

He has look at Nicaragua

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Sorry, Mark Ludwick couldn't find the perfect post card to send from Nicaragua in his two-week stay there.

Instead he would prefer to paint his own picture of what he saw in the war-torn region. Ludwick, a member of the Trinity Church of the Brethren in Bedford Township, went there on a goodwill trip, with Witness for Peace. It's a group concerned with the current situation in Central America.

"It's not Americans they don't like. It's the government here they don't care for," he said.

LUDWICK WANTED to find out first-hand the political and social climate in a country where the leftist Sandinista government is fighting the United States-backed Contras.

And he caught more than an eye-ful. He witnessed poverty with people living in wooden shacks and children playing in the mud.

He watched an anti-U.S. demonstration where a mannequin of President Reagan was burned in the town square.

Ludwick spoke with families who've been ravaged by the conflict, with family members believed to be kidnapped and killed by the contras.



Mark Ludwick
sees war's effects

"I NEVER saw the effects of war before," said Ludwick, 28, of Detroit. "I've never seen so many people under the pressure of war."

Nicaragua is an uncomfortable place to be for a U.S. citizen. Ludwick said he did not detect any hostility towards him.

In fact he even had an animated conversation with a youth who was involved in the political demonstration against the United States.

"He wanted to know what it was

like here," Ludwick said. "... Even though they tie (the conflict) with the United States, they showed no animosity towards me."

Which is what Ludwick wanted to achieve on his visit there. His main task was to show that not everyone in the United States wants to cause upheaval in Nicaragua.

HE ALSO MET with the members of Catholic Church hierarchy in Managua and the banned newspaper, La Prensa, which opposes the Sandinista government.

The people in the street, he said, provided their own view of the situation. They told him they are appalled by the U.S. intervention.

Ludwick had ample opportunity to sample general public opinion. For a week, he stayed with a Baptist minister 25 miles from the Honduran border where the conflict is most intense.

"A lot of the parishioners have had

problems with the contras," he said. "One had her sons kidnapped and killed. One had her sister kidnapped and haven't seen her since."

QUILALI, THE town he stayed in, was attacked three weeks ago by the contras.

Ludwick also spent some time at a resettlement camp, which later was the scene of a mortar attack. Four children were killed and 34 people were injured in the attack.

The experience, he said, hasn't made him a supporter of the Sandinistas. If anything, however, it has turned him more against the contras.

More than anything, though, he supports the end to the conflict. The problems, he believes, aren't as easy to solve as some people might think.

"A lot of people think it's a simple situation (communism versus democracy)," he said. "It's more complicated than that."

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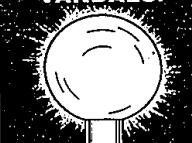
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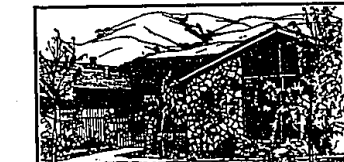
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