

PEACE CORPS TRAINING

Thailand Group VI, June – August 1963

Bloomington, Indiana, USA and Bangkok, Thailand had – and surely still have – much in common in those months we Americans call "summer." Both were/are unbearably hot and humid. The sole difference between them are the regular (almost daily) rains that however briefly break the heat in Bangkok. Alas, in the early 1960's air conditioning in recent – not to mention older – buildings was the exception rather than the expectation. One movie theater in downtown Bloomington boasted it was air cooled. That meant it had huge fans somewhere out of sight that blew hot, humid air into the theater. Hey! It was better than enjoying a movie in the otherwise humid, breeze free air.

We were housed in a complex built by the US government during World War II to house officers who were in training in Bloomington. Twenty years later those temporary buildings were still being used for student housing by Indiana University. Give the climate Indiana University then did not have a large summer school so it's even then huge campus often seemed all but deserted. And yet its even then renowned school of music put on a production of Verdi's Aida in the football stadium, complete with live elephants in the grand victory procession. Sorry, I got no photo of the elephants, so you'll have to take my word and my memory on that. Eat your heart out, Metropolitan Opera in NYC, you've never had real, live elephants any time you put on Verdi's Aida!

The photos are organized into three groups:

- first, the University campus and buildings;
- second, photos of members of Group VI trainees;
- and third, (see below)...

The last one or two weeks of our training we were at a summer camp of some sort in southern Wisconsin, near Elkhorn, I believe. I'd like to be more precise, and having lived all but four years of my post Peace Corps life in greater Chicagoland, Illinois, you might suppose I should have such details firmly in mind. However, to Illinoisans Indiana and Wisconsin respectively are but nuisances on the way to visiting friends or relatives in Michigan's lower or upper peninsulas. That said, RPCV's from other early groups may note that near the end of their training they were put into a jungle survival training of unimaginable horrors and rigors. Every volunteer in our group, however, was to be a teacher of English as a second language. And so the third section of photos will show the appropriate testings of the needed fortitude we would face. And you of other early groups, let it also be noted, envy is not attractive. We worked hard. Oh, how we worked hard!