

Barbara Straub Oral History Interview
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Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Barbara Straub served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Ghana from 1962 to 1964 as a chemistry teacher.

Access

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Oral History Interview

with

Barbara Straub

December 2, 2001
Tucson, Arizona

By Robert Klein

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

KLEIN: [00:00:04] And this is Bob Klein. I am interviewing Barbara Straub of Tucson, Arizona, who was a Peace Corps volunteer in Ghana from 1962 to 1964. Usually what I do is ask people to go back, oh, to about six months before you join the Peace Corps and to describe sort of where you were at, a little bit of your background possibly. And then we'll move you into the Peace Corps.

STRAUB: [00:00:37] Yeah. Well, I was a student at Stanford, and I had watched the nomination for Kennedy to be president and was, um, taking a, I was taking a poli-sci class. And Peter Grote was my advisor. Oh, not the advisor, the TA.

KLEIN: [00:00:56] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:00:57] And he talked about setting up the Peace Corps that Kennedy addressed when he was working as an assistant to Hubert Humphrey, I think.

KLEIN: [00:01:07] So Peter Grote was, had been an assistant.

STRAUB: [00:01:10] He was a TA at Stanford, and Al Lowenstein was also there.

KLEIN: [00:01:15] Oh.

STRAUB: [00:01:16] And they both are very enthusiastic supporters of the Peace Corps. And several of my friends were.

KLEIN: [00:01:21] Lowenstein was in what capacity?

STRAUB: [00:01:24] Teaching in the political science department.

KLEIN: [00:01:26] And he was the one. He later became a representative?

STRAUB: [00:01:30] No, he was.

KLEIN: [00:01:31] Allard Lowenstein?

STRAUB: [00:01:33] Yeah. Yeah, he was a representative. And then he was murdered, wasn't he?

KLEIN: [00:01:35] Yeah. Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:01:37] I don't know whatever happened to Peter Grote.

KLEIN: [00:01:39] Oh, he's in Monterey. I'll tell you about it.

STRAUB: [00:01:44] But anyway, so. And I didn't know what I was going to do when I graduated. I was going to graduate in biochemistry. And I didn't want to go to graduate school because I didn't have any great passion about being a biochemist or going to medical school. And my father was resisted any

talk of the Peace Corps because he felt it was going to be like a communist cell group. And I thought, well, that's possible.

KLEIN: [00:02:15] Where are you from originally? Where'd you grow up?

STRAUB: [00:02:18] I was born in San Francisco. And I grew up in Port Arthur, Texas.

KLEIN: [00:02:20] Oh, OK.

STRAUB: [00:02:21] And my father, my parents were very conservative. And they were afraid that when I went off to Stanford, that I would fall in with a bunch of liberals.

KLEIN: [00:02:33] Right.

STRAUB: [00:02:34] Which I did. And um, but you know, I had no experience of the world except between Louisiana on the east, Denver on the north, San Francisco on the west, and Tucson.

KLEIN: [00:02:53] Where'd you go to high school, in Port Arthur?

STRAUB: [00:02:55] Port Arthur. And I was a National Merit Scholar finalist. And, you know, I had all sorts of reasons to believe I was hot stuff.

KLEIN: [00:03:03] Yeah. When you're in high school, did you, uh. What'd you do, extracurricular activities?

STRAUB: [00:03:12] Um.

KLEIN: [00:03:12] Anything service oriented?

STRAUB: [00:03:13] No. No.

KLEIN: [00:03:16] And did you travel at all with the family, without the family?

STRAUB: [00:03:19] With the family, we traveled to Denver, where my mother's family was from, and to San Francisco every, practically every summer.

KLEIN: [00:03:27] Right.

STRAUB: [00:03:29] And I knew that much. So I was considered a great traveler in Port Arthur.

KLEIN: [00:03:37] OK. By Port Arthur standards.

STRAUB: [00:03:41] And at Stanford, I began, you know, I sort of became aware of the fact that the world was a lot bigger than I had even ever thought about. I didn't even think about it.

KLEIN: [00:03:52] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:03:53] And then so I thought if the, if people are going to be in the Peace Corps, I would just assume that it had people like me representing myself instead of leaving it up to soldiers or people that wanted to prove that Africans couldn't do what they were doing. And so I applied and I didn't specify any country.

KLEIN: [00:04:20] Let me take you. During your four years at Stanford, did you travel at all, did you?

STRAUB: [00:04:25] No. I went to Los Angeles and to Sacramento.

KLEIN: [00:04:29] Nothing, no travel outside the United States?

STRAUB: [00:04:32] No. Because as a chemistry major, there were programs where Stanford had, you could go to Stanford in Germany, Stanford in Italy. And that was very interesting to me. But um.

KLEIN: [00:04:44] You hadn't done it.

STRAUB: [00:04:45] I couldn't do it and still be a chemistry major.

KLEIN: [00:04:48] How about language? Had you studied?

STRAUB: [00:04:52] I studied, um, took German for every undergraduate had to, science undergraduates had to do German because in those days we had to read Bilstein to do research.

KLEIN: [00:05:07] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:05:08] And but I always was interested in travel. I've always wanted to go to places like Afghanistan and China. I would love to see the Gobi Desert.

KLEIN: [00:05:17] Mm hmm.

STRAUB: [00:05:17] And I always interested in other people's different ways of doing things. I knew, I knew foreign students at Stanford. I used to go to the international house.

KLEIN: [00:05:27] Yeah. So let's see. Graduation would have been June of?

STRAUB: [00:05:34] '62.

KLEIN: [00:05:34] '62. Before then, had you taken any steps toward, uh, what were the alternatives at that point as you came to the degree?

STRAUB: [00:05:43] I would have gone into a research position in Sacramento, worked for Proctor and Gamble. I interviewed for a job with them, and I thought that's what I might do, but I wasn't really committed.

KLEIN: [00:05:55] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:05:56] So then I applied to the Peace Corps and was accepted to go to Ghana.

KLEIN: [00:06:01] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:06:01] And the training started at Berkeley in July, I think July of '62.

KLEIN: [00:06:11] What was the family's reaction when you announced?

STRAUB: [00:06:14] My father didn't speak to me until the year before he died. He died 11 years ago.

KLEIN: [00:06:23] Oh my goodness. Because you had?

STRAUB: [00:06:26] I would go to the house and he would say to my mother, Margaret, see if she wants more potatoes, at the dinner table. But he was, he was mortified because in Port Arthur, Texas, his colleagues make fun of him that his daughter was going to Africa and would come back with a black husband and a checkered child.

KLEIN: [00:06:50] Yes. Yeah. Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:06:52] And I mean, he lost his dignity. And when I went back.

KLEIN: [00:06:56] Where did he work?

STRAUB: [00:06:57] He worked for Texaco. He was a chemist.

KLEIN: [00:07:00] Yeah. Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:07:01] And when I went back to, different clubs in Port Arthur would invite me to talk when I spent a couple of months there before I decided what to do, after I left the Peace Corps.

KLEIN: [00:07:13] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:07:15] And he was embarrassed that I was talking to these clubs, social service clubs that his colleagues belonged to.

KLEIN: [00:07:23] Do you have any siblings?

STRAUB: [00:07:25] Yeah. I'm the oldest of seven children, and one of, my youngest sister was born when I was in Ghana. My mother was pregnant when I joined the Peace Corps.

KLEIN: [00:07:35] And what was their reaction?

STRAUB: [00:07:38] Well, they would hear Joan Baez singing on the radio and they'd say, that's my sister, Barbara.

KLEIN: [00:07:44] Oh.

STRAUB: [00:07:47] Because.

KLEIN: [00:07:47] So you were the family nut.

STRAUB: [00:07:48] I was the family black sheep.

KLEIN: [00:07:50] Yeah. Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:07:52] And my father would not allow any of my other siblings to even consider going outside the state of Texas to university.

KLEIN: [00:08:00] Yeah. But in the meantime, you had the Stanford environment.

STRAUB: [00:08:06] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:08:07] Where.

STRAUB: [00:08:08] And it was so exciting.

KLEIN: [00:08:10] Your peers there, what was their reaction or?

STRAUB: [00:08:14] Oh, they were very envious. Some of them were going off to medical school or law school. My best friend was going to law school.

KLEIN: [00:08:22] Others going into the Peace Corps too?

STRAUB: [00:08:24] They hadn't been accepted.

KLEIN: [00:08:26] Oh, OK.

STRAUB: [00:08:27] I think my chemistry is what was appealing because Ghana was looking for science teachers. This was Sputnik stuff.

KLEIN: [00:08:36] Yeah. What do you remember of Kennedy himself? I mean, as in this whole mix, or was it?

STRAUB: [00:08:45] We didn't meet him.

KLEIN: [00:08:46] No, but I mean, it was Peter Grote and Lowenstein talking about the excitement of.

STRAUB: [00:08:54] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:08:54] That you responded.

STRAUB: [00:08:56] Mm hmm. And the idea of of doing something for yourself as well as for your country.

KLEIN: [00:09:03] Mm hmm.

STRAUB: [00:09:04] That was. And as well as for another country. And travel.

KLEIN: [00:09:10] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:09:11] All that would be included.

KLEIN: [00:09:13] So you reported up to Berkeley for training. And do you recall your reaction to the others in the group, I mean?

STRAUB: [00:09:22] Well, I was. Rosemary. I didn't know Rosemary George until then.

KLEIN: [00:09:26] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:09:27] And she was in my class and she was there. And Carol Bodie I remember. And we were all put into I House.

KLEIN: [00:09:36] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:09:37] And I remember there were, there was, you know, it was just a very strange dormitory type arrangement.

KLEIN: [00:09:49] Well, at Stanford?

STRAUB: [00:09:51] We were all put into I House.

KLEIN: [00:09:52] Yeah. At Stanford had you?

STRAUB: [00:09:54] Yeah, we'd, but the dormitories were a lot smaller. The groups were smaller.

KLEIN: [00:09:59] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:10:00] And so here was this monster thing and we would go down and eat. Our meals in the dining room.

KLEIN: [00:10:05] Were you, did you eat by yourself separately?

STRAUB: [00:10:08] No, we mixed in. And my memory is that the faculty ate with us, too. And there were those teachers from Ghana, the three teachers.

KLEIN: [00:10:21] Right.

STRAUB: [00:10:22] They were there.

KLEIN: [00:10:25] About how many people were in the training program?

STRAUB: [00:10:26] I think it was 60.

KLEIN: [00:10:28] Men, women? Do you know the balance?

STRAUB: [00:10:33] No. I was relieved we didn't have to go to Puerto Rico because I never could swim.

KLEIN: [00:10:40] Yeah. Who was head of the faculty?

STRAUB: [00:10:48] Um, Apter.

KLEIN: [00:10:50] David Apter.

STRAUB: [00:10:53] Yeah, and then Foster. What was his name? A Black fellow.

KLEIN: [00:10:57] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:10:58] Foster, with hair straight up.

KLEIN: [00:11:01] I know the name. I don't know.

STRAUB: [00:11:03] And the British fellow that taught us about the English.

KLEIN: [00:11:05] Brokenshaw?

STRAUB: [00:11:07] No, he was South African. It's a British fellow that talks about the English education system, the secondary education. That was all very eye opening.

KLEIN: [00:11:18] Yeah, well, training essentially. There was area studies. And was it all new to you? Learning about Africa, learning about Ghana?

STRAUB: [00:11:27] Yes. Yeah, the history. How much history had I ever learned?

KLEIN: [00:11:35] As a biochemist.

STRAUB: [00:11:37] As a Texan.

KLEIN: [00:11:38] Oh.

STRAUB: [00:11:40] We had history every three years.

KLEIN: [00:11:44] And then there was American studies where a certain amount of American history, constitutional.

STRAUB: [00:11:50] Then we had health. I was trying to remember the name of the guy, Shyack?

KLEIN: [00:11:55] Doctor Stiles.

STRAUB: [00:11:55] Stiles, yeah.

KLEIN: [00:11:56] Yes.

STRAUB: [00:11:57] And we had to do our duty at the Oakland emergency room. It's the first time I ever saw a victim of a stabbing.

KLEIN: [00:12:05] Uh huh.

STRAUB: [00:12:06] Blood spurting out all over.

KLEIN: [00:12:08] How did, why, how did they justify you going?

STRAUB: [00:12:12] Teach us self-confidence, that we could, we could survive any kind of situation.

KLEIN: [00:12:17] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:12:18] Stick through.

KLEIN: [00:12:19] Were you paired with someone when you went?

STRAUB: [00:12:21] Yeah, and I don't remember. I think it was Valerie Scap.

KLEIN: [00:12:27] And how did you handle? You only had, what, three, four sessions?

STRAUB: [00:12:30] Yeah. I got dizzy, sat down, put my head between my knees. But it was, you know, it was, it was tolerable because I knew it had a point of showing me that things could happen that I hadn't experienced and just, you know, just sit down and think about it and then do it.

KLEIN: [00:12:55] Did you have a special interest in the health training? I mean, it was a little bit more scientifically oriented.

STRAUB: [00:13:00] Well, I was playing with the idea of going to medical school. And so this was interesting to me.

KLEIN: [00:13:08] You didn't think to yourself, well, oh my God, I'm going into a very hostile environment, you know?

STRAUB: [00:13:14] No.

KLEIN: [00:13:14] OK, how about language training? How was that carried out?

STRAUB: [00:13:20] I can still do the, you know, [speaks Twi]. We learned all that stuff. And I just thought it was really interesting, but I didn't get the tones. So that when I would go into the village in Aburi, the people would just fall down laughing.

KLEIN: [00:13:42] Yeah. We'll get there in a while. Did you have any sense that the language training was essential as far as the job you were going to be doing?

STRAUB: [00:13:56] I thought I would need it a lot more than I did. They should, I think we should have been taught British pronunciation.

KLEIN: [00:14:04] Of English?

STRAUB: [00:14:05] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:14:05] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:14:07] And I mean otherwise I wouldn't have wasted the first six months of my teaching.

KLEIN: [00:14:12] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:14:16] But we were completely unaware of the fact that our English was not their English.

KLEIN: [00:14:23] And even in talking with the Twi instructors, did you begin to get a sense that there were other ways of talking English? I mean, coming from Texas, you must have known that.

STRAUB: [00:14:32] Yes. Well, I thought that they were, well, they had been students in the U.S., so they understood us. And it never occurred to me that people that hadn't been around Americans wouldn't understand what we were saying.

KLEIN: [00:14:48] Mm hmm.

STRAUB: [00:14:49] And I understood them because I knew English wasn't their first language.

KLEIN: [00:14:54] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:14:55] And I've always enjoyed listening to the way things are expressed in another language.

KLEIN: [00:15:02] As training developed, was there any kind of esprit that developed within the group or how did you experience the group?

STRAUB: [00:15:13] I thought it was very non-cliquey. I mean, we were very much separate individuals I thought. We didn't have one group that we ate with.

KLEIN: [00:15:26] Yeah. Were there stars and then some middle and some?

STRAUB: [00:15:30] Yeah, there was. Blair was a star and the ones that were fun was Tia and.

KLEIN: [00:15:35] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:15:36] And most of us were sort of quiet and studly.

KLEIN: [00:15:41] During training, did anyone at any point mentioned Ghana I, the group that was already in country, do you recall?

STRAUB: [00:15:50] I think David Apter did quite often. The faculty would talk about. And I think he'd been over to visit them and he reported back things that Ghana I thought that would be good if we had in our kit bag.

KLEIN: [00:16:06] Oh OK. But any sense of this was a model to follow or?

STRAUB: [00:16:12] No.

KLEIN: [00:16:13] Simply that you joining?

STRAUB: [00:16:14] No, there was this group of architects in our group that were going to help build schools.

KLEIN: [00:16:21] To Ghana?

STRAUB: [00:16:22] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:16:22] They never got there?

STRAUB: [00:16:23] No, they ended up in the technical school.

KLEIN: [00:16:26] Oh, yeah, just a few.

STRAUB: [00:16:28] There were five or six guys.

KLEIN: [00:16:29] Yeah, OK. Yes, I remember that.

STRAUB: [00:16:33] And I mean, other than that, we were all going to be teachers.

KLEIN: [00:16:37] Right, right.

STRAUB: [00:16:38] In secondary schools that were already set up.

KLEIN: [00:16:42] How did the selection process play out? Do you remember?

STRAUB: [00:16:46] I remember vaguely some guys were deselected and it was very tense, trying to figure out if we were going to be deselected.

KLEIN: [00:16:55] Mm hmm.

STRAUB: [00:16:55] And it was sort of a scary thing, wondering, well, if I get deselected, then what next? Because it was too late to get into graduate school. My job was gone at Proctor and Gamble. And so it was a very. And I had no idea what the criteria for deselection or selection was.

KLEIN: [00:17:17] Did you have to see, be interviewed by psychiatrists?

STRAUB: [00:17:20] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:17:22] Do you recall that?

STRAUB: [00:17:23] I can't remember the guy's name, but Gold something or other. And it ended up after long years later, he was in the psychology department at the University of Oregon in Eugene.

KLEIN: [00:17:36] Mm hmm.

STRAUB: [00:17:36] And his claim to fame was that he had a perfectly round bed, and he was a perfectly round man. And he, he kept ask, he asked us these questions that I know several of us thought were just meaningless, the things we find out. Do you like your mother? Do you like black cats? Does your mother remind you of a cat? That kind of question. And we had that same test at the end of our stay. And I know I was playing with the idea of staying for a third year, and it was considered psychologically not correct to stay on for a third year. And it was the same test. Do you like your mother? Do you like black cats?

KLEIN: [00:18:29] Yeah. This is a paper pencil thing?

STRAUB: [00:18:32] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:18:33] But you had a psychiatric interview also?

STRAUB: [00:18:35] I don't remember it.

KLEIN: [00:18:36] Oh, OK. Maybe not. Yeah. Was there a mid-selection and then a final? I mean, did people disappear during training?

STRAUB: [00:18:44] Yeah. People disappear. And then I remember a couple of people that I was surprised. One fellow was a journalist and he was from Yale. I don't remember his name. And I was surprised that he was deselected.

KLEIN: [00:18:59] Did the group object at all when people?

STRAUB: [00:19:01] Yeah. They didn't like the fact that he was deselected. And there was a very quiet Black fellow that was deselected and the group thought that was very strange.

KLEIN: [00:19:14] Were there Blacks in the group?

STRAUB: [00:19:16] Mm hmm. Eddie Johnson was one. I remember him.

KLEIN: [00:19:19] Eddie Smith?

STRAUB: [00:19:20] Smith. Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:19:20] OK, yeah.

STRAUB: [00:19:23] And then there was a Black girl.

KLEIN: [00:19:28] Betty Owens.

STRAUB: [00:19:31] Mm hmm. I don't remember her. But I think one of the people that was deselected in the middle was a Black fellow. I don't remember though.

KLEIN: [00:19:42] Well, it could be.

STRAUB: [00:19:45] But it was all pretty overwhelming.

KLEIN: [00:19:49] But as training went on, did you, were you really were you concerned about being deselected or did you have a sense that you were?

STRAUB: [00:19:57] I didn't know. I had no idea. It was pretty scary.

KLEIN: [00:20:01] Yeah. How do you recall how final selection worked? Were you all called into a room one by one or?

STRAUB: [00:20:08] I don't remember.

KLEIN: [00:20:09] Were there? Oh, OK. Training came to an end.

STRAUB: [00:20:14] Yeah. And then we were allowed to go home.

KLEIN: [00:20:18] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:20:19] And I had a, had a car to drive, a Volkswagen, and I had to drive back to Port Arthur. And one of the guys drove with me and he was married, but he was being very gentlemanly and wouldn't, couldn't think of my driving by myself across the country. He actually fell asleep at the wheel and scrunched the back fender on my car. But anyway.

KLEIN: [00:20:49] So much for chivalry.

STRAUB: [00:20:50] Yeah. Then I got home and found my mother pregnant.

KLEIN: [00:20:52] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:20:53] And my father not speaking to me. And a lot of my little sisters sitting around wondering where Barbara was going to Africa. And then flew to New York and stayed in the Great Northwestern Hotel with the other volunteers. And then we got on a Pan Am charter.

KLEIN: [00:21:12] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:21:13] And the Pan Am charter had plane tires in it that they were taking to the Canary Islands or to Accra. And we were allowed to wander around in the plane. And we landed in the Azores.

KLEIN: [00:21:27] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:21:28] And then. And then we landed in Accra and it was. I can remember it was just sticky hot, and there were police walking around and they were Ghana I people there to meet the plane. And we had busses or vans, big.

KLEIN: [00:21:44] Busses.

STRAUB: [00:21:45] They weren't mammy lorries.

KLEIN: [00:21:46] No, no, not yet.

STRAUB: [00:21:48] And we were driven to Legon.

KLEIN: [00:21:53] Do you remember your first impression of being in Africa, being in Ghana?

STRAUB: [00:21:58] Yeah, I mean it was just, it was so warm and so sticky. And I thought I knew all about it coming from Port Arthur.

KLEIN: [00:22:04] Uh huh, yeah.

STRAUB: [00:22:06] And the all, the soldiers around the airport and the threats, the sort of implied threat of going through the immigration, the customs, and

being told everything was okay. And we had packed stuff in trunks that we sent separate from what we were carrying on the plane.

KLEIN: [00:22:29] Right.

STRAUB: [00:22:30] And it was my first experience with a foreign customs agent or any of this.

KLEIN: [00:22:40] Yeah. But the baggage was there to be checked through as you came.

STRAUB: [00:22:44] Yeah, and having to be questioned and pushed through and.

KLEIN: [00:22:48] Do you remember from, you know, before you flew to Ghana, did you have any sense of what your assignment was going to be, had you?

STRAUB: [00:22:57] I knew I was going to be at Aburi Girls Secondary School.

KLEIN: [00:23:00] So you knew. OK.

STRAUB: [00:23:02] But that was one of the schools that wasn't going to open until later.

KLEIN: [00:23:05] Mm hmm. Did you try to stock up on science books that would be of use to you when you got there? Or did you assume everything?

STRAUB: [00:23:14] I had taken all the chemistry books I could get my hands on.

KLEIN: [00:23:17] Right.

STRAUB: [00:23:18] Because we were told there weren't that many books. And we were connected with people in the chemistry department at Legon.

KLEIN: [00:23:32] Oh, during training or?

STRAUB: [00:23:35] When we got there.

KLEIN: [00:23:36] Oh, OK. And then where did you stay when you first got there?

STRAUB: [00:23:41] In a dormitory. And it was, I mean, I remember this very clearly because the crazy thing was that the sunset came on so quickly. I mean, we were, we were outside. And then all of a sudden, we went into the dining room to eat and we went and it was just black outside. Just quickly. Just bang. No, no, no, nothing. No simple sun going down, just black. And then we went to our dorm rooms and I flopped down on the bed, and it was just a board, and I practically pushed my spine up through my head. Do you remember those beds?

KLEIN: [00:24:21] I think they were just thin.

STRAUB: [00:24:23] Thin, thin mattress on it.

KLEIN: [00:24:25] Yes.

STRAUB: [00:24:25] But you flopped, because it was way low. And so I flopped down to sit on it and just about bit my tongue off. And I remember the breakfast with funny cold fried eggs and cayenne pepper to put on them. And the eggs had been cooked in palm oil I think. They were tasteless and pale yellow. You couldn't tell the yolks from the whites. And hideous bread. But we had curry for that first dinner, and I'd never had curry before.

KLEIN: [00:24:59] But you were sitting at tables and being served by stewards in white jackets.

STRAUB: [00:25:05] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:25:05] Which is the Legon high table style, you know, or the British style.

STRAUB: [00:25:11] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:25:14] And how long before you went to the Lido?

STRAUB: [00:25:21] I think the Ghana I people took us all there the first night.

KLEIN: [00:25:24] Could be.

STRAUB: [00:25:25] Yeah. And that was.

KLEIN: [00:25:26] Do you remember the Lido at all?

STRAUB: [00:25:27] Oh, yeah, yeah.

KLEIN: [00:25:29] Can you describe it?

STRAUB: [00:25:30] Well, first of all, it didn't have a roof except around the edges. It was a circular place. And then around the edges were tables where people sat and had their Fanta or their beer or whatever. And then there was an orchestra sitting over in one section, and people were doing highlife, dancing around in circles. And the African men were wearing suits and smelling very hot.

KLEIN: [00:26:05] Did you in training, had you had any sessions learning highlife?

STRAUB: [00:26:10] No, no.

KLEIN: [00:26:11] Oh, OK.

STRAUB: [00:26:12] And we went, I remember going to a movie, saw East of Eden, and the movie theaters didn't have a roof.

KLEIN: [00:26:19] But let's go back to the Lido. Did any Ghanaian men come up and ask you to dance?

STRAUB: [00:26:24] Oh, yes. Oh, yes. And that was fun. And they were.

KLEIN: [00:26:27] Were there echoes of Texas in your head anywhere?

STRAUB: [00:26:29] No, no, no. Because my parents had always told me that they had gone to school with Africans and that it was completely unnatural to separate the Blacks from the whites.

KLEIN: [00:26:44] Uh huh, yeah.

STRAUB: [00:26:44] And I had always known theoretically, but I had never.

KLEIN: [00:26:47] But you'd never experienced it.

STRAUB: [00:26:48] I never experienced. I'd never danced with an African before.

KLEIN: [00:26:52] Right.

STRAUB: [00:26:52] Right. I mean, the first, the first Black person I saw in a suit was a kid that was running for class president when I was at Stanford.

KLEIN: [00:27:02] Mm hmm.

STRAUB: [00:27:03] And the first, and I remember in Palo Alto, it was the first time I'd ever seen black people shopping in the same department store, in Penney's, as I was.

KLEIN: [00:27:13] Yeah. That's funny.

STRAUB: [00:27:14] And, I mean, I grew. First time we drank out of the same water fountains. We had colored water fountains and white water fountains. And that was in '61, as late as '67, when I was back in Port Arthur. They still separated colored real estate from white real estate in the newspapers.

KLEIN: [00:27:34] But in coming.

STRAUB: [00:27:37] But in the Lido, I mean, I would forget that I wasn't the same color as the people until I'd see another white person.

KLEIN: [00:27:44] So you were able, for whatever reason, I mean, to move into the situation?

STRAUB: [00:27:48] Yeah, it was so.

KLEIN: [00:27:49] Without stress or I mean?

STRAUB: [00:27:52] No. I mean, that wasn't what was stressful to me. What was stressful to me was my fellow teachers, the British teachers.

KLEIN: [00:28:01] Oh, that we'll get up to that in a minute.

STRAUB: [00:28:04] But at the Lido, I mean, it was just. It was also, I mean, it was just like going to a party in college. People were.

KLEIN: [00:28:14] Well, there must have been some of the excitement also of being in Ghana. And this is the Lido and this is the real thing.

STRAUB: [00:28:20] Do you remember the rest house in Accra?

KLEIN: [00:28:24] Peace Corps rest house?

STRAUB: [00:28:25] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:28:27] Vaguely.

STRAUB: [00:28:27] Because I think that first night some of the Ghana I were staying at the rest house and we went by that on the way. Someone had a van and we went from Legon and then we stopped off at the rest house then went to the Lido.

KLEIN: [00:28:42] Could be. Yeah. Then there was some, some further training while you were at Legon?

STRAUB: [00:28:47] Yeah. That's when we connected with the guys in the chemistry department, I mean.

KLEIN: [00:28:52] When you say we, how many people do you remember?

STRAUB: [00:28:56] There were about, I'd say about 20 of us that were science teachers. And then there were French teachers.

KLEIN: [00:29:01] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:29:02] And there were, um, English?

KLEIN: [00:29:06] Some English.

STRAUB: [00:29:06] English teachers.

KLEIN: [00:29:07] Math also.

STRAUB: [00:29:08] Yeah, but the science and math connected with Legon professors.

KLEIN: [00:29:13] And did you begin to?

STRAUB: [00:29:14] Because I was going to have to teach the sixth form, which is like junior college chemistry.

KLEIN: [00:29:19] Right.

STRAUB: [00:29:20] And so, and the examiners were connected with Legon.

KLEIN: [00:29:25] Did you at least know what the sixth form was and the role it played?

STRAUB: [00:29:29] Well, we'd been taught that in this class at Berkeley.

KLEIN: [00:29:33] Yeah, but.

STRAUB: [00:29:34] And how it was.

KLEIN: [00:29:36] And how did you get a profile of the Aburi School while you're in training?

STRAUB: [00:29:40] Uh uh.

KLEIN: [00:29:42] OK, but you came in knowing your assignment?

STRAUB: [00:29:47] Yeah, and most people did. Some people didn't go where they had been told you were going to go.

KLEIN: [00:29:55] And you were assigned alone?

STRAUB: [00:29:56] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:29:58] Was there another Peace Corps volunteer there?

STRAUB: [00:30:00] No.

KLEIN: [00:30:01] You were the first Peace Corps volunteer to go to Aburi?

STRAUB: [00:30:03] Right. Right. They were very reluctant to hire people that hadn't got British degrees.

KLEIN: [00:30:09] OK. Why don't you talk a little bit about that aspect?

STRAUB: [00:30:11] Well, first of all, the headmistress was Miss Anderson and the assistant headmistress was Miss Purdy, and they were from Scotland and they had been there for 30 years running this Presbyterian Mission School. And, um, they wouldn't let. They, first of all, my Bachelor of Science degree was called a BA because only British universities could give Bachelor of Science degrees. And so I was immediately demoted, they thought, to a BA. And they asked me if I had brought my academic gown for teaching and it was just complete nonsense. But I got there before, um, I was picked up by one of the teachers.

KLEIN: [00:31:04] An African person?

STRAUB: [00:31:06] No, no. British. Most of the faculty were British. And most of them were missionaries and had been missionaries until independence, when the school became, um, nationalized.

KLEIN: [00:31:19] Right. Right.

STRAUB: [00:31:20] And, um, and so the school had hired the missionaries to stay on. And they were all women and all very devout. There's two of them, two of the women picked me up at Legon and drove me and asked me if there was anything I needed to buy in the. [tape break] One of the stores.

KLEIN: [00:31:56] Kingsway?

STRAUB: [00:31:57] Kingsway or GTO, yeah.

KLEIN: [00:32:01] GNTC.

STRAUB: [00:32:01] GNTC.

KLEIN: [00:32:02] Or Leventis.

STRAUB: [00:32:03] Yeah. So we went to one of those and, and they sort of supervised my, I bought a blue plastic bucket to haul water in and cooking utensils, pots and pans and cutlery.

KLEIN: [00:32:18] Mosquito net?

STRAUB: [00:32:20] I think we had one in our, it was given to us. Or maybe I bought a mosquito net.

KLEIN: [00:32:25] Yeah. Do you remember, had Peace Corps given you money?

STRAUB: [00:32:31] I don't remember.

KLEIN: [00:32:32] A settling in allowance, I think it was called.

STRAUB: [00:32:34] I think it was something like, some sort of stuff. And they also promised to provide a refrigerator.

KLEIN: [00:32:43] Who's they?

STRAUB: [00:32:43] The Peace Corps.

KLEIN: [00:32:44] OK.

STRAUB: [00:32:46] And it eventually was delivered and it was three times as big as the refrigerator for the whole girls school. One of those Servels from Sears, gas kerosene run.

KLEIN: [00:32:58] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:32:59] But anyway, after we went back to, collected my things at probably Kingsway is where they always shopped, because the other one was a Swiss outfit, wasn't it? GNTC?

KLEIN: [00:33:12] One of them was, yeah.

STRAUB: [00:33:12] Yeah. So then we went up to the school and they took me into my apartment and it was just empty. It had no chairs. It had a bed. It had no cooking material, had it had one of these things you pour water in, a filter.

KLEIN: [00:33:33] Yeah, a water filter.

STRAUB: [00:33:33] That clay water filter thing. And it had a kerosene stove, but there were no curtains on the windows. And no screens on the windows.

KLEIN: [00:33:42] No screens?

STRAUB: [00:33:43] No screens, no curtains. And this was a school that was built by a very famous tropical architect. His name was Fry, I think. Christopher Fry. And it was the oldest girls boarding school in West Africa, that had been founded by some fancy British lady.

KLEIN: [00:34:09] Describe the.

STRAUB: [00:34:11] It's up on a hill. It was on the edge of an escarpment. And because of being on this top of this stone escarpment, there was no water in the ground. And so the water was collected in a big cistern.

KLEIN: [00:34:23] But it was also, I think the elevation was about 1,000 feet.

STRAUB: [00:34:27] Yeah, yeah. That's where the famous Aburi Gardens were.

KLEIN: [00:34:30] Therefore, it was a bit cooler than Accra itself.

STRAUB: [00:34:33] Yeah, yeah. People went there for the breezes, but there was no, there was no consistent water supply.

KLEIN: [00:34:41] When you, let's go back to the arrival time. And do you recall at all if Peace Corps staff, or George Carter perhaps, talking to you about the assignment you had, about Aburi being special, about?

STRAUB: [00:34:57] No, no, they didn't. They didn't. They just said that, you know, Achimota was special. And then Aburi and. I think that's, that they were schools that was very competitive entrance.

KLEIN: [00:35:14] Yeah, because a lot of the first group of Peace Corps had gone to so called bush schools and it was a breakthrough for Peace Corps to begin to get people into the, there were quite a few prestige schools in Cape Coast as well as in the Accra area. And so that you were kind of, to that extent without whether you knew it or not, you would sort of point of the lands. Yeah. I mean. And I'm sure the fact that your degree was from Stanford meant.

STRAUB: [00:35:44] And that I was the woman. I mean, they wanted a woman teacher at Aburi.

KLEIN: [00:35:48] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:35:49] The only male that taught there was a choir master and he could sing higher than most girls. And they, he was considered harmless.

But Miss Anderson just wouldn't have any kind of men teachers. And I think she was desperate to, uh, to have a science teacher.

KLEIN: [00:36:11] Do you recall your first meeting with Miss Anderson?

STRAUB: [00:36:13] Oh, God, it was. I mean, she was. She was a fright. She was completely solid and interviewed me and, you know, and she asked me what my, all about my academic training. And had I ever administered exams. I'd never even taught. I had no teaching experience.

KLEIN: [00:36:39] Did you do any student teaching or practice teaching in training?

STRAUB: [00:36:41] No, no. It was the summertime in Berkeley. Nobody goes to school.

KLEIN: [00:36:48] Yeah. Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:36:50] And I mean, it was pretty humiliating.

KLEIN: [00:36:55] Did she ask you personal questions, religion or anything?

STRAUB: [00:36:58] No, no. But I was required to do the religious readings, take my turn. And I can remember we'd do these responsive readings and the books, the missives [missives] came from Scotland. And we were praying for the heathens in Africa. And I felt I was praying for myself. And I just felt like a complete hypocrite quite often because I was responsible for these religious teachings.

KLEIN: [00:37:31] You had arrived. You've had your initial encounter with Miss Anderson. Did she give you a teaching schedule?

STRAUB: [00:37:38] Yes. And also, I was in charge of one of the dormitories. One of the.

KLEIN: [00:37:43] And how many days was it before the students showed up?

STRAUB: [00:37:47] It was two weeks.

KLEIN: [00:37:48] So you had two weeks.

STRAUB: [00:37:50] And I was all by myself in that place. And Miss Anderson hadn't shown up. And here I am in this place with. I had bought sheets from home and I had, um, hadn't bought curtains and it was a very nice apartment, bigger than anything I'd ever had to myself.

KLEIN: [00:38:08] Mm hmm. Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:38:09] No curtains on the windows.

KLEIN: [00:38:11] Did you have any food?

STRAUB: [00:38:12] And I had brought some food, some fruit.

KLEIN: [00:38:16] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:38:17] But I never gone out and foraged for myself before. And it started to get dark, and I thought I would just go and knock on this teacher's door. And I went to her apartment and I knocked on the door and her servant came to the door and I said I wanted to talk to the teacher. And then the teacher came and she stuck her head out. She wouldn't open the door all the way. And I got scared because she was so formidable. And I asked her, um, I don't have a clock. What time is it? And so she looked, she said, just a minute. And she went and she looked to see what time it was. She came back and told me and closed the door. And so then I went back and climbed into the bed.

STRAUB: [00:39:08] And then went down to Accra the next day where this group of technology guys from Ghana II worked. They had put them all in a house and they were already working and they were also very jolly about what they were doing. But I was ready to get on the next plane to go back to Port Arthur or wherever. I was so just lonely and scared and just at my wits end. And they were so nice. They showed me how they'd gone shopping and they took me shopping and they rode up on, they went to

the lorry park with me. And they went up to Aburi with me and helped me find curtains and go back down and get curtains and.

KLEIN: [00:39:52] Yeah. How lovely.

STRAUB: [00:39:54] It was very nice of them. I mean, I feel so kindly towards them. And I had a tape recorder that I was using, I had brought with me one of those reel to reel cassette tape recorders because I wanted to record students and stuff. I couldn't get that to work and they got me to help that work. And then about that time, mail started to come from the U.S. It took a long time to get mail from the U.S.

KLEIN: [00:40:16] Mm hmm. Well, what was, why is mail significant?

STRAUB: [00:40:20] Well, then I started, you know, getting, hearing, not feeling completely on another planet. Connection with friends and people.

KLEIN: [00:40:29] Where was the nearest other Peace Corps volunteer?

STRAUB: [00:40:32] In Accra. Blair was up in Akropong.

KLEIN: [00:40:36] Right.

STRAUB: [00:40:37] But um.

KLEIN: [00:40:39] You said, you mentioned you'd been friends with Carol and Rosemary.

STRAUB: [00:40:42] Yeah, well, Carol was in Kumasi. And Rosemary was.

KLEIN: [00:40:49] No, Rosemary was in Kumasi.

STRAUB: [00:40:50] Yeah. And Carol.

KLEIN: [00:40:53] Carol was on the other side of Sekondi.

STRAUB: [00:40:53] Yeah, were in Axim.

KLEIN: [00:40:54] Yeah, right.

STRAUB: [00:40:56] And that was a long ways away.

KLEIN: [00:40:59] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:40:59] And there was no telephone or.

KLEIN: [00:41:01] Do you recall in the first weeks, week or two, going to the Peace Corps office and trying to get solace or?

STRAUB: [00:41:08] No, no, no. Because I mean, I thought the people in the Peace Corps office as being, you know, they'd sort of said go out there and do your own thing and don't lean on us. And it was just wonderful to have those guys that were in Accra.

KLEIN: [00:41:26] So somewhere in the second week up there, that's when you, when Miss Anderson confronted you?

STRAUB: [00:41:31] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:41:32] OK.

STRAUB: [00:41:33] And then she told me how she could tell if the students that were applying were as young as they said they are. Because she warned me that some of the sixth form students were going to be older than I was because.

KLEIN: [00:41:47] How old were you at that time?

STRAUB: [00:41:47] I was 23. 22, 23. And they said, she said that she'd make the girls turn around and she'd look at the backs of their legs and see if the calves were developed. And she'd say, these 26 year olds come in and they say they're 12. And it always gave me some sort of a, I'd always look at the back of the girls' legs to see if I could tell if they were older than they said they were. But it was very, very peculiar.

KLEIN: [00:42:18] So do you recall your initial teaching schedule?

STRAUB: [00:42:22] I, yeah.

KLEIN: [00:42:24] I mean, how many periods a day and that sort of thing?

STRAUB: [00:42:28] Well, we had the religious thing that we have to assemble in the auditorium every day.

KLEIN: [00:42:35] What time?

STRAUB: [00:42:35] It's 6:30. And then we'd have a class from 7:00 until 8:00. And then at 8:00 we had breakfast. And by that time I'd met an English woman that was new to teach physics, and her name was Miss Brown. We were all Miss. That was the other thing. I'd never been called Miss before. And Miss Brown and I shared a servant and he called them American mother and English mother, called us that. And he would have water boiling and we'd make breakfast together.

KLEIN: [00:43:18] You didn't eat at the dining hall with the students?

STRAUB: [00:43:21] Oh, we weren't allowed.

KLEIN: [00:43:22] Oh, OK.

STRAUB: [00:43:23] And, and this. And then we would have classes. Then the generator would turn on at 10:00. The electrical generator would turn on at 10:00, and you could either have, use that to. I'd use it for chemical experiments and the physics teacher needed it and, um. And the generator was on until noon and then we would have a lunch break. And then we'd have classes and then we, each teacher had a club that they would sponsor. I sponsored a newspaper and.

KLEIN: [00:44:05] Your choice or did somebody?

STRAUB: [00:44:07] No, I chose it. I thought it would be interesting to have. I thought it was the way I could learn about the students. And so I'd get them to interview each other.

KLEIN: [00:44:14] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:44:15] So that way I could find out where they came from and what they were about. And I had somehow talked the Peace Corps into getting me one of those things that did the purple print.

KLEIN: [00:44:28] Spirit duplicator.

STRAUB: [00:44:28] Yeah, yeah. And that was, that turned out to be very successful until I sent them to interview. Russia had sent two Peace Corps volunteers and they had, there were always two. One was a teacher and the other one was the guardian. Yeah. And Valentina, I sent them to interview her and it caused a huge ruckus.

KLEIN: [00:44:52] Where?

STRAUB: [00:44:52] Between.

KLEIN: [00:44:54] Within the school?

STRAUB: [00:44:56] In Accra.

KLEIN: [00:44:56] Oh, OK.

STRAUB: [00:44:56] And Carter sent instructions to me to cease and desist.

KLEIN: [00:45:01] OK.

STRAUB: [00:45:01] I could not interview this, I mean, I couldn't interview the Russians. But the Russians had been sent there as an antidote to the Peace Corps.

KLEIN: [00:45:11] Yeah. Yeah. Let's go back to your beginning teaching. Then we'll talk about the Russians.

STRAUB: [00:45:18] So I taught. I taught the.

KLEIN: [00:45:20] What was your.

STRAUB: [00:45:20] The general chemistry, I mean, the.

KLEIN: [00:45:22] Impression of the students initially?

STRAUB: [00:45:23] They were really bright.

KLEIN: [00:45:25] How did you know that?

STRAUB: [00:45:26] Because they sat there and listened. But then I realized they didn't understand anything. Except some of them could just regurgitate a whole textbook.

KLEIN: [00:45:40] Right.

STRAUB: [00:45:42] They'd recognize a question. And then you'd just get the whole textbook back.

KLEIN: [00:45:46] Right.

STRAUB: [00:45:46] And that was really an amazing phenomenon.

KLEIN: [00:45:50] At the point when you start, you were teaching sixth form only or did you have?

STRAUB: [00:45:55] No, I started out general. There was general science. I had a general science class. Then I had.

KLEIN: [00:46:00] What form level, do you remember?

STRAUB: [00:46:02] Third. And then I had fourth form and fifth form chemistry.

KLEIN: [00:46:06] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:46:07] And then I had the sixth form of, and I only had the first year and then the next year I had the second year and the first year.

KLEIN: [00:46:14] The first sixth form group you had, in other words, were in their first year of a two year sequence?

STRAUB: [00:46:20] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:46:21] So you didn't have students who would be facing the exam?

STRAUB: [00:46:25] Right.

KLEIN: [00:46:25] That first year.

STRAUB: [00:46:26] Right. But I did have fifth form students that were facing the GCE.

KLEIN: [00:46:31] OK. In chemistry?

STRAUB: [00:46:33] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:46:33] So all your teaching was chemistry?

STRAUB: [00:46:35] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:46:36] And general science.

STRAUB: [00:46:36] The third science, the third grade I did general science. I also had to teach P.E. and I had to look it up in the dictionary. I was supposed to teach javelin and discus, and I didn't know which was which. I'd never been to a track meet.

KLEIN: [00:46:55] Why javelin and discus?

STRAUB: [00:46:57] African girls are supposed to be good at it, and they also played a lot of tetherball and this, what's the one that?

KLEIN: [00:47:05] One game is netball.

STRAUB: [00:47:06] Netball, yeah.

KLEIN: [00:47:07] And the other game is rounders.

STRAUB: [00:47:09] I didn't do rounders, but I had, and then I went somewhere in Legon and looked up all of these things in the Encyclopedia Britannica to get an idea of the form you're supposed to have and.

KLEIN: [00:47:22] What was the setting for the PE? Was it a period or was it after school?

STRAUB: [00:47:27] It was after school, and it was, there was an asphalt, like a huge patio in the midst of the school and that's where they did the netball and they played barefoot on the asphalt. It just horrified me.

KLEIN: [00:47:40] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:47:41] And then there was big, huge green fields where they did track and field.

KLEIN: [00:47:46] Where the girls assigned to the class?

STRAUB: [00:47:50] Yes, they all had to take it.

KLEIN: [00:47:51] OK. So you would be dealing with a variety of students, not just those in your own class, right?

STRAUB: [00:47:58] Right. Yeah. First formers and just about anything. And I was not allowed to coach the English class, because the fifth formers all had English exams from London.

KLEIN: [00:48:12] Right.

STRAUB: [00:48:13] And because I could not distinguish between scarlet cardigan and cot and caught, I was not allowed to do that. But I did read Sons and Lovers with one group to help them discuss the ideas, and I was amazed at how much Christianity influenced their interpretation of Lawrence. And they read, they explained to me. They also read The Lord of the Flies and explained things to me that I didn't get about Lord of the Flies reading it as an adult.

KLEIN: [00:48:53] Yeah. Can you talk a little bit about the students, their backgrounds, where they were from, their initial reaction to you?

STRAUB: [00:49:05] Yeah, well, they, of course, were very impressed that they had this American and they.

KLEIN: [00:49:13] Unlike Miss Anderson.

STRAUB: [00:49:13] Yeah, and this is and, they'd just follow me around and ask me questions. And Miss Anderson didn't like that because you weren't supposed to be friendly with the students. You were supposed to hold them at a distance.

KLEIN: [00:49:26] How did you know that?

STRAUB: [00:49:29] You could tell when somebody disapproves of what you're doing.

KLEIN: [00:49:31] Oh, OK. Was she, was it only Miss Anderson or whether others on the staff?

STRAUB: [00:49:36] All the staff were like that.

KLEIN: [00:49:38] Oh, OK.

STRAUB: [00:49:38] And but, um, it was fun because they. This is when Selma, the stuff was going on in Selma. And so they would ask me, please, Miss, what tribe do you belong to? Because to them there is prejudice and it's

between tribes, the Ewes and the Gas. And so they felt that my tribe might be one of the ones that was being threatened.

KLEIN: [00:50:11] How did they get their information?

STRAUB: [00:50:13] The newspapers had. Remember those, the Daily Stars and?

KLEIN: [00:50:19] The Daily Graphic, The Evening News. And there was another one, Ghanaian Times.

STRAUB: [00:50:23] Yeah. And that was always in the school library. Anyone could read it that wanted to.

KLEIN: [00:50:29] Were they permitted to listen to the news on the radio?

STRAUB: [00:50:34] I don't know.

KLEIN: [00:50:35] OK.

STRAUB: [00:50:36] No. And I didn't have a radio.

KLEIN: [00:50:39] You didn't?

STRAUB: [00:50:40] I just had that tape recorder.

KLEIN: [00:50:42] Yeah. Talk a little bit more about the students then.

STRAUB: [00:50:47] Well, they were. Some of them were the children of diplomats that had traveled all over the world.

KLEIN: [00:50:55] Mm hmm.

STRAUB: [00:50:56] And some of them hadn't ever really talked to a white person. And I would try and get them to, like, in the general science class, I was trying to get them to talk about, um, prejudices. Or not prejudices, um, things like, what is it when you walk under a ladder and it's bad luck?

KLEIN: [00:51:24] Superstition.

STRAUB: [00:51:24] Superstitions. And the one gal said that she had always thought that white people had a machine for wiping themselves when they went to the bathroom. And it was because we always used our left hands as well as our right hands in paying for things or waving at people.

KLEIN: [00:51:50] Yeah. Fascinating.

STRAUB: [00:51:52] And she was, I mean, and she was the village chief's daughter.

KLEIN: [00:51:59] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:52:00] And then. And what fascinated me is that some of them were just real pills as people. And I was able to dislike them, even though I knew I was supposed to not dislike them.

KLEIN: [00:52:15] Truly crossing cross cultural barriers.

STRAUB: [00:52:18] Yes. And I would, you know, it's funny. I didn't see colors until another white person would come into the compound or something. But I remember Muhammad Ali came to visit our school.

KLEIN: [00:52:33] Oh, really?

STRAUB: [00:52:34] And he came in a red convertible, and he said, he rode in and then he picked up Miss Anderson, and she weighed about 350 pounds. And she was furious. She turned red and she kicked her feet, made him put her down, and he'd say, who's the prettiest? They'd say, you are. But he was Cassius Clay then.

KLEIN: [00:52:58] Yeah, yeah.

STRAUB: [00:53:00] And he just thought the girls were all beautiful and they had to sort of sweep him off, get him out of the school.

KLEIN: [00:53:08] Was it a USIS sponsored tour kind of thing?

STRAUB: [00:53:13] Yeah. And do you remember why Malcolm X came to Accra? Because I happened to see, go to hear him speak in Accra. And I don't remember.

KLEIN: [00:53:23] He certainly wasn't sponsored by the U.S. government.

STRAUB: [00:53:25] And he was not brought up to Aburi.

KLEIN: [00:53:27] Right.

STRAUB: [00:53:28] But we had G. Mennen Williams come up to Aburi. Mm hmm. And Sargent Shriver came to Aburi when he was there. It was sort of a, you know, short run from the airport.

KLEIN: [00:53:42] Yeah, well, yeah. I mean, it was convenient. It's outside Accra but it's a good road.

STRAUB: [00:53:47] And do you remember, there was, when I was first there, there was a group of senators touring Africa, and there was a senator from Louisiana who said he couldn't believe that there were Black bank tellers in West Africa. And it was the first time I'd ever realized that the bank tellers were Black. I hadn't even thought about it, but he was talking about how, I mean, he got a lot of bad press because he went on to South Africa after he was in West Africa and talked about how West Africa was always going to be held down. But I can't remember his name.

KLEIN: [00:54:29] Ellender?

STRAUB: [00:54:30] Maybe.

KLEIN: [00:54:31] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:54:32] It was an ugly, ugly experience.

KLEIN: [00:54:35] See, your first year was my second year and I was up in the boonies, you know, in Sefwi. And so a lot of this kind of coming and going, I didn't encounter. Let's go back to. Were there non-Ghanaian students?

STRAUB: [00:54:52] No, no, they were all Ghanaian.

KLEIN: [00:54:54] OK. And you had mentioned that it was, it took six months before they understood you.

STRAUB: [00:55:00] Yeah, because I.

KLEIN: [00:55:03] How did you become aware of that?

STRAUB: [00:55:05] Because finally, you know, they just, I just couldn't believe they didn't understand. They'd respond when I was talking to them. But then on the exams, they just didn't, they didn't know any of the right answers. And so one of the students, her name was Comfort Agikomah, told me that, um, they didn't understand my English. So.

KLEIN: [00:55:31] So what adjustments did you make?

STRAUB: [00:55:33] Started pronouncing my Ts and speaking more slowly, which is quite easy.

KLEIN: [00:55:46] What was your teaching style? Did you give a lot of notes? Did you?

STRAUB: [00:55:51] That was the other thing, I did it the American way. I would teach for understanding. I'd teach the principles.

KLEIN: [00:55:57] Right.

STRAUB: [00:55:58] I'd, and I'd, like I had a class on Brownian motion and I, and Brownian motion is what essentially will change a gas to a liquid to a solid. And so I made them all get really close together, and then they got hot and they'd start moving around, you know? And then I'd say, well now if, you know, we turn on the heater or make it really hot, build a fire, then

they, you know, they move out and they become a liquid. And so but, I mean a gas, but that, I mean, that kind of stuff didn't go over. They wanted rules so that it would be. And then quite often they'd say, is this going to be on the exam?

KLEIN: [00:56:43] Mm hmm.

STRAUB: [00:56:44] And since I wasn't writing the exam from England, I didn't really know. But um. And also the way of teaching to see, to give them the ideas so that they could work out anything was completely wrong for that. So I went back to this gal, this physics teacher, her name was Miss Brown, helped me work out ways to do a syllabus that was. But there was a kind of syllabus from the school, from the school system, for what was third form chemistry, fourth form chemistry, fifth form.

KLEIN: [00:57:19] Did you have past exams to work from? Especially with the fifth form?

STRAUB: [00:57:22] Yeah. Yeah, with the fifth form.

KLEIN: [00:57:25] So you knew the kinds of questions they would be facing.

STRAUB: [00:57:27] Yeah. And we had to set up labs and such and make the reagents for them and.

KLEIN: [00:57:34] Mm hmm. And the exam.

STRAUB: [00:57:35] And that took a lot of time, a lot of my spare time doing that and making sure the experiments would work.

KLEIN: [00:57:41] So did you find yourself then moving more toward the British or Ghanaian system as far as the giving of notes and the accepting of memorized answers?

STRAUB: [00:57:52] Yeah. And do you remember being with school teachers in the school room when you're? Because that's what turned me against

teaching, was listening to the school teachers, my fellow teachers, talking about how much they hated teaching.

KLEIN: [00:58:09] Oh.

STRAUB: [00:58:11] They were.

KLEIN: [00:58:12] I've been in some places like that.

STRAUB: [00:58:14] It was really weird.

KLEIN: [00:58:15] Yeah, this is at Aburi now?

STRAUB: [00:58:16] Yeah. It killed my idealism about.

KLEIN: [00:58:20] But didn't you have any personal sense of achievement or interconnectedness with the students?

STRAUB: [00:58:28] Oh, yeah. It was fun.

KLEIN: [00:58:29] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:58:30] And inspiring to see a kid that didn't have a clue about why water had three different phases and then explain it to them. Make it so that they could feel the process of going from a liquid to a solid or a liquid to a gas.

KLEIN: [00:58:49] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:58:50] That was really.

KLEIN: [00:58:51] So you continued with what we might consider the American style or American, of trying to develop understandings and so that they could apply it in other settings.

STRAUB: [00:59:03] Yeah. But also giving them their rigid rules, like you have to learn the Bessemer conversion process.

KLEIN: [00:59:11] Yeah.

STRAUB: [00:59:12] Rote instead of understanding it. I'd never learned the whole thing. You start with pig iron, you do this, you do that and that and that. I had learned just sort of the principles. And so I always felt, I know why China had backyard Bessemer converters because it was just an economically.

KLEIN: [00:59:31] Yeah. Through the first year, did you have, what was the kind of continuing contact with Miss Anderson? What was her role?

STRAUB: [00:59:41] We'd have faculty meetings and she'd announce who had to do what, and she still made fun of my Americanism.

KLEIN: [00:59:49] In front of everyone?

STRAUB: [00:59:51] Yeah. Well, also I was the least experienced teacher, the least qualified as a teacher.

KLEIN: [00:59:58] By their standard.

STRAUB: [00:59:59] Yeah.

KLEIN: [00:59:59] By her standard, I should say.

STRAUB: [01:00:04] I was learning how to teach while I was learning all these other things.

KLEIN: [01:00:08] Were you discouraged a lot?

STRAUB: [01:00:11] No, I loved it. No, because there was a lot of support from the rest of the Peace Corps. Because if, you know, if I went down to Accra to do shopping and would run into people.

KLEIN: [01:00:25] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:00:26] And people were all having the same kind of experiences.

KLEIN: [01:00:30] Did anyone ever come in and observe you teach?

STRAUB: [01:00:32] No. No.

KLEIN: [01:00:35] Did you have any Peace Corps visitors from the staff during the first year up in Aburi?

STRAUB: [01:00:41] Uh uh, no.

KLEIN: [01:00:43] OK. Did you, there must have been some get together, but for example, how did you deal with the first Christmas, I mean?

STRAUB: [01:00:51] I went to see Susie and Carol in Axim.

KLEIN: [01:00:54] Oh, OK.

STRAUB: [01:00:55] And their headmaster had just died and his brother was the ambassador to Japan and they were waiting for the brother to arrive to have the funeral.

KLEIN: [01:01:06] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:01:06] And they had him in his bed and in his very best suit and they had his chin tied up with a white satin ribbon so it wouldn't go like this. And we all had to go through the house and pay our respects. And I got the giggles because I had never seen anything so bizarre because he was like dressed up like a baby in a crib in a way.

KLEIN: [01:01:29] Yeah, with the thing around.

STRAUB: [01:01:32] And flowers all over the place.

KLEIN: [01:01:33] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:01:34] And Susie's mother had sent her a very small Christmas tree from Minnesota. And Carol had something. And we just.

KLEIN: [01:01:44] You must have had other visitors.

STRAUB: [01:01:47] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:01:48] Susie, what's Susie's last name?

STRAUB: [01:01:50] Wheeler. It was. Now it's Susie MacLaren.

KLEIN: [01:01:52] OK.

STRAUB: [01:01:53] And, um, and I remember the New Year's celebration. There were these men on stilts in Axim walking around with the grass skirts and a lot of music, even though the headmaster had died.

KLEIN: [01:02:11] Now, Axim is on the coast.

STRAUB: [01:02:13] It's near Ivory Coast, but right on the border.

KLEIN: [01:02:16] But is it close to a beach?

STRAUB: [01:02:17] Yeah. Well, it wasn't walking distance.

KLEIN: [01:02:21] Oh, OK. OK. Did you do, during the first year, did you do other travel? You had other vacations?

STRAUB: [01:02:34] Well, that summer I went to East Africa.

KLEIN: [01:02:38] Oh, OK.

STRAUB: [01:02:39] Flew to Salisbury and went with Cathy Spall and Valerie Scafe, the three of us. And we hitchhiked clear up to, and we visited Carol in Entebbe because Carol was, no, she wasn't. Yeah, she was at Entebbe at a math conference.

KLEIN: [01:02:59] Carol Bodie?

STRAUB: [01:03:01] Mm hmm. And then, um, then that was.

KLEIN: [01:03:07] Did you get to Nairobi?

STRAUB: [01:03:09] Mm hmm. And to Dar. It was funny. When we got to Dar, I felt like, I felt homesick for Ghana.

KLEIN: [01:03:16] Oh.

STRAUB: [01:03:17] Because it was, it was humid and the ocean was there.

KLEIN: [01:03:20] Yeah. Did you?

STRAUB: [01:03:23] By that time, I was really felt like Ghana was a home.

KLEIN: [01:03:27] You must have done the game parks and some?

STRAUB: [01:03:30] No, we did one in Nairobi. [tape break]

KLEIN: [01:03:50] Uh, as the first year came to an end, what was your sense of being a Peace Corps volunteer? Any goals you'd set yourself?

STRAUB: [01:03:59] The first year, like the following October?

KLEIN: [01:04:02] Well, the end of the first school year actually.

STRAUB: [01:04:05] Well, I just felt like I was much better prepared to be a teacher. And when I realized that, I wrote this to a lot of people, that the first year had been for me, I'd learned a lot. And so the second year, I really thought I could be a better teacher. And I really was a better teacher. I felt better about it. I was, I mean, I wasn't doing a good job as a teacher the first year. And it bothered me because, you know, I'm goody two shoes, I always want to do things the best.

KLEIN: [01:04:40] But no one was holding you to account, I mean?

STRAUB: [01:04:42] No, no, no, no. But I was just, it was just the position that I had. I hadn't, I had been a, you know, I hadn't done a good job.

KLEIN: [01:04:51] Did you feel you were letting down the Peace Corps, the students, Ghana, or yourself?

STRAUB: [01:04:57] The whole thing.

KLEIN: [01:04:58] Oh.

STRAUB: [01:04:59] But I, but I knew, I knew how to correct it I thought.

KLEIN: [01:05:06] Uh huh. What were the results that the fifth formers, on the fifth formers' exam that year, do you remember?

STRAUB: [01:05:12] They were good. They were very, very good. But it was some fluke.

KLEIN: [01:05:18] You didn't take full credit?

STRAUB: [01:05:19] No, no. They'd had a chemistry teacher before that had taught them how to make me teach them what they needed to know.

KLEIN: [01:05:29] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:05:30] And the sixth formers, a lot of the girls had been in other schools and so they were sort of learning together.

KLEIN: [01:05:42] OK, let's, uh. At no point during the first year did you think, well, one year is enough, I'm ready to give this up?

STRAUB: [01:05:49] Oh, no.

KLEIN: [01:05:50] Oh, OK. Did you have much contact with the others in the group? I mean, did your experience match theirs?

STRAUB: [01:06:00] Some of them had been, Carol had been a teacher before. Rosemary had been a teacher before. And so there was a little bit of contact from them about that and discussing American versus British ways of doing it. And we definitely didn't blame it on the Africans. It was just different philosophies.

KLEIN: [01:06:30] Do you recall, do you particularly recall political tensions during your first year?

STRAUB: [01:06:37] In Africa?

KLEIN: [01:06:38] No, within Ghana, with the role, whether Peace Corps were spies.

STRAUB: [01:06:42] Yeah. And I remember, um, some of the people up in the north. People, um. Well, we had been instructed not to talk to anyone, that we were not part of the State Department, that we were not part of anything but the Peace Corps. And if any American came and offered to talk to us that we should, that we would be fired if we cooperated. And one of the guys up in the north in Tamale, I think, said some American came and had some Pabst beer and hot dogs and said, don't you want to just sit around and talk to me about these projects that the Chinese are planning of making the highway go across the Sahara? And the guy said, you get out of here and take your beer with you.

KLEIN: [01:07:41] Huh. I think it was during your first year that the, uh, some of the resistance to Nkrumah had begun to emerge. There was a bombing incident.

STRAUB: [01:07:52] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:07:53] Up in the north. Kulungugu, remember that name?

STRAUB: [01:07:57] Yeah, yeah.

KLEIN: [01:08:00] There were other incidents in Accra.

STRAUB: [01:08:03] Well, do you remember they made, they put up those, um, those guards when you would drive up, come up the road, you'd have to get off the mammy lorry?

KLEIN: [01:08:12] Roadblocks.

STRAUB: [01:08:12] Roadblocks. And they, and the women would go in a tent. And this is when wearing skimpy sun dresses with no sleeves, no nothing. And they were looking for hand grenades and they, the women had body pats. And I just think they wanted to see what it was like to feel a white woman's body because we look so funny compared to them.

KLEIN: [01:08:32] True.

STRAUB: [01:08:33] So they'd call, everyone on the mammy lorry would be sitting there watching to see what they were going to find on me. That was bizarre. And there, I mean, we had roadblocks up to Aburi for a long time.

KLEIN: [01:08:46] Well, there was, remember Peduase Lodge, I think that was open, which was kind of Nkrumah's lodge.

STRAUB: [01:08:53] Yeah, he built that.

KLEIN: [01:08:54] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:08:55] And we got a tour of that, our group did.

KLEIN: [01:08:57] OK.

STRAUB: [01:08:58] And I remember it was not very far from Aburi.

KLEIN: [01:09:01] Right.

STRAUB: [01:09:02] And it had 15 toilets and they all had water in it. And we didn't have five gallons of water a day to our name.

KLEIN: [01:09:08] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:09:09] I mean, I had a toilet, but no water. And I had a huge bathtub. No water. I had a snake come up the bathtub and I had to waste some of my water to pour it to get the snake to go back down the drain. And then I just kept my physics books on the bathtub drain. So. But anyway, he had, we went to Osagyefo's big compound up on the hill and it was quite lovely. And he had apparently taken things from building schools.

KLEIN: [01:09:44] Well.

STRAUB: [01:09:45] Glass windows and tiles.

KLEIN: [01:09:47] There's various stories. How did politics play on the school compound? I mean, with all the British expatriates, do you recall anything particular?

STRAUB: [01:09:59] No, just the trouble with the Russians.

KLEIN: [01:10:02] Yeah. Was there a Young Pioneers group at the school?

STRAUB: [01:10:05] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:10:06] There was? First year or second year?

STRAUB: [01:10:09] The first to second.

KLEIN: [01:10:10] Yeah. And who ran it?

STRAUB: [01:10:13] One of the Ghanaian teachers. And um, I mean, there was a Ghanaian teacher that taught housekeeping, one that taught religious knowledge, one that taught art. And I think it was the religious knowledge teacher that did the Young Pioneers, and they did that in the afternoon after school when we were doing things like writing a newspaper. We had clubs.

KLEIN: [01:10:42] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:10:43] I mean, that's what you do in a boarding school to keep the girls from killing each other.

KLEIN: [01:10:47] Was there a faculty room?

STRAUB: [01:10:48] Yes, upstairs. And that's where I'd hear the teachers make these horrible cracks about teaching.

KLEIN: [01:10:55] About teaching? Much anti, much racial stuff?

STRAUB: [01:11:00] No, just they didn't like living in Ghana and.

KLEIN: [01:11:04] Yeah. Any political comments that you recall?

STRAUB: [01:11:07] No. I mean, there was a lot of concern about Selma and stuff going on in the South in America.

KLEIN: [01:11:17] Well, did the expatriate teachers focus on you then to explain it or to? Did they challenge you about it or?

STRAUB: [01:11:27] No, no. But didn't talk to me about it either.

KLEIN: [01:11:32] Yeah. Second year. There must have been a conference with the somewhere in the summer where you got together with the group.

STRAUB: [01:11:44] Yeah. At the, at the, we stayed in the Peace Corps hostel in Accra.

KLEIN: [01:11:53] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:11:53] We just got, I mean, that's got more sort of support.

KLEIN: [01:12:03] And you don't remember the departure of the first group.

STRAUB: [01:12:06] Uh uh.

KLEIN: [01:12:06] OK. Second year, were any other Peace Corps assigned to Aburi?

STRAUB: [01:12:16] No.

KLEIN: [01:12:17] It was just you. And what was your own sense of going into the second year? How did you feel?

STRAUB: [01:12:25] Well, I had more of an idea what I had to do. That was amazing. And, um, that's when Kennedy was killed.

KLEIN: [01:12:39] November '63.

STRAUB: [01:12:40] Yeah. And I was down in Accra at a concert. I'd taken some students and.

KLEIN: [01:12:51] Western music concert?

STRAUB: [01:12:53] Yeah. Mozart. And there was a Ghanaian outfit, some chamber music group playing. And by that time, I had started taking piano lessons from Miss Purdy.

KLEIN: [01:13:04] Purdy?

STRAUB: [01:13:05] Yeah, the assistant headmistress.

KLEIN: [01:13:07] Had you ever studied music before?

STRAUB: [01:13:10] No, I always wanted to. And she had a piano. And, um. And that was. And so we took the school van and went down with some students to hear the Eine Kleine Nachtmusik and the other thing. And they interrupted the concert and said that Kennedy had been shot. I didn't believe it. I thought it was a tremendous mistake because I had, by that time, I didn't have much confidence in the news reports.

KLEIN: [01:13:40] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:13:41] And, um, then went back up to Aburi and other people had heard about it and came to the compound and talked.

KLEIN: [01:13:53] Other people, Ghanaian or?

STRAUB: [01:13:54] Yeah, Ghanaian. And there was a Canadian woman.

KLEIN: [01:13:57] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:13:59] And, you know, that came and said, yes, it's true.

KLEIN: [01:14:02] Did people then seek you out to?

STRAUB: [01:14:05] Oh yeah, they all came and paid their compliments or their.

KLEIN: [01:14:08] Respects.

STRAUB: [01:14:08] Respects.

KLEIN: [01:14:09] Yeah. Miss Anderson?

STRAUB: [01:14:13] No. She was too removed. I mean, she had to keep her authority.

KLEIN: [01:14:20] Yeah, well, that's why I asked.

STRAUB: [01:14:23] And, you know, I mean, she did not, she, her Presbyterian brand of Presbyterianism I had never run into, but the girls were not allowed to sing. They weren't supposed to sing or dance. And when I was in charge of clean up day, because we had to clean up the classrooms, they'd start singing and the Ewe girls would be doing this, you know? And I just thought it was fantastic. And so they'd be singing their songs and I'd be wearing my white glove and looking for dust on top of the windowsills and stuff like that. And I really liked it. And they'd teach me, they taught me how to dance. And it was, you know, it was, I was fraternizing and I probably shouldn't have been doing it, but I was.

KLEIN: [01:15:10] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:15:11] I wasn't going to work with Miss Anderson all the rest of my life.

KLEIN: [01:15:15] You felt pretty confident there wouldn't be any consequences?

STRAUB: [01:15:18] I mean, she didn't have any, she couldn't fire me. She could just tell me she didn't think she liked what I was doing.

KLEIN: [01:15:24] Yeah. Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:15:25] And that was fun.

KLEIN: [01:15:27] We were talking about the Kennedy assassination.

STRAUB: [01:15:29] Yeah, and so the girls would come and tell me they were sorry.

KLEIN: [01:15:34] Did you find yourself mourning and grieving sort of privately?

STRAUB: [01:15:38] Well, left, left without information. I mean, it was a big time lag.

KLEIN: [01:15:44] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:15:44] So eventually I went down to Accra and then to the Peace Corps, and George Carter was, had all sorts of information and shared it and had diplomatic access to things.

KLEIN: [01:15:58] Mm hmm.

STRAUB: [01:15:58] And so that was a relief. We'd had some of that during the Bay of Pigs. Do you remember that?

KLEIN: [01:16:05] No.

STRAUB: [01:16:06] In '62.

KLEIN: [01:16:06] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:16:07] There was a threat that we were going, I mean, we sort of get three days later that Russia was ready to bomb us with missiles.

KLEIN: [01:16:19] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:16:20] We were right up at the edge. And I was getting this from the Ghanaian newspaper.

KLEIN: [01:16:27] That was the Cuban Missile Crisis.

STRAUB: [01:16:29] Yeah, remember that? But it was hard to get any information. I mean, you were way up, weren't you?

KLEIN: [01:16:36] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:16:37] But the Kennedy thing was a lot. Maybe I had more experience of getting the information, or maybe it was something that was easier to transmit to a lot of people. That was, that was something that I only thought happened in third world countries. I really didn't believe it for several, several days.

KLEIN: [01:17:03] Yeah. I can't recall if there was any special ceremony, memorial service down in Accra.

STRAUB: [01:17:11] There was, and there was, at the embassy. And a lot of us went.

KLEIN: [01:17:18] You went?

STRAUB: [01:17:18] Yeah. There was a book to sign.

KLEIN: [01:17:24] So then in a sense, I mean, it took on a reality because you were part of your American group again and acknowledging that he had died and that uh.

STRAUB: [01:17:36] But he also was a hero to a lot of the Ghanaians. They were quite, I think his youth impressed them and his idealism, that came across. And I think that's why they liked Peace Corps, because of the youth and the idealism. I mean, a lot of the Ghanaians.

KLEIN: [01:18:03] Well, also, I mean, as you describe your school, I mean, an American tended to be somewhat different a person than a British expatriate.

STRAUB: [01:18:16] Can you think of what they could have got if they got a real American? Well, a wild and wooly one that hadn't been.

KLEIN: [01:18:24] Well, some did. And that's another story. When did the Russians come?

STRAUB: [01:18:34] Um, after Christmas. The first Christmas.

KLEIN: [01:18:36] And how did you become aware of it?

STRAUB: [01:18:39] Well, there had been whispering and whispering and whispering that they were coming. That we were going to get a math teacher and that she was a Russian. And remember, the Russians had delivered a bunch of Aleutian jets to Ghana Airlines. And about that time, the Russian, the two Russian women showed up on our compound and they stayed at the farthest little building away. And they had their, they had their own water. They had their own, they had food come up every day. They had all sorts of stuff delivered to them.

KLEIN: [01:19:14] Had George called you in and talked to you at all about it?

STRAUB: [01:19:19] Uh uh.

KLEIN: [01:19:19] So you had no.

STRAUB: [01:19:20] No, I just was told, George did tell me to quit doing my newspaper thing.

KLEIN: [01:19:25] But that was after they came.

STRAUB: [01:19:27] Yeah. And I had no idea that it was a.

KLEIN: [01:19:31] Prior to their coming, you hadn't been alerted.

STRAUB: [01:19:33] Yeah. And I had no idea that, that it was a diplomatic thing. I just thought it was a little tiny school thing.

KLEIN: [01:19:39] Right. Right. What was this math teacher's name?

STRAUB: [01:19:50] Miss, uh, Valentina.

KLEIN: [01:19:50] Valentina. Did you get to know her at all?

STRAUB: [01:19:55] Uh uh. I tried because I was curious.

KLEIN: [01:19:58] How did you try?

STRAUB: [01:19:59] I'd talk to her and ask her if she wanted this because she was new and I knew what it was like to be new. And she just rejected everything. And her English was pretty good.

KLEIN: [01:20:11] Oh, it was?

STRAUB: [01:20:12] But the students complained that her English was horrible. But it was, I was amazed at it.

KLEIN: [01:20:18] How did the rest of the faculty take her?

STRAUB: [01:20:23] Oh, they ignored her. The Canadian, there was a Canadian woman and she was even more outgoing than I am. And she got, she would offer her things. She had a car. She'd offer her a ride.

KLEIN: [01:20:38] Yeah. Who was the Canadian woman?

STRAUB: [01:20:42] Sherry McEachran from Saskatchewan.

KLEIN: [01:20:47] And what program was she on? Was she a Cuso?

STRAUB: [01:20:50] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:20:51] OK. Which is a Canadian equivalent of the Peace Corps, or there was a British VSO voluntary, you know.

STRAUB: [01:21:00] And Sherry had taught for 20 years.

KLEIN: [01:21:04] Oh. Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:21:05] So she really was a resource too. But she was there the second, after the second year.

KLEIN: [01:21:11] And how did it go the second year that you're teaching and all?

STRAUB: [01:21:14] It was, it was, it was easy. I could enjoy myself when I went to the beach.

KLEIN: [01:21:19] Where did you go to the beach?

STRAUB: [01:21:20] Down in Accra. It's just down there and fiddle around and eat pineapples. Remember the guys that would come by with the trays of pineapple?

KLEIN: [01:21:30] Truly ripe, yeah. Labadi Beach, I think was.

STRAUB: [01:21:33] Yeah, exactly.

KLEIN: [01:21:35] So you're, did you spend most of your weekends on the compound or did you tend to go down to Accra?

STRAUB: [01:21:43] No, I tended to travel.

KLEIN: [01:21:46] OK.

STRAUB: [01:21:47] The second year I went, I went to Lagos a couple of times on the mammy lorries.

KLEIN: [01:21:53] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:21:54] And went to Kano once.

KLEIN: [01:21:58] Oh.

STRAUB: [01:21:59] And went up to Ouagadougou and tried to get to Timbuktu but didn't make it.

KLEIN: [01:22:06] How far do you get?

STRAUB: [01:22:08] Got to the river and got on a pirogue.

KLEIN: [01:22:11] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:22:12] And had to get back and teach.

KLEIN: [01:22:15] Oh. You weren't in a crowd that got held up at the border coming back in?

STRAUB: [01:22:21] Uh uh.

KLEIN: [01:22:21] OK.

STRAUB: [01:22:24] But the second Christmas I was traveling in Ouagadougou and I have never been so cold. And we went, I was with Kathy Falt Miller and we went in and we traveled. We always traveled with a loaf of bread and a jar of peanut butter, knowing that we had peanut butter and we could always buy bread and oranges or something like that. And we stayed in a government guesthouse and we, they did a Missa Luba in the church in Ouagadougou. We went and we'd hold coins in our hands to get them warm and then put them on our arms because we hadn't brought any kinds of sweaters and it was icy cold. It was the harmattan.

KLEIN: [01:23:14] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:23:14] Remember that?

KLEIN: [01:23:15] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:23:15] And then we helped prepare a dinner, a Christmas dinner, at one of the missions. There were lay nuns from France and Cathy had been teaching French. And so we volunteered to help cook dinner. And that was the first time, I thought they were going to put marron in the turkey stuffing. And I thought maroon, you know, colored crayons in stuffing? And it was chestnuts.

KLEIN: [01:23:46] Oh.

STRAUB: [01:23:49] So you learn, you learn things in peculiar ways.

KLEIN: [01:23:55] Yes, and never forget them.

STRAUB: [01:23:57] And now I see marron and I know it's not a color.

KLEIN: [01:24:00] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:24:02] And I'd never had chestnuts either.

KLEIN: [01:24:04] Yeah. So you traveled a lot during the second year?

STRAUB: [01:24:07] Yeah, yeah. On school vacations. One school vacation I worked at Korle-Bu Hospital as a volunteer. And the doctor, I mean, I was still playing with the idea of going to medical school. And the doctors just would sit there and the patients would just stream through and we would help organize, triage the patients according to how sick they were. And I remember taking meals into people that were in bed, and there was a man that had lockjaw that had been in a car wreck. And I'd never seen anybody with lockjaw. And he was just, his whole body was shaking.

KLEIN: [01:24:49] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:24:50] But the, there was a dentist from Trieste that was working at the hospital too. It wasn't Korle-Bu, this was Akropong. I did Korle-Bu later. Akropong was the one up between Aburi and.

KLEIN: [01:25:06] Where Blair was.

STRAUB: [01:25:06] Yeah, and there's, there was a hospital there.

KLEIN: [01:25:10] Clinic?

STRAUB: [01:25:11] Yeah, but it was big. I mean, they'd see 300 patients in a day.

KLEIN: [01:25:16] Oh, uh. It's at Mampong.

STRAUB: [01:25:20] Yeah. Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:25:21] Where the sculptor, Ghanaian sculptor. Dr. Oku Ampofo I think.

STRAUB: [01:25:27] Yeah. Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:25:29] Yeah. OK.

STRAUB: [01:25:31] But um.

KLEIN: [01:25:34] Oh, I remember that place now.

STRAUB: [01:25:36] Yeah. And there was a dentist there from Yugoslavia who was just taking teeth out. Because people would come there, they weren't. They were desperate.

KLEIN: [01:25:47] Yeah. I think Peace Corps had a policy that you were expected to do some kind of project during the long vacation during the summer.

STRAUB: [01:25:55] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:25:56] And was it the hospital, Mampong Hospital, your project?

STRAUB: [01:25:59] Yeah. That was the first summer, summer vacation.

KLEIN: [01:26:01] And did you negotiate a role or did someone else?

STRAUB: [01:26:05] I did. I just went, I had, um, I had helped. I was in town one time and a car, a little kid fell off a ledge down onto the road and a car ran into him. And I, using my Oakland training, went running down to make sure that nobody moved his body until someone could move him. And the ambulance came and the ambulance driver was, uh, German. And he said that if I, and I asked him where he was from and where he was going to go. And I said, I need, I would like to work there this summer. And they said, just go ahead and do it.

KLEIN: [01:26:46] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:26:48] So that was easy.

KLEIN: [01:26:51] You didn't do, you weren't like school dispenser or anything?

STRAUB: [01:26:53] No, no, we had a nurse.

KLEIN: [01:26:56] Oh, OK.

STRAUB: [01:26:56] And when I got the, in the January of '64, I got malaria and that nurse took care of me. And she got, she had quinine or whatever it was, and she sent for Peace Corps to come and see me, but they didn't make it.

KLEIN: [01:27:18] That's not very reassuring.

STRAUB: [01:27:21] Well, it was. I mean, I was, they knew I was, I mean, she was an experienced and well-trained nurse.

KLEIN: [01:27:27] Right.

STRAUB: [01:27:27] A Ghanaian nurse.

KLEIN: [01:27:28] Ghanaian, yeah.

STRAUB: [01:27:30] And when I left the Peace, when I left Aburi, I gave my refrigerator to her dispensary. Because she didn't have anything to keep her medicine in. She kept it in the refrigerator for the school cafeteria, which was just a small, tiny camper size thing.

KLEIN: [01:27:51] Generally, your health was okay or did you have medical problems?

STRAUB: [01:27:55] Well, just that one thing with malaria. I had no other problems.

KLEIN: [01:27:58] And where did you get malaria?

STRAUB: [01:28:01] That was when I was on my Ouagadougou trip, I think.

KLEIN: [01:28:05] You think? But you'd been taking the?

STRAUB: [01:28:08] Oh yeah.

KLEIN: [01:28:09] The anti-malarial.

STRAUB: [01:28:10] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:28:12] Aralen, I think.

STRAUB: [01:28:12] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:28:15] Were you, how long were you incapacitated?

STRAUB: [01:28:20] I think I was unconscious for three weeks.

KLEIN: [01:28:24] Unconscious?

STRAUB: [01:28:25] Yeah. Not aware of where I was. I was really, it was really quite, and I lost a lot of weight.

KLEIN: [01:28:32] Peace Corps didn't come out?

STRAUB: [01:28:35] No.

KLEIN: [01:28:36] Did you send word or did she send word?

STRAUB: [01:28:39] I don't know. See, I just, I remember walking from my classroom to go home for breakfast and just being, you know, just shivering. And I got into bed. And then Miss Brown, who shared the servant with me, came and she apparently piled blankets on me. And she slept on the floor in the night. They didn't move me into the dispensary because they didn't, they didn't want the students to be exposed to whatever it was I had.

KLEIN: [01:29:15] So you were in your house for three weeks?

STRAUB: [01:29:19] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:29:19] And you don't remember, I mean.

STRAUB: [01:29:21] I can remember waking up and being cold and waking up and being hot.

KLEIN: [01:29:24] And not eating much and.

STRAUB: [01:29:26] No, no.

KLEIN: [01:29:27] And the care was given by this nurse who.

STRAUB: [01:29:30] Yeah, the school nurse.

KLEIN: [01:29:31] Obviously wasn't resident in your place. She would just come over.

STRAUB: [01:29:34] Mm hmm.

KLEIN: [01:29:37] Now, did Miss Anderson come and express any concern?

STRAUB: [01:29:40] Yeah, she did. And Miss Purdy.

KLEIN: [01:29:44] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:29:45] Yeah. And when I got ready to leave, I had a very interesting experience with Miss Purdy. I asked her to record some piano lessons for me so that when I got back to America, I could continue playing the piano. And I didn't listen to them for about five or six years. And then I was going through my things and I put those tapes on and she had left the tape recorder going and she was breaking up with a lover and bawling her eyes out. And I never, she could have just been, it was bizarre. Just and saying, no, I can't leave you. You can't. And he would say, I have to leave. No, no. But he was being reassigned somewhere else.

KLEIN: [01:30:40] Was he British or?

STRAUB: [01:30:41] He was British. And she couldn't, she couldn't leave her position because she needed a couple more years, so she couldn't follow him. And it was a very eerie experience.

KLEIN: [01:30:54] There was British military there for?

STRAUB: [01:30:56] Yeah, I guess. Well, they used to. They were Scottish, Miss Purdy and Miss Anderson, and they used to have these Scottish formal celebrations in Miss Anderson's house, which was way off in the pretty green part of the school.

KLEIN: [01:31:11] To which you weren't invited.

STRAUB: [01:31:11] Oh no. And the men would come up in their kilts and they'd have bagpipes. And Miss Anderson and Miss Purdy had long white dresses with tartan sashes, and you could see them in the candlelight wandering around because we didn't have electricity. It was kerosene and candles.

KLEIN: [01:31:32] So you had a taste of the British Empire?

STRAUB: [01:31:34] We had a haggis even. But that was so weird. After many years afterwards, to turn that on and have this raw emotion pour out.

KLEIN: [01:31:48] You can write a great story about that.

STRAUB: [01:31:50] Oh, God, it was spooky. Yeah, I think I still have those tapes, but I don't have a reel to reel.

KLEIN: [01:31:55] Yeah, they may be deteriorated too. So through the second year you were more, you did more traveling, you got into Accra a lot, went to the beach, pretty satisfied with?

STRAUB: [01:32:09] And I was playing with the idea of re, of signing up for a third year.

KLEIN: [01:32:14] At Aburi?

STRAUB: [01:32:16] Yeah. Or I would have gone, I would have liked to have gone to the bush.

KLEIN: [01:32:20] Ah, OK. Did you, did you open up that door at the end of the first year? Did you try to see if you could get transferred, because there's a certain number of transfers?

STRAUB: [01:32:29] Yeah, Carol did. And a lot of people did.

KLEIN: [01:32:32] Yeah, but you didn't?

STRAUB: [01:32:33] No, I wasn't unhappy.

KLEIN: [01:32:35] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:32:36] And I wasn't, I didn't have anything I wanted to do at another place.

KLEIN: [01:32:40] Did you first go to Miss Anderson and say you'd like to do a third year?

STRAUB: [01:32:43] No, no. I just.

KLEIN: [01:32:46] Coward.

STRAUB: [01:32:48] She would have fallen on the floor laughing. We had passing out ceremonies and I had to borrow an academic gown. And in our passing out ceremony, the ambassador from Ceylon spoke at the passing out ceremony. And it was a woman.

KLEIN: [01:33:03] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:33:03] And at that time Ceylon had a woman prime minister, which was very inspiring for the girls school. And so I went up to the Methodist Church in Aburi and got a black choir robe and wore that for my academic gown.

KLEIN: [01:33:20] With no cowl though.

STRAUB: [01:33:22] No, well, I didn't have any, I didn't have a proper degree.

KLEIN: [01:33:25] Yeah right. I'm interested, during the two years, did you have any, did you get to have Ghanaian friends or more than just the casual kind of?

STRAUB: [01:33:42] I was, I mean, I was close to Miss Love, who was the, no, Lamabadi was the art teacher.

KLEIN: [01:33:50] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:33:51] And she took me into her home. She lived in Akropong, I think, and she taught. She explained to me about color, because one of the things you teach in chemistry is flame tests for metals. And I, uh, and I couldn't understand why they couldn't see the difference between a brick red and a carbon red and a bluish red, or green with blue in it or green

with yellow in it. And she said, first of all, she had to learn all of that when she went to London to art school, that they don't have words in their language. There is just green, there is just red, and there is just blue.

KLEIN: [01:34:41] And yellow.

STRAUB: [01:34:42] Just yellow. And you never see the yellow in this green. And you never see the blue in this green.

KLEIN: [01:34:49] Right.

STRAUB: [01:34:49] Because the language doesn't have it. And I thought that was fascinating. And she talked to me a lot about going to London to go to school and what she'd done. And she was what I would call a close friend and then there was.

KLEIN: [01:35:01] Your age or?

STRAUB: [01:35:03] Yes. And then there was a teacher, the home ec teacher, who was interested in the chemistry of making soap, because I asked her how to make soap because that's a chemistry thing. And then she had these little fruits that you could chew on that would make grapefruit sweet.

KLEIN: [01:35:21] Asaa is what they called them in Twi.

STRAUB: [01:35:24] Yes, and that, and she was interested in mine. [tape break] These people that they were very attached to. And she had this crush on me and she was one of the ugliest. And but she was the daughter of a military officer. And one morning, I went into her, to the dormitory where they were staying in Edinburgh House, because there was this noise going on. And I went in to say, be quiet, we're going to have church in a few minutes. And they were using loofahs, which they weren't supposed to have, and I was just inspecting. And she jumped on my back and she got possessed and she clung to my back like a tick.

KLEIN: [01:36:33] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:36:33] And had her arm, had her hands digging into my shoulders up here. And her legs were around me and she was heavy. And she started foaming at the mouth.

KLEIN: [01:36:45] Oh my God.

STRAUB: [01:36:45] And screeching and screaming. And the students, you know, they stood back because she was possessed. And finally, the nurse came in, the school nurse, and got her off my back. But that was a weird experience.

KLEIN: [01:37:01] Was she epileptic?

STRAUB: [01:37:03] I don't know. Just ugly. And felt very privileged because her father was a hotshot military. And no, I mean, she was doing me an honor by.

KLEIN: [01:37:18] Being your friend. But were there any other students where you felt you could relax a little bit or have a more personal?

STRAUB: [01:37:25] Yeah, there were some students I talked to, I mean, like the one that talked to me about the toilet and then this Comfort Agikomah. And the student that took my place eventually was a, she was a very distant. Her name was Nelson, Miss Nelson. And she was one I really wanted to be friendly with and to keep in touch with.

KLEIN: [01:37:51] She was a student at the time?

STRAUB: [01:37:53] She was in the sixth form.

KLEIN: [01:37:54] Oh, OK.

STRAUB: [01:37:55] She went off to Oxford.

KLEIN: [01:37:56] Right.

STRAUB: [01:37:57] But I lost contact with her. But I did hear that she did get my job.

KLEIN: [01:38:01] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:38:02] Which I thought was good.

KLEIN: [01:38:03] Yes. So coming to the end of the second year, you had sort of thought you might like to do a third year. And what did you do about it?

STRAUB: [01:38:16] Well, we got some information from the Peace Corps, and I said yes. And then we had to fill out all these things. And I thought, it looks like they think I'm crazy if I want to stay for a third year. It was sort of like, why don't you want to go back to America? Why don't you want to do this?

KLEIN: [01:38:30] Were you called in to an interview or?

STRAUB: [01:38:31] No, it was just stuff you had to fill out.

KLEIN: [01:38:34] Funny.

STRAUB: [01:38:35] And I just thought, well, I'm not that peculiar.

KLEIN: [01:38:40] And you don't recall talking with George? Well, George may have been gone by then.

STRAUB: [01:38:46] Yeah, I thought, I think George. Yeah, there was a change coming.

KLEIN: [01:38:51] Frank Broderick.

STRAUB: [01:38:52] Yeah, yeah. He came in in January I think.

KLEIN: [01:38:55] I'm not sure exactly, yeah.

STRAUB: [01:38:56] That's probably why no one came up to see me when I was sick too, because there was a change going on. And remember the doctor?

KLEIN: [01:39:03] Well, Dr. Chin was the doctor I recall.

STRAUB: [01:39:06] Oh, there was another doctor who's. And his wife.

KLEIN: [01:39:11] Wiley? No, he was later.

STRAUB: [01:39:16] What was their name?

KLEIN: [01:39:17] Cline.

STRAUB: [01:39:18] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:39:19] Right.

STRAUB: [01:39:19] Yeah. And his wife's name was Marjorie or something like that. And they had. At that time, there was an American ambassador that had hundreds of children. He was a friend of Kennedy's and they went to.

KLEIN: [01:39:35] Ambassador Mahoney.

STRAUB: [01:39:36] And his kids went to. And he's from Arizona.

KLEIN: [01:39:39] Right.

STRAUB: [01:39:39] And his kids went to Achimota.

KLEIN: [01:39:41] Yeah. He's still alive, I think. Lives up in Phoenix and his son's running for governor.

STRAUB: [01:39:51] Remember the Achimota motto? If you educate a man, you educate an individual; you educate a woman, you educate a nation, or some sort of thing.

KLEIN: [01:40:01] Agree. There was one of the early Ghanaian educators, I think, that the quote is from. So then I'm confused.

STRAUB: [01:40:13] Forward ever, backward never.

KLEIN: [01:40:14] Well, that was the convention people's body. So you. You don't recall having any discussions with anyone about your third year? Just the paperwork. And then you said, well, I kind of.

STRAUB: [01:40:31] And I don't think anyone in our group stayed on, unless it was.

KLEIN: [01:40:35] I have a feeling there was a policy at that point discouraging people from doing third years.

STRAUB: [01:40:40] Yeah, it was clear. Clearly.

KLEIN: [01:40:44] OK. There may have been a policy statement you had gotten which indicated they weren't encouraging it. I think the idea was that you needed to get back to regain your perspective or something, some strange things. Did, um, were there celebrations at the school on your departure or any kind of farewell ceremonies?

STRAUB: [01:41:10] Oh, yeah, lots of presents I can't take home.

KLEIN: [01:41:13] Was it for you or for everyone leaving?

STRAUB: [01:41:17] Oh, just for me. I mean, I was, I was going back to America, and so I got a kente stole and.

KLEIN: [01:41:26] Who organized it?

STRAUB: [01:41:31] The teachers, the faculty. It was very, very nice, very touching.

KLEIN: [01:41:36] Did you feel that you had changed some minds or gained some acceptance by the end of the two years?

STRAUB: [01:41:45] I, no, I didn't. You know, I felt that I had changed my mind and gained a lot of experience.

KLEIN: [01:41:55] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:41:56] I mean, I was such a raw, just completely inexperienced person.

KLEIN: [01:42:02] Yeah. Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:42:04] It was a humbling experience, and that they should have been teaching me, especially the religious stuff.

KLEIN: [01:42:14] And there was a termination conference back in Accra where someone came out from Washington?

STRAUB: [01:42:21] Yeah. But I don't remember anything about it. Nothing. It was just sort of superficial, as I remember.

KLEIN: [01:42:28] Do you recall Shriver's visit? Was that during your first or second year?

STRAUB: [01:42:33] First year.

KLEIN: [01:42:34] OK.

STRAUB: [01:42:35] He must have been visiting you guys because.

KLEIN: [01:42:38] Well, he visited the project, but he came to a boarding school.

STRAUB: [01:42:42] Yeah. Yeah. Briefly. No, he didn't. He didn't speak to the students. He just met Miss Anderson and met me and then went on somewhere. And do you remember in the second year, Blair organized with Alistair Cooke's ex-wife, who had come to Ghana to live with Miss Anderson, a production. No, no, no. I'm getting that mixed up. They did a production of Odysseus in Ghanaian dress and garb, but Alistair Cooke's ex-wife and Miss Anderson. Miss Anderson was very interested in drama.

KLEIN: [01:43:22] Mm hmm.

STRAUB: [01:43:22] But then Blair brought to our school a production of Diary of Anne Frank. And that was an incredible experience for the students that stirred up their interest in prejudice again. And they talked to me about the tribes and stuff like that. And then there was another thing that the Peace Corps brought to our school, which was Margo did her thing with, um.

KLEIN: [01:43:50] King and I?

STRAUB: [01:43:50] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:43:51] Margo Schmidt.

STRAUB: [01:43:52] Yeah. And they bought that. I mean, Miss Anderson let the Peace Corps bring that. And that was definitely a warming up on her part to what the Americans were doing.

KLEIN: [01:44:02] Well, that was a Winneba Secondary School enterprise, although Peace Corps was deeply involved.

STRAUB: [01:44:07] Yeah, but because the contact was Peace Corps through me and Margo.

KLEIN: [01:44:13] Oh, OK.

STRAUB: [01:44:14] That was definitely a thing where Americans were no longer considered the savages, ignorant savages, the unwashed.

KLEIN: [01:44:27] So finishing up the two years, what were your plans then at the point as you were leaving?

STRAUB: [01:44:33] Oh, I was really at loose ends because I had, well, I did. I traveled in Europe for about nine months and met different Peace Corps friends in Europe.

KLEIN: [01:44:49] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:44:50] And came back and I really and truly didn't apply for medical school. And then found out that I was over 25 and women over 25 in California were not admitted to medical school then. By the time I decided I didn't want to sit around and be a research assistant all my life.

KLEIN: [01:45:12] So you returned to Stanford?

STRAUB: [01:45:14] No, I returned, I went first to Port Arthur, visited my parents and met my new sister that I had never seen before. And then I went to Oregon, to Eugene, Oregon, and enrolled at the university to take anatomy. I had never had anatomy, to go with the idea of entering medical school, and then I just didn't.

KLEIN: [01:45:44] What do you think was the effect of having joined the Peace Corps on your life? Short term, long term?

STRAUB: [01:45:57] Oh, God. Growing up and, you know, just expanding my view. There's nothing, there's nothing like travel for really understanding different cultures.

KLEIN: [01:46:13] Right.

STRAUB: [01:46:14] I've not traveled in India. So India, even though I'm probably more informed about India than a lot of people, it's still a big mystery.

KLEIN: [01:46:24] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:46:26] And I, I also have become, you know, just an inveterate traveler, having gone all over South America.

KLEIN: [01:46:38] One effect of service, I gather you decided that you were not going to become a teacher, I mean?

STRAUB: [01:46:42] Yes.

KLEIN: [01:46:44] And it wasn't so much your own experience as the experience of others who were teachers in that school environment.

STRAUB: [01:46:51] Yeah, I need to have respect for people that are doing the same thing I am doing.

KLEIN: [01:46:58] You didn't?

STRAUB: [01:46:59] Personally, it's my personal thing. I can't just stand up and say I'm doing an honorable job therefore this is something I enjoyed.

KLEIN: [01:47:07] Did you give, did you ever give teaching a try after the Peace Corps?

STRAUB: [01:47:11] No.

KLEIN: [01:47:12] Oh, OK. You make up your mind, you make up your mind.

STRAUB: [01:47:17] I did. I did fiddle around here and try to do substitute teaching.

KLEIN: [01:47:24] Oh, OK.

STRAUB: [01:47:25] But I mean, the kids are just awful.

KLEIN: [01:47:28] Yeah, well, substitute teaching is just awful by its nature.

STRAUB: [01:47:33] But I never went to get an education, which is what I think you should do.

KLEIN: [01:47:40] Um, oh, I had a few. Oh, let's jump ahead to 2001. If someone approached you and asked about joining the Peace Corps, what kind, what do you think you might tell them?

STRAUB: [01:47:59] Well, I think the 21 year old Barbara would not be able to survive in today's Peace Corps. Because it really is, I mean, I was so lucky that there was a structure for me to fall into and there was a lot of support.

KLEIN: [01:48:21] Right.

STRAUB: [01:48:22] From Washington. And it wasn't tied in with the State Department or CIA or anything.

KLEIN: [01:48:31] Right.

STRAUB: [01:48:31] And I felt very proud of it. And I felt that I was in a, in an organization that was worth anything that I could get out of it or put into it. And the Peace Corps, as I've, I had a niece that went to Morocco a couple of years ago, and um, she had no, no structure. She was just told to go and teach people how to take care of their horses. And her training was she learned Arabic and then was told to find your own place to live. And as a 21 year old, I couldn't have done it, or a 22 year old. Ignorant, I was too ignorant.

KLEIN: [01:49:20] But also what you're implying is that there was an overarching kind of sense of purpose.

STRAUB: [01:49:27] Yeah.

KLEIN: [01:49:28] And the mission. Mission is a little too strong a word.

STRAUB: [01:49:34] And you could see the package.

KLEIN: [01:49:34] Yeah. And you feel that that's lacking today?

STRAUB: [01:49:39] Yeah. I don't know. I mean, I sort of, I play with the idea every once in a while of calling up and saying, is there any place where I could go? But I wouldn't want the complete disorganization that, I need to feel that the organization is.

KLEIN: [01:49:58] Well, do you think sense of mission or purpose partly came from Kennedy and from the?

STRAUB: [01:50:04] Yeah. From sitting around, the bull sessions with Al Lowenstein and.

KLEIN: [01:50:11] Uh huh.

STRAUB: [01:50:12] Because after, after poli-sci classes, we'd sit around and talk. And then I saw Lowenstein. He was dating one of my friends, so I'd see him once in a while.

KLEIN: [01:50:22] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:50:24] And they were really fired up. And we felt that it was important to keep it from becoming like a cell group or whatever it could deteriorate into.

KLEIN: [01:50:45] And I think you may have mentioned already, but you didn't really continue any involvement in Ghana or with any particular Ghanaians?

STRAUB: [01:51:00] No, no. Because my purse was stolen in Mexico the first Christmas after I was back and it had every single address. And I was moving around the country a lot and I just lost touch with everyone. I did get a call from Miss Anderson, a letter from Miss Anderson once, asking me if I would come back and be a teacher, a chemistry teacher. And I was at the time trying to get into graduate school in Oregon. And so I just wrote her and said, thank you very much, but no. Because I would have had to pay my own way over, which, and then, and then. And it was just too much to think about.

KLEIN: [01:51:54] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:51:55] And I sort of regret not having taken her up on it. Who knows what would have happened?

KLEIN: [01:52:03] Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:52:04] I might have liked teaching.

KLEIN: [01:52:07] Well, I think having been recruited and having had the experience of the two years, you would certainly come at it differently.

STRAUB: [01:52:13] Sure. Sure.

KLEIN: [01:52:15] It also being then no longer as a, within the Peace Corps context, but you.

STRAUB: [01:52:21] Hired by the, I would have been an employee of Ghana, Ghanaian government.

KLEIN: [01:52:27] Well, you know, we were. The whole time we were paid directly by the Ghana government.

STRAUB: [01:52:31] I remember that. That was a sticking point, that they insisted that they pay.

KLEIN: [01:52:36] It was a point of pride.

STRAUB: [01:52:36] Yeah. That they insisted that they pay us. That meant that if they were displeased, they could have got rid of us.

KLEIN: [01:52:41] Yeah, well, there are a whole bunch of reasons. Anything else you wish to?

STRAUB: [01:52:47] Oh, do you remember how? I mean, I had to pay 15 pounds a month for my apartment.

KLEIN: [01:52:53] Mm hmm.

STRAUB: [01:52:53] Do you remember that? And then we paid our servant 13 pounds a month, the two of us. I mean, that was a very.

KLEIN: [01:53:03] We were being paid, I can't remember.

STRAUB: [01:53:05] We had 75 a month put into a.

KLEIN: [01:53:09] The bank, locally.

STRAUB: [01:53:10] The bank.

KLEIN: [01:53:10] And that was the, uh, from the Ghana ministry.

STRAUB: [01:53:13] Yeah. But also our own savings. I mean we got \$75.

KLEIN: [01:53:17] Oh, that was the readjustment allowance.

STRAUB: [01:53:19] So we got \$1800.

KLEIN: [01:53:20] Yeah. Yeah.

STRAUB: [01:53:21] And we were paid 50 pounds a month.

KLEIN: [01:53:27] I can't remember the exact figure, but uh.

STRAUB: [01:53:30] Ghanaian pounds.

KLEIN: [01:53:31] Yes, but it was a lot of money.

STRAUB: [01:53:32] Yeah, it was a lot more than it is today.

KLEIN: [01:53:34] And there were other special allowances. I think when you first came in, you got some money to settle in and stuff like that. Plus you got leave pay, vacation allowance that you accumulated.

STRAUB: [01:53:49] I don't remember that.

KLEIN: [01:53:50] Spent it all. OK.

STRAUB: [01:53:53] So.

[END OF INTERVIEW]