

Sandra L.
CIA - Bolivia
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PEACE CORPSMAN MOURNED

Angel to Bolivian Peasants

LA PAZ, Bolivia (AP)—In the slum high above this mountain capital the ragged Indian peasants say Sandra Smith was an angel.

In the city itself sophisticated editorial writers say she was a true revolutionary, a soldier who gave her life to the cause of redeeming Bolivia's downtrodden Indians.

In her own eyes Sandra L. Smith, 22, was a Peace Corps volunteer doing her job. That was to run a one-room school where children were learning to read and write. She also gave their mothers advice on cooking and sanitation, and kept house for her husband, a fellow volunteer and childhood sweetheart.

Sandra died last month of a sudden brain injury.

Cause of Death Unknown

The Peace Corps in Washington said death was apparently due to a pathological cause which has not been determined; she had been feeling ill for a couple of days.

While congressmen in nearby Chile accused the Peace Corps of serving as a front for the Central Intelligence Agency, the newspaper *El Diario* of La Paz editorialized: "Although you did not wish it to be, your life is a slap in the face to all the paper revolutionaries who sing odes to the 'campesinos' from their plush



SANDRA SMITH

homes and comfortable desks."

One of 200 volunteers assigned to Bolivia, Sandra had been living and working in the El Alto slum near the city's mountaintop airport for a year. Her husband, Frederic W. Smith, 23, taught masonry at a nearby trade school and worked with Sandra in teaching their neighbors rudimentary sanitation.

"There Was No School"

Both were brought up in upstate New York where they attended Clarence Central High School, and both grad-

uated from the University of Rochester.

The school, in the middle of a dirt-floor adobe compound, is about 12 by 26 feet. The furniture consists of scrap lumber and bricks. But for the 27 children who study there, the school is a great deal better than what their parents had in childhood.

"There were no schools when I was young," says Amelia de Churates, whose two children attend Sandra's school. "My girls are learning many things."

Like most of the other mothers in El Alto, Mrs. de Churates is an Indian peasant whose main language is the Aymara dialect. For her children's education she pays a peso a week. That's only about a nickel in American money, but it's sizable for the desperately poor campesinos of the highlands. The money was used to pay for supplies, and for the salary of a young girl from the interior who helped Sandra with the younger children.

"She was constantly thinking of the school and how to improve it," says Rosa Peiaez, Sandra's 24-year-old assistant. Barely literate herself, she is now trying to run the school alone while waiting for the Peace Corps to decide whether a new volunteer will be sent into the project.