

# CINDY'S LUNCH TAKES WINGS

BY MARJORIE LEE CHANDLER

"Perhaps this stalk of bananas I'm holding came from Nicaragua," Mrs. Lee told her class. Pulling down a big world map, she pointed to a snake-like chain of countries—Central America. "And, here—right in the middle—is Nicaragua," she said.

"While it's cold and snowy here in Colorado, it's hot and muggy in Nicaragua, located in the earth's tropic zone—between the Tropic of Cancer and the Equator.

"But right now, Nicaraguans are worried about more than the weather. Many have no homes because of a terrible earthquake there," Mrs. Lee said sadly. "Two days before Christmas, 70 percent of the homes in Managua, the capital city, were destroyed. Now 300,000 persons are homeless.

"Our Friday morning assembly speaker will be a missionary who works in Nicaragua. How could our school help him help these homeless people?"

"Can some of the children come and go to school here?" asked Richard, usually first with a solution.

"Umm . . . what do you think?" Mrs. Lee thoughtfully asked the class.

Jennifer responded: "Their parents would miss them too much. They'd be so far away from family and friends."

"Well, what could we do to help the Nicaraguans right where they are?" pressed Mrs. Lee. "What things might earthquake victims need?"

"Beds," said Timothy.

"Books," added Beth.

"But our books aren't written in Spanish. So they couldn't read them!" corrected Mark.

"Good thinking," Mrs. Lee noted. "But younger chil-

dren might like picture books without words," she nodded to Beth.

"Think about your home for a moment. What does your kitchen have that you'd really miss?" Mrs. Lee teased.

"Food!" several students shouted, forgetting to raise their hands.

"I'd sure miss my mom's cookies and cakes and refrigerator snacks . . . and spaghetti, and nut loaf for dinner," said Robert.

"Well, we couldn't send the Nicaraguan people spaghetti," Mrs. Lee said laughingly. "But what foods could we send? Let's make a list. What does everyone like to drink—babies, children, and grownups?"

"Milk, . . . but how could we send that?" asked Stephanie.

"There's boxes of powdered milk in our grocery," answered Rene.

"My mom uses canned milk sometimes when she makes cookies," added Matthew.

"So, there is a way to send milk," confirmed Mrs. Lee. "Also, they like a flatbread called tortillas. What ingredients would they need?"

"Flour . . . maybe oil and eggs," said Tanya who liked to help her mom in the kitchen.

"We couldn't send eggs, could we? And the Nicaraguans don't use much flour; they use cornmeal instead," Mrs. Lee said as she wrote two more words on a huge easel pad.

Soon Mrs. Lee had a long list: milk, dried beans, cornmeal, sugar, cereal, crackers, baby food. . . .

"Now, your homework will be to put these items in alphabetical order," Mrs. Lee told her students as she capped

off her purple marker.

Cindy quickly scribbled the words into her binder—she'd have to recopy them anyway. She hadn't raised her hand earlier. Instead, she was thinking a lot about earthquakes. Cindy tried to imagine homes covered with rocks and rubble. Walls that were once upright crumbled into giant heaps. And beds buried under tons of upturned earth.

Mrs. Lee's reminder about the assignment brought Cindy's thoughts back to the classroom: "Since you'll have this list at home, you can ask your family to help the Nicaraguans, too. Don't forget to bring your gifts by Friday."

That night at dinner Cindy shared news about the Nicaraguan tragedy. Her junior-aged brother and sister volunteered to buy beef jerky with their allowance money. And her mom said she'd add some canned goods.

"Hey, you almost forgot your own lunch!" her mom shouted on Friday morning. Cindy grabbed her brown-bag lunch and stuffed it into the big sack of food gifts.

By 8:30 that morning the school's multipurpose room had a growing tower of food in cans, boxes, and plastic containers. Mr. Worth, the missionary, helped the children understand how hard it is for earthquake survivors to find homes and food. And how sad children are when they cannot go to school for many months. He was obviously sorry for so many people with so little of the things they needed. He told the children, "I've just come back from

Managua, Nicaragua, . . . and I have a heavy heart."

Mr. Worth flashed pictures on the overhead projector. They looked like a jumble of kindergarten building blocks

Picture  
Removed

dumped out in a big pile! He told the students what science knows about earthquakes—that it's very hard to predict where and when the next one will happen. Once a tremor begins, there's no stopping it. The earthquake in Managua lasted only a few moments, yet caused hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of damage.

"When God allows such natural disasters, Christians can help those who are suffering," said Mr. Worth. "I'm overwhelmed by the response of you students. I promise you that mercy planes will get everything you've given air-lifted to Central America."

All the sacks would go by air, south of

the United States border, over Mexico and land to Managua, Nicaragua. Cindy's heart skipped a beat! She was so excited!

Last night as she lay in bed, she had decided that she'd send her school lunch along with the canned goods. The thought of a little girl or boy in Managua eating her shiny red apple had filled Cindy with the happiest feeling she'd had since she heard about the Nicaraguan calamity.

At school that morning Cindy gently laid her brown-bag lunch on the heap of other gifts. Never mind what Mr. Worth might think if her peanut butter sandwich got mashed between strong tin cans and heavy cardboard containers. Cindy knew that God's Word asked people to give to those in need. Surely Mr. Worth would see that she had given part of herself.

Cindy had one unfulfilled wish—to sit under the broad, ragged leaves of a banana tree and share her lunch with the Central American girl or boy who might eat it. She was sure they could become good friends. ☞

\* Nicaraguan earthquake facts from *Information Almanac 1983*, A & W Publishers, New York, N.Y.

This story is based upon a real incident. Names have been changed and some dialogue added.

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