

To the Class of '55;

Thank you for your generosity in awarding me the Class of '55 scholarship this year. Your assistance allowed me to travel to Nicaragua with Professor Hanson. This trip was truly life changing for me in many ways.

We toured cities and villages on the Pacific side of the country, from Granada north to near the Honduras border. Robert Pillers of Potters for Peace was our guide. Nicaragua is currently experiencing a drought, which only adds to the plight of its people, the second poorest in the Western Hemisphere. Lack of clean drinking water is a severe problem there and contributes to their high incidence of mortality in children. Potters for Peace has developed a filtration system, made from earthenware, which destroys 98% of contaminants. They provide micro-loans to potters and others to set up filter factories, not only providing an income to factory workers, but a life-saving benefit. We visited potters and other artisans, each with their own unique forms and techniques.

Despite their poverty, these are some of the most gracious and friendly people I have met. They opened their homes and studios to us and shared their stories. I had been looking for a resist technique to use on some of my own pottery for my senior show. In one of the villages we learned of an ash/slip resist, which works perfectly for my pottery. Had I not made this trip, I might still be struggling with other formulas.

I plan to return to Nicaragua in the future. I would like to help promote the work of their talented artists and Robert has an idea for producing a book that features the work of indigenous potters, along with traditional recipes. I have volunteered my book design and production expertise to this endeavor.

I would also like to spend more time studying pre-Columbian ceramics and iconography, especially at Mi Museo in Granada. I am fascinated with the forms that I saw in Nicaragua as they differ from any I have seen before.

Thank you for continuing to assist Cornell students to experience other countries and cultures.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Smallwood-Roberts '10



San Juan de Limay, Feb. 10, 2010
I'm second from left in the back row.



Kiln



Ducuale Grande, ash/slip resist ware