

Stephen Wiley Oral History Interview
Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection
Administrative Information

Creator: Stephen Wiley
Interviewer: Julius Sztuk
Date of Interview: June 30, 2019
Location of Interview: Bethesda, Maryland
Length: 52 pages

Biographical Note

Stephen (Steve) Wiley served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Fiji from 1970 to 1971 as an elementary school teacher.

Access

Open.

Usage Restrictions

According to the deed of gift signed August 21, 2019, copyright of these materials has been assigned to the United States Government. This interview is in the public domain.

Copyright

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excesses of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law. The copyright law extends its protection to unpublished works from the moment of creation in a tangible form. Direct your questions concerning copyright to the reference staff.

Technical Note

This transcript was created by Sonix software from the MP3 audio recording of the interview. The resulting text file was lightly edited and reformatted according to a standard template.

Suggested Citation

Stephen Wiley, recorded interview by Julius Sztuk, June 30, 2019, page #, Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.

DISCLAIMER

This transcript was generated automatically by Sonix software from the audio recording. The accuracy of the transcript cannot be guaranteed. Only the original audio recording constitutes the official record of this interview and should be used along with the transcript. If researchers have any concerns about accuracy or would like to recommend corrections, they are encouraged to contact the library reference staff.

Oral History Interview

with

Stephen Wiley

June 30, 2019
Bethesda, Maryland

By Julius Sztuk

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

SZTUK: [00:00:02] Today is June 30th, 2019. My name is Jay Sztuk. I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Fiji from 1974 through 1976. Today I'm going to interview Stephen Wiley, who was also a Peace Corps volunteer in Fiji from 1970 to 1971 and worked in elementary education. Steve, tell us a little bit about your background. Where are you from?

WILEY: [00:00:34] Well, currently I live in Minneapolis. Many years ago, I'm 73 and I was born, I was born there. But basically when I was growing up, we moved around every 2 to 3 and a half years. My dad was riding the wave of IBM's expansion in the post World War II era, so they kept offering him places to go. And he kept saying yes, because that's what you did. And we were pretty comfortable. He had grown up and put himself through college during the Depression. My mom had grown up under more comfortable circumstances than he did. And they met in the Navy in World War II in the Philadelphia supply operation. She had come from California

because she wanted to join the war effort. She was a WAVE. He was, I think when he started out, he was an ensign. But anyway, um.

WILEY: [00:01:40] So anyway, that's how my parents met. And my dad had decided he was going to go to this little adding machine company with the presumptuous name of International Business Machines after he graduated from college in 1938, and he did. Turned out to be the correct choice for him. But all that is by way of saying that we had post-World War II middle class upwardly mobile expectations. And the idea that if you worked hard and did the right thing, good things would come your way. And that generally happened for us. You know, white privilege and all that, which I was totally blind to until more recently than I care to admit, but. It was also something informed my way of interacting with my environment because I was very often the new kid in class.

SZTUK: [00:02:46] OK.

WILEY: [00:02:47] And so the consistent things were getting the teacher's approval and by doing well in class and getting my parents approval for having done that. So it was a pretty small world that I lived in and it was comfortable, it was predictable. And I did that. But the other thing that was kind of seeping in on a much less, or an even less conscious level I'll say, was adapting each time we moved. To different people, to different places, to slightly different, you know, geographic environments, slightly different social environments. I was completely unaware of at the time as a kid just, you know, a new place and here you are, let's go do this.

SZTUK: [00:03:38] Mm hmm.

WILEY: [00:03:38] And so the predictable part of it was school. To some extent, kids were predictable, but they were always new kids to me until I got used to them. And then very soon afterward, we moved again. And so that's part of how it works. The first time my eyes were opened to things being different in post-World War suburban America was when my dad had a choice. My dad and my mom, because they made the choice together, had the choice whether to stay in the United States and go into management, or go into kind of a mixture of sales and management by

working for, working as a liaison between IBM World Trade in Europe and domestic IBM. Now these days, you just do it in a few keystrokes or by Skype or something, but no such thing then. And the computers weren't thought of as personal back then.

SZTUK: [00:04:36] Yeah.

WILEY: [00:04:36] My dad once showed me around one of the places that he worked and was just huge air-conditioned rooms with spools of tape going, you know, 24/7.

SZTUK: [00:04:49] So which did they choose?

WILEY: [00:04:51] Well, they chose to go to Europe. And where are we going to live in Europe? Well, it should be centrally located. OK, how about Switzerland? Switzerland would be good. France would be nice, but France was too expensive. And so that was the choice that was made. The next choice was, and I didn't even see him making this choice because I was presented with the choice. I was ten.

SZTUK: [00:05:15] Mm hmm.

WILEY: [00:05:16] Public schools or American schools? Well, you might as well go to the public schools, the Swiss have very good schools. And the kid, the boys can learn the language. So we did that.

SZTUK: [00:05:26] Oh.

WILEY: [00:05:27] Yeah. And so I took 25 Berlitz lessons during our month or so of transition before the house was ready for us to move into, which my dad had found because mom was staying with us, you know? So, you know, I thought I was all ready because I didn't know anything about foreign languages.

SZTUK: [00:05:52] Mm hmm. With your 25 lessons.

WILEY: [00:05:54] 25 lessons, Berlitz lessons, mind you, not just any, the really old outmoded. Well, at the time they were, you know, they were top of the line. And so then we moved into the house, which was really nice. It was kind of like, it was at the end of the road out in one of the farm suburbs in the hills above Zurich. And it's just a beautiful place. We had a, well, I don't want to describe the property too much but it was a very nicely done property. And we had thick oak beams above a big fireplace and the cathedral ceiling. And the cathedral, is what it's called, the high ceiling?

SZTUK: [00:06:39] Yeah.

WILEY: [00:06:39] The cathedral ceiling in the main living room. And it was just, it was a nice place. And at school, I found out very quickly that I'd better pay attention and work hard because German was harder than I thought it was going to be after those Berlitz lessons. And I buckled down and I did OK. And it got reinforced in several very interesting ways, which I won't go into now, on the playground and walking to school with my neighbor kids and walking home from school afterwards with them, you know, playing things and talking together. But the important thing was that in school, and I had started out their school year began, I think, I can't remember, April? Yeah, sounds about right I think, after Easter. They had more frequent and shorter vacations, like summer was five weeks.

SZTUK: [00:07:39] Mm hmm.

WILEY: [00:07:40] And so the result was I entered fourth grade when it was already, so this would have been September, October, it was already kind of halfway done. I was blessed in having Miss Kliner as a teacher. She was terrific. And I, you know, I didn't process it that way, but I knew it, you know, at a gut level. She'd go out of her way and her English was pretty good. You know, she go out of the way to, but she didn't teach me. I was part of the class and you're going to learn stuff in German, here you go, right?

SZTUK: [00:08:11] Mm hmm.

WILEY: [00:08:11] So I had this constant supportive environment that was also challenging, and I learned German pretty well, and I learned Swiss German pretty well. At one point, I think during our second or maybe our last year there, my mom was really sick and couldn't go shopping. So I went along with my dad and he did the shopping, but he needed an interpreter because he didn't speak German. And so we're in the, we're at the butcher shop and the butcher's slicing the meat and he says, hey, kid, where did you learn to speak English like that? So that was pretty satisfying.

SZTUK: [00:08:43] Yeah.

WILEY: [00:08:44] You know, I said, *Ich bin ein Amerikaner*, you know. So anyway, that's how that went.

SZTUK: [00:08:51] This would have been in the mid fifties then, '54 or '55?

WILEY: [00:08:57] '56 to '50, uh. October. Now what? September, October '56 to I think May of '59. So yeah. And then when I came back, boy, it was a different world, you know, what are all these people doing, you had to have chinos, you had to have penny loafers, and the whole nine yards. I was 13, I had just turned 13 when we got back. And, you know, faced once again, the new environment, new kids, new things to adjust to, in particular now clothes. Big deal.

SZTUK: [00:09:34] Oh, right. For a teenager.

WILEY: [00:09:35] Yeah. And girls are beginning to be kind of interesting in a way that I hadn't known before. Didn't quite get it for, well, you can, that's an interesting discussion, how long did it take to get girls? I'm still learning. But now we had different teachers for different subjects. Mr. Mahone For English. Dave Johnson from Minnesota, it turns out. This is in New York now.

SZTUK: [00:10:07] OK.

WILEY: [00:10:09] Uh, well. Where were we? Uh. Chappaqua in Westchester County. Before it became really hoity toity. And you know, once again, predictably, I knew how to play the schoolboy game by now, right?

SZTUK: [00:10:36] OK.

WILEY: [00:10:36] And it wasn't really a game. I took it pretty seriously. But, you know, I knew what I had to do and what I didn't have to do. And so I did OK. And by the time I got there, so I went into eighth grade. Skipped most of seventh grade, it turns out, because they start school in Switzerland a year behind. But it turns out that they pack in more. And so I was pretty OK in eighth grade. That finished without incident pretty much. And I went on to high school and did the college prep business and did pretty well in everything. And took French as my language and got that under my belt. My French teachers, there are a lot of really good teachers there. But he had us reading Emile Zola in the original French in fourth year in high school, which was pretty fancy. So, prompt me. What more? So what else do you need?

SZTUK: [00:11:44] So when did you first hear about Peace Corps? And how did you come to decide that that was a route for you to take?

WILEY: [00:11:52] Well, then it was the sixties, right?

SZTUK: [00:11:53] Yeah.

WILEY: [00:11:54] Because I graduated from high school in '64.

SZTUK: [00:11:58] OK.

WILEY: [00:11:59] And by then, we had had actually Josh White, the folk singer, came and did a performance in our high school gym, which was kind of a big deal at the time.

SZTUK: [00:12:10] Mm hmm.

WILEY: [00:12:11] And things were beginning to fray a bit around the edges. The post-World War II consensus was beginning to fray, and I was maturing into that ferment as it was going on. Civil rights. We had, our cleaning lady was pretty predictably always a black woman after we got back. And my mother was very sympathetic to the civil rights movement. I don't, I'm pretty sure she didn't march or protest. That wasn't her style. She born in 1920, so what do you expect. But it was a big deal. Not something that had a direct effect on my life. I just kind of heard about it and followed it along in this kind of separate strand of my consciousness, it was becoming more conscious.

SZTUK: [00:13:13] Become more socially conscious.

WILEY: [00:13:14] Yeah, I think so. And once I got to Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, there were young black men there who wanted an African, an Afro-American studies department. And they sat in at the president's office. Now, this is a college at the time, it was all men. It got gender integrated in the year after I graduated. But [coughs], excuse me. But it was just, I hadn't. I hadn't had any direct interaction with anybody other than white people when I was in high school, except for Gary Kaneshiro, who was Hawaiian. Japanese Hawaiian, of course.

SZTUK: [00:14:08] Sure.

WILEY: [00:14:08] And God help me, like everybody else, I called him pineapple. You know, yellow from the tropics, I guess. And it didn't even occur to me that it could possibly be offensive. It's just what people call them. And he was very good natured about it. I don't, and I don't know what happened to him. There was another kid in our class, Ernie Chu, who was Chinese American, but I think his folks had been born here. But my exposure to people, anybody other than European American, was virtually nil.

SZTUK: [00:14:47] OK.

WILEY: [00:14:48] Until I got to college. And it was like, wow. Not only are they from all over the place, but they're from all different kinds of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, all different kinds. We didn't have Somalis, you

know, and we didn't have, um, I don't think we had Koreans. But there was a smattering of people from around the world, and that made things a little more interesting.

SZTUK: [00:15:10] Did that kind of make you get interested more in other countries than Europe and America?

WILEY: [00:15:26] Well, I already had that interest, but not. Not as one of the guiding principles for my academic life. So, I mean, my life was in two parts in college, as it often is with people, academics and partying. Sometimes the partying won out. Sometimes the academics won out. And then when you throw in, beginning in 1966, just after I turned 20, when you throw in marijuana, then things all of a sudden get really interesting. And so, you know, the hand in front of your face becomes interesting and your perspective kind of gets foreshortened a little bit occasionally. So, you know, that's fine. It also gets extended and bent occasionally. So all those things are part of it. But no, I wouldn't say so. Then, of course, as I moved closer to graduation, I'd registered for the draft.

SZTUK: [00:16:28] OK.

WILEY: [00:16:28] Yeah. And so I think we're covering most of, some of the stuff in the earlier questions anyway. But as the draft loomed, I had already decided, partly because of the campus culture, partly because of the generational thing, that the Vietnam War was just, it was hypocritical, it was immoral, and maybe illegal. And I wasn't going to have any part of it.

SZTUK: [00:16:50] OK.

WILEY: [00:16:51] And my father, who believed in doing your duty to God and country as well as your family, you know, he wasn't a two-dimensional person, but he was very upset with me.

SZTUK: [00:17:03] Because you wouldn't enlist or?

WILEY: [00:17:06] Well, no, I registered for the draft.

SZTUK: [00:17:10] Right.

WILEY: [00:17:10] But I didn't want to go and I didn't register for the draft until I lost my 2-S deferment.

SZTUK: [00:17:17] Right.

WILEY: [00:17:18] Which I don't, I don't know if they have that anymore, but that meant if you were a college kid, you got a deferment until you're done with college. And of course, that favored white kids, which is where that expression comes from, or part of the demographic reason and cultural reason, that the expression is that the Vietnam War was a white man's war against yellow people fought by black people. And as the decades have passed, I see more and more how that was just exactly true.

SZTUK: [00:17:49] Yeah. So did you, uh, was Peace Corps a way out of the draft for you?

WILEY: [00:17:58] I figured out, well, I don't know what I can do. Maybe I could teach. And it occurred to me, yeah, I probably could teach. And so I thought I'd give that a try and I didn't know where to start. I had no idea about job search. I'd never had to do one, being a privileged kid. And I tried, and I can't remember what it was. It was a, it was a government program for teaching on Native American reservations.

SZTUK: [00:18:27] OK.

WILEY: [00:18:28] And so I applied for that and I never heard anything, nothing, for like two or three months. And I thought, OK, well, other people have been talking about the Peace Corps, I'm going to check that out. And I checked it out. My reaction was kind of a series of wows. You know, you work overseas two years. OK, that's fine. I've done that. I mean, I've lived overseas for longer than that. Technically, not much. But, you know, I'm grown up now, so I could probably do that. 22 years old, you know, you think you're growing up, and in some ways you are. And I thought, OK, I'll see if they, if I can, if they'll offer me a job in education, because at that time that's what they were doing. They would offer you a job and they

would offer you a place. And I think, if I recall correctly, on the application at that time. So this would have been 1968 thereabouts.

SZTUK: [00:19:33] OK. Yeah. Your service started in 1970.

WILEY: [00:19:41] Right, yeah. So but I was applying. I was applying in '68 because I got accepted in '68 and I think it was for Fiji III, because Fiji II would have started in January of '69 and I would have missed that boat already. So and I can't remember if it was Ag extension, which, you know, my grandfather had a farm, so I thought I could do that. I thought I could do everything, still do.

WILEY: [00:20:11] But in the meantime, I had met Sally Brown. And curiously, this was, I think it was December 18th, 1968. And the reason I remember that, I don't know why I remember that, but I think, I know it was in December. She and her best friend from high school, my cousin Christine Brown, had known each other in high school. And Chris was living in New York City at the time, doing some sort of a job at a publishing house, I think, something like that. And Sally was at Columbia Teachers College working on an education degree, a masters. And so they both lived in New York. And Chris invited Sally and she invited me and a bunch of other people. I think there were three of them sharing a one or maybe two bedroom apartment, but it was the right part of town as far as my Aunt Yula was concerned.

SZTUK: [00:21:09] Yeah.

WILEY: [00:21:09] That's Chris's mom. So we met at this party, and the party was, eh, the party was OK, but wow, that Sally Brown. She just caught my eye, you know? And I apparently caught hers. And so we began an intense romance and decided we loved each other. And in the meantime, staging had started, or I think, I don't know, staging or pre-staging. No, I think it was staging. I think I went to the initial staging in San Francisco for Fiji III.

SZTUK: [00:21:46] OK.

WILEY: [00:21:47] And the guy. Went to the screening interview. It became very quickly evident to both of us at the screening interview that I wasn't ready

to go, and I wanted to go, if I did at all, with Sally, which necessitated getting married and her applying. So long story short, we did that.

SZTUK: [00:22:05] Oh, OK.

WILEY: [00:22:05] Right. And then we left. We left our honeymoon early after having gotten married in late September in Syracuse. We left our honeymoon. So this is 1969 now, right? We left our honeymoon early to go to our, not our honeymoon, our reception, our wedding reception early, to catch the train across Canada to go to Banff and Jasper before we flew down to staging in San Francisco.

SZTUK: [00:22:32] OK. So Peace Corps was very accommodating.

WILEY: [00:22:34] Yeah. They said, well, look, you really want to. They found out. The other thing they found out was that I was interested in teaching. Said, look, Fiji IV is a teaching group. It's going to be, it's being put together as a teaching, what they call them, group or whatever, and it is being designed for couples.

SZTUK: [00:22:54] Oh, OK.

WILEY: [00:22:56] Because there have been some blowback about single people not being able to stick it out in the more remote parts of Fiji. And that did happen in the place that we wound up.

SZTUK: [00:23:05] OK. So there were quite a few couples in your group.

WILEY: [00:23:10] Oh, God, yes. Yeah. It wasn't only couples. There were lots of single people too. There was, you know, I suppose if you went and, if you went like Jim Kalowski was in our group, whom I saw last night and sat with. He's from the next town over, it turns out. And we had known each other from high school football having been on rival teams. Um. But, uh, what was the thread?

SZTUK: [00:23:48] Couples in your group.

WILEY: [00:23:49] Couples, right. Yeah. If you wanted to see exactly how many there were, and this is beyond, probably beyond your job description. It's all volunteer anyway, right? But.

SZTUK: [00:24:04] I've got your mug book.

WILEY: [00:24:06] OK, right. Well, then you can figure that out. Yeah. And I don't know, I would guess probably about half of us. Middle. A little more, a little less than half. Probably married couples.

SZTUK: [00:24:18] Now, was Fiji a preference? When you applied did you state a preference?

WILEY: [00:24:23] Yes. You got to state a preference. Are there any, and I think it was by country or by geographic area. And so I don't know if I said Fiji or if I said South Pacific or what I said, but they gave me. When they offered me Fiji IV, they had already offered me Fiji.

SZTUK: [00:24:41] Yeah.

WILEY: [00:24:41] For the community development, ag, whatever it was that I turned down. So that was, so I had made that preference known already. And Sally was much taken with my idealism. Things don't always last, but. So she said, sure, let's do it. That's cool. I'm down with it.

SZTUK: [00:25:03] And did you know anything about Fiji before that?

WILEY: [00:25:06] No, not really. I figured we'd learned something about it in training. And we did. But there's nothing like direct experience. And that was, that was amazing.

SZTUK: [00:25:20] Now, you guys didn't train in country, did you? Where did you do your training?

WILEY: [00:25:25] No, all of our training. Well, yeah, I would say all of our training, all three months of it, were in Hawaii and we were in Hilo on the Big Island. And it was a beautiful place. First time I had ever seen a banyan

tree. And there was, it had been an old hospital converted to a training center for the Peace Corps. And so it had kind of dormitories that previously probably had been sick wing, but whatever. And it had this nice garden or grounds outside, this humongous banyan tree. And I'd never seen one before. And I just, I was taken with it. Plus I was taken with the program, the fact that I was going to do something, that the government was investing in me. You hearing this? That the government was investing in me to go forth and not exactly bring enlightenment to the heathen, but an idealistic, more open-minded approach to the same thing.

WILEY: [00:26:27] So, I mean, parenthetically I have to say, I think a lot of what we did was enlightened colonialism. And that's, and you can argue both ways on that. Yes, we did, but we were giving them real life skills and all that.

SZTUK: [00:26:43] Right.

WILEY: [00:26:44] So we'll get to that eventually I suppose. But and then beyond the banyan tree, you took a little pass and it went to some pools above a waterfall and you could just, you could dunk in the pools and cool off on the rocks. And it was just, it was a fabulous. We didn't do a whole lot of that because we had a very full day.

SZTUK: [00:27:05] Yeah.

WILEY: [00:27:06] Very full day. But I think we started our morning language classes, and it was very heavily language.

SZTUK: [00:27:13] So did they bring over the language instructors from Fiji?

WILEY: [00:27:17] Native Fijians. Upito Lasaysay. Samisoni. I can't remember his second name. Levi. Levi Wanga. Yeah, I still remember, I mean, I remember these people because they were just, they were the first actual Fijians that we'd met and they were teaching us. So that seemed appropriate, you know, on a number of levels. Not just because they were native speakers, but because they were culturally Fijian. And they looked and talked and acted and had the expectations and mannerisms of the

Fijian people that we were going to be serving. Yeah. They were wonderful people.

SZTUK: [00:27:57] So you did intensive language training there?

WILEY: [00:28:00] Yeah, 6:30 to, I think we broke at 8:00 for breakfast and then go back to your rooms and shower and brush your teeth, whatever you're going to do. And then I think there was more language in the later morning. And then we had another break and then we had. Anyway, we had probably 5 hours on average a day.

SZTUK: [00:28:19] Yeah.

WILEY: [00:28:20] You know, it was full tilt.

SZTUK: [00:28:22] And did they think that the Hawaii being an island location would be similar to Fiji and would kind of prepare you for Fiji?

WILEY: [00:28:39] Yeah. But what I, but the contrast of course is that Fiji is Fijian even though it's a British crown colony. And so the British were basically, they took it over reluctantly and, well, you know the story.

SZTUK: [00:28:54] Sure.

WILEY: [00:28:55] 1874. Do we want another colony? No, but we'll take it anyway, because maybe we can justify it strategically in terms of where it's located in the Pacific. And plus, we can get rid of all of our starving people from India and have them go there and grow sugar cane for us and maybe make some money out of it. I mean, I think they were pretty cynical about the whole thing.

SZTUK: [00:29:13] Maybe. Yeah.

WILEY: [00:29:16] But, you know, I mean, you worked with the Indians. You know, you go someplace, you try to make the best life you can. And, you know, it was, it can't have been easy for the for the. Because before the starvation happened in the late 1800s in India, the constitution of Fiji had said, look,

you know, this land is the property of Fijian landowners, traditional landowners, in perpetuity. Well, so the Indians show up a couple of decades later and after a while they want to buy land. They had to rent it in perpetuity.

SZTUK: [00:29:51] Yeah. Right.

WILEY: [00:29:51] And that's why there were such go getters. And part of the reason for the ongoing, I think still to the present day, I mean, it flares and it subsides, but friction, I guess I'd call it, between the two groups.

SZTUK: [00:30:04] Mm hmm. OK. So then you finish training in Hawaii and you head off to Fiji?

WILEY: [00:30:13] Yeah, off to Fiji.

SZTUK: [00:30:14] How many people were in your group, do you remember about how big a group it was? And did all of them make it through training?

WILEY: [00:30:22] I have a vague memory and, no, all of them didn't. I'm going to say, and again, you've got the face book so or the mug book so you can do the counting.

SZTUK: [00:30:31] We should say a mug book is kind of like a yearbook for your group.

WILEY: [00:30:34] Oh, yeah, yeah, right. It wasn't, you know, profile left, profile right. I do remember, though, I had a thing about authority. And as I look at my life, I've always had a thing about authority. I maybe was rebelling against my father. I don't know. But they wanted us, when they took those pictures for the mug book, to hold up our name placards like, you know, like this, or just out of sight or over here. And they had last name, comma, first name. I said, this is totally unnecessary. So I crossed mine out and I wrote Stephen Wiley. Or Steve Wiley. And, boy, did that set them off.

SZTUK: [00:31:21] No kidding.

WILEY: [00:31:22] Oh, yeah. Well, anyway. And but so there was that. And I think the director of training even talked to me about it. You don't want to do this because it just upsets the apple cart unnecessarily. So the training finished. Oh, and well so there was, OK. We had language training pretty intensively. We had teacher training in which we put in, I think it was at least a month pretty much full time, at local elementary schools in and around Hilo.

SZTUK: [00:32:00] So you did student teaching?

WILEY: [00:32:01] Oh, yeah. Full tilt. And Irene Greenhouse was, I think Japanese Hawaiian, and Greenhouse is a haole name. So her husband must have been a haole. But she knew what she was doing and she was very good with the kids. She was very low key and patient.

SZTUK: [00:32:24] She was a trainer?

WILEY: [00:32:25] No, she was the teacher. I, we worked as assistants in the classroom to the kids, to teach the kids. And but, you know, that was just for. They knew it was only for a few weeks that they had to put up with this. I didn't have any idea we were being put up with, you know, I thought it was a good deal. But knowing now what I know, if I had known it then, I would have realized that they were being gracious and patient. And helping us learn things, how to teach. So I had a rough idea of how to teach when I was done with that. I would say the language training was superb. The teacher training was, it was OK, B or maybe a high C. The culture training was very strange.

SZTUK: [00:33:14] Why is that?

WILEY: [00:33:14] Well, I don't think Peace Corps knew how to look for people. Or at least in our case, they didn't find. Joe and Linda Berglund were OK and they were interesting and funny. They had us, I'm sure you've read this, right?

SZTUK: [00:33:32] No, actually.

WILEY: [00:33:33] The classic essay by, I forget his name now. Oh, Horace Miner, M-I-N-E-R. It's called The Nacirema [Body Ritual Among the Nacirema]. Never read it?

WILEY: [00:33:44] No.

SZTUK: [00:33:45] You can probably find it online. N-A-C-I-R-E-M-A. And they're located somewhere south of the Cree and north of the Yaqui. And if you know anything about where Native American tribes are, that's the United States. And Nacirema is American spelled backwards. And so the whole essay is a very, very deftly done spoof of fifties American mainstream culture. They have holy head men. They have holy mouth men. They have people, when people are really sick, they go to the Latipso, which is hospital backwards without the H. But they don't want to go there because they know they're going to die, and they get poked and prodded and tortured a little bit. And there are vestal maidens who wait on them before the medicine. Before and after the medicine men come and make their pronouncements.

WILEY: [00:34:48] It's just, it's funnier than hell. It's a satire of anthropology as a clueless discipline, and it's also a satire of fifties American culture. And I didn't get it. I had no, most people didn't get it. Some of them had read it already, and they were told to shut up and just let the rest of us deal with it. And then it was revealed. But and so we had some fun around that.

SZTUK: [00:35:08] So this was part of your cultural training?

WILEY: [00:35:10] Part of our cultural training, yeah. Oh, would some power give us the gift to see ourselves as others see us, as the poet Robert Burns once said. But it didn't happen. And Joe and Linda had done their work in Rajasthan. And I don't know what relevance that had to the Peace Corps program in Fiji. I don't think a lot of the people. I mean, you learned Hindi, right?

SZTUK: [00:35:35] Yeah.

WILEY: [00:35:35] And even that didn't work for all the volunteers, I'm sure. There must have been some Urdu speakers that were served by. You know what I mean?

SZTUK: [00:35:43] Yeah. Well.

WILEY: [00:35:46] Anyhow, so. We were down to that. I mean, it was entertaining and provocative, but it wasn't very conclusive.

SZTUK: [00:36:00] It didn't teach you anything about the Fijian people.

WILEY: [00:36:03] Well, not as such. You know, we got some do's and don'ts which were useful in their own way, but, you know, no flashes of insight. But I think the reason for that is that if you really want to flashes of insight, you've got to put in your time and be patient and observe and ask yourself what's going on and verify your answers with people who know. And some of them probably won't be wanting to tell you whether your answers are right or wrong. Some will. But it was, uh. So the cultural training was, I would give that a C maybe.

SZTUK: [00:36:42] Yeah.

WILEY: [00:36:44] But then we got to Fiji, we got, as you were asking before. We got off the plane at Nadi, and yeah, it was hot but it wasn't. I mean, we had had some acclimation.

SZTUK: [00:36:56] You had been in Hawaii where.

WILEY: [00:36:58] We'd been in Hawaii where it was winter. But Hawaii is what, 17, 20 degrees north of the equator?

SZTUK: [00:37:04] Yeah.

WILEY: [00:37:04] About the same distance as Fiji is south.

SZTUK: [00:37:06] Right.

WILEY: [00:37:06] So it was hotter in Fiji and stickier. But, you know, we were young and healthy and the weather wasn't much of a bother really. And they kept us pretty busy at Nasinu Teachers College.

SZTUK: [00:37:23] OK.

WILEY: [00:37:23] And we had a kind of a barracks like set up there in the dorms that were vacated because it was Christmas break, or coming to the end of Christmas break. And those student teachers would be back shortly after we vacated. I think we were there for a week or maybe not even quite. And then it was time to go off to our various sites.

SZTUK: [00:37:45] So you had about a week of transition in Fiji before you started your jobs?

WILEY: [00:37:51] Yeah, and it was, and you know, that was fine as far as we were concerned. And I'm still two minds about it. I think maybe some sort of hybrid training model would work best. The idea that in-country, see, I think the weakness to in-country training might be, and it probably varies enormously from program to program, that, well, they'll pick it up because you're going to be in-country. Well, maybe you will, maybe you won't.

SZTUK: [00:38:18] Language or?

WILEY: [00:38:20] Oh, everything. Language, culture, you know. Certainly not the, certainly not the technical or professional or vocational stuff. That needs to be done. And if it can be done by. Now, see, if we had had teacher training by Fijian teachers, that would have been enormously helpful.

SZTUK: [00:38:40] To understand how their schools work?

WILEY: [00:38:43] Well, not just how their schools work. But, yeah, how to teach. How Fijians teach Fijian kids.

SZTUK: [00:38:50] Where were you assigned?

WILEY: [00:38:52] A village called Laselevu, L-A-S-E-L-E-V-U.

SZTUK: [00:38:56] In the interior?

WILEY: [00:38:58] In the interior, you bet.

SZTUK: [00:39:01] So I know a little bit about Laselevu. Tell me.

WILEY: [00:39:06] When were you there?

SZTUK: [00:39:07] I wasn't there, but I know a little bit. Tell me what it took.

WILEY: [00:39:12] I'll ask you afterwards, go ahead.

SZTUK: [00:39:12] What did it take to get to Laselevu?

WILEY: [00:39:14] It took a bus ride to the end of the road in, I think the town was called Nasinu. The road just kind of ended there. It was the Wainimala River that ran through there and on into the, on down into the river delta. But then from there, you had to take a boat or walk. Those were really the only options, I think, upriver until you got to where you were going. And we didn't walk because we had all of our stuff. We had had. I will say this, we had had minute and extensive directions about what to buy, which is part of what we did when we were in Nasinu, what to buy to take with us. A kerosene lamp, a hurricane lamp. So we had the Coleman lamps.

SZTUK: [00:40:06] Right.

WILEY: [00:40:07] Lamps that that work really well. And then also one of those things is just like a kind of a glorified candle. So we had one of each of those. We had a two burner Coleman stove, or the equivalent of two burner Coleman stove, and all different kinds of supplies, right? Because we were going to furnish, not entirely furnish our house. One of the things that the Peace Corps volunteer, and this is why this was a couples, or some of the postings were designed for couples, partly because they were remote.

WILEY: [00:40:44] So we were in Laselevu. There were some other people who lived up the Sigatoka Valley. There were some who lived around the northeast coast. Betty and John were on the island of Gau.

SZTUK: [00:41:01] Mm hmm.

WILEY: [00:41:01] So, you know, we were sprinkled at, we weren't close to anything particularly convenient necessarily. And the idea was that we would have each other as company. Uh. But our village had, and this had gone up the chain. So it's a good thing that the various, well, Ministry of Education in this case, listened. Our village had specifically said, look, you know, these two guys you sent us left after a year, each of them. We thought we were getting somebody for two years. So, you know, give us a couple. And when we got there, as you may know, the furnishings, such as we would consider them, in a Fijian house were very sparse. There was one desk.

SZTUK: [00:41:54] Mm hmm.

WILEY: [00:41:55] One chair to sit at the desk with.

SZTUK: [00:41:57] Mm hmm.

WILEY: [00:41:58] So you could prepare your lesson plans. And there was a bed, a double bed with a foam mattress on it.

SZTUK: [00:42:11] A foam mattress?

WILEY: [00:42:12] Oh, yeah. Well, you know, I mean, the school committee, this is a very poor village, you know? I mean, their idea of some extra money is taking the bananas that they grew, some of the bananas that they grew by often. They even though they had a marketing cooperative, it was more something in name than an operational substance. Down the river by bamboo raft, you took your bananas, excess bananas, and then they went off to New Zealand. Well, by the time they got to New Zealand, my God, you know, who wants those, right? But they kept doing it and they earned a little cash for it up front.

SZTUK: [00:42:56] Yeah.

WILEY: [00:42:56] And that supplied. The school didn't supply anything. The villagers had to buy school uniforms, they had to buy pencils, they had to buy notebooks, the whole deal.

SZTUK: [00:43:08] Right.

WILEY: [00:43:09] So it was a major outlay for them, but they still did it anyway. And part of the reason they did it, I think the prime mover was a man named Malachi Moramambito. And he had had the idea that, well, you know, look, our kids need education. They need good education. I don't know. He had been in on. There was somebody from Fiji I up there.

SZTUK: [00:43:36] Yeah.

WILEY: [00:43:37] You know? Is that how you know?

SZTUK: [00:43:40] Yeah.

WILEY: [00:43:41] OK. And I don't know if it was Mark Schultheis who was the big rugby star or another guy.

SZTUK: [00:43:49] It was, um, his name is Dan.

WILEY: [00:43:53] Yeah. Well, I think maybe it was Dan and I don't, I may have my signals crossed. There was a guy who drank too much and got crazy and didn't show up for school sometimes. And so I heard.

SZTUK: [00:44:10] OK, well.

WILEY: [00:44:11] That wasn't Dan?

SZTUK: [00:44:12] I don't think so.

WILEY: [00:44:12] OK. Might not have been, but that happened to a lot of single guys.

SZTUK: [00:44:16] Right, right.

WILEY: [00:44:17] And so, you know, predictably, the village wanted something a little more predictable and productive. So that's what they got with us. And Sally had been in, you know, she was going to go into education one way or another anyway. And I, this is my first chosen career. And as it turns out, it became my career for my whole life in one form or another of various levels. So we were both earnest about it and we did our very best. And I don't know if you ever saw the lesson plan books? When they opened, they were about that wide and they were probably 18 inches down the middle, top to bottom.

SZTUK: [00:45:06] Yeah.

WILEY: [00:45:06] And they all, it's all little lines going all the way across. And you had to use a ruler and pencils and pens. And I don't think we were supposed to use colored pens or colored pencils, but so. And you plan Monday through Friday, and you had the entire week blocked out. Every day, every lesson, every timeslot. This day we're going to do this. On this day we're going to this, on this day we're going to do this. And it seemed to work out, which is the amazing thing.

SZTUK: [00:45:39] So it was very structured.

WILEY: [00:45:40] Oh, God, yes. In fact, the visiting teachers that we had, I think we were visited maybe twice a year. I'm not sure.

SZTUK: [00:45:51] Yeah.

WILEY: [00:45:52] Because you're pretty remote.

SZTUK: [00:45:53] Well, it's hard to get to.

WILEY: [00:45:53] Yeah. Yeah, exactly. And we had to put the guy up. And I think all of them or, or all but one of them, were Indian.

SZTUK: [00:46:08] OK.

WILEY: [00:46:08] And they just, this was, they didn't want to be there, you know.

SZTUK: [00:46:13] Right.

WILEY: [00:46:14] And so they'd come and do some observation in the classroom and check our lesson plans and, you know, very kind of bureaucratically highfalutin, you know, you're just teachers, even though you are Peace Corps. And here we are. We tried to be as accommodating as we could. And about the only thing we could do is would be to serve daal, which we did, with rice. And we didn't have any ghee. I don't know if we had any butter at the time. And I think he ate it because he was hungry, but he wasn't, they weren't warm, fuzzy people. Well, you know, they're basically the cops for the Ministry of Education.

SZTUK: [00:47:00] Sure. Sure. And being in an interior village like that would have been.

WILEY: [00:47:04] Well, right.

SZTUK: [00:47:04] Equivalent to going to a foreign country probably.

WILEY: [00:47:07] Yes. Yes, absolutely. In fact, one of the things that I saw on the one cot, what was called the hospital, I guess you could call it a clinic, that was run by the dissolute hereditary chief for one of the big clans from Rewa province. But he had basically washed out and he was a doctor. And so this was his, he was secommed to Laselevu, as they would have said. One of the things they had to keep was a chart of the population in the village. So it was, I think it said 140 Fijians, zero Indians, two others. And those two others, that was us.

SZTUK: [00:47:55] That was you.

WILEY: [00:47:57] And so that was it. And he basically most of the time had nothing to do.

SZTUK: [00:48:02] So describe this, the village, you mean, what? What was it like and what did most of the people do there?

WILEY: [00:48:10] Most of the people in the village just did their daily activities. Economically, it was subsistence horticulture, gardening, you know, with a little surplus sometimes. Occasionally, there weren't really any fish in the river. I mean, I think I caught one three inches long at one point, which was kind of a disappointment. I did have my fishing gear with me. But occasionally there was a man in the village and he might have been a clan head. But there was a man in the village who had dogs, and he had somehow trained them to hunt, and they would go hunt wild pig out in the forest, maybe a couple of times every three months, not very often. But we always got a chunk of pork. It must have been a pound and a half, two pounds. Just the two of us. And I remember trying not to think how much privilege that showed that we had. But, you know, I mean, the whole village, because you had to share.

SZTUK: [00:49:24] Sure.

WILEY: [00:49:24] What you got, right?

SZTUK: [00:49:25] Sure.

WILEY: [00:49:26] And so I can imagine these families, especially the ones that were putting up relatives, putting up, putting up their relatives' kids.

SZTUK: [00:49:36] To go to school there?

WILEY: [00:49:37] To come to school there. You know, I mean, how much, how much were they getting? You know, I never thought of it much. But we managed to figure out a marinade that included oil and a lot of vinegar and soften it up so it was pretty good. Yeah. Fijians thought that soft meat was terrible, because if you eat soft meat, you become a soft person.

SZTUK: [00:49:57] Yeah, different tastes. And what type of house did you live in? Was it a traditional house?

WILEY: [00:50:04] A traditional bure, yeah. Yeah. And we actually, our roof began to leak at one point pretty, pretty badly. And so we said, we went to Molokai and said, hey, our roof's leaking. And he said. He didn't, well, he did speak English, actually, but he tried not to speak English with us because he wanted to encourage us to speak Fijian. And I think the fact that we did that was something that was a small feather in his cap. I mean, it wasn't entirely altruistic on his part, but he was a pretty good guy. And so he said, no problem, I'll get it fixed. Or the equivalent, right?

SZTUK: [00:50:46] Right.

WILEY: [00:50:47] And so these guys show up. I'd say probably half a dozen, maybe eight or ten. Some of the older men in the village, not real old, but, you know, older at that point from me, you know, forties, fifties, parents of, you know, fathers and uncles of the kids.

SZTUK: [00:51:07] Yeah.

WILEY: [00:51:08] And they went right to work and they put together bundles of river reeds, which they folded over. And they, and so this is pole and thatch construction, or pole and post construction, and they basically, they repaired the house and it was good as new.

SZTUK: [00:51:30] Replaced the roof.

WILEY: [00:51:31] It's like putting new shingles on.

SZTUK: [00:51:33] Yeah.

WILEY: [00:51:34] But much more organic. And I don't think there were any nails involved. They did a lot of the tying with, I think it was coconut fiber rope, which is kind of a. We had like two or three coconut trees in our village. I think the soil maybe wasn't. I know, weird, right? I don't think the soil was sandy enough. I'm not sure.

SZTUK: [00:51:57] And it was a, it was a higher altitude.

WILEY: [00:51:59] Well, not that much higher, you know, maybe 500 feet above sea level. But it wasn't, that wasn't it. Altitude was not the reason. So, you know, but anyway, we got to see that happen. And they did it for us and they got it done in I think three days.

SZTUK: [00:52:29] Yeah.

WILEY: [00:52:30] And I made the mistake of thinking, oh, that's cool. And so they didn't take. I didn't give them any yagona, I didn't thank them in the way that I should have thanked them traditionally.

SZTUK: [00:52:44] Oh.

WILEY: [00:52:44] And so nobody gave me a bad time about it. But I spent way too much time with my new wife, from Fijian point of view now, with my new wife and preparing lesson plans and reading up and trying to be a good teacher. And I just kind of neglected the whole social side of everything.

SZTUK: [00:53:07] Oh.

WILEY: [00:53:08] Yeah, that was. And that was a serious mistake.

SZTUK: [00:53:10] You mentioned yagona. Tell us tell us what that is.

WILEY: [00:53:13] Oh, yagona is the Fijian word for kava. And I spent some time in the village drinking socially with the men, but that was kind of the ante, the social ante that you had to, that you had to give was, your time with other people, other men, because it was men who drank it. Women sometimes prepared it. Adolescent men sometimes prepared it and served it if it was a less formal setting. They'd have the kids in the house serve it. But it was, uh, it was a serious kind of ceremonial time to relax. And it sounds like a bit of an oxymoron, but it wasn't really. And I, you

know, I wish that I had spent more time out in the village just hanging out with the men.

SZTUK: [00:54:08] So. But being the only foreigners in the village, the only Americans there, you had no other Americans to socialize with.

WILEY: [00:54:21] Right.

SZTUK: [00:54:22] So you must have had quite a bit of interaction with the village there, didn't you?

WILEY: [00:54:28] Well, as I said, not much, between making dinner and still being newlyweds and the schoolwork. It was the first time I'd ever taught, you know, and I wanted to be on top of my lessons, and the textbooks we had were helpful. But I had to figure out how to transliterate what was on the page into how I was going to teach it.

SZTUK: [00:54:56] Yeah.

WILEY: [00:54:57] And that was a big job for me. It didn't come to me very naturally. I didn't feel comfortable really, or begin to feel comfortable teaching, until partway into my second year. But and so the funny thing is, I saw these things as equivalent. My facility, relative facility, with Fijian. And doing my job, right? And I figured if I could handle the language, if I could do the schoolwork, that was enough. And I just thought I'd just let the social thing slide. So.

SZTUK: [00:55:42] And how about the students at school? How did you find them?

WILEY: [00:55:47] The students were enthusiastic, eager, funny. They were capable of being very serious. They were easy to work with. Mostly.

SZTUK: [00:56:02] Yeah.

WILEY: [00:56:03] Except when they didn't get something and I didn't know how to help them get it. You know, and then it became a kind of, I wish you could tell me how to do this, you know? I wish I could too. Sort of thing. Not

spoken, you understand, but just interpersonally. But some of those, some of those kids. [speaks Fijian] Little. A little girl. Small, physically. And just smarter than a whip. And then there was another girl who was bigger, who was, I guess you could say, developmentally precocious. And, uh, who was also very smart. And they had sweet dispositions, you know, all of them.

WILEY: [00:56:58] There was one boy who I think who would, and he was developing pretty quickly too. I mean, in sixth grade, his voice was beginning to change and, you know, uh. And he was. He had an older brother who worked in Vatukoula. And I think, I think he probably heard stories of abusive white mine bosses. And so maybe that Ponty was a little less inclined. And I don't know if that's why, but I'm pretty sure that he did have a brother who worked at Vatukoula. I think Ponty was less inclined to take me at face value. I think he was a little more skeptical.

SZTUK: [00:57:45] Was he suspicious of you?

WILEY: [00:57:46] Well, not suspicious exactly, but just kind of like. Kind of like, you know, why should I? You know, this all, it's all a line of nonsense. And maybe it's because his brother told him, look, you know, I went through school and here I am, I'm a miner.

SZTUK: [00:58:01] Oh, OK.

WILEY: [00:58:03] I'm envisioning something like that. I never asked him because it never occurred to me to ask him. You know, um. And then Peta Naroso and Apenisa Seru. And there are some other kids who are smart, too. But Peta and Apenisa, which is to say Peter and Ebenezer, right?

SZTUK: [00:58:30] Mm hmm.

WILEY: [00:58:30] They were both from up the much less developed much more mountainous river that came to Laselevu kind of from the northern end. Not the northern end, from the northern side of the central mountains on the big island. And the terrain was much more rugged. Those people were the ones who were considered true Appalachians by other, by the other

Fijians. And Sally and I went up there and visited and it was something else. It really was. I mean, there was an elementary school in [inaudible]. And I'm pretty sure there was another one much further in, although I'm not absolutely certain. Now, it turns out that Seru's older brother, I think maybe it was Seru's older brother who was the headmaster at the school in [inaudible], a one through six. But, you know, a lot of the kids decided they were going to go down to the Laselevu anyway, because now Laselevu had Peace Corps volunteers.

SZTUK: [00:59:43] Ah.

WILEY: [00:59:44] Or the kids didn't decide, their folks did. And some decided they wanted them to stick around. And so they did that. But the people were uniformly accommodating, friendly and very tolerant of our blindness. Well, you know, you can only get, you can only get to know people in that culture so well in the span of, I don't know. name a span, right? A year. You know, you know the ropes. You know who the personalities are.

SZTUK: [01:00:20] Yeah.

WILEY: [01:00:21] But the subtexts that are going on all the time, you have no connection with. I mean, why is person A interacting with person B in a certain way? Part of the explanation for that has nothing to do with personality. Some of it does. But a lot of it has to do with kinship and clan membership and the histories of the family, the nuclear families and the families of origin that everybody is part of. And what loyalties and strategic interests those groups of people have, and they're very often at loggerheads. So the fact that a couple of boys won't speak to each other in fifth grade, why? Well, because, you know, so-and-so's father, even though they're the same clan, he talked the clan head in the village into letting him have the better land for gardening the next season. And so the guy who lost out told his kids, don't go to talk to your uncle, you know? And that's why.

SZTUK: [01:01:29] Yeah, OK. Things you wouldn't be in.

WILEY: [01:01:31] No. And that, I became very acutely aware of that once I realized that even though I had started occasionally dreaming in Fijian and I was pretty good at keeping up in a conversation. I found last night that I've lost that entirely. I can produce Fijian, but as far as hearing it, processing it, and responding in the same, you know, in the same rhythmic flow, I don't have it anymore. Which is not surprising. It's been a while. Still, I wish I had it.

SZTUK: [01:02:04] What did you guys do in your spare time or your time off? Like there were school breaks? Did you stay in the village or did you go somewhere else?

WILEY: [01:02:13] School breaks we looked forward to in the beginning and we'd take the whole time, you know, week, week and a half. And we'd stock up on supplies that we didn't have in the village.

SZTUK: [01:02:28] So you'd go to town?

WILEY: [01:02:29] We'd fantasize about bread and butter. And eggs because, you know, the chickens in the village were for eating. They weren't for eggs.

SZTUK: [01:02:38] Oh, really?

WILEY: [01:02:39] Yeah. So, yeah, we'd go to town. We'd hire a boat, or hire a boat, and then. We'd hire the boat and then the guy who owned the boat would say, OK. There were two of them in the village and they were both pretty good. And he would say, well, you know, the word would get around somehow really quickly that somebody was going down the river in the boat. And so the guy who owned the boat would collect the additional fares, which is fine, you know? I mean, it was nothing.

WILEY: [01:03:10] Yeah, we'd stock up and we'd occasionally go into the Peace Corps office or, you know, buy something we were out of. But increasingly that became unnecessary because I think, well, I think, I know in some ways we just simplified our wants and found that our needs were pretty adequately met by what was available in the village. Not all of it, but a lot of it. And so, why go? And it was at that point that we began to, instead of

going into Suva and meeting other Peace Corps volunteers the way a lot of people do, which is fine. We'd say, well, how about? You think? How about if we get Nikko, who was a little impish little kid in my class, fun and smart. How about if we have Nikko take us across to Lautucoma? This is across, up.

SZTUK: [01:04:22] You'd go through the jungle?

WILEY: [01:04:23] Yeah, exactly. Up through and, you know, jungle tracks.

SZTUK: [01:04:28] Yeah.

WILEY: [01:04:28] And mud up to your knees some of the time.

SZTUK: [01:04:33] Yeah.

WILEY: [01:04:34] And so Sally and I did that. We did that one time. Another time, I can't remember how we got there, but we basically hiked from the headwaters of the Sigatoka. We hiked to the headwaters of the Sigatoka and then took the bus down. And that was an amazing trip. I mean, it was kind of like open grasslands.

SZTUK: [01:05:03] That would have been essentially on the opposite side of the?

WILEY: [01:05:06] Well, the opposite and a half, you know, or half opposite. I mean, the Sigatoka still runs out into the ocean. If you're looking at Viti Levu like this. And so, let's see, Suva's here, the way you're looking at it.

SZTUK: [01:05:21] OK.

WILEY: [01:05:21] Yeah. Laselevu was here. Tomanivi, the mountain, the highest point is here. Vatukoula's here. The Sigatoka River starts up here, but it runs down this way. And so it's still. The Sigatoka is interesting because it's mostly grassland. It's kind of open.

SZTUK: [01:05:44] Right, right.

WILEY: [01:05:44] Much more so than, it's not the wet side. We got 250 inches a year of rain, on average. Which was amazing, you know? So.

SZTUK: [01:05:55] A lot of rain.

WILEY: [01:05:56] A lot of rain. Yeah. In fact, during the rainy season, you could set your clock by it, you know? As soon as you got back in the classroom at 1:00 and we did go by the clock. Although the first sound you heard in the morning after the roosters was the *lali* that woke people up.

SZTUK: [01:06:18] Right. And *lali*, for the audience?

WILEY: [01:06:21] Yes. Well, the old-fashioned British term is slit gong. It's actually a hollowed-out section of log, which is a drum. And I don't know, I'd say the diameter probably varies, of the opening on the inside, probably varies anywhere between four or five inches to bigger ones were probably closer to nine or ten. But it's very resonant. The sound carries. And somehow that's something that the Fijians had obviously long before the Brits showed up and said school began promptly at 9:00 in the morning. But it did, 9:00 to 12:00 and 1:00 to 3:00, I think, were the hours. And as I was saying, during the rainy season, you could pretty much set your clock. As soon as you got back into the classroom at 1:00, the skies would open. It would pour for five, ten, maybe sometimes 15 minutes. And that was it. And you could start teaching because the rain on the roof was so loud, you couldn't hear anybody.

SZTUK: [01:07:30] So it was a tin roof then?

WILEY: [01:07:35] Yes. School buildings had tin roofs. The teacher's houses were all traditional bures.

SZTUK: [01:07:39] Yeah. So any episodes at school there that really stick out in your memory?

WILEY: [01:07:53] Pleasant and unpleasant. Pleasant first. Tuway tutu at the end of the year where everybody, which means stand according to your rank. The kids would stand at the end of the year in their, in rank order of their, I

guess, grades. For a kind of a graduation ceremony. It was a bigger deal for the kids who were in sixth grade because they were either going to stay or they were going to go off to secondary school, or they were going to stay and they were going to go on to seventh and eighth grade. That became much easier after, well, after the Peace Corps was hired, because that's what Peace Corps was hired for, this business of grafting on seventh and eighth grades to strategically located elementary schools like ours.

SZTUK: [01:08:51] Yeah.

WILEY: [01:08:54] It was part of the reason Fiji I went in the first place because that was an education group. And all of a sudden, lo and behold, the Ministry of Education had an acute shortage of teachers, because now there were some schools where they needed teachers to teach an additional two grades.

SZTUK: [01:09:10] Right.

WILEY: [01:09:11] And so that's how Peace Corps, I guess, got started in Fiji. And then. And the idea was A, they learn more, which the Ministry of Education and the Fijian people themselves were seriously interested in. They didn't necessarily understand why, but they understood that it was a good thing. And some of them did understand perfectly well why. I mean, they weren't a bunch. They weren't. They were. They weren't stupid.

SZTUK: [01:09:43] Right.

WILEY: [01:09:44] They were simply, some of them, a little uneducated. And so and they were, they lived in tribal villages. They knew what was what. Um. Prompt me.

SZTUK: [01:10:03] So this was a memorable episode, something.

WILEY: [01:10:05] It was a memorable episode simply because everybody got dressed up and they, well, actually, I don't know if they ran up the Fiji flag every morning or not. I think maybe they did. Another memorable episode

was our village, because it was centrally located, became one of the official places where independence was celebrated. And so there are some wonderful graphic images of that time. At sundown on October 9th, 1970, the Union Jack was lowered in the schoolyard for the last time.

SZTUK: [01:10:49] This is when Fiji gained its independence?

WILEY: [01:10:52] Yeah. Because on October 10th, 1874, it had become a crown colony.

SZTUK: [01:10:57] Right.

WILEY: [01:10:58] So they were now making the transition from crown colony to dominion. And that's kind of like we're run our own show and you can run our foreign affairs, but they're not doing anything anyway, much. And so there were, there were all of these older men in the village who had, who had, kept their formal jackets somewhere. I don't know where they kept them because I'd never seen them in their formal jackets.

SZTUK: [01:11:32] Everybody got dressed up for this event.

WILEY: [01:11:33] With their medals from World War II and from the Malaysia campaign, where they went to put down Commies for the Brits. And that was pretty much it. But there they are, saluting the Union Jack as it comes down, in their old zoot suit jackets, straight out of mothballs with the medals on them. Not all had medals, but some of them did. Crying. These stoic Fijian men. It was a powerful image. Yeah.

SZTUK: [01:12:05] Yeah.

WILEY: [01:12:07] And then the next day, instead of somber, well, they were grieving maybe? Yeah. Not too much to call it that I think for some of them, at least the men, because they had been warriors for the queen.

SZTUK: [01:12:22] Right, right.

WILEY: [01:12:23] And that was a big deal for them.

SZTUK: [01:12:25] Yeah, it was a strong alliance.

WILEY: [01:12:26] Oh, yeah. Well, not just a strong alliance, but something, you know what I mean, Fijians didn't. The place where being a warrior was a really big deal was around the coast where people fought over more resources and where they had 80 foot, I don't think 80 foot, but big, big double hulled canoes.

SZTUK: [01:12:45] Yeah.

WILEY: [01:12:46] Back in the, back in the old days. But, you know, there was warfare traditionally between villages, which doesn't make sense to us because, you know, we like to think in binary terms, but tribal people very often think in terms of alliance or opposition. And sometimes an alliance can be a strong alliance. Sometimes an opposition can be a weak opposition. But it can go the other way too. So, you know, and this is difficult. It's made much more complicated by the fact that you don't just marry within the village. And it's not because everybody knows that's bad for the gene pool. You marry outside the village because it's a good place to get allies from. And the marriages were patrilocal, so the women would move in with their, into their husbands' villages.

SZTUK: [01:13:45] Yeah.

WILEY: [01:13:47] Well, then you've got brothers-in-law in this other village, if you're a man, and you've got sisters-in-law too by marriage. And so a man and a woman would have alliances not just within the village on a day to day basis, because the village is pretty much self-reliant that way. But, you know, if they were going to be long term relationships and visiting and somebody had something you really wanted or just to have a wider network of people, it's a good thing to do. And that's how they operated. I didn't understand any of this until I started in with my anthropology and long after I came back. But that's that whole other level of discourse that I talked about earlier, which when I was explaining why a boy wasn't supposed to talk to his uncle.

SZTUK: [01:14:36] Right, right.

WILEY: [01:14:39] And that just went right over me because we didn't have that kind of training in cultural training. It would have been really great to have.

SZTUK: [01:14:46] Oh, yeah, sure would. So you're out there and you decided that you're pretty comfortable out at your site and you don't need to travel into town much.

WILEY: [01:14:54] Well, not much, you know, I mean every so often still. But, you know, it would be for three or four days and then we'd use the rest of the vacation to go do something else. We never went to New Zealand or Australia. A lot of people did.

SZTUK: [01:15:07] Did you have much communication with the Peace Corps office in all the time you were out there?

WILEY: [01:15:12] No. I mean, they came out I think once a year just to sort of see, or they tried to, depending on transportation conditions, how low or high the river was, you know, to see us and, um.

SZTUK: [01:15:28] You were pretty much on your own.

WILEY: [01:15:29] We were pretty much on our own, and they could see that we were doing OK as far as they were concerned and as far as we were concerned, so no problems, you know. When we got done towards the end of our service, they said, well, just come in for a physical. They took stool samples. And of course, having eventually figured out the best way to, who needs flip flops anyway, right? We had intestinal parasites. And so they gave us medicine for those.

SZTUK: [01:15:54] Right.

WILEY: [01:15:55] And that eventually worked itself out. And so we were good to go.

SZTUK: [01:16:00] Yeah.

WILEY: [01:16:01] That was fine. Um, I think. Oh! But Fiji did not have, um, how to say this. I don't know. Didn't have ambient antisepsis. That is, the entire environment had not been controlled enough against disease vectors for people generally not to get infected.

SZTUK: [01:16:33] OK.

WILEY: [01:16:34] Generally people did get infected and the ones who didn't were the ones who survived childhood. Sally got herself a mosquito bite on her instep, and it didn't go away. And so we put a little of this medicine on it and it didn't go away and it didn't go away. And so eventually it turned into a nasty abscess boil that had to be lanced by the doctor. Yeah.

SZTUK: [01:17:02] Yeah.

WILEY: [01:17:03] And that would have never happened in the United States, you know.

SZTUK: [01:17:07] Well, it's hot and humid climate. Walking barefoot.

WILEY: [01:17:10] Right. That and the fact that there is no such thing as kids getting all their shots, you know.

SZTUK: [01:17:15] Yeah.

WILEY: [01:17:17] Or what are those kind of deal. So yeah, it was different in that way. The kids, all the kids, most of the kids, a lot of the kids had ringworm. And, you know, they didn't think it was a big deal. And I guess it wasn't, I don't think it gets very serious. I'm not sure. But they lived with it without too much trouble and eventually it'd go away.

SZTUK: [01:17:45] So it sounds like you adapted very well to the village.

WILEY: [01:17:51] Well, I think I did. I did tell you there were some unpleasant memories, and one in particular. The headmaster had been off. It was a school vacation. The headmaster had taken it upon himself, this is our

second year, to have the doctor circumcise all of the boys who were resident at the seventh and eighth grade dorms. The ones from other villages. And he considers, he considered himself a progressive. A, it's very expensive to do this because you have to have a feast for it. These people can't afford feasts. B, it's going to be a lot more sanitary than it would if it were being done with a piece of glass out in the village. And C, they'll all have it done. They'll have time to recuperate over the school break. And when things start up again, we'll be fine.

SZTUK: [01:18:54] OK.

WILEY: [01:18:56] Sounded like a plan. He didn't explain it to me. He said, just said, Mr. Wiley, I want you to keep an eye on the kids while I'm gone. That was it. OK. I knew they'd been circumcised. I had no idea what it meant. I mean, you know, I'd been circumcised when I was born, but I don't have a vivid memory of it.

SZTUK: [01:19:15] Right.

WILEY: [01:19:15] So, you know, after. So meanwhile, the girls were doing all the work and the boys were lying around talking and seemingly having a good old time. I didn't realize that they were also being stoic.

SZTUK: [01:19:34] Yeah.

WILEY: [01:19:35] Until I thought about it later. What else happens to you when you're male and 13, 14 years old? The thing develops a mind of its own, and that happening with scar tissue has got to be a very, very powerful reminder that something is going on that you better get a handle on. Literally and figuratively. So but that, you know, that went right over my head. All I knew was, well, you know, they're kids.

SZTUK: [01:20:03] Yeah.

WILEY: [01:20:04] And meanwhile, the grass is getting long. And traditionally, in terms of the gender division of labor, it's the boys who cut the grass.

SZTUK: [01:20:11] Boys cut the grass?

WILEY: [01:20:11] With machetes, which start out like this and end up looking like a paring knife because they get, well, they get sharpened away.

SZTUK: [01:20:20] This is audio. So it starts out as a big knife and then gets.

WILEY: [01:20:23] Oh, it starts looking like a sharp, I don't know what.

SZTUK: [01:20:26] And then it gets smaller and smaller.

WILEY: [01:20:26] A foot and a half long blade, with a kind of, with kind of like a scimitar arc on one side and a handle on it. And then, yeah. And eventually it winds up, well, not the size of a paring knife, but maybe six inches and it's a little narrow triangle. And they use it until it's done and they get a new one. But traditionally it was a boy's job to cut the grass and the grass is getting longer and longer and longer. And the girls, it looked to me like they were working, I mean, they just nonstop. And I thought, well, I'm going to ask them if they're ready. And what I should have known by then really, if I had been paying attention to the subtleties of language, was when a superior asks an inferior something, they're asking for cooperation and consent. It's not really a question at all.

SZTUK: [01:21:24] Right.

WILEY: [01:21:24] So when I asked them, guys, do you think, how are you feeling? Do you think you might be able to cut some grass? They took it as a command, which in traditional Fijian discourse it would have been. And they knew that I spoke Fijian, so they understood very logically that I must understand what the words meant, right? But no, this is me still working in a second language. And so the day after I had them do that, they did it without complaining, but I did hear some additional moans and groans I think that night. And the next day the head teacher came back and he found out what had happened. Somebody told him, rightly so. And I was up. I was, for once, I was up in the village, sitting around drinking yagona with some of the men. And he came and found me and said, Mr. Wiley, go to your house now. He grounded me.

SZTUK: [01:22:26] He did?

WILEY: [01:22:26] Oh, yeah. He was furious. He damn near boxed my ears. I mean, metaphorically speaking, he wouldn't have lifted a hand against me. If he had, it would have been trouble for me, because he was a very, he was a very fit man, as they used to say, even more fit than I was, and I was pretty fit back then. But he was furious. Now, the reasons for this are complicated and interesting. You know, number one, I had made him look bad because I had exposed the vulnerability and the arrogance, really, of his decision in overriding tradition. You know, these were not his sons, except in a metaphorical and in loco parentis way. They were their family's sons. And the families ought to have been given a choice. They weren't given a choice in where their sons were going to get circumcised. And so he just did it and that was that.

WILEY: [01:23:21] I don't know how the communication about that went. Because traditionally those boys would have gone home during school break, and they stuck around. So I don't know if word got back to the villages that the headmaster was keeping the boys, if he gave, and if he did that, got the word out. I don't know whether he gave them a reason, because I'm circumcising them. Because, and my guess is, maybe not. There was a lot of deference to him as the head teacher in the village because he was, because the education was special and school is special and people were invested in it and there was definitely hierarchical thinking going on.

SZTUK: [01:24:08] Yeah, yeah.

WILEY: [01:24:09] So it's interesting.

SZTUK: [01:24:10] Yeah. So then your two years is coming to an end there. How did you feel about leaving the village?

WILEY: [01:24:16] I was ready to go.

SZTUK: [01:24:18] Were you?

WILEY: [01:24:18] Yeah. I said, they wanted us for two years. I think I've done what I can.

SZTUK: [01:24:25] You didn't have any thoughts about extending.

WILEY: [01:24:27] Sally did. She wanted to stay in the village for a third year.

SZTUK: [01:24:29] Yeah?

WILEY: [01:24:31] Oh, yeah. She said, I don't want to go. I love this. And I, no, I want to get out of here, you know? So we got out. And the compromise we made was, we did, but see, we couldn't have done it anyway as Peace Corps volunteers. Whether the Ministry of Education would have hired us as regular teachers, I don't know. But they were very explicit. No more Peace Corps volunteers in elementary education.

SZTUK: [01:25:06] Oh, OK.

WILEY: [01:25:07] Beginning with 1972. So. But what happened was I got a job at Ratu Sukuna Memorial School out in Nabua, which is, as prestige goes, a pretty prestigious. It wasn't the, it wasn't the jewel in the crown, but it was a pretty well-respected secondary school for Fijian kids. And so I got to teach senior high English, including Shakespeare. Go figure, right? Because it's English, that's why.

SZTUK: [01:25:40] So you stayed in Fiji?

WILEY: [01:25:41] Yeah. Yeah, we stayed.

SZTUK: [01:25:43] And this is not a volunteer position.

WILEY: [01:25:45] No. All of a sudden, we were rolling in dough because you're being paid like white folks. And no, seriously, the ratio is about 2 to 1.

SZTUK: [01:25:53] Yeah.

WILEY: [01:25:54] White folks got paid about twice as much for exactly the same teaching job as local people, whether they were Indian Fijian or Fijian Fijian or whatever they were. Sally had, I guess, on one of the school breaks somehow befriended or gotten to know Merle Angus, whose husband was doing a UN job in Fiji. And part of that circle included the president and his wife of the University of the South Pacific. They had a kid who was developmentally delayed and so she was looking for something for her kid.

SZTUK: [01:26:39] OK.

WILEY: [01:26:40] And lo and behold, things happened. The Ministry of Education agreed to set up a school, the Fiji School for the Intellectually Handicapped. Sally became the headmistress and she had two people working for her. She had a great time. She loved that.

SZTUK: [01:26:58] This was in Suva?

WILEY: [01:26:59] In Suva, yeah. Yeah. And we had been able, through another connection that we'd gotten to know, I think, over a longer Christmas break a year earlier. We had a connection to a rent-controlled apartment, which was like 50 bucks a month. And so we stepped into that and we were already living there when the guy decided that we had, that we'd pulled a fast one on him. And so we just kept paying him 50 bucks a month. He was madder than hell, but he couldn't move us out. And so people came and visited us in Suva and that was kind of nice.

SZTUK: [01:27:34] And how long did you stay in Suva?

WILEY: [01:27:35] A year.

SZTUK: [01:27:36] A year.

WILEY: [01:27:36] Yeah. And by then, Sally had to get back to finish up her master's program, because she had finished the first year and then, um, or maybe the first year and a half. But she had, I think maybe the first year, I'm not sure. But then, you know, you get a certain number of years to

finish it or they kick you out. And so it's December of '72. School's over. We're done working. You saved all, saved up this money as, you know, filthy capitalist teachers. And plus, we had some money saved up from our transition allowance to come back home.

SZTUK: [01:28:18] Yeah.

WILEY: [01:28:19] Because we never used it. You know, we just. The Peace Corps flew us home and back, which I think they weren't supposed to do because we didn't extend in the Peace Corps.

SZTUK: [01:28:28] Right.

WILEY: [01:28:29] But, you know, that's fine. That was fine with us. We didn't ask too many questions. And I think the Peace Corps had the discretion at that point to do that. Things were a little looser back then. So we flew to Palo Alto and hung out with my family for a while. Dad was working for Stanford, the IBM contract for Stanford at that point. And then we flew to Syracuse because that was our. That was our home address.

SZTUK: [01:29:02] OK.

WILEY: [01:29:03] Because it was Sally's. It was where we got married and so on.

SZTUK: [01:29:05] OK.

WILEY: [01:29:06] So we got to see our folks briefly and then we went back to Fiji and did our third year, and we had a bunch of money saved up. And we had like eight months to get from Fiji to Montreal. Because my family, my family who. At that time had my dad had retired, I think, well no, not really. But they were spending the summers at his ancestral farm in upstate New York, just across the border from Canada.

SZTUK: [01:29:41] OK.

WILEY: [01:29:41] On Lake Champlain. And so we decided we're going to do that. Well, we go to the Pan Am ticket office and we explained to the ticket

agent what we wanted to do. We had this all figured out too, a complete itinerary that we had done through the mail from Laselevu. Yeah. During our last year. What do you want to do when we leave? I don't know. Let's travel around the world. Well, let's see what there is, you know. And so we figured out where we wanted to go and roughly how long we wanted to be there. But Pan Am at that point was writing tickets for, you know, you want to go here and here and here with, and I don't think there was a time limit on them. We had our own time limit.

SZTUK: [01:30:27] OK. Right.

WILEY: [01:30:28] And we made some reservations. But we basically, we went from. I think. Can't remember how it started exactly, but I think we went from Fiji to New Zealand to American Samoa to Western Samoa to New Caledonia to the New Hebrides to the Solomons. Did I miss anything? I went to every one of the polities in Melanesia.

SZTUK: [01:31:03] OK.

WILEY: [01:31:03] And then Papua New Guinea, too. And we spent 2 hours making a plane connection in Darwin, Australia, because we figured, you know, Darwin's, you know, Australia's is too big, it's going to take us too much time, it's too much like the United States.

SZTUK: [01:31:17] Not interested.

WILEY: [01:31:18] So we were looking for what was different. And so that's what we did after we left. And we wound up hitting, oh well, so many fantastic things I could tell you that don't have to do with the Peace Corps.

SZTUK: [01:31:35] So, um, then how do you think Peace Corps, your Peace Corps experience shaped the rest of your life or influenced the rest of your life?

WILEY: [01:31:47] I should tell you a little bit more about how cut off we were up there, although you may have inferred some of it.

SZTUK: [01:31:54] Sure.

WILEY: [01:31:55] There were no Peace Corps staff around. We talked about that. No electricity, no phone, no radio, no coworkers. So that was that. Very shortly before we arrived, they had installed a gravity fed water system, pipe system, which started up near somebody's garden.

SZTUK: [01:32:23] Mm hmm.

WILEY: [01:32:24] And there was a kind of a collection pond.

SZTUK: [01:32:25] A pond.

WILEY: [01:32:26] And the water would come down, it was just gravity. So there was a tap in the upper village. And a second tap, I think, in the upper village. The upper village, so the three divisions of the village, there are two up on the hill and one down in the plain. The plain they called it. It wasn't really a plain. It's a floodplain.

SZTUK: [01:32:51] Yeah.

WILEY: [01:32:53] Not often flooded, but the river. And so this beautiful village. The river ran in an arc right around the village. And in the plain included a very, I think, two or maybe three *bures*, which were one clan segment. But that guy's, that guy's name was Thao, which meant the owner. And he basically owned the village traditionally, not as private property or anything like that. And then Malachi was in one of the, one of the clan neighborhoods up on the hill. And the other, and somewhat larger and more spread-out clan neighborhood was also up on the hill. So two up the hill and one down. Um. Where was I going?

SZTUK: [01:33:52] Oh, you were talking about the water supply.

WILEY: [01:33:54] Yeah. So there was. So each of the three different clan neighborhoods had one tap, I think. And the school had. I don't know if each of the teachers' houses had one. I know we did. I know the headmaster did. I think the others did too. Or there was, maybe there were. There was a total of four teachers' *bures*.

SZTUK: [01:34:30] OK.

WILEY: [01:34:30] There might have been one for the headmaster, one for us, and another one in between for those two, those two teachers' *bures*.

SZTUK: [01:34:36] Yeah.

WILEY: [01:34:39] But I think that was it.

SZTUK: [01:34:40] And this pipe was outside, it was on a standpipe?

WILEY: [01:34:43] Absolutely. Yeah. And so, but we had a. How the hell we got a shower, I don't know. But they put it in and we were able to shower.

SZTUK: [01:34:52] Outdoors or indoors?

WILEY: [01:34:53] Oh, yeah. Oh, no, outdoors. Yeah. But, you know, I think we were enclosed on three sides and the other side faced our house and our water was the last one in the line. So it was like we could shower nude if you wanted to. I don't know. I think we did sometimes when it was dark enough. But, you know, and not together, you know, you don't want to violate people's sense of propriety.

SZTUK: [01:35:20] Right.

WILEY: [01:35:23] But it was nice because at night you would hear occasionally somebody strumming a guitar and some people singing along. Sometimes just talk, sometimes just the mosquitoes, but always the river murmuring around the village. It was. It was beautiful. Absolutely beautiful.

SZTUK: [01:35:48] Yeah. Yeah, it sounds very nice. So how did you feel about leaving Fiji? It must have, uh, I'm sure even though you haven't, you said you didn't interact much, you must have made some good friends.

WILEY: [01:35:59] Well, we were eager to get off to the next thing, you know, we were in our mid twenties, early to mid twenties, I think. And yeah, and we had this whole adventure trip planned, so we were ready to go, you know.

WILEY: [01:36:17] The way we started it actually was to go see the rest of Fiji, quotation marks. We took a boat, a copra boat, which did basically everything else, mail supplies, you know, called the Ululakemba. It was a famous boat which several years later went down in a storm, but it had stopped offshore. And occasionally we'd just catch a ride with whoever had come out to pick up supplies, go into shore, look and see what people were doing, and then come back out. One of the islands we stopped at was Namuka, which had, not the only one, certainly one of them, that it was one of them. And that was one of the places they made *masi*, also known as tapa cloth. And we actually got to see the women making it.

SZTUK: [01:37:16] They didn't make it in your village?

WILEY: [01:37:18] No, no, it's only done, I think, basically on the islands that are Polynesian or Polynesian influenced. And I don't know if they could have done it in our village because the inner bark of a mulberry tree and maybe 250 inches a year is too much rain for a mulberry tree. I don't know. It's a good question, though. But anyway, they didn't make it. But there are some places they did make it in Papua New Guinea, which has some pretty heavy rain too. So they might have been able to, if they'd been into it, if they'd been into it.

SZTUK: [01:38:00] So then you get back home. What'd you do when you got back home? And did Peace Corps have anything to do with the direction you?

WILEY: [01:38:08] Oh, it shaped the rest of my life. Oh yeah. Very, very deeply. I mean, even to this day. I advocate for indigenous people. Now that people have finally come around to beginning to put together the idea that one of the ways that we could actually survive and correct climate change would be to take some practices and principles from indigenous tradition. Because what they all had in common was they didn't overuse what they had.

SZTUK: [01:38:42] Yeah.

WILEY: [01:38:42] And we all have in common is we do, and we throw it away. What's left, thrown out. I saw the downside of this when somebody got a nasty cut on their foot in Laselevu. What's that from? One of those tin cans.

SZTUK: [01:39:00] Yeah.

WILEY: [01:39:00] Because what do they do with garbage? I literally heard a woman in the village say this once, throw it far. Because, you know, traditionally it's all biodegradable.

SZTUK: [01:39:11] The jungle will eat it up.

WILEY: [01:39:12] Yeah, exactly. So. So, yeah, in terms of influence on me, I think it influenced Sally too, but you'd have to ask her. Have you interviewed her?

SZTUK: [01:39:27] No.

WILEY: [01:39:27] OK. Anyway. So how it influenced me. I remember what happened and how I decided what I was going to do. I became very curious about what it meant to be an American, because when I was in Fiji I was told I was American. And I kind of had a sense of what that was, but it was kind of like the white sense of being white, you know, not this, not that, not the other thing, right? And so I thought it'd be interesting to do that. And I looked into graduate programs in American Studies, and I found one that included folklore at Indiana University, where John and Betty were, before we went there. And so we went out and looked at, stayed with John and Betty, and looked at Bloomington, Indiana, which basically was a university surrounded by cornfields at the time.

WILEY: [01:40:31] And I had also been, I had also been accepted. I'm getting ahead of myself, but I'll go back. I'd also been accepted at the University of Minnesota, located in the Twin Cities, Minneapolis and St. Paul. OK, back up. I taught ESL while Sally finished up her education degrees. She

got two of them in two years, it was a combined program, and it was an MA and an MA Ed or some kind of thing in special ed. And so she was well qualified and we went out in the spring of '64 and looked at the two places. And after I had spent the year teaching English as a second language to people from all over the world at the American Language Institute at New York University in Greenwich Village, which was a real trip, just wonderful. I had a blast. And people loved me.

SZTUK: [01:41:34] Yeah.

WILEY: [01:41:34] Because I was good at it. And I had enough arrogance not to see that, see where the ice was thin. I just kind of glided over it.

SZTUK: [01:41:41] And do you think you would have done that if you hadn't been?

WILEY: [01:41:43] Oh, I don't know. It was, no, I was more ambitious than that. And I don't know in retrospect if that was such a wise thing, but that's how it was. But no, I did definitely want to go to grad school and it wasn't an ESL. I had this curiosity about what it meant to be American. So I got into the graduate program in American Studies at the University of Minnesota, did very well. And then as I got on after a couple of years, because I finished up the master's degree and then I wanted to go for the PhD, I realized that really they kept talking about American culture, but they never defined culture in the American Studies Program, and they never defined American culture. It was just kind of like a little bit of history, a little bit social studies, a little bit of the arts, you know, put together. It was very individually made. I mean, you could put it up.

WILEY: [01:42:37] They had categories of courses. So you had to take some literature, you had to take some philosophy and religion, you had to take some fine arts, you had to take some history and social studies and like that, you know, and you added them up. And then that was that. It was an individually made program, which was great, but they didn't have any courses on American culture or culture as such. Well, let's see, who teaches about culture? Oh, anthropology does. So I also got a master's degree in anthropology. Some of the courses transferred. It wasn't, I didn't

start afresh. And that became then a tool really for understanding how cultures weave themselves together continuously.

WILEY: [01:43:26] And it was at that point when I started looking for teaching, in teaching cultural anthropology, when I started looking for little handy dandy monographs on individual traditional cultures. That's when the stuff from Fiji started coming back to me and I realized that I had lived in a situation where I could have done an extended study of a of a tribal village.

SZTUK: [01:43:56] Yeah.

WILEY: [01:43:57] And just totally missed the opportunity. I should have spent more time drinking yagona in the village. That's my take.

SZTUK: [01:44:05] So that's your big regret?

WILEY: [01:44:06] That's my big takeaway, yeah. Well, it sounds kind of frivolous, but it's not really.

SZTUK: [01:44:13] All right. Anything you want to say though?

WILEY: [01:44:16] I don't know. I guess we.

SZTUK: [01:44:17] Wrap things up, or did we skip over anything?

WILEY: [01:44:19] Good God, I hope not. I don't think we skipped anything. Some of the formalities, but just, you know, that's superficial stuff, not what's important.

SZTUK: [01:44:31] So if you, um, you've probably spoken to other people over the years about, who have been interested in Peace Corps and might want to join.

WILEY: [01:44:39] Yeah.

SZTUK: [01:44:40] So what do you tell somebody that's thinking about joining Peace Corps?

WILEY: [01:44:43] Check it out. Do it if you can. Because it will. It will feed you and deepen you in ways that you can't possibly imagine. Or maybe I should say no, because you can imagine almost anything. You can't possibly know how it's going to affect you and it'll all be with good, I think. You know, Peace Corps is one of the most fantastic things that Jack Kennedy ever did. And I don't think even he fully knew what he was doing. That's all right. Sometimes we have a vision and we have to follow it.

SZTUK: [01:45:24] And your advice would be to spend more time drinking yagona with them?

WILEY: [01:45:27] That's right. Or the equivalent.

SZTUK: [01:45:30] All right, Steve. Well, I appreciate you taking the time today. It's been a great interview.

WILEY: [01:45:34] Thank you.

SZTUK: [01:45:36] And this concludes our time.

WILEY: [01:45:38] I appreciate it. OK.

[END OF INTERVIEW]