

A man with curly hair, wearing a red and white plaid shirt and dark pants, stands on a dirt path. He is holding a small, white, stylized sheep figurine in his right hand. He has a camera hanging from his neck and a fanny pack. The background is a vast, rugged mountain range with steep, green slopes and deep valleys. The sky is clear and blue.

7Roads

Issue 2 • October 2013

The Pema Peace Project

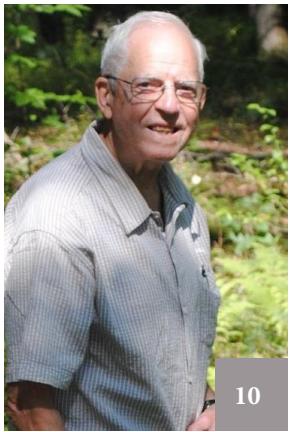
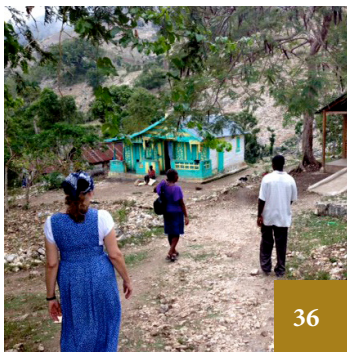
Leif DeJong, Class of 2009

**THE SCHOOL
PYTHON**

Rom Whitaker

**THE INCA
TRAIL AND
PERU**

PIPPA MUKHERJEE,
FORMER STAFF



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FROM THE EDITOR

I wish to extend my warmest greetings to you all.

It's a privilege for me to have the opportunity to make contribution to alumni relations and to get to know numerous people from different graduating classes. I am returning to Kodai School 25 years after graduation and I must say it has been a wonderful journey this past seven months. The reminiscence of my time here as a student still resonates in my mind as I walk past my old dormitory, Kennedy. The friends we make at KIS are life time friends and the KIS experience binds us together no matter the generation. These relationships are what we seek to nurture and enhance through the various events, activities and publications.

7Roads magazine which was launched last year, aims to showcase diverse events, activities, academic prowess and achievements of KIS Alumni. In this year's edition, both student and staff alumni have made stunning contributions worth reading about. It covers stories of personal achievements, daring expeditions, humanitarian, literary works and renewing of old friendships.

We hope that this edition would also be entertaining and informative to you as did the first edition. I will

conclude with a word on inspiration from Wisdom Commons:

Unity

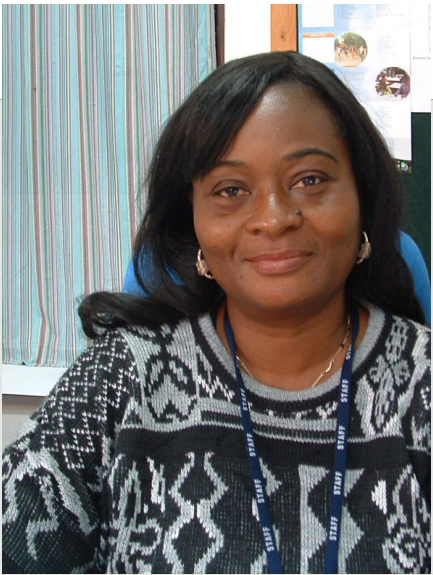
Unity is when we come together with other individuals or groups to form something greater than any of us. For many people, the heart of spirituality is a sense of being part of something larger than ourselves, a unity or oneness with our fellow humans and with the vast and intricate Reality in which we have our existence.

Unity is often built around a common purpose – a harmony of interests or values that create a shared identity. When people are united by shared values and goals, they can move together, synchronizing their efforts to attain things that none could attain alone.

Unity is inclusive. It frees us from the divisiveness of prejudice. We see our commonality without devaluing our differences. A sense of unity can transcend our fear of each other. In unity, the joy of one is the joy of all, and the hurt of one is the hurt of all; the honor of one is the honor of all.

Be involved and stay connected. Thank you.

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DON'T RUSH ME

July 11, 2007

RUTH KAMALA (MARTIN) KORTELING, CLASS OF 1947

I stood, hands behind me, head bent upward, looking at the white, frothy, roaring water

Pommelling over the cliff, hitting jabs of rock, causing spray that made a rainbow in the sun. MAJESTIC. MIGHTY. POWERFUL.

Though my arms were locked behind me, I could almost feel two other arms slowly extend farther and farther, as I grew taller, until they embraced the falls, completely encircling it. I was hugging the falls ... yet allowing it to continue on its way. It was filling me, cleansing me. It slipped thru me, and over me..., yet I was dry.

Then the words came. DON'T RUSH ME.

It takes time to FEEL ... to become one with.

The water rushed on, but time stood still.

DON'T RUSH ME.

But in the real world time DOES march on, and people were waiting.

I turned. Yet unwilling to leave the water, I followed it down to the lower falls, and on, as it stumbled less over rocks, till finally it became a quiet, clear passage over smooth, colorful stones.

DON'T RUSH ME ... thru the Japanese Garden in Seattle, sitting on a bench above the pond, soft music floating up, as hushed as the people slowly wandering the paths.

It takes time to absorb the subtle shades of green and blue and yellow/orange of leaves from various trees.

It takes time to see and appreciate how the trees dovetail together, giving depth to this picture in front, with a background of dark firs in back.

DON'T RUSH ME ... as I stand on rocks above Whistler and above the tree line, surrounded by yet higher jagged peaks iced with snow in July. It's so quiet up here - even with others around. It must be something like this to stand "on the top of the world".

DON'T RUSH ME ... on the suspension bridge, ever so gently swaying, where I can look down at white water endlessly carving a curve in the rock.

DON'T RUSH ME ... as I marvel at the straightness and tallness of the fir and hemlock and pine trees of the Northwest. I feel dwarfed as I look up, up, up. How can they grow so tall? What a long way nutrients must travel.

How grand they are ... in a forest or in a yard.

But Life on earth does NOT stand still...

And in the airport in Seattle I DID rush and did not get my luggage squarely on the escalator step. It toppled, and so did I, losing a shoe, and landing on my tailbone!

BACK TO THE REAL WORLD!



MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN AFGHANISTAN

NANCY HATCH DUPREE, CLASS OF 1944

A childhood during the 1930s that included the Maharaja's magnificent durbars and equally spectacular ceremonies staged by the British Raj in Trivandrum, as well as days spent in villages associated with my father's pioneer agricultural center at near-by Martandam, was balanced by idyllic hours midst nature's wooded beauty in Kodai. Such variety was good preparation for a life filled with peoples of all sorts, learning from them and respecting their diverse outlooks.

I was brought to Kodai by parents and lived on Association Hill. I left Kodai School in 6th grade, but I had a good academic foundation and since I participated in several

plays (written by my mother) it taught me stage presence for later public performances

My favourite campus memory is learning to roller skate; most vivid memories off campus were boating on the lake, walks in woods and my first movie ever, in Kodai bazaar was Shirley Temple in color! Forgot the title but something tells me it was about a lot of ice-cream? The color impact was great.

The first time I ever saw electricity was in Kodai. Also, I learned all about flowers and loved them in our luxurious garden; the bliss of a first kiss; nothing to do with the campus I'm afraid. Hated 1st Grade - used to run away each day and walk home

alone (2 miles was it?, for my young legs a long way anyway)

As the years went by, I collected a BA from Barnard College and a MA from Columbia University in New York in the 1950s. I then spent years as a diplomat's wife in various capitals of the Middle East before ending up in 1962 in Kabul, Afghanistan, where I wrote guidebooks for the then newly established Afghan Tourist Organization. In the course of my research I met archaeologist Louis Dupree and married him in 1966. Thus began an exhilarating period of working together which sadly came to an end with Louis' death in March 1989.

The Soviets had occupied Afghanistan in December 1978 and the Duprees were compelled to join the three million refugees who fled to Pakistan. Massive aid programs were under way and it was Louis' bright idea to collect all the reports generated by this assistance in a central depository before they were lost. Such information would be invaluable once repatriation took place, he said, for he was one of a few convinced the Afghans would orchestrate a Soviet retreat. The last Soviet soldier walked out in February 1989. Furthering Louis' vision, the network among NGOs, UN agencies and bilateral offices expanded, a proper catalogue system was introduced, and an outreach component called ABLE placed box libraries in the camps.

In 2006, the collection, then numbering 36,000 documents, was moved to Kabul, registered with the government as the Afghanistan Centre at Kabul University (ACKU), and temporarily located in the Central Library of the university. ACKU moved forward with the sustained cooperation and coordination of many actors demonstrating these two basic development principles too often set aside: a prized plot on the campus was allotted to ACKU by the university; the

Ministry of Finance allocated US\$ 2 million to build a facility, and funds for equipment and staff came from an array of generous donors. The collection expanded rapidly and now has 87,000 documents.

ACKU opened its new home in March 2013. Its motto is Sharing Information for Nation Building. Cataloged documents are available for national and worldwide access in digital format. Every two weeks or so ACKU holds lectures and other events attended by up to 200 students and professors from KU and other universities in the city. Changing exhibitions adorn the halls. The reading room fills each month with as many as 5000 users. To date, ABLE has published 140 titles, and distributed 366,500 books to 220 libraries functioning in communities and high schools in all 34 provinces. For details about these activities see www.acku.edu.af

There is no end to the creative ideas yet to be explored. For 87 years my life has been filled with adventure, but time with ACKU has been truly exciting and richly rewarding.

Kabul 15 June 2013



//
Hated 1st Grade - used to run away each day and walk home alone (2 miles was it?, for my young legs a long way anyway)"



Sam Schmitthenner
*was awarded the
2013 ME Award for his
exemplary contribution
to Kodaikanal
International School
and as a missionary
serving in India."*



MARGARET EDDY AWARD

SAM SCHMITTHENNER, FORMER COUNCIL MEMBER



The Margaret Eddy Award is an annual Award given to distinguished KIS Alumni who has made significant contribution to KIS, excellence in their field/vocation and contribution to society –service to KIS, India and the world.

Sam Schmitthenner was awarded the 2013 ME Award for his exemplary contribution to Kodaikanal International School and as a missionary serving in India. He served as a Board Member for the School and all his children attended Kodai School. His son, William Schmitthenner '70 received the award on his behalf. Here is an excerpt from his acceptance speech:

My father was very disappointed that he was not able to come. Parkinson's had debilitated him. I am fortunate and honored to be chosen by my family.

I wish to tell you what kind of a man Sam Schmitthenner is and what Kodai has meant to him and my family. My father loves everything about India: the various cultures and religions and customs, its history, languages and dialects, and food. He is at home "roughing it" in rural India. He took us exploring old temples and fort ruins. He learned their lore from the locals. He was adventurous and enjoyed hiking, hunting, camping, fishing, and rafting rivers. We were fortunate that he and my mother knew all the trails in Kodai from hiking in their youth. He appreciated nature and wildlife, both in Kodai and in Pennsylvania.

He is a Telugu scholar, is fluent in it, and has studied Sanskrit. His knowledge of the Bible, its history and origins, has always impressed me.

People know him to be a very social person. He is well known to be a

joker, especially for his puns. For years, little children would listen in wonder when he told stories, usually making them up on the spot. We urged him to write, and he did when he retired, writing children's' stories and books about the mission experience. I highly recommend "Ramblings with Ruth," especially to Kodaiites, a beautiful memoir and love story about his life with my mother, who died of cancer two years after they retired.

Dad is a passive evangelist. His Christianity is a religion of love. The church is a community of service to people; to better their lives and give help where needed. One memory stands out with me. When Srisailem Dam was being built on the Krishna River, Srisailem was a shantytown without a church, school, or clinic. He and another Lutheran missionary were instrumental in rectifying that. I was with him on the way back home from



a visit there, when he took a side trip to inspect a new copper mine that had opened. When we arrived, it was dusk and work had finished, and people surrounded our jeep in curiosity. It was another shantytown of men without their families because there were no schools. “Would you like a school?” he asked. Within two hours we drove away with the agreement that the church would start two schools, one for the laborers, and an English medium school for the engineers and supervisors. The church would pay for the teachers on condition the schools would be Christian, and the community would erect the buildings at their expense. The miners’ joy was immeasurable. I was never so proud of my father.

After leaving India, he turned down an offer of a more lucrative position for his preference to serve a rural parish in Pennsylvania that was failing. The two churches in the parish did not get along, and both were losing attendance. Dad visited everyone on the church roll regularly, whether they came to church or not. He gave communion to anyone in their home, whether they were Lutheran or not. He encouraged those that had been shunned, such as unwed mothers, to come and have their kids baptized and attend Sunday school. Every service had a kids’ sermon, where they all gathered up front and listened to a

story. When he started, his salary was being paid by the Synod. By the fourth year, the parish was self-supporting and growing.


Dad is a “Kodai Kid,” still! Kodai had a large part in shaping the character of Sam Schmitthenner. At that time it was a school for missionaries’ kids, as it was in my day. He met my mother, Ruth, here. His parents were missionaries in Andhra, hers in Basra Iraq, this being the closest mission school for the Arabian missionaries. They went through school together and were High School sweethearts. They, my uncles and aunts, and my siblings all attended Kodai School. After mother died he married Barbara Columban, widow of Steve Columban, who taught physical therapy at Vellore Hospital, so even my stepbrothers and sister went to Kodai. This was our home, more than where our parents worked, because we were here over nine months of the year. Our peers were as close as brothers and sisters, the staff were our surrogate parents. We did everything together and lived by Kodai rules, which amazingly to me, were also the guide for most parents.

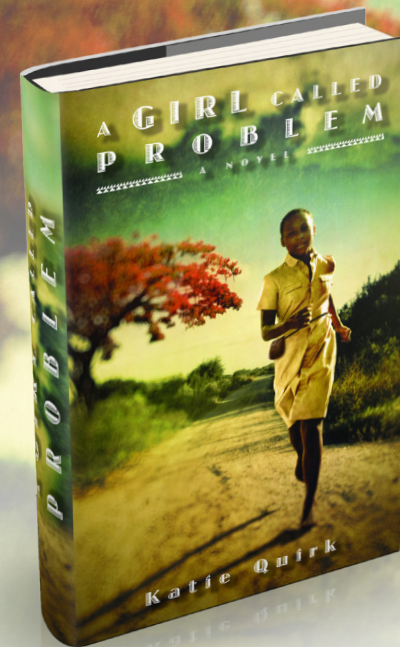
The mission spirit of helping others was strong. Kodai gave its students a solid, religiously moral background. If confronted head on, we would admit to any wrongdoing, and take our punishment. Kodai values have

basically stayed the same. Living here in boarding school teaches you to live in harmony with others. Living closely with people of other cultures and religions teaches understanding and tolerance, now more than ever.

My brother, Hans, says, “This is a one-of-a-kind place, a one-of-a-kind school, and a one-of-a-kind experience. It is a community unto itself. Kodai School expects the majority of its graduates to go to college. It teaches a single moral code. The vast majority leave here well balanced, educationally and psychologically. They have good marriages and raise their children well. They go all over the world and find interesting things to do.

Paulo Coelho, in his book “The Alchemist,” says, Life is a series of choices and consequences.....To realize one’s destiny is a person’s only real obligation.”

Sam Schmitthenner is one of many pastors, but he pursued his ministry in a country he loved with people he found interesting. He is an exceptional model of what a pastor should be. He is loved and admired because he served his fellow man in the spirit of Christ. Since remarrying, Sam and Barbara have continued serving their church in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania in the same spirit. That continues to make all the difference, not only for them, but for those they serve. 



WHEN AMERICA AND AFRICA MET AT SEVEN ROADS

KATIE QUIRK, ENGLISH TEACHER - 2001-03

Books are born of many experiences, but I’m fairly certain my middle-grade novel set in Tanzania, *A Girl Called Problem*, wouldn’t exist if it weren’t for Kodai School. In the fall of 2001, I was teaching English in the KIS middle school. That year, as a class, we read Steinbeck’s *The Pearl*, and we memorized Eliot’s *Macavity: The Mystery Cat*. We also did a lot of free reading, and that’s where my students introduced me to the world of middle-grade fiction, a genre that had exploded since I was their age. *Harry Potter* was popular, of course, but so were other middle-grade novels: *Holes*, *Because of Winn-Dixie*, *Out of the Dust*, and *The Giver*. I didn’t realize it at the time, but KIS and my seventh-grade students were seeding in me a passion for middle-grade fiction, one that would lead me to study the genre and later become one of its authors.

That same semester, KIS was facilitating something else that would prove to be even more important in the story

of my book and my life: the school agreed to admit my dear friend Modesta Kuzenzia into the 8th grade class. I had met Modesta when I lived in East Africa a few years earlier. Modesta’s access to education in her rural Tanzanian village was limited, but in the two years I spent in Tanzania, she stood out as an exceptional kid—hard working, resilient, and socially gifted beyond measure. Modesta, as her many KIS friends would soon discover, has a one-in-a-million laugh.

My husband, Tim Waring (KIS science teacher 2001-03), and I flew from India to Tanzania over the December break to meet up with Modesta and to help her make her courageous move to KIS. We got Modesta her first birth certificate, followed by a passport and visa. These documents were just the beginning of many firsts for Modesta: first time in an African city, let alone first time out of the country; first time on a plane and then a train; first time wearing jeans; first time speaking English full-time; first time standing out



because of the color of her skin; and her first time being far away from her family, her two mother tongues, and the ugali maize porridge she loved.

That initial semester at KIS wasn't exactly easy for Modesta. She was still learning English, which made understanding everything and everyone around her difficult. She also worried about her mom, who had been sick when she left Tanzania, and this worry was compounded by the fact that she wasn't able to communicate with her family. They didn't have a computer or a phone back in Tanzania, nor even electricity in their home.

Nevertheless, Modesta worked hard, and KIS did a wonderful job of embracing her. She emerged at the end of that first semester with great friends, including Rokimi Khawlhing and Ketsa DeJong (both KIS '06). Not

only did she learn English words like "osmosis" and "photosynthesis" for science, she memorized songs and performed in the middle-school production of Annie. She went on a field trip to Mr. Sither's Tibetan settlement, Bylakuppe, and she ran track and ended up winning medals on Field Day. By the next semester, the entire high-school choir would be performing a Swahili song Mr. Clarke overheard Modesta singing to herself around campus. Soon everyone at KIS knew and loved Modesta—I still run into alumni who talk about her laugh.

Modesta spent four and a half years at KIS. She graduated in 2006, and Tim and I, having moved back to the U.S. after her freshman year, had the good fortune to return to India for her graduation. Modesta has since gone on to get a university degree in Uganda, and she now works for another KIS-



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Although Modesta
and I have now
spent 10 years
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continents, our
stories continue to
overlap.”



affiliated family, John and Louise Riber (both class of 1973), along with their sons Jordan and Sterling (KIS'03). Together, they produce popular television shows and movies with imbedded development messages for their non-profit, Media for Development International Tanzania.


Although Modesta and I have now spent 10 years apart on separate continents, our stories continue to overlap. After teaching at KIS, I enrolled in a graduate program in creative writing and dove right into classes focused on middle-grade and young-adult fiction. Within a year, I had a draft of a novel set in Tanzania. The main character is a resilient 13-year-old girl whose name—Shida—means “Problem” in Swahili. Shida is determined to go to school and to train to become a village healer, in spite of some challenging circumstances, including a belief in her village that girls shouldn't attend school and a suspicion by some that her family is “cursed.”

Now, many drafts later, A Girl Called Problem was released in the spring of 2013 in both North America and the U.K. The novel has received some great press from publications I used to rely on for vetting books as a KIS teacher, including The New York Times, School Library Journal, and Kirkus Reviews.

Modesta proved critical in the writing of the book. She read drafts and did all sorts of research. She answered emails with questions like “So, if a person of your tribe has malaria and goes to a medicine man, what kind of medicine does she take?” But most importantly, Modesta herself, and the

time I spent with her in Tanzania, provided inspiration for A Girl Called Problem's story. If you read the novel, you'll see it is dedicated to Modesta.

I'd like to think that without KIS, Modesta and I would still be in contact today, but I'm not sure that's true. Modesta's educational opportunities in Tanzania were limited—if she had stayed there, her life certainly would have taken a different path. After I left Tanzania, she and I were forced to communicate by post, and at least at that time, many letters leaving East Africa literally got lost in the mail.

KIS opened doors for Modesta that allowed her access to a whole new world, one in which she could be a kid for a few more years, learning and playing at KIS, and then later get a university degree and a fulfilling job where she is valued for all the wonderful gifts she brings to the table. KIS also allowed me to cement my bond with Modesta. We spent a year and a half together in India as a quasi-mother-daughter-sister team, and since then we've remained in constant contact by phone and email. Because of that connection, I've been able to write A Girl Problem. More importantly, Tim and I will always think of Modesta as part of our family. We have KIS to thank for that. 

Katie Quirk (KIS teacher 2001-03) is the author of A Girl Called Problem. Katie is currently working on a book about raising her baby in Kodaikanal. Her website is www.katie-quirk.com

THE INCA TRAIL AND PERU

PIPPA MUKHERJEE, FORMER STAFF

In March and April of this year, I went to Peru specifically to do the Inca Trail which has been a lifetime wish and also to fly over the Nasca lines.

I flew into Lima from Amsterdam and stayed with a friend who teaches in one of the International schools of Lima and whom I had worked with in Malta. She had carefully booked the Inca Trail through an excellent company in Cusco, as to do this walking trip, one needs to book about five to six months in advance.

After a few days in Lima, Jane and I flew to Cusco which is about 3900 metres above sea level and stayed the night in a small hotel. We had to be up very early the next morning with all our luggage ready to be driven with the two American women who were to be with us, to the lovely little town of Ollantaytambo where we had breakfast and then came to the start point of the Inca Trail. Our guide Edwin was excellent and we had nine porters to carry all the tents, sleeping gear, food etc. plus a fully functioning portalou. We also had a chef who cooked delicious food for us. We were very lucky as we trekked at the end of the rainy season when the vegetation is at its best.

At the check post, we had our passports checked as only 200 people a day are allowed on the trail and then we started walking up a lovely valley with the river on one side and trees covered in Spanish moss on the other. The lunch stop four hours later was near a small stream and then we continued up into the mountains with spectacular views on all sides to

Condor flying



Full view of Llaqtapata



La Salineras



Me with sheep Colca



Ancient candelabra on sand



Jane feeding the llama with her apple core



Jane and I top of Machu Pichu



Saints day Puno

our night camp site. About six and a half to seven hours walking but with fabulous plants everywhere and as usual I was the slowest as every plant was fascinating. We also saw many Inca ruins en route and could climb among the stones of many.

Dinner and bed with coca tea to drink to help with any side effects of the high altitude which luckily did not worry me.

Day two was a much more gruelling hike as we had to climb to 4215 metres up extremely steep Inca steps to the ridge where we had wonderful views over the Andes but then had to start down the steep steps on the other side to reach our camp site; its about nine and a half hours hiking. Again lovely food was offered to us and views of snow-capped mountains with the sun behind them.

Day three, a tough start for the day but worth every minute and perhaps my favourite day as well. Although we walked about ten hours, it was often through cloud forest and the vegetation was superb, by about 6.0 pm we reached the last and largest camp site where all 200 trekkers camp for the night. We had our dinner and

went to sleep quite early as we had to get up at 3.0 am the next morning in time for the porters to pack up and get all the equipment to the train at 4.30 am. Our walk started through forest to the Machu Pichu Sun gate which unfortunately was bathed in cloud, so we could not see the sun rise but then we quickly went on to Machu Pichu which is quite the most breathtaking place I have ever seen; rising out of the mist with the buildings contoured around the mountain, one cannot describe its beauty adequately.

We spent the morning up to about 1.30 pm walking everywhere amongst the ruins and then took a bus to Aguis Caliente, the small rail head town where we had lunch in a restaurant and listened to pan pipe music played by musicians on the roadside. Then took the train part way to Cusco and after that a bus, as the line had been damaged by a rock fall. Cusco is much higher than Machu Pichu which is only about 2700 metres.

My friend left the next morning to get back to school and I had four and a half days by myself, to explore Cusco and the area around the city which was the capital of the Inca civilisation.

I then take a tourist bus (booked in Lima) to Punoo on Lake Titicaca. At Punoo, I spent three days, one of which was on the lake which borders Bolivia, and walked around the city which I loved. There is so much to see in the towns and cities of Peru.

Next stop Arequipa where there is the Monastery of Santa Catalina and the incredible Mummy of Juanita who was a young girl sacrificed at the top of a volcano and is the only Mummy that still has her internal organs intact. Her body is being studied and her DNA taken to find relatives amongst the present population.

From Arequipa I spent two days up on the Altiplano over mountains ridges 6000 metres above sea-level to visit the Colca Canyon which is deeper than the Grand Canyon and has a population of giant vultures called Condors flying on the updrafts. Then back to Arequipa and next stop Nasca.

The Nasca lines were made from about 200 BC onwards by the Nasca tribes and the reason for these enormous figures and lines have never fully been explained as they were only discovered in 1939 when a man flew over them; but one theory is that they were made

by aliens. This does not match the life's work of Maria Reich who spent all her time looking at the fantastic trapezoids, lines often more than 6 miles in length and patterns in the shape of animals including a whale. The lines were made by scraping away the dark coloured soil on what must have once been a river bed and exposing the lighter subsoil beneath and exposing the lighter subsoil beneath in patterns, which can only be seen

from the air. Maria Reich was certain that the lines were for Astrological purposes but other scientists have other theories none of which can be proved. From Nasca I went to the Ballestros islands which are called 'The poor man's Galapagos' where one takes a boat out to the islands which are covered in sea bird life with penguins and sea lions everywhere, and of

course each rock covered in guano. The last part of the trip was to the Paracas National Reserve which is mainly desert but is on the coast, so there are rocky inlets and interesting geological formations everywhere, also a very interesting museum. Back to Lima and then the end of my wonderful trip. I was very sad to leave this fascinating country. **ZR**



Camp night

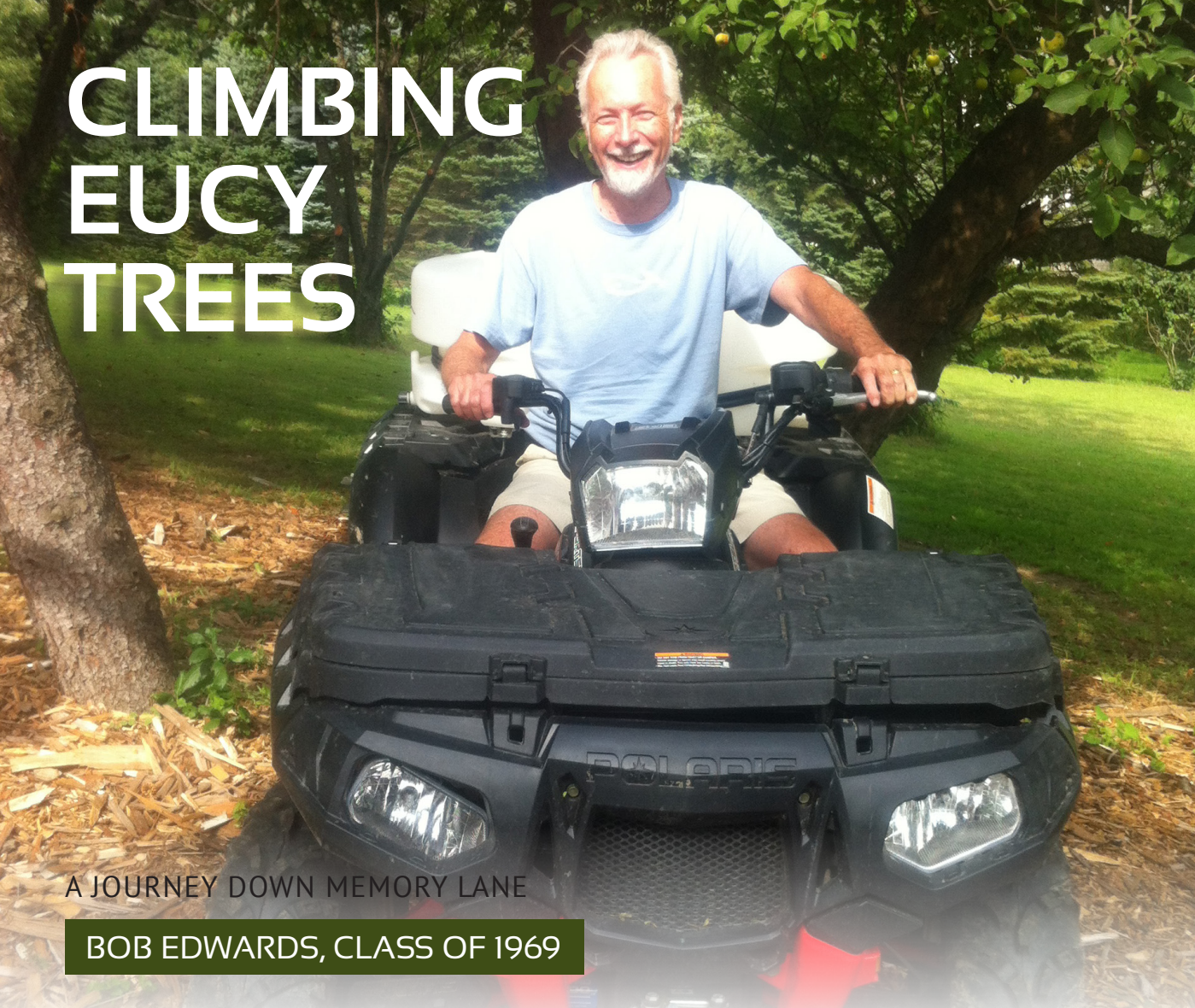


Ruins Sayacmarca



Pottery recovered from Inca and pre Inca graves Larco Museo Lima

CLIMBING EUCY TREES



A JOURNEY DOWN MEMORY LANE

BOB EDWARDS, CLASS OF 1969

I spent a couple of semesters in Wyadra, after Clancullen folded. I think it was in 8th or maybe 9th grade. Verle Bell decided we should make a tree house in the top of a eucy tree. The "WE" I refer to is Verle Bell (our leader), Ben Norton, Ken Rubesh, Richard McDermid and myself. We went scouting about Wyadra Compound for a tall eucy tree that had (from the ground looking up) a reasonable potential to support a tree house platform. It had to be near the top of the tree. It had to have three branches to support the platform, and have room for us 5 kids. We located our mark!

We found this huge length of thick rope (about an inch and a half thick) in one of the Wyadra go-downs. It was probably 180 feet long, if not just slightly longer. Actually, the discovery of this rope in that shed led our imaginations to think we could use it to conquer the mighty eucalyptus tree. We determined that once the initial moves were made for one of us to get up to the top, we could loop the big rope over a branch at the top, drop the ends down, and tie the two ends at the bottom of the tree. This way we would have double rope to shinny up from branch to branch.

Big question: Eucy branches are a minimum of 10 feet apart. How in the world do we get the big rope up there? Verle, of course had the answer. He took a section of thinner coir rope, which was about 25 ft long. He weighted one end with a small chunk of wood. He threw the weighted end over the first branch, then tied the ends together at the bottom, and climbed up the rope to the first branch. Then while at the first branch level, Verle pulled the knotted part of the rope up to his level, untied it, reattached the weight, threw the rope over the second branch, secured it, and went up to the second, then the third branch etc., Until he reached the



top. We were utterly amazed at the genius and daring of this guy.

When Verle reached “the summit,” He surveyed the three branch site saying, “Yup, we can do it. The location is fine.” He stayed up at the top, swaying in the breeze for a minute and then began his decent using the small 25 ft. rope. Verle’s next task was to take one end of the large rope up to the top with him, and drape it over the top branch, so we of lesser courage could shinny up and help him construct the tree house. He did so without much trouble. After draping it over one branch at the top, we now had our “stairway to heaven” via the large rope. Doubled up from the tree top down, the two ends met 10 feet off the ground, at just under the first branch, which is where we tied the two ends. This height, we thought was perfect, as it would keep people off our “property”; since they had no access to where the “stairway to heaven” began, which was at the first branch, unless they brought a ladder or their own piece of rope.

The problem was, none of us had the initial courage to climb the distance, except Verle. So how high up was our tree house to be? Verle dropped a measuring string down, holding one end at the top. We stretched it tight and cut it at the ground. He dropped it, then we stretched the string down the driveway, and measured the distance end to end, to be around 101 feet. We found an old well pulley, and some thinner rope. Verle wired the pulley to a branch at the top. We of lesser courage were the ground crew, cutting wattle, and sending it to the top via rope and pulley, where Verle would secure it with wire and nails and a couple of bolts. Little by little a frame began to take shape with Verle doing most of the daring work up at the top of the tree.

We were doing well as the ground crew, but all of us wanted to help construct the tree house at the top of this eucy tree. Little by little, we would make it slowly from branch to branch. Each attempt would produce a certain



Cal Dexter, Ted Scudder and Bagwan Mathani

level of comfort, which would enable us to go to the next branch. It must have taken me 5 days of trying (after school) before I finally made it up the tree to the platform foundation Verle was constructing.

We attempted to “work” helping Verle secure the platform, but it was really scary to release our grip on the rope (or a branch) and use both hands to place a wattle branch, wrap wire, or pound a nail. But it is amazing how quickly you lose your fear of heights when you are actually occupied with a task. It happened fast. We were soon shinnying right up the rope to the top, with very little rest, and doing some pretty (stupid) daring construction feats, the greatest of which was to secure the outermost foundation. Now THAT’s going out on a limb!

One day Richard McDearmid was 20 ft above me going up the tree. I was probably at 50 ft. above the ground. We were both taking a break from the climb, holding on to the big rope, and resting on a branch. I looked up to say, “Let’s move on up,” and as I turned my head towards him to speak to him Richard stood up. A hatchet which was resting on his lap, fell off his lap and on to mine, (harmlessly) just missing my head. Close call!

We constructed quite a sturdy base platform, then placed vertical wattle

branches which made the siding, and wove bamboo (from Fairy Falls and Leving Stream area) between the struts. Scrounging around the property we found two old corrugated metal pieces, which we hoisted up via the pulley, and secured to the siding for a roof.

Our task finished, we would go up there, hang out, tell stories etc. It was really “cool.” Not content to just hang out, we asked the house mother if we could spend the night in the tree house. Her heart was in her throat. 100 feet up? We convinced her that we had been up there so many times that surely nothing could happen. She gave the permission. Up we went with our sleeping bags. It was quite windy that night. (Remember watching eucy trees sway in the wind?). Five of us in sleeping bags, trying to sleep; we all claimed it was the best night of sleep we had had in a long time. As I recall, I was totally frightened and hardly slept at all. We did that just once!

I revisited Wyadra, even after the property was sold. This was in the mid-seventies, when I was in college. The main access rope was gone and our roofing had blown off, but the tree house main platform still stood until the wood cutters took down all the trees on Wyadra compound.

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Not content to just hang out, we asked the house mother if we could spend the night in the tree house. Her heart was in her throat. 100 feet up?



LEIF DEJONG, CLASS OF 2009

THE PEMA PEACE PROJECT

Pema was born in Tibet and escaped out of Chinese oppression at the age of ten to Dharamsala, India.

Kodaikanal International School (KIS) and other similar institutions has provided the structure, base, and incentive that allows alumni to go out into the world and excel in what they are truly passionate about while being able to give back to the community that fostered them. Leif DeJong, a 2009 graduate from KIS along with his friend Benedikt Urban, a 2010 graduate from Mahindra United World College (MUWCI) in Pune, joined forces to run a project known as the Pema Peace Project. It was inspired by the work of the late Pema Norbu whose dedication to peace inspired many to follow his lead in this extraordinary initiative.

Pema Norbu had a dream to change the lives of many people by educating the Tibetan community on effective ways to use nonviolent strategies and tactics in order to attain peace and justice in Tibet. Pema felt that nonviolence

was misconceived to be passive and ineffective and strived to correct that

PEMA'S STORY

Pema was born in Tibet and escaped out of Chinese oppression at the age of ten to Dharamsala, India. His hard work and determination from the Tibetan Children's Village (TCV) school got him into Mahindra United World College with a full scholarship and later to Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana. More than his academic achievements and social responsibilities, Pema was

brilliant, broad minded, and sincere in his thinking. Amongst many other qualities, Pema was an active member of the community and led the planting of 40,000 trees in an attempt to restore biodiversity while at MUWCI. This was later recognized and honored by the Prime Minister of India. Pema held himself to excellence in his studies and his personal life. He had a unique perspective towards the world and had a deep yearning for knowledge and a new way of thinking. Pema believed that to inspire change, one had to promote dialogue and group discussions

through social activities. This led him to write a peace proposal to teach Tibetan students about active ways of approaching nonviolence. In a series of unfortunate events, Pema was tragically killed in a car accident in the summer of 2011 before the peace project could be implemented.

PEMA'S DREAM

A class on the 'History of Nonviolent Movements' at Earlham College inspired Pema to further explore a concept known as "Direct Nonviolent Action" formulated by the writings



Pema Norbu had a dream to change the lives of many people by educating the Tibetan community on effective ways to use nonviolent strategies and tactics in order to attain peace and justice



Leif DeJong was born and raised in the hill station of Kodaikanal in South India where he spent the majority of his time living with the local Tamil community and understanding their socio economic differences and the struggles that they deal with

and lifetime work of Gene Sharp. Direct Nonviolent Action is an active approach to nonviolence that involves heavy planning and analysis of societal structures to formulate strategies and tactics for a potential nonviolent movement. While at Earlham, Pema devised a proposal for the “Davis Projects for Peace” to bring books on Direct Nonviolent Action and translate them into Tibetan to spark interest amongst the Tibetan students. He then aimed to run workshops in the TCV schools to connect the students to the ideas and writings of various life time advocates of Direct Nonviolent Action.

“As Nehru once said, “today’s children, tomorrow’s nation.” The future of Tibet is in the hands of today’s generation of Tibetans and a fundamental understanding of nonviolence is vital to our success.” said Pema Norbu. The Pema Peace Project

In the aftermath of Pema’s unfortunate death, Dr. Carol Hunter of Earlham College along with a group of students, raised enough funds to supply books to several TCV school libraries in Dharamsala as Pema envisioned. Benedikt Urban, Pema’s friend and ex-TCV student, took the lead in this initiative and upon his return to Earlham College, collaborated with Leif DeJong, another one of Pema’s close friends, to rewrite Pema’s proposal in a project now known as the Pema Peace Project. After a year of hard work, the proposal was finally accepted by Earlham College and was implemented in Dharamsala in the summer of 2013.

The project implementation team, led by Leif and Benedikt in collaboration with Pema’s brother Wangchen Tsering and others, aimed to educate Tibetan students on Direct Nonviolent Action by running five day workshops in

four Tibetan schools in and around Dharamsala. The workshops are aimed at awakening the teacher within all Tibetans by providing them with the necessary tools to develop active nonviolent strategies and tactics in the Tibetan context. The syllabus for these workshops was developed as a collaborative effort by advocates and facilitators of Direct Nonviolent Action from around the world. In addition, the project provides an online platform, (pemapeaceproject.org) that allows anyone from around the globe to explore, discuss, and contribute to Direct Nonviolent Action as a way to help restore peace and justice for Tibetans.

LEIF AND BENEDIKT’S STORY

Leif DeJong was born and raised in the hill station of Kodaikanal in South India where he spent the majority of his time living with the local Tamil community and understanding their socio economic differences and the struggles that they deal with. In conjunction and through the same lens, he got to know many of the exiled Tibetans living in the community and was able to hear their stories. After graduating from KIS in 2009, Leif went to attend Earlham College, a small Quaker liberal arts institution in Richmond Indiana with the intention of studying ‘Peace and Global Studies’ and merging it with his passion and major in ‘Computer Science’. Leif met Pema in Earlham College and quickly became close friends and lived with him in the summer of 2011 where he inspired Leif with his dream to teach active nonviolence to the Tibetan youth.

“Pema Norbu was very dear to my heart and as a result of his engagement in my life, I ended up retracing his footsteps all the way back to Dharamsala and learning a great deal



After a whole year of planning and writing project proposals, Leif and Benedikt won the Earlham Peace Award”

about his background and the people who made it. In that process, I have come to develop a deep connection with the Tibetan community and all the wonderful people that encompass it. I have learned so much as a project manager and a workshop facilitator for the Pema Peace Project and although there is not a lot of clarity in how the project will piece itself together for the long term, the connections and the experiences I have made will be the driving factors that motivate me to work with others to tackle the continuation and expansion of the project.”

Benedikt Urban was born and raised in the Tibetan settlement of Dharamsala in Northern India. He attended the Upper Tibetan Children’s Village (Upper TCV) school until he

was eighteen, and therefore naturally feels very attached to the Tibetan community. While growing up in Dharamsala, Benedikt learnt the local languages, developed an insider’s view of the Sino-Tibetan conflict, and the nonviolent middle way approach advocated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Benedikt’s undergraduate education at a progressive institution like Earlham has further exposed him to a unique set of skills and a different dynamic of the world.

“Growing up in Dharamsala and especially attending the Tibetan Children Village (TCV) schools, I realized that part of going out into the world embodied in Tibetan culture meant that I would return home and give back to the community that fostered me. Being Austrian/German

by blood and Tibetan by birth, I feel I have a unique advantage to really help bring a different dynamic to life with the Tibetan community. This was one of the driving incentives that led me to honour my late friend Pema Norbu, by co-creating the Pema Peace Project and serving the community that has shaped a big part of who I am today.”

After a whole year of planning and writing project proposals, Leif and Benedikt won the Earlham Peace Award which funds students to lead projects that inspire global change as part of Earlham’s initiative as an institution.

Soon afterwards they began preparatory groundwork by establishing contact with the various Tibetan schools in Dharamsala, starting work on the

syllabus, and figuring out the logistical ground work needed to run the workshops. With the active support from the school principals, approximately thirty students were selected per school solely on an interest basis.

THE WORKSHOP

In June of 2013, Leif and Benedikt traveled to Dharamsala where they had a week to finalize plans before running five day workshops in four of the Tibetan schools. With the help of Dr. Mary and Rabbi Everett Gendler, advocates of nonviolence who marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, and Dr. Carol Hunter, professor of Peace and Global Studies at Earlham College, Leif and Benedikt finalized the five day workshop manual that aimed at using a series of lectures, discussions, activities, skits, and videos to help bring out the potential in the Tibetan youth to explore this approach to nonviolence.

In brief, the five day syllabus attempted to encompass a well-rounded and holistic understanding of Direct Nonviolent Action that would provide students with the tools and the groundwork needed to start thinking about and further developing strategies and tactics for the Tibetan context on their own. The approach revolved around an academic understanding of nonviolence as opposed to the religious and principled definitions that the Tibetans were exposed to growing up.

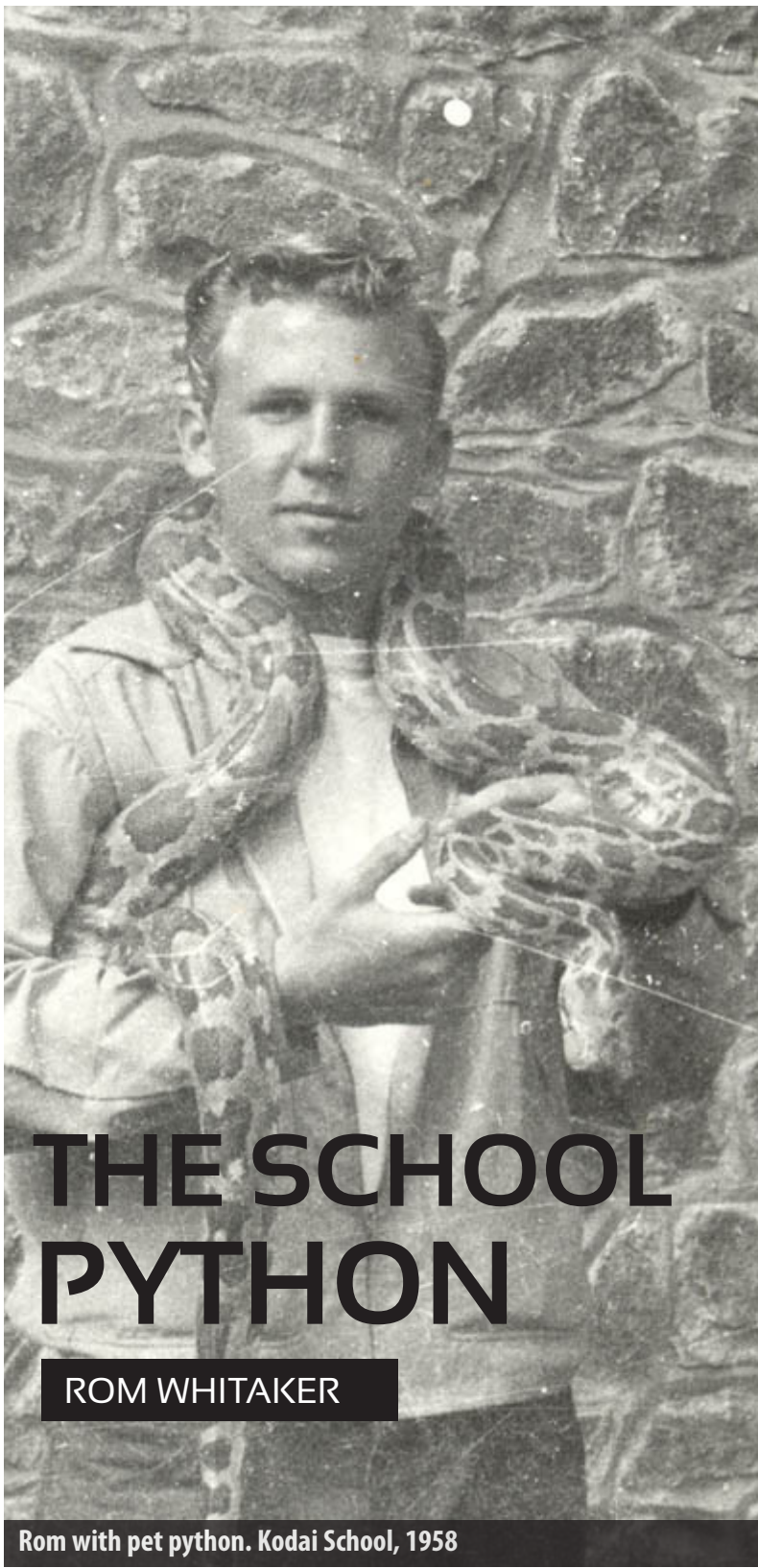


The teaching style was aimed at helping the students themselves determine the concepts and understanding of the material by awakening the teacher within them as opposed to simply providing concepts and their definitions while reiterating the theory from the resource books and manual.

A month later, Leif and Benedikt successfully completed the running of four workshops in Tibetan schools in and around Dharamsala including Pema’s old school, TCV Gopalpur. The project website was also launched - pemapeaceproject.org.

THE NEXT STEP

This project was very motivational and has made us want to continue running these kinds of workshops in the future. Next year, we hope to raise more funds for the project and run workshops in South India in the settlements in Bylakuppe and in the Kodaikanal community and schools. We feel that the diaspora of Tibetans in the world would benefit from these kinds of initiatives and hope to be able to target them in the future. In addition, if the project grows, we hope to take what we learnt from the Tibetan context and run workshops of this sort for other minorities like the Palestinians in Palestine. With hard work and motivation, perhaps these goals can be accomplished for the future of peace not only in Tibet but for the world.



Well, no student was allowed to have pets but I couldn’t very well leave my pet python with my mother in her apartment in Bombay, so I smuggled the 8 footer into my room at Boys Block when I got back from vacation, probably January, 1958. Mrs. Daisy Gibbs was house mother and there were several ayahs working there then. I convinced the ayahs that I would sweep my room and not to bother.

The python, stayed under my bed in a large wooden box I made in Shop class, complete with holes for ventilation and a secure latch. He was a very tame snake, never struck or bit even once. Since Kodai is so cool most of the time the snake was reasonably inactive and didn’t require much food, one or two rats per week were sufficient to keep him healthy. I had a bunch of rat traps and would set them near the garbage dump and along the inside wall of Tredis Compound (where the Pudukottai rajah had his bungalow) where there was abundant evidence of rats digging burrows.

Sunday afternoon was always basking time for us boys and we put out bedspreads on the grass, put some music on and enjoyed doing nothing except sunbathe and maybe read for several hours while the sun was high and hot. The python was with us, a bedspread close at hand to throw over it in case a staff member happened to walk by. What was amazing is that the big snake remained a secret for months before it was finally found out. I did indeed have to take it back to Bombay in May that year and my mother did end up looking after it.

The green pit viper we found at Thalayar (Rat Tail) Falls and Russells viper (caught swimming in Berijam lake!) I kept for a while were a bit dicey, both are venomous and if one had escaped and someone got bitten it would have been pretty bad to say the least. Well I only kept these guys for a few weeks and then let them go, just to be on the safe side. This was the beginning of my infamous career so I do have fond memories of KIS! The pic was taken by a friend in back of the Science Lab.

CLASS OF '73 REUNION IN MONTREAL

LOUISE RIBER '73



French Canadian Kodaiites

Our door that shut 40 years ago opened briefly for a spectacular view! The Class of 1973 held its 40th class reunion over the Memorial Day weekend in Montreal, Canada. Thanks to the generosity of one of our classmates, Carole Lachance, and her husband, Jac, we had a perfect venue for this momentous occasion. The seed was planted by Ingrid Hahn, who suggested we bring Pandy Bhaskeran

over to the Kirchenwald reunion for a 40 year celebration. After much discussion and flying emails, we decided it would be best to have a separate event just for our class. Things developed from there and with three of us at the steering wheel, we managed to get 16 classmates plus 6 spouses and one child attending. We had people coming from India, Australia, London, Tanzania, USA and

Canada. We even got the chance to extend our gathering out on the Sunday to the wider collective of Kodaiites that live in the Montreal area. It was like being transported back in time to our Kodai days which we will all cherish for the rest of our lives. Excitement at seeing long ago friends, laughter at junior high pranks, exchanging stories of our lives, eating



Montreal gang



Vince leads



Oh the FOOD



Class of '73 in Bellingham



Gifts for the Hostess: (L to R) John Gipson, Louise Heineman, Pandy Bhaskeran, Carole Lachance



Montreal reunion

pakka lamb curry, chicken biriyani, and litres of chai, walking in the rain and warming up by the fire--just like Kodai. What a soul-warming reunion we had.

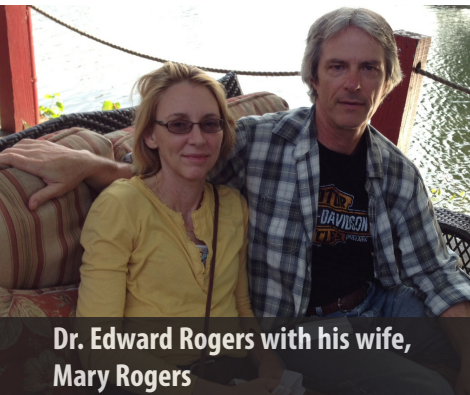
I think Peter Reble has spoken for all of us when he said, "One of the things we Kodaites are very good at is sharing ourselves. It is so amazing to be with a community of people who just pitch in and contribute. Can you imagine if we were together doing things on more than an occasional basis? We would be a catalyst for world transformation! Speaking from my own experience of being together after a long separation from some of

dearest people I know, I was present to a space of "completion". It was like finally having the chance to complete a conversation with a bunch of people I was very close to that had been unexpectedly interrupted. Forty years may seem to be more than enough time to make things not matter any more. Our experience together in Montreal proved otherwise. Distance in time and place will never remove the impact of those years together no matter how they were experienced."

As the reunion ends, and we all go back to our somewhat disconnected lives, Pandy sums up our ongoing

connected spirit with: "Gowri and I landed at the Chennai airport at 3 30 am today and went thru a LOONG queue at immigration, collected our baggage, had a fight with the taxi driver who fixed up one rate and then demanded Rs. 100 more after we piled in our luggage, got a taste of all the horning, autos, dust and humid temperature at 35 degrees C, etc. and reached home at 5:00 am...but, it is GOOD to be back home....Yes -- I keep telling myself those lines from THE WIZARD OF OZ...."home is where the heart is...."

In The Pictures, Class of '73: Alfred and John Gipson, Pat (Herbich) O'Connor, Kaya O'Connor, Vince O'Connor, Ingrid Hahn, Sylvia Trautman, Mary Weddington, Joy Johnson, Louise Riber, Jessica Maher, Christine Fanning, Carole Lachance, Karen Tibbals, Henry Poetker, John Riber, Pandy Bhaskeran, Tim Fanning, Peter Reble, Jac (Carole's husband) Louise (Heineman) Riber, Robin Perret, Gowri Bhaskeran, Alfred Pickard, Nathan Knoll



Dr. Edward Rogers with his wife, Mary Rogers

DR. EDWARD W. ROGERS '76

CHIEF KNOWLEDGE OFFICER AT
GODDARD- NASA



Attending Kodai is an experience, a legacy and a privilege. It has shaped my life in many fundamental ways and helped me to be the person I am today.

Dr. Edward Rogers (class of '76) is the Chief Knowledge Officer at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt Maryland. He received his Bachelor of Science Degree from Ohio State University Agriculture, AA Christ for the Nations Institute in Bible ESL Certificate, Georgetown University, Arabic Level 4- Middlebury Language Institute MIB University of South Carolina and his PhD from Cornell University. He has consulted with a number of organizations on building conceptual transparency and leveraging collective knowledge. In a short online interview, he sent the following;

Q: How has KIS impacted your life?

A: Kodai prepared me to address complex challenges in my life. After college my wife and I spent five years in Lebanon doing Christian relief work during some dark days for the people of southern Lebanon. Later I pursued graduate degrees and again it was Kodai that had prepared me for academic challenges. I did not hesitate to take on first a Master's in International Business from South Carolina and later a PhD from Cornell. It was the foundation of inquiry and learning I had from the teachers at Kodai that continued to inspire me.

Q: How Did You Come To KIS?

A: I grew up in Dhahran Saudi Arabia, my father was a Physics Professor there and they needed boarding School to send me to after the 'civil war' in Lebanon in 1970 diminished the appeal of the American School in Beirut. Ms. Schoeninger came to Dhahran to recruit and I and my brother Glenn (KIS grad 74) went to visit KIS in 1971 (I enrolled in 72).

Q: What Is Your Favorite Campus Memory?

A: My favorite memory is that of fishing with Tom Fergin, Charlie Lutz, Ron Nunn and Paul Vander Aarde. We used to hike out to the trout stream and fish for rainbow trout, cook and eat them!

Q: What Does Being A KIS Alumnus Mean To You?

A: It means a special connection to India which I treasure. It imprinted

on my life a special place and love for India and the Indian people. I also became a Christian in my own faith while at Kodai so it holds a special memory of beginnings for me.

Q: What Is Your Greatest Accomplishment?

A: While in Lebanon we managed to hold Christian retreats for believers from Israel, Palestine and Lebanon. Such joint meetings were almost unheard of. I can still see the tears on the faces of these believers joined in one praise and worship session knowing that what they had in common in Christ was far more than what may tend to divide them in the physical world.

Q: What Do You like Most about the Career Path Chosen?

A: My current career offers the opportunity to work with lots of very smart and intelligent people who are working on complex and exciting challenges. It continually challenges my abilities to help the organization work smarter and continually learn from all the projects and missions undertaken at NASA Goddard.

Q: Additional comments you would like to add?

A: Attending Kodai is an experience, a legacy and a privilege. It has shaped my life in many fundamental ways and helped me to be the person I am today. I am forever grateful for those who poured their lives into mine during the four years I was there.



DR. JOE RITTMANN '66

CONSULTANT IN
HEALTH DEVELOPMENT



Joe has worked in over 20 countries and has visited more than 60. Kodai remains the destination for Joe to meet his family each year

Dr. Joe Rittmann joined Kodai School because his parents were missionaries so boarding school was the basis for getting him schooled. After completing primary school at Loch End, Highclerc was the next step for secondary school. His favorite campus memory is being part of High School student council.

He graduated from KIS in 1966 with about 25 class mates. He went back to the US for college, dropped out for 2 years after his 3rd year, then returned and finished his BA in 1972, the year he met and married Marty Grubbs class of 1969. By 1974, when he traveled out to Kodai through Europe, Iran, and Afghanistan, he had visited all 50 of the United States. After six month volunteer teaching 4th grade at Kodai, he obtained an MA in teaching English as a Second Language in 1976 and continued his teaching career in Iran, Libya, and the US until 1982, when he obtained a Masters in Public Health. In 1987, he took his PhD in Health Education and continued to live and work abroad as a freelance consultant in health development working with

firms, NGOs, and agencies in the Middle East and Africa. In 1995, he continued to advice on projects in Central Asia, where Mihra (KIS 2000) and Misha (KIS 2003) went to a local Russian-language school before they came to KIS to graduate. In 1999, Joe volunteered to teach an IB class in business at KIS, and in 2000 continued on other assignments in Central Asia, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Joe has worked in over 20 countries and has visited more than 60. Kodai remains the destination for Joe to meet his family each year, with Mihra working in Central Asia and Misha studying in China.

In his travels, he has learned about the world from having lived and traveled to over 60 Countries. Joe says what he likes most about his career path is the opportunity to have lived and worked worldwide. When asked what does being a KIS alumnus mean to him, he said he loves connecting with the Kodai village. Joe Rittmann is a Co-Rep for the Minnesota Chapter in the US.



Class of '66 - Joe Rittmann, Lyn Krause, Maureen Aung-Thwin, Bob Coleman, Terri Oliver-Crabbe and Curtis Johnson



JOURNEY OF A WILLING HEART

NANCY & STEVE JAMES (BOTH CLASS OF 1967)

Having just returned from a long trip, Steve and I had only two days to unpack, rest, and gear up for a rough trip from northern Haiti to Grand Goave on the southwest peninsula, 2 hours from Port Au Prince. We had been invited to attend the dedication of a new Baptist church that was replacing one destroyed in the 2010 earthquake.

Although we were honored to have received an invitation to this remarkable event, I wasn't keen on another trip nor did I look forward to the long drive. I prayed about it and turned it over to the Lord, saying "not my will but your will!" To my amazement I started to have a change of attitude and made plans to go.

Since our truck has been out of commission for weeks, we were delighted when our friend Paul

Romeus said he was going to the event and offered us a ride. In Haiti, travel is almost never done alone, and the truck quickly filled with people and belongings. The journey was uneventful although crowded and somewhat hot since the air-conditioning was not working.

We had heard that the mountain roads had been fixed, and much to everyone's amazement, it was true! With new pavement the switchback mountain roads were not as precarious as before and the travel time almost two hours shorter. Haiti has had terrible roads for decades. That major roadwork has been completed is nothing short of a miracle!

Nearing Port Au Prince, we began seeing the tent-pocked landscape where people are still living in dry, barren, inhospitable hills that are

becoming established villages. Once in the capital it was encouraging to see that many of the damaged buildings, so evident a few years ago, have been repaired or completely rebuilt.

Port Au Prince was teeming with people buying and selling. Motorcycles crowded the streets already jammed with buses, trucks and cars, and pedestrians walked faster than the vehicles. It's always a relief to get through the stand still traffic of Port and get on the road going southwest. Six hours later we arrived at our destination in Grand Goave.

Our little group stayed at the Guest House of an organization called Conscience International, a group partnering with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, the American Baptist Church, and the Haitian Baptist Convention. They designed the "rubble

houses" whose sturdy, particle design using gabion wire baskets filled with the earthquake rubble, is intended to be "earthquake proof." According to the area housing coordinator, Jeremy Hollomon, the Haitian community and teams from the US have completed over 130 of these homes. Displaced families are so grateful to have a safe dwelling in which to live and raise their families, a home they themselves helped build.

The Guest House was filled with visitors from the US who came to work and share in the celebration. Although not "The Ritz," the courtyard was landscaped with banana trees, mango and papaya trees, picnic tables and the sounds of pigeons, parrots and roosters, which made the scene charming and lively. The Haitian women did all the cooking on charcoal fires, as the propane stove was not working. The next morning we were

treated to pumpkin soup, a typical breakfast dish in Haiti, and strong, locally grown, black coffee.

We spent the morning and afternoon in meetings with the CBF missionaries and staff as we talked, prayed about how to move from "disaster relief" to the "development" phase of the involvement in Grand Goave and Port Au Prince.

The next morning we walked to the new church where the members gathered for the dedication service starting with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the front door. Excitement was in the air! After the ribbon cutting, the choir led us into the sanctuary with their songs to begin the service.

The old church had been small and dark. When planning the new design, the congregation's one desire was to have it be "light-filled" and that it is!

The large windows allow for light and air to stream in, bringing a sense of peace and joy. It was an inspiring service of singing by the choir and special singing groups. The church was filled with Haitian pastors, lay people, congregants and visitors from abroad and people from all over Haiti.

After the service the women of the church had prepared rice and beans, fried chicken and fried plantain for over 400 people. A huge feat, even in the best of kitchens but remarkable when done mostly outdoors on charcoal fires in huge cooking pots. Much preparation had gone into this memorable day for the people and the new building has given them a real hope for their future.

After lunch we decided to travel to the "nearby" village of Magandu to visit a new Community Health Evangelism (CHE) group. Since it "wasn't far" we



New Church



Dedication Celebration

asked Paul if we could borrow his driver and truck. We didn’t even have time to change out of our church clothes because we needed to go and get back to start the journey to Port Au Prince where we would spend the night.

Off we went picking up more and more people on the way to Magandu. Soon Kilie, the driver, drove the truck up a steep gravel road that snaked its way higher and higher. Steve and I had not realized that Magandu was on top of a mountain range close. It took my breath away when the truck sped up the widening rural road. It was unpaved with loose gravel and steep drop-offs that made me feel insecure. I wondered what we had gotten ourselves into.

“How much farther is this village?” I asked one of the CHE workers. She laughed at my obviously nervous question. “Oh don’t worry Ma Steve,” she said in Creole as she pointed to the top of a far-away mountain. I felt like a wimp as I put my head in Steve’s lap and wouldn’t look at the road anymore. I held on to the handle bar of the truck and prayed that we would all arrive safely and not fall off the mountain. After what seemed like ages, the truck couldn’t make it up the steep, gravel road and started

sliding backwards. We all got out and Kilie slowly backed down the hill and parked while we continued on foot to the village. Again, I was reassured by the same young woman, “Its not much further.” It took us almost 40 minutes, walking on a narrow path with breath-taking views of Grand Goave and the Caribbean Sea, to get to our destination.

Finally a group of neatly built little houses came into view. Erik had gone on ahead of us and had started talking with the village leaders. We sat down and listened to their questions and Erik’s responses. The group was eager to continue with Community Health Evangelism’s training and lesson plans for health for Magandu. Although the meeting was short, he later said it had been a meeting of encouragement and affirmation for the group.

Before long, the clouds started rolling in on the mountaintop community, indicating that rain was soon to come. Our little group needed to get down the mountain before the rains started and get on the road to Port before dark. We said our hasty farewells and started back on the paths to our truck. The rains held back and we got down the mountain without incident. I was grateful that even though I had doubts and more than a little fear, we

went to this distant place so that we might be an encouragement to this little forming CHE group, so remote and isolated from any established health care. The next time I will be better prepared for what to expect and hope to spend some extended time in Magandu.

It wasn’t surprising that on our trip home to Haut Limbe the next day, we had a flat tire. On examining the back tires we were aghast to see how pocked and shredded the new tires had become on our trip up to Magandu! Needless to say, we paid Paul for two replacement tires when we got home. He may think twice when we ask to borrow his truck for a “short side trip.”

It was good to get home I’ll be the first to admit, but I was so thankful that I had not given in to my own desires of staying home but that I had listened to the “inner nudging” to go on this trip that filled me with hope to see what God is doing in Grand Goave and Magandu.

Thank you to those of you who have supported the relief and development efforts in Haiti, whether participating in medial relief, reconstruction or funding of the ongoing effort. And thank you most of all for your prayers!



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