



# FRIENDS OF MONGOLIA

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DECEMBER 2000

***Friends of Mongolia (FOM) is an incorporated nonprofit organization conducting operations in both Mongolia and the United States. It is an affiliate of the National Peace Corps Association and its membership includes both Americans and Mongolians. It is organized and operated exclusively for charitable, educational, and developmental purposes. Friends of Mongolia exists to develop partnerships with the people of Mongolia in furtherance of cultural exchange and human development.***

## UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT JUSTICE VISITS MONGOLIA

By G. Ganzorig, FOM Board of Directors



*Justice O'Connor with Justice Ganzorig and Chief Justice Gh. Ganbat*

During my September visit to Mongolia I joined a historic mission to the Supreme Court of Mongolia with US Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.

Justice O'Connor was born in Texas. She has worked as a prosecutor, a State Senator and justice. In 1981 President Ronald Reagan appointed her to the Supreme Court of the US. She was the first woman ever appointed to the Supreme Court and was its 102nd justice.

The US Embassy in Mongolia coordinated her visit and she met the President, high-ranking Parliament and government officials, Supreme Court Justices and local court judges. I assisted the Supreme Court of Mongolia with her visit to the Supreme Court and Tov aimag provincial court. Honorable Gh.

Ganbat, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Mongolia and other Justices received Justice O'Connor at the Supreme Court on the first day of her visit. He gave a brief introduction to the Mongolian judiciary and on going judicial reform. In return, Justice O'Connor briefed us on the federal and state judicial system in the United States.

Her next visit was the Tov aimag court, which is about 50 kilometer from the capital city. She visited a typical rural, trial court and met aimag and soum court judges (both appeal and trail court). It was interesting to see their initial meeting. This meeting was in the soum courthouse, which was in a very old and poorly maintained small building.

When Justice Sandra met Rashzeveg, the Chief Judge of the aimag court, and other local judges, she didn't sit down, instead, she immediately started questioning judges about their court procedure, jury system, case load and so on. Thus began an exceptional, informal and easy discussion and felt like Justice O'Connor was meeting her fellow judges in the States. After some period of time someone realized that all we were standing and waiting for her to sit down, so we asked her if she would like to sit down and continue the discussion, which we did. The talk had a broad range from the judges' salary to providing access to court as a constitutional right. Mongolian judges identified problems facing the local courts, such as the low salary, housing shortage for judges, insufficient court budget for facilitating judges communication and computer equipment, inadequate court houses and transportation for courts. Justice O'Connor responded that proper support from the Government to the judiciary was a necessity and shared her court experience. Realizing the problems associated with transportation to the court, she suggested using video teleconferencing so that a court could conduct a hearing from a distance, instead traveling a long way to a local soum or province. Tov aimag and soum judges

were really excited about the opportunity to meet a Justice of the United States Supreme Court and had a chance to freely discuss with her as their colleague.

On the way back to UB we met a herdsman, who brought his camels close by to the road to show them for us. Justice O'Connor, her husband and other people combined her, were excited to see a two-hump camel that exists only in Mongolia and China.

Justice O'Connor's last meeting was at the Supreme Court with all Supreme Court Justices, Chief Judges of district courts and judges who had been training at the Supreme Court training Center. At this meeting, she emphasized the importance of a strong independent judiciary and freedom of media. It was interesting to listen how she brought up in her discussion as an example, days early her observation in Tov aimag court. Admitting the inadequate budget for the judiciary she said "It was certainly improper to accommodate a court in such an idle house that we saw in Tov aimag. The government must take care of judiciary so that it can have a proper building or house." Justice O'Connor expressing the urgent need for re-training of judges and mentioned her experience in State court. She said that the most inexpensive and simple way of getting training during that time was during lunchtime when one of her fellow judges shared court-hearing practice on the most complicated cases with their colleagues. Responding the question whether the public should supervise the judiciary, Justice O'Connor stated that in order to have freedom (discretion) for ruling in accordance with the constitution and law, a court must be independent from any type of control, including the supervision from the public. Ironically, days later I saw in the newspaper the Action Plan for the Government, which talked about establishing public control over the judges' discipline and ethics; and created a practicing mechanism for the removal, recall, and accountability of judges.

Every meeting was mutually beneficial and provided a rare opportunity for Mongolian judges to express their opinion, and exchange their ideas with the Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. The national TV and press extensively covered Justice O'Connor's visit to Mongolia. Her visit echoed for the Mongolian people and government a call for social justice, human rights and liberty.

## FOM DELIVERS SUSTAINABLE DISASTER RELIEF

By Rick Smith, FOM Co-Coordinator

Last Spring, Friends of Mongolia successfully raised USD \$665.00 for the Zud Disaster. After soliciting ideas from members, the officers decided to invest this money into primary education rather than spend it on food aid, which would not lead to



*Gobi-Ugtaal soum uses a revolving fodder fund to help weather the winter. Photo by B. Uranchimeg.*

sustainable development. The rationale was that rural families who lost their livestock would not be able to afford to send their children to boarding school for the winter. Although Mongolian schools are technically free, they have uniform fees and often require in kind contributions of meat for the dormitories. Bryan Pearson (M10), a graduate of University of Wisconsin-Madison, submitted a proposal to distribute scholarships at this site, Ulziit soum of Ovorkhangai aimag. According to the United Nations System, this is one of the most affected areas. Pearson developed a list of about 20 students from families who have lost significant amounts of livestock. He will pay the school directly for their fees and monitor their grades throughout the year. In the spring our website and next newsletter, will have photos of some of the children supported by FOM.

FOM Co-Coordinator Rick Smith met with Pearson in Ulaanbaatar this past August to discuss the scholarship fund. Smith returned to Mongolia last August for a monitoring and evaluation internship at UNICEF. He was able to see first hand the remaining carcasses litter the roads of Tov aimag on his way to the Middle Gobi, which only had its first rain of the summer on August 7th, much later than normal. "Even my Mongolian hosts remarked about how sour the *airag* was this year," he said.

Although spirits in Dundgobi were up after the recent August rain, local officials in Gobi-Ugtaal soum were concerned about the coming winter. Fortunately, their soum had the fewest percentage of livestock lost compared to other Dundgobi aimags because they organized a revolving fodder fund with Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and UNICEF the previous fall. All soum governors in Mongolia met in Selenge in August to plan winter pasture and fodder exchange for the coming winter.

More information and photos about the impact of weather on Mongolia can be found at our website at <http://zud.friendsofmongolia.org> or the United Nations in Mongolia: <http://www.un-mongolia.mn/news/dmt31aug.html>

## JOIN FRIENDS OF MONGOLIA (FOM)

As a member you can:

- Subscribe to our e-mail listserve
- Join our ecircle
- Continue to receive our newsletter (**from now on, the newsletter will be sent only to members**).
- Vote in officer or board elections and FOM meetings
- Serve on ad hoc committees for scholarships, fundraising, and development projects
- Join the National Peace Corps Association for an additional \$25

\_\_\_\_\_ \$15 individual FOM

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\_\_\_\_\_ \$40 individual joint FOM/NPCA

\_\_\_\_\_ \$55 family joint FOM/NPCA

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to receive future newsletters only by e-mail

\$\_\_\_\_\_ **Additional donation for FOM's general fund**

\$\_\_\_\_\_ **Additional donation for the Scholarship Fund** (for more information visit <http://scholarship.friendsofmongolia.org>)

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Current occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

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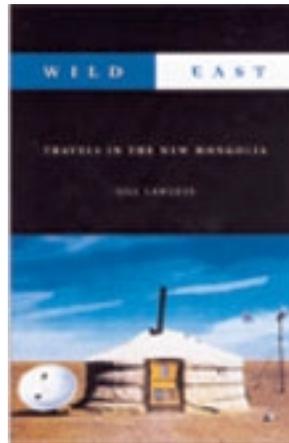
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## BOOK REVIEW: "Wild East: Travels in the New Mongolia"



For most of us, the name Mongolia conjures up exotic images of wild horsemen, endless grasslands, and nomads – a timeless and mysterious land that is also, in many ways, one that time forgot. Under Genghis Khan, the Mongols' empire stretched across Asia and into the heart of Europe. But over the centuries Mongolia disappeared from the world's consciousness, overshadowed and dominated by its huge neighbors.

Jill Lawless arrived in Mongolia in the 1990s to find a country waking from centuries of isolation, at once rediscovering its heritage as a nomadic and Buddhist society and discovering the western world.

The result is a land of fascinating, bewildering contrasts: a vast country where nomadic herders graze their sheep and yaks on the steppe, it also has one of the world's highest literacy levels and a burgeoning high-tech scene. While trendy teenagers rollerblade amid the Soviet apartment blocks of Ulaanbaatar and dance to the latest pop music in nightclubs, and the rich drive Mercedes and surf the Internet, more than half the population still lives in felt tents, scratching out a living in one of the world's harshest landscapes. ECW PRESS, 2000 [www.ecwpress.com](http://www.ecwpress.com) \$19.95 CAN \$16.95 US.

### NEW BOARD MEMBERS

**Douglas Gardner** is the former Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in Mongolia, from Fall 1997 to Summer 2000. He is now working in Kiev with the United Nations.

**O. Oyuntsetseg** currently serves as the Executive Director of the Women's Information and Research Centre in Mongolia. She is a Board Member of the Soros Foundation/Open Society Institute and several other women issue-focused NGO boards.

**Morris Rossabi** is a Professor of Chinese and Mongolian History and has been visiting Mongolia since 1977. Author of *Khubilai Khan, China and Inner Asia*, his latest book, written with his wife Mary, is entitled *Bounty from the Sheep*.

**Judge Joe Spurlock II** is currently Professor and Acting Director of the Asian Judicial Institute at Texas Wesleyan University School of Law. Judge Spurlock visited Mongolia in May 2000 and in June, five Mongolian judges began a 10-day judicial re-training program at Texas Wesleyan University School of Law Asian Judicial Institute.

**L. Tur-Od** currently works as the Programme Officer with the UNDP Governance Programme in Mongolia. Previously, he worked as a Senior Legal Expert with the Mongolian Ministry of Justice. For full bios see [www.friendsofmongolia.org](http://www.friendsofmongolia.org).

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## FRIENDS OF MONGOLIA REUNION 2001

In the true spirit of friendship to one another, kinship to Mongolia, commitment to service, and a downright great excuse for a blow-out party, Friends of Mongolia invites you to our first ever Friends of Mongolia reunion in Washington, D.C., September 20th - 23, 2001. This weekend corresponds with the National Peace Corps Association's national conference, so we'll be in like-minded company with lots of opportunity for socializing, participating in community service projects, and attending workshops with other RPCVs from around the world. Costs will be discounted for Friends of Mongolia members, so join now! We are just in the planning stages now, so please send suggestions for types of activities and events that you would like to participate in and housing suggestions to us at [friendsofmongolia@att.net](mailto:friendsofmongolia@att.net) or P. O. Box 1269, New York, NY 10276. Also please let us know if you would like to help our organizing committee!

## FEBUARY OFFICER ELECTIONS

FOM is accepting nominations for the 2001 Officer election coming up in February. If you are interested in serving as an officer (Coordinator, Communications, Membership or Treasurer) or know someone who does, please send an email to [friendsofmongolia@worldnet.att.net](mailto:friendsofmongolia@worldnet.att.net).

## MONGOLIA - U.S. CAUCUS

*Following is an abridged version of a talk by Ambassador Alphonse F. LaPorta, an FOM Board Member, to the Mongolian-U.S. Parliamentary Group of the Ikh Hural on October 30. Ambassador La Porta departed Ulaanbaatar on November 3 after a three-year tour of duty:*

Because you are familiar with the facts and extent of United State support for Mongolia over the past decade, I would like to sharpen the focus a bit and consider U.S. interests and objectives vis a vis Mongolia. These can be summarized as follows:

1. To help Mongolian political and economic democracy to grow and prosper.

2. To enhance regional stability by encouraging Mongolia to play an active and constructive role in East Asia, for example, through the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and other organizations.
3. To expand U.S. business and investment.
4. To promote the transition of the Mongolian armed forces to a civilian-led democratic system.
5. To extend U.S. humanitarian assistance through U.S. Defense Department programs and private voluntary organizations.

My greatest concerns lie in the economic area. The economic realities today are different today than in 1992-96 when the Revolutionary Party was last in power.

Mongolia's economic has shifted from the public to the private sector (in 1995, 55.5% of the economy was in private hands, while in 1999 over 72% of GDP came from the private sector). The state enterprises must be privatized in order to modernize and to obtain new investment capital and up-to-date management expertise in order to survive.

It is overdue for Mongolia to shift to a true investment-led economic base. Mongolia must also shift its tax policy from being punitive, arbitrary, unfair and discouraging to economic growth and investment. Parliament now has a chance to overcome the disputes and blockages of the past by taking bold action to put Mongolia on a sound growth path. If Parliament does not move forward now, there will be a loss of donor confidence (already there is "donor fatigue").

The role of USAID and other donors is not to dictate but to respond to legitimate requests for assistance in accord with the government's development strategy. The macro-economic fundamentals and international best practices weigh heavily in this equation - that is why agreements with the IMF, World Bank and other donors are so important.

UPDATE: *Since October, the MPRP government approved a fiscal year 2001 budget that accords with IMF guidelines, and discussions with the IMF on a new three-year Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) have resumed. For more information, see [www.friendsofmongolia.org](http://www.friendsofmongolia.org).*

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