

John Archer Oral History Interview
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Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

John Archer served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Bolivia from 1967 to 1969 on a rural community development project.

Access

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Oral History Interview

with

John Archer

December 1, 2011
Madison, Wisconsin

By Robert Klein

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

KLEIN: [00:00:04] This is Bob Klein. Today is December 1, 2011. I'm interviewing John Archer, who is a Peace Corps volunteer in 1967 to 1969 in Bolivia in a rural community development project. So let's go back, oh, maybe a year before you joined and talk about what was going on.

ARCHER: [00:00:30] All right. I went to college in Minnesota, Northfield, Minnesota, and I got a small liberal arts school that was maybe three hundred and fifty miles away from where I grew up in southeastern Wisconsin. And I had an opportunity my sophomore year to go to Germany as part of a little work exchange program that maybe I have helped facilitate to Harvard in Germany. And that was my first experience going overseas. OK, first experience having a long plane ride. And I remember while I was over there, I read newspapers about the riots in Watts and some of the things that were going on back in the States. Right. And I thought that's unusual, just the position of my life and things that here am flying over the English

Channel, let's say. Yeah. And then in the meantime, reading about this stuff going on in the United States, that was fairly heavy duty and significant.

KLEIN: [00:01:49] Yeah. What was what was your major?

ARCHER: [00:01:55] I was I became an English major.

KLEIN: [00:01:59] Well, let's go. Where had you grown up?

ARCHER: [00:02:03] I'd grown up in I was born in Milwaukee. Then my family moved to the country, western Milwaukee, around Wales and Dallas and Delafield. Yeah. Is a farming community. And my dad commuted to Milwaukee. He worked at Schultz Brewery and I commuted to the local watering school, which was two miles down the road.

KLEIN: [00:02:28] Genuine one room school. Any siblings?

ARCHER: [00:02:35] I have a sister three years younger, OK. And so when we moved out, I was working in the sixth grade and she into third grade, but because she was the only student in the school in the school and that created the prompter up one grade, you automatically caught up with me.

KLEIN: [00:02:53] So you, as you were growing up in a farm community?

ARCHER: Yes. Right.

KLEIN: Through high school or?

ARCHER: Yes.

KLEIN: And during those years, what kind of extracurricular activities did you do to any travel around?

ARCHER: [00:03:11] There wasn't too much travel. I guess our family as a group maybe drove to D.C. part of one summer and our travels through strictly in the Midwest. And it was probably a long history.

KLEIN: [00:03:31] Did you do any volunteer work at all during school or while you were in high school or vacations?

ARCHER: [00:03:39] No, I do remember working at some of the local farms, as it turns out, to volunteer. But I was never a part of any organization I was volunteering.

KLEIN: [00:03:52] It was just the community helping out within the community. So when you finished high school, your decision was to go right on to college at that point, yes? Did you have any kind of career goal at that point?

ARCHER: [00:04:11] At that point, my only career goal goal was to figure out what my interests were and to get enough experiences to help guide myself there. And I felt I really needed some greater perspectives of things because it was fairly limited living where we did.

KLEIN: [00:04:35] And you were aware of that also, I guess?

ARCHER: [00:04:38] Well, I would like to say that it was at the top of my mind but I don't think I was that wise at that point.

KLEIN: [00:04:47] The family expectation was that you were going to go on to college?

ARCHER: Yes.

KLEIN: OK, and how did you choose St. Olaf?

ARCHER: [00:04:58] I think because it seemed to fit in a variety of ways for. Onwards, I guess what got me interested first and saying off is that there is I think this is true, that other people just are very small things occurred

that put things on the map. But I was working at a church camp one summer and the guy is the most popular guy. There was a guy who was at Saint or college. He had all the finesse and all the experiences of a college guy and attracted all kinds of girls. So I thought, well, if I want to settle, maybe that would happen to me.

KLEIN: [00:05:47] OK.

ARCHER: [00:05:49] But it was nice also because it was just from my home. However, I think I would have preferred to go into the University of Wisconsin where there was a little more of a variety show of things to choose from.

KLEIN: [00:06:05] So, you know, it was basically a four year liberal arts college.

ARCHER: [00:06:10] Yes. And the idea was because I had my folks thought that because I didn't have much of a direction at that point, it would be better to be in the more insulated kind of environment, like saying or write slightly larger than my previous environment, but not as overwhelming as, you know, in the university town.

KLEIN: And that was your first time living away from home also?

ARCHER Yes. Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:06:38] So you started saying off and decided somewhere in the four years that you were an English major and within that four years, it was also included a year or a semester was it in Germany?

ARCHER: [00:06:58] Just the summer. Maybe eight weeks.

KLEIN: [00:07:01] Ok, did you was German the foreign language then that you studied?

ARCHER: [00:07:10] I yes, I was studying German for a semester there. And my folks come from Germanic backgrounds.

KLEIN: [00:07:18] Right.

ARCHER: [00:07:18] So they've always had a little interest in German. But beyond that, yeah, it was German that I studied the year before I went.

KLEIN: [00:07:30] As, let's say, the time you entered college. Were you at all aware of the Peace Corps? Do you recall if anyone you knew was in it or if you read about it or heard about it?

ARCHER: [00:07:43] I'd heard about it and remembered Sargent Shriver and Kennedy and some of the commotion back when it began. And so I had hidden deep background. I would say at that point, I don't think I had met with any volunteers

KLEIN: [00:08:03] And no one had seen all of who you met had been in the Peace Corps.

ARCHER: [00:08:08] Not that I recall. Yeah, except for maybe a recruiter who came through. And I don't remember exactly when my first contact, the Peace Corps.

KLEIN: [00:08:18] Ok, so you're you're moving on toward graduation would be '67. You're going to get a degree in English during the four years. The scene, along with other activities you got involved in.

ARCHER: [00:08:42] I was involved in a cross-country intramural sports. There was a big program there by which anybody, any member of the school could participate at a level in intramural that was really well organized. You know, I became a manager with my roommate as a team and we went for the whole year and managed this team and a variety of sports and participated in it. Right. And so I think that began as a sophomore. I participated freshman and then as a sophomore became more involved in

it. So that was one thing that I was involved in throughout the year. And also I became a counselor my junior year as an attorney. What that means was the amount of freshman and floor and helping to try to make that transition with being students.

KLEIN: [00:09:48] Is that a church based school?

ARCHER: Yes.

KLEIN: [00:09:53] And what's the church?

ARCHER: It's based on the Lutheran Church of America. OK, it has that background. Right. And religion is part of. Curriculum, the compulsory curriculum.

KLEIN: [00:10:07] Ok, and what did you do on vacation, you know, during the year or between years of college years, one summer you went to Germany, right?

ARCHER: [00:10:21] Or the following summer, I was in Peace Corps. I was part of an early training program called the Advanced Training Program ATP, which I would. Why my junior year, OK? I was accepted for that program later in my junior year so that my junior summer suspension training already for Peace Corps, OK, at Notre Dame. And so I spent most of my summer in South during the Peace Corps program.

KLEIN: [00:11:02] Let's go to the when at what point did you decide you were going to I gather the recruiter came and you then decided to apply for Peace Corps. Did the recruiter say that there's this program where you can begin your Peace Corps service while you're still in college? And are you aware of that?

ARCHER: Yeah. Yeah.

KLEIN: And did you share it with your folks and what was their reaction?

ARCHER: [00:11:28] I did share it and I think they were positive. I think they were relieved that I was interested in something that I was showing a little proactivity and kind of thing.

KLEIN: [00:11:44] What about your peers that up?

ARCHER: [00:11:46] I mean, some of them part of the screen and others thought it was just another thing that Archer's being interested in. See how long it sticks

KLEIN: [00:12:00] At that point, the draft wasn't a concern?

ARCHER: [00:12:04] I got that right. But I saw at the end of the tunnel upon graduation because, yeah, I think I would have done kind of an interest in my draft board.

KLEIN: [00:12:16] Yeah. OK, so peers of yours had been drafted from the community where you

ARCHER: [00:12:23] Not that I knew of. Of course I remember. I just knew Vietnam was there and I was there.

KLEIN: [00:12:33] And any other travel also right now. So between junior and senior years, you're now what they call you a trainee?

ARCHER: Yes.

KLEIN: When you applied for the Peace Corps, I think even in those days, you you used to be able to, one, indicate whether you had any language facility, foreign language, the other if you had a preference for assignment. You know, I'd like to. Do you recall that at all?

ARCHER: [00:13:05] I did. My preference for us to learn a language and the culture that I could I could relate to for as much as my life as I could. OK, so I

thought Spanish would be a great way to go. And I think that was my preference to go over to Latin America or Spanish speaking country.

KLEIN: [00:13:26] Ok, and now when you went into when you were accepted, when you were accepted into a project overseas or simply into this advanced training?

ARCHER: [00:13:42] We were, the country had already been designated.

KLEIN: [00:13:44] Oh, OK.

ARCHER: [00:13:46] And and that's where my invitation arose to be part of the A.P. program, going to Bolivia after my senior year. Oh, and so it was already pretty specific. I think it probably was already marked as a rural community development program.

KLEIN: [00:14:08] So you reported to Notre Dame. Do you recall your reaction? I mean, a couple. I mean, you now you're coming from St. Olaf to a known school. And not only that, you're not putting yourself in the midst of a bunch of other people who've joined who are joining the Peace Corps. You recall your.

ARCHER: [00:14:29] Ah, yeah. I was really something the first to go to Notre Dame and Big University. You know, it seemed like you could walk for miles and still be on campus. Yeah. But more importantly, the people that I was suddenly with were of all different sizes, shapes, colors, backgrounds, the training, the trainees. Yes, it was incredible.

KLEIN: [00:14:52] And so I gather that's a contrast to say.

ARCHER: [00:14:56] Yes, OK. And so I was I was suddenly in a pool of people who had a whole variety of experiences. I'd never been there. Yeah. And it just opened up a wonderful, sometimes scary part of life. To me it was.

KLEIN: [00:15:18] What did you find most shocking about other behaviors?

ARCHER: [00:15:23] Oh. Oh, I was I was with people of other ethnic backgrounds that I hadn't done before. And I sat down here. This feels pretty good. These folks and then people from different traditions around the United States, for example, are Jewish folks, some from the East Coast, some from other places at a Lutheran school, just not much of the Jewish tradition here are much other than studying Jews is honor and people who were raised here as well.

KLEIN: [00:16:07] See, and were most of the group is finishing up between junior and senior year at college.

ARCHER: [00:16:15] And everybody was the same age, same stage of education.

KLEIN: [00:16:21] About how many were in the group?

ARCHER: [00:16:23] About 60, I think.

KLEIN: [00:16:24] And male female?

ARCHER: Pretty equally dispersed.

KLEIN: OK, and what do you think? How did the group perceive you? I mean, is the Midwest Lutheran or.

ARCHER: [00:16:43] The most unique thing was to get this little publication, this pamphlet, not a pamphlet, but a booklet of everybody's bios and remarkable book. Yes. And so reading that thing was there. And at just beginning, the whole story with there was just a wonderful way to get started. I forget what your question was or how they perceive you. Yeah, they read my Bible. And I do remember some people thought, in fact, the woman that I was stationed with, she said that at first she thought I was some kind of a mindless jock from the Midwest who didn't really know diddley. I don't know all the other folks thought.

KLEIN: [00:17:42] So what was the content of the training, the Notre Dame summit?

ARCHER: [00:17:47] Oh, it was pretty. It focused on Spanish because the concept of rule, the philosophy of rural development.

KLEIN: [00:18:05] Were there any Bolivians teaching?

ARCHER: [00:18:12] Yes, there was a considerable staff of the Spanish people who were Spanish as well as cultural experts.

KLEIN: [00:18:21] And in I guess the language lasted an intense four or five hours a day. Yes. Yes. Was there any implication that you had to get to a certain level by the end of the summer in order to continue with the program?

ARCHER: [00:18:36] I think it was I don't think the selection was part of that formula. It seemed like there was a fair amount of understanding that these maybe people with the first exposure to foreign language that might not bloom at the end of eight by the end of the week. So I think there was some flexibility given the people. How did you do it? I was one of the slower groups and each group was designated by Bolivian city manager and Cochabamba was mine. And it happened to be slower learners. Yeah, one of my friends right next to me, you had an accent that was just a killer accent. He went on to become one of the most successful of the volunteers over the years. But you never would have known that for a week.

KLEIN: [00:19:37] Ok, so, I mean, it was somewhat daunting to challenge. Must be you must have felt pressure to be learning the language. And it was being taught by native speakers, I assume. Were there any within the group who who came with the facility in Spanish?

ARCHER: [00:19:56] Yes, yes. Some people were way advanced.

KLEIN: [00:20:00] And what was their background?

ARCHER: [00:20:01] Some people were native speakers. And one guy was from El Salvador, his family was from El Salvador. And he had spoken Spanish in his home. And was bilingual perfectly. And there were people who were studying to be Spanish Spanish speakers as part of their next career. And so they were way out there, you know, so we had some native speakers. You know,

KLEIN: [00:20:25] It was all the work academic or you have a chance to do any kind of field work or other activity while you were at Notre Dame?

ARCHER: [00:20:34] Ah, we had field work in a variety of ways, sometimes on several weekends, members of one of the prominent gangs in Chicago spent the weekend at Notre Dame with us and we were organizing activities and panels and whatnot as part of their experience at a campus. Right. And then we spent, I think it was two weeks in Chicago and the Pilson neighborhood, which is primarily was primarily Spanish speaking. And we would go door to door I with the more proficient speaker as part of our cooperative movement, a credit card shop in the Chicago credit co-op that focused on Spanish speaking people. We helped to promote their mission. Door to door in

KLEIN: [00:21:36] What was the living arrangement during that two weeks? Dormitory?

ARCHER: [00:21:38] I don't think we had roommates in Chicago or in Chicago.

KLEIN: [00:21:45] Yeah. Oh, man. Did they put you up in a hotel or you didn't stay with the family?

ARCHER: [00:21:52] I don't think so. OK, no, that would have been a great idea. Yeah, that's right. That's something that certainly is. Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:22:01] So say at least you had some cool field work. Was there and was there also a selection process going on during the eight weeks, psychological testing, interviews with shrinks or anything like that?

ARCHER: [00:22:25] We were getting feedback from the staff along the way. And I remember I, I played volleyball once. We had a variety of extracurricular activities going on. Yeah. And this one staff member was noticing how I was playing. And he also knew from my experience there and he told me at one point that I would need to be showing more proactivity if I wanted to be a successful volunteer.

KLEIN: [00:23:03] Based on your volleyball game?

ARCHER: [00:23:05] Based on volleyball and other things. Oh, OK. But it seemed like that was the culminating activity that brought this to the surface somehow.

KLEIN: [00:23:17] Yeah, it must have been the area and the staff sort of eyeballing everybody.

ARCHER: [00:23:23] Yeah. Yeah. And I think there was a character deselection, maybe mid-term, you know, maybe after four weeks.

KLEIN: [00:23:30] Did people disappear?

ARCHER: Yeah, yeah.

KLEIN: Do you recall how the group dealt with that?

ARCHER: [00:23:36] Are generally we accepted it but we scratched our heads because we could see the creativity and just about everybody there, you know, potential for them. And we were sad when that happened.

KLEIN: [00:23:50] We knew that as part of that process, we asked to do peer ratings. I'd like to be assigned with X, but not Y.

ARCHER: [00:24:02] Oh, I don't, I don't remember the game.

KLEIN: [00:24:04] And who was it who ran the training was at Notre Dame or was it a special group?

ARCHER: [00:24:12] It was Peace Corps. His name was William Langford. OK, and I think he was hired by Peace Corps to do that. I don't think he was arrested. So he pulled together the faculty and everything.

KLEIN: [00:24:22] So did anyone from Bolivia, Peace Corps or Bolivia itself come and say to you, this is the job you're going to do when you get to Bolivia, when you're a volunteer?

ARCHER: [00:24:40] I think only in general terms. I don't think I think this program was new and they didn't have a lot of experience already with them.

KLEIN: [00:24:49] So at the end of the summer, some people have been selected, you know, during the summer. Were you nervous that that might include you?

ARCHER: [00:25:06] Yes, I do that. I tried to be more proactive. I tried to show my leadership qualities, and so I tried to be a good practice.

KLEIN: [00:25:13] More volleyball?

ARCHER: [00:25:17] Yes. I try to be socially, just things like that.

KLEIN: [00:25:23] What wasn't all training? I mean, the groups generally, they break into some kind of cliques or subgroups and there is some free time. Do you recall that process at play?

ARCHER: [00:25:37] Yes, yes, I remember I was not part of the drinker's at that point, and people were turning or getting close to the age 21 and going out to some of the local bars. We never had much. I've never been in that kind of group and say no. And so it's kind of a wide open field. Right. And part

of the participants in this program were really good drinkers and very social. And they kind of knew what to do. Right. So I was a wannabe, but I never made that

KLEIN: [00:26:16] Good people begin to pair off with in any marriages that came out of the yes. At the time or, you know, down the pipe.

ARCHER: [00:26:26] Some relationships grew and marriage didn't happen. Yeah, yeah. I think yeah. I think we had two marriages before going into it. Yes.

KLEIN: [00:26:39] Ok, let's wrap up the summer. You are selected so you're not deselected. The group is now smaller than 60. What's the next step?

ARCHER: [00:26:56] Next step is to keep on moving through senior year in preparation for growing soon after graduation to Bolivia.

KLEIN: [00:27:03] And what what what would that entail while you're at St. Olaf now you're finishing your degree.

ARCHER: [00:27:10] Right. So I wanted to show my leadership. So I get involved with some things that could give me that forum. And I switched my language direction, certainly to Spanish. Yeah. And I started to think seriously about living on my own. And what I needed is Peace Corps volunteer, OK? And then that senior year around holiday time, we had a reunion, everybody, an official piece by piece growing in here at O'Hare Airport just in order to get a few more classes in order to get a little more cohesive at O'Hare. Yeah, at the hotel right nearby.

KLEIN: [00:27:56] So was during the Christmas break. Yeah. You were there for, what, five days, six days?

ARCHER: Something like that.

KLEIN: And what what went on then?

ARCHER: [00:28:07] Oh, I don't remember the exact best of advice, but certainly a large part of it was just reestablishing friendships with other volunteers and with members of our staff. And there was a nice feeling of how are you doing and what do you need? Congratulations on what you've done. It was a very supportive field.

KLEIN: [00:28:33] We see you sort of we're expected to report on what you had done back at your school to prepare yourself. And your answer would have been?

ARCHER: [00:28:42] They are making good progress.

KLEIN: [00:28:45] Yeah, you're learning. You're taking Spanish classes. Are you doing anything in the community?

ARCHER: [00:28:53] Yeah, I was tutoring a student who needed some tutoring as kind of an outreach. Yeah, I became the head of the recreational program at the union. And so I, I wanted to show some leadership. Yeah. And so I helped to organize staff through your various tournaments, various activities that would appeal to people. I, I decided to start a fundraising program, and so I established, you know, the promotion for the ad and spoke in front of the student body and collected money with some other people and sent it off to here.

KLEIN: [00:29:41] And I'm interested. Do you think you would have gone in that direction had you not decided to become part of the Peace Corps?

ARCHER: [00:29:48] I don't think so. Or possibly that direction? Yeah, those specific activities I probably would not have been involved in then as a leader

KLEIN: [00:29:59] During that year, you begin to have a feeling that, hey, I'm a Peace Corps volunteer. I'm doing these. Oh, okay.

ARCHER: [00:30:09] Yeah. I was surprised to myself with a little push so much and a little expectations out there.

KLEIN: [00:30:15] So you're you're getting close to graduation. Do you have any second thoughts about this is a crazy decision. Should I just go back to the farm or anything?

ARCHER: [00:30:31] You know, I felt really happy I was doing and. And I felt really special, I felt I was lion with a whole lot of people that were going to take me into a new direction in life. And it really gave me what I was needing at that point as far as hope for the future and direction in my life and some kind of structure against which to work.

KLEIN: [00:30:51] Yes. And your family?

ARCHER: [00:30:58] They were supportive all the time.

KLEIN: [00:31:01] And your friends are saying all along, did they kid you or did they just simply feel it was a good thing you were doing?

ARCHER: [00:31:10] Yeah, I thought I think they thought it was a good thing that the Peace Corps had such a feeling. I just got a little.

KLEIN: [00:31:19] So we're sort of wrapping up this summer and your final year at St. Olaf. All of you, you felt the Peace Corps, he challenged you to do more and you had begun to do that. And I gather it felt good. I mean, you felt and you felt yourself part of this bigger thing, which was called, quote, the Peace Corps. Did you ever consider that? Well, suppose I decide not to go what my alternative is or was the whole focus on going Peace Corps?

ARCHER: [00:32:08] I felt really proactively going toward Peace Corps. I really felt I wanted to be a part of that. And I knew in my mind that it was going to give me some wonderful experiences and returns and opportunities. So I didn't think much of what other areas to go to. I had the luxury of focusing on one particular project.

KLEIN: [00:32:37] And how did you draft board look at all this?

ARCHER: [00:32:41] Oh, I got a I didn't speak personally with anyone, but I was supported in that. I got to determine and it was encouraged.

KLEIN: [00:32:53] I mean, it was not automatic that most boards tended to. So you graduated, you enjoyed celebrated your degree. What was the next step?

ARCHER: [00:33:10] The next step was to pack my bags, basically. And I had proof of it. Yeah, I said my goodbyes, I imagine.

KLEIN: [00:33:21] And no further training. Not in the States. OK, so the summit the previous summer had been enough for you to be considered part of part of the program and be sent to Bolivia.

ARCHER: [00:33:37] There was a further deselection moment at the end of our senior years before we actually left. And so that senior year was all part of a task for us. Yeah, that was monitored.

KLEIN: [00:33:56] And how was it?

ARCHER: [00:33:59] A good question that we had to do reports to people who were on the staff?

KLEIN: [00:34:08] We had the Peace Corps training staff. That's interesting there.

ARCHER: [00:34:14] And so there was always doubt about whether I could make it or not.

KLEIN: [00:34:20] And going into that year, had they been so specific that saying, well, we feel you should demonstrate leadership, you should do something in the community, you should move to this level in language, I mean, a specific set of goals or just general?

ARCHER: [00:34:42] I think they were somewhat specific. Those were qualities that they wanted me to demonstrate. The leadership part organization part the. That gets tricky.

KLEIN: [00:34:59] And what kind of feedback did you get? You must have gotten something during your sending in these reports. Look, I'm a leader. I just did just this list. Did anyone then report back to you and say, well, John, you're moving in the right direction?

ARCHER: Yes.

KLEIN: Oh, and who was that?

ARCHER: [00:35:17] And I think that was the director of the program, Walter Langford.

KLEIN: [00:35:22] Ok, and

ARCHER: [00:35:23] I think I was in contact with him correspondence. And I think along the way he encouraged me and supported and direction I was going.

KLEIN: [00:35:34] But also during that year, others, some others in the group either voluntarily dropped or were dropped. Yeah. And you were only aware of that when you reported to the airport, I guess.

ARCHER: [00:35:46] No. Along the way, we hear of people who thought better of not going to Bolivia and for one reason or another dropped out. And I don't know of any specific people who were selected during that time. Yeah, but that was very much a life issue.

KLEIN: [00:36:09] So you gather, where do you report? Washington? Or Miami?

ARCHER: [00:36:18] I think it was Philadelphia or Philadelphia, something like that.

KLEIN: [00:36:24] Ok, and at that point, you must have had a list, you know, by, you know, twenty five handkerchiefs and fifteen shirts and so forth and all packed up with. Was that going with you or was it shipped in advance.

ARCHER: [00:36:42] Both. There was one guy, this guy who became a success, even though he had the horrible horrible he wore a trench coat and then. He put in numerous pockets in his trench coat and including things like a steam iron and no, I'm not out of steam pressure cooker and all kinds of other metal objects. And so he he had like a suit of armor that he wore on. And of course, then there weren't all the beepers. Right. So he was happy to get on the plane with a lot of things.

KLEIN: [00:37:21] But you weren't you weren't bringing household goods. I mean.

ARCHER: [00:37:28] Well, we were told the steam pressure cookers were hard to find, hard to find and believe that he'd be really useful at altitude.

KLEIN:- [00:37:42] Do you remember saying goodbye to your family and friends? Was it?

ARCHER: [00:37:47] Yes, it was tearful at the airport with my folks. And it was the only time that my sister saw my dad cry. Yeah, well, it's when

KLEIN: [00:38:07] I left, you know, because it was you were going out into the unknown, even though you would describe it pretty fully. Right, as best you could.

ARCHER: [00:38:16] Yeah. My dad equated Peace Corps to his earlier service during the war as a naval officer. And so he he he saw me in part as a global citizen, but also somebody who was serving this country, you know.

KLEIN: [00:38:36] Yeah, that's great to. So now we agreed it was Philadelphia, yes, about you remember, how about how many in the group then? Was it down to 45 or so?

ARCHER: [00:38:59] Yeah, I think it was high. You know how they. Yeah. Probably go for it.

KLEIN: [00:39:04] And from there, you flew down to Bolivia?

ARCHER: Right.

KLEIN: Why am I blocking in the name of the capital.

ARCHER: La Paz.

KLEIN: La Paz. Yeah. And you recall arriving in La Paz, your impression?

ARCHER: [00:39:25] Very much so. But first, before we got there, we go through a little bit of trauma. When we flew from Chile to Miami, we were greeted by fire trucks that were, you know, racing alongside of us. There was some problem with the landing gear that we had. And so that was kind of exciting. And then we changed planes and flew down to Bolivia. And I guess that was that was smooth. But then once we got to La Paz, we continue down to Cochabamba on a DC six that was serviced and flown by Bolivian folks. And it was the last the airline, you know. Yeah. You know, and we lost two engines on the way down, Cochabamba out of the four. And so that was kind of disconcerting. And we were wondering what we were getting into.

KLEIN: [00:40:32] Yes. Now La Paz is at altitude, its 12000. So. But you weren't there. You just changed planes. So you were there for a few days.

ARCHER: [00:40:45] Just change planes.

KLEIN: [00:40:46] Ok, so by the end, when you finally got the joke, Cochabamba, there must've been some sense of relief that you didn't have to fly anywhere else.

ARCHER: [00:40:56] Yes. Thank God we were there.

KLEIN: [00:40:59] Yeah. And was it was it charter flights all the way or just the last?

ARCHER: [00:41:08] They were like, I think they were all passenger flights.

KLEIN: [00:41:10] Ok and OK. Now you so you arrive in Cochabamba, which also is at altitude about 8000, 8000. And you talk about your initial impression of being in Cochabamba and now in Bolivia itself?

ARCHER: [00:41:32] It was hard for me to remember, too, specifics, because it was just a wonderful collage of new feelings and new smells and sights and every culture and activity. I knew I was finding support among all the other volunteers and the staff, you know, so I wasn't worried about the day to day me. Activities of life, because they were all planned and taken care of for. Oh yeah, residency or curriculum. We were going to spend, I think, six weeks in training in the country outside of Cochabamba. Yeah. And so I wasn't worried about that. I was it was just a happy time in my life to be around so much support.

KLEIN: [00:42:28] And we weren't worried about what was beyond. When you're out there on your own suddenly trying to be a community developer, I mean, that was still enough down the pike that you didn't worry about it.

ARCHER: [00:42:42] Yes.

KLEIN: [00:42:44] Don't really put words in your mouth.

ARCHER: [00:42:47] We knew we would be full of support and be supportive along the way. Yeah, I think some of us or I was worried whether I'd have the skills to do whatever I came up with, what I was involved with. We were we were trained to be flexible, to be to recognize things that we could do and how to do that. We had a general philosophical background and kind of a morale of doing, discovering and doing.

KLEIN: [00:43:30] Let's come back to Cochabamba when you arrived, a couple of things. Everybody talks at one time or another about culture shock. I mean, you're certainly you're stepping into a new environment. Do you recall that particularly or doing.

ARCHER: [00:43:59] I don't recall a culture shock or I just recall a change in the name of the standards, and I didn't really. Well, I guess that would be called culture shock. Well, I was we we went from the airport out to by the Kaiya, which was our our home for the next six weeks. And we lived in a big dorm room. Guys, we were separated, you know, from the girls. And we had kind of a regular schedule of getting up.

KLEIN: [00:44:44] And it was Lankford still running things

ARCHER: [00:44:50] At this point. I think it was more of the country director who probably picked up the guitar. OK, he was not there anyway for this there. They're OK. And some of the staff had most of the staff that switched in to local bolivianos.

KLEIN: [00:45:07] They're OK, except for the need to recall who the Peace Corps director was,

ARCHER: [00:45:12] I think, with Geno Bowman.

KLEIN: [00:45:14] Ok. So you have a six week in country training program, is selection still part of the process or is you're there? And if you do, you recall at all?

ARCHER: [00:45:40] I don't I don't recall whether we were officially in or if we were still around the edges.

KLEIN: [00:45:48] I were there. Tell me about the program that was in Bolivia at the time you arrived and then about the role that any of the volunteer current volunteers played in your training. Those two things.

ARCHER: [00:46:02] And I do think I don't remember specifically what kind of togetherness we built with the current Peace Corps back. Yeah, we did need some volunteers and we did later during that six weeks visit various volunteers in their sights. Right. So there is some interaction there.

KLEIN: [00:46:35] How many volunteers were in country at the time?

ARCHER: [00:46:38] I think several hundred. Couple hundred.

KLEIN: [00:46:40] And were they overwhelmingly in rural community development or the government in the variety? OK, but your group, your entire group, the focus was rural community development, which meant that you would all be working under one particular ministry. Let's talk about the six weeks then. What what went on during that time?

ARCHER: [00:47:11] The thing that I first focused on was beautiful. And after classes walking along, it turned out to be that the main highway between our paths in Santa Cruz and which is now grown to incredible heights, of course. But back then, you could walk along the Panamerican Highway, you know, and not worry about any traffic and just absorb the stars. But the days were filled with the variety of classes ranging from more language to more culture. And then we developed more of our basic skills complemented so that we became adept at shearing sheep or riding a horse or there was some conditioning, nothing.

KLEIN: [00:48:07] Have you ever ridden a horse before?

ARCHER: Yes.

KLEIN: But there must have been some of the group?

ARCHER: [00:48:16] Oh yeah. Oh my God. They're just more kind of basic things. I can't remember other good examples, but

KLEIN: [00:48:23] During that time, was there anyone from either the Bolivian ministry or Peace Corps staff who began to define the job that you were going to do once he got out here?

ARCHER: [00:48:35] We had some officials from the Bolivian ah, counterparts in Bolivia in the area.

KLEIN: [00:48:44] What would their counterparts title be?

ARCHER: [00:48:47] Our actual counterparts were known as community technicians, they were supposed to be our counterparts. And and so they were local folks who had some organizational skills who would be teaming up with. And so this was a new concept in Bolivia and Peace Corps at that point to have a direct conflict.

KLEIN: [00:49:18] So during the six weeks, did the entire group or just in small clusters go out to villages to see what was going on or everybody left?

ARCHER: [00:49:27] I'm not sure we did it in advance or not, but there were two opportunities for virtually all of us to go to a site. And generally, they were in different geographic areas in the jungle, or some, I think, even went up to the Altiplano or around the palms, certainly around Cochabamba. You know, that was another area. So we had that opportunity to spend time with volunteers in the field. However, for the most part, I don't think we had much interaction with the Bolivian community development folks in the field.

KLEIN: [00:50:15] Was the idea that you were going to have some input as to where you were assigned? And so you exposed to two extremes of climate, if nothing else, right?

ARCHER: [00:50:30] Yeah, this was considered a time to shop around for what we thought would be best.

KLEIN: [00:50:33] Was I'd involved at all in the project you were doing?

ARCHER: [00:50:41] There were some things that I could do with the idea,

KLEIN: [00:50:44] But it wasn't built into the project design.

ARCHER: [00:50:49] Yes, we knew about the idea of a potential support group and somebody we could be involved with.

KLEIN: [00:50:58] Ok, but OK. Anything else? During the six weeks I wrote, I mean, you do recall when you first began to use Spanish in situations where people spoke only Spanish.

ARCHER: [00:51:15] Sure. Going to the markets every so often we go going to live fire.

KLEIN: [00:51:20] I guess we say we I mean, so it's not like you decide I'm going to go alone and work my way from one side of the market to another.

ARCHER: [00:51:29] Oh, yeah. Once we got there, we knew that we were out of town to go to a market. We need transportation and we usually go as a group and a truck. And, you know, take it from there and we break into groups or whatever.

KLEIN: [00:51:39] What was your feeling about your language facility at this point or realized?

ARCHER: [00:51:48] There was a lot a lot for me to learn still and got this whole two years was going to be a language learning experience. Yeah, I did feel confident to the point that I could basically survive. And I also felt that I had a long way to go in order to have deeper conversations and relationships.

KLEIN: [00:52:15] Were there regional differences in the language? It must have been.

ARCHER: Yeah, yeah.

KLEIN: We'll get to them later. So the six weeks comes to an end when you ask your preferences for assignment as to location, as to whether you're going to be assigned with someone else with the group. And was there any idea did you need a counterpart before you got the assignment or do you have a chance to test that out?

ARCHER: [00:52:53] We did not meet our our boy. We didn't he did not meet that Bolivian component that the technical that I was supposed to work with, I did not do that. We had a I want to two different places from the desert. And one was a lower highlands to the south called telecon. And it was the second place that I decided to go. And I had a really had a choice of places to go. I had that flexibility. And those were two excellent choices. I could have easily enjoyed being in the jungle.

KLEIN: [00:53:45] So you chose Tarija?

ARCHER: [00:53:46] I chose Tarija, yes.

KLEIN: [00:53:49] On what basis?

ARCHER: [00:53:51] On the basis of some programs that were already there. Some volunteers that had that, that it it seemed like a real nice community with opportunities for rural as well as urban kinds of things.

KLEIN: [00:54:10] And that was your assignment? The assignment you got?

ARCHER: [00:54:13] Yes. In a small town near Tarija.

KLEIN: [00:54:17] And were you assigned there alone?

ARCHER: [00:54:19] No, I was sitting there with another Peace Corps volunteer woman, and she had been somebody that she was the one who said that she thought at first.

KLEIN: [00:54:34] Yes, yes. Yeah, yeah.

ARCHER: [00:54:39] And I don't think I had too much influence as far as who I was going to be paired up with. So but it was a happy feeling.

KLEIN: [00:54:56] So you're going into a community where the larger community there are several Peace Corps volunteers already there. Who made the arrangements for the housing? And I mean, talk about how you got from the training site to Tarija and what goes on initially.

ARCHER: [00:55:20] I don't remember how I actually I don't I think we stayed at a hotel for a while and we're basically told it's time to find a place in your community. And so I started looking in San Lorenzo which was my my town. And eventually I found a place that was vacant and that I couldn't go to. It took a few days, I recall.

KLEIN: [00:55:48] So there was a transition process hotel. And then you finally found the place, right?

ARCHER: [00:55:58] I don't think I had much help in there. I think we were kind of. There was no main office in Tarija.

KLEIN: Peace Corps?

ARCHER: [00:56:06] Right. So now it's a loose organization.

KLEIN: [00:56:12] What was your budget? I mean, how are you being paid?

ARCHER: [00:56:20] Oh, we had the usual Peace Corps. I think it was sixty or eighty dollars.

KLEIN: [00:56:24] Living allowance?

ARCHER: Living allowance.

KLEIN: So it was deposited to your account, I assume, in Tarija.

ARCHER: Yes.

KLEIN: And so based on that, you would provide yourself with housing, food and so forth.

ARCHER: Yes, we did.

KLEIN: You have to sign a lease. I mean, do you recall that?

ARCHER: No.

KLEIN: So you just you sort of make the arrangement pay on a week by week or month by month basis.

ARCHER: Yes.

KLEIN: So, you know, you move that much, have giving you some introduction to the community center and looking at rent walking around. And we do that walking around, looking for a place to live. And was that done? Did you do that by yourself?

ARCHER: Yes.

KLEIN: And what was your sense of what it was doing that helped pay my taxes, the things.

ARCHER: [00:57:27] And I just knew it was a quick immersion and I was on my own. And if I were to leave, I got to make it work and be self-reliant and let's go.

KLEIN: [00:57:46] So on any given day, then at least at the beginning, the initiative to do something had to come just from within you. Right. You weren't on a schedule. I mean, you could have slept the day through

what? You could have sat at the bar and drank beer and wouldn't have made any difference in a sense. Yeah.

ARCHER: [00:58:05] Nothing but peer pressure and nothing but OK. You know, I support everybody was there trying to get settled in and to ease into whatever.

KLEIN: [00:58:16] So this woman was living was she also in San Lorenzo? And she went off on her own. At what point are you all right or did you have an office or a ministry or something against which to work, to work, you need to go someplace else. Maybe I'm wrong, right?

ARCHER: [00:58:44] There was an office of Rural Community Development that the Bolivians had there, and there were

KLEIN: [00:58:52] In San Lorenzo?

ARCHER: [00:58:53] San Lorenzo. Wait, no. This is in Tarija. And that that was kind of our home base for those of us who were going into the countryside and the smaller towns and

KLEIN: [00:59:08] How far from San Lorenzo to Tarija?

ARCHER: [00:59:10] Oh 12 kilometers or so.

KLEIN: [00:59:13] How do you get back and forth?

ARCHER: [00:59:16] There were busses every three hours which were in town, in town. And and so we did get some guidance with those folks, those Bolivian folks at this central office.

KLEIN: [00:59:33] What kind of guidance?

ARCHER: [00:59:35] Of people to contact. In fact, one of the guys. Yeah, people to contact us,

KLEIN: [00:59:51] At what point do you meet your technical I mean, assuming it's going to be one?

ARCHER: [00:59:59] Yes, I think I probably met them through this office in one way or another. And I got to know him a little bit at that point.

KLEIN: [01:00:10] And who was he and where did he live and what was his background?

ARCHER: [01:00:14] Oh, he was a man who lived outside of somewhere and so maybe five kilometers and I don't remember his name. He was skilled in that he had gone through the Bolivian training, I think for a technical he was from that community, that small spark, and he I think he would he was more than an agriculturalist farmer. And he had a long career, a little more of an education. How many people? I think it was about my age, you know, the early 20s.

KLEIN: [01:01:04] Who did he think you were?

ARCHER: [01:01:12] He was a kind guy. But I don't think we had great in-depth conversations because of my Spanish and wondering initially. And I'm not sure what he thought of me as far as somebody coming from the United States to help him in some way that was useful.

KLEIN: [01:01:38] So underneath that is a question of how much groundwork had been done either by Peace Corps, by the Bolivian ministry to get this particular program in place, which is combining a volunteer with a technical and working on community development. Was it a new concept? I think it was at that point, yeah.

ARCHER: [01:02:02] I think he had probably been on the job for a year or two.

KLEIN: [01:02:06] Was there any sense that he didn't do a good job today of putting you there to know, OK?

ARCHER: [01:02:13] Oh, yeah. Yeah. I thought of him as somebody who would know the local people and then be able to direct me to helping them out in one way or another. And what he thought of my role, I don't know, are the.

KLEIN: [01:02:40] Yeah. So what were the first few weeks you were able to find a place to live?

ARCHER: Yes.

KLEIN: Did that bring you close to a family from whom you rented or was it just like a landlord tenant kind of relationship?

ARCHER: [01:03:01] I would. It was kind of a distance tenant relationship. It didn't seem like I gathered anybody really to combine with it at that point. It was for one reason or another, a distant kind of relationship. So I found a house that was out of town, maybe a half a kilometer from the parts of this whole town of 2000. And it seemed perfect in that it was big enough for me to move into and do stuff to

KLEIN: [01:03:42] Electricity, running water, indoor plumbing.

ARCHER: [01:03:45] No, no, no, no. So I had to clean out the potatoes. There was a corner filled with potatoes and that's how they'd been using it. And so get the kids out and try to create a home here and find out where the water is. And I had to walk a couple hundred yards to get to that. And I wanted to be very resourceful and my water consumption as a result. And then I think I had some sort of a dream. Yeah. And and then I went to the town, had no electricity except for Friday nights. And then they'd crank up the generator, you know, a couple hours, know people could walk around. So it's kind of basic goods.

KLEIN: [01:04:37] People from nearby appear, young young people saying, can I help you? Can I work? You can. I mean, the Africa in Africa, it was common for volunteers to have schools, you know, House colleagues,

wherever you want to call it. And there's a whole background to that. But I don't know if that would be if that occurred with you that, you know, someone said, can I help you?

ARCHER: [01:05:04] I mean, no, there really wasn't I didn't find in that rural area that kind of set sort of. And it seemed like everybody was pretty close to the same level of economics.

KLEIN: [01:05:19] And the other volunteers in in and around that area were pretty much living on their own. And depending on way, they did their own cooking, cleaning and all that. Yeah.

ARCHER: [01:05:31] And my counterpart, you know, so she she set up a living situation with the family, which was a real estate thing. Yeah. Yeah. And she looked right off the plaza and her family, in fact, was the police chief and his family. And they had a little interior pass. And they also would have the opportunity to grow up with these kids and to improve her Spanish considered way past living with the family. And I was all alone.

KLEIN: [01:06:04] And you didn't think, well, maybe I should find a family to try to live with?

ARCHER: [01:06:13] I thought I could do it on my own.

KLEIN: [01:06:16] OK, showing leadership skills.

ARCHER: [01:06:22] As it turned out, it changed. I was out of that house after a month or two because I realized I needed to be closer to town to to people to maybe have a better living situation. So I found a room in a house that had several other people in it to whom one of whom was a young male cast. And then there was a guy who was an employee of the local water sanitation board. And so those were two people who I could kind of team up with. I could be friends and I could be with him. And our landlady was a wonderful person who really enjoyed having these three guys living in her periphery.

KLEIN: [01:07:24] Right. So so after the month, which much to do somewhat bleak was at the point in the month, did you think? Well, I made a mistake. I ought to chop it and go home.

ARCHER: [01:07:37] Not home, but just a better place to live. I didn't I didn't have thoughts of leaving Bolivia. I just had thoughts of needed to change my living situation in Bolivia.

KLEIN: [01:07:49] And during that first month, did anyone from Peace Corps staff come out to visit you?

ARCHER: [01:07:59] I don't think so.

KLEIN: [01:08:00] They sent you out saying, settle in and meet your technical and do and do what?

ARCHER: [01:08:11] And become involved with community development t, you folks get on it and use your creativity to find yourself a job, basically.

KLEIN: [01:08:22] Were there any favorite kinds of activities? In other ways? It's better to go to a train than to start a basketball club or something, or was it totally open?

ARCHER: [01:08:35] There was one guy who was leading an experienced volunteer who was leaving from college. And one of the things he did, he had an incredible he was a very precarious, outgoing kind of person. And he was leaving. And there was some thought that I should pick up some of his activities. And he was he had just finished his two years, one of which was coaching the Nationals, the local the regional basketball All-Star Game. And so there was one activity that I started with that jump started that helped to jump start with.

KLEIN: [01:09:15] So it was something were in existence and you could move in.

ARCHER: [01:09:19] Yeah. And that was incredible. So I would have to kind of commute there. Right. Of others. And that that was the the only job that could have been a legacy job. So I did that for a while, a number of months.

KLEIN: [01:09:40] Doing nothing else during those months?

ARCHER: [01:09:44] I was trying to set up something and some of that. So I was trying to interact with with various Bolivian people, including the padre in town. Who was, you know, a year after degree of a social movement and actually the agricultural age and the local extension agent and so on and so on. So he became really my focus person and so on and so on. And I would do things with him. And he was very open to helping me and educating me along along the way. And we developed a nice relationship.

KLEIN: [01:10:28] Where was your technical and what was

ARCHER: [01:10:30] The technical was different. And in my daily life and distance, I tried to get involved with him and there just didn't seem to be a job there for me to do. It seemed like what was going on, it didn't seem like I could contribute much to anything that he was doing other than maybe to some occasions. I get equipment and equipment from the

KLEIN: [01:11:03] USAID?

ARCHER: [01:11:04] Yeah, USAID, and help facilitate help facilitate him having community meetings. But once the community meeting was going, there wasn't much that I could do other than listen and perhaps offer things. He was the main guy as far as getting people together.

KLEIN: [01:11:30] But were they focusing on any projects or was just there?

ARCHER: [01:11:35] Yeah, there would be the occasional road project or school project.

KLEIN: [01:11:40] That the technical would work on with the community. And in a sense, I think what you're saying is there was no particular role for you in that mix.

ARCHER: Right.

KLEIN: So you shifted over and put more effort into the basketball team?

ARCHER: [01:11:57] Basketball and agricultural agent.

KLEIN: [01:11:59] And the agent came by. I mean, actually, it was a farming community, I assume. And what did they farm?

ARCHER: [01:12:09] Corn fruits. It was a Mediterranean climate. Some cattle, potatoes, mostly terrible crops like that, very small.

KLEIN: [01:12:28] Did you have familiarity with any of that from your own background?

ARCHER: [01:12:33] Very little. I've done a bunch of farms, dairy farms, farms with dealers, but most equipment is not very translatable.

KLEIN: [01:12:48] Yeah, and in training, they had not zeroed in on specific agricultural skills.

ARCHER: No.

KLEIN: OK, jump to sort of a somewhat different topic. Uh. In some countries, security became a concern of safety. So volunteers would have a system of reporting back to headquarters and or a network of communication so that if there's a problem, you would know, you know, don't go anywhere or wait for the truck to pick you up. You recall anything like that?

ARCHER: [01:13:38] No, and I remember talking to my folks, there was a guy in particular who had a ham radio who could get us information if we needed it. And I spoke with my folks a couple of times that way.

KLEIN: [01:13:51] And he was a Bolivian.

ARCHER: [01:13:52] Yes.

KLEIN: [01:13:53] Ok, were you expected to do any kind of regular reporting back to the Peace Corps?

ARCHER: [01:14:00] Not until a further program came to our area a year or two.

KLEIN: [01:14:08] Ok.

ARCHER: [01:14:10] That was when an office was first established, a Peace Corps office.

KLEIN: In?

ARCHER: In Tarija.

KLEIN: [01:14:16] Ok, let's take. And then?

ARCHER: [01:14:19] There was more interaction with the local Peace Corps staff.

KLEIN: [01:14:25] Let's take the first six months. One, by the end of the six months, what was happening with your language, and two, when you were able to begin to project a specific role for yourself, because at that point you still have at least a year and a half to go.

ARCHER: [01:14:49] Right. I was feeling very close to the agricultural director and so have the agriculture agent and some of them. So and I felt that I had a future there as far as helping out, you know, every day it's very different with me and yeah. And him that I felt he was doing good work and I

wanted to interface in a way that I could with. And so that was where the future was at the time.

KLEIN: [01:15:19] And you were communicating with him in Spanish.

ARCHER: Yes.

KLEIN: He spoke no English. All right. And what was your feeling about your Spanish?

ARCHER: [01:15:32] Knowing that I was improving, you know, I could get conversations going with girls as well. Like I joined a local soccer. And so I was traveling and playing with them. And soccer. Yeah. And so I was developing a little network and friends and I you soccer, you know. Yes, OK, well, from the beginning, you know, we are four weeks and I still try to watch, but yes, that's the way it goes.

KLEIN: [01:16:04] But you were the biggest guy on the team in Bolivia.

ARCHER: [01:16:08] I was. I was the biggest guy. So they made me the goalie.

KLEIN: [01:16:16] It's terrible. So and just the soccer team had improved by the end of the six months. So after six months, here you must be. What's what's your feeling about being there? I mean, is it worth staying to project a future for yourself?

ARCHER: [01:16:41] Yes, I was feeling good about opportunities, feeling good about myself. I still desire to have more of a concrete structure going on you some sort of a job that I could go to every day. Yeah, it would give me some satisfaction. And, you know, I had my fingers in a number of things, but I didn't feel like I was the central mover in anything. I felt like I was. And it's just that that's the very best, you know. And, you know, I was still looking for other opportunities and a little disappointed that I had found something really that I could grab lunch together.

KLEIN: [01:17:30] I had the feeling during that time that when you are doing, you really could be done by the Bolivian. I mean, what's the big deal about these girls?

ARCHER: [01:17:39] Well. I think part of what I saw as my mission was to be somebody from the United States. Living with people in another culture and living in culture, and I hope there is some value in just being friends and developing relationships with people and becoming more global citizens as opposed to representing the country and so on in a larger sense. I thought I was I was contributing by just being there to kind and hopefully open and helpful person in whatever the situation might be. And when there were times when I was really working for this structure, that's how I rationalized it while I was there and hoping that with patience things could develop, that I would be more substantial.

KLEIN: [01:18:52] Or sometimes people in situations like yours and often with Peace Corps volunteers, you were able to luckily find a friend or two who sort of become your mentors, or are they open up the culture that you're in? Did you have anyone? Was there anyone? I mean, you could if you were puzzled by something you saw come through, you could go to and say, you know, what's going on here?

ARCHER: [01:19:23] I had some of that with the guys that I was living with. Living in my little neighborhood. And they were the same age. And at least this one guy was in kind of a mini Peace Corps and he was from another part of Bolivia. But he was there because he was part of this national water project. And so that was a really nice connection. As it turned out, he dated and married the girl, the only girl in town that I had any kind of beginning a relationship, but I could see what she saw through it.

KLEIN: [01:20:03] So what was your connection with Peace Corps during the first year? And did they call you together back in La Paz?

ARCHER: [01:20:13] Yes, we had the occasional workshop or a meeting in Cochabamba, actually. OK, I think we went up to the house once that

Cochabamba was our boss, were our boss, was our Peace Corps boy, our Peace Corps boss, OK? And that was a heck of a long way from where we were. Right. And so we didn't have any close contact with that person. I think he came down maybe twice or somebody from that office during the years, at least that first year, it was pretty detached from the main hierarchy.

KLEIN: [01:20:57] Do you recall the first, the training group or that group getting back together for the first time?

ARCHER: [01:21:08] Yeah, yeah. It was really fun.

KLEIN: [01:21:11] And I guess one of the measures you would make would be how much progress others have been making in developing a role for themselves. Did you get a sense that you were way behind, way ahead?

ARCHER: [01:21:26] I got a sense that everybody who was in my situation was feeling more or less the same unless they had a real hard skill set, a real different skill set, like there was one guy who just graduated as an engineer. And so he was busy building things in his community. He was working closely with an appropriate construction crew. But those of us who came from liberal arts backgrounds, who didn't have any hard skills, all of us were experiencing the same difficulties in focusing and developing our role during the first year together.

KLEIN: [01:22:11] I mean, you did have a very basic skill, which is you were an English speaker. And did you ever think of shifting over into a teaching role and someone must have approached you? We are trying to learn English. Were those opportunities there?

ARCHER: [01:22:31] Yes, to not a large degree, the school I can't really remember any schools and the of and so I worked with another school that was three or four kilometers out of town and I worked there. Later, I developed some, you know, little programs of English teaching and I tested vision testing and I developed a relationship with them. But I can't remember why

I developed a relationship with the top the school right in town. So education can be a possibility. A little bit later on, other members of my group stayed in touch and worked with universities. They were not real. They changed from being real community development people to being university professors. I was. And they were real high on my list of perfect jobs to have. One of them went on to be a Ph.D. and the other something else.

KLEIN: [01:23:54] But the beauty of teaching is that it has specificity. Every time you go in front of a group and you go back again and again and again and which is, you know, makes education in some ways a more satisfying role for a volunteer and community development because it's so diffuse. Right. What was, generally speaking during the first year? How was your health?

ARCHER: [01:24:22] First year was fine other than, you know, a short digestive issues. But, it was fine.

KLEIN: [01:24:28] Malaria wasn't a problem where you were?

ARCHER: [01:24:33] No. The second year I got hepatitis. The first, right toward the time I was going home.

KLEIN: [01:24:40] During the first year, there must have been breaks when you took some vacation. And what do you do?

ARCHER: [01:24:53] I went to the north of Argentina. Salta. That was maybe 12 to 14 hour bus ride. So and of course, that was a major change in culture. And very interesting to you there. You know, and I went to Brazil, I think that first year I went to to Rio at some point. Well, I think about it. It's my first year. My parents came down, I guess. And so I was getting some of the capitals of South America.

KLEIN: [01:25:37] So the three of them came down here with the we able to take them out to San Lorenzo.

ARCHER: [01:25:45] We we we didn't go there. Yeah. I felt that their time was short. And my interests such as well, I wanted to show the beam and the prize and so. Yeah, yeah. And rather than go to someone else or

KLEIN: [01:26:03] Do any of the three of them speak Spanish at that time?

ARCHER: No.

KLEIN: So you get that role reversal that occurs where your parents now suddenly are on your turf.

ARCHER: [01:26:18] Yes. What a shock. Asking me for advice.

KLEIN: [01:26:19] Yeah. Yeah, it must have felt good. So that was doing between first and second year. They can, uh. Now let's see, you felt pretty much finished up the first year. You're living in San Lorenzo, but your work focuses over in with the agricultural agent. And severance always runs. And so at that point what you would achieve was a little coaching and sort of meant going along with his agent. The technical seems to have gotten lost in the next year. We had a do you have any obligation to touch base with him or.

ARCHER: [01:27:16] No, it was left up to me to establish that relationship and to end. Yes, OK. Yeah. And I don't know what his original. Our objectives were what he was instructed to do and not to further his Bolivian superior.

KLEIN: [01:27:37] Yeah, what about that? What about others in the group? What was their experience with technicals? Because that was supposedly the heart of the program.

ARCHER: [01:27:48] Yeah, very little interaction. From what I can gather. It was what I remember. Between those people and volunteers. It seemed like a weak link for one reason or another.

KLEIN: [01:28:07] Ok, let's get you into the second year now and what happens, particularly in people who could as you go into the second year, you you really have spent the first year learning the language and maybe a little bit about your community. But then as you went through the second year, you say, well, I know in about a year I'm going home, but before then, by God, I'm going to achieve X, Y or Z. Does that occur to you?

ARCHER: [01:28:42] Well, yeah, I still was hungering for something structured to do. And so I got into a couple of things

KLEIN: [01:28:50] Talking about going into your second year?

ARCHER: [01:28:54] Yeah, I started working more with Project and so through the bad guy and so that was helpful. We were able to bring animals down from the states and get them scattered around the community and that was a short term success or most successful project. And then something came up that really interested me and that was working in study in an orphanage. And there was a German volunteer in town there who was stationed at the orphanage, who had developed a friendship with who. I worked with results from a class that became a place where I could put energy on, are structured in a structured way.

KLEIN: [01:29:53] And you communicated with him or her in German?

ARCHER: No, in English.

KLEIN: In English.

ARCHER: Or Spanish. Oh, actually, I think it was in Spanish. Yeah, it was weird.

KLEIN: And what was the role that you developed at the orphanage?

ARCHER: [01:30:09] Well, developing recreational programs and tutoring and teaching some English and just being kind of a big brother in some ways.

KLEIN: [01:30:19] How many kids were at the orphanage or.

ARCHER: [01:30:22] Oh, I remember maybe 30 or so.

KLEIN: [01:30:25] And was it a church run?

ARCHER: [01:30:27] Yeah, it was run by nuns and they handled that. Think the girls and the strong volunteer and I got involved with the boys. What age range are I'd say maybe age seven and eight up through 14, 15.

KLEIN: [01:30:47] Now, where's the orphanage located?

ARCHER: In Tarija.

KLEIN: In Tarija. Did you consider at that point as this emerged, do you consider moving to Tarija?

ARCHER: [01:30:59] Yes, I did. And I did get an apartment. I asked for the official blessings of Peace Corps to transfer to the city. And they said no, because they already had adequate volunteers. They thought in theory.

KLEIN: [01:31:16] Yeah. Interesting. Yeah.

ARCHER: [01:31:21] And by then, a new program had come to town, a new Peace Corps program.

KLEIN: [01:31:26] This time they're going to do it right.

ARCHER: [01:31:31] Everyone trained to be tuberculosis clinicians, OK? And so they all became doctors and medicos. And they were in all these villages around there. They were rural programs. So there were two that came into my town, some of them. So, you know, and various towns in my area as well as all around. And so, you know, 35 or 40 volunteers.

KLEIN: [01:32:00] So it was health education as well as

ARCHER: [01:32:02] Some. It was mostly tuberculosis test and get TB shots and support from TB. And they were trained specifically for that. And I eat my heart out because they had a definite job to go.

KLEIN: [01:32:25] And and Peace Corps set up an office in Tarija?

ARCHER: [01:32:29] As a result of that program, to support that program.

KLEIN: [01:32:33] And was it AID money mixed in there, too?

ARCHER: Quite possibly, yeah.

KLEIN: And so now you're now you're a commuter. You you're living in San Lorenzo, actually working. And I keep to the Tarija.

ARCHER: [01:32:55] And I had a little apartment for the last few months.

KLEIN: In Tarija?

ARCHER: Yeah. Obviously in Bolivia.

KLEIN: [01:33:03] In spite of what Peace Corps had said that you shouldn't move.

ARCHER: [01:33:09] So, you know, I'm still a resident of San Lorenzo. And so with the possibility, you know, with a living place in Tarija. So I wasn't there five nights out of the week. But more regularly.

KLEIN: [01:33:24] So now through the second year. You you're you've always completely shifted focus now and you're really a social worker at an orphanage or it's a different role. And did you report you reported that back to Peace Corps?

ARCHER: [01:33:53] Oh, yeah, I think so. Probably not to the degree that I most wanted. I really enjoyed it.

KLEIN: [01:34:07] OK, so to see what value you then felt that you had, find your place as far as being a Peace Corps volunteer in Bolivia. So as you're coming near the end of your tour, are you at all tempted to extend because it seems like it took a while to find the niche, but there it is.

ARCHER: [01:34:37] No, I've been getting first of all, I had hepatitis and I was hospitalized for a while. OK, well, we asked in Cochabamba and then I recovered in at the home of the the the doctor who was the head of that particular program in America. Yeah, no, he was from Uruguay, his wife. But they were basically the medical side of that. And so that was part of that. I was I was concerned about what I was going to do with the rest of my life and I wanted to get into that exploration. And I had been developing during the second year this vision program and the school that I told you about. Also, I taught English and it was outside of Summerlands. So I was getting the feeling that I wanted to study optometry a little bit to develop some further skills and in that area. Yeah. Well, you chose not to. Of course.

KLEIN: [01:36:03] So actually, that second year, you were doing at least two things, I guess, but both sort of school based. As it turned out. OK. OK, well, the question I have for you is, did you let your folks know that you are hospitalized and did they say we're on the next plane? I mean, it must have been a little hairy to them.

ARCHER: [01:36:32] It may if I told them, I told them I was in good hands and things were going well. And I'm sure they were worried, but they didn't. They were always supporting me to stay as long as I wanted to.

KLEIN: [01:36:49] Do, you know, the Peace Corps officially communicated with them that, you know, you you've been hospitalized and receiving the best care kind of thing?

ARCHER: I don't know that.

KLEIN: OK, so you're coming out at the end of the tour and you really feel that you're ready to move on to something else in your life. Did the group gather at a what do you usually called end of service conference? You may have stopped by then?

ARCHER: I don't think so.

KLEIN: OK, OK, so let's see if you can picture yourself now you're ready to leave. What was your sense of what you would achieve either personally or in terms of the community as you're leaving to touch you? It was a tough call.

ARCHER: [01:37:45] Well, I think the thing that I felt the best about was the friendships and relationships that I developed over the years with Bolivianos and with Bolivia. And I knew much more about the baby. I felt like I could take some of that knowledge and extend it in my future in one way or another to the help that objective, the Peace Corps and bring people together. Yeah. And so that felt good about I did not feel like I had been an important cog in the development of Bolivia. I felt that I had honestly tried in the best way I could to be a part of people's growth and happiness. And I held them in high respect that I really felt it was. I had had some remarkable experiences and I was grateful for the whole process.

KLEIN: [01:38:53] And in leaving, what did you feel your next step was going to be?

ARCHER: [01:38:59] My next step was to. Applied to various schools of optometry, you know, and I was accepted at one or two. And when the moment came, when I thought that was what I was going to follow, I came back to the states and as it turned out, that this that interest disappeared very quickly. And my main interest was to come back to the states finally to live in Madison for a while and to find what I wanted to study and to take it.

KLEIN: [01:39:46] So by '69, the draft was no longer an issue. I forget

ARCHER: [01:39:52] It was. And then along I was one year and I had taken my medical and I was probably within weeks of being called and the lottery and my number put me beyond what my grandpa needed.

KLEIN: [01:40:13] Ok, and so it was yeah. It must have been a shock. I mean, or I don't know.

ARCHER: [01:40:22] Yeah, it was a shock both ways to a shock to be getting my medical and being and to be facing going to Vietnam. And then the shock of getting a number that was beyond.

KLEIN: [01:40:41] Yeah. Really folks living when you came back from Bolivia

ARCHER: [01:40:46] Where where I'd grown up in that farming

KLEIN: [01:40:48] Community and you weren't at all tempted to return to that community to live, you know, and do community development. So you pretty much set yourself the idea of Madison. Did you feel that you could make use or did you plan to make use of your I assume you were relatively bilingual by now? Was that was that part of the mix or the plan?

ARCHER: [01:41:19] Yes. As it turned out, after trying to be a journalist and trying to learn to smoke and burning my nose or that I'd taken some courses as a special student when I immediately got here. OK, but then very soon after that, I went into an education program remembering how much I enjoyed. I scored my educational experiences, you know, and joining the educational culturally of the culturally diverse as I focus of the program. And so part of that was we came here in a bilingual peak here in Milwaukee and doing a report there and in various ways trying to use utilize the Spanish come.

KLEIN: [01:42:16] Did you go on for an advanced degree? I got a master's in education, which then qualifies you for secondary teaching? Pretty much. Or elementary.

ARCHER: [01:42:29] I was targeted with elementary.

KLEIN: [01:42:31] And with a subspecialty of English as a second language or not?

ARCHER: [01:42:41] Personally I felt that way. But I didn't get any credential to that effect until later.

KLEIN: [01:42:44] And then you settled in Madison and started to teach?

ARCHER: Right.

KLEIN: That's kind of wraps it up, but, uh oh, a couple of questions about the.

[END OF INTERVIEW]