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# Trip to Nicaragua angers, educates students

By Eric Peterson

For Ann Aldrich and Teresa Holder, going to Nicaragua this summer was an experience of appreciation and anger. Both have warm feelings about the culture they encountered, and are angry at U.S. intervention there, which they said has caused much harm in Nicaragua.

The two Lincoln women spent two months — from June 19 to Aug. 14 — at the Casa Nicaraguense De Espanol, a school that was started by four Nicaraguan women and one American woman.

"They all support the revolution (against former-dictator Anastasio Somoza) and wanted to set up a program to teach people Spanish, but also to teach about the revolution," Aldrich said.

The 30 students at the school lived with Nicaraguan families. They took classes in the mornings and attended informational meetings at various offices during the afternoons. Most of their time was spent in the country's capital of Managua, but Holder and Aldrich said they also made trips to other parts of the country on weekends.

Aldrich said Nicaraguans think the U.S. government is very oppressive.

"All the people make a distinction between the U.S. government and the people of the United States," Aldrich said.

Holder said actually being in Nicaragua made the Central American situation less abstract to her and the suffering in the area more real.

Holder visited a hospital and learned of changes in health care. Before the revolution, health care was "only in the cities and only for rich people." But medical care remains scarce.

"They make lay people do a lot of the work that doctors do here," Holder said. "There's a real material problem

which is not helped by the United States embargo at all," Holder said.

### Literacy program to help

Aldrich said the government's massive literacy program also will help improve public health in Nicaragua. Medical knowledge and treatments can be more easily learned and dispersed across the country when most people can read.

Although private health care is available for those who can afford it, the government has responsibility for providing free health care. Holder emphasized the imbalance of medical services which persists in the world.

"I'd taken good health for granted," she said. "You learn how much a problem public health is."

Holder and Aldrich said students who were skeptical about the revolution at first became less skeptical during their stay.

"The freedom of speech seemed vigorous," Aldrich said.

Press censorship continues in Nicaragua, she said, but the censored material usually finds its way to the streets. She said one of the largest newspapers, La Prensa, is a reactionary paper which carries almost no positive domestic news coverage.

Both agreed that shortages of food and other supplies are the major non-military problem in Nicaragua at the moment. They blamed the shortages in part on the American embargo and on the fact that food is being equally distributed in the country for the first time... there simply isn't enough to adequately feed everyone.

While in Managua, Aldrich and Holder heard of an attack by the contras, the counter-revolutionary guerrillas in Nicaragua, on an intercity bus. All but a few people were shot and killed.

"It's hard to grasp how they deal with that..." Aldrich said.

Continued on Page 9

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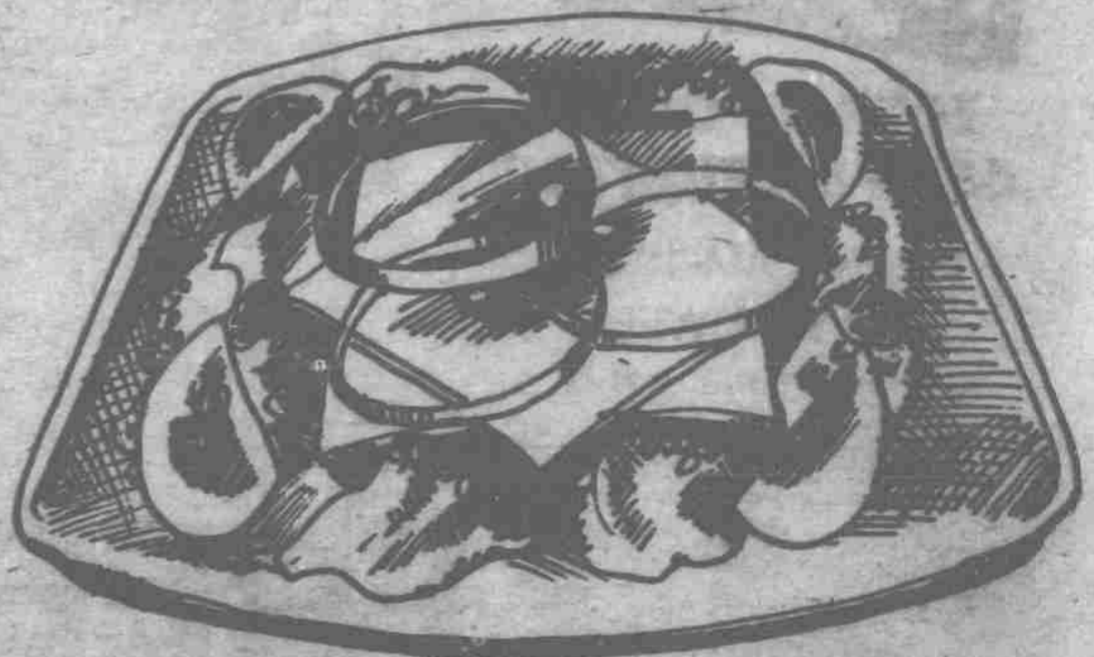
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