

Cheri Damschroder Oral History Interview
Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection
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Biographical Note

Cheri Damschroder served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Honduras from 1977 to 1979 as a home economics teacher.

Access

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Oral History Interview

with

Cheri Damschroder

May 6, 2018
Hutto, Texas

By Barbara Kaare-Lopez

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

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:00:04] Okay. Good afternoon. Good afternoon.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:00:09] *Buenas tardes.*

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:00:10] Yeah, *buenas tardes.* Okay. Let's make sure this thing is working good. I see the numbers advancing. Okay, today is Sunday, May 6, 2018. And we are in Hutto, that's H-U-T-T-O, Texas. And the interviewer is myself, Barbara. I'll spell my last name. K-A-A-R-E hyphen Lopez. I live in Denver and I'm interviewing Cheri, or some people call her Cheri, Damschroder. Okay. D-A-M-S-C-H-R-O-D-E-R. Who lives in Hatch, New Mexico. And she was a Peace Corps volunteer in Honduras. Let me, hold on a minute. It was December 1977 through December 1979, and her job was a teacher and teacher trainee in home economics. Is that correct, Miss Cheri?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:01:14] Yes, that's correct.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:01:15] And in fact, we knew each other in Honduras, which is something just, oh, so special. Okay. Now, Sherrie, did you get a chance to look at the interview questions?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:01:25] I read all the questions, Barbara, yes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:01:28] Okay. And so anyway, for the listener, there's 13 questions, which I see as a guideline. And so we'll be covering possibly all 13 and I'll be asking questions and we can pause, you know, and maybe go back and stuff. It's not a rigid outline as I see it, okay? So Cheri, we're going to start the interview by, if you can describe your present family, work, residence, interests. That's part, first part of the first question. So tell us about yourself, Cheri.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:02:07] Okay. Recently or the last 23 years, I've been living in Hatch, New Mexico. And in Hatch, I was working as a public school teacher in the field of bilingual education and or Spanish teaching and in a very small Mexican heritage rural community. And therefore, in that district, a teacher wore many hats.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:02:35] Okay. I guess in your case, sombreros.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:02:38] Yeah, that's correct.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:02:40] Okay. Okay. Are you retired now, Cheri?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:02:44] I'm retired from public school teaching, yeah. And presently just teaching yoga since, since teaching.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:02:52] Yeah. Where do you live currently?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:02:55] We live on a farm, a pecan farm in Hatch, about 35 acres, which my husband planted in pecans. We raised two boys there. They went to school from K, kinder, no, from first grade

through 12th. And they've left with no interest to come back and farm pecans.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:03:16] Yeah. Okay. And how, where is Hatch? I know it's in New Mexico, but can you tell us a little bit about where it's located?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:03:25] Okay. Hatch is located on the Rio Grande River about an hour, an hour, hour and a half north of El Paso, Texas. So it's in southern New Mexico, which is geographically within the Chihuahua Desert.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:03:39] Oh, I didn't know that. Chihuahua Desert. Okay. What are your current interests now that you've retired from public school teaching?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:03:46] Well, currently I've taken up yoga and have been teaching yoga for ten years, and I created a studio within my house. And, um, I don't know, it's something I've always been interested in, physical activity, from Jane Fonda's aerobic exercises through dance, through Zumba, through everything, and yoga stuck with me. Probably because, not, no, I've just always enjoyed body movement. And so it's been very therapeutic. It's been, um, it keeps me teaching, which I love to do.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:04:25] Teaching, okay.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:04:25] And it's no stress in comparison to teaching in a public school.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:04:29] Yes. Okay. And I think you mentioned to me earlier about your, you've taken up dancing the tango. Is that correct, Miss Cheri?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:04:39] Yes, that's correct. That's correct.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:04:40] Okay.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:04:41] Actually, I had breast cancer about eight years ago. And at that point, I realized I was going to make out a bucket list and fulfill it. And I've got a couple of things down. I spent a month in Australia loving it and I started dancing tango and after about three years I went to Buenos Aires and took intensive lessons and have improved greatly. And I feel like now I'm a sought-after dancer.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:05:08] Oh, good for you. Good for you. Okay, thank you. The second part of that question is to think back to the year before joining Peace Corps. If you can talk about your life then, and you can include your childhood if you choose to, your education, whatever other experiences may have drawn you to become a Peace Corps volunteer?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:05:32] Well, I think what planted a seed really when I was younger in the Lutheran Church, I remember specifically going to presentations my parents would take us to which missionaries would present and they would get in. They would put their slide projector on the huge wall, and you'd have these huge images of third world scenes and them helping people like in Africa. I don't know what they were doing, but the visual of seeing other parts of the world really drew me in, and I think that's where the idea started. And then I remember through high school knowing about the Peace Corps.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:06:18] And throughout college, my parents traveled a lot and traveled a lot to Latin America because my sister was a stewardess on Braniff Airlines and they had passes. They were forever going to Latin America and bringing back these wonderful stories, these adventures, all these artifacts. And it was like, I just knew there was a world out there. So I kept, I pursued Spanish as my major and really loved it and went to study on the study abroad programs when I could. And Peace Corps became my goal, mostly because I knew I would be able to learn the language very well if I was able to live in a, in a native speaking country.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:07:04] Okay. Where did you grow up?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:07:06] I grew up in Sandusky County, Ohio, first ten years on a farm that my dad farmed. And then my dad pursued his lifelong dream, after being a Navy pilot, to actually construct an airport. So he bought property. And when I was ten years old, we moved onto the airport, lived in the hangar while he began a flight school and flight charter. And we lived on the airport, worked on the airport in the office, gassing planes, doing all kinds of physical labor, mowing the runways. We were kept working 24/7 just like them. I mean, it was a business, a family business. And there were always people around. I mean, the lobby of the airport was our living room. So we, you know, I just always grew up listening to stories that people would tell of their flights.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:08:03] Travels.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:08:03] Yeah. I mean, they were, yeah. It was just, uh, it was not a boring life. I mean, there was always something going on.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:08:12] Okay. Tell us about your education, like I'll say after high school. Your college education.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:08:20] Yeah, there are five kids in my family and the oldest was able to go to college. She had the last, I believe she had the last Lutheran scholarship from our church.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:08:31] Oh, they had, okay.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:08:32] Yeah. And she went to a Lutheran college in Columbus, Ohio, and my second sister went off to Ohio University down in the hills. And I remember visiting there and thinking, oh my God, this is beautiful. Northern Ohio's flat land corn and southern Ohio is rolling hills Appalachia. Big difference.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:08:53] Which part are you from? I don't know.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:08:55] I'm from up north, yeah, about 20 minutes from Lake Erie.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:08:58] Oh, from Lake Erie.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:08:59] And then my third brother stayed home and went to the local Bowling Green branch. And when it was my turn, I just followed course. My older siblings went to college. I knew it was expected of me and I was interested in Spanish through all these adventures that I had seen with my parents. So I declared myself a Spanish major and went to the same school my second sister went to, Ohio University in the hills of southern Ohio.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:09:26] Ohio University?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:09:27] Yes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:09:27] What town was that in?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:09:29] That was in Athens, Ohio, which is sometimes confused with Ohio State, but that's in Columbus, Ohio. That's the huge university. So I went to the smaller one.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:09:37] Okay. Are there other experiences you might want to tell us about, that influenced you to become a Peace Corps volunteer? And you might have already told us that.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:09:49] Yeah. I, well, I also figured that there must be something that I could do to help out other people in the world who needed assistance of some sort. But after checking out jobs in Peace Corps, what was available, truly, it was my 4-H experience and my mother teaching me to sew when I was ten years old and forever. I was an avid sewer. I just loved it and would maintain the sewing machines and everything. And ultimately that was the job that was most usable in my Peace Corps experience.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:10:28] Your sewing?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:10:29] Yes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:10:29] Yeah. Reader, I'm going to. Miss Donna, I'm just going to close the doors in case we're picking up any noise. I'm going to come back in one minute. Sorry. Because I'm not sure if it picks up. Okay, thank you, Miss Cheri. The second question is, and you've heard this before, of course, why did you join the Peace Corps? And as I think I've already tried to state, some of these questions might be redundant. So if there's anything else you might want to say. Why did you join the Peace Corps?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:11:00] Well, I truly think that in my gut feeling, I knew that, um, I was, I was interested in really refining my Spanish. I wanted to be fluent and I wanted it to stick. And I knew that if I had an overseas experience and immersion in a Latin speaking, Spanish speaking country, I knew that my Spanish would then stick and I would be much more sellable, I guess you could say, as a, marketable as a bilingual person if I could have that opportunity. And Peace Corps was the perfect format to complete that.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:11:41] Okay. Very good. Okay. We're going to move on to the third question. How did you hear about the Peace Corps? Oh, and what made you decide to apply? Well, let's focus on how did you hear about it?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:11:54] I'm not really sure. It might have been. It might have been my older sister. My older sister later told me she said she wanted to join the Peace Corps when she graduated from college, but she wasn't quite ready to make that decision. And I understand that because it took me about a year after I first graduated from college to actually fill out the application. Maybe just a little more maturity, you know, makes you realize, okay, I'm ready for this big step. It is a big step, two year commitment at that age seems like a decade, you know? Um, and.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:12:30] Did you have to go somewhere to interview? Face to face?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:12:35] No, no. It was so easy back then, my goodness. It was just, I just sent in the paperwork. There were a couple of phone calls. I had two offers initially and quickly in March of '77. Those were both offers to teach English as a second language in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:12:54] Wow.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:12:55] And I truly would have taken something like that. But I had no interest in the Muslim countries, the, you know, the religion. But I was willing to wait it out and wait for a Spanish speaking country.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:13:10] Okay. How long did it take you from the time you applied until the time you got accepted?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:13:16] I think from March to September. I think in September they offered me Ecuador and Honduras, and Ecuador was community development and Honduras was this teacher, teacher trainer in home economics. And that really struck a note, like I say, home economics and 4-H, that just went together and I felt like I could probably create a job out of that.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:13:38] Okay, good. One of the questions, the other part of this third question, did you have a specific country or a project in mind? I think you've kind of talked about you wanted a Spanish speaking country.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:13:49] Absolutely, Spanish speaking. And I didn't know what kind of job, truthfully, that I, that I did want, because back then they just send you these jobs. And it wasn't, like now you can pick out your job. So you just kind of had to wait and see. I guess your recruiter would be your best advocate. I probably would have taught English as a second language, but I would not have been

good at it because I had no teaching experience. You know, fresh out of college, you just kind of.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:14:21] Yeah. Tell me, what year did you graduate from college?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:14:25] Actually, I graduated in '76, but then everyone told me, oh, you're a language major, you're not getting a teaching certificate? And I said, no, I don't want to teach. And everyone said, oh, you better just get the certificate. And I listened to them. And I did stay for the extra semester and did the student teaching. Got the certificate. So I finished that up in the next March when I applied for Peace Corps. And truly, I think that helped me get that job because I had the certification. Because I was in the education program in Peace Corps.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:15:01] And so your, what was your major? What did you graduate in? It was in?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:15:09] Spanish was my major.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:15:10] Spanish. And then got your teaching certificate.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:15:13] With teacher certification.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:15:15] Okay. Thank you. So we're on to the fourth question, which is what were your friends' or families' reactions when you were accepted? You can answer also if there was any hesitation or reservations on your part or their part. Here's the question if you want to look at it. So how about what were their reactions when you were accepted?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:15:40] Well, the only reactions were from my parents, and I think my mom was maybe surprised, but at the same time excited, at the same time scared, just kind of the unknown. But it was never a negative, like, oh, you shouldn't do that. Never. My father was always pushing us to do something. He had no reservation

about it, so there was nothing negative. It was just my decision and I went for it.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:16:12] Did you have any reservations?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:16:14] Not in the least. Not in the least. Once I knew it was a Spanish speaking country, because I had already studied abroad with university groups and I so enjoyed being in Latin America on the just the couple of times that I had gone to, I think Mexico and Peru with my parents one time. It just, it just felt so appropriate that I go there. I had no reservation.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:16:38] Okay. Moving on to the fifth question, which is what project were you invited to join? And then you could also expand on that. How did you prepare yourself and others for dislocation, it says, of entering into two years of Peace Corps service? Or I wouldn't use the word dislocation, but leaving the United States. So what were you invited to join project wise?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:17:05] My, um, my sector would have been education. And then my job specific would be home economics. And they called it *actividades practicas*, or practical activities, which pretty much home based. And it was between the sewing, *corte y confección*, which they called it.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:17:25] Tell me again. Okay.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:17:28] *Corte*.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:17:28] It was cutting, that's.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:17:28] Cutting and, cutting and sewing. *Confección*. Or cutting and fashion. I'm not sure what the *confección* translates as, but it was sewing and fashion. And then nutrition also. So I did, I purchased some nutrition books, you know, vitamins and food groups for, uh, to try to teach in that area. And I was pretty knowledgeable about food and I felt that we always ate very well

or healthfully. My mother cooked from scratch. So it was not like nowadays, you know, there was no prepared food in the house. It was all cooked from scratch. So I felt like I could, may be able to contribute somehow in that area to my job.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:18:20] Okay. Anything else you might want to add about that? How you prepared to enter the two years of service?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:18:25] Well, I bought a waterbed because I knew I was going to a very hot country and someone recommended that. And actually it served well. It was very comfortable.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:18:35] Okay. We are now on to the sixth question, which covers your training. To expand on that, it's where you had your training. If you want to say anything about the faculty, the syllabus, technical studies, things of that nature. Reaction to other trainees. And that it will expand onto the language training. So tell us about your basic training and where it was.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:19:00] Yeah, we had training in country, so we arrived in Honduras and were assigned to a family.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:19:08] What city did you arrive? Where did you live?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:19:11] Yeah, we arrived in Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras, and the first weekend we stayed with volunteers and then we were assigned to a family. And I lived in, I can't remember the name of the barrio, but a very nice single mother with two children and she was a seamstress herself. And I stayed in the second floor level with her niece. I was supposed to have a private room, but I remember upon arrival she said, oh, the niece stays in this room too. Is that okay? And so I said, uh, yeah, sure, that's okay.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:19:46] Yeah.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:19:47] Not knowing that that really wasn't the policy of Peace Corps. And there was a bathroom right there. I guess the toilet was there, too, but God, I remember it was cold water and a bucket, that was, that was our. And it was the dry season, I believe, at that time. We arrived in December. And so there really wasn't any spigot water. It was a bucket of water, cold, and dang, that was cold. And that's the way we lived for three months. She was a fairly decent cook. We had beans and rice and maybe a little chicken sometime. And the breakfast was corn *flacas*, corn flakes with warm milk, that was the interesting part.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:20:28] I'm so glad you translated corn *flacas* and I know what you meant, but we in the United States call it corn flakes. Thank you.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:20:36] Yes, corn flakes, right. Um. So that was where I lived.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:20:42] What was the training like? Faculty, for instance?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:20:45] So we went to the training center. We were divided in groups by language ability. And also then, we were education sector. And truthfully, I can't remember anything in the technical side of training in education that was of any value whatsoever. I can't remember anything. I mean, we visited a couple of schools. And I just, training to me was a waste of time. And I was already a Spanish major and I had lived in other countries because I studied abroad. So I was in the advanced group language and we spoke. It was good practice, but I could have just been put right into a school and started right off. So it really, three months were rather frustrating.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:21:39] For you?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:21:39] Yes, for me.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:21:41] Do you remember what your FSI score was when you entered? And for the listener, that's the Foreign Service Institute, I

don't, language scoring as I define it. What was your score when you entered?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:21:54] I came in as a two plus and I probably left probably as a three plus, something like that.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:22:00] And this is out of five, if I remember right.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:22:02] Out of five.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:22:03] Five is like a perfect.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:22:04] Yeah. Native speaker level.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:22:06] Native speaker. Yeah.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:22:07] Right, right.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:22:08] So you really, I would thought you would have entered higher because of your Spanish.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:22:14] Well, it's conversation and, you know, you had to get your ear acclimated to Honduran Spanish. That was another thing.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:22:20] Yes. Okay.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:22:20] And it was taking a test and you had to figure out, oh, I see what they're doing in the test. They're using a different tense in each question, progressing to the more difficult tenses to see what you can recognize. Yeah, it's just, it could have been higher, but it wasn't. That's just the way it goes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:22:35] Any special reaction that you might think of or want to include about the other trainees in your group? Oh, how many people were in your group? Do you remember that?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:22:45] I think there were 19 to 21, 23, something, somewhere around 20 trainees. I think we were all education. I'm pretty sure we were all education, and uh, I think I was only. No, no, no. Mary Beth Mayor. She was in same thing I was, *actividades practicas* or home ec. Yeah. And she was a home ec major. So that was a little difference between her and I. I spoke Spanish. She was the home ec major. We should have worked together.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:23:17] What did you call it again, *actividad*?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:23:19] *Actividades practicas*.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:23:19] *Practicas*. Okay. Practical activities.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:23:23] Meaning practical in the home, I guess.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:23:27] Okay. Um. Okay. How, well, language training. You've already kind of addressed that. Anything you might want to add? Because you came very well-prepared language wise.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:23:41] Yeah. And since I kind of trained as a Spanish teacher, I saw the strategy they used on the trainees. It was totally immersion. And immersion meant that you sat with a native speaker, a Honduran native speaker teacher, and they taught you language, but their weakness was the structure of the language. They were not able to outline the structure of the language well enough for beginners, I thought. I mean, just looking back at teacher techniques and how I, because I did teach Spanish then for a number of years and taught at the university level. I remember people asking me for explanations in the grammar, etcetera. So I was very critical of. But they did the best they could. I mean, you know, it's, yeah, it was a third world country. They're not going to get Spanish teachers with American training.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:24:45] Okay. Anything you'd like to say about the selection process, you know, any surprises with it? Disappointments,

enjoyments? If there's anything you might want to say to that. Was everybody selected after training? Obviously you were selected.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:25:06] You mean passing training and going on to be a volunteer?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:25:08] Yes, that's what I guess.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:25:09] I think everyone, I think everyone was selected. I'm not sure that, I don't think anyone dropped out of our group. There might have been one volunteer that dropped out during training. I don't remember. I don't remember anything significant about that. I think we all just got our jobs, went to our sites, and I don't remember anything particular.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:25:30] Okay. And the here's the last part of that question, which I think we've addressed, but you might want to add something. Did training prepare you? Was it useful to your Peace Corps service?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:25:40] I think the most useful part of training was just the cultural side of, you know, we went on our site visits. You need to learn how to use the bus system, navigate the health situations, what to eat in restaurants, what not to. You know, don't use a wet glass, don't have ice in your glass, you know, to avoid. There was no bottled water. You always had to drink beverages from closed containers like Coca Cola or beer, you know. And that's pretty much that's how I got about four cavities at the end of my Peace Corps service from, you know, I'm sure from drinking Coca Cola.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:26:19] Yeah. Okay. Moving on to the seventh question. Now this question talks about your initial entry into the Peace Corps training, reaction to the country where you were assigned. And then the second part is about describing your project, and or the Peace Corps staff. Okay. What was your initial reaction to the country?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:26:45] My initial reaction to the country.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:26:48] Which is Honduras.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:26:49] Yeah. And because I had been in Mexico, Peru, and Spain, my initial reaction to Honduras was, oh my God, it's so dirty.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:27:00] Okay.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:27:00] It was so dirty. People were much less healthier. People had very poor quality teeth. And that's, you know, there were teeth missing everywhere. And it didn't dawn on me for a while, but I thought, why am I not understanding their Spanish?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:27:21] Interesting.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:27:21] I understand Spanish. I've spoken Spanish in countries where, you know, I'm fluent and conversing and all that. And I couldn't understand it. And it took a while, but I put two and two together. Number one, phonetically, because there was such a problem with so many missing teeth, they could not pronounce, um, consonants well. So their Spanish was very garbled sounding. And the other factor to me was that Honduras was a country where the education level of the common person might have been third grade. So you're working with a very illiterate group of people, and many times speaking with the people we came in contact with, was they would speak in phrases, not complete thoughts or sentences, um, you know, like, isn't that right? *Es veras. Verida, verida, verida.*

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:28:20] Yeah. You're not, yeah.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:28:22] Vera. They did not pronounce it well. And so you had all these deleted final consonants and stuff like that and you really had to acclimate your ear to the deletion of consonants mostly and garbled vowel sounds, etcetera. And of course we all mastered it. You know, I felt like we all spoke campo Spanish.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:28:44] Yeah, yeah. Okay. What would you like to say about your project? And I just because I know, Cheri, you started off in a town, I think, in southern Honduras and then moved. So your first site, I'll say, describe the project. Oh, we've, Peace Corps staff. I mean, I think we kind of, if you want to say anything about that. Your impression of the local people, the physical environment. This is question seven. And what was your first site?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:29:15] My first site was, um, God, it was south of Danli. El Progreso? Oh dios mio. No, El Paraiso. El Paraiso.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:29:26] And what does that mean in English?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:29:27] That means paradise.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:29:29] Yeah.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:29:29] And Danli was the town just north of there. It probably took an hour or an hour and a half to get to Danli and then another half hour to get south towards El Paraiso. And that was just on the road to Nicaragua.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:29:46] Okay.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:29:46] Probably the road to Esteli, Nicaragua.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:29:48] Did that have a name, a number, the road or?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:29:51] I can't remember that, but it's a direct road to Nicaragua. And one time I went down to the border and I don't know if we walked an hour to the border or if we took a taxi. I don't remember. I think it kind of been, it might have been an all day, you know, just a walk down there with some friends that I had that came to visit. So it was real close to there. It was dry season when I was placed there, probably in March, and Peace Corps found me a place there. I was a single woman. Very small town, had coffee around

there because there were some coffee production buildings. So this doctor had a patio and a room out back and that's where I was to stay. And I think, I think Peace Corps staff arranged that. So I, I had a room, and I was supposed to work in this school.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:30:47] It was an old building with a patio in the middle and some rooms around the outside that really didn't have any lighting, maybe a window or two. And I remember going in to observe some classes. You know, I took a few days to observe, and I remember this teacher on the blackboard teaching the class about the ruler, a 12-inch ruler, you know, and in a typical classroom there, everyone's got their little *cuaderno*, you know, their little notebook and a pencil. That's, that's the standard equipment in a school. It's copy whatever the teacher says into your notebook and then regurgitate it for a test. That's the typical, that to me is the educational process there. So he was up on the blackboard with his ruler and chalk and he would mark out, okay, number one is one inch. And then he, I don't know, I guess the kids wrote down one inch or *una pulgada* and then two, two inches, you know.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:31:52] And it was so, the lesson was so simplistic that I'm going, oh my God, are we, you know, and we're teaching, what, sixth graders what the ruler is? You know, just it just seemed like that was, that was a real, that was a little bit of culture shock there to see what type of lesson they were regurgitating. And I didn't really have, you know, I don't remember the classwork there, what I taught. It's just strange, um, because there wasn't a, there wasn't a home ec room or anything that I can recall. But I suggested doing gymnastics after school with a group of girls because I noticed how they didn't have PE, you know, and I was a real PE nut.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:32:35] Did the boys have PE or no PE whatsoever?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:32:38] I don't recall. There's probably a basketball hoop there. And, you know, at recess they played basketball or they probably, they could have played soccer, too, on the cement patio. You

know, everyone played soccer. But to me there, that was the only thing that I can remember. I had these little girls, this group of girls, and we'd go out to this little grassy field and I'd teach them somersaults. I'd teach them just little body movement stuff, you know. And because I remember, I considered myself an athlete back then, and I remember touching some of the girls and their flesh was just so fleshy, you know, like their arms. There were no biceps. And, you know, it's, you know, to me that was a big thing. So I thought, oh, this is, this is appropriate.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:33:15] Were the girls interested? Did they like that?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:33:17] The group of girls, yeah, they enjoyed it. They enjoyed being with la gringa, you know, like Anita.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:33:24] But sorry, I'm laughing, listener.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:33:25] The living situation there. I was only there three months, and in this one room, the bathroom, I turn on the water and I remember the shower coming out black. It was.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:33:40] Black water?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:33:40] Black, yeah, it was probably sediment, you know, you flush the toilet and it would be black, you know. And I remember having either cystitis or, you know, like a urinary tract infection or something or other. And I was a woman. At night I couldn't go out. I had to stay in.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:33:56] And why was that, Miss Cheri?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:33:59] It was a small, small town, and it just wasn't culturally appropriate. I mean, we were taught that, you know. You didn't wear shorts, you had to wear a dress or pants and uh. Oh, God. It was just there was nothing to do outside of just go to your work. And I just didn't. I remember the director of the school would line the kids up in the morning, you know, and he came from a military

background and it was just like, okay, kids. Stand up. Stand up straight. No, no, no. All right. We're going to sing the national anthem. We're going to say the pledge or pledge of allegiance. I don't know, or whatever they said, I think. Well, the national anthem probably, because all the schools started out, a lot of them started out with the national anthem in the morning. And after a while, this was my impression. It was my impression that he wanted a Peace Corps volunteer there because he thought he could get some money for the school.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:34:57] Okay.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:34:57] And I was clueless to that. You know, it was like money, for what? You know, I just was clueless. And, you know, that was my first job out of college. And I really didn't. I had no, uh, I was observing. I wasn't creative. I was observing what was going on.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:35:13] And was this elementary level, middle school, high school? I don't know if you said.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:35:17] I would say, oh God, I would say this is like K through eight maybe. It was not high school I don't think. I'd say K eight. I can't remember, but I'd say K eight.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:35:27] Were you actually, actually, uh, listener, we've actually kind of moved on to question eight too about her first assignment. Did you actually get to teach sewing? At the first school?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:35:41] I don't think there I did. Like I say, I can't quite even remember teaching. If I did something during the day, I must have done something. But I don't remember.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:35:50] Okay.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:35:50] I just remember because the gymnastics thing was much more memorable.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:35:54] And that was something you chose to do after school?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:35:57] That was probably an extra, yeah, that is so weird that I can't remember. Um. I don't think I had a classroom either. You know, I do remember a teacher meeting and at the end of the teacher meeting they brought out the rum and sat it on the table and.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:36:10] Ha! Sorry, listener, okay. Now, Miss Cheri, would you repeat what you just said? They brought out the rum.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:36:15] Yeah, yeah, it was.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:36:16] That's what I thought you said.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:36:17] You know, it was like closure, you know, okay, the end of the meeting. Now let's all have a drink of rum and then we'll go home. And I thought, oh, this is pretty cool, you know?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:36:25] Yeah. Were there other Peace Corps volunteers in your town?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:36:29] No, there was nobody.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:36:31] Okay.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:36:32] No. There was an old lady volunteer who was working at La Escuela Normal, which was between Danli and El Paraiso on the road. And I would go up there and spend the night with her like on the weekend. Escuela Normal, I think, is a teacher's preparation for, like, high school kids. And it was all girls, and she had a little casita there. And so we could go up there and I could stay with her. And she was about 70 years old and I think she smoked cigarettes and she would drink those little fruit juice cans, you know, and she'd put her rum in there. And boy, I really liked the rum and fruit juice, you know.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:37:07] It sounds like rum is a theme in this, this answer right now.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:37:11] Yes, it is.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:37:11] Okay. Rum at the end of the meeting and then rum with the volunteer.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:37:16] Mm, yeah. And she was.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:37:17] What kind of rum did you drink?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:37:19] Flor de Caña.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:37:20] Oh yeah. Okay.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:37:21] Flor de Caña. The flower of sugarcane.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:37:23] Yeah, yeah. You know, I drank that too, Miss Cheri, come to think of it. Okay. Anything else you might want to say? Because I know, you know, you moved to La Saber then. Anything else you might want to say about El Perspire? Am I saying that right, Miss Cheri?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:37:40] El Paraiso.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:37:41] Oh, I think that's perspiring. Sorry, listeners.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:37:45] That was Maggie's site.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:37:47] Sorry, listener. She was in Paradise.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:37:49] Okay, the last thing I want to say.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:37:50] Tell us more about Paradise.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:37:52] I complained to my program manager about the director, um, mostly that I didn't feel like I had any rapport with him, you know? I felt like I was his subject. And, you know, he just was a military weirdo. And I just didn't, I couldn't communicate with him. And then I used the black water in my house as an excuse too that said, this isn't very healthy for me, you know. And I said, wouldn't there be another site where I might be able to work more with, um. I don't know.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:38:29] What you came to teach perhaps?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:38:31] Yeah, what I came to teach, yeah, sewing and sewing and. Yeah, because I really. I don't think I had a classroom and it had no, there was no equipment obviously. So, yeah, you had to innovate everything. But she had an idea and so she pursued it. And I went to see a couple other sites. AID had given money.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:38:50] What is AID, Miss Cheri?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:38:52] Okay, AID is Agency for International Development. They gave funding to a couple of these schools to provide sewing machines and like kitchen equipment for the course in practical activities or home economics. So I went to two schools and saw their facilities and the one that I liked was up in La Ceiba.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:39:16] Okay. Will you spell La Ceiba for us?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:39:18] La Ceiba, two words. L-A space C-E-I-B-A. That refers to the La Ceiba tree, but it was a town on the north coast of Honduras, originally a fruit company town.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:39:33] Which fruit company?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:39:34] Well, Standard Fruit, I believe. I don't know that it was United. Standard Fruit at that time. But they had a school there that was constructed by AID, a cement block school. And another volunteer had been in that school doing, um, workshop. Uh, shop,

what we called it in the United States with woodworking tools and all kinds of tools. And so they had a kitchen there, classroom, and they had sewing machines which had never been used. And I thought, oh my golly, this is it, you know, so.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:40:11] Did the sewing machines look like they were in good condition?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:40:14] Oh, they were brand new. Yeah, they were provided and never used. And so we agreed that that would be my next site and I was thrilled.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:40:22] Good. Okay, okay. So now, okay, you were three months in your first site. About when did you go to La Ceiba? So that would be 1978.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:40:32] Probably July, July of '78.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:40:35] Okay, what would you like to tell us about your job in La Ceiba? You've already started, you know, that they actually had equipment, sewing machines. Um. Did you have a counterpart?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:40:47] Yeah, I had a counterpart, a very sweet woman. Um. And again, I think she probably had a high school education. If you complete, I think the rule was in Honduras that if you completed your high school education, you could teach.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:40:59] Okay.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:41:00] I don't think you needed any college training at all or teacher certification. It was just a high school diploma. So she taught *actividades practicas* and.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:41:12] Home ec also or just sewing?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:41:14] Well, no, there was, there was a nutrition portion.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:41:17] Nutrition.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:41:17] Food. And then there was the, yeah, the *corte y confección*, the sewing portion. And I don't know which was first. I don't know if we went right into sewing. I think, I think we might have gone right into the sewing. So anyways, I got all the machines out and I was able to grease them, make sure they all worked and everything. And that was the most creative part. I did a really good job of allowing, there must have been ten machines. And so I taught the kids how to sew by using a piece of paper, drawing designs on the paper. And they had to maneuver the paper around so that they could train their eyes and hands to use the, you know, the presser foot and the needle, etcetera. And that was fun. And then I should have, I tried to think of something simple to make. So I came up with gym shorts, which is really complicated. I should have made tea towels or pillowcase or something like that, like I did in 4-H.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:42:18] Did they have a zipper? Did you have to?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:42:20] No, no, no.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:42:21] Just like elastic?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:42:22] Elastic top. But, you know. And then taking measurements of the body, using the measurement tape, I thought that was educational, etcetera.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:42:28] They could have used that ruler concept then.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:42:31] That's right, from the other school.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:42:33] That the first teacher taught in the Paradise.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:42:35] Yeah, it was, it was fun. But I was in my element there and we did it. And the funny part is, you know, you saw which kids actually did the sewing themselves and then you saw the ones that

took them home and let someone else make them and bring back these perfect little shorts, you know. And that took a whole semester because they had to go through and learn how to use the machine. And I think we gave them a test, you know, what part is this? What's this? What's this on the machine, you know, etcetera. And I remember, this is just one thing that sticks out. I remember the boys did it too.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:43:08] Oh.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:43:08] And I remember.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:43:09] Was it a coed class?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:43:10] I think it was. I think it was. Or else there were girls and then there were boys, I don't know. But I remember having this guy and I remember because he was sewing on the paper, you know, and guiding with his hands like this. And I was looking at his hands and by golly, if he didn't have six fingers on each hand.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:43:25] Oh, really?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:43:25] He had a full extra digit and it was like, oh my, you know, that was the first time I'd ever seen something like that. So I was like, boom. Actually, I had actually had one student in Hatch who had the extra digit too.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:43:40] Uh huh.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:43:40] She was a cheerleader. But anyway.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:43:42] Okay. Um, how did you do with your counterpart? You've already started talking about her.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:43:48] Well, she wasn't. She was real sweet. And like I say, they don't have much education.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:43:54] Yeah.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:43:55] But, you know, I would suggest things, and she'd go, oh, yeah, yeah, very in agreement. Oh, that's a good idea.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:44:01] And?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:44:03] Well, this conversation was stop there. It wasn't like we could, you know, develop it. And, you know, she would have ideas and I would have ideas and we'd grow into a wonderful activity out of this. She would just be very agreeable to anything. So it was kind of like, whatever you want to do, whatever you want to do.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:44:17] So did you, I'll use the word guide her to further projects, maybe more complicated projects?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:44:26] You know, I would be real curious to know if she ever did sewing again. You know what I mean?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:44:31] Okay.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:44:32] She's kind of, because her materials that she used for cooking and all that was just like a little recipe out of a magazine she had. And her little file of material was very limited. And it was just all, you know, cut outs from places. It wasn't like, here's the, here's the curriculum for *corte y confección*.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:44:53] I'm glad you said that. So there was no curriculum.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:44:56] I believe that there really was not a written guide.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:44:59] Okay.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:44:59] I mean, that I can recall. I really don't think so. And if there was, uh, it wasn't, didn't leave an impression on me and I didn't see her use it. So yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:45:13] Okay. What, describe a typical workday when you went to, what was the name of the school? Did you tell me, Miss Cheri?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:45:19] Escuela Manuel Bonilla.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:45:23] Okay. Will you spell Manuel Bonilla for me?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:45:26] Manuel, M-A-N-U-E-L. Bonilla, B-O-N-I-L-L-A. And he was probably some historic figure.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:45:35] Yeah, I think so. I can't tell you what he did. Okay, um, what was a typical day?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:45:41] Well, I would go in in the morning and it would, it would be two parts, and then you come home the hot part of the day, probably from 11:00 to 1:00 or 2:00, and then go back from 4:00 to 6:00.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:45:54] Was it like a siesta, would you say?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:45:57] Yeah, yeah, yeah, I think so. Yeah, it was a split day. And, oh God, it was hot in the middle of the day. And I finally got a bicycle, so I got burned so bad walking. I had to learn to use a hat, learn to use sunglasses. Coming from Ohio, you know, those were foreign instruments to me.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:46:18] Okay.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:46:18] And then I got a bicycle so I could quickly zip into school and back. That was wonderful. La Ceiba was a good town to have a bicycle.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:46:26] Yeah, yeah.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:46:26] Perfect town for a bicycle. So it would be a two part day.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:46:30] With new students in the latter part of the day?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:46:33] Yeah, yeah. Different classes. Probably two or three classes a day. Um, yeah. And we would both, you know, the sewing part I pretty much taught all by myself. And she observed and helped me and just answered questions. When we went into the nutrition part, I didn't feel like I was as helpful as I could have, and that's because of my lack of academic ability to create a curriculum I didn't know how to teach.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:47:05] And this was your first teaching job, correct?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:47:07] Absolutely. Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I had, I had, I was a practice teacher or what do you call it, student teacher. But that was in Spanish and that was worthless. I mean, gosh, that was worthless. Yeah, that experience.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:47:22] Sorry, I'm laughing.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:47:23] I don't remember anything that I learned, you know, other than, here's the book, read this page. And you know, and it was Spanish structure. So I don't, the teacher, I don't know. It just wasn't a good experience.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:47:35] Tell us about your living conditions then in La Ceiba.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:47:38] I must say it really was comfortable. It was a very hot, humid, low climate. And there were a couple other volunteers in that town. So that was really comfortable. And there was a guy who was an engineer who worked in the town and, oh, and he had a horrible living situation. He had rats.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:48:02] Oh my goodness.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:48:02] Coming through the room that he had. And so when I got there, I stayed in another volunteer's house for about a month and we agreed to look for a place together. And we found a little old wooden shack that another volunteer was finishing up and we

said, oh, well, we'll rent your house. And so we both moved in. He and I moved into that house.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:48:22] And that was Pat Hackett I believe?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:48:23] That was Pat Hackett. And next door was the landlord. Landlord.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:48:27] What was their last name?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:48:28] Oh my God. Their last name was Foreskin. Oh my. A Black family.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:48:32] Can you spell that?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:48:33] No, I don't know. F-O-R-E-S-K-I-N? And oh, that was always a, that was always a nice joke to remember. Anyway, it was a Black family. They were real nice. They lived next door and their, their bajo, or underneath their house, their bajo was a full story high. Ours was just three feet high. It was an older wooden structure with, you know, the termites would come and eat slats and we would have to, we'd have to let him know, oh, this board needs replacing. And they were real good about it because, you know.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:49:05] So termites were a big problem.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:49:06] Oh, termites were a big problem. And then the windows were just wooden doors to close the window.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:49:12] Like shutters, would you say?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:49:14] No, no, not like shutters. Just a solid wooden door to close the window.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:49:18] And did you have screens?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:49:19] No, there were no screens. That's just it. It was very hot at night because you had to close them. So the first thing anyone would buy there would be a fan. And I had my waterbed there and my engineer roommate was great. He went under the house and made sure that my waterbed wouldn't fall through the termite-ridden floor.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:49:37] Yeah. I wouldn't have thought of that.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:49:39] Oh, I could have, that could have been a disaster.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:49:41] Yeah, you and the termites sleeping on the ground.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:49:44] He put a support underneath it, so that was great. And we got along really well. He was. I cooked, I was a horrible cook, but whatever I cooked, he'd say, oh, this is great. And then he'd do the dishes. And it was, we had a real good understanding. He was a wonderful roommate.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:49:59] Yeah. How would you describe your relations with the people, the other Hondurans?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:50:07] Oh, overall, with the other Hondurans, I was able to speak Spanish and I felt so fortunate because I saw how other volunteers struggled, especially their first six months or year.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:50:17] Yes.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:50:18] While they were learning the language and trying to have a job. I mean, I was able to speak, understand, even helping other people out. And like I say, I quickly identified the education level of the Honduran population. You could tell the difference if you, if you were talking, if you were talking to an educated professional in Honduras, they were much more articulate and open minded and more worldly, I guess you could say. But generally, I think in the rural parts, you had third grade education, maybe in the cities an eighth grade education.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:51:00] Really?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:51:00] On the average, yeah, because in Honduras, you had to pay your matricula, you had to pay your.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:51:07] What is a matricula, Miss Cheri?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:51:08] Your tuition, you know, you have to pay. I can't remember. I think maybe the first three grades were free, maybe one through six was free education. And then after that, if you wanted to continue, you had to pay. And it was already.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:51:21] And this is in the public schools?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:51:22] Yeah, this is public school. And you already, you had to wear a uniform. You had to pay for your uniform. You had to pay for your books, of which there were no textbooks. There was just nothing. I mean, your, your materials or your *cuadernos*, your notebooks, and your resources was just what the teacher put on the board and what you copied down. That was the system. And you were tested on what the teacher wrote on the board and what you wrote down. That's pretty much the way it was. There was a library in my school.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:51:53] Did people use it?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:51:54] It was, it was like locked up. You couldn't borrow. You could go in and look at something. But, you know, I don't think it was a loaning out library and it was very limited. It didn't have much. It was kind of ironic because, well, here's our library. Oh, okay, can you use it? No, but here it is. You know, it just existed and it was very limited. It was of no use, in my opinion.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:52:21] Okay. Anything. Oh, how many Peace Corps volunteers ended up, well, living in La Ceiba besides you? You had

mentioned there was at least a couple, but I think there was probably more over time.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:52:34] Yeah, they'd come in and out. I think probably there could have been a one or two in the health sector. My roommate was an engineer with the city. I was with education. Um, 3 to 5 maybe at one time. Three to five. And then, oh, then Don Pendleton came in. He was bug man. He was an entomologist.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:52:56] Yeah.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:52:57] Tom Green came in for a while. He was maintenance in the hospital. Um. Yeah, maybe six.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:53:02] There was a nurse I know, Carol Denison.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:53:04] Carol. She worked as in one of the hospitals, in the hospital there. Yeah. And then Fay came in towards the end. Might have been as many as six at one time, I guess, in the town.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:53:16] What did you do in leisure time? And then I'm going to add, did you hang out with the Peace Corps volunteers a lot? Tell us about your leisure time in La Ceiba.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:53:23] Leisure time in La Ceiba. You know, this was the first time I was able to, well, especially in the rainy season, I remember reading books. I was not an avid reader of novels, but I remember reading *The Thorn Birds* on a week when it rained three or five days straight. I mean, just one of those, you know, you just lay there and read forever because it was difficult to go out. Um. And, well, since I lived with a man, it was really easy to disguise myself. I think most of us thought, most of the public thought that we were probably a couple, and that was very nice. It was very comforting. I didn't have problems like maybe some other volunteers did, or single women. We were able to go down and have a beer. We were able to go to the beach. We may have gone to the movies.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:54:22] You were on the Caribbean, weren't you?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:54:23] Yeah, that was the Caribbean side, the Atlantic side. Yeah, the Gulf of Mexico. No, that would have been the Caribbean. The Gulf of Mexico is up north. Yeah, it was the Caribbean. And, um, yeah, I remember on weekends we even rode our bikes all the way to the Playa De Peru, Peru Beach.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:54:42] And how far would that be?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:54:44] I would say we rode our bikes, I don't know, 45 minutes to an hour. I really can't remember.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:54:49] One way?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:54:50] One way, yeah. We'd take the road, cross the bridge, and then find the trails that led to the beach. And that was fun. That was fun to just go out there and spend the day there and then ride the bikes back.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:55:06] Did you make Honduran friends?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:55:11] Um, yes and no. I think we made acquaintances, you know. And I remember Hondurans coming over to the house to visit, probably more Pat, Pat, my roommate's friends. They were males. A couple of the neighbors would come over and visit. There was a little girl that, a neighbor girl that would come over and hang out and we'd talk to her. And I remember when her mother died, that was an interesting adventure. Her mother died and we went over to her house because they buried the body within 24 hours. And everyone's there crying and wailing. And the wake lasts 24 hours. And the body was in a box, a wood box coffin. And there was a little window with glass. And you were obviously supposed to go pay your respects by looking into this little window and seeing this dead body.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:56:03] It was closed?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:56:04] Yeah, it was closed. And I remember little Miriam, the girl, she might have led us right over there and said, see, look, look, there's my mother. Take a look. And that's how you would pay your respects, by looking at the body, you know? And, you know, give her a hug and then visit, you know, the next few days to make sure. And I remember frequently, you know, the procession, maybe the procession to the graveyard, where they would carry the body, carry the box and the family, etcetera, would walk down that same road. And that would be the funeral procession. There were no vehicles, no nothing. It was just the family carrying the box to the graveyard.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:56:50] Carrying.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:56:50] Yeah, carrying the box.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:56:53] Huh.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:56:54] Yeah. I don't, I don't recall any wagons or carts, you know. And of course, a lot of small coffins, you know, the little babies that would die. You could always tell, oh, that's a baby died. And we lived on a dirt road behind the main paved road. And I think there was a railroad track also because there was a factory beside our house.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:57:14] What part of La Ceiba did you live in? I mean, did it have, did the neighborhood have a name or?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:57:20] Yeah, I think it was called La Blanquita because the factory that was there was La Blanquita and I think that was the lard processing. What was La Blanquita? It was like, it was a trademark.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:57:33] Might have been.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:57:34] Lard or something. And they needed delivery trucks to go in and out and a railroad went by there. So there was a, not like trains went by our house. I think there was just a track there because it went down the street. And I remember just always walking over the tracks to get wherever we were going. But it was quiet because it was off the, off the main drag. It wasn't close to the beach, it was on the opposite side of town. It was quiet. Yeah, it was nice. We had a huge mango tree in the back yard and that was always fun. So we always had mangoes.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:58:04] Productive with its mangoes?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:58:06] Oh yeah. Yeah, it was a big tree. Mature tree.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:58:09] Good. Okay, now we're going to question nine. End of the first year with Peace Corps. What would you like to tell us about? And these are examples that you don't have to answer all of them, any notable events that come to mind? Joys, woes. Any reflections at that time, after a year, unexpected events, relationships. They even have a few more examples. Any health problems, vacation, travel. After your first year, what can you tell us?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:58:43] I think the biggest thing after one year, you know, the two year commitment that you make, at one year, I think a lot of people probably reflect and say, do I want to stay and do this again, you know? And I really didn't feel like I was happy with my work.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:58:59] Oh, you weren't?

DAMSCHRODER: [00:59:00] No, I didn't feel productive. I don't know. I had some dissatisfaction. And I thought, you know, should I? I just remember thinking about, this is one year. Do you want to stay? Do you want to quit? Just because of the time frame, I guess, more than anything. And at the one year my parents came down, it was Christmas, and my parents came down and visited.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [00:59:27] Okay.

DAMSCHRODER: [00:59:28] And I think that might have helped me to decide, okay, I can do this for one more year, I think, I think that helped. They really enjoyed it. They enjoyed seeing where I worked. They enjoyed, I took them to a church on Christmas Eve and all these little Black girls were dressed up as angels. I'll never forget that. It was so cute. And that was memorable to them. And then I took them to my counterpart's house, which was on top of a store front, and we went up this rickety staircase and she served us Coca Cola and cookies. And that was a cultural, a little cultural experience for them. A very dark room, you know, with curtains hanging, separating the living room from the kitchen. And I took my mom and dad to the beach and then I took them into the city, the capital. And, uh, I remember I was dating a guy and I thought, oh, I better tell my parents I'm dating a guy. I never told them in letters.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:00:28] Was his name Paul by any chance?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:00:29] Yes, it was.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:00:31] Okay.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:00:31] And I just thought, oh, I'd better quickly tell them. Oh, and by the way, because you're probably going to meet this guy.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:00:35] Yeah.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:00:36] I just never, you know.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:00:37] And where did he live?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:00:38] He lived in Tegucigalpa. So uh.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:00:40] So you lived hours apart?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:00:42] Yeah, we were three and a half hours apart, so I didn't see him but once every three weeks or something like that. And so when we went into Tegucigalpa, he and I, my Peace Corps boyfriend, Paul, and I took my parents out to dinner. And then the next day I took them to the prison, which was a fascinating place, because the prison, the national prison in Tegucigalpa was conducted like a small community and had all these workshops inside the prison.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:01:12] Yes, yeah, I remember that.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:01:12] It was a fascinating thing to see. And my father, who was a state representative, was just fascinated with seeing how a prison system in another country worked. And they actually made musical instruments there. They made hammocks there. They made, um, just a workshop to make anything. And so we bought, I bought a guitar, my dad bought a guitar. I bought a mandolin because my father was very musical.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:01:38] Were they constructed well, the instruments?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:01:41] Oh, yeah. My guitar that I bought there was, oh, I used it the two years and I'm sorry I left it but I did leave it.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:01:46] Oh.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:01:47] It was very nice. Yeah. And so my dad was just really fascinated with that and the fact that they had prostitutes come in and, and the men could buy their time and there was a little facility.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:01:58] I don't remember that.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:01:59] Yeah, there was a little facility, little rooms in the back where they could have a conjugal visit with whoever. Families could bring food in. There was one Jamaican kind of. [tape break]

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:02:12] Okay, listener, we just put in a new battery. So I think, I think we got most of what Cheri was saying on our last interview. The numbers are advancing once again. And we were on question nine at the end of her first year. And you were talking about your parents coming to visit and you went to Tegucigalpa. They met your boyfriend, your Peace Corps boyfriend, Paul. Okay. Anything else you might want to add about the end of your first year, like health problems? Did you take any vacations or travel within the country that you might want to talk about?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:02:49] Yeah. At the end of the first year, I had saved like \$350, I think, in traveler's checks to go somewhere. And Paul was available at Christmas. So Paul and I took a trip to Guatemala and that's that was, oh jeez, two weeks. Almost three weeks. I don't know. We did a big trip, probably at least two weeks going to Guatemala. And so we traveled during Christmas time, which was.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:03:11] By plane? By bus?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:03:14] By bus, yeah. We probably met in San Pedro Sula and then went over to Esquipulas and saw the fascinating, huge church there and the procession of the people on their knees walking towards the church, lighting candles inside the church. It was probably very close to Christmas or something. It was an excellent time to observe the culture. And we went through Guatemala and just had a fantastic time. Climbed the mountain near Lake Atitlan.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:03:46] Can you spell Atitlan for us?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:03:48] Atitlan. A-T-I-T-L-A-N. Atitlan.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:03:53] Okay.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:03:55] Just a wonderful way to top off, you know, because the culture in Honduras was not colorful. It was a very poor culture, um, not much from traditional Indian practices or dress or anything

left. And when you cross the border into Guatemala, you have all these incredible costumes that they wear and their communities are identified by each design. The entire community wears a design on their *huipiles*, their clothes, their blouses.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:04:29] Can you spell *huipil*?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:04:31] Uh, yeah. I'm not real sure. It might be H-U-I-P-I-L.
Huipil.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:04:37] And that is, what is the *huipil*, Cheri?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:04:39] The *huipil* is the woman's blouse. It's all like needle point design and it goes, it's just a square piece of material with a hole in the middle and they throw it over their head and then wrap a skirt around it. But anyway, we, we, uh, you see how rich it was. It was a healthier population. You didn't see the rotten teeth or toothless people. It was just a very rich culture which survived through the centuries, I guess, people who still wore their native, native outfits. So yeah, that was, that was really wonderful. And then that kind of motivated us both, well, me anyways, to stick around, do the next year and kind of start counting down the months of service left.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:05:29] Okay. Any other trips that you might want to talk about?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:05:35] Well, the other special trip was from La Ceiba, it was a jump, a 15 minute airplane ride over to the islands, Las Islas de la Bahia.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:05:45] Bay Islands.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:05:46] The Bay Islands, yeah. There were three islands and the closest one was Utila and, um, it was, you know, you fly over there and you could just get a snorkel and see the most exquisite barrier reef that surrounded the island. And that's what it was known for. It wasn't on the international scene much. There were

two places to stay in town, one on one end of the island, one on the other end of the island. And, you know, you ate your fried fish and beans and that's pretty much it. And pan de coco, your corn, coconut bread, that was popular. And volunteers would go over there, you know, spending like Semana Santa, Easter week.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:06:31] What is Semana Santa?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:06:32] Easter week, where the entire country would close down for the whole week. Or Independence Day in September. The whole country would close down. Celebrating holidays was big there. So I think I probably went there at least four times on long weekends or vacations, and it was just so refreshing. And they would speak, there was some Spanish there, but there's also an English Creole spoken there from when pirates landed and descendants of pirates populated those islands. So you had some white skinned people and you had a few Hispanics, but it was a different, it really was a different culture on the islands.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:07:08] And they spoke English, I believe?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:07:09] Yeah, it was a pidgin English.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:07:10] What you said, yeah, pidgin English. Okay. We're onto question ten, the end of your tour. Unless you want to say something else before we get to this.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:07:19] I would say the only other thing that's memorable in Peace Corps Honduras as far as getting together is we had the opportunity as volunteers to all gather like in the capital. We would have a music festival. And I think there were two, probably three of them in my two years there. And there was so much talent in our group, in the people that were. There were, what, maybe 200 volunteers in Honduras at one time?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:07:42] Yeah, maybe more. I'm almost wanting to say 300.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:07:46] Maybe 250.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:07:46] It was a lot. There was a lot.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:07:48] But those who gathered in the city, there were a few people who were musicians. And so they put together these music festivals and it was incredible. People would bring their guitars and there was just so much talent. And I remember singing with my, with my boyfriend Paul, and I remember other people singing and playing lots of country music, lots of folk music. It was such a wonderful way to celebrate together. And then there would be Thanksgiving feasts also, maybe at the American embassy or the director's house. And those were just such really special occasions where everyone could get together and compare notes, see how you're doing, how we're progressing through our two years. That was so special. That was, that was always uplifting for anyone who got homesick or who was down and needed an upper, you know. So those were, those are special get togethers.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:08:40] Yeah. Okay, now we'll go on with the end of your tour. What do you feel that you achieved, accomplished, or maybe failed at?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:08:53] Hmm, yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:08:53] What were the pluses and minuses?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:08:55] Well, professionally, I probably started to learn how to teach a little bit, you know, how to, how to present material to students and organize myself better in that aspect. I did after the sewing, I went on and did a leather workshop project with my program manager's, uh, approval. So I went to an artist volunteer in Valle de Angeles, Angel Valley, and she worked in arts and crafts. So she taught me some leather crafting. And I took that up and made a whole project out of there where my students made little leather coin purses. That was very successful, it really was. And, you know, I just hope that, uh, I don't think my counterpart

was very talented with her hands. You know, she was more into the cooking and sewing, cooking end and the nutrition end. And so we made a good pair in that aspect.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:09:51] Okay. You did the sewing part.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:09:53] I did the hands on, yeah, I did the hands on. And that was, that really was my success I think. It seems so minor, but you know, so be it.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:10:02] You know, I just thought of this because people would make a living as a seamstress.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:10:06] Oh, yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:10:07] *Modista*, M-O-D-I-S-T-A. I mean, who knows? You might have helped some of the students become *modistas* or things of that nature.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:10:14] Yeah. Yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:10:16] Okay. Do you have any regrets about your Peace Corps service?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:10:20] Uh, I think my. Let's see. I don't know. Um, I think my regret would be, it would be nice to have been an experienced teacher, you know, like ten or 20 years later, and actually go in with teaching experience and being better able to observe the needs and be a more effective teacher. I mean, that would be my wish. Um. What was I thinking? Uh. Again, what?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:10:50] Regrets, satisfactions at the end of your tour.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:10:53] The other regret would be that, um, I really. Yeah, this is silly, but I thought that when you did your two years service that it included your three month training. And actually my service was supposed to go four more months over the school vacation and

into the next year. And, and I presented it to my program manager. I said, well, I didn't know I was supposed to stay more than two years. And I told my father about it and I didn't ask him to do anything. I just told him about it. And he actually called up Washington or something because he was a state representative at that time. He was flouting his, uh, his position, I guess, and said, well, how come my daughter can't come home, blah, blah, blah? And so it was fixed and I didn't realize what I was going into until after I got home, that he had requested that I be terminated or COSed, you know, a full completion.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:11:46] What does COS mean, Cherie?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:11:47] COS means completion [close] of service.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:11:49] Okay.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:11:50] So I was completed in December. So I stayed the full two years, but I really should have stayed until April.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:11:57] Okay.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:11:57] And so I regret that. I just, it was a stupid thing on my part. But, you know, I don't know. So be it.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:12:04] Um. We'll go to question 11. How would you evaluate your service in light of Peace Corps' three goals? There's, you can answer one at a time if you want, to provide technical assistance where requested. Were you able to do that?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:12:19] Yeah, I think just the fact that I got the sewing machines out of the boxes, greased them up, taught them how to use them, you know, and put their hands on them was, you know, otherwise AID, I see, can spend a lot of money and if you don't have the technical assistance there to put whatever equipment they're providing into use, then it's a waste of money, you know, you just put it into storehouse.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:12:42] Okay. The second part, were you able to promote better understanding of the United States?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:12:50] I felt that I was a good representative of an American. You know, being able to speak Spanish was my biggest asset. I could speak with anyone. And it was so much fun just to learn about other people and present yourself as an American in a desirable way and not as an ugly American, you know?

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:13:12] Yeah.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:13:12] Appreciate people.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:13:13] This really isn't part of the question, but I just thought of this. How do you, because you spoke Spanish but had problems with the understanding the accent and or the lack of teeth of some of the Hondurans, how long did it take you to understand them?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:13:29] Oh, I think after about six months I was able.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:13:32] Six months.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:13:33] To understand anyone. Yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:13:35] Okay.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:13:36] Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, I mean, and that's. Or maybe not even that long. I don't know. I understood them. It was just that, yeah, God, there just wasn't much. They didn't seem to offer much in verbal, verbal information back to me. You know, that's just, again, lack of, lack of education I think, after being in educated cultures.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:13:59] Last part of that question. Were you able to promote better understanding of other peoples by Americans? And I, and to me, that's when you come back home. They don't say it that way.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:14:10] Well.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:14:11] By Americans.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:14:14] People would ask about my service and I remember coming home and they might ask one question and you'd have something to say, but then you'd realize, oh, that was just a question. And now they're not really interested in hearing your experience or your, you know, how you changed or anything like that. Yeah, that was kind of interesting to observe what people were actually interested in hearing from me, you know.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:14:43] Mm hmm.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:14:44] If, if at all, anything. But as I became a teacher then, I would bring. I would do almost yearly, I would bring in a bunch of artifacts and slides and just show them what a culture was, what a, what a, what a poor third world country culture was, and point out the differences between poverty and then richer countries and etcetera. So that, I enjoyed doing that. It always had good information in my Spanish classes and my social studies classes, geography classes, that was always good to offer personal experience.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:15:18] Okay. The twelfth question. So through the years, have you continued any kind of involvement with your country of service, which is of course Honduras, and or contact with people from that country? I mean, you did go back to live there I know.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:15:34] Yeah, I did go back and live there because I married my Peace Corps boyfriend and he subsequently, three and a half years later, got a job there. And so we went back.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:15:43] Who did he get a job with?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:15:45] He got a job with Chemonics International and he was the.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:15:48] Would you spell Chemonics please?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:15:49] C-H-E-M-O-N-I-C-S. Out of Washington, D.C., and he was the project coordinator for, oh, I'm not sure. I can't remember the acronym. For an environmental development project mostly in the Choluteca area.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:16:12] Okay.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:16:12] And so he had counterparts again, you know, it was, it was like a Peace Corps, glorified Peace Corps job, but this time he got paid.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:16:19] Okay.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:16:19] And I worked at, I worked at the training center for a while and then I worked at the American school.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:16:23] The Peace Corps training center, correct?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:16:25] Yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:16:25] Had it moved by any chance?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:16:27] Yeah, they took it out in the country, a little town, Santa Lucia, I think it was called, outside of Tegucigalpa. And I think they actually had the volunteers living in that little village too.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:16:38] Okay, that's, that's something I did not experience.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:16:40] More of a rural experience instead of the city experience.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:16:43] Okay. How long did you live in Honduras the second time?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:16:48] The second time was three years.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:16:49] Oh, three years.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:16:50] Yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:16:50] And did you live in Tegucigalpa?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:16:52] Yeah, we lived in Tegucigalpa near the, actually fairly near the Peace Corps office. Yeah, in an apartment, yeah.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:17:00] Okay.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:17:00] It was a nice experience to go back and visit and live there in a nice house.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:17:06] Yeah, right, right. Okay. Have you been involved with any third goal activities since you came back?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:17:13] Just the presenting of Peace Corps experience in, within the school, schools, making school presentations.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:17:20] Okay. Um. Is there anything that I have not asked you that you might like to cover?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:17:27] Well, I think coming back, there are so many RPCV groups. We immediately, when we moved, we moved around a lot. In Vermont, we didn't have any RPCV groups, but Paul worked at a, at another firm, ARD, Associates in Rural Development, where most of the people were volunteers. That was their first overseas experience. And that was a consulting firm that handled projects in other countries. And so we made good friends there because of Peace Corps. And then we went back overseas for five years and worked with CARE in Ecuador and the Inter-American

Development Bank in Argentina. And I don't know, again, we had the background. We would always meet volunteers wherever we went. And, um.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:18:21] Then moving here to New Mexico, living in Hatch, there was a return Peace Corps volunteer group and it has always served as a base to meet new people. So if you can hook up with one of those groups, you inevitably make lifelong friends, again, just from that bond of being in the Peace Corps.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:18:37] Yeah. Okay. Last question. And like I said, you might have already answered this, but if there's anything you could, uh, you might want to add about this. How has the Peace Corps, your Peace Corps service, affected you? Did it change you? Did it influence your career? Any other long term effects, you might say, from your Peace Corps service?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:19:02] Yeah. My Peace Corps service affected me in every single job I ever had since then. Because I was teaching, because I was a Spanish teacher, because I was a bilingual teacher in the poorest district in New Mexico.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:19:19] Was it the poorest district?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:19:20] Yeah, yeah, Hatch is one, I think it's either the poor. I think it is the poorest district because it's an agricultural valley where the kids are usually the offspring of agricultural workers, migrant workers. And, um, I continued to work pretty much, in my opinion, with the same class of people, especially when I first started there, you could tell. I would ask the kids how many of you were born in Mexico? And almost the entire class would raise their hand. So they were all immigrant kids and Spanish was their second language. Um. And again, I would look at their teeth. It was the first time I noticed brown spots on teeth, which meant the high concentration of fluoride in their water from the northern Chihuahua desert, or southern Chihuahua desert and Durango

and Chihuahua. And that's just funny, you know, you see different health issues in different groups of people.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:20:19] But every, every job I've ever had, Peace Corps experience helped me understand the population with which I worked. And the Spanish obviously was ingrained in me. And I think as far as values in life, um, you know, we can be really greedy Americans, but I think that you realize what's important in life. It's not how big your house is. It's not how many cars you have in the garage. And I remember one, one, one incident that really bothered me or defined other people in different from me was my neighbor complaining about their health care cost. And they didn't have any kids, but they were paying, oh, for this procedure and that procedure. And, you know, don't you agree? And maybe she was talking about Obamacare too. I don't know.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:21:17] But I just had to say it. I said, you know, you have a beautiful home. Um, I, no. I don't know how I said it, but I said, you know, I feel like we have good health care and it's worth the money because so many people in the world have nothing. They don't have access to a doctor. They go through life without, you know, what do you call it? Prevention care, your yearly checkup and everything. And I don't know. I just had to say it to shut her up. She didn't complain in front of me anymore about her health care cost. But it was just like, you know, I just, basically I was telling her, I don't think along those lines because my experience tells me that, you know, yeah, I'm paying for my health care, but I have it and I can afford it, you know, and yeah. Priorities. Your priorities are viewed differently after you see the Third World and live with it.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:22:12] Okay. Anything else you might want to add, Cheri?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:22:16] Well, had I not joined the Peace Corps. Hmm. My life would have been totally different. And you just have this core value that's way down deep inside that you never forget that affects you for the rest of your life. And, uh, I'm just thrilled that I had one son, we had two sons, and one son became second generation Peace

Corps. So he just completed Panama two years. And he knows now what his parents went through. And he will, I feel like he will also have those values and that thrills me to death, really, that we were honored to have a son to follow in our footsteps. Oh, cry, cry, cry.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:23:07] What's his name, Cheri?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:23:08] His name is Zane. Zane Dulin.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:23:10] Z-A-N-E. And then Dulin, D-U-L-I-N. And what years did he serve in Panama?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:23:16] In Panama it was 2015 to 2017. Two years.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:23:20] Okay. Very good. Very good. That's something to be proud of. And our other son is a budding actor, by the way.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:23:26] That's right. Totally different environment.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:23:28] Okay. And I already asked you anything else that comes to your mind?

DAMSCHRODER: [01:23:32] No, nothing. Nothing particularly. I think we've covered it.

KAARE-LOPEZ: [01:23:35] Thank you very much, listener. I'm going to put a marker on this. And this concludes the interview. Barbara Kaare-Lopez, interviewer, with Cheri Damschroder from Hatch, New Mexico, interviewee. And we're conducting this interview in Hutto, H-U-T-T-O. Sorry I'm laughing, listener. H-U-T-T-O, Texas, which is outside of Austin, Texas. We're having a mini Peace Corps volunteer reunion. Thank you.

DAMSCHRODER: [01:24:09] Very cute. That's quite the device.

[END OF INTERVIEW]