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FUNNY MAN
 "One on One's"
 Flex Alexander
 comes to the
 Impov. Page D3

COMING FRIDAY
 Colin Farrell defies
 expectations in "A
 Home at the End of
 the World."

AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS

ALTA LOMA WOMAN'S DISEASE SENDS ADVENTURERS ON DRIVE TO RAISE FUNDS

One of the team's Land Rover Discovery expedition vehicles splashes through the orange mud of Australia's Gun Barrel Highway.

Photos courtesy of Neil O'Leary

By La Rue Novick | Staff Writer

NICK BAGGARLY felt helpless the day he learned his sister had been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. But he used his great sense of adventure to devise a plan that would take him and seven others around the world in one year — all while raising funds to help find a cure for his sister. The plan took two years to develop. And even in that time, he couldn't possibly prepare for every detail of the incredible journey that crosses four continents and 34 countries.

"I always say that if you plan for all the details, you'd never leave the house," Baggarly, 35, who grew up in the Inland Valley before moving to Silicon Valley during the dot-com boom, said by phone from Bangkok. "You'd be in the driveway forever."

Nick and his wife, Chanda Baggarly, of Los Gatos met while working for the same anti-virus software company and soon discovered they shared a passion for adventure. They drove around the world once before on what they called the LATITUDE expedition in 1999. In three months, they journeyed east to west from China to Europe and then from New York to California.

Just as they returned from that expedition, they heard about Nick's sister, Jackie Farrar of Alta Loma. Chanda, 33, had the idea of raising money for Parkinson's research on a new expedition, only this time they would travel the world north to south.

On Nov. 1, the team — composed of San Francisco Bay area professionals with several years of traveling experience — set off on the new LONGITUDE expedition from the Parkinson's Institute in Sunnyvale, Calif. They traveled down Mexico and into South America where they crossed the Andes Mountains. They reached the southernmost city of Argentina and drove until they could drive no farther.



The LONGITUDE Expedition camps at one of the most beautiful sites of the journey, Torres Del Paine National Park in Patagonia.

"It was interesting to see what the bottom of the road at the end of the world looks like," Nick said.

The adventurers and their four certified, pre-owned 2003 Land Rover Discovery vehicles, which were donated for the cause, were then shipped by boat to Australia.

The team drove on red dirt roads through the Outback and farther north on one of the most remote highways in the world, the Gun Barrel Highway. Along the way, they dived the Great Barrier Reef, met aborigines, stopped at an Aussie rodeo and climbed Uluru. The long trek on the lonely highway was actually a major highlight of the expedition.

"It provided us with the sense of isolation, adventure and excitement that we all crave so dearly," Nick said.

"For four days, it was nothing but the eight of us, four certified Land Rovers and Australia's camels, dingos and kangaroos."

After Australia, they shipped everything to Singapore and on May 23, they began their journey through Asia. The team is now driving through Laos, headed for

See EXPEDITION | page D2



Nick and Chanda Baggarly stopped at the ancient Iranian city of Bam in 1999 during their LATITUDE expedition.



These Two Staff Photographers Jackie Farrar of Alta Loma purchased a globe to follow her brother's journey around the world.

The team is now driving through China, headed for India. In major cities, they have to sleep in hostels or hotels. But in the wild, they bunk down in cozy tents.

When asked if they've ever been road weary, Nick said, "All the time, but it's easy to stay focused when you're passionate about something."

The eight adventurers dedicated a year of their lives to the cause and spent \$10,000 of their own money to travel around the world. Sixty company sponsors, such as Land Rover Certified, BFGoodrich, Mobil 1, Red Bull (they group has consumed about 700 cans since they left California; it keeps them awake, Nick said), Panasonic and K&N air filters, help offset costs of communication and travel. All this is so that 100 percent of funds raised can go to directly to the Parkinson's Institute, a research facility and clinic for Parkinson's and other neurological disorders.

"We are just so thrilled and have nothing but the most compassion and support for what these folks are doing out there," said Donna Wick, director of development for the Parkinson's Institute. "They really are nothing short of heroic."

A donation of at least \$10 -- made online at www.drivearoundtheworld.com -- enters the giver into a raffle to win a brand new, fully outfitted Land Rover. Pledges are made per-kilometer (the entire trip is approximately 50,000 km).

Nick said they are on a mission not only to raise money for a cause, but to inspire anyone who's been touched by Parkinson's or by cancer, AIDS or anything devastating, to get up and do something about it.

"Use what you know how to do. Use what you love to do -- in our case it's travel -- to make a difference," Nick said.

The Baggarlys established Drive Around the World as a nonprofit organization in 2002 because they plan to do more projects like the one for Nick's sister.

The team is not only passionate about raising money for Parkinson's research, but to educate students about various cultures and countries. Nick added the education component to Drive Around the World's projects so his team could interact with schools. Students can follow the expedition and e-mail questions to the team along the way. The team's Web site is full of information about different cultures, religions, foods, traveling and camping.

Their trip has been very successful thus far and that's in large part due to Chanda, also the team's field research reporter, Nick said. It is her job to know what the team should expect before entering new territory. She must know the laws, customs and potential dangers.

For example, she must know that a global positioning system (GPS) will immediately be confiscated if brought into Russia, she said.

"There is an enormous amount of information that has to be understood ... so that we are proactive rather than reacting to situations that arise," Chanda said in a recent e-mail.

This falls in line with one of the team's major principles: "Be knowledgeable." The other two are "Be respectful" and "Be curious."

The last principle helps with the educational aspect of the Drive Around the World project. Teammates seek answers to students' questions. That sometimes means one of them must interview a Buddhist monk, learn how to cook Thai food or try some really outrageous delicacies. Nick said he has eaten kangaroo in Australia, guinea pig in Peru and maggots, grasshoppers and crickets in Thailand.

"The maggots tasted like cashews and the grasshoppers --well, they're deep fried. And that's OK. I can eat anything as long as it's deep fried and I've got some sauce to dip it in. But the crickets didn't taste very good. I don't recommend them," he said.

Strange edibles aside, the crew has witnessed amazing sites and had great fun together. But they have to be careful, too.

The team chose not to drive through Colombia because it was just too dangerous. They try not to drive at night and keep expensive equipment out of sight at borders and crowded areas. They trust no one, Nick said.

In Thailand, they worked very hard to find the perfect camping and off-roading spot. But the location they chose suddenly became off-limits during the night when black-clothed vigilantes chased them away with their shiny, black guns.

That story, along with countless others, is available on the team's Web site by clicking on and viewing various journal entries.

Nick's sister Jackie Farrar, 38, who lives with her husband and their four children, said they read the entries regularly and they follow the team's journey on a globe they purchased just before her brother left. She said what Nick and the team are doing is simply mind boggling.

"I was just overwhelmed that anyone would do that for me," Farrar said.

Nick is the fifth of eight children born to Harriet and Brad Baggarly of Upland. Farrar is the fourth.

"I used to dress him up when he was little and torment him, and here he's paying me back with all this kindness. I feel unbelievably privileged and blessed and I pray every day for the team," she said.

Farrar's condition is slowly but steadily worsening. She recently had to quit her job of more than 20 years at Chick's Sporting Goods, where she met her husband, Steve Farrar, 40. Her hands shake almost all the time. She experiences a lot of stiffness and her mind is a bit slower, she said. She's also lost inflection in her voice, making her more monotone, and the volume of her voice is lower.

But she keeps a good attitude and uses humor to cope and to help those around her feel less troubled.

"I try to be positive and laugh about things, more than just 'Woe is me,'" she said. "So, I'll say things like, 'I should be the next Bobble-head spokesmodel.' "

Nick said it tears him apart to see his sister going through this, but he feels empowered to be doing something about it.

"I'll tell you, I certainly don't feel helpless anymore," he said.

The Drive Around the World team faces plenty of challenges in the next few months. The adventurers will leave China en route to India where they will have to be escorted through Manipur state because of a nearby civil war. Then they'll travel along the Ganges River where natives live, bathe and burn their dead, Nick said. The team will split in India, with two Land Rovers headed to see the Taj Mahal and the others to see the "City of Pink" in Jaipur.

When they meet again in Delhi, they'll journey back into China and go north across the Takla Makan desert, which translates to "those who enter, do not leave." They will continue north into Siberia, Russia. The weather could be severe. Or they could get lucky. Then they'll drive Russia's notorious "Road of Bones" before getting shipped to Kamchatka. They'll finish driving the Kamchatka Peninsula and then ship to Alaska.

At last they will begin the homeward stretch through Canada back to California. If all goes well, they should be home in late October.

"We all pray," Nick's mother said, choking back tears. "We all pray for his safe return."

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