

Visit

FROM/1-B

They have no savings. Their rented, one-room stone cottage has no running water or indoor plumbing but has the largest sycamore tree in Ohio in the forest out back.

"Priorities, I guess," Sugden explains. "If we were in town, paying rent and all the normal stuff, no way could we afford to do the trips."

The last trip to Tibet cost \$80,000. Elchert and Sugden planned to live in the cottage, near Arlington, O., south of Findlay, for only three months. The joke is that, for eight years now, all they've ever wanted was another three months here.

"A lot of our friends with money stop up," Sugden said. "They say, 'Boy, we really envy you that you can live like this.' In the same breath they add, 'But I'd be damned if I'd live like this.'"

Sage, basil, oregano and other herbs hang on the cottage walls, drying. Homemade lentil soup bubbles on the stove, providing food and a cozy aroma.

"The inconvenience here never struck me as inconvenience," said Elchert, who grew up on a pig farm in New Reigel, O. "I was used to stacking and hauling wood. I love gardening, and you need the ground to do that."

But she admits to pining for a bathtub.

Buddhist monks think Sugden and Elchert are lucky to live here, too.

Nine of them once came to the cottage to bless it, hurling rice in the air as if they were at a wedding. They blessed a prayer wheel, a snail, photographs.

Their very existence seems surreal.

"There is no physical explanation for it," Elchert said of the path she and Sugden have taken together. "I remember as a child just loving hills. But I never thought as a farm girl in New Reigel that I would ever be hiking the mountains of Tibet."

Both recently were accepted into the Explorers' Club, an organization whose honorary president is Sir Edmund Hillary and whose honorary directors include Sen. John Glenn, Thor Heyerdahl and Richard

If you dallied, it's too late: tickets all gone

FINDLAY (AP) — University of Findlay officials say they are out of free tickets for a speech to be given Thursday by the Dalai Lama of Tibet.

Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet, will speak on "Compassion and Leadership" as part of the University's Leadership Day.

The visit comes in the midst of "International Year of Tibet" activities that are scheduled around the world.

All 3,400 tickets for the speech have been taken for almost a month.

In addition to his visit to the United States, the Dalai Lama will appear before the U.S. Senate and House in mid-April.

E. Leakey.

Elchert is organizing a tree nursery project in eastern Tibet to replenish deforested areas of China's western provinces. But she worries the Chinese will deny their requests for visas to tour again.

"They are beginning to understand tourists are very dangerous people," she said. "Tourists tell stories. They mail postcards. They show their pictures."

Elchert and Sugden watched the Chinese army crush a demonstration of holy men who were protesting the imprisonment of nuns in 1988. Bullets were fired over the crowd and everyone scrambled in panic, Sugden said.

As Sugden sketched the golden rooftops of Potala Palace, the home of the Dalai Lama until 1959, when he fled the Chinese invasion, a Tibetan woman eyed him with suspicion.

She was looking for a messenger.

At the palace, the holy man's doorstep, the conflict between invader and invaded is still strongly felt. This is holy land for Tibetans, a

threat for occupying Chinese militia who walk the grounds in plain clothes.

Western tourists like Sugden say the Chinese have become very handy with surveillance equipment there, eavesdropping on Tibetan pilgrims who try to share their plight with the visitors.

Most of the Tibetans and all of the Chinese ask tourists, "From what country do you come?"

Sugden told the Chinese soldiers that he was a New Zealander.

But when the pilgrim, a Tibetan woman, asked in English, "What country?" Sugden answered, "America."

She smiled.

"She sat next to me for 10 minutes, a long, dangerous time for pilgrims," Sugden said. "She looked like she was straight off the plateau, big heavy sheepskin coat. Many pilgrims and Chinese walked by. Then, when the passageways in the palace were clear of people and no one seemed to be looking, quite suddenly she jammed a small folded letter deep into my pocket."

He believed it was simply another piece of mail to be delivered outside the country because the Chinese do not allow mail service from Tibetans.

Sugden gave the woman a thumbs-up, a sign that meant he would carry her letter out of Tibet. She nodded.

Later in Kathmandu, he discovered the true message of the letter, which was written in beautiful, long Tibetan script and folded into a one-inch square.

It was a letter about the human rights abuses in eastern Tibet, which is closed to Westerners.

The Dalai Lama's representative in Kathmandu told Sugden the letter was to be delivered to the secretary-general of the United Nations in New York.

"This person who gave this to you, if she was caught, this person would have been shot. It's just that simple," the representative told Sugden.

The letter pleaded:

"In our suffering, we place our hope on His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who, we hope, will deliver us from our long period of suffering. We appeal to the United Nations to take an immediate step for the restoration of our independence

based on truth, justice and history, and to enable His Holiness the Dalai Lama to return to Tibet. Just as many nations have gained their independence in the light of truth and justice, we hope the United Nations will help in the restoration of Tibet's independence, too."

It was delivered and later read to the General Assembly of the United Nations on International Human Rights Day.

The Dalai Lama may deliver a similar plea in Ohio on Thursday.