

*This edition of the Newsletter features an article submitted by Dave Ellis which describes vividly his early experience with the Cantonese language. Dave has also provided a thought-provoking article on the Future of translation/interpreting which lack of space prevents us publishing this time. We shall include it in the Spring '99 issue.*

*Alan Robertson is another former student who frequently makes valued contributions to the Newsletter, not least in the tracking down of names which appear in the 'Where Are They Now?' section. Alan has been responsible for transferring several from that section to the 'Contacts' section. Currently he is working on tracing the whereabouts of:*

*Brian Trueman*

*Peter Govett*

*Roger Taylerson*

*Barry Lenton*

*If anyone can help, please let us know.*

*As usual, thank you to all who have helped to find new members by providing good addresses for those whose names often readily spring to mind, but whose whereabouts are currently unknown. We act on all addresses submitted but frequently get no reply. Please include us on your list of people to inform if you do change address.*

*Our 'poll' concerning the CLS tie Mark IV was inconclusive. Only four responded, all in favour of a tie but with four different ideas for what it should be like. We shall not be ordering any at present, but we shall float the idea again from time to time and if there is sufficient response, take it from there.*

***A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND  
HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL***

## NEWS OF MEMBERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

**Brian ALDRIDGE** [Mandarin Early 80s] retired from the Army in the rank of Colonel and is now living in the west of England. Brian was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire [OBE] during his career.

**John BORDWELL** [FAO Mid 80s] is currently a student at the US Naval War College in Rhode Island. John is to be promoted to Colonel very soon and is to be assigned to Hawaii to take command of a Transportation Brigade next July.

**Mrs. CHENG Ya Lan [Mrs. ZHONG]** [Staff] was visited last summer in Rexburg by Joe Northrop [reported in last issue of the Newsletter]. This summer she visited Mr. James Wong Kwok-wei in Los Angeles, where she enjoyed various regional Chinese cooking styles so much that she put on weight. Mrs. Zhong has asked us to point out that she is learning Russian, not teaching it, and is reckoned to be the oldest enrolled student at her college. The picture shows her with Joe Northrop last summer. Elsewhere in the issue is a picture of Mrs. Zhong with Mr. Wong in Los Angeles.



**Sheena CONNELLY** [Mandarin late 80s] is still living in Melbourne and will be at University until November 1999. She has bought a second home in northern New South Wales and may move there in a couple of years' time. Sheena and daughter Sara have also spent some time travelling in a campervan which is a fully equipped home on wheels. She has a new E-mail address [seconn@acepia.nel.au] if you want to contact her by this method.

**Dave ELLIS** [Cantonese Early 70s] has written from Michigan where he says he is continuing to limp along on a writer's pittance. His second book 'Computers, Technology **and the Future of Healthcare**' will be published in June next year by the AHA [American Hospital Association] Press. His first book 'Deus ex Machina Sapiens' has yet to find a publisher, probably because no-one understands the title. For a taste of Dave's writing, see 'Where Have **All The** Characters Gone' elsewhere in this issue.

**Bill GUEST** [Cantonese Early 70s and Mandarin Mid 70s] visited Vancouver in September this year where he contacted Mr. Tse Hau Loong. Bill reports that Mr. Tse is now in good health, after a period of illness in the past couple of years. The photo shows Bill with Mr. & Mrs. Tse in the Vancouver sunshine. We are looking forward to seeing Bill in Guernsey during December.



**Dave KITCHING** [Cantonese Late 60s and Mandarin Late 80s] is still living in Hong Kong, where he is enjoying part time teaching work. He was in Britain earlier this year and we spoke on the telephone; unfortunately we were unable to find an opportunity to meet. Dave has sent us the picture below as a rare example of modesty in advertising.



**Bob LAWSON** [Cantonese Early 80s] visited Guernsey on a golfing holiday this summer and we took the opportunity to have a few beers together one evening. We hope to have a photograph for the next issue.

**Ian LIVERMORE** [Cantonese Early 70s] is now living semipermanently in Germany where he is able to indulge his interests in cooking and gardening. Thanks to Ian, we have been able to get Nigel 'Chips' Woodhouse off the 'Where Are They Now?' list.

**Normand MAILHOT** [Mandarin Late 60s] has relocated to Ontario, Canada, from New York, where he was the Consul and Senior Trade Commissioner at the Consulate General of Canada.

**Alastair McLEAN** [Mandarin Early 70s] has written from New Zealand where he is a Director of the New Zealand Translation Centre in Wellington. The Centre is a thriving business with much work being done in Asian languages.

**Ray NEWELL** [Cantonese Mid 70s] retired from the Army in the rank of Major in 1978 and went into Further Education in Britain. He retired in August this year at age 60 from his post as Vice-Principal [Resources] of Hugh Baird College in Bootle, near Liverpool. Ray is now working on a number of projects which, although at the present time are not very lucrative, are nevertheless extremely enjoyable and interesting. He maintains regular contact with Mr. Tse Hau Loong and his wife in Vancouver, Canada.

**Andrew PEARSON** [Mandarin Early 70s] is still Secretary of the UK Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. This summer Andrew visited Australia where he hoped to meet up with Mrs. Chen Shu Fong.

**Mel PETRBE** [Mandarin Early 80s] has moved house but is still living and working in Hong Kong.

**James RAND** [Cantonese and Mandarin Late 60s] is still living in Thailand while managing a group of factories in China manufacturing vehicle components. James recently visited Hangzhou, where he was impressed with the Jing Ci temple with its massive old image of Buddha, as well as the Liu He pagoda. James also enjoyed the famous Long Jing [Dragon Well] tea, which is grown locally, and admired the pearls which are cultivated in the West Lake.

**Mick ROBERTS** [Cantonese Mid 70s] has acted as an interpreter on three occasions during the past year for the Police and Immigration authorities in Guernsey, Channel Islands. With a resident Chinese population of over 1,000, almost all Cantonese speaking, there is the possibility that this type of work will increase in the future.

**Bernard ROURKE** [Mandarin Late 60s] served at CLS as Chief Instructor under Bob Sloss from 1969 to 1972 and then returned as Commandant from 1976 to 1979. Bernard has joined us from Spain, where he now lives. He and Veronica went there three years ago, intending to spend six months, but decided to take up permanent residence. We are delighted to have Bernard with us and our thanks go to Alan Robertson for tracking him down.

**Don STEVENS** [Mandarin Early 80s] has come out of retirement in Norfolk and has obtained a post with the Ministry of the Interior in Bahrain, Arabian Gulf, in the rank of Major.

**Paul STOKES** [Mandarin Mid 80s] is coming to the end of his long training as a lawyer and is due to be called to the Bar in October this year. He is engaged to be married to a German lady and is slowly learning German. We wish him well in his future career; he hopes to be practising as a lawyer by October next year.

**Alan SYKES** [Cantonese Late 60s] and his wife Mei visited John and Ann Prince at their home in France last year. As well as enjoying the food and wine, all four made a trip to Monte Carlo organised by Mei; the weather was very hot so they spent most of the time at the hotel swimming pool and not in the casinos.

**David SYME** [Mandarin Late 70s] is working in the International Force in Bosnia with the Specialist Linguist Group of the Territorial Army. The head of his team is an American ex-FAO [Portuguese] who knows many of the China FAOs, so they have had much to talk about.

Mr. **TSE Hau** Loong [Staff], as reported earlier, has recovered from the illness which he suffered during the past two years and is now fit and well. Pictured below are Mr. & Mrs. Tse with a daughter-in-law. The picture was taken by Bill Guest when he visited them during the summer.



**Matt VAN DER LUGT** [Mandarin Late 80s] is still in the Royal Australian Air Force and is currently the Co-ordinator of the Indonesian Specialist Course at the Australian Defence Forces School of Languages at Point Cook, Victoria. Although having studied Indonesian at Point Cook in 1991, Matt spent two years [1994-95] at the Australian Embassy in Beijing. Among the interesting people he met there was **Deng Xianfu** [pictured with Matt in a Sichuanese Restaurant in Beijing]. Matt is coming to the end of his career with the Air Force and after completing a Marketing and Management degree would like to use that, together with his language qualifications and experience, in his future employment.



**Anne WEIR** [Cantonese Early 90s] has embarked on a history degree course with the Open University in Britain, coupled with reading Greek [Classical] for the pleasure of it. While studying for her degree in languages and linguistics two years ago [with Chinese and Hindi as the languages] one of her Chinese instructors frequently quoted a four-character phrase which has the meaning "your last daughter tears your heart out". If anyone is able to let me have the four characters, which I have not been able to trace, I will be pleased to learn them.



**Mr. James WONG Kwok Wei** [Staff] was visited in Los Angeles by Mrs. Zhong earlier this year. The picture shows them outside the high-rise block where he lives. Mr. Wong has also been in contact with Mr. Tang Pong, who is living in San Jose, California, and has also made trips to San Leandro, near San Francisco, and to Yellowstone Park during the summer. While not travelling Mr. Wong is still collecting material for a newspaper article on the 'One Country, Two Systems' concept.



**Nigel 'Chips' WOODHOUSE** [Mandarin late 60s] has joined us from Germany, where he now lives. Nigel is the Sales Director for a sporting goods company, which has been expanding steadily over the years; during the 1980s in particular Nigel made a number of buying trips to China, where he put to use the Mandarin he learnt at CLS. Needless to say, his German is now extremely good. A member of the MCC [Marylebone Cricket Club] Nigel has enjoyed conversations there with Sir Denys Roberts, who was at various times Attorney General and Chief Secretary in Hong Kong. He hopes to visit Hong Kong en route to Australia next year.



*The flag of the Hong Kong SAR flies alongside that of the People's*



*Republic of China at the ceremony to mark the first anniversary of the establishment of the SAR on 1st July, 1998. President Jiang Zemin attended the ceremony.*

## WHERE HAVE ALL THE CHARACTERS GONE? by David Ellis

Characters epitomize the Chinese language: works of art to those who know them, ungainly squiggles to those who do not; pregnant with the accumulated meaning of millennia to those who understand them, inscrutable to those who do not.

I studied Cantonese at CLS in the early 70s, under the inscrutable eyes of Messrs. Tse, Li, Wu and Ho, and in the delightful company of just one classmate, the erudite eclectic Bill Guest. At the end of two years of first-rate and virtually private tutoring, Bill and I had conquered enough characters [by which, for literary purposes, I mean the language as a whole, not just 漢字] to cruise through the Interpretership exams. A day or so before the exams, Mr. Tse had bestowed upon us his highest honour: the secret of his success at mahjong. It consisted of [1] finding some quiet spot, ten minutes to game time, [2] lying supine in said spot, and [3] emptying one's mind of all thought. Guaranteed to produce razor-sharp responses and clarity of thought.

I don't know about Bill, but I tried it before the Interpretership, on the floor of an unoccupied classroom, and it at least helped me avoid the celebrated but not very successful Brian Throssel-ian opening gambit of saying "Good-bye, gentlemen" in perfect Cantonese to a nonplussed examination panel.

Unfortunately, Mr. Tse's technique was difficult to implement in the villages, streets, cabs and stores of Hong Kong, where the *real* test took place, as Bill and I were to discover when John Prince [then Commandant] threw us in at the deep end. The deep end was George Duckett, a delightful eccentric whose character John Le Carré would kill for. Outwardly straight about the mission, John Prince must have been in paroxysms of inner glee at our impending fate.

Major Duckett was a sort-of one-man Psy Ops unit created, I suspect, just for him, because the Army could not possibly have had any idea what else to do with him. He executed his task of winning the hearts and minds of New Territories villagers by giving each village a refurbished black-and-white TV set for the village hall.

Then he would tour the villages making sure the TV sets were doing their duty for Queen and Colony. George spoke neither Cantonese nor Hakka, the chief languages of the NT. He seemed to get by on the [astonishingly effective] British stentorian tradition, further amplified by exuberance. More likely, though, he got by through the unsung graces of the Chinese TV technicians who accompanied him and did the real work.

On the other hand, if there ever was an Army officer who would countenance a soldier's request to take a short nap on the brink of battle, that officer was not George. He didn't even give one time to ask questions; in fact, *he* asked the questions, which Bill and I were expected to interpret, along with the village headmen's Canto-Hakka responses. Bill and I didn't speak Hakka any more than George did, and truth to tell we barely spoke Cantonese. But we did at least know the Chinese for "TV set".

Don't laugh. At the mock Linguist exams about halfway through our stay at CLS, we had to interpret between a Chinese and a British general discussing a Sino-British joint exercise, *Banana Boat*. Try getting around *that*, if you don't know the Chinese for 'banana' as I did not. "General Wu, General Smith proposes naming our joint exercise "Exercise Long, Yellow, Curved, Soft, Fruit Boat". I'll never forget the looks on Major Prince and Mr. Tse's faces. When all the other characters have disappeared in memory's mists these two: 香蕉 shall burn brightly on.

Blessedly unaware of the Great Banana Slip, which might easily have precipitated a Sino-British incident had it been for real, George whisked us on a whistle-stop tour of villages in the NT. I'll spare you [and me] the embarrassing details; suffice to say that we learned what I am sure was the real lesson John Prince wanted us to learn: that we were a long way from speaking real Chinese, at least without first internalizing three or four inspirational brown bottles of St. Michael's elixir [San Miguel in green bottles, it was well established in Royal Hong Kong Police lore, was lethal].

More unfortunate still than the practical difficulty of implementing Mr. Tse's mind-enhancing technique was the fact that it would have been a pointless exercise in the Yuen Long Police Station basement cell where I spent the subsequent two years in the company of an English typist and a Chinese.....translator. Talk about disincentive!

The only things that kept me from promptly losing every character I had learned at CLS were the *ad hoc* and largely liquid lunches with a wonderful group of non-English-speaking policemen at Lo Wu, and occasional trips to temples on behalf of the greatest god-hunter of all time, Keith Stevens [Mandarin, pre-CLS].

For half his life, Keith visited temples throughout East and Southeast Asia, talking to the temple-keepers about their gods, taking thousands of pictures of the altars and their assorted idols and occasionally purchasing a statue for his collection. The temple-keepers were probably less impressed with his Mandarin than with his grasp of China's beliefs and pantheon. When I last met him [some 15 years ago], Keith had probably the finest collection of Chinese gods in the world - numbering some 600, if memory serves - housed in a specially built addition to his home. With the help of his wife, Nora, Keith had also written a manuscript documenting every single one of the thousand-plus gods he had discovered. It was a monumental, unique and priceless historical and cultural work, and I pray it has been or will be published, and that his collection of statues will eventually find a permanent home in some grand museum.

But I digress. The thing was, as a Mandarin speaker Keith was disadvantaged when it came to talking to the Cantonese, Hakka, and Chiu-Chou temple-keepers of Hong Kong, so he enlisted my help. I accompanied him as interpreter for a couple of trips, then he would send me off on my own to find obscure temples in remote reaches of the NT or even on the umpteenth storey of some Eastern District tenement skyscraper. I found a Chiu-Chou temple in one of the latter, and was entertained to Chiu-Chou tea - the genuine article: hyper-concentrated tannin stew served in dolls' teacups - and to the temple-keeper's version of Chinese philosophy regarding the death penalty, which Britain had recently abolished. We had done so, he said, because we knew that people were more afraid of imprisonment than of death. Abolishing the death penalty made us *look* humane in the eyes of the world, but we knew all along we were substituting for death a worse fate. He thought we were cunning devils.

I'm digressing again. The point is, after graduating from CLS I was barely able to hang on to the modicum of characters I had digested over two hard, if fun-filled, years. It didn't get any better when I left the Army and my two year stint in the NT to work for the RHKP in its Wanchai HQ. Here I still had a team of translators passing on documents in Chinglish for me to edit into shape. For a total of nearly eight years I was surrounded by Cantonese people and their language, yet it took a career move to London to get me really immersed and back in the deep end. I worked with a Cantonese colleague [another Bill] whose English was worse than my Cantonese and I was required from time to time to meet with other non-English-speakers in the overseas Chinese community, without an interpreter. So I painfully regained some of my lost ground as far as the spoken language was concerned, though I lost more ground in the written language.

In Hong Kong one cannot avoid Chinese characters, but in London they are almost non-existent but for a sprinkling of neon signs in Soho's Chinatown. Bill would bring in Chinese newspapers, but I gradually lost the ability to make much sense of them and eventually stopped trying. Since then I've lived in America for some 15 years, and my characters have gone right down the tubes, except for 香蕉 and a few others. A couple of weeks ago, out of the blue came a call from a Michigan district court, which had somehow heard of my Interpretership, asking me to interpret in a case involving a non-English-speaking Cantonese. I had instant visions of "He says he didn't kill him, your Honor. He says the man slipped on the skin of a long, yellow, curved, soft, fruit", and promptly declined the invitation.

The CLS International Newsletter reminds us of all those other characters whose acquaintance we made at CLS; the human characters,. Through the Newsletter at least we know where those characters have gone. A great debt is therefore owed also to our illustrious [not to say elliptical - see his picture in the last Newsletter] editor, Mick Roberts, and his industrious and beautiful wife Kay.

REMEMBERING MY BROTHERS ON A  
MOONLIGHT NIGHT

A wanderer hears drums portending battle.  
By the first call of autumn from a wild goose at the border,  
He knows that the dews tonight will be frost.  
...How much brighter the moonlight is at home!  
O my brothers, lost and scattered,  
What is life to me without you?  
Yet if missives in time of peace go wrong --  
What can I hope for during war?

月夜忆舍弟

杜甫

戍鼓断人行， 秋边一雁声。  
露从今夜白， 月是故乡明。  
有弟皆分散， 无家问死生。  
寄书长不达， 况乃未休兵。