The organic sesame business has flourished. PRONIC, S.A., (the for-profit business organized by us) is handling a contract for eight containers of sesame (48,000 pounds a piece) this year. “Whoa! Baby!” as César would say.

We founded this business. We continue to help with most administrative functions as we train others. PRONIC is 100% grower owned. It is now owned by 2,000 growers! We helped them get their organic certification papers filled out (imagine 2,000 campesinos filling out a seven-page U.S.-type form!).

The cash from these crops has been grace to growers, especially this year after suffering from El Niño. Where other crops failed, sesame survived and provided desperately poor families with money to pay for medicines, school fees, and even rice and beans, which withered away in the drought.

It has been and continues to be a lot of work but... slowly but surely the successes have been worth it.

The five dairy cooperatives have received the check from the Inter-America Foundation to start up the micro-milk processing plant! The work now begins implementing the grant we wrote. We can’t wait to start wearing our own milk moustaches.

The Wesley Foundation from Winthrop University (Rock Hill, SC) brought a group of 12 down here to work on a school in Las Parcelas. The delegation was a good group of college students (or recent graduates) and Risher, their adviser and fearless leader. They celebrated the last six days of Christmas with us, two days of Hanukkah, and New Year’s Eve (we like celebrations!).

The group had raised money toward the costs of the school construction. In 1997 Las Parcelas had an agreement with the mayor of their zone to provide a good bit of materials. With that agreement and foundation (through rock) and worked on the neighboring health center’s latrines.

Fortunately the mayor has now provided blocks and we have a group from Canada working on the school. It may actually get finished before fall.

We were fortunate to have Pam and Steve Agner, friends and volunteers, come spend a week. Pam, a nurse, held two clinics with a Nicaraguan doctor – treating 86 patients. She had brought medicines down and then bought some here. Steve helped Mike with transporting sesame. He agrees we need a new truck!

Mainly, though, they brought R&R for us. We watched movies, had our feet rubbed, and told new jokes. We laughed, sang, told tales, and relaxed. It was great!

Friends of the CDCA
All are invited to the Friends of CDCA annual meeting Saturday, April 4, from 12-3 at Parkway UCC in Winston-Salem, NC. Come for lunch, election of officers, and program (Sarah will be there). Childcare will be provided. Please come!

Other health updates: the lay training continues. One on-going project is the voluntary sterilization program. Currently we are working with a women’s center that received a grant to do 300 sterilizations free of charge in January and February. We are now doing all the legwork and transportation in the comarca.

Two interesting sidenotes are:

❖ While Pat was out with a worker organizing for the sterilization project, a dog bit her. She was obviously concerned about rabies (a serious problem here) and the lay health worker said, “Don’t worry, I vaccinated that dog myself.” Hooray!
❖ Another lay worker asked Pat to go with her into her community because she felt uncomfortable answering questions about sterilizations. Why? Well, she’s only 12 years old. Despite her age she appears to be that community’s coordinator, shaker, and mover. “And the babies shall lead them.”

Yes! I want to help in some way to support the work of the Center for Development in Central America.

☐ Enclosed please find my tax-deductible contribution of $______.

(For a minimum gift of $25, you may request Gris, Greens, and Gallo Pinto, our unique and versatile cookbook. For a minimum gift of $50, a hand-thrown pottery mug especially designed for the CDCA; please specify right-handed or left-handed handle.)

☐ Yes, please send me a copy of the cookbook. ☐ Yes, I would like a mug [ J R ] [ L].

☐ Enclosed is $25 for membership in the Friends of CDCA.

☐ Please contact me about opportunities as a volunteer in the U.S., ☐ in Nicaragua.

Please make address corrections on the reverse side of this form, including phone/fax/and email addresses, and mail to: 2425 Spicewood Dr, Winston-Salem, NC 27106-9768. Thank you.
Right at this moment Sarah is in the States (somewhere between New York and Florida) speaking her little heart out and pushing the slide remote button. She, along with all of us, loved having Tiff and Jessica here at Christmas and hated seeing them go. Pat has taken up yoga and feels great. Kathy’s English class has recently grown from two students to six! Mike and César are headed for Prince Edward’s Island in Canada for an OCIA (organic certification) meeting. César about froze in April in North Carolina. We hope the meeting space is well heated – none of this energy-conservation stuff or we will be bringing back one frozen Nicaraguan!

Cory turned nine on February 1st. Joseph turned two on January 30. Daniel, Cory and Joseph loved having their granddaddy here recently (as Mike did) and their Mam-ma and Pap-pa (as Kathleen did) in November.

Reflection...

This morning we found our feet pacing frantically and then found the mother horse’s carcass in a field. She had been stolen in the night and slaughtered.

The emotions that arise in me are mixed and turbulent. The sadness is amazingly deep as I watch Brown Beauty pace and look for her mother. The sense of violation is strong...of having people in our yard taking Snow off. It feels brutal and violent.

Gandhi said, “Poverty is the worst form of violence.” Snow was butchered for her meat, either to sell or for nutrition. Hunger is high and poverty is oppressive. I know that – poverty is all around us. It’s our work, our battle, our life in many ways. I know all this and the violation is still strong.

I had this romantic view of people here. We’d come down and with the work and aid we would become one big happy family. Yet my mother always said, “People are people, Kathleen, everywhere.” As a result of critical desperation we’ve been pickpocketed, mugged, robbed, and now our mama horse stolen and slaughtered. I want to quit.

During this Lenten time I’m especially reminded of the betrayal and loneliness of Jesus...his trusted disciples...and then all those people whom he had healed, fed, touched, and taught yelling for his death! Nothing we’ve experienced compares to this and Jesus kept on – for pure love has no limits.

My love does, and this reality makes me sad. I want to quit.

The very best I can do is not to quit, but keep plugging along. Sometimes the best we hope for is that the limits do stretch but not break...and maybe next time the love can stretch just a little more.

Thanks! ...

➢ As we finished out our 1997 financial records we were blown away. Two receipt line items went over our anticipation (and we always aim high in our hopes!): Individuals increased by 64% and Religious Organizations by 146%. We have to say to all of you, “Thank you!” It filled our hearts with joy!
➢ Thanks also to all those people emailing Sarah daily lining up her tour. You are doing/have done a wonderful job!
➢ Thanks to the Carolina Village volunteers who assembled this newsletter.

... and Needs.

➢ We need one or two groups to help raise funds and/or come build to finish the Las Parcetas school.
➢ We need preschools willing to become sister preschools.
➢ We need a used donated car/van to be available for our speaking tours (big enough to haul crafts).
➢ Hey! It never hurts to ask!
➢ And always we need funds, prayers, and good thoughts sent our way – always.

If you are interested, CDCA’s 1997 Year End Report is available upon request.