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I am pursuing an A.S. degree in Translation and Interpreting Studies at Miami Dade College. I was also able to land a position with The Kitchen, a dubbing and subtitling company. My work composes of both HR and Project Management responsibilities in correspondence with our company’s freelance translators. I have had much to learn, but I am thoroughly enjoying my new job. Please check out our website! The Kitchen

KATIE SWANSON

Currently, I’m living in Seoul, South Korea! It’s a great place, although I REALLY wish they spoke Spanish. Korean is difficult to learn. I should back-track a little—got married in June of 2007, moved to Texas where my husband finished residency (I taught 3rd grade), and then moved here in September 2009. I’m now taking graduate classes online for nonprofit management—definitely a different route than I had imagined before.

CHLOE (HOEKZEMA) LONG

Elsa Cortina Scholarship

The Elsa Cortina Scholarship will be awarded to a student for the first time in the Spring of 2012. However, the scholarship is not yet fully funded. If you wish to donate to this scholarship fund, please click here.

ELSA CORTINA

LESLEI HARKEMA

I have been awarded a Fulbright grant to Spain for next year, to work on my dissertation in archives at the Casa Museo Unamuno, the BNE and the Residencia de Estudiantes.

LESLIE HARKEMA

Buy

The Elsa Cortina Scholarship will be awarded to a student for the first time in the Spring of 2012. However, the scholarship is not yet fully funded. If you wish to donate to this scholarship fund, please click here.
ZACH CAMPBELL

Me aceptaron en el Graduate Center de CUNY y en Rutgers. En Rutgers también me ofrecieron una beca de 5 años (Transliteratures Fellowship), y creo que CUNY me va a avisar pronto de las oportunidades de becas.

SARAH WARPINSKI

After an intense training week in DC at the International Justice Mission headquarters, I flew out to Bolivia in mid-June. The training definitely confirmed for me that this is exactly the right organization and experience for me to be involved in right now. My apartment is located in Calacoto neighborhood of the Zona Sur of La Paz. After the morning prayer and updates on my first day, I settled in to study about the Bolivian legal system, using the Código Penal and a summary typed by a former legal intern. I am hoping to get out and explore a bit more in the near future; there is so much to do here!

CARISSA DE YOUNG

I have been settling into life in Quito and my work with Partners Worldwide. I feel blessed to have this opportunity to work with Ecuadorian Christians who are committed to empowering small business owners to improve their businesses and glorify God in their work. I truly believe that the best is yet to come as we work together over the coming months to see what God will do through this ministry.
The job is going well but it has its challenges, like any new job. I’m going to learn to use an eye-tracker to do language processing research. I’m interested thinking about how variation might affect language processing in children and adults. I’m trying to relate my variation work with literacy development in children. The idea is to investigate how variation might affect literacy development (i.e., when children use many nonstandard features at home but are learning to read in the standard variety), and also how literacy development might affect variation (i.e., how children learning to read/write change their own usage of local, nonstandard features in their own speech). I have been keeping up with Hannah Forsythe. She is at MSU now in linguistics.

OUTGOING DEPARTMENT CHAIR

Professor Dianne Zandstra

With gratitude the Spanish Department acknowledges the contributions of Dr. Dianne Zandstra as department chair since 2009. She has been a tireless worker and has shepherded us through a number of significant changes. During her time as chair the department has hired three new faculty members, has relocated one overseas program—in Spain (Denia to Oviedo)—rescheduled a second overseas program—in Honduras (fall semester to spring semester)—and established a third, new overseas program—in Arequipa, Peru. Of course, this was in addition to all of the normal paperwork a chair is subjected to and while continuing to teach Spanish classes.

Professor Zandstra steps down as chair during summer 2011 in order to take up a new challenge. She will be the first director of the new program in Peru and as such will be there from August through December 2011. We thank her for her service to the department in the past as department chair and wish her the best as she begins a new type of service as director of the Semester in Peru program.

Dr. Marcie Pyper will take over department chair duties in August.

NEWS FROM KAREN MILLER-FORMER SPANISH PROFESSOR

The job is going well but it has its challenges, like any new job. I’m going to learn to use an eye-tracker to do language processing research. I’m interested thinking about how variation might affect language processing in children and adults. I’m trying to relate my variation work with literacy development in children. The idea is to investigate how variation might affect literacy development (i.e., when children use many nonstandard features at home but are learning to read in the standard variety), and also how literacy development might affect variation (i.e., how children learning to read/write change their own usage of local, nonstandard features in their own speech). I have been keeping up with Hannah Forsythe. She is at MSU now in linguistics.
Lo pasé de maravilla en Denia, gracias a mi familia. Me tomaron como su propia hija, hermana, y tía. Nunca olvidaré la generosidad y el cariño que me mostraron. Sé que tengo familia en Denia... para siempre.

Amanda (VanProyen) Brouwer

¡Ay familia española, cómo nos divertíamos! Gracias por dejarme ser parte de la familia y por incluirme en vuestras actividades – discutiendo asuntos políticos, celebrando vuestras cumpleaños y apriendo cosas nuevas...

Brianna Pérez
Recuerdo todas las fiestas de los españoles, ¡las cuales son numerosas!

Jessica De Vries

Empecé a estudiar español cuando fui a Denia por primera vez en 1996. Sin duda era esa experiencia la que estableció la dirección del resto de mi carrera (y, bueno, la vida).

Ben Van Wyk

Conocí a un estudiante de Calvin allí. Nuestras familias nos observaban mientras nuestra relación crecía. Nos apoyaban como sólo nuestras propias familias lo habrían hecho. ¡Proféticamente bromearon diciendo que nos casaríamos! ¡Y tenían razón! Un año después nos comprometimos y luego nos casamos inmediatamente después de la graduación, en Michigan. La boda fue en la playa con un tema español en honor al lugar donde nos conocimos.

Brian and Aimee Tompkins

Mi familia española era mi parte favorita de estar en España y la gran bendición de mi tiempo allá ...Yo doy gracias a Dios por darme otros papás; y sobrinos por la primera vez

Katie Venhuizen
Gracias a la experiencia en España, estaba ansiosa por vivir en el extranjero después de graduarme, y he pasado 5 años viviendo en Honduras haciendo una variedad de trabajos y trabajo voluntario.

Sarah Lawrence

¡La amistad con mi familia (en Denia) continúa hasta el día de hoy. Sí, ¡21 años después todavía nos mantenemos en contacto! Quiero mucho a mis padres españoles y ellos han seguido la trayectoria de mi vida desde mis días en Denia incluyendo graduaciones, boda y maternidad.

Carin Ness Grzelak

Uno de los mejores recuerdos que guardo de mis años en Calvin, es mi tiempo en Denia.

Rebecca Palmer
When Professor Elsa Cortina set off to spend spring semester 1983 in Denia Spain with 21 pioneering students, little did she know that nearly 1000 more students would complete the same journey in the next 30 years. Now, after 30 semesters in Denia, we bid a fond farewell to the place that has kindled the love of Spain and Spanish in so many Calvin alumni.

It is with deep gratitude that we acknowledge the contributions of so many to our program: our long-time instructors Alfonso Fuente, Ge Menéndez, and Fuensanta Iborra; our more recent collaborators Tracy Ariza and Victoria Monera; the administration and staff of the UNED, pastors Antonio Calero and Jorge Pastor and the congregation of the Iglesia Bautista de Denia; our faithful bus driver Ricardo Esteve; the many participants in our ethnographic study program; and most of all the welcoming, caring families who opened their homes and their hearts to Calvin students for so many years. Without these people our program would not have been possible.

But times have changed and our student population has changed. The program was begun primarily as a way for Calvin students to complete their foreign language core requirement in one semester. However, over the years the percentage of students who participated in the program as a way of strengthening their Spanish major or minor grew. In 2009 the core language program and the advanced program for Spanish majors and minors were separated as we worked to best meet the needs of these two different groups. When the separation of the advanced and core programs was approved, the administration also charged the department with researching possible alternative locations for the programs in Spain, noting that criteria for departmental goals and required attributes for our programs might necessitate a change in the location of the Spain program. Soon it became clear that Denia, although lovely and charming, was unable to meet the academic needs of our students.

So it was with some sadness that we said “adios” to our friends in Denia. Our program closed with a banquet of over 100 people where we exchanged fond memories and funny stories. Professor Cortina was able to share her reminiscences and we paid tribute to the many people who contributed to the program.

We thank God for the rich blessings we received in Denia and pray that He will continue to bless us as we begin our new adventure in Oviedo.
Calle Colón 53. (Denia) Alicante. This was my destination with the Professor Slagter February 18th 2011. A stylish, selective clothing store. And I was terrified. Not because the store would likely contain dresses, no, but because in this store I would meet my new mamá.

I had spent the entirety of the afternoon hidden in the professor’s office, saturating a handkerchief, shaking, and half-watching Nobody’s Fool after having left my first Spanish family. I didn’t want to see anyone, meet anyone, go anywhere—no matter how gorgeous a day it was. The world was scary.

But we went and I met my mamá—a woman with glowing eyes and a contagious smile, the woman with whom my shaking from fear would be transformed to a shaking with laughter. We would share stories, weeding, wine, laughter, tears, coffee, dog-duty, linguistic mixes. . . we managed Spanish, Valenciano, French, and English into several sentences spread out by snorts of laughter motivated by hands playing imaginary castanets, as if to summon the correct words. We stayed up until one in the morning cooking for a party up at her house in the mountains where we picked cherries at midnight our last night there together. We mimicked each other, rubbed off on each other; we made memories. She would introduce me with a No, no, es mi hija Americana. Tiene nombre de escritor: Annie Williams. No, no (to being asked if I was a relative), this is my American daughter. She has the name of a writer: Annie Williams. She called herself crazy and would always say: ¡Que madre te ha tocado! What a mother you landed with! And I would always respond La mejor. The best.

The best because she was not only my mamá, but my sister and my friend. She was a teacher who opened my eyes to how beautiful and bright the world can be, how different, how similar, how magical amidst the difficult and frightening. She is an example of a smile and strength in what seems impossible, of joie de vivre, carpe diem, however one might call it, and she is my mamá española.

The sight of flowers, homemade bread, the wispy clouds that stretch across the evening sky, the sound of wind rustling pines, the smell of Ducados, impressionist paintings, a good pair, a cup of coffee with a piece of quiet in the morning, a million little nothings have become reminders of the bit of the path we walked together.
Calvin Hosts Denia Natives

Nearly 1000 Calvin students have gone to Denia, Spain to study over the past thirty years, but in the last few years, Calvin has also been able to host three students from Denia in Grand Rapids.

Lara Fuente Utor, daughter of long-time Denia professor Alfonso Fuente, attended Calvin College this year and worked as the Foreign Language Assistant for the Spanish Department. She is the third assistant we have had from Denia.

Tamar Mesa, whose mother is a worship leader at the Evangelical Church in Denia, served as FL assistant in 2008-2009 and enjoyed her time in Grand Rapids so much that she has returned to visit us several times, including once this year while Lara was also here.

Julia Tramunt Iborra, daughter of another long-time professor in the SIS program, Fuensanta Iborra, spent three months in Grand Rapids this spring living in the home of Nora Koster, our administrative assistant. Julia was here to learn English during a “gap” semester in her studies.

After experiencing the warmth and hospitality of the families of Denia for so many years, we were gratified to be able to give back, just a little to three members of the Denia community.
These students didn’t let being in a different country stop them from participating in Calvin’s Col Knight Club! Check out a few photos of Spain 2011 students Cold Knight-ing it up in Denia.

NATHANIEL CHA

Honors Project

This year, my honors project and presentation combined Spanish literature of Bernal Díaz del Castillo and philosophy. More specifically, the project consisted of critiquing both Christianity and Aztec Religion using the Western and Aztec philosophy. In regards to Christianity, I addressed questions raised by Heidegger and Nietzsche in terms of interpretation, context, and the will to power. With Heidegger in mind, one can see how Cortez made dangerous interpretations without considering the context of culture. Nietzsche furthermore revealed intentions of the conquistadors that conflict Christian values. On the other hand, while Aztec religion is justifiable in principle, provided by my research of the culture, there are still inconsistencies in practice, and hierarchies of oppression.

During the presentation, I was able to note two aspects of constructive criticism. First of all, I realized how my project would have been better if I had drawn more evidence from different Spanish texts. Second, the audience pointed out that my position was dangerously close to cultural relativism, thus in the future, it would be helpful to establish a firm position grounded in foundational thinking.
Summer Research: An Oral History Project

This past spring Professor Marilyn Bierling was on sabbatical and found herself captivated by research she was doing about the connection between the Cuban refugee experience and the Christian Reformed Church. She began by examining the period of time in the 1960s and 70s when CRC Spanish-speaking congregations began to thrive in places like Miami and Grand Rapids. She started with a lot of print sources and realized that the scope of her research would support a larger project and curriculum materials. She then moved to more of an ethnographic style of research that consisted of conducting interviews with Cuban refugees from the relevant time period. The interviews were recorded in the homes of the more elderly refugees, in the Calvin AV recording studio, and even in a retirement home here in Grand Rapids. Professor Bierling also traveled to Miami and Cuba to record more oral histories. During the interviews she asked thought-provoking questions such as, “What was there about the Reformed tradition that attracted many Cubans?” And “What vision do you have for the future of the Spanish-speaking CRC congregations here in the United States?”

Not only did Professor Bierling want to better understand the CRC connection with Cuban refugees, but she also thought that the project could serve as an oral record for the first and second waves of Cuban refugees, many of whom are now in their senior years. She saw the project as an opportunity to preserve an important, but not always easy, part of Cuban and U.S. history. The video interviews preserve a record of a time when the CRC was very active in helping Cuban refugees enter a foreign land with a foreign language.

I, Elena Brubaker, have had the great privilege of assisting Professor Bierling with transcribing and translating the interviews, so that we can preserve the histories in both oral and written form. We plan to keep the videos, as well as the transcripts, right here in Heritage Hall of the Calvin Library. I cannot imagine a more interesting or a more meaningful summer job.

-Elena Brubaker
This past January I had the wonderful privilege of journeying to Mexico for a grand adventure in the Yucatan. Before I left I was nervous, but not for the traveling part of the expedition. I had been abroad in a Spanish speaking country for four months before. For the most part, I knew what to expect and thank goodness my Spanish was much better than when I had arrived in Honduras. The thing that made me nervous was actually the thing that was the most blessed part of the trip: the people I shared it with. Not being the most extroverted individual, I usually take some time to get to know people and really be myself around them. In Mexico, I had less than a month to get to know the people around me, and I was worried there would be no time to connect to my family or classmates. I couldn’t have been more wrong. As fun and educational as the trips to cenotes and Mayan ruins were, the memories that have lasted the longest are of the friends and family I found in a faraway place. Every day was a party with 23 great friends (professors included!) However, As much of a blessing as my group was, I think the biggest blessing had to be my family.

My Merida family was and is the nicest and most generous family I have ever met. The moment I walked into their house I was a part of their family. During that month I gained not only a Mamá and Papi, but 2 sisters, aunts, uncles and cousins. My mamá and I became especially close, and every morning when she sent me off to school she’d say, “Nos vemos hija, vaya con Dios,” (see you soon daughter, go with God). Every night I came home safe from a trip she and Papi would sit down pray with me, thanking God for me and my safety. When it finally came time to leave, I didn’t want to leave at all. My whole family piled into my Papi’s truck and drove me to the bus. Unwilling to say goodbye, I hugged everyone while trying to think of what I could say. Not a goodbye, thank you wasn’t enough...and then my Mama hugged me and said exactly the words I couldn’t find. “Nos vemos hija, vaya con Dios” These words carried a simple message with them: “You are in our hearts. This is not goodbye”. This summer my family traveled to Michigan for a wedding of a former Calvin student. Unfortunately, they arrived one day before I left for a week’s vacation in Colorado. After six months of missing my Merida family, I got just a couple hours to be with them and at the end I again couldn’t bring myself to say goodbye. However, my Mamá knew just what to say. “Nos vemos hija, vaya con Dios”.
What an experience!! Thirteen students spent three challenging weeks in Nicaragua learning Spanish, living with families, sleeping on hard beds, eating strange food, and experiencing culture in entirely new way. We visited communities where the poverty was almost too much to see and there found women full of joy and warmth and children eager to have fun doing the activities we had planned for them. We learned more from them than they from us. We visited a community that has no electricity and no running water. We bathed in the river, went to bed when it got dark and got up with the chickens. No longer can we turn on a tap, flush a toilet and light up our homes without remembering these people who opened their homes and community to us, and who taught us things that have taken us a long time to process. We experienced the beauty of Nicaragua: the people, the land, the lakes and rivers and the volcanoes. We praised God for allowing us to see this small corner of His marvelous creation.

Funny thing. Song that's playing on my iTunes right now? "I'm coming home". Slightly ironic wouldn't ya think. But it's the truth! We're coming home. And it is the scariest thing in the world. I don't know if I'm ready. This may sound completely ridiculous but Honduras has been our home for so long, it has parts of our hearts. Don't get me wrong, we are all so excited to come home and see everyone that we have been missing but at the same time you can't just spend 4 or 5 months in a place and not come to love a little bit of it. Imagine if this were you, you go to a strange country that you are going to live in for a certain amount of time that you have never been to. You are going to live with people you do not know, and there is somewhat of a language barrier (at least at the beginning if we're going to be completely honest), and to top it off, you are one of 5 girls. You know one. Have seen the others in passing but never have had a complete conversation with them before you are in the grand rapids airport at 4:30am in the morning getting ready to leave. It is absolutely impossible for those 4 girls to not become some of the most important people in your life. It is impossible not to think of this country as a second home. It is absolutely impossible not to see the beauty in this country and know that in a couple days you're not going to be able to see it every day. ..it has been a ride. And some of us are ready to get off, and others not so much. But the great thing about this is...it doesn't have to be the last adventure. Maybe we'll end up back in Honduras. Or maybe another country. We can do something great. The possibilities are limitless.