

Winter 1999

Geek Delegation Brings E-mail to Ometepe

By David Mitchell

Getting e-mail working on Ometepe has been a project of our Association for several years. We were able to provide e-mail to Scott Renfro when we were helping fund the construction of several water projects around Cerro Maderas. But our goal of linking schools on Ometepe to schools on Bainbridge has eluded us. An earlier attempt using an amateur radio link failed when the amateur network failed.

The ideas of Myles Conley and the establishment of our office on Ometepe provided the impetus for a second try. Myles is a computer network administrator, an "alpha geek," with impressive credentials in network administration and security. He became interested in the problem of providing rural schools, miles from a telephone, with e-mail access to the Internet. He designed a system and enlisted several friends to help him create the software to support it. He convinced his friend, and former

Bainbridge resident, Wim Lewis to spend a week on Ometepe installing computers and testing new wireless networking technologies. The two joined me in Nicaragua where I had been for a week getting this year's shipment

enda Magdalena and a climb (by some!) of Volcán Maderas. We got in one day's testing of the system before the phone again went dead.

We used our time to test and refine the software as best we could, without being able to dial into our remote server. When we left the island in mid-September it was with high hopes that we had gotten the system to a stage where it would work when the line was restored.

In mid-October another visit from phone company technicians brought up the line for a week and a half. E-mail traffic began to flow thick and fast between the office in Altagracia and the Board on Bainbridge. Then there was a bad storm ...

The line has finally been installed in Moyogalpa. Our goal is to have the high school on line before the end of the school year in December. We spent part of our time testing Wireless Ethernet,

continued on page 6



Geeks at work

Photo Siri Kushner

of coffee underway.

Several months in advance, we had ordered two telephone lines, one in the high school in Moyogalpa and one at the Association's office in Altagracia. The line was run in Altagracia, but it resisted the phone company's attempts to bring it to life. Two technicians from the phone company managed to get the line working just as we were leaving town for a visit to Haci-

Lynn DeLaney Saunders: a Fond Tribute

By Elena Castañeda
Reprinted with generous permission from
the Bremerton Sun. Photo Lynn Delaney
Saunders

It didn't occur to me that Lynn DeLaney Saunders might die when I first heard about her car accident Thursday morning.

Lynn was a fighter. My heart told me that she could make it through anything. You know Lynn as a Sun photographer. Her pictures captured other people's joys and heartaches. What you may not know is how Lynn coped with her own life's struggles. Let me tell you a story about Lynn that will help you understand the depth of this woman.

As photographer and reporter, Lynn and I worked on a lot of stories together. One brought us closer together than most: A trip

in 1997 to Nicaragua with a group of Bainbridge High School students. We followed the students around the Nicaraguan island Ometepe. The students helped construct new school facilities; we were there to learn about Ometepe and how it affected the students. Lynn and I lived like the students. We stayed with families in a village named Balgüe. We ate rice and beans at every meal. We walked down the dusty roads of the village, bathed in a river and washed our clothes on the rocks.

It was easy for me. I enjoyed the pace and simplicity of life in Balgüe. Lynn loved it, too, but traipsing around an undeveloped island wasn't easy for her. Lynn lost her sense of balance as a young woman. She learned to overcome the loss in part through sight - she stood upright as long as she could see where she was stepping. She had trouble walking in the dark or over rough terrain. Balgüe was a challenge for her in both ways. With no electricity, Lynn lost her sight trick when the sun went down. Rocky roads and



steep paths kept her from reaching the island's high places.

One day we followed Bainbridge Island student Jane Darrah to the river, where Jane planned to wash her clothes. Lynn wanted to photograph her. The route to the river was filled with smooth, gray river rocks. I had to be careful myself walking across the rocks. As we made our way to a secluded part of the river, Lynn began to stumble. Lynn wasn't one to ask for help, but she needed me to carry her cameras that day. She held on to tree branches and my arm in her fight

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
<http://www.bosia.org>**

**Founded in 1986 by
Kim and Ela Esterberg and friends
Non-profit organization**

A Fond Tribute...

across the rocks. She fell several times before reaching the river. Lynn broke into tears after one hard fall. As her friend, my heart broke for her. But I was also a little angry. Why did she insist on a career that posed tremendous obstacles for her? It wasn't the first time working with Lynn that I feared for her safety.

She dried her tears and picked herself up, as she must have done a thousand times before. And she said something I'll never forget. She told me her tears weren't shed out of self pity. Lynn said

they were tears for people she knew - loved ones and those she photographed - who would never stand on those rocks and wash their clothes in that river while monkeys swung in the tree canopy overhead. She was sorry that they would never witness what she was seeing that day.

I didn't want to believe Thursday's news of her car accident. I believed she would somehow pick herself up and start over again. As the reality of Lynn's accident and death sink in - it's still hard for me to believe -

I'll be thinking of Lynn when struggles creep into my own life. Falling down is OK. Tears are fine, too. But I hope my sense of life's blessings will overwhelm my troubles, as they did for Lynn.

Editors' note:

¡Lynn Delany Saunders Presente! *

* a saying used in Nicaragua for a fallen hero or martyr, meaning her spirit is still with us.

Upcoming Delegations

December 1999: Nora Ferm and Caitlin Goertz will be leaving on December 9 for Ometepe: Nora to do a photography project and Caitlin to spend some time with Project Ometepe-Alemania as a part of their medical brigade. Former high school delegates, both are in college now. They look forward to returning to their families on Ometepe.

Kim and Ela Esterberg and Asha and Binh Tran are planning on spending Christmas on Ometepe. They hope to avoid Y2K doom and gloom by spending time in a little house in Balue without electricity! Deadline for any (snail) mail going down with them is December 10.

January 2000: Alexis Bonoff is getting college credit from Western Washington State University for one quarter while working with *Sí a La Vida* (street kids project) and Sister Island projects. Jeremy Shapiro also leaves in January for an extended visit to Ometepe. He'll explore childrens' theater and teach English.

March 2000: Most likely, the third week in March. So far there are five people signed up: Steve Deines, Sara and Colin Hall, Emily Mansfield and possibly her sister, Marge. They are probably going to work on an addition to the school in Sacramento. If anyone wants more information, contact Steve Deines at 842-7958.

April 2000: Bainbridge High School annual trip with homestays and projects. We got 40 applications for 16 student slots! Six chaperones are already committed. The very difficult process of delegate selection has just been completed. Soon several months of intense preparation and orientation sessions will begin. Also in April or early May the second geek delegation will extend the bounds of email.

And Now.. a Word from our Office

*excerpted from e-mails from Siri Kushner ,
currently our long-term volunteer in Altagracia*

Greetings BOSIA!

I am doing very well! Dorita, (*Siri's Nicaraguan counterpart in the office*) is wonderful and we've quickly become good friends. I'm having fun exploring Altagracia and the rest of the Island. Everything is green and lush right now because of all the rain. It's

been fun to watch the volcanoes appear and disappear with the daily movement of the clouds... The road is in terrible condition - rivers of rain water have washed much of the dirt away

and left a stream bed of ruts and rocks... however, the buses continue to bounce their way along like they always have, the bus rides just take a little longer.

Our office is lovely! In addition to being a good working environment, the two little rooms in back provide storage space and a good place to have a couple of visitors

stay. We have our own a shower!

We purchased a hammock for the office and I know of several people who have already enjoyed an afternoon siesta in it. Dorita and I had two large tables made which should be arriving on Monday and we're also having a shelf made for storing books and



other office items. We asked Danilo Varela to make a BOSIA office sign to hang outside the office with our name, tele/fax number, email address, web site, and office hours. He should be finishing that early next week - we're going to look so formal!

According to our new sign, the office is open Mondays, Wednes-

days and Fridays 8-11:30 AM and Tuesdays and Fridays 2-5 PM. The office is closed Monday and Wednesday afternoons because Dorita and I will be teaching English in Balgue. Tuesday mornings and all day Thursday are reserved for us to schedule meetings, visit communities,

and go off-island, as needed.

To make up for the four days of school that the students missed recently, they've had four days of Saturday

school. Dorita has her computer class in Managua on Saturdays, and I've been her substitute. It's been fun to get to know the students and to learn a little about the Nicaraguan classroom!

I think that's about it for now, I look forward to hearing from you when communication is more accessible... until then, *saludos y un abrazo a todos!*

BOSIA Accomplishments To Date -- WOW!

By Emily Mansfield

As we approach the end of the year and the end of a century, the Sister Islands Association is pleased to report the following cooperatively achieved accomplishments:

Eleven Potable Water Systems (1989-1999)

Completed: El Corozal; La Palma; La Flor; San Pedro; San Ramon; Los Ramos; Merida; Tichanas; extension to

Taguizapa San Silvestre; Engineering studies in Urbaite and Las Pilas.

In progress: Si a la Vida's new rehabilitation residence for ex-street kids.

Medical (1990-1999)

Many visiting medical teams from *El Norte*, who worked in the most remote and poorest communities on Ometepe; delivered three ambulances donated by Shepherd Ambulance in Seattle; Altigracia research funding for *Doctora López*; Urbaite Clinic construction; Classes taught by Rosario Paisano on Family Planning, domestic violence, women's rights; 7 months of medical service by Dr. Rena Koshi.



Schools (1988-1999)

Arlén Siú Preschool
Los Ramos Elementary
Balgue primary school improvements

Arlén Siú Preschool playground

Altigracia Secondary School: Classrooms, an auditorium, sidewalk, lab furniture, bus shelter, library books

San Silvestre Preschool: Two classrooms, covered *corredor*

Balgue secondary: painted temporary school, classroom

Moyogalpa primary school improvements

Los Ramos Preschool

Urbaite Secondary School: help in purchase of land, furniture

Urbaite Preschool: classroom
La Flor: primary school paint, electrification, storeroom, secondary school outdoor stage

Sintiope Elementary: new roof and additional classroom

San José del Sur: Primary school paint

Ruben Darío Elementary: improvements

La Concepcion Preschool: Classroom

School supplies for many schools



Public Library (1997-99)

Altigracia: Rubén Darío — construction, paint, donations of books.

Scholarships

Twenty-one university students currently funded; eleven have now graduated.

Annual scholarship to a teacher for continuing education



Other

Moyogalpa Park playground

Loans to small organic coffee growers through the *Proyecto Agricultura Sostenible* fund

Rosario Paisano's workshops in sewing and crochet

Sports equipment to various communities

School supplies to various communities

Merida: Community hall

Urbaite: Speed bumps; community outdoor stage

Altigracia: Traditional dance costumes; labor costs for museum construction

Post-Hurricane Mitch: Two-room houses —three, thus far— one as a wedding present from a group of friends and another as a 25th anniversary gift from the happy couple to each other!

A new video about the Sister Islands --coming soon!



Coffee 102: Organic

By David Mitchell

Some time just before you brewed your most recent cup of coffee, the beans were taken from a burlap sack and put into a 400 degree oven where they were roasted for 15 to 20 minutes. Just before they were put into the burlap sack, they were soaked for 12 hours or more, washed with lots of fresh water, and dried in the sun. In the course of these processes, virtually all measurable traces of pesticides and herbicides that might have crept into the seeds inside the coffee cherry have certainly vanished. So, why bother with organic coffee?

For one thing, while scientists have gotten pretty good at creating complex chemicals that kill lots of “undesirable” insects, they don’t know many of the long-term effects of even tiny amounts of these substances on humans.

But the real place organic coffee makes a difference isn’t at your table it’s in the forest where the coffee is grown, and in the homes of the farmers and their neighbors.

In an organic *cafetal*, or coffee forest, there are plenty of insects including pests. And there are plenty of birds eating them, keeping the diverse insect populations in balance. Adding an insecticide to the mix kills as many “good” insects as “bad” ones, and reduces and poisons the food for birds. Now there’s no point in claiming that a *cafetal* is a natural

environment. All of the shrub-height plants have been taken out and replaced with coffee trees. But, as the Smithsonian Institution’s Migratory Bird Center observes, a *cafetal* is about the closest thing you can get to virgin forest, with an ecosystem as diverse as that of a virgin forest. If ecological diversity



is a desirable goal, organic coffee is a desirable method. The most important benefits of organic coffee apply directly to the farmers and those around them. Most coffee is grown by small farmers in the developing world, and most small farmers there are poor. Many of the pesticides and herbicides available to Central American farmers are banned in the U.S., and farmers who use chemicals usually don’t use masks or protective clothing. It’s not that they don’t know the risks; they know them quite well. They just can’t afford to buy the gear. As a

result acute pesticide poisoning is a common complaint in health posts. The effects of chemical use extend to the rest of the community, from pollution of water ways to a general increase of known carcinogens in the environment. Keeping chemicals out of tropical third-world communities is one good investment in the continued supply of delicious, quality coffee. It’s good consumer sense.

It’s hard to find organic coffee on the road, but it’s easy enough to keep it at home. It’s *really* easy if you use Fair-traded, Shade-grown, Certified Organic *Café Oro de Ometepe*, available at fine outlets in the Puget Sound area and on the web at <http://www.bosia.org>. Next issue, the third in this series: Coffee103 Fair-traded.

Geek Delegation

continued from page 1

a technology that may allow us to link Balgüe and other schools in areas where there aren’t any phones. The early results are promising and we should know soon if we can make this connection. We are back up at press time, and Siri says the line quality is the best ever.

Pending Project Requests From Ometepe

As always, our projects begin with “kernals” already underway with communities on Ometepe. As you see below, we have a variety of requests pending. We are looking for interested individuals and groups (clubs, businesses, etc.) to form sister-relationships to see these projects to completion. Please think about it: what can you do as a partner to make these projects go forward?

Location	Proposal	Cost estimate	Potential partner	Contact
Sintiope	Fence for school	\$3,000	Bethany Lutheran & future donors	Steve Deines
Las Pilas	Preschool classroom	\$4,082	Alice Mendoza’s 3 rd grade class calendar project.	Emily Mansfield
Balgüe	Community garden	\$245	Garden clubs? Nurseries?	Jane Wentworth
Sacramento	Preschool	\$2,166	Bethany Lutheran delegation & others	Steve Deines
Tilgüe	Wall around school	\$250	<i>None yet....are you interested?</i>	Emily Mansfield
San Marcos	School room & supplies	\$800	<i>None yet....are you interested?</i>	Emily Mansfield
Madoñal	School roof, improvements	\$1,000	None yet: request signed by 41 families!	Emily Mansfield
Merida	New high school	\$13,500	<i>None yet....are you interested?</i>	Emily Mansfield
San Sylvestre	Electrical cable for school	\$425	<i>None yet....are you interested?</i>	Emily Mansfield
Balgüe	Adult literacy project	\$60/mo.	<i>None yet....are you interested?</i>	Emily Mansfield
Balgüe	Sewing classes	Unknown	<i>None yet....are you interested?</i>	Emily Mansfield
Kos Koster	Library	Unknown	<i>None yet....are you interested?</i>	Emily Mansfield
Altagracia	Costumes for dance group	\$385	<i>None yet....are you interested?</i>	Emily Mansfield

If you are interested in partnering with one of these projects, please call Emily Mansfield at 842-4137. It’s a great opportunity to get involved on-the-ground!

Cut Here

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State/Province _____

Postcode _____

Country _____

Phone () _____

E-Mail _____

Annual Membership

Living Lightly	\$10	Individual	\$20
Family	\$35	Sustaining	\$100
Life Membership	\$1,000		

I'd love to volunteer : For events _____ Other _____

Specific interest _____

Bainbridge Ometepe Sister Islands Association
P.O. Box 4484
Rollingbay, WA USA 98061-0484

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

Celebrate the Holidays 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; Sister Island mugs.....\$5
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/mth
SISTER ISLAND MEMBERSHIP\$10.....\$35.....\$100
DONATIONS: for pure water, public library, classrooms...

Island Businesses That Are Wonderful Friends of the Sister Island

Custom Sport (8926 Miller Rd) owner and designer Chris Llewellyn is using friendship bracelets made by Nicaraguan street kids on winter hats and is trying to market them.

The Traveler (287 Winslow Way) owner Susan Taylor is contributing 5% of their gross sales for the entire month of December.

Town and Country Grocery will be selling the 2000 Calendar from Alice Mendoza’s third graders without any mark-up! *Muchas gracias!*

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



PO Box 4484
Rollingbay, WA USA 98061-0484

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BAINBRIDGE
ISLAND, WA
PERMIT N° 903