

Bangla Hope



Bangladesh Christian School Sponsorship America Newsletter

No. 47

April – June 2006

Go WHERE?

by Hazel Burns

Do I really even want to go?

This was the fifth year I'd been asked to go to Bangladesh. In previous years, commitments and questions prevented me from going. But now I had sacrificed my arm to immunizations. The six, 70-pound bags were packed with dental supplies and clothes for children.

The airports my husband, Len, and I became well acquainted with were Seattle, Los Angeles, Hong Kong, and Dhaka. In Seattle I stood behind a woman who was on her way to LA for a haircut. Of course, I don't know the details—maybe she had a free ticket because she worked for the airline and her daughter was her beautician, but in my mind, I contrasted it with what I'd heard about the conditions in the country where we were headed.

After thirty hours in airports and planes I felt exhausted, incoherent. An extra dose of adrenalin aroused me enough to deplane and answer questions from customs officials surrounding us in the Dhaka airport—no, all these bags were not our personal effects; yes, they were donated items to help children; yes, our organization was operating with our own NGO (legal recognition and documentation for the government). I tried to maintain my composure through the questioning, but inwardly I was thankful and ecstatic as the official, who seemed to be in charge, finally waved us on through. Bless him!

We were relieved to see Dave Waid waiting for us. We talked as we pushed the carts of luggage. As we neared the vehicle, our luggage was quickly surrounded by young men picking up our bags. Fortunately, they put them in the vehicle; unfortunately, they demanded lots more takas (money) than the job was worth. Exhausted and amazed at what was happening, I made a quick entry into the vehicle and just let the men handle it.

Streets in Dhaka, the capital city, are relatively quiet at 2 am. Within ten minutes we turned down what I thought was an alley and were in front of the receiving center. The driver, Dave, and Len all

jumped out to retrieve the luggage. The night guard, locked inside the security gate, tried to find the key so he could open the gate and let us in. I sat in the vehicle thinking: we're in an alley, there's security gates on everything, the driver's door is open, the engine is running, all the men are out of the vehicle, and I'm sitting here wondering who might jump in and drive off! Even in my foggy state of mind, I concluded it would be best to get out. A few minutes later they found the key. (The next day I learned the alley was really a street.)

Sleeping in a horizontal position for the remaining hours of the night was wonderful. Too many things in my life go unappreciated until I don't have them.

The next morning—and nearly every morning thereafter—we awakened to the sounds of baby beds sliding across the floor above us, someone pounding cement at the construction site behind the receiving center, babies letting the world know it was time for breakfast, the mournful calls of peddlers selling their goods, the bells from rickshaws announcing "get out of my way, I'm coming through," busses, trucks, cars, and horns—lots of horns.

Over 13 million people live in Dhaka. The challenges created by that many people living in one area must be massive. Streets bulge with traffic. On one three-lane road, we counted six vehicles side-by-side driving down those lanes. We couldn't see to count rickshaws, three-wheeled taxis, and foot traffic that were probably buzzing along the edge. Serious concentration is needed to drive in Bangladesh, and I



Len & Hazel Burns



Brent & Kara

Story on
Page 3



think, nerves of steel are mandatory to even be a passenger. Trucks, buses, cars, rickshaws, and foot traffic are all mixed in together. Many are without lights—even at night. Horns and brakes are equally important, but I suspect horns may wear out first. In the city, vehicles frequently drove so close that you could spread your fingers and touch one with your thumb and one with your little finger. Angels must have thin arms and hands. I visualized angel's arms stretched around all those vehicles protecting the riders in, on, and hanging from them.

Littering rules do not exist—people drop their garbage anywhere. Then others dig through piles of garbage searching for anything of value, like a bit of food, I imagine.

Open sewers ran along the edges of the streets. At times, one whiff assured me the amount of air in my lungs would have to be adequate until I walked a little farther.

We saw the blind, those without legs, and little children begging for money. If you gave, you soon had many surrounding you, and I wondered what Jesus would do. How would He show His love and meet the needs of these masses? How would He help the destitute living in the slums?

With so many people in one area, there is a lot of pollution, dust, and dirt. The first evening I washed my salwar kameez (typical dress worn by Bengali women), I looked at the water in disbelief. Where did all that dirt come from? Throughout our stay, as I saw school girls in their typical school uniforms with the white pants, I was in awe and wondered how they could keep them so very white.

Resourceful Bengalis take a little shop about seven or eight feet square and turn it into a fabric, grocery, or kitchen store. In the fabric shop, the cloth was folded neatly and stacked on shelves clear to the ceiling. A small ladder provided a way for the storeowner to reach even the top beautiful piece. A yardstick, small calculator, receipt book, and pencil completed his accessories.

One of the shops we went in sold beautiful salwar kameezes. This shop was larger and had one dressing room about two feet square. If you had a hard time with claustrophobia or heat, you wouldn't spend long there.

Many shops were closed during prayer time. I was impressed with the devotion of these Muslim shopkeepers.

Compared to the noisy cities, the rice paddies and small potato fields were a restful place for me. I don't know how those bent over the rice plants, pulling the plow, digging the potatoes by hand, and pounding bricks to pave the road may have felt.

The sky was clearer in the country, though never totally clear. One evening we rode a rickshaw van (rickshaw with a flat bed to ride on) from a village back to a boarding school. Though we were about half way through our 3½-week visit, this was the first time we had the time or were in a place dark enough to see the stars. Their brilliance was captivating. When we lowered our gaze, fireflies flitted around the little ponds on both sides of us. It would have been easy to be lost in the beauty of the darkness punctuated by God's natural lights except that we had to lis-

ten for vehicles so we could shine our head and tail-light (flashlight) in the appropriate direction.

There were rickshaw drivers who demanded too much money, and there were children who returned a dropped package. There were shop owners who tried to charge exorbitant prices, and the shop owner who came four miles on rickshaw van to return the right amount of change.

At the schools I was deeply impressed by the respectful, friendly manner of the students. "Auntie" and "Uncle" are the way they address their elders. If any students were present when I was washing my laundry by hand, they were soon by my side to assist, or more likely, finish the job.

Each student brings their own dish to meals and is responsible to wash it. Students, even as young as five, wash their own clothes and hang them out to dry on a clothes line or on the ground.

One morning when I went out of our room at one boarding school, I encountered two industrious boys sweeping sidewalks. As they turned to greet me, one of the boys, maybe ten-years-old, practiced his English. In one breath he shot out, "Good morning how are you I am fine, thank you." I smiled and greeted him, but inside I wished I could speak Bangla, even that well, so I could communicate with the people.

BASC College has about 1,000 students enrolled from kindergarten through college. We attended church there the Sabbath they concluded a week of spiritual emphasis programs presented by Pastor Randy Skeete from Michigan. Eighty-two young people showed publicly by baptism, they wanted to commit to a forever friendship with Jesus. We were told there were more students studying and desiring to make that commitment as well.

After the outdoor baptism, we watched from inside the church as the students lined up and reverently filed barefoot in to their seats.

As I worked, visited, worshipped, and talked with our workers in the Bangla Hope office and receiving center, I was impressed with their sincerity and desire to help their people. I watched those caring for the babies at the receiving center. There's a lot of activity there most of the time—cleaning, cooking, loving, washing, loving, diapering, dressing, loving, teaching, loving, etc. I watched the caregivers work together for the good of all. Some of the caregivers come from difficult circumstances themselves, and I realized this is not only a ministry to help the babies. We can also help in the healing process for some of God's older children, the caregivers.

I gave funds to Jason, our sponsorship director, to keep temporarily for a student. I watched him count it and mark the amount on the envelope. There would be no question whether the right amount would be returned to me in a few days. I watched others in the office carefully account for funds. I'm thankful to be associated with a ministry that believes in accountability to their donors.

We packed our bags for the return flight. They weren't as heavy—neither was I. I'd left some of my blood in Bangladesh. Maybe the mosquitoes liked my American blood for variety to their regular diet. But as I told the people good bye, I knew I was also leaving a part of my heart.

Brent & Kara

Off on another drive to the country—maybe I should say an event to the country. As far as I could tell, there are no leisurely drives in Bangladesh. The KMMS boarding school is about five hours from Dhaka. Early the next morning we left for the village, Rumsul. This is the area where many of the babies in the receiving center are from. Two more little ones needed a home.

As we bounced along, we frequently asked our driver to stop so we could take pictures. He didn't need a pull-off area—he just stopped. In one village, the driver of our rented van pulled over to the side of the narrow road so an oncoming truck could pass. Apparently our driver didn't notice the hole until the front left wheel dropped in. A tow truck was called—all the men standing in close proximity along the road—and with their lifting power, we were on our way within minutes. The narrowing road and varieties of things on the road—animals, people, houses—necessitated an alert driver.

When we arrived at the path to Rumsul, we started our short hike. Villagers along the path seemed to find our pale faces and arms something unique to gaze at. At the village, people were beginning to gather. The stories were heart wrenching. Some of the families had both a mother and father, but didn't make enough money to feed the family; one family lived on the roadway; one husband left soon after the baby was born. The mother went to live with her mother, but just twenty days previous to our arrival, the grandmother died. The mother was going back to Dhaka to work in a garment factory, but she needed someone to care for her baby. In addition to the two we went to get, we agreed to take four more.

Kara's family said they had no land of their own, and the little home they lived in had water in it nine months of the year. Parting from family is extremely traumatic, but Kara is adjusting and smiling again.

Brent is about one year old. His father died from cancer. His mother is going to work as a housemaid but she cannot take Brent and his older sister, three-year-old Sherry, with her. Both Brent and Sherry are now at the receiving center.

You can sponsor toddlers in the receiving center for \$100 monthly or co-sponsor for \$35 monthly. More pictures of children to sponsor are on our web site.

A Daughter's Tribute

Joanie Fair has been so generous with her quilting talent. She has donated several of her hand-stitched works of art for us to use as thank you gifts. Following is the poem her daughter wrote.

She sees it as so small,
a very tiny ability.
This talent, representing all
her artistic creativity.
A magnificent gift in the
beholder's eye.

They see a true beauty,
that money cannot buy.
When upon looking deep,
seeing endless hours,
tiredness effort creep.
She makes it look like
such ease,
Others see it as the complex
task that it be.
Harmonizing colors and patterns
lace up together in a perfect dance.
Her choices were decided
carefully, without chance.
Tiny stitches enhance her design,
and the patience that make it
extremely fine.
Beauty shines forth as her
talent is laid out lovingly
on the bed.
Peaceful sleep befalls
those who rest beneath,
to lay their head.
Warm folds tuck us in tight,
sleeping under "Mother's
Talent" tonight.

SPECIAL PEOPLE HELPING CHILDREN

Thank You

- ~ Ruby W. for donating new children's clothing
- ~Debbie B. for the rubber pants she made
- ~Ruth S. for the 3 boxes of miscellaneous baby items
- ~ Billie S. for the cute little Beanie Babies for the children in the Receiving Center
- ~Palatka Church Children's Class for your donation

In Loving Memory of:
Vera Grayson
By niece, LoVina Bliss

Peggy Hewlett
By Gordon

Marion Peterson
By Jan & Randy Paul

Bangla Hope E-Newsletter Link Change

Thank you to all who have signed up for electronic delivery of the Bangla Hope E-Newsletter (detailed in previous newsletter). The savings has allowed us to provide 363 more meals each year for hungry children!

If you haven't, you may still sign up to automatically receive the Bangla Hope E-Newsletter and help save at least \$2.00 per newsletter, per year. The sign-up link has changed slightly to:

www.banglahopenewsletter.icorrmail.com

<u>PROJECT</u>	<u>AMOUNT NEEDED</u>	<u>AMOUNT RECEIVED</u>
New (to us) Van in Bangladesh	\$ 15,000	\$ 6,000
English Reading Books	\$ 50,000	\$ 1,761
Bangla Hope Receiving Center/Orphanage	\$270,000	\$120,090