



PHILIPPINES: May 12 - 25, 2004: 5,000 Bedkits

BY DOUG CUNNINGHAM COBOURG, ONTARIO

Well we did it again, four of us. Over the last ten days in Manila, Philippines, we were personally in contact with, not to mention made happy, 5,000 children and their families. What a team! I was on my fifth distribution, three of which have been in the Philippines, and one each in India and Bangladesh. Edie Haslauer, was on her third distribution. Sally Jo Martin had previously been to India with SCAW, as well as volunteering one day each week at SCAW's office. The fourth member of our team was our "green-horn" first-timer, Milton van der Veen. It was not hard to keep tabs on Milton, as he stood a head above everybody else. I was the so-called team leader, and was fortunate to be travelling with three great volunteers – willing and capable of filling in for me whenever my knowledge (or lack of it) came up short. We all had the same goal, – to do whatever we could to allow as many people as possible to have better lives. In order to achieve that goal, we became your (bedkit donors) emissaries.

When we got back, and I was returning the equipment and the 46 rolls of exposed film to the office, Linda Webb, SCAW's office manager, commented on how amazed she was by the number of donations that are submitted by children. We, the travelling volunteers, saw first hand the actual poverty in which the recipients live. It is wonderful that we, as a "have" nation, are instilling in our children the thought that they too, with a little sacrifice, can help a "have-not" child. I was in a coffee shop the other day listening to a man on a pension complain that if taxes keep going up and his pension didn't follow we would all be in a fine mess. It was hard to explain that some of the money for his pension was probably coming from

returns on investments by companies taking advantage of the plight of children we are trying to help. It is a vicious circle. The fact that children are being made aware that they can help other children not so fortunate is one step in the right direction to establishing their moral fibre.

2004 PHILIPPINES BEDKIT

- 2 blankets
- 1 plastic mat
- 2 sleeping shorts
- 1 mosquito net
- 1 mat sheet
- 1 pillow
- 1 pillowcase
- 4 T-shirts
- 2 sweaters
- 2 school shorts
- 1 raincoat
- 1 bath towel
- 1 playing shorts
- 1 hat
- 1 duffy bag (cotton drawstring bag)
- 2 pair of socks
- 2 face towels
- 1 pair of slippers
- 1 lunch box
- 1 tumbler
- 1 handkerchief
- 2 toothbrushes
- 1 school bag, containing:
notebooks, pens, pencils, ruler sets,
pencil box, scissors, sharpener and
plastic envelope.
- 1 plastic bag for carrying the bedkit

We were about two weeks later (in the year) going to the Philippines this year, and during the last week we had a touch of the Monsoon Season. As you drive along very narrow streets, looking out the window, you see bare-behind kids out taking advantage of the warm rain showers. Children are the

same the world over, I guess playing in water is a given. If you look a little further down the narrow lanes you have to wonder though how the parents are making out. When you see sheets of cardboard attached to sheets of plywood attached to sheets of corrugated metal making the nucleus of a home, your heart drops. You know the hardships the rainy season is going to bring to these people. Although some of their houses may front onto the streets, many to the rear may be built on stilts, giving the very real possibility of being swept away by the rising waters. When you see some of these conditions, you know that you will be hearing stories similar to those recently from the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

Well dear donor, I want to come back to the fact that you, along with us, the travelling volunteers, in association with the country volunteers, are doing something realistic to help out. I can only urge you to keep up the good work. I am happy to confirm to you, and assure you, that 100% of what you donate to SCAW, goes to help that child, and that family to be a little more comfortable – a family in circumstances beyond their control. As the children say to us, we say to you, – thank you and may your creator bless you.

BY SALLY JO MARTIN ETOBICOKE, ONTARIO

5,000 Filipino children have just received a gift from folks they will never meet – a gift bigger even than their wildest dreams. Here is how "The Big Day" unfolded for them.

Following very specific SCAW guidelines first developed by Murray Dryden 35 years ago, teams of volunteers in the Manila area choose the neediest children from local barrios, villages and shanty towns. Some live in shelters under the bridge of Manila's
(continued on page 2)

(Philippines by Sally Jo Martin, Etobicoke, Ontario, continued from page 1)

busy highway, others in tiny homes made from scavenged sheet metal or discarded plywood. Some live with their families in fishing villages which are often threatened by flooding during the monsoon or typhoon seasons.

All, however, are among the poorest of the poor in this country. Their names and ages are recorded, and each is given a number because on distribution day only those with a certified number will receive a cherished bedkit.

They walk long distances or take local buses, tricycles with passenger side cars or decorated jeepneys to the chosen distribution site — usually a school ground, church or community centre. Many more volunteers help the children dress in their new and colourful T-shirts and shorts, part of their bedkit and then, with a number on a string around their necks, they wait patiently for the actual distribution to take place.

When we Canadians arrive with our Kiwanian hosts, our first task is to find a good location for the photographs, not always easy, particularly if it is raining or if the enclosure is confined.

I really enjoy interacting with the children, so while others prepared the site I played with my fluffy puppet “Maggie” who whistles and sings “I Love You”, encouraging the children to use hand actions to join in and mime the phrase. “Love” is universal in all languages, so it wasn’t hard to get them involved. Most kids can laugh at an adult being foolish so I danced, made funny faces and pantomimed the good posture we hoped they would use at picture taking time. Through an interpreter I explained the process to be followed and showed them an enlarged example of the photo a donor receives so they would know what to expect. Sometimes groups of children would also entertain us with songs or dances. What a day of fun and excitement for all!

After words of welcome and a prayer of thanksgiving, our leader, Doug, briefly told the children that they were about to receive a gift from people who hoped they would grow strong and healthy, and that having a good night’s sleep would help them succeed in school. Again, Murray Dryden’s philosophy that comfortable sleep is essential to well being was repeated. Young voices were enthusiastic as they sang the Philippine national anthem, and some knew “O Canada”

as well. We could feel their excitement as the distributions began.

Three by three the children were led to the upturned buckets for their photo. “Smile” or “*Tawa*” in the native language, *Tagalog*, was repeated as Doug endeavoured to make each picture perfect. This is the children’s way of saying “Thank you” to you, the donors.

One day, after three children had been seated for the photo, we realized that only two would be needed.

The remaining two hundred* would be photographed in groups of ten. So Alice Joy, a petite seven year old, was taken back to the others who were waiting. She immediately burst into tears, thinking that she would not receive a bedkit. It took some time, with the help of a translator, to calm her down. Finally her photo was taken, her bedkit given to her and she went off with her mother and younger brother. The SCAW promise had been realized. “One donation to one very needy child, who now knows that a stranger from far away, has sent a gift of love”.

The children, all dressed in their colourful SCAW T-shirts, are uniformly beautiful, but we noticed that many are very small for their age due to malnutrition, and a few have serious health problems such as blindness, cleft palate, club foot or skin ailments. Some wear plastic flip flops, but many are barefoot so the sandals in the bedkits will be appreciated. It is also true that the items will often be shared with other members of their families, and in this way, your gift enriches the lives of more than one child.

Sometimes as the children are seated, ready for the photo, the film needs to be changed in the camera. They then have time to look at the sample bedkits spread out in front of them, and we see their amazement as they glean the quantity of clothing, bedding and school supplies that they will receive. Birthday or Christmas gifts would never be so large for these poor children.

After their photos are taken, the children are led to one of the Canadian team members where the bedkit is handed over. An adult’s hand, raised to the child’s forehead in a sign of blessing, is followed by a broad smile and “Thank you” or “*Salamat po*”. The bedkits weigh five kilograms, so, frequently the smaller children need help carrying them to

where they will meet up with their parents). The parents had been waiting separately for hours for this moment, and now they all can happily return to their homes.

Distribution day is memorable for all who worked so hard to have things run smoothly, but it is a day to remember for the lucky children [and their families] who were chosen to receive your gift. “*Salamat po*” to all SCAW’s generous donors.

[**Editor's Notes: When large donations are received, the donor has the option of group photos.*]

BY MILTON VAN DER VEEN KEMBLE, ONTARIO

I am writing this as I return from my first SCAW distribution, a journey that began with a Christmas card I received from my friend Allan in 2002. I was intrigued by the name of the organization, and even more so when I checked the web site and learned that I might become a travelling volunteer. The following April, I went to a meeting at 28 Pinehurst, the former home of Murray Dryden and his family, and found out more about this remarkable charity that promised “zero overhead.” I learned that all this is possible because of a host of volunteers that have been working for more than thirty years to ensure that almost seven hundred thousand children in developing countries would receive a good night’s sleep.

I immediately signed up and, after an interview, was put on the waiting list to go on a distribution. The following Christmas, I received an E-mail telling me I was to be a member of the Philippines team for 2004.

At the end of April, I went back to 28 Pinehurst, this time to meet with the other members of my team: Doug, the team leader, for whom this would be his fifth distribution trip; Sally Jo, who volunteers at the Dryden home every Thursday, now going on her second trip; and Edie, who has been involved with SCAW for fourteen years and for whom this trip would be her third. I was the “rookie” travelling volunteer, but the others made me feel right at home as we completed our first duty as travelling volunteers: organizing the labels for the photos.

When you, the donor, send in your \$30 for a bedkit, administrative volunteers at 28 Pinehurst process the donation. Besides sending you a tax receipt, they also print up a label with your name that will begin a



journey that is not complete until it has been photographed with the child who received your bedkit donation.

Two of the administrative volunteers, Carm and Sue, worked with us for several hours organizing the labels into fourteen bundles, one for each of the distribution sites we would be visiting in the Philippines.

Two weeks later, we boarded the plane for the trip to Manila, each carrying our share of the labels in our hand luggage – we had to be sure they would get to their destination. After a 24 hour trip, we arrived in Manila into the hands of a group of overseas volunteers dedicated to Murray Dryden’s pledge to ensure a good night’s sleep to as many children as possible.

The volunteers in the Philippines are members of Kiwanis International. The core group is helped by several hundred other volunteers from groups like the Knights of Columbus, the Salvation Army, and other school and church organizations. At the airport, we were rushed through security and customs by Jess, our main host for the trip. Lydia had our hotel and transportation arrangements. At the hotel we had a meeting with Dr. Ito, who heads up the core group, and Rolly, who was looking after the assembling of bedkits. They gave us three bedkits to take back to Canada, and we were amazed at the number of items that your donation of \$30 was able to provide. Before we retired for the night, we checked out the items and tried to see how we would arrange them for the photos the next day.

In the morning, we went to our first distribution and, on May 22, we did our last one, thus completing our 2004 mission in the Philippines.

Now, 5,000 Filipino children have a more comfortable way to sleep, new clothes, new school supplies, and a new sense of self-worth. They know that there are people on the other side of the world who value them, want them to have a good night’s sleep and want to help them do well in school.

Let me briefly describe the events of our seventh distribution day, a typical day in the life of SCAW’s Canadian travelling volunteers in the Philippines. There have been distributions in the Philippines for many years, and the core group has developed procedures that make the job a pleasure for all who take part.

Early in the morning Doug, Sally Jo, Edie, and I met with Jess, one member of the core group of the Filipino volunteers, and went

for breakfast. Then we set off for the location of our first distribution in our rented van driven by Tony. He expertly manoeuvred the van through the busy Manila traffic and headed for the beltway. Today we went to the north and then drove back into Metropolitan Manila. When we got to Meycauayan, Boyet, another member of the core group, met us on his motorcycle to escort us to a local school. We could tell we were getting near by the crowds of happy, expectant people in the streets. There was no mistaking that this was the place when we saw the welcome banners hanging from the gates proclaiming that on this day, there was to be a distribution of bedkits by Sleeping Children Around the World. “A Gift of Love From Canada.” All our names were listed! When we went inside, we met with Dr. Torres, head of the Filipino core group of overseas volunteers. The children were seated in their new SCAW clothes. All had been given numbers so there would be an orderly distribution.

We surveyed the site to find a suitable location for the photo shoot. Because of the torrential rains the previous night, the ground was too wet and muddy for a setup in the school yard. We decided to use the stage, and the local volunteers managed to



commandeer a typical Manila tricycle for the morning, so it became part of the backdrop, adding some local colour. The bedkits were set up for the photo shoot, and then we had the welcoming ceremony. Local volunteers welcomed the Canadians, prayers were offered, two national anthems were sung, Doug spoke to the children, and the distribution began. Sally Jo and Cynthia organized the children for their photo; Doug took the photos; Teng talked to the children and reminded them to smile; Vincent looked after changing the labels; Josie, Lydia, and Alice kept track of the labels and film counter on the camera; Edie handed out each bedkit, receiving a “*Salamat Po*” or “Thank you very much” from each child; and I took pictures to document the event. There were 61 local volunteers working with Boyet, Jess, and Dr. Torres to make sure the children were in the right place at the right time, and then reuniting them with their waiting families.

After distributing 350 bedkits we stopped for lunch. This was typical of all distributions in that we were given tastes of Philippine fare of the region. In fact, there was always more than we could eat. But we always found room

for the fresh fruit that finished the meal.

We finished a bit early so we had a quick tour of the oldest part of Manila, and then went on to our afternoon distribution site, Marilao.

Again, we were met by large groups of parents waiting outside the gates for their children. Inside, some of the children were still getting into their SCAW clothes and assembling for the photo shoot. They all had numbers to keep them in order, and their own clothes were collected and numbered so they could be picked up after the distribution.

This time, we had no choice but to set up inside, since there were more torrential rains predicted for the afternoon. Again, we had an opening ceremony and then set out to do our assigned tasks. We managed to get the children back with their families before the afternoon was over.

Hospitality is an important part of Philippine tradition, and the group in charge of this distribution made no exception. Once again we were fed and entertained – this time to celebrate the end of the distributions.

The story of the labels doesn’t stop there either. The paper used for the labels is now in the Philippines, recycled for use in the schools. The photos – once again carried in our hand luggage – will be developed and sent back to you, the donors, so you can share with us the joy and thanks from a Filipino boy or girl.

And that is what it was all about: 7 days, 14 distributions, 5,000 children. But the bare facts can’t convey the impact of moments that touched me deeply: looking into the a boy or girls’ eyes and hearing them say “*Salamat Po*”; the grateful glances from parents as they return home with their children; the smiles of the volunteers as the little ones in their communities are being given their gift from Canada; the welcomes; the hospitality; the honours; the “Good Byes.”

The journey that began with a Christmas card a year and a half ago is now complete, but the memories will remain in my heart forever.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent you on this trip. I am looking forward to being able to do this again sometime in the future.

A candle loses nothing by lighting another candle!

- James Keller

**BY EDIE HASLAUER
PERKINSFIELD, ONTARIO**

"Salamat Po". Thank you with respect, as they say in the Philippines, this is how I feel having had the privilege to be one of the travelling volunteers for this particular distribution. Now, upon my return, I reflect on the memories of my journey and find it extremely difficult to put into words. I will however try to share a few of my reflections in this SCAW report.

My first glimpse of the bedkit was upon my arrival at the opening meeting with the local volunteers in the Philippines, headed by Dr. Ito Torres, and our SCAW travelling team. This first glimpse of the bedkit was an emotional one. There was a sudden hollow feeling in my stomach, filled with a numbing sadness in knowing that I would not be able to give Mr. Murray Dryden a quick phone report, or visit, on my return, as I had always done, – telling him about the bedkit and all the items included for the children. I did however hear the echo of his voice when he once said to me, "Eddie, everything in life happens for a reason, even if we cannot understand the reason today we will tomorrow". I do believe Mr. Dryden would have been happily in agreement with the bounty of what the children were to receive in this year's bedkits.

I congratulate our local Filipino team of volunteers on this bountiful array of items that is truly attributed to their incredible determination and hard work. I also feel tremendous gratitude for the generous donations provided by you, the donors, making the bedkits a reality. There were an incredible 36 items, or 76 pieces, included in this particular bedkit. It included items of clothing, personal hygiene, school supplies and, most importantly, all the items for a tranquil night of sleep (mat, blanket, pillow and sheet). Allowing the children to escape from the reality of life's hardships, and thus

gather strength to face the next day with refreshed energy, I was reminded of a quote I read by O.A. Battista, "The best eraser in the world is a good night's sleep".

Dr. Ito Torres shared with us some stories from Murray Dryden's last visit/distribution in the Philippines. While some stories were humorous, others were of a more serious nature; i.e. that of making sure that every child that was promised a bedkit, received one, allowing the vision of the gift and the promise to both be fulfilled. Dr. Ito also told us that it was Murray Dryden's request that a raincoat be included. I am happy to report that a raincoat was received by each child on this distribution. The raincoat proved to be most useful as the rainy season seemed to arrive a little early in Manila this year, officially kicked off by "Dindo" the typhoon, that we were faced with during this particular distribution. Yes, in my opinion, each and every item in the bedkit was greatly needed and appreciated by the children and their families.

On one of our tours of a local department store, we noticed that the same school books as provided in the SCAW bedkits where offered for sale. We learned that these school supplies (books, writing paper, pens and other supplies) are mandatory for attending school, and that was the reason they were included in the bedkits. It will make it easier for the recipients to attend school, and minimize the financial burdens on their families.

As a SCAW volunteer, I was happy to find myself part of a tremendous team of volunteers, both Filipino and travelling. It was the co-operation and team work that created the powerful synergy that allowed each child to receive his or her bedkit as promised; that the photos were taken for the donors as promised; and that Murray Dryden's vision was set into motion and accomplished for 5,000 children once again this year in the Philippines.

A few of the days during our distribution, I was assigned to presenting the children with their bedkits. During those times of presenting the bedkits to the children, I once again was reminded of the true essence of these distributions. I witnessed the faces and gratitude of the children. I felt overwhelmed as I thought about Murray Dryden's vision for children locally and globally. I was filled with so many powerful feelings, yes it is a fact that each child received all the material items that would allow their day to day lives to be enhanced tremendously, but the true reward in my humble opinion is the

intangible, the gift that we cannot see with the human eye, but can experience through human energy. The gift of compassion, one that encompasses love, kindness, understanding and a willingness to give freely without expecting something in return or consumed with a hidden agenda. Showing that child how important they are with pure actions, empowering that child to believe in themselves and to dream, never giving up their dreams because anything is possible in life with dreams.

In closing I once again say thank you with respect to all that helped influence and change the lives of these children. I witnessed these children with a sparkle in their eyes, a smile on their face, and a sense of dignity, as they proudly skipped away with their bedkits and unspoken energy of hopes and dreams.

With the highest regard for Murray Dryden's vision and the fondest memories of this distribution I would like to sign off with a **Confucianism Proverb "A truly great man never puts away the simplicity of a child"**.

**THANK YOU
for your
contribution to this
Philippines trip**

Black's Photography for
photofinishing

**Champion Photochemistry
Limited** for continuously
funding film and photofinishing
costs since 1986.

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Donors and Volunteers!

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**AUGUST, 2004
SRI LANKA
4,000 BEDKITS**

**TANZANIA
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