

"THIRD CULTURE CHILDREN"

by Judith M. Holton in Kuala Lumpur

Dr. Ruth Hill Useem, anthropologist and sociologist at Michigan State University has spent many years studying the children of parents living outside the country of their citizenship. She calls them "Third Culture Kids", or TCK's, belonging neither to their "home" country nor the country of residence, but rather growing up in a mixture of the two — a kind of third culture.

In a recent series of lectures at the International School of Kuala Lumpur, Dr. Useem shared some of her observations, gleaned in her years of research, which included the raising of three TCK's of her own.

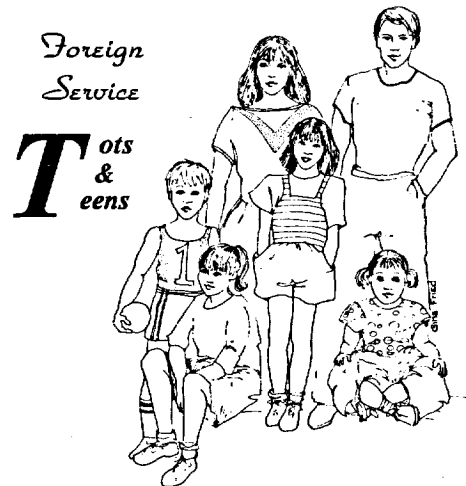
As a result of their rich variety of experiences, third culture children tend to possess certain characteristics. They are often very creative, and a disproportionate number seem to pursue careers in the arts. Their powers of observation are often highly developed and although they learn to make comparisons, they shy away from making moral judgments. They are generally good students, and most go on to some form of tertiary education. In her experience, Dr. Useem has found international schools to be quite good, although she recommends an increased emphasis on practical skills. She sees computer literacy as an asset especially valuable to mobile young people.

On the other hand, Dr. Useem recognizes the problems of mobility, noting that difficulties, especially during the teenage years, are often magnified in the overseas setting. As well, the success of TCK's is often not as immediate nor as brilliant as their

parents might wish. The late teen years usually find the young person returning to his home country to complete his education, and this period of "re-entry" frequently proves to be the most difficult of all the moves he has made. He often goes through a period of uncertainty and may, for example, follow several paths of work or study before making a final commitment. In this regard, he may appear less mature than his contemporaries. Moreover, the young person who has grown up in a sheltered overseas environment may be less competent at handling day-to-day realities, such as managing personal finances. An interesting offshoot of this situation is an apparent trend toward early marriage among young men returning from a third culture setting. (This does not necessarily seem to be the case with young women.)

Frequently, their unique experiences cause third culture children to feel a sense of isolation from their peers. Many feel most comfortable with others who have grown up in some kind of overseas situation, and tend to seek out these "kindred spirits". On reaching their mid or late twenties, however, they generally resolve their conflicts. Very often, they take up careers of an international nature, involved in "relating two cultures".

On the whole, then, Dr. Useem finds the future of third culture children to be bright. They are well-equipped indeed to be "at the fastest moving edge of the closely interdependent world culture" in which we now live.



TOTS

Christmas has passed, '85 has arrived and our young ones are now the proud owners of...? Here at home, the lists were headed by Cabbage Patch Kids, Globugs, Snugglumms, Ewoks, Koosas and Go-Bots (sounds like a foreign language). Unfortunately, obtaining the specific items was a full-time occupation for parents. Even the stalwarts who resisted the crazes of '83 (considering them transitory), found themselves reluctantly succumbing and queuing along with the crowds. There definitely are some advantages to being at a "hardship" post — you can avoid all this "craziness" at Christmas.

TEENS

For teens at home, it was gadgets, music and sports equipment. The gadgets included solar calculators and digital clocks attached to everything from rulers to photo frames, plus combinations of items (telephone, cassette, radio and clock) all in one unit. Music requests included ghettoblasters, walkman's and strange sounding groups like "Ratts", "Twisted Sister", "Iron Maiden" (that was this week anyway). Even sports equipment is constantly changing — skates no longer have laces but rather velcro straps and buckles. That was '84. What will '85 bring?

DID YOU KNOW?

— that by December 1984, over 20 million Cabbage Patch Kids had been sold, which is enough for every child in the United States and Canada between the ages of 3 to 8.
 — that in 1985, "Twins" will hit the market and will become the new status symbol for the "Tots" generation — much to the chagrin of the parents.
 — that "the recent recreational fad, the video game, is on the decline with warehouses full of unsold games", so says Thomas Godale, professor of recreology at the University of Ottawa.

GOING TO EUROPE? THIS MAY BE USEFUL

WOMEN								
CLOTHING (DRESSES)			BLOUSES AND PULLOVERS			SHOES		
GB	USA	EUROPE	GB	USA	EUROPE	GB	USA	EUROPE
10	8	38	32	10	38	3	4 1/2	35 1/2
10	10	40	34	12	40	4	5 1/2	36 1/2
14	12	42	36	14	42	5	6 1/2	37 1/2
16	14	44	38	16	44	6	7 1/2	38 1/2
18	16	46	40	18	46	6 1/2	8	39
20	18	48	42	20	48	7	8 1/2	39 1/2
MEN								
CLOTHES		SHIRTS		SHOES				
GB/USA	EUROPE	GB/USA	EUROPE	GB	USA	EUROPE		
35	36	14	35	6	6 1/2	39		
36	38	15	38	7	7	40		
37	40	16	41	7 1/2	8	41		
38	42	17	43	8	8 1/2	42		
39	44	17 1/4	44	9	9 1/2	43		
40	46			10	10 1/2	44		