

Student Journal: Sri Lanka

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Contributing Writer

As I recall the sun's reflection glistening in the indigo and sapphire hues of the Indian Ocean, I become angered at the recurring image of waves splashing against the cluster of rocks along the shore. I am reminded of the many helpless victims begging for their stories to be told as we strolled along a damaged coastline. Structure after structure still stands, but is barely intact. Tents have been built and clothes hang from what is left. I remember the sight of a bright yellow sandal buried beneath the sand. "Is this the shoe of a survivor or someone taken by the tsunami," I asked myself. I remember being relieved not to find the answer.

The first day of the journey, I was captivated by the slanting coconut trees in the backdrop. As we continued our travel, I tried

to recall the numerous stories of survival and imagine how survivors clinged for hours on branches of coconut trees. With each passing tree, I tried to tell a story of how someone holding on with all their might could have outlasted the tsunami.

Later I focused my attention to the destruction along the shoreline. There are many torn roof tops and debris still lurks into the ocean. Demolished fishermen boats are lined along the coastline, one after another. The images from this trip that will remain throughout my life will always be the big, bright eyes and beautiful smiles of each Sri Lankan I met. I remember the two lively 16-year old girls dressed in their crisp, white dress uniforms at a damaged school in Matara. One of the girls lost her mother in the tsunami. I remember a young woman telling a remarkable story of bravery and survival. This young woman and her family hung onto the

walls of her home when the tsunami struck her house. They all survived. I memorized her words, "If we ran, we would die."

Of all the words spoken, I will never forget just four words whispered by a mother, "two daughters, tsunami, dead." She holds two pictures of two little girls dancing. I am still heartbroken.

The most profound was Theldeniya, where the well-photographed red train seen as sturdy and stable by 1,000 people was demolished by the tsunami. Instead of finding safety, they died. It was heart wrenching to see the windows shattered, damaged exterior and piles of train tracks. I reminisce of the woman and her husband who walked up to me as I tried to grasp this reality. I was invited into, what they called, their "temporary home." The woman informed me that she lost one daughter and two sons in the tsunami.

Throughout this trip, I was constantly questioning how to respond. I hope they know that I listened to their stories and I will continue to tell their stories for them. They will always be with me and will forever be in my prayers. This has become a journey of the heart, rather than distance. I hope to help Meredith College pursue its endeavors, as well as speak with anyone interested in tsunami relief. A website was developed to display journals from the travelers. You can visit <http://www.meredith.edu/tsunamirelief/sri-lanka/default.htm> to read the journals. I hope the stories I have shared will influence others to become personally involved. The tragedy of the Indian Ocean tsunami has diminished in the news and I hope our trip has helped Meredith College become more aware and familiar with the victims of Sri Lanka.

Tsunami relief Kick Off
Please purchase your Tide of Hope Button and attend the Tide Of Hope Kickoff Friday April 8 at 1:30 to 2:30 pm in the amphitheatre by the pond. We will be carrying out a traditional Sri Lankan String Ceremony. All proceeds from the button sale go to our Meredith's relief efforts in Sri Lanka. All our welcome to the kickoff. Bring friends, family, classes... For more information email kenyong@meredith.edu

If you need a cultural event to fulfill a convocation, or an event for CORE attend the Hunger Banquet. Monday April 11 6-7pm in the dining hall. Cost: \$5 or meal card plus a canned food item. Email Harrison@meredith.edu if you're interested in purchasing a ticket or for more information.

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'clock scholars presents **Sylvia Huot**

*Reader in Medieval French Literature, Pembroke College
University of Cambridge*

Thurs 7 April 2005 @ 5 o'clock p.m.

Carswell Concert Hall, Wainwright

Madness in the Middle Ages: Marie's Bisclavret

In the Middle Ages, legends of werewolves were sometimes explained as resulting from a form of mental illness called 'canine mania'. Dr Huot will discuss these medical traditions as well as medieval literary depictions of madness, with particular attention to the twelfth-century werewolf story 'Bisclavret' written by Marie de France.

Free and open to the public. A reception for Dr Huot follows the talk. Event co-sponsored by Meredith College Medieval and Renaissance Studies, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Honors, and the Departments of English, History & Politics, and Music. Information: 760-8335.