



THE NATIONAL NEWSLETTER OF THE MIVAC TRUST

PATRON: COLONEL SANDY MACGREGOR, MC, RFD (Rtd)

JUNE 2008

The MIVAC TRUST is the initiative of Australian Veterans who cleared landmines during the Vietnam War and witnessed the devastation caused by these indiscriminate weapons. MIVAC is primarily a fundraising body, a voluntary organization allocating much needed funds to projects identified to the MIVAC Trustees by Australian de-miners who are or have been, involved with de-mining, health or education projects overseas. MIVAC is giving you the opportunity to make a difference and help clear the world of landmines and unexploded remnants of war. Please support the work MIVAC is involved with. All MIVAC staff are volunteers and this enables us to deliver the maximum amount of funds we have raised to projects.

COMING EVENTS:

ART & WAR MEMORABILIA EXHIBITION

TWINS TOWNS RSL

TWEEDS HEADS

FUNDRAISING LUNCHEON

CURRUMBIN RSL

HOSTED BY NORMIE ROWE

& SANDY MACGREGOR

DAY OF 1000 BBQ'S

COMING SOON TO A TOWN NEAR YOU

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CHECK OUT OUR WEB SITE

www.mivactrust.org

TWIN TOWNS SERVICES CLUB
TWEED HEADS/COOLANGATTA - GOLD COAST WAR MUSEUM
SUB-BRANCH

Invites the Veterans & the Public to our
Vietnam War Exhibition
PLUS Korea & Post Vietnam Conflicts
13-14-15 AUG 2008
In the **ANZAC ROOM**
TIMINGS: 9:00am - 5:00pm
Exhibition of:
Memorabilia/Artifacts,
Photographic / Art display,
Electronic visual and Audio display,
Mine display.

Gold coin donation
Proceeds to benefit:
MIVAC & War Dogs

For further information contact:
BOB MEEHAN-MUSEUM 07 55335620
JOE RUSSELL-SUB-BRANCH 0755344076

SHARING THE KNOWLEDGE

BATTICALOA

SRI LANKA

Jesu Ashram – A Haven for Sri Lankan Children

The 2005 Tsunami brought catastrophe to millions of people living beside the Pacific and Indian Oceans. The vast generosity, which followed, was like another tidal wave, of sorts, which thankfully brought much good, in terms of useful funding and volunteer labour.



A fallen shrine on land washed bare

Thousands of stories of selflessness will remain forever unknown, except in local villages where people remember and retell these stories of sacrifice, good Samaritans and willing helpers.

MiVAC has been fortunate to be involved in a small but significant way. We have enabled the reconstruction of an orphanage at Dutch Bar, near the city of Batticaloa, in Batticaloa Province, on the eastern central coast of Sri Lanka.

Our project is now complete and the orphanage is occupied by children who were left destitute when the Tsunami washed away their home, on Boxing Day, 1995. Nuns of the Roman Catholic religious order, The Messengers of Jesus, run the orphanage.

The new building is a vast improvement on the old structure, part of which remained and was used as temporary housing for children who could not be sheltered elsewhere in the area during the reconstruction.

The total cost of the project in round numbers was \$122,000. MiVAC contributed roughly \$65,000. The State Government of Tasmania provided \$50,000 of that. 10,000 was granted by the Cofield Foundation, and 5,000 was raised through MiVAC activities and generous donations from our MiVAC members, and other supporters including the students and teachers of Glen Huon Primary School, Guilford Young College and Sacred Heart School at Newtown, Tas.



Welcoming line on opening day at Jesu Ashram

What about the other \$57,000? That funding came from the Dutch charity, Ayubowan, which has had a long-standing relationship with the orphanage at Dutch Bar.

MiVAC used initial individual donations to fund the scoping of the project. As a result of our findings, and the further funding it enabled, we were able to start, supervise and finish work that far exceeded our modest input. That is like a win on 23:1 odds.

It is a far more significant win for the children at Jesu Ashram, some of whom are survivors of mine warfare and others of whom have found sanctuary from LTTE factions seeking child soldiers. They are able to continue their education in a new building with superior amenities, compared to their original housing.



Residents sing hymns at opening ceremony

Special thanks goes to Brendan Boucher and Caroline del Court Koenig.

Brendan was our MiVAC Project Supervisor, who spent many weekends travelling to Dutch Bar – after full weeks of work for another major NGO. Brendan's work, consulting with the Sri Lankan building contractor and engineer, was a key element in the project's success.

Caroline, who represents Ayubowan, travelled to Sri Lanka twice, at her own expense, from Holland. Her presence was essential to our major funding partner, and her good will, her relationship with the Sisters running the orphanage, and openness toward all have been essential in keeping lines of communication open. She hopes to visit the orphanage again in three or four months.

I look forward to her report.

Robert Rands

Chairman The MiVAC Trust

KON KATU VIETNAM Road Repair Project

Last year my wife and I visited Vietnam. We had been there with our children in 1999 and were keen to re-visit this amazing country. I had been involved for some time, raising funds for two orphanages in Kon Tum which is in the central highlands of Vietnam. We planned to spend some time with the orphanages, and indeed we did and were able to pass over some much needed money for use by the orphanages. But that is another story.

Kon Tum was the scene of fierce fighting during the war, particularly during the TET Offensive in 1968, and again during the advance south of the North Vietnamese Army in 1974/5. An area near Kon Tum has been referred to by some NVA soldiers as The Screaming Soul's Jungle. It is difficult for us to imagine the hardship the locals had to endure back then, and for some, still today.

While in Kon Tum, our guide, Mr Hau, of the Roman Catholic Diocese and a person very much involved with the orphans, took Rhonda and I to a Bahnar village a few kilometres from Kon Tum. The Bahnar are an ethnic minority tribe. We arrived in the village of Kon Katu and were introduced to the village chief, Mr Kheo. After exchanging a few pleasantries, we were then taken for a walk, well hike for us, of about two kilometres of rough track. The track roughly followed the Dak Bla River, which runs through Kon Tum.

We were shown various section of the track that were in desperate need of repair, but the crunch came when we halted at a point where a creek flows into the river. During the monsoon season, the creek floods the track thus isolating outlying villages and preventing the Bahnar and Vietnamese villagers from accessing their crops. They rely on getting these crops to the Kon Tum markets. No sale and no income mean no money to feed the family. For these people it is a desperate situation.

After pulling out the trusty Field Message Notebook and taking a few rough estimates, it seemed to me that the solution was a couple of decent culverts with a causeway over the top, constructed beyond the high water mark. I told the chief that I would put a proposal to some of my friends back in Australia (MiVAC of course), and would see if we could give some help. Needless to say Mr Kheo was over the moon. I did stress however, that all I was doing was making an approach. Nothing could be guaranteed.

We then returned to the village and were taken to Mr Kheo's home where he honoured us with a drink of Cassava wine. That was much more of a challenge than the hiking.



The track from Kon Katu as it was during the war.



The track in 2007

And so the Kon Katu Road Repair project was born. After we returned home, I put a proposal together and sent it on to MiVAC for their approval in principal. Then I contacted an old Army Reserve friend, Elvin Smith, who was a retired Main Roads engineer. He kindly drew up some plans, based on the photos that I had taken, and information I had gleaned from the locals. It was critical then to have a qualified engineer visit the site, plans in hand, to determine if the task was doable or not.

Between Rob Woolley and myself, we forwarded the proposal and plans to another MiVAC friend, Walter Kopek in Bangkok. Walter and two civil engineers were able to visit the site in April and have provided a detailed plan that will incorporate a number of box culverts. I have been fortunate in gaining a volunteer to provide some training for the villagers to carry out the work if the project is approved.

I remain confident that we can get the job done. It would be a very tardy ex Sapper who threw in the towel because of a few hurdles. So the Kon Katu Road Repair Project is very much still an embryo, work still in progress, but **watch this space**. The Bahnar folk need our help and I am hell bent on giving it to them. How could we not.

Derek Smith
MiVAC Rep.

KAI'S VILLAGE

CAMBODIA

Kia's Village Orphanage Sustainable Farm Project

Project Goal:

"To develop an Integrated Farm at Kai's Village Orphanage in order to sustainably produce enough food for the growing numbers of orphaned children living at the facilities."

Kai's Village Orphanage is located at Komong Speau Province. The orphanage is currently the home for about 43 children with 20 of them being under the age of 12 months.

Due to the isolated location, the orphanage currently faces regular water shortages as there is no central water system. Water is currently being pumped from several open wells to two water towers. There is also a bore hole (near one of the water towers) approximately 10 meters deep, however, it is not enough and needs to be drilled deeper in order to access ground water levels.

The land is currently being used as an orchard with limited usage for growing vegetables for consumption by the children.

There are more than 400 mango trees planted on the land, but there is limited success in producing fruit for sale to assist purchasing food for the orphanage and the orchard is infected with a pest/disease.

There is currently a herd of 13 cattle which were intended for sale to purchase food for the orphanage, yet they are not as productive as they could be due to limited understanding of animal husbandry techniques and difficulty meeting their food requirements.

There is a chicken pen which is not being used due to fears of bird flu. In addition, there are other opportunities for raising animals, but not yet being taken advantage of.

There is a large pond in the centre of the land, but as of yet, it's not being used to its full potential.

There are more than 43 mouths to be fed on a daily basis and the orphanage staff are currently purchasing most of their food from a local market which is an unsustainable approach to managing the premises given the available land resources. In order to assist the orphanage in improving the efficiency of caring for the children, several steps must be taken to develop its agricultural outputs in a sustainable manner.

One such way to address the problem of sustainability at the orphanage is to develop the 7 hectares of land into an integrated farming system capable of producing enough food on an annual basis, or at least significantly subsidize the costs that orphanage is currently spending on feeding the children. Such an integrated farm would require responsible utilization of available resources on the land, implementing techniques to improve agricultural outputs, and introducing simple, but effective rural technologies that can vastly improve living conditions at the orphanage.

The initial period of time for the development of an integrated farm would take at least one year, however it is likely if more financial resources are available, a longer period of up to two years would be needed.

Short-Term Objectives:

To improve living conditions of the children at Kai's Village Orphanage by:

1. Improved food security for orphanage children - in terms of quality, quantity and diversity, through improved agriculture techniques, aquaculture and small livestock (chickens) training and supply.
2. Provision of income generation opportunities for the orphanage - through surplus production of fruits (mangos) and livestock (cattle and pigs).
3. Improved water and sanitation - through provision of rainwater collectors and completion of a bore well to supply clean drinking water, repair of a drainage trench, and construction of a biodigester unit.



Chicken Coop at Kia's Village Orphanage

Mike Roberts, a MiVAC member and Vietnam Veteran (2RAR) alerted MiVAC Trustees to the plight of the orphans of Kai's Village. With the help of the students and staff of GAGEBROOK PRIMARY SCHOOL in Southern Tasmania we were able to supply some much needed funds to this area.

After hearing about MiVAC's work in Cambodia and watching a video about landmines the Gagebrook students decided to raise some money for this project by holding an auction of a series of paintings they had done with the theme of "Garden's of Death"(inspired by Bernard Carney's song of the same name).

The auction was held at Siren's Restaurant in Hobart and after some very spirited bidding by parents, friends and other supporters over \$1,200 was raised. Several of these paintings will be part of the exhibition at Twin Towns RSL in August.

The initiative of the students and support of their teachers shows how much can be achieved by becoming aware of the landmine problem and making a decision to do something about it.

We would like to continue supporting the Kai's Village project. Please help us to do this by making a donation to MiVAC (marking it for Kai's Village Project).

TEME POPUOM

LAOS

"To Give Every Child a Chance... and a Place To Pee"

The Lao People's Democratic Republic, generally referred to as Lao PDR or simply Lao, is the most bombed country per capita in the history of warfare. Although it has been over thirty years since the end of the Vietnam War, or American War depending on perspective, the remnants of the bombing linger in the form of unexploded bombs that litter the countryside. Although the dangers posed by these unexploded bombs present a constant threat to their lives and livelihoods, the Lao people exhibit an amazing resiliency and on a recent homestay at a hill tribe village they were as warm and welcoming and gracious as any hosts anywhere.

The purpose of the trip was to visit several villages to survey school construction projects and opportunities for MiVAC. Most of the villages we visited were in Salavan province which is in the southern area of Lao and straddles Viet Nam and Thailand. Any visit to the hill areas of Southeast Asia requires certain precautions including a fair supply of Imodium A-D for stomach ills, doxycycline for malaria, and azythromycin to take care of the odd bacteria that may find its way into the body.

Despite the potential health issues, the homestay was a grand time, although one must be willing to accept communal living, eating and sleeping. The communal living includes the various livestock such as chickens, ducks, pigs, water buffalo, and occasional horse while the sleeping arrangements were one large room with mosquito nets for all.

We stayed in the only house in the village with a bathroom: a detached building with a squat toilet and a shower consisting of a drum of water with a salad bowl. The water was trucked in especially for us. The village did not have a well. The rest of the village used the bushes to relieve themselves and the river for bathing. Thus MiVAC was presented with its first project opportunity in Lao: at breakfast the last day the headman asked if MiVAC could provide a well and toilet at the site of the village school.

In a few short months, through the generosity of MiVAC and in co-operation with Shanti Volunteer Association of Japan, the villagers of Teme Popuom had a source of clean water and a place to pee.



Clean Water

*Toilet
Block*



Walter Kopek joined MiVAC as a member of the VVA Chapter in Stoneham, Massachusetts. He has self funded several trips into Laos and Vietnam on behalf of MiVAC and has recently overseen our projects in Laos. After the successful completion of the toilet block and water well at Teme Popuom Walter is spending several months back in the USA and will return to S.E.Asia in September.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS???????
**Contact National Office if you have recently
changed your email or postal address.**

DAY OF 1000 BARBEQUES -

What About One in Your Backyard?

Each year in the first week of December, to start the official BBQ season, MiVAC is encouraging its supporters to run a BBQ with a little awareness raising and fundraising and fun on the side.

For a bit of fun and to raise the profile of MiVAC, in Tasmania we've inaugurated the Tongmaster Award. Each year three people (pollies, local heroes, someone controversial who attracts the press) are each given two sausages to cook and present the best one for a blind tasting to a set of judges (usually Vets) who judge on colour, presentation, texture and "doneness". The winner carries away for a year the prestigious engraved MiVAC Tongmaster Tongs and gets to defend the position next year.

So far we've had some controversy, with a local ALP member beating the Liberal, or better still, the vegetarian Green beating both ALP and Liberal! Challenges on the judges ruling have been threatened, all in good faith and over a beer or two. A donated bottle or wine or three keeps them all sweet to come back next year.

Ensuring there's a quantity of donated sausages, bread, sauces, with cans of soft drink selling for around \$1, and a sausage by gold coin, makes for a great afternoon. We've had good weather, and hired the BBQs in a city council park, organised in entertainment for the children and encouraged people to peruse the information on MiVAC. All in all, two cracking good BBQs with good media coverage and money raised beside.

Want to do the same in your local park? Or even in your backyard? You could hold a simple BBQ with friends and family, and let them BYO the lot, but hit them for a gold coin or two, or a small raffle. The event size for your Day of a 1000 BBQs is up to you. In the first week of December, let a 1000 BBQs be lit!



MiVAC Day of 1000 BBQ's 2006. MHA's Will Hodgman, Nick McKim and Lisa Singh.



Some serious judging happening here! Mick Ryan, Peter Gee and Tony Scott.

THE MiVAC EXHIBITION

The MiVAC Trust is developing an exhibition dedicated to the awareness of landmines and the devastation they cause.

The exhibition is made up of artworks by a number of Australian painters, film and photos from landmine-affected parts of the world, and hands on exhibits.

The exhibition aims to make all of us aware of the devastation and suffering landmines create. You can make a difference. Visit the exhibition when it arrives in your city or town. Organise a group from your company, school or club to show the devastation landmines make.

Call 0417 294 293 for more information, or check out our website:

www.mivactrust.org

VIETNAM AND OTHER CONFLICTS EXHIBITION

From Wednesday 13th – 15th August 2008

Sponsored by Coolangatta – Tweed Heads RSL Sub Branch in conjunction with the Gold Coast War Museum at the TWIN TOWNS SERVICES CLUB.

The display will feature

1. The Gold Coast War Museum
2. 4 RAR Assoc QLD Memorabilia
3. War Dogs – photos and other memorabilia
4. MiVAC art Works, memorabilia, photos, trench art including part of the Mines Museum from the School of Military Engineering.

WHO CAN COME?

Anyone – There is a gold coin admission charge.

1 Mine disposal work in Laos



If you would like to join MiVAC or send a donation to support one of our projects contact

**MIVAC TRUST NATIONAL OFFICE
P.O.Box 967, SANDY BAY, TAS. 7006**

Gill Paxton -

secretarymivactrust@mivactrust.org

or Rob Woolley -

Phone – (03) 62641485

FUNDRAISING LUNCHEON HOSTED BY NORMIE ROWE, AM

Wednesday 13th August, 2008

12.00pm for a 12.30pm start at the CURRUMBIN RSL

Currumbin Creek Road, Currumbin Qld 4223

The Legendary NORMIE ROWE AM will be entertaining you in more ways than one and SANDY MACGREGOR, MC, RFD the Patron of MiVAC will give a presentation covering the work of MiVAC.

BOOK AND PAY NOW (individually or tables) for your 3 course luncheon costing \$70 per head by calling The Currumbin RSL at 07 55347999

Flying out from LAOS to attend the luncheon will be MICK HAYES a professional mine and bomb disposal expert who will soon be undertaking work for MiVAC clearing villages in Xai Ban Fai District, Khammouane Province Lao, PDR.

Vietnam Veteran and former MHR, GRAHAM EDWARDS is also planning to attend.

WHO CAN COME?

Any one who is interested!

WHO SHOULD COME?

Everyone who wishes to assist MiVAC support landmine survivors



MiVAC member, Donny Patterson was on the front line in Sri Lanka after the devastating Tsunami swept over parts of Asia. Here is the story of his involvement in Don's own words.....

Yes we did some really worthwhile work over there, I'd like to reiterate that I feel very proud and honoured that I was able to firstly go and offer my help. Basically it was the operational deployment I didn't get in the Army.....anyhow moving on.....Look I will try and outline my leadership tasks.....Here goes Basically the very first thing we did when we arrived in Peraliya was to set up a makeshift med centre and we treated folk for all sorts of injuries ranging from small cuts and abrasions to some absolutely horrific injuries, I was actively involved in administering first aid well not really first aid I guess you'd call it second aid? The initial patch up job wasn't too bad in fact however a lot of people fell thru the gaps and never had any follow up or rehab plan.....I feel we really made a big difference here. This went on unabated for days I have photos of a mass of people waiting for our help, during the coming days as more and more people arrived to help I took a bit of a step back from the first aid and started to concentrate on getting the infrastructure up and running ie, we cleaned out the school library and this became what I call the Heart of P, we also cleaned up the temple and got it so people could pray again, sanitation, the old army slit trench came in handy here people were indiscriminately doing their business all over the place I was concerned for the risk of disease....Our toilets got better and better until in fact I had managed to get a real toilet block built next to the heart thanks to the Italians.....We then embarked on what I like to refer to as Reclaim, recycle and rebuild. Mate this is where I came into my own I organized working parties from P initially eventually however a senior minister from the SL govt visited us, in fact the 3ic and chief govt whip. What ever that is??.....He asked me what I needed to really get stuck in, I asked for a section of their Army Engineers, immediately on the arrival of the engineers I struck up an instant rapport with their OC, WE worked very well together, he obviously had his orders but always helped me out when asked. He consistently looked to me for tasks his sappers could do. The 3ic gave me heap of plant and equipment, which he duly provided he also provided me with some one thousand or so workers, workers employed by US AID locals...well as you can imagine with these resources at my immediate disposal and direction enabled me to really get stuck in and clean up. During this period more and more aid and offers of help arrived in one instance an NGO called the Danish Peoples Aid (DPA) negotiated with me and the chief and his men to build some temporary shelters. These were very basic structures made of timber and corrugated iron. In hindsight probably not the best, it was however the only shelters we had on offer and they were certainly better than tents. DPA hired me as their temp shelter field manager I guess you'd say. They provided all materials and labour basically i

coordinated which ones would be built and tasked all the workers hired from DPA in Peraliya and now in surrounding villages. I believe we built some 700 or so of these structures in Peraliya and surrounding villages, appearing daily was offers of help, in fact we had the US Marine Corps. Help out, we had Austrians, Italians Scots, the whole box and dice...all the while we were constantly negotiating resources etc to the effort from all over. We somehow became famous and all sorts of people started turning up, the Prime minister of SL came, they all came to see this relief village and the work going on, Generally people could just not believe that we were freelance aid workers or as we were affectionately known as guerrilla aiders. In fact I started farming people out to out lying areas and other places for example an orphanage in Galle needed a lot of work done so I got people down there and we put in a well and painted it etc, etc all on volunteer labour and funding. In conjunction with this activity we negotiated with other NGOs who wanted to build permanent houses, we built over 200 permanent houses Whilst I Was there, the Germans were exceptionally well organized and did a bloody great job as did all the NGO involved in this phase.

I would usually be the first one to work so would have from time to time have to treat people for injuries sustained during the rebuild, you know cuts and scratches they don't wear shoes so a lot of feet and hand injuries and they usually happened early in the morning very strange indeed.

I would like to make a point here.....At no point in time did I try to take over completely all tasks were conducted with the express permission of the chief of P in conjunction with his hierarchy. Basically I would advise on things that I had knowledge on and we would discuss it they'd agree or otherwise and I'd get it done, sounds simple enough huh?? It was extremely challenging at times, it was very bloody frustrating too at times...and very emotional

I was winning hearts and minds and developed an amazing rapport with the SL people, and all the other races we had turn up, it is in closing an amazing story of human spirit to survive and get on and things like religion, race, creed etc was not an issue people working together to achieve a common goal and that was to give these people some normalcy as soon as was possible. I think we achieved this in a general sense.

In relation to where all the money went well hey, who knows? I know we didn't see too much where I was. The film The Third Wave explores this issue.....

