

*Pant Glas Uchaf, Pant Glas, Garndolbenmaen, Gwynedd LL51 9DQ
North Wales, UK*

Dear Fernando and Monica,

27 October 1996

Thank you for your fax. We are so pleased to get your address so that we can write to you both. Many years ago, when I was asked back to Cambridge to give a talk, we asked Marcial for your address but he didn't have it. And then we sent a message through a friend of a friend, who lives in Chile but we assume this never reached you. Anyway, we have it now and we are very happy. It was quite a coincidence that we got in touch with Katherine MacInnes. A sample edition of *World Architecture* arrived by post one day (we don't subscribe to it), and in it was an article about a housing scheme by you, and news that you are well and very busy. So we phoned the magazine, were put in touch with Katherine and she seemed so pleased to be able to help.

^{no, 21!}
It is nearly 20 years since our "Algerian" year. That year was particularly special to us, not only because of the excitement of such a project, but because you were a breath of fresh air in the School of Architecture - and not least because that is the year Frances and I got together. And together we still are, as you see. One potent reminder we have of that year is something you may not have been aware of at the time - a Swedish pop-group had a successful song in the Top Ten that year, it was played all the time in Brooklands Avenue and it was called "Fernando". We have a tape of this song on a little collection of Memories we have made, and it brings back wonderful memories...

After that year, we seemed to waste a lot of time doing Fifth Year and then we both applied for jobs with housing architects in London. It was a bad time to look for good jobs, we didn't manage, so we took ourselves off to India, where we worked with architects in Ahmedabad for a year. It was a mixture of work we helped with, the most relevant being a low-cost housing scheme I designed in the outskirts of Ahmedabad. But mostly it was unsatisfying as well as being very hot for us, so after a three-month trip around India, we came home and we were put in touch with an interesting architect in North Wales, who was looking for help both on some big schemes and also with his small-holding. This interested us as we didn't want ordinary jobs in some city, and we spent three very enjoyable years with him, designing, building an office with our own hands, looking after animals and the vegetable garden - and generally living a wholesome and varied life in the hills of Snowdonia. When these jobs were finished and there were no more to help with, we decided to stay in the area as we liked it so much, and we have remained here ever since. We found our own house, built our own office there, started our own vegetable garden and had 3 children - Jacob (14), Isaac (12) and Rebecca (6).

Wales is its own country like Scotland. In our area, they speak Welsh and our children learn in Welsh at school, so it is a bit like living in another country. It is

a rural and poor region, not the best place to live and work as architects, but over the years we have built up useful contacts and a small reputation for working on old buildings. We see ourselves as GPs (country doctors) offering our services at a local scale. There are no great and exciting opportunities, but we have some nice jobs nevertheless, and all are located in the most beautiful of landscapes.

As for our children, Jacob is very serious and steady. He loves technical things, especially cars and engines, and hopes to go in this direction when he goes to college. Isaac is more fluid as a character; no less able but his interests are less focussed. He flips from one thing to another, but, despite a tantrum or two on the way, usually excels at whatever he turns his hand to - except school which he hates. Rebecca is more like Jacob. With two older brothers, she has had to grow up fast and is quite mature for her age. She loves school, but doesn't miss it in holiday time as she is so good at keeping herself busy, either with or without the boys.

Do you remember some of the others in our year? We have kept in touch with Neil Gilmore, who is now a primary school teacher. The other family in the photo with me pushing the wheelbarrow is Neil's. We keep in touch with David Thompson, who has 2 children and works in Norwich. And also John Radice, who you may remember on one of the photos. Our year was always quite a strong one socially so perhaps it's not surprising we have kept up with them, and more besides. When we are next in touch with any of them, we will certainly tell them that we have made contact with you again.

Monica, was it you on the phone last week? Earlier in the day, we had received a fax from a client who may well have an au pair in the household so I assumed that you were speaking on behalf of the client. When I saw the fax was from Chile, I felt silly! But I had the impression of a young voice...

As Adam has written, we were both very pleased to discover that you are both still alive & active. Our fourth year was the best; for me, because so many things came together in a way that suited me; and because you opened so many new doors for us - some of which I regret I have not explored further. One of these is the way you encouraged us to work as a group, co-operatively. I remember you saying that the democratic process takes time, and must be given time. I have found that insight useful in non-

professional work, but as things have turned out, I have worked only in small, private practice so it has not been possible to use it much as an architect. In the last few years, I've got very involved as a volunteer with a community-based project to rescue an old building, and here I think the democratic process and group working has and will be useful. We have had a Tory government for the whole of our life since we came back from India (- our children have never known anything else!) They have been dismantling the welfare state, public transport, any idea of social responsibility. Because they have centralised power in London, regional decision-making is meaningless and without proportional representation, we feel disenfranchised. We have looked at emigration quite seriously, but I suppose the risks involved looked too great. Anyway, things can't improve here if we all run away! I don't have much hopes of Tony Blair, either. In the end you realise that most politicians are followers not leaders and a change in the attitudes of a large mass of the population is the only way we'll get a better government.

Thank you for the ^{invitation} ~~info~~ to Chile - what an exciting idea! We can't really afford it, but we certainly won't rule it out. We keep very fond memories of you both so I'll finish with a kiss for Monica (do you remember Simon Reed?) and very best wishes to you both from

Frances and Adam

Do you remember him in Algeria?
He was the one who refused to kiss
Monica goodbye!