

EXCERPT FROM LETTER FROM LAS PALMAS, GRAND CANARIA

Aug 8, 1964

Buenas dias!

I'm sitting in the main plaza under a palm tree waiting for the NY Times to arrive at the news stand. This is my usual morning occupation after breakfast in bed. After the paper arrives, I'll have lunch then go to the beach, followed by siesta time, dinner at 8 and out. These 2½ weeks have done wonders for my nerves, health, and mental attitude.

Yesterday morning a man from the Spanish tourist agency with a questionnaire about my vacation—how much was I spending, what I liked, what I disliked, and what could be improved. He was most upset when I couldn't think of anything that needed improving. My explanation that after a year in the bush I was 99 and 44/100 % satisfied with civilization didn't allay his mind.

Last week I took an all-day guided tour of the interior of the island. The high point was lunch at an inn at the 4700 foot level. Here we were about 1500 to 2000 feet above the clouds. It was a magnificent view. This is an old volcanic region. From the inn's terrace among some heavenly scented pines the view encompassed some rugged scenery—a deep, steep-sided valley. Across on the other side were 3 volcanic plugs silhouetted against the sky.

The land is very intensely cultivated from the valley bottom to the mountain top. Over the centuries the people have terraced even the steepest slopes to get the maximum amount of level land where is very little naturally. Because of the low annual rainfall, there are elaborate irrigation arrangements everywhere. Scattered throughout the fields were small reservoirs—mainly empty now—since most of the rain comes in the winter.

There is a tremendous range of crops, fruit and flowers grown here—both temperate zone plants as well as tropical ones—because the winter average temps are in the 60s. This is not cold enuf to kill the tropical plants. The roads are lined with all kinds of cacti, fruit trees, and geraniums, bougainvillea, etc.

There are some cave dwellings here. They remind me of the pictures of the ones in our Southwest. Also here is the world's only inhabited volcanic caldera. From the rim to the bottom is about 700 feet straight down. There is a small banana plantation in the bottom. The only way out is a very steep footpath meandering up one side. Can you imagine the problems of the weekly shopping trip or of bringing up stalks of bananas for the market? On a level spot along one side of the rim is an 18-hole golf course. No one could tell me the number of penalty strokes if you knocked your ball down the crater.

A fair percentage of the men here are in uniform. (The Canaries are a part of Spain, not a possession.) There is not much crime. I was talking to some Americans here with NASA—NASA has a tracking station here. They were telling me the reason for the low crime rate. Several months ago a roll of wire was stolen from the site. Naturally they called the police to report it. A few days later the police reappeared with the wire and a culprit. When NASA confirmed that it was their wire, the police took the culprit out and machine gunned him. Needless to say, the NASA staff were most upset.

While here I've gone out with 2 Spaniards who didn't speak any English, 2 Americans and 1 Brit. I've had 7 propositions and one qualified proposal. Now don't get upset, I said no to all of them, including the proposal.

Things here are cheap:

- My nice room with private bath and breakfast in bed is \$1.60 per day.
- A bus ride from one end of town to the other is 16 cents; while taxis cost from 4 cents to about 35 cents.
- Linen for dresses is from 75 cents to \$2 per yard. I bought 3 pieces and had one made into a dress with a jacket.
- Food (I've gained a couple of pounds but I've enjoyed every ounce of it.)
2.2 lbs of grapes are 18 cents;
Fillet of sole with veggies is 60 cents;
1 inch thick veal or beef fillets range from \$1 to \$1.25;
Wine is 5 cents per glass;
Scrumptious salads and all kinds of freshly baked, fattening pastries – um, um good!
Etc., etc., etc.

One of the many RC churches was having a carnival the other day on some feast day. One event was a modern day version of a jousting tournament of old. Instead of knights in armor on snow white chargers spearing a gold ring with their lances, there were long-haired boys on motorcycles spearing an O ring with their pencils.

I'm flying back to SaLone bright and early Tuesday morning. I have to be at the airport at 5:30 AM. I'll still have a week of leave there and then probably will have to start house hunting and job training.