

# SCAW NEWSLETTER



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A charitable organization founded by Margaret and Murray Dryden

MARCH 1993

## BANGLADESH:

### *February 14 - 28, 1993: 3,700 Bedkits*

BY TOM JACQUES, Hamilton, Ontario

I am just recovering from jet lag from my first SCAW distribution in Bangladesh. I had the privilege to join four veterans, Richmond Chandler, Laura Harper, Clarence Deyoung, and Peter Howard, as well as one other rookie John Troup. It was an excellent experience and I learned a lot about SCAW and about life in Bangladesh. This is a brief review of my twelve days in Bangladesh.

John Troup and myself left Canada a few days before the majority of the group and visited a friend in Hong Kong. It was a nice way to start our trip and helped ease us into the eleven hour time change. On February 16, we met with others of our team in Bangkok and headed for Dhaka. We were greeted at the airport by two members of the Human Development Society (HDS), Dr Miyan and Mr Anisul Islam. Both of these men became good friends and were extremely hospitable hosts. John and myself were invited to stay at Dr. Miyan's home. We spent our first day with Dr. Miyan visiting his home and then going into Dhaka to see the university he founded, and the city.

Our first distribution day started around 8 am on Wednesday 17th. We were picked up by the group in our rented Toyota mini van that would become much of our home for the next twelve days. Somehow I was lucky enough to get the front seat and became co-pilot for much of our travel. I soon realized this was a "for rookie only" selection and having my life insurance paid up was a must credential. Not only are the roads crowded, narrow, and in need of repair, but the drivers seem to be

addicted to playing chicken and the rules of the road are the bigger you are the more road you get. A horn is an essential vehicle part next to 4 wheels and a motor, and is used constantly to warn other vehicles of our approach.

Our first distribution was at a private fish farm. This location was ideal because it was secluded and the crowds of onlookers, we would see a lot of on later distributions, were minimal. The distribution of 100 kits went quickly because the children were already there and dressed. I photographed my first children carrying their new kits home on their heads and all wearing big happy smiles, something I would see many times over the next twelve days.

After a short break we loaded up in the van and began another three hour trip to our second distribution. This being my first day on the road, I found everything new and interesting. The countryside of Bangladesh is very green, lush and beautiful. The fields were barren of Massey Ferguson and John Deere tractors, but were crowded with farmers and their families working their small rice fields. The fields were terraced from water ponds for irrigation, not like the large flat hundred acre fields of Western Ontario. Scattered along the way were many villages which were always places of activity. People were shopping for their daily supplies and gathering to share conversation. Very few industries were seen besides the frequent brick kiln and a small lumber mill.

Arriving at our second distribution was a bit difficult. The school yard was crowded with far more than the 250 children we had kits for, and the kits had not arrived yet. Our

group leader, Richmond, quickly showed us the needed skill of crowd control. Our group and some of the local volunteers began the task of clearing the school yard of all onlookers. This large group left quite orderly but once outside the school gates, stayed right there to see what activities the foreigners were up to. This distribution went well, and when we drove out through the crowded gates, we left inside 250 happy children.

The next day at 9 am we began a three hour ride to Comilla. It involved a half hour ferry and then an hour or two traffic jam. There had been a forty-eight hour general strike which ended only a day before, so the ferry had two days worth of trucks lined up waiting to get across to Dhaka. Once we finally arrived, the 360 children were all patiently waiting in lines of twenty in their new clothes. This distribution went like clockwork and we finished very quickly. Another member of the HDS, Professor Chow, took the group to his ancestral home for a quick lunch and then we started the long journey back. At the ferry we again found a large traffic jam of hundreds of trucks. We decided to leave the van in line and walk to the ferry, cross by foot, and board a bus to take us back to Dhaka. This gave us the experience of bus travel, which is a bit different from travelling by Greyhound. We did arrive safely in Dhaka by 9.30 pm to finish our second day.

The third day we rose early to start a six hour ride to Faridpur, including an hour ferry ride. When we finally arrived, we were told that the bedkits had not yet arrived. After waiting three hours we were

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told that one of the trucks had been in an accident and that this distribution would have to be done another day. It was a long day of travel without the benefit of a successful distribution but one week later, part of our group returned to make it a success.

The days that followed were lots of work but with many great experiences and many successful distributions. Long days of travelling to some very remote villages by many forms of transportation. We were always met by friendly volunteers and we always left each distribution with hundreds of happy children waving goodbye. I learned a lot from my first SCAW trip

that I hope will help me all of my life. The people of Bangladesh, have many problems of their own but they still manage and are happy. Their children are full of life and were very happy to receive their very own bedkit. Being that this was my first trip I saw many things I liked and some things I may have done differently. But as each day passed, I became more aware of our own inherited problems, and how the people of Bangladesh work. Looking back on the trip it becomes the great success that it was. I hope my impressions combined with my photos will make my future presentations both interesting and successful.

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### BY CLARENCE DEYOUNG, Milton, Ontario

I returned from Bangladesh with mixed feelings. On one hand I am pleased to be home with family and friends, where I can turn on the tap and get a drink of water, but on the other hand, I cannot stop thinking of all those people, especially the children, back in Bangladesh with their diseases, sores, and malnutrition problems because they live in a country that is devastated by government corruption, annual monsoons and frequent cyclones that kill 1000's of people and that destroy 40% of their homes.

Bangladesh is a country that stretches not much further than a couple of hundred miles across and a couple of hundred miles from top to bottom, but it is very heavily populated (110 million people), has absolutely no infra structure and has very little industry to employ their people. It is impossible to explain the conditions that the people of this country live in. I thank SCAW for giving me

the opportunity to make me realize how well we in the western world have it.

By mini-van, by bus, by ferry, by river boat, and by rickshaw, we travelled to Gazipur, Comilla, Narayanganj, Narsingdi, Muktagacha, Mymensingh and Munshinganj, to deliver one of the best bedkits that I have seen. There were about 20 items in the bedkit including a mattress, pillow, ground mat made of jute, a sari, a blanket, etc.

SCAW's overseas volunteers in Bangladesh are the HDS who did a great job of putting the bedkits together, selecting the children who are to receive the bedkits, as well as arrange for the physical distribution of the kits with the Canadian team.

But none of this would be possible if you, the donors, did not contribute part of your hard earned money to this very worthwhile cause. You really are part of fulfilling a dream of our founder, Murray Dryden.

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### FISCAL YEAR MARCH 1, 1992 - FEBRUARY 28, 1993

At the end of December we were hopelessly buried - only a miracle would pull us out. The thought of being down after 21 years of increases each year was downright discouraging and humiliating. "Recession"

excuses to us were merely "cop-outs". Everyone, and I mean everyone, put their shoulder to the task. So many churches responded to presentations made by our overseas personnel. The Rotary Foundation sent a grant to match the \$3,000 donation from the Oakville Club. The Thornhill Lions District Club put another hundred

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- There was great excitement among our volunteer staff just before Christmas as a large parcel was unwrapped and tucked inside were fifty "hand made" cuddly wool dolls. These were the generous gift of Miss Eka Berends of Windsor. More of these delightful "little ones" have arrived and will be given to "special needs" children on our overseas distributions.
- Our book "For the Love of His Children" is still only \$5.00. It tells the story of SCAW and when donors ask "how can we help you?" we suggest buying a book and sharing it with your friends or perhaps donating it to your local library.
- On our March distribution to the Philippines, 1000 babies will be given "layettes" by your gifts. What a sight that will be for our travelling volunteers to share with you!
- Special thanks to Dr. Douglas and Jacqueline Wickware of London for allowing us to share "their" Christmas gift letter with other SCAW donors.
- We are encouraged by the number of you who are forwarding a gift to SCAW in memory of a loved family member or friend. Just provide us with the name of the one in whose name the gift is given and also the name of their family or friends and an acknowledgement card will be sent followed by a photo of the child who receives their gift - a living gift.

"hurting" children into bed. Japan Kiwanis Clubs sent us \$4,000 US. But it was still the "one-bedders" who turned the tide. On the last day Don Valley Junior High School phoned to say they had a \$2,000 cheque to be picked up - funds they had raised from a "Sleep-in". St. Elizabeth Seton School was in again for the seventh year in a row with almost a hundred beds. Lambton Kingsway Public School campaign went on for more than a week and on the last day operated like a stock exchange as they phoned in their escalating reports. I picked up their final return (91 bedkits) at 5:30pm and dashed to the bank, arriving under the wire at 5:58pm. Maurice Kowanetz, our computer "guru" punched in a few minutes after 11:00 pm and in less than ten minutes handed us a print out, explaining that we had smashed the target by 3%. Then, we could not sleep! What joy prevailed at 28 Pinehurst Crescent - thanks to all you caring people out there. Now we hardly know what to do for an encore!. (By M. Dryden)

**BY RICHMOND CHANDLER (Team Leader), Milton, Ontario**

In reviewing the last half dozen or so newsletters that I have contributed to, I noticed that I'd never really explained the mechanics of a distribution but rather talked about the need and condition of the country and its children.

SCAW is not unique in the fact that it helps the desperate kids of the world but it is unique not only in the way it helps but also in the way it validates the delivery for you our donors.

Murray, being the old pedlar he is, knows that the unique selling propositions that SCAW has is the pictures that we send to you, our validation of a job well done. Because this picture is so important to you and us we take great pains to make it as good as possible, by Karsh we ain't. Sometimes weather, local conditions and actual shoot sites conspire against us and stretch our ingenuity. But let me leave this till later.

As you know each \$28 we receive from our donors goes to the purchase of a kit. In actual fact though each kit has \$30 worth of goods. The extra \$2 has been the supplement from the funds Murray has put in trust for SCAW from the sale of the Christmas tree farm(s). Inflation and the lower yield on these invested funds have put us in the enviable position of agonizing, as they say in the retail of a "price increase" All these monies are transferred, with as much lead time as possible, to our overseas partners, so that they can make the best deal possible in the price of the components of the kits. In Bangladesh our overseas partner is the Human Development Society. The kits are assembled and await the arrival of the SCAW team for actual distribution and picture taking, "the mechanics" that I mentioned before.

This year's team covered 2/3 of Bangladesh with most days starting at 7am and ending at 8 pm but with the odd midnight exception to this rule. The recipient children were identified by HDS before our arrival and given a slip that has their name, age, as well their parents' name. They are also notified of the distribution site and date. This slip and the information on it assures us, on the day of the distribution that we're getting the picture of the right child and that he or she receives the kit.

As you can well imagine the excitement generated by your gift and our arrival can

translate into hundreds and even thousands of people showing up at a distribution so its imperative that we have as secure a site as possible or bedlam will prevail and the kits will "evaporate" in a sea of need. These secure sites, though are sometimes not the most pleasant sites for a photographic session and in some instances do not reflect the flavour and texture of the country. Nevertheless our primary objectives of protecting the dignity and safety of each child override the photographic niceties. Oh if every child would smile. Its not a lack of appreciation, I assure you. Rather, apprehension, after hours of walking and waiting, then consternation at the strange people having you sit behind strangely lettered signs all the while pointing a little black box at you with muttered phrases in a language you can't understand. Smiles abound however, when each child finally gets to the head of the line and proudly marches off with his gift of a lifetime.

In Dhaka proper with its teeming millions, the very hint that some foreigners might show up can generate a massive crowd quicker than you can say peri-peri-winkle. Picture taking and distribution is particularly challenging. One of the Dhaka distributions was at a small health clinic on a narrow alley. The only place with light or room to set up for picture taking was on the third floor roof as those of you who receive those pictures will see. The children were dressed at street level thirty at a time then marched to the roof for your pictures then back to the second floor for their kits while the next thirty were getting sorted out.

The second Dhaka site was a walled courtyard at a newly formed university with part of an old bed against the wall that along with two broken window frames was the only visual relief from hundreds of square yards (I'm dating myself by not using square metres) of dirty wall.

In Pabna our distribution site was another walled compound and you guessed it more dirty walls so I took the liberty of snaring a passing goat who along with a pedal rickshaw supplied the background for you who received pictures from here.

Since we moved around the country so much we used just about every form of transportation available, other than water buffaloes; vans, pedal rickshaws, ferries, and various other things that floated dis-

guised as boats. Needless to say the kits had to be delivered in the same manner hopefully before we arrived. I say hopefully because the gods, the rivers, the roads and the interminable petty bureaucracy all conspired against anyone on a timetable in Bangladesh.

Such was the case in Baliakandi, a 48 hour transportation strike, a missed ferry and two truck breakdowns forced us into another 12 hour return trip a week later.

As I look back the fact that we even return with pictures constitutes a small miracle. But a tale of woe this is not, only a little "background" to give you a glimpse of what happens as we deliver your gift and try to get you the best picture possible for your SCAW album. But we know that you know its not the cosmetics that count but rather the fact that your gift of a lifetime got to a needy child. I've been pleased and proud to be your emissary.

### **THANK YOU:**

- Agfa Canada Inc for donating the film for the Bangladesh distribution.
- Black Photo Corp. for the photofinishing of the distribution.
- Challenge Litho and Lorraine Graves for the printing of this Newsletter.
- Champion Photochemistry Limited for publishing this Newsletter and supporting with the photofinishing.

BY PETER HOWARD, Toronto, Ontario

Very early in the acquaintance of an educated Bangladeshi two subjects invariably arise, initially in derogatory form. First, is international aid being used properly; and second, how can the huge problems facing Bangladesh be solved? The latter issue, understandably, is the subject of endless and earnest discussion. After 11 or 12 days in Bangladesh I am not qualified to even offer an opinion as to solutions. I'm still staggered by the impact of the enormity of the sheer numbers of human beings in the country and the effect of the human misery encountered.

There is no way that words can convey any sense of the overwhelming impact that travelling in Bangladesh had on me and the Canadian volunteers. At the end of each day, we'd find ourselves shaking our heads in a combination of sympathy, frustration and even awe at what these people face every day simply to survive to try and live another day. What I did take from the trip

was a confirmation of the central SCAW theory that in all event, and whatever is done at a political level, it is a very good thing that a child can go to bed warm and feeling that someone somewhere cares what happens to him or her. In Bangladesh, the energy this gives the child makes an incredible difference and if there is anything that I'd like the donors to understand is how much the kit means to the kid and his or her family. There may not be a solution to the terrible troubles in this unfortunate country but in human terms a SCAW kit makes a huge difference in ameliorating misery for the recipients.

Travel in the country is not for the faint hearted. There are few roads and it is stretching the lexicon somewhat to call some of what we went over roads. If you go there make sure you get Jaleel as your driver or else, abandon all hope. All the people in our liaison organization, the Human Development Society, were impressive and I don't

mean to slight any of them by singling out Anisul Islam as being one of the most truly remarkable persons I've ever met. He was unfailingly cheerful and helpful and most importantly he has a quiet sense of dignity and humanity experienced by everyone who has anything to ask him. To hear him talk to an old beggar at the Pabna ferry and elicit his life story of woe while at the same time giving his baksheesh with dignity for the recipient was merely exemplary of any number of times you'd look at him and say this is how a human being should be.

At the distributions we had the whole gamut of heart wrenching problems. Children were lame, crippled, blind, deaf, diseased and each and every one was in desperate need. After a few days in the country I found you had to find a way not to think about what you were seeing because depressing it didn't begin to cover it; prolonged thought had me conclude that Bangladesh was synonymous with the absence of hope. And yet, children are the same the world over and Shameem in Baliakandi and his counterparts in Natayanganj, Comilla and Mymensingh are the hope of this country if there is one. By doing something to make his life a little easier SCAW is doing a lot to allow the Bangladeshis eventually to help themselves.

BY LAURA HARPER, Ontario

This is being written following the last day of distribution in Bangladesh and as I pondered upon what to write the words of an Australian aboriginal woman came to mind:

If you have come to help me  
You are wasting your time.  
But if you have come because your liberation  
is bound up with mine  
Then let us work together.

And so, I sit here and ask myself, "Why did I come?"

For ten days the SCAW team has bounced about the countryside, waterways, and city streets of Dhaka by travelling in vans, a bus, bicycle rickshaws, ferry boats, row boats, and speed boats. We walked into one village after going as far as possible by speed boat - a village where there were no motorized vehicles and where electric power had just been put in the week before. After the noise, traffic jams and pollution of Dhaka, it was a refreshing change.

I have experienced a real sense of sharing, not only with my SCAW team-mates, but also with our overseas volunteers members of the HDS and a Dhaka Rotary Club.

Distribution day sees the result of a lot of hard work by our overseas agencies. To assemble articles for the kits, select the children, and organize the transportation of kits and children to the various sites is no easy task. At today's distribution, for example, 125 children were brought by boat from 18 different locations. To participate in the actual distribution of kits and to photograph the children is like eating icing on the cake. (I can hear my team-mates groaning at that comment).

Knowing that so many children will sleep more comfortably and that there are so many generous donors and dedicated people in our world brings me much personal satisfaction. Having lived with a Bangladesh family I have heard of the many projects underway to provide opportunities for the less fortunate to become self-sufficient.

This has been a memorable experience and to all who made it possible I am most grateful. I feel enriched by the sharing and caring and hopefully this seventh trip with SCAW will not be my last. I do know why I came.

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I am so happy to write this section of the Newsletter. The last 2 to 3 years have been difficult for me. The aging process was taking its toll - 100 hour weeks were not unusual. Little did I realize that our Lord was busy preparing the way. Lorraine Graves had gradually become involved in every facet of this program since her inception in the fall of 1985. She loves SCAW and has an uncanny ability in getting along with people. A few months ago we added her to our Executive Board. On Monday, January 18th, she accepted our appointment as 2 I.C. (without pay) and already amazing improvements and developments are happening. When you hear her gentle voice on the telephone answering tape, please introduce yourself and get to know her.

By Murray Dryden