

Peace Parts
Box 66, Olin

March 14, 1989

Dear Peace Parts People,

This last week we received a floppy disc from Managua on which John Tinker recorded a diary of his personal experiences since leaving the States in December.

We've done a little editing (excuse any typos!. Thankyou.) and are mailing out the following pages. We hope you enjoy the tales he has to tell and and we ask you to keep in mind that Peace Parts needs your contributions to continue. One of John's most recent and lucrative tactics was to sell his plane ticket home! You can see, in light of this, that your support will be deeply appreciated.

If by some wild stretch of the imagination we could raise the sum of \$1500.00 John could purchase a small plot of land (and yet another building!) to provide a base for Peace Parts and a stopping place for those interested in visiting Managua.

Sashi plans to leave today and will arrive by car in a few weeks. John will be staying on till the middle of next month. In these last few weeks of his visit, he will be continue parcelling out Peace and Parts. We hope you keep them both in mind.

The Peace Parts Editorial Board,
Frank Seiberling & Patricia Fisher

Saturday, Sunday, & Monday, Dec 10-12, 1988, San Antonio, TX

Have been through a series of meetings with the Pastors for Peace group -- good folks, committed, real. Talked with David Linder, father of Ben, about Peace Parts. He is very interested in the concept. He knows about a group which fixes Mercedes trucks and donates them to Nicaragua. This group is willing to take third party shipments along.

Leave today at 2:30pm for airport. Flight to Mexico City. Overnight there, then to Managua on Tuesday. Last night reorganized load in truck. Took off heavy medical equipment, which will go very soon in a container and beat the convoy. The truck is viewed as the major donation to Nicaragua and want it to arrive in good shape. Approximately 1 1/2 tons of Peace Parts equipment and parts aboard. Hope it all arrives in good condition. Folks driving in the convoy have a wearying experience ahead of them. Wish them good luck. Also hoping that Sashi and I get through Nicaraguan customs without major problems. Pro-Nica has agreed to be our umbrella organization if one is needed. They have official standing and can import materials without paying duties. Have to go now, leaving for airport in one hour and have things to pack. ***

Wednesday, Dec 21, 1988 San Judas, Managua, Nicaragua

Have been in Managua since a week ago Tuesday. Stayed one night at Hospedeje Norma. Then to Pro-Nica and the Friends Center. Stayed two days at the Friends center. Joe McIntire thought that the container I was to buy may not be available. Will be working with John Kellogg on a warehouse for spare parts at the engineering university (UNI). Met John at the Embassy demonstration Thursday, where he sells tee-shirts to support his project. Sashi and I had lunch with him and a took tour of Electronics shop at the engineering university (UNI). There we met Tomas, a Swiss, who is in charge of the repair shop. I agreed to work with students taking apart an obsolete Soviet computer which is being stored in a cargo container, and to take charge of the repair shop during the month of February, when Tomas will be in Switzerland arranging a shipment. John lent me a 250 cc East German motorcycle.

We needed to arrange for the receipt of the Peace Parts materials as they pass through customs. Pro-Nica is officially under the wing of CEPAD, an ecumenical relief organization, and can bring in development materials free of taxes. Joe and I talked about the possibility of Peace Parts becoming a project of Pro-Nica, at least where relations with the Nicaraguan government are concerned. We are now thinking in those terms. Joe wrote a letter to CEPAD to inform them of the arrival of the Peace Parts shipment. He also arranged for the temporary use by Peace Parts of a half-size cargo container belonging to CEPAD.

Went to Silo church in San Judas and decided to move there. Moved two loads of luggage on the motorcycle. Have had two meetings with community leaders Isidro Velasquez, An/val Rodriguez, and the pastor, Carlos Escorcia about structure of trade school to be organized at the church. I suggested that we model our school in the manner of the community college idea, with the prospective teachers designing and scheduling the courses they are to teach. This idea was accepted. Presently we plan courses in sewing, welding, carpentry, electricity and typewriter repair. We will write a statement of organization for approval by the church board. We also decided to finance an open, roofed workspace, to be built by the carpentry class. The sale of 5 typewriters donated by Peace Parts and overhauled by the typewriter repair class will fund the project. Peace Parts lent the church project \$100 to enable construction of the roof before the sale of the typewriters.

Peace Parts plans to pay for groceries which will be used to prepare a community dinner in the afternoon on Christmas eve. The majority of the

food will be prepared at the church. However, the chief cook is not yet designated and a gas regulator and pipe fitting need to be found for the stove before it can be used. The Caravan is expected to reach Managua soon, and is supposed to come through customs with considerably less red tape than usual. I am hoping to have the use of the truck to unload materials at several locations: the cargo container, San Judas, and if there is time the ministry of health (MINSa) and UNI. I have not yet had time to go to MINSa, but Anival has told Cesar Cajina, my contact there, that we are in town and that we will be visiting soon. Today Sashi and I went to Pro-Nica to talk with Soledad McIntire, who has recently come back from a week in Puerto Cabezas working on a women's support project. The computer had been fixed and I helped Joe get his software loaded back into it and his system running.

Christmas day, 1988 San Judas, Managua, Nicaragua

Yesterday the Silo Church community had a big dinner, or cena. The children played at the piñata, a red paper and clay flamingo filled with dulce sweets. A meal had been prepared, seats set on the sparse grass. A pulley was hung in the air on a rope. Another rope went through the pulley, the piñata on one end, a young woman, Silvia, on the other. The littlest child is held up to swing a stick at the candy bowl in the sky, the paper flamingo. One then another took their turn. Occasionally bits of candy would spin out of the tail. Slowly a break developed in the paper around the base of the neck. The children would dash in and grab what they could. Silvia was not blindfolded and she took almost every advantage, allowing few hits, occasionally falling asleep at the job, but generally miserly with opportunities. The neck finally broke off, and the clay pot cracked, held together only by paper and the will of god. It would not break, but the crack got wider. It became a broken clay pot more than a flamingo. The children in the ring around drew closer. A boy was hit in the shoulder by a blindfolded innocent. In a moment of distraction Silvia left the rope too low. A child reached up, pulled on the clay bowl and it came down. A rule was tried and failed. In a torrent they surged forward in a pile at the center, grasping, clutching candy and dry grass in their little hands, laughing and screaming.

Dinner was served, turkey, chicken, rice and a rich sauce. Oranges had been squeezed to make juice which was offered around in colored plastic glasses. Sashi and I, with photos and audio cassette, recorded the scene. Later that afternoon we went to the Bautist (Baptist) seminario, where the Pastors for Peace caravan is camped, to see what the current situation with the trucks is. We are eager to get the things through customs and start unloading them. We were told that they would not be available until the Wednesday after Christmas. Today we flew kites with Jos and Carlito, then went to the Friend's meeting in time for refreshments afterward. Sashi and I rode John Kellogg's motorcycle to the Baptist seminary, where the Pastor's caravan rested after an eleven day drive from Larado Texas. We learned that the prospected unloading of the truck is now to be this coming Wednesday, the 28th of December.

Sashi and I went to eat in Barrio Marta Casada, sometimes referred to as Gringolandia. Restaurant Gloria was closed and having a cumple a\$o celebration (birthday party), but they asked us anyway to buy a meal of biftek or fish. A couple was drinking beer at the next table. We ordered one plate of biftek with two tenedores (forks). I have never quite seen a piece of meat like this one. It was grey in color with a slight congealed fat surface coating. Pulling it apart with a fork and knife, fine tendons or fat crossed through the muscle fibers. The smell was not bad, neither the taste, but it did not taste like beef. Some Nicaraguan equivalent of Worcestershire sauce made it seem juicier. This meat seemed somewhat older than fresh, yet not quite spoiled, dead but not rotten. Also we ate some salad. We ate much of the meat between us, but did not finish it, paid the

bill and left.

Thursday, December 29, 1988 San Judas, Managua

Woke up with the roosters this morning: last night there was a reception ceremony at the Baptist seminary for the Pastors for Peace convoy with the president, Daniel Ortega, and Miguel D'Escoto, the foreign minister. The folks on the convoy had held a meeting and had carefully prepared themselves by voting amongst themselves on which questions they would ask Daniel, if given the opportunity, and who would ask them (not all white males). Lucius Walker, the Pastors for Peace leader who had been shot in the buttocks during the August, 1988 contra attack on the Bluefields passenger boat, and whose wound had been photographed and printed in Barracada, the Sandinista daily newspaper, had stressed that the question askers were not to make speeches to Ortega. The celebrities were late, even taking Latin Time into account --Daniel has been recovering from a recent illness but that gave the video people plenty of time to get ready. Chaplain Morrison from the Miami area American Friends Service Committee, has been running himself ragged documenting the arrival of the convoy and interviewing various Nicaraguan and American participants with his small video camera, used the delay to catch up on much needed sleep. We heard a helicopter pass overhead. The caravan folk music group sang several songs including "If I had a Hammer" and "Nicaragua, Nicaragua" the beautiful anthem. A Salvadoran political vadoran political refugee entertained us with several entertained us with several songs. Finally, they arrived. Daniel had brought with him a a young boy who had been injured in the head by the Contras, and who had just returned to Nicaragua from surgery in, ironically, the United States. The atmosphere was informal. I had heard good things was informal. I had heard good things about the accessibility of Ortega and these reports seemed to be true. There was a prayer. Lucius made a speech about the origins of the Pastors convoy and also made a promise that there would be another convoy within six months. Then Daniel made a short speech with references to the human cost of the war and the Christian imperative to stop it. He did not present the gladhanding, artificiality that is so often seen in US politicians (with some exceptions, Bev*), but was friendly, intelligent and sincere. The prioritized questions were never asked by the socio-economic-gender balanced representatives. And it never occurred to me to ask him about the radio. I should write him a letter.

* Bev Hannon, a State Legislature Senator

Monday, January 16, 1989, San Judas, Managua

Sunday morning Carlos Ted and I went to see a demonstration which had been organized by a loose coalition of opposition political parties. I say "loose" because they range widely across the left/right political spectrum, and seem to hold no common agenda except their opposition to the Frente Sandinista de Liberation National (FSLN). This coalition is bounded on the right perhaps by the party COSEP, which is an organization of business interests, and on the left by one of the Communist factions. Carlos had thought it was important for Ted and me to see it and to record it with our cameras. He thought there was a good chance that there would be a violent confrontation with the police. After we had parked our motorcycle, we walked a few cuadras (blocks) to a side street where a group carrying scores of large green banderas (flags) affixed atop tall strong palos (poles). The four meter (twelve foot) palos had been cut from stout bamboo. They were cut diagonally at the tops, somehow coincidentally seeming to have been sharpened. The green, just slightly blue, cloth was large and new. People carried signs saying that they were hungry, Daniel. Several young men about a black painted tin coffin filled with weeds, labeled FSLN.

Not much was happening. We took pictures and waited for them to start moving. We bought cokes and listened to a distressed mechanic rant drunkenly about the privations suffered by the people. He talked about salaries, saying that he made 15,000 crdobas (or "cords") per week. We knew

that one dollar can be legally exchanged for 4,500 of them, and that our cokes cost one mil (a thousand crds) each. We were sitting on his front porch watching the people in the street with their green banderas and signs. His esposa (wife) brought out from their house a framed photograph of their son who was killed in the war in 1982. The man told us he feared for the life of his other son who will soon be subject to the military draft. Two large loudspeakers atop a battered rusted little taxi alternately played popular radio music and harangued us with political complaints. Ted left to take photographs with his Nikon zoom lens. The man raised his voice now and then. I tried to express sympathy for his suffering. Carlos looked off to the side and seemed disgusted with the man's dramatics, but didn't say much. The wife protectively took the photograph back into the house. When Ted returned, he drank the rest of his coke and the three of us paid for the cokes and went back to the crowd in the street. I took pictures too, of green flags, protest signs, and various political figures whom Carlos would point out to us. We passed a few remarks about how few people were there, maybe six or seven hundred. If this was a march, they weren't marching and they only stretched two or three short cuadras back. But I saw only green flags and signs, banners promoting only the Conservative Party. This march was widely billed to be composed of a broad coalition, so I suspected there might be other similar groups waiting on other side streets, to form together later into a bigger march. Then Ted saw a group of large blue flags down the street. These had the ancient Christian symbol of the fish sewn onto them, the logo of the Christian Democrats. They were centered around the Esso gas station, but soon started walking up the hill toward us. It was quite colorful and pretty, the flags new, bright, large and high in the air on their palos. The flagstaves of the Christian Democrats were not bamboo, but had turned on lathes. But they were no less stout. They were topped by sharp wooden diamond-shaped ornaments, looking perhaps somewhat useful as weapons. This was a slow march it stopped every block or so, and there were orations through the loudspeakers. Another group joined, these with tricolor flags with horizontal bands, I cannot remember the colors. They were also large, with tall, thick, strong poles. One of the men held a smaller flag on a shorter stick, but one equally thick. He held it up in the air with one hand. It was a club, obviously, hiding behind a small flag. We moved along with the crowd. Ted and I were looking like gringo periodistas (journalists) with our cameras, we were dressed casually but well. We were enjoying a sense of conspiracy in our affected professionalism. We smiled at the people as we photographed, and mostly they smiled back. The streets were getting more crowded. It was hot and sunny. We bought some cinnamon flavored ice-cream cones. More groups were converging on the march and merging into it, all with bright colored flags on tall stout poles. I asked one of the other gringo periodistas if he worked for the US media. He was Rick Uglig (?) of the New York Times. I asked him if he had any information on a local press report that the US embassy had given \$26,000 to the opposition groups. He said that they had refused to comment because it is against Nicaraguan law for a foreign government to make such a donation. Slowly the march progressed, block after block, finally arriving at the gate of a large cemetery. An Atlantic Coast Communist group was among the last to arrive, but they arrived in mass, hundreds of them. Their flags were red, with a hammer and sickle, but they were not so new looking as the rest, and had more of a handmade look to them. Their signs were hand painted.

The Spanish was not easy for me to understand, but I could tell that the haranguing over the loudspeakers by the various parties was mostly composed of complaints about the government and promotion for particular parties. "The people are hungry", they were saying. "The Sandinistas are to blame, and we want to see them out of power this year." Agendas were not being articulated, and due to the disparity between the politics or the parties represented it might have been inciting to riot to do so. What

they shared were complaints about the economic conditions and a dislike, perhaps hatred, of the Sandinista government. Estimates of the size of the whole crowd ranged upwards from 5,000. Carlos and Ted both thought around six or seven thousand. I thought there might have been eight. Carlos said that when the Sandinistas have rallies, there are a hundred thousand or more. Several times it occurred to me to wonder where the police were. I looked around, but couldn't see any. It was not until started walking back to the motor cycle and were several blocks from the edge of the crowd at the cemetery that we saw the first green and beige jeep with the blue light on the top and the Sandinista star on the side of the door, clean bright and shiny. It was clear that an intentional decision had been made to avoid contact with the march and for the uniformed police to observe it only from a distance. On the way to the march Carlos has worried that we might be stopped by the police for riding three people on a motorcycle. I occasionally see small families, mother and father with two or three children, riding on one motorcycle, but still I was somewhat concerned. Finally, as we neared Carlos' church, where we all live, we happened to stop at a stoplight next to a police jeep. There were two on them in the front seats. They looked over at us, smiled slightly and one of them held up two fingers. I asked "como" (what) and he said that only two people are allowed to ride on one motorcycle at a time. I explained that there was no other way for us to travel, and that we were almost home. The light turned green and they drove off. Relieved, I drove us the rest of the way home. Carlos explained that had they been the traffic police they would have given us a ticket, and I suspect he may be right.

February 8, 1989

Spent the afternoons of today and yesterday at UNI, in the electronics shop. A fellow, Marcos, is working on a battery charger for a video camera which belongs to a school. Yesterday he had brought into the shop just one resistor which he thought might be bad, but it wasn't. Today he brought in the whole charger and we looked at it together. It became clear that the circuit is too complex to analyze just by looking at it, so we made a schematic. From the schematic we could see that we would need the battery pack to check the function of the charger, so tomorrow afternoon he is going to bring it all. In the shop there are two computers, an IBM compatible and a Macintosh. The students take turns working with them. It is a pleasant environment and the students are intelligent, friendly and purposeful. I also re-inked the printer ribbon with a little homemade kit I had brought down from Iowa. The output from the printer had been just barely legible. It took longer than I thought and my fingers ended up covered with ink. I took them about an inch and a half of printer paper today, because they were out. This morning I helped Eric put a new battery in the bus. The two original ones had been stolen one night because there was no lock on the hood. There is a battery factory here in Managua, so they bought one made there. We shall see how good it is. The school project here at the church is limping along. The Ministry of Education (MED) has given us notice that we need official permission to have a school. We are going to stress that it is going to be a small informal school for the teaching of basic skills, not a trade school which certifies its graduates. Originally the fellow from MED had let us believe that there would be no problem. I think it was a mistake for Carlos to talk to them in the first place. This project got alot bigger alot faster than I thought it would, at least the plans got bigger. I have stressed along that we should try to make a small informal school first, and develop it into something bigger latter if we find enough enthusiasm and support within the community. Now with the problem with MED I think it will be easier to scale down the expectations somewhat. I keep hearing from various people that it is important not to fail with a project of the people will lose confidence in you and be unwilling to work with you again. I have consciously been trying to keep a lid on expectations from the start, but it has been difficult. The trip to Costa Rica was nice in

some ways, but I am glad to be back in Managua. We shopped in San Jos for lots of little things, which were easy to find. But when we tried to find sheets of 3/16 inch polypropylene for the prosthetics shop at the hospital where Roberto Valasquez works we met with frustrating failure. There was a factory which makes all types of plastic, but they only sell in large quantities. None of the outlets which they sent me to had what we were looking for. Our visit to Monteverde was pleasant. We stayed for three days with Becky Day in her cabin on the side of a mountain overlooking a bay. The sunsets were spectacular and we could see for twenty or thirty miles from our perch a mile above sea level. On the way back to Managua we stopped overnight in Rivas and by chance at a small restaurant we found for sale a stack of 28 nesting plastic storage baskets, each about a foot wide and two feet in length. I tied them all together and made straps on the stack, which was about five feet tall, so I could carry it on my back like a backpack. It weighed about 60 or 70 pounds, and I had to walk about a mile like that to our hotel. The next day we took it to the bus stop with us. When the bus finally came it was one of those converted school buses that characterize third world countries. It had a large rack on top for luggage and freight. The fellow in charge put my stack of crates on top of his head, scaled the ladder on the back of the bus like that. I was impressed. There was standing room only in the bus by the time we got aboard. Also, to complete the picture, there were chickens walking around on the floor, and I think some tied up in sacks also. Sashi found a seat after about an hour and a half, but not to be out-machoed by the natives, I stood up the whole way back to Managua, about 2 1/2 hours. I needn't have worried about how I was going to get the crates across town from the bus station. A quick negotiation was made and they were whisked into the back of a beat-up little pickup. We got in front with the driver and he took us home for 15,000 c"rdobas, about three dollars. I am happy to have the crates for storing things (wish I had some back in Olin!) and am glad I undertook getting them to Managua, which seemed an almost impossible undertaking at first. There has been some problems with the kids taking little things from the workshop without asking me. Today Carlito stole some balloons, of all things. He fest-up when confronted and asked for forgiveness, which I gave him. I hope he was sincere in reality, he certainly has a sincere act. Also I found out tonight through a little informer that Walter had taken my little red Spanish/English dictionary that I have carried with me since I first went to Mexico eleven years ago. This was disappointing because I always considered Walter to be one of the more honest children. I will have to talk to him about it tomorrow. The war Nicaragua by the United States is a big problem here for everybody, and in my mind should be the focus of attention by concerned Americans, but the truth is that Nicaragua has problems of its own, even without the war. They threw out the dictator, but ever since then they have not had an opportunity to work out their internal problems, and the cultural problems subsequent to fifty years of dictatorship. The crimes of the US here are compounded by the fact that we are committing them against a helpless, impoverished, people who have suffered oppression for so long and now should be allowed to work out their problems and recover their independence. Have to go upstairs and take a shower, tomorrow is a no-water day.

Friday, February 10, 1989

I have been in the workshop at the church this morning. The orange plastic crates are handy for organizing the various electronic parts and hardware that we brought down from Olin with the truck.

This afternoon I went with Gladys, who has been living in a small building attached to the church, to see her new house which is being built by her father. It is about halfway between San Judas and Los Brisas, which is where the Quaker Center is. We rode the bus, incredibly crowded, and I was anxious that we would not be able to get out of the door when we got to out stop. Managua buses are to normal buses what Slam Dancing is to walt-

zing. I have tried several times to count the people aboard, but it is impossible. Your best approach is to try to time your passage down the aisle to coincide with the arrival of the bus at your stop. The squirming of tightly packed stranger past each other is suggestive of a digestive action, and you can only hope that everything comes out alright.

Later this evening I tried for two hours to call my mother but was barely able to reach the operator, and way unable to get a line out of the country.

Sunday, February 12, 1989

Yesterday I worked in the shop at the church sorting hardware with Walter, a twelve year old who lives down the street with his grandmother. It is always wondrous to watch a collection of disassembled parts turn into a hardware inventory when some time is invested sorting it. Walter enjoys doing it and I pay him twenty cents an hour (a thousand c"rdobas) which is an average wage for an adult. His brother Nelson also likes to be here, even if it just to sit and watch me typing at the computer. They also like to ride bicycles and are quite eager to do errands such as going down the street to buy fruit, because the current rule here is that bicycles can only be used for work, not for entertainment.

Today I went to the Friends Center, where I got several messages. One from my mother that she had come to Managua late last night and had already left for Esteli this morning. She is planning to visit Managua in three weeks, but I hope Sashi and I can go to visit her this weekend. Esteli is about three hours from Managua, probably we will take the bus. I met with John Kellogg at the UNI this afternoon and we talked about the progress on the electronics shop and the almacn (parts warehouse). The engineering university used to be a colegio (highschool) but was damaged by the earthquake of 1972 and abandoned. Now it is being rebuilt and, hopefully, earthquake proofed. The work is all proceeding by hand. Huge deep pits have been dug underneath the basement, which is temporarily supported by wooden posts. They are going to make huge concrete ballast pads which the building will rest upon, and according to a theory which I do not quite understand, will prevent the building from shaking apart. John showed me the floor plan for the new workshops and was excited by the prospect of having an excellent repair facility and parts warehouse. He wants me to work full time on this project, but I can't agree to at this time because of commitments to the school project at San Judas and to the repair shops at MINSA. I suggested that I would be able to work with outreach to other organizations which need parts and services, but he said that for now outreach was not going to be a priority. I am feeling a need to make connections in other parts of the country which even in worse economic condition than Managua. John lent me his motorcycle again, which is helpful. Later in the afternoon I met Soledad McIntire at the ProNica container. She is going to take one of the bicycles we had brought to the women's project in Puerta Cabeza, on the Atlantic coast. Also I found a very nice Underwood portable typewriter which she is going to take with her. Peace Parts accepted responsibility for finding good places for the donations which came down on the truck, and we are asking ProNica to help us with this, because they know what the needs are in different places throughout the country. Tonight Sasamuri, the Japanese monk, had returned from Bluefields, and he gave a report of his experiences. He has been there for the past two months, working with a construction brigade to rebuild houses destroyed by hurricane Joan in October. He said that there was very little new lumber available and that much of the construction was with old lumber from the houses which had been blown down. During the Somoza years the people there did not suffer the oppression that the rest of the country did, partly because Bluefields is inaccessible by road. So the people along the Atlantic coast did not really take part in the overthrow of the dictatorship, and also partly because of mistakes made by the Sandinista government

in the first years after the revolution, there has been quite a bit of resentment against the government in this part of the country. Sasamuri thinks that the government effort to rebuild after the hurricane will have a uniting effect between Atlantic and Pacific Nicaragua. He is also critical of the United States government for exploiting the differences between the coasts, largely through the use of powerful radio and television stations in both Costa Rica and Honduras.

Monday, February 13

Today I went to the repair shops at MINSA (the Ministry of Health) to see if I could help with a malfunctioning computer. They did not know it was a problem with the hardware (the machine itself) or with the software (the programs). I ran diagnostics on its 20 megabyte hard disk and it was ok, but their payroll program still would not run. We called the programmer who had written the program, and he came to look at it. A number of program files were missing from the hard disk, so he re-installed them and got everything working again. There was some question whether the problem had been caused by bad electricity from the wall plug, or whether a novice user had accidentally screwed things up. The government paid for the computer in the first place, but there is no money in the budget for repairs, so the programmers bill was paid by all of the workers in the shop.

February 14, 1989

Today I went to UNI (the Engineering University) to work on the disassembly of the Cuban computer. I took Walter with me on the motorcycle and he helped me arrange a stack of plywood which was being stored in a container. In one of the small containers (20 feet long) we are going to make a shop specifically for the disassembly of obsolete and junk equipment. This evening there was a meeting of the school board and we decided to go ahead with or without the approval of MED (the Ministry of Education). The power company, INE, has not yet come to install the meter for the 220 volt line we will need for the welding shop. Also, Gladys hasn't moved out of the annex yet because her house isn't finished yet. Her father is working on it, and it looks very nice -- his workmanship is excellent. She told me that she needs \$100 to finish it. I lent her \$60 and said that I would lent her \$40 more soon. Part of this money is to construct a barb wire fence around the whole property, without which thievery would be a real problem. She is going to let us keep our container on her property, and I feel more secure knowing that she will be keeping her eye on it.

Wednesday, February 15

Spent the morning taking apart the old computer at UNI. Walter and I are working on this, using a shipping container as a workshop. We are descomponando la m quina (taking the machine apart). It makes me feel at home, because I do the same thing in Olin, Iowa. It is interesting for me to be able to see components that have been made in the Eastern Bloc countries. I am sure it would surprise many from the US to see how well made they are. Also it was interesting to find a part made by Hewlett-Packard, which is a US company, inside of a Soviet designed computer which was made in Cuba.

February 22, 1989

Yesterday evening Sashi and I went to a large pro-Sandinista rally held in front of the National Palace, at the Plaza de la Revoluti"n. On one side of the square stands the ruins of an old cathedral which was destroyed in the earthquake of 1972. I wanted to improve my sense of the political situation in Nicaragua, to be better able to respond to the perennial question "are the Sandinistas supported by the people?" I had seen one part of the answer at an opposition rally on the 8th of January, and yesterday I saw another. It was the 55th anniversary of the assassination of Augusto Cesar Sandino, who became the father of Nicaraguan nationalism

when he kicked out the US Marines in 1933. The rally started at 3 PM. We got there at five, and there was still a large crowd, larger than the opposition rally in January where the 14 opposition parties had all joined forces. The banners hanging down along the columns of the National Palace were long and bright, the red and black of the Sandinista party alternated with the blue and white representing Nicaragua. Earlier, the blue and white had not been so prominent at Sandinista functions, and I think I am seeing an intentional effort on their part to broaden their identity. Less prominent locations throughout the plaza were under the care of older banners of faded red and black. In speech president Daniel Ortega stunned the crowd with his announcement that he would submit before the National Assembly a proposal that Nicaragua release from prison 1,700 ex-members of the National Guard. This proposal would be in accord with meetings of the Central American presidents recently in San Salvador. Many people feel strong emotions concerning the release of these prisoners, because the crimes of the National Guard are well known. The known murderers were not executed following the revolution because the Sandinistas do not believe in the death penalty, but I have heard on the street comments that all the pain and suffering that has been inflicted by the contras would have been prevented if they would have been executed. So it is quite a concession to release them from prison. Ortega called it a "bitter drink, but necessary for peace." The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights will be used to determine who will be released, and presumably the worse will not be released. Ortega also said that there would be no changes made to the constitution prior to the upcoming elections in February of 1990. He said that to do so would be undemocratic, because the Nicaraguan people voted overwhelmingly for the Sandinistas in 1984 and that they wanted the constitution as it was. One of the results of the meeting of the presidents in San Salvador recently has been that the elections have been moved up from November of 1990 to February of the same year. Interestingly the opposition, which had previously complained that the elections were too far off, now complain that they are going to be too soon -- that they need more time to organize supporters. The truth is that the Sandinistas feel confident of their support and that the opposition is probably more or less discredited by their cozy relationship with the CIA and the US embassy. The crimes of the contras are well known here, as is the complicity of elements of the opposition in US policy. It is also difficult that a program could develop out of a coalition which includes such a widely disparate range of parties from the extreme right-wing to the extreme left-wing. In truth all of the opposition parties are tiny minorities, and they join together only because they share a dislike, or jealousy, of the Sandinistas. Ortega fired the opening shot of the upcoming campaign by challenging the opposition parties to prove their support at the polls, because he feels confident in the support that will be given to the Sandinistas. At the end of the rally a recording of the Sandinista anthem was played and the people sang along. It was moving to me to see a patriotic crowd sing a song which had sustained them through trials and sorrows. A feature of the Sandinista supporters is their youth. To me they seem idealistic and energetic. Their enthusiasm and spirit could well form the Nicaraguan national character for years to come. The rally did not really break up after it was over. Rather it turned into a party, with dancing and samba music. Sashi and I left before long, but the newspaper today reports that hundreds remained until the early hours of the morning.