

WALDRON NEWSLETTER

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RETURN TO INDIA: We send you greetings from Dindigul. The weather is fine, a bit humid though. It is the rainy season. Every day a short shower comes and cools things off a bit. As of the end of September Jim felt he had recuperated enough from his heart bi-pass surgery (June 26) to return to the work in India and Nepal. Today is Monday October 2nd. We have been away from home one week today. Already we have visited the girls' and boys' schools in Coimbatore, which is 100 miles northwest of Dindigul, and traveled the 3 and ½ hours by car to Dindigul. At this writing Jim has gone out to the married men's school here in Dindigul. He has been away from India so long, a few problems have arisen that he must work out. (I just noticed the time in the lower right hand corner of my computer – it is 1:30 a.m. CST USA and it's noontime here in Dindigul!)

For those who have never traveled overseas I thought it might be interesting to describe our journey thus far. We left Nashville, TN at 3:45 p.m. on a flight to Detroit where we were to get our international flight to Amsterdam. The schedule showed that we would have less than one hour to make the change over. I began to worry that the luggage would not be transferred in time. Also, my observation has been that our arrival gate is always on the opposite end of the terminal from the gate where we depart. Such was the case in Detroit. We had discovered upon looking at our tickets and seat assignments that we were not seated together on the KLM flight to Amsterdam. They told us at Nashville that this problem would have to be taken care of in Detroit by KLM. I know the hallway to the international gate must have been at least half a mile long. Jim had to leave me behind and raced on to the ticket counter to take care of the problem. Fortunately, when he reached the counter he learned that the flight was delayed 45 minutes. This did not cause us a problem in Amsterdam because KLM was able to make up the lost time. Cruising speed for the 747 aircraft is usually 550 mph, but with a tailwind the captain told us we were flying at 697 mph, flying time was about 6 hours, and we would arrive about 1:00 a.m. CST (local time 9:00 a.m.). In Amsterdam we learned that our next flight had also been delayed 45 minutes. And to our dismay, after boarding, we sat for two hours in the plane before taking off. Because they were unable to make up the lost time we arrived late in Bombay, where we had to clear customs and immigration.

At Immigration one has to show the passport and present a previously filled out form telling the reason for the visit and the location of accommodations to receive permission to enter and a stamp in the passport. Then one proceeds to the baggage claim area. This late arrival posed a very bad problem as there were two other large planes arriving at the same time. There were 12 lines at the Immigration counters so we proceeded to choose the shortest line. However, we decided it must have been the first night on the job for our Immigration officer because Jim and I ended up being the very last two people to clear Immigration.

The luggage turnstile was unable to sufficiently handle so much baggage, creating a mad house situation when we tried to retrieve our four pieces. As the luggage came into the building it was being dragged off and stacked in the floor. So we went from area to area searching for ours. We had been given some red plastic tags to put on our luggage to help identify them from others of like makeup, so this helped a lot to find them.

After retrieving the luggage we stopped at the bank counter to exchange money. We were spending one night in Bombay and going by domestic air the next day so we needed a hotel near the domestic terminal that was about 12 miles away. Arrival time in Bombay was 12:00 midnight. With all the rigmarole it took to get us out of there it was 2:00 a.m. before we got to a hotel. As we were dead for sleep anyway we were soon sound asleep. Our next day flight did not leave until 3:30 p.m., so we had a good long rest (in preparation for the next ordeal of arriving in Madras/Chennai). No big deal getting our luggage and arranging for a hotel because we had been there before and knew where we would be staying. The problem came when we tried to cross the city after 6 p.m. Our driver said "6:00 to 9:00 in Chennai (Madras) is traffic jam." And he was right about that! It took an hour to get to our hotel. Traffic jams in American cities are a breeze compared to this traffic jam. In America at least people do observe the law of individual traffic lanes. There in Chennai it was a constant merge of large trucks, many buses, cars of all sizes, small motorcycles (some carrying a family of four), motorized rickshaws, and bicycles (Jim said at least there are no animals allowed on the city roads in Chennai). While we were there Jim had some dental work done, a filling for the amazing price of \$6.50. He had business with the American Express Bank, so he was able to take care of that also.

After two days we flew into Coimbatore where we were met at the airport by a group of Christians. They were especially concerned for Jim regarding his surgery. Some of us piled into the school van to make the 45-minute trip to the campus of Angie Greene, the Coimbatore Bible Institute for Women. On the way we ran through a rain shower. The van is so old and rusted that the rain came inside in a few places. However, the trip was good and the girls were waiting, giggling at the front gate when we arrived. All were dressed so beautifully in lavender saris. Lilly (the director) was away for the day. Her first cousin died

that morning and she had gone to the funeral. Here funerals are conducted the same day of the death because there is no embalming.

There is the most charming blind girl at Angie Greene named Kanimall. She has a wonderful sense of humor, and Jim is always teasing her about something to make her laugh. She and a friend came up to our room for a visit. She is very intelligent and has a Masters degree in English, so she teaches the girls English. She says the girls are discouraged because learning the language is so hard. Jim encouraged her to just keep on working with them. They've learned the names of trees and flowers and vegetables already and they eagerly showed their knowledge a little while earlier when they took Jim around the grounds and to see their vegetable garden. A large number of the graduates have married Christian men and established Christian homes. Isn't that what this school is all about!!! Kanimall reminded Jim of a story he told here about brother Otis Gatewood that they all enjoyed very much. Brother Gatewood said when he was in college he met a beautiful young woman and prayed to God that he could marry her. She, however, married someone else. Brother Gatewood said he saw her years later and he thanked God he didn't marry her!

Upon inquiry Jim learned they had had to replace a lazy cook. From one of the local churches a 43-year-old brother died and his wife asked if she might work at the school. She agreed she could handle the cooking. When she came she brought with her a little nine year old girl she and her husband had adopted as a baby, that she says she found abandoned on a dust pile (garbage dump). She and her husband had no other children.

Several problems had come up while Jim has been away so he had to take care of those, then we enjoyed our short stay there with the girls. He spoke to the boys on Saturday night at 6:00 and then to the girls at 7:30 and preached for the church that meets at Angie Greene on Sunday morning. A car came for us at 11:00 to take us to Dindigul. That leg of the trip took 3 and ½ hours over washboard roads. I said to Jim, "I know how to describe this car trip." You know the exercise machine that is a broad belt that vibrates the parts of the body one is trying to reduce? Well, that is the way it feels to ride in a car on these roads. However, all parts of the body are being vibrated at the same time!!! Our ears felt like they had been vibrated for 3 and ½ hours also. The driver had a companion with him. We think the driver was concerned about being alone on such a long trip in case something happened to the car. The companion did not take a break in his talking the whole way. Jim said he believed he had never met a man who could talk so much. It really sounded like a filibuster in Congress, except he spoke with all speed. It might have been interesting if we could have understood what he was saying.

Today was laundry day. Fortunately there are a couple of buckets in the bathroom, so that made it easy to soak in one and rinse in the other. I hung Jim's socks over the curtain rod. As there are two coat hangers in the wardrobe I hung his shirt on one and his trousers on the other. Humidity is very high so it is hard to dry things. Hopefully with the a/c on and the fan on in the room things will dry quickly.

Just had an interruption! I had spoken to the desk clerk about the a/c because it was not cooling. The electrician came and fiddled with it for a while, then the manager came up and said we must shift you to the room on third floor just above our present room because they could not get the a/c to work. Two bellhops came and helped me pack up everything and move to the third floor (this was while Jim was away at the men's school). No telling what he will think when he comes back if they don't catch him before he goes to our previous room. There is a huge window up here and I can see all the way across the city. It is costing only \$15 a day and includes a small fridge and a TV. (After thought: The desk clerk missed Jim when he came in and he did go to the other room and knocked and knocked and knocked, until someone realized they needed to tell him where I was.)

From now on I must ask Jim to request this room. The other room is the same we had the last time we were here and it is a bit depressing because it only has a small corner window that is even with the buildings across the road. Sometimes I get so bored being in the room that I just stand at the window and watch people down below. Now I can gaze across the city. There is a mountain in the distance upon which is the ruins of an ancient fort. The first time we came to Dindigul some friends took us up there to see it. Our plans are to be in Dindigul until Saturday the 7th. We will then go by car back across the washboard roads to Coimbatore where we will worship with the church on Sunday then take a plane that afternoon on to Kathmandu, Nepal via Bombay and Delhi.

Jim says our Bible correspondence courses are increasing and we are in need of Tamil Bibles at a cost of \$1.50 and Tamil songbooks, which cost \$1.00. In the spring we will have to build two new classrooms and put a new roof on three older classrooms at the school in Dindigul. We thank God for each and every one of you who participate in this work. Please keep us and the Christians here in your prayers. Love, Laura