

COMINGS – GOINGS AND NEW VENTURES

Mrs. Taring came, the Nepal Study Tour students went, and everywhere you look Tibet is in the news – with artists, films, books and university students all adding to a greater awareness and understanding of this unique and endangered country.

MRS. TARING arrived on February 18 (see Dorothea Leach's article on *Page 3*), and we were very excited to meet this extraordinary lady in person. We had hoped to have her in Vancouver long enough to put on a evening for all our BC members, but her short time here curtailed our plans. However, for the Directors and the local Tibetan community her visit was

a wonderful opportunity to talk with a person who embodies the charm, the humour, the altruism and the indomitable spirit of Tibet.

Our first **DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR YOUNG CANADIANS - NEPAL STUDY TOUR** (co-sponsored with CIDA) left Vancouver on March 13. This project has kept several of our Directors busy over the past few months. The selections committee was impressed with the high calibre of the students who applied for this experience, and had a hard time choosing the eight finalists. Since December, these enthusiastic Grade 11 students have



been hard at work fundraising for their tour to Nepal and training for it. TRAS Directors Jennifer Hales (project leader), Frank and Lynn Beck, and Duane Webster ran sessions on TRAS projects, overseas development, personal health and safety, culture shock etc. Jennifer and co-leader Abby Fitch met often with the students, helping to mould them into a cohesive group and taking them on hikes to make sure they were up to the strenuous trip ahead of them. No problems there! This is an active, motivated, interested group of young people, fully committed to getting the most out of their tour.

We have heard via a couple of mothers that they reached Pokhara in good order – after a comfortable “6 movie” flight to Singapore (where the heat hit them like a wall, and some were thrilled to see their first palm tree) and a brief stay in Kathmandu.

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The Principal of the *Buddha Memorial Home*, Dorje Namgyal, came to their guest house to pick up the mountains of clothing the students had collected for the Home. He was most grateful for this gift, and for letters from Jennifer's Grade 4 class to his children. He hopes to have replies ready when the group returns to Kathmandu to visit the Home. Then they were off to Pokhara, where they gazed in awe from their hotel windows at the incredible mountain scenery. By now they will be well into their 11 day trek to seven of the villages which are helped by the TRAS/CIDA funded ACAP project. These are remote villages, well off the usual tourist trekking routes. Our integrated rural development projects are making a difference for the villagers.

People have asked what tasks our group will be doing in the villages – the answer is none. TRAS' philosophy is that all the villagers and refugees we support are perfectly capable of building schools, painting halls, planting trees – what they need is moral support, some advice and money. So these are what TRAS offers. The duty of our students will be to spread the word on their return. Each student is committed to giving seven illustrated talks to a variety of audiences – to help TRAS and CIDA educate Canadians about our overseas partnerships. As one of the students said, the world is so small these days, whatever happens in one part of the world affects all of us – we must all help each other and learn from each other.

Their first talk will be at the TRAS Annual General Meeting (details on *Page 6*) We hope to see many of you there. TRAS is grateful for CIDA's support of this opportunity to educate Canadians and train future volunteers.

NEW VENTURES?

◆ Several new books about Tibet have been released, and many of us have been to see *Seven Years in Tibet* and *Kundun*. Have you? The books deal with different aspects of the reality of Tibet and the films complement each other well. See *Page 5* for reviews.

◆ **WORLD ARTISTS FOR TIBET** is a new movement engaging artists from all over the globe to unite the world around human rights issues. In July and August 1998 communities around the world will be show-casing art, music, theatre, poetry, film, etc, dedicated to the Tibetan cause. 45 countries are involved in this promotion of freedom and peace for all.

The Vancouver Branch can be reached at 604-874-8572, and the North American coordinator is at:

Tel: 718-658-0906
 e-mail: art4tibet@aol.com
<http://www.art4tibet1998.org>

◆ In Greater Vancouver no fewer than 3 new groups have sprung up and have held very successful film evenings about Tibet and its problems. These are **STUDENTS FOR A FREE TIBET** at Simon Fraser University, University of British Columbia and Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design.

Congratulations to all these young people and artists who are acting out the Dalai Lama's statement:

" I truly believe that individuals can make a difference in society. Since periods of change such as the present come so rarely in human history, it is up to each of us to make the best use of our time to help create a happier world" .

SPONSORSHIPS

Joan Ford

First of all I would like to thank all the sponsors who have paid their sponsorship dues so quickly. It does make life easier for me and Bridget. To those who put the letter aside, you have now received a reminder. Please let us know your wishes, as the first payment for 1998 goes out to the settlements on March 31. I hope some of you saw the very nice newspaper article on the *Buddha Memorial School* that Keith Morgan wrote in the March 8th edition of *The Vancouver Province*. If you missed it, and would like a copy, please phone the TRAS office.

I have a large number of girls at the Mustang School needing sponsors, as well as others in several different settlements, so please contact me at the TRAS office if you would like to be a part of this program.



MRS TARING' S VISIT

Dorothea Leach

At the end of November a telegram arrived informing us that Mrs. Taring, our much respected and long time partner in India had been invited to a **Congressional Prayer Breakfast** in Washington, DC, in February, 1998. As she is now 87, her grandson, Tenor Taring, was to accompany her.

When Inge and George Woodcock were in India in 1962 and became aware of the plight of the Tibetan refugees, they not only met His Holiness the Dalai Lama but also went to Mussoorie to visit the **Tibetan Homes Foundation** (of which Mrs. Taring was the Secretary General) and the **Central School for Tibetans** (run by Mr. Taring). The Woodcocks were very impressed by the devotion and dedication both Tarings brought to their task of looking after hundreds of children, many of them orphans. They became firm friends and for more than 3 decades TRAS cooperated with Mrs. Taring – creating a sponsorship scheme, supporting the old people, purchasing Canada House at Mussoorie, offering vocational training to hundreds of the young people, etc. Mrs. Taring took it upon herself to supervise each project, which was for us a guarantee that it would be successful. Many times she appeared in our Newsletter and “Mrs. Taring” became a household word. However, very few Directors ever met her and now she was coming to Canada and we all hoped to be able to have an event at which our members could meet her. Unfortunately she could only stay two days in Vancouver.

The event in Washington was to honour people who had made significant contributions to their communities and 4000 were invited. Mrs. Taring very much enjoyed the celebration; she was asked to speak at three different gatherings on behalf of the Tibetans and she also met President and Mrs. Clinton (to whom she presented her book, *Daughter of Tibet*). Mrs. Clinton assured her most sincerely that she would read it.



Mrs. Rinchen Taring

After all the excitement in Washington, Mrs Taring and Tenor started on a grand tour of relatives and friends in North America, finally arriving in Vancouver on February 18 in very good spirits and not tired at all! Mrs. Wood-

cock had invited us for lunch and we went there from the airport. It was wonderful and very touching to see these two long time friends meet again, something neither had ever thought possible.

In the past Barry and I had stayed many times with the Tarings either at Mussoorie or Rajpur where they retired. I was therefore very happy to have Mrs. Taring and Tenor stay with me and to hold an “open house” for our local Tibetans and also the TRAS Directors. Most of the local Tibetans live in the White Rock – South Surrey area and 20 of them arrived in the evening with a wonderful pot luck Tibetan dinner. Some of them had been educated at the **Tibetan Homes Foundation** while Mrs. Taring was running it and they were overjoyed to see “Amala” (Mother) again and were surprised to find that she remembered most of them, even though hundreds of children had passed through the Homes.

In 1959, Mr. Taring filmed the Dalai Lama on his visit to the three major monasteries near Lhasa where thousands of monks had gathered to observe His Holiness in debate with learned lamas during the Monlan celebrations. Although taken by an amateur, the film is fascinating and very colourful. Indeed many scenes could have been taken at the time of Marco Polo; it seems as if nothing had changed. Mr. Taring gave a copy of the film to the Woodcocks and TRAS used it for fundraising in the 1970’s.

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Tenor Taring (grandson), **Joan Ford** (Sponsorship Director), **Beth Whittaker** (Director), **Mrs. Rinchen Taring**, **Dorothea Leach** (Secretary) & **John Conway** (past president)

At present TRAS Director Graham Peat is using his expertise to upgrade the footage to make a more professional film which we could use now that there is such an interest in Tibet. Mrs. Taring kindly consented to be interviewed by Graham on the making of the film and also to tell of her memories of "old Tibet". He came in the morning with two cameramen and we were all a little anxious not to overwork dear "Amala". But no, she was very keen to answer any question and we had to stop her to have lunch and a rest before the TRAS Directors came to visit in the afternoon and evening.

All were impressed with her deep concern for her people, her energy and lively interest - and her charming way of soliciting help.



A CONGRESSIONAL BREAKFAST AND A CUP OF TEA

Mrs. Taring is a great fund raiser and came prepared – she had a receipt book with her! We learned that at the **Congressional Prayer Breakfast** in Washington she had been on the war-path too. A British MP was motivated to promise funds to build decent housing for 150 families in the Rajpur area. No doubt he was touched by her sincerity and compassion for her people and promised his support. In return she assured him that she would administer and oversee the construction. It will be well planned and executed, as we have experienced so many times while cooperating with her on many diverse projects. I know her ability to evaluate architectural plans, make suitable changes, and buy bricks and cement – haggling with the trades people for the best price!

Mrs. Taring told us that recently she had been invited for tea by a group of 80 elderly Tibetans whose settlement had nowhere for them to gather and pray. Horrified at the thought of these old people outside in all weathers, she found a space between two buildings and received permission to build on it (the Minister responsible just happening to be in town that day). A Dutch supporter visited soon after and Mrs. Taring asked for help. The entire funding was immediately guaranteed and a cheque arrived soon after from Holland. Mrs. Taring went in triumph to the local bank to deposit it, only to discover she would need to form a society to open a charitable bank account for the old people. Not to worry, the local welfare officer was seen outside, and he quickly responded to her plea for help by depositing the money in the settlement bank account up the road, specially earmarked for a new prayer hall. On the very day we met her in Vancouver, the building was to be started. A fortuitous (or judicious!) cup of tea!!

We were all very sad to see her go. However, no doubt those of us who met her will now read her book, *Daughter of Tibet*, again or for the first time and enjoy it even more, hearing her voice as she tells her incredible life story.



Mrs Taring & Dorothea Leach

REVIEWS OF FILMS AND BOOKS

Graham Peat

TIBET ON THE BIG SCREEN

This winter was brightened for many by the release of two much anticipated major films on Tibet. *SEVEN YEARS IN TIBET* shows us the forbidden land that once was seen through the eyes of a westerner (Heinrich Harrer) who lived among the Tibetans from 1943 to 1950.

In his role as tutor to the young Dalai Lama, Harrer was exposed to the kindness and wisdom that changed his outlook forever. *KUNDUN*, however, is the Dalai Lama's own story, entirely from his point of view and therefore a revelation to us as we're shown the inner workings of the Potala and the boy-king's impressions of the same events that Harrer experienced from the outside. Both

films end with flight from Tibet – Harrer in 1950 and His Holiness in 1959.

What *Seven Years* does best is recreate life in Lhasa so stunningly that even our local Tibetans said it took their breath away. Director Jean-Jacques Annaud has done a superb job of preserving for us (on film) a culture that is no more. Although most of the sets were built in Argentina, many of the "Himalayan" peaks are familiar BC mountains, and those Tibetans learning

to ice skate from Brad Pitt (Harrer) are portrayed by our Tibetan friends in Vancouver who went to Williams Lake to shoot this gleeful scene.

Martin Scorsese's *Kundun* is more reverent in tone, thanks to screenwriter Melissa Mathison's buddhist perspective and her many interviews with the

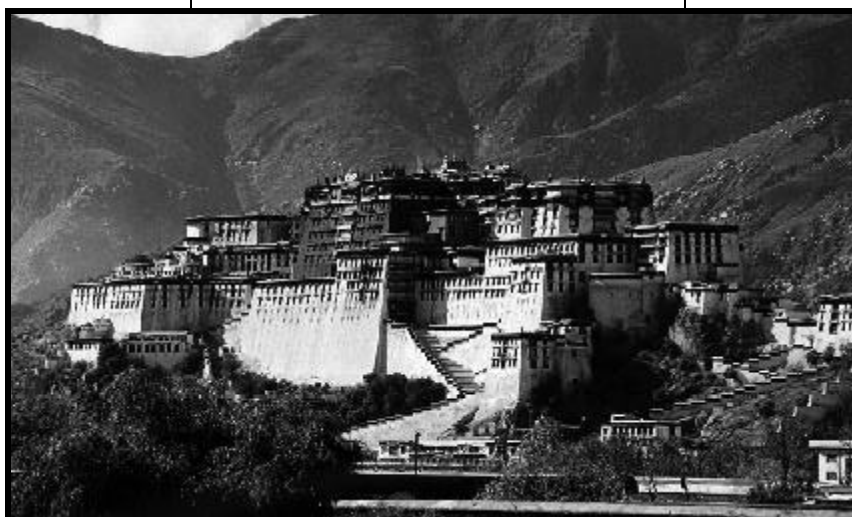
at the screening and the Tibetan Cultural Society's dancers performed for the audience of 650. At the *Kundun* premiere, almost one third of the audience were Tibet supporters, and most seemed quite moved by the experience.

Kundun does seem to be the favourite of both Tibet supporters and critics. Common criticisms of *Seven Years* were focussed on Brad Pitt's portrayal of Harrer and the feeling that there was too much of his character and not enough of the fascinating Tibetans! *Kundun*, however, is a little less accessible to the majority of filmgoers and therefore may not be as widely seen. Ultimately both films make an important contribution to our understanding of what happened to Tibet and

one story complements the other.

Both movies have excellent scores and are available on CD. I am particularly fond of Glass' Oscar-nominated score for its use of real Tibetan instruments and voices. The two films will soon be available on video. *Seven Years* appears for rental on April 7 and *Kundun* will likely be released in the early summer.

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Potala - Lhasa Tibet

Dalai Lama to consult on the accuracy of her portrait of his early years. The costumes, the set design, the cinematography and editing all flow around Phillip Glass' compelling score to create a kind of meditative history that is told in layers, both documentary-like and yet very personal.

We were fortunate to have our Tibetan community at the Vancouver premieres of both films. Those who acted in *Seven Years* were introduced

TIBET IN PRINT

Recent reviews in the Economist (Feb 14, 1998) and the Guardian Weekly (Oct 12, 1997) highlight three books on Tibet:

- *The Snow Lion and the Dragon: China, Tibet and the Dalai Lama*, by Melvyn Goldstein, traces the history of Tibet from the seventh century to the present.

- *Dawa Norbu, in Tibet: The Road Ahead*, also looks at the history of Tibet and its future, with the added interest of a personal account. It is the story of the "lost Tibet" that is so compelling, but both authors end with a glimmer of hope that moderates in China believe in a more sensitive policy towards Tibet.

- The third book is *Fire Under The Snow*, by Palden Gyatso, a monk imprisoned and tortured by the Chinese for 33 years. After his eventual escape to Dharmasala, the Dalai Lama gave him a tape recorder to tell his story. Fellow Tibetan Tsering Shakya translated the tapes and in lucid, elegant English turned them into this extraordinary, haunting story. Tsering's knowledge of Tibetan history puts the book's events into context, and his unique blend of Tibetan upbringing and Western education help him convey a distinctly Tibetan story to a mainly non-Tibetan audience. To order from Culture Shop, London:

Phone: (44) 181 324 5503

Fax: (44) 181 324 5678

email: bid@mail.bogo.co.uk

Tras T-shirts



Adult sizes: medium, large and extra-large (they are not my size!)
Colour: white, leopard, black and blue border.

Price:

- \$15.00 for the front design
 - \$15.00 for the back design and a front logo
 - postage \$2.00
- Order them from the office.

AN EVENING WITH TRAS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday - April 29, 1998

7.30pm at the Lutheran Campus Centre

5885 University Blvd.,

Vancouver, BC

(corner of University Blvd and Wesbrook Mall)

There will be a short business meeting, followed by a *slide show*

“EYES OF YOUTH ON NEPAL”

A FRESH PERSPECTIVE ON OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Eight Grade 11 students from Greater Vancouver share their slides and comments on TRAS projects in Nepal after their recent development education tour, sponsored by TRAS and CIDA.

Refreshments

Crafts

SPOTLIGHT ON SHILLONG

Duane Webster

Meghalaya, one of the smallest states in India, is situated between Assam and Bangladesh. This state, along with six other “sister” states which comprise the NORTHEASTER HILL STATES, has long been all but sealed off from the outside world. The capital, Shillong, with its rolling hills and elegant pines, has often been called “the Scotland of the east”. Shillong, once a favourite holiday resort for the British, was one of the areas chosen by the Indian government for placement of Tibetan refugees.



Col. Robert Snaize

TRAS has been funding a variety of projects in the Shillong area since the early 1960's. We were first introduced to this district by our longtime friend and partner in India Captain Bill Davinson. As Captain Davinson was with MYRADA (Mysore Rehabilitation and Development Agency) and therefore working mainly in southern India, he introduced us to Col. Robert Snaize, VSM (retd). Col. Snaize is the Executive Director of NERDA (NorthEastern Rural Development Agency). Over the past few decades, Col. Snaize has been

our liaison with the Tibetan Community in Shillong. Our most recent joint project, was the funding for the renovation of their school buildings. The school building, a renovated and converted “godown” (storage shed) was originally funded by TRAS/MYRADA in the mid 1980's. Over the years the school's population increased and there was a great need for expansion. In 1995-96, Col. Snaize (with funding by TRAS) capably organized: the construction of a two storied hostel building (able to accommodate 50 students in each hostel); a small staff quarters; the renovation of the kitchen and storage room; the installation of piped drinking water, bathing facilities and latrines; and a four bed infirmary. Under the Colonel's watchful eye, this undertaking was accomplished in short time and with minimal expense! .

Miss Passang Lhamo is the new Head Mistress of the Tibetan School (Shillong). She is a dynamic and most astute individual. She and Col.Snaize work well as a team. He helps put the



Passang Lhamo (Head Mistress)

school together, and she makes sure that it runs efficiently. The school presently has 134 students. Approximately half of the students are boarders (69) and the remainder are “day scholars”. They are still utilizing the original “godown” which is now subdivided into six classrooms. This structure is rapidly deteriorating due to age and severe weather. Shillong is a mere 56km from the “wettest place in the world”. Cherrapunjee, a small market town to the south, has the distinction of having had the greatest amount of rainfall ever recorded in a single day – 104cm in 24 hours!!! Small wonder that TRAS is awaiting a proposal for the construction of new classrooms.



TRAS EXECUTIVE

Patron Mrs. Inge Woodcock
President Dr. Frank Beck
Vice-President ... Dr. Marion Tipple
Secretary Mrs. Dorothea Leach
Treasurer Mr. Bill Haberl
Sponsorship Dr. Joan Ford
Project Director . Dr. Lynn Beck

Trans - Himalayan Newsletter
(published quarterly)

Editors Daphne Hales
Duane Webster

TRAS Office

5885 University Blvd.
Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1K7
Office Secretary — Bridget Bird
Tel: (604) 224-5133
Fax: (604) 224-4881
e-mail: tras@portal.ca

Om Mani Padme Hum
Hail to the Jewel in the Lotus



Yearly Membership donation (\$20) ----- \$ 20

Possible Additional Donations:

Monthly Donation of \$25 for the "Child Development and Education
Project" at a residential school -----

Monthly Donation of \$10 for a child in a "Family and Community
Development Project" -----

Donation to the Old People's Fund, which supports a "Self-Help Project"
for the elderly and infirm -----

Donation to the general fund or other specific area of your choice -----

TOTAL \$ _____

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____ Postal Code _____

Please write address and postal code on your cheque and mail to:

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Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T 1K7**