

James Maurer Oral History Interview
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Biographical Note

James (Jim) Maurer served as a Peace Corps volunteer in India from 1966 to 1968 on an agriculture project.

Access

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Oral History Interview

with

James Maurer

October 17, 2007
Tucson, Arizona

By Robert Klein

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

KLEIN: [00:00:02] This is Bob Klein. Today is October 17, 2007, and I'm interviewing Jim Maurer, who was a Peace Corps volunteer in India in 1966 to '68 in an agricultural project, which was pig production. So let's go back, you know, maybe a year before you joined. Talk about what was going on.

MAURER: [00:00:25] Will actually have to go back a couple of years. Sure. I was in high school, graduated from high school '64. And when I was in my sophomore year, one of the teachers from our school decided she wanted to go into the Peace Corps and she was selected, she came back in my senior year and we had a school program. She got up and she talked about it.

KLEIN: [00:00:49] Now, where were you going to high school?

MAURER: [00:00:50] This was in Colorado. Grand Junction, Colorado. And it just kind of inspired me that it sounded like something that was exciting and fun to do. And, you know, my background with my father had been towards service. He was in Scouts for probably close to 25 years.

KLEIN: [00:01:14] Had you grown up in Grand Junction?

MAURER: [00:01:15] Mostly in Grand Junction, from the time I was about fifth grade till, you know, my first couple of years of college, we were in Grand Junction. So he was always, you know, you got to give something back. He did public service and he worked for the state of Colorado. And he did a lot of volunteer work with the Boy Scouts, loved that.

KLEIN: [00:01:37] And when you were in high school, did you get involved with volunteer activities?

MAURER: [00:01:42] Well, other than Scouts, I was in Scouts pretty much all the way up until after I was graduated from high school.

KLEIN: [00:01:48] Oh, through Eagle?

MAURER: [00:01:49] Through Eagle, through Explorer Scouts. So when when this thing came along, it was kind of like an opportunity to go out and see the world and I thought this would be really great. So right after the assembly they had somebody there who was taking names and application of interest, not actual application for per se. But, you know, would you be interested? And I signed up, I'm going to go to the Peace Corps.

KLEIN: [00:02:15] This is just after high school.

MAURER: [00:02:17] This was high school in '64. So I never heard a word for two years.

KLEIN: [00:02:23] Right. Right. And now when did you fill out an application?

MAURER: [00:02:29] I think I did. I remember that I wanted to go to Micronesia.

KLEIN: They asked you for a preference.

MAURER: [00:02:35] Yeah, and I love the South Seas.

KLEIN: [00:02:37] Do you recall what they also do as a kind of a skill array supposed to describe the skills you have, you recall?

MAURER: [00:02:44] Well, at that time, probably the only skill I had was I'd grown up in an agricultural type of background. We always had animals. We always had a small farm. And my dad came from a larger Soviet ranch when he was younger.

KLEIN: So you grew up living on a small farm?

MAURER: I was in the country. Yeah. We we had three acres. We really rented some acreage for the frame feed for the animals, usually kept pigs. So I knew how to deal with pigs, how to put them through the birthing process.

KLEIN: Any brothers or sisters?

MAURER: I had one sister, three years older than I was. And she was in college by the time I got out of high school.

KLEIN: [00:03:27] So as you remember, when you filled out the application, you indicated agricultural skills as one of the skills.

MAURER: [00:03:36] That was about the only saleable skill I had at that time.

KLEIN: [00:03:39] And we still in high school or had you by then going on to college when you did?

MAURER: [00:03:44] And I think this was right after high school just before we graduated.

KLEIN: [00:03:48] Oh, OK.

MAURER: [00:03:50] Because I remember her coming back and doing the assembly and there were people at a table in the hallway with a little clipboard. And I just thought, wow, this would be a great thing if I could do that. So I filled out all the paperwork and oh, and then went on with my life and went to college out in Colorado.

KLEIN: [00:04:07] Let's concentrate on. Do you recall at that point whether you were getting references and did you have to take the Peace Corps entry exam? Were they still giving an exam at that time?

MAURER: [00:04:21] I don't think any of that happened. I think what happened is they took my application, put it in the process, shoot. Two years later it came out the other end.

KLEIN: [00:04:32] Probably because of the agricultural flight. So, yeah, during your years up through high school, had you done any travel?

MAURER: [00:04:44] Other than to various parts of the country to visit family farms about it, that's about it.

KLEIN: Nothing outside the U.S.?

MAURER: Nothing outside the U.S.

KLEIN: [00:04:52] Had you studied any foreign language?

MAURER: [00:04:55] We had Latin in high school. But that's not coming in handy. I could go to Latin America and speak Latin.

KLEIN: [00:05:05] So where did you go to college?

MAURER: [00:05:08] So when I graduated from high school, I applied to the University of Colorado at Boulder. It was over the mountains from from where I lived. Yeah. And I was looking at taking architecture and engineering. And then and two years after I started, I was looking for a summer job in 1966. I had applied to the city and county of Denver in the drafting department planning department. And I was hired as a draftsman and I worked there and I was taking some courses in Denver, working in Denver for the summer before I went back for the fall. Right. And towards the end of the summer of 1966, I got a letter from the Peace Corps said, would you like to go to India? And I said, yes!

KLEIN: [00:05:56] Oh, how old were you then?

MAURER: [00:06:01] I would have been 20 at that time.

KLEIN: [00:06:03] So fairly young.

MAURER: [00:06:04] I was fairly young, you know, which later on acted to my detriment when they finished the program. The training program. And we can get to that.

KLEIN: [00:06:13] At that point, what was your family's attitude? Did they know you had applied?

MAURER: [00:06:21] I don't remember whether they did. I'm pretty sure I had told them because I write that to my mom and dad.

KLEIN: [00:06:27] And at the summer, when you're working in Denver, uh, up to that point, other than the returned teacher who was a volunteer. Had you met anyone who had been in the Peace Corps?

MAURER: [00:06:39] And hadn't met anybody else who'd been in the Peace Corps.

KLEIN: [00:06:41] What would you remember your initial reaction when you got a letter from Peace Corps?

MAURER: [00:06:48] I was just terribly excited because I thought, wow, this is a chance. India. Wow. You know, I had heard so much about India. I'd read a little bit about India. Right. It seemed like a very foreign foreign country to me because of the differences in religions, differences in languages, you know, multiple languages, other side of the world type of thing. And I'd read some stories and accounts of the British Raj and what that was like in India. And I just thought this would be a fantastic thing to go to India and see firsthand what the other side of the world was all about. So I don't think I even hesitated. I just signed it and sent it back and said, of course, I'll go at that point.

KLEIN: [00:07:35] Do you recall what your family's reaction was?

MAURER: [00:07:39] I don't think they knew until probably the weekend when I went down there and went back home for the weekend and said, hey, guess what, India. They said what? I said, yes, in the Peace Corps.

KLEIN: [00:07:51] You had no hesitation. I mean, you were in the middle of a college career and working toward a degree.

MAURER: [00:07:58] I was, but it wasn't as exciting as going to India would be. Uh, I was having a little bit of academic difficulty because I couldn't apply myself as much as I should have at that. I can't remember.

KLEIN: [00:08:13] Now, do you remember if at that point the draft was an issue?

MAURER: [00:08:20] Uh.

KLEIN: [00:08:23] It's '66.

MAURER: [00:08:26] Well, I know I had to sign up for the draft and I know they were drafting people for Vietnam, right. But that didn't really influence my decision one way or the other.

KLEIN: [00:08:37] Ok, OK. It's that era. And that's why I ask.

MAURER: [00:08:42] I'm not even sure if I even consciously took that into account in my consideration to go to India. You know, just here was this opportunity, which I felt was a once in a lifetime opportunity.

KLEIN: [00:08:56] And did what did the invitation say? You're invited to India to work in pig production or just in an agricultural project?

MAURER: [00:09:04] I believe they just said in an agricultural production, because when I got to the program, the program was set up with maybe about 50 to 60 men. And about 40 of those were for general agriculture, 10 were for pig production and 10 were for poultry production.

KLEIN: [00:09:29] Describe your taking, saying goodbye and leaving Grand Junction. I mean, any second thoughts? Were people, you know, at the station to wave you off or it was just you went?

MAURER: [00:09:45] My parents took me out to dinner the night before I left. But as far as making a big deal of it, I don't know.

KLEIN: [00:09:57] I know friends try to talk you out of it, you know.

MAURER: [00:10:00] Nobody tried to talk about it. Matter of fact, some of my college friends were envious that I was going.

KLEIN: [00:10:05] Oh, OK.

MAURER: [00:10:06] Because they were, you know, my best friend at the time. He and I were we're looking for excitement in our lives because there was this period of the war was going on and it was just difficult to to go to school knowing that there's a possibility you could be dropped out of school any minute, drive him at least. And he was looking trying to get married. And then when this thing came for India. He said, wow, you know, that's really cool, are you going to go? And I said, yeah.

KLEIN: [00:10:40] So we had to report for training.

MAURER: [00:10:42] We trained in Davis, California.

KLEIN: [00:10:46] So you flew to Los Angeles?

MAURER: [00:10:50] Uh, I think we flew to Sacramento. I can't remember exactly. Davis. It's south of Sacramento and east of San Francisco.

KLEIN: [00:11:03] Ok, yeah. Yeah. All right. I know where it is.

MAURER: [00:11:06] And, um, it's kind of interesting because there was this other guy on the airplane about my age and he was a few seats away from me. And he had this book called *The Zinzin Road*, uh, which I found out later was a book about Peace Corps in West Africa. And I was thinking myself, you know, it's a strange thing for somebody to be reading. Well, we got off the plane and whoever picked us up. There was me. There was this guy and his book and several other people who'd flown in there. And he was laughing kind of at me because. Well, did you see the book I was reading? Why didn't you come say hi and tell me you were going to Peace Corps training?

KLEIN: [00:11:52] Do you remember, as the group gathered at Davis? Now, you know, you're no longer in Grand Junction. You're in this whole new world. And there were some 50 other people who are doing the same thing. Inevitably, you know, you sort of match yourself up against the others in the group. Do you recall your reaction to the group and now you're becoming part of it?

MAURER: [00:12:17] Um, there were a couple of interesting things that happened. First thing I noticed when I walked into the building. We actually stayed in an old bracero camp, uh, maybe about three miles outside the city of Davis itself.

KLEIN: Presaro?

MAURER: Bracero, the guest worker program for Mexicans. And I walked in and it was my college roommate from the University of Colorado. And of course, we had this big, you know, what are you doing here?

KLEIN: [00:12:51] And you didn't know he was?

MAURER: [00:12:53] I had no idea he had applied. Uh, and the sad thing is that within a week, he had decided it wasn't for him and he left. So we never really get a chance to do that. The other thing is that this was mid '60s. So we had the Beatles going on and the California beach boy beach bum right thing going on. And where I lived in Colorado, we were relatively sheltered. You know, we we didn't have a lot of people coming in and going out. So when I got to training and I looked at some of the guys who were from California, they had hair that was down to their collars. Oh, what are these guys doing? You know, just because I've never been exposed to that.

KLEIN: [00:13:36] Right. So that the first clue.

MAURER: [00:13:38] Yeah, they're not Beatles, they're not singers. They're guys with long hair. And there was another guy who looked like Dennis Hopper. He had hair down almost to his shoulder blades and he looked like Dennis Hopper and he kind of acted like it.

KLEIN: [00:13:49] Any beards?

MAURER: [00:13:52] A few. There was one gentleman from New York City, uh uh, beautiful black beard. And when we got to India, or actually during training, we were trained by several Indian nationals who were teaching us language and teaching us customs and culture. And they thought that Charlie looked like the god, Shiva, because most of the pictures you see of Shiva had this tall, strong looking man with a dark beard and came to a point. Yeah, that's exactly what Charlie looked like. So they started calling

him Shivaji, Honorable Shiva. So he took it in good, good, good stride. I had a beard when I went there. And I think ever since I got out of high school, I had a beard. So that didn't bother me.

KLEIN: [00:14:46] Oh, OK. Cause there were different times where it was an issue with Peace Corps.

MAURER: [00:14:53] They never said anything about hair or beards as far as that goes.

KLEIN: [00:14:58] So you're staying at this braceros camp and you how long is the training going to be? Do you have any idea?

MAURER: [00:15:07] I believe the training was for three months. And during that time, we were supposed to refine our skills and whatever of the three different parts of the program we were going into.

KLEIN: [00:15:24] Were you designated early for the pig production?

MAURER: [00:15:27] No, I don't remember when I was designated. It could be that we did it when we got there and he said we need 10 for this and 10 for them to rescue here, or it could be that early on, I said, you know, if I've had experience with pigs and they assigned me, I just don't remember it at this point.

KLEIN: [00:15:48] Were there a fair number in the group who had no agricultural background?

MAURER: [00:15:51] Absolutely. We had one kid from Connecticut, Steve Johnson, going into our programs that said, I've never seen a live pig outside of a zoo. And what really, really hard to take is that this kid who'd never seen pigs before he got into our program, was the only one who actually got a successful piggery running. So all of us who had experience, we just had too many other problems to get going.

KLEIN: [00:16:24] So so you there's some agricultural training. Another component of the training is cross-cultural studies and studying about the country you're going to.

MAURER: [00:16:37] Studying about country. We were going to central India.

KLEIN: [00:16:41] And so you knew that in advance?

MAURER: [00:16:43] We knew that we were going to go to the state of Maharashtra, which is kind of extends from Bombay to the middle of India. And we knew that we were supposed to learn Marathi, which I think was a sister language to Hindi. So they were trying to teach that.

KLEIN: [00:17:05] How intensive was language training?

MAURER: [00:17:07] It was fairly intensive. I think we had two or three classes a day. And the instructors we had both male and female instructors, many of the female instructors had husbands who were either going to school or working at Davis University there. So they were kind of doing like a part time.

KLEIN: [00:17:29] Was it said that you were going to be working in the language, not in English, when you got there?

MAURER: [00:17:39] It was implied we need to know the language, so it was fairly intensive.

KLEIN: [00:17:44] And did they give you FSR testing, the Foreign Service language?

MAURER: I don't believe so.

KLEIN: OK. Another part of training often is medical, and for that, I mean some medical training. Do you recall any of that?

MAURER: [00:18:01] We had no medical training per se. We might have had a first aid course, but nothing intensive. And we did not have any physical education at all in our training program. I found out later after I got married that my wife's older sister's husband had been in the Peace Corps. And I think Mexico about a year or so before I had gone in or maybe two years. And we talked about it later. And he said that there were a lot of physical training, things that they had to do. You know, they had to swim in the river.

KLEIN: [00:18:43] The camps in Puerto Rico. So, yeah.

MAURER: [00:18:47] So we really didn't have any of that by late '66, early '67. That wasn't part of the program anymore.

KLEIN: [00:18:57] Not during the three months of training. Did anyone who'd served with the Peace Corps in India come and take part in the training?

MAURER: [00:19:06] Yes, we had an older couple, very old and must have been in their 50s, at least at that time. I thought they were ancient. I believe they were from Ohio and they had gone to someplace in India, south India, I believe. Bob was an old Ohio farmer who was working in agriculture and his wife Dorothy was teaching English. And she kind of took over as a substitute mom for all of us. And she made sure that if we were homesick, she had somebody to talk to and she'd take us out. And there was money for, I guess, entertainment and she would make crafts and things for us to do

KLEIN: [00:19:54] Would be this is during the training process?

MAURER: [00:19:55] During training, when we had like a long weekend and the right thing to do on a Saturday afternoon. You didn't want to go down to the university. You can go in and see Dorothy and she'd give, you know, some something to do that you could work with your hands and just kind of keep your mind off. So it was it was nice to have those people there as part of the training.

KLEIN: [00:20:16] Did you tend through the training to stick closer with the other pig production, or was the group just sort of mixed and divided into groups on different sides?

MAURER: [00:20:28] It was pretty much a mixed group. We didn't really have that distinction. You know, we would have separate portions of training, right? Like the piggery guys would go out to various farms in the neighborhood. We went up to Chico State. And they had a large agricultural program up there.

KLEIN: [00:20:49] Was most of the piggery work familiar to you? I mean, to do it.

MAURER: [00:20:57] It's basically. Yeah, but but it went even further than that and it got into the the academic part of it. Which as a general farmer you don't get into all. They gave us this great big thick book on everything you needed to know about raising pigs and talked about the different diseases that talked about inoculations and talked about how to do things from a medical standpoint. Generally, if you're just raising a few pigs at a time, you're not going to do. Yeah, and it really got into the feed of how to create a food that would have all the necessary vitamins by a certain percentage. And I remember we went to Chico State. We talked about the professors there and he showed us how to work all this stuff out. And then we actually had a test. You got all these different types of things. What kind of a mix would you use to try to do for pig? You had to figure out the percentages and write that down.

KLEIN: [00:21:57] What was anyone describing the exact job you were going to be doing once you got to India? Or was this all still at the theoretical point?

MAURER: [00:22:09] They told us we'd be working with societies, pig society, piggery societies. And we didn't actually find out until either much later in the program or until we got there and what that meant. But it was a program that was started by the Indian government and they had requested of people with certain areas of expertise to come in and work with that

program. So when we got there, it was a program that was just pretty good.

KLEIN: [00:22:41] So you were the first in this, if not the first.

MAURER: [00:22:43] We were pretty close to being the first people.

KLEIN: [00:22:47] Another big piece of most training programs is the selection process. And it varies from time to time and place to place where you were given a psychological test, you might be interviewed by a psychologist or even a psychiatrist. Do you recall any of that?

MAURER: [00:23:07] We did have a staff psychologist who was, I think, it was there mostly as an observer. I don't remember specific tests, but I think we did have some tests. And during the selection process, at the end, they were worried about me because they thought I was too young to go and they almost deselected me because of that.

KLEIN: [00:23:35] And were you the youngest in the group?

MAURER: [00:23:38] No, actually I was getting close to 21.

KLEIN: [00:23:43] And there were others in the group?

MAURER: [00:23:44] Others in the group who were fresh out of high school, and there were others who were quite a bit older. But there were those who had not completed a college degree but had grown up on a farm or were a little bit younger for the most part.

KLEIN: So you weren't exclusively alone in that?

MAURER: [00:24:07] No. They tried to get people with experience.

KLEIN: [00:24:09] And what was your answer when they said you were too young?

KLEIN: [00:24:12] You had a beard.

MAURER: [00:24:15] I had a beard. How young can I be? I probably said, you know, I'll be OK. Don't worry about me. I mean, they almost got me out. We have a swami who was part of our training program. He was um I think he was from Eastern America, but he had so adopted the Indian religion that he had become a swami. He'd gone to training.

KLEIN: [00:24:47] This is a Hindu religion?

MAURER: [00:24:48] A Hindu religion. He had his own ashram outside of San Francisco. And when the psychologist and the director said that you may be better if I came back in a year or two and retrained, I'd be more suited for it, he tried to get me to go to the ashram for a while to see if he could help me get straightened out. I chose not to do that. And they relented and let me go to India.

KLEIN: [00:25:19] Yeah, that must have been a little unsettling though.

MAURER: [00:25:23] Well, in retrospect, I think they were probably right. I think I was a little too young to go to India.

KLEIN: [00:25:29] So don't tell us now.

MAURER: [00:25:31] I can tell you now. Forty years ago. Forty plus.

KLEIN: [00:25:34] OK, so the training, three months, just the final selection. And I did a large number get deselected?

MAURER: [00:25:48] We had a lot of attrition through the program. Like I said, my, my college roommate deselected himself the first week. One of the long haired hippies from San Francisco decided that he didn't want to go to India to kill chickens. Deselected himself. We had another young man who I, I believe younger than I was, and I believe he was deselected because

he really was too young. And we had one man drafted out of the program. Oh. Which surprised everybody. Uh, and we had one of the California surfer boys who got involved with one of the girls at the university, and her daddy decided that he should stay there and marry her before she had the baby before, rather than go to India. So we all attended his wedding. And by that time, you know, we'd had maybe five or six people out of the program with other reasons.

KLEIN: [00:26:52] Was there a fairly strong group feeling?

MAURER: [00:26:56] I think so. There were a few people that, uh, like this faction didn't get along with that for sure. But, uh, once we got to India and we would meet each other for various reasons, you know, it was like long lost brothers because here you are, the only white person in what were miles.

KLEIN: [00:27:18] So it was a cohort of sorts. Uh, so you get through the questions about your age and everything and the training is over. What happens at that point? Did you get a chance to get home?

MAURER: [00:27:34] I believe we got sent home for a week or two. You know, clean up our affairs. Whatever affairs we had at the age of twenty.

KLEIN: [00:27:43] And packing up clothes for two years.

MAURER: [00:27:45] We were allowed to take, uh, I think it was one hundred pounds in a duffel bag and it was interesting what people would pack. There was an older gentleman, Merle, who was a carpenter by trade. And for some reason he was in the piggery area. But when he packed his duffel bag, he took about 100 pounds of carpentry tools with him. And we had a guy who was a mountain climber, you know, and his bag was climbing tools. But when we got to Delhi, which is where we flew into the day before New Year's. We landed and you could see the Himalayas to the north of us with the sun gleaming off there. And he went right to the office and signed up for a third year because he wanted to be close to those mountains. That

was his reason for going to the Peace Corps to go mountain climbing in the Himalayas.

KLEIN: [00:28:39] I do recall what you packed?

MAURER: [00:28:42] Um, I didn't take enough tools. I should have taken more clothes, blue jeans. Didn't take any books because they told us we'd have books given to us. Every household was given in what they call a book locker.

KLEIN: [00:28:58] Uh, no security blankets.

MAURER: [00:29:02] I can't think of any.

KLEIN: [00:29:04] Uh, so you as a group, you flew to New Delhi.

MAURER: [00:29:09] We flew to, we met in New York and we spent, I think, a day in New York and getting gathered. So we had about a twenty four hour layover in New York City where we could kind of wander around and see what was going on in the city.

KLEIN: [00:29:23] First time to the city?

MAURER: [00:29:25] First time to New York, yeah. And then we all got on a plane, Air India. At that time, they were trying to become the charter flight for the Peace Corps to India. They pulled out all the stops.

KLEIN: [00:29:39] So it was a charter flight. The whole plane was just Peace Corps people?

MAURER: [00:29:42] There were other people on there, but there were a lot of Peace Corps people. And I believe the director of the Peace Corps was flying first class.

KLEIN: [00:29:53] The director of Peace Corps in India, or?

MAURER: [00:29:57] Um, I'm not really sure. And the reason I can't remember is because one of the things they did to pull out all the stops was they were handing out bottles of Chivas Regal. For those of us who thought this was a good thing, yeah, partook freely. And they told me that I got drunk and made a jackass out of myself up in first class with the director. And I don't remember a thing about it, thank god. And I hope he doesn't either.

KLEIN: [00:30:22] Jack Warner, it would have been, if it was the Peace Corps director. Shriver was out by then.

MAURER: [00:30:32] I really don't know who it was. That's one of the darker moments in my life that I just as soon forget.

KLEIN: [00:30:36] Appropriately blanked out.

MAURER: [00:30:38] Well, yeah, you're too young to go to India. So I do remember kind of waking up in London, getting off the plane, going, trying to make a phone call. I have no idea who I was trying to call because I didn't know anybody in London, but I wanted the change. I want to take some of the Indian and English money home with me. Oh, I've got a crown and a half crown, but I got change for the machine so I could make a phone call.

KLEIN: [00:31:06] And then now you arrive in New Delhi.

MAURER: [00:31:10] We arrive in New Delhi.

KLEIN: [00:31:11] Uh, do you recall your first impression?

MAURER: [00:31:15] Very late at night. Uh. And the most persistent thing I remember about India is a smell, mmm, wood fire and dung. It just was everywhere. We got into a bus, which was an Indian bus. So, of course, you had to roll the windows down or lower the windows. And as we were going through there through the midnight streets of Delhi, just looking out at all of these unlit mud structures and smelling this odor and smelling the smoke. And I

was just almost indescribable that that it had really struck home that this was a truly foreign country for all of us. And by this time, of course, we had been on the plane for 15, 16 hours with a stopover in London, the stopover in Cairo, and I think someplace else. And everybody was dog tired. We got to our hotel and there was this photographer who had been part of our training program. He had volunteered to go through the training program and take pictures and do like a photo documentary of a Peace Corps training group.

KLEIN: [00:32:46] For Peace Corps?

MAURER: [00:32:47] I don't know if it was for Peace Corps or his own personal reasons, but they let him go along with the training. I understand he paid his own way to go to India.

KLEIN: [00:32:57] Ok, you don't remember his name?

MAURER: [00:32:59] His name is Doug Whiteside, and he was out of San Francisco and he had been to India before. And when we got India the 31st of December, of course, the first of January is Independence Day for India. And Doug said one o'clock in the morning there's a big parade in Delhi. You know, there's going to be all this stuff. He wants to go. And everybody else was tired. And I said, I'll go with you. So of course, he had all the money I had, I had no money.

KLEIN: [00:33:36] And he was had he had been to India before?

MAURER: [00:33:39] He had been to India before. So he knew a little bit about the customs, you know, when to bribe a policeman and when not to bribe a policeman, let you through a barrier on the street. We rented a cab and got as close to the main street as possible. And then we kind of worked our way up to this major street in Delhi. And it turned out that we were maybe about a block away from the grandstand where Indira Gandhi and all the dignitaries were on this stand to watch the parade go by. And we were on the other side of the street. And it just seemed like millions of

people were out there. And of course, they have the streets all roped off. And he said, come on, let's go. And he'd get out beyond the ropes and I'd be tagging along with him.

KLEIN: [00:34:36] So it was just the two of you?

MAURER: [00:34:38] It's just the two of us. The police would be yelling at us to get back under the ropes and don't understand, don't understand. Just got to get good position to take photographs. And we finally got to where we were going and we had the parade. They had the trucks with the missiles on them and they had the marching soldiers. They had the ceremonial elephants with the full trappings and their full colors. And I thought it was just a fantastic for the first day. Here we are with the whole parade. And I know if I wanted, I could have gone down there and said hi to the prime minister and it was just great.

KLEIN: [00:35:14] And then you sobered up.

MAURER: [00:35:18] And I sobered up. Actually pretty sober by then.

KLEIN: [00:35:21] And so the first couple of days in, uh, New Delhi.

MAURER: [00:35:26] But we had a number of meetings with people who were going to be our counterparts in the villages we were going to be assigned to.

KLEIN: [00:35:34] At the point you arrived, do you have any idea how many Peace Corps volunteers were in India at that?

MAURER: [00:35:40] I really didn't have any idea. I knew they were in the hundreds. There were a lot because we'd heard about people who were there, nursing programs, teaching program of industrial arts engineering.

KLEIN: [00:35:53] In your first few days, were there Peace Corps staff people who appeared and sort of guided you through what was going on?

MAURER: [00:36:02] There were a lot of meetings that we were expected to attend that had a lot of the Indian officials as well as the people we were going to be working with. And then our officials would take us in and of course, everybody and give speeches and.

KLEIN: [00:36:20] Our officials being the Peace Corps staff?

MAURER: [00:36:22] Peace Corps staff. So they would they would give us all of these beautiful, flowery speeches about the cooperation between our country and theirs and what we were going to do. And yeah, and then after a while, we were just standing there looking at these people. We were supposed to go back to the village but what do we do next?

KLEIN: [00:36:41] And do you remember meeting a counterpart?

MAURER: [00:36:46] I did, I did. And the interesting thing is that when you introduce yourself in India, you introduce yourself by your last name. And Americans, of course, introduce yourself by your first name. So for all the time I was there, I was Mr. Jim. And my counterpart, Mr. Deshmukh, he always called me that, I could never get him to drop the Mr. or go with Mr. Maurer.

KLEIN: [00:37:14] Your initial contact with him, I assume the exchanges were in English?

MAURER: [00:37:20] They were, because we found out that once we got to where we were going to go, they didn't speak Marathi in that area. The people who did speak Marathi spoke English for the most part.

KLEIN: [00:37:34] You weren't you weren't particularly fluent in Marathi?

MAURER: [00:37:37] Not terribly. And the ones who didn't speak English typically spoke Hindi. But the people in the piggery society were all very good speakers.

KLEIN: [00:37:48] But there must have been an initial, uh, transition phase and tuning into Indian English, which is emphasis and everything is different, you know the whole lilt. Do you recall, you know, sort of straining to figure out?

MAURER: [00:38:10] Um, I don't think I had that much difficulty because we had had the Indian teachers who spoke the same type of English. Although we kind of got used to the way they pronounce some of the words and ran with tongue in the back of the mouth and the patterns. And we had a lot of fun with them too, because there were certain times when they were trying to say English words, which we absolutely could not understand because they were putting the emphasis on the wrong syllable. And we had a lot of laughs over over that when we finally got straightened out.

KLEIN: [00:38:46] So you meet your counterparts and you're still in New Delhi and is it are you now identified just as the piggery group or are you still traveling with the rest of the people? I want to get you out to your site and what the transition was.

MAURER: [00:39:08] You know, I'm not really sure I do remember that there were a lot of us on the train going from Delhi down to Bombay. Yeah. And then I think what happened once we got to Bombay is that we were all sent to our sites from there, because there was a regional office in Bombay, a regional Peace Corps office.

KLEIN: [00:39:36] It became an issue later, but do you recall if there were any Peace Corps discussion of emergency procedures or, you know, if you were out in your village and something happens, you should be that you should do this?

MAURER: [00:39:52] No, but I wish there had been because there came a time when I needed some emergency procedures. I was 14 hours from Bombay on a fast train. And I needed to get to the hospital.

KLEIN: [00:40:06] Well, when you get out there, we'll talk about the communication. So you head down to Bombay and then from Bombay, how do you get out to where your station is and how far is it from Bombay?

MAURER: [00:40:19] We were I was stationed. The way we had our, I think by the time we got everybody who was going to India, I think we had seven people left in the piggery society. We had two of them went north of Bombay. I went to pretty much central India by myself. We had Steve Johnson, who had never seen the pig before, go to Poona, which is southeast of Bombay. And then we had two people who were staying in Bombay to work with the agricultural college there. And their job was to set up a receiving station in an area where the port could be processed, where pigs could be processed once we finally got pigs into and then look for a market, because in the villages, typically you either had Hindus and Muslims who wouldn't eat pork.

KLEIN: [00:41:17] So I was wondering about that.

MAURER: It was one of the things that we always kicked around. What are we doing here?

KLEIN: [00:41:24] Who in India is going to end up eating the pork?

MAURER: [00:41:28] That's why it was sent to Bombay to be processed, because you had a lot of Westernized Indians and you had a lot of Europeans and Americans.

KLEIN: [00:41:37] So there was a market.

MAURER: [00:41:38] So there was a market. I mean, OK, we found a place in Relevé that served a pretty good hamburger.

KLEIN: [00:41:44] Relatively modest market, though. I mean, it's not like this is food for the millions.

MAURER: [00:41:49] No, it's not food for the millions. Well we understood was that this was an economic type of program that the government was putting money into, the Indian government. The American government is providing the expertise and the volunteers. And each society consisted of twenty five shares. And the idea was you would have twenty five farmers who would scrape up the minimum amount to match the government's contribution and then the society of twenty five people would be formed. As we got things up and running, they would be able to split all the profits.

KLEIN: [00:42:38] Was USAID involved at all on the project?

MAURER: No, not at all.

KLEIN: Peace Corps in India must have trusted you as being mature because they sent you off alone. So talk about the village you went to and whether other Peace Corps around. I mean, what was it like initially getting out to this village and how far was it from Bombay?

MAURER: [00:43:03] Um, in terms of kilometers, I think about four hundred and fifty kilometers.

KLEIN: [00:43:12] And the way you get there is by train?

MAURER: [00:43:14] By train. We were not allowed to have private vehicles. The only people that did have private vehicles were high ranking Peace Corps staff.

KLEIN: [00:43:24] Right.

MAURER: [00:43:25] And one of our supervisors would go around from village to village in a in a Jeep Wagoneer. And but he was one of the few people who could drive in India.

KLEIN: [00:43:34] Yeah. So talk about your initial reaction and your arrival in the village.

MAURER: [00:43:40] By the time we got to Bombay, I had started conversing with Mr. Deshmukh, my counterpart, and I think there was another person there who was also one of the the other lower ranking, not not one of the investors, but one of the people who worked for the investors. And so by that time we were friendly enough with each other at least to be able to converse a little bit. I do remember the first time I got there, got to the train station and they said, OK, you're going to go to such and such a place and we'll see you tomorrow down here.

KLEIN: [00:44:28] Do you have your one hundred pound duffel?

MAURER: [00:44:30] I had the duffel with me. And I had no idea where I was going, what I was doing. I must have had some money. But basically I was just abandoned. He said, well, you take this tonga, which was a horse-drawn cart, up to wherever I was going to stay. I don't even remember where I was going to stay. And on the way, there was nobody in the tonga. The driver didn't speak English and I got across to him that I was hungry, I hadn't eaten all day, so he found a little restaurant and they put me in the booth and drew the curtains so people couldn't look at me behind the curtain and I see people staring at me. And I really couldn't order yet because they didn't know what the food was. I didn't know how to order. Not spicy. And, you know, I wasn't supposed to drink the water. Right. And they brought this very, very spicy food to me. And I was trying to eat it and trying not to feel like I've just been dropped off and abandoned. But that's the way I felt. I was just sitting there in this booth and people were staring at me and I didn't know what was going on. I didn't know where I was going. I couldn't speak to anybody, whatever language I thought I knew. By this time, it vanished out of my mind. I didn't even know I was supposed to pay for the food. I got up and started to leave, you know. They made symbols that I was supposed to pay for it. So I gave them some money. And then the tonga driver took me the rest of the way to wherever I was staying.

KLEIN: [00:46:06] Do you recall? Was it a hotel?

MAURER: [00:46:08] I just don't know. It wasn't a family. Eventually we got straightened out.

KLEIN: [00:46:16] I mean, it's crazy. You've traveled these thousands of miles and then all of a sudden you're all alone.

MAURER: [00:46:23] All of a sudden I'm all by myself. I don't know what I'm doing and where I'm going.

KLEIN: [00:46:26] In a curtained booth, in a restaurant with food you can't eat.

MAURER: [00:46:29] People staring at me. And I'm going, what am I doing here?

KLEIN: [00:46:32] Yeah, well, wow, that's a tough one. So describe the first couple of days, you know, getting your feet on the ground.

MAURER: [00:46:39] So the next day I managed to get together with the members of the society. And I found out then that what the Indian government had envisioned as a self-help economic development program wasn't really that at all. There were two brothers and a cousin who were fairly well off, high ranking Hindus, Hindus who had bought all the twenty five shares of the piggery.

KLEIN: [00:47:13] So you learn this from the get go.

MAURER: [00:47:16] From the get go. We are the society, the three of us, you, me, my brother and cousin, or whatever it was. And, you know, we're investing the money so that.

KLEIN: [00:47:25] And who did they think you were?

MAURER: [00:47:27] And they knew I was a Peace Corps volunteer to help them get the things set up, to help them with the actual setting up the piggery site. Getting the pigs, getting the feed, figuring out where to put them to market.

KLEIN: [00:47:43] And essentially your piece of it is animal husbandry. It's not finance.

MAURER: [00:47:49] Right. You know, this this was something else entirely. And so it came as a little bit of a shock that that this obviously was a, uh, I thought it was kind of a scam that these guys were going through because they were the farmers that I was led to believe that we were right out there to help. These guys were businessmen. They were they're investing to make money.

KLEIN: [00:48:13] Were you able to share this with your counterpart?

MAURER: [00:48:16] No, not really.

KLEIN: [00:48:18] And what was his role in this mix supposed to be? Exactly the same as yours?

MAURER: [00:48:25] No, he, uh, he was kind of like an office person.

KLEIN: [00:48:30] Tell me his name again.

MAURER: [00:48:31] Deshmukh. Well, they were all named Deshmukh so they're all related.

KLEIN: [00:48:36] One is Deshmukh. OK.

MAURER: [00:48:41] His primary job, as near as I could tell it, was to to do the paperwork and to to make sure that all the applications were correct and just make sure that everything kept flowing.

KLEIN: [00:48:53] At the point you arrive, was there any anyone in the village raising pigs?

MAURER: [00:48:59] Ok, I didn't really go to a village, I went to a small town that was bigger than the town I grew up in, but they called it the village. It had over 90 thousand people in it. And it was urban, very urbanized. Right within the first couple of days, though, they did take me to the village where the pigs were going to be raised. And that was about 10 kilometers further east up in the hills.

KLEIN: [00:49:28] And how did they how do you get out there?

MAURER: [00:49:30] And they had a jeep. They took us all out there.

KLEIN: [00:49:34] We had you keep saying us. But it was just you.

MAURER: [00:49:38] Well, all of the people who, the Deshmukhs and. There was a ceremonial groundbreaking type thing where they had an Indian holy man, bless the what was going on, because when we got to the village, the village was maybe two hundred people. Consisted of one little tea stall store and probably 35 to 50 mud houses. And the piggery site was totally vacant, unprepared land with some trees on it. and that's where we were supposed to raise pigs and we had this little ceremony and we spread the blanket and they blessed everybody. And he had speeches and we all had ceremonial food to eat. And then after we did all the appropriate blessing. We went back to town and and that was it.

KLEIN: [00:50:44] At that point, what were you thinking?

MAURER: [00:50:48] I just didn't know what to do because there was absolutely nothing here. You know, and I thought to myself, well, am I supposed to make the bricks to build the pig pens by myself? It turned out that they did hire some people to dig a well, and by well, I mean, it was a place that was in the stream. In the head of the stream. It was dry season so the water wasn't running. And what they wanted to do was dig this. Well, that

was about maybe 15 feet square and about 30 feet deep so that when the rainy season came, the water would fill up this well and they could use that for the for the remaining season. So we really had no water at the site. Even after I left, they still hadn't dug the well deep enough to hold water. So there there was no there were no pens, no fences, no structures of any kind.

KLEIN: [00:52:03] All the money to do this had been put up by the rest of the rest of the Deshmukhs?

MAURER: [00:52:10] The government and the Deshmukhs had matched it.

KLEIN: [00:52:12] Ok, so you had no idea.

MAURER: [00:52:14] I had no idea where that money was

KLEIN: [00:52:16] Or what a budget looked like or what a projection by six months will be here.

MAURER: Nothing.

KLEIN: So for the first few weeks you were living alone?

MAURER: [00:52:30] At first they, uh, they tried to put me in a little mud hut. Which had absolutely no furniture, no door thatched roof. And I said, I don't really want to live here. And they found a place for me. There was an area that was called the camp, which is where the Indian army used to be. And there was a woman there, a widow who had been in India probably since the early 1900s. Her husband had been a British army officer who was in charge of the regiment for many, many years. And she had his old stone house that had a two wings and a central portion. She lived in the central portion and they rented out one of the wings for me.

KLEIN: [00:53:22] She was British?

MAURER: [00:53:23] She was British and old almost to the point of senility, uh, bedridden. And, um, she had a cook that had been their cook for probably close to 50 years. He and his family lived in one of the outbuildings. So he became my cook for a while.

KLEIN: [00:53:44] So at least you ended up so fairly soon in a reasonably familiar looking place.

MAURER: [00:53:50] I had a house. Yeah, no furniture still. Had to go by a little rush mat.

KLEIN: [00:53:57] Had Peace Corps prepared you for any of this, like given you a settling in allowance?

MAURER: [00:54:04] They gave us, I think it was five hundred rupees to set up a household. And then four hundred rupees a month for household expenses.

KLEIN: [00:54:13] Within the first couple of weeks, were you in communication with the Peace Corps at all? I mean, you must have wanted to tell somebody what in the world was going on.

MAURER: [00:54:25] No, not with any of the Peace Corps people back in Bombay.

KLEIN: [00:54:29] In the town where the co-op with the piggery group is, were there other Europeans there?

MAURER: [00:54:38] Yes, there were just down the street from where I was, there was a Canadian missionary and his wife, and we got to know them fairly well. And there were other two other Peace Corps volunteers from an earlier program that were sent there to work with industrial design. And they were living in a small industrial estate to the south of the town.

KLEIN: [00:55:08] But you became aware of them and, you know, hooked up them within fairly early on?

MAURER: [00:55:14] Became aware of them and eventually we all moved in together. We were joined later on by somebody from another village who was having problems with his Indian supervisors. Even though he had an engineering degree, they wouldn't let him do any engineering work. So we he'd met the two that I was living with and came and joined us. And all four of us shared that that one place in the industrial estate.

KLEIN: [00:55:40] So let's take the first six months. Did you go back to Bombay at all during that time?

MAURER: [00:55:51] Um, I know I'd been back to Bombay maybe three or four times in the entire time I was there.

KLEIN: [00:56:01] Was it because there was a meeting or you had to?

MAURER: [00:56:04] I thought it was because of a meeting or we were having some type of seminar or we were going to be introduced to somebody. There was a gentleman there who worked for Pfizer. He was an Indian and he was someone who was supposed to provide us with the feed we needed. And he was at that time of India was a lot of a lot of stuff was being rationed, sugar, butter. These were rationed pretty much nationwide. Grain was rationed. And for whatever reason, the rationing of the grain was overseen by the minister of steel. And so, of course, he didn't really care too much about grain. So when we were trying to get food stuffs for the pigs, we had this incredible bureaucracy that Deshmukh was supposed to be able to figure out how to go through approval for us to get green for the pigs. And the man from Pfizer was supposed to know some of the shortcuts.

KLEIN: [00:57:18] And during the six months that anyone from the Peace Corps come out to your site?

MAURER: [00:57:23] I believe after a couple of months, uh, Ivan Brotzman, our supervisor, did make the rounds and check on everybody to make sure everybody was OK and settled in.

KLEIN: [00:57:33] And do you recall feeding back to him that there were some, you know, holes in the project perhaps?

MAURER: [00:57:45] Um, I'm positive I let my frustrations be known to the administrator because from that point on, he really took a disliking to me.

KLEIN: [00:58:00] And what about the others in the group during, again, during, say, the first six months or so? Were you in touch with them? And how did their experience match up against what you were experiencing?

MAURER: [00:58:13] I think we were all pretty much in the same boat. We were kind of put out there and we didn't really have the infrastructure there for us to just hit the ground running, so to speak. And there wasn't really a support group for any of us.

KLEIN: [00:58:29] Support group in what way?

MAURER: [00:58:30] In terms of where you getting your stuff from, who can I see to get this type of stuff? How are you how are you building your your pig pens? Where are you getting the material from? How are you doing it? What design are you using? I did go visit the other volunteers. I was we were fortunate we could do that. I think we had to pay for it out of our household money, but we saved up enough money. I went to visit the two guys north of Bombay and they had lucked out in that they had gotten with a farmer, a richer farmer, kind of like the people I was working for. He had had an estate. But he was in the process of already raising pigs, trying to improve the native pig line. So I got to see what they were trying to do. I know we had a, um, a convention or seminar down in Poona, which is where the other guys was, and trying to figure out, you know, what he's doing and how he's doing it.

KLEIN: [00:59:37] And the convention was what?

MAURER: [00:59:39] It just the piggery guys, just the Peace Corps people so that we could at least get some feedback about how it's working for everybody else.

KLEIN: [00:59:50] Were there other than other than your group, Peace Corps, people who were in the pig program?

MAURER: [00:59:58] I don't believe there were any.

KLEIN: [01:00:00] But you seem to feel that it was the first of its kind.

MAURER: [01:00:06] But the society members and I, we did go to certain places. The University of Nonpoor, which was about maybe 50 kilometers from us, had an agricultural college. And we went there. We saw how they were raised. And when we were trying to get a line on what can we get some of these pigs once we get a place set up to keep them.

KLEIN: [01:00:29] When you go in that kind of session, who took the lead in talking to people with the deferred to you and say, you know, our expert will discuss our needs? Or did they express it and say, well, I think it's going to help us?

MAURER: [01:00:46] Ah, I think it was kind of we were all there to see what was going on in the agricultural college. And it I don't really remember that anybody took the lead. I do remember that, uh, I was dismayed because they really didn't have a good program there.

KLEIN: [01:01:10] At the Ag College.

MAURER: [01:01:11] They were in-breeding their stock. And so the pigs that they did have available weren't really healthy pigs. So, uh, and I did make that known to the Deshmukhs.

KLEIN: [01:01:25] And, uh, but after six months, if you went out to that little village, was it still just an open field with a bunch of trees?

MAURER: [01:01:36] And a slightly larger pit every time we went out there.

KLEIN: [01:01:40] And that was the well.

MAURER: [01:01:41] That was the well. They'd have another maybe six, eight inches dug out of it.

KLEIN: [01:01:45] But you never said, OK, I'm going to sit here and supervise. We're going to finish this well and then we'll go on to the next day.

MAURER: [01:01:53] I didn't see that that was my job to supervise it.

KLEIN: [01:01:56] Well, um, any point in the six months, first period when you thought to yourself, well, it's a lot of nonsense, I want to get out of here, I want to go home. I mean, what am I doing?

MAURER: [01:02:10] Well, there was a lot of frustration here, and I wasn't the only Peace Corps volunteer to feel that some of the other guys and the other programs also had frustrations and not just picked people, not just to pick people. You know, there is an incredible bureaucracy in India, even more so than I think in America. And none of the training that any of us got really prepared us for dealing with that bureaucracy.

KLEIN: [01:02:36] And most of you did not have extensive experience.

MAURER: [01:02:44] So one of the things that I was trying to do on my own was that, when we finally did get ready to have pigs, we needed to have a way to feed them and water them and I was trying to make some feeders, some self feeders, that were big hoppers that we could put the feed in and then you could adjust where the flow was so that when the pig was hungry, you could go in and as he ate to a certain point, the feed would fall down.

KLEIN: [01:03:17] So your own design or something?

MAURER: [01:03:19] It was based on some designs that they showed up at the University of California at Chico. And then I was trying to come up with a bit of watering automatic water device based on a 50 gallon drum. So I was working on these there at the society headquarters. We had they had the office upstairs and downstairs. There was like an alley across from the alley with a sign painting shop where they used to make the signs for all the Indian movies. So I had been on one side of the alley working on my pig feeder and the other guys would be over there painting these beautiful canvases of Indian actors and actresses. The problem we were having was that we didn't have a place to put pigs right when we did have an opportunity to get pigs, we couldn't take them because we didn't have any place to keep them.

KLEIN: [01:04:21] How did you become aware? How would the opportunity arise?

MAURER: [01:04:26] They would the society members would say, well, we've got pigs at the University of Nonpoor. You know, those pigs are the problem pigs, right. Where are you going to put the pigs until we. Well, we don't have a place to put them. Let's pass these up and then we need to get feed. Where can we put the feed? Well, we don't have a place to store the feed when they had it. I remember we were trying to find some feed. Eventually we got a line on some feed and we've been out to this warehouse that had these stacks and stacks and stacks of some type of grain mixture. And I told you earlier about how we had this big screw up. And you're supposed to go through this formula about how you can find out whether or not this is good food. Yeah, well, nobody there knew what good food to pigs was, right? Nobody knew how to work the formulas. I didn't have the book with me for some reason. So I took a spoonful and tasted it. And I think I lost face right then and there because you've got these high class Hindus who aren't going to touch stuff, right, and they look upon very, very strong caste system. You know, if you do certain things, you're untouchable. And I think even though they said, well, it was very brave of you to try that food, I think from that point on, I kind of lost a

little bit of status with them. And food was salty, too, so I told them not to buy it.

KLEIN: [01:06:00] How far into your service was this?

MAURER: [01:06:02] Probably about maybe nine months?

KLEIN: [01:06:07] Uh, just a related issue. What do you do with your free time? I mean, you know, what else? Any given day.

MAURER: [01:06:16] What I'd do is I go to the office and talk to them and see what's going on. If I had finished my construction projects, I'd go to the other Peace Corps volunteers and see what they were doing right. And sometimes we'd we go to one of their places where they were working. And we'd see if we could all help out. The there was a bishopric there and he found out he had a school and a church orphanage. And we tried to help them a little bit. They had some mechanical problems with some of the machinery. And we tried to help fix the machinery.

KLEIN: [01:06:57] Any free time, I mean, weekends?

MAURER: [01:07:00] We had a lot of free time, I think probably more than I should have had. I did make a fairly good number of Indian friends. We would go out and drink tea and we talk about politics.

KLEIN: [01:07:13] And Indian friends were from related to work or just where you lived?

MAURER: [01:07:19] Just people we had met.

KLEIN: [01:07:22] You keep saying we. But for the most part, it's just you.

MAURER: [01:07:27] I would say so. Yeah. For the most part, there was an informal network of the other Peace Corps. And I mean, we all knew each other. The Canadian couple, they were an older couple and they were really not

part of our social circle. We would see them and talk to them. And just how they were doing that would be about it on a related topic.

KLEIN: [01:07:55] Do you recall your first Thanksgiving and your first Christmas being in India?

MAURER: [01:08:00] I remember my first Fourth of July because I was working on the on the feeding box. And as I was cleaning the wood down and I said, hey today's the Fourth of July, it doesn't mean anything to the people here. So I'm going back to work.

KLEIN: [01:08:25] You had already been there nine months, almost a year.

MAURER: [01:08:29] So, yeah, I just don't think it was a big deal.

KLEIN: [01:08:33] Ok. Coming on toward the end of the first year, usually there's some kind of break you get you get vacation you can take or you get with the whole group gets called together by the Peace Corps for a sit around and talk kind of conference. Do you recall, you know, any anything between first and second year?

MAURER: [01:09:01] I know that we've been to Bombay. I had been Bombay a couple of times for Peace Corps related reasons. For like a seminar or just to check on us. We also have free time while we were at the conferences so that we go to movies, have dinner with each other or walk around.

KLEIN: [01:09:29] And there's a much more comfortable environment than where you were living.

MAURER: [01:09:34] It was, because these guys, we can go to restaurants and actually order a hamburger or whatever. Meat was prepared in a Western fashion.

KLEIN: [01:09:45] So were you living a vegetarian diet when you're up in the town?

MAURER: [01:09:49] Not really. We had, once I had gotten to live with the other guys in the industrial estate. We had a cook, a Muslim who had been a sheet metal worker. And Gary and Phil were interviewing people to see if they could find a good cook. And he came up and said he was an excellent cook and he'd been cooking for years. And it turned out that he'd never cooked in his life. He was a sheet metal worker. And what would happen is he'd go home and ask his wife how to cook and then he come back and cook it for us, you know, and he would go into town maybe two or three times a week and buy goat. So the only meat that we ever had in any quantity at all in the village was pretty good. Chicken and eggs and. I don't think we had eggs. I don't remember chicken, but I know we could go to the restaurant and get chicken, chicken biriyani or something like that.

KLEIN: [01:10:54] Did you take any vacation during that period at the end of the first year?

MAURER: [01:10:56] I did. I went to visit two guys north of Bombay. Who was just a little short hop up the coast and they were right on the coast. It was very nice to spend a few days up there and then. Later, can't remember which one of the other volunteers and I went to Goa, south of Bombay, it was Portuguese.

KLEIN: [01:11:24] Was it still Portuguese?

MAURER: [01:11:25] It was Portuguese then, and we probably spent about a week or so there. James Brown was making a movie and we almost got to see him. I almost ran into Shirley MacLaine one day in Bombay. My friend and I were doing something and he had to go one way and I went the other way. And just after he left me said, by the way, I just ran into Shirley MacLaine. So she was there doing some ashram thing.

KLEIN: [01:11:53] Did you during that whole first year, did you get a sense that you could take part in or become aware of traditional Hindu practices or the religion?

MAURER: [01:12:07] There were several festivals during the year. One, which was very popular was called Diwali Festival of Lights. And I don't really remember what it stood for, but the idea was that you would sprinkle colored powders on each other, to wish them a happy New Year or prosperity. And I have pictures of us just totally covered and it seemed like it was mostly red rubbed into our hair, rubbed into our faces. And you just go around the village knowing the people that you know.

KLEIN: [01:12:52] For the most part, people were friendly. I mean, did you encounter either indifference or hostility and any points?

MAURER: [01:13:00] I don't think I ever will. Let me let me back up. It wasn't really hostility. At one time, I was in Bombay by myself and I had gone to a concert with one of my friends from the village. And later on he had to go some and I just kind of wandering around. I was staying with the two Peace Corps volunteers who were living there in Bombay, and I met these three or four Indian boys and we got to talking and they invited me back to their room so we could talk some more. And after we'd been there, there are a few other people who showed up and after we'd been there, talked a lot about America, about how I liked India and what they wanted to do in America. It was kind of like they, you know, you're really very stupid to come to a place like this by yourself. You could be hurt. I said, I think I'll go now. And they let me go. It could have been, who knows? But I never felt, with one exception, I never felt threatened by anybody.

KLEIN: [01:14:21] But being in the town you were, I mean, did small children follow you when you walk around or?

MAURER: [01:14:27] They'd come up to you and just grab you by the legs and say, take me to America.

KLEIN: [01:14:34] So the exposure at some sometimes can get very annoying or wearing?

MAURER: [01:14:41] If they were nice kids, it wasn't bad. If they were. And we had a lot of nice kids. There was a little mud village around the industrial estate and some of the kids just love to see us, you know, and some of them were just really neat. And we couldn't always understand what they were saying, or at least we pretended not to understand what they were saying, but for the most part, seen the families of. It was very enjoyable. We did meet a number of people, even though we didn't know them, they would accept us on a social level. We were invited to a number of weddings where we never knew the people who were actually getting married. But because our friend, a friend who knew a friend was the cousin to the bride's first maid sister.

KLEIN: [01:15:36] So it was like welcoming the visitors.

MAURER: [01:15:39] We would go in there and it was just welcomed with open arms.

KLEIN: [01:15:44] As you going into the second year? Sometimes people see the light at the end of the tunnel. They don't get involved with, tours to 20 months or two years, whatever it is, and sort of say, well, before I leave, I think I would like at least to get this far with whatever the task is I think I'm doing.

MAURER: [01:16:08] I would have liked to have gotten some pigs. That's what I was sent there for and I haven't accomplished that.

KLEIN: [01:16:15] So was your second year like a continuation of the first? Was there no closure points or no achievement, real achievement points?

MAURER: [01:16:27] We never really did get any buildings built for pigs. But I did visit my friends who not only had the pigs, they managed to ship them to Bombay. And I went to Bombay once to help the guys in the Bombay College of Veterinary College to see what they were doing and how they were doing it. And I got through the process.

KLEIN: [01:16:50] Just to take it through, we'll talk about your medical crisis or whatever it was. But as you came to the end of the two years, what sense of accomplishment did you have?

MAURER: [01:17:08] I think the biggest sense of accomplishment that I had was the fact that made so many good friends of one of those friends who was a Sikh, confided in me that he wanted to be a Christian and that he couldn't tell his family, you know, because otherwise they would kill him. I was trying to see if there was a way writing back to my family, to my church members, to see if there was a way in which they could help him come to America. I personally was not able to do much for him. But he did get to Canada and got into America and he settled in Colorado. Well, my wife and I met him after he got married about a year or two after he got married. And last I heard, he had three boys and he had his own optical shop in Montrose. And I think that was I had, I think a lot to do that we had an article in our local newspaper that interviewed him, and he's standing there in front of his optical shop and he's got a 1964 John Kennedy half dollar, which I have given him. And he said that's what kept him going, what John Kennedy stood for.

KLEIN: [01:18:49] All through this first year, second year, what were you communicating back to your family? I assume you were writing.

MAURER: [01:18:58] I was trying to tell them what I was going through, the difference of things that. But I'm not sure they could understand.

KLEIN: [01:19:08] Did it at any point in the first year, did you say to yourself, oh, my God, I'm an idiot? I said I wanted to come to India, here I am.

MAURER: [01:19:16] I think I said that myself almost every day. It was just so unique, so exotic.

KLEIN: [01:19:21] Did anyone keep your letters, by the way?

I still have all of them.

KLEIN: OK, now, you mentioned the communication situation. Tell me when it happened and what it was. You mentioned the time when you needed to be at a hostel.

MAURER: [01:19:46] Oh, OK.

KLEIN: [01:19:49] I was going to ask you generally about health care.

MAURER: [01:19:52] For the most part, we at one point in time or another, all of us got sick with some type of dysentery, either because the food was so hot, you just had to drink the water, even though, you know, you shouldn't. Or you ate something that wasn't quite right.

KLEIN: [01:20:12] Do Hindus not drink alcohol?

MAURER: [01:20:16] It's interesting, you can get a license to drink alcohol in India if you are an alcoholic. And there were state run shops, we could go to buy liquor. And any American just had to say, I'm an American, and they would automatically give you this liquor license because everybody knows that Americans are alcoholics. I see it in the movies. Everything they know about America, they learn from movies. Every American is rich. Every American has a car. Every American has a watch. I heard that I don't know how many times. I never got a liquor license. But one time several of my friends said we're going to have a little party south of town. And they invited me and they invited all of the volunteers, but only one of the other guys and I went and we wrote our bikes out to this abandoned gas station about maybe six kilometers south of town. And it faced on the road. We had to go round the back and you climbed up the ladder and you were on this roof that had a high parapet around the front so that nobody could see you from the road, bikes in the back. And there were a few of our friends and the few people that they knew that were providing them with the liquor. And they hand us bottles that was called Lucky Tiger, and it looked and smelled like a lucky tiger here. And as they were passing it around before it got to us, one of them said, you know, we had this lucky tiger

wedding at my cousin's last month. We were lucky, only three people died. And we just didn't even want to try that.

KLEIN: [01:22:05] It wasn't Shivas.

MAURER: [01:22:07] I don't know what was in that, but I wasn't going to risk it. There was one guy in India, I'm not sure what program he was with, but he got so sick that the American Red Cross ship Hope had to medical evacuation, medically evacuate him from India. Otherwise, he would have died.

KLEIN: [01:22:34] And, you know, with the time that you were, you said.

MAURER: [01:22:37] What had happened is in India, typically you wear real thin leather sandals. And in the rainy season, these things get wet and very, very slippery. And I had gone to a movie with some friends of mine. And as we were coming out of the movie from upstairs, we were going downstairs and the steps were slick because it had rained while we were inside. And my feet went out from under me. And I landed on my butt. Two days later, I started pissing blood and I said, that's it, I'm going. It took me the better part of a day, 24 hours to get into India, go to the administrative office and say, hey.

KLEIN: In Bombay?

MAURER: Yeah, Bombay. And then they put me in a hospital. Which I found was fascinating because it had people from all nationalities who were Swedish ship sailors, and if I if I hadn't felt so bad, I would have enjoyed it a lot more. And they gave me a bunch of tests and they gave me a variant to do to take x-rays. I thought it was fairly competent for an Indian hospital. I think it was all Indian, I don't remember any Europeans on the staff at all, and I was probably in the hospital for three or four days or one of my fellow co-workers from the village had come in to see how I was doing. And we had some friends who was an industrialist, who had two very Westernized children, and his daughter had come in but with Pete or she

was there already and they met together in the hospital. And he and I probably spent another three or four days after I got out of the hospital recuperating at my friend's apartment in Bombay.

KLEIN: Peace Corps?

MAURER: Peace Corps friend.

KLEIN: [01:24:42] Was there a Peace Corps doctor on staff in Bombay?

MAURER: [01:24:45] I don't think so. If there was, I never saw.

KLEIN: [01:24:49] Yeah, OK. And so whatever had gone on with your insides?

MAURER: [01:24:55] Apparently when I fell, I ripped something loose in one of my kidneys or my bladder. And that's why I was peeing blood. And you just the rest for about a week, let it heal up. But it was extremely painful.

KLEIN: [01:25:13] And you sort of were on your own for X number of hours, getting the train down?

MAURER: [01:25:18] Totally on my own. Yeah, I, I remember I was in such pain. I couldn't sit, I couldn't lay down. I couldn't stand. Yet I had 14 hours of that on the train before I got to Bombay. I was ready to give it up right then.

KLEIN: [01:25:35] When you did come out of the hospital and you say maybe it's time to go home or?

MAURER: [01:25:40] By that time I was feeling OK and I knew what had happened to me. And I said, well, I'm just going to make sure I don't wear my sandals in the rain again, or get sandals with that rubber soles.

KLEIN: [01:25:52] So it seems that like you were there almost two years that your time runs out. It's not like you say, OK, Project X is done and I've set the groundwork for Project Y. Did you did you have that sense?

MAURER: [01:26:12] I did not have that sense. Looking back on it, I wish I had had the strength to go live underneath that tree and build the pig pen myself.

KLEIN: [01:26:25] Right.

MAURER: [01:26:26] I really regret not doing that.

KLEIN: [01:26:28] Yeah, but as you came near leaving, usually there's a termination conference when your group gets back together and sort of processes the experience. Do you recall that at all?

MAURER: [01:26:43] Uh, no, because I left early because I was having problems with my knee. I had a bad knee from early, early years on. I been riding a bicycle and either I ran into a water buffalo, or it ran into me or something, but my knee really started to bother me. And at that time, there was nobody in the Indian hospital who could heal that kind of a bone pain. So what they did is they sent me back to Washington on a medical leave. For 30 days to be evaluated and to see what was going on.

KLEIN: This is during the second year?

MAURER: This was near the end of my second year and the bureaucracy in Washington took so long to get me in and get me evaluated, that by the time they finally figured out what was wrong with me, they said my 30 days have expired and I couldn't go back to India.

KLEIN: [01:27:50] You had not left understanding that?

MAURER: [01:27:54] I had left with the understanding I was going to go back after I got treatment for my knee, which is where my duffel bag was, which is why it wound up at my friend's house, was because he said, well, I'm not just going to ship it home. So I did in fact, get an early discharge because of my knee.

KLEIN: [01:28:15] And when you finally realized that you weren't going back and what was your sense of, you know, had it been worthwhile joining the Peace Corps and what did you look to in the future?

MAURER: [01:28:34] You know. I was very frustrated with the bureaucracy, both American and Indian. And I did have a, what do you call it when you have the interview, when you when you leave?

KLEIN: Termination interview.

MAURER: So I did have one of those and I tried to express this in Washington, in Washington, trying to express my frustration. And, you know, why don't you tell us these things while we were going through training? You know, it really would have helped if we had known about these, just like went over their heads. They didn't even want to know that. They didn't want to hear about it. You know, I don't know what you're talking about.

KLEIN: [01:29:19] Do you know who had been responsible for developing the program?

MAURER: I don't know. Things happen.

KLIEN: [01:29:26] So you really felt that people hadn't done their homework and putting you there.

MAURER: [01:29:38] I thought they could have been a lot better to prepare us more if we had known about some of the processes. Instead of concentrating on here's how you raise a pig, here's how you feed it, here's how you slaughter it. If they had said, you're going to be involved with this program and here's how you get your food, here's how you get your vets for your pigs, and here's how you get your medicine.

KLEIN: [01:30:06] You mentioned good old Steve from Connecticut somehow raised pigs or got some pigs. What was the difference?

MAURER: [01:30:15] I mentioned the guy from Pfizer, Pfizer chemical. He was stationed where he worked near where Steve worked. So he was kind of like Steve's liaison. He could get stuff for Steve because he was there. I was two, three hundred kilometers away. And I'd see him, I think I only saw him three times in the entire time I was there, but Steve would see him probably once or twice a week.

KLEIN: [01:30:40] And was there much of a push from the family, the Deshmukhs, to get things done or they can content to let it?

MAURER: [01:30:50] I think they were content because as long as they had their money in there, they were going to get their money back no matter what happened. However, the program was set up right. It was economic development for them.

KLEIN: [01:31:02] It wasn't like they felt the commitment.

MAURER: [01:31:05] And I didn't get the impression that they were committed to raising pigs. Yeah, I got the impression they were there for the money.

KLEIN: [01:31:10] And that that's part of the slippage, too. And, you know, so now finally, when you realize your Peace Corps service is over, what where are you going next?

MAURER: [01:31:23] I didn't know what I was going to do. They put me up in a hotel, motel, hotel in Washington. I was getting fourteen dollars a day for living expenses. And of course, Washington, D.C. Fourteen dollars just doesn't cover much. Go out and buy a coke and breakfast that takes care of that.

KLEIN: [01:31:45] No one in your family came to try to visit while you were.

MAURER: [01:31:48] No, because that was two thirds of the way across the country. And I was thinking, well they're going to give me a certain amount of money because your termination allowance, whatever it was. I'll just buy a car and drive back to this back home. I'll just get a job in D.C. and, you

know, in a restaurant when the dishwasher had a big fight with the with the cook, the dishwasher walked out. Hey, you guys need a dishwasher, I'm available? Well, come back tomorrow and talk to the owner. So if they said, yeah, come to work right then, then I probably would have stayed in Washington and find a place to live. By that time, I think I was ready to go back and to continue my education.

KLEIN: [01:32:45] Where did you stand with the draft as you came home?

MAURER: [01:32:47] You know, it's interesting point because I finally did not get my readjustment allowance. I went home, they gave me a train ticket to a plane ticket to go home. I went home and a few weeks later, I got my readjustment allowance. And I said to myself, well, if I don't do something, the draft is going to get me. I've got this bad knee. And they sent me home from India. I'll just go fly free. They'll turn me down after I get my physical. Oh, they didn't. Three years later, after I got out of the Army.

KLEIN: [01:33:24] So you enlisted.

MAURER: [01:33:27] So I enlisted thinking that I would not be taken because of my knee. And but the nice thing is that the Army had to operate on my knee and I've been getting disability ever since. 10 percent.

KLEIN: [01:33:40] And did you go to Vietnam or not?

MAURER: [01:33:42] No, I was in Germany for two years. I took almost a year of training in Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, thirty five miles south of the city of New York. Signal Corps. And we always had the joke. The artillery for their colors had crossed cannons and the infantry had crossed rifles. Signal Corps had crossed wires. You know where you're going to go and you've got some to offer, go for it. It's an experience that's a once in a lifetime experience. As a matter of fact, one of the guys that I worked with for the city, I work for the city for twenty three years.

KLEIN: The city being Tucson?

MAURER: The city of Tucson and a friend of mine, we probably worked there as long as I had. And I just found out that he'd finally gotten fed up with the bureaucracy and quit and joined the Peace Corps. I have no idea where he's going, when he's going.

KLEIN: [01:34:48] It's still there, it's still possible.

MAURER: [01:34:50] I don't even know what countries are still involved with the Peace Corps these days. I would imagine it's primarily out of Africa now.

KLEIN: [01:34:57] It's a lot. It's all over the place.

MAURER: [01:35:00] Because I know India had to drop the Peace Corps right back in the mid '80s, I think it was.

KLEIN: [01:35:06] And you did mention that you had some continuing contact with the Sikh who came here. Did you have any other continuing contacts?

MAURER: [01:35:20] Yes, I had another friend who is a watchmaker by trade. And we wrote back and forth for a while and he sent me the picture of his wedding where he and his bride had gotten married. And after that, somehow, well, when I when I got out of the Army, my mom and dad had gotten divorced and she moved to California to be near her family. And when I lost my home address, I think I lost a lot of contact. I never was able to pick back up.

KLEIN: [01:36:00] Have you ever been tempted to go back to India?

MAURER: [01:36:03] Yes, I'd love to go back to India.

KLEIN: [01:36:04] But you haven't.

MAURER: [01:36:05] Haven't yet. But my daughter now is 29.

KLEIN: [01:36:10] Do you think they finally got some pigs in the village?

MAURER: [01:36:14] I want to go back and see if they ever got a piggery going there. I'd love to do that.

KLEIN: [01:36:20] But be prepared to be disappointed. Who knows.

MAURER: [01:36:24] My daughter and her husband got married out of country. They were at the point where they were trying to decide how big a wedding, who you invite, blah, blah, blah. And he said, to hell with it. But so they did. They went to Scotland, got married overseas. And so every year for their wedding anniversary, they go to a different country. So we're talking about maybe, not this coming year, but maybe the next year, going to India for their wedding anniversary. There's a travel bureau that has motorcycle tours of the Himalayas.

KLEIN: [01:37:05] How high up can you go on a motorcycle?

MAURER: [01:37:07] Apparently pretty far. They provide the motorcycle. And since we've all got motorcycles now, we thought that would be a fantastic thing. And I would like to take a couple of three, maybe even months after that. Just go back and see all the things that I told myself I was going to see that I never got around to.

KLEIN: [01:37:26] Because you couldn't play on a return trip touring around India because you suddenly came out with the knee problem and you were in Washington and didn't have the chance to go back.

MAURER: [01:37:38] My dream at the time was once I got back to India, I'll see if I could get out in India and then travel overland to Europe.

KLEIN: [01:37:49] And in the '60s, that was fairly common. I mean, people would terminate in their country and then you could get a plane ticket with twenty five stops and the opportunities were there.

MAURER: [01:38:03] Well, I did manage to do that in the Army. I had been discharged from Germany and they gave me a year to go do what I wanted to do and I could still get a ticket back home. And I think, I think I travel for about four or five months. And then I had enrolled at the University of New Mexico. About three weeks before I was due to enroll, I went in, got my ticket, sold the vehicle I had been travelling in to a friend of mine. And but I did have that period of time. I wish I had been able to do that for me. I've always wanted to go over the Khyber Pass and the reason that just strikes me.

KLEIN: [01:38:46] It's not a healthy place to be right now.

MAURER: [01:38:48] Right now it's not a good place. But back in the sixties, yes, it would have been a fantastic thing to go over.

KLEIN: [01:38:55] Anything else for the archives that you'd like to mention related to Peace Corps?

MAURER: [01:39:02] Um, my advice to anybody going into the Peace Corps is make sure you have enough time to really explore the country itself, not just be there to do the job that you think you sent there to do all right. The thing that strikes me that somebody told us during our training or during our flowery speeches was that we were America's goodwill ambassadors. And I think that that is far more important than raising a pig or two. And I think that by going around the country and seeing the country and being with people, you're fulfilling that job. And I did manage to spend a lot of time with friends and acquaintances in India, going to places, Bishop gave me a ride up to the hill station one time, which I thought was kind of interesting because he didn't try to convert me.

KLEIN: [01:40:17] But and that's the second goal of the Peace Corps is, is to allow people in other cultures to become aware of Americans.

MAURER: [01:40:29] So, you know, it seemed to me that any time I would sit down with Indians, we would get to the point of, what's America like? What is it

like for you as a young man in America? What do you do? What kind of opportunities are there for you? And I think that by answering that question, it really helped a lot of people understand what America was all about.

KLEIN: [01:40:57] It'll be interesting to see the kinds of conversations you have in 2008, you know, because the world has changed considerably from 1968. And, you know, if, not if, when you get back to India, that will be a subject for another interview.

[END OF INTERVIEW]