

A Letter from Cynthia Regnense

Florida, USA

(Extract from a letter)



Well, it is no surprise to anyone that I am a bit of an adventure junkie... but even I have surprised myself by spending the last three days in one of the hottest countries in the world, Pakistan. Several months ago, I met the head of the Presbyterian Board of Education, Mrs. Veeda Javaid. With her assistance and her wonderful staff, I have been able to travel safely here. I have had a royal reception... this is my 65th country, and I have never been welcomed in any other country with so much warmth and love! I have been able to tour four schools, one here in Lahore Pakistan, a city of 10 million, two in the tiny village of 3000 people who have no paved roads and whose homes have mud-packed floors, and one at Sangla Hill (a two hour drive west of Lahore). The children are all 100% respectful and glad to be in school.

They are perfectly neat in their little uniforms, the boys even wearing ties! Unlike to US, these kids want to be in school and want to learn. There are no discipline problems. The kids want to do their homework! In a country where only 51% of the male population and 39% of the female population is literate (with literacy being defined as the ability to read and write one's name), it is a privilege to be in school! In the village, some bulletin boards are packed mud covered with cloth, but the teachers and students have drawn wonderful artworks to decorate the boards and classrooms.

I was invited to lay the first brick of a groundbreaking ceremony for a perimeter wall at the Sangla Hill school; it was an honor I will not soon forget. When I spoke to the assembly, I had no trouble telling them how much I loved the school personnel and people of Pakistan. The kids throwing rose petals at our feet as we approached really topped it off!

The crossing into Pakistan is by foot across a half-mile, no-man's land. You walk along stopping to clear five sets of Indian checkpoints and three Pakistani checkpoints. It was the first day of the EID holiday (like Christmas in the West, and even complete with Christmas lights!) Because of the holiday, NOONE was crossing the border!!! Only one CSer, Rodney from Australia, and myself! Laura opted to spend these three days in India just across the border by an hour at Amritsar, India. It was odd to walk alone along the concrete road! I had heard horror stories of six-hour waits across this only-major-crossing from India border crossing. It took us 56 minutes. There were also none of the horrific we-take-everything-out-of-your pack sessions at any of the 8 checkpoints! No xrays, no wands, nothing! It is harder to get on a metro in Delhi (bag xray, personal pat down and personal wand!)

I got to stay on the campus of Foreman Christian College. Security was tight there. The cars are checked upon entry with mirrors reviewing the undercarriage. Each street has a guard, although they are not visibly armed. I was, again, treated like royalty... an air-conditioned house about the size of mine at home ... upon arrival, a cook and assistant waited for us... and a lovely meal commenced!