William Schnek Oral History Interview
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Biographical Note
William (Bill) Schnek served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Bolivia from 1962 to 1964 on a rural development project (Bolivia II).

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Oral History Interview

with

William Schnek

June 23, 2009
Branson, Missouri

By Sharleen Hirschi Simpson

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SIMPSON: [00:00:02] This is June 23, 2009, and I'm Sharleen Hirschi Simpson interviewing Bill Schnek from the Bolivia II group. OK, Bill, first, I'm just going to ask you to think back about before you went in the Peace Corps and to think about what happened and why you decided to go into it.

SCHNEK: [00:00:29] Well, I had went to college at Fenn College, which is today, Cleveland State University in Cleveland. And I spent, I was in my first year fresh off the farm and with the idea of going into premed or some scientific program. And I was having a tough time of it because I came from a very small school high school and there's only 16 others in our class. 17 actually. And this program was announced by John Fitzgerald Kennedy. So over Easter, I walked down to the federal building and took the exams for admittance to the Peace Corps and didn't give it a lot of thought. After that, after the quarter was over, my problem was, this was a co-op school and it was very that time was very difficult for me to find a job. So that was

one of the reasons I applied. I went home in June. My parents were away on vacation. And lo and behold, a few days after they had left, there was a telegram that came and said, you are accepted. And then all of these forms and permissions began arriving. And when my mother came home and found out that I had an airplane ticket to go to Arizona, she started crying. I was the oldest. And that's how it came about.

SIMPSON: [00:02:09] Ok, I don't need to ask you how your parents reacted because you just told me. OK, so how did you hear about that announcement? Was it in the papers or at school or?

SCHNEK: [00:02:23] I actually don't remember where I first heard of it. I mean, it was a popular program, was one of John Fitzgerald's early initiatives. He made this promise and carried it out approximately on the first of the year in 2000, excuse me, 1962 it was.

SIMPSON: [00:02:51] OK. And what project were you invited to join? Can you tell us something about that?

SCHNEK: [00:02:56] We were, I was asked. I was with the Heifer Project. Our administrator was the Heifer Project and it was suggested that this would be an appropriate vehicle for me because of my agricultural background. I had been raised on a farm, my parents and grandparents on both sides of my family were farmers and had much practical experience. I've been through the FFA Future Farmers of America program for each program, and my whole life revolved around agriculture at that point. So this is what they believed they needed for Bolivia.

SIMPSON: [00:03:44] Did you have a specific country in mind when you applied?

SCHNEK: [00:03:47] No, I took the Spanish exam because I had a few months introductory Spanish in college and I think that was probably the reason I was selected for Bolivia. They just said, well, he's had a little bit of Spanish, we'll send him there.

SIMPSON: [00:04:07] Ok, OK. And did you do anything special once you found out you were going to go in the Peace Corps to get ready to go?

SCHNEK: [00:04:16] Well, they set oodles of instructions, you know. Packed so many blue jeans and packed chambray shirts and work boots and the list went on and on. So we were well, we were purportedly at least well prepared.

SIMPSON: [00:04:35] Ok, now let's talk about the training a little bit. Where did you do your training?

SCHNEK: [00:04:42] Well, first they took us to Tempe, Arizona, and Dr. Maynard Parker was the coordinator with the university for us. And again, this was the year that we were in a brand new scenario and nobody really knew what worked and what didn't. So Dr. Parker confessed to us that he was just sort of winging it. But he set up a program of instruction and they brought in many experts on Bolivia to talk to us in the lecture hall. And we got our series of shots and hard physical training right in the Arizona State University coach. And he trained us and emphasized that it was very strict, very, very tough physical training. And then after approximately a month, they took us out to the Maricopa Indian Reservation and we lived in trailers on the reservation and continued our physical training in the early in the morning and intensive Spanish courses. And they brought up professors from the university. I remember, Dr. Erts Parker was the poultry specialist at that time and they had a chicken coop out there. And he just gave us very practical advice for raising chickens. And we did some engineering. We actually had a couple civil engineers with us in our group. They didn't go to Bolivia with us, but they we set up transoms and did a land leveling. In Arizona at that time this was an important agricultural operation. They took desert and it was slightly rolling. And they would you take a big landscaping machine, cut off the tops of the and fill in the low spots and grade it to a level so that it could be irrigated. You had to have a slope to a low corner and then you'd either dig dirt ditches or concrete ditches. The fields we worked in actually had a concrete ditch, irrigation ditch on two sides of it, or at least one side of it. I remember the concrete

because one of our group caught a rattlesnake from underneath it, put it in a gunnysack, took it back to the university.

SIMPSON: [00:06:56] Yeah. Um, so is that the only place you trained?

SCHNEK: [00:07:01] No. After we were finished in Arizona, they we got an airplane. This is a big adventure for me. This is actually we were just on the verge of the jet age. Everything we did was in prop planes. They flew us to Puerto Rico and that was a big adventure in itself. We landed in Fort Worth or Dallas and everything was closed down because it was Sunday. So we didn't get to do anything. Then the next stage was one of the other places we landed was in New Orleans. We were we had a little bit more time. So all of us headed right down to the French Quarter. And, you know, this was a lot of our group were still teenagers and it was a big adventure. But it was just a few hours that we landed in Puerto Rico. We were trained again at the University of Mayaguez in tropical agriculture, for the most part, an intensive. Excuse me, I'm getting it mixed up. First of all, we went to one of the old CCC camps up in the hills and we had very tough physical training the entire day. We spent approximately three weeks, something like that, four weeks, rappelling, life saving in the pool learn to swim, endurance tests we went through. One of our group stated that he had been in the army and this training was tougher than his basic training. And for example, we had to swim out to a buoy about a half mile out in the ocean and come back. And we were taught how to float in the water. We could encourage that if you follow these techniques, you can either stay afloat for eight hours a day with no external help. It was to build our self-esteem. But after we got to Bolivia, it was became very, very, very useful because we were in good shape and at the altitude of La Paz is 12,000 feet, the oxygen is very limited and we needed to be in good shape.

SIMPSON: [00:09:14] So do you remember anything about the time in Mayagüez with that?

SCHNEK: [00:09:18] That we spent about a month at the University of Mayaguez. It was actually a pleasant time. And again, it was mostly to acclimate us to speaking Spanish. And I must say that I didn't really conquer Spanish until after I got married. And, you know, Puerto Rico, everybody speaks English anyway, for the most part, and their variety of what I was going to say is once we got to Bolivia, they sent me to an area where no one spoke Spanish. So excellent government planning again.

SIMPSON: [00:09:58] So after Puerto Rico, then did you go to Bolivia or what happened?

SCHNEK: [00:10:02] So we, they gave us. This is October. I was home for my birthday, which is October 12. We had two weeks leave to spend with our families before they shipped this overseas. And then we had airplane tickets. I know they should be through New York, but I had a short helicopter ride out to Newark to fly home, which I've never been in a helicopter before. That was a big adventure. And we reunited in Miami at the airport. And while we were waiting there, we got some mysterious notice that we were supposed to be in our room at a certain time on that night, and they turned the television on. Well lo and behold, it was President Kennedy announcing the Cuban Missile Crisis. So we had no idea what was happening. They sent somebody, an emissary, down from Washington to talk to our group. And he said, we are not going to send you overseas. We're going to take you someplace else because you are for the most part of conscription age. And we might need you to fight a war. This is what we were told. And they shipped it off to Brattleboro, Vermont, and we were there for approximately a month and the crisis subsided. Then we went to Bolivia.

SIMPSON: [00:11:18] So how was it being in Brattleboro, Vermont?

SCHNEK: [00:11:21] For the most part, boring. This was our plan. We had no program as such.

SIMPSON: [00:11:28] All right. So, all right. When you first got to Bolivia, what did you think when you were coming into Bolivia?

SCHNEK: [00:11:39] Well, when you come off to the Altiplano. At that time the Alto was not populated. There was maybe a mud hut here and there. And you as you come through the gates at the top of the plain and go into the valley, there was a big gatepost, as it were. You go underneath that, it's painted in Coca-Cola, little advertisement there. You come over the top of that rise and there is a city laid out below you. And it's very deep, very steep. And oftentimes there are mudslides and part of the city will give way. But the wind back and forth and back and forth until you get down to the depths. But we stayed for the most part of the upper city. At a hotel.

SIMPSON: [00:12:31] Ok, so did you how long did you stay in the place? Where did you end up?

SCHNEK:` [00:12:39] If I remember correctly, it was approximately two weeks that we went through a little orientation. It was, again, to allow us a little time for our bodies to adapt. I believe in part because if you need it, you need to generally speaking, you need to rest for three days or so when you arrive at an altitude like that to acclimatize yourself slightly because it takes about a year before you're truly acclimatize. Then we had blue jeeps that were given to our group and we formed a caravan and traveled down to Cochabamba. At that time, it took about 12 hours. The trip was normally about 12 hours. Very unpaved roads, very dangerous in spots on the road to vehicles could not pass. And if you came upon someone coming from the opposite direction, sometimes you'd have to back up. You got to a little wider spot or they would have to back up until you could pass each other. And there were many accidents at a time. And even though there were other people, they understand there's still many, many accidents. You'd be driving right over the edge and maybe there will be a drop off at three thousand feet. It was dizzying.

SIMPSON: [00:14:02] Ok, now, when you got to Cochabamba, what did you end up doing, what was what were you?

SCHNEK: [00:14:09] Mel Zelinksi and myself were assigned to the 4H program, equivalent of the 4H program, because of our experience. And so I, for the most part, worked out of the central agricultural office in Cochabamba. And Mr. Wolf, Claude Wolfe, who was our Heifer Project monitor, you know, he was our director, the person we were responsible to, kept a close watch on us because there's four of us that were barely 19 at the time. And he gives a little special. Actually Mel Zelinski and I lived very close to Claude and June and Claude had his family there, all three of his children at the time also. And after a while we start getting bored. So when are we going to do something? And I start questioning around and decided, I was decided by the agriculture people there and our counterparts in Cochabamba that I could go out to a village called Arani. Now the Cochabamba Valley consists of seven valleys, seven major valleys, and Arani is one of the farthest away. You know, it took about an hour to drive out there. And I pretty much spent the rest of my time in that village. But Claude would call us back for a weekly, I mean, a monthly meeting at his house. He wanted to keep us in contact and make certain that we went to church in the morning on Sunday and so forth.

SIMPSON: [00:15:53] So what was your impression of the local people out there that day?

SCHNEK: [00:16:02] Well, you have to remember their history. 1952, the Indians, the population, the native population, rebelled against this very thin veneer of the old line oligarchy. And they took their lands back because it was a feudal society before that. And the oligarchy at this point that, this was this was a mere 10 years later. And the Indians, they made it, the Bolivians made a bad mistake in the Chaco War. They armed the Indians to fight the war because the Bolivians just simply didn't have enough people that they could trust to fight the Uruguayans. And that, excuse me, the Paraguayans. And the Paraguayans won that war, doubled their territory. But the Indians, when they came back and I you know, I don't know what the proper term is, we always call them Indians because they're the natives there. And they hid their arms when they came back from the war.

And in 1952, they pulled those arms out and they slaughtered any of the oligarchy that they found out on their *haciendas*. And those people who could escape went to the major cities. They just abandoned their holdings and the Indians took over operating these landholdings.

SCHNEK: [00:17:31] So what we have there is a patchwork of small holdings, none of it surveyed. And oftentimes it's just far. I remember at one point I was asked to calculate the area of a small piece of triangular land because there wasn't, the my counterpart, who is an agricultural engineer, that is not an agricultural engineer, doesn't translate the same as it would be here in the United States. It's more of a general agronomist. And he asked me to calculate the area. And I did it slightly different than he did. My basis of math was apparently better than his. And so we avoided a fight among two groups that way. But it was a very impressive. When the Indians wanted to show their force, for whatever reason, they could assemble many thousands of people, get them out on these big trucks. They all get their rifles out and then go to Cochabamba and just show that they could do what they wanted and the authorities could do nothing. The militia, I mean, it wasn't militia. It was the syndicate, *los sindicatos*.

SIMPSON: [00:18:51] Ok, now tell me a little bit about the job that you did and where you lived. Did you still keep living in Cochabamba?

SCHNEK: [00:19:01] I had a room, Claude said. He said, when you come to Cochabamba, we're going to get you a room. And I actually roomed with the agricultural director there, Oscar Rocha and his wife. They're very nice people, Oscar. He was actually raised on the *estancia* in Argentina, but he and he had a degree. He was an agricultural engineer, also agronomist. And so he wasn't typically Bolivian. And it was very nice, very nice family. But so I would come in maybe once a week on the train. They had a little something called baracareles or altocareles, which were a gasoline driven engine that ran on the rails. And I would ride that into Cochabamba for our monthly meeting with the Wolfs and generally come in once a week. We'd have, meetings we'd have to attend here, there and so forth. But mostly I worked with the 4H kids out in the province. They had no one to work with

this group. We actually organized 4H, Quattro Essay [4S], in that village. I worked with the kids my age or younger for the most part. Now, later on the Heifer Project. For those who might not know what the Heifer Project is, basically it was formed for the more developed countries to donate animals to areas which didn't have the animal genetics that we did in more developed countries. For example, a cow down there might give three or four quarts of milk a day, whereas here in the States, you might get as much as 100 pounds a day or thereabouts. I mean, so the premise was to bring in animals.

SCHNEK: [00:21:07] We would select, we as the operating arm on the spot there, would select people to donate these animals to. When the animals had offspring, those animals came back to the Heifer Project and other participants were selected. And in theory, it would form an unbroken chain continuing on this process. And the original animals after the first offspring were given were there was no further requirement. They just became the property of the people who were taking care of them. And it's very, very effective program. And the first planeloads of animals that came in, Claude asked me to go down from Cochabamba to Santa Cruz. They flew them into Santa Cruz. And I ran the quarantine of these animals, was down there and babysit an animal for approximately a month and lived right with the animals, took their temperature daily, gave them injections and vaccinations as needed, under the direction of the other representatives in Santa Cruz. He'd come out once every two or three days, take a look at me and see how things going. But we brought in some brown Swiss cows, brought in some pigs, brought in some sheep and chickens and rabbits. And when I went back to my village, I arranged so we could take some of the sheep out, rams, because the wool was the yield was much, much better. And goats, goats. That was popular also because the goats that I introduced in my village would actually give as much milk as their cows. And of course the goat would consume much less food.

SIMPSON: [00:22:54] Great. OK, so talking about you said that where you went, they didn't speak Spanish. What did they speak?

SCHNEK: [00:23:03] Quechua.

SIMPSON: Quechua?

SCHNEK: Yes.

SIMPSON: [00:23:05] So were you able to learn to communicate in there?

SCHNEK: [00:23:08] No. I mean, that's one of the reasons my Spanish didn't get very good while I was there. My counterpart pretty much translated everything. And he wasn't a native speaker either.

SIMPSON: [00:23:23] So you had work time, you talked something about that. What did you do in your free time?

SCHNEK: [00:23:31] Well, of course, the big thing was go on every weekend or every other weekend back to Cochabamba. Look up my buddies. We'd go down to the local shop, have an ice cream sundae or something like that. And that was pretty much rhetoric, recreation. But I did take a vacation. Three of us went to Lima, Peru. We traveled up to La Paz and took the steamer across Lake Titicaca to Juliaca in Peru. And from there, we took the train to Cusco. From Cusco, after we toured Cusco. I have many pretty pictures of that. I took many, many slides. We flew from there to Lima. Now this time, the airplanes were again, they were still prop planes. And the cabins were unpressurized. So we were we were flying probably 8,000 feet or higher and our oxygen consisted, they dropped these masks down out of the overhead compartment. We would place them on so we wouldn't be oxygen deprived. And that was that's the way we traveled back there.

SIMPSON: [00:24:54] Yeah, OK. When you got to the end of the first year, was there any, were any notable events or anything that that happened, particularly that you remember? After you've been there a year and gotten adjusted and all that?

SCHNEK: [00:25:15] Well, Bolivia, there's nothing certain except that it's constantly in revolt. Governments constantly change. And in my experience with Bolivia, I remember there was one day they had three different presidents. Not during my term, when I served there, but I married a girl from, her family was from Cochabamba, her father's side of the family was from Cochabamba, and her mother was from a small village in the south of Bolivia, mining community, but she was actually born in Argentina and raised in Argentina. So I had many opportunities go back in Bolivia and I kept close track of things that are happening even now.

SIMPSON: [00:26:06] So if you think back on your Peace Corps experience, tell me about some of the events or the things that happened that you remember most?

SCHNEK: [00:26:20] Well, Claude threatened to send me home at one point. Because I flew into Trinidad, which is in the, in the headwaters of the Amazon, very flat country, you know, a big swamp. And I wanted to go upriver to the head, to Chapare, which is a day's travel from Cochabamba. And I went down to the waterfront and talked to somebody. I had missed the ferry, the riverboat. There's a riverboat coming and going all the time. And for some reason I got the time wrong or they said, oh, it just left. And I was talking to him and he said, we're going to go up and cut timber and you can take the canoe with us. He said, we'll catch up with them in two or three hours, but it was two weeks and we never did catch up with him.

SIMPSON: You were lost.

SCHNEK: They knew where they were. I didn't know where I was. But we had, our diet consist mostly of bananas and dried, it's a yam or a cassava root. We had powdered cassava that you'd scoop some water out of the river and make a little paste out of it and eat that. But my diet mostly consisted of bananas. We got up there, we stopped at a banana plantation, and the owner there was actually hiding out. He was an ex-Nazi. And again, this is 1963. And he was happy to have somebody to talk to and he was very

friendly and he said, you've been, you've been having, your diet hasn't been very good. He said we'll get some the fish and you can come with us. So you know, the river's wind back and forth and cut new channels and they'll leave like a small pond or a large lake cut off from the main river flow. And these are filled with fish. So we went out there in the boats and this guy reached down, got something out of a canoe. It was dynamite. He threw it out there and boom! And the fish would float to the top of the water. Some were large, as large as I was. And but they tasted very good.

SIMPSON: [00:28:58] That's quite an interesting, um. OK, did you have any.

SCHNEK: [00:29:07] But anyway, Claude was very worried about me because nobody knew where I was. It took me much longer than I expected and I ended up at the same place I started from back in Trinidad because there was a ferry boat there, riverboat, didn't have any motor, not a working motor. So we just sort of loaded a couple rafts with bananas and floated back down to Trinidad. And Claude called me into his office and said, Bill, he said, if you ever do anything like this, he said, I said, I'm going to send you home. OK. And of course, I never did.

SIMPSON: [00:29:46] Ok, well, what about, uh, did you have any health problems when you were there?

SCHNEK: Constant diarrhea.

SIMPSON: Yeah, that's I mean, for a lot of people that was a problem, I know.

SCHNEK: [00:29:59] Nothing major other than that constant. I went down to, when I left, I was weighing about 178, something like that. And I went down to 140 pounds within a year. I did go up the Sucre to participate in the United States building project up there. They had a project going on. I was sent up there for a month. I wasn't much help at all to be honest.

SIMPSON: [00:30:26] So you talked about the taking the trip to Lima. Was that the only time that you took, like a vacation or anything like that?

SCHNEK: Yes, it was.

SIMPSON: How about did you have a relationship with the family that you were living with?

SCHNEK: [00:30:42] Yeah, I stayed with my counterparts, the title was counterparts. He had a degree and was working as an agricultural extension agent in the village of Arani. And I participated with him and worked as a sort of a junior. I mean, they did label me as an agricultural extension agent. So I speak, you know, I talk about the animals, but we did a lot of demonstrations on cultivating what we would call crops here. Of course, this is the home of the potato. And we would go out and look at crops and give advice, spray chemicals, how to keep disease under control. I work with kids on planters, you know, planting vegetables, onions. I remember we had very good success with this one kid. He raised a very good crop and then he would bundle them up and get on a train or the trucks. The major transport was trucks, you'd crawl in the back of the truck. And for a few pesos, you could ride to the village and I traveled that way many times to and there was busses, bus services again. The only difference between that and the truck was you got to sit down maybe. Yes. But he would bundle in big bundles and put it on top of the truck or the bus and take it to the open air market in Cochabamba. He sold them and for him was very huge success. But other crops also.

SIMPSON: [00:32:25] Were you ever able to follow any of those kids that you worked with?

SCHNEK: [00:32:29] No, I went back approximately four years later. I went out to the village, and at that time there was an American construction crew building a pipeline, oil pipeline, from Santa Cruz up across the Andes. And I talked to a couple of them, but everything had been disrupted.

SIMPSON: [00:32:55] Ok, so when you got to the end of your tour, what did you think about what you had done there? Did you feel like it was?

SCHNEK: [00:33:09] Well, the honest truth is, of course, in many of these situations, particularly in mine, I just felt that I had received much more out of the experience than I was able to give yet. I look back and add up all the things that I did do, and I think I did a considerable amount of good also. Improved agricultural practice and working with youth. The population, the native population, is very insular. It's very hard to break through.

SIMPSON: [00:33:42] So did you feel like you were able to break through that, after time?

SCHNEK: [00:33:49] Yes, somewhat.

SIMPSON: [00:33:50] Yes, it's kind of difficult trying to be an insider when you're really an outsider.

SCHNEK: [00:33:58] Yeah. In Queche, you know, being in a situation like that, you do pick up some of the language a little bit. And I found out my nickname was the Red Man because I would tend to blush easily.

SIMPSON: [00:34:14] And they probably enjoyed making you do that. So if you had it to do over again, would you have done anything differently?

SCHNEK: [00:34:24] No, but it fundamentally changed my life, that experience.

SIMPSON: [00:34:29] How did it change your life?

SCHNEK: [00:34:33] Well, for one thing, I found Martha and I will be celebrating our forty-fifth wedding anniversary this October.

SIMPSON: [00:34:40] So you met her while you were in?

SCHNEK: [00:34:41] Yes, that's one fundamental change.

SIMPSON: [00:34:45] Well that's pretty significant.

SCHNEK: [00:34:46] If I came back and completed my agricultural degree. I actually received a degree I once spent went back to our training site in Arizona, the Arizona State University, went there a couple of years. That was very pleasant being out there. And then I got a lot of pressure to come back to Ohio. So I went back and actually got my degree at Ohio State University and 21 years later, I got another degree in accounting. I am a CPA today.

SIMPSON: [00:35:19] I was going to say, I forgot to ask you in the beginning what you were doing today.

SCHNEK: [00:35:23] Well, actually, I'm working for human services in our county as the accountant, and a job in family services is the proper name.

SIMPSON: [00:35:37] Well, do you think?

SCHNEK: [00:35:38] That's just a sideline. My major occupation is still the farm.

SIMPSON: [00:35:41] Yeah. Do you think that, um, that well, the goals that they had listed or was the technical assistance and to promote better understanding of the U.S. and also better understanding of other people by Americans, how do you think all those goals, you ended up with all those goals?

SCHNEK: [00:36:06] Yes, I did.

SIMPSON: [00:36:11] You did all of them. Have you continued any kind of involvement with Bolivia since you were there?

SCHNEK: [00:36:17] Oh, yes. I mean, my sister in law lives in Bolivia. My wife has one sister. There's five of those children. Her mother had five children. Only two have lived. My wife and her sister. And I have very strong contacts yet.

SIMPSON: [00:36:35] Do you think, well, that really was a major change for you, because that's never changed.

SCHNEK: That's true.

SIMPSON: Big time. Yeah. Uh, have you or you said that you're, the effect of the Peace Corps service was a change of career. What were you going to do?

SCHNEK: [00:36:56] No, I didn't say that. I came back and I mean, I was.

SIMPSON: [00:36:58] You just came back and.

SCHNEK: [00:36:59] I completed my agricultural degree. Well, yes. I mean, initially I started out, but the first year of college is just general anyway. And it oriented me. I said, well, you know, why be unnatural about this? My training, my inclination is agricultural. I'll stay with that. Went and got my agricultural degree at Hofsted University, entered graduate school for two quarters, dropped out, went to Argentina. We actually ranched in Argentina for three years.

SIMPSON: [00:37:28] Oh, in Argentina.

SCHNEK: [00:37:29] Yes.

SIMPSON: Well, how was that?

SCHNEK: Oh, Argentina's pleasant.

SIMPSON: [00:37:35] Do you think that being in the Peace Corps helped you in later years to do the things that you ended up doing?

SCHNEK: [00:37:42] Oh, yes.

SIMPSON: [00:37:44] How particularly what did you gain from that experience? That seems to be useful.

SCHNEK: [00:37:57] What did I gain? Yeah, it's such a big question. I don't know where to start.

SIMPSON: [00:38:03] You start little.

SCHNEK: [00:38:11] Today, for example, in the grain markets that we have. People come and ask me, what is the situation in Argentina? Last year, they had a heavy drought, I mean, a very severe drought, and as a result, our soybean prices have increased considerably. And I'm still asked my opinion on conditions.

SIMPSON: [00:38:38] In Bolivia?

SCHNEK: Bolivia is not an agricultural and a large agricultural producer. I mean, it's so isolated with the mountains along the Andean mountains on the west side of the country. And the big swamp headquarters headlands of the Amazon on the other. It's still a very insular country there. For the most part, they are self-sufficient today. That's not true when we went. They had to import a lot of food. But today they actually do have a slight exportable agricultural surplus. But that could change.

SIMPSON: [00:39:14] Well, that's. Is there anything else that you think of that we haven't talked about that, that you would like to add about the experience?

SCHNEK: [00:39:26] Well, the time that we allotted is nearly up, and I probably talked enough.

SIMPSON: [00:39:32] No, if you like to say anything more that’s fine. Whatever, otherwise.

SCHNEK: [00:39:40] Well, I follow the situation right now, and as you know, the present president is the first Native American president ever elected and he won with a plurality. That is something. I remember when I was out Arizona State University, one of my professors asking me, because at that

time when I left Bolivia, approximately 90 percent of the population was pureblood Incan, Quecha, Aymara. And only and maybe two or three percent of the population, maybe as high as seven percent, was what you would call European. And the rest was a mixed blood. And I responded to him, what's the future of Bolivia? And I responded to him, I said at that time, I believe the native culture will take over. And this is what we're seeing today. I mean, they have elected a bicameral legislature, which is for the most part, Native American. They have a Native American president who until very recently was head of the Coca Growers Association. I have some views on that also. You will never stop, you will never stop coca cultivation in Bolivia. And the State Department officials that try to do this are just wasting our money. I mean, that's the home of coca.

SIMPSON: [00:41:09] Part of their culture.

SCHNEK: Part of their culture. They have raised it since they've been populating that area of the globe. They used to have these big bales of coca leaves in the market. I mean, it's just something that is part of their culture. They do not use cocaine like we do. They chew the leaves. It gives a slow release with the alkali substance. You get a slow release. It helps, it's sort of like taking aspirin and it's just a way to cope with the trials that they go through in their daily living. And of course, lately we've mechanized that, or somebody has mechanized it. The drug lords and made a very high income cash crop work, and what other alternatives do the farmers there have? Not many, none that will match that income. I mean, the U.S. State Department is not. It will run into resistance in any endeavor they have tried to eradicate that.

SIMPSON: [00:42:14] Too strong of a cultural tradition.

SCHNEK: [00:42:16] Yes, it is. And I have, I remember we had back talked about some of my professors at Ohio State University and they were working with the State Department in this problem, and that was his opinion also.

He said the only way we're going to eradicate this is to stop the use here in the United States.

SIMPSON: [00:42:36] I think so too yeah. OK, well thank you, Bill.

[END OF INTERVIEW]