

Kevin's Journal May 22 - 28, 2016

Sunday May 22

Last night after I sent my journal for the week I found yet another water leak on the ship. There is water in the ceiling beside our walk-in cooler. The wood ceiling and the trim that holds the ceiling panels in was soaking wet and rotten, black with mold. When I was tearing it out I also found an ant nest in the ceiling so a good shot of RAID took care of that. It looks like it is a leaking pipe from the cold room, or possibly just condensation from a cooling pipe because the insulation wrapped around the pipe is wet and falling off. I was too tired to do anything more with it, so we'll let it drip onto the floor (it is a slow drip) and when the crew are back I'll have the engineer and electrician see what they can do with it.

Sunday was a relaxing day on the ship. It was a bit cloudy and there was a good breeze, so the temperature was maybe about 30C, at least 10 degrees cooler than it has been the past few weeks. This meant it was pleasant to sit out in the shade of the triage area of the ship. Everyone visited, read, watched movies, played dominoes and cards to pass the time today. In the middle of the afternoon we took the truck and a tuk tuk and travelled 20 minutes up the highway to a large outdoor market at the nearest large town. This gave the nurses from Harding a chance to see a local market and I bought repair parts for the leaking sink and some other things we needed on the ship. Because the cook always has the weekend off, Catharine and Lisa took care of breakfast, lunch and dinner for the Harding group so the cooking and cleaning up for the eight of us takes some time as well. It was nice to see the captain join Sovannara and some of the girls in a game of dominoes. In the evening we had our church service and the dining room was full with Catharine, me, the 6 visiting nurses/nursing students, Sovannara, Sopheak, the Captain, and Somphos our pharmacist. The hymnbook has some of the same hymns in both English and Khmer so we can sing together in both languages and it sounds really nice.

Monday May 23

This morning the Engineer and Electrician fixed the water leak in the pipe in the ceiling that feeds the walk-in cooler. Then we measured the size of replacement ceiling panels that we need and I sent that information to Bunthoeurn. Tuesday he is sending a van and driver from Phnom Penh to the ship to pick up the Harding group, so they will bring out the supplies to us at the same time.

We had a full morning of clinic this morning with the Harding nursing students helping out and their instructor seeing patients with Sovannara serving as her interpreter. I took the cook and his helper in the truck to the big market about 20 minutes north of where we are and they bought a LOT of fruit, vegetables, and other staples to bring back to the ship. After we got back the captain and I drove through the two closest villages and he used the megaphone to inform people about the ship and the free medical services that are available. He was surprised how slow the clinic was today. He said that two years ago when he was here in this location with the ship the people were sleeping out on the shore overnight to make sure they got a number to see a doctor. After we got back we had the maintenance meeting with the engineer and electrician. I can't believe it, but the walk-in cooler has stopped working AGAIN. This month we had the repair company out

two different times for two different problems. They will come back tomorrow. The cook is confident that the vegetables should be okay in the cooler for a day as it is an insulated room and it was cool before the refrigeration unit quit. If not, we'll buy some big blocks of ice locally somewhere and use that to cool the room down. Catharine continues to work with the crew on keeping the kitchen, dishwashing area, etc cleaner than they have been doing. She asked Socheat to show her how he loads and uses the dishwasher. He opened it and put Sunlight liquid dish-soap into the container where you are supposed to put the finishing liquid. Catharine pointed to the container where you are "supposed" to put the special liquid dishwasher soap that we buy and he went and got powdered laundry detergent and dumped it in there. Who knows how long he has been doing this! The dishwasher was bought new last summer while Catharine and I were back in Canada and I "assumed" someone taught him properly. So, Catharine went in to the office and got the operators manual to check everything and don't you suppose it is only in German! Catharine was able to correct Socheat without the manual. It makes you wonder what else is going on like this that we don't know about.

Tuesday May 24

We had a very full clinic morning on the ship with Dr. Panha and Lisa both seeing patients. One grandmother brought her grandson on board and he had some terrible condition that was causing the skin on his feet to peel off. Even with a good translator, it was hard for Catharine to get the full, true story. We think they went to the Kampa Bopha charity hospital last year, but were told the hospital did not have a specialist, so they were told to go to a second hospital. For an unknown reason, they did not end up going there. Our doctor diagnosed it as a severe fungal infection, so Catharine cleaned his feet, put antifungal cream on them, and put on dressings and also socks. They will come back tomorrow. Catharine called another charity hospital in Phnom Penh and they asked her to take a photo of his feet and send the picture, by email, to their doctor so we will do that and see if they think they can help.

Catharine also heard back from the doctor at the hospital that has the room full of disabled child patients who have been left at the hospital by their parents for various reasons. They contacted the NGO in Phnom Penh that the NGO in Siem Reap told us to have them contact, and the short answer is that there is no help available from them. We had offered to purchase some toys, mobiles for the cribs, maybe a CD player and music, and some other things to use to provide some stimulation for the children but the doctor has refused our offer. The hospital is afraid that if people see the quality of care is improving for these children it could encourage more parents to abandon children with disabilities at the hospital. It is very difficult to be in a situation where you see a need and want to help but you are prevented from doing so, but we have to respect the hospital's wishes.

Just after lunch we said goodbye to our group from the Harding School of Nursing. As luck would have it, right when they were getting ready to go off the ship and up the riverbank to the van that came to get them the skies opened and the rain started to pour. Welcome to the monsoon season. They all made it up through the mud and onto the van and off down the road.

Wednesday May 25

Today the captain, electrician and I went across the river in the ex-gun boat to check out the water depth and the shoreline where we will move the ship to on Friday. The water is very shallow, and the wind and waves were quite strong on the other side of the river. So, I suggested, and the captain agreed, that we wait and move the ship on Monday. The captain will be off the ship this weekend and so I don't want to move to a windy, rough location and risk the ship drifting again if the anchor doesn't hold. Plus, on Sunday we have to get our visiting nurses from Thailand and all their luggage, and an order of frozen meat and other groceries all on to the ship. If we move across the river, we will have to hand-load it onto and off of a ferry as the ferry and the road on the other side of the river is too small to handle our truck. As well, on Sunday Seyha can go to the good, big market near where the ship currently is and buy his local fish, vegetables and fruit before the ship moves to the other side of the river. I didn't see a good market at the next location. When the little boy with the skin condition came on the ship today he came with his mother. She had the lab results from their hospital visit two years earlier and it ruled out a fungal infection, so our doctor is not able to give a confident diagnosis. We offered to take them to Phnom Penh to a different hospital from the two they have already gone to and they agreed to come with us tomorrow.

Thursday/Friday May 26 & 27

Thursday we had our regular morning of clinic, and then Catharine and I left the ship at 1:00 to go to Phnom Penh. The little 6 year old boy with the terrible skin condition on his feet joined us, along with his mother. We are taking them in to a hospital that supposedly specializes in dermatology. We brought two "barf bags" along with us and it was good thing because they both got really car sick as they are not used to riding in automobiles. Bunthoeurn met us at the hospital and took over from there. We asked him to bring a pair of shoes for the boy as well so that his feet are protected. It turned out to be too late for them to be seen today, so he got them settled in to a guest house that is walking distance from the hospital. He had to show the mom how to turn on a light switch, how to use the taps for hot and cold water, etc as this was all new to her. On Friday we heard from them that they were seen by a doctor and they said he has some sort of genetic skin condition. They gave him some medication and they want to see him again in 10 days. We'll help with transportation, food and accommodation costs again for that trip. Friday morning Bunthoeurn picked me up at 6:30 a.m. and we drove clear across the city and just into the next province to attend the Kandal Provincial Health Meeting. It was our turn to present a report on the work of our NGO to the group. I had prepared a PowerPoint with photos and statistics of the number of patients we see, etc and Bunthoeurn delivered the presentation to the group. The "president" of the meeting commented that we should have had handouts. (No one told me we needed to have handouts.) He also said that in the past when Partners in Progress presented the director always brought cake for the group. I didn't know if he was serious or joking, but sadly I think he was serious. They also suggested that since we are only in a village for a week with the ship, we should leave a bunch of medication at the Health Centre so that the people we prescribe medication to can get their refills. Yeah right. Like THAT is going to happen. If we left a bunch of medication, most likely the local doctor/nurse would take it to their own private clinic they operate out of the back of their house and

they would charge patients for their medications and make 100% profit on it. Sadly, this is the state of health care here. Bunthoeurn and I also took care of dropping off a water pump motor shaft at a machinist to have it rewelded and machined. We also met Catharine at a wholesale pharmacy and bought just over \$300 of meds to take back to the ship. One of our trucks needed an oil and filter change, and then there was banking and the May accounting to reconcile. Catharine and Vanny also worked on the new mother - new baby packages together. It was a productive day. We ended with a delicious meal at our favourite Khmer restaurant near the office.

Saturday May 28

We enjoyed our usual morning run in Phnom Penh, and then settled in to a day of shopping and re-stocking for the ship. We drove down to the central market and REALLY lucked out with a parking spot right beside the market. It is usually a crush of cars and bicycles and motos and tuk tuk's, and almost impossible to find a parking spot. We bought hand-towels for the hand washing station on the ship, more serving bowls for the cook, a small flashlight for the doctor to use when examining patients, etc. We also made a trip to the Superstore grocery store to get the remainder of groceries that Catharine had not been able to find at the other stores. In the evening we met Dan and Ravi at the Foreign Correspondent's Club along the riverside. It is the place that the foreign journalists used to meet at and it is a wonderful, big restaurant. The restaurant is on the second floor and it overlooks the river. They open up the huge wooden shutters and there is a nice breeze through the restaurant. And, to top it off, the food is tasty too. It's been a month and a half since we last saw Dan and Ravi so it was nice to be together again. Tomorrow we pick up the nursing students and nursing instructors from Thailand for their two week stay on the ship.