Nicaragua: a society in transition

James Mason Stillings

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NICARAGUA: A SOCIETY IN TRANSITION

by

James Mason Stillings

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

MFA PHOTOGRAPHY PROGRAM
SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTS AND SCIENCES
ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK
JUNE 1982

Gunther Cartwright
Gunther Cartwright, Chairperson
Assistant Professor
School of Photographic Arts and Sciences

Paul A. Miller
Paul A. Miller
Professor
College of General Studies, RIT

Charles C. Werberig
Charles C. Werberig
Assistant Professor
School of Photographic Arts and Sciences
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Date 8 July 1982 Signature James Mason Stillings

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In dedication . . .

To Mother and Father for their constant love, support, belief in my abilities, and inspiration by their fine examples,

and to Margy for her generous patience, understanding, kindness, and unfailing love.
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Introduction

Between December 1980 and March 1981, I spent three months in Nicaragua undertaking a documentary thesis project for a Master of Fine Arts degree in Photography. Initial preparation for the trip began in May 1980. My thesis exhibition was held October 11-18, 1981. The purpose of the thesis was to "integrate creative expression with social/political concerns by photographing aspects of societal change that have grown out of the popular revolution in Nicaragua."

This report is an accounting of that project from its inception to its completion. The project has been a rewarding experience, full of learning and growth. I have attempted herein to share many details of this experience in the hope that you, the reader, may be enriched by them as I have been.
Nicaragua: View of a Society in Transition

by James Mason Stillings

Thesis Proposal for the Degree:
Master of Fine Arts in Photography

School of Photographic Arts and Sciences
Rochester Institute of Technology
Rochester, New York

September 1980

Thesis Board:

Gunther Cartwright, Chairperson
Assistant Professor
School of Photographic Arts and Sciences

Paul A. Miller
Professor
College of General Studies

Charles C. Werberig
Assistant Professor
School of Photographic Arts and Sciences
Purpose

The intent of my thesis is to integrate creative expression with social/political concerns by photographing aspects of societal change that have grown out of the popular revolution in Nicaragua.

Background

For several years two important forces have run through my life. One is the need for creative expression, which has found its primary outlet in photography. The other is a multi-level social/political awareness which favors action over other alternatives. In the past, these two forces have often co-existed separately and peaceably. At other times they have collided head-on, calling into question the validity of "purely aesthetic" photography, the depth of my social/political concerns, and the desirability of cultivating these two forces separately or in collaboration.

This past year has brought a certain resolve. I now feel these two forces can, and should, be allowed to retain their separate identities within me. Additionally, I have opened myself to their potential combination. It is the challenge of successfully integrating creative expression and social/political concerns, via the documentary mode, that I seek in undertaking this thesis.

I am familiar with, and necessarily affected by, the tradition of documentary photography in the United States. Such individuals and groups as Lewis Hine, the Farm Security Administration, the Photo League, and W. Eugene Smith, did not merely record the people and conditions they encountered; rather they sought to visually affirm human dignity as well as to reveal the injustice of people's oppression. These photographers saw the medium as a tool to facilitate needed change. History reveals both their successes and failures.
Additionally, I am influenced by the vision of Robert Frank and Garry Winogrand. I admire their ability to capture the significant moment in a social setting with a critical eye that yields a powerful and compelling statement.

W. Eugene Smith rightly denied the existence of objectivity in documentary photography. The most a photographer can attempt is an honest, sensitive interpretation of that which he sees or experiences. My hope is to achieve this during my stay in Nicaragua.

Why Nicaragua? The inevitably asked question deserves an answer.

First, I wish to undertake my thesis away from Rochester, both to avoid the many distractions of a home environment and to take advantage of the energy and enthusiasm that a new environment stimulates.

Second, in 1977, I was fortunate enough to spend four months in Central America. While there I was exposed to Hispanic culture, the extremes of poverty and wealth, the specific economic and political conditions of the countries, and most importantly, the quiet warmth of the people. My interest in Central America, aroused by that trip, persists.

Third, pre-revolution Nicaragua fit the too common mold of many Latin American countries: a United States supported military dictatorship protected the privileged position of a small wealthy elite and the unfettered operation of the free enterprise system at the expense of the poor rural and urban masses. Revolutionary Nicaragua seeks to rectify the social and economic inequities of the past. It has set ambitious and important goals dealing with literacy, health, agrarian reform, and democratization. It faces enormous obstacles, but enjoys an unprecedented broad base of popular support. I see the social energy and commitment of the people as providing exciting potential for a documentary project.

Fourth, present conditions in Nicaragua indicate that I can travel, live, and photograph in relative safety.
Fifth, undertaking a thesis in Nicaragua will allow me to test myself. How well will I adapt to and function within a foreign culture? How successfully will the two forces of creative expression and social/political concerns merge? Will the experience be one I shall desire to repeat?

Procedure

The procedure and projected timetable for my thesis are as follows:

Fall 1980 - Thesis preparation

1. Increase familiarity with previous documentary work in Latin America, related reading.
2. Read about the history, culture, and present social/political/economic conditions in Nicaragua.
3. Maintain awareness of current events in Nicaragua.
4. Audit a hispanic culture class at RIT.
5. Intensive review of Spanish.
6. Take a conversational Spanish class through Communiversity.
7. Establish personal contacts with people who have first-hand knowledge of present conditions in Nicaragua.
8. Resolve logistical problems - transportation, visa, innoculations, letters of introduction, personal contacts in Nicaragua, access to darkroom facilities.
9. Acquire all needed equipment and supplies.
10. Meet periodically with board members to inform them of progress and to establish communication procedures.

Winter 1980-1981 - Undertaking the thesis

I will leave for Nicaragua in late November 1980, and return to Rochester in early March 1981. Photography will be 35mm format, primarily in black and white,
although some color will be used. Duplicate contacts will be made of all black and white work. One set will be sent weekly or bi-weekly to the thesis board for review. Comments about the contacts will be taped and mailed to me in Nicaragua.

Spring and Summer 1981 - Printing and Report

The photographs will be edited and printed with periodic meetings with the thesis board. The written report will be completed over the Summer.

Fall 1981 - Thesis Show

The photographs should be ready to show in early Fall. I intend to turn in the approved written report at that time.

Tentative Budget

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<td>travel, phone, supplies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winter 1980-81 -</td>
<td>Flight</td>
<td>550</td>
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<td>Supplies and equipment</td>
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<td>Expenses in Nicaragua</td>
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<td>Emergency fund</td>
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<td>Spring, Summer, Fall 1981 -</td>
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<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>matting, framing</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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FORMATION OF THE THESIS PROPOSAL
AND THESIS BOARD SELECTION
The decision to undertake a documentary thesis project and to choose Nicaragua for its subject resulted from a number of personal forces within me. Primary among these was an almost constant tension between my involvement with "art photography" and my social/political concerns.

In May 1980, I had nearly completed one year of study at RIT. The year had been one of learning and playful exploration with the modus operandi being "photography for photography's sake." I had lived an insular existence, a year detached from the current events of the world or at least my involvement in them. The extended vacation was beginning to take its toll.

Prior to arriving in Rochester, much energy in Oregon had been directed toward political awareness and activism: environmental issues and apartheid in South Africa, among them. The move from Oregon severed connections in these areas and time/energy priorities in the MFA program inhibited their re-establishment in Rochester.

How could I bring social/political concerns back into balance with my activity in aesthetic photography? As I pondered this one day in Pre-thesis Seminar, the logic of a documentary thesis project became apparent. Here was an opportunity to respond to both creative needs and social/political concerns. Here was a project that could have practical value beyond the thesis itself, a photojournalistic endeavor without the extra-personal responsibilities of an actual assignment.

I briefly considered undertaking a project in Rochester, but decided against it. I work best when pouring 200% of my energy into a project. Friends, work, living, and a thousand other distractions in Rochester would not permit this. A new environment was needed to explore, learn about, and be challenged by.

Nicaragua presented an exciting possibility. I had visited the country briefly in 1977, while on a four month Central American field studies program. The program had given me a cultural, economic, and political awareness of Nicaragua and other countries in the region. In July 1979, a popular insurrection had successfully overthrown a
corrupt and violent regime in Nicaragua. The new government was engaged in a wide range of programs: reconstruction, education, health care, and agrarian reform. The country seemed ripe to undertake a socially oriented documentary project.

Additionally, I could schedule my trip to Nicaragua for Winter quarter 1980-81. By doing so, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Spring vacations could be combined to extend my stay in the country to three full months, thereby avoiding a Rochester Winter!

In May 1980, my idealized conception of the three month trip was to spend the first month travelling throughout Nicaragua becoming familiar with conditions and activities in the country. This overview would hopefully reveal a small urban or rural community that could serve as an example, "in microcosm," of the "social energy and spirit of cooperation that (had) grown out of the popular revolution in Nicaragua." The remaining two months would be spent doing an in-depth project in such a community. This conception would change considerably with time and actual experience in Nicaragua.

During the "Impact of Excellence" symposium at RIT, I spoke very briefly with Cornell Capa concerning my thesis. He warned me of the political instability of the region, the need for a strong stomach, adequate finances, plenty of time (two to three years to do the job right), and an attitude of being the detached observer. He did not intend to discourage, but to challenge and put my ideas into a "realistic format" that could be of greater use. His comments were well taken, but finances and time dictated that the project would need to be limited to three months. If upon completing the thesis I desired to return, outside funding sources might make additional work possible.

Over the Summer of 1980, I selected my thesis board: Charles Werberig, Paul Miller, and Gunther Cartwright. Comments from my journal reveal the main reasons for their selection.

I found Charles to be a person who shows sincere interest, gives constructive visual criticism, and presents challenges. He said my old work was very formal and lacked the dynamism that I would need to incorporate into my thesis. A detached aggres-
siveness is what he thought I should work to develop. This is undoubtedly true, though I do not wish to lose my sensitivity to the subject's feelings.

As a sociologist, Paul laid out the nature of his concern for the agricultural, economic, and social problems of the developing countries. Having recently returned from a year and a half of travel and research which took him down to Central America, I found his energy and enthusiasm refreshing. I feel that his distinct viewpoint as a sociologist will be a welcome addition to the thesis board. I asked. He accepted.

Gunther is interested in visual anthropology and some of his own work deals with people in their occupational/cultural context. He responded favorably to my photographs as a whole with the main criticism (a valid one) being that subjects tended to be too centralized. We had a good talk and our communication level is high. Gunther agreed to be my thesis board chairperson and seemed to be enthusiastic about it.

With the help of the board, my thesis proposal took shape in September 1980. Board members were dissatisfied with the "Purpose" of my first draft which read:

The purpose of my thesis is to photograph aspects of the social energy and spirit of cooperation that have grown out of the popular revolution in Nicaragua.

How was I going to capture "social energy" or the "spirit of cooperation" in photographs? How could I be sure such qualities even existed in Nicaragua?

Their concerns were well-founded, so the Purpose was changed to one emphasizing the personal photographic challenge at hand:

The intent of my thesis is to integrate creative expression with social/political concerns by photographing aspects of societal change that have grown out of the popular revolution in Nicaragua.

We also discussed the choice of medium for the project. I would be using a 35mm camera system, but should black and white negative, color negative, or color transparency film be used? Each film had distinct advantages and disadvantages.

If future publication was envisioned, color transparency film was the best choice. Color negative film was preferable if a large exhibition of color prints was the goal. For visual feedback during the project, both films would require access to dependable, reasonably priced lab processing. This was not available in Nicaragua and the
uncertainty of mail service between the U.S. and Nicaragua discouraged sending original film.

Of primary importance was personal visual feedback. I wished to evaluate work as I progressed through the project. Only black and white film allowed for this option as it could be "field processed" virtually anywhere and contact prints could be made wherever there was electricity. It was for this reason, rather than an aesthetic one, that I chose black and white as the primary medium to be supplemented by color transparency film.

To enable my board to critique "work in progress" while I was in Nicaragua, we arranged that I periodically send up a group of contact sheets with comments on a cassette tape. They would evaluate my work, then record their own comments on another tape which would be returned to me.

With the Purpose rewritten, black and white chosen as the primary medium, and a method of communication/critiquing established with my thesis board, the board approved my thesis proposal in mid-September 1980. On September 23rd, the MFA faculty met and approved my thesis board.
TRIP PREPARATION: BACKGROUND INFORMATION
CONTACTS, LOGISTICS
The trip to Nicaragua required a great degree of preparation. Background research, Spanish study, and logistical details all required attention before the planned departure during the Thanksgiving holiday. Much of this preparation began in the Summer with the pace of activities accelerating in the Fall.

For photographic background, it was necessary to begin a review of documentary photography in book form with an emphasis on Latin American themes. For historical background, I read the *The Sandino Affair* by Neill Macauley and combed U.S. press coverage of Nicaragua in magazines from 1976 (before the revolution) to the present. Besides reviewing standard news magazines (Time, Newsweek, etc.) It seemed important to investigate both right wing and left wing periodicals. This would provide familiarity with U.S. written and photographic coverage of events in Nicaragua. Orientation included following Nicaraguan current events as covered by U.S. television, radio, magazines, and newspapers.

At the beginning of Summer 1980, I had no personal contacts with anyone who had been in Nicaragua since the revolution. Realizing the limitations of depending on the media for information, it was essential to establish personal contacts as part of the project preparation. The question was where to find them. Surprisingly, two leads opened up numerous doors.

One was an article on Nicaragua appearing in the May–June issue of the Rochester Patriot newspaper. The article's author, Mickey Revenaugh, at the Patriot gave me the name of Mark Hansen from the Committee of the United States on Latin American Relations (CUSLAR) in Ithaca. He had just returned from a trip to Nicaragua. Mark provided helpful information and referred me to the National Network in Solidarity with the Nicaraguan People (The Network) in Washington, D.C. for more information.

The Network was contacted both by letter and telephone. Diane Passmore was quite helpful and sent me a packet of information about Nicaragua, the revolution, and many programs and campaigns that were underway in the country. She said David
Funkhouser of the Network would be returning soon from Nicaragua and that he would be a good source of first-hand information. She also gave me the name of Mary Jo Dudley, a Rochester woman involved with the Rochester Committee on Latin America (ROCLA).

Between ROCLA, the Network, and CUSLAR a wealth of information and personal contacts was opened up.

The second lead came from Gunther. He suggested contacting Leslie Locketz, a photographer involved with the Rochester Hispanic community for several years. Leslie talked about the work of Susan Meiselas, a photographer with Magnum Photo, who had photographed extensively in Nicaragua before, during, and after the revolution.

It took two months to get in touch with Susan through Magnum and some diplomatic coaxing to convince her to meet with me in New York City. Her decision to "squeeze an hour" in for me in mid-September seemed a sign of resigned obligation. It turned out to be self-defense against a barrage of "vulture-like" people who had tried to contact her since her name had become more known.

Susan's defensiveness dissolved with some tea, a look at my portfolio, and an afternoon of conversation learning more about each other's backgrounds, experiences, and ideas. Susan turned out to be a soft-spoken, sensitive, caring person as well as an aggressive, dynamic, talented photographer. The beginning of an important friendship had been established.

Time was the largest constraint on the amount of background research I was able to undertake prior to my departure. In retrospect, I overemphasized U.S. press coverage and underutilized the resource libraries available at CUSLAR in Ithaca and the Network in Washington, D.C. Had they been more accessible or had several days been spent at one or both, the additional information would have been beneficial.

Proficiency in Spanish was another essential component of preparation for the trip. My knowledge of the language was adequate following two years of college
Spanish and four months in Central America in 1977. But three subsequent years of infrequent use had left it in a rusty, broken state. To correct this, I enrolled in a conversational Spanish class through Communiversity. It turned out that Mary Jo Dudley was the instructor and class conversations centered on current political events in Latin America. To supplement the class, I attempted a personal review of Spanish grammar and vocabulary. Both the class and the review were helpful, yet no amount of study would have been "enough." My Spanish reached a degree of functional proficiency, but was nowhere near fluency.

In addition to Spanish study, I audited an Hispanic culture class given through the social work department of RIT. Many subtleties of the culture discussed in the course were relevant to Nicaragua.

Logistics for the trip consumed a great deal of time and energy. One concern was funding. I had hoped some sort of grant might be available for the project, but found that grant funding for graduate work is virtually non-existent. I resigned myself to dependence on loans, determined not to let finances prevent the project's completion. A combination of a National Direct Student Loan, and Oregon State Guaranteed Student Loan, and a substantial parental load made the trip possible.

Air transportation to Nicaragua was least expensive out of Toronto, rather than Rochester or New York City. For $570 round trip, one could fly on Air Canada from Toronto to Miami, then on Lanica (the Nicaraguan national airline) from Miami to Managua.

To find out about health precautions for Nicaragua, Monroe County Health Services was contacted. They recommended taking malaria suppressant starting one week before the trip and receiving a gama globulin shot for hepatitis a few weeks prior to departure. The shot and prescriptions for malaria suppressant and Lomotil (to control diarrhea) were obtained from RIT Student Health Services. I also bought water purification tablets and put together a small, but well-stocked first aid kit.
My passport was current and required no renewal, but it was necessary to apply for a visa from the Nicaraguan consulate in Washington, D.C. less than 60 days before my arrival in Nicaragua. Their turn around time was very quick, less than ten days including two-way mail service. However, I could only receive a 30 day visa and would have to obtain an extension from the immigration office in Managua.

While conversing with David Funkhouser of the Network in September, I asked how to maximize access to government ministries, state-owned farms, and mass organizations in Nicaragua. He recommended drafting a statement of purpose (in Spanish) explaining my school affiliation, the thesis project, my sympathy for the revolution, and the intended uses of the photographs. He would supplement this with a letter of introduction expressing his confidence in me and requesting the full cooperation of the Nicaraguan government and mass organizations.

With the Network's letter of introduction and my statement of purpose, I could procure in Nicaragua a press card from the Nicaraguan government, and a letter of introduction from the Department of International Relations of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). The press card would admit me to photograph at government events such as news conferences and allow access to all government agencies. The FSLN letter of introduction would insure closer contact with mass organizations and state my intentions as friendly to the Nicaraguan people. Together, the two documents would assure the freedom I sought to successfully pursue the project.

Material preparation for the trip was considerable. I needed not only camera equipment and film, but the means to process the black and white film and make contact prints for a three month trip.

Camera equipment was simple: two 35mm SLR bodies (one for B&W, one for color), three lenses (a 28mm, 50mm, and a 75-150mm zoom), an autowinder, electronic flash, and other necessary amenities. A pocket sized 35mm rangefinder camera was also included so I would never go anywhere without a camera.
How much film would be needed for a three month project? Having no previous experience to use as a rule of thumb, I estimated: 4 rolls per day x 5 shooting days a week x 12 weeks = 240 rolls. It was okay if there was unused film after three months, but I certainly did not want to run out or feel the need to ration myself. To save money and space, bulk B&W film was bought and loaded as needed. I also acquired 50 individual rolls of color transparency film.

To process film and make contact prints in the field it was essential to have compact darkroom equipment that would fit in a stuff sack on top of my pack. I could not depend on running water and could only hope for electricity in the cities. Thus, all considerations, from a five gallon collapsible plastic jug to a 7½ watt light bulb, were carefully thought through and tested before inclusion.

Chemistry required similar planning. The convenience of one-quart developer and hypo packets outweighed their additional expense. Glacial acetic acid replaced the 28% variety. Sodium sulfite replaced hypo clearing agent. Quantities had to be calculated to process 240 rolls of film and twice that many contact sheets. (See Appendix III.)

In addition to photo related equipment and chemistry, I included a small stereo cassette tape recorder, separate microphones, and several 90 minute blank tapes. The recorder could be used for a verbal log, correspondence with my board, and for interviews. Though uncertain of its further applications, it seemed an important alternative "recording device" to have along.

Camera equipment and boxes of film, paper, and chemistry have a way of adding up. My clothes and sleeping bag filled less than two-thirds of an internal-frame pack. But with the rest of the equipment and supplies, a small trunk, a camera bag, a stuff sack, and the backpack were filled to an overflowing 150 pounds!

* * * * * *

By the end of November 1980, all preparations for the trip were complete. With both excitement and apprehension, I faced the experience ahead. It was exciting to
take on a new challenge, yet I felt apprehensive about the project's evolution and its ultimate success or failure. Only by energetically meeting the challenge would it be possible to alleviate this apprehension and increase my chances of success. The time had come to depart.
BEGINNING: IN MANAGUA
There is no way to fully prepare for a documentary project in a foreign country and culture. You read, look at pictures, and talk with people who have been there, but when you arrive no prior description or conception really fits. So it was with my trip to Nicaragua.

During my first few weeks in the country I dealt with a wide range of experiences and feelings. To explain this period of the trip more clearly, I will recount separately: initial impressions and orientation, red tape and logistics, early photographic opportunities, and my personal mood/attitude. All four areas were in reality intricately interwoven.

Initial Impressions

Managua, Nicaragua's capital, is a difficult city with which to become acquainted. A major earthquake in 1972 nearly leveled the city's center save for a few earthquake resistant structures (e.g. the Bank of America and the Hotel Intercontinental). The Somoza regime did little to repair the damage. Managua became a "donut-shaped" city with most of its activity occurring around the city's perimeter. To a newcomer, like myself, this lack of a vital city center is confusing and disorienting. Nearly all government buildings, banks, markets, and neighborhoods are spread around a large semi-circle.

Many small streets are unnamed in Managua and even more have no regular street signs to identify them. Street numbers are virtually non-existent. Instead, specific locations are given in reference to commonly known buildings, parks, etc. "Al lago" (to the lake) means north. "Al sur" (to the south) or "al monte" (to the mountain) is south. "Arriba" (up, referring to the rising sun) is east. "Abajo" (down, referring to the setting sun) is west. Thus, the location of my pension, Casa Fiedler, was "from the casa ober (the worker's union office), two blocks 'al sur,' one and a half blocks 'abajo.'"
Taxis and buses form the main transportation system for the city. Taxis are small, inexpensive, and everywhere. Drivers try to fill up their vehicles with passengers going the same general direction. This may lengthen a trip somewhat, but ultimately results in lower fares. One could travel across the city for less than a dollar.

Buses ranged from old school buses on their last leg to modern city buses and were very inexpensive (less than ten cents a ride). No maps were available detailing bus routes so a lot was learned by asking and trial and error. Within a few weeks, I knew a half dozen routes that went nearly everywhere I needed to travel in the city.

Dollars could be changed into Nicaraguan cordobas in two ways. At banks, the official exchange rate was ten cordobas to the dollar. On the street, you could change money on the "grey" market (an unofficial, but legal exchange) for an average of 20 cordobas to the dollar. As my budget was limited, the unofficial exchange rate effectively cut my cost of living in half.

Despite early difficulties in understanding the Nicaraguan accent and idiom, my initial contacts with the Nicaraguan people were filled with friendliness and warmth. This hospitality extended itself from government employees and soldiers to citizens of the poorest neighborhoods. When in Nicaragua in 1977 before the revolution, I felt a fearful silence and reserve in the people. Three years later this was gone. Though full of economic difficulties, life since the revolution was generally described as "tranquilo" and "alegre."

In conversations, people expressed a wide range of opinions about the new National Government of Reconstruction from staunch support to strong opposition. Some people evaluated pre- and post-war Nicaragua strictly on the basis of their personal economic circumstances. Others moved beyond this to include their new-found safety, the absence of repression, and new health and education opportunities. Those most strongly opposed to the new government often talked my ear off, then told me there was no freedom of speech in the country. Many Nicaraguans questioned me about
the significance of Ronald Reagan becoming president. On the whole, the country's youth seemed to be enthusiastic and idealistic about Nicaragua since the war. Older people seemed to be more pragmatic and cautious.

**Red Tape and Logistics**

On the first morning in Managua (December 3rd), it was necessary to visit the office of Divulgation and the Press (D&P) in the House of Government to request a press card. I was asked to return in the afternoon with extra passport photos, a passport, and the letter from the Nicaraguan Network.

Upon returning and completing an application, I met with Carina Castro and Kay Stubbs to get help with some of my questions. They offered to write a letter to the Department of International Relations (DRI) of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) to insure that a solidarity letter would be forthcoming. They also said that D&P would provide information about upcoming press conferences, rallies, etc.

By the following afternoon, my press card was in hand. Normal press access would now be possible to government agencies, press conferences, and public events. The letter from the DRI would not be forthcoming until the 10th, providing then a friendly admittance to mass organizations and increasing the cooperation of government agencies.

Housing in Managua was another task to be accomplished in my first few days. I needed an inexpensive place to stay in Managua that would be secure for my equipment. My first hope was to stay with a family, feeling that this would provide both a rich experience and increase my Spanish ability. Such an option was not forthcoming, though I asked many people and inquired at the Office of Tourism.

In the interim, I stayed at Casa Fiedler, an immaculately clean pension, that was costing $9.50 a night (well over my budget). Casa Fiedler was a friendly place and safe for my equipment and supplies. In addition, the foreign guests residing there were
primarily journalists or skilled individuals volunteering their services to the government as doctors, land use planners, etc. The personal resources at Casa Fiedler were invaluable. Through a combination of changing dollars on the street and a half-price monthly rate, I was able to lower the per night cost to $2.50 (within my budget). Thus, Casa Fiedler became my permanent base in Managua.

To process film and make contact sheets while in Managua, I sought access to a darkroom. Nicaraguan photographers at the National Film Institute (Incine) and the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA) offered me off-peak hour use of their facilities, but the distance of both darkrooms from Casa Fiedler made them inconvenient.

I investigated darkroom work at Casa Fiedler and discovered one of the bathrooms could be made light tight. Senora Fiedler gave me permission to use the beer and soda cooler to chill my chemistry. Since I had my own hardware, Casa Fiedler came to fill both my darkroom and housing needs.

Research in Rochester had yielded little specific information on the structure of the National Government of Reconstruction or the plans and programs of various government ministries. In Managua, I worked to overcome this ignorance. During the first few weeks, I contacted various government ministries, explained by project, and requested information on their activities. The level of cooperation varied from office to office. In virtually all, the slow pace of bureaucracy was evident. Multiple visits over a period of days were frequently required to get the desired information and access.

I decided to concentrate more energy on the Ministry of Social Welfare (MBS) and the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA). At the MBS, they gave me literature on production collectives, daycare centers, rehabilitation centers, and other projects of the ministry. They also wrote letters of introduction for the collectives and centers I wished to visit. INRA gave me literature on farm cooperatives and state-owned farms and offered assistance in visiting some remote state-owned farms.
It was extremely difficult for me to photograph while establishing government contacts in Managua. Perhaps it is a curse, but I prefer to concentrate on one activity at a time. Though the "official" activities were necessary and beneficial in the long run, I always felt a little guilty for not photographing constantly. That was, after all, what I had travelled to Nicaragua to do!

Early Photographic Opportunities

My early photographic experiences were diverse as I tried to become familiar with activities and conditions in and around Managua. The "destroyed zone" of central Managua was explored in an area where earthquake damaged buildings were being rebuilt and a large new park was near completion. I visited a housing project under construction and one of the poor neighborhoods for whom the housing was intended. I photographed at town meetings, press conferences, political rallies, a work collective, and a state-owned coffee farm. This orientation provided learning opportunities, a chance to warm up my "eye," and a number of photographic challenges.

Almost from the start, a tension evolved between shooting in black and white and in color. (Example: The visual accent of construction workers' blue and yellow hard hats on a scaffolding would be lost in B&W.) To ease this tension, I often photographed the same subject in both media. Unfortunately, I "see" differently for color than for B&W. Both in an aesthetic sense and a technical sense it was hard to constantly switch back and forth. During three months in Nicaragua this tension would not disappear, just ebb and flow. I learned to live with it.

In situations like my visit to the San Judas work collective, I was frustrated in my attempts to move beyond the "mere descriptive." How could photographs of women at their sewing machines or the cutting table be more interesting and compelling? Though I had (and have) much room for improvement, there seemed to be limits to what could be done in a given situation.
These same limits were confronted in more overtly journalistic endeavors such as town meetings and press conferences. At the "Face the People" meeting in Monimbo, with townspeople and members of the National Junta in attendance, the banners, flags, and posters added some visual interest to the event. But generally, the dynamic of meetings and press conferences was not conducive to exciting photographs. Indoor conferences were particularly boring photographically, yet they provided me a unique opportunity for close observation of government leaders in action.

During public events or personal encounters, it was difficult to listen attentively or converse while photographing. One activity was always a distraction to the other. My limited ability in Spanish compounded the problem. Good comprehension required full concentration. At public events the tape recorder alleviated this problem. I could review the details of a speech afterwards. But on the street, this was hard to do. In Barrio Acahualinca, a very poor neighborhood of Managua, I had several interesting conversations about the revolution, the new government, and economic/living conditions. Photographing frequently came at the tail end of such conversations, but in so delaying it, I often missed some dynamic photo opportunities. The possible advantages to a journalist/photojournalist team became apparent.

There are limits to what one can gain from overviews. INRA took me on a day trip to visit Los Alpes, a state-owned coffee farm in the mountains of Matagalpa. A lot was learned about the farm's operation, working and living conditions, and changes that had come with the revolution. I even felt pretty good about the day's photographic results. But the visit was too short. I looked forward to the stage of the project when I would explore a community or a situation in greater depth.

The first round of film processing and contact sheet printing at Casa Fiedler revealed no surprises. It was evident I was still searching for an approach to the project. A few minor technical problems could be easily resolved: when using a wide angle lens in dimly lit scenes it was necessary to focus more carefully, and in
photographs with dark skinned people and/or a dark environment I needed to meter more carefully favoring over exposure to get necessary shadow detail. Most of the photographs were unexciting and not "well seen," yet there were enough glimmers of hope to keep me going.

**Personal Mood/Attitude**

During the first few weeks in Nicaragua, I experienced wide fluctuations in my mood and attitude. What had seemed exciting, perhaps even romantic, from Rochester was often emotionally draining in Managua. I suffered most from self-doubt. The notion that "success" was not inevitable and that "failure" was possible frightened me at times.

To follow these shifts in mood/attitude I began a daily "moodograph" in my journal. Mood/attitude was placed on the vertical axis of this small graph, from excellent to poor. On the horizontal axis, I put time, from morning to night. Thus, changes in mood/attitude could easily be recorded over the course of a day or several days and I could begin to see what correlations existed with events and thoughts recorded in my journal.

Many factors contributed to my bouts with depression. One was security. Having Casa Fiedler as a base in Nicaragua and establishing friendships there was a way of creating security in a new environment. By itself this is not bad, but at times I found this "security" reduced my sense of independence, adventurism, and mobility. I discovered there were both constructive and destructive forms of security.

Shyness was another factor. I am not a naturally forward or aggressive person. As a documentary photographer especially, these are learned traits. The project required me to continually establish and develop new contacts with a variety of people
in a variety of situations. Thus, overcoming personal timidity required constant self-pushing.

I also felt "green." Because of inexperience my investigative skills needed to be developed. How do you find the right person in the right government agency as rapidly as possible? How do you conduct a probing and thorough interview? How do you develop the knack for being in the right place at the right time? My less than total command of Spanish, and in particular the Nicaraguan idiom, made these challenges more difficult to overcome.

Time and time again, as my mood and confidence shifted up and down, I asked myself, "Am I cut out for this?" The upcoming holidays and distance from my family did not help. A few new friends at Casa Fiedler, especially Martin, a fellow photographer from West Germany, helped me through some weaker times by providing the outlet to discuss my ideas, feelings, and frustrations. I knew from past experience travelling that the first month is always the most difficult and that somewhere down the line a "hump" would be overcome. I was determined to push forward and postpone the larger questions concerning photojournalistic aptitude until the end of the trip.

* * * * *

Prior to Christmas, I was still unclear as to the project's ultimate focus. I struggled to find a balance between supportive understanding of the huge problems faced by Nicaragua and constructive criticism of actions taken to alleviate or eliminate those problems. How could my photographs become more exemplary of the Nicaraguan process?

As Christmas approached, I learned that government offices would be closed from December 24th through January 5th, providing government employees their first vacation since "the Triumph" in July 1979. This discovery gave me added impetus to
get out into the country away from Managua. I wanted to pick up the trip's pace, "finish" my orientation, and search out possibilities for a community to spend more time in.

On the morning of December 27th, I headed north by bus out of Managua.
THE COYOLITO FARM COOPERATIVE
Esteli

The bus ride north to Esteli was a real sardine experience, but a good one. The 1000 meter gain in elevation brought with it a cool breeze, clean air, puffy white clouds, and a deep blue sky. The escape from Managua's heat and humidity was invigorating.

My pack was incredibly heavy! Between darkroom hardware, chemicals, and camera equipment the pack had become too hefty to wear comfortably for an extended period of time.

Esteli, a town of about 50,000 people, was a refreshing change. Things were less hectic than in Managua. There was a surreal quality to being in a quiet, tranquil town realizing only through various abstractions the real terror people had experienced during the war. Bullet hole ridden walls and bombed out buildings told but part of the story.

A visit with Miguel, a young boy on a bicycle, exemplified this. During the revolution, the National Guard frequently swept through neighborhoods killing all males between the ages of about eight and thirty. Their favorite method was to slit throats as this required no gun shots. To escape the repression, Miguel went up into the mountains where he joined the guerrilla forces. He fought against the Guard in Esteli and lost one brother in action. After the war ended, Miguel returned to the mountains to teach for five months as part of the National Literacy Crusade. Pretty heavy experiences for a boy of 13 years!

On December 29th, through an arrangement made in Managua, I contacted PROCAMPO in Esteli, the branch of INRA that gives technical assistance to individual and cooperative farms. Robert Reichmond, the head administrator, was working despite the official government vacation. With Robert and two others from PROCAMPO, I visited two nearby cooperative farms. At both, the majority of
cooperative members commuted each day from Esteli. Though interesting, neither coop seemed ripe for a longer stay.

As we passed through town in the afternoon, we gave a ride to a farmer, Julio Valenzuela. After visiting briefly with him in the back of the pickup truck, he invited me to visit Coyolito, the farm cooperative of which he was a member. He also invited me to stay with his family for as long as I liked.

To Coyolito

Early the next morning, Julio and I got a ride out to Coyolito about 20-30 kilometers northeast of Esteli. The Valenzuela family welcomed me with warmth and tremendous hospitality. Despite their economic poverty, they generously took me into their home without the slightest thought of, or willingness to accept, compensation. In the afternoon, Raul, a teenage son, took me on a "burroback" tour of the area and I was introduced to some other families.

That evening, Julio explained more about the Coyolito cooperative. Prior to the revolution, families had share-cropped individually on land owned by a wealthy landlord. They were required to give up 50% of their harvest as rent and could not legally hold meetings or organize. After the revolution, the Government of National Reconstruction established reasonable monetary limits on land rental and the Association of Rural Farmworkers helped the families of Coyolito to organize a farm cooperative. Sixteen farmers joined together to collectively farm their rented land.

I explained more about my project to the Valenzuelas. It was my hope to become integrated into the cooperative by combining farm work and photography. I also expressed a wish that they would come to ignore the camera thereby allowing me to photograph them more candidly.

In a single day I had entered a different world, one removed from the modern conveniences of the city: no electricity, no running water, and rice, beans, and tortillas as the staple diet. I felt excited by the change and was in no rush to leave.
December 31st was my first day working in the field. Adilia, the mother, rose at 4:30 am to prepare the day's food. The shaping of tortillas could be heard throughout the house. At 5:30, Julio and I arose, ate breakfast, saddled up the horse and burro, and rode about an hour to the field where other cooperative members were already hard at work.

All day long, I alternated shucking and shelling dried corn with photographing the other men working. The group seemed very accepting of me and gradually grew used to the novelty of the camera. I experienced the tedium of their labor intensive work and learned how they told stories and jokes to alleviate it. My dual responsibility permitted me to switch from corn to camera - wherever I needed a break.

Photographically, I loosened up a lot. I shot only black and white and used the autowinder which reduced hesitation before pressing the shutter by permitting me to be immediately prepared for a follow up shot if expressions changed. Six rolls went through the camera with great ease.

Exposure was a bit tricky. I needed to account both for dark skin in the shade of a hat brim and light corn in the sunlight. (The exposure index was eventually cut to 100 for Tri X in such situations.) Also, the sun had an unruly habit of constantly peeking in and out from behind small clouds!

The next day, January 1st, I processed my first batches of film in the field. The night before the chemistry had been mixed by heating water in Nalgene bottles in a water bath over the fire. After breakfast, we moved the kitchen table out onto the porch and I went to work. The five gallon plastic job of bandana filtered water was sufficient to process two batches of four rolls. Film was loaded onto reels in a changing bag, then processed in daylight. I used an inversion method of film washing to conserve water. A clothesline strung on the porch provided the most dust and smoke free environment available. (See Appendix III for processing details.)
The Valenzuela family was thrilled by the negatives. (Without electricity contact sheets could not be made.) I was less satisfied. With a few exceptions, the shots lacked "imagination and compositional inspiration." Again, they failed to "transcend the descriptive." How could the cooperative's work be made visually more clear and interesting? Was there a way to capture photographically some of the collective spirit felt within the group? With my evaluation and questions in mind, I could return to photograph and work with the cooperative.

Over the next few days, I continued to photograph both the cooperative and the Valenzuela family getting to know each better. The family shared their reflections on the revolution and the wartime experience of housing up to 81 refugees from Esteli during the heaviest fighting in that town. They spoke of the Literacy Crusade and the new importance the family placed on education. I recorded many traditional and revolutionary songs that the family sang. With the boys of the family, I went by horseback down to the river to bathe and swim. In many respects, I became a part of the family.

As my work and photography progressed, the men of the cooperative felt more and more at ease. In interviews with all the members, ages 16 to 67, I learned more about life before the revolution, the war experience, the formation of the cooperative, and their ideas for the future. The question of long term land security predominated. Though many had lived and worked the land all their lives, the owner of the land would prefer to kick them off it. (They farm less than two percent of the owner's land.) Only the new government, PROCAMPO, and the Rural Farmworkers' Association gave them the right and the power to stay. Until the security question was resolved, they could not move ahead with ideas for irrigation, expanded crops, and new houses with running water and electricity.

My photographs improved. In viewing new negatives, there were several frames I liked a lot — a change! Perhaps there was hope! If a few good photographs could be taken each day, I might have a thesis at the end of three months!
There appeared to be limits to what could be done at Coyolito. I loved the people of the community, but aside from the cooperative there was little "revolutionary" activity. As I fought off a mild case of the flu (helped along by a night spent guarding the shelled and bagged corn in the field), I decided the time had come to move on.

The richness of my experience far exceeded the photographic results. The love and generosity of the Valenzuela family and the community left the deepest impression on me. "For all their lack of material comforts and things which we consider necessary, they are very rich in that which comes from the heart."

I hoped to return, if possible, for a second visit to Coyolito later in the trip.

The Trip North

My trip north to Ocotol and Quilali proved to be photographically unproductive. Poor transportation hampered my movements; it took excessive amounts of time to travel relatively short distances. Most crop harvesting had been completed in the dry, rugged, mountainous region — a "dead time" for agriculture. Vacations made it difficult to contact regional government agencies. Popular Education Collectives (CEPs) were also inactive over vacation and the CEP office in Quilali had a week of planning and staff seminars scheduled before resuming classes. Finally, there was some question as to my safety due to the presence of ex-National Guardsmen and other counter-revolutionaries along the border with Honduras. Even government employees went out into the countryside only in groups and with side arms. People were generally less friendly and more cautious than further south.

The big difference in attitude between this northern region of Nueva Segovia and the area around Esteli was, I concluded, one of significantly different experiences. Before the revolution, corruption and oppression by the National Guard was less in the North. During the war, there was little fighting in the area so this caused no dramatic change in people's attitudes. After the war, the new government concentrated its
limited resources where there was the most immediate need. Hence, the region of Neuva Segovia had seen less positive visible action in the year and a half since the war's end. All these factors added up to a population that was, at best, less overtly supportive of the government and, at worst, outwardly hostile toward it.

In addition to my lack of photographic success in the North, several days of riding in the back of trucks on dusty roads left me with no voice and a severe cough.

**Altering the Game Plan**

Back in Esteli on January 9th, Christmas holidays had come to an end and I could resume normal contacts with government agencies. Through the Ministry of Social Welfare, visits to a new public daycare center, a shoe production collective, and a clothing production collective were arranged. I shot "decent descriptive" photographs, mostly in color, but also in black and white. In addition, I conducted a competent interview at the daycare center despite my lack of voice.

But self-criticism and occasional self-doubt continued. On January 10th I wrote:

"At this point in time, I would have to say there is nothing particularly special about my "eye." Nothing unique. Brought up in an environment where average is not good enough, it is frustrating to think, that at least in this realm, I am just that. I want so much to have a worthwhile "end product," one that merits the time and expense, one that I will be able to be proud of. But lack of clear vision, directedness, and self-confidence inhibit this. If I can overcome these problems soon, something may yet occur . . ."

Slightly more than a month had passed since arriving in Nicaragua. According to my original perception, the "overview" should have been drawing to a close and I should have been deciding on an area of concentration for the "real thing." Still, I had yet to encounter a single community or situation that seemed to warrant a two month focus.

"It becomes increasingly obvious that "ideal examples" do not exist, that reality and day to day life still predominate over any revolutionary activities, and that these factors will necessarily affect the final outcome (of the project)."
I decided to alter my game plan. Instead of one area of concentration, I would have two or three. Three ideas seemed viable: a look at the Atlantic Coast's Literacy Crusade "in Languages," a project on the mining district where the Sandinista Confederation of Workers (CST) was attempting to improve working conditions, and a longer stay on a state-owned coffee farm. I could spend one to three weeks per topic, sticking with each long enough to get a good body of photographs. The Atlantic Coast was to be my first priority as the official Crusade "in Languages" would end in February.

Back in Managua for a few days, I made contact sheets and sent a set with tape to my thesis board. I renewed my press card and found it would not be necessary to renew my 30 day visa for the three month stay, but I would need to obtain an exit visa prior to departure. The Literacy Crusade office gave me names of people to contact in Bluefields and the CST seemed interested in my idea for a project on the mining district. Martin and I visited for the last time as he would be returning to West Germany before I came back from the Atlantic Coast.

My energy level and spirits were high. I was ready for a new experience.
TUMARIN: THE ATLANTIC COAST
The Journey to Tumarin

On January 14th, at 5 am, I departed Managua for Bluefields on Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast. The trip consisted of a five hour bus ride to Rama and an equally long boat trip down the sparsely populated Rio Escondido. No highway connects the eastern and western sections of the country.

One incident marked the journey: a woman gave birth to a baby girl on the boat. My first aid kit came in handy as other women helping in the birth used alcohol, cotton swabs, scissors, matches, and safety pins from it. Because the birth occurred under a makeshift canopy, there was little I could photograph.

The following morning in Bluefields, I visited the office of the Literacy Crusade and expressed an interest in visiting a remote area where people were participating in the Crusade "in Languages." I met and had a good visit with Luis Jaquim, sub-director of the Adult Education Commission (CEA) for the region. He was departing a few hours later by boat for La Cruz, a small town to the north up the Rio Grande de Matagalpa. As the Crusade was active in that area, he offered me a ride there. I accepted.

On the onset we did not realize the journey to La Cruz would take as long as it did. It turned out the CEA's only boat (the primary means of transportation in the region) was of questionable seaworthiness -- a 20 foot, aluminum hulled, outboard motorboat ... with a leak! If we cruised fast enough, the drain plugs in the boat's rear compensated for the leak. However, good sized waves on the inland lagoons kept our speed down and threatened to enlarge the leak in the fatigued aluminum. As a result, our trip to La Cruz took three days including one day spent in the village of Tasbapauni repairing the boat's hull with tar and handmade copper rivets. In our pre-dawn departure from Tasbapauni, I also accidentally left behind my diary.

On Saturday afternoon, the 17th, we arrived in La Cruz, a river town of about a thousand people and the area's trading center. I met with Lidio of the CEA and Roberto, the local FSLN representative. After discussing my interests, they suggested
travelling further upriver to Tumarin. At Tumarin, the indigenous Miskito community was involved in the Literacy Crusade "in Languages" while the Spanish speaking community had formed Popular Education Collectives (CEPs) as the follow up to the earlier Crusade in Spanish. By visiting Tumarin, I could learn about both programs. Lidio and Roberto also offered to introduce me to a family where I might stay.

The next boats heading upriver would not depart until Monday. In the interim, I learned the only regular transportation from La Cruz back to Bluefields, "El Expresso," left but once a week, on Sundays. My departure would need to be planned around this fact. Unless something very interesting came up, I planned to stay for one week. To optimize my time, film would not be processed unless I extended my stay.

In Tumarin and Pantipitu

Six days after leaving Managua, I finally arrived at Tumarin. Anticipating some kind of village, I encountered instead three families, a one-room school with a Cuban couple teaching, a small store (temporarily closed), and a few small public structures. Tumarin, it turned out, was not a village, but a rural farming community of several hundred spread out along a few miles of the river. I was introduced to the Raudez family and made arrangements to eat meals with them. In one of the public huts we strung out a small borrowed hammock. To save weight, I had left my sleeping bag in Managua thinking nights would be warm enough to get by without it. That was a mistake. Nights along the river were cool and foggy. All my clothes and a rain poncho were insufficient for nighttime comfort and restful sleep.

On the morning of the 20th, I had the opportunity to go downriver a few miles to visit briefly the Miskito community participating in the Literacy Crusade. The Miskitos said they preferred Pantipitu to Tumarin for their community's name.

I met and interviewed two "brigadistas" (literacy volunteers), who spoke Spanish, to get a feel for how the Crusade was progressing. Then I photographed a group of men
cooperatively building a new schoolhouse from native materials. Despite the language barrier (only a few spoke Spanish), we had a great time. They readily accepted me and the camera.

The Miskito sense of community and cooperation impressed me and I looked forward to returning in a day or two for another visit. If the experience turned out to be as rich and photogenic as it seemed, I might lengthen my stay.

Back upriver, two days were spent in the Spanish speaking community. I photographed the primary school and talked with the Cuban teachers, who were there on a "Peace Corps-type" program. I visited and photographed the families nearest the school. The Raudez father and sons took me across the river to where they were sowing corn along the river bank. Because of my short stay, I chose to only photograph and not help with the farming. Borrowing the dugout canoe, I visited other groups of men and boys working along the river. In the evenings, the elder Raudez brothers sang several songs for my tape recorder.

In Tumarin, the CEPS were not very active. A combination of few skilled tutors, distance between families, work, lack of light for nighttime study, and the community's isolation complicated the Literacy Crusade's follow-up program. (See Appendix IV.) With little community activity in Tumarin, it seemed best to return to Pantipitu where the Literacy Crusade was still in full swing.

Arriving in Pantipitu for the second time, it was a pleasant surprise to learn they had called a special meeting so I could meet the community as a whole. Language was a problem as a significant portion of the group did not understand much Spanish. (At least the way I spoke it!) In the future, it would be wise to hire a competent interpreter. Still the experience was rewarding.

During the meeting people expressed their feeling that racial tension still existed between the "espanoles" (Spanish speakers) and the Miskitos. They felt some government programs were more accessible to the espanoles. To counter this inequity, 26 of
33 Pantipitu families planned to build a village around their new school and the adjacent church. By living closer together, they hoped to gain improved access to government health, education, and farming services. Except for the school, the project had not yet begun. Houses were to be built in the following three to six months.

With one of the brigadistas as a guide, I walked on narrow paths through dense jungle vegetation to visit families during their daily literacy instruction. Usually, lessons were given inside their dark houses making it difficult to photograph with available light. As I dislike the look of "on camera" flash, slow shutter speeds and a steady hand were required. I was not equipped to simulate natural light sources with a bounced, off camera flash setup. Aside from technical problems, it was difficult to present the Crusade in a visually interesting way as reading and writing are fairly static activities.

Farming photographs also presented a challenge which I did not successfully overcome. It was difficult to find satisfactory points of view to clearly photograph farming activity. (After the fact, of course, I have ideas!)

Despite these challenges, my photographic skills were developing and improving. Though the results were yet to be seen, I sensed the frequency of finding and making strong photographs was increasing.

After positive initial experiences in Pantipitu, the language barrier (from my inability to speak Miskito) limited further assimilation into the community. Family intimacy, so quickly established with Spanish speaking families, was not readily forthcoming when communication was limited. (With one Miskito family who spoke good Spanish, the Jones, I did achieve some of this closeness.) Without a major time commitment to learn the language, the same intimacy in Pantipitu could not be expected. For this reason, I decided not to extend my stay in the area for a second week.
Were there limits to what I could gain from a given rural setting? With due
respect to their knowledge and skills, the life of the campesino (peasant) is not
complex. It is very repetitious. During my short stay in Tumarin/Pantipitu, I felt I had
absorbed and photographed the essence of things. How much more would be gained by
an extended stay in such a community? From a photo-documentary perspective, where
was the point of diminishing returns? I resolved that the end result of the thesis project
would indeed be a composite of experiences in different communities.

Return to Managua

On Saturday the 24th, the Jones family and I kept an eye out for any boat which
might be headed downriver to La Cruz. During the week, a half dozen small motorboats
passed by each day heading up or downriver. But all day Saturday, not one boat passed.
Arrangements had been made in La Cruz for a boat to retrieve me, if I did not return by
2:30 pm Saturday. At 4 pm, no boat had come upriver to meet me. If I did not arrive in
La Cruz before El Expresso left the next day, there would be no choice but to remain
another week in the area.

Shortly after four, I hired a man and his son to transport me downriver in their
dugout canoe. By 6:30, we were paddling downriver in total darkness. To entertain
ourselves, my companions suggested playing the tape recorder. Soon we were gliding
down the river with the sounds of Peter Tosh reggae and Jeff Lorber Fusion jazz
carrying across the water! Many families living on the banks must have been quite
puzzled!

One-half hour from La Cruz, a small motorboat passed. When I shined a flashlight
to give evidence of our location, someone called out my name. It was the La Cruz crew
belatedly leaving to pick me up. They had had trouble finding a boat, which
substantially delayed their departure.
El Expresso arrived in La Cruz at 6 am Sunday. After talking with Lidio and others at the CEA about my experiences and observations upriver, I left on the boat at 11 am.

The three day return trip to Managua via Bluefields was uneventful save for two things. One was the retrieval of my diary, since Tasbapauni was not on the route of El Expresso. The bank in La Cruz, which had the only shortwave radio in town, had contacted the bank branch in Pearl Lagoon, the closest village to Tasbapauni. The bank in Pearl Lagoon contacted by radio the INRA office in Tasbapauni where I had left the journal. Someone from Tasbapauni travelling to Pearl Lagoon by boat brought it with them and gave it to the bank manager there. Thus, when El Expresso stopped at Pearl Lagoon on Monday morning, I was able to retrieve my diary. Amazing!

The other thing of note was...I got my voice back! (The one lost soon after leaving Coyolito!)

* * * * *

Layover in Managua

Back in Managua, I hoped to attend a conference of international committees in solidarity with the Nicaraguan revolution. Several government leaders would be speaking at it. But within 36 hours of returning, I came down with the worst abdominal pains and diarrhea of the trip. My "moodograph" nearly bottomed out and I was able to attend only a small part of the conference.

By the 31st, I had recovered enough to photograph at a government rally "for defense and production." Attended by over 50,000 Nicaraguans, it was also a memorial to seven soldiers killed along the Honduran border in fighting with ex-National Guardsmen.

During the rally, Susan Meiselas and I visited briefly. We discussed my conclusions about the predominance of daily life in the countryside, the abstract quality
of most significant changes, and the need for supportive text to verbally express what visually could not be. I mentioned that it seemed difficult to move beyond reportage with overtly "revolutionary activities," such as the rally. Susan confirmed my thoughts and reaffirmed her interest in viewing the end result of my thesis project.

Via Mary Jo Dudley, who had come down from Rochester for the conference, I received the first taped response from Gunther on behalf of my thesis board. Because of mail problems, it would be the only tape received. Unfortunately, it was in response to the first 12 contact sheets sent to Rochester. Those initial experiences were already a month and a half in the past.

Still, the comments Gunther made were well taken. He sensed a normal distance from the subject matter in the early photos. He and Charles felt I often picked out the "gem fine arts photo" in contact sheets while ignoring frames of greater descriptive interest. Gunther suggested trying to respond more intuitively to what was going on around me and thinking about better creation of space in photos by more effective use of foreground, middleground, and background.

Gunther also suggested the possibility of staging or re-creating an event, if it might result in greater pictorial clarity. Sometimes a photographer thinks he should be invisible, said Gunther, but the photographer is unavoidably a participant in the events around him. Thus, it may sometimes behoove him to rearrange people or things for a better picture as long as this does not alter the basic truth of a situation.

On February 1st, I held my hottest contact printing session on record, over 40°C! The results were considerably better than after the previous two rounds. The Atlantic Coast trip had yielded several strong photographs. To a degree, certain problems noted by the board, such as use of space, had begun to resolve themselves with experience and time. But the overuse of some compositional conventions was evident.

I really missed immediate intelligent feedback from the board. This was a distinct drawback to my choice of location for undertaking the thesis.
In retrospect, this period in Managua was disruptive to the project's continuity. Because of the conference, I was suddenly around a lot of foreigners, especially Americans and Canadians, and found myself speaking more English and less Spanish. The diarrhea sapped a lot of my energy and strength. Managua's hot humid climate was an additional drain. In the first few days of February, I felt quite disconnected from the purpose of my trip.

Because of time constraints, the intended trip to the mining district was cancelled. I chose instead to continue with the rural theme which had predominated my work to that point. Most of my remaining time would be focused on the coffee growing region around Matagalpa. But first, I wanted to return to Coyolito for a brief visit.
LA ESTRELLA: STATE COFFEE FARM
Coyolito Revisited

My return to Coyolito, on February 6th, yielded just the renewal of spirit and energy I needed. There was something special about the love and friendship I experienced in the community — like visiting old friends.

I brought a set of contact sheets from my previous visit to leave behind. It was my first opportunity for direct feedback from those I had photographed. Both the men of the cooperative and the Valenzuela family poured over each contact sheet with eager scrutiny, but they were so enthusiastic and appreciative that it was impossible to get critical comments about the photos.

Aware of the photographic strengths and weaknesses of my first visit, I took advantage of the opportunity to re-shoot and to improve upon that which I had. Two productive days were spent at Coyolito alternating photographing with picking corn and visiting families. By combining the results of both visits, photographs of Coyolito would become an important portion of my thesis.

* * * * *

An Overview

In Matagalpa on the 9th, I had the good fortune of talking with Eliseo Ubeda of INRA. I explained my project and expressed an interest in combining an overview of working and living conditions on several state coffee farms with an exended stay on one. He was exceedingly cooperative and offered to make an INRA jeep and driver available to facilitate the overview. I felt a bit guilty about using limited government funds for this purpose, but my funds were also limited and it seemed the only feasible way to get around in the rugged, remote, mountainous area.

For three days, Sergio (the driver) and I visited many state-owned coffee farms, all of which had been expropriated from Somoza or his associates after the war. I spoke with many people who had lived and worked on the farms before and after the
revolution to learn what had and had not changed in the transition. Conditions before
the revolution under private ownership were consistently described as poor and
inadequate in the areas of work conditions, wages, food, and housing. Schools, health
care, and daycare were virtually unheard of. Public ownership since the war had
brought improvements in at least some of these areas, but the degree and kind of
improvements varied widely from farm to farm. What impressed me the most during
this overview were not the significant changes which had occurred in 18 months, but the
monumental challenges which lay ahead.

After three long days of driving and spending one to two hours at each of several
farms, I was anxious to stay in one place for awhile. Only by doing so could I get a
more in depth view and take the photographs needed to fill out my black and white
work. The state-owned coffee farm, La Estrella, appealed to me because it seemed to
represent a balance between farms with very poor conditions and ones which had seen
substantial improvements. Once more, INRA was kind enough to transport me to La
Estrella and to introduce me to the administrator there.

La Estrella

Before arriving at La Estrella, I felt impatient to get the thesis project over and
done with. However, after my arrival on the 12th, there was no such pressure. I
desired instead to take my time in getting to know the farm community.

I hoped to integrate myself as fully as possible into the community by combining
coffee picking with photographing. On my first full day, I arose at 5:30 am, dressed,
and went down to the communal kitchen for breakfast. Rice, beans, tortillas, and a cup
of coffee were the standard fare. (Occasionally, this would be supplemented with
cabbage, eggs, cheese, or a bit of meat.)

Shortly after six, I headed up the hill with some "cortadores" (pickers) to begin a
day of work. There is no doubt that picking brought me closer to the other workers.
They showed me how to pick properly and efficiently and were curious to see how much I could pick as a beginner. (Not much!) We picked until about 1 pm, when the supervisors arrived with lunch, a carbon copy of breakfast. The afternoon consisted of a bit more picking, then sorting the red and green "cherries," and weighing in. By the end of the first day, I felt the ice had been broken. Most people were friendly and warm to me.

It was difficult to alternate coffee picking with photographing. The coffee basket and burlap bag often seemed an impediment to my mobility, especially after picking for awhile. Picking also left my hands sticky and dirty requiring me to rinse them off before handling the camera. On subsequent days, I picked less and photographed more.

Besides picking and eating with the community, several evenings were spent socializing at different tenements around the farm. At quieter ones, I visited and learned more about family backgrounds, people's experiences during the revolution, and their impressions of changing conditions at La Estrella. At rowdier ones, I joined in the song and dance and learned of their efforts (unsuccessful) to match-make me with one of the attractive young women in her mid-teens.

An exception made to full integration into the community was to sleep and keep my belongings in the farm's office instead of a tenement. This was done for the security of my equipment, since unlike Coyolito or Tumarin, La Estrella was a highly transient community. I wanted to minimize any risk of theft.

Every day was not spent picking coffee. There were several other activities on the farm to observe and photograph. In the newly-built communal kitchen, three women were responsible for feeding nearly 200 workers and children on the farm. Their work included hand-making several hundred tortillas each day. At the coffee processing area, coffee picked the previous day had its skin removed, then was washed and spread out to dry on large screen-bottomed trays. A small primary school, run in two shifts by a Cuban woman with infinite patience, was tucked onto the end of a long porch
adjoining the coffee processing area. In the house once occupied by La Estrella's former owner, a rural daycare center had been running for two months under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Welfare. Parents were able to leave their young children at the center while they worked rather than bring them to the field or leave them home alone. At one end of the house, a room had been set aside for a small, sparsely equipped health clinic run by a young nurse from Matagalpa. All of these activities contributed to a more complete view of life on La Estrella.

Unlike my experiences in Coyolito and Tumarin, people at La Estrella never fully got over the novelty of having someone around with a camera. I was continually being asked to take a frontal head and shoulders shot of someone. People also inquired constantly about the cost of this or that piece of equipment. I tried to steer around such questions but became even more conscious of how the camera can be seen as a symbol of relative wealth. The cost of one camera was equal, in some cases, to an entire family's yearly income.

Photographing on the farm was not without its challenges. Of the three communities I had spent some time in, La Estrella was the least "picturesque." It was difficult to move beyond what had become a catch phrase in my journal, "boring descriptive." It was particularly challenging to isolate subject matter within large groups of people. How could a picture be effectively framed when people filled it from edge to edge?

There were a few situations where I failed to get any good shots. If it was possible, a "re-shoot" would be in order. An example was a children's circle game directed by the nun at the daycare center. Under the porch were the game was played, I was unable to find a view that both clearly illustrated the activity and expressed the joy of the children. This was a situation where the scene might have been re-created to get a good shot, a decision, however, I did not make. Had the game been moved out
into the courtyard and shots tried from higher up (perhaps from the roof of the porch), a better result might have been achieved.

Darkroom work consumed a lot of time at La Estrella. One full day and three long evenings were spent processing film and making contact prints. One contact print marathon lasted until 2:30 in the morning with electricity courtesy of a diesel generator and indirect moonlight as my safelight. While the visual feedback on location was beneficial, this time in the darkroom reduced my participation in La Estrella's prime social periods. In retrospect, this disrupted and limited my relationship with the community.

Processing and printing on site provided a chance to share the results with the community. Extra contact sheets could be cut and distributed. However, sharing was a mixed blessing. On the Sunday afternoon before departing La Estrella, I posted the sheets at the daycare center for people to view. But rather than a relaxing chance to thank the local people, the event turned into near pandemonium as several children competed for my attention to clip this or that photo. After two hours or so, the occasion exhausted me!

During the ten days at the farm, certain cultural barriers and limits tested my patience. After two months of accepting most cultural norms whether I agreed with them or not, my tolerance level began to decline.

In both Coyolito and Tumarin, people had called my by my name, "Jaime." But at La Estrella, people persisted in calling me "Yanqui" (Yankee). Though meant in a friendly way, it was difficult to dissociate this term from less desireable aspects of United States foreign policy in Nicaragua (eg. "imperialismo yanqui"). I was also bothered by several children who were constantly asking to have their picture taken. After ten days, it got old.
I had no tolerance for the practice of many men (often heads of households) to get roaring drunk on payday. Their families were trying to get by on an income that was already too meager.

Most difficult for me to endure was the "machismo" double standard. At the coffee farm, men and women worked side by side during the day. But following "work," while the men were relaxing and singing, women were washing clothes, cooking extra food, and caring for the children. I found myself in more than one discussion about this and other double standards. As a small personal protest of sorts, I partook in "women's work" to show that men could, in fact, do it by washing my clothes on a rock in a public place and learning to make my own tortillas.

By the time I left La Estrella on February 23rd, any romantic notions brought with me from the United States about "the Revolution" were gone. Reality had been both a source of encouragement and discouragement. In my journal I wrote:

This is neither the "ideal revolution" of the Left, nor the "totalitarian Communist state" that the Right says it is. Quite simply, Nicaragua is trying to better itself. It has a long, long way to go and needs an awful lot of help to get there.
DEPARTURE
My final week in Managua was filled with last minute details. Jamey's Managua rule applied: "You shall accomplish no more than one-half of what you plan to do." I confirmed my return flight on Taca Airlines, obtained an exit visa, and sold all excess photographic supplies to a local newspaper. At the Ministries of Housing, Social Welfare, and Education, they gave me more information and data about projects I had visited and photographed during my stay in the country. A health center, night classes which one of the maids at Casa Fiedler attended, revolutionary billboards, and central Managua from the top of the Bank of America were photographed. I even permitted myself a brief vacation — a Sunday afternoon of sun, sand, and surf at La Boquita on the Pacific Coast.

Three months had brought several changes. My language skills had improved considerably both in comprehension and in speaking. I felt completely at ease moving around Managua and the country. A great deal had been learned about the Nicaraguan government and how I, as a photojournalist, could obtain access and information from it. Photographing in a wide variety of situations over time had permitted me to become more comfortable and somewhat more confident as a photographer. If I returned to Nicaragua in the future, it would be possible to move forward on an assignment or project with greater ease and less indecision. Still, as I prepared to leave the country, doubts, insecurities, and questions persisted:

I find myself in an indifferent mood, not overly inspired by my contact sheets, questioning the relevance of what I did to what the revolution is, and pondering the problems I am having at arriving at clear conclusions concerning what is and is not happening here. Nothing is clear cut, which shouldn't be surprising, but it would certainly make things easier.

I am probably my severest critic and am rarely satisfied with my photographic results. Though difficult to work with at times, I am hopefully good for myself in the long run.
On March 4th, I departed Managua for Rochester. It was time to return, to review and evaluate the work with my thesis board and friends. Only after the printing began would I begin to feel happier with the results.

* * * * *
EDITING AND PRINTING
A disadvantage of making the trip to Nicaragua during the Winter was that I returned to RIT in the Spring to face a final quarter of academic requirements. This prevented an earlier completion of my thesis exhibition and inhibited the immediate use of my photographs for any current events value they may have had. Though it might have been wise to take the photographs to New York soon after returning, I was still insecure about the quality of the end result. It was important to know exactly how I felt about my photographs before approaching any publication or photo agency.

In March, Gunther and I spent three sessions together carefully combing through the 85 contact sheets, marking any shots of potential interest from informational/descriptive shots to purely aesthetic ones. Charles deferred looking at the work until workprints were made. By the end of Spring quarter, a pile of 4-500 workprints was ready for editing.

Gunther and I began working through the prints making initial cuts and marking prints as to their relative merits. It was my desire to edit around the concept of the three different communities: Coyolito, Tumarin, and La Estrella. Gunther thought this might be plausible, but suggested being open to other possibilities.

At this point Paul first viewed the results of the trip. He responded positively and with interest, but suggested the editing be left to the "photographers."

Charles and I also got together for a session of preliminary editing. He did not see the logic behind grouping photos by community and went to work trying out other options. He assembled and sequenced photos of "revolutionary activities" (eg. cooperative farm work, literacy, daycare) and put other portraits or descriptive photos on the side to possibly make up "some other grouping." Charles put forward many valid ideas for consideration, but I was personally unable to conceive of separating the photos of "revolutionary activities" from the more personal, sensitive looks at people. In my experience, they had been completely integrated.
Charles suggested choosing one principal editor to avoid working at cross purposes. Gunther would be available during the Summer. Charles would be gone. Gunther was also amenable to retaining the identity of the three communities in grouping and sequencing the photos. For these reasons, Gunther assumed the task.

During three or four long editing sessions in late May and early June, Gunther and I whittled down the pile of workprints. In a large classroom, we laid the prints out on tables so we could view any print at will. Mediocre shots, "similar," and "arty" shots were eliminated or set aside. We were left with a group of prints that ranged from very strong aesthetic photos to less exciting but informationally relevant ones.

A number of times we encountered more than one "decisive moment" of a subject, shots taken within a few minutes or a few seconds of one another which carried radically different messages. Which message should be conveyed? Which photo most accurately reflected the "reality" of the situation photographed? An example of this was a sequence of shots taken of a 12 year old boy and his younger brother embracing each other. In the first few shots they look serious and concerned. Then they break into laughter holding each other tighter. Finally, their serious faces return, this time with a look of tragic destitution reminiscent of Dorothea Lange's 'Migrant Mother.' Would it complicate things further to know the older boy had an ear ache that day? In this case, Gunther and I decided against using any photos from the sequence, but clearly choices in editing can radically affect the ultimate message.

In certain cases, photos may even impart lies. At the daycare center of La Estrella, I photographed a nun teaching a song to a group of children. It was a song about the revolution that required two characters, a boy guerrilla (complete with stick rifle) and a girl who wanted to join the rebel forces. The nun had the boy and the girl act out their parts as they sang. At one point, the boy raised his stick rifle to his shoulder, as if to shoot, and I took a photograph. The angle of the shot made it appear as though the rifle was pointed at the nun, which, in reality, it was not. Without an
appropriate explanation this photograph could be taken as a symbol of the Revolution being against the Church, or something similar, which would be untrue. Gunther and I decided against using this graphic photo for that reason.

As the editing and tentative sequencing progressed, strengths and weaknesses in the body of photographs became apparent. If we lacked a really good photo of something in a community that seemed important, we would provisionally include the best shot available.

Fortunately, the strengths and weaknesses of the three groups complemented each other somewhat. There were few education shots from Coyolito or La Estrella, but some were available from Tumarin. I lacked good farming shots from Tumarin, but had some from Coyolito. The three communities were photographically stronger together than apart.

After our editing sessions, Gunther and I had trimmed the workprint pile down to about 80 prints. I made finished prints of about 70.

Printing over the Summer went very slowly. I usually put in five to ten hour darkroom sessions after a half day of work. Being a meticulous printer, I will work and work until satisfied. Hence, printing progressed at the rate of only two to four different finished prints per session. After toning, drying, and evaluation, about 20% of these would require reprinting.

Gunther occasionally reviewed my progress and made printing suggestions. I had been including a frame edge black line when printing uncropped photos, but eliminating the line if I cropped. My reason for including the black line was aesthetic preference, not dogmatic purism. Gunther suggested I add the black line to cropped photos to maintain a visual consistency. This was accomplished by removing the negative from the enlarger after exposing the paper and burning in the edges.

Printing in the Summer was frequently a torture test. What masochism to lock yourself in a darkroom on a beautiful, warm, sunny day! My ups and downs continued as
the printing proceeded. A good print of a strong photograph would send me into ecstasy, but a few less earth-shattering "necessary descriptive" photos would bring me right back down. I remained uncertain of how successful the end product would be.

The scheduled completion date for printing was continually push back. First, I naively predicted the beginning of July, then the middle, then the end... It was the middle of August before my printing was completed and the end of August before prints were spotted, matted, and in boxes ready for the exhibition.
THE EXHIBITION
Though the duration of MFA thesis shows is very short, almost token, I wanted people not just from RIT, but from the greater Rochester community to see the exhibition. To accomplish this, I began planning publicity two months prior to the show.

One aspect of publicity was the reproduction of a well printed duotone poster on quality stock. I wanted a poster that would provide positive show publicity and could be used as a "calling card" when seeking work later in the game. The normal cost for such an undertaking is high ($600-1000), but through a number of factors it was possible to reduce my costs substantially.

Joan Hantz, a friend and graphic designer, volunteered her services in designing the poster. After reviewing my photos, we selected an image of a farmer practicing writing exercises during the Literacy Crusade because it struck a balance between description and aesthetics and showed something specific about the Nicaraguan process.

With Joan and Marilyn McCray's help, Rochester Lithographies, a respected printer in town, was convinced to do the printing job "at cost." We were unable to find a paper company that would donate the stock. By a combination of Joan's generous services, the reduced printing price, and a $100 contribution from the Nicaraguan Network, my cost was reduced to $415. (Subsequent poster sales, both wholesale and retail, have covered all but $56 of this cost.)

The resultant 18x24" poster was beautiful. For me, it was well worth the time, money, and effort to produce it. Others must have liked it as well because virtually every poster put up around campus to publicize the show was stolen before the close of the exhibition. (A form of flattery I could have done without!)

In addition to the poster, an inexpensive ($30) halftone flyer on 8½x11" stock was produced to use as a mailing. Through the Rochester Committee on Latin America, I was able to do a mailing at a non-profit bulk rate.

About 4-6 weeks before the exhibition, I contacted community newspapers to see if they would do articles about it. Mark Hare of City Newspaper and Christopher
Garlock of the Rochester Patriot each interviewed me. Both papers published good articles and reproduced photographs from the show. The Gannett papers seemed less accessible, but they did grace me with a small notice and photo in the Times-Union "Tip Off on the Arts" column. All of the articles contained minor factual inaccuracies and "quoted" me rather loosely. (The Times-Union, for example, placed Nicaragua in South America.)

For radio coverage, standard press releases were sent to all Rochester radio stations. I also contacted Isabel Neuberger of WXXI, Rochester's public radio station. After conversing at length on the phone, she decided to interview me for her five minute Friday morning program on the arts. This was taped in advance and aired on Friday, October 9th, the day before the show opened. WXXI also announced the show from time to time during the week of the exhibition on their "Cultural Calendar."

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A few weeks before the show, I got together with Charles and Gunther for final editing and sequencing of the work. (Paul was unable to attend this session because of a prior commitment.) Community by community we laid the prints out on the living room floor. The first comment made was that they thought my 16x20" matts were too large for 11x14" prints — too much white space requiring too much separation between prints. Charles would have preferred no matts at all. At that late date, I was not up for the time and expense involved in recutting window matts or trimming the existing ones down. We decided to use the matts as they were.

To avoid a completely linear presentation, Charles tried grouping the photos together in an irregular cluster. This, however, seemed to dilute the individual integrity of the images. After some experimentation, the three of us arrived at a non-linear sequencing that staggered, stacked, grouped, and spaced photographs to create greater visual variety and pacing. We pulled out several less exciting non-essential descriptive photos, attempted to eliminate redundancies, and smoothed over weaker
areas. By the evening's end, we had edited 70 prints down to 57 and I began to feel I might indeed have a presentable show.

It was my desire to use the right side of the gallery for the exhibition, the side you enter first when coming into the gallery. A week before the show, I was told this would be fine and made plans accordingly. However, a few days prior to hanging the show, Elliot Rubenstein (who had ultimate decision making authority for the gallery) changed his mind and decided I must use the left side. He reserved the right side for a concurrent outside show (photos by James Van der Zee).

Though unhappy with Elliot's decision, I worked hard to optimize the space on the left side of the gallery. A configuration was arrived at that flowed well and allowed for a clear presentation of the three community groupings. With the help of several dear friends, the show was hung on the night of October 9th.

My opening reception on October 10th, 1981, was a festive affair complete with Nicaraguan and other latin music. Once again, It was the loving generosity of many friends that made it possible. Friends brought homemade tortillas, guacamole, bean dip, empanadas, etc. to create a delectable feast. The opening was the joyous culmination of many months of hard work.
CONCLUSION
The process of undertaking this thesis project, from its inception to its completion, has been a long one. Preparation, shooting, editing, printing, and presentation spanned a period of one and half years. To the best of my present ability, I have fulfilled the thesis proposal's stated purpose: "to integrate creative expression with social/political concerns." From the experience, a few ideas concerning this integration have evolved.

In merging political and social attitudes with aesthetics in documentary work, one must avoid being constrained by either. Social/political concerns help determine the choice of subject matter. But once chosen, it is important to photograph what is seen, not what one wants to see or thinks one should see. This does not necessitate putting aside personal values or a point of view. It does require that outcomes not be predetermined. Likewise, personal aesthetics may shape how visual information is organized. Yet, this should not interfere with the documenting process. Informational content and aesthetics do not always dovetail. Effective documentary photography requires that content not be neglected for want of aesthetic interest. The successful integration of social/political concerns with creative expression in documentary work implies the ability to photograph a range of visual information, from descriptive to aesthetic. I must learn to more effectively utilize this spectrum.

There are strengths and weaknesses to my photographs. Perhaps their greatest strength is a constant sensitivity to the dignity and feelings of the people photographed. This I attempt to practice in shooting, editing and printing. The need to instill more action and dynamism into photographs provides me the biggest challenge to improve. While it is necessary to maintain an awareness of composition, it should become less of a preoccupation. My photographing needs to become less conscious, more intuitive, and more creative.

There is an essential difference in approach between most "fine art" photography and photojournalism. (Exceptions will always exist.) Fine art photography frequently
employs pre-visualization, a slow, conscious decision-making process, before the photograph is taken. Photojournalism, on the other hand, often requires quick recognition of a photograph's potential followed immediately by exposure. Slow, conscious decision-making becomes the editing process after the fact.

My board and I selected photographs for the thesis exhibition that attempted to provide both visual information and aesthetic enjoyment. It was important that the show provide viewers an opportunity for learning and understanding. This necessitated the inclusion of several descriptive photographs which would not have been included on aesthetic criteria alone. Had aesthetics been the only standard for print selection, the resultant show (and the shooting for it) would have looked considerably different.

To convey specific information, the text accompanying the photographs was an important component of the exhibition. Some feel photographs should stand entirely on their own, but photographs are limited in what they can communicate. Through my experience, I have come to understand the individual merits of writing and photography. In documentary work, they are two vitally interdependent modes of communication.

Photographic material from the Nicaragua trip has been of value beyond the realm of the thesis itself. Since my RIT thesis show, the work has been exhibited at the Puerto Rican Art and Culture Center in Rochester and a show is scheduled for Portland State University in Oregon. Black and white photographs have been used by non-profit publications such as NACLA (North American Congress on Latin America) and Food Monitor magazines. The color slides have been shown with talks and lectures I have given at RIT, Monroe Community College, Cornell University, and with various community groups.

In February of 1982, I finally got up enough courage to journey to New York City with my work. I was very apprehensive and had braced myself for rejection. Instead, I was met with mostly positive responses, especially to the color transparencies (which are of more potential use to publications).
After visiting a few photo agencies and conferring with more experienced advisors, a decision was made to work with Black Star Publishing Company. They have accepted some color transparencies for their stock files. (One photograph was published in the March 22, 1982 issue of Time magazine.) I wrote the text for a photo story on Nicaragua, which they are presently submitting to a number of foreign publications. (See Appendix IV.) Black Star is also interested in helping me secure an assignment to return to Nicaragua. As of now, everything is tentative. It is too soon to know what may or may not result from all this, but I am hopeful.

The positive and supportive response to my photographs has helped my self-confidence. Yet, I am aware of personal and experiential limitations. (For instance, I have no desire to be a war photographer.) Photojournalism is new to me, but I am spurred to move on, to seek new projects and challenges.

Photography provides constant opportunities for learning and growth. As a photographer, I am but a child taking my first few steps. I feel the desire and responsibility to continue developing my skills in documentary work. My thesis has provided a healthy foundation for this development.

June 1982
Bibliography


Glossary of Acronyms and Terms

ATC - Rural Farmworkers' Association
CEA - Adult Education Commission
CEP - Popular Education Collective
CST - Sandinista Confederation of Workers
CUSLAR - Committee of the United States on Latin American Relations
D&P - Office of Divulgation and the Press
DRI - Department of International Relations of the FSLN
FSLN - Sandinista National Liberation Front
GRN - National Government of Reconstruction
INRA - National Institute of Agrarian Reform
MBS - Ministry of Social Welfare
NACLA - North American Congress on Latin America
THE NETWORK - National Network in Solidarity with the Nicaraguan People
PROCAMPO - Division of INRA which gives technical assistance to farmers and farm cooperatives
ROCLA - Rochester Committee on Latin America
APPENDIX I:

EXHIBITION STATEMENTS

INSTALLATION SHOTS
THIS SHOW IS DEDICATED TO ALL NICARAGUANS WHO ARE WORKING TO BUILD A BETTER SOCIETY THROUGH LOVE, COOPERATION, AND UNDERSTANDING.
INTRODUCTION

The war against the National Guard was difficult and bloody. But now a new war begins... a war against poverty, against illiteracy, against disease. This war will be even more difficult and prolonged than the previous one.

A Sandinista Leader

The Sandinista led government of National Reconstruction was a year and a half old when I arrived in Nicaragua in December 1980. The popular unity of the war against Somoza had been strained somewhat, as differing political and economic philosophies re-emerged in peacetime. The new government was engaged in an ambitious range of programs including Agrarian reform, education, health, new construction, and economic reactivation.

I desired to learn what the Nicaraguan revolution was and was not by living, working, and visiting with the Nicaraguan people. People's daily lives took precedence over "news events."

I visited a number of cities and rural areas over a period of three months. Extended stays in three rural communities form the basis of this show.

My hope is that you will emerge from the exhibition with a better understanding of Nicaraguans, the challenges they confront, and the hopes they hold in building a better society.
A journey to the isolated community of Tumarin is long: one day by bus and boat from Managua to Bluefields, on the Atlantic Coast, and three days in progressively smaller boats travelling north through coastal lagoons, then inland up the Rio Grande de Matagalpa past the Town of La Cruz.

Stretched along a few miles of the Rio Grande, Tumarin is actually two communities in one. Upriver, the population is primarily Mestizo (of mixed Spanish and Indian blood) and Spanish speaking. Downriver, it is Miskito, one of three indigenous peoples of Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast. Though language and cultural differences exist, they share a common lifestyle: subsistence farming.

Tumarin's isolation has been both a blessing and a curse. Ignored by Somoza's National Guard before and during the revolution, it saw none of the torture and violence experienced elsewhere in the country. The community followed the events of the war on the radio, as removed spectators. Unfortunately, during 45 years of Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua, they were also ignored in the areas of education, health, transportation, and local economic development.

The National Literacy Crusade brought to Tumarin the first tangible sign that the new National Government of Reconstruction would not also ignore them. In 1980, dozens of trained literacy volunteers came to the community for five months to teach basic reading, writing, and arithmetic skills in Spanish and Miskito. Volunteers lived and farmed with the families they taught.

Challenges confronted during the Crusade still remain. Evening study is limited by a shortage of kerosene and lantern parts. Magazines, newspapers, and books are scarce in the community. More permanent teachers are needed. Slowly, the situation is improving.

Many in Tumarin are realizing that a combination of community self-help and new government programs in agriculture, health, and education will bring a substantial improvement to their lives.
Tumarin section -- west view.
La Estrella

Life is distinctively different on large coffee farms than on small family farms. The coffee harvest requires a large labor force for two to three months each year. Traditionally, this labor pool has been drawn from the urban unemployed and the thousands of rural Nicaraguans whose own farms are too small to support their family year-round.

A temporary community with its population in a state of flux yields a unique set of social conditions. Common meals and living quarters can increase health problems. Children are often picking coffee alongside their parents, making education difficult. The work force is difficult to organize.

La Estrella was a private coffee farm until it was expropriated by the government after the war. Conditions were poor then: cramped run-down tenements with dirt floors and no latrines, beans and tortillas for food, no health care, no schools, and wages about $1 per day.

The National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA) now manages the farm and is working to change conditions there. Wages have increased. The recently opened daycare center provides attention for young children. A young nurse now lives and works in the community. New housing units have been built with concrete floors and nearby latrines. Food is improved with the addition of rice, and occasional meat, cheese, eggs, and vegetables. A small school accommodates students at times that interfere less with work.

While material and social conditions are improving at La Estrella, the basic economic conditions, that make a temporary labor force available to harvest coffee and other export crops, remain. Family security and self-sufficiency are at odds with seasonal migrant labor. Contradictions in the system will continue to challenge efforts of Nicaragua's new government.
La Estrella section -- northeast view.
Coyolito

"It was a difficult time during the war. People came from Esteli without food, without anything. We filled up the house with people."

The revolution had a profound effect on the families of Coyolito. As thousands fled Esteli to escape the repressive violence of Somoza's National Guard, many sought refuge in surrounding rural communities. Houses filled quickly as families in Coyolito opened their doors and their hearts to these people.

Most families suddenly had 30-40 extra mouths to feed. Necessity gave birth to cooperation. Men worked the fields. Women set up large kitchens to feed everyone. What there was, however meager, was shared by all.

With Somoza's overthrow and the war's end, lessons learned from this cooperation were not forgotten. Sixteen men in the community formed a small farming cooperative with the help of the new Rural Farmworkers Association. Before the revolution, they had individually farmed small plots of land and were required to give the landlord 50% of their harvest. Now, they collectively work the land and pay the landlord a more reasonable monetary rent set by the government.

The revolution has filled the families of Coyolito with renewed hope and enthusiasm for a better life. Working together, they may come to realize their dreams.
Coyolito section -- southeast view.
APPENDIX II:

EXHIBITION FLYER

NEWSPAPER PUBLICITY ARTICLES
NICARAGUA
A SOCIETY IN TRANSITION

An Exhibition of Photographs by
Jamey Stillings

MFA Photography Gallery
RIT, Rochester, New York
October 11-16, 1981
Opening Reception Saturday, Oct. 10, 8pm
Nicaragua: the art of change

by Mark Hare

"I just wanted to deal with the Nicaraguan people as human beings," says RIT graduate student Jamey Stillings. "The official acts and press releases from Managua are really distant to the 50 per cent of the people who live in rural areas. They are just people trying to quietly improve their lives."

For his Masters of Fine Arts Degree thesis, Stillings, 26, made an unusual choice. He decided on an "aesthetic documentary" and—at his own expense—spent three months (from December 1980 to February 1981) in Nicaragua, filming ordinary people at work and trying to understand how the 1979 Sandanista revolution had changed their lives.

The result of Stillings’s ambitious undertaking will soon go on display at RIT’s MFA Photography Gallery. For his thesis project, he has put together an exhibit: "Nicaragua: A Society in Transition." Stillings has chosen 60 stark but moving black and white prints, and 140 color slides for the exhibit.

On his own, Stillings made contact with the National Network in Solidarity with the Nicaraguan People and, through the group, secured press credentials. He also carried with him a letter of introduction from the Sandanista National Liberation Front—to ease any suspicions there might be of an American photographer traveling alone through the countryside.

With unrest fermenting in El Salvador and Guatemala, Nicaragua is still the only successful example of Latin American revolution, and although, the United States backed the government of Nicaraguan strongman Anastasio Somoza, President Jimmy Carter did maintain polite—if cool—relations with the Sandanistas after the 1979 takeover.

The Carter administration made $75 million in loans available to the new government. But the Reagan administration, citing the State Department’s now discredited White Paper on El Salvador, said Nicaragua was funneling ammunition and weapons to the Salvadoran leftists. As a result, president Reagan froze the still unborrowed $15 million of the original Carter loan package.

Although the US Marines helped establish the Somoza dynasty 45 years ago, and a succession of US governments backed the unpopular, and often repressive, Somoza family, Stillings says as an American he sensed no hostility from Nicaraguans. "Even the poorest of families would feed me and take me in," he says. "I carried a portable darkroom with me so I could leave some pictures behind for them. I thought it was the least I could do."

The conflict between the Somozas and the Sandanistas dates to 1933, when Augusto Cesar Sandino, a farmer and mining engineer, refused to support the efforts of the brutal US Marine-trained National Guard, headed by Anastasio "Tacho" Somoza (father of the just deposed dictator).

Sandino was the leader of a peasant revolution in support of the Liberal party movement begun by Jose Maria Moncada. On February 21, 1934, Sandino was ambushed and murdered by members of Somoza’s National Guard. The fighting continued on and off until Sandino’s young followers successfully overthrew Somoza two years ago.

Stillings does not claim political expertise, but says his first observations of the revolution revealed "a mixed bag. Nothing is going perfectly," he says, "but the government is faced with difficulties everywhere."

Stillings spent most of his time in three rural areas: Coyolito, a small farming cooperative; Pantipitu, a small village involved in the Sandanista’s Literacy Crusade; and a state-owned coffee farm, LaEstrella.

The Literacy Crusade, one of the first Sandanista reforms, is designed to send "brigadistas," or literary volunteers, into the rural areas to teach elementary reading and writing skills to the poor, rural farmworkers. In the campaign’s second phase, now underway, the most skilled of the natives are put in charge of teaching other villagers how to read and write.

"What I found in Pantipitu," Stillings says, "is that there are all kinds of complications making it difficult to meet the goals set out. It’s not that there isn’t interest on the part of the people, but there are problems most of us would never consider."

Many of the tiny villages or farming cooperatives, he says, are so remote that there are no newspapers, magazines, or even small libraries. "So there is a shortage of reading material to help people utilize the skills once they’ve acquired them."

In addition, he says, many farmers who work from dawn to dusk—find it hard to make time for study. "Even when they are willing to study," Stillings says, "there are problems with simple things like light. There is a shortage of kerosene for lanterns, and even if you have kerosene, if the Coleman generator is broken, you’re still out of luck."

And, he says, it’s difficult to assess whether common people are better off after two years with Sandanista leadership. "It all depends on who you talk to," he says. "If you ask people in the urban barrier, some will see the change only in terms of how it af-
ffects their economic situation. They'll learn that prices are higher now, so they are worse off. But just down the street, you might find a mother who says that even though prices are higher, life is better because she can send her children out on the street without fear: they'll be shot by the National Guard.'

In rural areas, he says, the improvements are more noticeable. The Sandanista land reform—unlike the US-backed Land to the Tiller program in El Salvador—has not resulted in mass transfers in property ownership. Small farmers are allowed to rent land from large holders and the average wage paid to farm workers has more than doubled—about a day—for workers. The government has taken systematic steps to improve housing and provide better and more plentiful food for rural workers.

"The people have learned to work together," he says. During the civil war, families had to harbor people fleeing cities and the survival skills they learned have stayed with the rural workers: "They learned to take 16 men on a cooperative and work the land together," he says. "Everyone has a job, and they are better able now to make a living for themselves and their families."

As in other Latin American countries, the Catholic Church has played a role in the revolution. The church hierarchy, Stillings says, has been cool toward the Sandanista "but the grassroots clergy has been very supportive because they were keenly aware of the oppression under Somoza," he says. In fact, priests play an active role in the Sandanista government.

Although they have agreed with Nicaragua's bishops not to perform priest functions while actively serving in the government, priests now head the Literacy Crusade, the Ministry of Culture, and the Foreign Ministry.

"What is noticeably different from my experience in Panama and Guatemala," Stillings says, "is the sense of safety I felt in Nicaragua. The people no longer fear the military. You'll see soldiers playing with children at the airports and talking to people on the streets. There is no sense of intimidation which is present in other countries."

Stillings says he's pleased with the result of his trip. The show is free and open to the public between October 11 and 16. The MF gallery is on the third floor of the RIT printing and photography building on the Jefferson Road campus. Show hours are 2 to 8 p.m. Sunday, 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Friday.
A woman studying her native Miskit language in the village of Pantiputu, in eastern Nicaragua. She and her children are involved in the Sandinista Government of National Reconstruction's literacy program.

A farmer, also involved in the literacy campaign, practices his writing skills. On the walls are the machete and rubber boots—the essential tools of a Nicaraguan small farmers.

Dugout canoes along the Rio Grande de Matagalpa. The canoes are the primary mode of transportation for rural Nicaraguans. Along the river, 2 families are forming a village so they can convince a physician to visit them periodically. In the past, rural workers have often had to journey two to three hours over rough waters to reach the physician. "But," says Stillings, "they believe that once they form a village, the doctor should come to see them instead."
From RIT lensman, images of a new nation

by Christopher Garlock

This past winter, photographer Jamey Stillings' everyday equipment included ordinary farming implements.

With his camera slung over his shoulder, Stillings—a graduate student at the Rochester Institute of Technology—wielded a hoe and pitchfork as he worked in the fields of post-revolutionary Nicaragua.

Stillings sees photography as both an aesthetic and political art, and it was the conflict between the two that brought him to Nicaragua to work on his Master's thesis for RIT. The results will be on display October 10-16 at the MFA Photography Gallery at RIT.

"I wanted to get an overview of where the country was at," explains Stillings. "I wanted to find a community or neighborhood that would serve as an example of what the revolution was all about."

Working with and photographing the Nicaraguan people from December, 1980 to March, 1981, Stillings says he never found such an example. Instead, he found a nation of farmers, Indians, peasants and newly urbanized people in the midst of the complex task of rebuilding an entire country, ravaged by war and earthquakes.

Moving through this changing country, Stillings experienced a frustration unique to photographers.

"Much of what was happening was not easily seen or photographed," he says.

Stillings' photographs, however, belie his statement. There are the images of political rallies—colorful groups of people, banners waving, fists raised high in solidarity. And there are the photographs of new construction in the capital city of Managua, left in ruins by deposed president Anastasio Somoza after the 1972 earthquake.

Most forceful in their utter simplicity, however, are the images of the farmers and peasants who till the land and work in the coffee farms. Living in one-room thatched huts, these are the Nicaraguan people; it is they who made the revolution happen and it is they who are struggling to make their revolution a success.

The photographs don't tell the story of higher wages for coffee pickers, or the rice, vegetables, meat and fruit now available to people used to a diet of beans and tortillas.

Continued on page 10
A photographer's search for the 'new Nicaragua'

Continued from page 9

What they do show is the dignity of the Nicaraguans and the hope they hold for their future.

A concrete sign of the revolution's effect was evident in every hut through the presence of what Stillings describes as "a sort of rubberized chalkboard." These makeshift chalkboards are what remain of the recently concluded literacy campaign. Along with continuing shortages of everything from food to medical supplies, there are no libraries, no newspapers and no magazines available to help develop literacy.

"The real challenge they're facing now is not to let their advances slip," says Stillings.

Stillings describes the plans of 26 families in the Atlantic coast area to create a community around a church and school they plan to build themselves. Once formed, the community would be able to ask the government to provide social services such as having a doctor visit. Presently, the closest the doctor place comes is two hours away.

What most impressed Stillings was the sense of cooperation he felt wherever he went. That cooperation, says Stillings, "reveals itself in subtle ways. People fed and housed me although they were poor and had little themselves. They would offer a jacket because they'd rather they were cold than you."

In return for the hospitality extended to him, and to do his part in helping the Nicaraguans rebuild their nation, Stillings is trying to raise money to duplicate his show.

The duplicate will then be sent to the Nicaraguan embassy in Washington, and eventually wind up in Nicaragua.

Donations should be sent to Humanitarian Aid for Nicaraguan Democracy in care of Jamey Stillings, 109 Vassar Street, Rochester, 14607.
Former resident of Salem has Eastern photo show

Professional photographer Jamey Stillings, formerly a resident of Salem, will have a photo exhibition on post-revolutionary Nicaragua from Oct. 11 through 16 in Rochester, N.Y.

The exhibit, "Nicaragua: A Society in Transition," is composed of 80 black and white photos and color slides taken by Stillings during his visit to the Central American country earlier this year.

The exhibit is part of Stillings' master's degree thesis in photography at the Rochester Institute of Technology.

He is the son of Edwin and Mary Stillings of Salem, and graduated from South Salem High School in 1973 and Willamette University in 1978.

"My desire was to document aspects of Nicaraguan society that may not be well publicized by the press, but which present a more in-depth and realistic picture of the on-going revolutionary process in the country," said Stillings, who spent three months photographing and working in Nicaragua.

Armed with 500 rolls of film and two 35-millimeter cameras, Stillings documented society after the 1979 revolution with thousands of photos. His photos focus on a small farming cooperative, a state-owned coffee farm and an isolated community involved in the country's literacy crusade.

He also worked alongside Nicaraguans in the coffee fields.

"He lived on beans, tortillas and corn day after day," said his mother.

Some of the communities he visited could be reached only by dugout canoe, she said.

Stillings first visited Nicaragua before the revolution in 1977 while working on an independent study photo essay at Willamette.

He is now pursuing a career in documentary photography.

□ LIFE AFTER SOMOZA: Two years after a bloody civil war that killed 35,000 people in Nicaragua, it's surprising to see placid photographs of straw hats and siestas coming out of that South American country. But Jamey Stillings' series of 60 black-and-white prints, on exhibit Sunday through next Friday at Rochester Institute of Technology's MFA Photography Gallery, reflect what he calls an "in-depth and realistic picture of the on-going revolutionary process in the country." Stillings' pictures, part of his master's thesis at RIT, come from three months he spent in Nicaragua earlier this year, visiting and photographing such places as a farming cooperative and a state-owned coffee farm. Hours for the gallery, on the third floor of the photography and printing building on RIT's Henrietta campus, are 2-5 p.m. Sunday, 8 a.m.-10 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Friday.

Detail from a Jamey Stillings' photo taken in Nicaragua.
APPENDIX III:

TECHNICAL SECTION
Below is a list of equipment and supplies assembled for the Nicaragua trip. This is followed by a brief equipment and film evaluation, information on field processing of film and contact sheets, and information on printing for the exhibition.

**Camera Equipment**

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cable release</td>
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<td>Sunpak 522 flash</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>36 exp. Ektachrome 200 with mailers</td>
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**Darkroom hardware**

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<td>4 reel stainless steel tank</td>
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<td>Metal dial thermometers (1 spare)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Film sponge</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Clothespins and nylon clothesline</td>
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1 8¼ x 11 x ⅛" plate glass with foamcore backing (for contact frame)
2 8x10 trays
2 Light sockets with cords
2 7½ watt white light bulbs (1 spare) for exposing contact sheets
2 7½ watt red safelight bulbs (1 spare)
1 10" windshield wiper squeegee
1 Cleaning sponge
1 Small darkroom towel

Paper
2 250 sheet boxes 8x10" Kodabromide RCII FM

Chemicals
40 1 quart packets D76
20 1 quart packets Dektol
40 1 quart packets Kodak Fixer
2 1 pint glacial acetic acid
1 Hypo check
2 1 pound jars Sodium Sulfite (to substitute for Hypo Clearing Agent)
2 4 ounces Photo Flo

Audio Equipment
1 Sony TCS-300 stereo cassette recorder
2 Superscope EC-5 microphones
1 Head demagnitizer
25 90 minute cassette tapes
Denatured alcohol and Q-tips (for cleaning tape recorder heads)

Batteries
10 AA NiCad batteries
1 GE NiCad battery charger
54 AA alkaline batteries
1 9 volt alkaline (extra for meter)
2 EXP 76 batteries (for XA)
2 PX 13 batteries (for OM-1)

Camera equipment and film evaluation
All my equipment performed without mechanical problems for the duration of the trip. The 28mm f3.5 lens was too slow for some low light situations, requiring compensation with slower shutter speeds. Occasionally, a focal length slightly longer or shorter than 28mm was needed.
The 75-150mm Zuiko zoom was not a sharp lens. This frustrated me as did its minimum focusing distance of two meters. I sometimes needed a longer focal length than 150mm. Since the trip, this lens was replaced with a very sharp Vivitar Series I 70-210mm zoom lens.

The autowinder was an unexpected aid to my work. It was left on the camera all the time, but used only when automatic winding was more convenient. It was especially useful for frequent subtle expression changes in portraiture, as I was always ready for the next shot.

The Olympus XA was a very handy pocket camera to have along. It was quick and easy to use. Aside from minor aberrations at the corners of the frame, the camera gave good quality results. Approximately ten percent of the photos in the exhibition were shot with the XA.

The monopod was relatively useless. I would recommend a light sturdy tripod instead. A few wonderful nighttime shots were missed for lack of a tripod.

The Sunpack 522 flash was big and heavy for the limited use given it during the trip, though occasionally its power came in handy. Unless you plan to develop off camera flash lighting capability, a smaller hot shoe mounted flash might be more advisable.

In future trips, I will leave the Plus X film home and take only Tri X or an equivalent black and white film. The extra speed of Tri X was often essential and the difference in graininess is negligible. If financially possible, do not bulk load film. A few emulsion side scratches on important negatives from the last leg of my trip have been real pains. (They print black.) Prerolled film in single use cassettes is your best insurance against this.

Kodachrome 64 gave good results, but I need to experiment with outdoor fill flash to reduce heavy shadows, especially under hat brims in bright sunlight. The Ektachrome 200 was never used, though it or a similar fast reversal film would likely be needed, if color were my primary medium.
Film Processing in the Field

When away from a darkroom and the luxury of hot and cold running water, you learn to make do. In Nicaragua, I processed film both at Casa Fiedler, which had electricity and "cold" running water, and in the countryside, which had neither.

At Casa Fiedler, an electric heating loop was used to heat water before mixing chemistry. In the countryside, Nalgene bottles were handy because they could be placed in boiling water without melting. Thus, water for chemistry was heated in bottles in water baths over the fire.

Tap water at Casa Fiedler was 28-29°C, quite warm. By using the beer and soda cooler, it was possible to start processing at 20°C with near normal development times. The standard with my thermometer was D76 1:1 for 10 minutes at 20°C, with agitation for the first 30 seconds, then 10 seconds each minute.

In the countryside, I had to live with the existing water temperature for processing, which ranged from 20-24°C. To compensate development times were varied using a combination of an Ilford time/temperature table and intuition.

For stop bath, I used 12 ml. of glacial acetic acid per liter of water. Film was fixed in Kodak general hardening fixer for twice the clearing time. After fixing and an initial water rinse, all film was soaked for 3-5 minutes with agitation in a 5% sodium sulfite solution in place of hypo clearing agent.

Film was washed at Casa Fiedler in running water. In the countryside, a five gallon collapsible jug was used. With a modified limited water inversion method, outlined by Ilford, I was able to process two batches of four rolls with five gallons of water. To wash, the film tank was filled with water, inverted ten times, then dumped. This process was repeated six times using 20 inversions on the last two rinses. Washing appeared to be complete with this process.

Film was dried on a clothesline with clothespins top and bottom. A film sponge was used to remove excess water and minimize dust problems.
While people have asked about my fine grain results with Tri X, I can offer no special advice. The film was exposed at E.I. 200 (occasionally E.I. 100, if the shadows were very deep). D76 1:1 is a standard developer. My only recommendation is care in exposure and development.

**Processing contact sheets**

Most contact sheets were made at Casa Fiedler in a bathroom made light tight. Room temperature usually started around 30°C and rose to well over 40°C during a printing session.

A red 7\½ watt safelight illuminated the room. To expose the paper a white 7\½ watt bulb was suspended four feet over the contact frame. Exposure time was six seconds. Contact sheets were batch processed in trays on the shower floor. After washing, prints were "lined dried."

My biggest problem at Casa Fiedler was perspiration. A head band and wrist bands were necessary to keep sweat off the contact frame and paper.

The only field processing of contacts occurred at La Estrella. There, a 25 watt bulb in the administrator's office, powered by a lone diesel generator, put out as much illumination as my 7\½ watt bulb did in Managua. The full moon provided the only auxiliary light source. All other procedures were standard.

Since returning to Rochester, I have discovered, through experimentation, that a variable power electronic flash may be used in place of a light bulb to expose contact prints. (The Sunpak 522 with 85B and PC3 filters gave a good exposure at one-tenth power two feet above this contact frame.) This would effectively free you from the constraint of needing electricity to make contact prints in the field.
Printing for the Exhibition

Printing for the thesis exhibition was done on all three grades of Agfa Portriga 111. Most printing was done with a condenser head, though a cold-light head enabled me to "split grades" on prints that required it. Grade three paper with a cold-light head gave the equivalent of grade "two and a half" with a condenser head. No visual difference can be detected between prints enlarged with the different light sources.

Prints were developed for three minutes in Edwal Platinum or Platinum II developer. Platinum was my favorite yielding a wonderful, long, silvery tonal range. Unfortunately, Edwal replaced this with Platinum II, which contains no Metol. For me, the Platinum III lacks a certain magic (the Metol?) that the original Platinum developer had.

After a stop bath, prints were quick fixed halfway in C-23 non-hardening rapid fixer for one minute. They were fixed an additional minute in fresh hypo just prior to toning. Toning was done in a Rapid Selenium Toner/Hypo Clearing Agent bath as per recommendations in the New Zone System Manual.

Washed prints were screen dried. I did encounter some emulsion softening problems with unhardened Portriga, if it was washed for extended periods of time or left to soak overnight.

A disadvantage of non-hardened, screen-dried Portriga is that dry prints have a semi-matt, rather lifeless surface to them. Quite by accident, I discovered a method of restoring the "snap" of an unferrotyped glossy print. In attempting to remove a fingerprint from a photograph one day, I decided to steam the mark over a tea kettle of boiling water. To my surprise, the steamed area took on a glossier surface with a richer black and a crisper white. (The fingerprint also disappeared!) The steamed print was much closer to the way I had been trying to print. From that day on, I have steamed all my prints before matting and framing.
APPENDIX IV:

The following article "Nicaragua: Promise and Paradox of Revolution," was submitted to Black Star Publishing Company for possible publication with a color photo story. Captions for the color slides follow the text.
Nicaragua: Promise and Paradox of Revolution by Jamey Stillings

The world community watched with interest, sympathy, and support as the Nicaraguan people united to overthrow Anastasio Somoza Debayle and his National Guard in July 1979. The near-universal hatred for Somoza within the country transcended political, economic, religious, and social distinctions to permit a degree of popular unity unique to the Nicaraguan revolution.

Victory over Somoza brought a euphoric idealism and hope to many Nicaraguans and to much of the world community. Perhaps the unity of battle could be harnessed and ideological differences kept in check to yield a truly humane "new Nicaragua." Perhaps Nicaragua could create a political and economic democracy, an ideal blend of responsible capitalism, socialism, and Christian ethics, that could serve as a model for other Latin American countries.

Time has tempered such dreams. Reality has become Nicaragua's "modus operandi." Since July 1979, the Sandinista-led Government of National Reconstruction and the Nicaraguan people have struggled with a myriad of economic, political, and social challenges which defy easy resolution.

As a poor, agriculturally based country, Nicaragua's agro-export economy has traditionally developed at the expense of a strong domestic counterpart. Destruction from Managua's 1972 earthquake was never repaired. Major bombing by the National Guard during the revolution destroyed much of the country's industrial base, numerous neighborhoods, and several hospitals. 40,000 people lost their lives and 100,000 were wounded in the war's violence. The economy came to a virtual standstill during the war. Along with a near bankrupt economy and high inflation, the Government of National Reconstruction inherited, and chose to honor, a $1.6 billion international debt. Within this context, the new government has engaged in an ambitious range of programs including agrarian reform, education, health, new construction, and economic reactivation.
Even with complete unity the road to progress in Nicaragua would be a difficult one. But the re-emergence of a full spectrum of political and economic philosophies, from reactionary right to dogmatic left, has brought with it increased conflict.

Pragmatism governed by historical wisdom indicates that neither free enterprise nor a fully socialist economy would yield the kind of economic development and commitment to social progress that the country desperately needs. Within the Sandinista Front, even the Marxists see the immediate necessity of developing a mixed economy.

The Government of National Reconstruction has scheduled elections for 1985. The interim period is seen as a time for the country to rebuild, to stabilize the economy, and to develop social programs. But many in the private sector, which still controls at least two-thirds of the country's economy, have not fully cooperated in this effort. Fear that the Sandinistas will nationalize everything and create a "Marxist State" has stifled investment and encouraged economic mischief. Many in the private sector favor immediate elections as a panacea.

The attitude and actions of the United States has further complicated Nicaragua's progress. After five decades of support to Somoza, the Carter administration extended cautious support, with conditions, to the new government, ostensibly to promote a moderate course. The Reagan administration reversed that policy of conditional support. Using the now discredited "White Paper" on El Salvador to "prove" that Nicaragua was shipping arms to guerrillas in El Salvador, Reagan cut off economic aid to Nicaragua. A campaign of aggression, both verbal and active, has since been directed toward the country.

If there is one point on which the Sandinistas and the opposition parties agree, it is that this U.S. posture has had a deleterious effect on their country by aggravating economic problems and increasing political polarization.
Outside the realm of ideological differences, two factors greatly influence Nicaragua's social and economic progress. The first is a basic shortage of resources: qualified people, money, materials, technology, transportation, time, etc. Every project the Government of National Reconstruction wishes to implement is constrained by resource limitations that are often severe. The second factor is that all social and economic issues are interrelated. Progress in one area is frequently contingent upon simultaneous progress in other areas. The resolution of certain problems may lead to the creation of new ones.

Dozens of social programs are underway in Nicaragua aimed at improving the lives of the poor urban and rural working class. Challenging problems have been met with innovation and enthusiasm as well as inexperience and naivety. No miracles are occurring. Mistakes have been made. All successes are tempered. Yet progress in a number of areas is significant and apparent. A closer look at some examples of success in the face of adversity will yield insight into the complexity of the Nicaraguan process.

Rural Education (slides F9, 10, 11, 12)

Along a remote section of the Rio Grande de Matagalpa, inland from Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast, two neighboring communities of Tumarin and Pantipitu are confronting the challenges of rural education.

Tumarin participated in the National Literacy Crusade in Spanish during the first half of 1980. During that Crusade, 180,000 trained literacy volunteers, or "brigadistas," spent five months teaching basic reading, writing, and arithmetic skills in both city and country throughout Nicaragua. In Tumarin and elsewhere, volunteers lived and worked with the families they taught. The methodology for the Crusade was based on the "conscientizacion" method of the Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire. Lessons focused on Nicaraguan history, geography, freedoms gained as a result of the revolution, program and goals of the Government of National Reconstruction, and popular participation in
"mass" community organizations. By the Crusade's end, the official literacy rate had risen from 50% to 88%.

Near the end of their five month involvement in Tumarin, the brigadistas helped to form study groups, or Popular Education Collectives (CEPs), to continue the learning initiated during the Crusade.

By early 1981, Tumarin's CEPs were only partially active. Aside from a drop in energy and enthusiasm that followed the brigadistas' departure, other challenges were evident. The community lacked sufficient volunteers with the level of skills necessary to run and tutor the CEPs. Families lived and farmed some distance apart from each other, making collective learning at day's end difficult. A lack of kerosene and lantern parts made effective evening study impossible. There was no community library, and Tumarin's remoteness insulated it from regular access to newspapers and magazines. Thus, the immediate application of people's newly acquired skills was limited.

Despite these constraints, many adults continue their learning within the family by listening to lessons broadcast daily on the radio. The children of Tumarin are lucky, for in a country with a severe shortage of teachers, Tumarin has a small primary school and the help of two Cuban teachers.

Also in early 1981, a few miles downriver from Tumarin, the indigenous Miskito community of Pantipitu wa participating in the Literacy Crusade "in Languages." This second Crusade was an attempt by the Ministry of Education to respect the language and culture of the Miskito and other Atlantic Coast peoples that together comprise 10% of the country's population. Because additional time was needed to prepare special learning materials and to train volunteers, the Crusade "in Languages" began after the main Crusade in Spanish had ended. Though the delay may have been necessary, it prevented Pantipitu's full integration into the excitement of the main Crusade along the Rio Grande.
In Pantipitu, 17 brigadistas were teaching members of 33 families. The Crusade was proceeding smoothly, even though a shortage of kerosene and lantern parts limited evening study and learning had to be scheduled around the daily work routine.

Spirits were high in Pantipitu. The concept of achieving change through popular participation was taking hold. Utilizing local materials and volunteer labor, a one room school was under construction for the community's children. Twenty-six families were planning to build new houses around the school and the local Moravian church to form a village. As a village, they would then request a teacher, regular visits by a doctor, and attempt to open a small cooperative store.

Ultimately, the practical utility of literacy in the Miskito language may be limited compared to literacy in Spanish, since little is published in Miskito. There are contradictions between respecting language/culture differences and integrating all Nicaraguans into the country's social and economic development (a process which favors Spanish as the national language) and both the community of Pantipitu and the Government must recognize this. Recent tensions between "los espanoles" (the Sandinistas) and the Miskito peoples of northeastern Nicaragua stem as much from these contradictions as from historical mistrust.

Health Care (slides F7, 8)

The public health situation that the Sandinistas inherited from Somoza was a sad one. Nicaragua's infant mortality rate was 120 per 1000. Diarrhea was the leading cause of death in children under the age of six. Powdered "infant formula" was widely used, often devouring one-fourth to one-third of a family's meager income. Life expectancy was 53 years. Private health care was available to the rich minority, but no effective system of public health care existed for the poor majority. Medical personnel were in short supply.
A major priority of the Government of National Reconstruction is to develop a free public health care system accessible to all Nicaraguans. In less than three years, significant progress has been made. New hospitals have been built to replace those destroyed in the war. "Health Centers," staffed with doctors and nurses, have been created in all towns or geographical localities with populations of 20,000 or more. In smaller towns, health clinics have been established staffed by nurses or medics.

Providing health care to remote rural communities presents a much greater challenge. To compensate for a severe shortage of Nicaraguan medical personnel, the Government has enlisted the skilled aid of hundreds of Cubans and other "internacionalistas." Transportation to remote areas is difficult, requiring travel by jeep, boat, horseback, and/or foot. Some communities are fortunate enough to have a small clinic, but most must be content with weekly or bi-weekly medical visits. A few isolated communities are still without regular access to medical care.

To combat communicable diseases such as malaria, typhoid, measles, and polio, the Ministry of Health has initiated several national campaigns. The first phase of the anti-polio campaign of February 1982 illustrated the degree of popular mobilization needed to carry out such a project. With the help of the Nicaraguan Women's Association (AMNLAE) and other mass organizations, a national health census was taken to determine vaccination needs, especially in children ages 0-5 years. A media campaign was launched to inform people about polio, the need for vaccinations, and the upcoming vaccination day. Volunteers were trained in all neighborhoods and rural communities to help administer the oral polio vaccine.

On February 7th, parents brought children to vaccination centers throughout the country. The oral vaccine was administered and vaccination cards were validated. Late in the day, families who had yet to visit their local centers were called on by neighbors to remind them of the campaign and to offer to "mind the house" while their children were taken to be vaccinated.
Nationwide cooperation confirmed the success of the anti-polio campaign, and future campaign hold similar promise.

The most crucial step in preventative health care, and a priority of the Ministry of Health, is health education. It must continue to instill the basics: the connection between disease and unsanitary conditions in the home and community, the use of latrines, the need to boil water, the advantages of breast feeding babies, good personal hygiene, and good nutrition. It is one thing to inform people of proper health practices: it is quite another to turn this information into good habits. Progress has been made in many areas, but the struggle to overcome ignorance and improve health in Nicaragua has just begun.

**Daycare (slides F15-19)**

In Esteli, a large house expropriated from a slum landlord after the war has been transformed into a model daycare center. With international aid, the Ministry of Social Welfare (MBS) and local mass organizations (such as the Nicaraguan Women's Association, neighborhood Sandinista Defense Committees, and the Sandinista Youth) establish the center for young children of low income families who had been previously left home alone while their parents worked. A range of services provided at the center encourage the children's "physical, psychological, educational, and social development." These include regular health care, lessons in hygiene, nutritious meals, and both structured and unstructured educational and recreational activities. By involving parents and community organizations in the center, MBS hopes to improve the conditions and customs of the family and community which may impede child development. No such daycare was available prior to the revolution.

Although similar daycare centers have been opened in many other towns and on several state-owned farms, demand for childcare far exceeds capacity. Funding remains the critical limiting factor. With parental cost for daycare based on each
family's ability to pay, centers are not self-sustaining. Less costly alternatives are being sought to expand daycare availability. These may include closer cooperation with the workplace and a greater utilization of elders within neighborhoods. As yet, the goal of expanding the program to assure that all children needing daycare receive it is a long way from being realized.

State Production Collectives (slides F13, 14)

In an effort to increase domestic production of basic consumer goods and reduce Nicaragua's dependence on imports, the Ministry of Social Welfare (MBS) has worked with mass organization in many communities to establish "State Production Collectives." Though publicly owned, these collectives are largely worker managed. Most manufacture clothing, but shoemaking, carpentry, masonry, and fishing collectives have also been formed. The principle goal of these collectives is to produce quality consumer goods at lower prices than their imported counterparts while creating permanent employment for collective members. The profits of each collective are used to reinvest in the collective, help in the formation of new collectives, and provide funds for community development projects.

To hold down retail prices, the MBS distributes the collectives' products to "popular stores," thereby eliminating the middlemen. Goods are then sold to consumers at a low markup. The desired result is to strengthen the domestic economy by increasing employment and consumer purchasing power.

"Getting the goods to the people who need them most" remains the biggest challenge facing the MBS. In a country that lacks an adequate transportation infrastructure, such a task continues to be difficult.
Farm Cooperatives (slides F21, 22)

The war against Somoza had a profound effect on the population around Esteli. As thousands fled the city to escape the repressive violence of the National Guard, many sought refuge in surrounding rural communities. Houses filled quickly as families opened their doors and their hearts to these people.

Most families suddenly had 30-40 extra mouths to feed, and necessity gave birth to cooperation. Men worked the fields. Women set up large kitchens to feed everyone. What there was, however meager, was shared by all.

At the war's end, lessons learned from this cooperation were not forgotten. With the help of the Rural Farmworkers Association and PROCAMPO, a division of the National Institute of Agrarian Reform, hundreds of peasant cooperatives have been formed.

Before the revolution, farmers were not legally permitted to organize. About 60% of peasant farmers owned small parcels of land. The rest were forced into various forms of share-cropping, labor-rent, or tenancy arrangements. In nearly all situations the impossibility of self-sufficiency required farmers and their families to survive by working as migrant laborers for several months of each year. Now, the government has set a reasonable monetary limit on land rents. Twenty-two percent of government land expropriated from Somoza and his associates has been opened up to cooperatives, and a program of transferring land titles to successful cooperatives and individual farmers has been established.

The role of PROCAMPO is to provide advice and technical assistance to these cooperatives as well as other small and medium-sized farms. Basic improvements in seed quality, the use of fertilizers and insecticides, and crop storage promise a significant increase in productivity. Additionally, popular credit lines have been opened up to farmers permitting greater access to land, supplies, and equipment to expand production.
On Coyolito, a sixteen member cooperative north of Esteli, the nature of the work itself has not changed significantly since the revolution. Farming of corn beans, and other basic food crops remains labor intensive. Oxen are used to plow the fields. Planting, hoeing, and harvesting are still done by hand. What has changed is the sense of community and the alleviation of boredom that comes through comradesy. For the first time, collective members are looking to the eventuality of field irrigation, electricity, community house building, and a small cooperative store.

Farm cooperatives are an essential component of Nicaraguan agrarian reform. Through them, the rural standard of living is being raised. They are helping to increase the domestic food supply and the country's chances of achieving food self-sufficiency.

**State Farms (slides F23-30)**

After Somoza's defeat in 1979, the new Government of National Reconstruction expropriated all land belonging to the Somoza family and its associates. The National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA) was created to administer this property as part of the public sector. Since much of the land was involved in the production of cash crops for export (coffee, cotton, meat, and sugar), INRA became a participant with the private sector in a system with an inherent contradiction. Export crops are the country's major revenue source, having the potential to provide funds urgently needed in rebuilding and developing the country. However, the harvest of export crops had traditionally depended on an oppressed seasonal migrant labor force, drawn from the urban unemployed and thousands of rural Nicaraguans whose own small farms were insufficient to support their family year-round.

In a move governed by pragmatism, INRA decided not to break up its export crop farms, but to administer them as large, more efficient enterprises. Export revenues could thus be applied to development of the rural infrastructure, improving work
conditions, and increasing both the monetary and the "social" wages of worker (eg. housing, food, healthcare, daycare, and education).

La Estrella was a private coffee farm until it was expropriated by the government after the war. Conditions were very poor then: cramped run-down tenements with dirt floors and no latrines, nothing but beans and tortillas for food, no health care, no schools, and wages of about $1 per day.

INRA now manages this farm and is working to change conditions there. Wages have more than doubled. Newly constructed housing units have concrete floors, rooms affording some privacy for families, and nearby latrines. Food is improved with the addition of rice, and occasional vegetables, eggs, cheese, and meat. A nurse now runs a small health clinic in the community. A recently opened daycare center provides attention for young children while parents work. And a small school accommodates students at times that interfere less with work.

While material and social conditions are gradually improving at La Estrella and other state farms, the basic economic conditions that make a temporary labor force available to harvest coffee and other export crops remain, since family security and self-sufficiency are at odds with the concept of seasonal migrant labor.

The recent dramatic drop in world prices for coffee and sugar, and the corresponding drop in export revenues, has caught INRA in the middle. Improvements in living and working conditions on state farms are primarily dependent upon sufficient export revenues to fund them. If world prices remain low or drop even further, INRA's goals will be even more difficult to achieve.

Urban Housing (slides F5, 6)

Nicaragua faces a critical shortage of adequate urban housing. In Managua the housing situation is most severe due to physical damage from the 1972 earthquake, destruction from the war, and a long-term migration of the rural population to the city.
While the urban housing problem cannot be resolved until rural conditions are sufficiently improved to stem this migration, the Government of National Reconstruction is moving to improve the urban conditions that presently exist.

At Barrio Batahola, just a few blocks from the United States Embassy in Managua, a low-cost, 1800 unit housing project is under construction. The project was initiated by the Ministry of Housing "to respond to the urgent needs of people living in unhealthy zones near Lake Managua and other marginal neighborhoods." The one-story duplexes have concrete floors, walls of reinforced concrete or terracotta blocks, and tin roofs. They will provide drinking water, electricity, and flush toilets. Paved streets, schools, a health center, and a children's park are also planned. To repay international loans obtained for the project's financing, tenants will pay monthly payments toward ownership, graduated from $18-38 over a ten year period.

Lower Acahualinca is an extremely poor community of makeshift shacks near the city's dump and a major sewer outlet into Lake Managua. The Government hopes that this community and others like it can be vacated and moved to Batahola upon the project's completion, but family economics complicate this desire. Most citizens of Acahualinca are unemployed or underemployed. Many are forced to scavenge through the dump for both food and items which might be sold. Without steady employment, many families cannot afford the monthly payments of the new housing. To supplement their income and food needs, many families in Acahualinca raise a few chickens, ducks, or pigs. In Batahola, animals will not be permitted to roam freely for health reasons. A collective animal yard could be established in a "green area" of the new project, but Ministry officials are concerned that a health problem would still exist.

New housing for those of Acahualinca and of other communities will provide an obvious improvement in living conditions and family health. Yet the creation of new employment opportunities is necessary if these families are to pay for the Batahola housing. The Acahualinca/Batahola project is one expression of the complex challenges facing the social plan of the new Government.
Reconstruction in Central Managua (slides F1-4, 20, 38, 39, 40)

In the seven years following the 1972 earthquake that leveled the center of Managua, the Somoza Government made only token efforts at reconstruction. Instead, Somoza corruptly diverted millions of dollars in international disaster aid to his own pockets and those of his associates. The rebuilding that did occur was done primarily around the city's perimeter on land Somoza sold to his own government for exorbitant prices. Managua became a donut-shaped city with a large, demolished, nearly-deserted core.

In contrast, the Sandinista Government of National Reconstruction has begun to transform Managua's center. Rubble and garbage are being cleared away. Some streets have been widened and repaved. Skeletons of several buildings left standing since the earthquake are being reinforced and reconstructed. One of them, the old Bank of Nicaragua, now houses the Council of State.

The Luis A. Velazquez Park (named for a young Sandinista messenger killed by the National Guard during the revolution) serves as a huge focal point for revitalization of the former downtown area. With its playgrounds, basketball courts, murals, and kiosks, the park has become a popular Sunday destination for Managuans.

In a country with limited resources and great needs in so many areas, the utilization of precious resources for culture, sports, and recreation has been criticized by some. The Government's logic behind such projects is simple and clear. To rebuild a country while ignoring these areas is to stifle the spirit of its people. For too long in Nicaragua such joys of life were accessible only to the privileged few. It is the new Government's desire to make them available to all.

Conclusion (slides F31-36)

Nicaraguans have enough domestic challenges to confront without outside interference. Yet from the Nicaraguan Government's perspective, the United States poses
the biggest single threat to their country's successful social, economic, and political development.

History provides the precedent for Nicaraguan fears of possible U.S. aggression. In this century alone, Nicaragua has experienced two decades of U.S. Marine occupation and an additional 45 years of U.S. support to the repressive Somoza dictatorship. It has seen acts of U.S. intervention in other Latin American and Caribbean countries, most notably Guatemala in 1954, Cuba in 1961, the Dominican Republic in 1965, and Chile in the early 1970's.

The aggressive posture of the Reagan Administration has reinforced Nicaragua's feeling of vulnerability. As a result of unproven U.S. charges of Nicaraguan material aid to the guerillas in El Salvador, Nicaragua has suffered the termination of U.S. economic aid, U.S. attempts to block other international funding sources, and threats by the U.S. of direct military intervention, such as a naval blockade. Nicaragua has watched the Reagan Administration permit anti-Sandinista paramilitary training on U.S. territory, and endorse a CIA sponsored covert operations campaign.

The Nicaraguan Government has responded by placing a greater emphasis on building its military defenses. It has trained a standing army of 20-25,000 soldiers. This is supplemented by a much larger volunteer people's militia composed primarily of women and men who devote several evenings and one or two weekends each month to defense training and drills. Despite the substantial military increase, the U.S. charge of imminent Nicaraguan aggression seems unfounded.

Unfortunately, the building of Nicaraguan military defenses, regardless of the rationale for doing so, diverts already limited human and financial resources away from critical social and economic priorities.

The U.S. Government's antagonistic posture toward Nicaragua is the result of a self-imposed ideological barrier. The U.S. can be friendly with the most brutal right-wing dictatorship, but not with the left-leaning government that still retains the
promise of political and economic pluralism. The Reagan Administration has failed to learn from history that conciliation, not confrontation, is most likely to achieve moderation.

Until a 30 day State of Emergency was declared in Nicaragua in March 1982, which temporarily suspended constitutional rights and invoked press censorship, (a move made in response to the bombing of two major bridges and other acts of external aggression), Nicaraguans had enjoyed relative freedom of speech and press. For nearly three years since the revolution, the entire population has been engaged in a great political debate. Community meetings with local and national government officials have permitted direct citizen questioning and criticism of the Government. Oppositions and pro-government newspapers and radio stations have flourished.

Exceptions to this freedom have occurred: five temporary closings (24-28 hour) of the opposition newspaper, La Prensa, for journalistic libel, and the temporary jailing of three business leaders and some 20 communist trade union activists under the Economic Emergency Law enacted in September 1981. While these exceptions raise legitimate concerns, they are exceptions and must be viewed within the broader Nicaraguan context.

In a recent move towards the 1985 elections, many of Nicaragua's political parties cooperated in the writing of political party guidelines. The guidelines will establish procedures for the formal registration of political parties, campaigning, and access to the media. Prior to the elections, all parties shall be represented in the Council of State.

Given the economic and political realities facing Nicaragua, its future remains uncertain. However, the prospect of negotiations between Nicaragua and the United States is encouraging. If such negotiations lead to an easing to tensions between the
two countries, Nicaragua will be able to pursue with greater energy its more important social objectives of proper health care, education, housing, and employment for all its citizens.

Jamey Stillings
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Slide Captions for "Nicaragua: Promise and Paradox of Revolution"

F1: Earthquake zone, central Managua, 1977. — Five years after the December 1972 earthquake leveled the heart of Managua, the area lay nearly deserted and in ruins except for a few government buildings and the "earthquake resistant" Bank of America (distant right).


F4: "Luis A. Velazquez Park," aerial view, central Managua, March 1981. — This new park and sports complex, a project of the Sandinista Government of National Reconstruction, serves as a focal point around which revitalization of the earthquake zone is progressing.

F5: Batahola housing project, Managua, January 1981. — 1800 housing units are being built by the Ministry of Housing in Barrio Batahola of Managua as part of a plan to provide low cost basic housing (including water, sewer, and electricity) for some of Managua's poorest citizens.


F7: Examination table, Public Health Center, Diriamba, March 1981. — A chalkboard provides minimal privacy for patients in the spartan facilities of the Diriamba Health Center. While services are offered to the public free of charge, a 10 Cordoba ($1) donation is requested of those able to pay.

F8: Rural health clinic, "La Estrella," state-owned coffee farm, Matagalpa region, February 1981. — A mother, who's infant is sick with diarrhea and a fever, consults a Nicaraguan nurse at this small rural clinic. No such health care was available under Somoza.

F9: Teacher with students, Tumarin, Rio Grande de Matagalpa, January 1981. — A Cuban teacher reviews student work at a rural primary school along the Rio Grande de Matagalpa. Cuban teachers are helping to fill a critical teacher shortage until sufficient Nicaraguan teachers can be trained.

F10: Farmer writing, Literacy Crusade, Pantipitu, Rio Grande de Matagalpa, January 1981. — A farmer practices writing exercises as part of the National Literacy Crusade in Miskito, the language of Nicaragua's largest indigenous group. Though the main Crusade was conducted in Spanish, literacy was also taught in English, Miskito, and Sumo.

F11: Rural school construction, Pantipitu, Rio Grande de Matagalpa, January 1981. — Out of the enthusiasm generated by the Literacy Crusade and with local materials, the community of Pantipitu builds a one-room schoolhouse for its children.

F13: Members of San Judas clothing collective, Managua, March 1981. — With assistance and guidance of the Ministry of Social Welfare, these women of Barrio San Judas are operation a small work collective. The collective is producing clothing for domestic purchase which sells for prices significantly lower than imported goods of equivalent quality.

F14: Women sewing, San Judas clothing collective, Managua, March 1981. — Without the traditional "boss" overseeing production, the women of the collective work hard, yet in an atmosphere of joviality.

F15: Nursery, Child daycare center, Esteli, January 1981. — Infants in this model daycare center receive regular medical attention. The Ministry of Social Welfare with support from community organizations has opened dozens of such facilities throughout the country. The World Council of Churches, Sweden, and Canada have helped in their funding.

F16: Learning a song, Child daycare center, Esteli, January 1981. — See also F15.

F17: Naptime, Child daycare center, Esteli, January 1981. — See also F15.

F18: Lunch, Child daycare center, Esteli, January 1981. — Nutritious meals and snacks are part of the services provided by these public daycare facilities. Cost of daycare varies according to each family's ability to pay.


F20: Traditional folk dancing, 1st Annual Workers Festival, Managua, December 1980. — Folk dancing was part of a day's festivities which included songs, skits and poems from all parts of the country.


F22: Piling hand-picked corn, "Coyolito," farming cooperative, near Esteli, February 1981. — Prior to the revolution farmers of Coyolito sharecropped on individual plots of land. 50% of their crop was paid as rent. Now, they collectively work the land and pay their common landlady a government set monetary rent.

F23: Mother and children in front of tenement, "La Estrella," state-owned coffee farm, Matagalpa region, February 1981. — Old housing with dirt floors, poor ventilation, and few windows must be used by farm workers until new housing can be built to replace it. Such housing often without latrines was the norm on private farms before the revolution.

F24: New housing ready for occupancy, "Los Alpes," state-owned coffed farm, Matagalpa region, December 1980. — Simple but clean, the new housing for farm workers has concrete floors, large windows, rooms affording some privacy for families, and nearby latrines.

F26: Lunchtime, "Los Alpes," state-owned coffee farm, Matagalpa region, December 1980. — Prior to the revolution most farm workers received only beans and tortillas for food from private owners of coffee farms. Now, the menu has been expanded on state farms to include rice and occasional vegetables, eggs, cheese, and meat.


F28: New coffee processing machine, "La Suana," state-owned coffee farm, Matagalpa region, January 1981. In an effort to increase production capacity a new machine, which eliminates the need for a fermentation step, is tested at La Suana.


F30: Raking sun-drying coffee, near Matagalpa, February 1981. — Most coffee is sun dried prior to roasting or exporting. Wooden rakes are periodically used to aid in thorough drying.

F31: "Cara al Pueblo" (Face the People), town meeting with national and local government leaders, Monimbo, December 1980. — In order to maintain an awareness of local needs and ideas, and to make themselves available for public question and criticism, members of the Junta of National Reconstruction attend periodic town meetings throughout the country. These are usually broadcast nationally on television and radio.


F33: An official responds to a question, "Cara al Pueblo," town meeting, Monimbo, December 1980. — See also F31.

F34: Military funeral and political rally for "Defense and Production," Managua, January 1981. — Humberto Saavedra Ortega, member of the Sandinista Front (FSLN) Directorate, delivers a speech at a military funeral and rally to commemorate seven soldiers who were killed in fighting with ex-National Guardsmen along the Honduran-Nicaraguan border.

F35: A Sandinista leader comforts mother of slain soldier, military funeral and political rally, Managua, January 1981. — See also F34.

F36: Crowd attending military funeral and rally for "Defense and Production," Managua, January 1981. — See also F34.

F37: Mother's momento of her sons' involvement in the revolution against Somoza, Managua, December 1980.

F38: Mural detail, Luis A. Velazquez Park, Managua, March 1981. — Detail from a huge mural commemorating the Sandinista led popular victory over Somoza and the National Guard.
