

GONPA GAZETTE

This time of year seems to speed by, no matter where I am. Exams over, marked and recorded...check. Three days of *party* (special holiday) over...check. *Mela* (annual carnival in Kushalnagar) over...check. His Holiness the Dalai Lama in the settlement for several weeks...check!

The only time we are not on Indian/Tibetan time (late) is when a high lama is arriving. Then we must be ready several hours in advance, and usually end up standing on pavement in the blazing sun for hours. Luckily, I got a nanosecond glimpse as his car drove by.



Look carefully! He really is in the first vehicle.

It was pretty impressive to see everyone that could get out, come out, to welcome His Holiness. The road was lined with Tibetans of all ages and ambulatory abilities, as far I as I could see in either direction!

I had a peak experience this month! Not dancing with the stars or swimming with the dolphins: hoofin' with the goats!

The monastery is surrounded by cornfields, which comprise most of the uninhabited land in the settlement. The last part of the farming season is bringing in the goats to chow down the remains. I have fantasized about walking **in** the herd as they tromp home at night.

The first time we met I didn't have my camera. The second time I was late and couldn't get many photos. The third time was a charm! Not one, but *three* different herds coming from *three* different directions at *three* different times. I got more tromping than I ever imagined possible!



The ultimate 'fitting in'...as one of the herd!

There have been more 'Hallmark moments' that got away because there was no camera or it would have interrupted the moment. Use your most vivid imagination as you see me sitting on a bottom bunk bed in one of the dorms, surrounded by endless monks in various stages of undress and filth; playing as only boys can when they should be bathing. My mobile rings, I must answer it, but who can hear in such an environment? The monk sitting next to me intuited that and stuck his finger in my ear to help the process. Yes, it took me by great surprise!

Standing in the dark, waiting for Rinpoche to arrive for puja, a young 'un slips his hand in mine saying, "Rinpoche is the father of all monks." Interesting perception. "Yes, he is."

I'm convinced street dogs know when the volunteer vets are here and hide! We have had a very stable pack for months...they are all de-sexed and vaccinated... maybe I was feeling too prideful, because as soon as the vets left, four males and a female wandered in...and stayed!

I call them 'walk-ins': walked in off the street, didn't get run off by the pack, and decided this was as good a place as any to call home. Only thing is four unneutered males and one unneutered female could present some serious problems in the form of new pups born here, which we can't accommodate.

The powers that be are at work to ensure all settlement street dogs are de-sexed and vaccinated against rabies as soon as possible. Let's hope they are successful *before* she becomes pregnant!



Monks + food = dogs!

DECEMBER 2015 IN PHOTOS



