

As TSF turns 20, Founder Nancy Hendrie looks back

From the beginning

We are deeply grateful to Nancy Hendrie, Founder, for taking the time to document the early history of The Sharing Foundation.

After 25 years of pediatric practice in Massachusetts, and with the advent of HMOs and other increasing regulations which were making medicine less and less about the patient and more and more about paperwork, I decided to turn my attentions elsewhere, where maybe I could interact more with children than with forms and computers.

Having served on the board of directors for Wide Horizons, an adoption agency in Waltham, MA, for a number of years, and having made trips to Korea, India, and China to look at orphanage care and the children being sent from these countries for adoption, I had seen a lot of good and bad care of orphaned and abandoned children. My job with Wide Horizons had evolved into taking groups of 16 or more parents to China to complete their adoptions and taking care of scared and often sick new parents, as well as their infants who often came with significant medical issues. I was also frequently asked by Chinese authorities to assess individual infants in their care. If turned out the Chinese had almost as many rules as did the HMOs back home, and after two years, 1994 to 1996, I began to think about where I could find a job with more opportunities to actually affect care. Someone suggested, and I do not remember who, "Go to Cambodia. It's a cowboy country." So on the way home from a China trip, I went to Cambodia to see for myself.

Terrible conditions at Cambodian orphanages

It was immediately apparent as I visited two or three orphanages on

that first trip that the care was almost universally terrible. At that time lots of infants were being turned over to orphanages, as poverty was rampant, birth control essentially non-existent, and AIDS was taking Cambodia in its grip and killing young parents, as well as infecting the babies. In the orphanages I visited, babies lay in hammocks all day, diapers were not used, and the few workers, when they were not watching black and white TV, were propping bottles in the babies' mouths, or sloshing the infants with water to clean them up, and then putting them back in their hammocks. One infant, who had been born with no anal opening but had a rudimentary colostomy, weighed only about 10 pounds at 12 months of age because the "nannies" had figured out that if they did not feed her much, it was easier to care for her. Lots of infants were dying, often of diarrhea and dehydration, sometimes of tetanus related to their unclean deliveries, and most had skin infections, such as impetigo and scabies. The year was 1997.

Weaving through red tape, starting a foundation

Back home, Judy Jones, my partner for 23 years, heard all about the bad things going on with the children I had seen, and we decided we needed to do something radical. Judy was a pediatric nurse practitioner and could not let terrible care go undealt with. She set about going after all the dreaded paperwork to set up a federally recognized 501(c)(3), The Sharing Foundation, as well as a separate adoption agency, Adopt Cambodia, to be licensed in Maine where we were then living. Her persistence when we were challenged by a large money-making adoption agency CEO, and her quiet weaving through all the red tape accomplished both our aims.

The idea was that we would put a nominal charge on adoptions, which we would use to fund our first Sharing Foundation projects. This was one reason we were challenged: our adoption charges were less than the standard rates by American agencies, not to mention that I, the pediatrician, got to examine the babies and children and produce written physicals on site, which had not been done before. Judy secured our licenses and approvals in early 1998 while I was busy going back and forth to Cambodia defining the problems and beginning to deal with them. The Sharing Foundation was officially born in the spring of 1998.

One of our earliest moves was to seek the counsel of Grant Wilson, a very successful entrepreneur in Carlisle, MA, about how to go forward. We came away from our very first evening conference with him with a \$20,000 check, unasked for, to "get things started". Other former patient families, such as Maureen and Michael Ruettgers, also in Carlisle, came forward without asking and gave us hearty financial boosts early on. The Ruettgers also invited about 100 people to a fundraising dinner for TSF and raised \$17,000 in one evening for our first projects.

We started with a small board of directors, meeting in the Hendrie/Jones sunporch in Arrowsic, Maine. Original board members, by invitation, were Kathy and Richard Recknagel, Eric Busch who, with his wife, were early adoptive parents, Judy and myself. We enlisted a cost-conscious local lawyer for advice, and a wonderful, local CPA.

Improving care at Cham Chao Orphanage

TSF started by working to improve conditions at Cham Chao

Orphanage, located out beyond Phnom Penh airport. We built a bathing area at the orphanage and hired a local Cambodian doctor to go weekly to treat sick children and educate the caretakers about prevention of infections. We provided many cases of French baby formula and then put in place safeguards to supervise its use after we found that infants were being fed twice diluted formula as a cost savings measure. We had serious disagreements with Tit Vorn, "Grandma" and owner of Cham Chao, when we wanted to fill the open cesspool beneath the wooden floor of the orphanage. Grandma was happy with how things were and we had to threaten to withdraw all our support if she would not let us close the cesspool, a major source of illness. We finally got it done, screened the whole place, and put rules into place improving the care.

The infant born without an anal opening became our first infant hand-carried by me to the U.S. for definitive care at Massachusetts General Hospital, followed over the next few years by four other children with serious surgical issues. Mass General, after we went through quite a process applying for free care, was receptive and fantastic in caring for some very complex infants for us; my many years of association there helped. That first child had multiple operations for six different congenital anomalies and was written up in the Boston Globe. She had months of recovery in the home of Sally Stokes, a new TSF board member still on the board today, and was adopted ultimately by a family in Maine.

We built and equipped a new, small building at Cham Chao to house a clinic, and a preschool for our toddler children. We were able to clean the existing latrines which had never been done, and to stop the practice of chopping food on the cement doorstep of the latrines. We had noted failures, however, as sloppy caretakers, mostly relatives of Grandma, showed little interest in higher standards of care for the children. One noted incident came when there was a big flood at the

orphanage and a call came that they had no water to make formula. Our driver and assistant at that time, Visoth, and I loaded up his car with cases and cases of bottled water from the market and drove it out to Cham Chao. Late that evening, Visoth called me to say that the water had disappeared. We went out again early the next morning to find that Grandma had taken possession and sold the water to neighbors and friends, pocketing the money, heedless of the infants' needs. Although she and I did not speak each other's language, my furor that day made it clear that this was a really terrible thing to do. It was apparent that we needed to build our own orphanage, where we could make the rules and not allow such dishonesty.

Addressing needs at other orphanages

David Boardman of Oakland, ME, who, with his wife, were early adoptive parents of three Cambodian children, joined us on the board, and in early 1999 came to Cambodia with me to assess our next steps. The word was out that we were looking to improve the care of babies and children in orphanages, and we began to get many requests for help. We had become involved with an orphanage, nominally run by the Cambodian government, in Kampong Speu province, an hour west of Phnom Penh. Here there were fewer babies, but about 60 young school-age children and toddlers. It was totally underfunded by the government, at about \$1 per day per child, and our assessment was that Pol Sok Ly, the director, was both earnest and honest. Our first project there was to rehab a mold-covered dormitory building, replacing its leaking roof and cleaning and painting all the little rooms. We also rebuilt their main building, which they used as a school and recreational building, replacing the decayed tile roof with a metal one. The children at this orphanage had no kitchen or dining place: cooking was done outdoors over a wood fire, or, when it rained, on the dirt floor in an old wooden stable. We would later build

and equip a kitchen/ dining building, which we continue to maintain. We also got them a used generator for lighting at night.

In 1999, we took on the care of some 20 HIV-infected children at the government's Nutrition Center in Phnom Penh and continued to pay for their HIV meds until the Clinton Foundation took over around 2006, as well as provide some hands-on medical care. In addition, we supervised and funded a large building rehabilitation at Angkor Orphanage in Siem Reap at a cost of about \$5,000.

Adoption was continuing steadily, with Judy Jones handling all the extreme amount of paperwork required for Adopt Cambodia, whose operation we kept entirely separate from TSF. Money derived from adoption funded our TSF projects, and adopting parents also brought many cases of baby and children's clothing, medications and supplies from the U.S. at our request. Additional funds were raised at many speaking venues, from Women's Clubs, Rotary Clubs, church groups, private and public schools, as well as many helpful individuals, literally from New England to Florida to California and Washington state. The fact that adoptions provided funds for the projects for the many, many children whose care we assumed in Cambodia was a great arrangement, and TSF thrived from its beginning.

Building a model orphanage

The board agreed that we should build our own orphanage facility as a model of compassionate, clean, and medically-supervised care for some of the flood of Cambodian infants coming in. The search for land began, and it was a great education. Many of the first parcels offered, with lovely documents, turned out not even to be owned by the person offering to sell them when they were researched by Mekong Law firm, which somehow, by good luck, we had thought to retain. Finally, after a year of looking, a parcel of the right size came up out in Roteang Village in Kien Svey, outside Phnom Penh

about an hour's ride on dusty, gravel, pot-holed roads all the way, which turned to lethal mud holes in the rainy season. With much negotiating, we were able to purchase this land for \$50,000. Land ownership is very tricky in that it is not allowed for foreigners to own land. Our purchase had to be in the name of a Cambodian in the U.S. who maintained a "family book" in his birth land and would lease it to us with a long-term contract. Paul Kelly of Concord, Massachusetts, one of our well-known adoptive parents, had worked with such a man, Sam Hong, for multiple years and Sam is the owner of record. We were able to secure a 70-year lease and we can build buildings, which we own, on the land. The same land arrangements exist also in China, Vietnam, and throughout Southeast Asia.

In early 2000, we embarked on the major project of building our own place. Our orphanage was designed by Cambodian architect, Chun Dy Hok, who worked with Manalan Enterprises, an Australian construction firm, to build what we needed. On the land when we got it lived Peng Ron, his wife and small baby in a small wooden hut, full of holes: his job was to prevent squatters from taking over the land. We hired him on the spot and he continues to work with TSF to this day, but now lives in a small, sturdy waterproof cabin we built for his family.

We built our first building, a good-sized wooden lodge out toward the back of the property, as we already had agreed to take on 19 babies and small children from the failing Cham Chao Orphanage. The wood building could and did get built fast, as we needed it immediately. Tep Dany, who was a nanny at Cham Chao came to us too, as our first head nanny, as well as a Dr. Ly Srey Vina, the Cambodia doctor we had found to help out at Cham Chao, which we continued to do.

Carefully drawn plans, much studied in the U.S. and in Cambodia, called for the building of the kitchen/dining facility, down a short cement and

tiled walkway from the wood building, as well an "ablutions" building housing toilets, sinks and shower facilities, also tied by walkway to the wood building. In the meantime, the big main building of the orphanage was slowly fabricated of cement, steel beams, bricks and huge labor.

A workforce of about 25 men moved onto the property. They brought their own cook tent out front, and tarp shelter for the men to sleep under. There is no commuting to work by construction workers in Cambodia; they live on the project until it is done. I spent over three months in Cambodia that summer and fall, overseeing the care of our first children, and watching the construction work daily. Rebar used in the cement for reinforcement was bent by hand; the cement mixer was a small kettle-sized one, such as those used on home projects in the U.S., but it worked continuously. Scaffolding was bamboo, and the men worked barefoot to get a good grip. When the very high ceilings were being finished, and the men worked way up on the swaying bamboo rods, I could not bear to watch for fear of a catastrophe.

The main building featured several large sleeping rooms, as well as isolation rooms for new admissions, a clinic, a formula preparation room, a bathing room with waist-high tubs where the nannies could bathe the children, and a western bathroom for needy visitors. A large tiled verandah with a long roof overhang provided shade and a good play space as the babies grew up. The orphanage was finished in December 2000, and we had a lovely party, without any officials invited to speak, as is the custom, when we found out these officials would expect to be paid.

Finding hard-working, In Country Director Elephant

In August of 1999, another event occurred, which would turn out to be a major turning point for TSF: we found Elephant. Chan Kim Leng, Elephant, had been working as a taxi driver with his ancient Toyota. He often parked in front of the Sunway

Hotel in the city, where the adopting parents stayed at that time. One day some parents told me that they had had this driver who seemed unusual in his outlook, his command of English, and his desire to work hard; they suggested I meet him. I did, and after several conversations, I asked him if he would like to work for our fledgling foundation as a driver, interpreter, and assistant as I went all around the area examining and treating babies and toddlers in various orphanages. He did, and a relationship was born that persists still.

Elephant had grown up in the jungles of Mondolkiri in northeast Cambodia; he had not even gone to the school until he was 12 years old. He had come to Phnom Penh seeking a better paying job when he was about 20; at that time he was about 31, though not sure, as there was no birth registration in Mondolkiri. He had learned English by listening to the BBC, and taking every opportunity to talk with English speakers. He first worked as a brick carrier on construction projects, but realized he could make more money as a taxi driver, so he bought an old motor bike, and transported then-present UN workers. He acquired the name Elephant, because he was big and tough, and with his English skills, could challenge and win passengers when his peers tried to take them. He did well with his Moto and soon moved on to his fifth-hand Toyota. He also brought his young wife from the jungle, and he started classes in a local college.

For TSF, Elephant proved to be a quick learner with good judgement and the negotiating skills we needed to get things done. We needed him for interactions with government officials, and he proved skillful, and most important, honest. Political party is a very major concern in Cambodia, and can get you jobs, or get you blackballed, or even get you killed, but he took care not to align himself with any party. Gradually he assumed more and more responsibility, especially in hiring and firing, and purchasing major things we needed, like a small bus and a

big generator. His language skills were vital as a go-between. In 2004 he became In-Country Director, which he is today.

Introducing nannies to new rules

Women regularly appeared at our gate begging for nanny jobs, and several had followed Dany from Cham Chao. Dr. Ly held regular classes with the nannies on baby care, and we were adamant about safety and cleanliness. About six months after we opened, with now about 40 babies there, the senior nanny, Bin Sovann, through Elephant said to me that all the nannies were going to quit because they did not “like the rules”.

“Which rules did they not like?” I asked.

“Wash your hands when you change the diaper. Rinse the baby bottle when the feeding is done and put it in the rack under the cheesecloth. Hold the baby when you feed him and talk to him/her.”

“Okay,” I said. “This is not a prison and of course you can quit, but if you are going to work here, these are the rules.” (And there were others.) I told her I would come to each nanny in two days and ask if she wanted to quit, and pay her off if she did. Two days later we spoke to each nanny; none quit. They had good pay, \$60 per month, were screened (and treated) for parasites, TB, and HIV, given free medical care as needed, fed good food, given even free shampoo and soaps, and had three consecutive days off monthly. There were no jobs anywhere with these benefits. In fact, many nannies ultimately stayed 10 to 15 years, and they became very snobby about how bad cleanliness and care was in other places they visited.

Establishing a farm and school for the very poor

Soon after we settled in at Roteang, the board began to think about our responsibilities to the village of Roteang. Elephant and I went to the village chief, and we asked what the most serious needs were. He answered that there were a lot of

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families living “out back” who were really farmers, but they had no land to farm, and were very poor, so they just sat around in their tiny falling-down thatched stilt hovels, gambled and drank homemade hooch. He wondered what we might do. The board voted to start the farm project, and Elephant found and negotiated for about three acres of land. The chief suggested an experienced local man to be head farmer and we opened the farm project to any adults who wanted to work daily, and grow vegetables which they would share, and be paid \$2 per day, the laborer wage at the time. Dr. Om, husband of our Dr. Ly, oversaw the project.

At the same time, we voted to build a thatch one-room school building at the edge of the farm fields where the children of these families, who had never considered schooling, could learn reading, writing and arithmetic. At first the adults balked: they had never been to school, and saw no need for the children to go. We held fast and said they could work on the new project and get paid as well share the food, but the condition was, they had to send their kids to school. Gradually the children arrived: they loved the school that also freed them from other home labor, or being rented out to other farmers.

Soon we had so many people working on the farm, and so many children in school that we had to find bigger fields, build a two-room schoolhouse, and have morning and afternoon shifts. We hired two great, as it turned out, local teachers, albeit with sixth-grade educations themselves. The children were thrilled with their slates, chalk, pencils and notebooks as they progressed, and the parents became very proud of the children’s skills as they could read village signs and keep some records for their families.

Launching immunizations and clean water initiatives

About the same time, as a very natural extension, we did our first

large immunization project: all the children of Roteang village, as well as everyone who worked in the farm project. We had had a number of newborns arrive at the orphanage only to die of tetanus on about their eighth day, because the mothers, delivering at home, had never had any immunization despite being out on the farm fields all the time, and thus had no tetanus protective antibodies to pass to their newborns. We enlisted the village chief to organize, and hundreds showed up for the shots, originally just diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough combined. This required a series of three shots, spaced, and the feat was keeping records so that the same person got three spaced shots, and some people did not just get back in line on the same date. Fortunately, we had our local students who helped out with the complicated, and sometimes repeated, names. The enticement at the end was getting a yellow shot record card after all three shots, and they all wanted this, often the first written item displayed in their houses.

We went on to offer Hepatitis B immunizations to all the villagers too, though this required screening to find all the already infected people. Hepatitis B is a big cause of death in Southeast Asia, but before immunizing we needed to ascertain we were not giving shots to infected folks, which would start the rumor they had gotten the disease from the vaccine!

We also became aware of the problem of arsenic in the drinking water which came from local wells. While back in the U.S., I had read in the NY Times of arsenic problems in wells in Bangladesh, and told the board that we had never checked in Cambodia. So next trip, we got arsenic assays done of a number of local wells, at the Pasteur Institute in the city: they came back with alarming levels. I went to the local health authority office in the city to talk about it, and was told they knew all about it, and it was against the law to discuss it with the villagers or any local people, as it would cause panic.

And no, they had no plans to address the problem.

We immediately switched to bottle water for the orphanage, and began investigating remediation for arsenic. It turned out that if wells were too shallow, they were full of bacteria and parasites, and that deep drilling resulted in arsenic contamination in wells 5km either side of the Mekong River. A local NGO we found had just started building rainwater collection systems, which was the solution being used in Bangladesh. We worked with them and put in about 50 such systems at the several schools we have become involved with, and small ones for many of the farmers out back. Generous individual donors and organizations back in the U.S. paid for these systems, involving roof gutters, filters, pumps, and collection tanks. Of interest is the fact that the government still puts wells in at schools, with no regard for the arsenic, a known, lethal, toxin.

Expanding educational programs

Meanwhile, our educational programs were expanding rapidly. Locally, in Roteang village, we began a large English language school, utilizing the local grammar school after it finished, from mid-afternoons through early evening. Typically there were about twelve classes going on, an hour in length, followed by a second shift. We hired teachers mostly from Phnom Penh Universities, who rode out to our village on their motorbikes. A lot of the early teachers were barely proficient in English themselves, but as we went on we replaced them with better and better teachers, and they became a really excellent group. Daily, the school accommodated about 450 students, who came after they finished their own Khmer classes in junior high or high school.

A computer school evolved, too, taught by one of our best English schoolteachers, on second-hand laptops screened in the U.S. by board member Jim Ganley, who also produced The Sharing Foundation newsletter. The newsletter, published four times a year, was distributed in

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the U.S. to about 900 subscribers and represented a major source of income for the projects we wrote about.

Continuing programs after adoptions close

In December 2001, the Cambodian government closed adoptions, under pressure from the American government, which had detected widespread corruption in the process in some orphanages and many "facilitators". Adoptions were also closed in other countries in Asia and South America, for the same reason. For TSF, this meant serious curtailment of supplies brought to Cambodia by adopting families, as well as the loss of funds that adoptions provided back to Roteang village. We had 77 children at Roteang Orphanage, many of them with medical issues, such as HIV or cerebral palsy, which meant this would be their permanent home no matter what. We also were deeply involved with education in the village, and the farm, and with water projects, as well as sanitation. We had a sewing school so young women could develop a marketable skill and not have to enter the garment industry at the lowest level. We continued with the computer school. Luckily we were by then supported by a broad base of donors and could forge ahead. High school students got sponsors who could support their education at the secondary school, and a few years later, this would evolve into sponsorships for college in Phnom Penh, and life in one of the two "dormitories" Elephant helped us to develop.

Our immunization endeavors also continued, with all Roteang children now eligible for protection from eight diseases, having added MMR (mumps, measles, rubella) to our basics of DPT and Hepatitis B. We also added skin testing of all children for Tb, and every nanny got screening by chest x-ray annually. Other villages began asking for immunization programs and we offered these when they had a village organization that could handle the

setup and the record keeping. We also immunized all the children at Kampong Speu Orphanage, at Director Pol Sok Ly's request.

By 2003 we had established a 250-book library at the Roteang village school, albeit that the books were almost all in English. In Cambodia books for children were not yet available in Khmer, except for a few paperback fairy tales, which we got. We also placed great emphasis on books at the orphanage, with reading time every morning, when bins of donated picture books were brought out to the wide verandah and nannies and children alike enjoyed turning the pages and chatting noisily about the pictures. Even for the nannies, these were often the first books they had handled!

2003 also marked the beginning of great involvement by Denise Gosch and her school, St. Paul's Lutheran School in Lakeland, Florida. She and her children raised funds first for a small playground at the orphanage with a slide, a glider swing, and a climbing structure in the yard in front of our kitchen. Denise has gone on to fund, with her church and school, a TSF project every year, including clothing, supplies, and even buildings. Many other individuals and groups came up with projects in their home areas to raise funds for TSF, and all the orphanage children received support from sponsors.

The farm program grew, and about 185 farm children went to the farm school in staggered sessions, while over 100 of their parents worked growing vegetables. The vegetables that were not consumed were sold in the Phnom Penh market, and we began a program of benefits for the farm families with the proceeds, such as latrines, new roofs, and ladders.

2004 was truly a memorable year for TSF. In January Elephant, as In-Country Director, became in charge of overseeing all our outreach projects, such as the farm, English language school, vocational projects, water projects, work at other orphanages we supported, as well as sponsorships of a number of

individual children we helped in the community. He also now kept all the financial records, sending copies of all for board review in the U.S. monthly. Thanks to the Internet, weekly Skype calls made for excellent communications with us at home, and questions could be quickly handled. I continued to make at least four trips yearly, sometimes with another board member. (Most Board members at that time still had young children at home and did not want to travel.)

In July came the saddest event of my whole time in Cambodia when Tep Dany, our head nanny, died suddenly, the day I arrived in Cambodia for a regular visit. She had been the never-tiring, patient leader who got Roteang Orphanage going in its first years, and her loss was a real tragedy that upset the entire place for a long time. We still talk about her and remember her with fondness; her two sons, Tep Vuthea, 12, and Tep Vuthy, 19, continued to be cared for by us, with Vuthea choosing to live permanently at the orphanage.

Launching a preschool and the New World School

2004 also marked the building and opening of our preschool building, which later evolved into an after-school activities building, in the front yard of Roteang Orphanage. Denise Gosch and her crew raised all the funds, even soliciting a generous donation from the Florida/Georgia Central Lutheran organization. The new school required the training of teachers as preschools were basically unheard of in Cambodia. Robin Jean of Concord, MA, a very experienced Montessori teacher, came two summers in a row, not only organizing a first-class program for our children, but also bringing a whole classroom of supplies.

In October of 2004, we opened the One World School at the Roteang Village School, a new building of classrooms and, unique for public school, a library. Financed by the Feeney family of Nantucket, this project was appreciated by the whole town. The building replaced the

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dangerous, buckling and leaking public school building there before. Amazingly, without permission or a building permit, we just tore down the old building and built this one, on government land, but we felt really relieved that village children could now safely go to school in a place not in imminent danger of collapsing. We also poured cement floors in the other school buildings at Roteang School, and put in their first lighting and white boards.

At our farm project, organic farming took over from pesticides when a young farmer from North Carolina State University came to spend his summer with TSF. He introduced crop rotations, and much safer farming. Unfortunately, pesticides banned in other countries are often donated to Cambodia, and Brian Bereunger was as much an educator as a crop advisor as he worked to improve our farm and our farmers' health.

Building a sewing school

The following year, thanks to perceptive donors, we opened our own free-standing sewing school building and ten young trainees, eager to learn a marketable skill, moved in. On treadle sewing machines, they first concentrated on just sewing straight lines, and graduated to making white uniform shirts for TSF to donate, with blue shorts or skirts, to needy children allowing them to attend public schools. Sewing students were paid \$10 a week, often more than their parents were earning, and the young women could then move into supervisory jobs in the garment industry with reliable wages of about \$50 per month.

TSF students made about 750 school uniforms that first year, increased in following years to about 1,500 uniforms: all found recipients most grateful for not being excluded from school because families could not afford the average market cost of six dollars per uniform. Among other places, we were able to donate 500 uniforms to the Street Children's Assistance and Development

organization. Skilled sewers also began making TSF's signature purses and tote bags; these were brought back to the U.S., sold at church fairs and the like, and helped to spread the word about TSF and generate extra funds.

Back in the U.S. many other projects helped with support, from sponsorships of orphanage children and high school students, to road races, a trike-a-thon, and church drives. David Boardman and Shirley Brook in Maine kicked off the effort to build an endowment as back-up for potential hard times; by the end of the year, a matching grant initiative led to \$500,000 safely banked.

First students to go off to college

In 2005, we next saw the first ten students ever, all sponsored from Roteang Village, go off to college in Phnom Penh. None of their parents had even finished high school, most having dropped out in about sixth grade. These TSF students had been in our Roteang English language school since early junior high school and had all been sponsored by their U.S. benefactors through high school.

The six girls and four boys moved into our four-story "dormitory" in the city, which Elephant had outfitted with beds and desks, pans and dishes. It had indoor bathrooms, something most students had never seen, and electricity for lights and a hot-plate type stove, as well as two laptop computers on the ground floor. We bought a bicycle for each student so he or she could make the trip to Norton University, four kilometers away. The students were truly terrified at first, of the traffic, of the "gangsters" they believed lurked everywhere, and just of living in such a strange, new environment. They themselves made up charts, sharing the work of caring for their new home, and preparing meals. At first the boys would not do kitchen work, because in the village that would all fall to women, but when we pointed out that this could not be so in their new environment, they capitulated and, in fact, one of the boys, Sokret,

became the favored chef. A huge donation of nearly \$9,000 from the Concord, MA Rotary Club paid all the expenses of tuition, board, room and even the bikes for all these students. It truly changed their lives forever, as well as initiated a major program that today has seen over 60 young people graduate from college and get well-paying jobs.

Mom, an invaluable leader

By 2006, Mom Sineath had been working with TSF for five years already, and was head of the farm project, working, as he said, as much as a social worker with the poorest families of the village, and their children, as using his expertise to rotate crops, decide on the most valuable ones to raise and sell, and keep track of all the items for the farming and the farm school. Mom became, and is, our invaluable second Cambodian leader.

July saw a remarkable new project when the Trudeau family from Concord, including Tom, owner of a construction company, Ann, now TSF President, and their three teenaged children, came to Cambodia just when we really needed them. Denise Gosch's St. Paul Lutheran Church had again raised substantial funds for a new, advanced orphanage playground. With no such equipment available in Cambodia, I went to Bangkok and purchased it. It was trucked to the Thai/Cambodian border from which Elephant, after a series of strange mishaps, managed to secure and truck it through pelting rain over mud-slicked roads for four days. He finally got the eight water-soaked boxes to Roteang. Tom Trudeau, always cool, despite no instructions or pictures, set about with his family and assembled the magnificent new structures, including two slides, a bridge, a climbing bridge and a climbing wall, in about a week.

Meanwhile, our school projects had expanded to include scholarships for all our college students to also go to ACE, the Australia Center for Education in Phnom Penh. Out in the countryside, we opened another school building, the American Spirit School, located at the local high school where our sponsored village students were attending. Our program at Owens House for pregnant women with HIV was going well, with more than a dozen infants treated with niveripine at birth to interrupt the transmission of the HIV virus from mother to baby, and to educate mothers about safe infant care and feeding. Our own HIV-infected children at Roteang Orphanage, all on antiretrovirals, were indistinguishable from our non-infected children; all were doing well.