

I CAME TO THE MOUNTAIN

Preface

It has been about 27 years since I read the book, *High Time*, by Louise Hillary, the wife of Sir Edmund Hillary. Her book inspired me to take a wild, wonderful, unforgettable adventure. I never have forgotten much of the experience because it was an adventure of a lifetime, full of surprises, beauty, unforgettable scenery, sorrow, laughter, and most of all a very personal moment with God.

Indeed, it is the last, that brings me to this day, and the urge to tell this story. It has been captured for the most part in the diary I kept daily. I will embellish only as a matter of reflection after 27 years, but will keep that to a minimum to hold to the adventure as much as possible.

Lastly, what stirred me to write? My wife and I have begun a series called *Experiencing God* by Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King. As I have moved through these daily lessons I have come to understand my relationship with God much better. Indeed, it was after some of these lessons that I decided to reread Ms Hillary's book, *High Time*. I have completed it (July 31, 2001) much as I did 27 years ago in 1974 when I decided I would go to Nepal and follow in the footsteps of the Hillary family as they worked to build schools, hospitals and bridges for the Sherpa people they had known and come to love. Her story became my story, to some extent, and in ways that I could never have imagined.

So, relax, sit back and come on a journey. Time is standing still for a moment, in fact, it has reversed. It's now 1975, and you are invited on an adventure. Join me as my God and *I came to the Mountain*.

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Diary Transcription - notes for Travel

The notes here are an exact replica of the notes on page 1 of my diary. What is not explained in the notes is that I was leaving Udorn, Thailand (I was stationed in the United States Air Force at that location in 1975). My destination was Kathmandu, Nepal. While I knew some things for certain, like the fact that I could get a visa for Nepal at the airport, I was using information from books to build plans. The only reservations I had were those on Thai Airways to and from Nepal. Thus, this would turn out to be a truly remarkable adventure...from the start.

Notes

Thai Airways Int'l Ph 13565
Darbar Marg

1. Shankar Hotel

2. Everest View hotel
Trans Himalayan Tours
Put. Ltd.

3. Sherpa Society
Ram Shah Path

LV Bangkok intl' 0810L

ARR Calcutta 0850L

LV Calcutta 0930L

ARR Kathmandu 1035L

17 March The First Day

It's only 1630 (4:30 PM), but I'm really tired. I need to reflect a moment because an immense number of things have happened already, and I am just beginning to understand a part.

I attempted my first coup de etat on The Shankar Hotel - it didn't work. While I sat for two hours waiting for a possible room, I reflected on several wheels that I'd already set in motion.

Everything had gone smoothly from my arrival at Truhuvan Airport (Kathmandu). I got my 7 day visa - no problem. I exchanged \$200 at the airport and got aboard a cab to the Shankar. It's about a four to six mile trip to town. The man riding with the cabby spoke good English, so I proceeded to pump him for answers to my main questions:

Visa extension/trekking permit

We went immediately to the Central Immigration Office, the sight and composition of which you could not believe! Having "the guide" along smoothed the transaction nicely. I needed one more photograph than I had; however, there was no problem.

From here, I wasted the two hours in the Shankar. The "guide" told me that he'd check on a Sherpa and other items I may need. When he got back, I decided to press on to the Sherpa trekking service for first hand discussion. In a small building, rather rundown, a short but well-built man with piercing eyes, speaking excellent English, asked me where I wanted to go. The final arrangements included the following:

Price \$200

This included two to three porters, one Sherpa guide, food, and my STOL (short take-off and landing) aircraft ticket down from Songboche.

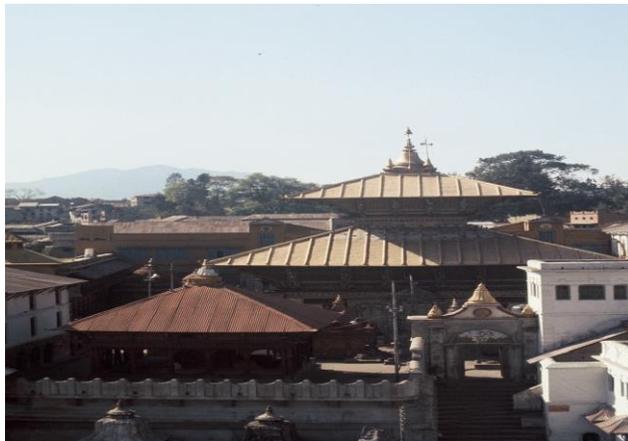
All in all, I'm extremely pleased with the arrangement. Also, the group and I will be driven to Dolalghat on the morning of the 19th to begin the trek.

At this point I was rather done for the day, but my guide had visitations in store for me.

First stop was Bouddhanathr, an extremely large stupa about four miles from the city.



Second stop was the Golden Temple (I think Pashupatinath Temple) on the Bagmati River



Children pose for me in Darbar Square.



Third stop was Darbar Square and the old palace of previous rulers.

Note: I exchanged \$80 upstairs in some back shop (really broken down - probably some sort of black market, though the exchange rate was the same.)

Ye old guide took me there. WOW! What a den!

On the same trip and in the same general area I bought some woolen gloves (mittens) at 35 rupees.

To bring this up to date, I "dropped" \$35 to the guide and cabby for service today and tomorrow. I really put my money on the line, but this guide has saved me a monumental amount of chasing (around). If he's for real (and my \$35 may or may not mean he's real or I'm a sucker), my trip looks pretty solid.

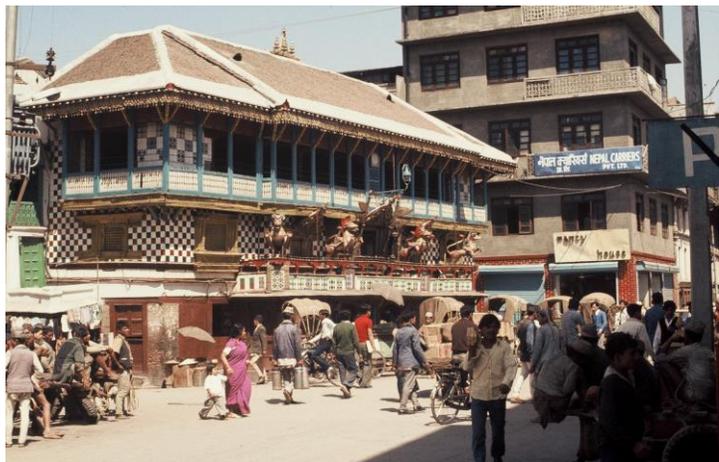
By the way, I'm currently staying at the Green Hotel, downtown

Kathmandu. The noise of the city is everywhere, but the weather is extremely comfortable.



The gate going down one of the main streets - about half way down is the Green Hotel, a small multi-story hotel which was very inexpensive.

And, further down the same street were some very unusual vendors.



I guess general characterization would be mixed emotion. I'm still somewhat uncertain about some things, and I admit to being "stunned" by the dual religious culture - about which I have covered myself with the Lord.

(Note: Kathmandu is unique in some respects to most other places in the world in that two major world religions live harmoniously together in the same city - Tibetan Buddhism and Hinduism)

Tomorrow morning at 0430 (4:30 AM) I'll be up with the guide to see the sunrise, then a relaxing afternoon until 1530 (3:30 PM) when I will pick up

my Visa extension and passport and trekking permit. Then, some final arrangements with the Sherpa personnel, and away we go----

