Honduras information service

- Not a government agency

501 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1611 New York, N. Y. 10017, U.S.A. Tel: (212) 869-0766 & 683-1506 Cable: GWENBENN NEWYORK

GWENDOLYN K. BENNATON Director Press releases, publications, tourist promotion, films and business information service.

Dic. 9, 1975

Dr. Hector Garcia 1315 Bright Street Corpus Christi, Texas

Muy estimado Doctor García:

Espero que después de tantos años aun se recuerde de mi -- en las Naciones Unidas siempre lo recordamos, especialmente ahora cuando se discutio el delizado tema de Belize en la CUARTA COMISION!

El Honduras Information Service siempre sigue adelante y con un cresciente apoyo de Honduras para finanziar las actividades de promocion turistica para mi Patria. Le mandare reportajes pronto.

Quisiera ahora presentarle por carta a un amigo mio que hace poco fue trasladado a Corpus Christi para trabajar ahi. Se llama: William H. Wyly (Bill) y trabaja con Pier I Imports, es el Gerente. La dirección es 5717 South Padre Island Drive. Yo le he hablado mucho de Ud, y le sugeri que se comunicara con Ud. pero no se si lo ha hecho. Ya que el no conoce a nadie en Corpus Christi, y se están aproximando las Fiestas de Navidad y Año Nuevo, pense que talvez sería muy interesante para el conocer personas que valen la pena a través de Ud. para que no se sienta solo.

Talvez llego a Corpus un de estos días, y naturalmente será un gran gusto volverlo a ver a Ud. y su familia. Mientras tanto, quedo, con mis mejores deseos para una Feliz Navidad y muy prospero Ano Nuevo!

Sinceramente su amiga,

Gyendolyn K. Bennaton

Honduras Information Service Write here 501 Fifth Avenue, Suite 16114 New York, N.Y. 10017, U.S.A.(

Dec. 7, 1975

Dear Friends:

A week ago today I was basking in the sun and swimming in the crystal clear waters of Roatan - one of the magnificent Bay Islands off the North Coast of Honduras. The sand was pearly white and the palm trees swayed softly in the breeze as a few rain drops started to fall and a rainbow formed above me. I was staying at a small hotel, called very appropriately "The Lost Paradise of West End". As I was enjoying the totally empty beach, Don Santiago Pineda the owner of the hotel, came in a small motor boat and asked me whether I would like to see the place where Jean Laffite, the pirate, supposedly was I got into the boat and off we went over the waters which seemed burried. almost like a mirror, so calm were they, to see the hidden path ...

This Sunday afternoon - just back from Honduras - I went to my office, practically frozen into a little icicle with a drippy nose and am writing you my Christmas letter, Since I am very short on time and long on news, I trust you will forgive my not writing a personal letter to each one.

As everyone knows, last year Hurricane Fifi lashed into Honduras causing incredible destruction. The entire world came to the aid of the Honduran people in a vast demonstration of compassion and gifts of clothes, food, medicine, funds for the reconstruction of the country, etc. etc. etc.

As you probably know, I have established the Honduras Information Service in New York, and by a freak chance, the name Honduras Information Service was the only name under Honduras, with the exception of the Honduras Shipping Line, in the New York telephone directory. As a result, when the crisis occurred, I started receiving an average of 25 to 40 calls an hour from the thousands of people who wanted to help and didn't know how, and what to send or bring. Business firms would call me and say, "We have 3 truckloads of canned food, where do we take it?" The Honduras Society of New York has its offices in the basement of the church of St. Francis Xavier, 30 West 16th Street, and there the Honduras Emergency Committee set up headquarters, the street was blocked off by order of the city of New York and the thousands of packages of food, clothing and medicines were sent there for transshipment to Honduras via ships who were taking the things free of charge, such as Castle & Cook and United Brands, etc.

I could go on and write a novel about all the help received - all I can say is that it was absolutely gigantic. During the crisis all Hondurans worked practically around the clock, many of them standing in the rain 24 hours to receive the packages. There were no week-ends and no days off for anyone. Besides trying to do whatever was in my power to help, I was also at the U.N. as a Honduran Delegate, so when December came around, I was absolutely done in from work and exhaustion, with the result that I got sick with all sorts of infections fromsheer fatigue.

1975 has altogether been a most difficult year, although a very successful one. First I had to move my office: first to my apartment since I hadnot found the right one, and then to my new quarters, which are at 501 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1611, New York, N. Y. 10017. (Tel. 869-0766). A little miracle had happened! I had looked at numerous offices and being exhausted stood up a few people who wanted to show me their office space. I had explained to all that I wanted something very moderate in price, on a high floor and with lots of windows so the sun could shine in. A very resourceful man called me up sometime in January and first told me that I had stood him up (for which I apologized) and then said that he thought he had just the right thing for Of course it was perfect! I have 3 huge windows in my office and the place is flooded with sunshine, and the price is right!

Then it was work, work, work -- the main purpose of the Honduras Information Service is tourist promotion, but since the support I have received this year has been very limited \$\$\$wise because Honduras is still recovering from FIFI, I had to work as a secretary and do translations and typing jobs in order to make ends meet, and furthermore get-ahead. It has meant working practically every night till 8 and 9 and 10 p.m., and week-ends as well!

Then another crisis - my nephew, <u>Mito Steinle</u> (my sister Ann's son) was repor ted to have Multiple Sclerosis, and my mother, who had also broken a hip, flew with him to the Ochsner Clinic in New Orleans. I flew down to New Orleans to be with them, and it really broke my heart to see such a beautiful child, he was hardly 14 years old, be afflicted with MS, and my mother so weak.(Only last week did I hear that when my mother and Mito returned to Guatemala, he was given only two more weeks to live.) Another miracle happened! With an intensive dosis of vitamins, treatment with Acupuncture,(given by a Doctor in Guatemala who learned Acupuncture from the Doctor who takes care of MAO) and prayers by hundreds of people who met in prayer groups and prayed for his healing, he is practically 100% well again! This case has made medical history, and I was told that a number of articles were being written about him.

Then the "Grand Scandale!!!" which rocked the boat in Honduras, prompted a change of government ... Dr. J. A. Bennaton, a cousin twice removed, was Minister of Economy at the time, and due to the negotiations of the Banana Tax right smack in the middle of the whole thing. Unfortunately he had the bad luck of being made the scapegoat for the whole thing, which naturally wasn't too pleasant for the rest of the family, but what can one do. Everyone feels he was the bagman for others, but since the lives of members of his family and himself were threatened if he revealed the facts of who was involved he has not done so. But he has at the same time taken the necessary precautions to insure his safety. He was so respected in Honduras and Central America that when the Minister of Economy of Costa Rica was in Honduras, he went to see my cousin in jail! And when I was in Honduras two weeks ago, the President of the Bar Association of Honduras, Lic. Gustavo Acosta Mejia, told me personally that everybody knew the real story behind the whole thing, and that the Bar Association had sent a committee to Dr. Bennaton to inform him that they would defend his right for a fair trial, which I thought was pretty decent. I saw him, and he was still pretty much shook up about the whole thing, but surviving.

As the Honduras Information Service I presented a week about Honduras in June. It was a classical guitar concert, a movie and slide presentation, and a variety show. All Honduran talent... and it was a big success, and although I practically did myself in with work, I enjoyed every minute of it.

In August I had a nice little inauguration for my office and at the same time welcomed the new Consul General to New York, <u>Coronel Ruben Villanueva</u>. A picture of the event appeared in "La Prensa", the Latin American newspaper in New York and everyone was very pleased. By a lucky chance my father suddenly came to New York, and everyone was just delighted to meet & see him.

Then - September and the U. N. again. I switched committees this year, since my Ambassador, <u>Ingeniero Roberto Martínez Ordoñez</u>, was elected President of the Special Political Committee and I had to pinch-hit for him, sitting in his place in the committee. He succeeded in getting the meetings to start on time, which of course was a problem for me, because since everybody was showing up punctually, I had to be punctual too - and that sometimes is very painful!

LAs the saying goes, it never rains but pours... I was continuing to work by very intensely at my office, starting my day at 8:30 and working till 9 and 0,010 p.m., and running off to the U. N. to be present as Delegate of Honduras, and literally working late into the nights and Saturdays and Sundays.... O e One day I got a cable from Trancuila Castañeda saying that herhusband Julio was arriving that day. Trancuila and Julio Castañeda are my best friends "In Guatemala and of course I was delighted. I took him to the inauguration of the 30"th U. N. General Assembly, took him to receptions, he took me to malunches and dinners, and so he saw a bit of the life I lead in New York. How When I am in Guatemala, they take me to everything, so I was delighted to  $\mathfrak{P}_{\mathfrak{Q}}$  be able to reciprocate.

CIM

Then <u>Count Francesco Carraciolo</u> (whom I had not seen in 12 years) and his is an adviso Onew wife showed up, and I also took them to the U. N. A few days later, I with ad the delightful visit of Marie Agurcia from Honduras, who is an advisor o Rato the Instituto de Historia y Antropologia (I believe you can understand that!) of Honduras and deeply involved in the discovery of archeological officiency of Honduras: there are hundreds of them just waiting to be discovered. will also took her to the U. N. to some receptions and to meed David Vela, 20 Director of the newspaper el Imparcial in Guatemala, and also most keenly interested in archeology. Before that the new Minister of Culture, Touris and Information of Honduras, <u>Coronel Efrain Gonzalez Muñoz</u> had come to N. interested in archeology. Before that the new Minister of Culture, Tourism Reand Information of Honduras, Coronel Efrain Gonzalez Muñoz had come to N.Y. with him but was also able to introduce him to the International Advertising e or -BExecutive: of the New York Times, Jerry Gogol, and also Mr. Roger Stone, Bresident of the Center for Inter-American Relations and Edna Phillips who and showed him the entire center, which is a landmark of New York. In between 0 H d all these visits, I also had the visit of Dr. Robert Kaiser of Bellingham, Washington who owns lands on the Bay Islands of Honduras and with whom I am developing all sorts of ideas about projects on the Bay Islands in which the other friends of mine are also interested... Then Bette Backus Conte - a or classmate of mine from Mt. Holyoke called me and said she would like to come Noto the U. N. with her two sons. Of course she came on the day when the big E-debate on Belize and what will happen to it (it was formerly British Honduras, but territorially belongs to Guatemala) took place, so she and her sons got a lot of action. My Ambassador, Ing. Martinez Ordonez of Honduras, gave an description of action brilliant and well worded statement defending the position of 0 0 Guatemala, and all the Guatemalan Ambassadors were so delighted that they came Hover and bear-hugged him in typical Latin American fashion.

Then suddenly everything fell into place so I could go to Honduras-and have the salks with the tourist entities to obtain financing for my office. I 0 + o, ogstayed with Marie Agurcia who was most gracious and kind and helped me enormously in my appointments. I saw Don Daniel Matamoros, Director of the Insno e e titute of Tourism, the Minister, Coronel Efraín Gonzalez Muñoz; Capitan Figueroa > goand Victor Castro, the President and sales manager of SAHSA-TAN Airlines (they on outhad given me a free ticket to fly to Honduras), Zoila Margarita Montes, Fito HMidence and Horst Schiftan, the top hotel people in Honduras; Margot and John Kinna, directors of the newspaper El Dia, who published a lovely article about I and my activities in New York; Dr. Enrique Ortez Colindres, President of TTT the Central American Bank for Economic Integration; people from Banco Atlantida Age- associated with the Chase Manhattan Bank, and many others. I was given to > o ounderstand that I would receive solid apport for my office, and of course now and of course in big checks so I can promote Honduras.

 $f \overset{\circ}{\Sigma}_{\mathbb{Q}}$  went to Guatemala and saw my mother and had a lovely Thanksgiving dinner with , other. She celebrated belatedly my birthday and we spent 3 very happy days together. Then I flew to Honduras, stayed overnight with my father and Margaret  $\frac{1}{2}$   $\frac{1}$ H U Phouse on the site where an English Fortress stood to defend the Bay Islands. She is a delightful person and we will coordinate our activities to promote the Bay Islands. Then I dashed back to San Pedro Sula & New York & the U.N.