

# The Experimenter

Alumni Newsletter  
SPRING 2021



## A Note from Carla Lineback, Director of Alumni Engagement

As we come up on a year of adapting to a new way of living, I cannot help but think that lessons from our international experiences have helped us in ways we never could have imagined. Many of us have had to explore new ways to stay connected with loved ones. We have had to continually adapt to new circumstances, new guidelines, new realities. Some of us have learned new technical skills, explored new hobbies, or have reconnected (virtually) with old friends. Some have suffered incredible loss. This past year has not been easy. And yet, I continue to receive heart-warming stories from alumni. Some are cleaning out their homes and are remembering their experiences abroad. Some are reconnecting with members from their group or cohort.



If you missed participating in SIT's Critical Conversations Series this past fall, be sure to check out the spring series (information below)! One benefit to hosting events virtually is that we have been able to offer truly global discussions and panels for alumni and friends to participate in and enjoy.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the alumni newsletter. The programs continue to evolve in incredibly creative ways and the alumni stories continue to uplift and inspire. Please consider sending in your own update for inclusion in a future newsletter to [alumni@worldlearning.org](mailto:alumni@worldlearning.org).

## How a Decades-Old Flagship Program Got a Digital Makeover and Blew Up the Internet Last Summer

As you know, summer 2020 was the first time in The Experiment's history that it was unable to run in-person exchange programs. "Expanding digital programming was always a long-term goal of ours but

COVID-19 sped up our timetable,” says Christina Thomas, divisional vice president of Youth Exchange. The concept aligned well with the program’s tradition of providing access to diverse socio-economic backgrounds. “In a matter of weeks, the majority of our team, who normally would be facilitating in person activities and exchanges in front of hundreds of students, became instructional designers almost overnight,” she says.

Many alumni have wondered how a digital program works specifically, how participants learn about another culture and create friendships. Learn more about the structure, the activities, and the conversations and exchanges that occur in this program in the multimedia story about The Experiment Digital. <https://spark.adobe.com/page/52S8Pui0JPysn/>

In 2021, The Experiment is offering three virtual exchange programs with distinct themes. The spring kicks off with STEAM Discovery Lab and Climate Change and the Environment. The Youth Leadership and Community Service program is enrolling now for the summer.

In addition, The Experiment is enrolling for three in-person programs this summer, in Costa Rica, Jordan, and the Netherlands. For information on virtual and in-person programs, visit [www.experiment.org](http://www.experiment.org).

### **Experiment Alumni News** *(Listed by year of participation)*

**Jean deBeer Pollak**, *France 1946 and Group Leader France 1947*, celebrated her 95th birthday this past fall. The Experiment has remained a strong tradition in her family. Jean’s son, **Richard Pollak**, *Japan 1971*, married group member **June (Mukoda) Pollak**. Jean’s other son married **Georgia (Brown) Pollak**, *Sweden 1970*, and their two children were Experimenters, **Charles Pollak**, *Italy 1996*, and **Sarah (Pollak) Sullivan**, *France 2000*.

**Lenore “Bunny” (Graf) Schneider**, *Holland 1954*, was part of a group in Woerden. Her Dutch family of six had been interred in a Japanese prison camp during WWII. The host father had been an economics professor at a college in Java. Her family visited her Dutch family in the summer of ’55 and in ’56 her Dutch sister Hetty visited in Cincinnati and joined a family road trip to the western National Parks. Such memories!

**Joan (Sampson) Schmidt Arnhem**, *Netherlands 1955*, has lost touch with her group members and host family, but continued with the practice of homestays. After moving to the Washington, DC, area with her husband, Richard, they began hosting international visitors through Meridian House. The visitors were passing through DC before spending several months in locations across the country, studying state governments and other institutions. They also hosted several German teachers who came to the U.S. for short summer stays. In retirement, they have taken several river trips in Europe, and have explored, Mexico, Canada, and the United States.

**Joseph VanderVeer**, *Austria 1957 and India 1961*, is a retired surgeon who recently finished writing his fifth book, *One Surgeon’s Life*, in which two chapters are devoted to his Experiment summers. Joe writes, “Since my retirement, my wife Diane and I have been blessed with opportunities to travel abroad many times. But no trips as tourists have rivaled the experiences I had early on living with foreign families on the Experiment.”

**Robert Allen**, *India 1962*, still has photos from his Experiment adventure and the good memories have never faded. After returning from India, he worked for a year to save for a year-long backpack trip westward, staying on land and sea. He then went to Vietnam as an Army RN which he says was “an entirely different experience.” He welcomes contact from former group members.

**Susan (Burke) Aglietti**, *Switzerland 1964*, returned to Switzerland on a fellowship for a year of study at the University of Neuchatel during the 1967–68 academic year. She met, and later married, a Belgian graduate student, Jean-Pierre Aglietti. She stayed in touch with her Swiss family until the last member sadly passed away in 2019. She has returned to Switzerland many times and always visits the same restaurant on the Lake of Biemme to which her Swiss family had taken her for dinner as a special treat during her stay. Susan received a master's degree in French and later attended law school. She is in her 19th year of practice.

**Sheila Walker**, *Cameroon 1964*, is a cultural anthropologist and former university professor now writing a memoir that includes how her Experiment experience at age 19 determined the rest of her life. Learn more about her work at [afrodiaspora.net](http://afrodiaspora.net).

**Barbara (Breeding) Blackburn**, *Belgium 1964*, has hosted many adult students for three-week periods. She is a home/hospital instructor for Williamsville Schools in Western New York, mostly teaching English. Her culinary and writing interests have led her to be a columnist for several local and national publications. She also volunteers as a reader for the Niagara Frontier Radio Reading, for the blind and print handicapped, and as a newspaper reader. She and husband Alan led a tour to Egypt and one to Australia, New Zealand, and Hawaii for EF.

**Roberta (Luce) Barry**, *Egypt 1965*, has stayed in touch with group member **Camille (Buck) Biter** who now lives in Nashville, Tennessee. Camille is enjoying retirement from teaching at the college level. Roberta is also retired from a career in education in New Hampshire and now enjoys spending time with her grandchild. Roberta and Camille would love to reconnect with others in their group, so please email [alumni@worldlearning.org](mailto:alumni@worldlearning.org) if you would like to be in touch!

**James (Stratton) Stratigakes**, *India 1966*, reached out hoping to reconnect with members of his group. He was able to reconnect with **Gary Goodwin** and upon learning where Jim lived, the two discovered that one of Jim's hiking partners is a good friend of Gary's. Unfortunately, **Aubrey Drewry**, the group leader, has passed away, but Jim was able to express his gratitude and appreciation to his widow.

**Andrew Kohn**, *Japan 1966*, is a retired lawyer living in Cleveland, Ohio. He still maintains a relationship with his Experiment family. The host family's great granddaughter, a doctor, has visited Cleveland and Andrew's family has visited her in Tokyo.



**Frank "Sandy" Bolway**, *Belgium 1967*, is celebrating his 50th wedding anniversary to his wife, Fran, and has retired to Vero Beach, Florida, after 40 years in Boston. They continue to enjoy sailing, skiing, and extensive traveling.

**David Stein**, *France 1969*, received his BA in French Literature from Duke University, and then an MA in French Literature from UC Berkeley. He spent his junior year at the Sorbonne in Paris and later taught French for a few years. David was a tour rep for three summers in Paris, and also worked other times of the year in Ireland, Denmark, Senegal, Portugal, and Jamaica. After settling in San Francisco, he became a tour guide and tour director for people from all over the world, with a special focus on French speaking groups.

**Karen Bohannan-Reed**, *Switzerland 1971*, is still in close contact with the host family, including their children and grandchildren. Karen writes, “This was the most memorable experiences of my life. And the rewards continue today. I just spoke with my host mother this morning.”



**Edward “Lex” Youngman**, *Group Leader Germany 1973*, shared pictures of his group (above) hoping to reconnect with other group members. He says the summer resulted in a life-long friendship with his host family. He has visited them numerous times and was “privileged to photograph the weddings of two of their children.”

**Paul Goren**, *Switzerland 1975, Group Leader Switzerland 1982, and India in 1986*. Paul has spent his career on education improvement including stints in the San Diego and Minneapolis Public Schools, at the MacArthur and Spencer Foundations, and at the National Governors’ Association. Most recently he was superintendent of schools for the Evanston/Skokie Illinois K–8 public school system. He currently serves as the chief strategy advisor to the Northwestern University School of Education and Social Policy. He also held the Ian Axford/New Zealand Fulbright Public Policy Fellowship where he worked for seven months with colleagues in the New Zealand Ministry of Education on improving opportunities for Maori children.

**Alison (Epstein) Trujillo**, *Spain 1996, and Group Leader Spain 2002*, lives in Northern California and keeps in touch with many members of her Granada group. Alison taught both Spanish and English for many years in K–12 schools, and she now runs her own Spanish-English translation business: [lifetranslated.net](http://lifetranslated.net).

## Have News to Share?

Send news about a new job, a publication, an accomplishment, or just a general update to [alumni@worldlearning.org](mailto:alumni@worldlearning.org).

## Opportunities

**Apply to become a digital facilitator** with The Experiment Digital *Youth Leadership and Community Service* in summer 2021. Facilitators work up to 10 hours a week over three months to support the implementation of The Experiment Digital, a virtual exchange program that connects high school students between the ages of 14 and 18 from the Middle East, North Africa, and the United States. Learn more at [experiment.org/apply/become-a-digital-facilitator](http://experiment.org/apply/become-a-digital-facilitator) and apply by March 14.

The **spring 2021 Critical Conversations webinar series** is designed to inspire community-wide dialogue on global, interdisciplinary topics within SIT’s Critical Global Issues Framework. The series includes a continuation of our Perspectives from the Global South faculty lectures and a wide variety of virtual events for participants to experience an SIT program. Three alumni will also be featured, award-winning social change filmmaker **Maria Agui-Carter** (International Honors Program 1986); **Jennifer**

**Dulski** (SIT Study Abroad Brazil 1992), a technology executive and social changemaker who has held positions at Facebook, Google, and Change.org; and **Aicha Cooper** (SIT Graduate Institute, Sustainable Development 2012), a World Bank international development expert and advocate for marginalized people. Visit <https://www.sit.edu/criticalconversations/> to view the full schedule of events and to register for sessions. Links to webinar recordings are available on the Critical Conversations page shortly after each event.

Take a language class with the **SIT World Languages Center**! Committed to promoting and preserving indigenous and less commonly taught languages, the World Languages Center provides critical, specialized courses in widely studied languages. Online and in-person language courses for college credit are open to high school, undergraduate, and graduate students, and adult learners. [sit.edu/sit-world-languages-center](https://www.sit.edu/sit-world-languages-center)

## About the Organization

*Scholarships for Experiment and SIT programs may be available to Experiment or SIT alumni and their family members.*

**SIT Study Abroad** provides academically rich undergraduate semester and summer programs, most with field research or internships, and International Honors Program comparative study. [studyabroad.sit.edu](https://www.sit.edu/studyabroad)

**SIT Graduate Institute** offers global, full-time and hybrid master's degrees, certificates, and professional development programs. SIT has also launched a hybrid Doctorate in Global Education (EdD) which combines rigorous online coursework with short residencies in Vermont to fit the needs of part- and fulltime professionals seeking to rapidly accelerate their career, while tackling highly relevant issues in global education, both locally and abroad. [graduate.sit.edu](https://www.sit.edu/graduate)

**World Learning's Global Programs** work to create a more peaceful and just world through education, sustainable development, and exchange. Our programs advance leadership in more than 150 countries. [worldlearning.org](https://www.worldlearning.org)

*World Learning Inc., the nonprofit parent organization of School for International Training and The Experiment in International Living, offers high school, undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs. World Learning Inc.'s summer programs (through The Experiment in International Living) help high school students experience another culture. SIT Study Abroad offers semester- and summer-long undergraduate programs that address critical global issues on all seven continents and includes the International Honors Program comparative studies. SIT Graduate Institute offers graduate degrees in low-residency and global formats. World Learning is working to create a more peaceful and just world through education, sustainable development, and exchange. Founded in 1932 as The Experiment in International Living, the organization that has become World Learning Inc. was inspired by Dr. Donald Watt's innovative idea to improve understanding across cultures and nations by sending U.S. students abroad to live with families to expand their worldviews.*