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Head: Jeanne Trumble-Hejduk

Subhead: Decision to Join Changed Her Life

Written by Blair Townley

Current photo of Jeanne Anthony Rao

It was a new US goodwill program still in its infancy but the Peace Corps went on to become an experience that ultimately changed volunteer Jeanne Trumble-Hejduk's outlook on the world and herself.

"If I were to look back over the 45 years of my career, my Peace Corps involvement definitely impacted me the most," the Leesburg resident says.

"I think the Peace Corps set the tone for the rest of my life; for the appreciation of other cultures and the recognition of the tunnel vision of some in the United States. I came back feeling like I was a citizen of the world as well as a citizen of the United States."

#### A New Endeavor

Encouraged to serve after hearing President John F. Kennedy's 1961 inaugural speech, and of the late Sergeant Shriver's involvement in creating the Peace Corps, Jeanne, 69, joined the Peace Corps with her first husband Robert Trumble in 1962.

The Trumbles were accepted into the organization after a two-month wait and began with other volunteers an intense 10-week training program with focus on language and culture training at Boston College. The preparation concluded with three weeks spent in Puerto Rico so volunteers could practice their Spanish and adaptability in a new culture.

Jeanne and Robert were assigned to live in the squatter settlement of San Martin de Porres near Lima, Peru, a village of 100,000 people living on a dry river bed with no running water or streets and very little electricity.

Their first night in the village the couple came home to find "Yankees Go Home" painted on their home — not the welcome the volunteers were hoping for.

"The people were used to the diplomatic corps and wealthy Americans that weren't very nice. It took us a while to be there and meet the people," Jeanne recalls.

#### Lives Changed for the Better

Little by little the volunteers started to make progress in helping the village thrive, where families would survive on begging and what they could sell of food or goods.

Jeanne began working with another volunteer in setting up the first foster family program for Peru. They learned to maneuver in the different court systems and also translated into Spanish the court information for children who only knew the Quechua language of Peruvian Indians.

"We had to set up the system from how to identify who the children were so they could become legally wards of the state to educating judges and social workers to establish the credibility of the program with the children," she states.

While she was helping to start the foster program, Jeanne was also asked to assist in creating a social service program for the Institute for the Handicapped in Lima. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in Social Work before joining the Peace Corps.

What struck Jeanne as meaningful was the protection she felt from the people after having lived in Peru for a while, shown most on the day President Kennedy was shot.

"At four a.m. people were pounding on our door and when we opened the door, the villagers were just in tears telling us our president had been shot," she states.

"The difference between the 'Yankees Go Home' painting on our house and a year and a half later telling us in tears about our president had a major effect on how I saw how you develop relationships and trust with people."

Once their two years were completed in 1965, the Trumbles returned to the U.S. to recruit for the Peace Corps and await the birth of their first child, Eric.

Reflecting on the 50th anniversary this year of the Peace Corps, Jeanne believes the decision to join the still unknown organization changed the course of her life forever as well as her appreciation for other cultures and belief in her own abilities.

#### Captions:

Historial Photos: provided by Jeanne Trumble-Hejduk

Above: November 1963 — outside their home in San Martin.

Left, Top to Bottom: An old Indian woman with her pack partially filled with garbage collected along the streets of San Martin in about a block from their house; Taken on the roof of their house in San Martin with some of the kids peering down into their home through the ventilation hole in the center of the house; Half a block from their home in San Martin on Avenida Peru, the main thoroughfare an old Indian lady sifts through the scattered garbage for re-usable items; Jeanne overlooking the Cathedral in the Plaza de Armas from the roof of their apartment building in Lima.

Right: December 1963 — outside of their home in the barriada of San Martin with some of the neighbor kids.