

THE AMERICAN HIMALAYAN FOUNDATION

NEWSLETTER • SUMMER • 1994

GANGOTRI SOURCE OF THE GANGES

The towering prong of ice and snow known as Shivling stands like a proud parent over one of the most revered spots in Asia. It is here that the newborn river Ganges emerges from the Gangotri Glacier and begins its nine month journey to the Bay of Bengal.



PHOTO: NORBU TENZING

Devout pilgrims, some looking little more than flesh, bones and rags, kneel to pray and bathe in the frigid glacial waters. Many have walked thousands of kilometers on poorly shod feet to get here.

site, ensure that the flow of visitors will continue.

But their sheer numbers have left the Gangotri area visibly scarred by increasing signs of ecological abuse. In keeping with the AHF's commitment to environmental preservation, we have, with the Himalayan Environmental Trust (HET), embarked on the Gangotri Conservation Project, whose aim is to clean up and preserve this sanctuary for generations to come.

Last November's wildly successful Legends of Rock fundraising dinner in San Francisco made the Gangotri cleanup possible. And now AHF's commitment has been matched by both the State of Uttar Pradesh and the Department of the Environment of the Indian Government, as a measure of their enthusiasm for the project.

For more than half a billion people in Asia, a pilgrimage to the source of the river Ganges is a lifelong spiritual yearning. Not only is it considered sacred, but the Ganges also provides much of the water needed to sustain agricultural land that feeds millions of people who live in the region.

Gangotri, the source of the Ganges, acts as a magnet for 250,000 pilgrims, 25,000 trekkers and over 75 mountaineering expeditions who visit the Gangotri region every year. The beauty of the area, the peaks surrounding it, and the sacredness of the



PHOTO: NORBU TENZING

SACRED HEADWATERS

I have just returned from a deeply moving journey to the source of the magnificent Ganges. I couldn't help but feel overwhelmed with awe and reverence as I stood at the glacial source of this river amid the crystalline peaks of the Himalaya. I was joined by Reinhold and Sabine Messner from the HET, also visiting the area for the first time. As we walked to Gomukh, the source of the Ganges, from the town of Gangotri, we were pleasantly surprised to see the illegal tea houses that had littered the 18 km trail had been shut down by Forestry officials.

On our return to Gangotri, we visited with religious and elected local officials, who shared our excitement about restoring the area's pristine beauty. The local mountaineering school and various sectors of the Indian armed forces have volunteered their time to help. And, in an unprecedented move, the starting point for the pilgrimage will be moved 5 kilometers back from the town of Gangotri to reduce congestion on the small trailhead area, despite the economic impact on the tourist-dependent town. Trash and sanitary facilities will be built, cleanups will continue and illegal tea houses will be monitored.

Gangotri has been a sacred site for centuries. But at no other time has the danger of potentially massive environmental degradation from the crush of visitors been so great. The Gangotri Project will help in preserving the area for generations to come. As Sir Edmund Hillary, patron of the HET, pointed out, we need to do things that are small, simple and have a direct impact on preserving the environment: this is one. — Norbu Tenzing

HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA IN BERKELEY

Details on page 7...



PHOTO: VASS KOUTSAFIS



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Many thanks to the Contributors
for donating their labor in the
production of this newsletter.

ENCORE!

AHF books Los Angeles again!

It was so much fun, we're going to do it again! Join mountaineering legends Sir Edmund Hillary, Reinhold Messner, Maurice Herzog, Junko Tabei and Chris Bonington for an amazing evening. We have another special guest this time, Dick Bass. **November 1, Beverly Hilton, Beverly Hills.** Cocktails 6:30, dinner and tall tales 7:30. All proceeds from this fabulous event will help protect and restore the Himalayan environment.



The Legends of Rock (and Ice) in San Francisco, '93.

PHOTO: TOM GIBBONS

Dear Friends,

The early response to our appeal for Dr. Ashok Banskota's hospital has been truly heartwarming. We offer our deepest thanks to all of you who have so generously helped Nepal's most disadvantaged children by contributing to building the operating theater. Since we made the commitment to fund this surgical center, several new European organizations have pledged their support for building other parts of the hospital. Dr. Ashok's long-awaited dream, a fully equipped hospital with enough space to work in, will become a reality! This facility will allow his highly skilled team to give terribly disabled Nepali and Tibetan children a freedom and dignity they could otherwise never have hoped for. Dr. Ashok has already done so much with so little that we can only begin to imagine what he can accomplish with a real hospital.

Thank you again for offering your support. If you've been thinking of contributing, but haven't yet done so – fear not. Now is a great time to help ensure the success of this vital project. Construction is scheduled to begin as early as this fall.

And don't forget to mark your calendars now - this September 27th we are throwing another one of our renowned events: a celebration of Americans on Everest. It will be a great party for a great cause: proceeds will help provide Sherpas in the Everest area with schools, hospitals, clinics and reforestation. Anyone who has been touched by the spirit and compassion of the Sherpas knows why these hard-working people deserve our efforts to improve their lives.

Please join us.

Best personal regards,

Richard C. Blum, Chairman

*One of Dr. Ashok's
young patients, born
with double club feet, awaits
your caring support.*



PHOTO COURTESY DR. ASHOK BANSKOTA

Special thanks to our hospital benefactors for their generosity.
Margaret Polak, the very first supporter
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Margaret and Reid Dennis
William Ruth
Jean Schulz
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\$150
GOAL

\$45

**\$45K DOWN,
\$105K TO GO**

THE FAMOUS AHF ANNUAL DINNER AMERICANS ON EVEREST

COME CELEBRATE THREE
DECADES OF INSPIRATION IN THE
ASCENT OF MOUNT EVEREST

Join summitters JIM WHITTAKER, NAWANG GOMBU SHERPA, LUTE JERSTAD, TOM HORNBEIN and BARRY BISHOP from the 1st American Everest Expedition of 1963... LOU REICHARDT from the first Kanchung East Face ascent... SHARON WOOD, first North American woman to climb Everest... and BRENT BISHOP, hot off the summit with the successful 1994 Sagarmatha Environmental Expedition... and a HOST OF STARS and summitters from the years in between.

This evening promises to be a major high – so cop some altitude with some of the climbing heroes of our age. Whether you've climbed to the summit, trekked to base camp, or pitched Camp V from the comfort of your favorite armchair, you won't want to miss this one!

September 27 • Fairmont Hotel, San Francisco

Reception: 6:30 • Dinner: 7:30

Talks, merriment, and mingling all evening

Tickets \$200

Call for information – Erica or Norbu: 415 288-7245

Proceeds from this evening will provide schools, hospitals and clinics for the Sherpas of the Everest region of Nepal, ever our intrepid climbing partners.



Triumph on the First American Everest Expedition: an exultant Big Jim Whittaker and Gombu at advance base camp, after their successful summit bid, May 1, 1963.

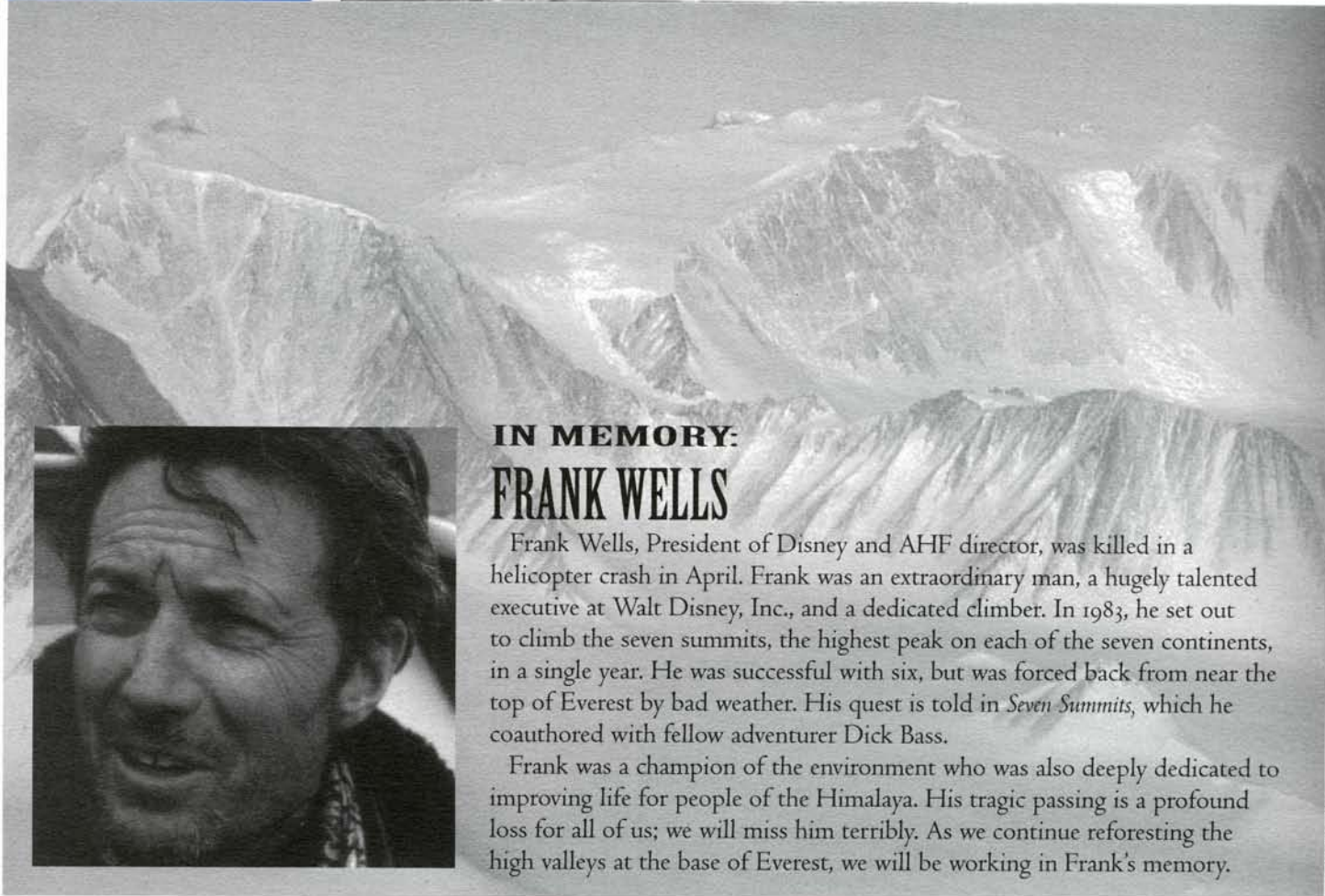
EVEREST

THE VIEW FROM
A B O V E



SEPT. 27

SAN FRANCISCO
COP SOME
ALTITUDE
& BE THERE!



IN MEMORY: FRANK WELLS

Frank Wells, President of Disney and AHF director, was killed in a helicopter crash in April. Frank was an extraordinary man, a hugely talented executive at Walt Disney, Inc., and a dedicated climber. In 1983, he set out to climb the seven summits, the highest peak on each of the seven continents, in a single year. He was successful with six, but was forced back from near the top of Everest by bad weather. His quest is told in *Seven Summits*, which he coauthored with fellow adventurer Dick Bass.

Frank was a champion of the environment who was also deeply dedicated to improving life for people of the Himalaya. His tragic passing is a profound loss for all of us; we will miss him terribly. As we continue reforesting the high valleys at the base of Everest, we will be working in Frank's memory.



the kingdom of lo is well & flourishing! AHF IN MUSTANG

In 1991, the veil of secrecy was pulled back from the Kingdom of Mustang, when the area was opened to western visitors for the first time in 35 years. AHF Chairman Richard Blum, invited to visit Mustang by the Nepalese government before its opening, had discovered first-hand that in this fragile land, people lacked many of the basics we take for granted, such as schools and health care. AHF has teamed up with the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) to bring these basics to the Lobas, the people of Mustang.

All of our projects in Mustang are done in a working partnership with local residents. In one project, for example, AHF provided for the planting of 15,000 trees for community forestation and the Lobas, for their part, agreed to build irrigation canals and stone walls to protect the young trees. This partnership approach is often slower at first, but is ultimately much more effective and empowering. Our approach was solidly endorsed at a June meeting in Pokhara that included the King of Mustang, the Rinpoche of Lo Mantang and twenty village mayors, all of whom applauded ACAP and AHF (represented by Norbu Tenzing).

Our work in Mustang so far has provided health camps for general and emergency care; health workers helped contain a deadly measles epidemic just this spring. Repairs have begun to protect and restore several gompas. A monastic school has been inaugurated and supplied with chairs, books, and teachers for



Lobas from upper Mustang.

its first 27 students. Building a reservoir pond to store water has averted a severe irrigation crisis in Surkhang village. The isolated village of lower Chhosher is being connected to the main trail by a wooden bridge. Hundreds of apple graftings have been distributed and Loba farmers trained to maintain their new fruit trees properly. A new solar cooking system, widely used in Tibet, will lessen dependence on precious wood fuel.

Manju Thapa, one of AHF's early scholarship students, has been ACAP's project director in Mustang. Her tireless efforts, in often difficult working conditions, have contributed greatly to the success of these projects. Already, our partnership with ACAP and the people of Mustang is making people's lives tangibly better in this beautiful and remote corner of the world.

thimi home: CHILD HAVEN

The first child admitted to Child Haven's home in Thimi, just outside Kathmandu, was a six-month-old baby girl, named Hira, which means "diamond". She was brought to Child Haven when her mother died of liver failure shortly after her birth. Hira has been joined by 28 other young children, all destitute, orphaned, abandoned or rescued from prison. At the Thimi home they receive food, shelter, love and schooling, the ingredients of a strong and healthy future.

Young scholar reviews his English lesson.



PHOTO COURTESY CHILD HAVEN

Child Haven International was founded by an extraordinary Canadian couple, Fred and Bonnie Cappuccino. Fred and Bonnie have two youngsters of their own and 19 more children adopted from 11

*Let me light my
lamp, says the star,
and never debate
if it will dispel
the dark*

different countries. Needless to say, they have abundant first-hand experience in determining children's needs. With four successful orphanages in India, Child Haven opened the home in Thimi, their first in Nepal, a year and a half ago.

Last year, Fred and Bonnie approached AHF for help funding the education of the Thimi children, and running women's literacy classes in the area. (Interestingly enough, more than one study has



AHF Director Erica Stone with some of the Thimi children.

shown that the main indicator of how well children do in school has to do with their mother's level of education.) We visited Thimi in December, at the end of the first project year, where we were happily surrounded by a crowd of children in their school uniforms. This year, with AHF help, the Cappuccinos will also be able to bring teachers to the home for the younger children, and will continue the popular women's literacy classes.

"Let me light my lamp, says the star, and never debate if it will dispel the dark," is the Cappuccino's motto. They bring the light of a positive future to some of Nepal's poorest children, and we are happy to help.

more mountain madness... TENGOBOCHE TREK II

We have only four spaces left on the special AHF trek to Tengboche (below). If you want to revel in the world's most fabulous mountain scenery and witness the colorful Sherpa festival of Mani Rimdu, call now! Get in shape, have a great cultural experience and bolster a worthy cause, all at the same time! The trek leaves the U.S. on November 9, returning Nov. 24. For more information, call us at (415) 288-7245.



himalayan geography lesson #8

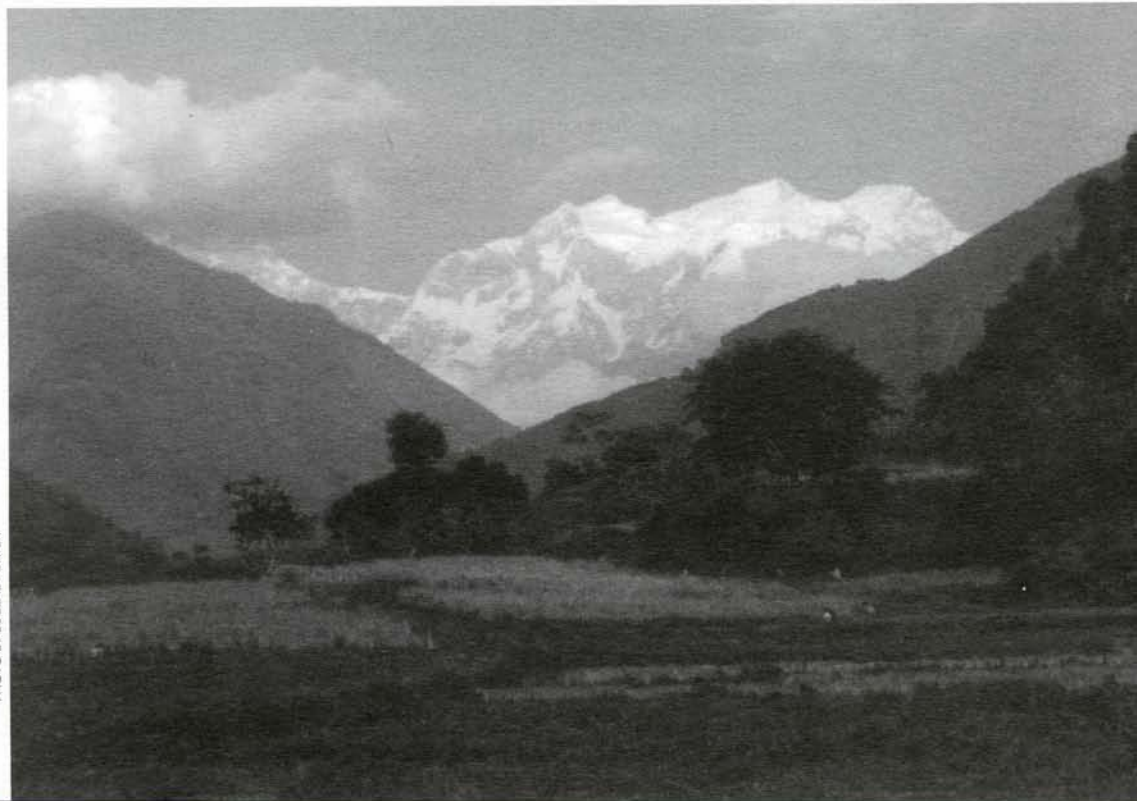
MANASLU

MOUNTAIN OF THE SOUL

8163 M • 26,781 Ft

Eighth highest mountain in the world, located in central Nepal in the Gorka Himal, Manaslu was first climbed in 1956 by a Japanese expedition after four years of intense preparation. This view is from Nayagaon.

PHOTO BY EUGENE PORTER



LAM BELA: TOMORROW'S PATHWAY

by Greg Mortenson

In Northern Pakistan's Hushe Valley, near K2 mountain, the villages of Khane and Balegon are a study of the triumph of the human spirit. There, amidst towering granite spires and desert flood plains, the Balti people make their lives in



For these village children, school is an open-air affair; above, in a dusty apricot grove, and below left, in a hillside amphitheater.

some of the harshest conditions on earth.

I came to Hushe as part of an expedition to K2 in 1993. After seventy days on the mountain, I spent some time in Khane. When I asked to see the school, the villagers took me up to a dusty apricot grove on a hill behind the village. A group of 85 children, five to twelve years old, were sitting in the dirt, reciting spelling tables. Some of the girls were baby-sitting younger children. Despite abject poverty, their spirits

soared. It was obvious that these children were intensely loved by their community, that their well-being was a top priority. But the village simply had no money for education or health care.

A decent education, in a school with benches and desks and a full-time teacher, would give these children the skills needed to survive in their changing world and still honor their own cultural heritage. So I made the commitment to help realize a school and clinic in Khane.

I started this project because I care deeply about these people. But I also have another, personal reason for dedicating myself to Khane's people. Two years ago, my youngest sister Christa died suddenly after a valiant 23-year struggle with epilepsy. During her short life, her joyful spirit touched many people, especially me. The Khane School Project is my way of honoring her. If you'd like to be part of this project, please give us a call.



PHOTO: GREG MORTENSON



PHOTO: VASSI KOULTSAPTS

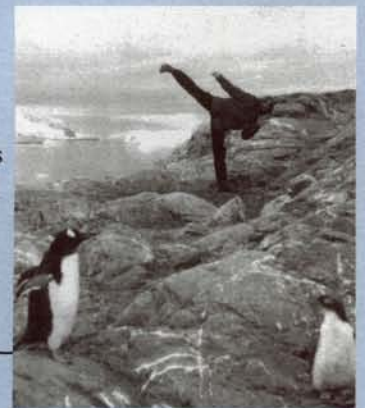
The Dalai Lama with proud parents Norbu and Terry Tenzing and their beautiful new daughter, Olivia Daku. Olivia was born March 30 at 8:53 pm, weighing in at 8 pounds, 15 ounces. In one of the highlights of her young life, His Holiness blessed Olivia and gave her a special name, Tenzin Kinzom, which means "Accumulation of Happiness."

Dear Readers,

On September 27th, in San Francisco, we will eat, drink and be merry with some of the most remarkable names in American mountaineering. An evening not to be missed! We can't wait to see you there.

And in our next newsletter, look forward to updates on some of our exciting new Tibetan projects. I'd like to offer my thanks in advance to Marjorie McLaren for her wonderful support of both a new school and new students at Tibetan's Children's Village in Dharamsala. It is the heartfelt caring of individuals like Marjorie, and like you, that enable us at the AHF to do so much good work. Thank you. Yours,

Erica Stone
Executive Director



Your editor and Himalayan penguins, very rare.

PHOTO: GIL ROBERTS

**eager ears,
eager hearts:
THE DALAI LAMA
IN BERKELEY**

His Holiness the Dalai Lama graced the Bay Area this past April, as part of his tour of American universities. Under brilliant blue skies at the Greek Theater at U.C. Berkeley, he gave a stirring talk to a capacity crowd about human rights and moral practice. He returned to his longstanding theme, that "to be a good human being, you must have compassion. You cannot be happy without compassion".

AHF helped coordinate His

Holiness' visit. We appreciated the opportunity to help bring him to the Bay Area; we are also deeply grateful to the many people who helped with his visit. Sterling among those were Loni Shep at U.C. Berkeley, Steve Swig, Fred Shepardson, Virginia Miller, Vassi Koutsaftis and Jeannie Craig. We also want to thank the officers at U.C. Berkeley, SF International Airport and the SFPD for the flawless security. And a very special thanks to Northwest Airlines for donating first class air tickets for His Holiness and his entourage from San Francisco to their next destination.

**AHF scholar-
ship student:
PRAGYA MISHRA**

PRAGYA MISHRA attended Albright College in Pennsylvania as a pre-med and biology major, graduating first in her class. Recently, she applied to AHF for help so she could attend medical school, help we were glad to give this dedicated young scholar.

Pragya writes,

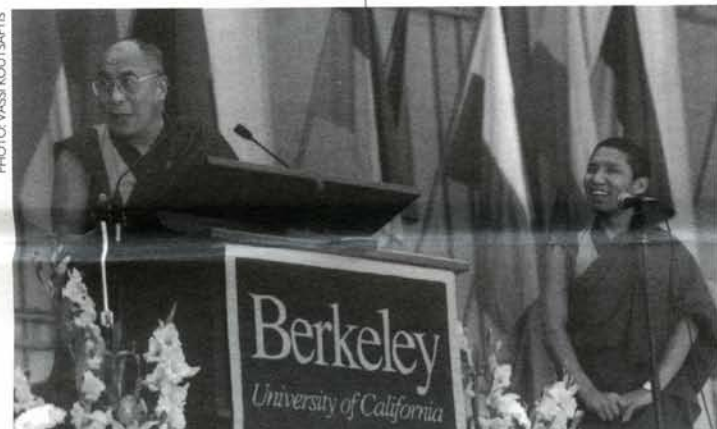
Now I am attending Penn State University College of Medicine at Hershey, PA. I will be a second year student in the fall of 1994. I had a great first year. I absolutely love the Hershey Medical Center and also my classmates - we all encourage and help each other.

I am delighted to be in medical school. I have wanted to become a doctor ever since I was about ten years old. While growing up, many of my neighbors were poor and could not afford to pay for their health care. This always made me sad and I was determined to become a doctor some day and try to make a difference. It gives me much joy to think that I am going to become a doctor. I am still determined to return to Nepal and do all I can to bring better health care to the very hardworking, poor but happy and content Nepali brothers and sisters. I have much respect for them and they deserve good health care.

I have much thanks to give to the American Himalayan Foundation for the help with my medical education. I feel that the best way to say thank you is by serving the sick and the poor in Nepal and doing all I can to make a difference, and that I am determined to do. For now, all I can say is a very sincere thank you.

Sincerely,

Pragya



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20th century
impact:
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CROSSROADS**

Carbon rods of used batteries crushed in the kitchen mortar and pestle to make a base for paint. Fish killed with pesticides, then eaten. Villagers becoming acutely mountain sick after reaching a high-altitude pilgrimage site by bus.

Stories like these are becoming frighteningly common in rural Nepal, as technology reaches villagers faster than the educational system can teach them how to handle it. Their unfamiliarity with things and situations that we take for granted can be dangerous.

To bridge this information gap, AHF has teamed up with Himal, a Nepali non-profit educational organization. With AHF support, Himal has painstakingly researched and produced a booklet, written in clear Nepali, with easy-to-understand illustrations, about "modern" products and processes and how to use them safely. The booklet will be distributed Nepalwide

*The modern world
reaches villagers
faster than the
educational system
can teach them how
to handle it.*

beginning in July, through village markets, development agencies and hill community and health centers.

The booklet covers many of the basics of modern life: how to cross a highway; how to take antibiotic medicine; how to question cigarette advertising; the dangers of burning rubber or plastic; electricity; AIDS. A little knowledge, in this case, can protect villagers from many dangerous things.

Himal also publishes a thoughtful magazine in English about issues and trends that affect the Himalayan region. If you're interested, call (415) 986-7762.



*Nawang sent us a note along with this picture of her and Ang Rita's son, Phinjo Wangdi.
—Lookin' good, dude!*

news from
Nawang:
**MEET THE
CROWN PRINCE**

"Dental clinic is going good. We will again be visiting different schools in Khumbu to do a fluoride program and brushing, etc. It will show a big change to all kid's teeth in the future." *Love, Nawang*

