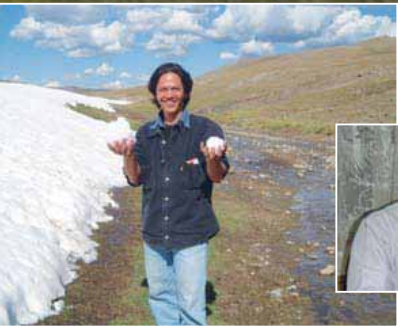
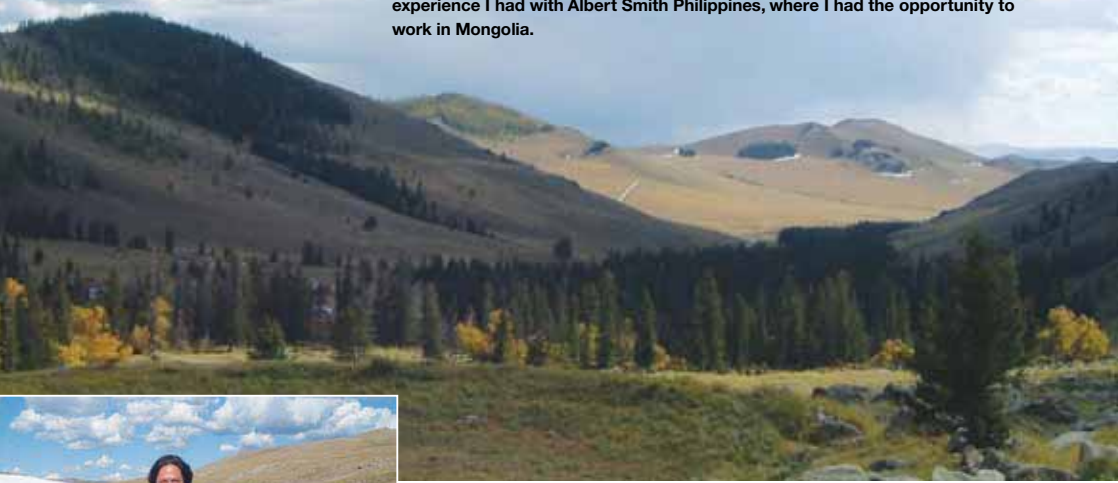


Memories of Mongolia

Recently I received an email from my friend in Mongolia, Mr. P Bayer, G.M. of Monnis International's vehicle division, which reminded me of the wonderful experience I had with Albert Smith Philippines, where I had the opportunity to work in Mongolia.



Mr P Bayer

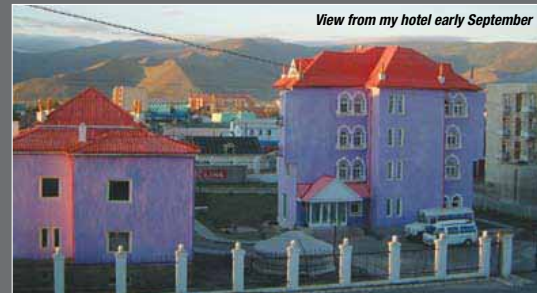
Monnis International, is the official distributor for Nissan Motor Co. Ltd. in Mongolia, Mr P Bayer was writing to tell me that their new Nissan dealership showroom and service center was officially inaugurated on the 8th September 2006. This prestigious event was attended by dignitaries such as; S.Batbold, Head of the Cabinet Secretariat of the Mongolian Government; Mr. Sasaki, a representative of the Nissan Motors Corporation; H.Maekawa, the First Secretary of the Japanese Embassy in Mongolia; B.Jargsaikhon, Vice President of the Monnis Group; and B.Chuluunbaatar, Director General of the Monnis Properties Company.

Albert Smith Philippines as regional supplier for Nissan's RVI programme in South East Asia was asked if we could supply and install the new image to Mongolia's first ever Nissan showroom. Our scope included the supply of all the Alucobond (ACM / aluminum composite material) cladding for the building, all external signage and internal signage and furniture for the showroom. Planning and preparation started in early 2005 in close consultation with the architect, the team from Monnis International Mongolia and Nissan's Project Consultants from Turner and Townsend.

All products were manufactured and assembled in our Philippine plant, undergoing a thorough QA check, knocked down, then packed ready for shipping. By early June, five (5) x forty-foot hi-cube containers were well on their way from the Philippines to Ulaanbaatar Mongolia. By early September so was I.



Traveling via Seoul Korea I arrived in Ulaanbaatar on September the 8th to mild weather, a mere 14 degrees Celcius compared to the Philippines 32 degrees Celsius. Mr. P Bayer kindly greeted me at the airport and took me to the Edelweiss Hotel, which was to be my home for the next 10 weeks. Work commenced the next day, and throughout the months that followed the temperature continued to drop, right down to zero degrees with intermittent snowfall. As a Filipino used to consistent warm weather, working long hours outdoors in Mongolia, I can honestly say it was the most difficult task I have handled for Albert Smith, but without hesitation the most rewarding both professionally and personally.



View from my hotel early September



The cold weather starts late October

Mongolia was fascinating, I really enjoyed experiencing their culture and felt privileged to spend my free time sight seeing and socializing with the locals. Mr P. Bayar and the Monnis team showed me wonderful hospitality and friendship for which I will always be grateful.

I went to the wrestling, which is held in the Central Wrestling Palace. Wrestling is the most popular of all Mongolian sports. There are no weight categories or age limits. The wrestler wears a special costume consisting of a loin cloth, a pair of sleeves which meet across the back of the shoulders and a pair of big heavy boots known as gutuls. Before the match starts the wrestlers leap and dance flapping their arms imitating an eagle. To win the match you must knock your opponent off balance throwing him down making him touch the ground with his elbow and knee.

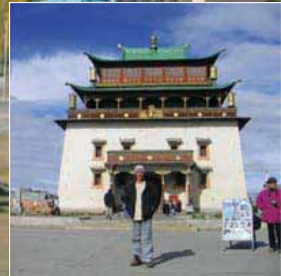


Some notable sites in and around the Capital Ulaanbaatar I visited were Sukhbaatar Square, located in the heart of the city, named after the famous patriot Sukhbaatar. Gandan Monastery which is the largest and most significant Buddhist monastery in Mongolia is the home of the Migjid Janraisig Temple. This beautiful temple houses a 26 meter high, 20 ton, jewel decorated, statue of Migjid Janraisig. Unfortunately no photos can be taken of this amazing statue.

Outside town are the ruins of the Manzushir Monastery located in most picturesque Mt. Bogd National Park. The communists destroyed the monastery in 1937, during a country wide political religious purge. A new temple acts as a museum on the site showing original remains of the old monastery. Zaisan Hill just in front of the city offers the best view of Ulaanbaatar its surrounds.



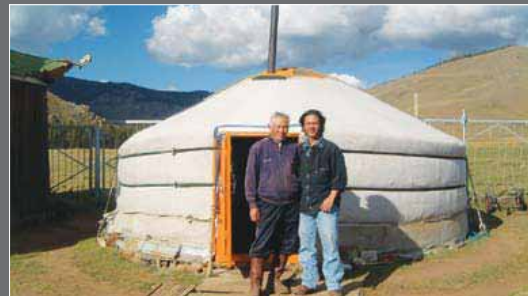
Manzushir Monastery – Mt. Bogd National Park



Migjid Janraisig temple part of the Gandan monastery



Many memorable evenings were spent with my new Mongolian friends, enjoying great food and the ever-present vodka, (considering the climate I'm not surprised) and warm hospitality. Though to my embarrassment, and in front of my new friends, a beautiful lady beat me in an arm wrestling competition. Will I ever live this down?



Most people in the countryside still live in the traditional Nomad style, in dwellings called Ger's. The Ger is a round, wooden framed felt tent covered in white canvas, which is totally collapsible and transportable. There are several insulating layers of felt, covering the wooden framework, while the outer canvas protects the felt from rain and snow. The door is always positioned on the southern side to face the sunrise, and to keep out the harsh northern winds. The central area that houses the stove is the most respected part of the ger. In true Mongolian tradition, I enjoyed partaking in a couple of shots of Vodka with my host when visiting one of these traditional homes.



After 10 weeks of learning, gaining new experience, meeting and making new friends, I am back to my life in Manila. Now I go back to Mongolia in thought, fondly remembering my experience of a lifetime.

Ronwaldo Osorio – Albert Smith Philippines