



## MINUTE FOR MISSION

September 1, 2007

### It Is Worth the Walk (Nicaragua)

Whenever anyone points to a muddy path up a hill and says, "It's only a half-hour walk," I'm suspicious. I think that what is a half-hour walk for young campesinos and campesinas usually turns out to be about three to four times that long when they are trying to help some gringos of my age up the hill through the mud. That is what we discovered going up to the Coffee Farm of Salomon and Juana last week. As much as I sometimes dread taking people on these hikes, it is always worth the walk.

When we got up to Salomon and Juana's farm, we found buildings with cement floors and block foundations—not too surprising until you consider that every bag of cement, every concrete block, every board, everything had to be carried on human shoulders up that same "half-hour walk" that usually takes two hours. And, of course, every bag of coffee that pays for building a home here has to go down the hill in the same way, on human shoulders. Oh yes, there are mules that can do most of it, but even mules can't make it up the steepest parts. For that you need hands that can grip and pull on the roots of the tree up the hill in front of you.

I learned again how tough life is for the poor of the world, how far they walk and how hard they work just to survive, whether in the mountains or in the lower, hotter, less humid areas. It is hard work to be poor.

It is hard work to be poor in the city, where many people walk miles to avoid having to pay even a 3-cordoba (16-cent) bus ride, where people walk carrying large bundles or packages for someone else, where women walk carrying their babies and leading their toddlers. In fact, it may even seem



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more difficult in the city. In the country everyone walks, while in the city, only the poorest of the poor walk. Everyone else takes taxis or buses, or (like I do) drives his or her own vehicle.

Once in a while it is a good thing to be forced into a walk like that, just as a reminder of what our sisters and brothers do every day. Sure, it is hard work, but it reminds us of a lesson we need to learn and re-learn frequently. It is hard work to be poor. To really learn that is worth the walk.

Lord, let us not forget those who walk, who carry heavy loads, who lead their mules instead of riding them, and who need help to even walk across the street. Remind us again that it is hard work to be poor, but that we who are rich must learn to lighten that burden and share that load. In the name of your Son, Jesus, who walked before us. Amen.

R ev. Doug Orbaker  
PC(USA) Mission Worker  
Managua, Nicaragua.

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*Do you have a mission story to tell? Would you like to read inspiring stories of Presbyterians in mission? Visit the Witness Season Web site: [www.pcusa.org/witness](http://www.pcusa.org/witness). New minutes for mission are posted on the 1st and 15th of each month.*

*For more information on the Witness Season mission education emphasis contact Billie Healy, Associate for Mission Education Resources (888) 728-7228, ext. 5689, or [Bhealy@ctr.pcusa.org](mailto:Bhealy@ctr.pcusa.org).*

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