



Nancy brings up the rear of an impressive parade. The maidens are bearing trays of fresh cow dung from barn to fields.



Under the direction of her host mother, Nancy trims the edge of a grass mat she has woven.



With deft movements of the tray different grades of rice are separated.



Sisters get the dishwashing assignment in Nepal, too, with all the convenience of running water and ashes and sand for soap.



Nepalese man and wife enjoy comforts of home.



A young mother bathes her baby.

## We Shared Our Cultures, Including My Toothpaste and Soap, During My Visit in Nepal

By NANCY JO MITCHELL  
Montana IFYE Delegate to Nepal

NEPAL IS FAMED for Mount Everest, Sherpa climbers, Yogi, gallant Gurkha fighters, and as the birthplace of Buddha.

These recommendations would interest any newcomer to Nepal. As an IFYE I am living and working with farm families to learn their way of life. It is promoting understanding.

My experiences are personal and unusual! I'd like to share some of them with you.

Living with thirteen families in six areas of Nepal for the last five months has given me opportunity to learn of Nepalese culture.

The Nepalese are eager to show their culture in every way. Night after night we've exchanged songs and dances and observed the spontaneous culture show outside the tea shop.

### Culture and Soap

The people realize that I come from a different culture and they are anxious to learn about American life. Sharing my shampoo, toothpaste, curlers, nail polish and soap have been part of this.

People say to me, "America is just like heaven." But I reply, "No, we have many pressures and problems in our developed society." I hope as Nepal develops they can do it without these.

People constantly apologize because their country is so poor. They are anxious to develop. Development does take time. Nepal has been developing for about the last ten years since the King took over his rule in the country. I'm proud to see the United States helping this country.

The temples help reveal the ancient culture of Nepal. Religion plays an important part in everyday living. It is good for stability and togetherness. But it can endanger health and happiness, too, as their beliefs lead to improper care of cattle. Many religious festivals are observed by the lunar calendar. Hindu and Buddhist celebrations are numerous.

### Year 2018 in Nepal

I had always hoped to live to the year 2000. It's 2018 in Nepal according to the lunar calendar. The Christian year 1962 is also popular, so I am living in two years at one time.

Everyone asks what can I possibly learn in Nepal. When I reply that I learn from every experience they are surprised. I've learned some new techniques

in cooking and mat weaving that I can use with Girl Scout programs. I've developed personally. And I have a greater appreciation of my own country. Many things that I have always taken for granted I now appreciate more fully.

Contrasts are many—from Mount Everest to the jungle, from the Tharu women and their scant one yard bikinis to the problem of having to push back the veil enough to see the women's faces in the area of the outer Torai.

The Nepalese are hard working people. Animals are used for some work, but man does most of it.

Work experiences for me vary. In one area it was "I work-You no work." In another area it was "Will she work?" But even there they would find me trailing them to the fields because they went on without me, saying, "We didn't want you to have to work so hard."

### Daily Chores

I've harvested and threshed rice, transplanted and watered tobacco, weeded potatoes, pounded rice to make flour, ground corn for flour, carried water, cared for children, made leaf dishes, rope, and I handwove a straw mat. Picking up and removing cow dung from the barn is another daily chore. Wonderful clean up idea. The cow dung is used for fertilizer. And because it is sacred it is also used to cleanse and purify the floors of the home. In one area it was used for fuel because there was a shortage of wood. Using it for fuel caused a shortage of fertilizer for the soil.

One day I watched a girl push a mustard oil making machine for an hour and a half. Then I asked if I could try. I pushed the wood arm until I was dizzy and stopped to see if I had added any oil to the cup. As I stopped the wooden arm knocked the cup of oil over. She immediately salvaged all the oil she could with her fingers without saying a word. And then continued to push the machine for more oil. I hope that soon in the development of Nepal this type of labor will be done by animals and eventually by machines.

### Effective Machines

The women are just like machines. The shaking of rice takes dexterity, coordination, and rhythm.

Nepalese customs have been easy to (Continued on Page 14)



Not all women iron their clothes but this woman's iron is heated with hot coals placed inside.



A Nepalese woman makes doughnut bread.



A Nepalese woman grinds spices while she cooks on her chula (stove) in the background.



Heated rice is pounded to make flat cakes served for breakfast and at tea time.