



*Cambodia Diary of
Sr. Ann Catherine Veierstahler, SCSJA, RN
Sister of Charity of St. Joan Antida*

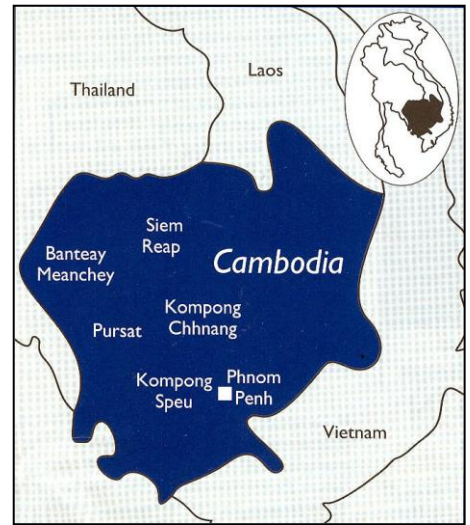
February – July, 1980

*My story of 5 Months spent with the Cambodian Refugees
In Nong Samet Refugee Camp
On the Border of Thailand and Cambodia
We, an American Red Cross Team,
Had skills to teach*

And lots of love to give and to get from the people we loved.

“And in the end, that’s what it really comes down to.

All we could really do was show that the rest of the world cared.”



Dedicated to my dad – Frank John Veierstahler



*This photo truly tells the story:
 "My Soul clings fast to You. Your right hand holds me." Psalm 63*

February 13, 1980 Wednesday

Thanks Lord!

Received the news of going to Thailand!

This will be a great enriching experience. Fill every fiber of my being Lord with Your Presence so that it is you who become Present to all I touch.

You lead us in the way you desire. I trust in your great plan of life.

Members of the team # 4



Jane McInnes, RN, Ted Mazza, Pat Hooper, RN
 Sister Mary Vincent, RN, Katie Hall, RN
 Sister Ann Catherine Veierstahler, RN, John Delcambre, MD



John Delcambre – 33 approx. –
Our team MD
4th (year) surgical resident from
Texas

Seems to want the best for our
group

Sister Ann Catherine is with
Dr. John (left) in front of clinic
and Sr. Mary Vincent (below).

Sr. Mary Vincent – 42 –
Daughter of Charity
Emmitsburg, Maryland

Loves community life, pray together
Caring for older Sisters now
A charming person



Jane McInnes – 45 approx. – housewife 2 sons 17&21
Public Health Nurse
She was sick much of the time.
She spent time in a Bangkok Nursing Home.
She had a very kind, pleasant personality.

Kathleen (Katie) Hall – 30 – ER nurse
Former nun – Seems to be struggling to find herself

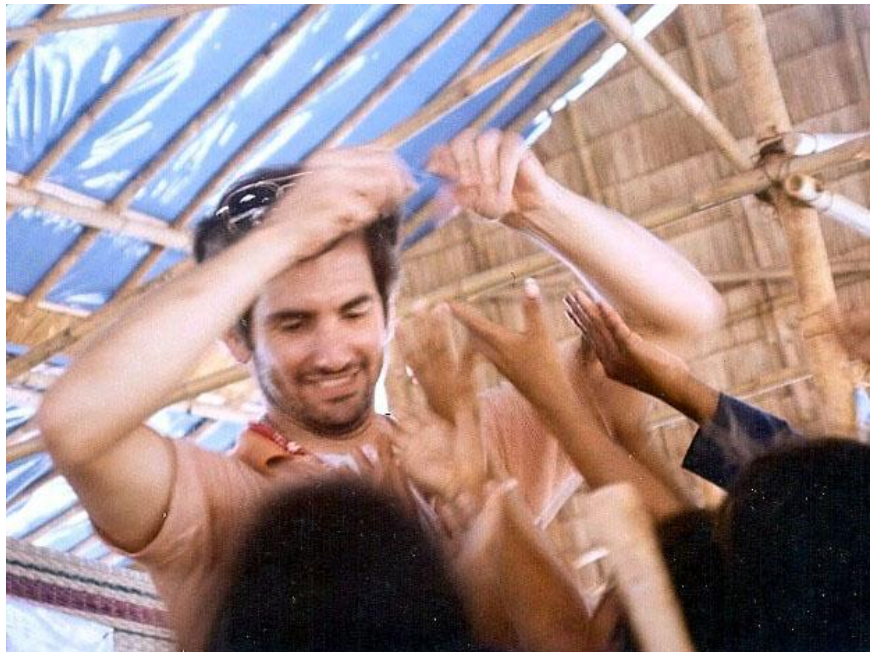


**Patricia (Pat)
Hooper – 32 –
ICU (nurse)**

She is a quiet,
gentle, sensitive
person.
Very beautiful
woman!

Photo by Ted Mazza

(Ted) Charles Mazza – 39 –
(of Red Cross blood bank)
At one time was going to be a
minister.
Great love for his wife, Barbara,
and two daughters 3 & 5.
Has beautiful home.
He loves outdoors, sports.
He is very friendly.
He is loved by all – just like my
dad.



February 28, 1980 Thursday

I leave St. Anthony's quietly & realize this work is totally for You alone Lord.

I find my truest support in You – God Alone! - & my Sisters.

Sr. Anne McDonald has been so kind - She truly gives up her life for others –
Stands in the back as others move ahead.

I am most grateful for all my Sisters in Community & love each in a personal way.

So very sorry if I hurt them!



St. Joan Antida Thouret

*My Journey started in Milwaukee, Wisconsin as a Sister of Charity of St. Joan Antida~
Working as an RN in an inner-city hospital*

February 29, 1980 Friday

Departure Mass – Fr. Francis said the Mass, gave the blessing.
Fr. Francis & Sisters!
Lord, what Peace I am feeling deep within my being.
How I treasure our gift of Community.
Yes, I go as “Your” Presence among our needy & suffering brethren.
In the blessings and embraces I received from my Sisters,
I felt much reconciliation.
The supper was a quiet, peaceful sharing –
I am so grateful for the support of my Sisters.

March 1, 1980 Saturday

Lord, bless all my Sisters at West Allis as I share in this meal and love with them.
All my years spent there have been a preparation for this mission.
Bless April Irek & Steve on their wedding.

March 2, 1980 Sunday

Milwaukee (to) Washington (DC)
Lord, everything has gone so smooth & I am most grateful.
The lauds were special – thanks to Sr. Andrea.
“Be not afraid!”
All have been kind to me at the airport –
Sr. Sophia, Lucy, Cecilia, Barb, Mom, Norm, Irene, Etc.
Bob, Gerry, Joe & Virge, Marvin, Jeanne Seals.

March 3, 1980 Monday

Mass at St. Patrick's – Washington DC

Team: Sr. Mary Vincent, John, Ted, Jane, Pat, Katie

Lord, what an enriching day! Our team is great – beautiful spirits.

Ted looks like Tom Dooley!

All the people we met at the Red Cross building were so kind & gracious –

They would do anything for us.

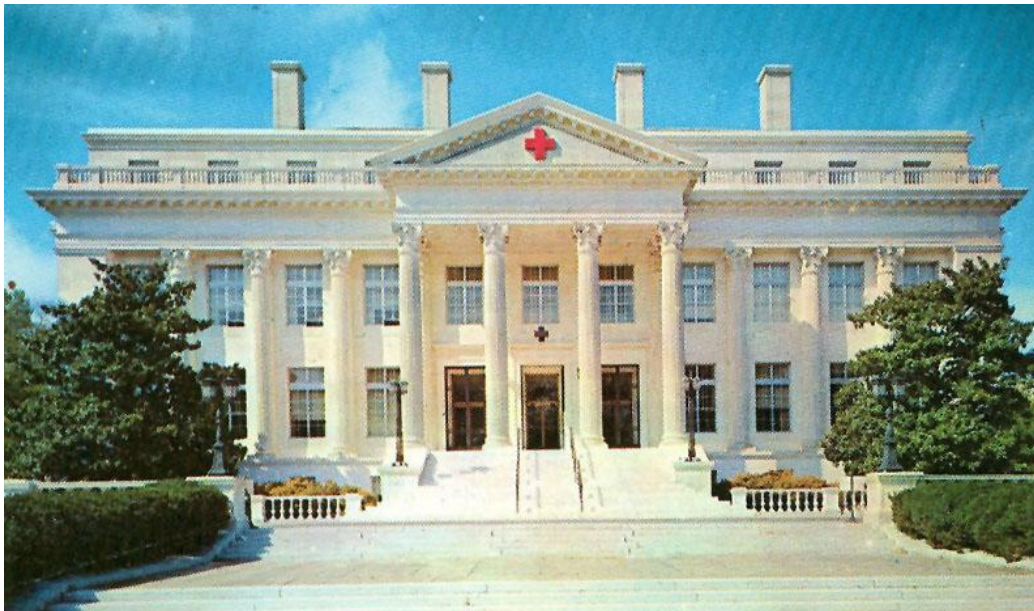
Our dinner was pleasant – a very Christian Spirit among all.

The International Red Cross is a most impressive organization.

Lord, how could I ever say thanks for this great opportunity –

For Sr. Vincent who is so much like me.

The Doctor attended Mass with us.



*American Red Cross National Headquarters Building
Washington, D.C.*

*A fitting memorial "to the heroic women of the Civil War,"
Completed in 1917, the headquarters building and
Two adjacent office buildings are the operating center for the
Worldwide services of the American Red Cross*

March 4, 1980 Tuesday

Eph 4, 3 "Preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace!"

On a plaque in St. Pat's Church – Washington DC

Lord, what a beautiful Spirit among our team –

Very gentle, caring people.

The above quote could very well be a motto for our trip.

Joan Johnson was charming.

I seemed so overwhelmed by all the information esp. by the Dr. & nurse
who were there – however, every situation is so unique & always changing.

Our dinner at Watergate – the famous place – was again delightful!

I love Washington DC – the majesty of its buildings, Spirit of the people.

March 5, 1980 Wednesday

Lord, we are off! What a great experience!

Sr. Mary Vincent's Sisters (about 8) met us at the Dallas airport –

It was like having our own Sisters there –

All so friendly and happy.

Plane ride accommodations great!

Alaska's mountains – snow capped - breathe taking!

Lord, I look at those huge air wings, the vast land of desolated,

Serene Beauty, magnificent skies and realize man is greater than all this.

How little we are in relation to this, yet how great is each individual soul!

March 6, 1980 Thursday

12 hours were added to this day so we will always be at opposite ends of day & night with USA.

I sat back in the plane quietly admiring with wonder & awe Your vast, magnificent creation.

Enjoyed our layover in Japan where we met a young man from Thailand. There were many refugees in the airport on their way to a new home.

This will be a great Spiritual retreat for me – growing in Your love.

*Postcard:
Nippon
Budohkan Hall
and Imperial
Palace
Tokyo, Japan*

**Card sent to my Sisters from Japan – I wrote:**

Stopped here on the way to Hong Kong where we will stay overnight. Our flight was beautiful! The snow covered Alaska – fantastic sight! Oh the great majesty of our God – who could ever create such wonders.

We have now been traveling about 20 hour's straight and have another 5 – 6 hours before we reach our hotel.

Our team is great. The Doctor is always concerned about all of us. We will be spending a few days in Bangkok for more briefing and rest before going to the camps. We stopped in Chicago instead of Seattle.

March 7, 1980 Friday

Arrived in Bangkok after spending night in Hong Kong!

We were received at the Bangkok airport by ICRC.

Traffic here is 10 times worse than Rome. There are many accidents with serious injuries.

At the ICRC headquarters we began briefing and filling out forms, etc.

There certainly was a lack of warmth that we received at our national office.

This is war country and we are to always do as the soldiers say regardless of needs. It is important to stay together always and wear our Red Cross badges. I will always wear my American one for I want all to know I am American. We really need strong team Spirit among us for support!

March 8, 1980 Saturday

We attended Mass at Holy Redeemer Church in Bangkok.

We participated in intense briefing!

It is so important to really respect all the people. We are guests in another country strictly to serve medical needs. The Thai are very warm, loving people who would do anything for us!

People need a tremendous amount of love, caring, gentleness, same as what I am used to at St. Anthony Hospital!

March 9, 1980 Sunday

We enjoyed touring Bangkok today. We took a boat trip. I was impressed by the utter simplicity of how some of the people live.

The Main Temple was high with so many mosaics.

The Palace of the King was big and majestic. It had a quiet awe around it.

We saw the Emerald Buddha and went to a Buddhist service. There was chanting continuously. At the Rose Garden, we enjoyed dancing, sword fight and cock fight.



*Postcard:
The entrance of
Wat Pho
Bangkok,
Thailand*

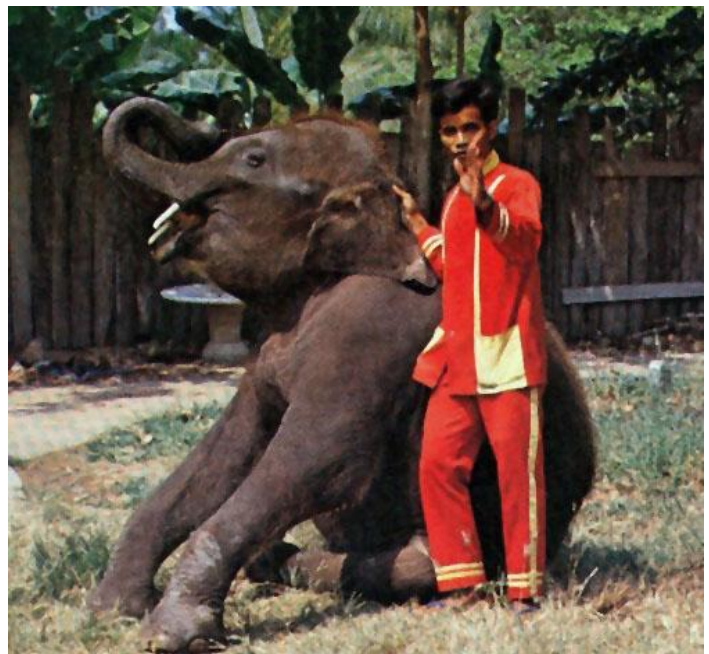
*In front of the
entrance are
Marble standing
figures
Makhopolo,
the Italian
tourist found in
China many
centuries ago.*

*Postcard:
Floating Market can only be seen
in Thailand. Tourists like them
very much.*



*Postcard:
Thai Actor and Actress,
a posture of “Lakorn” Thai-Theatrical-play
mostly admired and enjoyed by the tourists.*

*Postcard:
An intelligent child-elephant taught to dance to
a Thai folk song and play mouth organ at the
crocodile farm, Samut Prakarn Province,
Thailand*



March 10, 1980 Monday

We left Bangkok today to go to Watthana, the home of all medical personnel. There we had another briefing.

Lord, what simple, peaceful people, who although they have very little, seem pleased.

Our camp is so well done – in these few weeks, they built a great establishment.

Sr. Vincent and I sleep together – very homey – mosquito net on. The whole place is well organized.

We eat in a big mess hall.

Breakfast is free – eggs, toast, coffee and fruit.

Dinner - Fruit or something to drink

Supper – Thai or American food (I eat Thai)

Excellent shower and toilet facilities!

Our “Home” in “Barnes Village” Watthana



Sister Ann Catherine with Daughters of Charity



*Representatives of 18 Countries of the world lived a simple life
Facilities were basic but we did have fun and found support.*

Quiet time was spent daily in reflection.

We had the Presence of the Blessed Sacrament in our hut.

This experience touched my life forever.

March 11, 1980 Tuesday

The weather is hot but tolerable. I enjoyed time writing letters!

We had briefing at our camp and Aran. (*Aranyaprathet, Thailand*)

Lord, I thank you for this relatively free day to gather my thoughts and organize myself.

I love the very slow style of life – I guess it is the only way to beat the heat!

Birds are always singing and roosters wake us up.

Somehow there are just so many great things happening. I would like to capture and hold on to each moment but must relax, let go and soak in all these experiences.

I enjoy meeting so many people.

March 12, 1980 Wednesday

We had our first visit to our work camp – Samet – on the Border.

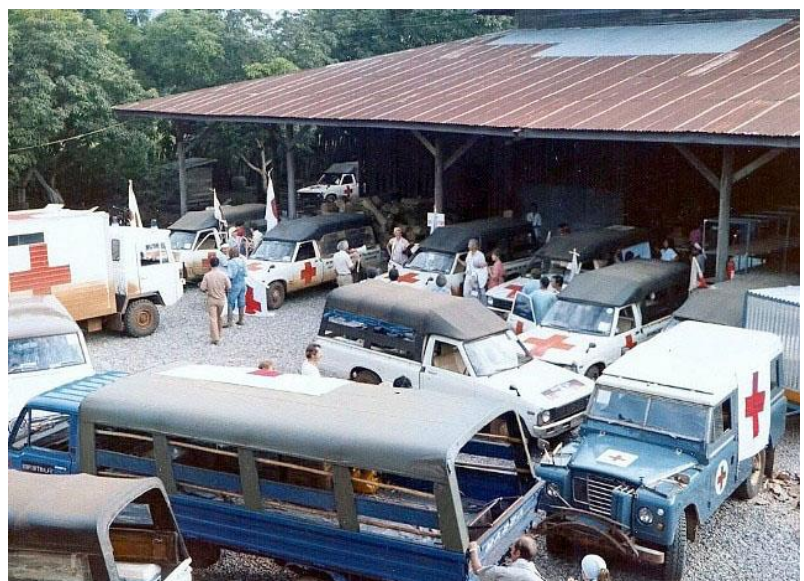


From Milwaukee Journal

Lord, what can I say? I'm lost for words! What HOPE is there? Where are the people going? You love them.

- A year old baby looks three months old.
- A young man wants to go to the US to join his family
- A mother crying because her baby is dying
- Children laughing – “ok” “bye”
- Holding out hands for more Batt
- Little beggars already at this age.
- Malnourished children – so many
- A man begging to be joined with his wife
- Barren land cut down by war
- Dusty, warm, difficult to keep clean

Each morning we picked up our supplies and went on our way to the refugee camp.



Daily scenery on the way to the camp



*Our final destination was home to 100,000 men,
women and children in Camp Nong Samet
(Halfway around the world from where we started!)
It was located inside the border of Cambodia where people came to find peace.*



March 13, 1980 Thursday

Began our clinic.

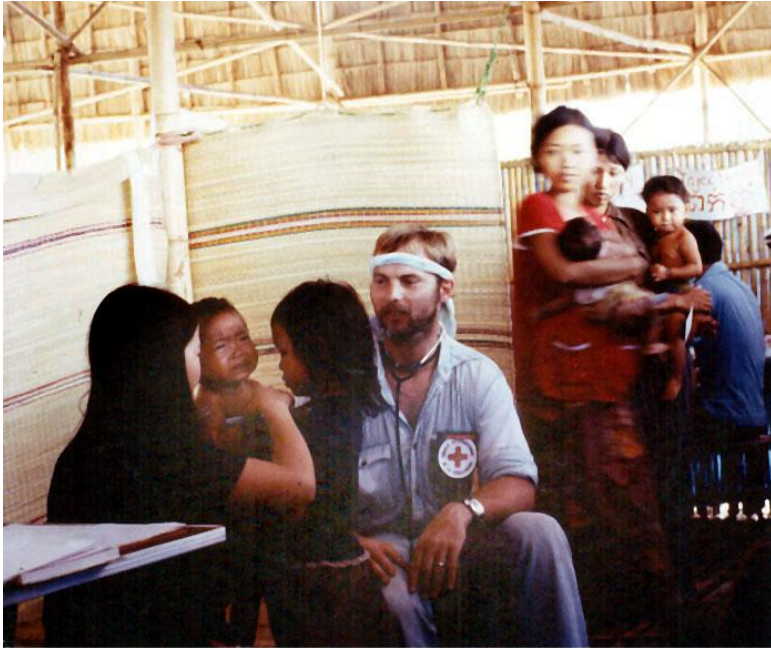
Main objective – teaching the Khmers so they can take over.

We emphasize no drugs, rather personal responsibility, self care, cleanliness, home-made remedies.

We are making posters to hang in the clinic so patients can read as they wait.

Many people see us off each day. Behind the smiles, I see so much fear as they huddle together and we hear shelling in the background.

Lord, the work seems so massive but You alone can do all things!

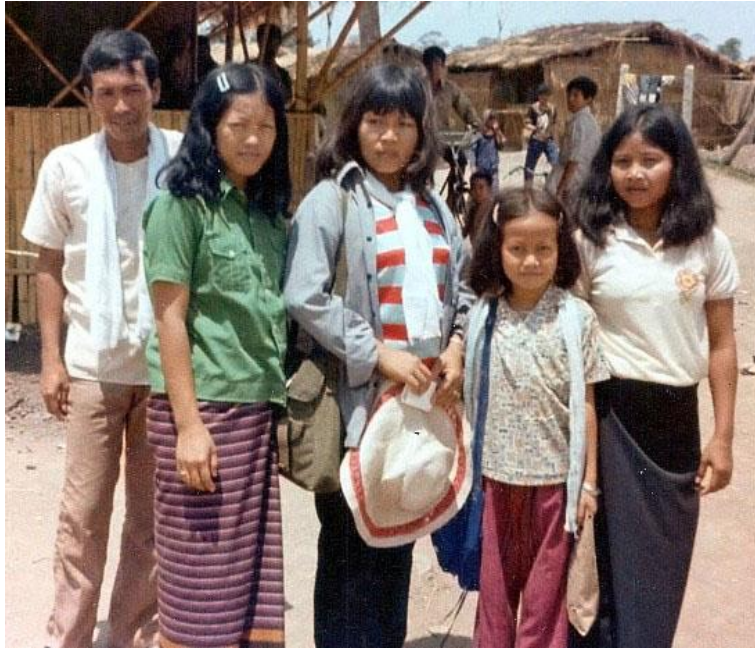


*Dr. John Delcambre,
a 4th year surgical resident from
Temple, Texas
(Temple VA Hospital) at work in our first
clinic in Nong Samet*

*Patricia (Pat) Hooper, RN with
some of her students at the clinic
Pat is an ICU nurse from
Summer County Memorial
Hospital in Gallatin, Tennessee*



**My first job in the clinic was to care for wounds
Always training other Khmers**



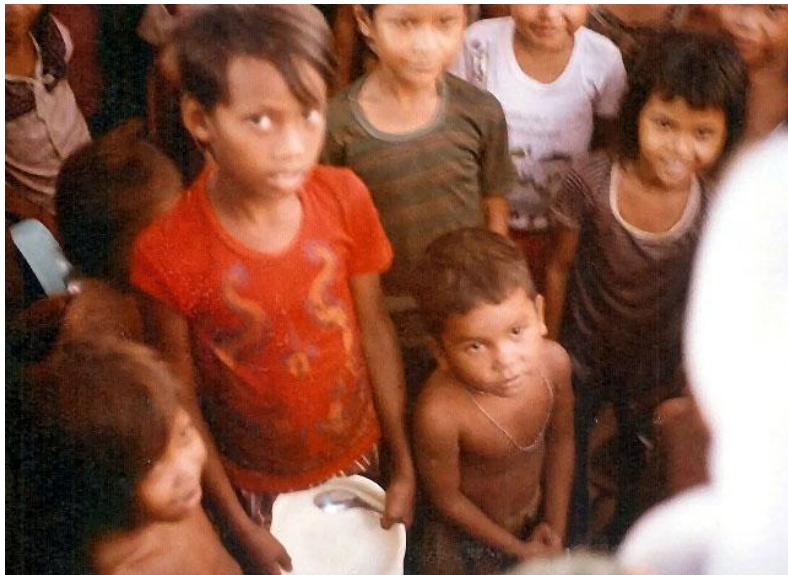
*My team who helped me with “wound care”
No antibiotics but cleaning wounds with boiled water daily promoted miracle healing!*



*Our Volunteers: Important volunteer jobs
Interpreting, recording, teaching, personal care
Everything we did was done with our volunteers so they could learn –
And they were so anxious to learn!
Their daily pay: a bag of rice and a chance to learn to better themselves!
Keep in mind: most professional people lost their lives and therefore
we were training new people to care for basic health needs.
Also, they were anxious to use any English they knew and to always learn more.
That is why we always had interpreters so willing to help us.*



*Our” pharmacists” trained by the Red Cross
Only very basic medications were used.
The students were awarded “certificates”.*



*I did a little teaching ~ numbers, letters and English to the children.
It was hard to have regular classes because the whole camp moved so often.
The children were so anxious to learn! It was a “fun” time together.*

March 14, 1980 Friday

Took a walk around the camp.

Masses of children – many alone

Black market – much drug abuse

Thatched huts – held together by straw - Each has private rooms for sleeping

Bathroom situation – extremely poor – Big pits with logs over them.

Little children carrying smaller ones.

Everything so dirty since roads and land dry

Activity very limited since hot all the time.

Some people have been very well off – built wells, nice homes

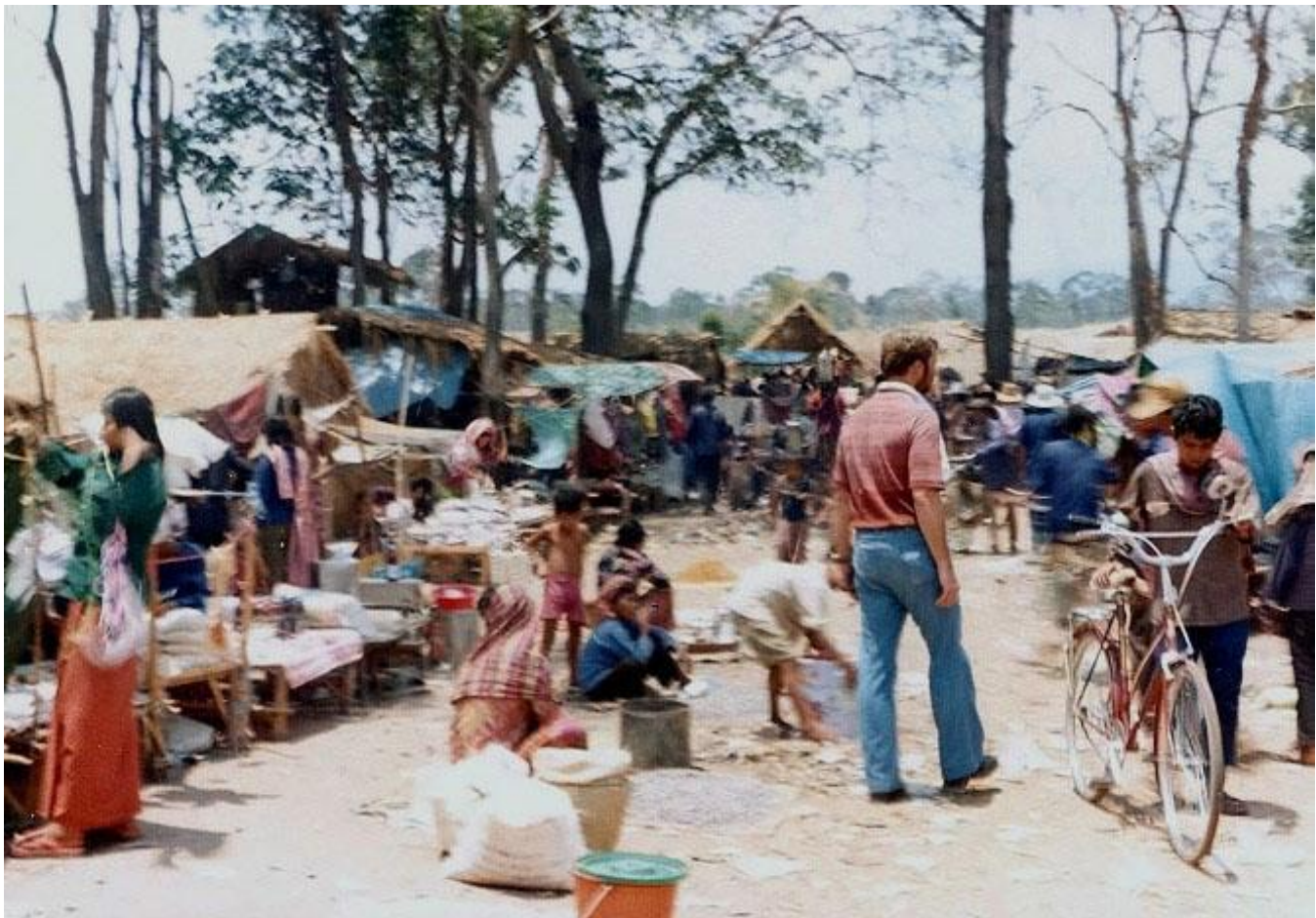
But the whole situation is so tragic; one must become stoic and hard – show lots of love.



March 15, 1980 Saturday

We have a fine staff! Our biggest problem is people have become dependent on drugs or else come to sell them on the black market.

All the black market along the roads were closed down. They sell goods at more than 200% to the Cambodian people and cause much congestion on the roads. Some walk miles or ride a bus to the camp to sell goods!

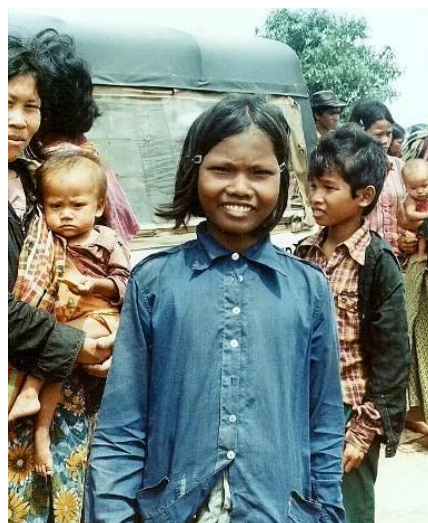


March 16, 1980 Sunday

My nurse in the treatment area is doing quite well.

What a joy to see our little orphan girl – age 14 – with a severe neck wound, come back to us so nice and clean, hair washed, smiling. Our goal is again to build up the self pride of these beautiful women.

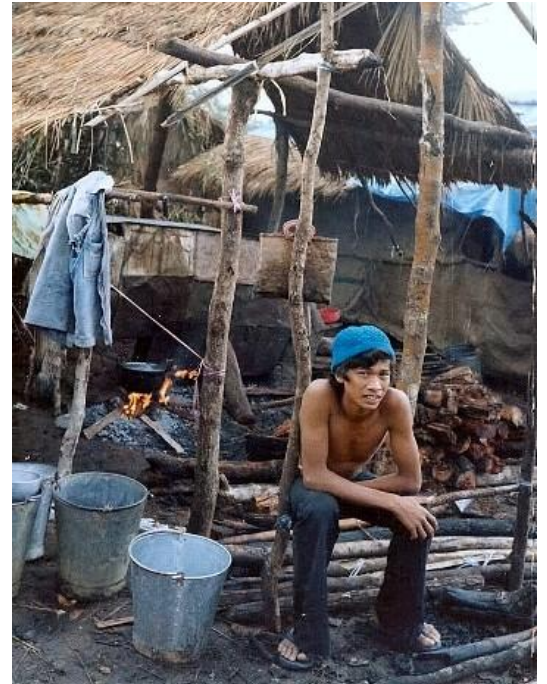
One woman, so unkempt, cried because her husband left her to marry another. It is so difficult to raise her child alone!



March 17, 1980 Monday

Our clinic is coming along very well.

Lord, I cried today as some of the teenagers and others told of their desire to go to "America." I never realized how free I am, how very gifted I am thanks to Your great generosity. Help me to be gentle, to listen, and to show compassion to a deeply suffering people. So many young people – 10 – 15, are literally on their own. They sleep out in the open, have only the clothes on their back. We have sinned and we see here the result of sin, but please bring back peace to these beautiful people.



March 18, 1980 Tuesday

I walked around the camp.

Such misery and poverty yet a beautiful baby well cared for in their midst.

People digging wells in primitive ways. Some little huts so neat, bed, kitchen

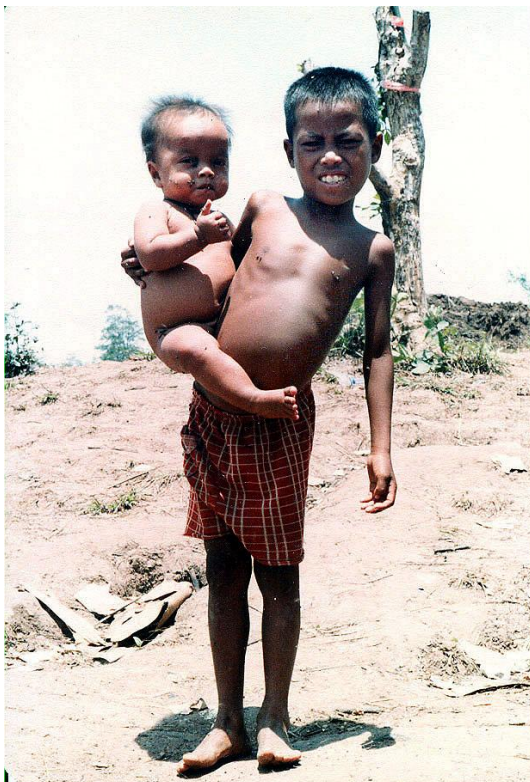
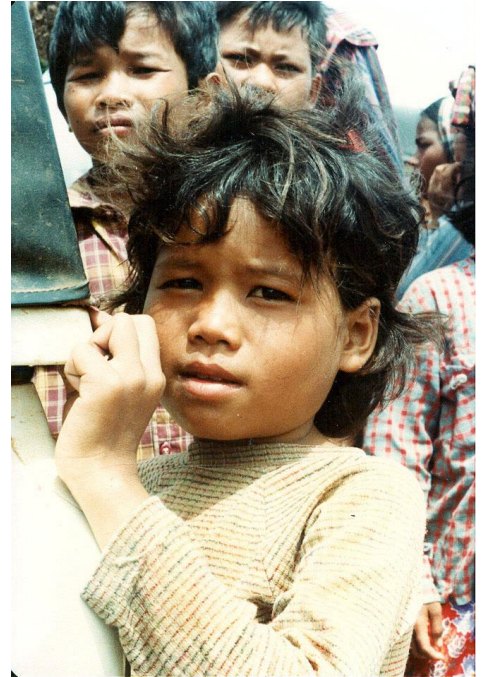
All equipment made of bamboo. Will this village stand within this rain coming?

We see many wounds – combat. Our nurses in the treatment area are doing well.

Lord, these little children so uncared for, so alone. Many are extremely thin or big stomach. Many don't have shoes and get worms. Keep your hand on them and show your gentle, caring love!



*It is so easy to fall in
love with the children!*



*Notice the bugs, swollen bellies, scant hair, and
thin bodies.*

Children caring for children – a common sight.

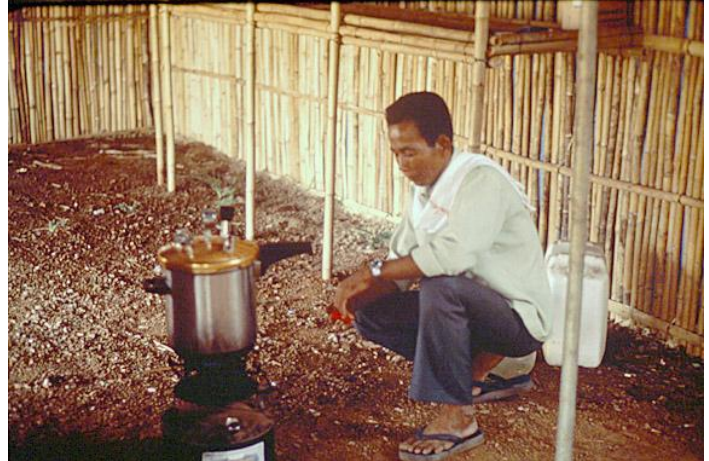
March 19, 1980 Wednesday

Working in Supplementary Feeding Center with BeBe.

I love my work here Lord and see so much need for this. Please help me discipline the children yet not be too stern. Rather I wish to show your love and caring. The children look very happy – love entertainment. I started to count with a few of them and soon had 500 around me.

Fill my heart with affection and warmth so that my presence may be Your loving Presence. I trust in Your infinite love for each person although there just seem masses of people before me.

The women (and men) of the refugee camp helped with the cooking.



*No matter how many children came to eat, there was always enough food.
Catholic Relief Services provided the food and support for preparing the noon meal.
The meal consisted of rice and at times a little chicken and vegetables if this food was available.
I am sure the nutrition of these meals saved lives.*

