

SISTER ISLANDS

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SOMOS ISLEÑOS

We tend the relationships....

Spring 2003

*the projects we do are secondary
to the friendships we build.*

A Veritable Flood Hits Ometepe from the North!



Although there were no official delegations organized by the Association last winter, there was a veritable inundation of visitors from the North that converged on Ometepe last December. In this issue we bring you stories, impressions and memories from these travelers. The visitors included the following. See page indicated for *los cuentos de los viajeros* (stories from these travelers):

Lisa Giles (page 4) & David Mitchell, and David's sister Betty, (page 4) whom they introduced to Ometepe. Canadians Beth and Paul Ranney and Andy and Betty Gibson (page 5) all from Saltspring Island and active members of the Ometepe Gulf Islands Friendship Association (OGIFA); Andy celebrated his 83rd birthday while there!

Diane Jennings (page 6), her sister Elisa (page 7), and their mom Pat who enjoyed a family vacation with Diane as able guide;

Kim (page 3) & Ela Esterberg (page 7), returning for the umpteenth time to their beloved sister island family; Kim's sister Wyn (page 2), a nurse at Harrison Hospital, who came with her best friend Kathy Pulicci, also a nurse, and Kathy's husband Jacques. Among other things, Wyn and Kathy spent a few days learning about some medical programs on Ometepe;

Martha, Chip and (11-year-old) Addie Jordan. They came down to visit their daughters/sisters (Amy and Anne), who are living with families on Ometepe for ten months. The big event many of us (who just happened to be down there) got to experience was the *Quinceñera* (15th birthday *fiesta*) the town gave Amy! (page 8)

We hope you agree that the variety of reasons for these visits and the range of experiences described in this issue proves, once again, the incredible breadth and depth of this wonderful long-term relationship we have between our islands!

One Enchanted Day on Ometepe

by Wyn Esterberg

I left the *Finca* at Santa Domingo at five in the morning to walk the three miles to Kim (my brother) and Ela's house in Balgüe before it got too hot. Surprisingly, many people were up and working by that hour. I spotted a monkey climbing a power pole and a flock of green parrots flying low in the trees. Three times I stepped off the road to let cattle herds pass. Most houses I passed, while modest, had wonderful gardens with many blooming tropical flowers! I said "*Hola*" to everyone I passed and everyone returned my greeting.

When I got to their house, Kim and Ela shared breakfast with me—fresh papaya, sweet bread and Ometepe coffee. Kim, always the teacher, played games with a small group of kids on their porch. I was so glad to see that his sense of humor survives in Spanish! Lydia, a good friend of theirs, had invited us to lunch. We walked the mile outside of Balgüe to her home. We entered the kitchen through a small doorway where Lydia was putting the final touches on our meal. Instantly, I felt more like a long lost cousin than a perfect stranger. We were escorted to the garden where the table was set and served heavenly, fresh passion fruit juice. Lydia and her daughters had prepared a delicious meal for us. We laughed together, were entertained by her handsome young son and charmed by her beautiful daughters. When we left, Lydia sent us home with a pot of beans and a stem of bananas.

After a short rest we attended the Literacy Program graduation at the *Casa Comunal*. Several teachers, parents and about 35 kids were waiting for us. Kim and Ela were the honored guests and the promotion was dedicated to the Sister Islands Association. I have

never watched a group of kids sing so well together where they actually knew the words and weren't too shy to belt them out! By the end of the ceremony we were all dancing and crying because it was so touching. Our parting gift was a huge box of fruit, including a dozen big star fruit!

Towards dusk we headed up to the Cooperative, 1.3 kilometers away. As we arrived, a bull (horns and all) came crashing out of his pen, kicking his heels! Thankfully, he ran past us! Kim asked José María, a member of the coffee co-op, to show us something special. I didn't know where we were going as we headed up the volcano, but soon we came to a giant petroglyph, the size of a small car! Archeologists have dated it back about 2,500 years. Back at the Hacienda, we settled on the veranda to take in the views and enjoy cold beer. There were people there from all over the world, in a casual social setting sharing the wonders of this ecosystem, which included several dramatic downpours. We found our way home, guided by the stars. The only thing that could make this day more enchanting would be being lulled to sleep by crashing waves. Lake Nicaragua obliged!

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

Alexander *by Kim Esterberg*



Alexander (2nd from left) with amigos.

Photo by Kim Esterberg

Every day on Ometepe is filled with many strange and wonderful experiences for me. This is the story of meeting Alexander (not Alejandro), a little boy who lives in Tichenas, one of the most remote communities on the island. I had gone to Tichenas with my sister, Wyn. Win is a nurse, and she would be helping in the clinic there and I would translate, if needed. A bunch of little kids ran up to the clinic door and looked in -- to see the gringos, I suppose. The one in front had a rather strange look, sort of a blank stare and very serious. His dirty T-shirt was in the print of a sports coat, with shirt and tie. Suddenly he blurted out some question that was hard to catch. He wanted to know about us. Why were we there? After he asked a question he would step back and as if someone had switched him off, he would return to the same blank stare. Then he would ask some other question, and again return to the "off position."

It turned out he was 13 years old. He seemed very small for his age. He had moved with his mother three years ago to Tichenas from Costa Rica, and had no father, nor any siblings. Then he started to beg, as he may have done in Costa Rica, since his appearance was quite pathetic. I explained that we were here on our sister island to work together with whole communities. That seemed to mean nothing to him. But I repeated it every time he would beg. Then I asked him if he liked it better here than in Costa Rica. Yes! Even though this is one of the poorest communities on Ometepe, it is probably a more inclusive world for this little fellow. Here was "Owen Meany," again showing up in my life, again touching my heart. I will not forget him. I wonder how long he will remember me. I plan to send him a couple of photos. I noticed I never took a picture of his blank stare. I always wanted his smile, with other kids around him. Perhaps I was building some security around him that would at least be the reality of my picture. A certain level of unfairness we take for granted, but this seemed too much. Poor Alexander. May you make your home in Tichenas with clean water and some friends.

Nochebuena en Ometepe by Lisa Giles

On Christmas Eve (*Nochebuena*) in Nicaragua, small communities re-enact the traditional Nativity story with a procession called the "*posada*." Young people chosen by the community to portray Mary and Joseph dress in traditional clothing and walk through the village. Sometimes *María* rides a donkey led by *José*. They stop at a house and sing outside the door, "In the name of God, we ask for shelter. We can't walk any more and my wife is ready to have her baby." The voice behind the door responds, "This is no inn; go on. I can't open the door because there are many villains out there." As they walk through town, they are accompanied by a drum band and the villagers come out of their homes and follow them. As they go from house to house, their songs add information. *José* identifies himself as a carpenter and says they're exhausted, asking for just one night's lodging. They are rejected until they reach the church, where *José* says, "My wife is the Queen of Heaven and is going to be the divine



María and José prepare for the posada

Photo by Kim Esterberg

everlasting Mother". From inside the church they hear, "Is that you *José* and *María* ? Come in, Pilgrims; we didn't recognize you". As they enter the church, the congregation sings, "Happy is the house that opens this day to the pure virgin, the beautiful *María*. Good fortune and happiness reign in our hut, because you are the pilgrims, the chaste *José* and your wife".

Baby Jesus is born while 20 shepherds (*pastores*), dressed colorfully and carrying shepherds' crooks, sing and march at the church steps. After the presentation of the newborn Baby Jesus, the villagers celebrate in the church and then with a family dinner around midnight.

First Impressions by Betty Henchel

It was with much apprehension that I decided to go to Ometepe, traveling alone so far to a country where I did not speak the language. Landing in Managua was indeed overwhelming, but by the time I met my brother David (Mitchell) in San Jorge I felt more comfortable. We could see the beauty of Ometepe as I crossed the lake on the ferry. It was a clear day with just a few clouds covering the tops of the volcanoes. The bus and truck ride to the Magdalena coffee coop was indescribable, but also gave me my introduction to the wonderful people of Ometepe. Finca Magdalena was peaceful and soul-satisfying, and the people there were kind and most generous to me. The weather was warm and pleasant, the vegetation beautiful and lush. Mostly I was impressed by how hard-working the people are. I am very glad that the Sister Islands Association sells their coffee.

I would go to Ometepe again in a heartbeat if given the chance, and I will never look at a cup of coffee the same way again.

El Informe de los Canadienses (The Canadian Report)

by Andy Gibson



*Andy Gibson shares a birthday cake with Dora Gutierrez. Andy turned 83 on Ometepe!
Photo by K Esterberg*

The four of us traveling together from Saltspring Island (Beth and Paul Ranney and my wife Betty and I) arrived in Ometepe on 19 December, and stayed in Altagracia because our Bainbridge friends maintain an office there. We gratefully acknowledge their cordial assistance and intimate knowledge of conditions on Ometepe.

Our first stop was the Altagracia mayor's office, where we got more information on desperately needed road repairs, which the Ometepe Gulf Islands Friendship Association (OGIFA) is helping to fund, along with BOSIA, the local municipalities and businesses. Although the national government ferried road repair equipment to the Island, they did not have enough funds to pay for the diesel fuel to run said equipment, and so Ometepe's two Mayors had to raise money to buy the fuel! A lot of work had been done by the time we arrived, but money was needed for another month's worth of fuel, which is very expensive in Nicaragua.

On the outskirts of Altagracia, we visited Sí a La Vida's farm complex on Ometepe, where street children from Managua are given a new start in life. This is another OGIFA project, and we were impressed at how much had been accomplished there since our last visit. Balgüe, near the Magdalena coffee cooperative, is the largest community that has benefitted from OGIFA's water programs. Here we met Bernabé Lopez, and the Esterbergs and Giles-Mitchells (from Bainbridge), and were updated on the evolving water needs of the growing population. Later we went up to the cooperative itself, and saw the increasing success of this vibrant community, which now depends for half its income on backpacker tourism (the other half being its fair traded, shade-grown coffee). We visited the site of a new storage tank being built to increase the water supply to Balgüe.

After Christmas festivities in Altagracia, we visited the mayor at his little beach hotel, learning of his interest in promoting eco-tourism, in soy production as a way to meet the nutritional needs of school children, and most immediately, road repairs on Ometepe. As a result, we voted an additional donation to the fuel fund. All in all, it was a most enjoyable and productive visit to our Sister Island.

A Family Holiday *by Diane Jennings*

My first time to Ometepe was 12 years ago with one of the first medical delegations. Since then I have returned on several occasions either with medical groups, high school students and even on my own. I have stayed in contact with all my host families as well as other families I have met. I believe people on Ometepe have a better life now, thanks to all the supporters of the Bainbridge Ometepe Sister Islands Association. There are clean water systems, improved basic health education, available educational supplies in the schools, as well as university graduates returning to Ometepe to further support their own people. I am very proud that my scholarship student just graduated from medical school and is starting her (nationally required) year of social service.

Every time I go to Ometepe people ask, "What is your plan?" This December I went with the intention of a vacation with my biological family to visit my Nicaraguan families. Although we were unable to give as much time to each family as we would have liked, everyone was so appreciative and welcomed our visit. For my mother, it was her second time to Ometepe, and for my sister, it was a first. Both did great and enjoyed the cultural experience tremendously. I am sorry my brother wasn't able to join us.

This trip was also very special because it was over Christmas time. As many here acknowledge, the 21st century "American" Christmas holiday is very commercialized and far from representing the true meaning of Christmas. So what better way to spend our holiday than with those who are less materialistic but yet so genuinely happy for the things they do have? So, for my Mom, my sister and me, this was a very meaningful Christmas in which hearts were deeply touched, friendships shared, new friendships started, and unforgettable connections made.



Part of the Jennings' Nicaraguan family: Franklin Avellán and his granddaughter Ariana

Photo by Pat Jennings

Word Pictures *by Elisa Jennings*

My mom, sister, and I recently spent two-and-a-half weeks in Nicaragua, the majority of that time on Ometepe. Simple new experiences were around every corner. Learning to use the sink—one side is for water collection, the other for washing (the two do not mix). Riding the bus-- music blaring, tiny seats, chickens on board. Such a wild difference from riding Metro! My first taste of a coconut—hand picked and opened by machete just for me! Washing clothes on a washboard—very challenging! Using an outhouse... Ah, and cold showers! Got used to those pretty fast!

But, if it's a bucket shower, and the water has been sitting, it can be nice and warm! One piece of advice—bring your bug repellent!

In Nicaragua Christmas is celebrated on Dec. 24th. We were in the village of Los Angeles, where the only stars we saw were in the night sky—so bright, and appearing so very close! Mom and I went to the church service and enjoyed the children's reenactment of the birth of Christ, after which lots of sweets were passed out, along with a fresh ginger *fresco*.

We brought along origami paper, and spent hours making origami with the kids and the adults. It was lots of fun. Ometepinos' hospitality is wonderful, their friendliness contagious. The kids were so much fun to be with—Esmerelda and Moises loved showing me giant bugs and watching my reaction, Deborah gave me many fashionable hair/ponytail styles, Maribelki made jokes and teased me about my Spanish. I even rode a horse with 7-year-old cowboy extraordinaire, Harold. I really love that strangers greet passersby. I wish that was commonplace here!

Culture Shock --Does It Ever Go Away?

by Ela Esterberg

After one intense month on *la isla bellísima de Ometepe*, it has been *casi imposible* for me to land back into this *realidad*, and to pick up our “normal” *vida* here in *El Norte*! *Pues*, I miss the sunshine, the *calor de la cultura*, the different *tradiciones*, being surrounded by brown-skinned *morenos*, who embrace me as one of their own, the fragrant *flores y frutas deliciosas*, the monkeys, the pigs, the sweet *amistad*, and *mucho más...* Plus, here I am plopped back into all this un-deserved abundance, super-power talk of war, overwhelming material consumption and frantic, nail-biting pace of life...

I find myself *completamente* frustrated at feeling these classic culture shock waves, especially after (come on!) some dozen or so trips to Ometepe. Doesn't it ever get easier?

I stew and ponder and suddenly it hits me: *por cierto*, part of the *razón* for this cauldron of confusing *emociones* must be that with every *viaje* our friendships on *la isla* are deepened and broadened beyond our wildest *sueños*. *Por ejemplo*, this time we were asked to be godparents * to a sweet 3-month-old *bebé* named for our current Office Volunteer (Katy Childers)! *La niña*, Katy Vanesa Menocal Lopez, has a 16-year-old *mamá* and an 18-year-old *papá*, whom we've known since he was four years old! Is it any wonder that it is *difícil* to leave such relations, knowing we will only see them once a year, that is, *si dios quiere*? Sigh! Surely, this business of straddling two *mundos* is no bed of *rosas*!

*Note: The baptism took place on Christmas morning. The itinerant priest, who arrived two hours late(!) baptized 31 village children and performed a wedding followed by High Mass in the sweltering heat! But, that's another story, *otra historia...*!

Unexpected Gifts of Community

by Martha Jordan

When our daughter Anne, now a high school senior, went to Ometepe as a student delegate in the spring of 2001, it was truly a life-changing experience. Little did we realize the impact that Ometepe would have on our lives as well. The next spring, Anne returned as a delegate, staying with the same family in the village of Sacramento. This second trip strengthened her ties, both with her host family and with the entire community. She came back to Bainbridge Island fired with enthusiasm to return to Ometepe for an extended stay. This enthusiasm spread to her sister Amy, then 14, and the two girls set about devising a plan acceptable to both skeptical parents and school officials. That plan, arrived at with the assistance of Soledad Amador, Siri Kushner and helpful others, included attending classes at the *collegio* in San Jose, receiving credit through the Bainbridge Island School District's Contract Studies Program, teaching English and living with two separate families in Sacramento. On August 15 we saw our daughters off for what we thought would be a five-month adventure. The original plan materialized beyond all our expectations. The girls grew remarkably close to their families, were accepted within their village, and progressed toward fluency in Spanish. Ultimately, this led to their current situation: living in San Jose, teaching English in Los Angeles, and working for the *Quincho Barrillette* Girls' Orphanage. At present, they plan to remain on Ometepe through June, resulting in a ten-month stay in Nicaragua.

Having children on Ometepe gave us the perfect excuse to go down for a visit in December. Anne and Amy arranged for us and their sister Addie, 11, to stay with two other families in Sacramento. At the end of a 24-hour trip by plane, bus, ferry and truck, we reached Sacramento at 9

p.m. to find the entire community waiting to greet us and then watch us eat a specially-prepared meal -- a generous, if somewhat intimidating experience. Our one-month stay was full of so many remarkable experiences, not the least of which was the celebration of Amy's fifteenth



Photo by D Mitchell

birthday or *quinciñera*. The celebration included the participation of the entire population of Sacramento as well as from surrounding villages, and brought home how strong the bond had grown between the girls and their host community.

On the day of the celebration, the village assembled at the Catholic Church for a special service in Amy's honor. Afterwards, a procession of six small children, Amy (in a pink gown and crown handmade especially for her) with her father Chip, plus 14 *damas y caballeros* (attendants) made its way to the elementary school. Following a dance ceremony, the 200 guests enjoyed dinner and danced until 2 a.m!

I'm not sure what I expected before going to Ometepe, but I do know that I came away feeling a part of a bigger community. Our family felt loved and accepted by the people of Ometepe. They will always be a part of our lives. We are already making plans for our next trip.

And now, a report from our Office!

By Dora Gutierrez, BOSIA office manager, Altagracia, Nicaragua

1. The Balgüe primary school Construction Committee is working very hard on the four classrooms, because the children need them now. They are excited about an idea they have to make a plaque in the wall with the name of Islas Hermanas. And they want to name the classrooms for someone very special in the Association.
2. In San Marcos, the community is happy because their second classroom is built. They did not put in the floor or paint because they do not have the money yet. But the classroom is lovely.
3. The La Paloma classroom is finished. With the money we gave them, Merida can start constructing a classroom and teachers' office. We have received proposed budgets for building classrooms in La Palma and San Silvestre.
4. Tilgüe has received the financing for its fence project. Like several other communities, they are excited about a visit from the Bainbridge students.
5. We delivered \$4,000 to Fundación Entre Volcanes to implement the proposed Plan organizing and enabling village Water Committees on Volcán Maderas.
6. We are giving money to Altagracia High School to buy library furniture. La Sabana received its furniture.
7. Library materials—we are still waiting for the globes to be delivered. Then we will distribute these materials including National Geographic in Spanish to 8 secondary schools.
8. Road improvements have been completed from Moyogalpa to Altagracia, and they are now working their way to Balgüe. We don't have to ride the bumpy bus anymore, and our poor *nalguitas* (translation: bottoms) thank you for donating fuel for the road equipment!



Sister Islands Office, Altagracia Photo by Dallas Shaffer

By Katy Childers, Bainbridge volunteer, Altagracia, Nicaragua

After a way too short (and cold!) trip to Bainbridge for the holidays, I am back to work and sunshine. Most of our projects right now involve constructing classrooms. San Marcos has built its second classroom, and La Paloma will finish one in time for the Bainbridge student delegation to paint in April. The Balgüe elementary school, which has been in need of new facilities since anyone can remember, has started construction on four classrooms. Merida's Robert Drew Secondary School also has a classroom underway.

Once school starts we will begin to distribute basic library packets to all thirty primary schools on the Island. These contain dictionaries, texts, literature, maps and a globe. The primary schools are excited about this as many don't even own a dictionary! We are also organizing a new scholarship program this year for high school teachers on Ometepe who study at universities on Saturdays. This will benefit not only the teachers who earn their degrees, but also their students.

I wish all BOSIA supporters could be here to experience the amazing things that we have accomplished together with our friends on Ometepe this past year! *Mil gracias!*

Ten Years of Kids Making a Difference *by Becky Fox Marshall*

"I have absolutely no idea," I said to the barista as she handed me my single-tall, nonfat and asked what I was going to write about next week. I was struggling with my debit card, trying to swipe it in the wrong direction (why can't they standardize this whole process?). "Write about these things. Or technology," she said, trying to be helpful, but we both sort of rolled our eyes. It just wasn't a good week. I was plum out of ideas, and certainly devoid of enthusiasm. I was looking for work, anticipating war and feeling hopeless, insignificant and invisible.

That afternoon, I reluctantly left my cocoon (home) to honor a commitment I had made to attend a check-passing ceremony in the third-grade class of Alice Mendoza. The students were hosting a reception to honor the Ometepe calendar's 10th anniversary, and to personally present \$5,000 to the Bainbridge-Ometepe Sister Islands Association (BOSIA) for the building of a preschool classroom, and \$5,000 to a fund created for the education of children orphaned by the terrorist bombing in Bali. I figured I'd just stay a few minutes. It was so thoughtful of them to include me, when the only thing I did was write a story for this paper about the calendar's 10 years.

When I approached the classroom, it was already packed with kids in the middle, parents leaning against the back wall, and representatives of BOSIA, the Bali children's fund, Custom Printing and others up

front. When I squeezed in, I was immediately greeted by a third-grader who handed me a carnation, looked up at me with a face full of joy and excitement, and said, "Becky, YOU get to sit up front!"

My funk and self-pity suddenly dissipated. How could you worry when this bright soul not only knew your name, but shared in the honor that was being bestowed on you by being designated a front-of-the-room occupant?

From that moment on, it was moving moment after moving moment. I can cry at sentimental commercials. I admit that. But I don't believe there was a person sitting up there at the front of the room, looking back at those rows of 9-year-olds, wearing their matching T-shirts, who didn't feel as if their heart was going to break right then and there. I saw others bite their lower lips, and cover their hearts, listening to Mendoza and the students talk about their feelings about making a difference in this world with their artwork and sales tenacity.

These children spoke of hope, of help, and of being part of something that did good in the world. BOSIA spoke, and showed pictures, of the good that was done with their hard-earned money – pictures of cultures working to understand and help each other. Pictures of children and schools and people with their arms draped around one another. A representative of the Bali children's fund lit a candle and spoke of that Indonesian province's peaceful

culture and traditions, and the fact that about 100 children have been identified as having lost one or both parents in the bombing, and that the check from Ms. Mendoza's class will send those kids to college someday. She spoke into a video camera that was recording the event to be shown in Indonesia by the close of the weekend.

When I climbed back into my car, the radio was full of heightened terror alerts and the rattling of sabers. I wanted to run back in and apologize to those children. We haven't worked hard enough, we haven't put the kind of energy into peace that they have. I know it's more complicated than that, that the troubles of the world are complex and rooted in history.

But I also know that we owe them more than what they're getting. We owe them leaders who work harder toward the kind of world those children still believe is possible. I know that where we're headed has nothing to do with them, but when we get there, it will have everything to do with them. I know the path we're on represents the antithesis of everything they've done to help the children of Ometepe and the victims of a bomb.

And I know that the hour and a half I spent with them was the most valuable hour and a half I'd spent for a good long time. And, I no longer cry at commercials. Now I cry at the headlines.

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Upcoming Delegations

High School Students

From March 29 through April 12, 24 BHS students will be going to four towns on Ometepe, each staying with a separate family. In La Palma they will work with the community on a classroom; in Tilgüe, on a wall and fence around the school; in La Paloma, painting the classroom recently financed by Alice Mendoza's Third Graders (see related story pg 10) and in San Silvestre, working on a new classroom. We have six chaperones going with the students: Jim Starrs, working with Lynne Pendleton (a language teacher from Bellingham who is a chaperone -in- training), Maria Kildall, Magaly McLaughlin, David Mitchell and Nancy Quitslund.

Before leaving, students have three evening orientation meetings and an overnight retreat, in addition to a "packing party" to organize school, sports, and medical donations. This year we are augmenting all this preparation and orientation with an overnight visit from Lopez Island students, recently returned from Nicaragua! Also, midway through the trip, we will have a parent meeting to prepare families on Bainbridge for the inevitable culture shock most students experience upon their return (see related article pg 7).

Farmer-to-Campesino

Planning is just beginning for the first ever delegation of farmers from Bainbridge Island to connect with farmers on Ometepe. Dates being discussed are January 2004, for two weeks. If you're interested, call Ed Kushner (842-5911) or Kim Esterberg (842-8148).

Join Us!

Thanks for your support. We use membership income wisely --- primarily to publish this newsletter.

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Bainbridge Ometepe Sister Islands Association

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Next Coffee Delegation forming: Come Join Us!

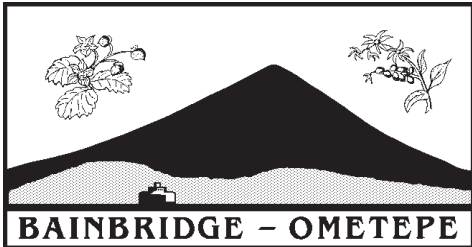
by Lee Robinson

The Association is looking for up to 15 folks interested in spending 10 days on Ometepe learning about our sister island, picking Café Oro, and seeing some of the bridges we have built between our two islands. We plan to leave SeaTac on Saturday, November 29, returning on Wednesday, December 10, 2003 (with a possible 2-day extension to visit the beautiful, 500-year-old city of Granada on the shores of Lake Nicaragua). The cost of the trip is \$1,250 (with an estimated \$150 for the extension to Granada). The majority of the time will be spent at Finca Magdalena, home of the *Cooperativa Carlos Díaz Cajina* and Café Oro de Ometepe. Delegates will spend two days in the *cafetal* (coffee forest) learning about how coffee is grown and harvested. Members of the cooperative will accompany and instruct us. Also, delegates will visit some of the world-famous island petroglyphs.

Two optional trips around the island, visiting various towns and BOSIA projects will be available. For the really adventurous and fit, a guided hike up to the crater lake at the top of Volcan Maderas can be arranged. Two birding trips led by IslandWood naturalist Stan Rullman are planned for early risers -- one up into the *cafetal* to see the importance of shade-grown coffee to the migratory birds and native plants and animals and one to the isthmus between the two volcanoes to observe the wide variety of birds using this wetland area. Two nights at the end of your visit will be spent as home stays in the town of Altagracia. You will, most likely, experience the festival of *Purisima* one evening during your home stay. It's quite a treat! A nonrefundable deposit of \$250 is required by May 15. If you are interested please contact David Mitchell (davidm@bosia.org) (206-842-6907). The trip will be a life-changing experience, I guarantee it!



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