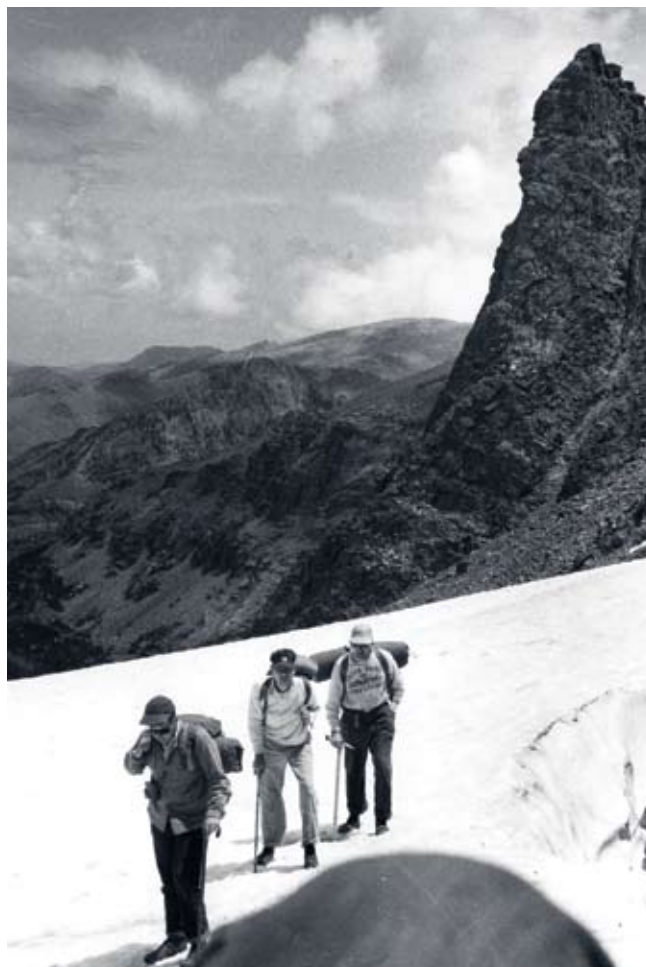


A FAMILY TRADITION OF SERVICE: THE HILTON BROTHERS



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One of the defining characteristics of the college that has become the University of Indianapolis is the sense of community and family that it has continually provided for students and faculty. While the presence of a close-knit campus community is not unusual at small colleges, the University community exceeds the norm in this regard. Many students and their parents are drawn to the school by the personal touch, the one-on-one attention, and personal closeness that form a core institutional value. Historically, Indiana Central College and its successors have uniquely drawn students from the same families. Indeed, for a number of those who arrive on campus, enrolling for courses at the school is a significant part of family tradition, as generation after generation follows in the footsteps of parents and grandparents to pursue higher education at the place they call “the college” or “the university.” Sometimes, more than one member of a particular generation comes to the school, as brothers, sisters, or cousins graduate within a short time of each other. The Hilton brothers, three siblings who all graduated from Indiana Central College before pursuing careers of service, clearly demonstrate such family loyalty to the college. For Bruce, David, and Don Hilton, service is a family tradition, and they illustrate not only the close nature of the college community, but also capture the essence of what it means to live out the motto, “Education for Service.”

THE MISSIONARY DOCTOR

A. James Fuller & Rebecca Blair '80



A

David Hilton '53

His ministry of service has spanned the globe in a career of more than forty years as a medical doctor and missionary. Dr. David Hilton's work has combined faith and science to bring health and healing to the tropics. In his many years as a missionary doctor and consultant, he has lived out the motto, "Education for Service," in a powerful and lasting way. Like his brothers, David Hilton stands as a living symbol of how the essential values of Indiana Central College have changed the world.

A graduate of the class of 1953, David was the second of the Hilton brothers. Born in Plymouth, Wisconsin, in 1931, Hilton spent most of his childhood in Minnesota, where his father served as a pastor in the United Brethren Church. Like his older brother, Bruce, David was much influenced by his father, who was a role model for a life of faith and ser-



vice. His passion for medicine was rooted in his admiration of a doctor who was a family friend, but this interest deepened when David ruptured his appendix at age fifteen. The crisis resulted in time spent at the Mayo Clinic, where he was much impressed by the dedication and expertise of the doctors he met.

In the Hilton family, college was simply a fact, and the Reverend Hilton made it clear that Indiana Central was *the* place to go. David found the transition to college life an easy process and was soon involved in campus life. He majored in chemistry and biology and, like his older brother, sang in the choir. Like so many others, including his brothers, David was destined to become a Graduate of the Heart, as he met his wife, Laveta, at the school. He credits the college with helping to prepare him for a life of service, pointing to the strong sense of dedication to that ideal that pervaded the campus climate. He also remembers the importance of the chapel services, where he learned much about giving to others and serving the Lord through the presentations of the many speakers. In his junior year at the college,

David felt a sense of calling to the medical field and decided to pursue it. Following his graduation from ICC in 1953, he went on to medical school at Indiana University. His interest lay in tropical medicine, and he prepared for a career in that field as well as in surgery. Upon his graduation from medical school in 1957, he served an internship at a hospital in the Panama Canal Zone and a surgery residency in Fort Worth, Texas.

In 1959, the young doctor went to Nigeria to practice as a missionary doctor at a Methodist hospital in the remote rural area. He remembers that he “had no idea what to expect,” and it seemed that he was going “to the end of the world.” His missionary training included studying the local language and being offered some insights into the culture, but the experience was still a “baptism by fire” for David. Living in a hut constructed of mud and grass, Hilton was quickly immersed in the world of tropical/ third World medicine. For ten years he worked in Nigeria, battling infectious diseases from his base at the 110-bed hospital. Much of the time he was the only doctor on the staff and found that his job included a lot of teaching with the aim of delegating responsibilities for medical care, as it was simply impossible for him to do it all. The

missionary doctor trained nurses and pharmacists and midwives to help, but after ten years of work, he realized that “there were just as many sick people” as when he had started. “It dawned on me that there had to be a better way to deal with this,” Hilton remembers, and he set his mind to coming up with ways to “change the conditions that cause illness” instead of only treating those suffering from the diseases after the fact.

His term of African service completed, Hilton returned in 1969 to the United States, where he worked in family practice in Wisconsin. But he continued to think of ways to implement his idea for a new direction in tropical medicine and, when an opportunity to go back to Africa came along, he took it. In 1975, he began working as a primary health care consultant in Nigeria for the Church of the Brethren. David served as part of a Health Promoters Team, a group that traveled through the remote areas of the country teaching the people basic health practices with the hope of creating more healthy living conditions. Here his experience as a missionary doctor helped tremendously. Diarrhea, often a symptom



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E

of the infectious diseases that spread so rapidly through villages, ranked as the number one cause of death in the developing world at this time. By teaching simple treatment concepts such as hydration, the missionary doctors could greatly improve the chances for a sick person to recover. The second leading cause of death was malnutrition, especially among infants. The traditional practice of moving babies from milk directly to whole grain cereals at about age two contributed in part to malnourishment. While they often had plenty to eat, their bodies were unable to digest the food they were eating. Teaching mothers to offset this outcome by varying their children's diets dramatically improved the situation.

Such work was the fulfillment of David Hilton's dream to help people assume responsibility for their own health rather than being dependent on doctors. His vision was for the "empowerment of health" which involved education as well as treatment, improving conditions as well as curing particular diseases. Hilton took to heart the fact that, in many languages, "doctor means teacher." And part of this teaching role becomes social as well as medical since health, in his view, often has more to do with socio-economics than anything else. Furthermore, he realized that matters

of justice and spirituality were often as important to consider as traditional medical questions. His vision of medicine was rooted in a comprehensive compassion for humanity which he had first found in the church. As Hilton expresses it, "medicine is always necessary, health is more."

Even today, the missionary doctor believes that "the church is the real World Health Organization," and thinks that the teachings of Christianity can help create a social environment for true health. His view holds true for the United States as well as the Third World. Dr. Hilton reminds us that, here in America, "most causes of death are the result of lifestyle choices." Thus, health is often an "issue of morality." From tobacco to alcohol to overeating, our moral choices create the unhealthy conditions for disease. Pointing to "diet and sedentary lifestyles," he asks, "Why do we do it to ourselves?" He believes that the answer lies in the spiritual and moral realm, and he hopes that Americans will move toward "true healthcare instead of only disease care."

Hilton finds hope in initiatives such as the parish nursing movement, which connects medical care to the church in positive ways. One important preventative action that the church can take to allay the onset of illness is to create community. Dr. Hilton cites statistics that support the assertion that the "mortality rate is inversely proportionate to the number of friends"



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G

that one has. This research points to the significance of being involved with others in a community. Churches play a critical role in the building of such networks of people in which individuals can find information, help, and spiritual support. He thinks that churches need to “be more intentional about creating small groups” in which community can be created. Doing so will not only help the churches grow stronger, but will also mean better health for those who participate in them.

Hilton’s career as a missionary doctor continued throughout the 1970s, as he moved into a position as a medical officer for the Gongola State Government in Nigeria in 1978-79 before returning once more to the United States in 1980. This time he did not enter family practice, but continued his missionary work by serving as clinical director for the Health Program of the Seminole Indian Tribe in Florida. From 1986-91, he served as associate director of the Christian Medical Commission of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, Switzerland. Since 1992, he has served as a consultant to international and congregation-based health programs for Ecumenical Health Ministries in Atlanta, Georgia. He also works as an assistant to the University Chaplain at Emory University and teaches as an adjunct professor in the International Health Program at Emory’s School of Public Health. His consulting career has taken him

to dozens of countries and the influence of his work is felt worldwide. He continues to teach, ensuring that others will carry on his legacy long after his retirement.

Looking back over a career that has spanned more than four decades, David Hilton defines service as “a way of life.” Being a missionary doctor allowed him to travel all over the world. He has learned a lot and had “incredible experiences” as a result of his work. He urges today’s students to remember that “life doesn’t revolve around you” and to understand that they must learn to transcend themselves to “feel a part” of the greater world. He reminds them that sometimes “you have to give up what you want to get it” by way of emphasizing the importance of living a life of service to others. Hilton urges students to understand that the “best method of education is listening” and to glean knowledge from others by continuing to “ask them questions” and hearing what they say through “sincere, non-judgmental listening.” His own experience has taught him that listening allows one to learn invaluable knowledge that may allow that person to offer wisdom and help to others in the long run. Furthermore, his “experience has confirmed that by whatever means you give, you will receive.” In helping others, the missionary doctor has shared and found a true “sense of joy.”

WITH SERVANT'S HANDS

A. James Fuller & Rebecca Blair '80



A

Don Hilton '54

“Are our human hands being used gently for serving and the health, comfort, uplifting, deliverance, blessing and miracles needed by others?” Don Hilton, who has worked as a teacher and missionary in a life of Christian service, poses this question for our reflection. Confident that his efforts are made in Christ’s name, Hilton believes that his hands are “the very hands of Christ on the earth.” He sees himself as God’s instrument, a person through whom Jesus can work to reach others. As a missionary educator, Don Hilton has fulfilled his calling by reaching out to his students and the community with the “hands of Jesus.” And those hands are “servant hands, for He came not to be served, but to serve.”

As the youngest of the three Hilton brothers, Don was born in 1932 in Plymouth, Wisconsin. His father, an Evangelical United Brethren minister, served parishes in Wisconsin, Ohio, and Minnesota. Like his older brothers, Don was heavily influenced by his parents, especially his father. He observed firsthand how his parents poured their lives into the ministry and “sought the Lord.” Furthermore, as the youngest son, Don’s brothers, especially Bruce, influenced him. According to Don, his oldest sibling served as the leader of the trio by force of intellect and personality as well as by age. When it came time for Don to choose a college, he followed his brothers to Indiana Central College in Indianapolis.

Just like his brothers, Don found the transition to college life an easy one and felt comfortable in the familial atmosphere on campus. He remembers his time at the school fondly and credits the college with providing him with a strong “spiritual and moral training.” He noticed the motto, “Education for Service,” right away and recalls that it “grabbed [him]” and had a lasting effect. As he recalls, the motto “reinforced what I had learned at home” and made it clear that “this is what you are here for.” Hilton believed that he was “here to glorify God” in service that extended from his faith. Life at the college offered a demonstration of service to the young scholar, as he observed both professors and students who lived out the motto of the institution in their daily lives. In the post-Depression era, he notes that the professors were “struggling financially, but they poured themselves into service.”

Another important area in which the school helped him concerned his shy personality. Even as a young man, Don learned that “God pushes us into things,” a process made evident in the way that college life forced him into situations that helped him overcome his timidity. Public speaking and discussion requirements in class forced him to confront his shyness and helped him master it, an invaluable accomplishment for a student planning to be a teacher. Hilton ultimately defeated his reticence when being put in front of the classroom left him no choice.

He graduated from college in 1954, just in time to be drafted into military service. He served for two years in the Army, working as a paymaster in a small unit based in Germany. Hilton’s military service became a testing ground for his morality, as so many soldiers spent time drinking and womanizing. But his faith held true, as his strong moral background made it easier for him to overcome temptations. Being in the military also afforded him an opportunity to travel, so Hilton journeyed all over Europe. He perceived life in the Army as a chance to serve. During Hilton’s enlistment, the soldiers comprised part of a force stationed on the front of the Cold War with the Soviet Union. He viewed his task as helping to detain Communism and defend democratic freedom. In addition to these military aspects of his service, being in the Army allowed him to witness to others about his faith. By his constancy of living the Christian life daily, his military companions were reminded of their need for Christ as well.

During his active Army service, Hilton also became engaged to Mary Huston, a young woman he had met at Indiana Central. Like both of his brothers, he became a “Graduate of the Heart” when he was discharged from the Army, marrying his fiancée upon his return to the United States. At first, the newlyweds lived in Indianapolis where Don took graduate classes in history at Butler University. But in 1957, he accepted a position as a teacher in Denver, Colorado. The job came about somewhat unexpectedly during a time when it seemed that another such position would not be forthcoming right away. The circumstances of the offer helped confirm his calling in Hilton’s mind; he was sure that God’s hand was in it. Today, he still looks back on that unexpected job offer as a reminder to “Trust the Lord.” He points back to his senior year in high school, when he observed a talented teacher, experiencing a strong sense that this vocation would form his life’s work. As a result, he had pursued a degree in education at Indiana Central. With the Colorado job in hand, he was now ready to take up his career.



Hilton taught junior high math for seven years in a Denver public school with a burgeoning population of students. Though he started teaching in a brand new school, it soon reached capacity, requiring the teaching staff to offer double sessions to accommodate student educational need. Hilton observes that he enjoyed teaching. Moreover, he and Mary were settling into their lives in the community. They had started a family, and now had two sons (a third would come a few years later). With a steady income and a growing family, they had purchased a new house, and the future seemed clear. But God had other plans. A fellow teacher passed on a leaflet about a USAID program called Teachers for East Africa, a program that sent educators to African countries for two years. The leaflet advertised the need for teachers in Kenya. Hilton immediately felt a strong pull to join the program, but with life progressing so well in Denver, he wasn’t sure what to do. He was convinced that it would be too difficult and that Mary wouldn’t want to move the family to another country. The boys were only 2 ½ and 4-years-old at the time. Still, he took the paper home, laid it on the table, and left it there. Mary found it, read it, and came to her husband, explaining to him that she thought they should go!



C



D

Without having discussed it together, the couple had each come to the same conclusion. is convinced them that going to Kenya was the Lord's will. So they went.

In Kakamega, Kenya, Don taught high school math in a public school from 1964-1966. e Hiltons found the experience a rewarding and easy adventure. ey had a car, their housing was provided, and the school was located in the high plateau lands where there was a healthier climate and more beautiful landscape than one might find elsewhere. ey toured East Africa, meeting people from many different countries. e Peace Corps was just starting at that time, so they had the opportunity to meet some of the volunteers working under the new program as well. e school in Kakamega operated under the British plan, which included chapel meetings. is aspect enabled Don to carry on a Christian witness through regular participation in chapel.

ese two years in Kenya only whetted their appetites for missions, which led to their next "assignment."

Upon their return to the United States, Don took a job as a science and math teacher at the McCurdy School in Española, New Mexico. Part of a missionary effort of the United Brethren and later the Evangelical United Brethren Church, the school would continue under the United Methodist banner following the 1968 merger. e complex at McCurdy included a hospital and school. Indeed, Española, had long served as an

important service destination for Indiana Central students, whether they went west to work for a summer or took up a career there. Mary Huston Hilton had worked for Dr. Roy Turley at the Española hospital for a summer while at Indiana Central, and the couple had also visited the mission. Hilton wrote to Dale Robinson, who had recently been appointed as superintendent of the school, to inquire about a position, but there were no openings. So Don and Mary readied themselves to take up educational service positions in Kentucky. At the last minute, they received a letter from Robinson announcing that there was an opening after all. Was God testing their obedience?

From 1966 to 1989, Don Hilton taught at the McCurdy School. e school served an impoverished rural population, including a large number of Native Americans and Hispanics, as well as many Anglo-American families. In addition to education, the teachers and staff offered Christ to the community. Hilton often witnessed to his faith, helping some individuals to convert.

e Hiltons bought a home in Española and threw themselves into the mission work and the community. But after twenty-three years there, Don began to sense that it was time for something else. ough no outward signs of trouble, no great crises, no clear signs emerged, as Hilton explains it, "God has a way of making you uncomfortable in a place." He began to feel that God wanted him to move on.

Don Hilton believed that the Lord wanted him to go back to foreign missions through the Christ for the Nations Institute in Dallas, Texas. is training program provided studies in Bible, ministry, and mission work, offering a useful opportunity to find a place as a missionary. But Hilton felt that the move to Dallas would be irrevocably stymied by his lean finances. He and Mary realized that, after thirty-four years of marriage, they had thirty-five dollars in the bank! After all, missionary work meant that financial troubles were a way of life. Still, the CFNI training was expensive and would require a couple of years or more. at meant a lot of money—money that the Hiltons did not have. How could they fulfill the sure understanding that God was calling them to Dallas? en, they realized that they owned a valuable asset: their home on one acre of irrigated land. ey had purchased the house in 1968 for \$17,000. Over their twenty-three years in New Mexico, its value had significantly increased. So, they put the house up for sale as a way to pay for their trip and time in Dallas. It sold for \$110,000, financing their two-and-a-half year stay at CFNI, as well as four self-supported years overseas.

While in Dallas, Hilton experienced another calling, this time to Russia and Estonia. In 1992, the Hiltons moved to Moscow as part of a program called "Schools of Tomorrow." ese schools are Christian, English-language institutions designed to offer Christian classes in public schools. e



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schools started with first grade and today offer programming for grades 1-11. Don and Mary were instrumental in establishing the Christian educational programs for grades 1-4 in two public schools in Sillamäe, Estonia.

The move to Moscow brought a big change for the Hiltons. For them, Russia and Estonia seemed more like third World countries than Kenya had been so many years before! They did not have a car and the physical conditions were difficult. They had to learn how to get food, which meant standing in lines and knowing which store to go to on which day to get which kind of food. The parents of students proved helpful, often standing in line for the Hiltons. In addition to setting up the School of Tomorrow and teaching, Don and Mary held Bible studies in their home three nights a week. This more personal contact led to a number of conversions and the formation of a dedicated community of Christian adherents. In this way, they were able to see the fruits of their labor in the community as well as the classroom.

After nearly five years in Russia, the Hiltons returned to the United States. When they left, the two Schools of Tomorrow in Russian and Estonia were successfully operating programs for grades 1-4. A number of Russian and Estonian teachers had become Christians and were supporting the program. The Hiltons located in Hereford, Texas, to live near one of their sons. Don Hilton found a job there teaching fourth grade at the Nazarene Christian Academy. In 1999, he retired from teaching, although

he is currently writing a curriculum for a Discipleship Class for the Church of the Nazarene, as well as a twelve-session adult class on scientific creation. And in retirement, he has found yet another mission field: the Internet. Don had started writing while in Española, composing a weekly column for a local paper. Now, he has resumed writing a similar column on the Internet, designing and maintaining the Good News Daily Web site www.goodnewsdaily.org. This site features Don's columns on various issues, including many of his pieces published in New Mexico.

Here one will find his column of December 1, 1999. Titled "Jesus' Hands," the article encapsulates Don Hilton's vision of service as being God's instrument on earth. When asked to define service, he replies that, "service is doing something for others to make the world a better place within the context of God's plan." He also thinks that service includes "being motivated by a design" to help others. For him, it is "obedience to God" and is something that "pleases God." Ultimately, the missionary teacher thinks that service is "doing what God wants us to do." Indeed, he believes that "helping others is a means of glorifying the Creator."

Hilton says a great deal of satisfaction comes from the "permanent positives" that the Russian-Estonians with whom he worked acquired during his four years there. At the time he left that former Soviet republic, 190 students were studying all

their subjects in English as well as Russian. Even more satisfying is that nearly all those students had obtained the spiritual foundations of accepting Christ as well as having a rudimentary knowledge of the Bible.

Don recalls: "An indelible memory remains with me of conversing with fourth graders completely in English. This is in addition to the spiritual growth of students and teachers, made it all worthwhile in spite of the hardships."

His view of education today also shares in this vision. He advises today's students to remember that, "education is not the goal," but is "simply a means to a goal." He urges them to "put things into perspective" and keep their priorities straight. Hilton hopes that students will continually ask themselves, "What am I here for?" He also urges young people to realize that "God has given us a lot," but that He also "requires a lot." When it comes to a life of service, he encourages students to remember that the "best way to change things is one individual at a time through Christ." Realizing that many of today's students at the University of Indianapolis may not be Christians or might be struggling with their faith, he hopes that they will "compare religions and traditions and see what is best." Specifically, he advises them to "compare true believers of each and see how they practice." In the end, Don Hilton is confident that his Christian faith will win out. And it will give rise to another generation of servants who will go out and help others with the servant hands of Jesus.

INDEX OF PHOTOGRAPHS: IDENTIFICATIONS & PERMISSIONS

I. BROTHERS & SISTERS

Hilton Brothers

- A (p. 21) The three Hilton brothers (Bruce, David, and Don) as children—dressed in overalls, barefoot with no shirts—at the parsonage in Ontario, Wisconsin. Personal photo of Bruce Hilton reprinted with his permission.
- B (p. 21) Bruce Hilton and Don Hilton hiking with a friend in the Rocky Mountains above Boulder, Colorado. Personal photo of Bruce Hilton reprinted with his permission.

David Hilton '53

- A (p. 22) Dr. David Hilton beside airplane in Nigeria. “This is the airplane that I used to visit a dozen village dispensaries ranging from 30 to 100 miles from the hospital. There were no roads to the hospital, so in the six-month rainy season when rivers were up, it was not possible to drive, even in a jeep.” Personal photograph of Dr. David Hilton used with his permission.
- B (p. 23) View from airplane of the area in Nigeria where Dr. David Hilton served—the complex of buildings included the 110-bed hospital and had a separate building for each ward: female and male medical, female and male surgical, maternity, pediatric, tuberculosis, and leprosy. It also included an outpatient clinic, surgery, administration, training school, and pharmacy. Personal photograph of Dr. David Hilton used with his permission.
- C (p. 23) Dr. David Hilton and colleague doing surgery in Nigeria. “We averaged six operations a day, six days a week.” Personal photograph of Dr. David Hilton used with his permission.
- D (p. 24) Dr. David Hilton with group of Nigerian males standing around him while he examines a patient during a “house call.” “Ours was the only medical facility for a quarter-million people, so everywhere that we went, we were asked to to prescribe.” Personal photograph of Dr. David Hilton used with his permission.
- E (p. 24) Dr. Hilton with Korean officials in 1980s. Personal photograph of Dr. David Hilton used with his permission.
- F (p. 25) Outpatient Clinic in Nigeria where Dr. David Hilton worked. Hilton notes: “an average of 300 outpatients a day were seen by medical assistants that we trained.” Personal photograph of Dr. David Hilton used with his permission.
- G (p. 25) Dr. David Hilton with small child in his arms (Seminole Florida Reservations). Personal photograph of Dr. David Hilton used with his permission.

Bruce Hilton '53

- A (p. 26) Bruce Hilton in the aisle of a church playing the tuba (May 25, 1995). Personal photo of Bruce Hilton reprinted with his permission.
- B (p. 27) Formal Photo of Bruce Hilton (ca. 2002). Personal photo of Bruce Hilton reprinted with his permission.
- C (p. 28) Class Photo of Bruce Hilton from *The Oracle* yearbook (1953), p. 70. Photograph used with permission of the Frederick D. Hill Archives of the University of Indianapolis.
- D (p. 29) Bruce and Virginia Hilton on hill overlooking the ocean (Nov. 7, 1998). Bruce and Virginia were awarded the annual Ball Award, the top honor of the Methodist Federation for Social Action. Personal photo used with permission of Bruce Hilton.

Don Hilton '54

- A (p. 30) Don Hilton against snowy background in Estonia, carrying groceries to their fifth floor apartment (see building in the background). Personal photo from Nov. 1992 used with permission of Don Hilton.
- B (p. 31) Don Hilton (January 2001). Personal photo used with permission of Don Hilton.
- C (p. 32) Bruce and Don Hilton from *The Oracle* yearbook (1954); Photograph used with permission of the Frederick D. Hill Archives, University of Indianapolis.
- D (p. 32) Don Hilton with the “School of Tomorrow” Teachers in School #5 in Estonia (1996). Teachers from left: Nina, Yelena, Olga, Tatyana, Irina, and Nadya. Seated: Sergei. Personal photo used with permission of Don Hilton.
- E (p. 33) First Grade Classroom in Sillamae Estonia where Mary Hilton supervised “School of Tomorrow” Christian/English language program, based in Louisville, Texas (1992–1993). Personal photo used with permission of Don Hilton.
- F (p. 33) Don and Mary Hilton. Photograph by Olan Mills studios, used with permission of the photographer and Don Hilton.