

'We looked like gringos'

Cultural changes for Cathy 'blue-eyes'

the HERALD Family

By ANIPEDERIAN
Herald Staff Writer
Her blue eyes were a dead give-away for Kathy Aggiss.

The 20-year old Limehouse woman only had to open her eyes and everyone knew she was a foreigner.

Taking part in a six-month exchange program with Canada World Youth, Kathy recently spent three months living and working in Colombia, South America.

Most Colombians have brown eyes and brown hair.

"You can't go out by yourself," Kathy said of women. "The men always kiss at you, like snakes, if you do. And if you look that means you're

interested. You have to look at the ground."

Cultural differences between men and women struck Kathy while she was away. She found men were very macho in Colombia, and their masculine pride took some getting used to.

Differences between the social classes struck Kathy as well. She found a big contrast between the rich and poor.

"A poor person here is not the same as a poor person in Colombia," Kathy said. "Here, the poor have shoes. In Colombia, they don't. The Canadian middle class would be considered rich in Colombia."

THREE MONTHS
Kathy was one of 50

Ontario young people 17 to 20 years old who lived and worked in a Third World country for three months, then came back to work another three months in Ontario.

Canada World Youth
'What does this little boy want?'

paid her airfare to Colombia, her room and board during the program and \$10 a week in spending money. The organization is a non-profit one in its eleventh year of operation, with 25 countries participating.

Leaving Canada July 21, Kathy flew to Bogota, the capital of Colombia, a city about the size of

Toronto. There, her first day, she was robbed walking down the street with two other Canadians.

"We looked like 'gringos' (Americans)," Kathy explained. "I felt someone grabbing my arm, and I thought, 'What does this little boy want?'"

Called gamines, the street children had knives in their hands, and went through the girls' pockets.

The gamines are a problem in the city, robbing to stay alive. Although a number of convent schools have been opened for them, the gamines run

away from them because they don't like them. They like the freedom of the streets, said Juan Florez, 19.

TOOK PART
Juan is a native of Colombia who took part in the program with Kathy. He's staying with Kathy now, hoping to get a basketball scholarship at an American university.

A business administration student going into his second year of university in Colombia, Juan said he plays basketball for the Bogota team.

"When I came here, my first shock was Yongo Street," he said. "The people are very serious, quiet, and the streets are very empty, not busy like in Bogota."

Juan said most Canadians know nothing about Colombia. They ask him if there are buildings, if there are streets, if there are movies and if there is rock music in Colombia.

When he goes out alone, he finds people not as friendly as back home. "People will help me, but they won't help me with the heart," Juan said.

Everything is very planned in the life of Canadians, with little time left free, he noted.

"The climate is part of your cultural development," Juan observed. "You have to organize; you have to prepare for the seasons. We don't have seasons in Colombia. We don't have to worry about food for the next month, it's always

growing."

ALWAYS LATE
The different approach to time by Canadians became apparent to Juan when the elderly woman he was living with for three months in Barrie, bought him a watch because he was always late.

In Colombia, Kathy found herself adjusting to the relaxed approach to time. When a get-together was planned for 1 p.m., she learned to show up three or four hours later.

Living three months in a very poor town of 2,000 people, called Restrepo, Kathy picked up the Colombian pace of life. She learned to walk slow, so the heat of the day wouldn't bother her as much. Temperatures were regularly 100 degrees Fahrenheit or 30 degrees centigrade, she said.

In Restrepo, she lived on a milk farm owned by a rich family. She would get up at 4:30 a.m. to milk 30 cows every day, a chore she'd never done before. Kathy also got to shovel manure and feed the pigs.

AFTER DEATH
When the woman of the family got sick, a witch doctor was called to the home. The woman believed in the spiritual healing powers of San Gregorio and had a doll of the Venezuelan doctor who became a saint after his death.

Fabio, a Colombian youth on the exchange

program with Kathy who was billeted in the same home, would tell Kathy it was time to leave the

house everytime the witch doctor came. The woman didn't want the two young people in

the house when the spirits were visiting, Kathy explained.

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A liking for rice cakes was acquired by Georgetown's Kathy Aggiss while she was away in Colombia for three months this past fall. She would buy the treat from a little boy who would regularly visit her while she was living in the very poor village of Restrepo (above). (Photos by Kathy Aggiss)

Special programme on Third World development

By JANET DUVAL
Herald Special

This week in local supermarkets you can buy apples grown locally for about 50 cents a pound, and you can buy bananas grown 3,000 miles away in Central America for 45 cents a pound.

This week, many Canadians publicly criticized federal government policies on the economy, defence and tax laws, while several people in Central America were arrested or shot for voicing similar criticisms.

This week, dozens of clubs, night school classes and religious congregations in Georgetown met freely, while in parts of Guatemala and El Salvador, such gatherings could have brought instant action by the military.

Why? These concerns will be among those discussed at a special programme this Sunday evening from 7 to 9 p.m. at St. George's Anglican Church. Georgetown's new "Ten Days for World Development" group, representing six local churches, will sponsor a presentation on Central America as part of its aim to increase local awareness of conditions in Third World or "developing" countries.

Sister Anastasia of Milton, a Sister of St. Joseph formerly with the Catholic Mission in Guatemala, will speak and present the half-hour film "Seeds of Liberty". She will be accompanied by a former newspaper editor from El Salvador who is now on the death list there, and in exile.

"Conditions there are unbelievable", says Sister Anastasia. "It's so far removed from our

experience in Canada: to live daily with fear, soldiers all about, family members disappeared. And people here don't know much of the history. I was there in 1968 when

70,000 people were killed. The streets ran with blood."

Each of the seven countries of Central America is different, she points out. Some, Continued on page A12

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