

My interest in international experiences began during high school in New Jersey, when I spent summers volunteering and working as a teachers' aide at a program for children of Migrant Farm workers (1972-1974). Many of the children were from **Puerto Rico** or were African American living in harsh and unstable conditions, many worked to exhaustion from a very young age. One summer I spent helping each child to create a 'book' that told about their life, in their words and with their pictures. I will always be inspired by the children's stories of resilience, adaptability and love for their families.

Fascinated by Latin-American history and culture, I spent a summer living with a family in Mexico. I took three courses at the **University of Guadalajara, Mexico** (1975) in Spanish in Latin American Studies. I have returned to Mexico for various travels and homestays in different parts of Mexico in 1980, 1988, 2004 and 2008. With the migration of Central Americans to North Carolina beginning in the mid-1980's, I would translate for Spanish speaking patients at Duke Hospital, until the time they had explicit rights to a trained translator who is fluent in medical Spanish.

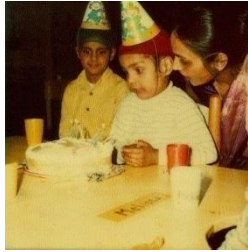
In 1978 I was a student teacher in **Crawley, England** for a fourth grade class. With England's track system at the time, these were exceptionally bright children who taught me that creativity can emerge within a disciplined learning environment. They learned that all Americans didn't carry guns and ride horses. I lived with a family there, and although language was not a barrier, it was an enriching cross-cultural experience.

As a young adult, my sister and I stayed with my extended family in San Salvatore Telesino, **Italy**. These warm and welcoming relatives remembered my grandparents before they left for Ellis Island and a "better" life in the sweat shops of New York. Finding my family roots changed my view of the world, and gave me a sense of connection between countries and generations. I will always appreciate family members I never knew that worked to send my father to college. In a recent visit to Ellis Island with my teenage daughter, we experienced what her great-grandparents went through and our heritage beyond the US.



As a special education teacher from 1979-1983, I learned from close relationships with families of my students from **Jordan, El Salvador, India**, and countries in **Africa** that have new names. These connections taught me how to provide culturally appropriate experiences for the child and family, taking into account their beliefs, cultural practices and views on disability.

Now as an OT teacher, international and cross-cultural content is part of my courses, beginning in the students' first semester when they explore an international practice setting for underserved populations. I facilitated a spring break student trip in **Guatemala**. I coordinate international fieldwork experiences for students. These experiences have been in **England, South Africa, Denmark and Thailand** (where I directly supervised a student). Our plans for fieldwork in 2010 includes: **Honduras, Thailand, and Guatemala**. International faculty collaborations and research projects with **Denmark and Thailand** are discussed in another part of this website.



Friends and I took a trip to **Chile** in 2007 in a vacation to hike and kayak and celebrate turning 50. Yet, I found myself drawn to the culture and politics. This was an exciting time for Chile, after recently electing a female president. It was fascinating to listen to local people talk about the changes they had gone through in the past 35 years, in contrast to the stories of Chilean exiles I met in Mexico in 1975 during the dictatorship of Pinochet. The contrast between Chile and Mexico, both considered Hispanic, was a reminder about seeing each person and group individually.

It has been a great pleasure to share enthusiasm for cross cultural experiences with my family. Here is my daughter Josie with her exchange student from **China**, Yang Xu.



Life is about learning, and using that understanding to contribute to bridge building between people for the common good. One of the valuable parts of cross cultural learning is self-understanding. Intersections of culture bring to light the fact that beliefs about families, work, health, identity and purpose are culturally constructed. My understanding of the United States is greater from having seen through eyes of other nations. My appreciation of our country is stronger, as are my ideas for how we can be better.