

MK Problems, MK Solutions

by Ralph D. Winter

Just as the squeaky wheel gets the grease, we tend to hear more about the different MK “challenges” (i.e., “problems,” in today’s PC speak) than we hear about the many truly outstanding MK contributions in missions today.

We would like to sound a trumpet call for current missionaries to take note of and write notes about MKs around the world who are doing an unusually good job that probably a non-MK could not do as well.

Undoubtedly, MKs have long made outstanding contributions in many walks of life all down through the decades of Protestant missions. I say decades, and I say Protestant, because in the centuries of outstanding Roman Catholic missions MKs were not a major factor. Right now missionary families must be rearing well over 50,000 MKs on countless fields around the world.

Is this a part of missions? Is it a major factor? Is the right analysis of it a “frontier”? We think so.

We have not done as good a job as we could. Our families in US churches are not doing as good a job as they should. Why should overseas families succeed where US families very often fall short?

It is a peculiar feature of Western society and especially American society that we coop our children up in school rooms for so much of the week and for so many years that their very delay into maturity and responsibility becomes a problem in itself. There are few “teenager” problems in societies which integrate their children into real life earlier than we do.

MKs are, however, part of both worlds. My children growing up in Guatemala were quite normally caught up in adult activities precisely because their playmates (read work-mates) were involved in adult activities. For them things adults valued seemed far more exciting than either “play” or sitting in a classroom.

But, amazingly, the adults I’m talking about, whose activities were models for my children, were not Americans but Guatemalan Mayas. In America we have shunted our children off into school care for so many years that we have almost totally forgotten that children want and need to participate in the adult world.

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Do you know, dear reader, of any adult MKs working significantly still in the world of missions? . . . Let us hear from you!

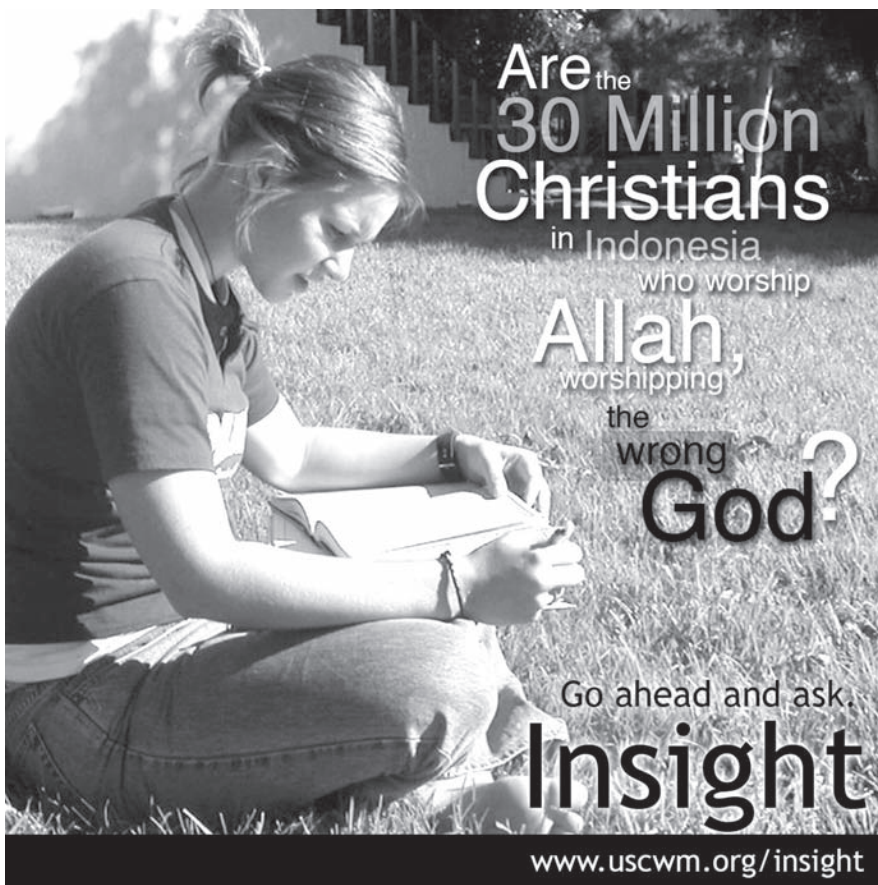
So MKs often straddle not only the normally-thought-of linguistic and cultural differences. They may try to make sense in the midst of the biggest differences of all—the differences between American child rearing and non-Western child rearing.

In any case, because of or in spite of this straddling tension there are notable examples of MKs becoming almost “supermissionaries.” One of the most significant examples is that of Donald McGavran, a third-generation missionary whose ideas have transformed modern missions in the Protestant and especially the Evangelical sphere from mere witnessing and evangelism into the building of accountable fellowships of believers. Missionaries used to say they were evangelizing. Now they say (almost as one word) that

they are doing “evangelizing and church planting.”

Okay, how about a book of a dozen or more chapters highlighting some of these “supermissionaries” who are laboring often behind the scenes in missions all over the place.

How about a series of articles in *IJFM*? How about building a book out of those articles? Yes, let’s do it. Do YOU know, dear reader, of any adult MKs working significantly still in the world of missions? If all you do is to report their existence that will be the first step. Let us hear from you! **IJFM**



MK Resources: A Short List

Magazines

Interact, published by Interaction International, an organization committed to counseling and research of MKs/TCKs (tckinteract.net).

Among Worlds (tckinteract.net)

Organizations/Websites

Barnabas International (barnabas.org) sponsors re-entry seminars for MKs, started Mu Kappa (fraternity-like clubs for MKs) on 70 college campuses.

The Interchange Institute (interchangeinstitute.org) is a research institute focused on expatriate issues.

Transition Dynamics (transition-dynamics.com) has an extensive bibliography on expatriate/repatriate issues. Click on *Resources and Products*, then on the word *bibliography*.

TCK World (tckworld.com). Claims to be the largest site related to third culture kid issues.

Books on MKs/TCKs

Andrews, Leslie A., ed. (2004). *The Missionary Family: Understanding and Caring for Those Who Serve*, Palmer Lake, CO: Mission Training International. (See inside ad for ordering information).

Pollock, D. C., and Van Reken, R. E. (1999). *Third Culture Kids: The experience of growing up among worlds*. London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Rosalea Cameron (2006). *Missionary Kids: Who they are; Why they are who they are; What now?* (Available from Cypress Trust, PO Box 476, Deception Bay, 4508, Queensland, Australia.) To order, write to author at TCK.au@wesleyan.org.au.

For other resources, see missiology.org/bibliographies/missionarycare.htm

Conferences: 2007

Families in Global Transition (figt.org), “8th Families in Transition International Conference.” The conference will be held in Houston, March 29–31, 2007.