



OCCASIONAL REPORT

December 2008

I am delighted to tell you that the first fully accredited class of students from Escuela San Miguel (ESM) has graduated! And what a grand time it was. I have a video of it and I will be posting photos on our website, so take a look at: www.projectsforpeople.org. The students decorated our big shop to accommodate the fiesta and it went off beautifully. The graduates marched arm in arm with their mothers and my heart skipped a beat as I watched and thought back a few years. The looks of pride on the mother's faces made everything worthwhile-if I ever needed anything more than to know that students come to the school daily. The new president of the school board, Alexis Zambrana, spoke well of the school's beginnings and the time of construction leading up to now. Even I spoke in my broken Spanish. I told them I was very proud and I was. Some of these students could make great changes as they become aware of the meaning and power that education gives them. At the very least they have the capacity to make even little changes in their lives and the lives of others. It has already happened whether they realize it or not. Two of our students receiving full financial aid took top scholastic honors, a testament to your faith and generosity in providing for those most in need.



More good news! The newly elected mayor Rodolfo Pérez has pledged his offices' help for the school. The municipality recently received an Internet connection from the government and he will place it, along with several computers in ESM. We can reestablish our Internet Café making the service available to the public and also use it in the classroom. We are building an Intranet system in our computer lab which when combined with the Internet will provide access to an otherwise unknown world to many of these folks. It is exciting to think of it. I believe we will have a big signup for our planned course "Introduction to the Internet".

And more! Rodolfo has also pledged \$5,000.00 in financial support. You have heard me talk before of mayoral support to no avail, but I believe this will happen. He was a part of the administration of Luis Argueta, the mayor who helped us so much in obtaining the land and with workers, a truck and backhoe when we were in construction. Rodolfo has had his own children as students in the school. He promised the aid to the entire School Board and I think he will not go back on it. We shall see. He takes office January 12th.

We have the possibility of two other funding sources and we are now in the process of submitting 2009 budget information to them. This is timely as our PFP coffers are dry. In 2009 we will try to provide about half of the operating budget along with salary and expenses for our maintenance and upkeep of the buildings and equipment, for a total of \$16,000. We also have upcoming expenses for a needed shipment of donated tools, machines and computers that we have on-hand. We need to get those items to the school. Your continued support is needed and most appreciated. If you can see your way to provide a donation for the school you may send to either Jeff or I at:

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If you are keeping up at all with Nicaraguan politics things here are dour to say the least. Confidence and support for President Daniel Ortega is eroding after the November election cycle of mayors. The most hotly contested was for the Capital City of Managua. Mr. Montealegre whom the U.S. publicly and unashamedly backed for President two years ago was defeated by the Sandinista candidate a popular ex boxer. Mr. Montealegre's old boss, ex-President Arnoldo Alemán has been convicted of misappropriating millions of dollars while serving (sic). There have been riots, the legislature is looking at recounting, the Catholic bishops have called the election a fraud, and the old founding loyalists of the Sandinista movement continue to abandon Daniel. Our government and others are discontinuing aid, while Daniel has started railing against the U.S. to keep his old friend Hugo Chavez, Venezuela's president happy. Chavez is pulling all the strings. He has lots of oil which he is providing to Daniel to keep him shored up politically and which Nicaragua desperately needs.

However, I feel no heightened threat. I think most in the country do not want to lose the support and patronage of the U.S. being more aligned geographically and politically. Many have family in the U.S. and they realize that their economy is tied very closely to ours. Of course the people

in the countryside do not keep up-they have no means-and thus have little knowledge of these goings-on. But others are still bitter about the U.S. long time support for the murderous Somoza regimes and for the many covert and overt military interventions by our government in their country. So the crazy and sad intrigue of Latin American/American politics goes on. The people are anxiously waiting to see any changes from the new Obama administration.

On the other hand, I have never felt better about the situation in our school and its stability. Things went very well and it was most satisfying for me and I think of benefit to the board and the director. I wish more of you could see first-hand the students and school in operation. I hope these reports give you a bit of an idea. All for now.

Peace and Love,
Dean

By the way: We are looking for a volunteer to teach a computer class in the care, maintenance and repair of PC's, for three months or more, beginning in June 2009. If you know of anyone who may be interested have them contact me at: dean@projectsforpeople.org.