

50 years ago Peace Corps came to the country of Belize, one short year after it all began. Two teachers ended up in Stan Creek on the coast of Belize. It was hot, humid, and buzzing with mosquitoes but they had a great time after they started visiting the nurse's dorm at the Stann Creek Hospital. They made friends with one of the nurses there while playing games in the evening and laughing their cares away.

2012 and Belize is still hot, humid and home to huge quantities of mosquitoes. It was on such a typical evening in Corozal in northern Belize that I met Emma Williams. I was waiting for friends to open the Baha'i Center where we were having a meeting and Emma was on her way to check on a house that she owns. She stopped to chat. I learned that she was Belizean, had married an English Baha'i back in the 60's and moved with him to London where they lived for many years. I shared that I was Baha'i as well as a Peace Corps volunteer working in literacy education.

Emma Williams was that nurse who worked in Stann Creek back in the 60's and she recalled fond memories of meeting two Peace Corps volunteers who became good friends - Mary Lou McCormick and Molly Lee Zimmer. Emma remembers that Mary Lou did the Charleston at a celebration that they attended and one of the women gave her a necklace. When the volunteers left Belize, they kept in touch for awhile. When Emma lived in England she even went to France to visit Molly Lee who had moved there. Unfortunately at the time of the visit Molly Lee was on vacation and not at home. Emma left a note under the door to say that she had been there. Molly wrote back to Emma to tell of her disappointment in missing Emma's visit. Although they were only separated by the English Channel they never managed to see each other again.

Ultimately many years have passed but the memories of their friendship linger in Emma's mind and she would like to reconnect with these women. Friendships may indeed be the most valuable part of our Peace Corps experience after all.