the consequences of that?

CRISP: [00:49:08] Yeah, it was. It was a volatile society when we went in, very volatile. In fact, I was crossing the street in the capital, Santo Domingo, and some man was arguing with somebody on the other side and pulled his gun and pointed at him just as I was crossing diagonally. And I was right in the line of fire. So I said, held up my hands, and I said, *espero, espero*. Wait, wait. And so the guy looked at me and then when I crossed, I said, OK. So if you go to shoot, you know, wait till I get out of the way. But luckily, the guy, I guess he cooled off and put his gun away and the two men left. But he was angry and he was looked like he was going to shoot the guy just as I was crossing the street between the two.

ADAMS: [00:50:27] Did you talk about the Trujillo era with your Dominican friends in either side?

CRISP: [00:50:34] Yeah. They didn't like him. I heard all kinds of stories about him, about how he and his family rounded up all the cattle they could that belonged to other people and took them out on boats. And then they sell the boats over to Spain, and so they basically, they stole the wealth from the country when they went. His Trujillo's family, sons I guess. And then there was a man elected as president, well, very soon after that. And then there was a military coup that overthrew him and I was there. We were there for all of that and there was a curfew. And we were, all the Peace Corps volunteers were restricted during the curfew. I would still go out, but I'd have to sneak down to this house where I would play cards with another family but try not to get caught by the people enforcing the curfew. So things like that happened.

ADAMS: [00:52:20] How did things change over time? You said you had some difficulty learning the language, but over time your Spanish?

CRISP: [00:52:29] I never perfected it, but I could learn enough that I could communicate with the people, whatever I needed to do. But that is a very, very basic level of Spanish.

ADAMS: [00:52:46] But it allowed you to do the type of work the organizing.

CRISP: [00:52:49] Yeah, I could. I learned enough that I could communicate with the people I was working with. But I never became fluent. I'm not good with languages.

ADAMS: [00:53:06] What did you do during vacation time?

CRISP: [00:53:10] Oh. When I was at the University of Puerto Rico, I met a girl and I would go back during vacation to Puerto Rico and visit her. Or I would go to Haiti and spend time in Haiti. So those two things is what I would do during vacation time. I wound up marrying the girl. She's my wife now. Fifty-five years in December.

ADAMS: [00:53:48] Congratulations. You were restricted from going back to the U.S., I believe, during your time.

CRISP: [00:54:00] Right, we could not go back to the U.S.

ADAMS: [00:54:01] Puerto Rico was considered legitimate. I did the same.

CRISP: [00:54:06] Oh go, we could go to Puerto Rico, not the U.S. In fact, I think we had volunteers who went to Florida, and when they came back to the Dominican Republic they were sent home.

ADAMS: [00:54:28] Looking back at your service, what do you feel were your main accomplishments?

CRISP: [00:54:35] Accomplishments? That's hard to say. Well, I think what we're trying to do is give the people a good impression of Americans, and I hope that the people in Constanza enjoyed the washing centers, the wells, the ovens. My partner and his original partner had helped the Dominicans build a bridge across the creek, which was still in use. I hope the chicken group prospered. But I don't know. And the goodwill I think that we tried to establish would be the major accomplishments. But did I accomplish anything permanent? Probably not.

ADAMS: [00:55:50] What about lessons learned?

CRISP: [00:55:52] About what?

ADAMS: [00:55:53] Lessons learned?

CRISP: [00:55:54] Oh. Well, learned a lot about the Dominican Republic, its culture, its people, its history. I learned that when you have difficult problems, you have to. Don't give up. Keep trying. Find a solution one way or the other. It may not be the best, but it may be better than nothing.

[END OF INTERVIEW]