

COVER

A TIME TO GROW

New Shoots

B. D. Buma Kor (b.kor@iccnet.cm), a publisher in Yaoundé, Cameroon, offers a long-time reader's perspective of *InterLit's* history.

There comes a time when life bursts out in new shoots, leaving the old gnarled branches to die back, and be buffeted and felled to the ground by gales."

These words by Dennis E. Clark, from a December 1973 editorial, come to mind as *InterLit* marks its 40th year. Clark was commenting on the hot issue of the time: *Were missionaries listening and responding to the views of national Christians?*

Throughout its history, *InterLit* has demonstrated that "a positive response of western-based missions to [local] realities would be to revert to the simple biblical pattern of assisting godly men and women... to serve their Lord and His people wherever they are," as Dennis Clark concluded. This, in *InterLit*, means that "partners are coworkers in ministry... serving Christian publishing professionals around the world." In comparing *InterLit* issues of the first two decades with those of the last two, one can see striking evidence of listening.

What started in 1964 as a newsletter of David C. Cook Foundation, published in Elgin, Illinois, U.S., to provide a forum for global sharing of ideas in the fields of literature, literacy and leadership training, soon became a "trade journal" to develop and upgrade international Christian publishing. Today, it is an "international magazine of Christian publishing," serving professionals

around the world with industry news and information and published in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Developing international [Christian] literature, to date, remains as Cook's main focus, and *InterLit* is one vehicle for achieving this.

At first, *InterLit*, a 16-page newsletter, was published quarterly (4 issues a year). It became a 24-page journal from 1990-1996 and a bimonthly (6 issues) from 1997-2001; then in 2002 it returned to its original quarterly release.

There have been seven editors of *InterLit* since 1964, coming almost or within each change of cover designs. Each one brought in some uniqueness, some new shoots that made *InterLit* interesting, useful and informative—and changes in content, presentation and cover design.

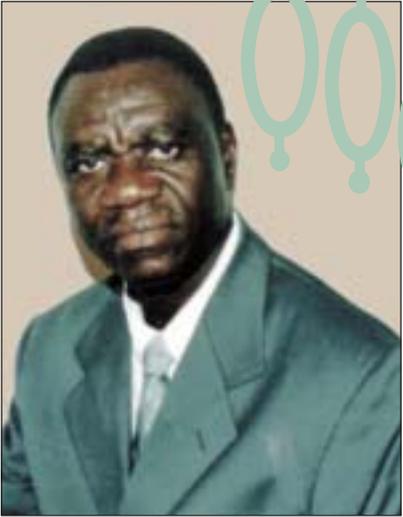
Gladys J. Peterson was the first editor and remained so throughout the '70s and '80s. With an Afro-look coiffure and clear glasses, this photojournalist displayed much of her talent by using one-color printing with effective results. At the time, *InterLit* reported on news and activities of the Foundation overseas. One such report I remember is "Sound the Trumpet Wisely" by one "anonymous" writer and frequent traveler in Communist-controlled areas behind the Iron Curtain. At first only missionaries, to a large extent, contributed to *InterLit* while in the later issues, more and more content came from around the world,

from people who are not only beneficiaries but actual users of the magazine. Regular contributors were C. Charles Van Ness, Bruce L. Cook, C. Richard Shumaker, and others.

From the late '80s to the September 1991 issue, Tim Bascom served as editor. Kathy Tull was assistant editor. It was during their time that a break was made from newspaper to trade journal. In fact, they laid the ground rules for future changes. Articles became more instructional and informative, while cartoons and photographs vied with each other to bring home the point. *InterLit* magazine was transformed into a working tool for those in publishing, rather than for those in communications in general.

The titles of articles were short, with descriptive sub-titles, leading directly to the subject matter of the story. Even the internal arrangement, as it is today, had its beginning from Bascom's time—a contents page showing lead articles (with a particular focus for each issue), departments and columns. His editorial column was called "Up Front." Gladys Peterson ably handled the photography department. Larry Brook contributed a "Writer's Craft" column.

Under Tim Bascom's leadership, more "people from overseas" became regular contributors to *InterLit*. Among them were Gloria F. Rodriguez (Philippines), Sigit Triyono (Indonesia), Steve Hrib (from the former Czechoslovakia),



"I have been receiving InterLit for 34 years," says B. D. Buma Kor, a publisher in Yaoundé, Cameroon. "I still have old copies dating back to the 70s. I jealously keep a personal note, signed by Gladys Peterson, thanking me for subscribing to InterLit during its 25th anniversary year in 1974."

Kuruville Chandy (India), Tunde Ojo (Nigeria), Richard Crabbe (Ghana), Dereje Abebe (Ethiopia), Mark L. Carpenter (Brazil), Charles Taylor (African-American), and several others from all over the world.

The next *InterLit* editor was Ronda Oosterhoff, who stayed until the December 1994 issue. The trend toward instructional pieces continued with her "Edi-tutorials" and columns like "The Christian Communicator," by David Howard. Titles like "Nuts & Bolts of News" by Marion van Horne, "Start Simply, Plan Purposefully" by Timothy Kwara, and all the articles of my mentor, Modupe Oduyoye—as well as interviews and profiles of leaders such as Randy Wittig (Costa Rica) and Mae Alice Reggy (Kenya)—were typical of articles of the time.

The focus for the December 1992 issue was newsletters, and a memorable article in that issue was Isaac Phiri's "Ambitious Beginnings," pinpointing the most common and costly mistakes in newsletter publishing. A good read still today! Phiri was ushered into the prestigious desk of editor of *InterLit*, which he took over from Oosterhoff as coeditor with Kathy Tull from the March 1995 issue.

Phiri became full editor and Susan Miller, managing editor. Then another bout of remarkable changes, as we saw with Tim Bascom, transformed *InterLit*.

It became a bimonthly for the first time. *InterLit* truly became a magazine with long descriptive titles. The articles were light-hearted but informative. The internal arrangement was transformed. The Wheaton-trained editor took on "Front Matter," Miller wrote "Practical Advice," a column on the inner back page, and "Final Folio," a column by David Mehlis, president of Cook Communications Ministries International, replaced "The Christian Communicator."

Susan Miller kept the same covers and interior design when she became editor from the December 1997 issue. She had an editorial team that included Sonia Yuen Weston and David Olsen. Isaac Phiri rejoined the team with the February 1999 issue, replacing Weston. A remarkable component of the Phiri-Miller era was the development of resource materials for publishers, such as *Imprints and Insights*. In addition, the International Christian Publishing Institute, an MBA-type training course for leaders of Christian publishing houses, from which many of us have benefited, began during their time.

With the August 1999 issue came Kim A. Pettit as editor, with an editorial team that includes Phiri. Additions to the content included "International Publishing Events" and "*InterLit* Forum," which gave information on upcoming events and reader's letters, respectively. And "Final Folio" on the back page by

David Mehlis offered consistent personal insights into the publishing scene worldwide.

In the future *InterLit* should remain an industry magazine, covering Christian writing, publishing, printing, and bookselling problems encountered throughout the world. More autobiographical articles, mirroring people's experiences in different professions, will speak eloquently to others in the same situation. The content in each issue should be balanced to cover all the regions, or one issue should cover a particular region and the next another and so forth. News on what is happening in Christian literature, literacy and leadership training worldwide are still needed. Professional magazines help people catch up with what cannot be learned elsewhere and keep them abreast with new discoveries. Back copies are useful for training staff and as a reference tool.

At different seasons, new shoots grew and blossomed, yet *InterLit* continues to be interesting, informative, and useful. Will *InterLit* still be here in the next 40 years, and after? May it live forever, growing more shoots! ❖

