

1-1-2010

The Heart of a Revolution

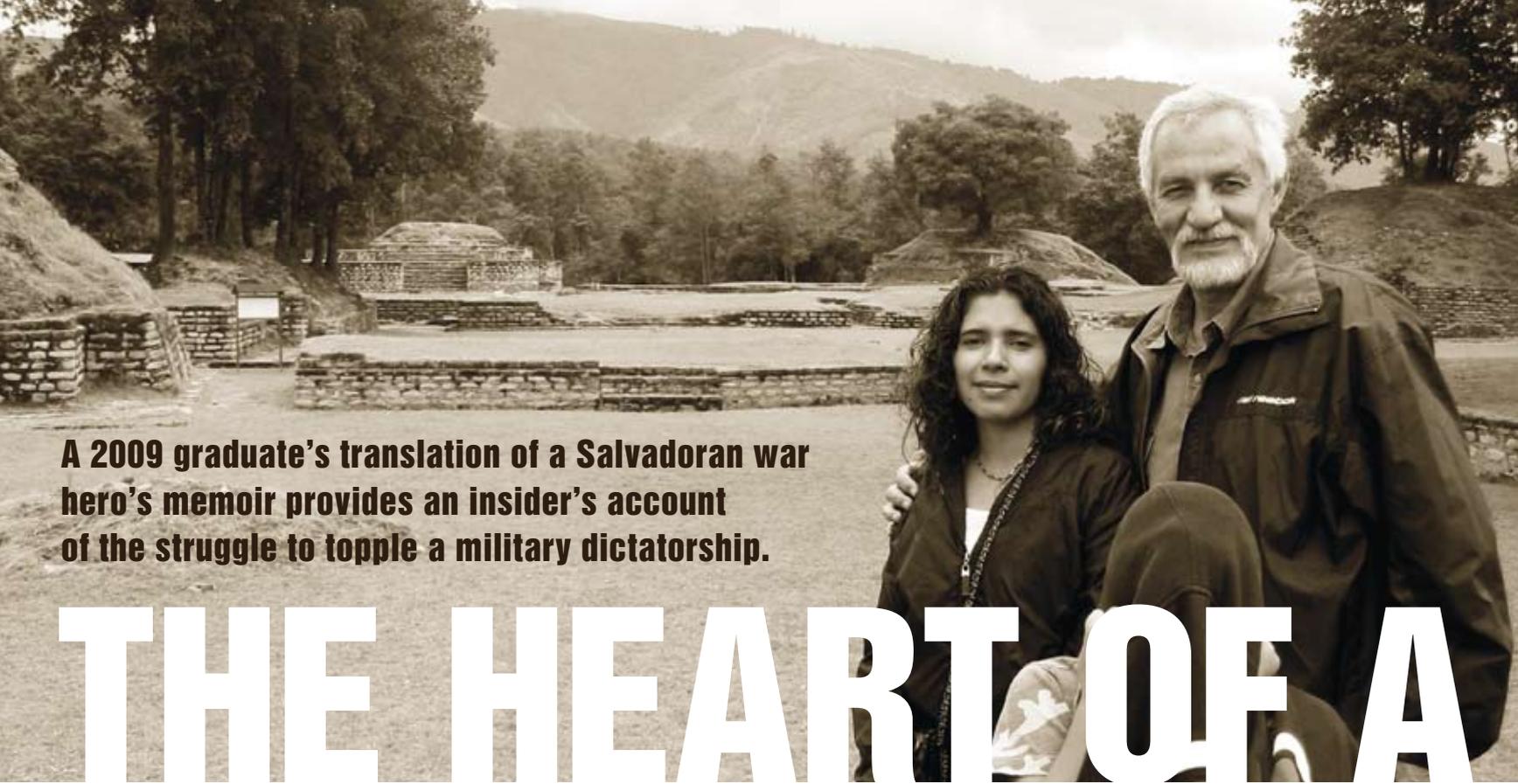
Ann Green

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/furman-magazine>

Recommended Citation

Green, Ann (2010) "The Heart of a Revolution," *Furman Magazine*: Vol. 52 : Iss. 4 , Article 8.
Available at: <https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/furman-magazine/vol52/iss4/8>

This Article is made available online by Journals, part of the Furman University Scholar Exchange (FUSE). It has been accepted for inclusion in Furman Magazine by an authorized FUSE administrator. For terms of use, please refer to the [FUSE Institutional Repository Guidelines](#). For more information, please contact scholarexchange@furman.edu.



A 2009 graduate's translation of a Salvadoran war hero's memoir provides an insider's account of the struggle to topple a military dictatorship.

THE HEART OF A

BY ANN GREEN

At first glance, Charlie Nagle doesn't fit the description of a revolutionary.

The Spanish major and 2009 Furman graduate is clean-cut, polite and soft-spoken. He chooses his words carefully, whether he's talking or writing.

During his four years at Furman, he was a volunteer translator at a free medical clinic and taught immigrants in an English as a Second Language program.

He also used his language skills for another purpose, and in the process has given readers the opportunity to journey into the heart of a revolution by providing an inside look at the struggle to overthrow a military dictatorship in El Salvador.

His English translation of the memoir of Salvadoran war hero Carlos Henriquez Consalvi, *Broadcasting the Civil War in El Salvador: A Memoir of Guerrilla Radio*, is scheduled for publication August 1 by the University of Texas Press.

Furman professors who worked with Nagle say it's rare for someone so young to have the patience and knowledge to translate a book of such importance, let alone have it accepted for publication by a major university press.

Consalvi has quite a story to tell, one that would make a blockbuster movie. It would feature rebels hiding in the hills of El Salvador, dodging bullets and bombardments as they try to keep a radio station up and running.

Known throughout El Salvador as Comandante Santiago, Consalvi used words as weapons during the civil war. The Venezuela-born journalist was drawn to insurgencies in Central America and became the voice of the revolution in El Salvador, broadcasting from Radio Venceremos, a clandestine station operated by the guerrillas.

The rebels used an old transmitter — vintage World War II equipment. The equipment was always breaking down, and they scrambled to find parts.

"They would broadcast twice a day at set times," Nagle says. "It was important for them to broadcast at those times to inspire the people and to let the government, as well as the people, know that they were alive and well and hadn't been defeated."

Nagle describes how guerrillas carried the radio station's equipment on their backs under enemy fire as they moved to safer locations. They would broadcast to the entire country and throughout Central America, and the station became not just an alternative source of information but a symbol of their struggle.

"The people rallied behind this one symbol and knew that if the symbol still stood, the people behind it still stood," Nagle says.

He says the book has "a little bit of romance mixed in with the war." There's also an intricate plot to assassinate the man responsible for an infamous massacre reported by the radio station.

Today Comandante Santiago operates a museum in San Salvador, the capital of El Salvador. He uses the Museum of Word and Image to preserve the history of the revolution and other aspects of his adopted country's culture and history. The museum also features a replica of the radio station.

Through Furman history professor Erik Ching, students at Furman have been able to work with Santiago.

"I came to know Santiago some six or so years ago as part of my ongoing research on El Salvador," Ching says. "When I saw the work he was doing with his museum, I realized it could be a win-win situation. He would get input and help from our students, and they in turn would have the opportunity to learn the history and politics of El Salvador."



REVOLUTION

Opposite and below: Today Commandante Santiago operates a museum in San Salvador. It features a replica of the radio station used by the guerrillas. Left: Charlie Nagle is now enrolled in a Ph.D. program in Spanish linguistics at Georgetown University. Photos courtesy Charlie Nagle.

Nagle, who participated in study abroad programs in Spain and Chile during his time at Furman, wanted to be an intern at the museum. But he says the position went to Derek Gleason, who graduated from Furman in 2007 and has since completed work on a master's degree in Latin American Studies at Indiana University.

Nagle let his professors know that he'd be interested in future opportunities in El Salvador. So when Santiago wanted someone to translate his book, Ching recommended Nagle.

Spanish professor Bill Prince was Nagle's advisor on the project, and Nagle and Santiago communicated by e-mail throughout the process. Prince says, "Although I made corrections and offered some suggestions, Charlie did most of the work."

Nagle knew the importance of the project and seized the opportunity. "There were outside accounts of what was going on during the war, but no direct accounts," he says.

Not surprisingly, to see his project about to be published fills Nagle with immense pride. "It's exciting. It was a long process," he says. "The translation took a relatively short amount of time, a few months. Then Dr. Prince and I spent months and months editing and looking it over.

"Dr. Ching sent the manuscript to different places. So it was a two-year period. Having not been involved in any publication process before,

I didn't know exactly how long it would take. I guess I was starting to lose hope that it would be accepted or published at all."



He describes translation as mentally exhausting work. "You can agonize over a sentence or a word for an hour, or complete 10 pages in an hour. It just depends on the context of what you're translating," he says. "It's hard to capture not just the words but the sense of the words, the flow of the book and the emotion behind everything, especially if it's a memoir."

Prince says, "The number of undergraduate students in the entire country who could do what Charlie did is extremely small. He is a remarkably talented language student."

Nagle says he was paid \$3,000 for his work, but the experience was priceless.

And he's come a long way since he first sat in a high school Spanish class more than eight years ago.

"I was frustrated with it. Then I fell in love with Spanish and decided it was the only thing I could do in life, my one true passion," he says. "As a Spanish major or any language major, you spend years and years honing your skills, and you may or may not use them. For me, it's definitely all about the practicality of it, using it and learning more. Then anyway I can interact to help people is always a plus." [F]

Reprinted from Engage magazine (Volume 5, Issue 2), a publication of the Office of Admission. Ann Green, a 1975 graduate, is a freelance writer and former reporter for The Greenville News.