



LEGACY INSTITUTE

P.O. Box 7, Dundee, Ohio 44624

www.legacyinstitute.org

anita_showers@legacyinstitute.org

Bangkok, Thailand

April 25, 2001

Dear Friends,

Gloria and I recently arrived back in Bangkok after our trip to Kachinland for the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. As I have mentioned before in these letters, one never knows what to expect on a trip into this part of the world. This time, I ended up ultimately in the Bangkok Tropical Disease Hospital! Here's how it happened.

The first part of the journey went uneventful enough. Gloria and I flew to Yangon (Rangoon), the Capital of Myanmar (Burma). We had several hours before we needed to catch our flight to Mandalay to meet Lazum Brang, Pastor of the Church of God in Kachinland, so we called on David YeGyan, Pastor of the COG 7th Day in Rangoon. We met and talked with David and his father Andrew for a few hours before heading back to the airport. This is the hottest time of the year in Burma and the entire city seemed to be enveloped in blazing heat and dust. But the heat of Yangon is NOTHING compared to the intense, energy-sucking heat of the Mandalay plains!

We flew north on Mandalay Air. This is a relatively new airline with modern planes. But for some reason, this one had a broken air conditioner. We were soaking wet and overheated by the time we ended our one-hour flight to Mandalay. We told them they should change the name of their airline from "Mandalay Air" to "Mandalay NO Air." Mandalay has a brand new international airport. It is very beautiful and has all the modern facilities. It is also 30 miles outside of town. We hired a taxi to take us into Mandalay and found Lazum Brang waiting for us at the Pacific Hotel across from the railway station.

He was very glad to see us because the telegram we sent had been garbled in transmission and the dates did not come through accurately. He had been waiting for several days. We immediately booked seats on the train for the next day. They had 3 seats available on the "Special Train." I am not sure why they call it the special train. Maybe it is because they have covers on the broken seats, and not just plain broken seats! Or maybe it is because the latrine (which is just a hole in the floor) has a light in it that works! I say this because everything, and I DO MEAN everything, on the government trains is in a state of disrepair. But somehow, they keep the trains running. It is a necessity because it is the only form of public transportation from south to north.

The next day we collected supplies, exchanged money and started on our 22-hour train journey north across the Mandalay plains and into the mountains of Kachinland. I am not exaggerating about the heat. The British built an entire British style town called Maymyo in the high mountains northeast of Mandalay just to escape the debilitating heat every year. I have been to many hot places in Asia (I have even lived in Dallas!), but the Mandalay heat is different. It seems to suck energy right out of your body. And, of course, there is no air conditioning on the train. Hand fans and plenty of water are very important on the Mandalay train. I have told you about these Burmese “rock and roll” trains before. If a person gets seasick easily, this is not the ride for them! By the time one completes the 22-hour journey, there are black and blue spots on certain “strategic” parts of the body from the constant jumping and pounding of the ride.

We finally reached Hopin, the railhead jump-off point for traveling over the mountains to Pastor Brang’s village of Na Mawn in the Lake Indawgyi region. This time we were able to hire a regular motorcar, not the usual log truck or four-wheel-drive vehicle, to take us over the mountains. During the dry season, even regular motorcars are able to transverse the mountain passes; but during the monsoon season, sometimes the road is closed for several months.

It was a joyous homecoming for us when we reached Na Mawn village. The brethren came out to meet us with shouts of joy, many hugs and tears. Sometimes we just do not understand the value and importance of getting in to see scattered brethren in remote parts of the world. We in the West think nothing of jumping in a car and traveling 6-8 hours to see friends or relatives; or boarding a plane to fly thousands of miles to do the same. Our lives are filled with many conveniences we take for granted. In Na Mawn village, no one owns a car. Flying in an airplane is only a dream. If they want to visit friends or relatives, the usual way is by foot. Usually they cannot afford the cost of fare on a log truck or train. So, to them, Gloria and I traveling from Thailand to see them is as if we traveled all the way from a different planet!

Lazum Brang had a small bamboo pavilion built next to his house for services. His house was just too small. Also, 7 teenagers had come from the China border to participate in UB and they were all sleeping in the front area of his house. They are planning to stay on after UB to study the Bible with Lazum Brang until school starts again in June. These young people are excited about the Bible. Their ages ranged from 12 to 22. Some can speak a little English. During services they took notes and you could see that they were excited about the things they were learning. Two of the older girls had left their homes against their Baptist parents’ wishes in order to come to keep the Days of UB with us. They may not be welcome back. But the TRUTH is more important to them than the acceptance of their families. They are ready to give up all, even father and mother, to follow Christ. They want the Pearl of Great Price. Going against parent’s wishes in this country and being disowned is a very big price to pay and a very hard decision to make for two young girls. But they seek the Truth and they believe that no price is too high to pay for the Truth. The intensity of the dedication of these two girls is extremely inspiring to Gloria and me. What about us? Do we have this kind of dedication? Do we hunger and thirst for God’s Truth? These two girls are a refreshing reminder that what we have been given is beyond price. They have given up all to get what we already have. Do we all take it for granted? Do we give thanks enough to God for the precious gift of the Truth of His Word? It is something to think about.

We held worship services every day. The format of their services is much like what we are used to in our Western COG's, except that they sing more hymns and pray more. On each of the Holy Days we took up an offering and had special music. One of the Kachin ladies is a music teacher and writes beautiful hymns. So we had the pleasure of hearing several of her compositions. Also, the China border girls learned one of our hymns called "How Lovely Are Thy Dwellings" which they sang on the last day of Unleavened Bread. It was very beautiful. We also held a "Blessing of the Children" ceremony, the first COG blessing in Kachinland. There were many young children to bless.

My problems began about the fourth day of the Feast. I suddenly came down with a very high fever and had to lie down. My leg turned beet red, got very hot and began to swell. The fever did not go away, so the next day Lazum Brang sent for a Kachin Army nurse. After looking at my leg she told us it was an infection caused by a small bug bite called "mudden." She swabbed my leg with gentian violet and gave me 2 injections of penicillin. My high fever lasted for 3 days and finally came down. But the leg remained swollen and hot.

Somehow, I was "resurrected" long enough to give the last day sermon, and then back to bed. The next day we needed to leave Na Mawn to catch the train at Hopin to Mandalay. Since it was the water festival time, we knew that no vehicles would be running the road over the mountains. So we prayed that God would provide a ride for us to get to Hopin train station. The next morning we went early to the market area where various vehicles stop that are headed over the mountains. But no vehicles of any kind were available. Again we prayed. Soon after, a flat-bed truck came speeding up the road. Lazum Brang flagged it down. The driver said he was headed for Hopin and would be happy to take us. So we quickly loaded in, said our goodbyes and headed up over the pass. The driver told us that he had felt "compelled" to drive all night long all the way from the jade mine area to get to Hopin. He didn't know why. There was no pressing need for him to get to Hopin so quickly. He just felt the need to get there. He reached Na Mawn village just as we needed the ride to Hopin. Now, this could have been just pure coincidence. But we believe it was the answer to our prayers.

The train ride back was difficult. It was the height of the water festival in Burma. This is the time of year that all of Burma just goes wild. For 3 or 4 days, Burma erupts into an orgy of drunkenness and revelry. Gangs of youths ride around in pickup trucks or roam the streets looking for victims to soak with water. Sometimes they add sugar to the water to make it extra sticky. No one is exempt (except monks and policemen.) We saw 3 well-dressed young ladies at the railroad station try to make it to the platform intact. No way. They became instant targets for drunken boys who completely soaked them with buckets of water; dresses, bags, shoes – all soaking wet. Of course, being the only westerners on the train made us particularly juicy targets. I was still running a fever and trying to keep my leg dry. Gloria was very helpful in keeping a sharp eye out and getting the train window closed in time before the water came flying in.

We were relieved to get to Mandalay train station and into a small guesthouse near Mandalay Fort. I was able to take a real bath and crash for a good night's sleep. The next day we bought 2 guitars for Davidson and Jack to use during their "house-church" services. They make good guitars in Mandalay and they are only 5 dollars each! We then headed for the airport and back to Yangon and finally Bangkok.

We reached Bangkok at night so I had to wait until the next morning to get to a hospital. I called my friend “Joe” Kashemsant who works for the king. He arranged for me to get checked out at the Tropical Disease Hospital. They immediately admitted me with infection complicated by cellulites. After 4 days in the hospital I am back home and writing this letter to you all.

Whenever I think about the pain and agony of this ordeal with my leg, I remember all of the troubles and trials that the Apostle Paul went through on his journeys. Then I just laugh! The leg infection is NOTHING by comparison. Jesus never promised us a rose garden when he sent us to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom. There will be more trials and tribulations ahead. Please pray for us that we will have the strength to face what ever comes.

Lazum Brang is headed for the Tibetan border at the end of May. Many in that region have written him asking for a visit. Pray for his safe journey and good health. There is a lot of work to be done. We are only a few. Pray that God also gives us some workers for His fields.

Feast of Tabernacles in Thailand

We will hold a Feast of Tabernacles in Thailand once again this year for the Karen brethren who number around 30 persons with children. Once again we invite any who wish to attend in Thailand to join us. Services will be held every day and will generally follow the traditional format.

This year we will spend most of the Feast in northern Thailand (Chiangmai and Ang Khang). Ang Khang is the royal agriculture project high in the mountains near the Burma border where Mr. Armstrong, in 1971, started helping King Bhumibol teach the hill tribes to grow fruits and vegetables instead of opium. 30 years later, this area has a beautiful resort built on the grounds run by the Amari hotel group. All food served is organic and comes from the royal project. The king allows us to use his meeting pavilion there for services. Angkhang also has a beautiful nursery with myriads of exotic tropical plants and a garden with a variety of miniature trees.

In Bangkok we will visit Wat Poh Temple and the Grand Palace. A unique and special privilege will be our visit to Chitralada Palace – the royal residence of the King and Queen of Thailand. Here we will see in action the workshops of the Royal Support Foundation where the handicapped and underprivileged learn to make beautiful works of art.

We will also visit hill tribe villages, ride elephants and participate in many other exciting cultural opportunities. All hotels offer First Class accommodations and cater to our dietary needs. If you are thinking about coming to Thailand this year for the Feast of Tabernacles, please let us know right away so that we can begin making arrangements and reservations with hotels, etc. For itinerary and further information please contact us at:

email glomar7@juno.com or write to the address at the top of this letter. You may also contact Frank Fish who will be handling travel arrangements for us. His contact info is:

Frank Fish
Travel Gallery, Inc.
1388 E. Walnut Street
Pasadena, CA 91106-1528

Phone: 626-577-9717 800-858-6999

Fax: 626-577-0577

Email: frank@travelgallery.com or frank@pandaconsultants.com

Reservations System (24hours a day)

<http://www.travelpoint.com/TravelGallery>

Web: www.travelgallery.com www.cruiseholidaysofpasadena.com

That is all for now. Hope you all had a meaningful Passover and rejuvenating Days of Unleavened Bread.

In Jesus' service,



Leon Sexton

WHAT IS LEGACY INSTITUTE?

LEGACY INSTITUTE IS NOT A CHURCH. *Nor is it affiliated with any human church organization. Legacy Institute seeks to serve and help mankind in the spirit and example of our Lord Jesus Christ. His instructions were to freely give. This means without discrimination and without prejudice. Your donations to Legacy Institute are tax deductible in the USA.*