

Making Deposits and Withdrawals in the Memory Bank

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I invited some of my friends on the Foreign Missions Administrative Committee to make a withdrawal from the bank. It wasn't costly; just something from their memory banks. I trust their investments will make a great deposit to my account in this issue of *Culture Shock*.

Brother Lynden Shalm is our Regional Director for Asia, and one of our prized Missionary Kids. Here he reflects on a few memories of growing up in India. "Ellis and Marjorie Scism and their two young teenagers arrived in India in early part of 1949 for the first time. George and Margaret Shalm arrived about nine months later. India had only celebrated two years of independence from England. This was a pre-PIM era. It was twenty years before the Partners in Missions program would be introduced to Foreign Missions. As a young boy growing up in India, I watched my mom and dad 'pray in' our support. On one occasion, no funds arrived for three consecutive months. Mom and Dad were driven to their knees to seek God for their basic needs in that day of utilitarianism. Every day, we watched as the postman would come up the lane. Did he have any food parcels today? One day he brought eight parcels that had been sent from home. We were thrilled. One parcel had a box of Cool Aid. It turned out that all seventy-two packages were the orange flavor! Another parcel had Christmas gifts and someone back home evidently thought there was a girl in the family as I got the comb and mirror set. My brothers got a big laugh out of that. Oh well, at least I can remember what I got!

Communication was extremely limited. In this day of instant emails, text messaging, etc., it is hard to imagine that during all the years that I lived in India as a boy, I cannot recall any of our missionaries ever making a telephone call.

In all our years on the field, we did not have a shower facility in the house, so we used the old fashioned 'dipper' method.

Something I will never forget is when my mother received a letter from her sister one day. It had taken more than two weeks to arrive in the post. When Mom opened up the letter and read it, she sadly discovered that her sister had written to tell her that her mom had passed away.

Looking back on growing up as a missionary kid in South India, at no time did either my brothers or I feel that we had missed out on the good things in life. Mom and Dad had raised us to enjoy the rich life of faith and trusting in God."

I am always touched by the words of a Gaither song entitled “We Have This Moment Today.” I’m sure you all have it on your iPods. Smile! The chorus says, “We have this moment to hold in our hands and to touch as it slips through our fingers like sand; Yesterday's gone and tomorrow may never come, But we have this moment today.” The song-writer wisely advises us to make deposits to the memory bank through the memories of the moment. “Hold them near while they're here and don't wait for tomorrow, to look back and wish for today.” After one of our terms of service we came home with Amy. She was about four years old. As we arrived in the airport she saw people putting money in a machine and soft drinks falling out of the bottom. She had NEVER seen that. She begged us for money so she could watch the drinks fall out of the machine. Also, since we do not have hardly any people of African descent in El Salvador, she was very astonished at seeing African-American people in Mississippi which was our home in the states. I smile each time I recall this. She now serves on the staff at Christian Life Center and Christian Life College. She has gone from being a little missionary kid to a mission’s instructor.

Not all withdrawals bring smiles. Some bring pain. Living in El Salvador did not afford us the opportunity to allow our children to work and handle some things that a normal teenager would do in North America. So, there was a lot of learning to do. I cannot forget when Leah, our first daughter, left for Bible College. I was blessed to be able to go and purchase a car that a pastor in Texas helped us get for her. Needless to say it was not a new one.

One day, when Leah had been at IBC for just a little while, she called very upset, in fact she was crying. She needed gas. She was not accustomed to filling her own car; no self serve in El Salvador! She wanted to write a check, and of course the gas station would not accept it. She was confused and ended up just going back to the dorm in frustration. Her mother and I were very sad we could not be there to help her. We did our share of crying as well. Now she and her husband pastor in the Los Angeles area and the preparation of the mission field is serving her well.

My, oh my, the memories of our MKs. Now, I feel my family has grown by leaps and bounds and with it the blessing of many precious jewels I consider “my missionary kids.” You are included!

Brother Bryan Abernathy, our Director of Promotion remembers well his missionary kid experiences. “The one thing that I can remember was the visit from Bro Scism and Bro Freeman to Capetown. I was thinking of coming home and not returning to the mission field. I had been teaching in the Bible Schools in Capetown and helping my Dad and Mom with many things in the work but the pull of home was strong on me. Bro Scism asked me to make a sacrifice and stay two more years to help Dad and Mom. He saw the need that I did not see. He gave me a

book called *The Saffron Rope* that told the story of the great sacrifice of a man from India for the Gospel's sake. I stayed and have never regretted it. My Dad commented to me many times of how much I helped them and the work by staying for those two years. He made me feel like more than just a kid who was with his missionary parents in Africa. I was an important part of the work of God. He taught me that if I would sacrifice, God would reward me. God has surely rewarded me many times over for such a small sacrifice. By the way, I still have the book."

Brother Carl Varnell, our Secretary of Foreign Missions writes, "I was asked to make a withdrawal from my memory bank to share with you. I am very sorry but when I tried to make the withdrawal, I was informed my account had been canceled due to lack of activity. However, I did have something small on hand to share. To all of you who have returned to North America after living overseas for several years please remember that your parents, family, friends and Foreign Missions have been making deposits to your account. This means you are very valuable to us and we believe in your future. You are now approaching a time in life when you will begin making withdrawals from your memory bank of life experiences. Remember to invest in others as it pays rich dividends. We love and appreciate you all." I think that expresses the sentiments of all of us in Foreign Missions. Invest wisely. Make withdrawals as needed. God will use your past to bless our future.