



NEWS FROM

HOINA

HOMES OF THE INDIAN NATION

P.O. Box 636, Brownstown, PA 17508-0636 • www.hoina.org • Summer 2021

FROM OUR
ARCHIVES

April 1997 Newsletter

Five Days in February

[Editor's Note: The following newsletter article is one written by a previous HOINA Board Member, Ed Miller, Esq. It was originally published in our April 1997 issue. I hope you enjoy this look back into HOINA's history.]

My wife, Twila, and I awoke as our train hissed to a stop in Madras Station. It was 5:00 A.M. on a dark and cool Saturday morning at the end of February. We had planned to spend the weekend with the HOINA project near Madras. On Monday we planned to travel by train to see the projects near Bapatla, in Andhra Pradesh. Tuesday and Wednesday were to be spent in there before returning to our base in Calcutta. All of these plans depended upon our getting in contact with Darlene Large, HOINA's President. We thought she was in India, but we had been unable to confirm our arrival with her. Calls from us to Darlene's husband, Bruce, in the U.S. set off a chain reaction, unbeknownst to Twila and me. Bruce called his daughter and then my secretary, trying to pinpoint Darlene's location and get a message back to me as to our plans.

Twila and I were in India because of a nine-month assignment in Calcutta, preparing a week-long conference in Calcutta for 4500 attendees. Both of us had taken leaves of absence from our work—hers as an English teacher and mine as a lawyer. After the conference we decided to travel in India before we returned to work in the U.S. I am a board member and supporter of HOINA but had never visited the projects. My work in Calcutta gave me the opportunity to see for myself what HOINA does in India.

We struggled with our luggage down the long platform toward the Madras terminal until we were swooped up by the energy of Darlene. She had indeed received word of our intended visit and had come into the city the night before to meet us at the station. We began our trip to see the work of HOINA by visiting the ocean beach that morning. As we walked the sandy beach in the cool darkness, Darlene made it quite clear that we were in for less of a vacation and more of a five-day adventure.

India will soon have a billion people and will pass China to become the most populated country in the world. It is easy to be overwhelmed by the country's





problems. As an organization, HOINA may not solve every problem in India, but (thanks to your support) it is doing something and making a difference in the lives of those it serves. The girls' hostel is a unique oasis of calm and quietness. The air is filled with the sounds of cowbells and squawking Crows. Most new construction in India is uninventive, using the same dull cement and whitewash throughout the towns and cities; however, HOINA's buildings are pleasing to the eye and functional as well. Darlene's creativity is evident everywhere—from the architecture to the brightly colored windows and doors reminiscent of a child's bedroom in the U.S. Beautiful mosaic tile murals created by enlarging the girls' self-portraits decorate one wall.

Our first meal was unforgettable. Fortunately for us, Twila and I like Indian food, and we were accustomed to sitting on the floor for meals and eating with our fingers. As we were invited to the dining hall, we saw the girls sitting on the floor with plates of food in front of them. We hesitated unsure of what to do, until one of the girls motioned for us to sit down beside her. Her gesture of welcome put us immediately at ease, and the great food that was served made us sure that we were "really at home." The food was so good I actually would have been happy to spend a long time there.

At the girls' hostel smiles abound. A family spirit pervades the environment. You tend to forget that many of the girls are disabled because everybody pitches in and does what she can. If the dining room needed to be cleaned up after a meal, someone did it. Dishes were rinsed and stacked, mats collected and shaken off, and the floor swept. Whenever someone needed help, it was provided. We found ourselves wishing that this experience would be every Indian girls' experience.

Many of us have heard the reports of how girls' lives are substandard in some areas of India, from the work they are expected to do in the family to their schooling being less than their male counterparts. It pleases me that HOINA has a haven of refuge for abandoned little girls, a place for them to be put on more equal footing with boys by receiving education and health care.

The facilities at the boys' home in Bapatla were great, evidence to the guest that you are entering a "home" and not an institution. As at the girls' hostel, the food at the boys' hostel was great. One meal in particular stands out in my mind. Darlene had taken us to the beach at Pondurangapuram where HOINA's medical clinic and agricultural projects are. We stood on the beach watching the fishing boats come in. One of the fishermen came up to us carrying a large eel. The eel was three or four feet long, his only catch of the day from what I could see, but he insisted that Darlene have it. After her decline and his insistence continued for a few minutes, she finally agreed, and we loaded the eel into the Jeep. Back at the hostel, Das cooked it up for dinner. Something different, but we enjoyed the fisherman's generosity all the same. He had little to offer to HOINA in thanks, but what he had he freely gave.

The boys' talent show put on for our benefit made it clear that the education they are receiving will make them a real force for good in the future of India. Our days in Bapatla passed too quickly, and we left at 4:00 A.M. on Thursday morning. Darlene and her staff again woke early to see us off at the train station in Bapatla. Our train to Calcutta stopped in Bapatla for only three minutes. Unlike riding on Amtrack in the U.S., you cannot pass from one railroad car to the next while on board Indian trains. This fact compounded with not knowing where the train will stop on the platform nor which car will hold your reserved berth makes boarding complicated. To make matters worse, Indian passenger trains are long (often 15-18 cars). So, as the train screeched to a stop, Darlene and her staff quickly stuffed us into the closest car, an unreserved coach where we were able to sit on our luggage for two hours until we reached a station stop that allowed us enough time to disembark and reboard in our assigned car. The ride back to Calcutta that should have been 30 hours long took 55 as our train was diverted into the interior of India because of a wreck on the coast line. Since we were on our way back to our "home base" and then on to the U.S., we enjoyed the extra time on the train to reflect on what we had seen at HOINA.

The amount of work that gets done by this organization with so little money is unbelievable. I wish that every contributor to HOINA could see the work first-hand. I wish that I had been able to see what HOINA was doing in India years ago. Those people who contribute to HOINA can be assured that every dime, nickel, and penny is going to those who need it. HOINA's financial resources are not enough to meet the needs of all of India's people. In fact, in a country of a billion people, what HOINA does doesn't make much of

a difference at all. However, HOINA and its supporters believe we are obligated not to solve all of India's problems but to do whatever we can.

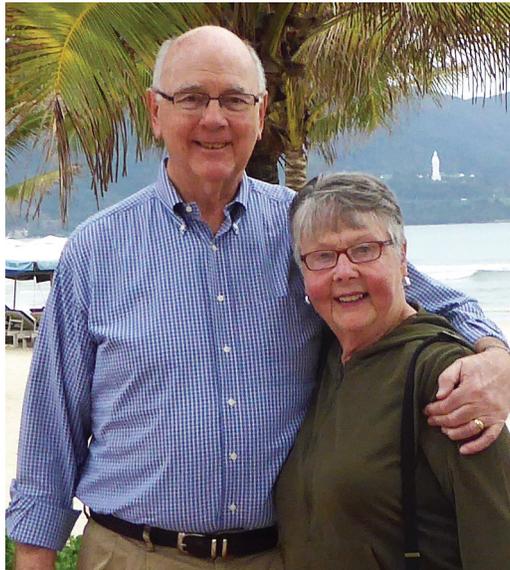
Thank you, Darlene Large, for your energy and commitment to the people of India. Thanks to all of you who read this and support the work of HOINA in India. Thanks to all of the employees and staff of HOINA in India who do the work of caring that makes HOINA so special, and thanks to the One who created us so wonderfully.

MEET the **HOINA BOARD**

Tom Yohe, HOINA Board Member & Treasurer

After I retired from managing a Farm Machinery dealership seven years ago, I was looking for an organization that could use my skills. HOINA had asked for help in their Lancaster, PA office, so I volunteered my time.

The outreach committee of Leola UMC has supported the work of HOINA since 1990. Darlene resided in Leola when she began to work with destitute children in India, and several members of our congregation at Leola UMC worked with her in the local school district. When Darlene presented her vision and the results of how God provided for development of HOINA in the United States and in India, the outreach committee gladly agreed to support HOINA in its work rescuing the less fortunate.



Tom and Mary Yohe

One of our members, Pat Robinson, who taught with Darlene decided soon after to spend some sabbatical time visiting the HOINA campuses in India. Upon her return she shared her experience with Leola UMC. Her time spent in India with Darlene and the HOINA children convinced me that the work of HOINA was truly inspired and sustained by Darlene's sacrificial dependence upon our faithful and loving God.

Since joining the HOINA Board two and a half years ago, Darlene continues to amaze me how she lives and cares for her HOINA children of all ages. I encourage each of you to continue to pray for Darlene and the Indian staff who selflessly provide for the needs and well-being of the HOINA children entrusted to their care.

HOINA is a 501(c)3, tax-exempt organization.

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