

Dear Larry,

March 17, 1968

Greetings from sunny Central America! I realized today that the Nicaraguan winter had come and gone that that it's mid-summer, which means that my years stay is almost to an end. With only 2 degrees difference in the average annual yearly temperature the climate is very deceiving timewise. If I would do more writing to my friends and less thinking about them, I'd be more pleased with myself. But I do hope that this reaches you in time for you to reply before the middle of June when I'll be heading home northward. I'm always eager and thrilled to share news.

Today I celebrated St. Patrick's Day with a real live Irish girl—that makes up for the fact that it goes unnoticed in Nicaragua as a holiday. Of course I can't complain about a lack of fiestas or siestas..it's been a good year for both. I'm now sometimes more Latin than my hosts and feel very much at home on a noisy gay dance floor and equally so sacked out in a hammock.

Anna, my Irish friend and roommate, and I went to a huge hacienda today and rode horseback in the breathtakingly beautiful mountains. Also traveling the 150 K. to the farm with us was Pilu, our other roommate (or better said "housemate") who is a charming Nica who edits a tv magazine here. Anna works as a volunteer physical therapist. She and I moved in with Pilu following the earthquake in January which nearly frightened us to death as we were in our 4th story old frame apartment overlooking the central market. I'm really enjoying this new house, but I feel like a materialist getting such a kick out of having such things as an electric stove, icobox and clean job. (ha I hear one is supposed to suffer when he goes overseas) I don't think I'll ever break the habit of appreciating such things. I've fixed my room up with the things I've collected from trips to Guate., Honduras, Salvador, Costa Rica and Panamá. So the place feels like home sweet home, even if it will always be in 2nd place to Kansas.

I've come to the conclusion that this part of the world doesn't get enough publicity nor encouragement from the more developed societies. I've found all the places I've visited to be rich in indigenous history, beautiful panoramas and unforgettable hospitality. I'm afraid I may be somewhat bitter if people ask me as they did before I left, "Oh, Nicaragua, where's that? ?? That's not the one in Africa, is it? Well, I won't preach a sermon, but as you can see I have picked up a feeling of loyalty to this land and its people, regardless of how frustrated I get over its poorness, disorganization, absence of self-confidence, etc... But there is evidence of progress everywhere.

University classes are over. I was pleased with history, literature and culture classes that I received. It was a delightful experience, sometimes traumatic due to language and different customs, but always was an adventure which I wouldn't trade unless I thought about it for a long time. During final week I pulled another "chitty" and had an emergency appendicitis operation. So, I finished exams at the end of Feb. and went to Corn Island for a vacation. I'm really happy that I got to see the East Coast; it's a world of its own. I couldn't get used to the fact that many people not only didn't want to speak Spanish - but absolutely couldn't. The population is mostly negro and all English speaking. However, this generation is learning Spanish at school. The people were generous, cheerful and gentle. I understand the US has a 99 year lease on the island for military reasons. Holiday Inn may put a luxury hotel there. I almost hope not! It's beautiful as it is - a calm, uncommercialized paradise. And the skin-diving is fantastic. (You should have seen me when I flew out of the water when I ran face into a 8 foot fish (magnified under water). It was tied up under the pier. The fishermen who had secured it there are still laughing I'm sure. But, golly all I could think about was tiburón... shark). That isn't the funniest experience I've had. The top prize still goes to the adventure in Honduras when I got lost in a swamp with a Peace Corp friend.

But don't let me fool you. Most of my days here have been quite calm. I'm reading L.A. modern novels, trying to understand trends in literature. In order to understand and improve my Spanish--I'm receiving an hour class daily. My French class is over. The Nica summer vacation is March through May. So, I'm doing an independent study on rural life with emphasis on the teenagers, their needs, problems, desires, etc.. I'll be living in three contrasting communities, one near Managua, another on an isolated island in Lake Nicaragua and the other in the interior near Rama. It will bring back many memories of life in Brazil. Here I've been quite the "city slicker" for a Ks. farmgirl.

Also I will be doing a study with an Embassy friend in May about the effect of US informational service projects. We want to see what happens to the books, tapes, etc... that are given to help spread information among the illiterates.

I won't go to the country till after this weekend. Sara Bentley, my good Theta K's friend, is stopping by for a visit on her way home from Argentina where she was an IPT.

I'm sorry to report that I have no news about any romances with Latin lovers. I'm still dating Wolfgang, the German from Heidelberg. It's a crazy world... maybe my sister Judy in Germany can find a Latin American to date to compensate. I'm not exactly following the old rule of foreign relations, "consume what the country produces" ho ho.... (if you know any Latin lovers- you know I'm much safer this way)

Next years plans?? I'm waiting to hear from Indiana, Texas and Wisconsin. If I don't receive a fellowship for graduate school, I'll join the 8 to 5 crowd. Possibly, I might be able to work in a visit to Judy to Europe for a short while. As far as details, where? What? No sé. Vamos a ver. Time will tell. OFFER** if you want the answer send I newsy letter to APT:O. 3365, Managua, Nicaragua. hint.... hint.....

I'll close now on that note, with hopes that you are well, finding life meaningful and happy and not tooooooo busy.

OF COURSE, I'm looking forward to a reunion within the coming months.

I have been wondering where you are and what you are doing? *Con cariño,*
Karen

Please let me know because news is so inaccurate and scare where I am, that I must plead ignorance about the situation in Laos. I hope

your constructive assistance is not being demolished by the war in Viet Nam and of course I hope you can continue with your plans. I suppose I have a secret admiration for you because of your energy and imaginative actions ~~there~~ ^{there}. I must laugh when I think about IFE selection way back there in the old days at KSV.

I haven't heard much from Manhattan lately - just that we did well in basketball, but lost the tournament.

I'm waiting to hear about grants - not too optimistic right now. But I won't be heart broken if I don't get to go. 17 years of studying should be enough for anyone when people all around the world are deprived of having even 2 years to learn to read and write.

What are your plans? When will you be in K'so again? We must get together and compare notes.

I hope this letter finds you well and in a happy frame of mind.

miss you

Karen