

◆ Khmer Lowell ◆

Issue 6

April - June, 1998

WHAT IS YOUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION?

I WANT TO STAY HEALTHY, HAPPY...MAYBE HIT A LOTTERY JACKPOT — **RONNIE MOUTH, ADMINISTRATOR**

I WISH ALL CAMBODIANS HARMONY AND PEACE — **TIMOTHY MOUTH, DIRECTOR OF MONOROM FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM**

GET FAMILIAR WITH MY NEW JOB — **MARGARET THAM, MONOROM CASE WORKER**

CONTINUE TO EMBRACE DIVERSITY — **SIMEON ZOROKONG, YPP TEACHER AIDE**

BE HAPPY AND HEALTHY WITH MY FAMILY AND MY TO BE HUSBAND — **ROSEMARY ZALESKI, ESL TEACHER**

TO BE IN THE COMPANY OF GOOD, HONEST AND TRUSTWORTHY FRIENDS — **ARN CHORN POND, DIRECTOR OF YOUTH PROGRAM**

I WANT TO LOSE A FEW POUNDS — **THIRIT HUT, DIRECTOR OF FINANCE**

An Interview With Tooch Van, An International Honor Student

Van Tooch, like many Cambodian children who survived the Khmer Rouge, is now an orphan. His parents were killed and all his siblings died from starvation. He was only ten years old when that happened. He marveled at what a miracle it was that he survived at all.

Today, Van Tooch is an international honor student at Middlesex Community College. He was honored on April 3, 1998 as one of the students inducted into the Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society. Among one hundred and eight students honored, he was the only Cambodian.

To become a member of the international honor society, a student must have a GPA of 3.7 or higher and have earned half of the total credit needed to grad-

uate with an Associate Degree. Most importantly, that student must be involved in building bridges and forging partnerships with each other and members of his or her



Tooch Van, international honor student

community to make knowledge applicable and useful in the real world.

What Tooch is learning from Middlesex Community College will greatly enhance and strengthen the kind of work he has already been doing in the last two years in Cambodia. Prior to his arrival in the United States in 1996, Tooch was working for an international non-governmental organization, PACT (Private Agencies Collaborating Together) as a trainer and con-
(Please see Tooch/next page)

Moved To 165 Jackson Street

On March 9, 1998, CMAA relocated from 125 Perry Street to 165 Jackson Street. Thanks to all the Staff who worked very hard to pack things into boxes and load and unload them into and from the U-Haul Truck. It took a few days and a few evenings from regular work hours to finish the move. There were more things we had accumulated than we thought. We had some computers dating back twenty years. There were many books and magazines we no longer could use. The move gave us a chance to sort things out and start anew. Files of services provided to people back in 1984, when CMAA was founded, were still around. It was amazing how things piled up over the years. Now, with the new building, we have enough space to accumulate even more things. Hopefully, the director will be able to keep things at a minimum level. The more space, the better for all of us.

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Year of The Tiger: Hopes and Challenges

Year of the Tiger, according to Cambodian astrology, is the year of dramatic and often dangerous change. For some, there will be success and great adventure. For others, this year may mean disaster and calamity. Just within our community so far, we are experiencing both sides of the spectrum.

For starters, death this year has plagued our community. A recent shooting of an innocent 13 year-old boy, Khedy Leang, was a shocking reminder that there's no safe place in the world. Violence follows us wherever we may be. The shadow of the Khmer Rouge still haunts us. One of our staff's relative was shot and killed along with two daughters in their Seattle apartment. The man who killed them shot himself. He was considered to be the woman's old friend. The daughters were in their teens. A month earlier, a man in Lowell hung himself. He never shared his problems with anybody. He suffered alone and when too many things were left unresolved, he decided to take his own life. Silence was his way to death. Then, there was

the death of Pol Pot. He was on the front page of the *Lowell Sun*. Many of us thought that it was one of those political jokes. But it was true. This leaves us with the question, "How come he got off so easy?" Those of us who went through those horrible five years will never know the whole truth. We were hoping for a sense of closure and that he would be brought to the international tribunal court and be questioned until everyone involved in the murdering of more than two million Cambodians were punished. Now, that will never happen. His death leaves some of us feeling incomplete and in disrepair. Many of our relatives, parents and siblings were starved or murdered without proper burial. They were left scattered all over the fields. Their skulls and bones were strewn along banks of rivers and swamps. Some were shoved into mountain holes and crevices to rot. For over forty years, Cambodia was at war.

As Cambodian Americans, we live with these memories always in our minds. However, we plan to go on with

where we are now and try to create permanent improvement in the lives of all people in the city of Lowell. We must look at the past in order to shape our future, our community and ourselves. There are many hopes and challenges. One of those hopes is to make Lowell a place to root ourselves and to establish our importance to the city's whole economic, social and political development. Part of our success is the Courier building where the Cambodian community can make many positive contributions to the city of Lowell. Through the development of the Courier building as a social and commercial center, Cambodians will be able to access more

economic opportunities to better their chances in this country. A feasibility study of the building is now in process.

With the development of the building, the CMAA can look forward to organizational growth and expansion in its
(Please see Tiger/Page 6)

We must look at the past in order to shape our future, our community and ourselves.

Van Tooch...

sultant to local non-governmental organizations (NGOs). He also worked for the American Embassy on a variety of US AID projects. Most of his work experience has been to help train and build the capacity of local NGOs to implement and fundraise for their proposed social, educational and community develop-

ment programs. One such organization is the Cambodian Volunteers for Community Development (CVCD). This organization works with street children and mobilizes thousands of young people around free of charge English classes to do city and neighborhood clean-up, tree planting, HIV/AIDS prevention outreach and

human rights education. Tooch worked with this organization to provide technical assistance and needed funding for their programs.

PACT, an organization that has largely been funded by US AID, was very instrumental in helping newly formed NGOs in Cambodia to do the work
(Please see Tooch/next page)

Southeast Asian Water Festival, August 22, 1998



Mark your calendar and reserve August 22 for a dance in the sun on the bank of the Merrimack River. The South-

Cambodia and Laos hold boat races to celebrate water and life as well as to honor spirits in nature

east Asian Water Festival is coming to its second wave of family fun and festivities. The Southeast Asian Water Festival Committee is currently working diligently to make this year's festival even better than the first one. If you want to get involved, call Chath pierSath at the CMAA or Rassany Khakeo at the Center for Family, Work and Community. The Committee welcomes your support and enthusiasm as well as your knowledge and expertise. We want your contribution to this great annual event.

The first festival received a very large turn-out, which was more than we expected. People came from as far as France to see it and be with family and friends. Others came from Washington D.C., Pennsylvania and New York. This year, with your involvement and support, we expect even a greater number of out of state visitors. This is a wonderful way to bring people into our Lowell hub.

Many people who attended the festival last year really liked it. They praised the event as a way of bringing people together to celebrate the environment, each other and cultures. It was the first time that Southeast Asians had ever done anything together on that grand scale. We can certainly do it again and again.

For last year's festival, we had to borrow boats from the Chinese community. Now, we have two boats of our own shipped from Cambodia, along with agricultural tools, handmade baskets, musical instruments and a variety of fishing nets and fish traps. They will be a part of this year's festival as display items.

The two boats can hold sixteen people: one cheerleader in the front, one drummer in the back, and fourteen rowers in the middle. The boats were especially painted with the all-seeing eye by builders from a temple in Siem Reap. They were named last October by Buddhist monks from the Trairatanaram Temple. One was named Maha Vichey. The other has been named Bopha Meanrith, the all-powerful she-boat of spring's blossom. She will be competing with the all powerful he-Maha Vichey.

Those who are interested in forming a team and participating in the race should attend regular water festival committee meetings and choose between these powerful boats to make them champion of this year. Last year, the trophy went to a Laotian team. One of the Cambodian teams received second place.

Women teams are encouraged. If you get a few women teams, then there can be women's competition and a separate trophy will be given to whoever wins.

Boat teams can come and **(Please see Festival/Page 7)**

Tooch Van...

that Cambodian government was not able to do after the 1993 democratic elections. There was a growing number of NGOs in Cambodia after the Paris Peace Accord was signed in 1992. These NGOs were vital to the many social, economic and political changes and improvements made in Cambodia in the last two or

three years.

Non-governmental organization was only a recent phenomena in Cambodia when Tooch started working for PACT. After the Khmer Rouge, during communism, people were not allowed to organize and assemble to make changes in their society.

Today, one of the most

effective ways to achieve changes in Cambodia is via local NGOs and grassroots community development efforts.

Tooch hopes, after he finishes college here, to go back and continue his work with local NGOs, helping to strengthen them and their capacity to deal with larger societal issues such **(Please see Tooch/next page)**

Through the Young, Our Culture Survives

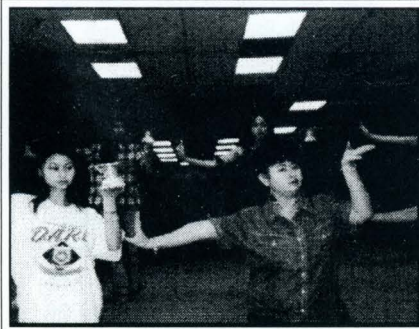


They bend and stretch their Americanized hands and feet to chant-like music instead of rock 'n roll.

As celestial Apsara dancers, they bless the Cambodian New Year, open religious ceremonies and cultural festivals. They are the CMAA's children from the Cambodian community of Lowell. Every special holiday such as the Cambodian New Year, these children perform various Khmer cultural dances. Dressed in their bright and colorful customs they demonstrate the beauty of their cultural heritage. These amazing children keep the Cambodian traditions alive while they are very integrated into the American mainstream culture. During rehearsal time at CMAA, we see them wearing bell bottom jeans and T-shirts like regular American kids. When they perform their folk or classical dances, they are transformed back to being Khmer. This is how Cambodian adults help their children establish a sense of Khmer identity in America. Through

various art forms, the children learn to mirror and reflect Khmer gentle nature and kind attributes.

Cambodian New Year is one of the most important celebrations in Cambodian culture. The children always have a lot of dances to prepare for. They often work very hard after school and on weekends to rehearse these dances. Their



dance teacher, Rany Him, was a former staff member of CMAA, who continues to pass on these dances she learned while living in the refugee camp in Thailand. She takes time from her own children and devotes it to teaching these dances to keep Khmer culture alive. Her efforts are greatly valued.

Cultural activity like this

keeps our children safe and off the street away from the violence of gangs. It helps our children build self-esteem and bridges between old and new cultures. For us, these dances are intricately woven into our hearts and souls. They are our cultural icons, what we have to show others about ourselves. Outside Cambodia, these dances provide our only link for our children to see themselves as Khmer and not be ashamed of it.

It is through our children that our culture survives. The CMAA owes it to community leaders like Mr. Arn Chorn Pond and Rany Him, who care enough about Cambodian culture to pass on what they know to our children. While Rany teaches dance, Arn teaches Khmer music. He has been able to gather several Cambodian master musicians in the city of Lowell to come and work with gang and at-risk youth. They provide opportunities for our children to learn, through dance and music, about themselves and their culture. Their efforts and contributions are greatly appreciated.

Tooch Van...

as the effect of HIV/AIDS and landmines on Cambodia's future and those already in dire poverty.

Right now, Tooch is determined to get his associate degree and hopefully a bachelor from a four year college or a university here. He studies rigorously. Sometimes, he stays up until two in the morning

reading. His eyes get very red from fatigue.

To Tooch, education is a source of food for his brain as well as a way out from being dependent on others to being self-reliance and independent. When he was young, after the Khmer Rouge, he had to rely on others for his survival even though the adopted families he lived with

often beat and abused him.

Tooch struggled throughout his life so he takes education very seriously. For him, being able to come and study in the United States was an opportunity for a lifetime.

Thanks to the United States Information Agency (USIA) for providing him with the *(Please see Tooch/next page)*

Internet Access: Technology at Your Fingertips

On April 18, 1998, UMass Lowell hosted a "Town Meeting" to launch its new internet site "*The Flowering City Forum*."

Nancy Keniewski, Dean of Arts and Sciences at UMass Lowell welcomed the guests, telling those present that this internet site is an example of UMass Lowell's and the city's ability to stay on the cutting edge of technology.

Guests were treated to a demonstration of the new site. The Internet address is [H t t p : / / v a l l e y . u m l . e d u c / f c f](http://valley.uml.edu/fcf). Once at the site, the person browsing can go to various places within the site. For example, there is a virtual version of the Hellenic Culture Society's museum exhibit "Acropolis of America: The Greek Community of Lowell, 1930-1940"; a site devoted to the Angkor Dance Troupe; a new on-line magazine *The Bridge Review*, featuring poems, stories, photographs, paintings, videos; and much

more.

Paul Marion, who is the editor of *The Bridge Review*, led a discussion regarding the new site and how Lowell can benefit from the site. Thousands of people have already logged onto the site and thousands more will click on each day.

Then two poets featured in *The Bridge Review* each read a poem as the audience viewed the poem on a large screen. These two poets both work at the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association: Chath pierSath and Judith Dickerman-Nelson. During the day, they work to help the people of Lowell, and when they can they both write in an effort to share their thoughts, their discoveries.

So, if you have access to the Internet, go ahead and find this new site. You'll discover an on-line community network devoted to Lowell. Here people exchange information, ideas and creative expression. The following are two samples of poems featured in *The Bridge Review* written by our very own staff poets of CMAA. Judith Dickerman-

Nelson's poem is titled *Inside The Zone*; Chath pierSath's poem is titled *The Day It Rains*.

Inside The Zone

*Danger Seabrook Nuclear Zone
No Evacuation Possible
(Billboard on I-95 by We the People)*

We arrive
with packed bags:
towels, suntan lotion,
and children toting buckets,
shovels, matchbox cars,
and tiny plastic dinosaurs.
We carry lunch, drinks, snacks,
and think we are prepared.

White kites, birds,
and bathing caps
dot the landscape,
and a lone swimmer
slices through waves
in deep waters
while seagulls scavenge
this stretch of land.

Rocks jut into the sea
where we search for treasures
at low tide — hermit crabs
retract and hide when held
in our palms, starfish
scraped from stones are tossed
(Please see Zone/Page 6)

**The Internet address is
[Http://valley.uml.edu/fcf](http://valley.uml.edu/fcf)**

**...if you have access to
the Internet, go ahead
and find this new site.
You'll discover an on-
line community net-
work devoted to Low-
ell.**

Tooch Van...

scholarship to study at Middlesex Community College. He is now in his second year, earning straight A's in all his courses. In May, when his summer vacation starts, he will return to Cambodia to work for PACT, again as a trainer and technical consultant to local Cambodian NGOs.

In honoring and recognizing

Tooch, Cambodians can see themselves in the spirit of their own survival and be able to become great agents of many possibilities and change. With hard work, determination, self-confidence, self-respect and self-love and esteem, every Cambodian will be able to achieve another millenium of Angkorean pride that is of

peace, understanding, charms, beauty and compassion hidden behind the faces of those hiding smiles of Taprooms. Congratulations to Tooch on his many achievements and accomplishments.

*Tooch
look-
ing on*



Internet Access Continued...

in pails and we watch snails in shallow pools making road maps, trails in sand.

Judith Dickerman-Nelson

The Day It Rains

On the battleground of the common streets, inside the city walls where bombs have dropped, bodies of children were scattered about while the rain battered upon them like a hail of bullets showered from heaven to mop away the anguish and blood, helping to calm the nerves of those who are still alive, to silence the crying children. In a war, I am trembling among the dead, crouching and whimpering prayers as a soul without shelter, while the rain keeps battering on, putting rage in its proper burial ground, forgiving and forgiving. In the rain I'd stand listening to the sound of my own weep-

ing, reminding myself of how I had feared and how I had survived the war.

In it, it's either you or me, your children or mine. Who will be left among the ruins to pick up the pieces and bury the dead?

Chath pierSath

Welcome Simeon Zorokong and Margaret Tham (See Margaret/Page 8), our new staff members

My name is Simeon Zorokong. I am originally from Sierra Leone, in West Africa. I immigrated to the United States in June, 1990, and currently reside in Lowell with my mother, and my sister. My immediate family, my three children, Claudius, Joseph and Sandenya live in Ithaca, upstate New York with their mom, Cindi. Before I came to the United States, I worked as a community developer in my home country. I assisted families

and individuals improve their living conditions and to alleviate poverty. I provided services mostly to the rural communities. I taught health care, literacy and income generation activities from small businesses. I helped people acquire the necessary skills to better their lives and their communities.

I attended Cornell University in Ithaca, where I pursued a B.S. degree in Rural Sociology with a concentration in community and international development. Upon completion at Cornell, I devoted myself to working with low-income families and individuals. I am interested mostly in working with young people, especially young parents, to assist them in finding more meanings to their lives. This is why I came to the CMAA.

I came to Lowell in February and was happy to find a job with the CMAA working with young parents as an assistant teacher to Judith Dickerman-Nelson.



Year of the Tiger continued

services to the community. New programs are being created to fit the changing needs of the Cambodian population. There's a lot of room for collaboration with other organizations to support expansion and change. The Praxis Group, Inc. is working with CMAA to bring technology and ESL training that will give South-

east Asians a better opportunity to compete for jobs. Another possible strong link we will have is with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to start an urban and suburban farming project within the Southeast Asian community.

The CMAA Board is a strong, committed team, working to incorporate into a strate-

gic plan the essence of social, and grassroots community economic development. This includes looking at existing programs within the CMAA, their strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and seeing how they all fit into the whole development of the Courier building. Also, what **(Please see Tiger/Page 8)**

Southeast Asian Water Festival continued

see the boats. They are being stored at the CMAA. Ask Chath pierSath for further information.

If you have any questions regarding the festival planning committee and the meeting time, you can also ask Chath at 978-454-4286 or Rassany at 934-4677.

Why do we have a Southeast Asian Water Festival? In Southeast Asia, water plays a very important role in the lives of agrarian people. Once a year, Cambodia and Laos hold boat races to celebrate water and life, as well as to honor spirits in nature that give and protect their chain of sustenance. In Asia, they say that where there's water, there's life and food in abundance to reap and give thanks for.

The Water Festival in Cambodia and Laos is full of fun and games. People don't just boat race, but they dance, sing and worship. In the capitol city of Phnom Penh in Cambodia, people come from various provinces to participate in the boat racing event. Teams, often sponsored by temples, represent their home village or town. Winners will not only

take a sum of money back home, but a sense of pride and fame. Many teams take winning very seriously. Prior to the actual event, people often practice at least two or three months ahead. They prepare the boat, bless and name it. The spiritual energy of every team member must be in sync with that of the boat. They must be unified in strength and in mind as well as in soul.

Southeast Asian Water Festival is very ritualistic in nature. Boat teams are often sponsored by a temple. The head monk can take the role of a trainer or a spiritual figurehead. The boat is usually named to capture the essence of the supernatural power. They are given names based on mythical monsters, witches or sorcerers that tend to project great power and strength. The team members must embody this power and strength and be able to become as one when they row in competition with the others to win.

Last year's festival in Lowell had similar spiritual themes, especially those which relate to the environment and the use of water. The Merri-

mack River has been the artery of various states throughout New England. She is especially important to Lowell just as the Mekong is important to Southeast Asian countries. The Merrimack River in the past was used mainly as an industrial dump, whereas, the Mekong in Southeast Asia was used, even to this day, to transport things from one place to another. The river provides a great source of food, fish, and fertile silts to rice fields.

The water festival weaves aspects of nature, environment and culture as well as beliefs into the lives of Southeast Asian people. It is a colorful and traditional event for Cambodia and Laos. Dressed in their best clothes, people huddle around the bank of the river to watch boat teams competing for the trophy, pride and money for their village or their sponsored temple.

In Lowell, Massachusetts, the celebration carried the same flavor. It was festive and fun. Some attendees felt very nostalgic and thought the celebration was actually taking place in their homeland.

You don't want to miss this

year's festival. There will be many more things to see as well as to have fun and learn. Check out our environmental booths. Come and taste our food, listen to music, dance and see the boat races. There will be fishing demonstrations, using the agricultural tools shipped to us with the two boats. There will be poetry readings and a small stage theater for your entertainment. August will be hot, and you

may just want to doze out in the sun and feel the breeze on the bank of the Merrimack River. Don't miss it!

If you would like to get involved in the planning process, please contact Chath and Rassany. We need volunteers!!

Our next Water Festival Committee meeting is on May 19, 1998 at 5:30 P.M. at the Mercier Center.

Look for this New CD Release About last year's festival!



Year of the Tiger...

CMAA Programs and Their Directors:

Komar Daycare
Coreen Guivan

Young Parent Program
(GED)
Judith
Dickerman-Nelson

ESL (Adult Education)
Rosemary Zaleski

Youth Peer Leadership
Arn Chorn Pond

Elderly Outreach
Thy Chey

Monorom Family
Support
Timothy Mouth

Environmental Justice
Chath pierSath

Khmer Language Classes
Sak Seang

Citizenship Assistance
Montha Oum

are the different ways staff, Board and community members alike can bring more financial resources into this development process to make it successful.

The Courier building is of best interest to the city government as well as to the community at large. It is a historical site, and the development of the whole Jackson Street will bring more social and economic activities to the now depressed area.

Without the support from the city and the community, this whole redevelopment of the Courier building would not be a success. It will take everyone, Cambodian and non-Cambodian, to work in support of this

development.

The opportunity is limitless considering the plan that has already been drawn by the Architect. The envisioned one-stop cultural, social and commercial center has a very unique appeal in bringing people to learn and be with each other. There's talk of creating a library that will house books on a broad range of Cambodian culture, social and political life. In working with the Praxis Group, Inc., there will be a Technology Center that allows people to access the Internet, use e-mail and websites to communicate on a broader scale. There is certainly enough space for various purposes. Thirty percent of the building space will be occupied by the CMAA. The

other seventy percent is devoted to commercial use.

The future for CMAA and the Cambodian community it serves looks very positive, though there will be many challenges and obstacles to overcome.

Year of the Tiger is a year of exciting change and self-exploration. The CMAA can look and plan ahead to self-evaluate as well as to take the opportunities to make better improvement in the way it serves community members that change and affect their lives.

LOUIS L. PINN
INSURANCE AGENCY

ភារិយាស័យធានារ៉ាប់រង

1319 MIDDLESEX STREET PHONE (978) 452-4748
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Introducing Margaret Tham

My name is Margaret Tham, a newly hired case-worker for the Monorom Family Support Program at CMAA. I was born in Takeo province, Cambodia. Like millions of other Cambodians, I lived and endured five years under the Khmer Rouge regime. All fifteen members of my family were forced to abandon our home and evacuate to the countryside. I was separated from my family during those five years. After it was all over I was the only one left. The rest of my family members were either killed or died of starvation. I was lucky to survive and live through the harsh life of refugee camps for two years. Today, I am living in Lowell, Massachusetts as an American citizen. It was a miracle that I am now alive as I look

back at those years. Right now, I am focusing on building my own family and educating myself so I can live freer of those torments.

I have lived in the United States for seventeen years, mostly on the West Coast in Fresno, California. I received my B.S. in Health Science from CSU of Fresno in December of 1994. I could not have done this without the support from my husband.

Before coming to CMAA, I have been working closely with the Cambodian community in Fresno. I taught Cambodian literature and English. I published a bi-lingual Cambodian-English book in 1996. I am also an author of two Cambodian folk tales, which have not been published. I hope to publish them one day. I was also an executive director of

the Cambodian Association of Fresno.

I am glad to be at CMAA, working closely with my people and helping the children we serve within the Monorom Family Support Program. I am open to learning and helping the Cambodian community in Lowell become more successful in mainstream American culture and at the same time, help promote our cultural heritage.

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The 14th Dalai Lama: The Way of Compassion

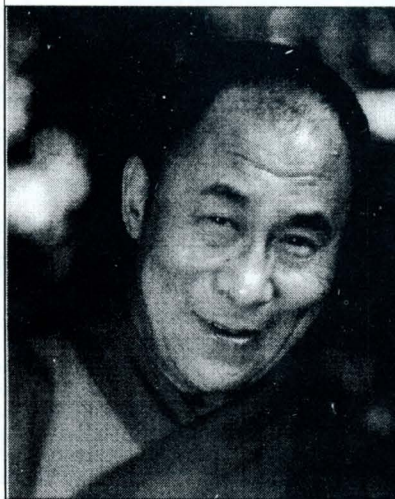
The auspicious, rainy morning of May 9, 1998 His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet, spoke at Brandeis University in Waltham. There were over 7000 people who attended. The Brandeis stadium was packed with families, friends and children. Everyone listened with their mouths agape as His Holiness delivered His message of peace and non-violence.

His smile was full of radiance and love. "Please, don't expect any kind of wisdom," he said. "I have nothing to offer to you," the audience laughed. "I am just a human being."

To many people, He may be more than a human being. He is a super human because He is very wise with a very big, super heart to offer the world. His solution to the world's pain, violence and causes of suffering is very simple, and it's the only thing that may save us from ourselves and our own destruction. That solution is the achievement of peace through compassion and non-violence.

His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, who is recognized as the leader of the Tibetan nation and people, fled Tibet

from Chinese aggression into exile in 1959. He hasn't been able to return home since. In the tradition of Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi, he has become one of the world's great advocates of non-violence. For this, he has won the admiration of the world and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989.



Tibet is roughly the size of all Western European countries combined. Like Cambodia, it is a Buddhist country, with serene, beautiful mountainous landscape. Five of Asia's great rivers including the Indus, Mekong, and Brahmaputra start out from Tibet.

Tibet's high plains, forests and mountains form a unique eco-

system on the planet and are home to many rare wildlife, including the snow leopard, blue sheep, and Tibetan wild ass. This ecosystem, and many of its species, are now endangered.

Tibet was a distinct nation and maintained its own government, religion, language, laws and customs. Over the centuries, some countries, including China, Britain, and Mongolia have sought to exert control over Tibet, with periodic and partial success. International legal scholars agree that, from 1911 until the Chinese invasion of 1949, Tibet was a fully independent state by modern standards. Since then, Tibetans have struggled to regain their freedom and keep their culture intact.

The Tibetan culture, like the cultures of Southeast Asian countries like Thailand, Cambodia and Laos, is centered around Buddhism.

Buddhism was embraced by the Tibetan people in the 8th century AD. Since then, the life of the Tibetan people has been to cultivate a good heart and a calm, clear mind. In the wake of China's repressive occupation, however, the

Tibetan people have not been allowed to practice Buddhism freely. Over 6,000 monasteries were desecrated and destroyed by the Communist Chinese. Today, news of torture, rape and imprisonment hit the world's newspapers' headlines. Nuns are often raped and tortured at the hands of Chinese soldiers and many monks who try to resist Chinese rules by continuing to practice their religion are con-

stantly being harassed and many are taken into prison and beaten.

In spite of these harsh and inhuman rules and domination by China, His Holiness the Dalai Lama continues to advocate non-violence and compassion. At Brandeis University, His Holiness spoke of patience and offering love toward the Chinese. Though freedom for Tibet is urgent for the survival of the Tibetan culture and environment, His

Holiness feels that only patience and compassion will rid our world of further hatred and war. He emphasized that all beings, plants and animals as well as man are interconnected and interdependent on each other. Therefore, we cannot build peace alone. Those who oppress and commit violence against others are the ones who we need to love and give peace to the most.

A Prayer for the Millenium



I think of my motherland, like an invocation I'd give to the world,

dreaming that by the year 2000, peace will truly come to this wounded nation of mass genocide and violence.

I think of her as a land of gardens, a rain forest of air and life for all, a country of forgiveness and compassion. She is understanding beyond borders, peacemaker of neighboring conflicts and historical hatred with the Vietnamese, the Thais and themselves.

All her children will have a childhood, a generation with both parents alive and siblings to play with. All the land mines would have been destroyed from where her people farm to eat. All land mines banned from the world.

No child would be forced to hold a gun for someone else's political rights or economic

greed and power.

There would be playgrounds instead of war zones.

There would be more schools instead of brothels and nightclubs. The children will sing songs of joy instead of terror.

They will learn how to read love instead of hate.

And each child will have enough to eat and clean water to drink.

Cambodia is greening again, sprouting seeds of peace into spring blossoms of love and joy. All her tropical trees are left uncut.

Her abundant fruit is shared. Her vegetation's an earthly paradise.

She is serene, beautiful and full of charms like the statues carved on her temple walls, filled with peace and hiding smiles.

Her people are made strong and wise from all the suffering they have endured.

The world will look upon her with admiration because she has learned to overcome the war in her blood, the rage in her eyes, the darkness in her midst.

Her people united to end all agonies, all bloods to be spilled on her land, to stop all killings of

lives and make all violations of her innocence a crime against humanity.

The bigger and more wealthy countries will stop selling her arms to kill her own people. They will become good role models of her socio-economic, political and spiritual development. They will respect her as an equal and love her as their own sister.

My Cambodia will join a band of other impoverished nations to acquire needed knowledge to solve her own poverty, to lessen all injustices, to protect her rivers and forest from capital slaughtering, and provide opportunities for all her children so they won't have to sell their bodies for foreign currencies.

Those nations with skills to share, friendship to gain and love to give will sincerely come to help her, give her encouragement and provide her with some infrastructural support needed to keep her people growing trees instead of cutting them down

to pay her debt.

Every country like Cambodia, big or small, rich or poor, will meet under the same sun, gather for the same prayer, experience the same hope and dream, live for the same peace, and love for the same reason.

In each of us, we will find our common suffering, our hunger and thirst for life,

our desire to be free from all harms to our bodies, our spirits and our souls.

I think of Cambodia as one nation loved; one nation healed and freed from war and hate. Imagine earth with all nations loved and treated when sick or diseased.

Imagine families of people willing to share, to understand and learn from each other.

Imagine all the wisdom and the experiences that we could gather to make our planet one home and ourselves one people, united in our diversity.

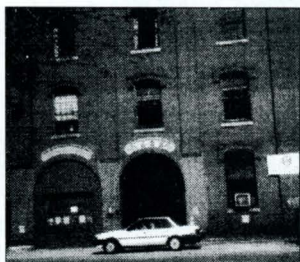
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