

THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST

REPORT BY

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2003 CHURCHILL FELLOW

TO ACHIEVE PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT FROM AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE THAT
CAN'T BE ATTAINED IN AUSTRALIA BY PARTICIAPTING IN AN INTERNATIONAL
UNICYCLE CONVENTION IN JAPAN AND CIRCUS WORKSHOPS AND EVENTS IN
GERMANY, ENGLAND AND THE UNITED STATES

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Signed:

Dated:

INDEX

INTRODUCTION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROGRAM

MAIN BODY – AROUND THE WORLD IN 71 DAYS...ON ONE WHEEL

CONCLUSIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Newspaper Article – Palmerston Sun/Darwin Sun, 28th April 2004
2. Newspaper Article – Palmerston Sun/Darwin, Sun19th May 2004
3. Newspaper Article – NT News, Sat, 7th August 2004
4. New Zealand Mountain Biker – refer to page 12 for story about Unicon 12 and pages 41-46 for story about Ken's unicycle ride from Siagon to Siem Reap
5. Australian Unicycle Society August 2004 Newsletter – with Unicon 12 Results
6. Newspaper Article – Intelligencer Journal – with David Ramos from Lancaster, Pensilvania USA
7. CD ROM –Radio Interviews – ABC 105.7, Oct 2003 (Churchill Fellowship, Unicycling in Darwin & 2003 Australian Unicycle Championships) & Top FM 104.9, Oct 2003 (2004 Australian Unicycle Championships to be held in Darwin)
8. CD ROM - Photographs
9. QUOTES – about circus in schools (from principals from numerous schools throughout the NT)

RELATED WEBSITES:

- unicyclist.com
- unicyclist.com/forums/showthread.php?s=3ddd332eabf3c6b3f8ddec7e008f90cf&threadid=33886&perpage=15&highlight=red%20bull&pagenumber=1
- hkcrystal.com/unicycling/unicon12/unicon2.htm (Unicon 12 photographs)
- hkcrystal.com/unicycling (Unicycle Hockey in Hong Kong)
- circuschimera.com
- marekkaszuba.com (Trapeze Instructor)
- unicyclingnt.com (Unicycling Association of the Northern Territory)
- unicyclingnt.com/html/aus.html (Australian Unicycle Society)
- circusshop.net – Reg Bolton
- mountain-mayhem.co.uk (24hr endurance mountain biking event)
- gallery.unicyclist.com/album277 (British Muni Weekend photographs, 9-11th July 2004)
- unicon12.com (International unicycle convention and world championships)
- unicyclejester.com/animation/uni_dreams.html (website animation designed by Jess, California, US)
- newyorkunicycle.com
- unicycle.uk.com
- unicycling.org
- tcuc.org (twin cities unicycle club)
- unicycling.org (The Unicycle Page, with roster of unicyclists)
- unicycle.org.uk (Union of UK Unicyclists)
- unicycling.org/usa (Unicycling Society of America)
- gallery.unicyclist.com/Uniconpics/20_Love_the_tattoos
- unicycling.com

INTRODUCTION

This fellowship allowed me the opportunity to expand my knowledge, appreciation and understanding of the circus arts from an international perspective. I visited circuses, circus schools, juggling clubs, unicycle clubs, cycling competitions, unicycle stores, and the 12th International Unicycle Convention and World Championships. I met with professional entertainers and performers, circus instructors, convention organisers and other very talented and inspiring individuals, from professionals and world champions to amateurs, from 4 years old to 70 years old.

The fellowship funded my journey for 7 weeks and I self funded a further 3 weeks to enable longer stays in each location plus an additional stop-over in Hong Kong to meet with a Hong Kong unicycle club. Thankyou to the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust of Australia for their support without which I would never have been able to partake in such a wonderful self-development experience. This experience has inspired me in so many ways that I know will provide me with the know-how , professionalism and enthusiasm to help me to develop further opportunities for individuals, clubs and communities throughout Australia to participate in circus arts (especially unicycling), as a pastime, hobby and as a sport.

There is certainly something special about circus. Sharing circus skills as a common interest, even without a common language, seemed to break down barriers very quickly and allow wonderful friendships to begin without hesitation. I thank the kind people I met on my travels who not only shared their knowledge and ideas with me but also welcomed me into their lives and their homes. It is wonderful to be able to transverse the globe and be so warmly welcomed by people whom I have never met. I have made many professional connections and many wonderful friendships that will continue well into the future. To introduce you to all these people in this report is impossible so I have included a list of 'related websites' for you to visit to get to know just some of the people I met, stayed with, practiced and trained with on my travels.

Thankyou also to my local supporters in Darwin, who have been understanding in my absence and so welcoming on my return home. Special thanks to my husband who whilst working hard at home always provided support and encouragement, even when for our first wedding anniversary we were worlds apart.

The following report resembles to some extent a diary, as I discuss from a personal viewpoint the many and varied experiences I was exposed to (often for the first time), and the lessons I learnt whilst participating in some wild and wonderful activities in the five countries I visited. I am only too happy to share my experiences with you in further detail or provide any advice or recommendation about circus and unicycling if you wish to contact me by email.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Fellowship objective:

To achieve personal development from an international perspective that can't be attained in Australia by participating in an international unicycle convention in Japan and circus workshops and events in Germany, England and the United States.

Fellowship highlights:

It is difficult to identify "highlights" of my journey because I learnt so much on a daily basis from not only circus schools and organised club events but also individual circus artists and unicyclists. Following are just some of the major highlights of my 10 week journey:

1. San Francisco School of Circus Arts – San Francisco, United States
2. Flying Trapeze School – Novato, CA, United States
3. Long Beach Island Unithon – Long Beach Island, United States
4. Shooting Star Circus School – Pershore, England
5. Mountain Mayhem – Eastnor Castle, England
6. Unicycle.com warehouse – Stockton, England
7. British Muni Weekend – Afan Argoed, South Wales
8. Trials Training – Munich, Germany
9. Unicycle Hockey – Hong Kong
10. Disney TV Filming – Hong Kong
11. Unicycle World Championships – Tokyo, Japan

Findings:

The self-development benefits derived from individuals participating in circus activities are recognisable not only locally, and nationally but also internationally. These benefits are being noticed by people the world over hence warrant further investigation into the 'success of circus' and 'why circus works' as well as further financial support for the introduction of circus in schools and communities.

Unicycling is a new and developing sport with enthusiasts the world over. It has a lot to offer people of all ages as a pastime, hobby or a sport. Unicycling as a sport has many 'strains' which include **Team sports** (unicycle basketball; unicycle hockey), **Track & Field events** (10km marathon; high jump; long jump; 100m, 400m, 800m racing; backwards race; slow race; one-footed race; walking the wheel; ride and juggle; obstacle course; gliding and coasting), **Novelty events** (wrestling, cat and mouse, red rover, jousting), **Artistic unicycling** (individual; pairs; and group categories), **Mountain Unicycling (Muni)/Off Road Riding** (uphill; downhill; cross-country), **Urban Trials** and **Open X**. Night riding also offers a whole new dimension and excitement to everyday unicycle rides and there are a variety of helmet mounted and frame mounted lamps that are suitable for unicycling at night.

I learnt how to make unicycle trial props, maintain and modify unicycles, and plan world class standard events. I shared ideas with the International Unicycle Federation (IUF) about the organisation of local club meets through to national & international unicycling events. International support was shown by the world unicycling community and the IUF for Australia to host the 2010 International Unicycle Convention and World Championships (in Brisbane or Darwin). Financial and in-kind support within Australia will determine the success of these world championships so we now need to begin the planning and recruitment process.

Unicycles are now more widely available in Australia with more wholesale and retail outlets now established. Anyone, of any age, with enthusiasm and initiative has an opportunity to lead the development of unicycling in Australia or develop new activities in their community, due to unicycling being a relatively new sport around the world and especially within Australia. I discovered that many physical feats that I considered impossible are actually possible, with the right mental attitude and unwavering personal commitment. I watched in awe as others demonstrated amazing skill and determination to achieve incredible stunts and personal challenges. I even amazed myself at what I could achieve with my newfound willingness to attempt previously 'impossible' personal challenges and acceptance of the potential for greater achievement. This new openness and understanding of my personal strengths has changed my life for the better, and will help me to set and achieve higher personal goals and standards in every aspect of my life now and forever.

I am now officially a world unicycle champion at many unicycle events in my age category, winning 9 gold, 1 silver and 3 bronze medals at the world championships. I also achieved a 2nd, 3rd 4th and 5th placing in different events in the 'expert' (all age groups) female category.

One of my circus students and her mother met me in Japan and both competed in the World Unicycling Championships. I am sharing my experiences and newfound knowledge I attained on the journey with students in my circus workshops on a weekly basis. I also make announcements and discuss unicycling as a sport at many private and public events where I perform. After being awarded this fellowship I was instrumental in putting together an application for Darwin to host the 2005 National Unicycle Championships. We succeeded in our application and now I am on a mission to invite and involve as many people as possible in the Australian Unicycle Championships (UniNATs) in Darwin from July 1st –July 4th 2005. This will be a wonderful opportunity to spread the word about unicycling and encourage new recruits as well as inspire competent unicyclist to achieve higher goals. It will also importantly help to gather support for the 2010 world championships.

PROGRAM

UNITED STATES

25th May – 13th June

San Francisco

- San Francisco School of Circus Arts
- Circus Chimera
- Flying Trapeze School
- Muni (Mountain Unicycling)

New York

- Long Beach Island Unithon – Fundraiser for The Alliance of the Living Ocean

Pennsylvania

- Unicycle club meeting – Country of Lancaster Unicycle Balancers (C.L.U.B.)

UNITED KINGDOM

13th June – 12th July

Manchester

- Muni Training
- Prop Development
- Mountain Mayhem
- DUC Unicycle Club meeting
- Robert Brothers Circus

Birmingham

- Shooting Star Circus School - Circus Workshops
- Circomedia show - Circus theatre performance

Scarborough

- Shooting Star Circus School - Circus Workshops
- Unicycle.com
- Juggling club

Manchester

- Coker riding

South Wales

- British Muni Weekend (BMW)

GERMANY

12th July – 15 July

Munich

- Trials Riding
- Bike Tour with Mike's Bike Tours

HONG KONG

15th July – 20th July

- Muni
- Disney TV Channel Filming
- Unicycle Hockey

JAPAN

20th July – 4th August

Tokyo

- Unicon 12 – International Unicycle Convention and World Championships

AROUND THE WORLD IN 71 DAYS... ON ONE WHEEL

On my journey I carried a large hiking backpack on my back and a smaller backpack that I strapped to the front of me to balance me out a little and then my Mountain Unicycle (Muni). This unicycle hadn't had much use since I won the Women's Australian Mountain unicycling competition in Canberra in 2003. I was quite comfortable riding my Muni with my two backpacks firmly strapped to my body. This is how I traveled from airports to hotels when I needed to travel by foot. It was actually easier riding my Muni rather than walking with such heavy bags most of the time.

This 71 day journey posed an intensive training regime for my own personal development. From a physical, mental and emotional perspective, I have had a life-changing experience. The over-riding lesson I have learnt from many aspects of my travels is to expand my understanding of the realms of possibility. Something may appear or seem impossible (mentally, physically or emotionally) however if you apply yourself to the task at hand it is amazing what outcomes you can and will achieve. How many times have we all heard this? Well it is easy to say we just need to apply ourselves, but sometimes applying ourselves to a task takes extreme self-discipline. This self-discipline however can result in us being surprised and delighted at what we are able to achieve. This is a lesson I have learnt through circus arts, but it is a lesson that applies to all aspects of life.

UNITED STATES

San Francisco School of Circus Arts

My first stop in my incredible journey around the world was at the San Francisco School of Circus Arts (SFSCA). I was welcomed by staff, professional instructors and students alike. I met people who have instructed, worked and trained with some of my mentors here in Australia. Professional instructors at the SFSCA offered a diverse range of classes such as swinging trapeze; static trapeze; flying trapeze; trampoline; clowning; stilt walking; ballet; tightwire walking; contortion; hand balancing; pole; Chinese acrobatics and more.

In the short time I was there I spent many hours watching a number of adults dedicate themselves to strict training regimes. The sheer amount of time these people put into their training overwhelmed me. They were not enrolled in a Circus Arts degree or the like but were simply working towards the ability to perform specific routines. The outcome hence for these participants was somewhat unknown. There was no promise that they would get an opportunity to perform their skills professionally on a regular basis and neither would they have a recognised diploma/degree to prove their abilities. This, I felt was unfortunate. Obviously each enjoyed the tasks they were dedicating so much time to and I hope that performance companies, circus's, theatres and anyone else who can draw upon their individual talents will do so. What a shame it would be for us to miss out on the talents of these amazing people. In this regard I believe the Australian National Institute of Circus Arts (NICA) is doing a wonderful job, lifting the profile of trainees and demonstrating to Australia and the world that these students are as dedicated, if not more dedicated to their studies than students undertaking conventional studies. NICA also provides recognition in the form of Bachelor Degrees to the students and teaches them how to integrate nationally and internationally into the performing arts work force. We are very fortunate in Australia to have an organisation such as NICA.

Circus Chimera

A sobering experience in my circus days taught me never to mix tight-wire performance with slackwire performance. Impossible so I thought. Well, now I know it is definitely possible. I saw Alex of Circus Chimera perform on a tight-wire that immediately dropped down into a slackwire as he stood on it. He then continued to walk along and perform astounding tricks on the slackwire.

Twelve year old Alina stole the show with her hula-hoop routine, reminding me of how entertaining such simple props can be. I will develop my hula hooping skills and integrate hula hooping into my circus classes in Darwin.

The staff at Circus Chimera allowed me to join in with a behind the scenes circus tour prior to the show and I was fortunate to meet with Marek, a trapeze instructor and Tony a retired trapeze artist, who were also visiting the circus.

Trapeze school with Marek and Tony

Circus is more than just physical feats. To be able to achieve such feats we must first be able to conquer fears and master our thoughts. Sam Keen has written books on Trapeze in this regard. Marek's trapeze school was set up on Sam's property.

Having performed solo (or static) trapeze in a circus, I was able to progress quickly to 'flying' on the training trapeze on the day I visited the school. Was I scared? Yes, Terrified actually! Did I enjoy the accomplishment of something I was unsure I was able to do? Absolutely! Belief in myself and a trust in others were feelings I was made aware of whilst learning to 'fly' and these are some of the topics of Sam's books.

Just as I was revelling the fact that I had just flown, I became disappointed that 'at my age' (30) I had only just discovered the thrill of flying. Obviously I was too old to begin learning the trapeze now! Looking up as I spoke those words, I watched as Tony flew to Marek completing a beautiful somersault, at age 68. Again, the 'so-called' impossible IS possible.

How lucky I was to not only to meet up with Marek and be encouraged by him to fly, but also to meet, and be on the trapeze platform with Tony, the first person to achieve a triple somersault on the flying trapeze (many years ago) as recorded by the Guinness Book of World Records.

Muni with Zack and Jess

Zack and Jess had unbelievable abilities at riding up and over boulders and drop offs as we rode through the mountains along the American River. Treacherous downhill sections that were unrideable became rideable with the use of a brake on the boy's unicycles.

I rode with Zack, Jess (and two others) along the edges of mountains for the first time. What an experience, with one slip the wrong way meaning a plummet down the mountain until you hit a tree to stop. Enjoying the differences of nationalities and laughing at each other as well as ourselves we enjoyed the wonderfully challenging ride and the beautiful scenery. What a wonderful experience! We took videos of each other whilst Muni riding so Zack and Jess could make another unicycle video. Two young men, out on their own (and encouraging others to get involved) making their own fun with just a couple of unicycles. One of them is now the current world champion at Trials riding. Both of them are an inspiration to youth and adults alike.

I wanted to do some sightseeing before leaving San Francisco so I jumped on a bus with my Muni and headed to the Golden Gate Bridge. Much to the disbelief of passers by, and my thorough enjoyment I rode across the Golden Gate Bridge and back again. I had visions of grandeur about the possibility of organising a unicycle tour (for international/national riders) to ride across the Sydney Harbour Bridge and over or around other Australian icons in a bit of an epic unicycle ride. Maybe one day I will make it happen.

Unicycle Meeting

Zack and Jess took me to their local unicycle meet I met John who organises the meets. I also finally met some other female unicyclists. Zack demonstrated his prowess on the BC wheel (a wheel with pegs only attached to the axle – no seat, no cranks, no pedals – just a wheel with pegs to stand on). We practiced in the car park and the playground at a local school until it became too dark. This was a very brief meeting with many keen unicyclists. I was disappointed to be leaving San Francisco so soon but was cheerful in the knowledge that I would see John, Zack and Jess again, at Unicon in Japan.

New York

My second destination by plane was New York. I met David, an extraordinary man who founded the New York Unicycle club. I thank him for his generosity in allowing me to stay in his home with his family. He helped me get to a number of unicycle events and also introduced me to his brother John, a film critic and music composer. I enjoyed listening to some of John's fantastic compositions which I may one day be privileged enough to use in some of my performances. John is an accomplished long distance unicycle rider and took great pleasure in showing me his 36" wheeled unicycle and sharing some inspiring stories about long distance rides (of hundreds of kilometers) in different countries. It bemused me that people actually enjoyed travelling hundreds of kilometers on one wheel, on one seat, on one bottom! I certainly needed to find a unicycle seat that was more comfortable for me. I was about to find out just how hard a seat could be on my next adventure, an 18.5mile Unithon on Long Beach Island (LBI).

Thanks to Amos I was able to make the two hour journey to LBI to take part in this island transversing ride. The 18.5mile Unithon took me a casual 3hrs to complete before reaching the lighthouse at the far end of the island. The gusts of wind were almost blowing us off the cokers. The 36" wheels were acting like sails in the wind. Over 30 riders participated in this event on an array of different sized unicycles. A local newspaper took photographs of the 'crazy' Australian who was freezing in such mild conditions doing such a strange event. I met the young girl who began the event with her friend 6 years ago. The reason behind the establishment of the event, 'we were bored and wanted something to do'. Not only did the girls start something that is now a popular event among unicyclists but they are also raising awareness for the Alliance for the Living Ocean and raising money for its cause. Here is an example of two young girls establishing an event that now draws unicyclists from many miles away. Some riders travelled over 6 hours to get to the event but there was no doubt that I had travelled the farthest (from Australia) to participate.

I must say, this 18.5mile ride was a very painful experience for me. I learnt the disadvantages of not having a soft and comfortable seat. Since this ride, by necessity, I have researched and discovered a wide array of unicycle seats that are available and have found one that suits me. I can now ride in comfort for many hours on end. Let this be a lesson for all unicyclists. Different people find different seats more comfortable and you should keep looking until you find the one just right for you. If you can't find one, engage your initiative and make one! I learnt how to make air-seats in two different ways. Air seats are unicycle seats with 12" or 20" bike tubes built into the seat so you can pump up the tube to your desired level of comfort. They can be very soft. Airseats are very comfortable however they are not everyone's cup of tea.

After the LBI Unithon I went to stay in the centre of New York City, in Manhattan itself. I familiarised myself with my new surroundings by jumping on my Muni and riding through the city to Time Square, down to the World Trade Centre site and on to Wall Street. The dozens of armed security guards at the International Stock exchange didn't quite know what to make of my odd form of transport but didn't consider me to be a threat.

David gave me a lift again when it was time for his unicycle club to meet. The New York unicycle club includes many beginners and advanced riders, from children to adults. At the club meeting I met people from the LBI ride as well as others I had never met before. I discussed styles of riding as well as techniques and the mechanics of unicycles (including how to install a brake on a Muni). I tried riding a BC wheel (which I'd seen Zack and Jess ride in America) and I learnt why this

wheel is sometimes called the impossible wheel! It will take me many more hours of practice to learn to ride a BC wheel. David was very good at this wheel and although his 7 year old daughter was still a long way from mastering it, she was not letting that dampen her enthusiasm.

Pensylvania with David R

I travelled four hours by bus from New York to Pennsylvania to meet with David R and the Country of Lancaster Unicycle Balancers (C.L.U.B.). David participated in the LBI ride and was a current world champion unicycle basketball player and obstacle course champion. All the C.L.U.B. members were excited to have an Australian visitor and I was thrilled when they put on an enthusiastic display of their artistic unicycling skills. I practiced some combination moves with them that I had always wanted to do but had not yet had the opportunity to try with experienced unicyclists. I enjoyed this very much.

I encouraged younger members of the club to continue trying to learn new skills and watched as they tried and fell, and tried and fell and tried and fell again but never gave up. Unicycling rewards those who put in the effort, time and dedication to practice. These keen kids will achieve a lot of skills and hence a lot of self satisfaction and self confidence from their disciplined efforts. I saw in these kids, the same enthusiasm and persistence I see every day in my circus students at home in Australia. I spoke to some of the parents at the meet and they agreed that unicycling can help many kids, especially those who are not interested in other conventional sports. One mother in particular agreed emphatically that her son would not participate in other sports and that unicycling had given him a sense of pride and confidence that he had been lacking. This is something that I have witnessed time and again in Australia. I realised the benefits of unicycling for individuals knows no boundaries and is concurrent throughout the world.

ENGLAND

Muni Training and Prop Development with Steve

In Manchester I met and stayed with Steve, his wife Wendy and 2 children Tio (4years) and Zak (7 months). Wendy was about to begin a Thesis about "Why Circus Works", specifically targeting unicycling. This is further proof to me that people around the world can see the benefits of circus. I put Wendy in touch with Reg Bolton from Western Australia, who has just completed his thesis on circus. Steve was teaching his son Tio how to ride a unicycle. Whilst I was there four year old Tio rode his first few meters on a unicycle, even before he could ride a bike without training wheels. A couple of weeks later Tio learnt to ride his bike and was heard boasting to friends about how he could ride a bike "with two wheels", in a manner that would suggest it was harder (or strange) to ride a two-wheeler.

Steve meanwhile had been training for 5 months for the up and coming 24hr mountain bike event called Mountain Mayhem. Unicyclists throughout England were getting together to enter 3 teams of unicyclists into this popular European mountain bike event. I had never met anyone who trained as hard as Steve to participate in a unicycle event. I didn't know there were such dedicated unicyclists out there who trained so hard for just one event, especially adult unicyclists! If your going to do something challenging, you may as well train as hard as you can in preparation to attain the maximum amount of enjoyment and sense of achievement as possible. This was Steve's reasoning as to why he trained so hard and I think that this is a great motto to live life by.

I was surprised at the number of adult unicyclists I met in England. Some were advanced riders and others were still learning. They showed me that it is a fallacy that unicycling is only for youth and that it is too late to learn when you are an adult. It may take a little longer to master, but that just makes success even sweeter. I am now more passionate about promoting unicycling as an activity for adults.

Steve showed me the trials equipment that he had made. The jigsaw style in which it all fit together was wonderful to allow easy transport of the equipment and the ideas were great for providing new challenges for my circus students in a safe way. I will be making some new equipment as soon as possible and it will be of use not only for my circus students in the NT but also for all participants visiting Darwin for the Australian Unicycle Championships in July 2005.

With all the training Steve and I were doing in preparation for Mountain Mayhem, I was getting a very sore butt. Yes, a common problem for unicyclists who have not yet discovered the solution. I have been riding for many years but never had I ridden on a seriously long ride so it has never been an issue. After identifying this problem on the LBI ride I definitely needed to find a solution to my problem before the 24hr unicycle ride. I discovered very good bike pants helped greatly and two pairs worn together were even better! This was not the real answer however as the underneath pair would crease and become uncomfortable. I ordered a seamless seat from Roger at Unicycle.com and that, in combination with one pair of bike pants was the answer. Also, chaffing can be a problem for some people and apparently 'butt butter' is great! Visit unicycle.com to place your order.

I learnt some more about maintenance for my Muni as Steve and I tightened our spokes, checked wheel rotation and trueness, replaced pedal studs, tightened cranks and pedals and installed new seats in preparation for the mayhem that was about to begin.

Mountain Mayhem

The Saab Salomon Mountain Mayhem is the biggest, and oldest 24 hour mountain bike race in Europe and has earned a reputation for being not only a good race but also a celebration of mountain biking. This year 3 unicycle teams entered the race at a new location, Eastnor Castle (UK) and I was lucky enough (or was that silly enough) to join them.

Throughout the 24hr race one member of each team had to be on the course at any one time. The course consisted of one 10.5mile long lap with uphill and downhill sections, mud, mud and more mud. Oh, did I happen to mention the mud? It made the riding throughout the day very difficult and riding the course at night near impossible. Walking through the mud was hard enough! I had only once ridden 10.5 miles (on the LBI Unithon – on a large 36” wheel) so I was anxious as to whether I could make the distance, especially on such a gruelling cross country course. I met the other unicyclists the day before the big event as we prepared to camp onsite for the next 2 nights. Pretending to be confident about how I would successfully meet the challenge ahead, I convinced some of the guys to let me join their team. Each team member of every team was required to do two laps in order for the team to register placings at the end of the event. I seriously didn’t think I’d be able to get through the 1st lap let alone the 2nd but I didn’t want to miss out on participating in such a wonderful event. I was so overwhelmed by the enormity of what I was getting into to even think about the 2nd lap, I had to get through lap one first.

The idea of the challenge was that once you headed out on your lap you had to finish it. This meant that we each had to carry tools and puncture repair kits to be able to repair any damage to our unicycles as we were not allowed any help from other team members until we got back to camp. Basically if you couldn’t repair your bike/unicycle then you would have to push it or carry it all the way to the end of the lap. Even though I felt I could competently repair a punctured tyre, the thought of possibly having to walk 10.5miles as quickly as possible was overwhelming.

Each team (on bikes and unicycles) consisted of four people, or five people for mixed teams. The unicycle teams were sponsored by Unicycle.com and were as follows:

Unicycle.Com - No Gears:

Roger Davies,
Des Devlin,
Nathan Hoover,
Scot Cooper.

Unicycle.Com - No Handlebars:

Steve Colligan,
Leo White,
Mark Wiggins,
Phil Himsworth.

Unicycle.Com - No Brakes:

Debbie Hyder,
Joe McLean,
Alan Chambers,
Chris Dobbie,
Steve Robertson.

All in all our 3 unicycle teams beat over 139 bike teams. Yes, you read right... we beat 139 bike teams, those unicycles with trainer wheels – bicycles! Wow. I couldn’t believe it! Throughout the event I overtook bikes in muddy bogs who couldn’t stay on the ‘line’ required. A highlight of the event for me was when I was near exhaustion on my second lap and was trailing behind 3 bikes. As they hit a muddy section one bike fell to the left, the other lost traction and fell to the right, the next one fell left and I quickly spotted a very narrow line between the riders and rode straight through and onward ahead, as they were left picking up themselves and their bikes. An unbelievable experience. Overtaking bikes on very steep hills was also something that I had never experienced. Unicyclists can apply a lot of torque and can very quickly over take bikes. A camera man actually filmed me as I overtook a bike on the last uphill section. Another highlight of the ride was the support we received from the mountain bikers. They thought they were doing it tough on two wheels and then saw us on our one wheels. It is true that bikes can coast down the hills and ‘rest’ whilst they do this whereas unicyclists have to pedal all the way as we cannot freewheel/coast. The bike riders were doing it tough in other respects though because the course was so muddy the wheels, brakes and forks were clogging up the unicycles and the bikes but weighing down the bikes much more. At one stage my unicycle almost stopped for no apparent reason as I rode down a hill. As I looked down at my wheel I saw the mud and grass had built up between the fork and rim and was acting like a brake. Every few hundred meters I would have to dismount and clean the mud off my wheel.

At another time a biker was riding behind me for some time. I always allowed space for the bikes to overtake but this guy wasn’t interested in overtaking. In fact I discovered he was having a hard time keeping up with me! After a few minutes he did pull past me, with a lot of grunting and groaning and implored me not to tell his team mates that he had been slipstreaming behind a unicyclist!

I can’t even begin to describe what an incredible experience participating in this event was. The team spirit between unicyclists and the support and the respect between unicyclists and bikers was magnificent. This was more than a race, it was a great personal development challenge and a wonderful team building experience. Pushing our bodies to the limit and forcing ourselves to drink special chocolate recovery drinks then eat energy foods in preparation to subject our bodies to more torture was the ultimate challenge for me personally.

I say forcing ourselves to eat and drink because when exhaustion hits, you don't want to eat or drink but this is the time you need it the most. In fact on my first lap I pushed my body so hard through the 1st mile that I felt physically sick for the next 9.5 miles ... but ...on on. I completed my first lap in about 2hrs 30minutes and my second lap in 2hrs 40minutes and I was astounded at how much easier the second lap felt in comparison to the first.

Throughout the 24hrs of mayhem I learnt about different bike and helmet lights that can be used for unicycling at night. There were helmet mounted lights (single and double) with battery packs mounted on the helmet or in a backpack with a cable to your helmet. The later is certainly a much better option if you have a heavy battery pack as it would otherwise weigh your head down too much. There were also uni mounted lights for front and rear. There is no doubt the uni mounted lights help distinguish the bumps better than the head lamps but the disadvantage is they are subject to damage easily when doing UPD's (unplanned dismounts). The ultimate night lighting is of course to have a light mounted on the uni and a helmet light however it is often easiest just to use a helmet light. Attaching any lights to a unicycle can sometimes be a tricky procedure without much to attach it to. Thankfully I didn't do a night ride in the race but I did do one in training for the event. Night riding is very tiring because you need to be prepared for obstacles that you can't see. Bumps are often hard to distinguish, as is soil texture change, therefore you need to be alert and quick to respond to stay in balance. Although this is very tiring the extra adrenalin of an exciting night ride helps a lot.

DUC Unicycle Club meeting

There were many adult riders at this club. The kids went all shy when they saw me and wouldn't participate in the workshop. I went over and introduced myself to them and encouraged them to show me what they could do. They became very enthusiastic and impressed me with their differing skills. I got the kids doing pirouettes with me at first and then with each other. Personal goal setting is something I think is important in the regular workshops. It helps to keep the kids focused on what they are there to achieve both over the course of the year and throughout each workshop. It gives them something to aim for and an ability to realise and appreciate the efforts they have been putting in. I practiced a little bit of unicycle hockey and Steve helped me practice my gliding by pulling me along with a rope. Gliding is where you take your both feet off the pedals and place them on the frame. One foot touches the top of the wheel to apply pressure when you need to slow down or maintain balance. Gliding is best done down a slope but practicing with a rope was a novel idea that helped a lot.

Circus Workshops with Steve & Jackie

For one week we worked at Pindar Primary School. I participated in some of Steve's workshops and also taught unicycling, juggling, plate spinning, rola bola and many other circus tricks to over 100 kids throughout the week. Steve and Jackie tend to push the children to great heights...literally with their development. No sooner do the kids achieve a goal but Steve and Jackie are challenging them and encouraging them to go further. With unicycling, this meant that by the end of one week of practicing each day, we had 3 students riding the 4ft and 6ft giraffe unicycles in the end of week concert.

In keeping with my discoveries here in Australia, Steve and Jackie had also discovered that "problem" children tend to gravitate towards the unicycles. It is an uncanny phenomenon that means within only one lesson it is easy for us to identify the so called "trouble-maker" children. With the help of the unicycles, we can use these children's energy, persistence and tenacity to teach them to be great unicyclists in no time at all. Frustration's are expressed and occasionally in a physical manner towards the unicycles however, left to their own devices at times and at others encouraged, these children will almost always shine through as leaders on unicycles in the culminating concert. I experienced this at both the schools I worked at with Shooting Stars Circus School. There are certainly many, many great benefits for teaching circus activities to youth, during and outside of normal school hours. It is something that has been recognised but not completely understood for many years. There are many reasons I could put forth but that would be a whole report in itself. Steve and Jackie shared many of their "success" stories with me and I asked them to contact Wendy to discuss them with her to help with her PHD. Needless to say, circus does work and I will continue to teach circus classes for the benefit of youth and the community throughout the NT as long as I can.

Unicycle.com with Roger and Miark

Extreme unicyclists often break their seats so Roger at Unicycle.com has developed the very strong, yet lightweight carbon fibre seat base. I visited the factory where the carbon fibre seats bases are made. What an amazing and interesting process this is. Some people complain about the cost of the carbon fibre seats, however if they only knew how complicated and time consuming the process is to make them, I'm sure they would be happy to pay the price.

Juggling club

I watched hat juggling and did some club passing which was wonderful as again I don't get much of an opportunity in my home-town to pass clubs. I would love to tell you what a fantastic club passer Roger was, but this report is based on truth so maybe I should stick to describing how talented he is as a unicycle rider.

Although I had never seen a unicycle like Roger's eccentric and twisted unicycle, I rode it with great success. I also managed to ride a free wheeling unicycle! It was amazing. When pedaling forward it was just like a standard unicycle however when you push back to slow down it does not slow down, but rather freewheels. This was very difficult to ride. I found I was trying to continuously push forwards however this means you are going faster and faster and faster all the time.

Coker riding along the Mersey

The wind was so strong until we started riding, then it disappeared, or so I thought. We were riding with the wind and at the same speed. It must have been approximately 15 miles per hour. Whenever we stopped the wind was still blowing and it was very cold. It was a great feeling to ride with the wind, especially along the Mersey as my father always used to sing the song "Ferry across the Mersey". When I entertain children I dress up as a fairy. I suppose I can now sing "Fairy along the Mersey".

British Muni Weekend (BMW)

In the Afan Valley of South Wales about 13 unicycle riders got together for a weekend of extreme mountain unicycling on some world class mountain biking trails. I thought we only did it in Mountain Mayhem because it was a prestigious racing event. Apparently not. People do this for fun? We pushing our bodies to the absolute limit and then pushed them some more. This wasn't always fun but it sure resulted in a feeling of unbelievable personal achievement. I did enjoy most of the riding and I certainly enjoyed the sense of achievement at the end of each ride. I remember distinctly thinking that in the Mountain Mayhem we had to keep going because we were in a race and didn't want to let our team members down but why were we doing this? riding across unforgiving terrain hour after hour, pulling ourselves together at points to eat our Mars bars, only to push on over more rocks and through mud. Why? And as if this wasn't bad enough, we'd then go out and do it all again at the end of the day ... and the next day too! The dynamics of the group were always friendly and encouraging. The rides were not a competition amongst each unicyclist, rather a challenge to each individual.

I learnt during these rides just how far a young accomplished unicyclist could push himself and was astounded at how far he travelled and how well he kept up the rest of the group (all adults), even on his smaller wheel.

It was very cold at night times at this camping site and after a long day of riding, with more riding planned for the next day, there was one thing we all wanted to do... dry our shoes around the fire.

GERMANY

Trials riding with Thomas and Tassilo

I touched down in Munich however discovered later that the majority of unicyclists are in central Germany. I did however find 3 unicyclists near Munich. One was out of action after trying to ride down an extra large block of stairs on his unicycle (he twisting his ankle) and the other two didn't know each other. I found Thomas and Tassilo's contact details on the Internet and was able to organise a practice session between the three of us. Tassilo was a lot younger than Thomas and I however displayed great talent at trials unicycling. I have never seen anyone (in person) do drops as high as Tassilo and Thomas. Pedal grinding, crank grinding, stair riding, wall riding, crank grabs, pedal grabs, rail riding, skipping and obstacle jumping were some of the activities I practiced with these enthusiastic unicyclists. During our trials riding, my right pedal came off. The pedal was fine, it was the thread on my crank was ruined. I've never had a unicycle fail in action before. That's something I've only seen on videos when the experts are riding. Thomas was kind enough to share his unicycle with me for the rest of the day.

Tassilo seemed to be fearless when he tackled the toughest of obstacles. Going to thinner walls to ride and then demonstrating some rail riding on the back of a park bench. He did know his limits however and was not afraid to ask for help when he needed it. This is a very important aspect of learning new tricks. Always know your limits and push through them carefully and always at your own pace, to prevent injuries.

Later in the day we had to do some riding up and down some hills because my new friends wanted to see some of the Muni skills that made me the Australian Women's Muni champion. We rode down a hill with grass that was waist high. This was unnerving because it was impossible to know how deep the unicycle would sink in the grass and what surface was underneath. It was however a lot of fun.

Before leaving Germany I mused about how the wonders of modern technology, namely the Internet, allowed me (recently arrived from the other side of the world) to unite two unicyclists who lived in the same city together as friends. Thomas and Tassilo developed a good friendship as we trained and are keen to stay in contact and practice together regularly.

Unicycle tour with Mikes Bike Tours

One day I was so keen to ride my unicycle but couldn't arrange a meet with any unicyclists so I went on a tour with Mikes Bike Tours. This was a four hour bike ride that saw the tour guide lead about 30 bikers (and me on my Muni) on a 4hr riding tour of Munich. I did manage to keep up but was certainly exhausted by the end of it. I definitely would have put shorter cranks on my Muni to help me go faster if I had some with me. I survived the tour though and impressed the socks off all the other riders, especially when I overtook them going up a big hill.

HONG KONG

The Dragons Back and Disney TV Filming

I landed in Hong Kong on Thursday 15th of July right in the middle of a typhoon. It was raining and blowing a gale. Many buses were not in operation so when Roz met me at the Airport we had to find our way to other buses that were still operating.

We got home safely and soon the typhoon didn't appear to be much whatsoever. The skyscraper buildings may have been blocking out most of the winds. The next day in the paper, I read that 3 people were injured by falling shop signs and debris during the typhoon, in the suburb where I was staying.

A Disney TV film crew had travelled from Singapore and were planning to film the kid from the unicycle club. The typhoon did threaten to cause the filming to be cancelled due to the rain however eventually we were able to get out to ride on The Dragons Back (a mountain) and the kids were filmed by a very hot and bothered film crew. It was a very hot day but the children rode up the mountain and did a great job being interviewed. I also got filmed as an Australian Champion unicyclist on my way to the World Championships. The footage was to be shown on the Disney TV Channel throughout Asia (not in Australia).

Roz is a very inspiring lady who has established a unicycling group who ride together and play unicycle hockey in Hong Kong. The group is comprised of many adults as well as children. Joslin was 6 and her brother, father and mother also ride unicycles and I enjoyed many outings with Roz and Joslin's family in Hong Kong and also Japan. Joslin is the youngest member of the Hong Kong unicycle group who learnt to ride a unicycle when she was merely 3 years old. She amazed me with her advanced unicycling abilities. I have never met anyone else who has learnt to ride at such a young age. I have heard of a toddler riding across the stage in a circus with a diaper on! Needless to say, you can begin unicycling at a very early age.

It was incredibly hot in Hong Kong, even at 8pm when we played unicycle hockey. We were sweating buckets of sweat. Wow, it was hot! A great game though. At the unicycle hockey game I met some bike riders who learnt to unicycle as a stepping stone to become better at their artistic bike riding. This was interesting because I thought when people took up unicycling, it was because it was the ultimate challenge. It did seem however that these boys were most impressed with the diversity of activities that could be done on unicycles, including unicycle hockey. Hong Kong may get a few more unicyclists in this manner.

I met a couple of children's entertainers in Hong Kong and discovered that I could probably retire a few years earlier if I worked in Hong Kong instead of Australia. However as usual, making a living from entertaining in Hong Kong requires taking the time to establish a good reputation. This would entail me making a lifestyle change to live in Hong Kong for an extended period of time. Even though the Chinese food was marvellous, I much prefer to remain in Australia and continue doing the work I love a little longer! I am potentially available however at times to duck over and support any entertainers during their peak season in Hong Kong. Unfortunately however it is the same time as our peak season for entertainment here in Australia.

JAPAN

Unicon 12 – International Unicycle Convention and World Championships

The International Unicycle Convention and World Championships (UNICON) are held every 2 years in different countries. Unicon 12 was a 10 day event held in Tokyo, Japan from 23rd July to 1st August. Over 1500 people from 17 countries registered and there were over 900 unicyclists competing in the numerous unicycling events which included competitions in all of the different strains of unicycling.

The different 'strains' of unicycling include:

Team Sports: unicycle basketball and unicycle hockey

Track & Field: 10km marathon; high jump; long jump; 100m, 400m, 800m racing; backwards race; slow race; one-footed race; walking the wheel race; ride and juggle race; obstacle course; gliding and coasting

Artistic Unicycling: individual, pairs and group freestyle categories

Mountain Unicycling (Muni)/Off Road Riding: uphill, downhill and cross-country

Trials/Urban Trials

Open X and

Novelty events: wrestling, cat and mouse, red rover and jousting.

Unicycle team sports currently are predominated by unicycle hockey and unicycle basketball. Track and Field is similar to standard track and field events however it includes a unicycle. Artistic unicycling can be thought of in simple terms as dancing on unicycles choreographed to music. Muni includes uphill, downhill and cross-country riding on all types of terrain from mud to creek beds to volcano slopes to ski slopes with snow! Trials involves jumping up onto and over different size and different height obstacles, pedal grinding, crank grinding and more. Open X is a new category that involves a display (rather than a performance) of difficult skills. It is a field where new tricks may be seen for the first time. Open X does not have to be choreographed to music and is judged very differently to artistic riding. Novelty events are played as games rather than competitions.

It was at the Muni event that I learnt about the value of timely maintenance and early preparation of your unicycle. I wanted to put on shorter cranks on my unicycle for the muni ride however discovered when I took my cranks off that the thread had stripped on my axle (not just the crank as it had the last time) and could not hold the new shorter cranks on. I had to put the old cranks back on and the right hand crank was only held on by one thread! What a nightmare! I had no other options so I just had to hop it stayed on throughout the gruelling uphill, downhill and cross country events. It did and I have now since rebuild my entire hub, which I am happy that I am able to do with all the new knowledge I gained on my journey. I am also

installing a brake so I can take advantage of the big mountains, I mean the big hills, well O.K., the short but occasionally steep slopes that we have here in Darwin.

A number of people from Australia went to Japan for Unicon 12 and although unicycling in Australia is still a relatively new sport, we did Australia proud by winning quite a few medals and placings. The proudest moment that I experienced was when the Australian spirit was shared by all. This was a moment when we carried our Australian flags in a token group artistic routine to display our presence and eagerness to be involved with the event. Knowing we had no chance of winning anything in the artistic competition we got out there and performed to a packed stadium with an audience of over 17 different nationalities. They soon began cheering and screaming for us as we waved our flags and rode in formation to the song "We come from a land Down under". What a magical moment it was. From this moment and throughout the championships all the Australian showed true team spirit and good morals as we supported and encouraged our competitors and assisted them where possible. By the end of the convention, the "good old" Aussies were renowned for their willingness to get in and have a go, their friendliness. We also amazed people with our unicycling talents in some areas. Well done to all the Australians involved either directly or indirectly with your support.

Personally I won 9 gold medals, 1 silver and 3 bronze in my age category (30-45years). In the open/expert female category I achieved 2nd in the Trials, 3rd in Muni Downhill, 4th in Muni Cross Country and 5th in Muni Uphill. See attachment 5 for further details about Australia's medal tallies and visit unicon12.com for the international results.

One of my circus students (Phoebe) from Darwin and her mother (Karen) who both have learnt to ride unicycles in my circus classes travelled to Japan to meet with me and participate in the world championships. I am very proud that Phoebe (10 years old) participated in many events and won a medal. Karen, a new recruit to unicycling, participated in the 100m race and did us all proud by completing the race.

Karen and myself as well as other Australian Unicycle Society representatives met with the International Unicycle Federation Committee and discussed the advancement of unicycling as a world sport as well as general 'housekeeping' activities. Unicycling will not be an Olympic Sport for quite some time as it is necessary to expand the participation rate quite considerably before it can even be considered as an Olympic sport. Nevertheless, our current National and International Championships do provide for great competitions and most of all great fun and the opportunity to skill-share and develop wonderful friendships. A noticeable trend at these events is the particular willingness of participants to try at numerous events even when they know they have now chance of getting a placing. This is a very admirable approach and sets a good example for youth that your efforts are what counts, not if you win or lose. Well done to everyone who participated at Unicon and many thanks to all involved with the organisation of the event, especially the Japanese Unicycling Association.

The Australian Unicycle Society expressed interest in hosted the games some time ago with further discussions with the international unicycling community and the IUF it appears we will have the opportunity to host this world event here in 2010, possibly in Darwin or Brisbane. The schedule for the next 6 years will probably see Unicon 13 in Switzerland, Unicon 14 in Germany and Unicon 15 in Australia.

Unicon 12 was a wonderful way to finish my journey as not only did I see some of the best unicycling I have ever seen but I was able to share these moments with some friends who I had met on my travels though America, England and Hong Kong.

CONCLUSIONS

Circus people are a great bunch of people. As a single woman traveller having never stepped far afield from Australia, I was a little anxious about riding off over the seas. This concern was soon made redundant, as I was welcomed again and again into the lives of many wonderful people. Circus people are very special people and most welcoming of others in their field or others who show an interest.

I first became aware of the benefits of circus activities to youth development from my own personal experiences with students in my local circus classes six years ago. I have often reflected on the personal development and achievements of my students with other people in the industry within Australia and discovered this success of circus is nationwide. I have now also witnessed its success the world over. Circus as an art and a sport is an area we should be committing more resources to.

Circus skills can be implemented into the school curriculum and help to: promote cooperation; increase self-confidence and self-worth; introduce realistic goal setting techniques; encourage perseverance and individual initiative; enhance coordination and balance; and stimulate brain activity development. Most importantly, the students (and staff) find circus is a whole lot of fun and teachers find it to be an easy way to get outcomes achieved. I am proud to be a circus instructor and am continually inspired by the results and progress I see in my students physically, mentally and psychologically.

The diversity of circus activities means there is something for almost anyone, from poi spinning, tricky sticks, scarf juggling, ball juggling, club swinging, hat manipulation, plate spinning, balancing, flying trapeze to unicycling. This is one of the reasons why circus works so well in the school environment. Circus activities have been successfully incorporated in the school curriculum in many countries and the schools in Australia have also reported great successes.

There are dozens of different types of unicycles, many ways to ride them, and a myriad of places and diverse conditions to ride in. This is why unicycling has so much to offer as a pastime, hobby or a sport for people of all ages. The oldest competitor at the 2005 World Unicycle Championships in Japan was over 70 years old. What are *you* waiting for?

Even though there are many people who attend unicycle championships to see how many events they can win, there are also a great number of people who just want to see how many events they can enter and finish, or how many new unicycle friends they can make. I especially liked the friendly atmosphere at Unicon 12 and I think that even though unicycling can be a serious, or rather, a competitive sport (if you wish to get involved in that way), it will always be fun.

Good technique is important in achieving the best results from unicycling. From keeping your knees in while racing, to holding the seat whilst muni riding to pulling down against the seat to climb steep hills. It is also important however to have the right type of unicycle for the type of riding you are doing. A Coker unicycle (with 36" wheel) or a twenty niner (with 29" wheel) is ideal for long distance riding, a Muni with 24" tyre for off road riding, a trials unicycle with 20" tyre is ideal for trials riding and a standard unicycle for artistic riding. Modifying your unicycle for specific challenges helps you to achieve your best results. This may mean putting shorter cranks on for racing to help you go faster, or slightly longer cranks for Muni riding. A brake takes a bit of getting used to but can be advantageous on long and steep descents. You can also adjust your tyre pressures so you have high pressure for racing in your racing and road tyre and lower pressure in you off road tyre for Muni.

Unicycling is still a relatively new sport, especially in Australia so there is a lot of scope for people to develop new ideas and world class skills. Because it is a new sport however people have some misconceptions about the safety of unicycling.

Unicycling is not the dangerous activity people often perceive it to be. When basic safety procedures are followed the reality is quite different. In fact I consider unicycling to be safer than riding a bicycle or roller blades, primarily because you cannot achieve the same speeds on a unicycle. There are always risks of injury but unicycling injuries are primarily scrapes and bruises and a bit of chaffing. Risks can be minimised by riders wearing a helmet, good closed shoes, wrist guards, elbow and knee-pads and practicing on a relatively soft surface. When common sense safety procedures are followed unicycling is not a dangerous activity.

Extreme unicycling does pose a much higher risk of injury than basic unicycling and riders should never attempt a skill without first being confident they have prepared themselves for such a challenge. More guards and padding, including shin guards and a back guards should also be worn with very high level stunts. This risk for extreme unicycling is comparative and probably lower than the risk associated with other extreme sports such as extreme biking, again due to the lack of speed attained on unicycles.

Unicycles that are built for speed may present a problem when you fall off due to the higher momentum. Again however this is no more dangerous than the two wheeled alternative. All in all unicycling is relatively safe if you use common sense and wear the correct, well fitting safety gear.

It is so easy to assume and believe that we cannot do something and it takes courage and commitment to persevere and achieve our goals. It seems the more challenging a goal is, the more rewarding is the sense of achievement when we accomplish that goal. The physical challenges I put my body through on my world journey was a challenge to my mind as well as my body. I am very proud of myself for many personal successes after having attempted and successfully achieved so many new challenges. This pride has little to do with how others perceive my achievements but rather is a reflection of how I feel about my personal accomplishments and newfound abilities.

I am very fortunate to have had this amazing opportunity and once again I am very appreciative and thankful to the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust for making this all possible. Every aspect of this incredible journey has contributed to my personal development. There is not doubt these 10 weeks have provided me with life changing experiences that will help not only myself in my personal endeavours but also many, many other Australians.

I have ample opportunities to share my skills and knowledge on a weekly basis with my circus students as well as with the general public at many private and public events where I perform as a Children's Entertainer. After being awarded this fellowship I was instrumental in putting together an application for Darwin to host the 2005 National Unicycle Championships. We succeeded in our application and now I am on a mission to help coordinate the event and invite and involve as many people as possible in the Australian Unicycle Championships (UniNATs) in Darwin from July 1st –July 4th 2005. This will be a wonderful opportunity to spread the word about unicycling and encourage new recruits as well as further inspire competent unicyclists. It will also importantly help to gather support for the 2010 World Championships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is certainly something special about circus, especially unicycling. I knew this even before I embarked on my wonderful journey but now I am even more convinced. The outcomes I have witnessed locally are also recognisable on a global scale. More finances need to be made available either by communities, schools and councils by making funds for circus a priority or from the local and federal governments respectively to directly fund the introduction and implementation of circus activities in more schools throughout Australia. The benefits to individuals, schools and communities will far out-way any costs.

More individuals, of all ages, should act now to get involved with this new, exciting and healthy phenomenon of unicycling. In particular I encourage the parents of children who have learnt/are learning to ride to get outside and have a go themselves. By getting involved with the personal challenges of this fun and healthy outdoor activity you will also be sharing some valuable time and great experiences with your children.

I also recommend that if you have not yet found your ideal sport or have in fact never found competitive sports appealing, then try unicycling. Unicycling has so much more to offer than other conventional sports as it can be done as an individual, in pairs, as a group, competitively or non-competitively and can even combine with other sports (such as basketball).

Unicyclists and any other interested people and groups throughout Australia (and particularly in Brisbane and Darwin), need to show their support now for the 2010 International Unicycle Convention and World Championships (Unicon 15). Get involved now by contacting The Secretary of the Australian Unicycle Society to offer your support or to register to participate in the Australian National Championships in Darwin from July 1st-July 4th 2005.

Financial and in kind support from governments and sporting groups is essential to make the 2010 International Unicycle Convention and World Championships in Australia a success. This will be the first time Australia has had the opportunity to host such an event and we want to make it a fantastic and memorable occasion. There will be much interest in the championships in 2010 however it is now and in the next few years in the lead up to 2010 that we need to act to begin preparations, inspire participants and consolidate plans. Support us financially or in kind in any way you can for the benefit of all Australians.