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Dear Members of the White Plains Rotary Club,

I am writing this letter by kerosene lantern, in my mud hut just South of the Sahara Desert, to thank you for the White Plains Rotary Club Scholarship of which I was the recipient four-plus years ago. After graduating with honors from Cornell University last May, I decided to join the Peace Corps. I have been working and learning in Niger, West Africa, since October.

The last four \oplus years have been great. I studied Animal Science at Cornell, fulfilling the requirements for vet school and also focussing on molecular biology. My senior year I wrote a thesis entitled "Localization of the Fas antigen in murine ovarian tissue", which dealt with a newly discovered cell-surface receptor involved in cell death. The opportunities for cutting edge research at Cornell were just fantastic.

While in school, and until leaving with the Peace Corps, I worked for the Department of Anesthesiology in the Cornell University Vet School's Large Animal Clinic. There I had the opportunity to assist with the anesthesia of horses, cows, the occasional llama, + even a baby elephant! I really enjoyed the balance between art and science required by anesthesia, + the logistical difficulties of large animal anesthesia. (How, for instance, does one get a horse onto a surgery table? At Cornell we hoisted them up to the ceiling + rolled the table underneath).

The summer after my junior year of college I decided to get some wildlife biology experience, + signed on as an intern with the University of Alaska Fairbanks in their Large Animal Research Station. There I assisted with the care of captive herds of reindeer, muskox, + caribou; and helped with a number of research projects. →

→ I also got to see a lot of Alaska. The best day that summer was the day I saw seven grizzlies while hiking in Denali Park.

I learned a lot of other things too in the last four years. At Cornell's indoor climbing wall I started rock-climbing, and eventually started climbing outdoors, + teaching climbing classes for Cornell Outdoor Education. This summer my climbing partner and I climbed Wallface, a 700 foot cliff in the Adirondacks.

Since coming to Niger I have learned a lot. We spent 10 weeks at a Peace Corps training site learning French and Hausa (a local language). I have actually been at my post - a bush-village near the Nigerian border - for just over two weeks. Officially I am here as a small-animal husbandry agent, but much of my work will involve agroforestry and improving health and nutrition. It is hard to believe, but Niger has an infant mortality rate of close to 20%, and less than 10% of adults are literate. Seeing the poverty here has really changed my perspective on the world, but I have been most impressed by the cheerfulness and generosity of the people. I am looking forward to spending the next 2 years working with them.

As for future plans, I am trying to decide between pursuing a career in veterinary medicine or in research. Perhaps I will combine the two. Either way, I have had a lot of wonderful opportunities, and your scholarship was a big part of that. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

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