

Keith's letter to
his parents, dated
Mar. 26, 1940, while
he was student at
U.T.

He describes his
spring break trip
to So. Texas +
Mexico.

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Austin, Texas
March 26, 1940

Dear Mother,

Had a nice vacation and now the works begins until the finals are through the last of May. Murray and I really had a good time on our travels. It was all leisurely during the trip. We slept until we wanted to get up and then went as far as we desired and took in everything on the way. We left out of Austin, at 9:30 Friday morning. Two other boys went as far as San Antonio. We went around by the way of Randolph field on the way down and showed these boys the place. There we ran into the Stephen's girls that were taking their annual trip through the south. Murray tried to find some of the girls he knew, but had no luck. One of the boys that was with us was walking toward the administration building when a girl hollered at him and it was an old schoolmate of his in Mich. We talked to some of the girls for sometime and then went on into town and got those two settled, as they were going to look the town over during the holidays, and then went out to see Sis. We had dinnere there and went to town and looked into the Govenor's mansion and then went on our way.

We went as far as Cotulla and then went out to Dossey's ranch. It was the first that Murray had seen of actual ranch life and enjoyed the side trip quite a bit. On the way out we say a snake and stopped to watch it a while and then went on out to the house. We visited awhile and then looked over the place. Murray was standing along side of a cow there and asked Don "How much milk that steer gave." Don was stumped and I put him right on the fact that not every* Texas white face was a steer. I ribbed him quite about it and being all in good natufed fun, he did not mind. The folks were all well and inquired about you folks and send their greetings.

We left Cotulla bout six thirty or seven. We picked up a hitch-hiker their going to Laredo. He is quite a track man from N.T.S.C. and we had a nice visit and he told us how to get around in Laredo. We put up for the night in Laredo and went into Nuevo Laredo that night and looked around. We both bought some of their famouse Tequilla and were disappointed. We drove around the place and got an appreciatìon for the states the more we saw of the place. When you got off of the main highway to Mexico City the streets were almost impassable. Holes and ruts two feet deep everywhere. The dirty buildings and the indifferent attitude of the inhabitants is quite astonishing. The taxi's in the town where were horse drawn carriages that we had in this country years ago.

We came back across about one that night and when we had figured up we had each spent twelve dollars in old Mexico that night. Not actually twelve dollars, but twelve pesos, which is about two dollars American money.

We slept until ten-thirty the next morning and ate breakfast and dinner at the same time and then took off for Brownsville. We stopped at all the memorial markers on the road and read them and it gave the histroy of the Mier Expedition. This expedition was a half crazed group of fighting fools from Texas that were going to whip Mexico by themselves and came into a great deal of hardship. Texas history glofifies them as heroes, but it was nothing but a darn fool stunt.

We went to Pharr and visited some relatives of a boy we both know. There I ran into a girl that I had gone to school with in S. A. and we visited awhile. (Murray ribbed me when she told us she had been married since August) Verry little time was spent there and we decided to take the river road to Brownsville from here. We started out right, but ended up almost in the Rio Grande

before we realized that we had missed our road. We went back and wasted an hour trying to find the right road. We hadn't gone far when we came to a mud hole and got stuck. Luckily Murray was driving and I accused him of all kinds of things. We finally got out of there and two hours later we hit the main highway again and found that we had covered about five miles towards our destination. After that we kept to the main highway to Brownsville. It was late when we hit the place, so we ate got a place to stay and then looked up an old school teacher of Murray's that is vacationing down there.

The next morning, Easter Sunday, we picked up the teacher and went to Matamoros (she gave us breakfast first) and it was worse than Nuevo Laredo. The streets were worse, the buildings were worse and the jail was worse. I forgot to tell you about the jail in Nuevo Laredo. It is one big room and everybody is thrown in there. They just stand and hang on the bars and look out the window, while the lizards and rats run up and down the walls playing hide and seek around the prisoners. Thank God we did not land up in one of them. We visited all the curio shops and of all the junk. Everything there from hairpins to wagons. We started in on the plaza and made the rounds to the market about six blocks away. That market. Oh man. You enter through a little aisle between two eating stands. They have flies, bugs and dirt thicker than the eats. The market is divided into three sections. The eating joints, meat department, and the miscellaneous. They have no refrigeration for their meat and at the end of the day they sell out their meat for what they can get, but it is so dirty, I can't imagine how one can taste the meat. The miscellaneous department has everything in it. They almost drag you into the booths to sell you things. I bought a handkerchief that I am sending to you. Also bought some cigarettes that we brought back with us and gave to the boys around here and

am sending some to Corky. When we were about to leave the flea market somebody just about spit a half a glass of water on us and never thought anything of it. That is Mexico.

We visited the cemetery. They bury the more wealthy people on top of the ground. I never saw anything so crowded. The wealthy are buried on the higher land and those that cant afford this luxury are buried under the ground on the lower land. The descendants must continue to pay rent for the plot on which the person is buried and soon as they fail the body is taken out and thrown over in one corner. They just take them out and nonchalantly put them over in one corner and you can see bones and skulls stacked up in all positions. Quite a hideous sight. It makes a person want to be cremated when they die.

We went back to Brownsville where Miss Sprague, the teacher, treated us to dinner and then went out to the airport, where they were exhibiting the new stratoplane the Braniff airlines are putting on for regular trips from Chicago to Mexico City. It flies at 25000 feet at 200 miles per hour, top speed 240 m.p. h. The wing spread is 107 feet and the plane stands 21 feet high. It is the biggest thing with wings. All the windows and doors are sealed and air and pressure is kept constant by tanks inside the ship. It can carry 35 passengers in the day and 25 at night. Really a revolution in flying.

About four we left for Corpus. We ran into rain just north of Brownsville. It flooded in Harlingen and Raymondville and we went right through it. We got as far as Falfurrias and put up for the night. We took in a show and then ate and went to bed. We got up about eight in the morning and ate and headed for Corpus. While eating breakfast I met a boy I had gone to school with in S. A. and talked with him a while. We took the road straight north out of

of town and headed toward the King ranch. We had to go fifty miles out of the way to go around the place and then cut back. We went into the county about six miles where the road stopped. There are two towns in the county and we got to the county seat. One bldg. was the Kennedy land office and the other was a general store and a filling station. Quite a city for a county seat.

We got to Corpus for dinner and then went to the docks and saw the big boats. Among them was the French ship "Pluvoise" that is interned for the war. All about Corpus is oil and derrick after derrick is seen all about.

We left for Aransas Pass and Port Lavaca. On the way to Port Lavaca we saw some men doing oyster fishing. We stopped and talked to them awhile and took a picture of the causeway and them. We saw them taking oysters out of the shell and dumping them into a bucket to send to market.

We left and went to Gonzales for supper and ran into three busses carrying kids back to school after the holiday. Naturally there was one or two we knew and we talked to them awhile. We hit rain again right after we left town and drove in it all the way to Austin. It was about 9:30 Monday night when we got here. We went and visited Mrs. Erevillyan for a while and then came home and went to bed and got up for school this morning.

I felt good over the trip. I got a physics test back just before the holidays, on which I made the highest in class and today I got back a 60 in math which is equivalent to a 100. The prof gave six problems and each counted ten. That is the way he always grades and then bases his final average on the number of problems rather than on the number of tests. So it was a very successful time. This is a rather complete itinerary of the trip as I thought that you would be interested.

We took two rolls of pictures during the trip, but some of them wont be too good on account of the inclement weather during the day. I hop most of them turn out good.

I read the paper today and found a part of it gone. I was wondering just what the interesting thing was.

Well after being in Mexico it gives a person a feeling of rejoicing that he is living in this country. Honestly it is almost incredible to believe that people are contented to live like they do. I have often heard that after visiting Mexico that you would be glad to be contented with just a little here and it never dawned on me that there would be such a striking difference by just crossing the bridge. Brownsville and Laredo are nice towns, but soon as you cover that half mile across the bridge things go back a hundred years, except what the U. S. people bring over.

Soon as the pictures are developed I will send you some and let you see some of the things we did.

Where we stopped in Talfurrias the guy had quite a menagerie started and had a couple of ant eaters there. It was the first I had ever seen.

I hope that you folks had a good Easter and that the cold wave wasn't to severe that it hurt. How is Dad feeling these days? I hope that Hazel will get over here trouble. I see by the paper that things are going along with the building. I hope that you folks can leave after school is out. Will you have to move out of the building before school lets out or can you stay? Surely hope that everything is turning out alright.

This letter is long now so better quit for the present. I have two hourtests coming up this week that I will have to get down and do soon.

Love

Keith