

Patricia A. Wand Oral History Interview
Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Patricia A. (Pat) Wand served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Colombia from 1963 to 1965 on a rural community development and health education project.

Access

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Oral History Interview

with

Patricia A. Wand

July 17, 2012
Bethesda, Maryland

By Phyllis Noble

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

NOBLE: [00:00:01] Today is July 17th, 2012. This is Phyllis Noble. I am interviewing Patricia Wand, who was a Peace Corps volunteer in Colombia, 1963 to 1965, in a rural community development and health education project. Pat, tell us what you were doing a year before you joined the Peace Corps.

WAND: [00:00:32] A year before I joined the Peace Corps, I was attending university. I was going to Seattle University and it was my final year. I had participated at Seattle University in an honors program that was an intensive, very intensive, two-year program. And at the end, and I entered that as a freshman, and as I ended that those two years, I had accumulated so many credits that I could, by majoring in history, which I loved, I could finish in my third year. So coming from a large family, very little money, if any, to support me for my education, I decided to do that. And I majored in American, U.S. and Latin American history. So I was very, very excited about that. I just loved all of the coursework in that.

NOBLE: [00:01:34] Yeah. And so you came from a family that didn't have a whole lot of money. Could you talk a little bit more about your family? Where did you grow up?

WAND: [00:01:43] I grew up on a farm in Oregon. My great grandparents homesteaded on the farm next to my the one that I grew up on. And uh, we were a large Catholic family. My parents always said they never had a child they didn't want, and they had eight of us.

NOBLE: [00:02:06] Wow.

WAND: [00:02:06] So I was the third oldest and grew up learning to tend the land and observing a father who absolutely loved the soil and loved working on the land. And he instilled in all of us a deep respect for what the soil does for us and how creative it is to be a farmer. And we all learned about farming as we were growing up. And so, uh, I was as a young child, I was in 4-H clubs. My mother was very committed to lifelong learning. She and my father were both lifelong learners, even though they didn't have a lot of formal education. They took advantage of the extension service that was offered through Oregon State University. They did that to improve their own farming skills, and my mother did it to improve her own home making skills constantly. And they very much admired the youth programs that were available through the 4-H curriculum that was often developed right there at Oregon State University. And so we, all of us were 4-H club members, and my mother was a boys club leader and we all had our projects around whatever our interests were.

NOBLE: [00:03:34] Sounds very rich.

WAND: [00:03:35] It was.

NOBLE: [00:03:36] And very full.

WAND: [00:03:36] It was a very full, full life.

NOBLE: [00:03:38] Did you make your own clothes as a child?

WAND: [00:03:41] Oh yes, I loved sewing. And of course, I learned a great deal from my mother and also then from the other 4-H club leaders that helped us with the sewing projects.

NOBLE: [00:03:53] So there were two parents and eight children, 10 people in the family. A family trip would have been almost out of the question.

WAND: [00:04:03] Not out of the question at all.

NOBLE: [00:04:04] How did you travel? Where did you go?

WAND: [00:04:06] Well, my family pulled together enough money to buy a station wagon when they first started out, in about, this was maybe a '52, a 1952 station wagon I remember. I don't think they bought it new then because they had hit a very, very tough part in terms of sustainability at that point. But they got, I think they got that station wagon a little maybe mid '50s when it was already a couple of years old. But we always went to. My father loved to go into the mountains, to go hiking and fishing and some hunting, but not with the family. That was another sport that he did less of as we came along. But um, fishing and camping we loved. He loved camping out in the mountains of the Cascade range, and so we would always do some camping trips as a family.

WAND: [00:04:59] And then we also took the day trips. They wouldn't infringe. They didn't have the money for a hotel. We would camp if we went out overnight. And they would never ask friends to put up all of us. But we would do day trips. As you know, by the time we were all eight there, we still did, but oftentimes the older ones were already gone, or couldn't do something, but there were times when we always went together. We didn't have seatbelts in those days.

NOBLE: [00:05:34] Of course not. So you could all get together.

WAND: [00:05:37] All squeeze into the three seats, having that third seat in the back of the station wagon saved our bacon.

NOBLE: [00:05:44] That's right. But you wouldn't have been able to do international travel.

WAND: [00:05:51] No, no, no, no, no.

NOBLE: [00:05:53] And so then we get into high school and there's languages. Is what language did you study in high school?

WAND: [00:05:59] Latin.

NOBLE: [00:06:01] Latin? Oh yes. Was it a Catholic high school?

WAND: [00:06:02] It was a Catholic high school.

NOBLE: [00:06:03] Yeah, I too.

WAND: [00:06:04] And I had, I learned Latin, had two years of Latin, and that gave me a wonderful base. Of course, it taught me tremendous amount about English and about the structure of language and how language emerges with the culture. So that was really an important base and my mother always said that's what you should learn, Latin is to give you a base for almost any other language you want to learn. So anyway, that was great.

NOBLE: [00:06:32] And so then in high school, you studied Latin and did you get involved in extracurricular things beyond 4-H in high school?

WAND: [00:06:44] Yes, I always had a job because we didn't have a lot of money. And one of the ways that I earned money was by teaching baton twirling.

NOBLE: [00:06:55] Oh my goodness.

WAND: [00:07:01] Yes, I used to have baton twirling lessons once or twice a week, and I would go to the local elementary or high school, whichever one it was at, and would teach the girls how to twirl batons. And then every year we would enter in the Junior Rose Festival Parade in Portland and march in that parade. So we had our little white satin outfits that we all made and we would march in the Rose Festival. So most of the time we

didn't have enough money to buy boots because, you know, majorettes are supposed to have those pretty fancy white boots. And we didn't have the money to, so we figured out a way to make little chaps, if you will, little fake boots out of white oil cloth. And we sewed those. Anyway. It was fun. It was really.

NOBLE: [00:08:01] Can you still do it?

WAND: [00:08:02] Yeah, I think. I still got a baton in here. I can do a little bit when the interview is finished.

NOBLE: [00:08:10] And so then you graduated from high school. Were you the first person in your family to go to college? You said your parents have not had a lot of formal education.

WAND: [00:08:21] No, my father had to quit school at the end of the eighth grade to work on his farm, and my mother went through high school and my mother was desperately wanted to go to college. But she, her parents, were both from Germany directly, and her parents said that women were not supposed to go to college. There was no need. They were just supposed to get married and have babies. She knew better than that. But she couldn't convince her father, who had the money to send her to college, but he would not do that. So she was determined that as many of us would go to college as possible. So my older sister went to college. She was four years ahead of me.

NOBLE: [00:08:57] You had two older than you.

WAND: [00:08:58] Yeah, there were two older. My older sister went to college. My older brother was not interested. He would become an electrician and then a contractor and a wonderful woodworker as well. But they had a very successful business in housing construction. But then I went to college. And you had mentioned something a minute ago about travel. We could only afford day trips in the car as a family, but I was always very interested and we would sometimes. We lived in Oregon and sometimes we would visit friends in Washington state. But through my 4-H club work, I earned enough honors and awards that I won an award to go to National 4-H Club

Congress when I was a senior in high school in 1959. And that was my first train trip. That was my first trip out of the Pacific Northwest.

NOBLE: [00:09:57] Where did you go?

WAND: [00:09:58] It was in Chicago. And so we took the, there was a small group of us with one of the 4-H extension agents went with us. And we went to Chicago for, it was like a week. It was over the Thanksgiving weekend. And so it was a big deal. We didn't, I don't think we had to miss very much school, but we did have to miss a few days. And it was a big deal. And I remember going to Chicago and I remember. This was, of course, before the days of, we didn't have television. And I could not believe listening to people from the south of the United States speaking.

NOBLE: [00:10:32] You had not had any contact before.

WAND: [00:10:34] Had never somebody from the South talking and I'd never heard anybody from Boston talk. And so I couldn't understand them really. And I remember overhearing a conversation with Southerners speaking. And I remember going turning to the group that I was with from the Northwest and saying, did you hear it? They said y'all!

NOBLE: [00:11:00] It was your very first contact with people who were radically different from you.

WAND: [00:11:03] Yes.

NOBLE: [00:11:05] Was there a migrant Spanish speaking migrant population in the Northwest coast?

WAND: [00:11:12] There was. Absolutely. And my father used to hire the Mexican laborers to work in the field. And that was one of my first exposures. And my father was always very, very respectful of them.

NOBLE: [00:11:25] Oh, good.

WAND: [00:11:27] So he would have to pick them up in Portland, at a central point for laborers. And then he would bring them out to work in the field. Yes. So yes, that was my first exposure to.

NOBLE: [00:11:42] And you could hear people speaking Spanish, but you wouldn't have known what they were saying.

WAND: [00:11:49] No, that's correct.

NOBLE: [00:11:51] So you get into college and it was Seattle?

WAND: [00:11:55] Seattle University.

NOBLE: [00:11:57] So when you went in, what did you envision as a career? You were studying history?

WAND: [00:12:06] I did. I really didn't have a clear idea of what I would do as a career. I knew I loved to sew, and I seriously had considered going into a design and fiber arts of some kind or dress design or construction or textiles. But for reasons that were never, for whatever reason, in my high school, I got really focused on the academic track. And so that's the track I stayed on. And that was when I got the scholarship to the honors program at Seattle University, which, by the way, was a Ford Foundation grant which covered all my tuition, which was wonderful.

NOBLE: [00:12:58] Oh, that's perfect.

WAND: [00:12:58] It was a two-year scholarship. It was incredible.

NOBLE: [00:13:01] But then the third year, your family had to come up with?

WAND: [00:13:05] Well, I worked. I worked every summer at a job. I had a summer job every year. And then the third year I worked part time at the university actually and earned some money and then got a partial scholarship. So I was able to get through that.

NOBLE: [00:13:19] Did you have to study a language in college?

WAND: [00:13:22] German.

NOBLE: [00:13:24] German? Oh right, because your heritage was German?

WAND: [00:13:26] Exactly.

NOBLE: [00:13:27] Both sides, mother and father?

WAND: [00:13:29] Yes. Right. In fact, my father grew up speaking German first, even though he was third generation from Germany. I mean, he was second generation.

NOBLE: [00:13:39] But he was bilingual.

WAND: [00:13:41] Yes.

NOBLE: [00:13:43] So even as a college student, um, there wouldn't have been study abroad programs. So you had, you still hadn't as a college graduate, you had not stepped out of the United States?

WAND: [00:14:03] No, but I knew that I was desperate to travel. I knew I had an incredibly deep and abiding desire to travel. As I was growing up, and as long as I can remember, I would hear my parents and their friends and my relatives say that Oregon is God's country and there's no place else in the world to live. This was what they inherited from their families after the migration across the country and around from Germany. And then, you know, back a generation. And of course, this was in the Columbia River Gorge, which is absolutely a beautiful.

NOBLE: [00:14:50] Gorgeous.

WAND: [00:14:51] Beautiful place. But I kept hearing this as a child, Oregon is God's country, and there's no place else to live. And I keep kept thinking to myself, I remember as a child saying, that's got to be, that can't be true. There have got to be lots of places.

NOBLE: [00:15:08] And then you saw Chicago.

WAND: [00:15:10] Then I saw Chicago.

NOBLE: [00:15:11] Wait, how did you get? Was it a train trip?

WAND: [00:15:13] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:15:13] So out the window of the train, you could see that there are other places.

WAND: [00:15:17] Absolutely. Yeah. And of course, my parents knew there were other places, but this was one of the little things that, you know, that people would marvel. Anyway. I just knew I had to travel, and then when I was in that last year. Well, going back just a bit to the election of Kennedy and Nixon. This was an important election. This was in 1960, of course, the fall of '60.

NOBLE: [00:15:42] And where were you in college then?

WAND: [00:15:44] I was a freshman. I was a freshman in college. But my parents, we were always pretty sure. In our house there was a rule that nobody talked about politics because my father was a radical Republican. And he was one of these people who was very calm and gentle. But when it came to politics, he could kind of flip out. And my mother didn't like to have anybody flipping out in the house. We had a very calm house overall. I mean, it was a very loving and tolerant place.

NOBLE: [00:16:20] Just don't talk about Franklin Delano Roosevelt and everything will be OK.

WAND: [00:16:24] Got it. You've got it, lady. And so my parents didn't talk about politics, so we were all pretty sure that my mother voted for Kennedy and daddy voted for Nixon, even though both of them were devout Catholics. My mother was far more liberal and open minded to things than my father was, and he was absolutely sure that, you know, Nixon should be the president. So we didn't talk about that much at home, but I knew there was

a great deal of admiration for Kennedy. And I, of course, thought he was terrific. [tape break]

WAND: [00:16:59] I thought he was terrific partly because I had had this unique opportunity to not just meet him and shake his hand, but to introduce him to the student body at my high school. It was one of those really fluky things. He was campaigning in Portland, on the east side of Portland. He was like, you know, doing the whistle stops. I mean, he was going every place and the shopping centers and everything. And some of the really energetic young women who were seniors with me decided that we had to get him to come to our high school because after all, we were Catholic high school. And he should, you know, pay attention to us. So they went up to the shopping center where he was, and they first started talking to his handlers and they said, no way, there's no time. So they got to him, to JFK himself, and said, come and see, you know, we're only a few blocks away. Come on and the nuns really want to meet you. And well, he said, yes, he would. So the whole entourage came.

WAND: [00:18:05] And of course, this was long before cell phones or anything. But here they come to campus with. And I was student body president. I had to stand in front of the students and introduce John F. Kennedy to them. And we were in a construction zone. I mean, this was a high school that was still under construction, it was a new Catholic girls high school. We were the first class to go all the way through it. And anyway, it was such a great thrill to be in his presence and to have him right there at this little, you know, school where, I don't know what we were, probably maybe 400 students at the most. It was quite a thrill. Yeah. Anyway, so I had this great affection for Kennedy in and of himself.

NOBLE: [00:18:55] And that was not college. That was high school.

WAND: [00:18:58] That was high school. It was like, let's say, March or April of 1960. And then I graduated from high school in '60 in June of that year and then went to university in the fall. So when it was time to graduate, I had been hearing about the Peace Corps. And it just seemed so interesting. And then I thought, well, you know, but I really want to go to

Europe. I don't really want to go to one of those, you know, developing countries.

NOBLE: [00:19:25] Yeah, yeah.

WAND: [00:19:26] And then I thought, but I don't have any money to go to Europe, and if I went to one of those developing countries, I could learn a language. I would be there for two years, so I'd really get to know the people. It would really make a difference in terms of my understanding of how another group of people live. And you know, who knows. I could, you know, just maybe even help them or something. I mean, helping was down the list of priorities.

NOBLE: [00:19:58] Yeah, yeah.

WAND: [00:19:58] In terms of Peace Corps, it was really for me at that point I just was dying to travel. I just was dying to travel. And so I started looking at the application. I can't remember. I think I had to send off for an application.

NOBLE: [00:20:13] At that point, did you know anybody who had been in the Peace Corps?

WAND: [00:20:16] Never. No, no. I didn't know a soul.

NOBLE: [00:20:17] It was so new yet.

WAND: [00:20:18] Yeah, I didn't know a soul. This was in the fall of 1962. I just been hearing about it. And of course, I started talking to my parents and my mother thought it was a fabulous idea because she was an adventuresome soul.

NOBLE: [00:20:32] And your father?

WAND: [00:20:33] My father, well, he was always as supportive as he could be, but he really basically thought that the United States should not get involved internationally with anything. He was basically an isolationist and

didn't want us, you know, to do anything internationally. But again, he was a loving, caring man who wanted me to do what would make me happy. And I was grateful that he was at least tolerant of my doing this.

NOBLE: [00:21:01] So he wasn't saying no.

WAND: [00:21:03] No, he never said, no. Absolutely not.

NOBLE: [00:21:05] So you sent off and you got an application. Did they ask you the question? Was there this question on the form saying, is there a particular country or part of the world that you most want to go to? Or is there any place that you would not go to?

WAND: [00:21:20] I said I would go to any place, but I said I had a preference for Latin America.

NOBLE: [00:21:25] And then the next question would be why?

WAND: [00:21:27] And the real answer to that, I'm not sure I wrote the real answer. The real answer was because I was raised Catholic, and I thought it would be interesting to go to a Catholic country and a country that was predominantly Catholic. But that was my major reason.

NOBLE: [00:21:46] Maybe not what you said.

WAND: [00:21:48] You know, I don't remember what I said, although I may have a copy. I don't know. We didn't do photocopies back then. Who knows? But I know that one of the reasons I said is that I had this background, a major in Latin American history, and I loved that whole intellectual endeavor. So that was it. That was very likely what it was. Anyway, I can't remember all the other reasons that I wrote down. I've told you that truthfully.

NOBLE: [00:22:17] So this is fall of 1962.

WAND: [00:22:21] Yes. I'd started the process.

NOBLE: [00:22:23] Right. And so a few months later, I suppose you got an invitation to train.

WAND: [00:22:28] Well, it didn't happen that fast. The faculty member who was a priest who I was working for, I was helping him with his, uh, pulling together a book that he was writing, and I was doing some of the proofing and the indexing and things. And I was working for him and he told me one day, he said, by the way, the FBI are coming to see me today about you.

NOBLE: [00:22:51] Now what, you're still a student? You're in your senior year of college?

WAND: [00:22:54] Yes, I was still a student, right, right. He said, they're going to come and ask me about you. So he said, if they come while you're here, you'd better leave. And I said, OK, I will. Anyway, so I know they did a security check and secured your security around my family. And this was in a rural area and they talked to some of the neighbors. And they had to, you know, study me. And then finally, sometime in the spring, I got the invitation to serve in Colombia, and I accepted it immediately. I was really, I mean, I had to go to the map to make sure that I kind of knew where Colombia was exactly.

NOBLE: [00:23:32] Yes.

WAND: [00:23:32] But I accepted it and then I graduated, I'm going to say like June 3rd or June 4th and June 6th, I was already in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in training.

NOBLE: [00:23:45] Immediately.

WAND: [00:23:46] Immediately.

NOBLE: [00:23:46] Wow.

WAND: [00:23:47] Yeah, I barely had time to get home and changed.

NOBLE: [00:23:50] What was the reaction of your friends to this? You talked about your family, but how about your classmates, your friends in college?

WAND: [00:23:59] Well, some of them were inspired to do the same thing. This group in the honors program, there were 18 of us. And by the time, within about two years after I did, we graduated, um, I think about five of them had been had already gone into Peace Corps.

NOBLE: [00:24:23] Oh, okay. All right. So you were not surrounded by people who thought you were weird?

WAND: [00:24:27] No.

NOBLE: [00:24:28] This was something that understandable in your circle.

WAND: [00:24:32] Right, right, right. I was the first one to go in, but it wasn't long afterwards that others.

NOBLE: [00:24:37] So we're in summer of 1963. You're in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Where in Albuquerque?

WAND: [00:24:43] Right there at the university. The University of New Mexico had a huge program to train Latin American volunteers. And I was, you know, one of the. We were not the first group to be trained there, but early on, I think maybe they had been training for several groups ahead of us.

NOBLE: [00:25:02] Do you remember your first day of training? Do you remember arriving there? You're fresh out of college and now you're in a whole new group of people?

WAND: [00:25:12] Right.

NOBLE: [00:25:13] What was your sense of your other trainees? Were they sort of like you or did you feel like you were plunged into a whole different milieu?

WAND: [00:25:21] I felt like I was a country bumpkin.

NOBLE: [00:25:26] Oh, no kidding!

WAND: [00:25:28] I did. Because there were so many people there from the East Coast or California. And I always thought they were so much more cosmopolitan than I was. And I mean, I was pretty confident, but nonetheless I really felt like, you know, um, that they all were much more, I don't know, prepared, much more wise than I was. But one of the things that was interesting, it just was coming out of the Pacific Northwest. It was so hot, hot in Albuquerque.

NOBLE: [00:26:03] Uh huh.

WAND: [00:26:03] But then there were so many people from the East Coast or the Southeast who kept saying, no, it's really cool because it's dry, it's a dry heat. And to me, it was just plain hot.

NOBLE: [00:26:17] And this is a mixture of men and women?

WAND: [00:26:19] Yes. Yes. Right.

NOBLE: [00:26:21] Was it, how big was the training group here?

WAND: [00:26:25] I believe there were 80 of us.

NOBLE: [00:26:28] Mm hmm. And you were which? Back then groups had numbers.

WAND: [00:26:32] We were eight. Colombia XIII.

NOBLE: [00:26:33] Colombia eight.

WAND: [00:26:34] Right, right. Colombia XIII. And when we were about halfway through our training, they brought a one or two people from Colombia I to help orient us.

NOBLE: [00:26:48] Oh good. What a nice idea.

WAND: [00:26:49] That was good. Because then we had, um, the opportunity to talk with somebody who had been there and had been working in a rural community development program project. By the way, this was an interesting thing. When we were told that we were the first group of women that Peace Corps was sending to rural Latin America. This was in the summer of '63. They said that they had sent other women into urban environments, but none of them into rural environments. I've not tested that data, but that's what we were told at that time. And I know they were training us very emphatically about how to maintain our reputations in the rural villages because the reputation of American women was tainted by the movies even back then.

NOBLE: [00:27:51] OK, so they thought you were all loose.

WAND: [00:27:52] All loose and prostitutes and, you know, and they were afraid we were all going to get pregnant and come home. And of course, in those days now you have to remember this is 1963. The pill was not available.

NOBLE: [00:28:03] That's right.

WAND: [00:28:03] Birth control was very limited and not very effective. And so it was a risk to send women into. And so they sent us in pairs and they told us they were going to be doing that, each of us working together.

NOBLE: [00:28:18] Did you say this was all women?

WAND: [00:28:19] No.

NOBLE: [00:28:19] There were also men in the group.

WAND: [00:28:21] Yes, but mostly men. There were like maybe 12 or 14 women in the group.

NOBLE: [00:28:28] Out of 80?

WAND: [00:28:29] That ended up going, yeah.

NOBLE: [00:28:30] Wow. And were there any married couples?

WAND: [00:28:34] Um, there was. I think there was one married couple and another couple that got married, uh, before we went into country.

NOBLE: [00:28:44] So you're staying in, um, college dormitory?

WAND: [00:28:52] Yes. College dorm in the University of New Mexico, that's where we did our academic programs. It was very intensely while we were there.

NOBLE: [00:28:59] Let's talk about the academic programs. There would have been something about the history and culture, the Spanish of course. Spanish language.

WAND: [00:29:06] I was in what I called the, um, what was it called? I used to call it the entry level Spanish and I don't have a facility for languages. So it was challenging for me to learn Spanish.

NOBLE: [00:29:23] Although your Latin would have come in handy in terms of understanding the structure.

WAND: [00:29:27] Yes, right. But I, uh, but I was in. So it was a total immersion kind of program, I mean to the extent they could do that. And we were divided by skillset or levels for Spanish.

NOBLE: [00:29:42] So how many of you in one group, one classroom, if you will, of language learning?

WAND: [00:29:48] Maybe 15.

NOBLE: [00:29:49] Oh, that's big. That's pretty big.

WAND: [00:29:51] At the most. I can't remember exactly, but it was pretty small. And but we had, you know, in our bigger group, we had people who had studied Spanish at the university and people who had gone to Middlebury, for example, and studied Spanish or, you know, University of Texas.

NOBLE: [00:30:07] Well, that wouldn't have helped your feeling like the country bumpkin, some sophisticated person who'd been at Middlebury studying Spanish five.

WAND: [00:30:15] Exactly. Right, right. But anyway, you know, we can talk a little bit more about language when I, after we talk about getting into the country. But then we had history and that. One of the fun things about, um, that of course, you know, some of our time was spent socializing.

NOBLE: [00:30:44] Music?

WAND: [00:30:45] Music. And we'd go to the bar and dance and whatever. And one of the people who I socialized with in my group was Sam Farr. So he and I have remained good friends after all those years.

NOBLE: [00:30:59] Oh good. Yeah, I can imagine. He's such a live wire now. He must have been really been the life of the party.

WAND: [00:31:05] Yeah, he was. He was great.

NOBLE: [00:31:07] So you do recall any particular tunes? Was there a particular thing that you were all dancing to, a particular tune, a song that was hot just then?

WAND: [00:31:17] Wow, I don't remember. But there were some, of course.

NOBLE: [00:31:21] Sure. Yeah, yeah, right. So there was a lot of bonding going on. [tape break] OK, so we're in training.

WAND: [00:31:31] Right. So one of the things that our training included was this very strong program, Outward Bound. On campus, they started us immediately with running a mile every day. Most of us had never run in our lives.

NOBLE: [00:31:47] Oh my goodness, a whole mile.

WAND: [00:31:50] Yes. And swimming, intensive swimming lessons, and then drown proofing, learning how to. We had to prove that we could stay afloat in the water if we were in trouble. So we had a physical regimen and then we started doing weekend camping trips and we camped up in the Sandia Mountains.

NOBLE: [00:32:12] Ah yes, of course you'd been camping as a child.

WAND: [00:32:14] Exactly. So that part was real easy and fun for me. I mean, I really loved that, whereas some of the women were not at all happy and some of the men were not either. I mean.

NOBLE: [00:32:24] The great equalizer.

WAND: [00:32:25] Exactly, right. And one of the things we did was a survival hike. So we had a three day hike where we, you know, lived off rations and just sort of, you know, dispersed.

NOBLE: [00:32:36] And you're relying on one another.

WAND: [00:32:38] Right, right. We were kind of divided into small groups where we would have to, you know, carry the tent and the water and the food and the pack and the sleeping bag and everything. So that was really, I loved it frankly. I loved it. It was great. And then they also taught us rock climbing and rappelling. And like, they started us on campus rappelling off the back of this football stadium, teaching us how to use the ropes going down. And, you know, bouncing off and bouncing back and forth to rappel down.

NOBLE: [00:33:14] Now what is it? Was this to develop trust in one another or is that the point of it?

WAND: [00:33:20] The reason was to develop trust in yourself.

NOBLE: [00:33:22] In yourself. But you were also relying, weren't you, on the person who's belaying down there?

WAND: [00:33:26] Absolutely, absolutely. But they said that the fundamental purpose of this Outward Bound project is to show you that when you think that you have taken your very last step, that you can't take another step, that you can take another step, that you can survive this. It is the will. And so they wanted to push all of us as far as we would go. And so we did a lot of rock climbing and a lot of rappelling. And it was scary at times, especially going rock climbing. Rocks where, you know, there were just not holes far enough, close enough together for my hands, et cetera. But we had, you know, as you say, there's a trust in others as well because there'd be people above and people below coaching. And anyway, what was fun, what was interesting for me is many of the women refused to do these things.

NOBLE: [00:34:26] It was given to you as an option?

WAND: [00:34:28] It was not really totally an option, but you could opt out. And there were any number of women who decided to opt out of some of these things. And I was very proud of myself because I did absolutely every obstacle course or every single challenge that was, physical challenge, that was presented to us.

NOBLE: [00:34:50] I want to come, I don't want to leap too fast into deselection, but of course, that's what comes to my mind right away. Were those who opted out, were some of those who opted out still selected to go to Colombia?

WAND: [00:35:03] That's a really good question and I never tracked it that close. You know, I have a notebook of notes and I have letters that I wrote to my family.

NOBLE: [00:35:14] During training?

WAND: [00:35:14] During training. And I have never gone back and read all of us to that detail. Those eventually will find their way to the archive at American University. But in fact, I have written into my will that all of my papers and photographs and everything will be deposited at the archives.

But so, you know, someday somebody could read it and someday I might still read it. But tracking on the deselection would be an interesting thing.

NOBLE: [00:35:40] Well, let's pursue the deselection thing, and then I'll let you get back to the academics and training a little bit. But so, psychologists, did you have interviews with psychologists?

WAND: [00:35:53] We did. We all did.

NOBLE: [00:35:54] And how did you all feel about, I mean, what was your reaction to that? How did you perceive them?

WAND: [00:35:59] Well, it was, on one level, it was kind of scary because you didn't know what they were looking for and you didn't know whether you were giving them the right or the wrong answer. On one level it was, but down deep I felt in my heart that I was never really a question. I mean, I was very assured of myself, whether that was valid, whether that was appropriate or not. And I felt like it. But there were people who were deselected for reasons that nobody could understand. And one of those people, and I will be able to tell you now because he's public about it, was Sam Farr.

NOBLE: [00:36:37] No kidding. But then he went on to some other group, right?

WAND: [00:36:42] Sam was deselected from our group the night before we were leaving the training site.

NOBLE: [00:36:48] Oh my goodness.

WAND: [00:36:49] And everybody was shocked and devastated.

NOBLE: [00:36:54] Yes.

WAND: [00:36:54] And Sam wasn't the only one who surprised us by any means, but he's the most notorious one because people know him now as a Peace Corps volunteer.

NOBLE: [00:37:05] Yeah, yeah.

WAND: [00:37:05] But it was. This is a great example of how, what the fallacies were around this whole deselection process. I mean, I'm sure there were people who were deselected that should have been. But there were also many, many whose lives were tainted and really negatively affected by having been deselected when they should not have been deselected. It was a real tragedy in many respects, in many, in many cases.

NOBLE: [00:37:31] But since we opened this up, Sam did go. He must have gotten switched to a different program.

WAND: [00:37:36] Sam has told me that, and he'll tell anybody, he went home. He was devastated. His mother said, well, what do you want to do? And he said, I want to go into the Peace Corps to Colombia. And she said, well, then do it. Learn your Spanish and reapply.

NOBLE: [00:37:55] So you think it was a line he was told it was the language? Or he was just imagining that it might have been that?

WAND: [00:38:00] Well, it was, you know, he knew that his language ability was no worse than my language ability. You know, we were both in the same class together, you know.

NOBLE: [00:38:08] So who knows?

WAND: [00:38:09] Yeah. But he just decided that would give, he and his mother. I mean, his mother supported him and that would give him the support, another leg up, if you will. And so he did it. Five months later, he reapplied. He got into another training group. He never told a soul that he was doing this the second time around. He excelled in absolutely every way. And then he went to Colombia.

NOBLE: [00:38:34] Off he went.

WAND: [00:38:36] Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:38:36] What a story.

WAND: [00:38:37] Isn't that a great story?

NOBLE: [00:38:37] But let's get back to your story. So your academics in training included intensive Spanish language, but what else? History, culture?

WAND: [00:38:49] History and culture and also a lot about trying to help us understand the way of life of the villagers in the rural Colombia and also the principles of community development. We had a lot of classes and orientation about what is community development, what does it mean, and how do you make sure that you're really working with what are the felt needs of the community? And not just you, the gringo's, ideas of what they ought to be doing. And that is such a difficult. Yeah, I mean, international development still faces this very basic question. And I recently had an opportunity to read over some of the reports from one of the conferences that was held for Colombia I after they'd been in country for six months. So this was probably in the summer or so of '62, where they met as a group and were reoriented and they had a chance to assess themselves around community development.

WAND: [00:39:59] And the principles of community development are so important, and it was such an important concept that still is not widely applied enough. Because it's really the best way. Anyway, we were kept, it was just drilled into us. When you go to the village, ask them what they need. And that's the principle we used. And in fact, when we talk in a few minutes about the program we developed, I'll talk to you about how we learned what they wanted. But we learned that in training, that was really. And those principles have stood me in good stead a manager, all my career actually, trying to be a good listener.

NOBLE: [00:40:45] Ah yes.

WAND: [00:40:46] Trying to hear what somebody else is saying. It's also a good principle in family life. You know, it's just not.

NOBLE: [00:40:54] And it's not always easy to do.

WAND: [00:40:56] It's not easy. It's not easy because we have voices in our brains that tell us we're the smartest and we have the answers. And so it's hard.

NOBLE: [00:41:05] To set that aside.

WAND: [00:41:08] To set that aside, right.

NOBLE: [00:41:08] Were there classes about American, were there American studies? There was something that was called ASWAC. American studies, world affairs, communism.

WAND: [00:41:19] Right. Well, and I'm not sure that that acronym was exactly what we used in our training. But certainly there were classes about that and there was a lot of anti-communist, what I would call now propaganda, shoved at us. In other words, we're the first world. We don't, you know, communism is evil, you know, et cetera. And socialism is evil, et cetera, et cetera. The Cold War line, if you will, even though the Cold War was just, shall we say, heating up in the sixties, but still it was still actually, I mean, it was it really heated up in the 50s and the 60s it was pretty much embedded in our media and our thinking.

NOBLE: [00:41:56] Right, but it was still very much buzz.

WAND: [00:42:00] Oh yes, yes. We have to worry about the communists, they will come and take over the Latin America. So you have to be, you know, examples of noncommunist life and principles.

NOBLE: [00:42:14] So you get to the end of training, which lasted, what about three months or so?

WAND: [00:42:20] Yes.

NOBLE: [00:42:21] So we're now in?

WAND: [00:42:22] We started like June 6th or 7th.

NOBLE: [00:42:24] July, August, September. So now we're around September, October?

WAND: [00:42:28] And it was, I think it was very last of August we finished training. Or maybe mid to late August. We finished training. Well, the last part of our training, by the way, the last month was in rural areas in New Mexico, where we lived in villages and did community development projects that were already established in those villages north around, not too far from Taos. They were just little communities. And we were divided up and we had different projects. I worked in a little community called Arroyo Seco. I wonder if, it must still be there, I'm sure.

NOBLE: [00:43:06] I think I have been to Arroyo Seco in New Mexico.

WAND: [00:43:10] Right. Right.

NOBLE: [00:43:11] And people there were speaking Spanish?

WAND: [00:43:15] It was a mix. Yes. A lot of Spanish, right.

NOBLE: [00:43:17] Yeah. So you got a chance to maybe try out?

WAND: [00:43:19] A little bit of a chance, but I was so awful in Spanish by the end of that time. I mean, I can barely force myself. For me, the speaking, the difficulty was forcing myself to say words because I wasn't quite sure I was going to be right.

NOBLE: [00:43:35] Oh, and you wanted, you wanted to get it right?

WAND: [00:43:37] Exactly. So I had to break through that barrier of fear, of failing basically. And in country, I learned some techniques to do that. But in training, I wasn't yet adept at that.

NOBLE: [00:43:53] And it would have been a different Spanish.

WAND: [00:43:54] Yeah, right.

NOBLE: [00:43:56] It wouldn't be exactly the same as what you'd hear in rural Colombia.

WAND: [00:43:58] Right, right.

NOBLE: [00:44:00] And so on the whole, would you say the training program was well done?

WAND: [00:44:06] Yeah, I think so. I mean, you know, it's been interesting for me over the years to reflect back on it and also to hear about how the Peace Corps was challenged to put together appropriate training when it was creating something out of nothing.

NOBLE: [00:44:23] Yes.

WAND: [00:44:24] And you know, I know how Sargent Shriver worked on that and I know how he worked with people, for example, brought in the concept of Outward Bound because the Kennedy brothers used to go and climb mountains.

NOBLE: [00:44:39] Oh, that's what, that whole family was very active.

WAND: [00:44:40] That's exactly right. And they used and they got trainers from their Colorado climbing school to help with set up Puerto Rico training, for example, set up the curriculum around Outward Bound. So, you know.

NOBLE: [00:44:54] But you didn't have to go to Puerto Rico as part of training?

WAND: [00:44:56] No, I didn't. Because they had sent most Latin America. Initially, they sent all the Latin American volunteers to Puerto Rico for at least the physical training and the outdoor stuff. But they set up, they replicated that training in New Mexico. And so we stayed right there in New Mexico. So by late August then we were done and we went home for, it was like three weeks or something. So it was September. I'm going to say maybe a little bit wrong on this, but I'm thinking about September 23rd or so that we flew back to New York and congregated there in New York. And went as a group out of JFK down to Bogota.

NOBLE: [00:45:36] Somewhere in there, you would have had a swearing in ceremony either in New Mexico or in New York where you have to take an oath.

WAND: [00:45:47] I do not remember where that is, where that happened. I would, I suspect I have it in my notes, but I don't remember where that was.

NOBLE: [00:45:56] Yeah, that's OK. And so three weeks at home. And so there were goodbyes or parties. People were peppering you with questions, I imagine.

WAND: [00:46:09] Yes. I just I remember my mother was extremely helpful, including helping me put together the things that I wanted to put into my trunk, because they shipped a trunk for us and we worked. You know, one thing was my little featherweight sewing machine. Another was a little.

NOBLE: [00:46:30] How fortuitous that you knew that it would be useful to you.

WAND: [00:46:33] Oh, I couldn't. I couldn't have lived without my sewing machine. It didn't make any difference whether I was going to use it for teaching students or not. I was just, I could not live without my sewing machine.

NOBLE: [00:46:43] Oh, interesting.

WAND: [00:46:45] I took it everywhere. It was a machine I bought when I graduated from high school as my high school graduation present to myself. I still have it.

NOBLE: [00:46:55] Oh, wonderful.

WAND: [00:46:56] Built in 1939.

NOBLE: [00:46:58] Wow.

WAND: [00:46:59] Anyway, so you know, I took that. I took a travel iron. Uh, you know, I can't remember all the things, but I suspect I will have them written down someplace. The things that I put into that trunk and shipped.

NOBLE: [00:47:15] Yeah, yeah. So that was shipped out of?

WAND: [00:47:18] Out of Portland.

NOBLE: [00:47:19] Portland, Oregon.

WAND: [00:47:20] And shipped to Bogota directly. And it arrived, you know, some weeks or maybe, I don't remember how long after we arrived. Months maybe. I think it came by ship.

NOBLE: [00:47:32] Yeah. So you say goodbye to your family.

WAND: [00:47:35] Very, very scary to say goodbye, knowing that I would not see them for two years. There was a restriction, as you know, you could not go home.

NOBLE: [00:47:46] Right. Although if somebody died, I think, they'd send you home.

WAND: [00:47:49] Yes, they did, right. But um, so and my whole family, as many, many family, I have pictures still of my little siblings and my aunts and uncles and cousins going to the airport to say goodbye. You know, it's a big deal.

NOBLE: [00:48:05] Yeah. And then, you know, this is your second flying experience, right? Because you'd probably flown into Albuquerque.

WAND: [00:48:14] Yes, right.

NOBLE: [00:48:15] So now you're taking a longer flight.

WAND: [00:48:17] Going to New York, where I'd never been before. But one of the women in our group, whom I'm still in touch with sometimes, she lived in,

grew up in Long Island. And she and her family met me at JFK and invited me to stay, met another one of our group. And they invited the two of us, two women, to stay with them.

NOBLE: [00:48:38] In Long Island?

WAND: [00:48:39] In Long Island, not too far from JFK, overnight or something. You know, getting ready. And I have a picture of us. We are all in our wool suits, all with hats and heels and gloves and all ready to get on the plane. All dressed up as women were supposed to dress.

NOBLE: [00:49:00] That's right. And gloves.

WAND: [00:49:02] And gloves. And this was a suit that I had made. And you know, it was, there we were. I still have this picture of, you know.

NOBLE: [00:49:10] Yeah, yeah. Well, that really warmed up New York for you, didn't it, to get to stay with the family there?

WAND: [00:49:18] It did warm up New York, and in fact, we were there. I was there long enough to go spend one day taking the train into the city and doing Times Square, doing a little of the tourist stuff with her, with Isabel, and she was able, you know, to do me a little tour guide. So that was wonderful.

NOBLE: [00:49:39] Then back to Long Island for the second night and then with her family to the airport.

WAND: [00:49:45] Right, right.

NOBLE: [00:49:47] So was it just your group on that air? Was it a charter flight or were there more than one group?

WAND: [00:49:52] It was a commercial airline, a regular flight.

NOBLE: [00:49:55] So there were other non-Peace Corps people right on the plane as well?

WAND: [00:49:59] Right. Yeah.

NOBLE: [00:50:01] So that was a pretty long flight from New York to Bogota. What is it? Four hours, maybe?

WAND: [00:50:07] Yeah, maybe. But of course, it was a long flight across the country too.

NOBLE: [00:50:11] That's true. That's right.

WAND: [00:50:12] Although I'm not sure it was direct. I we probably stopped in Chicago. I don't remember.

NOBLE: [00:50:17] And then you arrive in Bogota and what was that arrival like? Do you recall getting off the plane?

WAND: [00:50:28] I do recall getting off the plane, but I just recall being absolutely depressed by Bogota.

NOBLE: [00:50:38] Oh, really?

WAND: [00:50:38] Bogota is high in the mountains, and it's cold, often cold, and can be very foggy as well, you know? And it was. I've been back now three years ago, and I could see some nice parts of Bogota, but for the most part, I've never really enjoyed being in Bogota when I was a Peace Corps volunteer. We stayed in Bogota a few weeks.

NOBLE: [00:51:08] Oh, just a little mini in-country training or orientation?

WAND: [00:51:12] Yeah, exactly, and maybe even only a week or so, I mean, it was, but it was more than just a couple of days. Chris Sheldon was our country director. He was a wonderful man. He had been the founding country director in Colombia.

NOBLE: [00:51:29] So he's still there.

WAND: [00:51:30] And he was still there, right, two years after he opened the country. And so we met with him. We met with Peace Corps staff. We met with a medical doctor, who everybody greatly admired, and he, his wife was a nurse and, um, Mary and Jim. Jim, and I'm forgetting his last name, but his wife's name is Mary, and they were wonderful to us, to the volunteers, very welcoming.

NOBLE: [00:51:58] And of course, by this time arriving in Bogota, you'd already had all your shots, all your immunizations.

WAND: [00:52:04] Oh yes, that all went through during training and all of our wisdom teeth yanked out. You know, we'd gotten, yeah.

NOBLE: [00:52:11] Extra pair of glasses.

WAND: [00:52:13] Oh, extra pair of glasses. The ugliest frames. And we were already on our, um.

NOBLE: [00:52:19] Aralen.

WAND: [00:52:20] Aralen, right, the malaria prevention stuff. And so. So we got to Bogota. And the one thing, of course, being in the country was wonderful, but we were still very antsy about where were we going to end up.

NOBLE: [00:52:41] Oh, you still didn't know.

WAND: [00:52:44] Did not know.

NOBLE: [00:52:45] How long were you in Bogota before they told you the assignments?

WAND: [00:52:49] Too long. I mean, I still remember just being on pins and needles. Where are we going? Where are we going?

NOBLE: [00:52:56] And did you have the sense that you'd all be split up?

WAND: [00:52:59] We knew we'd be split up.

NOBLE: [00:52:59] You knew that. OK.

WAND: [00:53:01] Yeah. And we didn't know who. We also knew that we were, at that point, we were all going to be with partners. Each of us were going to be assigned, but we a partner.

NOBLE: [00:53:08] Another Peace Corps volunteer as a partner?

WAND: [00:53:11] As a partner. And none of us had any options about that. We were just assigned. It was so interesting.

NOBLE: [00:53:20] They didn't ask if there's anyone that you would rather not.

WAND: [00:53:25] Oh, let me think a minute. They did ask. You're right. They did ask our preferences. You're right. Thank you for asking the question. They asked our preferences and I remember listing a few people, but the person they assigned me to was not someone on my list. But she turned out to be one of the best possible choices for me. She was a very quiet person. She had very strong Spanish skills. She had majored in Spanish as an undergraduate. She was wonderful and, um, and because she came in as a quiet person and I, as we might, you know, in Myers-Briggs, we would call her an introvert and I am an extrovert. It was the perfect blend because when she didn't want to talk, it forced me out of the house to talk with the Colombians.

NOBLE: [00:54:28] And using your Spanish.

WAND: [00:54:30] And then I would use it. That's right. That's right. And so it helped me so much. I mean, I don't think frankly, I never caught up with her because she was so smart and she had such a fine Spanish vocabulary. But we were really great partners, and I brought the sewing and the homemaking skills and she brought other skills. She was, she learned, had the Colombians teach her how to play the guitar, and she learned songs from them in Spanish. And so, you know, she brought a certain ambiance to our house and to the village, and I brought other things. So it was great.

NOBLE: [00:55:13] Well, before we go into the area where your assignment is, during those three weeks or so. So you met the doctor. What did they have you doing for those three weeks?

WAND: [00:55:25] Well, that was one of the reasons that we got kind of antsy because they didn't really have a lot for us to do.

NOBLE: [00:55:31] It wasn't very tightly programmed.

WAND: [00:55:33] No, it wasn't tightly programmed. They had a few of the in-house volunteers there to talk with us more about what we were going to expect. But by this time, we were so anticipatory about what we were going to do. We just wanted to get on with it.

NOBLE: [00:55:47] And where were you staying then during that time in Bogota? Was there a hostel, a Peace Corps hostel?

WAND: [00:55:52] No, we were. It was just a hotel, as I recall. You know, it was an OK hotel. And we were just assigned double rooms. I guess I can't remember a whole lot about it.

NOBLE: [00:56:05] For meals you'd go?

WAND: [00:56:07] I think we were, we got a daily allowance for meals. You know, cash where we could just go out and do our own.

NOBLE: [00:56:17] So you're getting used to the money system, equivalencies, pesos, how many pesos would be 50 cents and so forth, getting a sense of that?

WAND: [00:56:27] Yeah, yeah.

NOBLE: [00:56:29] So then they tell you where you're going to go and you meet, what was her name?

WAND: [00:56:34] Jenny, Jenny Bishop.

NOBLE: [00:56:36] Ok, so you and Jenny then were told.

WAND: [00:56:39] We get assigned to each other. And we just both look at each other and then we said, I think this is going to be fine, and she said, I think this is going to be fine. I mean, you know, I'm not sure. We never told each other whether we were each other's first choices, but we just did it together and it was lovely. Anyway, we got assigned to Nariño, which is in the southern part of the country, right next to the Ecuadorian border. And Nariño is. The capital city is Pasto and in Colombia, there are all kinds of what they call Pastuso jokes, and they're just like the Polack jokes.

NOBLE: [00:57:20] So Pastuso is a person who lives near Pasto?

WAND: [00:57:23] Pasto, or in Pasto, or lives in Nariño.

NOBLE: [00:57:27] Nariño is the town?

WAND: [00:57:27] Nariño is the state, or department. In Colombia they're called *departamentos*. Nariño is the *departemento* and Pasto is the capital city.

NOBLE: [00:57:39] The capital city of Nariño. But you probably weren't going to be living right in Pasto.

WAND: [00:57:45] No, it was much too urban for us. We were relatively close to Pasto, though. We were 38 kilometers on what was then the Pan-American Highway.

NOBLE: [00:57:56] Oh yeah, going down into Ecuador.

WAND: [00:57:59] Yes, it was the Pan-American Highway that goes from Panama, I mean, it goes all the way through Mexico and Central America.

NOBLE: [00:58:08] And it would be connecting Medellin, maybe.

WAND: [00:58:08] Yes, exactly. All the way down to Chile. Right, right. And we were right on that highway, which was at best a, um, what would you call

it, semi paved? And at worst it was packed dirt. But it was smooth. There were not very many potholes, you know, so and the village where we went, our little village is called Buesaco, B-U-E-S-A-C-O. Buesaco. And it is a little village that was built on either side of the Pan-American Highway on the top of a mountain.

NOBLE: [00:59:05] On either side of the highway, the highway bisects?

WAND: [00:59:08] Bisects, goes right through the town and the village is, and in some cases, depending upon how steep the mountain was, there might be one block behind the house that was on the highway or not. I mean, literally, this was on the ridge. A long skinny mountain. And I went back three years ago and went back to the village, and the village has expanded on either end and a few and there are houses down. But there's many, it's very reminiscent of, the stores that were there 50 years ago are still there and it's lovely.

NOBLE: [00:59:47] So you come into, how did you get from Bogota, you and Jenny to Buesaco?

WAND: [00:59:53] Well, first of all, there were a handful of us, I'm going to say from our group, maybe, maybe altogether eight to 10 of us went to Nariño. So we were spread all over the country. But so let's say eight of us went to Nariño and there were four women in our group who went to Nariño.

NOBLE: [01:00:18] And so the four of you would have been two and two.

WAND: [01:00:22] Exactly.

NOBLE: [01:00:22] So you were the two that went to Buesaco.

WAND: [01:00:25] Right. And the other two went to Ipiales or Tumaco. And then there were a handful of men who had assignments out in some of the other villages as well. And in fact, in our group, there was a couple men that ended up working with the co-op, crafts co-op, in Pasto itself.

NOBLE: [01:00:50] And how far was it from where Buesaco to Ipiales to get to the other two women? How long would it take you to get there?

WAND: [01:00:58] Well, you'd have to go into Pasto and change busses and then go down to Ipiales. And that would be, you know, Pasto to Buesaco was, if everything went really well, it was an hour and a half. Otherwise, it might be two hours. From Buesaco to Pasto. Because it was a mountain road, curvy and very curvy. And then there'd be landslides.

NOBLE: [01:01:23] Yeah, yeah, things would have to. And then from Pasto, another?

WAND: [01:01:28] Another two to maybe three hours.

NOBLE: [01:01:30] Oh, that's all day then.

WAND: [01:01:31] Yeah, yeah. So we didn't go back and forth. I mean, we did. Everybody, all the volunteers from all over the department met in Pasto from time to time. Seldom were we all there at the same time, but we would run into each other there. That's where we picked up our mail.

NOBLE: [01:01:47] Oh, you had to go into Pasto to get you mail.

WAND: [01:01:50] Had to go to Pasto.

NOBLE: [01:01:50] An hour and a half or so away. Wow.

WAND: [01:01:52] Yeah. So we would go in maybe every two weeks or so. You know, we didn't go in every week.

NOBLE: [01:01:58] And so if you wanted to see another volunteer, you'd run into that person in Pasto, but you didn't often visit each other's sites.

WAND: [01:02:08] Some we did. I mean, you know, there'd be fiestas, let's say, San Pablo had a fiesta at a certain month of the year, certain days. Well, maybe, but they were volunteers up there, and some of us, whoever could

get away would go and be there for a fiesta. And since we were right on the Pan-American Highway, we often would have a volunteer stop by.

NOBLE: [01:02:29] Yeah, yeah. On their way going.

WAND: [01:02:31] On their way to or from Pasto. Right, right.

NOBLE: [01:02:34] So you and Jenny get to Buesaco, somebody drove you, Peace Corps vehicle or something.

WAND: [01:02:43] Yeah, oh my god.

NOBLE: [01:02:43] Let's talk about your arrival.

WAND: [01:02:46] Oh my god that was scary.

NOBLE: [01:02:50] So we're beginning tape number two of the interview with Patricia Wand. So, Pat, you've just arrived in Colombia two or three weeks ago and now you're being taken from Bogota to your assignment in Pasto together with your partner, whose name is Jenny. And how did you get there? What was that like?

WAND: [01:03:19] Well, we had to fly Avianca, which was a highly reputable airline in Colombia, has a really good record. And we had to fly DC3 prop planes and fly into Pasto. And the Pasto airport is somewhat unique in the world in that it resides on the top of a flat mountain. And in order to get.

NOBLE: [01:03:46] Even then?

WAND: [01:03:47] Even then, flew into Pasto because getting by land from Bogota to Pasto would have taken several days because of the mountains. So we flew, had to fly into Pasto at this airport, and Pasto is famous for having delayed flights because it's often cloudy because the clouds are hanging low over the Andes Mountains. Or if it isn't cloudy, there are very strong winds, including up winds that throw the planes off course as they tried to land. And they have to aim themselves very carefully so that they get to the runway at the right place. So it is a rather precarious and scary

experience, and it hasn't changed because I was there just four years ago and the same kind of thing happened.

NOBLE: [01:04:45] Just as scary.

WAND: [01:04:46] Just as scary. But in fact, the thing that happened, and I'm not sure that this happened the first time I went to Pasto, but it certainly did many, many times to us in the two years. I shouldn't say many because we didn't go to Bogota that often. But well, any flight into Pasto would have meant that it's a good, you probably got about a 60, no, shall we say, about 40 percent chance that the flight you're on is going to be either delayed or totally canceled for the day because of its being too cloudy or the wind currents are too strong for them to land the plane. Even now, they have small jet planes that go in there. But they still have to be very careful. And then if you land, once you land, you're at the mercy of whatever the weather is in terms of getting from the airport into the city because you're going through very curvy mountainous roads that are sometimes there are landslides that cover the road. So then you're delayed either in the airport or on the road trying to get to the airport. So, yeah, getting into Pasto is a challenge.

NOBLE: [01:05:57] Was there anybody accompanying you or was it just you and Jenny? Was there somebody from Peace Corps who was going to introduce you to local?

WAND: [01:06:05] No, there was nobody with us on the plane, as I remember, except for other volunteers. There were, you know.

NOBLE: [01:06:12] Oh, those other ones going to Pasto and then from Pasto to someplace else.

WAND: [01:06:15] Exactly, we were all going in together.

NOBLE: [01:06:17] So there was a group, OK.

WAND: [01:06:18] Yeah, eight or 10 of us. I can't remember exact number but we had a group leader in Pasto. This was when Peace Corps had a system of

group leaders. They had discovered that there needed to be a point person in each region who was a volunteer. They were called volunteer leaders.

NOBLE: [01:06:37] And this would have been somebody who had already been there for a while?

WAND: [01:06:41] A Peace Corps volunteer who was a little seasoned. I mean, this might not be maybe more, not more than a year more than you have.

NOBLE: [01:06:47] But still they could help orient you.

WAND: [01:06:51] Help find their way around. So there was a group of volunteer, what they called a volunteer leader there. No paid staff for Peace Corps in Pasto, but a volunteer leader who met us at the airport. And we either took taxis, you know, some sort of local taxis or we rode in his green jeep, the infamous green jeeps. And so then we stayed.

NOBLE: [01:07:14] So you would have spent a night in Pasto.

WAND: [01:07:16] Yes. In fact, we spent at least one night because that's where we had our mailboxes and we had, you know, we had, in fact he took us to help us get beds because we needed to be equipped.

NOBLE: [01:07:28] So where you were going to be going in, there had not been Peace Corps volunteers before?

WAND: [01:07:34] No.

NOBLE: [01:07:35] You were the very first.

WAND: [01:07:36] We were the very first, right. That was really an interesting thing, too. But anyway, we'll get to that.

NOBLE: [01:07:43] Was there a hostel, a Peace Corps hostel in Pasto where you could stay the night when you'd come in?

WAND: [01:07:49] No, no, there wasn't. We had to stay in an inexpensive hotel. But there were people, volunteers over the two years that I was there. There were volunteers who lived in Pasto and some of them would have larger apartments and we could hang out there, which we did. That was wonderful. It was wonderful to see the volunteers.

NOBLE: [01:08:15] No kidding.

WAND: [01:08:16] Yeah. Yeah, right. And we formed good, strong bonds with some of them. So anyway, you know, I'm just thinking when we first went in, I don't think we. Well, we had to buy some bedding. But then, um, our volunteer leader helped us kind of find our way around and then he took us out to Buesaco. And he took us, um, I think he took us to Buesaco, and two other male volunteers further up another hour and a half or beyond Buesaco. Not even this other group of volunteers were not even on the Pan-American Highway. They went up a ways north and then went off the Pan-American Highway, off onto a side road to a village called San Pablo. Um, anyway, uh, but I will never forget. He took us to Buesaco and dropped us off at this, well, one could call it a bed and breakfast, but that doesn't connote anything like what it was. There was no hotel in town. There was no public place to stop. So but this *mamacita*, who was a wonderful grandmotherly kind of woman who was highly respected in the village, she owned this little, we'll call it a restaurant for lack of a better term. And there were a couple bedrooms that she would rent out.

NOBLE: [01:10:07] And she knew you were coming?

WAND: [01:10:08] She knew we were coming because of the volunteer leader, whose name is escaping me right now. I may think of it because I know it so well and I certainly see his face, but he had arranged before we came. In fact, he had met with the padre in the village. In Latin America, in Colombia, at this time, you didn't do anything unless the padre allowed you to do it in his village. So the volunteer leader had met with the padre and the mayor of the town and talked about Peace Corps. And they said, yes, they'd take volunteers. The women could come and would be welcome. And um, I'm not sure what all they talked about we would be doing.

NOBLE: [01:10:54] And the padre himself was Colombian? He wasn't like in from Spain or something?

WAND: [01:10:59] He was Colombian, right. So. So we, um, so he had gone, um, earlier to meet with them and to clear the way, so to speak, and to find a place for us to stay.

NOBLE: [01:11:17] The volunteer group leader?

WAND: [01:11:20] The volunteer leader, right. And I need to make sure that I call him volunteer leader because that was his term. That was his title. And so he took us there. He was very kind and set us up. And, you know, we were, but we were still traveling just with our suitcases. Our trunks had not yet to come. They weren't going to come for a long, for quite a while. But so the goal, we understood that he would come back and stop by in a few days and see, you know, in a week or so and see how we were doing. But our first initial thing was to stay with her, Rosalia. Rosalia was her name. Stay with Rosalia and then find a place, a permanent place, for us to stay. Now, Rosalia kept saying we could stay with her forever, but we really wanted to have a house where we could have some privacy and set it up and cook for ourselves.

NOBLE: [01:12:17] Do your own cooking.

WAND: [01:12:18] And, you know, live independently of her. And because now you have to realize that, you know, there was a flush toilet of sorts in this house that was back in the backyard and what we, you know, back and there was piped water to an outdoor spigot in kind of a sink. But that was the extent of the water.

NOBLE: [01:12:44] And so you had to go outside to get to the toilet place.

WAND: [01:12:47] Yes, exactly.

NOBLE: [01:12:48] But it was a little outhouse sort of with the flush toilet.

WAND: [01:12:51] Right, right. A cement kind of base. But that was about it. And it was, there was a door on the outside of it. That was nice to have that.

NOBLE: [01:13:00] Something to sit on?

WAND: [01:13:04] I think that there may have been, it may have been a stool kind of toilet. Yeah, I think it was. Yeah. Um, so, and there was just a, we shared a room. There were two beds. We had, uh, brought our powder for bed, uh, bedbugs so that we. Because the mattress we slept on was straw, was covered straw. And we had, one of the things we had bought with the volunteer leader were blankets and sheets. But we still, you know, we used the powder, of course, on the. Anyway, it was.

NOBLE: [01:13:49] Did it work?

WAND: [01:13:51] Yes. And we shared meals there in a communal table because this was also kind of a restaurant where people, especially in the community in town, would sometimes come for breakfast or lunch or, you know, dinner even every day. The food was very simple. But um, I'll just never forget what it felt like when the volunteer leader got back into his jeep.

NOBLE: [01:14:21] And drove away.

WAND: [01:14:22] And drove away. That image of that, the back end of that green jeep driving out away from us, leaving us there was like, I'll never forget it. It was just blasted into my brain because it was like, that's when I suddenly realized, oh my God.

NOBLE: [01:14:41] We're here and we're alone. Now, you didn't, of course, there were no cell phones.

WAND: [01:14:45] No, and not even any phones into the village.

NOBLE: [01:14:48] In the whole village. Right, right. So you were totally cut off?

WAND: [01:14:52] Totally cut off.

NOBLE: [01:14:52] Yeah, yeah. Was there electricity in the town?

WAND: [01:14:56] There was electricity during certain hours of the day.

NOBLE: [01:14:59] In Rosalia's house?

WAND: [01:15:00] In Rosalia's house, there would be like one bulb.

NOBLE: [01:15:03] But not all the time.

WAND: [01:15:05] Not all the time. No, no. And yeah, if you know, if the man who ran the generator got mad at the mayor, then there was no electricity anyway, you know. Or he'd just decide to go out drinking one night and he'd turn it off at six o'clock at night. So, you know, then nobody has.

NOBLE: [01:15:23] Oh, so you couldn't really plan for when you could have it?

WAND: [01:15:26] No, couldn't plan for when you'd have it, no, at all.

NOBLE: [01:15:28] So refrigeration was not available regularly.

WAND: [01:15:30] No, no, not an option, regularly. But that's, of course, you know, like for Rosalia, she had a little stand where she sold Coca-Colas and soft drinks, you know, the local soft drinks and, you know, sometimes they would not be refrigerated because it wasn't on, you know.

NOBLE: [01:15:50] And meat, how did people keep?

WAND: [01:15:52] They butchered twice a week. So you buy meat on the day or two days after they butchered and after that.

NOBLE: [01:15:58] And it's not being refrigerated between the butchering and the cooking?

WAND: [01:16:01] No, no, never. You buy it for the day. But I was immediately overwhelmed by the filth, by the dirt that was everywhere, and the lack of sanitation.

NOBLE: [01:16:24] Now the streets, the Pan-American Highway was not necessarily paved in every place, but the little streets in the village probably weren't paved either.

WAND: [01:16:33] No, they were really dirty. But the Pan-American Highway through the village was paved.

NOBLE: [01:16:40] But soon as you got off that into the side streets, it was.

WAND: [01:16:44] Exactly.

NOBLE: [01:16:44] So there'd be a lot of dust and mud.

WAND: [01:16:45] Dust and mud, depending on what season it was. I became so overwhelmed. And then one of, all I could see was the poverty, the filth, and the starvation of the babies and the children and the flies on their faces and the emaciated and extended stomachs. I became so depressed that all I wanted to do was cry. This was in the first few days and I just didn't know what I was going to do because this is so, it was so unfair, overwhelming and uncharacteristic.

NOBLE: [01:17:26] Uncharacteristic for you to respond to something that way.

WAND: [01:17:30] For me, yeah, for me to be depressed. I'd never been depressed basically in my life. And to be in this. And then I kept thinking, oh my God, I've committed to be here for two years. How can I do this for two years? And every time I thought of two years, I would just, you know, sort of turn into a heap or want to turn into a heap. I keep a pretty good face up and I was able, but I tried not to be too negative, certainly not negative at all around the Colombians. And I didn't know Jenny well enough to be able to share that depth of feeling with her. So I was keeping it all very much inside.

NOBLE: [01:18:11] Did you ever find out later from Jenny if she was feeling some similar emotions of being overwhelmed?

WAND: [01:18:18] No, I never did. That's a really good question, and I could ask her now. But so inside myself, this is what I did. I figured out a technique and the technique was this, OK? OK, Pat, I said to myself, you get up tomorrow morning, six o'clock. You think about what's going to happen between 6:00 and noon. That's all you going to let your brain. Your brain can only think until noon. At noon, at lunchtime, you can plan the afternoon. The next day, exactly the same thing. You get up at six o'clock. You think about what you're going to do in the morning. And in the morning, you allow yourself to think then about the afternoon at lunchtime, you can think about the afternoon and evening. And that is how I got through the first two weeks.

NOBLE: [01:19:13] And what did you do? You haven't got a clearer idea yet of the way in which you'll be engaged with this community. What you do from six o'clock in the morning until noon?

WAND: [01:19:25] Okay. Well, you know, we started getting very practical. We started, we'd sort of let the word out that we were going to rent a house.

NOBLE: [01:19:34] OK, so it was up to you to find it.

WAND: [01:19:36] Yes. So people would come to Rosalia and say, you know, we heard the gringos want to rent a house. Well, I have a house to rent. You know, we'd start lining up a visit here and then. Another thing is we were supposed to work with the health center, so we immediately wanted to do that. But actually, even before that, the most, the most important thing we were told to do is to visit the padre and to visit the mayor. So we lined those up immediately. So we went to visit each of those people.

NOBLE: [01:20:07] Now how big a place is Buesaco? How many people?

WAND: [01:20:11] They thought maybe there were two thousand inhabitants. Nobody knew for sure. But you know, that was, two thousand, 2,500 maybe.

NOBLE: [01:20:19] So you have a main street, that's the Pan-American Highway and then a few others.

WAND: [01:20:23] And it goes for about a mile.

NOBLE: [01:20:25] So this is a village that's strung out, a skinny village strung out along a highway, with in some places, little streets that.

WAND: [01:20:33] That go off like a block, a block long.

NOBLE: [01:20:35] And there might be another parallel to the.

WAND: [01:20:37] And some of those block long streets, then would lead to a trail that would go down the mountain or down around the side of the mountain. And then they'd go off and you could walk for hours up into the mountains. Which we did sometimes, you know, going to what were called *veredas*, or little neighborhoods, that were way up there.

NOBLE: [01:20:56] So you spend those first weeks, you spent your time meeting the padre, meeting the mayor, and looking at possible houses to rent.

WAND: [01:21:06] Right. And the first meeting with the padre is one of those memorable experiences.

NOBLE: [01:21:13] Yeah. How did that go?

WAND: [01:21:14] Okay, we were told that the padre could see us at a morning that he receives people, let's say, at, you know, 10 o'clock in the morning or something on a particular day. So it was shortly after we got there. So we went to his, to the rectory, the house, which is of course, the biggest building in the village, was the church and it was on a little bit the highest ground of the village. And in kind of the center of this long stretched out village and the house we were living in was right there on that plaza, which was right in.

NOBLE: [01:21:48] So there's a little plaza.

WAND: [01:21:50] Little plaza in front of the church.

NOBLE: [01:21:52] With buildings on other sides of it too?

WAND: [01:21:53] Yes, and the road goes right around the plaza. The Pan-American Highway went right around, went just to one side of the plaza, and the road that Rosalia's house was right on that highway, right there across, right opened onto the plaza.

NOBLE: [01:22:11] Yeah.

WAND: [01:22:12] Well, so we went across the plaza to the padre's house and we sat. We noticed he was receiving people and we noticed that. So we were kind of motioned to sit in one of the chairs. And so he was receiving some campesinos and this little woman went who had, she was carrying a baby and she had a couple of children in tow and she went to the padre and she bowed down and opened a rag that she had as part of her clothing and spilled out some centavos out of this bag and gave them to the padre and implored him to help her in some way. I do not know what it was.

NOBLE: [01:23:02] Now would that woman have been speaking Spanish or were there indigenous languages?

WAND: [01:23:07] It was Spanish.

NOBLE: [01:23:08] Spanish. So even the women spoke Spanish.

WAND: [01:23:10] Yeah, yeah, yeah. In that particular village, it had been exposed to Spanish for so long that some of the outlying areas where they still spoke some indigenous languages, but not in Buesaco. So you know, again, her babies were starving. And here she was, giving the padre this money.

NOBLE: [01:23:33] And I would guess he's not starving. He probably looks well-fed.

WAND: [01:23:36] No, he's a little roly-poly. Yeah. So we were next. So we were invited then to sit and talk with him. And so he said to us, you know, we love President Kennedy. He is our, he is a Colombian. We know he's a Colombian and he does wonderful, wonderful work. And we're so happy that he has sent you to us. And he said, and we said, well, what? And he said to us, then what are you going to do? And we said, we are going to help your village do what it wants to do, you know, we would like to, if there are projects to do, if there are things you can like tell us to do, or the people we can, and we can teach and work with the community. And then he said, well, this is what the padre in Buesaco wants you to do.

NOBLE: [01:24:31] He's talking about himself in the third person?

WAND: [01:24:33] Yes. He said, we want, the padre wants you to write to President Kennedy and get the money for a jeep. The padre in Buesaco needs a jeep. I have my flock is all over and I have to borrow a car in order to visit my flock, who live out away from the village. And President Kennedy is very generous and he will send a jeep.

NOBLE: [01:25:08] Oh my goodness, what are you supposed to do with that?

WAND: [01:25:13] So we assured him we came with no money. We came with no inside scoop with Kennedy. There was no way we were going to get the president of the United States to send a jeep to the padre, that we were here to help with teaching or community work and service, but not with any.

NOBLE: [01:25:34] Not with money.

WAND: [01:25:35] Yeah. And after that, he pretty much didn't care what we did. The next test, though, came with the administrative officer to the mayor. His official title was secretary to the mayor. And when we went to see the mayor, he was very eager, this man, the secretary, was very eager to see us. And he said that. And of course, we were eager to meet more people. And he said. Well, somehow we got, he invited us to meet his mother. And so we said, well, that would be, we would love to meet his mother. And so the next day, we were supposed to meet his mother and we were

supposed to come to her house. And he told us where it was. And of course, a friend who was Rosalia's son in law, who was a very respected principal of the boys' school in town, a friend was our guide. I mean, he and Rosalia were a fabulous team for us because they got it. They understood about what. They just got the concept of Peace Corps volunteers coming and working with the.

NOBLE: [01:26:57] Yeah, yeah, yeah.

WAND: [01:26:58] They came from kind of an education background to that extent. And so the next day, we were supposed to go and visit the secretary's mother. Well, we got to their house and Fran had told us where their house was. We got to their house. We knocked on the door. The secretary came to the door and we said, hello, you know, et cetera, we're here to meet your mother. And he said, well, come in. I have a friend here. Please come and join us. We want you to play poker with us. And here, would you like a little aguardiente, which is the local drink.

NOBLE: [01:27:32] Oh, wait a minute. Where is your mother, did you say?

WAND: [01:27:35] Exactly. Thank you. You're very kind. But we're here to visit your mother. Well, she's not available right now. She'll be here in a little bit. Of course, my Spanish is still catching up. But Jenny, luckily, Jenny was understanding everything very clearly.

NOBLE: [01:27:53] And could she make little asides to you in English so that you?

WAND: [01:27:56] Yeah. And, you know, I'd say, Jenny, is he saying such and such? Yeah. So anyway, he said, oh. We said, well, we don't drink aguardiente. And then because, we'd been told that if you drink alcohol in public, women, American women drinking alcohol in public, in the rural areas, we would be labeled prostitutes. So we said we don't drink. Well, then play cards. Well, we don't play cards. We just decided that was, you know, there he was with his friend, you know? And who didn't look terribly reputable, but that's beside the point anyway. So then he said, oh, we understand you don't like aguardiente, because that's not good enough for you. I have a little whiskey here.

NOBLE: [01:28:34] Oh, gee.

WAND: [01:28:35] We'll have a little whiskey. And we said, no, we don't, we don't drink whiskey. And so by this time, we had sat down and he kept giving it, trying to get us to drink something. We said, no, we're not going to drink. We'd like to see your mother. Is your mother around. When do you expect her? Well, you know, he didn't have any answers for us. And so pretty soon, he said, well, you are now a prisoner of our house and we expect you to play poker with us. And I said.

NOBLE: [01:29:02] Were you able to get out, was the door open?

WAND: [01:29:03] I said to Jenny, I said, did he just say that we were prisoners? And she said, that's what he said. I said, we're out of here! So we just got up and walked out as fast as we could.

NOBLE: [01:29:13] Oh, good for you.

WAND: [01:29:14] Walked immediately back to a friend and Rosalia's house. They were there. We told them what happened, and Rosalia said, you stay right here. We will protect you no matter what happens. And there was never another word, and we were never again approached to be partners in drinking and cards.

NOBLE: [01:29:37] Thank goodness that you didn't have a house already set up for you because you're having to stay with Rosalie really gave you that buffer, that advocate on your behalf.

WAND: [01:29:50] Absolutely. And a safe haven.

NOBLE: [01:29:52] Yes, that's right.

WAND: [01:29:53] And also, Rosalie and a friend then could help establish our relationship. I mean, our reputation. These are reputable women who are not going to be sleeping around. They're going to be here to do their tasks.

NOBLE: [01:30:09] Yes. How wonderful.

WAND: [01:30:12] So it was. It was scary at the time because we thought, we didn't know how powerful this man was. We thought we might have overstepped somebody who had a great deal of authority, you know, in the in the village. But a friend said, no, it's OK, you know, it's OK. You did the right thing.

NOBLE: [01:30:30] That's right. And so right at the beginning, you established who you were and who you were not. And then you could proceed to get something done.

WAND: [01:30:38] It was all really basically successful after that. I mean, it was. And you know, my little trick of keeping myself from crying every day worked. Because suddenly, I mean, after I was there for about three or four weeks, I suddenly began. I suddenly realized, oh my god, I love this place. This is incredible. I mean, and it was. You know, and that's the way the whole two years was.

NOBLE: [01:31:10] OK, so um, after some time, how long was it before you were able to move out of Rosalia's house and into your own place, you and Jenny?

WAND: [01:31:23] You know, I can't remember the exact number of weeks. Um, we found the place probably within the first week, but it wasn't quite finished. It was a place that was right on the Pan-American Highway, right next to the only service station, the only gas station, from Pasto on north for many, many, many, many miles. So the owner of this gas station had built our little house thinking he would rent it, and it was a pretty upscale house for that village. It had a concrete floor all the way through it. It wasn't just a packed dirt floor.

NOBLE: [01:32:13] Yeah, that's good. Did it have a bathroom?

WAND: [01:32:16] It had a, um, out in the courtyard, it had a concrete structure that on the side that faced the patio of the house was a sink with running water, cold running water. And on the backside of that were two stalls, one

with a roof that had the toilet in it and one next to it without a roof that had the shower in it. So it was like upscale.

NOBLE: [01:32:50] No kidding.

WAND: [01:32:51] In terms of the people there.

NOBLE: [01:32:53] So I'm trying to get a picture of this. You've got a courtyard in the house, a patio or something.

WAND: [01:32:58] A covered patio and all four of the rooms. So it had three or four rooms that opened out into that covered courtyard and you'd enter it from the street.

NOBLE: [01:33:11] From the street.

WAND: [01:33:12] By going through a long hall, hallway into this covered little patio. And then that you stepped off into just dirt when we bought it, or when we rented it. But the landlord hadn't quite finished it, and he wouldn't let us move in until he built a topgia, which is a wall around the back of the house.

NOBLE: [01:33:35] Ok, so that you'd be closed in for your safety?

WAND: [01:33:39] For the safety, right. Yeah, yeah. Didn't want the gringas living there with being exposed. And so that took a few more weeks to have him do that. So we had to stay with Rosalia for several weeks until the house was ready. Rosalia was very sad that we didn't, that we got a house so far away. Because it was.

NOBLE: [01:34:01] Far away?

WAND: [01:34:01] Far away, meaning it was probably a ten. [tape break]

NOBLE: [01:34:11] Was about a ten minute walk away from Rosalia's.

WAND: [01:34:14] Right, from the square, from the plaza. Yeah, and because remember now, this village is a mile long. And the church and the plaza were basically in the center of it. And then it's extended out in both directions.

NOBLE: [01:34:28] So a ten minute walk takes you pretty far out towards the edge of town.

WAND: [01:34:32] Yes, we were on the edge of town. Right at the edge of town, where the gas station was, and then our house and then um, and not, there were a couple of things that were happening.

NOBLE: [01:34:44] On the way going towards Pasto from the plaza?

WAND: [01:34:47] Yes. So which would have been on the south side of the village was where our house was. There were two things, two strikes against this house as far as Rosalia was concerned. First of all, it was too far away from her and the plaza. And second of all, it was too expensive and the rent was \$7.50 a month. And that was too expensive. That was the highest priced rent that she had ever heard of in the village.

NOBLE: [01:35:21] But there probably weren't too many houses with solid concrete floors.

WAND: [01:35:26] There were no other houses like this. And we were just so lucky to find it. It was brand new and it was clean and it had doors that locked and, you know, and the landlord was sensitive to our needs, and he desperately wanted to make sure that that wall was built around the back.

NOBLE: [01:35:48] Right. So this is all good. But Rosalia is not happy.

WAND: [01:35:52] Right. But Rosalia was a wise lady, and she knew that this was a good situation for us. And so she always remained our dear fast friend and we would stop and have lunch with her. And we would have a cup of coffee with her. And yes.

NOBLE: [01:36:10] So you had a kitchen. You had four rooms. One of them was the kitchen?

WAND: [01:36:14] One of them was a little room to the left that, as you faced it from the dirt from the patio, you know, a little room that was the kitchen and it had a raised concrete, um. I'm going to call it a counter, but that's really a word that doesn't describe it. It was simply a block, if you will. But on the top of it was a grate to hold the charcoal.

NOBLE: [01:36:46] Oh, charcoal.

WAND: [01:36:47] So we had to burn charcoal. That's how we cooked, was on charcoal, which we would buy from the campesinos who would bring it down in gunny sacks from the mountains where they would make it. And they made charcoal, do you know how they make charcoal?

NOBLE: [01:37:04] I really don't know how.

WAND: [01:37:05] Well, they take wood and put it in a pit and then they light it on fire. And then they cover the wood and so it only burns, so it partially burns. So then it's light and it dries out. And it looks just exactly like the charcoal stuff that we buy for our barbecue.

NOBLE: [01:37:32] OK, yeah.

WAND: [01:37:33] But it's not so regular. It's not regular in shape. It's all different sizes of wood chips.

NOBLE: [01:37:40] They're bringing that back now in the supermarkets.

WAND: [01:37:43] I believe it. Anyway, so that's what we cooked on for two years, and we even figured out a way to use our pressure cooker on the charcoal. And we only blew out two safety valves that got buried in the ceiling because it was too hot.

NOBLE: [01:38:00] Oh my goodness. So you did all your own cooking.

WAND: [01:38:02] Yeah, we did our own cooking.

NOBLE: [01:38:03] And there was a market there? There must have been a market where you shopped?

WAND: [01:38:06] There was a, uh, twice a week Saturday and Wednesdays, the farmers would bring. So there was an open market for produce and then there were a couple of little stores in town where you can buy canned goods and they may have a papaya or a few bananas or something, but they didn't usually keep fresh produce. The fresh produce you bought at the market when it happened on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

NOBLE: [01:38:33] And if you wanted some meat, you'd buy it on a Wednesday or Saturday or you wouldn't have meat.

WAND: [01:38:37] Exactly right. They would butcher those two days. And that's when you had meat. And you know, you just survive. That's OK. And of course, the campesinos in the countryside, they didn't get butchered meat. They would raise guinea pigs and the guinea pig would live on the floor of their kitchen and eat all the scraps. You know, the peelings and the old potatoes and all the stuff. And then they would kill the guinea pig and eat it. So it was a perfect food chain.

NOBLE: [01:39:08] Sure.

WAND: [01:39:09] And they always had fresh protein there, which they couldn't afford to do that very often because they'd run out of guinea pig, but whenever we would visit them, they would fix a guinea pig for us.

NOBLE: [01:39:20] You talked about a shower in the back and without a ceiling to it. So now I'm realizing that I don't know what the climate is. Like your house, what's your altitude here in Buesaco?

WAND: [01:39:36] Good question. The altitude was about seven thousand feet above sea level, but it was very close to the equator, very close to the equator. Days that were 12 hours long exactly, year-round.

NOBLE: [01:39:56] Right. So there wasn't the difference, year round. The sun came up and set at the same time.

WAND: [01:40:01] At the same time all the time. But the elevation was such that it was kind of like perpetual spring. It was the perfect climate. In the sunshine it was really, really warm. In the evenings you might want a sweater.

NOBLE: [01:40:19] When you'd step from the sunshine into the shade, there'd be a.

WAND: [01:40:23] You'd feel a difference. But it was not too cold. The only time it would get cool and kind of uncomfortable was when it was raining. But, you know, that happened, that was a rainy season. There were two, one major and one minor rainy season, but those were not bad.

NOBLE: [01:40:40] That sounds good.

WAND: [01:40:41] It was lovely.

NOBLE: [01:40:42] So the weather was not a major problem.

WAND: [01:40:44] The weather was like a dream.

NOBLE: [01:40:46] Yeah. You mentioned that the children in town were hungry. They were, their bellies were popping out from malnutrition. So I guess this is saying something about the scarcity of those guinea pigs and that people. What were the ordinary rural residents eating?

WAND: [01:41:11] A lot of starch, a lot of yucca, the yucca root, you know, cassava.

NOBLE: [01:41:19] Cassava, yeah.

WAND: [01:41:19] I think it's called cassava.

NOBLE: [01:41:21] That doesn't have a lot of nutritional value.

WAND: [01:41:23] No nutrition. Potatoes. They, you know, the concept of green vegetables were not really known. They used, you know, there'd be beans, there'd be rice. If they could buy anything, they bought rice. They would eat bananas and plantains. A lot of plantains. And they cooked the plantains, you know, either fry them in slices or put them in soup. And that was called *sancocho*. And *sancocho* was the basic food of lunch. Breakfast, lunch and dinner, well, usually not breakfast, but dinner, lunch and dinner. The same thing. And it would always have yucca and potatoes and, you know, and it was a very.

NOBLE: [01:42:11] But there wouldn't be a green vegetable in there and there wouldn't be meat, usually, for a really poor family.

WAND: [01:42:16] Exactly. Right. And so one of the things that we did was as we got settled in our in our house, the neighbor ladies wanted to do a mothers club. So we said, sure, we'll do mothers club. So we started doing some interesting things, including teaching them about nutrition, but through the idea of cooking. And so we would show them. One of the things, one source of protein that was readily available was canned tuna fish. They would import it. I think they imported it illegally. I mean, there was a lot of black market stuff, but it was readily available on all the shelves. And so we showed them how to mix that with rice or to, you know, use it in ways to increase the variety of the foods they ate and more nutrition. And we also talked a lot about, you know, the green, using, introducing greens. And of course, we had to be careful because the water was not good. We talked to them about boiling water.

NOBLE: [01:43:31] Yeah, yeah.

WAND: [01:43:31] And I always used boiled water and always emphasized it in every demonstration that we gave. And so then we'd have the mothers club come and we would cook something together and then we'd eat it together. So it was really fun.

NOBLE: [01:43:46] And beans, you said, was part of their diet too, right?

WAND: [01:43:49] Yeah, like a white bean, you know? Well, a couple of different kinds of beans, but they would be, you know. Not the green beans.

NOBLE: [01:43:58] No, no. Dried beans.

WAND: [01:44:00] Dried beans, right. But it was. So we started this mother's club and there were probably 10 women that would come, and we'd have a meeting once a week and we'd talk with them about what they would like to learn. And then we would always do something about sanitation or nutrition. And we did the food groups, you know, four food, very simple food groups and showing them how a good diet has all of those things in it. And because it gives us, they knew the concept of vitamins and minerals, but they didn't, you know? But that was all. I mean, some of them had heard it. Then they would bring their little notebooks and they would copy the recipes down. And we translated the recipes and put them on a sheet. And so we did this at a couple of mothers clubs in different neighborhoods in the village. And then the women in our neighborhood wanted to learn how to bake the first communion cakes. Well, the first communion cakes there are just like wedding cakes here. They're tiered, they're elaborate, and they cost a tremendous amount of money to pay the baker. So the women said, well, we're learning to cook. You know how to do these things.

NOBLE: [01:45:17] Teach us how to bake a cake.

WAND: [01:45:21] Well, I had charcoal fire. Where's the oven? They said, we don't have an oven. Nobody has an oven in this neighborhood. And these are the ovens that are the adobe ovens, where you bake bread.

NOBLE: [01:45:33] Did they have bread?

WAND: [01:45:35] Oh yeah, yeah. But they bought them from the bakery. But where you build a fire inside the adobe and then you let it burn down and you scoop the charcoal out and then you bake your bread or whatever.

NOBLE: [01:45:46] Yeah.

WAND: [01:45:47] Or cakes. They didn't have. They couldn't use electricity. So we said, well, what are we going to do? And they said, well, we got to get an oven. And I said, well, where can we put, where can there be an oven? And they said, well, we don't know, but let's talk. So they talked with their husbands and they figured out that one of the houses had the room in the back courtyard. And it was a house that was neutral enough that a lot of people could share it. And that the husband knew how to make what make one of those ovens. But it costs money to buy the bricks and the adobe and to get these materials to do it. Well, the women decided that they could bake bread in a borrowed oven, sell the bread on market day, and get the money to buy the materials and the bricks to build their own oven. So they did that for three or four market days and got enough money together and built this oven next door, which happened to be next door to our house. And so then we, then I used my Betty Crocker cookbook, which I still have.

NOBLE: [01:46:51] Which you had taken with you?

WAND: [01:46:52] Which I had taken with me.

NOBLE: [01:46:54] Along with your sewing machine.

WAND: [01:46:55] And I translated, Jenny and I worked on translating the recipe for doing a white wedding cake. And we translated that recipe and wrote it up on a flip chart and they copied it down and we showed them how to do it.

NOBLE: [01:47:11] Had you tried it out on your own? Just the two of you, in this oven?

WAND: [01:47:16] I think we did it as a test before, but I'm not absolutely sure that we did even a test. We were, you know, we were, we had no idea what we were doing, but it was so much fun and they empowered us to do all this. And so we just did it, you know?

NOBLE: [01:47:34] And how did it turn out?

WAND: [01:47:37] Beautiful. So they started doing it. They started making cakes and then they started.

NOBLE: [01:47:40] And then the frosting, they would do a little sugar?

WAND: [01:47:43] Sugar and Crisco. Or they could get white Crisco kind of thing. And they started doing it. And one of them started doing it for pay, you know, making cakes for other people.

NOBLE: [01:47:56] Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah.

WAND: [01:47:58] And then one of their husbands made the tiered rack and I still, and they gave one to me when I left, a tiered rack out of wood that's on a pole that holds three layers of a cake. It's lovely. I've used it since. I've never made it cake to put on it, obviously, because I don't do that. But I used it to display like hors d'oeuvres and stuff at a party, you know, because it's tiered. It stands about this tall.

NOBLE: [01:48:28] Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

WAND: [01:48:30] But he made them to use for selling cakes, you know, to display at a first communion. So anyway, that's was wonderful.

NOBLE: [01:48:38] Marvelous. So you've got this baking project going and there were other things too.

WAND: [01:48:45] Yeah. Then they started saying, well, teach how to sew. And so I said, yeah, I think I can do that. But I had to teach myself how to draft patterns, and my mother sent me some stuff about drafting patterns. And I had been changing patterns all my life when I sew, but I never did one from scratch, you know, taking measurements and figuring out how big around it has to be and how deep the sleeve needs to be. How the neckline goes and all that. I mean, I knew how it worked, but I never cut the form myself. So I started practicing and then I was able to show them, and so I ran. So I put together a curriculum for a sewing class where each woman chose a neckline pattern and they each did the basic, a basic shirtwaist dress.

NOBLE: [01:49:37] So you were teaching them not only how to sew, but how to make a pattern.

WAND: [01:49:41] Yes.

NOBLE: [01:49:41] Wow.

WAND: [01:49:42] Because they didn't. There was no other way.

NOBLE: [01:49:43] There wasn't any.

WAND: [01:49:44] No, they weren't any patterns available. So um, those little, we called them *cursios* or little courses, about sewing and I'm trying to think of how many. I think I ran at least two, I may have done three, and there were like four or five women in each one. And they lasted like two months or so.

NOBLE: [01:50:07] Each little *cursio*?

WAND: [01:50:09] Yeah, because we had to, it took time to do it, you know?

NOBLE: [01:50:13] Now where did you, what kind of paper did you? How did you get paper to do the patterns and where did you get the cloth?

WAND: [01:50:20] The fabric was there in town. There was a couple stores that carried a few bolts of fabric, you know, like the old general store. Except these were places where you, um, you couldn't get to the material yourself. It was behind the counter.

NOBLE: [01:50:37] You had ask somebody to get you it.

WAND: [01:50:40] Yeah, retrieve it, right. But there was lots of cottons. And so, we're looking at this picture here, which I'm showing you.

NOBLE: [01:50:46] And I see each one is made out of a totally different kind of cloth.

WAND: [01:50:49] Yes.

NOBLE: [01:50:49] They're all very lovely.

WAND: [01:50:50] It's all cotton and in different necklines. And they did this themselves and they just, you know. And so they had to make choices about whether they're going to pleat the skirt around the waist or were they going to do gathers around the waist and all of that. We had to cut the sleeves, and that was a challenge to make sure that they turned out right. But they succeeded.

NOBLE: [01:51:15] And meanwhile, your Spanish is getting better and better, when you have to teach in Spanish. And so this vocabulary, pleat, gather, the whole thing, you were learning as you're teaching.

WAND: [01:51:30] I had to learn it from them. You know, what do you call this? You know, what do you call this sleeve? What do you call a pleat? So it was great.

NOBLE: [01:51:39] So your students were your teachers?

WAND: [01:51:42] They were, they were. And one of the women in my class, in my sewing class, was a weaver. And I said to her, Otia, I have taught you to sew. Will you please teach me to weave? So she said, well, you need a loom. I said, well, how do I get the loom? And she said, well, somebody has to make it for you. So it just so happened at about that time, my brother, who's a year and a half older than me, had decided he was going to come and visit me. He's the only one of the family who could do it. He was an electrician at that time. He saved his money. He literally quit his job and in came and took two months out of his life.

NOBLE: [01:52:27] Oh my goodness.

WAND: [01:52:29] And came to Colombia, and he stayed for a month in the village with Jenny and me.

NOBLE: [01:52:34] Oh my goodness.

WAND: [01:52:35] Then he traveled with us in the midpoint, all the way around Latin America.

NOBLE: [01:52:40] Oh, marvelous. This is older brother, younger brother?

WAND: [01:52:42] Older brother. And he, as I mentioned.

NOBLE: [01:52:45] Oh, he's the one who chose not to go to college, but he's very talented.

WAND: [01:52:48] Yes, very talented, very artistic, very able with wood. And so he, um, came about that time and I said, Jerry, I would love to have a loom. Do you think you could make one for me? He said, sure. So Otia showed us how the loom works and he made me a little one.

NOBLE: [01:53:06] Oh my goodness, what a kid.

WAND: [01:53:08] Yeah.

NOBLE: [01:53:11] So this is about the halfway point. Jenny is working alongside you on all these projects? Or did she have other different things that she got into?

WAND: [01:53:21] Well, besides these things that we were doing. First of all, let me roll back in a minute. One of the things that a friend, you know, from Rosalia's son in law, wanted us to do was to teach English to the children. And at first, we resist because we said, look, this is a village. These most of these children will never even get to high school. Why do they need English? Well, it's the language of the future. Every child needs English. And he was dead set on making on getting us to teach English.

NOBLE: [01:53:55] In the school?

WAND: [01:53:56] In the school. And they had no high school. So this is great.

NOBLE: [01:53:59] There's no high school?

WAND: [01:54:00] There was an elementary school, one through five grades for the boys, and another elementary school, one through four grades, for the girls.

NOBLE: [01:54:12] And if a parent wanted their child to go on beyond fourth or fifth grade, they would have to go to Pasto?

WAND: [01:54:20] Send them to Pasto.

NOBLE: [01:54:20] And then they'd have to stay with some family member or who knows.

WAND: [01:54:24] Plus, pay tuition and all of that. I mean.

NOBLE: [01:54:26] This was prohibitive.

WAND: [01:54:28] Prohibitive for most of the families. So a friend just kept pushing about high school, about, um, English. And finally, you know, Jenny and I looked at each other one night and said, look, you know, we were taught. First of all, we were told, don't bother to teach English because that's not what they need. But second of all, we were taught listen to the felt needs. This is a felt need.

NOBLE: [01:54:51] That's right.

WAND: [01:54:52] Really strong.

NOBLE: [01:54:53] That's right.

WAND: [01:54:54] And not only that, it would give us an entree to the families if they see us as teachers. Our reputation will be further solidified. So we said, OK, OK, a friend, we'll teach English. So what we did.

NOBLE: [01:55:07] So now this is how far into your being there are you starting to teach?

WAND: [01:55:10] This was maybe about the third or fourth week.

NOBLE: [01:55:13] Oh, so from the beginning.

WAND: [01:55:15] Early on. We started teaching almost right away and we taught once a week to the highest grade in the school, and we scoped each class around a science concept.

NOBLE: [01:55:31] Oh, this is so, this is so 2012, this content-based English.

WAND: [01:55:38] Yes. So we said, OK, if we're going to do English, we're going to relate it to something we want to tell them about. So we did science, we did nutrition, we did sanitation, and we would introduce English words. And that's all he, he loved it. Vocabulary was fine. They didn't need to learn to speak if they just learn the words, and then they would say, then they would. And we taught them greetings. And so they would greet us in English and, you know, that kind. So it was the perfect thing for us to do. So we continued all the time we were there, teaching English once a week to the children.

NOBLE: [01:56:20] To the oldest in each school.

WAND: [01:56:22] Oldest in each school. And we started with the boys school and then we also then went over to the girls school too. So that was wonderful because we got, the children saw us as human beings. Then the other thing that was happening is the Alliance For Progress, Kennedy's program, was totally, uh, you know, it was all over Colombia. And when we got there, there was an Alliance for Progress school being built in one of the distant, distant *veredas* or communities. It was from Buesaco, from the village, it was a four-hour horseback ride.

NOBLE: [01:56:59] Oh my goodness, this is really remote.

WAND: [01:57:01] Really remote, this place, and that school was already being built.

NOBLE: [01:57:05] And this was another elementary school.

WAND: [01:57:07] Yes, an elementary. It was a two-room elementary school. Most of the schools were one room, but this was, you know, two rooms.

NOBLE: [01:57:15] Oh, most of the schools were one room.

WAND: [01:57:18] The rural schools.

NOBLE: [01:57:19] Oh yeah, OK.

WAND: [01:57:20] Yeah. But anyway, uh, so we visited. One of the early things we did was to visit that school. And, you know, we got horses, they got us horses and we borrowed them from somebody. In fact, actually, I forgot to tell you, we had to buy a horse. Each of us bought a horse.

NOBLE: [01:57:36] You did? Ah!

WAND: [01:57:40] I can't believe, see I totally forgot or neglected to tell. Yes, we had horses.

NOBLE: [01:57:43] And that's how you got around?

WAND: [01:57:44] That's how we got around. We didn't walk. We took the horses.

NOBLE: [01:57:49] If you wanted to go into Pasto, you would take a bus.

WAND: [01:57:51] Yeah, yeah. But getting around out into the rural areas where we needed to visit. So to go up there to that school, el alto, which means the high place. It was cold up there. And we took horses. Anyway, then we, one day we had a knock on our little door. Everybody knew where the gringas lived. And it was two campesinos from a way distant *vereda*, not four hours away, but like two hours away. Who said, we understand that you're here to help us and we need a school. And we want you to come and talk with us about how we can get a school in our neighborhood.

NOBLE: [01:58:35] Oh my goodness. Oh my goodness.

WAND: [01:58:37] So what the program was, was this. The money for the materials were available through the Alliance for Progress and through the Ministry of Education or one of the local ministries. I don't remember any more which one it was called. And the community had to put together a request. We helped them with that request. Fill out the paperwork. We went with them, the campesinos, on the bus to Pasto. We went to the office with them, next to them, and we were recognized. Whereas many, in many of those cases, the campesinos themselves.

NOBLE: [01:59:19] They could sit there for hours.

WAND: [01:59:20] For hours.

NOBLE: [01:59:20] Yeah, yeah.

WAND: [01:59:21] And we were recognized, we were ushered into the room, the offices. We said we would be there to assist the community.

NOBLE: [01:59:28] And your very presence gave them legitimacy.

WAND: [01:59:31] Absolutely. Yeah, absolutely. And they got the money. They got the money and they got an architect and the plan. The architect, the engineer, would come out on the day and the community had to build it themselves. They got the money for the materials and the plans and the community had to build it. And they had a long, hundreds of years, a tradition of what they call *minga*, which is an Indian word meaning workday. Community work. It's like a barn raising in English terms, in U.S. terms. And so they would have *minga* and we went for each of the *mingas* and we were there and we would help the women with the lunches. But we were also around the site and interacting with the men. And before we left, we were involved in three more school building projects, at the request of the communities.

NOBLE: [02:00:26] That's exactly, it's perfect. It's absolutely perfect. But then they'd need to get a teacher, right? And materials and all that, but that would be provided?

WAND: [02:00:35] In each of these cases, they already had a teacher. They were meeting in a porch or they were meeting in a falling down building. In each of these little communities they already had.

NOBLE: [02:00:48] Already teaching and learning going on, they needed a facility.

WAND: [02:00:52] They needed a facility that could be available through the through the rainy season, that wasn't washing away, and their textbooks were getting wet. I mean, they didn't have in many cases, they didn't have textbooks. But whatever papers they had. And the children brought their slates. They had slates and some of them had little paper notebooks that they would write their lessons into. Anyway, they were beautiful projects, these school building projects. And when I think about, you know, how successful that was, it was just incredible. One of the schools, another school had two rooms as well. But anyway, and then another.

NOBLE: [02:01:34] There was four different rural schools?

WAND: [02:01:36] The first one was already underway and we were involved with the inauguration of that. And, you know, with visits and et cetera, the el alto one, it was already underway. But the other three were not underway. They came because we were there to help these people.

NOBLE: [02:01:53] And they had heard that you had helped this other community.

WAND: [02:01:55] Exactly. And the word spread that we could help. So then.

NOBLE: [02:01:59] This is just perfect because the idea is originating from the people. They decided what they wanted. They came to you.

WAND: [02:02:06] We had the, I think we had one of the perfect sites. I really do. And so just before we left, one of the communities way up in the mountains said we need to replace a bridge. The bridge that is essential, that links us, it washes out with the rain every few years.

NOBLE: [02:02:27] Because it's not substantial.

WAND: [02:02:28] It's not substantial. It wasn't high enough. So they said, can we help you? So of course we said yes. And so we got together. We went to visit them way out there and we talked about what needed to be done. We worked with them to fill out the paperwork. We went with them to Pasto to get the materials and the engineer.

NOBLE: [02:02:44] You need an engineer to design this.

WAND: [02:02:46] Yeah, yeah. Because this was a major concrete bridge that still stands. And about this time we were leaving because our two years was up. So we worked with Peace Corps to get, to assure them, that they would get two more volunteers. And the second time around, the second group was a married couple. So the idea was if the man could help with some of these engineering things and the woman could carry on the programs that we had. Well, you know, nobody replaces anybody, you know, and they had a successful thing. But you know, the woman didn't have the same kind of skills that we had.

NOBLE: [02:03:26] That's right.

WAND: [02:03:26] It was, you know, it didn't, some of those things didn't continue, but the bridge got built. And in fact, there is a documentary made about that bridge.

NOBLE: [02:03:37] There's a documentary about the bridge building. What's it called?

WAND: [02:03:41] Well, it was created by Cliff Witt, who was a volunteer who's, um, a professional filmmaker, and I think a copy of it might be, in fact, in the Friends of Colombia archive at American University. And it was about not just that one project, but that was one of several projects in Colombia.

NOBLE: [02:04:08] Are you in it? Did he film it?

WAND: [02:04:11] No.

NOBLE: [02:04:11] Because you'd already gone.

WAND: [02:04:11] Yeah, right. It happened. Our successors are in it, but not me.

NOBLE: [02:04:15] I'd like to go back a little bit, um, back to your first year there, when you said your brother came at the midpoint and you traveled around. You got there in, um, September, October of 1963. Kennedy died in November.

WAND: [02:04:37] And I can't believe that we are.

NOBLE: [02:04:37] And what was the?

WAND: [02:04:41] And what was the reaction.

NOBLE: [02:04:41] Yeah, let's talk about that.

WAND: [02:04:42] I can't believe that we are, what, two hours into this interview and I haven't told you about that. Because that actually was one of the most astounding things to us. The day that Kennedy died was in, of course, November. We had been in the village only about six or seven weeks. We were in country just two months by that time. Because we came in late September, he was assassinated November 22nd or something. Well, it was ironic that the day before Kennedy was assassinated, Jenny and I had gone into Pasto to get our mail, get a few more supplies, and one of the. [tape break]

NOBLE: [02:05:30] Tape three of the interview with Patricia Wand, who was in Colombia, talking about the death of President John F. Kennedy in November of 1963. She'd been in the country for two months. And you and your partner Jenny had just gone into the big town of Pasto the day before Kennedy's death, and you had purchased a shortwave radio.

WAND: [02:06:02] Right. Battery operated, which was essential.

NOBLE: [02:06:05] Of course.

WAND: [02:06:07] So we were sitting. It was a, we were having some lunch on that day. It was a late lunch.

NOBLE: [02:06:17] In Pasto? You're still in Pasto?

WAND: [02:06:17] No, we're back in our house.

NOBLE: [02:06:19] Oh, you're back.

WAND: [02:06:20] We're back in the house. And that morning we had spent at the health center and I haven't told you about that.

NOBLE: [02:06:29] No, we haven't talked about the health center, but we can get to that.

WAND: [02:06:31] The health center has been very important to us. And we'd spent the health center. That was a day that CARE was delivering milk products and food supplies to the health center for the poorest people in the village. And we were asked by the mayor if we would help distribute that because CARE, it came from the United States. So we thought that sounded like an appropriate thing for us to be present to do. And so we had gone to the health center that morning and, um, and the mayor was there and the food products were there and the people were lining up. And there was supposedly a list of the poorest people. Well, there was a lot of confusion. There was a nurse practitioner in the village that was the most medical help that was available. Manuela was the nurse practitioner with a little training but very little training.

NOBLE: [02:07:34] And she was running the clinic?

WAND: [02:07:35] She was the person with the, the medical person. Once, um, about once a month, maybe, the doctor would come from Pasto and would be there for a few hours. But this particular day was time to distribute the CARE packages and the mayor was there. And there became concern among the people who had been lining up since dawn, and some of them had walked for miles to get there for the CARE food, that the people who were getting the food were not necessarily the poorest people, but the

best friends of the mayor. And so Jenny and I were caught up in this situation, the face of CARE and the food may be going to people who are not the neediest. It was awful. There was beginning to be a bit of a riot outside.

NOBLE: [02:08:37] Was the mayor there?

WAND: [02:08:38] The mayor was there and he was denying that, you know, he had done this and you know, all of these names.

NOBLE: [02:08:45] And the padre, was he there?

WAND: [02:08:47] No, the padre didn't. He sometimes was around for things like this, but he wasn't there at that time, thank heavens. Anyway, it was very tense. And in fact, we sort of, I'm not really sure whether it really got resolved. It's just that I think enough people finally gave up and went home and.

NOBLE: [02:09:08] Without their food?

WAND: [02:09:08] Without their food, and the food was gone. And so Jenny and I were feeling really stressed out because it was such a tragic scene to us and we realized that we were powerless over the politics of the whole thing. And so we got back to our house and we fixed some lunch and we're sitting eating some lunch, and the landlord of our house came through the back door, through the wall, because it had joined, it joined their passage way to their house. And came to the back, knocked on the door. And he said, and he started saying, um, saying something. Kennedy, Kennedy. And we didn't, I didn't understand what he was saying. And so we opened the door and he came and he said, they've shot Kennedy, they've shot Kennedy. President Kennedy has been shot. And Jenny and I looked at each other and Jenny helped me to really understand what. Is he dead? No, no, we don't know. He's just been shot. And so we turned on the radio and got Voice of America and could listen to it in English. But the town was devastated, devastated. Everybody was crying. It was as if. First of all, they could not believe that it would happen

in the United States. They couldn't believe, they immediately thought it was a conspiracy. It was a conspiracy against Latin America.

NOBLE: [02:10:42] Oh really?

WAND: [02:10:43] It was targeted in Latin America, because he was the first president who ever paid attention to Latin America. That was their feeling. And they said it was worse than if they're own Colombian president had been assassinated. It was terrible.

NOBLE: [02:11:00] So, well, you had said that someone, was it the mayor? Had said that Kennedy was a Colombian. Or maybe it was the padre.

WAND: [02:11:07] The padre, yeah, that's right. That was the feeling there, that he was the first president in, maybe ever, who had visited Colombia.

NOBLE: [02:11:17] Oh, he did.

WAND: [02:11:18] Yeah. He went to Bogota, and Jackie. And so I mean, it was one of those things. He was just an idol.

NOBLE: [02:11:25] They took him on, yeah.

WAND: [02:11:26] And so they immediately began to fly the Colombian flags with a black ribbon at the end, which is a sign of mourning. So we saw these Colombian flags flying out, up and down the village. There would be, you know, whatever family had enough money for a Colombian flag. They would tie this black ribbon on it. So I said to Jenny, I said, you know, the funeral's tomorrow. We don't have a flag. We've got to, we got to do a flag. And she said, yeah, but you know, we don't have one. And I said, you know, I could make one.

NOBLE: [02:12:04] Oh, my goodness. Betsy Ross, here you are.

WAND: [02:12:08] So I went to the village stores and I bought the red, white and blue. And I set about making our flag. And we flew it out of our house on the, with the black, with the black ribbon.

NOBLE: [02:12:27] With a black ribbon, which is understood. But so it was an American flag?

WAND: [02:12:31] It was an American flag.

NOBLE: [02:12:31] But with a Colombian symbol of mourning.

WAND: [02:12:36] Of mourning. And the villagers loved it. They loved seeing the American flag in their village. But for the entire rest of the time we were in Colombia, whenever we met somebody new who realized that we were Americans. They said, we are so sorry about the death of your president.

NOBLE: [02:13:00] Kennedy. For the rest of your stay.

WAND: [02:13:01] The rest of the time, saying it over and over and over. It was a tragic time for Colombia.

NOBLE: [02:13:13] How fascinating.

WAND: [02:13:14] Fascinating. And they immediately said it was a conspiracy. There was no doubt in their minds. And it was a conspiracy about, by somebody who hated Latin America.

NOBLE: [02:13:26] I've never heard that viewpoint of Kennedy's assassination before. It's absolutely fascinating. Would you like to say more about your involvement with the clinic before we go on?

WAND: [02:13:43] Yeah, that was, yeah. The first, the very first time that we went to the clinic was when one of the days that the doctor was visiting. And so Manuela wanted us to meet the doctor and et cetera. Dr. Eduardo, he was a very kind man. So he came and he was examining. And when we went to the clinic that morning, there was a line of families waiting, mostly mothers waiting with children in their arms who were sick or children coughing, and you know. So he examined these children and there was one particular baby that Manuela said she'd seen before. This baby was literally, literally dark. And it was so skinny and it was like three months

old, but it looked like it was newborn, except for the size of its head. And the mother had died in childbirth. And the family, the sisters were there. And so the doctor said to the sisters, so why have you brought the baby? And they said, because all he does. You know, I think it was a she, excuse me. All she does is cry. Well, are you feeding her? Well, sometimes.

NOBLE: [02:15:14] Why? Sometimes?

WAND: [02:15:16] Yes. I mean, it was awful.

NOBLE: [02:15:19] Do they even have bottles with nipples? And what would they do? They didn't have formula.

WAND: [02:15:25] No, they didn't have formula, and they couldn't. I mean, there was formula available, but they couldn't afford to buy it. Yeah. And they, you know, I'm just trying to remember, how did they feed? They had to have some mechanism to feed the baby. I think they had some kind of a bottle because we talked with them and then we gave them some formula and, you know, to take home. And then we said, and the baby was filthy.

NOBLE: [02:15:52] Oh, oh my.

WAND: [02:15:55] And only swaddled in rags. So we said, can we come and see if we can help, you know, in some way.

NOBLE: [02:16:05] To your house?

WAND: [02:16:06] To their house. They lived right in town. Yes. So we found out where they lived and we went that afternoon and we saw what was. You know, it was, the baby was in a hammock, but flies were all over it and it was starving and it was crying. And so we tried to show them how to fix the formula, how to give it, how to bathe it. And I took this baby in my arms to show them how to bathe it, and the baby literally almost fell through my fingers.

NOBLE: [02:16:42] Oh my, so tiny.

WAND: [02:16:44] Tiny. And just skin and bones. I mean, I'd never seen anything like it. I couldn't ever imagine. And the skin would have been all olive color, but instead it was like gray. And it was incredible. So we went back several days and we tried to talk with the sisters and they just.

NOBLE: [02:17:06] These sisters did not have children of their own?

WAND: [02:17:08] No, they were little. I mean, they were like maybe 10 or 11.

NOBLE: [02:17:12] Oh, oh, so they really didn't have a clue.

WAND: [02:17:15] The father was there and he was also clueless.

NOBLE: [02:17:18] Oh my.

WAND: [02:17:20] And it was. It was just one of those things. And basically they were waiting for the baby to die, and the noise of the baby's crying was annoying them. So they can be told, what can we do to get this baby to stop crying? Feed it, you know? But no, no, they would give it water.

NOBLE: [02:17:39] And not boiled water.

WAND: [02:17:40] Not boiled water, right. So anyway, that was my one, of our first introductions to the clinic. And so we went to the clinic at, uh, frequently and we would sometimes help Manuela do some inoculations, but we couldn't do the inoculations ourselves. We could just help her with. Sometimes we went with her out into the countryside. She was supposed to do a certain number of inoculations every month. And so sometimes we would walk with her out. In fact, the first time we walked with her out into the countryside, we went off to the other end of town, to the north, and we went down into this trail down, way down the mountainside, to a couple of houses down there. And she, you know, did some vaccinations and then one of the houses said, well, you have to have lunch with us. We have to give you, you can't just walk back up to the village.

NOBLE: [02:18:28] Oh, there is a problem right there.

WAND: [02:18:30] Right. So they took one of their *cuy* and they were cooking *cuy*. Well, this is not, you know, you don't.

NOBLE: [02:18:36] What's *cuy*?

WAND: [02:18:37] *Cuy*, excuse me, guinea pig.

NOBLE: [02:18:38] Oh, OK.

WAND: [02:18:39] Yeah. So they butchered one of their guinea pigs, precious as it was, to fix us lunch. Well, this was actually a house that wasn't real poor. I mean, they made some money from their sugarcane and their farm produce. And so, you know, they had a little garden plot and bananas and coffee beans and things. But we were, they insisted that we have lunch. Well, it takes quite a while to butcher a guinea pig and cook it up. So there was time for us to sort of stand around and talk and enjoy and just look. I mean, the vista was fabulous. Mountains after mountains. And here you were in this house with a straw roof, but it was adobe, and they had a battery powered radio. And they had the radio playing and you know the song that came on while I was there waiting for lunch?

NOBLE: [02:19:43] What was it?

WAND: [02:19:44] Far Away Places. Da da da dee da dee.

NOBLE: [02:19:53] Oh, my goodness.

WAND: [02:19:56] Talk about overwhelming. Far away places.

NOBLE: [02:20:01] And there you were as far away from.

WAND: [02:20:02] From anything I knew.

NOBLE: [02:20:04] Right. Chicago, New York, Seattle.

WAND: [02:20:07] Yeah. Anyway, that was a pretty powerful experience. I had a lot of them, a lot of powerful experiences in those two years. Another thing

that we did was I started knitting classes. I taught the girls how to knit, and they couldn't. Most of them couldn't afford knitting needles, so they used bicycle spokes.

NOBLE: [02:20:27] Oh my goodness.

WAND: [02:20:29] They had somebody sharpened them up.

NOBLE: [02:20:31] Oh my goodness. Make do with what you've got. I wonder if they're still sitting around knitting today.

WAND: [02:20:37] Yeah, I wonder. Some of them caught on like that.

NOBLE: [02:20:40] Wow. I want to talk just briefly about your midway point there with your brother. You finally, you had a little break there. You got away from, um, Buesaco. And where did you go with your? Did Jenny come along too?

WAND: [02:20:57] Yep.

NOBLE: [02:20:57] The three of you were a trio?

WAND: [02:20:58] A trio. We started out ourselves. We went by land. We had heard other volunteers had done this so we knew it could be done. But we didn't know what we were doing, basically. But we did it. We started by land. We went by land down.

NOBLE: [02:21:14] On busses or?

WAND: [02:21:15] Busses. Yeah. Uh-huh. Through the rest of Colombia, we walked across the border to Ecuador. We got bussed in Ecuador from Tulcan, which is an interesting town with this cemetery that it's a total topiary garden, the most incredible topiary garden I've ever seen in my life anywhere.

NOBLE: [02:21:38] Right near the border on the Ecuador side?

WAND: [02:21:41] On the Ecuador side, uh huh. Yeah, really interesting. We ran into Peace Corps volunteers along the way, you know. Tulcan, we visited a Peace Corps volunteer. You know, we heard he was there. We found out where he was.

NOBLE: [02:21:52] And then he can say, well, when you're going to this and such a place, be sure you.

WAND: [02:21:56] Yeah, you know how it works. So then we went on down through Otavalo, which is a marketplace, and then we went down to Quito and spent a little bit of time in Quito doing sightseeing. And then we took the bus down out of Quito, down to Guayaquil.

NOBLE: [02:22:11] Is that the coast?

WAND: [02:22:12] On the coast. Much different climate. And then we got to Guayaquil and we got on an overnight boat to the Peruvian border. Got off there and went to the, had to walk across the Peruvian border, then got on a bus.

NOBLE: [02:22:29] You would be close to Tumbes.

WAND: [02:22:31] Tumbes, exactly.

NOBLE: [02:22:32] That's where my friend was in the Peace Corps.

WAND: [02:22:34] Oh, right, it was right at Tumbes. And we got on. There it's dry and desert.

NOBLE: [02:22:41] Yeah. So different from where you were.

WAND: [02:22:45] Totally different.

NOBLE: [02:22:47] On a map not so very far away.

WAND: [02:22:48] Right. So we got on the bus at Tumbes and we knew it was a 24 hour bus ride.

NOBLE: [02:22:55] To Lima?

WAND: [02:22:56] To Lima, yeah. Twenty-four hours of almost nonstop right down the coast.

NOBLE: [02:23:03] Wow.

WAND: [02:23:03] And so we were there overnight, on the bus. We knew we would be there overnight. The next morning we were waking up and we had to go to the bathroom. Well, the bus is sailing down the coast and so I could hardly stand it. So finally, I went up to the bus driver.

NOBLE: [02:23:22] What are all the other people on the bus doing?

WAND: [02:23:24] All of us were in need but there was no commercial establishments, no development anywhere. No trees, no bushes, nothing but sand. And this highway. So I went up to the driver and I said, can you please stop so that we can go to the bathroom? No response. So I went back and I sat down. An hour later, I got up. Did the same thing. No response. Nothing, no stopping. Nothing, no explanation. Nothing. Finally, I mean, it was like, I'm going to say 10 or 11 o'clock in the morning and we were dying. There was, what one the best, one could say, a roadside stand of some kind and everybody got off. He stopped there. It's the first one we came to. Everybody got off the bus and ran around the back. And there were no latrines.

NOBLE: [02:24:22] No, no, no. You just had to pick up your skirt and go.

WAND: [02:24:25] That's right. And everybody else had done the same thing. I mean, you could see all over the place. Anyway, I'll never forget that bus ride, but we finally made it to Lima. And then we stayed in Lima for a few days and did some sightseeing around Lima. And then we flew from Lima to Cusco.

NOBLE: [02:24:45] Oh yes.

WAND: [02:24:46] Got to Cusco and got acclimated and then took the train to Machu Picchu. Then took the train back to Cusco, and then we took the train from Cusco to Lake Titicaca.

NOBLE: [02:24:58] Oh yeah, yeah.

WAND: [02:24:59] And then we went across on the ferry to La Paz and then we went by air from La Paz to Buenos Aires.

NOBLE: [02:25:10] Oh wow.

WAND: [02:25:11] And then we went from Buenos Aires to Rio. And the plan was for us to go from Rio up to the Amazon, Manaus. Fly up the Amazon to Leticia and come in the back door of Colombia. But in Rio, two things happened. We couldn't get on a plane in the Amazon. Couldn't get on the plane. They were all full. They were very, very full from Manaus to Leticia.

NOBLE: [02:25:41] Oh, that piece. So you knew in Rio that once in Manaus, you wouldn't be able to get out of Manaus to continue?

WAND: [02:25:48] Right, yeah. And we were running out of time. And we were running out of money.

NOBLE: [02:25:53] So but there you are in Rio, very far away.

WAND: [02:25:57] We were a long ways away. So anyway, we pooled our money and we got. Jenny and I. No, we all three. Let's see. Jerry had more time, my brother, so he came a little later. So Jenny and I had to get back to the site. We'd been gone a month. So we flew by, flew to Lima, and did the reverse route right up.

NOBLE: [02:26:24] And retraced your steps.

WAND: [02:26:26] Retraced our steps, yeah, right.

NOBLE: [02:26:27] What a trip.

WAND: [02:26:31] What a trip.

NOBLE: [02:26:32] We need to bring this to a close in some kind of way, but I'd like to know about your second year. In what ways was your second year different from your first year there?

WAND: [02:26:45] It's, you know, to put it as succinctly as possible, I felt totally acculturated by the second year. I loved the place, I loved the people. I felt so at home in Buesaco, it felt so easy.

NOBLE: [02:27:00] So it was like coming home almost.

WAND: [02:27:02] Right, yeah.

NOBLE: [02:27:04] And did you find yourself in some ways more effective the second year than the first? Do you have more language available?

WAND: [02:27:09] Language, right. The people understood what we were about and yeah. And so when it was time to come home, I did not really want to come home.

NOBLE: [02:27:21] Before we before we get to that, um, having to leave when you don't want to. Had you had contact with Peace Corps? Did people come out to visit you, Peace Corps staff? Did you have some support from them?

WAND: [02:27:37] The volunteer leader was always very supportive.

NOBLE: [02:27:40] That was the volunteer who was in?

WAND: [02:27:43] In Pasto. And we had some.

NOBLE: [02:27:46] But people from Bogota, the country director or regional directors? Did they come out? Did a Peace Corps doctor come to visit you to give you gamma globulin or something?

WAND: [02:27:58] Well, no, we got that when we went into Bogota. We had a conference.

NOBLE: [02:28:01] Oh, you did, they called you into Bogota rather than them going out to. Nobody ever came to, no Peace Corps paid staff came to your site to see how things were going?

WAND: [02:28:14] You know, the volunteer leader did bring out a few people because he considered our site, you know, so successful.

NOBLE: [02:28:20] Yeah, yeah.

WAND: [02:28:23] But not very many. Not very many. You know, I can't remember who it was. By the way, I forgot to mention that when we were in training way back then, Sargent Shriver came to our training site.

NOBLE: [02:28:34] In Albuquerque?

WAND: [02:28:35] Actually in Taos and Arroyo Seco.

NOBLE: [02:28:39] Then in that last month then.

WAND: [02:28:40] Yeah, yeah.

NOBLE: [02:28:41] Oh, how thrilling.

WAND: [02:28:43] But no, we didn't. We were not. We didn't have very much presence of paid staff in Pasto. I mean, people didn't want to go there because it was.

NOBLE: [02:28:51] There was no place to stay.

WAND: [02:28:53] Well, in Pasto there was lots of places to stay. But in Buesaco, no, there was.

NOBLE: [02:28:57] There wouldn't have been a place to stay.

WAND: [02:28:59] People stayed with us sometimes.

NOBLE: [02:29:01] And they knew you were okay?

WAND: [02:29:03] Yes.

NOBLE: [02:29:03] Maybe people had to feel that they should go and visit the people where there were problems.

WAND: [02:29:08] Yeah, right. They didn't. I mean, we didn't have a lot of, we had plenty of support. There were other volunteers who helped us. You know, there were a couple of volunteers who were engineers or architects, and they helped us on some of the school projects. So they would come on *minga* day and work with us.

NOBLE: [02:29:25] Those other volunteers?

WAND: [02:29:27] Yeah, yeah. Sometimes that happened. Not always, but yeah.

NOBLE: [02:29:33] And so we come to the end of your two years and you're realizing that, um, leaving was going to be hard.

WAND: [02:29:41] It was really hard.

NOBLE: [02:29:42] A lot of goodbyes.

WAND: [02:29:44] It was really hard, you know, but we did it. I mean, for me, it was a matter of, you know, if I don't leave now, when am I going to leave? It was like there'd be no better, there's no other time that's going to be better.

NOBLE: [02:30:00] Was there ever any question of extending for a third year or extending for an extra six months or something, to finished something up?

WAND: [02:30:07] We weren't really given that option. And besides, I think for us, the um, the fact that they had already decided that more volunteers were

going to come into the village, that sort of brought closure. You know, that brought closure to us.

NOBLE: [02:30:23] Oh, that's right. That's right.

WAND: [02:30:24] Because the projects would have been picked up.

NOBLE: [02:30:25] And then they would have moved into your house.

WAND: [02:30:26] Yes, they did.

NOBLE: [02:30:27] Yeah. In all of your two years there, did you ever get sick?

WAND: [02:30:40] Yes, I did get sick and it was a strange disease, a strange malady, it just left me exhausted. And it came somewhere, um, maybe three quarters of the way through, and it left me exhausted for weeks and weeks. I mean, there were no aches and pains. I just had, I was sapped of energy. And the same exact thing afflicted me when I, after I got home. It returned. And there was never any diagnosis. But it was so uncharacteristic. I mean, I knew I wasn't well, because I had no energy.

NOBLE: [02:31:23] Right, right. But then after what, a month or two, it seemed to go away and you were fine?

WAND: [02:31:29] Right. I mean, uh, it lasted maybe six to eight weeks and then I got, you know, I slept a lot and I didn't feel like doing much.

NOBLE: [02:31:39] But did this happen to Jenny too?

WAND: [02:31:41] No.

NOBLE: [02:31:42] Because you were eating the same things, exposed to the same insects and whatever. But no, no.

WAND: [02:31:47] Isn't it interesting?

NOBLE: [02:31:48] That's fascinating. And during this time, of course, you were writing letters. There wasn't any Skype or telephone calls home. Did you use those blue aerograms?

WAND: [02:31:59] Sometimes, yes, I used a lot of those, but I also used onion skin paper. I had, I took. One of the things I took was a little manual typewriter. And so I typed single spaced letters to my family.

NOBLE: [02:32:14] Oh, how wonderful.

WAND: [02:32:15] Which my mother kept, and then my mother used that information and went to schools in our community and told them what I was doing.

NOBLE: [02:32:26] Oh, while you were still down there? Oh, how wonderful.

WAND: [02:32:29] She took pictures and took my pictures that I sent them.

NOBLE: [02:32:32] So you were also sending photographs. Were you able to develop the photographs down there in Colombia and send, you didn't have to send negatives home?

WAND: [02:32:40] No, I could send actual photographs.

NOBLE: [02:32:43] Where are all those letters and photographs now?

WAND: [02:32:46] I have copies and my sister has some too. I know that my mother, she has some that my sister, that my. But I mean, they're part of the bequest that's going to go to American University.

NOBLE: [02:33:02] And so when we're talking about family now, there are certain times of year when people miss their family, like Christmas, for example. Of course, well, that was right. Kennedy died. And then there's Christmas and you're far from home. You were there for two Christmases, right?

WAND: [02:33:20] Two Christmases, right.

NOBLE: [02:33:21] How was that celebrated?

WAND: [02:33:22] Well, Jenny and I decided we were going to make a happy Christmas as much as we possibly could. And so, um, so we worked with our mothers club and we decided to have a Christmas party, and they had never done that.

NOBLE: [02:33:36] They had not?

WAND: [02:33:37] Not part of their tradition. They might go to mass. But they don't do anything. No festives, no exchange of gifts.

NOBLE: [02:33:45] Well, that's refreshing.

WAND: [02:33:46] It was, but we did little things for the children. And we got a coffee branch and decorated it and made a lovely little Christmas display.

NOBLE: [02:33:55] And New Year's? Did the town do something special for New Year's?

WAND: [02:33:58] No, the town didn't. But we went to Cali. Both New Year's. And Cali has a big bullfighting festival. Oh, this was another story.

NOBLE: [02:34:09] So Cali, is it coastal? It's north of where you were.

WAND: [02:34:13] It's in a valley, Valle del Cauca, it's in a valley and it's lower. So it's warm.

NOBLE: [02:34:21] Oh, perfect, fun.

WAND: [02:34:24] Warm, yeah, nice temperature. And so the irony was that we, and a lot of Peace Corps volunteers congregated in Cali for New Year's. So we saw lots of our friends. And we got a hotel. And by the second year we went there, we had met this very well to do Colombian family that owned a huge sugar plantation and owned some of the sugar industry stuff. And we had met two men from that family at a little fishing hotel that was near Pasto. And they, when they start talking to us, we had gone

there like for a weekend kind of a getaway, and they started talking to us. What are you doing? And we told him where we lived and they said, what? You live in Buesaco? And we said, yeah. Well, what are you doing? The guy said, Enrique Gonzalez said, you live in? He said, I wouldn't spend a night in Buesaco.

NOBLE: [02:35:26] Yeah, there's nothing there.

WAND: [02:35:30] There's no hotel, no place to stay.

NOBLE: [02:35:32] That's right. That's right.

WAND: [02:35:33] Yeah. And then he said, and so what are you doing? So we talked, you know, that evening, we talked quite a while. They kept saying, we can't believe that you're giving two years of your life to help our country, our people wouldn't even do that. Our children wouldn't do that. So they invited us to their house, their mansion. They had a Cadillac and all kinds of cars. And you know, and then they invited us to stay in the best hotel in Cali, which they owned.

NOBLE: [02:36:08] Oh, what a nice little piece of R&R. Wow.

WAND: [02:36:12] Really, the second year we were there, we were in the penthouse of the, um, Hotel Real, Via Real or something. I forget the name, exactly. But anyway, that was a real bonus.

NOBLE: [02:36:29] Eventually, you did come to the end. You must have had some sort of ceremony or closing activities in Bogota, right, before you flew back?

WAND: [02:36:39] Yeah, they all seemed rather anticlimactic after the warm goodbyes of the village. But we did and we were. It was interesting. I remember. [tape break]

NOBLE: [02:36:48] Close of service activities in Bogota.

WAND: [02:36:55] So we were all gathered in Bogota, and one of the things that they were doing is they were orienting us about going home was, well, you know, this is a, you're at the age, it's a transition time. You will probably be finding partners to marry.

NOBLE: [02:37:15] Peace Corps was saying this?

WAND: [02:37:16] Peace Corps, that's what they said. I thought that was a really interesting message to us. I mean, I think that was maybe in the back of my mind, but it certainly wasn't in the front of my mind. In the front of my mind was going to graduate school.

NOBLE: [02:37:36] Ah, yes, yes.

WAND: [02:37:37] And I had already chosen to do a master's in teaching.

NOBLE: [02:37:42] From Buesaco you were already?

WAND: [02:37:45] I had done all this correspondence and I'd been admitted to three programs, and I chose the one that was here in Washington, D.C., actually, by Antioch, as part of their extension, their extension programs. And so, yeah, so I was excited about going.

NOBLE: [02:38:06] Yes. Marriage was not your primary.

WAND: [02:38:08] No, it wasn't, right. At least not on the forefront of my brain.

NOBLE: [02:38:12] But that's fascinating. Did it not occur to anybody that there might be some small percentage of the people in your group who were gay?

WAND: [02:38:21] Oh, I don't know. People were really totally in the closet back then.

NOBLE: [02:38:27] But the very fact that they said that meant that they were totally oblivious.

WAND: [02:38:32] And if, yeah, if anybody was thinking about it, they weren't talking about.

NOBLE: [02:38:36] No, no, no, they couldn't. They wouldn't have back then. Um, so Peace Corps is still in Colombia, isn't it?

WAND: [02:38:48] No, Peace Corps left.

NOBLE: [02:38:50] They left, when?

WAND: [02:38:51] Left Colombia in 1981 because of the drugs and all the security issues.

NOBLE: [02:38:58] That's right.

WAND: [02:38:59] One of the Peace Corps volunteers was kidnapped in Colombia in 1970, in the late seventies, and he was held for three years in captivity.

NOBLE: [02:39:12] Oh wow.

WAND: [02:39:13] So after that, they, um, they slowly phased out the program. But now Peace Corps is back. It went back partly because of this conference that Friends of Colombia sponsored in Cartagena in 2008. We brought the ambassadors together and introduced, reintroduced the idea of bringing Peace Corps back, and now it's back.

NOBLE: [02:39:36] And with some guarantees of safety?

WAND: [02:39:39] In the northern part of the country in teaching programs.

NOBLE: [02:39:44] And you, but you've gone back.

WAND: [02:39:46] I've gone back three times. I went back in 1969. Uh, I took my husband back to the village and we stayed several days.

NOBLE: [02:39:58] So that would have been about five or six years after you left.

WAND: [02:40:01] That was right. That was actually four years after I left.

NOBLE: [02:40:04] Oh, that's right, because you left in '65.

WAND: [02:40:07] Right. And electricity had come in. Strong electricity. And they had televisions in '69. And they had watched several, there were three television sets in town and they had watched the moon landing. So they got to watch another big success story from Kennedy. They were so excited about watching Kennedy's program to the moon be successful.

NOBLE: [02:40:34] So Kennedy was still very much alive in their minds then.

WAND: [02:40:37] And I went back in '89 and again in 2008.

NOBLE: [02:40:41] Oh yeah, quite recently.

NOBLE: [02:40:44] And back here in the States, have you made maintain some contact with people in your group? Have you had reunions?

WAND: [02:40:50] Oh yes, right. I was one of the founding people for Friends of Colombia.

NOBLE: [02:40:57] Ah, good for you.

WAND: [02:40:58] In the late eighties, '89, '90 actually, after I moved here, I really started working on it. And we've got, uh, so Friends of Colombia is very active and we have a very strong database of volunteers.

NOBLE: [02:41:10] And you're also involved with the National Peace Corps Association.

WAND: [02:41:14] Right. I've been on the board now of the National Peace Corps Association for, this is my eighth year and this will be my final year because it's a term.

NOBLE: [02:41:21] Oh yeah, that's right. And you're also now initiating the, um, Peace Corps archival expansion at American University.

WAND: [02:41:31] Right. Yes. Very exciting.

NOBLE: [02:41:35] How would you say? Has the rest of the, has the direction of your life post Peace Corps somehow been different than it might have been had you not ever gone into the Peace Corps?

WAND: [02:41:48] Oh, absolutely. Oh, in so many ways it has been different. I mean, from, you know, in the Peace Corps, I learned how much I enjoy teaching and how important education is to me, just part of my own being. I was exposed to different cultural ways of life and I saw the United States from outside in, and would be much more critical. I saw the Catholic Church in a way that convinced me that it was no longer the right formal religion for me. I could not stand what the church was doing to the people in Latin America. It just, it's totally changed my life.

NOBLE: [02:42:40] I know that you fairly recently spent four years working in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, and I wonder if you would have done that had you not been in Colombia back in the '60s?

WAND: [02:42:51] That's a really good question. I have always thought I had. During the decades when I was doing a more traditional career path here in the United States, I always thought that I wanted to do at least one more major international experience gig, if you will. And it was wonderful for me to have the opportunity to go to a totally different culture from Latin America or Western world. In fact, I see it as my first major exposure to a non Judeo-Christian culture.

NOBLE: [02:43:28] Ah yes, because Colombia was still a very Catholic place.

WAND: [02:43:31] Very Judeo-Christian, right. Whereas Middle East, the Arab and the Muslim traditions there form a very different infrastructure for values.

NOBLE: [02:43:42] And you were open to that and you wanted to.

WAND: [02:43:45] To learn that and to admire those wonderful values that are part of the Muslim faith.

NOBLE: [02:43:51] Is there anything else you'd like to say about your Peace Corps experience?

WAND: [02:44:01] I really, I don't think so. You've helped stimulate a lot of memories here and it's been powerful. I think this even just this interview is going to change the way I see some things, having forced me to look at them from the perspective of decades now. So thank you very much.

NOBLE: [02:44:23] Thank you. You know, I do have another question for you. Have you been back to Colombia since your Peace Corps service there? Have you had any way of knowing whether or not your presence there as a Peace Corps volunteer made a difference in the lives of the people?

WAND: [02:44:40] You know, I have been back. I've been back three times. I left in the first place in 1965. I returned in 1969, four years later, for a brief time. I returned the second time in 1989, and in that spring of '89, I had a Fulbright award to Ecuador. I was working with librarians in Ecuador and I had the opportunity to take my son, who was nine years old at the time, with me to Ecuador. And within the first month I was in Ecuador, I scheduled a long weekend to be gone, and I took my son and worked our way north by land to the Colombian border. We walked across the border there and then went on up, the Ecuadorian Colombian border, and then we walked. Then we took busses up to Pasto, the capital city, and then, and when we were in Pasto, we stayed overnight because by that time it was too late to go out to the village. And besides, I knew they didn't have hotels in the village, and so it would be a day trip out. And my son and I then the next morning got onto one of the busses that went out to the village. I had to inquire, of course, where they were. We got onto the bus out to the village, and we were about halfway out to the village when the man in front of me turned around and said to me, *Senora Patricia, donde esta Jenny?* In other words, where is Jenny? Because Jenny was my partner. And we always saw, they always saw us together.

NOBLE: [02:46:27] So this man recognized you from?

WAND: [02:46:28] This man recognized me from 24 years before. And me with my then already white hair and my nine year old son. So we chatted a bit. It was quite, you know, quite an emotional feeling for me to realize that I was recognized even with this age of 20 years, 25 years later. And then as we got off the bus, there was a man who came up from the back of the bus and got off behind me. And he stopped me as I stood on the ground in front of the gas station, in front of our old house. And he said to me, Senora Patricia, do my sisters know you are here? They still talk about you all the time. You've got, they are still sewing, you taught them to sew, so they will want to see you. Please come and see them. And I told him that I would be visiting Olga at our house first and that I hope to see his sisters and by the end of the day, I did.

WAND: [02:47:25] But the Olga situation was really quite a lovely situation as well. She invited us to have lunch with her. This was early in the morning and so I knew we were going to be walking around in the village for the day and we would come back for lunch. So we came back for lunch and again, her kitchen was totally different. They had reliable electricity and she had a countertop instead of just a cement block to work on. And it was, the kitchen was totally lined with ceramic tile, so it was lovely and clean. And so she had some appliances there, a stove, for example. So when she fed us lunch, she put a glass of juice down in front of each of our plates. And of course, my son and I were not drinking juice that was made by anybody except ourselves or didn't come out of a can or a bottle. And so my son whispered to me, Mommy, what do I do with the juice? And I said, well, just a minute. So I said to Olga, of course, in Spanish, Olga, how did you make the juice? And she said, well, we peel the fruit. We wash the fruit, then we peel the fruit, then we blend it and mash it up, puree it, and then we add boiled water. And I said, oh, do you boil your water Olga? And she said, well, of course, Senora Patricia, you're the one who taught me how to boil water.

NOBLE: [02:48:59] Twenty years later, 24 years later.

WAND: [02:49:02] And she had totally incorporated that help, that sanitation issue into her life. So in the course of that day, I just spent a lot of time crying. Actually, besides the sisters that this man had told me about, who would

want to see me and who were still sewing, there were two other women who found me in the village and who said to me, come to my house or come to my workshop and see my sewing machine and see where I work. I clothe my children with the things that I make, and I feed my family because I sew, and you taught me to sew. So it was quite an incredible day.

NOBLE: [02:49:43] Incredibly gratifying.

WAND: [02:49:43] It was very, very gratifying. My son had taken little miniature trains and cars with us. We had packed them in the suitcase. And he took them and gave them to some of the boys that he met. And then they got him incorporated into playing a little ball game there.

NOBLE: [02:49:59] Even though there was no language that was shared.

WAND: [02:50:00] No language that they could share. It was a really memorable experience and my son took away from that some important lessons.

NOBLE: [02:50:09] So you, unlike many Peace Corps volunteers, know that you did leave or make an impact in that people are.

WAND: [02:50:19] They remembered what I did.

NOBLE: [02:50:20] And in more than one way, living a healthier, economically viable life because you were there.

WAND: [02:50:26] Yes. Thank you so much for allowing me to do this interview. It was really quite a remarkable experience.

NOBLE: [02:50:33] I enjoyed it very much. Thank you.

WAND: [02:50:34] You're welcome.

[END OF INTERVIEW]