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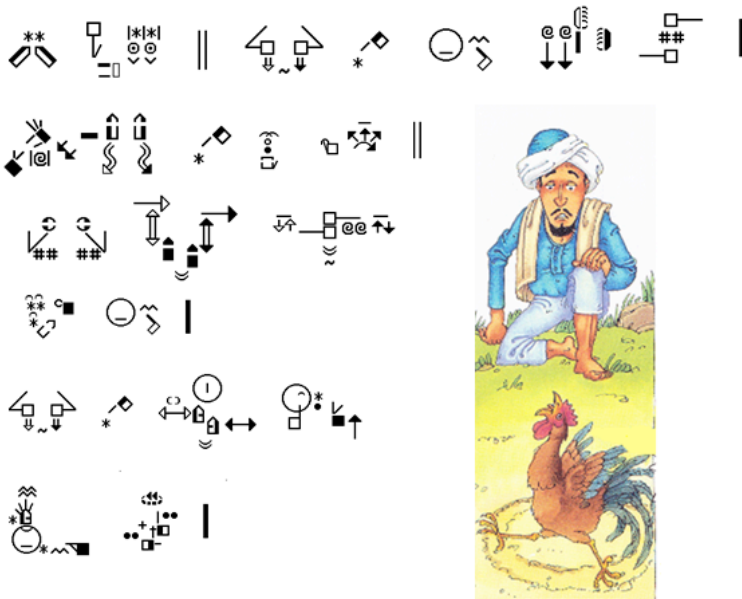
Progress Report: June, 2010

June 16, 2010

To Our Donors,

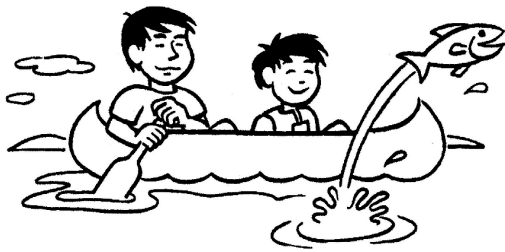
We are making final preparations for the upcoming sign language immersion project on the Isle of Ometepe. The classes are set to begin on July 5 and will run through August 20. As previously reported, our Deaf teachers will be Tomasa Gonzalez from Palacaguina and Yuri Shepard-Kegl, originally from Bluefields and now from Maine. Due to a family emergency, our volunteer facilitator from the University of Southern Maine will not be able to accompany them, so our two Deaf teachers will be on their own.

To keep students focused, our sign language instructors are trained to employ a variety of techniques, never spending too much time on one methodology. The theme this time will be very basic world geography. Bear in mind that the Deaf children of Ometepe have had very limited language exposure spread over a considerable period of time. We would not expect them to have a concept of "Nicaragua" as a nation or even necessarily as a place, to say nothing of its relationship to other countries. Accordingly, we will be practicing story telling with stories from around the world: *Madeline*, set in Paris; *Ferdinand the Bull*, set in Spain; *The Cremation of Sam McGhee*, set in Canada; *Babar the Little Elephant*, set in Africa, and so forth.



Excerpt from *The Evil Cockatrice* (in *Stories of Magical Animals* by Carol Watson), with illustrations indicating a Middle Eastern setting. "The man grows food in the farm by his cottage. His wife tosses feed to several hungry chickens who gobble it up. The man is puzzled to see a rooster running in circles." This is one of several reading lessons that we recently completed. These stories will be carried to Ometepe, but also sent to the Deaf schools in Condega, Bilwi and Bluefields.

The teachers also use picture flashcards to introduce and practice vocabulary. Sometimes these cards merely show a picture for a word, but we also have developed cards to show actions and spatial relationships.



This clip-art scene is packed with grammar, showing nouns: “lake”, “fish”, “canoe”, “oars”, “boys”, “clouds”; actions: “boys *see* fish”, “boys *paddle* the canoe”, “one boy *smiles*”, “fish *jumps*”; and spatial relationships: “fish jumps *out of* the water”, “fish jumps *in front of* the boat.” As you can see, many aspects of language production can be taught from even one simple drawing.



Sometimes we use drawings that are a bit whimsical, and at times bizarre. Cartoons by Charles Addams, for example, are not only entertaining, but because the content is unusual require more sophisticated language to describe them.

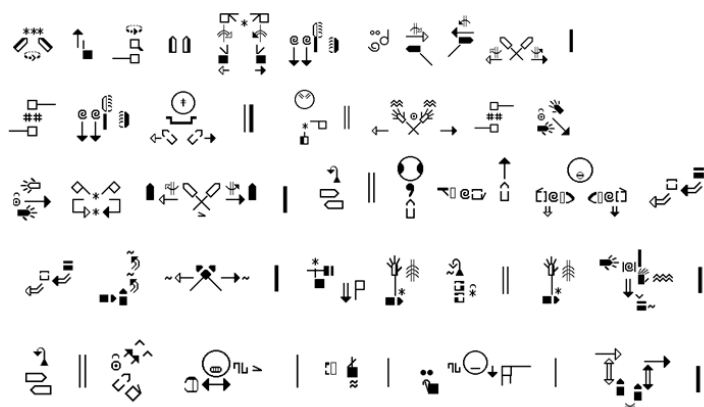
In past years, we assembled an impressive collection of movies, including biopics, historical dramatizations and fiction, that we used extensively in Bluefields. We are currently digitizing this collection, along with more movies, so that our entire film library can be conveniently carried in a pocket iPod. Wonders of new technology! The students on Ometepe will not have enough language yet to be ready for feature films. However, the teachers will show two minute excerpts from vintage animated cartoons so that, as always, children can develop story telling skills. In addition, we have captured clips from these films on paper to be discussed and practiced in class.



We continue to produce SignWriting reading lessons for use in the Deaf schools in Bilwi, Condega and Bluefields. Our latest lesson is about the Mexicas (perhaps more popularly known as the Aztecs):



Excerpt from reading lesson about the Aztec civilization: “The city is on a small island, but there are no farms. How were farms made? First, weave grass criss-cross into a square. Next, shovel mud onto the platform higher and higher. Now, implant a tree. The tree’s roots go down, down and grasp the bottom. Then, plant seeds: corn, tomato, cacao, and so forth.”



This form of early hydroponic farming is still practiced in Central America, by the way. Our daughter Yuri, who, as you know, grew up and attended the Deaf school in Bluefields, informs me she had been taught this technique by her grandmother. On a side note, the Portland Press Herald this week selected Yuri as representative of “the best of the class of 2010” having “achieved success in the face of significant challenges.”

On the subject of significant challenges, our expenses have remained steady these past few years, but for cost of living increases; alas, our revenue in the first five months of 2010 has been less than anticipated, and well short of budgetary requirements. As always, we are pursuing grants that will enable us to train and place more Deaf teachers. In the interim (for as long as that may be), we are relying on our small pool of donors to enable us to maintain the status quo.

Your contributions are needed and appreciated.

Thanking you for your support,
James Shepard-Kegl