REFLECTION ON LEAVING NEPAL

*Dr. G. W. Hankins **

Although the prospect of returning home after 12 years in Nepal is pleasant to contemplate, it is nonetheless difficult to say good-bye to Nepal. Though we came here to serve with the United Mission, somehow both of us feel that we have been given far more than we gave.

Most of our experiences have been very positive ones. There can be few countries with greater natural beauty than Nepal; we have delighted much in its flowers, birds, hills and mountains. You would have to look hard to find people more cheerful, patient and courteous than the people of this country. The friendship shown to us by many Nepalis will linger in memory for many years. Some of the most rewarding experiences have involved contacts with medical colleagues in this country. These I would like to emphasize at this time, while expressing a deep appreciation for such opportunities.

It is my impression that Nepal has a better-than-average ratio of sincere, well-motivated and competent doctors. Over the years it has been my opportunity to interact with a goodly number of these professional colleagues in the care of patients. For many of them there are formidable obstacles to their giving the quality of service they would like to offer; the system under which most of them are obliged to work rates health care a pretty low priority. Even so, they seek to maintain acceptable standards, and I admire them for that.

I must also express appreciation for those who have pioneered the M.B.B.S. training program at the Institute of Medicine, enabling Nepal to train its own doctors. This has been a most commendable effort. In my opinion, graduates of the first two classes testify to the sound & solid teaching & training they have received. It has been a most encouraging & auspicious start.

* *Patan Hospital, Kathmandu.*

Of course Nepal faces staggering health problems which will take decades to solve; but doctors, nurses and para-medical workers are making an honest effort to cope with them. There is no easy solution to the problems of malnutrition, chronic anemia, T. B. and other respiratory diseases in a country as hilly and roadless as Nepal; but they are no less difficult to solve than some of the distressing socio-medical dilemmas facing doctors in western countries. Nepal can be thankful for small mercies: at least it is for the most part spared the ravages of cardio-vascular disease, wide spread alcohol and drug abuse, and the disintegration of the family.

The Nepal Medical Association deserves to be singled out for special praise. The All-Nepal Medical Conferences have grown to be fine meetings, attracting participants from several foreign countries. The journal has steadily improved. Many doctors have contributed much to enhance the association and its work. I can foresee an increasingly important role for the N. M. A., - providing it serves to unite the profession, speaks out boldly when it is necessary to do so, and makes a point of supporting its corporate needs as well as those of its individual members.

Others have said "I left Nepal --- years ago, but part of me is still there!" We can appreciate such sentiments. It is true that long hours in the O. R. and the C. P. D. have at times for me been wearying and demanding-but the rewards have far out weighed the stress and weariness. In fact, they would make a very long list. Near the top of the list would be my association with Nepali health-care workers at various levels. In particular I must single out the contacts with Nepali Medical Colleagues and express thanks and appreciation for your help on many occasions, and friendship over the years.