

Letters Reveal Pain in Refugee Camps

Since their return to the United States from stints as workers among the refugees in the Khao I Dang camp on the Thailand/Cambodia border, Sisters Nancy Ventura and Catherine Charles McNamara, both of St. Mary's Hospital, and Jerome Vaiana, a layman who has promoted the Cambodia Emergency Relief Fund, have received letters from the refugees they came to know. Following are excerpts from some of those letters.

"I consider myself as God's daughter waiting to do anything that God asks me because I don't mind death. I really thought that the body died but the soul never died."

"There is all the time change in Khao I Dang and I know there has been a lot of 'bad' news going around the world."

"There has been a lot of fighting at the border and a lot of fear in Khao I Dang among the people. It started with the repatriation — people who 'chose' to go back to Cambodia. When it was at the worst at the border we got about 300 wounded and there was two more groups of refugees of between 100,000 and 75,000. Again we received a lot of emaciated children — and adults. Hospitals were filled up."

"People in the camp are told the same morning that they are leaving and they are not told beforehand where they will go. Everyday a lot of people leave. People can hardly sleep at night because of the robbers."

From a series of letters from KS.

"(My wife) said if it will take us for long time to live in camp we will finish our money soon; then some problems will appear for us. I think two years is very hard to wait too and she said again that when we finish our money maybe she will go back to Cambodia."

"Today the security near the border Khmer-Thai is not good. The Vietnam Soldiers are arriving in Samit Camp and the others from last night until now. The rocket sounds still breaking out. Two Thai fighter planes are flying over Khmer border to bombard and there are other planes over there, too. Thai soldiers are fighting with Vietnamese soldiers. There are many people dying and wounded. The ambulance brings them to Khao I Dang."

"In Khao I Dang camp now the weather still the same like before. It's very hot, many

New Name For Chest

The United Community Chest has a new name — United Way of Greater Rochester.

The name change, approved by the Chest's board on July 14, gives strong identification with the national United Way movement, of which the local organization is a member.

More than 2,200 United Ways exist across the country with national headquarters in Alexandria, Va. The United Way of Greater Rochester ranks as the leading fundraising organization among United Ways across the country.

people and children get cold, respiratory and skin infections."

"Sometimes I think I only spend time for the air in refugee camps without any hope to develop and build up for my future. I am very sad when I think about this problem — that I have no ability to follow my aim. If you know any good news or any way to try to go to third country... I would go to any country where there is full of peace."

The following excerpts are from a number of different refugees in Khao I Dang:

"I myself never mention it, but a little regret to my younger brothers, died is the best way more than anything. But I trust God."

"There are a lot of people get wound from the border. Now I have worried so much about the event happened every night in (Khao I Dang). There are a lot robbery — robbing by gun on the people, but never mind for me. I have a big problem in my family especially, I have pity over all my three sons every day. My three sons ask me every day for money to get some cakes to eat. But I don't have it for them. I tell them: My salary every day get I can of Sardine... Our family very poor, their father has no money for them, please they take only rice..."

"I wish Embassy Bangkok call up my name to move from Khao I Dang because I really want to leave Khao I Dang."

"Please pity on me and my family to help find a sponsor for going from Khao I Dang camp, Thailand, because I haven't the relationship at the abroad... If you can help find the way to go to abroad of my country my family will have a long age and will fall upon one's feet."

The following excerpts are from letters from a young woman, LR, who is being sponsored to come to this country by Vaiana:

"I miss you very much, every day I wait your letter will reach to me someday."

What are you doing and where? what are you wearing? what weather is going now? and how are you feeling? I want to let you know how happy that I am to-day and what it was, but although it is so, I still thinking and missed you always..."

"... Today, many people are very happy because they have the names called to go to (C) on 4 October and the day afterward, some people don't have any relatives in USA but they can go to. I don't know how come. I don't have a chance to go, many times already that I don't have the name called to go..."

"Andre came from Switzerland, she will work here for 6 months and she is so happy to work with me here. She is so kind to me... I'm so happy that I have many sisters and brothers, but also I'm so regret that they be here close to me for a while, not forever. I'm very sorry, but I will try anyway that could help me to get out from Thailand and could have possibility to go to see all my friends in Switzerland, German, France, England, Australia, USA, India..."

"... brother, the area outside the hospital have many robbers happened every night, I'm so afraid but I pray God every every day to safe me and also to help me more as much as possible to get to (C) camp where they hopefully thought to go to the 3rd country as soon as possible... brother please excuse me about my writing is too bad because I got sick but Colleen will be going on 21st August so I want to write the letter to you by her that could be get very fast than by mail... brother, don't forget that you still have one more sister staying in Khao I Dang and she hope firmly on you and always ready to listen, all of what you say by mail even you are away but she's really happy to have you a good brother that she doesn't have any. I'm feeling actually you are talking with me but really you don't. Many Loves."

my greetings respectfully to you and praise God bless you always to get everything going very well, please excuse me about my

writing under the candles' light so weakly."

The following excerpts are from letters received from HH, a 35-year-old Khmer living in Khao I Dang with his wife and children. He was a teacher in Cambodia.

"... I left to C two weeks

ago. I'm coordinator of the Khmer staff. I work always hard because I lost my old team. But I'm sad, my brother-in-law has not right to be my sponsor even if he had been long time in New York."

"... I do not expect to meet you in USA as I said to you before because I have not

chance to go to USA. I think I will stay here long time. Please don't forget tell your wife and your family about my terrible life in Cambodia. If you don't mind please write to me often if it's possible and I hope your letter will make me happy. At last I request to God to bless you and your family with happiness."

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