

THE CAMBODIAN CHRONICLES

THEN

January 2008

I'm sitting at a desk, a somewhat dust covered desk. It is 5:00 AM and I am wide awake. On the desk are some dusty papers and a twisted, dried rubber band that is more the caricature of a prehistoric worm than what it was created for. Also with me are the dessicated remains of several insects, the classification of which will remain a mystery. Added to this collection are a couple of dung caps gratis of marauding Jing Jack lizards, and a plaster-of-Paris cross, painted brown to resemble wood. I am somewhat of the same mind regarding this cross as Bob Cratchit was regarding the lone coal of his stove. Having but one ember and a weak imagination he found it difficult to stay warm. The cross, resembling an ornate fluer de lis and bedecked with a singularly poor imitation of a diamond in its center, barely summons thoughts of Calvary. Nevertheless, in this nearly cross-less land it is a welcome addition to the desk.

I apologize for that last paragraph. It must sound like I still have jet lag even though we arrived in Cambodia five days ago. On our way here we spent a night with Japanese friends in California, fellow seminarians with Yuko, who are now pastors at a church near Los Angeles.

Since we've returned, Yuko has been shopping twice and delighted they were missions accomplished, that her proficiency in speaking the language carried her over any barriers. We have already paid to have our visas for thirteen months. They were supposed to be delivered today, but will be a day late--business as usual.

Rents are much more expensive than before. That is difficult for us but maybe a sign the infrastructure is improving, which is a good thing for the native population.

Yuko and the boys are fine. Corey has a bit of a sniffle and Caleb, despite precautions has a dozen mosquito bites. We are concerned about the mosquito borne Dengue Fever here. Yuko will be helping with the APFMMA (Asian Pacific Free Methodist Mission Association) accounting and the American Mission accounting when Rebecca travels to Hong Kong this year. As we already mentioned Yuko will help the development group, Reiksmei, too.

I was talking with our neighbor two days ago and she mentioned she is originally from Phnom Penh. She was sent off to another province during the Khmer Rouge days. Her father and brother were both executed. There is so much pain under the surface in this land. It is enough to make one hang his or her lyre on the willows, to retire from joy and hope. It is amazing these folks can laugh and sing. Surely it is the grace of God. I pray we can be ministers of His reconciliation.

NOW

May 2008

We arrived back in Cambodia last week after a trip to Japan. Yuko had a lump on her neck. The doctor suggested we go to Thailand to get her checked out. Since we needed to get Corey's Japanese passport anyway, we opted to do the check-up at the same time. While in Japan our family had ten visits to the hospital. Yuko was diagnosed as having a small non-malignant lump, Corey recovered from his fever, and Caleb received medicine that has helped him to stop coughing after

having an unrelenting cough for a year. It was a successful adventure. Yuko also spoke at the chapel of the FM Osaka Christian College, a couple of churches, and a mission conference. Caleb and I played with cars and trains. We all have different ministries.

When we returned to Cambodia I had to pick up our van early the next morning so that the parking lot could be redone. The van had a flat and a dead battery. I had some help from a garage although it was a public holiday. It took two guys to loosen the lug nuts. After all was done the car died on the ramp of the gas station—completely empty. I gave the garage guys a dollar for fruit, and a few tracts, and they pushed me up to the pump.

On Monday of this week I saw a fellow sniffing glue. I drove up to him and offered him a tract. I shared with him about the results of glue-sniffing. He laughed. I gave him some baby crackers, it was all I had. He asked for some water and I gave him what I had. He smiled exposing his teeth and blood in his mouth. I told him of Jesus' love, and he laughed good-naturedly. He seemed to be acquainted with the Gospel.

A few days later I went to Treuslaar, on an island, to visit Pastor Gideon. He just redid the roof on the church and House of Joy childcare center. He teaches everyday at the center. He is a busy, committed man of God. Miu Ling from Hong Kong translated when I felt in trouble with the language. We talked about the need to see our committees as the next area of focus for our ministry. It is here that we need to have vision and implementation. In this way the local believers will feel a sense of ownership of the ministry.

After this I returned by ferry to the other side and visited Prek Thei. I met Pastor Kung Ti and set a date for the next pastor's meeting. We'll have a lesson on June 7th regarding the interaction between leadership and administration. In addition we'll talk about initiating a new insurance plan for the pastors and mission office staff.

I also talked to Samgol Sar while there. Please pray for the Sar family. Samgol's son has been one of our childcare students. He is a senior in high school. He got drunk a few weeks ago, threw a stone and killed someone on a motorcycle. He is in police custody now. His father said he gave him a Bible. There is a Christian policeman doing a Bible study at the jail.

Samgol's brother, Samouen, is our first and oldest pastor. He was taken to the hospital more than a week ago. He was convulsing and vomiting. The doctors do not know the cause. He is still in the hospital. I visited him Wednesday night with some of the young people. We sang: "Knyom Ban Somrait Chet," "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus," in low tones, and prayed for Pastor Samouen.

The next day I went to Kompot down by the ocean. It takes several hours to get there. Davis, our administrator, and Philemon, a student and translator went too. Davis is doing a pig project. I went with Pastor Gan to do some visitation. We will have a special service for children next month and afterward I will share a message with the adults. Pastor Gan is a farmer without a lot of training. He has been conducting the services but there have been none for a month. He said that people stopped coming.

The next day I talked with Philemon (same as above), the college student dorm representative on our Higher Education Committee, and Mark, our new dorm supervisor. They have had a problem. Several weeks ago the former supervisor and a graduate moved back into the dorm without permission. It has caused a stir among the students. I called

the two stowaways today and let them know we need a letter of apology, a month's rent, and a request to move in again. I told them to have it for me Sunday. We'll see what happens.

The two present leaders shared they have an authority problem in the dorm. I suggested we have a warning/punishment system, and encouraged them to create one and submit it to the committee.

We ended today with a birthday party for Helen from the Philippines. Yuko baked a cake and Caleb helped eat it. Helen replaced us as the Pastor of Kampong Cham. I'll be going there with her next month for the church meeting. I'll encourage the church family and help with the meeting.

Folks ask what kinds of things go on here so hopefully this account has been an example of ministry here. This is not my usual job description: I'm filling in for the Margins while they are in the Philippines. Yuko likes to remind folks it is a temporary position. We'll see in a couple of months what the Lord thinks about it. Regardless, this was a meaningful week for me. I would ask that our prayer team keep all of the items mentioned before the Throne.

I'm sorry we haven't communicated very much this last half a year. It has been a time filled with opportunity and blessing. Thanks for helping to make it so.

We pray the Lord bless you in your labors with Him.

To you who find Him precious (I Pet. 2:7), Chris for the Wilkins Family

Ps. If Caleb had written this letter it would have been more interesting. In his first three months here he had the chicken pox, a chronic cough that would wake him at night, a case of worms, and a fall (from his high chair) that required after hours x-rays. He is fine now. We have a date to play with his trucks this evening.