

Teachers for East Africa and Teacher Educators for East Africa

TEA/TEEA Newsletter, Number 1. September 1999.

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Jambo sana! Na habari ya siku nyingi? And as Arthur Bull taught us, "Haraka, haraka, haina baraka." (Hurry, hurry, there's no blessing in it.)

Why a newsletter and how did this happen? I had been thinking about reestablishing contact with a few old TEA friends for some time. A few years ago I found Dale Otto by using a national phone directory on a CD at my library. Dale expressed an interest in some sort of reunion, noting that 1) our group contains members with a great deal of expertise on Africa and 2) we aren't getting any younger. About the same time I talked to someone at the Alumni office at TC, but they never returned my call, and I abandoned the idea for a time. Then last year I got a computer with internet capability, and this spring, when I saw a block of free time approaching, I began thinking about it again. In the meantime, I tried to find another old friend -- not of TEA -- only to learn that he had died five years ago. That experience lent some urgency to getting started. Hal Sondrol, the only TEAer with whom I have been in regular contact over the years, was enthusiastic about the idea. We both feel the African experience had a profound effect on our lives. He noted that TEA was an exciting and fun time in our lives and that was reason enough to try to bring people together. Thus, this project began. Hal provided some names in the beginning and has continued with moral support. He is, however, much involved with caring for his elderly father so the task, with help from many of you, has fallen to me. Ron Stockton's letter of 6/30 sums up our own motivation:

"Dear Ed,

What a great idea. I do have some addresses of some other people, which I will forward later.... TEA was a great program and it will be interesting to see what happened to us. I hope you will also compile a profile of what people have done since then. Christensen, Berger, and I all went into academics. It would be valuable to show what impact this program had on people's lives."

TASK: SEND ME A BRIEF PROFILE FOR YOURSELF. WE'LL INCLUDE THEM IN THE NEXT NEWSLETTER.

Brief log of creating the directory-- dates are all 1999.

March 29. Talk to Sondrol. He agrees to help. The lists I have are the original list for Wave 1, the booklet with photos of everyone in Wave 4, and a directory from 1970. Hal mentions getting a letter about a reunion from someone in Ohio in 1990.

April 1. Do a Yahoo search of "Teachers for East Africa" and get 5 hits including two TEA vets, Charles Good and Sandra Taylor, whose CVs are on the websites of the institutions where they are teaching! Each CV mentions their TEA experience -- I am impressed with the power of internet search engines! A similar search on Alta Vista turns up Dean McHenry. Of these three I knew the first two which also amazes me since I really knew very few people in TEA. Sandra's reaction to my e-mail:

"Absolutely amazed to read this email! If I wasn't recovering from a broken arm and under doctor's orders to avoid accidents, I would have fallen off my chair."

Mid-April. Follow up on a few people with leads supplied by Dean McHenry. Dean knew that Gary Gappert was the person who had done the 1990 mailing, though no reunion occurred. During this period I also try to find phone numbers for people from Wave 1 and 4 using The Ultimate White Pages website, <<http://www.theultimates.com/white/>>. The more unusual the name, the easier the search. Women are much harder to find

because of name changes and the habit of listing only first initials.

April 25. Learned from Mary Ellen Leslie that Gary Gappert had died in 1997. Gary and Mary had been married four years at the time of Gary's death.

April 26. First night of phoning -- find Psychas, Swain, Zalatimo and James. Gary James sends the names of four other people. Getting names from one person sets up a chain reaction to follow up with. I usually spend one evening a week phoning from now until the end of May.

May 2. Dean McHenry finds Gary Gappert's list, dated 5/15/90, and other earlier lists in his files. Dean confesses, "Yes, I save too much."

May 4. The 1990 list arrives. I am disappointed to see that the address given for me on this list was an place I had left in 1973! My guess is that Gary did a mailing using an earlier list and if the mail wasn't returned, he assumed the address was good. Gary's 1990 list becomes the basis for the continuing search. I find phone numbers for a few names on each page of 30 names from this list.

May 12. Locate 8 people this evening. Total near 40.

May 29. Lee Smith adds 17 names from his personal files.

Early June. I go to Guatemala for a week. The pace of the phone work slows.

June 18. Received from Lee Smith the TEEA 6 (1969-'71) list containing another 30 names. This list is later confirmed by Ruth Cutler, Gene Child, and Don Knies.

Mid July. I agree to take on a new job -- for pay! The pace slows again but does not stop -- the job is only half time!

July 27. Receive from Don Knies in England letters with additional names. The directory contains about 130 names at this time. It is a living document, a work in progress. Apologies for any errors or omissions.

TASK: PLEASE SEND CORRECTIONS, CHANGES, AND ADDITIONS TO ME, ED SCHMIDT. LET ME KNOW YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS IF YOU HAVE ONE. I could also use complete lists for any of the waves other than 1 and 4 if any of you have them.

Reunion talk. What about a reunion? In July I learned that the TEEA 6 group ('69-'71) has been having reunions every five years. Gene Child, a member of the group writes:

"Alex Cutler, Ruth's deceased husband, is the person most responsible for the five reunions wave six of TEEA has held. participation has been from 25 to 50 people including spouses and children. The first reunion was held in the summer of 1979 in California at Malibu Beach hosted by Ruth and Alex Cutler. The 1984 reunion was held in Minnesota at Lake Ida with Lee and Betty Sandiger as hosts. The 1989 20-year reunion was held in Nairobi, Kenya at the Fairfield Hotel with Carl Graham, who was still working with Columbia University in Africa, doing most of the groundwork.

About 25 people showed up in Snowmass/Aspen for the 1994 reunion. This reunion was a sad affair because Alex Cutler died in California while we were meeting in Aspen. He had left home to attend but had to turn back when the ravages of his cancer got the best of him. We miss him greatly.

This past April we met on the beach near Sarasota, FL for the 30th reunion. Who knows where we will meet in the future. Maybe you will get an even larger group together."

Reunion talk has apparently been a frequent topic of conversation among some of you, too. Stumbling blocks that have been raised include 1) the fact that we are so dispersed geographically and 2) that it would be an insurmountable task to locate everyone. In answer, I'd say that 2) is in the process of being overcome as the directory that follows will show. Number 1) might be solved by having regional reunions except that then we'd miss seeing old friends we had hoped to see. Certainly there are other groups, e. g., university alums and veterans groups, that have overcome the problem of geographical diversity. Does anyone want to take on the reunion project? We need to do this sooner rather than

later! My personal fantasy is that Teachers College would host a reunion for us and we could stay in the graduate dorms as we did in the 60s. Here is John Bing's e-mail to Lee Smith on the reunion subject:

"Subject: Re: Voice from the TEA past

It really will be a pleasure to hold such a reunion. It was so long ago. It feels, I'm afraid, more like a film I viewed or a book I read than the reality it was. And yet, some of the memories are vivid, as clear as last week. Let's urge Ed to set a date as soon as possible. I wonder if Chicago might be a good central place. Or, why not DC and take advantage of what will probably be alums with interesting access and hence opportunities for briefings and good discussions of current African affairs."

If we can't do it at Teacher's College, my personal second choice would be a location more central -- in the Midwest. That would be a compromise since there are so many of you on the two coasts. What do the rest of you think? Also, is there a best time of year?

The directory. How might you use the directory? Most of the people in the directory you won't know. Perhaps there will be an address for someone you wish you hadn't lost contact with, and you'll be motivated to reestablish communication. Hal and I also hope that the directory might be a source of new friendships with others who share the East African experience. Why not get in contact with others in your geographical area and get to know one another?

Costs. What about the costs of researching the directory and of the newsletter? Making all the phone calls for the directory is an expense I am willing to pay out of my own pocket. I think of it as coming out of my entertainment budget since I've had a lot of fun talking to so many of you on the phone and by e-mail. I don't feel the same way about the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter. This mailing is going to cost about \$1 per US address and more for overseas postage. To cover those costs I'd like to solicit donations -- on a voluntary basis -- of up to \$10, hoping that that would cover future mailings for at least the first year. When the money runs out, I'll ask for more.

Where do we go from here? My goal is to get out another newsletter around the end of the year. Naturally, I expect many of us will be in touch by e-mail, phone, and letter in the interim.