Big Frog in Little Kalasin

50 Years of Shared Memories...
that have changed lives
Peace Corps Thailand
1962-2012

THE DIRECTOR OF THE PEACE CORPS
WASHINGTON, D.C.

On behalf of the Peace Corps, I would like to extend my heartiest congratulations and warmest regards to the men and women who have served so faithfully as Peace Corps Volunteers and staff members in Thailand during the past 50 years. I am most grateful for this opportunity to thank you for your service to the Peace Corps and to the people of Thailand.

Since 1962, Peace Corps/Thailand Volunteers and staff members have worked successfully to build an enduring foundation of friendship and understanding between Thailand and the United States. I commend those first Volunteers and staff members, who, in the early 1960s, set the standard for all who followed after them. Subsequent generations of Volunteers and staff have deepened and broadened that very special friendship. To all of you, I say thank you. You reflect the best of the Peace Corps' spirit of service.

Beginning with the arrival of our first Peace Corps Volunteers, the Thai people have opened their hearts and their homes to our Volunteers. I greatly appreciate the generous hospitality that the Thai people have extended to our Volunteers over the years. You have treated our Volunteers as family members, and the Peace Corps is forever grateful to you.

With the strong support of the government and people of Thailand, the Peace Corps program in 2012 remains relevant, vital, and involved in community needs throughout Thailand. Therefore, I am confident that the ties of friendship and understanding between the people of the United States and Thailand will continue to thrive in the years to come.

Sincerely,

Aaron S. Williams
Director

Treaty

TREATIES AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ACTS SERIES 4929

PEACE CORPS PROGRAM

Agreement Between the
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
and THAILAND

Effected by Exchange of Notes
Signed at Bangkok November 20
and 28, 1961

THAILAND

Peace Corps Program

Agreement effected by exchange of notes
Signed at Bangkok November 20 and 28, 1961;
Entered into force November 28, 1961.

The American Ambassador to the Thai Minister of Foreign Affairs

No. 1504 BANGKOK, *November 20, 1961.*

EXCELLENCY:

I have the honor to refer to recent conversations between representatives of our two Governments concerning appropriate arrangements with respect to the men and women of the United States of America who volunteer to serve in the Peace Corps and who, at the request of your Government, would live and work for periods of time in the Kingdom of Thailand. In these conversations your Government has indicated it would welcome Peace Corps Volunteers and Volunteer Leaders.

I have the honor to propose the following understandings with respect to the Peace Corps:

1. The Government of Thailand will accord equitable treatment to Peace Corps Volunteers and Volunteer Leaders, both as to their persons and their property; afford them, particularly in case of need, full aid and protection; exempt them from immigration fees, from income tax as to all income derived from their Peace Corps work and from sources outside Thailand, from social security taxes, and from tax on commodities except those included in prices of goods and services; permit duty-free entry of personal effects and household goods, not including a motorized vehicle, brought into Thailand within a period of six months after the first arrival of the owner; and fully inform and consult and cooperate with representatives of my Government with respect to all matters concerning them. The names of the Peace Corps Volunteers and Volunteer Leaders arriving will be communicated to the Thai appropriate authorities from time to time.

2. The Government of Thailand will accept a Peace Corps representative and his staff who will discharge functions for the United States Government with respect to Peace Corps programs; will exempt them from immigration fees and from income tax as to all income derived from their Peace Corps work and from sources outside Thai-

land, from social security taxes, and from taxes on commodities except those included in prices of goods and services; and will accord them the same treatment with respect to payment of customs duties on personal property, equipment, and supplies imported into Thailand for their own use as is accorded personnel of comparable rank or grade of the Embassy of the United States of America. The names of such representative and his staff will be communicated to Thai appropriate authorities concerned.

3. The Government of Thailand will exempt equipment, materials, and provisions used in connection with Peace Corps programs from taxes, investment, or deposit requirements and from customs duties.

4. Appropriate representatives of our two Governments may make from time to time such arrangements with respect to Peace Corps Volunteers and Volunteer Leaders and Peace Corps programs in Thailand as appear necessary or desirable for purposes of implementing this Agreement.

Finally, I have the honor to propose, if these understandings are acceptable to the Government of Thailand, this note and your reply note concurring therein shall constitute an Agreement between our two Governments which shall enter into force on the date of Your Excellency's reply note and which shall remain in force until ninety days after receipt by either Government of written notification of the other to terminate it.

Accept, Excellency, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

KENNETH T. YOUNG, Jr.

His Excellency
THANAT KHOMAN,
Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Bangkok.

The Thai Minister of Foreign Affairs to the American Ambassador

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
SARANROM PALACE
November 28, B.E. 2504. [1]

No. 50874/2504

EXCELLENCY:

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Note No. 1504 of November 20, 1961 which reads as follows:

"I have the honor to refer to recent conversations between representatives of our two Governments concerning appropriate arrangements with respect to the men and women of the United States of

[1] 1961.

America who volunteer to serve in the Peace Corps and who, at the request of your Government, would live and work for periods of time in the Kingdom of Thailand. In these conversations your Government has indicated it would welcome Peace Corps Volunteers and Volunteer Leaders.

I have the honor to propose the following understandings with respect to the Peace Corps:

1. The Government of Thailand will accord equitable treatment to Peace Corps Volunteers and Volunteer Leaders, both as to their persons and their property; afford them, particularly in case of need, full aid and protection; exempt them from immigration fees, from income tax as to all income derived from their Peace Corps work and from sources outside Thailand, from social security taxes, and from tax on commodities except those included in prices of goods and services; permit duty-free entry of personal effects and household goods, not including a motorized vehicle, brought into Thailand within a period of six months after the first arrival of the owner; and fully inform and consult and cooperate with representatives of my Government with respect to all matters concerning them. The names of the Peace Corps Volunteers and Volunteer Leaders arriving will be communicated to the Thai appropriate authorities from time to time.

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3. The Government of Thailand will exempt equipment, materials, and provisions used in connection with Peace Corps programs from taxes, investment, or deposit requirements and from customs duties.

4. Appropriate representatives of our two Governments may make from time to time such arrangements with respect to Peace Corps Volunteers and Volunteer Leaders and Peace Corps programs in Thailand as appear necessary or desirable for purposes of implementing this Agreement.

Finally, I have the honor to propose, if these understandings are acceptable to the Government of Thailand, this note and your reply note concurring therein shall constitute an Agreement between our two Governments which shall enter into force on the date of Your

Excellency's reply note and which shall remain in force until ninety days after receipt by either Government of written notification of the other to terminate it."

In reply, I have the honour to inform Your Excellency that the foregoing provisions are acceptable to the Royal Thai Government, who therefore agree that your Note and this reply shall be regarded as constituting an Agreement between the two Governments in this matter, which shall enter into force on this day's date.

Accept, Excellency, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

TH. KHOMAN
Minister of Foreign Affairs.

His Excellency
Monsieur KENNETH TODD YOUNG, Jr.
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
of the United States of America,
Bangkok.

TIAS 4029

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1963

Table of Contents

RPCV Memories

John Haynes, a Malaria Eradication volunteer assigned to the South, discussing the benefits of spraying with a Thai family in the photo above (1968).

On January 21, 1962, Peace Corps Thailand's first group of 46 volunteers landed at Don Muang Airport. They had been invited to serve in towns and villages throughout the Kingdom. Some were assigned to teach in secondary schools, teacher training colleges and universities. Others went on-site to work in malaria eradication and entomology.

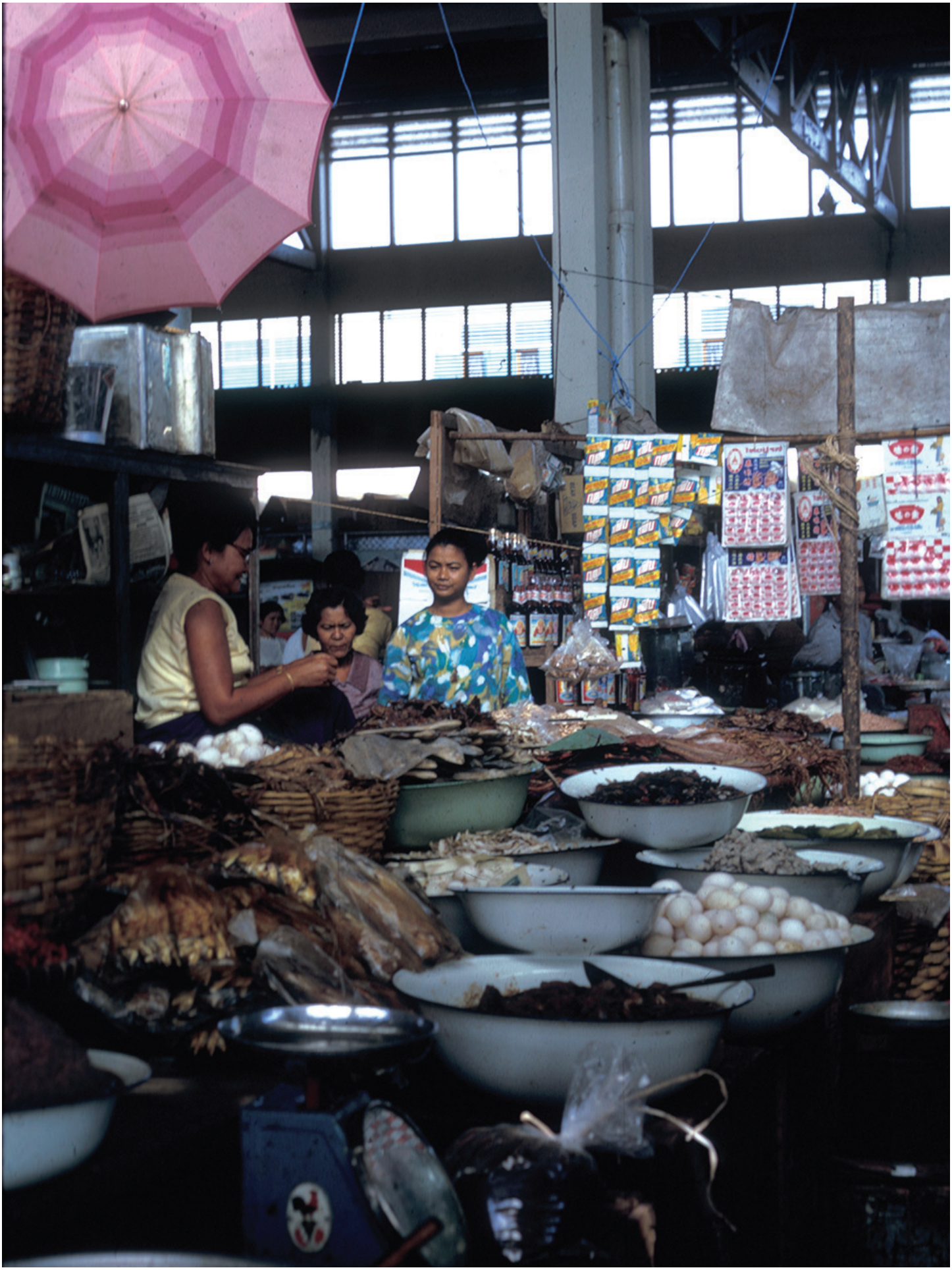
And so, the unique and special partnership between the people of Thailand and the United States began and continues to this day.

Since 1962, more than 5,000 of us in 124 groups have spent a very special part of our lives living and working in Thailand. We have served in programs as diverse as fisheries, water resources, community development, wildlife conservation, curriculum development, English instruction and national park development.

Each of us has gone to Thailand with a sense of enthusiasm that we might share something of value with Thai colleagues. Each of us has departed Thailand after completion of service with a sense that we have received much more than we could ever have given. And each of us has returned to the United States with a deep and abiding connection to the Thai people and culture.

On the following pages is a collection of memories and photographs provided by RPCVs who have served over the decades since January 1962. It demonstrates the love and appreciation so many of us feel for all we have been given.

As Patricia Hughes of Thai 34 has written, "I am humbled by the fact that I gained so much more from the Thai people than I could ever have given to them. I will always be proud that I served my country as a Peace Corps Volunteer and that I contributed a small part to the effort to bring peace to this planet. It truly was the toughest and best job that I ever loved." She speaks for us all.



Thai 1, 1962-1964

TEFL, Health, Vocational Education

Recollections

Sumner Sharpe

By way of introduction to this brief series of recollections of 1961-63, we all have BobTextor, among others, to thank for selecting our group and for providing us with a thorough grounding in Thai language. I remember (or it seems like) we had 30 hours/week of language classes for the three months of training, plus Thai history, geography and culture. Group 1 ended up with about 43 volunteers going to Thailand – in community development, TESL (or was it TEFL?), university/elementary/secondary teaching, and malaria eradication. (Note: I expect to stand corrected about the information provided in this brief piece as time plays strange tricks with one's memory; so I encourage others in Thailand 1 to add their comments.)

Dr. Robert Textor, who headed up the training program for Thailand 1, has retired from teaching (last at Stanford) and has settled in Portland, OR. Reestablishing a relationship with Bob Textor has been a most enjoyable series of events; and we often discuss the early beginnings of Peace Corps Thailand. And we have also had a visit from another Thailand 1 volunteer, Emilie Ketudat and her husband, Dr. Sippanondha Ketudat, and their children and grandchildren.

Like every volunteer, each person decides why the Peace Corps is the right choice for him or her. For those of us in Thailand 1, there wasn't any prior volunteer experience to build on and clearly we were guinea pigs in the era of "The Ugly American" which, incidentally, was set in Thailand (or at least had Thai nationals playing roles in the film).

Also, we were the pre-Vietnam War group, and I am sure the Vietnam War era PCVs had a much more difficult time than we had.

In my case, I was engaged in post-graduate studies in London when John F. Kennedy, recently elected President, announced the beginnings of the Peace Corps in the Spring of 1961. I remember sending an aerogramme to Sargent Shriver, Peace Corps, Washington DC. I think I got back some type of application form, completed it, and sent it in. After I arrived home in August 1961, I received a postcard inviting me to come to the University of Michigan for three months of training, and to go to Thailand In January as a university instructor in town planning. Needless to say, my parents were not too overjoyed – I believe they would have much rather seen me settle down – finally.

The training program was thorough – and it was clear that we were guinea pigs, as Textor and company pulled out all stops to be sure we were ready to go. We left Michigan in January with sub-frezing weather, flew from Detroit to San Francisco, where it was slightly warmer. Then on to Hawaii, Wake Island, Tokyo, Hong Kong and finally, Bangkok via Pan Am 1. My memory is that we arrived in Bangkok late at night and it felt like it was about 80 degrees and 80% plus humidity. (About two or three weeks later we realized it was "winter" in Thailand and we actually were wearing heavier clothes as our bodies adjusted to the climate.)

After welcoming speeches and events in Bangkok, we were sent to Chachoengsao where we stayed, I believe, at a teacher training center. The idea was for us to make the transition into life in Thailand with additional language training and acculturation. It was a great idea - at Chachoengsao we learned that Thais are not always quiet, respectful, and peaceful. A community celebration was underway with parades, bands, Thai boxing, Chinese opera, shadow puppets, and lots of food and drink, and loudspeakers that seemed to blare out well into the night. We also were served Thai food, and I could not get enough of it. However, after about three or four days, my tongue and the roof of my mouth were so affected by the hot peppers that it was all I could do to drink water, and I went on a plain rice, bland food, and fruit diet until things got back to normal. Thus, I learned the importance of mixing spicy and non-spicy dishes.

Teaching at Chulalongkorn was a challenge. First because I had never taught before, but also because there were very few up to date materials available – so I sent a request to the professional associations in the U.S. and books, journals and other materials began to arrive. In addition to teaching, I was involved in curriculum development, and in providing seminars for practicing planners with the City of Bangkok and the national government. During the school vacation, I participated in a manpower study being conducted by the Rand Institute, several of us helped get a YMCA camp ready for the season. I also made contact with a USOM planner from Oregon, Cy Nims, who was working on national planning legislation and a plan for Khon Kaen, designated as a major regional center; and I assisted Cy in some of his work.

I also have memories of several visits by U.S. Congressmen (no or very few women representatives then), mostly Republicans, checking up on us and looking

for ways to embarrass the Kennedy administration by hoping we would screw up. Mostly, I think they were on junkets and they seemed to spend more time shopping, sightseeing, etc. than checking us out. But those of us in Bangkok were the subjects of these visits much more than those who were up-country.

And we traveled. Three of us (Jim Shannon and Bob Cummimg) took a trip to Cambodia, via Singapore as Thailand and Cambodia were not on speaking terms and one could not travel by air or train directly from Thailand to Cambodia. On our return, I remember we crossed the Thai-Cambodian border on foot. We walked across a bridge that had been shelled, UN helicopters were overhead, and Cambodian soldiers were on buildings behind sandbags (behind us).

I shudder to think of the tragedy that occurred in Cambodia and the horrors faced by the people, some of whom we may have met during our brief visit. U.S. understanding of the internal politics of Indochina, and our subsequent policies and relationships, left much to be desired, and there is no doubt in my mind that we contributed to the turmoil in both Vietnam and Cambodia.

I remember the early contingents of U.S. military arriving in Bangkok and Thailand – the advance group had some language and cultural training. But that changed very quickly as Bangkok became the R&R capital for the GI buildup in SE Asia, and in Bangkok the prices of samlaws and taxis went sky high. The "Friendship Highway," an oxymoron if ever I saw one, built with U.S. aid, became the main route for the movement of military equipment from the Gulf to the inland northeast. The plan for Khon Kaen as a regional medical and educational center lost ground to a large U.S, Air Force base from which planes traveled into Indochina for bombing runs.

Like many others, my Peace Corps experience was unique and rewarding. I have not been back to Thailand, but not for lack of trying. A mid-1970s Fulbright teaching scholarship disappeared, as a result of a peaceful "coup d'etat" in Bangkok, and then other things got in the way. Recently, I met an American planner who had visited and lectured at Chulalongkorn University. He commented that the curriculum seemed adequate, but somewhat dated.

Perhaps it's time for an update!

The First Group of Peace Corps Volunteers And Their Assignments in Thailand

Jacob M. BILMES *26 Eagle Lane, East Hills, L.I., N.Y.*
Assignment : English Teacher, Teachers' College, Ubol.

Elsa M. BRUTON *2042 34th St. S.E., Washington 20, D.C.*
Assignment : English Teacher, Teachers' College, Chiengmai.

Robert H. BRUTON *2042 34th St. S.E. Washington 20, D.C.*
Assignment : Physics Teacher, Teachers' College, Chiengmai.

David A. BURGER *RD Box 45A, Edgar 63, Wisconsin.*
Assignment : Teacher of Carpentry, Trade School, Ubol.

Robert L. CANION *Box 623, Port Lavaca, Texas.*
Assignment : Entomologist, Malaria Eradication Program, Praputabat.

Judy R. CLEM *2108 Henry Road, Anniston, Alabama.*
Assignment : Laboratory Technician, Malaria Eradication Program, Khonkaen.

William A. CHAMBERLAIN *5040 Maple Street, Omaha 39, Nebraska*
Assignment : Teacher of Mathematics, Technical Institute, Korat.

Emilie Ann CLEVENGER *929 Main Street, Brookville, Indiana.*
Assignment : Instructor in Inorganic Chemistry, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.

Charles M. COBB *199 West End Avenue, Ridgewood, New Jersey.*
Assignment : Teacher of Carpentry and Mechanics, Technical Institute, Chiengmai.

Daniel T. CORY *83—73 rd Street, Brooklyn 9, N.Y.*
Assignment : Auto/Metal Teacher, Technical Institute, Songkla.

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Arthur C. CRISFIELD *R.D. 1, Middleford Road, Seaford, Delaware.*
Assignment : Teacher of English, Teachers' College, Udorn.

Robert P. CUMMING *Box 306, Davidson 45, North Carolina.*
Assignment : Instructor in English, Chulalongkorn University and National Museum (School of Archaeology), Bangkok.

Lee G. DAMERON *Box 349, Douglas 64, Wyoming.*
Assignment : Entomologist, Malaria Eradication Program, Praputabat.

Marilyn J. DAVIDSON *S. Main St., N. Conway, New Hampshire.*
Assignment : Laboratory Technician, Malaria Eradication Program, Songkhla.

Curry B. DAVIS *Woodhull, New York.*
Assignment : Teacher of Carpentry, Trade School, Korat.

William C. DAVIS *6 Linden Street, Ipswich, Mass.*
Assignment : Teacher of Electricity, Technical Institute, Korat.

Ann Marie FLANAGAN *157 Washington St., Groveland, Mass.*
Assignment : Laboratory Technician, Malaria Eradication Program, Khonkaen.

Lawrence T. FORMAN *"Lombardy Orchard" Easton, Md.*
Assignment : Instructor in English and Sociology, Chulalongkorn University and Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University, Bangkok.

Roy T. FURUMIZO *1032 Pular Lane, Honolulu 17, Hawaii.*
Assignment : Entomologist, Malaria Eradication Program, Chiengmai.

Alan GUSKIN *Ann Arbor, Michigan*
Assignment : Instructor in Educational Research, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.

Judith GUSKIN *Ann Arbor, Michigan.*
Assignment : Instructor in English, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.

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Keiko HIRAMOTO *1320 A Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, Calif.*
Assignment : English Instructor, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.

Robert B. JOHNSON *Old County Road, East Hampden, Maine.*
Assignment : English Teacher, Teachers' College, Ubol.

Sally J. MACLAY *48 Hawthorne Place, Summit, N.J.*
Assignment : English Teacher, Teachers' College, Korat.

John R. MCLEAN *16880 Snowden, Detroit, Michigan.*
Assignment : English Teacher, Teachers' College, Mahasarakam.

David MICHAELS *20 Monroe Street, New York, N.Y.*
Assignment : English Teacher, Teachers' College, Yala.

Marianne S. MICHAELS *20 Monroe Street, New York, N.Y.*
Assignment : English Teacher, Teachers' College, Yala.

David R. MILLER *627 South Flood, Norman, Oklahoma.*
Assignment : English Teacher, Teachers' College (Boys'), Songkhla.

Wanda MONTGOMERY *R 1, Bluffton, Ohio.*
Assignment : Home Economics Teacher, Technical Institute, Songkhla.

Roger O. PARENT *Box 5, Lille, Maine*
Assignment : Teacher of Carpentry, Trade School, Udorn.

Robert A. PITTS *P.O. Box 409, Red Bank, New Jersey.*
Assignment : Instructor in Basic Physics,
Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.

Susan POWELL *4850 First Avenue North, St, Petersburg, Florida.*
Assignment : English Teacher, Teachers' College (Girls'), Songkhla.

James A. PRESCOTT *4615 E. College Ave., Las Vegas, Nevada.*
Assignment : Tescher of Industrial Arts, Technical Institute, Korat.

Harvey PRICE *1937 O'Farrell, San Francisco 15, Calif.*
Assignment : Instructor in Law and Accounting,
Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.

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Ralph X. JACK RAYNOLDS *9023 Smallwood Ave., Downey, Calif.*

Assignment : Teacher of Business Administration and Carpentry Technical, Institute, Songkhla.

Arthur B. SCHWEICH *4 St. Alfred Rd. St. Louis 32, Mo.*

Assignment : Laboratory Technician, Malaria Eradication Program, Chiengmai.

James V. SHANNON *9553 S. Winchester, Chicago 43, Illinois.*

Assignment : Instructor in Educational Psychology and Educational Counseling, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.

Sumner M. SHARPE *19 Hall Avenue, Nashua, New Hampshire.*

Assignment : Instructor in Town Planning, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.

Gerald SHOGREN *226 N. Main St., Lindsborg, Kansas.*

Assignment : Teacher of Industrial Arts, Technical Institute, Chiengmai.

Donald C. SHORT *402 W. Annsbury St., Philadelphia, Pa.*

Assignment : Teacher of Mechanics, Trade School, Korat.

Clarence E. URNESS *18423 Riverside Dr., Sonoma, Cal.*

Assignment : English Teacher, Teachers' College, Pitsanuloke.

Shanna T. URNESS *18423 Riverside Dr., Sonoma, Cal.*

Assignment : English Teacher and Librarian, Teachers' College, Pitsanuloke.

Rose M. WELLIVER *Whit-Well Farm, R.D./2, Bloomsburg, Pa.*

Assignment : English Teacher, Teachers' College (Boys') Songkhla.

Lucia C. WILCOX *121 Stanford Dr., S.E. Albuquerque, New Mexico.*

Assignment : Laboratory Technician, Malaria Eradication Program, Songkhla.

John E. WILKES *102 Guilbert Street, Johnstown, N.Y.*

Assignment : English Teacher, Teachers' College, Udorn.

Printed at Government House Printing Office, Sam Sen Road, Bangkok, Thailand.
Nai Chaleo Chuntarasup, Printer and Publisher, 1962.

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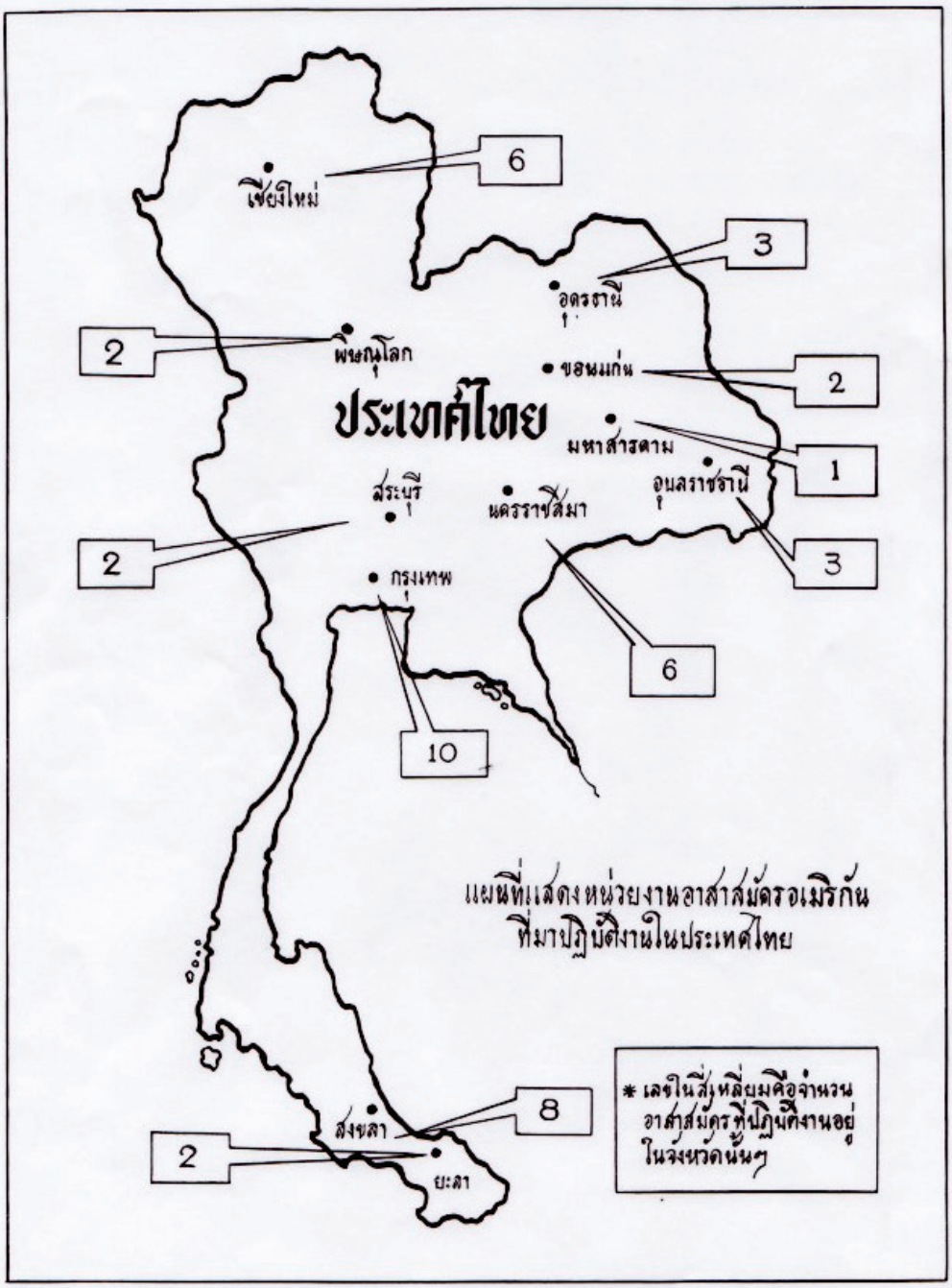

Map Showing Peace Corps Volunteers distribution in Thailand.

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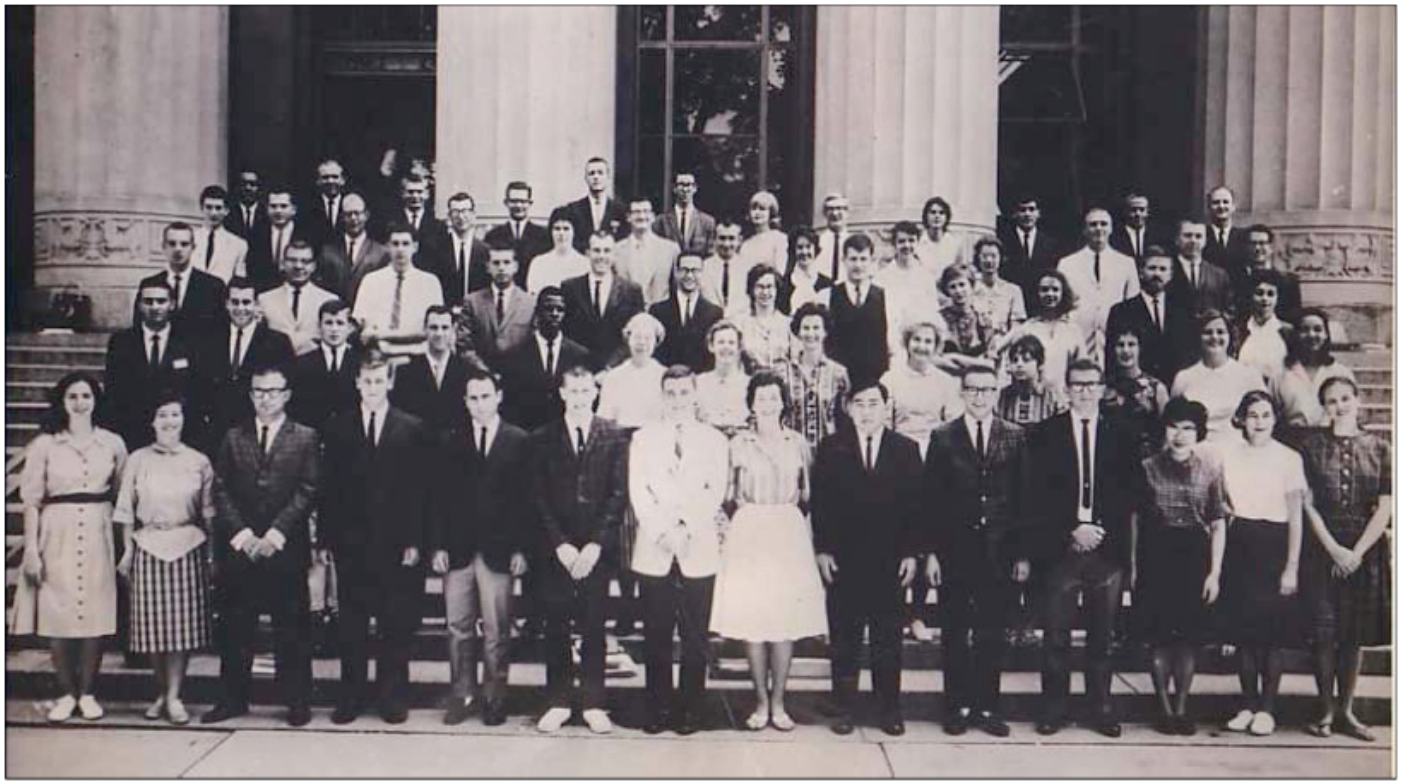
Thai 11, 1962-1964

Secondary TEFL, Teacher Training College



Dennis Tolsma

Dennis, 1962

Two anecdotes: We arrived in 1962, and I did not return to Thailand for 25 years. I returned for a project with Mahidol School of Public Health, but I tried to revisit Thammasart University (where I was one of Dr. Chalao's "radicals" in creating a then-nouveau TESL-based English curriculum); alas, she died a tragic early death, and I found not a trace that I had ever passed that way. (Try that for an ego boost some time.) There was little trace of Bangkok as I knew it, either--klongs filled in, Don Muang (once WAY out in the rice paddies) now well inside the city limits, dirty air like Beijing, traffic like Mexico City, 4-star hotels offering body massage, everything but Wat Pra Keo torn down, and I never did relocate my soi. What was not changed much? The same cheerful and likeable people. The same admirable young families risking life on motorbikes, husbands in front, wives behind, kids snuggled in between, just trying to make it. The same entrepreneurism spilling out of store fronts into every teeming side street. Same Singha beer. And, of course, the same King!

Anecdote 2: I never met King Bumiphol as a PCV, but I went to Thailand the second time with Surgeon General Koop, and that got me invited to an audience. I was trying to establish a violence-prevention program at the time, and so I asked The King how Buddhism looked on suicide. He never hesitated a second, simply saying "Your life is not your own; how then could you take it?" Sure sounded like a zen master's koan to me.

I have always understood that my time in Thailand did more for me than I could ever do for her. After my return, I got an MPH at Columbia, and I spent 30 years at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), part of the time as Director of one of the Centers (Health Promotion and Education) and later as Associate Director. I found satisfying opportunities to start some international health promotion initiatives, and was elected President of the International Union for Health Promotion and Education (1988-91). (Bad luck, headquarters are in Paris).

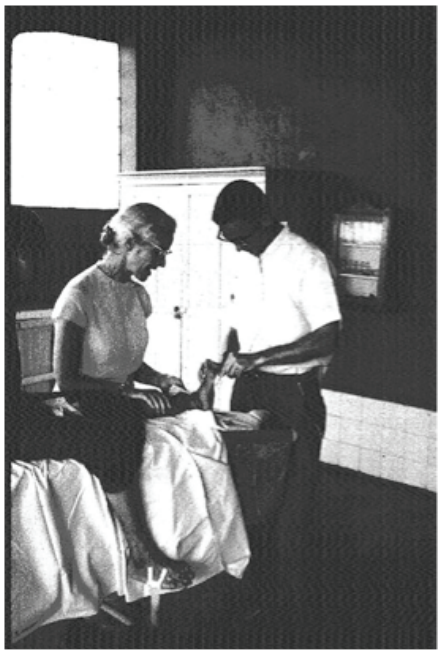
Dennis, 2002

It Smells Bad, Very Bad

Warner M. Montgomery, Ph.D.

I served in the Peace Corps in Thailand in the early sixties. My main job was teaching English at a teacher training college near the now–famous resort of Pattaya. However, during summer vacation I worked at the McKean Leprosy Hospital in Chiangmai near the now–famous, drug–infested Golden Triangle.

The Presbyterian hospital was nestled in idyllic foothills, a 30-minute bus ride outside the historic northern Thai city. The weather was a cool relief from the tropical heat of southern Thailand. The gardens that surrounded the main house where I lived, contained strawberries, pineapples, papayas and mangoes. Up a little mountain path about a half mile away was a silk worm farm and crematorium. In the other direction was the clinic, the cottages and the dormitories.



Warner Montgomery performs surgery on a leprosy patient's toes under the supervision of Dr. Schnorf at McKean Leprosy Hospital.

We worked under the expert guidance of 72-year-old Dr. Lizbet Schnorf, a Swiss medical missionary. I had received a three-day orientation to leprosy and its treatment and was put right to work. There were about 200 inpatients living on the grounds. Since leprosy is a very slowly developing disease, it can be eliminated in one generation if children are separated from their infected parents until they reach school age. Nursing and cuddling was done by non–infected paraprofessionals.

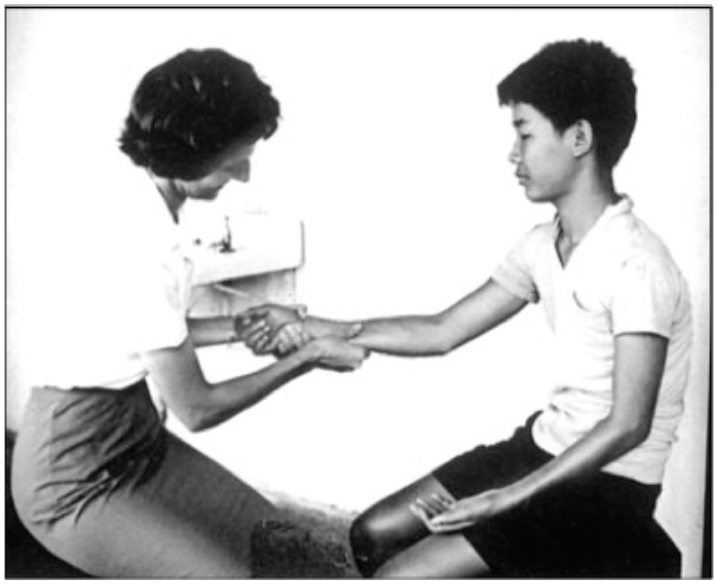
My job was to assist Dr. Schnorf in the clinic. I provided first aid treatment and conducted physical therapy. In off hours I played games with the children. Every morning we tested walk–ins for leprosy.
We touched their ringworm–like sores with a cotton swab. If they felt it, they didn't have leprosy. If they didn't feel it, we scraped off a bit of it and sent it to the lab technician. This former patient had been trained by Dr. Schnorf to look at the sample under a microscope and to determine if it was Hansen's bacillus – cause of the dreaded leprosy.

Ellen Asher massages a patient's arm before a plaster cast is applied.

Those with no other symptoms, that is, no open wounds, were given a lesson on caring for themselves. We taught them how to bathe using a mirror, how to wear shoes and gloves when working in the fields, and how to take sulphur pills everyday. They were sent away after we took down their family and village information.

We cleaned up those with open wounds. This began with the self–instructive bath with a mirror.

The only effect of leprosy is the loss of feeling at the infected nerve endings. Everything else associated with the disease is a secondary infection. The problem is that the infected villagers must continue to work, and in doing so, they cut or bruise themselves. Since they can't feel it, they don't treat it. And because they work in fields fertilized with human waste, it quickly becomes infected. We taught them how to bathe using a mirror to check for open wounds. First-aid consisted of washing the wound with soap and water, applying hydrogen peroxide and covering it with a bandage. Another secondary result of leprosy is paralysis. If a person cannot feel his hands or feet, he tends not to move them. After a period of time without movement, paralysis will set in. We used a simple but very effective method of physical therapy. The paralyzed hand or foot



Myrtis Herndon massages a patient's arm during physical therapy.

was dipped into hot paraffin, then wrapped in gauze. After 30 minutes the wrapping was removed and the body massaged. At the point of maximum extension the hand or foot was put in a plaster cast and left until the next morning when the cycle began again. It was amazing to me how much movement could be restored after just a few weeks.

My first duty station was in first aid. I sat at a table with my supplies – soapy water, bandages, cotton swabs and hydrogen peroxide. My table-side manner developed quickly.

With my limited Thai language I asked their names, villages and ages. I recited the only Thai joke I knew and began work on their wounds. It was easy, enjoyable and rewarding. I was serving mankind and loving it. That is, until an older man hobbled up to my table. His leg was heavily wrapped from the knee down. After my joke, he said, "It smells bad, very bad." I looked down and the odor took my breath away. I almost passed out. I turned away from him, closed my eyes, took a deep breath, summoned all of my Peace Corps idealism, turned back around, and with a forced smile said, "No problem." He repeated, "It smells bad, very bad." I agreed and went to work on his leg.

I cut the rubber bands that held the plastic bag over his foot and lower leg. As I peeled off the plastic, the odor leapt out at me. I saw it coming and held my breath. My eyes teared as I removed yet another layer, this time a paper bag. I turned around, quickly grabbed another breath and thought about calling Dr. Schnorf. Then I remembered that she had gone into town. I had to do it by myself.

Putting cultural affronts aside, I tied a bandage around my face and once again turned to face my patient. We both agreed, "It smells bad, very bad."

The third layer down was banana leaves tied with bamboo string. The old man, who had no other wounds or symptoms of leprosy, began to tell me his story. He was a farmer in a village two days walk from Chiangmai. He was married and had five children. He had cut his foot while working in the rice paddies about two months before. He wrapped it and continued to work. Several days later it got very painful, so he went to the village doctor, a shaman. The doctor gave him some powder to put on it and some tea to drink. That helped for a few days. Then, he noticed that the wound was spreading to his toes.

Just as I removed the last piece of banana leaf, he told me what it was that I was seeing imbedded in the hard, black mud caked around his leg and foot. The doctor had performed a ceremony at his home to cure his ailment. During candlelight incantations, the doctor killed two mice and three birds, cut them into pieces and plastered them to his leg. All that night, the witch doctor chanted, while the man's leg simmered in hot coals.

Ellen Asher and Myrtis Herndon with Thai assistant at McKean Leprosy Hospital

I tried to get the remains of the mice and birds out of his cast with tweezers and picks. I was not very successful. I wet the mud hoping it would dissolve. It didn't. My patient told me that he had gone back into the fields with his cast, attempting to get his rice planted. He had put the bags on his leg to keep it from getting wet. But he kept getting weaker and soon couldn't work. It was then that he got in his ox cart and made his way to our hospital. He knew about the hospital

from some of his friends who were lepers.

I asked him if I could try to break the cast to get it off. He said he couldn't feel anything anyway, so why not? By this time we had quite an audience – men, women, children – who were curious about the man's leg. They, however, were able to stand out of range of the rank odor.

I hit the cast and it cracked. Three or four blows and it was cracked all around. I used a pick to pry off a piece of the cast, and when I did, my audience gasped. I gagged. His naked leg looked like rancid hamburger meat. It had no shape, no features, no skin. A faint movement soon appeared beneath the yellow stink. I couldn't believe it.

Maggots!

Maggots were churning in what had been this man's flesh.

Fat white bodies with little black heads. No legs. About a half inch long.

Without a hint of discomfort on his face, my patient once again said, "It smells bad, very bad." I asked him if he could feel the worms. He said no, he had no feeling below his knee. His knee looked normal. Two inches below his knee the skin disappeared, revealing a shapeless hulk that continued even where his toes should have been. The lifeless flesh was reddish brown with streaks of yellow. The maggots were the only life I could detect.

Doctor Schnorf was away for the week. The only hospital was in town, a long bus ride away. I knew the leg would have to be amputated, but I certainly couldn't do it. Not knowing what else to do, I doused his leg in the only medication we had – hydrogen peroxide. It foamed up and the peroxide cut through the odor of death that had permeated the room for almost an hour.

A few of the maggots fell off onto the concrete floor. The others bore deeper into the leg to escape the toxin. I went after them with tweezers and a pick. It reminded me of chasing doodle bugs in the sand as a child. I put them in a bottle supplied by one of the assistants in the audience. Two dozen worms later, I poured more peroxide on the man's leg. While it foamed, I got up and took a break. My back was aching, my nostrils were burning, and even my eyes were sweating. My stomach was knotted up, but I had conquered the nausea I felt when I first pulled the plastic off his leg.

When I returned, the man was crying and his hands were in front of his face in the prayer–like gesture that Thais use to give thanks and respect. It was not given lightly, he truly meant it. I accepted and returned the respect. We agreed that he would not lose his leg, and that it would heal.

His leg was steaming now. A few more maggots had hit the concrete. I searched through the flesh that was now bright pink and found ten more. I bathed his leg in peroxide and wiped it gently with a strip of cotton sheet that we used for bandages. Then, I wrapped it loosely.

With the help of the assistants, the patient was taken to a nearby cottage where he was given rice, fruit and tea. The next morning, I removed the bandage, swabbed his stump with more peroxide, picked out a few more worms and applied a new bandage. After five days of the same treatment, skin began to appear. In ten days it covered his entire leg, and toes emerged, complete with joints and nails.

Three weeks after he arrived, he was able to move his foot and toes. And he had regained feeling in most of his leg. Tests showed that he did not have leprosy. He was simply the victim of a farm accident, which had been inappropriately treated by folk medicine.

A month after I first saw his leg cast in mud and wrapped in plastic, paper and banana leaves, he was released. I walked alongside his oxcart to the edge of the Presbyterian hospital grounds. He got out of the cart and placed a bit of food in a little Thai spirit house.

He then hobbled across the dusty road and lit some incense in front of a large image of a smiling Buddha. Back in his cart he offered his respect to me and said, "It really did smell bad, didn't it?" I agreed.

He turned and drove away

PEACE CORPS

Washington 25, D. C.

April 26, 1962

Mr. Warner M. Montgomery
1213 Glenwood Road
Columbia, South Carolina

Dear Mr. Montgomery:

I am happy to inform you that you have been chosen to participate in the training program for the Peace Corps Project described in the enclosed brochure.

Please reply to this invitation as soon as possible, and in any case within two weeks, so that if you are not available we may extend a similar invitation to another well-qualified Peace Corps applicant. An Invitation Acceptance Form and a prepaid envelope are enclosed, as are other forms which should be completed and returned if you accept the invitation.

I am sure you will do well in training; however, I must remind you that no one is finally selected for Peace Corps service overseas until the successful completion of training.

Sincerely,

Sargent Shriver

Robert Sargent Shriver, Jr.
Director

Questionnaire No. 20167
Enclosures

PEACE CORPS

Washington 25, D. C.

September 21, 1962

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Montgomery,

We are happy to inform you that the Volunteers have arrived safely in Thailand and will be spending approximately one week in additional training. Until they are permanently assigned or write and give you a more specific address we suggest you send mail to them as follows:

c/o Mr. Glenn Ferguson
Peace Corps Representative
American Embassy
Bangkok, Thailand

You can send one-half ounce (4 sheets of onionskin paper in an envelope) airmail for 25¢ or purchase an Aerogramme for 11¢ at any U. S. Post Office. Aerogrammes will also be available to the Volunteers. Airmail to and from Thailand takes approximately three days. Volunteers will be required to use local postage.

The Division of Volunteer Field Support has been established to assist Volunteers while they are overseas. If you have any questions, or if there is any way in which we can be of assistance to you, please let us know.

Sincerely,

Ruth L Olson

Ruth L. Olson
Division of Volunteer
Field Support

Ron Vander Klok teaches basketball skills at the College of Physical Education in Bangkok.

Tex Boggs trains a student at the National Stadium in Bangkok.

PEACE CORPS TRAINING ABSTRACT PROGRAM: Thailand II

TRAINING INSTITUTION: University of Michigan
June 19, 1962 - September 7, 1962

LANGUAGE: Primary objective is to achieve genuine mastery of the sound and grammatical patterns of Thai utilizing a limited vocabulary of words of high frequency. 297 hrs.

THAI CULTURE: To lead the trainees to a sympathetic understanding of and favorable attitude toward Thailand, its people and their culture. 80 hrs.

AMERICAN CULTURE: To help the trainees achieve a deeper understanding of the achievements, problems, and dynamics of selected aspects of American culture. (Minority groups, politics, education, economics, family life, public arts and youth). 72 hrs.

WORLD AFFAIRS AND COMMUNISM: Aim to help the trainees acquire an introductory practicaL understanding of the topics and issues noted: U.S. Foreign Policy, Social Change and Economic Development, Communism. 28 hrs.

PERSONAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE: Provide trainees with an adequate knowledge of personal preventive medicine, which, aided by his own resourcefulness and abetted by medicaL care available to him overseas will enable him to maintain the good physical and mentaL health essential to the success of his service. 33 hrs.

PHYSICAL FITNESS: Objective to increase physical fitness of trainees and teach them knowledge and sports skills requisite to maintaining a condition of physical well-being under tropical conditions. 64 hrs.

PEACE CORPS ORIENTATION: To acquaint trainees with Peace Corps philosophy, policies, and procedures. 24 hrs.

TECHNICAL TRAINING: To prepare trainees for effective service as 1) general laboratory technicians in provincial hospitals; 2) physical education/sports teachers at teacher training institutions; 3) vocational agriculture instructors at provincial agricultural schools: or 4) English teachers at secondary schools, teachers' colleges or universities. 150 hrs.

Notice from Peace Corps Washington
September 14, 1962

The following information is pertinent to all THAILAND II PCVs:

1. Meeting you in Seattle, Washington on September 20, 1962 will be Mr. Robert McClusky, your escort officer, and Miss Marie Ahl of the Division of Volunteer Administration. Miss Ahl will distribute tickets, passports, health cards, PC identification cards and extra baggage tags in Room 201, the Northwest Airlines Imperial Lounge at the Seattle Airport, commencing at 6:00 p.m.

2. On the 20th, report to the Northwest Airlines ticket counter at the Seattle Airport and identify yourself as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Northwest Airlines has suggested that you leave your baggage at the ticket counter. The final baggage "check in" process, however, will take place after you have received your tickets and passports. Room 201, The Northwest Imperial Lounge, will be available during the day for Peace Corps use. Plan to assemble there between 5:00 and 6:00 p.m.

3. We have been informed by Northwest Alrlines that all accompanied baggage will be checked through to Bangkok. This means that you will not have access to your accompanied baggage during the overnight stay in Tokyo. We suggest, therefore, that you make arrangements to carry with you in the plane those items needed for your Tokyo stay.

PEACE CORPS/THAILAND
VQLUNTEER GROUP II

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Name	Assignment	Home
T. Boggs	Bangkok	Pulaski, VA
H, Brawley	Ratburi	Mooresville, NC
Ruby Burr	Songkhla	Goshen, NY
E. Clark	Chachoengsao	Milwaukee, WI
J. L. Compton	Lopburi	Columbus, Oh
Susan Gray	Bangkok	Washington, D.C.
Myrtis Herndon	Nakornn Pathom	Key West, FL
Marjorie Larney	Bangkok	Woodhaven, NY
W. Montgomery	Korat	Columbia, SC
W. Norton	Yala	Baytown, TX
R. Resseguie	Udorn	Madison, NJ
L.J. Setti	Pitsanuloke	Watertown, MA
J. Trevino	Ubol	Mancos, CO
R. VanderKlok	Chiengnei	Kalamazoo, MI

VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE

R.T. Kleerman	Chiengmai	Elgin, OK
C. Robertson	Chiengmai	Apple Valley, CA
F. Perry	Nan	Woodland, NC
B. Deaton	Nan	London, KY
H. Lesnick	Ayodhya	Providence, RI
E. Hardy	Ayodhya	Highiand Park, NJ
B. Williams	Siracha	Boston, GA
I. Smith	Siracha	Jebberville, MI
L. Smith	Nakorn Pathom	Duncan, OK
W. Randol	Nakorn Pathom	Cantua Creek, CA
C. Rheingans	Nakornsrithamarat	Plainview, MN
D. Mortensen	Nakornsrithamarat	Oxnard, CA
G. Paul	Surin	Bourbon, MO

ENGLISH TEACHERS

Secondary Schools

Ida Gammon	Prae	Marion, AR
Nonie Trexler	Cholburi	Newport News, VA
Dian Paul	Surin	Bronxville, NY
W. Ackerman	Udorn	Cleveland, OH
Barbara. Bentz	Ba.n Mee	Houston, MS

Teachers' Colleges

Deborah French	Chachoengsao	Farmington, CT
Lew Smith	Mahasarakam	Los Angeles
F. Gillespie	Ubol	East Cleveland, OH
Ellen Asher	Udorn	NYC
Caroline Siedling	Utaradit	Brookville, IN

Kasetsort University

S. Andors	Bangkok	Long Island, NY
C. Sanford	Bangkok	Gibsonia, PA

Thammasart University

Ellen Teper	Bangkok	Albany, NY
D. Tolsma	Bangkok	Artesia, CA

LABORATORY TECHNICIANS

R. Davidson	Udorn	Billings, MT
Bonnie Harris	Rajburi	Arcadia, CA
Marguerite Hewett	Ubol	St. Petersburg, FL
E. Klaviter	Surin	LaSalle, MN
N. Kobayashi	Pattani	Cardena, CA
Mary Lane	Pitsanuloke	Butte, MT
Louise Labarre	Korat	Candia, NH
Helene Lew	Yala	Brookline, MA
Sally Lewis	Cholburi	Montgomery, AL
Jeanne McFiggans	Prabutabat	River Edge, NJ
Linda Oatman	Phuket	Fort Wayne, IN
A. Peters	Lampang	Dallas, TX
Mary Tudor	Narathiwat	Milton, MA

Thai III, 1963-1965

Secondary TEFL, Teacher Training College

Darryl Johnson

Following my return from Thailand in 1965, I joined the US Foreign Service and served for 40 years before retiring in early 2005. I spent most of my career working on East Asian affairs, especially China, and on East European affairs. My last Foreign Service assignment was as US Ambassador to Thailand – an exciting and deeply satisfying conclusion to my professional life.

Darryl (standing) with a gathering of villagers in Lamphun.

Returning to live in Thailand in 2001 brought the opportunity to re-connect with many former students and teaching colleagues from Buriram and Lamphun.

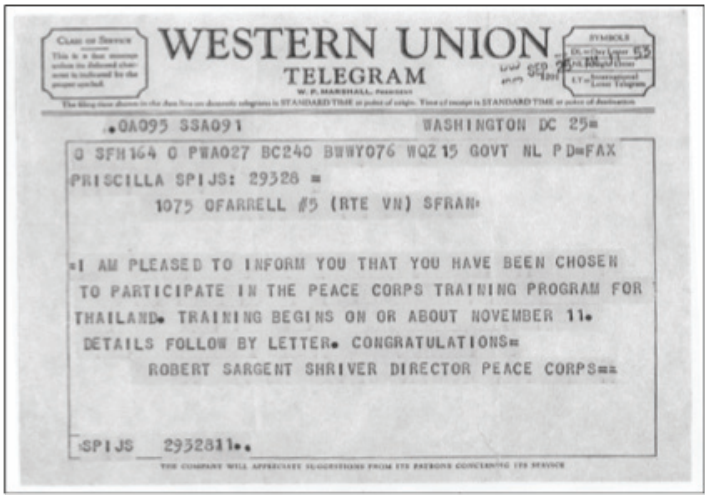
Many of them had amusing anecdotes from their first encounter with the "farang" teacher. Both schools have grown dramatically, and the students are far more aware of the outside world. My former school in Lamphun, for example, hosts an American Field Service (AFS) student from abroad every year now, and sends one of their own abroad.

Darryl (with flowers) preparing to leave Lamphun.

In March 2002, we marked the 40th anniversary of the arrival of Group I and swore in Group 113. In February 2003, we hosted a reunion of Group III (my group), and nearly half of the original group of 42 came back.

The Peace Corps experience was formative in many ways – living and working abroad in an unfamiliar environment, having to cope daily with a genuinely foreign language, foreign food and frequent minor illnesses required us to draw on our personal resources beyond any previous life challenge. But having this experience in Thailand brought special rewards because of the warmth of our hosts and the sense of genuine welcome. Thailand will always be our second home.

DEDICATION: The most memorable "character" in our group was George Papagianis. At our end-of-tour seminar, we were each asked to say how our PC experience had changed our lives. Most of us said similar things about how our cultural sensitivity had changed. George said, "When I joined the Peace Corps, I wanted to be President of the United States; now I just want to go back to Chicago and open a little Greek restaurant." In fact, George went to get a degree in SEAsian studies at Stanford and taught for many years at Florida State University. Unfortunately, he died just at the time we were celebrating our 40th anniversary.



WESTERN UNION
TELEGRAM

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PRISCILLA SPIJS: 29328 =
1075 OFARRELL #5 (RTE VN) SFRAN=

=I AM PLEASED TO INFORM YOU THAT YOU HAVE BEEN CHOSEN
TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PEACE CORPS TRAINING PROGRAM FOR
THAILAND. TRAINING BEGINS ON OR ABOUT NOVEMBER 11.
DETAILS FOLLOW BY LETTER. CONGRATULATIONS=
ROBERT SARGENT SHRIVER DIRECTOR PEACE CORPS==

SPIJS 2932811..

Pris Spires

Serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand from 1963 through 1964 expanded my horizons in a great many ways. The experience changed me from a selfish, privileged, materialistic, and condescending "do-gooder" into a person who appreciates the value of diversity in people, cultures, religions, and lifeways. For the past twenty-five years, I have been the volunteer curator of the University of Idaho's Asian American Comparative Collection, a unique resource containing artifacts, images, and documentary materials essential for understanding Asian American archaeological sites, economic contributions, and cultural history.

New Peace Corpsmen Undergo Courses Today

Thirty-seven young Americans, all qualified English teachers and members of the U.S. Peace Corps, who arrived Saturday, will attend orientation ceremonies here this morning.

The event will begin at 9 a.m. at Sala Wandek in the proximity of the old Ministry of Culture, a Peace Corps source said last night.

Minister of Education M.L. Pin Malakul and Counsellor of the U.S. Embassy Alfred Puhan will address the corpsmen, who represent the third group to arrive in Thailand to date.

After three days of orientation here and a free day Thursday, the source said, the 37 will leave on Friday for their stations which are spread over 25 different provinces.

Four will go to work in teachers' colleges, 31 to secondary schools and two to universities in the Bangkok area, the source said.

Eleven of them, or nearly one-third, will be working in the under-developed Northeast, some going into amphurs whereas previously corpsmen were stationed only in provincial capitals.

Every province in the Northeast will now have at least one corpsman working in it, the source said.

Thai International Photo

Peace Corps. . . *a third group of U.S.. Peace Corps volunteers, 37 in number, arrived at Don Muang Saturday from Manila by SAS Coronado jet. The young men and women, seen in the above photo leaving the aircraft, will disperse to 25 provinces throughout the kingdom and remain for at least 21 months.*

The new arrivals, like the 99 here before them, have agreed to stay with the Peace Corps 21 months following their three-month stateside training course, the source said.

This does not mean that they will necessarily remain only that long, the source added. For example, the first corpsmen who arrived in January 1962 are due to finish this October.

However, the source predicted, most will probably stay until the completion of the school year in March 1964, and some may choose to remain beyond that.

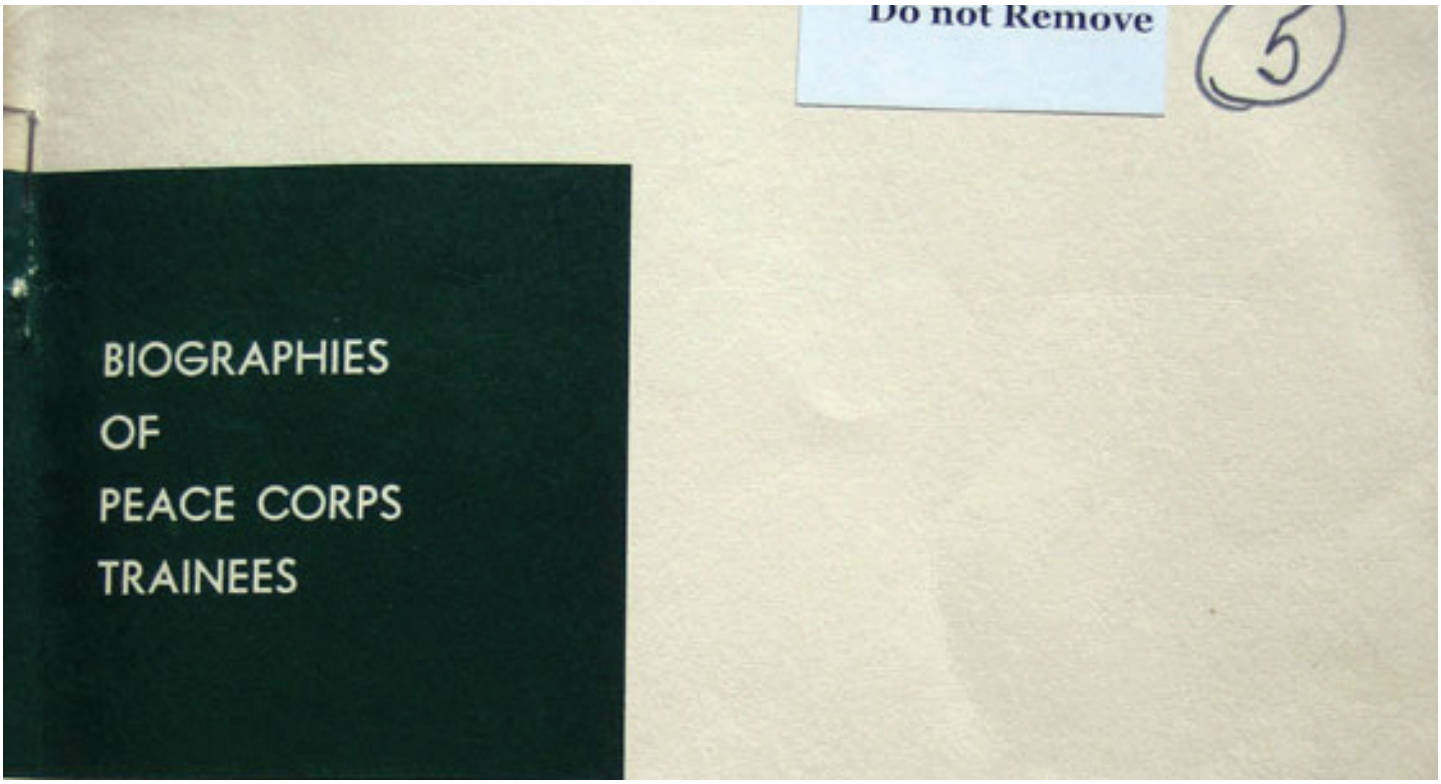
The first two groups have been getting along well in their various assignments, the source said. Only five have had cause to leave Thailand --- three because of parental deaths, and two because of serious sickness or injury in their family --- and they all returned to complete their tours of duty.

The Thai Government has proven very cooperative, the source added. It was the Government who arranged for temporary housing for the corpsmen, the source said, until they are ready to leave Friday for their new posts.

Two or three more corpsmen may arrive in a couple of weeks as a part of this present group, the source said, but as of today the total members of the U.S. Peace Corps working in Thailand is 136. [*Bangkok World, Feb. 18, 1963*]

Thai V, 1963-1965

Medical Technology, Secondary TEFL, Teacher Training College, Higher Education



Selections from "The Thailand Poems"
Mary Flad

I.
At dusk the tree sang
no birds showing in the shadows
and the height of the palm tree moved a bit
for no reason.

A few pieces of the road moved too (dogs),
thought briefly about fighting,
then decided it better
to find food.

The sun had set, but still gilded the sky.
No one thought of the next day,
simply glad
that the heat of the last had passed.
July 1963

II.
The rains kept coming –
not all the time, but enough
that the lake crept up under the school.
(It happened every year.)
there was water everywhere,
neatly hidden by tall green grasses;
except for the higher gravel pathways
that stood safe.
Even they were muddy right after a rain.
Now, when the grass moved,
it might be a dog
(then there was splashing)
or, equally likely, a fish.
In drier days, it was always a dog.
The brown wood porch
had a new color
of three dozen umbrellas –
some still in tight bud,
others in full bloom.
And a long, long line
of seventy-two black look-alike shoes,
somewhat the worse for wear and mud,
waited for lunchtime.
August 1963

III.
She was built thickly,
though not without grace.
Four children sat about her;
she lay on the floor
with an ease
born of knowing well
hard surfaces.

The man reached down,
and raised aloft the youngest
(unclothed);
then, thrown off balance by the weight,
once more set him down.

As she turned,
the blue sarong
pulled tight across her.
She carefully re-tucked its upper edge
and caught to her the youngest child.
September 1963

IV.
My window hangs lower
than the coconuts
of a nearby tree.
Sunset comes through
and a child plays below.
Before the light faded
she wove a fishnet.
Her face turns up
and smiles
and another light comes.
October 1963

V.
A young man on a bicycle.
a determined look on his face,
on his head a white pith helmet.

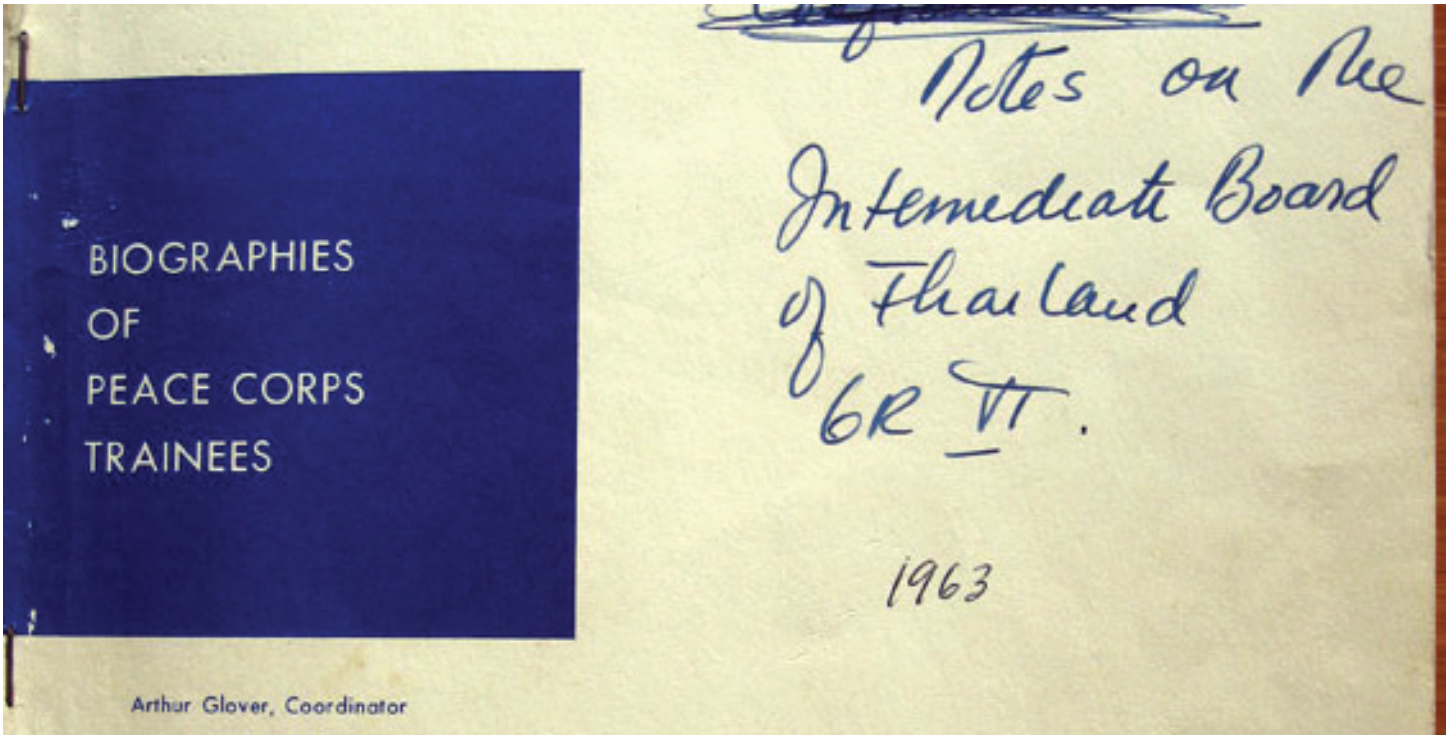
With deep sense of purpose,
his right hand is firm on the handlebars.
In his left. he clutches
a scrawny black chicken
whose sense of despair
is so great
and so evident
that it no longer squawks.
June 1964

VI.
Seven children pass.
Two wear shoes;
three carry them in gleeful guilt;
two never had them.
August 1964

VII.
A red kite,
skittering the edge of a hot tar road.
A small wind but not enough.
If a butterfly can go aloft,
why not a kite?
The boy sighs,
tries again.
August 1964

Thai VI, 1963-1965

Secondary TEFL, Teacher Training College



A DAY AT THE RACES

Kermit Krueger

1. WELCOME TO MAHASARAKHAM

Despite classes to teach, papers to grade, lesson plans to write, and wondrous students, life at the Teachers Training College of Mahasarakham, Thailand, long ago was not all work. A few steps from my classroom was the college's coffee shop where coffee was served in 6

ounce glasses (which one might hope were Pyrex, but which were not). Thai coffee is one-half Turkish coffee, thick enough to make ordinary espresso seem like "decaf" and what Starbucks and its ilk offer to be little more than old dishwater. In this was an equal measure of sweet, 'Eagle" brand, condensed milk. The economics of student impoverishment years earlier led me to swear off anything but coffee in my coffee. I asked the student "baristas" (as dispensers of coffee now would be called) in place of the milk to add plain, old, hot water to the coffee, making the resulting brew nigh unto perfect. I, a "farang" (Thai for "foreigner"), was considered baffling, and thus, to be politely misunderstood. As a teacher, however, I was deemed wise beyond measure. The latter was reason enough for the baristas to cheerfully accommodate my coffee mania.

Of course, in downtown Mahasarakham there were almost around the clock diversions. By day, the market teemed with shoppers, and with those who

came to meet friends, to get a bite to eat at the market cafes, or just to enjoy humanity. Beyond the market were streets of small shops eager to sell or feed you anything you desired. At night...– the movies featured the latest Thai films (Indian and American films on many weekends). The latter were dubbed into Thai, of course. But to hear John Wayne say, "Howdy partner," in a mousy voice? Oh my! ... – cock fights, and Thai boxing (both with lots of wagering, of course) ... – and... on weekends only, ... HORSE RACES!

The track was almost adjacent to the Teachers Training College, so we teachers often set work aside to enjoy races at the MAHASARAKHAM DOWNS! Consider the photo. I know, any culture-centric, western snobs will sniff, "Well, it's certainly not Churchill Downs!" True, and it was not Arlington Park, Pimlico, Santa Anita, or ... either. Still, Mahasarakham Downs had parimutuel windows with long lines of eager bettors, each of whom was absolutely certain which horse was that "sure bet." In short, say or think what you will, the race track was the place to be, and to be seen, on weekend afternoons!

There were two grandstands: the main one (in the distance in photo above) and a smaller, more elite one (on the right in photo above). The Thai flag over the judges' stand in the main grandstand indicates today is a racing day. While the grandstands were reserved for persons of importance: provincial officials, high school and college teachers, their friends or guests, anyone willing to pay a Baht or two (approximately 5¢ or 10¢ back then) was admitted. We college teachers preferred the northern grandstand, along with provincial officials. I should tell you that grandstands were often extremely hot. Thin metal roofs may block the sun, but they do little to block the heat. Also, I admit that apart from the judges, most of us in the grandstands were more interested in witty conversation, the latest political intrigue, or other social scandals than we were about the races themselves.

Between the grandstands was a semi-covered section for food concessions and the parimutuel windows. Of course, serious bettors and true racing fans (of any class) risked sun-stroke as they thronged to the haphazard railing (mid-foreground in photo) in order to follow the action. Gaps in the track rails enabled thoughtful bettors to enter the track the better to advise jockeys riding the horses on which they'd bet. Try to do that at any track here in the snooty US of A!
One final feature existed which no other race track in all of creation has ever had, but for more about this you will just have to wait. Remember, patience is a virtue. Details will appear as convenient.

2. THE JOCKEYS IN THEIR SILKS

Although not a fan of the ponies, I recall that racing protocol requires most races to begin with a trumpet fanfare. This alerts bettors that "time is short!" Within minutes the horses, with their finely and colorfully clad jockeys, will be led into their "stalls." Once all are in place, the parimutuel windows

close, a hush overtakes the crowd, the starter's gun fires, and ...

Because the Mahasarakham Downs was not as glorious as first- world tracks seek to be and lacked racing frills, no trumpets announced the coming race. Instead, trainers or stable boys led the horses and their

jockeys onto the track and to each steed's place.

There was no starting gate. A pole and an invisible line across the track worked well enough. Once all were more or less in place, the trainers (or stable boys) turned the horses and jockeys in small circles until all were mostly aligned, that is facing exactly the same way. The trainers / stable-boys then left. Next, a judge in the main grandstand rang a rather large bell. The parimutuel windows shut, though one might wonder how – amid the din of that place where food concessionaires endlessly hawked their goods – the clerks could have heard it clang; but they could, and they did! And, as they did, on the track, ...

A reasonable skeptic could wisely ask, "Weren't there a lot of false starts? After all, that would seem to be a fairly primitive system!" "No," I am pleased to report. "On those afternoons I visited the track there was not a single false start! Besides, why quibble over things such as one or more magnificent steeds not quite aligned. The race is the thing. It's only a game. Never mind tiny details!"

Meanwhile, in the grandstands, conversation, not the race, was the thing. Political and social rumors were shared and explored, and, most assuredly, appropriate resolutions foreseen. Standing at trackside, however, in the milling throng, some would be eating, others would be pushing for better views, and there was great confusion and excitement, all of it race-centered. And, ... if you sought an unobstructed, almost bird 's-eye, view as the horses sped around the curve and out of sight, ... ah, here that unique feature of the Mahasarakham Downs was offered to a select few, true, racing afficionados, or any big wigs who muscled into line. Eat your heart out, beautiful Hialeah!

3. THE VIEW FROM THE COCKPIT

Yes, you read that correctly. The subject of this tale, among other things, is: the view from the cockpit in the middle of the Mahasarakham Downs. To the best of my knowledge, no other race track anywhere in creation has had the opportunity or temerity to embrace this innovation. And why, or how, did the good racing fans at the Mahasarakham Downs enjoy such a wondrous innovation? Well, let me explain.

Ages and ages ago (during World War II), Thailand

Isan – the area's own name for itself – may also be spelled in English as: Issan or Isaan or even Eson! However you spell it, it is the vast Mekhong River plateau, which today is geographically and politically known as northeastern Thailand, and there's no question of English spelling of that!

was nominally ruled by a foreign power, the Empire of Japan. The Japanese military saw strategic value only fools could miss in that part of Thailand which calls itself Isan and is called by the rest of the world, "the Northeast." Obscure locations – places in which no patriotic Thai resistance fighters would consider lurking – were identified. Mahasarakham was one such place. The surrounding land was flat, very flat. No paved roads led to or from it. The railway was 80 kilometers away. Can anything worth defending be found in such a place? Hardly! And so just a little outside that then sleepy, remote, provincial capital, the Japanese military built a landing strip to supply their occupying forces. And they built similar landing strips in other equally unremarkable sites in Isan. However, no airplane landed in any of them before the Japanese Empire collapsed and the war ended. For all anyone knew, though, somehow, someday, someone might need such places. In Mahasarakham, at least, the landing strip and nearby land were kept free of noxious weeds and/or other uses. Before long, some enterprising individual concluded one could have a race track there surrounding the landing strip without destroying the strip itself. Lo and behold! Mahasarakham Downs. Back here in the first world that's called, "efficient land use."

Unbeknownst to racing afficionados and local politicians, however, the landing strips built by the Japanese became features on the maps the United States Air Force (USAF) supplied its pilots should they be in that area. Of course, our aviators were not then flying to or from Thailand to bombard the Ho Chi Minh trail or other sites in nearby Laos and Cambodia. So why would they need such maps and strips at all? As late as the mid-1960s, commercial air travel was all but unknown in Thailand apart from Bangkok, Chiang Mai and few places in southern Thailand. True, some Australians in nearby Khon Kaen had built a landing strip for use by their corporate-owned aircraft and although the US military was not in Thailand, it could not use that strip lest its presence be revealed to the

world, so Khon Kaen's airstrip was not to be found on USAF maps as an emergency landing site. However, as far as anyone knew, there was that perfectly good, nearby strip in Mahasarakham! And it was found on all of the USAF maps.

A month before I arrived in Mahasarakham (late September 1963), a small, but distressed, or lost, USAF cargo plane, seeking an emergency landing site, selected the fine strip located at Mahasarakham. Alas, the long idle ground, by then soft from two decades of neglect and the annual rainy seasons, enveloped the plane's landing gear, which sank into the mire, securely uniting the plane to the earth about it.

"*You may have our plane*," the USAF, according to local representatives, generously told the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF), "*as soon as we've removed our secret things from it*."

"*It crashed*," the RTAF surely replied. "*It's no good. Why would anyone want it? Besides, besides, both you and it are not to be found in this country! You take it away, secret stuff and all!*"

Ah, the view from the cockpit (above). At any given time only one or two lucky individuals could share it. If you look carefully, there's a fine view of a race in progress. So what if one horse is already ahead by several lengths (mid-right in photo and a tad up)? It's early. Even those far behind have chances to win. Was it not truly providential that the USAF plane had so crash-landed that it in no way impeded the wondrous races at the Mahasarakham Downs, and that it so imaginatively enhanced the pleasure of racing fans? Ah, but we must not forget the secretive negotiations over that poor plane ...

4. NEVER MIND THE PLANE, YOU SAY YOU NEED A HAIRCUT?

Ah, ... the international dispute over plane ownership. Let generals debate the fate of the fallen craft, meanwhile the USAF stationed its military police (two, with a jeep) at the plane for its protection.

As "negotiations" continued between the USAF and the RTAF on the fate of the downed plane, an aside: In those days the USAF was not in Thailand, nor were our army nor navy! Never mind the USAF presence near Bangkok's Don Muang airport, we had no bases west of Vietnam! And yet from some mystery location, USAF planes flew east almost every day to bomb the Ho Chi Minh Trail and other targets. Bomb-laden USAF jets on their way to Laos or North Vietnam flew low enough to be seen; but, freed of their heavy loads, their return flights were at much higher altitudes and thus all but invisible. The C-47 that crashed in Mahasarakham's World War II era air strip was most likely returning from a mission to deliver supplies and/or munitions to "friendly" forces in Laos. The CIA also operated an "air line" called Air America, which serviced its agents in Laos (though, officially, none were there). To the best of my knowledge, the US government never has admitted it lied about its presence in Thailand in the early 1960s. It is, of course, no secret that US forces did participate in maneuvers with SEATO forces, including the Thai army, in that same period. That was an open participation, whereas the bombing raids and equipping raids were clandestine, unadmitted, and ...

And now that I have that rant out of my system, back to our story.

The MPs took rooms and some meals at the *Ritz-Carlton/Mahasarakham*. OK, it wasn't the *Ritz-Carlton/Anywhere*, but it was a fine new building and it offered a restaurant that boasted international fusion cuisine. I was never able to identify which nations' cuisines it presented, though I often suspected its cuisine was out of this world. And the hotel's fine building – that curved front edifice in the background – might bring a Ludwig Mies van der Rohe to tears, but never mind! By the way, those musicians and dancers in the foreground are students from the Teachers Training College of Mahasarakham where I taught English as a Second Language (actually as a third language; Thai was the second language for most of our students). The college chancellor, Mr. Wisan Siwarat, developed Isan musical and dance troupes to keep the region's culture alive. His legacy survives. The current the successor institution to the Teachers Training College, **Mahasarakham University** has an amazing **Research Institute for Isan Arts and Culture.**

Since this tale is about horse racing in an erstwhile airport, not parades in downtown Mahasarakham, we must return to those MPs in the *Ritz-Carlton / Mahasarakham* who slept, entertained guests of the night, enjoyed haute cuisine and/or government-fast-food (a.k.a. C-rations), with considerable Singha brand beer, as they pined for anything American. At first, we three Peace Corps Volunteers then stationed in Mahasarakham identified the local amusements, but they were uninterested. We got the hint. (*It was and is not the purpose of Peace Corps Volunteers then or now*

to entertain American troops; that's what the USO does.) The sole exception to what the MPs deemed an otherwise deadly assignment was the horse races around their airplane on weekends. Indeed, their presence made the races a regional tourist wonder, and, as they left, an economic stimulus package. In the photo below-left, one MP is having his hair cut in the mobile, racetrack barber shop. The line includes waiting customers and gawking tourists. Pale faced foreigners were quite a wonder that far up-country back then.

Some time after the picture was taken, the USAF and the RTAF reached an agreement. Secret and otherwise usable things were removed from the plane, the aero-carcass of which was then detonated. Immediately, a mob rushed to seize every metallic shard. Within days across Isan, one could buy metal ash trays. No two were alike!

For this one-time, short-lived offer, prices were very reasonable! As a rule, airplanes try not to land in mud puddles, even in Mahasarakham. Alas, lacking wing-shade and alien presence, the barbers returned to their shops in the downtown market just behind the *Ritz-Carlton/Mahasarakham*. Since then, the Mahasarakham Downs has been content to offer horse racing only. I confess, fearing track excitement might supercede tonsorial duties, I had chosen to have my hair trimmed at any of the fine barber shops in the market. This choice, however, brought its own risk, especially for those of – shall we say? – a queasy stomach. You see, at random times, if you visited the barbers in the market for a trim, you had to ignore how the provincial board of health the night before had used the open space in front of the barber shops to pile strychnine-laced carcasses of feral market dogs. By afternoon at latest, they'd be gone. And so I admit that whenever possible, I scheduled my next tonsorial trim for the term break in remote, but civilized, Bangkok. I trusted that was a forgivable snobbery. After all, we farang are a baffling lot!

* * * * *

Horse racing is beloved throughout Isan. While there, I was told a story about a village headman named Yama, who owned horses. Now that my tale has ended, Yama's story begins ...

YAMA AND THE POOR MAN

Once upon a time in the province of Roi-et there was a village headman whose passion was to breed and race horses. He owned some of the finest fields in the area and used them solely for the grazing of his horses. To the people of his village, he was Yama (which in English would be, Mr. Horse Grass). Yama had acquired his delight in breeding horses after a visit to the city of Roi-et where he'd seen a single race. He had been so intrigued with it, so excited by it, that he decided his village must have its own racetrack. "After all," he told his people, "the fields around our village are luxuriant. There is no reason why we cannot have the finest horses in the country!" And from that time on Yama's village had its own racetrack!

For many years before this, Yama's sole delights had been his lovely wife, Nuan-chan, and his even more lovely daughter, Chantra. Many young men had come to Yama asking for Chantra's hand in marriage, but he had refused them all. He wanted to choose the perfect young man for his daughter. But once Yama discovered horse racing, it became his first love, his all-consuming passion.

Before long, Yama's racetrack was the most famous in the province. People came from great distances just to watch the races there. This, of course, pleased Yama, for he enjoyed a good horse race. Only one thing pleased him more, and that was winning races. Yama was determined to win every time his horses raced, and it was not long before he was winning nearly every race. His finest horse was named Loi-Lom (or, in English, "Floating Breeze"). Loi-Lom proved itself to be no ordinary horse. In no time, it had beaten every other horse of distinction within the province, as well as many horses from other provinces. This, of course, discouraged Yama's opponents and soon none of them would race against Loi-Lom.

Yama's heart was nearly broken. He lived only for winning races, and now there was no one to race. At first, he would not speak to his friends. Then, he began snapping at his wife and beating his daughter. One day, Nuan-chan, his wife, could tolerate this no longer.

"*Yama, what on earth is the matter with you? Why are you so angry with us?*" she asked.

"*No one will race against Loi-Lom,*" he replied sadly.

"*Is that all?*"

"Is that all!" he retorted. "*What more could there be?*"

"*Have you considered...*" she began, but Yama had stomped out of the house before she could say "*...your family?*"

Nuan-chan did not know what to do.

"*It will be better,*" she thought, "*not to mention this for a while. Perhaps Yama will be kinder in a few weeks. Perhaps he will forget about Loi-Lom.*"

But that very day Chantra came to her mother crying, "*None of the young men will ever marry me. They are terrified of Father, now that he has become so bad-tempered. Every time one of them comes near the house, Father threatens to kill him.*"

Nuan-chan went to her husband. "*Yama, this has gone far enough*," she said. "*It is not only that you have been cruel to Chantra and myself, but you have kept our friends away from the house. We are lonely, and if you do not do something we will leave you.*"

Yama stared at her angrily as she continued, "*I have an idea that may please you. ...*"

The next day Yama sent letters throughout the province declaring, "*Yama challenges any man to race his horse against Loi-Lom. The conditions are this: the challenger may be rich or poor, young or old, but he must be a bachelor. If Loi-Lom wins the race, the challenger will become Yama's servant; but if Loi-Lom loses, Yama will give Chantra in marriage to the successful challenger.*"

Yama was pleased, indeed, with his idea.

He thought, "*Only rich men will have enough money to own good horses, and only young men will be interested in marrying Chantra. I will have a good race, and at worst, I will find a good husband for Chantra*."

For several months, the god Indra had been observing the actions of Yama. Knowing Yama to be a proud and foolish man,

Indra decided, "*I must teach Yama a lesson.*"

So, Indra changed himself into a man, a very poor man. Next he found a tired, swaybacked, ancient horse that looked as if it could not run a yard, much less a mile, and, pulling his unwilling steed, Indra appeared in Yama's village.

He said, "*I have come to race against Loi-Lom. I intend to marry Chantra*."

The people of Yama's village could not believe their eyes.

They ran to Yama and said, "*Come to the market and see who has arrived to challenge your horse. You will not believe it!*"

Indeed, Yama did not believe his eyes. But then, who could?

He thought, "*This man must be crazy!*"

When he was able to stop laughing, Yama said, "*Your horse is so old, it can barely walk. It could never run. It is lame in two feet. I will not race Loi-Lom against this horse.*"

But the poor man replied, "*Yama, are you a man who breaks his word? You promised you would race your horse against any bachelor who challenged you. I am a bachelor, I have a horse, and I intend to race it against Loi-Lom*."

Yama still would not agree, that is, until the people said, "*Yama, you did make that promise. You must fulfill it*."
And so under great pressure Yama agreed to race his horse the next weekend. By the day of the race, hundreds of people had poured into Yama's village just for the event. Everyone expected Loi-Lom would win again. In fact, they did not expect it to be a race at all, but, if nothing else, it would be amusing. There was not one person present who expected the poor man's horse to win.

The race began at last. Loi-Lom was halfway around the course before the poor man's nag had crossed the starting line.

"*Would you like another start?*" Yama taunted the poor man.

"*No, this one is good as any*," said he.

But at this very moment something incredibly strange happened. Loi-Lom stopped running! It walked to the track fence, put its head under, and began eating some of the fine grass. The jockey could not make it move an inch! Yama could not believe his eyes at this turn of affairs. The crowd was even more bewildered.

"*It's been so long since Loi-Lom raced,*" they whispered, "*that it no longer knows where the finish line is*."

Meanwhile, the poor man's horse walked as fast as it could, and this was not much more than an irregular stagger. Loi-Lom began to wander in the direction of the finish line, eating more grass every few steps.

All the while, the swaybacked nag was closing the gap. In the home stretch, not more than fifty yards from the finish line, it actually passed Loi-Lom, which had gorged itself on so much grass by this time that it could not even move as fast as the old horse staggered. Yama was furious!

He said to himself, "*He is a poor man, and, therefore, not suitable to marry my daughter*."

He refused to keep his promise in spite of the reminders of everyone present at the race.

Indra, also, was furious. He transformed himself into a god once more, and declared, "*Open, pit, deep and wide, and let proud Yama fall inside*."

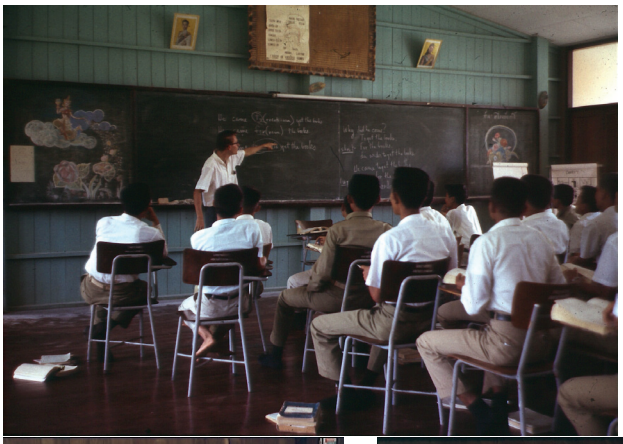
No sooner had Indra spoken than the ground beneath

Yama yawned open into an enormous pit so deep, no one could see the bottom. Instantly Yama disappeared from sight. Indra then returned to the heavens, while the crowd fled in every direction, filled with terror. Only Nuan-chan and Chantra remained by the pit into which Yama had fallen.

Day and night, week after week, they sat on the edge of the pit crying. Gradually, their tears began to fill it and before long, an actual lake of tears had filled the pit.

Naturally, it was named Yama's Lake. Naturally, the village of which Yama was once the headman was named after him, too.

And to this very day, races are held by the shores of Yama's Lake. Although there has never been another horse the likes of Loi-Lom, nor another village headman to compare with Yama, no one has forgotten the lesson Yama had to learn so many years ago.



Kermit Krueger in Photos:
in the classroom at Mahasarkham Teachers' College; doing the daily laundry; busy planning for the next week's lessons; with a friend and a good-looking water buffalo.

Thai IX, 1964-1966

Secondary TEFL, Teacher Training College, Vocational Agriculture, Vocational Education

A Second Identity

Michael MacLeod

When I arrived in Ban Mi, Lopburi Province, in 1964, as a Thai IX TEFL volunteer, the only basketball courts sported dirt surfaces. The baskets hung on wooden stands that vibrated and swung on every impact. Soccer was much more popular, and, grudgingly, I took part for the socializing and activity. But I was thrilled when two schools built concrete courts, even though my skills were only slightly ahead of my soccer ability. One thing led to another and soon I had a second identity, as coach. I kept one step ahead of the 9th and 10th grade boys and girls who tolerated my learning on the job. We all got better together.

One of the most memorable and fun basketball moments involved a road trip. The nai amphur (district officer, like a county executive) of Ban Mi had received a challenge to bring a men's civil servants soccer team and, if he could, a women's basketball team, to a district in a neighboring province. He knew that the school had a girls' team. There was no women's team, so his plan was to have the girls' team represent Ban Mi. My principal got permission from every girl's family and just assumed that I'd be more than happy to go. My main problem with the plan was the typical vagueness, especially in terms of time, and the fact that it was scheduled for a Wednesday. Since we wouldn't leave till after school, it seemed logical that we would return later than my normal ten o'clock bedtime. But the expectation was that we would go, so we met after school and were picked up by a bigger version of the song taew, this one a vehicle something like a jeepney in The Philippines and painted almost as brightly.

More than twenty people, the majority who were male civil servants, packed onto the three benches. The girls took up the ends of the benches. I and another teacher stood on a step that was about eight inches lower than the bed of the truck. We held on, sometimes for dear life, because the blacktopped roads were rough. Not far along, the truck swung around a broad curve. The curve arched left and since driving in Thailand is on the left side of the road and I was standing on the left, I felt the pressure of everybody leaning left that created a sort of dip on my corner.

We weren't traveling fast, but the truck was definitely overloaded. A glance to the right told me that the vehicle was almost running on two wheels, so, instinctively, I hopped off. I may have feared getting crushed, but as it worked out, taking my weight out of the equation eased the lean. People inside near the cab were yelling at the driver, who stopped as soon as he could stabilize the truck. Some of the bigwigs yelled at him enough to chasten his driving style from then on.

Our next problem was not his fault. We had to cross a rickety wooden, one-lane bridge. We made it across, but at the far end we heard a crack and, looking back, we could see a crossbeam dangling in two halves under the bridge deck. At the next two bridges, the passengers all clambered out before crossing and then piled back in once the rig was off the bridge.

We arrived in Hankha District, in Chainat Province, in time to stage the soccer match before dark. The men's team got whacked and looked a bit embarrassed. Then came a long dinner, at which the men drank and smoked quite a bit. The Ban Mi guys, including the district officer, told me that it was up to the girls to save Ban Mi's honor. I ignored them. I knew that my team hadn't developed near enough offensively, though we were pretty good defensively. Also, I didn't like the sore-loser syndrome that I had observed several times in Thailand and had heard between the lines from the men's team.

Finally, at a bit before ten in the evening, it was near time to play, and we hadn't even seen the court. Keep in mind that normally these girls all were asleep by that hour. My girls had put on their uniforms before dinner, so we were ready to go, except for one kid, who sidled over to me and said, in an embarrassed tone, that her zipper on the side of her shorts had broken. What to do, especially when we only had eight girls? Well, thank goodness, she had brought another pair, but they were in the schoolroom where the girls had changed. Would I walk over there and stand guard? Why? Because she was afraid of ghosts! I kept the ghosts at bay and, once changed, we joined the rest of the team courtside.

It was a dirt court, something I hadn't seen since 1965, and my girls had never played on such a surface. The lights were bulbs strung high over the court and they left big shadows in parts of the court. The final straw was that there was no doubt that the homemade hoop was smaller than ours at home. The playing field was made even less level by the late starting time and the fact that the youngest player on the other team was at least twenty and no longer in school, while my team of schoolgirls averaged about fifteen years of age. The market team ran through warm-up drills that showed their familiarity with the dirt court. They seldom dribbled, opting for precision passing. I told my girls to go out and have fun. At halftime, I told them to keep working hard and learn from the experience. Despite all the handicaps my girls faced, we only lost by eight points, which I considered a moral victory.

The trip to the game was eventful enough. The journey home was memorable because of the time factor. All the men had gone home after dinner, which I didn't even realize till it was time to go home. So my team and I had the song taew to ourselves. It was past midnight before we got started. The driver had told me that he would take a different route back, a longer one, in order to avoid having to cross the bridge with the cracked beam. We needed to see that each girl got home safely, which meant going deep into several villages.

I had to walk several of the girls down little lanes, with only the moon to illuminate the way, and then walk back by my lonesome. The last girl lived past the school, and I knew that we'd have to walk down a winding trail for at least a hundred yards through a thicket of trees and shrubs. She led the way, and when we could hear several dogs coming our way, it was she who calmed them. I saw a lantern get lit at the family's house, so the noise had roused somebody. The girl's mom greeted us and said she was glad to see us, and all I could do was apologize and be on my way. The driver took me back to school and went on his way, dead-tired. I got home at 4:30 a.m., and there was no way that I'd be ready to teach at 8:30. Maybe by noon!

So teacher also got known as "coach." I also played, never well. I feel lucky to have joined other volunteers in Pitsanuloke to play a game benefiting AFS scholarships. A friend, Don McLean, continued a tradition at his school, which included volunteers commandeering samlor (3-wheeled bike), while the drivers held signs advertising the game. I took the idea and organized games with teams of American Air Force guys more for public relations reasons (the U.S. base at Takli was quite near) than for raising money.

A woman who had been on our 1968 team loaned me her rental house during a month stay in Ban Mi after my retirement from teaching. A man who had been on the boys' team, a dentist proudly driving a Mercedes, told me while driving me to Bangkok, that he had stunned his coach of the Chula University men's team with his defensive skills. He told the coach where he had learned that defense was important.

So the "coach" label had stuck, and my tie to basketball made my four years as a volunteer in Thailand have another dimension and identity and made the experience even more enjoyable and memorable. I'm so grateful to my students who allowed such a rank amateur find ways to develop his teaching and coaching chops!

A Royal Reason to Revisit Ban Mi

My wife and I often wonder where each of us would be had she not been posted to Ban Mi, Lopburi, to teach science or if I had limited my Peace Corps service to just two years instead of four. As it was, it took ten years before we married in 1978. Our son, Manat, was born a year later. He was thriving, Wilawan's English was improving, and life in Bangkok was tolerable for me, who really had become a country boy while in Ban Mi.

I had heard that Her Highness, Princess Sirinthorn, would preside over the formal dedication of a new temple viharn in Ban Mi. My proposal to cover the event for the "National Geographic" was denied because I had no experience, but I decided to return to Ban Mi to experience the royal visit. It was magical.

After an overnight stay with a friend and his wife, I took a song taew to the Ban Kluay Banana Village stop and joined hundreds of people who were walking down the village lane toward the temple. Excitement and anticipation filled the air, and although it was only nine in the morning, people had already staked out viewing spots, usually under trees for shade. That was a good idea, so I got as close to the temple as I could get and claimed my space. A second later I had company, a woman and her daughter. Who was the woman? A luuk sit - former student (and on my basketball team)! Throngs of people kept entering the space. Some, especially elderly people, were directed toward a thatch lean-to structure where they could sit in the shade. Most people, though, had to stand. As it turned out, the Princess and her retinue didn't arrive till about 2 p.m., but nobody seemed to care about the long wait. People talked, snacked, and watched other people.

The electricity in the air increased a couple of times as rumors of the royal arrival swept through the crowd, but the third time was real, as proven by an advance crew walking down the lane. This was a security detail, and the men, all dressed in suits, took their time in surveying the area and crowd for any problems. I noticed a couple of them conferring and looking my direction. One fellow came over, introduced himself as my luuk sit, and told me he was sorry, but he needed to check my camera. I was blown away by his introduction and, frankly, couldn't place him till later, but, of course, I complied. Mine was one of only a few cameras, so he didn't have much business. When he returned the camera, he apologized again, and wished me well, then went on his way. He was extremely polished, debonair, and well spoken, as one in his position would have to be.

In short order, the buzz in the crowd became much more intense. Several women assistants to the Princess preceded her. I got so caught up in the excitement of the crowd and the moment that I almost forgot I was holding a camera. There was no cheering, as would have occurred back home, just the buzz of adoring subjects, whose curtsies and wai (the respectful gesture of greeting) were accompanied by smiles and, especially on the part of the elderly, some tears. As the Princess walked, she scanned the crowd on both sides of the lane and smiled, clearly aware that her presence was very special for these Ban Mi people and appreciating their adoration. And for me, as I revered her, too, for her down-to-earth ways, her intellect, and her emulation of His Majesty, The King's true concern for the welfare of the Thai people.

She spent considerable time in front of the covered reviewing area, accepting people's offerings and blessings, and listening to their entreaties and stories. It was a very warm afternoon, but she showed no signs of wilting, and the gathered crowd showed no intention of dispersing until she had left. I could not see what transpired in the dedication ceremony, but when it was over, the Princess got into a waiting car and drove

out to the main road, leaving thousands of people still reveling in having been in her presence and ready to start home.

I got home to Bangkok late, to find that Mr. Manat had contracted measles and was most uncomfortable. Wilawan wasn't very pleased that his sickness had manifested itself while I had gone on my little jaunt. I had to agree I had been a little selfish. Other than my guilt, though, I must say the trip was a special experience, one I'll never forget.

Thai X, 1965-1966
Secondary TEFL

Charlotte Hutchison

The following are excerpts from some of the letters I wrote to my family during my first couple of months in Thailand, in May and June of 1965 . . .

The "Bangkok Thais" have a somewhat justified sense of superiority over the rest of the country, especially the Northeast. People I met in Bangkok thought it was terrible that I'll be here in Buriram for two years, and they never stopped reminding me. Every time they showed me something pretty or modern or entertaining, they always added, "You won't have this in Buriram."

And they were right. We don't have much of anything in Buriram. Buriram is the name of the province and also the name of its main city. Nangrong – my town – is a little amphur (district), about two hours ride from the city of Buriram down a horrible dirt road. After riding for about eight hours from Bangkok to Buriram on the train, I was met by a group of teachers from my school. We ate dinner and then started back to Nangrong in a Jeep. (You have to go in a Jeep. The road is too rough for a regular car.)

I had heard rumors to the effect that it takes two hours to get from Buriram to Nangrong in the dry season, and four to six hours in the rainy season. Well, the rainy season began with a vengeance just as we started for Nangrong. Being in an open Jeep, there was nothing to do but get drenched, which we promptly did. The road was turning into a mudhole, and I can see how it would take hours to make that trip during the rainy season.

When we finally got to Nangrong and stopped at the house that was to be mine, we all just sat around in silence. I expected my headmaster to say something if there was something he thought we should be doing, and I certainly didn't know what there was to do. I just wanted to take a bath and go to bed. They left eventu-

ally, on a note of complete lack of communication, but the teacher who lives two houses away from me stayed to talk. Finally she left, too, but – wonder of wonders – a student who had recently wandered in spread out her sleeping-gear on the floor of my bedroom and began to make herself at home.

I asked her in Thai where she lived, and the answer was, "Here." Just what I'd always wanted! (Not!) I had always heard that Thais hate to be alone, and I've really found it to be true. I don't know how many people, when they heard that I live alone, have asked me the Thai equivalent of "Are you afraid?" I guess the student was to keep me from being afraid. She's gone now, thank heaven.

I had asked to live with a Thai family, but now I'm glad I didn't get what I asked for. Thai houses are so open and the people so friendly that, even in my own house, I have what borders on complete lack of privacy. I don't mind, but much less would definitely be too little.

About my house . . . it's basically similar to the Thai house I lived in in the Waipio Valley during the last part of Training, only slightly bigger and better-equipped. I have electricity (from 6 p.m. to midnight and from 4-6 a.m., which means there isn't any during daylight, and there isn't any in the middle of the night), a water supply that's OK to drink (big earthenware jars of rainwater from the roof), a washroom (some buckets of water on the enclosed back platform of the house – to take a bath you pour water on yourself and let it run out between the cracks in the floor), a water-seal toilet of the Peace Corps-approved variety (no seat – it's the Asian kind, known to Americans as a "squat john").

My house has no glass windows or screens, so I live in close association with an awful lot of bugs. Thai people close their doors and windows after dark, which doesn't do much for the air circulation.

This probably sounds pretty meager to you, but I'm living very comfortably and quite easily. I haven't had any "culture shock" at all, either here or in Bangkok, and the thought of spending two years in my present situation is not the least bit disagreeable. Many people in Nangrong are much worse off than I am. The house across the street from me has a thatched roof and no electricity. (My house has a corrugated tin roof.) The only thing I find hard to do is dispose of garbage. "Throw it back behind the banana trees," I was told.

Buriram is considered to be in the Northeast, but, as you can see if you look at a map, it's nowhere near Thailand's northern or eastern border. I was told before I came here that Nangrong has a population of about 2,000, but I have no way of judging whether this is true or not, since I have yet to see much beyond my immediate neighborhood. (Nangrong is the central town for a number of villages, which I haven't seen.) The Northeast is the poorest and most neglected part of Thailand, and Nangrong is a very poor town. It's also a green and very beautiful town, with hundreds of coconut palms.

My school has 14 teachers and 283 students, in three grades which are the equivalent of grades 8, 9 and 10 in the U.S. These are the first three grades of secondary school. If the students want to go on to grades 11 and 12, they have to leave Nangrong and go to a bigger town. The students at Nangrong School are both boys and girls, which is unusual. In most places there are separate schools for boys and girls, but Nangrong is too small to have two separate schools, so the boys sit on one side of the room and the girls on the other. The teachers are good, very friendly, and very young. I think I'd be correct in saying that over half of them aren't even thirty.

They can all speak English to some extent, and two speak exceptionally well.

The school is well-kept and well-run and has homogeneous grouping in each of the three grades. It appears that whatever can be accomplished by hard work on the part of the teachers and students, Nangrong School will probably have. But whatever requires money – like a lawnmower for the schoolyard, books for the library, or a public address system – these things my school will almost certainly not have.

*****

Last night, for the first time since I've been here (as far as I know), Nangrong's movie theater showed a movie. There hadn't been one for a while because the sound of the rain on the tin roof made it impossible to hear. It was great fun, even though I couldn't understand it at all. The theater is a big, rough, wooden building with long backless wooden seats, kind of like the bleachers at a ballgame. Two people – one for the men's roles and one for the women's – read all the dialog from a script. They also make the sounds, like gunshots and punches. The movie was about "999" (pronounced "gow gow gow," rhyming with "now"), who is the Thai counterpart of our "007," James Bond. Some of the background music was even James Bond music – "From Russia with Love" and some other song that I couldn't remember the name of. It was filmed in Bangkok and Hong Kong, and one scene took place at the airport where we arrived in Thailand.

The "snack bar" is located all along the street in front of the theater. The food-sellers spread out their wares and you walk along and buy what you want. No popcorn or soft drinks, but peanuts, watermelon seeds, various fruits, and all sorts of sweets made with coconut milk, sugar, etc.

*****

I think I have discovered the most fun thing to talk about with people who speak another language. All you need to know are the names of a few animals. You ask, "What does a _____ say?" Such as a pig, or a duck. Most people here think "oink" is an absolute riot, as is "quack." Sometimes the sounds are the same, but often they're hilariously different. My imitation of a chicken laying an egg even got a couple of encores. And this was with the teachers, not the students. They're so fun-loving and friendly, I just love them.

We have quite a communication problem, which sometimes produces great silences but often produces great fun. Both in class and out, nothing communicates like ham acting, which I like better all the time. We're not supposed to use Thai in class (the students are supposed to think in English, not think in Thai and translate), and I usually don't know the Thai words I really need anyway. So I act things out. This afternoon I discussed with the teachers the difference between rain and snow, in part-English, part-Thai, and part acting. They understood the acting even better than the words.

And improvised words, even when you know they are wrong, usually work and are more fun than the right words. Like the Thai equivalent of boy-chicken, which I used when I wanted to ask what Thai roosters say instead of "cock-a-doodle-doo," since I didn't know the Thai word for rooster. For some reason, "boy-chicken" is hilarious in Thai.

*****

I had seen a couple of elephants go past the house yesterday afternoon. Nid, my next door neighbor, had told me they were here because of the celebration being held at the temple behind my house. The head-monk from that temple had just been made the head-monk of all Nangrong, and monks from all over were coming for the celebration.

This morning I went to the temple with some of the neighbors to take food to the monks. We helped dish out the food and then sat there while the monks ate and then prayed. They pray in Pali, and I can't understand a word they're saying – and neither can most of the Thais – but it sounds wonderful to hear them all chanting together.

This afternoon there was sort of a parade. The five elephants (each elephant-seat carries three people), a couple of buses and Jeeps, and a whole bunch of bicycles and pedestrians went all around the town – past the Health Center, the Post Office, through the market, and back to the temple. And guess who was riding on one of the elephants. Yup – me!

It was great fun, and not difficult or uncomfortable at all – just sort of lurchy. High-ranking monks were on the first three elephants, followed by Nid and me and four other lucky people on the other two.

Thailand has many elephants, but you don't usually see them in town. They're quite a curiosity even here, and getting to ride on one is strange and exciting even for a Thai.

*****

I discovered yesterday how terribly uncouth I am. We Americans sure don't know the finer points of hanging up laundry! Knowing how modest the Thais are, I had been hanging my laundry in the house, which I figured was a sure way to avoid any unknown taboos. But not so. I had hung the line across the back room of my house, high enough to walk under without hanging myself. And that was terribly wrong, I was informed yesterday by Nid, who came over to help me do my laundry and discovered that I wasn't doing it properly. Panties and slips must be hung on a very low line. And they (but not bras, for some reason) must never be on the same line with a man's clothes. Pretty sexy, no?

*****

I've discovered the most beautiful, peaceful place in Nangrong – my bathroom on a moonlit night. The bathroom has walls but no roof, and looking up you can see the tops of the banana trees, the bamboo, some coconut palms, and various other surrounding vegetation. I had never realized how pretty it was at night until last Friday, when I discovered it by accident. I went out there with the light off to look at the sky. (I was looking for rain, which we haven't had a decent amount of in more than a week.) Sitting on the bathroom floor and looking up, I could see the moon, some clouds, and the trees. It was just like the opening scene of "The Night of the Iguana." Remember? The really great thing about viewing the sky from the privacy of your own bathroom is that no one can see you. Being outside alone at night is frowned on, at least for women.

*****

Last night at the Likay show (sort of a Thai version of Gilbert and Sullivan, very popular up-country, but considered hicky in Bangkok), a big snake crawled in among the audience. People started shouting "ngu ngu" (snake, snake), and the show stopped while we all jumped up on the benches and waited for it to be killed. Just last week at the movie the big round part of an electric fan vibrated itself off the stem part and fell onto a little boy's head. Never a dull moment at that theater.

Here's a poem I wrote about the experience of going to the morning market:

Still Life with Chicken

They think I'm crazy
Because I like to do this –

Get up before dawn and ride
Off to the market on my bicycle,
Carrying my red plastic basket.

To them it's a daily chore,
To me it's a source of wonder –

Real people,
Sitting on real ground,

Selling real food.
Not wrapped in cellophane
Or sealed in cans
Or pre-cooked and frozen.

Here I can buy three eggs
And a handful of beans,

A bunch of morning-glory vines,
And a dozen different kinds of bananas.

And here I can buy – oh, wonder of wonders –
A chicken that still has a head and feet!

Charlotte Hutchison
Thailand X
1965-67

Thai XI, 1963-1965

Secondary TEFL, Health, Malaria Eradication

Jean Burton

My husband John and I were both Thailand 11 Peace Corps Volunteers (married two whole weeks before training began!) although he was in the Malaria Program. Our Peace Corps service began a lifetime of friendships in Thailand that we maintain to this day with former colleagues in the Bangkok Municipality

where I was a TEFL teacher on Thai TV, with former neighbors and other friends. We chose to spend our careers abroad, raising our children in Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. I spent most of my 34 year career as a first and second grade teacher. My last experience was in Vientiane, Laos, where we spent three years after leaving the Middle East. I was a first grade teacher in the first international school for Lao students and found myself in a true TEFL situation again. It was a wonderful way to end my teaching career and difficult

to say good-bye to the students and staff. We returned to the U.S.A. a year ago after 33 years as expats. We enjoy being nearer our daughters and their families. We hope to continue visiting Thailand and Laos.

John Burton

Thailand, overseas living and entomology have managed to remain central themes in our lives (with wife Jean, Thai 11 TEFL) since our Peace Corps terms ended in 1967. The first step was to Cornell, with one of the best Southeast Asia Programs. After a 7-month collecting trip back in Thailand, I wrote my thesis on the horse flies (Tabanini) of Thailand above the Isthmus of Kra, describing over 30 new species. We then went to Kuala Lumpur for 6 years with UCSF where I collected flies in West Malaysia and researched rural-cycle dengue fever transmission. Then we went to Saudi Arabia for 20 years to supervise pest control in the oil industry, and even there I was able to keep up my Thai language because there were so many Thai construction workers. After retiring from there, we wished to return to Southeast Asia, and chose Laos.

Fortunately, the Lao watch Thai television and so they understood me all over the country, but understanding Lao in return took a good deal of imagination. It was all a great experience. Before returning to the U.S.A., we moved to the Thai coast for 7 months of 2004-05 to write a book on Laos, thus coming full circle in our 33-year overseas career. The book, "Lao Close Encounters," is a look at Laos today through 1200 photographs and commentary throughout the country, and should be of interest to those who fondly remember how our lives were on the Thai side long ago or who maintain an interest in things Southeast Asian. It was published in Bangkok, and is available in North America on the internet, including Amazon. In retirement, I have the Malay Peninsula and Lao flies to study taxonomically.

Regrets on not keeping in touch with more fellow Malaria Volunteers. My closest Thai 11 contact has been Bob Pinger, who himself has had a largely entomological career. I continue to go collecting with Greg Ballmer (Thai 21 Malaria) on both sides of the Mekong, and indeed we will be back there for June/July this year. I look forward to reading the stories of others. Our Malariology teacher at METC, Dr. Mohyeddin Farid, passed away a few years ago after a long career with WHO. Dr. Surin, head of Entomology at the NMEP during our time, is alive and well and living in Petchaburi Province. Our Thai teacher Khun Khampi Suwanarat is the COO of the Dusit Thani Hotel.

Amy F. J. Stone

I probably wouldn't be here in China working on an English-language newspaper if I hadn't been in the Peace Corps followed by working as the first non-Thai reporter on The Bangkok Post back in the '60s.

Dedication

Thank you Peter Montalbano for keeping Thailand XI not only in touch, but eating and drinking together and connected wherever we go.

Yaoapa and Me

Sandy Keith
Thailand XI 1965-1967

My husband and I were planning to go to Thailand for the 50th anniversary of the Peace Corps. Most of the week's activities would take place in Bangkok.

"While we're there, do you want to go to Payao?" John asked me.

Payao was the small town up north "right below the Burma-Laos border" as I would explain to anyone who asked, where I taught at the girls' high school 47 years ago.

"No," I said. "I doubt anyone there remembers me. It's been too long."

When I first returned to the States in 1967, I corresponded with a few Payao friends, but we had long ago lost touch. I had returned for a visit in 1988, and met some of my former students and teachers, but that was a lifetime ago.

So, we went to Bangkok and had a great time at the 50th. Two nights before we were to leave, we had dinner at the Bangkok Polo Club with some of my Peace Corps buddies from Thailand XI. We went around the room saying what we missed most about our Peace Corps experience. I said I missed my students

the most. Why? When I arrived in Payao I had just turned 21, a girl from Iowa with a B.A. in history from a college in Ohio. Those lively little girls in their white blouses and blue skirts, ankle sox and Mary Janes, taught me how to be a grownup.

While I was teaching them English, they taught me Thai, as well as the northern dialect, "peun meung." They taught me to keep my fingers clean while eating "naam prik kepi"- hot chili paste with balls of sticky rice. They informed me that my sleeveless dress was not appropriate for school. They taught me to love "pai tiaw"- taking spur-of-the-moment bike trips to just about anywhere to see a waterfall or a great view or visit another teacher. They taught me to salute the Thai flag and sing the King's anthem. They took turns touching my "red" hair. They giggled when I inadvertently made an obscene gesture explaining some point of English grammar. They taught me to relax and enjoy the frequent holidays that cut into the school year and took them away for silly parades around the school grounds. They called me "Ajaan (Teacher) Sandy" in class, but outside of class I was "Jae Ut" or "Older Sister Piggy." And most of all, I remember their smiles and laughs and enthusiastic efforts to learn. And while I had all their photos at home in an old scrapbook, I had not seen most of them in almost half a century.

On our last night in Bangkok, at the Friends of Thailand farewell dinner, a conversation took place at a table near me that went something like this.....

"Where are you from?" former volunteer Debbie Dohrmann asked the Thai wife of another RPCV, who was sitting next to her.

"I'm originally from Payao, but my husband and I have been living in the US for many years. I met Larry at the University of Missouri, where I took my doctorate, and I taught TEFL in Wisconsin high schools before I retired," Yaoapa Nahlik, the wife of RPCV Larry Nahlik, responded.

"Did you say Payao?" Debbie asked. "Did you have any Peace Corps teachers there when you were growing up?"

"Yes," Yaoapa Nahlik responded. "I had Ajaan Sandy Keith, but we have not been in touch since she left Payao."

"Sandy Keith? She's right over there!" Debbie exclaimed, pointing to the nearby table where I sat.

And then, Yaoapa came over and told me she was my student and we hugged and cried.

And when we got up to speak, everyone in the room teared up. Folks came up to take our picture and to just be part of the good feelings. Yaoapa and I promised to email, which we did almost immediately. She and her husband recently retired to Chiengmai and bought a home there. They graciously invited my husband and me to visit. Yaoapa said many of my former students were still in Payao and she was so happy to tell them we had met up again. And since then, we have been emailing—so much easier than airmail letters—and I am sure we will see each other again soon.

Yaoapa and Ajaan Sandy in Payao, c 1967.

Sandy Keith and her former student Yaoapa Nahlik on August 18, 2012.

Thai XII, 1966-1968
Community Development

John Williams

The story I am about to share began in 1966. It is a personal account of what I believed for the better part of 37 years to be a project in which I had failed as a Peace Corps Volunteer. I had many opportunities to return to the project site after completing my service at the end of 1967. But for reason that even now I cannot fully explain, I avoided doing so. Then, quite by change in December of 2003 I returned to the place where the story began -- a place where I was finally able to put to rest an unsettled spirit that haunted me for 37 years.

I believe my story is important to share with current

and past Volunteers, not because it is unique or unusual. To the contrary, I believe my story is very typical of what many Volunteers and RPCVs would find if given

the opportunity to return to their sites decades after completing their service. Following is my story. If you are a Volunteer or and RPCV, I'll bet it represents your story, too.

I arrived in Thailand in January 1966 as one of fifty-five new community development Volunteers. I was 22 years old and fresh out of college. I had completed my 3 months of Peace Corps training and was eagerly looking forward to assisting my host community. I was equipped with my newly acquired and still to be tested community development/agriculture knowledge and skills. In addition, I had acquired a new phaa khao maa, which was also untested when it came to bathing in public, and a new Thai name (Khun Wilaat). For those who don't speak Thai, a Phaa khao maa is a multiple purpose piece of cloth about the size of a beach towel that is used primarily by men. It is commonly worn in rural areas, particularly where bathing is often done in public. Worn properly and securely, it is a very modest way to bathe. My experience of bathing in public for the first

time with a new phaa khao maa will have to wait for another time. I'll just say that it gave new meaning to "exposing one's self to a new culture!"

Upon arrival at my site in Nong Khai, I was assigned a wonderful Thai community development co-worker, Khun Wichian. Within a few months we were working on agricultural projects with a group of villagers in Ban Bong, which was located about an hour's bicycle ride along a dirt road east of the town of Nong Khai.

Among the things that the village headman of Ban Bong indicated his villagers were interested in was to develop a fish pond. He asked if Khun Wichian and I could assist. The village headman and other village leaders showed us a small swampy area near the village that they said never went dry. There were some fish in this natural pond, but they weren't very good to eat. The villagers wondered if they could convert

the swampy area into a larger pond and stock it with a better variety of fish. Khun Wichian and I were eager to help.

I knew very little about raising fish, but my Peace Corps training had prepared me to identify and utilize local resources as much as possible. I was aware that there was a government fisheries station in the neighboring province, and soon we had facilitated the connection between the villagers and the fisheries department extension workers. The villagers were advised that if the got rid of the predator fish by using a natural poison recommended by the extension workers and constructed a small earth dam to contain more water, they would be able to have a sizable fish pond. The extension workers agreed to stock the pond with 15,000 fingerlings of a newly introduced variety of fast growing and producing fish. It sounded great.

However, there was one more important matter to contend with before the villagers could begin. The villagers said the spirit that occupied the swampy area would have to be appeased before they could begin. Curious about how this might be done, I invited several of

villagers to go with me to a temple in Nong Khai to consult with the monks. They prescribed a ceremony and various offerings. These were performed, the natural poison was placed in the swampy water to get rid of the predator fish, and the dam was constructed. Khun Wichian and I pitched in to lend a hand with the construction of the dam. It was a great Peace Corps moment. I thought to myself, finally here is something tangible that will be here after I'm gone.

It was mid-August 1966 when the dam was completed, and we were well into the rainy season. The new pond was now full of water and ready to be stocked. We made an appointment with the fisheries department to come and stock the pond, and we were told it would be several weeks before they could get there. In the mean time, the rains continued; but more heavily than usual. In fact, it rained so much that a 100 year flood occurred along the Mekong River not far from Ban Bong. Practically the entire province of Nong Khai was under water, including Ban Bong. After several weeks when the flood waters receded, it was discovered that the dam of the new pond was destroyed.

The pond had looked so nice before the flood destroyed the dam, that we all thought it would be a good idea to rebuild and try again. However, the villagers said that we couldn't start until we had fully appeased the spirit of the land, which they believed we had failed to do the first time.

Once again we set off to consult with the monks at the temple in Nong Khai. The monks prescribed additional rituals and offerings to the spirit of the land. These were performed and the rebuilding of the dam was completed. The rains came, and once again the pond was brimming with water. It was a day of celebration for the whole village when the extension workers from the fisheries department showed up to release the 15,000 fingerlings. It was early October of my second year as a Volunteer, and I would be leaving in a few short months.

I was one happy Volunteer, again thinking that the fish pond would be a tangible legacy of my service in that community. Then word came from Ban Bong less than a month later that the fish pond had mysteriously gone bone dry. I rushed out to the village to see for myself, and there it was -- a dry depression in the ground that nearly sent me into depression. Just a few weeks earlier it had been a beautiful fish pond.

What had gone wrong? No one in Ban Bong could remember when that area had been without at least some standing water. I thought to myself, nearly two years of effort on the fish pond and nothing to show for it but a dry hole in the ground.

Shortly thereafter, I completed my service. And even though I spent the majority of the next 12 years working in Thailand and neighboring countries following my Peace Corps service, and on occasion went to other places in Nong Khai where I had been as a Volunteer, I never went back to Ban Bong. Even after settling back in the United States in 1979, there was never a year that I didn't visit Thailand at least once; but still I

couldn't bring myself to make a visit to Ban Bong.

In late 2002, I had the good fortune to return to Thailand as the Peace Corps country director. Last December, 2003, as I was making a round of site visits to Volunteers in Nong Khai Province we drove past the village of Ban Bong. The road is now paved, but I could still recognize some of the features of the village. It was one of those flashback experiences. At that instant I decided to stop and find out, if possible, what had happened with the fish pond.

The car in which I was riding pulled up next to a road side store/noodle shop typical of those found in villages in rural Thailand. I got out of the car and walked up to the covered area where as usual a number of villagers were sitting in the shade talking.

As I walked towards them I wondered what they must be thinking as this 6'4" farang with graying hair approached. I was startled when before I said anything, and elderly white haired man with a walking stick greeted me saying: "Khun Wilaat (which is the Thai name I had been given as a Volunteer), we haven't seen you for years. How have you been? Why haven't you come to visit?" I was amazed and of course pleased that he remembered me. He went on to ask about the other two Volunteers from my group who served with me in the same area.

After chatting with the elderly man for a few minutes I asked him if the phuu yai baan (village headman) I had known as a Volunteer was still around. I was told that indeed he was, and that he was now 73 and no longer the village headman. He pointed to a woman standing in the shop with two small children tugging at her sarong saying she was the former village headman's daughter. He called out to her to go tell her father that Khun Wilaat was here.

She disappeared and a few minutes later the former village headman came rushing from the village with his own greeting of "Khun Wilaat, welcome back. It is good to see you after such a long time." We sat in the shade of the roadside shelter talking about what we had been doing in the years since we had last seen one another. Finally, I got around to asking the question that had been on my mind for so long.

"Phuu yai, do you remember the fish pond we tried to put in? Did it ever work out?" The phuu yai let out a big laugh saying how crazy we all were to try to put a fish pond in that spot. I learned that by constructing the dam we had blocked the natural drainage into the swampy area and that as soon as the rains stopped there was no means to supply water to the pond. The Phuu yai went on to say that they had eventually filled in that swampy area and put the land to other use. I was starting to feel disappointment all over again, thinking that the time and effort I had spent in Ban Bong all those years ago had little to show for it.

But before my spirits could sink very far, the Phuu yai asked me a question that came without any prompting on my part. "Khun Wilaat, do you remember the watermelon demonstration plot you helped us put in right over there:" he asked as he pointed to a small area just across the road? I did remember. It was a small plot not much larger than the office I now occupy in the Peace Corps office in Bangkok. It seemed so insignificant at the time. The Phuu yai went on to say that as a result of that demonstration plot, watermelons became a major cash crop for his village.

Then he asked another question – again without any prompting on my part. "Do you remember the little irrigation canal that you helped us plan and construct?" I vaguely remembered working with my co-worker, Khun Wichian, to put the villagers in contact with a local irrigation department official. The Phuu yai also reminded me that we had joined with the villagers in digging what seemed like an insignificant little ditch perhaps 100 meters or so long to one of the nearby rice

fields. He went on to explain with great enthusiasm that not only was that little canal still in use today, but that it was the beginning of an extensive irrigation system that over the years helped stabilize their annual rice production.

Would watermelons have become a major cash crop, or would the irrigation system have been developed even if a Peace Corps Volunteer hadn't spent time in Ban Bong in 1966-67? Perhaps.

But clearly, the involvement of that Volunteer made a far greater impression than he ever imagined. What a relief it was to know that rather than focus on the failed fish pond; the people of Ban Bong not only remembered but attributed some of their successful development to this now 60 something RPCV who helped them plant a few watermelon seeds and dig a small ditch nearly 4 decades earlier.

While this was my experience, it is really our story – the story of thousands of Volunteers and RPCVs who serve for two short years planting seeds, digging ditches, or working with teachers and mentoring students. Then we move on, and for the most part never fully realize the positive impact of our service.

I can tell you that in the nearly two years that I have been serving as country director rarely a week goes by that I don't encounter a Thai who has a story to tell about an RPCV. The stories often go back many years. They remember the name and recall how the Volunteer influenced their life in a positive way. I seriously doubt if that Volunteer had any idea of the impact he or she had on that individual.

For current Volunteers, I hope my story will give you a sense that you are making a positive difference even if you have difficulty recognizing it during your service. For RPCVs I hope it puts to rest any doubts you may have had about the value of your contributions as Volunteers.

Volunteers are taught during training that development is a long-term process. This is so true. Success has to be measured in small and often intangible steps; the results of which are not recognized until years later. Are the results worth the effort? I hope you will never doubt that they are – even if your fish pond failed.


REX
Records
We Prefer

Thai XIII, 1966-1968

Secondary TEFL, Teacher Training College

Mark Anderson

Our group of 81 trainees started a 10-week intensive training program at Northern Illinois University, in DeKalb, IL, in February, 1966. All of us were enthusiastic about becoming Peace Corps Volunteers, but the daunting schedule of 12-hour days, six days per week, was exhausting, Thai Language was very difficult, as was learning teaching methods of TEFL, but cross-cultural studies were quite interesting.

Our group was subject to weekly self-assessments and interviews with psychiatrists, a very intimidating part of the program. Some trainees self-selected out, but some were asked to leave because of language or teaching or personality problems (according to the "shrinks"). As a result, when we left in April for two weeks of practice-teaching in Hawaii, our group was reduced to 52, and two more were selected out there.

We arrived in Thailand thinking we were ready, but struggled to speak or understand Thai spoken by people in Bangkok. We got our teaching assignments at the Ministry of Education, but a curious situation arose. Thai officials, standing in front of a 6 foot tall map of Thailand had trouble finding some of the towns where PCVs were to be assigned. One official took several minutes to find my town, Maesarieng. (I was the first PCV assigned to this remote town)

I went by plane to Maesarieng with another PCV teacher (Thai X) who was working in the provincial capitol of Maehongsorn, and after I landed, I never saw him again!

Road to Maehongsorn capitol being constructed. VW Bus operated by anthropologist, Charles Keyes, who conducted Hill Tribes research in Marsarieng.

A road was being built by the timber companies and the Thai Government 200 KM across the mountains from Chiengmai to my town, then 180 KM up to Maehongsorn. When I went to Chiengmai, it took 6 hours by bus up over the mountains in dry season, but 10-12

Mark Anderson planting rice in Maesarieng, Maehongsorn province.

Two mother elephants with baby between, being pushed up the mountain to a Karen hill tribe village.

Mark Anderson riding Timber elephant at hill tribe house.

hours during rainy season with a Caterpillar tractor pulling the bus through miles of mud. (I visited my town ten years later in 1977 and covered the 200 KM by taxi in 3 hours)

Maesarieng was in a valley with two rivers coming out of the mountains, two crops of rice and a third crop of onions and garlic. (I tried plowing flooded fields with a water buffalo, but broke the farmer's plow handle!) Mountains were covered with teak, rosewood and

Basi Bowls decorated by Maesarieng students.

conifers, and timber companies hired hill tribes (Karen) to use their elephants to haul teak logs out of the forests. Baptist missionaries established a small hospital to service the town and hill tribe villages in the area, and had a youth hostel to board tribal children while going to Thai government schools. Other missionaries included two Jesuits and another, who translated Bibles to hill tribe languages. (He welcomed me on my 1st day and asked "was I saved yet?"). We also had a mosque set up by Muslim traders from Bangladesh, and several Thai and Burmese Buddhist temples. With the Baptist missionaries, I rode elephants up the

Maesarieng students floating flower boats for Loi Kratong festival.

Students dancing for King's arrival ceremony in Maehongsorn.

mountains, went with the doctors to hill tribe villages, or explored remote sites with an anthropologist from Seattle. (Several times I was asked by curious Thais if I was "secretly" working for the CIA)

PCV living allowances of $70/month didn't allow any extravagance, but I tried to go to Chiengmai every three months, sometimes by bus or by motorcycle with my Thai roommate, the physical education instructor.

Queen mother meeting with Karen Hill Tribe people.

Queen speaking with students in Maehongsorn.

I lived in a new house with a well on the high school compound, sharing it with two teachers and two students, who cooked and washed laundry for all of us. We had many events at school, some religious with monks, and students made decorations (money trees) for parades through town. My PE roommate taught

King speaking with Queen in attendance, at ceremony in Maehongsorn Province.

many sports and organized programs for the schools, and I tried soccer (but was not very good at Takraw). It took a few months to get into a teaching routine in Maesarieng. During my two years as a TEFL teacher, my students were delightful. I became part of the community, participated with other teachers at parties and pageants, and was "encouraged" to learn several Thai songs (Sai fon, etc.).

More than 20% of our group extended for a 3rd year. Several PCVs in my group married Thais. In preparation for my 3rd year working in Bangkok, I took six weeks intensive Thai reading and writing so I might be more effective as a Project Analyst at the Dept. of Technical and Economic Development (DTEC). (I had culture shock, going from a small northern town to the urban metropolis of Bangkok. I had to learn how to use a telephone)

I worked with several Thai government officials (economists) and USAID project officers to evaluate USAID projects in District administration, rural community development, building agricultural cooperatives, etc. I had opportunities to travel all over Thailand, from Chiengrai to Phuket, Songkla to Nongkhai (and strangely found it more difficult working with Americans than Thai officials.... was I becoming too acculturated?)

My 3rd year experiences provided more insights for working in a cross-cultural environment, and significantly influenced my choice of graduate studies in international affairs and economic development when I returned to the United States. After graduate studies, I was a Peace Corps staffer in Washington and Kenya (5 interesting years, and I also met my wife in Kenya where she was working for USAID.) I then joined USAID working as a management officer for 20 years in Somalia, Liberia, Botswana, and Sri Lanka, with a couple of Washington assignments in between .

My PCV experience was a most significant life-changer, a major influence on my world perspective.

Thai XVI, 1966-1968
Physical Education

Pam Milchrist

When I arrived in my town, Ratburi, in 1966, I was initally disappointed by the modern developments: paved roads, automobiles mixed in with samlaws and bicycles, and TV antennas were mounted on practically every building and home. This certainly wasn't the image that I had of myself working as a PCV in a remote village with thatched roofs, livestock, and children running about on dirt roads.

It did not take long for me to realize that the Peace Corps experience is not in the dramatic sacrifices associated with hardship living conditions (although there were plenty to be found), but rather with the mundane day-to-day living and working experiences in a culture with other people who share the same values, passions, and commitment to improving the human condition.

During my service as a PCV, I became totally immersed in the Thai culture. My job (a physical education supervisor for 5 provinces) brought me to the rural areas I had envisioned working in as a PCV, but the longer I stayed in Thailand, the more I realized that it's not the physical environment that makes the experience, rather, it's the interaction with the people within that environment that helps transcend cultural differences.

My two year Peace Corps commitment changed my life significantly and I am forever grateful to the gentle, kind people of Thailand for opening up their hearts and way of life to me.

Thai XIX, 1967-1969

Secondary TEFL, Teacher Training College

Cathy Riggs Salter

Cathy Riggs Salter wrote the following two pieces for the Columbia Tribune and the Boone County Journal in Missouri. She has given us permission to reproduce them here.

Reflections on the Era of Peace Corps Booklockers

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps, perhaps his most enduring legacy. Fifty years later, President Barack Obama recognized the Peace Corps as "forever changing the way America sees the world and the world sees us." To date over 200,000 current and returned Peace Corps Volunteers have collectively given over a half century of service to the cause of peace in nearly 140 countries.

Recently, I received a fascinating article, "The Famous Peace Corps Book Lockers," from a former Peace Corps volunteer who served in Thailand when I did in the late 1960s. The article explained that in the early days of the agency, PCVs were supplied with book lockers when they went off to their country assignments. The books were the idea of Eunice Shriver—a sister of President Kennedy and the wife of Sargent Shriver, the first Director of the Peace Corps.

In an early memo to Volunteers, Sarge Shriver wrote: "We know you need books. This Booklocker of paperbacks and other inexpensive publications is designed to meet that need." The book collections, wide ranging in scope, served as portable libraries for Volunteers at their isolated sites and were meant to be read and passed on.

Included in the email from my old friend was a 4-page, single-spaced list of titles included in the Booklockers as of 1964. There were American classics by authors ranging from Henry Adams to Thornton Wilder and international classics from Miguel de Cervantes to H. G. Wells. Also listed were works of contemporary fiction and non-fiction, reference books, maps, illustrated classics, regional studies and Ladder Editions-specially prepared editions of well-known American books that would appeal to readers for whom English is a second language.

News of the Booklockers soon triggered a buzz of E-Mail exchanges among my circle of Volunteer friends, each filled with personal reflections from more than four decades ago. David Davenport, who spent two years on the remote island of Koh Samui--a six-hour ferry ride from the southeast coast of Thailand--wrote, "Man, I loved my Booklocker!" Steve Landau's diary from 1967 noted that he'd read Kobo Abe's "Woman in the Dunes" and Gunter Grass' "The Tin Drum." Another friend admitted that he'd received three Booklockers!

One must have been mine, because for the life of me, I can't recall ever having received such a gift. In lieu of a portable library, I spent evenings conversing with students, making nightly entries in a journal and composing letters on blue onion-skinned aerograms at my bedroom table.

Having no screens or glass on my open windows, a slow burning mosquito coil balanced on the neck of a Coke bottle burned at my feet. The sun set each evening over a canal winding past a Buddhist monastery and cemetery. When it finally grew too dark to see, I'd duck under the mosquito netting that hung over my bed, accompanied by a flashlight and issues of TIME mailed from home.

Tom Hudak, now a University professor wrote, "The Booklockers were there as a stable foundation and support for us when everything else seemed totally alien… and you were about to have a complete melt down. They were there in the corner watching you and cheering you on."

When asked by his students how he stood the isolation, Tom tells them that the Booklockers helped to combat that. "In my pre-retirement days and as I watch students today latch onto their cell phones, I wonder how they would handle the isolation," he commented. "They have a hard enough time in my class since cell phones, computers and Facebook are forbidden in my class."

Shriver's Booklocker idea—part of the agency's legacy in its infancy fifty years ago--was great but shortlived. In that magical era without cell phones and instant communication, the written word—whether read by flashlight or recorded in fading light in a journal or letter--was an enduring gift that has stood the test of time.

Celebrating the Peace Corps at 50

As electrifying events swept across North Africa and the Middle East in early February, I followed the protests taking place in Tunisia and Egypt for days from the snowy isolation of Boomerang Creek. Half a world away, I felt intensely moved by the passions of those who inspired them.

This feeling has deep roots that go back to a snowy winter in 1966 when I applied during my junior year of college to become a Peace Corps Volunteer. Like thousands of other young people, I'd been inspired by the stirring line in President Kennedy's inaugural address in 1961, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." Two months later, on March 1, 1961, President Kennedy established the Peace Corps and appointed R. Sargent Shriver as the founding director.

Fifty years later, the mission of the Peace Corps remains as alive as Kennedy's inspirational words, actively changing lives as its volunteer corps continues to promote peace and friendship around the world. More than 200,000 Americans have served with the Peace Corps to promote a better understanding between Americans and the people of 139 host countries. Today, 8655 volunteers, all U.S. citizens who are at least 18 years of age, are working in 77 host countries.

My own Peace Corps experience began in Omaha, NE, with my very first airplane flight. Arriving alone at O'Hare Airport, I joined 46 other volunteers from colleges and universities around the country who'd also signed up for 27 months of service in Thailand. As Thailand Group 19, we spent 16 unforgettable weeks together across the summers of 1966 and 1967 studying Thai culture and its exotic 5-tone language at the University of Northern Illinois in De Kalb.

By our August 1967 departure for Bangkok, friendships born of our intensive training experiences were as solid as our resolve to change the world. During our college years, we'd all been profoundly affected by the assassination of President Kennedy; and with the escalation of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, many young

people our age were uncertain about their future. It was a time of increasing student unrest on college campuses, hippies and psychedelic concerts in Haight-Ashbury, the Vietnam War, and the draft. While some were dropping out, we couldn't wait to get going.

Looking back at that early era of the Peace Corps, anthropologist Margaret Mead wrote, "In the past, fathers used to send their children to distant relatives, and noblemen sent their sons to the courts of kings to be

Swearing-In Ceremony for Thai XIX in September 1967. Left to right: Jean Bernard, Cathy Riggs Salter, Cathy French, Shirley Mess Scott, Jim Lehman and Dennis Enser.

educated. In the 1960s, we sent our children to work in countries whose need, like our own need, is urgent, as we and they adapt to technological change. As in the past, they return to us the wiser." Inevitably, RPCVs (Returned Volunteers) will tell you that the Peace Corps changed their lives. It changed mine. Over the course of my three-year assignment in Thailand teaching English as a second language, the world became a classroom that continues to instruct me to this day.

My experiences gave me a geographer's vision and an explorer's curiosity. While I taught, I was also a student learning life lessons each day as I moved by bus, scooter, taxi, boats, trains, prop planes and on foot all over Southeast Asia and beyond. Perhaps most importantly, volunteering allowed me to view world events from another place on the planet, distant and far different from my own America-centric cultural experiences.

Ten years ago, terrorism and the events of September 11, 2001, led to the cancellation of a 40th Anniversary celebration of the Peace Corps. Now, a decade later, the world is witnessing protests inspired by young people across North Africa and the Middle East region eager for democratic change. This March, as America prepares to celebrate 50 years of the Peace Corps, its active volunteers corps remain as relevant a force for fostering peace and understanding around the globe as ever.

Return to Buriram, 1998

Thom Huebner

January 6, 1998, 10 pm: I find myself sitting in a train in Bangkok's Hua Lompong Station, maybe even the same second class express train sleeper berth that first took me to Buriram thirty years, five months and 15 days ago. We've barely left the station when the porter comes around to make up my bunk. I crawl onto the crisp linen sheets, draw the curtain shut, turn on the reading lamp, and wonder what world is passing through the darkness on the other side of the window.

It's still dark outside, but I'm already awake when the conductor comes to call me for my stop. On the platform, the morning feels cool. Unlike my first trip, this time there is no one to greet me, except for a half dozen samlor [pedicab] drivers hoping for their first fare of the day. That's fine: I haven't kept in contact with anyone since I left here 27 years ago, and whether or not it is true that within a twenty year span all of the cells in your body are replaced, I know I am not the twenty-two year old Peace Corps volunteer who everyone in town agreed was always "riep-roi" [neatly groomed and conservatively dressed] and "suphaap" [polite and deferential to age and authority], two highly prized virtues in Thai culture. It never occurrs to me that the gold hoops in my peirced ears might raise an eyebrow or two; nonetheless a side of me wants to observe this place invisible, to pass through unseen.

I hire a samlor to take me to the hotel. From the back seat, my gaze moves from the pumping buttocks of my "cabbie" to the pre-dawn sights of a town in Northeastern Thailand waking up. In streets only vaguely familiar, the activity has not changed much in over a quarter century. Chinese shopkeepers hose down the sidewalks in front of their shops before opening the

metal accordian shutters for business. Buses spewing black deisel smoke line up at the station, the first of the day, bringing villagers hoping to sell eggs, beetlenut, papayas, chickens, tomatoes, whatever will supplement a small farmer's income. More successful farmers bring in their produce by truck now instead of ox cart, and set up their stalls in the morning market. We turn the corner. Young men, early risers, clad in cotton phaa-khaw-maa [plaid loin cloths] bathe under their raised houses, rinsing themselves with water from large earthen water jars, lathering every node and crevice of their bodies, then rinsing completely again, all without revealing anything of themselves between waist and upper thighs. Along the street, lines of monks, sometimes as many as a dozen men and boys, in saffron robes and carrying black begging bowls, stop at house after house, where women, young children and elderly men stand in wait to make offerings of rice or curries wrapped in banana leaves. I wonder what I will do, now that I am here.

To the extent that it could be considered a plan, it wasn't much of one. After checking into the hotel, taking a shower, and a nap, I would dress, have breakfast and walk to Buriram Withayalai, the provincial boys' high school, where I had taught English for three years. I was curious to meet old colleagues, but I most hoped that I would see two: Phii Somjari, the chair of the English department at the time, an unmarried woman fifteen to twenty years my senior, a very kind and loving, sometimes controlling, "phii" [older sister] to me; and Somsak, the math teacher. In a society where age, education, and rank determine status, a true peer: we were the same age, had equivalent university degrees, and were both brand new to teaching, the school and the town. He was a devout and gentle Buddhist, a master of the Thai classical violin, and the man with whom I was assigned to share a two room faculty house on campus. If I could meet them, that would be great. But I would at least try to learn what had become of them.

The campus was still where I remembered; the brick wall around the perimeter built during my stay was still intact; even the squeaky pre-World War II wooden structure was still standing. But beyond that, the school was unrecognizable. Several new three-storey concrete buildings now filled in the space that I remembered as rice fields. The expansion of the physical plant was to accommodate a greatly expanded enrollment, now co-educational and with a sixth grade. As I walked through the gate and up the lane toward the main buildings, a student approached and asked if I needed help. She directed me to the English department. None of the teachers from my days was still there, and the department is larger than the entire faculty when I taught there. Nevertheless, in typical Thai fashion, they welcomed me warmly as we shared stories of common acquaintances.

As I knew they would, they asked me to address a class. Although I also knew I could not refuse, it was really my desire to do it that made me say yes. Fifty very active fourteen-year-olds, boys in white shirts and khaki shorts, girls in white blouses and navy skirts. I knew this audience, that more than English, they wanted verbal repartee with the excitement-enhancing prospect of potentially embarrassing either me or themselves. My job as I saw it was to be a good sport. Because in the Thai language gender distinctions on nouns and pronouns are often inexplicit, it was possible thirty years ago, when the inevitable question of a girlfriend would come up, to invent a "faen" [a general and very common term referring to special friend, or spouse, usually assumed to be of the opposite sex] back home. This time I would talk about my "faen" who died three years ago, but not that my special friend was a man nor that he died of AIDS.

After forty-five minutes of laughing, and hooting and hollering, questions and answers back and forth, more laughing, students self-mockingly offering a demonstration of their singing skills, more laughing and questions, all in a classroom open to the 90-plus heat outside, I was exhausted. If it occurred to me that the "misunderstanding" about my partner would be planted in the teachers as well as the students, it didn't seem to matter that much to me. I had just met them. And while I didn't hestitate to accept their invitations to both lunch and dinner parties already planned for the school's soon-departing Australian foreign exchange student, the myth would end with my departure the next morning. No harm done.

Lunch was at the town's only air-conditioned restaurant and the teachers, drawing on their local Lao and Cambodian gastronomic roots, ordered several kinds of fish sauce and shrimp paste for dipping fresh vegetables, broiled river fish, and curries unique to the

region, food I hadn't eaten in a quarter century, food I've never seen in Thai restaurants in the States. During lunch it was established that the teachers would take me around in the afternoon to meet some of the old teachers, starting with Phii Somjari.

Now retired for many years and living alone in an old house on the edge of town, surrounded by fruit trees and vegetable plants, her dog and cats, chickens, ducks, geese, even an occasional heron rehabilitating from a broken leg, wing, or beak, Phii Somjari, still unmarried, has come to be known around town as somewhat excentric and, it's rumored, suffering from cancer. I waited by the car while the teachers went in to her that they brought an old friend to see her. Initially she didn't recognize me, but then something clicked.

"Not Thom Huebner?" she said somewhat timidly.

"That's right"

"How come you're so fat!" she joked, then hugged me, tears streaming down her face. The others said they would be back in an hour to get me and left us alone to catch up.

We talked about what became of our colleagues, and then something happened that, although I must have anticipated it, I felt completely unprepared for. She asked me if I "had someone."

I responded, accurately enough, that I did, but he/she died three years ago. I was maneuvering through this conversation without indicating gender, but I was getting nervous.

Died of what, she wanted to know.

Could I say AIDS? I was less concerned about the stigma attached to the desease in Thailand than about blowing my cover. Why did I care if she knew I was gay? Was I afraid I would offend her? Did I fear having to explain more that I would care to? Or that she might find it revolting?

"Of cancer."

"What kind of cancer?"

I said I didn't know what it was called in Thai, but it was a skin cancer that spread to other organs. I was trying very hard to stay within the bounds of truth. Then, suddenly, checkmate: she asked if I had any children. I knew that my answer would have repercussions beyond this conversation. I couldn't do it. I adopted my neice for the moment. Satisfied that I had progeny, she allowed the conversaton to move on to other topics. I felt relief and total self-disgust.

The teachers eventually returned to pick me up and take me to meet other teachers they could find: my dance partner at parties, still teaching social studies at the high school, a couple of retired teachers, one science, one math, now grand dames of the town, preparing for farewell dinner at the Red Cross hall for the governor, even a woman in her thirties who had been the naked little two year old daughter of my landlord next door when I had moved off campus in my third year.

Finally they took me to see Somsak. He is now the second-ranking educational official in the province. He was at a meeting but the secretary said that he could be interrupted for a few minutes. I was standing in the parking lot as he came out of the building. I "wai"-ed him, a greeting of respect, hands in the prayer position and a bow. He simply laughed at my formality as he ran up and gave me a spontaneous hug. We could talk only briefly but he agreed to join the English teachers and me that night for the going away party.

That evening, as I looked at him I could still see the twenty-one year old teacher I knew thirty years ago. A little heavier, a little greyer. More sure of himself and his place in his community. Certainly more powerful. But with the same openness and concern for those around him. The same self-mocking sense of humor. The same beautiful, open smile, dark, glittering eyes, and thick, black curly eyelashes. It wasn't until weeks later in San Francisco, after I had the photographs developed that I noticed how much he had aged.

It could have been a wonderful evening. Somsak remembered stories about me that I had long forgotten. He told how he takes great pride in, and accepts full credit for, my Thai abilities, since his total lack of English forced us as roommates to communicate only Thai. (I've only rarely heard him speak English. But his

ability to understand it improved enormously during my stay and he apparently speaks it well enough now to have gone abroad for courses and seminars, both regionally (ASEAN) and in the U.S.) A tea-tottler himself, he ordered bottle after bottle of beer for me, bragging to the others about my capacity for alcohol and telling long forgotten stories of my ability to hang in there with the toughest drinkers of the Buriram Withayalai faculty. We talked about education and politics, the economy, Buddhism and Thai culture, our jobs, the past.

Sometimes it seems in rural Thailand people are always inquiring about social relaitonships, but that's not true. Certainly not any more than Americans. It is just that the implications of the answers to those inqiries are more profound. And so that night at dinner on the second floor deck of a Korean barbecue restaurant, as Somsak told me of his wife, his son, married and studying education in Bangkok, and his expectant grandchild, I heard repeated, and repeated myself, the fiction that started so harmlessly that morning and grew hard as the day progressed.

The party broke up around 9:30. Somsak asked how I was getting back to my hotel. When one of the teachers said that she had picked me up and that she would take me back, Somsak insisted on taking me himself.

When we got to the hotel, he asked to come in so we could talk some more, become re-acquainted. Did he know? Did he suspect? It's true, thirty years ago I did light-heartedly come on to him in what I understood to be a playful Thai adolescent way. But neither my advances nor his rejection seemed to affect our relationship. He remained my best friend, role model, and primary resource throughout my three years as a volunteer.

Westerners often misinterpret in Thai men the lack of machismo associated with Western ideas of straight malehood as a sign of homosexuality. Somsak prefers classical music to soccer, the company of women to that of men, and meditation over alcohol, but he is not gay. Sometimes the willingness to experiment with matters sexual and/or lack of guilt are misinterpreted among Westerners as gay. While Somsak was never judgemental about his colleagues' regular trips to the local brothals, he himself always abstained, for which he was respected among his colleagues. Nor was it guilt that held him back from my advances. He is just very straight, so straight that I feel I can see right through him. And so complex I feel he can see through me.

We sat and exchanged small talk. He brought me something, a present. A brightly colored silk phaa-khaw-maa from one of the local villages. I felt foolish for having looked him up without thinking to bring anything for him, but in retrospect I think he only wanted a moment of real connection. He went to the bathroom, we exchanged more small talk, but I think we both realized the barrier between us was not going to come down. Eventually he left. We promised to write. And for the second time in less than twelve hours, I felt I lost a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Within three weeks of coming home, I wrote to him, as I did to each of the people I saw in Buriram, the contents warm, but not close, not intimate. I enclosed photos from my recent visit and from thirty years ago. No pictures of anything in between. I haven't heard from him, nor from anyone in Buriram, since. This January I'll go back to Thailand. I'll travel through Buriram on my way to a temple in Ubon that offers courses on meditation. But I don't think I will stop.

A Few Thoughts from a Thai XIX PCV
Stephen Aufrecht

The bus hurtled around mountain curves through the black night, the red dirt road and dirty green jungle revealed by the ghostly glow of lightening. Then the rattling of every part of the bus would be swallowed by the head piercing boom of the thunder. After a week in Bangkok, then a few more days in Chiangmai with the other volunteers assigned to the North, I was now wondering if I'd survive to reach my teaching assignment in Kamphaengphet. After all the dialogues we'd memorized and the lesson plans we'd written and practice-taught to each other, the real thing was about to begin. If I survived this bus ride through the mountains. "Mai ben rai" I chanted. My favorite Thai phrase covering a lot of English situations in the general category of "no big deal." Mai ben rai, mai ben rai until the many grisly ways this bus ride could end faded and I fell asleep.

That was the end of phase one - preparing to be a Peace

Corps Volunteer. We'd spent two summers in DeKalb, Illinois, learning Thai, learning TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language), how to eat hot food, dance the ramwong, and survive temperatures and humidity in the high 90s. Back then - our first summer training was 1966 - Peace Corps was training college students between their junior and senior years, in hopes of snagging them before other recruiters did. That was when students got jobs after they graduated, and when the army was drafting males for Vietnam. The Peace Corps wanted to get us first. Then, we returned to school, graduated, and returned to a second summer of training. While we lost a fair number of people during the school year, everyone who went to Thailand stayed the full two years (except one volunteer who was kicked out because she got married) and about a third of us stayed longer. Because we had one summer of training before our last year of college, I was able to become friends with several Thai students at UCLA and even to learn to play (badly) a kind of Thai gong the ethnomusicology department had.

I could write volumes about the mistakes I made and less about the things I learned, but as someone who's been a returned Peace Corps Volunteer for 40 years now, perhaps what I can contribute most is perspective on one of the burning questions most volunteers have: Am I doing any good here? After all that work, has anyone besides me gotten anything out of my being here? So let me tell you a couple of stories.

I had a student, let's call him, Somsak. He was a bright student, but very poor. He was awkward with others and didn't have the fun-loving demeanor and smiling face of most Thais. I helped Somsak study for national exams that would qualify him to go to an excellent private high school in Bangkok that would improve his chances of getting into college. He passed and was accepted at the school. When I'd first arrived in Bangkok, the well-to-do family of one of my UCLA Thai friends "adopted" me and insisted I stay with them when I was in Bangkok. And Khun Mae and Khun Paw truly took care of me.

I asked if Somsak could stay with them in Bangkok, and they agreed he could stay in the servant quarters when we was going to school. I left money for the schooling before leaving Thailand when my assignment ended.

But following my departure, it didn't take long for me to be certain that I'd really screwed up. Somsak wasn't going to be happy in the servant quarters. How was he going to handle the much more affluent kids at this school? How was he going to get along with the family members? He wasn't a sweet and easy-to-like kid. It took a bit to get past his armor and tease out his sly humor. And I regretted what I now regarded as my playing God. After a few years, writing letters in Thai became too difficult and the family had never said anything about Somsak. My connections to Thailand faded.

Flash forward. I first went back to Thailand 17 years after I left, with my wife and two kids. I went to my Bangkok family's home, but it had been replaced by a shopping mall and I couldn't find out where they were.

The reception in Kamphaengphet was fantastic - as though I hadn't left. My family was taken in like, well, family. Somsak's name never came up.

I had occasion to return to Thailand a few more times over the years, and one time I asked about Somsak. I was told he lived in Bangkok and worked for the post office, but no one had his phone number and I returned to Anchorage (my home in the US since 1977) without getting to see him, and not completely unhappy
about that since I still was sure my meddling had led to no good.

About a month after we got home, I got a phone call. It was Somsak calling from Bangkok. He'd heard I'd asked after him and was very sorry he missed me. He went on to tell me how grateful he was for everything I'd done. It had changed his life for the better and he was saving money to set up a scholarship to help poor students like himself. He was still close to my Bangkok family.

Wow! Hollywood couldn't have written a sweeter ending.

We did get to meet in person a few years later when I attended the 45th Anniversary of Peace Corps Thailand in 2007. He also remembered the first and last name of Khun Jim, another volunteer from my group who was at the anniversary, who'd been in Mae Sot and

whom he had first met in 1969 at the English Summer camp we'd held in Lan Sang National Park in Tak.

On one of these trips, I also got to meet another former student, Somprasong, who was the headmaster of a school in the very remote border town of Umphang. The night before, at a dinner in Kamphaengphet, the regional supervisor had complained that Somprasong had scored first in all of Thailand in the test for school headmasters and could have had any school, but he'd chosen this remote little village school.

Visiting the school the next day, I was totally amazed. It was the most beautiful school I'd seen in Thailand. The grounds were full of trees and flowering plants - every one had the name of the student who was tending it - and he had dormitories for 200 students. Most of the students were hill tribe kids.

When Somprasong first took over the school, he'd gone into the mountains to ask villagers why their children weren't going to high school. It was too far away, they couldn't afford to pay for housing. Somprasong managed to raise the funds from the local businesses and the international NGOs (non-governmental organizations) in the area working at the Burmese refugee camp. He said it was all due to his ability to speak English to raise money, which, he said, had never been an interest until he took English with me. He was upset because the supervisor wanted him to leave for a bigger school.

We talked a long time about how to deal with this. About a year later, I got an E-Mail from Khun Jim, who lived in Bangkok, with a link to a Bangkok Post article. "Is this your student?" he asked? Somprasong had been named one of four Thai Teachers of the Year.

I mention these two stories not to brag because, really, what I did was typical of what all Peace Corps volunteers do as a routine part of their assignments. My actions weren't any more noteworthy than anyone else's. The only difference is that I had the chance to go back and find out, 35 years later, that some of what I did actually had tangible positive results. Even, in the case of Somsak, where I thought I'd made a huge mistake.

I know these experiences were not exceptional because at the 45th Anniversary of Peace Corps Thailand, other former volunteers gave similar accounts of learning that their name still lives on because of things they did years ago, things they'd long forgotten, which had turned out to have had a significant impact on a person or on a whole community.

Measuring the impact of Peace Corps volunteers by the number of students taught or wells dug may have some meaning, but the real impact is in people's hearts. And the way to know about those changes is through stories, not statistics.

So, I offer these stories for people who want to know if the Peace Corps is doing any good. And particularly for current volunteers who wonder whether they are doing any good.

Yes, I assure you, that you are having an impact that will grow over time. Hang in there and yes, take that extra effort. People are watching and noticing and it will make a difference that you probably will never know about.

Steve Aufrecht
whatdoino-steve.blogspot.com

A Peace Corps Remembrance

Greg Ballmer

Out of ignorance, my first thoughts on being offered an opportunity to become a Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand's National Malaria Eradication Project were an imagined life under harsh conditions, perhaps living in a thatched hut in the forest. And, while life for most Thailand PCVs was far from austere (maybe even posh compared with assignments in some countries), malaria volunteers did spend a lot of time in the woods, sometimes slept on plank floors in bamboo huts, slogged through muddy, leech-infested forest trails, and endured poor quality food for days at a time.

My co-worker, Khun Kasem Nimtrakul, and me acting as bait for Anopheles in Nong Bawn, a muddy gem-mining camp in the rain forest of Trat Province, June 1968.

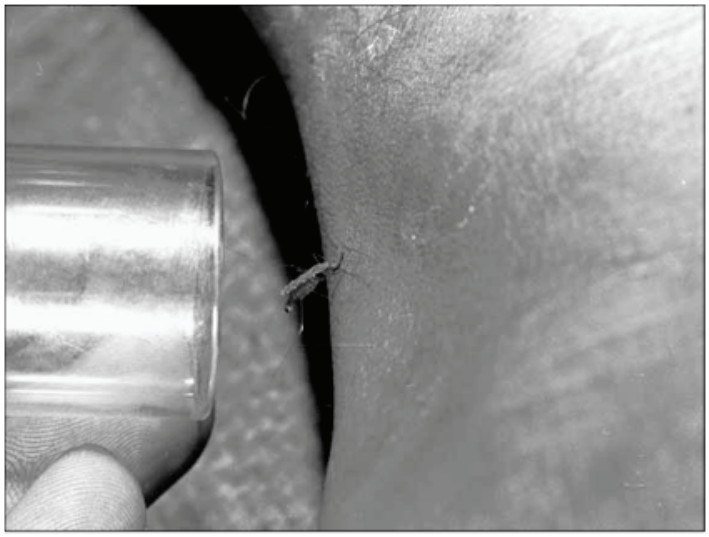
A gem-mining operation in Nong Bawn, Trat (the abandoned holes created breeding sites for malaria vectors), June 1968.

Thailand's National Malaria Eradication Project (NMEP) was second only to the military in the size of

This is perhaps the most dangerous Malaria vector in Thailand for one who lives in the forest.

its work force and was the only branch of Thai government, which regularly interacted with villagers throughout the kingdom.

Primarily during the 1960s, scores of PCVs brought youthful vigor, scientific training, and dedication to their jobs supervising mapping and spraying of rural dwellings (homes in malarious areas were sprayed with DDT at 6- or 12-month intervals), collecting blood smears, and dispensing anti-malarial drugs. We were trained in malaria eradication methods at the international Malaria Eradication Training Center in Manila prior to our arrival in Thailand. A few



Capturing An. dirus (= balabacensis) for later dissection.

of us had the specialty job of working with entomology teams, whose duty was to track the effectiveness of efforts to interrupt malaria transmission. Specifically, we measured the abundance of malaria vector mosquitoes, dissected them to determine the infection rate, conducted susceptibility tests to determine whether the vectors were becoming resistant to insecticides, and conducted epidemiological investigations as needed. This often entailed serving as human bait when we would stay up all night in forest huts collecting vector mosquitoes as they bit our ankles. It was a bit risky and NMEP entomology team members often contracted malaria.

Khun Kasem (NMEP Entomologist) pinning mosquito specimens.

The NMEP operations were divided among five administrative regions with headquarters in Phra Phuttabat (Region 1), Chiang Mai (Region 2), Khon Kaen (Region 3), Song Khla (Region 4) and Bangkok (Region 5). I was stationed in Bangkok at the NMEP headquarters (November 1967-November 1970), serving double duty, along with my counterpart Khun Kasem Nimtrakul, in luxuries of Bangkok.

During 1969, I participated in an intensified effort, along with several other PCVs, to interrupt malaria transmission in Pakchong Distict of Khorat Province, which had become an infamous source of malaria transmission and dispersal to other regions. Pakchong, at the SW margin of the Khorat Plateau, is crisscrossed with creeks and, at that time, heavily forested. But the forest was being cut and burned at a rapid pace as immigrant farmers arrived to grow tapioca and corn. New villages and remote dwellings were being built constantly at the receding forest margin wherein dwelled the dangerous

Khun Kasem (NMEP Entomologist) with microscope, dissecting mosquitoes.

malaria vectors Anopheles balabacensis (now renamed An. dirus and An. minimus). A large unstable seasonal work force contributed to the problem by contracting malaria while working in the fields and then dispersing to other work sites throughout the kingdom. The

Kwian carrying NMEP entomology team supplies and equipment to Khlong Yai in Pak Chong District, 5 Sept. 1969, after the storm.

one malaria PVC assigned to Pakchong at that time (Tim McGloin) was supplemented temporarily with several others, as well as various WHO, USPHS, and Thai malariologists in an intensive effort to find, map, and spray new dwellings being built at the changing forest margin, and to identify and treat infected inhabitants. A reinforced entomology team (sometimes with ten or more members) visited one study site (a remote farmer's dwelling in Tambon Musi) for ten days each month to monitor indoor and outdoor biting rates of the vectors and to conduct surveys on villager behav-

Dr. Mashaal (WHO Chief Malariologist at NMEP) checking for enlarged spleens of village children in Lampang Province.

ior to discern how much malaria transmission might be occurring due to indoor biting (in theory, people sleeping inside sprayed dwellings were protected from mosquitoes) or people working, hunting, or moving about outdoors at night. It turned out that all of the above was occurring.

When our year-long entomological observations began in January, the roads were dry and dusty, but negotiable by 4WD vehicles. By June the rainy season had set in, the road was a muddy quagmire, and the only wheeled vehicle capable of making the 20 km journey from pavement to our study site was an ox cart (kwian), which we piled high with our microscopes, food supplies, and other baggage.

We were like wealthy peasants in that we cooked our own food and ate a simple diet of rice supplemented by local eggs and chickens when we ran out of fresh meat from the Pakchong market. By August we had consumed all available local chickens, but fortunately for us a local farmer had killed two bears found ma-

NMEP entomology team at field "headquarters" in Khlong Yai, Pak Chong District, 24 July 1969.

rauding his corn and turned them into jerky. The bear meat had to be boiled a long time to become edible. The culinary low point came in September after a major storm event had rendered the roads virtually impassable and only one kwian owner could be found who would consent to rent his kwian to us. Most of our crew arrived on foot at the study site late in the day, while our kwian, with all the supplies, arrived a day later. One of my entomology team members (Chuang) collected a number of coconut beetles, which had emerged following the rain, and that was our dinner.

I have only fond memories of my days in Pakchong; perhaps the best memories are those one works hardest for.

A Retrospective on Making a Difference

Greg Ballmer and Dick Murphy
RPCVs Thailand Group XXI

More than 40 years after leaving our Peace Corps service, we found ourselves attending the 50th anniversary celebration of Peace Corps activities in Thailand. One of the speakers was a current young volunteer who reminded us of ourselves 40+ years ago, especially, when he wondered aloud, "Am I really making a difference?"

Oh, the agony of the question! "Am I wasting two years of my life here? " This question is one of the daily torments of Peace Corps service for most volunteers. We have learned that the answer comes much later after Peace Corps service. Take our cases for example.

Each year from 1965 through 1970 and a little thereafter, about two dozen Peace Corps Volunteers were recruited to work in Thailand's National Malaria Eradication Project (NMEP). We were Group XXI, entering the country in 1967.

We came from diverse backgrounds, but like a Karass (defined in Kurt Vonnegut's Cat's Cradle as a group of people who perform the work of God), we worked in common endeavor with Thai counterparts to vanquish the scourge of malaria. Malaria had been identified as the number one impediment to development in many countries around the globe. And the Thai government took it seriously.

The NMEP was the largest manpower employer in Thailand outside of the military. Its minions were responsible for visiting even the most remote villages throughout the country on a regular basis to detect and treat malaria cases, to map and spray (DDT wettable powder) all rural dwellings in malarious areas (generally outside of the central plains) twice annually, to administer treatment to positive cases, and to compile epidemiological data on the effectiveness of the program.

PCVs were involved in all aspects of the program from supervising lab work to conducting epidemiological surveys and mosquito vector surveys. We brought to the program our youthful vigor, optimism, and eagerness to contribute to achieving the tasks at hand. The work was sometimes arduous and even dangerous; not only did some of us contract malaria and other parasites, we also sometimes encountered insurgents who often worked in malaria infested villages. But the work was always interesting and memorable.

At that time, most of us just felt that we were enjoying a great cultural experience – delicious exotic food, lasting friendships, and memories to last a lifetime. OK, so it wasn't all mangoes and sweet sticky rice. Sometimes we slept on bare hardwood or bamboo floors, subsisted on dried fish and broken rice seasoned with raw chilies, and always there were those danged mosquitoes. But those are not the dominant memories.

The NMEP was so effective it put itself out of business, perhaps in unexpected ways. Reduced malaria incidence made it safer to enter or live near forested areas, the breeding grounds for the bulk of malaria vector mosquitoes. This spurred economic development through increased deforestation for lumber and agricultural expansion during a time when Thailand's population was growing rapidly. While one may have mixed feelings about the loss of biological resources, the reduction in forest cover also resulted in a permanent decrease in breeding habitat for malaria vectors. This in turn has made Thailand safer for residents and tourists alike, thereby enhancing the quality of life and conditions for continued economic growth.

Now, returning to visit some of those formerly malaria and insurgent infested areas, we see nice homes, schools, shops, and health clinics where we only dreamed they would be. In fact, one of us just revisited such an area which has now become a popular weekend get-away mountain resort for Thais.

Did we make a difference? **Absolutely**. Carrying those memories and knowing that we played a role in the fantastic development of a beautiful country makes our lives much richer today.

Brief history of malaria eradication in Thailand during the 1960s

G.R. Ballmer (Thai Group XXI)

Malaria eradication in Thailand began with a pilot control program in Chiang Mai Province during 1949-51. This effort was supported by UNICEF and WHO, which used it to test and refine general principles for its worldwide malaria eradication strategy. Malaria

control activities in Thailand gradually expanded to cover 12 million people by 1958 when a transition to the more rigorous goal of eradication began. The effectiveness of initial malaria control/eradication efforts is reflected in the declining malaria death rate (per 100,000 people) from 201.5 in 1949 to 22.8 in 1963. Although true eradication was not possible, the program was able to eliminate malaria transmission from all but the most remote border regions, where the threat remains due to ongoing influx of infected foreign immigrants.

The first full cohort of specialized Peace Corps Thailand malaria volunteers arrived in 1965, when NMEP operations were still expanding to cover the entire country. At that time, areas of low malaria endemicity (chiefly the central plains devoted to rice cultivation) were transitioning from "attack" to "maintenance" phase, allowing redeployment of resources to areas of continuing high malaria transmission. Malaria transmission stubbornly continued in some problem areas, threatening to upset the timetable for eradication (initially projected at 7 years) and to supply a reservoir of infected individuals who might reintroduce malaria to areas where it had been eliminated.

The reported incidence of malaria actually increased after Group XXI arrived in country in 1967. There were doubts among some PCVs and even among some project administrators at that time as to whether malaria actually could be eradicated according to the plan. Since PCVs served only for a relatively brief period, they could not witness the ultimate success of the project which was achieved only after additional years of sustained effort. Malaria incidence steadily declined after 1969 and eventually the remaining surveillance activities of the NMEP were subsumed by the existing framework of public health facilities.

The increase in malaria incidence during the late 1960s was a "blip" in the overall progress and could be accounted for by the overall effectiveness of NMEP operations and especially the efficiency in detecting and treating malaria cases. During the 1960s there was a surge in conversion of forest to cultivated agriculture, with concomitant increase in mobility of the rural population. It was difficult for spray teams to keep up with the rate of new farmhouse construction as the forests were being felled; thus, some portion of the population, especially near the receding forest fringe, remained at risk of malaria infection. Yet such cases were quickly detected and treated. At the same time, improved highways and public transport resulted in a large number of migrant workers, many of whom became infected with malaria. Such mobile malaria cases could be recorded in multiple districts (thereby inflating the apparent incidence) where they subsequently sought treatment and posed the added threat of reintroducing malaria into regions where it had been eliminated.

Perhaps the most notable example was Amphur Pak Chong of Nakhon Ratchasima Province, a hilly region which includes the main travel corridor between the Northeast (Isaan) and the Central plains. Pak Chong was once known as "The Valley of Death" for the high probability of travelers to contract malaria by spending even one night in that area. Due to effective antimalarial operations (and new highway infrastructure built for US Military bases), immigrants flooded in and rapidly converted the dense forest cover of Pak Chong to agricultural uses. Additional seasonal migrant workers passed through the area to harvest the crops for a few weeks each year and then moved on to work elsewhere, such as the tin mines of the South and the gem fields of Chantaburi and Trat Provinces, before returning to their own farms. This helped to bring about a related problem of drug-resistant malaria. People infected with malaria often failed to take a fully curative regimen of drugs, resulting in survival of drug-tolerant and -resistant strains. The drug-resistant strains could only be treated with quinine, which was in short supply, and new synthetic antimalarial drugs, which were experimental at that time.

In response the NMEP intensified operations in Pak Chong during 1969 by bringing in additional workers, including WHO and USOM advisors and PCVs borrowed from other zones. The combination of intensified malaria eradication efforts and ongoing decrease in vector habitat eventually subdued malaria in Pak Chong (and throughout the country). But that result was still uncertain in the late 1960s.

Thai 24, 1968-1970

Secondary TEFL, Higher Education

Back in the Day

Karen Beatty

After serving in Peace Corps Thailand from 1968 to 1970, I yearned to return to Thailand to visit old haunts and forge new ones. Operating under the premise that in life and travel you should not carry more baggage than you can manage by yourself, I set

2000 Reunion with Adjohn Saowanee at Srinakharinwioot University (named for the princess), formerly Prasarnmitr College of Education where I taught 1968-1970.

off for Southeast Asia toting just two pieces of carry-on luggage:

It's June 2000 (Buddhist Era 2543), and I'm finally back in Bangkok in rendezvous mode. It's been 32 years since my Peace Corps group first arrived in Meuang Thaai (Thailand) during the Vietnam War era. Yes-

Karen Beatty with maw saw students in 1968 at Prasarnmitr Demonstration School

terday I had dinner with Jerry, a former Peace Corps Turkey Volunteer who is departing for Cambodia on an ESCAP mission this week, and his wife, Krisdaporn, a Thai UNHCR employee. We had a fabulously aroi (delicious) Thai dinner in my old Sukhumvit neighborhood, which doesn't exist anymore as I knew it. I arrived at this now upscale area on a fantastical vehicle called the rot fai faa (sky train) to encounter an electrified street flashing the name Soy Cowboy. A high-rise sits atop the site where my original tiny thatched-roof house once perched, and the only familiar remaining structure is the venerable Siam Society. At least the warm sawatdii (greeting) from Kris and Jerry was familiar.

My little house on Soi Asoke in 1968

Tonight in Bangkok I'm hooking up with Howard and Ted, former Thai #24 Peace Corps volunteers in town for ***thurakit*** (business) and ***yiam*** (visiting) respectively. We gather at Howard's business hotel on Ratchadamnern Avenue , where we yuu choei choei (hang out) and fall into easy camaraderie reminiscing about how things were in Thailand BACK IN THE DAY. Exchanging updates on who we have seen, or not, and whatever else is currently in the RPCV pipeline, we ascertain that: 83

Rick and Karline are in Shanghai working in international schools. Jim and Jered already left Shanghai and bought a house in San Francisco. Lani and her family, retired from UNHCR, are ensconced in upstate NY, after serving in Serbo-Croatia, after Turkey, after the Sudan, after Pakistan. Paul is off working on an agricultural project in the Philippines. Marg is still a Sister of Mercy in Africa and recently visited Jackie, who is in Arizona working on a liaison program with the University of Laos in Vientiane.

2000: Karen Beatty in Northwest Thailand

And where, we wonder, is Dow? (Once a shepherd in Iran.) As for Wayne, will he return once again to Southeast Asia or finally settle in the States? Chaat naa baai baai (not likely in this life or the next). Many of us have kids; many do not. Rick and Karline's daughter Stephanie served three years in Peace Corps Russia (too cold for our tropical souls), and she is about to marry a Russian fisherman who barely speaks English. Jackie's daughter Alena wants to blow off college in the States and attend Payap University in Chiengmai Province, northern Thailand. We empathize with the parents. And laugh. It's not like we ever concerned ourselves with the fears or hopes of our parents, BACK IN THE DAY.

We three old friends decide to hit the humid Bangkok streets and doen len (meander) past the high-rises, down the dark side streets and littered back alleys of old Krung Thep (Bangkok). Not to worry about gentrification: it will take more than a lifetime to sanitize this Bangkok.

Ted reports, "Hey, we stopped by the Peace Corps Office yesterday and it's been moved back to that old mansion on Thanon Rajvithi." Apparently not much else is the same with Peace Corps, though.

1968: Karen Beatty with Prasarnmitr student in Prajinburi

At the office Ted fortuitously ran into Khun Singh, a Thai Peace Corps administrator still there after more than 30 years. Surprisingly, Singh remembered many of our group, and lamented that the present, greatly reduced number of volunteers and staff, will have a hard time measuring up to us. He said, "Nowadays volunteers complain if their email is down; they take themselves too seriously, expect too much." Howie recalls that BACK IN THE DAY we could only receive telegrams, and it sometimes took several days to even reach a volunteer. Before Ted left, Khun Singh produced youthful photos of Dr. Wilson and Ann Morgan and further reminisced about how things were, BACK IN THE DAY.

I wonder: *What was it about our generation that made things stick? There was the war, and sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll, so it was never really all about innocence and idealism. Maybe it was just youthful exuberance from free falling into an aberrant little niche of socio-political upheaval. You had to be there, and all that, BACK IN THE DAY.*

In Bangkok's dank night air Howie, Ted and I continue our journey, tramping through a disassembling talaat tawn kham (night market); any such one off the tourist beat would be the same. Our memory senses are assaulted and comforted by the sights and smells: Pungent durian (a popular fruit described as like eating strawberries and cream in an outhouse); kluay khaek (fried bananas); incense and tiger balm; oh-liang (strong iced black coffee); kai yaang (grilled northeastern chicken); aromatic fresh cut sapparot (pineapple); assorted entrails speckled with flies (whether they are discarded on the floor or still hung for consumption); cloyingly sweet jasmine flowers and steaming kuaytiaw (noodles). Also lacing the night air is the familiar whiff of raw sewage draining into the gutters and klongs (canals, or what's left of them) of old Bangkok.

The market setting also lends us former volunteers the gratification of encountering the ***khon thai*** (Thai people) in a more traditional milieu: throngs of locals haggling for last minute bargains or shutting down the family stalls, some smiling or staring at us, albeit less than BACK IN THE DAY.

Karen Beatty on tiaw with colleague from Prasarnmitr in 1969

Accustomed to showing deference to the ancient deeply etched faces with missing teeth or teeth stained dark red from champing on betel nut, we nod and wai (bow) to the elders, though they're likely not much older than us. The ubiquitous bossy ***khun yai*** (grandmothers) are counting up the day's take while ***khun phaw*** (dad) and ***khun mae*** (mom) and the assorted ***phii-nawng*** (siblings) stash the goods for the night, roll out the sleep mats, and hose down the detritus toward another vendor's side. Some of the ***dek-dek naa-rak*** (adorable

1968: My little house on Soi Asoke drying out after a monsoon flood

children) are still very much awake; there are a few whispers of "farang" (foreigner) but no one is begging or hustling—we're too far off the beaten path for that. It's well into evening now, so we exit the market and wander deserted streets, eventually, randomly, selecting a raan aahaan thai (Thai restaurant). To the relief of the servers (likely all one family), we ignore the proffered menu and order in Thai: kai phat bai kaphrao (chicken with holy basil and chilies), phat phak khanaa (something like collard greens), kaeng kari pet (hot spicy curry), kai phat met mamuang (chicken and cashews). Howie requests the hawy malaeng phun (green mussels), likely culled right from Bangkok's murky Chao Phrya River. Of course we shouldn't eat them, but we all do. The Thais take turns buzzing our table to tell us that we ***phut phaasaa thai keng maak*** (speak Thai so well), and to marvel that we learned to speak Thai ***samsip pii kan laew*** (more than thirty years ago). The various delectable dishes are served in Thai fashion, i.e., in any old order, to be shared communally and eaten with a spoon, unlike Chinese food. The Thais are delighted that we ***gin aahaan thai pen*** (can eat Thai food) and ***chawp phet*** (like it spicy).

We now talk more about our own lives. Some people our age are retiring but we won't, ever. Ted may look for a job in Laos. Howie finally got his love life right and has a three-year-old now that he's in his mid fifties. My twelve-year-old did her school project on Thailand. I recently heard from Steve who says Thailand would be an ideal place to live out one's final days. (He and John work their thriving import business mostly through Thailand and India.) Do you remember the time I…. Whatever happened to….. There are the ones we married. The ones we didn't. The ones it's best to forget. The ones we never will forget. Somehow it all came together and the people from our Peace Corps group are generally phaaw jai (content). And we haven't changed that much (Have we?), since BACK IN THE DAY.

Toward the end of our meal, someone does the ***liang*** (surreptitiously picks up the tab), because in Thailand you would never be so crude as to discuss or ante up baht (money) at a group dinner. We exit the restaurant and move on to the next venue. Why finish off a Bangkok night ***kap pheuan*** (with friends) in a restaurant?

Strolling back toward a more upscale part of the city, we spot a bar called, incongruously, SOHO. Inside we ascertain that the bar, run by a French expat, is an excessively air-conditioned watering hole for the European set. We ignore them and strike up a conversation with the Thai waiter who is dii jai (happy) to serve us because we phut phaasaa thai keng. He informs us that he wasn't even born when we learned to speak Thai,

Thai 24, 2006

BACK IN THE DAY. Someone orders the obligatory Singha Beer, but I notice we former volunteers (a little more weight, a lot less hair) no longer consume so much alcohol.

Now the table talk turns political: Adulations for the incomparable King Bhumipol... I recall when, back in the day, His Majesty whipped around Bangkok in that yellow Rolls Royce, smiling and waving to us farangs, while the Thai people prostrated themselves along the sidewalks. Have you been to Vietnam? It's teeming with American tourists and the Vietnamese want to talk about the Stock Market, not the American War, as they call it. (So much for redemption for all those returning U.S. Veterans....) Yeah, the Muslims are continuing to exert a conservative influence in Malaysia. Remember that guy who left our training group and later turned up, seemingly everywhere, as part of Peace Corps Malaysia?…. What about this surge of nationalism in Laos? It mostly seems to be about rebuffing Thailand, but how can you tell what or who is really behind the unrest? Hope our families haven't been watching the CNN feature stories about the bombings in Vientiane and the border clashes between Thailand and the roving bands of Hmong ***kawng jon*** (terrorists).

Of course, Ted and I are both next headed for Laos, in the direction of the bombings. ***Mai pen rai*** (never

mind). You can get car-jacked in Florida, blown up in Oklahoma, slaughtered at Kent State. We shrug it off; better to journey at risk through life's fullness than to be immobilized at every border by fears real and imagined.

From the dessert menu, I order up the crème brulee and pass it around; we roll our eyes at the sumptuous excess. Yet there were always expat places like this in Bangkok BACK IN THE DAY, so how much have things changed, really? I finesse the check this time, and we again spill out into the steamy Bangkok night and take our farewells. *Hey, regards to the family. Check in with me on email*! ***Pai tiaw haj sanuk dii*** (*Have fun in your travels*). ***Pop kan mai na*** (*We'll meet again.*)… perhaps in Luang Prabang, or maybe Djakarta, or even Eugene, Oregon.

We former Peace Corps Volunteers drift toward our various determinations and destinations, assured that, before long ***thii nai kaw dai*** (*wherever*), we will meet up with an old training mate, a former colleague, a very dear friend. You see, we are sanit kan talawt kaan (bonded forever) by the awesome good fortune of having been part of Peace Corps Thailand in the late 60's, BACK IN THE DAY.

Walk on the Moon
Sandra Storey

I've never seen a man walk on the moon.
I missed the original miracle.
Green mountains blocked all TV reception
in our lush town in Thailand.
I listened to Neil Armstrong walk on the moon,
heard his small step from his lips,
felt his large leap in my ears.

All of our eyes were focused
on the transistor radio
positioned just so/antenna at an angle
crackling on a table
outdoors at the foot of the stairs
where our students' black uniform shoes
lay waiting for them to descend.

The students listened to the moon
in their classrooms above,
louvered walls open,
so we shared the sounds of the voices
bouncing.
Water buffalo shuffled near us
silently mowing the lawn.

I was told I had to explain the next day
how the magic was done
because I was from the United States, too.
Though I protested I didn't know,
I did,
drawing ellipses and humans in chalk,
speaking the five tones of Thai.

Whenever I get a hint these days
they're going to show a tape
of a man walk on the moon
I cover my eyes,

but I don't move.
Some things you miss
you want to remember that way.

Phuket Memories

By Collin Tong

My first trip back to Phuket, my former Peace Corps town, was in late September 1978. I was a University of Washington faculty lecturer returning from a two-week visit to China sponsored by the U.S. – China People's Friendship Association, en route to Bombay, Athens and other stops on my journey back to Seattle. As many Thai RPCVs have done, for nostalgic reasons, I stayed at the Thai Hotel in Bangkok, where my Thai 24 group spent their first week of in-country orientation in the fall of 1968. Next morning, I hopped a Thai Airways flight and spent three days in Phuket visiting teaching colleagues and former students at Phuket Girls School [Rongrian Satri Phuket].

My short visit was memorable. Aajaan Yenchit Nataguathong, our much-esteemed aajaan yaay at Satri Phuket, hosted a lavish seafood dinner with other teaching colleagues at the Kaan Eng restaurant, renowned for its smoked fish, blaa phaw, at Rawaii Beach. I stayed with the family of my closest friend at the school, Nonglak Tantawatana, a former English teacher and librarian and Bangsaen College of Education alumnus. I visited several former students, including a M.S. 5 student and recent graduate of Chulalongkorn University who was now an English teacher at Phuket Girls' School. Of all the experiences I've had in my lifetime, seeing her again was probably my proudest moment. That visit, the first of many trips back to the island, brought back many memories of my days as a Peace Corps volunteer in Phuket.

Ten years earlier, shortly after our orientation that initial week in Bangkok, I was at Songkhla's General Educational Development Center working at a teacher-training conference along with other new Thai 24 volunteers. Eager to get to Phuket, I left a day early in an overcrowded taxi for a spine-tingling jaunt to the island. My taxi driver was determined to set a new Guinness Book of Records land-speed world record for a Toyota Corona. Barreling down a dusty road near Trang at what must have been seventy miles an hour, our passengers stared in horror as an enormous pig from a nearby town bolted directly in front of us. Not having time to avoid the frightened animal, the driver plowed into the pig with predicable results, catapulting the hapless animal 12 feet in the air. Not an auspicious beginning for a new volunteer.

Phuket Girls' School was, and still is, arguably one of the best academic provincial secondary schools in Thailand. I was the second Peace Corps TEFL teacher in the school's history. After several months living in a small, one bedroom bungalow on the school's sprawling campus, through Thai friends I met a Thai physician at the Vachira Phuket Hospital [named after Vajiravudh, [Rama VI King], Dr. Bannya Sanguanchua, and Kosol Surakomol, a chemical engineer, who graciously invited me to stay at their home at the hospital campus in return for teaching them English. They had a wonderful cook, who also did our laundry. It was hardly what I had always envisioned myself doing as a Peace Corps volunteer – living in a mud hut and going native.

My neighbor was a retired 70-year-old Chinese woman, the aunt of Hollywood actress Nancy Kwan [Flower Drum Song, the World of Suzy Wong]. Every morning, I would ride my bike several miles to school, past lush, verdant fields, enjoying the sight of swaying palm

trees and sunny skies. I'd think to myself that I had the greatest job in the world – teaching in a girl's school on a tropical island in south Thailand. My brother David, a Peace Corps volunteer in Sarawak, Malaysia, and his friend Joe Battershaw, visited me a few months later. I distinctly remember his first words after one of our thiaws to Batong and Surin beaches. "Collin, this isn't Peace Corps. This is Maui!" Crestfallen, I continued my TEFL teaching in blissful denial.

Phuket has a very large, diverse population of overseas Chinese [hua chiao], many of them Hokkien from southeastern China, where my parents grew up. Along with my regular teaching at the Girls School, I taught an evening AUA class for some of my teacher colleagues and people in the community. One of my students, Anan, was an accountant at the local Phuket municipality. A diligent and earnest student who regularly peppered me with questions, Anan had the uncanny propensity for showing up everywhere I went in Phuket to practice his English. Knowing that Cantonese was my native dialect, Anan was determined to introduce me to young Chinese divorcee, a local doctor who worked at the Seventh Day Adventist Clinic. Embarrassed, and

somewhat reluctantly, I accepted her invitation to dinner, along with her good friend, Anan. Her hospitality and culinary mastery were impeccable. I lost count of the many wonderful dishes she prepared, many regional Cantonese dishes my mother used to cook. She kept trundling in and out of the kitchen with more and more dishes until I could barely eat any more. I never saw her again during my time as a volunteer, but I will never forget that evening. It was one of many memories I had of the Phuket community's warmth and hospitality.

My summer project was teaching Thai Franciscan nuns, all primary school English teachers, at Mater Dei, a private Catholic secondary school in Bangkok near the Erawan Hotel. It was an enjoyable project, which I did with some of my Thai 24 and 22 friends. Although I loved the Franciscan students, many of whom would later become good friends, I could not get used to the noise and congestion of Bangkok after living in such idyllic tropical conditions in Phuket. I could hardly wait to get back after the summer project was over.

As an Asian-American volunteer in Thailand, I found living in a predominantly Thai Chinese community in Phuket an interesting experience. Although my Thai language skills were decidedly at the beginner's level, I found many of my Thai friends assumed otherwise because I looked Thai! Noel Kobayashi, a Thai 2 volunteer and alumnus of the University of Redlands, my alma mater, and Timothy Wong, Thai 6, both spoke excellent Thai and were as close to native fluency as anyone could be. Tim, who just retired as a professor of Asian literature at Arizona State University in Tempe, recalled a funny experience when they showed up to greet an incoming group of new Peace Corps volunteers at Don Muang Airport. They decided to pose as official host-country dignitaries. The new volunteers bowed deferentially for many minutes before Noel and Tim began laughing their heads off. Before long, some of the new recruits sensed that something was awry, but they kept waaying and doing their best to show their respect. Fi-

nally, not able to contain his laughter anymore, Tim said to the volunteers, "Okay fellas, it's time to cut the crap. Welcome to Thailand!"

I made many more return visits to Phuket when I

worked for a brief time at Thai Airways International. Linda, my wife, and I once took my parents to China and spent several days in Bangkok accompanying them on a Chao Phrya river cruise to Ayutthaya and sightseeing in the capitol. My last trip back to Phuket was three years ago, when I stayed for a week and visited Thai friends. While the island of Phuket has changed beyond recognition, with hundreds of beachside hotels, resorts, and condos, and wall-to-wall farang ex-patriates and

tourists, the community of Phuket is still, for the most part, much as it was when I was there 44 years ago. The warm memories of my time as a Peace Corps volunteer there continue to enrich my life, and I can hardly wait to go back for another visit.

Collin Tong [Thai 24] is a Seattle-based freelance journalist and contributing writer for Crosscut Public Media and the New York Times. He taught at Phuket Girls' School from 1968 to 1969.

Ernie Geefay

Learning to Get Around Bangkok, 1969

We arrived in Bangkok in l969, and 3 volunteers and myself rented a nice big house together on Soi Aree Samphan Saam off of Paholyothin Rd. When we got settled in Bangkok several of us decided to go shopping for some western food.

Back then there weren't any big shopping malls or "Costco" type warehouses that you find everywhere in Bangkok today. If you wanted western food, you had to go to a specialty store.

One well-known store was the BANGKOK HAM, a small shop with a limited supply of frozen meats like pork chops. Thais refer to the BANGKOK HAM as 'BANGKOK HAM."

But being new to the country, we thought we had to do a bit of translation, so we went out to Paholyothin Rd. one day and hailed a taxi.

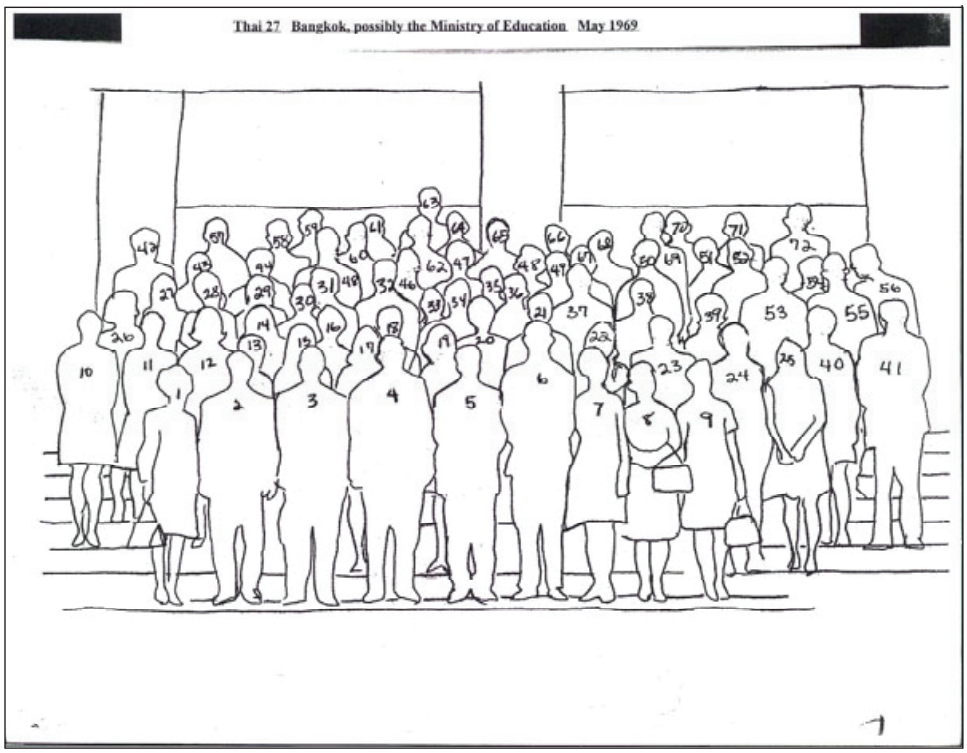
We asked the driver to take us to "Grung Thep Muu" ..which was a literal translation of "Bangkok" plus "Pig".

As hard as we tried to explain ourselves to the taxi driver, he was totally perplexed. He had never heard of the "Grung Thep Muu".

We never got to go shopping there that day. But we did later on when we discovered our error.

Ernie working on a script.


Thai 27-Honolulu International Airport-Pan Am Flt. 2 for Bangkok May 11, 1969



The names and numbers that go with the photos and diagrams are: Kevin Delaney (6, BKK only), Ann Morgan (7, BKK only), Dewleen Hayes (10), Barbara Talbot (11), Elaine Somogyl (12), Barbara Thomas (13), Pat Forsythe (14), Kathy Fukao (15, BKK only), Barbara Dressler (16 BKK only), Fran Gelsone (17), Paulette Seiler (18), Dianne Sherman (19), Michele Stroshine (20, HNL only), Steve Krichels (21), Grace Hendershott (22), Tom McEachron (23), Ernie Geefay (24), Susie Cooper (25), Gay Turner (27), Jan Dunn (28), Maureen O'Brien (29), Ingrid Danapei (30), Don Blakemore (31), Paul Hobelman (32), Joyce Wagner (33), Fran Wells (34), Diana McConkey (35), Bob Blau (36), Chuck Berry (37), Cher Conger (39, BKK only), Mona Melanson (40), Gary Arrowsmith (41, BKK only), Steve Talbot (42), Renee Trent (43), Kevin Snow (44), Steve Trippe (45), Sue Corcoran (46), Rachel Barker (47), Wynn Debevoise Eggingon (48, BKK only), Lou Parisien (50), Hugh Leong (51), Harold Hayes (52), Brian Francis (53), Bob Narcisi (54), Jim Barber (56?, BKK only), Sam Sorich (57), Dave Johnson (58), Bob Drexler (60, BKK only), Vance Hyndman (65), Lloyd Miller (62), Pete Coombs (63), Ken Debevoise (64, BKK only), Dickie Williams (66, BKK only), Chesley Prince (67), Anthony (Skip) Mynar (68), Derek Brereton (69), Kevin Wheeler (70), Vill Muir (71), Mike Schmueker (72), Tony Horne (73), Bonnie Pacala (72, HNL only), Napong (75, HNL only), Pat Stark (76, HNL only), Bob Stroshine (77, HNL only). Not identified: Bart Butler, Mary Hackbarth, Jim Marion, Lucia McAlpin, John Pearce, Kitty Proctor, Alina Stephanovsky, Nancy Straky, Barbara Theobald, Steve Theobald, Nick Thiele, Pat Weber, Judd Wyant, Mary Wyant.

Thai 30, 1970-1972
Teacher Training College

Jongkolnee "T." Wontog
Julianne Gilmore

Jongkolnee was missing. Soon the whole of the teachers college would be abuzz -- the farang just let one of her best students disappear. I was panicked; my life flashed before me.

I had had my misgivings about teaching English from the very beginning. First, I had never liked English in college. Second, I had always scoffed that I would rather starve than be a teacher.

Alright, I was wrong about the teaching. I had grown to like teaching during Peace Corps training. I had always been a ham, and having all those eyes focused on me egged me on. Moreover, during training I had run across a book by Wilga Rivers revealing the learning psychology behind all those grammar drills, how practice gets the mind to absorb language. What a blast -- I got a kick out of being in front of a class, and I relished watching students learn. I was a master puppeteer -- and thanks to Wilga Rivers, I knew what strings to pull, why to pull them, and how to do it deftly.

My assignment after training was a bummer. How did the Peace Corps come up with Uttaradit? It was a backwater with a metropolitan area of three blocks by four blocks. Worse still, the teachers college was a long, sweaty, dusty twenty-minute bike ride from down-

Julianne and students in the language lab.

town. Uttaradit boasted the finest quality brooms and the highest recorded temperature in Thailand. Nine hours by train from Bangkok and seven hours from ChiangMai, "UtterGut" seemed a more appropriate appellation.

23 members of Magnolia House.

I implored Achaan Kit Phongsadhat, the TEFL director, to reconsider. Perhaps the Peace Corps could use my newly honed TEFL skills to contribute to some larger, more established institution. He was unmoved. In his eyes, Uttaradit was perfect for me. So, there I went, off to the hot, broom capital of Thailand, with little else to do than teach English.

Uttaradit turned out to be a TEFLer's dream. The Teachers College was headed by a forward-looking director, Achaan Boonlert Srihong. Not afraid to try new things, Achaan Boonlert, along with the English department, gave volunteers lots of creative license. Volunteers interviewed and selected the English majors. Then the students had all their English classes together as a group.

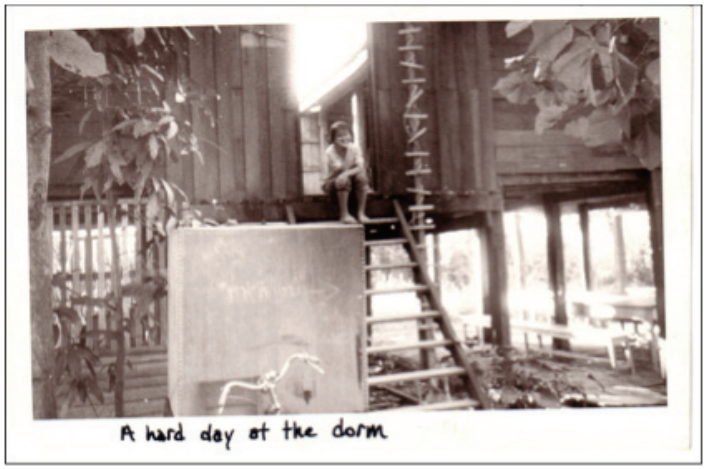
Likit and Jongkolnee

If watching students learn was fun during practice teaching in Peace Corps training, it was an exquisite challenge when I got to know real students, all future English teachers in Thailand. The freshman class that I would shepherd for two years came to be known as the 23 Musketeers (Yiisip-saam Thahaan Sua).

One day it came to me that only one thing stood between these twenty-three charges and perfect English, and that was was me. Two years was precious little time to get the final -s on plurals and -ed on the past tense. I caught fire, willing to use any occasion, any idea, or any amount of homework. We had workshops, we had plays, we even had a summer English Camp.

Okay, Achaan Kit, you were right; I was wrong. Uttaradit was the perfect place. I was in love with 23 students; I was learning what it meant to be a teacher.

But, at the present moment, with one of those charges unaccounted for, even yesterday seemed like the good old days.



Thai 34, 1971-1973

Secondary TEFL, Agriculture Education

Big Frog in Little Kalasin

Carolyn Nickels-Cox

It was a pleasant evening. Chuck and I sat in the living room of our house correcting student workbooks. As it approached the time when we could tune in a broadcast from China or Vietnam on our shortwave radio, I heard a loud racket coming from behind the house. I opened the backdoor and peeked out.

Nothing.

I stepped out onto the brick patio Chuck had laid a few months earlier for Thanksgiving.

Next door, I could see our teacher-neighbor and his nephew standing outside beating on cooking pots.

"Chuck, come out here! Something strange is going on!"

Chuck joined me.

Ajaan Wirote waved with a stern smile and returned to his rhythmic pounding.

"What're you doing?" Chuck called across the space between the two houses.

"A frog's eating the moon!" Ajaan Wirote pointed skyward with his wooden spoon. "We need to chase him away."

I walked to the side of the house where I could get a clear view of the sky.

Then, I saw it!

Something had taken gigantic bite out of the huge and perfectly

Carolyn in her Peace Corps helmet getting ready to ride!

round, white orb.

The hair on my arms and neck stood on edge.

I ran inside and grabbed a cooking pot and a metal spoon. Back outside, I began beating with all my might.

Chuck in the backyard showing off bananas on one our many trees.

Chuck chortled. I looked at him and told him to grab a pot and get to work.

The cacophony in the neighborhood increased until the frog began a slow retreat and all became right again in the universe.

I slept well that night.

Pat Hughes

Amphur Thamaka, Changwat Kanchanaburi

My service as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand has been the single most profound experience of my life. It truly shaped the person I've become, defined my responsibilities as a citizen of this world and clarified my perspective of my purpose in this lifetime.

Thailand was such a wonderful country in which to serve! Part of my heart will forever remain in the Land of Smiles and with the Thai people I came to love so deeply.

I am humbled by the fact that I gained so much more from the Thai people than I could ever have given to them.

I will always be proud that I served my country as a Peace Corps Volunteer and that I contributed a small part to the effort to bring peace to this planet.
It truly was the toughest and best job that I ever loved.

Pat Hughes in her karachikan uniform on site in Amphur Thamaka.

Steve Fox

When I arrived in Buriram as a Peace Corps Volunteer teacher at Buriram Wittayalai in June 1971, I asked the Ajaan-Yai in my halting Thai if he could identify a student to share my house. I thought it would be a good way to improve my Thai, help me understand the town and the school better, and provide financial support and a place to live for a student who otherwise might not be able to attend school. The faculty (I never learned how the process worked, but it clearly was a collaborative effort) introduced me to Lai Watiroyram.

He was a bright eighth-grader from a village about 15 kilometers from the school. He had a thirst for learning and a cross-cultural curiosity that never ceased to make me pause to think about my own society. This became the most symbiotic relationship imaginable. Lai introduced me to village life with his family, showed me the rhythms of a rice farmer's year, became my language teacher, made sure I not only participated in but understood local festivals and customs, and explored the area in ways even other Volunteers could not. Together, we attended Wat fairs, sailed banana-leaf boats for Loy Kratong, appreciated the finer points of Thai movies, and explored thousand-year-old Khmer-era temple ruins (sparking a lifelong interest in archeology in me).

A room in my house made it possible for Lai to attend school; living with a native English speaker enabled him to attain the highest score in the province on the English examination and secure entrance to the regional Teacher Training College when he completed tenth grade, leading to a career as a high school English teacher. Had we not crossed paths, he probably would have left school after eighth grade to return to his parents' farm. In the two years we shared a house, he learned more about the quirks of American society than I thought possible; one of my favorites came when he picked up a copy of the International Herald Tribune's comics page. Snoopy was sitting atop his doghouse in the Peanuts strip, typewriter balanced in front of him, working on the beginning of his latest novel: "It was a dark and stormy night . . ." the world's only talking beagle had begun. Lai's reaction brought it back to basics for me: "Teacher, I don't understand this. Why can the dog type?"

After two years in Buriram, I moved to Bangkok to serve for two more years on a team of PCVs revising the ***English for Thai Students*** series. Lai and I remained in touch, and he visited me once or twice. Poignantly, he was the only person to see me off when I flew out of Bangkok at the end of my Peace Corps service (going to the airport marked the first time he rode in a taxi, saw an airplane up close, or rode in an elevator). We continued to exchange letters, but lost each others' addresses after too many moves when I returned to school, and have not been in contact for perhaps 30 years. But his is the only full name I can still recall from my two years in Buriram, and a face that will stay with me forever.

Lai and I changed each others' lives in enduring ways. As I prepare to attend the celebration of Peace Corps Thailand's fifty years of service to the Thai and American people, the first thing I will do is write to the Ajaan-Yai of Buriram Wittayalai to ask for help in finding my student, friend, and mentor, Lai Watiroyram. I want to see him, hug him, and thank him.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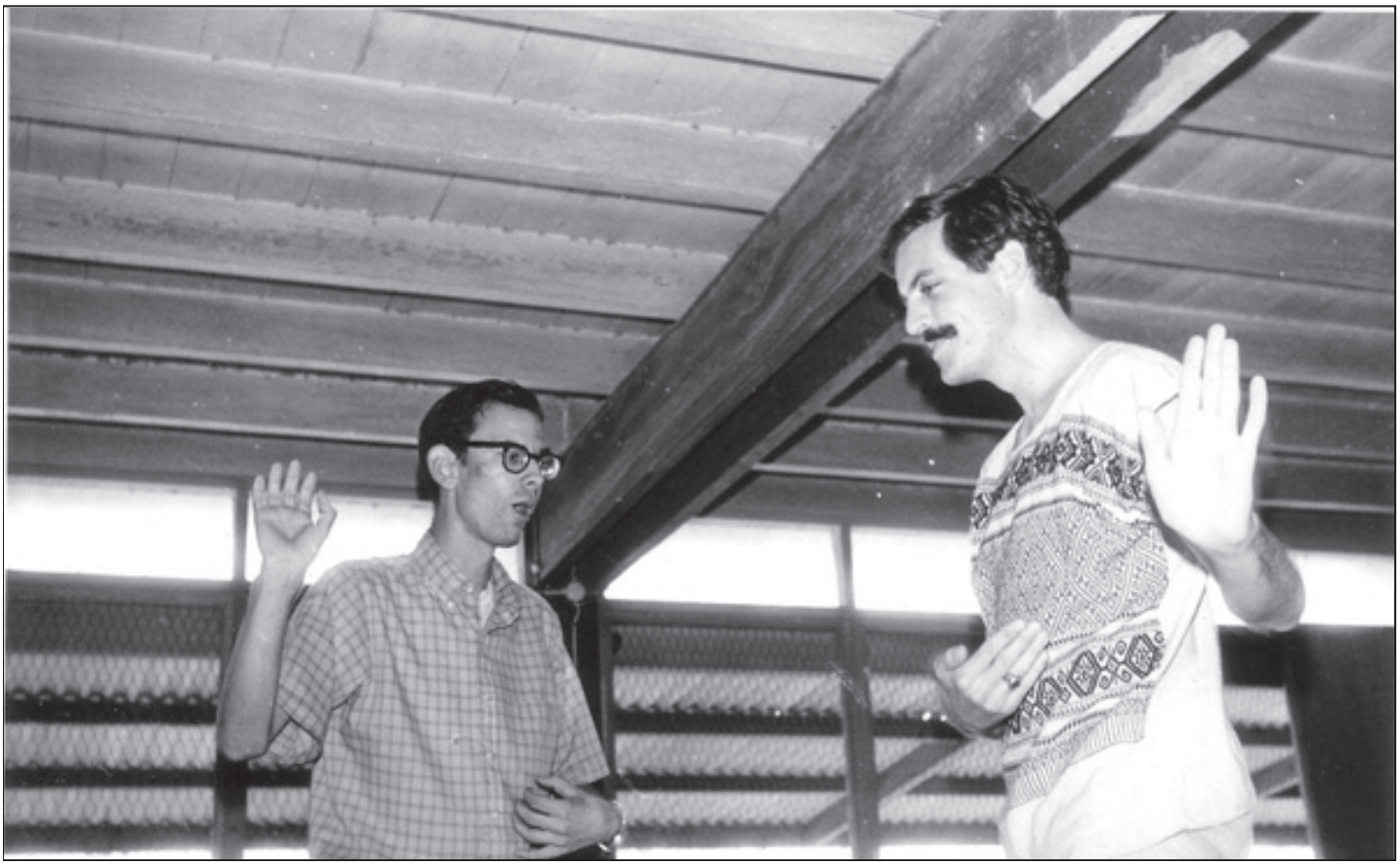
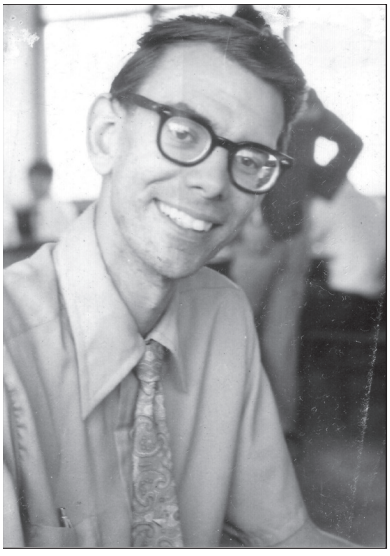
Thai 35, 1971-1973
Higher Education



Jim Matchett

<u>The Invitation</u>



Here it is at last, the invitation from the Peace Corps. Destination Thailand. Having studied Spanish in high school, I was expecting to go somewhere in Latin America, but I don't mind where I go. As far as I know, the war in Vietnam has not spilled over to that country, so Thailand sounds OK to me. Ever since the Peace Corps got started in the early 1960s, it has been my dream to join up and see another part of the world. The U.S. army wanted me as part of their organization, but possible armed military combat in Vietnam was not exactly the social interaction I was searching for. Due to poor eyesight, thankfully, my U.S. army invitation was revoked. My eyesight will not keep me out of the Peace Corps and I decide I will go to Thailand.

<u>Hawaii</u>

In the spring of 1971, my group, some 35 strong or so, arrives in the big island of Hawaii for training. Since I have a degree in education, I am assigned to the group who will go into higher education. We are sent to Honomu, a town of about a thousand near Akaka Falls State Park, north of Hilo. During the week, we are busy studying mostly Thai language and customs with a little language teaching methodology. We are staying in a large barracks-like building we have dubbed the Honomu Hilton. Sometime during our training, we begin practice teaching with our first students, Japanese Americans living in and around Honomu. Many of them have never learned to speak English.

Though claimed by the Peace Corps during the week, on weekends we are all over that island. There are excursions to Volcanoes National Park, lush and tropical Wiapio Valley and the Kona coast on the western side of Hawaii Island. At Volcanoes National Park, Kilauea Volcano is busy erupting and lava flows race towards the sea. Where the hot lava meets the cool ocean waters, clouds of steam billow into the air. At Kona beaches we go body surfing and ride the waves. I also organize a deep-sea fishing boat expedition. Though we don't catch any marlin or other large fish, we do get a few tuna, which get cooked up at the main Peace Corp training site in Hilo, next to Rainbow Falls.

In Hawaii, a couple of volunteers have close calls. One falls into the water above Rainbow Falls and is nearly swept over. Another is caught in an outgoing tide and has to be rescued before being taken out to sea. However, when we arrive in Thailand, we are all together, nary a volunteer lost.

Bangkok

We spend a week in Bangkok after completing the first part of our training in Hawaii. There we are given lectures on culture and safety in Thailand. This is important because there are several ways to get into trouble, such as drinking untreated water. In spite of precautions, I get sick with stomach cramps and diarrhea. Soon my weight has plunged nearly 50 pounds down to 130 on my six-foot frame. It would never go above that throughout my stay in Thailand. Though magnificent, Bangkok is noisy, dirty and crowded. It is not here I wish to spend the next two years.

Songkhla

The final part of our training takes place in Songkhla, a small town in the southern part of Thailand on the beach. On the first day, I have a problem when I go to the toilet; there is no flush, only a pot of water and a dipper. It takes me forever to figure out the connection. In Songkhla, we continue our training with more emphasis on methodology. We have some local students for practice. They take us out to the beach and when I go in, the water is so warm I feel I am in a giant bathtub. As we did in Hawaii, we make excursions, to the bustling town of Hat Yai and beyond. A small group of us travels to one of the largest sitting Buddhas in the world at Narathi-wat near the Malaysian border. There are few people to be seen, hardly surprising since this oversized image is located in the heart of Muslim country.

Uttaradit

After a week of practice teaching at historical Ayutthaya, once the capital city of Siam, I am given my assignment: Uttaradit, a small farming town in northern Thailand on the Nan River, where I will be teaching at Uttaradit Teachers College. I arrive late at night by train. There seems to be some mix up. No one from

the college is there to meet me, but Julie Gilmore, the Peace Corps Volunteer who has been there a year, knows of my coming and she gets me settled for the night. The next day I report for duty at UTC, a four-year school equivalent to the last two years of high school and the first two years of higher education. At the end of two years, students declare their majors. Julie has been teaching a group of 23 English majors. I find out that much trust is placed in the hands of the native English-speaking volunteers and we are given our choice of classes. Besides Julie and myself, there is a Canadian volunteer, Jerry. Together we conduct a process of interviews and testing and after finishing, we have a group of twenty-four new English majors. It is this group I will be working closely with for the next two years. I feel up to the task; it is what I have been training for.

Not long after I begin teaching, I am approached by one of my students with her friend in tow. Would I come with her to visit her hometown of Nan? I know nothing about Nan or its attractions, but with such a pretty girl offering to be my guide, how can I refuse?

Nan

I have arrived in Nan, another small town on the upper Nan River close to the border with Laos with my student, Ampun. She takes me to her home and I meet her family. Though her parents do not speak English, her older sister does and together we enjoy talking. Ampun takes me around the town, always with a friend or two as chaperone. I discover another side to her. In class, she is shy and demure. Here, boosted by the confidence of being in her home environment, she becomes outgoing and exuberant, smiling intently. One of the places she takes me is to Nan Christian School where she studied and I meet the headmaster who speaks excellent English. This meeting is significant because it is here we will have the English camp for English majors during the summer after the end of the first year. Later I would visit homes of other students, but there is always something special about this, my first visit to a Thai home.

Classes at Uttaradit Teachers College

Back at UTC, I continue my classes of reading, literature, composition, grammar and the like. Since Thai doesn't have as many verb tenses as English, we continually drill such things as the continuous tense; Thai makes no distinction between it and the present tense. After weeks of drilling, I feel confident they have got it. Seeing a couple of students on campus, I ask, "Where do you go?" expecting to be corrected on my faulty English. "We go to the cafeteria," they cheerfully respond, not missing a beat. I am crestfallen.

Extra Curricular Activities

My activities are not limited to classes. When students in the girls' dormitories have a track meet, I am there, taking pictures. At Loy Kratong, students make me a float, which I sail on the waters conveying my hopes and dreams. At Halloween, I write up a play based on stories of Thai ghosts and students perform it. There are excursions to nearby places, such as a local waterfall. I also visit students' homes in the nearby provinces of Lampang and Phrae, as well as in Uttaradit. Our lives become interwoven in many ways.

Rittirone and the Motorbike

Soon after I arrive in Uttaradit, I purchase a Honda motorcycle. It is a godsend as I use it to go everywhere. Sometimes I ride around with Julie or others, but my most constant companion is one of the male

students, Rittirone. For some reason, he has decided that when I go somewhere, he would like to tag along and, thus, he can often be seen riding on the back of my motorbike. When I go to Lampang and Chiang Mae on tour, Rittirone is with me.

The English Camp

We are holding English camp for English majors in Nan at Nan Christian School. I have asked some other PC volunteers to join and help me with this. The city of Nan is proud to host us. They offer us some city government vehicles to take us out sightseeing. Upon hearing that, the volunteers all balk. Government vehicles are sometimes targets of communist sympathizing insurgents, mostly discontented farmers. We do organize a visit to a nearby hill tribe village, but when we go, it is without the assistance of the city government and their vehicles.

Penang

One year has passed and we are on summer break. I decide to go south to visit Malaysia. My original intension was to travel to Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, but when I arrive at Penang Island, I stop. This place has what I require, sightseeing places and beaches. Best of all, there is a bookshop with English books, run by a Muslim family whom I get to know. I often stop in to buy or exchange books, always with some friendly conversation. In Thailand I don't hear much English spoken outside the classroom and unfortunately, my Thai language ability has not progressed very far. In Penang, I read and relax, surrounded by English.

The English Speaking Dormitory

During my second year at UTC, English majors do practice teaching. I am much involved in this process,

visiting classes they are teaching and then critiquing them on their teaching. I also form a dormitory for the male students. All of them except a couple living in Uttaradit join with me. We find a nice wooden building outside of campus and by pooling our money, we are able to live there. I am spoiled, to say the least. The students wash and cook for me, especially Rittirone, my traveling companion. Sometimes, other students living in Uttaradit drop by and we chat together. Unfortunately, this pleasant atmosphere cannot last; there is a thief in our midst. When we come home at night, one or another of us finds something missing. We cannot uncover the thief. When the stealing continues unabated, I do what I am forced to do, close down the English dormitory. I then move into new housing on campus along with three trusted students, including Rittirone.

Frustration

A special relationship has developed with one particular girl. However, it is more a cause of frustration than anything else. We cannot date in any sense of the western definition of the word. We cannot be seen together, just the two of us, for fear of social ramifications. Thus, we only go out in groups. As my feelings intensify, I desperately long to be alone with her, to hold, to touch, to caress. However, it is impossible. I am in misery, which I cannot hide. She, on the other hand, never stops smiling and laughing when we go out, always chaperoned. What is there behind this mask of smiles? Is she feeling the same frustration as I do? There is no way to tell.

The Funeral

Suwita, one of the twenty-four English majors, has lost her father and I attend the funeral. I take on a somber appearance I consider appropriate to the occasion. However, afterwards, the students are concerned. Am I all right? Is anything wrong? Not even in death, it would appear, does one surrender the mask of smiles.

The Choice

It is spring of 1973 and near the end of my two-year tour of duty. What shall I do? I thoroughly enjoy my job and I find there is a college in Phitsanulok that would gladly have me. I can extend if I choose. However, I am plagued by second thoughts. For one thing, my ability in Thai language has not improved significantly and there are many people with whom I cannot communicate. Moreover, the situation with the girl has not been resolved in any satisfactory manner. Most of all, though, I just feel thoroughly exhausted, mentally and physically. I have given my all for two years and I am spent. Deciding a return to the States is in my best interest, I do not extend.

The Farewell

I say my goodbyes to students and teachers of UTC. Surapong, one of the class leaders, hands me an autograph book all the students have signed. In it, they express their appreciation for being taught, saying they will remember me. A few tell me they hope I will come back to Thailand. However, the most common sentiment is a plea not to forget them. They have been an intricate part of my life for two years. They have accepted me and made me feel welcome, always welcome. Even now, many years later, strong memories still reside within me, especially of the twenty-four with whom I shared so much. No, I will not forget.

Thai 37, 1971-1973
Malaria Eradication, Health

Beth Wassenberg Guislin

I am grateful to all my friends in Thailand. They showed me great kindness and humility, and gave me reasons each day to commit to work for the common good.

As a side note, thirty-seven years later, I still marvel at turning on the shower and seeing water come out of the wall with ease. I haven't forgotten the year of drought in Isaan!

With gratitude,
"Arunee"

Top Right: Dr. Paichit Pawabutr was the chief health officer in Ban Phai. His compassion, medical competence, community leadership, and kindness were evident to his patients and co-workers. Dr. Paichit had a great influence on my decision to pursue a doctorate in public health at UCLA. He and his wife, Ajaan Ratana, were so gracious and welcoming to me. It was a great privilege to work for them.

Child Nutrition Centers (CNCs) were similar to Head Start preschool programs in the U.S. There were health, education, and home garden/agricultural elements. Mothers accompanied their children to the CNCs for periodic height and weight progress reports, and nutrition education. 1972.

Thai 39, 1972-1974
Secondary TEFL

Sompop Jantraka - Thai Host-Country National and Humanitarian

Rebecca Perham

In a letter to President Bush at the White House after 9/11, Sompop shared our country's collective grief and wrote about the children's sanctuary in the 'Golden Triangle' of which he was founder and director:

… I work to save children from poverty, prostitution and exploitation in Thailand. We face organized crime… (but) we make a difference by bringing education, opportunity and hope to families … offering safety to those who flee for their lives and a chance to children who were facing a life of few choices…. It was an American Peace Corps Volunteer (who) taught me the value of respect for myself … and the value of education to change a child and the world.… From this has come my life's work. [my file]

It is hard to imagine a more moving tribute from a former student. I have the distinct honor of being that American Peace Corps volunteer, though I had no idea when I returned home - nor until more than two decades later - that my two years of service had amounted to anything so important. It is common for volunteers to feel that they can help change the world -- one school, one village, or one well of clean water at a time, wherever they are assigned; it is the most usual reason given for applying to the Peace Corps. It is also common for volunteers to complete their service - to COS - feeling certain that they received far more than they gave. Both were true for me.

This Peace Corps story begins and has a first ending when young Sompop was a student in my M.S. 1 then M.S. 2 English classes. Fast-forward more than twenty years, and the story picks up anew with Sompop's search for me from Thailand so that -- he told his Ashoka biographer -- he could "tell her what I have done with my life." [www.ashoka.org] 1994 Profile]. Sompop would be coming soon to the U.S for as an official guest of our government to confer with human rights groups across the country about child trafficking and other forms of child exploitation; he hoped Peace Corps or the sponsoring USIS would have found me by his arrival. It was the USIA visitor program that located me through the Internet, and an invitation from Peace Corps to a reunion in Washington, D.C. followed. There was hardly a dry eye when we met at the Peace Corps offices.

Sompop was already 'Ajahn Sompop.' He had founded and was director of the Daughters' Education Programme/DEP [www.depdc.org] in MaeSai, Chiang Rai, and he was an Ashoka Fellow [www.ashoka.org/node/2816]. Sompop's dangerous and dedicated work for the Daughters of DEP and DEPDC was already the subject of newspaper articles in Thailand and the U.S. about the prevention of child trafficking, and of stories in "Reader's Digest"/Asia and Time/Asia. Within the next several years, Sompop would be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize and would be one of twelve

"social entrepreneurs" featured on the nation-wide PBS documentary, "The New Heroes" [www.pbs.org/opb/thenewheroes/].

After Washington, my family welcomed Sompop for a brief visit. He then headed for New York to begin his month-long itinerary. First stops: Meet with Human Rights Watch and U.N personnel.

The story has, over these last ten years, remained on a continuum with Sompop and his family: My son was with me for the reunion at Peace Corps, D.C., and he has, on his own, twice been to Thailand to visit Sompop and DEPDC. We have all met here on the several trips Sompop has made to the U.S. since the D.C. reunion, and my son and I were both present this year with Sompop's family for the impressive events at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor when it awarded its 2008 Wallenberg Medal for humanitarian service to Sompop. [www.wallenberg@umich.edu/] and [www.depdc.org Newsletter May 2008]

In recognition of the University of Michigan's singular honor to Sompop, I have decided to finally write down and share something of this Peace Corps journey with readers of things-Peace-Corps. Peace Corps' presence at Sompop's school provided opportunities which -- Sompop says to this very day -- enabled him to change the direction of his life. Worthy of note is that Sompop took advantage of those opportunities.

To RPCVs who are reading this piece, I hope you will extrapolate to your own service that you also - even if unknowingly - had a profound effect on those around you. Sometimes we have the good fortune of finding out some years later just how profound.

***Rewind to the 1970's. By the time my Peace Corps group was assembling for Training in Bangkok, I had been in-country on my own for six months --- physically in Thailand to reactivate my application in a way that would assure the Thai Desk that I would, this time, accept the Invitation to serve. My long-ago application had included a three-hour, written test in a Post Office. While my math scores were not worth mentioning, I excelled in working with the grammar of the artificial language. Fifteen of my closest acquaintances had written glowing recommendations, and my interest in things-Thai had not wavered since having had a Thai roommate in college. I could not accept the first invitation, but I was not going to miss a second. This bonus time in Thailand proved to be a deciding factor in my being assigned to Sompop's town.

So now in country and through the hospitality of Thais I had known in the States, I had two homestays and a dorm-stay while teaching EFL in Bangkok and the North. All others in my group had PRISTed (Pre-Invitational Staging) in the States. Even though I regularly received my monthly-living stipend and in two years the COS savings, I apparently did not always turn up on this or that list of the group's volunteers without a concerted search. The glitch? That I had not, of course, been on the incoming airplane's official, group departure/arrival list. I was - I was eventually told - the first and last trainee whom Peace Corps would allow to join from in-country. I had bought a round-trip ticket and now cashed half of it in.

Thirty-nine was the first Thai group to train in-country. Also, like other early trainees of the era, we were sequestered en masse for our daily living and instruction --- the antithesis of present-day programs. Too, like other early groups, we learned to read and write Thai phonetics (which you will guess at here but with less ease than with handwritten symbols) before learning the Thai alphabet At the time and in retrospect, phonetics felt like a very efficient way to enter into such a multi-tiered writing system: we could immediately transcribe or read whatever we could say and understand as soon as we could say or understand it. Phonetics and tandem learning of the Thai alphabet gave us effective tools for rapidly acquiring a large vocabulary. Some of my students would later find phonetics useful so that they could write in Thai what they could not yet say or write in English.

Peace Corps training was an exhilarating three months of intensive morn-to-night Thai-language and cross-culture and practice-teaching classes in two regional locales. Sessions were packed with language drills (no love lost there) and dialogues as well as situation-specific practice like buying fruit at the market or traveling to a specific destination. We ate Thai food and absorbed Thai customs. Our Thai instructors were so competent and so committed to our group's metamorphosis from green-horn arrivals to culturally-sensitive speakers of Thai that I still count those twelve weeks as

a highlight of my education. What was at the top of the 'Top Ten' charts in the States at the time? The Carpenters' "Top of the World." That's as good a dating tool as Carbon 14.

Why have I always remembered our first training dialogue?: stick figures "A" and "B" talking to each other in four blocks to a page:

A. sawad'dii kha
B. sawad'dii kha

A. pbai (r)nai kha?
B. pbai (f)baan kha

A. (f)baan (l)yuu (f)thii (r)nai (h)kha?
B. (f)baan (l)yuu (f)thii sa' (r)waang kha' nii (f)waat' kha

A. sawad'dii kha
B. sawad'dii kha
Then:
A. sawad'dii (h)khrap' ….

I should have been alerted by this dialogue to what I realized when I arrived at my site was one of the most confusing aspects about Thai greetings: the seemingly intrusive "Where are you going?" much less "Where do you live?" from a casual acqaintance or a perfect stranger. Not to worry. Come to find out, the Thai "Where are you going?" inquiry is as uninterested in the truth as the English "What's up?" or "How are you?" Stock replies work best: "pbai (f)thiaw kha/(h) khrap" is a perfect, culturally-aware answer. (Has anyone come up yet with a perfect, succinct translation of "(f)thiaw"?)

By the end of training, I was completely at ease in Thai culture and now had clarifying organization behind my earlier, jumbled understandings about the Thai alphabet and grammar. My language instructors told me they were confident I would "be able to take care of (myself) in Thai." My site, therefore, would be where no volunteer had yet been allowed to go. It was a car, truck, motorcycle or Vespa drive of 40 kilometers to the nearest other PCV. Still puzzled by the metric system at the time, it took a trip to see exactly how far 40km 'actually' was. By this time, I needed new, smaller clothes and marveled at the town's seamstresses who would measure me one day and have the new items ready the next.

***No native speaker of English had ever lived in Sompop's town. The English accents of Aussies and New Zealanders were what the townspeople heard if tourists came through the area. School text books in English were - still are - in British English. I was at once warmly welcomed… and, likely to many townspeople, a linguistic curiosity.

Sompop's school had waited three years for a PCV English teacher. The principal had applied and been turned down because Peace Corps/Bangkok considered the town to be in too dangerous an area. It was during the Viet Nam war years. Small bands of guerrilla fighters held up in the near-by hills and freely wandered the streets in town. Many other places were also not entirely safe. Foreigners didn't live there.

On my arrival at the school, my principal cautioned me not to smile at the soldiers when we passed in the marketplace or on the street. I respected the instruction, but it was difficult and uncomfortable to be intentionally unfriendly. 'Maybe not "un" friendly; just not friendly. I could sometimes hear distant shooting in the hills, but I never saw or heard of any incidents in the town.

I have never recalled whether Peace Corps told me or not that I would be asked to make a speech in Thai on the opening day of school, but I was asked, and I did, somehow, manage to say at least something. Thankfully, it is a complete blur now. There is a fear that is unique to that kind of preparation. (I have great appreciation for Sompop's fluent delivery of his Wallenberg Lecture in front of an audience of University of Michigan academia.) Perhaps my school appreciated my accomplishment, because my two-storey house was ever-after, almost-always overflowing with young and old from the town ... visiting and practicing their English and teaching me Thai. I would live in my own house next to the principal's family and be easy for everyone to find. It was a quick walk or bike-ride to the open market and the quiet center of my very scenic town.

Restaurants were not a daily option. With the help of students and teachers who lived with me, I learned to

shop for and make all three meals. On school days, I ate lunch with the other teachers in the open-air on school grounds. Cooking outside at home worked perfectly in a large wok cradled onto sprockets around a heavy, tin-lined, bucket-shaped, pottery stove. It was set just off the ground and used charcoal. The local marketplace sold plenty of everything. We made the meals and washed the dishes at ground level on a ce ment patio in back of the house.

In my second year, my principal reluctantly gave me permission to travel into the countryside to conduct a family interview for a study-abroad application -- but only after Peace Corps/Bangkok officially, in writing, on Peace Corps letterhead, absolved him of responsibility were I killed. I should frame my carbon-copy of the letter, signed by astronaut Donn Eisele, then Country Director. My principal worried more than I did … but he also knew more than I did. Understandably - and gratefully - he took my safety seriously and hoped for a new PCV to follow me. I was fine, and one did.

***Having a Peace Corps volunteer meant everything to my school's principal. A native-English-speaker's presence helped him rapidly improve his own and his family's English fluency. All of his teachers' language skills would improve in conversation, especially helpful for those who taught other subjects by having my desk in the Teachers' Room. The pageantry and flower arrangements for Teachers' Day were fun. Can we do that, too? I had to master use of the abacus so that I could be part of the teacher-teams who corrected exams. Being able to calculate on an abacus still feels like knowing a little magic. I had four and five junior high classes with an average of forty-five students' papers to read and correct. The students took care of the classrooms, sweeping them out at day's end even though shoes were often left outside the door.

The principal shared me with other English teachers in the town by arranging training workshops at another school. (I wince now at having taught so many language drills!)

Having a volunteer of course meant everything to the students also. Some of them wrote short stories for me about their long wait for a Peace Corps teacher and about the improved English they were now expecting to acquire. I brought back many of those and other stories, in suitcases I purchased specifically to carry as much as I could of examples of students' homework from all my classes, their projects, exams, photographs --- several hundred of those, postcards --- a hundred+ of those, too, samples of children's and adult clothes, books and posters for learning Thai and English, maps, calendars, newspapers and magazines printed in Thai, pictures and articles about their majesties the King and Queen, silk and cotton weavings, marvelous wood carvings and Thai silver. I planned to talk frequently to organizations and school groups when I got home; at my site was the time to amass my realia.

Among my most interesting 'saves' are lots of used, homework notebooks that street vendors recycled to sell their wares: Rip a page out, fold it just so, then again so, and voilà: some student's corrected math, science, or history (and occasionally English) schoolwork was transformed at the pushcart into a cone for a portable snack of hot, fried bananas or cold, refreshing chunks of sugar cane. I collected very many of these notebooks.

***It is certain that most learning of English for just about everyone happened outside the classroom … because it is sure that my lessons were too deadly dull to have interested the students in retaining very much of the language. Sompop is too polite to be honest, but if he could be truthful, he would have to say that the classroom teaching was boring … except, that is, for the music and art and games I encorporated. All verses of "Top of the World" were popular. One American story, "Tom Sawyer Paints the Fence," was at least amusing and universally appealing. Stories about Paul Bunyan and King Arthur's Excalibur saved many a day; a giant and a magic sword are spell-binding in any language. I most enjoyed drawing on the required texts' selections about near-by (relatively-speaking) Australia and New Zealand because I had known so little about those places before living in Thailand. I still remember "Going to School by Radio in the Outback."

The best thinking at the time for language teaching and learning was the repetition-substitution drill method, as: "Store; I'm going to the store. Library; I'm going to the library. Then the trick vocabulary: Home; I'm going home. (no "to") "Downtown" (no "to") was hard for most to remember.

Fortunately, these drills are now very passé for most of us in the language-teaching profession and for Peace Corps … with some programs in favor of Community Language Learning (CLL), my personal choice. All those deadly drills must have revealed something about our sentence structure that caught my attention, because I acquired a dedicated love of nitty-gritty English grammar (such an about-turn from high school!) that led to studying in awe of "Transformational Grammar" for a master's degree in later years. Who could have known.

***My Sara-Lee-type recollection about my house was that it was never not open and welcoming to students, teachers, and town youngsters. English was always fun there. Some children came with the baby or toddler siblings they were babysitting. Some stayed near-by,but didn't often come inside. There were card games --- (f)Pye, for 'cards," was my Thai dog's name which also worked for English "Pie," board games, crafts, books … and (f)Pye's five puppies: Licorice (all black, of course), Taffy, Muffin, Bagel and Tray keeping with the pastry theme. The daily, elementary-school children who came by learned to lovingly hold the puppies and to care for them and (f)Pye. Such bright, eager language-learners the kids were in their everyday visits after school. It would be wonderful to see them again.

From back home, my mother kept me supplied with Pet Tabs -- vet vitams to supplement the six dogs' rice-and-meat meals, and lots of flea collars. The dogs' good health made them cute and bouncy and fluffy, free of mange and with great delight in and affection for human company. In a word, loveable. (f)Pye - (r)maa thai (r)sii dum - often accompanied me to classes -- before the puppies came -- sleeping under the teacher's desk. I was unhappy to hear that my dogs ate better than many children in the town. To get past that, so I could share my food with the youngsters who came to the house, I asked them to eat with me so I didn't have to eat alone and so I could learn Thai/ teach English. I doubt Sompop ever felt comfortable enough to eat at the house, and I cannot remember whether he did, but I learned twenty years later that he was almost always hungry. I was not aware enough at the time of his and, I have to assume, many others' basic needs. 'Not a good memory. This humble humanitarian who now walks and talks with government officials spent his youthful school years hungry at lunchtime, usually without shoes or a uniform that fit, and often fending for himself on the streets. It is because of his young life, though, Sompop says, that he knows what DEPDC's children face and what they need: "I was almost like these kids. My family was poor, with no opportunity.…" [www.ashoka.org 1994 Profile]

Sompop says that he was a difficult child, disruptive in school and frequently in trouble. He lived at times on the streets, at times with a family member in a moveable house and, he says, was all but headed for a delinquent life up to no good. When I hear this, I am puzzled that these describe the same student who was in my classes. Instead, always polite, naturally gregarious, friendly to all, helpful, cheerful, pleasant, a diligent student, neat, and first to step up to lend anyone a hand -- that was the only Sompop I knew. A Peace Corps presence had counted, I learned twenty years later.

My mother kept me supplied with packages of Americana, especially foods and lots of various holiday decorations to assemble or sew. Sompop has told me about having his first peanut butter and jelly sandwich. I hadn't thought any of the students around the table would like it, but the sandwiches were gone in a flash, the Skippy jar scraped clean. My sister was Sompop's age. They corresponded a few times. For students like Sompop with a knack for language-learning and a determination to take in everything, the house was a gold mine for learning.

When I eventually left for the U.S., I could take only one dog, (f)Pye. The canned dog samples sent by my mother in preparation for (f)Pye's life in America all went untouched by any of the dogs. Even when I put the contents out back in the woods behind my house, the wild animals wouldn't eat it. What is in those cans? All of (f)Pye's puppies remained behind with different students. Sompop took one which, I realized twenty-plus years later, had been unfair of me to ask because he himself did not have enough to eat.

I shipped (f)Pye on ahead while I visited Korea. A telegram arrived from home: "What will we do with this dog? She doesn't understand English." I had thought that (f)Pye was bilingual. She lived a long time. Her ashes are saved in a very nice, wooden box.

***Without refrigeration, I liked having ice for the day. It was Sompop who showed the initiative to usually bring some by in the mornings before school. I don't remember what I paid beyond the cost of the ice, but he says it was enough. I certainly hope so. This youth was going places. Enterprise was to be encouraged.

Sompop was musical. He played the melodion for pleasure and frequently for school events. I hadn't known until twenty years later that he used to go off and practice during school lunchtime because he didn't have enough money for lunch. My radar for this and other students' needs was seriously lacking, an oblivion which I regret even now. Sompop also played the harmonica at the time, and he picked up the guitar and pan flute somewhere along the way --- musical talents,which later helped him pay for college and even later share with DEPDC Daughters.

Sompop still has an artistic bent. Noteworthy in his youth were his exquisite pencil drawings; the school's English newspaper cover is filled with Sompop's delicate butterfly on the wing in an array of flower blooms. Ease of language learning may have been a logical extension of his creative talents.

***My Peace Corps stipend of $90 a month was somewhat more than I needed in my town. I remember waiting in line at the bank … on the day I realized that I was completely understanding the local dialect. Someone behind me asked the teller how much money I had in my account. Never mind what was asked; I was thrilled to have understood the question. Peace Corps asked volunteers to spend their saved money in-country, and that is what I did.

On what was a once-in-a-lifetime occasion for my students as well as for myself, a group of us went to Bangkok so we could be at the national celebration of His Royal Highness Prince Wachiralongkorn's investiture as heir to the Thai throne. We all stayed at an American Embassy family's home (a friend from pre-Peace Corps days) to use as our base from which to explore the palace and surrounding area. A Peace Corps presence helped me to be able to broaden many students' horizons.

I took groups of students on near-by field-trips that met up with other volunteers and some of their students. Sompop remembers more of the trips than I do now. During vacations both years, there were scholarships for some students to attend the summer camps organized and staffed by in-country volunteers who, like me, were perennial camp counselors back in the States. Ask Sompop now, and he still remembers being in plays. As Peter Pan was one of the photos I was able to pass along from the many collections I had brought home for him to share with his family. Sompop himself had saved both years' panorama pictures of all the campers and counselors.

In 2008, Sompop told the Ann Arbor, Michigan, audience at his Wallenberg Lecture* what the experiences of Peace Corps's summer-vacation camps had meant to him:

I dreamt that one day I would be able to speak English well and have opportunities to travel. Vacation camps set up by Peace Corps Volunteers gave me the chance to practice English and to travel. I was excited to learn about being able to live for a while with so many foreigners. I got scholarships for three years to these summer camps. These opportunities kept me from going back to the streets, or working in the mines or the graveyard. To me, it was like getting a new life, and it pushed me to learn English even more.
English took care of me. It allowed me to continue my education….

As with other positive experiences from his youth, Sompop as founder and director of DEPDC, adapted the summer-camp concepts of trips and activities and built some parts of his Peace Corps camp experiences into the program for the Daughters and Sons. Too, DEPDC's on-site International Volunteers provide ongoing, year-after-year opportunities for the children to hear and practice English as well as to learn about other cultures.

Sompop had asked me during our first meeting in the States to look again at a photo of himself and a school friend horsing around outside their cabin at one of the summer camps. What did I see? 'You weren't wearing any shoes.' "I didn't have any that fit." That was not a good moment for me, and I could see that Sompop felt

badly for mentioning it. This PCV was again unobservant and unaware of what I think should have been an obvious need. I am underwhelmed by some aspects of my volunteer time.

Continue his education he did. During that same first reunion time, Sompop told my son in an interview for school how his - Sompop's - English entrance-exam scores at a prestigious high school were nearly the highest; they earned him admission. But because he had no money, Sompop lived at a (h)wat' while he studied at the school. He would graduate and would then enroll for his college degree. To make ends meet at the university, he played intermittently with a band. but it was enough money to pay only for a semester here and a semester there. Sompop studied patiently for eight years. During that time, he would come across the research project that would complete the B.A. degree, and that project would, in turn, lead to the creation of DEP - the Daughters Education Programme. [Biography at www.wallenberg@umich.edu/]

***Beginning with when the U.S. Information Agency's' International Visitor Program found me up until now as I write this story, it has been truly amazing to learn of the meaning that my two years of Sompop's youth has had for his life. Before he left the west coast ten years ago, he mailed pictures to me of his family that he had had quickly developed (in the pre-digital days). Each photo was in a paper frame, with a note about the family member(s) and how our two families must now stay connected. Before he left California, he got together with Janet Visick, his Ashoka biographer; she would become "Aunt Jan" on a later visit to DEP-DC. Before he left for home, I mailed him a 'school-days' box filled with selections from my photos, his schoolwork, and his artwork which he could include as part of his luggage. He would go home this time, he said, happy that he had found me and had so much to share with his family.

Such a powerful time it has been for me. It is a treasured feeling still for me to remem-ber that I have been searched for … for the purpose of making sure I knew how a former student had found a new direction for his life. It is proof-positive that a Peace Corps presence wherever we are is mightily important.

***In the mid-1990s, I shared my story of being found by the USIA and Sompop with my RPCV chapter. At a winter pot luck, we all heartily toasted Sompop, "Congratulations on your Nobel Peace Prize nomination!" and posed for group pictures, holding up signs of greetings and congratulations. Yes, there was someone who had to make a V behind someone's head; I wondered what Sompop and his family would think of that. Perhaps it's a universal. A professor from Sompop's alma mater in Thailand and from a university in the U.S. each placed Sompop's name as a candidate with the Nobel Committee in Oslo -- the home of the Peace Prize. It is sure this humble, humanitarian activist will be nominated again.

My family is also a great friend of DEPDC. Between my son's visits to Sompop's home, Sompop has been our guest a few times. In these intervening years, I have learned about how another U.S. organization, Ashoka, also played a key role in Sompop's life-journey. [www.ashoka.org/node/2816]

The high caliber of the man who was honored this Spring with the University of Michigan's Wallenberg Medal is described by Bill Drayton, founder and CEO of Ashoka: Innovators for the Public. This Virginia-based organization awards fellowships to those whom Ashoka calls "social entrepreneurs."

"Ashoka," Drayton says, "… scouts third-world countries for … people with the imagination and will to succeed where others have failed or feared to tread. (Ashoka Fellows) are not mere idealists. For these rare men and women, an idea can bring satisfaction only when it is realized. Possessing the same unstoppable drive of a Steve Jobs, they define new issues and create new approaches. Their innovations then set new yardsticks of performance for society's larger bureaucracies." The … stipend," Drayton continues, … "gives the Fellow the freedom to launch a vision for change." [MacArthur Foundation: "Leveraged Philanthropy: Ashoka" 199?]

Ashoka Fellow Sompop Jantraka's "new idea" … his "vision for change" had been the founding in 1989 of Thailand's first and, at the time only, pro-active center of rescue for the education and safety of girls at risk of being sold into prostitution. Other operations existed that rescued girls from brothels, but Sompop felt that after-the-fact was too late. The young girls' lives were

already in jeopardy. Use a pro-active approach: convince parents before they sell their daughters that an education is the legal and best alternative.

But parents were not usually easy to convince. In a 1996 interview with my son's teacher, Sompop told about those first girls who begged him not to have to go into the sex trade and who became the first Daughters:

If I had left them behind, they would have gone into the sex industry. Many were just 13 and 14 years old -- just finished with (compulsory) primary school…. Their families told me, "We have no money. We're starving. Dying." They had been told the girls were guaranteed a good job.

When I went back to study what really happened, I found that they had been killed, or tortured, or punthe ished, or were now HIV positive. I took photos to show the parents. Of the 30 girls in the first study, only 19 came into the project. [my file]

"At that time, I had no plans to start an NGO. I just wanted to stop something that was wrong and that was directly in front of me." [Wallenberg Lecture, 13 March 2008]

Sompop did not leave the girls behind, and now several of them are contributing to ensuring an education and life-choices for other youth at DEPDC and in the whole region. The Mekong Youth Net/MYN is actively growing. From the first Daughters and researchers have come teachers and administrators of DEPDC:

"If people get a helping hand, maybe in the future, after ten years, they will help other people." [www.ashoka.org. 1994 Profile] And again twenty-plus years later, to my son's teacher: "One man can change a lot in the world. We can share." [my file]

"Education," Sompop told his Ashoka biographer, Janet Visick, "is the way to give (the girls) confidence and the ability to decide their own futures. … I have to continue this work. I want to see these girls grow up smiling in their eyes - with hope, power. They've never had it before. I try to do my best to build up these things in their lives while they are still young. Daughters can become someone important in the family." [www.ashoka.org. 1994 Profile]

Peace Corps/Thailand is now a mere remnant of its former impact. My group had sixty trainees, and every year used to send out multiple groups. Thailand has now moved beyond being a "third world" country, and so PCVs are more requested elsewhere. It is certain that those PCVs presently in the field are being a life-changing presence for some unknown host-country-nationals … and the world.
Rebecca Perham, Thai 39

* Note: Sompop's Wallenberg Lecture at the University of Michigan can be sent as a Word document upon e-mail request to <vol@depdc.org>.

Thai 42, 1973-1975
Secondary TEFL

If I Could Do It Over Again…
Debbie Marak Dohrmann

Those two years as a volunteer went by quickly and were full of adventures and exciting new experiences. When I look back on my time in Uttaradit thirty-two plus years ago, I think fondly of my students, fellow teachers, and market sellers. However, it is a couple of circumstances not long after my arrival that remind me how far I came as a volunteer.

The first occasion presented itself as we were preparing for the start of the school year. A number of teachers were busy discussing one teacher in particular, Ajaan Rabiap, a math teacher. I soon learned that she had died about the time that I arrived, so funeral plans were being made. I had no idea what to expect or what to do, so I let them guide me (This subject was definitely not covered during training!). I don't remember what I wore. I must have had something appropriate, or someone lent me the right things. I don't remember the specifics of the memorial gathering, either. I didn't even know what Ajaan Rabiap looked like until I saw her photo there. I do remember that I felt somewhat out of place as I was so new and barely knew any of the teachers. I'm fairly sure that I got through that part of the funeral without doing anything to make myself stand out. Well, I had made it through only half of the proceedings. I was informed that later that evening there would be a funeral pyre for her. I don't recall whether I suddenly looked uncomfortable, but a few teachers were quick to suggest that I probably didn't need to go to that and that my absence would not be a problem. I must say, I was quite relieved to be let out of that duty. To this day, I'm not sure why this situation is still memorable, but perhaps it was the newness of it all.

The second occasion had to do with a visit from the Minister of Education. Sometime in my first month, I was told that we teachers would all gather at school on a Saturday to greet this important man. I had not yet had my uniforms made, so again, I didn't have the most appropriate garment to wear. I was told to wear something either dark or very light. I had only one dress that fit the bill - sort of. When the minister arrived, I stood near the back of the group, trying not to be noticed. After he greeted the Ajaan Yai and had a brief meeting with her, he stood before us to deliver a few remarks. As he finished, he called me forward for acknowledgment. I started to wai him and he held out his hand to shake mine. A moment of awkwardness. I said "kho toit" then shook his hand. There was someone taking pictures and I later received one of our

handshake. I felt embarrassed all over again as I saw that my dress looked awfully short (this was 1973) for such an important event. There was nothing I could do about it but I sure learned to be prepared with the right clothing for the occasion.

I do not think of these instances as anything more than part of my early learning of Thai culture and language. I certainly didn't dwell on them for the remainder of my volunteer time. I took away with me a great deal of fantastic memories and I hope that the students and teachers I worked with likewise have only good recollections of the things I did.

Thai 43, 1973-1975
Teacher Training, Higher Education

A i i i i i e e e e e o o o o o h h h h h !!!!!!!!!!!!!!
Robert Dale Hajek

Who is screaming? The lights in the two dorm rooms were turned off five minutes ago. Who is screaming? A person in the men's dorm or a woman in the women's room? Who is screaming?

Each room has about 30 new Peace Corps Volunteers plus a few Thai instructors. Who is screaming? The lights come on and one of the American men, flat on his back wearing a pakima, is visibly upset. A lizard is running away.

"Chok dii" says one of the Thai men. "Good luck. It's good luck when a lizard falls on you."

Soon all of the Thai instructors are saying "Chok dii." It takes a while for the Americans to feel peaceful enough to return to their beds.

A few months later I was a the teacher College in Nakorn Pathom, at my new residence, wearing my pakima leaning over a sink, brushing my teeth. Suddenly I felt something heavy on my shoulder, and I knew immediately to think, "Chok dii."

Indeed, it was good luck. I still appreciate my three years in Thailand.

Remembering Thailand
Rebecca Cardozo

A Patchwork of images, remembrances and experience

Like the rice fields and villages laid out across the countryside
Remembering Thailand, its people, its place, its beauty.

The biggest full moon I ever saw rose in Hua Moo
The rice fields outside my window, from plowing to planting to harvesting
An amazing sight for my newly opened eyes

Picnics with friends, gai yaang, sticky rice and som tam
The sunsets from the berm
A quietly stunning spectacle every single time

Seven hours on the train to my site
Never tiring of the scenery going by
Never tiring of the newness and wonder of it all

Visits to my students' homes
In beautiful villages and towns
The chance to understand each other
and form everlasting bonds

Going places by bicycle, sam law, rot tuk tuk
Song tows, trains and buses, the ride an adventure and
The journey that would continue for the rest of my life

Villagers making matmii, silk of every color
Caans that made such a wonderful sound!
Weaving, carving , charming, fabulous crafts
Thais who became friends, sharing meals and smiles
Understanding and love growing among us

Rebecca on site at Hua Moo.

Tasting the fruit and wonderful food
Smelling the flavors first strange then delicious
Quenching our thirst with coconut water at noon and
Singha at the end of the day

Teaching our students and learning much more
Sharing with our colleagues and making friends
Hoping we served them well
and knowing they gave us more

Giving a student my bike when I left
and hearing 30 years later
That the bike met another Volunteer
And my student had become the teacher

Returning to Thailand and to our sites
Seeing what's changed and what hasn't
Feeling welcome and at home even many years later

Meeting Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and feeling
The bond instantly – knowing each other
without missing a beat
We had served and learned together
with the same mission and heart

50 years and counting Peace Corps Thailand
continues its mission
Welcomes back former Volunteers
as it swears in the new
And looks to the future in friendship and peace.

Rebecca and Jan Birkelbach, also of Thai 43.

Above: Bangkok, 1973
Below: Washington DC, 2005

Thai 45, 1973-1975
Wildlife Conservation, Nutrition

Dwaila Armstrong

I was actually in PC for almost 3 years. I had a dream assignment, when I was sent to replace Ralph White, in Khao Chong Nature Center. I worked with a German volunteer. We split up the work and I became responsible for overseeing of the small zoo of local wildlife that was part of the project. During this time, I was given Thean, a 6 month old elephant who had lost its mother. She became the center of my life for about the next 2 years. In the early part of 1976, if was discovered she was a white elephant, and was to be presented to the King of Thailand.

Since I had been responsible for most of Thean's upbringing, the palace spokesman insisted I should be present. So, on May 9,1976, I was presented a medal from the King. I think this is the most exciting and distingishing thing that could happen to any volunteer. After this, I transferred to a new sight, but could never experience all the rewarding feelings I had working in Khao Chong, so resigned before my third year was up.

PCV Dwaila Armstrong helped set up the first nature education center in Thailand at Khao Chong Nature Center in Trang Province. Here she spoke with Khun Teran Boonnap, supervisor of the Center.

Dwaila receives a medal from the King.


7
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Thai 46, 1973-1975

Malaria Eradication, Community Development, Land Development, Parisitology

Jonathan Green

Before I went to Thailand, I thought I was going to go to law school afterward. After serving with the Thai National Malaria Eradication Project, I wanted to work in health care and get a degree in public health. It took many years, but I eventually became a physician assistant (in 1983) and got a Master of Public Health degree (in 1993).

Exposure to Thai customs and values, especially Buddhist values, gave me a reverence for all life forms that I would not have otherwise had.

Practical experience in keeping people healthy out in the chonabot taught me that life is never totally risk-free; you must trade one risk off against another, e.g. spraying DDT to prevent children from dying from malaria while accepting a hypothetical, still unproven risk of unknown health effects from exposure to DDT. [By the way, in supervising the spraying,

I was exposed to far more DDT than the chawbaan were, and I am still hale and hearty. Perhaps my most pleasant memory is of one evening after a long, hot day of hard work, with all the spraymen crammed into a Jeep with the sector chief and me, on our way down to bathe in the river, the spraymen singing a popular folk song and drumming on the bottoms of their mixing buckets; as we passed one house, an elderly gentleman standing outside started bending his knees and dancing in time to our song. We all laughed and waved to Khun Luung.

Jonathan spraying a village house as part of his job with malaria control

In much of Kanchanaburi province, the dirt roads were execrable in the dry season and totally impassable in

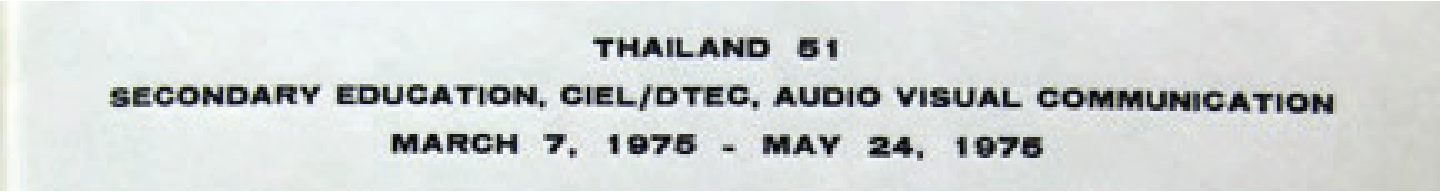
the rainy season. We therefore went by boat up the Kwae Yai and Kwae Noi rivers on most of our spray missions to the villages. I wore a Thai civil service uniform on the advice of my zone chief, who said that the chawbaan might otherwise be suspicious of a farang visiting such remote areas; they might have thought I was a hipii looking for drugs. On the other hand, by my wearing the uniform, they immediately knew I was just the farang malaria guy.

All 6 Malaria Control PCVs from Group 46 at the annual conference of the Thai National Malaria Eradication Project in Korat, December 1974. Left to right: John Googins [Chantaburi], Jonathan Green [Kanchanaburi], Tim Sawers [initially Pak Chong, later Chiang Mai], Mr. Suthit [Tim's zone chief at Pak Chong], Rob Hessler [Nakhorn Sawan], Dick Scott [Suratthani], Joe Flear [Petchaboon].

Dedication: To Mr. Prasert Sanguansri, my zone chief, for his patience and understanding of my ignorance and youthful foibles, and constant encouragement.

Thai 51, 1975-1977

Secondary TEFL, DTEC, Audio-Visual Communications



Howard Stateman

Changing the world? I didn't mean to. I didn't even mean to join the Peace Corps, but that's another story. I arrived in Thailand in March of 1975 for language and cultural training, expecting to spend the two years after that at the Institute for the Promotion of Teaching Science and Technology (IPST) in Bangkok, as an Audio/Visual technologist. My main job was supposed to be to share my darkroom and video skilz with a group which was revolutionizing the country's high school science and math programs by doing away with most of the rote learning, and adopting lab-based learning. They mostly needed me because they could not figure out how to copy photos from the American textbooks, which they had bought the rights to translate into Thai. That took about 5 minutes - and then I was mostly out of work.

The original plan had been to have me be a cameraman and videotape editor - they would record teachers using the new books on a guinea pig class, which they would then use to show teachers that labs were not so hard to do, after all. But it had been 18 months from the time they placed their order for a volunteer, and they had since hired a fully competent staff. But I did manage to run a camera for some physics classes, edit one math videotape with another volunteer, and take a lot of photos to "localize" the textbook. And I helped validate their Thai translation of the chemistry films. The Institute was a UN operation, but they hired department heads from colleges around the country, most had doctorates, some from US schools. I worked with most of them at least a little.

I did not think there would be any visible evidence of this program after 15 years, let alone 37.

As I said, there really wasn't any work for me there, so after a year Peace Corps transferred me to The Rubber Research Center (RRC), just outside of Haad Yai in Songkhla province, an 18-hour train ride south of Bangkok.

I actually felt useful there. The project was to convince rubber plantation owners to pull up all their trees and replace them with a variety which would yield 10 times as much rubber. It takes 8 years for a rubber tree to start producing, so the bulk of the project was to teach the plantation owners how to grow cash crops in between the rows of young rubber trees. Pineapples and chili peppers, primarily. It's called "intercropping" My job was to make slide shows on how to do that, as well as how to treat diseases of rubber trees. I also

helped produce pamphlets and worked with some very talented artists who were agricultural extension agents, teaching them how to use a camera and a darkroom so they could make museum-quality drawings from photos they took in the field.

My posting was going to last less than a year, I had no idea when I left if the project would be successful, or if it would last.

Fast forward to 2012

If you take the Bangkok Skytrain to Ekamai station, Soi 63 Sukhumwit, half a block down the road is the building I worked in, with a big fancy sign in front. It's still the IPST. I didn't go inside, but I doubt if anyone I worked with is still there. However, walking back to the main road, in what used to be the vast front lawn and fish ponds in front of the planetarium, is now the Children's Science Museum. It's a spin-off from IPST, and some of the displays are signed by people I worked with. So maybe, indirectly, I changed things for the better there.

Traveling south, what used to be the national RRC has been turned over to the provincial government, so none of my co-workers would be there either. But traveling across to Phuket, the RRC station I worked at once a month is still there, and everywhere there are young rubber trees, I saw pineapples in between the rows. The whole south looks like my slide shows. That made me very proud because I can point to my small role in that change for the better.

Thai 56, 1976-1978

Rural Development, Land Development, Rural Public Works, Science, University Math, Secondary TEFL

A Lasting First Impression

Kevin Quigley
a.k.a. Suchart Prahachesuan

You probably know the saying that "you get to make a first impression just once."

When I arrived at my site at Srisongrak Wittaya School in Amphur Dansai, Loei province, I was assigned to share a house with a newly-wedded couple of teachers. Within minutes, it was clear that I was as welcome as a pair of bare feet on the dinner table.

So, I asked to move into town and rented a house in a compound of four traditional Thai houses. On my first day there, my new neighbors asked me to play badminton.

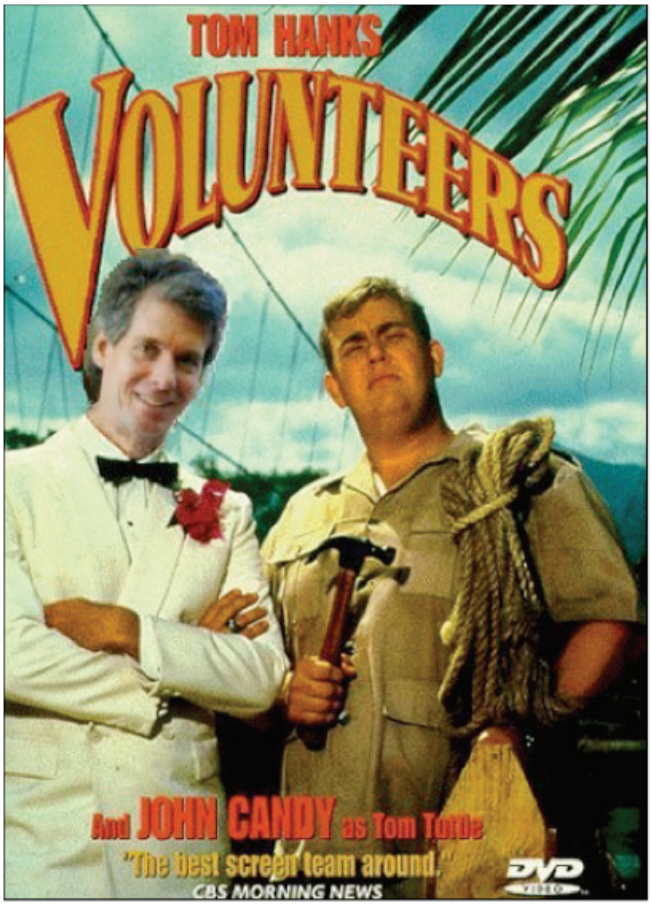
Within moments, there were 200 people watching (although it felt like 2,000). Since it was May, and I was totally unprepared for Thai-style competitive badminton, I was soon sweating profusely.

After the game and trying hard to be a good PCV, I knew I needed to say a few words…

With my heat-addled brain and limited Thai… all I good think of was Sawadee Krop Tuk Kon and Wanee Roon Mag.

The expectant faces in the crowd suggested that was not enough…

All I could think of was that I was sweating profusely… knowing the word for water and come out… I thought I would try…



So I said…. (You will have to ask me individually what I said; I'm too embarrassed to put it in writing). And the crowd laughed uproariously…

Of course, my Thai neighbors and colleagues would not tell me what I said… within days, if not hours, the story was all around Dansai…

Finally, two weeks later, a colleague who was not there my fateful first day told me, "I heard all about you!"

And with great delight explained what I had said. Although I certainly did not make the first impression I wanted to, I know that first day I made a lasting impression with my new neighbors.

Thai 65, 1979-1981

Water Resources, Secondary TEFL, Teacher Training College TEFL, University TEFL, Librarian, Adult Education, Medical Technology

Mohezin Tejani

It was evening in Chiang Rai and I was riding my motorcycle over the bridge into Chiang Rai town from the college. It had been one of those frustrating days when I couldn't get through to a single student. In English Literature class, we had been studying Robert Frost's famous poem "The Road Not Taken," and the poetic language was proving too far removed from reality for my Thai students to care about or empathize with Mr. Frost.

Ajaan Mo with English class students: 1980

At the bridge, the last rays of the sun reflected off the Kok River. Young boys and girls led their water buffaloes from plowing the rice paddies back home along various routes to their different villages nearby. The scene, though serene, was a common sight for me every evening when I returned home from the town.

Returned home?

That was it! That was the ticket. I stopped on the bridge and gazed more intently at the boys and girls and the buffaloes. Eureka! I now knew what to do to get my students to understand the meaning behind Mr. Frost's poem.

Mo with Ajaan Uthai, April 1979

The next day in class, I handed out the following assignment:

"Think back to the time when you were a little boy or girl growing up in one of the villages. It is evening and you are returning home from the family rice field with your water buffalo, Dum, who is your responsibility. Every day you take the same path home. You see the same things on the way. Today, however, you decide to take Dum on a different path home. What do you see? Write a short essay on all the things you notice on this different route home."

The students went crazy with words for the next few days. These very same 35 students that repeatedly fell asleep in class, or chatted and doodled cartoons through boredom, now hunkered down with their journals, fighting over the six Thai-English dictionaries and one thesaurus they had to share between them.

Mo with host family in Nakhon Nayok village, June 1979

Three students got an 'A' for their essays. First time ever. A few turned in additional poems of their own. Not of Mr. Frost's caliber, but certainly a very good start. Two even wrote out in great detail (with the usual grammar and spelling mistakes) what "The Road Not Taken" now meant to them. They became my peer teachers in class the next day. Mr. Frost was now alive and well in the province of Chiang Rai, thanks to my old friend Dum and the Kok River.

Mo taking care of Dum, his host family's water buffalo

EXCERPT FROM CHAPTER ON PEACE CORPS THAILAND EXPERIENCES IN FIRST VOLUME OF MO TEJANI'S TRAVEL MEMOIR: " A CHAMELEON'S TALE: TRUE STORIES OF A GLOBAL REFUGEE"

Thai 66, 1979-1981

Agriculture Extension, Fisheries, Secondary TEFL, Health, Parasite Control, Village Development, District Agriculture, Agriculture Education, Livestock Production Extension Agent, Crop Production, Community Health, Medical Technology, 4-H Extension, Water Resources

Harry Richard Hushaw

A Remembrance by Mark Oshiro

Rick with my landlady's cat in Ubon.

Rick Hushaw and I met at the Thai 66 staging in Seattle. When I found out he'd served in N. Yemen, I told him about my year in Afghanistan, so we hit it off. We were also older than the other guys in the room, so it was pretty natural to hang together. It's odd being the old men at age 30 and 27. I remember one of the 'kids' asking why we weren't very excited about the whole deal. After N. Yemen and Afghanistan, we both figured Thailand might be 'okay.'

Harry Richard Hushaw, 'Rick,' was killed in a tour bus crash on March 10, 1981, while traveling to his spillway construction project in Amphur Nagae, Changwat Nakorn Panom. He was 31 years old.

Rick was a water resources engineer in Thai 66 (July 1979 – September 1981), based with Accelerated Rural Development in Changwat Buriram. He was on temporary assignment as a construction engineer building a spillway on the Huay Gut stream for Community Development in Amphur Nagae.

Rick graduated from Purdue University with bachelor's degrees in Engineering Technology and Industrial Psychology. Prior to joining the water resources program of PC Thailand, Rick served as a PCV in North Yemen for one year, supervising pipeline construction.

When his project ended, Rick terminated early to

Rick heading to Cha'am for a language workshop, 1980.

Rick on the beach at Cha'am thinking of new ways to get himself and friends into trouble, 1980.

spend time with his seriously ill father in Indiana. After his father died, Rick wanted to complete a full two-year term as a volunteer, so he applied as an engineer with Peace Corps Thailand.

After Yemen, Thailand was a piece of cake. Rick appreciated the opportunity to eat pork in a hundred different dishes, drink an ice cold Singha, eat a hamburger at the kiosk behind Siam Square in Bangkok, look at and

Upstream from project site, Amphur Nagae, January 1981.

Draining site, Amphur Nagae, January 1981.

Setting benchmark with Khun Sopa, Amphur Nagae, January, 1981.

talk and laugh with women, and drink Mae Khong with his co-workers. He liked his coworkers and neighbors in Buriram and enjoyed his work, which included projects for ARD and Food for the Hungry.

He also found time to help his fellow volunteers erect a windmill, construct a cistern water system, and survey and consult on various water projects for other volunteers. Rick also worked on the Peace Corps Thailand Engineering Newsletter which was distributed to Peace Corps and CUSO (Canadian Volunteers) engineers.

Rick also had the patience and cross-cultural skills to persuade his wonderful Thai sweetheart, Prawait Danprakom, to marry him, and he had the ability to persuade the Peace Corps Thailand Director to give him permission to do so. Prawait and Rick were married in November, 1980.

Rick was a humorous and mischievous fellow, who found ways to make life fun for himself and his friends. The peculiarities of Thai culture always amused him even when they affected him adversely. He was always prepared to have a good laugh, especially at his own expense.

Rick checking elevations, Amphur Nagae, January, 1981.

Rick was a great motorcycle rider who tore through the Peace Corps motorcycle train-

Excavation, Amphur Nagae, January, 1981.

Rick with the Puyaiban in the foreground, Amphur Nagae, February, 1981.

ing course at Bang Saen. But unlike most of the other Ag/Rural Development volunteers, he never bought a motorcycle. Instead, he pedalled through Buriram on his used girl's bicycle, which always amused him and the Thai passersby.

The people of Nagae, and family members, who built the spillway with Rick's assistance, May 1981.

The spillway at Huay Gut was dedicated to his memory in a ceremony on May 28, 1981. Rick's mother, Rosemary, and Rick's wife, Lynn, attended the ceremony as did many Peace Corps Volunteers and staff, including PC Thailand Director, John Darrah, and Jim Ogata, representatives from the United States' and Canadian Embassies, which funded the project, officials from the Local Administration Department, the Puwarachagan Nakorn Panom, the Nai Amphur of Amphur Nagae and the villagers who built the project.

The last time I saw Rick was at Hualompong train station. I told him he didn't need to go to the station with me, but he wanted to help me carry a water pump we'd checked out from the Peace Corps office. Then he paid back a few hundred baht that I'd lent him. I told him he didn't have to do that, told him to just keep it and have a good time in Bangkok, and that we'd see each other in Nagae in a few days. He insisted I take the money. We shook hands and said goodbye, I boarded the train, and that was that.

Rick was a good man, a great friend, and a fine volunteer. He is missed. My son's middle name is 'Harry' in Rick's honor.

Memories of Rick Hushaw

Mark Raabe

This past March was the 30th anniversary of the tragic death of Harry Richard Hushaw, 'Rick', a member of the 66th group of Peace Corps volunteers who served in Thailand. Memorializing Rick at this juncture requires more than just reconnecting with memories of our association during the brief period as fellow volunteers and friends. It means recalling who I was at that time and the Thailand that existed back then. So much has changed in the interim.

Checking elevations, Amphur Nagae, February, 1981.

Construction survey, Amphur Nagae, February, 1981.

Much can be written about the 'hand of fate' in a person's life. In regard to Rick, it is the historical period in which he lived that played a central role in his untimely death. It is a story that should be told to fully understand the man Rick was and the significance of his service to the people of Thailand.

Rick was the second of three volunteers to die during the long association of Peace Corps and the people of Thailand – Lowell Dunn (Thai 12) died previously in 1966 and Danuta Kassowska (Thai 87) died in 1988. Rick was also one of thirteen volunteers throughout the world to die while in service in 1981. I do not

Khun Sopa and Rick enjoying the sun and each other's company during a work break, Amphur Nagae, February 1981.

believe that he and other members of Thai 66 thought seriously about the potential dangers of living and working in Thailand, even in the face of risks that existed around us. For instance, during a session of language/cross-cultural training, a Thai journalist explained the degree of lawlessness in the country, stating that arrangements could be made to assassinate anyone for as little as 1500 Baht. [Note: The exchange rate at the time was about 25 Baht to the US Dollar.] Yet, this seemed more like a 'side show' to the work ahead as volunteers. Similarly, during the period we served at our respective sites, Thailand had to contend with Pol Pot and members of his regime who were in hiding on the Thai-Cambodian border, after forcibly being removed from power by 200,000 Vietnamese soldiers. The possibility of an invasion by Vietnam and overthrow of the Thai government was taken lightly by the Thais because it was widely assumed that the Vietnamese tanks would be stopped by traffic gridlock on the streets of Bangkok. The more immediate concern of volunteers was dealing with intestinal infections caused by the local bacteria, and perhaps the rising price of Singha beer.

Khun Sopa, Rick, and several very hardworking women moving a rebar mat for placement.

Rick and his fellow volunteers arrived in Thailand approximately four years following the Vietnam War. The United States had been given permission by the Thai Government to relocate its military bases in the northeastern region of the country. This was in response to increased insurgency by North Vietnamese

Rick observing preparations for a concrete pour, Amphur Nagae, February 1981.

military and paramilitary forces, which threatened bases originally located in South Vietnam. Air force bombing missions with fighter escorts were routinely conducted from Thailand. Immediately after the war

Spillway project nearing completion, May, 1981. Backfilling remains to be done.

Lynn, Mrs. Prawait Hushaw, 1981.

officially ended in 1975, the Thai Government requested the US military to remove all of its men and equipment. All that remained was the legacy of the relationship between US soldiers and the Thai people. Overcoming negative perceptions, attitudes and stereotypes was a major obstacle facing volunteers in Thailand at that time. In addition, Thai culture and values were increasingly eroding due to the dominating influences of multi-national companies and western culture.

Rick died while in transit from Bangkok to the city of Nagae, the administrative seat of Nagae District in Nakorn Panom Province, located in northeastern Thailand. He and fellow volunteer, Mark Oshiro, were engaged in a special assignment to provide construction management services for a proposed dam and concrete spillway on a seasonal stream called the Huay Gut. A common mode of transportation linking Bangkok with the rest of the country was buses that traveled through the night. The buses were luxurious, providing air conditioning, packaged meals, and the services of a stewardess. Seats were assigned at the time a reservation was made.

During the course of Rick's journey, the bus encountered a semi trailer transporting a load of large logs. The logs were held on the trailer using chains. Often, the trailers were overloaded, with some of the logs cantilevered over the length of the bed on either side. This made for dangerous encounters with buses traveling from the other direction. It was suspected that either the bus driver or the semi driver was drowsy and crossed over the median line of the road. The answer was never confirmed; both drivers were killed in the resulting collision.

The overhanging logs crashed through the entire half of the bus adjacent to the trailer, killing all who were seated on that side of the bus. The passengers seated on the other half were able to evacuate the bus before diesel fuel from erupted tanks ignited. Rick was reported among the deceased; however, on review of

Lynn, Rick, Mark van Koevering, Rob Thompson, Kevin Kamp and Ajaan Orasa at the Candle Festival in Ubon, 1980.

Lynn, Mrs. Prawait Hushaw, Moon River, Amphur Pibun Mangsahan, Changwat Ubon, 1981.

the seating chart, it was discovered that he was originally assigned a seat on the left (exterior) side of the bus. [Note: Vehicles in Thailand travel on the left side of the road.] This was consistent with the preferences of most volunteers and many Thais, based on the frequency of bus crashes reported in the news, and personal encounters with bus drivers who drove recklessly. The person who occupied the seat originally assigned to Rick survived and was later interviewed. It was learned that Rick exchanged seats with a Thai located on the right side of the bus. This was requested by a young woman who occupied the seat next to the one Rick originally reserved. Due to cultural norms – and in particular the prevailing view of American men at that time – she did not feel comfortable seated next to a foreign man through the night. Rick was likely sensitive to her concerns and agreed to move to a new location, regardless of the fact that he assumed the risks of sitting on the right side of the bus.

L to R: Mark van Koevering, Lynn's friend, Lynn Hushaw, and Mark Raabe, Sakon Nakorn, 1981.

Rick's body was never recovered. His remains and those of all other deceased passengers were completely burned after the bus ignited. This was tragic for the surviving families, who were denied the opportunity to identify the bodies and conduct proper burial rites according to Buddhist customs. It was decided that the appropriate response was to collect the ashes from the wreckage and divide them equally among the families. In conjunction with gathering the ashes, a watch was found with the initials H.R.H. etched on the back cover plate. This provided further evidence that Rick was a passenger on the fateful bus. Given Rick's penchant for detail, this was something that he would have done.

At the spillway dedication in Rick's memory (note: dedication plaque is at right of photo) are, left to right: Jon Darrah, Kevin Kamp, Mark Oshiro, Ajaan Orasa, Mark Raabe, Lynn Hushaw, Nancy Ellison, Rosemary Hushaw, Patrick McSween, Michelle Miller, unidentified, George Costa, and Jim Ogata. All the identified volunteers are from Thai 66.

The response by Peace Corps Washington, Peace Corps Thailand and the Government of Thailand to this tragedy was commendable. Arrangements were made for Rick's mother to travel to Thailand to attend a memorial service to Rick in conjunction with the dedication of the completed project. Rick's father passed away in 1978. Other people in attendance were Rick's Thai wife, Lynn, officials from Peace Corps Thailand and the Government of Thailand, fellow volunteers and the many Thais who participated in the project. A memorial plaque was placed on the side of one of the concrete walls.

The memorial service provided Rick's mother and Lynn the opportunity to meet people who were closest to Rick during the time he was a volunteer. He would have completed his tour of service in the Peace Corps at the end of October that year, about eight

From left to right are: U.S. Deputy Ambassador, Burton Levin, Rosemary Hushaw, Lynn Hushaw, and probably a Thai representative from the Local Administration Department with whom the PC engineers were attached.

months after he died. Rick's mother stated that he was already discussing in recent letters his anticipated return home. He had not completed the paperwork necessary for Lynn to obtain a visa for her to reside in the US. Thus, Rick's mother returned home alone and without knowing whether she would ever see her new daughter-in-law again.

Mark and I provided additional support to Rick's mother and Lynn thereafter. I made a promise to Rick's mother before she departed Nagae that I would visit her again on my way home to Wisconsin. She lived in Lafayette, IN. Mark and I kept in touch with Lynn during our remaining period in Thailand; and, after returning to the US, collaborated in making arrangements for Lynn to travel to the US to visit her mother-in-law.

My visit with Rick's mother did not occur until over a year later. I was received very warmly by her. I was introduced to Rick's sister, Gay, and her family. Rick had another sister, Patty, who lived in California. Rick's mother still grieved greatly for her son. My visit may have provided her with closure because she was deprived of seeing his body when she traveled to Thailand. My presence in place of Rick likely dispelled any false hope that eventually he would return home.

Mark traveled to Thailand in 1984 to visit his site and Thai friends. He then made arrangements for Lynn to travel back to the US with him. This was necessary because of Lynn's limited competency with the English language. She initially visited with Mark in California. Mark then made arrangements for her to fly alone to Milwaukee, WI, where I met her at the airport. I then drove her to Lafayette to visit her mother-in-law. Lynn stayed with her for several weeks before traveling back to Milwaukee. I then made arrangements for Lynn to visit with Mark Van Koevering and Kevin Kamp, two other former volunteers and friends of Rick.

Before returning to Thailand, Mark took Lynn to Escondido, CA to meet Rick's sister, Patty, and her family. Thus, Lynn was able to meet all the members of Rick's immediate family. Lynn then returned to Thailand. She lived in the city of Sakorn Nakorn, not far from where Rick died.

Rick's mother retired from the US Fish and Wildlife Service in 1988 and moved to Escondido, CA to live with her daughter. She passed away in 2004. Lynn never visited the US again. Mark and I corresponded with her until about 1987; thereafter, we never heard from her again. All attempts to contact her from the US were unsuccessful.

I remember Rick as a jovial, kind-hearted soul and good friend. I respected him initially because of the technical knowledge gained previously while a Peace Corps volunteer in North Yemen, and his prior experiences adapting to a much more difficult social environment. I later admired him for his willingness to help others. He was well liked by volunteers and Thais alike; thus, he helped to forge the relationship between Thais and Americans that exists today.

Rick's legacy exemplifies the character of a fine man and friend, whose greatest contribution to Thailand was unknowingly saving the life of one of its citizens – a person he never knew.

Memories

James Ogata

As you might imagine, Rick Hushaw's death was very high profile in Peace Corps at the time. It was also a very intense personal experience for me. I knew him very well. I dropped everything to investigate the accident, and was reporting to Jon Darrah, Peace Corps Thailand's Country Director, on a daily basis. He, in turn, was reporting to the Director in Washington.

About this time, we lost three Volunteers around the world. The first was a young male PCV in Nepal, who disappeared on a hiking trip to a remote part of the country, and his case was not closed until years later. The second was a woman PCV killed in a purse-snatching robbery in Manila. The third, of course, was Rick. The number one priority for Washington in all three cases was to have the deceased Volunteers' remains sent back to their families, and we were under intense pressure to find Rick.

My original objective was to hopefully find Rick alive and well somewhere enjoying himself. I spent a very intense month traveling all over NE Thailand, combing through the many rumors that were swirling about. Then, I recovered a watch with Rick's initials engraved on the back, a story in itself. I began to meet survivors of the crash, who provided me with eyewitness accounts. They led me to believe that the chances

of finding Rick or his remains were unlikely. All the evidence seemed to point to the fact that Rick had died with the other passengers who had been sitting on the right side of the bus that night. But Rick had purchased a ticket for the left side of the bus. I needed to find out more.

With the help of the Thai Ministry of the Interior, I eventually located two women, I can't remember if they were mother and daughter. One of them had been assigned a seat on the left side of the bus next to Rick and the other across the aisle. Realizing they were related and wanted to sit together, Rick apparently offered his seat to the woman on the right and he switched with her. It was a simple gesture of kindness and respect that any Volunteer would make, especially a person of Rick's character. But on this particular night…

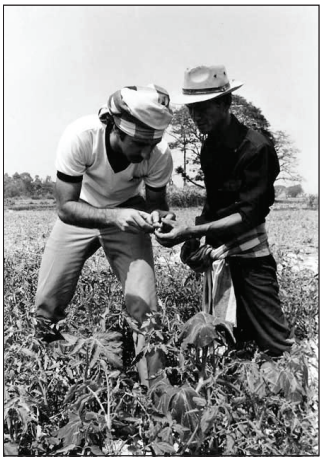
Our Peace Corps legacy is made up by many small gestures of humanity and kindness such as this that all Volunteers make every day. These acts set us apart, and create human bonds and lasting friendships in a very turbulent world. The world hasn't changed much. Maybe it has become even more chaotic. But I am heartened to see Peace Corps still attracts young and old people alike, who believe we can still make a difference through compassion and friendship, working tirelessly, quietly, alone and unheralded. Rick exemplified such a spirit.

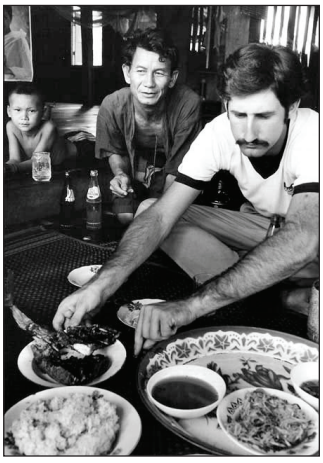
And so, my work was complete, and I wrote the report. There would be no body to accompany back to the United States and Rick's family

I asked Peace Corps to bring his mother to Thailand for his funeral and a dedication ceremony with the villagers at his project in Nagae. On the way there, we stopped at the site of the accident where the Thais had built a spirit house for the departed souls of that tragic night, and I thought Rick's mother was very appreciative of and moved by this kind gesture.

I was grateful that both the Thai Ministry of Interior and Peace Corps, through Jon, wholeheartedly supported my request to host Mrs. Hushaw. In our small way, we were able to bring some peace of mind and a bit of closure for Rick and his family.

Thank you,
Jim Ogata, Former Associate Peace Corps Director for Agriculture/Rural Development

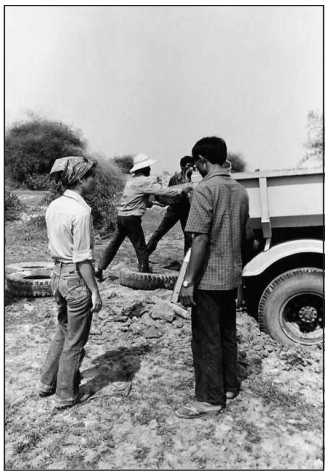




Mark Allan Van Koevering served with ARD Crop Production in Yasothorn.


Nancy Lee Ellison served as a Medical Technologist at the Provincial Hospital in Ubonrathani.






Michelle Pearl Miller was an Agriculture Instructor at Sakonnakorn Teachers' College.



Sharon Elaine Fletcher served with ARD Livestock in Uttaradit.

Thai 70, 1981-1983
Agriculture Education, Health

A WALL is ALL: Memories of a Thai TO PVC

Carole Beauclerk

As a PVC – English teacher, teacher trainer in the early 80s. I was assigned to Nakorn Sri Thammarat, Amphur Lansaka, a lush fruit-growing region among the limestone mountains of the South. I faced compliant and obedient, albeit large, groups of Bratom students each day and teaching them English proved to be a challenging task. Although I already was an experienced teacher, dealing with the extreme linguistic differences between the two languages, as well as the overly difficult grammar-based required text, was daunting.

However, I was able to adapt the text and pitch it to my students' level and develop interesting learner-centered activities. What was truly problematic was the simple fact that my classrooms had no walls! They were called "temporary," but seemed to have been there a rather long time and were subject to visual distraction, noise, and wind and rain, of while there was copious amount of in my region.

The Peace Corps office in Bangkok was offering a grantwriting opportunity to acquire funds for community projects, called Peace Corps Partnership, by locating donors in the US.

While this was usually the domain of the Agricultural PVC and no English volunteer had applied to the program, I decided to give it a go. My students and I created a Cultural Kit, not only including letters (in English, of course), but also drawings of our classrooms and village life, as well as a sarong, a spice selection, a basket, a cassette of Thai music and lots of photos. Finally, architectural plans for the modest project (I was asking for $500) were provided by an Australian tourist, whom I met on a weekend getaway in Koh Samui and who happened to be a professional architect.

The PC. Office found donors easily; an American couple whose son had died in Vietnam and who wanted to have a positive memory for him in South East Asia. All

the funds went into my bank account and local carpenters were employed to add the walls. They were a big improvement to the teaching-learning environment for both teachers and students.

A final note: Before my parents came to visit me at my site, they contacted the donors by telephone and had a good exchange. Once there, my father was inspired, perhaps by the heat, to donate a water cooler to the school. This was done during his birthday celebration in one of the now-walled classrooms, and accompanied by Thai dance performances, speeches, singing, ram wong by every one, and of course, lots of delicious spicy food.

Thai 71, 1981-1983

Fisheries, Soil Science, Agriculture, 4-H Extension, Water Resources, Geology, Malaria Control

One of the most ambitious projects ever implemented and documented by a PCV was that conducted by Jacques Landy of Mae Hong Son. He was assisted by Steve Blanchard. During the years of his service from 1981-1984, he designed and built a suspension foot bridge over Mae Kam Pai in Mae Hong Son. Over the years since it was built, it has served the surrounding communities well, and has even been featured in two Hollywood movies.

Above, PCVs Steve Blanchard and Jacques Landry at the dedication of the bridge Mae Kam Pai in Mae Hong Son. Steve receives a plaque from the Governor below.

Sitthi opens new bridge

A 120-METRE suspension bridge, one of the longest of its type in Thailand, was opened in Mae Hong Son Province on Saturday.

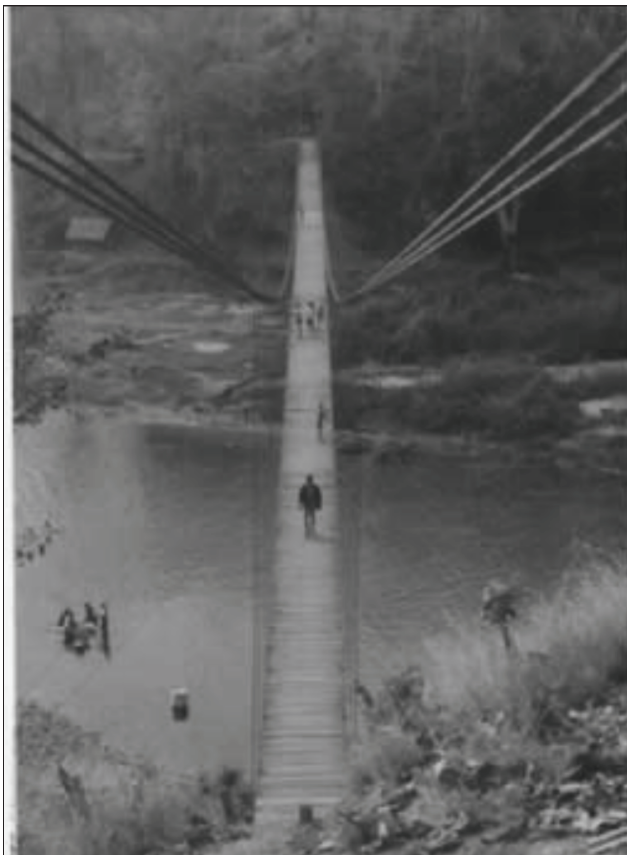
Interior Minister Sitthi Jirarote presided at the opening ceremony which was also attended by Mae Hong Son Governor Vanich Pornpiboon and the Netherlands ambassador.

The 800,000-baht bridge, designed and supervised by a US Peace Corps volunteer, was built by residents of the area with financial support from local government bodies as well as from the the Netherlands and Canadian governments.

The new all-weather bridge spans the Pai River and links Ban Sop Toi and Khun Klang in Muang District.

The bridge is expected to stimulate economic development of the region.

Gen Sitthi Jirarote (right) and US Ambassador John Gunther Dean accompanied by governmen officials inspect the new bridge.




NESCAFÉ
SPONSOR

Thai 73, 1982-1984

Secondary TEFL, Teacher Training College, University TEFL

THE NOMNGUEN BLUES

Kevin Acers

"The Nomnguen Blues" as performed by the Moo 2 Khu Bua Language Group on the last day of Homestay, Group 73 training, 1982 (including Ian Fitzsimmons, the late Maggie Reynolds, Pindie Stephens, Laura Holder (now Mills), and yers truly, songwriter extraordinaire Kevin Acers, with inspiration from our Thai language trainer, Aj. Somsak):

When I was gonna learn to phut passa Thai
It was the Silent Way--don't ask me why.
The ajaan had a pointer and a colorful chart
And we all got off to a real good start.

We hit "mai see dang" and "mai see kow"
And I thought, "Whoa! We're really rollin' now."
But then the pointer tapped out a dreadful word-
It was the most goddawful sound I'd ever heard.

And I got the nomgnuen blues...those nomgnuen-nomguen blues.
If I could ever choose, I 'd stay away from those nomgnuen blues.
(blues, blues, blues, blues...we'd stay away from those nomgnuen blues)

Well, we finally got past those wooden blocks
And learned how to talk the way a real Thai talks!
We could chat about the weather and know what it means,
I just prayed no one would ask about the color of my jeans.

'Cause I got the nomgnuen blues...those nomgnuen-nomguen blues.
Feels like I'll never lose the nasty, no-good nomnguen blues.
(blues, blues, blues, blues...we'll never lose those nomgnuen blues)

Now, I love to say “sa-wa-dee” and “kap-khun-mak”
And you know I love to brag about my pa-ko-mah.
But it’s my greatest fear that the day will come
When the whole world will be blue and I’ll be stricken dumb.

With the nomgnuen blues...those nomgnuen-nomguen blues.
If I could ever choose, I’d stay away from the nomguen,
The nasty, no-good nomguen blueeeeeeees!

THOUGHTS
I left PC/T in the Spring of 1986; 20 years later this wriggled its way to the surface:

Jasmine steam

this curling steam carries the scent of jasmine tea
and with it a silent stream of associations
from decades long evaporated...

fresh faced children
sell garlands of jasmine blossoms
in the Ubon streets at night
best friends by day
competitors after the sun goes down
as they each offer sweet, sweet smelling
flower strings

3 garlands, 10 baht
3 garlands, 10 baht

I buy their flowers after being hypnotized
by their expert puppy-eyes

here, let me have them all
20 garlands, 50 garlands, whatever you have
tonight, go home early and sleep

I become known as the white man whose house reeks
of that concentrated perfume
garlands dangling everywhere...

heat from the small ceramic cup
burns my fingers as,
eyes closed, I inhale the jasmine steam

how are these children now,
and, by now, these children’s children?
as I sip the tea, its flavor goes away.

Thai 74, 1982-1984

Agriculture, Rural Development, Occupational Therapy, Teacher for the Blind, Lab Technology, Medical Technology, Adult Education, Nutrition, Nursing

Ron Hemmer

Of course, one of the most common phases heard during PC training was "Culture Shock." I thought they must be referring to someone else because I certainly hadn't ever suffered from Culture Shock. I had already lived in several other countries, albeit western countries, and had experienced different languages, foods and customs. Training was a cinch! I was even helping some of the shyest in our group to adjust to life outside of the "comfort zone" that was the USofA.

That was, until I got off the Rot Tour in Kalasin, my home for the next 2 years. I must have spent the next two months in a dream-like state; was it culture shock? Something must have been wrong with me because all those people stared at me constantly; they even pointed and laughed. The kids were all scared, thought I was a ghost, and tried to run away. There were days that I couldn't force myself to the night market for supper no matter how hungry I was. Gradually, I seemed to come out of the cloud, although, even now, I can't seem to remember how long it took. Over time, I even came to enjoy the notoriety and the looks on the faces of people I happened to surprise in the market, the village or the school. They laughed, I laughed and life was Sanook. It made work interesting and fun and

Dancing Lessons: Far Left, Russ Elliot, Michael Calabria, Marian Valentine, Fred Fellner, Ron Hemmer, Lynn Henagan

the ability to laugh at myself became the most important factor in anything I was able to accomplish as a volunteer.

Equally unexpected was the reverse culture shock I experienced on my return to the States. The sheer letdown of not being noticed at all – of not standing out in the slightest way, was hard to take. Interaction with others was just plain boring, no one acknowledged my existence – and Sanook was a lot harder to find.

Parade: Left to Right: Russ Elliot, Randy Arnst, Lynn Henagan, Mark Weber, Ron Hemmer, Mike Rice, Michael Ordonez, Gray-haired farang-Richard Konrad, farthest right farang-Melissa Lang.

But, you know, in every thing I have done since, in every job I have had since Peace Corps Thailand, I have tried to incorporate Sanook - and believe it or not, it works here too!

Dedication

Although, I still think about folks I met during my 2+ years in Thailand, I was totally impressed by a fellow volunteer, Jan Weisman, who was speaking, reading, and writing Thai 3 months after her arrival in country. Unfortunately, we had little time to get reacquainted, since she learned shortly of the reoccurrence of breast cancer. She died in January 2001, just as she was finishing her PhD in Thai (Linguistics) at the University of Washington (Seattle). I can only imagine, what she might have accomplished.

Thai 85, 1985-1987

TEFL, Malaria Control, Nutrition

Kathy Dillon

It was July 1985. There was one book about travel to Thailand on the shelves of the major bookstores, a thin version of Lonely Planet. It's hard to believe now how little information was available about Thailand in the U.S. at that time.

Thirty-nine of us came together for staging in Chicago prior to departure for Thailand. We were from many states around America, all of us strangers to one another. In one session during staging, one of our trainers told us how important the people in the room would become to us. She was right; we just didn't know it yet. We did not realize then that most of us would become life-long friends. We would become volunteers in Thailand in the areas of nutrition/health, nutrition/agriculture, malaria prevention/eradication, and TEFL/Crossover.

Most of our members were fresh out of college. Three in the group were senior citizens. The rest of us were somewhere in between. Only one had ever been to Thailand before. Several of our members were disappointed that their assignment had been changed. Originally scheduled for Peace Corps Mali, they were switched to serve in Thailand instead. Needless to say, the group would not have been complete, would not have been what it was, had they gone to Mali rather than becoming part of Thai 85.

We landed in Bangkok on a hot and sultry night. The air was heavy with heat and humidity. We had been asked to dress up/freshen up for our late arrival at Don Muang Airport. There, we were whisked into the VIP room, with fragrant flowers placed around the neck of each volunteer.

The Viengthai Hotel in Banglampoo was where we spent our first few days and nights in-country. Our training would last for four months. By the time it was over, four trainees would return to the USA.
Nakorn Sawan, in central Thailand, was our first destination outside of Bangkok for training. There we stayed at the Rongram Anodard for three weeks of training in Thai language and culture.

Next we went to the northeast province of Nong Khai for several weeks of agriculture training, in addition to ongoing training in language and culture. Nong Khai was a sleepy town along the Mekong back then. Our daily Peace Corps training took place at an abandoned refugee camp outside of town. We had our homestay in Nong Khai villages, as well. For some of us, our homestay villages were right on the banks of the Mekong. There were amusing stories shared about homestay as the weeks went on (bugs for dinner again!).

In our spare time on weekends we would meet one another for lunch and a leisurely afternoon of letter writing at the restaurants on the Mekong. It was long before the days of email, and calls home were very rare and expensive. Most of us always had a good supply of aerograms with us at all times. The town was much quieter then, as it was many years before the Friendship Bridge turned the place into a bustling market town between Laos and Thailand. A couple of weekend breaks from Nong Khai were spent in Udorn, in a nice air-conditioned hotel complete with pool and delicious pancakes.

Malaria trainees became known for their tiows, since their training took them to different places around Thailand. The nutrition trainees had two weeks of training at Mahidol University in Bangkok. There, the aerograms came in handy, making it look as if most of us were taking copious notes on all of the lecture material that was being presented. The air-conditioned Viengthai made that two-week period bearable, however. We also had a portion of nutrition training in Buriram. TEFL training took place in Phrae.

Our four months of training ended with a few final days at Bang Saen beach resort. Then, there was a lovely swearing-in ceremony at the home of the country director, Bob Charles.

There seemed to be some places that were considered to be highly desirable for site assignments…in the south by the beaches, or in the north in the mountains. Yet those of us who ended up serving in Esan (the northeast), well known for its hospitality, as well as its poverty, realized later that we had been blessed. And those who were assigned to central Thailand were happy as well, often enjoying weekends meeting up with one another in Bangkok. Most of us ended up feeling that we were, indeed, where we belonged; and our assigned sites truly became "home" for two years.

During our two years of service, we enjoyed some opportunities to come together for training and conferences in places such as Cha Am, Bang Saen, Chiang Mai, and Surathani. Some volunteers from the group traveled to other countries during our vacations. Some went to Burma, Nepal, China, Singapore and Hong Kong. Only a couple visited the USA during our two years of service.

Koh Samet, Kho Samui, Hua Hin and Phuket beaches were favorite destinations for brief holidays with one another, and when we had visitors from the states. The Royal Orchid, with its Peace Corps discount, was a favorite spot for stays with family members visiting from the states. Brunch at the Hilton was a favorite meeting place on Sundays when some of us had business in Bangkok over the weekend.

The guest houses on Khao San Road, Peachy Guesthouse, Vienghthai Hotel (with several volunteers to a room), and the Star Hotel were favorite lodging choices when business brought us to Bangkok. Some liked drinks and dancing at Jusmag, a favorite expat hangout.

Our Close of Service (COS) Conference was held in Chiang Mai in late 1987. A couple of our group members extended their service in Thailand a little longer. One man and woman in our group married each other after returning to the states. Overall, three women in our group married Thai men and one man married a Thai woman. Two of our members stayed for many years, and are still in Thailand. Some of our members worked with refugees or teaching English in Thailand for some years after their Peace Corps service ended. Some of us have returned to Thailand at least once. And some of us have returned quite a few times.

Thai 85 could be described by virtually all of its members as a very close group. Every five years or so, we have published a newsletter, with everyone submitting updates on their lives. We have also had three big reunions, with more than half the volunteers and their families attending. Weddings have been another way of reuniting, especially in the years soon after returning to the USA. Our time in Thailand was life-altering, and the relationships that we formed in our group were a big part of that. I think that we all feel that it was an honor and a privilege to serve with such fine people, in such a warm and welcoming country.

Thai 87, 1986-1988

Secondary TEFL, Teacher Training College TEFL, University TEFL

Name:	DANUTA IRENE KOSSOWSKA
Education:	M.A. (French/Italian) - Duke University, 1980 Ph.D. (French/Italian) - Duke University, 1984
Interests:	Journalism, writing
Birthdate:	April 4, 1915
Experience:	Continuing Education Program, Duke U. - Course in 18th C French Literature 1985 Spring & Fall semester; Skill course, French Fall/Spring 1981-82 Perkins Library - Duke University; Manuscript Department arranging - cataloging new collection - 1985-86. Perkins Library cataloging 1980-85 as part-time occupation.
Travel:	England, France, Italy, Austria, Hungary, Germany, Poland, Portugal
Home Address:	4915 Howe Street Durham, NC 27705

April 4, 1915 - April 3, 1988

หน่วยสันติภาพสหรัฐอเมริกา
242 ถนนราชวิถี เขตดุสิต กรุงเทพฯ 10300
โทร. 243-0140-4

U.S. PEACE CORPS/THAILAND
242 RAJVITHI ROAD, DUSIT, BANGKOK 10300
TEL. 243-0140-4

April 4, 1988

Dear Volunteers, Trainees and Staff:

Peace Corps Volunteer Danuta Kossowska who was struck by a minibus outside the Peace Corps office last Thursday died late last night.

This sudden loss will be regarded by many Americans and Thais as a death in the family. My few encounters with Danuta made me feel very close to her, and I particularly miss the sparkle in her eyes, her inquisitive mind and moral support. Her dedication to the kind of work we do, particularly her desire and ability to be of service, was inspiring. By her example, none of you should ever think you are insignificant to this program and can pass on without leaving a mark.

I ask myself whether this tragedy could have been prevented and how we can guard against future accidents so Danuta's death will not be in vain. I think about the many perils that are around us all as we live and work overseas. Danuta would be the first to say we cannot shelter ourselves from every danger. In fact, as we once discussed volunteer security, she told me about the most secure summer of her life in 1939 in Poland just before she returned from the countryside to Warsaw and the Nazis. Life was never after secure for her but that did not stop her from charging ahead.

We can though now head off another tragedy. Particularly when volunteers from upcountry come to Bangkok, they should be especially cautious with the traffic. Most Americans are unfamiliar with the driving on the left side; also Bangkok's one way system seems to change periodically, and bus lanes are particularly dangerous. I hate to say you should look both ways before crossing, but you should--- always and thoroughly--- and I recommend you only cross at stop lights and not under any circumstances in the middle of streets, even if there are pedestrian crosswalks.

Two last thoughts from Danuta's termination report written last week: "I have a very good tip for any and all volunteers--- ASK. Whenever something puzzles you, is unclear or even shocking, as this happens too, ask. When you feel uncertain, lost--- ask. People of all cultures like to inform and explain and that is the beginning of bridge building."

"For good bye I can repeat what was and maybe still is said about being a volunteer "The hardest job you'll ever love." Today is Danuta's 73 birthday.

Vance Hyndman

Thai 89, 1986-1988

Secondary TEFL, Nutrition, Malaria Control, 4-H Extension, Land Reform, Water Resources, Fisheries

Billie Fallon

Being a PC Volunteer in Thailand gave me a true appreciation of what it was like to be a minority in another culture, and struggle often to effectively communicate. I don't think that experience has ever left me, and has even, in subtle ways, has carried over to my professional practice and personal interactions.

I make a dedication to Ralph Owen from Thai 89, who has passed on from this life to another

Billie visiting some locals who were thrashing rice. The villages around the clinic were surrounded by rice fields, and workers who had been injured in the fields or bitten by snakes visited the clinic frequently.


Race
Truck

Thai 95, 1989-1991

Fisheries, Forestry, Food Preservation, Community Development, 4-H Extension, Secondary TEFL

Aha!

Timothy Hartigan

Prior to joining the Peace Corps, I was a substitute teacher in the Buffalo public school system for the last half of the academic year. While I subbed at several schools, I spent a lot of time working in the primary school that I had graduated from ten years earlier. Administrators, teachers, staff and students knew that I was going to be there off and on until June, but as a sub, I wasn't really a full-fledged member of that community. However, this knowledge of the school and my good rapport with the people in it gave me a 'privileged insider/outsider' position.

Jump forward about six months and I'm in a similar 'privileged insider/outsider' position as a PCV getting settled in at my junior/senior high school in Nongkhai. It was fun getting to know my students and co-workers as we practiced Thai and English. They all got a real laugh when I told them I was from "Muang Kwai." Perhaps five or six weeks after getting to site, I had an "Aha!" moment: administrators complain about teachers, teachers complain about administrators and students, and students complain about teachers in schools in Thailand as much as they did in Buffalo.

The life lesson learned here wasn't so much about the similarities between schools, but people. My time in the Peace Corps allowed me to learn that people are basically the same, whether they are in rural northeastern Thai towns or big American cities.

Here is a picture of me teaching at Pakkard Phittayakhom School (A. Pakkard, J. Nongkhai) in 1990. I think this is a M.S. 2 class. I can still remember some of the students' names! The young lady holding the paper near my hand is Phikhuntong Yawdkiri.

Thai 96, 1991-1993

Community Development, Diversified Farming, National Park Development, Soil and Water Conservation, Water Resources, Nutrition, Filariasis Control, Rural Water Supply, Primary Education

Leslie Wilson

One of my strongest memories is of Ajaan Patra urging me to please not melt down completely as we sat under a tree in the sweltering humidity and heat of PST is Ratchaburi for my "How's it going?" check-in.

I did not feel it was going well, early on, and I also remember vividly how I struggled to say, "Hello, my name is Leslie!" to the assembled village.

My pen rai! It all got better and I remember with delight the flotsam and jetsam of 40-plus sworn-in PCVs worldly goods strewn over the front lawn of the Peace Corps office as we organized ourselves to head out to our assigned sites.

There are hundreds of strong memories from throughout the next two-plus years, including post-swearing-in cocktails at The Oriental complements of LA's parents and Annette's "wallet" and LA's birthday boat cruise on the Mekong.

But no memory is fonder than that of my farewell party on the beach near Pathiu where my Thai co-workers and a gaggle of the childcare center attendants I'd worked with for years put on a grilled fresh fish fest complemented with over-mic'ed singing and tipsy dancing into the late hours of the night.

Thai 97, 1991-1993

TEFL, Forestry, Fisheries, Plant Protection

Eric Meusch

It was never my plan, but Peace Corps ended up the beginning of a career in Southeast Asia.

Following my assignment with Peace Corps, I have continued to work with rural people to manage aquatic resources.

I've spent the last 15 years in Thailand, Cambodia and Laos, with work in Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and China.

While with PCVs, there were jokes about Volunteers who would never go back. It seems that I've ended up being one of them, although as a volunteer I was once voted "Most likely to open a Mexican Restaurant named Chico's in Topeka, Kansas."


LUX

Thai 98, 1991-1993

Nutrition, Community Development, Filariasis Control, AIDS Control, Land Development, Rural Development, Forestry, Water Resources, TEFL, Malaria Control

Bill Knowlton

How did my Peace Corps experience affect my life? How didn't it?

There are a lot of things I can think of that affected me back when I was a volunteer in Mahasarakam Province, between 1991-1994. I remember upon my arrival here one of the "older" volunteers telling me "during your time here, you'll learn more about yourself than you will about Thailand," and I thought, "no way!"

All was new, there was SO MUCH to learn, to experience. It seemed impossible that I could have time learn more about myself with everything around me.

And, of course, that volunteer was right. My Peace Corps experience in Thailand has taught, shown, and given me so much about myself. and I'm still taking it all in; perhaps that I'm still learning about myself and this great place 13 years later is one reason why I'm living in Bangkok now.

What was it like at the District Agriculture Office in Wapi Pathum, Mahasarakam? I think my three years there showed me that life really is a balance, that there will be good times and bad, that things will sometimes go your way and sometimes not, and that you shouldn't let it bother you, it's just life, it is what it is, so try to sit back and enjoy the ride, regardless of where it takes you. I remember that some of the things I loved and miss are the same things that drove me crazy: the laid-back attitudes: don't get too excited about anything, just "jai yen yen" and let whatever it is pass with a "mai ben rai"; the stares and "you-you"s, the basic Issan hospitality. Often people with very little, but what they did have they would gladly share with you.

And the Issaners' ability to be so nice and accommodating, almost to the point of being a nuisance; often, especially in the beginning when I had no language skills, I learned a great deal about patience and how it's such an important thing in life, as it seemed I would be treated like a child with little or no free will. You just gotta smile and say "mai kow jai" and go with the flow. And much more often than not, things would turn out fine, if not great!

I remember the food as amazing: sticky rice, som-tom ("tom-bak-hoon"!), kai-yang, bamboo soup, ant-egg salad!! And of course, the best dish in the world, "kow-niow-ma-muang"!! (as someone in my group said during training in Pichit in mid-April, "it's about the only thing that makes the hot season bearable!"). I remember some of my most tranquil moments were riding the "orange-crush" bus along the 36 km stretch between Wapi and the Amphur Muang of 'Sarakam, staring out at the beautiful scenery of the green, green, green rice paddy, dotted with the occasional tree or bush or water buffalo, often against the bluest of blue skies with white clouds, the horizon seeming to go on forever. Those were the times when I thought I was in the middle of a National Geographic picture, so different than what I was used to and so totally comforting. I remember the incredible Thai smiles from the shopkeeper in town to a farmer out on a back road I met during a long bike ride. I guess the communication barrier here really isn't that bad, as long as you can start out with a smile.

I know I was so lucky to be posted here with Peace Corps. This truly is an incredible place with incredible people . . and that's why I'm still here. It's become my home away from home, this great country.

Walter Levinson teaching basic soil science to students at Anuban Chiangmai School.

Walter Levison

I was a soil and water conservation extension agent in Chiangmai Province, but I also developed an eco-education curriculum at Anuban Chiangmai School in the City of Chiangmai.

Thai 101, 1992-1994

Fisheries, Forestry, TEFL

Rachel Isaacson Cooke (Fisheries)

I can easily say that Ba Dao was my favorite person in Thailand. She was my landlady at the beginning, but she quickly became my mom away from home. I would come home from work to find a freshly cut mango or pomelo waiting on the table, or she would be in the garden watering and singing a local tune. Sometimes she would be sleeping in the hammock in the shade of the house and I would get in the hammock beside her and write letters home or read a book. She made me feel at home.

One day she asked me how I learned to read Thai. I told her that I used books that explained the sounds of the letters and how they're put together, and then practiced reading children's books with fairy tales that I already knew. She then asked me, to my surprise, to teach her how to read. It had never occured to me that she might not know how to read. I didn't know anything about her childhood or her education, but she had raised several children who had gone to university and had white-collar jobs -- I guess I just assumed she knew how to read.

I was really pleased that she had asked me to help her with this. She did so much for me and this was a great opportunity to give her something back. So several nights a week we sat around with the letter charts and the books, making headway. It wasn't fast, what with 44 consonants, 28 vowels and 4 tone marks -- but it was wonderful time that we spent together. After nearly a year of learning, she was able to read the wat prayer book, which was the most important thing for her. During my time as a volunteer I helped develop 9 fish farms, but teaching Ba Dao to read is the thing I'm most proud of -- we changed each other's lives.

Rachel and Ba Dao at temple in Ayutthaya

Thai 108, 1997-1999

Rural Child Health, Environmental Education, Primary School Enhancement, National Park Development

Liz Stabenow

The impact of those two years in Thailand has been immeasurable. I arrived in Thailand excited to see the national parks and learn about the wildlife, and, of course, to eat a lot of delicious Thai food. After living with a Thai family for three months during training, I felt totally unprepared to go out on my own. When I finally did arrive at my site, it was the people and not the parks that really mattered.

I worked for the Royal Forest Department, on nature trails and slide shows, educational brochures, and interpretive signs. I surveyed visitors to see what educational programs would have the most impact. Amazingly, my projects are still being used today and the impact of my actions has not been forgotten. It was one of the best times of my life, living under a beautiful waterfall surrounded by an abundance of amazing wildlife.

Despite all of this, what impacted me the most were the people around me and our everyday life. Playing with the children, eating everything from termites to spaghetti with my colleagues and neighbors, and visiting with the families and friends of the people who felt more like family than neighbors to me. Often, my Thai was nearly useless, as everyone was speaking Karen or Burmese. Sometimes, I would meet a refugee who spoke perfect English and could tell me her incredible journey.

During those two years, my own goals in life changed. I visited every school in the wildlife sanctuary I was stationed in, and trained teachers in environmental education. In the end, I learned much more than I

taught. All of those smiling schoolchildren changed me, and I became an elementary school teacher. I suppose it's no coincidence that I learned the word for teacher in three languages.

Today, my life is tied to Thailand very deeply. Of course, my husband is Thai and we manage to return occasionally, dragging our children along the still-treacherous mountain roads. My joy in watching my own kids playing with the children I grew to love in the Peace Corps is beyond description. It is a surreal life at times, but I would never choose a "mono-cultural" existence over our Thai & U.S. identities.

Liz with students in one of the classes she delivered an environmental education lesson

erased from the world's memories forever

Domenick Piccinich

Trying to encapsulate my Peace Corps experience in a few paragraphs would prove to be a Herculean task in not only in selecting an experience but also keeping it concise and within the limit requested by the editor. The latter problem is easily solvable as I remind the reader that this piece is written by a volunteer currently ensconced in Thai society. Therefore, I respectfully make a request for their attention in a longer-than-requested piece on my experience.

The former problem is a bit more of a Gordian knot as so many experiences are all interwoven and to try to find one strand of rope or experience to stand out is incredibly difficult. And if I try to unravel the knot by summarizing and making sense of my time in Peace Corps Thailand, it might prove to be more of an impossible task as my experiences are so varied. Yet, when I cut the knot, the answer is much simpler and more evident than I have slavishly thought through for the past week, as it is at the heart of many entangled ropes of current volunteers. It is a collective experience, a special experience, shared by us all in Group 117.

Special, in the way, that we are members of a larger community and have interlinked with organizations, government, teachers, nurses, with each other in this very ambitious and critical project on a grassroots level. Special, in that, we can see the life altering changes, not only in the life of the villages and tambons, but changes within ourselves. Special, in that I see my fellow volunteers having made an impact through their

intense dedication and, I take special pride in having made an impact through their intense dedication and, I take special pride in having come to know them these past two years. Special, in that people of all walks of life who joining to undertake this project, are living the truism spoken by Guatama Buddha over two millennia ago:

"Have compassion for all beings, rich and poor alike; each has their suffering. Some suffer too much, others too little."

The special project is HIV / AIDS.

The seminal beginnings took place on a Group 117 visit to a famous temple that cares for AIDS victims in Thailand, Wat Phra Baht Nam Phu. Accompanying this article is a picture that captures a moving experience many of us had in the temple; a sanguine and restful Buddha serving as a paternal guardian by watching over the cremated remains of AIDS victims whose last days were filled with agony, loneliness, and fear. As part of our Peace Corps training, we visited this well-renowned temple in Thailand that brings dignity to people who are in the final stages of their losing battle with AIDS. In most cases, these patients are abandoned by their families and usually wind up in this temple by either their own initiative or a family member "dumps" them off on the curbside, literally. The stigma of having AIDS is a death sentence for some Thais in their communities and therefore, many are marginalized or completely shunned.

The remains are those of Thais who stayed at the temple and passed away. After the funeral/cremation ceremonies, the monks send the remains to the families. Even in death, they are rejected by their own families and the remains are mailed back to the Temple with the victim's families wanting nothing more to do with their own mother, brother, sister, father, grandmother. So, these remains provide testament to their lives and serves as a reminder of their existence even though their closest relatives would like them to be….

erased from the world's memories forever.

On that day, many Peace Corps volunteers from Group 117 were jolted by the harsh and indifferent treatment of HIV / AIDS patients in a culture that prides itself in community. We were inspired by those volunteering in the hospital and especially, the patients who wanted to share their stories. As the virus seeks refuge in "silence", we took the challenge to this disease on its own turf as many of us made a "silent" commitment among ourselves.

Living in Thailand for an extensive amount of time, we recognized that once we strip away the layers of misinformation and falsehoods regarding HIV / AIDS, Thais will again be welcoming those inflicted back into their communities.

I am proud to say I am a Peace Corps Volunteer. I am proud to be part of a Peace Corps group whose Thai life and experience acts out the social justice and compassion spoken and lived by Gautama Buddha. I am proud to have joined a collaborative effort as many Peace Corps volunteers have enlisted the help of NGOs or joined in their efforts, and received generous financial aid from organizations such as Friends of Thailand and philanthropic organizations to support various HIV / AIDS initiatives. I am proud to see first hand the

the hospital nurses' and community members' tireless devotion in fighting this disease and its prejudices on a local level. I am proud to listen to the voices emanating from my fellow volunteers in varied outlets such as the PC yahoo group, phone text messages, a discussion over Thai whiskey and the HIV / AIDS website.

From Daniel Han's collaboration with the Catholic Church to run a 5 – day camp for orphans affected by HIV / AIDS supported by the Disney Corporation

...to David Sturza's awareness and education training in Don Jon supported by PEPFAR

...to Brian Kaderli's and Brent Fennerman's jangwat-wide children's camp in collaboration with Thai Concern Foundation

...to David Dore's assistance in a local children's camp run by his PHA group

...to the HIV / AIDS GIG's 3-day camps led by Emily Lawson and Christina Mancini among others to teach potential trainers on how to effectively raise awareness of HIV / AIDS in their communities

...to many volunteers who attend the monthly support meetings to show we care for their lifestyle,

...to Dr. John Williams and the Peace Corps staff who have encouraged and supported us by their own experience and advice,

I have witnessed tremendous work undertaken by my fellow volunteers, NGOs, and community members as

I sense a sea of change engulfing Thailand as people's perspectives on HIV / AIDS are being challenged.

However, I am most proud of my friendship with members of the HIV / AIDS support group as they have emerged as unwitting leaders and unheralded heroes in the eyes of many volunteers. Their unwavering support for each other, their total commitment to create a more welcoming community and their willingness to guide villagers to avoid risky behavior is courage beyond reproach. And their lives, now, are testaments to courage and perseverance, as well as triumph, as they are helping curb future generations of HIV / AIDS victims. They are an inspiration to many of us. And this unique Peace Corps experience allowed me to forge these friendships and be part of global effort of having the stigma of being an HIV / AIDS victim …

erased from the world's memories forever

Liesbeth Koning

My good friend at site has two young boy cousins, who were 6 and 7 years old. Every once in a while they would come over to my house. As they were accustomed to, they walked in without knocking. I was on the phone with a fellow PCV discussing Peace Corps business, and saw the two little boys come in, pass me, go to my bathroom and shut the door. They stayed a little while, I heard the toilet flush multiple times. Soon they came out, saw I was still on the phone, and left. Whenever I got overwhelmed with work, I just had to think about these two boys and the wonder they held for a little thing like a flush toilet and I laughed and relaxed.

Dedication My first two months of training were extremely difficult and the thought of going back home was often present. I was lucky enough to find a good friend my first day of staging in LA. She was always available to talk and helped to give perspective to my thoughts. If it wasn't for my fellow PCV, Emily Lawson, I wouldn't have had the wondeful experience of serving in the Peace Corpse in Thailand. Throughout our service, Emily inspired me with ideas, encouraged and supported many volunteers, formed wonderful relationships with the people at her site, and offered me continuous friendship and forgiveness. Thank you Emily.

Carolyn McGee

It's days like these that I'm going to cherish. I'm going to hold them close to my heart for the rest of my life. I'm going to keep them locked deep inside for fear no body will ever understand. 4:30 p.m. slowly rolls around, and as I'm hanging my last load of laundry, socks on, ready to head out the door to aerobics, the rain begins.

First one drop, then two. I wonder if it is even going to rain; two drops could be a tease. The sun is shining so bright to the west in preparation for its nights sleep. The rain never came. It was a false alarm. Any

one who moved their drainage tube into the big ceramic water tank can't expect water now. It proves to be just another hot and humid Thai evening. The street vendors still set up outside Wat Noi selling local vegetables from their gardens. The som-tom lady also makes gap-cow, and she spoons it in a folded down plastic bag, as I ride by on my bicycle en route to Lampan's house. Ironically we cross paths before I get there. Me - in search of an aerobics instructor; her – aerobics's instructor in search of rest. Lampan is my best friend. One of them.

We were drawn together because of our loud voices and love of anything considered exercise. Lampan deserves rest tonight. She's been out to her field harvesting tapioca and cashing it in at a local mill. She can hang with the best of the farmers. She can take on any man. Maybe that's why I like her so much. She is a tough gal. Physically tough. And loud. A Thai girl who isn't afraid to scream out for no reason.

I hand Lampan two sticks of cow-lam, a local dessert of sticky rice in bamboo, fire roasted – one that Pee Moo made and the other from Keo's mom's baskets. What a life those baskets have seen. And the same with all her wrinkles. They tell an intricate story – long, hard years of living in poverty in a rural village. Keo's mom, better referred to as Khun Yai with no teeth, has had a hard life. But a hard life, full of many laughs… and smiles. Lots and lots of toothless smiles. I also hand over two pictures to Lampan. One she is doing a traditional thai dance – maw lam – through the village streets in front of Wat Noi. I will never forget her "ohh-wee-ohh-wee-ohh-wee-ohh-wee-ahhh." I remember her voice was hard to hear over the mortal and pestle for a week after that.

The other picture was one of Lampan and I at Christmas 2006 at my house. I remember her swinging at the piñata. She was the first "adult" to jump up to the plate and play. She missed completely with both her hits. I thought she would have been good at games like this. She is so strong. Lampan is showing the picture to a lady across the street. She is showing off our friendship to anyone who will listen. She informs me aerobics is off in our village because all the ladies are too tired from farming, and nobody comes. Whizzing by in front of us goes Pah-ah on his nightly bike ride. I yell after him as I waive "bye-bye" to Lampan and peddle off to greet my new exercise buddy. I call him Pah-ah which is a respectable title for a school director. After two years here I still can't remember his name.

Or the som-tom lady's, and I consider her a good friend.

Or Khun Yai. The one with the beautifully-aged toothless smile who likes to stick her head through the bars of my window.

Or the man who likes to yell "good morning" when I ride by on my bike. The list could go on and on. I might not remember these people's names, but I will cherish my moments with them. Even the people I never spoke to, yet had an intimate relationship with, I will cherish them as well. The man who drove the bright blue song-taow. I enjoyed exchanging coy smiles when you picked up the kids for school or when I rode by your house on my way to the market.

And what about the one man I think is hot in my village. How we like to play the "I'm too embarrassed to even look at you game." And to the fruit seller's son. I enjoyed the big smile and wave you gave me as I sped by on the home stretch of my bike ride.

Tonight, Bow, the 91 year old partially deaf and blind man who likes to wave me over for a chat or Khun Yai who likes to shower naked outside her house, were missing from their normal spots when I passed their homes through Chaleang Tung. I finally pull up to my house, sweating and breathing heavily and meet Maah who is walking back from her mother's house with a bundle of fresh vegetables. She asks why I'm home so early (jung luey!), and I explain that Lampan didn't want to teach aerobics so I went on a bike ride with Pah-ah. Maah says Lampan can work like a man. Lucky actually eats most of her chicken and rice tonight. Pah comes to fill up old oil buckets with rain water from my ceramic tanks. I guess the rain that teased us earlier this afternoon leaves him thirsty for drinking water for the next couple days. Luckily, I have four huge ceramic tanks on reserve.

The sun finally falls asleep, and I settle into the house for the evening. Except this night, like so many previous, I get the urge to go across the street to Maah and Pah's house and chat with all the old people who congregate there. Maah G'Ja, Maah, and Pah are there tonight. Pah, crossed legs up on the bench , with his quizzical, serious look. Maah on the other end, arms

crossed and her floral batik skirt. And Maah G'Ja sitting slightly lower than them on the edge of the concrete step, bra-less, in her weathered indigo shirt. We talk about everything from love, to the rich and poor, to my return back to America. Pah says I must give him money to come back and visit him at his house. He is kidding of course, but it is such a typical response. Maah says I'm going to forget them all. And Maah G'Ja says no I won't. It is getting late, or maybe Maah G'Ja is growing hungry, and the gathering has adjourned. Everyone goes their separate ways through the dark, dusty street among faint sounds of revving motorcycle engines. After I take my second shower for the day, double dead bolt my door, and settle into my room for another night in Thailand, I realize it is days like today I will cherish forever.

Brian Kederli

"Wee-I-Pee", I say, enunciating each syllable with care. I fork over my 80 baht ($2) and get on the bus back home. I almost missed it, I thought. Carefully dodging the women who'd boarded to sell roasted chickens, I look for a seat. Only one available, next to a young woman, dressed neatly for a Sunday. I lean into the seat and sit down, taking notice of her outfit. Black slacks, formal shoes, and a red blouse. Across her chest, written in large black letters, "Life Ain't Nothin' But Bitches and Money."

Stifling a laugh, I pull the blanket over me. Thais don't mess around with the air conditioning. I'm not sure yet which is worse- freezing or burning my balls off, but for two years I've been periodically rotating between the two and I'm not sure if I'll be able to have children. There was already a movie in progress, which is great because I haven't seen a Jackie Chan movie in at least a few days.

Interesting, this movie is an actual Thai movie, so I don't have to listen to awkward voice-overs. And it's apparently about pirates, which is so wildly original I barely notice that the ticket-taker has made his way back to my seat.

Getting the bus to stop at my house is always difficult, because the drivers rarely know where my village is. So I have a prepared statement explaining exactly at which gas station to stop the bus, before what major stop, how many kilometers, etc. I've said it roughly two million times in the past two years, but it hasn't gotten much easier. The first go-around, the ticket-taker will stare at me, puzzled that I'm speaking Thai, and forget to actually listen to anything I was saying. Which is reflective of my life, actually. Probably 80% of my first words to people are followed by, "What?" "Where are you getting off?" he asks the woman sitting next to me. "Kao-Sang-Kwan", she answers. The town next to mine. "Where is your husband's ticket?" he asks. This is exactly why I don't sit next to women on buses. Heaven forbid a white man travel alone in this country. "I'm going to Nam Phong," I said as she blushes. "Alone". "And I need to get off at blah, blah, blah." He grunts and turns his back to take more tickets.

Udon is a city known for it's falang population. It used to be an American Air Force base and still sports relics of the Vietnam War: fighter jets, VOA, and old, bald men with wives doubling as granddaughters. This very day, I had eaten lunch at a restaurant while a man with a tattoo of a lawnmower on his bald-spot stood reading an advertisement for an all-natural alternative to Viagra.

Sure enough, the ticket-taker turns to another falang, and having learnt his lesson, asks his young Thai wife where she and her husband are going. She gives him both their tickets and the ticket-taker moves on, having proved, as if it needed proving, that I am an idiot.

The audio/visual systems put in these buses are amazing. You will watch and listen to the movie playing, whether you like it or not. No conversations, no sleeping, nothing except you appreciating exactly how powerful these speakers kick. I imagine the driver and his rig are big hits in the local high school parking lot.

Thais like action and horror movies, so you're either being woken up by machine-gun fire or by five year with a chainsaw. And the Thais just sit there and take it, too respectful to get up and tell the driver, "Hey maybe 2 am isn't the best time to be showing a Steven Segal movie". Then again, when is?

Today's movie, like I said, is about pirates. English

pirates, actually, who have mobilized the Chinese to enslave the Thais. And the main falang character is now molesting a 10 year old. So that's just great. I look back to see what the other falang thinks of this, but he and his wife are busy miming at each other, and aren't watching the movie.

At Kao-Sang-Kwan, the woman next to me gets off, and I stretch out a little. The movie concludes with the Thais on the island expelling the English pedophiles by firing homemade rockets at their ship. As the injured vessel sails off into the setting sun, the credits start to roll. And, holy shit, there goes my stop.

I run up to the front of the bus yelling at the driver to stop the bus. I look crossly at the ticket-taker sitting next to him, who evidently didn't tell him someone was getting off there. He steps on the brakes, and while the bus gently rolls to a stop, I exit. Just as the doors are closing behind me, I hear the driver say to the ticket-taker, "He's very talented, traveling without his wife like that."

I adjust my backpack, and with the sun at my back, begin my walk home.

Emily Lawson

Memory 1:

Well, the rain just keeps falling. Today is not nearly as bad as yesterday and I've been able to leave the house.

Apparently, we are experiencing the effects of tropical depression Chang Saen (or Big Elephant). The eye of the storm is over Ubon Rachatani. Much of the country is experiencing flooding, so I guess we are lucky that all we have is a grey sky and constant rain and drizzles.

Last night, I went to dinner with a bunch of my teacher friends for Ah Jarn Kanika's birthday. This is a tradition that we have. For everyone's birthday, we go to a nice restaurant and then split the bill. Everyone pays an equal amount except for the birthday girl - who eats for free. This may sound ordinary, but in this country it is quite amazing. Thais almost never split the bill. Typically, the oldest, wealthiest or highest ranking person at the table pays for everyone. In fact, most Thai people refer to the splitting of any bill as "American Share." So, my progressive group of friends is quite unique!

Memory 2:
Yesterday was Thanksgiving and though I spent most of the day trying to teach the story of Thanksgiving to five classes of Thai students who were only mildly interested, I had time for reflection on the many blessings in my life and time to spend with people I enjoy having fun and giving thanks together! Thanksgiving seems to be an interesting concept for Thai students. The literal translation from Thai wan krup khun prajao is day of thanks to God. Though this is appropriate, I feel it only partially describes what the day stands for. I tried, with some help from my co-teachers, to tell the story of the Pilgrims and Indians and the first Thanksgiving. Next, I described typical activities for Thanksgiving day: gathering together of family members, watching the parade, cooking, eating, watching football, eating, playing football, sleeping, sitting, talking, eating and more eating. A day of rest and a day of thanks. Most of the students found the concept quite wonderful.

Something I was very thankful for yesterday was the impromptu thanksgiving dinner I had with my Thai "family". I spend time with this family many evenings a week and really feel like a member of the family. Yesterday afternoon, I went to their house and told them not to cook dinner because it was American Thanksgiving and I wanted to make dinner for us. I made garlic mashed potatoes, carrots and beans, creamed corn and cranberry sauce (from Bangkok) and a pumpkin pie. We bought grilled chicken in place of turkey. It was a great feast and I think they enjoyed the little taste of America. Here are some pictures:

I put the food in tupperware and piled it on Pee Noot's motorcycle to take to her house.

The Thanksgiving feast, eating with the family

Last one. Here's an e-mail I wrote home:

found a dragonfly yesterday. I was leaving the computer lab at NongKhom School and I happened to glance down as I stepped out the door. The yellow bands around the tail struck me first. As I leaned in, I could see the glistening turquoise of the eyes. I tried to imagine the thousands of individual eye receptors within the glassy turquoise sphere. The wings were a little bit broken around the edges and dust was clinging to them as well as around the legs.

"Wow. Isn't that beautiful?"

Silence. Granted, I was talking to nobody in particular, but I was speaking Thai. I reached to pick it up. I grabbed hold of the tail and began lifting. However, the struggle for life was not over for as soon as the body left the ground, a final struggle was made. The sudden rapid movement of the wings startled me and I dropped it back on the floor.

Laughter.

The teacher in the room told me not to be afraid and picked it up for me. He showed me how to hold is beneath the body and the wings - they won't flap that way. No more struggle.

"It's so beautiful," I told him.

This time in response he told me what the name of it was.

"Dragonfly," I replied.

"I don't know. Ask Ahjahn Nannapat." (My co-teacher who speaks English.)

It was a statement, not a question, but I let it go. He tries to hand it back to me. I indicate we should set it free to fly away since there is still life in it. He disagrees.

"It will die. It can't fly. Take it."

I take it. Another moment of strength that quickly passes.

During the journey from school to my house, there were a few more moments in which it fought for life. They were only moments, but moments that required incredible energy to move the wings so quickly. Enough energy to startle me each time.

Today, as I write, I am looking at the lifeless body. The turquoise is gone from the eyes. They are dark. No more struggles. It's still beautiful. Somehow this little creature spoke to me. I'm not entirely sure why. It represented both Thailand as I see it and try to interact with the people as well as myself in that journey. I know it has been ages since I wrote.

Part of the reason is an on-line statistics class that ate my internet time for 5 weeks. (Pre-rec for grad school). I have thought of it many times and never knew where to start. So much has happened and I have gone though so many different emotions that it felt a bit overwhelming to try and write about it. Needless to say, letting more time pass does not lesson the task. So, I will try to summarize the last two months for you here and relate it to my beautiful discovery of yesterday.

Dragonfly as Thailand, Thai people Thais seem pretty happy with the lives they lead. They have everything necessary to stay alive in this world. Nobody in Thailand goes hungry. They may not have the best nutrition and there are some beggars in larger cities, but everyone has food. Families take care of their own. In this communal society, my friends find it difficult to understand why each of my immediate and extended family members lives alone.

Here, there is always room for one more mat on the floor. As far as developing countries go (though honestly, I hardly classify Thailand in that category), most people have fairly good access to healthcare. With the exception of extremely rural people (most especially in the northern hills) most people can get to a hospi- home. Water is plentiful. People rarely fight. Everyone

smiles at each other - real or not. Life is generally pretty ok.

The dragonfly was safely in a corner. Probably wouldn't get stepped on. Could it have tried to move if desired - not sure. There were probably tal occasionally - once there care is cheap. Schools are available. Booze is relatively cheap, or can be made at home. Water is plentiful. People rarely fight. Everyone smiles at each other - real or not. Life is generally pretty ok.

The dragonfly was safely in a corner. Probably wouldn't get stepped on. Could it have tried to move if desired - not sure. There were probably larger forces at work. But it didn't try. At least not until external forces came along.

Then Emily shows up in Thailand. Emily pushes people to look outside of their mediocre zone of comfort and see how a little work can move mountains. Value education. Institute discipline in the schools. Teach people true compassion. Learn about health and diseases currently effecting your people. Realize that there is a world out there bigger than Thailand and the countries that touch its borders. A moment of strength. A moment of fight. A conference. A meeting. A project. Some initiative. But only a moment. Then it is still.

I am always surprised and want to set it free. I am told by the Thais that it can't fly. I wonder.. can't or won't. I'm not sure. They assume I've never seen it before. I am young and inexperienced. But still there are moments of movement. Then stillness. They are used to my presence. Yes, still the occasional "Falang! Hey YOU!" comment. But people don't go out of their way to come see me or try to initiate a project. In Thai, it is called grang jai. Basically it means doing something you don't want to do in order to appease someone else.

Part of me is really glad both to have the personal space, as well as to know who my true friends are and who was merely acting in a grang jai. Part of me feels slightly useless. Was it all pretend? Have I had any sustainable impact? Are the eyes really dark today, or am I seeing them merely in a different light.

Again, I'm not entirely sure. The turquoise was beautiful. Maybe if I just go outside to natural light. Dragonfly as Emily. When I applied for the Peace Corps, I envisioned myself living in a hut on the plains of Africa. Life was hard, but I was touching lives, opening eyes, forming relationships and leaving at least a little of myself behind. Changing the world one grain of sand at a time. I arrived here to find a culture I could not relate to. Superficiality is not really my cup of tea. But I embraced it and adapted myself as best I could. No grass hut. I have a 2 bedroom, 2 bathroom house with air conditioning in my bedroom and a western toilet in the bathroom. Physical life is not hard. Transportation is easy. A variety of foods surround me. I have bottled drinking water in my house. Emotional life is challenging. I have learned and grown in ways I could never have imagined. I have mastered the "smile when you don't want to smile".

My appreciation for the true friendship and love, that I have at home, increases daily. I am learning a new culture. Looking back on the things that I have done while I've been here, I see things that I think/hope have made a difference.

I started my service off with a bang. I'm sure some of these things have touched lives and changed thoughts in ways I have and have not seen.

Two days ago the dragonfly flew. Did anyone notice it? Maybe. It seems now that people don't really want to try.

Well, maybe they never did, I was just more pushy. And I second-guess myself as to whether anything I have done has really been "noticed" in a way that will leave some sort of lasting change.

Yesterday, it was in a corner. Not stepped on, but not actively noticed either. Maybe I am a little tired of trying to no avail. Only nine months left, after all. People have had babies in less time! (In fact, several friends did - just last week!) I still have moments of excitement. Great ideas. I try. I push. But I feel lately, that they are often only moments. Laughter, nothing more. Then stillness. Yes, I'm talking to you. And, yes, I'm speaking Thai!

Chris Antoun

about training:

Our training group is a crew of 48 Americans from diverse backgrounds (most people are in their mid-twenties). We each live in a Thai homestay and then commute on our bikes, wearing bright-colored helmets, to a central hub for language and technical training each day. Living with a host family is probably most exhausting part of training thus far because they limit our freedom so much, and well, because they speak Thai. Each volunteer has to be home by dark or our families worry too much. For instance, the second week of training I was 20 minutes late getting home, so my host family rode their motorbikes around town looking for me. Once they found me they immediately wanted to now what happened. I think I just went to buy a coke before riding home. The funny thing is that

my dad rode his motorbike about 10 meters in front of my bike the rest of the way home, like my own personal escort. Or an even crazier is the time a female volunteer went for a run in the morning and her host father rode his motorbike beside her for the entire 3 miles, just to make sure nothing happened. Wow.

same letter...
On March 25 we were sworn in as official volunteers by the US ambassador to Thailand.
Only one person in our group didn't finish training.
This last weekend we have been blowing off steam in Bangkok because you can eat American food here and speak English and you don't stand out so much as a westerner.

Nobody yells "hello" or "I love you" when they see a white person in Bangkok--Its just the rest of the country that does that.

I'm not too homesick yet. But I have a feeling that this will change once I get to site and I realize that I am here for 2 years and that there is no one who can speak English in my village.

Oh and by the way, I know I'm a Peace Corps volunteer so I should be in a hut in the mountains with no way to communicate. But this is 2005, so I actually have a cell phone.

Andrew Hokenson

It has been 5 months since I was a Peace Corps Volunteer living in Thailand. I have started a new job and am settling into a new role in life. I am getting used to the things that I had to give up. In all regards I am leading a "normal" life.

I just had people over to my new apartment for the first time. While looking around, one of them noticed two framed documents on my wall. He commented, "You probably don't see that too often." He was looking at my Peace Corps Certificate of Service and my Honorable Discharge from the U.S. Army.

You see, I am one of the few people that have had the privilege to serve their country in two seemingly different ways: one as a U.S. Soldier and the other as a Peace Corps Volunteer. I can understand why people are surprised at this. They tend to attract different sorts of people with different takes on life. For me it makes perfect sense.

I seek out unique experiences and new challenges, something the military and Peace Corps have plenty of. to do in the Infantry, adapt and overcome. I had made it through basic training, and two tours in Kosovo, I was going to make it through this.

When I think about my service as a volunteer, one experience was very unique and quite challenging for me. Our conditions the first week or so of training were not ideal but nothing I couldn't handle. Sure we had strange foods to eat, cold showers, and people talking to us in a language we couldn't understand, none of which was easy. I just did what I was trained

On the day we were introduced to our host families, everyone was a bit anxious, as well as excited. I was confident that I would be able to handle everything fine. No matter what they threw at me I had been through worse. I mean what were the chances of waking up on the ground, freezing, and under a thin blanket of snow in Thailand?

When I got to my house and met everyone in my new family, I was not really sure what was going through my mind. Everyone from the neighborhood was coming at me at once. All of these smiling people were talking a mile a minute using none of the words that I had learned over the course of the prior week. As the dizziness set in, my other senses began to kick in. My nose keyed in on the cows that occupied the very small barn that was nearly attached to our house.

I was brought up to my room with all of my 70 lbs of belongings I was permitted to bring with me. My eyes quickly told me that not only was this my room, it was my new grandmother's room, my new father's room and my new little brother's room. It was also the living room, and the changing room. If you haven't guessed by now, it was the only room. My tour continued with the bathroom facilities. I had seen portable latrines that served soldiers at a ratio of 50 to 1, and even this one threw me.

The tour ended and all of the neighbors eventually settled back in their own homes. Some were happy because they had a new person living in the community. Others were happy from the rice whiskey they had been drinking all night. This was a beverage I wished I would have been able to take part in, however they mistakenly believed that the volunteers were not allowed to drink. This would be the first of the Peace Corps policies that needed to get cleared up with my host family.

As I tried to sleep that night on my skimpy mat, in the hot lofted room, with the fragrance of dairy cows adding to the ambiance, I suddenly realized that the next couple of years would be very interesting. I wondered if the confidence I had prior to this was justified.

By the next morning the initial shock had warn off. I wasn't exactly sure what to do, but I just watched the others and followed along. I accepted my living conditions and went back into my basic training mindset. It was interesting to see all of the volunteers gather at the training center later that morning. They had been separated from one another for less than a day, but everything had changed. They had all had experiences similar to mine. Sure, some had tougher living conditions than others, but that really didn't matter. It was an overwhelming experience for us all and everyone wanted to relate what had happened.

I am not really sure if there is a moral to this story. I was asked to write about something from my service and this is what came to mind. Not much throws me, but my experiences during training did. I guess if there is a moral, it is that every volunteer's experience is unique. Some assignments may seem more challenging than others, but in the end that doesn't really matter. It's our service and we will carry the memories and experiences with us wherever we go. It's kind of the same with soldiers. Some have it tougher than others, but no one ever forgets the time they served no matter how "normal" their lives end up.

Welcome Bisson

The Wedding

Well, the mushroom picking has occurred and Pee-Waan and her family are well on their way in the mushroom business.

For her first harvest, Pee Waan packaged over 100 bags of mushrooms that will be sold at 65 baht per bag (making her first earnings over 6500 baht). That's an

incredible increase to her current salary of just about 3000 baht per month. With her new found income, she has already made an initial payment on the loan, started construction on her new home for her, her daughter and her new son-in-law; son-in-law because Pee Waan's daughter, Omichad, was recently. It was a wonderful ceremony and, as you can imagine, there was much to celebrate on this wonderful occasion.

I am so thankful to have been apart of Pee Waan's life and to have been a small part of helping her improve it. She's been a diligent worker and I know that she will only continue to be a strong and active member in her

community. Thank you so much to Friends of Thailand for helping Pee Waan and her family. Money well spent indeed.

Thai 122, 2010-2012
TCCO and CBOD

My Counterpart, My Hero
Kale Roberts

"Hen eek laeo!" My counterpart, Songkram Sanram, Pu for short, skids his bicycle to a stop and hops off to collect a couple aluminum cans and a plastic bottle littered along the roadway.

"Recycle daai!" he says with a smile and plops the cans into a bag he always keeps with him when he rides. While he is disappointed so many people in the village litter, he never gets discouraged and always keeps an eye out for recyclable waste, taking the time to retrieve each piece with a smile.


Kale and Phi Pu on the road near their village in Buriram.

Pii Pu's endless patience extends to his work as mentor of the youth group. When I arrived to my site in Buriram Province, I admit I was somewhat overwhelmed. Garbage-burn piles were everywhere, including outside school classrooms and in the community forest. I knew I wanted to work on a recycling project right away.

Pu immediately acknowledged my ideas and helped me organize the youth to create recycle centers in two of the villages. This has proven to be a big undertaking, requiring an entire year to get the centers up and running. However, Pu nhas never given up on his enthusiasm and encouragement for the 30 youth group members to achieve their goals.


Kale, Phi Pu and Baby Blue.

"Kale, gin khao tee baan daai mai? Will you eat at our family's house tonight?" he asks me several days a week.

Pu's philosophy has always been that as a Peace Corps volunteer, I am part of his family. People even call us brothers. His mom is my "Mae" as well; his baby son calls me Uncle Kale. When rice

harvest season comes around, Pii Pu makes sure I can jump in and help villagers in the fields. When it's time for a village event, Pii Pu is at my side explaining elements of culture and vocabulary so I can feel included and understand everything. When I make a cultural mistake, Pu is there to explain differences and smooth things over.

I often ask myself "what would I do without Pii Pu?" The answer may well be: not very much. As my counterpart, Pu is my bridge to the youth group, to my village, my coworkers and Thai culture.

"You teach me many things, Kale," Pii Pu recently told me. I was flattered but I also knew he teaches me much, much more.

Kale and Phi Pu on a visit to Phanom Rung in Buriram.

Pu shows me what endless patience is like. He teaches me how to listen more with my heart than my ears, why the youth are the future of our world, and the importance of stopping your bicycle to grab a littered bottle off the road. I joined Peace Corps hoping to develop a hero out of myself; I couldn't have known I would find my own hero among the people I was sent to help.

PC Thailand Groups 1962-2012

From 1962 to 2012, over 5,000 Peace Corps Volunteers in 124 groups have served in Thailand. We have participated in more than 80 programs, from TEFL to CBOD (Community Based Organization Development). One of the enduring mementos of Peace Corps service is the Group Photo. Below, and on the following pages, are group photos that remain part of Peace Corps Thailand's archives. A few are missing, but one day, we hope to acquire copies of them to add to this volume.

Thai I, 1962-1964

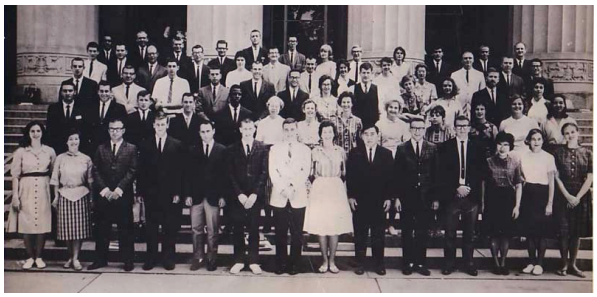
TEFL, Health, Vocational Education

GROUP I TEFL

GROUP I HEALTH

GROUP I VO - ED

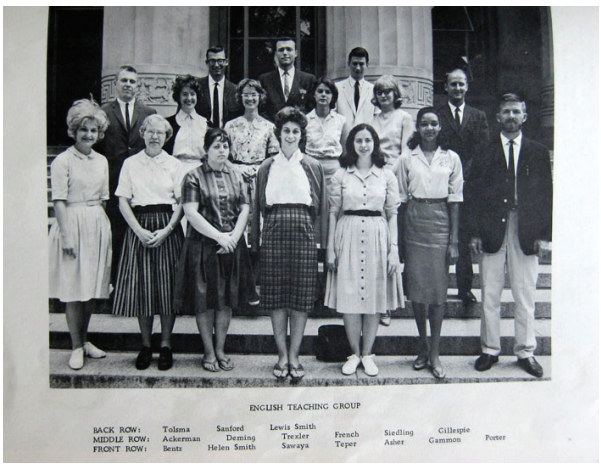
Thai II, 1962-1964
Secondary TEFL, Teacher Training College



Thai VII, 1963-1965
Community Development, Malaria Eradication

Thai XI, 1965-1967
TEFL, Malaria Eradication, Health

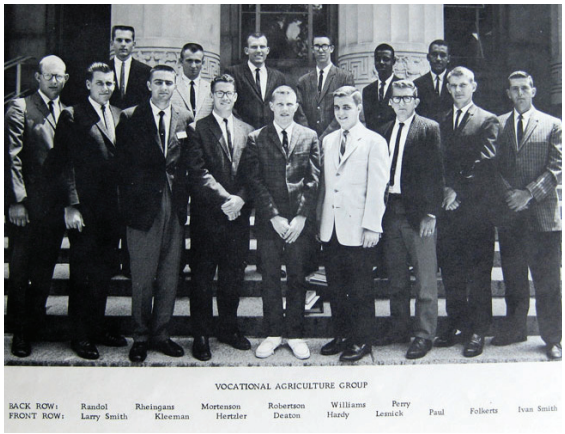
Thai XI, 1965-1967
TEFL, Malaria Eradication, Health



Thai XI, 1965-1967
TEFL, Malaria Eradication, Health

Thai XI, 1965-1967
TEFL, Malaria Eradication, Health

Thai XI, 1965-1967
TEFL, Malaria Eradication, Health



Thai XII, 1966-1968
Community Development

Thai XIII, 1966-1968
Secondary TEFL, Teacher Training College

Thai XIV, 1966-1968
Rural Community Health

Thai XV, 1966-1968
Secondary TEFL, Teacher Training College

Thai XVI, 1966-1968
Physical Education

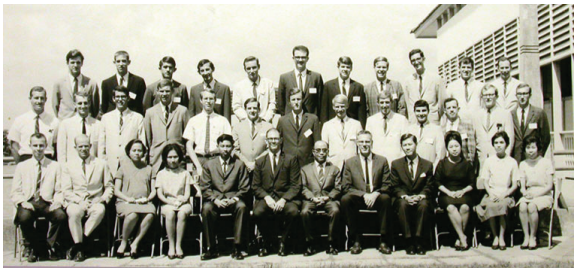
Thai XVII, 1966-1968
Malaria Eradication

Thai XVIII, 1967-1969
Secondary TEFL, Teacher Training College

Thai XIX, 1967-1969
Secondary TEFL, Teacher Training College

Thai XX, 1967-1969
Rural Health

Thai XXI, 1967-1969
Malaria Eradication



Thai 22-23, 1968-1970
Secondary TEFL, Teacher Training College, Physical Education, Secretarial Work

Thai 24, 1968-1970
Secondary TEFL, Teacher Training College

Thai 25, 1968-1970
Malaria Eradication

Thai 26, 1968-1970
Rural Health

Thai 27, 1969-1971
Secondary TEFL

Thai 30, 1970-1972
Secondary TEFL, Teacher Training College

Thai 31, 1970-1972
Mekong Development, Vocational Education, Vocational Agriculture, Modern Math

Thai 33, 1970-1972
Malaria Eradication, Leprosy Control, Medical Technology

Thai 34, 1971-1973
Secondary TEFL, Agriculture Education

Thai 39, 1972-1974
Secondary TEFL

Thai 45, 1973-1975
Wildlife Conservation, Nutrition

Thai 58, 1977-1979
Teacher Training College Agriculture, Ag Extension, Land Development, Rural Public Works, Rubber Research

Thai 59, 1977-1979
Teacher Training College Agriculture, Rural Development, Rural Public Works, Land Development, TEFL, Teacher Training College, Forestry, Health

Thai 60, 1977-1979
Fisheries, Crop Extension, Agriculture Extension, Land Development, Livestock Extension

Thai 61, 1978-1980
Vocational Education, Higher Education, Secondary TEFL, Teacher Training College

Thai 62, 1978-1980
Livestock, Crop Production, Land Development, 4-H Extension, Community Health, Teacher Training College Agriculture

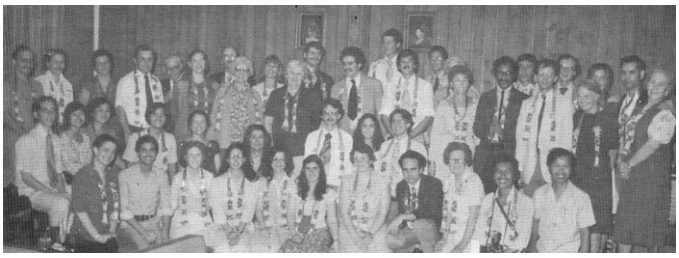
Thai 63, 1978-1980
Wildlife Research, Chemical Engineering, Vocational College TEFL, University TEFL, Secondary TEFL, Physical Therapy, Land Development Extension, Mental Health Statistician, Thai Women's Lawyers Association

Thai 64, 1978-1980

Health, Malaria Control, Community Health, Lab Services, Water Resources

Thai 65, 1979-1981

Water Resources, Secondary TEFL, Teacher Training College TEFL, University TEFL, Librarian, Adult Education, Medical Technology



Thai 66, 1979-1981

Agriculture Extension, Fisheries, Secondary TEFL, Health, Parasite Control, Village Development, District Agriculture, Agriculture Education, Livestock Production Extension Agent, Crop Production, Community Health, Medical Technology, 4-H Extension, Water Resources

Thai 67, 1980-1982

Secondary TEFL, Teacher Training College, Higher Education, Special Education

Thai 68, 1980-1982

Agriculture Extension, Beef Extension, Crop Extension, Community Health, Medical Technology, Medical Rehabilitation, Water Resources, Adult Education, Lab Services

Thai 69, 1980-1982

Agriculture Instruction, Agriculture Worker, Geology, 4-H Extension, Handicrafts, Industrial Arts, Physical Therapy, Water Resources, Secondary TEFL, Fish Production, Community Health, Malaria Control

Thai 70, 1981-1983

Agriculture Education, Health

Thai 71-72, 1981-1983

Fisheries, Soil Science, Agriculture, 4-H Extension, Water Resources, Geology, Malaria Control, Secondary TEFL

Thai 73, 1982-1984
Secondary TEFL, Teacher Training College TEFL, University TEFL

Thai 74, 1982-1984
Agriculture, Rural Development, Occupational Therapy, Teacher for the Blind, Lab Technology, Medical Technology, Adult Education, Nutrition, Nursing

Thai 75, 1982-1984
Fisheries, Secondary TEFL, Water Resources, Nutrition, Malaria Control, Agriculture Extension and Instruction

Thai 76, 1983-1985
Secondary TEFL, Teacher Training College, University TEFL

Thai 78, 1983-1985
Agriculture Extension, 4-H Extension, Nutrition, Water Resources, TEFL, Malaria Control

Thai 79, 1984-1986
Secondary TEFL, Teacher Training College TEFL, University TEFL

Thai 80, 1984-1986
Lab Services, Water Resources, Physical Therapy, Rural Development, Adult Education, 4-H Extension, Medical Technology

Thai 81, 1984-1986
Secondary TEFL, Malaria Control

Thai 82, 1984-1986

Nutrition, Water Resources, Soil and Water Conservation, 4-H Extension, Fisheries, Agriculture Extension

Thai 84, 1985-1987

Agriculture Extension, 4-H Extension, Adult Education, Medical Technology, Plant Protection, Water Resources, Physical Therapy, Lab Services

Thai 86, 1985-1987

Plant Protection, Crop Extension, Soil and Water Conservation, Water Resources, 4-H Extension, Fisheries

Thai 87, 1986-1988

Secondary TEFL, Teacher Training College TEFL, University TEFL

Thai 88, 1986-1988

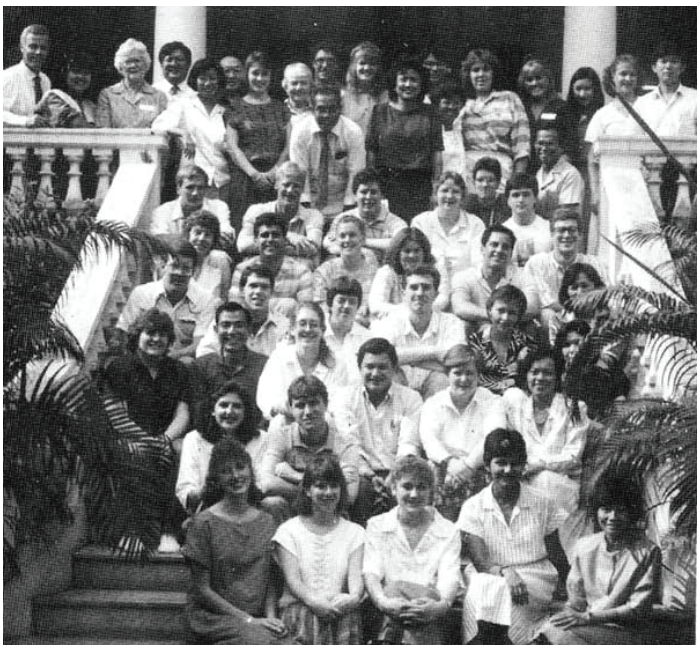
Lab Services, Adult Education, Agriculture Extension, Plant Protection, Agriculture Education, Livestock Production, Water Resources, Physical Therapy, Medical Technology, 4-H Extension

Thai 89, 1986-1988

Secondary TEFL, Nutrition Malaria Control, 4-H Extension, Land Reform, Water Resources, Fisheries

Thai 90, 1987-1989

Adult Education, 4-H Extension, Soil and Water Conservation, Crop Extension, Livestock Production, Crop Extension, Beef Extension, Water Resources, Community Development, Filariasis Control, Malaria Control, Food Production, Nutrition



Thai 91, 1987-1989

Community Development, Fisheries, Secondary TEFL

Thai 93, 1988-1990

Forestry, 4-H Extension, Plant Protection, Community Development, Secondary TEFL, Fisheries

Thai 95, 1989-1991

Fisheries, Forestry, Food Preservation Community Development, 4-H Extension, Secondary TEFL

Thai 96, 1990-1992

Community Development, Diversified Farming, National Park Development, Soil and Water Conservation, Water Resources, Nutrition, Filariasis Control, Rural Water Supply, Primary Education

Thai 98, 1991-1993

Nutrition, Community Development, Filariasis Control, AIDS Control, Land Development, Rural Development Forestry

Thai 100, 1992-1994

Filariasis Control, AIDS Control, National Park Development, Soil and Water Conservation, Nutrition, Rural Health, Water Resources

Thai 101, 1992-1994

Forestry, Fisheries, TEFL

Thai 102, 1993-1995

Diversified Farming, National Park Development, Soil and Water Conservation, Nutrition, Filariasis Control, AIDS Control, Nutrition, Rural Health, Water Resources

Thai 103, 1993-1995

Forestry, Fisheries, TEFL

Thai 104, 1994-1996

National Park Development, Soil and Water Conservation, Filariasis Control, AIDS Control, Nutrition, Rural Health, Water Resources

Thai 105, 1994-1996

Forestry, Fisheries, TEFL

Thai 108, 1997-1999

Rural Child Health, Environmental Education, Primary School Enhancement, National Park Development

Thai 111, 2000-2002
IECO (Integrated Education and Community Outreach)

Thai 113, 2002-2004
IECO (Integrated Education and Community Outreach)

Thai 114, 2003-2005
IECO (Integrated Education and Community Outreach)

Thai 115, 2003-2005
CBOD (Community-Based Organizational Development Project)

Thai 116, 2004-2006
TCCO (Teacher Collaboration and Community Outreach)

Thai 117, 2005-2007
CBOD, TCCO

Thai 118, 2006-2008
CBOD, TCCO

Thai 119, 2007-2009
CBOD, TCCO

Thai 120, 2008-2010
CBOD, TCCO

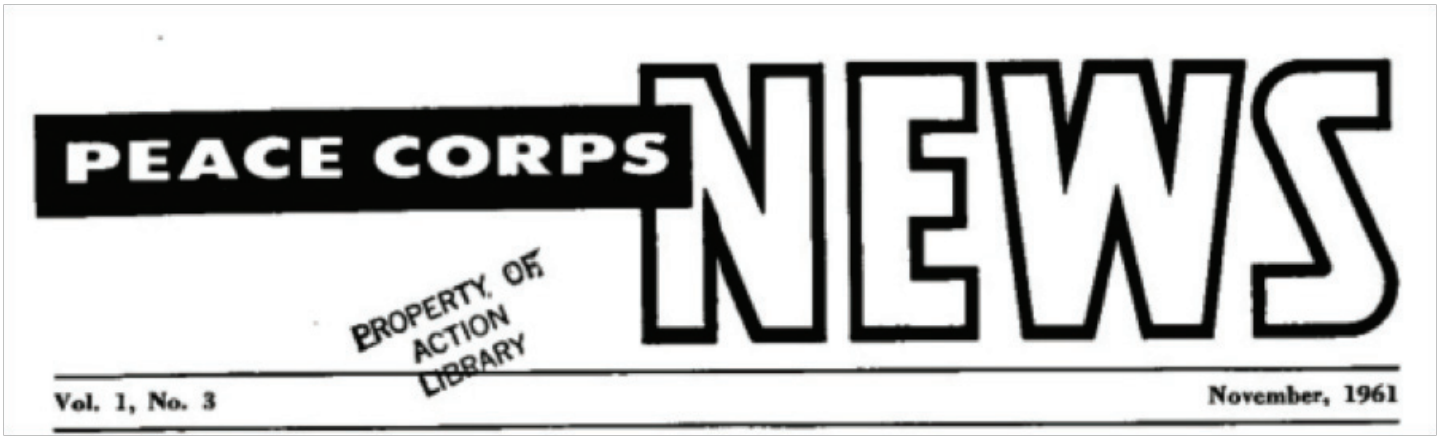
Thai 121, 2009-2011
CBOD, TCCO

Thai 122, 2010-2012
CBOD, TCCO

Thai 123, 2011-2013
CBOD, TCCO

Thai 124, 2012-2014
CBOD, TCCO

Peace Corps Journals


PEACE CORPS NEWS

PROPERTY OF ACTION LIBRARY

Vol. 1, No. 3 November, 1961

At various times since the inception of Peace Corps in 1961, Peace Corps Washington has published at least three journals. ***Peace Corps News, The Peace Corps Volunteer*** and ***The Volunteer*** have featured reports about programs worldwide, as well pieces about and by Volunteers.

Peace Corps Washington has given us permission to reproduce pages from the journals for this book. Unfortunately, we only have scanned copies of the publications to work with, so much of the text and many of the photos are blurry. But those PCVs featured will recognize themselves.

Included on the following pages is a collection of articles about Peace Corps Thailand from the time the 46 trainees of Thai I began training at the University of Michigan until the mid-1990s, as well as a collection of musings written by Volunteers whose names have become synonymous with Peace Corps Thailand.

One of the most fascinating bits of information about Peace Corps Thailand is found in the Box Scores, published in ***Peace Corps News*** as early groups entered training at various locations throughout the United States and transited to Thailand, in-country training and site assignments. The Box Scores, some of which are featured on the following pages, provide such information as the date Thai I departed for Thailand, something even members of the first group were unable to recall during the research phase of this effort. Robert Pitts, Thai I PCV and amateur Thai kick-boxer, was among the first Thai PCVs featured in Peace Corps News. Another early article announced that three volunteers in Thai I were donating their pay from teaching English at AUA in Chiang Mai to fifteen Thai students in need of scholarships.

"Stories" written by a wide range of PCVs, including Robert Johnson, Harvey Price, Roy Furumizo, Arthur Schweich, Gerald Shogren, Sumner Sharpe, Marilyn Davidson and Wanda Montgomery, to name just a few, tell the real story of early Peace Corps Thailand. It is through their varied and inspiring reflections that we learn why Peace Corps Thailand became the largest program worldwide after the first trainees met at the University of Michigan in October 1961.

OVERSEAS ..... VOLUNTEERS	
GHANA	51
TANGANYIKA	35
PHILIPPINES I	128
COLOMBIA	62
ST. LUCIA	16
CHILE	45
NIGERIA (Harvard group)	37
IN TRAINING .... VOLUNTEERS	
PHILIPPINES II & III	63
WEST PAKISTAN	32
EAST PAKISTAN	32
NIGERIA (Michigan State)	33
NIGERIA (UCLA)	47
INDIA	32
THAILAND	46*
MALAYA	41*
SIERRA LEONE	51*

* Approximate

PEACE CORPS NEWS

Vol. 1, No. 3 November, 1961

374 VOLUNTEERS OVERSEAS IN WIDE-RANGING PROJECTS

With the Peace Corps program less than six months old, 374 Volunteers already are overseas.

By the end of January, this number will total almost 700, as all PCV groups now in training Stateside will be abroad.

Twelve countries have 17 Peace Corps projects, with assignments for volunteers ranging from teaching to roadbuilding.

Many more project requests are being weighed. In January, just as the last wave of Stateside Volunteers departs for overseas, some 250 new candidates will begin training.

Here is the October score:

OVERSEAS ..... VOLUNTEERS	
GHANA	51
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NIGERIA (Harvard group)	37

IN TRAINING .... VOLUNTEERS	
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NIGERIA (Michigan State)	33
NIGERIA (UCLA)	47
INDIA	32
THAILAND	46*
MALAYA	41*
SIERRA LEONE	51*

* Approximate

TESTING

The next general testing of Peace Corps Volunteers will be held November 28-29 at Civil Service Commission testing centers throughout the United States.

CONGRESS GIVES FIRM APPROVAL TO PEACE CORPS

Congress has given the Peace Corps an overwhelming endorsement.

Legislation necessary to make the Corps a permanent agency received solid approval in both the House and Senate.

President Kennedy, who launched the pilot program by Executive Order last March, signed the bill into law September 22.

The measure authorizes a budget of $30 million for the first year of the Peace Corps program.

Here are the key provisions of the Peace Corps Act:

—Volunteers will be protected by workmen's compensation, Civil Service retirement and Social Security laws.

—Volunteers will receive allowances sufficient to enable them to live at approximately the level of their

Continued on page 5

NIGERIA

HARVARD, M.S.U., U.C.L.A.

Peace Corps Volunteers have gone to three American university campuses to train for teaching assignments in Nigeria.

At Harvard University, their special studies have been completed and the 37 candidates selected are already overseas receiving additional orientation.

They will begin teaching in Nigerian secondary schools at the opening of the school year in late January.

At Michigan State University in East Lansing, 33 candidates are nearing the end of their stateside training. They are preparing for teaching assignments at the new University of Nigeria in Nsukka. When they depart for Nsukka late in November, it will mark the first time an entire Peace Corps group has been assigned to a university abroad.

Each Volunteer chosen for the Nsukka assignment will serve as a teaching or research assistant.

A third Nigerian teaching project is underway at the University of California at Los Angeles where 47 candidates began specialized studies September 20.

They will complete their work at UCLA about mid-December. After a leave for the Christmas holidays, they will depart for Nigeria in early January to work as teachers in the secondary schools.

Nigeria, a populous nation of many resources, has been held back by a shortage of trained citizens.

THAILAND

U. OF MICHIGAN

On the campus of the University of Michigan are 46 PCVs training for assignments in the heart of the Indo-Chinese peninsula—Thailand.

Candidates began study October 9. Their curriculum includes intensive instruction in the Thai language and culture, the teaching of English as a foreign language, physical education, personal health and hygiene and American cultural institutions.

Purpose of the Thai project is to assist that country's education and public health programs. Thai schools and colleges are understaffed. A nationwide campaign to eradicate malaria is in need of entomologists and laboratory technicians.

Volunteers selected for Thai assignments will depart for Bangkok in mid-January for four weeks further training.

In the provinces they will work as English-language instructors at teacher training colleges, as vocational instructors in technical and trade schools and as teaching assistants in science, English, economics and sociology at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok.

Volunteers trained as entomologists and laboratory technicians will work in regional health centers, assisting Thai health officials in the battle against malaria.

Photo courtesy The New York Times

Toughening up for Tanganyika, a Peace Corps Volunteer soars through the treetops via a rope pulley at the Field Training Center in Puerto Rico. The center, set up last summer with the cooperation of the Puerto Rican government, tests the ability of Volunteers to withstand the stresses of a vastly different environment.

THE LATEST OVERSEAS DEPARTURES

To: Kuala Lumpur, Malaya
January 8, 1962
Mary Jo Bray, Palm Desert, California
Pauline Carmody, West Des Moines, Iowa
Sarah Cimino, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Ruth Clark, West Brentwood, New York
Charles Combs, Louisville, Kentucky
Barbara Contessa, Norwalk, Connecticut
Eleanor Cross, Stevenson, Maryland
Jean Eisenhart, Watervleit, New York
Cynthia Easkine, San Mateo, California
Mark Francis, Berkeley, California
Anne Hennessey, Lawrence, Massachusetts
John Hurley, Centralia, Illinois
Mary Ianzetti, Napa, California
Benita Jorkasky, Altoona, Pennsylvania
Peter Kramer, Chicago, Illinois
James Lewis, McFarland, Wisconsin
Jane Lilly, Wethersfield, Connecticut
Mary McEnerney, Chicago, Illinois
Joyce Miller, Denver, Colorado
Alix Paschen, Cambridge, Massachusetts
Ernest Phillips, Forestville, Connecticut
Florence Pleskovic, Somerset, Pennsylvania
Anne Porter, Brooklyn, New York
Robert Rourke, New Haven, Connecticut
Arnold Seaberg, Park Ridge, Illinois
Suzanne Schick, Pottsville, Pennsylvania
Carol Semeniuk, Oaklawn, Illinois
Peter Sigourney, Phoenix, Arizona
Jeanette Stensland, Leola, South Dakota
Ralph Stensland, Hecla, South Dakota
Alan Stockland, Lincoln, Nebraska
Sadie Stout, Arkansas City, Kansas
Nancy Stripe, Joliet, Illinois
William Weinhold, Kohler, Wisconsin
Carol Ann Wolf, Babylon, New York
James Wolter, Chicago, Illinois

To: Bangkok, Thailand
January 19, 1962
Jacob Bilmes, East Hills, New York
Elsa Bruton, Washington, D.C.
Robert Bruton, Washington, D.C.
David Burger, Edgar, Wisconsin
Robert Canion, Port Lavaca, Texas
William Chamberlain, Omaha, Nebraska
Judy Clem, Anniston, Alabama
Emilie Clevenger, Brookville, Indiana
Charles Cobb, Ridgewood, New Jersey
Daniel Cory, Brooklyn, New York
Arthur Crisfield, Seaford, Delaware
Robert Cumming, Davidson, North Carolina
Lee Dameron, Douglas, Wyoming
Marilyn Davidson, North Conway, New Hampshire
Curry Davis, Woodhull, New York
William Davis, Ipswich, Massachusetts
Ann Flanagan, Groveland, Massachusetts
Lawrence Forman, Easton, Maryland
Roy Furumizo, Honolulu, Hawaii
Alan Guskin, Asbury Park, New Jersey
Judith Guskin, Asbury Park, New Jersey
Keiko Hiramoto, Berkeley, California
Robert Johnson, East Hampden, Maine
Sally Maclay, Summit, New Jersey
John McLean, Detroit, Michigan
David Micheals, New York, New York
David Miller, Tulsa, Oklahoma
Wanda Montgomery, Bluffton, Ohio
Roger Parent, Lille, Maine
Robert Pitts, Red Bank, New Jersey
Susan Powell, St. Petersburg, Florida
James Prescott, Las Vegas, Nevada
Harvey Price, San Francisco, California
Ralph Reynolds, Downey, California
Arthur Schweich, St. Louis, Missouri
James Shannon, Washington, D.C.
Sumner Sharpe, Nashua, New Hampshire
Gerald Shogren, Lindsborg, Kansas
Donald Short, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Marianne Spalding, Newton Hlds., Massachussets
Clarence Urness, Pocatello, Idaho
Shanna Urness, Pocatello, Idaho
Rose Welliver, Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania
John Wilkes, Lynbrook, New York
Lucia Wilcox, Albuquerque, New Mexico

PCV 1—3

PEACE CORPS
WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

POSTAGE AND FEES PAID

ONE, TWO, THREE—KICK!

Volunteer in Thai Boxing Match

THE PEACE CORPS scored another first recently when a Volunteer slugged, kicked, kneed, and elbowed his way to a draw in a Thai-style boxing match.

In holding his own against Thai pugilist Wooth Barbos, Volunteer Robert Pitts, 25, of Red Bank, N.J., became the first non-Thai to do better than suffer defeat at the hands and feet of a Thai boxer in a Thai-style bout.

Pitts, who boxed American-style at Yale, studied the Thai technique for three weeks before tying the Thai at Operation Mitrapab's charity boxing show in Bangkok June 5.

"It's a whole new area of fighting," Pitts said before the contest. His trainer, Chow Javewong, one-time Thai boxing champion, said the 5-4, 126-lb. American entered wholeheartedly into the world of kicking and elbowing, but had some initial trouble getting his leg up high enough for a good boot at his opponent's head.

Barbos, who was making his first appearance in the ring, weighed in the same as Pitts but stood a couple of inches taller and reportedly had a slightly longer reach. It was not clear whether this referred to arm reach or leg reach.

Pitts' performance included the elaborate pre-bout ritual of drawing symbols and making incantations to draw down the spirits of his opponent.

A physics teacher at Chulalongkorn University, Pitts doesn't recommend that fighters mix their boxing styles.

"You can pick up some bad habits from Thai boxing," he said.

Shriver Reports on Far East Visit to Volunteers

By Sargent Shriver

For five weeks during August and September I toured the Far East to find out how the Volunteers were actually performing on the job. Many of them had been over there for a year, and it seemed to me that after a year's time we should be able to draw some conclusions about the quality of their performance.

I learned a great deal about the Volunteers and their living and working conditions, and about how the host countries feel about the Volunteers.

At the time of my visit we had about 450 Volunteers who had been in the Far East for six months to a year, and more were arriving.

Talked to 300

I saw more than 300 Volunteers, some of them in big meetings, but mostly in individual encounters, by spending the night in houses they were living in, by having lunch with two or three of them, by travelling to the locations where they are serving in small villages and towns.

Along with me on the trip were Public Information Chief Douglas Kiker; Dr. Joseph English, chief Peace Corps psychiatric consultant; William Kelly, chief of the Peace Corps Division of Contracts and Logistics, and Richard Graham, acting associate director of the Office of Public Affairs.

Within the Philippines, Thailand, Malaya, and North Borneo and Sarawak, we travelled about 10,000 miles by airplane, helicopter, or jeep. I can sum up my impressions by four conclusions.

Despite the original skepticism of many people in our country and of many Asian leaders about the ability of Americans to live in Asian villages, to live in Asian houses, and to eat Asian food, the Volunteers are doing everything that we said they would do.

They are living in Asian houses. A number of them live in nipa-and-bamboo houses and sleep without mattresses on beds made of rattan wicker. Some Volunteers, of course, live better than that, but many of them live in conditions like those I have described.

Second, they speak the native language. They speak Tagalog and Visayan in the Philippines. They speak Thai. They speak Malay. Even the ones who just got off the airplane in Borneo were able to go into a tiny village—and I was with them at the time—and walk up to the villagers and make themselves understood in Bahasa Malay.

Eating the Food

Third, the Volunteers are eating the food and, for the most part, thriving on it. In Thailand, I asked one fellow how he was getting along on rice. He told me that after eight months of it, he had a longing for something else. On a brief leave, he went to Bangkok and had a western-type meal, he told me, and the next day he was sick from having eaten steak and potatoes.

The medical record of Volunteers in Thailand and Malaya is almost unbelievably good. We have had no serious sickness, and nearly 90 pct. of the Volunteers are living in towns or villages or, at best, provincial capitals.

Last, the Volunteers are doing their job, and they are popular and respected.

I remember one incident at a town in Thailand. The American ambassador and I flew in by helicopter to visit a teacher-training school where there is one Volunteer working. All the students and townspeople turned out for our arrival, including the mayor and other officials.

The Volunteer introduced the ambassador and me first to the entire faculty of the institution and then to all the officials of the town, and he didn't miss a name.

It was a stupendous display. Those Thai names are long and are hard to pronounce, and this fellow knew every one of them. This man, typical of the Volunteers I saw, is very popular in that town.

Nurse's Work

Then there was the girl we met who was doing her job almost too well. She was the sole nurse in charge of 80 leprosy patients at a hospital in Malaya.

On her own initiative, she fitted out a vehicle with medicines and journeyed out to villages 20 to 40 miles from her hospital. She found 700 additional cases of leprosy, and she was told to stop her trips because the hospital could not handle the cases.

In each country I visited, I had the good fortune to have a long meeting with the chief official of the country: President Macapagal of the Philippines; Marshal Sarit, the prime minister of Thailand; Tengku Abdul Rahman, the prime minister of Malaya, and Sir William Goode, the British governor of Borneo.

Every one of these men was enthusiastic about the Peace Corps and asked me to send more Volunteers to serve in his country.

The prime minister of Malaya suggested, in fact, that his country produce a documentary film on the Peace Corps in Malaya for exhibition in Malaya, and then—if we wanted it—for exhibition in the United States.

Role in Film

He told me that he himself would like to appear in this film to tell why he thinks the Peace Corps is such a good thing for Southeast Asia.

To me, this was about the best endorsement we could possibly have: the Malayans want to spend their money to talk about the Peace Corps in that country.

Another example of the effect of the Peace Corps abroad occurred in Thailand.

Just before my departure, I expected to hold a press conference at the American embassy. Thai govern-

HAPPY REUNION was shared by Peace Corps Director Sargent Shriver and Volunteers from Bangkok and nearby provinces following Shriver's arrival for a five-day visit to Thailand.

SERIOUS SESSION engaged Director Shriver (in dark shirt in right foreground) as he discusses the Peace Corps and experiences of his Far East trip with North Borneo Volunteers a few days after their arrival.

ment people heard of the plan, and insisted that I meet the press at the headquarters of the Thailand Temporary Economic Committee.

At the press conference, the managing director of the Thai agency sat next to me, in a sense endorsing everything I said about the Peace Corps in his country.

His gesture was a great compliment. He and his colleagues feel that the Peace Corps is a part of their organization rather than a part of a U.S. mission abroad.

Plans Changed

My companions and I intended to close our tour at Singapore, and fly home from there. While we were there, however, I received a message that President Sukarno of Indonesia would like to talk to me about the Peace Corps.

We spent a week in Indonesia. At the conclusion of our visit, President Sukarno told me I could tell the press that there was no doubt that the Peace Corps was coming to Indonesia.

I have one last anecdote. A nurse in a Philippine hospital, where Dr. English had an appendectomy, did not comprehend the words *Peace Corps*.

But then when she was told the names of some Volunteers who had been treated at the hospital, her eyes brightened and she said, "Oh, you mean the Americans from the country?" referring to the Volunteers working in rural areas, and she made the thumbs-up gesture.

She did not know what the Peace Corps was, really, but she knew these people as representing something that was to her admirable about our country.

SKIRTING A PUDDLE, Shriver walks through rain to disabled Land Rover, in a ditch for the second time on the round trip from Kota Belud to Mile Ten, North Borneo, to visit Volunteers.

Photo: Black Star

FLOODED RIVER washed out roads and forced the Shriver party to take to a raft on the return trip from Kota Belud to Jesselton, the capital of North Borneo. On the raft are Dr. Joseph English, chief Peace Corps psychiatric consultant (with camera); Mrs. John Landgraf, wife of the Peace Corps Representative in North Borneo; William Kelly, chief of the Division of Contracts and Logistics, and John Landgraf. Shriver is at extreme left.

Volunteers Set Up 15 Scholarships

Three American Peace Corps Volunteers, who have been teaching English in their spare time at the American University Alumni branch in Chiengmai, have donated their entire AUA earnings toward 15 one-year English scholarships for needy Thai students.

The recipients, who were selected by school headmasters and teachers, include students, medical interns at Chiengmai University, teachers, and one nurse at McCormick Hospital.

The three Volunteers are Peggy Bruton, who teaches English at the Teachers Training College; Charles Cobb, who teaches at the Northern Technical Institute; and Arthur Schweich, who is a technician at the Malaria Control Commission.

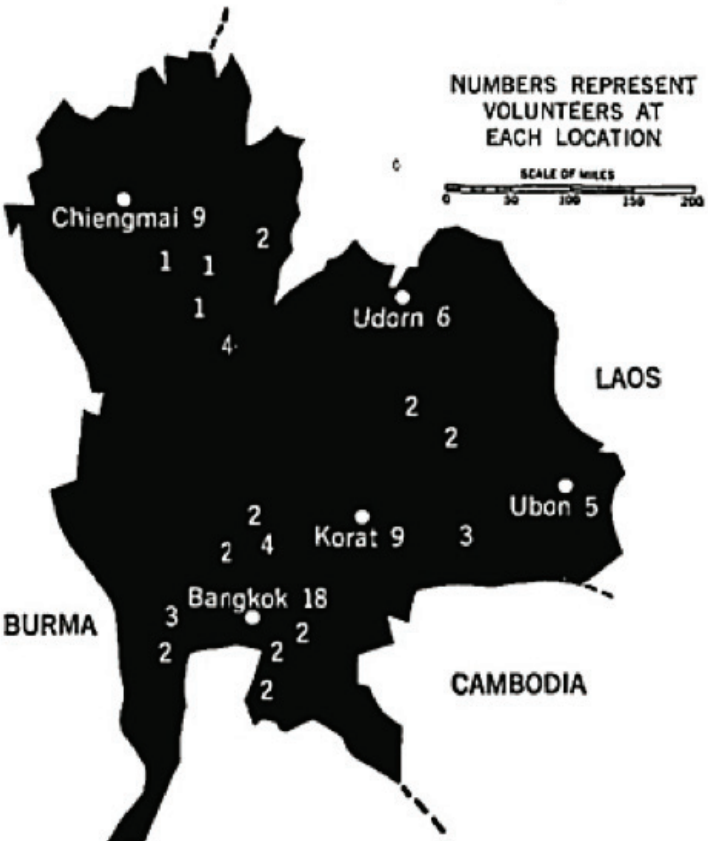
THE BOX SCORE
(as of February 1, 1962)

PROJECT	PCVs	STATUS
Chile	45	*Overseas*
Colombia	62	*Overseas*
Ghana	51	*Overseas*
Nigeria	107	*Overseas*
East Pakistan	29	*Overseas*
West Pakistan	28	*Overseas*
Philippines	183	*Overseas*
St. Lucia	15	*Overseas*
Tanganyika	35	*Overseas*
India	26	*Overseas*
Sierra Leone	37	*Overseas*
Malaya	36	*Overseas*
Thailand	45	*Overseas*
Philippines III	50	*In Training*
Brazil	53	*In Training*
El Salvador	25	*In Training*
Colombia II	62*	*Feb. 5, 1962#*
TOTAL	**879**	

* *Approximate—# Begin training, Stateside.*

Thailand Section

Articles in the following section on Thailand were written by Volunteers working with an editorial committee consisting of Robert and Peggy Bruton, Alan and Judith Guskin, and Robert Johnson, chairman.



a volunteer in THAILAND

By Robert B. Johnson

"Honorable foreigner comes from where?" the young villager asked in Thai as I jumped out the huge, double-rotor helicopter. "Honorable foreigner comes from where, *indeed*," I wondered as I sank slowly up to my knees in the mud and water of the flooded rice field.

I could think of several answers in English, but fortunately my rather formal Thai vocabulary didn't cover them. So I summoned what Thai I could remember before I went under, and said simply, "I come from a province in the direction that the sun arises, from the king's city of the lotus."

"Why have you come to our village?"

Again I thought of several Anglo-Saxon expressions before I said in Thai, "Flying machine has run out of gas."

"Oh," he said and sloshed off across the field to discuss the situation with his friends.

A young girl waded up. "Do you speak Thai?" she asked in English.

"Like a fish, like a snake," I said in Thai, using an expression that's stale but nevertheless guaranteed for a laugh.

"Where do you go?" she asked, changing to Thai.

Attempt in Thai

I wondered if I could explain it all in Thai. I thought I'd try. "In the flying machine," I began, "there are many people . . . important people. There's the American ambassador and his wife. There's the Peace Corps Representative in Thailand. We are travelling around Thailand with the Director of the Peace Corps, who is here on a visit from America. Do you understand Peace Corps?"

She shook her head.

"Peace Corps is an organization of volunteers who come from America to work in Thailand."

"Oh," she said. "President Kennedy's men."

"Er, yes," I said. There was a pause. I tried to think of something to say.

Then I came out with, "Do you know President Kennedy?"

"I have not yet met him, but many radios speak of him, of course."

"Of course," I said, and began to grope for some more small talk. Finally I said, "Mr. Shriver, the man with whom we travel, is brother-in-law of President Kennedy."

"Then he is an important man."

"Yes, he is an important man."

"Where is he now?"

"His flying machine did not run out of gas. He is flying to Korat."

There was another pause. This time she broke it. "Can you speak English?" she asked.

"Yes," I said, finally giving up the Thai. "I teach English at Ubon Teachers College."

She was quiet. I realized I had spoken too fast. I repeated myself, more slowly.

"Will you teach me English?"

I looked around. A crowd of about 30 children had gathered. "Yes," I said. "What do you want to learn?"

"I want to learn to speak."

"All right. We can talk together."

By this time, the American ambassador, his wife, Peace Corps Representative Glenn Ferguson, and others from the helicopter were engaged in

Robert Johnson of East Hampden, Me., teaches English at Ubon Teachers College.

similar conversations of their own. And so it went during the five hours necessary to get fuel from Korat.

This incident is perhaps not typical of the average Volunteer's life in Thailand, but it bears certain resemblances. We rarely—I might say *never*, if it weren't for Shriver's visit—go places by helicopter. But wherever we do go, we are asked for English lessons.

We rarely set down in the middle of a rice field with the American ambassador. But wherever we do go, we are received with genuine hospitality. On the Night of the Helicopter, for example, the villagers immediately asked us if we had eaten dinner. When told that we hadn't, they went off to their houses to prepare us a meal.

With occasional exceptions, such as Shriver's visit, life for the Volunteer in Thailand is rather unspectacular.

Wherever we are, whatever we do, we find ourselves closely involved in the day-to-day life of the institutions in which we teach or work. The glamour of living half-way around the world in a strange country has worn off. Life has become routine, even dull at times.

Such excitement as there is comes from an occasional party with our Thai colleagues, or a trip, often with students or Thai friends, during vacations.

After Glamour

But when the glamour wears off, something else comes to take its place. This something else is a sense of being at home, of being at ease in Thailand. Things cease to be strange. You find yourself, often to your own surprise, adopting Thai methods of doing things. Those of us who are English teachers sometimes even find ourselves, to our dismay, making typical Thai errors when we speak English.

Of course, we haven't completely become members of Thai society, and probably never will.

In the first place, during many years of contact with the West, Thai society has generally assigned *farang* (Americans and Europeans) to a position outside the highly mobile, but also highly structured, social pyramid.

When we arrived, most Thais were surprised to discover that we knew we should *wai* (bow with the hands in prayer position) to our superiors. Some liked it, some laughed (in Thailand, often an expression of embarrassment), and some told us frankly that *farang* should not *wai*.

Gradually, each Volunteer worked out his own answer to the problem so that today there are probably as many answers to the problem as there are Volunteers here.

Essentially American

In the second place, most of us will not become complete members of Thai society because we can't. We have our own culture, our own traditions. For many of us, the experience of living in Thailand has brought an increased understanding of what it means to be an American, a Westerner, a *farang*. To change these basic attitudes and become Thai would be difficult, if not impossible.

I was talking to a fellow teacher at my school the other day. "You like it here, don't you?" she said. I told her I did—very much. I described some of the things I like and also some of the things I find hard to accept. We talked about these for a while.

Then, quite suddenly, she asked, "Are you going to become a Thai citizen?" I didn't answer for a few minutes. I didn't want to risk offense with a blunt no. A blunt no wouldn't have been accurate anyway, because I

UNDER PARASOL, Sargent Shriver meets Thai students and Volunteer John McLean of Detroit, who is at Teachers College at Mahasarakham.

could see myself living in Thailand permanently—but as an American.

So instead of saying no, I began a discussion of cultural differences. It's still going on as she and I meet from time to time. I'm learning more and more about Thai ways of thinking, and I hope she is learning something about American ways.

A few days after our first discussion she said, "Well, if you don't think you can honestly become a Thai, why don't you become a Buddhist monk for a while?"

In Thai, the word for "sometime" and the word for "maybe" are the same. I answered her with that.

Assignments Unsure

Last January, when the first group of Volunteers arrived, many of us received the impression that the Thai government wasn't exactly sure what to do with us.

We had assignments, to be sure. But on arriving at our posts, we sometimes found our superiors a little unsure of what we were doing there. On the other hand, some of us were also a little unsure of what we were doing there.

I believe that this situation has now changed. Some of the first group found jobs for themselves; some were given jobs. All are now busy. In September, as the second group arrived at Bangkok airport, it seemed to me that there was less hesitation, both on the part of the Volunteers and on the part of the Thais.

As we were waiting for the airplane carrying the new group of Volunteers, I was talking to an official from the Ministry of Education. "The Thais are very happy to have the Peace Corps here," he said. "We are very happy that more of your group are coming."

ALL IN THAI, teacher Sally Davis of Summit, N.J., and carpenter David Burger of Edgar, Wis., talk with farmers bound for market in Chachoengsao, central Thailand. In the background is Seminar House, where the Peace Corps team spent first weeks in training before assignment.

Peace Corps In Thailand

Ninety-nine Peace Corps Volunteers are now on duty in Thailand; 79 are in various educational fields, 20 in health programs.

The 45 Volunteers of Group I, following 12 weeks of training at the University of Michigan, arrived in Bangkok in January, 1962. The 54 Volunteers of Group II, also trained at Michigan, arrived in Bangkok in late September. Group III, numbering about 50, is in training at the University of Washington and will, on arrival in Thailand in February, teach English-as-a-foreign-language at provincial primary and secondary schools.

The Volunteers in educational fields are teaching English-as-a-foreign-language at universities, teacher-training colleges, and secondary schools (33 Volunteers), working as vocational instructors and English teachers in trade and technical schools (12), teaching physical education and coaching sports in universities and secondary schools (14), serving as vocational agriculture instructors (13), and teaching a variety of subjects ranging from chemistry to law and accounting at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok (seven).

The majority of the 20 Volunteers working in health programs are assigned as laboratory technicians in provincial hospitals. The remainder serve as either laboratory technicians or entomologists in the Malaria Control Program.

The Volunteers are working in 33 locations, including Bangkok: 18 Volunteers in the northern part of Thailand, 37 in the central portion (including Bangkok), 27 in the northeast, and 17 in the south.

SAMLAW DRIVERS in Chachoengsao offer Volunteer Harvey Price encouraging smiles and helpful gestures along with directions in Thai. These cycle rickshaws carry passengers quickly and cheaply.

I DATE A THAI

Harvey Price of San Francisco, Cal., is an instructor in law and accounting at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.

By Harvey Price

I met her, an attractive Thai who speaks no English, in downtown Bangkok. I started talking to her and she was quite friendly. She was waiting to meet her older brother. She suggested that I write down her name and phone number. I didn't ask for it—she offered it. She asked me to call her.

There is no dating of the Western sort in Thailand. Normally young men and women go out together only in large groups. I decided to experiment, however.

A few days later I called and asked her out. She asked me if I was going to bring anyone with me. When I replied no, she seemed pleased.

Rendezvous Set

She said she would come alone also. She told me not to tell anyone I was meeting her. Our rendezvous was to be in the lobby of a theater. The date was for 6 p.m.

I arrived at the theater a little early. At 6 p.m. she arrived. She immediately asked me if I had told anyone about our meeting. I assured her I had not.

Having established the complete secrecy of our date, we then proceeded out of the lobby, into the street. I followed her, having no idea where she was taking me.

Mysterious Ride

We walked about a block, and then she said we should take a bus. I agreed, and we climbed aboard. We rode for about 15 minutes, then got off the bus and continued walking. I still had no idea where she was taking me.

It was then we approached a yellow bus.

"This will take you home," she said. "It's starting to get dark. I have to get home before my older brother . . . Goodbye . . . Thank you."

In a state of confusion, I got on the yellow bus. I glanced at my watch. It was 6:20 p.m.

By Raft and Jeep to Malaria

Roy Furumizo of Honolulu is an entomologist and Arthur Schweich of St. Louis is a laboratory technician at the Chiengmai Malaria Eradication Center.

By Roy Furumizo and Arthur Schweich

Thailand Peace Corps Volunteers, working as entomologists and laboratory technicians, are assisting in the work of the four regional headquarters of the National Malaria Eradication Project.

In the past, malaria has been the greatest single cause of sickness, debility, and death in this country. Eradication here is complicated, because the predominantly rural population is highly mobile and is difficult to reach by car.

The highest incidence of the disease is in the hilly areas, where stream conditions are ideal for *Anopheles minimum*, the principal vector. The lowest incidence is in the central plain around Bangkok.

We are stationed in Chiengmai, nearly 400 miles north of Bangkok. Chiengmai is the northern provincial capital and the second largest city in Thailand.

Prevalent in Country

In the city itself, malaria is no longer a problem. But in the surrounding countryside, it is prevalent. Our work usually takes us to these rural hills and river valleys. On one survey we had to navigate the Mae Ping River by raft.

A rugged, five-hour jeep trip took us to our point of departure. We spent the night at the village chief's home, and in the morning, prepared to board the rafts. They were made entirely of bamboo and thatch leaf. They were 20 feet long and six feet wide, with a covered center portion that housed all our raftboard activities.

Before pushing off, we made blood and spleen examinations of the village children. Suspected malaria cases were given chloroquine and pyrimethamine pills. Giving the pills was not easy; they are large to swallow and very bitter.

After a breakfast of fried rice, raw eggs, and Thai-style coffee (black opaque), we assembled on the sandy bank of the river for a short sacrificial ceremony.

Ritual Performed

The village chief performed the ritual as we all sat watching. He sipped some *mekhong*, the native whiskey, directly from a bottle and said a few words in his native tongue, Northern Thai or Lao.

He appeared to wish us, "Drink well on your voyage." Then he offered a pig to the spirit gods and uttered a few more words. Simultaneously we raised our hands to *wai* to him. The *wai* is a polite form of greeting, made by placing the hands palm to palm and raising them towards the face with a slight bowing of the head.

Later we were told that the sacrifice of the pig was performed to honor the Peace Corps Vounteers and to ensure a safe and joyous raft trip.

Our party consisted of two high officials of the malaria eradication program, a doctor from the Chiengmai Medical School, a registered nurse, a technician, two technical aides, and two of us Volunteers.

Rafts, Huts, Thickets

When everyone had climbed aboard, the polemen strained on their poles to guide the rafts into the current. Once caught in the current, the rafts glided quietly between the banks lined with bamboo huts and thorn-and-bamboo thickets.

After a few hours of floating, we were deep in the jungle—magnificent teak forests, raintrees, and rolling hills.

Down the river's tortuous course, the rafts were guided skillfully over small waterfalls and gentle rapids. From the deep jungle foliage, we could hear birds and monkeys chattering.

As we came to each village, the technicians paddled canoes to shore and, within an hour, rejoined the rafts with blood smears and other information. The speed, efficiency, and accuracy of these technicians was very impressive.

Overnight Camping

Our overnight camps were on flat, sandy areas where we could stretch out comfortably to sleep. We obtained drinking water by digging a hole near the river's edge and collecting the clear water that filtered through the sand. Then we boiled it or added halazone tablets.

Meals consisted of an assortment of salted eggs, pork, and fish; fried pork and fish; boiled and sticky rice; pork soup; pickled cucumbers and ginger; coffee, tea, and fruit.

Using ourselves as bait, we went with the malaria technicians each night to make mosquito collections along the river banks and up in the foothills. This activity was only the first step in this routine malaria survey. After collection, the mosquitoes must be identified, and all of the anopheline type must be dissected for malaria parasites.

Blood smears are collected, stained, and examined. Spleen examinations must be made of children (splenic enlargement is typical of malaria victims). Suspected cases must be treated

MALARIA PILLS are a new experience for little girl, who receives them warily from Volunteer Arthur Schweich, on tour of villages with Thai medical team working to eradicate the disease.

Thai farmer poses.

with antimalarial drugs. Public information on malaria prevention must be prepared and field records maintained.

In this way, areas to be resprayed with residual DDT are selected, and any malaria foci in the isolated villages of the Mae Ping Valley can be treated.

Journey by Jeep

After five days afloat, we reached Sam Gaw, where we climbed into jeeps for the journey home to Chiengmai.

Another focus of our work is hill-tribe villages, unhappily not accessible by raft. One Karen tribe village with which we are working is 92 miles north of Chiengmai on an old logging road, spotted with washed-out bridges and fallen trees. A good jeep and a lot of determination are needed to get there.

On our first trip, to survey the village, we were accompanied by a missionary who spoke Karen—an extremely valuable asset, as we were to learn in succeeding weeks. We went first to the headman's house, where we were to spend the night. His house was larger than all others in the village, but of the same design. It was all bamboo except for the stilts on which it stood and the sharply pitched roof of thatched leaves.

As is the Karen custom, we first were served a meal of rice and bamboo shoots and then began discussing our project. It was simple enough, we thought, and the headman agreed. We had only to take a drop of blood from the finger of each person in the village, examine the drops to see who had malaria, treat any cases, and give the rest of the people malaria suppressants.

A Trip on Foot

The next day we began to survey the area. This included a trip on foot to two neighboring villages and to the rice fields. Unlike most hill tribes, the Karen in this area have learned the art of wet rice-farming and were busy planting their fields.

The Karen are a short people, shorter than the Thais, and confirmed smokers. It is a common sight to see women with short pipes in their mouths. Many also chew betel nut and some of the men are opium addicts. They must bargain for opium, since they live at too low an altitude to cultivate it.

On our second visit to the village, the missionary was again along. This time we had a work party and began to take blood samples and distribute suppressant pills. We examined 46 persons. Nine had malaria.

With the missionary doing most of the talking, things went well. It was on the next trip that the troubles began. We had been assured that a number of persons in the village spoke the Northern Thai dialect. Since the Thais in our party all spoke it, we should have had no trouble.

We soon found, however, the Karen weren't the linguists we had been told they were. To find one of the infected children took 15 minutes of talk with four or five mothers.

Four Tongues at Once

At times we had four languages (plus gestures) going at once: Thai, Northern Thai, Karen, and English. The child was hard to find, but find him we did. We also found seven persons who had not been there when we first visited. Two of them had malaria.

This is the pattern which is being repeated with each successive visit. But we are beginning to know one another now, and communication somehow seems easier.

Fewer of the children are afraid of us. Candy seems to make children more co-operative everywhere, and a pill goes down much more quickly when followed by a fruit drop.

ISOLATED VILLAGE of hill tribe near Chiengmai in northern Thailand is visited by Volunteers Robert Cumming, Keiko Hiramoto, and Peggy and Robert Bruton, accompanied by Thai friends.

STUDENT PROJECT is this faculty house built by boys at the Technical Institute at Songkhla for occupancy by Volunteers Jack Reynolds of Downey, Col., and Daniel Cory of Brooklyn, N.Y.

When They Ask You To Teach English

Gerald Shogren of Lindsborg, Kan., is a teacher at the Chiengmai Technical Institute.

By Gerald Shogren

Stop in at the Northern Technical Institute at Chiengmai and you'll find a couple of Volunteers stumbling along at the difficult task of teaching English. It's not our primary job, but it's one we were asked to do when we arrived at the school. So we're doing our best.

Our primary purpose here is to teach in the shops. But the shops have plenty of qualified teachers, and the English department can use the help of native speakers as pronunciation and conversation guides. Therefore, we're teaching English, too.

English teaching sounded easy at first. But then I got to thinking about the members of our first Peace Corps group in Thailand who had had many hours of training for teaching English. Maybe it wouldn't be so easy.

Now, after several months of school, I would say that the job itself isn't too difficult. But it is difficult to believe that the long hours of classroom work are bringing any results.

Our school has 430 students and 67 teachers. It offers three-year courses in business, electricity, auto mechanics, carpentry, machine shop, building trades, industrial arts, and masonry. Most of the students are from 17 to 20.

After graduation, students often have difficulty in finding a job. A Thai businessman likes to have his sons take over his business, so apprenticeship learning is more popular than technical education.

Good students from our school have an opportunity for advanced study at the Bangkok Technical Institute after graduation. Bangkok Tech graduates become teachers in regional technical schools, such as the one I teach in. Others become teachers in primary schools. But many are unable to find work, so they return to the farms from which they came.

Carpentry Shop

Our entire school was built by the U.S. Agency for International Development. We have two large shops and a classroom building. The carpentry shop is very well equipped. The machines are all first-rate, heavy-duty, American equipment.

Much of my time is spent in the carpentry shop helping other teachers or students, working on projects for the school, or trying to explain books and manuals written in English.

Chief projects turned out by our shop are school furniture and houses for teachers on the campus. Houses are built as joint projects of carpentry, masonry, and electrical students. Each student works in his specialty on the house. In furniture projects, metal-shop students make frames for the desks and chairs, and wood-shop students do the rest.

The auto, machine, and electrical shops are housed in the second shop building. These shops have more difficulty in finding projects of value for their students. Students in the machine shop make hammers, punches, and clamps; but the material is so poor that the tools are often useless.

These students become quite proficient in their fields, but after graduation most have difficulty in finding a job using similar machines. Machines such as these the school has are very expensive, so few shops in this area have them. Northern Thailand is making progress in this area but it's very slow.

The teachers here are, I'm sure, among the easiest people in the world to get along with. Most of them, like us Volunteers, are single and in their 20s, so we have many common interests. We have casual and very friendly relationships with all of them, both in work and in leisure time.

Although we were disappointed at first not to be filling the jobs we were trained to do, we feel that as English teachers we are answering a definite need in Chiengmai.

BIKE-BRELLA was rigged up with piece of bamboo by Volunteer Gerald Shogren, who found disconcerting the Thai practice of riding with one hand on handlebar, one hand on umbrella. "This keeps the rain off my glasses and the sun out of my eyes," he says of his invention.

University Teachers? —They Also Serve

HELPFUL INSTRUCTOR assisted Volunteer Robert Cumming of Davidson, N.C., during in-country training. Robert now serves as an English teacher at Chulalongkorn University.

Alan Guskin is an instructor in educational research and Judith Guskin is an instructor in English at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. The Guskins are from Asbury Park, N.J.

By Alan and Judith Guskin

Who are you, Peace Corps Volunteer/Bangkok? You are not who you thought you would be: a pick-and-shovel type with callused hands. You've lost a little weight, but you're living in quarters as comfortable as any in the States.

You're a teacher; you know that. But why here? Why were you sent to this modern university where you are surrounded by highly intelligent Western-trained people who appear not to be in dire need of help? What, after all, are you doing here?

These are questions that those of us in Bangkok asked ourselves many times during our first months in Thailand. After 11 months here, we still don't have all the answers. But we do feel that our jobs are important.

Not Savior Role

We didn't come here to "save" Thailand. We didn't come to fulfill all its needs. We didn't come because there are not enough Americans in Bangkok. We didn't come to advise the Thais how to set up a new university. Although the vaguely felt need for which they asked us to come has not been defined, we do feel we can make a contribution.

We came to Chulalongkorn University because this was one of the best places to use our skills, and because these were very important students to teach.

Here we could help train people who would perhaps be able to replace us when we leave; here we could help train people who would themselves be teachers, and many of whom would be teachers of teachers. Isn't work of this kind an important goal of the Peace Corps?

Two months ago, the Peace Corps sponsored an international conference on manpower needs in the developing countries. The main concern was not good-will images but an analysis of what jobs need to be done and what people are needed to do them. Perhaps the Peace Corps can supply some of these people. And if universities abroad are found to need help, perhaps the Peace Corps can help supply teachers.

Peace Corps Volunteers who are professionals work alongside the staff in the university; they are not advisers. They should teach, be paid the same salary as their colleagues, and should not worry about how they can be more uncomfortable or how they can "make a greater sacrifice."

They should, instead, concentrate on communicating their ideas and skills to the people who are asking for these skills and who must adapt them to their own culture.

In Thailand, there is increasing emphasis on education, but the increasing numbers of high-school graduates will not all find places at the universities. One or two universities already are forced to hold classes of more than a hundred students.

Each year, more and more potential technicians and professionals are being denied entrance. Unless the students are wealthy, they can't afford to study abroad. Perhaps they could be trained at home if additional teachers were available to them. Perhaps they soon could replace the foreign teachers.

ORNATE DECORATION marks gable and three-level roof of Faculty of Arts building at Chulalongkorn University. Seven Volunteers serve as teachers at Chulalongkorn, Thailand's largest university.
Office of the Thai Public Relations Attaché

Of all the students who have graduated from the Faculty of Education at Chulalongkorn University, almost one half have taken jobs as instructors in teacher-training colleges or as principals or assistant principals of schools. This means that they will help train the future teachers of Thailand.

If we are talking of the effect of the Peace Corps project, if we are talking about aiding the development of Thai education, if we are talking about the future of Thailand, are we not correct in saying that we may play an important role if we teach these students?

Rapid Changes

The present for Thailand's students is an anxious and rapidly changing time; the university is the place where the traditions of the past are set side by side with new and conflicting ideas. Having been taught by American-educated Thais (who themselves must resolve their American education with the realities of Thailand), and having read books in English about American educational methods, these students will find themselves teaching in traditional Thai schools, often supervised by government officials who have a background more conservative than theirs.

The students speak about "modern methods" and about "improvement" but the hows and whats of change are difficult questions. Their dreams and desires are many, but so are their conflicts and frustrations.

These university students are the future leaders of Thailand: the people who will lead the government, the people who will supervise other teachers, the people who will teach the future technicians and professionals of Thailand.

Help Them to Dream

Can we not help to teach them? Can we not help them dream? Can we not talk with them and give them ideas and other viewpoints which may help them to make better decisions in the future? Can we not try to help them with some of their problems related to the development of their country? And, can we not learn about the dreams, the desires, and the frustrations of these future leaders?

The Peace Corps seems to have committed itself to assisting the universities of a number of countries. We think this is an important step. While the big cities where most universities are situated may not be the setting in which Peace Corps Volunteers are usually pictured as working, we think that the university setting is one in which the Peace Corps Volunteer is often needed and one in which he can be very effective.

Foreign Students in the U.S.

Sumner Sharpe of Nashua, N.H., is an instructor in town planning at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.

By Sumner M. Sharpe

Perhaps one of the greatest contributions the Peace Corps may make to understanding between countries is in the field of university education, both abroad and in the United States.

Most of us are familiar with the work Volunteers are doing in universities abroad. But as yet there seems to have been little discussion of the contribution Volunteers may make when they return to the United States.

Foreign students make up a fairly large percentage of the enrollment in many American universities today, and their numbers are probably increasing.

In most schools these students are treated in one of two ways. First, the school may treat all students, foreign and American, the same. This disregard for differences in educational and cultural background is certainly not the proper appreach to education, even if all the students were American.

Wide Gap Results

The second, and probably more common, approach is to create two groups of students: "foreign" and "American." Unfortunately this often results in a wide gap between the two groups with little intermingling. Even the international centers on campuses across the country are often little more than a place for one lonely foreign student to meet other lonely foreign students.

Furthermore, in colleges that recognize "foreign" and "American" students, a double standard of grading may be used to help foreign students through, since it is generally recognized that the degree is usually of paramount importance to them.

Thus it seems that the attempt is being made to fit the student to the program rather than to fit the program to the student.

Too little attention is being paid to the students and to their countries' needs and background. This failure, combined with the fact that the foreign student may be "helped through," usually does not produce a well-educated person, one with understanding and confidence in what he has learned.

On his return home, the student may be faced with unexpected frustrations and embarrassments when he tries to apply what he has learned in America.

In order to overcome this problem, American universities, the national governments of foreign countries which have students in the United States, and educational aid groups should make a concerted effort to find out as much as possible about each student before he begins his course of study.

Consider Backgrounds

Matters which should be considered include:

- Cultural background—What values are regarded as important by the student's culture? How do they affect him now? Should this be reflected in his education?
- Personality of the student—Is he shy or confident? How well may he be expected to adjust to American life, and to re-adjust to his own culture?
- Educational background — More than grades are necessary to understand the student and his needs. What was his eduction like? Was emphasis placed on rote memorization? What has he really learned in depth?
- Future work—What role will the student fill on returning to his country? Will he teach or will he work in a government or a private office? What should his major field of study be in regard to his future work?
- National needs—Since most of the students come from countries which have recently initiated programs of economic and social development, the student should be considered in the perspective of his nation's needs.

Adjust Programs

After gathering such information, schools could attempt to adjust their programs to meet the individual and national needs of foreign students.

The programs, not the standards, should be adjusted so the student becomes better prepared to meet the situation waiting for him when he returns home.

How does the Peace Corps fit into this picture? Volunteers returning to the United States will carry with them considerable information about national cultures as well as about problems of adjustment in a strange country. Some of us may work as teachers or for aid-giving agencies and thus be directly involved.

More important, though less direct, is the effect that all of us will have in increasing American understanding of cultural differences. In everyday life, whatever our work, we can serve as bridges linking our American and foreign homes.

You Begin With Peanuts

Marilyn Davidson of North Conway, N.H., is a laboratory technician at the Songkhla Hospital.

By Marilyn Davidson

As I remember, we started making peanut butter because we were all hungry for *farang* (American-European) food. Somebody made a batch and invited the rest of us in Songkhla over to try it.

Soon we were all making it. A little competition developed. We'd vie with each other in thinking up new and exotic peanut-butter recipes.

The result is that we now have sampled, here in the not-so-wilds of Songkhla, a greater variety of peanut butter than is available anywhere in the States. We've made classic-American-standard peanut butter; creamy-smooth; peanut butter with bananas; extra-crunchy; peanut butter with durian—I can't remember them all. [*Durian* is the large oval edible fruit of a tree of the chocolate family.]

The Science Mastered

We've got the process right down to a science. The one rule is, "Never measure anything." Just now I got through making some, so I'll run through how I made it today.

First I dry-roasted the nuts over a charcoal stove. Then I took the skins off. I took the roasted nuts over to another Volunteer's house, where there's a grinder. I ground the peanuts (about 1½ cups) and added a little margarine—about one tablespoon—and a little salt. To today's batch I added a little sugar, too, because another Volunteer said it made peanut butter taste better.

After it's done, you look at it and taste it. If it's OK, you put it in jars. If it's not quite right, you can always add something.

I guess you'd call the kind I made today semi-crunchy. It's the most popular variety in Songkhla. You can make creamy-smooth by using a mortar and pestle and pounding the dickens out of the peanuts. But it's a long job and not recommended for everyday.

Recipe Shared

We told a Thai friend about peanut-butter making and gave him a description of how we did it. He apparently went home and told his maid, who made some from what our friend had told her.

I was invited over to try it. It sat there in a bowl—pure white with what looked to me like fermentation taking place. After some discussion, I tried it. It certainly didn't taste like peanut butter, but tasted rather like some kind of cheese.

As far as my friend and his maid know, we've all converted and are making it their way now. Actually, I don't even know their recipe. All I know is that they used dairy products in theirs.

The disappointment in this whole matter is that we'll never be able to do it in the States. Peanuts are too expensive there. Maybe we can set up an import business so we can continue making peanut butter at home.

MIXED STYLES characterize tidy building which serves as Peace Corps headquarters in Bangkok.

The Peace Corps Volunteer And His Medical Kit

Wanda Montgomery of Bluffton, O., teaches home economics at the Songkhla Technical Institute.

By Wanda Montgomery

One of the many questions asked of the first group of Volunteers in Thailand in preparation for the arrival of the second group was, "What is the most useful item that you took with you to your assigned location?"

The answer was easy: the Peace Corps Medical Kit.

So I answered the question, and soon people were asking me if I had been sick. "I haven't used it much for sickness," I said. "It's the secondary uses that make it handy to have around."

For example, the medical kits arrived in the same shipment as our bicycles, so it was natural to think of the adhesive bandages when the wiring for the lights needed splicing. Decorative bits of tape at various spots on the bike also made identification easier. And, of course, the same bandages make fine temporary inner-tube patches.

Scalpel for Screws

Need a screwdriver for that tiny screw in your transistor radio? Check the snake-bite kit. The little scalpel works fine. We don't see many snakes around here anyway.

Nobody packed a doughnut cutter in either his air or sea freight. Our advisers in training failed to tell us we might yearn for a doughnut after a few months in Thailand. The ingredients (or at least approximations thereof) were easy enough to come by. What caused difficulties was, "How do you get the hole in the doughtnut?"

The bottle of malaria suppressant pills was buried deep in the kit, since malaria is well under control in this provincial town. But we found it to be the exact size of doughnut holes. This venture was one of our most successful.

Small Bed Table

Of course, we've had some sickness; and here, too, the kit has come to the rescue. It serves as a small but very adequate substitute for a table to use when playing cards with the bedridden patient.

The gauze bandages have numerous accomplishments to their credit. We use them to strain mosquito larvae from our drinking water, which is stored above the ground in open cisterns. We also use them to tie our hangers to the clotheslines so that monsoon winds cause fewer problems on wash days.

Another Volunteer urges that we not forget his toothpick container. It seems that the aspirin bottle, when empty, is the exact length to hold his favorite brand.

These are but a few of the uses we have found for the kit. Our list could go on. Other Volunteers elsewhere in the world have undoubtedly also found uses for the kit. Perhaps future Peace Corps Medical Kits might be packed with two sets of directions: one for medical uses and another for extra-medical uses.

'THIS IS A TEACHER'

Peggy Bruton of Washington teaches English at the Chiengmai Teachers' College.

By Peggy Bruton

One of the principal methods we use in teaching spoken English in Thailand's teacher-training colleges is called "pattern practice." Instead of explaining rules of grammar and requiring students to learn them, we depend on repetition of basic sentences, with key words for substitution given by the teacher.

In this way, we hope, the students master English syntax and grammar. At the start, we ask them to substitute words in only one position in the sentence. For instance: This is a chair. Door. This is a door. Table. This is a table. And so on.

Grammatical Dialogue

Here is a short drama that demonstrates what can, and frequently does, happen when the lessons get more complicated.

TEACHER: This is a chair.
STUDENTS: (Echo quality.) This is a chair.
TEACHER: Mango.
STUDENTS: This is a mango.
TEACHER: Table.
STUDENTS: This is a table.
TEACHER: That.
STUDENTS: This is a that.
TEACHER: No, think please.
STUDENT A: This is a think please.
TEACHER: No, a thousand times no. *(Pause)*
VERY BRIGHT STUDENT: That is a table.
TEACHER: Ah! Correct . . . Eye.
STUDENT B: I is a table.
STUDENT C: I am a table.

EXIT TEACHER

For teaching oral English we have a set of three books, one containing grammar drills similar in style to the illustration above, one with additional drills to establish these patterns, and another dealing exclusively with pronunciation, using drills and diagrams designed to help Thai students overcome particular pronunciation difficulties. A group of American linguists came to Thailand specifically to prepare this material.

English Is Popular

The Thai people are acutely aware of English as an international means of communication and of their need of it. Nearly all of us Volunteer teachers are asked by eager citizens for more private lessons than we could possibly give. Business and professional people are eager to learn in preparation for advanced study abroad or for advancement in their present positions.

Some young students seek out private instruction, too, so much do they want to speak this strange tongue they've heard in the classroom since primary school. But the biggest reason all Thai schoolchildren should master English is the need to read. There are few technical or scientific books in Thai; relatively little of Western literature can be found in translation, and of course much meaning is lost in that literature which has been translated.

Speech is important, too; some of the students will be teaching in communities where there are English-speakers with whom to converse. Our major teaching goal, however, must be reading proficiency.

Oral Proficiency

The linguistic theory on which the oral approach is based states that oral proficiency must precede visual. We fervently hope this theory is accurate and that the method we use is truly the most rapid.

Ideally, once the students have mastered basic speech patterns, reading and writing come easily. If the theory is proved incorrect at any time during the next two years, the Thais will have on their hands 30 young American suicide victims and a host of Thai young people able to say "This is a *mango*" with a perfect American accent.

There is a shortage here of reading material that our students, especially those in the first year, can understand. (The level of teacher-training colleges is comparable to America's last two years of high school and first two of college.) Most of us have prepared dialogues, simple short stories, song sheets, and word games with which to enliven our classes.

Songs Are a Treat

The promise of a song at the end of the hour serves as a bribe for greater concentration and better behavior — although maintaining discipline is generally easier than in an American classroom at the same level. While my students would prefer "The Young Ones" or some current Presleyian hit, they are happy enough with an American folk song. "Clementine" and "You Are My Sunshine" are favorites, with the words "dear" and "darling" adding an aura of deep romance.

It is a great pleasure after our working hours to teach the eager neighborhood children. Outside the classroom, there is ample food for discussion: household objects, the afternoon paper, the herdsmen with their water buffalo passing by.

Of course, we can't limit ourselves to English when the discussions be-

LISTENING IN EARNEST, Marguerite Hewett, a laboratory technician from Seattle, Wash., hears of work at Bangkok's General Laboratory. Marguerite now works at provincial hospital in Ubon.

SURROUNDED BY SMILES, Peace Corps staff member Nadya Danilchik stops on street of village near KhonKaen in northeast Thailand.

come intense. And, often, we must struggle to find a Thai word. In finding it, we enrich our Thai as well as our neighbors' English.

Since Chiengmai is so well-populated with native speakers of English, many of them with sufficient leisure to conduct private classes, I have tried to keep to a policy of teaching only those Thais who are genuinely eager and who cannot afford pay.

Thai-English

Some expressions and products from the English-speaking world have become firmly established in Thai speech. At every movie house, during intermission, one sees on the screen a sniffly child being magically cured by Wicks Wapo-Rub, and one is exhorted to use Ray-O-Wack batteries. "Good morning" is a common greeting at any time of day, and the question, "How are you?" is answered with "Yes." "O.K." is universal. "Yam" and "yelly" can be purchased, but at very high prices. "Fan" means girl friend. And there are the unique, refreshing expressions that set apart teaching English here from teaching it in the U.S.

Included on an examination was the question, "What can we do if we have a telephone?" The expected response was a sentence including the expression "call up," on which the students had been drilled.

One student apparently had seen a dial telephone and had been impressed by the machine itself: "If we have a telephone," he wrote, "we can point the number and round it." We can, indeed.

An Allegory of Sorts

By David Michaels

David Michaels of New York City teaches English at the Yala Teachers College.

What is the game the lizards play on my ceiling; they are barely full grown and yet are biting off each other's tails? Those tails must have taken weeks to grow. And how long is the life of a house lizard? And how many new tails can he grow?

At Michigan, in training for Thailand, we were made to grow tails. After 12 weeks some of us had tails of considerable length. It was because we were told it was useful to have a tail in Thailand—like knowing how to speak the local language, or how to dispose of your dinner politely. That was why we all grew our tails. It was one of the anthropologists who wandered through, I think, who told us all about it.

When we arrived in Thailand for our in-country training, we found we had been sorely misled. All our tails did for us was gain us a certain notoriety.

Stop, Look, and Laugh

Everywhere we went people would stop and look at us and laugh. Naked children splashing in a canal would shout with glee, or perhaps they would sit in the middle of the road dumfounded whenever we appeared. It was very disquieting, almost unnerving, and hardly what we expected.

When we went to the market place it was always the same. I would approach a fish seller. "How much is this fish?" I would ask. The fish seller would look up, smile, giggle, and then burst out into uncontrollable laughter. Soon there would be 20 or 30 people standing about as I dealt for my fish. And though they did not finger my tail (the Thais being an inherently reserved and polite people), I knew it was for no other reason than my tail that such a crowd had gathered.

Surely the anthropologist had been wrong. She had been wrong about bathing facilities—we did not have to bathe fully dressed in the canals; she must have been wrong about tails as well. Soon all around the in-country training site, Volunteers were getting rid of their tails.

Like the lizards on the ceiling they lost their tails with hardly a croak of regret. But it was too late. Word had gotten around and we were destined to be laughted at, pointed at, and made to feel in every market place around the country like some kind of monkey.

Some of us complained to our Representative, acknowledged that our own situation was beyond repair, but warned him that the second group should be spared our embarrassment.

We all agreed that the pioneer group would make blunders. The second group and those that would follow over the years would benefit from our experience.

Some months later, in the provinces where I am working, I bicycled to the market place to pick up a copy of the English-language daily. The clerks and customers giggled among the piles of magazines as I made my purchase.

New Recruits

I went across the street, ordered a 7-Up from a waiter who could barely suppress a guffaw at the sight of me, and spread the paper on the table before me. There, much to my surprise, in the middle of the second page was the new group of Volunteers destined for Thailand.

"ROUNDING UP TRAINING" the headline said. Had that anthropologist gotten to them, too? There they were, 55 strong, sitting on the steps of the Michigan Union, all with horns on their heads.

Drawing by Robert Bruton

REPORT FROM THAILAND

by Jack Reynolds

Forty-four of us stepped off the plane at the Bangkok airport. We had been at the University of Michigan for thirteen weeks of intense study of Thai language, Thai history and culture, English language teaching, American culture, malaria control procedures, technical and vocational training and hundreds of other special lectures covering everything from the use of an overhead projector to the first aid treatment of shock. (Whether there's a relationship or not is yet to be seen.) Two of our group who had met during training, David Michaels and Marianne Spaulding, got married just before we left. It was a happy surprise for us all.

The training in Michigan had been good, but it had been in Michigan. In Thailand the situation suddenly became real. Things are different half way around the world. We had been told this in Ann Arbor, but we realized it in Bangkok.

We soon learned that our most valuable training had been in Thai language and we had occasion to use it right from the start. Art Crisfield and Peggy Benton responded to the welcome at the Bangkok airport in Thai. Bob Pitts and Ann Flanagan were interviewed on TV in Thai and Bob Johnson spoke on the radio. The Thai people accepted us readily when they found we spoke their language. That's not to say we are fluent yet. A trip to a Thai barber shop can still be a disastrous experience.

Thailand is more than we expected. The people were friendly, receptive, kind and helpful from the start. Wherever we've gone, whether in the capital city or the outlying districts, whether in the homes of generous Thai officials or in the market place, we have been warmly received. And, naturally enough, the children are our favorites.

Not everyone is completely sold on our coming, however. The concept of the Peace Corps is still vague in most areas, especially outside the capital. Even in Bangkok our purpose was misunderstood by at least one very elite jewelry firm that sent us special invitations to purchase some of the "finest jewelry in Thailand."

There have been a few adjustment problems: most of the doorways are too short for us, and the restrooms are a real puzzle. But these situations are usually more funny than they are trying. The Thais, we feel certain, are puzzled by us. One evening we found ourselves on a stage at a buffet dinner and were confronted with requests for American songs. We picked up a Thai mandolin—the most familiar looking instrument—and started to sing an American folk song. Thai musical instruments, unfortunately, are not made to play American folk songs and we finished as we started—in a completely different key than the mandolin. We suspect that some of the Thais now have a strange concept of American music.

In a few more weeks we'll be in our assigned areas preparing to teach or to help fight malaria. The Thais seem delighted to learn that so many of us, 35, will be working in the provinces away from the capital city. The few who will stay in Bangkok will teach at Chulalongkorn University.

The rest of the teachers will be in teacher training colleges, trade schools and technical institutes. Those technicians working in malaria eradication will be in labs, and the entomologists will be out in the field. We will be spread from the southern border, near Malaya, to the northern and northeastern borders, near Burma and Laos.

We've been through a relatively long training program and we're anxious to get to work. We want the Thai people to know that we are sincere about helping in any way we can. We hope Thailand will ask another group of Peace Corps Volunteers to come to this beautiful and interesting country. We're very glad they asked for us.

From Thailand

A Trunked-Up Story

By Gerald Paul

Came a fine warm day in the Province of Surin and I, ostensibly an agriculture teacher at the Surin Vocational Agriculture School, was invited to accompany the physical-education teacher into town to pick up the mail.

Whilst engaged in this errand, we came upon a group of villagers around a large gray heap. We alighted from our bicycles, and upon closer scrutiny, found that the heap was an elephant lying on its back in the ditch.

As any Aggie knows, this position of a quadruped indicates imminent departure from this plane of existence. "Dead or not?" I inquired, desiring to add my bit to the general festivities.

"Not yet," replied a sturdy peasant posing as a soldier.

True enough; the distressed beast gargled most horribly every three minutes or so.

About this time I noticed the clustered gentlemen of the village eyeing me in a very odd way. It was not the usual stare reserved for those endowed by nature with white skins and big noses. Not at all. This stare had a pronounced note of expectancy in it. I resolved not to understand another word of Thai for at least an hour.

Alas, my defense was flanked as easily as the Maginot Line. "Can you cure him?" asked my treacherous companion in English. (Never trust a P.E. major.) Silence.

I searched my mind, but the only elephant information I could recall came from a text called *Bomba the Jungle Boy*, and the elephant obviously hadn't read it, or in this state we would have been deep in the jungle, in the centuries-old elephant graveyard known only to elephants, Bomba, and certain unprincipled ivory thieves.

I was desperate. How to save the situation? Consult the Peace Corps staff? Don Sullivan? "I doubt that this is in the Peace Corps image." John White? "But in Laos we used to. . . ." Bob Ford? "When you consider the socio-economic aspects of this situation. . . ." Athos, save me! "Peace Corps has not yet evolved a firm policy in this field." Gads, even Noel Kobayashi couldn't get out of this. Goodbye feature article in THE VOLUNTEER.

I drew myself up to my full five feet seven inches and spoke with desperate dignity: "My friends, I am an authority of sorts on sheep and goats. With proper drugs and equipment I can cure diseases in cattle, and I can draw swine back from the very grave. But if yon pachyderm had so much as a hangnail I would be powerless to help him."

With that I mounted my bicycle and rode into obscurity.

—From the Thailand Peace Corps Journal

Rural Thai bus stops along a road to pick up passengers, cargo, and livestock.

On the Riding Of Buses In Thailand

Barbara Hoffbeck of Big Stone City, S.D., teaches English in a secondary school at Samutprakan, south of Bangkok. She holds a B.S. in home economics and journalism, granted in May, 1961, by South Dakota College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts. Before joining the Peace Corps she was a reporter for the Sioux Falls (S.D.) **Argus-Leader**, and, before that, wire editor for the Rhinelander (Wis.) **Daily News**.

By Barbara Hoffbeck

Women who have been to Thailand probably never forget the beauty of Thailand's temples; men, the beauty of Thai women. Volunteers will probably never forget the bus rides.

For one-half baht (about 2½¢) you can ride for more than an hour through Bangkok's busy, colorful, congested streets.

Two major tasks confront the Bangkok bus rider: getting on and getting off. Although there are probably a hundred different bus routes with scores of buses on each one, the buses are always packed. You learn to climb on even if there seems to be no space.

The ride to the next stop calls for courage, as you feel you will lose your foothold and fall off. But after the next stop others climb aboard and you couldn't fall out if you wanted to. Once on, you're lucky to find something to hold on to; but sometimes there's even an unexpected luxury—a seat.

I think our physical training back in the U.S. lacked something, for it has taken me months to get the knack of hanging on with one hand, holding my packages with the other, giving my money to the ticket boy, and keeping myself from bumping fellow passengers.

If you do get to sit, you soon learn not to watch the driver, for Bangkok bus and taxi drivers are extremely optimistic and competitive. This often results in two buses racing side by side down a busy road scattering bicycles, carts, taxis, and people.

Buses are also exciting outside Bangkok. My favorite ride is from the city where I live, Samutprakan, 15 miles into Bangkok. Along the way the bus passes farmers in the rice fields, boys herding water buffalo, and women doing their washing in the *klongs* (canals). Inside the bus, people are watching me, for it's unusual for a foreigner to ride that route.

Sometimes the things inside the bus prove as interesting as the scenery. In the morning the aisles are filled with flowers, fruits, and vegetables being taken to the market. Once there was a man with his fighting cock perched on his arm. Another time, there was something wrapped in banana leaves that I didn't recognize for some time. It proved to be a pig's head, which a short time before had been on a pig.

Another Volunteer tells me that I can't call myself a veteran bus rider until, like him, I ride a route that has a temple on a sharp curve. In the middle of the curve the driver always takes both hands off the wheel and does a respectful Thai bow.

For 3 Months, Sombat Becomes A Buddhist Priest

Ted Goldenberg is from San Bernardino, Cal., and graduated from Texas A&M College in 1959 with a B.A. in math. He teaches English in a secondary school in the Sawankalok district of Sukhothai province, in northern Thailand.

By Ted Goldenberg

At the beginning of Thailand's rainy season this past July, Sombat, a teacher at my school, became a priest in the Buddhist temple in our town for three months of study, meditation, and prayer.

This is a familiar event in Thailand, for most Thai men enter the priesthood for at least a short time during their life.

The ceremonies marking the ordination of a priest last three days, and are one of the most important occasions in a Thai's life. Like much of Thai Buddhism, they are a mixture of solemnity and joy, ritual and exuberance, formality and fun.

Along with Sombat's family and other friends, I was invited to participate in the ceremonies.

Preparations began weeks ahead of time. The family made intricate decorations out of flowers, and prepared food for the hundred or so guests expected. A large porch was added to the house to give everyone room to sit, eat, and sleep.

The first evening of the ceremonies was a social occasion for the men. But it was work for many of the women and girls, who were finishing their flower arrangements. They spent hours stringing fragrant purple, pink, and white

(Continued from page 13)

petals to hang on gifts for the priests at the temple.

The men played cards, drank *mekong* (Thai whiskey), and talked. Popular Thai and American records were played at nearly full volume on a phonograph.

Early the next morning, Sombat's hair and eyebrows were shaved, as is the custom of all Thai priests each month. Then he was given a ritual bath (everyone poured a little water over him), and he was dressed in white robes. He wore these for the rest of the morning and afternoon.

The guests were served more food and drink, but Sombat ate in another room, attended by a few friends and relatives, for he was now in a state of grace.

After the noon meal, two groups of musicians entertained the guests. One was our boys' high-school band, the other a traditional Thai folk band, composed of workers, pedicab drivers, and farmers. The folk band was especially exciting and its enthusiastic members pounded out a steady rhythm on a variety of drums and other percussion instruments, accompanied by a small wind instrument that sounded like a shrill oboe.

Occasionally one of these players paused to perform portions of a Thai classical dance, standing or sitting, using his arms, hands, and legs to execute the stylized movements. Four or five of the older women, some over 60, danced too, wearing traditional costumes and make-up. They were all graceful.

Then everyone assembled outside, on the road. Sombat was mounted on a small horse, and all the guests, both bands, and several jeeps crammed with women and gifts began a noisy, joyous, two-hour procession through the market and town to the temple. It was hot, but the two bands played continuously, and the old women danced throughout the march.

Sombat had confessed to me that this would be his first ride on a horse, and it was not an easy one. He had to maintain a contemplative position the whole time, sitting erect, hands together as in prayer, eyes cast downward.

The horse became irritated after a while and kicked at marchers, and at the men trying to hold a large umbrella over Sombat, to shield him from the sun.

By the time we reached the temple, the horse was almost unmanageable. Sombat was lifted off, and placed on the shoulders of a husky man. Then he was carried ceremoniously and noisily around the main temple building, followed by everyone who wasn't standing in the shade, as I was.

Ordination Ceremony!

Now came the ordination ceremony. The temple's 23 priests were seated with their legs beneath them and their prayer screens before them, on a large, low wooden platform inside the temple. The abbot, 86, presided, his voice hoarse and cracked; several times he corrected and helped the younger priests chanting the ceremony.

Buddhist chants are in *Pali*, an ancient language, and their rhythm and changes of pitch are hypnotic and fascinating. During the ceremony the new monk must make several responses, some long. Sombat had studied for several months. Now, in his new, vivid-orange priest's robes, he responded carefully and, apparently, perfectly.

This ceremony lasted an hour, and by the end of it I was numb from sitting on the floor in a polite position, feet under me to one side.

On Sombat's way out of the temple, the people lined the path and put joss-sticks (incense) in his cloth bag. I went with him and some other teachers to see the room that was to be his during this stay in the temple. Surprisingly, it was large. It had a few pieces of furniture and was upstairs in a large wooden building that also houses the temple's offices and library.

The festivities were not yet finished, however. During his first night as a priest, Sombat would stay at his family's house, so I returned there.

That evening there was another fine meal (which Sombat, now a priest, could not share), and afterwards a concert by a classical Thai orchestra.

The next morning the priests came from the temple. They were served breakfast and were given food for their only other meal of the day, taken at noon. When they returned to the temple, Sombat went with them.

As a priest he will study the Dharma, or Buddhist, doctrine; the life of Buddha; the discipline of Buddhism; and the composition of the words of the Buddha.

He will have only nine possessions: his four robes, alms-bowl, razor, needle, umbrella, and water strainer. By thus renouncing the world and following the Path, Sombat hopes to approach an understanding of suffering and detach himself from desire. He will follow the Ten Precepts of Buddha, and be governed by the 227 rules of the Buddhist monastic order.

Volunteers live in Thai-style houses, raised above the ground on stilts, open for ventilation. Volunteer Ted Goldenburg (San Bernardino, Cal.) stands on his porch.

A Volunteer's Life In the Village Of the Lion Forest

Don Sjostrom has been teaching English in a secondary school in Yasothon, a village in northeastern Thailand, since last October. He is from Seattle, and graduated from the University of Washington last year with a B.A. in philosophy.

By Don Sjostrom

About 600 years ago two Buddhist monks named Jentanavin and Jinda set off from Vientiane, Laos, for India. They were making the long trip to get a bone of the holy Buddhist priest, Phra Anon, who had recently died near Agra.

They obtained the bone, but when they returned to Laos they were denied

A simple cotton gin is discussed with a villager by Steve Whitmer (Overland Park, Kan.). He works in rural community-action at Sakonnakhon, northeastern Thailand.

entrance by the newly-installed Prince of Vientiane. Weary and discouraged, they followed the Chi River south until they reached a small village named Bansingta (village of the lion forest). There they decided to settle. To house the relic they built a slender pagoda, finely carved from white stone, nearly a hundred feet high.

Today, Bansingta is the town of Yasothon, and the temple is called Wat Mahatad. I live about 200 yards from the temple.

Yasothon, although older than Bangkok itself, remains a small town typical of many in a country where 85 per cent of the people live in communities this size or smaller. One can walk from one end to the other in 15 minutes. It is accessible only by dirt roads that become very difficult to traverse during the rains, but its main streets are paved. There are two comfortable hotels, two uncomfortable theaters, and a large central market.

Leaving the main street one enters a maze of roads and paths winding among thatched houses on stilts, and banana, papaya, and coconut trees. Pigs wallow contentedly under the houses. It is quiet and smelly and my favorite part of town.

The people in the northeastern part of Thailand are more Laotian than Thai. No one exemplifies this better than my neighbor Meh Thon (*meh* means mother in Thai). She is a tall, handsome woman, though a bit scarred and red around the mouth from years of chewing betel nut. Her appearance is striking when she puts on her heavy gold necklace, rings, and bracelets. Like most village Thais she has little use for banks, and the ornaments represent her family's life saving.

A "Borrowed" Net

Meh Thon can't read or write and rarely speaks Thai, so I had an opportunity to learn Laotian (the local dialect) from the very beginning. Our relationship was strengthened only a few weeks after I arrived when I lent her my spare mosquito net. I had obviously misinterpreted her use of "borrow" for the next day she was proudly displaying my net, now made into a bra.

A month or so later she complained of her blood turning white and I gave her a handful of vitamin pills. We've been inseparable ever since.

Meh Thon's acceptance of me into her little world has not been an exception here in Yasothon. The ease with which the Thais brought me, their first and only Volunteer, into their community has been the most pleasant experience of my stay.

I had been in Yasothon only four days when the annual boat-racing festival was held. I was asked to be a member of our school's eight-man crew. It was a bright day with scores of boats representing all the nearby villages as well as teams from town. The boats were low, shallow, carved-out teak logs, incredibly heavy, which we paddled with short, slender poles.

We took to the river early and paddled confidently around challenging other teams to short sprint races. After an hour of these warm-up races we were all feeling rather limp; reluctantly, we answered the call to the starting line. Then our team decided that I should be steersman. I settled in the stern with an eight-foot board to paddle and steer with. This made us a little stern-heavy, but in a moment we were off. With a shout we dug our paddles deep and surged forward. As the boat gained momentum the bow began to lift and the water flew by. We were leading. Chanting hoarsely, we dug deeper with our paddles. The bow lifted higher, the stern settled deeper, and then we sank in disgrace not 50 yards from the starting line.

Life in Yasothon has long since ceased to be exciting or adventurous, but it's a good life crowded with a lot of good people.

Enough of the students are interested in English to make the teaching interesting for me. We have an enthusiastic English club and put out a newspaper that reaches a dozen schools in four towns.

The secondary school where I teach is a large, unattractive building. It is made of wood, and, like most Thai buildings, is unpainted. We have 310 students and 11 teachers. The classrooms are dreary but there is no lack of school spirit among the students.

I spend most of my weekends in the villages, occasionally teaching in the local primary school or working with the local teachers on teaching methods. Often, however, I go just to chat with the parents of the students, and I have spent many pleasant afternoons relaxing on a bamboo mat drinking cool, young-coconut milk, fresh from the tree.

Life here has not, of course, been without frustration. My attempt at organizing a 4-H Club during the summer vacation ended in failure. And there have been countless lesser difficulties with the teaching or the food or the language.

Nor has my stay in Yasothon been without sorrow. Not long ago, my best student died suddenly of spinal meningitis.

But given a peaceful afternoon in a quiet village, a house full of children preparing food for Sunday lunch, or an evening alone with the sunset on the bank of the nearby River Chi, then 10 months yet to spend in Yasothon seem too few.

At Hospital, Relatives Help

Regina Williams, from St. Paul, Minn., graduated in 1957 with a B.S. in medical technology from the University of Minnesota. She has been a laboratory technician at the Roi-et Provincial Hospital for the past 18 months.

By Regina Williams

Much of the activity of the hospital where I am a laboratory technician goes on not inside the hospital but in a cluster of huts behind it. Here live the patients' relatives.

I call them "nurses' aides," for they tend to many of the patients' needs. They are a feature of most hospitals in northeastern Thailand, particularly during the dry season, when there is little to do at home.

They are quite helpful. They feed, bathe, and comfort the patients, wash their clothes, and visit with them. (Visiting hours are not usually limited in Thai Hospitals.)

I enjoy watching the women in their *pa-nungs* (sarongs) preparing their charcoal fires to boil rice, and the men in their *pa-ko-mas* (loin cloths) carrying water from the hospital well, the tins hanging from a shoulder pole.

Going to and from the lab I pass the relatives sitting in the corridors and wards, or under the shade trees, chewing betel nut, eating sticky rice, and talking.

In time, as the hospital becomes more conscious of the dangers of contamination, the "nurses' aides" will probably disappear, replaced by more hygienic, but less-interested attendants.

Aside from this, working in a hospital lab in Thailand is outwardly quite similar to working in a small lab in the United States. The hours and most of the lab tests are the same. Even the atmosphere is the same—doctors calling for results or for blood transfusions, and aides running in with forgotten request slips.

But here the similarity ends. The real challenge is the unexpected. Will the electricity work today? Will the water run? Has the order for chemicals we placed three months ago arrived yet? We generally spend the morning hours coping with these small crises, collecting blood samples, and setting up filtrates and dilutions for chemical analyses.

Few Changes Made

Although the workload of the lab has increased, few changes have been made, and these are often contradictory. On some days we go backwards. On others we hold our own.

Our lab is small and meagerly equipped. Most hematology and urinalysis work is done by two lab assistants. We have no other lab technicians as such.

New habits, such as using sterile techniques and clean, dry glassware, are difficult to instill. Gradually the staff is learning to check results with factors or previous tests, correlate them with the doctor's diagnoses, and refer to textbooks when in doubt.

Other problems are solved more readily. To enable us to collect blood samples from several wards at one time we made a large hematology tray. We now clean plugged pipettes instead of throwing them away. We do urine-sugar tests in batches of 10 to 15 instead of individually, as before.

In chemistry, we post a list in each ward with the amount and type of blood needed for each test, requiring that all specimens be in the lab by 10:30 a.m. My Thai colleague and I have revised some procedures, revived others, and established some new ones. For the simpler jobs, we plan to recruit and teach high-school graduates.

There is still much to be done in chemistry and bacteriology, but we hope that with the opening of a new lab and with new equipment we can accomplish more.

Hitchhiking during annual Surin elephant round up are Dave Updegraff (Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.), Bob King (Guilderland Center, N.Y.), and Carl Zinkel (Spokane, Wash.).

Volunteers Ernie Kuhn (Newark, O.), left, and Lou Setti (Watertown, Mass.) pose with young friends; silver neck-rings are worn as signs of wealth. Kuhn, a community-development worker, is assigned to Miao people, who inhabit northern parts of Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand, coming originally from southwestern China. Setti is a teacher in Phitsanulok, in the north.

'The Students Began to Cry'

Readers of THE VOLUNTEER often learn of successes of Peace Corps Volunteers, but seldom read about situations that have had mixed or unhappy results. The following anecdotes of cross-cultural confusion and misunderstanding are taken from a recent questionnaire completed by Thailand Volunteers.

Volunteer A: My students had not done their homework and in class were lazy and inattentive. I was furious and I walked out of class. Then I was embarrassed because the students began to cry.

Volunteer B: A big celebration was planned at a nearby temple and the Prime Minister was to attend. We all waited in the hot sun for three hours and then were told that he was not coming. A prince came in his place and I was so angry after waiting for so long that I refused to *wai* (bow) when all the others did. One of my fellow teachers asked why I hadn't. I replied that he was her prince and not mine. I realized that I had been impolite and decided to be more careful with my explanations in the future.

Volunteer C: My class was particularly unruly. I lost my temper, grabbed one of the boys and gave him some firm whacks. I then took him to be punished by the headmaster. I lost rapport with the class.

Volunteer D: Some teachers and I were putting up room dividers so that I would have my own room. I wanted to know the size of the room but no one would tell me and because of language problems I could not express myself clearly. I took one teacher aside and asked him what the size of the room was to be. I entreated him to tell the truth for a change instead of just being politely vague. He interpreted this to mean that I was "hot-headed" and hostile towards him and he would not speak to me for some time afterwards. Since then the problem has resolved itself through an increase in understanding.

Volunteer E: At a large party I was asked to sing on a platform into a microphone. I refused. My principal and other teachers were embarrassed.

Volunteer F: I spent a lot of time joking with students and did not insist that they stand when I entered the classroom, and so forth. I acted like an American, not like a Thai teacher. I reduced the differential between teacher and student. The result is that my relationship with the students is wonderful. My relationship with the teachers leaves much to be desired. I threaten their authority and the system. I probably could have built much the same relationships with the students and still made them toe the line more. Next year I intend to try.

Their Best Starfish

Travis Montgomery, from Poplar Bluff, Mo., is an English teacher at Vajiravudh College in Bangkok. He graduated from Southeast Missouri College in 1957 with majors in English and history, and has taught English and social studies at an American private school in São Paulo, Brazil.

By Travis Montgomery

What I like most about Thailand are the people, and the children in particular. It is too bad that they have to grow up into men and women, but I forgive them. The reason I like the children is because they're so cleverly innocent, and as good example as any I know are the five Thai boys I encountered at the beach outside Satahieb.

The leader of the group was a lean, ivory-skinned twelve-year-old with large, almond eyes which revealed an ancestry not entirely Thai. He had the relaxed, unself-conscious bearing of a natural leader. Then there was a plump lad with merry eyes who was so anxious I understand what he was saying that he exaggerated his gestures to every statement. There were two noisy little tag-alongs who ran ahead, and after they had lost their feelings of shyness, they pointed out landmarks of interest along the beach. The group's *taloke yai* (practical joker), a dark-skinned boy, ran along beside me anxious to test my knowledge of Thai.

When I first met them, they were grouped together under a Payom tree, sorting their starfish, which they had gathered along the beach. The best ones were to be sold to the *farang* (foreigner) who sometimes visited the beach. I asked the tallest boy, whose name was Chai, how he managed to catch the starfish.

"Easy!" he exclaimed. "Walk along the beach and when you see an imprint of a star, dig into the sand. But, you must have sharp eyes."

"Sharp eyes!" the chubby boy said, building piles of sand with his arms and hands.

"Like this," the practical joker said, throwing himself on the sandy soil and gesticulating wildly with his chubby hands.

Chai took my hand and led me out into the sandy waste. The sand dunes rose and once we had mounted these, we could see the beach, the sea, and the small islands in Satahieb Bay.

"It's the most beautiful beach," the chubby boy shouted, spreading his arms as far as they would go. "A beautiful white beach."

From atop the sand dunes, I could see where a river ran into the sea and, on either side, stretches of shimmering white beach along which women and children walked, searching for clams, shells, and starfish.

"Beautiful?" questioned the tall boy.

"Beautiful," I replied, while the tag-alongs ran whooping up and down and the clown stood silent. Chai stood relaxed and confident, needing no assurance of my appreciation.

After we had spent a joyous afternoon gathering shells, looking for more starfish, and swimming, I realized it was getting late. The sea was almost motionless, a blue carpet that stretched to the edge of a cloud-filled sky.

Laden with many tiny shells, I bid my young friends good-bye, as I slowly mounted one of the large sand dunes.

"Beautiful!" the chubby boy cried.

Suddenly, the tall boy and the two tag-alongs ran to their pile of starfish and grabbed the three largest, most beautiful ones in the huge pile, and added them to the number I already carried. They were, they said, their best starfish.

Each year, new teachers at His Majesty's school, Vajiravudh College, are presented to the King; Travis Montgomery, standing with gifts at left, was included.

'Get the Hell Out of There, Gracefully'

Thailand Volunteers have collected the following anecdotes, some of which will probably sound familiar to Volunteers everywhere:

"We are concerned about you because of the hostilities in Vietnam. We have read everything we can and talked it over. We feel that you should get the hell out of there as fast as you can gracefully."

—From a parent's letter

□ □ □

One of my real pleasures comes at night, every night. The girls' dormitory is just 500 yards from my flat. They chant their Buddhist prayers nightly and the melodic tones seem to envelop me. If I've had a difficult day, the sounds are soothing beyond words. If the day has been a good one, the sounds remind me of the beauty in Thailand.

—Toby Talbot (Los Angeles, Cal.)

□ □ □

One day as I sat eating in a strange town a little boy passed by. When he saw me, he stopped and stood in front of the shop shouting, "What? Okay. What? Okay." Then he merrily bounced down the street shouting, "What? Okay . . ."

—Fred Ellis (Annapolis, Md.)

□ □ □

At present I'm living in a former classroom on the second floor of my school. When I want to take a bath (in Thailand this is two or three times a day), I must walk downstairs and

behind the school. The morning bath is the most fun. No matter how early I get up, some students always come to school before me. Even if I get up at 5 a.m. to take my shower some joker arrives at 4:55. On these occasions I am dressed appropriately in a Thai sarong and sandals, with a towel around my neck. Carrying soap and a metal bowl to pour water over me, I enter the bathroom and secure the door behind me. There are generally giggles and whispers at this stage. When I've finished, teeth chattering, I step out of the bathroom. Every morning a crowd of smiling little girls greets me with "Good morning, teacher."

—Marilyn Zihlay (Kennewick, Wash.)

□ □ □

From "*A Piece of the Corps*," written and performed by Thailand Group 7 at the conclusion of their training in Hilo, Hawaii:

Leader: OK. Try this one. You come home late at night. You find a tiger relaxing on your sleeping mat. What do you do?

Trainee 1: Explain to the tiger that in Buddhism, if he does good, he'll get good.

Trainee 2: Consult the Peace Corps Handbook.

Trainee 3: Start a zoo.

Trainee 4: Try to understand the elements in his culture that made the tiger do this.

□ □ □

You know how tired you get of hearing children shout "Farang! farang!" (foreigner) whenever you go by. I was on my way to school one day and these two little boys in their clean school clothes saw me. They began jumping up and down yelling "Farang! farang!" and fell into the klong (canal).

—Debbie French (Farmington, Conn.)

□ □ □

We were married in the *nai amphur's* (district official) office. When the ceremony was over I asked how much it was. He said 60 satangs (3¢). I gave him a baht (5¢) and he went into the back and opened a big safe and gave me 40 satangs change.

—Larry Forman (Easton, Md.)

Fred Ellis

Debbie French

(Continued on next page)

Teachers' room in a Thailand school is set aside for planning lessons and preparing materials. Donna Reilly (Spokane, Wash.) sits at her desk in the second row.

Aspects of Westernization

Clark Neher (Los Angeles) is an instructor of political science at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. He holds bachelor's and master's degrees in political science, granted in 1960 and 1961 from Stanford University; from 1958 to 1959 he studied at the University of Vienna. His wife, Arlene, teaches at Prasarnmitr College of Education in Bangkok.

By Clark Neher

Bangkok, not long ago, was a city of busy canals and magnificent temples. Today, the temples remain, but most of the canals have given way to wide concrete streets.

There are other changes in Bangkok. Bars and nightclubs abound (Las Vegas, the Americano) blaring forth rock and roll. Thai girls with bouffant hairstyles wear Western dresses instead of the traditional sarong-like skirt, and occasionally one even sees couples holding hands as they walk down the street—formerly a strict taboo.

All this distresses many Thais and many Westerners, who see unfortunate aspects of Westernization intruding on what has been a polite, modest, and respectful culture.

Chulalongkorn University, where I am an instructor, is in the heart of Bangkok. Many of the students are from remote villages, and are encountering Western influences and the changes going on in the city for the first time. Some Thais are concerned that the students will reject the best of their Thai traditions.

But Chulalongkorn, Thailand's oldest and most famous university, is rich in Thai tradition. It was founded by the great King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910). Its buildings are in the classic Thai style: bright orange- and green-tile roofs cover high-ceilinged airy classrooms.

The university's 6000 students dress in white blouses and shirts, and dark skirts or trousers. When they pass a teacher in the hall they step aside and bow deeply, hands before their faces, in Thailand's traditional sign of respect. Often there seems to be a wall between the students and teachers.

In my department, political science, students attend 26 hours a week of lecture classes. They have little opportunity to assimilate and discuss the teacher's lecture. They need only memorize the lecture notes and at exam time relate them back, with little critical thinking. There is almost no concept of the research-in-depth that exists in American universities. Part of the reason for this is a lack of library materials. I fear that many of these university students will graduate into influential government and business positions without ever having had their ideas fully criticized or challenged.

My classes are in current affairs and international relations. Both courses require discussion, interpretation, and differences of opinion if they are to be meaningful. To elicit opinions on controversial subjects was at first almost an impossible task because the students simply would not express an opinion which might be different from mine.

(Continued from page 19)

Since childhood they have been taught that "teacher's opinion is right."

A further problem was that the students were concerned they would lose face if their opinions were challenged or if their peers judged them to be "overly aggressive or disrespectful."

Gradually the students learned that I truly wanted their own original opinions and ideas and soon discussion became more lively. I was thrilled the first time a student raised his hand while I was lecturing, and said: "Mr. Clark, I would like to disagree with your last idea." Perhaps the Volunteer has an advantage over his Thai colleagues, in that the students will be more likely to express their ideas with him since he is outside the established hierarchy.

Almost all the Thailand Volunteers I have talked with feel this need for a more informal relationship between student and teacher. I believe such a change is necessary for effective teaching and learning.

Effects of Change

If we develop this new open relationship, there are questions to be considered. In a country where the social order is based on the respect for authority, what will be the result of changing values? Will the students now have less respect for their teachers? Will they know how to control and cope with their new relationship? Will the authority and image of the Thai teachers be undercut?

Perhaps in trying to encourage our students to think for themselves this way we are simply another disruptive element intruding, another unfortunate aspect of Westernization. But somehow it seems worthwhile when we see our students develop a little more confidence in thinking for themselves.

Dear_____,

For Thailand Volunteers behind in their correspondence (and what Volunteer isn't?) the *Journal of Community Development*, edited by Volunteer Tommie Griffin (Seattle), offered this form to be filled in and mailed:

Dear_____,

Well, here I am in_____, and I'm really quite_____. I have been_____ and_____, and sometimes I've even_____. The weather here has been_____. For entertainment I've been_____and_____. You know how it is.

The food has been very_____. I find that if I add a_____to it now and then, the results are_____. My house is made of _____, and it's very_____. I wish I had a_____to make things more comfortable.

I have_____ideas about future activities. For instance I think that_____would be an excellent idea, don't you?

The people here are_____. They seem to_____all the time. I find them very _____. In fact, sometimes I think they _____. What do you think?

Well, that's about_____for now. Tell everyone_____for me.

Your_____.

_____

'I Always Had A Lot of Visitors'

(Continued from previous page)

I always had a lot of visitors at my house in Songkhla. I had a gibbon tied in front, a trash pit in back, and an aquarium inside.

—Jack Reynolds (Downey, Cal.)

□ □ □

Occasionally in a Thai barber shop the barber stops in the middle of a haircut and combs his own hair.

—Jim Cusick (East Orange, N.J.)

□ □ □

Once I said to a student, "How do you do?" He said, "I can do."

—Howard Lesnick (Providence, R.I.)

□ □ □

I went on a *thiew* (walk) with some teachers. They bought an ice-cream stick for me. Since Thais don't eat while walking they put it in a bag for me. We walked around for awhile looking for a bench. Have you eaten a 15-minute-old ice-cream stick in the hot season?

—Donna Reilly (Spokane, Wash.)

Jim Cusick

Donna Reilly

Marilyn Ziblay

Howard Lesnick

Letter-writing style was lesson in English classes taught by Volunteer Jack Reynolds (Downey, Cal.), who is now studying at East-West Center, Hawaii.

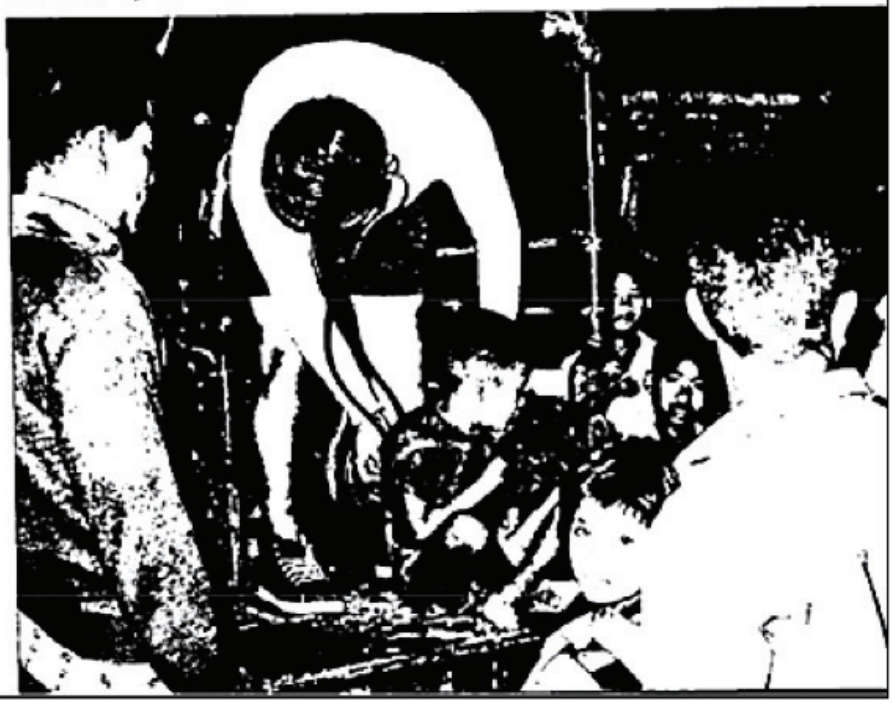
Atnam (bath) time at Bangkok welfare home. Jennifer Froistad (Cincinnati) worked there during summer; she teaches at college in Chonburi province.

'The Most Powerful Idea in Recent Times'

Excerpts from remarks of Thanat Khoman, Foreign Minister of Thailand, in response to an address given by Sargent Shriver at Chulalongkorn University, Jan. 28, 1964:

"It is indeed striking that this important idea—the most powerful idea in recent times: of a Peace Corps, of youth mingling, living, working with youth—should come from the mightiest nation on earth, the United States. Many of us who did not know about the United States thought of this great nation as a wealthy nation, a powerful nation, endowed with great material strength and many powerful weapons. But many of us know that in the United States ideas and ideals are also powerful. And I think this is the secret of your greatness, of your might, which is not imposing or crushing people but is the thought of future goodwill and understanding. I hope this idea will thrive and that all of you, my friends, will continue with your success."

Thai doctor inspects child at roadside clinic, as other patients wait; picture was taken by Volunteer Kirmach Natani (Oakland, Cal.) during surveying trip.



Where Are They From?

P. C. Rank	(Pop. Rank)	State	Training	Overseas	Completed	Total
1	(1)	California	565	861	254	1680
2	(2)	New York	477	642	193	1312
3	(4)	Illinois	250	325	130	705
4	(3)	Pennsylvania	211	299	112	622
5	(5)	Ohio	195	286	71	552
6	(9)	Massachusetts	182	283	74	539
7	(7)	Michigan	192	268	64	524
8	(8)	New Jersey	151	222	68	441
9	(15)	Wisconsin	129	211	44	384
10	(18)	Minnesota	120	205	63	388
11	(23)	Washington	103	188	38	329
12	(6)	Texas	120	164	59	343
13	(10)	Florida	69	144	34	247
14	(25)	Connecticut	103	142	33	278
15	(24)	Iowa	77	124	42	243
16	(33)	Oregon	95	116	26	237
17	(13)	Missouri	68	114	41	223
18	(34)	Colorado	59	113	38	210
19	(14)	Virginia	33	104	21	158
20	(11)	Indiana	91	100	31	222
21	(21)	Maryland	84	92	27	203
22	(12)	North Carolina	42	78	27	147
23	(29)	Kansas	52	75	29	156
24	(16)	Georgia	20	55	19	94
25	(28)	Oklahoma	31	54	24	109
26	(17)	Tennessee	40	52	18	110
27	(36)	Arizona	38	47	12	97
27	(35)	Nebraska	41	47	22	110
29	(41)	Dist. of Columbia	17	45	12	74
29	(37)	Maine	30	45	6	81
31	(19)	Alabama	26	41	9	76
31	(43)	Montana	20	41	8	69
33	(22)	Kentucky	35	39	17	91
33	(38)	New Mexico	10	39	9	58
35	(32)	Arkansas	23	38	11	72
36	(47)	New Hampshire	17	37	15	69
37	(40)	Rhode Island	23	36	8	67
38	(20)	Louisiana	15	30	13	58
38	(39)	Utah	20	30	7	57
40	(44)	Idaho	15	28	6	49
41	(42)	South Dakota	13	27	9	49
42	(49)	Vermont	17	26	4	47
43	(46)	North Dakota	10	22	18	50
43	(31)	West Virginia	14	22	7	43
45	(27)	Puerto Rico	—	19	14	33
46	(26)	South Carolina	16	18	9	43
47	(45)	Hawaii	14	17	7	38
47	(30)	Mississippi	6	17	4	27
49	(50)	Wyoming	12	13	6	31
50	(52)	Alaska	6	8	2	16
50	(48)	Delaware	10	8	9	27
52	(51)	Nevada	7	3	4	14
53	(55)	Virgin Islands	—	2	—	2
54	(53)	Guam	—	1	—	1
55	(54)	Canal Zone	1	—	—	1
Grand Totals:			4015	6063	1828	11,906

Peace Corps ranking figured on basis of Volunteers overseas
Figures as of June 30, 1964

23

Volunteers Around the World

OVERSEAS

Afghanistan	110
Bolivia	175
Brazil	323
British Honduras	28
Cameroon	103
Chile	200
Colombia	639
Costa Rica	56
Dominican Republic	120
Ecuador	316
El Salvador	45
Ethiopia	436
Gabon	40
Ghana	128
Guatemala	104
Guinea	70
Honduras	39
India	235
Indonesia	31
Iran	161
Ivory Coast	54
Jamaica	52
Liberia	352
Malawi	135
Malaysia	384
Morocco	113
Nepal	118
Niger	41
Nigeria	606
Pakistan	174
Panama	75
Peru	419
Philippines	276
St. Lucia	15
Senegal	70
Sierra Leone	148
Somalia	58
Tanzania	178
Thailand	291
Togo	61
Tunisia	140
Turkey	286
Uruguay	19
Venezuela	195

TRAINING

Bolivia	87
Brazil	282
British Honduras	25
Central America	28
Chile	87
Colombia	51
Costa Rica	81
Dominican Republic	29
Ecuador	57
Ethiopia	139
Guatemala	24
Honduras	77
India	52
Indonesia	20
Jamaica	35
Kenya	83
Latin America	58
Malawi	124
Malaysia	45
Morocco	32
Nigeria	127
Pakistan	11
Panama	96
Peru	97
Philippines	116
Tanzania	139
Tunisia	40
Turkey	30
Uganda	42
Venezuela	84
TOTAL IN TRAINING	**2198**
TOTAL OVERSEAS	**7618**
GRAND TOTAL	**9816**

Volunteers who have completed service: 3,113. Figures as of Oct. 31, 1964

5

Mosquitoes

I awoke in the night
In a terrible fright
For my ears were unpleasantly ringing.
And over my head
As I lay on my bed
Six dozen mosquitos were winging.

As they circled my toes
And dive-bombed my nose
I'd been rudely waked up by their whining.
And I knew by the itches
Those _____ ___ _____
Had already been wining and dining.

I hurled a few things
At the sound of their wings,
Which could not have been uttered more sweetly.
Then I jumped up because
Had I stayed where I was
I might well have been eaten completely.

I could not understand
How that ravenous band
Had slipped through the strands of my netting.
But there without doubt
More within than without
A condition most highly upsetting.

Now I've gone through malaria
Without much hysteria,
Dengue fever and encephalitis;
Used a virtual ocean
Of calamine lotion
And repellent for this parasitis.

But when the doctor begins
To enumerate the sins
Of the weight that I'm losing this season.
I will not hesitate,
I will just terminate
With a thousand and one itching reasons.

—By Sue Hall (Wenatchee, Wash.)
Reprinted from *Thailand Peace Corps Journal.*

Volunteers Write:

Missing Nid

The concrete house my co-worker purchased for me to rent is in an unfinished housing area. On the other side of my narrow road, in shacks made of plywood and tin, live the workers who build the houses. Nid and her family lived in one of the tiniest of the shacks. When I came home from the office, she would greet me with a smile. Sometimes she would smile without showing her teeth, as she already had cavities—she was six.

Bringing fruit from the market became my routine, and Nid and I would eat oranges or other delicious Thai fruits. Nid's favorite was lum yai. Sometimes Ohn, her brother, would come with her. We would eat oranges and then play catch amid shrieks of laughter and the slip-slap of rubber sandal-clad feet.

I began giving the children in my neighborhood stickers I brought from the United States. Each time, Nid would want to go through all of the stickers before she'd choose one. She would do this everyday and always ended up choosing a butterfly. Then she started to ask me what every sticker was. That's when I realized she was not in school.

Early in the morning, I'd water my garden and suddenly Nid would be there helping me. She could weed the whole garden faster than I could one row. When I'd go to work and the other children would go to school, Nid would stay at home.

Since I was learning Thai, my co-worker had given me books for writing Thai letters. Soon Nid was coming over every day to learn and write the Thai alphabet. One day Nid's mother came to get her. She saw a photo I had of Nid and Ohn taking a bath in my dishpan. She gestured that she would like to have it. I said, in my fractured Thai, that I had many photos of Nid that I would give her when the film was developed.

That day never came. Suddenly Nid and her family moved to another building project. I hope that someday Nid's mom will have the photo. I hope Nid is in school learning the Thai language and the unique culture of her beautiful country, Thailand.

Anne Marie Branon is a Volunteer in Thailand.

PC Thailand Staff 1962-2012

Glenn Ferguson, the first Country Director of Peace Corps Thailand (1962-1963), posed with his family at their home in Bangkok shortly after moving to Thailand and before the first group of volunteers arrived in-country.

When the first group of 46 Peace Corps Volunteers landed at Don Muang on January 21, 1962, they were greeted by a staff headed by Glenn Ferguson, the first Country Director. He had spent months working with Thai counterparts to establish an in-country training component and identify programs and sites where PCVs would best be utilized.

Judging from documents that survive from those early days, there was much fanfare as Peace Corps and Thailand launched its special partnership.

Since Mr. Ferguson's year at the helm, nineteen other individuals have served as Country Directors. Each has left his or her unique mark on the program. Additionally, numerous farang have served in a variety of positions on training and office staffs.

Throughout the fifty years of Peace Corps' presence in the Kingdom, however, another group of people has made our time as volunteers so much more meaningful because of the support they have given us no matter what the reason or the occasion. And they are the Thai staff.

They have visited us at our sites to make sure we have settled in comfortably. They have given us our shots and distributed our medicines. They have obtained our travel visas and wired us money when we have run out while on vacation. They have helped us plan projects and assisted us with funding them. They have been our "parents," friends and mentors, and we owe them more than can be documented here.

There have been legendary figures, whose presence has spanned multiple decades and who have become the "faces" of Peace Corps Thailand. Khun Singha, Khun Alisa, Ajaan Uthai, Ajaan Surapa, Dr. Prem and Khun Salinee, to mention just a few. But all the remarkable people of the Thai Peace Corps Staff have touched our lives immeasurably, and we are forever grateful.

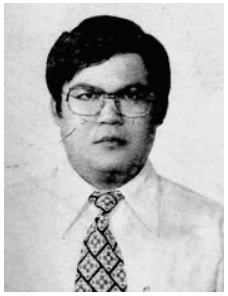
Peace Corps Staff

1962-2012

Following are photos of just a few of the people, both Thai and American, who have made the Peace Corps' Thailand office a home away from home. They are not in any particular order, but represent the five decades of the program in the Kingdom.

Chuleeporn Sagarincra

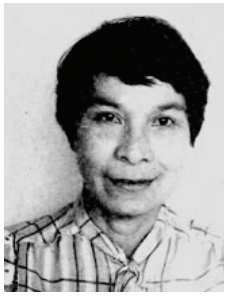
Uthai Kaewkhai
Training Manager



Ruangsilp Dhirakul
Travel Assistant

Dr. Phremthavi Bodhidatta, Physician

Sidhorn Sangdhanoo
Program Manager



Janya Vuthisasna
Nurse

Nikorn Saengchantr
Program Manager

Vallee Nantalic,
Secretary

Salinee Handharoensuk, Cashier

Vanpen Kaewpralom,
Secetary

Wanee Srichumsin,
Secetary

Mayury Tandavanitj
Clerk-Typist

Tuanchai Nakvivek
Housekeeper

Nuppon Na Ayudhya
Duplicator

Saipin Vongkitbuncha,
Admin Officer

Vance Hyndman,
Country Director

Pornthip Taechatada

Naowarat Duangthaoset

Supaporn Sethabutr

Amphon Saay-op-oua
Training Officer

Tarn Na Ranong
Accountant

Toh Dacharux, MD,
Physician

Bupha Pinig

Prapon Wanasritat


Alisa Tangkanangnukul, Executive Assistant


Sumalee Hirumpanich, Program Assistant


Billy Carlon III, TEFL Coordinator


Suphat Choomchuay, Language Coordinator


Panya Yurayart, Maintenance Clerk


Sutira Ariyapongse Language Coordinator


Somsak Buranateparporn, Training


Arun Sirinthipaporn, Driver


Rawi Tantayakorn, Language Coordinator


Roger Hawkey, TEFL Adviser


Nipawan Sawatdipanich, Training Assistant


Mana Charoensoongnern, Driver


Jaree Kiatsuphimol, Program Manager


Thanyalak Promsingh, Medical Officer


Yaowarat Laosinchai, TEFL Coordinator


Suthanya Sukphaisal, Program Assistant


Suvimon Sangsuansat, Program Manager

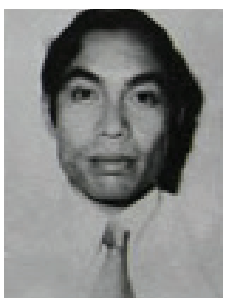

Panuthat Suwan, Safety and Security


Peter Coombs Program Manager


Webb Naas, TEFL Instructor


Nattavee Viboolsawas, Cashier


Pimolphan Keachacharoen, TEFL


Sompon Meboon Program Manager


Panatda Chuprasith, General Services


Terrapoj Hankulwatana, IT Specialist


Surat Koonphol Program Coordinator


Chaleo Changprai Program Coordinator


Sipatchapon Khamchariwong, Admin


Noree Bisuddhanaraksh, Lang Officer


Glenn Ferguson, Country Director


Chasit Chaiphibalsa-risdi, Admin Officer


Jorapa Na Songkhla, Secretary


Santiparp Ratanaprasart-porn, Secretary


Somsak Buranateparporn, Training


Ann Kelleran, Program Manager


Jim Ogata, Technical Consultant


Kathy Judd, TEFL Instructor


Van Nelson, Training Director


Carol Leviton, Project Director


Ann Morgan, Country Director


Carol Wzorek, Deputy Director


Jon Darrah, Country Director


Jack Timmons, Program Manager

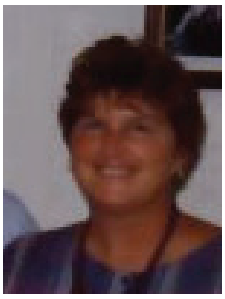

Narisorn Duongaudom, General Services


Mick Zenick, Country Director


Robert Charles, Country Director


Donn Eisele, Country Director


Pan-noi Tehphasdin, Training Coordinator

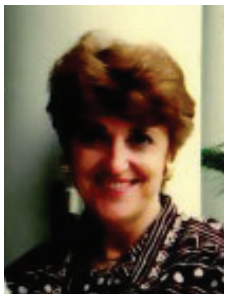

Ginny Kirkwood, Country Director


Surapha Rojanavipart, Language Coordinator


John McCarthy, Country Director


Roger Harmon, Country Director


Patricia Gerken, Health Program Director


Darcy Neill, Country Director


Maureen O'Brien, TEFL Instructor


Richard London, Medical Officer


Patcharapan Ngamukos, Training

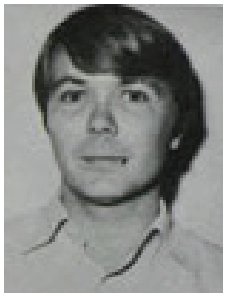

Tom Elam, Country Director


Kevin Delany, Country Director


Frank Smith, Director of Management

Barbara Burroughs
Program Manager

Winda Gunatilaka,
Language Instructor



Thom Huebner, TEFL
Instructor

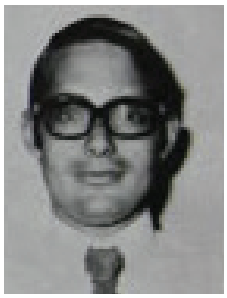
Pote Jantaraweragul,
Language Instructor

Tharee Dharmajiva,
Language Instructor

Mongkol Iemsam-
Arng, Language
Instructor

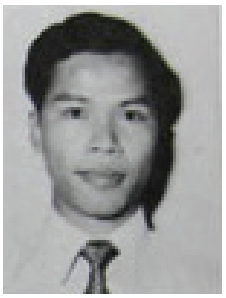
Henry Jankowski,
Project Director

Bruce Palmer, Field
Assessment Officer



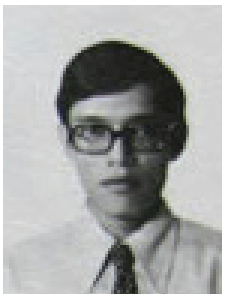
Chesley Prince,
TEFL Instructor

Supaporn Boonraksa-
satya, Training Mgr



Amphon Ongklaub,
Language Instructor

Chadchaya Wattana,
Program and Training



Nath Vajrasthirs,
Training Coordinator

Robin Velte, TEFL
Instructor

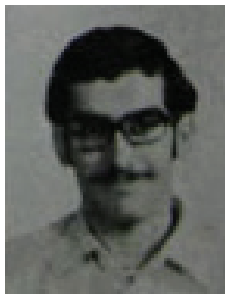
Steve Schmidt, TEFL
Instructor

Chatchai Prompubes,
Language Instrcutor

Chumpol Pool-
patcharachew

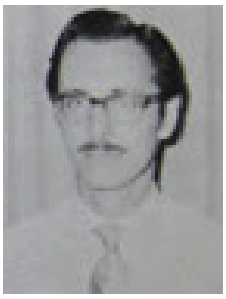
Paul Krause, TEFL
Instrcutor

Vunchai Valyapetch,
Language Instrutor

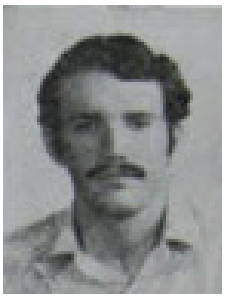


Gene St. Onge, Techni-
cal Instructor

Sangkom Suwannarat,
Project Director



Bill Brenneman,
Deputy Director



Richard Gnagey,
Technical Instructor

Suphon Sowatanan-
goon

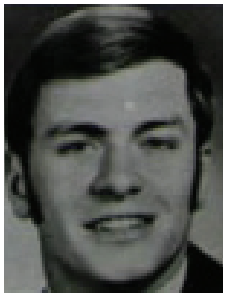
Terry Madden, TEFL
Trainer

Paula Miller, Director
of Program and Trng

Connie Woodberry,
Cross-Cultural

Dr. John Williams,
Country Director

Wisakha Phunkrai,
Medical Secretary



Terry Nelson, Cross
Cultural

Birthday Celebrations

On the occasion of the Twentieth Anniversary
of the United States Peace Corps service in Thailand
The Country Director of the United States Peace Corps
Requests the honor of your company
at a Reception
on Wednesday, January 20, 1982
7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
at Chompunuch Room
New Imperial Hotel, Wireless Road

Regrets only
2524153.4.5 Ext 38

Informal dress

Peace Corps Thailand began celebrating its birthay at the twenty-year mark. On January 20, 1982, an evening reception was held at the New Imperial Hotel on Wireless Road. Though no photos of the event have been located, it must have been a special occasion with many in attendance.

By the 25th Anniversary in 1987, Peace Corps Thailand, mounted a more elaborate celebration on January 16. U.S. Ambassador, William Brown, hosted a luncheon at his residence. The event featured speakers, a photo exhibit of Peace Corps Volunteers on the job, and a video. Peace Corps Thailand, under the guidance of Country Director Robert Charles, also celebrated with its own event following the Ambassador's luncheon.

To celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Peace Corps in Washington DC, Thailand RPCVs Judy and Alan Guskin of Thai I joined Sargent Shriver and Peace Corps Director Loret Ruppe as they laid a wreath at the grave of John F. Kennedy in the Arlington National Cemetery.

Very little of the 30th Anniversary of Peace Corps Thailand remains, except for a rather ambitious year-long schedule of activities.

The 40th Anniversary of Peace Corps Thailand on April 19, 2002, was a memorable affair. The celebration included the swearing-in of Thai 113. The main celebration at the U.S. Ambassador's residence was hosted by Ambassador Darryl Johnson, an RPCV of Thai III.

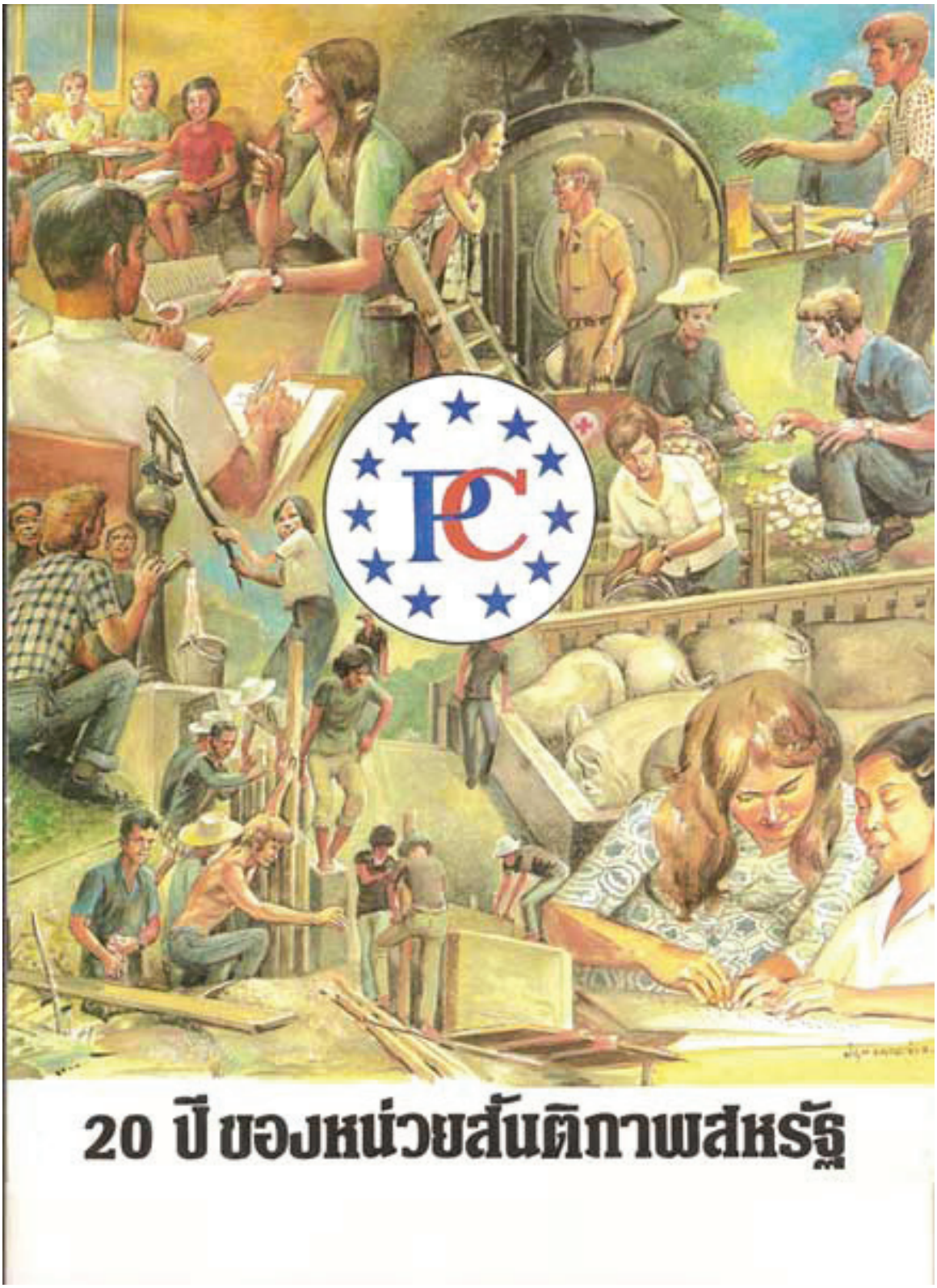
The 45th Anniversary of Peace Corps Thailand was a very special series of events, beginning with the swearing-in of Thai 119 on March 23, 2007. HRH Maha Chakri Sirindhorn presided over the ceremony at the Erawan Hotel. In the audience were a number of Thailand RPCVs and Staff, many of whom came from other countries to attend. The schedule of activities spanned a week, and included a tour of Vimanmek Palace, receptions at Peace Corps and the U.S. Ambassador's residence, and two days of meetings for RPCVs and PCVs.

The 50th Anniversary was even more special. The main event was on July 13 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with HRH Maha Chakri Sirindhorn graciously presiding. There were also opening and closing dinners, receptions at the U.S. Ambassador's residence and Peace Corps, bicycle tours of Bangkok and nearby environs, a private dinner cruise, special tours of Vinmanmek and the Grand Palace, shopping and dressmaker outings, and lots of storytelling.

We like our parties. So, stay tuned for the 55th in 2017!

20th Anniversary

January 20, 1982



25th Anniversary

January 16, 1987

ฉลอง 25 ปี หน่วยสันติภาพสหรัฐอเมริกา
ประจำประเทศไทย
UNITED STATES PEACE CORPS
THAILAND
25th ANNIVERSARY
1961 - 1986

30th Anniversary
1992

Peace Corps Thailand
30th Anniversary Activities

DATE	ACTIVITIES
November, 1991	CD Ginny Kirkwood appeared on face The Nation, a one-half hour TV Talk Show. Discussion was on the activities of the Peace Corps in Thailand for the past 30 years (in English).
February, 1992	Hour long - Panel Discussion at the American University Alumni Association on the Peace Corps in Thailand. Panelists were APCD Kathy Judd and PCV Jenny Goedken and PCV Pat Corrigan. (in Thai for a Thai audience)
March 3, 1992	Welcome to Group 100 to Peace Corps/Thailand representing 4,000 PCVs to have come here or 8,000 years of PC work.
March 20, 1992	Audience with His Majesty the King of Thailand, Bhumipol Adulyadey, for 1 hour and 50 minutes. CD Ginny Kirkwood and first director of the Peace Corps, Sargent Shriver, attended the audience at the Northern Palace in Chiengmai. His Majesty was appreciative and complimentary of Peace Corps work in Thailand.
March 21, 1992	Reception at the home of American Ambassador, Lambertson for 200 current PCVs and about 100 former PCVs residing in Thailand, to meet Sargent Shriver. More than 30 countries of service were represented. Mr. Shriver gave a wonderful speech incorporating the impressive historical prospective of 30 years of Peace Corps service. This was followed by an enthusiastic informal sing-along concert of music from all three decades played by PCV guitarists who served in Thailand in all decades. Several former volunteers from Peace Corps/Thailand Group One attended, especially noted as Group 100 is now in training.
Summer 1992	Expected to have full-sections on Peace Corps in Bangkok Post Newspaper and The Nation Newspaper. Features in the Thai press are also expected.
Summer 1992	"Chow Nit" (This Morning) widely viewed TV show has offered to do a full hour segment on the Peace Corps in Thailand (in Thai) (The well-known host of this program - Khun Somkiet Onvimon, learned his English years ago from a PCV)
Fall 1992	Planned reception hosted by staff and PCVs at the Peace Corps Office for all former Thai staff, ministry HCNs, and the scores of Thai supporters of the Peace Corps. Will include Thai and U.S. Government Officials plus PCVs to formally commemorate the 30th Anniversary.

40th Anniversary
April 19, 2002

The Ambassador of the United States of America and Mrs. Darryl N. Johonson,
Peace Corps Thailand
and
The Peace Corps Thailand 40th Anniversary Celebration Committee
request the pleasure of your company
at the Celebration of Peace Corps' 40th Anniversary in Thailand
on April 19, 2002
from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

R.S.V.P.
Tel. 205-4934, 205-4167
Fax. 205-4909
Smart Casual (outdoor event)

The Ambassador's Residence
108 Wireless Road

(Please present this invitation upon arrival)

45th Anniversary
March 23, 2007

H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn
will graciously preside over
Peace Corps Thailand's 45th Anniversary Celebration
and Swearing-in Ceremony of Thailand Group 119

The Ambassador of the United States of America Ralph L. Boyce
and Peace Corps Country Director Dr. John L. Williams
request the pleasure of your company
at The Grand Ballroom, The Grand Hyatt Erawan Hotel
on Friday, March 23, 2007
at 1:30 p.m.

Dress: Business Attire
White Uniform for RTG

R.S.V.P.
Tel. (02) 243-0140-4
Fax. (02) 243-5777

(Please present this invitation card upon arrival.)

50th Anniversary
July 13, 2012

On the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of Peace Corps Thailand

H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn
will graciously attend
Peace Corps Thailand's 50th Anniversary Celebration

The Ambassador of the United States Kristie Kenney
and Peace Corps Country Director Jon Darrah
request the pleasure of your company for this event at

Vithes Samosorn Grand Hall, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sri Ayudhya Road
8:00 a.m. Friday, 13 July 2012
and
Residence of the U.S. Ambassador to Thailand
6:30 p.m. Friday, 12 July 2012

Dress: Business Attire

R.S.V.P.
Fax: (02) 243 5777
Email:Thailand50thAnniversary@peacecorps.gov

Please present this invitation card upon arrival

"Home"

Peace Corps Thailand has maintained offices in three different locations over the past 50 years.

The first stop was for two years on Sukhumvit Road (both at Soi 2 and and Soi 71).

In 1964, the residence was moved to Rajvithi Road near the Chao Phraya River. Operations were headquartered there for five years.

Then, new offices were built on Soi Somprasong 2, Petchburi Road, and an official opening was held in 1969.

In 1983, staff moved back to the Rajvithi Road location, where Peace Corps has been based ever since.

In the mid-80s, Robert Charles, then Country Director, produced a document related to Peace Corps Thailand residences, with a history of the Rajvithi building. Read on!

PEACE CORPS / THAILAND: THE RESIDENCE

Below is a chronology of locations for the Peace Corps/Thailand office:

1962: Sukumvit Soi 2
Sukumvit Soi 71

1964: Rajvithi

1969: Somprasong II

1983: Rajvithi

The Rajvithi home also has a chronology:

1922 or 1924: The house is built for Chao Phraya Mahidhorn La-or Grailurk father-in-law of landlady.

1964: Peace Corps/Thailand moves in.

1969: Peace Corps/Thailand moves out, house is used for private use.

1972: House is barren, no occupants.

1976: French school

1979: Pharmacy

1983: Peace Corps moves in again.

Residence: 242 Rajvithi Road, Dusit, Bangkok
Landlady: Khun Ying Tanit

Enclosed is a brief description of the house (author [redacted]

Have you ever wondered, when you turned off of Rajvithi into the driveway, about the history of this the very beautiful building that Peace Corps now uses as its office? I did and what I learned both about the building and its builder is well worth sharing.

The house itself was built between 1922 and 1924 by Chao Phraya Mahidhorn La-or Grailurk, at that time the Principal Private Secretary to King Rama VI, or King Vajiravudh. Chao Phraya is the highest title given by the King to reward an official for his successful service. According to the present owner, Khunying Thanit Chakrpani, the daughter-in-law of Chao Phraya Mahidhorn, the house design was based on pictures of European houses her husband sent his father from Europe where he studied. Drawing ideas from many of these pictures, an English architect, probably named Hillary, designed the building as basically a house to receive guests and visitors with a bedroom each for the Chao Phraya and his wife Thaan Phuying Kleeb. This accounts for the many spacious receiving rooms with their elegant chandeliers and the open verandas at the front and rear of the house.

The house stood on a very large piece of property with many trees, the property originally stretched along Rajvithi to Soi Chairot. There were other buildings, including the wooden house next door to the east which was where most of the Chao Phraya's children lived. Altogether he had 16, 11 with Thaan Phuying Kleeb and 5 others.

There was a large pond directly to the rear of the house and a road on the property that led to the Chao Phraya River where he had a boat landing and boat to take him to the Palace. The circular drive and plantings

in front of the house remain much as they were when the Chao Phraya lived here.

When Peace Corps decided to rent the house, the floor plan remained exactly as when the Chao Phraya lived in the house. He died in 1956. To make the space useable we had to make some changes, although any change we made had to be, by agreement with the owner, able to be undone.

Originally the whole center section of the ground floor was used as a reception area, with the marble front porch as an entrance to the main reception area. The small rooms at the back, i.e. the mail room and the meeting room didn't exist. The space was used as an exit to the balcony at the back of the house. The Admin office was once a single room used as a more formal reception area. The Travel office was originally an informal living room then later became a bedroom. The Medical Unit, again then a single room, was the dining room with a pantry and an entrance/exit through the pantry to the kitchens which were outside the house. The Hall going upstairs remains the same.

On the second floor, the Training offices again, all a single space, served as the Chao Phraya's bedroom - with a bathroom the only one original to the house. The large room with the chandelier was used as a formal living room with the space presently occupied by the Education, Ag offices used as a balcony. The small offices opposite them were a single bedroom area for the children when they were allowed to sleep at the house. The Director's office as well as the Health office served as Thaan Phuying Kleeb's bedroom and dressing room. Finally, the library also was used as a bedroom.

The pictures on the walls are original to the house. The portraits on the first floor are of Chao Phraya Mahidhorn and Thaan Phuying Kleeb painted about 1925 just after they moved in. The Chao Phraya was 51 years old at the time. He was born in 1874. The large pictures upstairs are of the three Kings, under which the Chao Phraya served: Rama V or Chulalongkorn, Rama VI, or King Vajiravudh and Rama VII or King Prajadhipok.

The Chao Phraya's life is intricately involved in the history of Thailand and its evolution into a constitutional monarchy but that's another story for another time.

Unsung Heroes

A couple years ago, Jim Ogata (Thai 51) sat in my living room here is San Francisco, and I told him of a dream I had long had. One day, I wanted to acknowledge the spirit that has resulted in five decades of Americans joining the Peace Corps to serve in cultures around the world in the name of ***peace***, of their dedication to the Third Goal, and more.

I told him I wanted our leaders in Washington DC, who frequently quibble about the value of Peace Corps and its annual budget, to know how many of us have gone on to serve the cause of ***peace*** after our Volunteer service. Wherever we may have lived and whatever we may have done following our years as PCVs, every penny Washington has spent on training us and supporting us on-site has been "repaid" a million times over.

And who better represents this spirit than the RPCVs of Thailand and other Peace Corps countries who answered "the call" in the 1970s and 1980s to serve in refugee camps in Thailand, Cambodia and the Philippines, and in resettlement programs in the U.S., when the rather unsettling conclusion of the U.S. war in Southeast Asia caused the largest mass migration in human history.

These RPCV men and women are the "Unsung Heroes" of Peace Corps, and of the United States. Their willingness to set aside plans they may have had for graduate school, starting a family, or assuming a profession to make their way to the refugee camps in the north, the northeast, the southeast and south of Thailand is a testimony to their heart, and to their love for a people so ravaged by war.

Jim Ogata agreed, and told me a tragic story about an experience he had working in a camp. He cried as he talked, and he made me cry. And it made me begin the process of trying to gather as many stories as I could from RPCVs who had served in the refugee camps or the U.S.

With Jim's help, Mike Carroll (Thai 53) became the driving force in collecting the stories that follow. He has stayed in touch with many of his former "camp" colleagues over the years. Thank you, Jim and Mike, for everything.

And a heartfelt thanks to each RPCV who sent a story, as well as those who did not. You made the world a better place after all those grueling years. You are true heroes!

Photo Courtesy of Paul Paquette

From Swords to Plowshares: 1975-1992
by Mike Carroll, PC Thai 53
TEFL at Petburi Teacher College, Petburi Province

Peace Corps and the Path to Helping with the Peace in the Post-Indo China War

Udorn Thani Province: Circa December 1975

It all began at Nit's Bar in Udorn on a chilly night in December 1975, when Mike Drake, another volunteer in my group teaching at the Udorn Teacher Training College, and I went out for a drink. At that time there was a full U.S. Air Force Base at Udorn with perhaps, 10,000 U. S. troops, mainly Air Force, I guess. We called them the "boys in blue."

The tour bus trip from Petburi to Udorn had been long and with some surprises, such as the midnight "kaow dom" stop at a big, outdoor restaurant near Korat. I had normally taken the "orange crush," the nickname by volunteers for the big, common, orange buses that plied the roads to the provinces. Often, we did not take the tour buses, probably because as "karachaa ghaan," we got a discount on the "orange crushes." Those buses were, and still are, orange and loaded with people, hence the "crush." But for some reason, I had taken a tour bus that night.

The khao dom stop in Korat after midnight was loaded with American airmen in their blue uniforms. And it seemed like there were hundreds of them eating and drinking and having a good time.

It was shocking at the time for a volunteer to see so many Americans gathered in one place and behaving well, as normal Americans would in the US. But suddenly seeing so many of them brought home the reality of the daily statistics in the Bangkok World or Post or Nation, of the number of US troops in Thailand at that time, by base name. There were some 42,000 US troops in Thailand in May 1975, when PC Group 53 arrived at the Don Muang Airport in Bangkok on a

sultry, dark night way back when.

Now, seeing the troops for real was a sobering experience and not a newspaper story. Udorn was even more startling, with 10,000 service men and some women roaming around Udorn town. At that time, Peace Corps Volunteers were allowed to go to the US Air Base or the Thai Base with US personnel under special circumstances, ***such as for drinking beer and getting*** medical treatment from US doctors. The "Old Dad" or Mike Drake, as we nicknamed him because he was probably 35 years old, wanted to go to the doctor at the base and get a beer, so we trudged out there one afternoon.

My goodness, it was not just a base, it was a whole US town spread out on the flatlands around Udorn. I could not believe it, and was kind of in shock at the time.

Back to Nit's bar in Udorn. It was on a Saturday day time that The Old Dad and I went up by bus to Nongkhai from Udorn to see the newly established "Lao refugee camp" just west of Nongkhai town. I must confess that since 1993, I have been transiting or staying in Nongkhai enroute to or from Vientiane and have never asked around as to where that sprawling unorganized refugee camp was. The camp was a set of long wooden buildings with minimal security at the time. One could just walk right in and walk around.

The camp was divided into two parts, one for the Lao Hmong, perhaps 5,000 persons and another part for the other lowland Lao groups, perhaps another 5,000 persons. No one knew.

But a walk around the camp was a startling experience for The Old Dad and m2, and we were very moved emotionally by the plight of these people, especially the Hmong, whose unique dress and comportment was so very different from anyone else we had seen. The women mainly wore Hmong tribal dress, headdresses and quite bit of silver. They all seemed very stoic and determined.

Both the Hmong and the Lowland Lao (Lao Loum) were pleased to learn that we were Americans, but did not know what Peace Corps was. But we were Americans who had come to see them and it gave them hope. After all, the US Government was the main backer of the Royal Lao Government, which had just officially "fallen" on 2 December when the government came to be ruled by the communist Pathet Lao forces and party.

A lot of the people at the Nongkhai camp had just come across the Mekong River, some had been shot at and some had drowned in the river crossing. But the border was fluid and there were as many stories of escape as there were people. The Old Dad and I were very moved and probably "teared up" at seeing these people and hearing their pleas to have the United States help them, increase aid to the camp population, and expedite their passage to the United States for resettlement.

We were only at the Nongkhai Camp for 3 or 4 hours, but that visit had changed our lives, or at least mine, forever, although I did not know that at the time, of course.

We trudged at dusk back to Nongkhai town and took the orange crush back to Udorn arriving at nightfall. Nongkhai is only 53 kilometers from Udorn, but in those days, the road was a paved, but was a pock-marked, two lane-paved road, built by the U.S. under the "Friendship Highway" program from Bangkok to Isaan. (Many people say that this highway was in fact the real life road represented in the book, The Ugly American and portrayed in the film of the same name. M.R. Kukrit Pramoj, then Prime Minister of Thailand was an actor and in fact played the part of the Prime Minister of the mythical Kingdom of Syrinam, thought by many to in fact be Siam or Thailand).

We got back to The Old Dad's "bungalow" at Talaat Ban Houie (still there in 2012, the market, but not the bungalows). We took a bath, changed clothes and went to the market for dinner and later, went to Nit's bar, where our story now takes up and where I first met the world of refugee camp relief workers in the guise of Mr. Mac Thompson, of USAID Thailand and a former IVS Volunteer in Laos.

Some PCV Views on U.S. Military Presence in Udorn and Thailand

Nit's bar was one of several hundred "G.I. bars" in Udorn at that time that seemed to cater to US military personnel out on the town, so to speak. It was crowded, noisy, smoky with loud music playing, probably such popular ditties heard 15 times a day by everyone

then in Thailand including, "Mohammed Ali," "Love Potion Number 9" and yyyy, among others. A few of those bars are still there, at least by name, such as the Wolverine Club, which still has girls dancing on and with stainless steel poles in front of triple mirrors, in bikinis, some in cowboy hats, and most in white or black patent leather knee high boots. The dancers and costumes have changed, but not the costumes of the bar workers, though their English has probably gotten better! Still in 2012, some 37 years later the "ambience" in the Wolverine has not changed much.

It is worth adding the Peace Corps VBolunteers in Udorn, namely Mike Drake and another volunteer whose name I forget, had a lot of pressure on them. They felt that the precipitous withdrawal of U.S. forces and support from South Vietnam and Cambodia, in the face of communist party and military forces advances, was almost a harbinger of things to come for Thailand as well, that is the "fall" of Thailand, to an invading Vietnamese communist party army, poised, it was thought by many, to come across the Mekong River from Laos and take over Thailand, with Isaan to be taken first.

People used to speculate with "black humor" about the invasion timetable of the Vietnamese army in taking over Thailand, such as, "breakfast in Udorn, lunch in Korat and dinner in Bangkok."

This was a scary time of massive political and social destabilization in the area, and everyone felt its pressure. The PCVs in Udorn felt the local people of Udorn were starting to resent Americans, anticipated an abandonment of Thailand to an invading, tough, battle-proven Vietnamese army, and another precipitous chaotic American withdrawal.

In retrospect, this was a kind of hysteria and paranoia, but in the eyes of the beholders, very real. The volunteers in Udorn felt that local people were spitting at them on the streets of Udorn and that anti-American sentiments were increasing and were leading to nasty comments to them at the College and on the streets. Volunteers serving in the Thai towns with a large U.S. military presence or bases felt this type of pressure a lot, no doubt. But in Udorn, it was palpable and real to the volunteers.

They reported their fears to Peace Corps Bangkok, but did not feel listened to. I remember The Old Dad saying often, "Those Peace Corps administrators in Bangkok should come up here and see what we are going through for themselves. They don't believe us or are dismissive to our concerns."

Well, that was their impression, perhaps mistaken, but nonetheless real to them. It was a tough situation for PCVs in those Thai towns with U.S. military bases and personnel. After all, there was no reason to expect the local population to differentiate between a PCV and US military personnel. We did all look the same to the local Thai population: blacks, Latinos and whites. Asian American volunteers probably felt less pressure, but they can speak for themselves. But for most volunteers, such as myself at a provincial town at Petburi, this type of "post-Indo China War" stress was not the same as our colleagues in the base towns.

Applying for My First "Work" in the Refugee Sector: the Volunteer as a Volunteer

The next week from my hotel, the Opera Hotel, on Petburi Road, Soi Somprasong 1, near the "old" Peace Corps Office, I made a couple phone calls.

(Who among us then can forget the semi-horrid "Mouse Guest House," which was down the Soi walking up to Petchaburi Road. It was a clapboard wooden guesthouse, just the thing that replicated a junky provincial guest house, but some volunteers stayed there. Who can forget the old Metro Theatre at the top of Soi 3, the semi okay Asia Hotel, which always looked so glamorous when your salary was Baht 1900/month, and the Bakery over on Soi Somprasong 3, where many of us got our occasional Western breakfasts with the fried, plastic eggs and the banana bread? By the way, as of a couple of years ago, the Opera Hotel is exactly the same as in 1977)

I telephoned to the two offices that Mac Thompson told me to call about working as a volunteer in the refugee camps during my upcoming summer break.

I recall that I called Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA) first and no one answered the phone. I was supposed to speak with Wayne Persons, who lived in Loei town with his wife after being exiled from Laos after December 1975.

Next, I called to World Vision Foundation of Thailand, the local office of World Vision International based in Monrovia, CA, near LA. I spoke with Don Scott

Director, who was Canadian and a former Canadian Marine. He was very outgoing and welcoming to me regarding volunteer work. I told him my background in working on survey with the Census Bureau at AID in Washington (just as a Clerk and later, low-level Social Science Analyst GS-4 ha!). Don said, "Fine, just come by our office on Silom Road, the Kasemkij Building, Seventh Floor, near Soi Convent, and we can chat. I think we can use your help for a few weeks in March when you are free."

I was really happy with this officer and excited to get a chance to volunteer with the Lao and other refugees whom I had found so fascinating and was so moved by their suffering and dislocation, largely due to the incompetence and mismanagement of the Indo China War situation by the Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon administrations and probably beforehand also.

I felt very moved to sort of assist with "the clean up" of the mess of the Indo China Wars, and in a small way, do my part again for my country. This had been my main motivation to join the Peace Corps anyway, and assisting these refugees, for even just a few weeks, was an extension of my Peace Corps service.

However, eventually Peace Corps Thailand did not see it that way, but that was after my volunteer work with World Vision for about six weeks from April to May 1976. Mick Zenick, the Peace Corps Director in Thailand at that time, gave me permission to volunteer with World Vision. But later, there was a Peace Corps policy for volunteers not to do refugee work in Thailand because we were there to help the Thai government and Thai people. But as the first PCV to do so before the policy, I was indeed fortunate to work with World Vision in 1976.

TEFL Summer Teaching Secondary School English Teachers in Loei and meeting PCVs Jim Ogata and Kevin Quigley

As a TEFL volunteer, I was obligated to teach some type of a summer school course or conduct training. In February/March 1976, I was sent to teach secondary school teachers at the Loei Pittayakhom School near Loei town. I enjoyed Loei very much and stayed there for that seminar for about one month. The area was very pretty, hilly and the people were simple Isaaners whose dialect was charming to hear (similar to the Lao dialect of Luang Prabang). I taught with several other volunteers and remember meeting briefly, Kevin Quigley, former Executive Director of the National Peace Corps Association in Washington DC, and now, the Country Director of Peace Corps Thailand. But at that time, he was a teacher at the secondary school at Dansai District in Loei, some distance from the provincial town.

I also met Jim Ogata, a PCV civil engineer with ARD in the town. There were several other volunteers, too, but I do not recall their names offhand. I liked Loei so much that later I made some start to request to Peace Corps to extend a third at the new Loei Teachers College, but later changed my mind and decided to stay at Petburi another year. But that did not work out and as noted later here. As a matter of fact, I actually went from being a Peace Corps Volunteer at the end of my two years directly to an entry-level job with World Vision Foundation of Thailand. In retrospect now, it almost seems that some fate was involved in this course of action which had stops, starts, and turns and eventually led to my refugee "work."

But back to my "volunteer" work with World Vision during my summer break in 1976.

Beginning Volunteer Work with World Vision Foundation of Thailand for a Training Needs Assessment of "Refugee Temporary Encampments" in the North, Northeast and East

I recall so well that World Vision paid my expenses for travel, lodging and per diem during the survey I conducted of all the refugee or "displaced persons camps" in Thailand at that time. I also received a kind of stipend of $250 from World Vision at the end of my volunteer work. I remember that when I got that money, I looked at the check and I could not believe it was so much and wondered how could I ever spend all that money. I was used to a Peace Corps stipend of Baht 1,900 baht a month, so this was a huge windfall. But human beings are creative and I found a way to spend that $250!

Even more, I was sort of amazed that World Vision paid my expenses while traveling to the refugee encampments in Chiang Rai, Loei, Chanthaburi and Trat provinces. As a PCV, you get so used to paying for everything yourself from your meager, but sufficient stipend. It was surprising to have someone else to be paying my expenses.

That was an amazing summer break for me, conducting the "education and training needs survey" with World Vision during March and early April 1975.

I traveled up to Chiang Saen, Chiang Rai and met a group of Yao/Mien refugees at a place in the forest. The leader was Chao Sarn Chao, a man about my age and son of the legendary Chao Mai, leader of the Yao forces, which worked with Bill Young and Tony Poe and others in Boneo Province and Luang Namtha. Chao Sarn and I have remained friends since that time in April 1976 and ***he and his extended family live in t***he Bay Area where I am also now, occasionally, and we meet often. Those Yao/Mien people from Chieng Saen, who later moved to refugee camps in Chieng Khong and Chieng Kham (all Chieng Rai then), have remained friends of mine and I see them often in the Bay Area and have visited some of them in Lyon, France, as well.

At that time, I do not recall meeting other volunteers besides The Old Dad, Mike Drake, in my PC Group 53. There was another PCV at the Teachers College, whose name I do not recall. He was a bit freaked out by what he perceived as "anti- American" sentiment in Udorn, as it became apparent that the Indo China War was winding down. He thought that local Isaaners were spitting at him just because they were spitting as they passed him. Now 30 some years later, as one who often goes to Udorn for a weekend of shopping, going to the doctor, or just chilling out, everybody still spits in Udorn and I never feel offended. Not spitting is almost offensive to me. Now when I go to Udorn, I see a friend there, an RPCV, Paul Pitrays, who has settled there with his spouse, Mr. Joy. They will be married legally in New Hampshire this year. Paul was Peace Corps Senegal twice and it is good to recall Peace Corps days with him in Udorn. Some of our RPCV group in Laos has met for lunch with several Peace Corps Volunteers / Thailand, two women one posted in Udorn near Nongkhai and one in Nongkhai. They led pretty basic lives and said they rarely had enough money to go to the Starbucks in the shopping mall in Nongkhai.

The Temporary and Uncertain Status of Refugee or Displaced Persons Encampments in Thailand, circa 1976

Given the rapid changes in the political landscape in Southeast Asia in 1975, that is, the "fall" of Cambodia to Khmer Rouge troops in March 1975, the "fall" of Saigon and South Vietnam to North Vietnamese forces and Viet Cong remnants on 30 April, everyone was jittery in Thailand that somehow Thailand would "fall next." But Laos slowly teetered on the brink from May to December 1975, when finally the Pathet Lao, with heavy assistance from the North Vietnamese Army, took control of Vientiane by 2 December 1975. Unlike Cambodia and Vietnam, the political change in Laos was in rather slow motion, as most things in Laos still are today, with an almost orderly departure of the American official mission from there, especially USAID, though the US Embassy remained open ***for*** business after the political changes.

In Thailand, various groups of Lao, Khmer and some Vietnamese refugees began coming across to Thailand in small numbers during 1975. The Lao refugees were the most socially acceptable because most of Isaan is also ethnic Lao, and the cultures and main religions are similar or the same.

The Cambodian situation was eerily quiet and there were not many Khmers coming into Thailand and only in distant areas along the eastern border areas with Thailand at Trat and Chanthaburi.

A few hundred or thousand Vietnamese refugees started arriving along the eastern seaboard of Thailand by boat after April 1975; hence the term "boat people" coined to describe them. The Thais were, however, alarmed by even a few Vietnamese coming into Thailand, as the memories of 1954 were still fresh and ethnic Vietnamese along the Thai provinces along the Mekong River, such as Nongkhai, Nakorn Phanom, Ubon and throughout the Northeast were still held under heavy suspicion by the Thais, as a potential or real "fifth column" being used to infiltrate Thailand and lay the ground work for a Vietnamese invasion.

In 1975 and the late 70s, there were hysterical riots by local Thais against local Vietnamese communities suspected of being loyal to Ho Chi Minh, or being communist sympathizers, or somehow plotting the downfall of the Thai race. There were riots by local people in Isaan attributing a shrinking of men's penises to a sinister plot to inject chemicals into Thai watermelons. Local gangs attacked local Vietnamese neighborhoods with Thai police looking the other way. Vietnamese were beaten up on Thai buses or in bus stations and a general hysteria set in about almost any Vietnamese

people in Thailand.

These new Vietnamese boat people arriving in Thailand along the coast were viewed with suspicion and distrust, unless they were defecting South Vietnamese armed forces coming to Thailand. Civilian arrivals were greeted with suspicion and forced to stay on rocky outcrops and/beaches. Medical access was limited or denied by the Thai government, fearful of "attracting in" other Vietnamese ***refugees.***

In retrospect, it is easy to harshly judge some of the actions of the Thai Government then, but also in retrospect, no one knew the future and overall, Thailand was generous to most refugees, especially the Lao and the Khmer, who were culturally most similar.

Of course there were abuses and some atrocities, but this sort of thing has happened the world over, such as some of the actions by US personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan in the past few years. But I am sure that refugees have their own perspective and judgments.

CCSDPT and the "Refugee Situation" in Thailand 1975-79: One View

At this time, these nascent refugee camps or informal arrival or asylum sites, were not fully then "refugee camps" designated by the Royal Thai Government or under the "protection" of the UNHCR, and were scattered around the country. The Thais preferred to use the term, "displaced persons."

By 1975, a group of local NGOs and international NGOs had set up the "CCSDPT" or Committee for Coordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand. This small informal grouping met at the YMCA about every Friday morning or once a month on Fridays. Mr. Lanjul, the Secretary of the Thai YMCA, was one of the prime leaders of this group. Services to these displaced persons were coordinated at these meetings, which were conducted informally among friends, no more than 20 persons in total at this time. I attended one of these meetings as a PCV on my short-term assignment with World Vision. It was readily apparent that the Thai government most easily accepted Lao displaced persons, then the Khmer, and lastly, the Vietnamese. These encampments were quite informal with security provided on a local basis by Thai authorities. Access by outsiders, especially the Lao encampments at Nongkhai, was very easy. There was one encampment for the Hmong and one for the lowland Lao peoples there.

For Lao refugees in the north, up in Nan Province, they were in the forest near Mae Charim and at Baan Nam Yao at Pua District or amphur. These encampments were on the sides of steep mountains along the Lao border or not far from it. No one really knew about them since there were few roads and the maps did not mean a whole lot. Thai control and Lao control over those hilly forested areas was marginal at best. And for years and years, the same minority groups had easily traversed both sides of the "border" for trading or visiting relatives or other purposes.

In fact, I recall that the old junky Land Cruiser World Vision had rented in Nan town to get to Mae Charim, had to go up a dusty mountain path in the heat and dust of April. As our vehicle went up the dusty track, the road gave way and the left side of our vehicle dangled in the air as the driver struggled to maintain control. We had to scramble out of the vehicle to balance the weight, and finally got the truck back on the road with all four wheels, to our great relief. I was really scared and it was one of those few times in my life that I said to myself, "Mike, maybe you are going to die now."

But we survived and went on to the Lao encampment with no fences or gates, just open huts on the sides of hastily cleared forest and bamboo shacks where Yao, Hmong, Khmuu some Akha and others were living in a poor village-type situation.

At the Mae Charim encampment, there were a group of "yellow leaf people," aboriginals from Laos who had followed their Khmuu or Hmong sponsors, and were dying of self-imposed starvation in the jungle near the encampment. I was taken to meet about 12 of them, mainly emaciated women and children and older men. They were so shocked at seeing "civilization" or a settled place that they went into shock and were refusing to eat and were dying off slowly. The term "yellow leaf people" was used, I was told, because in the forest and jungles of Laos, they did not have permanent homes or even shifting-cultivation villages to follow an upland cropping cycle of "slash and burn" swidden agriculture. Rather they built temporary shelters in the jungles with banana leaves and when the green leaves turned yellow in color, they moved their living places.

It was an amazing experience to meet such people, although I understand that Refugees International under Lionel Rozenblatt continues to pursue the welfare of "the yellow leaf people" many years later because some had survived and some were already in Nan, it seems. The whole matter is a mystery. Today we met up with Steve Rothstein in San Francisco. Steve was not a PCV, but acts like one and worked at the Baan Nam Yao Camp and Panat Nikom with many volunteers, such as Bob McKean and Larry Crider and others.

The Hmong Lao Encampment at Ban Vinai, Pak Chom, Loei Province

In 1976, we traveled to the large, 14,000 or so mainly Hmong Lao encampment at Pak Chom District, Loei. The numbers were rather low, but at that time, 14,000 "refugees" was a large number of people to drop down on a rural, jungled district. such as Amphur Pak Chom at Loei.

I had met Jim Ogata, a PCV working with ARD as a civil engineer in Loei, and stayed at his house outside Loei town. Jim's house seemed to be open to all volunteers visiting there and he was hospitable and a close friend since then to now. Jim, with ARD, had been instrumental in building the basic encampment and housing and water ponds at Ban Vinai in 1975/6 when the Hmong leadership of General Vang Pao were evacuated from Laos to that place. An earlier group of the elite Hmong of VP had flown out to a small Thai/US air base at Nam Pong near Khon Kaen and had gone to the US quickly or some were taken to Loei by the Thai authorities.

Ban Vinai then was not a refugee camp at all, but rather a huge, Hmong village and the Hmong had rented farm land or hilly land from local Thai/Isaan farmers and farmed in the area…rice, corn, and vegetables. It was an almost idyllic setting in a distant area with very few Thais living there, and they got along with the Hmong just fine it seemed.

There were a few lowland Lao too, but not many. Later in 1980 or so, this situation changed largely due to the influx of the thousands of Khmer from Cambodia, and the Thai government tightened up restrictions on this camp, which would grow from 14,000 or so persons to over 45,000 by 1992. The Hmong still lived under restriction, but the camp was, even at its worst, probably a much better living situation in a rural natural area than a fenced in prison-type camp, which were typical of the Khmer camps and some of the Lao camps.

Still, for the Hmong there, and later some Mien people, this was no holiday place at all. When I later worked at the Ban Vinai Camp with World Vision starting in March 1978, none of the Hmong or the few lowland Lao had left. Who can forget "Chalee's' simple restaurant at the edge of the creek going over to the sports field and the Thai commanders headquarters on the Hill, at Centers 2 and 4? Later in life I met some resettled Hmong in the US or some Lao, and they reminded me that I always ordered "café bau mee nam than" (coffee no sugar) the only one to do so!

Many of we former RPCVs working in the Ban Vinai camp, such as those with JVA or the American Refugee Committee (Bob Medrala/PC Jamaica) or other Volags (voluntary agencies as they were called often then) can forget eating at Chalee's restaurant in the camp. This simple restaurant was usually an active place where Joan Baez had a cup of coffee, and I was one of her guides. US, French, and Australian Embassy personnel could often be found there, too. Staff from the US Consulate in Udorn visited fairly often, including Terry Daru, who I would be honored to call a friend and colleague when I worked with the State Department as a PSC in the US Embassy in Vientiane (and upcountry at Phong Saly) from 2003-11. Terry used to come over to Ban Vinai to check on the situation and I recalled with him laughing a few years ago that he always asked me, "Now where is Center One?" Those of us who worked at the camp of course knew the 8 Centers of the camp very well.

Khmer and Vietnamese Encampments, Early Days

The other encampments we visited were in Chanthaburi and Trat provinces on the eastern seaboard of Thailand. The encampments at Chanthaburi were at two amphurs/districts on the Cambodian border areas at XXX and YYY. These were very small encampments of Khmer, not more than several hundred people, who had somehow escaped through the forest to Thailand and the horrors of the Khmer Rouge, then still ruling with brutal terror in Cambodia. But at that time, very little was known about the situation there, although I recollect that the Khmers talked about the horrors of the Khmer Rouge rule….but there was very little information and the situation was quiet and stark and depressing.

Going down further in Chanthaburi, there was an encampment on the stark unforgiving rocky outcrops along the sea at XXXX, where a makeshift Vietnamese "boat people" encampment had taken root, much to the unhappiness of the Thais, who of course, generally despise the Vietnamese. But at this time, their numbers were few and I recall that when we visited, (Mr. Watt Santhatiwat of World Vision, now a Vice President of World Vision International, and I with a driver and rented car), these Vietnamese were tolerated by the Thais who remained fearful of a Vietnamese invasion anyway post 1975 and reluctantly gave refuge to these 100 or so Vietnamese families. While we were there at the seaside, a small Vietnamese boat with maybe 20 persons on board was sighted amidst great excitement and thrills, and landed at the seaside or were escorted in by the Thai Navy. Security was tight by the Thai authorities at these Vietnamese "boat camps" (one was at Single Province in the south as well).

This was in contrast to the rather lax security at the Khmer encampments in the north of the same province. One of these small border encampments was at Amphur Makham, in Chantaburi on the Khmer Border. But this encampment was only several hundred people, set among dense jungle, and the eerie quiet on the other side of the border, with the Khmer Rouge nightmare raging, was even then unsettling and weird.

During this trip, we might have visited some other areas in Trat Province near Mai Rut at Klong Yai District/amphur, where there were rumors of Vietnamese boat people or Khmer coming over from nearby Kho Kang Province of Cambodia, but I believe at that time there was no one.

The only agencies assisting these Cambodian "displaced persons" were the Thai YMCA, led by the great and good-hearted Kuhn Lanjul, Sec General of the YMCA on Sathorn Tai Road and Rev. Dan Bishop of the American Baptist Mission. The Thai Red Cross probably gave some assistance, as well. I concluded the six-week visit as a Peace Corps volunteer working with refugees or in the refugee situation and made recommendations to World Vision for a program for English teaching and basic skills-training in all the encampments.

The Vietnamese encampments were pretty well organized by the Vietnamese themselves who were teaching each other French and English. But the Thais did not want any other formal programs for them. The Khmer displaced persons were less organized, less educated, and content with teaching English to each other and a bit of gardening. The Vietnamese boat camp in Chantaburi was literally built on rocks along the sea, very constrictive and a sad place to see. But no doubt those Vietnamese were just happy to be alive and to have escaped Vietnam at that time. That was their decision and how can we know even know their motivations or reasons?

Return to TEFL Job at Petburi Teachers College

At the end of my volunteer service with World Vision, I returned to my job as a TEFL teacher at the Petburi Teacher College. Shortly after this, Peace Corps Director Mick Zenick issued an order, very understandable, stating that PCVs could not work in refugee camps or assist in refugee programs since they/we were in country to help Thai people. So I was very lucky to have had my initial service with World Vision approved by Mr. Zenick before the new rule was issued.

I assume that other volunteers in those same provinces, which I had visited, started to ask Peace Corps about assisting refugees more and a policy had to be made. To my knowledge, Jim Ogata and I were the only PCVs who assisted directly with refugee camp work during 1975-77. Later, with the collapse of the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia in 1978, that situation would change dramatically, as hundreds of thousands of starving and dying Khmer fled the crumbling Khmer Rouge regime, toppled by a Vietnamese army invasion and occupation of Cambodia, fleeing to Thailand in droves in a huge international emergency in 1978 and 1979.

During this survey, of course I was enthralled with the experience of working in "international development," at least on the edges, and the world of NGOs was then something very new for me and exciting. But upon my return to the College in Petburi, I settled back into the routine of teaching for my last year.

However, later, World Vision Foundation of Thailand told me that my brief six weeks of work with them had been very productive and they offered me a job as a Development Assistant after I finished my Peace Corps service.

Entering the World of Refugee Assistance

I completed my Peace Corps service on 15 May 1977 and joined World Vision on 17 May and began work in Bangkok at the World Vision office. I rented a single room at a singles' flat near the Peace Corps Office at Soi Somprasong 5. It was a single room with a simple bed, a fan I bought and a hot plate to boil water and make coffee. The shower room was downstairs and was fine. The rent was Baht 400/month. It was nice to rent a room in that area and maintain my links with the Peace Corps office a few sois over. I would go over and see my friend Dr. Prem, the Peace Corps doctor, and I continued to see Thai doctors, especially his colleague Dr. Panda at a hospital on New Petburi Road.

Somehow, being close to the Peace Corps office was very nice, even if I traveled all the time. There were a group of PCVs and RPCVs living at a simple house on one of the endless sois in back of "Pratuu Nam" across from the long-gone all-night market at "Talaat Nai Lert". Ask any older taxi driver in Bangkok about this market and they will grin…..It went on until dawn, and no one was there until 8 pm. All sorts of people came through there during the course of an evening, ALL sorts. I don't think Bangkok has any night market like that now and there were no tourists, always a strong selling point for RPCVs.

There was a kind of amazing household near Pratu Nam with some active PCVs and RPCVs, sort of mixed in. A lot of people went in and out. Two of the volunteers at that house nearby were Don Campbell, a great TEFL volunteer, a real professional with an MA in TEFL, and his lovely Thai wife named Suriwan, who had been a teacher. I would go over and see Don and the other volunteers/RPCVs in the evening and stay late.

Don had the famous "one plate of rice diet" to lose weight from his pouch from drinking a bit of beer. One volunteer there was an RPCV named Dewey, who was an extra in the film, ***The Deer Hunter***, filmed in Bangkok at that time. Dewey is one of the extras in the background with Robert Dinero, and wore a GI uniform and a helmet…but his hair was a bit long for a GI in that film!

Don helped edit the Peace Corps Thailand great, great magazine called "Sticky Rice" with Ann Kelleran, then the Peace Corps Thailand Education Officer, and Van Nelson, the Training Officer. There was a great interview with Ann in an edition of Sticky Fingers, maybe in 1978? Ann recalled, uproariously, how much the Thais had to put up with a lot of PCVs and how gracious the Thais were in general. She also emphasized how the Thai people had TRAINED the volunteers and that Peace Corps service was very much a two way "street." There was also a column in the magazine about cheap "tios" for volunteers, one of which involved checking into a local Thai hospital for the weekend…there were a lot of comments about a guy in the hospital who wore a monkey mask and went around to the patients rooms! The cost of the weekend was about Baht 140 and reimbursable to Peace Corps! Later, I did that tio several times to have a relaxing weekend or a few days at a nice upscale Thai Hospital, but I paid for it. But the idea of a "cheap holiday" for a Peace Corps Volunteer or even an RPCV by checking into a nice Thai hospital is still appealing!

Tom Beuter, Ag RPCV, Amphur Sri Chiang Mai, Nongkhai

One of my most rewarding experiences as an RPCV was hiring the great Tom Beuter at the recommendation of Jim Ogata. Tom had a just completed two years at Sri Chiang Mai in Nongkhai as an Ag Volunteer, not so far away.

I was working at the Nong Daeng Ag Training Center outside of the camp about 8 kms away in the forest. The Hmong essentially farmed on the 580 rai of land there, donated for this use to/for World Vision to operate with the local amphur, the "Nong Daeng Agriculture Training Center." Local Thai villagers came for ag training and the Hmong from the camp raised crops and stayed over, about 300-400 people at a time. Tom Beuter was almost magical in working with the Hmong on farming and was an excellent ag worker. As an RPCV at Nongkhai, he barely spoke Thai since he worked with Isaan farmers in the fields as a volunteer there. Tom worked with me there for several months and did a great job. The Hmong called Tom "Than Tom" and they got along with him well as did the local Thai authorities at Pak Chom. It was another way, a good way, that local people knew Americans through Peace Corps.

As President Kennedy told the first Peace Corps group in 1962, "The people you work with may never have seen America on a map or know where it is, but they will know America by your example as an American Peace Corps Volunteer." Tom was a credit to President

Kennedy's statement, as was Jim Early, whose story comes next.

Jim Earley, RPCV, Civil Engineer working at Chieng Khong, Chiang Rai Refugee Camp in Chiang Rai with me and with World Vision

Jim Earley was a civil engineer referred to me, again by Jim Ogata, who was almost a job placement officer for RPCVs to work in refugee camps! Thank goodness! Jim was a great person, who was a PCV in the late 70s. Jim worked with me in the far north of Thailand and supervised, with great skill and patience, the construction of a reliable water supply for the Chieng Khon encampment of 14 minority groups from northern Laos. The dominant group, so to speak, were the Iu Mien, or Mien, or Yao in Thai. There were also Hmong, Kui, Khmu, Leu, lowland Lao, Tai Dam, and a number of other groups, but the Mien more or less ran the refugee camp committee.

Of course the camp was supervised by the RTG and some occasional visits by an overworked UNHCR representative, including Nina Schaeffer, who now lives in northeastern Thailand at Nakorn Panom.

Jim Earley designed a complicated water pumping station, with assistance from the Civil Engineering Faculty at Khon Kaen University. Dr. Pradit Monkol and Dr. Amnat, were the lead designers. KKU did a lot of civil engineering work with designs as referred by Jim Ogata. Dr. Pradit's group from KKU and Dr. Amnat, both of whom I remain in contact with from time to time, worked with World Vision on three or four design jobs, one of which was a spring intake water supply system at Chieng Khong camp, noted here.

Initially, the water was insufficient, running 562 meters from the mountains behind the camp to a break pressure tank, stopping for a rest…and then running downhill to the camp. But this small amount of water was not sufficient for 7,000 plus people. Therefore, Dr. Pradit and his group designed a pump irrigation scheme on the Ing River, which ran nearby by camp, maybe 1-2 kms from the river to the camp. The design was complicated, using PEA electricity lines, a floating pontoon water pump, which rose and fell with the river level and then, pumped water across the highway (from Chieng Khong to Teung), under a bridge and into the camp. The Nam Ing Project also provided irrigation water for local Thai villagers, mostly Leu, in nearby Baan Thong Village.

The whole area is still lush with crops, such as maize and soybeans, and has a mysterious air about it. In the back of that camp, the hills rise slowly and majestically, and if you walk for a day, you will reach the Lao border. The many upland minority groups there, such as the Mien/Yao, Hmong, Kui (Lahu Daeng?), and Khmu, often explored those hills, which were thickly forested, but dotted with upland fields the refugees planted.

From 1977 until probably 1979, the refugees were allowed to farm at the back of the camp quite freely and rented land from the local Thai people. The lowland Lao groups, such as the Tai Leu, were abundant in adjacent Bokeo Province in Laos and had relatives in Chieng Rai and also moved around freely. A lot of refugees were even taken or allowed to go out of the camp to work as farm laborers for local farmers. They were not paid much, one can be sure, but the freedom to go out of the camp and roam around was valued, probably more than the money. This practice stopped, however, in about 1981 as restrictions increased mainly due to the Khmer border crises.

Regarding the area of the Chiang Khong Camp/Ban Thong, I have gone by this area every few years since the camp's closure in about 1988, and year by year, the camp has become overgrown with forest and bush, but the water system continued to function for about 20 years. The cost, with funds provided by UNHCR to World Vision, was about Baht 5 million as I recall, not so big, but then big…about $ 250,000.

Jim was from Long Island, NY, but did not fit the stereotype of a New Yorker. He is a very calm, open-faced person, very sensitive to people, a competent engineer and was very good with people. He had been a volunteer in Surat Thani, married a very nice woman who was the daughter of a local official and was friends with another famous RPCV, Dwaila Armstong, who married a Thai forestry official in Surat and opened one of the first REAL eco resorts. Jim was married there and many of us went to the wedding in the province and the "reception" was in the forest organized by Ms. Dwaila.

Jim worked on the Hiang Khong project for at least a year and his "supervisor" at World Vision (not me, I had departed in January 1983 after a six-year contract period with WV) and Jim guided the project to a suc-

cessful conclusion. The Yao liked him very much and he did an excellent job at negotiating with the nine ethnic groups of Lao in the camp and employed them as laborers and some local Thai people too. I think Jim was most impressed with the diligence of the Hmong workers and the amazing skills of the Kui people.

The Kui may be Lahu Daeng/Red or Black, no one is quite sure. They are a hunting and gathering culture and almost pre-literate. But their construction and "figure this out and do it skills" were excellent. I think Jim found them to be very skilled workers on the project (Jim where are you to confirm this ha ha!). Among the Kui's skills was rattan weaving and they would hand-design and make any lampshade, such at for refugee camp school, to fit the size of the light bulb or fluorescent lamp. The student's footballs would careen into the classrooms and break the lights, but the Kui designed and made a "football-proof" lamp protector. They also, in their heads, calculated with speed and fairness, the UNHCR food rations to divide among 70 families, in about one hour while the other "literate" groups struggled all day using hand calculators to do the same job! The Kui never had a "new year" but seeing that the other groups had one and a good party for it, invented a new year too, at the same time with the Mien, which is the Lunar ("Chinese") New Year…but things and calendars were always flexible.

Jim Earley did a great job and was a credit to President Kennedy's guidance to us to let people know America through their experience with the PCVs. Jim's only major frustration was with the cook they hired at the 8-sided bamboo house where we stayed at the front of the Chieng Khong camp. We all had our own bedroom off a central eating and meeting area. (The house was made of rattan, bamboo, roof grass, and Kusol Hakun, the very capable Thai World Vision manager for the North who was my counterpart and like a brother, designed it. Kusol is from Trang, but somehow managed to learn to speak Yao/Mien language and was very popular) Jim noticed that breakfast was always late…and one day he noticed that the cook did not report to the kitchen at the back first thing in the morning, but to the Thai technician working with Jim, Kuhn Pinit. Uhhh, it seems that Pinit and the cook started each day off with a "cup of tea" in Pinit's room, and then she went to the kitchen…Jim was not happy about this situation and asked Pinit to leave his social life out of the office. Later, Pinit and the cook married.

Other RPCVs from Thailand also worked in Chieng Khong, including Paul Paquette with JVA. They were all amazing and dedicated to the cause.

Chieng Khong District Hospital Trees and Gardens

When HRH the Crown Prince of Thailand married the first time, the Prince's foundation built a number of country district houses as wedding gifts to the people. I recall that one day in about 1979, there was a sudden local announcement that HRH the Prince would visit Chieng Khong by helicopter to open the new hospital built there…but the Thai contractor had neglected to landscape the area, so the district office asked the refugees at Baan Thong Camp at Chieng Khong to assist to quickly plant trees around the hospital for the Prince's visit.

Kusol Hakun designed the landscape, arranged the trees and flowers supply, and the Lao refugees at the camp planted all the trees and flowers around the hospital in time for a successful visit by the Prince. When I occasionally go by that hospital and see the big trees there now, almost a forest, I think of those days and the hard work and sweat of the refugees.

The Lao refugees respected and loved HM the King of Thailand and HRH the Queen, and they transferred that respect to the Crown Prince for that hospital. Later, HRH the Queen visited that camp twice and was so impressed with the silver smithing skills of Chao La', the Yao/Mien leader and his first wife's embroidery skills, that they were invited twice to the Royal Palace in Hua Hin to work and instruct at the handicrafts foundation there.

The Royal Family showed a lot of concern for the refugees from Laos, especially the minorities, and acted as kind of protectors of their welfare as best they could upon occasion. The refugees certainly believed this to be true. I was honored to be present at the Chieng Khong Camp once when HRH the Queen of Thailand visited the refugees. It was an amazing magical hour or so. She lingered and spent time speaking with the refugees, especially the Yao/Mien.

Cambodian Camps: 1979 – 84: Post-Khmer Rouge, Exit, Chaos

"The border" centered around Aranyaprathet with multiple former PCVs, and emergency assignments at Trat, Buriram, and elsewhere, and the collapse of the UNBRO border encampments along the Cambodian-Thai Border as Vietnamese Army attacked in 1984 defies description.

In late 1978, the Vietnamese Army invaded or, as they say, "liberated" Cambodia from the scourge of the Khmer Rouge communist regime. After several years of dead silence from Cambodia, within the space of a few weeks hundreds of thousands of dying, emaciated Khmers streamed across the border into the eastern areas of Thailand, suddenly internationalizing the refugee situation.

Former Peace Corps Volunteers responded to the international calls for assistance and Peace Corps Thailand played a big part in this effort, as well. Others will write more of this, but my own place was with a kind of World Vision "emergency team," which was called upon by UNHCR to go to various places along the border with Cambodia to provide emergency shelter for escaping Cambodians coming into Thailand.

Thailand's policies on this issue were to some extent a bit cruel, mixed and understandable. One the one hand, the traditional Thai and Buddhist compassion compelled the Thais to accept many, many thousands of displaced persons and refugees in their country on a temporary basis, provided the international community would assist and essentially pay for the housing and food and humanitarian assistance for these refugees.

But Thailand was also afraid, as many countries are, of "attracting in" more refugees by being too kind and too hospitable and, thereby, provoking more thousands of persons to enter their country very probably causing domestic political instability. ASEAN had not yet emerged and Thailand was still adjusting to the new political realities and a new type of "proxy cold war" being played out in the region.

Peace Corps Thailand, under the direction of Ann Morgan, dispatched a number of Peace Corps Volunteers and staff, such as Jim Ogata, to assist with the construction of the Khao I Dang Refugee Camp north of Aranyaprathet and the sad camps at Sakeo One and Two which were the sites of many thousands of Khmers dying on the ground after arriving from Cambodia, too sick and thin to survive or be treated medically.

Hundreds were buried every day in this emergency in 1979. Many RPCVs worked for aid agencies in those encampments as nurses, relief specialists and aid workers. I was pre occupied in Loei Province with a similar, but smaller exodus from Laos of mainly Hmong Lao refugees, coming across the Mekong River and fleeing internal fighting in Laos. But I don't go into that here.

But a large number of RPCVs worked at those emergency Khmer refugee sites and helped build large emergency camps.

At the Khmer border encampments in 1979, a number of RPCVs, including PC Thailand RPCVs ***Rich Kocher, Judy Kocher, Berta Romero, Joe and Mary Jo Wright, Bill Preston, Steve Majors and Cindy Lockhart (RPCV Brazil),*** worked with JVA and/or USAID providing resettlement interview services for these Khmer or Lao or Vietnamese refugees.

Steve Majors worked with a USAID-funded program to provide emergency assistance at the border areas. He can explain that better than I can. ***Rex Dufour, RPCV Thailand,*** worked in the UNBRO (U.N. Border Relief Operation) Thai Border Relief Assistance programs and I knew Rex from working at the border myself, from 1983-84. At that time I was the field coordinator for a French NGO called CEAR or Comite European Aide au Refugees, based in Paris. CEAR had program in agriculture and skills training at three of the "border encampments" coordinated by UNBRO based at Aranyaprathet, but working all along the border with Cambodia.

I worked at Khao I Dang Camp, which was under UNHCR jurisdiction, and the border encampments, actually inside Cambodia a few meters or a few kilometers, were at Ampil or Baan Sangae, Rithysen or Nong Samet, and Nong Chan, which was a temporary encampment. Ampil was the Khmer name for a lake near this spot north of Aranyaprathet and north of Tapraya District. Rithysen was the Khmer name, a name from Khmer mythology, and Nong Samet was the name of the Thai village in the area, which was the same for Ampil and Baan Sangae. Nong Chan was just Nong Chan to my knowledge.

When I later joined CARE Thailand in 1984, CARE was led by ***Marshall French (Peace Corps Afghanistan Group 1)*** and his wonderful wife, ***Joan Cherry French*** (***Peace Corps Afghanistan Group 2)***. Other RPCVs with CARE then were ***Ed Waters*** (***Peace Corps Nepal)*** and ***Chris Rosell*** (***Peace Corps Guatemala***) and the amazingly good guy, ***Ed Waters (Peace Corps Nepal)***. Ed and I later worked together at Yasothon with CARE and still stay in contact. Ed and ***Bob McKean*** (***RPCV Thailand)***, and then, with JVA and the ODP Resettlement Program in Bangkok, would often go out exploring in the Patpong area for good places and often started out at the famous Lucy's Tiger Den on Silom Road and later on Suriwong Road.

At the border, there were other notable RPCVs, including the great outgoing ***Bob Medrala*** of ***Peace Corps Jamaica***, Director of ARC or the American Refugee Committee; ***Nancy Knapp***, an RPCV from ***PC Philippines***, and her husband, ***Mark Gorman***, ***RPCV Central African Republic.***

Nancy worked with UNBRO and COERR. Mark was the Director of IRC or International Relief Committee. It is very wonderful now that I still see Bob Medrala in Bangkok from time to time and see Nancy and Mark in Laos…all wonderful friends.

Other PC Thailand RPCVs were working with refugees, too, namely ***Art Crisfield, Peace Corps Thailand Group I*** (Udorn), who worked in the Philippines with refugee resettlement programs, and ***Bob Resseguie, Peace Corps Thailand Group 2***, also from Udorn, who was with USAID Thailand in the 1980s. ***Brian Heidel of Peace Corps Thailand*** was working with Catholic Relief Services or CRS and later with the American Refugee Committee (ARC). ***Fred Lingon, Peace Corps Sierra Leone***, worked with the Overseas Refugee Training Program. I still see Art Crisfield often in Laos, Bob Resseguie in Thailand, Laos or by phone in the US, and Brian Heidel in Bangkok or Laos, who is with USAID/OFDA based in Bangkok. Bob Medrala, Brian Heidel and I occasionally meet up in Bangkok for Indian food.

<u>Ending and Continuing This Story</u>

This is the conclusion of my story which runs from about 1976 to 1984, the period in my life when I worked in Lao, Khmer, and to some minor extent, Vietnamese refugee or displaced persons encampments in Thailand or in the case of the Khmer border areas, several kilometers inside Cambodia under the aegis of the UN Border Relief Operation (UNBRO).

Peace Corps gave so many of us our beginning and basic training to work in this type of humanitarian assistance and our networks among the RPCVs were a special kind of way to cope and help each other out. This type of work, no matter what you did, where or when, was very stressful in retrospect and having that Peace Corps network to call upon for advice, counsel and occasional just good sense, was really helpful.

We could speak with each other in special ways and had a bond through Peace Corps that allowed us to overcome many barriers which might have otherwise existed.

I recall we would tell each other, "Oh so and so, working with this agency is a former volunteer. We have to get together." That was a nice connection and helped us all to some extent do a small part to bring peace to a war torn area and war weary people at this time.

And now many years later, though our time working together seems like just yesterday…..we can meet at Lao restaurants in Oakland, California, for a nice four-hour lunch recalling our work together as both Peace Corps Volunteers and our shared experience in working with and assisting refugees..…or even visiting guys like Bob McKean in Warwick, Rhode Island, last month for dinners and recalling those times and renewing friendships…..or talking by phone in a parking lot in Sacramento with Carol Leviton for about an hour recalling our Peace Corps days together and work in the refugee camps.

And now, for many of us, the roles have nicely reversed or evened out, such as that special lunch in Oakland several weeks ago with Carolyn Nickels, Jim Ogata and Larry Crider at the Champa Garden Restaurant. Jim Ogata showed Mr. San Chian Saechao, a Yao/Mien American and the owner of that that restaurant, a photo of himself taken by me of San Chian's father Chao Lao Seachao at their family bamboo hut home in the Ban Thong Refugee Camp at Chieng Khong District in Chiang Rai in 1980.

When we tried to pay for our massive four-hour lunch, San Chian told us "No, we cannot accept money from you all. You used to help our family a lot before in

June 2012: Lunch at the Champa Gardens in Oakland. Front Row: Larry Crider, Nong Ogata and Mike Carroll. Back Row: Steve Rothstein, Mr. San Chian Saechao, Mrs. Saechao, Jim Ogata, Carolyn Nickels and Mark Chambers.

the refugee camps and now we help you a little bit today for this lunch. We are happy to see you all today again." ***PEACE!***

Post Script: Meeting Sarge Shriver at the Peace Corps 30th Anniversary Year, 1991 in Bangkok, Thailand

In November or so 1991, I was working in Cambodia as Country Director of CARE International, based in Phnom Penh. The primary program of CARE then in Cambodia was the helping to resettle most of the some 350,000 Khmer refugees who were finally returning to Cambodia from long years in refugee camps in Thailand under a UNHCR program.

I happened to be visiting Bangkok at this time for a few days. Somehow, the word went out through the Peace Corps Thailand network that Sarge Shriver was in Bangkok and there would be an informal reception and party at the U.S. Ambassador's residence on Wireless Road. Several other RPCVs with CARE, such as Wendy King and Bill Buffin from Peace Corps Nepal, and I went over to the informal reception held on the ground floor outdoors.

There, of course was Sarge, in all his glory and good health in 1991, exuding sparkle and charisma as usual. I had a nice conversation with him and bought him a 7-Up drink for 10 Baht. The U.S. Embassy did not provide any drinks, nor official sponsorship for this event, so we had to buy our own drinks. But it was my great honor to buy that 7-Up for Sarge.

We chatted a bit about the refugee resettlement of the Khmer from Thailand back to Cambodia and I gave him my name card with CARE Cambodia. He was very interested and moved by the situation of these refugees being able to finally return home.

Later, I received a typed letter from Sarge on "Special Olympics" stationary, then his new life-cause with his wife Eunice Kennedy Shriver. He said in that letter, now in a box in Bangkok at my apartment, how much he had enjoyed meeting me, how inspired he was by my work in Cambodia, and how pleased he was to see that former Peace Corps Volunteers were assisting Cambodian refugees.

Of course I was flabbergasted to receive that letter from Sarge, and was humbled to think that of all the people he must have met on that trip to Southeast Asia, how kind and caring he was to write that letter to me, really not an important person at all.

But though Sarge Shriver took the time to commend me for my work with refugees, he really spoke to all of us, no doubt meaning to say, "Thank you all for your fine efforts as a former Peace Corps Volunteers to help these refugees. I admire your work and a job well done."

END

Mike Carroll
RPCV, Thailand
Group 53, 1975-77

Paul Paquette
Peace Corps Group 47 (1974-78)
JVA Field Officer for the Northern Camps (Naam Yao, Maejarim, Chieng Khong, Chieng Kham, Uthradit), June 1978 to December 1980

July 2007

As the bus winds its way through the hills between Phrae and Nan, small flashes of distant memories arise in me. A distinctive hilltop here, an ancient temple there, a particularly sharp curve just experienced--- all come back to me bathed in the flickering sunlight that quickly darts through the trees along the road as if I am watching some old 16mm movie long since forgotten. I have a feeling that, had I waited much longer to return here, these memories would have been extinguished all together.

I spent the next few days reacquainting myself with the city of Nan, where I was based while working in the camps years ago. On the second day, I rented a

taxi to take me on the 30-kilometer trip to whatever was left of Maejarim camp, located on the still-remote Thai-Lao border. The roads were paved, but steep and treacherous still. I hadn't been back in 27 years, and there was much to occupy me.

In the 1970s, this route used to be an unpaved clay-based mess in the rain. It had been flanked by a thick tropical forest once so common here. Slash-and-burn farming has rendered the place into a vast, hilly area devoid of much vegetation higher than 4-5 feet.

Maejarim itself was in a time-warp. The progress, so evident in Bangkok and in other areas of the country, had had little impact here. We spent the better part of an hour searching for the road that went from Maejarim to the camp. It is interesting that no one under 30 could even recall that the camp had ever existed!

We finally met a farmer in his 50s who gave us the directions we needed. At long last, we found a cement road that ran along the side of Maejarim School. The road quickly changed to a dirt path, then nothing more than a goat trail with tall grasses on either side. We met a teacher who advised us not to go any further as it was "dangerous up there." Besides, there was nothing more there than a few Hmong farmers and fields of corn, he continued.

Strangely, I was not disappointed. After all the drama played out in that camp and others, it was enough for me to bring it to closure entirely. Finding a path leading to fields of corn rather than a road to the remnants of a refugee camp was just fine with me as it turned out. It seemed to me as if the world, at least in this

small part of it, had finally righted itself.

June 2012

It's hard to answer the question on how my Peace Corps experience prepared me for working in the camps. In many respects, I don't think it could have! How do you compare being "ahjaan" in a small Thai school near Bangkok to dealing with all the desperation of a refugee camp? Certainly my time as a PCV taught me the culture, the language, and to develop a certain "sensibility" to work at that level in the camps.

I remember many days of waking at 5:30 and preparing files and lists for the day's tasks. This followed by a quick breakfast, then out by 8:00 to one camp or another. We'd work till sunset and often through a lunch of "fer" (noodles). Then back to the hotel to sort through it all.

Dinner would quite often flow into a few hours sipping tea streetside in the restaurant attached to the

hotel talking to the many passers-by till late at night--- Indian merchants; Western missionaries who had magical tales of once working in China; Thais wanting to practice their English; an odd assortment of tourists---

We all found our lives intersecting at the Thevarat Hotel. It was an endless and fascinating array of people who provided me with a wealth of experience on the human condition. I recall my bedtime "reading material" was largely going through the daily pile of petitions and rants from the "ban-ha" (problem) cases. I remember one written in a print so closely controlled that it looked like it had been typed. As it turned out, using print material was how this particular kid learned to write in English! The drive of these individuals was incredible and sometimes awe-inspiring! Then we'd be off to bed to have the privilege of doing it all again the next day. And I do mean it was a privilege!

You never knew what the day would bring. Sometimes you would suddenly find yourself trying to identify refugees detained outside the camps, escorting people down to Bangkok for one emergency or another, or parlaying a family through a particularly "spine-tingling" (Jerry Daniel's term) INS interview. And we all loved every minute of it! Every day was unique and purposeful! It was a 7 days-a-week, 24-hours-a-day circus! There was always something going on in those camps.

I'd like to believe that we were more than just a bunch of paper-pushers processing people to the US. I think the people in these camps looked upon us as a way out, a hope. At least, I know that every kid under 25 felt that way. I think that motivated us to fight in every way we could to assure that those that wanted to "moo Ah-me-ri-ka" (as the Hmong would say), got there.

I often reflect back on my time as both a Peace Corps volunteer and a JVA worker, and feel so blessed to have had two of the best jobs one could ever have hoped to experience.

Berta Romero
U.S. Peace Corps Thailand
Group 47, 1974 - 1976

It was serendipity, being in the right place at the right time, that led me from being a Peace Corps volunteer to getting involved in the first U.S. refugee program in Thailand. As my Peace Corps days were ending, I was hired to assist refugees streaming out of Indochina's war zones. Refugees and their needs have become a lifetime commitment.

I joined the Peace Corps as I was finishing my university studies. I was young, idealistic, and saw Peace Corps as a way to help others and see the world. Though my preference was for Latin America, I was sent to Thailand for language and TEFL training. It was by chance that my first assignment was to teach English language to multi-aged students at the Chiang Mai School for the Blind. Circumstances were challenging in the school, which led PC to re-assign me to a Bangkok child guidance center where I taught students with special needs. Both assignments were difficult. The teachers and students taught me to be patient and persistent. As Peace Corps says, it was the "hardest job" I ever had.

I was one of the original 13 Peace Corps volunteers hired for the first U.S. refugee program in Thailand, under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM), which is known today as the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration (IOM). There is an old, and very true saying, "Working with refugees gets into your blood." The temporary program in 1976 evolved into one of the largest U.S. resettlement programs in the world. We set up the systems - before computers - to interview and process refugees for resettlement in the U.S. It was a job that consumed us; we worked 24/7 to meet a three-month deadline to process 11,000 refugees. The end of the U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia produced a large migration of people – refugees - which no one had foreseen. As the head of the Cambodian section, my days were spent interviewing Cambodians who were fleeing from the Khmer Rouge regime; and the evenings setting up the files and preparing the paperwork to present their cases to U.S. immigration officials. It was heart wrenching to hear refugees tell of the atrocities and human rights abuses in Cambodia. My colleagues were hearing similar stories of persecution from refugees fleeing from Laos and Vietnam. This experience impacted all of us in varying ways. Then I was informed that to be effective and objective in the refugee business, you had to get beyond emotions - this was a numbers game. The more admission numbers approved by the U.S. Congress, the more refugees we could help. We were the pioneers for the U.S. refugee program - we laid the foundation that resulted in the resettlement of hundreds of thousands of Indochinese refugees in the United States.

Four months later, I left Thailand to travel. Arriving in the U.S., a PC friend and I had a six-month task to set up a resettlement program in Providence, RI, for Cambodian, Hmong and Lao refugees, and then phase ourselves out. Simultaneously, during that time, the U.S. State Department contracted with the national resettlement agencies to form a Joint Voluntary Agency (JVA) to identify, interview and process refugees who remained in 13 refugee camps in Thailand. I returned to work for the JVA, and spent many months traveling to all the refugee camps registering, identifying and interviewing refugees for the U.S. Refugee Program.

I had various roles in the program ranging from head of the Lao Section, to spearheading the special Khmer resettlement unit in 1979. I was fortunate to lead multiple congressional delegations and notables, among them, former First Lady Roselyn Carter, and the IRC Citizens Commission to witness and experience firsthand the ongoing plight of the refugees. In 1979, we witnessed another massive migration of people streaming across Thailand's borders. I escorted Joan Baez and her delegation to the border encampments, and then on to the other refugee camps. This led to my accompanying her to Malaysia, Singapore and the Anambas Islands to interview Vietnamese boat refugees who were living in extremely dire situations. It was an amazing time in history. In 1982, I completed my work in Thailand with the creation of the first Refugee Women's Project in the region, a pilot project with foundation funding, to focus on protection for refugee women and children.

Upon returning to the U.S., I transferred my refugee field experience to focus on protection, policy and advocacy for refugees and persons in refugee-like situations with several different national organizations in Washington, D.C. That led to my stint as the

first director for the Refugee Council USA, a national coalition of refugee and human rights organizations. Last year, I assisted the UNHCR Washington office in organizing the first ever Refugee Congress, a project which continues to evolve. Today, I continue my refugee work as a contract monitor for the reception and placement program for resettled refugees. This allows me to travel around our country, visit resettlement agencies that assist new refugee arrivals, and, most importantly, meet refugees from all parts of the world who are being resettled today.

All in all, it has been an extraordinary journey – my Peace Corps experience was the beginning for my international refugee work for which I am grateful.

Serendipitous – I was in the right place at the right time, and one amazing experience led to the next - filled with people from all corners of the earth. Their courageous, often heartbreaking, stories filled with hope for a better life continue to inspire my life.

Judy Kocher

U.S. Peace Corps Thailand
Group 47, 1974 - 1976

From Peace Corps to Refugee Work: an unanticipated career path

It was March 1976. I had just finished a two-year assignment as a secondary school teacher in Amphur Muang Lamphun. Peace Corps had already greatly changed my life, as I had married another volunteer during my PC assignment. My husband, Rich, and I hadn't made any firm plans for our post Peace Corps life. We planned to do some traveling, but I was more concerned about finding jobs and moving onto the next phase of our lives.

While completing our termination paperwork at the Peace Corps office on Soi Somprasong, we heard that the U.S. Embassy was looking for ex-PCVs to staff a fledgling office dealing with resettlement of Lao, Hmong and Khmer refugees located in camps along the border areas of Thailand. After a brief interview, we were hired as 'caseworkers' and told to start work immediately! We barely had time to find a place to live before we found ourselves on a train to Surin armed with legal pads and instructions to find eligible refugees from a Khmer refugee camp with a population of several thousand.

Berta Romero, Rich Kocher, Patty Culpepper (foreground) interviewing Vietnamese in Sikhiu Camp Korat

We had only one short orientation, where we practiced interviewing families to try to identify those that were eligible for resettlement according to a category system. The definitions of the categories were vaguely spelt out and there were no forms or other documentation to rely on. Congress had approved an autho-

Rich Kocher, Khmer Refugee Camp, Surin

rization for 11,000 'parolees' to be identified, verified, and approved by U.S. Immigration officers, and put on airplanes to meet their sponsors in the U.S. by June 30th. It was already nearly mid-March.

To complicate what seemed to be a nearly impossible assignment, these 11,000 were to be selected from a total refugee population of over 200,000, including Highland Lao, Lowland Lao, Khmer and Vietnamese. We were literally figuring it out as we went along. It was apparent to everyone that without the incredible spirit and total commitment of the small team of ex-PCVs, the goals of the program would not have been achieved. Few U.S. Embassy personnel were clamoring to work 16 -18 hour days in stifling heat, staying for weeks on end in upcountry lodging without air conditioning or hot showers.

Judy Kocher, Khmer Refugee Camp, Surin

Aside from the lack of creature comforts, I don't think anything could have prepared any of us for the stress and intensity of the next few months. Working 24/7, tempers sometimes flared, but I kept seeing the faces of the families we were literally saving and fought off the stress and sleep deprivation. I also kept thinking that it would all be over by June 30th (if we survived that long!) As the June 30th deadline approached, Rich and I were asked to stay on to 'mop up' until the last of the sponsorships, medical clearances, etc. were completed. We also wanted to assess the eligibility of those who had been left behind in the camps. It was depressing to realize that we had barely touched the tip of the iceberg in terms of resettling the scores of additional eligible refugees languishing in the camps.

We left Thailand in Dec. 1976. Over the next few months, we spent time visiting friends and our former Khmer interpreters as they began their new lives in America. We decided to head to Washington DC with plans to use our non-competitive eligibility to see about finding work in the government. We found temporary work in the Peace Corps Placement office for the 'summer crunch' period.

Judy Kocher interviewing Vietnamese Boat refugees in Songkhla

By July, we were asked if we would be interested in returning to Bangkok, as there was a new authorization to accept another 20,000 Indochinese refugees. We arrived back in Thailand in Aug. 1977.

Over the next few years, we continued to get U.S. Congressional authorization for Indochinese to be resettled, and we continued to extend what had started out as a three-month temporary contract.

In 1978, I was thrilled to be able to help resettle Dith Pran, the New York Times journalist whose story was featured in the Academy Award winning movie "The Killing Fields."

In 1979, the floodgates opened and Khmer refugees fled into Thailand from Cambodia after the Vietnam-

ese overthrew the Khmer Rouge. Boat refugees from Vietnam swamped the first asylum countries of Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. The Philippines offered to establish a Refugee Processing Center (RPC) to house refugees accepted for third country resettlement. Rich and I moved to Manila to set up the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration (ICEM) and the Joint Voluntary Agency (JVA) offices respectively. As the Deputy JVA Representative, I was tasked with hiring a team of caseworkers and immediately looked to hire former Philippine Peace Corps Volunteers. I knew that PCVs were ideal refugee caseworkers. They could work independently in the camps under less than ideal conditions. They were non-complaining and took pride and satisfaction in performing at the highest level.

JVA team in Lao Refugee Camp in Ubon. First row: Judy Kocher; second row: Deb Hammond; back row: Charlene Day, Chuck Howell

I'm proud to say that many of my former PCV caseworkers went on to successful careers with ICEM, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), Centers for Disease Control (CDC), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Dept. of State, and other non-governmental organizations (NGO's).

I think that my Peace Corps experience prepared me to deal successfully with the unplanned, the untested, the untried, and, most importantly, the unanticipated challenges that work and life present to us.

It is still amazing to me that what began as a post Peace Corps three-month assignment stretched to 12 years that changed my life and to a career path that would lead me to another 15 years working and living in Thailand. I am also very proud that my daughter, who was born in Manila and grew up in Bangkok, is now a refugee resettlement caseworker for the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Sacramento, California.

Chaz McCormack

Thai 51
Refugee Experiences 1975-1980

I arrived in Thailand in March, 1975, with Group 51. After training in Nakorn Sawan and Chiangrai, I was assigned to teaching English at Pua Secondary in Pua District, Nan Province. I arrived there late May 1975. The Ajaan Yai (Headmaster) Ajaan Pongpat Thiranphratuangul, had been requesting a Peace Corps Volunteer for 8 years, but the area had been considered a sensitive area prior to 1975. Now the area was considered secure, so I became Pua School's first volunteer.

A couple of months after I arrived in Pua, Hmong Refugees started pouring in from Sayabouri, Laos. Many of them had been connected with Gen. Vang Pao's CIA-backed army, which had fought the Pathet Lao during the "secret war." When the Pathet Lao won and Vientiane went communist, Vang Pao was evacuated. His people panicked and started pouring over the border into Thailand.

Soon there were about 10,000 Hmong Refugees living in thatched huts built in the fields by the Amphur Office. There was no barbed wire at the Pua camp, so locals could go in and out of it pretty easily in those first days. I first went there with the head of my English Department Ajaan Siree Suwan, and another English teacher, Ajann Wirat Sriwichian. One of the refugees told Siree that there were three young men, about 16 years of age, who wanted to continue their studies in Pua School. They couldn't go in and out of the camp in school uniforms, however, so Ajaan Siree suggested they move into a house outside the camp. She suggested that I move out of the school quarters and into the house since this would entitle us to housing allowance from the Ministry of Education. So Ajaan Wirat and I moved off campus and the three refugee kids moved in with us and started MS 5 at Pua School. Later we found out from the Nai Amphur that this was illegal, but "mai ben rai." We also found out later that the kids were older than MS5 age, when one of them got married in the camp over a long weekend.

I met a lot of interesting, and impressive characters because of the refugees. There was Father Harry Thiel, a Catholic missionary priest from Seattle, WA, who had been working in Thailand with the Hmong for many years. Because of his experience with the Hmong and

knowledge of the language, he visited many refugee camps in Thailand in 1975-76. On a visit to Pua, Father Harry called on Imogene Williams a Baptist missionary from Kentucky who ran a hostel for hill tribe students in the area. She told him there was a Peace Corps Volunteer at the school who was Catholic, so Father Harry came to Pua School, and invited me to come to mass in the refugee camp. After hearing my confession (I really did try to be good during those first days), we went to the camp where Father Harry said Mass in Hmong. Father Harry made many trips to Pua over the next several months, bringing medical supplies as well as medical personnel.

I spent my first Christmas in Pua with Siree, Wirat and Father Harry in the refugee camp. After celebrating mass in the camp, we went to a Christmas party in the house that Father Harry had rented for his visits to Pua.. There was a choir from the camp, dressed in traditional tribal garb, singing Christmas carols in Hmong, Lao and French. It was my first Christmas away from home, and I expected it to be a pretty sad and lonesome one. Thanks to Father Harry and the Hmong Refugees, it was one of the best Christmases I ever spent, certainly the most memorable.

In the weeks that followed, the refugees built a little school in the Pua Camp. I used to go there in my spare time unofficially to teach English classes. Some of the refugees had been teachers in Laos, so the hut was used to teach other subjects, as well.

In late May of '76 the camp was moved from the amphur office at Pua to Ban Nam Yao about 30 km away. Access to the Ban Nam Yao Camp wasn't as easy, but I was able to go with some of the medical personnel who worked there. There were two doctors from Australia working for an American organization called the Tom Dooley Heritage (an off-shoot of the Tom Dooley Foundation). They rented a house in Pua and commuted to Baan Naam Yao everyday. There was Dr. Mike Toole from Melbourne, who had spent several years in Chiangmai and spoke good central and northern Thai. After a while, his Hmong got pretty good, too. He studied every night with one of the refugee medics. The refs loved Mike. He even got a couple of Hmong refugee babies, whom he delivered, named after him.

The other doctor was Pitre Andersen from Adalaide, who originally came to Thailand on a two week visitor's visa for a "tiaw." One night, he met Mike in Bangkok and when Mike told him about the refugee situation in Nan, Pitre signed on.

Pitre and Mike worked in the camps seven days a week, sometimes five or six weeks in a row without a break. They'd spend all day in a couple of shacks that served as the camp hospital treating hundreds of patients, including refugees and locals. They made 16,000 baht a month (about $800 US), only a fraction of what they could have been making back home.

I met a lot of extraordinary people who worked in the Ban Nam Yao Refugee Camp. There was Lloyd Dakin, a former PCV who had served in Sa and who came back to the region to work as the Administrator for the Tom Dooley Heritage. There was Blandine Desmonds, a French nurse from Doctors Wihout Borders/Medecins Sans Frontiers (MSF), and Dr. Daniel Pavour, an MSF doctor who was killed in a motorcycle coming home from the Ban Nam Yao camp. There was Reinhard Strunz, a Physician's Assistant from Germany, who was also a linguist able to speak every language invented, including German, French, English (like an American, I thought he was from the midwest), Thai, Lao, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Hmong, Yao and every other hill tribe language in the region. Strunz had the ability to memorize about 300 words a day. He claimed anybody could do it.

I consider these people to be real life heroes. They weren't saints…these folks liked to party (Other VOLAGS and NGO's referred to the Tom Dooley House as the "Tom Foolery House), but nobody worked harder in the camps , and the refugees loved them.

At the end of my second year in Pua, the Ban Nam Yao Refugee Camp became my unofficial summer project In between teaching English classes, I got to help out in the hospital hut. There was a cholera epidemic going on at the time, so things were pretty busy. I did little things like bathing the patients, to help get the fever down, and postural drainage on the TB cases. That's where you cup them on the back and tell them to spit in a cup. That's how I learned the Hmong word for spit. It was kind of gross, but I liked it better than teaching English.

I also helped innoculate the kids. We had to chase them all over the camp. At first, the kids ran away because they were afraid of the needle. But after the

first kid got the shot he said to the others, "Ji Mouah," which is Hmong for" It doesn't hurt." Still, the kids wanted us to chase them. It turned into sort of a game. It was a lot of fun, actually. Everyone was running around and laughing. It's funny. Here were these kids, living in a refugee camp in the middle of a cholera epidemic with an uncertain future, and they were having the time of their lives.

Of course, some of these kids died. One day, I watched a little boy, about two years old, die. He had a high fever and was having trouble breathing because his larynx had enlarged. Mike and Pitre said he needed a tracheotomy, but there was no big rush. Since it was near the end of the day, they decided to take him back to the government health station at Pua, where conditions were better and more sanitary than the camp. We got into the van with the little boy and his father and headed for Pua. About a kilometer out of the camp, the boy started gagging. He needed an emergency tracheotomy, but there weren't any instruments in the van. Mike asked if anyone had a knife, but no one did. There was no way the little boy could make it to Pua, so we turned around and sped back to the camp. All the time, the little boy was choking to death on his father's lap, but the father remained very calm. He displayed no panic or hysterics. By time we got back to the camp, the little boy had stopped breathing. Mike tried mouth to mouth on the him, but it was too late. The boy's little body jerked a few times, and he spit something out. Then he died sort of in slow motion. It was almost as if you could see the little boy's spirit slowly leave his body. Then, Mike handed the little boy back to his father, who had been sitting there calmly during the whole thing. Only then, when it was all over, did the father show any emotion. With tears pouring down his cheeks, he gently took his son and, quietly, carried him away. I don't think I've ever seen anything more dignified or beautiful than that Hmong man carrying his dead son.

I spent a total of three years in Pua, In my third year, I began to see former PCVs I had known, coming back to Thailand to work in the camps with JVA. They spent hours in the camps interviewing refugees to prepare to go to the States. I knew a lot of volunteers who ended up working in refugee programs, some with US VOLAGS, such as Charlene Day, Chuck Howell, Bertha Romero, Carol Levitan, David Pun, Joe and Mary Jo Wright, and Dan Lewis in Thailand; as well as Anita Lee and Henry Pelifian, who worked JVA in Malaysia. Other former PCV's worked for international agencies. Lloyd Dakin, who had been a PCV in Nan and later the Administrator for the Tom Dooley Heritage, ended up working with refugees all over the world with the UNHCR. There was also Dave Eckman, who after his COS, worked with Food for the Hungry, Dick Hogan who worked for Catholic Relief Services in the Cambodian Camps, Chaz Algier, Kathleen Hamilton and many others who worked in the refugee processing center in the Bataan Pennisnsula in the Philippines.

I left Pua in 1978, and extended for a fourth year, to work with the Regional Supervisory Unit in Ubol. There was a refugee camp in Ubol made up of ethnic Lao, but I didn't spend much time doing any volunteer work in the camp there

After four years in the Peace Corps, I was hired as a Field Officer with ICEM (Now ICM) in Tanjung Pinang, on Pulau Bintan in Indonesia, from June until December, 1979. The Tanjung Pinang Office was a sub-office of the Singapore Office. Our job was to process refuges already accepted by third countries. There were refugee camps scattered throughout Pulau Bintan, with Vietnamese boat people, a large percentage of whom were ethnic Chinese. We would arrange for their physicals, fingerprints, passport photos, etc. and then round them up, often in the middle of the night, to take them on these old WWII vintage trucks to the Pier where they would be taken by boat to Singapore. From Singapore, they would be taken directly to the airport and flown to their new countries. Most went to the U.S. The next biggest destination was Canada. We also sent refugees to Sweden and Norway.

Eventually the refugees on Bintan were moved to the neighboring island, Pulau Galang. They were in the process of doing that during the time I was there. I remember spending a night on Galang and waking up in the morning to the smell of freshly baked French bread. Apparently the Vietnamese liked bread as a result of years of being a French Colony.

My last week in Indonesia was a hectic one. We had quotas to fill, and our quota for November was 3,000 refugees. On November 25th we were about 1,500 refugees short. Andy Bruce, the director of the Tanjung Pinang office, came up with an idea. He figured the out percentage of refugees that would always fail the medi-

cal screening and he overbooked medical screenings on Galang for that number. While this meant disappointing a large number of people who didn't pass the medical screening, usually for TB, it did get more out of the camps more quickly. November 29th we worked round the clock and on November 30th, we sent off the last boatload of refugees for Singapore, and met our quota. That was my last day with ICEM, and it ended on a high note. I felt very lucky to have been part of that.

I spent a couple of nights in Singapore and then flew to Bangkok. I went to the ICEM Office and told them that for the past week I had a cough and a fever that I couldn't get rid of. They sent me to Bangkok Christian Hospital where I was diagnosed with walking pneumonia. After they gave me a big shot of tetracycline, I went to the Opera Hotel to recover. The next day, Joe and Mary Jo Wright found me and let me recover in their apartment in Bangkok where they were stationed

In early 1980, I did some unofficial volunteer work in the Cambodian Camps, first in the Khao I Dang camp with CARE, and later, with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in Ban Sa Kao. While with CRS, I had to take care of a group of medical nuns from Indiana, The Poor Handmaidens of Jesus Christ. I wasn't too happy when Joe Curtain, a former PCV from the Philippines told me that, but these nuns turned out to be the finest, most adventurous, most adaptable group of people I had ever met. They had lost their luggage in Hong Kong, but it didn't phase them a bit. They took it all in stride. No group of PCVs could have handled it any better.

In Baan Sa Kao, I also met a doctor from Arizona named Donald Gatch. He worked in a lot of the border camps. One night, Gatch and I were in a ranahaan when some Thais invited us to a party. I didn't go, but Gatch got in the car with them. A half hour later, a policeman came and told us Gatch had been killed. There were a lot of people killed in traffic accidents that week.

I went home in April and spent six months working refugee settlement in Washington DC for IRC, mostly with unaccompanied minors (who had grown up in the camps and were no longer minors) as opposed to families. I remember meeting refugees in December at the National Airport. They had left Southeast Asia about a day earlier and were still were wearing flip flops and tee shirts. I remember thinking going from the tropics to a DC winter must be like going from paradise to Hell.

The IRC office in DC acted as direct sponsor for these unaccompanied young men. Once in DC, we would try to find them apartments and jobs. I remember putting four or more people in one-bedroom apartments in some pretty bad neighborhoods. The DC office's rationale was that a DC slum was better than a Southeast Asian refugee camp. Maybe in the long run this was true, but at the time I didn't think so. I had been in a lot of refugee camps in Thailand and Indonesia, and aside from being in a state of Limbo, the refugees had a much more comfortable and safer existence in the camps. In the camps they had a sense of community, as well as adequate shelter for the tropics, food, water and, in many cases, better medical attention than the local Thais and Indonesians thanks to International VOLAGS.

My job title with IRC was "Job Developer," which was pretty ironic as I had never had a real job in the States, with the exception of being a night watchman between college and Peace Corps. The most common jobs we found the refugees were as dishwashers at National Airport or working at a chicken farm in Ocean City, Baltimore. The pay there was low, but the farm provided the refugees with free room and board and ESL lessons.

Just before Christmas, I left IRC to attend Ohio University, where I managed to complete a nine-month master's degree program in a year and a half. I haven't been overseas since.

I consider the times I spent with refugees the best part of my five years in Southeast Asia because of the extraordinary people I met- doctors, nurses, educators, caseworkers, and the refugees themselves. In 2000, I was in Austin on business. A friend and I went into a Chinese restaurant for dinner. The owner turned out to be a former refugee, an ethnic Chinese from Vietnam. He told me he had been in the refugee camp on Galang Island in Indonesia in 1979. Now, he was a successful American entrepreneur. Some of the most productive, successful people living in this country today are former Southeast Asian refugees and their children. Like the immigrants before them, they have made this country a better place. I think Peace Corps should be

proud that so many of its former volunteers, using skills they picked up as PCVs, played a role in sending this country some its best Americans.

Photo Courtesy of Fred Lingon

Bill Preston, Thai 58

Memories of three refugee camps in Thailand (March - July 1980)

Sa Kaeo

In early 1980, while completing my third year as a volunteer, a call went out in Bangkok-I believe from Morton Abramowitz, then the U.S. Ambassador to Thailand-for volunteers to help set up a refugee camp in the eastern province of Sa Kaeo. On a weekend morning soon after, a group of us boarded a charter bus in Bangkok and travelled to Sa Kaeo for the day. I don't recall any of the others on the bus, and the day is a blur. What comes back to me now is the heat and desolation of the camp site when we arrived. It seemed like an enormous flat field of arid, reddish earth. There must have been trees, though I don't recall them, or much shade; just intense heat and lots of red dirt and dust.

And then, there was the sight of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Khmer refugees, who must have recently crossed the border into Thailand, having escaped the Khmer Rouge, following the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in late 1979. They were like a great, slow-moving wall, all dressed in black clothes and black rubber-tire sandals. Gaunt and emaciated, their clothes hung from their bodies. Many people limped, or used sticks or branches to walk, some were missing limbs. Their faces and body language spoke of having endured something incomprehensible to those of us bearing witness. Only the children seemed oblivious to the bleak and stark surroundings, finding energy to run about and play, and to smile and even laugh.

I knew little at this point about the Khmer Rouge, mostly that they had sealed off Cambodia from the outside world following the fall of Phnom Penh in April 1975. I had read stories of widespread starvation and killing, but was reluctant to believe them. I would learn how wrong I was to doubt these stories later, when working with Khmer refugees at another camp in Phanat Nikhom.

I wandered among the throng of black-clad people milling around in what seemed to me a vision of hell; in retrospect decades later, I imagine that stark, barren place could well have seemed a kind of heaven, or at least safe haven, to those survivors. I remember little of what I did that day. I recall digging the hard, dry

ground at some point to create latrines. I also remember helping to lift a large metal water container onto some kind of stand, where it would serve as a water supply. At the end of the day, we boarded the bus back to Bangkok. The return ride was very quiet. There were no words for what we had seen.

Nongkhai

After completing my third year as a volunteer, I worked as a pre-screener for the Joint Voluntary Agency. For some weeks, Pat Satterwaite, a fellow former PCV from group Thai 58, and I worked at Nongkhai camp. The town of Nongkhai is in the northeast, on the Mekong River and directly across from Laos. I used to look into Laos every morning from a small window in my shower stall in the hotel I stayed in near the river. How strange that Laos was so close, yet completely off limits.

When Pat and I arrived in Nongkhai, we joined a team of about four other expat screeners. Our job was to interview Lao refugees, with the help of Lao interpreters, and take down personal information to complete various forms required by the U.S. government, in order for refugees to be resettled in the U.S. Pre-screeners did the initial interviews, which were followed up later by case workers living in Bangkok. We often worked long hours in order to interview as many people--or "cases" as they were called in bureaucratese--as possible. The camp was usually very hot. We worked inside makeshift buildings, with little or no air circulation, let alone air conditioning. Sweat would often drip from my face and hands onto the forms we had to complete. In fact, this was comparable to teaching in Thai secondary schools, where sweat would often soak my clothes while teaching English classes.

The work itself wasn't hard—nowhere near as challenging as teaching English--but it was repetitious and could be emotionally draining. One case in point: the Lao refugees typically waied us--pressed their hands together in greeting and to show respect--at the start of an interview. On one occasion a male refugee waied Pat, who was interviewing at a table near me, and I saw that the man had only one hand. There was something at once disturbing and Zen-like about this sight of one hand waing. I later asked Pat about the man's hand. It had been blown off by a grenade. I thought of the opening line of Stephen Crane's famous poem, War is Kind: "Do not weep, babe, for war is kind."

Phanat Nikhom

Pat and I were transferred to a new camp in Phant Nikhom in early summer of 1980. While the Lao refugees we worked with in Nongkhai had endured much under the communist Pathet Lao, including family separations and time in re-education camps, nothing prepared us for what we learned from interviewing the Khmer.

The job was basically the same, doing preliminary interviews to gather personal information about the refugees and their families, so they might be resettled in the U.S. However, in response to our questions about the status or whereabouts of this or that family member, the answer given by the Khmer was so often and chillingly the same: salap—dead. Where is your mother now? Salap. Your brother? Salap. Sister? Salap. It became a kind of cruel and dreadful mantra during the time we worked at Phanat Nikhom.
Through these interviews, we slowly learned the extent to which the Khmer Rouge had destroyed Cambodia and its people, often entire families. Whereas it seemed that the Pathet Lao at least deemed the Lao people fit for re-education, the Khmer Rouge were bent on finding any reason to kill. Under their totalitarian organization known as the Angkor, no one was safe, everyone was suspect. In attempting to rewind history to Year Zero when they took power, the Angkor had seemed willing to use the same brutal math to reduce the Khmer population to an equal measure of nothing.

Once again Pat and I worked with refugee interpreters, who had the sober task of mediating between our bureaucratic, formulaic questions and the grim responses of the Khmer survivors. Our young interpreters Dara and Eng, through their resilience and compassion, gave us hope and helped put a human face on, and provide a focal point for, comprehending in some small way an incomprehensible tragedy.

Later, after returning to the U.S., I learned that Dara was resettled in Paris, and Eng in California. We corresponded for a time, but I regret that we never had the chance to meet again.

David Meyer
Thai 60

My Peace Corps service in Thailand from 1977 - 1981 prepared me for many things in life. Like many RPCVs, my years as a volunteer were some of the best I've experienced. This experience also led me to my next job: working with refugees from Southeast Asia at the Refugee Assistance Center (RAC) in Kansas City, Kansas.

During the years I spent at RAC, from 1982 - 1986, most of our clients were from Laos and were either Lowland Lao or Hmong. Most (but not all) of the Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees tended to resettle on the Missouri side of Kansas City and were serviced by a different agency. We had some people from Afghanistan fleeing from the Russians, a few Ba'hai families from Iran escaping religious persecution from the Muslims there, and a scattering of people from Central America. But 90% of our clients were Lao.

Peace Corps prepared me to help them most importantly in terms of language. I could speak, read and write Thai, which they understood (though they spoke to me in Lao). We had Lao staff to help clients, but sometimes we just needed an American to provide the translation. The Lao staff tended to handle social services, but I was used mostly to set up skills-training programs in data entry, offset printing and commercial sewing. The computer component was especially interesting since many of the Hmong women in the program had no formal education prior to our class.

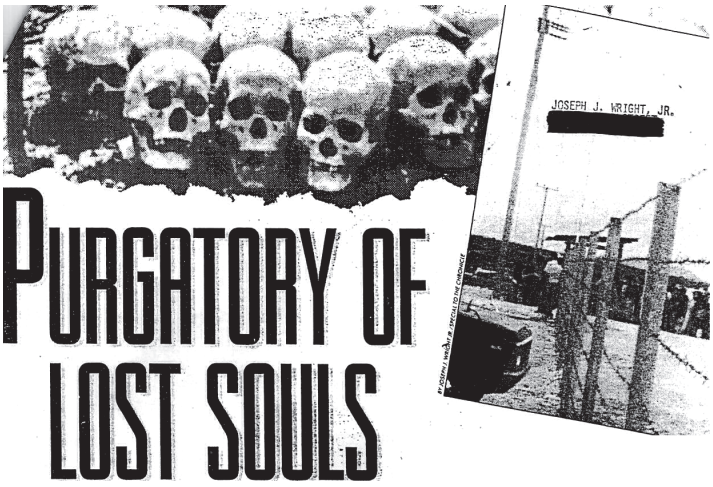
I also found jobs for our graduates, as well as for other refugees who did not join the skills-training program. We received federal recognition for our success in getting people to work and off welfare. Frequently, I would accompany refugees to the job and translate for them, whether it be a factory, a hotel or a restaurant. It was good fun.

My "extra-curricular" work was with the Hmong women. We took their elaborate needlework, which is called "Pa Ndau" (literally "flower cloth") to sell at craft fairs all over the Midwest and the women were paid for what they sold. I also helped refugee families secure a piece of property where they could grow vegetables for their own consumption or to sell.

Their success is legendary. Most thrived in their jobs and in quick time, had bought a car, a house, and were sending their kids to college.

There is still a strong Lao presence in Kansas City, I'm proud to say. I was lucky to have the opportunity to help so many people, and much of the credit for that must go to Peace Corps. And like so many others, I can attest that Peace Corps also helped me grow and excel as much as the people I was serving.

Photo Courtesy of Fred Lingon



PURGATORY OF LOST SOULS

JOSEPH J. WRIGHT, JR
Thai 63

We had a privileged role in those days, a position of no small power in a purgatory of lost souls. We heard stories from the killing fields ten hours a day, six and seven days a week, and we decided which stories were good enough to earn the teller the prize of freedom. Sometimes they lied to us, and sometimes we failed to recognize the truth. Sometimes we missed the point completely.

Mine was a very small part in the largest mass migration in human history, which began in the final weeks of 1978. That was when Vietnamese troops swept across Cambodia, smashing the murderous regime of the Khmer Rouge, sending hundreds of thousands of refugees across the border into Thailand and onward, eventually to the United Stales and a handful of other countries around the world. I arrived on the scene two years later.

From 1980 to 1982, I was part of a team that sorted the claims, recorded the stories and shuffled the paperwork of Indochinese refugees seeking political asylum and a chance to rebuild their lives in the United Stairs. We worked for JVA, the Joint Voluntary Agencies, under contract to the U.S. Department of State. There were many purgatories then in Thailand, most of them designated for lost souls from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

Our purgatory was a few hundred acres of dust and Quonset huts surrounded by barbed wire, just east of Phanat Nikhom, a town in the province of Chonburi. Here, the refugees waited, safely removed from the fire fights and shelling on the border. In addition to safety, food and shelter, Phanat Nikhom Camp

Khmer refugees line up at Phanat Nikhom Camp, Thailand.

provided schools for their young, doctors for their sick and access to us, the "interview people" who could get them to the immigration man and then onto the plane to Disneyland.

The interviews were complicated and could be lengthy. Eligibility for resettlement in the Slates required a close connection to the US government or its ally, the former Khmer Republic. Barring that, a close relative in the States might do. We took down their family trees and questioned them about their work history, their education and their military service. It was tedious and often confusing.

For us caseworkers, it was one step in a repetitive sequence, and we did it over and over, family after family, day after day. For the Khmers, however, it was like a test, a final exam for which a passing score meant graduation from the refugee camp.

"The first interview we had I was with JVA." wrote one of the lucky ones, Lim Sokha in his autobiography. "If you said the right answers you could go to the Immigration. And if you said the right answers again, you can come to America." A lost soul that finally found his way, Lim Sokha passed and is now a high school student in San Francisco.

The test was more involved than the vast majority of the refugees ever imagined. It was about something much bigger than just who went to America and who rotted in the camps. It was a test of policies, a contest between two departments of the U.S. government. We of the JVA, a service of the Department of State, whose job it was to fulfill America's commitments abroad, were pitted against the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), an arm of the Justice Department,

whose chore it was to keep aliens out of the country.

State wanted to resettle the refugees, to demonstrate American resolve — and Justice wanted to restrict immigration for the same purpose. In the middle, of course, were the refugees, whose chore, at least as they perceived it, was to pass a test and win their freedom.


Interpreter Vuthy and Joe Wright going over their interview notes.

To take the test, refugees first had to go through the "interps," the JVA interpreters who were the voices and ears of us otherwise deaf and dumb Americans. In the previous six years, they had gone from the top of the world to the depths of despair. Before the revolution, as urban, bourgeois college kids, they had had no notion of the rural hardships their less fortunate countrymen endured. Under Pol Pot's new order, however, their kind were relocated to the poorest villages and used as slave labor in the fields. Most of them bad seen their parents shot, bludgeoned to death, or slowly eaten away by disease and starvation, then plowed under in the mass graves of the killing fields.

With nothing but the rags they wore and whatever they had retained of their truncated educations, they had fled before the Vietnamese invaders to the relative freedom and safely of the Thai border camps. There, because of their English, they were able to work their way into the relief operations, assisting foreign doctors and translating for U.N. officials. Soon they were wearing counterfeit Levi's from Bangkok and T-shirts with the names and likenesses of American rock stars.

Later, the lucky ones were accepted for eventual resettlement in the States, and a special few volunteered to remain in Thailand, in the camps to work for us.

Each had different reasons for staying on. For some, it was the hope of finding lost relatives. Others simply wanted to save some money; meager though their salaries were. Most had a genuine desire to help their people, perhaps out of some deep guilt. But I also think they enjoyed the status. It must have been heady to have sunk so low and, then, to have risen again to a place of importance in the Khmer community. Diminished though their world now was, they were once again on top of it.

One of my first interps was a young man who had adopted the nickname Sunshine, which he claimed was the English translation of his rightful Khmer name. Sunshine's life story began with his father praying on a hillside at sunset on the evening of his birth. After five daughters his father desperately wanted a son, and when his prayers were answered, he named his boy in memory of the setting sun that had witnessed his prayers. Sunshine's story is filled with such growing reminiscences of his father, a member of Cambodia's republican government before the fall.

Under Pol Pot, the father had concealed his identity to protect his family, but after his slow death by disease or starvation—Sunshine could not know which—The Khmer Rouge found him out. Cheated out of the chance to execute him as they had his colleagues, the neo-Communists passed sentence on his family. Sunshine stood in horror one day as his sisters and their husbands were led away one at a time and were shot. When the last shot rang out, and Sunshine was next, he bolted into the jungle and hid.

After wandering for weeks, Sunshine came upon a village where he was not known. There he survived by passing himself off as a mentally handicapped child who, the villagers assumed, had got lost in the war. For the next three years, he masqueraded as the village idiot and was the object of cruel scorn and ridicule. But his secret past was safe, and he was not killed. When the Vietnamese invasion broke through to his zone, the Khmer Rouge cadres retreated, and Sunshine made for the Thai border.

In the camps, he learned that his mother had survived. She had been out of town visiting relatives when Phnom Penh fell, and Sunshine had not seen her since. When I met him, he was waiting for her to appear in Phanat Nikhorn.

Sunshine was dark and handsome and capable of both brooding silence and earsplitting laughter. He was also a good interpreter. Caseworkers fought over him and refugees maneuvered to get in the line that led to Sunshine's interview table It was a while before I picked up enough of the Khmer language to know this. But eventually, I began to hear and understand that applicants felt they were being interviewed by him instead of by me. Whereas I was always referred to in the third person, Sunshine was addressed directly and called "elder brother," even by men old enough to be

his father. It was more than a term of endearment in Khmer: it was a sign of respect.

Now and then, in the middle of listing an applicant's siblings or children, Sunshine would pound the table and let out a mournful groan, then turn to me with just the hint of a tear in his eye and in intone in his bass voice, "Pol Pot killed his brother," or "Gawt dam, Pol Pot take her children for the work camp," or simply, "All dead."

Whenever he spoke of Pol Pot, it was as if he knew the man personally, and whenever he said someone had been killed by Pol Pot, it was is if he could envision the man himself personally pulling the trigger. He often entertained a violent fantasy of revenge that involved his joining the US Air Force and returning with a fighter jet to wipe out the evil dictator. "He killed my father." he reminded me. "He took my house and my nice watch and my bicycle. I hate him." I could never get him to to explain that descending order of priorities. I have always taken it to mean that, next to the murder of his family, what Sunshine hated Pol Pot for most was his confiscation of his youth.

We were often frustrated by the misinformation handed us by applicants to better their chances at acceptance. We used to say there were three kinds of liars: liars, damn liars and refugees. Most common was the falsification of family trees to claim a supposed relative in the States. If these bogus sons and brothers got through — and I'm sure more than we were ever aware did — then the real brother or son was unable to support his claim when he finally got to the interview.

One day as we were opening new files, a family came before us with a rather farfetched fraud in mind. Sunshine banged the table when the supposed head of household listed his family members and their interrelationships,

The applicant was a toothless young man of no more than 20 claiming a son in the United States. On close inspection, we found that his "son" had gone to America on the merits of having worked several years at the U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh. If that wasn't fishy enough, Sunshine pointed out, "He says this is his wife!" The woman with him was sixty years old if she was a day.

"My Gawt!" The hut shook with Sunshine's laughter.

The toothless man dropped the deception immediately. His real name was Yort Sem, he told me in English. He begged my forgiveness and began to tell me about all the people he had lost under the Khmer Rouge, but I had heard the story a thousand times by then and was only half listening. I think I cut him off before he finished. I told him that if he had gone before INS with this story, he could have been rejected out of hand, and that as a convicted fraud, he would never be allowed to apply again despite his real merits. He told me that he had a cousin in Seattle. I said that that would do him no good if he was discovered in a lie.

Refugee Yort Sem before he got his dentures.

The old woman, a neighbor, he explained, turned out to be legit. She wanted him to take care of her and her grandchildren (there were five kids with her) on their way to America to join their father. Yort Sem figured that if he got to the States, he could send for his real wife, who was three months pregnant and living with him in camp. He was the sorriest, most desperate character I had met all day. I invalidated their application and told them to apply again. I also arranged for Yort Sem to come to work for JVA. His English was pretty good.

Another family came before us with four small children between the ages of 2 and 5. Their application claimed two boys and two girls. But I counted three girls. Sunshine asked why they had lied. I wondered if it might not have been some halfhearted attempt to match the family tree of some bogus relative. No, insisted the mother. Two boys and two girls. Where was the second boy? And who was this extra girl? The mother hoisted her 3-year-old and stood her on my desk. She hiked the child's skirt and revealed an unexpected explanation.

"Why does she dress him like this?" I asked.

The father was silent throughout. He only shrugged and looked away, embarrassed. It seemed the mother felt he'd look better as a girl. I had heard of such things.

I told them they could dress their kid however they wanted after they got to America, but for now they'd better cut his hair and get him into some trou-

sers. INS had a strict policy of rejecting cross-dressers, and I couldn't be sure they would make an exception for a child. Next case!

Case after case got rejected by INS because of what was called anchor fraud. The anchor was the relative in the States. At one point, tthe name of the game became "family reunification" and if you had, an immediate family relation in the States (mother, father, son or if daughter), your case was golden. The more distant the relative, the to worse your chances.

But even people with close relatives sometimes got rejected because the anchor had gotten through and into the States under false pretences, usually by giving a deliberately inaccurate family tree. The liar could not be punished. What could you do? Deport him? Where too? Invariably, then the relative in Thailand, who had a legitimate claim, was penalized with rejection.

A case in point was an experience our team leader, Karl, once had with an old Khmer woman whose son had gone America a year before with another elderly woman. The man had claimed this other woman as his mother, for reasons unknown. After the real mother arrived in Thailand and got in touch with her son in the United States, JVA received a flood of affidavits from the anchor recanting his initial claim and swearing up and down that the woman now before us was, indeed, his mother.

Karl believed her and said so on her application, but he could not send her to INS. Immigration had a strict policy against approving any and all claims based on anchor fraud. The INS officials complained we had wasted their time by sending such cases to them in the past. One particularly nasty INS man had gone into a fit of rage over such a case, berating a woman who beseeched him on her hands and knees to have mercy. She beat her head against the concrete floor of an interview hut, and the immigration officer rose and shouted, "Get this sniveling scum out of my sight!"

For this and other administrative reasons, Karl refused to present her case and suggested she apply for resettlement in another country. The woman camped outside his door day after day and sneaked in to see him every chance she could. Finally, he had his interp explain to her in no uncertain terms that she hadn't a snowball's chance and to stay away from his hut; more eligible cases required his attention. The woman let out a cry and swore if he didn't believe her, she would cut out her tongue, a frequent threat made by even the most obvious liars in the camp.

"Fine," said Karl, frustrated. "Just go away."

Later that day she came back with her mouth bloodied. She handed Karl a small parcel wrapped in newspaper. It was her tongue, and Karl spoke to no one for the next three days.

I had another interpreter later on, a levelheaded young man named Sokhan. Sokhan had been in the refugee business since the early 70s in Phnom Penh, where he was an interpreter for relief workers caring for the thousands upon thousands of displaced peasants who streamed into the city in search of sanctuary from the war. He was not much older than Sunshine, but he seemed more mature. Once his ambition had been to become a diplomat in the Cambodian foreign service. Now, his greatest hope was to find his family and take them with him to America.


JVA "interp Sokhan.

I worked with Sokhan in Mairut, a seaside camp on the south-eastern gulf shore, a stone's throw from Cambodia. While we were there, the resettlement program broke through a bureaucratic barrier that had kept thousands waiting for a crack at INS. For about a month, there was practically no way an applicant could get turned down. During that period, we processed some 30,000 people. Only out-and-out fraud could get a refugee rejected.

One day, just such a case came before Sokhan and me. The details elude me all these years later, but there was no way this case would pass. All they had to do was tell the truth, I pleaded with them, and they could go to America. They didn't have to tell this lie. Trust me. I urged them. Trust me. But when the head of household stuck to his story, I was forced to send them to INS and, I believed, certain rejection.

"Why?" I asked Sokhan. "Why wouldn't they trust me? Why wouldn't they just tell me the truth? What possible reason could they have to persist in this lie?"

It was a rhetorical question. I had asked it for so long that I no longer expected an answer. Then, Sokhan gave me one.

He told me how the Khmer Rouge would come into a village and set up shop. They made their headquarters inside Buddhist temples, removing the sacred Buddha image from its pedestal, tossing it onto a rubbish pile out back. In its place, they set up a desk with three chairs. A silent important looking man sat in the center; a questioner sat on one side of him, and a recording clerk on the other.

Outside, herded by armed cadres, the villagers lined up to be interviewed. One by one, they were brought inside and seated before the tribunal. The questioner spoke kindly and softly. The clerk took down every answer, while the judge made notes here and there. They asked all sorts of questions about each villager's background, in particular what skills each had to help the new government.

"Perhaps you were a civil servant?" they prompted. "We need experienced men to yet the country going again. Or were you a soldier? An officer, perhaps? You know we need brave fighting men to help defend the nation." And they recorded each person's family tree.

In this way, Pol Pot's men would ferret out the remnants of the *ancien régime*. Even the remotest tie to the old establishment could label one as an enemy of the new order. But the interview committee concealed this from the villagers, encouraging their trust and candor. Those who were fooled, Sokhan explained, who revealed that they had been municipal clerks, or small business owners, or even teachers, were separated out and eventually executed.

I had, of course, heard similar stories before and was not surprised that even minor officials were killed as enemies of the state. What hit home was the description of The Khmer Rouge interview process.

There I sat behind my desk, my interpreter to my left, a file runner on my right, as the next refugee family was brought in to be interviewed. I remembered the woman who had told the truth about her son in America and where it had gotten her. I never again asked an applicant to trust me. What would have been the point?

After trying to understand the rhyme and reason behind the stories I took down during three two years, I have tried to keep up with the scholarship on modern Cambodia. I have come across some ironies, one of them being the revelation that the atrocities recounted for me day after day were not, in fact, part of a systematic program of genocide. Despite what many of us had come to believe, and what our informants perceived, the carnage of the Khmer Rouge was actually the result of criminal incompetence and a misguided utopianism. Starvation, it seems, took more lives than political purges.

The magnitude of the horror may also have been overestimated. Michael Vickery (Cambodia 1975-1982, South End Press, 1984), for one, has made a very strong case for revising the once widely accepted figure of 2 million Cambodians dead under The Khmer Rouge. He believes, after careful study, that the figure is closer to 200,000 or 300,000, and that the atrocities were confined to specific places inside Cambodia and specific periods of internal dispute among the revolutionary leadership. The refugees we interviewed in Thailand tended to come from those areas, hence the distortion

Arguments over numbers, however, change nothing for the thousands who died or the millions whose lives were spared, but shattered.

While Cambodian factions argue statistics and debate the meaning of those 3½ years of death and slavery, more than 100,000 lost souls remain in purgatory, in the camps along the Thai border. The slow trickle of migration to build new lives in the West has continued throughout the last ten years, though it is gradually dwindling and may soon be cut off completely.

About a year after I returned to the States, I received a Christmas card from Seattle. Strange, I thought. I don't know anyone in Seattle. Inside was a photograph of a vaguely familiar Asian man, a kid really, with an even younger woman and a baby at his side. As I read the letter, the name Yort Sem returned to my mind, and I remembered the toothless would-be fraud who wound up working for JVA. With dentures he did not look like himself, but be had a great smile.

His letter was full of hope and happiness. He had a job in an electronics factory and was going to school nights. His son was a year old and his wife was pregnant again. He even had a car. He seemed convinced that I had saved his life by giving him a second chance.

Sunshine was reunited with his mother. I remember the day she passed 1NS and Sunshine announced he was leaving us to take her to the States. I visited them both a year later in San Diego, where they now reside.

I was pleased at Sunshine's adjustment to

America. He was still king of the roost. He had managed to buy a secondhand car, but could not yet drive it. No problem; a neighbor of his who had known and depended on him in the camp drove it for him. It was just like Sunshine to be on welfare and have a chauffeur. He wasn't on the dole for long, however. Today he is a San Diego policeman and drives his own squad car.

At his wedding in November, I had wanted to ask him if he still entertained thoughts of revenge, but a wedding did not seem the proper place to bring it up. At one point, however, between the blaring numbers of the Cambodian pop/rock band and the toasts in Khmer by the members of his wedding party, Sunshine took over the microphone to introduce his bride to his old friends, and I presumed, to thank everyone fur coming. Then he raised his glass and offered a toast of his own.

It was not a smiling toast, not the funny, heartwarming kind of toast his friends had offered before him. He gave his toast in the hut-shaking bass profundo I remembered from our camp days. And though I could not understand the words, the other guests at my table translated it variously as "a political statement" and "Long live the Khmer Republic." I could not help thinking it sounded more anguished than that, more full of regret and remembering. After all, his mother was there, but his father was not.

This piece first appeared in *The San Francisco Examiner, "This World Magazine"* on Sunday, October 15, 1989.

Cindy Lockhart

RPCV Brazil

I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Brazil for three years; from 1971 to 1974. Because of that experience, I was chosen from many applicants at my hospital in Boston to travel to Thailand and work in a Cambodian refugee camp.

It was January 1980. The weather in Boston was cold and damp, while the news carried nothing but the horrific situation in Cambodia, of the plight of Cambodians in their homeland, where the fighting seemed to have no end. I wanted to leave the drab winter of Boston and help somehow, in one of the refuge camps.

Boston's Children's Hospital, had a relationship with Rosalyn Carter, who worked tirelessly to assist in the orphans' displaced by the Pol Pot regime. She cut the ribbon on our new cardiac ICU and later made it possible for a team of two nurses, one lab professional and two doctors to go to Thailand and work in the newly set up pediatric ward at Kaio I Dang Refugee Camp. I was fortunate to be chosen to go and it was solely my public health experience in Northeastern Brazil in the Peace Corps that made it possible. Our housing was provided by Catholic Relief Services. We were on our way.

We arrived in Khoa I Dang refugee camp in January, 1980. As an RN, I fulfilled three roles while in the camp. I conducted vaccination campaigns, worked shifts in the pediatric tent, where there were long lines of cots where the mothers and children would sleep. Much of the job was starting IVs, administering antibiotics, adjusting oxygen tanks for those needing oxygen supplement and providing emotional support for the families and children via translators.

The camp was surrounded by Thai military guards, who stood along the walled-in facility to protect enemies from entering and to prevent any refugees from escaping into Thailand. Khoa I Dang consisted of large hospital tents, thatched huts as housing for the refugees, a jail and outpatient physiotherapy. Each day, we traveled by truck to the camp from Aranyaprathet, 5 KM from the Cambodian border, about a 30 minute drive, to begin our long shifts.

One day a week, I worked with a medical team of Thais, traveling to a different village each week. We

treated mostly children for parasites, various communicable diseases, the usual dehydration, diarrhea and vomiting, a common theme at that time. Our work week was usually six days. Each month or so, we took a few days off to decompress in Bangkok or travel to places beyond, but only for a few days.

I still have an entire notebook of letters and stories written by the mostly adolescents I worked with. These are the personal stories of life before Pol Pot and of the day, 17 April 1975, when their lives would change forever.

On that day most children were taken away from their parents and the parents were separated, as well. Detailed accounts provide information on their lives spent in inhumane conditions, separated from their families and of the starvation they suffered. Their education also came to a halt that day.

In our camp there was the constant search for family members. While there were some happy reunions there were many more losses and tragedies.

Fred Lingon

RPCV Sierra Leone

In 1964, all the students in my high school were called to attend a general assembly where we watched a film promoting the US government's new Peace Corps program. I was totally taken in and decided then and there that when I completed university, I would apply -- and I did.

On graduating from UC- Berkeley, one week later I was on my way to Sierra Leone where, for two years, I lived in the mountains near the country's largest waterfall and taught grades 4, 5 and 6 in the local primary school. On my return to the US, I wondered how I could top what had been a wonderful, life-changing experience.

After teaching assignments in Nigeria and Jamaica, I taught refugees from Indochina in the US, which led to working in a refugee camp in Indonesia for 18 months. I was then asked if I would sign a one-year contract to work with refugees in Thailand. Given the intensity of the work in Indonesia, I said no, but agreed to a six-month assignment. That was in April 1983, and I am still here in Thailand.

From 1983 until 1995, when the camps serving refugees from Indochina eventually closed, I worked as a trainer and curriculum developer in the Overseas Refugee Training Program which prepared refugees for resettlement in the US. Since 1998, I have been working with refugees and migrants from Burma in Mae Sot, first as Director of World Education and now, as Senior Advisor.

Reflecting on my life, there seems to have been a natural progression from my experiences as a Peace Corps Volunteer to my current work. What I learned and experienced as a Volunteer naturally led me to find opportunities for similar positive experiences. As a Volunteer I learned to be independent, I had the opportunity to show initiative and be innovative, and I was provided the space to express my resourcefulness and creativity. Whenever I considered job opportunities after Peace Corps, I believe I have always been drawn in a direction that mirrored what I experienced as a Volunteer. And, all those elements of my work that I found so sustaining as a Volunteer in a small village in Sierra Leone enabled me to be a better educator and manager of refugee programs in Thailand.

Photo Montage Courtesy of Fred Lingon

Acknowledgements

Friends of Thailand would like to thank the following people for their contributions to making this volume possible.

Aaron Williams: Former Peace Corps Director, for his letter recognizing the 50 years of Peace Corps Thailand

Dr. John Williams: former Peace Corps Thailand Country Director, for providing much inspiration, support and encouragement, as well as the ***Country Agreement*** of 1961

Khun Alisa Tangkanangnukul: former Executive Assistant of Peace Corps Thailand, for locating important photos and documents about Peace Corps Thailand's 50 years in the Kingdom and making them available for inclusion in this book

Leslie Duncan: former Administrative Officer of Peace Corps Thailand, for rescuing so many documents related to Peace Corps Thailand's history during the 2005-2006 renovation of the office and contributing them for this book and the Friends of Thailand web site

Peace Corps Washington: for allowing us to reproduce pieces from various Peace Corps journals

Mark Chambers and RPCV Steve Aufrecht: for the photos of Thailand used on open pages throughout the book

The following RPCVs who wrote and submitted the amazing selection of pieces included in this book

Sumner Sharpe, Thai I
Dennis Tolsma, Thai II
Warner Montgomery, Thai II
Darryl Johnson, Thai III
Pris Spires, Thai III
Mary Flad, Thai V
Kermit Krueger, Thai VI
Mike MacLeod, Thai IX
Charlotte Hutchison, Thai X
Jean Burton, Thai XI
John Burton, Thai XI
Amy Stone, Thai XI
Sandy Keith, Thai XI
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Pam Milchrist, Thai XVI
Cathy Riggs Salter, Thai XIX
Thom Huebner, Thai XIX
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Greg Ballmer, Thai XXI
Dick Murphy, Thai XXI
Karen Beatty, Thai 24
Sandra Storey, Thai 24
Collin Tong, Thai 24
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Chaz McCormack, Thai 51
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Welcome Bisson, Thai 118
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Cindy Lockhart, RPCV Brazil
Fred Lingon, RPCV Sierra Leone