

Former refugees return to Cambodia

Hin and Han Choen are two sisters who were born in a refugee camp in Thailand after their father and mother separately fled the genocidal Communist Khmer Rouge movement to refugee camps in the neighboring country. Their father and mother actually met in the refugee camp near the Thai/Cambodian border.

The family managed to emigrate to the United States in 1986, where Hin and Han were raised in Wisconsin as American girls. Hin worked full time for Habitat in Wisconsin and when she learned of the Habitat World Build event in Cambodia, she and Han jumped on the opportunity to go to their family's homeland in a way that would be meaningful and allow them to help the Cambodian people — and to immerse themselves in the culture they had left.

Hin told Sisters photographer Gary Miller, who participated in the Habitat build:

"I grew up in the United States almost all of my life and wanted to finally go back and experience where our family came from. I also learned many years ago that my mom currently has a



PHOTO BY GARY MILLER

Hin and Han worked with Habitat's Big Build in the homeland they fled when they were young girls.

few siblings currently residing in Cambodia. I felt that when Habitat for Humanity was doing a big build in Cambodia, that this was the calling and desire that I dreamed about.

"So, long story short, my sister Han was open to the idea in volunteering and the rest was history. We both met our aunts and cousin! How fun it was to have met this part of the family without a proper in-person introduction from my mom. When you meet any of your family for the first time, it's an internal feeling that is definitely hard to explain. It's like you never

parted in the first place."

"When they arrived they spent two days with family in Siem Reap where their fluency tore any barriers down before switching gears for the build," Miller reported. "I spent some hours with the gals in the local coffee shop where they shared the tough emotions their parents had about the trip. Maybe this experience will help influence their dad's terrible reluctance to return to his homeland as it was a wonderful experience for (Hin and Han)."

Swim team competes in relay meet

By Charlie Kanzig
Correspondent

Twenty-one teams took part in the first meet of the year for the Sisters Outlaws swim team at the Madras Swim Center on Saturday, December 2. The relay meet served as sort of an icebreaker into the competitive season.

"This meet was definitely structured for fun, and was a great way for new swimmers to get used to the meet atmosphere," said Head Coach Bryn Singleton. "It's the only meet where all the races are relays, most of which don't exist in a typical swim meet, including relays with boys and girls on the same team. For us, it was about getting those first-meet jitters out and building camaraderie as a team."

Highlights of the meet included a third-place finish in the 400-yard individual medley relay (4x100) by the team of Brooke Robillard, Ella Cole, Meredith Mandal and Hawlye Harrer with a time

of 5:03.57, along with three fifth-place finishes.

Serena Salisbury, Mary Root, Jade Anaya and Brooke Robillard placed fifth in the girls 100-yard freestyle relay in 1:01.82 and Robillard and Harrer joined Connor Crowe and Jackson Rheuben in the 800-yard mixed freestyle relay that also placed fifth with a time of 10:23.64.

Another mixed team comprised of Robillard, Harrer, Rheuben and Gator Haken garnered fifth place as well in the 400-yard freestyle with a time of 4:27.15

"I was proud of all the swimmers," said Singleton. "The veteran swimmers really stepped up and helped the newer swimmers learn how a meet works. After only 2.5 weeks in the pool, the swimmers who are new to the team this year did a fantastic job competing at a meet with lots of schools participating."

The Outlaws swim next at the Bend Invite on Saturday, December 16.

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