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Richards Elly - Callison College One Pager

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If I were to evaluate the most impactful event of my life, it would be the good fortune to have discovered Callison College that sent me to India with Bangalore IV. To take an upper middle class, wasp, prep school educated and put them in India for 8 and 1/2 months was life changing to say the least. To come from the haves and to witness first hand the have nots changed the trajectory of my life. India felt like home to me, in fact the night before flying out I spent camping out under a tree near the Delhi airport crying.

After India I went and lived in Birmingham, Alabama for a year and 1/2 and did social work. After seeing the immense physical poverty in India, I saw the mental and emotional poverty in the U.S. I can actually say that I saw more smiles on the faces of the poor in India than I did here.

For the next couple of years which included a stint in New Zealand doing agricultural labor, working with special needs kids, finishing college and substitute teaching, I landed in Oregon and began school to become a lay midwife for women who wanted to have their babies at home. Midwifery consumed the next couple of years of my life. It was being at the right place at the right time and such an honor to assist a new life come into this world. In 1979 I attended at Midwifery meeting in northern New Mexico and became smitten with the Taos area, it was the first place that felt like home since India. In 1980 I was able to finally move there after the volcano St. Helens erupted. In Taos I did a short stint working with children who had been severely abused, though within a year I became pregnant myself and embarked on my motherhood years. I was fortunate enough to just be a mother for a couple of years. In 1986 I joined the Threshold foundation and discovered though they were funding many good projects, hardly any money was going to the poor in 3rd world countries. My India experience kicked in and within a couple of years the International committee was formed specifically for projects in 3rd world countries.

I had my 2nd child in 1990 and did solely motherhood for a couple of years. The itch to live in a 3rd world country had never left me since India. I visited Ecuador 1994 and was captivated so in the late 90's I moved there and did 2 different Permaculture projects in the 12 years I lived there. The first one restoring 17 acres of land in southern Ecuador and the next one restoring 100 acres of land in the cloud forest. I got to live in the garden of Eden for 10 years.

I returned to live in the states in 2012 as I was turning 60. I have dedicated my time in environmental activism, helping the poor, and being an advocate for children involved in the court system due to their parents abuse and/or neglect.

I can truly say without the influence Callison had on my life would have been far less rewarding.

Elly Richards Bangalore IV