

Kim Herman, DR 21, 1967-1969

Before Peace Corps:

I grew up in Opportunity, Washington, then a large Township, now the City of Spokane Valley near Spokane, WA. My first connection with Peace Corps was watching a John Kennedy TV spot for PC when I was in the 9th grade. That was when I decided to become a volunteer. During my junior year at Washington State University I talked with the PC recruiters and, in my senior year, I filed two applications – one with PC and one for the Air Force. When my draft board granted my request to join PC, I turned down the Air Force offer and joined DR 21 in Philadelphia for orientation and entered the Dominican Republic in October of 1967 after training at Camp Radley in Puerto Rico.

As a Volunteer:

I was involved in rural community development as a Promotor for the Oficina de Desarrollo de la Comunidad. I was assigned to the ODC office in Higüey which was headed by Checo Montas, one of the best community developers in the DR. I still see Checo whenever I go to the DR. I worked first in a very small community, Matachalupe, outside Higüey but after about 45 days I was transferred to San Rafael del Yuma, a village of about 1,500 near the eastern tip of the island.

From Yuma I worked with Checo, other promoters and many Dominican friends to help build 5 rural schools, 2 agricultural access roads and an agricultural warehouse. I was very fortunate to be in the DR when AID and ODC were funding projects. I was also fortunate to be working with Checo, who was unstoppable when it came to finding the resources and money to complete almost every project his office could undertake. My two good friends from Yuma, Carmito Lugo and Ciprian Espinal (now deceased), gave me tremendous support and one or the other worked with me on every one of my projects. Mark Hagen (now Mark Randall) worked out of Higüey also and we worked on several projects together.

After Peace Corps:

After Peace Corps I made a trip to New York, Virginia and Kentucky to interview for jobs on my way home and in January 1969 I went to work developing affordable housing in Warrenton, Virginia working for the Fauquier Community Action Agency. It turned out to be the first job in a long career in housing development that led me next to Washington, DC to work for the Rural Housing Alliance developing farmworkers housing in 28 states under a DOL contract. I met my wife at RHA and we were married after I returned to Spokane for a two year stint with HUD on a Carter administration Rural Assistance Initiative to improve rural housing in Eastern WA. When Reagan was elected, the HUD rural initiative was terminated and we moved to Yakima, WA where I directed the Yakima Housing Authority for 3 plus years.

My first son was born in Yakima before we moved to Portland, OR where I briefly managed a housing rehabilitation program. My second son was born in Portland, just two weeks before we moved to Seattle where I became the Executive Director of the new Washington State Housing Finance Commission, an organization I helped lobby into existence to address affordable housing needs. I have been fortunate to be the director at the commission for the past 28 years and we have financed more than 125,000 affordable housing units and many community facilities across the state, among many other accomplishments.

My third son was born in Bellevue, WA where I still live, although I am no longer married. As part of my regular work, I have been heavily involved in lobbying at both the state and national level on funding for affordable housing and better housing policies and I have served on many nonprofit housing boards. As a single parent I was active in my sons' school as a PTSA member for several years and President for two years and, of course, coaching sports on weekends. I have attended the last three PC-DR reunions and now want to focus on my relationship with Friends of the DR and re-establishing a connection with Peace Corps, today's volunteers and RPCV's to see what we can accomplish at home.

