

# U.S. youths, U.K. team up for Operation Raleigh

By KATIE WHITE  
Staff Writer

For many students, education is four years of college, but for 20 young people, this is not the case. Operation Raleigh, a non-profit organization which offers unique youth leadership projects, is getting ready to send the group to Australia. For them, education is more than exams and grades; it's an international experience.

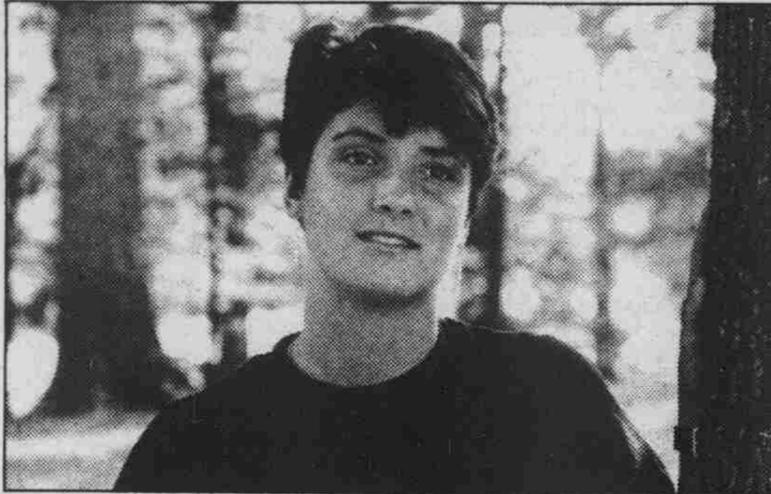
"It's a major challenge," says Lisa Long, a former "venturer" and current Operation Raleigh counselor. She went to Peru in 1985 where she and other young people from 30 other countries pitched in and performed community service and scientific research.

"We constructed cable extension bridges for a small village near a jungle," Long says. The group also built 80 water pumps, a playground for the school and other surrounding villages and performed medical research. They were responsible for teaching preventative medicine and basic hygiene. Long says that the experience was very rewarding.

Operation Raleigh was formed at the suggestion of Prince Charles after he and an international team of experts organized and led a series of expeditions worldwide involving over 400 young people from 27 different countries. The operation now offers places for 4,000 people from around the world in a system of 40 different kinds of expeditions for a four-year time period that started in 1984. It operates under the motto "Science, Service and Adventure."

What exactly is Operation Raleigh? The organization accepts applicants from all over the world. To be accepted, the applicants must be between the ages of 17-24, able to speak English and swim 500 yards. Over the four-year period, the organization will select 1,500 applicants from the United States, 1,500 from the United Kingdom and 1,000 from other countries. Long says that the organization does not look for specific skills, yet the applicant must have a good attitude, humor and high levels of compatibility. Those that do especially well are those who are well-rounded and exhibit leadership qualities.

After an applicant is selected, he or she will participate in a special selection weekend. During this time,



Tar Heel/David Foster

Thelma Mielenz

the selection committee will try to get to know each participant on an individual basis by asking questions and by presenting tasks that the applicant must participate in. Long explains that these tasks will often involve group camping, specific skills and practicums.

"It's a cross between Outward Bound and the Peace Corps," she says.

If the applicant is invited to continue, he or she must raise \$5,500 to cover tuition and personal expenses for the duration of the three-month expedition. This presents a major challenge, for each participant has only three to six months in which to raise the money.

Operation Raleigh offers some assistance. This year it has sponsored a 240 mile bike-a-thon and a biathlon in which the participants asked for sponsors to support them in a swim/run race. One venturer raised \$1,000. Others find sponsors for other things, like swim-a-thons or canoe-a-thons.

They accept gifts, use their own savings or get help from a scholarship fund started by Operation Raleigh. Area merchants have helped some venturers by giving them discounts on their gear. Thelma Mielenz, a biology major at UNC, is one of the group going to Australia on July 24 who has received such help. She got interested in Operation Raleigh because she always liked the out-

doors and has never been overseas. "I felt like I wanted to experience another country other than by being a tourist," she says. With Operation Raleigh, she is looking forward to having an international experience by not only working in another country but by working with people from around the world.

Operation Raleigh offers many different types of expeditions, on land and by sea. Mielenz hopes to be involved in an expedition named Lizard Island. This project involves constructing underwater trails around and in the Great Barrier Reef.

Operation Raleigh is currently accepting applications for expeditions and they say that right now is a good time to apply because a selection weekend is coming up in September. These weekends are given only twice a year. Those who apply now can be on their way to another country by December. For an application, write to National Selection, Operation Raleigh USA, 109 E. Jones St., Raleigh, N.C., 27611. For more information, you can write them at the above address

or call them at 733-5255. The Operation Raleigh Scholarship Fund is also accepting donations.

For all those who are looking for an experience which combines the educational, physical and international, Operation Raleigh offers an exciting alternative to the college campus.

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