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## Semester in Grenada enriches student's studies

By **ALYSON MADSEN**  
For The Star Press  
**STORYCHAT:** [Post Comment](#)

Cathryn Richter had to alter her college plans quickly when she was awarded the Lily Scholarship at Delta High School in 2006.

Expecting to attend Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill., Richter had to scurry to do some additional college visits and online applications since Lily recipients must attend an in-state institution.

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Then she visited DePauw. She fell in love with the campus, and it certainly didn't hurt that their study abroad program was one of the best anywhere.

"The only downside to DePauw was the Greek emphasis; I wasn't totally sold on it at the time," Richter said. But even that factor turned out to be a plus. She is now an involved member of Kappa Kappa Gamma, enjoying every minute of sorority life.

With a major in political science and Spanish, Richter chose Granada, Spain, for her study-abroad experience in her junior year. The smaller size of the city appealed to her, and she was excited about meeting students from all over the globe. Parents Randy and Susan Richter were a bit nervous but excited for their daughter's opportunity.

"Overall, we were happy and proud of her," Susan said. "We knew she had a good head on her shoulders."

Staying with her host family was different from what Richter expected. The family had two older daughters and housed several students in addition to Richter, who shared a room with another American.

"We didn't interact that much with the family," Richter said. "We were more like boarders. They really didn't invite us to join them on family outings or to attend church. It seems that in the United States we incorporate exchange students as part of the family."

It took some time for Richter and the other students to adjust to certain cultural habits such as meals. Only coffee and toast were served at breakfast. Lunch, the biggest meal of the day, wasn't served until 2 p.m. Most evenings, the family ate no dinner at all.

"Lunch often consisted of salad, a substantial soup such as bean, meat, fruit and cheese," Richter said. "And there was always fresh bread."

Since Richter and her peers were accustomed to an evening meal, their host mother regularly prepared one.

A few international students lived in the house, from places like the Netherlands, Britain and Australia.

"Our family spoke no English. Senora would talk slowly to help us understand. She told me I improved a great deal by the time I left."

Attending the University of Granada's Center of Modern Languages, Richter enrolled in grammar, conversational Spanish, political systems of Spain and art history. All classes were taught in Spanish.

"Grammar was the most helpful," Richter said. "But art history was most interesting since we saw some of the art we studied on our travels."

Of particular interest to Richter was Gaudi's Sagrada Familia in Barcelona and the Picasso Museum. She was also impressed with a mosque she visited in Cordoba. Surprisingly, the grand edifice was home to three religions: Catholicism, Islam and Judaism.

A midterm side trip included visits to Amsterdam, Morocco and Portugal.

"Morocco was so impressive," Richter said. "Our host family there took us to see the sights, and they were so welcoming and friendly. I really enjoyed the culture and the land."

At semester's end, Richter met up with her DePauw roommate in Paris to see the City of Lights, along with Rome, Prague, Ireland and Scotland.

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PHOTO PROVIDED

Cathryn Richter smiles during a visit to Amsterdam. Richter, a student at DePauw University, spent a semester in Spain through a study-abroad program. A midterm side trip included visits to Amsterdam, Morocco and Portugal.

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Cathryn Richter poses in Granada, Spain, with the Alhambra, an ancient palace and fortress, in the background. Richter, a political science and Spanish major, spent a semester living and studying in Spain through a study-abroad program.

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"We spent Christmas day in Scotland," Richter said. "We had eight different nationalities at the hostel, and one of the staff cooked us a wonderful dinner."

New Year's Eve found the sorority sisters at the Vatican in Rome and waiting in a long line to get into St. Peter's.


"We found out that the Pope was doing a New Year's Eve Mass," she said. "We sat next to a Mexican family who were very devout Catholics. We were next to the aisle, and the Pope came by and patted the little girl's head. Her father said 'Es mi hija' (it's my daughter). It was so touching to witness their devotion."

Richter wouldn't trade her international experience for anything.

"With the exception of Senegal, South Africa, the farthest away I've been is Canada and Mexico," she said.

"Being abroad made me feel that our world is really not so big," Richter said. "Europe is not that large, but there are so many different languages and cultures there."

"I might go in the Peace Corps after graduation," she said, "somewhere where I can put my Spanish skills to use."

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