

## 6 Pakistan--Sitting This One Out

Amritsar, India, to Lahore, Pakistan  
Tuesday, March 23

I awakened around 6 A.M., and after dressing dragged myself to the breakfast table in the hotel restaurant where everyone else appeared to be well and jovial, even Boris.

It seemed to take forever for breakfast to be served. I rested my head on my arms on the table and debated whether to stay or return to my room. Finally the redundant hard boiled eggs and dry bread appeared. After two bites and leaving my thermos with Jen to be filled with boiled water, I returned to my room and its blessed facilities.

Neil came in to see me again. The orange pills and the lomital had not helped significantly. He was concerned that I was losing too much fluid and encouraged me to take salt tablets.

Just before boarding the bus, I took the prescribed amount of lomital, the orange pills and a salt tablet hoping all this would keep my insides intact for the drive ahead. My roommates carried my luggage to the bus. I was the last to board and stretched out

as best I could in the two front seats behind Graeme. Neil had the hotel bar mix me a lemon soda which was served on a tray by a tall white-coated waiter. With the bus motor idling and the waiter standing beside me, I drank the settling potion in a matter of seconds.

The drive to the border took about two hours. Parked near the customs building, we handed our passports forward to Neil. He told us that we could sit in the shade on the lawn near the bus and wait while the official checked our passports; this time we would not be interviewed individually.

I was still too ill to move outside, so remained on the bus changing my semi-reclining position from time to time. My most urgent question was, "Were there any facilities?" Nino went out looking but found none. I finally sat up and, looking out the windows behind me, discovered a substitute, a large dry canal bed with a covering of tall grass. Carol accompanied me to the canal from which a local was returning probably for the same reason. Carol stood guard to warn me of other wandering locals as I waded into the high grass.

Everyone was on the lawn when I returned to the bus. To cheer me, Nino played some of my favorite cassettes. He left to change my Indian rupees into Pakistan rupees and brought me a Coke. Carol had found some cold water, and returned with a wet washcloth which she placed around my neck. How refreshing it felt. Neil, Carol and Nino's attentiveness and the group's concern and prayers for me were wonderful boosts to my morale. I was touched by Nino's

concern and felt even closer to him now.

After a couple of hours, we had cleared customs and were on the road again arriving in the heavily populated city of Lahore around 4 P.M. We waited in the bus in the hotel drive while Neil and Graeme made our room arrangements with the management.

A tall good-looking Aussie, a complete stranger to us, entered the bus and jumped into the driver's seat. We thought he was going to drive off with us until he began talking to us over the mike. He told us he was a Sundowners' courier and his group was on its way to Katmandu. They were staying in this hotel and this would be their last night in Lahore. He was one of Neil's "mates." His enthusiasm and funny tales of the trip from London kept us all in stitches.

Meanwhile, Brian, a salesman from Sydney and our "Wolfman" who enjoyed teasing the girls, was the next to succumb to the merciless wog. Both he and I left the bus together in search of the hotel loos, any loos. On our way, Neil, returning to the bus, told us our room numbers. But we couldn't make it to our rooms, so we tried every ground floor room until each of us found an unlocked door, no less than desperate were we.

Then I walked very slowly up to my third floor room and met Nino who had devotedly brought my bags. He left me with some encouraging words.

I roomed with three of the younger girls who were very sympathetic to my needs. Our connecting rooms shared a bath fully equipped with all modern conveniences. They even had telephones

for room service.

The girls left quietly for the hotel pool as I undressed for bed. From the sliding glass door which opened on a small balcony, I could see part of the pool and hear the laughter and splashing. It would have been fun to have mingled with the other group at the pool, but if I had to be ill, this was an ideal place for it. How thankful I was that I had made the border crossing and the drive without an embarrassing incident.

I spent the rest of the day in bed, nursing myself with more pills and salt tablets. Room service brought me tea, broth and crackers. Unable to sleep, I finished my book. Jen brought me a letter from Dad as Lahore was a mail stop for us. In my state, wondering whether I would live or die, it was especially good to have word from home. We had left Sydney one month ago.

Lahore  
Wednesday, March 24

I had a good night's sleep and was feeling much better though still weak. The salt tablets seemed to be helping, but I would forego the planned tour of the city and the Shalimar Gardens built by Shah Jahan. So I stayed in bed another day.

The group returned in the afternoon for rest and relaxation at the pool. Jen came in to visit and tell me about the tour. She had learned that 96 percent of Pakistan was Muslim, and, for this reason, Neil had advised the girls to cover up before going out. He had learned from the other courier that some girls from his group had been pelted by eggs and stones here. Our girls

also complained of being harassed.

Jen and I wondered if imported American and European films could be partly responsible for the prejudice the girls were experiencing. As for our appearance, it was undoubtedly objectionable for these Muslims to see women in jeans, short skirts and short sleeved tops with unveiled faces. The majority of their women were completely covered and veiled. We were really in the Muslim world now!

The group had learned a great deal about Islam on the tour and Jen, sitting at the foot of my bed, began reading from her copious notes. Before the prophet Muhammad, founder of Islam, there were as many as 200,000 to 300,000 prophets through whom Allah (God) made his revelations known. Of these prophets, the most important were Adam, Noah, Abraham who was the first Muslim and Father of the Faithful, Moses, Jesus and finally the Arab, Muhammad who lived from 570-632 A.D.

Many early Muslims found the Koran, a compilation of successive revelations Allah made to Muhammad, insufficient for instruction in the good life. Therefore, around the 9th century, the Sunna, additional collections of Muhammad's moral sayings and anecdotes, was also used as a guideline for the good life.

Among the many duties observed by practicing Muslims, the following five are basic with few exceptions: One must declare with complete understanding and acceptance that "there is no god but God and Muhammad is his prophet," one must also pray five times daily, give alms liberally, observe the fast of Ramadan

and make at least one pilgrimage to Mecca during his lifetime.

The Indian Muslims' fear of Hindu domination found its roots when such Hindu leaders as Mohandas K. Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru initiated moves for an independent India following World War I. Refusing to accept a state headed by Hindus, Indian Muslims pushed for their own state and with the persistent efforts of Ali Jinnah and other Muslims, the Muslim state of Pakistan was carved from northwest and northeast India where the heaviest concentrations of Muslims existed. Consequently, there followed mass exchanges of Hindus and Muslims into their respective countries resulting in much strife and bloodshed. A breakup between West and East Pakistan occurred in December 1971 when East Pakistan declared its independence and became Bangladesh.

Further facts Jen had gleaned on Pakistan were that it suffered from a birthrate of 2700 babies born daily and had a literacy rate of only 17 percent.

In a lighter vein, Jen asked me if I would like to hear some of the character sketches she had been writing on the trip. Remembering her clever sketches on our South Sea cruise, I told her that I would enjoy nothing better. So, with apologies that they were not as refined as she would like, she began reading:

Neil and Graeme

Neil was our tour leader, a paunchy rather flashy type, a man of the world. He sported a mustache and affected a small ivory horn, worn around his neck. He had the habit of speaking in an exaggerated fashion

with suitable gestures and facial grimaces to emphasize his words. His very sincerity made him seem a little insincere as though it were forced out of him by his position and circumstances. However he was an excellent tour leader; none of us girls could possibly fall in love with him, and complicate the tour atmosphere.

Graeme, our driver, was a different kettle of fish altogether. Very tall and thin he was, his face set crookedly but pleasantly and his head covered with a mop of straight gingery hair. So different from Neil. Not nearly so self-assertive, seemingly shy, finding conversation difficult; he puzzled me. I couldn't quite make up my mind about him.

But he had his positive side. One short word from him and we'd all obey instantly. Josi, our tour cheerleader (self-appointed), a noisy, cheerful, round sort of girl with boundless energy, tended to hang around him when we were on the road. Driving and trying to concentrate with someone like Josi around his neck must have been irritating. It eventually brought forth words from Graeme such as "Righto Josi, down the back now!" or "Back to your seat!" Sharp and sweet and eminently effective, Josi, who was always so easily upset and thin-skinned like a lot of noisy, seemingly happy people are--after the first time, when she thought he was

joking; obeyed instantly, muttering good-naturedly while she stumbled back to her seat.

Josi, and, I suspect, a few others of us were slightly infatuated with Graeme. His very remoteness made him appealing and gave him a mysterious air. He had a habit of speaking to one of us (or a few) then unexpectedly terminating the conversation by moving away. Often we called out goodbye or goodnight to him when he was halfway down a corridor, or out of the room altogether. My nonsense conversation, I thought irritated him. Excess words, left him cold. He only ever said what was necessary. Gauging Graeme's personality, his depth of character and his intelligence was thus very difficult, if not impossible, and left him open to conjecture.

Graeme and Neil together made a good pair, they complimented each other. While Graeme was quiet and serious, Neil was loud; his speech full of innuendos and quick quips. Neil was smart and well-dressed while Graeme didn't care and often wore the same T-shirt for days. Josi mended a hole in his jumper for him like the concerned, motherly person she was. All the same I don't think it mattered much to him. With such long arms and legs, clothes must have been hard to buy. His wrists always looked more exposed than was usual, his shirts seemed to ride up his chest.

Both men were in their mid-twenties, though we all thought that Neil was at least thirty-six and were surprised to find that he was ten years younger. I said I thought that early senility had set in, one comment of mine which brought forth sniggers of enjoyment from some of our group. But Graeme was older than Neil, under 30, just right for nearly all the others, (me being, to my dismay, the oldest on the tour by one month). Perhaps Neil was the more mature of the two which made him seem older? Or, more likely, perhaps he was the less sensible of the two?

#### Elizabeth and Myra

I see those two opposite, their active minds busy concocting naughty little verses and setting them to music (well recognized tunes most of them). Myra and Elizabeth have been forces to be reckoned with on this tour. Neither of them misses any commentable occurrences which take place and usually come up with a solution. Elizabeth would be one of the most notorious matchmakers that I've ever met. Unfortunately she has not had much material this trip, but she has made good use of what she has had. Some of her predictions have eventuated, mostly mild infatuations or a deepening of an existing friendship.

I must admit that I always feel a little nervous when I see them with heads together. Sometimes they

come too near the truth and the truth can be hard to take with equanimity.

Elizabeth seems a comfortable person until you get to know her, then you find that underneath that motherly exterior lies a will of iron. She is the type that would fight to the death for a principle or person precious to her. Myra is the innovator and Elizabeth provides the material.

#### Megan

When I first became aware of Megan we had recently arrived in Singapore and were staying at the Miramar Hotel. She was standing outside the lift talking, so freely and openly that I was quite amazed at her lack of reticence. As I came to know her, I realized that that was how she was, pleasant, forthcoming, forthright, definitely not shy!

She was a tall girl with a good figure and long legs that made me feel quite envious. Long hair hung free and framed a strong featured face. Megan had unusual eyes, a slightly eastern shape, smaller than is usual in a European, with short but thick black eyelashes and brown pupils. Her eyes most influenced her appearance.

Megan was a real Australian, not one of those city-types who worry constantly about their appearance, but a girl of the outback, used to dealing with the vagaries

of nursing in those areas. The aboriginals were her forte, she seemed to love them and to accept them as they were, not attempting--as many misguided Christians have in the past--to change them or their life-style in any way. We were constantly entertained by her stories about life and nursing difficulties in these areas. The nomadic ways of the natives, the drunken brawls, calling in the Flying Doctor or the police, she had certainly experienced a lot and would have coped with it all very competently. I admired her very much. She was much braver than I.

#### Brian

Brian is a man of obvious worth, God-fearing and particular, he is nevertheless human--he likes the ladies. This minor failing combined with a well-developed sense of fun tends to antagonise the prudes on the trip. It has also earned him the unattractive title of "Wolfman"--reminiscent of a revolting disc jockey at home (apparently). Brian displays a remarkable acceptance of his "label" and good-naturedly laughs it off when reference is made to it. I think he likes the idea of being a "ladies' man." The funny thing is that it quite suits him. At the mention of a kiss his eyes light up, he starts panting and hovering around the victim--then, an anticlimax--a small peck on the cheek is all that ensues. I feel that if Brian's religious-

based conservatism did not keep him on the straight and narrow, heaven knows what he'd be up to.

Jen left me to join the others at the pool. What a character she was--studying and trying to figure out people, what made them tick. Her observations were so different from mine. I was into history and she was into people.

Jen looked fit again, and I hoped that she had finally overcome the bug. There was no set pattern to the illness; some had it longer than others; and a fortunate few had escaped it so far. I wondered how long my bout would last.

I remained in bed through the evening continuing my liquid diet. Neil and Graeme stayed at the hotel too, while the rest of the group visited a Christian church in Lahore. Here they were to meet and listen to the testimonies of men and women who had left the teachings of Muhammad for those of Christ.

Lahore to Peshawar  
Thursday, March 25

Though still very weak, I decided to join the others for breakfast. Luckily I was able to retain solid food once again. I had lost at least ten pounds and had to borrow two large safety pins to tighten the waist of my jeans, otherwise they would have dropped to the floor. Not only had my body lost weight, but my face had too, my gaunt appearance reflected my ordeal. Fortunately though, my stomach had stopped rumbling, so the day's ride to Peshawar would hopefully be more comfortable.

Leaving the hotel around 9 A.M., Neil cautioned us about boys throwing rocks at foreign buses. It was a common occurrence here. So today he told us to be on guard against such an attack and to distract the culprits in any way possible. Not long after the warning, Graeme announced we were approaching such a situation. As we paralleled a railroad track on a high levy, several boys lining the track started throwing rocks down on us. Graeme flung open the bus door and Robert and Neil took positions on the bus steps shouting and waving violently at the boys while the rest of us followed suit until we were safely by. (This awareness and drill were to become a part of our everyday travel ritual through the rest of Asia.)

I tried to see what I could of Lahore, but I only remember that it had paved streets, many American cars and an occasional Mogul structure.

Heading northwest, we were soon traveling through rugged terrain again. The roads were much better and most were paved. We stopped for lunch around 1:00 at an attractive cafe-curtained restaurant where we enjoyed buffalo steaks and golden fried chips-- my first heavy meal in four days, delicious.

Continuing on, we crossed the Indus Valley. Neil told us that here between 2500 and 1500 B.C., a civilization had flourished with elaborate irrigation systems, citadels containing palaces, granaries, baths and well-planned towns with brick lined sewers.

Arriving at our Peshawar hotel around 4 P.M., we learned that the hotel management had not received Neil's telegram regarding

reservations. While accommodations were readied, we waited patiently in the lobby and were served cups of tasty tea. Due to a doctors' convention at the hotel, we had to double up.

The five-story hotel, though old and in poor condition, was built around a courtyard with stairways leading up to balconies on each floor. I shared a small stark room with five other girls. Wall to wall ropebeds with heavy bedding had been made up for us with only one narrow aisle at the foot of the beds. Besides the beds we had a sink in the room. The toilets and cold showers were some distance away.

We ate along with the doctors in the hotel restaurant and watched an overhead television broadcast the day's news, our first television viewing since leaving Sydney. Our menu was more buffalo steak, chips, narn and a green salad which we did not dare eat. The service was excellent. While some lingered in the restaurant after eating, I turned in early, thinking about Afghanistan--what would it be like?