

Madeline Kellner Oral History Interview
Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Madeline Kellner served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Guatemala from September 2016 to December 2018 in the healthy schools program.

Access

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Oral History Interview

with

Madeline Kellner

June 22, 2019
Austin, Texas

By Evelyn Ganzglass

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

GANZGLASS: [00:00:01] This is Evelyn Ganzglass. I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Somalia from 1966 to 1968. Today is June 22, 2019, and I'm interviewing Madeline Kellner, who was a Peace Corps volunteer in Guatemala from 2016 to 2018, and she worked in the Healthy Schools project. So glad to be interviewing you, Madeleine. And let me ask you the opening question. Why did you join the Peace Corps?

KELLNER: [00:00:35] You know, I always wanted to join the Peace Corps, but one thing led to another. I finished my one degree and then my husband and I went off and got more degrees and kids and parents that fell apart. And, yeah, one thing led to another. And it really became a good opportunity after I ran for office. I was on city council and mayor for two terms. And I thought, you know what? I've done my two terms and I'm in great health. And my husband was at a place where he could do it. So we threw our hats in the ring and we decided to apply to the Peace Corps.

GANZGLASS: [00:01:12] And why had you wanted to do it from the beginning?

KELLNER: [00:01:14] Well.

GANZGLASS: [00:01:15] What was intriguing about it?

KELLNER: [00:01:17] Well, I had taken Spanish all the way since I was in the sixth grade. I grew up in California, and I've always been intrigued by living and working in another country, and particularly in the Latin American culture. And I've lived a life of service. And so for me, it was another, another form of service. And I had done a lot of community development domestically in my own community, and I was eager to learn how that might be living in another, in another country.

GANZGLASS: [00:01:48] That's great. And I understand your husband was in the Peace Corps at the same time, right? So you both went.

KELLNER: [00:01:53] Exactly. Exactly.

GANZGLASS: [00:01:54] And he has a separate interview.

KELLNER: [00:01:56] He certainly does.

GANZGLASS: [00:01:57] And it's just fascinating because I've done other, I've interviewed married couples and it's as if they were in different places with totally different experiences. So it's good to do them, do them separately. So tell us, tell me a little bit about your background. You grew up in California and what kind of a community?

KELLNER: [00:02:17] I grew up in Berkeley, California. My parents settled in the Bay Area, but neither one was from the Bay Area. I went through the Berkeley schools. I went to the University of California at Berkeley. I, um, decided to go on into community or public health nutrition. Left California, went off to grad school in Tennessee, and came back. And I did some work in nutrition, but ended up going more into the health care world. I got an MBA after I got my master's in nutrition at

Tennessee and worked most of my career in the health care administration end of things. Kaiser Permanente. I also worked for, I was the head of the Health Services Division for the County of Marin.

GANZGLASS: [00:03:05] Oh.

KELLNER: [00:03:05] Did some work on my own for seven years as a consultant and then ran an agency not really in health care, but in matching caregivers with low income, disabled and elderly who were on the Medicaid program. And it was at that point, at the end of my time of that and my two terms as a council member, that I went into the Peace Corps. So really a pretty much a life of health and human services and community service.

GANZGLASS: [00:03:32] So I usually ask how parents reacted to it, but I will ask, how did your children react to you going into the Peace Corps?

KELLNER: [00:03:39] Well, you know, I think they were both very supportive. But my son is a major in the Air Force and he's in special operations. And so he was concerned, you know, about security, security issues. But I think we convinced him that just as the State Department has a lot to say about what, you know, happens to him, I think he began to understand that, you know, the Peace Corps was taking a lot of measures and had really changed its approach in Guatemala in 2012, given some of the issues then. So I think they were fine. And he was actually the first to visit us at the six month mark when we were allowed to either travel or receive visitors. And he had a fabulous time visiting us.

GANZGLASS: [00:04:21] That's good. Well, we can talk about that in a little bit. So you decided to join the Peace Corps and you applied. Did it take a long time to hear back?

KELLNER: [00:04:30] It was a very long and arduous process because we applied for things that were really not due until January and we applied in September. And Peace Corps was very, very quick. The minute the January 1 date hit, we had an interview like the next week. So that part

went really quickly. I think the part that was the hardest was the medical because of all the things that you had to turn in, and then the back and forth, and then some of the issues. So I was, um, I think it was probably a test for my resilience as a Peace Corps volunteer, because it really was, it was frustrating at times to go through that whole process. And I didn't know I was leaving until July, and I needed to let my board of directors know that I was leaving and I wanted to be able to get things put together. So that was a little bit frustrating.

GANZGLASS: [00:05:20] So you heard in?

KELLNER: [00:05:22] Officially I heard in the third week of July and we were to stage in the third week of September. And I was the director of an agency and I had, um, my board chair kept saying, well, can we start recruiting for your job? And I said, well, I'd kind of like to know that my seat's empty before you do that. So that was a little, a little hard. But, you know, we kind of did as much as we could to get ready and, you know, our house and all that. And we left. But yeah, it was, I think probably a little longer process because we did apply quite a bit earlier. Because by the time we tried to apply for the October things, most of them were already filled, so we just applied.

GANZGLASS: [00:06:01] So you had to wait for the January. Do you think you had more medical screening because you are older?

KELLNER: [00:06:06] No, I think there was one. I think my doctor almost did too much screening like on the blood work. And so some of the blood work that came out, she did every. I'm a Kaiser member. And they are very good about what they, you know, they're, they don't slight much. And so I think it was just this whole process of communicating with Washington and trying to put it ways that the Washington staff could understand what. Anyway, it was, it was really an act of diplomacy not to get kind of fried, you know, with the whole process.

GANZGLASS: [00:06:41] Which was probably part of the test.

KELLNER: [00:06:42] Which was part of the, part of the process. But yeah, and it ended up being all, all fine. And you know, the only issue I had in Guatemala was I had a basal cell on my lower eyelid that was discovered by an excellent ophthalmologist and I ended up coming home for four weeks halfway through my service to have it removed because there wasn't, the procedure wasn't available in Guatemala. But that was very quick and came home and right back. So I really didn't have any medical issues.

GANZGLASS: [00:07:13] Good. Excellent. Where was your staging?

KELLNER: [00:07:18] So we staged in Houston. We met up in Houston and very brief. Came in one day, had a brief orientation from our country officer from D.C. And then we took off at 3:00 in the morning, we all got up and we got on a plane and went to Guatemala. So all of our training.

GANZGLASS: [00:07:43] Direct flight?

KELLNER: [00:07:43] Yeah. And all of our training was in.

GANZGLASS: [00:07:47] In country.

KELLNER: [00:07:47] In country, yes.

GANZGLASS: [00:07:48] Let me, I forgot to ask. Did you ask for Guatemala?

KELLNER: [00:07:52] So in our period of time to apply, we were allowed to put down three, if we chose, three different countries. So we put Peru and Guatemala, which we had both visited, and the third Paraguay, because my husband's a biologist and there were some jobs there that would have been up his alley. But quite frankly, I was really aiming for the first two because of potential of being in a cooler climate and also because of the strong indigenous culture. And I am, um, I'm not a weaver, but I am a textile-phile. I love textiles so I was really hoping. So and we'd been to Guatemala. I had a staff person who was from Guatemala. And so we'd been, we had a love for the country. So it was.

GANZGLASS: [00:08:37] Sounds perfect.

KELLNER: [00:08:37] And they told us right away in January, you know, this is what we're thinking. And I also think because Guatemala had some security issues, I think the fact that we were older volunteers, um, that would probably be more likely to follow the rules and not do sort of challenging things may have also been why. So I don't know.

GANZGLASS: [00:08:57] We can talk about the rules in a, in a, I guess is it a conflict area? That's not conflict but.

KELLNER: [00:09:04] Well.

GANZGLASS: [00:09:05] Insecurity.

KELLNER: [00:09:05] Security, I think security issues.

GANZGLASS: [00:09:08] Security issues in Guatemala.

KELLNER: [00:09:09] Yeah.

GANZGLASS: [00:09:10] So you got to Guatemala and where was the training?

KELLNER: [00:09:14] So the offices for the Peace Corps in Guatemala are in, um, Santa Lucía Milpas Altas, which is outside of Antigua. Antigua, Guatemala. And they have a wonderful offices there and facilities. So most of our training was ten weeks. And most of our training, um, the basic kind of training was in the offices which were really lovely and great setting. There were two programs. I was in Healthy Schools and the other program was Youth and Development, which is a Peace Corps program. So for our actual program training, we did that in our communities. And so my husband and I lived in different communities because we were in the two different programs and that's where we had our program training, and that was also where we had our language. So language and culture was about three days a week. We stayed in community. We were divided up by our level of Spanish. And

then we had a Guatemalan Peace Corps staff person who worked with us.

GANZGLASS: [00:10:17] So the initial ten week training, what was, what was included in that?

KELLNER: [00:10:22] Well, there were basic things that are required by Peace Corps. Everything from safety, security, medical, health, some development training around sustainable development. And the philosophy behind that. A lot around avoiding sexual abuse, a lot of very basic kinds of training that everybody had to have. And then the rest of it, when we were in our communities and then in our case, working with the schools in our community, that was more specific to the actual program.

GANZGLASS: [00:11:01] So you had ten weeks and then you had basically two months, I guess a month and a half or something like that, afterwards in the communities in training?

KELLNER: [00:11:09] No, no, no. So actually what the way, the way they arrange it is they do the basic training in the offices of Peace Corps. But then our communities where we were living, we were living with families. That is where we would have like we would rotate houses. So maybe there were three of us in our language group. So we would go to my house one day and my host mom would host us and so we would be in the homes. So those were our classrooms where really for the language. And then the program training, some of it happened in the office, but we were like in the case of YAD, they were working in middle schools in my husband's, in the communities where my husband's team was. So it was ten weeks inclusive of the Peace Corps required training and the program training and the language training. So and so you, there were days where I'd get to see my husband because we would be coming into the offices, and there days where we would be in our respective.

GANZGLASS: [00:12:02] When you were in the community training, it wasn't that far from the Peace Corps offices.

KELLNER: [00:12:06] No.

GANZGLASS: [00:12:07] So you could come in.

KELLNER: [00:12:08] By bus. By bus, yes. Right. Yeah. So we were all.

GANZGLASS: [00:12:11] What town were you in?

KELLNER: [00:12:13] So I was in a town called Pastores, but an area called Barrio La Cruz. And I lived up on top of a hill in a very kind of tight. It seemed like a barrio, but it was kind of a tight little community with a great view of Volcan Agua, which is one of the beautiful volcanoes right near the city of Antigua, Guatemala. And I lived with a woman and her three children, and her husband was in the States working, and her youngest daughter had never met her dad. And I really enjoyed being with this family. They, you know, made me feel warm, clearly, you know, I was immersed in Spanish.

GANZGLASS: [00:13:01] Was your Spanish good enough for communication at that point? Oh, you had studied Spanish.

KELLNER: [00:13:05] Yeah, because I had come with Spanish. But the woman I was living with was from Guatemala City and talked pretty fast and giggled a lot. And so sometimes I didn't always understand her, but I know now that I picked up a lot of things from her, you know, I mean, just the way, the way she said things and, um, but yeah. And then of course, with the kids and, you know, and meeting the relatives and going to some of the events like the weddings and the, you know, the birthday parties.

GANZGLASS: [00:13:32] Were you the first volunteer to live with her?

KELLNER: [00:13:34] No. She had had a 22 year old young man who was before me, who was a really nice guy. I ended up meeting him. And so, I mean, I was obviously kind of at the whole other end of the spectrum, right? You know, and she was in her fifties. And here I come along,

you know, a woman in her sixties, but we got along so great and the kids would laugh because after dinner, we'd be sitting there talking and laughing. And her son, one of the quiet ones, would walk by just kind of shaking his head at the two of us, you know? But I think that she enjoyed, you know, having a companion and I enjoyed it as well.

GANZGLASS: [00:14:10] And then you got to meet the other host families as well, I guess, since you switched off?

KELLNER: [00:14:16] Yes, exactly. So each, so you got a feel for the other families and what they were like. And but we were all, but they were all in that Barrio La Cruz, which was a little less ritzy than the Pastores, the people that were down below in the main town, I think was a little, you know. And not to say that our homes weren't OK, they were, but it wasn't quite, it was pretty basic.

GANZGLASS: [00:14:38] What kind of home was it?

KELLNER: [00:14:39] Well, I mean, I think that my, that my host mom and her kids were probably living in maybe one or two rooms and were giving up one of their bedrooms for me. So I had the bedroom upstairs and then we all shared a bathroom and a shower. And it was very tight, you know, just like a little courtyard where Annabella would dry the clothes. And if we had rain, she would be up at 3:00 in the morning pulling all the clothes down. Very, very modest.

GANZGLASS: [00:15:06] Indoor plumbing and?

KELLNER: [00:15:07] Oh, yeah. No, no. We had, I mean, the bathroom was outside, but it was enclosed and, um, wash the dishes in a, you know, in what we call a *pila*, which is a several basin sink. She had a washer, so that was really nice. So she washed my clothes which was lovely and dried it on the, yeah, on the lines. And I ate my meals, we ate our meals together. Yeah. So it was, you know, other people had, um, everybody had a different situation, you know, some people had their own bathrooms, some people. But it all worked out. I just had to plan around, the boys especially would take long showers and I'd just have

to figure out when I could get my shower in and plan it. You know, when no one was around, I'd pop in the shower.

GANZGLASS: [00:15:56] So that worked out.

KELLNER: [00:15:57] Mm hmm.

GANZGLASS: [00:15:58] And do you have any thoughts about the training? Was it, did it prepare you for your work? The language training, your technical training, the general orientation?

KELLNER: [00:16:08] Yeah. You know, I think because I joined Peace Corps later in life, a lot of the things that were gone over in training were probably things that I either knew from experience or from prior education. But I think just being in community with my colleagues and the other volunteers and being with them and spending time together and getting to know the staff. I mean, that was all building those relationships that when you're, you know, many, many kilometers away, you know that you can tap those people, you know, either your colleagues or the staff. And so I think that was good.

KELLNER: [00:16:41] The language training, the two people that were our instructors were both indigenous and they were the only two indigenous trainers of the whole group. And I think that was a good thing because we did live, and we ended up living in an indigenous community for our service and I think it gave us, you know, a better frame, a better understanding by being with them and hearing their stories. And both of them had experienced the conflict in the country. And so I think that was really good. Yeah.

GANZGLASS: [00:17:14] I just lost the other thought. At this early stage in training, how did, what was your interaction like with the other volunteers, who was so much younger? Did they treat you as parents or?

KELLNER: [00:17:27] No, not at all. We had a really special group of people. There were 20, 28 of us. Six or seven of us were over 50.

GANZGLASS: [00:17:36] Ah.

KELLNER: [00:17:36] Which is very unusual and it was very diverse. We had five or six African Americans. We had maybe four people who were probably, well, three who were, had been born in the States, but they were of Latin American descent. We had only one, one Asian young woman. A little bit diverse in age. We had a few 21 year olds, a few 30. So it was a really nice mix. And no, we all, I think we were very well, you know, the older, you know, the older volunteers, we were really accepted. We were included. It was a very, very inclusive. And to this day, I'm close to a couple of the volunteers and they're, they tend to be actually the younger ones that I'm closer to so.

GANZGLASS: [00:18:23] That's great.

KELLNER: [00:18:24] Yeah.

GANZGLASS: [00:18:24] So after the training, where were you placed?

KELLNER: [00:18:26] So I think they knew where they were going to send us before we came because they needed a community that needed both programs. So we were sent to a community that was at 10,000 feet. It was at the highest point in the Inter-American Highway in Central America. It was in the western highlands of Guatemala, in a indigenous community of about 4,000. That was the seat of a municipality that had over 100 communities spread out in very remote areas. And luckily we were near the Inter-American Highway, so we were able to take the bus down to the second largest city in the country, called Quetzaltenango, or its Mayan name, Xela. So that was good because it was easier for us to be able to get to a larger city, to do commerce, and also to take the bus or the Peace Corps shuttle to go for medical appointments. And where some of our colleagues were, it was more of a twisty-turny road or perhaps a road that might wash out. So I think we were very lucky.

GANZGLASS: [00:19:38] Is the Inter-American Highway a highway?

KELLNER: [00:19:40] Yes, it's the Pan-American Highway. Now they call it the Inter-American, but it's the Pan-American Highway that goes all the way through North America, all the way into southern, into South America.

GANZGLASS: [00:19:49] So it is a highway.

KELLNER: [00:19:50] Yeah, it's a four lane.

GANZGLASS: [00:19:52] Oh.

KELLNER: [00:19:52] Four lane highway. You know, it's commerce. I mean, it's trucks and, yeah, it's a major, it's a major highway. And in actually a pretty good condition, you know, at least the part that we were on. When we were there in 20, um, 2011, it had been after a big storm and they'd had some issues. But in our time there, you know, the road was in pretty good condition.

GANZGLASS: [00:20:19] So the town you were in, what kind of facilities were in the town? How many people lived in the town?

KELLNER: [00:20:26] Four thousand in our town, and our town had been moved less than 20 years before from its original community. And the name of the town is Santa Catarina Ixtahuacan. And the original town was at 7,000 feet. It had existed before the Spanish came in the 1500s. It has a church that was built in the 1500s. But because Hurricane Mitch came through in 1998 and it caused a lot of damage and so the government, with help from a number of funders, the Germans, the Americans, and with negotiation with another nearby town, they moved the town about, gee, I don't know how many kilometers, maybe seven kilometers back up the mountain to this flat area along the Inter-American Highway. And they relocated the town there. Not everybody went, but that was where they, you know, they rebuilt the Catholic Church and the city hall, all the schools.

KELLNER: [00:21:29] There were two, three middle schools, one elementary school that met both morning and afternoon to accommodate. And so

our community had a market. It had, um, you know, some stores. But um, and we lived with a family that had everyone in their family lived on this piece of land. And we lived with a family of six on their end of the property. And we had two rooms that were built separately out of cinderblock, where we could have like one room for our bedroom and one room where we could set up a two burner gas stove with a tank. And then we shared with our host family a shower and a toilet. And that *pila* again, you know, the sink with the multiple. There was no washer or dryer. There were clotheslines. It was very cold. It never got hot there. And you would wash things and it might take you days.

GANZGLASS: [00:22:37] To dry?

KELLNER: [00:22:37] You put them up and you take them down.

GANZGLASS: [00:22:39] Because of the rain?

KELLNER: [00:22:40] Because, no, because it was just cold, you know? I mean, not necessarily because the rain. The rain, the rain in Guatemala where we were was half the year was rainy, half the year was not. But just things wouldn't dry. And we had no heat. And there were times when the inside of our.

GANZGLASS: [00:22:56] You say cold, how cold is cold?

KELLNER: [00:22:57] Well, you know, our first winter, it was, there was frost. It was down in the thirties, we had pictures that we posted on Facebook of the two of us wearing three or four jackets or hiking boots because we had no heat in our rooms. And so it was, um, we finally got a thermometer when our son visited. We got thermometers for in and out, so we'd kind of know what it was. But, you know, I mean, I remember times when it was in the forties inside, so it was.

GANZGLASS: [00:23:27] It was chilly.

KELLNER: [00:23:27] It was cold, yeah. And we didn't have a burning, like our host family when they built their little kitchen area out, they put in a

really nice fireplace, which they cook on and they sit around. And we didn't have any internal source of heat. So, you know, we just kind of.

GANZGLASS: [00:23:43] Had blankets.

KELLNER: [00:23:45] Yes. And at night I could hardly roll over. I had so many blankets on me. I'd have to think about whether I wanted to turn from one side to the other. And I had on sweatshirt, nightie, you know, sweatpants. You know, sometimes I had on another sweatshirt over my sweatshirt with a hood. Yeah.

GANZGLASS: [00:24:03] Great. So what is the Healthy Schools project? What is that?

KELLNER: [00:24:08] Healthy Schools was a program started by the Guatemalan government back in the late nineties, and it kind of changed over the years. But the focus was really around primary schools and around health and kind of the broadest sense of everything from whether it's gender, recycling, water, hygiene, nutrition. It was a very broad set of things that you could work on. And so what we decided to do, since I was the first Healthy Schools volunteer in my community, I worked very closely with the superintendent who was my real work partner, my counterpart, but also with the food security representative, the health department, even the literacy guy. You know, just everybody who kind of touches, you know, the basic needs of the community.

KELLNER: [00:25:02] And we decided since our town, out of the 20 in our department, which is like a state, was a second in malnutrition. We thought that maybe if we focused on school gardens, that might be a way to get people involved. You know, these are agricultural people. You know, farming is what they do. But to have ways of introducing, you know, different types of foods, the ability to grow them, involving the children, involving the mothers and fathers. So thinking that if we did that, then you could wrap around that, well, how would you use these foods in the school feeding program every day? Or might you do this maybe at home? So that was kind of, I used that as kind of the core and then sort of wrapping things around that.

KELLNER: [00:25:54] Working with the Agricultural Department, they helped. You know, even introducing different agricultural practices, that if you're introducing those with this school garden, then perhaps they would also think about using them in their own lands. So really using it as, as a touchpoint but almost like a, like a, like a wheel, you know, where that's the core and then the spokes.

GANZGLASS: [00:26:18] So who paid for the garden? Was that all part of the Department of Education?

KELLNER: [00:26:23] Well, now that's a very good question because the amount of resources that that we had for the program in my community were very skimpy. We tried to go after the mayor to get help, and we did not get much help. The food security guy was able to get some, what we call little *polones*, or the starts, and seeds. And so we had to really, a little bit like stone soup, you know, getting or somebody was connected with co-op, with one of the ag co-ops, and they were able to get seeds. And the equipment isn't such a big deal because everybody in the community had what's called an *azadón* or a hoe, or a, you know, they had those because they were agricultural people. Sometimes it was a little tricky getting the land. And so in one case, in our, in our town, the school director I was working with had a piece of property that wasn't being used. And so he offered that land. And so we used his land, you know, a block or two from school.

KELLNER: [00:27:28] So it was really scraping together resources and, you know, one of the most important things was working with people that were motivated. Because one of the first gardens I worked on, I could tell, you know, I would show up and the school director would kind of go, oh boy, there she comes again. And it just was a real heavy lift. And I could tell that the heart wasn't really in it. And so we, you know, we finished that project and he and I remained colleagues and all that. But then we decided the second year, oh, let's try some different schools. And I feel like the second year we picked some schools where I left in December knowing that, you know, three out of maybe four or five in that area, that they were going to do it again. And, you know, when you

think about here, I mean, we've all, I'm a parent, you know, about projects that you do with schools. I mean, parents change.

GANZGLASS: [00:28:21] Sure.

KELLNER: [00:28:21] You know, and keeping a project going is always a, it's a lift. You need to have someone who's either a teacher or a parent or a community volunteer. So but there was a little bit of, I don't want to say competition, but we did at the end of this last year do a tour. And we, you know, all of the different authorities like the health people and the food security. We all went out into the campo and visited all the gardens and the ones that had really thriving gardens, I mean, clearly had to feel really good about it. And the ones that didn't, either they will decide, you know, maybe gardening is not for us or maybe they'll step it up next year and go out and pick the caterpillars off of their broccoli so that we're not visiting what looks like a lace factory. Which one of our, one of our gardens, the broccoli leaves looked like lace, you know, because of the.

GANZGLASS: [00:29:17] And this is a farming community.

KELLNER: [00:29:18] Yes.

GANZGLASS: [00:29:18] You would think that they would know about doing that.

KELLNER: [00:29:21] Yes. Yes. But in this particular case, I think the person who was in charge of that school has other strengths and is more into arts and preserving his culture and his music. And so and, you know, and that's I think it's OK, you know what I mean? I think you, I think in any kind of development work, whether it's international or in your own backyard, you work with people that are motivated. And if people are really interested, then you can help them get where they want to go. I mean, you're kind of a travel agent. It's like, well, where do you want to go? And then working together, shoulder to shoulder, we can get you there, but there's no reason to do a heavy lift. I mean, people have to be ready. And that's, there's no shame in that. Sometimes it's timing too.

GANZGLASS: [00:30:06] What was your role? Was it introducing the idea or, and or did you help manage it, or how did, what do you think your role was in all of this?

KELLNER: [00:30:15] I think my role was a catalyst, and I think my role was to cheer people on. And I think my role was to be a colleague and to be, you know, to be an ear and to support, but also to encourage and to, um, to be resourceful and to be what we'd say in Spanish, an enlace, really a link. You know, like, wow, did you know that over here they have that or, you know, we could do this or maybe we could get these plants from so-and-so. Really being kind of the, but more the duck feet under the water, you know. And then making sure, like in one case we wanted to learn how to use, um, to do compost, you know, to have natural compost. And so to really work closely with the ag guy and to put together a program where we pulled together all the teachers from the schools.

KELLNER: [00:31:14] And we had not just a book learning training, but we had all the materials and on the school property, we all came together and made this compost with all the different components. So it was a hands-on kind of training. So I think that was really my role. My role was also to try to get a committee going because the first year I was there, Healthy Schools works best in each municipality if there's a committee, a multidisciplinary committee, that guides it. So it's owned by the community. But first year I couldn't get the health people involved because the Minister of Health had this new model that she was introducing. Everybody was spending all their time learning this new model, and then the government changed and that ended. So the second year they were more present and so, you know, they were more available. And then they even started to sort of take over things and act like it was all theirs. And I thought, you know what? Better that than not.

GANZGLASS: [00:32:12] Sure.

KELLNER: [00:32:13] And so one of the happiest moments I have in my last month, you know, in site, was to go to one of those committee meetings and to just sit there and hear them all going through what they've been doing and what they're doing around this training or getting this garden going or. So I think in my mind, if I were to say what Peace Corps is really about, I think that's what it's about, is to really be kind of a little bit of a catalyst to come in, to befriend, to cheer on, to believe in people, and to help them get to where they need to go and get out of the way. And I feel like, you know, I wouldn't have known that the first year, that that was going to happen. But by just being patient and hanging in there, by the second year, I did start to see, you know, those, um, those steps of progress.

GANZGLASS: [00:33:03] Did it make a difference that you are an American coming in?

KELLNER: [00:33:09] I don't know. You know, I sometimes don't know because I don't know whether. Yes, I'm sure that I'm American. I mean, they certainly, you know, I think they look up to that. I think just having, because I'm also very interested in the Mayan culture and in the textiles and I did some side work around that. I think, you know, I could have been Norwegian or Japanese. I don't think that. I think it was more just that there's somebody who values them, that values their culture, that is interested, curious.

KELLNER: [00:33:47] Um. I, you know, I just think, you know, I mean, it's like here when you're working with, like, you know, all these mentorship programs with young people. I mean, I hear over and over again with people that are like going to be the first in their family to go to college. You know what they'll say is the most valuable thing? Maybe not that they got the help with the essay writing and all that. It's that somebody believed in them. And I really think that that's a human, it's a very human thing, to have somebody be there. I mean, even like what you're doing right now, you know, you're listening to my story. And that's very, that's very powerful to have someone who listens and who is present.

GANZGLASS: [00:34:27] So do you think your impact was more, or I shouldn't say impact, your interactions were more with faculty and leaders in the community and or with the others, with the children themselves? Where do you think you had most of the?

KELLNER: [00:34:44] Oh, I don't, maybe not. Some with the children, because I worked with small schools, you know, 40 kids. And so and especially the one of the schools I went to a lot and we got to know each other and they were happy to see me. And I would go, like, for Mother's Day, I kind of adopted them. I went for the Mother's Day and would help out. And but I got to know, like the woman who was the head of the parents group at that school. I got to know the teachers and some of the parents that were, that were active and some of the kids. So, you know, kind of a, kind of a mix. And then there was another community that, you know, you're living in the community. So you're going to the market. You have your vendors, you have your, well, we ended up getting a bakery, going to the bakery.

KELLNER: [00:35:31] But you're also, you know, you establish relationships with just about everybody. You know, the bus drivers, the taxi drivers. You know, I worked closely, because we had a health department or a health volunteer in our community too. And so, you know, I got to know the doctor at the health center. And so there were relationships, you know, with all kinds of people.

GANZGLASS: [00:35:52] Did they ask you about the United States and about politics?

KELLNER: [00:35:56] Well, you know, we were.

GANZGLASS: [00:35:58] You were there during the election.

KELLNER: [00:35:59] When Trump was elected. So well, we were in training, and then we went out in community. And we did have people that would say things. And then but, you know, the Guatemalan government is under challenging leadership right now as well. So you kind of say, OK, yes, we have challenges in our country and you have challenges in yours. So together, what might we do right here? And to really bring

that focus more to what we can do together rather than being, um. Yeah, so I really didn't, really didn't get a lot of flak about, you know, your president or anything like that. We did hear a lot about people wanting to immigrate, people wanting to leave. Would you take us back in your suitcase? You know, there's, there's a lot of, um, there's a lot of challenges, you know.

GANZGLASS: [00:36:50] Were there are lots of people from that community who had come to the States?

KELLNER: [00:36:54] Yes. There were a lot of people in the community who had been and come back. And often I didn't ask a lot of questions because I didn't want to put them on the spot. And then there were a couple of cases where there were young people. We may not have known the young people that well, but we knew their parents or their uncles. And them being concerned, you know, that their kids had gone and did they get there safely? And, you know, and that was, that was always a bit of pins and needles about, you know, or hearing that so-and-so wants to go and, you know, you're just worried. I mean, you're worried about their safety and about whether they're going to get there OK but um.

GANZGLASS: [00:37:34] Did the parents want them to leave?

KELLNER: [00:37:38] You know, I. I don't. I think some do. I think some because in, well, one of the cases the mother's, I mean the husband is in the States. And so the son wanted to go, you know, join the dad. Yeah. So, you know, and they, and they were receiving remittances and those are helping. And so it's a very, you know, and we're in that part of Guatemala where there is quite a bit of, I mean, the western part is where there is a lot of, a lot of immigration.

KELLNER: [00:38:12] In our community, the municipal head that, we were in the kind of the, kind of like the county seat. There were challenges. I mean, there was poverty. There were, but there was even more out in the other smaller villages. It was even more, um, life was tougher even than in our community. In our community, there were people that, like our two, our host parents were both teachers, you know. I mean a lot

of people, you know, if they had government jobs or if they were teaching, they had good, they had good wages or they had at least enough education. But when you went out into the campo, I mean, people were really struggling or, you know, they were trying to get good prices for their produce.

GANZGLASS: [00:38:57] And what did they produce there, what kind of agriculture?

KELLNER: [00:39:00] So mostly, well, corn, but a lot of the corn, a lot of that was used in their own homes. And beans. But then they grew to sell some of it even within Central America, because we lived in a cold place. So broccoli and carrots and cabbage and things like that. And then in a community higher than us at 11,000 feet, they were growing potatoes. So a lot of, a lot of potatoes. And then there were these, um, these are the sugar snap peas. And there was in two of the communities, they had a very active co-op. And those communities, I think, are doing quite well because they had this co-op and they had, you know, already arrangements on how to sell their produce. And the trucks would come in and cold.

GANZGLASS: [00:39:47] And they were near the road anyway.

KELLNER: [00:39:49] Mm hmm, well, they were, yeah. I mean, dirt roads but yes. And so they had, and they had, you know, many years of experience at that and then they would make a little bit of money on that that they could use, for instance, to help fund a computer lab. So and there were maybe out of my all the communities I worked with, maybe two or three had those ag co-ops, which were really good because they, you know, they would generate some income to be able to use to reinvest in the community. But there were some communities, like the one with the potatoes was a fairly, um, fairly poor, poor community. And a lot of those people would get on the bus that would, and they were a ways from the highway. And they would go down to a town near Quetzaltenango and work in textiles or in selling textiles. So people had to, you know, had to leave the area to get work.

GANZGLASS: [00:40:50] So you mentioned you had, you came back to the United States because of your eye. How did, how was this diagnosed?

KELLNER: [00:41:00] So um.

GANZGLASS: [00:41:02] It sounds like pretty good health care.

KELLNER: [00:41:03] Yes. So I had a dry eye issue when I left the States and then I had, it was irritated more in Guatemala because there's a lot of diesel and a lot of smoke. And then maybe also living at altitude, you know, it's dry. So I was seeing an ophthalmologist that does a lot of work with the Peace Corps and our country.

GANZGLASS: [00:41:26] In the bigger town?

KELLNER: [00:41:27] Actually in Guatemala City.

GANZGLASS: [00:41:28] Oh, in Guatemala City.

KELLNER: [00:41:29] Yeah. And so our medical director, I was going to one ophthalmologist and that person was giving me like some steroids. And we kind of thought, well, you know, steroids are OK for a short term. But so she says, you know what, let's try this other, let's do another try here. So the physician that I went to see was very, very methodical. And he saw some other things around my eye. But the thing that he worried about most was this little growth. And I didn't really think a lot of it because several years ago in the States I had had one and I had it biopsied and it was just a growth. But he was so, he had to get approval from Washington. And, you know, our doctor got approval and it was biopsied. And sure enough. So I didn't want to leave. I wanted to have the procedure done in Guatemala. But the procedure that is used for basal cells in our country is called Mohs surgery.

GANZGLASS: [00:42:26] Yes.

KELLNER: [00:42:27] And they don't, they don't have that surgery in Guatemala. And so our medical director said, now I know you want to stay, but you

need to go home. And so I was able to, I'm a Kaiser member. And even though I wasn't a member, of course, during Peace Corps, I was able to get Kaiser to do it where I'd had another Mohs surgery. And so it all worked out super well. I mean, I got home, I got it done.

GANZGLASS: [00:42:54] So Peace Corps did well on the medical issue.

KELLNER: [00:42:56] Oh, absolutely excellent. You know, and the care I got, of course, was good and, yeah, it was great. So yeah, I had no. And came back, you know, four weeks. It was a little longer than I wanted to stay, but I made the most of it. I did a radio interview with one of my colleagues has a radio program. And so I did a little goal three when I was home and, you know, had went to my city's annual birthday party and was announced that I was there. That was very sweet, you know, from Guatemala. And so I really had some very nice connections from in my month there. Not enough to get too deep into the politics or anything, you know, anything like cleaning up my house or anything drastic like that. But, um, it was. And I thought it would be hard, but my husband was still in Guatemala. And so I thought, no, my home is Guatemala and I'm just here. But, you know, so it wasn't as much culture shock as I thought it would be because I knew I was going back, you know, and everyone could tell that's where my soul was, you know.

GANZGLASS: [00:44:05] Well, let me ask you about being a married couple in the Peace Corps. How do you think that? Did it influence how you, what you got out of Peace Corps or what you put into Peace Corps? I mean, were you? I ask that because, you know, individuals are all by themselves necessarily in a community and they're on their own. They're lonely. They talk to people. Is it a different with a married couple?

KELLNER: [00:44:35] Well, I mean, you can probably tell I'm pretty extroverted and my husband isn't super extroverted, but he kind of is. And so we each, you know, like he had his favorite banana ladies and he worked at a middle school, two middle schools. He worked in the afternoon. So he would be gone all afternoon. I would be gone in the morning,

sometimes getting up very early to go on the backs of trucks or whatever to go to my communities. So we really did have some of our own relationships. So, you know, but I think what was good was that we had each other. We had, you know, and when we had health issues or when we had disappointments, I mean, it was nice to be able to have that emotional support. It probably wasn't as good for our Spanish because we were speaking English to each other, whereas our other colleagues, we noticed their Spanish. Some people just really advanced because they were not able to speak English, you know.

KELLNER: [00:45:30] But I think for us it was probably a big help even coming back this last six months, I think we may not have. Because we're also coming back to a house. Some of our colleagues, they may not be living. You know, I mean, it's a little harder, but I think having each other was really, I think it was a good thing. And, you know, we'd been married 40 something years, so we weren't a newly married couple. And so I think it was a good experience and I think the community enjoyed that too I think, you know, the couple. And yeah, I think, I think it was a good thing.

GANZGLASS: [00:46:07] Did you interact with other couples?

KELLNER: [00:46:09] No, there weren't any other couples.

GANZGLASS: [00:46:13] I didn't mean Peace Corps couples.

KELLNER: [00:46:13] Oh.

GANZGLASS: [00:46:13] Just couples, as couples or it was always as individuals.

KELLNER: [00:46:17] No, we really didn't. Our community was an indigenous community. We didn't really, you know, we weren't real close with our host family. They were not really, I don't think that, I mean, it was more of a relationship of us living there. It wasn't really more than that. But no, we never really, um. I mean, toward the end, one of the, one of the host families for the newer volunteer, we did some things with them. We went to, but no, not, not a whole lot with other couples. And there

was only really when we left, I think there was one other younger couple. But no, I mean, we really didn't do a lot of those couples.

GANZGLASS: [00:46:58] So you are a very recent return. You came back December 2018.

KELLNER: [00:47:03] Mm hmm.

GANZGLASS: [00:47:03] So really, it is six months just like that. What was your reaction coming back, was it hard? You said you went back to your house and all of that, but was there a reentry process?

KELLNER: [00:47:17] Yeah, I think it was interesting because when I came back in January, I felt like people, for my eye surgery, people were more interested in what it was like and more curious. And it was almost like when you were back, it's like, oh well, you're back. Or people say things like, well, gee, how was your trip? And then you're sitting there and going, wow, you know. I mean, it was a little more than a trip. Yeah. So but one of my friends, or my daughter actually organized a dinner about two weeks after we got back, that we could. So we had, and it was Christmas time, you know. So that was nice that we could see some of our friends and that was special. And then what we did was we started, I connected with the Rotaries, with a whole bunch of folks. And so we started scheduling talks. So we gave our first talk, I think it was, you know, the holidays and everything. I think it was February. So we prepared presentations and we did talks to the Rotaries, the Democrats, the Marin Women's Political Caucus.

GANZGLASS: [00:48:27] And what were your talks about?

KELLNER: [00:48:29] They were really, um, well, you know, Rotary is very quick because you are on a short leash. So it was a combination of doing a little bit about what, you know, what Peace Corps is, what the three goals are, introduction to the country of Guatemala, and then a little bit about what our projects were. And then some of the other things that I've talked to you about, you know, the relationships that we made with our, with the host country nationals and the things that we did and the

cultural things that we did. And then some of our learnings about, about development. And then always at the end, we always encourage people to think about joining the Peace Corps. And most of our audiences have been older. And then we, you know, we promote the Response program. And if they're Rotary, we point out that there are Rotary clubs in Guatemala and that there are Rotary projects. And so we kind of had it down.

KELLNER: [00:49:24] And then, you know, it sort of varied. Like other groups, we might do a little bit different, like the Women's Political Caucus, we did a little bit more on gender. I did some research on that. So it kind of depended on the group. And then the more, most recent one we did was to the public library in our community, and we had about over 40 people come and a lot of them were people that we knew. But there were people, like one woman came who had adopted two Guatemalan girls. So now we'll have a new friend and a new contact. So there were some people that came because it was a public, you know, not Rotarians or.

GANZGLASS: [00:50:00] Yeah.

KELLNER: [00:50:00] But I think that helped too, because people could tell. They'd come up to us. And I'd always wear a huipil when I gave the talk, you know, which is the blouse from Guatemala. And, you know, people are kind of, well, I could see that you really. So I think that was a way of kind of dealing with some of that adjustment, trying to stay, you know, a little bit connected.

GANZGLASS: [00:50:21] Are you going to continue doing these, these talks?

KELLNER: [00:50:24] Um, yes. You know, we have had a request from two other Rotary groups. Um, another library. Yeah. I think we'll continue to do the talks. Yes, definitely.

GANZGLASS: [00:50:40] And what are people's reaction to that, to the variations that you've talked about? Is there interest or just polite interest or?

KELLNER: [00:50:50] No, I think they're, I think they're fascinated. I think, um, I think a lot of people had have no idea, partly because they want to know how you lived. And then you say, well, how we lived is very much how, I mean, it was probably better than how a lot of people live. And I think, I think it just, people were really fascinated to see this whole other world and the beauty of it, the culture. I mean, we're living in, people still wear their native clothing, you know. And sometimes you get returned Peace Corps volunteers that come and many of them served a long time ago. Or some of them, like we got a woman that came who now I'm friends with, who was also older and served later and just served a few years ago. So it's been good. It's kind of brought different people kind of out of the woodwork, you know, by doing these and creating new, new relationships.

KELLNER: [00:51:45] And I think I've sparked a lot of interest. And, you know, I was really active in Guatemala because a lot of our older volunteers left. And so I was a little bit of an activist about it and we ended up doing a survey. They didn't end up doing it till after I left.

GANZGLASS: [00:52:01] They left before the end of the project?

KELLNER: [00:52:02] Yeah. Yeah. And so I had a real interest in the older, older volunteers. And so I've been teaming up with our, um, with our recruiter and we're actually having a panel next week of older volunteers. And he's going to talk about the Peace Corps. So I'm on, I've been kind of on this tack about trying to get older people. Because, you know, I mean, my father retired at 59 from the federal government because he had some health issues and he lived to be 91. I mean, think about that, you know.

GANZGLASS: [00:52:35] That's a long retirement.

KELLNER: [00:52:35] That's like 30 years. I mean, and I know for myself, I'm in great health, I have great energy. I know a lot of other people my age or older or younger. But I think now, you know, I think there's so much we should be doing, like with people even in their fifties, you know, to get them thinking about the point they are. Especially people that may

have worked someplace a long time where they have a pretty good track record and maybe retirement. But to be thinking about what's next and not to be thinking about, I mean, I don't like the word retirement. I don't use it. I mean, I don't consider myself retired. I'm not, I'm, you know, I'm very eager to go do more international work. And I just think we have an amazing resource in our country that we're not tapping. So that's the other thing that I'm doing in these talks I think is really.

KELLNER: [00:53:21] And, you know, you're a, you're a model because people look at you like, oh wow, you know, and I had fair amount of visibility because I was an elected official for eight years. And so I got a lot of visibility then too when, at my going away part, you know, and even to have our congressmen talk about, well, you know, look, I mean, these guys are doing the Peace Corps. And I mean, it's, yeah, I mean, I think it's.

GANZGLASS: [00:53:43] Should Peace Corps be doing more in recruiting older people?

KELLNER: [00:53:45] Yes.

GANZGLASS: [00:53:46] What should they be doing?

KELLNER: [00:53:48] I think we need to be getting to people when they are. You know, I think, I think, you know, if you did some demographic research, you could find that maybe people, you know, finding them before they're, you know, they've got too many grandchildren. You know, but maybe at a point where they're kind of thinking, well, I could do this job for another ten years or five years, or I could, you know, take my retirement now and do something else. I just think people are, I think people. I can tell you this. This is what also has come up in these talks. People are looking for purpose. People are looking for contribution. And even if you spark them, you know, maybe Response isn't for them. Maybe they can't do it. Maybe they have a health issue or whatever. But even like I think Jody [Olsen] was talking about it yesterday, you know, getting them to think about, you know, AmeriCorps or some

other service, you know, that. I mean, you know, I can't imagine, I'm not a golfer, but I can't imagine getting out of bed and golfing. I mean, it's just not my thing, you know?

KELLNER: [00:54:46] But and like you and I were talking about on the way over here, the people connection, the travel, you know, even just doing, you know, going off and doing some stints where you help somebody get something going. I mean, that's very satisfying. And I think that, um, that in the Peace Corps, people with our experience, you know, we're not worried about getting, you know, the right approvals so that we're going to get a scholarship or, you know, we're more into it just for doing the service. And I think a lot of the younger people, I felt like they were already worried about applying to grad school and where they are going to get a job. And, you know, and maybe I don't want to challenge anybody here at Peace Corps because I don't want to make anybody mad because I want to get a, you know, a recommendation instead of maybe doing what the right thing was, you know?

KELLNER: [00:55:30] And I just think it's intergenerational too. I think I learned things from younger people, you know. You know, there were days where I could call one of my 25 year old buddies to help me figure out how to fill out a form. And the last six months, she was calling me, helping, asking for my counsel and coaching around her job, you know, her interviews and her applications.

GANZGLASS: [00:55:55] So you're mentoring her now?

KELLNER: [00:55:57] Yeah, but we're, you know, but I don't even, I mean, it is mentoring, but I feel like it's more we're friends. We're colleagues. She trusts me. I trust her. You know, I mean, we could talk about, gee, how is it coming back? You know, you could talk about, did you hear this person ask me how my trip was, you know, that trip. So I think it creates, you know, those kind of bonds. And I think. You know, I've really enjoyed being around, you know, diversity of ages and backgrounds. I mean, everybody that comes into Peace Corps, whether you're 60 or 25, you all come with a different life experience and you've never been a volunteer before.

GANZGLASS: [00:56:39] Mm hmm.

KELLNER: [00:56:40] So you're all trying to figure out, here I am, what do I do? That's an equalizer. You know, when you get in there, an older person might have a little more, maybe a little more life experience. But even then, I mean, we had some volunteers, older volunteers, and they weren't chill. I mean, you know, I mean.

GANZGLASS: [00:56:58] Why did they leave? Not to ask a personal question, but were there any systemic issues in why they left?

KELLNER: [00:57:04] Oh.

GANZGLASS: [00:57:04] Or was it all?

KELLNER: [00:57:05] I don't know, because we had.

GANZGLASS: [00:57:07] Kind of things.

KELLNER: [00:57:07] Well, the survey, we ended up surveying not just people in our group, but it wasn't, the n equals wasn't really, really large. So I think that Peace Corps might be looking at doing taking our survey and using it in a broader set of posts because I think it might give them some information. Um, one, I think the woman had a lot of, she was really not progressing in the Spanish, learning the Spanish as quickly as she wanted. And I think she also had interest in doing more, she had a health care background, maybe doing more in health care, and she ended up being able leaving and being able to do something like that. So that worked out. Another one, I'm really not sure why. I think she just, she just said, you know, I can't imagine doing this for like 19 more months and, but still kind of keeps in touch and a real good person. Another woman, health issues. Another woman, health issues, but was fighting and wanted to come back and ended up working in a school that her brother runs in Mexico.

GANZGLASS: [00:58:11] Oh.

KELLNER: [00:58:11] So it was kind of all, all over the, all over the map. And then one of my colleagues in, not in my cohort, but in another cohort, just finished and she did fine. And we got, we actually worked together on the training for Peace Corps staff. On my last week in country, we did a training for Peace Corps staff on working with older volunteers. And she, Kay and I did all the research on it and we presented it in Spanish and, um, it was kind of a dry run, you know. And then we left everything there in case they wanted to do it again. And then we did another one, not, another volunteer and I did one for a new cohort of volunteers and sort of it was kind of a diversity training, but we did a fishbowl with the older volunteers, and so we kind of tried some different things. But, uh, but I'd really like to see Peace Corps really tap the older, the older, older Americans, you know, or later career Americans more than they do. And so that's something.

GANZGLASS: [00:59:18] Maybe may be a whole different message. I mean, some of the messaging is very much geared to young people. Or maybe I'm just not up with on all of the more recent messages on Peace Corps.

KELLNER: [00:59:30] Well, today we were watching the beginnings of that film, The Towering Task. And, you know, you listen to Kennedy, and that's what he said, you know, young people. And I thought, oh, you know.

GANZGLASS: [00:59:42] That's when I went in.

KELLNER: [00:59:43] Yeah, yeah. But he, you know, I mean, that was his vision, right?

GANZGLASS: [00:59:46] Yeah.

KELLNER: [00:59:47] And so, yeah, but I think, you know, just like anything, any kind of marketing, you know, you pitch, your pitch is a little different depending on who your audience is. And I think you have to think about what those, what those issues are for older people. Like, for me, I don't have grandchildren, so I don't have that tugging away at me. But I mean, Jody sounded like she had a thing yesterday about, well, they'll

be there with you virtually or, you know. And I served with two women or three, actually, that had grandchildren. And one of them had to go back for medical reasons. But the other two did not and their grandchildren visited them.

GANZGLASS: [01:00:21] Yeah.

KELLNER: [01:00:22] You know, my children visited us, you know, I mean, so anyway. But it is something, it is a passion of mine that I want to continue.

GANZGLASS: [01:00:30] Let me just ask about that. When your children visited, you said your son, who's in the military, really had a good time. What was your children's reaction? And did they meet your, the people in the village or the town you were in?

KELLNER: [01:00:44] Yes. So they, we made sure that they visited our training host families. So both of our host families in training, and then they met our host family that, where we, where we lived, and then we did a lot of sightseeing. We went to Lake Atitlan, which is, you know, the beautiful lake. And, um, you know, and we did other, other. We did one trip when they both came at Christmas. We went to Coban and we went to see these amazing pools called Semuc Champey. And then my daughter came toward the end of our service. We had been to Tikal, which is a Mayan, amazing Mayan, um. I don't want to call it a ruin, a vestige. And so our daughter Laurel came and we did that with her.

KELLNER: [01:01:37] And our daughter is bilingual. Our son is not. But we were really surprised when our son came because he had taken Spanish in high school, but he really tried and he understood a lot of what was going on. So that was really, really amazing. And then my brother-in-law and his wife and his two daughters visited us toward the end of our service as well. And that was, they, I was a little concerned about them because they were a little bit nervous about, especially his wife, about safety and security. And I said, well, look, Mark had to come here and he had to go through all this. We had to have our trips approved by our

security people when we had, when we traveled in the country. And I think that made her feel more comfortable. They loved it.

KELLNER: [01:02:17] And my brother-in-law is an ornithologist. And so we, you know, organized a special trip. He added 100 more birds to his list of life birds. So I think that, you know, Peace Corps service is also about introducing people to the country when they, when they visit and then they go back. And so yeah.

GANZGLASS: [01:02:40] They spread it as well.

KELLNER: [01:02:41] Yeah. And then it makes you kind of proud, you know, when you can and, you know, you're really happy when people, you know, you can tell really enjoyed it because, you know, it's hard. You don't always know, well, should we do this or that or? But, um.

GANZGLASS: [01:02:53] So you've mentioned security a couple of times. Were you on a daily basis affected by security issues?

KELLNER: [01:03:00] No, we lived in a community that was pretty, you know, pretty safe, and we didn't go out a lot at night. We had, there were a lot of rules about certain parts of the Inter-American Highway. We were not allowed to go on public busses. We had to use a Peace Corps shuttle. We weren't supposed to be out after dark. Um. There were certain places we couldn't go after dark at all. We'd have to be back. Quetzaltenango, Antigua. There were a lot of rules and, um, we didn't really have a lot of trouble following those rules. But we were pretty careful and we weren't, we're not really, you know, we don't drink. So we didn't do a lot of, you know, where you might be at more at risk if you're in a bar or you've been drinking or things like that. So I think we led a pretty safe life.

KELLNER: [01:03:53] We were pickpocketed the first month we were in our site. We went to a nearby town, a pretty large town, and our host dad had said that day, it was the last day of the year, it was New Year's Eve. And he said, be careful. Well, sure enough, you know, we were in a very tight market and my wallet was stolen, my license, which was a

big problem because I didn't have my license. Clint lost his little tiny phone that the Peace Corps gives you. I mean, it wasn't, you know, we weren't harmed. We weren't. But we kind of learned our lesson. And then the money belt that we had brought with us, we started to use. So I just kept everything, you know.

GANZGLASS: [01:04:28] Yeah.

KELLNER: [01:04:28] Close to my body. And but, no, we never had any, you know, any bad experiences. And as an older woman, I didn't have some of the experiences that some of the younger women did where there would be more harassment or, you know, those kinds of things. So, you know, we didn't experience in our time any security problems, but we were careful.

GANZGLASS: [01:04:51] Yeah. So are there any other things that I should have asked you about that you wanted to talk about?

KELLNER: [01:05:01] Uh, no, just that I think that this experience, you don't really know how it's going to affect you. But when you talk about it and when you come back and you, you're never, you're never the same, you know, like you're asking me about the heat and, you know, and like hot water we only had when there was a fire in their stove. I just think, you know, it's been six months and I'm still really happy when I have a hot shower and when I could actually manipulate the dial on the heat. And I just think you realize what you have. I just had a lot of dental work done and I just thought, my goodness, I have the resources to have that. So I just think, not to sound Pollyanna, but I just think you're, you're so much more grateful in what you have and that's a good thing.

GANZGLASS: [01:05:47] Great. So thank you for the interview.

KELLNER: [01:05:49] And thank you for your attention and interest. And I really appreciate it. Thank you.

GANZGLASS: [01:05:54] Great.

[END OF INTERVIEW]