

*The material you are about to read, was transcribed from a journal I kept during a trip to Nicaragua in October of 1988. The trip was taken under the auspices of the Witness For Peace organization. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Witness\\_for\\_Peace](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Witness_for_Peace)*

*The following text is from a pamphlet from back then inviting U.S. citizens to participate in Witness for Peace activities.*

*"Witness for Peace (WFP) is a grassroots, faith-based movement committed to changing U.S. policy towards Nicaragua through nonviolent action.*

*At the invitation of Nicaraguan churches, Witness for Peace maintains a permanent presence of U.S. citizens in areas where U.S.-backed **contras** employ tactics of terror, torture and murder against the civilian population. Long-term volunteers, fluent in Spanish, make commitments of eight months or more. They live among the people, document **contra** attacks and host WFP short term delegations.*

*At least three times a month, delegations of short-term volunteers, go to Nicaragua for two weeks. They spend the majority of their time in areas of conflict, where they stay with families, worship with them and share their daily lives. They listen to church, government, and opposition leaders, representing varied perspectives.*

*Upon their return to the U.S. witnesses engage in local media work and public education. Having had a personal experience with the Nicaraguan people, and being sustained by a continuous flow of eyewitness reports, witnesses have developed dozens of creative, community-based projects that confront the current U.S. policy of financing the **contras**."*

*The record of this journey was written in haste I mention this because the notes you will read, below, can be fragmented and difficult to understand at times.*

*You will find some sections of this document rendered in **italics**. Italicized text is current day commentary about the journal's original 1988 text.*

*When a page number in italics, as in: "(Page 7)" appears, it refers to the pages of the*

*original physical journal.*

*When an italicized note like: "(Tape T01A @ 02:36)" appears, it refers to a specific tape (T01) and timing offset (02:36) on the tape.*

**Time line of the trip:**

1 Sep 18, Sun - Los Angeles WFP planning meeting  
 T Oct 03, Mon - LAX --> Mexico City  
 1 Oct 04, Tue - Mexico City  
 1 Oct 05, Wed - Mexico City  
 T Oct 06, Thu - Mexico City --> Managua, Nicaragua  
 2 Oct 07- Fri - Managua, Nicaragua  
 2 Oct 08, Sat - Managua, Nicaragua --> Esteli, Nicaragua  
 2 Oct 09, Sun - Esteli, Nicaragua --> San Juan de Limay, Nicaragua  
 2 Oct 10, Mon - San Juan de Limay, Nicaragua  
 2 Oct 11, Tue- San Juan de Limay, Nicaragua  
 2 Oct 12, Wed - San Juan de Limay, Nicaragua  
 2 Oct 13, Thu - San Juan de Limay, Nicaragua  
 2 Oct 14, Fri - San Juan de Limay, Nicaragua --> Managua  
 2 Oct 15, Sat - Managua, Nicaragua  
 2 Oct 16, Sun - Managua, Nicaragua  
 2 Oct 17, Mon - Managua, Nicaragua  
 T Oct 18, Tue - Managua, Nicaragua --> San Jose, Costa Rica  
 3 Oct 19, Wed - San Jose, Costa Rica  
 3 Oct 20, Thu - San Jose, Costa Rica  
 3 Oct 21, Fri - San Jose, Costa Rica  
 3 Oct 22, Sat - San Jose, Costa Rica  
 3,4 Oct 23, Sun - San Jose, Costa Rica  
 3,4 Oct 24, Mon - San Jose, Costa Rica  
 T,4,5 Oct 25, Tue - San Jose, Costa Rica --> Managua, Nicaragua  
 4,5 Oct 26, Wed - Managua, Nicaragua  
 5 Oct 27, Thu - Managua, Nicaragua  
 T Oct 28, Fri - Managua, Nicaragua --> LAX

**Notes:**

**1 = WFP Orientation**

**2 = WFP touring in Nicaragua**

**3 = Vacation in Costa Rica with David Christensen**

**4 = 'Hurricane Joan' impacts Nicaragua**

**5 = Stranded in Managua**

**T = Travel Days**

*I traveled with a number of people who are identified in the journal's text generally by their first names.*

*Some of these folks were 'short-termers' (who came on the journey to Nicaragua with me) and long-termers; who were WFP staff living and resident in Nicaragua.*

*I do not have a complete list of all these folks. It never occurred to me, when I was recording the journal, to create such a list.*

*However, within the records of the Witness For Peace organization, itself, there should exist a full list of the names, addresses and etc. of those who went on this trip.*

*I recorded 10 micro-cassette tapes of various moments and interactions during the trip. These tape have not been transcribed. But they have been loosely indexed as to date, time and place.*

*I also took photographs. But they were not labeled, at the time, and so they probably have little value as compared to the journal, itself, and the tapes.*

*(The following is the text of a letter I wrote on September 26<sup>th</sup>, 1988, and shared with friends and various political action groups in Southern California before I departed for Nicaragua. It detailed what I was doing and why.)*

*(Page 0)*

Dear <name inserted here>,

I am going to Nicaragua and I want to share with you what I will learn there. Here are my motives for doing so.

After four or five years of reading about Nicaragua in the Sandinistas, I still haven't come to any conclusions about what's happening there. The Left tells us a popular revolution occurred that freed people from the dictator imposed and supported by the imperialist U.S. The Right says that while it may have been a popular revolution when it began, it was subverted later from the inside by Communists, who have installed a totalitarian government.

Meanwhile, people are dying.

I am not partisan, unless being partisan is wanting to find the truth behind the political veils and vested interests. Nor am I political, unless being political is wanting to make truth freely available.

Accordingly, this letter is not about money or politics. I am not about to pitch you for donations, or try to convince you that one political viewpoint is better than another.

I simply want you to know that when I return from Central America, I will be glad to meet with your church groups, your clubs, or whoever, and share what I saw there. This offer extends to those both for and against U.S. policies or the Sandinistas.

I will be leaving October 4 and returning on the 25th. During this time I will be traveling and meeting Nicaraguans, including government officials, members of the opposition, religious leaders and everyday people in both the city and the countryside. While in Nicaragua, I will be traveling with the group "Witness For Peace" based in Durham, North Carolina.

Dennis Gallagher

## 18 Sep 88 - Sunday - Los Angeles, California

(Page 1)      *(Notes I took at an initial WFP meeting held at 10105 Flower St. in L.A.)*

- Clare Webber is leading.
- We go around and make introductions.

*(A side note I made about this meeting:)*

The people who think peace organizations are careful plots by devious people should infiltrate these meetings for the truth. But, will they have the courage to see and hear what's here? Simple and sincere, and perhaps marginal in the sense that they are not our economic movers and shakers.

- A discussion of our not present members in their names.
- A discussion of logistics.
- Our training will be held in Mexico City.
- We have a discussion of what we will be doing there.
- We will be in the "Casa de los amigos" in Mexico City.
- This will not be a sightseeing trip.
- Esteli (65k), Managua and San Juan de Lima. *(places we'll visit)*
- Check that luggage is checked through.
- Bring mosquito repellent, get a Tetanus shot and have malaria pills.
- Bring rain gear, plastic Ziploc's, large bags, and boots.
- For luggage we'll get one check through and one carry-on bag.
  
- Next a list of items for us to get and bring along for the long-termers already there.
- Be at the airport ready to go to.
  
- "Liberation Theology" (LT) - Look at this idea, reflect on it and act on it.
  
- Each of us will lead a reflection in Nicaragua.

**4 Oct 88 - Tuesday - 0812 - Mexico City**

*(Page 2)*

Both Rae and Clare are talking about our training.

We talk about our names, where we were born, where we are living, what we do for work.

We talk about our religious backgrounds and why we are here. All of this as part of our introductions.

A lady named Edith Pearson begins to tell us about herself. She is apparently from an island. She is wintering over here, she is a Unitarian, and she practices yoga. She is also a nurse, but not practicing now. She is committed to equality, justice, freedom, and better opportunities for Nicaraguans. She sees herself as a role model for the island where she's from. She has five children and six grandchildren.

I talked to Edith at this point, and tell her about myself.

Now Clare is talking to us. She has a witness for peace background. In 1983 church people in Nicaragua began to invite North Americans to come to Nicaragua. In July 1983 100 people went down to serve as a "shield of peace". In 1983 they decided to try to have a continue continuous WFP presence here.

Now they're talking about the witness for peace structure.

There is a national steering committee made of 19 people mostly highly folks.

In Washington DC they have a resources and lobby office.

The main office of the organization is in Durham, North Carolina.

It is staffed by both long and short-termers.

The organization has 11 regional offices.

There are state and local offices and groups too.

There's a Managua office, which is staffed by short and long-termers.

The long-termers in the country travel widely at the grassroots level to do documentary work, and to host short-termers.

There's a media person in Managua who provides information to external media, and to put data onto PeaceNet.

*(Page 3)*

WFP is in Nicaragua at the invitation of CEPAD, Maryknoll Sisters and others.

The Nicaraguan government gives us permission to enter and to go more places than most foreign correspondents can.

We are not aligned with the Sandinistas.

Our basic policies:

- No visitors can come except those have been screened.
- No gifts or selling things except for the families that we stay with.
- We practiced nonviolence in word and deed.

We form now into small groups and explore our expectations together.

**05 Oct 88 - Morning - Mexico City**

*(Page 4) (I wrote a reflection for the group which I delivered on the morning of the 6th.)*

Close your eyes  
And place your hands together as if in prayer.  
Open your mind's eye and begin to see... and to feel... we are going to take a journey.  
There is sunlight here that caresses your skin.  
And breeze that pulls small feathers through your hair.  
You are in the wheat fields of God's love  
Where, just as the wheat in the seasons comes and goes,  
so do the people rise and fall...

See the generations, tumbling forward, one over another  
There are children, age, beauty and death here.

Let your mind's eye close again.  
You feel the warmth of your hands still pressing together.  
Silence and being... Fill you... And emptiness and light

Open your eyes and look again...  
Here is the trusting child's laughter.  
And there, the warm brown skin of a woman.  
And there... The eyes of friends  
... The children run through fields of flowers  
... And the couples love  
... And the old people watch... with great compassion.

Close your mind's eye again.  
And hear the voices of the children.  
In the murmurs of the couples,  
And feel the warmth of the old person's hand on your arm.  
Silence and emptiness return and fill you  
You are in a timely space... filled with being  
Feel your hands together and the warmth between.



## 05 Oct 88 - Morning - Mexico City

*(Page 5)*

We are out for breakfast and we're sitting at an international table. There are British and Argentinians travelers here. We're all talking about Hawaii, New Zealand and Australia. There's a German lady with a daughter who's only two or three years old. We're in a Christian oriented youth hostel.

We're having lunch out today at a restaurant. Maybe we'll go get a beer tonight. We have a reflection by Jean on "Missing Opportunities".

We're discussing discernment now and there are three areas to focus on:

- How's the group doing
- Are there any group hindrances
- Any suggestions for how to improve the group.

Note, that we have an Australian fellow who's still coming to join us.

Various topics are discussed:

- Medicine and health
- Spanish phrases
- Coordination, leader ship, and decision making
- We decide on a division of group, leader ship roles - I'm appointed as recorder
- A discussion discussion of conflict resolution as lead by Rae
- Rae Hands out a paper on "Overcoming Masculine Oppression"

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- Rae Lead to discussion on nonviolence.

Ray discusses our tendency to decide that we're good and "they" are bad.

Not casting those we oppose as our enemies advances nonviolence.

When, in a potential confrontation, we can be both vulnerable and strong, because we draw strength from our faith and believe in the principles of nonviolence and love.

Ray says not being afraid comes from preparation.

A discussion of loving the contras by Don.

Sherry talks (crying) about what she's seen in El Salvador and about how hard it is to still love the "others" when you've seen their work.

Don and Sherry hug.

And then Rae continues on.

She's discussing how we each have (each of us) a potential for violence.

Eden says that she lost her pacifism for time in the 40s when she learned about the German WWII prison camps.

Richard talks about how young men are recruited for the contras from the people we're going to meet.

There's a discussion of passion or dispassion in doing peace work.

I say it's better to think clearly, therefore, I favor dispassion.

Clare and Sherry, both replied to this point well and say that passion gives strength without sacrificing clarity. And Sherry says that it's impossible to go and do these things without being touched, if you're a sensitive person.

*(Lunchtime)*

There's a discussion of vegetarianism and its impact on the land use.

The number of acres required for use per year by meat eaters is 4 acres, for dairy products is 1 acre and for vegetables only is 1/4 of an acre.

Cattle numbers have quadrupled in recent years in Costa Rica but meat consumption by Costa Ricans is still the same. They eat less meat than an average American house cat.

I have Carne Asada and a beer.

*(Page 7) (Afternoon discussions)*

We learn about a group called GATE, which stands for Global Awareness Through Experience. This is a group from the United States that visits Cuba.

*(One of the things that we do as part of our preparations for going to Nicaragua is to go through certain role-playing scenarios and to consider what might we might do if we encountered these situations)*

**Scenario 1** - Imagine that we're doing a piece vigil by the Honduran border and several silver civil guards or station to guard our safety. The potential issue here is our association with the government forces.

**Scenario 2** - A military commander says that a contra attack is imminent on the frontier town that we're in. Should we stay, should we all stay, should we divide, and what is the point of view of the local commander?

**Scenario 3** - A North American shows up and wants to join us mid-mission. Talking to us, he seems to share our goals. What could be the problems?

One of the role playing scenarios we go through is to consider what if we encounter a conservative reporter and we've just gotten off the plane in Managua.

So we divide roles we have this hypothetical exchange. And then we swap parts and do it all again. In this scenario, we should think about what we'd like to say if we were interviewed like this.

*(Remember, an American conservative reporter is not likely to share our POV about why we are here).*

Our missing member shows up. His name is Barry Hill. He was late because the dates were wrong on the letter he was sent. He gives us a bit of a talk about himself. He's from Canberra. He's at University. He's been in the Americas now for four months. And he leads and works with groups in Australia regarding peace.

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### Final Role Playing Session

All but three of us are standing atop of hill in rural Nicaragua with a local Nica. The other three have a different role; to which we are not privy.

We are discussing a ceremony which is to occur later in honor of some local Nicaraguans, who were killed recently by the Contras. In rough detail, we are to carry a wooden cross up the hill, and there we will hold some sort of the ceremony; the details of which we are working out with our Nicaraguan friend.

As we talk, we decide to all carry the cross together up the hill slowly. We expect that the families of the slain in the towns people will form a procession behind us. We will sing hymns as we slowly ascend. There is some discussion of stopping at the "Stations of the Cross".

At the top of the hill, we will plant the cross in the ground, and then our Nicaraguan friend will slowly say the names of the slain. And, after each name, he will raise his arm and say, "Presente!"

Following this, one of us in the WFP group will speak and say that we have "witnessed" this tragedy, and that the story of it will return with us to our country, where we will share it and work to inform people in our country of such tragedies.

We are working out the final details of this hilltop ceremony. when three armed Contras burst upon us, shouting and waving their weapons.

There is mass confusion. Most of us fall to the ground. Two or three of us remain standing. There's lots of gesticulating and one Contra holds a weapon to my chest and shout a question in Spanish. I reply, in a state of confusion, that I don't speak Spanish. Don, who is also standing, tries to translate. I'm conscious now that most of us are on the ground. I drop to my knees and the Contras leave the room, shouting.

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In the long moment of silence that follows, we look around, taking a headcount and realize that our Nicaraguan friend has been taken from us. Only a moment later, we realize that we failed him and ourselves badly. The entire Contra attack was to get him. And in our confusion and self concern with made it lamentably easy for them to take him.

The others return, our roles are over, we sit down to examine what happened and what we've learned.

Some points, among many, that surfaced:

1 - we should've held onto, or encircled, our Nicaraguan friend. He was far more at risk than we were.

2 - Our falling to the ground was examined and it led to a discussion of what attitude we'd actually like to possess if it came to a situation in which we might die and the decision was entirely out of our hands. A suggestion of quiet prayer was made and met acceptance.

After this, we discussed our fears about going to Nicaragua.

*(Page 10) (Evening time)*

This evening we had a cultural context, discussion. It was basically a repeat of the handout sheet that we've received on this subject.

Sherry does our reflection for today.

George, Richard, Clare, and myself go out for a beer in the evening two blocks from the WFP house.

## 06 Oct 88 - Daytime - Mexico City at the Casa de Amigos

A fellow on the lower bunk asked me if I would carry some books to Managua for him.

In the bathroom while shaving, I talked for 20 minutes with an American who's just back from a month in Cuba and then seven months in Nicaragua. Interesting stories about Cuba. He recommends a book, "Fidel".

Over breakfast, I talked to a US-Argentinian, who is returning to Argentina to serve six months in their military. We had a long discussion about the "disappeared" people in Argentina and the pre-and post periods surrounding those events.

### Our Morning Session Begins:

I do the group's reflection this morning. *(see the reflection notes back on 05 Oct 88)*

Clare goes into the history of Nick Nicaragua.

Ray is now talking about revolution and the church in Nicaragua.

And now Clare does an evaluation that divides into pluses and minuses.

*(I think she's evaluating WFP's efforts here with regard to both the long-termers and the short-termers)*

Pluses: Group bonding, welcoming, atmosphere, breakfast, the Casa de amigos, our reflections, humor, or role-plays, or background reading, the general variety of topics and approaches we use, or group, composition, or groups, wisdom, and openness, leaderships, flexibility, and smooth logistics (to date),

### Minuses:

We need more information on our agenda concerning training, some training was redundant with our reading, we need better clarity about clothing (no shorts), more language, classes, less boxes to Transport, we need to have boxes with tape colored for identification, we need to revise the list of stuff to bring to shorten it, there are contradictions in the list, there's some concern about the malaria medicines affects, she

explains why our passports need to be good for six months after our visit, and we need to have coffee available.

Now we have a commissioning ceremony from Barry and Edith.

## 06 Oct 88 - Casa de Amigos -> the Airport - Mexico City

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We had some fun getting to the airport with taxis. We dribbled off to the airport in twos and threes plus our luggage.

George's taxi got stopped and he had to get another one mid trip. Another taxi with myself, Don and Tammy got stopped and our driver had to pay a bribe to continue. Finally, we all arrived after paying various amounts.

After an hour or so, at the airport we're airborne. There's nothing special about the flight.

When we descend towards Managua, the sky's filled with several levels of clouds. Everything is shades of gray except for some dark green below. There are miles of emerald green fields and scattered buildings. We dropped through a large rainstorm and then emerge and turn for our approach. As we come across the end of the runway, I see several planes and helicopters mothballed and some others simply rotting away out in the grass.

On the ground, the airport appears like any small town. USA airport in a rundown area might look. There are no guns or military and evidence, though the maintenance workers are all dressed and fatigues. Inside the airport, there are occasional people in fatigues without guns or insignia, who seem to be there to make sure we make the right turns. Customs and currency check or quick. The luggage inspection got a little complicated due to a missing WFP letter. But Clare and Sheri got it straightened out. Once outside, a WFP Bus was waiting for us. A few introductions were made, luggage was loaded and we're off.

Driving through Managua I see streets with holes and no sidewalks. It is tropical dusk here and it is warm and humid. There are many people out walking and the feeling is peaceful and electric. I really wanted to walk. It feels safe and fun.

There are lots of street lights spaced out attempting to hold off the dark - but failing. There are only a few public street lights. There are the skeletons of buildings which mark the downtown are pre-1972; otherwise we wouldn't know. *(There was a big*



*earthquake in Managua in 1972.)*

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In Managua, we are at the extreme west end of the city near a volcanic lake bed.

Now we are at WFP's Managua house. A meeting with the long-termers is being held after supper on the porch.

They each introduced themselves, and we introduced ourselves.

A little discussion of logistics ensues and Buddy, who is a Managua long-termer, wants to collect our airline tickets and US dollars.

Barry is talking about how, in an appearance of the President of Guatemala in Guatemala City, 20 minutes before the president appeared the crowd was infiltrated with hundreds of fully armed soldiers. Nothing like that here judging from our airport reception.

07 Oct 88 - Friday - Morning - Managua, Nicaragua

We're having breakfast of Eggs Mexicana, pineapple, bread, and tiny bananas.

I've noted that there's not much light in our bathroom.

Last night the mosquitoes were kind but the chickens here seem to think that the dawn comes at 1 AM.

Also, the frogs here are fun. They sound like some sort of a space zapper noise in the video arcade.

The long-termers seem nice. They are all different ages and all seem idealistic and intelligent. I have to remind myself that they put their lives on the line by being here.

Gary, a long termer, begins our morning orientation.

He says that there are three functions which are served by the long-termers here:

- 1. they establish a permanent WFP presence in a war zone.
- 2. they document of what's going on as regards US foreign policy here.
- 3. they go out with delegations into the countryside (the Campo).

Most times, the long-termers are out in the campo. Therefore, no one is here watching the house here, except for which ever groups happen to be here.

Gary says that after eight months, they are just beginning to the drift of what's going on.

Most of the trips out into the campo are new experiences for **both** the short-termers and the long-termers.

The war is apparently winding down, but not the low intensity conflict. There are approximately 35 WFP long-termers in the country right now.

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We're out on the porch of the house now.

Buddy is talking. His emphasis is on the "low intensity conflict" here now. The US is pumping "dirty dollars" into all sorts of opposition organizations here.

On our schedule for this morning, is Rodolfo Castro from an organization using the acronym CRIES, which stands for the Regional Center for Economic and Social Research. He will be our first speaker. This organization is part of a multinational group investigating US policy effects on Nicaragua. He'll arrive here at 9 AM.

In the afternoon, Mr. Silver, a minister of either education or public relations from the Ministry of Education will be here. We will have a tour of the museum of Nicaraguan achievements.

Teachers here get a 6000 Cordova's/mo. which is equivalent to US\$14-US\$18/mo. This is very low and still this is after they had several large raises. The new raises take them up to \$25-\$30 US/mo. The long-termers here at WFP get \$50 US/mo. 20% of the local school faculty have left. There's lots of overloaded classes and lots of younger teachers.

The last 2 to 3 weeks, the prices of some staples here have increased by three or four times over. Milk and butter. Cost of gas/diesel. Have changed by that amount.

If the Ministry of Education asks us for donations, Buddy will do the talking for us.

Now the discussion moves on to a group called CEPOD, which is a group of evangelical churches. Here in Managua, they are noted to be progressive.

This organization was formed following the '72 earthquake when funds that were sent to help were misused. CEPOD was created to ensure fair and legal distribution of the funds. They get involved with human rights and religion versus draft problems.

They are one of two Nicaragua groups, that support WFP.

Milton Agulio from CEPOD will speak to us.

The second organization here that supports WFP is called "Center Antonio Va De Vi Eso"

and they are a Christian-based community.

This evening ,we will begin our preparations for our first trip out to the campo.

Pat Manning will be here in the morning to give us a WFP overview. And then we'll leave.

We are advised not to be too confrontational with any of these groups today so that WFP can continue to set up these meetings.

If WFP sees Sandinista abuses, it reports them to CEPOD.

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0900 - Now we're having a discussion of health by long-termer Sara.

She says we can eat veggies in Managua to toughen us up. Outside we won't eat the veggies. It's the same with the water. Fruit that has to be peeled is OK. Sodas are OK but they're rare to find. We don't drink or smoke around the evangelicals. Cooked vegetables are fine. Drink lots of liquids. The sun is a problem. Use sunscreen and wear hats.

0910 - Kate, another long-termer, on the subject of translation.

We are instructed to ask the person we are asking and not to ask the translator. Do not refer to Nicaraguans by name in their presence in English, if they don't speak English. And even if we speak Spanish, we should ask our questions in English.

0915 - On the subject of safety.

Don't go walking off from the villages. Use a buddy system. The war's intensity is low now so the risk level is low.

0915 - Gary is now speaking to us on cultural issues.

Long-termers wear shorts here; but only in this neighborhood in Managua.

The government policy on taking pictures changes, so ask. And also ask in general with

Nicaraguans. If you promise someone to send them a picture do send it to them!

Gift giving policy: no.

We are not a material aid organization. We can leave stuff here with the long-termers, or give it directly to organizations.

If we give gifts to the house staff, it must be a fair distribution.

"Adios" means hello, but I'm not going to stop to talk. "Goodbye "in passing means the same thing.

"Shh shh" is how you call for a persons attention.

Do not finger point.

0925 - Various terms to be aware of:

"Insurrection" - The battles against Somoza in 78/79.

"Prehunto" - 79 when the Sandinistas came to power.

"Processo" - Describes revolutionary processes - not necessarily Sandinista processes.

"Revolucion" - 79 until now.

- Always carry your passport.

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0930 - Meeting with Rodolfo Castro of CRIES

Richard begins by introducing us to Rudolfo.

In Rudolfo's opening remarks, he says that US policies are different than what the US public wants. The Low Intensity Conflict that we're seeing is something new but it derives from previous doctrines. Where do the present US doctrines come from?

They come from the Vietnam war where guerrillas were pitted against conventional forces.

In this scenario, Nicaraguans are the conventional side; as the US was in Vietnam.

The US activities in Vietnam can be divided into two parts. One was the period from 63 to 69 and the second was 69 to 75.

In the first period, counterinsurgency was fairly isolated and the US use conventional forces widely then. But once the strength of an Low Intensity Conflict approach was appreciated, the US changed its strategy to get better results.

Low Intensity Conflict - The term comes from the British, who've used it in their colonies since the turn of the century. The US has made it into a military doctrine. Nuclear warfare is at one end, conventional force is in the middle and Low Intensity Conflict is at the other end.

Low intensity conflict can even include civil disobedience actions.

Low Intensity Conflict force the opponent to have to maintain a certain level of conventional response.

The results in target countries are significant and he has statistics to prove the assertion. He's reciting data from El Salvador and Nicaragua. 150,000 dead in these two countries. The gross national product of Nicaragua is what it was now 20 years ago as a result. \$3 billion have been lost in the last seven years.

In Low Intensity Conflict, the emphasis is not to wipe out the enemy but to slowly dissolve the government's popular support.

Low Intensity Conflict is a selective operation rather than one of mass of oppression. Specific targets are chosen for their effect as regards the final goal. This means that technical people and those who provide popular education are targeted. They also target those who support and help to set up cooperatives.

The contras previously used indiscriminate terror tactics. And even now, in spite of the Low Intensity Conflict theory, they still do use terror tactics at times which indicates a weakness in their application of Low Intensity Conflict.

The same thing is happening in El Salvador. As Low Intensity Conflict grows more successful in El Salvador, the army there returns to using indiscriminate terror itself in order to cope. They've found that using Low Intensity Conflict tactics against Low Intensity Conflict tactics does not get at the root of the problem.

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So how is the success of Low Intensity Conflict measured?

Nicaragua is spending 60% on its military. The whole plan for a more just society is withering because the government cannot go forward with its ideas for improvement. Things are stalled because the revolution has had to adjust to the forces put on it. So, things are not turning out as they were originally intended. And, given enough time, the revolution may fail.

Adolfo has a document which he says details the US ideas for conflict in the third world over the next 20 years. It ties back to Kissinger, the CIA and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Points:

- US troops are not directly involved.
- Continue to support all anti-communist groups.
- Increase aid to Honduras, Guatemala and the Philippines.
- Less aid will go to Egypt and Turkey.
- US will ally itself more with the Third World military. (places like Grenada)
- It will give more weight to the use of technical weapons like propaganda, radio and newspapers.
- It will develop alternative locations for US bases. Like changing from Panama to the Honduras.
- If Low Intensity Conflict continues to be successful, then it could become the general policy of the US, regardless of which administration comes into power in the future.

A major problem exists in trying to change from a military based economy to a civil-based one. It is happening, but slowly.

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After Rodolfo's talk, several of us took a walk to the post office and around the neighborhood. The heat and humidity here are oppressive and I sweat profusely just from walking. The people seem very curious about us and if you smile and wave, most will respond. And all will turn and look at you as you pass.

Every third or fourth car here seems to be a Toyota Land Cruiser. And I saw one or two heavy trucks with eastern bloc Cyrillic letters on them.

We walked for 30 minutes and we saw many people in fatigues, but only two had weapons.

The sidewalks and general construction here seems quite similar to what I've seen in Baja California.

We saw a large hospital, which was called the Hospital Fernando Belize Piaz and which everyone in the city knows the location of.

About Rodolfo's talk: I found it interesting but his delivery of ideas seemed unnecessarily complex and pedantic to me.

We switch now to having a side meeting with Buddy about our schedule for the next few days after we return from the campo. (*Esteli & Limay*)

Apparently, we will be here in Managua for Saturday, Sunday and Monday.

On Sunday, David Dye a journalist who's been here for five years, will give us an economic overview of things.

At some point, over the weekend, we will go to the lake, we will go to the market, we will go to church, and we will visit with a Honduran exile group.

We cannot meet with the US Embassy. Recently, they've been giving two interviews per week. But now, after the "Melton Incident", they are giving none.

On Monday, the COSEF business/union (Superior Council on Business Enterprise) and the La Prensa opposition, would both meet with us.



Because of the dates our group is here we will have two weekends, and that limits the number of our working days.

In a more formal way, here's our upcoming schedule:

Saturday (Oct 08):

- Market
- Guatemala Group
- University
- Free Time
- Book store

Sunday (Oct 09):

- Economic overview (David Dye)
- Human Rights
- Visit to the lake

Monday (Oct 10):

- La Prensa (0900)
- COSEP (1100)
- debriefing in the afternoon.

We also need to work on a group report over the weekend.

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### At the Museum of Literacy

The minister of education, Mr. Silva, has given us a tour of the museum.

From a 50% rate of the illiteracy they have dropped that to less than 15% in an intensive five month campaign.

School books from before the revolution presented William Walker as a hero. And in this century, Sandino was a criminal. Those books were provided by an organization, which was really an arm of the US government. Adult education and special education did not exist pre-revolution. Before the revolution, the education had the upper class interest primarily in mind. Samosa built 2000 schools and had 12,400 teachers. But many of these teachers never taught classes. They just received money for nothing. In the 19

78/79 revolution, most schools were destroyed. The banks only had \$100 million post Samosa. That was not enough to accomplish much. Certainly not enough to rebuild schools so they had to go to other countries for help. The literacy campaign here only succeeded as a result of the generosity of other countries. In nine years they've now built 5000+ schools as compared to 2000 for all of the Samosa years. Now there are special education schools and now the Indians get to learn. But much is still undone due to the contra war. The 12% illiteracy has now increased back up to 20% due to the assassination of teachers. 413 teachers have died 96 students in classes and another 68 teachers have been kidnapped and we don't know where they are. 550 schools have been destroyed. And more than 45,000 Nicaraguans have stopped going to school. With peace, Nicaragua could be free and literate by the year 2000.

Under Samosa, only 30 medical students a year were trained but now the rate is 400 per year.

Teacher salaries are low, the minister calls them "salaries of war". 800 teachers have quit teaching. If they teach morning and night, then they get two salaries.

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1600 - We are meeting now with Milton Augules. He looks young; like 25 to 30 years old. We do a round of introductions. He's an assistant to Dr. Parajon on here at CEPAD. I like this guy. He seems sane and sincere.

CEPAD was founded in 1972. It helped bring aid to Nicaragua after the 1972 earthquake and then later it changed its focus to the creation of long-term development projects. It was founded by eight different evangelical denominations. And since then, 50 other groups have joined.

CEPAD has three fields of work:

1 - Development i.e. 400 different community projects in the country, construction of school rooms and the training of agricultural personnel for co-ops.

2 - Emergency Assistance. Some 30,000 families have been aided with food, clothes, tools, and medicine. In 1982 this work began as a result of a revolution. It supports the return of exiles from the country.

3 - In the pastoral area: i.e., in relations about & between churches. Concerning common issues like the draft or government laws, which affect churches. They've now formed commissions, like the Planning Commission to plan the CEPOD programs, a Human Rights Commission to investigate, abuses by the government or the contras and a Church Relations Commission. Concerning the issue of the draft, they would like for all pastors and seminary students to be draft exempt. This because the Catholic Church already has a similar agreement with the government.

CEPOD Is also involved in peace processes. The Director here was named to a peace committee. He's also on the Conciliation Commission, which mediate between the Moskito Indians and the government. CEPOD is financed mainly by European countries. I.e., Germany and Norway and also a bit from the US.

Q: How is CEPAD related to WFP?

A: It is a good relationship but independent.

Q: Where does CEPAD fit in with the Sandinistas?

A: CEPAD does not get involved into politics much. It does disagree with some Nicaraguan government policies, but it mainly feels that the problems here are mostly due to the US intervention. It supports, educational, medical and land reforms. It is not supportive of censorship and/or church interference. CEPOD wants, to get the Contra funding stopped.

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Q: The left and the right in the US disagree. Is this a popular revolution? Should the US butt out?

A: CEPAD feels that the US is largely funding the contras who are terrorists and it should not do this. It should support initiatives. If there was an election, he said the Sandinistas would win in spite of the current problems because there is no serious opposition. Most young here would back the Sandinistas, but the older folks would not. If the war ends, democracy here will increase.

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Q: What Sandinista abuses has CEPAD publicized and complained about? This question asked because things are really distorted in the US press.

A: Churches have been briefly taken over. The government newspaper has attacked CEPOD. Government troops have used temples as barracks. CEPAD has worked to obtain the freedom of people who have been accused of being Contras. And the government will free them, if it has no good evidence.

Q: Are there documented cases of physical abuses of some prisoners?

A: Yes, in a few isolated areas. In some scenarios first one group comes in and then another and then the first group again. The low army educational level combines with the intense conflict level involved. It is usually the Contras who are at fault. When CEPAD reports Sandinistas abuses to the government, the government tries to respond fairly.

Q: Does CEPAD have relationships with conservative churches in the US?

A: Yes, we do. Nicaragua is part of Latin America. Many governments here are more repressive. The US calls El Salvador and other countries democracies. But here in Nicaragua you will not be assassinated or have your house burned, but in many of those other "democracies", you will be - if you oppose the government. Here, if you've served your time with the draft, you are free to come and go and to leave the country, if you wish. Things are much better now under the Sandinistas.

Q: Are The Friends and Quakers part of CEPAD?

A: No, but we have very good relationships with them.

A: How would things have turned out if the US had never interfered with the Sandinista revolution?

Q: Many people in the US say that the Sandinistas would not be liberal without the Contra pressure on them. But the US financed and supported Samosa. They owe a tremendous debt. The US should be critical of the Sandinistas, so they will be fair. But they should not overtly interfere with Nicaragua and its revolution.

The root problem is self determination of the people.

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We'll go to Esteli after lunch in two trucks. It's a 2 1/2 hour drive and it's a town with 20,000 population.

Limay, another town, is another two hours on past Esteli. We will go there on Sunday.

We will stay with families for four nights there. We'll have our noon meals at the pension, and the other meals will be with the families we stay with. Then we go to a loop outside of town and then one night here.

Pack light with rain gear and boots and no expensive equipment.

1930 - Gary's talking to us about the state of the war. There have been no major attacks since early 1985 near Limay. But there was a recent attack (one was killed) near Esteli.

1940 - We talk about poverty.

1950 - We talk about our fears.

**08 Oct 88 - Saturday - morning - Managua**

We pack for the Campo. We eat breakfast. And we have a reflection by Richard on the subject of campo Evangelista's.

Pat Manning, an interim staff coordinator who's been here since 1985. He's talking to us about the history of WFP.

Nicaragua has a "mixed economy with a socialist flavor". They use and need the capitalist sector of the society to help them through this period of austerity.

There are at least 14 opposition parties. There's an amnesty program and it applies to any Contra (other than former national guardsmen), and they can come in and lay down their arms and be forgiven.

The majority of campesinos do not have any concept of what a Low Intensity Conflict is. Lots of people are trying to leave Nicaragua now. They want to get out to save their children from the military draft and to avoid the economic problems.

WFP is often mistaken for material aid organization, like "Quest for Peace".

He told us some stories about people who turn themselves in amnesty.

WFP incidents data can be gotten from the Washington DC office.

PeaceNet (CRIES) has data on! We met this group yesterday.

WFP actions: The Corinto Action in 1984. The US claimed a ship full of MIGs was coming into Nicaraguan harbors just as Reagan was getting reelected and the Nicaraguans were having a valid election. WFP went to Corinto to hassle a US worship there.

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In fact, on Nov 3, 84, tractors actually came off of the ship as WFP saw - no MIGs.

In another action, women marched on a road unarmed through a zone where many people have been killed. This road was between Esteli and Limay.

The **Ben Linder** killing was not part of a larger contra strategy to kill north Americans or we'd have seen more of the same by now. Probably, a renegade country leader decided and was responsible.

There's a couple of stories about how the US troops are told they are "going in".

Barry tells a story about a marine in the Fort Ord area who was just back from Honduras. Pat tells about the base in Honduras, known as "Comayaga", which is supposed to be a Honduran base. In fact, the US Embassy says the base is Honduran. But if you go to the base, then the perimeter forces all say you need US Embassy permission to enter. Pat tells about meeting US Marines in Florida, who bragged about engaging in fighting in Honduras and along the Nicaraguan border while Honduran forces backed them.

We have a discussion about the general harassment of civilians. Richard says military checkpoints in Venezuela are 10 times worse than what we see here in Nicaragua. And several agree that Honduras and El Salvador are very bad.

Witness for Peace has a full-time Media office in Managua. They routinely give reports to local news and international news people. They are invited along. The relationships are professional and good but their reporting is tempered by editors and considerations at home. They live very well here They live in nice hotels and drive new cars here.

There's a long discussion about why the press reporting from here doesn't really do justice to the situation when folks back in the US read their papers.

Witness for peace is \$90,000 in the hole now in terms of funding. The Managua office now has \$153 on hand.

The contra atrocity issues are disappearing from the press. But much is still happening here. Various US groups are going under as a result of this perception. None of the Nicaraguan papers are remotely objective. The eastern bloc influence here is the result of the specific decisions of Nicaraguans to "diversify" their dependencies.

*(Page 23) (this next part was actually written on Sunday the 9th to catch up on things that happened on Saturday the 8th)*

## 08 Oct 88 - Saturday - Managua & Esteli (Page 23)

I'm writing Sunday morning to catch up on Saturday.

After an excellent morning session with Pat on WFP and Nicaragua, we had a long break and then lunch.

Prior to going off in trucks to Esteli, several of us walked about 30 minutes to the US Embassy.

Along the way, we went over a tall hill from which we could see a good distance. Managua is a very un-centralized city. A few significant buildings here and there and lots of greenery in between.

We walked a good ways along the Pan-American Highway to get to the embassy.

Boys were throwing a baseball and children asked to have their photos taken. George obliged one and took his address.

Dan bought a fresco from a woman and talked to her. She said she didn't care anything about politics. She just wished the US would stop the war so things could get better.

### At The Embassy:

At the embassy, the contrasts were striking. Around Nicaragua, we've seen very little of military power. But the US embassy is ringed by a high wall (double walls, actually) topped with barbed wire coils. The contrast that strikes me is between the US news rhetoric at home about the Marxist Nicaraguan military, and how here we see an almost complete absence of any military checkpoints or controls at the airport and throughout the city. In general, there is a feeling of security and sanity here. But, from what others have told me, this is in marked contrast to the way things are in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala.

*(Page 24) (Departure for Esteli)*

We all loaded into two Toyota Land Cruiser pick ups. Our truck had a metal frame over



the bed so we could stand up and watch as we drove. What fun!

I stood up all the way out of Managua, watching. It was a 2 1/2 hour trip to Esteli.

It's beautiful country. Amazingly unpopulated with large areas of unoccupied space.

As we got into the mountains, rain threatened, we reveled in it and we bagged our stuff in plastic and waited.

On the whole trip, we passed maybe two or three trucks with soldiers and we saw no checkpoints. At one point, we saw an armed soldier who looked bored; guarding a bridge.

The rain came. Other than the wind from our speed, it was warm. The sky was full of light and dark, with patches of blue above and in among the green hills. The Nicaraguans, on the road, driving and walking, took no notice.

At the peasant, houses, small children played in the doorways while women leaned to against the door frames. In other places, people sat on porches, protected, waiting, or simply passing time.

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At Esteli, we arrived at the "Pension la Florida". Esteli is fairly small and the streets look like what we saw in the movie, "Salvador". The pension is primitive, but nice.

Barry, George and I are sharing a room.

In the evening, we ate our first "dangerous" meal at a local restaurant. We're all now taking Pepto-Bismol pills and I'm also dropping garlic and Vitamin C pills. I had Carne Asada (Meat), frijoles (beans) and arroz, ( Rice).

Later, we walked to the Square in front of the church. Most of the town gathers there on Saturday night.

The square is dark in some parts and light in others and it is thronged throughout with people of all ages.

Don and I went off and talked with some young guys (18 to 24). We told them who we were and asked them some questions. They were friendly and they said that the US should quit bothering Nicaragua. They weren't Sandinistas, just ordinary Nicaraguans.

Later, Barry, George, Don, and I again walked out and found some more people to talk to.

This time it was three soldiers. One of them was articulate, while the others mostly listened. He said that Nicaraguans have democratic and religious freedom, and that they have (because their government teaches them) a clear distinction between the US government and the US people.

To me, he had the face of a rural campesino. But his eyes were clear with intelligence and his words had good ideological clarity. He was both strong and friendly and relaxed.

We walked through the crowds, and I watched people. We stand out a lot and most people will turn and look at us; but they try not to be rude. Little children will always smile brightly, if you notice them. The men, usually, will acknowledge you, if you smile or wave. Some are taciturn and some are warm and open. The women vary the most. Some walk arm in arm and refuse to make eye contact while others will acknowledge you like the men. And a few of them will look at you with such openness and warmth that it feels like an invitation. Needless to say, this puts magic in the streets.

**09 Oct 88 - Morning - Esteli, Nicaragua**

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*(Tape T01A @ 00:00 Bgns)*

0825 - We are at the Base Christian Community Center "Committee of Solidarity". Rodolfo Rodriguez is the Director of this Institute.

*(Tape T01A @ 02:36)*

We wrote up some questions last night. And they say they can answer them.

Q: What is a Christian-Based Community?

A: It is faith motivated Christians who do social work. These people are of Catholic derivation.

A: What is the history of Christian-Based Communities?

*(Tape T01A @ 06:01)*

Q: It was born in South America. It was the result of the misery of the mountain people there. This occurred from 1936 to 1956, in Brazil. They realized that their faith in Christ was a way to gain self respect and it was a way to make the world a better place.

*(Tape T01A @ 19:16)*

In 1956, Vatican II, the Christian-Based Communities were recognized as a religious phenomenon. Two meetings were held by bishops which validated the existence of Christian-Based Communities.

Christian-Based Communities began to spread from Brazil to Central America. Then an American priest brought the Christian-Based Communities idea to Panama. He was tossed out of Panama 1966 and came to Managua, Nicaragua. The people came to understand that following Christ was the essential thing. This, even though they are Catholics.

*(Tape T01A @ 21:26)*

Somoza's troops thought these new communities were communist-based. The Christian-Based Communities groups began to meet and talk in small groups. They modeled themselves after the early Christians and they were treated as such by Somoza's troops.

Q: What is Liberation Theology and how has it affected these communities?

*(Tape T01A @ 24:13)*

A: There is no separation of body and spirit. Liberation Theology wants integration. In real life, faith must provoke action. Men should be free to solve the problems that affect their own lives. The Christian-Based Communities movement grows from the poor because they have the problems. It has grown widely in South America, because the South Americans have been the most exploited. Life and the Bible are both sources of truth. They must integrate. This is not a new idea. The idea is to go back to the ideas of Christ himself.

*(Tape T01A @ 26:50)*

*(Tape T01A @ 30:00 Ends)*

*(Tape T01B @ 00:00 Bgns)*

Q: What role did the Christian-Based Communities play in the 78/79 revolution??

A: Before the revolution, they prepared the ground for the revolution. Liberation Theology was a major impetus. In Esteli, the Sandinistas got moral and physical aid from the Christian-Based Communities. The Christian-Based Communities knew that a new government was necessary. All Christians (and not just Christian-Based Communities) participated in a significant way.

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Now, they continue doing what they did before the revolution. The majority of involved Christians, since then, have given their support to the new government. They are allied, but they also express criticism to make sure the process is going well. They are happy

and they want the revolutionary government to govern.

*(Tape T01B @ 02:35)*

The Christian-Based Communities want to maintain their autonomy. The Catholic hierarchy needs to leave them alone and let them fulfill their role. They serve the role of a conscience for the society.

*(Tape T01B @ 05:40)*

Q: Why did the Bishop change his support of the Christian-Based Communities here?

A: This bishop just recently, at the time of the revolution, was ordained and had appointed a deacons council. Mr. Rodriguez was on that council. Back in 78/79, the bishop was gone, and everything was fine. But then he returned, and wanted to reimpose the old order of things. The Latin American Council of Bishops had pressured him.

*(Tape T01B @ 09:10)*

At this point, they asked us some questions and we responded.

They will give the address to Gary, if we want it. This would be for material and spiritual aid.

*(Tape T01B @ 29:40 Ends)*

1030 - We are at the church to meet with the Charismatic Catholic group - again for questions and answers.

*(Tape T02A @ 00:00 Bgns)*

Q: What is the church of renewal or charismatics?

A: We are Catholics, who attend workshops. And then we have a life of prayer. We meet in the center for reflection, guidance, and support. Monsignor Videa, who will celebrate mass today, is their inspiration. Every three months, they have a seminar and they are growing. They visit the sick and they visit the prisons.

Q: Their attitude to the Sandinistas? Can someone else better govern?

A: They are not political, and they have no involvement.

Q: What do they think of the Contras?

A: They have no comments on politics. Both the Sandinistas and the Contras are killers. We have nothing more to say.

Q: What do the Charismatic Catholics do for society?

A: Our role is within the church. We visit prisons/hospital/the sick and we study. They help get food to the neighborhood, but there is also an official Catholic agency to do this.

Q: What is the relationship to the Christian-Based Communities?

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A: The spirit of the Charismatics is the same as the Catholic Church's spirit. Whereas the Christian-Based Communities are the Sandinista's church.

The leaders of the popular Christian-Based Communities churches have no real interest in spreading the gospel. When the Christian-Based Community had this church, only four people met here and they had the Sandinista's flag displayed and very few pews were set out.

Now, this facility is much used. The central issue here is holding true to traditional Catholic views, and/or to those ideas of Liberation Theology.

Q: Is there any cooperation with the end Evangelista's?

A: They say that the Evangelista's are completely different.

Now they switch to asking us questions.

*(Tape T02A @ 00:36) (I think the tape was paused before resuming here)*

The kids outside with the best part of all of this for me. I showed them my tape recorder and took lots of pictures of them. Beautiful kids!

*(Tape T02A @01:23) (paused again, I think, until Limay)*

We walked back afterwards through the town. This afternoon we're going to have lunch at a new restaurant and then we are off to Limay.

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The ride in the open back truck from Esteli to Limay was another excellent and beautiful ride.

1630 - We are now at the house of José Luis Vindel.

George and I end up as roommates with the Vindel family. These people have a nice house. Jose makes furniture and his house has three large rooms. The other people here are Christian Luis (Pepe), his son and Elizabeth, his daughter.

Jose was in Hinotega at the time of the revolution. He says that there was not much fighting here in Limay, but there was in Esteli.

After the 78/79 revolution though there has been a fair amount of Contra problems here.

Seven people were killed at the bridge and three elsewhere. Also, there were some killed who were from the highway department. The method the Contras use is usually ambushes with rifles.

This town is Pro-Sandinista. Prior to the revolution, there were no health centers and very few schools here. Now, there are many of both.

Up on the pass, the Contras ambushed a bus and killed a number of teachers in 1982.

Approximately 15 km from here, the contras had a base of 200 to 300 people. They've been gone from there since 1982.

As a result of the economic embargo here, specific products cost too much. Things like car repairs, medicine, and tires.

George asked him about Low Intensity Conflict and he knows what it is, mostly. It's hurting but people are gaining spirit and confidence because of the peace accords.

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1645 - Jose's house sits on a large lot and there is a second house here for his mother. There's a lot of yard, and everything is kept nice; Jose obviously works hard. There's lots of nicely made furniture here and the floors are made of tile.

I asked what the Nicaraguans think the reason is why the US supports the Contras.

Jose says that the US fears the loss of dollars from their trade with Nicaragua. I replied that I think their fear really is the loss of all of Central America.

We ask what their religious views are. He says that the Christian-Based Communities are doing good work, but there is a priest here who opposes them. He feels that the priest and the bishop of this district are for Reagan. But he feels it's good that the people should work for the process. There was a priest here who worked for Liberation Theology. But he was from Honduras. And when he returned, he was killed there.

After we talked a while, we took a break and went outside.

Some boys were playing baseball, and George and I watched. I joined in and played first base for a while. They kept throwing the ball at me at top speed and I kept saying, "I'm an old man, not so fast!", but it was no help. When it began to get too dark, I quit, but not before I've gotten puddle water all over my hands.

We went inside after George had fended it off the local boys for 20 minutes or so. They'd wanted him to tell them how to say bad words in English.

Inside, I asked to wash my hands, and Jose got me a pan of water and showed me the



soap.

We talked some more after that. The conversation was smoother now and we talked about more politics.

I told him that I've been to the USSR and Jose said he had been to Cuba for some months in 1982.

We talked about Socialism and I said the Socialism, as practiced in Cuba, and the USSR was too hard. It needed to be softened with some compassionate Christianity. He agreed.

Often, in the conversation, his wife chips in with her own ideas, and the give-and-take between them seems good.

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Just before seven, George and I left to go to a meeting with our group at the Pension, that the long-termers, Gary, Rita and Sara had set up.

This entire part of Limay, including the Vindel residence and the Pension, are without electricity.

Jose told us someone hit a power pole with a car and killed the power to a large area.

The meeting was held with chairs in a circle and a candle in the center. We went around and we shared about our new families. It would be too much to try and record all of this here. Some of us are with Evangelista's. Some with traditional Catholics and some, like George and I, are with Christian Based Community types.

I had told Jose and his wife that I was especially pleased to be in their house, because their views went well with my own. With George's work for the "Catholic Worker", I have no doubt that this is true for him also.

After we shared about our families, we discussed tomorrow's schedule and checked our mental and physical health states out. Except for Clare, who is constipated, everyone else seems fine.

George and I realized from the discussion that everyone else had eaten with their families except us. Sara got us some cheese and a frijole from the Pension's kitchen, and we concluded that it must've been a misunderstanding.

With a few rounds of "Domi Nobis Pacim" to warm us, we broke up and George and I walked back to Jose's house. They let us in and he and his wife laid out of mat with a cover over it. Apparently they only had one, so I'll let George take it.

I lit a candle of my own and sat down to write this logbook. George is working, on a reflection for the morning session. Jose sat up with us for a while. I'm going to close this journal here for the night.

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(Later) George went outside and showed me where the latrine was and then, a bit later, I went back myself.

What a beautiful sky! The Milky Way was high, high above; filling the sky. No moon and the thunderstorms were out of sight in two directions, flashing huge explosions of light. The wind was blowing and making the trees bend and talk and everything was warm. This is Central America.

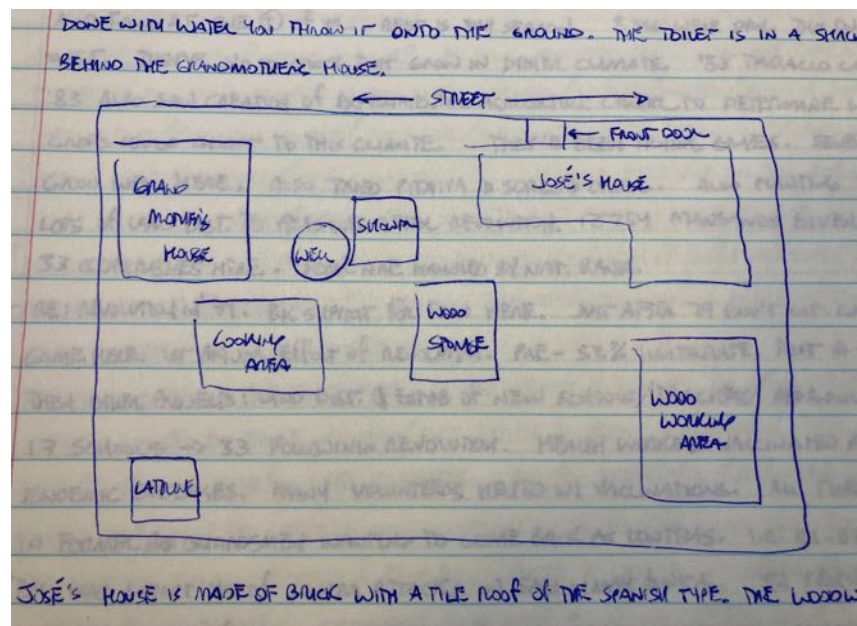
10 Oct 88 - Limay, Nicaragua*(Page 30)*

0645 - We went to bed last night at about 9:30 PM. I was awake again at 4 AM.

*(Tape T02A @ 04:00) (record some animal noises and pause again)*

About five, it began to get light and the chickens and the cows began a symphony. I taped a small part of it.

Later, the people of the house began to stir, and we learned the mysteries of the shower, shaving and the use and discarding of water here. When water comes from the tap into a sink, you can draw from the sink, but never put anything into it. When you are done with the water, you throw it out onto the ground. The toilet is in a shack behind the grandmother's house.

*(The Vindel'Property Layout)*

Jose's house is made of brick with a tile roof of the Spanish type. The woodworking is very nice. They seem to be quiet and taciturn people. Intelligent to talk to, but quiet and serious when not conversing.

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"Telecor" is the name of the telephone company of Nicaragua.

*(Tape T02A @ 05:54)*

We're having a meeting with The Mayor of San Limay. His name is Almondo and he's been the mayor for the last nine months.

Some background on Lemay:

The population is 12,062 people. The urban part of the town is 3000+ people. There are three main roads that leave from here:

One to Esteli.

One to Pueblo Nuevo (NE),

One to San Francisco Del Norte (NW)

There are 35 peasant communities here. 48% of them are accessible by truck. The soil quality here is very good. There are three types of land. Limay is mostly of type A and B of the three types, A, B and C.

It's a hot climate and the rainfall is not well distributed, and it tends to fall all at one time of the year. The rest is the dry season. Eight years in a row were dry. This last one was wet.

They've changed to crops that grow in drier climates. In 1983, tobacco came here. 1983 also saw the creation of an experimental agricultural center to determine which crops could adapt well to this climate. They've been trying grapes and seven types grow well here. They've also tried several other kinds of crops. And also, they are planting trees. There's lots of land to distribute to the peasants after the revolution.

12754 Manzanos .There are 33 cooperatives here. Some are handled by the National Bank.

*(1 Manzano = 1000 sq Meters but there are local variations on this concept)*

Regarding the revolution in 1979, there was big support for the Sandinistas here.

Just after '79, a government literacy campaign came here. It was the first major effort of the revolution. Before the revolution, 52% were illiterate. And after, that dropped down to 12.5%.

Then there were other projects: land distribution, the establishment of new schools and teachers for adult education. 17 schools became 33 following the revolution.

Health workers vaccinated against many of the endemic diseases in the area. And many volunteers helped with vaccinations.

All these actions resulted in former National Guardsmen, wanting to come back as Contras. '81 through '84 were the worst years for Contra attacks in the San Limay area and in Nicaragua.

42 people were killed by Contras as they were building and repairing local roads. The Contras wanted to isolate Limay.

'83 saw the start of the national draft which was necessary to fight the Contras. The claim is that 15,000 people were inducted in '83.

*(Tape T02A @ 24:44 Ends)*

*(Tape T02B @ 00:00 Bgns)*

'86 saw Contra activity go down, so finally new projects could begin.

*(Tape T02B @ 04:40)*

Currently, things are peaceful. There's three new health centers that have been built since '86 in outlying communities. Rural areas can have many new projects.

The US knows that the Contras cannot destroy the revolution therefore the US changing to other tactics.

They are trying to unite all the opposition parties. They are engaging in Low Intensity Conflict. And they've set aside \$74 million for this purpose.

The US is also working to cause Honduras and Nicaragua to become enemies. And this is designed to Justify a future US direct intervention.

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*(Tape T02B @ 13:05)*

Now the mayor takes questions from us.

Q: Your training was in East Germany and Russia. Would you care to comment?

A: He would've liked to of come to the USA also. There are many limitations in Latin America. One way to do better for yourself is to accept help from where it is offered. The East offered and the West did not.

He got good training in eastern Germany. But a lot of what he learned can't work here because of the primitive nature of Nicaraguan society. Nicaraguans would accept scholarships from other countries. If the US offered them, they would accept immediately.

Q: What does the mayor's job involve?

A:: There are so many jobs here that I will say only a few.

I oversee all the government projects in this area. That's streets, lights, water, the production of crops, health projects, education projects, garbage collection, the slaughterhouse, transportation, supplies into the area, civilian defense, and preparation for national disasters.

*(Tape T02B @ 24:53)*

Because everyone is so poor here, the local government lives off the taxes of the people. There are no dollars to get back. The lack of dollars results in the need for priorities and slow action.

*(Tape T02B @ 30:14 Ends)*

*(Tape T03A @ 00:00 Bgns)*

Taxation: small businesses pay 2% per month of their profits to the city.

Q: How did you become Mayor?

A: Mayors are appointed now by the government. This will last until the new laws are completed in '89. Then we will be able to elect mayors.

Q: So what's the situation with military service and the Evangelista's?

A: Local people have organized or civil defense. They've created houses to take any injured and sick people and they've created bomb shelters. This was not just the result of war but also for natural disasters. All of it is done by volunteers. They also set up guards around the town to prevent assassinations. A contra goal was to create terror by killing the leaders of people.

And there's also a law now for mandatory military service (draft) for two years for everyone.

The opposition says, "Why should we do that if nobody else has such a draft?"

For women, military service is voluntary.

*(Tape T03A @ 08:12)*

Some Christians think that they should be exempt from military service. And now the Evangelista leaders say to the people "Join us and we will free you from military service". So what do the Evangelista's do?

*(Tape T03A @ 11:44)*

We say, "if you don't want to carry arms then serve in a kitchen or otherwise".

*(Tape T03A @ 13:00)*

But then the Evangelista say, "if I have a uniform, but no gun then I am in danger by

enemies". These are big problems.

*(Tape T03A @ 16:40) (The Mayor is done. George is going to give us a reflection now. I didn't record anything in my LogBook about his reflection but it is recorded on tape.)*

*(Tape T03A @ 24:39) (Reflection ends? George, I and others are talking)*

*(Tape T03A @ 30:12 Ends)*

*(Tape T03B @ 00:00 Bgns)*

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1120 - After a break, during which I went home and showered, George and I walked. We are now at a government building where lunches are prepared for the children.

*(Tape T03B @ 01:22)*

There's not enough money, so the government has to ask the parents to help. The center was built by the revolutionary government for malnourished children seven years ago.

It was built for 200 but now 500+ children are in need. The government says that they cannot refuse children. Of 257 they give to, 13 are malnourished.

The lack of money prevents more action. The government wants to give more, but it cannot.

These children are from rural and urban zones. The rural leave at 5 AM. The organizers talk to parents about cleaning their kids. The lady we were talking to was trained by a Social Security organization; with regard to nutrition; so she can be effective.

We're going to eat here today with the children.

1250 - The last hour has been more effective than any speech or statistics could be. Hundreds of children in near rags are getting a small plate of rice and some vegetables. Brown warm eyes and skin from toddlers to near teens.



We take another break during which we first pump water for the group for Rita and then we go to the Pension and sit around and sweat.

*(Tape T03B @ 10:53)*

1415 - talking to Daisi Blanco of Limay's Public Health Center - She's also the president of the health workers union.

There are three centers and 17 workers in this area. There's also one auxiliary person per health center.

They do family planning and general health consulting. They do injections. Every day they do eight to twelve between two to five p.m.. They also do emergency services twenty four hours a day. They work during the day and then someone sleeps here each night. The charge is very nominal - only 50 Cordobas. There is no other charge.

*(Tape T03B @ 13:53)*

Dr. Maria Delgado - There is just one doctor in the center and eight nurses. All medical personnel are trained here in Nicaragua. The doctors go to medical school in Leon. The blockade hurts - and there's always a shortage of medicine.

*(Tape T03B @ 19:24)*

The town's ambulance is a gift from the Baltimore, Sister City Project.

*(Tape T03B @ 30:16 Ends)*

*(Tape T04A @ 00:00 Bgns)*

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*(Tape T04A @ 21:08)*

Now we are meeting with The Mothers of Heroes and Martyrs. We are at the Baltimore Sister City House. Each member here has lost her husband and/or son/s. And they have fallen in either the revolution or they have fallen to the Contras.

They want peace, so that their remaining loved ones can return. As Christians it's important to pardon the enemy. Sometimes, those who kill don't really know what they're doing or why. At these meetings, they focus on what they've felt. Sometimes, they write letters to President Reagan, and ask for peace.

*(Tape T04A @ 25:18)*

They pray to God for peace. And they continue to fall. One man fell this week in the Limay zone. It would be very bad if the war returned with the force that it had just a few years ago. They pray for peace, and for those who are still in the struggle.

If the war returned, the Limay area would be the first affected. We're only 20 to 25 miles here from the Honduran border.

*(Tape T04A @ 29:03)*

The children of those who fall often have no one to work for them.

*(Tape T04A @ 30:09 Ends)*

*(Tape T04B @ 00:00 Bgns)*

*(Tape T04B @ 04:09)*

A lady is now telling a story. Her son was a student. He fathered a son, but didn't tell his mother.

And men killed leave wives and children behind.

*(Tape T04B @ 07:31)*

Another woman begins to talk now. She also lost her son. It's something you never forget. The way he was 'disappeared'.

When they meet, they want to write in protest to President Reagan. They go to the current funerals to see how they can help the newly grieving mothers.

They feel solidarity with us because we've come to hear their stories. The first lady's

son fell in '84. She thanks us for not abandoning them and for listening to their stories. They do not blame the people of the US - it's the government.

*(Tape T04B @ 14:38)*

We are going to ask questions of them now.

Q: How many people are in this Limay group?

A: There are more than 50 mothers here.

Q: Are those killed from both sides of the conflict?

A: The Limay mothers we see here are all on the revolutionary side. But groups of mothers for the Contra side also exist. Many teachers died after the literacy campaign. Her son was killed while working for literacy. He was unarmed when he was killed.

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*(Tape T04B @ 18:39)*

Q: How many women have been left as the head of the household and what does the government do to help?

A: The government gives money to buy 2 pounds of sugar and 1 pound of salt per month. That's about 650 Cordobas per month. That was for one lady whose son was in the military. But only 300 Cordobas per month to the other lady whose son was not.

*(Tape T04B @ 26:05)*

"Shoes here cost 1500 Cordobas. 300 Cordobas are not worth the blood of my son."

*(Tape T04B @ 30:05 Ends)*

Q: How many sons have been lost in all of Nicaragua?

A: Mr. Castro in Managua, said that 75,000 have fallen.

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2115 - After the Mothers of Martyrs and Heroes left, then we stayed around at the Casa Baltimore. The weather was so nice. It rained just before the Mothers arrived. Their presentation was largely uninterrupted by us. They discussed the sadness and the senselessness of losing their sons to war. They also discuss their attitudes towards these things, and their attitudes seem to be heavily influenced by Christianity. There was some air of recitation to it all; as if they had told these stories many times.

Afterwards, we enjoyed the weather and just laid around talking and joking. At some point, I taped a good section of all of this. We sang the Latin song a number of times.

We broke up and I walked with Rita to the Pension to get more water and then I walked home to the Vindel's.

Because I don't speak much Spanish I just sat with Jose and two of his kids and a friend until the Señora called me for a meal. George arrived just as I began, and we told Señora Vindel, that we would try to be more predictable with our mealtime arrivals.

After dinner, Jose invited us to the local cinema where he worked some nights. We weren't sure if we could go because there was a tentative meeting at the Pension at 8 PM and the movie ran at 7:30 PM.

Jose left, and George and I sat and read and played with the kids and talked with Señora Vindel and her neighbor; who came a little later. We asked Señora Vindel about the Mayor, who seems to be so young. I guessed his age at 25 to 27. She said he was a very good man and he was more like 38 years old!

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The children and I played a game where they would teach me, Spanish, and I would teach them English by showing body parts or by drawing pictures.

At 7 PM, we walked to the pension to hang around there and found out they would not be a meeting, but that everyone was actually going to go to the movies. So, we went. It was a grade B movie from the late 60s. Big on macho and hippie dress and high powered car

car chase scenes. The film was spliced a lot, and obviously was very old. The theater was mostly full.

It was an interesting experience. I found myself wondering if the government allowed a movie like this to emphasize the corruption of the Yankee culture or simply because there was nothing else to show because of the embargo and our rural location.

After the movie, we came home and read a bit and turned in.

## 11 Oct 88 - Limay, Nicaragua

Over breakfast today, George and I talked about Iceland and my idea of bicycling around it.

0800 - Today, we're going to have an all day session on Liberation Theology.

Our speaker told us that before he worked with the church that he had been an ignorant Campesino. But by working with the church, he gained liberating knowledge. All this was during the time of Somoza. The knowledge integrated them, but the Guardia opposed them strongly. For them, the word of God was an awakening, but the Guardia didn't want that. They blocked the right to assemble without a permit. And the Guardia began to call them Communists for trying to live the word of God. And many went to prison.

In 77 and 78, many Christians supported the revolution as a change for the common good. After the triumph, they could study freely, and they found that to be a Christian means to support change, if it is for the common good. They found that day that Sandinistas and Christians had a lot in common.

The speaker was beaten by the Guardia and two of his sons were taken. Then he came to San Juan de Limay and after a year they came and took a third son. There has never been any word from any of his sons. They were taken because he is an active Christian.

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This has not stopped him in his work to create social structures with more justice. They continue to support life and justice, and they continue to be put down.

The word of God means maintaining the status quo for the Capitalist. But the word means an "awakening", however, for the poor. They discover that the word of God has a lesson for every reality they encounter today. Here they speak only of the exploiters and the exploited. See Exodus 3, verses 7 to 9.

*(We do a Bible reading at this point)*

God lives where the suffering is. He discusses what the interpretation of the passage we just read is for them. I.e. that God is with the poor and supports their struggle for a

better reality. In '72 they began discussing the oppression. At that time, certain priests began to push for the formation of Christian groups to study these matters. Studying this text (*the one we just read?*) made them begin to realize how poor their society truly was relative to healthcare, education, and intellectual oppression.

In Bible study, they analyze the text and then see its implications for the current historical context. They realized that it was their work to bring about changes God promised. Here we have a reference to Exodus five verses 10 through 23. We spend some time reflecting on these texts and how they relate to Nicaragua today. Who is asleep and who's awake? Who is on the fence and who has decided. We debate several views.

To determine the significance of the word of God: see it as past, present and future. The past, as when the passages were written. What to make of it now, and into the future.

15 years ago, only priests could understand and interpret the word of God to the people here in Latin America. Here, now, the people are coming to understand the Bible themselves. They begin to get "clear" that they've been a victim of Capitalism for 140 years.

The US controlled Somoza who control the elite classes who oppressed the poor. The people worked and were discriminated against and had no rights to healthcare and etc. The national resources were plundered away. The workers had no access to any means of social dialogue. All means of production were in the hands of the Capitalists. They paid the people low wages, and they charge them high prices.

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All these realities made what they saw in God's word, all the more pressing with regard to the need for action. See Exodus seven versus seven through 13: again we do a reflection on the passage. A small discussion of being justified by the word of God, and how many ways the mirror can be turned.

There's a story here by one of the men about conditions on the Atlantic coast gold mines under Somoza. They wore underwear into the mines, and were imprisoned if they rested. One man was thrown into the common water supply, and this made the community

sick the week after,. And this happened because he stole a small piece of gold.

And all of this was when the North Americans ran the mines.

Before the revolution, the money from the mine went to the North American's and the rich. Now it goes to this country and the people.

Agricultural workers and miners now work at a reasonable pace. And the results go to benefit the people.

The lands have been re-distributed into cooperatives so that people know longer work for others. Co-op money goes back into the same co-ops. Those who run the co-ops try to keep raising their consciousness so that things do not stagnate. Only those with religious and ideological faith persevere in the face of external aggression and internal ignorance. The fact that the fruits of the labor belong to us, should give us strength.

We take a break here.

1025 - So far in our readings, we have considered the beginning of Exodus. We began here to establish a basis for comparison of the experiences of the Israelites and the Nicaraguans of today.

Through such reflections, we will better understand Nicaragua. Here he refers to Exodus 14 verses, 10 to 14: this relates to contemporary Nicaragua as in when Moses took the Israelites to the desert. And there was a persecution which compares to the post Somoza US persecution; which makes life like a desert. Then he reads the Bible Text to us.

Many Nicaraguans today, see themselves as in a post-revolutionary desert similar to the Israelis when the pharaoh was coming to slay them after they marched away from Egypt.

He says, especially for North Americans coming here from a land of comfort, it must be hard to see Nicaragua as an example.

(there are gunshots or fireworks outside ay this point)

Another reading from First Peter 3 verses 13 to 17: This was a period in the primitive



church when the apostles are reforming things. We reflect on this text.

Gary comments on being impressed by the compassion and patience of the government people, the police and the military in explaining things to their own people and to the North Americans.

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Sherry says the willingness to die for their faith and doing this from a place of deep compassion and commitment, has impressed her deeply with the Salvadorian and Nicaraguan people.

Barry worries that the government, which has taken power by force, might become enamored of its own virtue, and lose its self critical ability. (The power of the Christian sector here is the force which will hopefully keep the government's integrity and commitment to truth and valid progress on track).

George says that no matter how right we are when we take up arms, we will necessarily transfer some pain and misery onto those who oppressed us, and this cannot but take away from the original truth somewhat. (I make some comments here that several in my group disavow; as not being in the group view).

Sarah says, later, that after four months here, and some time here in 85, that her view of the processes is confused much like the people's. Some are discouraged and she hears some stories of corruption. And she's unable to focus the picture into a clear resolution.

He says that they have exhausted all nonviolent means to correct the injustice. They have tried hard to cleave to nonviolence. But the people have their arms and thus the right to defend the revolution.

The role of the Christian is to raise people's consciousnesses and to criticize the revolution to make it stay true. He says that the fruit is what proves the value of the tree. Much as when John sent people to ask Jesus if he was the Messiah. And he bid them to go back and say what they've seen. That the blind see, and the lame walk. (See Matthew 25).

The people who are here still have arms to defend their rights. The Contras are trying to destroy the new social structures at all levels. The people themselves defend these things. The arms are not just in the hands of the army.

If there are abuses, it's because the education of people's consciousnesses are still catching up. The process itself will help raise the necessary educational level. Those who leave are those who do not want to work with the process. This is a natural weeding out process. We can learn much by studying the successes and failures of the previous socialist revolutions.

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*(some quotes and/or comments of mine at the top of Page 40 follow)*

The trade embargo was imposed in 1985.

We are squeezing 2 cups of truth from one cup of fruit. The rest comes from where?

Doing reflections on biblical passages, when the reflectors know the intended direction, is a powerful way to create a community consensus.

Sarah says it's scary that she sees so many people giving up. She says that those who leave are those who want to express their Capitalistic ambitions and cannot do so in Nicaragua's controlled market.

*(Here we take a lunch break)*

Now we focus on Luke, 1 verses 68 to 79: this is a section in which Zachariah, father of John the Baptist, is singing a song of praise. After he believes he will be granted a son (John).

We, as a group, have few reflections on the story.

He tells us that the birth of Capitalism is really the birth of a system of death. That we can see the hand of God in the events going on around us.

(The interpretation of this section is leaving me cold. The connections between the text and the current reality seems less relevant to me than it did this morning).

(As a workshop on Liberation Theology, I think we've gone far off the track. The basic idea stands on its own merit. Trying to also support it with these passages to me seems to be overreaching, unnecessarily).

He says that the US has been unable to crash Nicaragua. Because God is with Nicaragua?

The US is afraid of Nicaragua but not the reverse. This is true. But I'm still not sure why. US is also afraid of Liberation Theology.

He asked us to say how Nicaraguan religion is seen in the US.

I respond with the view, from the popular press, which is obviously simplistic and focused on communism and the lack of freedom of religion. Richard follows and says that more detailed information is available, if people want it.

He's stressing that Jesus was the change in which the Bible began to be for the common people.

Discussing inter-church politics, he say traditional, churches, call the Christian-Based Communities the "Marxist Church" or the "Communist Church".

He cites examples of assassinations and expulsions of Liberation Theology. As an example: Oscar Romero - assassinated in El Salvador in '80.

The repression of the people's church is to suppress the people's rights to interpret the Bible as they wish. And as the Bible says they can.

The root of this problem is the Pope. But he's always been aligned with the Capitalists. The local priest, Obando y Bravo, just remains silent. The higher levels of the church have forgotten it's essential commitment to the poor and that everyone has the right to work for change in their society.

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Q: Are the Evangelicals growing so well because of a split in the Catholics?

A: He says they depend on the US dollars and thus they want to put people to sleep. They use high-tech to exert more leverage. (Sounds like he's saying that the Evangelicals are totally US puppets). It's all just another part of Reagan's plot.

First John 4 verses 7 to 19: some people say Nicaragua is atheistic due to the Socialism. Evangelicals worship God out there (i.e. Jesus is coming), while the Christian-Based Communities feel God is in us.

He's done. Now he wants us to do some reflections on the last reading.

George comments that this view negates the Evangelicals. George feels that they may not be at the same level he is, but that they are sincere.

Rita says that the Evangelicals are still saying the reward is in heaven. Prior to the 60s, the Catholics were saying the same thing.

Richard says that the Reverend Fuller in Pasadena (the largest Evangelical in the US) graduates many who study and embrace Liberation Theology.

Now we do the evaluation.

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2130 - Tonight, I'm going to write about some things that were the reasons I came here.

And these are things that I hoped I would not find. But I have. And so I will record it.

Tonight, after George and I had spent some time talking to Jose Luis's wife about her teaching, and how she loves children, she began to talk of some of the atrocities committed here.

The first story was about her own brother, who was killed a year ago last February. He was in the military in the Hinotega area. When he was found. It was obvious that he had been tortured and mutilated. One of his testicles had been crushed, and his stomach has

been roughly ripped open; spilling his guts. And his fingers had been cut off.

I'm not sure what order she told us the other stories in, but I'll tell the ones that sticks with me the most, first.

Many teachers have been assassinated for trying to take education into the campo but just saying that doesn't do it justice.

Consider: a woman who was a teacher, and her husband, were teaching in a small village, or just setting up a school, when they were stopped and kidnapped. They cut the man's penis off and stuffed it in his mouth and killed him. The woman was raped and then they cut her open at the vagina and split her legs apart. This girl's mother lives Three blocks from here in Limay. This is how they were found three days later; half buried in dirt.

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*(Other stories she shared)*

A local man, a local militia or military, was caught outside Limay. He had some gold in his teeth in the front. They were pulled out by force as well as his fingernails being removed. They could not tell if he was dead when these things occurred.

A woman, whose son came home to visit her from the army, had to watch the Contras shoot him in front of her.

A young woman was kidnapped from here in Limay. When she was next seen, two years later, she had a child and was pregnant with another. People said she acted very strange; as if she was on drugs.

On the Atlantic coast, when there was a storm, the children were being evacuated from coastal community in an airplane. The plane was shot down by the Contras; killing 75 kids.

All of this was translated for me by George.

This was just after we had been talking with her about a picture sheet she used to teach first graders with. And how precious the children of the campesinos were to her - even more so than those of the town folk. Because they had even less.

She taught up until she got sick and the kids didn't want let her go. So she stayed over two or three extra days because they kept following her.

She didn't go back to teaching when she got well even though she'd been offered a post. The new job would've required her to rise at 4 AM to walk to the school. And also because Jose Luis said, 'No'.

I asked her, "Wouldn't it be dangerous?" And she replied that what it meant to the children made it worth it.

Then she began the story (above) about her brother.

She said that virtually every family in the country has lost a member to the Contra's war on Nicaragua.

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Tonight, after listening to Jose's, wife's stories, George and I went off to meet the group in to attend the movies. The movie was, "The Sailor, Who Fell from Grace with the Sea".

This evening it was another bizarre American film. I can't imagine what the government here is thinking by showing such crap.

It does run the US Capitalist world down. But its other cost is on these young isolated minds. And that cost has got to be the greater and outweigh the US bashing benefit.

In a nation plagued with such violence, such movies, throw fuel on an impressionable fire. Someone in government hasn't realized the opportunity or the dangers. Listening to the howls of the young guys in the small town theater, I think someone should wake up.

I have a note on the top of the page that says Sapos (frogs) hopped right into the house tonight.

## 12 Oct 99 - Limay, Nicaragua

At the morning meeting, we talked about our hosts. Clare's family is anti-process. Richard's Mayor is sure East Germany and the USSR are workers paradises.

Our reflection today is a reading. A dramatic reading about two women; one rich and one poor. It was good, I should get a copy.

I tell the group about our conversation with Jose's wife (Dina) last night.

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*(Tape T05A @ 00:00 Bgns)*

*(Order of events is confusing today as I wrote them up out of order. On the sidebar ,in my hard-written notes, I recorded the day's events as being in this order: The Mine, Campesino church service, The River, The Children, The 'Culto'?, Talking and Presents. I believe that later in the evening, around 1900, we also attended an Evangelista service.)*

1900 - Today's notes will be out of order.

We are now at the Evangelical Church. We've just been through a nice welcoming ceremony in the church full of people. Now we've gone off into another annex and we're answering and asking questions. I taped some of this smaller meeting.

It is basically a pitch for dollars or materials from us. (we're a captive audience)

Their needs:

- 1 - A vehicle to connect the parishes without public transport.
- 2 - Four ceiling fans because the church is so small and hot.
- 3 - An independent power generator so they can have 'Cultos' even if the power's off.
- 4 - They want to build a classroom to add to the local school rooms.
- 5 - They want a center for orphans and mothers who have too many kids.

(it is pouring outside and the humidity is high. I taped Q&A session because I am lazy.)

*(Page 44) (This next logbook section covers events earlier in the day before the church meeting, above)*

We walked to the Gold mine. About a 30 to 40 minute walk.

Some miners met us there and answered questions and showed us the mine and the equipment. The mine is currently shut down because the shafts flood during the rainy season and one of them has partially caved in.

The mine has apparently been around since colonial times. I took a small stone with some sparkles in it to put into Chris's rock polisher at home. Then we went to a Christian-Based Communities service by the campesinos. Very primitive building, and the people were very poor. I taped us singing to them, and they to us. I was really tired at this point.

After lunch at the Pension, and a meeting of the group that I was almost comatose for, several of us went to the local river. That was fun.

My watch said that the water temperature was 81°F. We (Gary, Sheri, Tammy, Clare, and myself) sat on the rock bed and let the water rush over us with the humidity and the rain clouds gathering above. And it did rain.

Some kids jumped naked from the bridge into the river and stood and stared at the gringa woman. We changed in the bushes and then threw rocks into the river.

I went home then and spent an hour, laughing and trying to talk to Dona Videll and Jose's wife, Dina, and the kids. And this with many referrals to my Spanish/English dictionary (loaned to me by my US friend, Sharon).

I drank a cup of coffee and then George came home from the second shift at the river.

While I sat talking, I gave the ninos three toys from my son Christopher. They were ecstatic and ran laughing with them around the yard.

*(Tape T05A @ 30:03 Ends)*

*(Tape T05B @ 00:00 Bgns)*



We ate dinner, and then met the group at the Evangelical Church two blocks up the road. I taped a good portions of this. It was (for me) a real holy-roller service. The pastor began with songs and a Bible reading and then introduced us. And we each stood and said our name, city and religion for the congregation.

Then we went to a private meeting with the church hierarchy and they (much to all of our surprises) made a major pitch to us for material aid.

And we asked questions of our own. I taped this question and answer session.

*(Tape T05B @ 30:00 Ends)*

After the service, which did get quite intense, George and I went home and sat talking to the Vindels until 10pm (that's late for here).

I gave them some presents as a way of saying, thanks. For Jose Luis, I gave him the pocket knife and multi tool that John gave me. And for Dina, I gave her the folding scissors and two packets of Velcro.

## 13 Oct 88 - Limay, Nicaragua

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0920 - We are several miles outside San Juan de Limay at a tobacco co-op. We're waiting for a meeting to begin.

Breakfast at the Vindel's was uneventful. But it was sad to say goodbye.

(I'm writing up Yesterday's notes on the previous page.)

1000 - Our meeting with the agricultural co-op begins - "La Grecia Co-Op".

A campesino stands and greets us. He says, "Many friendly people have come to visit us since the revolution". Sheri stands and gives them our greeting. We each then present ourselves. And now they each present themselves.

Most of those who speak were born right here in this co-op area.

Now, we begin talking. As I sit writing this, kids are crowding around us.

Q: Can you tell us about the history and the organization of the co-op?

A: It began and '83 there were originally 23 workers. Then in '85 /'86 that increased to 30. We've had many difficult times along the way. Here, the land belongs to small groups of poor peasants. The revolution brought agrarian reform and the first steps of the reformation was to give the large land holder's abandoned land out to the peasants. And the government gave credit to the campesinos to buy oxen and etc.

Once this was arranged, they could begin to work and make earnings. The land has suffered from the war and the economic embargo. A major problem is the lack of transport for their products. They are always struggling to make it all work. The price of gas has just gone up. This is the kind of community that the Contras like to single out to attack.

There are 3500 Monsanas here. 34 Families. Tobacco and some basic grains are all grown and they also have cattle here.

Q: Can they repair the trucks we see here?

A: Not here, but they can be repaired in Limay.

Q: Have there been Contra attacks here?

A: Attacks have happened close by and they've seen the victims of such attacks. But no one from the cooperative has been attacked. They've lost cattle. And they've lost men to the military mobilization. They are ready to defend their land.

Q: Why haven't they grown any tobacco in the last two years?

A: They began growing in '85, '86 and '87. But the last two years it's been too dry.

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Q: Why do the Contras attack cooperatives?

A: The ideal here is to have their families and their lives here. And so they have to defend it. The Contras don't care who they attack. If we didn't have arms here, we would be more vulnerable. A state of war has existed for eight or nine years. Maybe we, as North Americans, could change Reagan's policies. Because of the help of friendly countries, they have survived.

Q: Who owned this land before the revolution?

A: It was divided among private landowners. Now it's been given to the people according to the principles of Sandino.

Q: Could they set up irrigation to offset the dry seasons effects?

A: They have 40 Monsanas irrigated, but even this area, when it's dry, fails. They need wells.

Q: What is the religion of the co-op people here? And tell us about schools and healthcare?

A: We have two health centers nearby. One in Limay, and one in Planenales (2 km). There's a small school here for kids up to the fifth grade and then they have to go to Limay or Planenales.

Religion? There is no church here. They are Catholics, Evangelicals, and Seventh Day Adventists, and they all go to Limay for the services.

Q: How did they learn about co-op organization?

A: Before the revolution, the land was owned by millionaire landowners. It was the revolution which brought the idea of co-op organization, which they understood immediately. The first organization was a union of rural agricultural and ranch workers. The national bank supported them with loans.

Q: What happens here if there are no crops?

A: In '87 and '88, when there was no tobacco, they planted corn and depended on their cattle.

Q: Where is the previous landowner?

A: He's 45 km away in Esteli. He is well and he's involved with the CIA. They won't say his name.

Q: Where do they sell what they grow here?

A: Much of it we use and some goes for the military mobilization. The grain goes in trucks to Limay and we sell it to "NADBUS" the national government buyer. It's not required that they sell it to them but we do it because it's patriotic.

Q: Don't people have small private gardens?

A: Here they have a lack of seeds. In a Esteli it is easier.

Q: How else does the government help here?

A: They give in many ways. Technicians, teachers, doctors, nursery schools and adult education. Yes. He points to a teacher who will talk about how she was trained.

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First you take two workshops, each of two or three days in Limay. And then you choose which grade you will teach. Unlicensed teachers must study on Saturday and then take exams. That's three years of Saturday study to get a certificate. She went for six months to Cuba for the first part of the training and then into Esteli for the Saturday study. She got a Cuban scholarship. She's taught here now for four years. There are two teachers here and about 25 kids.

Q: How is someone selected to be a teacher?

A: An individual decides for themselves.

Q: Do they have any criticism of the Sandinistas?

A: The situation in the country is getting worse, but they still understand. Pre-revolution. If you had the money you could buy anything. But now it's fairer - even with the rationing.

1110 - Q: What percentage of the fifth graders go on with their education?

A: Because of the lack of money, very few go on. It's all free up until the fifth grade's end.

Now we switch and they ask us questions.

The teacher asked if we know how donations are distributed. They've gotten some, but they are confused at how the distribution decisions are made.

What brings us down here? Our ideology?. Clair response. Richard responds.

What about the (US?) election that's coming up? Will things continue in the same direction? Richard responds.

Are we comfortable here? What about the disinformation in our home press? Dennis responds. Edith responds. Don responds.

He says they are also badly informed down here. But will it be hard for us to go back and talk about the things we've seen here. Are we CIA repressed? Sherry responds. Richard responds.

Gary says we do have a form of repression when outside people with dissenting views are prevented from entering and speaking. Edith responds.

Can we vote for who we want? Richard responds.

Is the presidential winner voted in by popular election?

They know the Contra aid gets through even though it is known that the majority of the US is against it? Clara responds.

I don't understand or agree with how we do such things in the US. So, how can we hope to explain it to these people?

1215 - last question.

Q: What are we seeing that is positive? Comparing the city workers in the country workers.

These people have sat patient for a long time with high interest.

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After this is lunch. I give my school supplies to the school at this co-op. And then we go on a co-op tour to see the tobacco drying building.

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1445 - We are at the Experimental Grape Cooperative.

Pedro Joakim Cruz - responsible for the center. He is a cattle raising technician.

Mauricio Betanco - technician in grape growing. Is responsible for grapes in three different regions. And he's a superior technician in agricultural.

Richard introduces us with some humor. These two technicians seem to have some education and they seem a bit serious.

He's going to speak of the history of this experimental center. It began in '82 to study how to best use this dry zone. For basic grains, corn, beans, muca, sorghum, grapes, , Papaya, Tamarindo.... They also have a department involved with cattle and their nutrition. And they also deal with native legumes. It's too expensive to import legumes. Cotton would be good to grow here.

Regarding grapes specifically, they began an '82. They obtained grapes from California and France. They were financed by the Swiss government. And some crops and techniques were introduced here. They evaluate different types of crops and fertilization techniques. They want farmers in the area to grow grapes. Now 11.5 Monsanas are planted and 4.5 or producing. And more farmers have requested to do so. Equipment that they have comes from the Swiss.

Climate: they are 280 m above the sea level in the main temperature. Here is 26°C and they get 800-1200 mm<sup>3</sup> of rain per year. This is ideal for grapes and except for the recent floods it's gone quite well. They also raise some special crops like cactus fruits.

Objective: use local materials and working semi commercially (local use and some sales to remote areas). They are in the first stages of wine production now. They are doing home level wine production since they don't have large scale production equipment. They're experimenting with raisins also. Currently, most of their crops are sold as fresh fruit

Fruit varieties they sell are Italian, Moscato, Hamburg and Cardinal.  
And the wine varieties they have are Black Granco and Green M (?).

The Swiss have other projects here which include milk, reforestation, creating drinkable, water, and protection of waterways.

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Q: Gary asked if there is any wine that we could sample?

A: Yes, they'll give us a bottle but it's not too good due to their novices.

Q: Are there any problems with the Contras here and does this co-op send some of its profits back to the government?

A: There are no profits yet, but they expect a good crop next year.

The US wants to ruin the Nicaraguan economy. And since the Nicaraguan government has lots of investment here, the Contras want to destroy the co-op. In '85 the contras came close to doing this, but the army chased them away.

The Swiss money given here is not loans, but rather gifts of solidarity.

We eat dinner at this point and then we have a meeting where we discussed the evangelistic meeting that we had the previous evening.



## 14 Oct 88 - At the Grape Co-op ?

0820 - We have breakfast and then we have a meeting with Pedro Cruz. Pedro wants us to tell him about our experiences here since we've been in Nicaragua.

Clara says that a farm like this is part of the promise of this revolution for the third world. And I agree.

Pedro brings a bottle of their local wine and at 0845 in the morning we're down it among many toasts to each other.

I lead a reflection by reading Chief Seattle's letter to President Pierce in 1854. This is from my book, "The Peace Reader".

Gary translates for Pedro so I go very slow in my reading. I open with comments on how white men from Europe have virtually conquered the world. And, following the reading, I comments on how abstract political ideas ruined the lives of many simple people in this world.

---

Now we are away and driving to Esteli.

Sheri, Tammy, Barry, Don, Edith, and Jane.

Sheri, Donna and Barry regale us with peace songs and Monty Python skits.

In Esteli, Sara admires my book (*The Peace Reader?*) and I give it to her.

1210 - We are now at an El Salvadorian restaurant named Casa de Amistad. Lots of great Liberation Theology and revolutionary posters here and I've taken pictures of some.

1250 - After our lunch, we have a session with the people at the restaurant regarding who they are and what they are about. They are part of an organization that uses the acronym ACRES, and they have no political affiliation.

As refugees they began arriving here in '80 and '81 and they saw a need for an organization. Now ACRES has offices in several cities and each of these are organized as work cooperatives. The function of ACRES is to organize and retain a sense of being El Salvadorians. They very much want to not depend on or load down the Nicaraguan government. And they have been successful up until now.

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They are trying to collect aid to give to those who are trying to return to rural areas in El Salvador. They identify a lot with the churches in El Salvador, because they push for a solution to the social problems there. There are five co-ops here In Esteli. There are three in this building. A restaurant coop, a sewing coop and clothing sales co-op. Elsewhere in town, there is carpentry shop coop and an agricultural co-op. They're trying to build resources and see how to help those in El Salvador. 4300 El Salvadorians are here and 1200 have returned El Salvador to the abandoned rural areas. This was when European observers were not allowed to go along.

Q: Does the revolutionary FMLM have a lot of popular sport in El Salvador?

*(FMLM is Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front. They changed from being a revolutionary party to a legal party in '92; when the country's civil war ended.)*

A: Yes, there are attacks even the capital. Some areas are totally under FMLM control. There are even popular People's militias which spontaneously act within cities in rural areas. In addition to the gorillas. The Indians are not a factor because in 1932 30,000 of them were massacred which effectively ended the indigenous population. Repression has been nearly constant in El Salvador since the year 1900.

Q: Evangelista's?

A: Don't know much about those churches.

Q: Are the Christian-Based Communities in El Salvador?

A: Yes. Definitely since '65. They are called 'precas'. The ideas of Liberation Theology resulted in widespread slaughter of priests for having liberal idea.

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1420 - Roberto Guerra gave us a plant tour.

1530 - The plant tour was interesting. Supposedly, it's the largest facility of its kind in Central America, and possibly in all of Latin America. Most such food, production plants, or single food, stuff, production lines. While this one has multiple production lines and it is capable of significant parallel production. It is a large complex of buildings, some 50 or so miles north of Managua.

*(Page 49 ends) (There is no page 51)*

*(This is a memory that I'm not exactly sure where to place in the narrative. I think it most likely happened on the 14th on our ride back from Limay through Esteli and then onto Managua.*

*We were stopped at a roadside restaurant in the countryside. I recall that we were outside on the long side of a building with a dirt road running parallel to the building in front of us and there was jungle/forest on the other side of the road. It was quiet and no many people were passing.*

*A young kid, who looked about 14 to me, stepped out of the forest and approached us. he may have been wearing military style fatigues - I can't recall. But I do recall that he was carrying a military style rifle.*

*He came over to us and engaged us in conversation. Essentially, I think he wanted to know who we were and what we were doing. Who he was (Sandinista, Contra or independent) wasn't clear. What was clear (though he was not overtly belligerent) was that he had a weapon, we did not, and he was deciding if we were OK or not. After awhile, he must have decided that we were not a problem and left.*

*My enduring memory is that we were quite vulnerable and that I wasn't comfortable that someone with the mind and judgments of a 14 year old seemed to be deciding if he should shoot us, take us prisoner or ignore us. I could sense that he felt his power over us during the exchange.*

*In the end, nothing happened and we continued on. Interestingly, though I remember this event, I never wrote about in in my logbook.)*

## 15 Oct 88 - Managua

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At our morning reflection, Richard brings up a conversation he had with Luis driving yesterday. Luis is discouraged by the revolution and claims it's corrupted. I say it doesn't matter how they run their revolution - we, the US, need to get the hypocrisy out of our government.

0935 - We are touring the city in a bus. So far we've seen Ben Linder Park, downtown Managua (the '72 earthquake destroyed most of it), the Cathedral and the National Palace (which is now the treasury) and the "Rambo" Statue.

Then we went back on the bus to lunch at the WFP house. After this, I wash some clothes in the community pila.

*(Page 53) (Note at the top of this page says, "We saw the Cordoba go from 460/dollar to 760/dollar during our stay. It declined in three jumps.")*

*(Tape T06A @ 00:00 Bgns)*

1335 - We're listening to WFP, Cary Parker is their media interface person and I'm taping the discussion.

The larger media players all have reporters in Managua.

1435 - I taped Carrie's talk and the answers.

*(Tape T06A @ 30:07 Ends)*

*(Tape T06B @ 00:00 Bgns)*

*(Tape T06B @ 13:03)*

1500 - Now we have Julio Maldonado, and he is part of the exile groups and medical workers. He's a Honduran who will talk about Honduras. Again I'm taping this because my pen is dying.

*(Tape T06B @ 30:00 Ends)*

*(Tape T07A @ 00:00 Bgns)*

*(Tape T07A @ 30:04 Ends)*

*(Tape T07B @ 00:00 Bgns)*

*(Tape T07B @ 29:56 Ends)*

*(Tape T08A @ 00:00 Bgns)*

*(Tape T08A @ 30:00 Ends)*

*(Note: Tape T08B's contents were lost. So the next tape used will be T09A))*

1700 - Good discussion, but this guy "really" delivers a thought!

## 16 Oct 88 - Managua

0750 - Last night, we had a sing-along out here on the porch. One of the two Hondurans led most of it. I left after most of it, and sat in bed and thought about things. It's beginning to come to me that Joan won't be waiting for me when I get home and that these next months will be full of changes. I wrote a rather sad poem.

This morning, Gary, Sheri, Edith, and myself got up to walk to the top of "FSNL" Hill. We got about 2/3 of the way up before we pooped out. It's a beautiful view.

I asked Gary to sum up his experience here and I was happy to see that I wasn't too far off from his opinion.

0800 - We're about to begin reflection. Good poems by a Nicaraguan poet about women and their lives and their oppression. A good discussion of women's rights follows.

0840 - David Dye is talking to us about the Nicaraguan Economy. He came in '82 and is at the Institute of Social and Economic Studies. He's getting his PhD at Stanford now.

*(Tape T09A @ 00:00 Bgns)*

Over the years, he's gotten a good grip on the Nicaraguan economy. He delivered a two-part speech to us. (1) is the current state of the economy, and (2) are details of the 'Mixed Economy'.

The idea of a 'Mixed Economy' is not well understood in the US.

We can divide the period since '79. For the first three or four years, it was a partial recovery from the revolution's damage. Workers and peasants got good gains.

Approximately in '82, however, there began a process of steady decline. The gross national product of Nicaragua fell 25% between '80 to '87.

Many poor people have seen a 40% loss. In '84, inflation increased by 40%. In '85, it was 300%. In '87 it was 1300%. And in '88 it is even worse. The first six months of '88 shows a rate of 1100%. This is the highest in the western hemisphere.

(Page 54) *(Notes at the top of this page say, "People are required to register to vote but not to vote." And, "coffee is the main export and is declining because it is labor-intensive and labor is short. Why? Workers drafted into the military.")*

The result has been the government's introduction of strong controls. Exports in '86 were \$225 million. '81 was \$450 million. '77 was \$670 million.

This economy is deeply dependent on foreign trade. The capacity of the economy to generate export \$ sufficient to pay for imports is dropping like a rock.

The government deficit calculated as a percentage of the gross national product is approximately 20%. To compare with the US, at its worst, is only 5 to 6% of gross national product.

This is a badly out of balance economy. Above and beyond basic poverty inherent in the society itself.

Some groups have gotten better. I.e., some of the peasant co-ops. Also, some who had regular jobs before have gone into small merchant businesses, and speculating.

The overall result is that some of those that the revolution wanted to improve have actually fallen badly. The revolution's base of political support is being eroded by Reagan's policies. This means the next election the FSLN may not win so big. Or many just won't vote (the opposition here is weak and confused).

The Nicaragua government blames all economic problems on the US. It does admit some small mistakes. COSCP (the higher counsel of private enterprise) says problems are the result of Sandinista mismanagement, and these are the result of the government's attempt to impose Socialism. David says he gives a lot (*of credit?*) to the opposition side of the debate.

He says there are other factors to consider:

(1) The impacts of the war on the economy are diverse. Direct and indirect. The direct impact is the destruction of the co-ops. And military activities disrupt food planting in the north. The indirect effects are the military is a drain on the civilian labor pool and



this results in a drop in the agricultural production capability. There have been 80,000 draftees plus professionals taken into the military. Also, the government has allocated greater than 50% of the budget to the defense sector. Tax income covers only about 1/2 of what the government spends. And so it prints money to cover the rest. And the result is inflation.

(2) Nicaragua's economic interface to the world economy. I.e. the world markets have had a recession in the very products that Nicaragua exports. The value of exports have dropped while the cost of imports has risen. It is a lose-lose situation. Real purchasing power has dropped by 1/3 as a result of this and it is no fault of the Nicaraguan government.

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(3) The legacy of past attempts and economic developments. I.e. Somoza's policies on development. At one point they grew cotton and then later they focused on beef exports. There was a major impact on the ecological basis of society and this later resulted in economic problems. I.e., a buildup of pesticides from 40 years of trying to grow cotton in the tropics. The bugs resistance has increased from all this. They did as many as 30 sprayings per season. By the mid-80s it became unprofitable to keep growing cotton. On balance this stuff was a net negative. There are other examples of problems: Overgrazing, deforestation, and lake poisoning. All these make the present government's problems tougher.

Summing up: There are already sufficient reasons for problems without the government's policy problems. But the government's policies have aggravated the problems.

Nicaragua had a policy, until last year, of subsidized crop prices. But you were required to sell your crops to the government agency.

The peasants saw that the government prices were not rising, but that the black market was offering 2 to 3 times more. Gradually, many peasants switched over to the black market. Or they just began to grow only what they needed for themselves.

The government finally woke up to the cost of its policy; both economically and politically. And this was because the peasants were getting alienated.

Last year, they changed to a free trade system. The short run result was consumer prices in the cities rose, but the peasant's motivation increased also.

Climate problems these last two years have been unfortunate but the government's policy is sound. The general drift of the government's changes is to more and more allow free market forces to operate.

*(Tape T09A @ 46:48 Ends)*

*(Tape T09B @ 00:00 Bgns)*

The Nature of a Mixed Economy: There's lots of confusion about this term; it is a vague term.

The state owns 12% of the land. 20 to 25% is held by the co-ops (as a result of agrarian reform). 20 to 30% is private (COSEP). And the rest is held by private peasant farmers.

Overarching all of this is a system. Its function is to increase the economic development of the society and to redistribute money from the top to the bottom of the society; where possible. These things are difficult to do at the same time, Cuba would seem to be the only clear success of this so far. Most countries grow, but the rich versus the poor split widens.

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How they will they attempt to do it:

(1) The banking system is nationalized.

The government knows who has capital and what it uses are. The government can now finance, peasant projects. But many peasants don't repay. The policy is now changing as a result of the lack of repayment; which itself causes inflation to increase.

(2) There's a transfer of income from the rich to help the poor.

I.e. there are official export monopolies for coffee. Therefore, exporters are required them to sell their product to the government which then sells the product onward. The

government pays the growers, a small amount in Cordobas, and keeps the majority of the profits for social good. As a result, the growers are hostile to the revolution.

(3) The property redistribution laws (agrarian reform laws).

There is no upper limit on how much land you can own. But if you produce less than some specific level, the government can take your land without compensation and redistribute it. The government cannot afford to have land laying idle. Growers left the land idle as a political statement.

These three ideas are the heart of a mixed economy system.

He says medium and small private farmers and ranchers have been trying to make the adjustment. They are switching from COSEP to UNAG (union of farmers and ranchers). But the very rich are resisting. The overall negative picture is bad which obscures the fact that the mixed economy conversion is actually working well within the small and medium sized private sector.

David says the real reason for Reagan's policies towards Nicaragua is the fear of the larger Capitalists that other Latin countries will follow Nicaragua's example and the result will be a loss of freedom of operation for multinational corporations.

The inflow of support from the eastern bloc is what allows Nicaragua to deal with the imbalance of its import/export trade.

So one might ask is the USSR "running" Nicaragua? And what is the USSR's motive?

The answer is that they think that if Reagan is allowed to sink Nicaragua, then Reagan will next go after Cuba. Soviet aid to Nicaragua is the absolute minimum necessary to keep it afloat.

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*(Tape T09B @ 47:58 Ends)*

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1100 - We've driven across town to attend mass at the church of Obando y Bravo. A beautiful, well-kept building. The people are clean and affluent. I feel out of place in my tee shirt, which says, "This Very Body the Buddha". Oops.

1200 - They've begun the ceremony where people stand in line and get small wafers and a bit of wine. I walked outside to make some notes. Obando y Bravo talked for 30 or 40 minutes and I know that good portions of what he said was political from the various words I heard go by. But my Spanish is far from being able to follow. I think we're due for a condensed translation this afternoon.

I remembered a section of the book, "The Man who Mistook his Wife for a Hat", which dealt with people who cannot "get" abstract verbal stuff.

They can still follow quite a lot and can tell much about a person by empathy and body-english. I watched Obando y Bravo closely to see what I could get.

We drive back to lunch.

1310 - I do a post Mortem of the service; talking with Kate. The church is here to serve people. Those who want power over people will be brought down.

While others go to the lake, Jane and I go to the campesino flea market with Buddy and his wife. Then we have milkshakes and come back and I wash clothes.

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1730 - We are now at a Christian-Based Community Church, and it is fantastically painted. Buddy says that the Mass we will see here is as revolutionary to traditional Masses as the original Masses were to the Romans.

The walls are covered with mixed religious and political images, and the music is lively and interesting. The room is circular and the priest stands at a table near the middle. Now he has come out in front of the table and simply sets a chair down and began talking into a microphone.

The ceiling above is painted with wild, flowing religious images. Some of the paintings are images of the Spanish arriving and Indians in their original clothes.

Some of the pictures are of specific men who I think, have fallen in the revolution.

Some appear to be campesino women holding portraits of, perhaps, their 'disappeared' sons.

Some people are pictured as carrying a cross through the midst of these images.

There is imagery of people doing a surrealist harvest and then putting the food into a boat.

The priest is still reading and I see several Europeans around the room; besides us.

Buddy tells us this is a campesino church. And here the idea is that Jesus is just like a campesino. He labors, he sweats, he goes to the park and he buys ice cream.

The priest has finished reading and has gone back and now music plays. The people are going to the center and dropping money into one of two baskets.

So, he is just like us - this Jesus. When the Mass and the music are done, then everyone stands, embraces or pats each other's arms.

Then the priest speaks a moment more, the music restarts, he eats the bread, drinks the wine, wipes his mouth and walks to the front of the table, where he and an assistant give communion to a line which forms.

Music with a Latin beat plays now. I see more Caucasians amid the crowd. The music stops and the priest drains the wine.

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He speaks a moment more wishing us to go in peace. And then we go.

I continue to watch. He smiles and is without pomp as he takes off the colored sash from his white robe and folds it. A boy of 10 or so comes to get it and he gives the boy a very natural hug.

Behind me now, I see the final mural. Sandino and Fonseca are holding the Nicaraguan and the FSLN flags.

This place is the urban version of the Christian-Based Communities we saw in the Campo.

The "Misa Campesina" is their music.

My summary of all this: powerful and moving.

Liberation Theology Bibliography:

- The Silencing of Leonard Boff by Harvey Cox
- Towards a Christian Political Ethic by Jose Miguez Bonino

2000 - We have a meeting to develop a final statement. Tammy is controlling the meeting, and I am recording.

(1) The war being waged is wearing the Nicaraguan people down. Economically and emotionally. It is wearing their political commitment down (by being destructive towards them). We mention Low Intensity Conflict. And it is all interfering with their right to self-determination.

(1a) Focus on what-where-when. Integrate our itinerary into the story and mention the speakers, mention the cities, mentioned the dates in the title, and give a sense of the general breath of where we went.

(2) The opposition parties in Nicaragua are weak and disorganized.  
Set aside until post COSAP.

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(3) Low Intensity Conflict - Discuss how the stabilize the economy and increases inflation.

*(There's a disorganized section here as I recorded our free-flowing discussion in (3), thru (7). I'm going to skip over transcribing notes in favor of reporting out the Final Statement we developed. If you want to see the intermediates, you can refer to the original journal, itself. Thus we skip over Page 60, 61 and 62 here.)*

**17 Oct 88 - Managua, Nicaragua**

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I worked on our final statement outline last night and I worked on it more this morning after breakfast.

*(Tape T10A @ 00:00 Bgns)*

0915 - This morning, we have a speaker: Fernando Perez Pena.

He was born in Cuba and studied Spanish literature in New York. He taught for three years in Cuba after the revolution (in the early 60s) and then he was blacklisted.

He studied law in Los Angeles and then practiced for 17 years in Seattle. Two years ago, he came to Nicaragua and is working with the Nicaraguan Supreme Court. He's writing a digest of Nicaraguan law dating back to the 1800s. And he's doing it on a computer. Probably, it will be a 40 year job. He's also probably the only foreigner with a membership in the Nicaraguan bar.

Q: Are you a Marxist?

A: Yes! He likes in economy which fills needs and not pockets.

*(Tape T10A @ ?? ?? Ends)*

*(Tape T10B @ 00:00 Bgns)*

At the closing I talk to him about computers and he said he wants or needs a 386 with 40 MB Drive and 2 MB of memory for his law work.

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1055 - We're at the COSEP Offices now.

COSEP = Superior Council of Private Enterprise.

It is composed of six chambers: Industry, Commerce, Professionals, Construction, Agriculture, and the Institute for Development.

This organization has existed for 60 years. There is also a Board of Directors and a President.

*(Tape T10B @ 41:20 stops here)*

The Genteel man who talks to us is Nicholas Bolanos; a member of one of the chambers.

COSEP's Role in the '78/'79 revolution was important. The members have different political ideologies, but all participated in the anti-Somoza revolution.

As a result of this, the new government (June 79) was created in San Jose, Costa Rica. They wrote the original plan of government to be democratic with a five member junta plus a council of state with approximately 33 seats.

Six of these seats went to COSEP (one seat per chamber). One of the new changes was 'agrarian reform'. The land that was to be distributed was to be taken from the Somoza family and their close allies. The new government was to be pluralistic, but three of the five junta members would be Sandinistas. They had a commitment to the Nicaraguan people and to the international community.

BUT they began to pull away from the original agreement and to implement a totalitarian government based on Marxism. They chose to abolish private property. They took land from Somoza and his allies, and from others, in the private sector, who had fought for the revolution.

Many things began to be confiscated. They took these things and used them for the benefit of the Sandinistas, and not to give to the people.

They built up the same system as Somoza had.

Their system was based on four things:

- (1) Militarism - an army was at their service.
- (2) Economic power.
- (3) Structures in the Constitution - ensuring their control of power.
- (4) Electoral fraud was instituted.

*(Page 66) (skipped Page 65; with its final report notes)*



Under Somoza, the military was volunteer. Some of them fought (they thought) against Communism. Those who stayed until the end and surrendered were promised justice. But they were all sentenced to 30 years in prison.

The new Sandinista army was made of pro-Sandinistas and they were advised by Panama, Venezuela, Cuba, East Germany and Bulgaria. After a while, only the eastern block advisors stayed on.

The December '79 law: any organization that carries the name "Sandinista" belongs to the party. Therefore the army belongs to the party as do the police.

50,000 to 60,000 people were in the army in service to the Sandinistas because of the draft. This is unlike the 8000 or so that served under Somoza. Two years of required service and then, from the age of 25 to 40, they are in a semi active service. Once in the army, they are Sandinistas and are given political indoctrination.

Economic Power: The Sandinista's new power, weakened the economic position of the opposition and many left Nicaragua. At first, those who were leaving had lost property. But later, as many as 500,000 left from all walks of life. They didn't want their kids to join the Sandinista army. Education has become deeply Marxist based. Laws were passed limiting private initiatives in those first months.

Banking was nationalized in the country (this involved the two main national banks, plus the foreign banks here). The foreigners were driven out.

They also nationalized the system for foreign exports. So now producers must sell to the government without negotiation. And the government pays whatever it wants. It pays low. The result is production has dropped strongly.

They also nationalized the importing of goods like tractors, chemicals, and etc.

They also control wages and salary as well. It's not that there's a minimum wage now - but it's a fixed amount; and no one can pay any more or any less.

It is so bad, that people cannot make a living and they leave. The private sector's financing comes now from the government.

The agrarian reform laws, are like a hatchet. I.e., if a farm is deemed inefficient, then they simply confiscate it. They've done this to punish people in the opposition.

(Page 67)

There are no guarantees on property, homes or possessions. The largest Sugar Mill in the country was taken near Chinandega for no reason; except to do away with private opposition.

Some of the opposition have left, some of them have been killed and some are in jail.

He mentions a pamphlet about '81. When COSEP was trying to get Ortega to change back to the original plan, they sent a letter to Ortega. Only this one letter, of the many thousands that were sent, got a response.

And the response was that three of the six directors would spend some months in jail.

"Guillermo Quant", a Chinese Nicaraguan was taken by the Sandinistas and accused of being a CIA agent. He worked here at COSEP. He was given 30 years in prison. Later, they said they didn't have enough evidence to prove he was a CIA agent. So they changed his sentence from 30 years to 22 years.

"Manuel Alegria", was a Director of COSEP's (?) Institute, and got 16 years for gathering information about economics here. His information gathering was financed by a German Institute (Conrad Adenauer). And his data was obtained from Nicaraguan government publications. He was accused of giving secret information to the US Embassy and it was claimed that he was a CIA agent.

On July 10th, 1988, the Coordinora Democratica - A group of political parties of the opposition, which has existed since '80. They organized several demonstrations to support the plan Ortega originally signed (equipas). Each demonstration got bigger and bigger. Then there was the fourth rally at Nadime (sp?). This is where the Sandinistas busted heads. 30 people were captured. Some in homes days later and in other cities. They went to political prisons. One was a lady political leader. They got at least six months of jail sentences. Later it was changed and they were tried elsewhere. And many received even longer sentences. Being ill treated in jails with common criminals. Bad

food and getting sick. Because of the Sandinistas, they've seen clandestine jails. Some claim that over 10,000 political prisoners exist. A friend was held two weeks and he lost 18 pounds and was a nervous wreck afterwards and left the country. He says he could be accused of being a CIA agent.

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His property was all confiscated, along with his brother's, three years ago. They brought no judge or papers or anything. They just came in with guns and took it. Now called the "Camino Ortega".

The result is that production dropped from \$650 million/year in '78/'79. Also in '78/'79, the average personal income was \$260/year. Nine years it is \$60/year.

Many foreigners think it's all Reagan's fault.

In 1950 they began to grow cotton. Before that it was only coffee.

Now they can only make 1/2 of the 1978 coffee exports. He says that people were better off before.

He says it's hard to believe but if we could find people on the street, who could talk without fear, they would say the same. He reads us a letter supporting him and his point of view from an ex Sandinista soldier.

The Constitution: Says that everyone has to defend the Constitution. Ortega said in '81/'82, that it is a Marxist Revolution. Why then should they have to defend it?

He discusses the two major systems: Capitalist versus Communist. And he says that Capitalism has its excesses too, but then he lists all the freedoms associated with it.

He says there is a competition going on between the superpowers, and they are using Nicaragua as a pawn. In '78 they said "Anything is better than Somoza". Now, the Sandinista government has many Somoza people in it. And many regret their words. They know here how to recognize dictators, so we should believe them when they say this is a dictatorship.

Education: They are pushing Marxist/Atheist ideologies into their heads.

Divorce here is very easy compared to in the states. If either person decides to divorce, then it's done.

They attack Cardinal, Obando y Bravo and they attack religion. A Jewish synagogue in Managua was confiscated.

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Communism and Christianity cannot ultimately be reconciled. We forget the "real" meaning of Communism. They say they are making a new society. It will have no God, no morals and it be at the service of the Sandinistas.

The constitution says that the source of all power is man and not God. How can atheists be the spiritual leaders of a country?

In '79, on the steps of the Cathedral (destroyed in 72), they put images of Marx and Lennon. Then, inside a white circle intended to be Christ, they put Sandino. It says they're substituting Sandino for Christ.

*(Tape T10B @ 41:21 resumes here)*

Now we switch to a Q & A session. *(this was recorded and I apparently made no notes)*

*(Tape T10B @ 59:22 Ends) (end of my last tape)*

We return from COSEP and eat lunch. Father Dan Driscoll came by to visit while we were eating. Then we took off to the CAV bookstore; where I bought three tapes and two photos with lots of help from Sheri and Sara.

1500 - Now we're back in about to start a debriefing meeting. This is a three hour process.

- (1) Review of Training
- (2) State Side Reentry
- (3) Emotional Unwinding

Buddy is going to facilitate this meeting.

I discuss converting my tapes into cassette form for distribution. And I discuss getting my notes copied into a word processor. And I discuss that I'm going to hook up the PeaceNet for WFP in Los Angeles.

*(none of this that I said I would do ever happened.)*

*(Now begins a rough draft of the WFP Group Statement for the Southern California Delegation of Oct 4 to 18, 1988 from the notes in my LogBook. I'm not entirely clear on the date when this draft was written. But I suspect it was 18 Oct 88.)*

*(Pages 71 - 76) (page 70 was just junk)*

**A Low Intensity Conflict is being waged against the government and people of Nicaragua by the US. This war and the economic embargo are eroding the political, emotional, and economic will of the people; whose only apparent crime is the exercise their right to self-determination.**

**Our group is spent two weeks in Nicaragua traveling and documenting the situation and it is our conclusion that the situation is grave.**

**The effects of the Low Intensity Conflict on Nicaragua can be seen in virtually every aspect of their society. Their economy is in a vicious downward spiral. With greater than 50% of their budget going to defense and a large proportion of the population mobilized, fields lie fallow, and store shelves, empty. Inflation is running above 1000% per year, and within the last year beggars have reappeared on the streets for the first time since the triumph of the revolution. People say they want to plant, but they can neither find nor afford the seed. They say they want to produce but the lack of raw materials and spare parts increasingly cripples their industry.**

**But worse to our sensibilities than the economic chaos is the emotional and psychological violence done by the Contras, who attempt to subvert the revolution by terrorizing the populous. Rather than attacking the government or its military forces frontally, it targets those parts of the revolution which most benefit the common people. Workers attempting to set up healthcare centers or literacy projects, for the poor are murdered for their efforts. Farmers and ranchers who organize co-ops for their common good risk, having their children kidnapped. And those who rise to post of public leadership face assassination.**

**One Nicaraguan, who traveled with us for several days, keeps his identity, and whereabouts quiet since he was marked for death on the Contra Radio. His offense seems to be that he works in the adult educational program and the national**

literacy campaigns.

Stories of kidnapping, torture, rape, sexual mutilation, and death by the Contras are widespread, common and well documented throughout Nicaragua.

The US administration asserts that Nicaragua is a totalitarian state which denies political and religious freedom to its citizens. Armed with these charges, it backs a conflict, which is slowly destroying the fabric of Nicaragua and society.

It is our opinion that none of the administrations assertions are warranted by the facts. During our tour, we met with government and opposition leaders, with peasants working at rural co-ops, with urban intellectuals, with the families we stayed with, and with various church groups; both for and against the revolutionary process.

With respect to their politics, Nicaraguans enjoy a pluralistic political system. Opposition parties are permitted to operate, and the election held in 1984 was deemed, by most international observers, as fair. The Sandinista party won by a large majority. The opposition parties appear to be fragmented and ineffectual at this time though they do hold seats in the legislature and their advertising appears intermittently around Managua. Everywhere we went, people seem to feel free to express their political opinions, and did so with a wide amount of diversity.

The second assertion of the US administration is that religious freedoms are suppressed in Nicaragua. The vast majority of Nicaraguans we spoke to find this a ludicrous idea. If anything, Nicaraguan society seems overrun with competing religions. We visited with the three largest religious groups. The traditional Catholics seem to support the conservative side of Nicaraguan politics, and are generally against the Sandinistas and their revolution. The Christian-based communities are derived from Catholicism on are deeply committed to realizing the visions of Liberation Theology. This group strongly supports the revolutionary process. The last group are the Evangelicals, who choose to be apolitical and focus primarily on spiritual matters.

In summary, we believe that all US funding and support for the Low Intensity Conflict, the Contra forces, and the Economic Embargo should be discontinued. Such support has been based on claims about Nicaragua, which we have found to be

patently untrue. It is our opinion that the Nicaraguans have freely and knowledgeably, chosen the political and economic models used in their society and neither the US nor any other nation has any right or justification to interfere in their self-determination.



## 19 Oct 88 - San Juan, Costa Rica - Hotel Corobici

*(Page 77) (After my time with WFP in Nicaragua, I flew to San Juan, Costa Rica, on 18 Oct 88 to meet my friend David Christensen for a week's vacation. My logbook notes continue there. This personal vacation doesn't have anything to do with WFP. But, as you will see, we will return to Managua and WFP before we are done.)*

0920 - I'm sitting under an overhang roof in one of the hotel's restaurants next to the pool. It's raining pretty hard and making a big racket on the metal roof above me.

Dave met me yesterday at the airport customs and all of that was easy. The airport in Managua, however, was a bit of a wait. No one spoke English there. So, it was fun figuring out where to go, what to do and when.

I bought two books in English at the airport. One was about the Sandinista Revolution and the other was about the Dirty Contra War. I've read more than half of the latter at this point.

Costa Rica is a definite cultural shock after Nicaragua. It's a lot like the U.S. (as Julieta said) except everything's written in Spanish. Compared to where I've been these last two weeks, this is massive opulence. By U.S. business standards, this is actually a nice hotel.

Dave and I went out to dinner last night. I had a steak with mushrooms (Bueno). Then we hit several bars and finally ended up at "Key Largo" which is full of prostitutes. That was fun.

Dave had been there before. The girls find the most amazing ways to make their approaches. We weren't gonna take them up on their offers, but it was fun, talking and joking.

## 23 Oct 88 - San Juan, Costa Rica - Hotel Bougainvillea

*(Page 78) (After three days of sight-seeing and having fun, Dave left today.)*

Dave left today. At this hour, he may be sitting in LAX, waiting to get a plane to Sacramento.

Earlier, we caught a cab to "Key Largo" and took some photos there. We have spent a lot of time there this week. The girl he met there, Audi (*I think I remember her name was Mercedes*), has become special to him, I think.

We continued on after that and the cab dropped me at the Hotel Corobici where I tracked down some errant clothes while Dave continued on to the airport. I got my stuff and walked back to my hotel.

I walked. And when I began to get into the more populated areas, I got uncomfortable, and stopped at a park, and sat on a bench.

Some of it was the alien and alone feeling you can easily get in a foreign country. And some of it was my gathering thoughts about Joan; and our future, if any.

Probably this is the first time I've really had some alone time since I began at LAX with the WFP group.

What's Joan going to do when I get back? What has she decided? What has she done? What do I want? What if she wanted me like I want her to? Would it be enough?

That old, empty and alone feeling just about swallowed me up on that bench. The man on the bench across from me was maybe 10 years older than I am. And he looked very alone and hopeless. The couples walking by spoke some secret language. With Dave gone, I realized there wasn't a soul that I knew in the entire country.

2150 - If Joan is just sitting still on hold and didn't believe what I said the weekend I left, then I will really be in a quandary when I return. Logically and intellectually I understood and meant what I said.

I.e., "Why should we prolong our relationship, which is deep, monogamous, and trusting,

when we can both see that it is doomed, no matter how good it is from day to day?"

The problem is emotional and it will be hard to terminate things if she wants to continue.

It will be willfully bringing pain and loss upon myself. It will be pushing away someone I love and who loves me. If she's not decided, my heart and mind will be in a battle that I'd hoped to avoid when I left.

*(Page 79)*

If she's moved on and/or decided that our split is for the best, then it is going to hurt. Things like that don't just fade away after 2 1/2 years.

And what about Sharon? I've talked to Dave a lot about Sharon. There's a tremendous potential there with her - but not a lot of feeling yet. But it seems like it's a natural.

*(Joan and I did call it quits. And later, I got together with Sharon and lived with her for a year and then we married. A marriage that lasted 22 years [1990-2012]).*

2250 - I just got back from the bar here in the hotel. I was talking to "Kermit"; who works for the US Embassy on the "Voice of America" program.

I told him I'd just spent the last two weeks in Nicaragua and I shared some of my conclusion about what I'd seen to provoke a bit of political interchange between us. And all of this between my third and fourth glasses of wine.

He had mixed responses. On one hand, he says he wouldn't do what he does, except that he believes that the "Voice of America" transmits nothing but the truth.

He referred me to "Mercedes Laycayo", in the Costa Rican town of "Canuas" north of San José. Mercedes runs a motel across from the only gas station there. Mercedes was part of Somoza's world and can argue both pro-Somoza in anti-Sandinista POVs quite well.

On the other hand, he concurs that the US should let Nicaragua alone. I referred to the Contra atrocities in '84 and '85 and he did not disagree. He intimated that there was

more he could tell me except that security clearances prevented him from doing so.

He says he knows John Hull personally. He says Hull's status with the embassy is a very on again off again thing. He claims Hull is a good guy. But that he has a bit of a Soldier of Fortune complex.

He mentions a lady who works with the embassy (in the US Information Agency?) Her parents were associated with " United Fruit Company". And he feels that this company is a lot of the reason why the US has problems down here.

*(Page 80)*

We go off, then, into a discussion on why rapacious Capitalism seems to so often set things up to be ripe for communist revolutions. He agrees strongly that it does, but then says that "that's how it is". And now what are we supposed to do? Let Cuba and the USSR just come in and take over Nicaragua? I say there must be a middle ground and he says, with a playful punch on the shoulder, that I'm an idealist.

At some point, I tell him that the Nicaraguan revolution seems like a gentle socialist revolution to me and that I've been to the USSR and that I've studied the Cuban Revolution ... And he's gone in very short order!

I guess my mention of Cuba and the USSR may have triggered some conditioned anti-spy, response in him or something?

Other odds and ends from our discussion: He says that the Voice of America broadcasts are liked in Managua, and that a Voice of America employee goes up there once a month to check it out.

I said that after nine years, the revolutionary fervor seems to be wearing off. We discussed Nicaragua's brain drain. I told him I was considering going back to do volunteer work. And I also shared with him what my itinerary had been and who we had talked to and that this notebook was my journal.

I find myself wondering if I've started some wheels in motion after he left so quickly. Ah well, let the truth pave the way.

*(Yes, at some point in our conversation, he suddenly left; with very little preamble. Back in my room, it gave me the creeps. Did he realize he'd said too much after too many glasses of wine? And if he'd thought that, did that possibly put me in danger? In the end, nothing happened. But I found his sudden departure disquieting.)*

## 24 Oct 88 - San Jose, Costa Rica

*(Page 81)*

1330 - Today I had lunch with Annabel. She is a Costa Rican who works as the receptionist at the Costa Rican Central Bank. Very nice lady. She spoke very little English, and I had only a little bit of Spanish, but I found out a lot about her.

She was married, and her husband died by drowning at the beach two years ago. She has a child four years old. A girl I think.

She was married earlier to an Italian and lived in Italy for a year and then Yugoslavia for three months. She speaks Spanish and Italian quite well and English just a bit.

She has three or four brothers and sisters. One brother lives in Germany.

An American girl lives with her here and she drives a 'Neva' which is a Russian car.

She's blonde about 5'10" and looks nice.. Her age, my guess, is approximately 30.

She warned me to be careful of people in the Centro area who will come right up to you and pull the gold chain off your neck. It's happened to her twice.

She showed me pictures of her child and her sister's kids.

Our language was too poor to discuss anything complex like politics.

We exchanged addresses and she suggested we could write and I agreed. I like her. She's warm and friendly and relaxed.

In a few minutes I'm going to meet Ana Astorgia. in front of McDonald's. I'm not sure what we'll do. Maybe go to the museum or the university.

*(I'd met Annabel at the bank when I went into exchange some money, I think. We wrote a few times after I returned to the US.)*

*(Ann Astorgia is a lady Dave and I met when we were out earlier being*

*tourists. She rather latched onto us and was quite friendly and we walked about with us explaining things to us and suggesting things to do. I think we were in a town near San Juan where there's some famous saint or virgin or something we'd gone to see when we met her. She lived in that town and insisted on taking us home to her house and to meet her family. My recollection of the visit was that it was a bit strange and strained. I got the feeling that she was a bit odd and that her family thought so too - though they were very cordial towards us. I can no longer recall what she and I did on this day.)*

**(An aborted return to the U.S.)**

*On the 25th, I was scheduled to fly back to the US. It did not happen as planned.*

*Beginning on the 23rd, Nicaragua was being slammed on its east coast by a massive hurricane (Hurricane Joan (oh, the irony)).*

*My Nicaraguan Airlines plane was to take me from San Jose to Managua and then onward to LAX.*

*Well, when we touched down in Managua, the plane was confiscated by the Nicaraguan government for hurricane relief efforts. And we were all simply dumped off into the city to make our way as best we could.*

*That was a surprise - but luckily I knew people in the city. I.e., the WFP folks.*

*I managed to get myself over the WFP residence and asked if they could put me up. They only had a skeleton crew on duty because there were no groups in town. But they agreed.*

*I've lost track of the dates now but I think I spent two or three days in Managua trying to arrange an onward flight. I was a strange time, sleeping in the mostly empty WFP facilities and riding busses back and forth to the airport trying to arrange a flight.*

*I recall feeling, once or twice on the busses, that I stood out as a Gringo alone and that there was a sense of danger around me.*

*Eventually, I got a flight that headed north with a stop in Honduras and then onto LAX.*

*On Oct 27th, while stranded in Managua, I wrote this next section which turned out to be the last entry in my Logbook:)*

## **27 Oct 88 - Managua, Nicaragua**

*(Page 82) (last page)*

I've never met people who impress me like the WFP long-termers here in Managua do.

Simple idealism in action doesn't begin to describe it. Voluntary poverty without religious vows While Joan Baez's music floats over this house, undergarments and cotton clothing hang on strings between the afternoon downpours amid plates of rice and beans.

They hitchhike into the countryside with nothing but a change of clothes and a notebook traveling amid the ragged women and children on the deeply potted dirt roads. The army convoys and the heat and the rain surround them on their way to huts with dirt floors and children who play barefoot with sticks.

But when word comes of killings or kidnappings, they pick up their notebooks and go. And there they find bodies and people in grief and agony, and they ask them their questions and then file their reports. Reports of clinics burned, women raped, people, mutilated, and civilians machine gunned down on public roads. They write of these things amid dust and the unbelievable poverty. Amid tears and simple people who were probably born within a mile of their house. Simple people who labor all day and often pray and sing into the evening and who are proud if they can write their name.

So, who are these long-termers? They're not fanatics. They are not ideologues. They're not rabid soldiers for a cause. They look at the end results of the US's policies in Nicaragua and they see poverty and suffering and death. They see the people's revolutionary idealism withering under a relentless military and economic attack.

They are here and they see the reality the Nicaraguans live, and it simply moves them through their compassion, their empathy and their sense of what is fair. What could speak more eloquently to me than their witnessing?