

Journal - Around the World in 79 days - Spring 2013

Part 8: 8 days at Woodstock: 16 - 24 April

I took the now-familiar trip by taxi, train and taxi to Woodstock: Basu had arranged a taxi to pick me up at the lodging at 5 am, and he came too to the station - a trip through mostly deserted Delhi streets, past Embassy Row, India Gate (their arc de triomphe) and Connaught Place to the main Delhi station which was a mass of humanity as usual. The train to Dehradun is always on the first platform, so easy to get to with the fairly heavy luggage of supplies for the Woodstock science department. The “express” *Shatabdi train* travels the 250 km in close to six hours - even though the morning train is the fastest



Modern and old transport



Going to market in style

on the schedule, its average speed is only $250/5.7 = 44$ km/hr = 27 mph - that includes about 6 stops, one at Saharanpur where the engine goes to the other end of the

coaches: and this is all through flat agricultural land, mostly sugar cane and wheatfields, and plenty of smoky chimneys of brick factories, to the

beginning of the hills. The last section goes even slower, slightly uphill thru a valley to Dehradun from Haridwar. Haridwar itself is filled with Hindu pilgrims and temples, on the banks of the Ganges river, and is a holy bathing place. I wondered if it might be the place of origin of the Hare Krishna (since there are plenty of the requisite colored robes around there). However, good old wikipedia can tell you that the Hare Krishna were actually begun in New York City in 1966! But, their ideas go back to the Gaudiya Vaishnavism of the 1500s in India.

The taxi goes uphill to Woodstock at almost the same speed - one hour of twists and turns, but the road is a bit better this year - I think the board members get to fly in and miss all the fun.

Mark Windsor, the new head of the science department had booked me into the same room as last year - so after getting things shipshape, i wandered over to the senior school and met him and a few of the teachers who were still here from last year - not many because of quite a large turnover at the end of the school year - that seems to happen at all these international schools - eg also in Singapore, Shanghai and Chengdu; it might be partially low salaries, but I think these ex-Pats, from the USA, Europe, Australia, etc, are quite footloose, and enjoy traveling around trying things out before they return home.

Mark is a little different since he is not a trained teacher. His New Zealand parents were missionaries in Mussoorie, and hence he had his schooling at Woodstock; he has been a systems engineer most of his life, so he knows his science, and his easy, laid-back attitude in the



Waiting on the platform



Piles of fuel - mostly shit



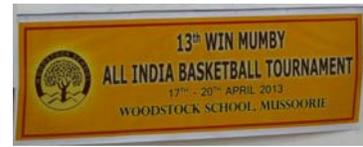
Going to market the standard way



Teachers: Mark & JC Sharma

classroom makes him a natural interactive teacher, and an excellent department leader. I think his being there has opened up the other science teachers (at least some of them) to review and revise their old teaching methods. I found the science department to be a much more open and friendly place - all for the good as far as I can see in my short 9 day visit - and much of it must be due to Mark. He teaches physics and piano, an interesting combination which fits well into Woodstock's priorities for the students, at least on the music side!

The main event during my Woodstock stay was the annual "All India" highschool basketball tournament, begun about 14



The Winston Mumby tournament



Young Linedancers

years ago in honor of Woodstockian Winston Mumby (not Gumby!): three days of excitement and entertainment at the Woodstock gym, with about 10 girls' and boys' schools from Mussoorie, Dehradun and Delhi participating. The



Young Indian dancers

Woodstock girls lost in the semifinals on the Saturday morning, but the boys clinched the title in the afternoon, to maintain the celebratory atmosphere. The entertainment included an inspired Woodstock band, especially the drummer, to open the Thursday proceedings, and two wonderful Saturday dances by Junior school members - one a line dance with some very original individual uniforms (see pic), and then a group performed a set of traditional Indian dances. [You will have to see my movies sometime..] Of course, a "famous Indian politician/ex-Supreme Court Justice" came to give the awards and give a short speech, mostly about himself.



Mussoorie Bazaar entry



Traffic in the bazaar



Horses need to eat



Man-driven Ferris wheel



Victorian English used to sit here on a Sunday afternoon..



Smile in your finery (said her proud father)

Between the semifinals and finals, I went



Going down...

to downtown Mussoorie, did some shopping and had lunch: they have spruced up the one long almost flat road thru the town since last year - the “bazaar” as it is known, is filled with little shops and restaurants, and people; even the cable car was running - I am not sure how far down the hill it goes - I’ll have to try it out next year.

On the way back to school was a little excitement - as I wrote to Mary later that day: “It wasn't an earthquake, it was not a Boston bomber, but it was unexpected, and fortunately all turned out ok... The way back from the edge of town to the school is about 2 km of winding road slightly downhill - about half way, one of the Woodstock employees passed me (we said hi), and around the next corner i saw two burly guys attacking him - naturally I ran up shouting and joined in a bit, but they backed off - one of the guys showed me his really bloody hands, all shouting at each other in hindi, me in English - the two tried again, but a bit half heartedly, (I think a car coming by basically broke it up) and we just walked rapidly away - i ended up with a bracelet in my hand - but apparently belonging to one of the opponents - so i threw it into the road and we walked rapidly down to Woodstock. The employee is going to write a report - he did have one cut on his hand (unless it was just blood from his



Woodstock team, with VIP, Jonathan Long, the Head of Woodstock, and the coach

asailant) - he actually cleans my room etc every other day, and also did last year - I told him that in Boston or Chicago they would have been using guns.” It all happened only minutes before the VIP in his jeep cavalcade drove along the same road



VIP arrival at Woodstock

to the school.

Sunday was hiking day: I walked up the steep path to the top of the hill behind Woodstock - too much haze to see the distant snow-capped Himalayas: true for almost all days



Ladies ahead



Roadside shrine at Tibri



Looking back at Tibri and shrine

once winter is over. Then a pleasant walk along the road and donkey-path and down



“Path” along the top

meet, expecting the women the road since it is a



Rhododendra trees on northside of ridge

to “village #1” (Jabarkhet) east of Woodstock. I followed along behind a group of women towards the next village where the upper and lower Tehri roads to go up Flag mountain next to bhuddist sanctuary, but no, they



must be Hindus, as they continued on, and then stopped for refreshments at “village #2” (Bhattaghat). I continued up the road to Tibri, where there is a big



Pathway strewn with welcoming rhododendron flowers...

distinctive pylon; just afterwards near the roadside Hindu shrine, I clambered up the steep hill to the top of the ridge above, and followed the ridgeline through its undulations - a kind of scramble like Striding Edge in the UK Lake District; last year I did the same but in the

Looking down - The path came down behind the two ridge houses - I joined the road at the extreme right of the pic.



Can the wolf blow it down?

opposite direction. There is a big marker at the top where I had the lunch which I had carried with me. Then basically down a trail on the other side which came out on the road below the “Himalayan wool shop”. The way home was along the Tehri road - quite a few new buildings since last year - one being a straw house, empty inside, but people eating on the verandah outside - clearly built by one of the three little pigs, to shelter them from the big, bad wolf.

Sunday night was the last one in my room at the school, being kicked out to provide room for the board members coming in. I had expected Eleanor to arrive on Sunday, but she was at a school finance meeting in Delhi till Wednesday - that was the day I left, so we never did meet - too bad, have to wait till we are both back in Chicago... However, I did get to meet one board member who arrived at the beginning of the week: one evening. I had a delightful supper with “the princess” (her name according to Mark Windsor) - her real name is *Bhavenesh Kumari Patiala*, a lawyer, close to



Woodstock board meeting (Family of Hanuman Langur monkeys)

Eleanor’s age. Again according to Mark it must have been an interesting conversation since both she and I have hearing problems - but I don’t remember a problem hearing during the conversation - perhaps we were both speaking very loudly (the only ones in the diningroom).



View from tabor - the two buildings are student dorms

For the last two nights, I stayed at hotel Tabor on top of the hill - a delightful place - four guestrooms, all filled. The same person owns the larger and better known hilltop hotel - the Rokeby Manor, where Mark and



Tabor hotel

his wife treated me to a splendid dinner on the final Tuesday evening. Easy coming down each morning, but the return was a little effortful each evening.

The last two days I enjoyed talking with the students in four different classrooms about science and what a scientist does..we discussed how it is all play and no work if you enjoy it, Zeno's paradox, why eggs are egg-shaped, had they measured anything that day, and their first science experiment....Their science classes are only 45 minutes long, but the staff are busy planning to move to double periods which will make for easier experiential learning doing real experiments. It should be a great improvement. Perhaps some of the students will make it to Notre Dame.

One morning, the macaque (red) monkeys had gained entry to the store of thrown away food, locked away, but accessible through a hole in the room ceiling. The security guards all carry little slings to fire stones at the monkeys who retreat to the safest possible roof - they learn where the slingshots can't reach...



Family of macaque monkeys running away from slingshots

Wednesday morning, I walked up to the Hanifl center to talk with the director Krishnan Kutty about developing a possible semester abroad program there with Notre Dame; in the Fall, they are having a first program with students from the University of Pittsburgh - that will be a test case.

Wednesday afternoon - down the hill by taxi, then train to Delhi, arriving about midnight (an hour late), where trusty Basu was waiting - also the same taxi-driver had remembered my return - and so back to IUAC - less than two weeks more and I will be off to London to meet my wife, and various relatives - should be a fun ending to this trip.