

Alumni News

Bringing together friends and former staff, for mutual support and encouragement.



Scott's Update

Dear Alumni,

Welcome to the first edition of the new **Global Interaction Alumni News**.

Over the past 18 months it has been a real joy for me to speak with a number of our faithful former workers. Your faith stories and continuing passion for global mission have inspired me and I appreciate the valuable feedback you can provide as we learn from the past and look to God's Spirit to lead us forward as a mission community.

It has been four years since we published the last edition of *Binbilla*, Global Interaction's former alumni newsletter. The newsletter sought to bring alumni together "for mutual support and encouragement" and "provide a context for maintaining engagement in global mission".

It's exciting to be re-launching an alumni publication for very similar reasons. **We want to celebrate our alumni, support former workers connecting with each other and continue to hear inspiring stories from our alumni and current team members.**

Alumni News will feature stories and a devotional resource from alumni and updates from our Global Interaction team. If you have something to share with other alumni, please let us know and we will put it in a 'Personnel' section.

In coming into my role, I never envisaged that I would commence as a pandemic was beginning to spread across the globe. COVID has impacted our work in many ways and yet we celebrate all that God is doing through our teams across the world, as they embody the good news of Jesus by word and deed.

We're also moving through a time of significant change as a mission organisation and I would welcome the opportunity to connect with many of you online to let you know about some of these changes. It will also be a privilege to pray with you as valued alumni members.

You are welcome to join me at an Alumni Zoom meeting on Tuesday 7 Dec at 7:30pm (AEDT).

You can join the Zoom meeting with this link:
<https://bit.ly/AlumniDec>

I am grateful to David Groves, Grace Dodge and John and Heather Spicer who have written stories in this edition.

Grace and peace,



Scott Pilgrim

Executive Director, Global Interaction



God is Faithful, But Are We?

Grace Dodge served in Bangladesh with Global Interaction (formerly the Australian Baptist Mission Society) for over 30 years.



*He that calleth you is faithful.
1 Thessalonians 5:24*

In 1956, God called me to a place called Mymensingh to serve with the Australian Baptist Mission Society (now Global Interaction). I had never heard of Mymensingh,

but I was aware of the ABMS. When I embarked on my journey, God gave me a dual promise: He had a work for me and I would come back to Australia. Looking back, I can only give thanks to the One who called me for His great faithfulness - and echo the words spoken by Joshua in Joshua 21:45; 23:14 and King Solomon in 1 Kings 8:56.

While God remains faithful to us, how can we remain faithful to Him? How did our Lord serve His Heavenly Father? He spent much time in prayer - especially in the early mornings. As much as possible we need to come to God's Word, day and night, and listen for a word of encouragement, instruction, guidance or correction.

Sometimes He gives a word to prepare us for a change of circumstances. **On 6/11/1969 I wrote the date against three messages in Zechariah 8:13. God was saying, we would be a blessing, not to be afraid, but to let our hands be strong.**

These words took on new meaning during the 1971 War of Liberation. Although Betty Salisbury and I were given the option of evacuating, we felt we should stay. Our chairman Ray Schaefer respected our decision. Amongst other things, we were able to offer shelter to a group of young women who completed a Bible Correspondence Course and each received a New Testament. **In spite of many dangers, we were unharmed, our resources were adequate and we never felt afraid.**

How did Jesus fulfil His ministry? Jesus spent time with His disciples. In normal times the highlight of each week was the station fellowship, Bible Study and prayer meeting. This was an opportunity to focus on our calling, maintain mutual support and to pray over our shared responsibilities. Malachi 3:16 tells us God keeps His own record of these types of meetings. Jesus promises to be with those who meet together in His Name (Matthew 18:20).



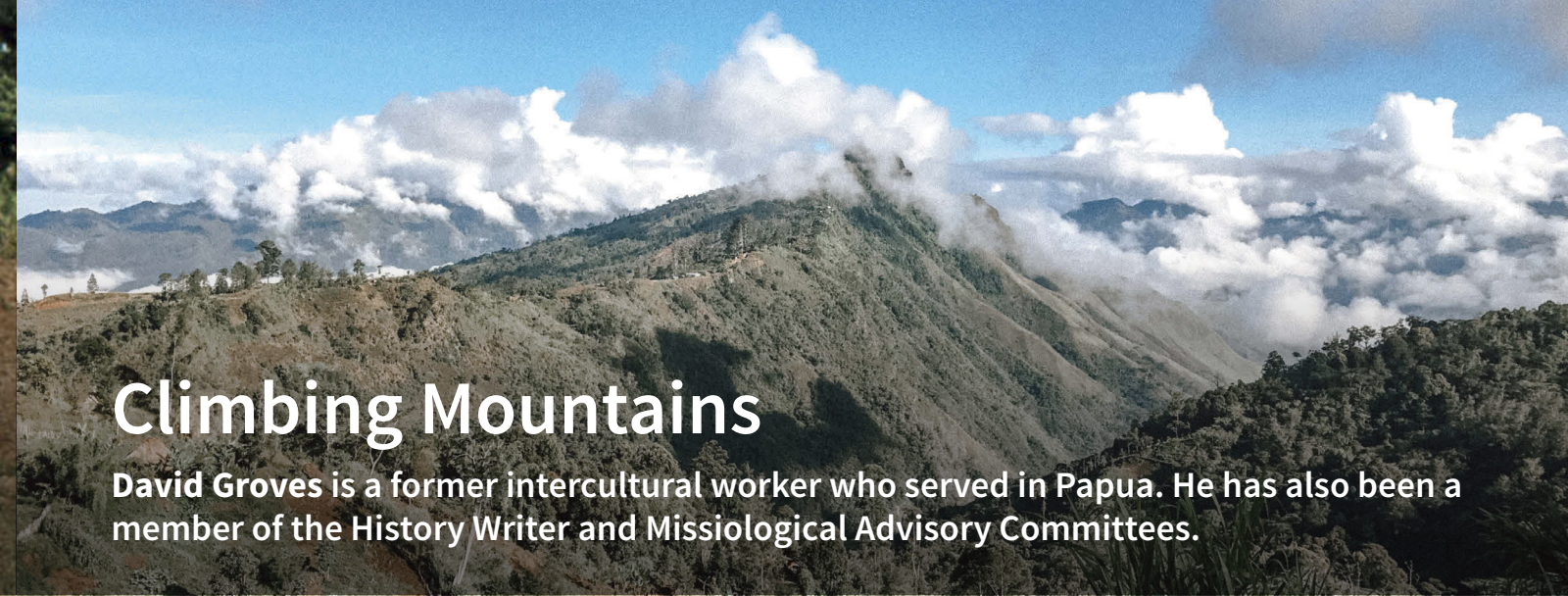
Grace Dodge and David Nath, 1986



Groves family, 1984 (article right)



David Groves bricklaying, 1986



Climbing Mountains

David Groves is a former intercultural worker who served in Papua. He has also been a member of the History Writer and Missiological Advisory Committees.

Pete Greig, author of the currently popular prayer training program and accompanying book, "How to Pray", says his "soul is awakened by climbing mountains." Unfortunately England, where he lives, provides little scope for his pre-prayer preparation as Great Britain's highest mountain, Ben Nevis is only 1,345 metres tall, and it's in Scotland anyway.

For a number of years, my family lived and worked in Papua (formerly Irian Jaya) where we could take our pick from at least five mountains, which all rose over 4,000 metres (some even had snow peaks year round). Our prayers reflected the topography with much enthusiasm, just as they did for David in Psalm 8:1, "O Lord, how majestic is thy name in all the earth."

I was a Development Officer for much of my time inland. We were continually on our feet, trekking out to see churches, projects, health clinics, the saw mill and clean water tanks and bridges. We also enjoyed beautiful scenery, cooling breezes and just plain, lovely country, usually with plenty of local companions. Mountain climbing with a purpose is rewarding, even if it's not necessarily truckloads of fun.

I spent many hours walking down the North Baliem Valley from Tiom to Pit, Makki and Danime. While the mountains we normally crossed were not as high, various jump ups were very steep and occurred with annoying regularity. These were the creek beds that carried water from all the surrounding hills and valleys into the mighty Baliem. It required us to climb down 30-40 metres and clamber back up again straight away, and then repeat the whole process virtually immediately.

On one frustrating, leg wearying day, while I was out inspecting some development projects with a local Dani colleague, I remember giving in to a bit of a whinge saying to him; "I really dislike these mountains."

His response was fascinating and a bit of a worry. It reflected insights gained through his senior role in Bible teaching, his pastoral experience and his time spent sharing the Gospel with other tribes as a missionary himself. My pretty defensive and rather shameful conversation with him (puffs, wheezes and all) went something like this:

Friend: "Do you have mountains in Australia?"

Me: "Some," (*puff, puff*) "but it's mostly pretty flat."

Friend: "Do you have people like us in Australia?"

Me: "Yes," (*puff, puff, wheeze, wheeze*) "...but there used to be a lot more."

Friend: "What happened to them?"

Me: "Many died of disease," (*puff, wheeze, puff, wheeze*) "and others in fighting."

Friend: "Was that because outsiders could just walk in and take the land?"

Me: "Yes." (*puff puff, wheeze wheeze*) ...

Friend: "We like our mountains."

The Dani believe they have been protected and sheltered over the years, until in the fullness of God's time, a generation of mission minded people were inspired to share the Gospel with them. We give thanks that was a group of Aussie Baptists. Through it all, the Dani have largely retained their land and culture but give thanks to God that they now have a thriving mission church and have Kingdom blessings to share with others.

Who else is waiting to hear the good news of Jesus?

Where Are They Now?

Prof John and Heather Spicer served in Bangladesh from 1966 to 1973.



John and Heather officially live in Camberwell, VIC in the Hedley Sutton Community (HSC), which is named after the former Global Interaction (then ABMS) missionary, with whom Heather's father and mother had worked with in Bengal, British India in the 1920s and 1930s. But where are they now? John and Heather spent 9 months of 2020, and currently over 2 months in 2021, in involuntary (but very pleasant) lockdown in their modest log cabin in Point Lonsdale.

They live like Darby and Joan, but rather more actively. Now eighty-five, they are both in reasonably good health, driving between HSC and 'Lonnie', walking and gardening, and creaking only a little.

John still teaches 3rd Year Medical Students from The Alfred, Box Hill and Werribee hospitals three times a week via Zoom on Infectious Diseases and Microbiology. **His service with Heather at Joyramkura Garo Christian Hospital in Bangladesh from 1966 to 1970, has shaped their lives ever since, with post-graduate training in Melbourne, Sydney, London and USA, then working at The Alfred Hospital in Melbourne since 1975, including 21 years since 'retiring'.** He manages 13 share portfolios for four generations of the family, looks after financial and property matters, and he and Heather both remain active in the church.



Spicer family - John, Heather, Merrill, Jillian

Heather has some difficulty in walking from a nerve condition called peripheral neuropathy, but walks and exercises daily, reads extensively, writes what she calls doggerel, and draws with watercolour pencils.

Heather writes in jest, "We understand why 'Seniors' are called 'Wrinklies,' but it's a wonder we are still alive and enjoying life at 85. Two of John's teachers from 1958-61 live at Hedley Sutton, and are in good health at 93 and 99! It reminds me of the criminal who tunnelled underground out of prison, came up next to a child in a sandpit, and exclaimed 'I'm free, I'm free.' The child replied, 'That's nuffin', I'm four.'"

Alumni Connect

We know people may want to be in contact with other alumni. Would you be able to help? We would love to have a contact person for each state. If this resonates with you please get in contact with Tim Collison at tcollison@globalinteraction.org.au

Share Your Story

Our current plan is to publish Alumni News twice next year. If you would like to contribute a story, devotional thought, or Where Are They Now section, please contact Tim Collison at tcollison@globalinteraction.org.au. If you have feedback, questions or do not want to receive this newsletter you can also contact Tim.