



The Death of Ben Linder; The Story of a North American in Sandinista Nicaragua

Joan Kruckewitt

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In 1987, the death of Ben Linder, the first American killed by President Reagan's "freedom fighters" -- the U.S.-backed Nicaraguan Contras -- ignited a firestorm of protest and debate. In this landmark first biography of Linder, investigative journalist Joan Kruckewitt tells his story.

In the summer of 1983, a 23-year-old American named Ben Linder arrived in Managua with a unicycle and a newly earned degree in engineering. In 1986, Linder moved from Managua to El Cuá, a village in the Nicaraguan war zone, where he helped form a team to build a hydroplant to bring electricity to the town. He was ambushed and killed by the Contras the following year while surveying a stream for a possible hydroplant.

In 1993, Kruckewitt traveled to the Nicaraguan mountains to investigate Linder's death. In July 1995, she finally located and interviewed one of the men who killed Ben Linder, a story that became the basis for a New Yorker feature on Linder's death. Linder's story is a portrait of one idealist who died for his beliefs, as well as a picture of a failed foreign policy, vividly exposing the true dimensions of a war that forever marked the lives of both Nicaraguans and Americans.

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