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OXOM PROBAX

News & Events of the Assamese People Living Around the World

Volume 34, Issue No. 4 :: January 2006

Promod Swarna Hall Inaugurated in Guwahati

Promod Swarna Hall, lovingly constructed in memory of late Promodlal Barua and Swarnalata Barua by their successful sons, daughters and grandchildren, spread out all around the world, was dedicated to the society in Guwahati on December 13, 2005. The family members who took the lead in the construction of the community hall, located on Lamb Road in Uzanbazar, are Pradip Baruah Guwahati, Molly Bordoloi Jorhat, Elly Bhuyan USA, Polly Saikia USA, Lakhimi Baishya USA, Banshree Borah Guwahati, Olina Barua Guwahati, Reeta Kastner USA and Dilip Barua Guwahati. More than twenty members of the family traveled to Assam from the USA for the inauguration.

The program took place over two days. The

opening ceremony was attended by several dignitaries including Dr. Nabin Chandra Bordoloi, Dr. Nirmal Kr. Choudhury, former vice-chancellor of Gauhati University, Dr. Birendra Nath Dutta ex-President of Axom Xahitya Xobha and Shri Dharendra Nath Bezbaruah, a renowned journalist. Dr. Choudhury praised the sincere effort of the extended family in executing the noble project and expressed hope that the private hall would serve the citizens of Guwahati in multifarious ways. Dr. Dutta said that the presentation of the community hall was not only a show of respect to the departed parents but stood as a sign of social responsibility for which the family is known. Shri Bezbaruah spoke about Barua familys struggle in early years of their lives, and

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how hard work and family unity can help every member of a family achieve his or her goal. It is a lesson for every family everywhere. A souvenir was also released on the occasion by Dr. Dutta.

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The Sons and Daughters of Promodlal and Swarnalata Barua in 2005

UAONA Reports

Help for Assam Flood Victims

I am pleased to inform the readers of Oxom Probox that donations earmarked for Assam Flood Victims that were collected on behalf of UAONA, have been effectively disbursed to Rural Volunteers Center (RVC) at Akajan, Dhemaji District, Assam.

RVC is a highly acclaimed and successful NGO (non-governmental organization, an euphemism for a charitable organization) that has been serving the perennially flood ravaged region of Dhemaji District in north-eastern Assam. Our net donation of \$5,000.00 will be utilized by RVC to provide modest but permanent housing for at least ten currently homeless and landless families who were uprooted from their land and homes by the China landslide dam burst in 2000, that released a 20 feet tall wall of water down the the Brahmaputra River, wiping out a number of indigenous people's villages and severely sand-casting their arable land. The houses will be partially completed with a tin roof, concrete columns, bamboo and mud plastered walls and a concrete floor slab. The interior partitions and other improvements will be installed by the owners with donated bamboo and other materials. Each home will also get a detached, enclosed, semi-sanitary outhouse (latrine) with a lined pit and fiberglass pan with a trap. The homestead parcel of ground will be obtained from the government and could be expected to be about one *katha* (approximately 40'X70') per family. Potable water will come from a community tube-well.

As you can see above, how even a little can

go very far in helping some very unfortunate people. I want to thank you again for your generous donation to a worthy cause.

Donors for Assam Flood Victims

I undertook a fund drive after the devastating floods in July of 2004 put one third of Guwahati under water and left around one million people homeless in Assam. I want to thank those of you in the community who made generous contributions. Chandan Mahanta took this project seriously and worked hard including personally visiting affected areas of Assam on this account to make sure our contributions are properly disbursed. Of this amount \$5,000 was disbursed a short while ago as mentioned above. The following is a list of people that helped fund this project.

- AAPI Charitable Foundation\$2000.00
- AAPI Down State IL.....\$150.00
- Chandan and Banti Mahanta.....\$300.00
- Rajnish and Melinda Bhuyan.....\$250.00
- Sunil and Anjali Apte.....\$100.00
- Luna and Jugma Borah.....\$100.00
- Mr and Mrs Rghunandan Dundo..\$100.00
- Raj and Monorama Mohapatra.....\$100.00
- Ajanta and Rajen Barua.....\$100.00
- Susheela and Ramulo Samudrala....\$100.00
- Mr and Mrs Ravi Shitut\$100.00
- Atindra and Manjulima Barua.....\$50.00
- Rupaleem Bhuyan and Marc Clausen ..\$50.00
- M. Seckom and Anita Singha.....\$50.00
- Reeta and Charles Kastner\$50.00

- Polly Saikia\$50.00
- Amulya Saikia.....\$50.00
- Fred Fisher.....\$50.00
- Patricia Wibbenmeyer\$35.00
- Patricia Kennedy\$25.00
- Jagdish and Vinod Suri\$25.00
- Amy Yoder\$10.00
- Pravu Partab\$10.00
- Elly Barua Bhuyan\$1350.00
- Ashok Mallaya\$50.00

Grand Total.\$5255.00

My Personal Contributions:

The following is a list of my contributions to the community through UAONA. Heartfelt thanks to Arnab Mahanta , treasurer of UAONA for volunteering his time and helping me disburse the collected money.

Contributions For the year 2004:

- Contributed to AAPI Charitable Foundation \$1000.00
- Logos School (Special Care school)\$750.00
- Mahatma Gandhi Center\$500.00
- SEWERAA (South Asian Womens Program against domestic violence)\$500.00
- Heritage House\$500.00
- Nurses for new born\$500.00
- Children Advocacy Group\$500.00

Contributions for year 2005:

- SEWERAA\$1000.00
 - Mohatma Gandhi Center\$1000.00
 - Heritage House\$500.00
 - Promode Lal and Swarnalata Barua Trust\$16000.00
- (This fund was collected in last 5 years)

By Elly Barua, (On behalf of UAONA), St. Louis, MO

... contd. frm page 1

Promod Swarna Hall

The inauguration was followed in the afternoon on discussion on health promotion topics such as diabetes and measures for its prevention, cardio-vascular diseases, depression in the life cycle of women, and coping with osteo-arthritis. The next days program was dedicated to children. About 30 children from nearby Chenikuthi Primary School took part in an art competition, and got lessons in how to take care of their personal hygiene as well as the surrounding environment. They were also told stories with the help of audio visual aid.

The main objective of Pramod Swarna Hall, built at a great cost to the family, is to pro-



mote non-profit activities such as health related programs free vaccine programs, free health seminars, yoga classes for adults as well children. It will also provide a place where classes can be taught to children to improve their creative skills.

By Mahesh Baishya, CA and Jugal Kalita, CO



Photos of 45th Annual Conference of Bodo Sahitya Sabha at Koklabari, Bagsa, Assam held in the 1st week of February 2006.

Photo by UB Photos, Guwahati

Living With Arthritis

My typical day starts at 2:30 or 3:30 AM each day, and sometimes even earlier, regardless of what time I go to bed. This is due to my Osteoarthritis condition in both of my knees. Long hours of idleness, like when sleeping, cause my knee joints to stiffen and start the knee pain. After about 30 to 40 minutes of tossing around in the bed, the pain goes away. Unfortunately, by that time, my alarm clock goes off because it is 4:30 AM, and I must leave home for work at 5:05 AM to start at my office work at 6:30 AM. I asked my doctor whether I should make myself wake up and get out of bed when the knees pain that early. He advised me not to.



Osteoarthritis, also called degenerative joint disease, is the most common type of arthritis prevalent among people. It is associated with a breakdown of cartilage in joints between bones and can occur in almost any joint in the body. Cartilage is a firm, rubbery material that covers the ends of bones in normal joints. Its main function is to reduce friction in the joints and serve as a "shock absorber." Currently, there is no cure for this joint disease; and it can only be maintained to reduce pain with medical help and will power. There is another type of arthritis called Rheumatoid arthritis which affects blood cells, however, I will continue to discuss in my article only Osteoarthritis which is affecting me personally and my struggle with it.

My arthritis started about three and a half years ago. In the beginning, I did not know the cause of this pain in my knees. I consulted two doctors, but they did not prescribe me any medicine or therapy. In my trip to India in January 2003, my knees were getting worse and I began to limp, giving a visual representation of the knee pain I was feeling. In Guwahati, my Sister Duldul in-

roduced me to a weight exercise for the knees. At that time, Duldul had one knee with arthritis and her doctor had prescribed such exercise. That weight exercise did help to some extent: my knee was getting a little more flexible. On the advice and recommendation of a gentleman whom we met at Siliguri Railway Station on our return from Gangtok (he noticed my limping), I went to see an Ayurvedic doctor and started a course of medication. The gentleman's family member had successfully used Ayurvedic treatment to help their joint problems. When I returned to the US, I continued the Ayurvedic treatment, in total for about a year. This was against the advice of my regular physician in the US. Eventually, I discontinued the use of the Ayurvedic treatment as it did not provide much relief and I also came to know that Ayurvedic medicines contained potentially harmful quantities of metallic substances.

Also on returning to the United States, my daughter Jina took me to see a doctor specialized in arthritis. This specialist did a series of tests including blood, knee joint fluid, knee X-Ray, etc. The doctor extracted the joint fluid himself. Looking at the test tube of the joint fluid, he smiled, and told me, "Polly, you do not have Rheumatoid arthritis." Unlike Osteoarthritis, which is primarily wear and tear of a joint or joint injury, rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune disease, meaning the immune system erroneously attacks parts of the body as foreign. Rheumatoid arthritis is considered more debilitating than osteoarthritis, but they are both serious chronic conditions which require immediate and long-lasting treatments.

This specialist prescribed me total body exercise, asked me to loose weight and to not carry heavy bags. When the knee x ray result came, I could see how my bone Cartilage was thinning. I went to see an Orthopedic Surgeon to discuss knee replacement options, which are widely advertised. My entire family, including my husband, and Jina, and others advised me to go for knee replacement, where the surgeon replaces the human knee with a non-organic replacement. I refused to do this. I have met a few persons who replaced their knees but were still in pain. The Surgeon also advised me that with proper exercise and proper food, I could

rebuild my knee joints' supporting muscle, which would help to alleviate knee joint pain.

The doctor also prescribed me a one tablet a day regimen of Vioxx medication (an anti-inflammatory which has since been banned for serious side effects) for pain relief but did not help me at all. In February 2003, I joined the Sport Club, an exercise club, and started water aerobics three times a week and also weight lifting exercises. Between February and April 2003, I went through severe depression. I was like a machine with no emotions. There was a constant pain in my knee. I could not stand for long periods, I could not walk well or sometimes at all, and if I was sitting for a while, the pain started as soon as I got up. My husband and my daughter were always supporting me in those months. I could not read anything, could not do any of my hobbies and had sleepless nights. At the same time, I went to work everyday. I even used a cane for support by that time, to walk around in San Francisco where I work. My daughter Jina taught me to eat more healthily. That and the exercise enabled me to loose 20 pounds. I gave away all of my heavy pocket books and fancy shoes. I felt like I was done with this life.

Exactly after about three months to beginning my exercise program in May 2003, one fine afternoon while coming back from my work, my knee pain went away, and at the same time I was not limping. My knees were flexible again. I was thrilled with joy. I called my husband and Jina to give them the news. I hugged my water aerobics instructor and showed her my walk without limping.

Everyday I get up, take my supplements and get ready for a busy day. One of the supplements I take for my joints is an over-the-counter called Glucosamine Chondroitin Sulfate; which is a biological component of the joint cartilages that is made from animals' joints. It has been shown in studies to relieve joint suffering. I have continued to routinely do my exercise. I do not like to dwell on anything negative anymore. I go to the gym three to four days a week and perform weight lifting exercises at home. I eat well, take vitamins, try to maintain a good physical condition and do the best that I can to live each day to the fullest. I started my hobbies and reading. Once again I got a life.

In the Sport Club, I met several people of all ages with some kinds of ailments and

Contd. to page 5...

Why Some of us 'Enjoy' Hurting Others

I have been thinking about responding to Assam.org recent e-mail.



Somebody is writing nasty anonymous letters attacking several community members in a cruel way. They don't have the courage to write their name. As if it is okay to act out if you are not getting caught. As a psychiatrist I encounter a lot of people who act out in this way and enjoy doing so. We call them having super ego lacuna (or Swiss cheese super ego). They are also short sighted. When ever we act out it always backfires in some ways. If you have a conscience it will get to you or you will get caught eventually.

Today, I just saw an article in one of the Psychiatric Journals "Understanding Joy of Aggression". The article discussed how American people have been shocked and embarrassed by photographs from Abu Grab Military Prison in Iraq. American soldiers were humiliating and abusing Iraqi prisoners. Most remarkable was the joy in Americans faces. This article was published in the July issue of Current Neuroscience News, by Dr. Higgins who has interest in Neuroscience development. He talked about Nucleus Accumben, the pleasure center in our brain. Dopamine is the neurotransmitter that activates it. Substance abuse like, alcohol, marijuana, cocaine and activities like, gambling, bullying others, listening to violent music, pornographic materials, attacking people by writing bad letters, all of these causes a change

in your Dopamine level. Pleasurable feelings is what a person gets from these behaviors or substance abuse produces these feeling. In some cases people can't resist the urges.

This whole situation reminded me of a very disturbed 16 year old male patient. Who came under my care about twelve years ago. He was brought to the hospital by his parents. Both parents were college educated. his older sister was attending an out of state college. The night before he was admitted his parents couldn't go to sleep as he was talking about elaborate plans to kill his parents and lots of other people.

This happened long before Colorado's Columbine incident. But, his thought processes were not far from Jeffrey Dunn's. He would get excited by just listening to music with violent themes or imagining how he could disintegrate in a suicide attempt. His parents were not on his island. He was all alone, separated from others. His self esteem was low. He had a learning disorder. He felt he was abused by other kids. He was just not threatening, these violent thoughts were meaningful to him and he got pleasure out of it. He ended up with an extended stay in the hospital for two weeks.

His parents were very involved in his treatment and co-operated with us fully. All the violent music and movies were removed. With minor stress this patient would regress with paranoid and homicidal ideas. He even had thoughts of killing. So, his progress was slow with relapses in between. After his initial hospitalization he made one se-

rious suicidal attempt. Gradually, though, his parents were on his island (I got a place there too—what a big relief). This patient has not been hospitalized in the last twelve years. He is in remission, taking his medicine regularly. He is far from being cured, but he is living a normal life.

This is an extreme case. However there are some common themes here, to help us understand why people enjoy hurting others. In recent emails among Assamese people most of us are feeling uncomfortable and keeping silent. While we are just human and we all make lots of mistakes in our lives, in this case we need to emphasize that this email attack is socially and personally unacceptable. As a responsible citizen of the community we can't tolerate this behavior.

On another note, who ever is involved in these writings may not realize they are loosing their brain cells. Positive thinking and activities repair your brain cells. My suggestions: By dealing with people honestly, and in real ways makes you humble. Try to get involved in simple pleasures.

These are my thoughts.

By Elly Barua Bhuyan, St. Louis, MO

**Become Member of
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bership of ASA will
help us make
Oxom Probax better**

Saumarjyoti Vidyalaya

The year was 1983, on an evening in Tinsukia a group of people, from different walks of life took a unique pledge to start a private school, on non-profit basis where the medium of instruction would be Assamese! It did raise a few eyebrows among the local population because firstly, Tinsukia, being a major business hub of Assam, nobody could even think that some citizens of the city would be interested in starting a non-profit venture. Secondly, at a time when English medium schools were mushrooming all over Assam and becoming an instant commercial success, why should somebody open an Assamese medium school? However, nothing could hold this group of educationists back. Their sole objective was to provide quality education in Assamese medium so that Assamese kids could get an education while remaining in their own cultural domain.



school a modest beginning, persuading people to teach in the school as a voluntary service and holding classes in the morning hours in the premises of other schools in Tinsukia. In a few years, words about the school had spread and the school had to open Middle English and High School sections. It was rechristened as Saumarjyoti Vidyalaya. On a government allotted piece of land the first building of the school came up in 1989. The money for the construction came primarily from donations to the school by philanthropists in the city and some business firms. In 1995 the first batch of 6 students completed the High School Leaving Certificate. One of them, Chiranjib Dutta, secured the first position all over Assam whereas four others passed with first division.

Until now over 300 students have completed the High School Leaving Certificate from Saumarjyoti Vidyalaya and the overall success rate of the last 10 years is 98%. The school which started in 1983 with 6 students now provides education to 1500 students. There is a teaching staff of 36 teachers, who are appointed with the commitment that they would consider teaching in this school as a service, not as a profession. The school collects 70 rupees per month as tuition fee; however they charge a modest construction fee of 500 rupees from the parents towards the school construction fund. Children, whose parents cannot afford admission and tuition fee, are given tuition and fee waiver. Presently the school has a compound with 26 classrooms, a library and

a computer room with 8 computers for students' use. Many books in the library were donated by the parents



of the students on the students' birthday. The school administration appealed to the parents and guardians that rather than distributing candies, they donate a book to the school library on the students' birthday!

In 2008 Saumarjyoti Vidyalaya is completing its 25th year of establishment and the school is still imparting quality education in Assamese medium tirelessly. Mridula Chaliha Sarma, principal and one of the founders of the school expresses her philosophy: "... I have no idea how to pray or how to practice a religion, I try to make a bunch of children Human Beings and I think that's where my religion begins and ends..."

We hope Saumarjyoti continues to be the eastern light and makes, not necessarily doctors or engineers, but human beings out of our children.

By Priyankoo Sharma, Florida

... contd. from page 3

have become friends. We all help each other deal with our situations. I rush back home from San Francisco on Tuesdays and Thursdays to attend the water aerobics classes at the Sport Club. The exercises in the class are performed in water about 4 and 1/2 feet deep and are best for the relief of arthritis pain management. One hour of exercises includes jogging, jumping, running, weight lifting, etc.; all in water to reduce pressure and strain on joints.

I still have limitation in my mobility. In San Francisco, I take underground trains and there are escalators and stairs to get up to the street level. Before 3 and 1/2 years, I never took the escalators. Now I always look for running escalators. Sometimes, none of the escalators work and in that case, I climb up or down the stairways slowly by holding the hand rails. Climbing down is rather difficult for me. Part of my duty at work is construction site visiting, requiring climbing ladders and stairs.

About three months ago while climbing down stairs from a fifteen storey building; I barely escaped a fall due to my unsteady knee condition. I requested the management in my company to exclude me from field site visits and I was refused. I immediately resigned from that company and applied to another company. In this company I told management upfront that I have limitations due to my knees to go to site visits and they agreed to the condition. It is always wise to let the management know your limitations. I could have taken my previous employer to Court for refusing my request, but somehow I am still in this industry and did not want to go through the hassle and be entangled in a Court case.

Presently, I am not taking any other medication except Glucosamine and Calcium with Vitamin D. I have noticed that as long as I am keeping my weekly exercise and am free from tension in the family my knees are ok. There are still instances for some strange reasons I

do not get sleep entire night and in the morning while walking in the street my knees get stiff. When I called my doctor, she said this is due to some tension and stress, which are powerful regulators of inflammation in the body. In such cases, I stop wherever I am and try to do some movements. It is very scary. I have discussed this with my husband and together we are working to reduce tension.

I may not be able to make arthritis pain totally go away or do everything that I used to do before, but I don't have to dwell on those facts. I make the most of what I can do, which includes fully utilizing the medical therapies available to me, leading a joint-healthy lifestyle, and maintaining a positive attitude toward life.

By Polly Saikia, California

Saving Grace

- a rare visitor to London



It was a cold grey winter morning in London last Friday and commuters were looking forward to the weekend away from work and into their warm cosy homes. Like many, a commuter walking over the Waterloo Bridge saw something which compelled him to call the BBC. "Hello, eeh.. this might sound a little strange and I m not sure if I am hallucinated but I.. I think I have just spotted a whale going up the Thames.

Soon news spread and emails and SMS were floating around about this new exciting creature whizzing around in Central London. One interesting message said- Has he tried the Motorway (M4). He could see a lot more Wales on the other side (as in England and Wales). Another SMS to a friend who live by the Thames said- Stop feeding your goldfish. There is a whale right outside your window. The curiosity of some onlookers turned into comic suspicion that it might be Bin Laden's submarine disguised as a whale inside which little frog terrorist must be hidden to destroy the west.

Now compared to our mighty Brahmaputra, Thames looks like a "naala" (no offence). The more you travel towards central London the narrower it gets and hell, is it a busy river with tourist boats, private jetties and police boats operating 24/7 and spotting a whale there- nah...you must be joking! My other half called Guwahati and in good humour told my mother-in-law- Maa, they spotted a whale in the Thames and at the moment it's near the Houses of Parliament. Perhaps it has come to give a petition to Tony Blair on global warming. Latest news reports identified that it was a 19ft adolescent female, bottle-

nosed whale and is usually found in the North Atlantic Ocean. An adult whale can grow up to the length of a traditional London bus. Despite the poor creature getting all the unnecessary attention, this has actually turned out to be a good educational trip for us. How many members of the public knew that we had an animal like this living in waters just to the west of the UK? The sight of a disorientated cetacean on their doorstep may be a novelty for Londoners, but globally there is nothing unusual about this phenomenon. But the mammal was terrified as the mob were chasing it (in all good faith) to take it back to the sea. An environmental science student from Kings College London tried to slash water at it and said "Come on girl, you don't want to die here. Throughout the day, it captured the attention of thousands of people who flocked to the river banks but all efforts failed. It has already beached twice, and since darkness fell, rescuers had been unable to track its progress. Around 6 pm, it suddenly went past the Thames barrier and people thought, freedom at last but the mammal still lost on her own, spend the rest of the evening under the Albert Bridge.

By Saturday, the mega rescue operation

begun to get her back to where she belonged. Hundreds of Londoners and millions of people all over the world were watching the rescue operation live on BBC 24 and Sky news. I was one among them. Like many, my husband didn't move an inch from the television for the rest of the day. Are you crazy- this is "Free Willy" and "Finding Nimo" combined together and that too in our own environment- he said. His calls to Guwahati didn't end too. I even overheard him telling a friend back home- aieera poonati, aji aietu case amaar tat hobo lagisil, uzanbazar ghaatot, blackot bikri hol heten!

London has seen it happen too. Back in the 17th century thousands of whales were killed simply to extract



their oil for lighting. Barrels of whale oil were placed around the streets and lit each night and London even won a reputation of being one of the best lit cities in Europe. It is the first time a bottle-neck whale has been seen in the Thames since records began in 1913 but this time the aim was to save, not slaughter but the rescue wasn't going to be easy. It is a long journey from Thames in central London to The North Atlantic. Should they hire an army helicopter and lift her out? That might be risky. Will it survive till it reaches safe waters? How do you handle a 19ft 8 ton mammal hanging lose in swallow waters. There are questions of high and low tides. Worst situation, should it be put to sleep? And of all the questions, how did it get so far from the sea? Bottlenose whales usually travel in family pods and the young ones are dependent on their mother. Was she separated from her family and got confused and swam up the Thames instead?

By noon, helicopters flew in; vets, marine biologists and rescue team members in their wetsuits soothed the whale by stroking its hulk and keeping its grey skin splashed with water. Blood samples were taken and it was whisked away for analysis. Divers and volunteers waded in, talking reassuringly to the whale while manoeuvring inflatable bags around it. Then it was guided between two small motorboats and towed downstream to a bigger vessel. It was then hoisted aboard by crane, laid on a large inflatable dinghy acting as a hospital bed and covered with damp blankets. Whales can survive out of water for a while provided its body is kept moist. Thus the procession began. It crossed the London Bridge, Tower Bridge and then Greenwich. All along thousands of spectators rushed from one side of the bridge to the other to get a glimpse of the mammal. London came to a standstill. One of the rescue workers on the boat said – You are looking at a creature that big right up next to your eye and it's looking back at you, you wonder what it thinks. Does it know the effort that everyone's making for it? There is a very deep affinity be-



tween humans and whales because they are one of the very few animals that can imitate – a rare quality in the animal world.

Meanwhile the crowd was getting emotional, some mentioned that it was inspirational and others were bursting into tears seeing the creature live. I mean you go to sea world and you are mentally prepared to witness similar creatures but watching her live in your surroundings was just another experi-



ence. Everybody including my husband was sincerely praying for her survival. A sense of togetherness and bonding engulfed all Londoners for those few hours.

During this whole drama, the whale was

thought to be conscious. Whales need to be awake to breathe and scientist believes that only half of their brain sleeps at a time. But she was exhausted and rapidly became disorientated and distressed, and sadly after about seven-hour since the rescue operation began, as they reached Gravesend in Kent, she passed away, after suffering convulsions.

Mark Stevens, a member of the team said: We turned the lights off on the boat as a mark of respect when she died. There were tears everywhere. Big hairy men crying like sissies.

Post-mortem findings confirmed that the echo response areas of her brain were damaged; causing the animal to become distracted, hence she was disoriented. Decision has been made to give the body to the Natural History Museum after all the tests were complete and it will clean the bones and preserve them for scientific research.

The whale captured the imagination of the British public - and of people all over the world - and now her legacy will live on," said one of the museum's zoologists. Animal lovers voiced fears that it may have become confused by noise from boats on the busy Thames.

I was personally touched to see something with immense grace and dignity in such close proximities that it was truly an unbelievable experience of a life time. It was not the first whale to lose its way and its life in an unfamiliar territory, and it might not be the last.

Being trapped in London accidentally for more than two days, she acquired various names from the public- Willy, Wally, and Celebrity Big Blubber but to me, I shall simply call her GRACE.

I would like to thank the BBC, Sky News and The Times newspaper for their help in contributing to the research for this article.

By Sanchayita Sharma, London

This is an
Official Publication of
Assam Society of America, USA



The ASA Newsletter is published monthly. Sanjib Bhuyan, NJ, on behalf of Assam Society of America, has published this issue of ASA newsletter. The **Editors** are Satyam Bhuyan (Ames, Iowa), Ganesh Bora (Lake Alfred, Florida), Prasenjit Chetia (Atlanta, Georgia), Babul Gogoi (New Delhi, India), Jugal Kalita (Colorado Springs, Colorado, Co-Editor-In-Chief), Vavani Sarmah (Secane, Pennsylvania), Rini Kakati (London, UK), Umesh Sharma (Cambridge, Massachusetts), Alpana Sarangapani (Co-Editor-In-Chief, Houston, Texas), Nandini Bora Das (Centennial, Colorado) and Ram Sarangapani (Houston, Texas). The **ASA Executive Committee** is composed of Sanjib Bhuyan, President (Franklin Park, New Jersey), Utpal Brahma, Vice President (Burlington, New Jersey), Ganesh Bora, General Secretary (Lake Alfred, Florida), Probal Tabhildar (Kendall Park, New Jersey), Mantu Baishya (Omaha, Nebraska), Kedar Bhuyan (Mays Landing, New Jersey), and Sangeeta Duorah (California). **Graphic Design and Layout:** Babul Gogoi.

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