

**Russ Fox**  
**Interviewed by Eric Stein**  
**The Evergreen State College oral history project**  
**September 27, 2017**  
**FINAL**

**Stein:** It is September 27, 2017, and I'm here with Russ Fox at his home in Olympia, Washington. We are starting an oral history interview that's going to be part of the Evergreen oral history archives. It focuses on Emeritus Faculty.

I'm very lucky to have an opportunity to speak with Russ. We talked a few days ago and set out some ideas for what we might want to discuss during this particular interview. I was really interested in what Russ had to say about growing up in East Cleveland in the 1950s, and I wanted to ask how that shaped your ideas about community.

**Fox:** Thank you, Eric. I'm delighted to have this opportunity. It's going to be fun. Yes, I grew up in East Cleveland, Ohio. I was born in 1944 in Washington, D.C. We moved back to Cleveland where my mother and father were born and had grown up.

I was really raised by my mother and both sets of grandparents due to the fact that my father was killed in a civil airplane crash in 1947 as he was just getting out of the Navy and had been in Pittsburgh for an interview. My mother moved my brother and me back to Cleveland when I was only three, and I lived there until I graduated from high school in 1962. So I really did grow up there; we didn't travel very much, pretty much just knew northeast Ohio.

The East Side of Cleveland at that time was so rich with different ethnic culture and communities. It was a time when—as I realized later more than I realized it at the time—each neighborhood or even each elementary school in East Cleveland was the hub or the center for a different Central or Eastern European community of families that had immigrated to Cleveland. Typically, the father was working in the steel mills or in the industrial section of Cleveland. Usually there would be a grandparent or two speaking the native language, and mothers and kids pretty much staying home.

But it was a time when we just played in the streets all the time. We played hockey or stick hockey and baseball and soccer and basketball. Always outside playing with other kids. I went to school part of the time on the city bus, where I would just pay three cents or a nickel to take a bus to school.

Just part of the community life without really being very separate or isolated from a lot of either public exposure to the realities of an urban life, or the messiness sometimes of growing up in a city.

It was just natural for me to grow up in a very publicly social community neighborhood environment. I think that really did frame how I wanted to be a part of a community in the rest of my life. When I went to college at the University of California Santa Barbara, I met my first roommate. We did the usual “Where are you from? What are you going to major in?” He was from the suburbs of Los Angeles and hadn’t had a lot of, I think, exposure to cultural diversity or richness or maybe even street life that I’d had.

But when he said he was going to major in anthropology, I had never heard the word. I had grown up in this industrial city where if you were male and in the upper third or fourth of your class, the only counseling or vision of a future that anyone had for us—family as well as teachers—was “How are you going to contribute to the industrial future of the Northeast or the Midwest? What kind of scientist are you going to be?” All my friends and I went off to college saying that we were going to be a chemistry major or a physics major. I was going to be a math major. That was our frame of reference for going on with our educations.

When he said anthropology, I said, “What’s that?” He started talking about interest in different ethnic communities around the world, and cultural experiences. To me, I said to myself—I probably said it to him—“Look, you could just go and live in East Cleveland for a while because that sounds like what you’re interested in.” It really did frame my sense of participation in community, of community as a place where people’s experiences and values are important in a community context and not just in a personal or family or professional way.

My mother was raising us—my brother and me--and we had another half-brother come along in another year or so. She had finished a couple years of college and spent most of her career working as secretarial support. She was the vice principal’s assistant or secretary in the junior high where I went. So, it was a modest but very comfortable upbringing in our family life.

My one set of grandparents bought a house that we could share with them, sort of like a duplex. It was a big house divided into two. My other set of grandparents lived just a mile away, so I had a really wonderful intergenerational upbringing, which really added to the way that growing up affected my sense of being in a community with multigenerational activities and experiences.

**Stein:** You said there was a pressure to become a chemistry major or a math major and build the future of the city or the United States at that particular time. But you got to college and started off in math but

then some of your interests changed. How did that come about and what was it that shaped your path toward a career in urban planning and community-based studies?

**Fox:** I don't know if pressure was quite the right word. That was just the frame of reference in all the conversations. It was an assumption without saying I had to be a math major or a scientist in some way. I was interested in science. It wasn't something I was in any way moved into by others' will rather than my own interest and the environment around me.

But when I got into college and discovered that I was expected to take many other courses as part of a liberal arts education, I just became fascinated in the arts, other social science, humanities. I took 20 or 22 credits every term so that I could fit in more non-math or non-science courses to round out my education or to discover new interests. I remember particularly art history, music appreciation, different philosophy courses, literature of different times and places. They were all really fascinating to me.

But I trudged along, and also did my math work, as I was in that major track. Fortunately—this was the next step in developing both a connection to community in a way that I really still grew more from, and also started some of the seeds that became my more graduate work and more professional identity in the future—I'd also along the way taken French language every quarter during my first two years. That let me qualify to apply for the University of California Study Abroad program in France.

It was only the second year of their program at the University of Bordeaux. The first year they did not have any science students enroll, or they didn't recruit science students for their program. I think there were 100 students each year from all of the UC campuses. They'd all go in one group to the University of Bordeaux. I said, really, this is a chance to get to know another part of the world. I qualified having minimum French background that I needed. I'll just take a chance and see if they're interested in someone who's a math major.

It turns out that they were, and there were two of us—another woman from Berkeley who was a biology major—who was accepted into the program in 1964-65, so I got to spend a year in France. That further enriched me in the appreciation of community life in the sense of a lot of street activity, a lot of pedestrian life, a lot of appreciating the relationship between city and town and countryside in ways that were different from what I saw in the U.S., particularly being in California, the way cities were just sprawling and spreading and there really didn't seem to be a whole lot of clear distinction between urban and rural. Even within urban, what could our neighborhoods be? That was another experience

that added to my wondering about communities—how they happen, why they attract me in certain ways.

I came back from that experience thinking about, what about architecture? I hadn't even heard the term urban planning yet, but I was thinking about city/countryside kinds of relationships, and the natural world relating to the built-in human world. Among all these different kinds of classes, I was really spreading myself into as many different other fields of inquiry as I could. As a senior, I took an urban sociology class. It was a seminar class, the closest I ever had to an Evergreen seminar experience, only a few students, 12 students and a faculty. We would read a book each week, and usually in the faculty's office or sitting around in small area, talk about that book, do our research, write papers, etc.

One of the books we read was Jane Jacobs's book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, which had been published a few years before, and that really captured my. . . gave me some language and concepts to frame my experience and interests around. Jane Jacobs was talking about the vitality of cities being based on and needing to be planned for around people's experience and values rather than around more analytical, administrative, engineering ways of thinking about the physical aspect of cities. Instead, we should be thinking about it, talking about it, and celebrating and planning around the more human, experiential, value-based ways of thinking about our lives rather than the physical structures that we have to live in, maneuver in, that frame us, define us, or limit us.

That book caught my attention and it led me to looking at graduate programs in urban planning as a possibility. I wanted to stay on the West Coast because I was really enjoying that part of the world and meeting friends there. By then my mother had moved my brothers and her father, my grandfather, to California also because her sister had already moved there and it gave the family a gathering place down in Southern California.

My other grandparents had moved to Baltimore to be closer to their son, who interestingly—this is a side comment—was my father's identical twin. I guess that was another interesting thing about my growing up in a context of family. Whereas I didn't get to know my father because he was killed in the plane crash before I was three, yet I had an uncle who was an identical twin. Even though we didn't live in the same city, I always could use him as a framework of seeing and experiencing and knowing something at least about what my father would have been like had he been alive and growing up in our family.

I guess the point is there wasn't a particular need to go back or feel a draw to go back to Cleveland since the grandparents and my mother had migrated west and gone back to the East Coast in Baltimore.

I applied to graduate programs in urban planning at the University of California Berkeley and the University of Washington. It was a fascinating interview when I was invited up to Berkeley to see if I might be interested in going there. They made an appointment with a faculty member. I was really naïve about what I should have been doing. I hadn't even looked up what is the professional journal in this profession, and I hadn't looked up who are some of the other important writers and thinkers and activists. I just loved this Jane Jacobs's whole way of talking and thinking and writing about cities and how they can be more vital and humane and safe and viable economically. She wrote a lot about city economics that related to her thinking about other aspects of city life.

I had my appointment with the faculty member at Berkeley. We were chatting along as he was doing his interview, and when it came to the question about how did I get interested in city and regional planning or urban planning from my math background, I said, "It really was more from having read this book in this seminar class I had." I mentioned *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* and it's really clear in my memory how the conversation changed at that moment. It was almost like there was different body language, maybe he put down his pen or his notebook closed. He didn't exactly look at his watch, but he said, "Well, good. I think we've probably done all we need to do. Thank you for coming."

The interview was very quickly over, which I thought, well, maybe that's fine, he got what he needed and he seemed like a nice person. Later I realized that I had had this interview with somebody who was one of the four or five top thinkers at the time about how to look at cities and city growth and city planning as a systems analysis, not necessarily mathematical but a systems way of understanding everything that wasn't at all based on the kind of values and experiences that Jane Jacobs was promoting as a way to be thinking about our cities and their futures. I quickly realized that to him—a scholar in the prominent analytically-based paradigm of thinking about planning in the '60s—that Jane Jacobs was a woman writing in a man's profession and she was not trained as a planner. She was an architectural historian and architectural critic, and the theories and the practices and the proposals that she was making were, to some people, heresy.

This was an era of urban renewal where we were going into very healthy—in many ways, not all ways—thriving, vital communities, and labeling them as slums or as poverty areas that need to be

replaced with modern, many times high-rise housing. In one big city—mainly in the East Coast—after another, we moved in and replaced the kind of communities that I had grown up in with housing projects or modern housing complexes, even if they were for more moderate and upper-income folks rather than the folks who had been living there.

I can't remember if I was accepted or not, but I didn't go to the University of California Berkeley. I'm sure that down the hall there would have been somebody—a graduate student or a younger up-and-coming professor—who was interested in some different ideas who would have loved to talk to me about Jane Jacobs's book, but it didn't lead to an engaged conversation in the interview I had.

I went to the University of Washington graduate school Master's Degree program in Urban Planning. It was part of the School of Architecture—and still is—at the UW. This was 1966. It was a time when not only in the profession of planning there were some of these new ideas of Jane Jacobs and others interested in social planning and social justice issues rather than just efficiency of systems and models. There was a lot of excitement about the potential of planning as a career or a field and that we could make a difference in the world and we could get involved in organizing as well as zoning. It wasn't going to be only highway planning and zoning; that we could break out of that paradigm that had been defining the profession.

**Stein:** How was your outlook on urban planning and community studies further shaped by your graduate work at the University of Washington?

**Fox:** As I think now about my experience of community, being at the University of California Santa Barbara living in student housing really didn't add much to what I had experienced growing up in Cleveland, but a little bit of the year in France did. Then when I went up to the University of Washington, living in Seattle, I was back in an urban neighborhood again and a more complex, interesting, to me, city than Santa Barbara had been.

So, in addition to the richness and the vitality and the challenging nature of our class—the particular class of us that started in the fall of 1966—my work study job to help put me through the expenses of going to college was as a social worker in one of the housing projects in South Seattle, the Rainier Vista housing project. This put me right back into the experience of the richness, the diversity, the struggles of people who are not just the wealthy and the upper-middle-class folks that we were mostly reading about or talking about in a lot of the early city planning courses.

I was actually a group worker for young boys of the ages of 11 to 14. At that time in the Seattle public schools, if students were not behaving as they were expected to they were pretty much put back

on the street until they behaved better. So a lot of the kids hung around the community center there at the housing project. There were a couple other work study students on the staff and we just tried to help these young people figure out how to navigate their lives given the things that were being thrown at them, whether at home in their family life, or in the community context, or the systems such as schools that were ignoring them or rejecting them. I really enjoyed working with those kids and how much I learned from them, and how much I learned from getting to know their families. That was the experiential part of being a part of a city neighborhood that was going through lots of social, economic, and sometimes physical challenges of survival.

That was a really enriching part of my experience there. But back in the graduate program classroom—I really liked the program because it had a lot of emphasis on small-group projects where we were in teams and were given an assignment to work on either a neighborhood or community issue. I was working on one team that worked on a planning problem with one of the local Native American communities north of Seattle, so it had some real-world problem-solving components to it, which were really the part I loved the best because the more historical and theoretical classroom work was still pretty old school, as I understood later.

I found interestingly that the coursework for me was really easy compared to having been a math major. The only Cs I ever got in college were in my major. I struggled in math even though I liked logic and geometry and some aspects of it, but it wasn't really my strength. That's why I only took the minimum needed to get a degree and discovered all these other life and intellectual and experiential interests.

The coursework was easy because I discovered that what they were trying to teach us in urban planning was how to take large issues or problems and break them down into smaller pieces that could be looked at and put together differently, or how to build something more complex and larger out of some smaller building block units of knowledge or of experience. I kind of learned how to do that in math, the relationship between small data or larger solutions or theorems or whatever, so the intellectual process was pretty easy. The knowledge was different, and some was interesting to me and some wasn't.

The part that was most interesting to me was what was increasingly being defined as social planning, community organizing. The group of students in my class really pushed our department to open up more options for us for our electives so we could take courses in social work, anthropology, and have those be part of our degree rather than in addition to the required courses in public administration

and housing and transportation planning, which was mostly engineering systems. It was a nice balance to be able to find more of those humanities and social movement courses that became part of our curriculum.

I kind of breezed through that. Most of my interest was in my work study job down at the Rainier Vista housing project. I had that position for two years. Along the way, I read another book that piqued my interest and framed my eventual thinking about pedagogy once I became a teacher, or found myself in a position of being an educator in a college setting as well as in a community setting, which is what I had expected to be doing. I expected myself to be more of a community educator, community planner, community organizer.

When I read Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*—which I thought later it was fascinating that that would be a book that we would read in an urban planning course, or be an urban planning approved elective—that was a real gift to me because it gave me a really challenging, theoretical, ethical kind of way of thinking, another language to use in thinking about people's experiences, and how people themselves, in collaboration and partnership and unity with others, can define their own experience and their own engagement with the community in ways that they weren't really allowed to given the forces and institutions of the societal context that they were in. Another way of thinking about how learning happens and for whom, and the role of oppression in learning, which I hadn't really thought about in the same way or maybe even hardly at all. So, another book that got stuck in the back of my mind. There were others, of course, but Jacobs and Freire were authors who influenced me greatly.

At the end of my two-year master's program, for the second time I was faced with "what do I do now?" given that my draft board back in East Cleveland was keeping an eye on me, and waiting for me to finish whatever little deferments they might want to give me, and then send me to Vietnam, which was not a very attractive thought in my mind. I had friends who went into the Army and the Navy right after high school. Not all of them survived, and at least one good friend I specifically remember did not.

It's sort of interesting because I'm starting to talk about this a little bit given that I'm watching the PBS series on Vietnam last week and this week. For someone my age, just cascading waves of emotions and memories. And now, new knowledge and new insights that we weren't exposed to at that time that we're gaining out of this series on TV. I've already been talking to my son, and I'm hoping that younger generations will be interested in learning that history, even though they won't be able to address it, lacking the experiential part of growing up at that time.



I wasn't particularly interested in supporting our military efforts in Southeast Asia. I was, however, very interested and committed to being of service. I was a pretty patriotic guy. I grew up in a family where my father was in the Navy, my uncle was in the Army. Like most of us, I had a lot of relatives that in earlier generations had been in the military--and were now. I wasn't necessarily a fanatic or a leader of antiwar movements. I participated—I gave my support in quiet ways, in solidarity ways.

But I just wanted something other than more academic work. I felt I was ready to do something in the community rather than immediately think about a PhD. I didn't know if I would even want to do that in the future. I was ready to get out in the communities and do some good work that would affect people's lives at a community level.

So, I looked at the Peace Corps as a possibility of serving. It turns out there were two Peace Corps programs in 1968 that were specifically recruiting graduates from urban planning master's programs rather than the recruitment of anybody with a degree to do teaching of English or maybe some low-level community development work that Peace Corps would train us to do.

These two programs were in two very interesting countries, both at that time and now--Iran and Chile. I looked into both of them. The program in Iran, which I really didn't know a lot about—I hadn't been as engaged in international politics and history and culture as maybe I should have been other than being kind of intrigued based on my experience in France and European North American history and relationships—but when I looked at the Iran Peace Corps program, it was pretty obvious that it was very top-down. We'd be in the Ministry of Housing in the capital doing the planning for the people and for the cities. It didn't seem to have a lot of engagement with the community or with the population. It was pretty much "We're the planners. We know best and we're going to build cities of the world." Again, mostly focusing on physical structures, assuming that people's lives would fit into that in some way that would work.

On the contrary, the program in Chile was almost the opposite. In the government of Chile at the time, the president was Eduardo Frei, Sr., a Christian Democrat. His party was in power. It turns out—I didn't know this till later—that when Paulo Freire was kicked out of Brazil for being a little too radical in how he was teaching people to think rather than teaching them literacy by teaching them the alphabet, and *Dick and Jane* kinds of stories, he at the time was a friend of Eduardo Frei and kind of a kitchen cabinet member to Frei's government helping the government agencies think about ways that they could decentralize their systems, whether it was education of healthcare or, in this case, housing,

to get more of the planning and the policymaking and the engagement of voices in government more at the community level and not just at the ministry level in the capital with the professionals and the upper and upper middle class folks that knew how to work those systems.

That program seemed really intriguing to me so I said, “This sounds like it would be really fun and perhaps valuable.” I was interested in learning Spanish, so I signed up and was accepted. At that time, the Peace Corps training—for all of the Americas at least—was being done in the U.S. Our training was at a fraternity house in Rutgers University in New Jersey in the middle of summer. Very hot. No air conditioning. We could only watch and listen to Spanish-speaking TV and radio. We had intensive Spanish language for six hours a day. It was great. I learned some Spanish really quickly.

It wasn’t until I was at the end of the program—when I realized that we were getting called into our final interviews or sessions with the staff, and the folks from Chile who were coming up to meet us or welcome us—that there was some uncertainty about those meetings, which I hadn’t figured out or realized. Essentially, we were given the information or the news that “We have a ticket in this envelope for you to go to Chile. This is when we need you to be there.” Or, “This envelope has a ticket home because you aren’t able to be accepted into this program.”

It was for one of two reasons. One is your draft board was not giving you a continued deferment, or our staff—meaning our psychiatrist, who was watching us all the time—felt that we really weren’t quite ready for the experiences we were going to have in terms of cultural immersion. It was like, oh, my gosh, some of my friends that I had been with are not going to be going to Chile. There were a few whose draft boards or the psychological powers-that-be felt that they were not appropriate for this program. Ninety percent of us went. It was just unexpected. I was a little naïve about it. Oh, this is all just going to work out fine for everybody.

So, I went off into the Peace Corps. I had a lot of good friends that I left behind from the UW graduate program. One of them was Carolyn Dobbs, who had also come to Washington—in her case from Tennessee and Kentucky—to join the graduate program in 1966. Carolyn already had a bachelor’s degree in history, a master’s degree in political science from the University of Kentucky, and a year or two of experience working as a planner in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. She had discovered planning through getting what started as a political science internship, and then realized, oh, this is something I want to now get some more education in. She already had a master’s degree, already had some planning in the field experience, and was one of the 40 of us or so who were in the program I was in.

She and about another 8 or 10 of us were really close. We did a lot of things together. We did a lot of mountain-climbing and skiing. In our community project work, she got engaged with working with the neighborhood of the Queen Anne Hill in Seattle in some of their community development work, where the community was empowered—or was both being given some authority by the City, but also assuming and taking more on their own—to try to have more control themselves over the planning for their neighborhood rather than just filling out a survey that the planners downtown would then take back to their offices and tabulate and then make some decision based on that. It was an example of a really urban neighborhood community participation, a neighborhood starting to push for more and more opportunity to be engaged with their own experience and values rather than just input into someone else's either PhD research or planning policy and implementation of programs.

I'm mentioning Carolyn now because when I came back from the Peace Corps—I'll come back to the Peace Corps work in a second—I reconnected with some of the friends from that program. Reconnecting with Carolyn is what led me to Evergreen. I'll come back to that. I was just making that initial connection.

The Peace Corps work was with the Ministry of Housing and Urbanization. Most of us, except for a few, were sent out into the provinces. We each had a Chilean co-worker—a young graduate our age coming out of the universities in Chile. They didn't have urban planning programs, so they came from political science or architecture or public administration.

**Stein:** Tell us a little bit more about your Peace Corps work in Chile.

**Fox:** That was a real highlight, and it really further framed the work I ended up going on and doing at Evergreen and in the local communities here in my own community engagement and volunteer work.

As I mentioned, it was a program to get us, with our partners—young Chilean graduates—out into the communities in the different provinces of Chile to work with the local communities—which meant everything from having access to, or be invited to meet, the governor and the mayors, the officialdom of the local communities, but also labor groups and neighborhood groups and other organizations in segments in the community, whether they were organized or not—about their community experience, and how their ideas could be fed back into the process of eventually the Ministry of Housing deciding how to invest public monies in community infrastructure in these towns.

For example, I was working in the province of Aconcagua, which is the next province north of Santiago in Chile, an agricultural province. It had two small cities of about 20,000 people, and lots of smaller villages and agricultural lands and scattered housing with the farmworkers. We were pretty

much on our own to work in these communities to try to do some organizing, have some meetings, and bring different perspectives of the community together.

We knew, for example, that the Ministry of Housing was going to spend, say, a million dollars in housing or public works infrastructure—water systems, sewer systems—or different kinds of housing programs in that province in the next year. We were given the data about how much different kinds of programs cost. You could build a certain number of houses of this type or quality with this much money, and this is what a water system costs for 500 families, etc.

They wanted input from the community about what their priorities might be for using that much money in this kind of array of possible investment programs. Fortunately—this was some of the forward thinking that Eduardo Frei's government was generating—their thinking about what housing meant was not just everybody having a nice, so-many-square-foot house per person with flush toilets and running water and electricity, but that housing meant also just having a safe, secure parcel of land that you could put up whatever you could afford or manage to put without either being over your head in debt. Supporting folks that perhaps just settling in what became known in different countries as “squatter communities”—“callampas” (mushrooms) in Chile—and just giving them a safe, secure parcel of land with water and electrical power access, and letting them build whatever they could or afford to build or manage to build.

We had a nice array of projects that could be supporting different segments of the community rather than only the segment of the community that could afford a house of a standard that we might expect in our communities here.

It was fascinating. The Peace Corps left us alone. They just said, “You’re working with the Ministry of Housing. We’re not going to mess with you too much.” I had a great camaraderie with some of the folks I met, young people as well as professional-level people, and people I hung out with in the lower-income neighborhoods in the town of Los Andes where I lived. The first year, the priority that we sent—that our community process sent back to the Ministry of Housing office in Santiago—was to spend almost all of the available money on getting the 500 families living in the Aconcagua riverbed—which flooded every other year and flooded them out and they had to go back in and try to rebuild—families that were just building their own shacks or putting up whatever they could on land they didn’t own but was a riverbed. We had participated in the 1970 census to do a census in that community, so we were in there a lot, getting to know the people who lived there, and not only doing the census data-gathering that was related to the housing work, but also getting more of a trusting, valuable relationship

with some of those folks in terms of letting them see that there is actually some potential of someone asking them what they would like rather than just being another survey that they never hear anything more about in the future. So, it builds some trust.

The community's recommendation was that these 500 families be given ownership of a parcel of land that's dry, that won't flood every other year, and be given water and sewer and electrical service, and then still just build whatever they could afford. It wouldn't be something that was putting them in any kind of debt of having to pay a mortgage. There was no mortgage, it was just giving them land.

The other projects that didn't make it to the top of the list were more of the traditional ones, like the Municipal Workers Union wanted to have some nicer houses for their union employees. They were folks who already had a house but they wanted a better house. And the traditional—this was not just in Chile at the time and not just South America, it was many of the southern continent countries, then and now—decision-making or the influence of decisions about who gets the benefit with what kind of facilities and services is based on who knows the people in power, who knows the senators or who knows the cabinet ministers. Typically, those union worker houses would, by the more normal ways that things get decided, be the ones who would get their project built because they were in the political system that was in power, or they supported the right people at the right time to get their projects supported.

This different perspective coming from the community was deliberately meant to muddle that a little bit. But as we discovered, it didn't replace it because six months later we would receive the feedback from the Ministry of Housing and they'd say, "Well, your project number one has been moved down to number 2C and these others have been moved ahead of it." The others were the more traditional ones.

On the other hand, the second year I was there, that project stayed up at the top. The seeds were planted for that process, and that input would not at least be totally shelved and wasted, which gave me a better feeling about being a foreigner coming into somebody else's community. At least I wasn't in an assignment or a program or a mentality that assumed I knew anything that would be of use to them, other than I might be helpful in a process of learning and getting engaged in civic or political processes that may or may not lead to some fruition, short-term or long-term, so I put it in the back of my mind as well. At least my Peace Corps experience was a do-no-harm—at least that I know of—

experience, so I felt good about it. I enjoyed the friendships that I made. Some of those people I'm still in touch with.

The other thing that was going on at that time—this was 1968-70—it was the last two years of Eduardo Frei's government. I was there during the election in 1970 when Salvador Allende was elected to be President of Chile. The Chilean constitution at that time—and it is again now—included a requirement that the president is elected for six years but it's not renewable. It's a one-term six-year term. They were also very proud at their—at that time—150-some years of uninterrupted democracy, even though that meant that not 100 percent of the population was actually represented in the kind of parties that kept being the winners back and forth.

Salvador Allende had been in the Chilean Senate for 35, 36 years. Very influential senator, a socialist from one of the many socialist parties. He was the head of one of those. He had run for president five different times as one of the socialist party candidates, so he was extremely well known politically. He was one candidate that was running during 1970—again.

A man named Jorge Alessandri, who had been president before Frei and who represented the titans of industry in Chile, whose family owned the paper mills, everything related to wood products as well as other industries—people knew his policies—he represented the idea that Chile needs to reinforce their industrial corporations to be better players in the international game of development. He was representing that sector of the economy and the society. He was extremely well known because he had been president.

Eduardo Frei, the current president, was extremely popular. He would have easily won again, but he couldn't run again. His party put up a man named Radomiro Tomic as their candidate. He had been a senator, was at the time Chile's representative at the United Nations, but he wasn't as well known as the other two.

The leftist parties never had been able to win because there were anywhere from six to 15 of them. They would always split the more progressive, leftist vote. In this campaign, they organized what they called Unidad Popular—the Popular Unity—and this was actually one of the programs that was somewhat influenced by Paulo Freire's thinking. They had this big conference to see if, among all of the different communist and socialist parties, they could agree on one candidate to represent them. I wasn't privy to any of this, but it was fascinating reading in the papers about it.

The Communist Party candidate was Pablo Neruda. The Communist Party represented the intellectual left. He, of course, was very well known, not as a politician but as a thinker and the conscience of the country.

Then there was Salvador Allende and a whole bunch of others, some of whom had also run before. Let me back up a little bit. Allende's party had figured, "He's had a chance five times." They put up somebody else, so Allende wasn't in this initial group. But the Unidad Popular couldn't agree on anybody except Allende at the end.

So, they did have a Unidad Popular leftist candidate, an industrial/corporate family monopoly representative of that segment and a vision of the future that was represented by that type of thinking about development and future, and a relatively unknown candidate from the party who was in power and whose current president could have easily won.

All the polls were always about 25 to 35 for each of them as it got closer and closer to the election. The Christian Democrats' candidate, Radomiro Tomic was increasingly realizing that the general mood of the country was to support more leftist, progressive, either the Christian Democrat or the Unidad Popular. But there was nervousness about the leftists being too leftist for some of the Christian Democrat folks, so they increasingly were promoting more and more policies that sounded like Allende's policies. They were moving more and more progressively to the left. But the way Tomic would present himself in these rallies would be "Viva Tomic! This is what I will do." Because he was trying to get his own name—my interpretation—well known. Whereas when I'd go to Allende's rallies, it would never be first-person singular. It would be "This is what we will do together." It was just fascinating. And yet, there was very little violence. These were three different futures for the country, much more diverse than we'd end up having in most of our elections.

The constitution provided that if no one candidate wins 50 percent, then the National Congress decides between the top two. None of them got 50 percent. The Congress was controlled by the Christian Democratic Party, and their candidate came in third. The Congress then was left with deciding between the right and the left candidates, Alessandri and Allende. They selected Allende to be the President.

It was just really a fascinating time to be there. There were some other things that I could tell more stories about. Allende did not take office until after our program was done. My two-year program ended in December, so I didn't get to be in Chile when he was in power for a few years before he was assassinated by a military coup led by General Augusto Pinochet.

My experience had been at the community level there. It had kept alive my fascination and experience of thinking about and experiencing how community building can happen with people at the community level that are working with folks with technical and professional training, but whose professional and technical training isn't identifying themselves as folks who know the answers, but as folks who know how to guide people through a process of learning and empowerment and engagement, and that can be facilitated, supported, or in different ways informed by professional and technical folks like us in the Peace Corps, or we planners in city planning departments here and in other places.

**Stein:** Did you apply for your doctoral studies at the University of Washington from Chile while you were enmeshed in that community studies-based work?

**Fox:** No. I'll do one step to get to that. I had one more little experience on the way back home. There had been a really major earthquake in Peru in May of 1970, and any Peace Corps volunteer who was finishing their program who wanted to continue and volunteer for a while longer from any of the South American countries could go to Peru and increase the pool of help there. It was an earthquake with devastation and tragedy, similar to what we've just seen in Mexico in these last few weeks.

So, I volunteered and went to Peru. I worked in Peru for six months, so I was taking my time getting back. That experience actually—without going into a lot of detail—led to an opportunity, if I had wanted to, to stay and have a job with the Peruvian government as a housing planner in Cuzco, which was a pretty cool place as a young person. I had gone there mostly just to be able to go to Machu Picchu and experience that segment of the mountains of Peru, which was different from where I'd been working in the earthquake recovery.

I realized I needed to get back and finish up my degree. I was in the two-year master's program but hadn't turned in my thesis yet because I wasn't really happy with it. I was discouraged about it, actually, and was getting more excited about just doing this Peace Corps experience. I came back and I had already formed in my mind a whole different replacement thesis for my master's degree based on the Peace Corps experience and some other work I was already starting to be interested in in terms of housing policy and housing programs that are defined by people's experiences rather than architects.

I did come back to the UW. The one correction for the question, though, is that I didn't enroll in a PhD program, I finished my master's program. While this was happening—while I was in Peru and getting back, I think that's about the time, or maybe I was still in Chile—the U.S. decided to have a lottery for the draft rather than just enrollment. I did have a fairly low lottery number. Somehow by then, maybe things were changing enough, or maybe there weren't as many new people needed, or my



draft board had forgotten about me, but I snuck through a little longer, even after I'd finished my two-year deferment for being in the Peace Corps. To be honest, the way our engagement in Vietnam had evolved and, from my perspective, the tragedy of sending young people like me over there for reasons that I really didn't believe were our own justification for doing it, I was, among many others, ready to just move a few miles north into Canada, but didn't. I was still interested in knowing other ways I could serve if needed.

I finished my dissertation. I was doing the post-Peace Corps immersion back into our culture of a crisis of identity and, what am I going to do now in my life? How could it ever be as wonderful here as it was there?

The experience overseas had been really deeply valuable to me, not just for the little, in my case, sort of interesting professional work on my resume, but just for the humanness of being a minority in another country where I didn't speak the language well, making friends, and having an immersion that was deep enough to be more than just a visitor, even though legitimately, in the eyes of many, dropping into their lives for two years and then leaving was still just a visitor. We all, I think, are sensitive to that—cultural exploitation and who benefits more in these exchanges? We have to come to some resolution of that in our own identities and work.

I was doing some housing consulting with the Puget Sound Council of Governments—a kind of regional planning consortium—and I reconnected with Carolyn Dobbs as well as with others. In the meantime, while I was in the Peace Corps, she had gone on and finished her PhD. She was the first woman to get a PhD in the University of Washington Urban Planning Department. During her last year, while she was finishing her dissertation, she had been hired by a dean who was given the charge of trying to create a few little experimental programs within the University system.

**End Part 3 of 4 of Russ Fox on 9-27-17**

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**Fox:** I came back and turned in my master's thesis. The comment I got was similar to the comments that I enjoy making at student evaluation time in my thinking back at teaching at Evergreen. What I was told was "You've got this fascinating thesis that's already the seeds and the roots and the branches and some of the leaves of what could easily be a PhD dissertation." I always enjoyed being able to tell students, "This work you did is already master's level work and could easily be continued on and become the core of your graduate work."

Carolyn had been hired at the University of Washington during her last year to be a halftime faculty in an experimental program called The Environmental Community. It was a faculty member, two resident assistants, and about 40 students who lived together on the top floor of Lander Hall. This community was living together in the dorms, which included the faculty bringing guests and having seminars and activities as part of the student's learning experience. I think they each got like six credits for the learning community experience and the additional knowledge about communities that was brought into that living environment. Plus, they were music majors, geologists, whatever their academic work was.

This was during the planning year for Evergreen and some of the Planning Faculty heard about this program. They were trying to learn from as many different models around the country as they could as they were putting together Evergreen's pedagogy and model, so several times different subgroups from the Evergreen Planning Faculty would come up and spend an evening, or an afternoon and evening, with Carolyn and the students, and they would get engaged in all kinds of fascinating discussions about learning as well as about what the students were doing.

Carolyn learned more about what they were doing about planning for Evergreen. Essentially, she was almost on the spot offered a job in that first year of Evergreen teaching, so she did. She actually brought a whole bunch of those UW students down to Evergreen with her because they wanted to have more of this kind of experience.

Carolyn was hired in the first-year faculty group in 1971, so she said, "Come on down to Olympia. There's a lot of State government jobs, and I'm doing these interesting things at Evergreen." Our relationship started developing into a more intimate one than when we had been just friends and part of a group.

I was in Olympia and I was interviewed for some jobs with the State. There was interestingly one that I thought I did really well on the interview. It was for the Office of Economic Opportunity—OEO—that was taking federal money that was for poverty relief and all these kinds of programs and getting it out in the communities. I thought it sounded perfect for me. I didn't get the job, but I later became a good friend with one of people who was on the interviewing panel. I said, "Why didn't I get that job?" [chuckles] He says, "There was one person on that committee—I think each person on the committee had one veto—who vetoed it because you had talked so enthusiastically about having worked in your Peace Corps experience in a town with a socialist mayor"—which was true. That was fortunate, I guess, maybe for me and Evergreen in the long run.

This is an interesting piece of college history. One of the programs in the first year of Evergreen was called Environmental Design. It was one of the many four-faculty first-year programs. The faculty were Carolyn Dobbs, Larry Eickstaedt, a marine biologist, Chuck Nisbet, an economist, and Phil Harding, architect.

One of the assignments that Carolyn framed for the students was that the college was located on Cooper Point—obviously, where it is now—but there was no land use planning, there was no zoning, there were no guidelines about what was going to happen around the college. It was sort of open territory. This was before we were doing land use planning in the rural areas—it was mostly city planning at that time—and the County Commissioners were concerned about what was going to happen around the college. They had created a typical blue-ribbon community leaders taskforce to be a Planning Commission to come up with a proposal. The assignment for the students in the program was to go and observe these hearings. They were using the early video equipment, these great, big cameras with tripods to try to videotape these to document the planning process.

The students came back from those hearings just aghast at what they were seeing because here was this proposal being given to the community. The students didn't know whether it was a good proposal or not given planning principles and practices because this was at the start of their year. But what they were observing was the community's reaction, which was almost universally "We don't know if we like this or not because we weren't involved with any input into it. We don't even know if we even understand it because you're just presenting it as a finished product"—which is typical. The Planning Commission presents a plan, the community doesn't like it, it gets shelved, and we start over. Or, it gets rammed through and becomes the plan without people feeling they had an engagement in it.

The students and the faculty said, "Here's an opportunity to engage with this a little bit." They organized a meeting for all the residents of Cooper Point—put fliers in everybody's mailbox—for the community to come to the fourth floor of the Library Building for a big meeting to talk as the follow-up of the public meeting about what they had heard and what they learned; get a deeper understanding of what was going on.

That led to a series of other meetings. People who were interested in transportation got a little subgroup, others were interested in housing. How are we going to protect the environment and the streams? Where should different kinds of housing be? Some folks said, "How do we keep it real rural like it is now?" Other folks were saying, "Wait a minute. I own land here that is my retirement investment and I want to develop this land and put some housing on it." It was a conversation where

people could talk to each other rather than have three minutes in front of a microphone and not have to listen to anyone else.

The students got all excited about this and they started working with these little subgroups, subcommittees. But along the way, within a month or so, the residents realized that they needed to somehow formalize this, so they created the Cooper Point Association. Then they said, “We need some guidance to manage this process,” because the students weren’t able to do it themselves--this was just one of their academic projects.

They put out this call for proposals and I said, “I’m sitting around looking for something to do. Here’s what I would do”—because I was participating just as a person in the community. “Here’s how I would facilitate some sequence of work—meetings, readings, research—over the next few months to work toward our community members doing our own plan.” That led to what’s known as the Cooper Point Plan. It was finished within six months. It was already supported by the membership of 750 people in the Association at that time.

When it was presented back to the Planning Commission and the County Commissioners there was no legitimate way that people could say, “Where did this come from? We had no opportunity to participate in it.” Even though some chose not to, at least it was there. This was a plan that actually was adopted—because it had so much community support—really quickly.

For me, it was a lot of fun working with the combination of the students and the community, and the kind of work I wanted to do. I’ll just keep floating around and getting these opportunities of working with community organizations. But I also realized it was really fun working with the students. There were 50 faculty hired the first year in ’71 and another 50 faculty were going to be hired in ’72. The faculty positions were defined really broadly, much more so than they are now.

There was one something like “the relationship between the built and the natural environment.” The applicants were landscape architects, architects, planners and probably philosophers—all kinds of folks. PhD’s were not required. It was the last position hired that year. I understand why. It was really a difficult decision for the Deans and the President. Everybody got interviewed by the President in those days, all faculty candidates.

Because there were three finalists, all of us would have been equally wonderful, I think, at least in terms of what we were bringing to start with. One had already been offered a position the year before but didn’t take it because they wanted a position at another school, wasn’t happy, and applied again. Another was a good friend of one of the other faculty, and this person had a really well-known

career in the private consulting sector. And then there was me, who represented this positive relationship with the local community through the Cooper Point Association. And, I think, maybe my interesting combination of Peace Corps and math.

I guess I was interesting enough of a candidate to be hired. When I was hired, I was still only 27 years old. I was hired at the end of August to start teaching before the end of September. I was assigned to teach by myself in an advanced group contract, mostly with students coming out of that Environmental Design program who wanted more advanced work.

That's how I got here to Evergreen. That first year was an interesting one to talk about. I guess we'll probably come back in another session.

**Stein:** That sounds great. Thank you so much for your time.