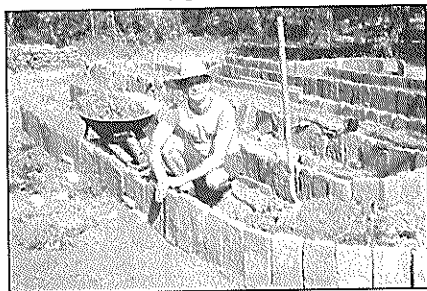




Jeremy and Rachel Thaler from Once Again Nut Butter will have been here and negotiated directly with organic farmers by the time you get this. This is a momentous event for the growers here and for us. The organic sesame crop has grown, from the first year and the participation of one cooperative of 19 growers, to four cooperatives of 69 growers in the second year, to this current year with close to 1400 growers!

Our organic sesame organizing has now become nationwide. For years there was only one corporation that organized the organic sesame market, and they did not pay fair prices. When we began growing sesame and working with other growers, giving them just prices for their crops, many jumped on board. This work is blossoming! We are now working with honey producers, *pitahaya* (a cactus fruit) growers, pineapple growers, and more and more are approaching us. We are excited about the prospects and a little nervous carrying the trust of so many people.



Nick building raised beds

We are also excited about several other brief but important additions to our work:

- Nick Argentati, our long-term volunteer, was able to start planting the garden that he worked so hard to prepare because of a donated drip irrigation system that uses only 10 gallons of water a day! This system is easy to use and very water efficient.
- A gift to get a family planning program started enabled four people to be voluntarily sterilized!
- We have hired a preschool teacher for the feeding center preschool!

We are celebrating our third anniversary here in Nicaragua! It is hard to fathom that we have been here for three years (or is it that we have been here for *only* three years?!), but we

have. Our vision of the Center has changed and evolved through these three years as we have listened to Nicaraguans and as their realities have changed.

The government has changed. This government instead of being neutral to the poor is actively against the poor. The economy has changed. Big business and agribusiness are coming in and dominating the markets. Small farmers and small business people are strangling. Poverty is still enormous and desperate, and hope seems to be dwindling. Many are getting so anxious that they are arming themselves. And so our work changes and shifts.

We are looking to our fourth year and we want you to have an idea of the goals we wish to accomplish (maybe you can help . . . hint, hint!):

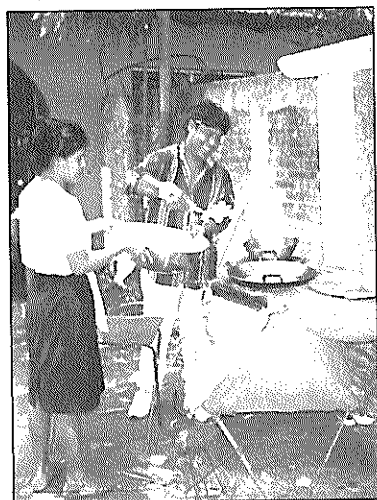
- We are already working to expand the organic sesame project nationwide and organize an additional 1400 growers (see above).
- We have funds and volunteers committed to build two health centers in two rural areas. Each will have a doctor once a week to see



Connie (preschool teacher) and children

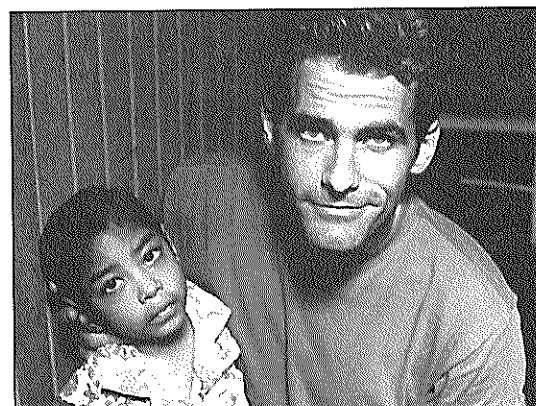
patients, have some medicines, and have a lay worker to staff it for emergencies.

- We want to build a consolidated school in another remote rural area. We have funds committed to supply the school building.
- We have hired a preschool teacher for the Roberto Clemente feeding center that we built in 1995. She is training the volunteers. We hope to expand the position later into working with 13 preschools as a consultant.
- We have begun this year a revolving loan fund to voluntarily sterilize women and men who desire such for purposes of family planning. We want to expand this to a viable program to reach 100 women and men.
- We will be resubmitting the funding request for the microprocessing plant for the five dairy cooperatives (the Inter American Foundation changed their policies after we had submitted our first request).
- We have in process the organizing of the building of a high-energy, wood-burning cook stove for each of the 15 houses in a housing project in the rural area of Los Filos.
- We want to translate the stove manual into Spanish.



Cookstove workshop

- We are working with more remote, isolated rural communities in organizing them and helping them develop a community needs assessment. We will begin addressing their identified needs.
- We want to expand the number of short-term delegations that come and work here (we have had one and have three more scheduled in the next two months).
- We want to expand the number of long-term volunteers (we have already had one).
- We want to double the microenterprise loan fund.
- We want to repair the school roof in a rural area.
- We want to get 100 families a drip irrigation system to use in their family gardens.
- We want to get the organic *pitahaya* project underway.
- We want to expand the health promoter training program.
- We want to get the People's Pharmacy on a sound footing.
- We want a good 4X4, diesel truck.
- We want to organize other organic growers.
- We want to raise the Nicaraguan staff's wages and pay two JHC staff people salaries.



Jim & child in physical therapy clinic

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JUBILEE HOUSE COMMUNITY
"You shall not oppress one another . . .
... for I am the Lord your God." Lev.

Sarah is in the States speaking about the CDCA in Georgia, Tennessee, North and South Carolina. Her stepfather, Don McCall, died and she returned early to be with her mother. **Kathleen, Mike,** and the boys will be in the States beginning May 22nd. Kathleen will be speaking in June. If you can use any of them then please contact Jim Brown at 1-800-ASHEVIL (locally in Asheville at 251-4401).

Pat is excited to be leading a workshop at a national gathering of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). She also wrote an article for the magazine *Friends Journal*. **Kathy** and Pat will be celebrating their 25th anniversary of deciding to live together as adults (as sisters, of course, they lived together as children).

Jessica is graduating from Salem Academy in May. **Tiff** is busy trying to find a summer job, which is critical because we can't help financially. **Coury** and **Daniel** are about to bust to get on the airplane and head north! **Joseph** has decided to only "grunt" as he processes two languages.

Please note: Several donors to us have doubled their contribution by participating in their businesses' matching gifts programs. This is an easy way to double your giving if your employer matches gifts!

You Are Invited on June 7th . . .

to the Annual Meeting of the Friends of CDCA 12-4 PM, Grace Baptist Church, Statesville, NC. There will be a rice and beans meal, worship time, slides, maybe a Nicaraguan folk dance by Coury (if he doesn't get too scared), and time to get to know us. Please RSVP to Linda Mashburn at 704/872-5927 to be included in the lunch count.

Reflection:

In our last newsletter we wrote about the delay in the water project for the squatter community of Motastepe (waiting for them to obtain title to their land). We want to give you the update on that community.

On February the first we were going to Managua to celebrate Coury's eighth birthday. On the way we saw a commotion and police on the roadside of the Motastepe community. When we came back by nothing was there. Nothing! One hundred riot police had gone in without warning and torn down the community: killing three people (one a pregnant woman), jailing 50 or more people, injuring untold numbers, and leaving 1500 people homeless.

This community was relatively new. There was a law in Nicaragua that if land was unused for three years it became public domain (although the last government repealed that law). The community had settled on land not being used, which was actually claimed by two different "owners". The community and the land had blossomed in the past year. The ownership dispute over the land was in the courts, and one of the claimants welcomed the settlers. These people received no warning that the police were coming. They had everything they owned confiscated; gardens and trees were uprooted to make the place unbearable. And it is...it is now just an empty, dry field.



Motastepe homes being dismantled

Using land not titled to you is a hard concept for us in the First World to comprehend. We are so much into private ownership that the idea of people, who are homeless, actually thinking they had a right to an empty field is very foreign to us...yet, most of us come from a Judeo-Christian

background and in that tradition we hold to the belief that the whole of creation is God's. Many of us also believe that God has a preferential option *for* the poor not *against* the poor, though few of us live that way.

The new president, Arnaldo Aleman, based much of his campaign on the Church and yet he definitely is moving *against* the poor. This was just *one* of his first acts against the poor. There have been many, many others.

Every time I drive by that field now with its new barbed wire fence and its dry, useless land I think of the people who kept trying for days to rebuild only to have the police come at night to tear down their houses of cardboard. I think of the filthy children who had no water to bathe as their parents tried to make a stand and claim small plots for their impoverished families. I think of the riot police with their black uniforms and their clubs tearing down shacks and beating up people and taking the pitiful belongings that those folks had and the damage that had to be done to the police people's souls.

"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof"... you wouldn't know it here ... now.

