

**Brenda Brown Schoonover Oral History Interview**  
Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** Brenda Brown Schoonover  
**Interviewer:** Ivan C. Browning  
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**Biographical Note**

Brenda Brown Schoonover served as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Philippines from 1961 to 1963 as an English teacher (Philippines I).

**Access**

Open.

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Oral History Interview

with

Brenda Brown Schoonover

April 6, 2018  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

By Ivan C. Browning

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

**BROWNING:** [00:00:00] Today is April 6, 2018. This is Ivan Browning and I'm interviewing Brenda Brown Schoonover who was a Peace Corps volunteer in the Philippines from July 1961 to August 1963 in a teaching project. Brenda, tell us a little bit about what you were doing one year before you started your Peace Corps training?

**SCHOONOVER:** [00:00:36] Before I started my Peace Corps training, I was in college. I was in my senior year at Morgan State College in Baltimore, Maryland. It's now called Morgan State University. And while I was there, Kennedy was campaigning and John F. Kennedy had already forewarned us that he wanted to establish the Peace Corps. And he started outlining it. And at the same time, in the spring before I graduated or somewhere between the beginning of the year, in the spring, I saw a documentary on Crossroads Africa. And then I saw another documentary on teachers for East Africa, which was a

volunteer group. And so at the same time, that was the year when a lot of the newly independent states in mostly in Africa were had just been had received their independence and were sending students to the U.S. And a lot of the African students were going to the historically black colleges. So they were several in at Morgan State and several at Lincoln University. And I had a boyfriend at Lincoln University. And so I became interested in going overseas from dealing with these foreign students and from seeing these two documentaries. And one particular student who really impressed me was an Indian student whose name was Sunny Andrews. And I still remember how much more serious he was about studying than most of us were. But that's how I got interested in wanting to go overseas and the Peace Corps just came along at just the right time.

BROWNING: [00:02:37] So let's go back a bit before that. Where did you grow up?

SCHOONOVER: [00:02:42] I grew up in a town called Halethorpe, Maryland, which is in Baltimore County, and he was outside of oh, I was about 12 miles outside of Washington, outside Baltimore. And I went to school in Catonsville, Maryland. I went to an all-black school until I was in the 10th grade. And at that time, the law changed in Maryland. And I integrated Catonsville High School. I was one of nine students that integrated Catonsville High School at that time. And a friend of mine who also integrated school with me is about to publish a book called The Catonsville Nine about our experiences there. And we've gone back to several reunions. It wasn't as bad as the deep, deep South. Nobody physically harmed us, but it was a sobering and humbling experience. But in the essay that I did for the fiftieth anniversary of the Peace Corps, the book entitled Answering Kennedy's Call, I talk about how that experience in their high school of being one of just a few of being certainly being really in the minority already, but in the minority every day in school. How that helped me as a Peace Corps volunteer because I knew what it was be like to be what it was like to be in the minority. Whereas many of my Peace Corps volunteer, my colleagues, we were only two blacks out of 128 of us as Peace Corps

volunteers. And they were having, I think, a harder time adjusting to being a minority than then I was suddenly they were.

BROWNING: [00:04:38] How would you describe your family?

SCHOONOVER: [00:04:45] The town that I lived in Halethorpe, Maryland, was a segregated town and the African-Americans were called Negroes at that time. We lived mainly on Northeast Avenue. And Northeast Avenue was a small area that actually had been started by my great grandfather. And he built the first five houses there and his business partner build the second five houses. And they also built a small school, which I did not go to, but my some of my family had gone to when it was still a school. And the school was later donated to the to Baltimore County to be used for educational purposes. Today it is a recreation center. My mother and father were both from the area. My father, both of them from Elkridge, Maryland, which is just down the road, was in near not too far from Ellicott City. And my mother and father were married very young and they were divorced. And then they both remarried. And then my mother remarried for a third time. In this little town that I lived with a lot of family and friends. And it was kind of like when I speak of my upbringing, I also say that, you know, I was in a village that same similar to when Hillary Clinton talks about a village, we could we could leave our doors open. If parents weren't home, you could just go to somebody's house and wait if there was a problem. So I live I grew up in a very nurturing environment. And even though my mother and father divorced, my father just lived ten miles away, so I saw him frequently. And we had a very amicable race. I had a really lovely childhood.

BROWNING: [00:06:40] And what did your mother and father do outside the home?

SCHOONOVER: [00:06:46] My father did many, he started off, he worked on the railroad as a porter. He was a tailor. And then his last job was a welder. My mother had started off, she went to a clerical school and

she eventually worked her way up to be the security officer for one of the branches of Westinghouse. Security officer, meaning that she was in charge of all of the security papers that that dealt with government contracts. And my mother was very, she still is, she's 96, she's still living, very feisty, and she was very, very curious and she's the one that got the travel bug in me. One morning I was about 19 and it was in the summer. And we woke up and she said, pack your bags. We're driving to California. She and my aunt and I took off for three weeks in California. That was quite something in that that era. And we did, you know, wasn't always fun to drive. But we did have to some places we got rejected because of the color barrier and we'd find another hotel. So it was quite, it's mainly a very positive experience. But my mom is a force and I certainly attribute a lot to the fun and the great life I've had to her, her being so forceful and so forceful. Sometimes she's just outright pushy.

BROWNING: [00:08:29] You were a very small minority at your high school. Were you able to participate in any clubs or activities or was it just your studies and that was it?

SCHOONOVER: [00:08:44] Well, we were able to participate in anything that we want. As a matter of fact, when I graduated, we graduated. There were four of us and five in the sophomore class. And we know we were in the 10th grade, the five of us and five of them in the ninth grade and four of us in the 10th grade. And when I graduated, there was a speech that I was not certainly not the valedictorian, but I was chosen to give up one of the closing speeches or messages to the students and parents. And I had been back to several reunions and many of the people that were there then have apologized for how cold they were and how they didn't embrace us. And I must say, there were, some of the teachers were not very friendly either.

BROWNING: [00:09:46] In high school, did you study a foreign language?

SCHOONOVER: [00:09:49] We studied French. I had had I've gotten my first 10 years had been at Banneker Elementary, junior in high school in Catonsville, and French was the only language spoken there. And so I resumed the French when I was at Catonsville High. And we had a really strict, unforgiving French teacher. I can't remember her name which is just as well. And she gave us a test the first day we were there. And then she seated us, according to the test results, putting the top test level at the front. And of course, the last five people, I was number five and there was a white girl and the other three students, we got the lowest, the lowest scores. And she purposely, I think, embarrassed us by seating us like that, which is pretty un-adult.

BROWNING: [00:10:56] Well, you did get into college and?

SCHOONOVER: [00:11:04] I had a choice because I did I did manage to get a scholarship and I had a choice of going to the University of Maryland or I guess any campus within the University of Maryland complex. And I chose to go to Morgan State College, which by that time was in the University of Maryland complex, because I had had such a lonely time. I wouldn't say lonely but isolated time at Catonsville High School. And I thought, I don't need to continue doing this.

BROWNING: [00:11:41] When you entered Morehead State, did you?

SCHOONOVER: Morgan.

BROWNING: Morgan. I'm sorry, Morgan State, did you have a career in mind?

SCHOONOVER: [00:11:51] I was going to be a teacher. Everybody was going to be a teacher. At that time. I had I had English. I was going to teach English and I had a scholarship for that. And I was actually supposed to be part of that was to teach within the Maryland school system for two years afterwards. But when I was selected for the Peace Corps, that requirement was waived.

BROWNING: [00:12:18] Why did you have an interest in teaching?

SCHOONOVER: [00:12:21] Because that I think we were sheltered. And we you know, when I when I was a kid, I wanted to be a lawyer and I wanted to be a writer. But realistically, that's what most people did, young women and particularly young black women, that that was what we aspired to do because that was what was open to us or that's what we assumed was open to us.

BROWNING: [00:12:48] And did you continue your French studies in college?

SCHOONOVER: [00:12:53] No, I took German, or German took me. I had some Latin, but I didn't get back into French until I actually until I joined the Foreign Service and was sent off to work. And my husband was sent off to Tunisia and I accompanied him and that's when I resumed the French.

BROWNING: [00:13:18] Well, would you characterize yourself in college after your studies completed your studies as fluent in any of the languages you studied?

SCHOONOVER: [00:13:28] No, not until the Foreign Service. Well, and even in the Philippines, we were taught, as Peace Corps volunteers, we were taught Tagalog, which was called Filipino. And then we were sent to all different regions. There are more than 80 dialects in the Philippines. So none of us was sent to the Tagalog speaking region. And most, and of course, we used English mostly because our language was our fluency was not as good as the Filipinos fluency in English.

BROWNING: [00:14:06] In college, did you do any traveling, have any extracurricular activities?

SCHOONOVER: [00:14:13] No, I don't. I think I was with the, what was it, kind of a home economics group that traveled to various colleges but nothing out, not outside of the country. I had not been on a plane before I went off with the Peace Corps.

BROWNING: [00:14:36] But you went outside Maryland?

SCHOONOVER: [00:14:38] Oh, yes. And as I said, my mom was very adventurous. So we traveled, you know, around the country.

BROWNING: [00:14:48] How did you become aware of the Peace Corps?

SCHOONOVER: [00:14:53] I thought it was part of Kennedy's campaign. And it was being touted that it was going to happen even before he became president in the and I took the exam my first opportunity. That was probably June of 1961, and I had a telegram. Well, I wanted to go to Africa and I told you why I want to go to Africa because I met all these students and because I'd seen those two documentaries which inspired me. But then I got a telegram offering me the Philippines. And the telegram arrived 12 hours after I had taken the Peace Corps exam.

BROWNING: [00:15:42] They must have liked your performance on the exam.

SCHOONOVER: [00:15:46] I think they were trying to get the program of the Peace Corps Act, which had just been signed and in March, I think so. I think they were trying to get the program off the ground. But I was certainly thrilled and looked up on the map to find out where the Philippines was. And, you know, and that's. Back to my mom, I mean, she let me integrate that school. She could have said, I don't want you going off to the Philippines. You know, she was very open and letting me soar as far as I could.

BROWNING: [00:16:19] So she felt OK about losing her little girl for two years?

SCHOONOVER: [00:16:26] Well, about 20 years later, after I've been a Peace Corps volunteer and was back home, my mom said, you know, when you were offered the Philippines, I didn't realize just how far it was and when I took you to the airport, I saw you off and she was with a neighbor, went with her, and she said, I promised I would not cry. I didn't want you to see the last vision that had the last vision of me crying. So I kept my cool until you got on the plane. And then I fell apart. And my friend and I were walking back to the car and we went by this airport bar and the bartender came out and said, bring that lady in, she needs a drink. But you know, she had the courage and the foresight not to worry me about that, not to even tell me until I said, you know, I was probably 20 years later.

BROWNING: [00:17:36] That is amazing. Do you remember how you felt when you received that telegram?

SCHOONOVER: [00:17:45] I was almost I wasn't sure whether it was real. I mean, 12 hours, and then everything happened very quickly. We went to State College University, Pennsylvania State College, for training in July 1961, so. So that didn't give us much time to think. I was too busy planning. And then people were saying, well, why are you going off to volunteer? What about your career? What about your, what about a decent salary? What about buying a house? What about car? What about an apartment? And I said, no, I want to do this and I can do those other things later.

BROWNING: [00:18:34] So when you got the telegram. You were ready to accept the invitation. Did you have any misgivings?

SCHOONOVER: [00:18:44] No misgivings, none. No. I knew this was very special.

BROWNING: [00:18:52] Certainly blazing a trail.

SCHOONOVER: Yes.

BROWNING: Excellent. So you went off to training and where was that again?

SCHOONOVER: [00:19:06] There's a state University of Pennsylvania State College, State College, Pennsylvania, and that was a that was about six weeks of training, as I recall.

BROWNING: [00:19:20] Ok? And all of the members of the group that you mentioned, are how many?

SCHOONOVER: [00:19:25] There were 100 if my memory serves me correctly. They were 165 of us that went into training and 128 of us made it all through. And others who left. I'm not sure how many left on their own volition or others who were not selected. We had lots of tests, you know, kind of like, I guess, the kind of test you take to get into graduate school and then we had interviews, so we had to pass a security background. And that might have been a factor for some people. And we did have an interview with the psychiatrist.

BROWNING: [00:20:26] So what kind of facilities were used in this in the training?

SCHOONOVER: [00:20:31] Well, it was the university in the summertime, so we were in student dormitories and I had a dorm room with another volunteer who was in training. Ellen Brindle was her name. Wonderful lady.

BROWNING: [00:20:49] And when you trained where it was in a classroom environment?

SCHOONOVER: [00:20:54] It was in a classroom environment and was mainly focusing on the culture of the Philippines, the history and then some of the methods of teaching, but the most significant part of the training was on the cultural sensitivity part. And there was a Professor Guthrie who was so perceptive and so enlightening on how each culture basically has the same values, but the priority list of those values can vary. For example, we in the U.S. like to think that honesty is at the top of our list, whereas in some Asian cultures,

shame is often at the top of the list. So being shamed is more is less important, to be honest, than to make sure you don't shame somebody. That kind of thing. And that, as brash young Americans, that was something we really needed to learn because we know we were just out of college, most of us, and we wanted to express our opinions and tell it like it is. And that didn't always work. And we had to learn. I think some of those lessons from that cultural training have helped me throughout my life. And certainly as a diplomat, I learned a lot from that.

BROWNING: [00:22:24] What did you think about the other trainees as a as a group?

SCHOONOVER: [00:22:29] Oh. It was a very interesting group, as I said, if only there were actually three African-Americans in the group and two of us made it through training there. The male applicant didn't make it for one reason or another. They were, as I said, 165 of us, 128 made it. Very friendly. We had a lot of fun. And, you know, we were back on campus again. And I remember there was a very nice watering hole where we would meet, have a few beers in the in the evening. It was almost like summer camp in a way. And everybody was very enthusiastic. And, you know, these were people coming from all over the country. So that in itself was a very unique experience.

BROWNING: [00:23:29] Since this was the first training that Peace Corps had ever done, did you feel like it was good training?

SCHOONOVER: [00:23:39] I'd say for the most part. I mean, we complained and we complained a lot. We also complained when we were overseas and we were young and looking for and expecting perfection. And it was it wasn't going to happen. Now I realize it just doesn't have to, period. But I think it was, as I said, the cultural sensitivity part of it was the best part, I thought.

BROWNING: [00:24:08] Did you get a chance to do any practice teaching and or was it mostly focused on cultural and language?

SCHOONOVER: [00:24:19] Mostly on culture and language, yeah. I don't think there was another training period after we got to the Philippines at Los Baños, and that went on for about a month. So we have more training in the culture and more on the teaching aspects as well.

BROWNING: [00:24:41] Did you ever find anything in the training to be funny?

SCHOONOVER: [00:24:50] I'm sure I did. I had the letter, I was just looking through some letters that I sent to my mom about the training that while we were in training at least one year in the Philippines. We had a typhoon come through and I had never experienced a typhoon and I'm describing how we were, you know, the dining room was flooded. We had to double up in the women's dorm because part of that, the ceiling was leaking. And at the time that seemed rather funny, probably wasn't. But it's probably funnier while reading it in hindsight than it was at the time. And then, and sometimes. We became very, very close as a group, and that was very heartening and we had a good time, we respected each other and we had a good time.

BROWNING: [00:25:56] Everybody was destined to be a teacher?

SCHOONOVER: [00:26:01] At that time, yeah. That group, we some of us branched out after we got there. But yes, we were supposed to be teaching. We were actually supposed to be helping Filipinos learn, teaching English as a second language. And in the end, most of us ended up teaching the students directly, which I'm sure was much more rewarding.

BROWNING: [00:26:26] Were the other trainees education majors like you?

SCHOONOVER: [00:26:31] No, some of them were. Some of them were. They were, they were everything.

BROWNING: [00:26:35] But they were all college grads?

SCHOONOVER: [00:26:37] They all college graduates. And we had one couple that was in their 50s, the Kennedys. No relation, no relation, and I mean, they were the most organized and the most probably the most effective volunteers. They were married couple. I would think they were the only married couple we had.

BROWNING: [00:27:03] So during the period of training, did you feel confident that you were going to make it through and actually get to go to the Philippines?

SCHOONOVER: [00:27:13] As I as I recall, I felt quite confident and it never occurred to me that I wouldn't have gotten that far. And I didn't see any reason why I would be disqualified. And I didn't. I was only 22. I didn't have that much experience to warrant security issues.

BROWNING: [00:27:33] And what types of things were you telling your family?

SCHOONOVER: [00:27:38] My family was, my mother was very positive, very encouraging. Other people were incredulous. I mean, including some of my college professors. I mean, that I would take off and go off into Neverland, into the unknown when I could be pursuing a career. And they even though I was teaching at some, didn't see it as a career. They just saw it as, how much money would you be making when they learned we would only make the equivalent of what a Filipino teacher would make, which at that time was 52 dollars a month. They didn't understand why, but there were I mean, there were so many others who were that the scale was tipped on those that were really happy and excited that I was going and willing to go along with this adventure with me in terms of tell us what you're doing right us. And when I wrote back to my mom, it was like writing to the whole family because the letters were shared by everybody, even when I was in training.

BROWNING: [00:28:47] So what kinds of things did you have to say during training in the communication with your family?

SCHOONOVER: [00:28:53] How friendly, how friendly it was, how friendly the group was. And I remember now it was the first time that I had been in a welcoming integrated environment, a much more welcoming than what I had experienced in high school, so that was a whole new experience. And in some of my letters to my mother, I would I mention that. And I also mention it once we were in training and in the Philippines, that we got along so well. And I wondered how these same people would have gotten along in the States when in a community where there was much more pressure to be segregated.

BROWNING: [00:29:42] After the training in the States, was there a swearing in ceremony or did that did you have a swearing in at all?

SCHOONOVER: [00:29:50] I don't recall that. I remember going off, I don't recall a training, swearing in ceremony. I just remember that got on the plane and I got on the plane with one other volunteer, Dudley Duncan Yagi, who happens to live in Durham about 10 miles from here. And he and I were on the plane together. We went to San Francisco. We met up in San Francisco with the all of the volunteers and 128 of us, Pan Am took. Pan Am took 32 of the first women volunteers, and we were selected by alpha, those who are the first in the alphabet, and the other volunteers were sent off to the Philippines on a chartered flight called Slick Airlines. And those of us, my name was Brown at the time, so I was among the first that got the Pan Am flight, which stopped in Hawaii. And we dined and entertained by the aluminum foil company Alco and we still arrived. And then we stopped in Guam. We still arrived in the Philippines a few hours before the Slick Airlines flight.

BROWNING: [00:31:19] What were your first impressions when you arrived in Manila?

SCHOONOVER: [00:31:25] We arrived at the airport, Manila. We were bussed out to Los Baños, which normally would take about an hour. But this was the first Peace Corps group in the Philippines. And along the way, as we went through these towns, there were parades welcoming us. We stopped 32 times. We ate *meriendas*, the snack, 32 times or thereabouts, and we got very giddy towards the end, but it was pouring down rain and these people were out on the on the roadsides with big signs saying, welcome, President Kennedy's Peace Corps.

BROWNING: [00:32:12] Well, that is great. No, when you saw the countryside, what did you think about the vegetation? Just how did it appear to it?

SCHOONOVER: [00:32:23] It wasn't that shocking because in training, we had seen a lot of films and pictures of the Philippines and Los Baños was just beautiful. It's a research center, right, research center. And we actually stayed in the area. That was a former Boy Scout camp. And as I said, we had two dorms and a big mess hall. And there was a there was a swimming pool, which wasn't very much of a swimming pool, but there was and there was a very nice town. And the town folks were very welcoming to us and we befriended some of them. And sometimes some folks would invite us to dinner, a few of us at a time. I have a picture of it, the town was roasting one of the little pigs for us, the *lechon*. We were just treated royally, I would say, almost the whole time we were in the Philippines.

BROWNING: [00:33:30] So when you arrived, you went into a in-country training orientation. How long did that last?

SCHOONOVER: [00:33:39] I think seem to recall it was about a month. And then we at that time, we didn't know exactly what town we would be assigned in to be assigned to once we left training. And all of that was sorted out. And then I was assigned to Magarao, Camarines Sur, which is in the southern tip of Luzon near Naga City.

BROWNING: [00:34:07] So when you were given your assignment, did you have any input as to where it would be or did you take whatever was given to you?

SCHOONOVER: [00:34:16] You took whatever was given to you. And I was in a household with three other women and we were all teaching, but I was teaching in the town of Magarao and the other three were in nearby towns. So in that sense, I was I was the luckiest to be able to teach in the town where I live, which allowed me to establish more rapport with the with the school and the townsfolk.

BROWNING: [00:34:48] So you'd had this language training in Tagalog?

SCHOONOVER: [00:34:53] And then we go to Bikol and we didn't speak Bicolano.

BROWNING: [00:34:57] So you found your Tagalog was?

SCHOONOVER: [00:35:00] Well it is there, for many of Filipinos, it was their second language, English being probably the third, the first being Bicolano. So certain words were useful, but you really did not need it to communicate. Thank goodness.

BROWNING: [00:35:17] You could usually get by in English?

SCHOONOVER: [00:35:20] Yes. And it was nice when you knew a few phrases of, you know, *magandang hapon po*, which is a greeting that you give to, to those you respect and that kind of thing.

BROWNING: [00:35:33] Definitely. I think that's true in pretty much every country. If you can't learn anything else, learn the proper greetings.

SCHOONOVER: [00:35:40] The greetings and thank yous.

BROWNING: [00:35:42] And indeed, those are very important. So how far away was your assigned school from the training site?

SCHOONOVER: [00:35:57] Oh, it was the training site was an hour from Manila in another direction. We took, it took us eight hours by train to get to Magarao and it was a very rough ride, an open car train. Now, transportation was, uh, had a lot to be desired in the Philippines, and even so, even every day transportation. A bus was not a bus. It really was a truck that had seats constructed on it, long benches. And you just piled onto the side of the open.

BROWNING: [00:36:39] It was open to the elements.

SCHOONOVER: [00:36:41] It was definitely open to the elements, open to the vendors, hawkers. Every time you stopped to let more people in. In the back section was called the kitchen, where the cows, the chickens, livestock, the livestock was.

BROWNING: [00:37:01] So when the sun was out, it was hot and when it rained?

SCHOONOVER: [00:37:05] It was always hot. It was very hot climate.

BROWNING: [00:37:08] And when it rained you got soaked.

SCHOONOVER: [00:37:12] Yeah, yeah and mosquitoes.

BROWNING: [00:37:14] Where it was the same conditions that the Filipinos enjoyed, right?

SCHOONOVER: [00:37:18] Yeah, I don't remember malaria, though. I don't think malaria was an issue.

BROWNING: [00:37:29] Were you the only Peace Corps volunteer in the town?

SCHOONOVER: [00:37:34] No, four of us lived in the town in Magarao, but I was the only teacher, only one working there. The others took jeepneys or the famous busses to their nearby towns.

BROWNING: [00:37:52] Ok, so you worked in town, but the others had to travel every day for their job assignment?

SCHOONOVER: [00:37:58] Yes. And I could walk from my house to the school.

BROWNING: [00:38:04] In terms of staying in touch with other trainees from the group, were you able to?

SCHOONOVER: [00:38:11] Oh, yes, we are. We had a network and we could go visit different. Most of us were in households of four, but somehow we managed to accommodate if people stayed over or nearby, even nearby Filipina families with Filipino families would help us. But we visited a lot. We had a lot of exchange and we had a Peace Corps volunteer leader who would travel from one household to the next to see what we needed. And he was also kind of the, you know, the region gossip. So we would find out what this group was doing, what that group was doing. Kept us in touch. The Peace Corps, I think, was very supportive, you know, when we arrived and they gave us kind of a care package which had several books in it. Well, mainly books, a book locker is what it was. But my mother was also so.

BROWNING: [00:39:16] When you would go to visit other volunteers, you would do what in your visits?

SCHOONOVER: [00:39:25] We played cards, we entertained each other, we cooked. One time, we had a march for a charity and we walked, I don't remember now how many kilometers, from Naga City to Legazpi. I do remember that my that my feet wore out, but it was a several hour walk for a charity. We also. My household and another household got together and devised a summer day camp for the first summer we were there. We solicited supplies from various companies and we got the counselors were high school students. By this time, my one of my classmates, my housemates had moved to teaching in high school. And so we had this network of high school students that were

counselors for the elementary school students that we had and we used the school premises. It was very, very successful. And I'm still in touch with one of the counselors who since moved to the States and married an American and has a family here.

BROWNING: [00:40:51] Did you have access to a telephone?

SCHOONOVER: [00:40:55] If you knew there was one there was one telephone in the in the town. And that was probably the richest family's. In an emergency, we could use it, but we weren't that far from Naga City and Naga. We could take a *kalesa* to Naga and we could find a phone there in the post office. If you had to call. Once in a while, I would try to call my mother. And I remember, if you recall, how that might have gone before we had cell phones and a more sophisticated system. By the time you got the call, it was mostly static and all you talked about is the weather. So I wrote once in one of my letters how I missed the American telephone booth as a sense of security.

BROWNING: [00:41:53] When you arrived in and took up residence with the other three women, what were your accommodations like? What did you think?

SCHOONOVER: [00:42:07] It was a house with two bedrooms, so we each were, you know, two of us in one bed, two in the other. It was a very sturdy house. We had electricity, we had running water. We had a nipa hut. I mean, a nipa roof, not really a nipa hut. It was probably one of the nicer houses in the in the community. Unfortunately, halfway through our tour or less than halfway, the landlord decided he wanted the house back. So that was when we moved. Two volunteers were relocated to another other areas, and I had found an apartment, well, it was the first floor of a house between Naga City and Magarao. It was near very near where my principal lived. And then the other volunteer who had moved to a high school, teaching in high school, she shared that with me.

BROWNING: [00:43:13] Did you have indoor bathroom facility?

SCHOONOVER: [00:43:16] Always had indoor, but no, no hot water, but always and not all volunteers did, but we did. We always had electricity. We always had. We had a big problem with ants. And I remember one Thanksgiving, I'd learned to cook this cake on this little kerosene oven that goes with that kerosene stove. The oven goes up on top of it. And I baked this cake and it was a chocolate cake. And so we were afraid ants were going to get into it, so we put it in a big pedestal in the tub of water. And as we were about to slice the cake, we could see the chocolate moving. The ants had somehow managed to swim across and get it.

BROWNING: [00:44:08] Well, they can be resourceful. So you had to take care of all your own shopping, cooking?

SCHOONOVER: [00:44:18] No, we were expected to have a maid. We had a maid because we were teachers. I mean, that was what you did. And we had Rita and she was a lovely person. And it took us some adjusting to get used to Rita because none of us were accustomed to having servants. And when I say one of my, in my essays, that Rita really got very upset with us. And I think it was at that, because she said, we talk too fast, we didn't listen. We were just, we did everything too fast for her. And I realized at that point that all of this cultural sensitivity we were supposedly practicing, we had not practiced it, practiced it on the person closest to us in our household. And that was a lesson learned. But she became, I saw her. I went back to the Philippines after I was in the Foreign Service. And I went back to my village, my town, and went and saw some of the people that I had known, including Rita, including that former counselor.

BROWNING: [00:45:33] What about what would you say the population was of the town?

SCHOONOVER: [00:45:37] 10,000, pretty big.

BROWNING: [00:45:39] Ok. It was not a small town.

SCHOONOVER: [00:45:41] No, you didn't seem that way when you went through it, but it was lots of, you know, houses off into the fields.

BROWNING: [00:45:50] Did you have any health or injury issues while you were serving?

SCHOONOVER: [00:45:55] I didn't, I was incredibly, I didn't I didn't even have the, you know, usually belly problems that people have. We were very careful. We also taught, really seriously, how to take care of our health and we had Peace Corps doctors. We had two Peace Corps doctors who were in the country who visited us, and we had good dental health. And I think we were fairly well taken care of, but we did lose a volunteer. Probably one of the first to die in the Peace Corps, David Mulholland. He had stomach problems and gastro problems and he passed away.

BROWNING: [00:46:45] It must have been pretty severe.

SCHOONOVER: [00:46:46] Pretty severe. And I think that, you know, he thought he could overcome them or ride them out. And that was real tragedy.

BROWNING: [00:46:57] That is. So talking about your, the school where you were teaching. What did you think of the school building itself when you first saw it?

SCHOONOVER: [00:47:10] It was not that. It was a very, you know, the students were very, they were required to keep the school clean. So they swept and they raked and the buildings were sturdy.

BROWNING: [00:47:25] Was it made out of wood?

SCHOONOVER: [00:47:27] Wood. Kind of open, open window. Well, actually, slat windows that open up, I mean, if you kept them close, they would there was no glass. So you open air and that could be, you know, it was raining. There could be a problem because you could if it wasn't coming in, at least you could hear it. But I'd say the rooms were, the school was adequately equipped. Unlike what I often saw in Togo later on and in some other places in the developing world where I've lived or visited. Um, I did I tell you about my library? As part of my school project?

BROWNING: [00:48:13] No, but you can now.

SCHOONOVER: [00:48:14] Always. My friend Barbara, Barbara Bassett, she was one of my other roommates. She and I started a library and she becomes less involved in it because she wasn't living in in the town. And then she moved, as I said, to work in the high school. I started a library, Magarao Community Library, and my mother collected 4,000 books for this library. She solicited the books from the Enoch Pratt Library, various bookstores, various schools, and we arranged to get the USAID, United States Information Agency, and some non-governmental organizations such as Asia Foundation to ship the books. All in all we collected, the library had 7,000 books and she said most of them, including five sets of encyclopedias, which at that that 1960s, encyclopedias were very, very important.

BROWNING: [00:49:30] State of the art.

SCHOONOVER: [00:49:31] Yeah. And that library have a picture of the 10 year anniversary of the library. I know it stayed in existence almost 15 years until they had a typhoon that came through the area. Now, what I don't know is how the books were replenished or if they were replenished. And there was a custodian that I worked with. First of all, the town found a spot for the library and then the custodian worked with me to help catalog the books. And he became the librarian.

BROWNING: [00:50:11] Mm hmm. Very good. Very good. And did your students at the school live at home and get transportation or walk to school?

SCHOONOVER: [00:50:21] Yes, mostly walked.

BROWNING: [00:50:23] So it was not a boarding school?

SCHOONOVER: [00:50:24] No, not at all.

BROWNING: [00:50:25] Ok.

SCHOONOVER: [00:50:27] It had a really dynamic teaching staff and most of all, a dynamic principal. Woman principal.

BROWNING: [00:50:38] So you were impressed with the other faculty members and the principal?

SCHOONOVER: [00:50:41] Yes, you know. There was one male principal who we had some misunderstandings with him, and I think this was another lesson learned in cultural sensitivity, is that if you have a meeting sometimes in the Philippines, at least then, people would tell you what they thought you wanted to hear rather than what was reality. And so we were disappointed that they hadn't done this or that for the two projects we were working on the summer camp or the library, and we express them freely. And this one gentleman expressed his opinions freely and we had a little friction there. But we'd gone along thinking things were going in one direction and then to fall to find out that certain things had fallen apart.

BROWNING: [00:51:37] I see. When you first saw your classroom, what did you think of?

SCHOONOVER: [00:51:45] The classes were large, maybe 35, 40 students. They were so docile. They were so sweet. But they also were so curious and they saw us as almost different creatures, and sometimes they

just burst out giggling at things, we didn't know what they were giggling about. And then when we came home at night, we'd sit in our living room and again, we had these open flat windows and the students, many of them would just come and sit and look at us while we while we were in the living room. Well, the result was that we the we as teachers, we're not supposed to be drinking or so we thought. So if we on Friday, if we had, they had very good rum, they had rum and Coke, we would drink it out of the teapot because these students were looking at us the whole time.

BROWNING: [00:52:54] And the students would sit on?

SCHOONOVER: [00:53:00] Their had regular bench. We had very basic desks. As I said, it was it was fairly well equipped and I think might have there might have been some USAID projects. I know there were some educational projects.

BROWNING: [00:53:18] And what grade levels?

SCHOONOVER: [00:53:20] Fifth and sixth, I was teaching fifth and sixth. And it was English and science.

BROWNING: [00:53:28] You know, the you were the only teacher in the school that was a Peace Corps volunteer? The other teachers were all Filipinos?

SCHOONOVER: [00:53:38] Yes.

BROWNING: [00:53:40] OK. Alrighty. And you had mentioned before we started the interview that there was you initially thought that you were going to train teachers and it ended up being more direct.

SCHOONOVER: [00:53:54] And that was dispelled almost immediately.

BROWNING: [00:53:57] Tell me a little more about that.

SCHOONOVER: [00:53:59] Well, the principal was a very strong leader. She said, I think you will be more effective if you work with that, with our students directly. And that will also relieve us to have one extra teacher that another with more evenly divide the workload.

BROWNING: [00:54:23] I see. So you did, did you do any teacher training or?

SCHOONOVER: [00:54:28] No, from the day we arrived.

BROWNING: [00:54:30] Ok, so that went out the window.

SCHOONOVER: [00:54:33] I think that was one of those hidden agendas that we didn't quite perceive to be so until it happened.

BROWNING: [00:54:43] Was there any kind of exam that the students were required to?

SCHOONOVER: [00:54:49] Yes, there was a curriculum and there was an exam. And then you could have your own kind of mini. There wasn't there wasn't an overall exam, like a baccalaureate kind of thing. No, there was not it. But you had your you could devise your own curriculum and there were certain basic things that you had to cover.

BROWNING: [00:55:12] I see. And so the students were at fifth and sixth grade. They were not trying to achieve the ability to pass an exam to the next level.

SCHOONOVER: [00:55:24] No, no. They were not pressured to go in. No, but they were so good. I mean, they were, they were curious. They were studious. I think, you know, they realized they were lucky to be in school.

BROWNING: [00:55:39] What was the alternative?

SCHOONOVER: [00:55:41] In the farm, on the farm. And then they still did a lot of work. And as I said, they had their little brooms. They were they did the cleaning. You did not have a custodial staff.

BROWNING: [00:55:56] So you administered tests and then graded them?

SCHOONOVER: [00:56:02] And then I would consult with the principal about the level of the rating.

BROWNING: [00:56:10] Was it the custom there to give homework or?

SCHOONOVER: [00:56:15] Not very much, no.

BROWNING: [00:56:17] Ok.

SCHOONOVER: [00:56:18] Because many of them did not have electricity. In their homes, I mean, they might have lighting, but not that.

BROWNING: [00:56:30] How was discipline?

SCHOONOVER: Excellent, excellent.

BROWNING: You never had any problems?

SCHOONOVER: None.

BROWNING: Well, that's certainly unusual.

SCHOONOVER: [00:56:37] Yeah, well, that's I think that's why when I came to the States, I couldn't adjust to teaching in an inner city school.

BROWNING: [00:56:47] So there was a stark contrast between the discipline of the Philippine students and what you found here?

SCHOONOVER: [00:56:55] And the appreciation for education. At least the appreciation of being in school.

BROWNING: [00:57:06] So tell me a little bit more about that experiment a little bit. You know how the Philippine students regarded their education versus what you feel?

SCHOONOVER: [00:57:17] I think one of the other factors is that the elders are very well respected. The teacher is almost God and the principal certainly is. And so the parents did not question the teacher's authority. And package that with the fact that many of the parents had never gone to school, so they were very. They cherish the fact that their children were in school and were not going to do anything to jeopardize that.

BROWNING: [00:57:55] So did students ever complain or give you compliments?

SCHOONOVER: [00:58:00] Oh, they complimented me all the time. Yeah. Americans in the '60s, Americans were really at the top of their game in the Philippines as far because the Philippines had been an American protectorate. So we had a special place and there had been this group of teachers called the Thomasites earlier in the century that had helped to formulate the education system, the modern and more modern education system in the Philippines. And so we were considered almost the second coming of the Thomasites.

BROWNING: [00:58:43] And that was a positive thing?

SCHOONOVER: [00:58:44] That was very positive.

BROWNING: That's good.

SCHOONOVER: The Thomasites were American teachers, I think they had a religious affiliation, but I don't recall that. But we can look that up.

BROWNING: [00:58:59] Did the students have any extracurricular activities or sports?

SCHOONOVER: [00:59:07] Mm hmm. I don't know if they did soccer, but they had little they did some baseball, and then when we had our camp, we taught them different games as well. But they did. They had their own little, they didn't have a formalized field, you know, with that was marked out for games. But you could say there was quite a bit of ground. I mean, we used that same school for the camp. There was quite a large, I don't remember how many students in all, but quite a large facility for it for an elementary school.

BROWNING: [00:59:44] And the camp was conceived and executed by you and other faculty?

SCHOONOVER: [00:59:52] It was it conceived and executed by four of us in our household, four volunteers and three other volunteers in the nearby town. And the teachers, actually, it was their vacation. They weren't there. They didn't really participate in it. I mean, they mean that was not a negative thing. It was just they had their own schedule in their lives and most of them had family and children of their own.

BROWNING: [01:00:23] Right. Right. Did you have any particularly memorable students or faculty members that stand out in your in your mind from that time?

SCHOONOVER: [01:00:32] Well, I think the principal and then another, Mrs. Bahramadia, who was a nearby school teacher and a neighbor. Yeah.

BROWNING: [01:00:44] And what made them stand out?

SCHOONOVER: [01:00:47] They always seem to be concerned about our welfare. They would tell us things that they thought we needed to know. They were more open, more frank than some of the others. Just who felt

that they would they would be impolite for them to tell us that you need to do this. They gave us guidance. Everybody was very welcoming. That was the least welcoming was the landlord who had probably been cajoled into renting to us for the first place.

BROWNING: [01:01:22] So overall, about your teaching experience in the Philippines, what did you like the most about it?

SCHOONOVER: [01:01:32] I like the enthusiasm of the students. Their eagerness to learn. And they've disciplined. And they were they were quiet.

BROWNING: [01:01:49] Was there anything that you could think of that you liked least about your job?

SCHOONOVER: No.

BROWNING: So how would you describe your relationship with the people of the Philippines as well as your work counterparts?

SCHOONOVER: [01:02:17] I think it was very positive and I think I learned a lot from the Philippines and the Philippines culture because they were so caring, so patient, and I think that that exposure has really helped me throughout my adult life and my career in learning how to listen and not jump in immediately with your own opinion, thinking that everything that's American is the best and that we're always right. And they had a gentle way of reminding you that that wasn't so at all times.

BROWNING: [01:03:01] How is the Philippine cooking?

SCHOONOVER: [01:03:05] Um, that is not my favorite part. They had certain. I liked the *lumpia*, which is kind of a spring roll and I liked the chicken adobo OK. The first thing I remember getting off the plane was the smell of garlic. I mean, the real smell of garlic. When I came back to the Philippines 15 years later in the Foreign Service, the first thing I

remember is the smell of garlic. But there was a lot of Spanish influence in the food so that that roasted pig and some of that. But there were other things. You know, there's *balut*, which is a special egg that's been preserved underground. And then there's another egg dish that's cooked when the chick is about to be hatched. Those those were my least favorite dishes and the actually dishes that I mostly avoided.

BROWNING: [01:04:05] So you said your health was good physically?

SCHOONOVER: [01:04:10] Except, almost universally as a group. The women gained weight and the men lost weight. I guess, and there were certain things that we craved, for example, our cook cooked us breakfast every morning, but she cooked duck eggs and she wanted to make sure they were ready for us. So she cooked them maybe an hour before we were ready to eat them. So certain things were not as pleasant as could be, but we craved peanut butter and jelly and the only jelly we could find was guava jelly. So you couldn't get that taste satisfaction. So we take the rice, which was abundantly available, and then put sugar and put milk on it. Evaporated milk. So that didn't help our waistlines.

BROWNING: [01:05:09] I'm sure. Tell me something about your correspondence with your mother while you're in the Philippines.

SCHOONOVER: [01:05:19] Well, I, I didn't realize how much I had written to my mother. And I must have a hundred letters between, that she and I, between the two of us that we wrote. And I started writing her from the time I got to San Francisco until the last day that I was in the in the Philippines. It was very extensive and this also allowed her to get involved in helping me with the library and allowed her to relay to my family and friends what I was doing. So that was kind of my lifeline, I think, to being back home. And sometimes she would in the letter, she'd say, you sounded a little homesick in the last letter. It's time to perk up.

BROWNING: [01:06:05] So she was able to give you emotional support.

SCHOONOVER: Exactly.

BROWNING: Even though there was a little bit of delay in that process.

SCHOONOVER: [01:06:12] And I also realized there was a shortage of writing paper. But we devised ways to use that thin air grams and write on the back of it, the side of it. But writing paper was an issue. Also, as I recall, looking back through the papers, one of the biggest expenses was, was postage back to the States.

BROWNING: [01:06:35] OK. OK, during the Christmas holidays, what kinds of things did you do and why?

SCHOONOVER: [01:06:45] We usually got together as a few a few households might get together. And one Christmas I remember spending with a Filipino family and they were so nice and so gracious. They knew that we like turkey, that we as Americans liked it. So they got this turkey that was not a butterball and fried it. And it was terrible. It wasn't one of those. But, you know, now we fry turkey in this big vat, but then they just fried it the way you would fried chicken it. I almost cried. I was so homesick that day. We had our moments.

BROWNING: [01:07:30] Indeed. Did you go to the movies while you're there?

SCHOONOVER: [01:07:35] Yes. They had a lot of old American movies. Movie theaters were not that nice. Kind of kept your feet off the ground the whole time you were in the theater so the mice wouldn't so you wouldn't encounter any of the mice. I may be exaggerating a little bit, but they were they were not very palatial, but they were there. And, you know, American movies are one of the things that we've exported the most and gives a certain impression of our culture, for better or for worse. There was one thing that the Filipinos did that

could sometimes be very cruel. The women volunteers who were taller, if we would have had a lot of fiestas and they had a great party for us when we first arrived first. But the men would push one of the shortest men in the community to dance with one of the tallest Peace Corps volunteers. And then they would just sit on the sidelines and giggle. And that could be very unwelcoming to the volunteers who were subjected to that. Fortunately, I'm not that tall, so it wasn't a big deal for me.

BROWNING: [01:08:51] So in what would you say about the Philippine music and arts and crafts?

SCHOONOVER: [01:08:58] Oh, gorgeous. They had a group called the Marienda and the bands that play at the mariendas are very very, I guess, kind of Spanish sounding, very welcoming, very pleasant. And the Filipinos are also very good imitators, and imitating worldwide stars is one of their means of making a living. And so they would imitate, Johnny Mathis was one of the big biggies at that time. And they knew so many American songs. So if you went to a restaurant and there was music everywhere, you'd always be able to sing along with them because they knew the songs.

BROWNING: [01:09:51] Did you ever get invited over for dinner to host country nationals?

SCHOONOVER: [01:09:57] Oh, many times, many times. And, you know, we were treated as if we were royalty. I mean, the mayors, the town leaders. And even in the even in Manila, we often be invited to the homes of quite well-off Filipinos. And once I had met a friend who took me up in his plane. Kind of frightened me.

BROWNING: [01:10:27] It gave you a different perspective from, um, in the in the second year of your service, was it the changes that or was it just another year of service?

SCHOONOVER: [01:10:40] Well, the change, the change was mainly in the household because the two volunteers moved to another area and the one who moved to the high school meant that I was really alone in the town. I mean, I'd always been the lone teacher in the town, but I was alone. And had moved just a little bit on the outskirts of the town. But I was the volunteer there rather than, you know, before they always, you know, considered us four even though I was the only one actually working here. But they treated us as a group of four. And sometimes they'd come and get us and take us out to somebody's farm or some excursion. They were very, very kind to us. So that that was the difference. And when I changed households, houses rather, I had to start all over again in terms of getting some of the furniture together and redoing this kind of shell of a place that I'd rented.

BROWNING: [01:11:43] When you were coming to the end of your service, how did you feel about what you'd accomplished?

SCHOONOVER: [01:11:50] I felt I had learned so much, and then one of the last things I did during that time was the summer before I left, I worked at Asia Foundation sorting books in Manila. And so I had the chance to have this wonderful almost two month period of living in Manila and working in with Asia Foundation and staying in this boarding house. Another Peace Corps volunteer and I worked on this project. And so we had kind of it was kind of a glamorous into a more simpler living than we did in the in the in the town.

BROWNING: [01:12:35] Do you ever have any thoughts of extending your service?

SCHOONOVER: [01:12:38] No, I thought it was time to. Well, one of the things I was looking forward to and I was able to do is, at that time, you could take a ticket and, you know, you got your ticket to the U.S. and you got one third of your readjustment allowance, which at that time readjustment allowance was eighteen hundred dollars. And the third of it, you could take on your trip with the ticket. And so my two other colleagues, a male volunteer and a female volunteer, one of my

former roommates, we went from, we took two months to get back home. So we went from Hong Kong. We went into Vietnam, which we could still get into. We went to Cambodia, Burma, India, even went to Jerusalem when it was, before 1967. So Jerusalem was still under under Jordan and we ended up in Rome. By that time, it was two months. By the time we got to Rome, my mother and two aunts met me and one of my friends, traveling companions, had left. The other was Tom Carlton, and he was still with me. I had a ticket and thirty dollars left and he had a ticket and fifteen dollars left. So my mother saw us through the three or four weeks that we were still staying in Europe. But, you know, she's very exacting. So once we got our readjustment allowance, we paid her back when we were back in the States and it was the first time my mother had ever been out of the country. So that started her traveling, which she continued until she was not able to.

BROWNING: [01:14:35] Is the Peace Corps still active in the Philippines?

SCHOONOVER: [01:14:40] I believe it is. It has been there have been periods when it hasn't been. I am not sure right now and I'm not sure about the security issue. There's quite a different president than the one we were there.

BROWNING: [01:14:58] So I guess that's certainly an understatement. Tell me a bit about the contact you've maintained with some of your group members through the years.

SCHOONOVER: [01:15:14] We meet every year, I'm sorry, we meet every other year. The last time we met was June 2017 in Santa Fe. We try to find somebody who's willing to put a program together and host us, and then we go from there. The next one we're thinking of is this. We're running out of hosts at our age. We're thinking of doing a short cruise out of Baltimore. And one of the former volunteers, Stan Massarov, who still lives in Baltimore, is willing to help us with that together. We are very close-knit group. I'm much closer to my former volunteers

than I am to, you know, high school or to a college get together and alumni. And we take care of each other and we keep, we also started a scholarship program with the Philippines that's been going on for more than 25 years. We put many students through college.

BROWNING: [01:16:26] It's great. Now after you return to the U.S., tell me a bit about what you were doing to transition back to the U.S.

SCHOONOVER: [01:16:39] At that time, you know, returned volunteers were a rare commodity. And I remember that shortly after we got back, there was a program and Vice President Humphrey spoke to us and he welcomed us back. And he said, now that you're back home, just don't think you can rest on your laurels. Don't just sit in your mama's kitchen and say, serve up the biscuits, mama. Get out there and do something. Do something that will make a difference. And I remember that was such a delightful experience to meet with him and to have him encourage us. I worked in the, there was a project called the Cardoza Teaching Project designed for 10 returned Peace Corps volunteers from all different countries. Well, we didn't have that many countries at the time. And one of them, two of them were from the Philippines, two of us from Group I and one from Group II. And we were, it was a federally funded program. We were supposed to be, again, working on curriculum to try to make that inner-city curriculum more relevant to the inner-city student. And at the same time, we were working on our master's in education, and I did that for the study program was at Howard, and I did that for a year.

SCHOONOVER: [01:18:16] But I had grown up in thought Maryland in the small town and then taught in the in the Philippines, which is so this inner city environment I found very, very challenging and somewhat discouraging. At first of all, the teachers resented us somewhat because we're going to revive a curriculum. We whippersnappers coming in to revive our curriculum. Their attitude, in a way, was somewhat like in the Filipino teachers who say, you can't just come in and tell us what to do. And it was in inner-city Washington. I actually

stayed with family members who didn't live far away. We lived in a really great big old brownstone so I could walk to work. But the neighborhood was in decline and the students were not that willing. They had so many different issues. And I found I was more of a policeman than a timekeeper, than a teacher. So after that one year at Cardoza, I decided to do something else.

**BROWNING:** [01:19:30] Now, your experience in the Peace Corps certainly had a profound impact on you and tell us a bit more about your foreign service in the diplomatic corps.

**SCHOONOVER:** [01:19:45] Well, let's make the transition. Once I decided not to teach that second year, I found a job in the Peace Corps Washington in the Office of Talent Search. And my job was to help process applicants who were going overseas as Peace Corps staff. And I did that for a year. And you take, I'd take them through the interviews and if they were successful, they'd get up to the top and be interviewed by Sargent Shriver. Later, Jack Vaughn, who followed Sargent Shriver. And the regional director of the Africa region said to me, you've been processing all of these people, how would you like to go to Tanzania as associate director of the Peace Corps? Now, there was a director and then there were five associate directors. So I went for two years. I had 70 volunteers in my charge. I had the coastal region and I was mainly responsible for their welfare and well-being and coordinating with their Tanzanian supervisors. And there I met Richard Schoonover who was a foreign service officer working at the embassy. And then later we were married and I became a trailing foreign service spouse until later I joined the Foreign Service in 1977.

**BROWNING:** [01:21:21] Tell us how you progressed into becoming an ambassador for Togo.

**SCHOONOVER:** [01:21:30] Well, I was a career foreign service officer. And as I say, I started off being a trailing spouse, because I had. Let's backtrack a little bit farther. When I came back from Tanzania, I worked in, I had

started a school partnership program in Tanzania. I didn't start the program. The program was started by the headquarters, but it so happened that Tanzania had the most active school partnership program where we would get students from the States to raise money for materials. And then the volunteer would get the community to build a school. The start off certainly with a volunteer with the project and so did the labor was provided by the community and the funding provided by a school in the States. And so I ran that program for a year when I when I went back and then and then later married. And that's when I left the Peace Corps. But I wanted to actually backtrack a little bit about before I had gone off to Tanzania was when I went to Tanzania in '65. But at the end of the Cardozo project was the time when President Kennedy was shot. And that was really a very sad experience and we were at the school when that happened. And I was asked to be one of the two Peace Corps volunteers to represent the Peace Corps at the Kennedy funeral. And that experience has stuck with me forever. I mean, Kennedy stuck with me. Kennedy had made such a difference to me personally in my life with the things he did with the Peace Corps.

BROWNING: [01:23:35] And certainly the Peace Corps has made a tremendous impact on everybody who has served in it. I can say the same is true for me. But since you were there at the beginning, it is especially good to hear your accounting of what you did. Anything else about the Peace Corps then or now that you'd like to mention before we wrap up?

SCHOONOVER: [01:24:03] Ok, before we go into the Foreign Service part a little bit more?

BROWNING: [01:24:08] Yes.

SCHOONOVER: [01:24:13] As I said, it's made such a significant difference because I wouldn't have I would have been teaching in in the U.S., which I think would have been just fine, but I would never have had that horizon of

the expansion. I don't think maybe something else would have come up. But it certainly has made certainly has made a great difference in my life. And when once I once I married and what we call the trailing spouse, and eventually I could see that that wasn't going to work very well. I mean, and I applied to the Foreign Service and was accepted. And at first my husband, he already had his assignment with the United States Information Agency going off to Manila. And I had just been accepted into the Foreign Service, but there was no position in Manila. So I went on following him there. And eventually a position came open and I had to come back to the States and go through orientation. And then I had one other time when I was on leave without pay because we couldn't get joint assignments. So some couples take separate assignments, but we decided we would not do that. But eventually I worked. I was in the administrative management cone in the Foreign Service and eventually I worked my way up.

SCHOONOVER: [01:25:37] And he retired in 1996. And that was the time when I was offered to put my hat in the ring for ambassador to Togo. And, you know, even as a career person, you don't apply to be ambassador. It's unseemly to even ask. And he accompanied me there. It was a very vibrant Peace Corps program in Togo, about 100 volunteers, and most of them in community development and business startups. And I had a great time there with the Peace Corps. Of course we had some interesting things to happen. It was at the same time that there'd been the bombings in Dar es Salaam, the embassy in Dar es Salaam and the embassy in Nairobi, and so we had a few security scares. I closed the embassy at least three times because of security, perceived threats or actual threats. And that's a highlight of my career. I did manage to, after that, go on come to Chapel Hill, as diplomat in residence, and then later go to Belgium as the deputy to the ambassador there and later as the acting ambassador to Belgium. For my last year there as chargé d'affaires.

BROWNING: [01:27:13] And who was it, whose administration was it when you became appointed?

SCHOONOVER: [01:27:19] It was Clinton and you, even career ambassadors have to go through the Senate confirmation hearings. And I remember that very well.

BROWNING: [01:27:33] Well, very good. And I certainly do appreciate you sharing your memories from an extremely varied career and a groundbreaking career as a member of a Group I for the Philippines. And so we appreciate very much your time and your sharing your history with us.

SCHOONOVER: [01:28:00] Well, it is my pleasure and my honor. Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]