

TO THE HIMALAYA AND BEYOND

The Journal of a Walk



Bill Pigott's personal reflection from 1971

This is the diary, commenced at the end of 1970, by Bill Pigott, a young physician from Australia, setting out on an eighteen month study tour to look at different countries' approaches to Medical Education, in particular to explore how education programmes enable health science students to learn how to communicate and to take responsibility.

The trip extended to more than two years and led to some most interesting experiences in Asia, Europe and North America, the most profound being the initial four weeks on trek in Nepal.

The adventure was a personal learning quest, and was virtually self funded, with the encouragement of many people, including a bank manager with vision.

The text is presented here as much as it was written in 1970, with some minor editorial changes. Several examples of word usage, which appear in retrospect to be perhaps a little quaint, are left untouched as they reflect the spirit of the moment.

This version in Decemebr 2008 has had some further editing and pictures have been added, however they are from slides which returned from processing with a very grainy appearance and later were subject to fungal damage. Some digital restoration has been attempted.

It is extra-ordinary how vivid the memories are, as one types out words used some twenty years earlier to describe some truly wonderful experiences.

The Diary of a Trip to the Himalaya and Beyond..

Sunday 6 December 1970

And so a new year begins in the life of Bill Pigott, as his 30th begins. On this my birthday, how strange it is to be 29, but how apt to spend it flinging oneself to the world. I travel from Sydney to Bangkok for an overnight stop and connecting flight to Kathmandu. I will join five others for a month long trek in Nepal and then journey on through India, Afghanistan, Iran, Europe, the United States and Canada to learn how others educate doctors and nurses, as I make a shift in my career to Medical Education.

The great adventure has begun. More than travel, more than learning:- a life experience to feed a yearning, to get done what must be done. Idealism in this technological age is not yet dead, (although expensive). Adventure in our high society has yet a place- whether it be physical or intellectual. Combine the two, feed the idealism and you have a potential trip, the outcome of which is beyond the imagination, and will be revealed as it unfolds and progresses.

Day one at 30,000

In days of old things moved slowly
Adventure commenced in manner lowly
On foot, a litter or a horse,
for them it was the only course.

Now came ships and journeys longer
the mind of man becoming stronger
They commenced an exploration
of their world and situation.

with trains and planes the changes came
but the motivation stayed the same...
seek beyond the wide horizon
to find the mind , and expansion

But now the pace is faster yet
we thrust away in shining jet
The effect the same as on the charger
Mind freed and man much larger

There is also cause for reflection: It is a departure that ends up in a rush. Too much promised, not enough time. Time and energy for organising myself for an eighteen month absence from home, finalising 5 years working at Sydney Hospital and saying goodbye to friends and family. The result demonstrates the great capacity of a family to mobilise itself to help.

My brothers and my youngest sister Johanna were there at the airport to wish me well. Mac travels from from Nyngan, ..we give him scarce a thought but he comes to bid farewell. Peter as an organiser, with help and understanding. Chris, quiet and sincere, with his growing involvement in the family. Jo, who will be so changed by the time I return. John, ..steady and taking the lead as eldest son. ..and dear old Mum and Dad, what a great pair. They give so freely, ..accept the way we use them to get done what we cannot fit in.. parcels to post, cases to pack, messages to run. Accepted always as willingly ..probably in fact quite willingly. A sad farewell .. a tear or two. I guess it reflects the strength of the bond between us all, the sense that I will be away for more than a year, and the knowledge that I will meet up with our other sister/daughter Elizabeth in a couple of months. Also there were bushwalking friends.

Monday 7 December 1970

I arise early in the morning in the Asia Hotel, Bangkok, bus to the airport for the Thai flight to Kathmandu, by DC9 aircraft, which left at 8.30. The airport is a long way from town and one senses the madness and urgency of the Thai traffic.

The flight: A gift to each passenger, purple orchid spray to ladies, a small fan to men. The Thai Hostesses are gloriously arrayed in Thai silk. I sit next to delightful Quaker couple.. Douglas Ferris or Freeman, and his wife. He is Chairman of the World Society of Friends, a former Professor of Philosophy in Philadelphia. We engage in interesting conversation. They were associated with a colloquium with other religions.. saying how impressed they were with the spirit which develops between people who look to things they share or have in common. He is to go to the World Council of Churches meeting in Ethiopia to represent the Quakers. I have always been impressed with them as a group, their simple idealism and the thoroughness of their religion, the way it simply pervades their whole life. After all a religion which does not affect the whole way of life is hardly worth bothering about.

The flight path crosses Thailand, Burma, Rangoon and a great delta of meandering rivers, and then over the sea to Calcutta, where we land but do not leave the aircraft. You don't see the city itself, that notorious sea of humanity, in which I'll be immersed for a day later, as I journey on from Nepal.

Soon after leaving Calcutta, in the clear sky ahead you see a horizon piled with white clouds.. but as you draw closer it becomes the white Himalaya.. and the whole flight then becomes excitement. They draw nearer.. loom higher... and then close to Kathmandu become spectacular. I am reminded a little of my sojourn in New Guinea, however this is all on a much larger scale.. bigger mountains ..bigger valleys ..bigger plane!



from the aircraft after Calcutta



from the Panorama Hotel

KATHMANDU !

To the Panorama Hotel for lunch. - a delightful 2 star hotel right in the middle of things. ..through a little alley into a dimly lit reception room.. into a courtyard and up some stairs.. across into another building with a steep staircase. Three rooms at each level. The stairs lead to the roof, where from within the centre of town you look out over the tiles to the hills and beyond mountains.. high and snow topped! ...on one side there is a family in their courtyard.. -grain drying on the roof.. -women washing great brass pots .. like those you see everywhere.. similar water jars are about, made of pottery, and you pass the potters with their carpets of orange-red pots laid out on the path. ...and on the other side hair washing goes on. The morning scene from here the next day was equally wonderful and engaging.

In the afternoon we go walking.. through the narrow streets lined with two- and three-storied houses, with their carved wooden window frames, mostly with shop areas on the ground floor. ..grocers with limited stocks of all sorts of food stuffs., ..merciers with their silks and other cloths. ..food stores and all sorts of others.

With the evening, it looks more interesting ..and since the valley becomes dark before the high mountains, you can look down a darkened street to see it frame with its ancient houses a distant peak.. white at first and then pink...

On my walk, I meet a 15 year old college boy, who wanted to change money at black market rates. He does Economics so a discussion starts on how bad the black market is for the country.. but he says he needs the money.. I give him 5 rupees instead (about 50 cents!) Jobs are very difficult to get, even for college graduates. This message is repeated again and again. We walked and talked for a couple of hours through the darkening streets past shops, temples and houses... and home for dinner at the Panorama, after a truly fascinating day.

I know I could spend much time here.. ..perhaps even work!

Tuesday 8 December 1970 ; in KATHMANDU..

during which we meet Colonel Roberts;
walk to Bodnath Temple;
and I am further enchanted by Kathmandu..

First thing in the morning we are driven to the Shanker Hotel: ..an old palace owned by the hotel's proprietor and providing medium class accommodation.. certainly looks an imposing place... there to meet Colonel Jimmy Roberts, who runs Mountain Travel, and not only organises treks but also climbing expeditions. He is to be co-leader of a planned Everest attempt, from three different routes, this year or early next. We talked about our trek and it really sounds exciting. He is a most interesting man.

Having finished our conference on the lawn in front of the Shanker, we set off to look for the Buddhist temple and Stupa at Bodnath, 3 or 4 miles from town. It is a fascinating walk! ..through villages and fields. When the country opens out as you cross the river, there it is! .. in the distance beyond the low lands divided into rice paddies, - mostly dry now, but some being worked, and in the distance nearby "low" ranges (up to 12000 ft), and behind, those mysterious steep snow covered Himalayan peaks.



The roads are narrow: ..full of foot traffic, sacred cows, dogs, chickens and people sitting. The vehicles all make much noise with their horns and raise a lot of dust.

Out near the temple there is a cottage industry weaving factory. They make cloth, and there was a room of Tibetans making carpets. ..working in pairs, some are husband and wife, others still only children, all singing while they work ,.. a happy crowd making glorious carpets ! ..(about A\$70-90 each)

On to the Temple, which is round, *in all ways it seems* ..and all round are prayer wheels. On one side the monks prayed. There were two groups. One group is quietly chanting with bells, hand tambourines, and little double drums with pellets on strings which hit the drum surfaces when they are rotated rhythmically. The other group, over the way, is making much more noise, with larger drums, trumpets occasionally, with crescendo, and chanting all the time. All around the Stupa there are houses forming a circle, all seem to be curio shops.

My initial reaction is to think "how sad it is to see such simple ideals and teachings complicated by such ritual ", yet the rhythm has a simple and basic effect, and the faces of the monks all look so alive and devout. .. it may actually have more point than our ritualistic non-ritualism.

The walk back is also very interesting, refreshed on the way by mandarins from a street stall, of which there are many, .. selling mandarins and other fruits ..tomatoes, bananas and peanuts.



In the afternoon we check airline bookings out of Nepal, which can be quite complicated, since all bookings on Indian Airlines are handled in New Delhi.

Then we wander again through those packed and fascinating streets. I look for a woolen pullover, but the largest size they seem to have is 40" .. too small for me. I am conscious of my height here. the people being quite a bit shorter. So I buy a Tibetan jacket.

In the evening we talk with the owner of the Hotel, a Tibetan who came here a couple of years ago after the takeover of Tibet by the Chinese.

Wednesday 9 December 1970;	To Pokhara
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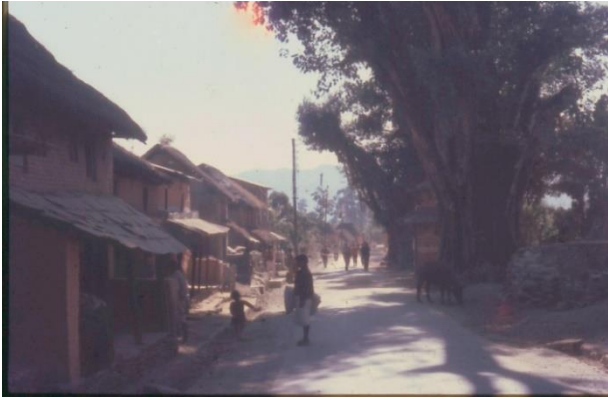
While we wait for plane, I talk with Darwa Norbu, a Sherpa, office manager of Mountain Travel ..16 expeditions to climb last year, 19 already planned for this year! Sherpas probably rather trek than climb. ..more trekking now, with new areas being opened up.

"Too many schools!" ..at last I've heard one of the locals say what I'd often thought myself when I was in Papua-New Guinea.. Education is a problem in Nepal .. for example there had been 500 applicants for a recent clerk job at a hotel. Perhaps just education is not the whole answer. Philosophical change or development ?. "Education for what purpose?" he asks. "..with what in mind ?" Darwa is quite definite on this point.



on the flight to Pohhara

The flight to Pokhara is **MAGNIFICENT**. We are met by Pemba Tensing, our Sirdah (or Chief), who was on the Hillary Everest expedition in 1953, and start off on a short first day of trekking, walking to a campsite just outside Pokhara.



How magnificent!! Machapuchare.. Annapurna.. (pronounced ana-purna, with some emphasis on the 'r') . They are MAGNIFICENT . They come towards, yet take you away, that mystic paradox....



I feel sheer excitement just sitting here and soaking them up...

Am I really here ?

Is that multi-peaked mass of snow-covered gray-and-pink rock really there ?

Can there be anything else so beautiful ?

Yes there probably is.. ,
but for now, no!

I am emotionally full of it all and feel full of fizz. I am uplifted and very happy.....

**CAN THERE BE ANY DAY BUT THIS
THOUGH MANY SUNS DO RISE ENDEAVOUR
WE COUNT THREE HUNDRED BUT WE MISS
THERE IS BUT ONE
AND THAT ONE EVER**

George Hebert

And to have been part of it means to always be a part. How can I comprehend it lest it become part of me. Grandeur... beauty.... Peace ... fill the inner man and give him the desire to float out and become; to go on into life with an increased awareness of reality of height and depth; of self and environment

Mountains that beckon and people with open faces arrest you so that you want to stop and meet each one. And as I write, on one side the river roars, while on the other another mule train tinkles past... while the valley darkens and the great mountain shines in glorious sunlight ..thrusting up into the clear blue sky.. the vault of which I too am a part, and too you !

and the sun sets glorious pink on Annapurna
what a sight ! ... so close yet so ethereal

..and then I am disturbed by a call from the camp for dinner... I did not want to stop losing myself. I did not want to leave my seat on the rock over from the camp... .. but dinner was welcome, ..hot and vegetably and followed by talk with the Sherpas. Pemba Tensing, Pemba Tarke, Kancha Tensing, Mingma Tsering and Tensing Gyaltsso had all been on Everest expeditions, most on 2 or more. Pemba Tensing and Mingma Tsering were both on the 1953 climb. They talk about the British Annapurna and other expeditions. They will all be on the Everest climb next year.

Then the moon arose ..silver light to make the snow covered part of the mountains float. ..I cannot describe how it feels. and to it listened to Bruch's Scottish Fantasia .. good mountain music, but not as good as the early evening ration of Mahler's second symphony. (I have a small tape recorder and a few cassettes, which I will ration to enables the batteries to last.)

August 1991: *I would later describe this day as the day on which I discarded the idea of "ultimate". .. standing outside Pokhara with those mountains rising 7000 metres or so just 30 or more kilometers away.. having my breath taken away... and finding no adjectives left in my head to describe them.. so this must be " ultimate beauty". I tear myself away to move on, and a short way down the path I see the same scene now framed in bamboo meeting across the way.. I must have been wrong back there. This is infinitely more beautiful. and within ten minutes this has happened so many times I have discarded the notion of ultimate....*

Thursday 10 December 1970

Today we awake at 6.30 a.m. ..just before the sun ..which had set the mountains pink and now rises them in similar hue. With tea and porridge aboard, we set off.. ..on the right Machapuchare and the left, the hills. Through villages, ochre houses with thatched roofs, some of slate; some walls of tightly packed stone, without filling, and most still with carved window frames.

The people pass and greet. " Namastay " they say, with hands together, palm to palm, placed before the forehead. Some just touch with one hand the forehead, but always those bright eyes and open faces.

...people spinning

...people cooking

...people flattening grain ,

with a sort of ram operated by foot, the grain goes into the small hole in the floor and the hammer flattens it. In Pokhara yesterday, a small girl sat by and in rhythm with the ram sifted with her fingers the grain. Today's man used a brush on a long stick to keep the grain in the well.

..people just talking....

You are invited frequently to partake "chia" .. the open front of the house has a low stove with a kettle and other pots. ..a woman squats by: "Chia ? "

We did not stop, but down by the river paused for " brunch" at about 10.30 a.m. Chips, eggs, beans, bread and cheese and large mugs of tea. There are many children around, ..limited English, but they do go to school. A group of girls entertained us with singing and dancing. They sang a song in praise of Sherpa Tensing of Everest fame, who seems to be somewhat of a national hero.



After brunch we continue along the river, through the dried paddies ..it is now winter ..and dry.

.. and then up .up ..up and up
....up to the village of Damphas.

What a climb ! What a sight! Hills rising from the river ..tops ahaze;
..mountains beyond, blue; but not as high as those over behind, those snowy magnificents;

The hills not only rise, they cascade down in terraces from top to river, some dry and brown, others midway up green with new wheat. Here and there, there are clusters of houses, some thatched, others with splendid slate.. nestling into the hillside.

A hawk soars overhead, and you look beyond him to distance
meandering river with high steep hills ..distance ..blue

I want to sing ..and do:
words of the valley to music ..
music to the poetry of life
..of hills ..of climbing ..of peace
.. of distance ..blue

We camp at Damphus, high in the hills. Three tents in a row looking out across a small valley, the other side of the ridge we had climbed, again terraces, but not as many. We are at about 5,600 ft. We were at 3,600 ft. last night. Over to the left is a 7,000 ft. hill. Straight out there is another, a bit higher, about 5 miles away.

..and beyond, partly obscured by low gray clouds, is Machapuchare, towering higher than ever.changed.

But no, it remains the same.

It is we who change.

...yet, too it changes ..seasons, time, age..

While we change more quickly ..seasons, time, age.. mood.

It **has** changed.. the sun now shines through the cloud, a narrow band of gold across the hills opposite, the bottom of the band of light is the silhouette of our hill, the upper, the shadow from the cloud. ..and the band creeps up the hill, lighting the villages in its path.

Children have gathered. Moitassen seems to be the spokesman. Round face and round black eyes. Dil Bahadur is another with something to say. They go to school in Damphus, but only to 3rd class. There is another fellow who is on holidays from the high school in Pokhara. We organise a game for them. At first they were reluctant to join in, but then a few participated with great hilarity. They respond by giving me a lesson in Nepali.

(I recall, years later, the game was the one in which a series of sticks are laid out, and you run through, taking one step in each space.)

For dinner we have the chicken that was bought as we walked through Dampus. With evening, the clouds clear, leaving the mountains even closer and Pemba Tarke talks about himself. He is 28 years of age, and has 2 children, a boy of 6, and a girl of 3. He has one brother and one sister, who is the wife of Tensing Gyaltsso. He has been working with the trekking groups now for 9 months, and prior to that was on many climbing expeditions; 1961; Makalu: 1962; Everest : 1963; Kantega, with Edmund Hillary : 1964; Tramserku : 1965, Indian Everest : 1966; Annapurna 1, with a German expedition : 1969; Annapurna, With Chris Bonnington... he talks of 6 Sherpas lost recently on the Japanese Everest Expedition, and says that this is why the Sherpas prefer trekking.



Friday 11 December 1970

Dampus: ..climb to 7,000 ft. .. a glimpse of Dhaulagiri and superb views of Annapurna and Machapuchare. A lunch stop by the river, and then walk the mountain to the steep Modi Khola valley.

Through Lamrung with its long main " street ", a paved track steeply downhill, with houses either side. ..people gathering with gifts of rice for the family of a dead man. ...down to the river, (we are now at 4,200 ft.,) ..cold, ..fast flowing ..roaring. Great to wash in after a good day's walk, but too fast for a swim.

I arrive at the evening not wanting to bother about writing, feeling contented, happy and having run out of adjectives.

The clouds have come over again. It seems to follow a pattern. Clear mornings and cloud in the afternoon. The morning today was superb. I had found a small lake, which reflected beautifully the glow of the rising sun on the eastern face of Annapurna.

Reflection as a mood.. -perspective, -colour, -glow, - a new day again.

..with no superlatives left, one can just feel
..and become --regarding it all in silence.

The Sherpas are great fun. They sing as they walk. The rest of the group is settling in well and all become involved in varied conversations. As predicted, there is generally someone each night who comes for medical advice. Last night it was a lady with epigastric pain. Tonight it is a man whose son sounds as if he has an abscess of the knee. (I gave him some Penicillin.) We also have a boy, one of the porters, with chemical burns to his back, which is responding well to therapy.

So even though the inclination to write is absent, there is much going on, *including more* talks with Sherpas about their expeditions and things seen. But it is all too much to record !

Saturday 12 December 1970

1: Lunch stop at Gandrung 10 a.m., altitude 6,250 ft.

Last night I felt fit and ready to tackle anything. No gastro-intestinal upset yet, as some of the others have.(from indiscreet drinking of water in Kathmandu, I guess.). Slept so well, up to the 6.30 a.m. pot of tea. Usually two or more 1/2 pint mugs get down, and then porridge and off on the long climb from the Landrung bridge to Gandrung, which is atop the opposite ridge, -about 1,000 ft per hour, - rough path at first, and then paved steps.

The clouds play mystique with Gangapurna and Annapurna and as you reach the village, the cluster of substantial stone houses, racks of corn, yards of chickens, families of delightful children, roofs of slate, all seem to greet us and give a foreground to Annapurna's magnificence .

O happiness how light you make the soul
The feet that trek sing, the whole man joins the tune
Poised on terrace edge, he would that he could fly
float out and really be one with them
Those floating masses of snow and rock
They sing , yet now their symphony is subdued
Hush, they say as the soft gray clouds sweep aside
Be still, O soul within, rest with me find peace
The peace I have I give

I write looking out across a deep valley to Machapuchare, -now with a wreath of cloud around its base, fish tail head thrust through, with a tree covered ridge before, from below the wreath of cloud.. Out to the left, seeming lower, - but really more beyond, is a snow covered ridge sweeping round and toward Gangapurna and Annapurna, also screened in part by cloud.

We wait in glorious sunlight
quiet, subdued, ..awed
waiting for breakfast !

Brunch, or officially "camp lunch ", is a full scale affair, taken 2 or 3 hours after leaving the night camping spot. So far it has been chips, egg (fried, scrambled and omelet so far) and baked beans from a can, with bread, jam and cheese to follow with great mugs of steaming tea . The quantities provided are enormous. Kancha is the cook and he has two helpers. They are always at the head of the party, to arrive first at the camp or lunch site, where they spread a blue ground sheet, which is our marker.

2: Camp stop at Chomro: Saturday evening.

After breakfast, brunch, lunch or whatever you like to call it, we climbed another thousand feet or so. Then down for 30 minutes or so to cross a river and straight up the other side. The "ups " are steep and at regular intervals there are stone ledges, just at the right height for the porters baskets. Having attained 6,000 ft. again, you proceed at that level, but continue to go up and down over minor hills. It is interesting that we walk because there it is the only way to get anywhere, rather as an alternative.

I arrive at Chomro before the others .. and wash refreshingly in the icy mountain stream. Although tired at the end of the upward climb, a rest and more level walking produced an exhilaration that burst into song. ..Clouds mostly, with shafts of sunlight. Passing round a corner you can see across and down the valley to where we spent last night.. 5 or so miles over and down, ..but more miles by the way we came.

I find myself walking alone ..even with others conversation is not easy because of the terrain ..better enjoyed this way. Annapurna is now very close ..towering above. We watch an almost full moon rise. It is white really, but the mist blowing off Machapuchare seems to envelop it in a silver veil. The clouds have completely cleared.



At each evening camp locals gather to see if we have some medicines for their various ailments, so I see some patients: an old lady with abdominal pain and diarrhoea, sounds like blood and mucus; a child with skin sores; a man with sore feet; a couple of "beautiful" goitres, one boy with obvious laryngeal effects...(*as a medical person it was extra ordinary to see such large swellings of thyroid glands, the result of iodine deficiency, ..not uncommon in mountainous areas. However it is not very nice to describe them as "beautiful".*)so much could be done with simple remedies. Perhaps one should undertake a medical trek to clear up the more obvious problems in outlying areas. Chomro is an isolated village. If only I had iodine and anti-parasite remedies. I went into one of the houses, ..low ceiling ..smoke-filled ..open fire, no chimney, and went upstairs to visit a sick woman. The house is very clean and tidy inside, but if only they had a simple chimney. Most people seem to cough. This may be one of the reasons.

Sunday 13 December 1970

At the end of a delightful day we camp by a river at 8,000 ft.

Thirty-one ant-like people on the steep side of a valley leading to the high altar of the world, the Himalaya. We are so close now that we only see the tip of Machapuchare. There is the roar of gray-blue tumbling water below, ..and either side of our camp, small rivers tumble from the heights behind us to meet the Modi Khola. You have to look up now to see the mountain tops and the sky.

A short, but steep climb out of Chomro took us back up to 6,000 ft or so.. and then with the usual up and down progression, we steadily climbed along rivers, through bamboo forests, forests of falling leaves, across rivers and over carpets of fallen leaves ..having to look up to see Machapuchare, gleaming in brilliant sunshine, thrusting up into deep blue vault.

The lunch stop was a little longer and the trek for the day a little shorter, arriving at camp before 3 p.m. .. sun enough for washing and swimming . The temperature of the water only allows for short term immersion, but it feels so good afterwards. In my third dip, I'm not sure which I enjoyed the most, the swim, or the look on Pat O'Leary's face ! Today a new member of the party is a small black dog who joined us in Chomro. The moment the sun was obscured by a western hill, the temperature dropped. I've been walking in shirt and singlet, but now have put on my track suit and guess my Tibetan jacket will follow.

Its great to be alive-
To be somewhere so different, so unimagined
But so near to other worlds
One week from work
And a thought span only from friends and family

There's a symbol there
To be explored - of life and being
Of different dimensions, perspectives,
- of thoughts and planes.

And today is Sunday, Traditional day of religion.
What a mockery to make it one day,
When life is as life is..
This world of mountain peak, steep valley and roaring river
Is it not, after all, the high altar of the world ?
And this high altar its life, its breathing and its being ?

Monday 14 December 1970

8,000 ft. at 8 a.m.
9,000 ft. at 9 a.m.
9,800 ft. at 10 a.m.
12,000 ft. at 3 p.m. camped at Machapuchare Base Camp

ANNAPURNA SANCTUARY: 4.30 p.m., altitude 12,000, temperature 30 F.

As I sit...

...to the right, Annapurna South;

...over my right shoulder, Annapurna 1, in evening sunlight, wisps of cloud rising;

...in front, through a screen of dried flowers, we look down the narrow Modi valley, snow covered slabs rock, the sun-drenched faces bare;

...over to the left, look **up** to Machapuchare, it's sharp point bathed in light, its snow and ice glistening...

...and behind you can see a little more of the Annapurna range, we in shadow, and have been for a couple of hours, while some of the peaks still catch the evening sun. (it was 11 a.m. before the sun reached the floor of the valley today.)



The area in which we are camped is known as the sanctuary. All the grasses are dried .. It's like walking through a dried flower arrangement which has been spread across the hill.

Today was a steady climb, slower as we got higher. More rest periods. Shortness of breath , slight head-aches, all relieved by resting. Again through bamboo thickets, the early crunch of the frosted ground giving way to the crunch on fallen leaves.

Once the sun is there, it is warm, even though there are patches of snow on the ground, and icicles on the small bridge across the tumbling creek. ...water cascading down the mountain in the morning become sheets of ice by the time the afternoon and higher altitudes are reached.

Profound
is the effect the whole has
Surrounded by high peaks
If truth is Beauty
this is truth....

Tuesday 15 December 1970

A whole awe-inspiring, beautiful day spent on the heights of the Annapurna Sanctuary; camping at 12,000 ft. with blobs of snow on the ground around and the Annapurna Machapuchare ranges surrounding; during which four of us climb the glacial moraine to about 14,000 ft.

Spectacular scenery. Almost deafening silence.

Sitting on the edge of a sheer drop to the glacial bed, the Sherpas Tensing Gyaltsso, Pemba Tarke and our sirdah, Pemba Tensing, describe how they had gone across the ridge from Annapurna 3 to Annapurna 1 with the German expedition attempting Annapurna. Pemba Tarke points out the route he'd taken with Bonnington's British attempt in early 1970. He must have reached 20,000 ft.

The light ..changing, and the increasing altitude from which we view it all, produces an ever changing pattern of light and shade on the rock and snow. ...Magnificent fluted ice caps along the ridges.. Deep green in some of the ice-falls.. Some rock faces fawn, others gray, some with touches of reddy-brown... look at the sedimentary striations across Annapurna, colours from light brown with pink, through to blackish gray.... and the three or four glaciers off Annapurna; ...and we stood at about their height!

We all sit and drink deeply of this heady draught of mountain magnificence, completely content to just be here,...the long walk up the valley worth every minute to reach this point.

So often I have thought that beauty has an ultimate point, that man can reach a point where he can no longer cope. But even today, it seemed as if that point had been reached, only to be reached again a little higher. No doubt, tomorrow and beyond will bring new pinnacles., ..and one's response will be richer for today's communion with the peaks of Annapurna and Machapuchare.



Annapurna Base Camp: This whole area must have seen much activity. For the British Annapurna expedition they had 900 porters ! The Japanese Everest expedition had 950 and Kancha says the 1971 Everest expedition will have 1,000 porters. The Annapurna climb included TV cameramen. Today we also saw the frames of shepherds huts, stone walls at either end with timber hooped frames. There is evidence of a large sheep population in the summer.

The ground is dry, the grass dry, and dried flowers still in the bushes. Pemba Tarke had seen a mountain goat on the opposite ridge. There are several camp sites as you climb the valley, and although a steady climb, requiring frequent rests and slow progress because the altitude, it doesn't seem nearly as steep until we started coming down.

There is snow about and at our highest point we could see a 360 degree circle of snow-capped peaks.... Absolutely magnificent: ...the joy of sitting and looking, ..of being part of it.

At the camp, not even seen until we are halfway down, some of the peaks are obscured by the nearer smaller " hills ". A raven flies around. What an amphitheatre to play to. So often on seeing large birds in flight, I have had the urge to be like them, soaring and on the wing. But now contentment bade me sit ..but soar nevertheless. The evening again glowed the peaks, this time wreathed with veils of high pink thin cloud.

The highest point of the day found me with little energy and a headache, which lasted until after tea. Four of us made the climb with three Sherpas. The other two, Pat O'Leary and Bob Green stayed by the camp. I had not realised that they were 53 and 47 respectively ! The health of the party has been good, some gastro-intestinal disorders, and three of us have colds. These started as sore throats, which I attributed to dust, dry air and mouth breathing.. but colds have ensued.



Wednesday 16 December 1970

8th Day on Trek:

Camped at 12,000 ft.

Lunch stop at 9,000 ft., after 2 1/2 hours down hill walk.

On sleeping at high altitude:

Monday night: One sleeping bag. had gone to bed in two bags plus various clothes, but got too hot, ..so took most of the clothes off and slept only in my own sleeping bag.

Tuesday night: One sleeping bag, with mine spread out on top. Slept well. Occasionally awake to cough. Morning cough with thick yellow sputum. No gut problems. Headache and anorexia on return from the heights yesterday, but 2 aspirin, not much supper and rest had me feeling fine by 7 p.m.

At the lunch stop I sit on a bed of wild strawberries, with a light dusting of frost, ..the roar of the Modi river nearby ..and the sun about to reach our part of the valley. The walls are almost sheer. We at times almost crawl along the wall. Although mostly down, there are still up-climbs out of stony river beds. The path is good, at times rocky, but still the crunch of fallen leaves. As we come lower there are larger trees, bared for winter, and bamboo thickets. We did see a couple of goats on the mountain before we left camp.

The river has less water in the mornings and the side streams are full of ice. The hillside along which we've just walked is still frozen, but by the afternoon, which it was when we walked up, it was quite mushy underfoot.

The trees around us have only few leaves left, their branches are outlined by red berries, their leaves brown and curled. Other trees include holly, occasional pines and Rhododendron. How magnificent they must look in the spring, all red splashed against the white distant peaks. *(and they did, especially with a light dusting of their own snow, seen some 15 years later with the family in the Langtang valley..)* Ground plants include the creeping plants with small heads of pink which we have at home, nettles as vicious and stinging at home, ..mosses, grasses and lots of wild strawberries (but no berries at this time of the year). Other wild life includes small birds, rodents and goats, high in the hills.

The air is crisp and the feeling one of joy.. now made warm by the sun as it flows across the opposite wall. (10.50 a.m.) Even at 9,000 ft. one can move more easily. You can stand up suddenly without feeling as if your head will catapult into the distance. The presence of the sun makes the air warmer by as much as 10 degrees. The frost has now gone from the ground. Pemba Tensing plays his flute while the porters sit about chatting, joking, cooking their lunch.

Everything is so new, so far away from the past,
..but then this is what the present is all about.
Yet there is something of the presence of family and friends
even here geographically so far.



Wednesday 16 December continued;` Evening Entry, Camped at Kuldi:

Having spent the latter part of the day walking towards the sun, but with a canopy of leaves between us. The vegetation has become more lush and tropical, ferns and moss covered tree trunks. The bamboo is larger and the stands taller. The rhododendron trees are much larger. .. some parts of the path are tunnels of lightness, yellow/green of bamboo leaf, while others are cool and dark with ferns, rocks and gurgling waters.

It is great to walk toward the sun
But beneath a leafy canopy
Which softens,
Shades and creates
Patterns, light, colour and variation
And makes one want to run

Today met three other groups, two English lads, three English bird watchers and a New Zealand school teacher from south India. The bird watchers made a peculiar trio.. the first looked a man of the world, ..obvious leader, the second young and wide-eyed, the third thick glasses, an academic approach and a barrage of questions about birds.

We are camped at Kuldi, 7,800 ft., which is where we stopped for lunch on our way up from Chomro. Thus we are half a day ahead of the upward trek.

Machapuchare is all we can now see, but again tonight it glowed pink with set of sun, transient cloud adding to the appeal. Again the afterglow showed itself. The sun leaves the valley but remains on the mountain .. then leaves it also. A short while later you notice the mountain with a soft glow, which must be as the whole area becomes much darker and the peak's twilight remains.

Today's Menu:

Lunch: Pancakes
Baked beans
Chips
Egg

Dinner: Noodles
Vegetables
Cheese Sauce
Pumpkin

Stewed Fruit

Morning entry: Lunch stop at Chomro, 10 a.m.

Sitting by an alabaster river rushing down from Annapurna. Sun shining bright , shorts only the order of the day, .. looking up to a fairly high level bridge whose passengers are silhouetted against the haze of the valley walls, porters with baskets, .. followed later by four trekkers (including a very dapper Frenchman who had sat at Kathmandu airport listening to Beethoven and who was coming to look for his wife .. not so dapper any more but with his wife and two other men) ..villagers, a lady with a baby on her back, children, men with bundles of bamboo, which they had been cutting on the ridge as we passed.

Today ,so far, has been downhill all the way. The valley is wider, so we were in sunlight by 9 a.m. Started walking at 8. The trees are larger. Everything is greener. Orchids on some of the trees.

Getting back to " civilization " brings the familiar "Namastay" greeting to our ears from the villagers we pass. We encountered two men from the village going to hunt mountain goats.

Last night had a most interesting chat with Peter Rees. He is 30, with long hair and beard. He has just completed a B.Ed degree at Melbourne University .. Dip Ed at Oxford, B.A. at London and Rugby School. He is the only son of a London Judge who lives in Lewes, Surrey. He's done some mountain climbing, including the Matterhorn, was with Outward Bound in East Africa and taught at Geelong Grammar's Timbertop. He did an Arts degree after school because of his interest in English literature, and will pursue this interest, probably teaching at tertiary level. We talked about education in general, clarifying some of my ideas about things. For example, the importance of exposure of teachers to educational psychology. Peter thinks it is possible to train people to be better facilitators of learning.

He continually amuses us with his comments such as " we are more like a traveling menagerie than a trek... " or " the sun also rises on Poona.. ", repeated often in the most English of accents, .. and " I wonder if they've turned our passports into ready cash yet.." He reads each night, currently into David Copperfield. How I wish I'd brought a meaty book.

Evening entry; ...of a diary which I'm really enjoying.

It seems to let me think a little about what's going on...

Lunch 6,000 ft.

Ridge 7,000 ft.

Camp 5,800 ft. 4 p.m. at Kumjung

The highlight of the day was a "clinic" at Chomro. As I strode up the steps that take you 800 or 900 ft. up the hill behind Chomro, I was called back. A sick baby ! The Sherpa Kancha gives the history even though he says his English is not too good.. Some vomiting, some diarrhoea, listless, hot.. Examination revealed a listless baby of 12 months. with in-drawing of the intercostal muscles, coarse rattles throughout both sides of the chest and a bit febrile. The abdomen appeared normal. O how I would liked to have given her a shot of penicillin. However not having any injectable stuff, I gave them 5 days supply of tablets and an effervescent multi-vitamin preparation to be had with boiled water. There were no signs of meningitis or the gross dehydration of gastroenteritis, and with a diagnosis acute respiratory tract infection she should respond to Penicillin.

The scene appeals to me. .. on the ground by a stone wall, behind which there is a green crop of millet; ..over by a typical Nepali two-storied stone/slate-roofed farmhouse; ..the mother and father seated; ..a crowd gathering (including an old man with 9 years of abdominal pain and various children); ..I kneeling, making my examination of the baby who I've laid on the grass; ..dressed in denim shorts and dirty singlet and a scruffy 8 day beard growth and red-nosed from the sun; ..stethoscope as my diagnostic aid; ..with Annapurna South and Huinchuli towering in the background; and Machapuchare over to the right; ..a high waterfall a little up the valley; ..Chomro's houses scattered across the terraced hillside; .. all bathed in glorious sunlight, with a vault of deepest blue overhead !

The only way these people get medical help is to go to Pokhara, two days walk away ! Pemba Tarke says the woman I treated when we spent the night here on the way up to the Sanctuary is now better. (I guess otherwise I would not have been asked to see the baby.)

So much could be done with a proper medical clinic. Yet too it raises questions like that of Education.. does the provision of aid and new standards merely introduce new frustrations ?

Lunch had been by a river, a small tributary of the Modi. What an incredible volume of water flows away from these mountains! It reminds me of Bill McCarthy's analogy of Knowledge, being like taking a dipper of water from a river, throwing it back, and never being able to get the same dipper-full ever again. Life's like that..

We climb the ridge, up another 1,000 ft., then down 1,200. The first 900 ft. is up well made steps, through bushes and trees. Then, nearing the top, the path levels out, but still rises and falls across the face of the hill. now through farms and hamlets, with a whole terraced hillside below.. and again on the opposite side of the valley.

Today's Menu:

Dinner: Potato
mince
Cauliflower
Pancakes
Greens

Pineapple

We are back in "civilization"! A man sits weaving a bamboo screen. His cattle graze nearby. Someone is calling across the valley. People call their greetings from afar, and on the track itself. We pass Nepali folk carrying their loads to Chomro. Women washing. The sun ablaze. All glowing with warm rural peacefulness.

In the distance, over to the south, we can see Landrung, where we spent our third night and soon we reach the river we crossed on our fourth day. Soon after we arrive at the camp site the sun slips over the western hill. In the shadow we rug up and look out over to the east where a 12,000 ft. wall of the Modi Valley (our river runs east to meet the Modi) reflects the evening sun. ..and there again are those low transient clouds across the hills.

I've bathed in the icy stream. Washed an item or two and sit, considering what a delightful state of being, having been part of a mountain range, ..which looks so different now we have been so close.

Friday 18 December 1970

Lunch stop/morning entry:

*10 a.m.; 7,500 ft.; cloudless deep blue sky;
looking out to the Annapurna Himal;*

We climbed all the way up, the first 1,000 ft. up through terraced farms ..up ...upup Passed a farmhouse, ..an old man sitting trimming bamboo, a boy working in an exercise book and others sitting round eating popped corn.

At the farmhouse we saw a family planning poster. Two adults and two children within a triangle.. presumably encouraging only two children per family.



Earlier we had passed one of many water mills. Of stone, but small, built over a running river with a simple horizontal water wheel and grinder above, the miller crouched over his stone.

We then walked in a beautiful forest of cool moss covered rhododendrons and other large trees , the path worn deep into the moist hillside (2 or 3 feet in places) .. ferns, rivers, shadows, and frost still aground.

The small black dog who wags his tail vertically is still with us. I fear he goes twice the distance. He frequently appears from ahead, running in the opposite direction, I suppose to check down the line. The porters have now picked up some of the load that was left while we took our diversion to the Annapurna Sanctuary.

I had assumed that no one would travel at night, but last night we saw two methods. One man came by the camp (which was placed on a fairly main route) waving a glowing brand of wood, waving it to keep it glowing. Later a group of four passed, one carrying a tight wad of small bamboo, blazing. One had a gun and another a bundle of more substantial sticks. Off to hunt birds, they said.

Today is again a glorious day. The warmth is not only external, ..one feels aglow with this relaxed happiness..

clear sky, clear hills,
clear peaks beyond
clear view, clear mind
and peace within
the whole ahaze-
blue which softens
and with the sun
melts all to one.

Look how the river changes colour, from the crystal clear of morning to the slightly opaque jade or alabaster of the later day.

Saturday 19 December 1970; Day 11
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From Yesterday to today's lunch stop, 10 a.m.:

6000 ft. ->7500 ->8500 ->8000 ->8600 (camp) ->10000 ->9000 ft.

We have passed through the 10,000 ft. Deorali pass and sit in the sun after the long climb. We sit for some time. It is almost a beach like feeling and we indulged in the fantasy of "ordering drinks", ..often used for humour in the group. The group laughs a lot. The Sherpas also enjoy life. Between

nonsensical associations and snatches of verse from Peter and Bob we are kept amused.

Yesterday afternoon it was again walking with the sun shining through a canopy of fine bamboo, creating a yellow dappling light, and huge rhododendron trees their darker shadow. We had camped by a cliff alongside a stream. I swam again in a clear pool, but for a few moments only. Two gray monkeys appeared on the cliff. The Sherpas yelled and then collapsed into peals of laughter as the monkeys raced away. Again this morning there was much hilarity as the monkeys reappeared, only to be teased by the fire-cracker like sound of exploding bamboo thrown into the fire.

Dinner was a delicious mutton curry and rice. They killed the sheep bought earlier in the day. Although buddhists, the Sherpas seem to allow themselves to eat the meat killed by our non buddhist Nepali porters. Every bit of the animal is used. They spent ages stuffing the intestines with a mixture of blood and other things and then cooked it all. The party seemed to go long into the night, with Pemba Tensing's flute and the Sherpas singing. ..a delightful Rembrandt like scene.. the Sherpa porters sitting around their cooking pots on blazing fires, framed by the doorway of the stone hut.. singing and chatting !

We discuss whether one must "get away from it all " in order to find oneself. ..not resolved. However we did agree that University students should spend a year at work between school and university; and did so around the warming fire .. until 7 p.m. or so, our usual bed time.

This morning it is cold on rising, but we are soon on the move, up and up to the Deorali Pass , through a narrow valley, with more ice on the ground as we get higher. Huge Rhododendron trees, some 40 or 50 ft. high, with their reddish trunks and carpets of crunching leaves. The creeks are iced over higher up, the track worn deep into the hillside. .. and then a magnificent spectacle at the top of the pass and from a view point a little higher on a ridge to the south: to the west: the massive Dhaulagiri Himal; to the north: Annapurna and Machapuchare; to the NE and East, mountains flowing away from the icy himal towards a sea of clouds which lies in the lower country. Bright blue sky with a few clouds over the mountains.

We stayed a while, Sherpas and porters resting, while trekkers go a little higher for the view and their photographs. They even sing while they rest, especially Kancha the cook. If you walk behind him for the first half hour of the day, you hear him chanting his Buddhist prayers. This gives way to song later. Since he is cook, he likes to get well in front, so you can hear him singing well down the valley, particularly in the mornings. Kancha carries a back-pack with his own clothes and sleeping gear and the cook-boys, of which there are two, both young Sherpas, carry baskets loaded with cooking utensils, implements and some of the food. They cook in big aluminium pans. Other porters carry the rest of the food in their baskets.

Over the Deorali Pass one passes through a delightful conifer forest and then find they begin to mix with the huge Rhododendrons again. The pass itself is a bare ridge, covered with dried grass and , dried flowers and a few shrubs. Bob is collecting flowers for a friend of his in Canberra and each evening presses what we collect for him. There some beautiful colours, and even though this is not the season, there are lupines and a flower that looks and smells like daphnia .. and many others.

The scene around us at the moment is interesting;

..in a clearing of brownish grass, the framework of a hut on one side, near which the porters sit, cooking their lunch on their many little fires.

..on the other side the Sherpas and Sherpa porters sit around the main fire.

. Passan is rolling out chapartis with a rolling pin on an aluminium tray across his knees.

. Mingma Tsering is cutting up sheep's liver

..Kancha attending a pot on the fire;

.and others doing their bit to help, such as Tensing Gyaltsso stoking the fire under the pressure cooker;

..Pat Green sits on a rock, checking the map.,

.. while Thea Ecksly, Pat O'Leary and I write in our diaries.

Peter Rees reads his David Copperfield

and Bob Bird lies stretched out on his back in the sun;

..all around there are spruce like conifers, with Dhaulagiri beyond,
...the gurgle of the river, the sizzle of the fire, and occasional snatches of highly amusing conversation, unintelligible in Nepali and highly irrelevant in English. A crow in a tree craws quietly.. and we sit and wait for brunch;
happy and content !



Saturday 19 December ; Afternoon Entry. Sikka at 6,500 ft.,

I sit on a porters rest, of which there are now many -being on the main road to Pokhara, and look west;

LOOKING WEST..

SHADOWED HILL BEFORE ME OBSCURES THE VALLEY
BUT NOT THE MASS OF ROCK

-HUGE AND WIDE, COVERED WITH ICE , CLOUD,
SPLASHES OF LIGHT AND A SOFT HAZE
--BECKONING DHAULAGIRI.

TO THE NORTH, THE STEEP VALLEY WALL,
DOTTED WITH FARMHOUSES AND THEIR TERRACES
EACH AS PINNED LIKE A FABRIC
WHICH HANGS AS IF FROM ANNAPURNA
--ATOP OF ALL.

TO THE SOUTH, THE DEORALI PASS,
CONIFERED RIDGE ABOVE THE TOWN OF CHITRE
-STILL CATCHING SUN, THE PATH MEANDERING DOWN
-ECHOING THE FEET OF MULES , OF BELLS,
OF PORTERS, SHERPAS AND US.

BEHIND, IN A TEAHOUSE, LOCAL MUSIC MIXED WITH SHERPA LAUGHS.
THE PASSING PORTERS GREET - STOP, -AND ADJOURN
TO MAKE PREPARATIONS FOR THE NIGHT.

As well as mule trains, 20 or 30 mules with jingling bells and varied loads, we are now running into Tibetans on the road. There was a Tibetan doctor on a horse, preceded by an immaculately dressed boy, on foot, carrying a radio or tape recorder. He is from Tukche, where he is well known and very rich. He is a lama, as well as a doctor of Tibetan Medicine , which I understand is a mixture of herbals, religion and folk-lore. Pemba Tarke knows him well.

The area seems to be more prosperous. We passed a three-storied farmhouse and saw a field being plowed with two buffalo on the plow rather than one !

We have met three of four groups of an English party who have traveled by Landrover from London to Kathmandu and will return. They will also spend the night in Sikka. There is an Australian in the group, a Radiographer from Sydney who was at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. One of their party has had a bad chest infection.

The country is more open now. The sun is losing its brilliance before it leaves the hills (14,000 ft.) opposite. The whole is glowing softly, while Dhaulagiri seems to change shape as shadows appear on its face. There are cold looking clouds over by the mountains, but none over where we sit. It is very cold however.

Dhaulagiri seems to be a much more massive Himal than the Annapurna-Machapuchare group. It sits in the north-west like a massive rock, its sides steep or sheer, ..its top a blunt icy point, the white of it now turning yellow, ..like the clouds above, the gray of the rock lightening, ..the foreground ranges purpling.

We sit around the fire after supper and laugh a lot over talk of characters from films and books and with quotes from poems.

The meals are delicious and substantial. At lunch today the liver, kidney's and heart of yesterdays sheep were chopped up and fried with garlic.. delicious with chips, chapartis and omelet.

Today's Menu

Lunch: Chapartis
Liver, kidneys
Omelet
Chips
Dinner: Noodles
Meat
Vegetables
Ginger pudding
(grated ginger boiled
with milk and sugar)



Sunday 20 December 1970 ;

Morning entry: Lunch stop by the mighty Kali Gandaki
10.30 a.m.; altitude 3,800 feet.

I slept well. My left knee hurts a little with all the downhill steps, but not enough to spoil the joy of the mornings walk.

We commence the days walk through a glorious morning at 7.30 a.m. The sun reaches us soon after we start. We have lowered ourselves below views of Dhaulagiri.

...From Sikka down to Chara which is a larger town. A schoolboy says it has 1,000 people. Their houses are substantial, gathered together on the hillside and are coloured a darker shade of red ochre. not all are coloured, some are bare mud filled stone.. mostly slate roofs. .. surrounded by terraces of fields green and brown. ...there is a large school. Tensing Gyaltsso says it is new.

..round corn racks, rather than the longitudinal ones of other valleys .. more Tibetan groups on the road.. tinkling mule trains, ..monkeys in a small group of trees by a river, ..schoolboys wanting a balloon ! (they generally ask for pens or sweets)

..cheery greetings from all on the way reflect the day, ..cloudless but for over the high mountains ..a village perched high on the other side of the valley, ..a Tibetan group around a fire drinking tea from small wooden bowls, ..sale of a Tibetan calendar, ..another Tibetan with yards of dirty hair in strands wound round his head,

..passed a valley gouged out by a river, which Tensing Gyaltsso says was all terraces last time he was through, ..herd of goats shepherded by two small boys, ..the last of the four groups of English trekkers, ..a Japanese trekker, ..a Japanese group making a water supply in Sikka, after their attempt on Dhaulagiri, ..a Swedish chap with the English group in Sikka who spoke of the sadness of the new laissez-faire and anti-authority attitudes in schools and universities in Sweden, with teachers not wanting to teach without authority,

..the suspension bridge over the Kali Gandaki, ..the blue rushing water a long way below, and the little black dog from Chomro, now part of our group, had to be carried over by Pemba Tensing, ...

Sunday evening: Dana; Altitude 4,800 ft

camped on a level bank about 30 to 40 feet wide, which drops suddenly away to the Kali Gandaki, 20 feet below. It roars past continually, clear blue with white foam, there are rocks and rapids everywhere. The water is not as cold as at Killung, and a swim is very refreshing after a dusty afternoon's walk. Wider valley. Warm sun.

Today's Menu

Lunch:

Boiled potatoes

Liver

Scrambled eggs

Chapartis

We watch the comings and goings on the suspension bridge across the Kali Gandaki while we have lunch. ..many mule trains and trains of other beasts, a yak/cattle cross or zum. Pemba Tensing has these at his village Namche. They give better milk than yaks. The larger beasts were allowed on the bridge only 2 or 3 at a time. The Sherpas had all made noises approaching the cattle on the way down from the Deorali Pass

We pass many mules on the path, each with a different bell tone, some with head plumes.

..varied loads. ..sacks of salt, cooking pans, carpets.

..a lama in a yellow jacket with horse accompanies a Tibetan mule team.

..porters on foot with large baskets, held by a single band supported on their foreheads.

Brilliance of red poinsettia flowers against the intensity of the blue sky,
..nearby trees laden with huge lemons, the size of grapefruit.
..along the Kali Gandaki all afternoon. ..views through tall pampas grass to waterfalls and sky.

..Huge eagles

...effortlessly glide about the valley.

..swooping low ..some dark, some white in colour,
seeming to fly as effortlessly

as the water comes over the waterfall,

..as high as the village on the ridge,

.. as swift as the cloud rushes to meet the snow on the peak.

We pause for mandarins. The Sherpas fool around, swinging on the hanging roots of a tree, with much amusement. We pause to enjoy it all. Pause to cool and have a drink. Pause to look at what the two small shops in Tatopani have to offer. Pause just because there is no need to hurry.

We pause in Dana to have trekking permits checked and chat with a Canadian while waiting. Dana looks prosperous, a house with curtains and another with blue stained window frames. We pause to watch the large flock of sheep cross to the river for water, also tinkling.

Monday 21 December 1970

Ghasa 11 a.m. Lunch stop:

Dana 7.30 a.m. 4800ft -----> 6200 ->5800 ->6200 ft Ghasa : with much of interest on the way

The valley of the Kali Gandaki at this point is a little wider, with room for a town and fields, a pine forest of small dimensions and the river. We walked for a good two hours through a narrow part, where the steep walls drop

straight to the river bed and the river is wide and strong with a torrent of water racing from side to side. The area is more arid and at the narrowest point, no trees. ..just one or two thousand feet of rock and dry grass.

The houses; We now see the flat roofed houses typical of Tibetan custom. They are made of the same gray stone, packed with mud. The stones are laid flat, so that the walls appear to be made of rectangles of well fitting gray stone. Along the track some of the villages look poor, their houses are of mud-packed bamboo screening and matted roofs, their stone houses in ruins or disrepair. ..dogs, chickens, cattle, buffalo.. greetings called from within and without.

The traffic; goats, horses, cows, zums, zopjoks, mules, donkeys, all with loads, ..bells, ..calls, whistles, Tibetans, one girl knitting while walking along; a lama with entourage of six horses, he on a white and dressed in maroon and gold with a gold dome-shaped helmet, attended by two monks and others.

The trains of pack animals hold up progress, especially as those going up meet those going down.. confusion! .. shouting, sticks beating the woolly backsides of animals.

Salt goes down to Tatopani and corn, rice and other goods come back. They only go down as far as Tatopani because it gets too hot for the zums and zopjoks. (the zopjok is the result of a cross between a male yak and a female cow, while the zum has a yak mother.) The Tibetan zopjok is larger than its Nepali cousin. They look like hairy bullocks. The main difference seems to be the size of their heads and the distance between the roots of the horns.

We stop for a rest at a Tibetan tea-house, with nice sweet tea, drunk to the background of a monk (dressed in khaki trousers and white shirt) reading the scriptures and the accompaniment of bells from passing pack animals and the muffled roar of the Kali Gandaki River. You can sense the culture change. I was asked to help a Tibetan with urinary trouble, so I gave him antibiotics.

The sun does not reach us until 9.30 or 10, but when it did, it really warmed the day. The path is dusty, at times rocky and at times there are well made steps. Bridges vary, some steel and timber and others logs, which feel unstable, but are apparently safe.

Evening entry at Lete; 8000 ft. arrive at 4 p.m.

A very pleasant but hot and dusty afternoon. Initially we walked through the part of Ghasa which was wrecked 9 months ago by a flood or landslide. 30 people died at 7 p.m. one evening. One can imagine their smoky dimly lit houses the wet and the swollen river, when crash!!

We saw other landslides into the river bed, which we followed, several hundred feet above its roar all the time., .. through conifers and small pines, ..more Tibetans with pack animals.

There is a chang house in Lete. I tasted chang, a sour but refreshing drink from fermented rice and other grain. Inside the chang-house the floor is clean and bare, shelves with brass and copper pots,. .an inner room with fire and cooking pot; and through an arch to an open courtyard, cattle with bells tinkling.. Outside the chang-house a woman is weaving and a man sewing together finished lengths of woven cloth of good looking gray and black check. ..porters resting wall with Tibetans resting, their turquoise jewelry and their interest in the movie camera. Our Sherpas and porters all enjoyed their chang!

Lete is a long strung out village. Its meandering rough main street is 1 1/2 to 2 miles long. The campsite is a gently sloping hill with conifers all around. Annapurna is over to one side and White Peak and the Dhaulagiri ice-fall to the other, Annapurna ablaze with the red sunset . This afternoon we could see Tuckche Peak, part of the Dhaulagiri range, however we spent the morning out of sight of snow covered peaks.

I didn't have my usual swim tonight. I had to do some sewing repairs on the kit bag in which my clothes are carried by the porters.

We have a large fire to sit around .. and are well satisfied with our stew, ..all sorts of vegetables with ginger, followed by canned pineapple, mandarins and tea.

The Sherpas have gone off to the village " to buy provisions ", more likely back to the chang-house. Passang and Lakpa, the cook boys remain busy cleaning pots. The food has been excellent throughout the trek, which unfortunately is now past the halfway point.

Passang is 24 and from Kumjung. This is his first trek, but he has been with two climbing expeditions including the Japanese Everest expedition. He is not yet married. Before he can marry he must have yaks etc., which he already has, 14 of them, together with 61 sheep belonging to him back in Kumjung. He spent three years at school there (or was it three years ago, his English is not so good.)

Many thoughts run through your mind when walking. You note what goes on, what is around. You note your tiredness as you reach the top of a hill, or your fascination at the life of the people here. You note how easily the eagles soar, using the airstreams to rise high. You think of the parallel of using what is to get beyond, using reality to live, You think of music, poetry, of people, of work, of home... in other words , you live!

Tuesday 22 December 1970

Morning entry: Tuckche, 11 a.m., having left Lete at 7.30

awaiting lunch on the flat roof of a Tibetan style house, prayer flags on their long poles fluttering everywhere

..looking out over other flat-roofed stone houses,(they are larger here), ..over to the flat wide bed of the Kali Gandaki, and up to the steep foothills and snow-covered slopes of the Nilgiri Himal.

Today's trip: from Lete through pine forests down to the river, which is now flat and wide- less noise, but still a lot of water. The stony flat bed is now between half and a mile wide. We walk for an hour along the edge and then an hour or more across the bed itself, passing the many pack-teams and looking for basalt like rocks, which, when cracked open reveal fossils. Is not this unusual for volcanic rock?. At first we look for these rocks, although no-one quite knows what was desired, ..but we still look. Soon Kancha is the guide, and discovers the first imprisoned fossil, and then there are others.

Then to Larjung, crossing two log bridges, of double pine logs only. Larjung has flat roofs and a banks of Buddhist prayer wheels at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the towns long main street. The main street is through a tunnel, with the houses built over it, and cattle feeding on the upstairs levels. At the back of the town there are caves with houses built into them. Having passed through and looking back, there is a monastery on a small hill looking out over the river and the cluster of flat-roofed houses, ..the near hills with covering of pines, high snow-covered mountains at the back.



There are many "roads" up the valley, - with zums and zopjoks, mules and peoples. We wind onto the river bed and then off up a hill for the

moment, and then back to the stones and sand. Quiet pools reflect the peaks and the blue sky. In Tuckche the houses are larger, one with balconies to the upstairs windows. There is even a letter box in the main street. I will post an airletter and see what happens !



Larjung

Another day of light-hearted walking, full of interest and variation. All is dry and the trees are bare. We are at 8,000 ft. and will remain at about this level all day. From Tuckche the walk is hot, dry and dusty, with a wild south wind blowing up the valley, -funneled by Annapurna and the Nilgiris on one side and the Dhaulagiri range on the other. It is a very cold wind and one is glad to be traveling with it.



Tuckche

And so to Jomosom. A desolate looking town ! The whole region is very arid, with stunted trees and no vegetation. At Marpha, a fascinating Tibetan style village of flat-roofed court-yarded houses, an entry arch, the exterior of which is brilliantly painted with Buddhist figures, with another at the end of the long narrow paved street, there is a Chang House. The chang is very good. The inside is clean and we sit cross-legged on the floor, and drink from a standard sized glass from a beautiful Tibetan serving girl ! Near Marpha there is a Government Horticultural Research Station and they grow excellent apricots.

Jomoson looks even more desolate than the rest of this upper part of the Kali Gandaki valley. There are many military personnel since we are but 30 miles from the border with Tibet. As soon as the sun goes it is very cold. The cloud is building up. The town has a rough airstrip, at the end of which is a crashed Twin Otter (Pilot was killed, it was the King's plane.) A rambling village, with mostly Tibetan style people and houses.

We stay in an empty house, and spend a couple of hours sorting out the party's moves. The original plan was to proceed to the Nama Phu yak pastures and the Tilicho pass. Pat O'Leary and Bob Bird will not go, as this means camping at 12,000 ft. They wish for a couple of days rest and to split the party. After much discussion with the Sherpas (in which the two older men make no attempt at compromise) we decide to break the party and also to abandon the attempt on the Tilicho Pass (16,000 ft.), which everyone agrees would require several days at 12,000 and 14,000 ft. to acclimatise. We will go up to Nama Phu for one night, while Pat and Bob go down a bit and rest. All settled.

Wednesday 23 December 1970

On which we walk from Jomoson to the Nama Phu yak pastures;

A walk not really enjoyed, cold wind , all clouds, and some snow. I am not well, .. an influenza like illness combined with increasing altitude. We are climbing all day, close to the Nilgiri Himal. I have to push myself hard and crawl gratefully into my sleeping bag at 3 p.m. and fall into a deep sleep and over-night recovery.

Thursday 24 December 1970 Day 16:

a glorious sunlit day. on which yesterday's clouds, snow (powder only and not enough to settle) and ill-health have given way to good health and fine weather.

We awake to a temperature below freezing.

Warmed by the fire and with tea and porridge we set out at about 8.30 a.m., and around the first corner, there it was !

..Dhaulagiri and its encircling peaks shining white in the morning sunlight.,
the Nilgiri range yet in shadow its tops brilliant white-
not only in the sunlight
but sharp against the vivid blue of the high sky.

COLOURS....

The morning's colours ;
 Blue -sky and haze..
 White -in sun and shade, close to us here and
across the valley to Dhaulagiri
 Brown-gray -of the rock and ridges
 sometimes outlined by ice and snow
 sometimes by sun and shadow
the **Brown** of the grass covered slopes
the **Olive** of the lower conifer-covered foothills
the **Gray** of the dust on the path
occasional **White** flowers and
clumps of **Pink** coloured bushes at ground level
the contrast is great with the bright colours of clothes
Sherpas with **Red** hats
 packs **Orange,**
 Blue,
 Red
 parkas **Green,**
 Red
more packs **Yellow,**
 Red

The path is down all the way. It is a steady gradient. Not steps and rocks to climb as in the Modi valley down from Annapurna Base Camp.

As you walk, you delight at the spectacle before:

 Dhaulagiri, its glacier,
 and to the right Tuckche Peak with its fluted buttresses and its long low ridge of ice which cuts across the front of the larger Dhaulagiri to its glacier
 Nilgiri beside us - its sheer walls of rock and ice towering above, mostly yet in shadow.

We are in the sun and it is not only the sun which warms, it is the freedom of a spirit which can take in and absorb such beauty,

..such beauty as makes one rejoice with ones whole self, .. and makes one think again of the fact that we, our lives, our living, are both the offering **and** the high altar of the world..

.. of life ..growth ..change ..new contacts, new ideas,
new thoughts about things already long accepted;
..new attitudes to people, places..
..new perspectives, ..new dimensions..

..the scope is as high as the vault above,
the potential as grand as the peaks beyond,
as impossible as being here
and as real as the present moment

How far away and irrelevant seem the Christmas preparations that must be going on the world over, yet how close are those involved in them, if only they can see beyond it all.

Thursday 24 December 1970 continued
--

CHRISTMAS EVE....

In Marpha



A thoroughly delightful day...

a day of new **sounds**

the familiar whistle, song and laugh of the Sherpas
the cough and chatter of the porters
bark of dogs / rush of water / howl of the south wind up the Kali
Gandakis river valley
gurgle of water in the races that supply villages with water
or their mills with milling power
the greetings of people
tingle of bells on animal pack teams
the calls whistles of their Tibetan attendants
the footsteps, ..one's own and those of the party, muffled by the
dust, distorted by the loose stones, clipped on the stone steps
the new sounds which include the rumble of the ice fall on Nilgiri -
followed by a slow prolonged cloud of snow and dust moving as in slow motion
down the mountain sides--
the crows, chickens and other birds
-and a new note of sadness, if this be a sound, as we no longer go on,
but now begin our return. Jomoson and the Nama Phu Yak pastures were the
farthest points of our itinerary..
... add to these the sounds of Vaughn William's' "Lark Ascending" from my
cassette recorder.

We camp this Christmas Eve in Marpha, a delightful Tibetan style village
which fills the crescent shaped north side of a hill and looks north towards the
mountains of Mustang, beyond which is Tibet, .. with the Kali Gandaki audible
across the fields- ..which only have the suggestion of green colouring, each
surrounded by its stone wall, each with one two or three white stones in the
middle, markers perhaps.. ..flat roofed houses, their courtyards, the 4 or 5 ft.
wide "streets" between the houses; the main street, only a little wider; ..
traffic of zopjoks, mules ; .. women carrying water, in copper or brass urns in
baskets, .people carrying wood, or just themselves,
..bells, cattle noises, people greeting.. smells of fire, ..of chang from the
chang houses.

As evening falls you note how many of the places opening onto the street
are in fact for the traveling pack teams and their attendants. Many houses are
empty, their families have gone south for the winter. We are camped in
the local Panchayat House (equivalent to Council Chambers) and feel sleepy
after a glorious day and chicken dinner, complete with " roasted " potatoes !

This afternoon we visited a flour mill. Each village has one or more. A
water race, or small river itself is channeled past a horizontal water-wheel
above which is a platform containing the mill. With two almost round slabs of
stone, the upper one turning, the grain is fed into the central area, either from
a hopper or by hand. One hopper was kept feeding the grain by the vibration
caused by an old sheep's horn being joggled on the roughness of the turning
stone. The owner of the grain sits by and gathers the flour from the surrounds.

The noise is an uneven grating noise, with the rush of water below. Tensing Gyaltso says they are owned by the village and any villager can use them.

Around the edges of the flat roofs of Marpha and other towns hereabouts are stacked piles of fire-wood. Each house has a tall pole from which flutters a prayer flag, stiff in the Kali Gandaki south wind, which blows strong hard and cold from about 10 a.m. until 4 p.m., for six months of the year. Each prayer pole is topped with a conifer branch, the significance of which I'm yet to ascertain. In some houses in Jomosom the corner of the roof is a white painted pillar with rams horns protruding and a green conifer out on top

Chortens;

these stacks of rocks or flat stones have replaced the porters rests, They have a lower portion, three to four feet high and generally three small "towers", another two to three feet higher. On these, which are sometimes painted white or ochre, are piled mani stones, stones with messages carved on them, generally prayers. The prayers are sometimes for the dead, and the chorten may contain the ashes of the dead. One passes a chorten always to the left, that is, clockwise.

Another type of chorten is the one with prayer wheels, each one given a whirl by the faithful as they pass, again always to the left side. The cylinders, like the portable prayer wheels are stuffed full of written prayers. Some cylinders are copper, some brass and some obviously reincarnated Caltex kerosene tins ! They are in racks, shoulder high and can be turned from both sides of the chorten.

CHRISTMAS DAY 1970

A clear cloudless day of joy on the Kali Gandaki River

Christmas day begins in Marpha with a minor disturbance in the night.

An intruder opens the door of our upstairs room in the Marpha Panchayat House, quickly retreating when disturbed. Thea's reaction is to say " Happy Christmas", while Peter and I chuckle about the Marpha Christmas Murders and go back to sleep.

We sing the Christmas carols we know through the narrow paved main street of Marpha,
singing ..of shepherds in their cold fields
as we pass the our fields with their iced rivers,
..of God becoming man that man might live,
as we again become a part of life in this corner of the world,
- the life of man and animal transport,

- of the wide stony river bed, now dry, but later in next years wet season, a mile or more wide of pouring tumbling life to the arid region here and to India beyond,
- of us, our separation from the lives we know,
- our presence and response to life of another kind,
- the Christian life as a life of another kind,
 - ..of another dimension within what is
 - ..of new being within an already established way,
- a new life within an existing framework,
- I as me,

now how different than before,
yet how much the same

a paradox which is yet so simple,
such, I suppose, as Christianity,
the simplicity of love between fellow man,
the potential of its bond,
its beauty and its truth,
as man becomes what he can become,
fulfills his own potential,
his destiny to relate with fellow man
in love,
a living with the quality of love
a loving with the quality of life

It is 11.30 a.m., 2.30 p.m. in Australia and 4 a.m. in England, to fit members of the family into the picture. Peter in Eastern Nepal is no doubt enjoying a slightly different, yet in many ways similar experience at this moment. The family at home will have lunched, and will no doubt wondered what Peter and I are up to. Elizabeth is not yet awake for Christmas Day in the UK.

Peter Rees has parents who will probably spend the day with an uncle north of London. Thea Ecksly has no close relatives, -an only child whose parents are dead; and Pat Green has a father who lives with friends in Perth Western Australia. All do not thus have available a riotous family Christmas. Those who do, often forget those who do not.....

Today's walk has been a joyous one.. we have walked together, chatted, sang and shopped in Tuckche, buying rakshi (the local spirit), sweets and cigarettes etc. for a small celebration this evening. We will give these and other goodies to the Sherpas and porters, - I still have a pound or two of dried apricots and the others have bits and pieces... We will sing a bit and hope to get the Sherpas singing.

The sky is clear,
- the wind blowing hard and cold,
- the river as wide as the valley and the sides steep.
- Nilgiri is close by on our left, snow-capped and a little aloof today

- while the Dhaulagiri range is at times obscured by the hills on our right as we walk
- walking at times in the dry bed of the river, at times on the right bank...

At the moment we are in Larjung, that fascinating Tibetan style town, with its Buddhist mani chortens, temples and flat roofed houses. As I sit on the pile of firewood that forms the edge of the flat roof of a house, my back is to the temple on a small hill by the river, which stretches out to the right and the left of me. To the right, the North, from whence we have come, the hills are dry and arid. To the left, downstream, the hills are lower, less steep and covered with conifers. In front of me, as I write, is another part of the house; packed stone walls, carved wooden windows.

Beyond, prayer flags flutter stiffly in the strong south wind, - a lowish hill and then a steep rise of bare hillside rising to the icefall and Dhaulagiri itself. We are at 8000 ft. and Dhaulagiri is just over 26,000 ft. The ice fall is at 12,000 ft. and we go there tomorrow. Dhaulagiri is a fascinating generator of clouds,- .. a wisp, a plume or a puff from the top. One must look up all the time to see what offers.

The wind raises quite a dust on the river bed. Miles away you can see the ant-like teams of animals and their attendants. We passed many today; zopjoks, mules, donkeys and porters; - on their way to and from Tatopani.

Tuckche appears a more prosperous town. More people. More activity. Larjung is also more prosperous. Its most fascinating feature is the way houses are built over the main street. One has to stoop a little at times. .. dark now, and then through wooden arches, a glimpse of the temple by the river with its gold spire and squat towered roof.

On the corner of our roof small sparrow like birds flutter about on a pile of straw. A lady in the next house stacks wood on her roof. Lunch arrives. It is beans, meat from a tin, boiled new potatoes, omelet and chapartis, which we eat with jam and cheese or with lemon and sugar. The tea comes in a huge kettle. We drink it black with lemon from huge plastic mugs.. lying back and enjoying the food and the scene about,

..certainly a Christmas with a difference..

After lunch we all stretch out, the girls on the hay, Peter and I against the wall of wood. The black dog stretches out too, while far away the eagles, two of them, coast the currents, -which high up whirl the thin clouds into changing patterns.

we had only a short way to walk from Larjung, through pine forests and a couple of small farms to a delightful campsite (as most of them are !) -by a small lake, - on the western side of the valley, -with Dhaulagiri behind, mostly obscured by a high hill, ..and to the east the curved panorama of Nilgiri and Annapurna; Annapurna 1, 26000 ft., Fang, and Annapurna South.

It may be the best panorama yet and the evening colour change and sunset are so beautiful I will not try to describe... being Christmas I have some music playing, -the last movement of Mahler's 2nd Symphony my eyes are full of tears with the exhilaration of sight so new and sound so familiar, blending within me to affect my depths .. a treasured moment.....

After a delicious meal of noodles, with a cake Kancha had specially made for the occasion, we gathered the whole group and explained that Christmas is the birthday of Christ, and is to us what Lord Buddha's birthday is to them. We sang a couple of carols and then, saying that it is traditional in our country to give small gifts, gave them each some sweets, jellies, dried fruits and cigarettes, which we'd either bought in Tuckche or brought from Australia with us.

The Sherpas sang a song, we another, ..they another and so on. As they warmed up (and with Kancha's great enthusiasm .. as cook-sherpa he cooks as enthusiastically as he sings while walking or as he removes rocks from the path and so on ..) they began to dance around the fire.. ..a line of happy faces flickering in the firelight, singing to the accompaniment of the rhythm of their feet beating the ground by the large log fire.

Then they went off to eat their meal. and we crossed the creek just down the hill, by the aid of a hurricane lamp, to visit a New Zealand group of 7, whom we had passed as we walked up to the Nama Phu yak pastures. They had been up there for several days and visited the Tilicho Pass. Their group seems to be older people, in their 50's and 60's, and is led by N.Z. urologist Ian Parton. Their trip was also arranged through Ausventure. Most of them had been up to the Dhaulagiri icefall, and we didn't see them when we arrived at camp. So we went over to wish them the greetings of Christmas. They did it in style, with gin, brandy and Christmas cake. We joined them for a while and then made our way back to our camp and so to bed !

a most unusual but beautiful Christmas day,
..much beauty of scenery and action/interaction between people;
..a simple religious festival, celebrated simply,
in an environment of peace and inner joy;
..of personal freedom and geological immensity

A perfect day on which we climb to the Dhaulagiri icefall (glacier) and see how spectacular is the panorama here..
another happy day..

Arise and greet a cold morning. Day is with us but the sun yet resides behind the mountain mass to the east of us. ..warmer with a fire, tea, the remains of last night's cake and porridge. Warmer yet as we walk up, up, up and up; ..and hot as the sun pours over us from Nilgiri even though we are climbing from an altitude between 8,000 and 9,000 ft.

Yaks and naks, their herder and his hut; they are smallish animals, with curved horns, long hair and bushy hairy tail to the ground, each with a bell and a nose more like that of a dog or cat than a cow.

Climb higher ..mind in neutral awhile, ..thinking only of now, and climbing, of mountains, snow, ice and rock; of winter dryness, dry grass and dry flowers.

Through a pine forest; How close Nilgiri looks; how close Annapurna. All looks as if being viewed through a telescope all around; -above, below, behind, in front: the intensity of the blue, the immensity of the mountains and the shrinkage of the valley, its rivers and towns disappearing as we climb higher; all around is glorious spectacle.

The magnitude of the heights and distances is incredible;
the valley floor here is 8,000 ft. above sea-level
Dhaulagiri is 26,800 ft. / 8160m.
Annapurna 26,500 ft. / 8000m.
the two peaks are but 22 miles or 35 km. apart.
and we are well above the 3900 ft./ 1100m. of the river at
Tatopani....

and we climb through from about 9,000 to 13,000 or more in 4 to 5 hours or so, within it all;
and that sky ! blue clear and immense;
and it just goes on and on, as I could about all this...

The tents become miniature below and there is another lake amongst the pine trees across the river.

On the steep hill the path leaves the rhododendron forest.
The tussocks of grass are dry and yellow,
-flowers dry and white,
thistles dry and the ground dry and cold.

birds:

eagles lazily soar, - two today
crows swoop and cry their raucous crow
small swallow like birds flutter and twitter
the smaller they are , the more they seem to..

frost on the ground; snow on the hill
frozen waterfall on the opposite cliff -
not far away, ice falls from on the Tuckche ridge..
with a "boom"
and a slowly falling cloud of white, rolling, roaring.
the ice lip on Dhaulagiri seems about to fall
while the glacier tumbles
as if from the side of the mountain

We climb to the top of the grassy slope and trudge across snow. There are snow covered slopes all around and several frames of herder's huts, for summer use no doubt. We reach the point where we look right at the edge of the glacier, its bed with its frozen puddles and the moraine beyond. It cuts across the hill, so that from the valley you just see the icy part of the glacier.

Pemba Tensing, Peter Rees, Thea Ecksly and self to the upper point, Pat Green and Pemba Tarke remain a little lower with Pat not feeling so well. We stay a short while and get colder and colder, then go down to the others for lunch; ..crackers cheese and sardines at 14,000 ft. ! ..with breath taken almost completely away, not by Dhaulagiri, to whom we are so close, but by the magnificence of the panorama of the curve formed by Nilgiri and Annapurna

..a sight which must remain a memory, occurring when the film in the camera is finished..

with Pemba Tensing trudging through deep snow
in his orange pullover and red hat,
dog in black coat and
Peter in his blue coat and burgundy red balaclava
with Annapurna and Nilgiri as their backdrop.

Better to keep this as a memory, a word-picture...
even Thea's film is finished at the same point

Pemba Tensing finds a yak bell. The little dog is playful. They sing and we jolt down the slopes, quicker than ever, and it seems impossible that we went so high in one day.

As we pass the lake, it is already in shadow, but perfectly reflects the sunlit Nilgiri and Annapurna heights, shining white in the afternoon haze.

We are met at camp with a cup of juice, and then tea and the usual splendid dinner...

As I write in the evening.. the shadows creep up the ranges opposite. Nilgiri and Annapurna over there, now turning pink. I sit by a large log fire. Music plays (Vaughn William's 5th Symphony), and soup arrives.. so I will pause and may even delay writing until tomorrow. ..time goes on, but there is no hurry here

The soup is excellent. -vegetable and goes down well, - then rice, mashed potato and meat sauce, - followed by fresh mandarins and tea. We taste yak (or rather "nak") milk, which is thinner and not as sweet as cows milk. There are several herds of yak (female = nak) on the heights above us. We sit by the fire awhile and chat ..about the day, ..about things in Australia, ..ideas, ..books, etc..

and at about 7 p.m. we go to bed. Tonight , after our day's 4,000 ft. climb we are all tired and happily relaxed.

and last night was CHRISTMAS....
tired,

..and so to bed at 7 p.m., well

- but so very happy and content.

Sunday 27 December	18th Day on Trek.
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from camp below Dhaulagiri to Lete and Ghasa;

Awake to the call "Washing water ready, Sir", and peer out into the cold morning light. A blazing fire is ready and tea and biscuits are soon laid out on the small blue ground sheet near the fire. Porridge is then added, the tents packed, the porters loaded and washed, fed and feeling the early rays of the sun, we set off.. Porters, Sherpas, trekkers, porters, down the hill to the creek and past the New Zealander's camp, where clearing up also occurs; ..much shouting, calling , singing as we pass; ..no doubt good natured abuse, and much laughter amongst our and their Sherpas.

Along the creek are bits of ice and water on overhanging grass is frozen, encasing the grass in shining crystal. The frozen ground crunches.. We climb down to the wide river bed of the now familiar Kali Gandaki. Down through conifers, the sun shining on us through their needles, glowing them yellow on the way. There is a newness about the day, ..a brilliance which is matched only by the magnificence of the mountains in front and behind.

The path is dusty, but a gentle breeze soon dispels the dust. The path goes through the pines, bordered by couch grass and pine needles. We pass fields, their new crops greening the surface of the stony ground. We cut a corner across the river bed and everyone is looking for interesting stones; .. back to the bank, onto the hill where the river comes close to the western side, back to the river bed and off again. We pass a mill, fed by a water-race of

hollowed logs from a small dam on the side of the river. The mill house is of woven bamboo with a grass roof.

We pass a memorial to four Americans and two Sherpas who were killed on the Dhaulagiri Glacier on April 28th 1969. It is a "porters' rest" of superior construction with a memorial plaque.

The western bank of the river is at times in shadow, at times bathed in warm sun, - all beneath the clear blue vault. We enter Lete. We had camped here on our way up, and were now to have lunch at the campsite. Thea, with help from Tensing Gyaltsso buys a rug from a local woman; many colours, predominantly maroon, but also green, purple and black, in stripes; for 52 rupees. Local woman wanted 60 rupees. Memsahib prepared to pay 55, so offers 50. Local woman wants 2 more; the final price is 52 rupees. - about Aus \$5.50 ! The transaction takes place by the bridge, which we crossed on our way north, but did not need to cross today since we have been on the western bank of the river since Marpha, as teams of zopjoks and porters passing by.

The New Zealand group is following. We had seen them silhouetted on the skyline when we were first on the river bed. Their first Sherpas are now catching us and there is a mock battle, with laughter as ammunition, it appears, between our Sherpas and theirs.

Lete is a strung-out town, spread along the track, which now swings away from the river, and is about two miles long from end to end. The houses are mostly flat roofed, while some have the pitched slate roofs reminiscent of the Nepali houses we'd become accustomed to earlier in the trek;

a woman weaves
chickens walk across her work, she worries not
a cobbler mends shoes
sitting on the floor of his low open fronted shop
some excellent looking shoes hanging from the rafter
smoke comes from a cooking fire at the back
a man squats, looking on
the Sherpas buy potatoes from a woman..
it is a chang house that sells potatoes.

We stop for lunch, and meet with the two of the party who had wanted to rest rather than go to Nama Phu.....

....Pat O'Leary and Bob Bird are the two older members of the group. They have rested and washed all their clothes. They don't say much, but then they don't appear to ever say much, except to complain a little about the food or worry a little about the day ahead, They are bachelors, Civil Servants, who are probably fairly set in their ways and find it not easy to adapt to our nomadic ways. (the reference to civil servants is purely descriptive, ..I have always been one myself !) Pat does not particularly like the food and Bob understood that there would be a rest day every five days. They sometimes

complain that we go too fast and rush through the villages, yet they are the ones who get to the camp spots first. However they are enjoying the trek, especially now they've had a couple of days to get all their washing done. As for me, I am enjoying being dirty! My denim shorts will be as stiff as an over starched garment before long. Peter observes that they are good examples of why one should get married, to prevent the development of selfish non-caring attitudes and to maintain pliability, which comes from having to be concerned for another or others.

The party is now reunited. Washing is now a private joke amongst the four of us who went to the heights. We sit together by their fire and then in the sun. Omelet, beans, chips and chapartis, amongst the pines.

Then on through Lete, past the Chang House where they've been weaving a rug for me, which is complete and has gone to Tatopani, where I'll get it tomorrow. Along the paved path, Annapurna framed by the stone houses and their overhanging flat eaves and the strings of orange flowers (now dead) which so often stretch across paths and bridges; ...with the light still behind the mountains, Annapurna 1, Fang and Annapurna South really stand out -beautiful beyond words.

Out of Lete, down the hill. Zopjoks and mules ringing along. "Namastay" to their attendants. We cross the bridge over the Lete Khola and up the other side. The path is still iced over just beyond the bridge. It doesn't get the sun. Rise a little and rest on a rock, reluctant to turn away from the scene.

..it is another curve of mountains;
Dhaulagiri, its glacier and Tuckche Peak;

I sit and just look...

The Glacier seems to pour motionlessly through a gap in the range.
The right side of that gap rises slowly to Tuckche with its large areas of snow.

The Kali Gandaki tumbles down, as if from a hole in a near hill,
and further round we now see Nilgiri, end-on,
presenting quite a different picture.

Tibetan boys carrying baskets offer Tibetan coins.
I pause, look and enjoy... reluctant to turn away.

Several of the New Zealand group arrive and we move on together, commenting on the lingering feelings we all have. We turn and go on.

Yes, I reflect, I turn and go on, in more ways than one. This trip is a turning point for me, particularly career-wise.

I'm reminded of this as I chat with an Auckland Periodontist by the name of Whikham. He is enthusiastic about my plans and my motives. He warns

about expecting short-term results and of the hazards of being an innovator. How glad I am that I expect these problems; -and regard working within these difficulties as a challenge.

We seem to have many points of agreement...such as
Affluence breeding dishonesty and complexity
The importance of attitudinal change
Motivation, not only in learning, but also in preventive medicine.

He feels there are four factors in maintaining good health.

1. weight control
2. regular exercise
3. preventive measures e.g. cigarettes etc.
4. stress.

He considers that the first three factors can be attended to people themselves.

I said I would put "stress" first as something people can change, contrary to Whikham's view that this is fixed. I believe that it relates to our attitude to realities. Our attitude or approach make or break the stresses. If we treat reality as a problem, reality becomes stress. Acceptance, and the conversion of so-called liabilities into assets, will so often make a problem into a stepping stone, stress into a solution. We talk of positive attitudes and people deserving the reactions they have to things, of optimism, rather than pessimism, - of action, rather than idle chatter, - of a positive, rather than a negative approach, - of integrity and honesty with self, with motives and with other people.. all sounding idealistic, yet all conversions of stress into more useful energy !

..of showing that something can be done, rather than just telling others that it ought to be done.. This is what my project must be.

We also talked a bit about Medicine in the community, about splitting the monolithic institutions and scattering the fragments out into the pond, to work where the work is. We talked about the attitudes of people and the need for simplicity in our approach to people and their problems..... such is the effect, I suppose, of the sheer beauty within which we wander about, -we see it translated in human terms. I hope we will translate it.

We pause outside Ghasa at a porters rest.

We stop talking to enjoy Nilgiri;
gray, white, - but really blue, ahaze with the afternoon. Even the conifers and the brown-grassed hills look blue this day. ..plus blue smoke from a distant grass fire;
blue the colour of the moment
to be breathed in -taking the breath away

to be enjoyed -taking all words away
to be part of..
the depth of man floating beyond....

We camp at Ghasa before three; a shower under the waterfall.. very cold; tents by the gurgling water, the N.Z. group camped across the creek.

Cold night.. fire, then most welcome sleeping bags

*Another great day
a day of stretch for the simple man...
increasing the distance
between his height and his depth*

Monday 28 December Ghasa to Dana
--

We continue along the river, now in a narrow valley and then as a series of cataracts, dropping in altitude as we do, only with more noise and more spectacle.

Just before Dana, we cross a bridge over a narrow gorge and around the corner tumbles an immense volume of water;

amazing water
returning to the ocean whence it came
seen and gone, replaced by another torrent

soft to touch
when still it softens man's mind with reflection
powerful in turbulence
destructive with volume too great
but part of a cycle
absorption/resorption/evaporation and condensation

a cycle of which Man is a part
and too these mountains
their trees, their valleys,
the sea and the sun.

I talk with Jim Josephson, an Australian from Cremorne, a computer consultant, who is with the New Zealand group. He was previously not a bushwalker, but thinks he has been converted. He says beware of computer assisted instruction as it is at the present. Although it is may be better than some existing instructional methods, it is not as good as it could or will be.

Presently computers are programmed to solve problems, not to teach people to solve problems. We need better techniques of involving people, -- interaction. But then we also need to develop this in the field of Human Relations as well, -INTER-ACTION.

The drop in altitude to Dana brings with it change. The re-appearance of buffalo, pitched roofs, both thatched and slate, and poinsettias, which seem to be more brilliant red than before. The terracing of the steep hillsides returns. Orange pumpkins in rows on roofs and verandahs. People washing.

In Dana there are huge trees laden with mandarins and others with huge lemons, neat Government buildings and a veterinary hospital with a horse being attended to in the front yard.

On the Way..

Bells of mules and zopjoks
cries of their attendants
whistles
chicks chirping,
from under upturned baskets, in houses, on the path.
crunch of feet; clatter of kicked stones
roar of water
even the man on the white horse tinkles as he passes

"Namastay" "Namastay"

Thankyou with eggs, from a Tibetan treated on the way up
creek of wooden bridges
plaintive bleat of buffalo calf
equally plaintive bleat from a young Canadian
who can't have found what he is looking for
dogs barking
roar of rushing water
Laughter of Sherpas

"Namastay" "Namastay"

all to contrast with that inner silence of happiness
absorbing all like a sponge,
drifting from step to step.....

We stop for lunch half way through Dana, amongst the sand and rocks of the river which runs through the town.. I sit, my back fitting the concavity of a warm rock.....

Annapurna South looms above
a near still hill lies in front,
its lower part terraced and holding clusters of houses

Splashes of red; the poinsettias
Clumps of green; the bamboos and trees
Long shadows of , and on the steeper parts

Pampas and bamboo stick out from the hill we are on,
catching the morning light,
as the water race catches the water for the mill
with its stone platform, woven bamboo roof
and irregular grinding sound.

Women getting water in large copper pots
Sherpas cooking lunch with much laughter and talk
Mule team crossing the river, tinkling on...
porters making their lunch on their own fires

Women washing clothes in a nearby stream
Sun shining hot. No wind, no cloud.
Children watching, others playing
trekkers waiting.... relaxed with joy
Lunch is good. (Pancakes, eggs, chips and large mugs of tea.)

It is an easy day with Tatopani not far away. A slow relaxed pace,
pausing, absorbing, drifting, losing oneself and moving amongst the life of this
part of the Kali Gandaki , its colour, its sounds, on towards Tatopani.

A slow pace through the colour of the afternoon

chocolate brown of buffalo
white of snow on mountains
orange of mandarins many
green of their and other trees
yellow of large lemons
red of poinsettias everywhere

off-white of pampas waving
gray stones; on the road, the houses
gray of the rock of the mountains
blue intensity of the sky
blue in tones of gray in the river
white where the rocks disturb the flow

yellow, red, blue, gray, sack-black
of the loads on porters backs
brown woven sacks on backs of mules, zopjoks and
goats
black of dog on path
orange hat on the porter we refer to as red-socks
red socks on Sherpa legs

orange brown of turning leaves
dark reds and dirty drabness of Tibetans' clothes
multicolours of shawls and blankets on passers by

colourful clothes,
colourful people

many colours of the wedding party near Tatopani

browns of dried grass on the hills
soft blue haze of the afternoon
multi-colours in small shops
warm-brown of the hot springs adjacent to the
cool-blue of the Kali Gandaki
green, yellow and blue tents

purples of the hills in shadow
which highlight the pink of Nilgiri's sunset
birds, butterflies, insects, animals,
people,

all colour
the colour of life

I buy a hand-woven cummerbund in Dana at a place where they spin and weave, for 15 rupees (\$1.50). I walk some more with Jim Josephson, the Sydney man with the New Zealand group, which is doing the same stages as our group today. We talk of the importance of awareness, the awareness that a trip like this brings, mysticism within the structure of society now, without having to withdraw.

Walking and not always talking; soundless pauses to see and to be aware; ..sun catching the pampas; ...eagles gliding;poinsettias against Annapurna and the high village of Narcheng, which at 6500 ft. perches on a steep hill that falls straight to the valley floor, the roaring river and us, at between 4,000 and 4,5000 ft.; ...ferns, spider webs; ...grasses, pampas by the path; ..two tunnels through the rock; ..poinsettias; ..people; ...colour; ..a wedding party, with bride and groom with rice stuck to their foreheads, women sitting round while men indulge in a game of sorts, tossing coins in a circle on the ground; ..a lemon tree with its bright yellow fruits as a foreground to a view of the Nilgiri peaks; ..a rice paddy; a shaded overhang on the path, cool and beautiful with maiden-hair ferns and fine bamboo;pausing to look back at how the valley here provides a symmetrical frame for the end on view of the Nilgiri Himal, which now rises to the north. We have followed it down from Jomoson, always on our left.

We arrive at Tatopani at about 2.30 p.m. Tato-pani is Nepali for hot water and there are three hot springs here. Our camp is in a field by the Kali Gandaki river, 50 ft. below us, close by one of the hot springs, which is

adjacent to the river. Peter and I soak for a while in the warmth of the hot muddy pool. I then plunge into the cold (icy!) river; ..very refreshing ! and back to the hot pool. The sun is warm enough to dry me. Pat O'Leary and Bob Bird take one look at the pool and make for the river for their evening wash. Villagers join us in the pool, while others wash clothes at the outlet point. Tatopani is the changeover point for trading of the salt and other Tibetan goods brought down on the zopjoks, mules and goats, which are exchanged for corn, rice and other commodities. The zopjoks find it too hot further south, and their loads are taken on by carriers on foot, mules, donkeys or horses. Their loads are carried in woven brown bags, one either side of a bamboo sort of saddle. (One wonders for how many centuries they have been doing it just like this.)

Being a trading centre, there are several well stocked but small open fronted shops. The merchant sits cross-legged on the floor, his wares stacked neatly on shelves that rise from floor to the low ceiling all around him; biscuits, pens, ink, books, soap, sweets, cotton cloth, batteries, tea, hair-pins, ..all sorts of things. He has sacks of flour and other grains on the lower floor of the house and probably lives with his family upstairs. One shop even had canned beer and the others bought some for 7 rupees a can (about 70c Aus.) Thea bought two of the brown woven sacks used to carry the loads on the zopjoks, still with the remains of their most recent load of salt, to make into cushions. I pick up and pay for the rug woven for me in Lete (40 rupees or \$4 Aus.) Pat Green was unable to find the white scarf she was looking for.

We return to the camp for tea and crackers with jam.

..and then patients begin to arrive; a child with chronic infection, given Penicillin and some advice about diet; Kancha, with eye trouble, given eye drops; Pemba Tarke, with sore feet, rubbed with liniment; a man with an angry looking hand, which had a large shiny abscess, which I lance with a scalpel blade, with immediate relief of the terrible pain as soon as the pus was released. His gratitude is such that he wants immediately to give me the lump of turquoise he has on a string around his neck. With Tensing Gyaltsso's help I work something out and I accept the gift, and he accepts 50 rupees as my part of the deal. What great relief one can provide by simply letting pus out ! What a treasured bit of turquoise.

Today's Menu

Dinner:

Chicken
Roast potatoes
cabbage
stewed fruits

tea and fruits

To bed early because of the long day ahead.

We are up at 6 a.m. for a day of climbing the path to Gorakpani. We say farewell to the group of New Zealanders, who are camped back through the village. Women are washing and the shops are already open at 7 a.m.. We cross the river, over the swinging suspension bridge. The river is a peculiar light blue colour. There is not enough room on the bridge for two parties to pass, so three donkeys go back.

Around a corner, across the Ghatta Khola, we begin to climb. The path is mostly steps and rises quickly. It is a high hill. Our backs are to the mountains and we look toward the sun, where spread out on a gentler slope are the green fields, terraces and orchards, not in formal rows like ours, but as groves of mandarin trees by the houses. Over on the far ridge, hazy because of the morning sun, is Ghara, its neat red houses.

A fleet of bobbing birds swoop and rise
swoop and rise and bob past.

Looking back the steep walls of the Kali Gandaki valley disappear behind each other. You can see where they go, but the river itself is well out of sight, well below our view. Nilgiri is half obscured. Dhaulagiri presents only Tuckche Peak as a fragment above a wide hill and Annapurna is a white peak only which peeks through a cleft in the steep hill opposite. The rest is obscured by the hills closer to us.

Still the steepness of the hills is their most amazing feature. The one opposite is really steep with the green/brown of the dried grass and terraces, like sheets of bright green corrugated cardboard tacked to a wall; ..patches of brighter green, the new crops, finely striped with horizontal lines into terraces, ..zebra like, or like the gathering of smocked cloth, finely gathered and hung here from village and there from a ridge, ..pinned to the wall by a now minute stone farmhouse (no doubt with its stone roof, its now ripening pumpkins, its corn-rack and its multi-coloured chickens) ..the village itself dribbling down the ridge like icing off a cake.

In the morning we pass Nepali children going to school. The way is a stepped path, ..up and down; ..again the horses, donkeys, bells, mules, bells, cattle, village folk and people washing. We meet again the Tibetan lady with the bad knee, carrying her load up the hill... I suspect her limp worsens as she sights me, but she is as grateful as before for liniment rubbed in.

The houses in Ghara are mostly stone, and many have their walls covered with what I suppose to be mud of some sort, but here it is a deep red colour rather than the ochre of elsewhere. Down the hill there is a an imposing three-storied place, with a neat pillared verandah and well stocked corn-rack.

It is a very pleasant town and sits well on the side of the hill, the greening fields all around and the activity within the town and its several shops.

We lunch now by a porters-rest, a neat stone construction with a ledge at the right height for the porters baskets to rest, .. they generally detach themselves, leaving the baskets perched on the ledge while the porters themselves squat to smoke or rest.

On a grassy bank by a gurgling stream
looking through the tall trees to the scene beyond
we sit in the warm sun
being melted lazy,
Leaves drift down from the tall trees
while monkeys amble across the fields
and birds circle high with the utmost ease.

On to Sikha: The path meanders through the town which is well stretched out. Initially it seems to wind around individual houses, their buffaloes in the yards, children in the doorways.. clean mud-floored houses.. "Namastay" .."Namastay".

At the dispensary we talk to a German nursing sister, who is normally at Beni, but has come here to pack up for the sister who had hepatitis and had to be carried to Pokhara; ..four days it took! This girl has been in the area for three years of five year term with a British based Christian missionary group which also runs the Pokhara Hospital. The diseases they encounter include Tuberculosis in many forms. They find it difficult to treat because of the non-acceptance of the drug regimes. There is some Leprosy down the valley, intestinal parasites, amoebic diseases and at this time of the year, a lot of pneumonia. Down at Beni they do forceps deliveries for difficult childbirth, but nothing more elaborate. Now that there is no sister at the dispensary, the town people still have a Government employed "compounder", trained to give simple remedies. The problem is that there are insufficient drugs. Apparently he does not do any public health work education. There is a Japanese group in Sikha, remnants of their Dhaulagiri expedition, with some extras, who have put in a water supply system and are now working on some carrying device to get loads up the hill. Their house is near the school, the next hill from the dispensary.

We wait awhile, amidst the mixed sounds, of radio and Nepali music from a chia house, a boys volleyball game in the school yard, a smaller boys' game of ball on the path which is narrow and between waist-high stone walls at this point, ..with overhanging trees. Behind it all, as a backdrop, is Dhaulagiri, which we now see because we are much higher; We sit and watch.... Two old men also sit, seemingly unaware of the throb of youth. Soon all is added to by the bells of a mule-team entering the scene and passing through (like a thread that links us with other purposes) The Sherpas are within the house of the Japanese group with their Sherpa friend, no doubt toasting the day.

As we climb through the afternoon, from Sikha to Chitre and beyond, Dhaulagiri spreads itself out before us, framed by stone farmhouses and terraced green fields. It is so much more massive as we see more of it, spreading to the west.

..green fields, stone houses, ..washing brightly spread on stone walls, ..distant masses of ice, rock and magnificent peaks, ..it again is almost too much. What reluctance there is to turn away ! What reluctance there is to even write about it, knowing how pathetic words are when one has breathed, felt and taken in this scene. It is now a part of me, ..and I suppose I of it, ..its beauty, its permanence shared.

a vivid memory;

a steep part of the path
donkeys coming down
.. they zig zag
and seem to go in all directions at once
as if through a maze..
their plumages bobbing
bells jingling
hooves clattering..
while the sun shines
through the dust they've made

We climb towards the Gorakpani Pass. We meet the Ausventure group of 15 and all agree we are glad we are only 6 !

We camp among tall mossy rhododendrons, with a big fire and lots of lethargy.

Dinner is noodles and fruit, followed by rakshi and a freshly baked cake, which the Sherpas say is for Nepali New Year. (I don't recall this being the time of year for either Sherpa or Nepali new Year, so it may have been just an excuse for a celebration. It is a great cake. Kancha names the "peaks" of the cracked top.. "this one Annapurna, this one Dhaulagiri, this one Machapuchare.. He then cuts it as we sing "happy new year to you" and "for they are jolly good fellows" as still steaming slabs are passed around.

Wednesday 30 December Gorakpani, the pass, 9,000 ft. to Birethante, 3,300 ft.,

the day of the big descent, or the day of many steps !

THE RHODODENDRON FOREST

Yellow early and later seeming blue
shafts of light permeate the path
through the huge gnarled rhododendrons
past conifers - scraggy and tall

In front, the moss hangs luminous yellow
behind, green brown and mysterious
the trunks dark curved and arching

Ferns and fallen leaves cover the ground,
colours, the red of leaves on low bushes
brilliant through the sun,
 crimson of small flower,
 green gold of leaves back-lit,
 olive greens in shadows

Furry light of outlined trees,
cold and white of frost patches,

all seems light within the dark forest
light feet, light head, light near and beyond,
light, diffuse or dappled, - always there

Daphne bushes, rhododendrons huge,
vines and mosses, ice on ground,
a path winds along, down and down,
hushing those who wander there
 subduing all , in the subdued morning light

and then you come out of the rhododendron forest, cross some lovely small rivers and look down a long valley, again steep-sided, but not as steep as on the other side of the pass. The sides are terraced, some fields are green, others yellow-brown stubble, the larger fields indicating the more gentle slope.

Immediately you are conscious of the fact that the high mountains, which have dominated the scene and forever drawn our gaze for the last three weeks , are no longer there.. We are now looking south,;
 yet in a while, around a corner,
 there it is, over to the left as we move east..
 a white cone sitting on a near ridge ..

Machapuchare
..white and afar,
yet as close as I feel to myself, the path, the forest, the people...

We meet interesting travelers on the way today:

9 Tibetans who have been schooling in India, now going to Mustang to see their parents, whom they hadn't seen since leaving Tibet when the Chinese took over 7 years previously. One of them asks "What advantage is there for you to go here?" .. the direct approach!

an American, his wife and two daughters, lunching by the way. He is the administrator of the Shanta Bhawan Mission Hospital in the Kathmandu valley. They have been there for seven years and like living in Nepal very much and find it hard, in fact not yet possible, to go back to life in the US. The two daughters, who are at college in the US. say how grateful they are to have been brought up in a place like Nepal. They both declare they "want to marry a poor man, because they value simplicity". He notes the simplicity of life in Nepal and tells of Nepalese who had served in Gurkha Regiments and tasted life in London and Europe, who have returned to their simple village ways, saying that the other way of life has nothing to offer. He notes that they are not within any power structure or power struggle. The Government of Nepal does not allow direct evangelism, but seems to welcome medical and other community service work. Their hospital consumes vast sums to keep it going. The man felt that they may have to divert their attention to more basic things such as Health Education and Public Health measures including water supply, vaccinations, etc. . The diseases they deal with include Polio, Tuberculosis in all its variations, amoebic intestinal disease. There is much paediatrics and Hepatitis amongst the foreigners. He agreed with Darwa Norbu's comments about too many schools and the need to think more about the type of education that would be most appropriate for this place. The family are on a holiday, just looking around.

an Australian couple on their way home from Europe. Three months on the road. She looked a little "jaded", but I could understand why when we get to the bottom of the hill they've just ascended.

a US. couple with their two children, who have been in Nepal for nine months. He is teaching Public Administration. They are from Montana in the US. and like Nepal very much.

We have lunch above Ullerei. Huinchuli, which is part of the Annapurna Himal, sits in front of us, framed by the nearer steep hills. Down the valley sits Tirkhe, a largish village, surrounded by extensive terraces. A large tree nearby serves as the launching pad for dozens of crows, which circle all around. Ullerei has many rounded houses with thatched roofs. Good lunch. Excellent pancakes.

Full of pancakes, we jolt on down a couple thousand feet to the river, ..up a little and then down , ..more level by the river, which is flatter now, with large inviting pools; ..monkeys by the path, fields of stubble, some rice. well constructed water-races to mills; .. a buffalo kill.. the meat being shared into 15 or 16 equal sized portions.

We stop for chia (sweet milky tea in a glass). Porters pass. Mules go by. Locals call in. .. monkeys in the trees.. ..bright coloured fowls, banana trees and the balmy feel of the lower altitudes. We heard ducks, but did not see them.

It's good to be alive and in the Himalaya
The mountains high take the eye
beyond that which fascinates and surrounds
beyond and back, ..-to feel a part.
The trees so near and the white peaks so far
make perception something real
while this awareness is its reality

Arise in the bright morning, crisp and cold,
climb the path and walk down the forest
towards the morning sun

Thursday 31 December Birethante to Sarangkot
--

Birethante is an interesting village, with an air of prosperity and activity. A paved main street, which is at times wide and at times as narrow as the footpaths we have become accustomed to. Shop people sit cross-legged on the floors of their low open-fronted shops, ..of which there are many here .. a tailor sewing, ..a family planning poster, .. men sitting around chang or chia houses.

The town is at the junction of two rivers, and we are now back to the Modi River, which we first met at Larjung and then followed to Chomro and up its narrow valley to the Annapurna Sanctuary, its source.

We camp in the vacant fields just through the town. I'm much refreshed by a dip in the river. It is amazing how much warmer it is down at this level. The lamp after dark attracts many insects. I spend some time mending the kit bag in which the porters carry most of my gear. It was bought in Sydney before we left. A bad buy, some of it has been almost completely re-sown.. Poor Peter, I gave him one of the same. He must be cursing me now.. In my back-pack, I carry my cameras two, film used and unused, my tape-recorder and a water bottle containing boiled water, to which is often added a squeeze

of fresh lemon at lunch-time; a waterproof anorak and my medical kit in case something happens on the way. Generally I drape my still wet towel across the top and perhaps not yet dried socks on the outside; ..during the morning I'll add my wind cheater, which starts the day's march on, ..but is soon discarded.

Thursday's path climbs out of Birethante, after the usual waking cry from Passang " water ready sir!" ..a pan of hot water and 6 bowls for washing, tea biscuits and porridge.

Up a thousand feet or so between two jingling mule-teams, the path at times rocky, at times steps and at times just a narrow path. A swaying suspension bridge is crossed first, superior to the log high above the rushing water at Landrung, but not as secure or steady.

We pause at the top of the steepest part. Three valleys seem to meet below us., all liberally scattered with villages, high and low. The ones just below us must be near red clay. They nestle red in the green .. the fresh bright green, of young wheat fields.

Houses round, houses square
Houses thatched and slated
Some high, imposing
Others spare
Corn, haystacks
Cows, buffalo
Pigs and piglets
Some without, some within;
Piglets alone
Ducks on a pond
Chicks and colourful hens;
Calves, puppies
Small black goats
And the children
Everywhere children;
Women weaving
Men carving
Building houses
Adzing doors
Merchants cross-legged waiting
some selling assorted wares
Clients drinking chia
Tailors seated on floors
Of open fronted shops, sewing;
Women washing.
Men carrying bamboo, baskets,
boxes, bundles, slates;
Women carry baskets too and babies
Dogs, travelers;
Men old and young

All seem in harmony
Making music of the poem
That unfolds as day wears on
Music
Which involves the whole

The upper part of that valley, stretching away to the left as I look south, seems to be treed, .. with a single large incongruous English looking leafless tree on the skyline. The main river valley goes south and looks hazy and soft under the low thin cloud.

On rising we see for a while Machapuchare wreathed in wispy cloud, reaching up to catch the morning sun, obscured later as the clouds become more solid.

We pass through a village or two, and then proceed through the green wheat around Lumle, having journeyed along the ridge. Lumle is at 5,000 ft., and we are 1,600 ft. above Birethane. On the way to Lumle we meet a US. couple who have been in Australia for three months.

Lumle is a village which immediately appeals, attractively nestling on the side of a hill into its bed of green wheat and bearded barley, -with an air of prosperity; ..substantial houses, mostly with slate roofs, but some thatched; ..neat rows of pumpkins, good sized hay-stacks and full corn-racks; ..colour from marigolds in gardens and the ochre colouring of the lower parts of some houses, their upper parts being white; banana trees.

Lumle has well paved paths and its shops look well stocked. Nearby is a vegetable garden. The Sherpas say it is British. The village's backdrop as you look back, is a terraced valley, hazy and shadowed by the low cloud.

We stop for lunch 15 minutes beyond Lumle and enjoyed the good bread baked by Kancha our Sherpa cook.

Then on up, and down a bit, but mostly yet up to Khare at 5,600 ft., and over the watershed into the upper reaches of the Yangadi River, the river we followed on the first two days of the trek. To the west the valley is wide, .. and sweeping down to the south one can see the lake by Pokhara, Phewa Lake, with the Sarangkot ridge to one side and round to the east the Yangadi..

This country has breadth as well as height. ..and it is just as breathtaking ! In the afternoon light, sunning intermittently, shafts of sunlight slope down onto range after range of hills , progressively diluted by haze and distance.

We rest in Naundanda (3,800 ft.,) and the clouds part for long enough to see how close and high Machapuchare is.

The trek is now near an end. I feel different, very fit and tanned, bit inwardly different; I know not how, but why, yes! I am conscious of this today as I walk along.....

Friday 1 January 1971

NEW YEARS DAY

A new day. A new year.

We wake on the ridge amongst the clouds. All is haze and cloud, but for a lightening in the east, pinkish in the morning ; the lake melts with it

It is sad to hear the " if only....", " if only it wasn't cloudy, how beautiful it would be ... "; " if only the haze wasn't there, how good it would be..." ... and to hear reality made into an " if only.. " commodity. Haze and cloud is the morning. The mountains **are there**, beyond, **..our mountains**, ..obscured only temporarily; ..they are there now and will be when we are gone. ..so will be their clouds. If only we could all look at both sides of the clouds, ..but that's man's reality I suppose, ..some would have it other than it is , rather than as well.....

We climb at first to the temple on the ridge ..a Nepali Temple at which they sacrifice chickens. We have glimpses only of snowy peaks through gray stationary clouds. On the other side, range upon range of hills look like cardboard cut-outs, - each painted a different shade of blue; ..from dark to light, finally merging with the haze, the distance, the clouds and the sky... All become one. All is soft, softened by the lack of light, by the haze itself....

Patches of blue appear. Patches of sunlight on distant hills follow. The blue grows, ..the clouds roll up into magnificent woolly balls ..and progressively fold back, at first in the south so that we are in the sun walking along the ridge; and then in the north, so that by the time we reach the fort at Sarangkot, an ancient rectangular stone area atop a hill, the Annapurna range is revealed.

It is a, or is it the ? ..most magnificent panorama
it all looks so close... and is !
it feels so immense... and is !

What a day for our last, and to have seen both the hazy cloud and the cleared magnificence gives us glimpses of the differences weather can make. It is again as if we look at the mountains with binoculars, while at the same time looking at villages through reversed binoculars, the two simultaneously.

Henje is laid out in ochre brown below; the river by which we camped on our first night, blue gray with splashes of white where it rushes over or through piles of rock; the terraces and fields look like etchings on the hills

while patches of new wheat add colour. The clouds now roll in slow motion just below the snow-line on the range.

From near the Gorakpani Pass I had thought the Dhaulagiri Himal looked more massive, but this is so much more ! ..perhaps because these are so close; ..perhaps because it is today !! I remember, early in the trek, thinking how each day was almost too much, each new spectacle as much as one could take.. how far things have gone since then. We sit in the fort at Sarangkot, reluctant to move.

We say "raamro". The Sherpas agree.

**Birds sing
Sherpas sing
Singing from the depths of me**

**Sun shines
Mountains shine
Shining from the depths of me (....is the feeling within**

We lunch just below the ridge. All the team is buoyant. The Sherpas and porters are nearing base. It's all jokes and games now.

The morning sees buffalo; a bright blue bird, almost turquoise, by a water-hole; pigs and chickens; round thatched houses; -distance, -height, -depth, -breadth; wheat, poinsettias, bougainvillea, bamboo with larger leaves and thick stems; a memory of the sun as a white ball through cloud framed by the graceful curve of a bamboo stem; children going to school; a blacksmith hammering an axe while a small boy works the mechanical bellows; women washing clothes, fetching water in their large brass jars.

Peter Rees' comment on the party's small black dog; " He's pretty good on pigs. He took on one four times his size and chased him right through the village. "

HEIGHTS

Soaring to the clouds
Soaring happiness
Of freedom and peace
Welling up from within

After lunch a steep descent through a forest, straight down the ridge, to the lake. We pass several leafless trees with crimson flowers and these emphasise the softness of the lake's blue and that of the hills beyond. We cross the lake-side paddies to the lake's edge; buffalo, cattle, women carrying

wood or grass, men in rough dugout canoes. The water looks deep and the hills fall steeply to the lake-side. We pass a man with a large fish.. 2 ft. long or more; poinsettias, large arching trees, and ochre covered houses with thatched roofs.

Soon we come across poles with electric wires ! How strange! Then a jeep.. even stranger !! Along the lake we meet more people and a group of women cracking stones with hammers for a new road. We pass the residence of the senior Government official and this is where the King stays when he comes to Pokhara.

We reach the campsite, which is right on the lake edge. Looking up to its northern end, back to the Sarangkot hill, now looking so far away, yet so very much part of today, we see a succession of ridges dipping into the lake. There is a small dam across a narrow part of the river which creates this expanse of water. Its colour is a most beautiful deep blue-green.

<p>Saturday 2 January 1971 a day in Pokhara on which the plane does not come..</p>
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I set off early in the morning to visit the Mission Hospital at the other end of the town. I pass some government buildings, the Indian Nepal Road construction offices, houses ochre with painted symbols and thatched roofs, to larger brick houses, looking very old - 2 and 3 stories high, with their small carved windows and no glass. The day is dull (weather-wise) and the town stirring. By the time I reach the real shopping area the day's trading is in full swing. Food shops and drapers, colourful with their bolts of cloth; tailors, watchmakers, mixed stores; vegetables and spices; pots and pans;; delightful urn shaped brass and stainless steel containers, kettles, ironmongery hanging out on display. I saw a man selling a kettle by weight. Some Tibetan women making carpets; Shops cooking; Chia houses; Books and stationary, Blacksmiths; every variety of commercial activity. People wander the streets, some on bicycles, occasional motor-bikes, some cars (generally landrovers) and trucks, also bullock teams, two to a cart.

It is strange how different the town seems now, after the trek. I seem to be aware of so much now ..there seems to be so much more life, so much colour, even though it is a cloudy day.

To the Hospital, a white building with a string of prefabricated galvanised iron huts, semi-circular in cross section, which house the 45 medical beds, 45 surgical beds, dispensary and operating theatre, each in a separate building.

I had gone there to leave the excess medicines, anti-biotics and the like which I had with me on the trek. I meet firstly Dr. Turner, an Englishman, who says he has been here " on and off " for 14 years and feels very much at home in Nepal. He looks after the Medical wards and Out-patients. There is another part of the hospital, near the airstrip, which looks after patients with Leprosy.

They have a surgical unit there which does re constructive surgery. They seem to have several doctors. Their problem is a lack of nurses, combined with the difficulty of training local people. They have a tutor sister who is trying to do something about this. However the Government of Nepal does not recognise their training. The Pharmacist is a Kerry Warboys, a girl from Sydney who studied Pharmacy with an old friend of mine, Sue King. She was traveling on the ship that Sue was on when she met Roger Tonkin, who she later married. I had coffee and talked with Kerry about the problems she faces; difficulties with transport of drugs and supplies -people loading trucks find it quicker to load salt and that means more loads per day. Thus they load salt rather than medicines.

The term for staff is 5 years, with 1 year for deputation work (fund raising, often for their own support) They belong to an inter-denominational international group . They worship in the Nepali church on Sundays and have their own service in the evenings, with Bible Study weekly. Their Nepali pastor is at the moment in prison, it being an offense to cause a person to change their religion. To belong to the UN., she says, Nepal must allow freedom of religion, which it allows by insisting that every one is free to follow the religion of their fathers. Christians have to be careful about even giving away literature, ..it must be sold. There was another Pastor who had to go to India to escape imprisonment.

It seems that these people are better to practice their Christianity in the way they are doing now, - showing concern for the sick, -without the encumbrances of organised religion. However Kerry pointed out that there is much aid coming into the country and that it should be possible to identify it and its motivation. I don't know whether this is so important.

Other religious factors come into the feeding of the patients. Different castes are only allowed to eat certain things. So the hospital provides cooking facilities and get a "watcher" or someone from the family or village of the patient to look after that side of things. Brahmins are not supposed to eat animal of any kind, and shouldn't even eat eggs !

They are planning to rebuild the Hospital. The missions are not allowed to preach or encourage change of faith, but they can run schools and hospitals. The morning tea conversation revealed other problems such as the trouble getting kerosene and the fact that it had been non-existent for a while, but is now at the bazaar for double the normal price. The reason for this became clear later.

There is a Government hospital in Pokhara, but it is poorly equipped. The doctors are apparently alright, but treat by prescriptions which have to be bought from the local drugstore at high prices. The Mission Hospital dispenses drugs for a nominal charge. Folk medicines and faith healers are active, and the problem with them is that the patients present late, after someone else has had a go.

From the hospital I wander back through the commercial centre of Pokhara; a dog tries to pinch a bit of meat from the butcher's shop. There are more people now. It is quite a busy centre ...down to the airport to wait for the plane to Kathmandu. It is pleasant waiting in the sun. Others wait.

Machapuchare and Annapurna loom above, and seem to be separate from the rest of the earth by the haze at their base which blends with the rest of the sky, ..a pale painted monochrome, the white of the peaks etched into the frosted glass of the hazy sky.

The airport area consists of one runway and a small single roomed office building, which also serves as a bus terminal. On the roadside are many stalls, mostly with food, but also a couple of barbers. There are mandarin sellers with their baskets full of delicious mandarins.. 4, 5, or 10 for a rupee (10c.) depending on size. We enjoy many as we wait.

The plane does not come. No-one seems at all surprised.. we will go in the morning, and meanwhile, will stay in the Himalaya Hotel. The accommodation is rough but comfortable with the sleeping bags the sherpas lend us We have a great meal of noodles and vegetables and momos, a Tibetan delicacy of minced meat wrapped up in a chapparti. Delicious.. This is followed by pancakes and jam and cups of tea.

The most interesting part of the meal is the interaction between the people. Our group of 6, an American Peace Corps fellow, a Swiss nurse and her friend. We were there first, and our conversation spasmodic and insignificant, at times especially trivial. Then arrived the two girls, attractive and speaking French.. -and lastly this miserable looking fellow with a mop of blond hair, peering through his rimless spectacles. He shyly begins to converse with the nurse. Our conversation remains trivial.. How can we talk about such nothings when at the other end of the large table people are becoming alive as they talk about what they are doing. Pat and Bob just seem unable to understand how anyone could work in this sort of place.. less even enjoy it. ..but gradually we all become involved as I seek to enter the conversation of interest, but am the furthest away.

The Peace Corpsman is from Long Island New York and finished Arts college course and received Peace Corps training in Agriculture. He speaks of the Culture Shock with everything just the opposite of life at home. and the loneliness of being in a village, the only non Nepali; having learnt Nepali but finding only 25% of the people speaking it in the area where he works south of Pokhara at Bhairahawa. He worries about the rationale of the work, when only those who can afford the risk of new methods stand to benefit. Those for whom each crop is essential, cannot afford to try a new method of sowing their crops. The rich get richer. ...

On being asked why he came he was honest enough to mention "finding himself". His work concerns the use of fertilisers and sowing in rows rather than the random broadcast of seed.. However he wonders whether he might

be better working with children. As he talked, he became alive and was much happier when we all went to bed, thanking us for making him feel better. It would be a loneliness that only he and others in a culture at the opposite extreme from their own, would know.

The Swiss nurse is with a Swiss Government team. Her reason for coming is to look at a new country and meet new people. She is in Eastern Nepal, in Sherpa country. There is a Swiss doctor, two Nepali doctors. She is the only nurse. She saves up her day-and-a-half per week off-duty time to make parcels of time which allow her to see other parts of Nepal. She is enjoying herself very much. She speaks of the difficulty of getting drugs, troubles with transport and the great difficulty of training local people.

We met another Peace Corps bloke, who is so happy with his lot that he has extended his term as an agriculturist, concentrating on vegetables, fruit and chickens.. He trained as a Marine Biologist, and has no idea what to do about his return to the US, something about which he does not seem to be very keen.

Even while this fascinating inter-change goes on, our two who least understand such people, only half listen, seize on unusual points and seek to change the subject, and ask questions but lose interest in the reply before it is finished. Could they be compressing all they see and hear into a pattern which they have already decided is the only pattern they will accept ? I hope I may remain sensitive to new things, receptive to change and able to go that little beyond the confines of my own concepts. I hope so, because it is surely the only growth can occur .. and anyway it is much more fun that way.

So the day ends. I am not sorry we are held up. I find I accept this change in plans with little reaction. It may be just the pleasure of staying close to the mountains a little longer. ..a day in which I see a Mission Hospital, a Town Previously Visited., seen with new awareness. Gifts, clothes, boots etc., which our party did not want were given to the Sherpas.. and while the five had their last Kancha cooked lunch I went to the airport to meet them there ..orange sellers look at the Tibetan souvenirs waiting by the airstrip with the mountains at the same time made close and distant ..and soft, by the haze of the day. The evening walk had been to the lake. Tradition says a city was submerged when it refused hospitality to a wandering God. There is a dam across the exit river which makes the deep blue-green sheet of water larger . It looks beautiful even in the hazy dusk. We note the shyness of some women who cover their mouths with the part of their sari which covers their head as you pass. A large dog attacks a little dog and nearly takes his head off. The little dog is rescued by four other dogs, who become really hostile. So dog does bite dog.... but also other dogs support the underdog !

Thea decides to take our little black dog back to Australia with her. I think we have all become quite attached to the animal. It has served the group by taking unwanted food when we have not wanted to offend the cook (I

haven't used this disposal method at all, but a couple of others have found the food a little unusual.)

A good night at the Tibetan Hotel and a breakfast of Tibetan bread, with butter, jam, tea and omelet. The whole lot , dinner, bed and breakfast for 16 rupees (equivalent to \$1.60 Aus.) You could certainly spend some time in Pokhara at that rate.

and so to January 3 and our departure from Western Nepal, with reluctance, but great gain, in fact taking it with us....

Sunday 3 January 1972

We wait by the airport. The Sherpas are traveling with us. The dog has had avomine. Tensing Gyaltsso thanks me for curing him. (it was not me, but the aspirin). The crowd begins to gather. Buses fill and depart. Orange sellers come. The clouds are there, but the mountains rise above. There is haze, but it merely detaches the mountain mass -it seems just to float, .. up yet be nearer...

The plane arrives and disgorges its Japanese tourists, each with two cameras and taking movies, running in all directions.

We leave at 12 midday (the plane was supposed to leave at 10 a.m.) but we wait

and look...

at those mountains

to whom I am now so grateful
that I could come and join
be stretched and also melted
to leave
but yet remain behind