
Amigos de Honduras

Vol. XXI, No. 4

November 2014

SECRETARY/ TREASURER'S

REPORT Joan M. Larimore San Francisco del Valle 1986-88

Thanks to you wonderful members who send in grant money with your dues, our total bank account is a very healthy balance: almost \$8000!

Your Secretary/Treasurer is streamlining our books and accounting. Many thanks to you who read my report in the August edition and contacted me about your due dates. NPCA and I are still unscrambling the mess when NPCA switched banks. I lost track of dues paid to NPCA all the way back to May. IF YOU HAVE NOT DONE SO, CHECK YOUR DUE DATE ON THE MAILING LABEL. IF IT IS INCORRECT, LET ME KNOW.

amigosdehondurasjml@gmail.com

Those of you who pay your NPCA dues through Amigos have no problem.

For those who may have forgotten and for our new members, Amigos de Honduras was started in 1990 and we are now 24 years old! Many of you have been with us right from the beginning. The Newsletter is our method of keeping you in touch with Honduras. It is also how we look back at that special time in our lives. Our editor, Loren Hintz, needs your

articles on what you were doing on site, how you spent your holidays and how you interacted with the Honduran people in your town. Send your thoughts to Loren, long or short.

EDITOR'S COLUMN

Loren Hintz Olanchito 1980-82

This is the fourth issue of my first year of editing the newsletter. Thanks to everyone who has written articles or shared ideas. Since I didn't get as many stories as I hoped, I included one I typed up from my journal 34 years ago. For more recent volunteers just cut and paste an old PC blog or email and send it to me! Once again I encourage everyone to think of your adventures in Peace Corps and share. For the next issue I would like to include some memories of your PC training experiences. Please contact me at ldhintz@bellsouth.net ; 804 Kings Mill Rd. Chapel Hill NC 27517; 919-933-8987. GRACIAS!

We will continue to create a paper edition of the newsletter. Many organizations are going all electronic but that leaves some members cold. We are offering the option of paper and/ or pdf.

Brant Miller, a long-time member of Amigos has offered to take over the electronic mailings. If you used to receive the newsletter electronically,

please check with Brant to be sure your email address is correct. If you are on the list and wish to drop off, notify him. Also if you wish to receive it electronically, contact him at finalviny@comcast.net Thanks!

Amigos de Honduras is part of National Peace Corps Association (NPCA). Please consider joining both. Every issue of Amigos will have some NPCA news. The August issue shared the new student loan relief for PCVs. This issue has a plea for funds to fight Ebola.

A GRANT COMMITTEE REPORT

Joan M. Larimore

The Amigos de Honduras Grant Committee now consists of Judith Whitney-Terry, Loren Hintz and Joan Larimore. If any of you who were on the original committee when Roxanne Cull was chair and wish to still help, please contact Joan at the Amigos email: amigosdehondurasjml@gmail.com

OJO: In the August Newsletter, one of my initials was inadvertently left off and some people had trouble reaching me. Be sure all 3 initials (jml) are there! And accept our apology for the error.

There are many new and exciting things going on in Honduras as a result of PCVs who saw a need and filled it. If you are interested on

Amigos de Honduras

Joan serving on the Grant Committee or if you have proposals please contact Joan at

amigosdehondurasjml@gmail.com

So far in 2014 we have made grants totaling \$1500. We made a second grant of \$500 for CAMO. (See the August issue for details about the organization camo@camo.org.) We also made a grant of \$1000 for Tools of Opportunity. (Read this issue to learn more!)

GRANT DONATIONS

August-November 2014

Heidi Given, Alan Meyer, Maria Robinson, Brant Miller, Mary Mayer, John and Jean Evans, Mary Shettig, Mickie Lee-Mershich, Nick (Robert N.) Anderson, Diane McCormack.

If we missed anyone, please let me know and we'll add you in the next Newsletter. Gracias!

TOOLS OF OPPORTUNITY: PALISAL

Dale Schmitz Yamaranguila, Intibuca 1967-69

A grant of \$1,000 was provided by *Amigos de Honduras* in September to *Tools for Opportunity*, a small Iowa non-profit. It will provide training and the *Amigos'* grant will provide most of the tools to some carpenters at the *PALISAL* lumber cooperative in Yamaranguila, Intibuca.

PALISAL was formed in 2001 from four existing groups working in carpentry to cut and sell lumber, which it began doing in 2006. It

received some initial funds from *FAO* (Food and Agricultural Organization, an agency of the United Nations) for a major piece of equipment to saw logs into boards. It also took out a loan from a local savings and loan cooperative, *CACIL*, for \$250,000 as reinsurance for the *PACTA* funds (*CACIL* was formed in the mid 1960's in La Esperanza, Intibuca with the assistance of Peace Corps Volunteers.)

This cooperative currently has 54 members, and at times has employed as many as 89 people. The local workers are paid based on a piece-work basis, and their average earnings are twice what local laborers are paid. Lumber is sold principally to businesses in northern Honduras. The income from products sold last year was approximately \$195,000. Permissions from three entities are now required before the cooperative may cut trees. It plants three new trees for each pine cut down.

Beginning in 2009, Peace Corps Volunteers with experience in business assisted *PALISAL* to put its financial and administrative areas in order so that the costs of production and the prices necessary to be profitable were available and utilized. That assistance ended when the Peace Corps removed all Volunteers from Honduras for security reasons.

The cooperative uses every part of trees. The pieces of wood resulting from cutting that cannot be sold as lumber is sold as scrap wood to local individuals to be used for purposes such as fencing or firewood in their ovens. Some is sold to a lime producing company to fuel its kilns. Bags of charcoal wood are sold to

small metal and iron shops to heat their forges, and also to supermarkets to sell to individuals for grilling. Even the sawdust is sold.

During the rainy season few trees are able to be harvested and processed into lumber. So *PALISAL* is constructing a special building to train some laborers as carpenters who can work and earn income during that time. *Tools for Opportunity* will provide the training in carpentry and the *Amigos'* grant will provide funds for most of the tools. The training is scheduled for March 11-12, 2015.

To earn their tools, the carpenters will sign an agreement with *Tools for Opportunity* to:

- a. Donate 40 hours on a carpentry product for their community, such as for a town, park, school
- b. Plant five trees
- c. Train another person in carpentry.

Tools for Opportunity follows up within a year to assure that these requirements have been met. I was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Yamaranguila, Intibuca 1967-69, and will personally be able to follow-up on this project. My wife Frances is from there, and so we have returned almost annually over the last 45 years both to visit family and also to help with various projects as progress came to the town, such as water, sewer, telephone and electricity. A newly paved highway finally goes through the town, connecting Santa Rosa de Copan through Gracias, Lempira, through La Esperanza, Intibuca and on to Siguatepeque.

RPCV BOOK: DEVIL'S BREATH

Robert Thurston
APCD Belize/Honduras
1972-1977

Robert Thurston lived and worked in Latin America for over 15 years. During that period, he served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Venezuela Peace Corps, Associate Director in Belize and Honduras, US Agency for International Development program manager in Latin America and South Asia, and as a development consultant. His assignments took him to remote back-country places where he met and worked with all kinds of people, many commendable but a few of dubious character. Hailing from Oregon, his ancestors ventured west by wagon train, thus passing along a sense of adventure, a curiosity about new frontiers, and accounts of frontier personalities. The author drew from all of these elements and experiences to weave together the extraordinary twists and turns in [Devil's Breath](#).

The story takes place in recognizable Latin American settings and brings to life a panoply of characters, some inspiring, some despicable, yet all engaging. But nothing is as it seems. Matt Bolls' well-intentioned volunteer service in South America turns into a nightmare of deceit, rape, murder and international intrigue. His insertion into a remote village and alien culture quickly challenges his naïve notions and assumptions, indeed, his very existence. Matt, aka Gringo Mateo, desperately flees

from the many who wish to see him dead, a flight immersing him into a dark world of shadowy figures and events, all in dangerous, violence-plagued locations. Unexpected allies provide him and his agonizing father, a US Congressman, windows of hope. Diamonds, cocaine and smuggled arms are the stock in trade along Matt's underground trajectory.

Anyone who has been a Peace Corps volunteer or staff, development worker, or served in a diplomatic or other overseas agency, will laugh, cry and be riveted by this tale.

[Devil's Breath](#) by Robert Thurston is now available at Amazon.com/books in both paperback and Kindle editions. A non-fiction account of Rob Thurston's professional and family experiences abroad are recounted in [Life's Treks and Trails: My Journey from Vale to Kathmandu](#), by Robert V. Thurston, which is also available in paperback on Amazon.com/books.



HONDURAS STILL NEEDS VOLUNTEERS

Barbara E. Joe, RPCV, El Triunfo & La Esperanza, Honduras, (2000-03)

In 2012, after 50 years in Honduras, sadly, as we all know, the Peace Corps left that country, only

temporarily, we certainly hope. The need was still great, but growing violence caused Washington to remove all PCVs in January of that year much to their dismay, and ours too as RPCVs. Other organizations soon followed suit. But one group has remained and has continued to provide medical services, International Health Service of Minnesota, IHS, (www.ihsmn.org), which, on a year round basis, works exclusively in Honduras and in every corner of the country, even in the remote Mosquitía. In 2013 December's issue of the Amigos de Honduras newsletter, Steve Rice made an urgent plea for IHS volunteers. I feel the need to second his appeal now, having returned at the end of February from another IHS medical brigade. I would encourage Honduras RPCVs, with their language skills and cultural understanding, to seriously consider participating in this all-volunteer endeavor. Medical, dental, and pharmacy staff are most crucial, but there is also a need for Spanish interpreters, radio operators, and just plain everyday helpers to lay out supplies, clean up, pack up, and fill up solar shower bags with water on a daily basis.

Nor is age a barrier. I'm now 76, so if I can do it, so can you! Take my word for it as a veteran of eight IHS brigades that the work is personally enriching for volunteers, as well as of immediate benefit to Honduran patients. Although the hours can be long and the demands considerable, teams experience a great sense of camaraderie and share frequent moments of fun, as well as an enduring sense of accomplishment.

Amigos de Honduras

I've always been impressed by the fact that IHS has no political, geographic (despite its name), or religious affiliations or limitations, and no overhead, no paid staff, and no physical office. It has operated that way for decades, going into the most remote and needy areas, relying on the goodwill and expertise of Americans, Canadians, Hondurans, and even folks from other countries—all of them willing to devote their time and pay their own expenses. It's really an amazing logistical feat to organize the various volunteer teams and coordinate with local people in each community. For that, Steve and his colleagues deserve much admiration and credit.

As readers of my Peace Corps memoir, *Triumph & Hope* (named for the two towns where I served an extended term as a health volunteer), already know, I volunteered with IHS in 2005 on my first return visit to Honduras after Peace Corps. I've gone back to Honduras a total of ten times for humanitarian projects since my COS, serving with IHS during eight of those visits. I also support individual education scholarships and make donations to Honduran physical rehabilitation and therapy facilities and those for the blind, as well as volunteering with Operation Smile, which also schedules an annual brigade in February at San Felipe Hospital in Tegucigalpa. Especially now that the Peace Corps is no longer in Honduras, I make it a point to give encouragement and medical supplies to El Triunfo's health center, whose staff I worked with during my service, as well as to village health volunteers whom I once helped train. My book proceeds help fund my participation in these various endeavors, along with my

part-time work as a Spanish interpreter in hospitals and schools in the Washington, DC, area.

Is Honduras really so dangerous now? I would have to say, yes, more so than when we were in the Peace Corps, even as recently as when I served from 2000 to 2003. According to a UN survey, Honduras' homicide rate of 90.4 per 100,000 is the highest in the world, fueled mostly by gang violence and activity by drug cartels. (Next highest is Venezuela, at 54 per 100,000.) The greatest risks are in major cities, where, unfortunately, most international airports are located. But even Honduran friends living in Comayagua and La Esperanza (my second Peace Corps site), usually considered safer, tell me they have been robbed and attacked recently.

Yet, rest assured that IHS takes special care of its volunteers, escorting them from airports by bus to rural areas where the brigades take place. My experience in Honduran villages and small towns is that local residents are more than grateful for and quite protective of visitors and that the bad guys don't even bother trying to go there. The new president of Honduras has promised a crackdown on crime and, when I was there in February, decreed the blocking of all cell phone communications within prisons, thus temporarily disrupting it for surrounding areas as well, but only time will tell whether his get-tough tactics work. According to recent reports, the crime and murder rate does seem to be leveling off or even diminishing, so I still hope to see Peace Corps' return to Honduras in the not-too-distant future.

IHS is an ongoing endeavor that can be accessed through the website

mentioned above or by sending calls or texts to the phone number Steve provided: 651-442-6220.



Barbara with a small IHS medical brigade patient, 2014.

REQUESTS TO NCPA EBOLA RELIEF FUND OUTSTRIP DONATIONS

Since we announced its launch last month, the **NPCA Ebola Relief Fund** has made good progress.

- We have passed the \$10,000 mark in contributions, which continue to come in steadily.
- We have received a donation from the Chicago Area Peace Corps Association. The Northeast New York RPCVs are doing a fundraiser next month. And the RPCVs of WI-Madison raised awareness about the Fund at a farmers market. Thank you to our groups for your support!
- A simple, downloadable fact sheet on the Fund is now posted to our website.
- We've created an attractive microsite with the URL www.NPCEbolaRelief.org.

But demand for project funding is far outstripping the amount we've raised. Thus far we have 32 project requests, totaling a need of close to \$95,000. Can you help? Ebola isn't waiting, so why are you?

Visit www.NPCEbolaRelief.org and Donate

PCHONDURAS REUNION 2016

Please contact Terri Salus if you are interested in helping with the RPCV reunion in New Orleans Feb. 2016. salusboyz@juno.com

HONDURAN CHILDREN FLEEING TO USA (PART II)

Joan M. Larimore San Francisco del Valle 1986-88

Many of you have sent me notes asking if Amigos or Peace Corps is doing anything to ease the plight of the Honduran Children fleeing the drug gangs. We have members who are trying. Following are excerpts from two letters received from Amigos members with their permission to publish:

A new member, Marta Sweitzer, comments upon reading the August issue of Amigos... "It does my heart good to be in the look and know that we are all concerned and heartbroken over the violent turn of events in a country where the majority of people are humble, peaceful, hospitable and poor but happy with so little. Seeing the not so friendly responses of some Americans to these immigrant children seeding refuge here really made me want to connect with some RPCVs from Honduras."

And from Fran Alcantana came this: "I really appreciated the August edition. I also have found it frustrating to break through Homeland Security to volunteer with the immigrant children, but I keep hitting brick walls. I am surprised

that Peace Corps hasn't gotten involved with returned volunteers-the short term jobs. When I called Peace Corps, I was disappointed by the same sort of tepid, bureaucratic responses that I received at Homeland Security."

Without a doubt, many more of you are saddened by our current policies of turning these children around and sending them back to Honduras despite their lives being threatened. When a child or other person states that they are in actual danger, the policy is that they are given a hearing. Evidently, in a recent border incident, this did NOT happen. Supposedly, the government department in charge of immigration is looking into this event which appears to involve border guards.

As editor I (Loren) have received some additional comments. From North Carolina Peace Corps Association I received the following post:

To
ncpeacecorps-list@meetup.com
Today at 12:31 AM
Desperately seeking pro bono Mam interpreter (Guatemalan Mayan language) for telephonic hearings for detained women and children. Please email me at: joanna.m.gaughan@gmail.com if you have contacts. Thank you!

Sept-Oct 2014: Please consider donating to help me and three other immigration attorneys travel to the Artesia detention center to provide free legal representation to detained immigrant women and children. See our fundraising link at <http://www.gofundme.com/e99lcc>. Thank you!

(Editor comment: Artesia, New Mexico is a small town near Texas. It is not too far from Roswell, NM which has gained fame for hosting a UFO museum grabbing tourist dollars from the alleged visit of aliens from outer space.)

And from a Honduran teacher un chiste: "Anoche entro un ladrón a mi casa y como lo que buscaba era dinero, me levante' de la cama y me puse a buscar con él." Dani Diaz Olanchito.

HONDURAN NEWS

Via alisonhoward@gmail.com: BUTTI UGANU "GOOD NEWS" Here is the latest form Fernando and Allison Sabio who are working with the Garifuna people to preserve their language and culture. And did you notice from the October 2014 flyer mailed out by Amigos de Honduras from the Task Force on the Americas that coffee growing is a part of the Garifuna culture?

The recent news from the Garifuna community is that Alison and son Jonathan, who spent some time here in Washington with grandparents are now back home in La Ceiba. Fernando remained at home to continue the training of new disciples in knowledge, skills and character.

The Sabios are planning on living in a remote Garifuna community and are attempting to gather funds for a truck so that materials can be hauled to the site for the building of their home. Their eight month old son will be trilingual! Fortunate child. Fernando will be attending the annual BILD International Summit with several other seminary leaders in Iowa this month.

Amigos de Honduras

From Maggie McQuaid and **Mayron McKewy Mejía Club de Observación de Aves Los Alzacuanes (COALA)** we learn that Sherry Lyn Thorn, former Peace Corps Volunteer and Professor Emerita at the National University of Honduras has been honored for her career studying and protecting Honduran wildlife with the dedication of a wildlife observation tower in the Cerro Azul Meambar National Park in central Honduras. She is a hero and a defender of animals, wild and domestic alike.

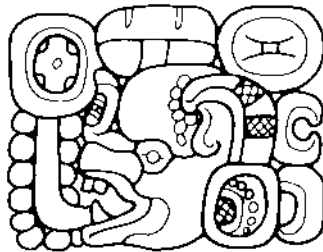
Nos es grato rendir honor a quien honor merece. El pasado sábado 18 de octubre de 2014 Proyecto Aldea Global (PAG) y USAID ProParque inauguraron las torres de observación de aves en el Parque Nacional Cerro Azul Meambar y una de ellas está dedicada a la profe Pilar Sherry Lyn Thorn) Dice un adagio que "de qué sirve saber sin dejar un legado" ¡Felicidades, profe!

Robert Gallardo reports that the Field Guide to the Birds of Honduras is now complete. There will be a celebrations Jan. 17, 2014 at Lake Yojoa. Only 500 Lempira entrada. See rgallardo32@gmail.com for more information.

According to several sources the number of Central American children reaching the US border has decreased. The Friendship Office of the Americas reported the US has strengthen US border patrols and state security forces in Mesoamerica. Deportations of children to the Palmera military base in Honduras continue despite the murders of at least five children in San Pedro Sula after they were returned. The issue of illegal mining and logging of communal lands continue in the area of Locomapa of the Tolupan tribe.

One year after the Aug. 25, 2013 murder of three indigenous Tolupan leaders, the alleged assassins remain in the area and continue to issue threats. Arrest warrants have been issued but the police have not acted.

On a very different note two folks driving a camper from North America to South America spent a few weeks this spring in Honduras including San Pedro Sula and had a great time. Check out <http://www.dealaskaapatagonia.com/> and see their adventures.



FUNERAL FOR A COWORKER'S BABY

Loren Hintz Olanchito 1980-82

(Editor's comments: I keep hoping for more stories from volunteers. I decided to share a journal entry of mine even showing some of my ignorance at the time.)

At two in the morning Friday a six month old baby girl died. The mother Alexandra lived alone with an older child and a servant. At 5:30 AM she told a neighbor and she comforted her. Later that morning the news reached our school. The students were dismissed and the teachers met to discuss it. I was mad because it meant another day with no classes. Around ten, we the teachers carrying pop, went to the teacher's

home. Already many students had come and laid their paper flowers on the table where the dead baby lay. Eyes were a wee bit open and you could see the whites. A fly flew around the face. On the nearby seat a simple brown coffin was open.

The women teachers were all sitting in one spot. A few had been crying and looked worried—most of them had young babies. They discussed local medical care, how hard it was to raise a baby etc. – all in a hushed voice. Gradually the living room with the baby was straightened up. White netted curtains were placed on the doorways and tied with black ribbons. A male neighbor brought over a white veil to keep the flies away from the baby. Two teachers came back with the coffin neatly lined with white silk linen. The flowers were rearranged and yellow draperies hung on the wall above the corpse. The pop was served and people chatted among themselves. I talked with the leader of the Student Front about the US and about education in Honduras. The mourning mother stayed in a separate room with a bandera in her hair and wearing a plain but not black dress. I thought more of the value of missing school. Let mourning be around lots of people in a time of need, to help the victim's family, to finish the ceremony and service. I went home for lunch at Doña Lidia's (after retrieving my carnet which I had left at the store.) At one PM students came to the afternoon session of school. Chonin the director told the afternoon students the news. A few strolled off. I told the students in my lab to listen for news and that we would not be able to have school today.

At three thirty I returned to Alexandra's home. Lots of students and teachers were there. So was a brown pickup truck with a wooden platform over the bed. They were decorating it. In the living room teachers pounded nails into the coffin and it was placed on the bed. A group of girls and teachers arrived from the elementary school bringing paper flowers and homemade bouquets. Flowers were placed with the coffin. One wilted flower in an aluminum foil covered vase was refused and the donor was told to carry it. The grieving mother was helped into the truck and another teacher sat beside her.

The school band began a death dirge and we started off. A carro lead in front with girls carrying paper flowers on poles. And a little girl walked with her rejected vase. We were a hundred or two hundred strong. We walked through the mud puddles and gravel – little girls barefoot with torn blue jumper skirts and off white blouses. Everyone came out and watched. A few said how big our group was. "That was good." At the church the coffin was carried in and placed on a wooden table. The priest arrived (a North American) and talked very softly. He read from a book and asked the mother or friend the sex and name of the child. He said he couldn't remember one prayer, he sprinkled some water on the coffin and then four men carried the coffin out. We left and the church bells tolled for the dead baby.

It seemed so mystical and superstitious and I wondered about it. I bitched to myself again about the loss of classes but knew how important it was that here friends,

companions and students are with the mother. Hopefully she is being washed of her feelings of guilt for losing a child. She needs the companionship we gave. Children see and learn what death is and a social hour forms which binds the people together. What say the anthropologists and psychologists?

The crowd walking thinned and it began to rain. All the umbrellas were opened. We reached the cemetery and the coffin was taken off the carro. Canales removed the flowers and the children came forward to carry them to the grave. Max gave a flowery speech of how much the mother worked to raise and save her child after, during and before teaching at school; that a world without children is a dead world; and the little girl is now in white with wings singing with the choir of God in heaven. He talked by an open door and the room inside amplified his voice to all outside. The mother listened from the pickup.

We walked through the cemetery. Suddenly kids ran to surround a grave. But it was being constructed for someone else and made of cement. The skies darkened and some started home. The baby's grave was found far to one side, surrounded by small mounds of earth – the infant section. The coffin was placed in the water logged grave and family and teachers took turns throwing earth on it. It began to pour but we stayed three or four to an umbrella. Folks joked some and it became a pretty gay affair. The mound was being formed lopsided so they had to move earth so it would not mess up the location. They also placed the paper covered poles to mark the site. After it was over the

girls laid the flowers on the grave. One child's blouse was red where the paper dye had run. We left joking about having enough mud on our shoes and clothes to made adobe.

We walked down the road from the cemetery and caught a ride to be left off at the Golden Gate Bar. Don't know if some stayed to drink. Anyways it was supper time. I wonder where the mother's husband was but I guess she has none.
**Written 9:35 PM August 3, 1980
Sunday. Olanchito, Yoro**

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Did you know that 40 nations in the world prohibit corporal punishment of children in the home and schools? According to the Oct. 20, 2014 issue of the Christian Science Monitor Weekly of the Americas only six nations prohibit all spanking of children. **Honduras** (along with Costa Rica, Bolivia, Brazil, Uruguay and Venezuela) are in this freedom from corporal punishment category. Kenneth Dodge of Duke University has found that 70 to 80 percent of children in the US have received corporal punishment.



Amigos de Honduras Membership Info

Use this form to renew membership or notify us of a change in address. Or, copy and give to a friend whom you think might like to keep in touch with Honduras and RPCVs. Other than your name, enter only the info that has changed.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ ZIP _____

Phone: _____ e-mail address _____

Peace Corps Info:

Years of service: from _____ to _____ Group # _____ Site(s) _____

Job _____

Post-Peace Corps Experiences (occupation, marriage, children, travels, interests) _____

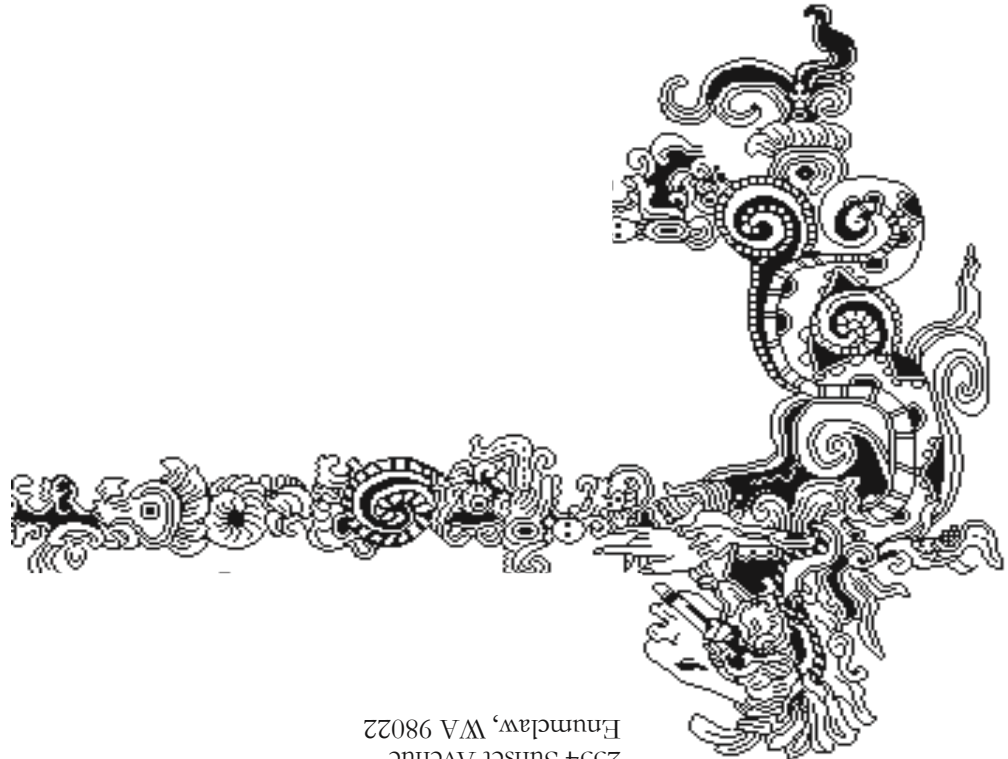
Make check payable to Amigos de Honduras: Mail to Joan Larimore, 2334 Sunset Avenue, Enumclaw, WA 98022

11-14

Aviso: the date on the mailing label is the expiration date of your membership - please renew if you're due!

Amigos de Honduras	\$15 <input type="checkbox"/>
Amigos & NPCA	\$50 <input type="checkbox"/>
Amigos, NPCA & another group name of other group _____	\$65 <input type="checkbox"/>
contribution to projects Amigos will fund in Honduras:	
\$	_____

I would prefer to receive my newsletter in .pdf format.



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