

As most of you know, I gathered up prosthetics and went on a journey to Thailand and Cambodia with Jason Snailham and the Pathfinders. On October 21st, I flew out on a journey to the other side of the world and to another world in it's self. We began military training with parachutes, training tower with the Thai army and met up with other pathfinders there. Bangkok was interesting; we saw a number of interesting parts of the city from the filthy poor to homes surrounding the palaces. The roads there and the driving was absolutely crazy and the sound of horns were constant and steady.

The training went on for a couple days; we wore military uniforms, boots, hats and jackets in about 100-degree weather with 100% humidity. Was tedious to say the least, but yet the surroundings of the gorgeous foliage and the sounds of birds unlike ours here in the states seemed someone pleasant. While there, the main things we had to remember was to watch for Cobras, mosquitoes, and remember that they drive on the other side of the road from what they do here in the states. So, when crossing the road on foot, you look in the opposite direction for the on coming cars, not like I did and almost got hit by all the on coming traffic. Whew, close call.

I don't think the Thai Special Forces could have been any more hospitable to us. We had two sections of training. I decided to choose the static line since I have never done static line and after the training, probably never will actually do it from a flight vessel. I like free fall way too much to give it up even for one jump. Also as most of you already know, I am an amputee skydiver. So this is why this trip has gone forward and was a must to become a very successful trip.

On to Cambodia. We arrived and checked in to our hotel. No one carries toilette paper by the way, you must have your own, shake it dry or use a water hose or pan to dip into the water hole they have next to the toilette, hole or wherever they have appointed a place to potty to wash yourself and then dare pull your britches up on the wetness. Eeeewwwwwyyy.

Once in Cambodia, Phnom Penh, we checked into our hotel and was picked up by an officer of the Royal Cambodian Special Force 911 team and taken to Kambol Camp where we met up with some of the airborne troops. We talked for a short while, looked around at their packing hanger, and studied the drop zone and their thousand obstacles we had to avoid during our next day skydive. On to their open pavilion to observe where we would eat the next day. Oh, there is a beautiful beige ox tied up. I think I'll head over and pet him. How sweet and what beautiful eyes. Then I heard "sure Robin just pet your dinner before you eat em" "yeah right"! After a long and much hotter and humid day in comparison to the almost unbearable heat in Thailand, off we went to our hotel. We rented a boy with a motorcycle. Looking down the streets you wonder, would I be safer to ride with one of these guys to the money transfer station or walk... really, it was safer to ride. I don't know how cause there didn't seem to be any rules on the road. There were not very many cars but thousands of these motorcycles and some

carrying families of 5. Some had 50 live ducks in their baskets. While some were quacking if they were lucky enough to be the first ones in the baskets tied by their feet. Others weren't so lucky if they were to be part of the over flow, their quacks became more and more faint until they actually hung over the sides beating their selves literally to death with the road. I am so glad that we weren't witnesses to what happens to the overflow of people hanging on for dear life to the sides, front, top and backs of trucks and vans. So we dared, we got on the back after looking over the driver to see if his body parts were still intact and how many scars his body contained. it kind of told us the story of how good a driver he was. "Ah ha, nice skin, I'll take this one!" We hired the drivers for the day then shopping for more uniform items. We ate at a tourist (mostly Europeans) restaurant on the bank of the river where I got my first eyes view of just how many amputees, homeless and beggars there were. Man I don't think I have ever seen so many amputees and deformed people on one block in my life. Not just one limb, but MANY with two, three and even four. As they approached us asking for handouts, I showed them my leg and they backed off watching me curiously and with smiles breaking on their faces.

We bought books from a double lower limb amputee and then as I turned to go back up to the balcony of the restaurant. we were face to face with another double arm amputee selling books. I thought this was a great thing that they weren't begging, rather they were selling something for their living. I bought a book from him and observed the use of his stumps to pick the books and even exchange the money we gave. The books they were selling were all books about the Khmar Rouge regime, Killing fields, and children of the mines and such. Years and years of killing in one way or another have without a doubt devastated their country. People are still stepping on mines left and trying to pick up the pieces of over two million of their people who were ordered slaughtered by the regime, families who were torn apart, drove them from their homes to work in forced labor camps, and executed captives in front of children, children were beat and killed, babies ripped from their mothers arms and murdered and if the mothers cried out, they were killed too. People were tortured beyond our comprehension and innocence was taken from children and brutal dismemberment took place. The khmar Rouge began their horrible control by taking all persons in power, doctor's teachers, workers and any one of any intellect what so ever and ordered them murdered. The hope and spirit of these people became only the hope for Kmar Rouge revolution dependent on the children to obtain. It was these Children's faces we saw in Cambodia those days of our visit and is now the faces of the young men and woman left to pick up the pieces. The Viet Nam war was also going on during many of these years and land mines were left by many countries involved in that war. These mines left are still blowing up two people on an average per day! **SOMETHING MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE TO HELP THESE PEOPLE RESTORE THEIR LIVES!**

Jump day! Our special force courtesy shuttle arrived early to take us to their base where we would jump from a donated Russian helicopter. The clouds hung very low and the winds were strangely blowing with gusts to a dead almost eerie calm. Of course we were grounded until something opened. As I sat and talked with many of the soldiers and told of my amputation and my skydiving, word spread and before I knew it I was surrounded by dozens of curious on lookers asking many questions through an interpreter. I was then approached by the free fall instructor "master" who said with a huge smile on his face as he puffed out his proud chest stating who he was and that he has 29 free fall jumps. I thought "oh, my God, this is scary". I guess they have to start somewhere. This is also the purpose of the Pathfinders, to take donated parachutes to them, teach them skydiving in areas of both static line and free fall, packing, repairing and teaching skills. How much can they learn twice a year for a couple days each visit?

The sky opened, the wind died down and now a load of static were up and under canopy. Ooops they landed in the rice paddies but all came back proud that they did their PLF and evidence shows on their sides and mud marked their points of impact.

Now it was the static and free fallers turn. The helicopter was loaded. It was amazing they could get it off the ground, but surprisingly it did. Jason Snailham pointed to the back at all the little eyes peaking out and smiling at me. He stated that they were there to watch me jump out. Seemed to be an amazing thing for a woman to free-fall. Never heard of there and also that I was an amputee and could do it. They all wanted to see this. Oh, boy, the pressures on. I must have a great skydive, not land in the mines, or paddy fields, oh, and let's not forget the thousand obstacles including all the flag poles with very sharp points at the tops. As I got ready to exit the helicopter, the kids came rushing out of their hiding places towards the door, My heart raced as I wondered how many of these precious faces were going to fall out with me. I motioned for them to all get back and the only way I could communicate with them in the few moments I had was to give them a mean face and a hand motion to stay back. They obeyed and Thank God for that! Now I am out and under canopy, I am looking for my landing area and spot every place I am not to land at first. No, not there, left turn. The wind took me and threw me to the right and collapsed two of my cells, quick back to the left and inflated my cells. OK, all is good. I was so adamant about having a good landing cause all eyes were on me. The television news reporters and cameras were there too and as a woman free faller, amputee and as a special guest of the Pathfinders and Royal Cambodian Special Force 911 group, I had to have a smooth, stand up landing without incident. I did! Yeah! I did!

We celebrated, had an award ceremony, and drank with these wonderful sweet people. Let's not forget the ox. The had a couple men rotating it's carcass over an open fire. Tasted pretty delicious actually. What I couldn't eat and meant no

disrespect for was the duck soup. Not the meat of the body, but the whole head in the center of my bowl. Couldn't do it.

I got my wings there that day, a certificate of skydive and was called Airborne Sister. This was my ticket for World Extremities to feel safe about bringing in prosthetics. What an honor to be in the presence of these fantastic loving people.

I spent some time in the following days, visiting places with the Pathfinders even though we broke the group apart. Some of the superiors had more work to do and I was ready to go and do what I came for. Making my contacts with the rehab centers. We flew to Siem Reap, went to Anchor Watt, saw the 5000-year-old ruins. Visited the mine hutches called museum, saw thousands of mines (not active). Along the miles of roads leading to the mine museum were blocked off with rope and signs of cross bones warning of live mines just 25 feet from where the dirt road was on both sides.

We visited the handicap international run by Belgium and governed by Australia. Made my contacts there, visited with the amputees and also polio victims. I held a 5-month-old badly deformed by polio. Observed their make shift wheel chairs and crutches, their hammocks and military medical stretchers they slept on, holes to potty in (can't see how they do it when most don't have legs. The rehab center for Cambodia is "state of the art" for them. I promised them that day that I would deliver and keep delivering as long as I live the much-needed prosthetics.

I came home and found that through Dana Bowman, he is willing to donate the two warehouses he has of prosthetics if I can supply the shipment. What a great thing and now, I must fund raise for my return trip in March to make good on my promise to deliver.

The Pieces of Eight are willing to make a trip this June or July to do a skydiving demonstration for fund raising for World Extremities. This is now in the works.

My experience was life changing, heart breaking, and heart warming,

I have special thanks to the following people who made this journey with me. I couldn't have done it without them. First and foremost: Jason Snailham (friend, fellow skydiver, and Pathfinder from the UK, static and free fall). Ean (pathfinder, static and free fall). Rocky Frie (United States Pathfinder, static). Bill (United States Pathfinder, static). Wayne (UK Pathfinder, static). Wayne's beautiful sweet wife Nina (Bangkok Thailand, completed tower training static). Nina's sweet and beautiful sister Ploy (Bangkok Thailand, completed tower training static). Russell (United States Pathfinder static and made first free fall in Cambodia congratulations!). Sum (Singapore Pathfinder, static). Maamar (Hong Kong Pathfinder and backbone. Static, free fall) his lovely tiny smile faced girlfriend Som, Thailand, completed tower training static) and the Special Forces of

Thailand and Cambodia. And many thanks to the residence of both places for changing my life forever!

Thank you all!

Robin
www.worldextremities.org

Talbott