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Reentry

TCKs in Relationship to Surrounding Dominant Culture

By David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken

There is [an] aspect of cross-cultural living that has a significant influence on a TCK's life—the changing nature of how he or she fundamentally relates to the surrounding dominant culture, be it the home or host culture. . . .

No group can hold together for long if they share only the visible or surface parts of culture such as dress, language, behavior, and traditions. . . . Traditionally, however, people have used their surface culture (e.g. tribal scarifications, heraldry, or the chador) to identify themselves as people who also share a common deep culture; in other words, they have similar beliefs, assumptions, and values. In some places, various tribes and nationalities may have coexisted side by side, but everyone readily knew by *appearance* who was and was not part of his or her group and, thus, who did or didn't share a common outlook in the deeper culture values as well. . . .

The deeper levels of culture . . . are far slower to change than the surface ones. This creates a major problem. Why? As long as we look different from another person, or have some way to quickly and easily identify that we are different, we don't expect the other to behave or believe as we do. But when a person looks and acts much like us on the outside, we assume sameness on the inside and fully expect that other person to respond in a situation as we would. The truth is, the appearance that we are the same hides the fact that in those deeper places of culture—the ones from which we make our life decisions—we may be as different as ever. This actually

increases cultural stress. We are far more offended if people who look like us don't behave as we assumed they would than if we never have any expectations of similarity in the first place. . . .

There are four possible ways [TCKs] relate to the surrounding culture, be it the home or host culture. For our purposes, we have called these relational patterns *foreigner*, *adopted*, *hidden immigrant*, and *mirror*.

Foreigner Look different Think different	Adopted Look different Think alike
Hidden Immigrant Look alike Think different	Mirror Look alike Think alike

1. *Foreigner—look different, think different.* This is the traditional model for TCKs in the host culture. They differ from those around them in both appearance and worldview. They know and others know they are foreigners. In a few cases (e.g. international adoption), this category may apply to TCKs in their official culture as well.

2. *Adopted—look different, think alike.* Some TCKs appear physically different from members of the surrounding culture, but they have lived there so long and immersed themselves in the culture so deeply that their behavior and worldview are the same as the members of that culture. While TCKs may feel very comfortable relating to the surrounding culture, others may treat them as foreigners.

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3. *Hidden immigrant—look alike, think different.* When TCKs return to their home culture, or when they grow up in countries where they physically resemble the majority of the citizens of that country, they appear like those around them, but internally these TCKs view life through a lens that is as different from the dominant culture as any obvious foreigner. People around them, however, presume they are the same as themselves inside, since they appear the same outside.

4. *Mirror—look alike, think alike.* Some TCKs not only physically resemble the members of their host culture, but they have lived there so long that they have adopted the deeper levels of that culture as well. No one would realize they aren't citizens unless they show their passports. TCKs who return to their home culture after spending only a year or two away or who were away only at a very young age may also fit in this category. Although they have lived abroad, their deeper levels of culture have remained rooted solidly in the home culture and they identify with it completely.

Reentry Stresses

Many reasons for reentry stresses are simply extensions of . . . the normal challenges of any cross-cultural transition: the grief of losing a world they have come to love, the discomfort of being out of cultural balance once more, and the struggle to find a sense of belonging in a new place with new people. There are also some very particular and additional stresses TCKs face during this transition to their home culture, however, and they are worth examining carefully.

False Expectations

One of the most basic, but unrecognized, reason for reentry stress has to do with unconscious expectations of both the TCKs and those in their home culture. . . . Traditionally most TCKs have been recognized as foreigners while they were living in their host culture. Some have lived there as hidden immigrants, and a few fit into either the adopted or mirror category. When

TCKs return to their passport culture, however, almost all are hidden immigrants. . . . People at home take one look at these returning TCKs and expect them to be in the "mirror" box—persons who think and look like themselves. Why wouldn't they? After all, these TCKs are from the same racial, ethnic, and national background as those "at home" are.

TCKs look around them and they, too, often expect to be in the mirror box. For years they've known they were "different" but excused it because they knew they were Asians living in England, Africans living in Germany, or Canadians living in Bolivia. That justification for being different is now gone, and they presume they will finally be the same as others; after all, these are their own people. Wrong. . . .

All seems well at the beginning of reentry. Relatives and old friends welcome the TCKs warmly, while the school bends over backward in its efforts to assess how transcripts from some exotic foreign school relate to the local curriculum. Soon, however, unexpected differences begin to pop up. Classmates use slang or idioms that mean nothing to the returning TCKs. Everyone else is driving a car; they only know how to ride a bike. Friends, relatives, and classmates are shocked at the TCKs' ignorance of the most common practices necessary for everyday living. If they were true immigrants, no one would expect them to know all these things, but because they are presumed to be in the mirror box, those in the home country begin to peg them as "strange" or, at least, slightly stupid.

Conversely, TCKs aren't doing much better in their opinions of newfound peers. When they saw themselves as true foreigners in Romania, they never expected their local friends to know where Utah was on the U.S. map. Now they can't believe how dumb their friends in Utah are because they have no idea where Romania is.

Reentry might not be quite so difficult if the unexpected differences were merely in some of these more obvious ways. But deeper levels of cultural dissonance lurk beneath the apparently similar surface. Every time someone takes them to McDonald's for a hamburger, the

TCKs mention how many people could eat for a whole week back in their host country for the money this one meal costs. Even worse, they watch how much food people throw out and express their shock and horror. The person who bought their hamburger sees the TCKs as ungrateful at best, condemning at worst. The fact is that while TCKs and their peers at home may indeed look exactly alike, they don't share a common worldview because their life experiences have been totally different. . . .

[The authors continue by naming two false fears of reentry: that if they allow themselves to repatriate totally, that means being disloyal to their host country. Others fear losing their identity, or "an important part of me." They also mention common reactions to reentry stress: trying to fit in perfectly by keeping their past a secret. Some TCKs "simply withdraw" and some even consider suicide. Others find themselves getting angry while trying to prove they're not like their fellow citizens.]

At times it seems TCKs can be culturally tolerant anywhere but in their own culture. When people move to a new host culture, they usually keep quiet if they have strongly negative opinions about that culture. At most, they only express them to fellow expatriates. These rules seem to change, however, on reentry. Some TCKs appear to feel quite free to express every negative opinion they can possibly think of about their home culture, no matter who is around. While chronic put-downs may be an unconscious defense for the TCKs' own feelings of insecurity or rejection, such remarks alienate them from everyone around them. But, like it or not, they are a member of this group by birth and citizenship. In affirming one part of their experience and themselves, they reject another.

Excerpts from Third Culture Kids: The Experience of Growing Up Among Worlds, Chapter 3 (pp. 51-54), Chapter 16 (pp. 245-49)

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c/o SIM USA
P.O. Box 7900
Charlotte, NC 28241
USA
704-588-4300
info@sim.org

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SIMROOTS
c/o SIM Canada
10 Huntingdale Blvd.
Scarborough, ON
Canada M1W 2S5
416-497-2424
postmast@sim.ca

Please send correspondence to:

EDITOR
Karen Keegan
222 Hyle Avenue
Murfreesboro, TN 37128
(615) 895-9011
simroots@sim.org

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Dan Elyea
fsiyfr@okeechobee.com

WEB SITE
Elizabeth Quinn
lizard@inr.net

LAYOUT
Grace Swanson
1565 Gascony Road
Encinitas, CA 92024
(760) 942-6109
swanson121@cox.net

PROMOTION
Deborah Turner
PO Box 273
Greenbank, WA 98253
(360) 678-3214
ethiopia@greenbank.net

An MK from Nigeria

One adjustment that caused me the most trouble and grief is the great amount of loss and change I was forced to experience suddenly. The only things that did not change in my life were a few pieces of clothing and a few articles that I brought with me to America. Everything else in my life was either altered or completely lost . . . Everything like people, places, food, clothes, language, culture, family, relatives, friends, cars, climates, school, the dorm system, nature—everything! It was almost as if I was (and I believe I was) dealing with thousands of deaths at once, including my own. **When I left, I really left everything except my body in Nigeria.** Reprinted with permission from www.mfcs.org. (care@mfcs.org)

Debb Forster (KA, HC '77) joy4debb@earthlink.net

I went to live in Kentucky after spending the first 19 years of my life mostly in West Africa. Not only did I have to face culture shock of being in America, I also experienced a secondary culture shock of living in rural Kentucky. For the first time in my life I experienced what it felt like to be discriminated against just because I “wasn’t from there.” When people would ask me where I was from, I’d reply, “Africa.” That reply would usually get me some funny stares, or stupid questions like, “Why aren’t you black?” or “How’d you learn to speak such good English?” And of course the impossible-to-answer, classic question, “What’s it like over there?” I realized fairly early in my stay there, that I could reject “these Americans,” reject my own heritage and identity, or share my heritage while trying to assimilate into American culture. I opted for the cross-cultural approach. I wanted to be accepted by Americans, but I wasn’t willing to relinquish who I was either.

While going to the community college for my nurse’s training, I lived with a woman from the church that was helping sponsor my education. She graciously opened her home so I could live there with her and her teenage daughter. Other than my exposure to African religions while growing up, I had been a sheltered missionary kid who had lived in a conservative Christian environment. So many things

that I had been taught to be sin were practiced here in America by confessing Christians. Living with this woman introduced me to issues that were completely out of my element up till then. I found I was living with a “divorced” woman. Her daughter was only 15 when she became pregnant out of wedlock. The ex-husband showed up and took his daughter away to be made to have an abortion. During the two years I lived there, I discovered that the mother was, literally, a closet alcoholic. One day while I was rummaging through a linen cupboard, I felt something hard amongst the towels. I dug in and pulled out an empty vodka bottle. With a little more digging, I also pulled out an empty whiskey and a rum bottle. This discovery alarmed me, to say the least. I proceeded to address the matter in my very “diplomatic” manner by shoving the empty bottles in front of her and asking in horrified tone, “Why are you drinking?! This is WRONG! You need to stop this now!” My presence in that house and my openness to confront things I thought to be sin, eventually caused her to resent me, but she never did ask me to leave. I found out how codependency works in relationships that are dysfunctional.

But there were some good times too. One of my favorite TV shows at that time was *Dukes of Hazard*. I secretly would have loved to have been able to drive like those guys. My first vehicle, in which I learned to drive, was an automatic VW Bug of the 1969 variety. It was an oxidized, dull red color and I named it BeetleBomb. I learned to drive at nineteen by being let loose on the gravel back roads of that

I wanted to be accepted by Americans, but I wasn’t willing to relinquish who I was either.

farming community. My mentor’s daughter thought that driving with me was a great adventure, and she and I had some hair-raising close calls—like when I found out that taking a corner at 30 miles an hour on a gravel road can slide you right into the adjoining ditch. Nobody was around to help, so the two of us had to figure out how to propel the Bug up out of the ditch on our own. We managed to do so and then went merrily down the road in search of more road mischief.

I had to drive 15 miles one direction to the town where my community college was located. I remember the thrill that I felt when I first

went around a vehicle in my lane and passed it before any oncoming traffic got too close. Another source of “thrills” was the lack of brakes that I had for a while because I didn’t have the money to fix them. I would gear down into low on the automatic shift and then pull the emergency brake to stop.

One day when I was driving in for classes and clinicals, I passed a house where I noticed out of the corner of my eye that people were doing yard work and trimming hedges. That afternoon on my way back from school, I was moving with the flow of traffic, when all of a sudden I saw brake lights flash on the cars in front of me. Not having brakes of my own, I was faced with the dilemma of either being hit by oncoming traffic if I pulled over to the other lane, hitting the car in front of me, or taking the shallow ditch to my right. I opted for the ditch. Just as I rolled down and then up the other side of the ditch, I looked up and saw a very tall evergreen shrub looming ahead of me. It was at the same home I had passed earlier that day. Right then I had a strong visual of me driving up over the tall shrub and then my VW getting stuck and teetering on top of the shrub. Weird thought, but at that moment real enough to propel me into action. My action was to gun my car so that I actually ripped through the large shrub and in the process uprooted one of the three plants that had made up that shrub’s configuration. After tearing through the bush and bouncing across the lawn and driveway, my car stopped dead on a patch of lawn on the far end of the yard. I patted my body over but found no apparent injuries.

Just then an elderly gentleman came up to my car. I rolled down my window and immediately asked him if he wanted my insurance card. (I kind of remembered that was either something you were or weren’t supposed to do.) He said, no, he didn’t want my insurance card, but asked me if I was ok. I replied that I thought I was ok, but then went on to profusely apologize for crashing through their lawn. The nice man told me it was all right and he was glad I was not hurt. He then leaned down to me and with a grin said, “If you’d come through earlier, you might have saved us some time in trimming our hedge.” I kind of grinned but still felt pretty bad about the damage I had caused. He stood by to make sure my car would start and then waved goodbye as I drove off.

I found out later when it was dark that the impact with the large bush had bent the whole

front end of my car down to such a degree that the driving lights were only good for illuminating the bottom of any pothole I was going to hit, and the brights barely made the road visible for driving at night. All in all, God protected me through that time with my VW Bug. My friends say I still drive like Dukes of Hazard, but I haven't done any hedge trimming lately.

Ruth Meed (BA '84)

rumeed@juno.com

First let me say that I am honored to have been an MK. I think it is a rich heritage to have been born to parents who gave up their easy life in Canada to serve the Lord in foreign missions. My missions experience for the first nine years is one I remember with pleasure. However, when we returned home from Ethiopia in 1975, I had a challenging time readjusting to this culture.

Growing up the first nine years of my life I was your average, normal kid. I took one day a time and, as was my nature, enjoyed it to the full. In 1975 the political situation changed in Ethiopia, and we were due for furlough so we came "home" to Canada. It may have been home to Mom and Dad maybe, but it was not home to me. My home was Ethiopia. That was all I knew or remembered. That was the place where I was comfortable to be me. We lived just outside of Toronto for the first year, and Dad worked at the SIM head office. Mom stayed at home and we waited for a new field assignment. During that year my grandfather Meed had a heart attack, and Dad felt he needed to honor his father, so he returned to New Brunswick to take over the family business. We never went back to the field full time as a family. Dad died of cancer in September of 2000.

As I look back over those years, I always cringe a little in the back of my mind when I think of Grade Four in Ontario. It was during that year that I went from fun-loving, happy-go-lucky Ruth to sullen, introverted, bitter bear. Because I was from another country, I was weird to the North American (NA) kids. I got a nickname right off the bat: "Rutheopia." I hated it with a passion. I think in time I could have grown used to it had it not been for all the other things piled on top of that that made it a burden to me. As is so often true of children, they liked to find someone to pick on. I became the target! After all, I was strange. I talked, thought, acted, and dressed differently. Words and phrases like "fruit, screw, nuts and bolts, play, gay," and "have fun" did not mean what I had always thought they did. You had to be careful what you said to whom and when or you got laughed at—or worse, made someone very angry.

I remember a couple of occasions where the picking went too far. One cold winter day at school I remember being jumped in the back field by a group of kids and kicked and punched and knocked down in the snow. I have no idea where the teacher was. Another time I was running away from them, and I fell, tearing my fingers open, and I had to go to the doctor to have them repaired.

The real killer for me was that I was separated from my twin sister at school. As twins go, we were close and had been in the same classes in Ethiopia. I think I may have fared better had I been able to stay in the same class with Rose for support. We never saw each other at school except maybe at recess because we ate lunch in our rooms and never had any classes together.

In that year I changed. I mentally froze my heart in an icebox and wouldn't let anyone—including my family—inside to hurt me ever again. I was "daddy's little girl" but I shut him out too. I decided I wasn't going to trust anyone any more. The kids would act friendly to set me up to do something that seemed weird to them so they could all laugh at me. I just wasn't going to let anyone do that anymore.

Then to make things even more confusing, we moved to New Brunswick. Moving in and of itself was not the issue. We had moved five times in Ethiopia. But it had always been in a familiar context with people who lived basically the same way we did and in a cultural setting I understood. Now we went from fast-paced city life to laid-back country life where everybody knew everybody else's business.

Here are some of the things that blew me away when I started out in NB. I would go to school and watch a kid next to me throw his entire fresh ham sandwich with fresh fruit and juice in the garbage because he wanted fries and a coke from the cafeteria. Seeing this just after I had left famine-starved Ethiopia, where we had voted not to eat desserts so that the money could go to famine relief, was horrifying. I got in my fair share of arguments with kids when they tossed their lunches. It got so they would offer me their lunch when they went for the fries. I was teased for that. I began to fear expressing an opinion about anything lest it would be ridiculed or considered stupid. My parents had taught us to ask questions if we didn't understand things. That was the intelligent thing to do, but these kids seemed to think that to ask a question about something that was obvious to them meant you were stupid.

Then there were the clothes. I dressed the way I felt comfortable and what my parents thought was right: shorts down to the knee and dresses to school always, summer and winter. Fashion is something I have never gotten into even now as it was not an important issue in

my family growing up. I discovered, however, that outward appearance was the god of the NA culture. Mind you, I dress appropriately, but I am still amazed when parents or peers spend \$80 for a pair of jeans when a \$20 pair would do just fine . . . or if you are really thrifty, an \$80 pair bought for \$5 at a thrift store.

The general overall waste of absolutely everything was overwhelming to me and to my family. We had to save everything in Ethiopia. You were weird if you saved anything in NA. Now that has changed a great deal with recycling, etc., as people have become much more conscious of the waste.

Those were the immediate outward shocks. But then there was the spiritual side of life. The standards we were raised with overseas seemed much higher than the NA church. Here it was okay to go to parties, gamble, casually drink, dance, etc. Church was no different than any other building. Kids could run down the aisles; adults wore jeans to church; the singing was like you were in a morgue. And full-time Christian work over a secular career? "Are you crazy?" Mind you, looking back now I was really no one to judge, as I had shut God out of my life by this point too—which was just as bad.

People for the most part were not interested in what life was like in Ethiopia after the initial "Wow! You were born there? What's it like?" I felt like my view of life must change now that I lived in NA. I was to think and act like an NA kid. It may seem like I was overreacting, but

I discovered, however, that outward appearance was the god of the NA culture.

then that was how I felt. I realize now that people were not intentionally trying to be insensitive. It just hurt really badly to know that I could not be myself in this culture. I had to fit their model or be left out. That experience has shaped my current philosophy of "I don't care what anyone thinks—I am following the biblical principles I have learned. That it is a noble calling to imitate my Savior." I only adjust as I learn more biblical truth—which is as it really should be.

Another thing that made the adjustment hard was that my parents didn't know how to handle it either. Nine years can do a lot to change the way people think in NA. For my parents, Ethiopia had been forever impressed on their hearts and minds. Even today we children have adjusted better than Dad or Mom did—though that may not be all good either. Misunderstandings and personality conflicts with people made things difficult, and part of that was our fault too. We were not so willing to have NA stuffed down our throats; nor were NA

kids eager to have Ethiopia stuffed down theirs. In my younger years I found a lot of healing and encouragement reading things like *Simroots*, Ruth Van Reken's book *Letters Never Sent*, and *Healing for Damaged Emotions* by David Seamans. In my later years I have found that the Word of God is the primary source of comfort in times of discouragement, fear, and loneliness. The other literature let me know that I was not alone, and that there were others who had experienced similar things and who had learned to deal with them. I have had people say that being an MK is no different than growing up in NA, and in my flesh I wanted to throttle them. Often these people have grown up in the same town for 30 years and don't have a clue what it is like to be uprooted from all you are familiar with and deposited on another planet, so to speak. It amazes me today how often I take for granted common expressions and phrases. I was at college in 1990, and a Kenyan asked me what I meant when I said that something was "cool" or "neat." It made me realize how quickly I had adapted to colloquialisms and how important it was to make sure those with whom I communicate understand my use of language.

How did I deal with it? I think you can see from what I have already written that it was initially with a great deal of hurt, anger, and bitterness and, sad to say, not very much understanding for many years. God has done some real healing and growth in my life to the point where I can think of the past without the rising emotions of that time. He used people to do it. One lady did not fit the overall picture I have painted of the kinds of reactions and treatment we received. She was my Sunday School teacher from Grades 5-9. You Sunday School teachers out there: stick with those rotten, angry kids in your class! You will never know the difference you can make in their lives for good later on if you will work with them through the trouble in their hearts! Kids who are hurting in a million different ways don't know how to express it other than in anger and acting out until you teach them better ways to deal with pain. Paulette, a lady to whom I owe who I am today (apart from God, obviously), was all I used to be before fourth grade: crazy, fun-loving, and carefree. She was, more importantly, a dedicated Christian lady who had (and still has) a special knack for working with rascals like me. She was a priceless source of stability in a very dark part of my life from age 9-19. She poured hours of her time into me with tears, prayer, and love—God's love—in large doses. She was patient and understanding and listened for hours on end as I tried to figure out my life. She tore down my emotional wall one brick at a time. I learned to trust her with

my pain, confusion, frustration, and lost sense of identity. She should have throttled me on several occasions for my callous, angry retorts. But she didn't. She just kept trying to understand me and point me back to the Lord. I had basically told God in my mind to go away. He had allowed me to get stuck in this awful place, and I didn't want to listen to Him if He did stuff like this to His followers. So He patiently sent Paulette along to remind me that He was still there, loving me, and had great things in store for me if I would just allow Him to heal the hurt. Her love instilled

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in me a sense of hope. I clung to her emotionally though I would never have admitted it to her then. She demonstrated Christ-like character and love that drew me back to the Lord.

All that effort has paid off in my life. I got involved in AWANA and started working with underprivileged children. I love children. They expect you to be real. After high school I attended New Brunswick Bible Institute where the Lord brought some people into my life to continue the healing process. The Lord has taught me to reach out to others who are hurting and show them the same unconditional love and forgiveness through His Son. I learned to trust my peers again. In February of 1985, the Lord showed me that the bitterness had to go. He replaced it with a zeal to glorify Him. I spent a year working with abused and neglected children in NB, then went to Washington Bible College to get my degree in counseling. After that I spent 7 years working in a home for abused and neglected girls in New Hampshire. Then the Lord led me back to school for a Master's degree in special education at Bob Jones University. I have spent the last two years since graduation working with emotionally challenged students in the public school here in Greenville. I have learned that God allows pain in our lives to make us comforters, and I have had the joy of being a comfort to many over the years. It was in His Word all along. 2 Cor. 1:3-4: *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.* That is what our lives are supposed to be about—reaching out and touching each other for the glory of God. He says that *By this shall*

all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. (John 13:35)

I have heard quoted in a sermon, "I doubt seriously if God uses a man greatly until He has wounded him deeply." That is true. We are too self-sufficient and arrogant till God humbles us and shows us our great need of His strength and courage. We have to be convinced of the healing hand of God in our lives before we can effectively communicate His heart to others.

How did I deal with it? I didn't—until I allowed God to work in my heart through the people he specifically placed in my life as tools to teach me of Him. My life verse is 2 Tim. 1:12: *For the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.* I know that whatever I face He is there and will guide me through it. He is sufficient for all things.

Paul Trigg

Triggemail@aol.com

In many ways those of us who had to deal with going back to their "home" country (which didn't feel much like home at the time) have been in a plane crash, and survived it. I came back to England when I was 14. My parents were still in Nigeria, and I ended up staying with my aunt and uncle. I went to yet another school (I lose count of how many) with 1300 other children. Because the American and English school systems were so different and hard for the teachers to understand, I remember being put in the lower classes (with the more disruptive children). I had a sun-tan and a leather bag which I was teased about. Yet I made a couple of close friends who I was most loyal to. When my parents did come back, they tell me (I can't remember however!) that I had a very nasty attitude towards them, as if I blamed them for sending me back on my own.

I can remember packing a small box with stuff and telling my Mom that I was off to Africa. She persuaded me that it would be better if I had an education first. For you to ponder over, these are some of the things I had in that box: string, scissors, a collection of feathers, a collection of tickets, a collection of seashells, a compass (for drawing circles, not for navigation!) a ruler, pencils, a change of clothes, and a toothbrush. My thoughts on this are that I collected things because they didn't require interaction with others.

So, I think many of us have survived a plane crash and are now more mentally stable because of it (I hope).

Peter Gilliland
(HC, Southern Baptist)
phgilliland@juno.com

I can remember that it came as a great shock to me as a teenager to realize that we were poor in material terms! As I think back to our house (that wonderful, big, comfortable house in Ogbomosho, which I thought was really about the nicest house in the Mission), I realize that almost all our furniture was locally made—and not especially well-made at that. (One fine exception was the two platform rockers in the living room; they were made by Ed Humphrey.) We often slept on beds that were a set of springs and mattress set on top of four footlockers. We had almost none of the typical American pieces of furniture that now seem so necessary. But I never FELT poor!

Part of that was because my parents came out of the Great Depression, and our material standard of living must have seemed very reasonable in comparison. We always had enough, as far as I remember. (My mother has spoken of times during their first tour, in the late '40s, when the food supplies/money were so limited that she was concerned about malnutrition.) I remember being aware that my rich cousins in the States had a lot of “stuff,” but that I wouldn't want to trade lives with them. After all, they didn't have monkeys or parrots for pets, or lizards to shoot, or cobras to kill. I consider that I was very blessed to have grown up where and when I did, and in the presence of the quality of people with whom I did.

Nancy (Ackley) Ruth
(BA, EL, HC '70)
nancyjaruth2003@yahoo.com

When I came to the States, I had been invited (and more than slightly “encouraged” by my parents) to visit Bob and Marion Bowers, great family friends. They lived in NE Pennsylvania, but having no idea—or I'm ashamed to say, any concept—of distance or “hassle factor,” I flew into Philadelphia (the only town I knew in PA at the time) and called them upon my arrival. It was a cross-state drive for them, late at night. They had to pick up their little one, (I think it would be David?) and drive half the night to come pick me up. I was mortified—although I didn't know at the time what else I could have done. I was kind of ignorant, and yet as an 18-year-old I had landed at JFK with \$50 and a plane ticket “home”—wherever THAT was?!

REENTRY RESOURCES

This listing of resources does not denote endorsement by Simroots.

Books

Missionary Children: Caught Between Cultures

By Dr. Doris L. Walters, 1996

Originally titled *An Assessment of Reentry Issues of the Children of Missionaries* (New York: Vantage Press, 1991).

care@mfc.org

Families on the Move— Growing up overseas and loving it!

By Marion Knell

Monarch Books, ISBN 0-8254-6018-2 (USA)

This 189-page paperback is a must-read for anyone who's ever made a move from one community to another. With practical tips, ideas, cartoons, charts, and plenty of thought-provoking questions, *Families on the Move* is a fun and easy-to-read book that focuses on transitions and how to cope with them. It's more than a “how-to” book. Rather, it helps give the reader and the family the “stimulus to work through the issues themselves.” Chapter 8 discusses the topic of Reentry.

Reviewed by Karen Keegan

Cross-Cultural Reentry A Book of Readings

by Clyde N. Austin, Ph.D

<http://www.tckworld.com/read/ccr.html>

Web Sites

Missionary Care - Missions and Mental Health
Click on “Reentry”

<http://www.missionarycare.com/dbTopics.asp>

TCK Materials on Culture Shock and Reentry
<http://www.tckworld.com/bibs.html>

TCK Interact

<http://www.tckinteract.net/Transition.html>

<http://edit.tckinteract.net/Reentry.html>

Services

Missionary Resources of Columbia

MRC holds reentry retreats at the end of the summer near Greenville, SC, in a camp setting called LookUp Lodge. The retreats are patterned after the ones put on by Barnabas/Narramore Christian Foundation, are very thorough and complete, and include some psychological testing as well with feedback on the test results. Basically we provide an opportunity for MKs transitioning from high school to college to learn more about the benefits and challenges of having grown up in other cultures. In addition, the MKs learn about the realities of college life, are given opportunities to develop practical life skills which they may not have learned in an overseas context, and they also are exposed to the cultural changes which may confront and at times confuse them. There are large group instruction times, small group interactions, and interspersed with these are times for fun and relaxation. Canoeing, kayaking and other water sports, campfires, table games, small group competitions, paintball wars, and rope courses are just a few of the fun activities provided. But the emphasis throughout the retreat is to help MKs be better prepared to deal with the challenges of living in the States while appreciating their unique personalities and outlook they have developed in an overseas context.

Phone: 803-254-3313

Web: www.mresourcescolumbia.org

Missionary Family Counseling Services, Inc.

Our services are available to the members of any missionary family returning for furlough, education, or permanent residence in the United States and to members of any ministers' families. In-depth personal counseling is provided by a counselor who has experienced multicultural living and possesses keen insight into the problems and challenges faced by these families. If it is not feasible for an individual or a family to travel to our counseling center in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, arrangements can be made to conduct counseling sessions by telephone. Our counselor travels to campuses to counsel individuals, facilitates retreats, and meets with missionary children to give them support. **There is no charge for our services to MKs in colleges or universities.** Fees for other clients are charged according to their ability to pay.

Phone: 336-722-6550

Web: www.mfcs.org

E-mail: *care@mfc.org*



Dear Karen,

I really appreciated reading and seeing the pictures in the anniversary issue. I attended the first Bingham Academy in 1948. In the BA alumni picture of 1974, I am standing beside Howie Brandt and behind John Haspels.

Denny Hoekstra
(DHoekstra@maf.org)

Hi Karen,

Here are some identifications for the archive picture on p.16 in the last issue:

Back row, far right, is John Wyllie.

Middle row, far right is, I think, Lillian Power.

Front row, the third from the left is Delwynn Elliott.

Diana Rigden
(drigden@aacte.org)

Log on to <http://simroots.sim.org> to view photo.

Dear Karen,

Here are some more people in the photo on page 16 of the Spring Edition:

Back row, 3rd from left, Bruce Campbell

Front row, 3rd from left, Becky Allen, Karen Craig, Mary Winterflood, Ruth Wright

Carol (Pullen) Sterken
(sterkencd@juno.com)

Dear *Simroots*,

It was a privilege for me to be able to be an influence in young lives at Kent Academy. I spent 16 years teaching first graders. My 17th year, I was school manager and teacher supervisor of the Nigerian teachers in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades. In the school year 1996-'97, I was principal at KA. The 50th Anniversary was in 1997. I was the only missionary at KA. Many Nigerian former students were there. What a rewarding time it was for me to see many of my former 1st graders. I praise the Lord for the ones who are still following the Lord, both MKs and Nigerians. It is great to read of the ones who are serving the Lord.

Lura Bodwell



Miss Bodwell with sign board. KA won!



Five years ago, we moved our family from Michigan in “The North” to Tennessee in “The South.” Though we’d lived here before, I felt the shock of changing cultures once more. A little paperback, **Families on the Move* by Marion Knell, helped me better understand and cope with the transition. How I wish I’d known these principles 35 years ago when I changed continents!

The theme of this *Simroots* edition is reentry: reentry to one’s passport country after spending a portion of time in another country. Though for us “oldies,” reentry issues seem so long ago, perhaps some of us have still not dealt with the residual effects of those experiences. I suspect the reason we’ve had so much trouble getting readers to respond to the plea for stories is that there’s too much pain or embarrassment attached to those memories. Thank you to those who were brave enough to write in and share from their heart and to pass on to the next generation of readers what lessons we learned going through the process.

An article by Sheila J. Ramsey and Barbara Schaetti entitled “Reentry: Coming ‘Home’ to the Unfamiliar” (first published in *MOBILITY*, the monthly magazine of the *Employee Relocation Council*, Nov., 1999) notes that TCKs tend to expect the following things:

(1) Although people and places change, relationships that were once vital will continue to be so;

(2) family and friends will be as eager and excited to hear about their adventures as they are to speak about them;

(3) activities and/or job responsibilities that inspired them before they left will continue to do so;

(4) they will feel relaxed, at ease, and “at home” because they are once again in a familiar cultural and physical environment; and

(5) their broader perspective on life, abilities to deal effectively with diversity, and their understanding of the global nature of the human condition will be acknowledged and valued.

The article goes on to say that “to varying degrees all of the above assumptions are false.” It then lists the “Ten Top Immediate Reentry Challenges” by Dr. Bruce La Brack, University of the Pacific, Stockton, CA:

- ✓ boredom;
- ✓ a frustrating inability to explain experiences to those not having similar travel backgrounds;
- ✓ a kind of “reverse homesickness” for the people and places one has left behind;
- ✓ being misunderstood when using behaviors, such as humor, that are now out-of-place;
- ✓ the “no one wants to hear” syndrome;
- ✓ feelings of alienation that can arise in seeing faults in other’s situations that were never noticed;
- ✓ a lack of opportunity to apply new knowledge or skills;
- ✓ and concern that the positive effects of the international experience will be lost.

If any of these statements resonate with your experience, feel free to send in an Open Dialogue or a Reentry story. Chances are, we’ll identify with your laughter or your pain.

Sai an jima (until a little while)
Karen Keegan, Editor

* You can read a review of this book on page 6.



Bingham Reunion Reflections

Submitted by Deborah (Goss) Turner

Forty-seven people gathered in Ailsa Craig, ON, about two hours from Toronto, July 1-4, for the first Bingham Academy Reunion held in North America. Attendees came in from England, Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Maryland, New York, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Washington State.

Things started off with a sizzle, as July 1st was Canada Day. Carol (Wallace) Lee, owner of Quiet Streams Bed and Breakfast, where the reunion took place, made up a circle of sparklers, which we lit from candles on a table. It was a beautiful sight to see, each person holding aloft a lit sparkler as “Oh, Canada!” played in the background. We all partook of Canada Day cake and punch.

Most of us stayed at the Michaelite Fathers Retreat Center (known as MRC), a few miles from Ailsa Craig. It was the perfect spot for quiet reflection and late night chats.

The next day was given over to talk and laughter. Tents had been set up around the spacious back yard; and we all crowded under them to view pictures, reminisce, and simply enjoy being together again after more than 30 years. We had people from four different decades who had attended Bingham, from the '50s to the '80s, so some of us had never met each other. Age differences didn't matter, though, as everyone just grouped together and shared common experiences. What a delight to see old boarding school photos, as well as current family pictures!

An additional joy was meeting former staff again and really getting to know them. Thanks to Roy Wallace, Carol Anne (Reimer) Griffith, Truitt and Joy (Anderson) Harper, and Tim and Lorna Jacobson for adding so much to the group. Joy had been a student at Bingham, so she was able to relate with both staff and students.

One of the highlights of the reunion was Mr. Mention-It's *Mercato*. Several people brought things to sell or share, including Ethiopian garments, books, baskets, candles, and other items. Ernie Giles was in charge of the *dabbo kolo* (roasted bread kernels) stand, and it was fun to watch him dicker until a suitable price was reached. There was also authentic *kolo* (roasted wheat) brought back from Addis Ababa.

That evening we had “movie night,” a tradition from boarding school days. We watched *The Gods Must be Crazy* and *Endurance*.



Back: Frank Wallace, Jon Wallace, Minna Kayser, Ernie Giles, Don Ricker
Front: Andrew Cunningham, Doug Koop, Deborah (Goss) Turner, Janet (Middleton) Hicks, Kathy Beck, Carol Anne (Reimer) Griffith, Mary Ricker, Lorna Jacobson



The winning Team: Marnie (Wallace) Breckin, Carol (Wallace) Lee, Truitt & Joy (Anderson) Harper, Jane (Wallace) Carlson, Julene (Hodges) Schroeder, Jeremy Koop, Doug Koop, Carolee (Hodges) Harbour, Norm Coppola, Mel Middleton



Yellow Team: Mary & Don Ricker, Marlene Giles, John Modricker, Frank Reeves, Russ Schmidt, Nancy (Ackley) Ruth, Andrew Cunningham

Afterwards several of us sat around the fire circle and listened to a tape of hyenas howling in the darkness. It sure brought back some memories.

Saturday we held the “Old-Lympics” Field Day. There were several races, including a three-legged race in which Julene (Hodges) Schroeder and Joy (Anderson) Truitt came in second to last, but “didn’t fall or break a nail.”

Also mentionable were the shot put, the javelin throw (in which two straws were put together and thrown forward, picked up by the next member and tossed again, etc.), the sling shots, water balloon toss, and the tug of war. Everyone had a great time, whether they won or not.

That evening we had the long-anticipated Ethiopian *gibsha* (feast). There were many in Ethiopian dress, and it looked especially festive. The food was fabulous, and I heard more than one person groaning about eating too much.

Sunday morning we held a special service. Julene (Hodges) Schoeder, Carolee (Hodges) Harbour, and Joy (Anderson) Harper led us in several songs, including the Loyal Ambassadors for Christ theme song, “Do Lord,” and “Wonderful Grace of Jesus.”

Thank you to Nancy (Ackley) Ruth for her brilliant vocal percussion effects and Mel Middleton for his accompaniment on the guitar. We also did a gorgeously harmonized version of “Our Father.” There wasn’t a dry eye anywhere when Frank Wallace sang his mother’s favorite song, “Amazing Grace.” It was a beautiful time of worship. Carol (Wallace) Lee played “Taps” on the accordion while Roy Wallace read out the names of staff and students who had died. It was very moving.

Afterwards, we returned indoors to have an authentic Ethiopian coffee ceremony. The women who served us were both graceful and gracious, and the Ethiopian coffee was wonderful.

I truly hated to see the weekend come to a close. This was so much like a family reunion, and it was tremendous to greet and hug my



Roy Wallace, Deborah (Goss) Turner



Green team: Valjean (Emmel) Nelson, Lynn (Emmel) Overlin, Minna Kayser, Rachel Black (child), Sue & Bob Black, Sarah Black (child), Jonathan Wallace, Frank Wallace (squatting), Greg & Sue Giles, Ron & Barbara Peat, Linda & Steve Donald



Carolee (Hodges) Harbour, Linda Donald, Julene (Hodges) Schroeder, Carol Anne (Reimer) Griffith, Sue Giles, Lynn (Emmel) Overlin



Janet (Middleton) Hicks

Not in photos: Tim Jacobson, Steve Griffith, Dan Maxson, Dale (Coppola) Reeves, Sheila Modricker, Lorraine Cunningham, Margaret Koop

brothers and sisters from Bingham. How wonderful, also, to meet and make friends with everyone’s spouses. I feel like my “family” has expanded.

A special thank you to Bruce and Carol (Wallace) Lee for their hospitality as we descended on their place. Carol’s special touches added to our enjoyment of the reunion. And to Frank Reeves and Russ Schmidt (*russel_schmidt@hotmail.com*) for being the official photographers and catching us in strange and not always flattering moments. Thanks also to everyone who worked behind the scenes, in setting up, cleaning up, and cooking. Your efforts made our experience so much more enjoyable.

Until then, *Dihina hunu* (Good-bye)

From London to London in One Day

Submitted by Andrew Cunningham (BA '85)

acunningham@waitrose.com

When Lorraine (my wife) and I arrived in London, Ontario, for the BA Reunion, it was after two plane trips from London, England, and a ride on the Robert Q bus. We didn’t know where we were going, but we did know who was going to meet us—even though we had never met before. Sounds very missionary-like. But then, why not—after all we were going to a reunion of a bunch of MKs. Somehow I think the word for a collection of MKs should be a “school” of

MKs—our schools having played such a large part in the formative years of our lives. So here we were arriving for the Bingham Academy reunion of 2004. It was my first ever reunion since leaving Bingham at the end of 5th grade in 1978. Carol (Wallace) Lee called Andrew, and the connection planned by e-mail over several months was completed. What joy!

We were straight into it. “Carol’s phone,” I said answering a call on her mobile while she was driving. “It’s about sausages,” I whispered. “Oh great!” she replied. We pulled over and the deal was done. Everyone at the reunion enjoyed specialty sausages on two occasions. We spent a neat half hour at the apartment of Carol’s dad (Sir Roy Wallace, BA teacher) getting to know a few early arrivers for the reunion. Then Carol (Wallace) Lee, Deb (Goss) Turner, Lorraine, Russ Schmidt, and I made our way through the streets of London, cradling boxes and bags of supplies, to Quiet Streams (Carol’s B&B), the centre of operations for the reunion.

We had all come from so many places, and the stories of our collective life experiences spanned many decades, but the Bingham bond was palpable—even with those who were teachers in Ethiopia. On Field Days at Bingham, Mr Ricker was the Head Master and prime organiser. When his whistle blew, it commanded attention. At the reunion we were teammates on the yellow team. Miss Reimer was my music teacher; now she was Carol Anne. Stephen Donald, prime organizer of BA Reunion Oldlympics (today’s version of BA field day), who was the star performer of his day (mid 1960s), did a fabulous job organizing the teams and dreaming up events.

It was marvelous to reminisce with people I normally would never meet about the school we went to and the common heritage we shared of growing up in Ethiopia. We had done so many of the same things at Bingham—even if years apart—that I felt I had known folks for years. There is something about shared experiences that has the capacity to sweep aside layers of social customs and get to the heart. Bob Dylan highlighted this in one of his songs: “Isn’t it strange how people who suffer together have tighter connections than those who are most content.” Not that Bingham was all suffering (I look back at Bingham with heaps of happy memories), but we did share the common pain of separation from parents that fostered the bond between us.

One of the things I appreciated most about the reunion was hearing about the experiences of others and how they considered those experiences to have shaped their lives. Much of what they said resonated in me, and Lorraine even recognised some of these characteristics in me. I already know that much of who I am today is a result of the impact of my Ethiopian and Bingham years, but extra light was shed on my life, and I am richer in personal understanding for it. I went not expecting to know any of the other Binghamites, but I knew some, and I know a whole lot more now. It would be terrific, though, to see a few more “children of the seventies” at the 2006 reunion. We all went to Bingham. We all have a common heritage that we should treasure, explore, and develop. I wouldn’t have missed it. Enough said! I look forward to seeing everyone there.

An Awesome Reunion

Submitted by Mel Middleton (BA '68)

mmiddleton@freedom-quest.ca

Well, I’m finally back home after a wonderful reunion! There are no words to describe it. It was more than awesome! The highlight for me (apart from winning the slingshot competition) was just being able to reflect on those days in a quiet, friendly atmosphere. Hearing from former teachers was very interesting. It was good to hear things from their perspective and to know the extent to which they agonized over our lives in those days—things which we took for granted. And, of course, Norm Coppola and I managed to astound all by triumphing in the three-legged race! See—old age and treachery triumphs over youth and skill every time!

They say that the “devil is in the detail.” If so, he was certainly chased out by Carol (Wallace) Lee, who had an amazing eye for detail—even down to Bill Grogan’s “three red shirts” on the line. She did a superb job of organizing everything. If some of the aid organizations had her logistical skills, the world would be a much better place!

Then, of course, there was Nancy (Ackley) Ruth, with her humourous stories and flamboyant accounts. All she had to do was walk into the room, and within less than a minute, everyone was in stitches laughing. If you haven’t heard her story of being detained by the homeland security authorities at Dallas airport on suspicion of being a terrorist, you have to get her to tell you. The story gets better every time it’s told! (Nancy’s defensive note: a learned missionary skill for “deputation” purposes only!!) Nancy, I did warn you about that diet coke!

Then, listening to the harmony and beauty of the singing on Sunday, Julene (Hodges) Schroeder led us in a selection of old LAC songs (how many can YOU remember!) followed by “Do Lord” and a stirring rendition of “Wonderful Grace of Jesus,” closing with the Lord’s Prayer. What an awesome experience. All that music training and the deep spiritual emotions all combined to produce an atmosphere and worship which I’ll never forget.

Thank you to everyone who made the time so memorable and refreshing. I wish we could do that every year! At least we should do it more often—and more of you Bingham-ites should consider attending! It was certainly a refreshing and rejuvenating experience.

Next Reunion

The Bingham Reunion Planning Committee is currently looking at 2006 for the next reunion. Get your vote in on dates and locations. We are considering Calgary, Abbotsford, and Seattle as locations. Any others? Anyone who would like to be part of the committee, please e-mail Nancy Ruth at nancyjaruth@yahoo.com or Deborah Turner at ethiopia@greenbank.net.

Good Shepherd Reunion

August 9-13, 2006

YMCA in Estes Park, Colorado

If you are interested in attending this reunion, receiving information about the reunion when it becomes available, or just sort of interested but don’t want to commit at this point, please contact me. Right now I am just gathering names. No money down until August 2005.

Judy Peterson, Registrar

japeterson@apu.edu

626-815-5027

818-957-5198

Open Dialogue

Testimony

Submitted by Peter Cox (KA '59)
coachpetercox@yahoo.com

My wife Lucie and I went to see *The Passion of the Christ* movie. I was struck with feelings of great forgiveness and respect for the missionaries who left their children behind at home and subsequently in boarding school during the war years of the World War II era.

What a great faith they had in God that He would take care of their children. Just as God had to temporarily forsake His Son while on the cross, so my parents had to leave me and others behind so they could spread the gospel. What a privilege to have had them as my parents.

What Child Is This?

By Donald Price (KA, HC '75)
dpricejeremiah@aol.com

What child is this
adopted by the mission
raised in the institution
and sent away?

Where is my degree?
To whom do I report?
And when shall I be furloughed?

Who is my support?
Where is my system?
To what mission do I belong?

Where do I go to learn the language?
How do I get from here to there?
Who will tell me about culture?
How shall I then live?

What is this I hear?
I am not a missionary?
Then whose gospel shall I preach?
What good news ought I to share?

To whom shall I go?
And what shall I say?
What child is this
that was sent away?

Sleepless!

Submitted by Tabitha (Payne) Plueddemann (KA, HC '92)
tabitha.plueddemann@sim.org

Hi fellow MKs! I just wanted to throw out a “hook” to see if anyone shares an issue I deal with, or if I should seek an explanation elsewhere. I’m sleepless! Does anyone out there suffer from regular (not occasional) nightmares, fear in the night, waking up often, unable to get to sleep, rituals or unusual preparations needed in order to feel “safe” before going to bed, or certain ways you have to sleep? And if so, is this recent in your adult life (for some of us, adult life is still “recent”) or was it experienced in your childhood too?

I remember few periods in life when I actually slept very well for an extended time. Recently I have been trying to figure out why. Okay, part of it is that I’m a night owl and have no discipline whatsoever about sleep. But that doesn’t seem to cover all the bases of my sleep disturbances. In fact, sometimes the inability to go to bed looks more like a symptom of something bigger, and not just the preference of my biological clock. Let me give you a very brief history.

I had nightmares almost every night in first grade at KA. They were terrible nightmares of *barayi* (robbers), big wild animals, not being able to run away, and all the other things little kids get scared of. I remember praying every night that I would not have nightmares.

Recently, my sister Miriam told me that in first grade, I slept walked (what is the past tense of “sleep walk” anyway?) all the time, and that I usually found my way to her room far away in the “4th Graders Hall.” Evidently I would climb into her top bunk in my sleep! She would either take me back to my bed then, or wait till morning and send me back. I never got in trouble for this as far as I know. And I seriously don’t remember a thing!—not even the parts when I was awake, like when she sent me back to my room in the morning.

She says it was the worst when it rained and stormed. Maybe being a Kano girl, I wasn’t used to the torrential rains and

electrical storms with thunder and lightning. The branches whipping in the wind made scary shadows on my dorm room walls and that, combined with the howling noises, sent me wandering into the darkness to find my sister.

Although I have not consistently had nightmares all my life, they have come back with a vengeance at certain stressful periods (like the weeks just prior to my wedding!). All my roommates from first grade through college have told me that I talk a lot in my sleep. Thankfully, my husband reports utter silence: marriage seems to have shut me up.

I have not talked to enough other MKs to be able to demonstrate any patterns. But among the few I have talked to, “safety” in sleeping is a big issue. One MK I recently talked to says she has kept a jackknife under her pillow since 4th grade at KA. Others, like me, made extensive “fortresses” with pillows and stuffed animals to sleep inside of (or . . . isn’t that just the universal human desire to be cozy?)

Well, I could say and ask a lot more, but I will wait to hear from you. I am curious to know if “sleep” was in any of those AMK surveys or if any of the MK counselors, like Dave Wickstrom, have come across this. If so, please write me! Thank you.

Please be assured that I am not trying to dredge up unnecessary negative stuff among those who enjoy a good night’s sleep. I am just curious if anyone else has sleep issues. I also cannot say if my adult sleep disturbances are at all related to what I experienced as a child. Life is so long and varied, it’s hard to know what connects and what doesn’t. So for now, I am just exploring.

The good part of all this sleep deprivation is that I have perfected the art of naps! I can sleep in planes, train stations, crowded buses, and a variety of other small, uncomfortable places. I am so vigilant in my sleep that I have never missed a final boarding call. Now that’s a handy skill for a global nomad to have!

STAFF TRIBUTES

Staff photos continued from previous issue . . .



Grace Archibald
KA



Lloyd Stinson
BA



Muriel Stinson
BA



Vi Swanson
BA



Betty Thompson
EL



Larry Tiedje
EL



Linda Tiedje
EL



June Trevor
BA



Barbara Tschetter
EL



Elizabeth Tutt
BA



Margaret Upson
KA



Roger Upson
KA



Kim Elizabeth
VandenHengel, SA



Betty VanDyken
KA



Leigh Vickers
KA



Del & Lois Voith
KA



Frances Wallace
BA