After much work on many people's part...

**We are all finally here!** We arrived in bits and pieces, but we have arrived.

We spent the first two months trying to get our vehicles and things out of customs (even duty free the bill is $1300.00).

We lived a bit more like most Nicaraguans while we were "camping out" in the house (one pot, one pan, a few bowls and cups, a Coleman stove, etc.) We had no refrigerator which meant we learned to cook with foods that didn't spoil and to make almost daily market trips.

We got the pool working and opened it to the community. Our yard became a park and a fruit stand (we have lots of trees) and so we've struggled with what's gracious and where our limits should be.

We began three English classes. With extreme unemployment in Nicaragua, English helps folks find jobs. Plus teaching takes no money on our part and was easy to begin.

When our computer and copier arrived, our office began to serve several cooperatives and FUNDECI. Tiff (our 17-year-old) has been a computer expert for FUNDECI (and us).

The staff of FUNDECI, our host organization, have been a family to us. They guide us, instruct us, play with us, support us, help us, and care for us. They openly welcome us into their family.

The FUNDECI folks aid us in finding our way through the Nicaraguan bureaucracy and teach us how to wait and be patient. Nothing is easy here (except maybe getting bread to rise and sweating).

After much rigamarole we finally received our stuff and vehicles from customs. We then immediately began transporting folks -- hospital/clinic runs, carrying bodies back to homes so the families could grieve, fetching chairs for meetings, carrying delegations, going here and there.

We also hosted a "here we are" celebration -- complete with speeches, a dance troupe, and refreshments. At this gathering we passed out approximately $20,000 worth of medical equipment, school supplies, and other donations brought on the caravan.

It's good to be here. We get homesick, but this is beginning to feel like home now.

2425 Spicewood Dr., Winston-Salem, NC 27106 Phone: 910/922-4794
At the heart of Nicaragua's current economic crisis is staggering unemployment. Nationwide unemployment stands at 65-70%. In Ciudad Sandino it is closer to 80%. This can be compared to 25% unemployment in the U.S. at the height of the Great Depression.

This unprecedented level of unemployment has given rise to or accentuated social problems with which we are so familiar in the U.S. In this and upcoming newsletters we would like to touch upon these problems now common to both of our homes. Here we wish to offer some brief insights into drugs and drug trafficking, sexual and family violence, and street children here in Nicaragua.

For various historical and cultural reasons the drug trafficking which has so plagued much of Latin America has by-passed Nicaragua in the past. Because of strong family and community bonds, the problems of drug abuse, other than alcohol, have been minimal. Now, however, as a direct result of the lack of employment, more and more Nicaraguans are turning to drug trafficking as a way to relieve the oppressive poverty in which they live, and more are turning to drug use to dull the pain and hopelessness of life without livelihood. With the increased pressure of being unable to provide financially for their families, more and more Nicaraguan men are venting their frustrations on those further down the social ladder than they—women and children. Spouse and child abuse, as well as rape and sexual assault, are increasing dramatically.

Perhaps the most heartbreaking problem of all is that of the children on the street. Just a few years ago Nicaragua's children were in school. Now they are at every street corner, washing windshields that have been washed already at every red light in town; begging for change; selling whatever they can find, including their own small bodies in an effort to sustain life another day. It is estimated that in Managua alone there are over 6,000 children on the street.

There are a multitude of complex factors that contribute to these problems. But one overarching factor is the new economic model which has been imposed on Nicaragua by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in order for Nicaragua to receive loans from these institutions. Known in officialese as "structural readjustment", the Nicaraguan economy is being forced to undergo draconian measures to satisfy international lending institutions. These measures include the privatization of education, health, and utilities. And, as always, it is the poor who feel these measures most.

But, after a decade of war and the destruction of the nation's infrastructure, Nicaragua's poor have nothing left to give to satisfy the international lending institutions. In the fiscal year 91-92 the standard of living, as determined by the United Nations, fell in Nicaragua by 14%. Such a dramatic decline has never before been recorded anywhere in the world. If Nicaragua must change in order to satisfy international creditors, a more humane, a more just, a more Christian way must be found to accomplish that change.

Three cooperatives are joining together to plant 30 manzanas (about 50 acres) of organic sesame.

If capital is in hand, the crops can be grown, harvested, transported, and marketed yet this year.

The sesame will provide cash for 30+ families. These are folks struggling to provide the barest necessities for their families. They need investments totalling $5,000 - $10,000 to ensure all the steps to the market. It is virtually impossible for small-scale farmers in Nicaragua to get loans locally, due to the economic policies imposed by structural adjustment. These people are planting on faith, and will irrigate as needed, in hopes that we can pull the money together for them.

If you would like to invest in this project (interest rate negotiable up to 10%) please let us know quickly by writing or calling:

Jubilee House Community
2425 Spicewood Drive
Winston-Salem, NC 27106
Phone: 910/922-4794

The rains are not enough yet. Although it is the rainy season (May-October), the water level is way down . . . electricity is being rationed and animals slaughtered.

The rains have picked up recently and with the help of a nearby cooperative maybe our garden will grow. The cooperative has come and plowed our land, provided us with manure, and is teaching us what will grow here and what will not. Growing food helps us focus on the earth and to in solidarity with the farmers (somewhat -- we can always go to the market if our crops fail). The food will be used in initial feeding centers as well as for us and for our volunteers.

Almost everything we do is done in partnership with our Nicaraguan friends. People do not expect help to come unilaterally but to come in partnership.
Community News is back in the newsletter by popular demand.

Mostly we are dealing with culture shock, learning and bettering our Spanish, coping with the frustrations of waiting, and adjusting to a new house. The house has bats, rats, scorpions, killer bees, mosquitos, and flies (we live by a dairy cooperative that slaughters cattle at night). Pat, in particular, watches the bats fly in and out of her room.

It has been wonderful having Tiff here this summer (he returns for his senior year at the NC School of Science and Mathematics). We were thrilled when Jessie Junkin McCall (Sarah's mother) came down with Jessica and visited. Jessica had remained in the US to be in 42nd Street, a production of the Forsyth County Summer Enrichment Program.

We had a good visit with Gail Phares, CITCA and Witness For Peace founder and an Advisory Board member and a friend. We are looking forward to visits with Nora Laws, and children Nick and Nicole, and Pam Agner who are coming to use their medical skills here for three weeks in September and to hug our necks.

Kathy and Mike deal most with most verbal business because of their Spanish fluency. The machismo in the country is driving us nuts -- men want to deal only with Michael.

Corry has a wonderful time with all the animals and is making friends.

Daniel had to have surgery (a hernia repaired) and is fine though Mama (Kathleen) had a very difficult time handing her child over to someone she couldn't talk to. Financially the surgery was not good -- we discovered that our new insurance wouldn't cover it until after a waiting period, and our surgeon advised against waiting.

Well, that's about it from Lake Wobegone -- no, from Volcano Mombotombo!

The poverty is overwhelming here in Nicaragua. When we were here in 1988 Nicaragua was poor, so very, very poor. But now it is worse. People have enough to eat -- let alone to meet any other basic needs, especially in Ciudad Sandino, where we live. And though there are many like Cesar Fajardo, our compañero who guides us daily, who struggle to keep hope alive, most can't see hope's beacon.

Violence, as a result of the hopelessness, is an ever-growing problem. In the short time since we've arrived, we've been touched by the violence twice. Cesar's 17-year-old cousin, who called Cesar "Papa", was bayoneted by a gang and left to bleed to death by his terrified friends. Flavio Galo, a famous Nicaraguan folk singer whom some of us had just heard perform less than a week before, was gunned down as he stopped to admire the scenery. Our Nicaraguan friends worry about us because gringos are tempting targets and we live out here separated from many neighbors.

It's sad to see poverty birth hopelessness and hopelessness birth violence. These people have struggled too hard for too long. They need a break, but the controllers of money (the US, World Bank, etc.) won't give them the break they need. So they say, "La lucha es larga." "The struggle is long."

How can you help these amazing folks?
* You can give of your time (volunteer with our Board in the US or if you have special talents or work crews come volunteer with us in Nicaragua).
* You can help change US policy and international money policies.
* You can give money. We are desperate for funds to help get projects started. What can your money do?
  
  $25 will provide 100 life-saving syringes for a health center
  $50 will fill one truck with gasoline for transportation needs
  $100 will cover room and board for a volunteer for one month
  $500 will build 10 solar composting latrines for 20 families to share
  $1000 will pay the electricity/rent for the Center for a year
  $3500 will provide a community of 200 families with potable water
  $5000 will get the sesame crop underway

And for more information, write us in the US, or Air Mail to Nicaragua:

  c/o FUNDECI - Casa Ben Linder
  Barrio Mons. Lezcano
  de la estatua 3 c. al sur, 1 1/2 arriba
  Managua, Nicaragua
  phone: 011-505-2-664373  fax: 011-505-2-663381

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Delegations are important to getting work done. We have helped with three delegations that have come through FUNDECI. Two were combined medical/construction groups from Oklahoma, working on a health center in a barrio of Managua. The other was a construction crew from Canada, who raised $17,000 for supplies and are now constructing a health clinic in Trinidad Central.

What do we do? We have helped with transportation, logistical support, translation, office support, construction, hospitality, and one medical emergency. Facilitating delegations takes a great deal of work, but the work they do is enormous and well worth all of our effort.

Our volunteers have done much of the delegation work. They also provide other support services.

We have had six volunteers (and two guests). Stephen Shanafelt, Brian Van Hoy, Kayhan Ostovar, and Max Coudeman came on the caravan. Stephen and Max have returned home (although Max will be back in October). Brian had to make a brief sojourn back to the US but will be here again by the time you receive this. Kayhan has hung in there with us straight through except for a trip to Costa Rica to study monkeys. He then returned with his brother Payam (who is painting a mural at FUNDECI) and Maret Taylor who has acted as a translator. Christy Ochoa and Justin Whitton were with us for two months but have had to return to the US. Christy, at least, hopes to be back.

All our volunteers have different skills and knowledge and all of them have energy. We have been grateful for their presence with us.

Let us introduce you to a friend and staff member at FUNDECI, Dr. Emilio Miranda. Although his speciality is dermatology, his work is in all fields of medicine. Dr. Miranda was a doctor during the contra war. As groups of the contra have taken up arms again, he was until recently up in the mountains again himself, fighting against the contra and fixing up the wounded.

Padre Miguel D'Escoto talked Emilio into coming to work at FUNDECI. Emilio is a doctor who lives on next to nothing. He has a son, two years old, who is his pride and joy. Emilio gently looks at sick folks and offers free advice always. He discovered Daniel's hernia, got his friend Dr. Guerrero -- a pediatric surgeon -- to operate for free, and helped us through the whole experience.

We discovered we had previously met Emilio in 1987 when Mike and Kathleen led a Witness For Peace delegation to San José de Bocay. Both he and Daniel's surgeon were staffing a field hospital up there. What a small world it really is!

We feel honored to know him, and many, many others like him, and to call him friend.

It is always rewarding to travel around with delegations, watching them work to improve the lives of Nicaragua's poor. There is, however, a downside to delegation work. Inevitably a time comes when no more work can be done because the delegation must go away.

I recently experienced such a time. A group of medical people from Oklahoma were here for several days of medical clinics. On the last day around noon, the word was passed along to the long lines of people still waiting to be seen, that only those who had already received a number would be seen.

That meant turning away dozens of people who had waited for several days for medical care. Many of these were children. Immediately the doctor who was seeing children was surrounded by worried, insistent, sometimes, angry mothers.

"My child must be seen. She has diarrhea." "My child is running a fever." "My child has a rash all over his body. I've been here everyday, and still no one has given him attention."

Over and over Dr. Miranda explained that there were more people waiting than he could see. He tried as he talked with the mothers to do clandestine triage; feeling a child to check for fever, casually examining a rash without the appearance of giving treatment, occasionally telling a mother that her child would somehow be seen.

When the day was through there were still many people who had not been seen. Some would be fine without treatment, others would not. I was reminded of something from long ago, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God--not because of works lest anyone should boast."

YES! I want to support the JHC's Center for Development in Central America in the following ways:

Enclosed please find my tax-deductible contribution of $______

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