
Sister City Update

Issue 6

September 1996

“Spring Break” Delegation Reports

As many of our readers know, a delegation of Richland area residents traveled to Santa Teresa in Nicaragua last spring, from March 16-22. Coinciding with spring break at the UWC-Richland campus, the trip was organized (at least initially) by Dr. Emil Haney, UWC-R professor, and included 3 of his Spanish students: Kathy Neckar, Jane Papke, and Jan Swenson. Also joining the contingent were Dr. Bill Cook and his daughter Erin, attorney Peter Lawrence, and Jen Silva, UWC-R student body president.

Following are reflections on the adventure from four of the participants:

Emil Haney...

As our plane circled over Managua in preparation for landing at the Augusto Sandino International Airport, we descended through a cloud of smog from wood smoke and exhaust fumes. Indeed, the smell of smoke from preparing the evening meal for this sprawling, tropical metropolis of three-quarters of a million inhabitants penetrated our plane before it taxied to a stop at the terminal. It was an sobering reminder to those of us who had known Nicaragua during the Sandinista Revolution of the early 1980s that the standard of living for most of the country's four and a half million inhabitants has been on the skids for more than a decade now. Sixteen years after the despotic Somoza regime was overthrown by the idealistic and youthful Sandinistas, the time and resources devoted to gathering, distributing, and cooking with firewood far exceed the commitment to the Sandinista priorities of building schools and health clinics and imparting universal education and health care from these facilities.

After packing our limit of boxes and suitcases with medical and school supplies in the UWC-Richland cafeteria the night before and departing Richland Center early that morning, we were about to confront Nicaragua's notoriously sluggish immigration and

customs processes--that is, if our luggage and cardboard boxes had made it through two jam-packed flights and transfer at a very security conscious Houston airport. The boxes were there intact with all our personal luggage! And no, Managua immigration and customs had not changed! An hour and a half later, we emerged relatively unscathed and unfleeced to a patient reception party from Santa Teresa--Luís Matus (alcalde), María Adelayda Traña (wife), Luis Jr. (son and 4th yr. *instituto* student at Diriamba), and Juan (hired hand and chauffer). The drive to Sta. Teresa was classic Latin American motoring. The boxes and luggage were entrusted to Juan, Peter and Luís Jr. in Don Luís' small, high and hard mileage Toyota pickup. The rest of us packed into a well-used Toyota Land Cruiser with bench

K/GAP Benefit Concert

(Kickapoo/Guatemala Accompaniment Project)
Saturday, October 5th, 7:30pm
Pleasant Ridge School Gym in Viroqua
(formerly the public elementary school)

Featuring

Dean Stevens from Boston. Involved with Central American projects, particularly in Salvador and Nicaragua. He sings in Spanish and English

Randy Sabine, well known Wisconsin fiddler.

Connie Vanderhyden, recently returned from 3 months of accompaniment in the returned refugee village of Nueva Esperanza, Chacula, Guatemala, will talk briefly about her experiences, as well.

Refreshments and Crafts on sale
Tickets: \$10 for adults, \$5 for students, under 5 free

seats along the sides. Because the pick-up had no taillights and because Managua has become infamous for theft and robberies (not surprising in a county with 60% unemployment), our entourage avoided the capital by heading east to Tipitapa, taking the Pan-American Highway south to Masaya, and then proceeding southwest to Jinotepe through Masatepe. We limped into Jinotepe with one high beam or two low beams on the pickup and no taillights and no lights at all on the Land Cruiser! As usual, we shared the road with a multitude of trucks, buses, cars, bikes, pedestrians, and animals.

On this Saturday night, there were far more vehicles than there would have been during the fuel and parts shortages of the early 1980s. Most of the open-air bars and nightclubs bustled with activity. They were adorned with string lights and salsa music blared from jukeboxes. Many were ringed with Japanese-made cars and pickups. Lots of roadside stands were still open and they seemed well supplied with piles of coconuts, large striped watermelons, and huge red-fleshed papayas.

We had a pleasant reception at Don Luís and Doña María's home in Jinotepe, including a visit with daughters Cils (2nd yr. Economics student at UNAN) and Naima (5th yr. *instituto* student at Diriamba). We relaxed in those marvelous Nicaraguan high-back, caned rockers and sipped tumblers of fresh *tamarindo* juice. Some insisted on sterilizing their drinks with Nicaragua's best rum, *Flor de Caña* (now available in lite!). By midnight the lights had been fixed on the Land Cruiser and the caravan proceeded to Sta. Teresa, about 10 kilometers southwest of Jinotepe. Jane and Jen stayed with Don Luís' daughter, Karen, and son-in-law, Jorge, who operate a small store in Sta. Teresa. Kathy, Jan, and Peter were installed in a dormitory in the home of an architect and municipal council member, María del Socorro. Their dorm was complete with mango tree, guard dog, and guard spiders! Bill, Erin, and I stayed with the Matus' in Jinotepe.

Sunday was a day of relaxation and getting acquainted. We enjoyed tours of Sta. Teresa and Jinotepe, including a trek through the sprawling 4-block square open-air market of Jinotepe. There was an abundance of fruits and vegetables. Used clothing was more abundant in the stalls than new clothing. In stark contrast to the Sandinista years, there were quite a few beggars and vagrants in the streets. Jinotepe's commercial district not only serves a town of 15,000, twice the size of Sta. Teresa, but apparently draws heavily from the surrounding *municipios* of San Marcos, Diriamba, El Rosario, and Santa Teresa. Jinotepe has a fairly complete array of services, including banks, schools, and a regional hospital. In contrast to our sole sister city relationship with Sta. Teresa, Jinotepe has

several official linkages, mostly with Western European cities.

In the afternoon, we drove to La Boquita on the Pacific coast to an open-air seafood restaurant. The countryside always looks the worse for wear during the dry season, but this 30 kilometer stretch of mostly cattle farms with natural pastures looked especially inauspicious. The livestock was gaunt and the small farmsteads seemed very neglected. At 22% interest, farm credit has all but dried up. Cattle rustling has become rampant throughout the country, but especially on farms with absentee owners in the north. Don Luis had lost 22 head within the past three years. The cattle are slaughtered and the meat is sold clandestinely to markets in Managua.

Some say the rustlers are vestiges of Somosa's *guardia* or *ex-contras*. Others blame the rustling and rising lawlessness in the countryside and cities on the country's high unemployment, the downsizing of the Sandinista army from 85,000 to 15,000 soldiers, and widespread corruption in the new police force and court system.

The seafood was superb, especially the huge bowls of *sopa de mariscos* and *sopa de pescado*. And the accompanying marimba music was proclaimed outstanding by our group musician. It was on to the beach at Luís and María's retirement home in process where we visited, took siestas, snacked on fruit, and body surfed into a spectacular sunset. Here we were--so close to paradise, so far from bone-chilling winds and piles of rotting snow. Whoops, time for a reality check--*mañana*.

Monday through Wednesday was quite packed with visits to the Sta. Teresa Health Clinic and several schools to deliver supplies. And of course many hours were invested in goodwill listening and chatting over meals, in corner cafes, and along city streets and country trails. Bill and I also managed a visit to the Jinotepe Hospital to leave some supplies that were not appropriate for the Sta. Teresa Clinic. We also had a very early morning tour of a sugar mill in Nadaime in the southern part of Carazo to resolve the squeezing of Don Luís' sugarcane crop. And we sat in a meeting with Don Luís and the vice rector of the University of Mobile's Latin America campus in San Marcos (about 10 kilometers northeast of Jinotepe and Somoza's hometown) to discuss a proposal from them for setting up an ecotourism/natural area project in the Chacocentes area of Sta. Teresa.

We had some bad luck with the timing of our visit to the clinic. An employee had been dismissed the previous

(Haney, continued from Page 2)

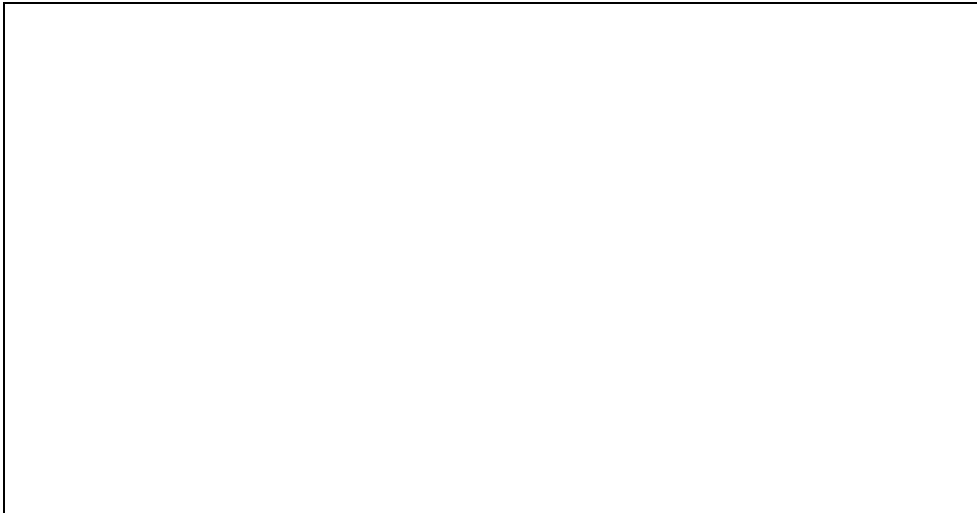
week on an embezzlement charge and the other employees had struck in sympathy. Things were not up to speed on Monday morning as employees came back to work and then suspended operations again in the afternoon while the director of rural clinics for the state of Carazo came in to mediate the dispute. The resolution included the dismissal of the director and appointment of a new director. Still, we managed to present the medical supplies and dental equipment and tour the clinic. Despite the implementation of modest charges for clinical services and medicines (which obviously pose a burden for most families), this rural clinic (and apparently others in the country) seems to have maintained priorities, established in the Sandinista era, on inoculations and pre-natal care. Nevertheless, the bare shelves in the pharmacy and the sparsely equipped dental section made the agony of toting extra baggage and hassling customs agents all seem worthwhile.

After hearing about the local and national crisis of inadequate supplies in rural schools, the group had hoped to deliver our limited supplies to the rural schools of Sta. Teresa. But limited time and minimal transportation facilities (Don Luís' pickup) put a serious constraint on our efforts. While the urban public schools are also wanting, they tend to be in far better shape than the rural schools. Indeed, a front page story in the national press during the week of our visit reported that as many as 400,000 children (out of a national population of 4 million people) didn't attend school regularly because they lacked basic school supplies such as pencils and notebooks. And on Friday, when we returned to Managua, we witnessed a drive by school children there to collect materials for poor children nationwide.

We did get to some schools, despite dusty trails and flat tires! Again, the efforts by school children in the Richland Center area and by our group to sort and transport school supplies seemed to all the more worthwhile. But since local stores appeared to be well supplied with these materials, we concluded that a monetary subsidy to the children and parents of Sta. Teresa might be a better way of helping the local economy at the same time. We estimated that as little as \$100 per year for each of the 28 rural schools would keep the students supplied with the basic materials.

The monetary gift of \$500 that we carried with us went to finish the kiosk at the new outdoor basketball arena and park on the outskirts of town. A gift from Western European countries had resulted in a very attractive and permanent facility with concrete courts and bleachers. However, there had not been enough funds to finish the kiosk where children could seek protection during torrential rains and where refreshments could be sold during games.

The trip was too short to achieve all of our goals. But it certainly affirmed that there is no substitute for people to people contacts in building international understanding. As with previous visitors from the Richland Center area, the people of Sta. Teresa opened their hearts and homes to us and shared beyond their means. It was a sobering reminder to those of us who often bear deep grudges against our government policies to find that local people are very understanding and forgiving. They appreciate our sharing material goods with those in desperate need. But above all, they appreciate our friendship and understanding. And they are very pleased and proud to share with us elements of their culture which we desperately need. Let's keep on giving generously to our friends in need in Sta. Teresa, but think seriously about what they can offer you as well.



The kiosk at the newly completed outdoor park and basketball court. The Sister City Project contributed \$500 toward completion of the kiosk.

Photo: Luis Matus

Peter Lawrence...

The 8 individuals who went to Santa Teresa on March 16, 1996 were able to take substantial amounts of supplies with us without additional cost. We took a portable dental drill and amalgam generously donated by Drs. Louie and Tom Williams, used eye glasses donated by John Guelig, and medical supplies donated by the Richland Medical Center and Ray and Jane Papke (Empire Drugs). On our second day in Santa Teresa we gathered in the Mayor's office to present these materials to the Municipal officials. We then toured the Medical Clinic. I was quite impressed with the medical clinic and it's staff - they obviously were very dedicated individuals. There are three doctors at the clinic in Santa Teresa, who also serviced the outlying clinics, which we did not visit. There were very few supplies/ drugs/medicines on hand and were informed that we had provided them with approximately a 3 month supply of medical supplies. Health care is provided to all members of the community without charge, including medicines when available. When not available at the clinic, drugs are available at private pharmacies at prices that exceed most peoples financial abilities.

Supplies for Santa Teresa's Schools

Three weeks before our departure I started to seriously contemplate the importance of collecting school supplies for distribution. Lots and lots of school supplies (300 - 400 lbs) were donated by many children, teachers, parents, and other interested individuals. In addition, I purchased an additional \$275 of school supplies from funds donated by a number of generous people, including: Mike Mullarkey (from moneys donated in memory of his son, Tom; Richard Meister (our former High School Acting Principal); Andrew Sharp; Phyllis Keller; Jane and Dan Basarich; Karen Lupa (of Milwaukee), and Bernice Lawrence (of Connecticut, my mom).

The schools in Santa Teresa desperately need paper and pencils for the students, as well as less basic items. One of our main goals was to provide substantial quantities of school supplies as they are in very short supply. The City of Santa Teresa has approximately 6000 residents, with an equal amount living outside the City. However, a substantial number of school age students do not attend school for a number of reasons. First, many parents in both the City and countryside need their children to help them make ends meet - work within or outside of the home. Second, all students must pay a fee each semester of approx. \$20. While this may not sound onerous, please note that a school teacher in Santa Teresa makes approx. \$30 a month! Given the high birth (and infant mortality) rate in Nicaragua, this fee is prohibitive for a country with 60 % unemployment.

The main public school in Santa Teresa is the Ruben Dario school, on the outskirts of town. Ruben Dario was

a well known Nicaraguan poet. Although a Catholic School, it is the largest public school and receives Municipal funding. Emil Haney, Jan Swenson and I visited this school on two different days. Public education in Nicaragua starts at kindergarten age and continues through 6th grade. High school, which lasts five years, is the exception - not the rule, and relatively few students attend. It is quite expensive to attend high school. We visited the High School on two occasions to inquire about interest in an exchange program and to distribute pen pal letters. Since our return, we have heard that a qualified high school senior is interested in attending the U. W. Richland Campus.

Distribution of School Supplies

It had been our goal to distribute supplies to the locations with the greatest need. We quickly determined that the city schools were better supplied than the rural schools, based upon the fact that most rural families are poorer than most city dwelling families. There are 42 rural schools in the area within the municipal boundaries of Santa Teresa. The city of Santa Teresa is the municipal center of the Municipality of Santa Teresa, just as Richland Center is the County seat of Richland County.

We visited three rural schools during our six days in Nicaragua. The first school we visited was relatively close to town on a good road. It was large, with a school administration building, a medical clinic (one of the above mentioned outlying clinics), and a number of separate classroom buildings. Given Nicaragua's desperate national financial situation, there are mandated national standards for minimum classroom size (40 per classroom). Accordingly, the classes were very crowded. The other two rural schools were one room buildings. Because of overcrowding, all schools have a morning session - 7:30 until 12:30 and an afternoon session - 1 P.M. until 6 P.M. It was unbearably hot (at least for us) in the afternoons in March (the hottest month), with temperatures averaging around 90 degrees. The same teacher teaches both sessions. Although students in the city schools were marginally supplied, one rural teacher told us that none of her students had paper or a pencil with which to write. We passed out the supplies that had generously been given to us. We estimated that it might cost \$50 to \$100 per rural school to supply that school with supplies for the year, resulting in a maximum cost of \$4200 for supplies for the entire year for the entire rural school system. Although the physical condition of the buildings we visited appeared to be adequate. Note, that there were no bathroom facilities evident at the rural schools and the latrines were closed (unusable) at the large city school. However, the walls were largely bare of posters, maps and other visually attractive items.

(Lawrence, continued from Page 4)

Although there is a blackboard in every class, the rural schools have shortages of chalk for the teachers. School is in session from mid Feb. until December (before Christmas) and is in vacation for two months.

Recent Donation from "The Last Supper" Group

Recently, I was contacted by John Heasley, a member of the Community Group who performed "The Last Supper" at the UW Richland Center Coppertop Theater. He informed me that his group knew of our project and was considering making a donation. I provided him with some information about our trip to Santa Teresa and the various projects we were supporting, especially the school supply project. About a week later, his group generously donated \$250 to the Santa Teresa Sister City Program. Thank you for your generous donation. That money was deposited into our general account at the Richland County Bank. .

Kathy Neckar...

The week we spent in Nicaragua last March, besides saving the shred of sanity I had left as a long, cold Wisconsin winter turned into a long, cold Wisconsin spring, gave me a chance to begin to touch the lives of the people, especially the women, there. I was grateful that Jane Furchgott had asked me, before we left, to try to make some contact with women's organizations in Santa Teresa. I discovered much of the real, vibrant life of that area that is being lived quietly by the women of the community. They send their greetings to their sisters and brothers in Richland Center. I even brought back some letters from women in Santa Teresa who would like to correspond with women from our area. I hope those of us who are interested in forming an on-going relationship with some of the women there can get together soon to talk about what form that might take.

Jane had talked about organizing a women's trip within the next year. I hope that more and more people from this area will travel to Santa Teresa, whether women make up the entire delegation or not. It seems to me that the people-to-people contacts that we make with these trips is at least as important as any economic aid we might be able to provide.

While we were there, Luis Palacios, the former mayor, showed us an album of letters and pictures they had received in 1988 from friends in this area. It is treasured. He asked if we could ask those folks to write again now and to stay in touch. He even suggested that maybe we could get everyone together for a group picture. Sounds like a great idea to me. Let me know what you think. In case you don't remember whether you sent a letter and a picture, I'll include the list of names I copied from the album:

Darlo Wentz
Stein Goering and Barb Duerksen
Jane Furchgott and Charles Munch
Kathie Swanson
Dan and Dianne Hendricks and family
Mary and Neil Bard and family
Bill Bewick
Jan and Rick Neumann
Jay Esteban
Corinne Rockow
Anne Marie Goeden
Tom Bachman and family
Michael Wunnicke and Andrea Kaiser
the Pulvermachers
Ron Solinger and Peggy Swan
Carol Feyen and David
Juan Weigel
Kathryn Lewandowski
Peppin Karras

I know some of these people have left the area or may not get a copy of the newsletter. If you know any of them, please pass the word on.

This is an appeal to individuals who might have an interest in developing an on-going contact with the women's group or with individual women in Santa Teresa. Sometime within the next month I'd like to organize a meeting so we can discuss where to go from here. I brought back over 20 letters, and I hope we can get enough people to answer every one. Don't worry if your Spanish isn't great. We'll work together on the translations, and I'm sure we'll be able to make ourselves understood. Also let me know if you'd like to get in on a get-together to update the RC album in Santa Teresa. Please give me a call soon if you are willing to participate in any of these efforts. My telephone number is (608) 872-2270. During the day, I'm often in the foreign programs office at the campus - 647-6186. I can also be reached by e-mail. My address is: kneckar@uwc.edu.

-- K. N.

Bill Cooke...

As a member of our sister city project with Santa Teresa, Nicaragua, I have enjoyed learning about trips other people from Richland Center have made to Nicaragua in the past. Last March, I had the opportunity to travel to Santa Teresa with a group from Richland Center. My daughter, Erin, a junior in high school, also was very interested in participating in this goodwill trip.

Member of our group stayed as guests in the homes of people in Santa Teresa. Erin and I, along with Emil Haney, stayed with Luis Matus and his family. We were most fortunate because Luis is Mayor Santa Teresa, and he gave us a good overview of the politics, cultures and geography of Nicaragua. He had a very busy schedule between his work as mayor and running his small sugar cane and dairy farms. He spent a lot of time with us, however, in helping us obtain the goals of our trip.

As a physician, I was especially interested in learning about the medical needs of Santa Teresa. Luis Matus arranged a tour of the clinic in Santa Teresa the local hospital in Jinotepe. The physicians in the clinic and the hospital were very cordial in giving us a tour of their facilities. Seeing the clinic & hospital first hand helped us better understand their medical needs. We brought medical, dental, and optometry supplies which were donated by people from Richland Center. We made a detailed list of needed clinic and hospital supplies.

I was very impressed with what I felt were kind and competent physicians and staff. They did a fine job caring for their patients with scarce medical resources.

Erin also participated in our visits to the clinic and hospital. She enjoyed the medical project as well as helping deliver school supplies to the rural schools. Erin and I both felt gratified that we could help the people of Santa Teresa, even if only in a small way. I hope that in the future we may continue to bring needed medical supplies to our friends in Santa Teresa and Jinotepe, Nicaragua.

Jan Swenson...

Jan's remarks are taken from an interview with Don Greenwood for the May 8, 1996 issue of the Spring Green Home News.

"The only way to get things into the country and make certain that they get to those in need was to take them in ourselves. We took as much as eight people could carry.

"Managua looks much like other major cities. There are tall buildings, shops and a good deal of construction. There is money in Nicaragua, but it is in the hands of very few.

Once in Sta. Teresa, Jan stayed with council member and architect María del Socorro and her husband, an agricultural manager. "The family I stayed with and others we met were very friendly and warm-hearted people. They all expressed gratitude for the sister-city relationship."

Jan reported a memorable encounter during her first night. "There was a huge spider in the latrine room. It must have been six or seven inches across. Spiders are about the only thing I am afraid of, and there it was. I didn't sleep for the first two nights. Now that I'm back home, the little spiders we have here don't seem like much to get upset about.

"Every morning we could see the children come out of their homes in their school uniforms, freshly scrubbed white shirts and blouses and blue slacks or skirts. The clothes were all hand washed in outdoor cement basins. The schools have no textbooks. Most teachers have nothing more than chalk and a blackboard to use for instruction. In the cities, the students might have notebooks and pencils.

"Parents must pay \$3 per month for their children to attend in addition to the uniform expenses. That is a small amount by our standards, but a difficult sum to come up with in Nicaragua. Most students aren't able to continue school beyond sixth grade due to the expense. Teachers work for \$30 per month, barely a subsistence wage. We just don't realize how fortunate we are here and how much we have."

Jan commented on her first trip to Nicaragua in 1980, just after the overthrow of Anastasio Somoza by the Sandinista-led movement. "It was a time of great hope among the poor with a lot of enthusiasm for land reform, and improving things like health care and schools. Now many of the reforms have fallen by the wayside, and conditions have reverted to the way they were before.

"Some things are still better than they were. More schools were built. Some of the agricultural cooperatives still continue, and infant immunization and child nutrition programs are ongoing.

For many Nicaraguans, however, conditions are very unstable. "There is just no money, and people are desperate. There is always unrest in places where people can't feed their families and have no hope. That's where revolutions come from."

News and Events...

Guatemala Accompanier to speak at Sister City Meeting

Our next meeting will be Wednesday, October 23rd at 7:00 PM at the Brewer Library. Connie Vanderhyden, from Viroqua, who just spent three months in Guatemala, will speak. She was an "accompanier" in the returned refugee community of Nueva Esperanza. The people of this town are ethnic Mayans, resettling in Guatemala after fleeing to Mexico during the military violence of the 80's.

K/GAP, the area support group that Connie is working with, will be sponsoring a benefit concert on Oct 5th. See the announcement elsewhere in this issue for details on this event.

Medical Supplies going to Santa Teresa

During the summer the Richland Hospital held a rummage sale to benefit the Santa Teresa Health Center. Larry Loomis and Rhonda Sutton are to be thanked for organizing this fund raiser, which raised \$350. This month Sheldon Rampton, who is going to Nicaragua as an election observer, will be delivering a suitcase full of medicines and small equipment, such as an otoscope and ophthalmoscope, bought with this money.

Bill Cooke reports that there are additional medical supplies to be shipped, as well as a donated OB fetal monitor to be delivered to the hospital in Jinotepe. If anyone is planning a trip Nicaragua and would like to help us transport this needed instrument or other supplies, please contact the Sister City Project.

There is about \$600. in our Richland County Bank account. If necessary, we will use part of these funds to pay for shipping charges for medical supplies, but we hope to also contribute toward additional projects in Sta. Teresa. At the advice of the people who visited in March, we are waiting until after the elections, a time of turnover and turmoil, to make a decision on specific projects to fund.

Nicaraguan Elections to be Held Oct 20

Nicaragua will be holding national and municipal elections on October 20, 1996. Violeta Chamotto will step down. The two most popular presidential candidates are Sandinista ex-president Daniel Ortega, and right wing Managua Mayor Arnoldo Aleman, running on the Liberal Alliance ticket. There are actually 20 more minor party presidential candidates on the ballot as well. A candidate must get 45% of the vote to win. A run-off election is likely, but Nicaragua is already hard pressed to come up with the costs of the initial national elections.

In Santa Teresa, Luis Matus, the current mayor is not a candidate, and Jose Martinez (who was Neil Bard's host there) will be the Sandinista mayoral candidate. The government is in the process of issuing voter identification cards for all citizens, and Jader Castro, who visited Richland Center in 1992, is working on the voter ID distribution in Santa Teresa. We are sorry to lose him as our Health Center contact, but this meant a raise for him from \$30 to \$100 a month.

Richland Area - Santa Teresa
Sister City Project
%Brewer Library
Richland Center, WI 53581