



**Dr. Derek Conte performs an adjustment at a monastery in Tibet.**

# NINE DAYS IN TIBET

By Dr. Derek Conte

Two months after my mother passed away in December of 2009, I saw an invitation in *The Chiropractic Journal* to join a mission trip to the mysterious and far away land of Tibet. A photo showed a small temple on a hill and two monks, robed in red, nearby. In the background rose the massive, snow-covered slabs of the Himalayas. I was entranced. I never had any desire before to visit such a place, but somehow I was strongly called to go.

I had moved mom in with me in the last year of her life after I took an x-ray that revealed her cancer. It was the hardest thing and the best thing I ever did for another person. It was the best thing I ever did for myself. In the end, I was there for her and she went as bravely as a Viking. I remembered her reading to me in the 1960's from the books of Lobsang Rampa, a Tibetan Lama, which told of his world and religion. Perhaps it was this connection that I was feeling, or maybe some need to break free from my own world and routine that launched my trip, but I knew it was time to look outward again. I left for the unknown on August, 1st and kept my mind and heart free from expectation.

Upon arriving in the capital, Lhasa, I noticed a striking quiet and stillness. The air was fresh, the sky the bluest I've ever seen and, at an altitude of 13,000 feet, the clouds were so close I wanted to touch them. There was a heady, dreamy feeling as we carried our bags to the caravan to begin our journey. The environment in Tibet is extreme: very dry, very sharp, rocky, unforgiving ground that prevents growing of anything other than barley or rice in the areas near the rivers. There are no trees to use for building or fuel because of the altitude, so people build huts out of the plentiful stone and use compressed Yak dung for fires. It was cool in the day and cold at night; the sun so strong, coverings were required. The Tibetan diet is narrow and spare of fruits and vegetables, consisting of noodles and a spicy Yak broth, and a rich tea with tsampa (ground barley), honey and Yak butter (which is pleasant and fortifying). Sheep, goats, cattle and Yak freely graze the mountainsides. The Yak meat is delicious. Tibetans do not eat fish for religious reasons.

In the hinterlands we visited, we would drive off-road as high as we could and then hike for 2 or 3 hours more, up to a village, nunnery or monastery nestled as far as 16,000 feet up in the mountainside. The thin air takes its toll on all. One time, I was at the breaking point, physically and men-

tally, and wondered if I would die up there. I was alone. I stopped, gathered myself, and spread some of my mother's ashes on a stand of beautiful wildflowers and in a stream I discovered, near some monks who invited me to bathe with them. They gave me a colorful string they blessed as a gift, and I continued on.

Tibetans are beautiful people with deeply-lined faces etched by a hard life, and skin made reddish-brown by the unfiltered sun and who smile easily when engaged. They believe it rude to complain, even when hurt or sick. Most have never seen a doctor, dentist or hospital, much less a chiropractor.

In a place like this, a single, well-placed chiropractic adjustment can change a life. One villager I helped was stooped over from a motorcycle accident 10 days before, his face badly bruised, and within a few minutes he was upright and smiling with his family. I adjusted many villagers and monks on several mountains and their gratitude was great, insisting we accept dried Yak meat in a burlap sack as payment. We did not think to refuse.

There were several powerful moments for me, spiritually, when what I witnessed brought me to tears, like hearing the nuns chant and sing, meeting a holy woman whose radiant energy penetrated me and, when on the last day in Tibet, a child broke away from her mother's hand just to run up before me and declare, "Welcome to Tibet!" I wish she could have said that to my mother, too.

*Dr. Conte is preparing a presentation of his journey to Tibet. For info call: 404-784-6008.*



Dr. Derek Conte



Dr. Derek Conte visits with a Tibetan Monk.