

# Long Beach turns out for Cambodian New Year parade

By Greg Mellen – Press Telegram, Long Beach, California – April 4, 2010

The multicultural melange that is the Cambodian New Year parade set off on its sixth annual trip down Anaheim Street Sunday morning to a large and appreciative crowd.

The number of parade participants was down for a second straight year, possibly due in part to the economy or this year's date coinciding with Easter. Some of the Christian, Latino and interfaith organizations were not on hand this time around.

However, the crowd was at least as large and enthusiastic as in prior years and the spirit of the event was equally buoyant.

And, as seems to be tradition with the event, the grim-looking morning clouds seemed to disperse on cue with the 10:14 a.m. parade start from Junipero Avenue.

Among the honored guests at the parade was Cambodian Ambassador to the United States Hem Heng, who was making his first trip to the Long Beach event.



Members of the Cambodian Culture & Art Preservation Association step out behind a flag bearer during the sixth annual Cambodian New Year parade on Anaheim Street in Long Beach on Sunday. (Stephen Carr)

"As a Cambodian, it makes me very proud," Heng said. "It is an indication of the prestige of the Cambodian-American people in Long Beach.

"Also this parade can make others know better the Cambodian people."

Heng said having Cambodians stage an all-American event such as a parade, which is unknown in Cambodia, was a fitting way for cultures to mix and interact.

As always, a wide range of ethnic, cultural and social organizations, clubs and groups were on hand. They ranged from a variety of Khmer youth and arts groups, to a large contingent of Hmong, to police, a fire engine, politicians, civil leaders and two guys in kilts.

One of those kilted guys was Peter Joseph, the co-owner of the Big Red Bus, which was ferrying members of the United Cambodian Community down Anaheim.

Asked about his attire, Joseph said, "We wear these everywhere we go.

"It's just how we roll."

All through the parade route and throughout the day snapshots of the mixing of cultures were evident:

There was Mkott Pich jewelry store, festooned in United States and Cambodian flags.



Parade goers enjoy sights and sounds of the annual Cambodian New Year event as cultural, social and arts groups pass down the route. (Stephen Carr)

Pre-parade blessings given by monks and Cambodian and black Christian ministers.

Former ambassador Sichan Siv reading a letter from Cambodian King Norodom Sihamoni, praising the parade.

The entertainment troupe of Serey Raph doing a representation of the Cambodian folk opera Lakhon Bassac, or The Giant Never Wins, from the bed of a truck.

A Jeep accompanying the Cambodian Veterans Association with a Cambodian flag in the front and a Chicago Cubs wheel cover on the spare tire in back.

Postparade entertainment that ranged from traditional Cambodian ballads, to rap by Long Beach's Prach Ly, to an 11-year-old boy doing Michael Jackson dance moves.

A Cambodian man buying his daughter a paleta, a fruit ice pop, in the park.

As the afternoon waned, diagonally across the street from the park celebration, another fitting symbol of Americana was getting under way — a carnival.