

SCAW



NEWSLETTER

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A charitable organization founded by Margaret and Murray Dryden

March, 2004

MUMBAI, INDIA: February 4 to 23, 2004: 6,250 Bedkits

BY TED SWANSTON
ETOBICOKE, ONTARIO

With mixed emotions, our SCAW team departed from Toronto for what was, for each of us, a first trip to Mumbai. It was February 4, three days after the passing of our beloved founder, Murray Dryden. The usual excitement that precedes departure on a SCAW trip, the anticipation of seeing the smiles of beautiful children, working with overseas partners, and making new friends, was for this trip subdued.

Perhaps the timing was meant to be, as everywhere we went, individuals who had known Murray spoke with such reverence about him. In each place there was at least one person who had had a special relationship with Murray. It was often the person with whom he had the initial contact twenty or more years ago, and through whom the bedkit distributions had first begun in their particular region of India. These men were all so similar to Murray, the most humble individuals one could ever meet. They care so deeply for children and people in general, just as Murray did – they too are so giving! It was a privilege to meet them and hear them talk of Murray, and how the SCAW program benefited so many needy children in their area. Although we missed Murray's funeral, we heard eulogies about him from people who admired, respected, and loved him so much.

Our team listened as Shamaldas Parekh, the Rotarian who knew Murray the longest, spoke of the first SCAW distribution in Mumbai (previously Bombay) on January 26, 1982, when Murray handed out bedkits to 325 mentally-challenged children. Rotary Bombay had heard about SCAW through an article in a Rotary International magazine,

and wrote to Murray requesting bedkits for the children of Bombay. Shamaldas gave me copies of some correspondence between the two of them. Murray's December 28, 1981 letter challenges his new partners in Bombay, and not without humor, to make the most of the program for the children:

"... earlier it did not appear we could entertain any further commitments for 1982. However, our efforts over the year have finally produced some fine donations in the past couple of weeks. We are now in a position to promise money sufficient to look after 325 children. As our dollar is almost 15% stronger than one year ago in relation to the rupee, you should be able to come up with a splendid slumber kit. I do find that men in general are not good shoppers, and that a woman can manage to obtain much sharper deals! You may be an exception however."

We heard from Shamaldas how Murray travelled to Bombay (part of a multi-country distribution), took the donor photos at the home where the children were staying, and later that evening, took additional pictures of several of the children peacefully asleep in their new bedkits. The next year, Murray returned and gave out 1,250 bedkits; and so the program in Bombay started. It has continued yearly ever since.

Looking through the correspondence Shamaldas gave me, another note from Murray caught my attention. He wrote to Shamaldas in August, 1982, in preparation for the second SCAW distribution in Bombay.

"The Jesuits at Darjeeling are encountering troubles in procuring

some of the items for the Slumber Kits, and I wonder if you would be able to furnish them with sources and contacts. Any information ... would be appreciated by them and by me. We all must help each other to help others."

"We all must help each other to help others", Murray says. Whether volunteers with SCAW in Canada or overseas, we all will hopefully be open to give and receive ideas from others that benefit the bedkit program. The ultimate beneficiaries of this teamwork, at the end of the day, will always be the children.

Our Mumbai trip this year involved well over 2,000 km of travel through rural India to cities, towns, and tiny villages, and there were beautiful echoes of Murray everywhere. We distributed bedkits in Pune, where Murray did the first-ever SCAW distribution of 50 bedkits at an orphanage in 1970. We gave out bedkits in Rannebennaur, a place Dave Dryden also visited on a distribution several years ago. Walking alone through the school after a distribution, Dave told me he saw a picture of Murray hanging in a place of honor in the school. Dave said in that moment he came to truly understand the impact that his dad and SCAW were having with the bedkit program.

I took some photographs of Murray to the Rotarians in Mumbai, who kindly had one of them framed. I decided to start using this picture in the bedkit set-up. Although Murray was always very strict not to have any banners or anything in the photograph that would detract from the focus being on the child, I hope he won't mind this one time. It just felt right. Hopefully you'll be able to see Murray in the photos; we placed it between two of the labels, near the children.

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

**BY JANET WILSON
RENFREW, ONTARIO**

Most Appreciated Gifts

To my knowledge, *Sleeping Children Around the World* (SCAW) is the only charitable organization in which the donor's contribution goes directly and totally to the cause.

The 6,250 bedkits we distributed were almost evenly divided between the rural and urban areas, and between girls and boys. From the rural areas, the children were often transported to a central area for the distribution. Each day, our team travelled between one to four different distribution sites. Many of the children either walked or were trucked into a main village or town from tribal villages. It was a scary experience for some of the children, as many had never seen a white person before, and had been brought to us without their parents. Frequently we were behind schedule and the children had been waiting very patiently for hours, hopefully shaded by a tree or in a classroom. They got tired and a few even cried. The bedkits were sometimes larger than the children and they struggled to carry them home, reluctant to accept help from a stranger for fear of losing their precious gift.

Each distribution was different. The common threads were the children. They are so precious. Many children, especially those in the rural areas, had no shoes, but rather tough calloused wide feet, hands and knees, and a variety of skin diseases and obvious nutritional deficits. Some suffered with polio and thalidomide-like disabilities, while others had harelip and cleft palate problems and/or massive oral decay. The braver ones grabbed at our hands yelling "auntie" – a sign of respect – and frequently requested our autographs. Their smiles were precious. They have so few things in life, and the bedkit is such a sought after commodity that some parents attempt to nab a second one. However, they do not succeed, as the bedkits are well guarded, and counted, so that each selected child receives his/hers.

One emotional rural distribution was held at a small village school in the hills. Without our four-wheel drive vehicle we would not have been able to get there. The school was not very large but serviced 200 kids. Many

children from nearby tribal villages walk 10-15 kilometers to school on Mondays and back home on Fridays. The school had two sleeping areas, one for boys and one for girls. These areas were also used as classrooms. The rooms were empty—no furniture or anything for the children to sleep on. Each child owned a small metal box for protecting her/his limited belongs. There was also a kitchen, but we did not see it. The classroom had no desks, no chairs, nor any supplies. As a former teacher, I marvel at how the children can learn and teachers can successfully teach in such conditions.

MUMBAI BEDKIT 2004

Setrunji (mattress/ carpet)
Pillow/pillow cover
Blanket (wool)
Chaddar (cotton covering/sheet)
Two pair of dresses (or shirts and shorts) for each child – Size 7-9-11
Towel
School Bag
Water bottle
Lunch box
Raincoat
Pullover (Size 28-30-32)
Two Knickers (underclothes) for each girl (S/M/L)
Stationery Set (included
3 notebooks, 3 pencils, 1 pen,
a compass, Math Set, pencil sharpener, and crayons), and
Packing Bag

After our distribution in Belgaum, we visited Chapoli, a rural village of 850 people and 75 homes. There was no electricity but there was a well and a hand pump for water. In the monsoon season, this location, like many others, is totally inaccessible as the roads become impassable. Earlier in the day, some of the children from this village had received bedkits. The children had walked 15 kilometers the day before and slept at a town school so they could be delivered to Belgaum on time for the morning distribution. After the distribution, the children were trucked back to their village.

The villagers had been alerted to our impending visit. When we arrived, they quickly lined up the children. Three drummers assembled, we were presented

with a [floral] lei and an older woman put a red dot on our foreheads. As a large group, we all marched through the village to the other end. A head table was quickly set up for us in front of the school. Speeches followed. Ted, our team leader, passionately talked about Murray Dryden's dream, "Every child deserves a good night's sleep so that she/he can learn in school the next day." A coconut was smashed (good luck) and some children sang for us. The men sat on the ground on one side and the women on the other. I walked into the school—again there were no desks, no books, and only a small blackboard. They then gave us a drink of orange pop and a banana. (The sweeter the drink the more special you are.) This reception was the highest tribute of respect a village could pay any group of people. Wow! What an experience!

After the reception, I was taken to a home of one of the students to see the new bedkit. The room was about 8 feet by 12 feet and made out of mud. The bedkit was neatly stacked in two piles, one on each side of a stool. At the far end of the room, three older people sat huddled in the dark. There was also a live chicken in a basket hanging by the door. Your gifts from Canada were truly appreciated by the whole village. I felt very honoured!

In addition to the above touching images, there were personal interactions with the children, parents and grandparents. Many times the children would say "tank U" (Thank you). Other times you would hear *namaste* "I greet the light within you", hands held in the attitude of prayer, and then kneeling down and kissing the ground or our feet – a very humbling experience. Lightly touching a child's head with our right hand provided the recipient with a good omen.

As a first time SCAW travelling volunteer, I was delighted to observe that the 85 plus Rotary Clubs in Mumbai and surrounding areas diligently selected the recipients for the bedkits and sought value for each and every dollar that you contributed. To be eligible for a bedkit, the Rotary Club interviews the child and/or parent to ensure that he/she has a home and at least one parent.

You may wonder why some of the most needy children living on the streets or under bridges are not receiving bedkits. We want

your gift to be used for years, and if it goes to street people, there is a great chance that it would be resold within hours for about 25% of the value. I want to assure you that I witnessed your contribution being greatly appreciated by the children and their families.

The people we encountered are forever grateful to you, the donors, for your gifts. I felt very meek and touched to have received so many thanks on your behalf for your generosity. Thank you for making a difference in these children's lives.



BY DUNCAN MACGREGOR ETOBICOKE, ONTARIO

Having now experienced two trips to India as an overseas distribution volunteer, I continue to be overwhelmed at the number of volunteer hours that go into making a distribution of SCAW bedkits a reality! The SCAW Team in Mumbai distributed 6,250 bedkits to needy children, and this could not have happened without the efforts of a great number of volunteers in Canada and in India. This column will hopefully provide a glimpse into the many facets of this SCAW project, and it is dedicated to the many donors and volunteers who make the distribution of SCAW bedkits a reality.

Everything starts and finishes with a SCAW donor! When one makes a donation to SCAW, the volunteers in the office look after the details of registering the donation, sending out a receipt, and setting up a "Label" (that's the white sheet that has the donor information on it, that one sees in each recipient photograph).

The labels, over 6,250 for the Mumbai distribution, are then sorted and put into bundles so that the distribution team can take pictures in a way that provides the donor with different backgrounds and locations of bedkit distributions. The labels are then packed into the carry-on bags of the distribution team members and are actually carried on board the aircraft, along with the film and camera so that, if baggage gets delayed or lost, photographs can still be taken (just imagine the weight of 6,250 sheets of 8 1/2" x 11" paper being

carried by our team).

The plans are made for each distribution trip, and in our case, our team leader, Ted, corresponded with several people in the Mumbai area, as we would be working with approximately 60 Rotary Clubs. We also would be travelling over 2,000 km in India to complete this Mumbai distribution. Just as countless hours are put into the paperwork by SCAW volunteers in our home office, our overseas volunteers (Mumbai's Rotarians) also put in countless hours of preparation.

6,250 children needed to be selected. For this distribution, the Rotarians took on the responsibility of ensuring that all the recipient children were needy and in school. In many cases, the Rotarians actually visit the homes of the family whose child is being considered for a bedkit, and, in nearly every case, the Rotary Clubs work in conjunction with teachers to prepare the lists of neediest children.

While this is going on, another group has the responsibility of purchasing the bedkit items locally, and of packing them (over 100,000 individual items in total) into 6,250 bags, storing them, and transporting them to the 25 different distribution sites, ready for us to hand out to the children. Rotary volunteers also assume the responsibility of choosing locations and for covering any costs for the distribution sites.

On the day of distribution, they provide food, drink, and transportation, again at their expense, for the children, and they ensure their safe return home. Our Rotarian "partners" in the Mumbai area spent countless hours preparing, and if that wasn't enough, they hosted us (the SCAW overseas travelling distribution team) throughout the 19 day distribution process.

Finally, after the return of the SCAW distribution team from Mumbai to Toronto, the volunteers in the SCAW office will then send the film out for processing (the film and processing is provided free to SCAW), match 2,080 photos to the 6,250 labels, and mail 6,250 pictures to the donors with a copy of this newsletter. There are many more volunteer hours required, including the editing and publishing of this newsletter. Remember that everything starts and finishes with a SCAW donor!

What does all this mean? This process ensures that every donor dollar goes into the bedkit

for a needy child – a legacy that Murray and Margaret have left for all of us. It means that a vast number of volunteer hours and help from our overseas "partners" go into every successful SCAW bedkit distribution. It means that many people have touched the lives of each child who receives a bedkit from SCAW. In fact, it would not surprise me if the "Value" of each SCAW bedkit given to a needy child is at least double the amount provided by a SCAW donor!

I want to thank all our donors, volunteers, contributors, and our late founders for the opportunity of representing SCAW on the 2004 Mumbai distribution, and for the heart-warming and emotional experience of watching 6,250 bedkit recipients light up with their wonderful smiles as they finally understand what their "bedkit" is all about, and that this treasure is actually theirs! Each one of you has helped make a difference in the life of a very needy child. On their behalf, THANK YOU!

BY JUDY SNOBELEN RIPLEY, ONTARIO

This trip to India has been an amazing experience for me. This was my first distribution trip with SCAW. I feel very fortunate to be part of this team: two experienced – Ted and Duncan, and two newcomers – Janet and I.

My first impressions of India are the vast number of people everywhere, animals everywhere, shanties everywhere, the unbelievable poverty, the century old architecture, and the crowded roadways filled with bicycles, scooters, buses, trucks, lorries, motorized rickshaws, wooden oxen carts, and carts pushed or pulled by humans. Horns are blowing constantly as that is their method of passing. A taxi driver said that if your horn quits, you must get it fixed immediately as it is a necessity.

When we entered the site at Hubli, I saw a group of handicapped children in red and white uniforms, sitting in front of the building. What a sight! I was in tears already. Two little ones have no arms or legs, but they walk along on little feet attached to little stumps on the trunk of their bodies. Solomon is the little boy and he is 15 inches tall with black hair and the most beautiful dark eyes. The teacher passed his new shorts to him

(continued on page 4)

(Mumbai by Judy Snobelen, Ripley, Ontario, continued from page 3)

and he started to put them on. I lifted him up and pulled his shorts on, did them up, then rolled them up for him. I put on his shirt, tucked it in and did up his buttons. He thought he looked like a king, big dark eyes sparkling, and he was smiling from ear to ear.

My feelings at that moment were of intense gratitude to the donor back in Canada who donated \$30 so this little boy could sleep on a mattress tonight. I also thought of my own grandchildren, Brooke, Annie and Cole, who have a warm bed every night. In Hubli, I had the privilege of handing out the bedkits. I was in tears again when "My little boy" raced in on his little feet to get his bedkit. I just scooped him up for a big hug, and then the little girl raced in. I greeted and hugged all of them. There is only one teacher, so we piled the bedkits at the side and took pictures of them with the two little ones on top. This was the happiest day of their lives.

Those distribution days were full of emotions for us: sadness and happiness, joy and sorrow. We were on a roller coaster ride from one minute to the next.

Maria is a little nine-year-old girl who had her hair done in braids and tied with red bows. She had the biggest, most beautiful smile. I gave her a bedkit, and she hugged me so tight and then hugged me again. Her father, who was obviously so very poor, had been standing behind her. He then came forward, and in broken English, said, "I love you!"

The parents' smiles said it all. All the mothers were in their saris, and they wanted to shake hands or bow down to us. One grandmother was raising her orphaned

granddaughter, and she just knelt down and kissed my feet ... a very, very humbling experience for me. Once again, I am so fortunate to be receiving all these gestures of love and gratitude on your behalf.

At a rural school in Muland, we did a distribution to 200 very needy children from little remote pocket villages where the children walk 2 to 5 kms. to school. When we arrived, they were all dressed in their new clothes, just waiting in the shade.

Some of the girls were very shy, and wanted to leave their long navy school skirts on. They are beautiful girls dressed up with their hair in pigtails and red bows. Their feet are bare, and as Ted coaxes them, we see small smiles on most of their faces.



What a sight it was as 200 five to twelve year-old kids left this remote rural school and headed home with their bedkits. There were no parents in sight as these kids head in every direction, sometimes into the forest itself.

I walked down the road with some of them. One little girl balanced her bedkit on her head while she helped a little boy carry his. Some bigger children carried two bedkits, and some bedkits were being dragged. Most important of all though, the children were laughing and smiling, knowing tonight they would have the best sleep they have ever had.

We were involved in four rural distributions with the Rotarians of Pune. One group of Muslim girls dressed in their traditional blue *kurta* tops, with white pants and white *dupattas* (scarves). They looked like a wave of blue and white butterflies with sparkling eyes, they were so beautiful. After they received their bedkits, they left the site, laughing and smiling and waving from the back of a big truck.

The Rotarians took us to see some of the recipient children's homes. They are temporary homes near a construction site where most parents worked moving stones. The homes were one-room with dirt floors, and a few belongings and utensils along the walls. One mother had a wood fire going to cook supper. She was proud to show us her family's home. As we were leaving, other children were returning to the villages with their bedkits. I saw one little girl coming,

and she came running into my arms. I lifted her up and swung her around. We both felt we could fly anywhere, especially this beautiful little girl in her new blue and white clothes.

I have had many unbelievable experiences in this country of India. We had physically touched 6,250 children, and every one of them has touched our hearts.

It is a large team of donors, SCAW office staff and volunteers, SCAW overseas volunteers, the Rotary Clubs, Shamaldas, Raj and our team of Ted, Duncan, Janet and myself who have once again accomplished this distribution of bedkits to needy children in the Mumbai area. Thanks to everyone involved!

**Note: SCAW's - new e-mail address
- scaw@bellnet.ca**

**THANK YOU
for your
contribution to this
Mumbai, India trip**

Black's Photography for
photofinishing

**Champion Photochemistry
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Donors and Volunteers!

**NEXT SCHEDULED
DISTRIBUTION TRIPS**

**APRIL-MAY 2004 -
PHILIPPINES**