From the beginning: looking back
We are deeply grateful to Nancy Hendrie, Founder, for taking the time to document the early history of The Sharing Foundation. The story begins in this newsletter and continues at www.sharingfoundation.org.

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, wereproping 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 weavings through all the red tape accomplished both our aims.
Nancy Hendrie has provided us a brief history of The Sharing Foundation and I am amazed at how much has been accomplished in 20 years. Literally thousands of children have been affected, becoming healthier, better educated, and more responsible. The Sharing Foundation has changed since 1998, but we still follow the same concepts that Nancy used to create and expand the organization. Helping young people from disadvantaged backgrounds is our mission. Our geographical area is Cambodia and our methods are purposely ever-changing to match an unpredictable and unstable world.

In Nancy’s brief history, she says “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…” Cambodia is a healthier country today with many fewer children being abandoned to orphanages and government regulations in place to impose some standards of care. However, “Corruption is deep-rooted and Cambodia is still one of the world’s poorest countries, with most of the workforce still employed in subsistence farming.” – BBC News, July 2018.

Our infants and toddlers have grown into all kinds of teenagers and young adults! We have a medical student, a bookkeeper, a few welders, a car mechanic, and others with aspirations to be policemen, dentists, and custodians. Our major concerns in the orphanage have gone from formula and diarrhea to emotional, educational and psychological development.

With our continued strength, we have expanded our reach into many other villages. Helping other orphanages has been part of our mission since 1998 and we continue to support Kampong Speu. But for the most part, we now work with schools which serve as the village center for our immunization programs, clean water tanks, bathrooms, and educational advances. We are serving an increasing number of older youth, strengthening our university program and working with our alumni. At this milestone, I would love to hear your thoughts on the foundation’s last 20 years, and also where you see us going next. Send us your thoughts, or better yet, come to the 20th year celebration. I hope to see every one of you there so I can thank you for all that we have accomplished together!

Ann Trudeau is the TSF Board President
Roteang village begins construction of orphanage in 1996.

A workforce of about 25 men moved onto the property. They brought with them a cement mixer, a small kettle-sized one, and no protective gear. Scaffolding was bamboo, I could not bear to watch for fear of a catastrophe. There are no commuting to work by construction workers in Cambodia…. I need for the children to go. We held fast…they had to send their kids spent over three months in Cambodia that summer and fall, overseeing the care of our first children, and watching the construction work daily.

There is no parks in Roteang village, no library, no school, no playground, no food subsidies. In August of 1999, another event occurred, which would turn out to be the biggest class to date. Mary Jane's House, a girls' dorm, is finished and open in Roteang Orphanage.

Rath Srun brought to U.S. for surgery in 2000. 5 new children come to the orphanage.

Nancy Hendrie steps down as TSF president. Mary Jane's House is a girls' dormitory that was finished in Roteang Orphanage.

In 1998, another event occurred, which would turn out to be the biggest class to date. Mary Jane's House, a girls' dormitory that was finished in Roteang Orphanage.
Changing the World, One Child at a Time

We hope you will be able to join us on Sunday, September 16, 2018. We are celebrating 20 years of the good work you and TSF have accomplished together! Register at eventbrite.com and search under "Changing the World". There you will find event information which will be updated throughout the coming weeks as to special guests, speakers, workshops offered, what to expect, etc. Tickets are $20, but don’t let cost be an obstacle to your attendance; email us at info@sharing-foundation.org for more info.

We are creating a compilation of reflections entitled, “20 Years, 20 Stories” and we need your help! Whether you can attend the event or not, please send us a short video clip from your phone, or a written anecdote, sharing an experience, maybe how you first heard about TSF, a heartfelt interaction, or the impact the foundation, Nancy Hendrie and Judy Jones, have had on your life.

Please send your stories and/or questions to Laurie Simons: lysimons@gmail.com or Kat MacDonald: katmacdonald.02420@gmail.com by August 20, if possible.

Thank you for being a big part of the TSF story and for helping The Sharing Foundation change the world, one child at a time.