

Nicaraguan conflict

Red Cross volunteer relates
terror of bloody civil war

By LAURA ANDERSON

"Are you crazy?" Carolina graduate student Nancy Picado heard her sister, Janetita Picado-Chamorro, say. "It would be impossible over the phone."

Tita, a Red Cross volunteer in Nicaragua, did not want to tell her sister about conditions in the war-ravaged country. The terror of Nicaraguan President Anastasio Somoza Debayle's bloody fight against the Sandinistas is real for her, deadly real, and she is understandably reticent. Caught in a civil war that has spawned violence as sickeningly abject as the execution of a U.S. newsman, she knows that a phone tap and a poorly chosen word could be fatal.

Tita did say there are many refugee centers in Managua, and most of the people who come to the centers have either left their homes voluntarily or have been forced to evacuate because of Somoza's relentless bombing and artillery barrages. She herself has fled a bombed neighborhood to live with relatives.

Nancy elaborated on the conditions in the Nicaraguan capital city, based partly on Tita's reluctant testimony and partly on a previous telephone conversation in which Tita spoke more freely. She said although most of the fighting and bombing may be over in the city, the aftermath will be serious.

"It has always been that after the fighting stops and the guerillas leave there's even more violence," she said. "The national guard comes in and shoots anyone they think is a Sandinista. Since much of the fighting force of the guerillas is young males, there aren't a lot of them left in the cities anymore."

"Tita said there is typhoid in the city and the smell of decomposing bodies in the streets. The only food markets that are open are improvised and the health conditions are terrible."

Nancy relayed her sister's fear of Somoza and his national guard,

which was described as his personal army. "They use torture," Nancy said. "If you're a woman they will strip and rape you and burn your breasts. Men they castrate, beat—any torture they can think of. I had friends who were interrogated by them. First they stripped them, blindfolded them and drove them many different places, asking questions at each place." Nancy said the Red Cross operates in the cities, where most of the bombing of suspected Sandinistas by Somoza's troops has occurred.

She said Somoza is blocking relief efforts to areas controlled by guerillas in an effort to punish Sandinista sympathizers.

"Recently Red Cross workers were killed by the (national) guard, deliberately," she said.

Nancy has organized a relief fund in Chapel Hill to send supplies to the

victims of the ongoing carnage.

"Of course it would be detrimental to the dictatorship's opponents if they couldn't get medical care and supplies. He's right. But you can't break the determination of the people," she said.

Everyone in the country, Nancy said, is involved with the politics of the civil war. "No one knows when or where the fighting will break out next, but there is a lot of cooperation in the neighborhoods. One thing they all do is build up barricades when they hear of Somoza's troops coming in."

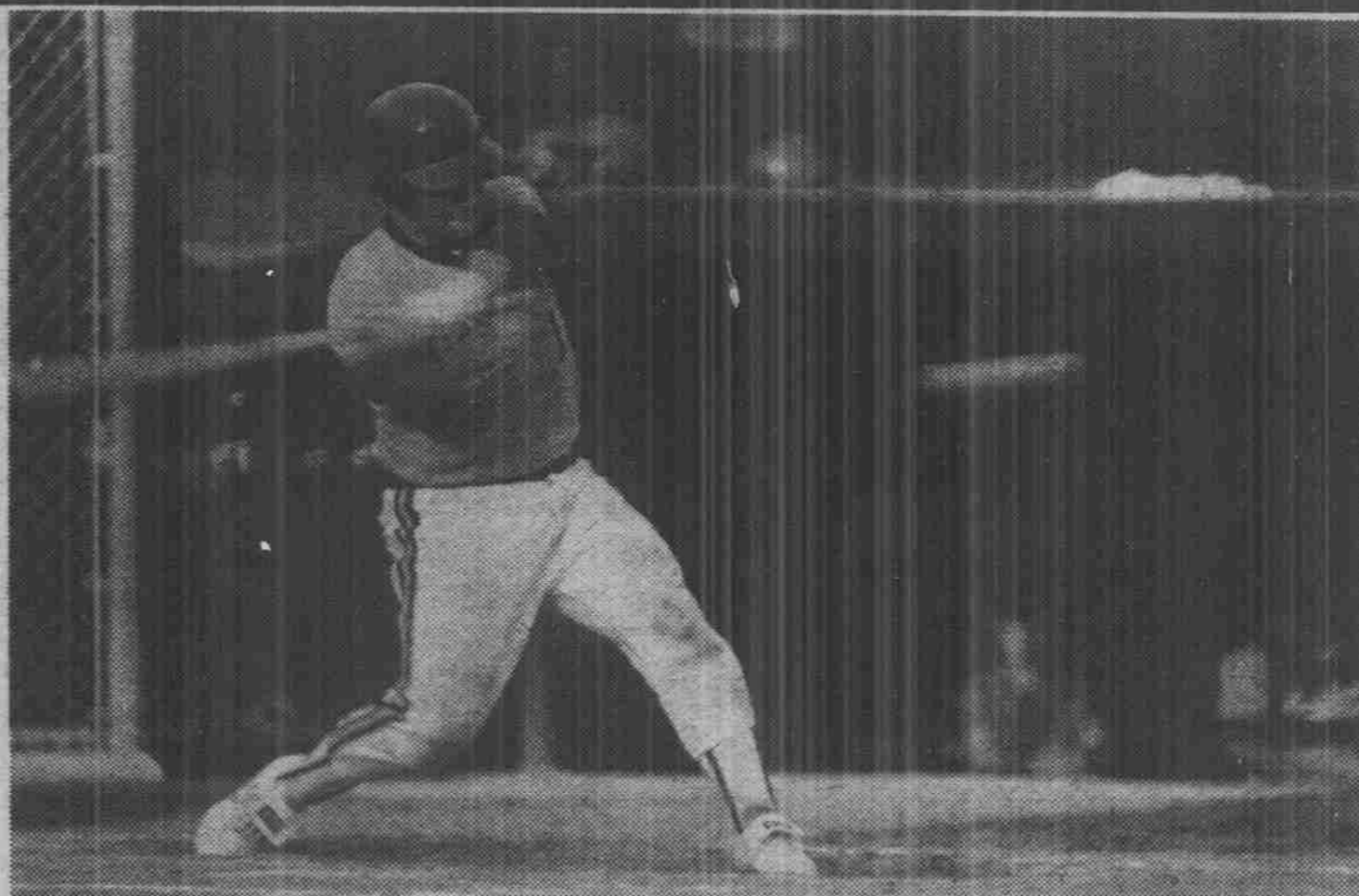
Nancy estimated that at least 90 percent of the people in Nicaragua support the Sandinistas, and that the support comes from all classes of people, not just the peasants.

Gil Joseph, a UNC assistant professor of history who specializes in Latin American studies, agreed with the estimate of the number of Sandinista supporters. He said although the new Sandinista-backed provisional government has the overwhelming support of the



Tita Picado-Chamorro
with her daughter

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Heels blast off in Summer League

Shumock swings in Heels sweep over Louisburg—Stories on page 15

Cane Creek controversy

Reservoir dispute hits home for one man

By KIMBERLY MCGUIRE

Just off the road to Mebane, 12 miles west of Chapel Hill, over a crest in the dirt road, is Coy Armstrong's home. The wooden frame house with two stone columns sits on top of a knoll, surrounded by a trimmed lawn and acres of rolling farm land as far as you can see. There's a chicken coop out back and a creek runs next to the property.

We walked along the creek and Coy stayed 10 paces ahead, stopping to identify every other plant and tell its medicinal value. He pointed out yellow root for hepatitis and raspberry for colic.

Although it was a blazing summer day with temperatures in the 90s in the fields, down along the creek bank it was cool and serene.

Coy, 65, has lived beside Cane Creek for 57 years. "My family moved here in 1922 from Wilkes County when my grandfather and father were invited to run the old water-powered Teer Mill that used to sit on the creek there," Coy said.

He lives alone now and makes a living from his small egg and produce business.

Coy is the only person who will be displaced by the building of a reservoir in

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As Coy Armstrong watches the water flow in Cane Creek, government agencies and conservation groups dicker over a solution to Chapel Hill's water problems—a decision that threatens to take his land and home of 57 years.

