

INSIDE:

- ? From the Board
- ? Annual Reunion photos
- ? Where are they now
  - Out of Africa
  - Down on the farm
  - Happy in Asia
- ? Here, there, and everywhere

## A Touch of Southeast Asia at 4<sup>th</sup> Alumni Reunion



*Traditional dancers provided by the Thai Embassy in Ottawa helped create a unique atmosphere at the Reunion.*

About 70 Alumni gathered on the 14<sup>th</sup> floor of IDRC Headquarters on October 14 for the fourth annual reunion. The regional theme for this event was Southeast Asia, and in addition to the performance by the colourful dancers, there was food and drink from the region, and the honorary host for the evening was former ASRO director Nihal Kappagoda.

You can read more about the event on page 2, and there are more pictures on page 3. Be sure to mark your calendar for the date of the 2006 Reunion — Friday, October 27. The regional theme this year will be Africa. Look for more details in future Alumni newsletters.

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### Just a reminder...

This newsletter is distributed exclusively to IDRC Alumni members. If you haven't yet renewed your membership for 2005-06, and you would like to continue receiving this newsletter, please send your cheque soon to our membership director, Maria Williams. Send your cheque for Cdn\$20 (or US\$15) payable to "IDRC Alumni" to Maria at: 40 Amberwood Crescent, Nepean, ON K2E 7B9.



## From the Board...

Judging by the reports of members I spoke to, the Fourth Annual Reunion and General Meeting, held on October 14th, was a success. The reports also indicate that the more light-hearted the meeting is, the better. Just remember that we are required to have a brief meeting in which we (the Board) report to you, and you have an opportunity to make your views known to us. The members expressed their satisfaction with our ability to hold this business meeting to four minutes flat!

For the last two years the reunion and AGM has been preceded by a collaborative seminar hosted by Maureen O'Neil, the President of IDRC, and her senior program staff. The seminar is open to all Alumni members and has been highly successful in keeping Alumni members up to date on IDRC's development work. We plan to continue this "tradition" and in the future, we hope to reduce the formal presentation elements of the seminar in order to make more room for discussion. Our 2006 reunion is scheduled to take place on Friday, October 27. It will build on the theme of Africa, with the support and assistance of the IDRC Regional offices – WARO in Dakar, Senegal, and ESARO in Nairobi, Kenya.

At its October 14 meeting, the Board introduced a large leather-bound *In Memoriam* book which is hand scripted and records the names of former staff colleagues who have died. If you hear of the passing of any former staff member (whether or not they were members of the Alumni) would you please advise us of the name and the date of passing, and we will arrange to enter the details in the book. The book will be on display each year at the annual reunion.

As you may know, we publish the Alumni Newsletter in French and English. Up until the last issue, our colleague Michèle Wilson had undertaken the translation of all English material and succeeded in maintaining a high standard with material that was given to her, frequently at the last minute. However, Michelle is now working full-time on a major project and has reluctantly moved out of the position as our translator, at least for the time being. In the interest of spreading the load, our editor, Bob Stanley, has now assembled a group of volunteers from the membership who have generously agreed to undertake translation responsibilities for the Newsletter (see front page). However, we continue to look for more volunteers to assist with future issues of the Newsletter. Please contact Bob if you would be willing to join the "translation team."

With our sincere wishes for a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

James Pfeifer  
Chairman

# Fourth Annual Alumni Reunion October 14, 2005

Here are just a few of the folks who attended the Reunion:

- 1 Anne Whyte, Gerry Bourrier.
- 2 Rose Wood, Bunny Barker Craig.
- 3 Shahid Akhtar, Nihal Kappagoda.
- 4 Lynne Bedard, Lyse Lavictoire, Christiane Constantineau.
- 5 Johanne Charbonneau, Jorge da Silva.
- 6 Jean-Marc Fleury, David Nostbakken.
- 7 Nancy Hutchinson, Kim Daly, John Poirier.
- 8 Nicola Pfeifer, Ruth Hopper.
- 9 Thai dancers.
- 10 Gracia Chiasson, Julie Lalonde, Clara Torres.
- 11 David Hopper, Bunny Barker Craig.



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Photos by Catherine Shearer

## Where Are They Now?

### Daniel Letouzé IDRC 1989-1995



## IDRC, Africa...and after

Daniel Letouzé's career in health administration and economics at the University of Ottawa and the Canadian Hospital Association gave him a taste for working at the international level. So an offer in 1989 to join IDRC's Health Sciences Division as a principal scientist enabled him, he says, "to realize a dream of contributing to medical research in developing countries and also to see more of the world."

Five years later, Daniel accepted an appointment as senior program specialist for health science in the Dakar regional office. His wife left her job at Algonquin College to accompany him, but his two daughters stayed behind to continue studies at the University of Ottawa. With the help of colleagues in the regional office the Letouzés quickly settled in to their new life in Dakar, his wife soon finding a job with the Canadian Embassy. Then says Daniel "the sky fell on my head". Just one year after their arrival in Senegal, the restructuring of the Centre eliminated the HSD along with several staff positions, including Daniel's.

Although bitterly disappointed, the Letouzés were fascinated by Africa and decided to stay. Daniel has dual Canadian and French citizenship, so he was able to obtain a position with Coopération Française as a technical counsellor in the Côte d'Ivoire Ministry of Public Health in Abidjan. He also taught at the Ecole Nationale d'Administration and consulted for the World Health Organization. The work was fascinating but these were difficult times—a coup d'état in 1999, confrontations between rebels and government troops, heavy losses of life, uprisings by the military, states of emergency, and a growing physical insecurity. Daniel believes that working in these conditions led to a serious decline in his health. Starting in 1998, he was treated for heart problems and, at the end of his contract in 2002, was hospitalized for tachycardia, an abnormally rapid heart rate. On the way home to Canada, Daniel and his wife stopped in France for a short holiday but ended up staying for a year as his deteriorating heart condition once again necessitated hospitalization and, eventually, a heart transplant.

Now happily residing in Orléans, Ontario, the Letouzés once again enjoy a peaceful life. Daniel says they take great pleasure in the company of their children and friends, in sport and travelling, and in the rich cultural life of Ottawa. And he is still well occupied—as a Member Emeritus of the Elizabeth Bruyère Research Institute and an adjunct professor in Ottawa University's School of Management.

Ken Riley

IDRC 1973-1992



## Practicing what he preaches on the family farm

*I have known Gerry Bourrier for as long as I have been associated with IDRC. Most would agree that Gerry is a very convincing guy. So when he and Aline turned up at our farm last summer, he not only sold me on joining the IDRC Alumni (which is an excellent investment of twenty bucks) but persuaded me to write something for the Alumni Newsletter about how we traveled full circle and found ourselves back on the family farm.*

It was a cold day in December 1973 when I turned up at the Pebb building in Ottawa to meet Gerry. I was an ex-CUSO Tanzania volunteer, finishing up my Masters in Crop Science at the University of Manitoba. Hugh Doggett had lined me up as a potential advisor on an Ethiopian sorghum improvement project. I was given the royal treatment – taken out for lunch and invited upstairs to the Board Room where then President David Hopper had assembled the Directors of the four Divisions and associated staff for a strategy meeting. I am not sure if it was the ergonomic chairs in the Board Room, IDRC's focus on strengthening research capacity in the Third World, or Gerry and Hugh's persuasive powers, but I left that meeting convinced that IDRC was the organization for me.

I spent two years working with Dr Brhane Gebrekidan at Haile Selassie I College of Agriculture in Eastern Ethiopia, utilizing the rich sorghum diversity that Ethiopian farmers were growing. In the days of the Green Revolution with its emphasis on uniform, fertilizer-responsive imported seeds, this was a novel idea. The high lysine gene, found in Ethiopian sorghum, became the focus of my PhD research project which I carried out at ICRISAT in Hyderabad, India for the next four years. During that time Allan Rix in the Fellowships and Awards Division supported me as an IDRC scholar. By the time I had completed my thesis research, I had fallen in love with India and met my future wife, Katya.

In 1981, I returned to Ethiopia with Katya to start up the Oilseeds Network for East Africa and South Asia. Again, the region's rich diversity of sesame, brassicas, groundnuts, and niger seed, as well as associated knowledge exchanged among the scientists in the network, became the basis of the network's success. Three years later we were back in India, where the new SRO office had opened in Delhi. As Programme Officer for Crops and Animal Production Systems, I found it very satisfying to support small farmers in the region by strengthening research capacity to use the native diversity

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Finally, in 1999 I resigned from IPGRI to try to “practice what I had preached.”

of their crops. But I wanted to get involved with more hands-on research with small farmers. So in 1988, our family (which now included two sons, Nik and Rohan, who were born in Delhi) moved to the hills just above Katmandu, where I joined the Nepalese National Hill Crops Improvement Programme as an IDRC advisor.

With the closure of the AFNS division in 1992, I moved on to become Regional Director for the International Board for Plant Genetic Resources (later renamed IPGRI). I still enjoyed a close association with IDRC, since our office was on the same floor as IDRC in Singapore, and rubbing shoulders with the likes of John Graham and Stephen Tyler may have had an effect on several IDRC-supported initiatives.



*Ken and Katya — down on the farm*

Finally, in 1999 I resigned from IPGRI to try to “practice what I had preached.” We returned to the small farm in Muskoka, Ontario, where I was born. We were determined to earn a living on the farm, not by producing high yields of a single crop, but by sustainably producing a diversity of farm fresh vegetables, fruits and maple syrup that customers could pick or purchase directly from us.

We are not strictly organic, but practice the “middle road” focusing on improving soil health and productivity through green manures and rotation, using a minimum of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. After six years working full time, the farm now provides us with all our needs. Of course there are still problems – the deer and raccoons enjoy a good feast of our strawberry plants and sweet corn; and its tough to find helpers who enjoy hand weeding the garden. So we invite IDRC veterans to pay us a visit – but don't forget to bring your work gloves!

Sheldon Shaeffer

IDRC 1980-1990



Alumni here,  
there, and  
everywhere



by Chris Smart

## Asia is where I wanted to be

Since leaving IDRC in 1990 I was a research fellow at UNESCO's International Institute for Education Planning in Paris for three years and then UNICEF's Regional Education Advisor in Bangkok for five years. I then went to New York to become head of UNICEF's global education programme for three years.

Deciding, however, that Asia is where I wanted to be, I returned to Bangkok as Director of UNESCO's Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education – with 150 staff and 45 countries to cover. I must admit it is pleasant to be in an agency (unlike IDRC and UNICEF) where Education is assumed to be an essential factor in development – no need to constantly defend education against the "harder" fields of economics, health, agriculture, etc.! In fact, in UNESCO, Education is on the "harder" end, compared to work done in culture, communications, and social and human sciences.

I will retire in two years, with time divided between a country house in Pattaya, Thailand, and a goat farm in Laos (a long story!). Clive Wing has just joined the UNESCO Bangkok office as head of its Information and Knowledge Management unit. So to all IDRC Alumni — come and visit!

## It's all about Networking

The Executive was meeting on December 7 when who should pop his head into room 1334 at IDRC World HQ but **Geoff Oldham**. In Ottawa on a science policy-related consult, he could not resist checking on us doing a little networking.

Geoff, in fine form, reported that the inaugural meeting of the **Sussex Chapter** of the IDRC Alumni met for dinner on November 15 in the ancient town of Lewes, near Brighton. Taking advantage of a visit by **Amitav Rath**, member in good standing of the Ottawa Chapter, **Geoff, Andrew Barnett, Martin Bell, Kurt Hoffman** (all connected to the Science and Technology Policy Programme) launched the Sussex Chapter over a dinner at the Circa Restaurant at Pelham House. The chapter set the pattern for all IDRC Alumni Chapter meetings with an agenda that required the sharing of comradeship, gossip and war stories, memories of the good times, good work, good colleagues in Canada and the regions. And, though no minutes were kept, the toasts to absent friends and adding an 'IDRC evening' to the store of memories was an acceptable substitute.

Another member of the Sussex Chapter, **Keith Bezanson**, sent regrets at missing the inaugural, but he was holding up the IDRC tradition of sharing knowledge to empower in

COULD THIS BE A TREND? Is this a 'one off' or can we expect to hear from other Chapters of the IDRC Alumni? A quick think suggests that IDRC Alumni are settling in critical numbers in Nairobi and Bangkok. Where else? Can we hope to hear from them sometime soon?

another part of the world. By the way, Keith's latest book is "The Future of Development Financing: Challenges and Strategic Choices" by Francisco Sagasti, Keith Bezanson and Fernando Prada. Published by Palgrave MacMillan (2005) and released at IDRC in November.

HISTORICAL NOTE: Geoff is one of the 'originals' (back to the 60s and 70s) who helped to bring the idea of IDRC to life. He was part of the team drafting the IDRC Act and helped lay the organizational foundations as Associate Director for the Science and Technology Policy Program in the Social Sciences Division.

### You can't hide

Want to see *tovarich* **Neil McKee** celebrating his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday in Moscow? Click on <http://mckeesinmoscow.blogspot.com/> and you can join Beth and Neil preparing the feast and later join Neil's staff (and *druges*) in demolishing it and wishing him many more happy returns.

### Caught in the act

From November 22 to December 10 the Ottawa Little Theatre put on *Widowers' Houses*, George Bernard Shaw's very first drama. Without a doubt the star was **John Hardie**. From IDRC party skits to the theatre was a seamless transition for John, for whom (in the guise of Mr Lickcheese, squeezing rents from poor tenements for his unfeeling slum landlord boss) drew on his years of chivvying program plans and policies out of harried programme staff. Since retiring John was also in the Wakefield Players' production of *Cabaret Civil* (CD now on sale) and in *At last*, a short movie by Blackburn Road Films. Watch for the World Premier!

### New! Alumni Website

Visit [www.idrc.ca/alumni](http://www.idrc.ca/alumni) to assess the first effort at putting the Alumni on the web. The site is very much 'under construction', so jump in with critiques and suggestions. Your tyro webmaster took so long to get the site this far that he petitioned the Executive to put it up in English while work on translation gets underway.

For the moment the site is open to the world but some thought is being given to how to make access to some features (for example, the membership list and the current year's Newletters) available to Alumni members only. If there is anyone out there in IDRC Alumni Land who would like to take over management of the website I'm all ears!

Chris