

Spring 1999

## Filming Ometepe



*Video team (l-r Natasha Dworkin, Mark Dworkin, Freddy Lanuza and Melissa Young capture a moment during the coffee negotiations.*

*by Melissa Young*

Doña Lidia Aguirre settled herself into a chair in her garden for what she confided was her first video interview. Living on a farm near the small town of Balgüe, the Aguirre family has hosted a number of Bainbridge visitors. When we showed up at her door, Doña Lidia remembered my face from a brief visit three years before, and invited us in. Then there was, “Algo para tomar?” A wonderful fruit fresco, followed

by a delicious lunch of barbecued pork, rice, beans and plantains. Then, all in good time, the interview. I had journeyed to Ometepe with Mark Dworkin, who collaborated with me on the 1988 “Island Sisters” video. Mark’s daughter Natasha was assisting with audio and getting her first taste of sister islands magic. We joined the November BOSIA delegation to film a new video that would do justice to the terrific, complicated, and

burgeoning relationship between the two islands. The videos would be used for orienting delegations, community presentations in grade and high school classes, and made available to all at the public library. Doña Lidia was one of a dozen Ometepinos we wanted to interview about their experiences with BOSIA. We had already filmed a bit of the Café Oro harvest at the Hacienda Magdalena, and planned to visit various projects in other Ometepe towns, plus cover some of the current delegation activities. Just as we finished at the Aguirre’s farm, our TV camera quit. Despite many attempts, Mark was not successful in getting it to function, and for the first time in years of documentary production around the world, we were faced with the prospect of abandoning our project. We decided not to quit without a fight. So, early the next morning we took a bus from Balgüe to Altagracia in order to phone a technician in the States. But the phones were

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# Ometepe Communities Welcome Larger Student Delegation from Bainbridge

By Katie Walton

The eighth annual Bainbridge High School student delegation is underway and preparing for its spring departure on March 27. A total of 20 students and 6 chaperones will once again be living with families and working on projects side by side with their host communities.

This year, the delegation will travel to four communities instead of three: San Jose del Sur, Mérida, San Marcos and La Concepción. Of the four, the last three are "new" to our student program -- this is the

first time they will be hosting student delegations. The trip will last a full two weeks.

notebooks, reams of paper, pencils, pens, colored pencils and pens, chalk, glue, scissors, staplers, paints, rulers, Spanish / English dictionaries, teacher supplies, picture books and durable toys that are good for use in schools. Sports equipment includes baseball gloves, bats, balls, helmets, basketballs, soccer balls, volleyballs and nets, uniforms (in sets) and cleats, pumps and

**"...the collection of school supplies and sports equipment is underway...Collection boxes are available at Eagle Harbor Books, Seabold and Bethany churches, Paper Products as well as in the classrooms of Jim Starrs, Woodward Middle School; Cindy Beck, Bainbridge High School; and Alice Mendoza, Wilkes Elementary School...The deadline for collection will be March 17."**

Students are now attending orientation meetings for three months to learn about and prepare for their Ometepe experience. Meanwhile, Kim and Ela Esterberg and Brook Mattock are on Ometepe organizing the details for this delegation.

Now, the important collection of school supplies and sports equipment is underway. Needed school supplies include spiral

inflation needles. Large suitcases to carry donations are also appreciated. Collection boxes are available at Eagle Harbor Books, Seabold and Bethany churches, Paper Products as well as in the classrooms of Jim Starrs, Woodward Middle School; Cindy Beck, Bainbridge High School; and Alice Mendoza, Wilkes Elementary School. **The deadline for collection will be March 17. Gracias!**

**"Hurricane Mitch seems to have given rise to new concerns about how we are depressing, among other things, the planet's ability to moderate atmospheric changes. It helps me to remember that while the problems are often gigantic and impersonal, the solutions can be small and intimate."**

**-- David Mitchell, upon his recent return from Ometepe**

**We hope that these Sister Islands stories will inspire you to look for those small, but effective ways to make a difference in the face of such cataclysmic events.**

## Bainbridge Ometepe Sister Islands Association

### Co-Editors

Yanira Cuellar, Ela Esterberg and Christine Llobregat

### Tech support

David Mitchell

PO Box 4484

Rollingbay, WA USA 98061-0484

Phone: 206 842 8148

FAX: 206 842 6907

E-mail: [info@bosia.org](mailto:info@bosia.org)

<http://www.bosia.org>

Founded in 1986 by

Kim and Ela Esterberg and friends  
Non-profit organization

# Filming

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and driver Marco who made a mad dash for the Moyogalpa ferry. Of course the ferry schedule had just changed [we could smell fresh paint on the sign] but we caught a later boat, and then bargained hard with a *taxista* to take us quickly to Managua. It was Friday afternoon. First stop, *Canal Dos* (Channel 2), the largest TV station in Nicaragua, but the technicians there were unfamiliar with our model camera. Next, on to Video Arte, an independent production company that made Violeta Chamorro's campaign ads in 1990. A Sony-trained technician tested various parts and recommended taking it to Miami for repair. We began looking for a substitute camera for rent. Difficult in Managua, but our Video Arte colleague Carlos suggested a possible source, then called and bargained with the manager on our behalf. Next morning we picked up the camera and the camera *responsable*, Freddy Lanuza, and headed back for the San Jorge ferry - just barely catching the 2:30 boat. Fortunately the camera rental manager had called Scott in Granada where he was repairing his boat, and Scott had arranged for Marco to meet us with the truck. [Rescued by cell phones!] Just as we reached the isthmus between the two volcanos, the sky darkened and we were thoroughly drenched in a tropical downpour. Arriving in Balgüe at about five, we began trudging

up the path to the coop with camera, gear, and other baggage just as it got dark and began to rain again. Our Bainbridge pals couldn't believe we were actually back that quickly and with a functioning camera. Freddy quickly adapted to the *norteamericanos locos*, in fact he became Mark's Spanish teacher, and we really enjoyed working with a Nicaraguan on our team. We visited the water system in Mérida with the delegation, filmed a bit of the coffee negotiations and electrical work [lots of teetering ladders] at the coop. We rode to Altagracia in Don Alvaro's bus the *San Diego*, and he



obligingly stopped for Freddy to climb on top of the bus for a great picture of the Concepción volcano. We took part in a meeting of the library committee at Rubén Darío school in Altagracia, a terrific, heavily used community building. Coming from a family of librarians - my mother, sister and niece - I found that particularly interesting. One day Marco drove us to Los Ramos, where proceeds from the first two years of calendar sales from Alice Mendoza's class had

supported the construction of a preschool. Total strangers arriving unannounced with television gear, and we were welcomed with open arms because of our relationship to BOSIA. What a contrast to our 1987 Ometepe visit when we tried to explain the potential for island sisterhood before any of us really knew what it would be like! Later we delivered mail in San Jose del Sur to families that had hosted students the previous spring. People were overjoyed to hear from the students, and wanted to chat about their *hijos*. All were impressed with the school paint job, and the community had set up street lights on major corners with the money the students had left. As one woman put it, "Every night when I see that light I remember how wonderful it was to have the students here." Because of our two days of unexpected travel to and from Managua, the work was rushed, but we thoroughly enjoyed it. Mark and I came away very impressed with the careful, community-promoting work BOSIA has done in the past 12 years. We were also reminded that although buses, phones and ferries don't function nearly as well as in the States, Nicaraguan friendship and generosity more than make up for it. If you want to look at the raw footage, please contact Kim Esterberg. Or you can wait for the finished program later this year, which will include Bainbridge footage.

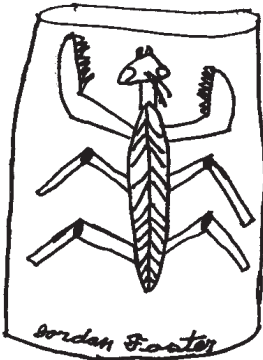


## 1999 Bug Calendar Makes a Difference

by Kim Esterberg

The "Bug" calendar for 1999 represents the sixth effort by Alice Mendoza's third grade class at Wilkes Elementary to live up to their motto: "Kids Can Make a Difference!" The total contribution to project development has been \$28,000 over the years.

This year the children asked \$10.00 for their calendar instead of \$7.00, so that \$3.00 from every calendar could go to hurricane relief. Custom Printing also helped in this effort by printing the calendars at cost, and the paper company donated the card stock. After lots of work on their calendars and working with all the parents, the kids were able to sell all of the 1000 calendars and raised a total of \$9,000 this year. The



three projects the class chose to fund this year were: the furniture for the new community school library Rubén Darío, which will cost \$1,404 to build on Ometepe by local artisans; a preschool classroom for the small community of La Concepción; and a \$3,000 donation for the construction of dormitories for the homeless boys of the project Sí a la Vida, which is building a new home on Ometepe.

Like many of the sister island projects, these link with other aspects of our Sister Islands relationship. The Rubén Darío library was itself built with calendar funds from the past two years and the building was painted by the High School Delegation to Altagracia in 1998. A high school delegation is planned to the village of La Concepción this year to work on the preschool and contribute more funds. BOSIA is also funding a water system to the Sí

a la Vida Project on Ometepe and every year high school students from Bainbridge meet these homeless boys and have a special outing with them.

Recently when we gave a presentation to an 8th grade class here on Bainbridge about the Sister Islands story, we asked if any of the kids were thinking about going to Ometepe. One child said, of course, he has been wanting to go for five years, and is eager to see what his calendar project accomplished when he was in the third grade.



# 1999 Ometepe Calendar



*Alice Mendoza's students present sixth check to the Association.*

## **Reggie Peltier:**

***"I just have a good feeling...when I am helping people I don't even know, that are far away...as soon as I started this calendar project, I wanted to go to Ometepe. Even though they are poor, they are rich in love. I want to see all the projects that this calendar project has helped to make."***

## **Stella Wilson:**

***"What I will most remember about this project is that we proved so many people wrong that thought little kids couldn't make a difference or see the big picture. Even though the kids on Ometepe are so far away, I still feel very close to them."***

## **A Few Words from Alice Mendoza**

As you can see by the above testimonials, what has been accomplished, for the 6<sup>th</sup> year in a row, is the opening of eyes, hearts and minds of 8 and 9 year old children to lives and culture of our sister island friends on Ometepe. As in the past, a serious commitment has been made by each and every student to ensure a quality product for a quality cause.

Each and every minute we spent in the process was a delight to watch. They made each decision very carefully with the democratic system working effectively, with numerous opportunities to work out compromises in a respectful manner.

In addition to the numerous "teachable moments," perhaps what continues to nourish and replenish my soul and fuel my determination to continue with this project year after year, are the faces of adults and children alike during the presentation of the check ceremony to the BOSIA Board of Directors.

We are all members of a team, each with an important role to play. In the months ahead, we all look forward to hearing about our Ometepe teammates construction efforts, the hardest part of this project.

Let Bernabé's image of us as "light that brightens the path of darkness of injustice in this world" continue to shine in all of you. Thank You!

# *Sí a la Vida* Kids Move to Altagracia

by Jonathan Roise

*Si a la Vida's* new Ometepe project for long-term rehabilitation of ex-street kids got underway in January when four youngsters and coordinator Jonathan Roise took up residence in Altagracia.

The move is a milestone in the increasingly close relationship between BOSIA and *Si a la Vida*, dating back to 1994 with visits by Kim Esterberg and the fourth Bainbridge student delegation shortly after the project was born. A day of interchange between the "Si" kids and BHS students is now a treasured part of the annual delegation itinerary, and contact among BOSIA members and the ex-street kids is a year-around delight for all involved.

In October, with the help of *amigos* in Bainbridge, Seattle and Spain, *Si a la Vida* completed purchase of a 17-acre plantain farm a kilometer north of Altagracia, bordering on the Paso Real beach.

Although building funds for development of the land are scarce, *Si a la Vida* decided to make the move now, to be on the island for the beginning of the school year in February. The boys are living in a rented house in Altagracia for the time being, and will attend the Rubén Darío School, where BOSIA and Alice Mendoza's third graders from Wilkes Elementary School have supported the development of a community library.

Maria Elena Martinez, a teacher at Rubén Darío and an old friend of many Bainbridge Islanders, has been hired to be the first *educadora* or house mother for the kids. Her husband Carlos Martinez, also a teacher, is helping out voluntarily as administrator of the farm, which is currently at the height of the plantain harvest season.

The "pilot" group of boys, all long-termers in the project, are proud to be the founders of this new phase of *Si a la Vida's* work. In addition to school, they will be working on the land 10 hours a week, weeding the plantain groves, helping (and learning) in the construction of the first buildings and installing the water system (which BOSIA has agreed to finance).

The number of resident boys is expected to increase to about 10 by the end of the year, and to a maximum of about 50 in five years, funding permitting.

The original *Si a la Vida* project, Casa Nuevo Amanecer in Managua, will continue recruiting kids from the streets, and will house them during the first crucial months of stabilization. Once they have attained a certain level of social adaptation and personal responsibility, they will be eligible to transfer to the Ometepe project.

As always, the goal is to reintegrate them into the community and (when feasible) into their families, prepared to the extent possible to cope with life in this economically and socially disintegrated country.



*Jonathan Roise and friends*

## Muchas Gracias to Town & Country Market

The members of the Bainbridge-Ometepe Sister Islands Association extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to Bainbridge Island's own Town & Country Market, and Central Market in Poulsbo. Both stores supported BOSIA's public education efforts during the busy holiday season for BOSIA coffee tastings. Also, Town & Country is very generous with their display space for Ometepe Coffee near the check-out lines. It is a prime spot that any retailer values quite highly. Thank you for helping BOSIA raise public awareness about our projects in Nicaragua.

## Report from Seabold United Methodist Church

by Nancy Quitsland

*The following is an excerpt from the 1998 annual report of Seabold United Methodist Church. It comes from the Missions and Social Concerns Committee.*

"Our church continues our relationship with our sister church in Balgüe (Ometepe, Nicaragua) through prayer. We continue to support the whole sister islands relationship with prayer, donations of school and sports supplies, and by allowing BOSIA to use the social hall for community meetings. This year we expanded in three ways. Seabold now sponsors a university student from Balgüe, thanks to financial support from a big-hearted anonymous member (not

on this committee). You also responded to the hurricane and mud slides in Nicaragua and Honduras with an unbelievable \$6400 contribution to the United Methodist Committee on Relief. In December we learned that Josefa Díaz Cajina ("Chepita"), an English teacher on Ometepe who spent two months on Bainbridge in 1996, is ahead in her battle against cancer because of treatment you helped pay for."

## Join Us!

- ◆ Membership is open to all who support our mission of encouraging mutual understanding, education, friendship, cultural and peaceful exchanges between the peoples of the US and Nicaragua
- ◆ Non-profit organization
- ◆ Registered with the State and Federal Governments
- ◆ Our membership list is not for rent or sale

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Specific interest \_\_\_\_\_

**Bainbridge Ometepe Sister Islands Association**

P.O. Box 4484

Rollingbay, WA USA 98061-0484

## Mark these dates!

**BOSIA Board Meetings:** 7:00 p.m. 2nd Monday each month Eagle Harbor Church

**Deadline for Dropping Off Items for Student Delegation:** March 17, see details on page 2

**Student Delegation Trip Dates:** March 27 through April 9.

## Celebrate Spring with Great Gifts that Do Good!

### World-Famous CAFÉ ORO de OMETEPE:

Certified organic, Shade grown/bird friendly & Fair-traded ..... 1lb..... \$8.50 8oz..... \$5

**Sister Island T-SHIRTS**..... \$14 to \$18

**Friendship bracelets & Bookmarks**..... by street kids from Sí a la Vida Project in Managua

**OR, give a “non-materialistic” gift in the name of someone you love**

**SCHOLARSHIP** to university for an Ometepe student..... \$60/month

**SISTER ISLAND MEMBERSHIP** .....\$10.....\$35.....\$100.....\$1000

**DONATIONS:** for pure water, public library, classrooms...

.....  
**WAIT! Don't just recycle this —Pass it on to a friend!**



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