

Building the first Okhaldhunga Hospital 1963-1964

By Stanley D. Kamp (2012)

When I went to Okhaldhunga, I had to walk because there were no roads. I could fly to an airport north of Okhaldhunga about a day or two's walk away, or walk from Bhatgaun. If I am thinking correctly, it took 6-9 days to walk the entire distance.

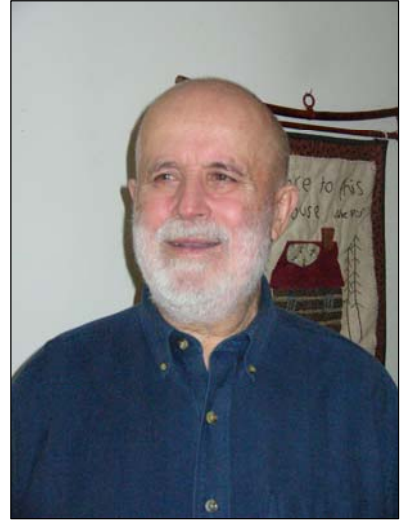
I arrived and met Dr Dick and Annie and the children. There were also two nurses there. One was Ann Avis. I don't remember the other nurse's name.

I was sent to Okhaldhunga to build two living quarters and start on the clinic. Foundations for the above the living quarters were built and the wood for windows and doors were cut. We were going to put mud roofs on, which had been designed by Odd Hufton. Rafters, boards, fine mud, black plastic, good ground, and then crab grass (dubo) was planted to hold the ground on. There was a board around the bottom edge to keep the ground from sliding off. I learned later, after I returned to the USA, they leaked because of termites which had eaten holes in the plastic, and so tin was put on these roofs.

When I arrived in Okhaldhunga, my living quarter was a small Nepali house on the building site. Half was a workshop, and half was bedroom with four small windows with screens on them. My light was a candle. I ate most of my meals with the Dick family. Annie was a great cook. I would also go into town to the Hat bazaar when I had spare time.

We didn't know how skilled the masons, carpenters, were in Okhaldhunga, so it was decided I should take people from Kathmandu (Patan) with me to do the work.

Dr. Dick had a young fellow hired (Could his name have been Narayan?) to go to the south to get supplies and to get porters to carry supplies up to Okhaldhunga. We used local labor to do as much of the work as we could. Tibetans came down from the north looking for work. I would hire families to do digging. They would set up their tents of skins (yurts) on the building site. I drank many glasses of Tibetan tea (salty tea) with them.



One Tibetan was named Dhurgi; another was Balu. They did all the digging and excavating. Their wives worked also. After six months, we had two staff houses completed and part of the clinic.

Memories from my time there

To do the cement work there, I needed sand that was down in the river below. No-one would carry sand for me. What to do?? In the end, I made a deal. If I would carry a load of sand up from the river, would they (local women) carry one as well? They said they would. So that is how I was able to acquire all the sand I needed.

I placed a black plastic pipe from the stream north at the building site, and it ran out on to the building site. Village people from all around came to "see the black snake that had water coming out of its mouth".

Village folks from behind the clinic site talked of how they were experiencing trouble with a mountain cat. They warned me to move with care as I lived there. I asked them how it looks and sounds. They explained that it was spotted and it grunted while breathing.

One night soon after they had told me, I woke up with this grunting going around the shop and my sleeping room. The next morning the village went out to hunt and kill the cat. Two men returned carrying a big cat on a bamboo carrier.

One morning Dr Dick came running down to my living quarters saying, "They shot him, they shot him, they shot him."

I asked, "Who did they shoot?"

He responded, "The American President Kennedy". He had just heard the news over the radio. That was how I was informed of that sad, sad happening in 1963.

Briefs from Kamps

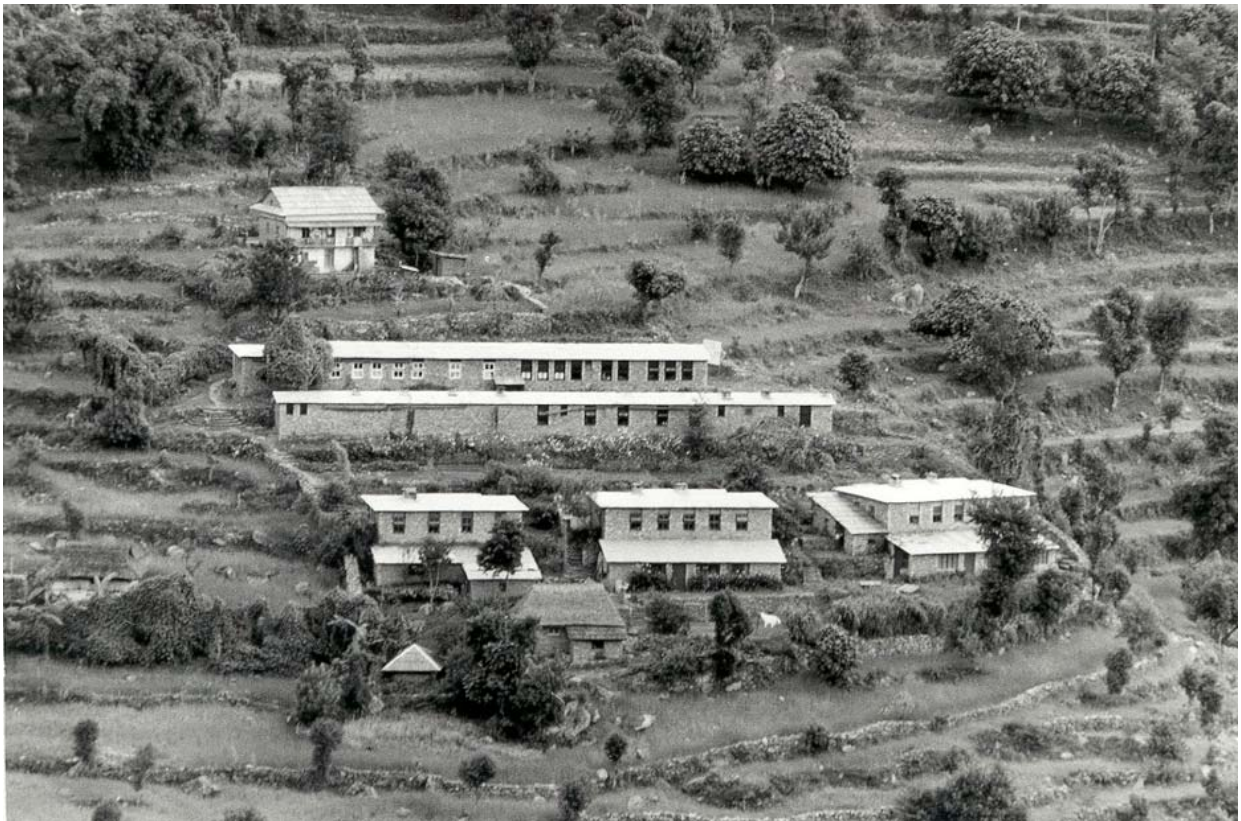
I am now seventy-one years young, while my wife is sixty-nine. We have five children, four of whom were born in Nepal. We adopted our two oldest children who are Nepalese while living and serving the Lord in Nepal, bore three children, and adopted an infant in the USA while we were on a home leave. The first child we bore died soon after birth and is buried in the British Embassy cemetery. So our family consists of 5 children, their spouses, and 10 grandchildren. Last year, we were blessed to host a young adult Christian from Nepal who

was here with a volunteer exchange program with our broader Mennonite church organization.

I lived and served in Okhaldhunga only 6 months of my three plus years with the United Mission to Nepal(Fall of 1963 into 1964).

My memory doesn't serve me regarding any Nepali Christian fellowship presence at that time. The church as I remember was of foreigners like myself.

We haven't had any contact with Okhaldhunga people for sometime. But we pray the work goes on and the community's needs are being met and that God's Holy Spirit is at work. Blessings to those who serve in the name of Jesus Christ.



The first set of hospital building, completed in 1964