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## At new Facial Rehabilitation Center

# Toy elephant's treatment facilitates her own

By David Williamson

When seven-year-old Vickie Harding of Asheville journeyed to Duke University Medical Center to undergo the major plastic surgery that would reshape her face, her stuffed toy elephant "33" came along to provide some company.

He didn't know what he was getting into.

Nurses on the Neurosurgical Unit swathed his head and long trunk in bandages, inserted a tube in his throat so that he could breathe and attached intravenous feeding lines to his front legs for nourishment.

He even accompanied Vickie on a tour of the recovery room to listen to the machines the two would hear when waking up after surgery.

Vickie told him not to worry because the doctors were doing it for their own good, and she explained the operation to him just as the nurses had explained it to her. On the morning of surgery, she held him on the operating table as anesthesiologist Donald Hooper put her gently to sleep.

### Elephant in recovery room

When the little girl awoke in the recovery room the day after her 14-hour transformation, she found her toy elephant and her parents there to wish her good morning. In the days that followed, nurses removed "33's"

bandages just as the doctors removed her own.

"Having a child who is scheduled for major facial surgery bring a toy animal or a doll to the hospital is one of the ways we try to help the child deal with the kinds of things that are going to be done," said Dr. Edward Clifford, co-director of Duke's Facial Rehabilitation Center.

Describing the purpose of the new center in a recent interview, Clifford, who is a psychologist, cited Vickie Harding as a vivacious child whose birth defect in later years would have made her an onlooker rather than a participant in the social scene.

"The problem of being disfigured is

largely the problem of meeting prejudice every day of your life," he said. "By operating on children at an early age, we are trying to spare them the emotional scars this prejudice leaves as they get older."

### Apert's syndrome

Dr. Calvin Peters, head of the center's craniofacial team, described Vickie as the victim of a rare genetic abnormality known to physicians as acrocephalosyndactyly or Apert's syndrome.

The middle third of her face had failed to develop properly so that her eyes bulged outward endangering her vision, and her entire face appeared spoon-shaped. Her fingers and toes had

failed to separate, making her hands look like mittens and her feet look similarly disfigured.

During the child's operation, Dr. Robert Wilkins, chief of neurosurgery, peeled down the skin on her forehead and removed a half-moon shaped plate of bone, exposing her brain. He then lifted the brain, temporarily shrunken by drugs, back from its resting place in the front of the skull and secured it with flat steel hooks called retractors.

### A more natural arrangement

Plastic surgeon Peters peeled her face further forward and cut loose the facial bones between her skull and lower jaw. He and Dr. John Angelillo, an oral  
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## From around the world to nursing school

By Ina Fried

Loren Melton has been around the world twice and across the Atlantic five times but she didn't know how to drive a car until this summer.

She and Claudia Gerard were classmates in an international high school in Bangkok, Thailand. Now both are among 90 freshman women in the School of Nursing.

The students come from 24 states and the District of Columbia with the largest, 19, from New York. Seventeen come from

New Jersey and nine from North Carolina.

Both Melton and Gerard were born in Germany but they didn't meet until the 10th grade in Thailand.

Melton, whose family is now in Oklahoma awaiting her father's reassignment by the State Department, has lived in Virginia; Vientiane, Laos; Washington, D.C.; and Paris. Gerard, whose family is now in Hawaii where her father is stationed with the Air Force, has lived in five other states.

Both recall with a sense of adventure the crowded conditions of Bangkok, a city of six million people.

### Adventures in Bangkok

Riding in a taxicab, "you put your life in your hands," Gerard said. "If there were two lanes painted on the street, there would be five lanes of cars. Motorcycles drove on the sidewalks and zipped in and out of traffic to get to the traffic lights. I never saw a speed limit posted the whole time I was there."

"Bangkok used to be the Venice of Asia," Melton said. "Then the canals in the main part of the city were filled in." Now the remaining canals are polluted and they flood during the monsoons, she added.

Prices were very low in Bangkok, the students remarked. For instance, a person could buy a long-stemmed rose for five cents, a bouquet of orchids for five dollars and a meal for 50 cents.

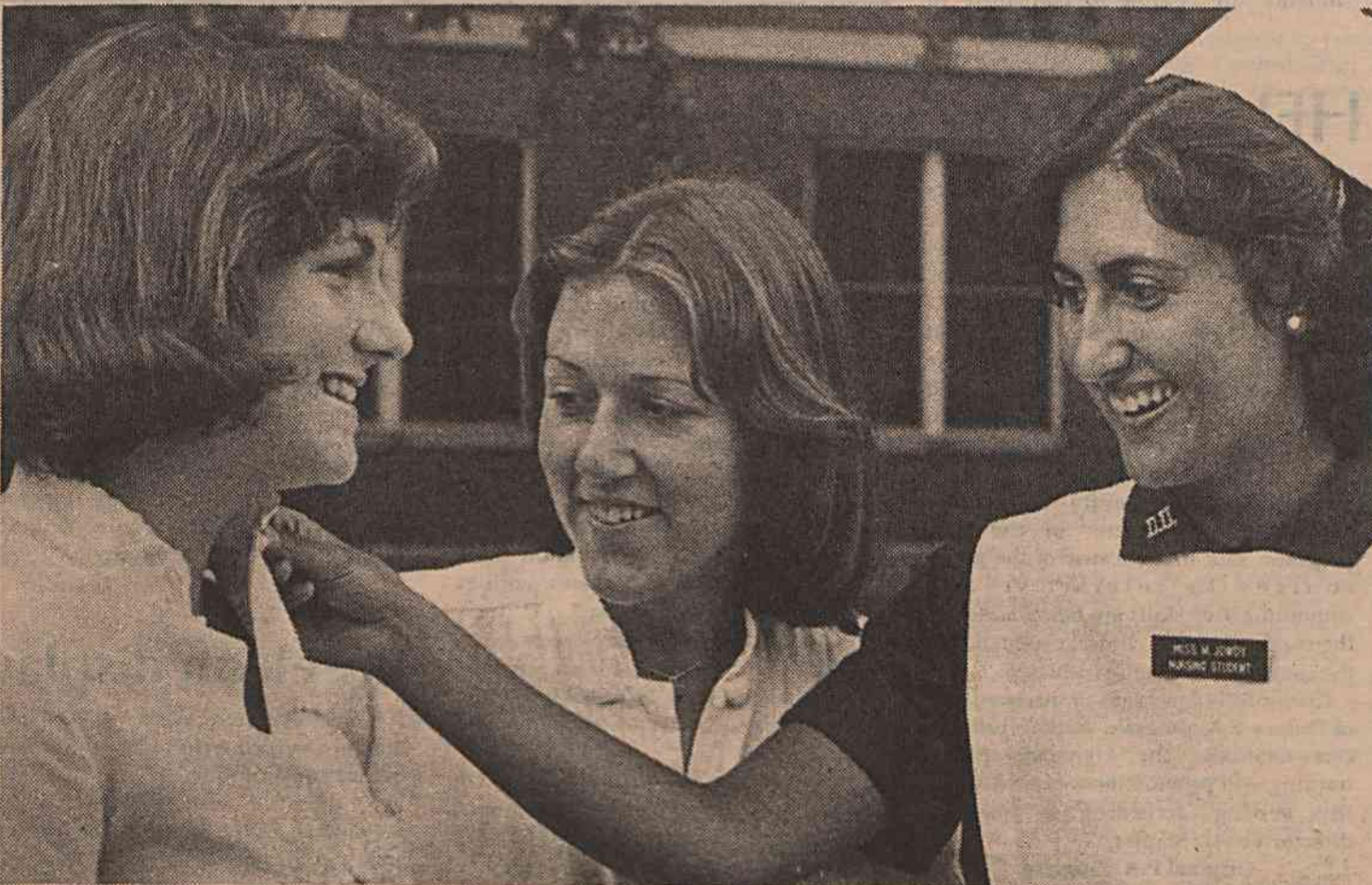
### Adjusting to new home

Living in North Carolina will be an adjustment, especially for Melton, who has lived eight of the last nine years overseas. The young women will no longer hear children whispering to their mothers, "foreigners have big noses." But Melton will have a chance to see her first live football game.

Both have received financial aid to attend Duke. Melton won a \$1,000 Overseas Scholarship from the Federation of American Women's Clubs, and Gerard received a \$2,800 grant from the Federation of Nursing.

Nursing freshmen from North Carolina are Lisa Kay Adams of Smithfield; Shirley Anne Ballantyne, Susan Fitzgibbon and Anne Baucom Keesler of Charlotte; Susan Elizabeth Beaty of Madison; Karen Ann Hardee of Raleigh; Sandra Joe Maxwell and Beth Lorraine Russell of Greensboro; and Diane Jo Starling of Durham.

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TOGETHER AGAIN—Nursing freshmen Loren Melton (left) and Claudia Gerard (center) show Melton's Freshman Advisory Counselor Margaret Jowdy the native outfits they bought while living and

attending high school in Bangkok, Thailand. The blouses feature "frog" closings and delicate embroidery and are worn with long, dark, baggy trousers. (Photo by Jim Wallace)