

Honduras information service

- Not a government agency -

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GWENDOLYN K. BENNATON
Director
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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 discutió el deliado tema de Belize en la CUARTA COMISION!

El Honduras Information Service siempre sigue adelante y con un creciente apoyo de Honduras para financiar 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 sugerí que se comunicara con Ud. pero no se si lo ha hecho. Ya que él no conoce a nadie en Corpus Christi, y se están aproximando las Fiestas de Navidad y Año Nuevo, pensé 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 Año Nuevo!

Sinceramente su amiga,

Gwendolyn K. Bennaton
Gwendolyn K. Bennaton

Honduras Information Service) Write here,
501 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1611
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 buried. I got into the boat and off we went over the waters which seemed 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 from sheer 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 had not 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 me. 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, Mito Steinle (my sister Ann's son) was reported 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, Coronel Ruben Villanueva. 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, Ingeniero Roberto Martínez Ordoñez, 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!

