

Center for Development in Central America



December 1996

The organic sesame crop is beautiful! There are acres of plants thriving. We planted the crop using tractors and oxen, a mechanical seeder and hand-rolled seeder (made from powdered milk cans), and with lots of labor. Field workers this year not only receive their daily wages but will receive part of the profits as well.

As with everything we do here, we are having to do the Nicaraguan 4 step: 1 step forward and 3 steps backward. But we do have lots of good news to report:

We have a buyer, Once Again Nut Butter, who has been very helpful to us. We have our own certification and the inspector came out and gave us the a-okay.



We have helped the processing plant to get their own certi-

fication. Five cooperatives are involved this year (last year we only had one). And so far the rainy season has been wet, very wet. This is good until harvest time when the weather needs to dry up a bit. We are anticipating a good harvest and having some sesame to experiment with (like pressing for oil or making home-made tahini for us).

Health promoters from the communities of Valle Solano, Nejapa, and Chiquilistagua (three small rural communities) are being trained in the area of basic health care. We have sponsored these types of trainings before,

which cover the areas of dehydration, diarrhea, birth control, vaccinations, prenatal care, cleanliness, etc. This is the first time that one of us has provided field evaluation for this project.



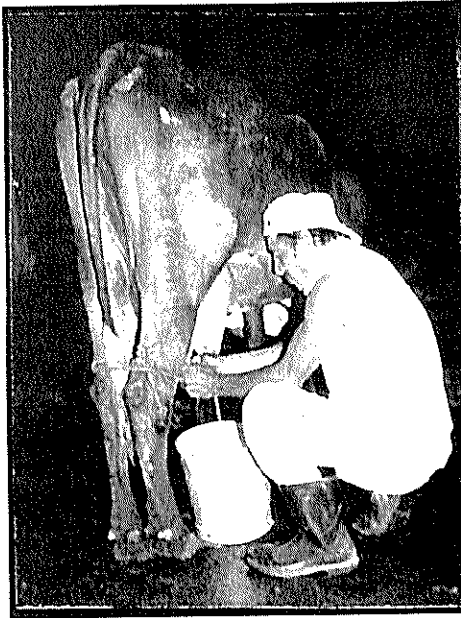
Pat attends the workshops and then goes with the participants into homes to evaluate how well the information is assimilated. She will then help the leaders identify points that are not being understood and be able to pinpoint weaknesses as well as strengths for the next training. We feel that this is an important addition to the program.

We are working with an evangelical group that is distributing seeds in exchange for one tenth of the produce going to feeding centers they are

operating. We are helping them locate cooperatives to plant their seeds. They also want the food grown organically and in a sustainable way but know little, so we're sharing information. We too are using their seeds in our garden.

We are looking forward to a busy first quarter in 1997. We have the possibility of several delegations and several long-term volunteers coming. This will entail more work but lots of opportunities for more needed projects to be accomplished such as building a health center in the community of Los Filos. It will also mean getting to know more fine people. Daniel, our four year old, still asks when "our group" is coming back, referring to the July delegation.

An update on Maestro and the shrimp farm: Maestro is to rest for two more months and continue with physical therapy for his broken back. He has problems with his left side. The doctor has said to put most of his medical options on hold for the next two months and wait to see how the elections turn out, because medical care will either open up for the poor or close down considering the outcome (currently he's unable to afford the prescription medicine he's supposed to be taking). His daughter has sold her little, two-room concrete house to pay off a debt (not CDCA's) incurred with the shrimp farm and Maestro is anxious to begin again, though his wife is not anxious for him to go kill himself. Currently it is too wet to even get to the farm, so nothing can happen right now. He and his family continue to need your prayers and well wishes.



One project that has been in the works now for over a year and appears to be coming into fruition is a microprocessing plant for milk. Currently five dairy cooperatives with the help of CDCA have formed a business to request and receive money to create a processing plant that will pasteurize and bag milk for sale here in Ciudad Sandino. The money will also provide for a refrigerated cart to take the milk to sale. The motion of the wheels will generate the electricity to refrigerate the milk. Great, huh?

The dairy cooperatives now cannot get the money their milk is worth.



They sell raw milk on the streets. Milk companies will not buy from small producers and to keep the market value of milk down they sometimes supplement their fresh milk with powdered milk that was donated to the poor in Nicaragua (but that doesn't seem to make it to the poor). Processing their own milk and selling it locally will give the cooperatives an edge to compete. We are requesting a \$73,300 low-interest loan from the Inter-American Foundation. So far getting the money looks really good!

Let us introduce you to the Nicaraguan staff of the CDCA:

César is the one responsible for this whole mess! He is the one who got us here and keeps it going. He works harder than just about anyone we know. He also knows more about community development in his little finger than all of us put together. He and Karla, who is absolutely beautiful, have 3 children. Karen and Niurbi are in school and Césarito (3) loves to come see the cows here.

Henry is the smallest man that we know. He is gentle, loving, and so very, very sweet. He is also cunning and if we need someone to be sly and figure out how to go about getting something then he's the one! He brightens our special days (birthdays, Mother's Day, Women's Day, etc.) with flowers that would be the envy of florists shops in the US. He is a real artist.

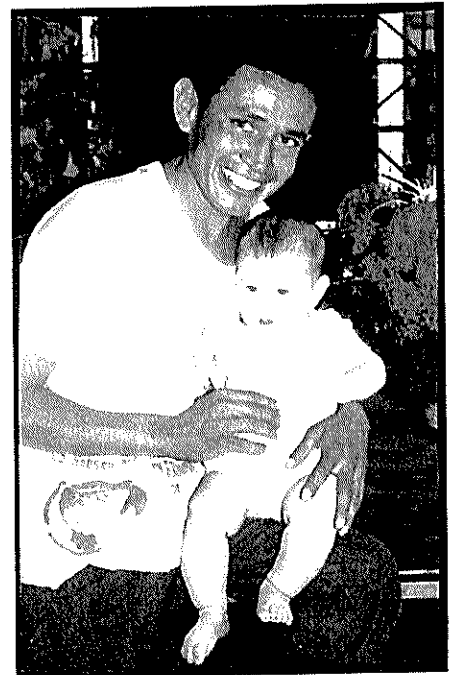
Azucena is the one responsible for keeping us presentable to the Nicaraguan world. She still can't believe that we cannot figure out how to keep floors clean. She is a wonderful cook. She lives in a tiny concrete house with her 4 generational family of 9 people! Living in such cramped quarters causes much strain on her as well as the rest of the family, but they have at least moved into a concrete home instead of the itchy, bitsy wooden shack they were surviving in last year.

Luis is our part-time mechanic. He is unusually patient with the folks who come to "assist" him or "apprentice" under him. We and he are learning the correct words to use with each other to solve mechanical problems, which with our vehicles is always an occurrence. What he and we would give for a newer 4 X 4 vehicle!

"Cabeza" is our newest not-official-but-here-everyday member. He is 16 years old and a wonder. He is a very intelligent hard-worker and he, like Henry, is so sweet. He finished 6th grade but could not go on because his family had no money. We would like to help him finish high school. He offers to teach "Felipito" (Joseph) how to be a real cowboy because he has grown up on the ranch.

And then not paid but here daily we have: **don Gregorio**, who is crazy as a bat and fills our life with humor; **Nelson**, who is trying to learn mechanics; **Geronimo**, Azucena's 8 year-old son, who helps sweep the yard and works in the fields some (he does go to school); and **Edwin**, who is around 10 years old who comes to work some with César. All of these work and get lunch which they would not have otherwise.

Stay tuned for further developments...



One of the ways that US folks have shown solidarity with Latin Americans has been to accompany them into dangerous zones to provide some protection for the Latins. Recently we have been the recipient of reversed accompaniment.

A couple of weeks ago, Kathy was robbed at knife-point, which brought up again the reality that in this country filled with desperate, poverty-stricken people; anyone who appears to have anything of value is a target. We are resigned to losing money and things, but the concern was raised that one of our children might be taken for ransom. So Henry, one of the staff, graciously accompanies Pat and Coury to Coury's weekly program in Ciudad Sandino. This certainly gives us a better perspective of the importance of accompaniment work.

Election News: We have already sent the newsletter back to the States with copy for 3 possible results of the Nicaraguan elections, but this being Nicaragua we obviously didn't think of ALL the results! So we have sent this analysis of what is happening now via email as the newsletter goes to the printers.

It is October 24; the elections were held four days ago. It quickly became a race between Arnaldo Aleman, the Liberal Alliance candidate, and Daniel Ortega, the Sandinista candidate. The elections were freely held and the turn-out was huge. The problem arose in the transferring of tallies of votes from the precincts to the Supreme Electoral Council (CSE, from the name in Spanish) by telegraph.

When the votes were counted at each precinct, all political parties observing the vote were given the vote totals. Many times the numbers that the political parties had disagreed with the numbers the CSE then received in official telegraphs to the advantage of the Liberal Alliance party.

We have been watching on television the discovery of many ballot boxes and ballots that were somehow taken and buried or dumped. These ballots should have been taken to the CSE. People are very angry that their votes have not been transferred and recorded properly and that their ballots have been stolen. Democracy here is not taken for granted. People spent up to 8 hours just waiting to cast their ballots.

Getting this whole mess resolved may take up to 11 more days and to what outcome? We don't know. Many very conservative parties are aligning themselves with Aleman and saying just finish it up and let Aleman take power. Many of the other parties are aligning themselves with Ortega, who actually fought for their hard-earned democracy, and calling for a recount that can be substantiated. Please keep this tiny country in your hearts as they move into their future.



Thanks...

We celebrate Thanksgiving here. Thanksgiving is one of our favorite U.S. holidays that is not widely celebrated here. I think here in Nicaragua we are more acutely aware of all that we have to be thankful for: a decent house, clean water to drink, food to set on our table, clothes, shoes, fans, safety, medicines when we need them, and friends and family who love and support us though the miles that separate us are great. But that is not all...



YOU who support this vital work through prayers and gifts.
 OUR NICARAGUAN FRIENDS who support us with their love.
 OUR U.S. PARTNERS through the organization of Friends of CDCA.
 YOU who offer hospitality to us when we come back to the States (most recently being those who helped Kathy and Pat).
 OUR NICARAGUAN PARTNERS who support this work through their advice and labor.

Needs...

As we end 1996 and begin 1997 we need:

YOUR PRAYERS. We are searching for 100 churches that are willing to commit to praying for CDCA at least once a month. If you are willing to be a part of this support, please let us know (we are willing to send a sentence of need every month).

YOUR PLEDGES. We are looking for an additional 100 people willing to give us a pledge for 1997. If you are willing to be a part of our on-going support, please let us know.

YOUR INVESTMENTS. We are looking for 10 people willing to invest at least \$1,000 for at least one year in the Microenterprise Loan Fund to be used to help people like Maestro. If you are willing to invest your money in a program that will use your money for good in the world instead of harm, please let us know.

Thank you.

This newsletter was printed, assembled, labelled, and mailed through the efforts of:
 Service Clubs of Reynolds High School, Winston-Salem;
 Aaron Clauset;
 Bob Wells;
 and as always, Linda Mashburn.
 Thank You!

As you plan your holiday giving, please consider an Alternative Gift to the poor in Central America through a contribution to the Center for Development in Central America in honor of family members or friends. We will be happy to acknowledge your gift to them with an appropriate card. Please enclose a note listing each recipient's name/address, and the way you wish each card signed.

YES! I want to help support the work of the CDCA in the following ways:

Enclosed please find my tax-deductible contribution of \$ _____. See attached Alternative Gift list.

For a minimum gift of \$25.00, you may request "Grits, Greens and Gallo Pinto", our unique and versatile cookbook, or a 1997 calendar.

Yes, please send me the cookbook or the calendar.

For a minimum gift of \$50.00, you may request a hand-thrown pottery mug especially designed for the CDCA. Yes, please send me the mug.

I am pledging \$ _____ (monthly/quarterly/annually) for 1997.

I want to support microenterprise projects.

Please send me more information.





From the youngest to the oldest: Joseph is now mobile (oh! dear!). He continues to be the twinkle in all the Nicaraguans' eyes. Daniel turned four in October and rides his Big Wheel (a present) like a kamikaze pilot through the house! Coury danced (the only male) in a traditional Nicaraguan folk dance and was wonderful.

Jessica is coming home for Christmas from Salem Acedemy, but this will be our first Christmas without Tiff, who is at Cornell.

Kathleen and Joseph had a good visit with her family in September after her father had by-pass surgery (he is fine and they are again headed for China to teach English). Mike is now learning the game of Magic. Between Magic and the theology books he has been reading, we have interesting conversations around the dinner table! Sarah has been busy with buying crafts and packing up all the crafts. She can get amazing stuff in one cubic inch. As this goes to print, Pat and Kathy are in Florida visiting with their mother and spreading the news about the CDCA there and in Alabama.



Reflection.....

Those of us that grew up in small churches have memories of Christmas Pageants. I remember when Jessica was 10 years old and finally was allowed to be Mary. We watched her with pride and then a little aghast as she grabbed the baby Jesus (a doll) by the head and lifted him out of the manger to wrap him in "swaddling clothes" holding him always by the one hand around the head and hanging him downwards.

The pageants are filled with humor and sweetness as children act them out. Everyone has their costumes and the sets are simple and full of familiarity and warmth. The pageants are so completely remote from the real thing that we have lost much of the pain and anguish of that fateful night so long ago.



One thing we can learn from the story is that Jesus came into the world to a frightened young woman and man far from home, homeless, and poor like the majority of the people of his day. The people who can identify the most with that family on that night are poor people living here in Nicaragua, not those of us watching or acting out these sweet little pageants. Many Nicaraguans live in shacks that would make a stable look nice! We have no idea of the poverty, pain, and fear of that young, new family. In Matthew the story goes on of how Herod tried to get rid of this new king by killing all the babies 2 years old and younger. I try to imagine the fear and panic of all those parents and the little children ripped from their mother's and father's arms and run through with swords and I can't...I simply cannot. But here....well a youth said about this passage in *The Gospel in Solentiname*:

You know what country we're in, and how there's so much infant mortality, and so many stunted, undernourished children. I think that is persecuting children. I think the same thing is happening here as happened to Christ when he was persecuted as a kid.

The Christmas story is a story of good news and hope, but for whom? Who did Christ come to be among? All of us, of course, but especially the poor. And realistically it is the poor, the oppressed, the beaten, the displaced that can mostly feel the hope and the wonder of a God coming to be *with them!* Not the kings. Not the Caesars. Not the Herods. Not the rulers. Not the rich. Not even the middle-class...but *them...* they who have nothing.

We are fortunate to live here among the poor because then we are able to see dimly what all of this means to them and it gives us hope.

The good news of the Christmas story is that God does care for the poor...really, *really* does care. Thank God someone does!

Air Mail to Nicaragua: CDCA c/o FUNDECI-Casa Ben Linder, Barrio Mons. Lezcano, de la estatua 3 c. al sur, 1 1/2 arriba, Managua, NICARAGUA

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