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The IDRC Alumni provides opportunities for former IDRC employees to maintain personal and professional links, and supports continuing dialogue on development issues.

Bulletin

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Thanks to Michèle Wilson for Translation

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From the Chair

Together Again

Rob Robertson

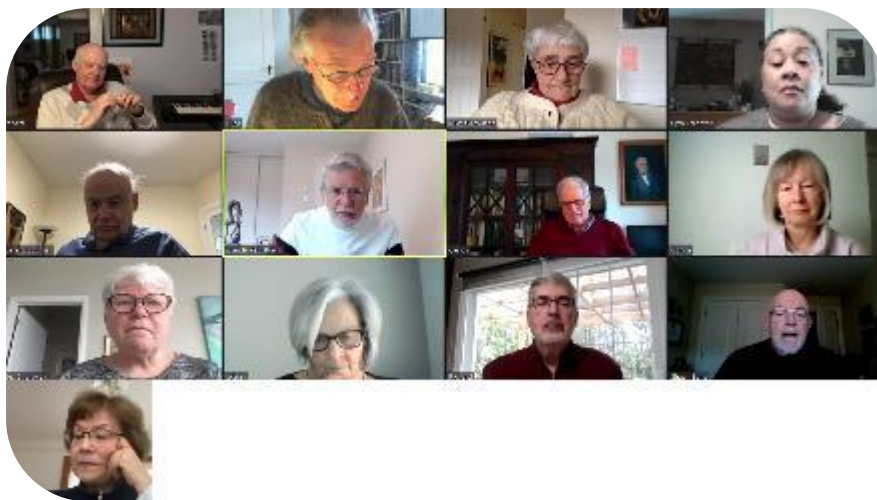
“The best laid schemes o’ Mice and Men gang aft agley.”

Robbie Burns

Scotland’s poet was clearly anticipating 2020 when he warned that sometimes our wonderful plans go awry. IDRC and your Alumni Association were eager to celebrate the Centre’s 50th anniversary. Instead, the Centre and its people had to change their modus operandi and just about every other modus to adjust to the pandemic, leaving no time for celebrating. And the Alumni had to forgo our annual meeting at the Centre as well as participating in other anniversary occasions.

But now it’s 2021 and once again Mice and Men are making plans, ones that we hope will not gang aft agley. Thanks to the idea of former LACRO RD Carlos Sere, we are planning an on-line annual meeting. Although we won’t be able to see each other in person, this does allow us to include our global community. More than half of you live outside the Ottawa area and haven’t been able to join us before. The format will be a familiar one, with a few of us on the Executive bringing bons mots about our areas of responsibility and IDRC President Jean Lebel giving an update on the Centre’s programming and situation. We can’t gather round a table and enjoy food and drink and reminiscing the way we normally do, but we plan to stage two flights of break-out groups in which you can have a conversation with some former colleagues about how the world is treating you and what you have been doing.

So, the annual meeting will be on Monday May 10 at 10 AM Ottawa time (and remember we’re on Daylight Saving Time) so those of you around the world adjust your schedules accordingly and plan to join us. You will receive detailed instructions in advance about how to enter the meeting. We do know that some technical snafus are unavoidable, but we really hope that it works for most of us and we can be together again.



You’re Alumni Executive and former colleagues testing Zoom!

IDRC's New look and Looking ahead...



In February IDRC launched a new Logo and Strategy

Over the past 50 years, IDRC has had three logos. In its 51st year, a fourth has been unveiled to celebrate two key events – the 50th anniversary of this unique organization and the launch of a new 10-year [Strategy 2030](#) that casts IDRC as a leader in research for development, investing in high-quality research and innovation, sharing knowledge, and mobilizing alliances for more sustainable and inclusive societies.

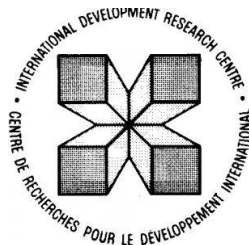
Over 50 years, IDRC has funded research that generated long-lasting solutions to critical global challenges. Its work has helped bridge the digital divide, implement Canada's Earth Summit agenda, address the world's food crises, ensure democratic transitions in emerging economies, and stop a devastating Ebola epidemic.



In addition to matching the time-frame for the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we have learned from our five-year strategies that the Centre needs more time to align its efforts with critical knowledge gaps and accelerate progress on our strategy. Ten years also allows the Centre to maintain a longer-term view and engage in foresight to address new and emerging research questions and dynamics.

IDRC's new logo reflects the Centre's confidence moving into the next decade of work on the global stage — a decade in which IDRC will invest in high-quality research and innovation, share knowledge, and mobilize alliances. The several colours represent the Centre's principles of partnership, sustainability, diversity and inclusion. The ribbons come together in a sphere to represent global activities and reach, with a circular movement to show action, learning, solutions and impact. The maple leaf defines us as proudly Canadian.

Tavinder Nijhawan



Alumni News



Ambassador Nancy Smyth

IDRC Alumna, Nancy Smyth, has been [appointed Canada's Ambassador](#) to the Republic of Ireland.

Nancy was at IDRC from 1995 to 2005: as Senior Policy Analyst, Policy and Planning Group, President's Office; Senior Program Specialist, Information and Communications Technology for Development; Senior Officer, Partnership and Business Development Division; and Project Officer, Regional Office for Southern Africa, Johannesburg.

Nancy joined Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada in 2005 as deputy director for Policy Planning and acted as deputy head in the Transformation Office (2008 to 2009). She worked with Employment and Social Development Canada as a director in the Program Operations Branch (2010 to 2015) and as director of International Policy Coordination at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (2015 to 2016). Most recently, Nancy served as the director general for Social Development in Global Affairs Canada's Global Issues and Development Branch.

Nancy writes: I feel blessed I managed to have 4 different positions at IDRC and they were all very different – the consistency was the meaningful work with Southern partners, and the excellent and admired bosses in Marc Van Ameringen (ROSA); Alain Beranger (RIP PBD) ; Rich Fuchs (ICT4D); and Lauchlan Munro (PPG). I learned so much from each of them and from all of the smart, kind and committed staff I worked with. IDRC is a magical place to work – no wonder many people spend their careers there, and that I spent a decade. What was truly meaningful in addition to this was the incredible and impactful leadership of Maureen O'Neil throughout this period.

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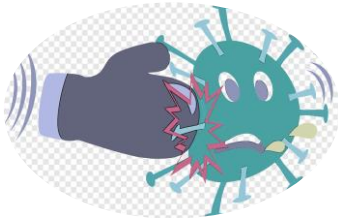
COVID Coping

David Brooks

As for what I have been doing, one part is not much of a story, which is to say that I have been keeping my finger lightly involved in Israeli-Palestinian water issues. The other will be more surprising to IDRC colleagues. I have been exploring, summarizing, and making presentations on Jewish Biblical Literature. For example, I wrote up a book called *The Apocrypha* (the capital letters were set by Saint Jerome). I describe it as the book that was originally written in Hebrew, first printed in Greek, canonized by the Catholics, ignored by the Protestants, and even today is the only source for the Jewish story of Chanukah. More recently, and all through the COVID-19 Lockdowns, I have been



working on the Pseudepigrapha, which took me most of the year just to read, stem from an uncertain mix of Jewish and Christian sources, and present different views of everything starting with Adam and Eve onward.



Not at all surprising - what else would we expect David to be doing in a plague?

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50 Years of Connections

Tony Tillett remembers Alejandro Nadal

Alejandro Nadal's death in Mexico on March 19 last year has deprived Latin America of a forceful and imaginative economist and environmental advocate. His policy work was principally about Mexico and Latin America, while his theoretical work, which earned him a well-regarded thesis from Paris demonstrated the impossibility of market equilibrium. He was well known to the Centre.

His work can perhaps be divided into two parts, that dealing with science and technology policy and later the environment. After participating in the Science and Technology Instruments project, together with Victor Urquidi, the head of El Colegio de Mexico, he set up a program on science and technology, which was supported by the Centre in the 1970s and 1980s and produced some valuable policy research. In these turbulent times, with the influx oil money, national bankruptcy and NAFTA, he became increasingly concerned about the impact of economic growth on the environment in Mexico, then a marginal issue. Later, as advisor to the McArthur Foundation and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) his own work stressed the loss of biodiversity and the impact of commercial agriculture on small holdings and indigenous genetic varieties. After his retirement he turned his considerable energy to the protection of elephants and rhinos and particularly the illegal and damaging ivory trade.



He was a gifted teacher and clear expositor but apart from the quality of his work I remember him for his sense of fun and persistence when he thought he was right. When I first met him, he insisted on following a habit learned in Paris, of roller skating to work which given Mexico's traffic was brave, not to say foolhardy, and involved some interesting 'conversations' with the police. A proposal from his

program regarding nuclear safety, a novel theme for Mexico, was questioned by Ivan Head, who knew a great deal about the topic. Alejandro met with him and a five minute courtesy call turned into an hour session resulting not only with the inclusion of this component in the grant, but informal collaboration between them, particularly during the preparation of Ivan's book, [On a Hinge of History](#).

His two most recent works, published posthumously by the U.N. Economic Commission for Latin America, summarize his influential views on changing the direction of economic analysis and so policy, (*Pensar fuera de la caja*) and the impact of untrammelled economic growth on the environment (*Los motores de degradación ambiental*).

[An interview with Alejandro Nadal](#): The Key Organizing Principle of Society: Macroeconomics – Markets or Sustainability. Part 1: The Myth of the Invisible Hand / Part 2: The Day That Capitalism Changed Forever.

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Lynn Krieger Mytelka



Dr. Lynn Mytelka died in February. She is remembered as a valued and respected partner in a number of IDRC programmes and projects. Lynn was a leading researcher in the critical and undervalued role technology policy should have in a country's economic and social development. Her collaboration with IDRC focused primarily on Africa but work with the United Nations engaged her fully with the Global South.

Full and fitting tributes to Lynn are found in her obituary in the [Ottawa Citizen](#). Lynn was *“a pioneering scholar in international development, long-time professor at universities in Canada and Europe, senior administrator of United Nations organizations, and frequent collaborator*

with scores of colleagues worldwide.”

See also the [United Nations University](#). *“Lynn was passionate about her work but also about people. She always sought to guide and support people, looking for hidden talents and opportunities to use those talents. She made you feel like you were the only person in the world.”*

A programme officer remembers:

I remember Lynn as one of the faculty for two of the month-long post grad Technology Policy Workshops IDRC funded in the early 1980s.

Lynn could be great fun. We arrived early for the Senegal workshop and found ourselves in the same hotel in Dakar. We went out to dinner, got caught in a tropical rain storm and fled into the first restaurant we could find. I think it was Chinese? As we sat scoffing we realized the water was rising... around our ankles... our shins...advancing. We finished the meal standing up. The rain had stopped. And we slogged back to the hotel, all accepted by Lynn as all part of a day's work.

The first workshop was held in the Danish Volunteer Centre in Arusha, Tanzania. Once things were underway it was my habit to get up with the dawn to have at least an hour before the fuss of the day took over. I wandered down to the dining hall attracted by the tinkling of a very out of tune piano and found Lynn playing very black music, tightly packed hemi semi demi quavers, *Aimez-vous Brahms?* comes to mind. Lynn too had got up early, found the piano and found the music. An indelible moment.

There have to be others?

We have all heard mention of other notable connections. Here's chance to see how many more were made over the Centre's fifty years.



Whom have you met with in the course of your IDRC work that the Bulletin should feature as a connection, a link to the wider world of what matters?

Ed.

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Alumni in Print

Akwasi Aidoo

"Akwasi Aidoo's [Rhythms of Dignity](#) is a remarkable, bold first collection. There is a rich diversity in range of form, expressiveness, experience, and passion. Reading through this work is a journey through the undercurrents of experience that reflect on living through the charged realities of the 'post-colonial' decades of our modern African not only with an intimate Pan-African awareness of history but also with a poignant sensibility of brotherhood, sisterhood and belonging.

Clearly evocative of the age the poet has lived through, these poems have both a sharp clear eye on history, and an abiding tender trust in human relationships." - Abena P.A.

Busia, Professor of literature and poet.

Dr. Akwasi Aidoo is a sitting Governor of IDRC



Together We will Walk

Together we will walk
side by side warmly
swinging arms in Arecaceae grace

Crassless, classless, raceless
We will walk together
gently, silently, firmly
uphill to the vaults

Where ancient mysteries hold
memories reposed, exposed
of our triumphs and shared community.

Tread and thread. Up and down.
Side by side. Back and forth to dream
Out teams of teams.

And there is nothing more
to it than that. We will walk
together, palm-in-palm, unpegged

by what long strewed shared dreams,
to a world that belongs to all who live in it
with Peace, Love and Trust.

Audacious
Boffo
Composed

We will Talk, Walk, Work Humanely

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Rachel DesRosiers Alumni Award 2021 WARO

Julie Crowley, Regional Director of IDRC Central and West Africa Regional Office has sent news that the Rachel DesRosiers Alumni Awards for 2021 have been awarded. Exceptionally, two grants were awarded this year for West and Central Africa, focusing on the impact of disinformation and misinformation on the use of scientific evidence, particularly in the context of COVID-19 pandemic.



The first award is allocated to a research team from [eBASE Africa](#), an international charity based in Cameroon which aims to build capacities in the health sector with a focus on vulnerable populations and inclusive community development. The research led by Ms. Marthe Bogne Penka (left), will be looking into the impact of disinformation and misinformation on the use of research evidence in public policy decision-making in West and Central Africa. Ms. Bogne Penka's work seeks to communicate trustworthy information from research and meta-analysis recommendations to community members and policy makers. Other members of the team include PhD. Andrew Tangang (middle), a public policy expert and Dr. Patrick Mbah Okwen (right), a medical doctor and health economist.

A second award is allocated to Mr. Asaah Ndah Asongwed, who will work on "the impact of COVID-a case study of Nigeria, Cameroon and Senegal". Mr. Asongwed is undertaking a Ph.D. in Communication at Ghent University (Belgium) and currently works as a Conference Analyst with the Board Affairs Division of the African Development Bank (AfDB).



"The 2020 Rachel DesRosiers Award provides a perfect opportunity for using innovation and best practice to develop sustainable solutions and strategies to mitigate the impact of dis/mis-information."

"I am honored to be a recipient of this prestigious Rachel Desrosiers Award. I hope that this study will contribute to enhancing our knowledge of the impact of disinformation and misinformation in the context of pandemics."

Thanks to Lancelot Sounelong Ehude, Regional Communications Advisor, WARO

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Letters to the Editor

I always enjoy Rob's intro and this time was reminded that I was one of the 40 in Montreal in 1989!

It's good to hear what others are doing - Sagasti, wow, President of Peru, and Amitav.

It's always enjoyable to reminisce about IDRC's beginnings while reading about Hopper.

Linda MacWillie

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Many thanks for the fantastic work with this Alumni Bulletin!!! I feel so proud and honored to have known many of the members during my years at IDRC in Dakar, Senegal.

I'm now a member of the Board of Governors of IDRC and I also bring up the great professional network retention that this Bulletin promotes.

Akwasi Aidoo

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Gallery

Shaun has assembled a series of albums celebrating IDRC's 50th Anniversary on the [Alumni Facebook account](#).

Access to the Alumni Facebook page is curated. Presently 237 IDRC alumni gather there. Consider joining.



Once logged in to the Alumni FB click on 'Media', then on 'Albums' to reach six photo groups sorted by decade.

Here's a sampler:



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IN MEMORIAM

Remembering former colleagues:

On visits to the IN MEMORIAM page on the website, Alumni have not found colleagues they remember.



Richard Albert wrote a remembrance of [Charles Morin](#) and Arun Abraham did the same for [Sitoo Mukerji](#) .



Visit the [IN MEMORIAM](#) and if you find a respected colleague missing do consider sending a paragraph or two to the Bulletin.

§



Claudette Fay Durrant
1946 – 2020

Prof. Durrant was a senior Programme Specialist at IDRC from 1989 to 1997. She spent a year in Ottawa and then was based in LACRO. Her areas of expertise included telecommunications policies, regional and national information systems, telecentres, knowledge management, e-government, and access to government information.

After qualifying as a librarian, Professor Durrant began her career at the University Library of Mona (1968-1973) moving to University of the West Indies (UWI) library at Cave Hill (1973–1975). She worked as assistant librarian at the Caribbean Community Secretariat in Guyana (1975–1979) and went on to be library and information training officer at the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in Trinidad (1979–1983) followed by independent consulting.

Post IDRC Prof. Durrant joined the secretariat of the Association of Caribbean States in Trinidad & Tobago as director coordinating the work of the special committees on science, technology, health, education and culture; and the special committee on budget and administration. She was appointed professor and head of the Department of Library and Information Studies at the UWI in 2000 and held this post until retiring in 2011.

After retirement, Prof Durrant continued to teach part-time until 2019. She taught and mentored countless number of students who now hold leadership positions in libraries and information institutions around the region.

In addition to her academic career Prof. Durrant's leadership was recognized through a range of

appointments: Chair of *Information For All Committee* of the Jamaica National Commission for Unesco; Vice President of the Unesco Intergovernmental Council for the *Information For All Programme*, 2006-2008; Director of the Association of Caribbean States, 1997-2000; President of the Library and Information Association of Jamaica (LIAJA); member of the boards of the Jamaica Sustainable Development Network (JSDN), the Jamaica Archives Advisory Committee, the National Library of Jamaica, the Board of Management of the Jamaica Library Service, the Board of the National Library and Information System (NALIS) of Trinidad and Tobago, and the Executive Council of the Association of Caribbean University, Research and Institutional Libraries (ACURIL).¶

Colleagues remember:

I visited projects with Fay a couple of times and recall she was a positive and effective colleague. I was particularly impressed by her wide network of contacts, especially in the Caribbean and it's no surprise that, after IDRC, she moved on to senior positions in that region. The Library and Information community in the Caribbean has lost one of its leading voices.

Paul McConnell

I worked with Fay for my period in Montevideo. She was extremely reserved although with a lovely smile and personality. Like other program officers, she found a Regional Director something of a nuisance and only took her advice from Martha. Like so many from that generation from UWI she was highly professional and with a deep commitment to that institution and the future of the West Indies. My impression is that globalization has reduced the appeal of this educated nationalism together with its possibilities. Part of her equanimity came from her Christian faith.

Tony Tillett

I remember Fay as a smiling, warm, respectful, positive individual.

David Balson

¶The text is based on a fuller appreciation of Fay in [The Gleaner](#) (Jamaica)

§



Dr. Olanrewaju Smith
1945 – 2021

Ola died in on the 8th of April.

Ola was born in Nigeria. Following an undergraduate degree in animal sciences at the University of Ife Ola became a Doctor in Veterinary Medicine at the University of Louvain in Belgium and came to Canada to obtain MSc and PhD degrees in Animal Nutrition at the University of Guelph. He returned to

Nigeria as professor of animal production and health at the University of Ife.

Ola joined IDRC as a Program Officer in the Animal Production Systems program of AFNS in the late 80's, based in Dakar and in the mid 90's he was appointed Regional Director of the West and Central Africa regional office (WARO). Ola's last move was to Headquarters in Ottawa. He became a Canadian.

In retirement from IDRC Ola was the Executive Secretary of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) based at the FAO in Rome. He served as a Technical Adviser at the International Trypanotolerance Centre (ITC) in the Gambia where he led the development of a 10-year strategy for the organization as well as serving as Board Chair.

On returning to Ottawa Ola worked as an international consultant for many organizations, including the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), and the World Bank. He was also a Member of the Board of West Africa Livestock Innovation Center (WALIC).

Ola was a research for development expert with more than forty years of experience and expertise in natural resource management. A senior administrator with over 20 years of experience in agricultural research management, he was remembered and widely respected for his expertise, wisdom, and gentle character.

Colleagues remember Ola:

Ola was particularly proud of his son, Oluseyi Smith, making Team Canada for the London Olympic games in 2012, in the 4x100 metre relay.

I had the honour of supervising Ola when he joined IDRC and I was the Associate Director for the Animal Production Systems program. The last time I had the pleasure of being with Ola was in 2015 at a meeting on agricultural research organized by the World Bank in Johannesburg. He had been hired to facilitate the meeting. After the meeting we were on the same flight back to North America. Ola is remembered as a great colleague, friend, and leader.

Hugo Li Pun

Though I knew Ola during his brief sojourn in Ottawa prior to his being posted to Dakar, I got to know him very well during my Regional Director posting to Dakar from 1992 to mid-1996. At the time, Ola was a Senior Program Officer responsible for the Centre's agriculture program in the region, a valued member of our management team, and upon my departure from Dakar, Ola was named Regional Director.

Ola had a musical and acting bent that most of us were not aware of, until we were invited to a musical stage play in Dakar where he played a major singing role in *The Pirates of Penzance*. Though Ola had a somewhat shy personality, on that occasion he certainly impressed all of us with his singing voice and acting prowess.

Ola was a caring, friendly and unassuming person, and he will be missed by his IDRC family, and by the numerous friends and contacts that he made worldwide.

Gerry Bourrier

In addition to Gerry and Hugo Carlos Sere helped with Ola's remembrance.

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**Henrique Tono
1929-2021**

Dr. Henrique Tono was the first Regional Director for LARO, (Bogota) from 1970 to 1981.

Prof. Tono was born in Cartagena, Colombia. He began an academic career, first at the University of Cartagena and then at Universidad Nacional in Bogotá, and at Universidad del Valle in Cali. After undergraduate studies he graduated Ph.D. in Biochemistry from the University of Pennsylvania, and obtained a post-doc at Stanford University.

Returning to Colombia, Prof. Tono joined Universidad del Valle's Biochemistry Department in the School of Medicine. He became Dean of this Department and subsequently Vice-Chancellor of the university. In the early seventies he served as Acting Chancellor of Universidad del Valle and Chancellor of Universidad de Cartagena.

Besides his academic work, Prof. Tono was deeply involved in social and community-development programmes, mainly in the southwestern region of Colombia. This reflected his strong commitment to social development issues and to the improvement of the livelihoods of people, in both the urban and the rural sector of the country. He participated in the establishment of Fundación para la Educación y el Desarrollo Social (FES), a non-profit institution that supports community development projects that respond to the basic needs of the population. FES became instrumental in supporting projects of this nature carried out by Universidad del Valle and other universities in Colombia. He was a Board member and President of Fundación FES.



Henrique and Ivan Head ca 1980

Post IDRC Prof. Tono joined a business group in the industrial sector of Colombia, where he served as Board member and as Executive Director of several companies. He continued to collaborate with NGOs and social-development institutions, being a Board member of both the FANA group and the Fundación Virgilio Barco, two institutions working to protect the fundamental rights of children and family.

Throughout his life Prof. Tono combined his interest in science as a tool for development, with a strong commitment to social transformation and to the improvement of the well-being of urban and rural communities, in Colombia and throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. He continued to work in industry, until he retired at the age of 84.

Fernando Chaparro

Henrique wrote [An Early History of LARO](#).

A colleague remembers:

Henrique was appointed by Hopper and had to face the difficulties of creating the branch of an international organisation at a time of turmoil with few resources. The connection to Hopper was through the CGIAR system – with the support of Joe Hulse as this is the country where AFNS did so much of their important work at the time. He took his work seriously and perhaps did not have the weight within the Center that he should have done, partly because of language and partly because of the myth of the very poor, which was a pervasive weapon to limit work in Latin America. These countries were, it was believed, too rich and work should be concentrated in Africa and South East Asia. Moreover most Latin Americans were argumentative.

He was always extremely helpful to me and when he was able to relax in Spanish he was the most wonderful company – wise, kind and with a marvellous sly sense of humour. His family were also great fun, committed to change – his daughter was a doctor and her work was important in the reform and development of their public health system. The very best of Colombia which is a high standard anywhere.

Tony Tillett

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The IN MEMORIAM book on line



The Alumni IN MEMORIAM feature has been digitized. [Click](#) here to find photos and remembrances.

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Bulletin Archive on Line



[Past issues of the IDRC Alumni Bulletin](#), from the first edition in January 2003, are available on the [IDRC Alumni website](#). Bulletins for 1 to 26 are either English or French. From 27-39 they are bilingual and from 40 on, either English or French.



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