

**Barbara Richards Oral History Interview**  
Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection  
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**Creator:** Barbara Richards  
**Interviewer:** Paul Kinsley  
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**Biographical Note**

Barbara Richards (formerly Rich Main) served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Ethiopia from June 1967 to June 1969 as an English teacher.

**Access**

Open.

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Oral History Interview

with

Barbara Richards

September 23, 2010  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

By Paul Kinsley

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

KINSLEY: [00:00:03] Today is September 23rd, 2010. This is Paul Kinsley, and I'm interviewing Barb Richards, formerly Rich Main, who was a Peace Corps volunteer in Ethiopia from June 1967 to June 1969 in TESL project. OK, Barb, let's see. Kind of describe your present family, work, current residence, and interests.

RICHARDS: [00:00:44] Presently, I live here in Milwaukee on the west side. I live in a small neighborhood. I have a small house. I'm hoping to make it a sustainable house. I work with a group called Transition Milwaukee, which is part of Transition International, a group started about five years ago in response to peak oil and climate change crises is coming together at the same time. So we're basically retooling ourselves, trying to live locally instead of this kind of anti-globalization and creating a local economy. More gardening. I work with something called Victory Garden Initiative, which is based over in Sherwood. We're working on all these initiatives trying to get models built up of how we can sustain ourselves

when oil is too expensive and fossil fuels are polluting the atmosphere too much for us to use them anymore.

RICHARDS: [00:01:41] My family, I have three children. My oldest lives in St. Paul. She graduated from Macalester and is working there as an admissions counselor. She's getting married this fall. She's 30, and she's been going with this guy a long time. But she's getting married this fall. My young, my son, the middle child lives here in Milwaukee. He's an armed security guard. He's married a young woman and we have two grandchildren through him. And I have my youngest daughter just graduated from Rhode Island School of Design, and she's working as a freelance artist at this time. My spouse lives in St. Paul. I'm transgender, and so that has caused some challenges for our families, but we're keeping our family and just going on. I'm retired from MPS after 25 years of teaching this spring, so I'm now being a full-time volunteer.

KINSLEY: [00:02:47] OK. Kind of think back to the year before you joined the Peace Corps and talk about life then. You can include childhood, education, and other experiences relevant to becoming a Peace Corps volunteer.

RICHARDS: [00:03:04] When I think back, this question kind of gets to me, you know, gets to why did you join the Peace Corps? I was a senior in the college. I was a political science major. I liked international relations. I had studied a lot about causes of different things are happening around the world. My freshman year of college was the year that John F. Kennedy was shot. That was the marking point of my generation, as 9/11 is perhaps the marking point of the generation coming up at this time. Peace Corps was something started through his efforts. The idea had been floated out by Hubert Humphrey before, I understand, but he made it a reality with Sargent Shriver. And I felt I wanted to do that.

RICHARDS: [00:04:07] I was, had gone a long way from home to go to school. I grew up in northern Indiana. I went to a small school in Pennsylvania and so I'd kind of gone away from home and gotten used to be out and about, and I wanted to help in the world with my life and I wanted to have an adventure too. I think I've achieved those things in the Peace Corps. And

my family, my mom was always involved in do-gooder things. My dad was a bit reticent. He didn't believe much in church and government and politics. He didn't think much of it. You know, all his life he kind of was on the edge of supporting and not supporting all those kinds of things.

RICHARDS: [00:05:03] But my mom was always contributing here and there, and she was League of Women Voters, and she was American Association of University Women, AAUW, and she was involved in many, many things. So I think there's kind of an impetus there of getting involved, in doing something with your life.

KINSLEY: [00:05:26] Can you, uh, what made you decide to apply? If you can kind of describe the process and the timing? Did you have a specific country or project in mind?

RICHARDS: [00:05:38] No, I just. I knew I wanted to go, so I figured I'd be as open as I could. I just said, basically, I'll go anywhere, do anything. I think I was probably sent to Ethiopia because of their alphabet. I don't know. I took two years of, actually three years of Russian in college, so I think probably they weren't going to send me to Russia. But dealing with that alphabet and dealing with a difficult language, I think probably that's a possibility why Ethiopia was selected for me. And I was quite willing to go there. I was glad to. I'm very grateful for my experience on the African continent.

KINSLEY: [00:06:27] And what was the timeframe of when you applied and when you found out?

RICHARDS: [00:06:31] Well, it's as much as I can remember. I must have been interested in the fall of my senior year and filled out the papers and sent them in. And probably February or March of that year, I heard where I was going to go and I sent back that, yes, I would accept that placement. So they told me I'd be going to Salt Lake City, Utah, for my training. So I told my family and they planned a trip out West. I went to parks, Yosemite, we visited Yosemite, and then they dropped down to Utah and dropped me off, and then they went on to the West Coast. And that was

the summer trip that they had. My oldest brother was living out on the West Coast, so I think, you know. That's how it kind of all worked out.

KINSLEY: [00:07:18] What were your friends' and family's reactions when you're accepted? And was there any hesitation or reservations either on your part or on theirs?

RICHARDS: [00:07:26] No, I think, no one. Everybody, you know. I had really few close friends in college. I had a few friends. But because of my kind of reticence to be out there, people made friends with me and I accepted their friendship, but I didn't really hang out with the guy as much or do things. So I didn't have a lot of close friends who would be asking me personal questions. They just said, oh yeah, he's going off to the Peace Corps. So off I went. There wasn't any. And at home, they were, you know, they were, you know, some concern about me going off far away, but not really. They were just glad that I had a mission and a goal and some place that I wanted to do, something that I wanted to do.

KINSLEY: [00:08:26] What project were you invited to join and how did you prepare yourself and others for being away two years?

RICHARDS: [00:08:35] Well, I think I was just pretty naive, and I figured I'd just go and see how things worked out. I think when I got to Utah, then they started telling us some of the things we wouldn't be eating. You know, I bought some gear, some rough gear, heavy shoes and stuff. And I bought a pair of postal shoes, postmen's shoes. There was a place, I think it was maybe like a Army-Navy surplus store they recommend we go to. So I did some shopping there. Those shoes, I used a lot.

KINSLEY: [00:09:11] Now that was in Salt Lake?

RICHARDS: [00:09:13] That was in Salt Lake City, so I didn't really get prepared until I went there and started the training because I just, you know, I figured things would happen as I needed to have them happen. So we got our Peace Corps trunk there, and we just filled it up and sent it off and. It's just kind of, that's kind of how my life is. I take a step and then see where I am and see what I need to do to make the next step.

KINSLEY: [00:09:40] So did you train fully in Salt Lake City or did you train some in Ethiopia?

RICHARDS: [00:09:46] It was fully in Utah. It wasn't fully in Salt Lake City.

KINSLEY: [00:09:50] Oh, OK.

RICHARDS: [00:09:50] The story they tell us, they told us, was that the director of training had visited Ethiopia the year before and was in such culture shock that he designed, redesigned, the training so that we spent four weeks, three or four weeks of our training in the desert of Utah, living in tents in red mud or dirt, depending on the weather. They scraped off the topsoil, planted these tents there. It was across the street from a school. They bussed in Native American children from the reservation, and they were guinea pigs for TESL. So we had three to four weeks at least, it might have been six, but I think it was three to four weeks of training in this place in the desert. But the rest of it was back in Salt Lake City at a university, so it was sort of semi in-country training. His best attempt at in-country training, which was the director's vision of how challenging Ethiopia would be.

KINSLEY: [00:10:56] Now did you have language training there?

RICHARDS: [00:10:58] Yes, we did.

KINSLEY: [00:10:59] How was that?

RICHARDS: [00:11:01] We had Ethiopian speakers, university students staying in the United States, taking classes as university students in the States, and they gave us our language training. We had, I don't remember the schedule, but we had several hours a day, and we had, I think there were tapes we could listen to also and practice.

KINSLEY: [00:11:27] OK, kind of talk about the faculty or the syllabus or technical studies and your reaction to other trainees.

RICHARDS: [00:11:40] We had culture studies, we had language studies, we have kind of history. We had a history of Ethiopia for part and the part where we're just doing the culture. Some of that was linked with language studies. Some of it was a kind of a separate kind of a thing. But we spent a lot of time in terms of trying to understand the culture and trying to figure out how we would actually interact in that culture. And then the language is the language, you know, how you need to do some, how you get to the marketplace and how you do all the different things that you need to do in order to live a daily life. And then there was the regular TESL, you know, teaching us how to be TESL teachers. So that's not something that I had done before, but it was. We had those different kinds of classes, and everybody knew their stuff very well, and I think they did a really good job of getting us.

KINSLEY: [00:12:45] OK, what about the selection process? Were there any surprises, disappointments, enjoyments? Like how many started out and how many made it?

RICHARDS: [00:12:54] I think we had a few self-selections that dropped out. We had a few that were selected out. I mentioned earlier on the tape that I was kind of a quiet introvert kind of a person, not too many people really had a lot of remarks about my going to Ethiopia from my college. They just said, oh yeah, well, good luck. Have fun. There wasn't a lot of real strong personal friendships. That carried through into my Peace Corps training too. And again, a couple of people befriended me and they came to me when we were in this place in the desert. They said, you know, there was a, it was actually a slaughterhouse building. It was a concrete block building. It had two rooms with all these meat hooks hanging in it. And that was the hangout kind of place. They would go there and play music and dance and, you know, on weekends and they would hang out there because there was no town nearby to go to them and hang out, no downtown or anything.

RICHARDS: [00:13:57] So the kind of the social crew would go there and hang out. And basically word got around to me through these two friends who kind of befriended me that I needed to go. Otherwise, I wasn't going to Ethiopia. Basically, that was how it was what you know here. They

would, they took a couple of weekend trips up to the mountains and stuff like that. I stayed back in my tent and studied my language because I wanted to go to Ethiopia. So I was studying and studying my language, so because I could get. But they also said, well, you need to be able to know that you can.

KINSLEY: [00:14:27] Loosen up a little bit.

RICHARDS: [00:14:28] Loosen up and relate to people. So I enjoyed it. I like to dance and stuff like that. So it was fine. It's just that my intensity was that I wanted to study the language. So I got there. I would stay in my tent while they were going off partying or going off on trips to the mountain or whatever.

KINSLEY: [00:14:45] Yeah, it was kind of the same with me. I trained in Portland, Oregon, for about a month and I really wanted to study the language and several people would go to the mountains or the ocean. And I didn't go and I stayed behind, but I made it anyway.

RICHARDS: [00:15:00] You made it in. Well, yeah. So those stories are very true. The language struggle is a big one, and I think it's a challenging one. So it's a lot of pressure, and I was worried. But I felt, you know, a good feeling from all the trainers and everybody. I think them slipping me the word that I needed to be more social through my these buddies was, you know, a good thing for them to have done. So I'm grateful for the whole thing.

KINSLEY: [00:15:36] So it sounds like the training prepared you, and it was pretty useful as part of your service.

RICHARDS: [00:15:42] Yes, I thought it was. They did fine. I was prepared as much as anybody could be prepared to do such things. I wasn't, you know, being a teacher in TESL means I was going to a traditional school and I was going to be teaching in the classroom or something. It wasn't, you know, many projects are a lot more open-ended than mine. So I was prepared fine for my project.



KINSLEY: [00:16:07] So you pretty much knew what you were going to do and you knew how to do it. What about your initial entry into and reaction to the country?

RICHARDS: [00:16:20] I was in awe. There was, it was a very harsh introduction in a way to Ethiopia. Because we got there at dusk. We flew in. It was beautiful, you know, coming in over the mountains into Addis Ababa at night. And as usual, I stayed in the hotel. Some people were going out. And at one point we heard this commotion downstairs. We were out on the balcony looking out at the night in the city and stuff like that. And some other people went down. Later on that evening, we heard that there were a couple of married couples in our group, and several people had been standing out by the curb and a taxi had gotten out of control and it smashed into the crowd and the wife died.

KINSLEY: [00:17:19] One of the volunteers?

RICHARDS: [00:17:21] One of the volunteers. The wife died and the husband went back home. So that was our first night in the area.

KINSLEY: [00:17:29] Sheesh.

RICHARDS: [00:17:29] So it was pretty, you know, serious business. You were there. And people, I don't think anybody else left at that point. But it was, you know, you knew this was, we're in here for keeps. This is, we're not messing around here. You've got to, you know, cause things can happen. I mean, it's kind of like, things can happen, are you ready for this or not?

KINSLEY: [00:17:55] That was just like a freak accident?

RICHARDS: [00:17:56] It was just a freak accident. It just, I mean, it was just a terrible, terrible thing. That was our first night. And I think everybody kind of banded together and just took a real deep breath and said, OK, well, we're here. We're going to do it. But it sure is hard.

KINSLEY: [00:18:14] Oh, I guess you never did mention like how many started out and how many ended up, approximately?

RICHARDS: [00:18:19] Well, I don't know in terms of numbers. I think we were less than 100. I think maybe 50 or 60 people. And I think probably, you know, 45 to 50 people went over. A few self-selected and a few are selected out. I can't really remember the numbers at this point anymore. I still have my book from training of all the pictures of all the people, and I could look at it, I guess, and figure that out.

KINSLEY: [00:18:43] Yeah, cause in our group, we started with a hundred and we ended up with 50 and we didn't know until the day before we were going to go who was. And we didn't even get a chance to go back home.

RICHARDS: [00:18:56] Oh really? Oh, well, we were much more. I got a chance to go back home before I left. I left, actually, you know, from my family's home to Chicago then to New York City, then flying across the ocean. So yeah, we got to go back home. And it wasn't that, it wasn't. I mean, we knew, you know, the last two weeks. You know, after that session in the desert, if we got through that part, we were pretty much sure we were going. We did have to pass the language test and that was like the last hurdle. But if you pass the language test then. I was at a T2? I forget, something like that. A level two or a level three or something. And then if you got that, you're pretty much going at that point. Unless you decided not to.

KINSLEY: [00:19:48] Yeah. Can you describe your project, the PC staff, the impression of local people, physical environment?

RICHARDS: [00:19:57] I was in two different towns. The first year was in a provincial capital, which was a new provincial capital because it was in the south where there was a lot of guerrilla warfare and so was a military provincial capital. The governor was a military government. So I was settled in a high school, middle school situation. I was teaching mostly in the middle school my first year. A lot of, um, the principal of the school and some of the other main staff were Amharas. And there were many Indian teachers there. Many teachers came over from India because the salary was good and they could get money and then send it back home. And I

think this is probably true. Apparently they said, because India has a surplus of educated people, this happens a lot in countries around the rim of Africa, of India. They send teachers all over. So there were a lot of Indian teachers there.

RICHARDS: [00:20:59] And there were a lot of. We had four Peace Corps volunteers in the same town that year. That was the last year they had individual volunteers. Next year, they sent two married couples there, because it was kind of, they decided it was a kind of a hardship post. So the second year I went to. That town, the only way of access, there's no road. You have to fly in. And for four months, five months of the year, it was too wet to land. It was a grass airport. It was too wet to land. So we didn't get a lot of communication. I wrote a lot of letters that sat and at the end I got a lot of letters all at once.

KINSLEY: [00:21:41] So you were kind of stuck.

RICHARDS: [00:21:43] We were there for a long time.

KINSLEY: [00:21:45] So how large was this?

RICHARDS: [00:21:47] Well, there was, um. It was a very provincial provisional capital. There were, uh, just at the end of the first year there was a bakery started. It was kind of more like a what you would call a Western or European bakery. I tried some of their bread, it was. They needed to take care of rodent protection, rodent control. It was a little, you had to pick through it. But you know, the only other businesses were the local market and, you know, the local tea houses and coffee houses and places where you could go. You know, there were restaurants, but very local restaurants. Very good food. You got used to the food that way. And the local markets that were. In the city there were, you know, Western style restaurants and Western style hotels and stuff like that.

KINSLEY: [00:22:50] How far away was the city? Is that Addis Ababa?

RICHARDS: [00:22:54] Addis Ababa? I went there, um, at the end of the semester and at the end of the year. I went there twice in that first year.

KINSLEY: [00:23:03] So you couldn't like go out once a month to a city?

RICHARDS: [00:23:07] No.

KINSLEY: [00:23:08] You were really stuck.

RICHARDS: [00:23:09] There was no going out to a city. That's why the second year they sent married couples there, the next year.

KINSLEY: [00:23:16] Because we had pretty much, we lived, I was in a village and we needed to go into the big city, you know, at least once a month.

RICHARDS: [00:23:26] We didn't have that chance. One, you couldn't go because you couldn't, you had to fly. Actually at Easter time, the way we left was on horseback. We had some horses. I had a horse and a couple of the other guys had a horse. So the four of us rode a horse to a town that was across the river and we took a bus from there. So that's how we got out at Easter time. That was the first time we've been out since we went there in September.

KINSLEY: [00:23:57] Boy, that was really. Did people come to see you or they couldn't get in?

RICHARDS: [00:24:01] Nobody could get in. Nobody could get in here.

KINSLEY: [00:24:03] That is really, I've never heard of anything like that.

RICHARDS: [00:24:06] Well, we managed. I did get pneumonia the first fall, and that's stayed with me for about 20 years. Every fall, I would get that in my chest. But there was a Belgian doctor there. There was a doctor from Belgium. Oh, not, I'm sorry, Bulgaria, there's a Bulgarian doctor there and he treated me. I think my friends came by and they noticed I was doing pretty poorly. And so that must have been November, late November or something. And they, you know, he came by and he gave me shots that must have been penicillin. But I got better.

KINSLEY: [00:24:42] What were your living conditions? Did you live with the other volunteers?

RICHARDS: [00:24:45] We all had separate houses because the year before, the four volunteers had had one house together and that hadn't worked out really well. There had been some conflicts. So they decided that this year we should all have separate houses, which was a little bit ridiculous. But so we all had separate houses. And we would visit each other, you know, Friday nights, I'd go to Bernie's house, but pretty much always there were four of us. We'd all kind of congregate. There was one person who had been in the town the year before, and three of us were new. So we all kind of congregated at the one guy's house and we had a good radio. We could listen to his radio and listen to music and tapes, and he played guitar. So we would kind of get a bottle of wine from the market and cook some food and have a Friday night together and stuff like that. So that's how we kind of socialize that way with each other.

RICHARDS: [00:25:37] And we were discouraged really from going out into the town. One of the volunteers the year before had been very much in the town and had kind of gotten a bad reputation for the volunteers. So we were kind of making a new reputation for the volunteers not being quite so, uh, in it.

KINSLEY: [00:25:59] Was it all women or was it?

RICHARDS: [00:26:02] We were all four guys. We were all four guys.

KINSLEY: [00:26:05] Four guys, OK.

RICHARDS: [00:26:07] We were four guys, and the year before I guess started with four guys too. One of them got into the culture pretty deeply, I guess.

KINSLEY: [00:26:17] What about the influence of Haile Selassie, did he still have some?

RICHARDS: [00:26:22] Yes, he was still the emperor. I remember before I left the first year, there was the big celebration there in the fall was the finding of the

True Cross, the Meskel cross. So I remember going to that celebration in Addis Ababa in the capital city and seeing the emperor from afar and seeing his horse and I have pictures of his horse. A white horse with all the fancy livery on it. You know, he was a very diminutive man, but he came and sat under a dais and they had the celebration and a bonfire they lit. And whichever way the fire fell was supposed to say whether it was a good harvest or a bad harvest. So it was kind of like, but it was on the celebration of the finding of the True Cross, which is a Coptic, very strong Coptic. So it was kind of a mixture of their traditions, the old tradition of the harvest festival and the Coptic mixed together.

RICHARDS: [00:27:17] Yeah. He was still strong. He was there. It was about two or three years, maybe four years after I left that the overthrow came. And it was as gently done as they can be done, I guess. He was just put in the, you know, kind of quiet retirement. His children, they're a little less well I think. I don't think anybody was really killed or murdered, but they were definitely put out of power. He tried to create a civil system that would survive him, but he started too late or didn't push hard enough. The landlords or landowners were too strong to push against. It didn't quite make it so that a Democratic elected or at least an elected kind of government, whether it be democratic or not. It turned out to be more kind of an oligarchy. He was kind of setting up more of an oligarchy that could have come along, but it didn't really happen. Just didn't quite get the. He had a lot of fancy buildings to try to make it go. But the energy wasn't there. The energy was still with the more feudal system which then led itself to be the stronger.

KINSLEY: [00:28:42] OK, what about your assignment, the specifics of your job, living conditions, typical day, relations with the people of the country.

RICHARDS: [00:28:51] A typical day was get up, and a lot of times it was raining. So, you know, I lived in a small house, we had a wood stove. I cooked on my wood stove and heated my wood stove house with that. It was good. We were kind of in the foothills of the mountains. I could make Jell-O at night during that season. I didn't have to have a refrigerator, was no air conditioning. We had electricity occasionally, it was supposed to be every evening, but we had electricity occasionally, like a single bulb

hanging in the room and stuff like that. Used candles some. Mostly, you know, I did, you know, I made, baked bread, I cooked. And I had, three students stayed in the little house behind me. It was kind of like getting, they got housing and, you know, room and board for like for going to the market for me and getting water from the river, which was down a bit steep hill and back up. They would get the water and they would wash my clothes, different things like that.

RICHARDS: [00:29:51] I tried to have a garden, but the seasons are wrong to have a garden there. So I would, you know, I had a nice little house. It was like a three-room house. Living room with Western style furniture, a bedroom, and a kitchen. Dining room kind of thing together with the stove, wood stove in it. So I'd make my breakfast.

RICHARDS: [00:30:24] The Peace Corps staff was, you know, and we had a local regional guy who was in charge of us, Andy, and he was good, he was fine. He was kind of always trying to figure out how he can help us. So I said, I like peanut butter. So he went to the store in Addis, the store in Addis, and had me shipped, before while things are still shippable, he shipped me a case of peanut butter. The difficulty was, it was natural peanut butter. Hadn't been homogenized and everything else. So it was fairly rancid when it came to me. So I had a case full of rancid peanut butter that I couldn't really. I tried to eat it now and then, but mostly I ate local food. My students would go get me a chicken like once a month or so and have chicken. And they knew how to chop its head off and put it under the pan while it flopped, and then they would clean it up and we would have chicken.

RICHARDS: [00:31:25] I didn't do too much with beef and stuff like that. I think they got some. I gave them like an allowance for their food and stuff like that. So we had a good life. I mean, I'd go to school. [tape break] I think I had three classes, maybe four classes, I can't remember, of like seventh grade students, teaching TESL. So we would meet at our appointed times during the day. The main high school had a big building all connected and then I was, my classroom was in kind of a separate building. There were four classrooms and I think two opened on one side and two. It was, I think the regular building was a frame building. I think

this was either concrete or block. I don't remember at this point whether it was a formed, a cement building. I think it was cement block. I don't know if it was really block or if it was built out of stone, but it was not frame construction. It was some kind of heavy construction, block or concrete or something.

RICHARDS: [00:32:41] So, you know, it had good windows. We had, you know, the children had desks, you know, tables, that they worked at. Chalkboards and chalk. So and they had copy books. We used the kind of books we took tests on in college, that's what they used for their regular classroom books. Most of the classes were taught by rote. The teacher would write something on the board and you would copy it down. And that was the class time. And very little talking about what was in the content of it. The physics classes were taught that way and all the science classes and everything was taught that way. And they went home and studied them. And then they would come back for the test and they would try to regurgitate it. So and then the TESL, of course, then we were, I was doing something different because we were actually. I would write sentences kind of like you would diagram sentences, with columns, and we would, you know.

RICHARDS: [00:33:45] I read the book, five times. Or I went to the market. And then, you went to the market, and we do all the pronouns and we would, you know, separate all the different words and substitute words, and we would say it and verbalize it and, you know, they would have to write a sentence that was like that, that they made up. And so we did lots of. So it was more oral based on what they were used to. So it was a little more of a challenge for them, because they liked, they were used to what they liked, what they were used to, which was, you give me something, I write it down and I give it back to you. That's what they liked. So sometimes it was a little challenge because there was, in language there's flexibility, and they didn't really want that flexibility. They wanted the right thing. They wanted it right because they were going to get it right on the test because they wanted to pass their leaving exam and they wanted to go on, which was a very valid reason. However I was trying to do something a little different.



KINSLEY: [00:34:45] How about the other teachers, do you know how they went about it?

RICHARDS: [00:34:48] They pretty much, the language teachers pretty much did that. I think in the high school level, they did a little bit more, you know, copy it down. There's not so much of an oral approach. But I took the oral approach to heart, and that's kind of how I taught my classes. So, but I think, you know, the high school, there are two of the. Two of the teachers taught, the volunteers, Peace Corps volunteers, taught high school. Two of us taught middle school. So I taught seventh grade, then there was eighth grade, and then there was the other teacher taught at the high school.

KINSLEY: [00:35:29] Now was this just for the first year?

RICHARDS: [00:35:31] That was just my first year. Then the second year I moved across the river into a town. I was the only volunteer there. There was a mission school up the road a couple of miles. I went there for Thanksgiving dinner but that's about the only time I had contact with them. They were from the States someplace. But I was, then I taught third through eighth grade. They started English language instruction in third grade, but with the third grade I was only helping the teacher. And fourth and fifth and sixth, I was kind of team teaching with the teacher. There was a teacher assigned, a native teacher was assigned there, but I was just kind of helping them. And I was helping them, they were trying to introduce a program that had come out of England that had manipulatives. So I made up envelopes and we tried to help them to teach that way too. I don't know if it lasted after my year or not.

RICHARDS: [00:36:32] And then I was teaching, I taught the seventh and eighth graders their language. There was one person who had been, he must I think he was about 30 years old, one man, and he was in my eighth grade class. And he had been a teacher at the mission school, but he hadn't really passed his eighth grade leaving exam yet. And they had told him that, he had a family, you know, he had a life. You know, he had to pass the eighth grade leaving exam that year or he wasn't going to be able to come back to their school and be a teacher. So, I never really

heard how he did, because I had to leave before he got the results, and I came back to the States and I lost track of whether he ever passed. I've always wondered if he passed. I always hoped he did, He worked hard at it. So anyway, so the second year was a little different. And then also that year I was able to go into town. I'd take the bus into a town, that was not the capital city but a larger town, and visit volunteers. I only did that once.

KINSLEY: [00:37:42] You only did it once? Even though you could have?

RICHARDS: [00:37:45] Yeah, I was a loner.

KINSLEY: [00:37:49] Yeah.

RICHARDS: [00:37:50] I spent my life being a loner and it was, I was, I liked my little town and it's beautiful. I liked the sunsets. I liked watching, my house was on the main street and I would just love to watch the people coming to the market. You know, the little kids coming to the market to get the oil to cook up for the night and just, you know, I just loved being there.

KINSLEY: [00:38:10] Now how was that transition made? Did you request that or did they tell you to go?

RICHARDS: [00:38:17] They told, basically told us that they're going to put two. There were four guys in this town. They told us they're going to put two married couples there, so we have to go someplace. One of them actually was a, one of the people who went back home, because he had been a Nigeria volunteer actually. But he had been switched to Ethiopia when the Nigerian civil war broke out. And so he came back to the States after one year. And the other, one of the other volunteers was his second year, so he came back to the States. And then Bernie was the kind of the same level I was, he went to another town. And so when I went to this town.

KINSLEY: [00:38:57] Did you have any choice in that or they just, it was picked out for you?

RICHARDS: [00:39:01] I guess I could have chosen. They picked out something and I said, sure, sounds good to me. So it was, it was good. I liked very much the principal that I worked with, was very supportive. I tried to start a library program at that school, which was really a disaster, because the little kids would come in and, you know, they'd want to check out a book. And I thought, well, I wrote down their name, I had that log. But you know, it wasn't very organized. And after about a month, he said, whoa! And he had a little meeting at the beginning of the day. Bring all the books back! Because they were just taking the books and, you know, they were free books. So they took them home. They never had a book in their own hand, in their own house before. So they were just taking the books and going home with them. So he said, bring the books back. So we got the books back and we tried to set up a better system of passing out the books and stuff like that.

KINSLEY: [00:39:52] Now what about the role of language? Did you learn the language or were you primarily just caught up in the teaching of English?

RICHARDS: [00:40:01] I would say that I got better at it. I would say that I wish I'd gotten a lot better. I was able to follow conversations and occasionally put in something, but I wasn't really able to, you know, speak in front of a group or start a conversation or, you know, deeply get into a conversation. I could kind of bounce along the edges and get along. But and I could go to the market and I could get what I needed. The second year, I had one student who lived with me, but I did a lot of the market stuff myself by them.

KINSLEY: [00:40:39] So you were the only English speaker, basically?

RICHARDS: [00:40:42] Yes, the only native English speaker. There were two university students who were doing a year of service. There were like, I think there were. I think they had already gone four years, but they would have to go another year when they came back, or something like that. I don't know, maybe they were doing this, I don't remember exactly, but there were two university students, so they were fairly verbal and they liked to speak English and we didn't hang out a lot together. We hung out some together. And then I was. There was Weyizero Salama Weet.

Weyizero was Mrs. Mrs. Weet. She was the high school, she was the school economic, home economics teacher, and I gave her some lessons on how to use. I had a gas abuta stove. I had a gas stove. So I gave her some lessons on how to cook with that stove because I figured when I left, it might just go to the school.

KINSLEY: [00:41:44] Now that was given to you by the Peace Corps?

RICHARDS: [00:41:46] The Peace Corps, you know, when I moved to that place, my area rep equipped me fully.

KINSLEY: [00:41:53] Yeah, we were the first one. They called it efer gas in Turkey. And you know, we were the first ones to introduce that.

RICHARDS: [00:42:02] Right, right. I had to go. I wasn't sure how much was in the canister. So at one point I took a bus to try to go get another one. That was a disaster. But it was a very good disaster anyway.

KINSLEY: [00:42:22] Now you know at the end of the first year that you'd be leaving or did the people know that you would be leaving?

RICHARDS: [00:42:29] Because I was switching towns?

KINSLEY: [00:42:31] Yeah.

RICHARDS: [00:42:32] I think it probably happened over the summer, so I didn't really get to say goodbye or anything. I don't think I ever got to. I think it just kind of happened over the summer, because we each had summer projects we went to over the summer, and mine was in a whole different town. They tried to get you to be someplace else and do something different. So I went to a whole different town for that first summer in between the two years.

KINSLEY: [00:42:55] After the first year, what was some of your joys and woes and unexpected things, relationships, health problems, vacation, travel?

RICHARDS: [00:43:05] Well, I had the one health problem because I got pneumonia that first fall, but that cleared up, but I was pretty healthy after that. The first year especially, we would go on shirishiri, picnics, we would.

KINSLEY: [00:43:26] On what?

RICHARDS: [00:43:26] Shirishiri, a picnic kind of a thing. On the weekends, the students, like 30 or 40 students, we'd either take a walk up into the mountains or we went to a mineral springs. Sometimes I, after I got a horse, then I would ride my horse and they would walk along with. It wasn't really riding, you know, you'd just kind of walk the horse along, just to get the horse some exercise and me some practice riding the horse. And so we would go many weekends, we would go out like that. So we always had a, it was a fairly good time. I enjoyed the country very much. I took lots of pictures, I have color slides and black and white, and I very much. [phone rings] Excuse me while I answer this. [tape break] So I. We went on those trips a lot that year.

RICHARDS: [00:44:15] The second year I kind of went on some trips. I'd take a few students with me. There wasn't a group like those high school kids. You know, my second year they went up to eighth grade, so they weren't that much, weren't that free, I guess, from their families. But I would take a couple of kids along with me and we would go on hikes and I'd say, hey, where could we go? And so we would go off hiking this way or off that way, or this way or that way. And then on the weekends, so I got to see the country. I spent a lot of time at the marketplaces, just shopping and just looking around. I took a lot of pictures of the marketplaces. It was just fascinating. The Gallinia people were there and there were subgroups of the Gallinia. The women would have a different kind of a hairstyle and different hair bundles, whether it was flat or round, by the different groups that they belong to.

KINSLEY: [00:45:09] What kind of groups?

RICHARDS: [00:45:10] Well, there were subgroups of their tribe. Yes, tribal subgroups. You could kind of pick out the different groups. There's one woman who always came with honey. She had jars of honey. Well,

they're actually carved wooden jars with cowrie shell decorations or beadwork around them. Beautiful things that they carried around. So I was always taking pictures of all the beadwork and the different beadings and things that they would do. So I'm very much just like getting into their culture that way.

KINSLEY: [00:45:45] Let's see. OK. Are there any other, you know, individuals that you'd like to talk about? You know, that you encountered there? Or stories with the natives?

RICHARDS: [00:46:03] I guess my students that I had working with me. They're always kind of special to me. They were, sometime in the first year they kind of came to us and said, well, we. They all had letters of recommendation from the Peace Corps volunteers from before so. They said that you shouldn't do that, but we always did anyway, gave a letter of recommendation so that they'll be able to continue that. And I was just, um. The year we left, in between the two years, that fall was a big turmoil among students all over Ethiopia. So I guess the high school that I was teaching at before, the school was shut down for several months from student unrest. And apparently some of the Peace Corps volunteers' students, who had worked with Peace Corps, were kind of the ringleaders of all of this. So I got some more feedback on some of the difficulties some of those students have and so it made it a little different.

RICHARDS: [00:47:19] But, you know, I just, they were living their lives the best they could. There was a lot of joy in their people. They didn't have much. They made ends meet with what they had. They didn't waste stuff like they do everywhere else. Coming back here was, oh, it was a shock. There if you had a glass bottle, it was a glass bottle that you had forever. Here, it was something to get thrown in the street and bust up. Plastic wasn't much around back then. So we didn't have plastic bottles. The few glass bottles that came to town stayed in town and were used and reused. All those kinds of things sit with me a lot in terms of how I've lived my life since. And what's important and what's not so important, it makes a lot of difference from my experience there. Living that life for

those two years and living it as simply as I could and trying to continue to live as simply as I could when I got back to the States.

KINSLEY: [00:48:29] Now.

RICHARDS: [00:48:30] And they taught me that. The people there taught me that.

KINSLEY: [00:48:33] As far as your vacation, did you travel out of the country at all?

RICHARDS: [00:48:36] Oh yeah. The first Easter when I got out, I went, I think it was the first Easter, or maybe it was second. One Easter when I went out, maybe that's the second Easter, I went to the rock churches of Lalibela, which are carved out of stone at the time when Ethiopia was being attacked by forces of Islam and having to hide away in the mountaintops. So I went to see there, those rock churches. That's where I eventually came across my career, because I'd met some people from California whose daughter was taken Montessori training, and they told me about Montessori training. So eventually, when I got back to the States after a few false starts doing some other things, I worked in Montessori training, which became my career eventually.

RICHARDS: [00:49:27] But then in the first summer, those guys that befriended me in my training wanted to go to Kenya and so we went to Kenya and Uganda. We flew down to Nairobi, and then we took the train to Mombasa, which is on the Indian Ocean. And we stayed a week there on some hotels on the beach in Mombasa. And then we took the train back across to Kampala, Uganda, and we went up to a game park up there and saw, uh. I'm trying to get the name of the falls. We didn't get to see Victoria Falls because Victoria Falls is right down. We saw a falls and we stayed in a game park, and it was very fun. And on the way back, we found out that we could take taxis from town to town instead of taking the train. So all the way back from Uganda, Kampala, Uganda to Nairobi, we took a taxi from town to town.

KINSLEY: [00:50:42] Oh.

RICHARDS: [00:50:42] And that was a kind of fun to travel because you got to be a little more local and see what was going on a little bit better. But the train ride was really cool too, because we went across the Rift Valley. That was so powerful to see the Rift Valley because we were just going along the edge of it. And you could see like the edge was straight down and you know, 50, 60, 100 miles across. You can see the other edge and you can see the Earth that had just gone, whoosh. This great Rift Valley. And so it was kind of cool to go just along the edge and see it from that perspective. So I remember that.

KINSLEY: [00:51:17] How would you compare your first year to your second year?

RICHARDS: [00:51:21] Oh, my second year was much calmer and slower. It just, kind of just flew by. The first year was a bit bulky. We had our celebration times together, but we got together and on the weekends go out. But the first year was pretty grueling because we were up in the mountains and the rain. It rained a lot and you had to wear these boots and you had to. The mud was muddy and just the mud stuck to your boots. You didn't walk through, you globbed through, you know, and it was day after day after day. It was a little challenging, but we made it. And it was, we made ourselves happy through it.

KINSLEY: [00:52:11] I think you mentioned that you had a foot locker with books. Do you read a lot?

RICHARDS: [00:52:15] Oh, yes, we did. I did a lot of reading. They sent us a good book locker. And then second year I got another.

KINSLEY: [00:52:23] What other things did you do for leisure?

RICHARDS: [00:52:28] Oh, reading, just hiking. We did a lot of hiking, and just going to the market. In the first town there was a big hill right behind the school, Koba Hill, and it was just, it must have been 100 feet up there and there's this big huge mound of hill. And you could just go up there and just look far, far, because it was pretty level land for a long, long way away from the mountains. Behind you were mountains. But if you're looking out, it was just beautiful. And we did a lot of trips just going



around seeing the various rivers and how they followed the land, and going to springs and things like that.

KINSLEY: [00:53:18] What about lot of water, could you drink the water?

RICHARDS: [00:53:22] I boiled it and filtered it in both towns. We had a double canister system. It could hold a couple, two or three gallons of water. So I'd boil the water and then filter it. I never tried drinking it. I just didn't take that risk.

KINSLEY: [00:53:39] OK. At the end of your tour, what was your sense of achievement and failure, your pluses and minuses, relations and work with the people of Ethiopia, regrets, satisfactions?

RICHARDS: [00:53:53] I want to tell one more story before. You got me thinking about the water. One time we went up. This was the first year. We went on a hike up to some mineral springs so we could get mineral water. So we were hiking up there and it was a long hike and it was about the middle of the afternoon. And so we came to this pool of water and it was so inviting. So a couple of us went swimming in there. And so we were having a great time swimming. So we got our clothes on, went back up higher, and then up higher were all these cows all doing their droppings in the stream. And then the mineral water was actually coming out of a rock at high level. So you put, we had bottles with us so we would collect the mineral water at the top. But the water we were swimming in was, you know, basically had been cow water.

KINSLEY: [00:54:44] Fertilized.

RICHARDS: [00:54:46] Had been fertilized. So I think the guy, the one guy who had been there the year before, knew that. But he didn't tell us. So but we were up pretty high. So I don't think there was any different difficulty with bilharzia. That's the one thing you could get if you swam in water that was down at lower elevations. It's a snail that would get in your system and cause havoc. So I think we're above the bilharzia, I think that's how you say it, elevation. I always wondered. So far it hasn't shown up. But anyway, how did.

RICHARDS: [00:55:19] You know, looking back over that time, I felt I gained a ton for my life from my experience there. I hope I gave a fraction of the gifts that I received to the people that I worked with. As I said, I always remembered about that eighth grade student. I wondered if he ever passed. I wondered about different students, you know, I have their pictures and I remember some things about them now and again. And I wonder if I made a difference in their lives or not. They were locked into a system that was a leaving exam system. Things got pretty rough after a few years after Haile Selassie was deposed and there was a lot of rough times. I don't know what ever happened to any of those people. I would like to know in a way.

KINSLEY: [00:56:08] You've never been back?

RICHARDS: [00:56:10] I've never been back. I've never been able to. I wouldn't know who to write to or where to write to somebody. I suppose it's possible to look things up on the internet now and try to figure out, but people have the same names a lot. I could, you know, I could look up Atu Bulagata and I could probably find his last name somewhere, but would I get the right Atu Bulagata? I don't know.

KINSLEY: [00:56:37] I went back a couple of times in Turkey, and I didn't let anybody know I was coming. I just showed up and they welcomed me back like a king. It was unbelievable. I wish I had known that at the time, you know? They really, they never told me while I was there that.

RICHARDS: [00:56:54] But yours, that you meant something special to them?

KINSLEY: [00:56:56] Yeah, yeah, so when I came back they really did.

RICHARDS: [00:56:59] Yeah, I think that would probably be the case. You know, the children would always be very intent about the *ferengis*, the foreigners, and they would be very much in your face a lot. I'm sure that, if I had been able to go back fairly soon, it would have been difficult, because of the political situation at that time. For about 20 years, it was very difficult. I think people have started going back now. But I very much. It was a

very blessed, big blessing in my life, and it made a lot of differences to me and gave me a lot of confidence that I could, you know, enter unusual situations and enjoy them and come out with a good feeling about it.

KINSLEY: [00:57:54] Did you have any plans for the future there at all or while you were there?

RICHARDS: [00:57:59] I considered staying a third year. I really liked, I, you know, there was part of me that just wanted to stay there, but the second Kennedy assassination had occurred. Martin Luther King had been assassinated. I wanted to come back and see what my country was again and see what was going on because I didn't understand what was going on. I hadn't really been a part of the civil rights movement at the beginning. I mean, I could have been, you know, my summers could have been in the South organizing voter rights and stuff like that when I was in college, but I was in a whole different place. And when I came back from the Peace Corps, I wanted to see what was going on. I was in the home, I was past that place, and my life has still been pretty traditional and pretty set, but I did choose a field of education that's, um.

RICHARDS: [00:59:00] When I came back to the States, I started with a secondary education and social studies program in Philadelphia. And there were several of us in the program. This other fellow and I was assigned to an agricultural high school on the edge of the city. It's an agricultural high school that was supposed to be like a training ground for high school students from the inner city to get training to be, like really hands-on training, to do animal care, small animal care for lab animals, and to be able to work for parks departments and things like that. So it was kind of an agricultural high school. But they wanted to change it into a regular academic prep school because the people who are going there were the, pardon me everybody, the smart black kids and the not so smart Jewish kids who couldn't make it in the regular system. And the black kids wanted out of the inner city, their parents wanted them to have. So they wanted accreditation. And this other guy and I, I had been coming from Ethiopia where I had to teach that curriculum. I was experimenting and doing weird things. And we got kicked out of our school.

RICHARDS: [01:00:15] So basically, I wanted to do something that wasn't traditional education. So eventually I found Montessori education, which became a way to do education that was not so traditional, that was hands-on, that involved the children in the learning. That was more of what I wanted to do with my life than just be a traditional teacher. So I think it formed me a lot in what I want to do with my life. It was a bit of a struggle finding that, but I stuck with it then for 25 years here and 30 years altogether in teaching Montessori.

KINSLEY: [01:00:52] OK, now we're going to try to go back and evaluate your service in the light of the three goals of the Peace Corps. The first goal is to provide technical assistance where requested. How do you feel you did in that area?

RICHARDS: [01:01:07] I felt I did a really good job in providing the assistance that I was requested to give. Um, I think it's unfortunate that they were required to. The reason I was teaching English as a second language, they were introducing it in third grade and they had all their courses in it at seventh and eighth grade. They had all their classes by seventh.

KINSLEY: [01:01:33] It's all in English?

RICHARDS: [01:01:34] It's all in English. The reason for that is they needed college. They wanted to have their own colleges and universities there. So they were just, they needed some language. They could have gone with French, they could have gone English. Later on, they went with Russian. So that's the way it came. So we were teaching English so that they could have a college so they can have English speaking students in college. And whether that was really a valid thing for their country, I don't know.

KINSLEY: [01:02:03] Yeah.

RICHARDS: [01:02:03] But it was. I was, I did what I was called to do and I was good, and maybe it was the best that anybody could do at that particular time.

KINSLEY: [01:02:11] Mm hmm.

RICHARDS: [01:02:11] Whether, you know, looking at it from a bigger perspective, was it the best thing for their country? It wasn't my decision to make. So when I came to the back to the States, I decided to do something different. But that's all. I think we did a good job teaching.

KINSLEY: [01:02:27] Because that's what the country wanted and you provided it.

RICHARDS: [01:02:30] We did it.

KINSLEY: [01:02:31] OK, and the second goal is to promote better understanding of the U.S. How do you feel you did in that?

RICHARDS: [01:02:36] And I think it was, I hope I did OK. Sometimes I wonder. I think they met a real person from the United States who came into their lives, did some dumb things maybe, but did some good things too, and was basically a good person. And hopefully showed them that Americans can be good people besides all the dumb things they do.

KINSLEY: [01:03:05] OK, and the third goal is to promote better understanding of other peoples by Americans.

RICHARDS: [01:03:13] I've, since I come back, I've participated in my classroom.  
[tape break]

KINSLEY: [01:03:22] Third goal of the Peace Corps, which is to promote better understanding of other peoples by Americans.

RICHARDS: [01:03:29] Well, when I got back to the States, I had all my slides, had color slides, and I developed a slide show that I would, I gave it to friends and family and I've given it to several organizations. And then I also gave it in my classes at school, specially during the Peace Corps, the month when we kind of emphasize the Peace Corps in the spring. So when I actually was able to give it to other, show to other classes at those different schools where I was, I would say, open invitation, I'll come to your class. I had some artifacts, baskets and basketry that was

made in Ethiopia, and I would put on my *gabi*. I have a piece of apparel, clothing, that would be used, worn by somebody in Ethiopia, so I could show them how to use that and talk about the culture and different things like that and show the pictures and tell them about the work that I did over there.

RICHARDS: [01:04:30] So I feel like I spread the word about other countries, especially Ethiopia as a country that I had been in. And my students would sometimes ask me after that, you know, tell me some more about Ethiopia. It kind of opened up their eyes to that there was another place in the world where they lived, people live differently. The children don't have shoes all the time. Sometimes they do, but a lot of times they don't. How that works and what that means and all that kind of.

KINSLEY: [01:05:04] Have you had any continued kind of involvement with your country or contact with the people from that country?

RICHARDS: [01:05:12] I've subscribed to the, you know, there's a local, there's a regional group, an Ethiopian group that. I don't think I've signed up every year, but most years I've signed up to be a part of that and get the newsletters. I haven't really responded to any appeals of, I think there was a book campaign and different things like that. I never thought that I could respond to those. I kind of kept in touch by listening and being aware of what's going on, but not really making contact.

KINSLEY: [01:05:46] Have you had any other continuing Peace Corps involvement at all?

RICHARDS: [01:05:52] I've been kind of an activist kind of a person, I guess, whenever they're trying to get legislation passed or trying to get this happening in Congress or something like that. I've tried to be, you know, sending letters or now it's not letters anymore, it's emails. So in the early days, you would send a letter. Now you send emails off to different places. So I've tried to be as helpful as I can in keeping the Peace Corps idea going, writing my Congresspeople, emphasizing that.

KINSLEY: [01:06:30] OK, now we're going to talk about the effect on you of your Peace Corps service. What's, you know, what was your immediate effect and then changing yourself, career plans, long term?

RICHARDS: [01:06:47] Yeah, when I first got back, I remember my dad picked me up at O'Hare Airport in Chicago and we hopped on the expressway. And that was pretty traumatic.

KINSLEY: [01:07:01] Oh, the same thing happened to me. I came back by boat and I landed in New York, and my aunt picked me up in New York and got on the freeway. And I was in the back seat and I was shaking, I hadn't seen anything like that for, you know, two years and I was scared.

RICHARDS: [01:07:17] It was just, it was just incredible. Um, so, I got set up when I was going to be doing. I was going to be going to Philadelphia, so I putzed around my home in Indiana for a while, visited a few friends and made a few contacts. And then I went off to Philadelphia and tried to do that program, got kicked out. And then I went hiking on the AT trail for a month till I got two big blisters and I had to stop. And I went and I was a gardener on Cape Cod for the summer. And then I went and was a dishwasher in Stowe, Vermont, for the winter. Then I sorted myself out a little bit, licked my wounds and decided to take Montessori training. That's how I kind of got into all of that.

RICHARDS: [01:08:21] I think that. Well, I chose, I married a woman who had been in the Peace Corps. I think there was a common sense that we would live our lives a little differently because of our experiences. We didn't have a TV all the time our children were growing up, and we only had one car. There was one time we had two cars, we had a truck and a car. But pretty much we have, you know, small fuel saving cars, Toyotas. We lived as simply as we could. And we tried to raise our children as simply as we could and not consume and use more than we really needed. So I think all in all, it made a very big impression on myself and on the family that I've got now.

RICHARDS: [01:09:26] Not necessarily that they will follow the path that we, our generation spoke about, not that they will follow necessarily all the things

that we did, but we had a good time growing up. There were challenges, of course, but it was a good time, having our family. I'm very grateful to the Peace Corps experience that I had, and just hopeful that it was good for the people I served.

KINSLEY: [01:09:54] Mm hmm. OK. Anything else you'd want to add? You know, any words of wisdom that you might have for the people that are going to be listening to this?

RICHARDS: [01:10:10] Well, I think programs like this need to grow and grow and grow. It kind of gets a lid put on it, and I think if we had been growing and growing and growing instead of having a lid put on it, we'd be in a whole different place in the world. The rest of the world would be in a different place, and so would we. Volunteerism catches on, and it has caught on, and there's some of it going on. But we need to be doing this much more than, oh, solving our problems with the guns and bullets that we tend to solve them with.

KINSLEY: [01:10:53] Well, that's for sure.

RICHARDS: [01:10:53] We could have a whole different world if you could just convince enough people that training people and sending them overseas for two years would make a bigger difference, a long-lasting difference in our country and in other countries, if we could only get that established as the goal. Because we just, we have had so many chances. You know, we had the '60s, we had the '70s. We had a little bit of the '80s and then we really shut down. It's been a really long shutdown. Things are starting to open up a little bit now, I hope. But I think we're seeing, a lot of people don't realize how much change is necessary because we've let it go so long. There's a lot of change that's necessary right now. And it's just, it's going to be overwhelming to us unless we're going to start making some steps to go forward. And volunteerism is a very big step that we need to be able to take.

KINSLEY: [01:12:04] Yeah, I think there always has been, I never thought of it that way, a lid on the Peace Corps, at least as far as numbers. Because, you



know, I think they wanted to get up to 10,000 at one point. But I don't think they've ever achieved that.

RICHARDS: [01:12:17] That would just be a drop in the bucket of what's needed in our world.

KINSLEY: [01:12:21] But even that, like you say, there's a lid on that and more money goes to Iraq or whatever.

RICHARDS: [01:12:30] The immediate needs of oil. Well, soon the immediate needs of oil will be come crashing down on us and we won't. You won't be able to. We'll either respond with more bullets and more guns and really destroy the world, or we'll find another way. And I'm hoping, I'm working locally so we can find another way.

KINSLEY: [01:12:49] Yeah, well, you're an inspiration. I lived a straight life for a long time, then I kind of just let it all go. And now I'm regretting that. But I admire your perseverance.

RICHARDS: [01:13:06] Well, thank you. I'm just giving it my best shot. This is my one time around, and I'm going to live it as slowly as I can. And living fully means living thoughtfully and respectfully of other people as much as I can. It's been a challenge sometimes.

KINSLEY: [01:13:29] You've stuck with it, and it's good to hear. Any other, uh. That's a good ending, but unless you had any pearls of wisdom you want to add?

RICHARDS: [01:13:39] I think that's it. I'd like us to be able to move forward in the ways that we need to move forward and not go backwards. There's so much of a push in our country to go backwards right now.

KINSLEY: [01:13:53] Boy, boy. Back to what?

RICHARDS: [01:13:56] Well, they want to go back to the era of cheap oil, and we've got to move on. We're not going to be able to. The way that I live in this tiny little house by myself is not sustainable. It's just not sustainable. We

have to move to a sustainable future, and we have to start that soon.  
And all that work, there are people doing it, so I'll be with them.

KINSLEY: [01:14:27] OK, well, thank you very much.

[END OF INTERVIEW]