



# ALFONSO NIETO CHARDI

APR 14, 1951 - APR 9, 2024



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# ALFONSO NIETO CHARDI

APR 14, 1951 - APR 9, 2024

**A**lfonso Chardy, journalist who helped expose Iran-contra affair, dies at 72.

Alfonso Chardy, a Miami Herald journalist who anchored Pulitzer Prize-winning reporting that helped expose the Iran-contra affair, a covert and illegal Reagan administration network to aid rebels in Nicaragua that later led to riveting hearings in Congress, died April 9 at a hospital in Miami. He was 72.

The cause was a heart attack, said his wife, Siobhan Morrissey.

During a more than four-decade career, Mr. Chardy covered the Middle East as the Herald's Jerusalem-based bureau chief from 1989 to 1990 and was part of three other Pulitzer-winning teams at the paper, including coverage of a Cuban boy, Elián González, who was returned to the island in 2000 after a raid by immigration agents in Miami and a months-long court battle that became a test of U.S. asylum rules.

Assigned to follow Latin American affairs in Washington in 1982, Mr. Chardy built a reputation as a dogged chronicler of U.S. policymaking in a region locked in Cold War proxy battles. In Nicaragua, where leftist Sandinista guerrillas seized power in 1979, Washington's money and support had flowed to anti-Sandinista rebels known as contras.

Congress later limited contra military aid and then imposed a hold in late 1984. Hints of possible secret workarounds began to reach Mr. Chardy, whose last name was Chardi but was once misspelled by an editor in his native Mexico and adopted as his byline. Mr. Chardy began tapping his sources in Washington and with the rebels.

In 1985, he reported that a then little-known National Security Council adviser, Marine Lt. Col. Oliver North, had promised the contras that President Ronald Reagan would never abandon them. About the same time, a Beirut newspaper, al-Shiraa, broke stories about back-channel U.S.



arms sales to Iran — then locked in a war with Iraq — for the release of hostages held by Iranian-allied groups in Lebanon.

Mr. Chardy's sources told him that North was involved in the arms shipments that reached Iran. "The minute I saw Oliver North's name raised in connection with the arms sales, I said to myself, 'This is going to lead to the contras,'" he wrote in an essay in a 1991 book, "Winning Pulitzers," by Karen Rothmyer.

Mr. Chardy and the Herald team started to piece together an audacious U.S. scheme: secretly selling missiles and other weapons to Iran through indirect sources, in violation of an arms embargo, and funneling most of the revenue from the sales to contras.

On Oct. 28, 1986, Mr. Chardy's byline was on a Herald story that ran across the top of the front page. "With President Reagan's blessing," wrote Mr. Chardy, "U.S. officials knitted a worldwide support network stretching from South Korea to Saudi Arabia over the last three years that kept the Nicaraguan rebels alive after Congress curbed and then banned Contra aid, according to administration and rebel officials."

The piece opened a scramble among the Washington press corps for more details. Then a bombshell: Attorney General Edwin Meese III announced in November 1986 that \$28 million from the Iran arm sales ended up with the contras. Soon, North was fired from the NSC.

A story by Mr. Chardy on Nov. 27, 1986, citing sources in Congress and with the contras, said Reagan had previously authorized North "to find alternative sources of financial aid for the Nicaraguan rebels after Congress moved to bar CIA aid to them."

On Dec. 11, 1986, a story by Mr. Chardy and Herald colleague Sam Dillon described a Boeing 707 cargo plane that ferried weapons to the Middle East bound for Iran and returned to Central America "laden with Soviet-made arms for the Nicaraguan rebels."

Mr. Chardy's reporting uncovered links to other obscure officials involved in aiding the contras, including Robert Owen, an NSC consultant who was North's go-between with the rebels.

A report in February 1987 by the Tower Commission — an investigative panel created by Reagan and led by a former senator from Texas, John Tower (R) — blamed Reagan for loose oversight that



allowed the secret contra program to operate under North and others, using middlemen for the Iran weapons sales such as Saudi arms dealer Adnan Khashoggi.

In a nationally televised address on March 4, 1987, Reagan acknowledged that he was aware of the arms-for-hostages deals but denied knowing about money diversions to the contras before Meese's disclosures. The next month, the Miami Herald was awarded a Pulitzer for national reporting. (The New York Times also received a national reporting Pulitzer for coverage into the 1986 space shuttle Challenger explosion.)

The fallout from Iran-contra was still not over. Joint hearings by House and Senate select committees opened in May 1987, bringing more revelations about Iran-contra during three months of questioning that were broadcast live.

In testimony in early July 1987, North admitted he lied to Congress during earlier questioning about the Iran-contra network and said he diverted funds to the rebels with the knowledge of superiors including the national security adviser, Vice Adm. John M. Poindexter. Fawn Hall, North's secretary, was given immunity from prosecution in exchange for her testimony about shredding documents and other acts.

"You've also admitted you altered some of the documents in which you clearly describe your role," North was asked by George Van Cleve, the deputy counsel for House Republicans.

"I did," North said.

"Can you assure this committee that you are not here now lying to protect your commander in chief?" Van Cleve asked later in the testimony.

"I am not lying to protect anybody, Counsel. I came here to tell the truth," North replied. "I told you that I was going to tell it to you — the good, the bad and the ugly. Some of it has been ugly for me."

North was convicted in 1989 of obstructing an investigation and destroying evidence. The conviction was overturned on appeal in 1991. Poindexter was convicted of conspiracy, perjury and other counts, but he was also cleared on appeal. Dozens of other officials faced charges related to



## Obituary

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Iran-contra, including Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams, but nearly all were pardoned in 1992 by President George H.W. Bush, who had been Reagan's vice president.

Alfonso Nieto Chardi was born on April 14, 1951, in Mexico City. His father was an accountant, and his mother tended to the home.

He learned English through courses and listening to the radio. He served in the army for six months and then worked as a proofreader and translator at the English-language Mexico City News, where an editor once rendered his name as Chardy. He credited the student protests in Mexico in 1968 and the Mexico City Olympics that year for his interest in journalism as he watched foreign reporters pour into the Mexican capital.

He joined the Associated Press in Mexico City in 1974 and later was an AP correspondent in Buenos Aires and Bogotá. He later freelanced in Central America, including for United Press International, and was in Nicaragua amid celebrations after Sandinista forces overthrew the president, Anastasio Somoza.

Mr. Chardy joined the Miami Herald in 1980, first covering the Mariel boatlift from Cuba when more than 120,000 people fled by sea seeking to reach Florida. He was part of Pulitzer-winning teams in 1993 for public service in the coverage of 1992's Hurricane Andrew; in 1999 for investigative reporting into voter fraud that helped overturn a Miami mayoral election; and in 2001 for breaking news in the Elián González case.

He retired in 2017 after several years with the Herald's Spanish-language sister publication, El Nuevo Herald. He lived in Key Biscayne with his wife, a journalist whom he married in 1994. Other survivors include five nephews and two nieces.

In recounting the Iran-contra reporting, Mr. Chardy said the contras were indispensable in filling in the gaps.

"They exposed Oliver North. They exposed Rob Owen," he wrote. "They exposed all the principal people."





## Events


**ALFONSO NIETO CHARDI**

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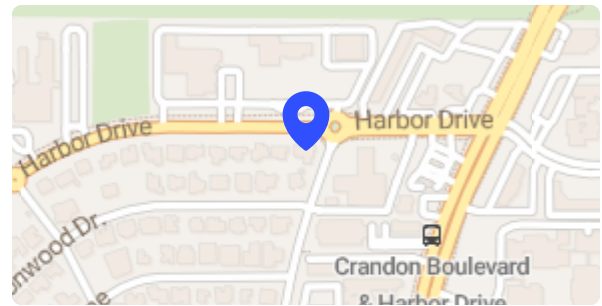
### Funeral Mass & Memorial

 **Saturday**, May 25, 2024

 12:00 PM ET

 **St. Agnes Catholic Church**  
101 Harbor Drive, Key Biscayne FL 33149

- ① All are welcome to repair to the Ritz after mass, where we can toast AI and maybe dine on some Mexican food at La Cantina.





# Tribute Wall

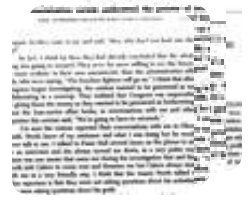
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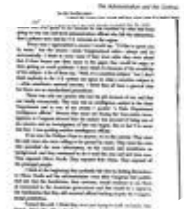
**Van Orsdel Funeral & Cremation Services** shared an album called **Alfonso Chardy -- From the Karen Rothmyer Book on Pulitzers**.

April 23 at 6:44 AM



**Crystal Van Orsdel** shared 10 photos to the **Alfonso Chardy - From the Karen Rothmyer Book on Pulitzers** album.

April 23 at 6:41 AM





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April 23 at 6:44 AM

The administration people understood the process of information, more so than the media do. They read everything and I found them to be very sharp and intelligent and aware. North and his people set up a special "propaganda ministry" that reported to Oliver North and received assistance from the CIA and the Pentagon. There were between fifty and sixty people working there, cultivating network correspondents and trying to influence television and the entertainment industry to support Reagan administration policies in Central America.

I think the first inkling that something really big was going to happen was when the Hasenfus plane was shot down in October of 1986. It came out then that Felix Rodriguez, who Hasenfus said was working for the CIA in the contra supply effort, was one of Bush's acquaintances. I remember that I quickly arranged to meet two sources of mine who knew each other for breakfast on a Saturday morning. They worked in separate agencies but they both worked with Oliver North and one of them knew Bush's people. I asked my sources about Rodriguez and they said, "Oh yeah, people in Bush's office have coordinated this"—the supply effort. I posed the question; they were just responding. I had begun to prepare the story

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newspapers, are the major agenda-setters in this country. "Everybody knows now about Oliver North and about his secretary, Fawn Hall, but not from reading my stories," he says. "They know that Fawn Hall is dating George Michaels the rock star because it comes out in places like *Rolling Stone* or it's exposed in *Entertainment Tonight*." And, he suggests facetiously, the way to get more Americans interested in what is going on in the world might be to allow them some direct, entertainment-based participation. "If Americans could vote every day by television on whether to give aid to Nicaragua or to El Salvador I think they'd love it," he says. "It would be like *Wheel of Fortune* on a planetary scale."

Following is an excerpt of one of Chardy's stories that formed part of the *Herald's* award-winning coverage.

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*The Administration and the Contras*

IRAN-CONTRA, AS IT BECAME KNOWN, WAS THE CLOSEST thing to a Watergate of the 1980s. Before the scandal was over, the American public found out not only that the Reagan administration had been secretly supplying aid to the Nicaraguan contras, in violation of Congressional prohibitions, but also that officials within the Reagan administration had been involved in selling arms to Iran and diverting profits to contra aid. At the time, Iran was officially regarded as a terrorist state with close links to Lebanese groups responsible for the kidnapping of Americans.

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arrogant. So they came to me and said, "Hey, why don't you look into this guy?"

In fact, I think by then they had already concluded that the whole thing was going to unravel. They were far more willing to see the future, far more realistic in their own assessments, than the administration officials, who were saying, "The freedom fighters will go on." I think that after Congress began investigating, the contras wanted to be perceived as not collaborating in a coverup. They realized that Congress was responsible for giving them the money so they wanted to be perceived as forthcoming. Once the Iran-contra affair broke, in conversations with me and other reporters the contras said, "We're going to have to retrench."

I'm sure the contras reported their conversations with me to Oliver North. North knew of my existence and what I was doing but he would never talk to me. I talked to Fawn Hall several times on the phone to ask for an interview and she always turned me down, in a very polite way. There was one memo that came out during the investigation that said that North told Calero to come over and threaten me but Calero always dealt with me in a very friendly way. I think that the reason North talked to other reporters is that they were not asking questions about his activities, they were asking questions about his goals.

Alfonso Chardy was one of a team of reporters responsible for the *Miami Herald's* winning a Pulitzer Prize in 1987 for the paper's exposure of details of the first aspect of the Iran-contra affair: the contra connection. Chardy is credited with a string of revelations that put the *Herald* out in front on the contra story virtually from the start. Among other things, he established a clear connection between Oliver North, then a member of the National Security Council, and the purportedly "private" contra-supply network. He also supplied details about the links between one of the major figures in the supply network and then-Vice President George Bush.

Chardy says he doubts that the *Herald's* work would ever have become nationally recognized—and Iran-contra a national scandal—if it hadn't been for the fact that television finally became interested in covering the story. "Americans don't read very much," says Chardy, a Mexican national born in 1952, whose guarded manner contrasts with the sharp edge to his observations. "In Mexico or in any Latin American country the people who read, read a lot. And they read the newspapers. In the U.S. I find it more difficult to discuss daily events with Americans at large than I do with citizens of Latin America or Europe."

Chardy believes that television and the entertainment media, not

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about two days before so then I had the whole thing and I wrote a story for the Sunday paper.

I think the contra issue would still have gone away if it hadn't been for the Iran connection being revealed when a magazine in Lebanon printed a story on it and the networks began picking it up. At first it was just the Iran arms sales. But the minute I saw Oliver North's name raised in connection with the arms sales I said to myself, "This is going to lead to the contras." Within a short time Attorney General Meese gave a news conference and acknowledged that North had diverted profits from the Iran arms sales to the contras. I think they felt that somebody would put two and two together and they figured it would be better if they put it out themselves.



From then on the story went in fits and starts. I had to do many other things—cover congressional hearings, attend briefings, and so forth, and every time my editors said, "Well, let's do something on the secret war; let's do something on Ollie North," it was always a struggle to free me up to do some investigating.

So that's how things went along until there was another flurry of stories in 1986 and that's when my editor put together a team of reporters that was the group that won the Pulitzer.

I covered the story the way I cover any other story. The systems may be different in different places but it's all people. The key lies in understanding the process of how gathering information works. The way I do it is that first I plan my piece by figuring out what the theme is going to be. Then I go out like a vacuum cleaner and get as much information as possible about this particular issue, like reading what has already been published and identifying sources, calling them, getting more information, getting the documents. I try to identify the managers of policies, the managers of the issues I'm interested in. Then I read everything that I've got and figure out what the angle is going to be and what I'm going to write.

The administration officials said that while the NSC recruited technical and logistical personnel retired from CIA or Army Special Forces in establishing the network, the vice president's staff concentrated on organizing Cuban exiles in Miami, many of whom were veterans of the CIA-organized Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961. . . .

The role of the NSC and Lt. Col. Oliver North, the NSC's director of political development and political-military affairs, has been widely publicized in the past year.

But the contra connection to Vice President Bush, a former CIA director, had not been generally known, although it was first mentioned publicly in a little-noticed trial in Miami a year ago.

I think at the beginning they probably felt that by linking themselves to Oliver North and the administration, even after Congress had prohibited aid, that the Sandinistas, their enemies, would continue to see them as connected to the American government and that would be a signal to the Sandinistas that they still received official backing despite the Congressional prohibition.

Toward the end, I think they were just trying to settle accounts. One faction didn't like Oliver North because he had tried to get rid of that faction. They also wanted to expose Spitz Chamell, Oliver North's fundraiser, because they never liked him; they always considered him to be

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Garcia on the weapons charge, also had mentioned Bush's office as his contact point. . . .

The contra link to Bush's office came to light when the only surviving crewman of the downed plane, Eugene Hasenfus, told reporters in Managua Thursday that a Cuban-American veteran of the Bay of Pigs named Max Gomez helped coordinate the intricate aerial supply system serving the contras from El Salvador. . . .

Bush, questioned during a campaign swing through South Carolina Saturday, described Gomez as "a patriot" whom he has met three times. But Bush did not comment on reports that Gomez reported to him on his effort to supply the contras.

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didn't realize what all this was going to lead to: how I was going to piece the story together and how that story would become somewhat historic because of the Iran-contra affair. So then I went to a couple of administration officials that I knew were involved in Nicaraguan affairs and I posed the question to them about North's involvement and they confirmed it. My assessment is that they thought as long as it didn't become a major national issue it didn't really matter.

And in fact, after my story came out in June of 1985, it didn't really lead to much. It was the first big story linking Oliver North to circumventing the Boland amendment but basically it was dead in the water. I think somebody on a congressional intelligence committee did put together some questions but that was only after the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* published their own stories two months later.

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THE MIAMI HERALD  
October 12, 1986

BUSH, NSC SET UP AID TO REBELS,  
OFFICIALS SAY  
By  
ALFONSO CHARDY

WASHINGTON—The National Security Council and the office of Vice President George Bush shared responsibilities in setting up the elaborate anti-Sandinista supply system that came to light with the downing of an American-manned aircraft in Nicaragua last week, knowledgeable administration officials said Saturday.

There was only one person who lost his job because of me, and that was totally erroneously. This man was an intelligence analyst in the State Department and in one of my stories I quoted "a State Department intelligence official." Memos that came out during the Iran-contra investigations in Congress showed that the analyst was accused of being one of my sources and an investigation of him was begun. But in fact I've never met him. I was quoting another intelligence official.

If we owe the Pulitzer Prize to anyone, it's to the contras. They were the only ones who were willing to be quoted by name. They were the ones who provided the most information, on the record, and sometimes on background, and they continued to do it until the very end and even now. They exposed Oliver North. They exposed Rob Owen. They exposed all the principal people.

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But the contra connection to Vice President Bush, a former CIA director, had not been generally known, although it was first mentioned publicly in a little-noticed trial in Miami a year ago.

The October 1985 trial involved a private contra supporter, Jesus Garcia, who was charged with illegal possession of a weapon.

Garcia, questioned by Miami Assistant U.S. Attorney Jeffrey Feldman, said that an apparently bogus mission mentioned to him to blow up the Soviet and Cuban embassies in Managua was known as "George Bush's baby."

Garcia, in a telephone interview last summer, said a man identified as Alan Saum, who was the police informant against



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"Stop shooting up in the air because the bullets come back down." I think several people were hurt but I don't think anybody was killed.

I was impressed by the fact that the Sandinistas all seemed to be very, very analytical, which made them different from other Latin American leaders who are generally very rhetorical. They had a plan to socialize Nicaragua, to turn it into a country of idealistic revolution, pretty much like Castro or Ho Chi Minh did. I think they would have been able to implement it had they not run into not just the Reagan administration but, I think, a changed way of thinking around the world, generated by *glasnost* and *perestroika*, that says economic prosperity is more important to the future than resting on your ideological laurels. As it was, they succeeded in withstanding the contra pressures and that is a major triumph. But they have to change and I think they are changing.

What really got me interested in journalism were two events in Mexico City in 1968: one was the massive student uprising and the other was the 1968 Olympics. Both of them attracted a large number of foreign reporters. I was a student then and I would approach the reporters and ask them what they did and where they were from, and I was fascinated by their tales about going to the Caribbean or around the world covering things. After I finished preparatory school, which is between high school and college in Mexico, I was in the Army for six months and then I got a job as a galley-proofreader and later a translator at the *Mexican City News*. I had visited the United States but most of my knowledge of English came from taking courses in high school and also by reading and listening to the radio.

From the *News* I went to the *Associated Press*, which sent me to Buenos Aires and Bogota, and then I became a free-lance in Central America for the *Miami Herald* and several other publications. In 1980 the *Herald* offered me a job because they needed Spanish-speaking reporters to cover the Mariel boatlift from Cuba to the United States. In 1982 they sent me to Washington to cover U.S. policy toward Latin America.

Within a couple of days I had it confirmed on the record from two contra officials, Calero and Ed Chamorro, that Oliver North was involved. North's name had already cropped up in other publications in connection with the contras but not in connection with private aid. I had already suspected that there was something going on but I had never really posed the question about North's involvement. The contras told me, "Oliver North has come down to Central America to tell us that the Reagan administration will continue helping us no matter what." We spoke in Spanish and I think the language and cultural affinity had something to do with their opening up to me. But I think the main reason was because they

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same process. One thing I do is that usually I don't call people on the phone. I just go over and sit down with them or take them out to lunch or dinner, and I sit down and say, "Hey, I want to talk to you." The only source who ever spoke to me because he was troubled by what had been going on was one mid-level administration official who felt the administration's policies were bad for U.S. interests in the region.

Every time I approached a source I would say, "I'd like to quote you by name," but the source—even Congressional aides—always said no automatically. I think in some cases if they were aides they were afraid that if their bosses saw their name in the paper they would be angry at their getting so much publicity. I don't think it's because of the sensitivity of the subject. A lot of them say, "Well, it's a sensitive subject," but I don't think anybody in the U.S. system can agree on what a sensitive subject is—what constitutes national security. I think they all have a general idea but there are no standardized procedures.

At the time I began covering the contra affair in Washington I already knew quite a lot about Nicaragua because I had covered the Sandinista revolution in 1978 and 1979, mostly working for UPI. One of the people I had met during that time was Adolfo Calero, who was the manager of the Coca-Cola plant in Nicaragua. Later, he became one of the major contra leaders. I left Nicaragua about two weeks before Somoza was overthrown, after an ABC newsmen was killed, and I returned the day after the Sandinistas took over. Everybody in Managua seemed to be elated at that time. A lot of people were coming out of their houses to welcome the Sandinistas as if they were liberators. Everyone was shooting guns up in the air to celebrate. The first statement of the junta people was,

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### ALFONSO CHARDI: THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

I began to encounter Nicaraguans again in the early '80s when I started working for the *Miami Herald* in Florida, because it was during that period that Nicaraguan refugees began to arrive, mostly people from the upper class. I also came into contact with some of the early contra activities; they had some paramilitary training in Florida.

It became well known to those of us in Washington who were covering Latin America and Central America that when Congress moved to end aid to the contras—first they limited U.S. action on behalf of the contras, the so-called Boland amendment, and then they imposed a ban in October of 1984—the administration geared up to find an alternative. All these conservative private benefactors cropped up and I wrote a number of private aid stories. So the next logical step was: Who is promoting all the private aid? Who is supporting them? In conversations with my editor we decided that we were going to go out and see whether the government was really respecting the congressional prohibition.

For me, the real enjoyment of journalism is gathering information and getting it out, so that people read and learn and do whatever they want to do with it—improve democracy or bring about a coup. I just want them to know.

I was always the initiator of the stories about contra aid. Later on, some people called with tips or whatever but even then I still followed the



Crystal Van Orsdel shared 10 photos to the **Alfonso Chardy - From the Karen Rothmyer Book on Pulitzers** album. April 23 at 6:41 AM

arrangment. So they came to me and said, "Hey, why don't you look into this guy?"

In fact, I think by then they had already concluded that the whole thing was going to unravel. They were far more willing to see the future, far more realistic in their own assessments, than the administration officials, who were saying, "The freedom fighters will go on." I think that after Congress began investigating, the contras wanted to be perceived as not collaborating in a coverup. They realized that Congress was responsible for giving them the money so they wanted to be perceived as forthcoming. Once the Iran-contra affair broke, in conversations with me and other reporters the contras said, "We're going to have to retrench."

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ALFONSO CHARDY
The Administration and the Contras

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KAREN ROTHMYER
"WINNING PULITZERS: THE STORIES BEHIND
Some of the Best News Coverage of Our Time"

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didn't realize what all this was going to lead to: how I was going to piece the story together and how that story would become somewhat infamous because of the Iran-contra affair.

And in fact, after my story came out in June of 1985, it didn't really lead to much. It was the first big story linking Oliver North to circumventing the Boland amendment but basically it was dead in the water.

From then on the story went in fits and starts. I had to do many other things—cover congressional hearings, attend briefings, and so forth, and every time my editors said, "Well, let's do something on the secret war; let's do something on Ollie North," it was always a struggle to bring me up to do some investigating.

So that's how things went along until there was another flurry of stories in 1986 and that's when my editor put together a team of reporters that was the group that won the Pulitzer.

I covered the story the way I cover any other story. The systems may be different in different places but it's all people. The key lies in understanding the process of how gathering information works.

For me, the real enjoyment of journalism is gathering information and getting it out, so that people read and learn and do whatever they want to do with it—improve democracy or bring about a coup. I just want them to know.

I was always the initiator of the stories about contra aid. Later on, some people called with tips or whatever but even then I still followed the

about two days before so then I had the whole thing and I wrote a story for the Sunday paper.

I think the contra issue would still have gone away if it hadn't been for the Iran connection being revealed when a magazine in Lebanon printed a story on it and the networks began picking it up.

"Stop shooting up in the air because the bullets come back down." I think several people were hurt but I don't think anybody was killed.

I was impressed by the fact that the Sandinistas all seemed to be very, very analytical, which made them different from other Latin American leaders who are generally very rhetorical. They had a plan to socialize Nicaragua, to turn it into a country of idealistic revolution, pretty much like Castro or Ho Chi Minh did.

I began to encounter Nicaraguans again in the early '80s when I started working for the Miami Herald in Florida, because it was during that period that Nicaraguan refugees began to arrive, mostly people from the upper class.

It became well known to those of us in Washington who were covering Latin America and Central America that when Congress moved to end aid to the contras—first they limited U.S. action on behalf of the contras, the so-called Boland amendment, and then they imposed a ban in October of 1984—the administration geared up to find an alternative.

Within a couple of days I had it confirmed on the record from two contra officials, Caldero and Ed Chamorro, that Oliver North was involved. North's name had already cropped up in other publications in connection with the contra but not in connection with private aid.



ALFONSO CHARDY: THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

What really got me interested in journalism were two events in Mexico City in 1968: one was the massive student uprising and the other was the 1968 Olympics. Both of them attracted a large number of foreign reporters. I was a student then and I would approach the reporters and ask them what they did and where they were from, and I was fascinated by their tales about going to the Caribbean or around the world covering things. After I finished preparatory school, which is between high school and college in Mexico, I was in the Army for six months and then I got a job as a galley-proofreader and later a translator at the Mexico City News. I had visited the United States but most of my knowledge of English came from taking courses in high school and also by reading and listening to the radio. From the News I went to the Associated Press, which sent me to Buenos Aires and Bogota, and then I became a free-lancer in Central America for the Miami Herald and several other publications. In 1980 the Herald offered me a job because they needed Spanish-speaking reporters to cover the Martel boatlift from Cuba to the United States. In 1982 they sent me to Washington to cover U.S. policy toward Latin America. At the time I began covering the contra affair in Washington I already knew quite a lot about Nicaragua because I had covered the Sandinista revolution in 1978 and 1979, mostly working for UPI. One of the people I had met during that time was Adolfo Calero, who was the manager of the Coca-Cola plant in Nicaragua. Later, he became one of the major contra leaders. I left Nicaragua about two weeks before Somoza was overthrown, after an ABC newsmen was killed, and I returned the day after the Sandinistas took over. Everybody in Managua seemed to be elated at that time. A lot of people were coming out of their homes to welcome the Sandinistas as if they were liberators. Everyone was drawing guns up in the air to celebrate. The first statement of the junta people was...

THE MIAMI HERALD October 12, 1986 BUSH, NSC SET UP AID TO REBELS, OFFICIALS SAY by ALFONSO CHARDY WASHINGTON—The National Security Council and the office of Vice President George Bush shared responsibilities in setting up the elaborate anti-Sandinista supply system that came to light with the downing of an American-maned aircraft in Nicaragua last week, knowledgeable administration officials said Saturday. The administration officials said that while the NSC recruited technical and logistical personnel retired from CIA or Army Special Forces in establishing the network, the vice president's staff concentrated on organizing Cuban exiles in Miami, many of whom were veterans of the CIA-organized Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961. The role of the NSC and Lt. Col. Oliver North, the NSC's director of political development and political-military affairs, has been widely publicized in the past year. But the contra connection to Vice President Bush, a former CIA director, had not been generally known, although it was first mentioned publicly in a little-noticed trial in Miami a year ago. The October 1985 trial involved a private contra supporter, Jesse Garcia, who was charged with illegal possession of a weapon. Garcia, questioned by Miami Assistant U.S. Attorney Jeffrey Feldman, said that an apparently bogus mission mentioned to him to blow up the Soviet and Cuban embassies in Managua was known as "George Bush's baby." Garcia, in a telephone interview last summer, said a man identified as Alan Saum, who was the police informant against...

Garcia on the weapons charge, also had mentioned Bush's office as his contact point. . . . The contra link to Bush's office came to light when the only surviving crewman of the downed plane, Eugene Hasenfus, told reporters in Managua Thursday that a Cuban-American veteran of the Bay of Pigs named Max Gomez helped coordinate the intricate aerial supply system serving the contras from El Salvador. . . . Bush, questioned during a campaign swing through South Carolina Saturday, described Gomez as "a patriot" whom he has met three times. But Bush did not comment on reports that Gomez reported to him on his effort to supply the contras.

newspapers, are the major agenda-setters in this country. "Everybody knows now about Oliver North and about his secretary, Fawn Hall, but not from reading my stories," he says. "They know that Fawn Hall is dating George Michaels the rock star because it comes out in places like Rolling Stone or it's exposed in Entertainment Tonight." And, he suggests facetiously, the way to get more Americans interested in what is going on in the world might be to allow them some direct, entertainment-based participation. "If Americans could vote every day by television on whether to give aid to Nicaragua or to El Salvador I think they'd love it," he says. "It would be like Wheel of Fortune on a planetary scale." Following is an excerpt of one of Chardy's stories that formed part of the Herald's award-winning coverage.



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