• Holiday gift feature

Arlington A

ursday, November 21, 1991

The Community Newspaper Since 1872

Sister City visit

Children swing at a witch pinata in the Teosinte town plaza brought by a local delegation to celebrate Halloween. Teosinte is Arlington's sister city in El Salvador.

(Susan Hershey photo)

A fiesta in Tremedal

By SUSAN HERSHEY
Harte-Hanks staff writer

The wake-up call in Teosinte came at 4:30 in the morning — before the roosters crowed. Salvadoran roosters greet the morning like clockwork, even in the city, but especially in the mountains. Early morning sounds typically included roosters, pigs and dogs. Dogs frequently barked loudly and forever, it seemed, in the very middle of the night.

But this morning in Teosinte — Arlington's sister city — the first sound the Arlington/Watertown/Belmont Sister City delegation heard — from our sleeping pads on the hard tile floor of the school building — was (in Spanish) a cheery man's voice over a megaphone with lively music in the background, announcing the fiesta in Tremedal.

The festival was to celebrate the second year anniversary of the repopulation of Tremedal, when the people returned to their village from neighboring Honduras after being in exile during the country's civil war. "Everyone come. The fiesta in Tremedal starts today. The soccer game begins at 8 a.m., with a marathon, a mass, and a dance at the school building until 4 a.m. Come one. Come all." The truck was parked immediately outside of our sleeping quarters and the announcement seemed to go on forever. We all awoke and began laughing uncontrollably. After all, we'd been through quite an ordeal during the last couple of days and this was cause for great merriment.

After 20 minutes or so, the truck and the man with the megaphone roared off and we were left to fall back to sleep until the roosters began their serious crowing with the break of dawn. After breakfast of refried beans, plantain and potatoes, we were accompanied by a troop of children down a rocky path to a nearby river for a swim and a much-needed bath.

We returned refreshed to the plaza to gather the children together for a pinata party. In San Salvador, we had purchased pinatas for the children of each community we planned to visit. Halloween is

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