

February 24, 2016

Dear Ernie,

I regret that I cannot attend the celebration in your honor on March 1st, but you are in my thoughts and prayers.

And the thoughts go back over many years now as I think about my becoming involved in CILA and venturing off to Tacambaro, Mexico in the summer of 1967. Joining the CILA group was rather serendipitous. It was prompted by attendance at folk masses in the basement of Farley Hall, making new friends whose interests were similar to my own, knowing of possible use of my first car (later to cause some consternation to the ND provost) for a trip outside the country, but most of all it was spawned by your call, enthusiasm and gentle direction to move forward.

Participating in CILA set the stage for my curiosity about joining the Peace Corps (along with six other graduating architects in the spring of 1968) and heading off to Peru for three years. This in turn oriented me towards a career in international development, first as an independent consultant (as a friend once said, someone who cannot find work in his own country), and then as a career staff member with the Organization of American States.

I remember a conversation with you in late 1981, I believe. We (my wife (SMC '67), three daughters and dog) had just been transferred from Uruguay to OAS headquarters in Washington, DC. You reminded me (perhaps from your already acquired experiences in the nation's capitol) and perhaps rather over estimating my position as an international civil servant, "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." The enduring value of your counsel and humor from those days at ND have held me in good stead, along with the faith, service, patience, belief in the good of mankind, and the call to justice in whatever one does that you show by example.

Always available for advice and support, your recommendation for my residency fellowship application to the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center was well received. The residency was a marvelous experience, and work on my book, then as now, benefits from the experiences and insights you have shared over the years.

Enjoy the celebration; please stay in touch, and peace.

Steve Bender
ND '68

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