



Celebration of the 10th Anniversary of the signing of the Ottawa Treaty

On December 3rd, 2007, the world paused and reflected on the 10th Anniversary of the Ottawa Treaty banning landmines. This was particularly true in Canada which played a key role in promoting, negotiating and implementing the Treaty. The Treaty reshaped the global community's assumptions on global affairs and set a new precedent on how to stop humanitarian disasters.

Vanna's Dance

2007 also marked the 10th anniversary of a landmine accident that took the leg of then 6-year old Vanna Min. Vanna was tending the chickens on her parents farm in north-western Cambodia when she stepped on a mine, losing her leg below the knee. When she was brought into the aid station, a Belgian filmmaker, who happened to be there, filmed the arrival. A Canadian woman, Maria Almudevar-van Santen, then working in Geneva, saw the footage and was inspired to write a fictitious story about Vanna and used Cambodian myth and legend to tell the story of the rebuilding of Vanna's spirit after her accident.

Profits from the sale of "Vanna's Dance" are donated to Adopt-A-Minefield.

In anticipation of the 10th anniversary of the Ottawa Treaty banning landmines in December 07 the Canadian Landmine Foundation tracked down the real Vanna and invited her to come to Canada.

Vanna, accompanied by Mr. Sokhon Prak of the Cambodian Mine Action Centre, attended and spoke at the 10th Anniversary Youth Forum, the

10th Anniversary Symposium on the Ottawa Treaty and the 10th Anniversary celebration at the St. Lawrence Centre in Toronto. This last event featured a reading of Vanna's Dance by six readers including former Ontario Premier Bob Rae, Rotary District 7070 Governor Lynda Ryder, and Mats Sundin, Captain of the Toronto Maple Leafs.



RFMA President Sandy Boucher and Miss Vanna Min



The following is the text of Vanna's remarks:

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!

My name is Min Vanna. I am Cambodian. I am 16 years old. I am a landmine survivor.

In August 1997, I became a landmine victim, when I lost my right leg below my knee.

After my landmine accident, my family suffered a lot. Our life became even more difficult, because I needed a lot more support, not only for my studies, but also for medical treatment.

My situation made me lose all hope; I did not believe in myself. I did not think that I could live & work like before, like other people. I lost my smile. When I saw people look down on me because they only saw my handicap, it made me very sad. When they looked at me & laughed, it made me fearful and made me regret my life, my bad fortune. Why did they look down on me and hate me? Was it my fault that I was an invalid? I became a lonely girl, dared not talk to others because I was afraid of their discrimination. I would hide by myself in a quiet place as it made me calm and released the tension in my heart. I used to ask myself, where shall I live? In the future, without my parents, who could I depend on? These thoughts made me cry a lot. These worries made me very scared.

The school I went to was very far. I was also taking additional courses. Going to school and doing extra work became extremely difficult. Sometimes, I could not go to school. This made my learning and getting good grades very difficult. When I could go to school, seeing other young people with healthy bodies, playing & talking about their studies, friends, and life, made me very nostalgic. I felt like I was living in a different world. My heart could never be happy like their hearts. Only books and pens were my good friends. They comforted me besides my parents.

I continued to study far from home for three years. My family and I had many problems. I nearly abandoned my studies when seeing my aging parents working very hard for me. Because of their love and encouragement, I continued to learn & study hard. I wanted to be a good daughter, a good student, a good sister and a good person in society, and not make them lose their hope, even though I had lost mine.

For ten years, I lived with a closed heart. Everyday was a nightmare. I felt like I was in hell. I could never go back in time and change what made me become crippled. I hated the war, landmine producers and landmine layers. The heritage of war drove many people to lose their lives & wealth, separate from loved ones, and made my country weak, leaving behind a lot of innocent landmine victims like me, who now suffer from a war we were not part of.

When I was six years old, I became a landmine victim. Today I am 16 and I am a landmine survivor. My dream is to become a tour guide, and to accompany visitors to the temples and other beautiful sites in Cambodia. I do not know whether or not my dream will become true, but I know I like & want this job, and I hope one day I will reach this goal.

With that said, I would like to thank my family who not only never abandoned me, but always encouraged and supported me. Thank you Brother Eric for saving my life at the time of the accident. Your warm heart warms my heart. Many thanks to Mr. Scott and Ms. Maria, and the University of Winnipeg for sponsoring me and giving me this wonderful opportunity to participate in this historical event.

I wish for a world without wars and landmines!

I wish that all people respect each other and be friends, and stop discriminating against each other!
I wish all of you here, peace, happiness and good luck in your life!