

Slow cure but steady healing in Nicaragua

by Judy Mills

Among my personal impressions of Nicaragua, one that stands out most vividly was adroitly expressed on a plaque I saw at a model prison for ex-National Guardsmen:

"Here, we have forgotten about the past; We think only of today and of the future."

Ironically, evidence of a past not easily forgotten by those who suffered abundantly in Nicaragua. In the core of Managua, the capital, skeletal remains of structures and wide expanses of barren, flattened land are sharp reminders of the 1972 earthquake's devastation. Thousands were killed, and countless others left homeless.

On the city's outskirts, barrios (neighbourhoods), markets and small industries built after the earthquake bear the mark of a more sinister destruction. They were the primary targets of President Somoza's last-ditch efforts to regain control from the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). These sections of Managua have not yet recovered from the systematic destruction of factories, homes, and four major hospitals.

Last month, as part of a Canadian delegation of health professionals, I spent a hectic two weeks in Nicaragua studying its national

health system. In Managua, my group visited hospitals, clinics, day care centres, factories and educational institutions, then travelled by bus and boat to outlying regions of the country to tour community health centres and rural health posts.

Throughout the tour we met with Nicaraguan health professionals and community, union, and government representatives. Apart from our objective to study the Nicaraguan health system, there was ample opportunity to talk to students, labourers, peasants, and professionals.

The impact of the past on the minds of the Nicaraguan people is not as readily apparent as the devastation to the land. But from talking to the people we met, each person in our group returned to Canada with a deeper insight into what their life is like in Nicaragua today.

Donald Boudreau is a Canadian MATN physician who works in a clinic in Managua. He says one of the most prevalent health problems in Nicaragua today is psychiatric disorders in both children and adults resulting from traumatizing experiences as victims or witnesses of gross atrocities committed by Somoza's National Guardsmen.

I met one of the many physically disabled survivors of the war — Freddy, a paraplegic who, incidentally, was Nicaragua's sole representative at last summer's Pan American Wheelchair Games in Halifax. Like so many others, Freddy is extremely reluctant to speak of his experiences during the years of struggle against Somoza. He prefers to talk about the new rehabilitation centre where he now works and of the "revolution within a revolution" that is striving for greater integration of the disabled into Nicaraguan society.

Most of the Nicaraguans whom I met were able to glean from the past lessons valuable only to their present endeavours. Conversely, I and the other Canadians found ourselves continually comparing what we saw to what existed before July 1979, in order to understand the extent of progress since then and the remaining obstacles.

Take the Velez Paiz maternity hospital in Managua for example. I saw three women to a bed — two lying head to feet and the third sitting at the end. The women remain in hospital for only eight hours after delivery as many others are waiting to take their place.



continued to page 14

Food 101: Meals Made Easy

CHICKEN A L'ORANGE

Preparation time: 20 minutes
Cooking time: 45 minutes
Serves two

Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).

Combine in a paper bag:
1 cup (250 mL) flour, any kind
1 tsp. (5 mL) salt
1 tsp. (5 mL) pepper

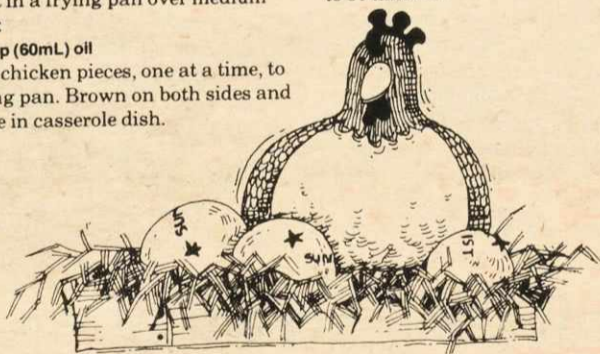
Place in paper bag and shake:
4 pieces of chicken (2 breasts, halved, or four legs)

Heat in a frying pan over medium heat:
1/4 cup (60 mL) oil
Add chicken pieces, one at a time, to frying pan. Brown on both sides and place in casserole dish.

Combine in a small bowl:
1/2 cup (125 mL) green pepper, chopped
1/2 cup (125 mL) chili sauce
1 cup (250 mL) orange juice
1 tsp. (5 mL) prepared mustard
1/4 tsp. (1 mL) garlic powder
2 tbsp. (30 mL) soy sauce
1 tbsp. (15 mL) molasses
Mix well.
Pour over chicken.

Slice and place on chicken:
1 orange

Bake for 45 minutes, basting every 20 to 30 minutes.



Don't Start Without:

- paper bag
- frying pan
- small bowl
- measuring spoons
- measuring cup
- casserole dish
- large fork
- large spoon

Helpful Hints:

- If your frying pan is large enough to hold chicken and sauce and doesn't have a plastic handle (is, therefore, oven-proof), you can simply drain oil, pour sauce over chicken, and put the whole thing in the oven.

- This chicken will keep at-the-ready for several hours, if necessary. After 45 minutes, cover with aluminum foil and reduce oven temperature to 200°F (100°C).

Serving Ideas:

- This is good with rice, or with Barley Casserole (see Chapter 4).

Recipe extracted from **FOOD 101: A STUDENT GUIDE TO QUICK AND EASY COOKING** by Cathy Smith, available at your bookstore or from The Canadian Student Book Club, 46 Harbord St, Toronto Ontario M5S 1G2 for only \$7.95



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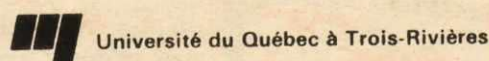
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