
Amigos de Honduras

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EDITOR'S CORNER

Loren Hintz (Olancho, 1980-82)
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ldhintz@bellsouth.net Thanks to folks who have shared their stories. **Tony Ives** tells about his recent visit and **Ricardo Feutz** shares his adventures from the late 60s. With increased vaccinations the postponed 2020 reunion is on for Aug. 5. See within for initial details and [website](https://amigosdehondurasrpcv.weebly.com/)

<https://amigosdehondurasrpcv.weebly.com/>. The NPCA has a number of articles about the PC, the on line museum and social justice. Many of the people at the US border are from Honduras. The international legal requirement of asylum is being recognized again. Slowly children are being reunited with family and transfers from ICE are resulting in better housing and conditions. But some deportees are sent Mexico instead of their home country and being kidnapped by gangs and held for ransom payments from relatives in the US. **Honduras continues to struggle!**

TREASURER REPORT

Anthony Ives (La Ceiba, 2003-5)
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Beginning balance
12/31/20 \$5,800.95
Ending balance
3/31/21 \$5,623.63
Current balance: \$5,753.63

Total deposits from members and transfers from NPCA:

January	\$ 605.00
February	\$ 630.00
March	\$ 625.00

Withdraws and projects funded:

January	\$ 84.00
February	\$1,953.32 /1
March	\$ 0.00

/1 Two projects were funded during the period. On February 23, 2021, Amigos de Honduras wired \$700 for a project in East End, Cayos Cochinos. The purpose of this project was to provide new solar light fixtures for the school and for the community. This project was originally built with funding from the Nature Conservancy and Peace Corps volunteers Max & Lynnette Acosta. On February 24, 2021, an aquaponics system in Las Flores, Olancho Yoro was funded for \$1,000.00 **As Treasurer for the organization**, I have been trying to update our status as a 501-3C tax exempt IRS organization. I have been working through the IRS since Nov. 2020 and most recently March 27, 2021 and sent an updated letter and document per the IRS request. **Finally 5.11.21 it is official and we have IRS tax exempt status so mail your donations to Amigos for the GRANT FUND.**

SECRETARY REPORT

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Thanks to all of you who have paid your membership dues. My records show we currently have 129 members receiving paper copies of their newsletters and 52 members receiving theirs by email for a total of 181 members. If you wish to change how you receive your newsletter please let me know. Just a reminder that your membership dues are \$15.00 per year or \$50.00 for 5 years. Your membership entitles you to a subscription of our Amigos de Honduras newsletter that is printed February, May, August and November. The back page of the newsletter, Membership Info, is how you can keep us updated with your pertinent information. *We love to hear from you!*

Spring has sprung in my corner of the world with lots of flowers, shrubs and trees blooming in my yard. Birds are singing early and late and we are finding broken shells in the yard. It's a balm to my soul in these trying times. I've received both my vaccines and look forward to venturing out into the world again. Take good care .

RPCV REUNION NEWS

Peggy Walsh and Terri Salus terrisalus@gmail.com are working on the postponed Windsor, CA reunion. Contracts are being renegotiated for the long August weekend (**Check-In Thursday, August 5, 2021 and Check-Out Monday, August 9, 2021.**) Details will be announced later via Amigos website, email etc. but folks may want to book flights (with liberal cancellation policies.) **Ann Reisenauer and John Kotula** were organizing a Hondu 5 (2005-07) ZOOM reunion for the end of April. Hope they share their adventures.

NPCA AND NEW MUSEUM

<https://www.american.edu/cas/museum/2021/peace-corps-at-60.cfm>

Visit the American University Virtual Peace Corps Museum that opened in March.

<https://www.peacecorpsconnect.org/> Check out the National Peace Corps Association (Amigos de Honduras is an affiliate group). See recent articles on the evacuation of all PCVs because of Covid pandemic, Statement in stand against Racial Injustice, A letter from all living former Peace Corps Directors about Doubling the Peace Corps, advice about jobs and writing books and more.

OLD PCV HUMOR

Via Brenda Crumpacker from the Mail Section of **Allí No Más** in 1990-1. **The Tampon Issue: Revisited** In reference to the current issue, I would like to offer an opposing view. For my work, I frequently am forced to travel and due to the current PC moto policy, I have to rely on public transportation and “the jalón.” As a male volunteer, I have found that hitching a ride is very difficult and

when I do get one, I unfailingly have to pay. However, when I am in the company of a female volunteer, vehicles will practically reverse directions to accommodate her. The ride is free and usually includes a fish dinner a Lago de Yojoa and an offer for a free weekend in Róatan. I am wondering if PC/Honduras could increase the male living allowance to adjust for this cultural disparity, or alternately, provide a jalón kit (o sea, a blond wig, skirt and make-up), to be distributed through the medical unit. -Mark Johnson Santa Bárbara, Santa Bárbara

OLANCHO 1967: Mi REALIDAD: OLANCHO IN THE 1960s.

Ricardo Feutz rdap@mhtc.net Compamento, 1967-9 (Editor Note: RPCV Feutz condensed his 20,000 word memoir of his PC service in Honduras for the newsletter. Enjoy reading about the good old days.)



LA LLEGADA: Landing at Toncontin, Group 8 expressed its respect on the tarmac by singing **Tu Bandera**. Following orientation, we were given maps indicating our assigned communities and told to

find our way. Following a three hour, bumpy dirt road adventure across three mountain ranges, I arrived in the forest pueblo of Campamento, on the road to Valle Lepaguare. Campamento had its origins where folks were sent to die, a death camp for those with infirmities for which there was no remedy.

I was shown my house/room and the 'tienda/comedor' where I was to take my meals. I stepped onto the tienda's dirt floor. Inside, above the door, were pictures of Jesus, JFK, and President Lopez Arellano - Jesus (in the middle) above JFK (to Jesus' left) and President Lopez Arellano (to Jesus right). The elderly Don Manuel sat in a rocking chair. He never did or said much, but always available for a chat. La Dona, was a spark plug. They treated me as if I were part of their family. My meals always included rice, eggs, beans and bread. Beef and venison were occasional. Tongue was popular. The coffee was so addictive I, I developed an ulcer. All was prepared on an open pit.

MI CASA: My living quarters consisted of a front room, a bedroom, an open-air bathroom/shower, an outdoor kitchen, a garage, and open-air courtyard with a palm and banana tree. With machete I hacked the grass to prevent the habitation of snakes and rats, and harvest the stalk of bananas which I hung onto a rafter outside my room facing the courtyard. **One night I heard scurrying sounds in the attic and a dragging movement.** Upon inquiry the next day during breakfast, La Doña informed me, "Oh yes, those are rats! My response was, "Oh, that's nice!" I don't remember her response to the presence of reptiles but if they were there, it would have been a constrictor, as acceptable as a cat. I climbed to the

attic for a look - found nothing.

I awoke one morning to see three small wormlike objects squiggling side-by-side across the floor. I quickly approached them. They exhibited a striking orange and black combination of colors. I thought of picking them up. But, they were moving fast, and I had a second thought. They quickly disappeared under the door into the courtyard. Upon questioning folks, I might have had an encounter with a newly hatched trio of coral snakes whose bite can be fatal. The easiest place for them to inflict their bite is between the fingers or toes, their mouth being quite small. But, even babies are full venomous. I never saw them or any others again. I always wondered where mama was.

From that time on, my machete clearing the courtyard took on a more urgent purpose. Cockroaches were endemic. They were much larger than our wimpy, little guys. The thought of them scurrying around my bed was disconcerting. Remembering that cockroaches thrive in urinals the 'eureka' moment popped. How about placing a beer bottle partially filled with urine next to the door? The morning next yielded spectacular results. Six cockroaches trapped and drowned. I felt overwhelmingly smart.

EL SUSTO: We had been warned about culture shock in training, which I 'pooh-pooed'. After my first three days, except for meals at the tienda, I secluded myself, spending all day reading books from my book locker or inspecting my banana tree and wandering around the courtyard with my machete, hacking here, hacking there. I needed to release mental and physical energy, but couldn't bring myself to confront the outside world. If only I could walk the dusty streets and

appreciate my new surroundings. The book locker was a critical remedy for this. After the initial exposure and emotional rush of my new surroundings, language, climate, and people, I fell into a funk. **"Why and what am I doing here?"**

Everything we learned in training seemed to be forgotten. The book locker got me through it emotionally. There was a sense of isolation, feeling totally alone. The powers in the Peace Corps knew this, and the book locker was their solution. It worked. 'Culture shock' was a very apt term. Many of us experienced it to one degree or another. After a few days, I emerged recharged, determined to get on with my work. I am told the book locker concept no longer exists. I am not surprised due to the existence of the internet. Isolation as we knew it must be incomprehensible to the 21st century volunteer. I'm told some even have their own blog - Incredible!

EDUCACION: There was one school 1st-6th grades with 13 teachers. Teaching stressed memorization of facts. I considered it a major victory if a student learned to read and write. Everyone who could read, vocalized. As the government changed, so did the teachers. I had a revelation with regard to the level of education. A campesino stopped by for a chat. On my wall was a map of the world. Quizzically, he looked at the map. I explained it was of the world. I pointed to Honduras. When he asked me about my country, I indicated the United States. He then asked me, "Don Ricardo, what is the blue country so large?". With as much nonchalance as I could, I said. "All the blue are the seas and oceans of the world." He looked on in amazement at the amount of water there was.

INFRA-ESTRUCTURA: The water utility consisted of gravity feed from a mountain stream. One day there was no water. The flow had been shut off. The corpse of a donkey was found in the tank system atop the mountain. Three weeks passed without water while the system was being cleansed. This was acceptance without complaint. "What will be, will be". It would be endured and life would move on. For the next three weeks we bathed in frigid mountain streams polluted with the detritus of indigenous species. The Peace Corps doctor warned us to not eat fleshy vegetables; they could be contaminated by worm eggs or parasites passed by handling with unsanitary hands. While bananas were approved, watery fruits such as tomatoes and melons were never to be eaten. Culinary dangers were unavoidable.

Everyone I knew, including myself, contracted something: roundworms, tapeworms, amoebic dysentery, or some other atrocious malady. It was common to see children with grossly distended bellies with worms. The clinic was frequently out of proper medicine. Every week there seemed to be a child's funeral. A procession would leave the church on foot, and proceed to the cemetery at the edge of town.

Power was generated by a French gas generator, supplying electricity four hours a night. This was when I received my news from VOA. For light beyond four hours, I had my Coleman lantern. Only once was there a major outage that required sending off to France for parts. We were four weeks without power.

There was no such thing as a food market as we know it. Frozen food was unknown. Fresh meat was

butchered and sold out early every day as were fresh vegetables. The odors were nauseous.

Walking back on a trail from coffee plots heightened my sense of sight and hearing. I heard 'things' in the bush. My greatest fear was an inadvertent meeting with a 'barba amarilla'. There was no antidote. Yet, I never had encounters more adventurous than squirrels passing or birds chirping warnings to one another. Bats were common at night.

PELIGROS: Olancho was a region similar in ambience to the Old West of the United States. Males who could afford them wore revolvers strapped to their hips. Others carried machetes sporting 24 inch blades. It was not uncommon to see one-armed campesinos. One day a man had been murdered and was laying on a table in the community center. I went over to view. He had a tiny blackened hole above his nose in the forehead. The perpetrator was said to have quickly disappeared into the forest.

Once, I was in my courtyard hacking away when I heard what sounded like gunshots coming from the town plaza. Once ended, I went to the tienda. I was informed a shootout had occurred; no one had been harmed, not a big deal to them. A certain Anibel screeched his truck to a halt in a swirl of dust. He told me I was his friend and gave me the 'a la orden' bit. Turns out he was a gunman from Teguc, the cousin of a local who was a crude man and wore his gun belt like others. Once, his wife was serving us coffee and talking about affairs of the day, he frequently spit on the dirt floor of his front room.

One Sunday, following a victorious soccer game in the mountainous countryside on a small flat piece of

field, spectators wearing pistols fired them into the air accompanied by confederate rebel-type shouts. Another week we had two murders. One fellow was shot at point blank range three times and the other was killed with a machete. Maximum penalty was twelve years, but one could get off with two, if he had money. Still another murder - a machete fight in one of the aldeas. He got twelve years...

An official with the Natural Resources Department stopped by. The local Colonel had changed the location of his military checkpoint by one-half kilometer, locating it on the opposite side of the road. Being unaware, he barreled passed it. When he got to the old checkpoint and found no one there, he immediately turned around looking out the back of his jeep. Kneeling on the road with rifles trained in his direction were two soldiers. He immediately gunned his jeep back toward the direction of the soldiers, who upon seeing his regression lowered their weapons. He asked the soldiers at what they did had their rifles aimed, the tires or him. **The soldiers assured him their rifles were aimed at him.** Such were the perils.

CONTROL MILITAR: The military commander controlled the political appointments, and if he didn't like someone or found their interests ran against his, he had them liquidated. Politics was not discussed. The risks were too great. Playing dumb and not rendering opinions was the rule. The Colonel gained his rank because, as a captain, he helped swing the golpe for President Arellano who then put the Colonel in charge of the 5th military zone - Olancho. The colonel controlled all political appointments - governor, alcaldes, etc. He had informers everywhere. One did not hear public debates about him. His

major contact in Lepaguare was my dueño and the alcalde of Campamento. I never heard anything good about the Colonel. One of his gunmen was the nephew of a local fellow - a member of the agriculture cooperative.

UNA VELADA MEMORABLE: December 24, 1968 - My friends took me to a local open-air bar to celebrate the Apollo 8 moon mission, the first time man orbited the moon. It was magical to look up into the brilliant moonlit night and imagine what was happening. **I was treated like a hero**, receiving misplaced adulation. Conversation drifted from moon to LBJ. Their point of view - governments changed when the military wanted. Democracy was a showpiece. The way a government would change involved assassination. Five years had passed since JFK was murdered. To them, Johnson was behind it. My compañeros were so ragging on LBJ, I felt I must defend him. I confused my patriotism for my country with the president. Due to the discomfort of all, it didn't take long for the conversation to shift, and the evening ended exalting the Americans orbiting the moon. My Honduran friends were sincere in their congratulations.

TAL COMO FUE: Public transportation was an old yellow bus in which and on which gathered people, chickens, and goats. Rest stops were made, the advantage being to enjoy coffee, shake off the dust, and recover from washboard roads. Children reached up to the windows holding baskets of bread and fruit for purchase. As the bus stopped, a swirl of dust engulfed them. One could also hitch a ride on a logging truck. Horses too were common.

The tienda was a gathering place.

Frequently playing cards, I wondered if these games were contrived due to their curiosity about me. But, it was good for them to differentiate between an individual American and what they perceived to be his dubious government. One day we had an interesting interchange - the doctor and dentist taught me all the dirty words in Spanish. I returned the compliment in English. A source of income was the cutting of the forest. Children, no longer in school, hauled firewood on crudely built wheelbarrows. **The major industry was that of lumber (mahogany), also a teja and ladrillo factory of which the 300 dwellings were covered.**

The pastoral residence adjoining the church on the square was frequently vacant. A kindly, soft-spoken American priest tended the flock for a short while. He worked with us and throughout Olancho in establishing savings and credit cooperatives. Another time, a Spanish priest had been assigned. He was a bit cranky, long in the tooth, did not seem to want to be there. He frequently solicited me for a game of chess. I enjoyed his expositions on the wonders of Spain. He was homesick. He too left.

Ambling down Main Street, I paused to visit with a lady. Standing with her was her daughter of about five years who cautiously touched my arm, staring intently as she stroked it. The mother laughed and said her daughter had never seen a 'gringo' before and was curious about my skin. The practice of courting was controlled. If a couple were an item, they were never to be left alone. A stroll in the plaza was followed by a chaperone or two. At dances in the community hall, one did not embrace a lady too closely. The musicians were local, elderly gentlemen whose stone-faced

countenance failed to betray their pride. The dancers were exuberant.

We enjoyed occasional picnic outings to a swimming hole in the Rio Guyape, swinging from a tree, dropping into the water. We would go shooting for buzzards. **I was presented with a kinkajou, thinking I might enjoy it as a pet.** I found it to be quite unmanageable, a wild animal from the rain forest related to raccoons. Native to Central and South America, it's a nocturnal, arboreal mammal hunted for meat and fur to make wallets and saddles. While some kept them as 'pets', I was out of its league. Was this gift intended as a joke?

In my daily walk around town, I spent time in the telegraph office. This was the place where I could find out about things. Besides the daily mail brought in by bus, the only communication with the outside world was by telegraph. Young as he was, Alfredo was one of the most important persons in the village, considering his skills to receive and transmit urgent information. His office/domicile was a wooden shack telegraph table adjacent to his cot. We never had a beer together. He evidently had to be alert always.

One man from Teguc who frequented the area caused concern. He was frequently seen around town and in the valley. His business justified our efforts for a credit coop. I was told he was a money-lender. Those who could not get by must borrow, and at unreasonable rates. He did not have an honorable reputation. I was told to keep my ears open. News got to me that the alcalde and three others mused that Campamento didn't need a credit coop. This bit of sabotage was worth investigating and might have some connection with the 'lender'. They said that Campamento needed some

other type of coop, but not a credit coop. For those who needed loans, whether it be for seeds, a horse, medicine, whatever, they must seek out someone who could make such a loan possible. All finca landowners, too, made loans to campesinos, buying their crop before it was harvested.

At the community meeting one night they were buzzing about the coming feria. **I was told there would be contests at which men would be shooting 'blancos'.** I hesitated and asked what was meant, showing fear. I told them I thought they meant me - that they were going to shoot the gringo. They belly-rolled at this for a good five minutes. The last dance of the feria was an invitational dance. The chosen ones were (1) the pretty girls, (2) school teachers, (3) tienda owners, and (4) the finca owners who lived in the pueblo. This list comprised the upper 4% of the population. Campesinos usually gathered at the doors or windows to stare. A smile never broke their stone-cold faces. One could see the hardened years - not one betraying evidence of happiness. But, that night of the invitational dance they did not stare. They weren't invited to do so.

We initiated a CARE project to daily supply a glass of milk from dehydrated milk powder to all children seven and under. Children seldom got proper milk from mothers who were so under-nourished they couldn't produce. Mothers helped prepare the milk on a rotational basis in my kitchen. However, the milk was so rich that it made the infants ill, their digestive systems not able to adjust. The project soon faded. Proper mother's milk was what the infants needed

QUE LASTIMA: In Valle Lepaguare I was to work with the top

1% and the bottom 99% in the same coop, a USAID effort to stabilize Central American economies to thwart communist insurgents creating conditions inimical to U.S. interests. Yet, I was provided no jeep nor scooter to get to the valley. I was expected to use the bus (once out, once back daily). I boarded the bus outside the telegraph office five blocks up the dusty street from my house. Once in the valley, I had to rely on the availability of others. One day, the rickety bus was abruptly stopped. The driver opened the door and on came Honduran military, pausing to stare at each passenger. All squirmed in their seats, not knowing if they would be commanded to exit the bus for interrogation. I too felt a rush of fear. But they passed by and were gone. No one was arrested. All were relieved and the bus continued on its way. There was much for a local to fear. A suspicion of one's loyalty to the government could result in permanent disappearance.

The Valley produced two corn harvests/year. Unfortunately, these finca owners did not have the storage facilities to store corn until market prices were advantageous to sell. They were very independent-minded and self-sufficient. They were powerful unto themselves as long as they were not offensive to the military. They were 'tight' with the reigning Colonel, (previously mentioned) endowing him with favors. He also owned a finca. Salvadorans would buy Honduran corn when market prices were low and haul it to Salvador for storage; then haul it back into Honduras and resell it when prices were high. It was feared extreme price fluctuations would contribute to the destabilization of Central America. The proposed solution was to construct storage bins to enable the safe, long-term storage of corn,

eliminating the middlemen of El Salvador. The management and marketing mechanism was to be through the one man/one vote structure of a democratically-run cooperative. Such cooperatives had achieved success throughout the world.

A meeting of the valley powers was convened at a finca on the grand veranda of the main house. Among them was my pueblo's alcalde, a senator, the governor, the Colonel, and my landlord. The director of USAID Honduras, his advisors and their Honduran counterparts made the case. An air of excitement prevailed. I felt as if I were in the Southwest of the 1880's. All land-owners were dressed in western style hats, clothes and boots, and wore holstered revolvers strapped to their legs. Questions were entertained. Then small groups discussed the implications. I found the philosophy of such a cooperative structure to be antithetical to the fundamental thinking of the land barons. I would be working with the very men who upheld a system which must be changed - feudalism.

The problem of the campesino was that he produced a meager 10-20 bushels of corn. He had to transport his corn from his plots by mule. In order to buy mules, he fed his corn to the hogs to obtain better prices for the hogs. With earnings from the hogs, he bought the mules. He then had just enough to live on. Saving was virtually unheard of. Those who could not get by borrowed at high rates. Once their corn arrived in town, the ricos snatched it up at 'fixed' low prices to be sold to the Salvadorans. To which rico the campesino sold his precious produce depended on factors such as familial relationships, personal favors, or 'obligations'. **The big wrinkle: All folks who owned and**

worked the land were eligible to participate in the coop - one man, one vote - including even those who, in addition to working their own plots, worked for the land owners. The campesinos had just as much right to join. However, to accept a campesino on the same level as themselves was inconceivable to the reigning powers.

I determined my two years would be wasted where the spirit of a cooperative would never be fulfilled. I saw the possibility of financial success overall, even if the small farmers were 'outcast', but I wanted nothing to do with it if the underclass were dominated. How could campesinos ever vote their conscience if they felt intimidated by their patrons, even though as a group they might outnumber them? They would always feel denigrated. I made the decision to focus on the credit coop instead for my remaining two years. **That was where the campesino could thrive, and it thrives to this day. I can find no evidence that the Ag coop is in existence.**



TALES FROM HONDURAS Anthony Ives (La Ceiba, 2003-5) I arrived in San Pedro Sula 3/5/21 with excitement and trepidation. Although I have been back in Honduras many times since I moved back in 2012, this was the first time in a bit and the very first time since the onslaught of Covid. The last I had heard, SAP was closed due to the two hurricanes that swept through the coast. I had envisioned something different but for the most part, the airport was clean with nary

a sign of the previous devastation. I also had been led to believe that the lines to come in would be long. Not true. It took only a short time to get through immigration. I think it surprised my friends from Marcala as they were an hour late.

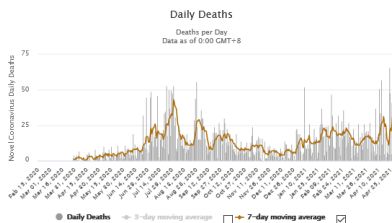
I hung outside of the airport talking to folks including various taxi drivers. It was warm but I was glad to have arrived after a long flight from Seattle. Rony arrived and had a couple of errands to do around San Pedro. I must say that I am still not **'acostumbrado'** to the traffic and how crazy folks drive as bicyclists are everyone and to drive down the wrong side of the road doesn't even deserve a honk of the horn. Best to just carry on the conversation and not look at the traffic.

We drove south. The cops are still corrupt. One stopped us expecting money. My friend took a picture of him and his patrol and threatened to post it on the internet. The cop gave up and we drove on without paying a bribe. This is the new thing apparently; I asked Rony about it. We drove south and headed through La Esperanza *hacia* Marcala finally arriving in the evening. My plan was to stay a few days and head to the coast but I ended up staying a full week. The plan was to work with COMSA, the coffee project, in order to apply for a grant with the IAF. The next day I met up with the new Executive Director and we went to the finca where we spent the next three days writing the grant, discussing strategy, and really just enjoying the environment. To picture the finca, go to <https://www.comsa.hn/> and look at the project. There are woodpeckers, lots of variety of birds and animals.

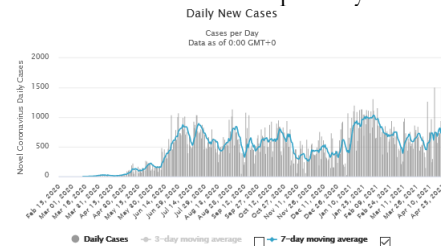
You wake up listening to this. It is amazing and incredible. I miss it.

If anyone knows Marcala, La Paz, you will know that it is smaller than La Esperanza. It is vibrant with farmers of all types, coffee, and the Lenca. One thing I immediately noticed in this 'Love in the time of Covid' as it were is that everyone had a mask on, right down to the military guys. My US family was concerned about this as they asked me if everyone was masked up. Definitely, even in the banks and supermarkets. One of my dear friends is the regional doctor at a clinic, La Clinica Moreno. She said that the region was hit pretty hard and it is still difficult as the Honduran government has not been able to secure sufficient supply of vaccines. I actually was tested there before I left for La Ceiba, the deep nostril test. The entire clinic heard me screaming but that is a different story. Time flew quickly. I was preparing to head to the coast and also to Cayos Cochinos to work on other projects. But the primary elections were about to occur. JOH as they call the president, was being accused of money laundering in **La Prensa** and his brother was just being put in jail by the United States. Ah it's good to be back. **Everything has changed, nothing has changed.**

NEWS OF HONDURAS
compiled by **Loren Hintz.**



The Coronavirus continues in Honduras. Graphs show death and infection rates continue at about the same level for the past year.



Of the Central American nations Honduras has the lowest vaccination rate and (0.6%, Guat., 1%; Nica 3%, ES, 14% and CR 16%). Honduras has the second highest death rates (535 per 100k) with CR the highest at 641. Nicaragua has one of the lowest Covid mortality rates in the world probably due to their system of local health clinics and US imposed isolation. **Worldometer 5.4.21.**

Presidential elections will be held in Nov. 2021. Telesurenglish.net 3.29.21 Results from the March 15 primary show a plurality voting for the National Party with Tegucigalpa mayor Nasry Asfura winning. (Current president Juan Orlando Hernández did not run for reelection like he did in 2017.) Yani Rosenthal, banker, former Deputy returned in 2020 from the US after serving a 3 year sentence for laundering drug money won the Liberal Party primary. Xiomara Castro, former presidential candidate and wife to overthrown President Mel Zelaya won the nomination of LIBRE party.

Queens Daily Eagle 4.6.21 Former Maspeth soccer star Juan Carlos Obregón scored a goal for Honduras in an Olympic qualifier victory over the US national team March 28. **The 2-1 Honduras win** prevented the US men's team from making the Olympics for the third straight time. Queens Tourism Council Director **RPCV Rob MacKay** doubles as a local soccer historian, and he says

special attention to fútbol in Honduras, where he served in the Peace Corps. MacKay is also passionate about Met Oval, which he has chronicled over the past several years. "It's really not surprising that somebody from the Met Oval scored a goal for a national team during a qualifier for the Olympics. ..." MacKay said. "Soccer-crazy immigrants and their children literally couldn't live without the Met Oval. It's central to their culture, social activities, and enjoyment."

RadioProgreso 3.22.21. On the eve of World Water Day, **another Honduran environmentalist was killed.** Juan Carlos Cerros Escalante, community leader and defender of River Ulua Biosphere. Since the coup, he began to participate in the defense of water at the community and regional level before the installation of the hydroelectric "El Tornillito", a project that threatens to destroy 10 communities in the departments of Cortés and Santa Bárbara. On Sunday night 3.21.21 when he was returning from his mother's house together with his children, subjects supposedly linked to the Mara Salvatrucha MS fired about 40 shots, killing him. Juan Carlos was president of the Nueva Granada Board of Trustees and of the Lenca Indigenous Movement. In 2018 he received an attack forcing him to flee with his family, but in 2019 he decided to return to continue fight against the "El Tornillito" hydroelectric project, owned by the Larach family.

The Guardian 2.12.21 Keyla Martínez, a final year nursing student, was visiting her family in La Esperanza last weekend and went out to eat with friends on Saturday evening. Police claimed that they detained Martínez and her friend, Dr Edgar Velázquez Orellana, around 11.45pm after stopping their car

because of the curfew. The pair were taken to the police station and separated. Martínez was locked up in a cell alone. Police claimed that Martínez was discovered trying to hang herself with her blouse during a routine check, but was still alive. She was taken to hospital, but doctors say she was dead on arrival. Through his lawyer, Velázquez Orellana has said that he heard Martínez shouting for help, before it went quiet. He is currently in hiding, apparently fearing reprisals. In the decade before the coup, 222 women were murdered annually, according to analysis by the Centre for Women's Studies - Honduras (CEM-H). In the past five years, 381 have been killed on average annually. **Ninety-six per cent of the murders remain unsolved.**

Banana Days Dr. Cyril Nelson Sutherland died 12.26.20 in Alcalá de Henares, Spain where he moved after retiring as the Botany Professor at the National University UNAH. He worked with RPCV professors Sherry Pilar Thorn. Becky Myton and Miles A. Powers (66-69). Many PVCs knew him as a source of info on the Flora of Honduras. He wrote numerous botanical books and had a number of new species named in his honor. He was born 1938 in La Ceiba. And **Biodiversity of Honduras Facebook 4.12.21** announced a new group to collect and save native plant seeds of Honduras.

The Hill 3.24.21 Those seeking asylum in the United States have a right to do so under U.S. and international law. Those who petition for asylum after crossing the border irregularly are not fundamentally in violation the law - they are, rather, attempting to appeal to the law for protection, by utilizing those processes that are available to them. One reason why this

important detail is mostly overlooked is the steady expansion of deterrence strategy and its application under the Obama and Trump presidencies. Although it has antecedents in the [origins](#) of the country's immigration detention system, prior to 2014, this strategy had principally been applied to those attempting [unlawful and clandestine border crossing](#). However, after an increase that year in the arrival of unaccompanied minors, the government began to apply this strategy to asylum seekers as well. This process began in earnest with President Obama. This policy was expanded further by President Trump's implementation of [metering](#) (which dramatically slowed the number of individuals who could petition for asylum on any given day), the policy of [family separation](#) and the [Migrant Protection Protocols](#) (MPP), popularly known as the "remain in Mexico" policy. MPP caused tens of thousands of asylum seekers to remain stranded in [squalid and dangerous conditions](#) in Mexico while awaiting court hearings in the United States.

IN HONDURAS, CORRUPTION KILLS

World Politics Review 1.26.21

[Adriana Beltrán](#) (Editor Note. A friend who worked in Central America for decades shared this article about Honduras written by a former co-worker.)

When Hurricanes Eta and Iota crashed through Central America in November, they caused massive devastation and destruction, leaving around 200 people dead and thousands displaced. Economists believe that in some parts of the region, [the economic toll of these disasters](#) could be greater than the damage inflicted in Honduras and Nicaragua by Hurricane Mitch in

1998—the deadliest hurricane in Central American history.

These two record-breaking storms were all the more devastating because they struck Honduras amid the COVID-19 pandemic, [which by then had killed nearly 3,000 Hondurans](#) and overwhelmed an already precarious health care system. The pandemic has also left many people, most of whom work in the informal sector, unemployed. Honduran economist Alejandro Kaffati told the news agency EFE in September that the poverty rate in the country was already expected to rise from 60 to 70 percent as a result of the pandemic's economic impact. [The percentage of those living in extreme poverty could approach 50 percent](#), he said.

These emergencies—two hurricanes and a global pandemic—are challenging enough for any government to face. But in both instances, their impact has been exacerbated by high-level corruption and poor governance. An audit by the watchdog NGO the Association for a More Just Society, for example, found that the Honduran agency charged with procuring emergency medical supplies had wasted tens of millions of dollars on subpar, overvalued medical equipment, [including spending an excess of \\$12.5 million to buy seven mobile hospitals](#).

Corruption is a long-standing cause of political dysfunction and economic stagnation in Honduras. Back in 2016, a massive mobilization against graft led to the creation of an international commission to tackle it, backed by the Organization of American States and modeled on [Guatemala's success with a similar initiative](#). Called the Mission to Support the Fight Against Corruption and Impunity in

Honduras, or the MACCIH for short, [the panel shed light on the depth of corruption in Honduras](#) and unearthed illicit networks of individuals who have leveraged their relationships and positions in government to embezzle public funds.

But as the MACCIH uncovered more and more damning evidence, [indicting 133 individuals and leading to 15 criminal cases](#), political elites and their allies pushed back, led by President Juan Orlando Hernandez. He eventually disbanded the commission in January 2020, and ever since, Honduras has seen a further backsliding of anti-corruption efforts. Recent cases investigated by the U.S. Attorney's Office of the Southern District of New York have shed light on this crooked network including the conviction of former congressman Tony Hernandez, the younger brother of President Hernandez. According to the investigation, Tony Hernandez trafficked tons of cocaine through Honduras, and at times used members of the police force to provide cover for drug shipments and even to commit murders. He made millions of dollars through this drug trafficking scheme, which he then used to fund the now-ruling National Party and his brother's presidential campaigns. Other cases have crossed party lines and involved a wide range of Honduran politicians and government officials. In 2017, the son of former President Porfirio Lobo was convicted in New York to 24 years in prison on drug trafficking charges. That same year, the leader of the Liberal Party, Yani Rosenthal, and his cousin, Yankel Rosenthal, pleaded guilty to laundering drug money for the notorious Cachiro cartel.

Corruption is a critical factor in explaining this ongoing insecurity,

impunity and the poor state of public services. More than the product of a few bad apples, it permeates nearly all government bodies in Honduras, comprising an [institutionalized system that serves the interests of a small and tight circle of elites](#). Over the years, powerful business interests, members of the political establishment, and illicit organizations have co-opted government from the local level to the national, and have used state coffers to maintain their economic status, ensure impunity for their misdeeds, and fund political parties and candidates. Corruption is the livelihood of this system.

According to the Honduras think tank FOSDEH, from 2014—when Hernandez began his first term—to 2018, [Honduras lost more than \\$10 billion in public funds to corruption](#). This figure exceeded the entire operating budget of the central government in 2018, and represents about [12.5 percent of the country's GDP](#). Ordinary Hondurans are the ones paying the price for this unchecked graft, as public services and infrastructure falter. Prior to the pandemic, the Honduran health care system was already on the verge of collapse due to lack of funding and mismanagement. [Only about 8.5 percent of the country's GDP is invested in health care](#)—well below the regional average of 14 percent. The embezzlement of health care funds and shady deals on overpriced equipment or fake medicine have only worsened the problem.

Similarly, compared to the rest of Central America, [Honduras invests the fewest resources into education](#). This is reflected in student performance: In 2018, [over 122,000 students were held back, while nearly 79,000 dropped out](#). In 2019, there was a clear correlation between student success and economic

development, as the departments with the highest dropout and failure rates were also those most affected by poverty, inequality, corruption and violence. Six of the departments with the worst outcomes for students also led the country in the number of homicides that went unpunished; the department Yoro and Cortes, for example, has [impunity rates equal to or above 90 percent](#).

Though the government had budgeted \$102.93 million for the maintenance of its roads in 2020, by the end of June, there was only \$9.38 million left. [The deficit](#) is due to massive, excess expenditures approved by Marco Bogran, the former director of the government strategic investment office INVEST-H, who is currently facing charges for his role in the misuse of public funds during the coronavirus pandemic.

Efforts to monitor, investigate and call out egregious cases of corruption have become more difficult to organize each year under Hernandez, especially given new restrictions on civic space. Advocates warned, for example, that the new Penal Code could also have a chilling effect on civil society, [because it makes it easier](#) for authorities to label public protests and advocacy group meetings as “terrorist” activities, which they can use to silence critics. The new law heightens the dangers facing journalists, lawyers and [human rights defenders](#), who already [operate in a hostile environment with little accountability or justice](#).

But in spite of these new vulnerabilities, Honduras’ civil society remains resilient. Within the first 190 days of the pandemic, there were [reportedly over 470 publicly registered demonstrations](#), as protesters voiced concerns about

everything from access to food, to welfare distribution, to COVID-19 policies. As coronavirus cases rose and reports emerged revealing the corruption in the state’s pandemic response, social movements [adopted an anti-corruption slogan](#)—“Where’s the money? Honduras demands it!”—that was shouted in the streets and plastered across social media.

Even as Hondurans brave the streets, civil society watchdogs and independent media have played a critical monitoring role, often serving as the main counterweight to government corruption and abuse. Organizations like FOSDEH, [the National Anti-Corruption Council](#), [the Association for a Just Society](#), and independent news outlets like [Contracorriente](#), among others, have been instrumental in uncovering major corruption cases and carrying out independent evaluations of government agencies, taking up the mantle after the fallout with the MACCIH. [Their efforts have helped expose irregularities](#), the manipulation of public contracts, price gouging and fraud in pandemic response efforts.

The work of these watchdogs has been a lifeline for civic space in Honduras, keeping activism alive and providing badly needed transparency at a time when there is little formal oversight on government spending, and when civil society mobility is increasingly restricted.

There may be hope on the horizon, too, with Biden’s election in the United States. His victory was welcomed by many across Latin America—including the U.N. human rights chief, [former Chilean President Michelle Bachelet](#)—as he is expected to renew U.S. attention to tackling corruption and impunity.

In the past four years, President Donald Trump’s administration squandered much of the momentum of previous anti-corruption efforts to instead adopt an overwhelming focus on deterring migration from the region. The U.S. effectively abandoned the anti-graft commissions in Guatemala and Honduras and failed to respond to attacks against the rule of law and those leading the reform efforts. A telling example was when the [U.S. government shipped a donation of military jeeps to Guatemala](#) even after reports emerged that jeeps it had previously donated were used by the Guatemalan government to intimidate that country’s anti-corruption commission, known as CICIG, and embassies, including the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala.

Under Trump, the U.S. consistently chose to maintain strong support for corrupt government officials and elites. Despite the mounting criminal allegations against President Hernandez, his administration consistently referred to him as a strategic partner for the United States. At a summit for Israeli Americans in 2019, [Trump went out of his way to thank Hernandez](#), who was in attendance, for their strong and collaborative relationship.

Without significant political will in Honduras, it will be impossible to dismantle the machinery that has enabled and facilitated government corruption for so long.

In contrast to Trump, as vice president, Biden took the lead on the Obama administration’s policies in Central America, traveling extensively in the region and launching a new initiative to provide millions of dollars in assistance to combat corruption, strengthen the rule of law, improve security and

generate economic opportunities. As a candidate last year, Biden returned to this approach and placed combating corruption at the heart of his [planned policy in Central America](#), recognizing that tackling graft is necessary for the long-term improvement of security and economic conditions in the Northern Triangle states of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. His plan includes a \$4 billion multiyear, regional strategy aimed at improving the conditions that lead to migration—a shift from Trump’s approach, which focused excessively on policing the southern border.

To see this agenda through, the Biden administration should make clear from the start that it stands not with Honduras’ corrupt elites, but with ordinary Hondurans themselves and with those who have been at the forefront of the battle for democracy and the rule of law. To help win back the progress that has been lost, the U.S. must support the civil society actors, journalists and those within government who have been advocating for much-needed reforms. U.S. aid should center on strengthening judicial and prosecutorial independence in Honduras, bolstering investigative capacities, improving transparency and proven accountability mechanisms, and addressing other structural weaknesses that have enabled corruption to flourish there and throughout Central America. Aid to central governments should be conditioned on clear and concrete actions on the part of the governments of Central America to reduce corruption and strengthen the rule of law.

Washington should also take full advantage of the many tools and mechanisms at its disposal, such as the Magnitsky Act’s sanctions on

human rights violators, State Department designations to restrict the visas of corrupt officials, and targeted sanctions under the Office of Foreign Asset Control. It is important, too, that the Biden administration incorporate this strong stance into its diplomatic strategy, making clear from the get-go that it will not turn a blind eye to corruption, and responding forcefully and promptly to any effort to hinder anti-corruption initiatives. It must visibly distance itself from corrupt leaders and avoid public engagements that could appear to signal unconditional support. It could, for example, make use of the recently approved [Northern Triangle Enhanced Engagement Act](#), which was passed as part of an omnibus appropriations bill in December, to help send a strong and consistent message from the outset. The new law requires the administration to publish a list of corrupt actors in the Northern Triangle, who will then be denied entry into the U.S.

EN MI PAÍS Por William Anderson via Editorial Guaymuras [Banana Days](#)

En mi pais de guamil y sol ardiente
 Se ve la historia en los rostros de la gente
 Hermosa tierra, vuelo de gaviota herida
 Tenes la luz que va repartiendo vida
 Sos la semilla y sos la fuerza en el arado
 Tenes el alma en el bullicio del mercado
 Suene la guitarra y la marimba
 Las maracas con el acordeon
 Que suene la flauta y la caramba
 Suenen el tambor y el caracol
 En mi pais rumor de de mar
 Selva y quebrada
 Estan el sabor
 De la naranja y la guayaba
 Esta el color de la flor que no marchita

Esta el olor a cafe en la tardecita
 Y aqui esta el Africa en cancion
 Vida y tambores
 Leyenda negra
 Cayuco lleno de flores
 Suene la guitarra y la marimba
 Las maracas con el acordeon
 Que suene la flauta y la caramba
 Suenen el tambor y el caracol
 Para quererte el corazon mio no alcanza

William Anderson was born 2.26.62 en La Ceiba and died there 8.6.16. He attended Mazapán elementary school and graduated with a Bachelor of Science and Letters from the San Isidro Institute. He studied literature, theater and music at the University of California -Santa Cruz. At this time the album "Para los chiquitos" came out, which includes "Toca la caramba", "Arroz con leche" and "La fna feliz". In 1987, Guillermo returned to Honduras, and created Colectivartes, a group made up of Honduran musicians, and invited various artists from Europe and the United States to come to La Ceiba to carry out various musical and cultural projects.

His music sings, above all, to love and the joy of being born in this part of the world. Garífuna rhythms (such as "parranda" or "punta") are an essential part of his music, and represent his love for the sea and everything related to it. His lyrics greatly exalt the natural beauties of Honduras. He also composed songs that address social problems, such as poverty and inequality. His discography is extensive, it includes, among others, the following albums: "Costa y calor", "Pobre marinero", "From the bottom of the sea", "Woman song, woman song", "Of time and the tropics", " Rain with sun ", and " That mortal named Morazán ". **In addition, he wrote several books, such as *Bordeando la Costa and Zompoto*.**

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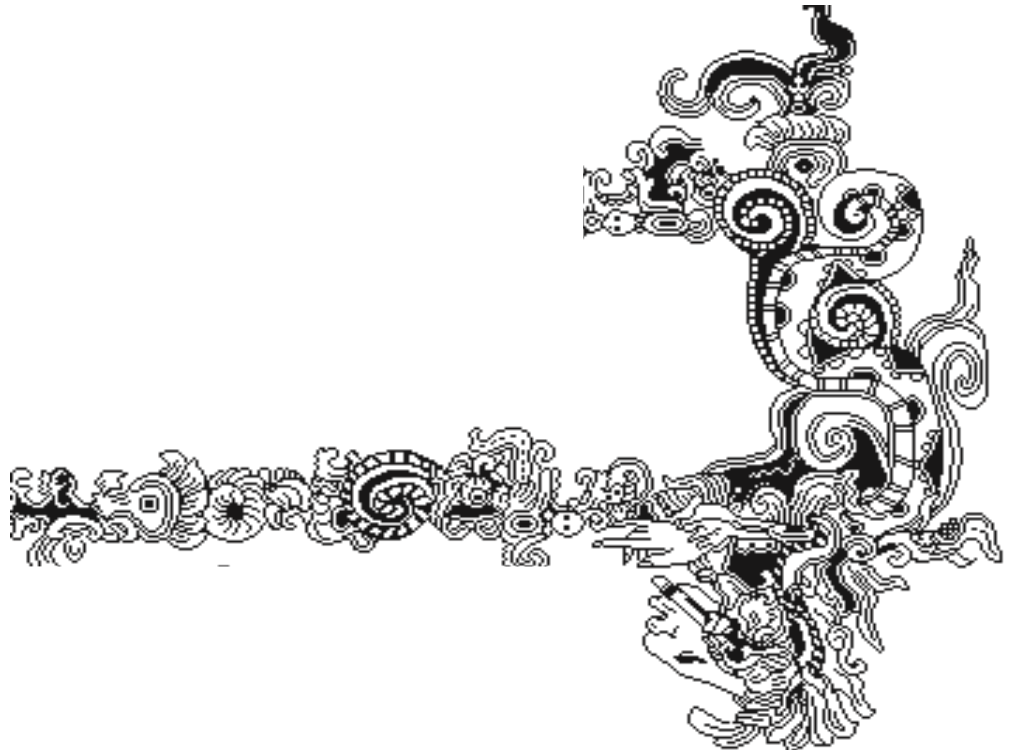
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