

In Line With The Class of 59

Volume 4

December 2003

COMING ALIVE AT 45

Coming Alive at 45
August 20th & 21st, 2004

Mark your calendars NOW! Our 45th Reunion committee is working VERY hard to make plans for an eventful, fun-filled weekend of renewing friendships, visiting with old (make that long time) friends!

The festivities will begin on Friday night, August 20, 2004, at 8 PM for a casual mixer. A dinner/dance will be held Saturday evening, August 21 with cocktails from 6 PM to 7PM, followed by dinner and dancing.

The reunion committee will be sending detailed information. Be prepared to say "YES! I'll be there!"

Editor's Comment

Due to the 45th reunion taking place in August 2004, there will not be a 2004 newsletter. You all are to find out the news of your classmates by attending the reunion! For that same reason, there is no photo page in this issue. Attend the reunion and see for your self what your classmates now look like. ☺

Contributions

Since 2002 report:

Carol Fagerstrom Counts
Geraldine Stephens Hawthorne
Sue Shumway
Janice Lyles Peterson
Sue Jarrett Martinetti
Ted Hollander
Kay Chrislock
Sally Hickok Floyd
Bill Carriere
Chris Mattison Kordash

Roseanne Cuppini Hemmens
Eleanor Burnstein Landau
Richard Greenberg
Darlene Myers Hanna
Toni Boardman Evans
Nancy Ghent Donohue
David Hallmark
Margaret Heiss Moustafa
John Canova
Donna Smith Herrmann
Penny Unger Martenson
Jerry Gustafson
Al Acker

Financial Statement

Balance 8/6/02	\$143.58
2003 Contributions	<u>\$940.00</u>
TOTAL	\$1083.58
Disbursements Vol 3 and Vol 4 to date:	
Postage to date	\$260.45
Labels and Ink	<u>\$ 63.00</u>
TOTAL	\$323.45
Balance 12/15/03	\$760.13

A TIME TO GIVE THANKS

By Joe Adams

As we celebrated Thanksgiving with a few gringos (all volunteers) here in Chimbote, Peru it became a time to reflect on the past months, look at the present, and dream of the future. It becomes very clear that celebrating our traditions, however brief they may be, is like a kiss of fresh air on a hot day.

We had a wonderful vacation visiting family and friends and working as volunteer lighthouse keepers on Michigan Island in the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore in Lake Superior. We gave tours of the two lighthouses, maintained 2.5 acres of campus and relearned the lessons of enjoying little gifts day by day. Watching the daily change of seasons through the flowers, birds, insects and animals made this time even more poignant. On this 1600-acre Eden we had bald eagles, beaver, otter, coyotes, and yes three bears.

Reflecting on what would we change in our lives, if such a thing were even possible, we decided that the saddest of all was losing track of friends and other wonderful people we have met on our life's journey. This even became clearer when we changed our e-mail address and hard drive. We lost much information regarding telephone numbers, etc. Now we are reconstructing that directory that is so important to us. Any help you may provide will be greatly appreciated.

Today we are back in Chimbote to complete our final tasks in the various projects. Our absence for 7 months gave us a clear picture of what can work without close supervision, fundraising, and unique perspectives we bring to this table of poverty. Our Dollars for Scholars and the Leaders for the Future programs functioned very well without us. Next week we will begin selection process for the next batch of students. Thanks to the Rotary Clubs of Chanhassen and Shakopee and individual benefactors we will be adding 13 new students.

Our Arte de Peru project has proven its viability but would require much supervision and extensive marketing. We have succeeded by teaching half dozen artists how to create marketable art and gave them the courage to strike out on their own. Therefore we are letting the project wind down.

The cement factory / construction trade school required a lot of cash, materials, and community interest to grow to the next phase. Although this program is needed we have neither the resources nor the time available to see this project through. We are serving notice that we will not renew the lease for the second year. All in all when we leave Chimbote in March we can look back and be proud of the good that the poor of Chimbote have received.

It is difficult to explain the culture gaps here in Peru. Every day we are amazed by:

- People that can use a cell phone but have no knowledge of postage stamps or a post office.

- Garbage in the streets yet the garbage truck comes by 3 times a week and the residents sweep the dirt in front of their homes every morning.
- A school system that doesn't know what the tuition will be until the day of registration.
- A school registration process that takes two days and many trips to banks and hours standing in line and yet parents and students are given just 4 days to complete the task.
- Schools where funding the graduation trip is more important than the books that are not available.
- Homes where a son with aids sleeps in the street because the family rejects him.
- Packs of sick dogs that roam the streets and threaten the children and yet are not seen as a health problem.
- A seat belt law that is enforced for the drivers but not the passengers.
- A culture that looks to government to provide jobs but little else.

And yet, there are few places where the people have such big hearts, the food is world class, the history and culture rich, and the beauty beyond the ability of photographs to reproduce.

We will have spent nearly three years working with the poor here in Chimbote, Peru. We have achieved our three goals as we first mapped them out:

1. To think and speak another language.
2. To live in and to understand another culture.
3. To share our gifts and education with those interested.

Now we can leave here knowing that we have contributed a little but have learned very much more.

This year Joe is the Rotary District 6044 Director of student exchange. There are many opportunities through various Rotary Foundation programs. We hope that we can get the word out to the 45 cities and 8 provinces of Northern Peru. The Chanhassen Rotary presented us (Joe the Rotarian) with a Paul Harris Fellow. It is such a great honor that there is no way to say thank you.

Each Saturday afternoon Joe plays football (soccer) with his league. His team has not lost a game in the past 5 weeks nor has anyone scored a goal from his right defense position.

Wednesday we had the first of 4 Posadas. It is a live reenactment of the Christmas story including a live burro, goats etc. The procession winds through several barrios knocking on various doors asking for shelter. There is a bloodless birth with a live baby and then moments later music erupts and dancing by the children in the street. The traditional hot chocolate is served. After this we lit our life-sized nativity scene, which is made of tortora (reeds) and sits on our balcony overlooking the street and patio of our compound. We have our traditional live Christmas tree in

our living room. It is decorated with sea horses and ribbons of red and white. Each night we play our Christmas CD and celebrate our love and time together.

What about our future? At the end of March we will return to the US for a couple of weeks then we will be going to Europe for much of the remaining year. We plan on spending time with friends and family from both the US and Europe. When we return we will take possession of our motor coach and see our own country. Summer of 2005 we will be going to Alaska with friends.

Merry Christmas and God Bless!

Mover, Shaker Ready for Life after Retirement

By Corina Curry

Rockford Register Star, September 3, 2002

Henrietta Pertet Dotson-Williams, who has been a community leader for most of her life, wants to make a difference in whatever she does.

Some people serve up chicken soup for the soul. Henrietta Dotson-Williams has her chili and chicken wings.

It started several years ago when the Rev. Steve Bland was new to the Rock River Valley and needed some good eats. Without hesitation, Dotson-William invited the new pastor to her home for home-cooked chili, chicken wings and the dish of Rockford. Before the night was over, Bland made a lifelong friend, received a crash course on important community issues and had a good, hot meal.

"She is one of the most fabulous people I know in the city," Bland said of Dotson-Williams, who retired from the city of Rockford last month after more than 20 years on the job. Friends and family are planning a reception in her honor Saturday afternoon at Burpee Museum.

"Henrietta's gift is providing support and encouragement to people," Bland explained.

"If there's someone in the community doing good things, there's a good chance that Henrietta is behind them, helping them, encouraging them and giving them feedback. She's an amazing woman...She's my she-ro"

The 62-year-old mother of four is a renowned community leader, civil rights activist and overall mover and shaker who has assembled a legacy of good deeds. She's held a variety of jobs in the community, from telephone operator to energy assistance specialist with the city of Rockford. She also did a short stint as a bus driver for the Rockford School District while living in the Jane Addams housing project with her four children.

"We've never been well-off, but I always told my children 'Poor is a state of mind,'" Dotson-Williams said. "We

didn't' have a lot of income, but I have a very loving family and the support of a very loving church community who helped me in every way they could. I told myself 'This is temporary. I can do this' And I worked hard."

Later this year she will celebrate 18 years of marriage to Rockford School board President Mike Williams.

Her children, all college graduates, work in juvenile probation, banking and computer engineering. Her youngest is a doctor in Texas.

"The biggest accomplishment in my life has always been my children," Dotson-Williams said. "They've all gone on to do such great things."

Dotson-William served on the Winnebago County Board from 1970 to 1990 and was the first black woman employed with the Winnebago County Treasurer's Office. She also led the effort to get Martin Luther King Jr's birthday recognized as a county holiday more than two decades ago and led an impromptu community fund-raising effort for an abandoned infant in 1998. Dotson-Williams also has served for several years a community representative on a variety of Rockford Register Star committees.

"I just always did what I thought needed to be done," she said. "I'm not a shy person, but I don't' really like the recognition. I'm more concerned about what happens to other people and helping them."

Dotson-Williams serves on the Burpee Museum board and is the treasurer and a founding member of New Direction Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church. She also was a founding member of the National Council of Negro Women chapter in Rockford and was featured in Essence magazine in 1974.

Winnebago County Sheriff Dick Meyers, who used to work with Dotson-Williams on issues of community safety, calls her a pleasant and kind woman who knows how to solve problems. "She was always very involved. She did her homework," Meyers said. "There was never a doubt that she took her job as a County Board member very seriously."

Former Mayor Charles Box, who has known Dotson-Williams and her family all of his life, calls Dotson-Williams "a big encouragement to people."

Longtime friend Katie Wells of Rockford believes that Dotson-William's secret is knowing how to be a good friend. "There are so many things," Wells said. "She's a loving, caring person. She's just one of my favorite friends."

Wells, who had surgery a few years back, said Dotson-Williams often brought her food as she recuperated at home. "She knew how I liked my food cooked, and she did it that

exact way for me. You know, I could depend on her," Wells said. "Even now, if she is cooking something she knows I'd like, she'll bring some for me."

As emergency assistance specialist for the city, Dotson-William helped scores of low-income Rockford families pay for housing, clothing and food. She also helped families keep their homes heated and served with electricity when times were tight.

Now that she is retired, Dotson-Williams said she's keeping an open mind and letting God lead the way. "I'm OK not knowing the master plan," she said. "Whatever I do next, I want to make a difference."

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A Good Story for Every Goodbye

By Christine Byers

Rockford Register Star, September 8, 2002

Hundreds Share their memories at Henrietta Dotson-Williams' retirement party.

When Norma Whitby got a phone call at work and leaned that her father had been admitted to the hospital, she didn't have to look far for support.

"I don't drive, and she was always good about hauling me around," Whitby said of her friend and co-worker of more than 25 years, Henrietta Dotson-Williams. "That time, by the time I turned around, she had her purse ready and said, 'C'mon, let's go' Later that day, he died"

Whitby was one of hundreds who passed through the doors and into the open arms of Dotson-Williams at her retirement party Saturday at Burpee Museum. Each came with a story to tell of the good deeds and funny moments they shared with Dotson-Williams, a 62-year-old mother of four, who retired from the city of Rockford after more than 20 years on the job.

"I am seeing people and friends that go back to the beginning, and I have made so many new friends, too," Dotson-William said. "My children and Mike (her husband) insisted that I have this, and I agreed...reluctantly."

Whitby sat across from Dotson-Williams when they worked as emergency assistance specialists for the city and helped low-income Rockford families pay for housing, clothing and food. Dotson-Williams also worked as a telephone operator, Rockford School District bus driver and Winnebago County Board member from 1970-1990.

Aside from her caring and nurturing side, Dotson-Williams also has a very persistent side, said Amedeo Giorgi, who served on the County Board with Dotson-Williams from 1978 through 1989. "If she was right, she would fight, and if not, she would just sit and listen," Giorgi said.

When she makes a promise, Dotson-Williams keeps it, said Ann Brown, who is married to Rockford School District Superintendent Alan Brown. "She promised her family popcorn form Garrett's in Chicago, and we waited in line for two hours. She had to keep her promise"

Some of Dotson-Williams' family includes children Angela Woodson, Dennis Dotson, Earl Dotson Jr and Clifford Dotson, three grandchildren, 12 siblings and her husband of 18 years, Mike Williams, the Rockford School Board President.

Rockford mayor Doug Scott doesn't mind the attention Dotson-Williams has given him throughout the years. "I'll always remember her kindness and her smile, and her always giving me a hug." Scott said.

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Little Known Facts

Much to **Nancy Ghent** Donohue's embarrassment, there now is a Ghent Street on the West side of Rockford. Nancy's sentimental sister decided that since their father's brother, John Ghent, was a circuit court judge for many years, and the Ghents were West Enders, there should be a street named Ghent. Sister Linda took matters into her own hands, rattled a few cages, wrote a few letters, and vun-dabar! In a new subdivision North of Elmwood and just West of Owen Center Road is Ghent Street.

A few years ago when **Pete Zammuto's** son was taking his dentistry practical exam for his dentistry license, **Joanne Zander** and Pete were in attendance. Joanne served as his son's dental assistant and Pete served as his son's patient. Thanks to the hard work of his son and the moral support, patience and assistance of Joanne and Pete, his son now has a dental practice here in Rockford.

Rick Ferre was seen judging a GMC Jimmy at the Loves Park City Hall at the Sixth Annual Car Show benefiting the Walter Lawson Children's Home. Vintage cars, race cars, low riders and motorcycles were on hand for the event. The event was hosted by the Rock River Valley chapter of the Studebaker Driver's Club.

OBITUARIES

Gloria Jean Ford Lewis

June 11, 1940 to March 9, 2003

Gloria Jean Ford Lewis departed this life on March 9, 2003 in her home after a lengthy illness. She lived most of her life in Rockford, moving to Maryland for eight years, and returning to Rockford in 1985. Gloria married L.C. Lewis in Rockford. She was employed as a merchandise buyer by T.H. Mandy Co. in Bethesda MD. She was a member of Allen Chapel A.M.E. Church and Jefferson Horton American Legion Post 340. Gloria was a supporter for many years of the Feed the Children Foundation and The Christian Fund. She is survived by many loving sisters, brothers, nieces, nephews, and close, special friends.

Sharon R. Wells Casper

July 21, 1940 to December 4, 2003

Sharon Rae Wells Casper died of natural causes Thursday, December 4, 2003 in Proctor Hospital, Peoria, Illinois. Sharon and our classmate, John Casper, were married in Rockford on August 26, 1961. Sharon was a homemaker. She is survived by her husband, a son, David T. (Kara) Casper of Bartonville, a daughter, Jacqueline C. (Mike) Kelson of East Peoria, one grandchild, and her brother Ronald (Carole) Wells of Cambridge, WI. There was neither visitation nor services. Cremation rites were accorded.

Ronald C. Wilke

January 12, 1941 to December 10, 2003

Ronald C. Wilke died December 10, 2003, in Rockford Memorial Hospital. Ron graduated with our class in 1959. He was a stand out basketball player. On May 20, 1962, Ron and our classmate Linda Simons were married in Rockford. Ron was a machinist at Barber-Colman Co for many years. Also, he owned and operated auto body repair shops in Rockford on Horseman and Preston Streets. He was involved in building and driving for oval track and drag racing activities. Survivors include his wife Linda, son Stephen (LaKaye) Wilke of Rockford, three grandchildren, and special sister, brother, and friend. Private services will be held.

Richard C. Ferre

November 10, 1941 to December 16, 2003

Richard (Rick) Ferre died Tuesday, December 16, 2003 in University of Wisconsin Medical Center, Madison, after a short illness. Rick married classmate Karen Menne May 30, 1962 in St. Patrick Catholic Church, Rockford. He was

formerly employed as project manager at Barnes Drill and WF and John Barnes for 10 years each, and at Ingersoll Milling Machine, Co. for 15 years. Rick enjoyed attending classic car shows and was a member of the Buick Club of America and GS Club, Chicago Chapter. He served as a Cub Scout and Boy Scout leader for many years and also was a former Junior Achievement advisor, and a member of St Patrick's Church.

Rick's family always came first in everything he did. He was the family event planner and loved family camping trips. Survivors include his wife, Karen, son, Nick (Kim) Ferre, daughter, Anita (fiancé, John Murillo) Ferre, all of Chandler AZ, two grandsons, father, sister, and numerous nieces and nephews. Rick will be missed by all.

UPDATES NEEDED

New email address? New snail mail address? New name? News of classmates?

Please notify any of the following:

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My Trip to Irkutsk, Siberia

By, Margaret (Peggy) Aleya Schams

My fourth son, Ron, is a missionary, in Irkutsk, Siberia. He, and his family, went there, in June of '99, and I had decided that it was time for me to visit them. We left for Siberia, August 12, 2002, out of O'Hare Airport, to Dulles Airport, Washington D.C. My son felt we would go through less trouble, at the airport, if we flew on the Russian Airline, (no body searches.) It took us twelve hours to reach Moscow. The plane really wasn't too bad, though our legs were cramped, and it was difficult to understand the language. My grandchildren understand, and speak Russian, much better than my son and daughter-in-law. Breakfast, on the airline consisted of ham and cheese sandwiches, yogurt, olives, tomatoes, orange juice, and coffee. I'm really not

fond of sandwiches for breakfast, but, Tina, my daughter-in-law, explained that it is almost impossible to find cold cereal in Siberia, for people can't afford it.

We flew into Moscow's International Airport, and were met there by a Russian girl, who had gone to Maranatha College, in Wisconsin, for two years. When she went back, to Moscow, to renew her visa, the Russian government refused to renew it. They stated that the longest period of time they would allow their young people, to leave the country, was for two years. My son took Anya's and another Russian girl's luggage back, to Russia that they had left at the college. We were able to take back only what we thought most important, and the girls lost the rest of their personal belongings. Anya, and her friend, drove us across Moscow, to the domestic airport. What a difference between the two airports. The international airport was quite new. There were many shops, at the airport, but we didn't want to hold up our driver, so I could look around. While waiting outside the terminal for our transportation, I had time to look around at the old buildings and observe the people. Most people use the bus, or taxis, for transportation. The people were rushing around, just like most Americans. Our ride, finally, got there. Well, I wasn't going to ride in a limo! Now, I really don't know much about cars. All I know, this "van" was taped together, and had no shocks. The streets of Moscow are VERY rugged, rough and bumpy. It was like riding on the roller coaster. We finally reached the domestic airport and our luggage was unloaded, and left in front of the airport. Since we had six hours between flights, I thought, we could leave our luggage at the check in gate (ha..dumb me...no gate...no place to leave our luggage). I asked my son why we couldn't go into the airport to wait and he just laughed, and told me to go look. I walked inside, with my granddaughters and Tina, as escorts, and found that it was really crowded, with booths, people, and little room to move. We were going to visit the washroom, where Tina handed me some toilet paper, (non-existent in Russian airport...well, the only toilet paper we could find, in Siberia, was a rough, unbleached, and unscored paper.) Tina had told me what to pack, to use along the way, so we bought some bottled water, and went to brush our teeth. When we went out to join the rest of the family, Anya asked my son if she could take us around that part of Moscow. He agreed, if we would promise we would be back in three hours. We got on a very old, crowded bus, and went through part of the town. My granddaughter told me not to look anyone in the face, to look lower than the neck. People in Russia don't like people looking them in the eyes, and DON'T smile. Never saw so many feet, in my life.

We got off the bus, at a large "shopping" area. As far as we could see, were booths, food booths, clothing booths, medical booths. Anya had been there many times, and knew which booths were safe to order something to eat. I had some type of a chicken sandwich, with a lot of vegetables, in some sort of a wrap. The flavor was pretty good. We walked around the park, eating our lunch, after

feeding some of the dogs that were running loose. People just let their dogs run through the town, and people feed them. I noticed many young couples, in the park, sitting on the benches, talking, and showing pictures to each other. The parks are full of young couples, for they have very little money for movies, dances, or other entertainment.

Then Anya took us to a "shopping center", which had lots of small shops, each about 12' X 12'. Each dealer owned his small shop; one would sell cameras, another clothing, etc. Everything was behind glass; only one item would be out in the open. A person would point, pay for it, and the clerk would unlock the case, and give it to you.

Finally, we were able to board our plane, to Irkutsk, Siberia. Well, let me tell you, now those Russians weren't going to have to impress anyone, for WHO would go to Siberia! The only people who lived there were the offspring of their political, or religious prisoners. No one goes there to stay as they can't make any money. The average monthly income of the Siberians is \$40, a month, or 1200 rubles. The plane was as small as our commuter planes, cramped, dirty, and loud. I've been told, by several sources, that the planes were in use, in the past, for hauling troops, and even livestock.????? A group of schoolchildren were heading to Irkutsk, for why, I don't have the faintest idea, and they decided to have an all nighter, in the seat, right behind me, so I had very little sleep, on that very long eight hour trip. We had supper, aboard our little piece of Eden, which consisted of smoked salmon. I had a small taste, and found it much to my liking, but my son warned me that the last people, who went to Siberia, got very sick on the salmon.

The Russians have a small tradition that my family "forgot" to tell me, before we landed in Moscow. As soon as the plane lands, everyone started clapping, I asked my granddaughter why were they clapping, and she just said, "They always do, when the plane lands." Well, needless to say, when that puddle jumper landed in Irkutsk, I gave the pilots a standing ovation!!!

We, now, had traveled through fifteen time zones.

What can I say about Irkutsk? First of all, when we were coming in for a landing, I noticed there were no lights shining up at us, to help find the runway. And, the runways were, well, very rough; only a step up from landing in a farmers cornfield. Another missionary met us, with the minister from the Baptist Church. He had no formal training, for what formal Christian education can a person get in Russia, especially in Siberia. On our way to the apartment, the family told me a little about the minister and their church. The minister started the Baptist Church seven years before, and it has grown to several hundred members. The sun was just rising, so I couldn't see too much, but what I could see wasn't very promising. Irkutsk is a very old city, built by the prisoners of the Russian government. They set up a fort, and put their prisoners inside the fort. Most of the

original buildings are still standing, for no one tears an old building down, to build a new one. When we reached Ron's apartment, on the outer edge of Irkutsk, I found there were few roads leading to that area, and no sidewalks. The buildings looked very old, but Ron assured me they were only about ten years old. Hardly anyone has a house, so most families live in apartments. Most of the people of Siberia, had inherited their apartments from their parents, who had been given them, by their employers, in the Soviet era. The workers could keep the apartments as long as they had that job, but if they lost their job, they lost their apartment. When the Soviets fell, the people were able to keep their apartments. All the apartments were of cement slabs, only three stories high, for Irkutsk lies on a fault line, and experiences many earthquakes every year. There were several when I was there, though rather small ones. The Siberians hardly take notice of them; it's a part of life, there. There is no grass, except the wild grass, that gets "cut" once, during the summer. While walking through Irkutsk, with my family, my son pointed out about ten men, down by the Angara River. All the men were cutting the grass, (waist high) with scythes and cycles. There are no sidewalks, in that area, only well-worn paths.

When we got to the apartment, I found out how rough the living is. Everything is cement, the stairways, the inner walls, even the floors. Outside was without any adornments, large open dumpsters were outside each apartment building, and the yards were nothing but ruts in dry weather or mud holes in wet weather. Climbing the stairs, to Ron's apartment, I noticed the filth in the stair wells, and all the graffiti, on the walls. Ron said he'd tried to clean up the stairways, but the neighbors got angry for they said he was taking a job away, from the person, who was being paid for the cleaning. Ron has lived there for three years, and no one has ever cleaned the area, as far as he could tell. There were three locked doors that we had to unlock, before reaching the inside of their apartment. Their apartment consisted of two bedrooms, the three kids, in one room, and Ron and Tina in the other. The girls slept in homemade bunk beds, in one end of the room, and Jonathon slept in an upper bunk, across the very small room. Two desks were built, under Jonathon's bed, for the children are home schooled. Their lessons are downloaded, on computers, early in the morning, and they each have their own desk, and computer.

When the family first saw their apartment, there was nothing in it. When the previous tenants left, they took the light switches, the ceiling fixtures, cupboards, etc., so my son, a carpenter while going through college, built cupboards, bunk beds, did electrical work, plumbing, flooring, and various other work around the apartment, to make it a better place for them to live. During the remodeling project both his family of five and the family of four from across the hall all lived in this apartment. Boy, is that a real testimony of Christianity, seven in a two bedroom

apartment. When the landowner saw the improvements, he raised the rent, so Ron has slowed his remodeling.

The Russians have been taught that HIV began in the U.S., and have the law that if you have been out of the country, more than three months, you have to have new HIV tests taken. As the family had been in the U.S. for 3 ½ months, their car was confiscated by the government. In addition my son wouldn't be allowed to apply to the University for Classes. Tina said she really didn't want to go to the clinic, but had no choice. I asked her why not, and she asked me to go along to see. As we had no car, we walked to the bus stop, and took the best type of transportation available. The Russians consider it a cab, but it was a van that held 12 passengers. No one smiles in Siberia. Everyone was very quiet, in the taxi, and no one looked at anyone else. You paid when you got off, and not when you got on. The clinic was about three hundred years old. The hallways were so narrow that you had to turn sideways to let the person coming up to you, pass. Everything was very dingy, clean, but so old, and, not painted, for decades. There were benches, out in the hallways, for people to sit on while waiting. I was sitting on a bench waiting when I decided to stand with them. (I had been sitting, for I had been stung by a bee that had been hiding in my shoe. My first bee sting, ever, and I had to go to Siberia to get it!!) I rose, to go to my son's family, when the bench went up in the air, dumping the Russian student on the floor. There was complete silence, and my son moved over by me, as well as the rest of the family. I started wondering how bad the prisons, in Siberia were. Well, after the look of shock wore off the gentleman, he got up, brushed himself off, and started laughing. Finally, everyone around us was laughing, too. I asked Rebekah if she would go over and apologize to him for me. While waiting, a woman walked by, carrying a tray of test tubes, covered by a paper towel. Tina told me the tubes contained blood samples, and the tubes had no stoppers. She said that was why she hesitated to go there, for things weren't very sanitary in the health care systems in Siberia. They had to fill out the papers, and it took many, many visits, and three weeks to get the paperwork and the tests results. On the day they received the results, Ron and Steve Jackson, along with my granddaughter, Rebekah, to act as interpreter, went to sign up at the university. Ron and Steve have been accepted into Russia as students, and are taking the Russian language, as their elective course. Bekah speaks and understands Russian, better than the adults, so she often has to go along, to help them. They, then, had to go to the police department, to show proof of their aides tests, to get a release for their car. It was a great day, getting their car.

Soon after I reached Irkutsk, we went downtown, so the family could show me around. All the buildings are very old with some buildings dating back to the 1600's. When the old aristocrats were deported to Siberia, some of their wives followed. A few brought their children, but, most left their children behind. There are many old shacks,

in the back alleys of Irkutsk left from those times. Most are without electricity, water, and plumbing. We went to a museum, so I could buy some souvenirs. I found the prices were very reasonable. Throughout my visit, to Siberia, I bought many stacking dolls, carvings of animals and jewelry. The average wage, there, is so low, that the people have to keep the prices low, so they will be able to sell them to the area people. The churches in Irkutsk are very beautiful. The only recognized church, in Russia, is the Russian Orthodox Church. I believe there are eight in Irkutsk and all are in the process of being remodeled. During the Soviet era, all churches were closed, and the largest one was razed, to make room for the Soviet embassy. All the domes were being covered with gold leaf, and most of them had been washed, and painted. We weren't allowed in any of the churches, but one had a rope across the doorway, so people could take pictures.

Ron and his wife decided we should have lunch while we were downtown, and had found one restaurant that they felt was safe. We went to the counter, to order, Bekah reading and translating the menu. Ron ordered some type of hamburger, but I swore it wasn't beef. I played it safe by ordering some type of chicken sandwich. Soon after we sat down, all our drinks were brought to us, with the exception of Jonathon's. Ron asked his son what he had ordered, and tea was the reply. Ron was a little upset by that answer, and I asked him if he forbid the kids to have tea. "You'll see," was his reply, and after all our lunches had been eaten, and the dishes had been cleared, they brought Jonathon's tea. Tea is always served after the meal, and is considered, by the Russians, as part of the dessert. Even on the plane, back to the U.S., the tea was served after the meal was cleared away. Most of the well-to-do families in Russia own samovars. The Russians make quite a ceremony out of teatime.

When we got off the "taxi" in Ron's neighborhood, we had to go to the market place. We went to one booth, for our bread, another, for our butter, to an old truck, for eggs, taking several hours to gather our meal, to take home to cook. Luckily, Tina had meat, in her freezer, for the meat, in the market, was full of flies. For the next three weeks, before we got possession of Ron's car, we made daily trips, to different markets. Four or five of us would go, and come back, with our arms full. You had to take your own bags, for markets just had several bags for sale. No one gave you bags. All food has to be purchased, almost daily, for they have no preservatives, and no freezers, except the small one, that comes in the refrigerator. There are several large markets in Irkutsk, but, all the booths are rented by the people. The government owns all the buildings, but rent out small areas. Several times, we went to the large markets, downtown, and it was really an experience. There were booths set up in one area, with fruit of all kinds. Each vendor would try to make their wares as becoming as possible. My daughter-in-law warned me not to touch anything. She had picked up a piece of fruit, to examine it, and the vendor started yelling at her. You point at the piece

of goods, and they pick it up to show it to you, and you'd better take it!! In one section was the meat, still on the carcass. You pointed to the part of the animal you wanted, and they chopped it off, and handed it to you. If you wanted honey, or sour cream, you brought you own container, and they scooped some into it. It was suggested, by Tina, not to purchase any clothing, from Siberia. The few pieces of clothing they had purchased had fallen apart, in the first few washings. Oh, and dryers are unheard of, in Siberia. Tina would string ropes in the apartment, and hang the clothes. They had a porch that they could usually hang the clothes, but when it got chilly, the lines were hung throughout the apartment.

There was a bathroom, in the apartment that Ron and his friend, Steve, had completely remodeled. They made two rooms out of it, one with just the stool, and the other with the sink, tub, shower, and washer. The hot water pipes were showing in the bathroom, which was the only source of heat, from May 1st through the end of September. The government controlled the heat, having the temperature 105 degrees, in the winter. Ron would have his windows opened, to cool it off a little. The second week of September, while I was still there, the hot water was shut off, so the pipes could get cleaned out. It was quite a challenge trying to heat enough water for the six of us to be able to bathe. We were, also, without the heat the hot water pipes gave off during this time, and it got very cool, in the apartments. We were lucky, for the apartment building next to us had no water at all, and the people had to take pails down to the truck, which hauled water in every morning. Ron said the first year they were there, they had to draw their water from the Angara River, and found many blood suckers in the pail.

Irkutsk has a population of about 600,000 people and is a very poor area. There are a lot of drugs, and the mafia lives just outside the town. The mafia has mansions, and they feel very safe in the area, for the Russian government spends very little in Siberia. As I was sitting in a park, a police car stopped, the police jumped out and went up to a woman who had a keg of beer on a cart. Both policemen walked away with a cup of beer, and we didn't see any money change hands. Ron said the police get whatever they want for free. I was warned by Tina, to watch where I walked, for there were many needles, from the drug users, just thrown down into the streets and walkways of Siberia. People didn't dress up to impress their neighbors. I was very impressed when Tina said she wanted to take me on a walk to observe the Russian children, on the way to their first day of school. The boys were wearing suits and ties, and the girls were wearing dresses. All the boys were carrying bouquet of flowers for their teachers. I thought the children were dressed like that because it was their first day of school, but Tina told me they had to dress like that every day. Only when a girl reached college could she wear slacks to college.

Now a little about the Baptist church, in Siberia. My granddaughter, Beak, warned me not to smile. She said she smiled, when she first sang in choir, and she was bawled out by the Russian women, for "making fun of God". Well, I'm afraid I was the reason she smiled, again, while singing in choir. It was the last Sunday I attended the Siberian church, and Beak gave me the most beautiful smile I have ever received. The first week I attended the church, there was choral numbers, hymns sung, prayers said, and some man got up and spoke for quite awhile. When he finished, I thought, "that wasn't too bad," and started collecting my things to go, when Tina shook her head, and whispered, "The preacher has his sermon, now." We had been in service for over an hour, and the preacher hadn't even preached, yet! Well, how long could a minister talk?? Oh, a whole hour...and I didn't even get one thing from his sermon. (I had to give a talk at my home church, and our minister told the congregation he thought that an hour sermon was just about right. I got some digs about that.) The last Sunday I attended church there, several of the members came up to me as I was waiting by the door for my son and his family. One elderly woman took my hands in hers, looked me in the eyes, and spoke to me. I had no idea what she was saying; when I noticed my thirteen year old grandson standing near to me. Part of what he translated was she had thanked me for coming over to see her country, and to tell all my Baptist friends, back in America, hi from my Baptist friends in Siberia. Several others came up, and spoke to me as my grandson translated.

My trip home was quite scary. My son flew, with me, from Irkutsk to Moscow. Again, we had no time to look through the shops for we only had time to "grab" a "cab", and get to the international airport. Ron could only walk me up to the security gate, and try to explain what I had to do to get clearance to board. No one spoke English. I was very shaky, but I made it through and plopped myself onto a chair. I was afraid to read; for I was afraid I would put myself to sleep. Ron had pointed out the gate I was to leave from, and if they changed gates, I'd never know, and might end up in China, for all I knew. I finally got to the US, on September 11, one year after the World Trade Towers fell, and landed in Dulles Airport, Washington D.C., and got stopped by the Americans. I was pulled from line, as they went over me, with this wand. The gal asked me to step aside, and continued waving the wand over me. Like a real dumb blonde, I commented, "Gee, I just went through Moscow, and had no problem, there." Finally, after taking off my shoes, they found a thumb tack in the bottom of it.

Since I started this article, my son has been given notice that his family's visas will not be renewed. When my son checked with the university, in Siberia, he found he had until the end of June to be out of the country. He doesn't know if this will be permanent or not, but prays he and his family can go back, for their hearts are with the Siberian people.

Excerpts from Get to Know Me **Phyllis K. Taylor Peterson**

By Edith C. Webster,
Rockford Register Star, August 31, 2002

Where have you heard the name? She is the Public Information Representative for the Baha'i Community of Rockford. A Rockford native and 1959 graduate of West High School who lives in Machesney Park, she is owner of Skylark Publishing Co, which produces and markets books, games, posters, videos and tapes to Domestic Violence Shelters in the United States and Canada. She writes stories that portray women and girls as heroes who bring peace to the world. She and her husband, John Peterson, owner of the Bookstall of Rockford, have three adult children.

Event you are working on: Assisting Rockford writer Flora Cousins with "Don't be a Bully, Be a buddy" program.

One thing about the Rock River Valley you would change: Better support for ethnic restaurants.

Something people don't know about you: I used to work in radio. I have 35 character voices and sometimes used three voices in one commercial.

If you could trade places with someone for one day, who would it be? The head chef in a fine restaurant. I love to cook.

Something you have always wanted to do: Write a book for women in prison.

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Are you still a Red and Black Warrior?

Wanna Join Us, the 62 plus group celebrating the 45th, but you just can't?

I may have a way to let us see you, let you see us, and we can all share in the FUN.

Send a current picture of yourself to be posted on a PICTURE WALL with a short message about yourself in the picture. We will see that the next newsletter has pictures of "all who are present."

Send your picture to Ella Cavitt Frese at 1189 Meadow Lark Drive, Starkville, MS 39759.