

Thomas Klug Oral History Interview
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Biographical Note

Thomas Klug served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Ghana from July 1972 to July 1974 as a chemistry and math teacher.

Access

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Oral History Interview

with

Thomas Klug

November 5, 2018
Blue Bell, Pennsylvania

By Evelyn Ganzglass

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

GANZGLASS: [00:00:02] This is Evelyn Ganzglass. I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Somalia from 1966 to 1968. Today is November 5th, 2018, and I'm interviewing Thomas Klug, who was a Peace Corps volunteer in Ghana from 1972 to 1974, and he was in a teaching program. Tom, why did you decide to join the Peace Corps?

KLUG: [00:00:31] I had always kind of wanted to volunteer and thought I was going to join VISTA, which was the U.S. program, kind of like Teach America and some other programs now. And I thought, my thinking was that it was better, that there was plenty of needs in the United States and I didn't need to go overseas to do those things, and I'd be better to go to the United States. But as I looked at it, it didn't seem like there were many teaching positions in the VISTA program. And I wanted to really teach and get some experience teaching. And my intent was to become a teacher when I came back. Um. So I decided

to apply for the Peace Corps. There did seem to be a lot more teaching positions and I guess I got accepted.

KLUG: [00:01:31] I had been looking for teaching positions. I had completed my master's degree, or I was completing my master's degree at the University of Wisconsin. I was studying chemistry, which I really didn't like to do. I found out, it took me a master's degree unfortunately, I found out I didn't like to do it, but I kind of liked to teach it. I liked the subject. I really didn't feel like I was the type of person to advance and I didn't really like working the lab and things of that nature. So it seemed like a good opportunity to see the world and get away. And for various reasons, I didn't serve in Vietnam and I felt like it was a way to provide some service to the U.S. I kind of felt that, you know, everybody had to provide some type of service to the United States.

KLUG: [00:02:24] And I probably wasn't as dedicated as the 19, you know, those in the 1960s who were starting this program. But I met some of them in recent meetings who were really the founders and felt like they were making a real contribution. I think in the seventies I found it a little, little different. Maybe not everybody in the sixties was that way, but in the seventies I think people just wanted to see the world some more.

GANZGLASS: [00:02:49] I think there was a lot of that.

KLUG: [00:02:49] They did have more of a, they had a devotion and, you know, wanted to serve, but maybe not quite as gung-ho I found as the people that I met recently at the, uh, who had served in the early to mid sixties, I think.

GANZGLASS: [00:03:05] So some of that may change over time as well as they tell their stories. So I think it was a total, being from the sixties, let me tell you, people wanted to see the world. They wanted to escape Vietnam. There were many reasons people joined, including not liking whatever they were studying and trying to do a reset.

KLUG: [00:03:25] And of course, when you've only got two to 300 of the 220,000 volunteers, you've got the really enthusiastic people who come to the national meeting. And many of them seem to come every year or many years when they can. So it isn't probably everybody.

GANZGLASS: [00:03:40] Don't feel bad.

KLUG: [00:03:41] A good sampling. No, I don't. I didn't, I didn't feel bad about it. I just, I think most of us and some of them had actually done a program, a teaching program, ahead of time and had planned to do it. So I think most of us really, really wanted to work hard and things. But I think coming in, I was too young, but coming in in the sixties would have been interesting. And, you know, with the Kennedy development of the program and his speeches about what we were going to do, I think you really probably came in a little more, more gung ho. And by the seventies, it was kind of there, I won't say passé, but a little bit more of a, just an important thing to do, but maybe not quite as changing overall that Kennedy had sold.

GANZGLASS: [00:04:26] OK. But you were still inspired by him.

KLUG: [00:04:28] Yeah.

GANZGLASS: [00:04:28] So how old were you when you were, when you went in?

KLUG: [00:04:32] Good question. I was. I just turned 26, I believe, and I was out by 28. And at the time I was 28, I did two years.

GANZGLASS: [00:04:41] And where did you grow up?

KLUG: [00:04:43] I grew up in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Went to school, went to college at Purdue. The Indiana Purdue campus in Fort Wayne for three years, went to the main campus for one year, then went to graduate school at the University of Wisconsin in Madison for three years.

GANZGLASS: [00:05:00] So definitely Midwest. Had you traveled at all?

KLUG: [00:05:05] Not a lot. I'd been to Montreal for the World's Fair, been to Florida with my parents to see my uncle. Went to New York on the way back from Montreal. But, you know.

GANZGLASS: [00:05:20] No international travel.

KLUG: [00:05:21] Didn't see the world.

GANZGLASS: [00:05:23] And Montreal's international.

KLUG: [00:05:23] Actually during graduate school, we took a road trip to the Grand Canyon. So I'd never been, other than Canada, I'd never been out of the country. In fact, this is kind of off the topic, but I think it was kind of interesting when I went to Canada. It was, and now it's so much different than nowadays. I had never really met somebody that didn't speak English as a primary or secondary language, and really there were probably others, but I can remember only one. And we had an exchange student when I was in grade school who was from a foreign country. I mean, in Fort Wayne, there probably just weren't that many, many foreigners. Now, you can go anywhere in small towns in Minnesota and, you know, you go to a grocery store and some are speaking Spanish, some are speaking German. It's, it's, it's, uh.

GANZGLASS: [00:06:19] Very different.

KLUG: [00:06:19] Amazing change.

GANZGLASS: [00:06:21] So that's all part of it. What did your parents think about your joining the Peace Corps, your friends?

KLUG: [00:06:27] Hmm. My dad thought I should go to work and get a job and prepare for retirement. Maybe in retrospect, he was right. And my mother. I had had a lot of illnesses when I was young between almost kindergarten through high school. I had had a lot of pulmonary lung and lung problems and had missed almost half of my freshman year of high school with pneumonia and a kidney infection. Finally, the doctor, after I got pneumonia the second time, the doctor said stay home until

it gets warm. So my mother thought I was going to get sick. Although through from college, you know, from freshman year of college on, I didn't really, wasn't really ill. My health had kind of turned around. I'd had every illness I think that was possible. So I was immune to a lot of things. And so she was worried that I'd get sick and die.

GANZGLASS: [00:07:32] It's a good thing for a mother to worry about.

KLUG: [00:07:34] Yeah, well, she was worried. As it turned out, I made it through most of the time. I think the worst thing I had was I think I got food poisoning one time at one of the better restaurants in Ghana. I ate off the street and things, but then never got sick. But ate at a good Chinese restaurant and I got sick, so I don't know whether I had probably a food poisoning from pork or something that I had.

GANZGLASS: [00:08:03] So we'll get, we'll get to that later.

KLUG: [00:08:06] Yeah.

GANZGLASS: [00:08:06] So you applied. How did you even know about the Peace Corps?

KLUG: [00:08:11] Good question. That I'm having a hard time, you know, I just.

GANZGLASS: [00:08:14] You just knew.

KLUG: [00:08:14] I just heard about it, I mean, there was so much out from the Kennedy.

GANZGLASS: [00:08:17] There wasn't a recruiter who recruited you?

KLUG: [00:08:18] I don't think I ever met a recruiter. I just, you know, wrote for probably an application, filled out the application, and didn't know if I was going to get called.

GANZGLASS: [00:08:30] How long did it take for you to hear back? Was it a long time?

KLUG: [00:08:33] I don't. I would think I applied in like February and found out in like April of the year.

GANZGLASS: [00:08:40] Oh, so it was pretty fast.

KLUG: [00:08:40] It wasn't too long. They needed science teachers. And I was a chemistry teacher and could teach math.

GANZGLASS: [00:08:47] So did you apply for a specific part of the world?

KLUG: [00:08:51] That was just, we were talking about this this morning on our way up and before you came. And I guess I put in places, but I really didn't know much. I think I put in like South America first, which probably wasn't a good choice for me. I may have thrown in Africa as a secondary choice, but it was, you know, in the end, I realized it was more logical to send me to a place like Ghana, which was English speaking, and where I could teach chemistry easily. It would not have been easy in a Spanish speaking country.

GANZGLASS: [00:09:22] So you applied to be a teacher and a chemist?

KLUG: [00:09:25] Yeah, I believe my main interest was in teaching so.

GANZGLASS: [00:09:29] OK, so you got the letter and then where did you have your training?

KLUG: [00:09:35] We went to Philadelphia for about three days, and then there were people from four countries I think. Maybe it was, I know it was Ghana, Togo, and maybe Dahomey, which is, there are two very thin countries next to Ghana, between Ghana and Nigeria. And then the others went to Uganda, flew off to Uganda afterwards. There might have been another East African country that they went to.

GANZGLASS: [00:10:11] So it was really just getting shots and things like that.

KLUG: [00:10:13] Yeah, then we did our training basically in country. Went to, uh, about, after our first thing we went, I think we went out to a relatively small village and did some language training.

GANZGLASS: [00:10:31] In country?

KLUG: [00:10:31] In country.

GANZGLASS: [00:10:32] So you met in Philadelphia, you were there three or four days, and then you flew off.

KLUG: [00:10:38] Flew off.

GANZGLASS: [00:10:39] How big was your group?

KLUG: [00:10:43] There were well over 200 going to all the countries.

GANZGLASS: [00:10:47] So all the countries.

KLUG: [00:10:49] I would say, and I really don't know, 60 to 80 maybe in Ghana, a lot of them teachers. Ghana needed teachers at that time. In fact, Ghana was the very first country. There's some argument, but Ghana was a very first country to, I think, have volunteers in the country. Several people are fighting over who was, uh, who was the first. I believe the Philippines was maybe the first to sign the document. And Ghana was the first to have volunteers.

GANZGLASS: [00:11:15] And then there are some people that say Nigeria as well. So maybe they were all at the same time.

KLUG: [00:11:20] Yeah, they, in '62, I believe, '61, '62, they went to several different places and I don't know. I think boots on the ground they were in Ghana first, but other people did some training in the United States before the Ghana thing started. So it gets to be kind of.

GANZGLASS: [00:11:37] So you had been on a plane before because you had gone to Montreal?

KLUG: [00:11:42] Yeah. Well, Montreal. Had ever been on a plane?

GANZGLASS: [00:11:45] Well, maybe you hadn't.

KLUG: [00:11:47] Yeah, I'd been on a plane to Montreal. I don't know if I'd ever done any other flying. Maybe once or twice.

GANZGLASS: [00:11:53] So you flew from Philadelphia to somewhere in Europe, I assume. And then?

KLUG: [00:11:58] No, we flew to the Canary Islands.

GANZGLASS: [00:12:00] Oh, to the Canary Islands.

KLUG: [00:12:01] So that was our stop, I guess, gas up spot. And then we flew to Ghana from there.

GANZGLASS: [00:12:07] And what was your impression when you got off the plane?

KLUG: [00:12:12] Well, we were in the airport first. And, you know, a lot of, a lot of people there.

GANZGLASS: [00:12:19] Did it look like the Philadelphia airport?

KLUG: [00:12:20] At first they didn't want to let us in because we hadn't had all our shots. But they, the staff, the in-country staff, managed to get us through and we got additional shots the next morning. So they kind of cut corners a little bit. Um, Accra was a fairly big airport, but nothing like Philadelphia maybe. I'm from Fort Wayne, Indiana, maybe somewhere between Fort Wayne and Philadelphia. Nothing like a huge airport like Philadelphia.

GANZGLASS: [00:12:58] Yeah.

KLUG: [00:12:59] But, uh, not in those days, although it's gotten bigger now.

GANZGLASS: [00:13:01] So you all hopped on a bus and then you went to this training site. Is that how it worked?

KLUG: [00:13:07] Yeah, I guess. I guess we got there on a bus. And then what was interesting is the people, and this was the middle of the night, we got started late at about 2:00 and then we didn't get there until pretty late in the evening. I don't even remember what time. But then the poor people who went to Togo had to hop on another bus and go, I don't know, another hour or two to Togo. So it was a challenge. I was glad I was getting Ghana.

GANZGLASS: [00:13:34] OK. And what kind of training site was this? Was it a college or do you know? But was it in the, it wasn't in Accra?

KLUG: [00:13:46] Yeah, I think it was near Accra. But I don't really. We weren't there very long. We were only there a couple of days. I don't know.

GANZGLASS: [00:13:52] Oh really?

KLUG: [00:13:52] You know, that part of it, I don't. I can't recall.

GANZGLASS: [00:13:53] OK, so what happened? So what happened in this training site? Language instruction?

KLUG: [00:13:58] At the initial site, they kind of just reorganized us all. And we went out with a group of only four. There were four of us I can remember, maybe one or two more. I think there were only four of us went to, I can't remember the town, but we went to a town past Kumasi, which is, oh, about an hour and a half, 2 hours. That's the other big city. And I should be able to remember the town.

GANZGLASS: [00:14:32] Doesn't matter.

KLUG: [00:14:32] But I can't. But we were there and then we were in maybe, maybe school dormitories. I guess they're out of school during the

summer. And there were at least two guys and one girl. And it wasn't really all that near the place. And I'm just trying to think. The girl went up north where, but if we all learned the language of Twi, which is T-W-I, and I don't learn. I'm very good at writing languages, but I'm not very good at, uh.

GANZGLASS: [00:15:10] Speaking?

KLUG: [00:15:10] At speaking them, which got me through well in high school Latin where we didn't have to speak it much, but it was tough. It was tough for me. So anyway, mostly language training. We had Ghanaian trainers who got us oriented to the culture and things and people in town and a little bit. I particularly met a boy who was, I can't think of his name. Michael. Michael Ageymang, I don't know how to spell it. A-G-E-Y-M-A-N-G, something like that. And he was crippled on crutches and things and we became kind of good friends, although I didn't follow up much with him afterwards, although he followed up with some of my sister's friends and things and managed to talk them into sending him watches and things of that nature. But that was okay. They liked it, I guess they enjoyed doing it and they had the money to do it.

KLUG: [00:16:09] So but anyway, that training lasted, oh, maybe four weeks. And then we went to a university, Cape Coast, which is a teaching, which a teacher's university, and did a little bit more of the orientation into what the teaching was going to be like. Although I can't remember learning a whole lot from that time.

GANZGLASS: [00:16:35] Did you do practice teaching?

KLUG: [00:16:38] Really not. I had, uh, I had been a teaching assistant at the University of Wisconsin teaching chemistry. So I, you know, I had a pretty good idea.

GANZGLASS: [00:16:52] So you knew what you were doing.

KLUG: [00:16:53] Pretty good, as much as you, you know, I mean, you're usually following a professor's lead that's there and trying to guess

what he's going to put on the test. So anything that happens in college. And so I wasn't too nervous about the teaching, although in, unlike the United States, you have to pass tests after you take so many years. And I was in a school that had both ordinary, which is sort of middle school, to high school. And then it had an advanced level, which is sort of a junior college. So you had five years of the middle high school, ordinary level, and you had two years of the advanced level. And after each of those, after the grade school actually, to get into the ordinary level, you have to take an exam. How you do determines whether you go back on the farm and use your machete, or whether you go on to ordinary school.

KLUG: [00:17:56] It also determines whether you get into a good ordinary school or not. After the ordinary five years, you take another test to get into the advanced level. And after the advanced level, you take a test to get into college. And these are very important tests. So it was a lot of, a lot of pressure on me, unlike in high schools, which are important here in the United States, but they don't test quite as well, although now there are, now a lot of these states are doing that.

GANZGLASS: [00:18:23] But so were you teaching at the high school level? What level were you teaching?

KLUG: [00:18:27] It kind of ran, it was a seven year program. It kind of ran from junior high, you know, like seventh, eighth grade, to high school.

GANZGLASS: [00:18:36] Oh, that's where you were teaching. What was the name of the school?

KLUG: [00:18:39] St. Peter's. And the town was Nkwatia, N-K-W-A-T-I-A.

GANZGLASS: [00:18:48] N-K-W.

KLUG: [00:18:50] A-T-I-A. And it was in the Kwahu region. That's K-W-A-H-U. And it was a mission, actually a mission school run by the Divine Word Order. And the principal was a priest named Father. He was German named Father William Glossel, G-A.

GANZGLASS: [00:19:26] Well, you can tell me that.

KLUG: [00:19:28] Yeah, all right, want me to tell you that later, after the thing?

GANZGLASS: [00:19:30] Yeah.

KLUG: [00:19:30] All right. And the vice principal was an Irish layperson, meaning he wasn't a priest or.

GANZGLASS: [00:19:40] Yeah.

KLUG: [00:19:41] But so it was a mission school, which made it actually, not always the mission schools were this way, but a lot of times they were this way. It was away from the village, a mile away from our village. So in some ways the experience was good and it was a very good school and I had good students. In some ways it was not as good because a lot of my friends, you know, just had a house in the middle of the village and actually learned the language a lot better and got to live in a village.

GANZGLASS: [00:20:14] Did you live at the school?

KLUG: [00:20:16] I lived, yeah. They had houses at the school that we got. And so the first year I had a house alone and in the second year, two more volunteers came and we got a bigger house together so.

GANZGLASS: [00:20:28] So were you the first Peace Corps volunteer there or had there been others before?

KLUG: [00:20:32] No, not at all. The person that who had been there the year before named Dennis White had a PhD in chemistry, and he was stolen, as they might say, by the University of Cape Coast. And he moved on there and then I took his place. In fact, the while I was at Cape Coast, the head of the chemistry department wanted to steal me too, because they needed teachers there, but they wouldn't let him

steal me in addition, because I had a master's degree so looked good. But and there had been Peace Corps volunteers before.

GANZGLASS: [00:21:22] So they were used to having Peace Corps volunteers?

KLUG: [00:21:25] They were used to having Peace Corps.

GANZGLASS: [00:21:25] Did the other teachers speak English?

KLUG: [00:21:28] Yes. It's a, I guess the official language is English. The, um, the language in. There's probably at least four or five languages in different parts of the country. So it, um. Educated, you know, students who had been to school spoke English although somewhat of a Ghanaian English. Use the word aluminum and they used a lot of British pronunciation and they, you know, had spellings and had some of their own, um.

GANZGLASS: [00:22:12] Words.

KLUG: [00:22:13] Words that were, you know, Ghanaian of origin. And they spoke with a little bit of a Ghanaian accent that you had to get used to.

GANZGLASS: [00:22:19] But you basically got by on English.

KLUG: [00:22:22] Basically, no. Basically, by the time they were out of, um, out of elementary school, they were supposed to know English pretty well.

GANZGLASS: [00:22:31] So how was your teaching experience in Ghana different than your teaching experience in the United States?

KLUG: [00:22:39] Well, I was only taught in college in the United States, and I only taught as a.

GANZGLASS: [00:22:43] You were basically in middle school, right?

KLUG: [00:22:46] Yeah. Well.

GANZGLASS: [00:22:46] Advanced?

KLUG: [00:22:48] I was all the way.

GANZGLASS: [00:22:49] Oh, you did all of that.

KLUG: [00:22:50] All of it. I had been, I've done, um, from, this was like junior college. I did a little bit of first year. I did some third year. They threw me in in math because they were short on math teachers. I did third year math. I did. And then I took over. It's a five year program. I took over when I came fourth year chemistry and then the next year I did fifth year because that was when they were taking the exams. So I took the kids through that and then I did first year junior college or advanced level the first year, and then I did the second year to take them through the test the second year. And sometimes it'd be in a year I'd have, you know, I'd have 27 or 28, 40 minute periods or so because teachers didn't show up. They tried to avoid going. This was awful in the bushes. They all wanted to teach in the big cities. So they tried to avoid coming after their assignments. And so we'd start the year short on teachers and they'd throw you in.

GANZGLASS: [00:23:58] So let's spend a little bit of time. So where, where were you? Which part of the country was this in?

KLUG: [00:24:05] Oh, I was in the. I was about probably 40 to 50 miles north of the capital, Accra, which is on the, uh, I've got to think direction, east end of the country, on the ocean. And I was north and a little bit east of Ghana, which I would say is in the far southwest of Accra. Which is in the far southwest of the country.

GANZGLASS: [00:24:39] How big was the town?

KLUG: [00:24:45] I didn't really get a population figure.

GANZGLASS: [00:24:47] No, but.

KLUG: [00:24:47] I'd say.

GANZGLASS: [00:24:49] Tiny?

KLUG: [00:24:50] Relatively small, probably under probably 1,000 people or so.

GANZGLASS: [00:24:55] And what was life like in 1972 in this small city, small town?

KLUG: [00:25:02] Well, as I say, I wasn't in the town. I was on the campus. I didn't. I had a nice cement house and a shower and.

GANZGLASS: [00:25:20] Oh you did?

KLUG: [00:25:20] I had showers. And although I tended. We had, in a second house I had. I can't remember if I did in the first house. Second year we had, uh, maybe the first year too. We had a, we collected the water off the roof of the house and it went under the house and the second year I had about 6,000 gallon water tank of rainwater, basically. So the water was very hard, rusty. And so for showers, I used to warm it up and use a bucket for showers because the other water would make you feel dirtier than.

GANZGLASS: [00:26:01] Yeah, yeah. So the first year, were there are other teachers, other Peace Corps there the first year?

KLUG: [00:26:07] No, I was the only Peace Corps, although we had a British couple, an Irish couple, who were almost kind of more permanent there. But and then we had the French also sent volunteers. The British couple was a well-paid, were well-paid non, they were really teachers who did this kind of thing long term. Actually the man was a math teacher, his wife was a nurse. So she served as kind of the school nurse, and they were paid well and had been in Kenya and other countries. Actually, she was originally from South Africa. She was, uh, she was colored, that is, a mix. Her father was Russian, her mother was Afrikaans or whatever. Not Afrikaans, or whatever they call

it, was black basically. And which is an interesting. I don't want to get off on.

KLUG: [00:27:07] But the interesting, it was interesting that the colored had a very interesting point of view of South Africa. They kind of, they were in kind of that middle segment where, and you'd think that they would be for independence, but they really weren't. But anyway. And then the Irish couple were, I think, also paid British, relatively well-paid British. They were both English teachers and he also was headmaster, or assistant headmaster. And they were, I think, a very religious couple. And in fact, I sometimes wondered if they had both, you know, maybe been a priest or a nun or something. I don't know. They kind of.

GANZGLASS: [00:27:52] Had that feel.

KLUG: [00:27:52] They had that feel. But I never asked, I thought it was none of my business. And while they were there, they had a daughter, and the British couple had about a five or six year old son. And then the French couple were young and were serving like they're doing their service much like the Peace Corps. I think they had to do service somewhere. So.

GANZGLASS: [00:28:15] So was that your social group?

KLUG: [00:28:17] Yeah, that was. I don't know if I've said this before, but that was kind of the difficulty of the school too. The administration considered you part of the overall staff. The staff kind of considered you a part of the administration because you're white. And so it was. Maybe it was me, but I think generally we tended to, tended to, you know, group together and didn't have strong relationships with the other staff other than on an academic, you know, point of view. We were pretty much together, although I was basically the only chemistry teacher. We had a biology, basically had a biology teacher. And although what, I guess we did have. I did have a second and we did have a second chemistry teacher. But a lot of times, you know, they went off to their house, they had families.

GANZGLASS: [00:29:12] So you really didn't interact that much?

KLUG: [00:29:15] Didn't interact too much.

GANZGLASS: [00:29:17] Did you stay in touch with the British or Irish or French couples?

KLUG: [00:29:21] Well, actually, I visited the French and Irish couple on my way back, but didn't keep contact with them. I think a couple of times I wrote and I don't know, I can't remember whether they didn't write or write back or what but.

GANZGLASS: [00:29:35] And what were your students like? Did you spend a lot of time with the students?

KLUG: [00:29:40] Uh, yeah. I mean, there was a lot of work to be done. And they were. Actually it was one of the better, better schools and sometimes argued to be. I never sure whether it was true or not, but they argued they were the best school in the country and had the best scores in the country. So there was quite a bit of pressure by the school and the students themselves to do well. I had probably my best student in, um, who took the ordinary level exam. They used to say he came from a farm and, you know, really wanted to get ahead. He didn't want to go back to having to work every day. And they used to say that, some kids told me he had a flashlight and he used to, they were supposed to go to bed, you know, at 10:00, 9:00, 10:00. And he had a flashlight and used to study well into the night so. And he was very bright. Although surprisingly, the school scores on the exams were from 1 to 9. And I think surprisingly on chemistry, about half of my kids got ones. Half my kids got.

GANZGLASS: [00:30:50] One is top or?

KLUG: [00:30:51] One is top. One is top, and about half got a two. I think I had maybe a couple threes and a four. So they were very good students. And I think I saw, I think I got a list of scores. I think he might have gotten a two, which was surprising, but he was very good at math and

everything. He was amazing. I wish I could remember his name. I may have my book, actually, but I'd like to find out what he.

GANZGLASS: [00:31:18] What happened to him? Did he go to, did he go away to college while you were there?

KLUG: [00:31:21] Well, no, because he was in the ordinary level. So he had to.

GANZGLASS: [00:31:27] Oh, he had to still go up.

KLUG: [00:31:27] He had to go on to the advanced level. Yeah. Some of my kids did go to college and a couple of them, I should have followed up more, but I got. I got busy and I feel bad, you know, I feel bad about that. I should have.

GANZGLASS: [00:31:39] But did you travel while you were in Peace Corps?

KLUG: [00:31:42] In the Peace Corps? While in the Peace Corps, we went to the beach often. That was kind of our favorite hang.

GANZGLASS: [00:31:52] How far were you from the beach? Hours away or?

KLUG: [00:31:57] Probably 2 hours total. Sometimes there was a, there was a hostel in Accra, and we used to always meet in Accra and hang out at the hostel, sometimes for several days. And the beds were crude things like that. But I don't know, we were only paying a few bucks a night, so it was cheap. And a lot of people there from the Peace Corps and other places, you know, just traveling around. And so we usually met there and then went down to a beach called Takoradi. And the interesting thing about beaches there is that Ghanaians don't go to the beach, they don't swim, and they think that it's, swimming is for fishermen, which is a low level job. So we used to be on the beach and, you know, maybe we'd have a beach almost all to ourselves. Maybe we'd have no more than ten people pass us all day. So yeah, I went to Hawaii one time and it was like.

GANZGLASS: [00:33:02] All these people.

KLUG: [00:33:02] Hawaii and the Jersey beaches and everywhere else. Whoa, whoa. Where's my, where's Takoradi?

GANZGLASS: [00:33:08] Yeah, your private beach.

KLUG: [00:33:09] Right, private beach. So.

GANZGLASS: [00:33:12] So you saw Peace Corps volunteers a lot?

KLUG: [00:33:15] Yeah, a fair amount. Although we were kind of, not at the beach. We didn't. We kind of hung out with the same people. And always, one fact, what we did was we, there was a castle, an old castle near there and we used to get a room for about a dollar a night there. And it had straw mattresses. And so it was kind of crude, but it was cheap.

GANZGLASS: [00:33:40] This is a Ghanaian king's castle or?

KLUG: [00:33:44] I think it was a British, former British castle, as I recall. And, you know, that used to protect their, um, their hold. They were the, they were the ruling class. And they owned it before, if you will. And actually, Ghana was the first country in the early sixties, I think like '60, '61, that got its independence from Britain.

GANZGLASS: [00:34:15] Mm hmm.

KLUG: [00:34:16] It was called the Gold Coast before that. And then other trip I took. Well, actually, we took one trip up to, um, well, this was called Upper Volta. And I now I think it's back to a French name. It was a French colony just north of Ghana.

GANZGLASS: [00:34:34] Burkina Faso?

KLUG: [00:34:35] Yeah, I believe so. And then we went to, on New Year's Eve, we were at the border of Niger. And I was going to visit a Peace

Corps person I had met, but we kind of were running out of time and there were these, like wooden seated trucks that you had to go. And we kind of chickened out to go up there, and we were kind of running out of time. We had to get back to teach. So anyway, I'm disappointed that I didn't do that, but I didn't know if I could handle after the travel.

GANZGLASS: [00:35:12] What's your most memorable memory of your time teaching? If you think back.

KLUG: [00:35:19] Other than teaching itself?

GANZGLASS: [00:35:21] Well, was teaching itself the most memorable thing?

KLUG: [00:35:23] Well, that's pretty memorable. I guess, we did. I did a trip on my own, actually, to Nigeria, which is west of Ghana. There's two little countries, as I mentioned before, Togo and Dahomey [now Benin], and went to Nigeria and did a circular path in Nigeria. And that trip was kind of exciting. I met someone in Ghana who said, oh, come visit me in Nigeria and I went to, I can't think of the town, but it had been part of the Biafran War movement in the sixties and seventies and it was a little bit wild. And I went there and tried to find this guy, but I couldn't. So I don't know whether he was playing a joke on me or whether they just wouldn't refer me or not. But eventually I found a place to stay and then took off from there. And then I went up to the northern Muslim, um, Islam.

GANZGLASS: [00:36:23] Part of Nigeria?

KLUG: [00:36:24] Called Kano is probably the biggest city, K-A-N-O. And that was interesting and safer, I think, than it is nowadays because that's where they've had a lot of, up in the, um, where they had a lot of the kidnappings and things most recently. The ride up there was very interesting. I happen to be seated next to a young man who had read Time magazine and he was very upset that, uh, the way we wrote about Nigeria in Time magazine and, you know, and how we had sort of indicated, how the article had sort of indicated they were a backward country and everything else. And that Time, for a while I was kind of

worried about the views, a little bit, of upsetting the type of person who I was afraid was going to get upset.

GANZGLASS: [00:37:17] How did you respond to him?

KLUG: [00:37:19] I just listened to him. You know, I said, you know, that's. We write about, you know, we write about our own country and ghettos and things being bad too. I said, you know, you've got to expect that some people who've lived all their life in the United States are going to see it different than you. So I tried to keep him calm. Eventually he got off the train. And but I was worried about him for a while. And the train was interesting in that it was certainly a local and people would get on with their chickens. And I think they had goats. Some people had goats on the train and it was like, oh my goodness. But I, you know, kind of been up to that. And then I got up to Kano and that was interesting. Then I went to Ibadan, which is back near Lagos, and actually they had an interesting zoo there that I thought was more of the today zoo of, you know, open and letting the animals roam and things. It wasn't as big as some of the biggest zoos here in the United States. But it was interesting.

KLUG: [00:38:25] And I guess I was in Lagos, I guess it was in Lagos. I went back to Lagos and Lagos is a very narrow town. It's got four big roads going and you get on a bus and it just, you don't move. So I met some people on the bus who, you know, I was a little leery of, but they were very nice and they said, oh, let's get off this bus and start walking and we can outwalk this bus. So they showed me around and were very nice. Nigeria was an interesting country in that it, there had been war and, you know, it was and it was more, a lot more concentrated population, a lot bigger concentration, a little bigger.

GANZGLASS: [00:39:05] Than Ghana?

KLUG: [00:39:05] Ghana. And so, you know, people told me there was going to be a, I was going to have trouble with the border and getting by and they were going to give me trouble at the border. But actually, the border guards were very friendly. I was, you know, I'm six, I was 6'7",

6'8" at that time. And one of the border guards was almost as tall as I was. And so he was joking around with me. And they were very, they were very friendly to me at the border. Sometimes you get away with the height and sometimes it hurts. But in Nigeria, sometimes they want to pick on you because you're tall. But in Nigeria, I had really no difficulties and they were, to me, most of them were very friendly. Although they were a little more intense.

GANZGLASS: [00:39:47] Did it seem culturally? More intense?

KLUG: [00:39:51] The town, you know, like Lagos is just packed. And, you know, some, you know, you'll see big buildings, but off in the distance, you'll see squalor, you know, just huts.

GANZGLASS: [00:40:01] And you don't have that in Ghana?

KLUG: [00:40:03] Not so much.

GANZGLASS: [00:40:04] You didn't have that?

KLUG: [00:40:05] Not so much in Ghana. Accra was crowded, but didn't have the feel of Nigeria, didn't have the feel of squalor in Nigeria, that Nigeria had. Kind of some. One person told me this, I guess my friend who had been in Kenya, my British friend who'd been in Kenya, said that Nairobi, Kenya, is very modern and looks like a European city. Accra looks like the rest of, in a lot of ways, it looks like the rest of the country. But the villages in Nigeria are very primitive, and whereas the villages in Ghana are much better. So it's a more even distribution of things. The city, Accra, had open sewers and things so.

GANZGLASS: [00:40:58] Where was this?

KLUG: [00:40:59] In Accra, in the capital. And Kumasi, which is the, which is the other big tribal town. Kumasi is K-U-M-A-S-I. So they're a little different. And Nigeria was just, you know, they had oil at the time and it was just a kind of a very crowded. And I think they're doing better now, as is Ghana, actually. But it's just very crowded. Very crowded.

GANZGLASS: [00:41:34] You spent two years teaching.

KLUG: [00:41:36] Pardon?

GANZGLASS: [00:41:37] You spent two years teaching.

KLUG: [00:41:38] Two years teaching, yeah.

GANZGLASS: [00:41:39] And then what happened after Peace Corps?

KLUG: [00:41:41] After Peace Corps, I came home and, well, actually, I spent about three months in Europe. London, France. Went down to visit my friends in southern France, trying to think of the town, but I can't right now. And then went to Switzerland and Germany. I'm German. So actually I did go back to, I did not go back to visit my relatives there, but I kind of would have liked to. But did some hitchhiking and took trains and.

GANZGLASS: [00:42:14] Were you on your own then?

KLUG: [00:42:15] Yeah, pretty much on my own, yeah. I did hook up with a person in Germany who had a car and gave me a ride for a little while. Hooked up with a few people here and there, but pretty much on my own. I could have made it more interesting had I planned it out a little better. I was kind of just doing a wandering, a little bit of a wandering trip, but it was interesting. And then I got tickets to fly back on Icelandic Airlines. So I went to, uh, at that time I was flying out of Luxembourg, pretty much flying out of Luxembourg only for Europe. And I flew from Luxembourg and spent about three or four days in Iceland and then flew back to New York, visited a friend, and came home on the bus.

GANZGLASS: [00:43:02] To Indiana?

KLUG: [00:43:03] Fort Wayne.

GANZGLASS: [00:43:03] Right. Yeah.

KLUG: [00:43:04] In fact, I didn't. My mother was going to go down to the bus station, pick me up. I didn't know that. But I took the, I took the regular Fort Wayne busses home and just showed up. So, so.

GANZGLASS: [00:43:20] And what did you do then?

KLUG: [00:43:23] Um.

GANZGLASS: [00:43:23] What was the reentry hard?

KLUG: [00:43:26] Yeah, um, I, you know, you get this feeling that, boy, we're wasting a lot of resources here in the United States. And, boy, I mean, we're spending 50 times, a kid is using 50 times the resources of a kid in Ghana, so had a little bit of a guilt feeling. I think, I don't know what they're doing. I was talking to them at the Peace Corps meeting. I don't know if they're doing more now, but I thought they could have done a little more because you come back with that enthusiasm. They could have done a little more to, you know, at least general suggestions of how to get involved in the community and things like that. I know they didn't have to connect us with people, but say, you know, have maybe a checklist of, you know, if you're interested in teaching, you can maybe volunteer to tutor and things like that, which I wound up finding some. I did a little tutoring for the university, got paid a little bit but.

KLUG: [00:44:28] And but was looking for a job. I actually went back and started to get my teaching certificate. But another job came up and my father was getting very nervous by that time. I got to get a job, you got to get a job. Teaching is not going to be any good. And so I really had two choices. I could have gotten a, he was driving me a little bit crazy. So I had really two choices. I could have, I had enough money to, you know, get a hotel for the eight months or so, or not a hotel, but a place for the 12 months that it would have taken to get my teaching certificate. Or a job came up with the American Chemical Society, and I decided to take the job in Columbus, Ohio, and get out of there. And so and by that time, I was 28 years old. So it was, he was, to a certain extent, he was right.

KLUG: [00:45:24] I was with, I had the intention of going back to teaching but I don't know, the situation didn't. Situations change. And there are a couple of times I could have done it and I should have done it, but only recently, only in the last ten years have I got my teaching certificate.

GANZGLASS: [00:45:44] Oh.

KLUG: [00:45:44] But that has some work anyway. And mostly I'm doing substitute teaching. I've found that regular teaching is pretty hard. I just don't have that.

GANZGLASS: [00:45:54] What did you, did you stay with the American Chemical Association?

KLUG: [00:45:58] I stayed there 11 years, actually working for a place called Chemical Abstracts Service in Columbus. Their main office is in Washington, D.C. But Chemical Abstracts Service is the tail that wags the dog, they say, the American chemists say. We had about 1,200 employees at the time I was there. And we, and the American Chemical Society has about 350 in D.C.

GANZGLASS: [00:46:24] Wow.

KLUG: [00:46:25] But what Chemical Abstracts does is abstract and index the chemical literature.

GANZGLASS: [00:46:30] Oh.

KLUG: [00:46:31] And uh, they had started computerizing everything because there are, well, now there's I think a million documents published. I believe there are half a million documents that they index and abstract every year. Patents, articles, conference proceedings, everything in chemistry. Chemistry is very big. And it was growing after the World War II, it was growing very rapidly. And so it was taking, they had almost shut down their operation for four months to create a five year index. They had an index, I believe, that was every six months that

they published. And it took them like four months to do, to insert cards by hand to, because there are millions of, you know, there are millions of entries. And so and, you know, doing the compounds and things was difficult. So in the early sixties, actually, there were three organizations, I'm kind of going off topic.

KLUG: [00:47:28] But there were three organizations, British, Germans, and American Chemical Society, that published indexing and half drafting books. The other two went out of business in the late sixties because they didn't computerize. But from very smart thing, they computerized and even put compounds via connection tables. What atoms connected to what atoms. So now what that did for them is it speeded up their indexing tremendously. But it also created a file, a computerized file of chemical compounds. And now that file is probably 125 million different compounds.

GANZGLASS: [00:48:13] My goodness.

KLUG: [00:48:13] And you can search it by a picture basically. You can say, I want a molecule that has this as a part. And then you go into the whole file and it comes up with all the molecules that have that as a part, which is useful to a drug. For example, it's useful to a drug company who may say, I want this, I want a, this is not quite working. It has a bad side effect that's putting you asleep. And have there been other things made like it that we could, you know, we could consider and test or? So that you can find everything.

GANZGLASS: [00:48:49] So you are involved in all that?

KLUG: [00:48:51] Yeah, I got lucky. I originally started by drawing the compounds from the article, but I got moved into marketing and coordinated their workshop program for a while, which was a boring, senseless type of job. But eventually I got, um, I got a chance to get out of there and get into product development. And actually one of the things I pushed first was they used to come. Besides doing the workshops, they used to call me with technical questions about how to search for this or how to find this so. And I started seeing that we don't,

we really didn't have a complete search service that would allow us to do that. So I said, you know, we had to get a search service and do this for people and, you know, get paid for it.

GANZGLASS: [00:49:47] Hmm.

KLUG: [00:49:47] And so I started that and we hired some. They said, do you want to run it? And I said, I don't know. It just doesn't seem like, it's interesting but doesn't seem like it's going to go anywhere. So we hired somebody. I helped him coordinate it and let him do it. Actually, it's grown to about 12 to 15 employees. I thought it had some potential, but at the time to grow. But now it's a really big thing. And they've actually not only have their files online, but they have a whole bunch of other people's files online. So it's a.

GANZGLASS: [00:50:18] It's a big deal.

KLUG: [00:50:19] Not big there, but not big in the total scheme of the organization. But it is, but it got, grew a lot more than I did. And then I got to, then I took over projects that connected reactants with products, chemical reaction file. And I didn't do the technical part of that, but I was a business marketing coordinator and project leader for those things, and also a thing that covers patent formulas, which are vague formulas. You know, it has an X and says X can be chlorine, bromine, methyl and things like that. And so it covered those. So I coordinated both of those projects until I left in '76? '86. And both of them are at least, I don't know how they're doing, but they're at least still running. So that's nice.

GANZGLASS: [00:51:14] So how did Peace Corps have an impact on your life? You've gone back to teaching I hear.

KLUG: [00:51:21] Yeah.

GANZGLASS: [00:51:22] Has it had an, do you think it's had an impact on your life?

KLUG: [00:51:28] Yeah, I think it's, you know, I feel that it's an experience that, um. You know, you can't just visit a country and really understand it. I felt that I got to know people, got to know students at least, not people quite as, not the regular town people, which I wish I had done better. I had more chance to do. But you get to know the kids in the countries and their goals and things like that, that I don't think anybody can do by just visiting for a week or two. And so maybe I'm not even that thrilled about travel. Just, you know, I'm not a real, let's go see this art museum thing. So maybe I don't appreciate travel as much as I could because I feel you're not getting much of an experience sometimes. But it was a good experience. I mean, it's kind of hard to look back and say, oh, I did this.

GANZGLASS: [00:52:23] Well, for some people, they, you know, they became teachers or whatever it is that they did. They spent the rest of their careers overseas. But that really didn't happen with you.

KLUG: [00:52:35] No. I don't know. I just.

GANZGLASS: [00:52:38] It was a good experience.

KLUG: [00:52:39] It was a good experience. And, you know, I actually I did interview for some jobs overseas, but by that time I had friends and things and didn't really go. I could have taught in a Saudi Arabian school. Actually I had an interview with a, with somebody from Saudi Arabia and I thought he asked me all sorts of difficult questions and I thought, oh, he's, we're not connecting at all. And it was about three or four months later, they wrote and said, are you interested? By then I just didn't.

GANZGLASS: [00:53:14] Want to do that.

KLUG: [00:53:14] Probably could have made some decent money there, but just didn't, uh, by that time I was just kind of connected in Columbus and didn't want to.

GANZGLASS: [00:53:23] Do you think your Peace Corps experience had any impact on the country itself, or more broadly, all the teachers that were there and your students? You're a good chemistry teacher.

KLUG: [00:53:37] Yeah, I think hopefully I, you know, kind of set an example of, you know, working hard and digging into things. I think that, um, that had hopefully had an influence on some of the students.

GANZGLASS: [00:53:56] And any thoughts about Peace Corps, its impact on the United States? Has it had any, do you think?

KLUG: [00:54:03] Well, I think, you know, when you see all. When you go to these big meetings and see a lot of people and probably not all of them are there, and what they've done afterwards, I think it's, you know, I think it is. And, you know, I don't know how many. I know you were busy with different things, but one speaker had been, had a high position with the United Nations.

GANZGLASS: [00:54:29] Kul Chandra Gautam of Nepal.

KLUG: [00:54:32] Nepal. Had Peace Corps teachers, and they had a great influence in what was it, Ecuador? What country was it? That somebody, the head of state, you know, had a real good experience with and felt that the Peace Corps volunteer had made a real difference in his life. So I think there are a lot of them. I wish I would have followed more of my students to find out. I did run into one person. I don't know that I ever had him in class, but he kind of remembers me. I don't remember him.

GANZGLASS: [00:55:03] You met him here?

KLUG: [00:55:04] I didn't really meet him, you know, I ran into him on LinkedIn.

GANZGLASS: [00:55:08] Oh, I see.

KLUG: [00:55:08] And we talked a little bit. But, um, but I, again, if I can still. I'm going to have to go back and see if I can find my grade books and things and see if I can look some of these kids up on the internet and see what they're, if I can figure out what they're doing but uh.

GANZGLASS: [00:55:28] Yeah, great. So are you in touch with any of the people from your Nigeria group?

KLUG: [00:55:33] Uh, Ghana group.

GANZGLASS: [00:55:34] Oh, I meant Ghana group. I'm sorry.

KLUG: [00:55:36] A few of my Peace Corps friends there, but not with any of my students. Actually, I had the interesting. I had the son of the head of state while I, in Ghana, was in our school. And I taught him math, I believe, and his dad eventually was overthrown and executed. But I guess he got to Europe for a while. And I happened to run into somebody who knew him and had been going to military school, you know, young military school, when he was young. And they were saying that he's going kind of crazy, I guess, over the whole thing. I guess he's back in Ghana and I don't know. I think I was reading about him, which is a very sad story because he seemed like a pretty nice kid, I guess a little off I read somewhere.

GANZGLASS: [00:56:32] And his father was?

KLUG: [00:56:33] His father was basically president.

GANZGLASS: [00:56:36] Who was that?

KLUG: [00:56:36] Acheampong.

GANZGLASS: [00:56:39] Was overthrown?

KLUG: [00:56:40] In the early '70s, he was overthrown by, uh, shoot, somebody with an American name who has since been, who has since left. But he's the guy who took over was in power for a long time. There

was always articles at the, in the newspapers, full of articles that the previous administration, Tu Acheampong, had been corrupt. And it, uh, which isn't unlike the United States especially today.

GANZGLASS: [00:57:12] Right. So are there any other, anything else you want to talk about your experience? I'm basically out of questions.

KLUG: [00:57:23] Yeah, um. It was a good experience and I'm glad I did it. And, you know, there were things during and afterwards I wish I had, you know, had followed up on, done better. I did have one. I'll give you one more experience.

GANZGLASS: [00:57:39] Sure.

KLUG: [00:57:42] My next-door neighbor was Ghanaian and he was a biology teacher. And we got along pretty well.

GANZGLASS: [00:57:48] Your next-door neighbor in Ghana?

KLUG: [00:57:51] In Ghana, you know, he was a teacher and had a place. Anyway, he, um. I was over. The Irish couple and their daughter were over at his place one day and I had my camera and wanted to take a picture of the daughter who was, I don't know, near the chicken coops or something. But so I took a picture of her and he got very upset. And eventually I had to give up the camera and the film because he said, had done, had some, had stayed with or and had, you know, was friends with some other Peace Corps people who had taken pictures of him while he was asleep. And I don't know, that was kind of taboo. And he was very upset by that. So he was upset with my having taken picture.

GANZGLASS: [00:58:44] Takes your spirit away.

KLUG: [00:58:45] And so, I don't know. It kind of, it was kind of upsetting to me that I. And we didn't talk much, although we worked very close together. But eventually we became friends and he helped me, you know, eventually we got back together and he helped me. He took me

down to get the chemicals I needed for the final laboratory exam. And they did actually, I think I mentioned before, they did actual laboratory exams for their final exams in both ordinary. And so at the advanced level, you had to find some strange chemicals and things sometimes. So he had taken me down and we got to be, our relationship got a little bit.

GANZGLASS: [00:59:26] That's good.

KLUG: [00:59:26] Got a little better again. But, uh. And there was also, we had a snake. He had had a snake in his place. It was a Gaboon viper, which is very poisonous. And he kept it in his lab and the students were supposed to feed it, go out and get mice or whatever, and they didn't do it. So it was a very hungry Gaboon viper. And he'd come in there. It wanted to eat you. But uh.

GANZGLASS: [00:59:54] Great pet.

KLUG: [00:59:55] Yeah. Yeah. And we were always a little, I guess, another little thing. We were always a little. We were supposed to take flashlights and things, but sometimes I couldn't find mine, so I'd go through the. You had to watch out because they could be under a rock or anything.

GANZGLASS: [01:00:09] These vipers, right?

KLUG: [01:00:11] Yeah, Gaboon vipers. But, um, so I used to remember, I used to kind of stomp if I. I didn't go over to the chemistry lab too much at night, but if I did, I'd kind of stomp a lot, wake them up and things. I didn't want to surprise any of them. And then when I got back, I was playing tennis one night. And now I have somewhat of an idea what flashbacks, because this wasn't a really terrifying experience in Ghana. But I kind of have an idea of what flashbacks are. I was playing tennis and I went to get some balls out in the, and all of a sudden I had a flashback of, you know, I'd better stomp and things because there may be snakes out here. And this was in Columbus, in the middle of Columbus, Ohio. So I can see how people who have been in, you

know, attacked and things like that have terrible flashbacks and things.
But that's all, I guess.

GANZGLASS: [01:00:57] So keep stomping, keep stomping.

KLUG: [01:00:58] I've told you all the little details. I've told you a lot of little detail, a lot of little trivia tonight.

GANZGLASS: [01:01:03] Well, it's good. It was a good interview, so thank you.

KLUG: [01:01:06] All right. Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]