

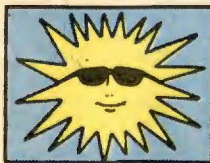
# Press-Telegram

LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA, DECEMBER 14, 1989

★ • 25¢

## AT A GLANCE

### WEATHER



**Clear, breezy**

**Coastal areas:** Highs near 70, lows in the 40s.  
**Inland areas:** Highs near 70, lows in the 40s.  
**Complete weather/E7**

### SPORTS



Michigan's Bo Schembechler, right, is calling it a career.

**Schembechler says Rose Bowl is last game/C1**

**CSULB cagers upset Longhorns at buzzer/C1**

**Clippers win/C1**

### PEOPLE



**Oh, that Gibson boy**

Spy magazine phone survey finds Mel the most liked entertainer/A2

### LOCAL

**Jet-test noise in Lakewood**

# Ollie North's memory forsakes him

## Poindexter quiz gets varying story

By Aaron Epstein

Knight-Ridder Newspapers

WASHINGTON — Former White House aide Oliver North, who testified just seven months ago that he saw John M. Poindexter destroy a politically embarrassing policy statement signed by President Reagan, said Wednesday that he did

not know what document Poindexter tore up.

It "could have been any sheet of paper," North said in his second and final day of pretrial testimony in the Iran-Contra criminal prosecution of Poindexter, who was Reagan's national security adviser and North's boss.

The presidential policy statement,

known as a "finding," is important because it figures in four of the five charges against Poindexter. The finding authorized a secret 1985 shipment of Hawk missiles to Iran in a failed attempt to win the freedom of hostages in Lebanon.

The finding was considered embarrassing because it ratified seemingly improper CIA involvement and depicted an arms-for-hostages swap in contrast to Reagan's publicly asserted policy of refusing to deal with any and all terrorists.

In congressional Iran-Contra hearings in 1987, Poindexter admitted that he destroyed the paper on Nov. 21, 1986, when the Iran-Contra affair was about to erupt into public view.

"I destroyed that (finding) by tearing it up ... because I thought it was a significant political embarrassment to the president, and I wanted to protect him from possible disclosure of this."

CONTINUED/A5, Col. 1

## A SPECIAL REPORT



Khemma Sin raises her hand to answer a question in Ann Weiman's fourth-grade class at Willard Elementary School in Long Beach. At Willard, nearly half the students are Cambodian,

so the Long Beach Unified School District can pool its resources to provide Khmer-speaking aides. But there is a district-wide shortage of bilingual teachers for Cambodian students.

Peggy Peattie/Press-Telegram

# Dollars for Poles urged by Baker

By Susan Bennett

Knight-Ridder Newspapers

BRUSSELS, Belgium — Secretary of State James A. Baker III urged Western nations Wednesday to provide "up-front cash" to Poland and push investments in Hungary to provide breathing room for the East European nations as they struggle to reform their economies.

Baker told foreign ministers from 23 of the richest Western countries that immediate coordinated help was needed to keep the reform movement alive in Eastern Europe.

"After the streets empty of demonstrators, after the people select new leaders ... the economies must put food on the table and goods on the shelves," Baker said in a speech to the ministers.

In an attempt to advance and accelerate the sudden wave of democratic reforms, the 24-nation group offered Wednesday to extend financial assistance to other Eastern European coun-



Peggy Peattie/Press-Telegram

Khemma Sin raises her hand to answer a question in Ann Weiman's fourth-grade class at Willard Elementary School in Long Beach. At Willard, nearly half the students are Cambodian,

so the Long Beach Unified School District can pool its resources to provide Khmer-speaking aides. But there is a district-wide shortage of bilingual teachers for Cambodian students.

CAMBODIANS  
IN LONG BEACH

BEYOND  
THE  
KILLING  
FIELDS

សេរីជាប់គ្នាខ្លះ មានពិធាន

Fifth of six parts

**Young Cambodian** immigrants to the United States soon learn the value of education and the isolation of being different.

**Life/style/D1**

**Cambodians living** in Long Beach have a taste for their past — their native cuisine stirs fond memories of their homeland.

**Food/E1**

# An influx of Cambodian students staggers LBUSD

## Schools desperately need bilingual teachers

By Dorothy Korber

Staff writer

**A** wild, giggling game of one-step tag enralls a knot of youngsters during recess at Willard Elementary School in central Long Beach, where the playground in its ethnic diversity looks like a set from Disneyland's Small World ride.

Along with hopscotch and jump rope, one-step is a favorite at Willard. The lurching tag, where the kid who's "it" hops on one foot, was introduced by the school's Cambodian children, and now everyone plays.

Maybe this is a small thing — the absorbing into the schoolyard culture of a new game. But it's a sign of a much larger change in the 68,500-student Long Beach Unified School District, which must absorb thousands of Cambodian refugee children into an educational system originally geared for American-born children who speak English.

"Cambodian refugees are struggling to learn, and our schools are struggling to

provide a quality education," says Tom Giugni, LBUSD superintendent. "I'm elated by some of the inspiring success stories I hear — but I'm also disturbed by the troubling failures.

"We have a critical need for bilingual teachers. We haven't found a way to reach out to Cambodian parents. And we're seeing a small but growing number of Cambodian teen-agers losing sight of the American dream and falling prey to drugs and street gangs."

A district survey on Oct. 10 found that 5,907 Cambodian students were enrolled in Long Beach Unified, and only a fourth of them speak English fluently. Of the 621 Cambodian kindergartners, not one was fluent in English. Of the 357 high school seniors, only one in three was fluent in English.

These students have a staggering impact on a school district already wrestling with overcrowding, underfunding and the enrollment of thousands of Spanish-speaking students.

# CAMBODIANS IN LONG BEACH

“The younger people are alive; there's a spark there. That's missing in the older ones. You can see it in their lack of laughter, lack of expression. Their faces are dead.”

—James Martois,  
Refugee Assistance  
Program director



Peggy Peattie/Press-Telegram

In a trailer on the edge of the Long Beach City College campus, a class of adult Cambodian, Vietnamese and Laotian students study English through the Refugee Assistance Program. To get federal aid during their early months here,

refugees are required to attend English and vocational classes in the college program. Teachers have found that students younger than 35 learn quickly and easily. Refugees older than 35, however, often have trouble learning English.

# Learning English often is the key to survival in new land

By Dorothy Korber

Staff writer

Next here. In a battered two-tone trailer on the edge of a parking lot, Joyce Toth is talking about black cats, broken mirrors and Friday the 13th. Harry, Kathy and Marvin listen intently, digesting the curious information that some Americans find these things unlucky.

"What day is unlucky in Cambodia?" Toth asks her class of 11 Cambodian and Vietnamese adults, all students of English in the Refugee Assistance Program at Long Beach City College. The students murmur among themselves, looking for an answer that will suit their teacher.

"Cambodians are not afraid of any special days?" Toth asks, straightening a stem in the vase of fresh roses she brings from home each day. Finally, Marvin answers.

"We are afraid of 1975," he says, recalling the date when the Khmer Rouge began its bloody regime. "The whole year."

Over the past decade, Long Beach City College has been a first toehold in American culture for thousands of newly arrived Cambodian adults. To get federal aid during their early months here, refugees are required to attend English and vocational classes in the college program. For some, particularly those under 35, the experience has been invaluable.

## Older Cambodians struggle

But for many older Cambodians, sent reeling by the one-two punch of war and relocation, the best efforts of teachers and counselors fall short.

Joyce Toth's English as a Second Language (ESL) class is made up of the top level of students in the refugee education program. These adults — who've been given American names if they want them — are the success stories. They will be able to find jobs, although their understanding and speaking of English is halting at best.

The outlook is much bleaker for many other Cambodian refugees — especially those over 35, according to James Martois, director of the Refugee Assistance Program.

His observation is supported by a recent Press-Telegram survey of Cambodian adults in Long Beach, which found that English skills were much poorer among those over 35. And, among those 50 and older, only 12 percent speak English "very well" or fluently. By contrast, 74 percent in the 18-24 age group fit that category.

"The age when they arrive here makes a big difference," Martois says. "If they're between 20 and 35, they do all right, but 35 seems to be the magic number. After that, they consider themselves old.

"The younger people are alive; there's a spark there. That's missing in the older ones. You can see it in their lack of laughter, lack of expression. Their faces are dead."

People in this age group lived through the war years as adults in Cambodia, often followed by years in refugee camps.

"The refugees over 35 are less resilient and less able to overcome the trauma they suffered," Martois says. "They lost more, and they remember the old ways.

"We've found that the strongest ones were the first out of the refugee camps. These latest batches have been in the camps for nine years now.

Everything was given to them; everything was out of their control. If they once had the work ethic, it's gone now.

"To get them off welfare is hard. What kind of work can we get someone with little command of English and no skills? For a man who's married with three kids, we cannot find him a job with pay to match his welfare grant. Why should he take a job that will mean his family gets less?"

The Refugee Assistance Program was set up in 1979 to provide survival-level English for these newcomers — and then help them find work.

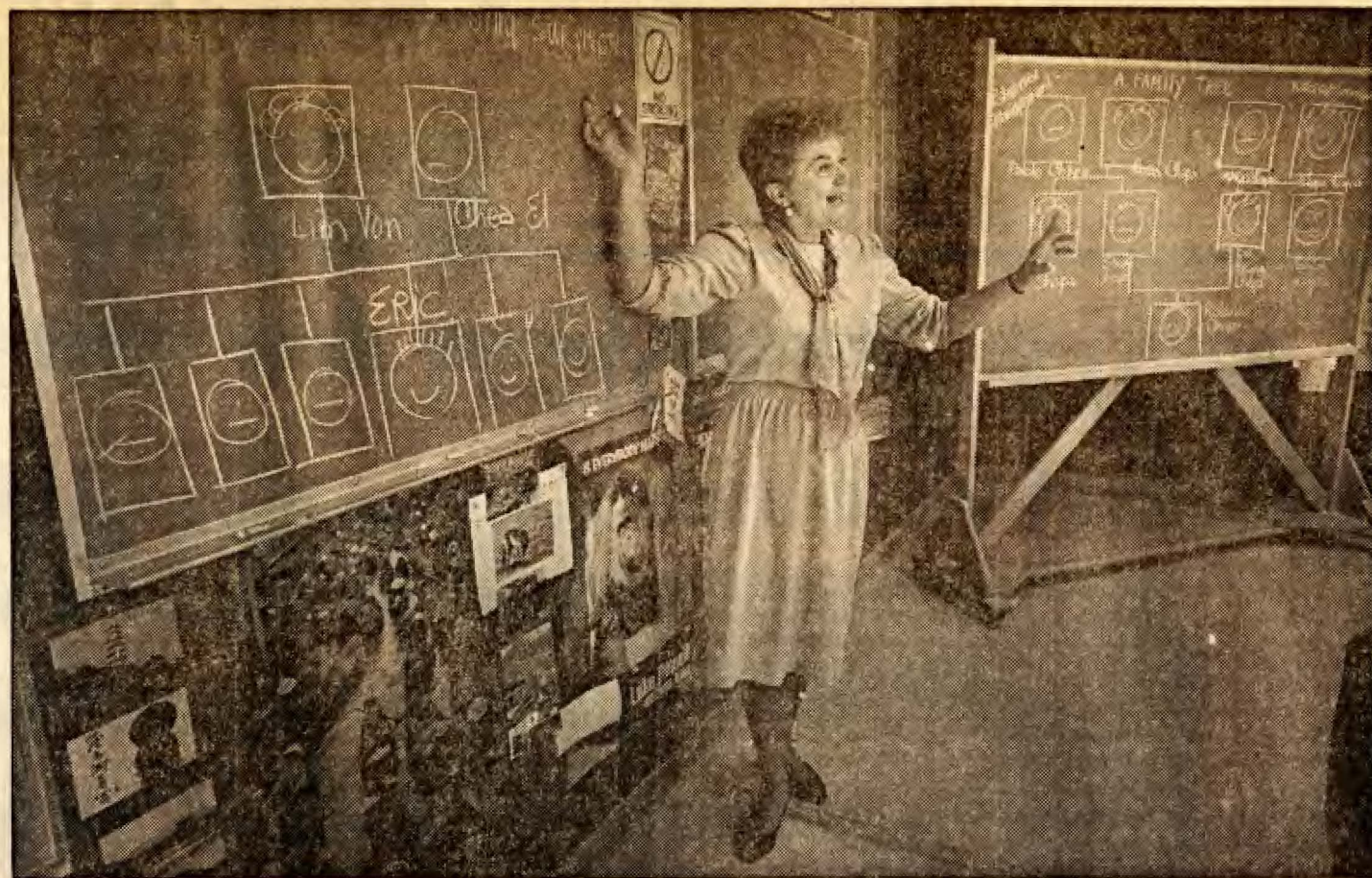
As long as they attend English and vocational classes, the federal government gives married refugees of all nationalities cash and medical assistance for two years. A family of four, for example, is eligible for \$824 a month in cash plus a maximum of \$241 in food stamps. Single people get federal assistance of \$313 monthly for one year. This federal money replaces state welfare grants.

"If they're getting welfare, they're supposed to be here," Martois explained. "But often, they're not. I think anyone could 'get' the English if he came to class. But, over and over, I see doctors' letters — a half-page note, often excusing a student for a whole year because of depression. How is it better to sit in an apartment for a year, I have to ask."

## Reaching rural refugees

Educating refugees from rural Cambodia has been a special challenge, according to Martois.

"We discovered we didn't have classes at a low enough level for them," he remembers. "Most of them



English teacher Joyce Toth keeps the dialogue and lessons lively and topical so none of the refugee students gets bored. She tries to give the students knowledge they can use in their everyday experiences. In drawing out a family

tree to help learn names of family members, one student revealed that of the seven children and two adults in his nuclear family, only he and his mother survived the Khmer Rouge.

had never been to school. They're peasants from the rice fields. They were pre-literate — 68 percent of them could not read. We had to teach them to hold a pencil.

"I remember once going into a class and finding a woman, dutifully listening to a language tape and reading along in her book. The book was upside down. This was six weeks into the class."

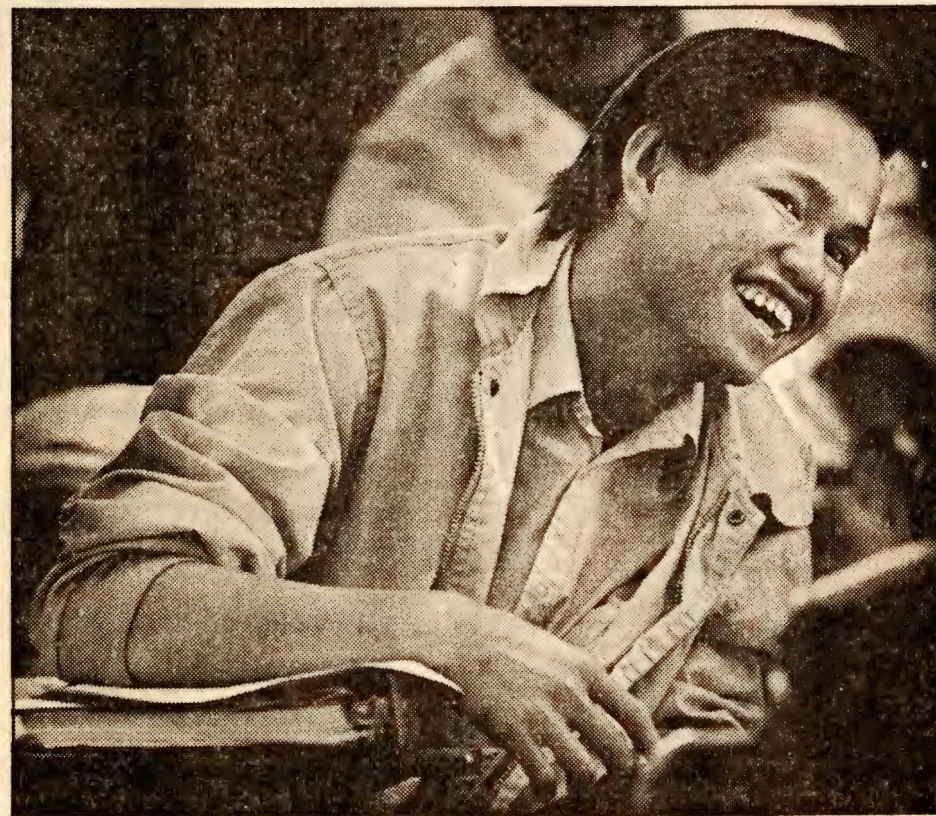
With the stream of incoming refugees slowing to a trickle, Martois is beginning to phase out the Refugee Assistance Program at the college. He's hopeful that a new state training program for welfare recipients — Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) — will be more successful at readying refugees for the workplace.

Participation in GAIN will be mandatory.

"I don't know if it will work, but it sure beats what the people do now, which is to go home and sit," Martois says.

Not all go home and sit, though. Nearly 2,700 Cambodians attend 26,000-student LBCC, and only about 290 of them currently are in the refugee program. For two years running, LBCC's homecoming queen has been Cambodian.

Most of these students are there to learn English. The RAP coordinator-Ding-Jo Currie, is frustrated that relatively few venture into the school's vocational program, and fewer transfer to four-year schools such as California State University/Long Beach, which reports a Cambodian enroll-



A Cambodian student, who has taken the American name Erik for English class, laughs at instructor Joyce Toth's pronunciation of Cambodian names.

ment of only 204.

"I keep hearing, 'You have a Cambodian homecoming queen!' Well, that doesn't mean a thing to me," she says. "It just means you got the votes. What does it have to do with education?"

"Two years ago, I did a survey of Asian students. I found that they're

not doing all that well. They are not understanding the lectures. They'd like to have more non-Asian friends. They want to reach out, but they don't know how.

"We need to create a structure to bridge the gap between them and the American students."



At Willard Elementary in Long Beach, where the school's enrollment is nearly half Cambodian, youngsters gather on the playground for a wild game of one-step tag. The game was introduced by the

school's Cambodian students, but children of diverse ethnic backgrounds join in the fun. With 370 Cambodian students enrolled at Willard, only 55 speak English.

Peggy Peattie/Press-Telegram

## Mastering English

### Fluency of Long Beach Cambodians Speaking proficiency

Age:	18-24	25-34	35-49	50 and older	Total
Not at all	0%	16%	40%	64%	30%
Poor	7%	26%	17%	14%	16%
Fair	19%	16%	21%	11%	18%
Very well	50%	34%	19%	7%	27%
Fluent	24%	8%	3%	5%	10%

### Reading proficiency

Age:	18-24	25-34	35-49	50 and older	Total
Not at all	6%	31%	49%	73%	39%
Poor	6%	24%	20%	11%	15%
Fair	35%	18%	14%	5%	18%
Very well	35%	21%	14%	5%	19%
Fluent	19%	5%	3%	7%	8%

\*The statistics in these charts represent the adult population of Cambodian refugees in Long Beach. They are based on a random sample of 206 individuals who were interviewed by the Press-Telegram in 92 households. The percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding off of the figures.

Press-Telegram

# Schools struggle to teach Cambodian students

## FROM/A 1

One kind of impact is felt at Willard, where nearly half the students are Cambodian. At least here, though, the district can pool its resources and provide teachers who specialize in English as a second language and aides who speak Khmer (Cambodia's tongue).

There's another kind of impact at a school like Longfellow Elementary in Bixby Knolls, where a handful of bewildered Cambodian children are dropped unceremoniously into classrooms full of American kids, with their rapid-fire English and middle-class values.

The most significant impact is on the Cambodian youngsters themselves. Coping with a foreign language, caught between clashing cultures, they are also refugees from horror and deprivation that their American teachers and classmates cannot comprehend.

Even if the children are resilient and able to put the past behind them, often their parents cannot.

The adults, too, are groping in an exotic society that was beyond their imagining in Cambodia. Some parents are emotionally crippled by their wartime experiences. Others, who would help their children if they could, are illiterate in their own language and unsure about how to hold a pencil or read a book.

The challenges seem overwhelming. But on a thousand small fronts every day — in classrooms at Longfellow and playgrounds at Willard, in language labs and libraries, at noon in noisy school cafeterias and at night in crowded downtown apartments —

these children are learning to speak English, learning to read, learning to survive in a strange new world.

## Motivated to learn

Like children everywhere, some Cambodians learn faster than others.

Monitoring Cambodian educational progress is difficult since the district lumps the refugees' test scores with other Asian groups. On the whole, teachers say, their Cambodian students are well-behaved and motivated to learn, but much depends on the age at which the children begin school here and on their talent for mastering English.

"We cannot generalize about the progress of Cambodian children in school," says Mory Ouk, who works for Long Beach Unified as an instructional associate. "Some children can get into the mainstream in one year. Others never do. Much depends on the family background."

Ouk taught the equivalent of high school in Cambodia, where only the elite reached that educational level. His background gives him a unique perspective on the differences between the two cultures.

In some ways, he finds, American education is as indigestible for the Cambodian metabolism as the cow's milk the children are expected to drink.

"Children wake up at home in one culture, find another culture on the street and another culture in school," he says. "We can classify three groups of children. One kind, very

conservative, keeps all the Cambodian traditions. These children are fine at home in the family, have trouble in school.

"Another group — it forgets everything at home. Is more American than the Americans. Big problem at home.

"But the flexible group — the smallest group — is in the middle. At home they are Cambodian, at school they are American. They do best.

"Most of the children are victims of the conflict of culture. At school, they're taught about freedom and the importance of childhood. At home, they're supposed to be quiet and obedient. The older they grow, the more rebellious they become."

The problem is compounded, Ouk believes, by the child's growing fluency in English, which can give him heady power over his Khmer-speaking parents.

"In Cambodia, the father was in control. In downtown Long Beach, it's the child who controls the family," Ouk says. "The parent feels helpless."

Parental education and involvement are the solution to this dilemma, according to Kry Lay, a Buddhist monk and another of the school district's Cambodian advisers.

"Cambodians have a strong culture, and children are trained to love knowledge more than real property," he says. "We have a proverb: 'Knowledge is the noble wealth.' But many parents are ignorant and unable to help the child learn.

"The resolution, to my point of view, is the parent's education. Not to

## Funds for Cambodian students in L.B.U.S.D.

Regular state funding per student	\$2,755
Federal refugee aid*	\$211
State aid for limited English speakers	\$278

\* This federal money is available only for the first three years a child is in the U.S. Cambodians born in the U.S. do not receive federal refugee money.

SOURCE: L.B. Unified School District

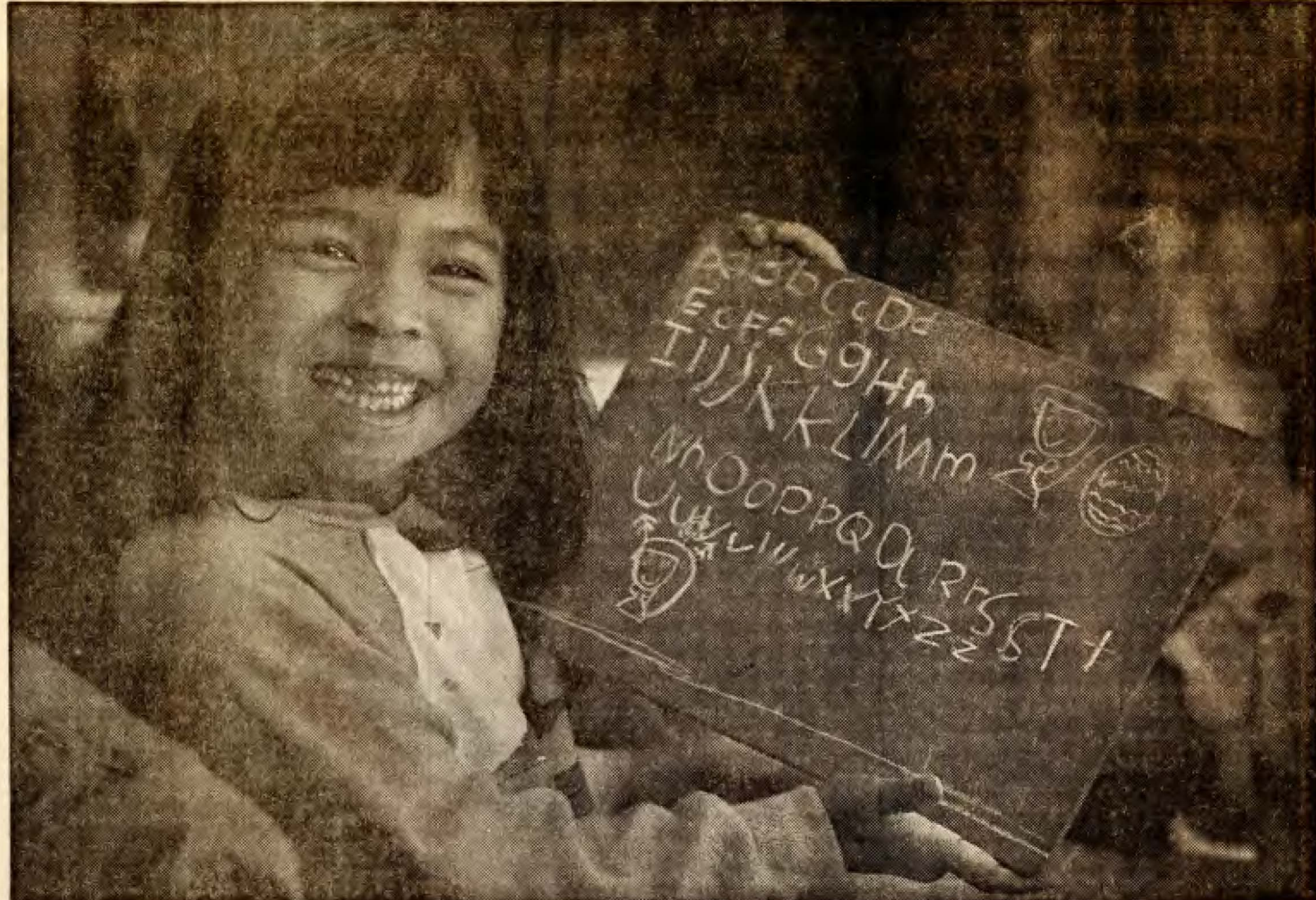
Press-Telegram

be a scholar, but to learn the new way of life, to survive happily."

Kry Lay's observations are borne out by a Press-Telegram survey of Long Beach Cambodians last summer, who rated their children's welfare as their top concern, along with financial matters. Asked how they felt about their children's education, 53 percent of the 206 respondents reported they were "very concerned." Almost an equal proportion — 47 percent — said they were "very concerned" about their children understanding Cambodian culture.

## Teachers must adapt

But parents and students are not the only ones who need educating, according to Ding-Jo Currie, a Long Beach City College staffer who is chairing the school district's new Asian advisory committee. Currie wants to see old teachers taught some new tricks as well.



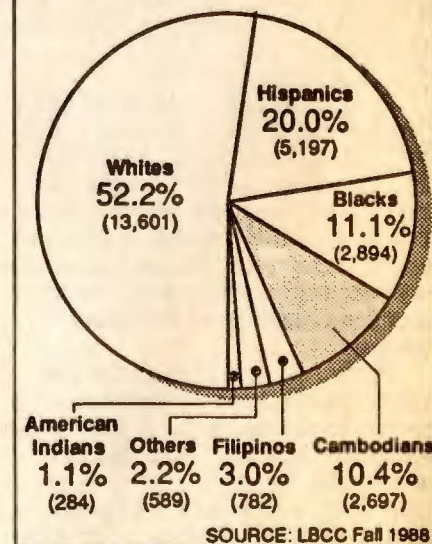
Rebecca Vorng, 6, holds up her assignment on the alphabet in Marsha Cohen's kindergarten class at Willard Elementary.

Teachers have found that the younger kids tackle a new language the quicker they grasp it.

Peggy Peattie/Press-Telegram

## L. B. City College ethnic enrollment

Total enrollment: 26,044



Press-Telegram

"So many of the staff were hired in the 1960s, when the school district was 80 percent white," she says. "Those teachers and administrators were trained to deal with white American kids. Now, the district's enrollment is completely turned around, with one-third of the elementary school children limited in English.

"Educating these children is SO different, but we're getting resistance

CONTINUED/A 10, Col. 1

# CAMBODIANS IN LONG BEACH



“ Teachers need to know what the living conditions are like. They'd be shocked. The children's lives are chaotic, with many people crammed into a small apartment. Some of the adults are depressed — simply not functioning. ”

—Ding-Jo Currie,  
LBCC staffer



Chantha Seng, 7, second from left, is the only Cambodian second-grader in Pat Jakub's classroom. She joins her class in a round-table reading group. Longfellow Elementary School has only a handful of Cambodian students

enrolled and, subsequently, doesn't have any special programs designed to teach these children English. Many Cambodian kids, however, have a great desire to learn and often do well at school.

Peggy Peattie/Press-Telegram

# Influx of immigrants staggers LBUSD, stymies some teachers

FROM/A9

from the teachers. I have not felt a willingness to understand the dilemmas of these children. The teachers need retraining in both their methodology and cultural sensitivity. The problem is really severe."

She is impressed by Superintendent Giugni's willingness to examine the problem. Currie says, but adds that, so far, he has failed to act effectively to solve it.

"Tom Giugni is very progressive, but his hands are tied in a sense, partly because of money, partly because of staffing," she says. "Still — that's his problem. I hold him responsible."

An important step, Currie believes, is for the district's teachers to understand the home life of the refugee child.

"Teachers need to know what the living conditions are like," she says. "They'd be shocked. The children's lives are chaotic, with many people crammed into a small apartment. Some of the adults are depressed — simply not functioning. Their family units are often broken, with widowed mothers or orphaned children."

## Youngsters make friends

Despite Currie's pessimism about the staff, many of the teachers themselves are optimistic about their success with Cambodian students. Pat Jakubs, a second-grade teacher at Longfellow, says her phonics-based approach to teaching reading works as well with Khmer-speaking 7-year-olds as it does with kids who grew up watching "Sesame Street."

"It takes three months to get the Cambodians speaking English — I'm not kidding," according to Jakubs, a tiny, blonde dynamo with an Oklahoma twang. "They're so eager to learn. You give me five months, and they're really reading. And I know immediately when they've really got it, because they start laughing at the funny stories."

Jakubs, who only has one or two Cambodian children in her class each year, says she treats them exactly like the other students: "They just fit in beautifully."

Cambodians are in the tiny minority at Longfellow. The situation is far different at Willard, with 370 Cambodians enrolled in the school — only 55 of them fluent in English.

Room 15 at Willard, Marge Hargrove's class of fifth-graders, is typical: 12 Cambodians, 10 Anglos, eight Hispanics and five blacks. Hargrove, who is at Willard by choice, has taught there nine years.

"I love working in a multicultural school," she says. "The kids really appreciate you, appreciate what you do for them. When I started teaching in 1959, I worked in Lakewood. The neighborhood was middle class, the children were white and very much

alike. And they all could read.

"But when I first came to Willard, what an education! At first, we got refugee kids right off the boat. They didn't know what a light bulb was, what bathrooms were. In those days, you just improvised and found your own thing for teaching them."

Now, she says, most newcomers spend a year in a high-intensity English program, "and that really helps."

On the whole, she believes, the influx of Cambodian pupils is good for Long Beach Unified.

"These kids are a positive influence," Hargrove says emphatically as she catches a moment in the teachers' lounge during recess. "They do their homework. They learn fast, and they respect education. You do pick up things from the kids about their homes — maybe 12 people living in one room. So they study in the library. But they do study."

She's pleased, too, by the interracial friendships that bloom in her classroom, pointing to kids like Brion Johnson, who is black, and Pini Nay, who is Cambodian. The 10-year-olds are best pals.

"We live right near each other," Brion says, and Pini, wearing the ubiquitous symbol of Batman on his shirt, nods eagerly. "We do almost everything together. We play on the weekend, do homework together."

And they agree on their favorite foods in the "caf": hamburgers, burritos, and something called "pizza pockets." They don't care much for the refried beans.

Another circle of friends encompasses four little girls: Alma Mercado and Shirley Becerra, who are Latina; Juliette Hing, who is Cambodian; and Rachel Huntley, who announces that she is Dutch. "We've been friends since kindergarten," Shirley says.

## Many exposed to racism

Once they leave the comforting embrace of Willard, these children may face some racial problems. Morodak Meas, a Cambodian girl who is now a top student in the gifted program at Poly High School, recalls a rude awakening when she transferred as a fourth-grader from Willard to Newcomb Elementary School in affluent El Dorado Park Estates.

"There were only four Cambodians at Newcomb," she says. "There were a lot of cruel jokes against us, comments that we should go back where we came from. These comments were mostly from black children who were bused in to the school. I didn't feel racism from the white children who lived in the neighborhood."

"It makes me sad that these black children, who also come from poverty and had their own civil rights movement, were prejudiced against us. I had similar experiences in the ninth grade at Millikan High School. Here

at Poly, however, there is more cultural diversity, and the students are more sophisticated."

A child who is the victim of racism will lose self-esteem, says Kry Lay.

"Due to color of skin and language, sometimes prejudice is expressed," comments the Buddhist monk. "Even the games the children play are different, so the immigrant seems ignorant. Then, the looking-down-upon may change to hatred. The Cambodian kid has pride — the conflict grows at school — and he may become ashamed of his own family."

"There is no way," he says, shaking his head sadly, "to prepare for America."

## Schools have obligation

But America — in the form of the Long Beach Unified School District — has an obligation to help these youngsters prepare for their new lives. The law requires the schools to ensure access to educational programs regardless of fluency in English or national origin.

That flat statement, simple on its face, opens up a vista of nearly insurmountable problems.

For example: To meet state requirements, Long Beach Unified should have 91 certified bilingual teachers who speak Khmer. In all California, however, there are only three such teachers, and none of them is in Long Beach.

This depressing statistic is cited by Michael Garcia, who heads up the school district's Assignment Center, a processing system for non-English-speaking newcomers. Between March and September of this year, 4,263 of these children passed through the center, sometimes at the rate of more than 100 a day. There are interpreters for 15 different languages.

"It's getting overwhelming," Garcia says. "It's hard. But the district is recognizing that these children are here to stay, and they must be provided for."

"Everyone has to work together as a team on this, because these kids are in every segment of the district, at every grade level. And this isn't a problem confined to Long Beach. It's all over the state."

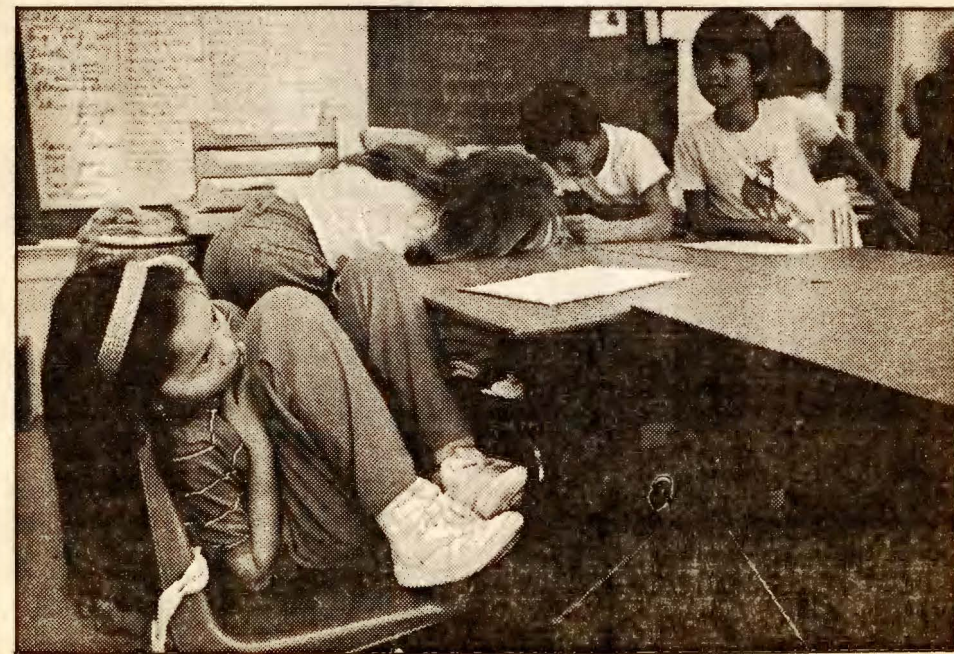
About 5.3 million Californians — 20 percent of the state's population — are foreign born, according to a report by California Tomorrow, a statewide organization that analyzes population and social trends. The report shows that more than 613,000 limited-English-speaking students attended the state's public schools in 1987, 15 percent of the total enrollment.

In Long Beach, 25 percent of all students are classified as having "limited English proficiency" — meaning they can't speak the language well



Peggy Peattie/Press-Telegram

Teacher Marsha Cohen helps students write their names on cards at Willard Elementary School in Long Beach. Cambodian children — and their families — often are torn between getting a good education in America and gaining a better understanding of their own culture.



Peggy Peattie/Press-Telegram

Chanky Choeun gets a stomach ache and curls up in a chair in her fourth-grade classroom at Willard Elementary. The influx of Cambodian students into Long Beach Unified School District has had a staggering impact on the school system.





# Schools struggle to give refugee students the education they deserve

FROM/A10

enough to function in classes taught solely in English. They need special teachers and materials, and to help cover these extra costs the state gives the district \$278 each year for any child — Cambodian or otherwise — who is limited in English.

For the refugee pupils, with their awesome adjustments and unique problems, the federal government pays Long Beach an additional \$211 for each of the child's first three years in America. This money applies to all refugees, with Cambodians in the heavy majority. After the three years, Long Beach Unified shoulders the financial burden itself.

## Some progress seen

The school district is very conservative, says Ding-Jo Currie, and too slow to change. But — nine years after the first big wave of Cambodian refugees began to stream in — a progressive new program is under way to reach the youngest Cambodian children.

This pilot program — at Willard, Whittier, Lee and Harte elementary schools — aims to increase the rate at which children in the early grades learn English. The children also will receive instruction in Khmer from bilingual classroom aides. Two specialists in English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) have been assigned to the schools, along with the two "community liaisons" who will work with parents.

It is financed through a three-year federal grant, according to Paul Boyd-Batstone, the program's facilitator, with \$328,000 budgeted for this first year.

Marsha Cohen's kindergarten classroom at Willard is one of 16 rooms participating in the project. One day recently, the 32 children — about evenly divided between Cambodians and non-Cambodians — were being taught by four adults. The kids were clearly thriving under the attention.

Sharon Lazo Nakamoto, an ESL specialist, stood at the front of the room, manipulating magnetized figures. "Can you say paramedic for me?" she asked one Cambodian child. When the little girl responded, Nakamoto and the others applauded gleefully.

Nakamoto is a passionate advocate of multicultural education.

"Long Beach is really changing fast," she stresses. "The district has to train the teachers how to deal with limited-English-speaking kids. There is finally some recognition of this.

"But the effort has to be not only in the schools, but in the work force as well. Cultural differences should be seen as something *positive*. The goal of global education should be to recognize the differences and build on the strengths."

## Glimpse of the future

A visitor to Willard Elementary School catches a glimpse of California's future, a future which will see the state shifting from its current Anglo majority to a day 40 years from now when Hispanics will outnumber everyone else and the Asian percentage will double to 16 percent.

Willard is an old campus — one of the few two-story school buildings to survive the 1933 quake. Near the front entrance is a portrait of the school's

## Cambodians in the classroom

### English fluency of Cambodians in L.B. middle schools

School	Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8		Total Cambodians	Total enrollment
	Limited English	Fluent English	Limited English	Fluent English	Limited English	Fluent English		
Avalon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	63
Bancroft	1	3	0	8	2	5	19	685
DeMille	9	3	1	3	1	4	21	1,057
Franklin	42	34	21	17	21	21	156	1,014
Hamilton	0	0	9	5	3	8	25	725
Hill	0	0	33	24	43	30	130	589
Hoover	0	0	15	18	10	16	59	638
Hughes	0	2	0	4	1	5	12	1,293
Jefferson	5	13	13	7	13	13	64	973
Lindbergh	2	9	1	11	4	5	32	1,161
Marshall	0	0	17	8	20	10	55	731
Rogers	0	0	5	7	3	10	25	495
Stanford	0	0	13	9	17	9	48	682
Stevens	0	1	0	2	0	6	9	784
Washington	5	3	6	1	10	5	30	818
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>699</b>	<b>11,709</b>

### English fluency of Cambodians in L.B. high schools

School	Grade 9		Grade 10		Grade 11		Grade 12		Total Cambodians	Total enrollment
	Limited English	Fluent English	Limited English	Fluent English	Limited English	Fluent English	Limited English	Fluent English		
Avalon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	108
Jordan	16	10	20	17	20	12	27	10	132	3,067
Lakewood	31	21	36	15	37	13	63	11	227	3,453
Millikan	53	35	73	25	65	32	83	20	386	3,257
Poly	7	42	15	37	16	28	12	26	183	3,650
Reid	2	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	5	348
Wilson	41	63	48	49	64	46	51	54	416	3,497
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>1,349</b>	<b>17,392</b>

SOURCE: Long Beach Unified School District

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namesake, Frances Willard, a 19th-century prohibitionist and suffragette. Her grim countenance glowers down on the children from the portrait, which was presented by the Women's Christian Temperance Union in 1926.

Upstairs, Pini Nay and Brion Johnson toot on their plastic flutes, practicing "Mary Had a Little Lamb." In the language lab, children hesitantly repeat: "Pythons are very interesting

snakes."

In Ann Weiman's fourth-grade room, small groups confer, heads together, debating whether elephants kiss. Down the hall, the cafeteria is controlled chaos, as kids born 7,000 miles away sit next to kids born down the street, all eating chewy burritos and speckled bananas.

And on the playground, children play one-step tag.