

Kampuchea House (Australia) Inc.  
A home for Cambodian orphans and deserted children



Kampuchea House

# Newsletter

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## Big Cambodian Bike Ride

by Belinda Lightfoot

We were getting up at 5am each day and going to the local markets to buy fruit for the day before all the main stalls had opened, and driving around strange towns looking for the guy who sells the huge blocks of ice; we watched him cut them into smaller blocks with a giant toothed saw, then smash the smaller blocks with a mallet for the crushed ice. We made the mistake of parking outside the fish market early in the morning – the smell was so bad even at that hour of the day.

It was great sitting in the ute with Sokhouen and having lots of laughs and seeing new Cambodian countryside and thinking how beautiful it is, as well as driving through small villages and seeing the locals waving and smiling at you (a sight that will bring back many happy memories of the people's friendliness).



Plenty of obstacles to negotiate along the way

It was interesting taking movies through the windscreen trying to hold the camera steady on bumpy roads. We watched the backsides of Les and Norm as we trailed behind them hour after hour whilst being in awe of the physical strain they were enduring. Driving for the first time on Cambodian roads (thanks Les for your faith in me!), we did get bogged whilst performing a U-turn. Sokhouen and I were covered in mud from head to toe trying to get the ute out of the mud and were thankful that a couple of locals decided to help after watching us for about 30 minutes. Embarrassment when facing Les after this

episode! However, getting the mud-covered clothes Sokhouen and I were wearing plus a few other items washed, dried and folded was accomplished within two hours for \$1.50.

It was priceless seeing the incredulous look on the faces of people on the roadside as Les and Norm rode by them. I was feeling like I was part of the Tour-de-France support team having conversations out the window of the ute whilst still moving with the guys and handing out drink bottles whilst Sokhouen was trying not to hit them! We were jumping out of the ute at the rest stops and grabbing ice cold towels and water for the guys and seeing how exhausted they looked but being amazed at their positivity and good humor.

Eating delicious bowls of noodle soup and drinking syrupy coffee for breakfast in small villages and having all the locals stop and look at Les and Norm in their cycling outfits made us realize that they will be talked about for days after. It was an eye opener to have strangers come up and start talking to me in excellent English and telling me all about the villages/towns we were in. It's marvelous how business is conducted right on



Norm and Les battle the heat between Battambang and Pursat



Norm and Sokhoeun during a rest break

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### Coming events:

Open Garden Party

Thursday, October 29

102 Ashburn Grove, Ashburton

3PM to 6PM

Fundraiser for Duong, Peach & Sophary

Friday, November 13

St. Kilda Bowling Club,

Fitzroy St., St. Kilda.

7PM til late

Christmas Shopping Night

Thursday, November 26

77 Canterbury Road, Middle Park.

5PM to 8PM

# Big Cambodian Bike Ride continued



Norm, Les and a local chat at breakfast after leaving Kampot

t h e roadside with traffic passing within a metre.

We had a puncture in the middle of nowhere

and all of a sudden ten kids appeared from the fields to watch us. Praying that Sokhouen would not be squashed whilst trying to put the jack under the ute, I was thankful that a guy appeared (from where I don't know) and gave Sokhouen a hand to jack up the ute and change the tyre; it was amazing that the same guy would not take



Norm and Les after the heat turned to rain and cold between Phnom Penh and Kampot

money as a way of o u r thanking him for his assistance (he did after some insistence on my part).

It was l o v e l y

seeing Norm and Sokhouen becoming great mates bonding over beer and hamburgers. I was constantly gazing at the absolutely beautiful countryside of rice fields with a

backdrop of the Cardamom mountain range (so incredibly green)and noticing how the rain changes dust to thick mud in a matter of seconds. Arriving in a town neither Sokhouen nor I had been to previously and trying to find our accommodation, with Les and Norm following us still on their bikes and not wanting to do any unnecessary extra kilometres after their already long day riding, we knew we had to find the place very quickly. Opening the door of my room in each hotel and hoping the bed and bathroom



Sokhouen weighs in...at 50 kilograms

were clean became a regular thing.

We saw kids aged a r o u n d e i g h t

years old walking along the

side of the roads herding up to six head of cattle or water buffalo which towered over them. You can't imagine our absolute happiness at finding a Tela service station that sold ice creams.

Despite having been to Cambodia on quite a few occasions, I was still being surprised at the crazy driving and how many people can be squeezed onto a moto or into vans or on the top of trucks. I looked at the big long hills leading into Sihanoukville on the last day and wondered how the guys were

going to cope with them - they did!



Les battles the heat on Day 2

I'll always remember standing in the driveway of the h o t e l i n Sihanoukville and hearing Norm ask "Is this the end, is this the end of the r i d e ? " i n a s o m e w h a t disbelieving voice and seeing Les arrive a minute or so later looking exhausted, relieved and happy all at the same time.

Then we had the long eleven hour drive (all done by Sokhouen) from Sihanoukville back to Siem Reap.

I'm always thinking more people should come to Cambodia to visit Kampuchea House and meet the children, and to see firsthand how friendly and warm the people are and to

see their beautiful country. Thank you Cambodia for a great week - I love you!



It's over! Norm and Les at the Orchidee Hotel in Sihanoukville

## Special thanks to...

To Dale Godfrey from the Department of Microbiology & Immunology at the University of Melbourne for assisting Belinda in locating used laptops for the use of the children of the orphanage. Many



thanks to D a v i d J a c k s o n a n d J u s t i n e M i n t e r n , from the s a m e



department, both of whom donated a laptop which are now.

Thanks to Sandra from the Springy Girls Club for organizing bags of stuffed toys and other goodies for the children. Their delight in receiving this in shown in the photo.

To committee member Eileen Crewes who, along with Greg McConnell and Nellie

Sutherland, organized a big bag of children's clothes and dolls from a group of ladies who wanted these donated to orphanage. Once again the photo tells the story of the children enjoying the dolls.



## Water, water everywhere



Torrential rain resulting from Typhoon Ketsana turned Siem Reap into a lake this week. A number of people were killed as

gale force winds hit parts of the surrounding countryside, causing their meager homes to collapse.

The Siem Reap River broke its banks in several places with the flood waters pouring onto the surrounding roads. Houses at road level were inundated with the filthy water. Sandbagging came too late for many of these residents.

The streets around Psar Cha, the Old Market, were awash yet the daily business seemed to continue. However, many of the stall holders on the periphery were unable to open their businesses to the public.

We await the receding of the water to see the damage, particularly to the road structure which was already in a parlous state before the rains came.



## At Sala Kor Koh



There has been quite a flood (sorry!) of visitors to Kampuchea House in the weeks since the children returned from their Pchum Benh holiday in their home villages. Many of these guests

have donated money for necessary items including dental appointments and, thanks to Peter Murray, a member of the group which came to see us from Westbourne Grammar, a 2500 litre plastic water tank for House Three.

The dentist is figuring prominently in the lives of the children as Sunday check ups have commenced.

The first five children—Chinh, Minea, Yet, Pisey and Samean Ya—attended last weekend with disastrous results. There were many fillings and one extraction...and that was only half the story. They need to return for a second time to have the lower jaws attended to.

The lack of a well balanced diet and, in particular, calcium-rich foods in the early years have led to the poor condition of the

teeth. Rea, aged four, has now been on weekly milk for nearly a year and it will be interesting to see how her teeth and bones develop. Already, she is nearly as tall as Chan Ratt who is nine years old.

Samean Ya did not even flinch during the extraction of her tooth.

Special thanks to Carolyn, Peter and Belinda who donated funds for the visits to the dentist.

The rest of the children will be treated as funds allow.

## Bike Ride wrap up...big, big thanks

Both Norm and Les would like to thank Singapore Airlines/Silk Air for waiving the overweight nature of the luggage for Norm. He was able to get the two donated bikes to Cambodia free of extra charges.



And, Norm and Les could not have completed the ride without the wonderful support of Total Rush Specialized Bike Shop in Melbourne.

Two bicycles were donated for the ride and are now back in Melbourne. Total Rush also donated three sets of riding gear for the boys. However, Norm and Les decided to use only one set, with the remaining two sets being brought back to Melbourne to be auctioned at the next function of Kampuchea House. They have the Kampuchea House logo on the jersey so they are quite unique.

Verofit Australia also donated drinking bottles and isotonic electrolyte drink for the boys to replenish the depleted fluids.



And thanks to Sokhoeun for driving the support vehicle to Sihanoukville and back. Well done sir!

## Our children—a series of updates on the children



This is the first photograph taken of Peach at the home of her aunt when she was interviewed by Sokhoeun and Les prior to taking up residence at Kampuchea House.



Peach as she is now. One of the shots taken by the hairdressing school to highlight the hair and makeup skills of the students.

### Peach

When Peach was brought to the attention of Kampuchea House, she was an eighteen year old languishing in Grade Three at the local primary school. Both her parents were dead and she was being looked after by an aunt.

Peach obviously has difficulty learning. So it was decided that she should leave school and commence vocational training. She had shown an interest in hairdressing and this direction for her life seemed the logical choice.

Since commencing her hairdressing course, we have discovered that she has an aptitude for the job but she takes twice as long to acquire the skills as the other students. Peach practises her skills on the other children when she goes back to Sala Kor Koh at the weekends and she is paid for her work.

Peach's grandfather died recently and she received a block of land from his estate. Kampuchea House has the deed in the safe to ensure that she is not cheated out of her inheritance.

### Duong

When Duong was first interviewed, she was so quiet. Her aunt, with whom she had been living, stated that Duong rarely smiled and was a sad child.

Almost from the time she joined Kampuchea House, Duong showed us she had a wonderful sense of humour, a deep and cheeky laugh and she rarely stops smiling.

Duong was in Grade Seven and a competent student but it was decided that she should also undertake vocational training. She expressed a desire to be a cook and so she was enrolled in the Introductory Course at the Paul Dubrule School of Hospitality. She just scraped through and is now in the main course learning to be a baker and ice-cream maker. She enjoys the course and eagerly attends school every week day.

Duong's English is developing very well and she can hold a simple conversation with native English speakers.



This is the first photograph taken of Duong at the home of her aunt when she was interviewed by Sokhoeun and Les prior to taking up residence at Kampuchea House.



A photograph of Duong taken at the wedding of Office Manager Leng