



VALERIE PEREIRA

Valerie Pereira is a graduate from the Spanish M.A. program. She also received a B.A. in Spanish, French and Italian from Loyola in 2001. In the following interview, she talks about her work and how her language studies at Loyola opened new vistas for her in the global arena. Presently, she works at Rotary Club International.

stopped at the small city of Tanabi in the state of Minas Gerais, where I visited a school for low-income students. Then I went to Santarém in the state of Pará where I was invited to a clinic that provides medical and dental assistance for low-income community. I visited Ecuador in 2003, 2007 and 2008 to participate in project fairs and serve as a recourse person and do presentations about grants. On my first trip in 2003 to Ecuador I visit Guayaquil and Quito. On my third trip in 2008 I just did presentations, but was very happy to be with Rotarians I often work with and see the types of projects they were interested in doing. In addition I was a resource staff at the convention in Los Angeles in 2008 where I was

Interview conducted by Prof. Olympia B. Gonzalez, G.P.D.

1. Describe your present position at Rotary Club International.

I work for Rotary International where I am a coordinator in the Humanitarian Programs department where I work with grants in Brazil, Ecuador and the Dominican Republic.

Recently, I also was assigned Italy, Albania, San Marino, Spain and Portugal, as part of the Latin American Department merged with Europe and Africa.

2. Could you tell us about some of your experiences while working at Rotary Club?

Some of my most memorable experiences I had while working at Rotary International come from my visits to countries I work with, when I saw sites where projects were created that benefited needy communities. I also personally met some of the Rotarians I work with long distance and also many I had never heard of before. I have visited Brazil twice and Ecuador three times. On my first trip to Brazil in 2003 I went to Rio de Janeiro for Stewardship training. On my second trip to Brazil in 2004, I

able to meet Rotarians from all over the world and interact with them and meet other staff from other departments. The trips to Brazil and Ecuador left me a mark because I was able to see with my own eyes the humanitarian work of Rotarians that are actually benefiting poor communities. It is very touching to see how the benefiting community is very appreciative of Rotary's help. On my trip to Los Angeles I practiced all of my languages and helped Rotarians facilitate communication by using their native language with their inquiries.

3. How has your work at Loyola influenced your presence career?

Since I received my B.A. in Spanish, French and Italian Literature and my M.A in Spanish Literature, speaking all these languages has influenced my present career because I use my language skills daily. I use my Spanish via email and phone when I respond to Rotarians' inquiries when I work with Ecuador and Dominican Republic. I also review grant applications, and reports when they are in Spanish. I had the opportunity to do my presentations and talk with Rotarians in Spanish when I visited Ecuador. This has made a positive effect on me as I am always expressing myself in Spanish, which enhances my professional standing. In addition I have helped fellow coworkers with reviewing documents, providing translations in Italian and French which in turn has enabled me to use my other languages.

4. When did you decide languages would be your main concentration at Loyola?

I did not start my studies at Loyola majoring in a language. I had an undecided major. It took about two years for me to make a concrete decision. In my Freshman year, I decided to first minor in French, since I took 4 years of French in high school. In my junior year, I added Spanish as another minor. Eventually I decided to make French and Spanish my majors. I then added Italian as another major in my senior year, making me have a triple major in Spanish, French and Italian. It took 7 years for me to obtain my Bachelor's in the three languages. I took a year off and worked. While working, I decided to enroll in the Master's program in Spanish and was lucky to receive a scholarship for the program and a T.A. position. In addition, as part of my scholarship, I had the opportunity to study one month in the summer program at the University of Alcalá de Henares, near Madrid, Spain. I took a class in Prose of the 20th Century.

6. What did you find was your greatest challenge in your studies?

The greatest challenge in my studies was studying three Latin-based languages at the same time. Since French, Spanish and Italian are very similar coming from the same root, it is very easy to mix words and use a word in one language for another. In addition I spoke Portuguese at home, so there was an additional Latin language in my head. My head was like a "mixed salad" with all these Latin languages. I surmounted this challenge by spending more time editing papers before I submitted them and made sure I did not add a word from another language. I also paid closer attention when I made errors in papers and when I spoke.

7. Was there any specific change or opportunity at Loyola that made a difference for you?

Being a Teaching Assistant made a big difference in determining my later success.

Because of the experience I gained as a teacher, I had the opportunity to teach Spanish for a semester at Barat College in Lake Forest and for several semesters and Cooking and Hospitality Institute of Chicago. Even though I currently do not teach, at least I had a unique experience working in an academic environment, which is very different working in business environment.

8. What is unique about being a student of Modern Languages?

Modern languages open doors to so many paths. By studying languages one can have an easier time communicating with locals in a particular country and understand better their culture. One has a higher chance of getting a job speaking another language in an International company or organization.

12. Should Loyola students pay more attention to careers in international or global studies?

Yes. Those careers are rewarding, interesting and beneficial. You learn about another culture and to use a foreign language to facilitate communication in both the work environment and travel. Also foreign languages give you an advantage when applying for work in an international company and help enrich and broaden one's personal horizons.