



# Up on the 'Rooftop of the World'

Tibet hit Forest McMullin like a bolt out of the blue.

The invitation to participate in "Tibet in Eyes of 100 Photographers" came as a complete surprise, says McMullin '77 (photo illustration). He learned that he had been recommended by the American Society of Media Photographers to take part in a unique project organized by the State Council Information Office, China

Photographers Association and Tibet Autonomous Region Information Office.

The offer was exciting, but he had only a few weeks to rearrange his business – he operates Forest McMullin Photography in Rochester – and personal commitments. Going meant that he would miss several

important family events.

Tibet ultimately proved irresistible, and on June 24, 2005, McMullin was on his way to join 50 photographers from 22 countries and 50 photographers from China. After two days of orientation in Beijing, they headed for Lhasa, capital of Tibet. Divided into four groups of 25, the photographers traveled the region for 10 days, reaching some extremely remote areas.

"The organizers took us to some specific places," says McMullin, "but much of the time we were free to roam. We weren't allowed to photograph anything related to the military, but otherwise we could shoot whatever we wanted."

McMullin discovered Tibetans to be "sweet, kind, engaging people" who were quite willing to be photographed – and thrilled to see themselves on the display of his digital camera. He visited monasteries and schools, met farmers and pilgrims, hiked steep mountain paths, drank yak butter tea and heard the flutter of prayer flags.

At the conclusion of the trip, an exhibit of 1,000 photos from all of the participants went on display in Beijing. Smaller exhibits

will travel to Chinese embassies around the world. McMullin captured 4,000 images, a selection of which can be viewed at <http://mcmullinphoto.com/gallery/tibetstories/> and at [www.worldpicturenews.com/web/IndexPageLightbox.aspx?lightbox=tibet](http://www.worldpicturenews.com/web/IndexPageLightbox.aspx?lightbox=tibet).

"As a photographer, what struck me first was the quality of light," says McMullin. But the experience took on deeper significance through his encounters with the people, the land and the culture. He's hoping to return.

"In retrospect, I realize I was actually scouting story ideas. Now I have a list of stories I want to tell. I would love for this to be the first of many trips I take to Tibet."



For more information about McMullin's work, visit [www.mcmullinphoto.com](http://www.mcmullinphoto.com).

**Below: Three monks hurry to noontime devotions at the Drepung Monastery. Opposite page: Prayer flags flutter in the breeze throughout Tibet.**

