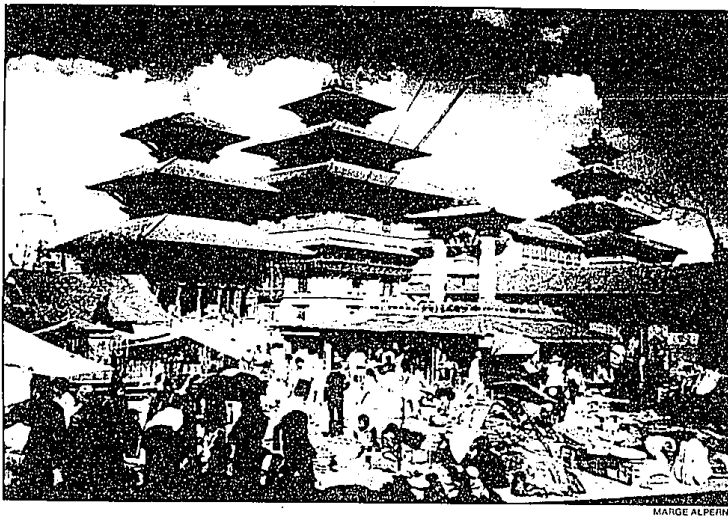


Travel Scene



10B ★ (8B ★)

PAGE Thursday, June 21, 1999



The downtown area of Katmandu is filled with bustling markets, palaces and temples. Local Nepalese make good use of the day, knowing they must beat the home-by-dark curfew.

AGING IN

Shangri-La

By Sally Davis
special writer

Shangri-La is a fictional Eden where people never age unless they leave. It's somewhere in the Himalayan Mountains. We were headed for Nepal, at the foot of the Himalayas, perhaps to find eternal youth.

The morning of our departure from Varanasi, India, to Katmandu, Nepal, began with a 6 a.m. visit to the river Ganges. To witness the spiritually uplifting process of prayer and immersion into the holy river at sunrise was rejuvenating for us as well as the devout.

Our boat paddled slowly and silently past people bathing, holy men at prayer along the banks and others who were washing clothes. The cremation ghats (steps) reminded us of our own mortality.

Returning to our hotel, we had a quick breakfast before leaving for our flight to Katmandu. Goodbye to India until our return to Bombay for our flight to the United States.

WHEN WE arrived in Katmandu, we enjoyed the cooler temperatures and the clean and modern airport. Our hotel, in the far suburbs, was luxurious, with lovely grounds, gardens and fountains. Our tour started with a hasty excursion to the

downtown area and the old city, with its market, palaces, temples and Durbar (government) Square.

Trying to beat the home-by-dark curfew, people were stepping at a lively pace throughout downtown.

Returning to the hotel, we had dinner and anticipated the next morning's flight over Mount Everest. This is why we had come: to see the beauty and enormity of the highest mountain in the world.

HOWEVER, OUR anticipation turned to frustration as our tour escort told us the plane might not be flying. He would let us know later in the evening.

"Later in the evening" came, with an ominous message that the flight had been canceled due to a strike by the Royal Nepal Airlines. We were flexible, quoth he, and could take the flight at a later time. A murmur of hope passed among my group.

Oh well, on to Tiger Tops in Chitwan National Park, for a safari on elephant-back to photograph elusive tigers and other wildlife. The group brightened.

Our escort had arranged for a bus to drive us there and to wait two days while we explored the jungle and nearby historical sites.

Royal Nepal Airlines was still having difficulties.

ACTUALLY, THE whole Katmandu valley was having difficulties. Political unrest and civil disturbances were escalating to dangerous proportions. Within a short period of time, we were confined to the hotel grounds.

The next day, escorted by a museum guide, we were able to visit the Archeological Museum of Nepal, a 15-minute hike from the hotel. He led us through back alleys and terraced levels to reach the museum.

It wasn't particularly interesting, but it was something to do, since there was no transportation and nowhere else to go, except a Monkey Temple atop a steep hill, an hour's hike in the hot sun.

LATER IN the afternoon, we learned we would not be going to Tiger Tops either. Our dream trip to Nepal had rapidly turned into a nightmare.

We decided that if we had to be stuck, what better place to be stuck in than our hotel? It had everything, including Nepal's only casino. Not to worry.

But we did worry. Hotel personnel knocked on doors, advising guests to close their shutters; there was a blackout. Rumors ran through the hotel lobby.



This market in downtown Katmandu is always filled with fresh fruits and vegetables from local vendors.

Unrest was everywhere in Nepal. Putting it simply, the people want a two-party system of government, with the king as a benevolent figurehead.

Early that morning, the king had fired the prime minister. The people's joy quickly turned to anger when he appointed another.

AT LEAST 25,000 people stormed the palace. The military, who were armed with rifles and tear gas, took control. They battled the citizens, who had only sticks and stones for weapons. Roadblocks were set up and the fighting continued.

We were advised the next morning that a daylong curfew was in effect. The curfew would end at 4 p.m. and resume at 6 p.m. until 7 a.m. the next morning. Our bags were packed in case a plane got through during the two-hour "window" in the curfew let-up.

No luck. The two-hour window was slammed shut by the government.

THE U.S. EMBASSY'S request for emergency phone numbers and next-of-kin forms from our tour escort was enough to add a few gray hairs.

We heard that planes might get in the next day if the Royal Nepal Airlines didn't go on strike again.

Please turn to Page 11

Bumper to bumper on Florida's coast

By Patrick Costello
special writer

When I'm old, I'll move up North and drive real slow.

Juan Ponce de Leon came with Christopher Columbus to this hemisphere almost 500 years ago and in 1510 he became governor of Puerto Rico.

I started with nothing and I still have a piece of it left.

In 1513, he sailed to what is now Florida to seek out the fountain of youth.

When you're perfect, you have to do everything yourself.

Here he was greeted by natives whose people had been living there for more than 2000 years.

As a matter of fact, I do own the road.

The place was a marsh and swampland infested with all kinds of bugs and animals but with such a beautiful abundance of flowers he gave it the Spanish name, Florida. He was injured, went to Cuba to die and is buried in Puerto Rico.

I love humanity, it's people I can't stand.

Today, Florida has changed greatly, with people arriving daily by ship, car and plane.

Someday my ship will come in and with my luck, I'll be at the airport.

The swamps are now drained and the orchards are reduced. There are buildings, roads, highways, shopping malls, parking lots, hotels, motels, campgrounds, restaurants, trailer parks, condominiums, amusement

parks and cars, cars, cars, along with people, people, people throughout the land, without the abundance of flowers and pleasant aromas.

I don't give a damn how cold it is up North.

Driving in Florida is one continuous line of cars.

If you don't like my driving call 1-800-Cry-Baby.

The slow relaxed pace and lovely little towns has given way to progress and congestion.

Go ahead tailgate, I need the money.

The eating places are plentiful but are typified by the description of one restaurant. The chefs haven't move down there yet.

Every broken heart takes a year off your life.

The Canadians flock to Florida but have to use American dollars to buy; or so the signs say.

A baseball game in Lakeland watching the Toledo Mudhens, a Tiger farm club, was worth the money. Real big time. Some players to watch for in the future are: Rick Sellers, a catcher from Remus; Steve Greene, outfielder who hit two home runs back to back; and LaVell Freeman, an outfielder who made five hits for five.

Let's not meet by accident.

The increased congestion brings on Florida's problems such as where to dump all the rubbish without affecting the water table that is very low because the state is desperate for rain.

This is a speedster. It goes from 0 to 60 mph in 15 minutes.



Patrick Costello

The locals don't get sunburned so you can easily spot the visitors who don't believe when in Roma, do as the Romans. The golf courses are flat and Michigan players find them a snap.

All the towns are big on a St. Patrick's Day parade with over 100 units in the Venice parade. A Georgia visitor said they have over 500,000 attending the parade in Savannah.

I'd rather push a Ford than drive a Honda or Volvo.

Silver hair rinse and walkers are popular. The old-timers know for sure Florida has changed when license plates from states along the east coast start showing up on the Gulf Coast.

I'd rather push a Ford than drive a Toyota or Yugo.

Florida's St. Augustine, founded in 1513 is the oldest city in these United States. That is where the earliest of American history began.

I may be stupid, but I'm ahead of you.

All was progressing between the

Please turn to Page 11



crossroads
Iris Sanderson
Jones

Off-season in the Caribbean

Scene One:

It was August in the Caribbean. Day one of a week-long trip aboard one of those boats where the passengers help to hoist the sails before breakfast and after Pina Colada time.

Two young women from western Canada were stretched out on the deck, broling in the summer sun. Micky and I wore loose long-sleeved shirts, floppy hats and a quart of suncreening lotion.

Was it too hot to vacation in the Caribbean? It was our first time in emerald seas, and we didn't know the answer to that one yet.

Scene Two:

Day Three. The young bikini-clad pair were still in their skin but they too were wearing hats, sunglasses and lotion. When we snorkeled in the warm waters off a sand beach, we kept our bodies completely underwater so we wouldn't sizzle. When we startled a giant Mania Ray from its afternoon nap at the bottom of the sea, it waved its fins and we got back into the hot sun like a rocket.

Was it too hot to vacation in the Caribbean, as all our friends had warned us it would be? Summer rates are much lower than winter rates, and we were determined to find out. So far we were sunburned but happy.

Scene Three:

Day Five. We were all broiled. We put-putted ashore to enjoy lunch on the beach of another island and migrated, as we always did, to the warm water sea. Even our two sun-lovers were covered up by this time.

Picture us, floating a few hundred yards from shore, in our bathing suits, sunglasses, floppy hats, handkerchiefs pinned to the back of our hats to keep the sun from our necks, each of us clad in long-sleeved shirts



MICKY JONES

A Vela crew member supervises the sail raising on one of those boats where the passengers help hoist the sails.

or pylama tops to protect our tenderized bodies from the sun.

We were an island of laundry and we didn't care a bit until we heard a boat with a band playing "When the Saints Come Marching In." It was the Club Med boat, from the CMT village on Paradise Island.

As it neared shore, shining bikini-clad bodies flung themselves into the sea, shortly followed by a large

Please turn to Page 11