

Sticky Rice

October 2013

*Chaturon On His
First Experience
With A PCV*

**An RPCV
Reflects on
October
Bpit Term**

*What's
Your Body
Telling You?*

**Wanting to Go
Home and Deciding
to Stay**

*Moving Forward
Isn't Moving On*

Grammatically Incorrect

*Everything You Wanted To
Know About Trat*

From the Editors

Welcome to the October issue of Sticky Rice! That amazing literary magazine/newsletter that will keep you entertained while you pretend to be researching lesson plan ideas or community projects (hey, your co-workers can't read English so how would they know any better?). Group 125 has taken over now- Natalia, Christine, and Nancy (the one writing this thing that I assume everyone is reading). We want to keep you guys entertained and keep the PCV morale up (I mean, Trey's weekly YouTube videos via Facebook are always good for that, but sometimes you just want to read a story or look at some pictures too!). We've brought back Better Know a Province, started some new partnerships with Friends of Thailand and PSN and set up a new section to get to know PC staff better. We'll be looking to do some contests in the future (art contests, story or essay contests where we will give you a topic or question to answer), so stay tuned for that, and much more. Thank you so much to everyone who contributed to this month's issue. We really appreciate it and hope everyone is doing well and staying safe at site!

Sincerely,
Christine, Natalia, and Nancy

In This Issue

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In which we ask a staff member 5 pressing questions

Dealing with the frustrations and humor in grammatical mistakes.

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You have to read it to believe it.

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We all know to eat right and exercise, but what else could we be doing?

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Plan your next bpai tiao with insider information

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Because slap game and quick draw get old fast

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The PSN has some parting words for us all to keep in mind

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From the Martha Stewart in each of us

Cover: *Sunset on Ko Chang in Trat*
Laura Jones

Got something to share with
the group? Send it to:

stickyrice_newsletter@gmail.com

Gin Khao Ru Yang?

We've all become familiar with the standard barrage of questions when meeting or first talking to Thai people: Gin khao ru yang? Bpai nai? Maa jak nai? Mii fan ru yang?

It's all in good spirit; they just want to get to know you better. We at Sticky Rice thought it would be fun to turn the questions around to some Thai folks and get to know them better, so we sent some questions to the Peace Corps staff. This issue we'll get to know Chaturon Kathong.

Chaturon is the Training and Programming Manager for the Youth in Development (YinD) project; you may know him best from Pre-Service Training. He also takes an active role in the Gender and Development

Committee's projects, recently helping to facilitate the Student Friendly Schools workshop. Here's what he had to say:



*Facilitating at the Student Friendly Schools Workshop.
Photo by Anuwat Khalertrum*

Sticky Rice: Where is your hometown and can you describe what it's like?

Chaturon Kathong: Banpong, Ratchaburi. It is not far from Bangkok. No tourist attraction but a lot of tasty foods.

SR: Where is your favorite place to visit in Thailand?

CK: Mae Hong Son. It is very peaceful.

SR: Can you share a favorite recipe?

CK: To make a good "Chaa-Yen". Make sure that you really put the tea bag in the boiling water – more than 100 Celsius Degree for 4-5 minutes. Your tea will taste better.

SR: Tell us about the first time you interacted with a PCV.

CK: As newly-graduated at that time, I was speechless for a while when talking to the first volunteer I met. Then, when the volunteer asked me the first question, my first answer was "Sorry, I don't know." with my lovely Thai smile. Feeling sorry for the volunteer and for the young me.

SR: The most people you've seen on one motorcycle?

CK: Only one family – father, mother and three kids.

"The beach solves anything and everything."

"There's some random lady in my classroom clipping her fingernails. I have no idea who she is and she won't leave."

"I think its silly that 6 is too early for bed time."

"Turn out we did have a reason for going to Udon."

"scabies and i made peace a

Texts from Thailand

long time ago"

A: "Look up snake bites in that medical book where there is no doctor."

B: "I'm not allowed to do things like that because within 5 minutes- despite having been nowhere near a snake- I will be sure I'm dying of a snake bite."

"it was going great and then someone tried to help."

"I'm sorry but its probably better than rabies."

"I was reliving my day and it's kinda crazy how much sense it made in the moment"

Have an amusing text? Send it to Rosie at 089-916-6610



Above: Koh Chang
Jamie Kuzemka

Fast Facts

Area: 2,819.0 km² (1,088.4 sq mi), the 63rd largest in Thailand.

Population: 222,013, with 1 Peace Corps Volunteer

Number of Ampurs: 7; Amphur Muang, Khlong Yai, Khao Saming, Bo Rai, Laem Ngop, Ko Kut and Ko Chang

Rainiest Month: June, with an average of 887.3 mm (34.933 in.)

Provincial Tree: Tropical almond



To get to Trat, from Bangkok, take a bus from Ek-kamai. Most people think us farangs are saying Tak when we say Trat so to avoid the headache sometimes I tell people it's easier to say you want to go to Koh Chang and then once you are on the bus say you want to go to the Trat Bus Station.

I'm a huge fan of Had Lek. It's a super Thai beach about 60 or so kilometers South of Amphur Muang, right near the Cambodian

Border Crossing. It has super calm water and doesn't have much beach but you can see Koh Kut and some Cambodian island that no one I know knows the name of.

Koh Chang and Koh Kood are also places to visit. It's not really a tourist attraction but in our Amphur Muang there are a bunch of those swifts that make that throw-up juice. Back when it was super rare and expensive, people starting having

them nest in the rafters, but now they're everywhere so if you go down there in the evening to nighttime you get to see and hear them. If you're lucky you might even get to hear someone set off a small bomb to try to make them all shutup.

Trat is well known for Koh Chang, yellow oil and everyone says that we're famous for gems and durian but Chantaburi steals those.

- Rosie O'Connor, YinD 125

Better Know a Province:
Trat

Game

Corner

This is a fun game to play with a large group of students to practice vocabulary words. It needs to be played outside or in a large, open space.

The teacher gives each student a vocabulary word card. The students sit in a circle with their cards.

One student walks around the outside of the circle and taps the head of each student he/she passes. When the student reads the vocabulary word on a student's card, that student must get up and chase the other student around the circle.

The first person must run around the circle and sit in the second person's spot. If he/she is tagged before reaching the spot, he/she must sit in the middle for one turn. Then, the second person walks around the circle.

Repeat with two new students. I've played this with students from first to sixth grade and they all seem to like this game a lot.

- Nancy Bunyea, TCCS 125



Photo: www.howtoliveoverseas.com

Kao Soi

Serves 10

Jay White, CBOD 124

1.5 kg *sien kao soi*
10 chicken legs
3 packets of *pong-ga-lee* (curry powder?)
5 large spoonfuls *naam prik geng pet*

1 carton of coconut milk
5 tbsp. Sugar
Dash of MSG (optional) v 3 cubes of chicken broth
Crushed red pepper, several small red onions, and limes for serving

1. Deep fry 1/2 Kg *sien kao soi* to crispiness.
2. Rinse 1 Kg *sien kao soi* several times. Make wet, clean, cool, and separated.
3. Boil the 1 kg clean kao soi a few minutes till tender and hot, then rinse/wash until cool.
4. Cut deep slits around all the chicken legs and cover with *pong-ga-lee*.
5. In a large pot on the stove add ~1/4 cup oil, *naam prik geng pet*. Mix and moisten with coconut milk
6. Add chicken legs/curry and mix thoroughly adding coconut milk as needed to moisten
7. Add ~5 tbsp. sugar, a dash of MSG (optional), ~2 tbsp. shrimp paste (optional), 3 cubes of chicken broth, and water. Mix well, turn paste into a soup.
8. Add coconut milk, enough to make the red soup a brownish-orange color.
9. Bring to boil and boil until chicken is thoroughly cooked. Taste and adjust accordingly.

Serving

Keep boiled noodles, fried noodles, and soup separate
Add boiled noodles to bowl first, followed by soup with one leg of chicken, some more coconut milk followed by choice of chopped baby red onions, crushed red pepper, and lime. Finally top off with fried noodles. *Laam dte dte!*

Better Homes

and Kanomes

Peanut Butter Oatmeal Banana Chocolate Chip Energy Bites

Emily Ball, TCCO 124

3 large bananas (6-8 smaller bananas)

1/2 c. peanut butter

1/4 c. olive oil

1 tsp. vanilla

2 c. oats

1 tsp. baking powder

1/4 tsp. cinnamon

1/4 tsp. salt

1/2 c. chocolate chips (can use more or less depending on your preference)

Combine mashed bananas, peanut butter, oil and vanilla. Then mix in oats, baking powder, cinnamon and salt. Once mixed, add chocolate chips. Scoop teaspoon sized balls and place on non-stick cooking surface. I spread a little shortening or oil over tinfoil. They don't expand much, so you can place them close together. Bake at 350F for 12-14 minutes.

These can also be enjoyed as delicious dough kept in the fridge as a treat! No need to bake.



Photo: Emily Ball

Magic Soup Sai Fah-Tong

Jill Sandiford, TCCS 125

So, first buy a pumpkin, or part of a pumpkin. I used half a pumpkin for my soup. (I baked the other half with a little bit of olive oil. That was delicious too.) You also should buy some sort of onion, shallots, garlic. I used one big onion, one big shallot, and about 6 garlic cloves.

While you chop up the onion and shallot, heat up some oil, I used olive, over low heat in your biggest soup pot. Don't put a lid on heating oil, because I have seen some crazy fires from that kind of bad behavior. When you lift the lid it's like a firebomb. BAM! Don't do it.

Anyway, sweat the onions, while you are sweating over chopping a carrot. Carrots are sweet and nutritious. Win-win. I cut them down the middle, cut the halves into fourths and then cut the sticks into small pieces of Trivial Pursuit-cheese. Add the carrot to the cooked onion and stir occasionally while you chop the garlic cloves and some fresh ginger. The more ginger you add, the better and healthier I think the soup is. An inch to three inches should be good. Chop it good and fine and then add it to the pot.

Peel the pumpkin and cube it up and add it to the pot. Stir it up little darlin'. Now you can get creative. Tomatoes in the fridge about to go bad? Throw 'em in. Want some meat? Go for it. Coconut milk? OK, go. You are going to need to add some water, or broth. Maybe a liter? 6 cups? Enough to cover the veggies and let it all simmer for a bit.

Add some spices. Paprika, cinnamon, hot pepper, salt, fish sauce, sugar, you know what you like. I added Cajun seasoning I got from Bourbon Street Restaurant in Bangkok. If you want a sweeter soup, go with cinnamon and coconut milk.

Cook about 20 minutes until the pumpkin is easily pierced with a fork. I then throw it into my best friend at site, my blender, and blam-o. Bomb diggity. Food that makes you happy and it's cheap, which makes you feel really good.

After I share, I put what is left into the freezer in the Thai rubber-band-baggie style and eat it another day. Right now my freezer is stuffed with frozen fruit, chicken soup, masaman curry, and pumpkin soup. You don't have to blend the soup for it to be delicious, whatever floats your boat or finds your lost remote.

"It's Look Like Rain."

Jeanette Clausen, TCCS 125

The other day a student brought me a little book of Thai and English phrases and pointed to a sentence she wanted me to see: "It's look like rain."

It did look like rain that day – it's the rainy season after all. I praised the student for learning English and told her how to say the sentence correctly: It looks like rain. She gave me a blank look and pointed to the sentence again. I said, yes, it looks like rain, *fon dok*. She seemed satisfied and went on her way.

The sentence illustrates a common mistake in Thai English and a dilemma of language teaching: How to teach contractions. I think we must teach them – if we don't, our sentences sound stilted and inauthentic. Compare:

It is a beautiful day.
It is raining.
What is your name?

It's a beautiful day.
It's raining.
What's your name?

When we teach using a communicative method, we want students to pick up chunks of language (What's your name?) without worrying about grammar.

Inevitably, some learners will draw faulty conclusions. It would be easy for learners to get the impression that "it" and "it's" are synonyms, freely interchangeable with each other. Or it might seem that "it's" is the preferred word, with "it" being reserved for specific (but unknown) contexts. Similar recent examples, spoken by adult Thais:

It's mean "really," jing jing.

What's was the last country to join ASEAN?

The first example above is from a Thai native speaker who was explaining the word "*leuy*" to me. The second

is from a Thai English teacher's questions for an ASEAN camp. Both sentences are jarring to an American ear, or at least to mine, but I'm at a loss for ways to prevent or remedy such errors without causing trauma to the speakers.

The errors with "it's" and "what's" may remind us of American misspelling such as "it's" for "its," "their" for "they're," "your" for "you're," etc., though the latter are a different category, since they're words that are pronounced the same but have different meanings.

However, maybe the Thai speakers' errors are not so different from commonly heard American (mis-)usages such as:

They're going to do it for he and I.

I haven't drank my coffee yet.

We don't know whom the next president will be.

What's do you think?

What's the most ridiculous abuse of grammar that you've seen in Thailand?

Tell us at stickyrice_newsletter@gmail.com



Sometimes at night, after my host siblings have quieted down, the giggling has ceased and they are all comfy and warm in their beds dreaming of places they have never been to- only read about or seen pictures of, I go to the window in my room, look up at the stars in the dark night sky and think of you.

I think of where you are now and how far away this really is. How vast the world is and how you are as far away from me as you could possibly be. And part of me feels guilty and part of me feels glad. I am missing your soccer games and your wrestling matches and taking your picture when you catch large fish from Lake Secor and go to dances and dress up for holidays, and I am missing the fights and laughter and the way we always sat in the living room and wrestled each other on the rug or just simply talked or stared out at the large picture window watching the seasons turn. I am missing the way you sang in the morning when you were happy, and the way you sat quietly as you drank your coffee, tea, milk, orange juice when you were sad- always sitting on the porch, greeting the day. I am missing the way we would swim in the pool in the summer, rake the leaves from the three large oak trees in the fall, shovel the driveway togeth-

er in the winter, take Sable, our dog, for long walks in the woods in the spring. I will miss your childhood, but being the oldest, I guess that's the way it was supposed to be. I can't stick around and remain a child with you. As much as I want to French braid your hair for spirit day at school and greet you when you get off the bus, and play soccer with you in the backyard, I know I couldn't stay there and do all of those things, because growing up means starting your own life and doing the things that you always wanted to do.

I had to be selfish. Because I could only spend so many hours flipping through National Geographic magazines or dreaming about other places while I walk through the woods behind our house. I watched too many things change- like losing the fields behind our house to large houses for rich people who dreamt Westchester would be the perfect place to raise a family and grow old. We watched men cut up the earth and pave a road, tear down the place we played. Our neighbor's house was torn down and all of the memories of spying on him and walking through those fields as the sun set in front of us are just that, only memories. We have to sneak back to the meadows now. But I still went. The day before I boarded the plane, I went to those meadows and stood in the first field. There is a large tree that stands in between the first and second field and when I was younger I always thought of that tree like it was a sign- that this was the tree dividing me from childhood and adulthood. And I watched the tree grow over time. I stood in the first field and looked at the outline of the snarly, old tree as the sun set behind me- pink and orange setting the sky on fire, and walked to it, past it, into the second field, and thought about how this might be the last time I ever see it again. Because moving on is inevitable. I can't be that girl walking through the woods anymore, thinking aloud and imagining the things I want to do.

I am here now. And I miss you and think of you sometimes. But then sometimes I don't. And when I don't it's usually on purpose. Because you'll always be in my life, but there's no point in looking back when there is so much here that I love and so much I want to do. So I look out the window and think of how you are waking up right now and getting ready for school. And your life is like mine was in so many ways- good. But someday you will grow up too, and I hope you move forward and don't waste too much time dreaming. Because I want you to cross oceans too or do whatever it is that you think of when you walk in the meadows alone.

Where You Are

(For My Siblings)

Nancy Bunyea, TCCS 125

To Your Health

Julia Schulkers, TCCO 124

Stop, hey, what's that sound? Listen to your body and see what's going down.

Peace Corps Volunteers are fighters. There's no doubt about it. We fight tough environment conditions, difficult cross-cultural challenges, homesickness, and a semi-permanent state of confusion about how to process our service. At the end of the day, though, we push through it with whatever coping mechanism we've developed in order to fulfill our 27-month commitment. Sometimes this comes in the form of writing, exercising, but more often than not people "tough it out." Too often I see volunteers sidestepping their health and adopting a *mai-bpen-rai* attitude when health concerns arise. Here, I encourage you to start listening to your body because where there is no doctor, only you and your self-awareness can know what you need and when you need it and I offer some suggestions about how to tune into this awareness.

Constant Fatigue – Thailand is hot and fatigue is

common. When it is abnormal? When should you be concerned? If you feel the need to sleep 10 hours per day or more then tune into this. If you often get easily confused or dizzy and need to rest often it's a sign of fatigue that may need to be addressed. Health concerns can range from dehydration, to anemia, an underlying infection, or walking pneumonia. Start first by drinking 2-3 L of water per day for at least a week. Log it if you have to. I can't say this enough: ***underconsuming water is one of the main contributions to an immune system that can't function its best. Drink water. If the problem persists, call the Medical Office.***

Noticeable and Unexplainable Weight Loss or Gain – The weight of a volunteer fluctuates and usually it's normal. We bike a lot, eat a lot, sweat a lot, and get a lot of diarrhea. When is it not normal? When you have no idea why. This could be from malabsorption of nu-

trients, lack of proper nutrients, overexertion, eating the incorrect proportion of food groups, hormone or thyroid issues, or an underlying illness. The list goes on. First, become aware of your diet by keeping a mental log of your food intake, at the very least. This will help medical staff see if there are areas where more nutrients need to be added or reduced. **When should you call PCMO?** Typically if the weight loss or gain becomes so significant that it might impact your overall health or when accompanied with other symptoms such as fatigue.

Lingering Sadness, Depression, Hopelessness or Anxiety – We're told coming in that Peace Corps service is a roller coaster of an emotion ride that puts the loopest, tallest, puke-worthy attractions at Disney World to shame. Yes. I said it. It's part of the process. When should you become concerned? Unfortunately, often the time when you should become concerned is also the time that you're least likely to be aware and notice it. So take this as a cue to do a self-check for these flags: you sleep a lot more than average, you have little to no desire to partake

in your normal hobbies that make you happy, you dread waking up in the morning and going to work or stop going altogether, you feel tired all the time, you have unexpected and frequent crying spells, you're constantly unexplainably angry, you drink alcohol more than average or abuse substances, you lie awake in bed at night with your mind racing and unable to sleep, you feel like there is no point in going on to live (this one is particularly serious, *please* reach out to a trusted Peace Corps Volunteer and the PCMO or PC Staff member as soon as possible).

What's one of the easiest ways to become aware of this other than the above red flags? Listen to the feedback of your friends and those who know you best. Typically, when a clinical depression or mental health concern arises we're not in a state to recognize this so our loved ones can act as a much needed mirror. Take their advice, do a quick self-check then call the PCMO with any mental health concerns. They are here to help and many volunteers in the past have had *overwhelmingly positive feedback* when they reached out. Peace Corps is difficult

but we're here to help you through. **When should you call?** The sooner the better.

Obviously, above is a non-comprehensive list of problems that arise throughout our service. I urge you to avoid fighting through illnesses or health concerns and instead start to take a self-aware and pro-active approach to preserve good health.

- First, do a frequent check and ask yourself how you feel. If others point out health problems they notice about you, it's because they care, so take it as a cue to evalu-

Help Medical Staff Help You

Remember, when you contact the doctor, do what you can to help them help you. Be as specific as possible with your health problem. Have notes on your health concern with the following:

- When it began
- Exhaustive list of symptoms
- The severity
- How it's affecting your overall quality of health
- Temperature (taken over a couple days)
- Any related past health concerns
- Pertinent daily lifestyle activities that may impact this health concern (i.e. Significant weight loss but little to no exercise or physical activity is definitely important to know).
- First day of your last period, (for females)
- Any and all medications, including vitamins and supplements.

This will help you navigate the health system in Thailand better and hopefully speed of the process of helping Rit and other medical staff help get to the root of your health problem.

- ate yourself.
- Next, jot down as much as you can about the concern and keep it handy when calling medical to make sure you don't forget anything important. Then call.
- Last, get some rest and relaxation and make sure you often engage in activities or hobbies that add to your own personal happiness (you know, in between the duu ngans, funerals, weddings, and thai-teows). Draw, write, meditate (a personal favorite), watch some funny movies (laughter is GREAT medicine), or call a friend who makes you smile.

Please note that the advice and information in these articles is not intended to replace professional medical advice. If you have a problem or need help please contact Thailand's Peace Corps Medical Office for any and all concerns. You can reach the Medical Officer, at 081-811-5855, the Back-Up Medical Officer at 081-925-1898. You can reach the Medical Office at 02-243-0140 ext 503 during office hours.

To Your Health is an ongoing health column written by Julia Schulkers from Group 124. It addresses health needs of volunteers and reminds us how to stay at our best while serving in the Peace Corps. Email me for suggested features or feedback at julia.schulkers@gmail.com Stay happy. Stay healthy.

An Abomination of Unholy Proportions

Jay Padzensky, TCCS 125

Fins, black beady eyes, and rows of razor sharp teeth

Yet all the nuisances of Legos strewn about the floor, myriad "why" questions, and an open door while the air conditioner runs

What could have compelled me to partake in such impure and base actions?

Those with two legs and none at all should never mix

What have I done?

He clumsily approaches, I can hear his voracious biting and feel his burning need for my affection

Quickly, think! How do I avoid him? Where can I hide?

Oh, too late...

*CHOMP

CHOMP

CHOMP* "faTHr" *CHOMP* "i IUV u" *CHOMP* "pleEse..."

Oh, uh, son, how utterly... happy I

am... to see you *CHOMP*

Who am I kidding? His mere appearance invokes bile, and its faint aroma incites an attempt on my life

He doesn't belong in my land dwelling home

He certainly can't survive in the sea

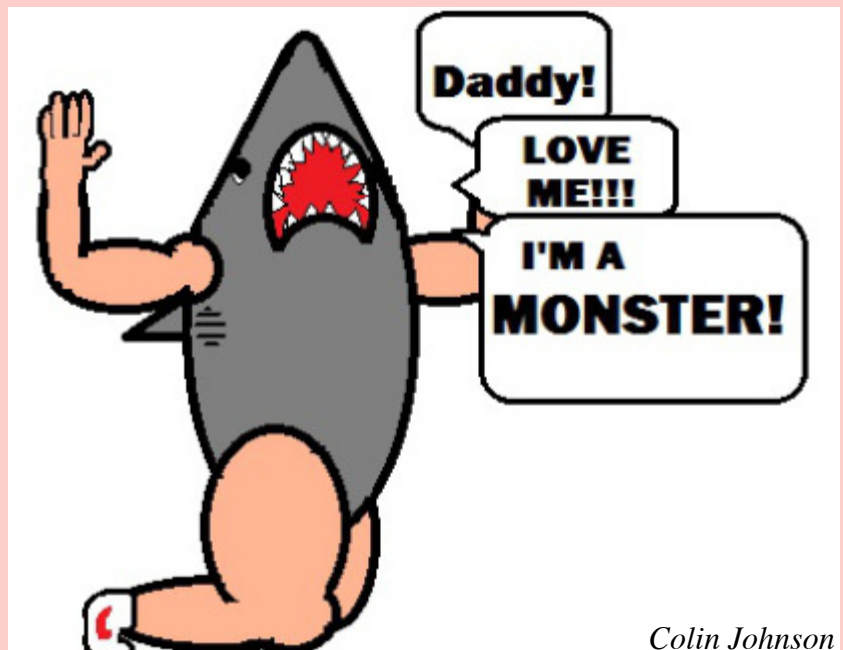
What's a father to do? My only comfort, my solitary confinement, wrestling my unending torment

A soccer ball kicked, he flops miserably on the ground, his gills now bruised

At the zoo we pass the seal exhibit, he goes into a blood frenzy, a child now without limbs

My face in my hands, despondent, I hear through hundreds of gnashing teeth...

"I'M A MONSTER-RRR!!!"



Colin Johnson

Tales from the Beyond

Jeff Kindschuh, CBOD 122

It's been a while since my Peace Corps days, but even back in America, where my time is spent managing the bread, organic dairy, and novelty ice cream sections of Omaha, Nebraska's newest Whole Foods, the days marking the beginning of the October Bit-Term vacation fill me with a nearly orgasmic exhilaration.

I completed my service as a CBOD volunteer in deep Issan, in Ubon Ratchathani province, actually. I was surely the only farang ever to spend not one, but two bit-term vacations in my tiny village. I think back on it now and I'm flooded by memories so vibrant and meaningful that I almost want to vomit: drinking "Seua Daengs" (Saeng Som and Red Fanta on the rocks) at the Karaoke whorehouse with my AwBawTaw's Rong-Balat and the guy that was in charge of keeping my Nayoke's Honda City free of bird droppings; playing LaoKao drinking games and smoking SMS Keaows in the rice fields with my PooYai Baan and his two illegitimate sons; riding side-saddle on my buddy's 'bicycle', shooting gangrenous soi-dogs with slingshots...

But by far the most meaningful, most cherished memory I have from that time is the small, somewhat odd celebration that the janitorial staff and cooks at my village school would have.

None of the teachers attended this celebration, which

makes sense, I guess. After all the janitorial staff only had 13 fingers between the two of them, and the three cooks were rumored to have each touched a serving ladle with their bare feet! But being a PCV...well, you know!

My friends called this celebration the "Day of the Duck," and it took place on the first day of bit-term every year, after the students had left and the teachers were off ignoring their duties at whatever job they may have held during the break. Day of the Duck (it sounds even better in Tinglish) began around 11 a.m., when we would all meet at the school's kitchen and wait for Pii Daeng to show up with the five ducks needed for the festivities. Daeng would show up, carrying the ducks upside down; their warm, plump bodies bound together at the feet, dangling from that ubiquitous pink ribbon/twine so beloved by Thai farmers.

My role in the festivities would begin at this point, when I would very gently slide the freshly sharpened

Left: Ducks being prepared at a food stand at Don Chedi festival in Suphan Buri. Christine Bedenis.



blade of a rusty kitchen knife through the jugular of each of the ducks, spilling their warm, fragrant life-blood into a large collection bowl. I remember my hands quivering slightly, fingertips tensed, at one with my greasy knife handle, feeling the fading pulse radiating up through the blade's tang.

Oel ngati kameie, ma Tsmukan, ulte ngaru seiya ireiyo. Ngari hu Eywa saleu tìrea, tokx 'i'awn slu Na'viyã hapxi,

I would say as I released each creature from its earthly bonds: I See You, Brother, and thank you. Your spirit goes with Eywa, your body stays behind to become part of the People.

After the final rattling breath had escaped the last ruined throat, and the last of my bitter tears had landed in the swirling maelstrom of rich duck blood, I would begin the de-feathering, first soaking the recently deceased into hot water, then tearing with violent swipes great fistfuls of feathers from their steaming corpses. By the time this was over, my friends would be finished with their own tasks – mostly drinking rice whiskey from the bottle and then blowing great fireballs – and we would all take a duck, a rough-hewn chopping board

and a heavy knife, together easily the most expensive equipment that the school owned.

As the sound of flesh and bone rent under heavy blows of honed steel began to fill the room and the scent of blood and viscera began to fill our nostrils, my friends would begin their Day-of-the-Duck-song.

*Thank You, O' beloved Duck,
For your flesh and bones.
You are so delicious, did you know?
Your blood is so creamy,
your marrow so mild,
Your meat is so sweet, as it is in the wild.
Your heart and your liver,
your brain and your eyes,
We will eat with rice whiskey, while our brains get fried!*

I didn't sing, of course. I'm not a big singer, and it is only just recently that I've completed translating this lovely tune, but I still enjoyed the music, especially the last line about getting our brains fried. It is so beautiful in Thai!

Instead of singing I would focus on the task at hand, letting the sweet sound of drunken janitors singing in their rough, country accents lull me into a

pleasant stupor as I hacked and twisted and ripped my way through my duck carcass.

The feet would always be the first to go – after the five pairs were chopped off, they would be thrown on the little charcoal Dtao for an afternoon snack! The oil gland on the tail would need to be cut away, requiring cleaving meat away from bone, lest the tender duck meat be tainted by the foul oil within, and the crop would need to be removed from the neck – a task made easier by simply hacking the neck into many bite-sized pieces. My favorite part followed: the part where all the innards were removed and dumped into a quivering, multicolored heap. Intestines, lungs, heart, liver, kidneys, gallbladder, voice-box... I would separate what was edible, which would then follow the duck feet onto the Dtao for more grilled snacks!

After that it was just a matter of hacking the meat and bone into manageable pieces. My duck was usually used for soup, so my pieces could be a bit jagged, although this meant that I had the additional responsibility of cleaving each severed duck head in half, preferably with enough caution to leave the marble-sized brain

intact.

After this it was drinking and smoking and watching herbs and spices pounded into powder and then blended. Meat was finely chopped, water was boiled, and soon the smell of cooked duck meat would fill the school's kitchen.

It is when I think back to that meal – the Duck Laab and Dtom Bpet, the grilled duck and cold congealed duck blood with peanuts and mint leaves; my own vegetarian meal of steamed lettuce and Thai eggplant – that I am the most homesick for October Bit-Term in rural Issan: a time and a place where even the most diverse among us can come together for a good time.

Today Was a Good Day

Jes Milberg-Haydu, TCCS 125

Today was a good day.

I know because what I remember are the smiles shining through the down-pour that pummeled me on my bike ride to school this morning.

Today was a good day.

I know because I don't remember changing out of my rain-soaked clothes. It might of been the first time I've felt cold in this country, hairs on my arms standing straight up. But, warm conversation enveloped me as I emerged from the bathroom.

Today was a good day.

I know because, while the

rain kept me inside unable to put in my lunch order, my coworker had my favorite meal waiting for me when I entered the break room at noon.

Today was a good day.

I know because our adorable school administrator, P' Tip, did me a favor before I had a chance to ask her. She handed me the forms I'd requested with a bag of fresh fruit.

Today was a good day.

I know because my frustration with an unruly class evaporated when a fourth grader handed me an enormous toy flower.

And when I went to the cor-

ner store to replenish my host family's coffee supply, I left with a bag of gorgeous oranges. Free of charge. That's probably why the seeds didn't bother me.

Today was a good day because the rain slowed to a sprinkle for the last stretch of my ride home. I spent time with my Yaa on the patio, peeling oranges and looking across the rice fields. The rest of my family will come home shortly and we'll spend the evening cooking, playing card games, watching Thai soap operas, and eating. eating. eating.

That's how I know today's a good day in Thailand.



The Thai Youth Theatre Festival is an annual event where Thai students from around the country learn about theater skills and perform a prepared English show. Applications will be available soon.

Thai Youth Theatre

My husband placed a wooden coin on our bed's headboard. It clearly had two sides, and one was placed deliberately up. "If you ever feel like leaving," he said, "just turn the coin over, and we can go." (I was always the one who most loudly voiced my feelings of uselessness, boredom, and despair, prompting the improvised exit strategy he gave me.)

I never turned the coin over, not for real, anyway. Sometimes I looked at it, picked it up, turned it over and over in my hand, fingering it and feeling no tactile difference between the stay side and to go side. But then, I'd put it back, right-side up.

If I had turned it over, we would certainly have talked about it, about the flipping of the coin. Our options, everything that made me feel the way I did in the moment I had turned it over, we would have hashed it out, discussed it, taken everything into consideration. It wasn't a magic button or a portal back to a more comfortable, less nonsensical life. But still, something

about turning the coin over felt final.

I couldn't cavalierly put the coin go-side to the ceiling. Transferring the weight of that huge decision to one small action—indeed, separating myself from that desire to go home, making it contingent on something else—forced me, often, in my first months at site, to slow down and back away from the brink of impulsiveness.

"I have discovered that the 'I don't want to' lives in the visceral discomfort of being out of place..."

I don't know where the coin is now. Over a year later, I still encounter feelings of uselessness and boredom, frustration, and anger.

Sometimes I wake up and think, "I don't want to" and those are the first words out of my mouth after nights of restless sleep or bad dreams or before a Monday or a Thursday that promises to be especially trying. "I don't want to" but I

do roll out of bed, plug in the hot water, shower, thus letting my small actions separate me from those baser thoughts that would at one time have driven me to feel the weight of that wooden coin pressing gently into my palm.

The routine, the distraction of pouring hot water over oatmeal, slicing bananas with the side of a spoon, of stuffing a skirt into my backpack and rustling around on the shelf for my keys, of preparing myself physically to go do the things that I must do—it is the morning ritual of self-composure that on those difficult days helps me to slip into the psychic space of composure, that helps me to leave the negativity behind.

I have discovered that the "I don't want to" lives in the visceral discomfort of being out of place, a discomfort that does not ever go away, but which lessens nonetheless, and which, it seems, is part of what it means to be here.

The follow up, though, "but I will," is what keeps me putting that mental coin back down again, without turning it over. Today, and everyday leading up to it, I am here.

One Last Thing

Erin Gallegos, TCCO 124