

Friends of Burma Annual Report 2015

Ruth Peterson, 79, of DeKalb, IL, passed away at home surrounded by family, Sept. 12, 2015. She was a member of the Executive Committee of FOB for many years. We could give you a long list of her accomplishments, but instead, decided to let you read how she affected two other members of our Executive Committee. First, from Tansy Kadoe. “More than a decade ago, Ruth and I stood with Nehemiah at the wall in Jerusalem, watching workers move blocks of stone, mix mortar, and energetically start the rebuilding process. At least it felt like we were there. Actually, it was 2002 and I was a part of an email Bible study on the OT event that occurred 445 years before the birth of Christ. Ruth brought the study of Nehemiah to life. I could almost feel the prophet’s pain as he dealt with ridicule, wrath, fear, laziness, discouragement and false prophets who told lies.



“What would go through Nehemiah’s mind? What would I think or do if I were wearing his shoes? How does what is going on in his time have any bearing on my life today? Coming out of this Bible study, I was a changed person. The seeds of love for God’s Word were sown in my heart. In my mind, the desire for the mind of Christ was implanted. That Bible study still has a profound influence on me, because I often ask myself what kind of wall God wants me to rebuild. Since then, I have shared Ruth’s lessons with a number of groups. They, too, experience the effect of God’s word that comes through Ruth in a powerful way. I also studied Jeremiah and Philippians with Ruth. I treasure every moment she engaged me in the scripture. Every time I have questions, Ruth was always available to help and so is John. Together, they were consistently supportive of my ministry.

“It has been a privilege to work alongside them on the Friends of Burma Executive Board. Ruth’s love for people, especially the people of Burma, was so encouraging. She served God, Friends of Burma, and everyone whole-heartedly. I found in Ruth love, generosity, kindness, humility, and joy. She lived out her faith in Jesus Christ. I will miss her greatly. But I rejoice in knowing she is with our Lord Jesus Christ, who was so gracious to have given me a friend like Ruth.

“Oh..one thing. When we studied the book of Nehemiah, which has 13 chapters, I thought others were studying along. Only after we finished our Bible study did I find out many dropped out early in the study. Yet, Ruth continued giving all that time just for me. God knew what I needed and He sent His angel. Ruth’s faithfulness should inspire us all.”

Next, from May Pearl Cartee

“I first met Ruth and John in the fall of 2002 when I moved to DeKalb, Illinois to study at Northern Illinois University. I did not know them nor did my parents. I was supposed to attend St. George’s

University for medical school in January 2003 and needed to register as a student for one semester to have a legal status in the U.S. Although they did not know me, they graciously allowed me to stay at their home. In December of 2002, I learned that the financial arrangement for my medical school did not work out as expected. John and Ruth allowed me to continue to stay with them while I continued my graduate study at N.I.U. My five and a half-year stay with them was a tremendous blessing for me. I learned that Ruth was always busy volunteering for different organizations. She served as a teacher assistant for ESL class at Kishwaukee Community College, a board member of local food Co-op, a member of Bread for the World organization, a trustee of Northern Baptist Seminary, an organizer for League of Women Voters. At the same time she was a co-interim minister for various churches with her loving husband, John, whom she respected and loved dearly. In spite of her busyness, she made time for many people who were far and near. I remember a particular person who called her weekly to get advice as well as to have a caring friend. She was very proud of her daughters who were serving the public in great capacity.

“She lived her life joyfully and everyone around her felt her joy through her laughter and singing. She and John also invested their life in ministering to the college students. The students loved and respected them and their ministry. She was always gentle and thoughtful. She taught me many things by how she lived, and she was always there for me when I needed help or advice. She was my American mother as she was for so many internationals who were away from home.

“She loved and cared about the people of Burma and served many years as a board member for FOB. When the Karen refugees were resettled in the Quad Cities area, she called me several times to interpret for them. She cared about their physical as well as spiritual wellness. Her life was full of tireless work for the glory of the Lord. Even when faced with life-threatening cancer, she was not afraid to die because of her faith. Her passing left a big void in the hearts and minds of many of us. We miss her very much, but we also know that she is at home with her heavenly Father where there is no more pain or sorrow.” And we, of FOB, say amen.

In 2015 our giving income dropped, so we are not able to do some of the projects that we have done in the past. However, with **\$38,381.00** in undesignated gifts given to the general fund we were able to send **\$17,700** to be used by various volunteers and associations in flood relief and more than \$1000 to be used for mosquito nets to prevent Dengue fever from taking young lives.

With one position to fill on the Executive Committee with the death of Ruth, and another person waiting to retire from the position, FOB has a need for people who are willing to serve as new committee members. Members are elected for 5 year terms and may serve continuously with the committee's approval. We need high caliber people who have shown a strong interest in the needs of Burma: people who have been committed to raising interest and support among other people; people who have given financially to FOB; people who want people in Burma to have healthier lives and more secure living; people who believe in higher education as a means to a better life; people who support seminary training. We are looking for volunteers who would serve on the board. Meetings are once a year, in

February, in Phoenix and some have been attended through Skype. Some members, although active, have not been able to attend the yearly meeting, but this is preferred. If any of you who get this newsletter are interested, please contact Neil by email or by mail.



This year has been a year of flooding in Burma. We have raised money both for the delta area and the Chin area. You can view flooding pictures on the internet by typing in Hakha flooding to see the devastation caused. In the wake of flooding has come widespread Dengue fever, particularly dangerous to children. We have been personally acquainted with people who have had Dengue fever. Neil's mother suffered this back in the 30's in Burma. She told us she knows why it is often called Breakbone Fever, because your whole body aches. After the widespread flooding the incidence of malaria and dengue rose dramatically. One good friend's daughter died of Dengue Hemorrhagic fever, which is a variant of Dengue. Hemorrhagic fever makes the blood vessels inside the body leak. Many children die. Since so many villagers are exposed to these diseases, we did all we could to raise funds to buy mosquito nets. These nets were divided among the Friends of Myanmar Governing Board in Yangon and each member of the board was given nets to distribute to the most needy.



Sometimes we have successes, as in the graduating seminary students we supported. Sometimes we have failures. Let us tell you about a failure.



“We had great hopes for drilling a well in Sin Zwe village” said Russ. “ In spite of drilling three times, we were unsuccessful in getting clean water for this village.” But our associate, “Sweetie”, as he is called, decided, if he could not get water, he would try for light. I will

paraphrase his account of this. He bought a solar power supply set and a guitar with the remaining money. It cost about \$3,333.



The teacher, Naw Yoe Yoe, came to visit Sweetie and told him that she now teaches the children from 7-9PM at her home every night. She has a video player and uses it in teaching. The kids come every night, 17 of them, and some of them sleep with the teacher. The villagers hear the voices coming from her house every night. The kids have more interest to learn than ever. They learn not only school lessons, but also ethics, Bible, music, and how to behave in society.

This teacher committed to serving 3 years in this village. She'll be leaving next year. It's a great sacrifice to serve in these remote and isolated villages. "May the Lord keep on blessing all of you for supporting this."



During the past, there has been an embargo against Burma. Now, with a more democratic atmosphere, Washington has loosened the restrictions we once had, which included no help to Microcredit agencies. So once more, we are encouraging Naw Paw Gaw's

efforts at organizing women with small group business efforts. FOB donated \$2000 last year, and a donor gave \$1000 for this project. The Asho Chin group is new, and is for both Christian and non-Christian women. They are planning new designs that are traditional in flavor, and sewing and selling these clothing items. The Golden Light group is raising pigs. They bought 2 pigs and the balance of the money is for food for the pigs. The group will decide how to use the profits.

The Blessing Women's group works at sewing mosquito nets, making liquid soap, and making snacks. Another group is working with leather, making covers for hymnals and Bibles. They also have looms and are making purses, napkins, and tablecloths. The Stara Beauty Salon Ladies Groups, some of whom came from Nargis affected villages, which were wiped out in 2008. "They want to stand on their feet and they try to do their best." They used microcredit to buy some beauty salon supplies, like shampoo, hair dryers, and a variety of tools for hair cutting and dressing. They opened on the first floor of Franc auditorium on the Ahlone compound, which has many people around and they are receiving more customers and enjoying their salaries. They are paying off their loan and also increasing in confidence and self-esteem. We are very happy to be supporting Naw Paw Gaw in her efforts at training and organizing these women, and are glad the U.S. government is allowing us to do this now.



Friends, supporters, readers, you have a big opportunity to introduce Friends of Burma and our projects to your friends and family. Please consider leaving a bequest in your will. Please consider mentioning us to people you come in contact with. Without your support, children, teachers, doctors, nurses, patients, administrators, students, and evangelists will suffer. We will not be able to continue at the rate we have in the past if we do not recruit new supporters.

Never underestimate the sacrifice that individuals display in the service of God. Our associate, rather reluctantly, took into his home several very needy children from an isolated village. It is quite a responsibility taking care of other people's children, but a real testament to his desire for a better life for these children. Here follows a part of his



letter of thanks to some who helped him financially. "At first I did not intend to accept them at my home but it happened. Slowly and slowly I realize that I did one of the right decisions in my life. There is no educated person in Sin Zwe village. Primary level is the highest. Lack of education and knowledge put them to poverty. They don't even know their current condition in present day. They said they are Christian but it is just a name. They always want to play but don't want to learn. They don't want to take medicine when they are not well. They don't want to use soap when cleaning and bathing. Pencils and exercise books are spoiled and lost frequently. But slowly they can change their habits. Now we don't need to talk too much like before. They go to church every Sunday. Now they can recite the verses of bible and pray at every evening service. My daughter tells them stories from the bible every night. They go to Sunday School every week. They help cleaning the home and the yard. We visited a zoo once. They

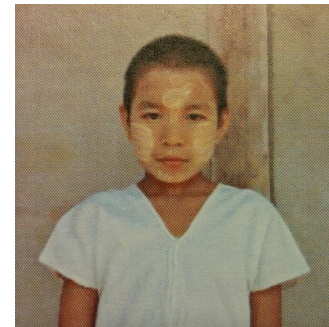
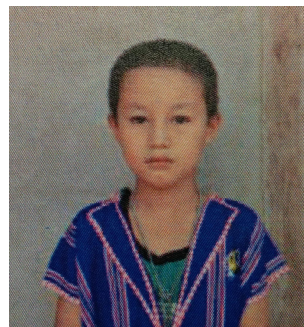
were very happy. They will go back to their village and stay a month this summer. I used the money for their health, materials for schooling, sandals and dresses. It was a great help. They never use sandals in their village, but now they are using them. I worry most about the health of the kids because I have to take full responsibility for somebody's kids when they are away from their parents. We don't know the future but we have to go by faith. Thank you for your loving and caring."

Naw In Gyin has no father. Her mother married another man and left them a few years ago. She lives with her grandmother, together with a brother and sister. What is so amazing about her is that she passed 10th standard in "one shot" with three distinctions—in Physics, Chemistry, and Biology. Now she is studying Anthropology in Yangon University. She is very rare in not only passing, but excelling in the very difficult Matriculation examinations. She needs support if she is to continue her education. The cost for food, books, and lodging is about \$100 per month. There is no help available, except from us. Would someone be interested in helping this young woman succeed in spite of overwhelming odds?



Help is being sought for a Kidney Dialysis machine. It costs \$13,500.00 This would be used in conjunction with patients at the KBC Hospital and other out patients.

Children in need in various childcare centers, such as Saw Hser Eh Klo Gay at Htee Moo Taw Ber. Born in 2005, his parents were divorced and did not care for him, ignored him. Came to the center in 2013. And Naw Aye Nay Moo, born in 2007. Her parents were also divorced and no one could help her, so she was sent to the center. She likes to sing. There are many more children who need our help. \$360 per year.



Wish List.

1. Give a mosquito net \$6 each, 10 for \$60.
2. Sponsor a Woman's Entrepreneur Group \$300.
3. Sponsor an orphan \$360 per year.
4. Sponsor Naw In Gyin to college \$1,200 year.
5. Give a Kidney Dialysis Machine \$13,500.
6. Flood Relief--any amount

This report was prepared by Neil and Diana Sowards and Lwin Moe.

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