

WELS THIRD CULTURE KIDS--THE
ORDEAL OF REENTRY

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When I was younger, I remember driving through other towns--even other neighborhoods of my hometown--and imagining what it would be like to live there. Eventually I would conclude that I was glad I didn't live there. My home was better; I was accustomed to it; this place was too strange; I would be uncomfortable there.

For most people, moving to a different location often brings a certain degree of stress, anxiety and even fear into their lives. The thought of leaving the environment in which one has grown up and become comfortable for totally new and different surroundings is naturally somewhat frightening.

Surely most of the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Seniors of 1989 experienced such feelings as they contemplated their upcoming assignments into the public ministry. And these feelings intensified when it was learned that one of the graduating candidates would be assigned overseas, to the foreign country of Japan.

It is widely recognized that moving to a foreign land is a major change, a difficult step in one's life which often involves much upheaval and many problems. No doubt this phenomenon has existed ever since people began moving from place to place (In our modern terminology it has been identified as "Culture Shock."), but only within the last several decades has it been given much greater attention and recognized as a serious problem. Now there are experts who

train people within international organizations (businesses, churches, etc.) how to prepare for and deal with this phenomenon called "Culture Shock" before they depart for some foreign land. Even within our own church body, the WELS, a program of orientation is offered to those who are called to be foreign missionaries.

The goal of this paper is to focus on a closely related phenomenon which until recently has received little or no attention at all, namely, the difficulty of *returning* from a foreign field to one's "native" land. Only in recent years have cross-cultural trainers developed a growing awareness of the seriousness of this problem, which they have dubbed with various terms: "Reverse Culture Shock," "Cross-Cultural Reentry," "Repatriation," "Homecoming," etc.. It has become apparent in the secular international field that Reentry or Repatriation can be and often is a rather painful ordeal for many who undergo such a change. In fact, according to one expert:

The task of readapting to the United States after living overseas is, for many, the most difficult hurdle in the cycle of international life. People who have lived overseas emphatically report that it is far less stressful to leave the United States and find a place in a new country than it is to experience the unexpected jolt of coming home.¹

This possibly surprising (in our eyes) fact is also true in the case of our own WELS missionaries and their families. And it would be good for all the members of our Synod to be aware of this. As one of our own "missionary kids" (MK's) reflects, "Repatriation may be one of the most difficult

areas of mission work." And she goes on to express her wish that our Synod "Just plain acknowledge the fact that it's difficult and offer help."

At first it may be difficult for us to understand how coming home could be such a problem. In the book Cross-Cultural Reentry, a hesitancy on the part of international organizations to recognize this problem of reentry is mentioned. Cross-cultural trainers who work for these organizations are having trouble convincing them to include not only pre-departure training, but also reentry training. The writer cites as the reason for their trouble "that it is beyond the scope of American logic to believe that people could possibly need more training before returning to their own country of birth and enculturation. *Yet such is the undisputed case* [my italics]."2

For WELS foreign missionaries and their families, cross-cultural reentry is difficult. The struggle intensifies especially for MK's who spend their formative years overseas and then return during their teenage years. When one considers this situation, reentry problems become perfectly logical. Although the United States may be considered the missionary kids' (MKs') home culture, it is not their true home. They love their "homeland" where they grew up and spent much, if not all of their lives, where they made new friends and slowly developed a deep-seated love for the local people and customs. As one WELS MK put it:

This country [America] is not home sweet home for MKs. Dealing with the culture of a different country is very difficult even for an adult who made the choice to move to a foreign country. Imagine how it feels for a child or teenager who had no choice in the matter and is ripped away from their home [foreign field], dropped into a different country [America] and expected to feel like this new country is home.

Often those of us who have lived exclusively in the U.S. don't think about MKs in this way. But that is the way some of them feel.

People like this who have undergone such cross-cultural reentry have been labeled with the descriptive title "Third Culture Kids," or TCKs. For they have been powerfully influenced by two different cultures: 1) that of the foreign field where they grew up; and 2) that of the U.S. which they learn both from their American parents and from firsthand experience upon their reentry later on. As they move from one culture to the other, they need to adjust to the change by incorporating elements from both cultures into a kind of hybrid third culture, thus the name TCK. One WELS TCK described the dilemma as "looking like an American and feeling Japanese." Another said:

I also have great difficulty answering the question, "And where are you from?" In Malawi, I was "an American;" here [in America], I'm "from Malawi," but I really don't belong to either place. I am an American citizen, who grew up in Malawi, but I am not a Malawian citizen. Therefore, I'm not very sure where I'm from.

WELS TCKs, like all TCKs, certainly face a confusing and often painful identity struggle upon reentry.

In order to gather information for this paper, a 3-page questionnaire (see Appendix I) was sent out to nine WELS

TCKs who came from several different fields and backgrounds: Japan, Malawi, Zambia, Hong Kong and Puerto Rico. Out of the nine sent out, eight have been returned and the return of the ninth has been promised. This high rate of return only serves to underscore what all of the respondents explicitly or implicitly stated in their replies--this issue concerning the ordeal TCKs go through is something they feel very strongly about. They are very emotional about this definite problem which they had to face and they will gladly and openly discuss their feelings and experiences with anyone who offers them a genuinely interested ear. What they desire most of all is greater awareness and understanding of their plight from lifetime, "one-culture" Americans like us.

More than likely, if one approaches any WELS TCK sincerely desiring to know more about them, he will not be disappointed. I found what they had to relate to be very interesting and enlightening, not only in regard to their feelings which we don't readily notice in casual contact with them, but also in regard to the way they see us, which we may never have realized. Since the respondents came from different foreign fields and spent varying degrees of time in these fields, naturally there was great diversity in a number of their answers. But despite their various backgrounds, there were also striking, across-the-board similarities in other answers.

Probably the most natural question to ask first would be: what was it like making friends and being accepted by your peers? All were unanimous that they had to struggle to fit in. Many expressed a fear of opening up to people because they felt so strange and different. Often this fear stemmed from communication problems. "I was always afraid of saying the wrong thing or not understanding what was being said." Another TCK lamented, "People thought I was stuck up...but in reality I just didn't know what to say or do." For another, "My English accent was something to laugh at, so I tried as hard as I could to lose it--and I succeeded." At other times this fear of being different was something that was perceived but never talked about: "Though I couldn't see the differences on the outside I felt others could spot differences in me. And then there were differences I could feel and yet no one (I just knew) could understand them."

The strongest differences felt by the TCKs when trying to make friends were in interests and likes, and also in thought patterns. "Since I think in Spanish, my English is often garbled...people still misunderstand my motives, prerogatives [sic], priorities or logic." Another TCK thought in Japanese thought patterns, so that "my sense of humor was different...I get lost when people try to be funny." The result for one frustrated TCK: "I think I learned to be quiet."

For TCKs to fit it in or feel comfortable much depends on the people around them in their new surroundings. Going from a place where you are popular and accepted to where no one knows you instills a burning need to be accepted. And the solution usually starts with an effort on the part of those around you. As one TCK described it: "But they got used to me, yes, they got used to me, not the other way around, and I found my place and 'fit in.'" Another one said, "The friends I did make were either those who for some reason or other were being ostracized themselves or those who cared and loved enough to overlook the differences. Thank God for them!!" One person reaching out in a friendly way could make a big difference. It could be something as "insignificant" as someone in the classroom leaning over and saying "Hi" on the first day of school.

Naturally many of these problems in making friends spilled over into TCKs' dating experiences. Although one of the respondents admitted, "I don't know if I can blame my lack of girlfriends on Japan," and another mentioned the advantage of having many topics of conversation, several pointed to a difficulty in establishing long-term relationships. On the one hand, there is still frustration with the lack of understanding. One TCK explained, "There's a much bigger part of me, the part that misses the ceremony and dreams of being back home that they don't understand. I find this hard to deal with." On the other hand, sometimes dating problems arose because of what Americans expected on

a date. "Once they realized all I wanted to do was talk and I couldn't afford to go out much, I was dropped like hot cakes." Or, "It was more physical from what I experienced."

One area where the difference between mission fields was clearly apparent and to be expected was in the area of clothes and fashions. TCKs coming from Africa were shocked by the emphasis on clothes, material possessions and outward appearance in America. They found it hard to accept the outrageous amounts of money spent on clothing, and they also had trouble understanding trends of any kind and resented the thought of having to conform to them. The TCKs who came from Japan, on the other hand, found that America was at least a year behind in clothing fashions. Sometimes they were suspected of showing off because they were more fashionable, and they often stuck out in the crowd. As far as other areas like music and sports, usually the TCKs were "out of it" when they were among Americans. Often they would just fake like they knew what the others were talking about so they wouldn't make a scene.

"Faking it" also came in handy when some of the TCKs encountered language problems. Overall, the TCKs who were interviewed handled ordinary English relatively smoothly. There were a few exceptions. For example,

I thought in the sentence pattern of how a Japanese sentence would be--the word order was different. I couldn't speak in 1/2 Japanese and 1/2 English sentences anymore and so found it hard to express myself.

Also, those who came from Africa tried to lose their British accent, figure out what terms were distinctively British as opposed to American and avoid them. Mostly, however, their problems with the language centered around the slang of the day, especially off-color words. Sometimes what were ordinary everyday words in their learned language turned out to be embarrassing words in the U.S. For example, "A *rubber* is what we call an eraser in Malawi." Another TCK noted: "I must say that I never heard the terribly crude terms they have over here." But it didn't stop there. Another said, "I didn't know any of the cuss words, and they were used on me--got me frustrated."

Another area that highlighted the variance between cultures was money and handling money. In Africa, one of the TCKs had earlier endured a change from the British pounds and schillings to "Kwacha and ngwee," making the second switch to dollars and cents more bearable. Meanwhile, some of those who reentered from Japan were accustomed to "Japanese money which is in 5's and 10's," and the change to American units and coin names was more difficult. "It took a while to get used to the 25 cents idea."

In general the responses given suggest that the problems faced in the areas of clothing/fashion, language and money were relatively minor. Adjusting to an American school presented more difficulty. As it was pointed out already in an earlier section, the social side was

definitely the worst aspect, which caused one of the responding TCKs to quit high school. A few of the TCKs had to adjust from the small classroom with the one-on-one approach to the larger more impersonal classroom. Some of those attending our Synod's parochial and prep schools found the teachers much tougher and more demanding. "50% was passing back in Africa; 70% was a big jump. Going into a prep school--there was so much homework and memory work!" Memory work seemed to be a weak spot for several of them. In one interesting case, the TCK had gone to a Christian school overseas. She remarked, "Not having a Lutheran religion background was the hardest thing for me." Not only would more Lutheran training at school have helped her to share her beliefs with others, she said, but it would also have given her more practice at memorizing, (like at our Synod's day schools where they memorize all those Bible passages and hymns).

Since many of those TCKs interviewed reentered the U.S. for the purpose of continuing their formal education, they reported being separated from their parents for long periods of time, stretching anywhere from 6 months to 9 months to three years. The answers here varied concerning how difficult it was to cope with the separation.

A few common themes ran through them all, however. More than one expressed the conflict between wanting to share with their parents all the pain and difficulty they were suffering, yet hesitating to tell them everything to

prevent their worrying for their children too much, which would interfere with their work.

Here it must be noted, not only in connection with these strong feelings of separation from family, but also in connection with all the feelings of pain and depression stemming from reentry, that *TCKs often feel alone in their thoughts and begin to believe that there is something wrong with them for feeling that way.* As one TCK put it, "I thought I was the only one who was having these deep, strange feelings after we moved." This can be the cause of much unnecessary guilt being loaded on an individual's shoulders. We will touch on this more later on in the paper.

As far as coping with their separation from their families, many of them shared the same ways of dealing with it. Prayer was given high priority. Next important would be to keep the lines of communication open with their parents overseas. Despite the fact that they hesitated to tell their parents everything they were feeling, yet they realized that their parents, more often than not, understood better than anyone else what they were going through and they recognized the importance of keeping in touch. Most often the means was letters exchanged regularly. Through letters they could maintain the common bond unique to their family alone. One of the TCKs also mentioned being mentally prepared beforehand for the inevitable separation from her family as a helpful way to alleviate the pain later on.

With all the changes and stress, the possibility for spiritually problems certainly exists for TCKs. In our evangelism training here at the Seminary, statistics are shown us which prove that people undergoing a period of change and stress in their lives are much more open to spiritual change in their lives as well. This fact alone should make us as fellow Christians especially concerned about our TCKs' readjustment upon reentry.

When asked whether their reentry affected their spiritual life positively or negatively, the TCKs responded with a variety of answers. One said: "I think it remained the same. I realize now I should've done a lot more talking to the Lord through the 'culture shock.' Maybe it would've prevented a lot of unnecessary tears!" Another TCK leaned a little more toward the negative: "I had strayed away from God before I came to the U.S. and continued to do so after reentering the U.S." She did, however, go on to say that recently the Lord has taken her back and her faith is growing. One reply was "Negatively, without a doubt." And we might be somewhat startled or saddened by her reasons why:

It's sad but parochial school reeducated me about the "important" things in life. God became more factual, less meaningful. But, only on the outside for the sake of conformity....In this p. school nobody talked about Jesus except in Religion class. It was immediately obvious you don't talk about Religion, and you didn't act excited about mission work anywhere. Not until I hit Lutheran Collegians did I find a love for Jesus in my peer group.

Yet we can take comfort in the fact that some TCKs found the spiritual apathy or lack of mission zeal within our schools to be a catalyst for spiritual growth, "because people didn't see the need for mission work and I liked to talk about the Japan mission and so I did more sharing of what the mission was like."

Still others who reentered the U.S. as TCKs considered the experience to have had a very positive effect on their faith. One answered:

Positively. I had to depend heavily on Christ for guidance in my life (instead of my parents). Also, knowing that he was there to comfort me helped me through the lonely stretches.

Another agreed:

Without God I'm sure I'd be a basket case. After all, in one year I went through a major move, a job change for Dad, new church, new friends, new school, new country and culture shock (whatever that is), big family problems, etc. Through it all, though, God was with me. Now when I look back I know that it was all for our own good and it was right with God's plan, but at the time I questioned it a lot.

It is evident that TCKs do indeed endure a great deal of pain and difficulty in the ordeal of reentry, much of which we may not always notice at first glance. In order to help them to adjust to their new "3rd" culture, one must realize that there is possibly a lot of unseen turmoil going on within them.

We Americans may also find it eye-opening to discover just how our WELS TCKs, like any other TCKs, see and feel about American people and their attitudes when they reenter the U.S. And these sentiments are not unique to TCKs alone.

Foreign people often share the same impressions, as one of our TCKs related, "Living overseas, one sees how others view Americans and their eccentricities--and once seen we often agree with them."

Perhaps here it would be best to let the TCKs do all the talking. The question reads: *DID YOU HAVE TROUBLE ADJUSTING TO OR ACCEPTING AMERICAN PEOPLE'S MANNERS OR ATTITUDES? IF SO, HOW?* Here are some of the answers: "Yes, very much. America to a foreigner is a materialistic, fast-paced and egocentric country." "Yes--Americans have to do everything always their way--no other way! And always so fast--go,go,go." "Yes!! Americans are lazy! They use drugs! But most of all they think that not only they are the greatest, but they think that this is the greatest country in the world even though they haven't lived in another country." "Yes...particularly midwesterners being close-minded about fashion, food, foreign culture, etc. Many 'know' that America is the best and that's it. They don't know or care that there are other countries and ways of life that could be better." "Yes...the attitude that Americans are far superior than other people." Also mentioned was the lack of appreciation among WELS Americans for their Christian upbringing and education free from any ridicule. And the list could go on.

Now certainly, one experiences that same disgust over such a superiority complex even when moving from town to town and from state to state, so in that respect TCKs are

not alone in their feelings. Also, it could possibly be argued that Americans might get the same impression of people in other nations should they decide to move to a foreign country. However, I believe the point has been made. Obviously Americans need to do a little soul-searching about their international attitudes and world views if they want to get along better with people of different cultural backgrounds. One WELS TCK vividly describes what a great hindrance such poor American attitudes can be to a person from another culture trying hard to fit in:

What upset me more in the beginning was when people would ask me, "What's it like in Japan?" or "Are you getting adjusted to life here?" It bothered me that first of all when I answered to the first question that I love it there, they would seem surprised. And when I answered to the 2nd question that I still miss my home it was like they never thought of that. What bothered me then was that after a few sentences they really weren't interested anymore. That hurt and disappointed me. I love Japan and will talk about it to anyone that really wants to listen. But that's just it, they weren't really interested in Japan. At that time Japan was my life. By not caring about Japan they weren't caring about me. I realize now that it's not their fault that they are that way. I'm just thankful I'm not like them.

Strong words, to be sure, but words which teach us a valuable lesson nonetheless. In our efforts to help our church's TCKs make the adjustment easier, we need to know these needs and feelings the TCKs have so that we can develop effective ways to deal with them. And we also need to know which of our own attitudes put a stumbling block in

the way of these efforts, so that we can make an effort to improve them.

When only eight out of all the TCKs from our Synod say something, one could argue that this is not necessarily the viewpoint of the majority. Maybe so, but if all eight of them agree upon something, it would seem that what they have to say is definitely worth listening to. One thing which they do all agree upon is the Synod's involvement in helping out TCKs in the reentry process.

Besides help they received from individual WELS people, families and relatives, all the TCKs answered with a resounding NO!! to the question *DID OUR CHURCH BODY (WELS) HELP YOU TO ADJUST WHEN YOU FIRST RETURNED TO THE U.S.?* One even added, "They [the synod] didn't even recognize that it is a major problem/hardship when someone suggested helping people like me."

Now, as it was stated in the questionnaire which was sent out, I do not intend to go synod-bashing. Nor do I wish to try to make any of our synodical officials look bad (In fact, one TCK commended their efforts: "The mission board did try very hard to take care of us"). Only the historical facts and feelings are desired to be reported on. It is a fact that all the TCKs interviewed strongly believe that our synod "needs to recognize that there is a need for something," some kind of program or planned-out means for helping from our synod as a formal body. It is also a fact that at the moment our synod does not have a formal program

or plan to help our TCKs, according to our synod's World Mission Counselor, Rev. John H. Kurth. But Rev. Kurth also pointed out that our synod officials are now looking into the problem, and studies concerning the reentry problem are already being made. One individual who already has made in-depth study on this subject is Miss Linda Phelps, and she has expressed her opinion that reentry is indeed a difficult problem for which we need to offer TCKs more help.

Since there are no programs for assistance to TCKs existing at the present, perhaps it would be beneficial for us to listen to suggestions made by the TCKs, those who have gone through it themselves. The strongest and most unanimous suggestion was that people who had already experienced the ordeal of reentry should be used to help out those who are about to or are presently experiencing it (Although it was preferred that MKs should be made aware of what they will be going through *before* it starts to happen). Support groups of TCKs are what they need.

At least make MKs aware of what they will be going through and that it is perfectly normal to go through this (for many years, I thought I was abnormal, that I had so many problems and that I was the only MK who went through this)."

And if a TCK still has trouble, send him/her to a professional counselor. One TCK said she would have welcomed professional counseling. Another suggestion in connection with support groups was to have TCKs write down their experiences to be kept and shared with future reentry kids.

In this area, apparently some individual TCKs are already making efforts on their own. "There are a number of us who are forming a support group for missionary's kids," writes Sue Weiland, a TCK from Africa. It is this writer's understanding from a personal interview with Tim Flunker, a TCK from Puerto Rico/Brazil, that nothing definite has been arranged yet, but that two different support groups are being considered--one for those who return especially in the high school years and earlier; the other for those who return for college. TCK Flunker revealed that he has already appeared before some LWMS meetings to suggest arranging some sort of get-together, perhaps at one of our synod's furlough houses over a holiday weekend, for all the younger WELS TCKs (High school age and down). He would like to try for funding through the LWMS and any other sources which may be available.

Besides support groups, another strong suggestion was made not to forget the parents. Because of possible communication barriers and the distances involved, parents might not necessarily be fully aware of what's going on. Also, if information is given to them, it can help them begin to prepare their children well before they actually begin the reentry process.

Becky Plath, a TCK from Africa who is now a missionary's wife and mother in Hong Kong, stressed, "Parents' education of the reentry process and their relationship with their children could make a lot of

difference." Having returned to the U.S. at age 11 after at least 7 years overseas, she knows what the reentry ordeal is all about, how frightened a TCK can sometimes feel. And now with children of her own entering the teenage years, naturally she is very concerned about how her own children will be able to handle reentry. She has obviously given this considerable thought, and perhaps her plan for her children would help anyone in their efforts to help a TCK. Here is the plan as she outlined it:

Obviously communication is the key. The next step for me is to learn all I can and help my own children (and whomever else the Lord puts in my path. I've read some books--helpful): 1) We've already begun talking to the kids about differences about American life--in a positive and honest way. 2) We talk about how they might feel. 3) We have good communication with the kids now on a very feeling level. 4) We encourage them not to carry a problem around by themselves but to let us help them...5) As they grow up I plan to give them all the helpful reading material I can get my hands on. 6) I'll try to have them talk with former MKs [TCKs] before and after reentry. 7) Pray continuously. 8) I am open to counseling for any family member if problems arise that I can't handle. 9) I'll take an active role in their integrating with their peers--if I'm in U.S.A. 10) We'll both have to do a lot of talking and listening--that means planning for that kind of time. 11) Pray some more. 12) Learn as we go!

Mrs. Plath also suggested that, in the synodical structure, a part-time counselor trained specially in cross-cultural reentry could be used to coordinate programs--her reason being that synodical officials in the world mission field are already over-scheduled with work.

Besides support groups and education of TCK parents, a third suggestion was unanimously emphasized--heightening our

Synod's awareness, not only among the synod's called, full-time workers, but also among the entire body of lay people. When asked whether they received help from any sources, most of the TCKs agreed that individuals who understood provided the most effective help. Three suggested methods for accomplishing synodical awareness are: 1) Make TCKs the topic of a series of articles in The Northwestern Lutheran; 2) Have a TCK or a TCK/parent team give informational talks to groups like the LWMS on the subject; and 3) Make special efforts to educate American children in our schools, make them aware of the difficulties a TCK faces, and encourage them "to make them [TCKs] feel especially welcome and not look at them as if they're 'stuck-up' but rather scared out of their wits! They need friends to make them feel wanted."

Other minor suggestions were to have mission groups provide TCKs with money to call home or fly home a little more often (Many pointed out that the Synod is presently getting better at allowing more flights home, more furloughs, etc.), or provide them with care packages, or birthday cards just to make them feel that someone cares.

After reading about all these difficulties TCKs face, one might begin to feel that he would never want to be an overseas missionary because it's all negative. But, when the TCKs were given a chance to list some of the positive blessings of being a TCK, they painted a much brighter picture.

First of all, nearly all of them considered it a great blessing that they were much more open-minded from their experience, much more accepting of other peoples' cultures and differences, "knowing that there's more than one way to do things and that your way isn't always right."

Other blessings included the chance to travel to many different places and to see many things most of us never get the chance to see, the extra opportunities opened up to someone who is bilingual, the closeness of a family that was drawn together in spite of and because of their separation, being more independent, more self-reliant, more resilient, better able to adjust to new experiences, and especially, knowing what it's like and also what it takes to be a missionary or missionary's spouse.

A few of the respondents concluded that the good far outweighed the bad. Over half of them asserted that if they had the chance to go back and decide all over again whether to go overseas, knowing all that they know now, they would go back despite the difficulty and the pain that they faced. This attitude can be attributed to what this writer sensed as a burning missionary zeal within these TCKs which seems to have been passed down from their faithful and dedicated parents.

In retrospect, it is clear that accepting a call into a foreign mission field means opening up yourself and your entire family to a number of tremendous challenges. No doubt this fact has been clear to our church body for as

long as we've been involved in foreign missions. But perhaps most of the membership in our church body was not aware of those problems associated with reentry of TCKs. If anyone reads this paper and as a result goes away with an increased awareness and sensitivity to what problems TCKs face when they "come home," I will consider this paper a success. It is only fitting, then, to conclude with the words of one of the responding TCKs:

Thanks for reading this. Please don't take what I said lightly, because it's not. I hope that by getting people more aware of this problem, there will be help for kids like me in the future. Thanks again!

Appendix I

PERSONAL BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

WHAT PART OF YOUR LIFE DID YOU SPEND IN A FOREIGN MISSION FIELD (e.g. from birth to age 14, or from age 3 to 8...)?

IN WHAT FOREIGN MISSION FIELD WERE THESE YEARS SPENT?

AT WHAT AGE DID YOU "RE-ENTER" THE UNITED STATES?

WHAT WAS THE MAIN REASON FOR RETURNING (e.g. to continue your formal education in the U.S., or Dad took a call..)?

"RE-ENTRY" EXPERIENCE QUESTIONS

WHAT, IF ANY, DIFFICULTY DID YOU EXPERIENCE IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS WHEN YOU RETURNED TO THE U.S. (Please feel free to write as much as you want--the more, the better! If you need more room please use the back side of this sheet):

----MAKING FRIENDS AND BEING ACCEPTED BY PEERS:

----DATING (certainly a confusing and frustating time even for us "full-time Americans!"):

----KEEPING UP WITH THE LATEST TRENDS/FASHIONS IN MUSIC, CLOTHES, etc.:

----LANGUAGE (latest slang words or strange terms):

----HANDLING MONEY:

----SCHOOL (teaching methods and type of homework...):

----OTHER "AVERAGE AMERICAN EXPERIENCES," LIKE GETTING YOUR
FIRST DRIVER'S LICENSE OR FINDING A JOB...:

DID YOU HAVE TROUBLE ADJUSTING TO OR ACCEPTING AMERICAN
PEOPLES' MANNERS OR ATTITUDES? IF SO, HOW?

DID YOU FIND THAT PEOPLE IN THE U.S. (like friends, teachers
or guardians...) OFTEN MISINTERPRETED OR MISUNDERSTOOD
WHAT YOU SAID OR DID? IF SO, HOW?

HOW DID YOUR RETURN AFFECT YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE, POSITIVELY
OR NEGATIVELY?

WERE YOU SEPARATED FROM YOUR PARENTS AND FAMILY FOR LONG
PERIODS OF TIME? HOW LONG?

IF SEPARATED FROM FAMILY...

----DID YOU FIND IT DIFFICULT COPING WITH SUCH SEPARATION?

----HOW DID YOU DEAL WITH IT?

-----DID YOU EVER FEEL GUILTY ABOUT FEELING DEPRESSED OR ANGRY ABOUT YOUR SEPARATION, LIKE YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE WHO FELT THIS WAY?

-----WAS IT HARD TO COMMUNICATE SUCH FEELINGS WITH YOUR FAMILY?

-----DID YOU EVER WORRY THAT SUCH FEELINGS WERE GOING AGAINST GOD'S WILL FOR CARRYING OUT WORK IN HIS KINGDOM?

WHAT WAS THE MOST DIFFICULT AREA (out of all the above or any else you can think of) FOR YOU TO DEAL WITH?

DID OUR CHURCH BODY (WELS) HELP YOU TO ADJUST WHEN YOU FIRST RETURNED TO THE U.S.? IF SO, HOW?

DO YOU FEEL THAT OUR SYNOD SHOULD DO MORE TO HELP PEOPLE IN SUCH A SITUATION? (PLEASE NOTE: I do not intend to go Synod-bashing or accusing anyone with my paper--I just want to report the facts)

IF SO, WHAT SUGGESTIONS WOULD YOU MAKE?

WHAT, IF ANY, HELP DID YOU RECEIVE FROM OTHER SOURCES?

SO FAR, MOST OF MY QUESTIONS HAVE DWELT ON THE DIFFICULTIES YOU EXPERIENCED. NOW I'D LIKE TO GIVE YOU A CHANCE TO LIST SOME OF THE POSITIVE BLESSINGS YOU HAVE ENJOYED FROM YOUR EXPERIENCES AS A "THIRD CULTURE KID." SO, FIRE AWAY!!

**I KNOW--A LOT OF QUESTIONS, AND LITTLE ROOM FOR ANSWERS!! AGAIN, PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTINUE YOUR RESPONSES ON BACK. THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR EFFORTS! I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO READING THEM!

ENDNOTES

¹ Clyde N. Austin, ed., CROSS-CULTURAL REENTRY: A BOOK OF READINGS (Abilene, Texas: Abilene Christian University Press, 1988), p. 5.

² Austin, p. xx.

SOURCES

Eight responses from WELS missionary children to the questionnaires sent out (See Appendix).

Austin, Clyde N., ed. CROSS-CULTURAL REENTRY: A BOOK OF READINGS. Abilene, Texas: Abilene Christian U. Press, 1988.

OTHER READING

Tucker, Ruth A. "Growing Up A World Away." Christianity Today. Feb. 17, 1989.

Van Reken, Ruth E. LETTERS NEVER SENT. Elgin, Ill: David C. Cook Publishing Co., 1988.