



Water from Hurricane Mitch was still standing in some of the fields when Lehman and Martin went to help people prepare the fields for planting.

Plight Of Honduran Farmers Not Forgotten

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— Six months after Hurricane Mitch devastated Central America, most Americans have forgotten the horrific sights shown on television of mud slides and angry waters that wiped out whole villages. As many as 9,000 lives were lost and two million were left homeless.

Many people probably don't know that Hurricane Mitch is considered the worst hurricane in more than a century.

At the time, people wanted to help, but not knowing how to assist a country so distant from their own home, most Americans soon forgot.

But not Carl Lehman. In the aftermath of the hurricane, Lehman and Walter Martin, co-workers at Binkley and Hurst, Rothsville, traveled to San Pedro Sula, Honduras. Their mission was to train Hondurans on how to use three new tractors to prepare land once again to produce food for the villagers.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) purchased the tractors at a discount from Binkley and Hurst, which also equipped the tractors for Honduras at no extra charge. Lehman and Martin volunteered to give up vacation time to accompany the tractors and to teach the



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appointed recipients on how to drive and maintain the tractors.

About three months after the hurricane, Lehman and Martin traveled to Honduras to set up the disc harrows and chisel plows and to train Hondurans on using the three Case tractors.

Water was still standing in some of the fields. Fish swam in the flooded fields as Brahmin cattle

wandered about. Lehman and Martin listened to stories of people stuck in palm trees for seven days in order to stay clear of the raging waters. They heard of whole communities that escaped to the hills where they were trapped for 21 days. Helicopters dropped food, water, and supplies to help the displaced villagers survive.

"I expected to see a poor country. I did — especially areas that were flooded," Lehman said.

But he was unprepared for the beauty of the countryside as greenery emerged from barren, mud-caked soil.

He was impressed by the villagers' eagerness to help with the rebuilding, by their uncomplaining attitudes, and the ease he felt in working side by side with people of another language.

As flood waters receded, it left behind hard-crust soil. Some areas were covered with heavy vines that needed to be chopped up with a disc.

The disc harrows and chisel plows needed to be put together piece by piece. A crowd of onlookers watched and several Hondurans assisted with the assembling.

"With a chisel plow, the soil worked up nice and looks fertile," Lehman said.

The climate enables two corn crops to be harvested from the land annually.



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