

Kid's KOrner

Pilgrimage To Chile

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 NEW WINDSOR, Md. —
 "Dime todo de Chile," I asked Elizabeth Kurrle as she bounded down the steps of her New Windsor, Maryland home. "Tell me all about Chile." And there was a lot to be told by this bright 12-year-old who just returned home from a four-month stay in Chile.

Following in the footsteps of her older brother, Christopher, Elizabeth journeyed solo to the country of her heritage, and where her mother's family still lives — Chile. After finishing fifth grade in New Windsor Middle School, her parents, Leonor Pisano and Joe Schreyer, sent her to meet her aunt and continue the trip to Santiago, Chile, on August 23, 1992.

"It ends up being a 24-hour ordeal," commented Leonor "Lee" Pisano. "Chile is about seven thousand miles from Baltimore."

With layovers and connections to be made along the way, the flight, which might take seven hours, ends up being a much longer trip. And, in this case, matters were complicated because Elizabeth found herself in Miami without her passport. After a frenzied scurry to get her papers in order, she continued on.

Elizabeth and her family have made the trip to be with the Pisano clan in years past, but this was the first time for Elizabeth to go on her own. The purpose of the stay was for her "to learn Spanish and about the culture," explained Ms. Pisano.

In talking about her adventure, Elizabeth easily slipped into Spanish or English when consulting with her native Spanish-speaking mom.

"Habla perfectamente; she speaks perfectly," her mother concurred. In just four months, Elizabeth is fluent in Spanish.

"I liked school a lot," said Elizabeth. "We fooled around a lot, but not in class," she was quick to add.

Arriving in August, or springtime below the equator, Elizabeth



Elizabeth Kurrle

picked up schooling in the middle of sixth grade at the Colegio Aleman de Quilpue or the German School of Quilpue.

"A typical day started at 8," she recalled. "I walked halfway and then rode with my cousin, Robert, the rest of the way to school. Classes were 45 minutes long. We had two classes, then a 15-minute break," and so on. School was out at 1:10. One of the most noticeable differences between her school in Chile and back in the U.S., was that the children stayed in the classroom and the teachers moved from class to class, except for German class. "Every Thursday sixth graders stayed until 4:45 for gym and biology, and on Tuesdays until 2:00.

All of Elizabeth's classes — social studies, physical education, religion, biology, art, music, and home economics, were held in Spanish. "The first day it was a shock," recalled Elizabeth. But then, the kids said "I'll help you with anything. The kids accepted me right away."

She estimated that it took about two months, with the help of a tutor, to overcome the language barrier. Along with her classmates, Elizabeth also studied English (they start in first grade), and German.

"Everyone goes home for

lunch," said Elizabeth. "And it's not just a sandwich. There is a first course and salad, a second course and dessert. Breakfast is kind of fancy, too." The family took tea at 6 or 7 with yogurt, pastries, cake, and milk for the kids and toast and tea for the adults. This late afternoon snack served to tide them over until the fourth meal of the day, when dinner was served at 9:30 or 10:00. She tried some of the local fare of this long coastal country famous for its seafood such as pulpo (octopus). "I only liked it in soup. I didn't like seaweed." One of her favorite dishes is empanadas, a specialty of her mother's that she enjoys at home.

Another of Elizabeth's favorite local dishes was "hot dog completo" or a hot dog with everything. "It had avocado, sauerkraut, mayonnaise, tomatoes and hot sauce. I've never eaten one without getting myself dirty," she laughed.

Elizabeth reported that she did well in her Chilean school and soon mastered the language, customs, and quickly got a handle on the money. "There are about 340 pesos in a dollar. Things are cheap. You could get a candy bar for less than a quarter."

As the months wore on, Elizabeth recalled "some great days in December. It was the beginning of summer. She made friends with kids in the neighborhood and at school. People there had parties at their houses instead of at school. The boys dance with the girls. They listen to both American and Chilean music. They asked me what it means all the time."

Elizabeth recalled one humorous incident when she heard one of her Spanish-speaking friends singing the words to a popular American tune — "Hello you fool, I love you."

"I asked her if she knew what she was saying and she said, 'I have no idea what it means — I just like it.'"

When Elizabeth wasn't swimming in the backyard pool at the host home of her aunt and uncle,



Elizabeth Kurrle, right, with her mother Leonor Pisano talk about life in Chile.

Dr. and Mrs. Herman Knop, or skiing in the Andes mountains at the chalet of her grandparents, Dr. and Mrs. Raul Pisano, she might have been shopping or taking riding lessons. "This is my horse," pointed out Elizabeth in a photo from Chile. "My uncle gave it to me. Her name is Gringa." Elizabeth had riding lessons twice a week. "I learned to gallop, jump, trot, walk, and to put the saddle and gear on."

All in all, Elizabeth accomplished what she set out to do. At a young age, she is fluent in Spanish and has a much better understanding of the heritage that her parents try to keep alive for her. "Now, in the 90s, you can't get anywhere without knowing a second language," she said.

On Christmas Eve, Elizabeth left the summer sun of Chile and flew back to the wintery cold of New Windsor, Maryland where her family greeted her after four months. "You leave and expect it to be the same when you get back, but you've grown, and so have others," she said. "My best friend had two years' worth of questions for me."

"It was hard not having her here — of course we missed her," said Ms. Pisano. "We were delighted to give her the opportunity to do this. There are no regrets."

"It was a situation that was great," added Mr. Schreyer. "Hopefully in two or three years, she can do this again. It was such a neat experience."



Elizabeth on Gringa, center, with her cousin Robert Knop, right, and Dr. Raul Pisano, left.

Apprenticeship

PENNINGTON, NJ — The Natural Organic Farmers Association of New Jersey (NOFA-NJ), has developed an Organic Farm Apprenticeship Program, according to the Association's Executive Director, Jennifer Morgan.

The Program publishes a list of organic farms in the New Jersey area that offer an educational experience, along with a small stipend and/or room and board, in exchange for labor. Nineteen farms are listed in the Apprenticeship Program brochure offering training in many different areas including soil fertility, crop planning, field work, pest control, equipment maintenance, animal care, and marketing strategies. Apprentices will also be offered three off-farm educational seminars, taught by local experts and Rutgers University faculty, about

the basics of organic growing methods.

"An apprentice will learn about the complexities of organic farming by combining both a school room and an on-the-job approach to farm education," said Carolyn Lasar, the Apprenticeship Program Director.

NOFA-NJ and six other NOFA chapters located in the Northeast are dedicated to serving the needs of organic growers through certification, education, marketing programs, and legislation. NOFA-NJ's programs are supported by memberships and grants from the United States Department of Agriculture, Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, and The Fund for New Jersey. For information, contact NOFA-NJ, 31 Titus Mill Road, Pennington, NJ 08534. 609-737-6848.