



Not all of Nepal is mountainous. The southern portion of Nepal extends into the Indo-Gangetic plain, which is flat. There, in the town of Lumbini, about 2,564 years ago, a prince named Siddhartha Gautama was born. He later became known as the Buddha (the Awakened One), the founder of the religion of Buddhism. I traveled to Lumbini in the summer of 1981, and took this photo of the ancient temple marking the place of the Buddha's nativity.



The temple in Lumbini was originally built around 250 BC by the great Mauryan emperor Ashoka, who converted to Buddhism after witnessing the horrors of war. This close-up photo shows an excavated pillar left by Ashoka to commemorate the site of Buddha's birth. (The pillar is visible in the previous photo to the left.)

One of my closest friends in Thuli Pokhari was Ramakanta Sapkota, who is shown here. Ramakanta taught math at JS Secondary School for many years. I now understand that he lives in Chitawan (2001), which is in the south of Nepal. He helped me with my Nepali and with several difficult living situations. He basically facilitated my communication with the entire village. He had many fine leadership qualities: a sense of ambition, and yet responsibility; enough motivation for a dozen normal men, and yet a strong sense of compassion, which is apparent from his photograph here. I suppose it's normal that one often has a sense of incompleteness in life; in my case, I often regret that I did not have more constructive time to spend with Ramakanta and his family.

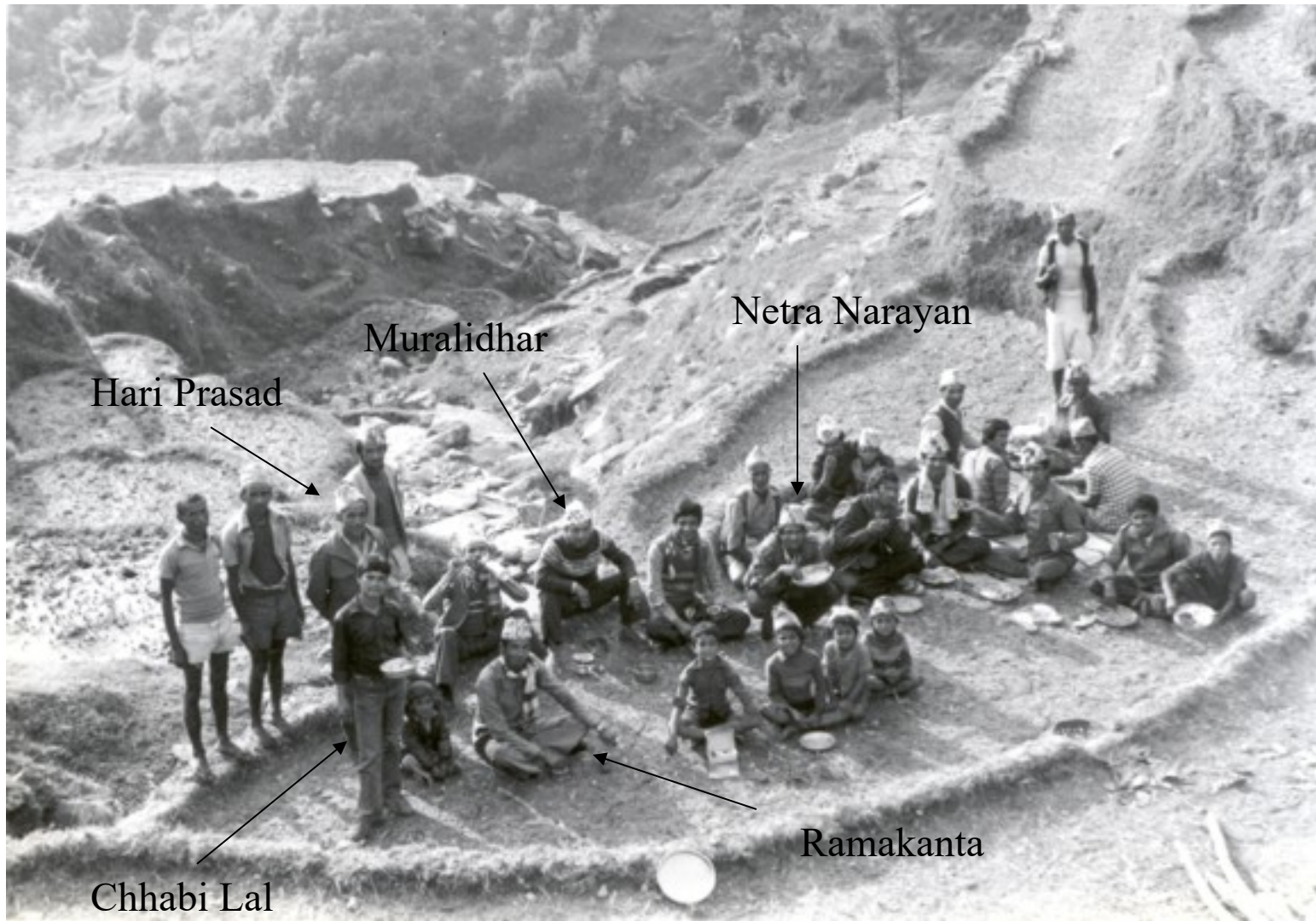


Ramakanta had three children: a son, Achyut, and two daughters. Unfortunately, I can remember the name of only one of his daughters: Bindia. Achyut is shown here in an oversized *topi* cap. He was about 4 years old when this photo was taken, which I would guess was around 1983.





Ramakanta is shown here with his wife, Narayani (also a teacher at JS Secondary School) and his 3 children. The *ping* (or swing) that Bal Chandra was photographed on in the Seventh Set of Photos can be seen in the background. Achyut is walking next to Bindia, and mother holds the youngest child.



I took this photo during a picnic that the teachers organized in 1982. I've named the people that I can still identify (I apologize in advance for any errors).



Another fine gentleman of Thuli Pokhari was Tek Bahadur Gharti, shown here with his family. Tek Bahadur was one of the first (if not the first) headmasters of JS Secondary School. Ramakanta Sapkota and many of the other teachers were former pupils of his. His eldest son, Nirmal Kumar (shown on the extreme left) was an outstanding student.



During the Dashain festival of 1982, I took this photo of Chhabi Lal Sapkota's extended family. Chhabi Lal became the headmaster of JS Secondary School shortly after I left (which was in early 1984). He is the gentleman in the center, holding the child in his arms.

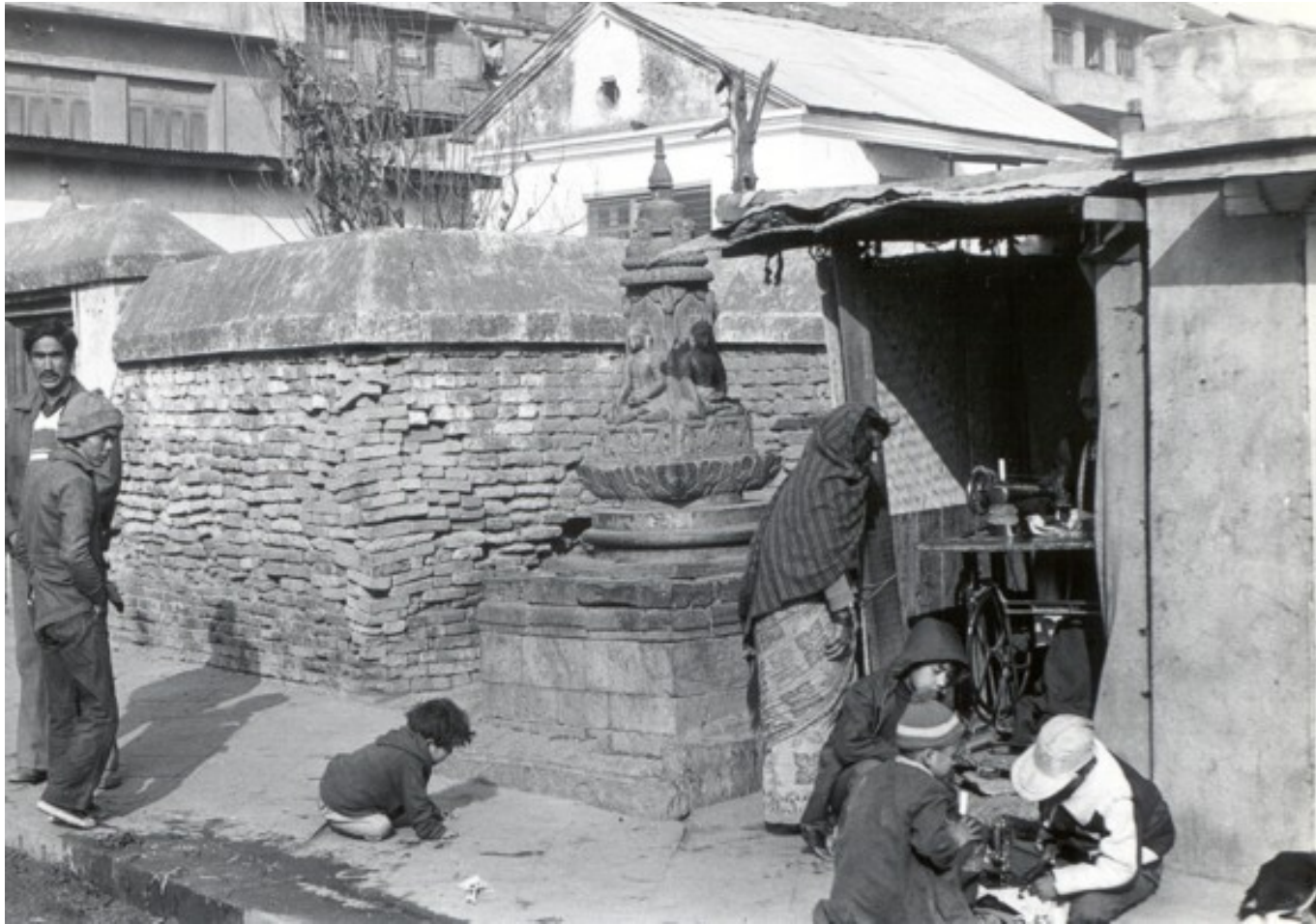




This photo was taken in front of Tribhuvan Primary School in Thuli Pokhari during Dashain, 1982. The school would hold programs at night to celebrate the Dashain festival. The programs would include drama, dance, singing and story telling. The mayor of the village when I arrived, Ram Chandra Subedi, is 5th from the right in the background. He stands next to his eldest son, Harish Chandra, who towers over everyone else. I can be seen in the back left. Chhabi Lal is the farthest person to the left wearing a *topi* cap.

This statue is of Garuda, the bird-man vehicle of the Hindu god Vishnu. The Fourth Set of Photos which I sent you has other photos of Garuda images. In this photo, Garuda stands praying outside a temple housing an image of Vishnu. This photo was taken somewhere inside the Kathmandu Valley, probably either in Basantapur or Patan.





A typical street scene in Kathmandu. A ramshackle tailor shop is erected next to an ancient *stupa* of exquisite craftsmanship. The *stupa* is crowned with images of the four principal buddhas. On the opposite side is a wall whose state of deterioration suggests that it was erected with less than desirable construction methods.



The United States Information Service operated a library on New Road in Kathmandu, the “American Library.” The window exhibits of this library (shown here) would often draw crowds with their displays of the latest in advanced American technology. It was propaganda, of course, but the passers-by usually seemed to enjoy themselves.



I took this photo in the Peace Corps Library in Kathmandu. Mr. Jerry Blakley is on the right, and Purna Chandra Subedi is on the left.



To cut down on cost, a number of us in the Peace Corps shared rented rooms when we were together in Kathmandu. In particular, about 20 of us rented an entire building in Maiti Devi, which came to be known as the TEFL *Deraa* (*deraa* being an apartment, and TEFL standing for “Teaching English as a Foreign Language,” which was what most of the volunteers did). Early one morning in the winter of 1981-82, this photo was taken of Nancy Baughman of California (on the left) and Tim Smith of New York. Nancy later got a Ph.D. in Public Health from Tulane in New Orleans, and currently (2001) runs a complex medical program in Denver. Tim has spent many years teaching English in Saudi Arabia.



I'm very fond of this photo, so I thought I'd give you a larger version. The volunteers were good people. Note the warm clothing - Kathmandu was quite chilly in the winter.

Allen Proffitt (shown here) visited me in Thuli Pokhari in the spring of 1983, while he was enroute to the Buddhist shrine of Muktinath, north of Annapurna. I took this photo of him early in the morning of the day he left Thuli Pokhari. We were just outside the place where I lived at the time. Note the terraced mountainside in the background, and the sparse tree population. Allen was one of the 18 volunteers in my group (which was the 84th contingent sent by the Peace Corps to Nepal). Our group was sent to assist in secondary school math and science education. Of the 18, 16 completed the two-year term of service. Three of us then extended our stay for a third year: David Newman of Georgia, Allen and I. I then stayed a fourth year, while David and Allen left Nepal. At this time, Allen had just completed his 3rd year, and was traveling prior to going home to the States. Allen originally hailed from Maryland.





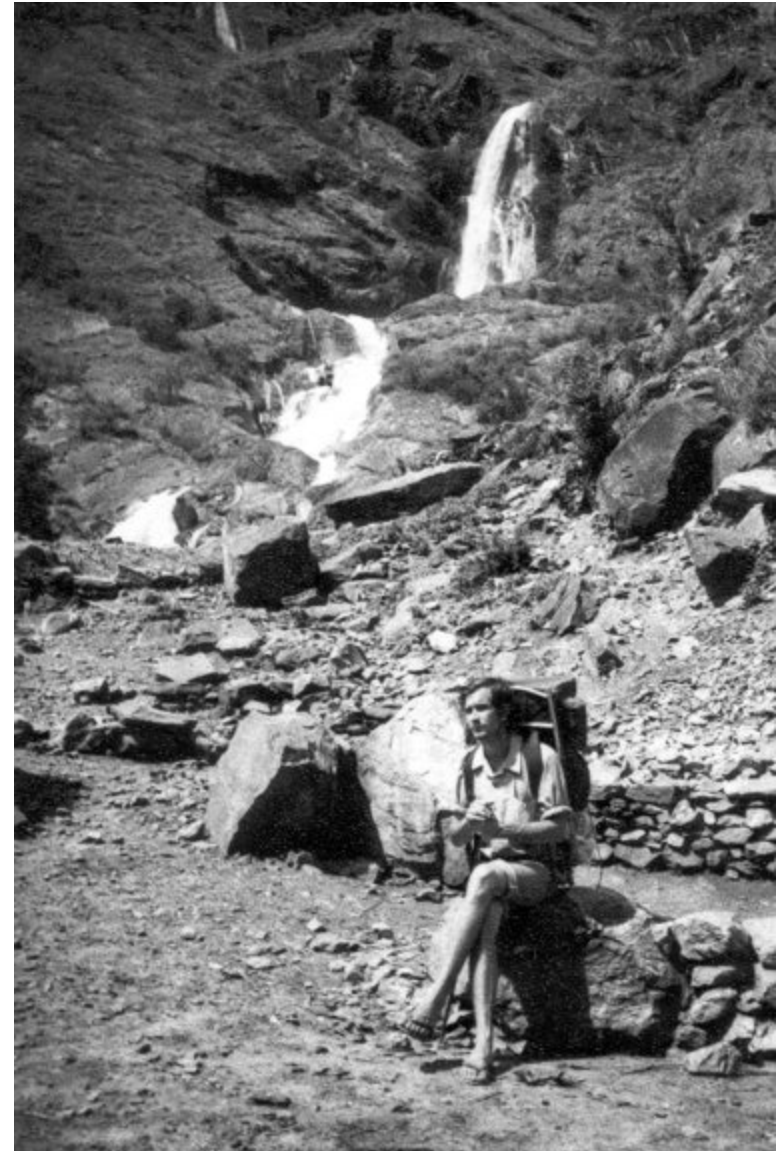
I applied to join the Peace Corps at the age of 22. I was a rather shy, introverted and bookish student of philosophy, whom a friend of mine described as “an *extremely* serious young man.” I was in a period of great vocational uncertainty following completion of my philosophy studies, and the Peace Corps seemed like a great thing to do while I decided what vocation to pursue. The application process took about 4 to 5 months. This was my passport photo.



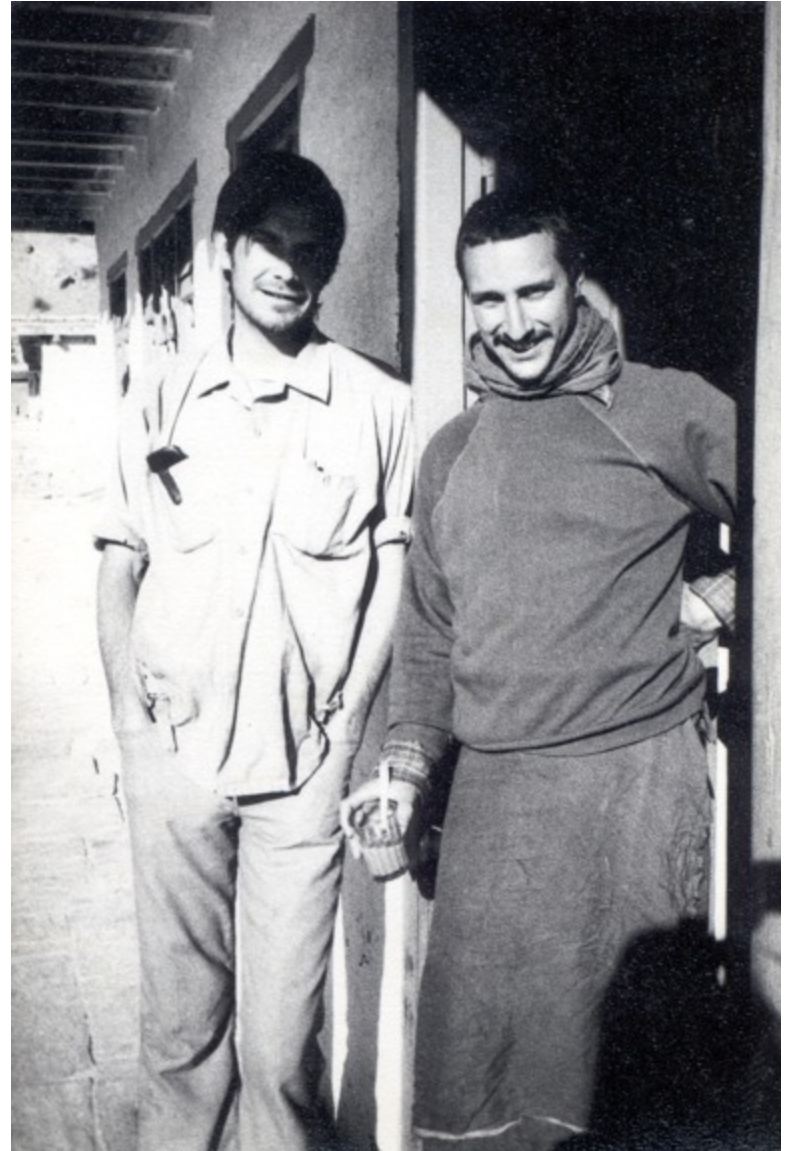
In June 1980, I walked 10 hours in monsoon weather and tropical heat across miles of muddy fields and slippery mountainsides (carrying a heavy pack to boot) to attend my Peace Corps group's mid-service conference in Kathmandu. I was several weeks shy of turning 24. The conference itself occurred during an interlude in the rainfall. Ray Leki of Chicago took this photo of myself, Tom Pinch of Virginia (in the center) and David Newman of Georgia (far right) during a break in the conference. I remember this moment distinctly: we were on a balcony of the Vajra Hotel in Kathmandu, and we were watching a farmer ploughing the fields under the noumenal gaze of Swayambhunath, the ancient Buddhist shrine, which was overlooking us very close by.



Around May or June of 1980, the teachers in Nepal went on a wildcat strike that lasted several months. Without any work, I went hiking from my post in Thuli Pokhari to the Tibetan Buddhist shrine of Muktinath near Mustang (alluded to earlier in Allen's photo). The trip took about 2 to 3 weeks of walking. It was one of the greatest experiences of my life. I walked from a sub-tropical, Hindu, Indo-European environment to an alpine desert, Buddhist, Tibeto-Mongolian environment. I was joined on the trip by my PCV friends Peter Schultz of Minnesota and David Newman. I also visited their posts during this trip. On the 4th or 5th day, Peter took this photo of me during a short rest.



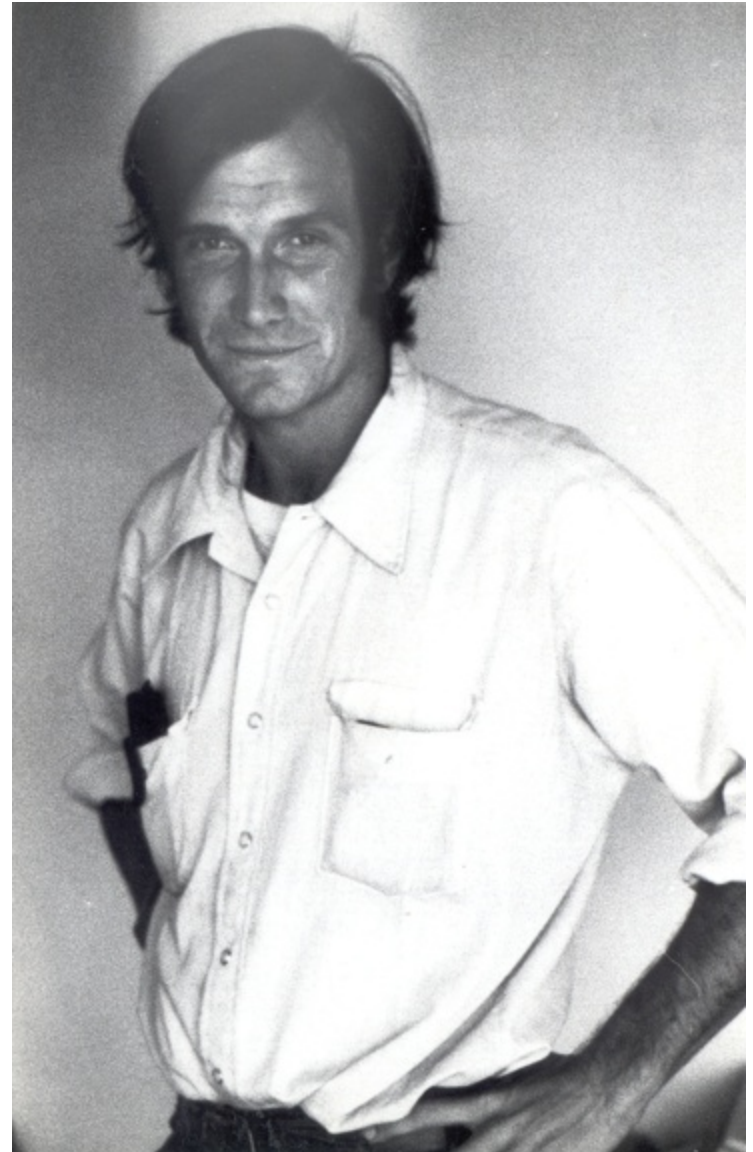
After some 5 or 6 days of walking, we arrived in the town of Jomsom, which is in the pass between the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri mountains. This pass is the deepest river valley gorge in the world, surpassing even the Grand Canyon. The winds were cold and strong, almost always over 20 mph. We collapsed in Jomsom for a couple of days. David took this photo of Peter and I outside the hotel room where we stayed. We were surprised to discover electrical cords all over this hotel; it turned out that an American movie crew had just finished filming a movie at this site. When we got back to America, we learned the name of the film: *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.





On the way back from Mustang, David took another route, and Peter and I traveled home together. Who should we meet on the way back, except Mari Sullivan, a Peace Corps Volunteer from Alaska. She was on her way to Muktinath with a friend. Peter took this photo of Mari and I talking about the trip to Muktinath in a tea shop.

After two years in Nepal with the Peace Corps, much of the shyness and introverted nature of my pre-Peace Corps days was lost. We had been through more hardship than we ever could have imagined in our naive American days. I can't think of anything short of combat that could have been more stressful. Yet the experience was very benign. Allen Proffitt took this photo of me in the Peace Corps office in Kathmandu during my group's "close of service" in December 1981. Everyone in the group was leaving, except Allen, David and Jerry, who were staying for another year, and I, who was staying for another two.



Before returning to America, Peter came to visit me in Thuli Pokhari one last time around March 1982. He had just finished traveling throughout India. A visiting friend of his took this photo of us.

