

ANNUAL REPORT, FRIENDS OF BURMA, INC. for 2013.

January, 2014. 548 Home Ave. Fort Wayne, IN 46807. E-mail: neildianasowards@juno.com  
Website: friendsofburma.org This report compiled by Neil & Diana Sowards



Diana and I were able to go to the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the arrival of Ann & Adoniram Judson to Burma in 1813. It was one incredible conference—45,000 registered and an estimated 15,000 more did not register but attended. It had everything—many different ethnic dances, 2,000 voice choir, action songs, beautiful ethnic costumes, friendly people, great speakers, some of whom we could understand-- a real gala event. We also attended the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the Karen Baptist Convention that was very well done and spiritually exciting. Between these two events we went to the Kachin Thanksgiving celebration where we

spoke briefly to 15,000 persons about our first mentor, Rev M. Zau Yaw.



We visited Pathein and saw their magnificent \$500,000 Baptist headquarters, two orphanages, and three seminaries. We were accompanied on this visit by American Baptist missionaries, Duane and Marcia Binkley. I visited with Tha Wah, formerly one of my students at MIT. She is now

director of Leadership Training with a staff of five. Her family now consists of her husband, a three year old boy they have adopted, a fourteen year old girl, her mother in law, and six students. What she wanted from me was support for a very smart young man who scored high enough to be accepted at Medical College but he and his family do not have the \$1,000 per year needed.

We went with Russ Kadoe to deliver a truck given by an FOB supporter to Tharawaddy Baptist Association. It is the first vehicle they have ever owned. It is one of the poorest districts but it did raise \$90,000 to build a nice classroom building for their Bible school. The faith and sacrificial giving of these people challenged my vision.



Pathein Myaungmya Sgaw Karen Baptist Association (PMSKBA) brings sixty of the most outstanding students from their mission fields and village churches so they can study in middle and high school in Pathein. They have filled the Gillen Hostel, given by another supporter, and they really need another hostel. These

students are chosen based on academic tests which are given to them.



*Padaung women learning the guitar. received “for most needed”.*

Sanlung Knu, a music teacher at BARS (Bachelor of Arts in Religious Study) goes to various ethnic groups in remote areas to teach music. FOB helped her when she was studying music in the Philippines. It is so rewarding when those we help use their training to help others. We were able to support her by combining gifts

We visited Matthew 25 Love Hospital. It needs an updated sewer system—now there’s a hard project to raise money for!!! But very necessary! Their toilets overflow in the rainy season and flow down a hill and out in front of the toilets. One donor church has already donated to this project, but more is needed.



After trying for 20 years, we were able to visit Falam in the Chin Hills. We saw the Sowards Library we paid for twenty years ago and they shared their dreams with us. At Hakha they shared that they want to expand their seminary to be a Chin Christian College in 2017.

It was 28 years ago I felt God called me to help the Christians of Burma. On one hand I was sad to remember so many leaders we have worked with have passed on. On the other we met so many new leaders who are so dedicated and competent who are a joy to know. How I wish each of you could have been with me and shared fellowship with these wonderful people. I thank God that so many of you have



*Musical Group at an orphanage.*

continued to support our fifty three programs in Burma (Myanmar). Many times persons came up to us and thanked us for this or that program that you have helped them. Several reminded us that they were formerly recipients of Sowards Scholarships during their student days and now they are in leadership and teaching positions.

We visited the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the Karen Baptist Convention Hospital. It has grown to a complex of buildings—from a clinic for Seminary Hill students to a hospital that “every taxi driver in Yangon knows where it is.” FOB was one of its first supporters and they remembered that. Now the Koreans and others are giving their support.

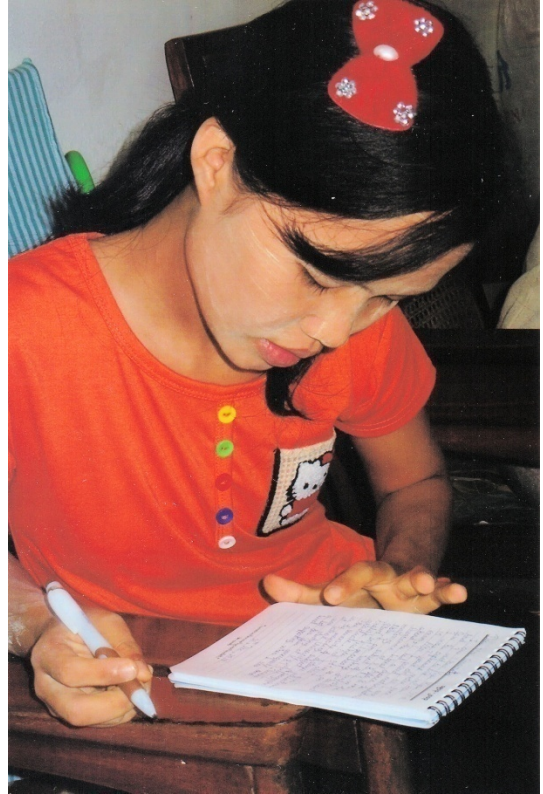
Burma has really changed since our last visit. The government seems more relaxed and much less abusive to the people. Construction is going on everywhere and traffic is a nightmare. It now takes 3 hours to travel what used to be done in one hour. Business is booming with incredible amounts of merchandise everywhere. Wages have gone up but so has cost of living but there seems to be some gain. Every leader seems to have cell phones, Ipods, Ipads, and cameras. And the cell phones work all over the country! Internet shops seem to be everywhere but connections in homes are poor and time consuming.

There is a general feeling the government will now allow a liberal arts, critical thinking college to be established by the Christians and at least five institutions are moving in that direction. Ask for a Thought Paper by e-mail if interested. Seed money is needed. Any ideas?

We took Jenny Paw to her first restaurant. She had been supported for years as an orphan by one of FOB's board members who is now supporting her in Kayah Pu Bible School. She has given him deep satisfaction in knowing he has made such a difference in her life. Another former graduate of a childcare facility visited, and sat down and wrote a thank you letter to her sponsor. She now teaches in a preschool.

On our last Sunday, we visited Ywama Baptist Church and saw their clinic that ministers to over 8,000 each year. They give all needed medicine free and need donations.

I finished my book, "The Last American Baptist Missionaries to Burma, 1946-1966" and had it printed in Burma. Earlier I compiled all the articles my mother, father and other missionaries had written about Burma into a four volume set. Two of each were given to each of the 45 Bible schools and seminaries.



*Writing a thank you letter.*



*Ywama Charity Healthcare Clinic*

We can send this newsletter to you in color if you give us your e-mail. Please feel free to pass on our newsletter to friends and to mention us on face book, etc. Friends of Burma, Inc is a non profit 501(c)(3) organization staffed in the U.S. by volunteers. Donations are tax deductible and less than 2% of income is used for mailings, overhead and the salary of one part time person in Burma. If you want to continue to do

good works remember FOB in your will.





*Saw Taw Lu teaching villagers in a village home.*

The poor Bago Yoma Karens were devastated when the bamboo bloomed three years ago. Rats ate up their paddy (rice). Saw Taw Lu collected food for them and got them through that crisis. He is a quiet, contemplative young man who has devoted his life to bettering the lives of the villagers in these mountains. He is “self support” missionary. This means that he has to raise his own support.

Diana talked with him a long time and got to know and respect him. On our last day in Burma, Diana read his autobiography. He attended KBTS, the Karen Seminary but had no money. Apparently he had no family support. Somehow he managed to get a typewriter and began typing school work for his fellow classmates to earn money. It took him nine years to finish KBTS, which is a four year school.

He made the comment, “From the time I knew right from left, I wanted to help people.” So Saw Taw Lu goes to these isolated villages and teaches them to make organic fertilizer, outdoor sanitary toilets, takes them medicines, teaches joint use of the forest, and leads medical groups to help them. Now he is trying to solve their water problems. He had a 90 foot tube well drilled but the water smelled and tasted bad. So now he wants to drill a 150 deep tube well to get clean, unpolluted water. The cost of drilling the well is \$600.

**Wish List**

Provide free medicine to the poor at Ywama Church's Charity Healthcare Clinic for one week..... \$153.84

Orphan Per Year.....\$240

Scholarship for a seminary student preparing for full time Christian service.....\$300

Funds to upgrade libraries in poor seminaries.....\$500.

Tube well for Bago Yoma.....\$600.

Train a doctor, Saw Thet Aung Htoo, \$1,000 per year for seven years.....\$1,000

Seed money for a loan fund for graduate entrepreneurs of KBTS-Liberal Arts.....\$1,000

Sewer System for Matthew 25 Love Hospital.....\$2,000

Hostel at Pathein for the brightest students from 60 villages and mission fields.....\$20,000

KBC Hospital. Elevator for four story building.....any amount.

Eye glasses for Chin seminary students in the Chin Hills. These are more expensive than in Yangon because the eye doctor comes twice a year, examines, goes back to Yangon and has the glasses made and then comes again to fit them. Each.....\$25.00

If none of the above appeals to you, please check our website ([friendsofburma.org](http://friendsofburma.org)) and see if any of our other 53 programs appeal to you.



*Orphan in Need of a Sponsor*