

Trip to India fun, eye-opening for Smith

Kings Mountain man teaches children, sees temples and other sites on mission trip

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Although Zach Smith says he's happy to get a proper shower and eat familiar foods like fried chicken and biscuits again, he wouldn't trade his recent trip to India for anything. In fact, he'll go one step further.

"Oh, absolutely," said the 20-year-old Gardner Webb University student who wants to join the ministry after he finishes school. "I could go back tonight or tomorrow."

Smith recently traveled to the subcontinent with other Gardner Webb students and two ministers connected to the Boiling Springs school as

part of a medical mission that also sought to spread the word about Christianity. Most members of the group were nurses, but the trip was open to any student who was interested.

Smith says he found India to be a land of many religions: Hindu, Buddhism, Islam and Sikhism, among others. Aside from matters of faith, though, he says that Indians are much like the people he's known all his life.

"Their family bonds are very strong. They're unselfish. They would do anything for each other," he said, adding that parts of the Asian country have the highest rates of poverty in the world. The trip lasted two weeks

and the group spent the better part of two days just reaching their final destination in the northwest corner of the country of 1.2 billion people. He reports on the long journey with the relieved exasperation that can come only come with the experience of it being in the past tense.

"It was 20 hours of flying (including layovers) to reach New Delhi," he said. "And then right after we got to New Delhi we took a 14-hour cab ride" to reach the remote village of Manali, which is nestled in the Himalayans.

On the long cab ride, while Smith tried to sleep, a bicycle smashed into the window he was resting his head against. Later, a motorcycle collided with the car, causing some damage to both vehicles. No one was injured in either incident.

"There are hardly any traffic laws," he said. "People are blowing their horns all the time. There are no speed limits in a lot of places."

Once in the mountain city of about 30,000 people, things were more peaceful and the 13 students and ministers settled into their work with helping out at an underfunded hospital or teaching children about the "Christian faith and making Christ the center of their life."

Smith says he found that people in that part of the world are sometimes suspi-

cious of Christians and feels that's because so many of them may have been Christians "in name only."

In his time there, which he described as a life-changing experience, he says was able to discuss this mistrust at length with many locals. And he agrees with what many he met bluntly told him.

"They said to go home and tell your people to be sincere Christians. Don't be hypocrites. Don't judge."

Smith, whose family attends the Pentecostal Family Worship Center in Kings Mountain, said the accommodations in Manali were plain.

"You couldn't drink the water or bathe with it. You couldn't get it in your eyes due to the risk of infection," he said, referring to pathogens there that westerners' immune systems wouldn't be able to fight off in a short stay.

The cool weather was one upside to staying in mountainous Manali, where the temperature hovered in the 70s. Meanwhile, in New Delhi, the mercury topped 115 degrees - with air conditioning a rare luxury.

Many who travel to India and other foreign lands as parts of mission trips go back many times. Dr. Carroll Page, a retired minister who was on the trip, has been travelling there for short and longer stays for 20 years.

Others, like Kings Moun-



Zach Smith stands beside a local Hindu priest at a historic temple site in the village of Old Manali.

tain native Gary Campbell, have made their home in India. He's the full-time youth minister at the Daystar School in Manali.

Smith, who is a rising junior at Gardner Webb, is majoring in discipleship studies in the religious studies and philosophy department. He hopes to go on to seminary when he graduates. Outside of school and church, Smith, an only child, says he's a big baseball fan and loves to read. He cites the evangelist Billy Graham and the novelist and theologian C.S. Lewis as his favorite authors.

Toward the end of the epic trip, the group paid a visit to the Taj Mahal, one of the world's most famous architectural wonders. Smith said he toured the site near New Delhi for hours despite the oppressive heat. They were also able to see the political and human rights ac-

tivists Mahatma Gandhi's memorial in New Delhi, and visit a number of Muslim, Buddhist and Sikh temples.

Smith has fond memories of the food, which he said consisted mostly of chicken and lamb and rice dishes and was "very spicy."

Even ten days after returning to Kings Mountain, he is still brimming with excitement and the new perspective he gained while overseas. He also says he's grateful to his church and to Gardner Webb for the fundraising help he received.

Leaving India after such an eye-opening and intimate experience wasn't easy.

"The last day was emotional. You don't know when you'll see 'em again or if you'll see 'em again."

Social media, he says, will allow him to keep in touch. "They don't have hardly anything, but they do have Facebook."



Zach Smith is seen here with several students of the Daystar School in Manali, India, during a Christian health fair.

PLONK: celebrates 90 years

From page 1C

the end of the war, Julia and Clarence bought parcels of property to build their own farm and home place on Cherryville Road, Highway 216. They were married for 50 years, until Clarence's death in 1993. She still wears both of their wedding rings.

Julia was the only child of Thomas Alexander and Linnie Cudd Pollock and had dreamed of a large family of her own. She and Clarence had six children: Tommy, Ken, the twins Mike and Steve, Judy and Richard. Tommy is married to Becky, Mike to Sue, and Judy to Steve Davis. Julia has 13 grandchildren, and 8 great grandchildren with the 9th one expected any day.

Julia and Clarence ran a dairy, produce, beef, chicken and pork farm. They grew, harvested, or hunted all the food for the family. The garden produced vegetables and fruits for summer consumption. Her hard work of canning and freezing insured there would be tomato sauce, vegetables, jellies and jams needed for the remainder of the year. She made butter, collected eggs, baked and cooked for the thriving family and employees needed to run the farm. Clarence was a meat-wholesaler, providing beef and pork to family-operated green grocers around Cleveland, Gaston and sur-

rounding counties. Every winter Monday, Julia cooked enormous batches of homemade Plonk Livermush to be delivered to stores like Blalock's, Fall's, Hord's, Macs, Margrace, Pauline's, and H and H. Side by side with the livermush in the meat case was Plonk Sausage ground and mixed by hand on the Plonk farm.

Julia, Clarence and their children were founding members of Resurrection Lutheran Church. She recalls digging the soil, carrying bricks, and sewing the original vestments for the sanctuary on her home machine. For many years, Julia was deeply involved in her beloved Resurrection, teaching Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, organizing egg hunts, singing the choir and serving her Lord every day.

As the children became school aged and the older ones enrolled in college, it was time for Julia to begin working away from the farm. She relished her 18 years of teaching first grade at West Elementary with the sister of her heart, Edie Bridges. She loved it, and her students. After she retired in 1985, Julia and Clarence were able to travel to visit grandchildren and enjoy retirement together. She still loves academic and word challenges. Her grandchildren, great-grandchildren and kittens are her favorite things to snuggle.

BETHWARE FAIR: opens this week with rides, exhibits

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Additionally, there are 15 separate categories for paint and photography, from chalk and pencil drawings to photographs featuring people and animals. There will also be top prizes for scale models from airplanes and cars to rockets and motorbikes.

There is also exhibiting

and judging of over 30 kinds of flowers at this year's fair.

In the antiques section, entrants in over 35 categories range from garden tools and coffee pots to shoes and old toys.

Prizes for first place range from \$2 to \$5, and \$1 to \$3 for second place.

Judges will also award the best booth in the exhibit hall with a \$20 prize.



A scale model of Jeff Gordon's No. 24 DuPont stock car sits ready for judging. Scale models are just one of six categories under arts, crafts and hobbies that will be exhibited at the local fair this year. This will be the last race season for the iconic Gordon Chevrolet - a new sponsorship will brand it the Axalta Coating Systems car.

DAY TRIPPERS: Garden Club visits Polkville daylily farm

From page 1C

has found himself host to a number of weddings and receptions as of late - and loving every minute of the attention the gardens are getting. The gardens are so picturesque, that Owen mentioned he had over 200 high school kids getting their pictures made in the gardens on prom night this year.

"I don't charge for such things... the more, the merrier!" He says he's had as many as three brides at a time getting their portraits done, which must have been quite a sight! He goes on to say, "I figure if all this work kills me off, I want folks to have had the chance to enjoy the place a little".

Owen will be an "anchor garden" for the 2014 National Convention of the American Daylily Society,

hosting enthusiasts from all over the world, next June. "It's gonna be a tough one... these folks are kinda picky".

He has nothing to worry

about.

For more information on this hidden (yet easy to get to) paradise, visit. Paul doesn't have regular retail

hours, yet will be happy to show either gardeners or brides-to-be the nursery with a simple appointment.



Owen's picturesque gardens, ideal for wedding or graduation photos with the mountains as backdrops, will host the 2014 National Convention of the American Daylily Society.

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