



Men & Women of Action

Mongolian

Potato Bin Project

By Milford Whitaker



The Sukhbaatar Mongolian church family was in need of a potato storage bin facility. Due to the minus -40 degree temperatures the structure needed to be underground and covered with at least 6 foot of dirt. The church family had been supplied in the spring with money to purchase seed potatoes but no storage facility was available. They were praying about how they would store their crop. The pastor's 5 year old daughter was in the USA for a birth defect hip surgery. During this time the pastor's wife met a lady



whose 17 year old son was also in the same hospital because of a heart defect from birth. In conversation the pastor's wife expressed their need for a potato storage facility. The young boy started to pray for the people to get their facility. The young boy died and in his remembrance his mother donated the money for the materials.

The Men Women of Action was contacted to see if possibly they could construct the building before freezing weather. Seven men was contacted by MWOA and agreed to go and build a building 12x24x8 feet inside dimension, there also had to be a 6 foot entrance walkway and a 18 foot long by 12 foot high wall to hold the dirt. The roof was to be 6 inches of concrete with steel support. The team consisted of two men from Tennessee, two from North Carolina and three from Michigan. The team members spent about 30 hours one way flying and waiting in airports. After arriving in Ulaanbaatar the Mongolian capital city the team was met by the pastor's wife who interpreted for the team. Miscellaneous building supplies were purchased in this warm (80 degrees) and sunny city and loaded on a truck along with the luggage for shipping to Sukhbaatar.

The team boarded the train for a nine hour ride to Sukhbaatar located very near the Russian border. In the process of boarding the train one team member was robbed of his passport, credit cards and money. The team arrived at 6 a.m. with snow falling and continuing all day, temperature around 30 degrees. The team found their sleeping quarters was going to be in the church, sleeping in sleeping bags on the floor without any heat. There was no hot water and no bathroom facilities; the toilet was only an outhouse with no seat, only a board missing to create an opening. To get to the job location from the church it was about a three quarter mile walk. The plans was to dig the hole and pour the footing the first day, this didn't happen. The old worn out Russian backhoe didn't arrive at 7 a.m. as schedule, but showed up around 10 a.m. The operator didn't know how to use the equipment...but with struggles, a test of faith and prayer the hole was roughed in by dark, but a long ways from being what was needed.



Sunday morning the snow had stopped and it was decided to take the whole church out about 30 miles to where the potatoes were grown. Three vans were made available for the people to make the adventurous trip. The Michigan men had brought three dozen toboggan caps and these were given out before leaving and you would have thought it was Christmas morning with the excitement of receiving these caps. Everyone wanted their picture made with their toboggans. The road was only dirt (or you could say a path) and was very rough with our van getting stuck at least ten times and having to be pushed out, once almost

turning over. Once arriving at the potato field there was three Ger's (A tent like structure) with nomads living in them. There is no direct communication with the outside world, they just live by themselves. Food supplies were taken to make sandwiches for everyone. A church service was held in one of the Ger's and the people received the service very well.



Monday morning was back to work with a different tractor. This was a piece of junk and didn't work, but a better piece of equipment was located and the digging was completed and the footings poured. Mongolian men were hired to work along side with our team. They were a great group of men to work with, very hard workers; the only problem was being able to communicate with them. The weather had changed for a little better and the temperature was in the 40's and the wind wasn't bad. Tuesday started with laying the block and cutting the rebar. A total of 5200 feet of rebar was used to reinforce the walls and roof. All voids inside of the block was filled with cement and rebar. By Tuesday evening it looked almost impossible to complete the building by Friday evening. Work days were from around sun up to sun down, 11 hours or so.

Lunch and evening meals were brought out to the job sight by ladies in the church. The team purchased supplies for the meals. The ladies only had one pot to cook in so both meals everyday turned out to be some type of soup or stew with noodles or rice and bread. Breakfast was bread and jelly we had purchased.



On Friday a big challenge faced the team to be able to complete the job. There were still blocks to be laid, roof formed and six inches of concrete poured and two insulated doors built. The weather wasn't the worst but it could have been much better. The team was to catch the train at 9 p.m. to return to the capital. At about 5 p.m. the last of the concrete was poured and at 6 p.m. the last door was finished, making the job complete. A plaque was given in honor of the young man who died and made this project possible. At 7:30 p.m. the team ate their last meal with the Mongolians and at 8:30 the team left for the train station to return back to the capital.

Thanks must be given to God for travel safety, no injuries or illness during the trip. The potatoes are ready for digging...Smiles are on the Mongolian faces. This was a great project and the joy of the completed potato bin will be shared by many Mongolian friends.

