

FACES OF BURMA November 29-December 16, 2013, A Joe VanOs Photo Safari led by guide Don Lyon

Day 1 & 2—Getting to Yangon. Day 3—December 1, 2013 Yangon Arrivals: Faces of Burma began to take shape today. Greg and Valerie Duncan, Lance Cummings, Charles Patrick and Charlie Berger had arrived early—Lance and Charles having enjoyed two days with Burmese guide, Zaw. Walter Muelken transferred over to the Chatrium then Jo-Anne Bodkin checked-in and Joanna Patterson and Deborah Woodley beat the clock arriving before midnight. Doug and Patty Sutherland flew in from Singapore and Victoria (Torrie) Olson flew in from Ngapali Beach where she had been photographing the fishing community there. Now, with your humble correspondent (YHC), Don Lyon we were complete—thirteen eager photographers ready to record and interpret Faces of Burma for two weeks. Our Burmese guide Sai Woon Sone, better known as Daniel, arrived at the Chatrium Hotel and by 3PM we're off to the Eastern entrance to the *Shwedagon* Pagoda, holiest shrine in Burma (officially named Myanmar). Everything was new to the group at this point and all had to be captured—vendors selling flowers for offerings and food for sustenance, kids with *thanaka* on their faces, visiting Shan monks with protective tattoos, wooden Buddha statues taking shape. By 4pm we drove over to the South entrance, up the elevator and spent 1.5 hours until 6:15 making a clockwise circuit of the great golden *paya* or pagoda. The sun set softly with shimmery gold stupas and pink clouds. We learned our birthday signs—some going through the ritual of pouring a cup of water over the small Buddha statue for each year of their lives. We focused on the worshipful and on the beautiful reflections from glass or gold. Back to the hotel by 6:45 for an incredible sea food buffet—including lobster and other shellfish cooked to order. Fresh grilled squid for YHC.

Day 4--Yangon City: Formerly known as Rangoon. Out at 8AM after wonderful omelet and sushi breakfast on hotel's terrace. Down to the jetty to capture small commuter boats crossing the Yangon River with passengers from delta towns. Stevedores with 100-plus pound sacks of rice on their backs drop a counting stick as they shoulder their sack into waiting trucks. After perilous crossing of Strand Road (gotta have faith) we drive to nearby Chinatown to see the busy street life—tea shop patrons, *naan* (bread) baking in *Tandoori* ovens, every manner of creature and plant sold for food, noodles and rice spring roll wrappers being made and on and on—the hoi poli at it's most ingenious and colorful. The colorful Confucian Temple offers an island of tranquility in this sea of humanity. Next a quick stop for a distant shot of the *Shwedagon* then to the Green Elephant for a lunch of steamed vegetables, beef, shrimp and chicken curries. Fresh lime juice hits the spot. From 1:30 to 3pm to regroup at the hotel. Greg and Val are back with us for the visit to *Sule* Pagoda area. Daniel provided some background on the student and monk demonstrations of 1988 and 2007 which both began here. We parked in front of the Independence Monument to capture a few scenes of the colonial era buildings such as the law courts, a former department store and one ugly Soviet era building standing out like a sore thumb. The buildings are being considered for UNESCO status. At *Chaukhtatgyi* *Paya* we struggle to include one of the largest reclining Buddha figures—the 10' feet tell the story. Back down to a different part of the jetty near

Botataung Pagoda where there are many monasteries to explore and vendors selling gilded cocanut pagoda offerings. The sun was setting into the river. We dropped Walter off at the *Shwedagon* Pagoda for another spin around the great dome while we dined at Bangkok Kitchen across from our hotel.

Day 5--Yangon to Lake Inle: Five early birds took two taxis to *Shwedagon* for morning shots—tranquil. YHC was not among them being briefly indisposed (something that happened to almost all of us at different times on the trip). By 9:45AM all were assembled to transfer to the airport. Out flight left an hour late at 11:20 so we had lunch at Daniel's favorite Heho Airport café where they made a tolerable (by Daniel's standards) Shan noodle soup (and much more). Neck and shoulder massages were enjoyed here—another specialty of the house. In *Nyang Shwe* town we boarded three large cargo canoes powered by long-tail engines (prop is raised and lowered to avoid the hyacinth). It was an hour's cruise out to Golden Isles cottages. We fed the gulls and captured some nice flight shots as they cruised overhead at the same speed as us. Keep your mouth closed! As we left the canal and entered the lake, what should we find but a band of *Intha* leg rowers who demonstrated their balance. Everyone kept shooting this unique method of transportation. In the gloaming we cruised into the Golden Isles Lodge, welcomed by the *Pa'O* staff clanging on cymbals and gongs in a rhythmic and mesmerizing beat. Soon we were preparing for dinner in our individual woven bamboo cabanas. Dinner was delicious and photogenic and was followed by a picture worthy cultural program including dancing, music, fire and sword dance as well as an amazing performance by the human puppet. Each role was performed by members of the staff who are *Pa'O* people from the surrounding hills. Sleep would come easy tonight interrupted only by the cargo canoes chugging past at 4:30 in the morning.

Day 6 –Around Lake Inle: Breakfast started at 6AM and the beautiful light soon after. At 8:15 we hopped aboard out three canoes and cruised among leg rowers retrieving their nets with the night's catch, levering up water weed from the shallow lake bottom to add nutrients to their floating vegetable gardens. Our first stop was the old monastery perched over the lake called *Nga Hpe Kyaung* or Jumping Cats Monastery . Alas, the new Abbott forbids the frivolity of monk's teaching cats to jump but the collection of lacquer Buddha figures makes the visit worthwhile. These were rescued from nearby hill monasteries abandoned during fighting during the 60's-90's between Karen insurgents and Burmese military. The hands tell the story—one touching the earth the other palm up in a gesture of teaching. We cruised through floating gardens of tomatoes and beans, through villages build on stilts and came to *Phaung Daw Oo Paya* housing the most sacred relics of Shan State—the five bowling ball size Buddha figures that ensure harmony and prosperity in the world of the Shan (the overlords of this region) and their subjects. It was market day here so we wandered among the vendors and shoppers finding a wealth of images and practicing our *Jei su bai's* and *Mingalaba's*. The people with red or yellow towel turbans are the hill dwelling *Pa'O* and the people selling fish or tomatoes are lake-dwelling *Intha*. The Golden Barge parked here represents the mythical *Karaweik*. The barge is used in processions around the lake and is

propelled by hundreds of leg-rowers. From 1:30 to 4pm at leisure to relax or download. At 4PM our two *Intha* boatmen arrived. Daniel directed them through a series of positions and poses that was like a ballet. Incredible the way they could hold a pose balanced on one foot standing on the prow of a tippy canoe. They passed back and forth under a small bridge so we had both golden light and silhouette shots—including the patented cheroot lighting shot—catch the flame! As the sun began to set we hopped in our three canoes and followed the two leg rowers out onto the lake for sunset shots with nets held high, silhouettes looking into the sun and golden light looking east. Daniel worked our two *Intha* models (and us) pretty hard—dinner tasted very good tonight.

Day 7 Lake Inle Crafts and In-Thein Market: The day began at 6AM with two more *Intha* leg rowers posing in the pre-dawn light for us on the east side of the lodge—we mainly wanted silhouetted images of the strong graphic shapes. Daniel directed them in a series of *pas a deux* ballet-like scenes. We clicked away, underexposing to accent the faint misty glow on the eastern rim. One had a charcoal brazier glowing just as the fishermen do to keep warm when they fish at night. The two men together sharing cheroots made for some nice images. Breakfast was extra tasty today. At 8AM we cruised west to stop at a craft center perched over the lake. We came to meet the five *Padaung* women who weave at their backstrap looms for a few months each year to earn some cash income. They pose with their 40 pounds of brass neck, leg and arm rings, necks seemingly stretched. The practice discouraged other tribes from taking the women as slaves. We bought scarves from them and left some oranges. Cruising up the swift cold river we came to *In Thein* market—held every five days. Together we walked up the old monastery steps past all the craft vendors to photograph among the ruined small stupas abandoned during years of conflict. Items such as the *Pa'O* women's woven backpacks caught the eye of the collectors among us. We had some time for bargaining, meeting at a new cafe along the river—the Bamboo Forest Restaurant. Our meals were served in black lacquer temple offering bowls—elegant and tasty. Many are photographing the beautiful presentations of our meals. The ginger salad and fish stew were delicious. R&R from 2-3:30PM back at our cabanas. At 3:30 we cruised over to the weaving village in the middle of the lake. Lotus stalk was made into fiber and woven into a luxurious soft numbly fabric. Older ladies tie-dyed and strung the looms while the younger ones wove the *ikat* cloth of silk. The dying room was wonderfully medieval with wood fired cauldrons and dyer with purple dye up to her elbows. As the light began to fade we stopped to see cheroot making—nimble fingers, enjoy a quiet smoke or capture images of the cheroot maker's daughter—*Chor-day*, beautiful! Cultural show again tonight was quite different that the one two nights ago—excellent *Kinaree-Kinaraw* dance performance of the mythical lovers—but most had gone to bed exhausted from the very full day on the water.

Day 8 Lake Inle to Lake Pindaya: 8AM departure by cargo canoe after breakfast and saying goodbye to our *Pa'O* friends. By 9Am we stopped to photograph some fishermen who were posing for our cameras—signs of developing tourism in Burma but good shots nevertheless. After reaching Nyang shwe we explored a bit by foot to

see the “hydroponic” tomatoes from the lake packed for shipment—lots of green tomatoes. Driving a few miles north of town to the venerable old wooden *Shwe Yaunghwe* monastery with the oval windows. Daniel posed a young monk holding a cat, then we shot from the interior where the novices were studying their lessons. Daniel posed one young novice in a doorway, then we returned to town for lunch. We worked our way through the busy produce market to reach the aptly named Amazing Naungshwe Hotel where a beautifully presented and delicious chicken in a pineapple, lake fish and crepe with local honey for desert awaited us. Daniel asked some of the hotel staff to pose with the bright yellow umbrellas, then we were off for *Pindaya*, about 50 miles NW. Toilet stop in *Aung Baung* junction town then the traffic quieted down—except for where it was being widened and rebuilt. We walked through the construction to see hot tar and gravel applied by hand. Two buffalo boys astride their charges were next. Bullock carts from the villages transferring cabbages to waiting trucks told the story of agricultural distribution but the crowning event of the afternoon were the columns of bullock carts returning home with loads of rice straw after a hard day of threshing. Stupas on a hillside were brilliant white and gold. A final scene at dusk was the field patterns with half timbered houses looking somewhat like a medieval English countryside. The Inle Inn at Pindaya served us a wonderful dinner in their great hall. YHC gave the group some ideas about preparing for the early scenes along the lake shore and shooting in the cave tomorrow.

Day 9 Pindaya Area: Breakfast began at 6AM and most were there for the pancakes, eggs, and fresh croissants, then hit the beaches. We were hoping for some mist hanging in the huge banyan trees surrounding the small lake where the local *Danu* and *Taungyi* people come to bathe, wash clothes and fill their water barrels. Recent additions of water pipes, reservoirs and such modern improvements are reducing such activity but there was enough going on to make the early morning worthwhile. A Burmese engineer working on the water project spent his spare time photographing in the area, too. What is Burma coming to!? By 8AM there were many bathers with the golden stupas across the lake as a background. A friendly “Mingalaba” breaks the ice. We meet at 9AM to visit Pindaya Caves but first a stop to watch the telephone lineman with his special shoes for scaling the metal utility poles. The colorful statues of the Shan Prince slaying the giant spider to free the imprisoned celestial princesses tells the story of how this region was settled. Inside the caves everyone found their special niche to photograph the thousands (almost 9000) of Buddha statues that abide here. The various types of lighting produces the greenish or golden light. YHC focused on scenes that juxtaposed a Buddha profile with a serene Buddha face. Use of fast (like f1.8) lenses created the preferred selective focus look. By 11:15 all were back on the bus with cards full of images. We walked through the whitewashed stupas of *Shwe Oo Min* below the caves and over to the paper umbrella workshop where the first step was to make the *Sa* paper using mulberry bark. Flower petals could be added. All the parts of the umbrella were created right here with a foot powered lathe and very sharp knives. Each step was demonstrated and captured for posterity. Some bought the *Sa* paper for art projects at home. The magnificent 150-year-old Banyan trees were stately subjects,

especially with the local kids scampering along the limbs like monkeys. Brick making was nearby. We had a delicious lunch at the Memento Café where the 2” spiders may have been the progeny of the giant spider of misty legend. At 3:15 we drove back along the road looking for landscapes with the white mustard and yellow sesame crops in neat grids where we could locate a tree using the rule of thirds. At a *Danu* village Daniel and YHC reconnected with a 102 year old woman who was busy harvesting hot peppers. She posed with two of her great great granddaughters. Scenes of five *Taungyo* women harvesting sesame with their sharp hand scythes then cattle going home—as we soon did for another fine meal and sound sleep.

Day 10 Pindaya to Mandalay: Another too beautiful (ie clear) day in Pindaya—breakfast at 6 AM for YHC then a brisk walk over to the venerable banyan trees to create some HDR scenes with the trees and stupas. By 8AM we were on the bus backtracking to *Aung Ban* and *Heho* Airport. It was a luxury to have time to stop for the patterned landscapes, bullock cart convoys. The water buffalo were quite terrified of us tourists and scattered to the four corners. Three other buffalo boys demonstrated the proper way to mount a water buffalo by stepping on the lowered neck. This is a beautiful part of Burma, Shan State actually. We agree with Daniel that his homeland is the most beautiful part of the country. Lunch at the little café. Lance and Charles enjoyed their massages then it was time to catch the 40 minute flight to Mandalay—watching the red earth and colorful fields around Lake Pindaya slip away. In Mandalay we stopped at *Aung Nan* Handicraft workshop to photograph the process of making the tapestries decorated with millions of sequins and stuffed to provide relief to the figures. Many other artifacts, sculpture, etc were on display in a way that allowed the photographer some interesting shots. By 3:30 we had arrived at the Mandalay City Hotel—an enclosure of calm in the bustling city. The night market was a few blocks away for after dinner perambulations.

Day 11 Mingun and Mandalay: After a tasty breakfast with wonderful papaya we were off by 8AM—this group is prompt and eager! We got off the bus along the Zeygo jetty to photograph the life along the Ayerwaddy River (aka The Road to Mandalay made known to western audiences by Rudyard Kipling and Bob Hope). Thousands of clay pots had been floated hundreds of miles down the river on bamboo rafts to be sold at Full Moon markets. The rafts would be broken up and the bamboo split and woven into sheets—Burmese plywood. Daniel persuaded a woman to demonstrate how she could carry five or six pots on her head at one time. Other young women were transporting 80 pound loads of wet sand on their heads from small boats to waiting trucks for the construction projects around town. They lived in simple lean-tos and eked out a meager existence yet everyone seemed to have something to do and a positive attitude about life. We boarded our 60’ riverboat for the 30 minute cruise upriver to the religious center of *Mingun*. Glasses of hot tea were offered against the morning chill. In Mingun, Daniel found a very serene nun to puff on a “whacking white cheroot” supplied by our magician of a guide. The backdrop was the immense pile of bricks that was the base of the unfinished circa 1806 *Mingun Paya*. Construction halted after an inauspicious

earthquake cracked the base. Smoking was not her style so she addressed the two red-robed novices on some aspect of proper behavior. We said “je sui bei” to her and followed the novices to the structure housing the “world’s largest bell” which was to have hung in the unfinished pagoda. Next stop was the white pagoda representing Mt. Meru and seven sacred mountain ranges that surround it—in this case looking more like waves. The two novices jumped from ridge to ridge on *Settawya Paya* as we photographed. Continuous focus a handy feature here. At 11:30 we shot and shopped our way back to the boat and soon were cruising back to Zeygo jetty for a delicious (as they all were) lunch at Ko’s Thai Kitchen. To beat the pesky crowds of tourists we went straight to the carved wooden monastery that had been King Mindon’s bed chamber (and where he died). Daniel found a young novice to pose in the carved wooden doorways (blessedly free of tourists who were all eating lunch). The structure was moved out of the Glass Palace after the King’s death, thus it survived the firebombing of the palace during WWII. Converted into a monastery it is called *Shwenenandaw Kyaung*. YHC’s friends TitTee and MiMi were at their stalls selling “antiques” and posing with *thanaka* paste leaf patterns on their smiling faces. At the near by “world’s largest book”, *Kuthodaw Paya*, there were glowing reflections in the marble tile floors and a happy little girl pleased to sell flower garlands for offerings and pose for the photographers. R&R back at the hotel from 3:45 to 4:45 then to the jetty again for sunset pictures of life along the river. We boarded two small dugouts to be transported across the channel to see how life was in a more prosperous village where sturdy wooden houses rose above any high water on sturdy stilts. Kids had the money to purchase dinner from vendors setting up little stalls. Dinner at the popular Chinese restaurant specializing in duck. A wonderful day full of images.

Day 12 Ancient Capitals: Out at 8AM as usual—straight to *Mahamuni Paya* (Pagoda)—home of the living Buddha believed to have been blessed by the Buddha. It is washed, teeth brushed, etc. daily. Photographically it is the worshipers and the building itself that is interesting—reflections in the polished floors of the gilded columns, soothsayers and palm-readers ply their trades. The bronze figures were originally removed from Angkor Wat in Cambodia. Next was the marble sculpting street where beautiful snow-white marble was shaped into Buddha statues and other figures and polished by young girls with their collections of smooth stones. On to Amarapura Monastery, home to over 1000 monks studying the scriptures and all coming on bare feet with alms bowls to receive their last meal of the day at 10:30AM. Shots of rows of feet and some poor children begging from the returning monks. A silk weaving and embroidery workshop provided clean toilets as well as a chance to photograph teams of girls doing the very ornate embroidery work that would take two of them four months to complete and then sell for \$1500. Dying and spinning work here, too. Some purchases made by the group ensures the livelihood of the artisans and our welcome as photographers. Crossing the Ayerwaddy on the new Chinese Bridge we soon arrived at *Aung Myae Oo*, the monastic school founded in 2003 by Ven U-Vilasa, a young monk who has now provided education for 1600 young novices, nuns and local children. We made donations to buy medicine and

other items needed here (aungmyaeoo@gmail.com). Lunch at Sagaing Hill Restaurant was delicious. Back across the river on the 1930's British built bridge still doing just fine after surviving WWII. We crossed the Ava River on a small ferry to reach Inwa (aka Ava) one of the several former capitols in the area (including Sagaing (under the Shans) and Amarapura. We were two to a horsecart for the trek around the city that had all but disappeared back to the soil. We stopped at a mustard colored paya (*Maha Aungmye Bonzan*) where Daniel requested that a reserved looking monk pose for us both outside and in the catacombs where there were a series of arches. He had a great face and was most patient. Down the bumpy path to the old wooden monastery where we hoped to pose some novices but they had all been given the day off to visit their homes so we focused on the wonderful old building and it's relics, including the Abbott. The evening light at *Amarapura's U-Bein* Bridge was OK but the crowds of tourists on the bridge outnumbered the Burmese returning home pushing bicycles, carrying baskets on their heads, etc. The best shots here were made by those who hired a rowboat for an hour's cruise with reflections. By 5:30 we were ready to return to Mandalay City Hotel and the delicious butterfish dinner awaiting.

Day 13 From Mandalay to Pyin Oo Lwin: Departure at 8AM to drive across town to the gold leaf making area where we captured the whole process starting with 1 gram of gold to beat into over 1000 tiny squares of leaf—pounding, turning, cutting into smaller pieces, over and over again. The coconut timers were particularly cool. They even make the special no-stick paper here in underground chambers to deaden the deafening “thonking” sound. Out onto the eastern road towards *Pyin Oo Lwin* (aka Maymyo). Wholesale flower market was held in the median between two lanes of highway—chrysanthemums, daisies, et al grown in Pyin Oo Lwin brought down by motorbike by the growers were sold to wholesalers. Next photo op was the rock crushing operation formerly performed by convicts now privatized but just as brutal—human conveyor belts. Climbing into the Shan Hills we stopped for toilets, snacks and to cool the engine—as did every other driver. In Pyin Oo Lwin we lunched at the San Francisco Guest House and by 1pm were enjoying a one hour siesta in our pleasant garden rooms at the Royal Parkview. At 2pm we were ready to visit the Waterfall Park. At first we were disappointed no one was there to swim under the falls for our cameras so we explored about but then a group of Burmese youth arrived to showoff for us. Women weeding and man watering the flower gardens was next. A few miles on to *Myaing Gyi* Monastery where Daniel requested of the Abbott that the novices perform their daily sweeping of the yard—which they did with gusto. Under the giant banyan tree the 30-40 novices gathered to see Daniel's images on his Nikon's LCD and to try their hand as photographers—we posed for them and they for us. In the last bits of light we visited the garish new pagoda built by the government for the “Stay at Home” Buddha that fell off the truck enroute to China and refused to go on. Our interest was in the reflection of the pagoda in the fountain. Good birding spot—sunbirds and bulbuls. As the town was established by General May during the British Raj as a hill station, YHC read Kipling's *Road to Mandalay* that so succinctly sums up the soldier's experience in a foreign culture and difficulty in adapting back to civilian life.

Day 14 Pyin Oo Lwin to Bagan: Quite a day—at 7:30 we were lined along a nearby forest path waiting for a group of monks to walk single file, barefoot with alms bowls through the mist. Pretty tricky, you say, but not for our Daniel. They came, they walked, we shot. Even the dog got into the act as did the mist up here at 4000'. Boarding the bus, we drove down town to the morning market to wander among the vegetable and meat vendors. Tailors worked their treadle sewing machines and crisp white shirts were ironed with charcoal-fired irons. Hansom cabs clipped clopped along driven by Nepalese, descendants of the Gurka soldiers that stayed in Burma at the end of WWII. Busy teashops nearby dispensed delicious *samosas* and instant *cappuccinos*. Further downtown was the wholesale market and the interesting old colonial shop buildings and clock tower. A pet store was full of beautiful parrots selling for about \$20. We squeezed in a visit to the Kandawgyi (Royal Lake) Botanical Garden begun by the British—beautiful, a favorite for wedding portraits. Most of us wanted to see the walk-in aviary where there were several species of Hornbill (Great Hornbill at 47" and Pied Hornbill at 27") who seemed to know Daniel and came to chat. At 12:30 we packed up our bags and said our *goodbys* to the Royal Parkview. Lunch was at the Garden Club Restaurant, built by Burmah Petroleum (which became British Petroleum) for staff R&R during the Raj. Great food—great atmosphere. Dropping down to 300' elevation Mandalay we stopped at the Naga Pagoda where several Burmese pythons had miraculously taken up residence coiled around the Buddha (protecting him just as in the story of the nine headed Cobra or Naga). About 20 very young children arrived, the boys dressed in Prince Siddhartha costumes as they were about to be initiated into monastic life—that was pretty cool but then we hit the jackpot with dozens and dozens of decorated bullock carts carrying the monastery initiation well-wishers. The novices-to-be were on horseback. What a scene! We captured it all—carts, bands clanging away on instruments, girls dressed in their finest—everyone having a great time! Thirty minute flight downriver to Bagan. By 7:30PM we are all sitting under the spreading acacia tree at Thande Old Bagan Lodge—listening to the Burmese harp, enjoying a delicious dinner with strawberry ice-cream to come.

Day 15 Old Bagan: The six balloonists were Picked up at 5:20 AM and all reported a wonderful and photo-rich experience with cooperative pilot who stayed low for most interesting perspectives. Meanwhile we earth dwellers enjoyed the sunrise from the Acacia Terrace Restaurant and watching the *Ayerwaddy* roll on with teak-laden barges. At 9AM all were on the bus. Our first stop was *Khay Min Gha* temple complex where we found the fastidious cheroot-smoking lady with the cocoanut ash-catcher. Here, too, is a nice very plain Buddha statue with three youngsters praying in front. Next, from 10-11AM was the brilliant freshly gilded pagoda of *Shwezigon* where an old lady was selling flower offerings and a young girl had a tray of watermelon slices on her head—catching the light beautifully. A shrine housed two nats that look after the area—for a few 1000 kyat one can buy their favor—as did Deborah and YHC. Couldn't hurt. Our third stop was at *Ananda* Temple where the booksellers offer great deals on boot-leg copies of rare books. Daniel leads the group to explain the history of the four standing Buddhas, each about 30' long and

each carved from a single teak log. The north and south statues are original 15th C while the east and west ones were replaced in the 18th C after fires from worshipper's candles. Frescos are nicely faded. Water hyacinth fiber purses are a few item for sale. On our way to lunch we spot two nuns in the shade of a tree waiting for a bus—the younger one was gracious about being photographed. Green Bee Eater birds waiting on the wires leading into Sunset Garden Restaurant. Another delicious meal—we try to cut back but the flesh is weak. The view and atmosphere here are stunning. From 1:30-4PM at leisure back at our bungalows on the river. At 4PM we visited the Buddha in Prison paya built by the Mon king Manuha who brought Buddhism to Bagan and was held for ransom for his pains. Daniel magically produced a sturdy young novice with candles for the pose of the lad praying while crouched on the hand of the reclining Buddha squeezed into the very tight paya—king's way of complaining about his treatment. Everyone took their turn to shoot and everyone had ample opportunity to get their shots—the novice earned much merit. Tourists are no longer permitted to climb up the interior staircases of the temples so we visited a small pagoda with outside steps like a Mayan pyramid—climbing to a level where we could shoot through the surrounding temples rather than down on them—atmospheric. There were about 30 other sunset worshippers—more signs of the times. Nice clouds blocked the setting sun at one point—creating some dramatic scenes. Now it was time to rush to the Puppet theatre Restaurant where we arrived just as the show began—eat or shoot, time for both and the presentation of the meal was photo worthy too—lacquered offering bowls. The puppet show recounted some scenes from the Ramayana epic from India.

Day 16 Mt. Popa and Sale: Morning at leisure for breakfast on the Acacia Terrace then 8AM departure. Our first photo adventure of the day was with the family crushing peanuts for oil with a press made from a stump (mortar) and a bullock going round and round to turn a heavy wooden pestle. The family was also in the palm sugar (jaggary) business. Daniel demonstrated how the palm fruiting parts were squeezed and trimmed to produce sap and a lithe young man demonstrated how he collected the sap, climbing the palm tree. Mom and sis boiled the sap into a sugary paste. The sap was also fermented into a wine, then distilled into a liquor of about 35% alcohol with a simple but effective clay still. We all tried the hooch, YHC bought a pint for the evening happy hour. The jaggary with cocoanut added was the real treat. The family offered tea and *lappet* (fermented tea leaves) and local peanuts. A few miles on a bit of color caught our eye and soon we were photographing a novitiation ceremony where the young boys of the village were spending the day treated like Prince Sidhartha before being shorn and trading their shimmery garments for the earthen-colored robes of a novice. One successful farmer in the area was hosting this event for all the local boys as well as his son. On to Popa Village for a toilet stop. Vendors sell flowers to offer to the Nats at Mt. Popa. At Mt. Popa we made some overview shots of the town and sacred mountain top where the 37 Nats live most of the time. Macaque Monkeys have free reign of the place and possibly are in cahoots with the Nats. At noon we drove up the higher volcanic mount to Mt. Popa Resort, looking across to the Nat sanctuary and a

stunning view across the hills. A wonderful meal was served on the balcony with strawberry mousse for desert. On to Sale where an old wooden monastery has survived for 150 years. Carvings depict the past lives and tribulations of the Buddha who experimented with all the pleasures of the flesh before seeking the middle way. Our Daniel produced a gaggle of novices to pose at the railings of the venerable structure. At an abandoned *paya* of white stucco the novices climbed like monkeys and one jumped from one dormer-like structure to another as we photographed. YHC had purchased some soccer balls for the boys and they happily set out to show their prowess on the field. The sun was setting over the *Ayerwaddy* as we made our way back to the Thande Old Bagan Lodge. YHC had purchased limes and soda to temper the raw palm liquor—still an acquired taste.

Day 17 Bagan to Yangon: Most of us were ready at 5:45 to drive the short distance to *Shwesandaw Pagoda*, one of the step pyramid type structure we were permitted to climb. There were many other sun worshippers, there, too but we went for the lower perches where we could shoot through the far off pagodas—compressing the scene with our longest lenses. The sun did not “come up like thunder” but it was great just to be there. The balloons did not fly that day due to winds in the wrong direction. By 7:40 we are enjoying breakfast on the acacia terrace and by 8:45 driving to *Naung Oo* market where 45 minutes was just too short for the photo ops AND for bargaining for an antique lacquerware betel box. We made a short stop for an overview of *Dhammayangyi* Paya with goats in the foreground. The paya is noted for the quality of construction but unfinished as the king was killed by his son. At nearby *Sulamani Pagoda* Daniel borrowed two novices with umbrellas and we posed them in the west entrance for backlit scenes framed by acacia branches. The red Sa-paper umbrellas catch the light. They hurried off for their last meal of the day and we worked the frescos of the temple. On to Moe Moe’s lacquerware workshop where Daniel explained the labor-intensive process of creating a framework, perhaps of split bamboo and horsetail hairs, the multiple layers of lacquer from an acacia tree then the etching of the design and rubbing in the color—yellow is sulfur, green from magnesium sulfide and red from cinnabar. The foot powered bamboo lathes were fascinating and most created a complete essay on the process before retiring to the showroom where our purchases said “Je sui tinbadye” for the photographs. We packed up and checked out of our hotel then had lunch at BBB Restaurant. From 2-4 at leisure around the hotel pool before catching the evening flight to Yangon. At the Chatrium Hotel again we said our goodbyes to Daniel and our goodbyes to each other during our “farewell Banquet” which was the Sunday night Seafood Extravaganza with every kind of seafood and fish (not to mention steak) cooked to order or from the steam table. Some have midnight flights, others leave in the morning. We were glad to have captured timeless scenes from traditional Burma before the relentless forces of modernization change the landscape and people we have enjoyed so much. Field notes compiled by Donald Lyon from his journal, November 28-December 16, 2013.