

SCAW



NEWSLETTER

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A charitable organization founded by Margaret and Murray Dryden

October, 2004

BANGLADESH: September 26 - October 14, 2004: 6,000 Bedkits

**BY DOUG CUNNINGHAM
COBOURG, ONTARIO**

Our Team - I would like to introduce our five person, 2004, Bangladesh Travelling Team. I am a widower, retired from the cartage business and loving my involvement with SCAW. This, my second trip to Bangladesh, was my third as team leader. My initial SCAW trip was to India '01, with three others to the Philippines.

Next meet Shirley Aerts. Shirley, a retired school teacher, along with her husband, Andre, also recently retired from operating their farm (passing it on to one of their sons). This was Shirley's fourth SCAW trip, having been to Colombia in '94, Philippines in '96, and Chennai, India in '99. She is a lady of many questions - "why?" "where?" "when?" "how?" and finally, "show me".

Peter Birnie, Electrical Contractor, is also retired. Having turned his business over to his sons, like most fathers, he has a hard time letting go, particularly when you've built your own business. I think he keeps his eye on things whether the boys realize it or not. Peter had been on one other SCAW trip to India in 2003. He spoke often and fondly of his wife, Dixie Lee.

Then there was Julie. Julie Coad the new kid. Having Julie along was a new twist to SCAW volunteers. Until about one year ago Julie, her husband Dwayne, and their three children, lived in Ontario's Sudbury area. They have now taken up residence on the island of Saipan, in the Pacific Ocean, half way between USA and Japan. If you are anything like me (heaven forbid) you are asking, "what is a family from Sudbury doing living in Saipan?" When I put that question to Julie, the answer was simply, quality of life. Julie is also a teacher by profession.

Last, but by no means least, was Linda Webb. Linda, previously a long time volunteer, due to some SCAW office changes, became full time office manager about two years ago.

LIONS 2004 Bedkit

- 1 Mattress
- 2 Pillow
- 3 Pillow Case
- 4 Bed Sheet
- 5 Blanket
- 6 Towel
- 7 Rain Coat
- 8 Flip Flops (Sandals)
- 9 School Bag
- 10 Pencil
- 11 Sharpener
- 12 Sweater
- 13 Mosquito Net
- 14 T-Shirt
- 15 Boys - Shorts/Shirt
Senior Girls: *Kamiz/Pyjama/Urna*
Junior girls: *Frock/Bloomers*

ROTARY 2004 Bedkit

- 1 Mattress
- 2 Blanket
- 3 Bed sheet
- 4 Pillow
- 5 Pillow Case
- 6 Mosquito Net
- 7 Wrapper
- 8 Towel
- 9 School bag
- 10 *Tiffin/Lunch Box & Mug*
- 11 Water Flask
- 12 T-Shirt
- 13 Pyjama
- 14 Girls: Dress
Boys: Long pants/Flannel Shirt
- 15 Flip Flops (Sandals)

This was Linda's second distribution, also in Bangladesh, last year. She was our "bean counter", keeping track of labels -- and always saying "stop until I check the count".

Our team got along wonderfully. In spite of the horrific traffic, the road conditions, the long traffic jams etc., we had a great time kibitzing among ourselves and about ourselves, during the long trips. I even tried to instill some control over the subject matter, "I don't want to hear this," but to no avail. Camaraderies sustains team morale under adverse and challenging conditions.

**BY JULIE COAD, SAIPAN,
NORTH. MARIANA ISLANDS**

A Touch of Christmas - Is there anything quite like the excitement and thrill of Christmas? For grownups and children alike, it's normally a time of anticipation and gladness. Even though the children of Bangladesh live in a world filled with poverty and despair, SCAW brought such a day to them, full of happiness and excitement, just like Christmas. Their [to us seemingly] dull and dreary world changed before their eyes. Short lived as this precious day was, they came prepared in their best attire, some even in borrowed clothing. Many of the girls wore make-up and decorated their faces. However, many children did arrive in what we would consider worn out dirty rags. They had no food, no water and little clothing, and many begged for a drink of water. The majority of these children arrived without shoes, or sandals and the others had worn-out, broken shoes.

However, the little bit of clothing, food, water and possessions that these children brought with them were precious to them. I will always remember one little girl who refused to let go of her small handbag. Inside were her clothes (which were dirty and had holes in them), a bun and some dirty water. She clung to that bag and would not let go. Rather than stress her out, I stood holding the bag for her, right beside the camera, so

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D. MURRAY DRYDEN - 1911 - 2004 - AN AMAZING LIFE!

(Bangladesh by Julie Coad, Saipan, M.P., Northern Mariana Islands, continued from page 1)

that it was never out of her sight. Dressed in their new clothes for the photos, many were concerned that they might not receive their clothing back [they did].

Distribution days brought feelings of nervousness, excitement, apprehension, and worry, reminding me a bit of Christmas. As a child, and even now, I love the holiday excitement and the wonderful, but anxious feeling it brings. SCAW brought about that feeling for me. I laid awake the night before our first distribution in Bangladesh wondering what the morning might bring. I had feelings of excitement, but feelings of anxiety as well. I wondered what the children would be like,



if I could interact with them, and really do this. I felt nervous about how it was all going to work. For me it felt like the night before Christmas. Well, that first distribution morning I could see excitement, happiness and overwhelming apprehension in the children. Some travelled long distances to our sites, and were unsure, nervous, and some quite scared. Some had tears as they prepared to have their picture taken, while others were bouncing with joy ready to have fun and anxious get their bedkits.

I found that all of the children were beautiful and very sweet. The majority of them were healthy looking, which came as a surprise to me. Most of them were happy, and quite a few could speak some English words.

I categorized the children into groups: the first group which I called the "pocket kids". They are little itty bitsy children who are so small that you feel you could put them in your pocket. They are incredibly precious and sweet, the kind you could just hug and hold tight. A few of these little pocket kids had to be carried, since their clothes were too big for them. Then there were the "gigglers". These were the boys and girls who came happy and giggling and it took very little effort to have fun with them, so of course we did! I had a blast playing and teasing this group -- peek-a-boo, tickle bug and my all time favourite, choo-choo train. The sillier I got the more they would laugh and the more relaxed the children became. I moved the children along in lines by playing train. I will never forget one group, all ten

children in the line made train sounds and chugged along the bedkit rail line with me.

Then there were the slightly older children, whom you approach with respect. Knowing how to ask them their names or their age in Bengali was a great way to enjoy their company. All of the children wanted to say hello and introduce themselves, and share a moment with all of us. Many wanted to practice the few words they knew in English, and all wanted to say thank you. What a lovely bunch of children.

Unfortunately, not all groups were healthy and happy. Some children had eye problems, while others had club-feet, and various other health problems. A few even had to be assisted to have their pictures taken. These children were just precious, and it felt wonderful knowing we were helping them.

It was a pleasure to take all of them and change them into their new clothing. The children were thrilled to receive a new outfit and display it during the photo session. They were excited. They came out fixing their hair, and/or straightening their collars, trying to look their very best.

After their photo session some practically bounced or ran all of the way to collect their bedkits (like getting to the tree on Christmas morning to see what Santa brought them). It was a wonderful pleasure to shake their hands and place a bedkit on their head, and wish them happiness.

Now, unfortunately, there are groups of children who did not celebrate this special time with us. These were the many children who did not receive bedkits. Some borrowed SCAW clothing and tried to sneak into line to receive one. Others were forced to ask us for a bedkit by their screaming and angry parents. One boy stands out in my mind, a teacher translated his words: "My name is Russell, and up to this day, I have not yet received a bedkit." Neither, I must add, did many other children, who looked at us as we drove away. It was easy to hand out bedkits, but it was an awful feeling to disappoint so many other children.

Even worse, Bangladesh was hit with a tornado when we were there. Without knowing, we were taken through the area only one hour after it was completely devastated. Trucks were overturned, cars floating in the river, hydro lines down, trees

on top of homes, houses blown completely apart, and totally destroyed, and worst of all, children and families wandering without anywhere to go. It was a sight that we often read about in the newspapers or see on television, only much worse. It was a devastation I wished I had not seen, and a feeling I wish I didn't have to feel. Children who might have been given a bedkit, no longer had anywhere to put one. Tears welled up that day, and still do so today as I write this. My heart aches for these people and for the children who live in Bangladesh.

Although, it is only one child at a time, and one moment in their lives, I feel SCAW's bedkits are a wonderful way to touch the lives of children around the world. Many people question whether you can actually make a difference in these countries, or does it really matter. These children live in a life of poverty and hardships, so I know it mattered to each and every one of the 6,000 2004 bedkit recipients in Bangladesh, and it matters to me, and the other SCAW members. I am proud to say I have been a part of a SCAW distribution and am thrilled I got to touch the lives of so many children. Many years ago, I donated a bedkit, and promised myself that someday I would volunteer to help with a distribution. I feel that I too, have had a touch of Christmas, as this was the best present I could ever receive. It is amazing that children with so little can give so much.

BY SHIRLEY AERTS STRATHROY, ONTARIO

Going to Bangladesh - While all our distributions were in the Dhaka area, here is some information about the country as a whole. I was apprehensive about going.

Did you know that Bangladesh is surrounded by India in the west, north and east, Myanmar to the southeast and the Bay of Bengal to the south?

It was under the rule of the British government from 1857 until it gained independence from them in 1947, when it became known as East Pakistan and West Pakistan (both mainly Muslim). Religious and political conflicts resulted in bloody battles. Eventually, in 1971, Bangladesh became the world's 139th country. It's also the most crowded -- 140-million people in an area the size of Iowa, and only 1¼-million taxpayers.

The average family income is \$172 US per year, however, many leave the country due to excessive (40%) unemployment. 70% of the women are illiterate, but many have small businesses. However, in spite of all of this, they are a happy people with a life expectancy of 61.8 years.

The main language is Bengali, but English is also used officially. Islam is the main religion at 88%, however, Hindus, Christians, and others are allowed religious freedom. The Bangladesh work week is Saturday to Thursday, since Friday is the prayer day for Muslims.

Major industries include jute manufacturing, cotton textiles, food processing, steel, fertilizer, rice, tea, wheat, sugar cane, potatoes, beef, milk, and poultry. Tourism is not promoted. One has to have a written invitation before a visa can be obtained.

Their largest and capital city, Dhaka, is divided into "Old" and "Modern". Old Dhaka has such attractions as Ahran Manzil (Pink Palace) and Lalbagh (Fort) of 1678 (unfinished), and an attractive mosque, Hussain Dalan.

Dhaka is the rickshaw (pun intended) capital of the world. Imagine 300,000 colourful rickshaws flowing like lava about the city. There are also some auto rickshaws. Business people have drivers who are responsible for the upkeep and guarding of the vehicles. They are masters at deftly maneuvering through traffic.

Travel is cheap, with many buses, plane flights and trains, as well as a well-developed system of water transportation, but travelling by boat is slow.

The climate is subtropical and tropical. The terrain is very flat and dominated by strands of the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Jamuna delta. It is also prone to floods and tidal waves. The land is very fertile from silt washed down from the Himalayas. These floods also bring the only gravel in the country.

Their flag is green with a red circle off-centre toward the hoist. The red represents the blood shed for independence, the green is for the lush countryside, as well as being the traditional colour of Islam.

Food is normally very spicy with fish and rice being staples, however, we quite often had chicken, eggs and a beef-like stew. Although rice constitutes a great part of their diet, fresh vegetables are being consumed much more than in the last few years, thankfully, even among the poor. The rural people shop often because they have no refrigeration. Everything is cooked fresh for each meal. Also, potatoes are used more now in curries.

A recharged car battery allows some to run a tv, but many have no electricity, tv's or phones. In the rural areas they do not own any more than what they can carry when floods come, which is often. In the event of a storm, they will hurry home to protect their belongings. Five corrugated sheets of steel are required for a roof, and may take several years of labour to build. Plastic toothbrushes are now replacing the ones made from the "neem" tree.

Public washrooms are very uncommon. Men face the wall to urinate and squat. Ladies, can you imagine squatting, wearing a sari, and carrying a water jug on your head?

Poor people carry all sorts of goods on their heads. Some will put a ring of straw or cloth on their head as a shock absorber.

It was all very different for us, but thanks to you donors, my apprehension has been erased by seeing 6,000 happy children with bedkits. **We have all made a difference.** We were a GREAT team.

BY LINDA WEBB ETOBICOKE, ONTARIO

"Sow the Seeds of Love" - 1930 - In the freezing cold of a relentless Canadian winter, Murray Dryden walks from London to Hamilton, falling often in the sleet. He reaches Hamilton and finds a place to sleep in a soap factory. He huddles in the unbearable cold. He is hungry and his coat is full of splinters from the raw floor-boards. He has no idea where or when he will earn his next penny, eat his next meal, sleep the following night. He endures because he firmly grasps his hope and faith in his God. The seeds of love are planted.

2004 - "Sow the seeds of love" is emblazoned on the Rotary T-shirts given to our team by the Rotary Club of Dhaka. As we are jolted, jostled and jerked over merciless potholes and in the strangle-hold of yet another traffic jam, we have many hours for talk, laughter, and

introspection. I thought about Murray, and I marvelled at the wisdom and integrity of this man who founded Sleeping Children Around the World.

SCAW is a carefully-honed network of dedicated volunteers. The story of each bedkit begins with a gift of \$30 from a compassionate individual, and ends with a child cozily tucked into a warm bed. As the story unfolds, a tremendous number of volunteers are involved in each chapter, and our overseas volunteers are vital to a happy ending.

In Bangladesh, SCAW works with both the Rotary and Lions Clubs. We rely on their resourcefulness, expertise and honesty. These people care deeply for their fellow countrymen who have suffered greatly again this year from monsoon-flooding. Prior to our arrival, they spent countless hours searching out cottage industries and manufacturers for the best prices on mattresses, blankets, clothing etc. They travelled to outlying villages and consulted with schools, teachers and social services to select children who will most benefit from a bedkit. They accomplished all of these tasks while complying with a stringent list of SCAW guidelines and stipulations.

We began the 2004 distributions with the Rotary Club, founded in 1937. Many committed gentlemen joined us daily as we arrived at what initially appeared to be chaotic sites. They quickly organized security and order among the crowds vying for a spot to watch the foreigners, or anxiously hoping for a bedkit for their child. A few of the distributions were complicated by rain. According to a Dhaka newspaper, "the monsoon staged a comeback".

The Rotary Club supplied our van, named Noah (not kidding), and driver, Kabir. Our lives depended on his nerves of steel. With the streets of Dhaka flooded [tornado & torrential rains], the name of the van took on new significance. Each time our four-wheeled ark arrived for us, Peter would greet Kabir with outstretched arms, and with his best baritone impression of the Almighty summoning Noah. Sensing that Kabir entertained serious doubts about Peter's mental health, I did my best to explain the bible story of Noah and the Ark. Much was lost in the translation. Later on I discovered that there is a similar story of Nuh in the

(continued on page 4)

(Bangladesh, by Linda Webb, Etobicoke, Ontario, continued from page 3)
Koran, and with the help of a translator, I was able to eventually explain to Kabir why Peter had bonded so closely with the van.

For the Lions Club share of the distribution, the weather changed. The sun reappeared and the distributions went flawlessly.

Lions Club members and their wives dug in to dress the children and help with the set-up to ensure smooth sailing. We were most impressed with their organization and hard work. They had visited the sites in advance, planned crowd-control and trained their volunteers prior to the distributions. On the last day of distributions, [Lion] Mr. Hadi emotionally recalled how, on a visit to Toronto, Murray had laid his hands on his head in blessing and called him "son".

Both service clubs were very caring about our comfort and well-being. On the day of the *hartal* (general strike called by the opposition party), for safety, the Lions moved us overnight to a house in the country. Both clubs provided refreshments for lunches and we received many invitations to their homes. Their hospitality and generosity were overwhelming. Their commitment to SCAW and the children is exemplary and we thank them all for being part of the SCAW team ... a network founded with passion and patience by Murray and Margaret Dryden.

Thank you Rotary, thank you Lions, thank you team, thank you donors for 6,000 happy smiles ... each smile a celebration!

**BY PETER BIRNIE
TORONTO, ONTARIO**

"On the road...with the Magician" - I awoke at 6:00 a.m. as usual and prepared for our

first out-of-town distribution. A quick shave and shower, a peak out the window, 15 minutes to write in my daily journal and then downstairs to join the rest of the team for breakfast at 7:15. Linda had her coffee already and will join Shirley and Julie in the business office playing out their symphonies on the computer. Doug will arrive on the dot of 7:15. The staff, at the Rosewood, sing their good morning hellos always accompanied by a big smile.

"Noah" our van, with Kabir our driver, are ready and waiting. We load our gear: three bedkits, labels, stands, signs, buckets, rope, tripod and cameras. Off we go to join up with the Rotarians. Our convoy will take us through Dhaka 30km east, then 50km north, to Bhairaba. "Should take us about 1½ hours" we are advised. "Just follow us." An hour later, still in Dhaka, Kabir is still bobbing and weaving his way between rickshaws and around buses. We are surrounded by rickshaws. Motorized baby taxis dart in and out like water bugs, and buses charge in from either side. But, Kabir is at work sliding effortlessly between vehicles, beeping his horn, maintaining control. He truly is "Kabir the Magnificent" our magician of the roads!



We finally shake loose from the city traffic and turn north on the highway bound for Bhairaba. The road is smooth and straight. The terrain flat and flanked both sides with lagoons and rice paddies. Bamboo bridges, constructed across the lagoons, are completely under water. People are walking along boardwalks knee deep in water. Others are fishing with nets and putting their catch into clay pots that float beside them. It is a quiet scene. Then, tranquility ends abruptly as construction forces us onto a series of potholes disguised as a road. We lurch and bump along for five km. Progress is slow. Will it ever end? It does! We are once again riding high above the rice paddies.

Bhairaba! We arrive at last and head for the government storage warehouse compound. Kabir finds his way through a maze of narrow side streets and into the compound. We are greeted by a relieved group of Rotarians as we are one hour overdue. The children, ever smiling, surround us as we walk the property looking for a photo site. We settle for a grass strip with some shade trees close to the brick wall enclosing the compound. Doug sets up the camera, Linda and Shirley unpack and organize the bedkits display, and Julie and I do our rope trick and hope to encourage an

orderly flow of children and hold back the waiting crowd of parents, guardians and onlookers. The bedkits are located in one of the warehouse buildings some 50' away. The Rotarians and volunteers quickly form a human daisy chain and pass the bedkits up for our use. This day I am stationed at the bedkits hand-off area. Each child, after he/she is photographed, receives a greeting and a bedkit from the SCAW volunteer. Although words are not understood, the sparkling eyes and ear-to-ear grins of the children say it all.

As child number 500 walks away, we pack, load the van and spend a little time with the Rotarians and their volunteers enjoying some tea and rice pancakes. I cannot say enough about these hard-working, dedicated people. They are truly remarkable.

Our van, Noah, reappears and we are on our way back to Dhaka. "Lord Douglas of Cunningham" and his happy team have done it again.

THANK YOU

for your
contribution to this
Bangladesh trip

Black's Photography for
photofinishing

**Champion Photochemistry
Limited** for continuously
funding film and photofinishing
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for publishing this newsletter

Donors and Volunteers!

NEXT SCHEDULED DISTRIBUTION TRIPS

November, 2004

HONDURAS - 4,000 bedkits

January, 2005

KOLKATA - 6,000 BEDKITS

MUMBAI - 7,000 BEDKITS

February, 2005

CHENNAI - 4,000 BEDKITS