

Russell P. Breyfogle, Jr. Oral History Interview
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Biographical Note

Russell P. Breyfogle, Jr. served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Kenya from 1964 to 1966 in a secondary education program.

Access

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Oral History Interview

with

Russell P. Breyfogle, Jr.

June 22, 2005
Columbia, Missouri

By Robert Klein

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

KLEIN: [00:00:05] Today's June 22, 2005. This is Bob Klein. And I'm interviewing Russ Breyfogle, who was a Peace Corps volunteer in Kenya in secondary education. 1964 to '66?

BREYFOGLE: [00:00:21] Yes. 1964.

KLEIN: [00:00:24] So let's go back to a year before you joined the Peace Corps.

BREYFOGLE: [00:00:32] I happened to be a teacher. I taught three years before I went in the Peace Corps.

KLEIN: [00:00:38] Okay.

BREYFOGLE: [00:00:38] And I was teaching an experimental program for high school dropouts in Flint, Michigan, called the Personalized

Curriculum Program. And I was realizing that teaching students, at least those students I had, I was not very well prepared to teach them. Massive problems. And so I realized I was dealing with an unusual population at least in traditional school sense. It was a great experience, and I enjoyed it.

KLEIN: [00:01:11] What degree did you have?

BREYFOGLE: [00:01:15] I was completing, I had a bachelor's degree in history and government from Beloit College.

KLEIN: [00:01:21] What year did you graduate?

BREYFOGLE: [00:01:23] 1957. And I was completing a master's degree, going to summer schools at Western Michigan in teaching of social studies.

KLEIN: [00:01:32] Right. And that, you were in the middle of that?

BREYFOGLE: [00:01:35] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:01:35] During your third year of teaching?

BREYFOGLE: [00:01:36] Yes. And then I completed the degree before I went into the Peace Corps.

KLEIN: [00:01:41] Okay. Um. Where did you grow up?

BREYFOGLE: [00:01:44] In Three Rivers, Michigan, which is about 25 miles south of Kalamazoo.

KLEIN: [00:01:48] You went to high school there?

BREYFOGLE: [00:01:49] Yes, I did.

KLEIN: [00:01:50] In high school, did you do any kind of volunteering work or travel?

BREYFOGLE: [00:01:57] Well, my parents did the best they could on very limited budgets to try to get us to travel some. Like I remember my dad taking us to Niagara Falls when I was five or six. And then he knew that with a war breaking out, he made a quick trip to Alabama to see his sister and brother-in-law in 1942, just before gas rationing. But we saw the Smoky Mountains.

KLEIN: [00:02:24] Siblings?

BREYFOGLE: [00:02:25] I'm the youngest of four. I have two sisters and a brother so, and that's our order. Girl, girl, boy, boy.

KLEIN: [00:02:35] Okay. And you went straight from high school to college?

BREYFOGLE: [00:02:42] Yes, I did.

KLEIN: [00:02:50] And at the point you're entering college, what was sort of your career goal?

BREYFOGLE: [00:02:51] Well, I, my dad had been active in politics. At that point, never was successful in elective office, but was a delegate to the Republican convention in 1952 and was a Taft delegate, conservative Republican family. And so I thought I would, since I had majored in government and history, I thought I would have a career in politics.

KLEIN: [00:03:19] During the four years in college, [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:03:26] I worked for the U.S. Forest Service in Idaho, in Montana. I was stationed in Idaho, but I fought forest fires in Montana. And I did that summers of '53, '54. So between my high school and Beloit, I was in Idaho and then also the next year. So I did, did travel. Yes. And one of the ironies is when I was in Idaho the second year, it was rainy. It was a rainy season and there weren't very many fires and not many prospects. The year before was very dry and so I made a lot of money, I mean, at a \$1.50 an hour. But, you know, when you

work 14 hours a day or so, you end up making a decent, a decent income.

KLEIN: [00:04:12] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [00:04:12] But anyway, so this one fella was going to take a quick trip down the coast, Pacific Coast, down through Oregon and California. There are two of them, so I ended up traveling with them. The fellow who was the primary organizer had an uncle who lived in Beverly Hills, was the head set director for 20th Century Fox. And so we met Marilyn Monroe and Gene Simmons. And for a 19 year old, you know, this is.

KLEIN: [00:04:43] Uh, so after college, your first degree at Beloit, you started teaching?

BREYFOGLE: [00:04:49] No, I worked. Let me back up.

KLEIN: [00:04:53] Sure.

BREYFOGLE: [00:04:54] I, I lived in a funeral home in Beloit. Actually, when I was in college my freshman year, all four of us were in college. And so my parents, although my dad certainly would be a middle income person making eight or \$9,000 bucks a year in those days, he didn't have that kind of money. My sisters were on scholarship and my brother at Western Michigan, I don't think his school cost maybe three or \$400 a year in those days. And Beloit was relatively expensive at \$1,300 a year.

KLEIN: [00:05:30] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:05:31] And so I ended up living in a funeral home. So I got my room. I got 25 bucks a week. So that, but I ended up, when I graduated from college, I ended up with \$90 in my pocket, so I was debt free. But anyway, I went to work in Detroit for the Aetna Casualty and Surety Company because I was going to be a big business type.

KLEIN: [00:05:52] And then go into politics.

BREYFOGLE: [00:05:54] Right. But anyway, when I, prior to my going to Detroit working for the Aetna, I had given myself a 30 day vacation. And so I had hitchhiked up to Maine and the New England states and ended up in Washington, D.C., and stayed at the YMCA, which was a few blocks from the White House. And ironically, a fraternity brother who was from Stanford but he was a political science professor at San Jose State. And I realized that he'd ran for Congress in 1956 as a Democrat. And so I wrote him a card at Christmastime and said, although I'm a Republican, I'll come out to California and help your campaign if you're going to run again. And he wrote back and said, I'm not running for Congress this year, but going to South America. Are you interested? So I quit my job with the Aetna and I traveled to Mexico, Central and South America.

BREYFOGLE: [00:06:53] There are three of us, and we got stuck on a sandbar in the Magdalena River in Colombia. And he and the other person were on a timetable. I mean, like he had to be back in fall time to teach. All I had to do was get back and get drafted. And so we split. But then I traveled on my own for the rest of that trip. I spent a total of \$600 for four and a half months. I literally ran out of money in Buenos Aires. And a German ship captain, the 24th ship captain I'd asked, said yeah, I could work on the ship. Didn't make any money, but I went from Buenos Aires to New York. So I had done some travel and service.

KLEIN: [00:07:33] How about had you picked up any language?

BREYFOGLE: [00:07:35] Spanish, I knew some.

KLEIN: [00:07:38] You wouldn't consider yourself fluent?

BREYFOGLE: [00:07:39] No. I mean, when I was there, of course, I got, I could survive with it.

KLEIN: [00:07:44] Right. Okay, so you finally, you get back to New York and then back to?

BREYFOGLE: [00:07:50] Three Rivers, Michigan. Went back to my draft board and said I'm here, and seven weeks later I'm in the Army.

KLEIN: [00:07:59] So that put you?

BREYFOGLE: [00:08:00] That would take us up to December 1958.

KLEIN: [00:08:05] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:08:06] Served 21 months. Got an early out and go to western Michigan to start my teaching certificate and master's degree.

KLEIN: [00:08:16] At what point did you become aware of the Peace Corps?

BREYFOGLE: [00:08:20] Well, surprisingly enough, in the campaign of 1960, I was aware of that being talked about. And then I kind of put it in the back of my mind until summer school in western Michigan in 1963, and the Peace Corps recruiter was there. And so I said, well, this sounds like a possibility for me, being single. So I got the information and filled out whatever I had to do at that time.

KLEIN: [00:08:48] It was a fairly lengthy application, I don't know if you remember it?

BREYFOGLE: [00:08:51] Oh, yes.

KLEIN: [00:08:53] One of the things they ask is the preference for area. Do you recall?

BREYFOGLE: [00:08:59] And I left that blank. I said anywhere.

KLEIN: [00:09:01] Okay.

BREYFOGLE: [00:09:02] Because I thought maybe at least with my even my limited Spanish, I might go to Central or South America.

KLEIN: [00:09:07] And did you think some familiarity with?

BREYFOGLE: [00:09:11] Yes. I said, I'm not trying to deceive anybody, I'm not fluent.

KLEIN: [00:09:18] Right, right. Were they still taking the entrance exams?
[inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:09:29] I, I don't remember, except for when I went into training, when I went to Columbia University, we had a battery of tests.

KLEIN: [00:09:36] No, this would have been, well, they may have stopped by then.

BREYFOGLE: [00:09:41] Or they may have and I'm just forgetting that.

KLEIN: [00:09:44] Yeah. So when did you apply?

BREYFOGLE: [00:09:51] I applied in that summer of '63.

KLEIN: [00:09:56] Oh, okay.

BREYFOGLE: [00:09:56] And made at least an initial application that said I wouldn't be available until after August of '64. I did want to graduate with my master's degree.

KLEIN: [00:10:09] So you completed your master's.

BREYFOGLE: [00:10:09] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:10:15] Did you do student teaching?

BREYFOGLE: [00:10:15] I had done student teaching back when I got out of the Army in the academic year '60-'61. I did my student teaching at Western Michigan University, I mean, at Three Rivers High School.

KLEIN: [00:10:31] Once you applied, did you think that was it or were you still looking for career alternatives or jobs?

BREYFOGLE: [00:10:40] Oh, when I was in Peace Corps, I was very open to whether I got assigned land settlement, teaching, whatever.

KLEIN: [00:10:51] But would you have fallbacks [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:10:56] Well, I was planning on then to stay on teaching where I was. And I got accepted in April or May of that year. Got a telegram from Sargent Shriver.

KLEIN: [00:11:08] Mm hmm.

BREYFOGLE: [00:11:09] And so then I made that announcement that I was not going to be back for next year because I was going in the Peace Corps.

KLEIN: [00:11:16] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:11:17] Said you'd been accepted for Kenya. Training at Columbia University Teachers College, Columbia. Such and such dates, like September 15th to December 20th or whatever.

KLEIN: [00:11:31] What was your reaction?

BREYFOGLE: [00:11:32] I was, I was, I was really excited. I thought, this is a tremendous, a tremendous opportunity. But also I was really honored in getting this far in the acceptance process.

KLEIN: [00:11:45] And what was your family's reaction?

BREYFOGLE: [00:11:49] Well, I, of course, called my parents, told them what I was doing. Since I'd been to South America and survived, my parents were not terribly distraught. And my dad had been in World War I in France, and so he could see the value of travel.

KLEIN: [00:12:09] What [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:12:11] Oh, they were, they were very encouraging, very supportive.

KLEIN: [00:12:13] Any fears or?

BREYFOGLE: [00:12:15] Yeah, they too thought this was just a tremendous experience. Certainly an enriching one to make a better teacher.

KLEIN: [00:12:24] Not that you were crazy or?

BREYFOGLE: [00:12:25] Oh, no.

KLEIN: [00:12:29] And what did you know of Kenya?

BREYFOGLE: [00:12:33] Well, of course, I had, having taken history and government through college in the fifties, I was aware of the Mau Mau movement. And obviously, very biased, very pro-British at that point in time. I shouldn't say pro-British, but certainly not pro-Africa.

KLEIN: [00:12:58] So you wrapped it up in Michigan and headed off?

BREYFOGLE: [00:13:03] Yes. At Teachers College.

KLEIN: [00:13:07] Do you remember initially reporting at Teachers College? Now you're meeting with the people who, like you, were going into Peace Corps. [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:13:25] You know, I don't have a real clear recollection. And I'm trying to think of whether we got in at night and went straight to the hotel that we stayed at and then the next day met at Teachers

College. I think that's what happened. Because I remember meeting. No, that was later, that was when we were getting ready to go to country that I met a couple of my friends who I'd trained with, we then were on the same plane. One came from Anchorage, Alaska, and then stopped in Detroit. But no, I flew into Newark because I had a high school friend who met me there. And so I really, my first night. I got there a couple of days before I was supposed to so I could visit with my high school friend who was lived in the greater New York area. He worked on Wall Street.

KLEIN: [00:14:24] So your training group was about 120 people?

BREYFOGLE: [00:14:25] 120 of us.

KLEIN: [00:14:33] And you were actually in training for Swahili?

BREYFOGLE: [00:14:34] That's true. All of us, of course, were being trained in Swahili. That was the common ground. And all being trained for education.

KLEIN: [00:14:44] Secondary education?

BREYFOGLE: [00:14:44] Yes, secondary education.

KLEIN: [00:14:49] For Tanganyika and Kenya?

BREYFOGLE: [00:14:49] That's correct. It was Tanganyika when we started, but it was Tanzania by the time we left the training because the merger with Zanzibar in '64.

KLEIN: [00:14:57] Yeah. Did you, did you differentiate initially? [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:15:05] No, we were. When we were lumped together for language, we were lumped alphabetically. And so whatever this group will have this teacher and people are going to all three countries, that did not make a big difference.

KLEIN: [00:15:20] Describe the training [inaudible].

BREYFOGLE: [00:15:27] Oh, we'd have lectures on East African history. Cultural things. And language we had one hour, three days a week. So it was not. I mean, people knew that we were going to be teaching in English.

KLEIN: [00:15:47] Oh, okay.

BREYFOGLE: [00:15:47] And so it's not like knowing Swahili meant whether we survived or not. And had a lot of presentations on racism. And of course, this is '64 when the civil rights stuff was just beginning to evolve. But, you know, whether you see two people, two males walking down the street holding hands. How do you feel about that? This is their culture and it's just a sign of affection. And it has nothing to do with sexual identity or sexual identity.

KLEIN: [00:16:24] Yeah, that would be inaccurate.

BREYFOGLE: [00:16:26] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:16:27] Wow.

BREYFOGLE: [00:16:28] And then have British teachers come in and talk about, talking about the boot, or the boot in the bottom of the car versus the trunk.

KLEIN: [00:16:37] You actually had?

BREYFOGLE: [00:16:38] So we had Brits come in and teach.

KLEIN: [00:16:40] Okay.

BREYFOGLE: [00:16:41] And it was fun, it was just to get this cultural difference.

KLEIN: [00:16:46] But it was kind of generic?

BREYFOGLE: [00:16:49] Yes. Where we were going made no difference. We were given the same education.

KLEIN: [00:17:04] Did that vary [inaudible]? Did you ever sense that [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:17:20] There certainly was that sense that they're going to prepare us for possibilities of being questioned why is your government doing these kinds of things? And of course, when I was in Kenya, I was confronted with, why are you going into Vietnam?

KLEIN: [00:17:36] During training, did anyone from Washington come?

BREYFOGLE: [00:17:45] Well, actually, talking about Vietnam, we had Roger Hilsman, who was the Assistant Secretary of State for Southeast Asian Affairs and was a West Point graduate. He was defending our policy in southeast Asia. And so, yes, we had people. And also we had people who wrote about the civil rights. Our chief psychologist in the deselection process, was it Dr. Gilbert, who was the chief psychologist at Nuremberg? We were just scared to death of him. I only heard him once and didn't really meet him personally. He presented when we had our first deselection. And like ten people got deselected, I mean, which was not a high number. I think out of 120 of us, 109 survived that process.

KLEIN: [00:18:49] Do you recall the deselection process? I mean, did they do a battery of tests?

BREYFOGLE: [00:18:54] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:18:55] Psychological tests?

BREYFOGLE: [00:18:58] Psychological and probably intelligence tests. Because at least I know when I was interviewed by my psychologist, he said I was kind of in the mid. I wasn't, I wasn't at the top or at the bottom. I don't know what that meant.

KLEIN: [00:19:13] You remember, do you recall the interview?

BREYFOGLE: [00:19:15] Yes. Oh, yeah.

KLEIN: [00:19:16] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:19:18] Well, at least the interview that I got was centered around, well, do you think you can survive two years without conveniences? Loneliness. You think you can cope? And I certainly felt, you know, I was a 29 year old male and so I was used to being single. And I thought, well, I can give it a try and certainly see, but I would think that I had that. And it is a big difference between being home and being alone.

KLEIN: [00:19:59] Were most of the group [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:20:05] Well, I think, I think all of us had a level of stress.

KLEIN: [00:20:10] And then when the big [inaudible], what was the reaction?

BREYFOGLE: [00:20:26] Shock. Disappointment. Not because they got deselected, but in the process, because one of the persons was very popular with the. We thought of all of us. And that's another thing I think plenty of us were tremendous people. I mean, I've never been involved, because then it became a family. Even though 120 of us got to know each other, at least to some degree. And it was just a talented group of people.

KLEIN: [00:21:13] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:21:13] Yes, that's true.

KLEIN: [00:21:14] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:21:18] And I didn't feel I was in any clique. I was never an outcast, but I never was inner-inner in any subgroup.

KLEIN: [00:21:26] Most of the group were just recent graduates?

BREYFOGLE: [00:21:26] Yes. Most were 21, 22, 23.

KLEIN: [00:21:41] So in effect, you were older.

BREYFOGLE: [00:21:41] I know there was another person who was 26, another male who was 26, I was 29, but he also was a former veteran. So there were two of us who had been veterans, and there were three women who were older than I was. But I was the oldest male. Yes. Clara was 67.

KLEIN: [00:22:02] Yes. [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:22:03] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:22:07] So, uh, the language component was minimal.

BREYFOGLE: [00:22:11] Yes, it was.

KLEIN: [00:22:17] [inaudible] What was your own feeling about deselection [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:22:23] Well, I certainly felt buoyed by making the first cut because I knew there would be a final cut. But, but, no, then my self confidence rose. I said, okay, I think this is the hardest part.

KLEIN: [00:22:46] Of the group [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:22:46] Oh, I would think, out of 120, maybe 20.

KLEIN: [00:23:00] That low?

BREYFOGLE: [00:23:00] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:23:00] During training [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:23:03] I should have said that initially, that the major focus really was on education. You know, how to present, how to teach.

KLEIN: [00:23:16] But you were a teacher already.

BREYFOGLE: [00:23:17] Yeah, that's right. And, and we had R. Freeman Butts, he wrote, which I thought was a tremendous book on the history of American education give a presentation, and other well-known educators would be a guest lecture. They weren't there all the time, but they did.

KLEIN: [00:23:45] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:23:45] We had, we had eight. I think we had two people come back who were teachers for East Africa, which was the program that preceded the Peace Corps. [inaudible]

KLEIN: [00:23:51] American?

BREYFOGLE: [00:23:59] American. We did have a couple of British people as well as I talked about doing the language thing and the cultural thing. So, so we got a good exposure, I thought. And then we had a block of student teaching. I was assigned to Commerce High School, which is now I think a hall. Not Carnegie Hall, but where Leonard Bernstein was conductor.

KLEIN: [00:24:35] Oh, okay.

BREYFOGLE: [00:24:36] But anyway. The old Commerce High School, it's now torn down. Anyway, it was, looked like it had possibilities, but having taught I was kind of bored. And so I fortunately was able to opt out and I worked for Leonard Covello who had been principal of Benjamin Franklin High School in Harlem, Puerto Rican, the commonwealth of Puerto Rico. So Nancy Shandling and I opted out because we've been teaching.

KLEIN: [00:25:08] And they simply said, you don't have to?

BREYFOGLE: [00:25:09] Right. They gave us permission. I think we had to find something before we could opt out.

KLEIN: [00:25:19] Okay. And what did you do instead?

BREYFOGLE: [00:25:21] Well, we helped organize a one day workshop for students at Benjamin Franklin High School, for people in the neighborhood, for career development. So a lot of my colleagues volunteered a half a day or a day to talk about what it was like to be whatever. And some were not really doing anything they were familiar with. Somebody didn't show up who was a beautician. But that was, that was also part of the growth, the development, was to do the unusual and be flexible.

KLEIN: [00:25:56] Was there, were there any [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:26:07] My Swahili teacher was from Kenya.

KLEIN: [00:26:15] Any significant others?

BREYFOGLE: [00:26:16] Other than an occasional person coming in and talking about cultural things. There was no permanent staff.

KLEIN: [00:26:27] And were there discussions or lectures about [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:26:39] Maybe not quite in that category, but certainly their awareness was heightened on these things. But it wasn't a direct topic on it.

KLEIN: [00:26:58] Were there lectures about [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:26:59] Not directly, because most of this was in '50, '52 to '54, '55. Since Kenyatta, of course, had been now at that time was the prime minister, was prime minister the first year. And when we got in country, he'd become president. So the government format was parliamentary.

KLEIN: [00:27:30] So how long did the training last?

BREYFOGLE: [00:27:31] As I remember, September 20th to December 20th, and then we had time off to go back home for Christmas.

KLEIN: [00:27:35] Okay. Do you remember the final deselection?

BREYFOGLE: [00:27:41] That was less stressful it seemed like, and only two people or one person maybe at that point were deselected. So it wasn't like the mid.

KLEIN: [00:27:56] Had you been given an assignment? Did you know?

BREYFOGLE: [00:28:03] We didn't know where, that didn't happen until we got in country. We just knew that we're going to Kenya and we're going to teach in a secondary school.

KLEIN: [00:28:11] And what subject were you going to be teaching?

BREYFOGLE: [00:28:15] I was obviously thinking I was going to be involved in some kind of social studies as I had a master's in teaching social studies.

KLEIN: [00:28:24] But that didn't match up.

BREYFOGLE: [00:28:33] No.

KLEIN: [00:28:33] You had home leave?

BREYFOGLE: [00:28:35] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:28:40] Five days, six days?

BREYFOGLE: [00:28:40] Probably a whole week, as I remember maybe it was the 20th. Then because we landed in Nairobi on the 31st. And so, and

we had a 12 hour layover in Madrid. SO we flew from New York to Madrid, to Athens. And then we had an hour refueling and that.

KLEIN: [00:29:03] It was a charter flight?

BREYFOGLE: [00:29:03] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:29:08] And the seats were full with volunteers?

BREYFOGLE: [00:29:08] Yes, the 120 of us plus the land development people going to Kenya.

KLEIN: [00:29:18] [inaudible] When you went home, any second thoughts?

BREYFOGLE: [00:29:24] Oh, not for me. I mean, I was wound up. I was ready to go.

KLEIN: [00:29:28] Did your family give you a big send off?

BREYFOGLE: [00:29:33] Well, my family certainly gave me a tremendous send off.

KLEIN: [00:29:42] Were you in the local paper?

BREYFOGLE: [00:29:42] I was. Three Rivers is the city of 7,000, but I had my picture in the paper, selected for Kenya.

KLEIN: [00:29:49] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:29:52] Oh, it was a big deal.

KLEIN: [00:29:55] So now you arrived in the airport.

BREYFOGLE: [00:30:00] Of course, my dad and my mother drove me to Detroit and people got off the plane, and that's when I saw [inaudible]. And she was from Anchorage and so she was on the flight with me going from Detroit to New York. And then, of course, we all assembled in the airport in New York City to catch our one flight. And as I say, we

had 12 hours in Madrid. Of course we're tired, but I tried to make every bit of that 12 hours. Go to the Prado.

KLEIN: [00:30:49] So you were on travel.

BREYFOGLE: [00:30:49] I was a traveler. And then we refueled in Athens. So I have been to Greece for an hour. But then, then as we were flying, the sun was coming up and I could look down and I could see where the White Nile and the Blue Nile came together. And we're flying over to Khartoum. And then I don't know how many hours later the landing in Nairobi.

KLEIN: [00:31:17] Was there a reception when you landed?

BREYFOGLE: [00:31:18] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:31:18] Governors?

BREYFOGLE: [00:31:19] Yes. And of course, the planned settlement people spoke very good Swahili so they could sing the national anthem much better than we could. [tape break]

KLEIN: [00:31:29] [inaudible] Do you recall at any point was there a swearing in ceremony? [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:31:51] I don't remember that. It's not to say it didn't happen.

KLEIN: [00:31:55] Tell me about your initial reaction to being in Kenya.

BREYFOGLE: [00:32:04] We were assigned to a hotel. I got sick for some reason, either because I hadn't been sleeping. I read a book a friend of mine, Neil Lampert, who was one of my professors at Western Michigan, gave me a book. Departing. And I read that book in its entirety on this flight. So I was really wound up. So probably from the lack of sleep, my body finally caved in and had got a tremendous cold. Finally, Dr. Campbell came up and gave me a shot or something because I was kind of throwing up.

KLEIN: [00:32:47] So the first couple of days [inaudible].

BREYFOGLE: [00:32:54] And it was at that time that the group met Tom Mboya and really, really high powered people, who I missed. I missed that part of it.

KLEIN: [00:33:12] When you got to Nairobi as a group [inaudible] other two continue on?

BREYFOGLE: [00:33:12] Yes, yes, yes. The Kenyan group stayed in Nairobi and the Uganda group, I don't know how they got to Uganda. They, we split.

KLEIN: [00:33:25] So all of a sudden, now the groups is down to about 40, 50 people?

BREYFOGLE: [00:33:29] Probably 35. 40 originally. Probably someone of those people [inaudible].

KLEIN: [00:33:47] What was your initial reaction then after that?

BREYFOGLE: [00:33:47] But Nairobi certainly was not bush. Major city. So, so that, I mean, the shock wasn't like if you landed in [inaudible]. It was a major city and hearing the different languages, but most people spoke, everyone we encountered spoke English.

KLEIN: [00:34:14] So it was kind of an easy transition?

BREYFOGLE: [00:34:20] Yes, it was. Yeah. And then people were. Met you. Met the Peace Corps Director Tom Kunde. And then the assignments were given. And so then we have an allotment of money to go buy bedding, pots, and whatever, whatever we need.

KLEIN: [00:34:44] Did you try your Swahili at all the first few?

BREYFOGLE: [00:34:50] Some. But I have to admit, I was not terribly fluent. Didn't push it.

KLEIN: [00:34:58] Talk about your time. At any point do you recall [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:35:11] I'm sure that that happened and I didn't have any preference. I just said, send me, again like my application, send me wherever you want. I'm open to that.

KLEIN: [00:35:20] So within the group, I mean, there wasn't any sort of [inaudible].

BREYFOGLE: [00:35:28] At least I didn't have that sense. I mean, I didn't. I really liked everybody and I thought I could work with anybody. And I was assigned with Steve Poland to work in a Harambee school.

KLEIN: [00:35:39] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:35:41] Well, what was it? Freedom. And it was one of the new schools just being opened. And so I thought this is going to be a neat experience, Steve and I got along well. And then when we got on the train to go to Kisumu, because the Harambee school was south of Kisumu. But when I got off the train, I had, overnight, been reassigned by the Ministry of Education and ended up going to Maseno, which was about 25 miles north of Kisumu. So Steve and I got separated at that point in time.

KLEIN: [00:36:17] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:36:24] No, that happened just as we were there and assignments were read out. And Breyfogle, you've been reassigned to.

KLEIN: [00:36:36] This was before?

BREYFOGLE: [00:36:36] Yes, we were in Kisumu at the train depot at that time.

KLEIN: [00:36:40] And somebody came?

BREYFOGLE: [00:36:40] And said, you're going to Maseno.

KLEIN: [00:36:48] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:36:48] From the Ministry of Education.

KLEIN: [00:36:52] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:36:52] Well, I was, I had to readjust. And plus the fact Steve and I bought stuff together. And so we had to kind of look at what, what we could separate. So he took the pots and pans because I figured I could take the, I had my blanket and sheets and those things because that stuff you, of course, had your own. That was easy.

KLEIN: [00:37:15] So how did you get to Maseno?

BREYFOGLE: [00:37:21] Somebody from Maseno, one of the teachers, one of the English teachers, who had a car, was asked to come down and pick me up.

KLEIN: [00:37:34] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:37:34] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:37:39] So now you're going off [inaudible].

BREYFOGLE: [00:37:55] Yes, I do. And that was. The Brit, who was the geography teacher, who I ended up living with during this time, was very welcoming. They made me feel very accepted. Just looking at the scenery, it was beautiful. Your first real glimpse of the African countryside, or at least for me. I thought it was beautiful.

KLEIN: [00:38:28] There was a good road there?

BREYFOGLE: [00:38:28] I guess it was.

KLEIN: [00:38:40] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:38:40] No, at that point in time, it was, as I remember, it was tarmac. But part of it was relatively smooth ride.

KLEIN: [00:38:50] Did the Brit try to fill you in on the school and what to expect?

BREYFOGLE: [00:38:57] Just in general terms. This is a school founded in 1907, well-established. The students are good students. You know, they're the cream of the crop of the country.

KLEIN: [00:39:08] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:39:08] No, it was not.

KLEIN: [00:39:08] Do you have any idea why [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:39:17] You know, I could, I could say probably because I had experience and also a masters degree.

KLEIN: [00:39:24] But no one ever [inaudible]? So you arrived at the school.

BREYFOGLE: [00:39:36] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:39:36] What were your living arrangements?

BREYFOGLE: [00:39:36] Yes. I was assigned to live with the geography teacher at least for the interim. Uh, the house that I lived in that first two weeks, because later I was going to be assigned to another house. Certainly more than adequate, but a much older house than some of the newer houses. In fact, they were constructing three new houses on the other side, of the western side of the compound. But that was a little house with two bedrooms. So I had my own bedroom. Living room, dining room, little kitchen.

KLEIN: [00:40:17] Running water?

BREYFOGLE: [00:40:18] Running water.

KLEIN: [00:40:20] Electricity?

BREYFOGLE: [00:40:20] Electricity at night. It was a generator.

KLEIN: [00:40:22] A steward or servant?

BREYFOGLE: [00:40:28] This person happened to have a, uh, houseboy is the term, which is very colonial.

KLEIN: [00:40:39] Were you beginning to feel [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:40:46] Well, that was a struggle because I was really looking at the mud hut impoverishment of being a person living on my own, not being dependent on other people. But I have to admit that then over a period of time, it took me about a month to get used to the idea of having, quote, a houseboy. We realized really how important this was for that person. I mean, it's an interesting part of the Kenyan economy. So this person then offered me \$12 month to do your laundry, mow your yard, clean your house. And that was his livelihood.

KLEIN: [00:41:43] Do you remember [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:41:59] No, but there was.

KLEIN: [00:42:00] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:42:03] Right. I mean, the expectation I thought was.

KLEIN: [00:42:09] Your own.

BREYFOGLE: [00:42:09] Your own, yeah.

KLEIN: [00:42:10] I mean, your own expectation [inaudible].

BREYFOGLE: [00:42:14] Yes, we would take care of ourselves.

KLEIN: [00:42:19] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:42:28] It was not bad at all. And certainly when we got the lay of the land and realized what was really expected, for the economic reasons and because of time. We were just horrendously busy once the students came that we didn't have time to mow the yard. I had, I had snakes in my yard.

KLEIN: [00:42:51] Describe the school. This was not a well-off school.

BREYFOGLE: [00:42:53] No, this was an old school. 1907.

KLEIN: [00:43:06] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:43:06] The housing, particularly for the European staff, was really very, very comfortable. For the African staff too. They had the older homes. But still the fact was the home that I lived in initially became an African staff person's home. But the new homes obviously were in colonial style and went to the Brits. And half the staff were British and half the staff were Africans. I was the only American.

KLEIN: [00:43:47] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:43:47] I think there are 60 or 70 even.

KLEIN: [00:43:54] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:43:56] We had, we had forms 1 through 6, yes.

KLEIN: [00:44:11] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:44:11] The headmaster, of course, was there for many years. His father happened to have been the bishop of Uganda. So he was maybe born in England, but had lived much of his life in East Africa. And his wife, Cicely, was the daughter of a bishop in India. I mean, so in other words, she was a colonial child as well.

KLEIN: [00:44:40] And I don't know [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:44:49] Yeah. But none of my British colleagues opted for that. They maintained the British passport.

KLEIN: [00:45:05] But how many of the British [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:45:16] I think all were British.

KLEIN: [00:45:18] Okay, so they come out just to teach.

BREYFOGLE: [00:45:21] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:45:27] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:45:27] We had one missionary probably. A young wife, two children. And the others were more my age, I mean, my age being 29, I was. And so the physics teacher, the chemistry teacher, and the geography teacher were about my age.

KLEIN: [00:46:02] Was this a church run school?

BREYFOGLE: [00:46:02] It was an Anglican school, British church, Church of England. In fact, in Maseno there's a cathedral. The chapel that we had on campus, I realize now, since I'm now an Episcopalian, sometimes we pray for the Diocese of the Maseno.

KLEIN: [00:46:22] And but you still got the support in that system.

BREYFOGLE: [00:46:27] Well, it was, it was a government, by that time it truly was, the government took control of it. But it certainly, we taught religion.

There was a Cambridge exam, the students took an exam like in November of their fourth year and their sixth year. And those exams were bundled up and sent to Cambridge.

KLEIN: [00:46:59] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:47:00] The Kenyan staff were teacher trained. In other words, they had gone through a certain level of education.

KLEIN: [00:47:09] Not university?

BREYFOGLE: [00:47:09] Not university. We did have later on have a graduate. And these, the African teachers basically taught forms 1 and 2, the lower forms, math, whatever the subject matter. And the Brits taught the higher levels. But later on when there wasn't a graduate, he was teaching.

KLEIN: [00:47:40] Was the school [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:47:40] It was initially and then when the physics teacher married an American in my second year, she then joined the staff.

KLEIN: [00:47:52] What about the student body?

BREYFOGLE: [00:47:56] The student body was all male.

KLEIN: [00:48:01] It was a boarding school?

BREYFOGLE: [00:48:01] Yes, it was. There were 10 dormitories.

KLEIN: [00:48:21] Now, well, let's talk about [inaudible].

BREYFOGLE: [00:48:22] The headmaster, Bertram Bower, a delightful person. He later retired to [inaudible] came to an. After I went and got back and got married, I spent an evening with Bertram [inaudible]. But anyway, Bertram assigned me forms 1 math, religion. And form 3 history. So I was out of my head in the math and religion because I

certainly was not steeped in the religion. And the math, I could do the basic math, but I was just barely a day ahead of the students. But then, because of the detached retina from one of the English teachers, this was the Hungarian born American who had an Australian wife. And then when he had the detached retina and had to go back to New York and get that taken care of, his wife taught his classes. But then she left to go to New York. And then that the big shift, that I got all forms 3 and 4 history and English, forms 5 [inaudible].

KLEIN: [00:49:53] But eventually [inaudible].

BREYFOGLE: [00:49:53] Well, I had a syllabus but that meant that I really had to do a lot of boning up to even be ahead of the students.

KLEIN: [00:50:04] Same things with the math?

BREYFOGLE: [00:50:05] Same thing with the math that I had.

KLEIN: [00:50:09] Did you feel [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:50:10] I mean, I had had high school algebra and geometry, advanced algebra and solid geometry, and that was the extent of my math.

KLEIN: [00:50:20] Given the fact that this is such a [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:50:32] I had those feelings. But overall, I thought. I mean, even though I thought I was out of depth in the math and religious studies, that shifted probably within six weeks. Yeah, the shift was not even a full semester. But it was during this time the results came out from the Cambridge exams from the year before. And it was the worst in the school system. And the students got very upset and went on strike.

KLEIN: [00:51:13] When was this?

BREYFOGLE: [00:51:13] It was in my first semester. And the students were on strike and not willing to participate in doing their garden work.

KLEIN: [00:51:22] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:51:26] We haven't even gotten that far yet. We had a meeting with the principal. The headmaster got permission from the Ministry of Education to send the students home. So the students were sent home for about a week. But this school strike became a national issue since Maseno was a very prominent school. Vice President Oginga Odinga and financial minister Tom Mboya had gone to school there. So Parliament was talking about this strike in Maseno and blaming it on the Peace Corps for not being prepared to teach. And of course, I really was not prepared to teach some of the subjects I had been teaching.

KLEIN: [00:52:08] Were these, they must have been politically motivated attacks?

BREYFOGLE: [00:52:11] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:52:12] So there was some political division [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:52:21] Of course there was. If you read Time magazine, if you had read Time magazine, Oginga Odinga, of course, was kind of considered pro-communist. He was a Luo, a member of the Luo tribe. Two thirds of our students were Luos. And so there might have been that. Certainly the students were truly upset with the results.

KLEIN: [00:52:43] I mean, [inaudible].

BREYFOGLE: [00:52:48] I mean, I'm assuming there were some student leaders. I wasn't.

KLEIN: [00:52:55] So you a very short time [inaudible].

BREYFOGLE: [00:53:00] Well, it gave me time to prepare. It helped me get caught up.

KLEIN: [00:53:04] During this period, is that when your schedule changed?

BREYFOGLE: [00:53:09] My schedule had changed before that.

KLEIN: [00:53:14] Okay, so now you're history.

BREYFOGLE: [00:53:14] Right, which I felt far more comfortable with.

KLEIN: [00:53:16] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:53:21] Yes, I was. Or at least, we're going to sit the exam the years after.

KLEIN: [00:53:24] [inaudible] you'll be out of here before [inaudible].

BREYFOGLE: [00:53:38] That's true.

KLEIN: [00:53:38] Did you feel [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:53:41] Well, certainly. In other words, the students made it very clear to me that I was there to teach them English or history. And the history, of course, is crazy. It was British Empire and Commonwealth history.

KLEIN: [00:53:53] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:53:57] Well, they were very, very clear about it. You're here to teach us. We need to take this exam. And our lives, our future hinges on how we do on this exam.

KLEIN: [00:54:08] I mean, did they say that to you?

BREYFOGLE: [00:54:10] Yes. No, that was very clear. Yes.

KLEIN: [00:54:17] How does, uh, Kenyan English is obviously a little bit.

BREYFOGLE: [00:54:20] Kind of the King's English.

KLEIN: [00:54:22] Was that an adjustment?

BREYFOGLE: [00:54:32] The joke was, as I got settled in, was the status symbol was to get an American accent rather than a British accent. So the Brits would tease me. And African students weren't the ones that really said this.

KLEIN: [00:54:51] Well, did any of your students [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:54:56] Well, they. No. But no, they, they wanted to be up to speed. And when we're teaching some of the literature, of course, a lot of it was British literature like Dickens, Orwell. But anyway, if there happened to have been an American author, of course they could see the slight difference in the language.

KLEIN: [00:55:17] So the strike is over [inaudible].

BREYFOGLE: [00:55:32] The strike took place probably two thirds of the way through my first semester. And so I finished that first semester and then I had a month off. And, well, in Kenya, the schools had three months off. You'd go to school like from January, mid-January to April. And have mid-April to mid-May off. In school from mid-May to mid-August. Off mid-August to mid-September. Teaching from mid-September to, say, right up to Christmas or 20th. And then have that off until mid-January.

KLEIN: [00:56:17] Okay, so [inaudible].

BREYFOGLE: [00:56:18] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:56:25] What was your sense of the interaction with the professional [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:56:37] There certainly was a camaraderie. But it wasn't the same camaraderie that I had with Americans. It still was, I don't like the word colonial, but there certainly was that angle that the British were superior and better educated. I mean, the truth is there was racism.

KLEIN: [00:57:11] So where did you fit in [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:57:16] Oh, absolutely. I mean, I didn't differentiate. But the African staff also were married and had families, which made it different socially from me than with my British friends who were single who could.

KLEIN: [00:57:37] So [inaudible].

BREYFOGLE: [00:57:51] Actually, most of the socialization was like in the teachers' lounge at coffee break. Like 10:00 to 10:30 in the morning or whatever the times were. And that's where the socialization was, because then once people went back to their homes, they had other obligations too.

KLEIN: [00:58:15] Do you recall if any of the [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:58:27] Oh, no, no. We would have dinner exchanges and I would be invited to their homes. I had a problem because the fact that I, with three other British, although I later ended up having a home of my own, I ate with three other British. And so for me then to invite an African family was kind of problematic.

KLEIN: [00:58:53] So you didn't do it?

BREYFOGLE: [00:58:54] I didn't do it. I mean, I did do it with a couple of people, but not, not with all the staff.

KLEIN: [00:59:01] So were there instances where the three Brits, you [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:59:09] Yes, that did happen. It's like, I didn't feel terribly uncomfortable, but I felt some discomfort, although only a little bit.

KLEIN: [00:59:21] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [00:59:29] One made it clear to me that was not the style.

KLEIN: [00:59:37] But this again was your [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [00:59:42] Well, actually, actually, by that time I had been assigned a home. And there were three new homes that had been completed and the geography teacher had a home by himself, and then the chemistry and physics teacher shared a home. And then the biology teacher, his wife, with two children, had the other home. And so we ate in the home where the physics and the chemistry teacher roomed together. But we split the wages of the cook four ways.

KLEIN: [01:00:19] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [01:00:27] Kisumu, a major seaport in west Kenya was about 17 miles away, and that was very accessible and a lot of times somebody would be going to Kisumu so I could go in and shop. See my friend Sue Boardman, who taught biology at one of the schools.

KLEIN: [01:00:48] But you would always drive down? [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [01:00:57] Rarely. I could go out and hitchhike, that was easy too. I could just go out and stick my thumb out and catch a ride with somebody else who was coming down from Butere or.

KLEIN: [01:01:08] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [01:01:27] I have to admit, I was really busy and so I didn't dwell on the unusual stuff so much. I really was trying to prepare and also grade papers because I really thought that students had to learn how to read and write English well. So I took that responsibility

seriously. And I thought that I maybe wasn't the best teacher, but I was adequate.

KLEIN: [01:01:59] What were your other responsibilities?

BREYFOGLE: [01:01:59] Well, I was the basketball coach, I introduced basketball, in fact even helped carve out, chopped. I didn't do the chopping, but carved out a place where we made a basketball court. And our first game was against a school that had been playing basketball for quite a while and we lost 64-8. We scored one basket each quarter. And I was the scout master. And we had a newspaper that was published, certainly once a semester, and I was responsible for that. And I had the yearbook, which was published at the end of each year.

KLEIN: [01:02:38] Were these assigned or were they volunteer?

BREYFOGLE: [01:02:46] No, they were assigned by the headmaster. And then one month out of the year, one month out of the semester, we would have chapel duty. I wasn't terribly steeped in the Bible so sometimes I would read [inaudible]. And that was, that was not [inaudible] headmaster who was a missionary.

KLEIN: [01:03:13] So you were supposed to get up in front of?

BREYFOGLE: [01:03:13] Three hundred students. It would be a ten or 15 minute inspirational, that's probably what we'd call it today. [tape break]

KLEIN: [01:03:42] We were talking about [inaudible]. During your first year, how often did you go away from the school?

BREYFOGLE: [01:03:50] Actually, I didn't go away a lot. I enjoyed the school. I enjoyed the students. I enjoyed the Brits, I enjoyed the African staff. So I didn't feel a great need.

KLEIN: [01:04:04] You didn't feel [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [01:04:22] I felt neutral. I mean, I felt comfortable with the African staff. And I had a lot of respect for both. The teachers were very competent and very bright.

KLEIN: [01:04:46] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [01:04:49] Yes, they were teachers from East Africa with the exception of the headmaster, of course, who came out of the Anglican Church. And then the biology teacher also was Anglican missionary. And then there was another missionary who was on leave. So there were three missionaries still left over from the old colonial days.

KLEIN: [01:05:06] Were there any [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [01:05:18] Well, the only, the only one was when [inaudible]. Students were very considerate, thoughtful, thankful, appreciative, respectful.

KLEIN: [01:05:28] What was the size of the class?

BREYFOGLE: [01:05:35] Thirty students in a class, at least in forms 3 and 4. And they did their homework. If they had questions, they would say, I don't understand, can you explain? Just tremendous respect. Teachers were really in an elevated position at that time.

KLEIN: [01:06:02] [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [01:06:14] It was certainly adequately staffed. Probably an old country schoolhouse with the description of the old wooden desks, a row of 30, whatever. Six rows with five desks each. And there was a blackboard, chalk. And no electricity. I mean, there was electricity, but at night. But buildings kind of latched, you know, where you had daylight, but then you'd close it down at night to not let the mosquitos in and keep the lights on.

KLEIN: [01:07:06] And so the students had textbooks. Do they work out of exercise books?

BREYFOGLE: [01:07:09] Yes. What we would, when we would take an exam. Blue books I think is what we called them. And that's, that's basically what they had.

KLEIN: [01:07:29] So during the first year [inaudible].

BREYFOGLE: [01:07:38] The doctor? Maybe. I mean, I didn't have a lot of visitors. I don't know why that was. You know, whether because I was surviving and things seemingly were going okay or what. I don't know. I certainly knew that I was supported and if I needed someone, I could. We did have a phone.

KLEIN: [01:08:08] Oh, okay.

BREYFOGLE: [01:08:08] I knew that folks were accessible.

KLEIN: [01:08:17] Yeah. And so you didn't [inaudible].

BREYFOGLE: [01:08:23] I did not. In fact, I remember, I remember the physics and chemistry teacher had a motorcycle. BMW, I think. And they taught me how to ride it. Wednesdays we didn't teach in the afternoon. And he said, why don't you go over to whatever, 20 or 30 miles away there was a Peace Corps volunteer. He said, take the bike. I took the darn thing over and skidded. Took a lot of skin off and it was a stupid thing for me to do, not being very competent. So anyway, I got the bike up to Majengo and then somebody, the government, a Land Rover, came by and took me back to the school. It took three baths to wash the stone grit out. And then I took a bottle of rubbing alcohol.

BREYFOGLE: [01:09:22] And the nurse when she discovered what had happened, she realized I'd done the right thing, but was amazed that I could tolerate that much pain because I was, I had a lot of spots where I poured the alcohol.

KLEIN: [01:09:35] The nurse at school?

BREYFOGLE: [01:09:36] Yeah, the nurse at school, the biology teacher's wife was a nurse. And then she got some salve for me and some gauze. And then finally, about a week later, a Peace Corps doctor came out.

KLEIN: [01:09:55] Wasn't there a policy [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [01:09:55] There probably was.

KLEIN: [01:10:05] [inaudible] As you're coming to the end of the first year, what was your sense of [inaudible]?

BREYFOGLE: [01:10:20] Well, I did feel good about, or at least I thought I was doing a good job of teaching. That I felt comfortable with.

KLEIN: [01:10:30] But you didn't get feedback from anyone else? [inaudible]

BREYFOGLE: [01:10:40] No, nobody on staff came to observe my teaching.

KLEIN: [01:10:47] Did you get any feedback in any way?

BREYFOGLE: [01:10:47] In kind of a roundabout way. I mean, they didn't come right out say you're doing a great job. But they appreciated the fact that they were learning English or learning British Empire history, which I thought was an interesting twist.

KLEIN: [01:11:11] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:11:11] Read about the American Revolution as to how it's written by the Brits and, you know, the other, the basketball, yearbook, the newspaper, you know, the outside activities were going well and the students were seemingly enjoying those activities, which I was involved in.

KLEIN: [01:11:34] Did you have much informal contact with the students?

BREYFOGLE: [01:11:37] Well, I had a dormitory.

KLEIN: [01:11:39] Oh, you did? Okay.

BREYFOGLE: [01:11:40] And so certainly two or three times a week I would wander over in the evening just to see how they were doing and if there's anything that they needed before. And then of course, I had ten banana trees in the yard. So when bananas get ripe, you've got arms of bananas and I'd give them to all ten dorms. I just, I wouldn't give them to my dorm.

KLEIN: [01:12:04] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:12:05] The Africans appreciated the extra food.

KLEIN: [01:12:09] Did the students question you about America? And do you have any sense of what their perception was of you as a Peace Corps volunteer? Did they distinguish you from the Brits?

BREYFOGLE: [01:12:24] Well, certainly when we got into Vietnam that became an issue for the Kenyan students.

KLEIN: [01:12:31] This is during your second year, isn't it?

BREYFOGLE: [01:12:32] During my second year, yes. 1966.

KLEIN: [01:12:35] How'd it become an issue?

BREYFOGLE: [01:12:37] Well, the students just couldn't figure out what in the world was America doing in this? I mean, they saw it as a form of colonialism, I mean, which from their perspective is absolutely right.

KLEIN: [01:12:47] Right, right.

BREYFOGLE: [01:12:49] And they thought it was dead wrong. And then, of course, the Congo thing was going on too.

KLEIN: [01:12:55] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:12:57] And they just thought the American government was intervening inappropriately.

KLEIN: [01:13:03] Where did, I mean, did you sit down in the dorm and say, let's talk about Vietnam? Or did it come up in class?

BREYFOGLE: [01:13:11] A lot of times it would come up when I'd have time. We'd discussed the material that we covered for that day and have an extra 10 minutes.

KLEIN: [01:13:19] In class?

BREYFOGLE: [01:13:20] In class, yeah. And so I'd say, is there anything you want to talk about?

KLEIN: [01:13:24] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:13:25] And they'd say, yeah, what in the world are you folks doing in the Congo or? I don't remember what it was that happened at the time.

KLEIN: [01:13:34] Yeah. I assume their language is a little bit more formal than, what are you folks doing in?

BREYFOGLE: [01:13:40] Yes.

KLEIN: [01:13:42] Okay.

BREYFOGLE: [01:13:43] And there certainly was a level of politeness.

KLEIN: [01:13:46] Yeah. So that, you never had a strong expression of anti-Americanism?

BREYFOGLE: [01:13:52] No.

KLEIN: [01:13:52] Or anything directed personally against you?

BREYFOGLE: [01:13:57] No.

KLEIN: [01:13:57] In those settings, did you feel called on to try to defend America, or how did you, whatever your own feelings about the Vietnam War?

BREYFOGLE: [01:14:09] I was, I was raised in a very conservative political family, and my basic source of information was Time magazine. And Time magazine supported the war so I supported the war in Vietnam. And so I defended American policy in Vietnam. Talked about the domino theory and the spread of communism.

KLEIN: [01:14:30] Right. And your students bought it?

BREYFOGLE: [01:14:35] No! They understood my point of view.

KLEIN: [01:14:42] Okay.

BREYFOGLE: [01:14:42] And they respected my being able to defend it, but they still didn't agree with it.

KLEIN: [01:14:52] Yeah. Well, let's jump. There must have been somewhere a long break between first and second year.

BREYFOGLE: [01:14:58] Well, there are these months between.

KLEIN: [01:15:00] Oh, that's right. Yeah. What did you do with the free time? Initially, I suppose you used it to prepare for teaching.

BREYFOGLE: [01:15:08] Well, I also traveled, but I would find the Peace Corps said you have 30 days of vacation here.

KLEIN: [01:15:14] Right. Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:15:15] But find a project.

KLEIN: [01:15:18] Ah, yeah. Okay.

BREYFOGLE: [01:15:19] So I had a project with the land settlement people. That's where I met Mike Davis and Jim Cloutier, I think.

KLEIN: [01:15:28] Right.

BREYFOGLE: [01:15:29] And they were living in this house where Robert Ruark either lived or, because there were bullet holes in the wall from where this particular murder took place, where the Brits killed the cook or.

KLEIN: [01:15:46] Oh, okay.

BREYFOGLE: [01:15:47] In Uhuru.

KLEIN: [01:15:48] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:15:50] And so I'm, I'm getting exposed to language and different experience.

KLEIN: [01:15:58] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:15:59] And so I felt very enriched by having that mixture of both working in projects when I was traveling.

KLEIN: [01:16:07] What was the project?

BREYFOGLE: [01:16:09] I'm even blocking on what I was doing, except for I was traveling with these guys who spoke fluent Swahili and they were doing something.

KLEIN: [01:16:17] Now they tended to be based on a land settlement area?

BREYFOGLE: [01:16:21] Yes, they were.

KLEIN: [01:16:21] And their role was kind of complicated. It could have been, was it with elementary school kids or?

BREYFOGLE: [01:16:31] I thought they were working with adults.

KLEIN: [01:16:33] No, I mean, they were. But did you come in and sort of?

BREYFOGLE: [01:16:36] No, I was working with them. I was just kind.

KLEIN: [01:16:38] Just following them.

BREYFOGLE: [01:16:43] Tagging along.

KLEIN: [01:16:43] Okay.

BREYFOGLE: [01:16:44] I mean, that particular project was, we laughed about it being a project.

KLEIN: [01:16:49] Yeah. That's, I mean, two interesting guys to spend time with. Again, I think I said going into the second year, you begin, you know that you're only going to be there another couple of semesters. Did you think in terms of what am I going to accomplish before I leave? Or you just knew that your teaching was it?

BREYFOGLE: [01:17:13] I have to admit, I stayed focused on the teaching part of it.

KLEIN: [01:17:17] Mm hmm.

BREYFOGLE: [01:17:17] And my goal was for the students. My accomplishment was through the students accomplishing success.

KLEIN: [01:17:24] Right.

BREYFOGLE: [01:17:25] By taking the Cambridge exam and doing well so they could go on to further education or some kind of career development.

KLEIN: [01:17:33] You'd been pretty adventurous in your life up to joining the Peace Corps. While you're in Kenya, I mean, you're under very comfortable circumstance. Were you at all tempted to try to reach out and learn more about the real Kenya? I mean, traditional culture of the Luo or village life or get a student to invite you to his village?

BREYFOGLE: [01:18:00] I didn't get invited by any students, but I did get invited by a family that lived off the compound. And I don't know if that person's connection with the school other than he'd graduated from the school. But he worked like for the Agriculture Department.

KLEIN: [01:18:16] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:18:17] And I had a couple of times where he would invite me out to dinner and he had twin daughters who were of marriage age.

KLEIN: [01:18:23] Oh. Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:18:27] If he probably only had one daughter, I might have had a different outlook. But now I'm in a dilemma here. I don't want to offend anybody. I mean, I'm maybe jesting or misreading but. I enjoyed that contact, but I didn't pursue it beyond just the, the dinners and the camaraderie. I did try to, it only lasted for about a month because it really became time, terribly time consuming. I went out to an elementary school and tried one hour a week and it took me like an hour to get there. And I tried to teach English, but that then that was like on my Wednesday afternoon that I had off. So I only did that probably for six or seven times, maybe four.

KLEIN: [01:19:19] How did, how did that get set up?

BREYFOGLE: [01:19:21] Well, I was aware of the school.

KLEIN: [01:19:24] How?

BREYFOGLE: [01:19:25] Because one of the wives of one of the Africans taught in that school.

KLEIN: [01:19:33] Ah, okay.

BREYFOGLE: [01:19:33] And so she said, gee, if you come out to the school and do this, this would be tremendous.

KLEIN: [01:19:37] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:19:38] So it was through her that I knew of the school. When I said an hours, it was probably only a half an hour walk, but an hour, you know, half an hour each way.

KLEIN: [01:19:49] So you'd walk out to the school.

BREYFOGLE: [01:19:51] Sure. And it was, it was nice, but it was, became very time consuming from what I really was trying to stay focused on.

KLEIN: [01:19:59] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:20:01] But I didn't, I didn't make a lot of inroads in the area with the African population.

KLEIN: [01:20:12] And that was a Luo, a traditional group?

BREYFOGLE: [01:20:15] Yeah, but there was the Abaluyia, which was a Bantu versus a Nilotic language.

KLEIN: [01:20:20] Right.

BREYFOGLE: [01:20:21] My, my gardener happened to be a Luo, uh, Abaluyia. And I remember he lost the child through the childbirth process. And so I knew that they would have celebrations because every so often

I could hear in the nighttime this wailing. And so I made sure that he had sufficient money to, for the burial and for.

KLEIN: [01:20:47] Right. You didn't you didn't try to improve your Swahili, did you?

BREYFOGLE: [01:20:53] I did not.

KLEIN: [01:20:54] Okay. That's not an accusation. It's just that.

BREYFOGLE: [01:20:57] I'm very, very honest about it.

KLEIN: [01:20:59] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:21:00] Interesting, though. I made sure that I spoke with my gardener.

KLEIN: [01:21:05] Mm hmm.

BREYFOGLE: [01:21:08] And he did something one day. It usually rained, if it rained, it rained at 4:00 or 4:30 in the afternoon. The rains were very predictable. One day the clouds came up about 11:30 in the morning and he came trotting up with my raincoat. And these British people said, how did you train him to do that? And I said, I didn't. It's just the fact that he appreciates me and I appreciate him and he's taking care of me.

KLEIN: [01:21:38] In the second year, had the faculty changed much? Had people come, people go?

BREYFOGLE: [01:21:44] As I mentioned, the physics teacher married an American TEA teacher. And so then she taught some of the English.

KLEIN: [01:21:51] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:21:54] And so that was, so then the chemistry teacher. He had worked with a physics teacher, but he moved out or went back to

England, because obviously the wife took his place in that household. That's still where we ate dinner. I mean, I still ate dinner with them, but there was no, there wasn't a major shift.

KLEIN: [01:22:18] And your health generally was okay after the initial bout you had when you arrived, generally good?

BREYFOGLE: [01:22:23] I maintained very good health.

KLEIN: [01:22:26] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:22:27] Except for I had my bottom, I had my wisdom teeth pulled.

KLEIN: [01:22:30] Right.

BREYFOGLE: [01:22:31] Right just before I was ready to get out because I wanted to have it done at government expense because I had a 90 degree root on both sides.

KLEIN: [01:22:37] Yeah. And that was done in Nairobi?

BREYFOGLE: [01:22:39] Yes. No, no, no. Kisumu.

KLEIN: [01:22:41] In Kisumu? Okay.

BREYFOGLE: [01:22:43] But when the dentist got to the bottoms. He popped the tops, he just popped out and I was able to play tennis. But when the bottoms were done, he said, you're going to be sick for four days. And I thought that guy had his foot on my jaw while he was pulling those teeth.

KLEIN: [01:22:58] Yeah, yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:23:00] And he was wanting to drive me back up to the compound. I said, no, I could hitchhike, which I did. And I also had been invited over to dinner to a teacher's college, and I said, I'm

really sorry, but I just had my wisdom teeth pulled. And I said, I don't think I'm going to be feeling well in a couple of hours. And so I ate soup and easy things to eat. And they took me home, a delightful couple from Winnipeg, and sure enough, I was sick for four days. This was on Wednesday afternoon, and the afternoon we had off I had my teeth pulled.

KLEIN: [01:23:34] Right.

BREYFOGLE: [01:23:34] So I crawled over to the classroom and wrote the assignments on the board, said sick, and then went back over Friday and Saturday. By Sunday afternoon, I was back to normal. But, boy, those four days were terrible. Otherwise, no, I was not sick.

KLEIN: [01:23:51] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:23:52] But I had consistently lost 25 pounds over a period of time. So I weighed 125 pounds. And I understand losing 25 pounds for a male is not abnormal in the tropical climate.

KLEIN: [01:24:08] Right. Right. It's, uh. At the end, between the first and second year, was there a conference of the group? Were you called together? A mid-term conference it would have been called, I think.

BREYFOGLE: [01:24:26] You know, we might have. By that time maybe you're gone?

KLEIN: [01:24:30] I think so. I was out of Kenya.

BREYFOGLE: [01:24:33] And we might have had not anything quite that formal.

KLEIN: [01:24:39] Oh, okay.

BREYFOGLE: [01:24:40] We had a formal get together down at Mombasa or Malindi.

KLEIN: [01:24:45] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:24:46] When we were ready to be discharged, probably.

KLEIN: [01:24:50] Okay.

BREYFOGLE: [01:24:50] Four weeks before we got discharged.

KLEIN: [01:24:52] Right. Right. And that was the termination conference?

BREYFOGLE: [01:24:58] Thank you, that's the term I'm trying to fish for.

KLEIN: [01:24:58] Yeah. And so the whole group gathered in Malindi.

BREYFOGLE: [01:25:03] Yes.

KLEIN: [01:25:04] Which is easy to take. It's a beachy resort.

BREYFOGLE: [01:25:09] Oh yeah, it was plush.

KLEIN: [01:25:13] I gather during the two years you did not have much contact with other volunteers?

BREYFOGLE: [01:25:20] Sporadically.

KLEIN: [01:25:20] Yeah. I mean, your real focus tended to, stayed within the school community.

BREYFOGLE: [01:25:24] Yes.

KLEIN: [01:25:26] So now you come back and two years are over and you suddenly.

BREYFOGLE: [01:25:30] Well, with the exception when we'd have those month periods. Like one time I went to Nairobi and spent. The Presbyterian Church had sent a shipload of books to Kenya. So one of the projects was to support, to separate these books out.

KLEIN: [01:25:55] Oh, okay.

BREYFOGLE: [01:25:55] And then try to catalog them in some way, shape or form. And then schools would be getting these books. And so that was one of the projects that I did.

KLEIN: [01:26:05] Where did you stay when you were in Nairobi?

BREYFOGLE: [01:26:07] There was, there was a hotel that was not terribly expensive. It was within a block or two of the Peace Corps office.

KLEIN: [01:26:13] Okay.

BREYFOGLE: [01:26:14] And so that was within my budget.

KLEIN: [01:26:17] Now, you were being paid a living allowance by the Peace Corps?

BREYFOGLE: [01:26:21] Yes.

KLEIN: [01:26:23] Was that, did that tend to be adequate?

BREYFOGLE: [01:26:25] Oh, I, I. It would not have been enough to support a vehicle, but it was enough for me to pay for a fourth of a cook's wage, to pay for a gardener. And to save enough money to buy a Pentax camera and wide angle lens and photo lens and tripod.

KLEIN: [01:26:44] You were specifically forbidden from owning a vehicle?

BREYFOGLE: [01:26:51] Yes.

KLEIN: [01:26:52] Okay.

BREYFOGLE: [01:26:53] So, so the \$100 a month I got, and the \$10 for my rent.

KLEIN: [01:26:58] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:27:00] The \$110 I got, I probably was able to save 30 to 40 percent of that.

KLEIN: [01:27:06] And was that deposited to your account in Maseno?

BREYFOGLE: [01:27:10] I think that's how it works. Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:27:15] All right. Let's jump back to the termination conference. And your, the group gathers now, I guess for the first time in the two years?

BREYFOGLE: [01:27:22] It might have really been in that break between.

KLEIN: [01:27:26] Well, yeah, okay.

BREYFOGLE: [01:27:26] Semesters, because I don't think, we didn't teach for that three or four days.

KLEIN: [01:27:30] Right. Right. Okay.

BREYFOGLE: [01:27:33] It was, it was in preparation for us to be prepared for culture shock going back to the United States.

KLEIN: [01:27:39] How was that played out? I mean.

BREYFOGLE: [01:27:45] I'm glad, I mean, it was, it was nice to see the people again, you know, the camaraderie and the friendships that we had in Teachers College, Columbia.

KLEIN: [01:27:53] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:27:54] And then plus the friendships that we had that were people that were in proximity. Like Sue Boardman for me.

KLEIN: [01:28:00] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:28:02] Sue I saw fairly frequently.

KLEIN: [01:28:04] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:28:07] That was delightful in that, as you mentioned, that Malindi was plush and probably not terribly expensive in those days, but seeing the ocean and the flowers were just magnificent.

KLEIN: [01:28:25] The settlement group wasn't there at the same time, was it?

BREYFOGLE: [01:28:27] No. They were obviously having their conference at a different time, maybe at the same place, but different times. Just the teachers.

KLEIN: [01:28:36] And at that point you at all tempted to extend for a third year?

BREYFOGLE: [01:28:44] At that time also they, not necessarily in Kenya, but in Micronesia, they said you can spend a year in Micronesia.

KLEIN: [01:28:52] Oh, okay.

BREYFOGLE: [01:28:54] And I was tempted to do that. But I was 31.

KLEIN: [01:28:58] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:28:59] And I was saying, you know, I could, I could be an adolescent all my life, live in this abnormal environment.

KLEIN: [01:29:07] You had a sense that this was not the way the world really was.

BREYFOGLE: [01:29:12] But I was grateful for that conference in preparation of serious culture shock when you get back to the United States because from '64 to '66 with the Vietnam, the social uprisings.

KLEIN: [01:29:31] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:29:32] A lot of change.

KLEIN: [01:29:34] Was it run in small groups?

BREYFOGLE: [01:29:36] Yes. They're kind of like a big talk and then you split off.

KLEIN: [01:29:41] Were there facilitators for each group?

BREYFOGLE: [01:29:43] Yes.

KLEIN: [01:29:46] And was it, did they tend to be lively exchanges or were people simply impatient and say, you know, I don't need to hear that, let me?

BREYFOGLE: [01:29:55] No, I, at least I thought people were very receptive to what was being said in preparation for what life was going to be like.

KLEIN: [01:30:05] Had many of the group terminated early? I mean, I don't know, you were 35 to begin.

BREYFOGLE: [01:30:11] I'm only aware of two people quitting in midstream.

KLEIN: [01:30:15] So it was still 30 some people.

BREYFOGLE: [01:30:21] Yes.

KLEIN: [01:30:21] Do you remember if there was discussion with the young men about the possibility of facing the draft when they came home? Because things had changed and the war had become a little more intense by then.

BREYFOGLE: [01:30:34] It certainly was mentioned. I mean, the war was heating up, had heated up.

KLEIN: [01:30:40] Right.

BREYFOGLE: [01:30:41] And that, you know, you. Whatever draft deferment you had before, you might not have.

KLEIN: [01:30:47] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:30:50] For the experience and now being with the group, will you still in your sensitivities essentially a Republican? Had you shifted or drifted at all?

BREYFOGLE: [01:31:03] I certainly. Let me just talk about an experience that I had.

KLEIN: [01:31:09] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:31:10] I basically am a very prompt, punctual person, and only once in my two years was I late for class. And I don't know, that's five or 10 minutes late.

KLEIN: [01:31:23] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:31:24] Because, you know, after 10 minutes, the students technically could go home. Go back to their room. And I came into class one morning late, six, seven, eight minutes or whatever it was, and the students said somebody was looking for you. And I was stunned. I mean, because nobody had ever checked on me. So I said, you know, was it Mr. Bowers, who is the headmaster? No, it wasn't. Mr. Smith, the chemistry teacher? No. Mr. Jenkins, the physics teacher? So I went down the European teachers. I was making an assumption it was a Caucasian male, and they said no all the way down. So I said, gee. And I was thinking, was it somebody from Peace Corps office? And that was very unusual. I mean, nobody ever came at 7:00 in the morning.

KLEIN: [01:32:16] Right.

BREYFOGLE: [01:32:18] Because usually if they had, they would have spent the night with me.

KLEIN: [01:32:21] Yeah, yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:32:22] Anyway, so I said, well, describe him. And they said, well, white skin, straight hair. And in unison, the 30 students said, all you white people look alike. And that, that was like a PhD for me, all of a sudden. Then the students said, what are you laughing at? And I said, well, if you came to the United States and you hear white people talk about Black people. And then they got offended.

KLEIN: [01:32:46] Uh huh.

BREYFOGLE: [01:32:49] Said we don't look alike. We look, we're different.

KLEIN: [01:32:51] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:32:54] So anyway, I certainly as far as race, culture, I certainly had grown tremendously.

KLEIN: [01:33:05] Mm hmm.

BREYFOGLE: [01:33:07] Politically, I still identified with the Republican party.

KLEIN: [01:33:10] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:33:12] My, I had left Flint and my congressman going back to Flint was Don Riegler.

KLEIN: [01:33:18] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:33:19] And Don was a Republican at that time.

KLEIN: [01:33:21] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:33:22] In his fourth term in the House, he switched to be a Democrat because of Vietnam, and then served a fifth term as a Democrat. Fifth term in Congress, but as a Democrat. And then, of

course, he ran for the U.S. Senate and won to replace Phil Hart. And of course, Senator Hart died even before the term was over. And finally Riegle became my senator for 18 years. He became a senator for 18 years. And I knew Mark Hatfield a little bit. So there are some decent Republicans still on the scope.

KLEIN: [01:33:57] But sitting in the termination conference or being near the end of your service, were you would at all reflective about how you had changed or what you'd gone through or what it all meant to you?

BREYFOGLE: [01:34:10] It probably hadn't crystallized.

KLEIN: [01:34:12] Yeah, okay.

BREYFOGLE: [01:34:13] But certainly the seeds had been planted.

KLEIN: [01:34:17] At that point then, what was your plan? I mean, obviously you were leaving Kenya in a fairly short time.

BREYFOGLE: [01:34:24] And, you know, it was funny. I was still flying by the seat of my pants and I knew that I'd have this air ticket to Detroit, and so did I want to get home for Christmas time. And I'd get discharged like on the 10th of December and do those whirlwind tours through the European capitals and.

KLEIN: [01:34:42] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:34:43] Get to, get to Detroit and then to Three Rivers. And finally, in the process I looked at the map and I sort of said, I could go to Europe, I could go to Asia. It's far different. So I finally sat down and cashed in my air ticket to Detroit and made it from Nairobi to San Francisco with 26 stops on it.

KLEIN: [01:35:09] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:35:10] But I still wasn't sure what I was going to do, whether I was going to do a whirlwind thing and try to be a name dropper. [tape break] Boarding the plane in Nairobi, Walter Brigadier knew this very attractive British lady who was the sister of his headmaster, and she was going to do a three week tour or so in Ethiopia. And Walter was going on up to Cairo. So I traveled with this lady for three, three weeks until Christmas had long passed.

KLEIN: [01:35:41] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:35:43] And she then went on to, she was married.

KLEIN: [01:35:47] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:35:49] You might not believe it, but I hardly didn't even hold hands with her in the three weeks. It's just, we were traveling companions and she'd studied Ethiopia, and so I learned a lot about it. And that's where I met, stayed at John Coyne's house.

KLEIN: [01:36:02] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:36:04] And so after that three weeks, I knew what I was going to do. I was really going to make good use of those 26 stops. And time was not of the essence.

KLEIN: [01:36:16] Yeah. So you're still avoiding readjustment or coming back. Well, you finally got back to San Francisco.

BREYFOGLE: [01:36:25] Yes.

KLEIN: [01:36:26] But you'd been on the road for quite a while.

BREYFOGLE: [01:36:28] Seven and a half months.

KLEIN: [01:36:29] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:36:30] Or seven months, because I still then, it took me about a week to get to Three Rivers, Michigan.

KLEIN: [01:36:36] Right. So the return culture shock must have been sort of diffuse, I mean, because you.

BREYFOGLE: [01:36:44] Well, in Hawaii, of course, all of a sudden I stayed at the Y, YMCA, and all these vets were on R&R from Vietnam.

KLEIN: [01:36:54] Ah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:36:55] And the music, the loud music. I mean, it was just a cacophony. But two people from Three Rivers, Michigan, lived in.

KLEIN: [01:37:06] Hawaii?

BREYFOGLE: [01:37:07] Honolulu. And so I had dinner with them. I had dinner with one couple, and then they took me over the other couple because I didn't know them. And so I had a more gradual coming in, but I was in shocked in Honolulu.

KLEIN: [01:37:21] Oh, okay. Because of the military, because of the music, because of the mix?

BREYFOGLE: [01:37:29] All of the above.

KLEIN: [01:37:30] Okay. You finally get your, work your way back to Three Rivers.

BREYFOGLE: [01:37:35] Yes.

KLEIN: [01:37:36] And you still face the question.

BREYFOGLE: [01:37:38] And I.

KLEIN: [01:37:39] While you were in Kenya, had you done anything to find out about programs or do any job search?

BREYFOGLE: [01:37:45] I did not.

KLEIN: [01:37:46] Did you ever consider trying to go to work for the Peace Corps? Was there any, ever any contact about that?

BREYFOGLE: [01:37:52] You know, it's funny and that, because of my language not being really a good Peace Corps volunteer and not learning the language.

KLEIN: [01:38:00] Right.

BREYFOGLE: [01:38:01] I really had not really thought that I would make a good staff member. You know, I kind of deselected myself from going further.

KLEIN: [01:38:10] Yeah. Yeah. Okay, now you're back.

BREYFOGLE: [01:38:14] And I really had, other than maybe thinking of going back and teaching in Flint, Michigan, I had not given serious thought about horrendous changes. But I did, when I got back to Three Rivers, I thought, well, I want to try the political stuff. And so I did hitchhike to Washington. And spent ten days in Washington seeing Don Riegle and Bill Steiger, who was a Republican from Oshkosh, Wisconsin, who I knew.

KLEIN: [01:38:46] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:38:46] Because he was had young Republicans in Oshkosh, but nobody had an opening for me. Nobody was willing to extend one. So I went back to Three Rivers.

KLEIN: [01:38:57] You had readjustment allowance, I think, which was a, you know.

BREYFOGLE: [01:39:01] But I'd spent that on my trip.

KLEIN: [01:39:02] Oh, okay. Okay. Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:39:06] And so I got to Flint, saw my old boss, and this is the Friday before Labor Day. He said, Russ, do you have a job? And I said, I've been offered a job up in Midland to teach junior high school social studies. Had a cousin who lived in Midland, and I was borrowing his car to come to Flint. I mean, he had two cars, so I had his Volkswagen. And Les Erenbright said, well, how about teaching junior high school in PCP, the program that I worked in, personalized curriculum program? Potential drop outs.

KLEIN: [01:39:41] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:39:42] I said okay. So I called Midland and said I'm not coming. So I went to lunch and I came back and Mr. Erenbright said, geez, I just changed you and you're going to be a counselor at a different junior high school just across the street here.

KLEIN: [01:39:57] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:39:57] And I said, how did you do that? I don't have a degree in counseling guidance. He said, you have a master's degree.

KLEIN: [01:40:02] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:40:02] And in junior high school, that's all you need. You don't have that counseling guidance degree.

KLEIN: [01:40:08] Uh huh.

BREYFOGLE: [01:40:08] So I went back to return the car back to my cousin. I think that's right. Unless he let me have the car. But I went to Three Rivers and got my stuff enough that I could live on. Went to Flint, got an apartment, and walked into this junior high school. The day after Labor Day was a teacher conference.

KLEIN: [01:40:34] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:40:34] And the principal, who I had known, Howard Auer played football with Jerry Ford at Michigan, later played for the Chicago Bears. And Howard had been my vice principal at Flint Central before I went to the Peace Corps.

KLEIN: [01:40:45] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:40:46] Got promoted as principal. And Howard said, Russ, what are you doing? I said, I'm going to be one of your counselors. What? And another fellow, Horance Brown, also was there. And he got introduced and said, what are you doing here? Well, I'm assigned also like Russ to be a counselor. And we ended up monitoring the cafeteria. That was our primary thrust. 1,350 students. There are five of us assigned to this duty.

KLEIN: [01:41:15] Wow.

BREYFOGLE: [01:41:16] The principal was very grateful to have these two warm bodies to help.

KLEIN: [01:41:20] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:41:21] Right in front of the cafeteria.

KLEIN: [01:41:22] Yeah. In the initial reassignment to become a counselor, was there any sense that, do you get a sense that people thought, well, he's been in the Peace Corps, he can do anything?

BREYFOGLE: [01:41:34] I thought there was that element.

KLEIN: [01:41:35] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:41:37] He's flexible. He could adapt and adjust.

KLEIN: [01:41:39] And you end up as a lunchroom monitor.

BREYFOGLE: [01:41:43] And which was really a neat experience because we tried to learn 1,350 kids' names. That was our means of control because if you know somebody's name you have tremendous control.

KLEIN: [01:41:55] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:41:56] And it was amazing. One, one person was eating, so there were four of us. In three different lunch periods, one staff member was eating. Clarence Brown, my office mate, and I ate after all this was over because we didn't have assigned duties per se. But anyway, learning those students' names. And one person was outside to monitor the smoking and no fighting policy. So three of us inside.

KLEIN: [01:42:25] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:42:26] Two were in the cafeteria and I was in the lunch line to make sure no brawls and cutting and that kind of stuff. And it was amazing. Later on, the students were really talking about serious problems through all this ruckus. And the privacy was tremendous.

KLEIN: [01:42:43] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:42:45] And I'd say a ninth grader, female. Jeez, I'm pregnant. I think I'm pregnant. And I'd say, go see the nurse.

KLEIN: [01:42:53] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:42:56] Okay, whatever. The stuff, the problems kids were having.

KLEIN: [01:43:00] So you were a counselor?

BREYFOGLE: [01:43:01] I really was, yes. And I ended up having part of a caseload around, surrounded around these kids who were in PCP, the personalized curriculum program.

KLEIN: [01:43:13] Right.

BREYFOGLE: [01:43:15] And it was amazing. The counselors were changing the kids' schedule, and the psychologist was testing kids, and one social worker was doing therapy. So I said to Ed Hughes, I said, what makes you special? And here you have counselors and psychologists and you're the one doing therapy. He said, I like therapy. I like doing therapy.

KLEIN: [01:43:38] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:43:39] So I said, well, what kind of degree you have? He said, I'm still a student at the University of Michigan. And so, evolution, I'm evolving.

KLEIN: [01:43:48] Yeah. Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:43:49] So I get introduced to Don Jake, which was social worker in Flint Central. He later supervised me. He introduced me to Frank Maple, who was a professor at the University of Michigan School of Social Work.

KLEIN: [01:44:01] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:44:03] So I ended up two years later going to the University of Michigan School of Social Work.

KLEIN: [01:44:08] And during this transition period, a year, two years. What was your perspective on the Peace Corps phase of your life? I mean, you're getting to be an old man now in your mid thirties.

BREYFOGLE: [01:44:22] And I also meet my wife in this process. She too was a Peace Corps volunteer in Tanzania. And we were speaking together as a panel at the International Institute.

KLEIN: [01:44:31] Yeah. Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:44:33] So then in June of 1968, so it was a quick romance.

KLEIN: [01:44:37] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:44:38] We got married. But in this time, Martin Luther King gets killed. And on the day of our wedding, Bobby Kennedy's funeral. So.

KLEIN: [01:44:45] Yeah. And the war in Vietnam is still on.

BREYFOGLE: [01:44:49] And the war in Vietnam was just getting worse.

KLEIN: [01:44:53] But how does this all relate to your sense of I've been a Peace Corps volunteer? I mean, it may be hard to connect.

BREYFOGLE: [01:45:01] Well, the racial unrest. This is an inner city junior high school.

KLEIN: [01:45:05] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:45:05] And 60 percent Black, 40 percent white. And certainly, again, I felt comfortable. African or European. And so I again was able to make that bridge. And so I got to know, you know, African American families as well as European families. And discovering the issue, the racial issue was not race so much as it was economic.

KLEIN: [01:45:35] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:45:35] The whites that were uptight were the poor whites. And so we then tried to work on those issues to try to make the school truly integrate.

KLEIN: [01:45:48] Yeah. Through the, um. I jumped in two directions. Uh. The third goal of the Peace Corps, of course, is that on your return that you become, you inform people about the Peace Corps point of view and possibly about the country you've been in. This is kind of a payoff. Have you done, can you, did you do any of that or have you done any of that?

BREYFOGLE: [01:46:22] Well, I certainly would have opportunities to talk to groups about my Peace Corps experience and to talk about Kenya specifically.

KLEIN: [01:46:29] Right.

BREYFOGLE: [01:46:30] And then, then later on talking about how this has affected me.

KLEIN: [01:46:35] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:46:35] And so it was in the mixing, in other words, the integration process, at this junior high school particularly.

KLEIN: [01:46:43] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:46:44] That it really. I'd come up to a Black student and say, let me rub a little bit of Africa off on you. And they would titter and they'd say.

KLEIN: [01:46:52] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:46:52] But, but they knew I'd been to Africa.

KLEIN: [01:46:54] Oh okay. And that was a, that was a plus.

BREYFOGLE: [01:46:56] That was a big plus. Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:46:58] Right. Okay. And did you ever get to formally teach about, I mean, either informal talks about Kenya?

BREYFOGLE: [01:47:11] In this junior high school, the social studies teachers would come to me and say, I'm preparing a week on Africa and could you come up and show slides or give a presentation? So that would happen within that building.

KLEIN: [01:47:29] Right. Okay. Now let's jump ahead, you know, after 30 some, 40 years or whatever. What's your perspective on what, you know, the effect Peace Corps had on you?

BREYFOGLE: [01:47:43] Well, first, as I mentioned, I got married. My wife had been a Peace Corps volunteer in Tanzania in an orphanage. And before we married, she said, you know, that experience is really affected me. And I'm thinking that maybe I'd really like to adopt and could be an African. And so in the course of our marriage, we did adopt a Korean daughter, had a biological son, and then we did adopt an African American. Actually, she's biracial.

KLEIN: [01:48:14] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:48:15] Mixed.

KLEIN: [01:48:16] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:48:17] And Sue and I have been very grateful having these three children. And they get along fine.

KLEIN: [01:48:26] Seemed perfectly natural to do.

BREYFOGLE: [01:48:28] Absolutely.

KLEIN: [01:48:29] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:48:31] And certainly my politics have changed. I had to switch parties when I was, I ran for the legislature last year and did not win. But I met a fellow, and my fliers said I had been a Republican. And he said, what made you change? And I said, Nixon. He said, that's a good answer. I'll vote for you.

KLEIN: [01:48:51] But he may have been the only one who voted for you. Um. That's kind of the end of the interview. I don't know if there's anything else you'd like to mention about Peace Corps, about your involvement.

BREYFOGLE: [01:49:06] Well, I mentioned the word evolution, and I'm still evolving.

KLEIN: [01:49:12] Uh huh.

BREYFOGLE: [01:49:12] I'm still changing. I'm still a student. And I'm going to be 70 in six weeks or so and I'm still young. And I attribute a lot of that to my Peace Corps experience. And I'm forever grateful. I'm grateful to you for coming out and staying, you old fart.

KLEIN: [01:49:35] You know, have you, have you had a chance to go back to Kenya?

BREYFOGLE: [01:49:37] I, soon I would like to go back to East Africa, but we just, the kids and college.

KLEIN: [01:49:44] Yeah. So you haven't.

BREYFOGLE: [01:49:45] But, you know, there's not to say that the time will not come.

KLEIN: [01:49:49] Yeah. And have you maintained any kind of contact with people from the, that you knew, the Kenyan students, staff, or?

BREYFOGLE: [01:49:58] I have to a degree but it's not been.

KLEIN: [01:50:02] Yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:50:04] A lot of people and then firm contact. We had a reunion, a 20th reunion, and I missed it. In San Francisco in 1984.

KLEIN: [01:50:11] Of your teaching group?

BREYFOGLE: [01:50:13] Right. And we didn't have a 40th.

KLEIN: [01:50:15] Right.

BREYFOGLE: [01:50:16] But it takes a lot of energy to organize one of those things.

KLEIN: [01:50:19] Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah.

BREYFOGLE: [01:50:20] So I'm thinking maybe I'll try to do something. I'll try to do something.

KLEIN: [01:50:25] Well, you know, and in some ways, Peace Corps ex-volunteers, they're very individual people and they don't respond readily to groups.

BREYFOGLE: [01:50:36] And not everybody has put their name in the directory.

KLEIN: [01:50:38] No, certainly not. Certainly not. Well, good. That's, uh.

BREYFOGLE: [01:50:44] Thank you very much.

[END OF INTERVIEW]