

India, Andaman Islands and Bangkok

by Irma Kackert

I am starting a trip to India, and escorting my friends Jessie and Wilbur VanDeventer. Usually I take my trips around the world alone, this is the first time to have someone go with me. They have never had a passport, and I have helped them to procure one beforehand. They flew two days ago from Chicago, and I picked them up in Los Angeles at the Marriot Airport Hotel. I could not meet their flight, as I had just given a slide lecture on travel, at Agoura Hills Senior Expo, and did not know the exact time I would be at the airport. They spent a day or two with me, at my home in Thousand Oaks, I had previously made all the reservations for our air travel, and on Thursday afternoon we departed for LAX, to catch our flight non-stop to Hong Kong. We traveled on Cathay Pacific airline, had no trouble checking our baggage and boarding the 747 plane. It was a full flight, immigration papers for Hong Kong were handed out shortly after takeoff and we filled them out, so they were ready on our arrival at Hong Kong. It was a very long flight, 15 hours, but we were not too uncomfortable. A nice feature was a computer print-out, on the movie screens, of a mapped flight as we traveled north to Alaska, over the Bering Sea, close to Japan, then over Taiwan, and landed at Hong Kong. The air miles covered and miles to our destination, were also shown. It was a very nice feature. We arrived in the evening of Friday, at Hong Kong, recovered our baggage promptly and made it through immigration with no problems. I had made reservations for the Grand Hotel, transfers there, breakfast, and a room for three persons, a package deal, for \$174. I had stayed at the Grand Hotel before, and knew it to be very good. On arrival at the hotel, found they had given us a small suite, a sitting room with a rollaway bed for me, terry robes on our beds, a bowl of fresh fruit on the table, lotions in the full bath. We were happy to soon go to sleep, after the long trip. The air temperature in Hong Kong was 69 degrees F. During the night I awoke, feeling chilly, the bed had only one blanket. I laid awhile, then finally arose and put on some socks, also put my very large beach towel over me, then I was comfortable – but jet lag had set in, and I did not sleep any more. About 4:00 a.m. Jessie awoke, also had jet lag. By 6 o'clock we were all up and talking about what we should do before our departure in late afternoon, on Singapore airlines, for Madras, India. I did my exercises on the floor, showered and dressed. Our suite had a small refrigerator and a coffee bar in the living room, we had coffee while we decided on our activities this morning.

At 7 a.m. we went down to breakfast, a lovely buffet. I chose cereal, scrambled egg and toast. The Grand Hotel is a nice place to stay in Hong Kong, it is on the Kowloon side, and in the shopping area. Ferryboats take you from the mainland to Hong Kong, the island. It was a misty, cool morning, but we took a cruise (on a local sampan) of the harbor, saw many interesting sights in the two hours aboard it. We could not see the top of Victoria peak; because of the mist and fog. The last time I was here, it was very clear and I took the tour up to Ocean Park, the amusement center on the very top of the peak, with such a beautiful view from up there. This stopover in Hong Kong was great, gave one a chance to relax, after the long air flight. Returning to the hotel, we packed our bags, then walked the streets nearby, which are all shops and businesses. The foot traffic, auto, bus, bicycle, carts pulled by men and by women, filled the streets and sidewalks, creating confusion. Signs overhead hang from every store, horns are blown constantly by trucks and cars, but everyone seemed to move well, in their own space. I took pictures as we walked, also

bought a couple of tee shirts and bracelets. The exchange rate here now is 7.2 Hong Kong dollars for 1 U.S. dollar. Our transfer service picked us up at the hotel and took us to the Kai Tek airport, for our departure at 4:33 p.m. on Cathay Pacific Airlines. Our baggage was checked through to Madras and we each had a carry-on bag.

The flight to Singapore was fine, we arrived at the beautiful new airport there, found the transfer desk, for now we had to change to Singapore airlines. Then a BIG SNAFU !!! The Cathay Pacific airline had made a mistake – their computer told the transfer desk that we had not been on the flight from Hong Kong to Singapore, and they had given up our seats on the next leg of our journey to Madras, India. I was furious, said “here we are, in person, you just flew us here”. Finally, they said I could go, there was one seat, but Web and Jessie could not. They would put Web and Jessie up in a hotel in Singapore, and send them on the next plane to Madras, which would be in 2 days. There were a lot of phone calls made by staff, finally I decided to go ahead, our baggage was all checked ahead to Madras, also George Swan would be waiting to meet me at the airport. He was a good friend with whom I worked in Saudi Arabia, now he was administrator at a new hospital being built in Madras. We would headquarter our stay with him, then travel India. Another friend from Al Hada hospital in Saudi, Virginia Aubry, who was a young French woman, was in India at this time too, and we would be together at times. I had no way of reaching George by phone, not everyone who wanted one, was able to have it, in India. He would not know what happened to us, if we did not appear. The staff assured me that my friends would be well taken care of, in Singapore. So a clerk helped me to the gate as it was now departure time, and I had to leave my friends behind, with no luggage !!! A bad situation, indeed. The plane was absolutely full, mainly all Indian men. One was in my specified seat, he had taken it in error, the hostess had to move him out, and find another spot for him. All passengers seemed to have very large shopping bags at their feet, which cluttered the area. This was quite an unnerving experience, when everything had been going so well. I also discovered that there is a 2 and ½ hour time difference, when crossing the international date line, going toward Madras. Never before have I ever found a ½ hour difference in time zones, when traveling in the world, always a one hour difference. The explanation was that the continent of India is so wide, they split one hour, to cover the whole area.

SUNDAY MAY 5, 1991

What an experience, entering Madras!!!. The plane was one hour late on arriving, the flight was 4 hours, Singapore to Madras. The immigration line was HUGE, many lines for Indian nationals, and 2 lines for foreign passports. After standing for awhile, I left my red carryon bag in line, guarded by a polite young Sri Lanka man who lived in the U. S., and spoke English, and I went to the ladies toilet room. I kept wondering if I would be met, outside of the immigration area, by George and Virginia. While in the rest room (it was old mid-east style, the hole-in-floor in one stall, and flush toilet in another stall) I heard an announcement “Irma Kackert come to -----desk”. I could not understand the fifth word. As I emerged I asked an official about the announcement, he said I must stay in line, get through the passport check and stamp, then go to the “facilitation desk”. It took over an hour to get through that line, then I went to the desk. The lady attendant, dressed in a sari, was from the Singapore airlines, was very pleasant, gave me a note with the phone number of the

Imperial Hotel in Singapore, where my friends had been placed, when they had to stay behind in Singapore. It was a relief, hearing from her, that they were o.k., but they had no luggage! Now, in the huge crowd of people milling about (but it was orderly and not like the baggage area in Bombay, when I was there several years ago), I started looking for our suitcases and also looking outside this protected customs area, into the milling crowd of people waiting for arriving passengers. They were not allowed to come into this glass enclosed area. I spied Virginia's blonde hair and her smiling face out there, she gave me a big wave. It was a relief to see her, George was nearby. It took another hour of searching amongst suitcases, but none of ours appeared. Finally, the lady, Carolyn, from Singapore airlines helped me, and I found the VanDeventer's two bags, the orange strip of material on each one was very helpful. Then a bit later I found mine. I put them on a trolley, along with my red carry-on bag and the blue back pack I had. Now I noted the zipper was open on my suitcase and someone had put a bit of tape over the area. I was ready to go out, through customs, but said to Carolyn that I needed to make a damage claim, so we went back to the desk and a gentleman made out the claim form. He had me open the case to see what was missing: one bead necklace of crystal, value about \$25, also suitcase damage, \$50. Now let's see if I ever collect anything on this. All else was o.k. They were very apologetic, and kept asking if I would sit on a stool nearby, guess I looked very tired. I was really exhausted, and angry that this separation had happened to my friends. But---I was glad that I came ahead and picked up the luggage. Web and Jessie will come on the next flight, on Monday, they will have to go alone through this mass of humanity in the customs area. It will be a rude awakening for them, customs area here is not like in the U.S., but at least I have obtained their luggage. Now, I finally was able to leave the restricted area, after 2 hours in the immigration area.

It was so nice to get hugs from George and Virginia. He had a car and driver to take us to his apartment on the third floor of a new apartment building, in a newer area of Madras .It was very warm, the temperature must have been near 100 deg. F. It was now about 1:30 a.m., we drove over bumpy streets, there were people walking, riding on bicycles, and in the auto-rickshaw conveyance used here. This is a golf cart, with a meter to give the fare, and used as taxi service. There were small open stalls for shops. In about 15 minutes we arrived at his apartment, there was an elevator to take us up: there were 2 bedrooms, living room, kitchen, 2 baths, and a large open porch with a clothes line hanging there. In the baths, the shower water ran down on the floor, this is the usual way in the mid east, there is a drain to carry the water away. I was given one bedroom, George the other, and Virginia slept on cushions on the floor, there were no screens on windows and a nice ocean breeze blew in. It was now 2:00 a.m., and I was happy to go to bed. When the VanDeventers arrive, they will get the bedroom and I will sleep on the davenport. George has an Indian man, named Tony, who comes in daily, does the cooking, cleans the house and does George's laundry. He proved to be a wonderful houseman.

MONDAY MAY 6

I slept very well for 4 hours, and felt rested, I had thought that I might really feel bad, after the long time getting through immigration. We all had coffee together, and talked, talked, and talked, for we had not seen each other in a few years. About 11:00 Virginia and I went out, George had already gone to work at the hospital. He had no car, they provided him with a

motorcycle for transportation, he enjoyed that. I was putting on a bare shoulder sun dress, when Virginia told me that was not appropriate for women as street wear, so I put on culottes and a blouse. The temperature was about 105 F., so hot! The street scene below was very different, I was seeing rural India at the edge of a big city. The road was black-topped and there was a steady stream of carts, bicycles, people walking, some carrying bundles on their heads, ladies were dressed in the Indian sari, here and there a goat wandered along. We walked two blocks to a busy intersection and passed several cows lying on the side of the road, or wandering around. The cow is sacred in India, those we saw had large horns, but were thin, you could see their ribs under the skin. They eat off of garbage piles that are raked up along roads. At the corner Virginia dealt with an auto-rickshaw driver, to take us to the Trident hotel, a very beautiful, modern building with air conditioning, where we would have lunch. A white suited doorman helped us out of the auto-rickshaw. What a contrast to the rural, very poor areas just a block or two away from George's apartment. India is now a free country, but for 400 years it was ruled by India, and many of the customs of that occupation are still evident. English is spoken, but with many dialects, sometimes it is very hard to understand them. There are also various dialects of the Hindi language spoken, they vary in different parts of the country.

There were other ex-pats (people from other countries working in India) eating also, I chose light food, a big fruit salad, roll, muffin and juice. After eating we went outside to see the large, beautiful lawn and the pool. Virginia had already been in Madras a week and knew how to get around. We stopped in the bookstore of the hotel, I bought cards, George had given me 100 rupees earlier, in exchange for \$5.00. A rupee is worth 5 cents in our money. We had to cross the very busy street outside, to get another auto-rickshaw, it was verily a heroic effort to not get hit.! Then we went to the place where, many years ago, St. Thomas, the Apostle, had come to preach the word of God. He was martyred here, for preaching Christianity, the cave he hid in had his handprint in stone, I placed my hand in it. He was trying to escape through a hole in part of the wall, it had been kept that way. Going up out of the little cave, we walked up to a rocky mound where they say, blood appears on the stone once each year, on the day he died. Water appeared miraculously, it is said, from out of a crack in the rock, medical cures have occurred from drinking the water. A young man drew water up, in a metal cup tied to a string, for us to drink, but I just made the sign of the cross with it, so many diseases are prevalent here that I did not want to touch the cup with my mouth. I saw a man nearby, with a small boy who limped badly, bring a thin, white candle to the rock mound in the cave, light it, drop some wax and set the candle in it. Then they both knelt and prayed. I wish a miracle could cure the boy's problem: their faces were beautiful as they knelt there.

Leaving here, the driver had waited for us, we returned through heavy traffic to George's place, 10 Beach Road, in Madras. Now we discussed what places we will visit throughout India, when the VanDeventers arrive. George knows a female travel agent, whom we will visit and make plans. India is a land of extreme poverty, also many very wealthy people reside here. There are 850million people, many live just in huts made of cardboard, thin, discarded sheets of wood or boards, with grass thatch for a roof. Many just lie on the streets, some cook food over a tiny stove, right on the sidewalk or roadside, and there are beggars everywhere. This very poor condition can exist right next to modern buildings.

Education is available, in public and private schools, and universities also. The very low caste of people are usually not educated, they are destined to do only very poor, manual work, and cannot elevate themselves. The caste system is supposed to be illegal in present years, but it still remains. Madras is in the far south-eastern part of India, borders the Bay of Bengal, and is the most "rural" of the modern 4 large cities of India. I can see the ocean in the distance, from the open porch at George's apartment.

I should relate here, what happened on Sunday afternoon. George is an avid jogger, belongs to a worldwide organization called the "Hash House Harriers", and had planned to run with them that afternoon. Virginia was going to do this too, and George said I must join them. The group meets two times a month and after a run through the streets, they meet for social time and a bar-b-q meal. They gave me a "Harrier" t-shirt to wear, and said some of the wives walked, and if I got tired jogging, I could join them. I had belonged to a jogging club in Thousand Oaks, California, but had to stop when I went to work in Saudi Arabia. Women did not jog there. We left the apartment, George by motorcycle and Virginia and myself by auto-rickshaw, went to a large home owned by the American Consulate, set in a very large garden area of lawn, bushes and flowering trees. It was surrounded by a high wall, which separated it from the adjoining slum areas of poor huts, ditches, dirt roads, no sanitation. People who lived there were standing around, some lying in the roads, some taking shelter in huge cement culverts that were probably meant to be used in road or bridge construction. Sitting in there gave them protection from the hot sun, or downpours, in the rainy season. On the way, Virginia had difficulty in finding the right alley to turn into, so we returned to the Sheraton hotel to phone for directions, there we met 2 other "Hash Harrier" runners, they asked us to join them in their Mercedes and we all drove to the Consulate gathering. There was a young American family living in the home, they had 3 young children, and were employed by the Department of Communications of the U.S. In the lovely yard were about 50 people, men, women and children, from several different countries, all working in India. This was a form of recreation for them, on weekends. I was introduced to quite a few of them, all were friendly.

The jogging run would be through nearby streets, past huts, and slum conditions. I was not going to do it, as I didn't think I could run, in the extreme heat, but many ladies said they were going to walk the route, then I decided to go too. I walked at first, then ran off and on, and it felt great! I didn't know I could still run, though I used to jog every day about 2 to 4 miles, and ran in 10K and 5K races quite often, have trophies from winning them, in the age 60 and over category. That was in years 1976 to 1980, then I went to Saudi Arabia to work, for about 5 years, and I did not jog anymore. I surprised myself, it really felt good to be running, even the heat did not bother me, and I was not too tired. After the run, came the fun!!!! There was initiation for new runners, a meeting first when the club membership was explained, then a couple of others and myself were seated in chairs out on the lawn. Several songs were sung, we were given a container of beer and told to drink it all quickly "down, down, down". As we did so, more was poured over our heads, this was the initiation. What fun!!! I poured the last of mine over my head, tipping it sideways, and laughed. After this there was a lovely bar-b-q meal, of chicken, steaks, potato salad, fresh vegetable salad, pickles, soda pop or beer. We were seated on the nice lawn, under huge trees and though it was very hot, there was a breeze blowing. My clothing was not very wet, as I had tilted my body to the side, as the beer was poured, what was damp, dried quickly.

A description of the run, through the slum streets, should be included here. It was a spectacle for the local people, to see this large group of "foreigners" running or walking past their huts in "alley-like" streets, and dirt paths. Some waved at us, smiled, we waved back. Virginia took a photo of me once, as I was among sari-garbed ladies and girls, who were anxious to be in the photo when I stopped near them. These people probably live and die in these conditions, but they all looked happy as we ran past. In one poor area, a native man ran alongside Virginia a little way, his people cheered him on, but I noted he stopped when a well dressed Indian man (maybe a police type ?) seemed to scold him, and he stopped. Maybe they should not participate in this event. Sometimes we would be running in a better area, past new houses and on paved streets. People watched from their yards, and waved sometimes. The upper classes, educated, business people, dentists and doctors, live in modern flats or homes surrounded by high walls with enclosed gardens, cement drives and gates, and usually a native man is employed to guard, and to open and close the gate.

It is Monday as I write this, sitting on my bed, the windows are open and a strong sea breeze is blowing in. I awake early every morning, before daylight, my watch is still on U.S. time, and the wind-up clock has stopped. The evenings are very warm, no blanket is needed, a woven, checked sheet over me was enough. Last night when we returned from the bar-b-q, I was tired, our neighbor Josephine, who also lives in this flat, invited us to view a movie on VHS, but I declined. She had lived in San Francisco, spoke English very well. I washed out my clothes from the day, hung them on the line on the porch; and retired. The street noises from below are heard very well up here, people walking often are barefoot, or wear sandals. The men often wear the wrap skirt around hips, pull it to the front, through legs, and tie it at waist, in front. A shirt is worn on top. Some wear the long, loose pants. Women in this area all wear the sari. This is one piece of fabric, 5 yards long., It is wrapped around the waist, 10 pleats are formed in front, toward left side, secured with a safety pin, and wrapping continued around back, brought up over left shoulder, and draped down the back. A short bodice is worn on top, the midriff area is bare. I have several of them, the first one was given to me by a female doctor from Pakistan, I helped her with swimming lessons while in Saudi, she also showed me how to drape it. I wear them when I give slide lectures on India. They are comfortable. Children wear shorts and a t-shirt. Very few people have autos, they use the buses in the cities, or the auto-rickshaws. I just heard a cow drawn cart go by; people come from the slum areas to the newer areas, to work as household help, or yardmen. A native lady comes to George's door at 8 a.m. every day, to gather wastebaskets, and garbage, she dumps it into a huge basket, takes it down to the street and puts it in a cart. This is emptied at a large "dump", just a block away from the apartment. There the lowest caste people come to sort through it, with a metal pole and a basket on their shoulder, to see if they can find anything of any value, or food that might still be good. I did get photos of that. When I was in Egypt, I remember taking a picture of a "garbage girl" who came every day to the flat and picked up these things. It is a third world country custom.

It is light now, people are walking on the street below, or some on bicycles: one man pedaled his, and his wife sat on the back, they are probably going to their work as household help, for the day. As I look down from the open porch to the empty lot next door,

I see it is used as a material storage yard. There are long bamboo poles, used for scaffolding on buildings, 8 foot long fiberglass panels, cement blocks, piles of new wood, etc. There will probably be a new building constructed here in the future. Now there is a palm frond hut at the back of the lot, with piles of sand here and there; an old man lives there, he is a guard. Yesterday I watched him do his bath, in front of the hut. He had on a g-string only. From a pail of water he poured a can of it over his head, then over arms, chest, back and private parts. He used about 4 or 5 cans, rubbed his body, but I did not see any soap used. This morning, I see a man lying on a wood board, under a roof made of an 8 foot piece of fiberglass with two pipes laid across it, to hold it down to the tall metal pipes that support it. He sleeps there. I saw him arise, rub his eyes, stretch his body, and walk away. Another day to live, in very primitive conditions; those Tamils in this area who are so poor, probably will never better their lives. Later on, as the garbage lady came to the door, I asked George if it would be all right to take her picture, he said yes, it would be o.k. She was very old, had a thin, poor material, sari on, and a ring in her nose. I told Tony, the houseman, to tell her she was beautiful, he did, and then she gave me a BIG smile. After eating a breakfast of delicious fresh tropical fruits, papaya and mango, prepared by the houseman, and some cereal, George went off to work at the hospital.

Virginia and I then walked to the corner where the auto-rickshaws wait for passengers. They really are motorized golf carts, used as taxis by everyone. We engaged one, and took off, flying over the bumpy streets hitting pot holes, dodging the busy traffic, and passing long horned cattle lying at the side of the streets, or pulling carts. We stopped at two different telephone suqs, as I wanted to contact Singapore airlines and get the proper phone number of the Imperial Hotel in Singapore. I want to let Jess and Web know that I have their luggage, and will meet them tonight, when they arrive in Madras. Phoning in the middle east countries is a big problem. The first two telephone suqs could not provide overseas service, the third one, which was close to the book store and hotel where we ate lunch, could help us. They did contact Singapore airlines, I was told the number of the Imperial Hotel that was given to me first, was wrong, and so I could not contact them. The airline will forward my message to my friends.

Now Virginia and I walked through the shopping areas, after using the phone in the "plush" Taj Mahal hotel. The word "suq" means the market place, where local people come to buy their needs, and artisans make items for sale. It was crowded everywhere, loaded with people, motorcycles, bicycles, and the three wheeled auto-rickshaws, now and then a goat or a cow wandered amongst everyone. We went into a shop that sells materials for saris, that the women wear. I bought 5 yards of beautiful material, there was such a great display of lovely materials, 2 floors full. Then we went to the home of an Indian couple, they lived in an apartment above the suq, it was an old building, we went up narrow steps to their living quarters., These were educated business people, their daughter was a physician who worked at the hospital where George works, and Virginia had met her previously, also her parents. These people were vegetarians, they also grind their own wheat each day, to make fresh flour for bread, and she showed us the machine she uses to do so. They also eat only fresh vegetables, nothing canned. Virginia had stayed with this family, on a previous visit to India, and called them "her family". She gave some mangos and papayas, which she had purchased at a stall down in the suq.

After the shopping venture we returned to 10 Beach Road. George came home about 6:30, while I was taking a short nap, then he suggested we have dinner at the “Beach Castle”, a small restaurant right on the shores of the Bay of Bengal. It was an open sided small structure, with a thatched roof, and we went on the motorcycle, all three of us. It was not very far from George’s apartment. It was pleasant eating there, the ocean breeze felt good, but although the fish I ordered was fried just a bit crisp, it did taste good.

This was the night to pick up Jessie and Wilbur (Web), their arrival time from Singapore was scheduled for 10:10 p.m. The car and driver that George had obtained, came at 10:00 and we were driven to the airport. What a huge crowd was there again! We were not allowed in the arrival area, so stood in the waiting throng, wondering if my friends really were on this flight. After a long wait, I waved an official toward me and asked him if I could go inside and look for Jessie and Web, as they might be looking for their luggage, and I had already picked it up. He let me go through the gate into the glass enclosed area. I did not see my friends, they were still in the immigration area, but finally they came out. The Singapore Airlines had treated them very well, they said the hotel was very nice, they were given \$245 for clothes, meal vouchers for three days, and they had received the message from me, that I had picked up the luggage, and would meet them tonight. I was relieved to hear that, and so they had a chance to see Singapore and to relax comfortably. George was waiting in the first mob of people, and came outside of the second mob, where we joined him. In these third world countries, the mass of humanity at airports is amazing, not everyone is allowed inside, and they charge 10 rupees, just to go into the terminal. After hugs were exchanged, we went back to George’s place, with the car and driver. Introductions to Virginia were made, places to sleep were prepared, and we felt “all is well”.

TUESDAY MAY 7

I slept so soundly, in hot, humid Madras, never awakened until 7 a.m. The ceiling fans are left on all night and there is an ocean breeze here, but the temperature does not cool much at night, and daytime temperatures at this time of the year, are always 100 to 116 F. I knew this, but this is the time I am free from teaching, and had to come in May. I still teach Adapted Aquatics classes for the local school district, at home. After breakfast of delicious fresh fruit, papaya and mango slices, cereal, and toast that Virginia made in a frying pan, George sat with me and outlined the trip through India that we will make, ending with a flight to the Andaman Islands. These are far out in the Indian ocean, belong to India, are located to the east and almost to shores of Thailand. We will snorkel amongst corals there. George will not be able to fly there with us, but will come by himself on the weekend.

Virginia, Jess and Web and I walked to the corner where we usually get an auto-rickshaw, but there were none waiting, we learned a strike had been called and most drivers were not working. So we walked several more blocks to a busy street, and found one there. Virginia bargained with the driver, as she usually did, was familiar with that procedure, and we got in. Since there were four of us, Virginia sat on the side bar, with her hips protruding outside a bit – she almost got bumped, the cars and auto-rickshaws came so close, in the busy traffic. Wilbur and Jess were really shocked at the scenes of humanity, as we rode, and wanted to get photos of everything. I took a lot also. I give a travel lecture series back home, of the many countries I have been in, and use the slides there. We stopped at a

travel agency, a very crowded place, but it was air-conditioned and that felt good, to be in from the terrible heat outside. We spent 3 hours there, planning our itinerary throughout India; we purchased a voucher for \$400, on Indian Airlines (the national airline), that would allow us travel on the continent and its possessions, for 21 days. We learned that we had to go to the immigration department office, to get papers that would allow us to enter the Andaman Islands, and that we must have passport photos of each of us to get these papers. They directed us to a photo shop nearby, for this, cost was 40 rupees for four pictures. I was also able to purchase two rolls of slide film there for 200 rupees, (\$10). I have 2 rolls in my suitcase, but they may be ruined by going through the x-ray machine in Hong Kong.

We now went for lunch to the Park Sheraton hotel, air conditioned, and very nice. The restaurant had a solid glass wall on one side, we were seated there and could see a procession of women, tall and slender, wearing their saris and carrying a large, flat metal pan on their heads. These were filled with stones, or gravel, or sand. We were told they were working in construction, and would go behind a building nearby that was being repaired, empty the pans, walk past us again going for a refill. They walked slowly, stately, were beautiful to watch. Jennifer, the travel agent who took us around, said they earn only about 50 rupees a month – hardly enough for their food. We watched them for a while, more came by and some carried a baby in their arms, as they walked with those pans on their heads, or a little child clung to their skirt and walked with them. I felt sorry for the women, and as we did not finish all the rolls at our meal, took the rest out and gave them to the children, also gave them some rupees. I asked, by sign language, if I could take photos of them and they posed willingly. Such hard work, for so little money! Next we had to go to the ticket office of India Airlines, and waited there from about 2:30 until 4:00, to get clearance for future flights and hotels. The service is very slow everywhere. We finally received all reservations and tickets and drove back to the hotel Sheraton, and had a swim. It felt great. I helped Web and Jessie to practice with their masks and snorkels, for when we get to the coral beds, they have not snorkeled for a long time, and need practice.. Both did very well, and the swim felt good. The fee to swim was 72 rupees each.

Jessie rode with George on the motorcycle, back to his apartment, said it was fun. Virginia and I took an auto-rickshaw. In the evening we were invited to the home of Steve and Tessie Ponman for a dinner party, they were friends of George. They lived in a huge, lovely house, it reminded me of the large homes of the wealthy, in Taif, Saudi Arabia. The menu was Indian food, chicken, beef, rice, chepatis, tiny whole potatoes with cream sauce, chopped fresh vegetables, all very tasty. After eating I became very sleepy, it was hard to keep my eyes open as I sat and visited with guests. Many were from the Hash House Harrier group, that ran the race in Madras on Sunday. We returned home at 11:30 and I retired immediately. Web and Jessie have the bedroom, I sleep on the couch, and Virginia on cushions on the floor.

I must mention some local color here, that I have observed. Right across the street from George's, was a modern, new house, with wall all around. Every morning the Indian house maid would come to the gate, open it, and right outside on the drive would make a "Rangouli" sign, with ground-up rice. She let it fall from her hand slowly, in a pattern. This is

the symbol of good luck that they make for the day. They also sometime use chalk, to make the symbol, I was told, and it is done daily. I took a photo.

How are you? (in Tamil dialect) Yepedi iri kinga
I am very good (“ “ “) Arhumba nala riken

WEDNESDAY MAY 8

I awakened at 3:30 a.m., couldn't go back to sleep. At daybreak went onto the open porch balcony, and watched the local people come silently into the yards of houses on this street, from their hovels a few blocks away. They are the house boys, and women servants for the upper class who live here. The Indian way of walking is stately and quiet, and they seem to be a happy people, despite their poverty. Of course there are many economic levels of the Indian population, which numbers 850 million at this time, 1992, and expectancy of 2 billion by year 2000. There are several different castes, and many different religions here, including Hindu, Buddhist, Brahmin, Muslim, Shiite, Christian. They are very spiritual people. Later on, after a delicious breakfast including a lot of fresh, tropical fruit, we left the house for another risky trip across town, the auto-rickshaws are an adventure every time you ride in them. Virginia was our guide. We went to the immigration office for permission to enter the Andaman Islands, they are owned by India, and are protected, one cannot enter without permission. Again, we had to wait in the crowded, small apace. After presenting our forms and 2 photos each, to the lady clerk, we were finally called into the office of the top official (his office was air conditioned, the other area was extremely hot) to be questioned. He just talked to each of us about our travels, then asked Virginia about her nationality, and reason for being in India, then we were told to pick up our visas tomorrow. It seems nothing is ever finished here, in one visit. Next we rode again through the terrible traffic, to the travel agent's office, were told that all our tickets, printed itinerary, etc. would be ready today. That was not so, we would have to come back tomorrow to get them, they were not ready. What a pain it is, to have to make all these trips way across town, in an auto-rickshaw. So Virginia said she will go by herself tomorrow, and pick up everything for us. After all this, we went to the hotel Sheraton for another swim. When out all morning, in the dreadful heat, we relax, and rest, get refreshed in the afternoon. In the evening we stayed at home, after a delicious dinner prepared by Tony, the Indian houseman.

THURSDAY MAY 9

Awoke again around 3:30 a.m., and felt good. My body is cooperating very well, on this trip, giving me no problems. We will leave Madras today on a trip south, Virginia will pick up all visas, passports, tickets, itinerary, that should have been ready yesterday, but were not. George has ordered a car and driver for us, to take us to Mahablipuram, an area many miles south of Madras, to see temples carved out of one piece of rock, very artistic works made in the 7th century. The Indian people are great artists, the temples are as much as 50 feet high, there's also a bull, lion, and elephant, each carved separately out of a huge rock. They stand guard over the temples, we were told. There were many people bothering you, trying to sell trinkets, carved items out of granite, bangles, bracelets and earrings. As we left one area and walked to another nearby, passed a snake charmer seated on the ground. He had a round basket where he kept the snake, then took it out, put

it on the ground and played a small pipe, emitting a few notes. The snake rose up, and swayed a little. This is the man's way of earning a little money, we put coins in his little tray. Next, walked further to another set of temples, a very large area on the shore of Bay of Bengal, to the temples ordered by King Rajasimha. These are the largest, and oldest temples in south India, again dating from the 7th century. The salt spray from the ocean, is eroding those close to the shore.

As we left, and drove back toward Madras, we passed a group of men on the side of the road. They were making a local, simple boat, made out of 4 logs of the "matchstick" tree. There was one completed, and men were shaving bark off the logs lying nearby, preparing to make another. We asked the driver to stop, got out and observed the procedure. Web wanted to try the simple tool they were using, to strip bark, he asked, and the men let him try. I took his picture doing it, he said it was not easy. The wood from this tree is very light weight, also white in color, and is used for toothpicks and matches. We left this area, drove on further, then another big SNAFU in India. We were out of gas. Now the temperature was about 110 F., very, very hot. We sat at the side of the road, while the driver stood out and tried to flag down a car, that would take him back 5 kilometers to a village where he could get gas. No one stopped, and finally Web got out there too, waved his arms around, and a motorcycle stopped, the driver would take our driver. We waited over 2 hours there in the heat. During that time we heard very loud explosions nearby, so Jess and I got out and walked toward the sound, in fields. We came upon an area where men were using dynamite to blow up a granite quarry. It had been a small mountain, but now was almost gone. They had trucks down in the hole, that picked up the pieces of granite. The large pieces were chopped, or broken by men wielding sledge hammers, there were piles of various sizes, down to pieces about 4 and 5 inches wide. People were carrying the smaller ones in baskets, to trucks that carried them away. This was a business; imagine people working in that intense heat, carrying heavy granite pieces. We returned to the car, and finally the driver came walking back, carrying a can of gas. He had to walk 5 kilometers, from the source of gasoline. While we waited in the car, several groups of children came by, also an older man, and they tried to converse with us, but spoke the Tamil dialect. One boy spoke some English and said he goes to school, but the girls did not. They were very clean and neat, and seemed happy. The car had to be pushed, after gas was put in, to get it started, Web and 2 passersby did the pushing, the driver steered. Finally, we were on our way back to Madras, we missed our lunch, were supposed to stop at Fisherman's Cove, a beach resort, but were too late due to the gas problem. We finally got home, very hot and tired, and knowing that we depart tonight by air, for Calcutta. The south of India is agricultural, there were many plantations of coconut palms, other fruits are grown here also. Villages we passed were quite primitive, there were many grass huts seen, but people seemed well dressed and prosperous, by looks. At one stop at an intersection, a boy stuck a basket of fruit, a local kind, into the open window, wanting us to purchase some. It was unfamiliar to me.

We ate salad that Tony had made, and some noodles, then got busy and packed our bags for the flight to Calcutta. This is north and on the east side of India. I arranged a black, soft one with clothing, that I can carry on the plane, and not have to take the large one and go through the hassle of collecting baggage from the carousel. George arrived home from work at 6 p.m., Virginia had picked up all the tickets, passports, etc. today and she also

brought a lei of jasmine flowers, for Jessie and myself, as a going away memento. She is remaining here for a little longer. About 8 p.m. a car and driver came to take us to the airport, there George saw us to the ticket window, made sure all visas and tickets were all right, then we waited in the departure area until departure at 9:30 p.m. He stays in Madras, to work, but will join us weeks later, when we go to Andaman Islands.

The flight to Calcutta, on Indian Airlines, was all right, were glad we had carry on bags, did not have to go to the baggage department to collect suitcases. As we came out of the airport, a driver was holding up a big card, with Web's name on it, and the name of the transit company. We saw it right away, the contact was excellent, we showed the voucher, and the driver took us to the Kenilworth Hotel in Calcutta. It was 14 miles from the airport, and as we drove through the city it was near midnight, but we noted people lying around, at the edge of the road, on sidewalks, in front of shabby huts; it was really shocking. We had all read the book "City Of Joy" before coming on this trip, and knew of the extreme poverty and unsanitary conditions prevailing in Calcutta, especially in the slum area across the Hooghly river, using the Howarth bridge. This is the area where Mother Theresa has spent her time, helping the sick and dying homeless people., she has established hospitals and clinics in many places. The hotel was fine, a doorman showed us into the large lobby, with marble floor and stairway, then to our room. I had a cot at one side of the large room, there was a full bath and dressing area also. We were all very tired, and retired immediately.

FRIDAY MAY 10

I slept very well, awoke at 7 a.m., bathed and dressed. After breakfast in the hotel dining room, we arranged for a taxi driver (in an auto, not a rickshaw) to drive us around Calcutta for 4 hours, so we could explore the city. It was pleasant in the early morning, but the temperature rose steadily, and it became extremely hot again. The British governed India for over 400 years, it gained it's independence in 1947. There were many old, once beautiful buildings in Calcutta, many were in need of repair but some still looked very good. One, that had been a British government building, was now a historical museum, and had beautiful gardens around it. There was a very large, old Anglican church, we went inside it and viewed the stained glass windows, the dark wood carved chairs for the choir, and pews. A minister was inside and he explained that it was not anymore, St. Paul's Cathedral, as the British named it, but was now Church Of India.

There was a Natural History Museum of India, we entered and saw the exhibits of skeletons from whales and mammals, also small animals from India that were prepared by taxidermy. It was interesting. The streets were cluttered with traffic of autos, carts, bicycles, foot traffic and rickshaws. These are pulled by men, and Calcutta is about the only place in the world where men still pull them, most other eastern countries have adapted to the trishaw, a bicycle frame with a two-wheeled conveyance for passengers in back. A man rides the bicycle and pedals it for power. There were many beggars about, when the car was stopped in traffic, a man, woman or child would stick their hand into the open window and beg for rupees, one time it was a woman carrying a baby. It really was pitiful and sad, to see the condition of many of them.

The driver took us to a Bhrama temple and large grounds. It was 500 years old, there was a priest who spoke English very well, and explained that this was the main temple of the religion, and members must come here once in their lifetime, if at all able. That is similar to the mosque in Mecca, Saudi Arabia: Muslims must come there also, once at least, in their lifetime. We saw a woman offering her little baby to a god, and he explained that previously she had come to the temple and made a fertility request, by hanging a stone in a certain tree, she did have a child, and so must come to the temple and offer thanksgiving to the god Kali, by offering fruit, and strings of flowers. Then he showed us a goat being prepared for sacrifice, it was blessed, had flowers around its neck as it was placed in a stanchion before being killed. Just a little bit away, a monk was standing with his head in a stanchion, and jumping up and down a bit, similar to the goat. Next we went to a wood framework that held a large black stone with carving on it. He said, that is the face of Kali. I found the visit to the temple interesting, a different culture. As he led us out, toward our car, he practically demanded that we each give him 400 rupees for a bag of rice for the poor. I said this was too much, and gave him 200, Jessie gave 250 and the priest pestered Web as we walked, that he must give the priest 400 rupees, for himself. Web finally gave it to him, but was upset by the persistence. I said that this was a beginning experience for Web, a lesson on begging. I learned this in Egypt, years ago, where the demand for "baksheesh" comes from almost everyone, not only the terribly poor. As we drove the streets, saw the poor, and maimed, lying on sidewalks, even at the edge of the street. Often would see people preparing food on the sidewalk, using a tiny flame of propane under a pan. We were stalled in traffic once, in front of a clinic run by Mother Theresa, there was a line of women carrying babies or small children, at the doorway, and one of her nuns was admitting them, slowly. I was able to get pictures, and as we proceeded down the street, saw 2 of her nuns in their white habits, walking toward a hut, they go into these to help the sick and dying.

We had paid for 4 hours of touring the city, but the driver took us back to the hotel in 2 hours, would drive no more. The bell captain explained that the driver would not go over the Howarth bridge, because the traffic on it would be so terrible that we would be stuck there for over an hour, in the terrible heat. We really wanted to go over it, into the other side of Calcutta, but had to give that up. The driver returned no money – but we did not argue. After lunch, and getting cooled off in the dining room, we did take a walk near the hotel, saw some nice buildings including the British Consulate grounds. These were surrounded with nice green lawns, different from the rest of the area. Life goes on right on the sidewalks, leather sandals were made by one man, another was repairing a small machine, people just sit, or lie down, bathing is done right there. Pumps for water are placed, two or three in a block, on the sidewalk and men lather themselves with soap and rinse off with water they pump. They wear just a cloth skirt, and reach under to wash the privates. Some had on a g-string, and stripped to this. I never saw any completely naked. The women come and get a pan or pail of water, they must wash in the hut. There were groups of men and boys near each water source, little children were naked, even in the shopping areas. Men urinate and defecate alongside walls and in alleys, the smell of urine is prevalent. If one does find a public toilet (there are few around) it is usually just a pit in the floor with ceramic tiles on each side, for the feet as you squat to relieve yourself. The toilet room in the museum was large and clean, it had a trough on the floor, with running water flowing to carry the waste. A dipper is nearby, to get water from a vat, it is poured

over privates and left hand may be used to wash there: no toilet paper is provided, only in the hotels. This custom is similar in many middle eastern countries. We rested, on returning to the hotel, had become very hot on our walk. Later on we had dinner, I had the fish and it was very good. We will leave Calcutta in the morning. I did not get the rickshaw ride I had hoped for, there were none in the area where we walked, but we did see a lot of them as we drove this afternoon. The men, and boys who pull, do not live long lives, we were told, it is very hard on their lungs. Also, we noted that they were all barefoot, running on that very hot asphalt road. Their skin must become very tough; what a hard life. There was a call to us at the hotel, from Steve Ponman, George's friend in Madras, giving me a phone contact at his company's offices in Delhi and in Calcutta, just in case we should have any trouble during our travels through India. That was very nice – in this country reservations are not always really confirmed, anything can happen. The transport car is due to pick us up at 8:30 in the morning at the hotel, we will fly to Bagdogra airport, the closest we can fly to Darjeeling, then we will go by car up the steep road the rest of the way. We will be near the Himalaya mountain range, at high elevation. It will be cooler there.

SATURDAY MAY 11

We had a delicious breakfast in the dining room, our bags were ready to leave here, next we will be staying at Hotel Windemere, in Darjeeling, for 3 nights. At breakfast, our waiter asked if we had seen Mother Theresa's hospital yesterday, on our drive through the city. We replied that we had seen one of the clinics, then he told us he had been raised in one of Mother Theresa's orphanage for boys, was educated in the school there up to the 10th grade, then he started working. He still lives at the school and must rise at 4:00 a.m. each day, takes different buses in order to reach the restaurant by 6:00 a.m. His name was Joseph, and he was very appreciative of the care and education he received from the institution. He was a handsome youth, I gave him 100 rupees to help at the school for boys. A driver from the travel agency picked us up at the Kenilworth at 8:45, about 15 minutes late, and drove through Calcutta to the airport. We saw the early morning street life emerging, people washing at the pumps, some carrying water, some cooking, some just lying around. We passed two Sisters of Charity walking along, probably going to aid some sick person in a hut. At the airport we went through check-in all right, carried on our bags, and departed. The flight was about 2 ½ hours.

On arrival at Bagdogra, a driver was waiting for us, he had no sign, but am sure we were easy to recognize, being three Americans, we stood out in the crowd, all the rest were of Indian nationality. He introduced us to a young man who would drive us up the mountain, to Darjeeling, about a 3½ hour ride, he said. The driver had taken our passports and cleared us for travel, there was much security present, for this was an India Air Force Base and we saw soldiers with guns in several places. We bought some cards in the small terminal, then took off. What a ride this was!!!! First we were on relatively flat land, the air was very warm, farming was evident in the area, then we drove up, up, up, and up some more, steadily rising in elevation. The road twisted, turned, it was very narrow, there were hairpin curves, and the driver used his horn almost constantly. He had to stop quickly many times, once he had to back up a ways in order to let a large bus get by, from the opposite direction. Sometimes there were tiny houses right next to the road, they seemed to be just hanging on at the edge of the road, were supported by long poles in the back, where the

land dropped steeply. As we gained elevation large trees appeared, and often we would see baboons sitting at the road edge, several large ones, then families with young ones. The driver told us they wait for people to throw food out to them. At one point, we were completely enclosed by heavy fog, I don't know how the driver could even see the road. Suddenly, in the fog, appeared two elephants, one behind the other, going down the road. I grabbed my camera, took a couple of pictures, which showed mainly fog, but part of the elephants are visible. They took up more than their half of the road – right behind them were two camels, walking. They did not show up much on the pictures. The driver said they had been in a local circus up in Darjeeling, and were returning down the mountain, they were so huge, it was scary to be next to them. After this hard trip, we finally arrived at Darjeeling and our hotel. The elevation is 7800 feet, the city is on several levels as the terrain is steep.

SUNDAY MAY 12

I awoke at 500 a.m., heart birds chirping, it was daylight. I felt good, despite that long, nerve-wracking ride up the mountain yesterday, it took over 4 hours, the road was full of trucks and buses, was hazardous all the way. The hotel Windemere is old, built by the British in the early 1900's, and has not been changed, or modernized. There is a large main building, and two other one story buildings, that have rooms facing the tea plantations on the hills. There is a glass enclosed porch in front of each, our room is very large, has a fireplace, and my bed is a little side room. The bath has all the old fixtures, claw-leg bath tub, with pipe above it for shower, the toilet has the flush tank up on the wall, with a chain hanging down to pull, and the refill little copper pipe is so small that it takes a long time for that flush tank to refill. There was a typed note on the wall, that this was put in about 1912, and they wanted it to remain, not be modernized. In past years, this hotel was a place where officers in the British Army would come and spend time to relax and get away from the heat below. British customs are still retained. The high peaks of the Himalaya mountains are in the distance, 28,700 feet and higher, I hope they will be visible, as fog is prevalent around here much of the time.

There is a narrow gauge train that comes up the mountain to Darjeeling, built over 100 years ago. We passed it's tracks several times, they criss-crossed the road. It is called the "toy train", carries passengers in small, open sided cars, and I hope we can ride on it, for the adventure. There is a small machine shop at one point, on the mountain, that makes up parts, for maintenance, and to keep the train in service, sometimes tracks are washed away, in monsoon time, we saw men and women working at one spot, filling in with dirt near the tracks. At one spot on our drive up, traffic was stopped by police: we could see several policemen smashing bottles, right on the road, they had raided small houses next to the road, a woman was standing the porch of one, screaming and yelling, I could not understand her. Our driver said that it was political, police come up here from areas below, raid houses, looking for, and finding, whiskey. The hill people resent it. I was amazed that they smashed the bottles right on the road, where we had to pass. Politics in India become very violent, I have read of shootings and violent deeds before political elections. Election time in India is next week, we have seen huge signs for politicians, in the cities, and sometimes strings of cars with flags flying, pictures displayed, and music blaring, as they drive along to attract voters. As we entered Darjeeling last evening, we saw many buses,

vans, jeeps, and autos, all filled with people coming for a political rally, and streets were filled with people.

Darjeeling is famous for its tea, plantations are seen on the way up the mountain, after about 5500, 6000 feet elevation. Picking of the tea leaves is done by hand, this is the occupation of most of the people in the area, and the leaves must be picked at a certain time of growth, for the best flavor. The bushes are not extremely high.

In the main building of our hotel are several "sitting rooms", furnished with elegant, old style furniture. One of these rooms serves as the bar, and we had a drink there, before dinner, which was served at 7:30 p.m. in the large dining room. When coming to the hotel, one is asked preference for meals, either vegetarian, Indian or European food, and a written statement is made. It can be changed, or varied. The tables all had white linen cloths, and were set with six pieces of silverware at each place setting. The waiters had white uniforms resplendent with much gold braid trim, and they wore white gloves, old time elegance was evident. The meal was served in courses, I had soup, fish, chicken, several vegetables, and lovely, puffy flat bread.

Right above the hotel area, at the top of the mountain, are several temples of the Brahmin, Buddhist and Hindu religions. People walk on a wide paved path, past the hotel and up to the temples, to do their prayers. We walked up also, and I observed them doing their offerings; at one of them, the priest dabbed his thumb in a small pot of red paste, then brushed the thumb on the forehead of that person, when they finished their adulations. Later on, when walking in the town, I saw several people with this red mark, and knew they had visited the temple that morning. There were bells hanging on the temples, and they chimed in the breeze; it was nice to hear them. The sun is up brightly and enables us to see the fantastic view around us, there is no fog. Our tour agent came to the hotel later in the morning, as we were being served tea on the outside patio, overlooking the steep drop, down the mountain. This trip is a wonderful experience, learning the culture of a different continent. We will take a ½ day trip of the area, also wander through the Darjeeling markets today, and probably take a short train ride tomorrow, on the "toy train".

With a car and driver we toured the area, saw very scenic spots on the mountainsides, overlooking miles of tea plantations, also went to the zoo where we saw black bears, large tigers, and wolves. Next, to the Himalayan Mountaineering Museum, where equipment of all kinds, that is needed to climb the Himalays, was displayed. It was very interesting; also some objects that were recovered from climbers who died in the attempt, were shown. We made a stop at the Tibetan Refuge Center, a place that housed political refugees from Tibet, they would be persecuted if they returned to their country, and are given shelter here. They make many types of crafts and sell them, to have a little money. The sun was out most of the time, but fog swirled in and out, would move away and then return. The snowy tops of the high Himalaya peaks were not visible, but we knew they were there, as there are large photo displays in the hotel, of the mountain range above us, the names of each peak and its elevation. Mt. Everest is the highest. The temperature around Darjeeling is pleasant, a light jacket is needed right now. The swelling I had in ankles and hands, while down in the hot Madras area, is all gone, it really feels good here. Jessie has a head cold, has been sneezing a lot but says she feels all right. We also drove through the shopping area, called

a bazaar, but it was so crowded with people, and with politicians giving speeches and playing loud music, that we left, and will try to shop tomorrow. I did buy some Darjeeling tea, at a shop where the driver stopped. It is supposed to be excellent, and is exported all over the world. Fog swirled in and out during our drive, we never did see snowy mountain tops. On returning to the hotel we had tea, about 4:30, in the library room inside. It had sprinkled a bit, so was nice to be inside near the fireplace. We played cards there, before dinner, where I chose the Indian dish, fish over rice, dahl, vegetables, and banana shortcake for dessert. A young houseboy comes into our room after dinner, makes a fire in the fireplace, so we relax and watch it for an hour or so, then take a warm bath, and retire.

MONDAY MAY 13

My wakeup time was so early, about 3:30, but I felt fine, had slept very well. About 4:30 a.m. I could see it was getting light, so arose, dressed warmly, and went outside. I walked the wide paved path that circles the hotel, and leads to the top of our mountain, there were several people already walking up, toward the temples, I greeted them and all responded "good morning", in English. One couple asked what country I came from, talked briefly, and told me I could see the tops of the Himalaya mountain range if I turned east at a nearby spot, I did so, and sure enough, I could see snow covered peaks. It was a beautiful sight, which they said was only visible at sunrise, and in about fifteen minutes the fog would cover them. There were many local people standing there, or sitting on benches, also enjoying the fantastic view. Some were saying prayers, and touching forehead with fingertips; as hands were pressed together. Tomorrow, I will come here and try again to view the range.

Returning to the hotel, I related my experience to my friends, then we went to the dining room and had an excellent breakfast. I wrote a letter to daughter Mary, sorted clothes, then our tour guide came to take us to the shopping area. It was a surprise to find out there was a street market very close to the hotel, so we dismissed him, said we would like to wander through the area, and we could get back to the hotel by ourselves. It was so interesting, many hand made items were for sale, plus various services were offered, right on the street, one next to the other. These included horse shoeing (a horse was being shod right in front of us), and a dentist, offering his service. 2 men passed us, trekkers, with huge burlap bags of grain on their backs. These were fastened to a band around the forehead, must have been very heavy, they were both bent over as they walked. This is how things are carried for expeditions of mountain climbers, in Tibet. I bought a green, thin wool shawl, beautifully overlaid with silver threads, also a hand crocheted white tablecloth, a book on Sikkem (an area near here) and in a bookstore, found a paperback like a comic book, of the life of Mother Theresa. Very interesting! Also in that store, I found a wood, cloth covered replica of a lady tea picker, with the long bag on her back, where they put the tea leaves. I love to go through local markets in foreign countries. We walked back to the hotel and had another very good meal. All the food is excellent here.

At 2:00 p.m. our driver came and took us to the train station, just a very small, simple building. We wanted to ride the "toy train" for a short distance, did not have time to do the whole route. Men oiled the wheels, checked everything, put water in the boiler, stoked the coal fire, and finally the little engine was ready to move. Our driver found seats for us in the small, wooden cars, with large open windows. The engine huffed and puffed a lot, and

finally started moving. As it went along on the street, boys would hop on the sides, where there was a rail, ride there a little way, and jump off; a regular game! The smoke from the little choo choo train, blew in on us, soon we were out of the town and riding to the station of Ghoom, about an hour away. This little station is the highest railroad station in Asia, 7408 feet. The train pulled 4 cars, the cost to ride was 1.5 R each and it was an interesting experience. Our car and driver were at Ghoom, waiting, and took us back to Darjeeling. Dinner tonight was Mulligawtany soup, pork roast, apple, potato and gravy, vegetables, and apple crisp for dessert. During dinner, an Indian lady who had a very strong English accent when she spoke, played the piano. She was excellent, she had also played during lunch.

TUESDAY MAY 14

We arose at 4:00 a.m. today, dressed, and walked the path to the mountain top, hoping to see the Himalaya range in the distance. By 4:45a.m. we were seated on the benches at the viewing site, and waited quite awhile, but there were too many clouds today and the sun never came through, no mountains visible. That was too bad, I was hoping Web would see them, that was his desire. Yesterday he bought a large coffee-table type book on the Himalayas, at the book store, will have it sent to the U.S., cost was \$90, it is very big, and beautiful. We had an early breakfast, as we leave the Windemere Hotel this morning, to drive back down to Bagdogra. We were given box lunches as we left, that was very nice. On the way, we stopped at a tea processing plant, where we were given a tour that showed us how the tea leaves are spread out on a large wood floor, local girls with bare feet, use small handmade brooms to sweep the leaves into piles.

These go on a conveyor, to the drying ovens, from there they go down to a lower level of the building, where local ladies sit on the floor, with large round baskets in front of them, they sort the leaves before they are packaged. This was all very interesting to see, and I noted that the man who showed us through and explained everything, had the red brush-mark on his forehead. He must have gone to his temple this morning. After the tea plant, we rode on, stopped one more time at a roadside stand, where a man was selling ginger root, grown locally here. We bought some from him, to use in cooking. The road down the mountain (not the same one we came up) was very narrow, twisted and turned a lot. There was no fog though, as we descended, guess we left that up in Darjeeling. We arrived in Bagdogra about noon, were taken to the airport, for a flight at 1:00 p.m. to Delhi. The driver took our passports to the departure desk, and arranged the flight. There were no seat assignments here, just boarding passes. At the security check, they opened my carryon bag and looked inside, but all was o.k. There was a metal coat hanger inside, maybe the metal alerted them? The flight to New Delhi was 2 hours, we were comfortable. As we stepped off the plane there, a blast of heat hit us, almost unbearable. We had been in cool temperatures, now back down at low elevation, the temperature was 43C (116 F.) It almost took your breath away. As we exited, a man wearing the Sikh type turban approached us, he had the travel voucher to identify himself, and we 3 Americans were probably easy for him to find. He took us to the Connaught Hotel, where we had separate rooms, did not share here. We showered, had some food, I had shrimp cocktail, then all resorted our luggage, as we want to leave 2 bags here, until we return in 4 days from Jaipur, which is our next stop. We retired early, as we must rise before 4:00 a.m. in order to be at the airport at 4:30. The flight to Jaipur is at 6:00 a.m.

WEDNESDAY MAY 15

I awoke at 3:30 a.m., before the 4:00 wake up call, on the phone. We were ready when the same transit man who brought us to the hotel, came to take us to the airport. He will meet us again, when we return to Delhi from Jaipur. At the airport, after getting boarding passes, we had to get on a bus and be driven to the aircraft, which was parked on the tarmac. That reminded me of Saudi Arabia, we had to do that also when boarding a plane there, no covered, elevated walkway into the plane. The flight was only 45 minutes. We were now going to the western state of Rajasthan, which is very rural, and a dry, desert-like part of India, also very, very hot. A man was waiting to transport us, his name was Adiyet. We really appreciate a driver waiting for us, at each of our stops, this was arranged by the travel lady in Madras. Adiyet took us to the luxurious Rambagh Palace Hotel, which was formerly the palace of a Rajah, now India has made several of these palaces into hotels, so visitors can see how the former royalty lived. We drove through the streets of Jaipur to the hotel, saw camels hitched to carts and pulling them in the heavy morning traffic. At a market place many camels and carts stood while men loaded them with large sacks of grain, purchased in the market. The area close to Jaipur is used for agriculture, wheat, millet and similar grains are grown near here. The air was very warm and traffic was the usual mix of bicycles, carts pulled by horse, camel, bullock, or man, autos, and people walking.

Reaching the hotel, we found it to be of mogul architecture, with round onion-type domes seen at several roof corners, it was 2 stories high and had open balconies facing the very large green lawns surrounding it. The front door was very tall, and was covered with gleaming brass, which was decorated with designs that were made by pounding with a blunt object. A uniformed doorman opened it for us, he wore the clothes of the former military in this state, his high turban had some of the material falling down his back. I learned later, that these turbans consist of 40 yards of thin, gauze material. I took his picture, he looked so majestic. There was much marble used inside, including the entrance stairway, which was covered with a red, hand made carpet. The manager greeted us, we were shown to our room, which we discovered, was the Lord Mountbatten suite, the nameplate was on the wall by the door. It is a huge room, with very high ceilings, an archway to a sitting area furnished with a sofa and large chair, a table with fresh fruit on it, and a TV, then 2 double beds and a walk-in closet, also a very large bathroom and dressing area. There was even a hair dryer there. There were ceiling fans and 2 window air conditioners in the suite, but it still was not really very cool, just better than outdoors. This was occupied by the British Lord Mountbatten, in the last years of the British occupation. It was ordered built by the Rajah of Jaipur 150 years ago, and exudes elegance.

We had breakfast in what used to be the ballroom, it was very large, with high vaulted ceiling and beautiful decoration up there. It is now filled with beautiful tables and upholstered chairs, linen cloths on the tables, and uniformed waiters present. Luxury was evident everywhere. After eating, the driver picked us up again and drove us through the city, there were people, people everywhere, many crowding around the vegetable markets on the street. We stopped at the ancient observatory, where hundreds of years ago, constellations were observed, by strange looking objects, these were explained to us. Next

we were taken just outside the city, to the fort high up on a hill, called Amber Fort. This was the fortification of the city, during past wars, and also was used as a residence for the Maharajah in those times. The whole area is surrounded by a high wall, that kept enemies away. The Maharajah would receive visitors by elephant, from the street below, a road wound up to the top. Of course, I wanted to go up this way, as I like the adventure, so Jessie and I ascended the high platform where the elephant waited, and were seated on a simple hoda, the place where passengers ride. The mahout, or elephant driver, was seated on the head, right in front of us, he was a young boy. They train for a long time, to handle the animal. It took a long time to ascend to the palace up on top, was very hot in the sun. Wilbur chose not to ride, but wanted to stay down in the shop area, out of the sun. There were a couple of elephants, transporting visitors, I took pictures, also some were coming down. At the palace, we were escorted through the rooms, after ascending a very wide, high stairway. There were a few baboons scampering around, as we walked the stairway. How exciting this visit, and elephant ride, was for us! The rooms were beautifully decorated, in one there were semi-precious stones set in the walls, garnet, amber, jade: we were told that real rubies, emeralds, etc. had been used in the past days, but the government has now removed them. On the ceiling of one of the rooms, pieces of mirror were set, in mosaic pattern, they shined and gleamed. The rooms were not occupied by furnishings now – we were told this fort and palace was started in 1592., it is in good repair.

After going through all the rooms, we returned to the streets below by auto,, it was faster. We found Web in a textile shop examining the materials, he had gone in there to get out of the sun. Our driver wanted to take us to several other places he said would be interesting, but we just chose one. It was the former “ladies palace” of the Maharajah, the ladies of his harem lived there. The buildings were very old, consisted of many rooms, which now were filled with, mainly, girls and women making beautiful rugs by hand. First we saw girls of age 10 and 11, twisting the wool yarn, then ladies spinning it, next were people weaving on large looms, creating patterns by hand, and as the rug was finished, a boy with needle and thread made the edging. These steps were going on in adjoining rooms. After the rug was finished, it was spread out and washed, the water was squeezed out, then the back was burned lightly, to get any uneven bits of yarn, the loops were slashed and a man with a large scissors cut any threads that extended too far. What a lot of work to make these beautiful oriental rugs, it is not surprising that they are costly. All are beautiful, we saw many in the showroom, and Jess and Web bought a small one for a wall hanging. It had a peacock on it.

After all this, we went back to the hotel, relaxed, then decided to go to the enclosed swim pool and health club that was on the grounds in the garden area. It was a beautiful place, floors were of marble, as was the pool. It was 25 yards long with a large deck, was 11 feet deep at one end, shallow at the other, had dressing rooms and a gym area also. We swam awhile, did some exercises in the water, then went outside, sat in lounge chairs and had a glass of beer. We talked about all the things and places we have seen on this trip, then after awhile went back into the pool for a little more swimming.

We were alone in the pool most of the time, but then a man, his wife and their boy came in. They were from America, so we talked a bit and learned that they had lived in Thousand

Oaks, California, but left there in 1983 as he took a job in Saudi Arabia, just as I did in 1980! They still reside there, in Jeddah, he works for Lytton Industries. What a coincidence, to meet fellow countrymen, with similar experience in Saudi, way over here in India. They are traveling, on holiday time from his job. His name was Robert Johnston, had been a U.S. Marine for eleven years, now was in the reserves. His wife was Denise, they are both scuba divers, he is a PADI Dive Master, she is a PADI Dive Instructor. We had interesting conversation together.

On returning to our room we were told that there would be a wedding this evening on a stage set up right under the balcony, across from our room. The manager said we would be welcome to observe, but not mingle with guests below, we could see many tables being set up around the huge lawn below, they were covered with rose colored gathered skirts. Guests would begin arriving at 6:00 p.m., and after the wedding 3000 invited guests would be served dinner out there. So we sat on the balcony, in comfortable chairs, and watched the preparations going on: floral patterns, made of colored flower petals, were being made alongside the sidewalk in a couple of places, a pre-formed arch was placed over the drive and covered with pink and orange flowers, the arriving guests would walk under this when they emerged from carriages. Hundreds of high-backed chairs were brought by trucks and placed on the grassy area in front of the stage, for family and close friends, the many others attending would stand further away, out near the tables. About 7:00 p.m. many had arrived, a little later a car drove up near the arch, an elderly lady got out, an attendant carried crutches for her, they went through the arch and she was assisted to a chair right near the stage. I wondered if she was a grandmother????? Soon another car, a large, black limousine, stopped near the arch and the bridegroom got out. He wore a white suit, walked briefly amongst the people, then to a small shrine, where the red Rajasthan headgear (turban) was put on him, then he proceeded to the stage and was seated in a big velvet chair. The stage had a flower bedecked background, strings of flowers hanging down from the top framework, covered the area. Soon the bride came into view, from a corner entrance of the hotel, accompanied by a crowd of women. She wore a pink bridal gown and veil, walked slowly to the stage, and was seated in a large chair next to the groom. Soon they stood and faced each other, he put a rope of flowers over her head and shoulders, then she did the same to him. Everyone cheered, those close to the stage, threw handfuls of flowers toward them. Many children went up to them, a few at a time, and congratulated the pair, who then went down amongst the nearby guests. The barbecue fires were seen blazing, at the edges of the huge lawn, and soon food was served from the many pink-skirted tables.

We went to the beautiful, big dining room at that point, for our dinner. I had Indian style lamb, in creamy yogurt/curry sauce, tandoori vegetables, and the soft, local flat bread. The name of the lamb dish is : maas ki kadhi, I enjoyed it very much. Following dinner, again watched the festivities below, from our balcony. The small group of Indian musicians with flute, string instrument and drums, had played first, now a larger group with bagpipes and large bass drum continued the entertainment. Huge groups of guests were still arriving to join the festivities. It was dark now, one could see the strings of colored lights that had been placed along the crenellated edges of the roof, also tiny white and some colored lights, decorated bushes along the driveways. The man being married must be a very

important and rich one. What a great treat, to have witnessed this cultural event, in traditional Jaipur, India!

Nan == bread

Pundin Pratha == soft flat bread, with mint

THURSDAY MAY 16

I slept so well in our large room, I figure it to be about 30x55 feet, the ceiling fans were going all night, for the 2 window air conditioners have a hard time really cooling the suite. We keep the bathroom door closed, to keep the cooler air in the sleeping area. I rose at 6:00a.m., went out on the balcony and viewed the area below, where the wedding had occurred. There was much litter on the grass, bits of paper and flower petals. The skirts had already been taken off the tables, as I watched men came to rake the debris and clean the area. I went down with my camera, and took a picture of the strings of flowers for the stage background, they were askew a bit, from people brushing against them often, and it wasn't long before the men had everything removed from the stage, and the lawn cleaned. They also took down the flower covered arch and chairs were piled into carts and taken away. Soon we had breakfast, then went out with car and driver to view the "pink city". A former Maharajah had a city built, about 12 blocks square, entirely of pink stone, from mountains nearby. It is of the mogul architecture, decorated in places with white stone. There are many buildings, it must have been simply beautiful at that time, windows are often screened, with only small openings to view out, and let air flow through, but no one can view women inside. Now, business is carried on here, signs hang from fronts of buildings, camels and carts ply the streets, there is much activity, trishaws are used to transport people here, no rickshaws, some trucks and autos are seen, but not many.

We went to the City Palace, consisting of 2 buildings, a museum of clothing, etc., and one containing armory and warring materials. The museum had costumes of the Maharajah and his lady, made of beautiful, rich fabrics, court attire made with gold and silver trim, all were very beautiful. There were also excellent carvings of ivory and marble. The armory contained swords, daggers, helmets, coats of mail, weapons of many kinds when warriors fought from backs of elephants. There were guns from olden days, Web particularly enjoyed seeing them. In another building were huge rugs hanging on walls, that had been taken from palaces, some were 400 years old. Many houdas were displayed, these are the seats that the royalty (and other passengers) used when being transported atop an elephant. Many were lined with velvet, some had gold fringe all around, those for royalty were especially elaborate. It was very worthwhile time spent, viewing all these historic objects, it almost made life in past centuries come to life. Ceilings in the large rooms were repainted 60 years ago, the designs were unique, showing great artistry, and they looked so fresh, just as if they were painted yesterday.

In the afternoon we went to a gem store, Web bought a pair of diamond earrings for Jessie. In that store, we were shown how the local gemologist prepared a ruby for setting in a ring. He put a wad of sticky putty on the end of a very small stick, put the uncut gem on it, then made a sharpening wheel turn, by pumping a foot pedal, and slowly pressed the gem against the wheel, turning it in different positions. He then gave me a small garnet on the end of a small stick, for a souvenir. I show it, when presenting a lecture on India. Back at the hotel we went for a short swim, relaxed with a glass of beer and a snack, then dressed

and repacked suitcase, because we leave this early evening for Jodhpur, still in the state of Rajasthan. The driver took us to the airport and helped us through the security check, and getting boarding passes: I had to open my black case, which was a nuisance, but everything was o.k. Departure of the plane was one hour late, they don't keep schedules well, but we arrived o.k. in Jodhpur after a 50 minute flight. A driver met us, with his identification, and the voucher from travel agency.

We were driven to the Umaid Bahwan Palace, another of the palaces of yesteryear, that are now being used as hotels. It was just dusk as we arrived, and we had a beautiful sight of this majestic palace sitting on top of a hill, overlooking the city. It is built of light tan stone, sits up like a castle, but is of more modern architecture. An architect from England was employed, and he modeled it after buildings there, built in later years. It is 2 stories high, with a central domed area above that. The central foyer, reached after a reception area, has curved, wide stairways on each side of it, then walking through that area, we found another huge circular foyer with large upholstered chairs and lounges placed here and there. This palace is even more elaborate than the last one, the Rambagh Palace Hotel. All attendants were very courteous to us. We were assigned to our room, a large one, with 3 beds, nice chairs, a fireplace, full bath and dressing area. We were tired, soon bathed and retired. I forgot to mention that yesterday, as Web, Jess and I were doing some exercises in the pool, the female attendant there was very interested in learning about them (these are the ones I teach and are my occupation) as she does massage for many of the wealthy Indian ladies, and would also like to help them regain their shape, after childbirth. She spoke English well, gave me her name and address, took mine, said she might write to me.

FRIDAY MAY 17

I slept well, arose about 6:15, and went out to the broad patio at the rear of the building, we were told that breakfast, or dinner, could be had there. I had to walk through the marble corridors, or huge foyer, all the time hearing the soft, stringed instrument music in the background. There are open balconies all around the building, from our room we can go out to one, through the bathroom door, and view the elaborate lawns and flowering bushes. The air was fresh and cool as I stood on the patio, enjoying the early morning, I am a "morning person" always like to rise early and be outdoors right after sunrise. I spent many, many weekends camping at the Red Sea beaches, mountains and deserts, sleeping out under the stars and waking to early dawn. Birds were giving their calls, and a couple of peacocks were strutting around nearby, giving their raucous sounds. They dragged their long tails behind them. Peacocks are found very often in rural parts of India, I was told. The patio where I stood, faces a monument called "The Pillars", it sits in the center of a very large grassy area. An Indian lady, wearing a light green sari, was watering this lawn by pulling a big hose, and spraying water, this was her employment – women do the same work done by men. She also watered the rose bushes that were planted in small circular areas, around the lawn, and some flowering bushes. The Indian people love flowers!!!! The "Pillars" monument is made of white marble, consists of 8 large columns spaced about 3 feet apart, sitting on a raised platform, and covered with a roof. Between the patio edge and the lawn, is a clay tile covered area, where dancers perform in the evenings. Now, I stood and enjoyed the beautiful scene before me, the cool air, and the adventure of being

here, where the present Maharajah of this area, still lives. As I stood, a waiter approached, asked if I wanted breakfast, I replied not yet, but later, when my friends will also.

When they came, we ate on the patio. Birds were flying past, peacocks strutted around: a male was courting a female, would strut past her, fanning his huge tail out, closing it, coming near her and repeating the procedure. Then he flew atop a low wall nearby, sat, with his long tailfeathers dragging down. I took his picture – Never before have I had breakfast with entertainment like this! The cool air will quickly leave and temperature will be 40 to 42 CM today, very, very hot. I chose oatmeal with milk, banana, fresh lime juice, croissant and coffee. Following this, our driver appeared, with an English speaking guide, to take us through the city, and to the fort Mahran Garh, another palace atop a high prominence, where the Maharajah would reside at time of attack.

The fort is very large, sits up high, is surrounded completely by a wall. We had to walk up a long way (no elephant ride here) from the parking area, on a road of stones. We passed a “water seller”, a local man who had several clay jugs of water on a platform, there were a few plastic glasses sitting there. He sold water to drink, by the glass – I did not see any place for him to wash them after use. Also, just inside the fort, found a man with his local-type divided drum, preparing to play it, but first he was winding his high turban around his head, the unfinished part hung down to the ground. I felt lucky to be able to get his picture. Inside we found groups of Indian people touring the rooms too, some of them greeted us smilingly, were friendly, and children often said “what’s your name?”. I took many pictures. The rooms of the Maharajah were large, with high ceilings, painted in beautiful art work, sometimes the sidewalls were too. Many statues, carvings and other treasures were shown, dancing girls performed in a large room. In another area hand crafted silver items, gold thread embroidery on damask materials, ivory carvings, and several houdahs were displayed. There was even an entire, elaborate tent set up, which the princes would use when they took an entire entourage, and spent time in the desert, hunting animals. No comforts available at the time, were spared, on these trips. Our guide was very good, spoke slowly, so we could understand him well – much better than yesterday’s guide, he spoke too fast, in a monotone. My film ended, in the fort, would have to buy more. Web spoiled his film, could not get it out of the camera properly, was disturbed by that. From our guide I learned the Umaid Bhawan palace was commissioned to be built, in the 1920’s, by Maharaja Umaid Singhji , grandfather of the present Maharajah, shortly after there had been a long famine in the area. A London firm was selected for architects, and the English style is evident, it is not in the Moghul style , as is the palace in Jaipur. Construction provided employment here for thousands of people, and created a memorial to the craftsmen of those days: stone sculptures, carvings in wood, great metal covered doors, iron work, mosaics, carved grill work, paintings, all are wonderful. In 1944 the present grandson of Umaid Singhji and family, took up residence and still reside here, on the upper floors. Rooms and corridors are graced with lovely pieces of furniture, carved sideboards, gold-sprayed iron works, carved tables and chairs. The soft eastern music is pleasant to hear as you go through the halls. The guide gave us this information as we returned to the palace hotel.

I should mention here that this is the wedding time in India, and explain that culture. Thousands of weddings will take place, many of them in highly decorated halls for that purpose. With the common people, the groom will ride to the bride’s house on a horse,

decorated with a shiny, sequin-like blanket, he will stop at the gate, knock on it 7 times, then he can go in. There will be a ceremony, everyone will know he is married, for the wedding symbol will stay on the gate for 7 days. We were fortunate to see the wedding horse on the street, in different places, several times. Indian people depend a great deal on astrology, and guide their lives according to the sign they were born under. When up in the fort this morning, one could look down on the city of Jodphur below, our guide explained that two different religious cults live here, without enmity (as occurs in some places). The Brahmin people live on one side, and Hindus on the other, houses here are flat roofed, one story, and usually painted a soft blue. I am really enjoying learning all these things, in Jodphur. In the fantastic circular foyer of the hotel, 3 stories high, with the domed ceiling, there are quite a few mounted heads of leopards and tigers on the walls of the staircases, these animals were native to the desert and wooded areas north of here and were hunted by the princes and Maharajas. Camels, which stand the heat of the desert, are still used here. As we viewed an exhibit in the fort this morning, a group of Hindu women and children came by, I had wanted to get a close-up photo of women here, so asked their permission to do so, they smilingly accepted, even held up a baby to be in the picture: it was just beautiful!

In the afternoon we rested a bit, Web took a nap, then we went to the swim pool, which was situated in the lower level, under the hotel. It was large, circular in shape, but was not deep, and surroundings were not as luxurious as the hotel in Jaipur. The water temperature was about 80 F, it felt cool as you entered, but was fine to swim for exercise. After a while, we went outside, sat in lawn chairs, had a glass of beer, then dressed and played cards for awhile in the Heritage room, which had large pieces of carved furniture, chests, tables and chairs. We discussed our next place to visit – I had desired to go to Jaiselmer, which was further west in the desert. My friends did not want to go there, as it gets even hotter than this area, it is a 6 hour drive one way, and would not allow me to come back in time to tour the rural villages nearby, which I wanted to do, so I decided to skip that plan. We had dinner on the patio area, the waiter had our table all ready. I chose fish Floretine, which was pieces of fish in a creamy sauce, served over spinach, very good! About 7:00 p.m., as it got dark, lights went on over the flat, tiled area between the patio and the Pillars monument, and musicians played there in front of us. There were 2 men and 2 small boys, they used drums, a flute, and the tiny cymbals commonly seen here. When they moved to the side, 3 female dancers, clad in the costumes native to this area, appeared, and performed dances, for a whole hour. It was lovely to view, we took pictures. A glass of wine was served with our meal. When dinner and the dancing was finished, we retired to our room, read a paper from the area, and retired.

SATURDAY MAY 18

I slept very well, am thankful my body is cooperating, in carrying out this long trip. Jessie said she is feeling better, she has had a head cold for a week – now Wilbur said he is feeling his throat is thick. I hope I don't contact it. I arose at 5:45, dressed, and went out to the garden area, walked around a bit, then sat at a table, listened to the birds and watched the peacocks. This is the best time of the day here, the early morning. There is a delightful breeze and air is cool, the sun is not yet through the thin hazy sky. The sounds of the nearby town can be heard, horns blowing from the cars already in the streets, people going

to their jobs. This hotel is quite empty, for this is the hottest part of the year, and there are not many tourists in India at this time, temperatures go up to 116 F in the afternoons. We are doing all right, do sightseeing in the mornings, and relax or swim in the afternoons. It is dry here in desert area, not humid, as it was in Calcutta and Madras. This state of Rajasthan was the wealthiest in days past, the Maharaja's income was listed (in the fort yesterday) as over one billion rupees a year --- no wonder he could build such a fabulous "castle", or palace, as we are staying in. The Indian government is trying to entice more tourism from other countries, they have taken the former palaces and are using them as hotels. This is a wonderful idea.

This morning a tour of nearby, rural villages is planned, after breakfast on the "Pillars" patio. I had the usual "porridge" (oatmeal) with milk, tomato juice, toast, butter and jam, coffee. This holds us until dinner time, we feel we don't need lunch. Our guide came in a jeep, which he drove, he spoke excellent English and proved to be very informative. We climbed into the jeep, he drove across town, stopped at a photo shop to get more slide film from my camera, but the shop was not open. I missed out on taking photos in the villages, but can use Web's negatives later, to have slides made. Our first stop was far away from town, a house made of dung, mud, some water, and chopped dry straw. This is shaped into walls for the house, also a low wall surrounds the area where house stands, also more land where there grain is stored in a mud built tower, and where they prepare food. This sect of people are vegetarians, they do not kill animals, don't cut down trees, but take large branches to use for roofing, they live mainly on millet and other grains, fruit from a tree, they dry some of it and store for use at times of the year when none is produced, also they get milk from their cows. There were several women, one man, and many children at this house. The women wore bright colors, not saris, but a flared skirt, tight bodice that was low at the neck, and some showed bare skin at the waist. Sometimes beads and embroidery embellished the bodice, a wide, shawl-like veil was on their heads and hung down in the back, sometimes they drew it over the shoulders. The married woman often pulled it over her face, the unmarried ones had face open to view. The husband objected, when I wanted to get pictures of them, but later on, when he went on his motorcycle, to take cans of milk, (which were strapped on each side of it) to a village to sell, they let us get pictures. They showed us how they pound the millet, in a hole in the ground, using a short pole, to make flour. Also a girl sat on the ground, used a tall spike that was attached to a whirling wire down in a jug of milk, she was making "ghee", their soft equivalent to butter. The roof of the house was made of bundles of dry millet stalks, tied together, and laid over branches from trees, roofs were cone shaped on 2 other small buildings, I presume they were for storage.

I had asked our guide earlier, to arrange for me to ride a camel while we were in this area. My friends were not anxious to do this. He spoke with the women, two of them went into the fields, and brought one back -- he was the biggest camel I had ever seen (and I saw many of them in Saudi deserts) and he was ornery! They drove him by tapping him with small switches, brought him right to the walled area. He jerked his head, stamped feet, kicked back legs out, but finally two ladies got a thin rope up over his head, and through a ring on each side of his jaw. The guide had to help them to do this. It was kind of scary to watch him, we jumped aside as he kicked out, this was an ornery camel! Finally they got him to lie down, he folded his legs under him, and the women threw a piece of rug over his back, motioned that I should get on his back. I started to do this, got one leg astride his back, he

immediately objected and started to rise --- Whoa, I thought --- the rug was not fastened at all, and I would immediately fall off as he got up, so I decided to abandon the idea of a ride, it was not worth a possible fall, and injury. I have ridden camels before, but the area where you sat was firm, and fastened to the camel. Then the ladies put a wood frame on his back, fastened it around his body, and hitched the frame to a cart. I'm sure they would receive money from our guide, for providing the camel, and probably did not want to lose that, so would give us a ride instead, in the cart, with the camel pulling it. So much for the camel safari idea I had.---- Little boys were coming near at that time, probably from lessons, and we asked them to ride with us, also one of the ladies got in the cart, another one led the camel, so he would not run away.

After this fun event, we drove in the jeep to another village, over bumpy tracks in the semi-desert area. This time it was to the clay pot-makers. The village was more cluttered than the last place we visited, that was all neat and orderly. It was not large, just a few huts gathered together, and some sheds to protect people from the hot sun. There were scads of little children, most all with their hands out, begging. I had a new roll of certs, and started giving them out, one at a time. Seeing this, they clutched at my arms, my bag, my skirt -- so many children. The pot maker sat on the ground, in front of a flat wheel of wood, set on a stick in the ground, so the wheel could spin. Pre-formed bunches of mud were on the ground near his body, he would push the wheel with a firm stick until it was revolving very fast, then he put a mound of clay on it, dipped his hand in water, and shaped the mound into a pot, about 12" high and 8" diameter at the bottom. Then he used a string, kept it taut, as he slid it under the clay, and removed the pot. He set it aside to harden a bit. Next we went to a nearby stall, where 2 men sat on the ground, each had a burlap cloth on them, as sort of an apron. They held a flat wood mallet, took a damp clay pot, and hammered at it with the mallet, turning it often, and expanding the clay into a larger pot. This was so interesting to see, all primitive type hand work, no electricity is available out here in these rural areas, to keep the wheel spinning. I gave the pot maker 5 rupees, I enjoyed seeing his skills. Now the guide showed us the huge pile of tree twigs and branches in an open pit, many expanded pots sat on the ground around it; later these branches would be burned, and the pots would be baked, and thus hardened. They are used mainly, as water jugs, women have to carry water from a stream, or small reservoir. There is no sanitation of any kind in the rural areas. Next we saw an older lady sitting on the ground, she wore a red dress and a bright veil, had a flat, metal ring in her nose. She was painting pots, the large ones, also had a few quite small ones also. We were told the dark red color came from red sandy soil in this area, black from black sand, yellow from curry, all natural products. She painted designs, a peacock with a long tail of feathers, another one with short tail, a scorpion, objects that she sees in her area. I gave her 5 rupees for a very small jar, with a little cover.

Leaving the pot village, we went to the home of a weaver, this was a small flat-roofed building which housed a primitive style loom. There was a large pit in the floor, where the legs of the weaver would go, as he sat at the loom. Threads of wool were strung over the framework, many of them, and a boy of about 9 was holding the spindle, which held other threads, he would push it back and forth through alternating threads, thereby making a fabric. We were told by our guide that the wool is purchased from farmers who raise sheep, and sell the wool. It is dyed different colors, using dye purchased elsewhere, so they

can have varied colors. I purchased a finished piece, all wool, it was pink and green, with fringed ends, paid 250 rupees. The ladies from the few houses were seated nearby in a circle, on the ground, looking at and buying, bangle bracelets, trinkets, needles, facial decorations such as the red dot seen on women's forehead. I asked, how does it stay on, one woman took one from a card full of them, and pressed it on my forehead. It stayed on! This is a decoration, to keep the person from evil, I was told, not only to depict a married woman. The guide said the man was a "peddler", who came to these little villages and sold items. The inside of the house had a clean, neat look, the cooking fire was on the ground in one corner, with a hole in the thatched roof above, for smoke to escape. A large, mud plastered, round-topped granary outside, held their millet, it was sealed at the bottom to keep out rodents. When they needed the grain, they broke a hole near the bottom, grain ran out on their cloth, then they sealed the hole again, with a cover, sealed with mud. All the villagers in these clusters of a few houses, are smiling and friendly, and of course all welcome rupees given them from tourists. The bright colored, ground length, dresses that ladies wear, make them stand out as they walk across fields, often carrying a pot of water on their heads. There is a reservoir, built long ago by a Maharajah, to serve animals, and people. We saw a camel drinking from it.

Later, a canal was built to carry water from the reservoir, to the edge of Jodphur, there it is pumped into the city. We drove along this canal for a long way, often saw children jumping into, and playing in it – others swarmed out, as we passed. Water buffalo, which are used to till fields, laid in it here and there, cows drank there, it served many purposes. Ladies from farms, and villages, walk to it and carry water back to their houses. Our guide had us stop at another house where we made a visit, the lady there showed us the cloth-covered soft ring they put on their head, under the water pot, to help balance it. It was red, and had pieces of silver colored cloth sewed on it, also some dangled down a bit. I bought it from her for 50 rupees. The lady then offered tea, as we sat on the primitive cot, made from wood and dried strips of reed woven together. This was risky, because we don't drink local water here, but the guide said it would be safe, for the water was boiled first. It was sweet, also had milk in it. Mine came in a glass, as is often the custom in middle east, Web and Jess had theirs in cups. After this we drove back to Jodphur, passing the pumping station I mentioned. We stopped there for a view, there was an arch up over the road, and through that arch came a large group of cows and calves, they passed a group of peacocks on a platform there, also some more were on the other side of the road. The peacock is the national bird of India, and it is so nice to see them in their natural habitat. We also saw many gazelle during the morning, some were dark colored males with large horns, and lighter colored females, they did not have horns. They were quite easily seen, and seemed not too frightened, for the locals do not hunt them, it is against their belief.

As we came back to the busy, busy city streets, we made a stop at a shop, hoping to buy slide film. The man in the shop did not have it, but ran to another store, came back with 2 rolls of Fuji slide film and I bought them for 175 R each. In Madras I paid 185 R. There will be many more opportunities for photos, I am sure. I cannot be without film. In the afternoon Web rested, for he now was not feeling very well, I think he is coming down with the cold that Jessie had. Jessie and I went down to the hotel pool, swam for awhile, laid in the sun to relax, then swam again, showered and dressed. Our travel lady, Ms.Kusum Joshee came to the hotel about 4:00 p.m. to return our air tickets to me, she had made the

reservations for a flight tomorrow evening, to return to Delhi. We will be transported from the hotel to the airport. When she left we played cards in the card room until dinner, in the dining room. I chose roast duck for this meal. We retired about 10:00 p.m.

SUNDAY MAY 19

I awoke early, as usual, said prayers of thanks for this fine trip, and rose about 5:30 a.m. I was sneezing a bit and my throat felt thick – guess it is now my turn to catch the cold my friends have had! After dressing, went outside to the patio area, watched the peacocks strut around, also observed the lady groundskeeper, dressed in her green sari, water the big lawn. The air was fresh and pleasant, as is usual in the early morning, I also sent a few cards, one to the bank manager at Home Savings, they sponsor my monthly travel slide lectures back in Thousand Oaks. At 7:00 Web and Jessie came down for breakfast, which we had again on the patio. It was so pleasant enjoying food and friendship, in this lovely setting.

Our morning agenda was more sightseeing in Jodhpur, we were picked up again by our guide Mr. Prudeep Singh, and driven to the old capitol building on the north side of town. It was made of local red sandstone, beautifully carved, the buildings here date back to the 17th century. Along a solid rock formation nearby, were life size figures of religious gods: Shiva, god of destruction, Kali, who is the black goddess, Ganesh, son of Shiva and represents good luck, and Vishnu, the highest, who destroys, and does evil. These were carved right out of the rock, and painted brightly. Then we visited the cenotaphs of the wives of Maharajahs. These were small, rock edifices, elaborately carved, and were made as memorials to the wives. The gardens all around them were beautiful, with trees, lawn, and flowers all over. People of the Indian nation really love flowers, and use their petals in many different artistic ways. Next we went out of the city to a large reservoir at a higher elevation, on the edge was a building made of the local stone, this used to be used as a hunting lodge by the royalty, it stood overlooking the water. The stonemasons are artists here, they sit at the side of the road sometime, chipping away with a chisel and hammer. Yesterday we saw fence posts alongside the road, they were tall, thin, slabs of rock, holes were made to run barbed wire through. This is a way to use natural resources here, the mountains have granite, sandstone, etc.

Our driver took us past the Catholic church (all religions are allowed, there are many Christians) and Sunday mass was going on. The small church must have been full, people were crowded together on the steps, to participate, men even overflowed into branches of a large tree beyond the steps entrance, so they could see inside. I made no attempt to go in, would never have made it through the crowd. We were driven back to the hotel, and now Jessie and I wanted to wander through the market a bit. Web said he would observe things in the hotel. I bought a large print cotton material, large enough to cover a bed, the design contained peacocks and cost 100 R (\$5.00), also some silver colored earrings for gifts, and a papaya, which I ate back in the hotel. When we arrived, Web told us the Maharajah came through the lobby while he was standing there, 6 attendants flanked him as he walked, and people were trying to kneel down and kiss his feet! It was nice that Web saw that.

Now we had to pack our bags again. This is becoming to be a difficult task, as I keep buying more, so I decided to wear shorts under my culotte skirt, and wear heavy socks: these items on the body made more room for other items in the black case. I had to put the wool piece I purchased, into the navy, little blue nylon zip bag I had folded up in the suitcase, hang it on the belt I had brought along, and put the belt around my waist. I have traveled this way many times before, with a back pack on my back, a shoulder bag, a small bag hanging from my waist, leaving 2 hands free to carry 2 suitcases in an air terminal. Where there's a will to travel, there's a way. One does not always find a "trolley", or push cart in airports, for baggage. I have circled the world before, and one needs different weight clothing, for the different climates encountered.

We checked out of our room about 5:00 p.m., then played cards in the Heritage room, and had a snack. Our flight to Delhi is at 8:00 p.m., our agent was to pick us up much before that. She was late in coming, and we became anxious, had the desk clerk call her office and learned she was on her way. Walking through these high domed circular foyers, with marble pillars all around, hearing the soft Indian music, is something I'll never forget! It was simply majestic and beautiful.

The driver took us to the Jodhpur airport, obtained our boarding passes, (no seat assignments here, just open seating), and stayed with us until we had to go through security check. I did not have to open any bag this time, but I was frisked two times, by female attendants, before boarding the plane. I was now beginning to feel miserable, sneezing, nose running, guess it is my turn now for the head cold. We arrived all right in New Delhi, and a transfer man was there to meet us. Also, Virginia Aubry was waiting for us. She worked with me in Saudi Arabia, was now traveling in India, had taken a yoga course for a week, in Bombay, and just arrived here today. She will go to the Andaman Islands with us, to snorkel over the coral. It was very good to see her again. We were driven to the Connaught Palace hotel, where we had stayed one night, before going to Jaipur. Now Virginia and I shared a twin-bed room, and Web and Jess had their room right across the hall. I was very tired, my head cold bothered me, it was good to retire soon after arrival.

MONDAY MAY 20

I felt terrible today, though I slept pretty well, was sneezing, my nose ran a lot, and generally was not up to par. I had breakfast in the dining room, but then returned to my room and spent the whole day lying down, thought the rest was the best remedy for the cold. I read my book on India, and napped off and on. About 5:00 p.m. Web and Jess came over to our room (they and Virginia had been out to shop during the day, looking for another suitcase), but this was election day and the shops were closed. They ordered a round of cocktails which we enjoyed together, then went to the dining room for dinner. This was unusual for me to be sick when traveling, I never had to spend the day lying down in a hotel room, while on a trip.

TUESDAY MAY 21

Awoke several times with a dry throat, and felt sneezy, but was better than yesterday. Our plan for today was a drive to see the Taj Mahal, I have wanted for many years, to see it, the last time I was in India my airline plans had to be changed, and I did not get to this area. We arose early, were in the dining room at 6:15 a.m. for breakfast, and the car and driver came at 7:00. The drive was very long, on a busy road that was full of all kinds of vehicles: bicycles, auto-rickshaws, cow-pulled carts, camel-pulled carts, trucks, buses and autos. The temperature rose rapidly, was already over 100 F. We passed villages with poor shacks for housing, some were of brick or stone, some of straw, saw people bathing under a pump, and small boys leading a donkey or a cow. Ladies carried jugs of water on their heads, also saw one woman with a huge bundle of sticks, tied together, also one with a bundle of greens, on her head. It was a steadily changing scene as we drove. Right outside of New Delhi there was an industrial area, with many factories spread out, they were not clustered together. Many large trucks were on the road, all seemed overloaded, also some that had long poles slanting out of the sides, and a cotton tarp, filled to overflowing with millet fodder. They looked so funny! Then we had car trouble – first, a flat tire, which he changed. Then he pulled off the road at a little stall, this was an auto repair shop, he needed to have the spark plugs cleaned, to make the car function better. It was a “poor excuse” for a shop, just 4 poles supporting a reed roof, and a few tools sitting around, but a man worked on the car. As he did so, I wandered nearby taking photos of the rural way of life here.

Continuing on, it became hotter, and hotter, we were very uncomfortable. Of course, cars do not have air conditioning, the open windows just let in a hot breeze. A stop was made about half way in our journey, for bathroom, and a drink of tea. That place had a window air-conditioner, and it was a bit cooler than outside. In front of it were two men, each with a dancing bear standing near him. The bear had a collar and leash, the man held a thin stick, which he used to prod the bear, make it stand up on hind legs, and sway a bit. Of course, they do this to get money from tourists. I did get their photo. Finally, feeling very hot, very uncomfortable, we arrived at Agra, near the Taj Mahal. This small city is not westernized at all, again there were the typical rural scenes, dirt streets, poor buildings. Outside the city is the magnificent memorial we had come so far to see. Immediately we were bothered by several touts with all kinds of souvenirs for sale. They held things up in front of you, waved items in the air, and were really a bother. Many were asking to be your guide, so we selected a young man and followed him into the grounds. Tired and hot, we passed through the gate, stopped to take pictures of the first building. There are 4 like this, one on each corner of the land where the Taj Mahal sits, they are made of dark red sandstone, and passing through this entranceway, we viewed the gleaming white marble memorial at the end of a long, narrow pool of water. This world famous building was constructed between 1632 and 1654, by Emperor Shah Jehan, in memory of his favorite wife, Mumtaz. 20,000 people, including artisans from other areas of the world, worked on it, many parts of the white marble are inlaid with semi-precious stones and the inlay is so fine that joints between the pieces cannot be felt with the hand. There are four minarets, one at each corner, they extend high into the air and lean outward, so they will not fall onto the main building, in case they should collapse. We walked toward it, took several photos, and reveled in it's beauty, though my joy was partly diminished because I felt ill, and the sun was

exceedingly hot, the temperature was 116 F. At the entrance, we had to take off our shoes, and the marble floor was so hot it almost burned your feet. Going inside, I suddenly felt faint, and sat down on a stair, told my friends to go downstairs to view the tomb of Mumtaz, I would just wait here. A beautiful, carved marble screen was across from me, I decided to take a photo of it. A guard with a gun came immediately, and took my camera, said “no photos inside”. He stayed near me, I said I did not see any sign, also that I felt sick. After a few minutes he was saying something I did not understand, then in English said “A gift for me?”. I wanted my camera back, so took out 50 R and gave it to him, this was ruse to get money! When my friends came back I was feeling better, then they told me a guard had taken Web’s camera too, and he got his back. I rested a bit more, and it was not as scorching hot inside, as outside, soon I rose and we went outside, found our shoes and walked back to the entrance building. The moghul architecture here had scalloped arches, and I got a very nice photo of the Taj Mahal, through that arch. Even though it was so hot, I am glad I was here at this time, for there were very few tourists, and my photos will not have a lot of people blocking the view. Millions of people come here every year to see this fantastic memorial. What a passion the emperor must have had for this wife, to build such a memorial to her. We returned to our car, did not stop in the gift shop, as I had planned, because of the heat. There was a Sheraton hotel, very modern, just outside of Agra, we stopped, enjoyed the air-conditioning, and had lunch.

The drive back to Delhi was again long, hot and tiring, the horns blasting almost constantly from our auto, and other auto-rickshaws, was hard on us too. We passed one spot where there were piles of the dried cow dung patties, stacked carefully in high piles. The driver stopped so I could get pictures of this cultural use. The patties are shaped in large circles, and when dry, are used for cooking. Also the local people make round huts out of mud and dung, where they stack the dry patties, and keep them out of the rains. They make intricate designs on the walls of the huts, while shaping the soft mud – it dries hard in the intense sun. The dry patties are sold for cooking fuel, quite unique, I thought. Arrival at the hotel was 7:00 p.m., it was raining lightly, we learned there had been a violent rainstorm here today, with hail and lightening, which had killed 2 people who sought shelter under trees. We were glad we missed that! We took showers, which felt wonderful, I felt much better, then we went to dinner in the hotel restaurant. They featured Chinese menu tonight, but I only had mulligatawny soup and a dessert, “apple crisp with ice cream”. I make apple crisp at home, but surprise! This was different, 4 oval shaped mounds of cooked, caramelized apple, hard as a rock, brown sugar over it, and a dab of ice cream. Jessie ordered it too, and we had to use our knives to break into the crust, it was so hard. It took the chef 45 minutes to make these, and our dinner was delayed until they were finished – one never knows what to expect of the menu here.

WEDNESDAY MAY 22

I slept well and felt good, on awakening at 5:30 a.m., coughed a bit, but the cold seems to be going away fast. When it was light I sat up in the big chair and wrote cards. Virginia was still fast asleep. After an hour or so of writing, and reading a little, I picked up the newspaper that had been pushed under the door, and read the shocking headlines, RAJIV GHANDI KILLED. He was former prime minister, son of Indira Ghandi who was politically assassinated in 1984, he took over when she was killed. I tink he was the grandson of

Mahatma Ghandi, who was so helpful in gaining India's freedom from British rule. Rajiv was campaigning to bring the Congress party back to power, making a speech near Madras, as he approached the dais, a woman handed him a bunch of flowers. She had a bomb attached to her waist, tripped it, and killed them both plus 18 others nearby. What a sad, horrible thing. He was really trying to unite the country, but politics in India are brutal. So we are here on a sad, historic day. Because of this event, all shops and offices are closed. I tried later, to call Mr. Ahuja at the elevator company to thank him for the message from Steve Ponman, who was keeping track of us on our travels, but there was no answer. We will just have to stay in the hotel today.; Later on Virginia and I went, in an auto-rickshaw, to the STD phone office . Here in Delhi it was a large, well run place: I wanted to call U.S.A. and talk to my son Tom, whom I thought might be worried, when hearing about the assassination and political troubles. Virginia wanted to call France. I was asked to put down a deposit of 300R, after signing a paper they gave me, Virginia did the same. We then sat down and waited, soon the man called my name "Irma", and motioned me to the phone booth No. 1. The connection had been made, they were both asleep as it was 11:30 p.m. there, but both Tom and Virginia talked and were glad I called, and that everything is going all right with us. He will call my daughter Mary, and Steve on the weekend, for they are in Yosemite right now. I hope they are having a good vacation there. I received 14 R change from the desk man, when I was finished with the call, figured the call cost about \$14.55. Virginia's call went through o.k. too. Then we walked back to Connaught Hotel, for exercise, it really was not too far. The country will have a 7 day mourning in memory of Rajiv, all shops are closed and there is hardly anyone on the streets, that is so different from the busy, busy traffic. The weather was a little better this morning, about 98 F.

Next we decided to go to the Imperial Hotel (an older one) it had a swim pool and we could spend the afternoon there, since shops were not open and there was nothing to do. We took an auto-rickshaw there, found it to have an outside pool with lawn around it, lounges, dressing rooms and showers, and lunch if you wished. The fee was 120 R per person. There were many "whities" relaxing, or swimming. This is a name used here, for white race people from Europe or other countries, working here in India. It was so pleasant to swim, rest awhile, and swim again, we stayed until after 4:30 p.m. Jessie and Web desperately needed another suitcase (they bought so many things) so we looked for shops that might be open near the railroad station, but everything except food stalls, and fruit stands was closed. People do have to have food – our hotel man told us later that if any shops did open, angry people would destroy, and burn it. So, no suitcase obtained! Back at the hotel we had a drink before dinner, in our room, and now it was my turn to treat. We talked about all we had seen, joked about some of our problems, and the hot weather, had fun together, and went down to the restaurant for dinner. Tonight, the meal was very good. There were few workers in the hotel, for many could not get to their jobs, no buses were available.

After dinner we had to pack, really cram the items we have purchased, into our suitcases, which were already pretty full. Jessie and Web had bags with expandable bottoms, they unfolded downward to accommodate more things, and they were now fully expanded! I ended up filling the black soft-side bag, the white "Cub" bag, and the backpack, now I'm ready to travel. We retired, after watching the news on the TV, they showed in detail, the sad events of the assassination. Rajiv will be cremated tomorrow here in New Delhi, using

the typical Indian ceremony of placing the body on a wood bier, incensing it before lighting the logs. Many dignitaries from all over the world will attend, including the vice-president from U.S.A. The city will be so crowded, I am glad we are leaving and returning to Madras.

THURSDAY MAY 23

Our wake-up call came at 3:45 a.m., a car to take us to the airport was due at 4:30. I had slept well, and was feeling all o.k. My head cold was definitely on the way out, though I was still a bit nasal sounding. We checked out down in the lobby, I had already given them the voucher for the first day, so it all went quickly. Travel is inexpensive here. The driver was a few minutes late and we left the hotel at 4:38 a.m., with all our luggage. There was hardly anyone on the streets at this early hour, and also in the airport. We checked our baggage this flight, everything went smoothly, there was no big crowd around, and we did not have to open suitcases, for security check. Next we had to go outside where the luggage was taken, and identify each piece, before it would be put on the plane. I could only find 2 of our checked bags, and finally a man went inside the airport again, and found Jessie's bag, it had not been brought out. Back in the waiting area, we heard no announcement for our flight, but then boarded hurriedly when we saw people line up, and it was our flight. We left at 5:45 a.m., the plane was an airbus, very large, we did have seat assignments. We were served a good breakfast, I chose scrambled eggs, roll, butter, yogurt and coffee. There was one stop, at Hyderabad, to pick up more passengers. Tomorrow morning we will have to get up very early again, fo take a 6:30 a.m. flight from Madras to the Andaman Islands. We do keep active! There have been some demonstrations in New Delhi after the assassination, because many native people feel the police did not give enough protection to the politician Rajiv, as he spoke in the Madras area. Buses were stoned, autos set on fire, etc. newspapers related the stories.

We arrived in Madras in 2 hours, and now we had no escort to meet us, felt we did not need one in Madras. Virginia found the area where one arranged for a taxi (you had to prepay here), we did get one, and were driven to George's apartment. He was already at work, but Tony was in the apartment to greet us. It was very, very hot again, but it was nice to return to a familiar place. We unpacked some things, took showers, did laundry, and rested. We have done a LOT of traveling, since we left here, have been to a lot of airports, in autos, seen so much, we needed to slow down today, and rest. George came home about 4:30 p.m.. and we chatted for a long time, filling him in on all the wonderful sights we've seen, and all the places we went. We related the good, and the bad, he has not been able to travel throughout India yet, since working here, ha been too busy at the hospital. Tony made a very good evening meal, we ate at home, which we enjoyed. George used the phone at the apartment next door, and reconfirmed our flight tomorrow morning at 6:00 a.m., to the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal, which is the area between India and Thailand. We will have to rise at 4:00 a.m., so went to bed early, after re-packing our suitcases. I put all my purchases into the small red bag that held my folding "wheels carrier" for the suitcase, after it was checked, on the flight here. It was lucky I had thought to bring it along. I have traveled so much, and know one always needs a folding bag of some kind, to carry purchases.

FRIDAY MAY 24

Arose at the appointed time in the morning, I felt a bit “bleary eyed”, but o.k. We dressed quickly, a driver came at 4:30 a.m. and transported us to the airport. Again, the streets were pretty empty, there was no traffic and we made it from George’s house in 20 minutes, that was really quick. It was not crowded, and the security checks were no worse than usual, even a little better,. We were just about to get our boarding passes when we heard the announcement “flight to Andaman Islands delayed until 10:45 a.m.”. What a shock!!!! We had hurried so, to get here. But, guess we have been lucky, our flights were not cancelled before, we were delayed at times. Now Virginia and George suggested we should go to the Triton Hotel, near the airport, have breakfast, and relax there in the nice air-conditioning, until our flight. We did get an auto rickshaw, the hotel was not yet open for breakfast when we arrived, but it did soon, we spent 2 hours there having a meal, and resting. There were several people we had met in the Hash House Harrier race, who came into the restaurant. They were bound for Sri Lanka, to do a run there. Their plane was not due to leave for several hours, but they wanted to be out of Madras today because a political demonstration was planned at the 11:30 a.m. funeral time, and streets would be closed, crowds would gather, bad things could possibly happen.. I did get to thank Steve Ponman then, for his phone call to his elevator company offices, in case we did have travel problems.

After the long wait in the hotel, we went again, to the airport: we had to go through the security checks and then finally boarded the plane about 10:50 a.m., the flight that was supposed to go at 6:00 a.m. It finally left the ground at 11:30, and we were leaving India, bound for one of the islands it owns. The flight took 2 hours, all of it over the Indian Ocean, we had just brought hand-carry luggage, so did not have the hassle of claiming checked baggage.

We had to show our immigration papers, which we had secured in Madras on May 7, our passports were checked, and a female security person made me click my camera 2 separate times, while we were in a darkened room. This is a protected island, and regulations are very strict. A son and daughter of George’s policeman (on this island) friend met us, but their father was on duty elsewhere today, they were taking his place. He had expected to guide us around, when we came here. A bus took us to the Andaman Beach Resort, which was very nice, quite modern. We were given 2 rooms, Web and Jess had one, George, Virginia and myself had the other, very large and with 3 beds. Upon driving in we noted the wonderful landscaping, beautiful gardens, tall palms, flowers everywhere. After getting settled and unpacking some things, we went into the ocean, right in front of the hotel – even though it was misting a bit. The air was warm and humid, and the water was delightfully warm, the beach was sandy and low rolling waves came in gently. What a wonderful feeling for me to be in a warm, salty ocean again!!!! We all used our masks and snorkels to practice a bit, but of course, you don’t see many fish, or any corals in the shallow, sandy area. Tomorrow, at 6:00 a.m. we will go on a boat, with an agent, to another area where there is coral to view. We will be here for 4 days, but George can only stay for 2, must get back to the hospital. George, Virginia and I did a lot of camping on the beaches of the Red Sea, while working in Saudi Arabia, the corals and fish there are outstandingly beautiful.

Before dinner time, I went into the large relaxation room for guests, there was a TV, and I watched the televised account of Rajiv Ghandi's funeral in Delhi. Hundreds of dignitaries from India and many other countries were present, Vice President Dan Quayle from U.S. was there. Brahmin priests chanted song-type prayers, flower petals were dropped from a helicopter overhead, and people dropped flower petals on the flower covered body. It lay on a bier of sandalwood logs, his son (who was in the U.S. when the assassination took place), his wife Sonia, and a daughter were present next to the funeral pyre. After a short period his son lit the wood, it burned very fast, with big flames. Then the son, wife and daughter stood in the smoke briefly, made a sign over the fire, and walked away – the others followed. This was very sad, for he was a good leader for India, had progressive ideas, but some people hated him enough to kill. The suicide assassin was a lady who handed him a floral garland, as he was about to speak, she triggered the bomb held within her belt. A picture in the newspaper yesterday, showed her body, head and face visible, middle of torso gone, legs intact, as it lay on it's back, - a gruesome picture. Several people were killed, many were injured. Later on, we had a buffet dinner in the restaurant. There were Indian type dishes, and many vegetarian ones. I chose Indian tonight, and enjoyed it. We retired very early.

SATURDAY MAY 25

A knock on our door woke us at 5:00 a.m., and we were down in the dining room at 5:45, had coffee. Then we waited, and waited, and waited, were told to be ready at 6:00 a.m. There was a bus outside the hotel, it was to take us across the island to a pier, where a boat would take us one hour away, to John-Boy Island. There were a few other people outside also, waiting. Finally, at 7:00 a.m. we took off, garbed in our bathing suits, and with terry cloth coverings over them. We all had masks, snorkels, and fins. The ride was terrible, a "rattly" bus over terribly bumpy roads, also very narrow, and it was hard for 2 buses to pass each other. Hopefully, we felt, the corals and fishes will be worth the ride. Arriving at the pier, we again waited, and waited. There were 5 boats tied up at the pier, next to each other, for excursion use – we had to cross through each one, board the next one, cross over it, do the same through all 5 boats, the last one was ours to use. There were no gang planks, or no helpers, but we made it, carrying our gear, cameras, towels, etc. It seems on this trip we have hurried to meet an appointment, only to wait, no one seems to be in a hurry. The boat ride took over an hour, and it was pleasant, made one forget the inconvenience we just had. The air was tropically warm, very pleasant, and we reached the island to find perfect white sand beach, sandy bottom, very clear, warm water. George had been to this island last year, and knew where the large coral heads were, also some other beds of different varieties of coral. We had to get off the boat quite a way out from shore, as it could not go to the beach, we walked there through the water. There was a family on board with us, man, wife, baby, and mother-in-law. They were out for a day's picnic, would lounge under the trees on the island. A couple of people from the resort were along also, they showed us where to go out, from the beach. George helped Web and Jess with their masks and fins, it was just LOVELY, the clear, warm water, easy sloping floor, a wide area of chest deep water. One could stand on a coral head, look at corals closely, observe the fish all around, and rest when needed. There was a strong current, and at times one needed to hang on to big coral, just lie with face in the water, and observe

the beauty of it all. It is easy to rest this way, and watch the marine life. The fish were numerous, goat fish, wrasse of many kinds, cleaner fish, anemone fish (I saw 3 different kinds) 7 stripe snappers, bird wrasse, (colored blue, and with a long snout) and many green wrasse. One kept nipping my legs, was really persistent and wouldn't stay away, I finally had to swim to another area. This was wonderful!!!! It brought back memories of when George, Pat, and I would be snorkeling, or diving, in the Red Sea. The same variety of fish are here, I even saw a half-beak swimming just below the surface. We spied the forepart of a large moray eel, it came out just a bit, from its hole in the coral. Very large groupers were seen a couple of times, also some very big hump-head wrasse. The teeth marks of big fish were visible, in the algae on large coral, and when lying quietly, one could hear the tic-tic-tic sound, of their bites.

Many kinds of corals were seen, stag horn;, fire coral, agrapora (the large, solid pieces) even some needle coral one time, that is so fine and fragile, many mushroom corals of all sizes, and even some clams. One was the largest I have ever seen, it had a brown and tan mantle; I pointed it out to Jessie. She and Web had never snorkeled before, in a warm sea, with all these tropical fish and the marine life. There were also many alcyonarian corals too, the soft kind that wave with the current, look like plants, but are animal matter. Web and Jess did just great with their masks and snorkels (after Jess found you don't put the whole mouthpiece into your mouth) and were very excited with what they saw. The water was very calm when we arrived, but after a few hours clouds and winds came up, and larger waves appeared. We had a very large area to explore, for there was coral reef around 2/3 of the island, in depths of 4 to 9 feet, so one could explore easily. As we went further from shore, and the shallow water, the current became much stronger and it was harder to make progress with finning, so we turned back to another area. After about 3 hours in the water, we returned to shore.

A box lunch was served to us, as we relaxed under the shade of trees, it had pieces of chicken, a sandwich, bananas and cup of hot tea. That tasted so good!! I put a t-shirt over my suit, and lay in the sun on the beach for a little while and rested. I did not want to get sunburned, was careful not to lay there too long. About 2:30 p.m. we went back to the boat that brought us here, climbed over the side and started back to Andaman Island. It took us about 1 ½ hours, was a long way. Arriving at the pier again, we now had to climb through the 5 boats to get to shore, just as we had to do this morning. The bus was waiting, and took us over that bumpy ride clear across the island, to our resort on the other side. I was quite tired, after this full day of activity, just had soup for dinner, and went to bed early. A muscle in my left lower back was sore, probably from all the finning I did today, so lying down was the best medicine, and I slept very well.

SUNDAY MAY 26

I felt fine in the morning, and we all had breakfast together at 7:15 a.m. George had to be ready to leave on the 9:a.m. plane, to return to Madras and his work. We will remain here and go back on Tuesday morning. The weather here is very warm, but not extremely hot, as it is in India now. This day was spent in leisure around the resort, as we all needed to rest, the trip yesterday was tiring. I know I exerted myself, finning my way over all those beautiful coral heads. I have been away for several years, from Saudi Arabia, when I swam

so much in the Red Sea doing snorkeling and scuba diving. I am not used to using the fins anymore, and of course, the sore muscle in my back told me so!! But the beautiful corals and fish we saw yesterday, were worth the little problem. In the hotel we were able to view a video about the Andaman / Nicobar Islands chain, and it's history. There are 200 small islands, here in the Bay of Bengal, a portion of the Indian Ocean. They are owned by India, but are much closer to Thailand than to India. There are natives on a few protected islands, that live in their primitive way, wear no clothing, and use natural products to make huts. No tourists are allowed to go there, the government protects their privacy. One can buy photos of them, taken by professionals, so people can learn about them. I bought two at the hotel.

The island we are on is famous for it's past history as a penal colony, and the prison called the "cellular jail", built by the British in the mid 1800's when they ruled India. It consists of a central tower, 3 stories high, and seven wings extending outward of single cells. Prisoners from Britain, who were felt to be very bad, were placed here at hard labor and then locked in cells; many died here. They were also whipped and tortured, for punishment, the whipping stanchion and torture bars were displayed, for it is now just a museum, not a prison. Political persons, who were trying to free India from Briton, were also placed here. India did become free in 1947, Mahatma Ghandi was one of the leaders in this movement – now, we are here in India when Rajiv Ghandi was assassinated, he was a leader in unifying all castes and promoting unity amongst faiths here. In one cell was a picture of an Indian national who spent 10 years in that cell before he died. We were shown through the jail, it was very interesting, but hot.

After returning from the prison tour, I lay down and rested, took a snort nap. Later on I went to the beach and took a pleasant swim, such nice warm water and gentle rollers coming in to shore made me feel renewed. In the evening Virginia said she would take us to dinner to a different hotel nearby. She was not happy with the food at our resort, so we got a taxi and went there, but there were no people, no food was being served. We then proceeded to another one, the Welcome Group was it's name. It was lovely, a most beautiful, open area building, set high up on a hill overlooking the bay. The roof was supported by huge teak pillars, giving a very, very high ceiling and the floors were of beautiful wood. There were 3 levels, the railings at the wide stairways were white and shiny. The bar was at the top level, we sat down and had a glass of beer there, then ordered dinner, which was served at the next lower level. I had prawns, Indian style, they were very spicy, and delicious. Web and Jessie had chicken in a basket, and fries, they don't try the Indian foods, said it was the best chicken we've had on this trip, so far, often it is tough. After this pleasant dining adventure we returned to our resort, but do plan to come back for lunch tomorrow, and then a swim in the pool here. I bought some tee-shirts before we left.

MONDAY MAY 27

I awoke at 5:15 a.m. after sleeping very well, but stayed in bed until 6:00 a.m., said some prayers of thanksgiving for this great trip. Then I went out on our patio, sat down and wrote in my journal, enjoying the early morning air. Virginia was still asleep in her bed. Web and Jessie have the adjoining room, they were not yet up, but about 7:15 a.m. we all went down to breakfast, I had good porridge (oatmeal), coffee, toast, butter and jam, did not want eggs. We were told some local young men had an inflatable boat, with motor, and could

take us out to a tiny place called “snake island”, just straight out from the beach here, and there should be corals in the area. They would charge 100 R per person, for 2 hours. We agreed to do this, and I treated for the four of us, gave them 400 R.

Later: We have just returned from a great adventure, a ride in an inflatable boat, with motor, called a zodiac, which took us out to Snake Island. This was completely opposite of John Boy Island, where we snorkeled yesterday, it was just a tiny uprising from the sea, of sharp rocks. The two young men with the boat, launched it at our beach, in the strong surf, that was not an easy task. We all stood in the shallow water and scrambled into it over the sides, very quickly, before the next wave came in. I carried my camera in a plastic bag so it would not get wet, as the water splashed us, I scraped my lower leg as I slid it over a nylon rope on entering hurriedly. I already have a little “nick” in the skin on the back of lower right leg, from yesterday, guess I scraped it on sharp coral. This reminds me of years past, it seems I always came in from a dive, with cuts on arms or legs, as wave action would drop you onto the corals on the reef.

A 10 minute ride took us out to the rocky island, and again, there had to be a tricky maneuver on the young men’s part, to get us on shore. They steered into a very narrow inlet, between sharp rocks, and we had to hop out quickly into shallow water, before the surge of waves dashed the zodiac against the rocks. A strong surge of water knocked Web down, as it rushed into the inlet, that made him apprehensive about going out to the reef, which was away from the shore. There was a very strong current there. But we did swim out and found coral growing on rocky areas, under the water. There were many different kinds, and colors, some very large flat blue kinds, some light yellow, there were a lot of white stag-horn species, tipped with light brown, they were very pretty. The fish were numerous, and beautiful: Imperial angel fish, another very large yellow-cheeked angel fish, many black surgeon , parrot, bream, which are white with black bars across and down the back of head and yellow along dorsal area, to the tail. I also saw a school of juvenile squid, never saw them so small before, everything was interesting. We had to fight the current, and keep finning, but Jessie stayed out with me, we just had to be careful not to get pushed toward the rocky shore and get scraped. I felt sure there would be even better corals further out, on a reef, but the surf was even stronger there, and I did not want to endanger myself or the others, so we enjoyed what we could, closer to shore. There were very large sponges, encrusting some of the large coral heads, in a variety of colors. I did observe a freckled hawk fish, sitting as usual on a piece of coral, waiting for some food to come along - just the same as I would see him often, in the Red Sea. The sun was behind the clouds a bit, but it was still very hot, and the water was warm. When we got out of the water, there was no shade, the tiny island was all rocky. There were gulls flying around, and we spotted 2 places where there were bird eggs (I presume from the gulls) lying in a dip of the rocks. That didn’t look like a good nesting place, but is what nature provided here. I had my thick plastic dive sandals on, so could search over the rocks without hurting my feet.

Getting back into the boat was not too hard, they towed it (by swimming) into the narrow channel, we hopped in quickly, and they guided it out between surges of waves, pulling at the anchor rope until we were out where they had dropped anchor previously. Now they started the motor, pulled up the anchor, and drove back to our resort beach. I really enjoyed this little “extra” snorkeling, and did get some pictures. We went back to our rooms, showered, and were ready for lunch. We had a taxi take us to the Welcome Group

Bay Island hotel, where we had dinner last evening, and I chose fried fish masala, it had a saffron, hot, dressing and onion rings on top, I enjoyed it. Following this we had the driver take us around the town, stopped at the Cottage Industries Handicraft store, where local-made items were for sale. I bought some long hair fasteners, which were made out of shells. Following that, as we were going up a high hill, on a main street, we ran out of gas – again! The driver had to back down part way, then turn and coast the rest of the way, at the entrance to a gas station. Web and Virginia pushed the car to the pump, the driver put in gas, and returned us to the resort. As we reached the beachfront there, many men, boys, and a woman dressed in her sari, were engaged in pulling on ropes, to bring in a huge fishing net, way out in the water. It was very interesting to watch them, it was a hard job. A few more people came, to help, and we stayed there to observe. There was a native, large wooden rowboat beached on the sand, just a short distance away. When they finally got the net pulled all the way up onto the beach, there were only a very few small fish in it, and a small sting ray. I took pictures, including a woman with a baby in a sling, on her back. Another woman put the small fish into a very large, round basket. The net and long ropes were then folded into the native boat, it filled it up completely, then a man rowed it out through the surf, and along the shore toward a cove, until I couldn't see him anymore. At this time a truck pulled up, filled with boys, girls, men and women, all happily yelling. They piled out, and very soon most of the males were in the water, jumping the surf. The ladies and girls walked a bit further up the beach and soon they were in the water too, in their saris. The boys and men soon made their way to where the females were, and then all were happily playing, jumping in the water, and having fun. I presume these were local people from the town.

About 4:15 p.m. a heavy rainstorm began, but I was back in our room. This is the first real rain we have encountered on this trip – the monsoon season starts here about mid June, or July, then it rains every day until about the end of September. It rained very hard for about ½ hour, then stopped. We spent the time playing cards, Springfield Rummy, until about 8:00 p.m., then had a light supper. The buffet meal tonight was all Indian vegetarian dishes, and one fish dish, but since I had fish at noon, I chose mushroom soup and cheese toast. I was loser in the card game before dinner, owed Jessie 30R and Web 20R.

TUESDAY MAY 28

It is 6:20 a.m. and I'm sitting on the balcony of our room at Andaman Beach Resort, enjoying the early morning. The lovely gardens below, with the tall, slender Ashok trees (they have leaves just like the peach tree), the many flowering bushes of many colors, evergreen-type trees about 15 feet high, and shaped like a cone, all present a beautiful scene. The manager told us he has received several awards for landscaping beauty, at the resort, the rest of the island is sort of drab, but these grounds are very nice. The air is very clear, after yesterday's rain, but clouds are still in the sky, the sun has not peeked through yet. Down below, on the cement drive, I see a gecko, searching for spiders or bugs. These are a very small lizard that inhabit the island, they are often seen running up and down on the walls of the reception area here, they are harmless to people. I can hear the surf pounding on the beach a short distance away- I can also hear some chanting, or singing. It is probably the Brahmin monks doing their morning offering. We did see a couple of temples in Port Blair, while riding through the city yesterday. Mr. Suri, the

manager of this resort, is of this faith, he had on his white tunic and tight white pants outfit last night at dinner. All the Indian lady guests wore beautiful saris, they dress for dinner in the evening. I wore the tan dress I brought along.

We will have breakfast, then leave the hotel at 8:00 a.m., with their little bus, to get to the airport and take the 9:00 a.m. flight back to Madras. The airport is really just a building that looks like a warehouse, the landing area is just a grassy field surrounded by low fence poles strung with barbed wire. The trip to Madras will be the last flight we will be using, on our Indian Airlines ticket that we purchased for \$400 (each of us); it allowed us to fly all over India for 21 days. This is the domestic airline in India. After Madras, we will be using Singapore, Thai Air, and Cathay Pacific lines. So now, it is good bye to lovely corals and fishes in the Bay of Bengal, at the Andaman Islands. We were really searched thoroughly at the security check, before we boarded, then they went through both my black bag and my back pack. I had to press the shutter button on my camera, two times, guess it was to show it was a camera, not a bomb! I wasted 2 pictures. If I was a terrorist, and had an explosive, the female searcher would have been blown up too, wonder if she thought of that? It was raining lightly when we flew away from the Port Blair airport.

On arrival at Madras, the temperature was very, very hot again, and we appreciated the pleasant air we had enjoyed the last 4 days. I tried to contact the Singapore Airlines, at the airport, but no one was at their desk, so later on went to their office, and to Cathay Pacific office. We wanted to change our itinerary, skip Bangkok on the return flight, go direct to Hong Kong and spend 2 days there before proceeding to Los Angeles. We had a taxi to do this because telephone reservations do not get response here, as we can do at home, and after bouncing along on the bumpy roads and making a stop at the travel agent's office to complain about the bad drive to Agra and the Taj Mahal in the dreadful heat, we decided to abandon our change of itinerary. We gave the idea up and came back to George's place, after stopping at a shopping area to look at suitcases, where Jessie and I nearly were run over while crossing a busy, busy street and having to climb over a center-road divider. We relaxed on his balcony, had cheese and crackers and a glass of beer. Later on Tony made a good vegetable soup and an omelette with cubed potatoes, very good.

In the news was an account of an Austrian Airlines plane that took off from Bangkok airport, was in flight 18 minutes, then exploded in mid air, 223 people were killed. That was kind of scary, when you know you are going next, to Bangkok. Also in the news was the story that the ashes of Rahjiv Gandhi were brought to Madras from Delhi, after the funeral, they will be venerated in Madras today and then taken on a special train, to other cities, for veneration. Some ashes will then be put into the Ganges river, others will be sprinkled over the Himalayas in northern India. We are here in very memorable times, history is being made.

WEDNESDAY MAY 29

I slept well, even though it was hot and sticky, arose at 5:45 a.m. , sat out on the balcony and looked over the hazy sky toward the sea. Last evening, on our return to the south part of the city, we passed the town center beach area, one of the parks of their city. There were so many people walking in the area, or sitting down and enjoying the cooler air near the shore, we had not passed this area before. George lives at 10 Beach Road, in Kalak

Shetra Colony, a development of newer homes and apartments. Madras is the 4th largest city in India, but is the least westernized, the sacred cows wander all over, eat out of garbage piles, I even saw one eating part of a cardboard box! Goats also wander around freely, the horse-drawn, cow-drawn, water buffalo-drawn, man-drawn carts are everywhere, also the bicycle rickshaws (trishaws), bicycles, trucks, motorcycles, taxis, auto rickshaws and taxis fill the streets. There are very few private cars seen. This will be our last day in Madras, we will go to see the hospital Tamilnad, where George works. He has secured a car from the hospital, it will be here at 9:00 a.m.

The trip to the hospital, which is quite away out of town, was an eye-opener, seeing how the poor people live, in huts and poor buildings. We drove in the hospital car to the city offices of the Tamilnad Hospital, then changed into a van, and drove south out of the city. It is a 600 bed hospital, not all completed yet. There is another building beside it, which is the future cafeteria, now all meals are prepared there for the patients (there are not many yet) and the staff can eat here also. Only Indian type dishes are prepared, and George says he does get tired of the foods. The roof is not even on the building yet, and he prays it will get completed before the monsoon time begins, about June 15. The labor is all done by hand, a slow process. Groups of ladies, men and boys were carrying sacks of construction debris, on their heads, to a chute where they were dumped into trucks. They were very happy in their work, and willingly posed for a picture. They had jobs! This will be the best hospital in India, when completed, with the very best, modern equipment. All CAT scans are in service already, mammography, x-ray, medical labs, cardiac lab are in use, surgery has been performed, kidney dialysis area is being prepared but is not in use yet. The rooms are spacious, there are 2 kitchens in the hospital building for future use, one side prepares vegetarian meals, non vegetarian are prepared in the other. We met several of the doctors who work there, several have worked for many years in the U.S., now they, and others, have pooled money to build a very fine, modern hospital in India, for their countrymen. George Swan has undertaken a tremendous challenge, as hospital administrator.

In the evening we were invited to a nice dinner meeting, with 3 members of the hospital staff, at the Connemara Hotel, also George and Virginia attended. This was a very old, British hotel, built and used by their officials when they governed India. It was large, and elegant, and we had a fine evening. Our luggage was all prepared for our departure to the airport, just after midnight. We are leaving Madras, for our journey home. The airport was very busy, as usual, crowds everywhere. The security people would not allow George and Virginia to enter the baggage check-in area (only ticketed passengers), so he said they would meet us in the airport restaurant, after we checked our bags. Well, when we had done this, filled out the emigration papers and passed through the security check, they would not let us go out again, to the restaurant. I went to officers, and tried to get a pass, but had no luck. Jessica, the Singapore Airlines agent (she helped me the night I arrived here) came a little later, had a message from George that he tried to get to us, but could not, so we left India without a last hug from Virginia and George. Jessica took a message back to George, that we had made it through all right, did not have to open our luggage, had our boarding passes, and were o.k.

THURSDAY MAY 30

We left Madras after midnight, and flew for about 4 hours, then arrived at Singapore. It was an o.k. flight, but I couldn't sleep much, like I usually can. Singapore has a new, lovely airport, it is very large and easy to find your way to next flight. The restrooms were beautifully clean, there was toilet paper in the stalls, the sinks were very clean. What a difference, from all the places in India. They did have eastern-style toilets in 2 stalls, the usual hole-in-floor, and ceramic foot plates, some stalls had flush toilets – all were very neat. Our baggage was checked through to Bangkok, so all we had to do was go to Singapore Airlines desk, and get boarding passes for the next leg of our journey, to Bangkok. We boarded that plane at 8:45 a.m., took off, were served a good omelette breakfast on the way. On arrival at Bangkok, we secured our baggage, and luckily did not have to open anything, on going through immigration. The airport there is new, and so much better than the old one. I had arrived and departed from it several times, one had to walk long distances and it was hard to find your way, on changing planes. The temperature was 81 and cloudy, much better than the 100 plus degrees we had in India. At the airport I secured a room for 3, at the Bangkok Palace hotel, where I have stayed before. The rate was \$120 per night and included transit to, and from the airport, breakfast each morning, and a ½ day tour of the city, a very good rate, for it is a fine hotel.

A driver appeared and took us to the hotel – the first room we were shown had only 2 twin beds and a cot. That did not suit Web, he wanted a queen size bed – so we had to wait 30 minutes for a room to be cleaned, then we got one that had a king size bed, and a cot for me. This was fine, it had full bath, a TV, refrigerator, desk and table. There were white bathrobes lying on each bed. We rested for awhile, unpacked a few things, then Jess and I walked out to a large department store very near the hotel. I had been there before, found that it has been enlarged a lot, even had a big grocery department. We looked around a bit, prices were quoted in bahts, the local money. We bought some snack crackers and can of beer for each of us, returned to our room and enjoyed it. Later on we went to dinner in the dining room, the selection was broad, Thai food, and Western. Since we had such a long day, we retired early.

But, I had a terrible night: my cot was very uncomfortable, the spring holding the metal mesh support was broken, and I sank way down in a hole. I kept getting bad leg and foot cramps in that position, and was up and down 6 times during the night. Finally I took 2 cushions from the overstuffed chairs and put them in the bed, and under my knees, then I got relief. In the morning I complained to the housekeeper, they put a flat board under the mattress, and that made it all right.

FRIDAY MAY 31

The buffet breakfast in the dining room was very good with a large selection of tropical fruits, cereals, juices, milk or coffee, rice, hot breakfasts that the Thai eat, eggs fixed any way, toast and rolls. After this, our guide for the morning tour was in the lobby at 9:00a.m., waiting for us. He had an air conditioned auto and drove us first, to the temple with the Golden Buddah. I had seen this before, but it was still a thrill to see this marvelous object, made 700 years ago and revered by the people of Thailand. At one time it was covered

with cement and hidden, to keep it from being taken by enemies, during a war. Next we went to the temple of the reclining buddah, this figure is so huge, and is in a reclining position. The young monks were around, who solicit money, they are supported by local population, as they study. I used my last slide, I will not buy anymore film, as I have many pictures of Bangkok area from my previous times here. I will pack the camera away. There are many more tourists seen, than other times, Bangkok also has new freeways in the city, better streets, and many new large buildings.

Wilbur and Jess enjoyed the day very much, these sights were all new to them, and of course very different than U.S. The Thai language is spoken all over, not many people (except tour guides and hotel personnel) speak English. In the afternoon Jess and I took a swim in the hotel pool, that felt so good. It was hot in the temples in the morning, but the car was comfortable. We had a light dinner in the hotel, and retired, for will rise early in the morning.

I slept much better, the bed did not sag anymore, and I had no leg cramps. We awoke to the sound of heavy rain outside, accompanied by thunder and lightening, but it ended at 6:15 a.m., and then there was a lovely rainbow in the sky. I had had a little stomach distress so ate a light breakfast, just cereal, milk and a croissant. Our guide today, named Jack, was in the lobby at 7:00 a.m., he drove us to the Cho Phaya river boat landings. We will be taken to the "floating market", where locals bring fruit, vegetables and home crafts to sell. The long, narrow boats, with a motor way out at the end of a 10 foot long pole, are used to ply up and down the river, and to take people to the market place. I have done this before, and knew it would be interesting to my friends. The people live in wooden houses, on poles, right in the river. I noted there were more buildings seen now, than the last time, also there was debris floating in the river, it was not as clean now. Ladies in the narrow boats came up to our boat, to sell fruit, hats, and peacock feather fans, they also go right to the front porch of houses, to sell items. We stopped at the market, walked around a bit amongst the baskets of vegetables, fruit and grains. There was a handicraft shop also, we went through it and observed the items made by local people, the Thai people are really artisans and make many interesting articles. I bought a nice, embroidered T-shirt for 190 B, and 2 fans of punched design artwork for 160 B. A baht is worth about 4 cents, U.S.

The next stop was at the "snake farm". This was a large round building, with open sides from waist-high to the ceiling, and people could stand all around it to view. In the center was a platform where a young man would handle snakes, and demonstrated how they took venom, which is used for medicinal purposes. The last time I was here, I took a picture of this process, the man brought the snakes head very close to me, as another man "milked" the venom gland. It was a very long python, took 3 men to hold the entire body. He also had a cobra, and another kind of snake. Then we floated on the river, back to the boat landing. There our driver was waiting, and he took us to the wood craft shops. Here young people hand carve wood, with chisels and punches, to be used in furniture making. They sit on the floor of a warehouse building, while they work, creating designs on wood pieces. It was wonderful to watch them, in one area several women were sanding, and hand rubbing the wood. The finished pieces were remarkable, so beautiful! My friends bought a free standing bar, a lovely piece of furniture, with doors that open to reveal places for glasses, bottles, drawers for small items, napkins, etc. The carving was ornate. They will have it

sent on September 1, to Miami, Florida, to be used in their new home on Cudjoe Key, close to Key West. They live there in winter months. I bought 3 wood, elephant carved, boxes, covered with black lacquer and designs, for 475 B.

After this, we returned to the hotel, rested a bit, and then went to the Metro Department store, near the hotel, and walked around. I was especially amazed at the display of foods, such a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, and meats. We each bought a donut and ate it, I also tried one of their local deserts, a leaf shaped into a basket, with a cooked orange colored filling, topped with fresh coconut. That was yummy!!! Then Jessie and I walked all around the block and checked out the stalls, like a market place, where local people sold many kinds of things. I bought a pair of thongs, to wear around the pool. The air was very pleasant today, not too hot. This was a nice relief from the high temperatures in India. I wanted to talk to my daughter Mary, so about 7:15 p.m. I called California, from our hotel room, got her right away – it was 5:17 a.m. there. She said everything is o.k. at home and I was glad to hear that. It was so nice to hear her voice, and I told her we would get home on Tuesday, in late afternoon.

Web had learned of a very fancy restaurant on one of the upper floors of our hotel, and decided we should eat there tonight. It was called the Steak Hut. The wood used in this hotel is beautiful, dark and lustrous, is used in the wide curved staircase that goes up from the lobby, the stairs are carpeted in red. The ceiling is also of the dark, beautiful wood, probably from the forests of Thailand. We entered the Steak Hut, and were seated at a dark wood table, there were white ruffled curtains on the windows, which gave the room a “homey” feeling, white lattice work embraced some of the walls, there was a pink rose on the table. This was all very nice. I ordered steak Diane, everything was served perfectly, my steak was brought, next to the table, brandy was poured over it, then set ablaze briefly, to enhance the flavor. It was delicious, but too filling, with the soup, breads and other accompaniments. I am usually a light eater. We all enjoyed the extra luxury shown in the Steak Hut.

SUNDAY JUNE 2

I slept very well, awoke to a light rain, and saw a rainbow again, out in the sky. We went down to breakfast at 7:45 a.m., and I just ate cornflakes and coffee – ate so much last night. . We planned to just rest today, because the Grand Palace grounds are not open on Sunday, and we will go there tomorrow. A short time after breakfast I had stomach cramps. I think Jessie and I both picked up something when we drank water at our last dinner in India, at the Connaught Hotel. We usually only drank bottled water, but thought it would be o.k. to drink water served with our meal, since we were in a good hotel. Anyway, I laid down for awhile, and it all went away. Jess and Web went downstairs to the hotel shops where he bought a beautiful, large, hand carved set of 2 elephants with warriors of olden days, on their backs. Each soldier carried 8 long spears (of wood), the mahouts sitting on the elephants heads each carried two. This is how wars were carried on in days past. He wants to display this piece in their home, it was beautiful! The shop keeper packed it securely, with padding, in a box, and he plans to send it with our suitcases. I'm sure he will have to pay overweight baggage charges, they have purchased so much on this trip.

Later on, I felt much better, and we all went down to the pool, and played cards for awhile, then Jessie and I had a swim. It felt so good! I've taken my Donnagel, for my tummy, and it is about gone, hope symptoms go away, so we have an easy trip home. This is the first time, in all my years of travel, that I have had any digestive distress. We all just had light dinners, I chose the Thai noodles with chicken and green vegetables in it, very tasty. When we passed the gift shop in the hotel I bought a set of very small forks and spoons, to use with hors d'oeuvres.

MONDAY JUNE 3

Had a good night's sleep, woke early, there was no rain or no rainbow this morning. This is our last day in Bangkok, weather was sunny and hot. Our guide, a young female, met us in the lobby at 8:45 a.m., her name was Sandy. We drove to another small hotel, where she picked up 2 more tourists, a woman and her daughter, from Finland. The traffic was very heavy as we went to the Grand Palace and its temples. This is the most beautiful set of temple buildings and royal palace, with the Siamese architecture, the curling roof ribs, and gold trim on everything. The presidential palace building is of grey stone, in western style, but the roof is of Siamese architecture. The roof tiles, of ceramic, are round and colored red and green, sometimes there are borders of blue, very unique and oriental. The outside of some of the temples, and also the Jade Buddha temple, are covered in mosaic- tiny pieces of colored glass and mirror, all set by hand, and gold leaf is used all over. These are priceless, and exquisitely beautiful. There are a lot of buildings in this walled area, and armed soldiers are in evidence everywhere. We entered the throne room, and an adjoining one, where the new king changes to royal garb and then walks into the large throne area. The throne is inlaid with mother-of-pearl and semi-precious jewels. When a new king is crowned, this room is used, he sits on the throne, then spends one night here to show he accepts being the ruler. The bed was shown, it was of metal filigree, covered with gold leaf.

At the temple of the Emerald Buddha we had to remove our shoes before entering, also there was a sign outside, in English, saying "Improper dress – do not enter". They do not want tourists inside wearing scanty shorts, etc. The Buddha, which is one piece of jade 48 centimeters across and about 2 times that in height, is beautifully carved, and is enthroned and worshipped in this temple. It was discovered in 1464 and brought to northern Siam, then moved to Chengmai where it was enthroned. It has been the subject of war booty several times in the past, and would be hidden by monks during these times, then brought out after attack was over, and replaced on the altar. This is covered with gold leaf filigree, and carving. The floor of the temple is of marble mosaic in a lovely pattern, I marvel at the artistry displayed by the people of this country. Following this temple we went to the others in the walled area, as the guide explained their structure, and their use. I went through all this area before, when I was here in about 1983, and I thoroughly enjoyed seeing it again. The sun was very hot, and we perspired as we walked all over, when we returned to the van, the air conditioning in it felt very good.

After returning to the Bangkok Palace hotel, and resting a bit, Jessie and I decided to take a tuk-tuk (the local transportation here) and go to the street market near the Indra hotel. Our door man told us we should pay only 20 B, so we flagged one down, but he wanted 40B,

double the price. We bartered with him, then did get it for 20B, the distance was not very far. As we rode, shades of yesteryear came to my mind, as we bounced over the bumpy streets of Bangkok in a tuk-tuk. I do have a tape I made one time when I was here, as I was riding in a tuk-tuk, wind blowing, trying to talk amidst the truck traffic, and being let off at the wrong hotel! It is fun to listen to it once in awhile. Jess and I purchased several things at the street shops, it is always fun to look, and prices are lower at market places. When ready to return, we could not get a tuk-tuk for 20B, one wanted 40, another 30, but we finally got one for 25B. The tuk-tuk is a golf cart body, with enlarged seat area in back, and a roof overhead, and is the local taxi, there is a meter to register fare, but one must always get a quoted price from the driver, before engaging him. Wilbur did not want to go shopping, so it was fun for Jess and I to explore a bit, I used up all my bahts!!! Before entering our hotel, we went into the Metro Department store, so Jessie could buy another gold chain and some earrings she wanted to take home. We also got some snacks. Then we took our last swim in the hotel pool, it is so lovely and really felt good. We did showers and shampoos, packed up suitcases, and got ready to leave here at 5:30 a.m., to get our flight at 8:00a.m. on Thai Airlines, for Hong Kong. There we will change to Cathay Pacific flight and go non-stop to Los Angeles. We leave here on June 4, and arrive in LAX on June 4 at noon, catching up with the time change. The Bangkok Palace hotel has been very good, has such a large lobby with shops, many different eating places, our room had a refrigerator and TV, the plumbing in the bathroom worked well, there was good room service, and everything was clean.

TUESDAY JUNE 4

Awoke with our call, at 4:30, dressed, and everything was ready to go, as we had packed bags last night. We had requested airport taxi service yesterday, and paid \$12 (300B) for the ticket, a 5:30 a.m. pickup. We had a lot of baggage, I had the large suitcase and red soft bag to check, the soft bag and folding wheels would be carry-on: Web and Jess had 1 huge, heavy, tall bag, 2 suitcases, 1 box with elephants, to check, and each had a carry-on bag and folding wheels. Everything went into the trunk and front seat, we sat in the back. Just as we were about to pull away, the bell hop came out, Web had to go to the desk, they said our last night here was not on the bill, that we needed to pay another \$100, so that took care of everything.

There was not much traffic, it took us ½ hour to get to the airport, it is quite far out of the city. The service there was wonderful, no lines at the check-in window, there were plenty of carts for our baggage, and it was easy going through immigration and security check – so much better than India!!!! There is not much order there, and crowds are brutal. We proceeded to Gate 23 and waited for our flight. The Thai Airlines did not charge for excess baggage, that was a real surprise, our things are checked right through to LAX, we do not have to handle them at Hong Kong. There we will again use Cathay Pacific Airlines to get home. All the ladies received a purple orchid on this flight, courtesy of Thailand, with hopes we will visit again. There were not many passengers, so empty seats were available, and I could sit with my leg up some of the time.

On arrival in Hong Kong my leg was red around the ankle, and sore, it felt good to walk as we exited the plane, and we did have a very long way to walk to the transit desk B, and the

Cathay Pacific desk. We stood in a long line (the one with passenger take-off within one hour) and finally got our boarding passes. No airport tax was taken from transit passengers. Then we had a long walk to gate 5, and I put my black bag on the little wheeled carrier, could just pull it along, easier than carrying it. I did find a Hong Kong patch for my hat, in a card shop we passed, it cost 20 H K dollars (\$2.80) and I could use U.S. money. The non-stop flight took off a bit late, it was not full, was a wide bodied plane. There were empty seats across from 63 A, B, C, our assigned seats, so the hostess said it was fine to stretch out there, and I could lie down. The flight was long, an estimated 12 ½ hours. There were 3 movies shown, and 2 full meals, plus snacks, were served. I watched "Once Around" and "Sleeping With The Enemy", and also tried to sleep a little. My leg was red and sore, and keeping it up on the seat was a help.

On arrival in LAX, we knew our trip home was very tiring, we had been in the process for about 19 hours, since leaving Bangkok. Going through the Immigration area kept us waiting in line quite awhile, then getting passports stamped, and passed through. Next, we hunted for our bags, and finally found them all. There were plenty of free carts to put them on, and go to Customs area. We had nothing to declare, for each person is allowed \$400 purchase, we were passed through after a wait, but nothing was opened, and that was fine. We wheeled our carts out of this department, in the International Terminal, and to the next building, where American Airlines operated. Web and Jess had to fly on this line, to Illinois, where they live. They planned to spend a day or so at my home in California, so we went to the baggage department, where Web persuaded an attendant (with a gift of \$10) to check their heavy bags now, and secure them again when they leave California. They did not want to take them to Thousand Oaks, and have to carry them back again to the airport. After that was taken care of, we waited outside, on the island, for the Great American Stage bus to Thousand Oaks. It came within 30 minutes, we were on the last leg home!! I had called daughter Mary, from inside the airport, and she was at the bus stop in Thousand Oaks, to take us home – 248 Dryden Street. It was so good to be home, just looked heavenly!!!! The roses in front were in full bloom, the pool looked very nice, and inside, Paul, my grandson, had painted the 2nd bathroom while I was gone. My new carpeting, fresh paint and wallpaper in hallway and living room wall, made the house look all spruced up. It was a hectic time, the month before I left on this trip, getting things done, but now the house looks so good. Mary had put fresh milk, orange juice, eggs, bread, bananas, apples, lettuce, carrots, in the refrigerator, so I would not have to go to the store immediately. How nice of her!

Our heads were spinning, we were so tired from all the travel in the last 24 hours, we all laid down to rest for awhile. At 7:00 p. m. Steve brought home made chili for us, we enjoyed eating that, while talking over the last few days. Web and Jess had planned earlier, to spend a couple of days with me, but felt they were tired, and wanted to get to their home right away.

WEDNESDAY JUNE 5

This morning I drove my friends to the American Airlines office in our city, Web changed their flight tickets from June 7 to June 5, there was a flight available today to O'Hare airport. We picked up their little case at my home, and I took them to the airport bus, so they could

get this flight. They were anxious to return to their home in Bristol, Illinois. I know the feelings they had, travel is great, but it is always so good to arrive at your own home, we had been gone a long time, and covered a big area.

The next morning they called me to say they had made the last leg of their journey o.k., collected their stored baggage at LAX, and checked in at American Airlines for their flight to O'Hare. I was surprised that they did not have to pay for overweight bags. In the airport they secured a transport to their home in Bristol, about 60 miles away. They did a lot of travel in 2 days. It was a hard trip, for them especially, they had never gone overseas before, nor ever been to a third world country. But, they were satisfied and felt good about going. Web's statement was "I'm glad I made the trip, but I wouldn't go there again. It was a hard learning experience".

So much for a month in India, and the far East. I hope my slides turn out well, I'll show them in lectures I give in Thousand Oaks. The jet lag is with me, will last a week or more, until my body recovers from the time changes. The next morning I had a call, at 9:00 a.m., from Maha bin Feten in Saudi Arabia, was glad I was at home, to receive it. She is sending me a book on Saudi language, which I studied over there, and tells me she speaks very good English now. She is 22 years old, is sending a picture also.