



The Douglas Mendel Cambodian Relief Fund

The Douglas Mendel Cambodian Relief Fund ♦ 1311 River Rock Dr. Montrose, CO 81403 ♦ PN: (970) 240-6120 ♦ Email: wndrlst49@hotmail.com January 2009



The vibrant colors and smells of the food markets in Cambodia

One of the great joys of traveling anywhere is finding and visiting food markets in other towns, whether they are across town or half-way around the world.

Being that I have visited Cambodia 15 times since 06/97, I have taken in the sights of many markets, where the vegetable, fruits and other items are a sight to behold with the visual beauty of the display of colorful fruits, a wide variety of vegetables and the interesting sights of the meats available. Being a vegetarian for 30 years I pinch my nose and walk briskly by the aisles of seafood, pig heads, beef and who-knows-what else.

The vegetables which include a variety of potatoes, string beans, scallions, corn, eggplant, broccoli, cauliflower to name just a few are a menagerie of colors, smells and artwork in the way they are displayed. I have spent a lot of time just walking the markets looking at the vegetables thinking how much

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THE SIMPLE PLEASURES...

One of the greatest joys I experience in Cambodia is getting a shave and a haircut for a couple bucks.

A couple days before I left Cambodia in late October for USA, I had my tuk-tuk driver take me to a barber. I didn't want to go to a storefront as that is a little more expensive and it is not as unique and authentic an experience as getting a shave and a haircut from a guy who has his little business set up on the side of the road.

After 10-15 minutes of riding around, my tuk-tuk driver pulled to the side of the road, and there were 2 barbers with chairs and mirrors ready for customers to be pampered for a while. I got out of the tuk-tuk and the barber motioned for me to sit in his chair. He put a sheet over my chest from the neck down and a small towel around my neck.

In America I always get a #2 cut, which is a buzz cut since I don't have too much hair, and short is good. In Cambodia, the barber uses a type of cutters that cuts the hair in ever-so-small increments. I can see the little bits of hair falling from my head to the ground watching in the mirror. It must take at least 20 minutes for him to 'buzz' my head the slow way, and it seems like he really takes his craft seriously and makes sure it is even all the way around. As he cuts the hair, I can hear and see the traffic of motorbikes, cars and trucks cruising by at a slow pace, as there is no need to hurry and rush to do errands or business in Cambodia.



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Battambang Fire Station

When I first started helping the station in October 2004, I started by bringing radios that were bought at Wal-Mart. Over a 2 year period I took over 7 sets of radios for the 14 fire fighters and they worked fine. A great improvement over the cell phones they had to communicate with one another when an incident occurred. Over time though, I received feedback that the radios only had a short range of communication, maybe 2-4 miles. Eventually, the Major (in charge of the station) asked for Motorola radios with a charging stand, that could be bought in Battambang that would have a greater range and would last longer.

During the trip in February 2008, I bought 4 radios for the firefighters and a cell phone for the Major, whose number would be broadcast to the community for them to call when a fire occurred. 911, as we know it here in the USA, is non-existent in Cambodia. It was amazing to feel that for just several hundred dollars, the beginnings of a communication system was going to be up and running, that far exceeded the cell phones the firefighters previously used and the radios I had given that they relied upon for a couple years.

For this trip, I bought 3 more Motorola radios, which is all the Major wanted and for about \$800 total (7 radios and the cell phone), they have probably the best communication system of the 6 fire stations that my non profit helps in Cambodia. ■



THE SIMPLE PLEASURES...

Interestingly, I see a guy pushing a cart of baseball hats in the mirror. I lost my hat on a bus ride several days earlier and I wanted to wave him down or walk over to him to buy a hat. But, I was enjoying the moment too much, and as I don't speak Khmer, it would have been too hard to explain to the barber that I wanted to buy a hat and for him to take the sheet off. If I had left momentarily, he might think I was trying to leave without paying. So I just continued to enjoy the haircut and know that I could buy a hat at the market later. It would have been cool to buy a hat from a roving hat vendor, though!

He gets done with my hair and I motion to by 3 days growth of beard. He configures the chair so I lay down and he tears a little packet to get a clean blade to shave my face. He lathers my face and starts to methodically shave my face in short segments. After about 7 minutes or so, he relathers my face, feels for stubble here and there and continues to shave until my face is completely smooth and clean. A great way to start the day!! ■



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Food markets in Cambodia

fun it would be to buy some and spend time cutting, chopping and preparing them for an amazing meal with fresh spices thrown in for good measure.

My Cambodian friends know I'm a vegetarian, and I have been treated to countless home-cooked meals of amazing curries, mixes vegetables, soups, collard greens, fresh cut potatoes, bean curd and salads. It is such a treat to sit down with friends for an hour or longer to relax, have an ice cold Angkor beer and taste delicious food.

And for the fruit, OH MY GOSH!!!!!! The Pineapple, Oranges, Apples, Mangoes, Papaya, Jackfruit, Coconut, Banana, Watermelon, Logan, Rambutan and Lychee I have tasted either on fruit plates or in fruit smoothies. When it is 90 degrees with 90 % humidity, nothing beats an ice-cold pineapple-banana smoothie, then a mixed fruit smoothie to while away the afternoon! And it doesn't get any better than sitting in a beach chair on one of the great beaches in Sihanoukville watching the beautiful sunsets.

Just thinking about the fresh vegetables and fruits can transport me to Cambodia in a flash. I guess that will have to do until 2010! ■



Cumulative totals for all the gear donated to the 6 fire stations

| | Pants | Coats | Boots (pr) | Gloves (pr) | Hoods | Helmets | Suspenders |
|---------------|------------|------------|----------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Phnom Penh | 78 | 92 | 52 | 29.5 | 59 | 36 | 13 |
| Sihanoukville | 14 | 16 | 15 | 10 | 17 | 11 | 7 |
| Battambang | 24 | 31 | 8 | 10.5 | 9 | 7 | 7 |
| Siem Reap | 11 | 20 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 5 | 7 |
| Kampot | 10 | 14 | 14 | 10 | | 11 | 14 |
| Ratanakiri | 2 | 14 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 12 | 8 |
| Royal Palace | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | | 4 | 10 |
| TOTAL | 149 | 197 | 112 pr. | 82 pr. | 98 | 86 | 67 |

The 2 fire trucks are operating wonderfully, helping to protect life and property in Prey Nop (near Sihanoukville) and Ban Lung, Ratanakiri Province.

In addition to the gear donated to the 6 fire stations, hundreds of pounds of childrens' clothing, stuffed animals, dental supplies, vitamins and supplements, educational supplies, latex gloves and mannequins for CPR training for the staff at M'lop Tapang have been donated to the organization (www.mloptapang.org). Also, 5 GPS units, 15 camera traps that photograph wildlife a desktop computer and printer and about 25 digital cameras have been given to Bokor National Park and a few digital cameras to Angkor Protected Landscape. Also 216 fire extinguishers have been bought in Cambodia that have been donated to the fire stations in Kampot, Battambang, Siem Reap, Ratanakiri as well as the national parks at Bokor and Angkor Protected Landscapes. If people would like to make year-end donations, please get in touch with me at wndrlst49@hotmail.com or (970) 240-6120 or at the address at the top of the newsletter.

Thank you for the amazing, phenomenal support! All the best for the holidays and a healthy and happy 2009!!! ■