

Peace Corps Thai 34 and Thai 35 Hilo Reunion

March 8 – 15, 2017



Thai 34

Front: Pat Hughes, Carolyn Nickels-Cox, Linda Gotthardt Allende, Nancy Schuler, Chuck Cox.
Back: Steve Fox, Tim Ryan, Bob Bidwell, Dennis Lemke, Jim Kreuze, Dallas Schuler, Larry Carey, Sue Eberlein Lundquist, Beverly McLeod, Roseanne Eparvier.



Thai 35 and Friends

Front: Sandy Powers, Tom Montgomery. Back: Don Starzyk, Tracy Cate, Adele Hansen, Steve Hansen.

Wednesday

March 8, 2017

People began to arrive at the Hilo Seaside Hotel. Later that afternoon, those who had checked in drove to the Hilo Public Library to view a movie about Peace Corps training on Hawaii. Afterwards, the group moved to the New Chiang Mai Restaurant for a dinner of talking and renewing friendships!



Then.....Now



Sandy Backus Powers, Thai 35

I remember the first time I walked up the stairs at my college in Thonburi and all the students quickly cleared a path for me. I turned around wondering what was going on. The respect for teachers is unparalleled. I continued teaching upon my return to the states, and there was no clearing a path for teachers.



Bob Bidwell, Thai 34

During training, and thanks to Joe Rodriguez, I finally found myself, for the first time in my life, part of a clique; PC service led in a roundabout way to my becoming a pediatrician in Hawaii, and the adoptive father of a Vietnamese son; my professional life has focused on advocacy on behalf of LGBTQ youth and youth in the juvenile justice system.



Geri Tanji Carey, Thai 37

what amazed me when i first went to my site in the northeast to work in child nutrition centers was how often i had to explain my nationality vs my ethnicity. thais/villagers assumed my dad was a caucasian born in america and my mother was japanese from japan. i tried to explain that my father was japanese; born in america to japanese parents who came to america in the early 1900's and that my mother was also born in america to japanese parents who also immigrated to america in the early 1900's. on site i was an american peace corps volunteer; in bangkok in the company of one or two male peace corps volunteers it was assumed i was a thai prostitute, though i never felt disrespected or mistreated.

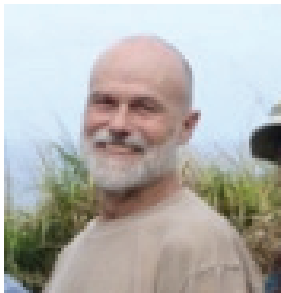
Thursday

March 9, 2017

More people arrived during the day, which started with breakfast at Ken's House of Pancakes, a short walk from the hotel. Later, people explored Hilo, and some bought chairs for the next day's outing to Honomu and Pepe'ekoo. Tom Montgomery, Don Starzyk and Tracy Cate took their first bike hike for the week along the coastline. The day ended with the lovely Welcome Dinner at Hilo Seaside's Coconut Grill!



Then.....Now



Larry Carey, Thai 34



Tracy Cate, Thai 35

Barbara Cate. 41 years together. In the deal I garnered her two kids and eventually their spouses. And, then their kids (our grand kids) and their spouses. This evening I am taking my oldest grandson out to celebrate his birthday, 31. I am sure Adam and I will talk about his spouse to be. Barbara and I had motorcycle trips and tandem bicycling trips and time on our tree farm. Barbara got recognized for her teaching and I for my work in local forestry. Barbara died in February. It has left a hole in my heart.



Chuck Cox, Thai 34

Getting on the bus and joining the circus (PC Thailand) started me off on a lifetime of playing and performing, sometimes in sideshows, small tents, or even under big tops. My privilege has been to play with a troupe of wonderful colleagues and students for 45+ years. I love you all. These people and experiences taught me a lot...the values of otherness, challenge, success and failure. I am blessed. (not an obit...more to come)

Friday

March 10, 2017

We had breakfast at Pat and Trish's hotel, the Hilo Hawaiian. Then, it was time to revisit the past. Don, Tom and Ellen, Tracy and Sandy, Steve and others drove to the Waipio Valley overlook before meeting up with the rest of us at the Hilo Hospital and Rainbow Falls. We all moved on to Thai 35's Honomu training site. That was exciting, as the site has changed, but the giant banyan trees are still there, bigger than ever. After that, it was onto Akaka Falls, before driving to Thai 34's training site at Pepékeo. There, folks bought lunch at Low's, which has been on the corner forever. We ate and reminisced about where the school buildings had once been. Some remarked that the space looked smaller than they remembered. It wasn't until we began to leave that some folks rummaged through the bush at the back, and found that the open space that was the training site and is now a park really WAS smaller. The "jungle" has taken over quite a bit of what we remember, and even our mud slide hill has become overgrown. Later, we had dinner at the Hilo Seaside Hotel Restaurant/Ponds Restaurant, and Steve began the job of recording RPCV oral history interviews, to be archived at the Kennedy Library at Harvard University.



Then.....Now



Carolyn Nickels-Cox, Thai 34

I will never forget walking into my MS 1 class of 50 girls in Kalasin for the first time, and being amazed at how well-behaved they were. I could have heard a pin drop. Those girls were my inspiration, and led to my becoming a teacher when I returned to the U.S. I still teach in San Francisco, and I still love it! And I love my son and his family, whose front door is 10' from Mark's and mine.



Henry Domzlaski, Thai 34

The Peace Corps saved me. My prison sentence was suspended. Then I learned Thai which resulted in my being picked up by the UN. 28 years providing legal protection to refugees. That took me to Africa, where I now live on the beach in Tanzania. Two daughters - Tessa (Thai mom) and Kira (Burmese mom). What a ride!



Sue Eberlein Lundquist, Thai 34

One of the things I learned from my Thai experience is that I value my privacy. Most of the Thai people were very loving and sincerely interested in knowing "The Western female/starlet". I understood this and tried to accommodate. However, I found it exhausting to be MISS SUSANNE 24/7. The second year I was able to blend more because I changed schools and moved to Bangkok. I also went from teaching boys to teaching girls.

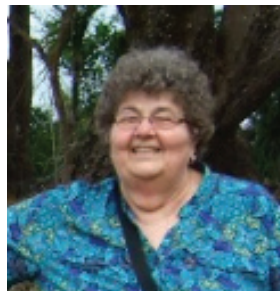
Saturday

March 11, 2017

After breakfast, much of the group spent the day at Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park. Mark, Carolyn and Sue hiked along the Kilauea Caldera to the observation point, passing steam vents along the way. Bob, Jim, Jeanette, Tim, Jan, Dennis, Dallas, Nancy and Linda hiked the Kilauea Iki Crater trail. Don, Tom and Ellen, Steve and Adele, Tracy and Sandy visited the Thurston Lava tube. They had lunch at the Military R&R Camp in the Park. Later in the afternoon, Beverly, Jim and Sue also hiked the Thurston Lava Tube. Dennis, Linda, Mark and Carolyn drove up Mauna Loa Road with Bob. A big bunch came together for dinner at the Thai Thai Restaurant in Volcano. That put everyone in good position to return to the caldera's observation center for night viewing of Halema'uma'u's "main pit." It was a busy, but great day for most of us! Our buddy Steve Fox, however, continued interviewing people back at the Hilo Seaside :(



Then.....Now



Roseanne Eparvier, Thai 34

As soon as John Kennedy announced the formation of the Peace Corps, I knew that's what I wanted to be part of. The Peace Corps led me to my career. I didn't realize I wanted to be a teacher until I taught in Thailand. I spent 30 years teaching elementary ed in Wisconsin, participated in a summer program in Dalian, China, teaching English, and spent a summer teaching in Bundaberg, Australia.



Steve Fox, Thai 34

Peace Corps planted the seed of interest in government service and living overseas; I decided I wanted to join the Foreign Service. That's a tough nut to crack, so I went to law school to keep options open. Entered the Foreign Service in 1980. Served 29 years, mostly in East Asia, retiring in 2009. Married to Bie since 1987; one son. Still punning.



Linda Gotthardt Allende, Thai 34

I joined the Peace Corps because I needed time to find out what to do with my life. Through my three years of service, I found my career - teaching English - and I learned to appreciate other cultures. I became more independent and a citizen of the world.

Sunday

March 12, 2017

Don, Tom and Ellen attended Mass at St. Joseph's in Hilo, and were warmly greeted by the parishioners there; each of them given a puka necklace, which they were wearing later at the Memorial. After a more leisurely start to the day, the rest of us joined them at the JFK Memorial on the University of Hawai'i's Hilo campus. It was a very moving moment. More than one of us had been prompted by JFK's words, "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country," to join the Peace Corps upon receiving our undergraduate degrees. And it was Thai VII, during training in Hilo in November 1963, who, along with other trainees bound for Indonesia and Sabah/Sarawak, donated money from their weekly living allowances to pay for the original memorial. It stood at the old Hilo Hospital until 2011, when it was relocated to and rededicated at the UH campus. We followed up the visit with a shopping stop at Big Island Candies factory/outlet, where everyone loaded up with gifts to take home to friends and family. Later that afternoon, a number of people had some beach time at Carlsmith Park, saw a turtle (the daring fellow even goosed Dennis) and shared more old memories, and even a few new ones. Fortunately, the story-telling continued with an extended Happy Hour at Ponds, where Ellen Burke Montgomery entertained us all (Tom was having his interview with Steve at the time) and later, over dinner at the New Saigon, both locations within half a block of the Hilo Seaside.

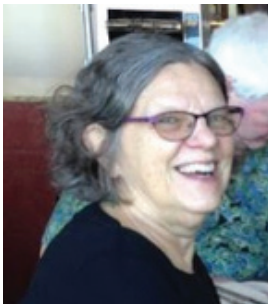


Then.....Now



Nancy Halprin Scharf, Thai 34

My favorite PC memory is going duck hunting with Steve Fox. I'm married with two wonderful sons, one in the navy and one in college. My husband and I love cruising.



Adele Grollman Hansen, Thai 35

Two strong memories of PC -- one is sharing my house with an enormous gecko ("too-kay") all night, who ruled the wall outside my bedroom. The second is taking a boat "up-country" to the River Kwai and observing life on the river. PC gave me a career since I taught ESL students in many wonderful settings. Now I'm retired and working for peace and social justice here in Minnesota.



Steve Hansen, Thai 35

Imagine a multi-sided building. Each side looks out on a different landscape - forest, desert, mountains, etc. Everyone in the world lives inside this building. Each looks out a window and that is how they see the world. The Peace Corps gave me a glimpse through a window with a very different landscape than my window. After that glimpse, I was never the same.

Monday

March 13, 2017

Monday was a free day to do whatever we wanted. So, Don, Tom and Ellen had another nice, big breakfast at Ken's. Then, they returned to the U of H-Hilo to meet with the Archivist to scan three biographies: Thai 30, 34 and 35. They also viewed the video some had seen at the Library on Wednesday afternoon before they arrived. Others of us drove to Tex Drive-In in Honoka'a, where most everyone ordered malasadas in a variety of flavors. Some of us continued on a back road to Waimea, where Sue Eberlein Lundquist taught for several months post-Peace Corps service and after receiving a graduate degree at Oregon State. We continued on to Hapuna Beach, which was as beautiful, though a bit more crowded than we remembered from our days of hitchhiking around the island. We finally made our way back to the the Hilo Seaside Hotel Restaurant for dinner.



Then.....Now



Pat Hughes, Thai 34

The most important result of my Peace Corps experience is the wonderful lifelong friendships I made with other PCVs and the Thai people. My folks, Bert & Betty Hughes, came to visit during our second Christmas holidays in 1972. While in Bangkok, they stayed at the First Hotel, where they constantly entertained homesick PCVs who'd heard that "a" Peace Corps Mom & Dad were in country. The room service bill was larger than the room bill!



Lowell Kile (AKA Ajaan Rowain), Thai 34

1974 - From Thailand to Manhattan. Married the late Dorothy Cann (Hamilton). Reinvented myself in Sales and Marketing for large IT companies, focusing on investment banks. Divorced/remarried to a British journalist 1986. Moved to UK in 1989. Continued working with investment banks until retirement 2003. Divorced/remarried a Yorkshire lass 2006. Live in a small, beautiful village in the countryside. Am learning to play the ukulele! Still crazy after all these years.



Jim (AKA The Deacon) Kreuze Thai 34

My Best Memory was Blackwater Brainstorm, featuring the exploits of Logger Bill, the daily decision to eat at the "shitty bamee" restaurant, the post-birth line from the kamlang painai movie "I shall name you umbilicard," and especially the Mekong-fueled moonlit ride on Lowell's bike to visit the temple ruins outside Kalasin. Blackwater and the follow-on 4-year project to rewrite English for Thai Students provided the skills to complete 8 years of DOD contracts in Iran and Saudi and 27 years of consulting work with Unocal and Chevron Thailand.

Tuesday

March 14, 2017

The closing breakfast at Coconut Grill started at 7:30 AM to accommodate people who would be flying back to the mainland later in the morning. Suddenly, it was interrupted for Carolyn by the receptionist telling her she had an urgent call at the front desk. While walking quickly behind the young woman, Carolyn wondered who would be making an "urgent" call so early in the morning. It turned out to be our good buddy, Lowell Kile, calling from his home in rural England to send everyone a loud ALOHA! What a huge, and pleasant, surprise that was! And once breakfast was over, and everyone had some hugs, a few people began to depart for the airport in Hilo, and later, Kona. The bittersweet end to an amazing week had arrived. Tom, Don and Tracy had their last Bike Hike. Later, Bob, Sue, Dennis, Tracy, Sandy and Chuck had a last adventure to the Puna area, with lunch at Keoki's Restaurant and a stroll along Paho'a's main street, followed by drive along southeast coast with stop at MacKenzie State Park. For those still in Hilo, there were drinks at Ponds and dinner at Sombat's Thai Restaurant.



Then.....Now



Karen Larsen, Thai 35

Favorite memory is having the honor of the former King dedicating a statue at Suan Sunantha where I served. Been back to Thailand as an AFS Exchange teacher and also with a UC-Fullerton program; and after years as an educator and an administrator, I am now retired and planning another trip back to Thailand. Hope to get in touch again with those in Thai 35.



Dennis Lemke, Thai 34



Beverly McLeod Thai 34

After two wonderful years teaching in southern Thailand, I traveled overland with my sister to Istanbul; returned to Hawaii for graduate studies; taught in Iran until shortly before the fall of the Shah; settled in northern California's Silicon Valley, married engineer Jim & raised son Austin; did teaching/research in cross-cultural psychology, minority education, and learning disabilities; became a science librarian at NASA at age 60; now work as a medical librarian.

Wednesday March 15 and Beyond...



Then.....Now



Ellen Burke Montgomery, Thai 30

My favorite memories of Peace Corps are the PEOPLE! The people in the town, the students and teachers in the school, but, most of all, the fellow volunteers. These are the folks with hearts so big, they're willing to give up YEARS of their lives, to do some good, to help others, to make a difference. Some we'll never see again, some we'll never lose contact with, some we'll find again at a reunion in 45 or 46 years! It may be the hardest job you'll ever love, but they're the finest friends you'll ever make!



Tom Montgomery, Thai 35

One learns much about oneself, your community then, your effect on your community now, and the larger world being independent in another country. We learn self-reliance, how to adapt, how to focus, how to cooperate, yet to drive/guide gracefully. It is most important to learn how to associate with people of "good heart" (jai dii in Thai), as positive people together create an even larger positive force.



Paett Ryan, Thai 34

One of my favorite memories occurred about ten years after my PCV experience, while working for Save The Children in Thailand for the UNHCR. I was doing teacher training in the Phanatnikhom Refugee Camp and we were training Thai teachers to teach English and life skills to Cambodian refugees slated for the USA.. On an opening day of training, I was welcoming a large group of Thai teachers when suddenly one of the young teachers stood up and spoke up from the crowd. She turned out to have been one of my students in Ampawa years before.



Tim Ryan Thai 34

Then.....Now



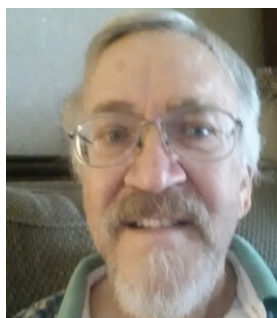
Dallas Schuler, Thai 34

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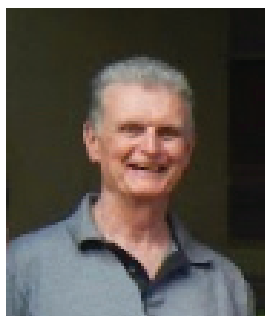
Nancy Schuler, Thai 34

Being Peace Corps Volunteers had a positive impact on our lives. When entering the Peace Corps, we were idealistic in thinking that we could “change the world,” when in fact, our experiences changed us! We acquired a more global view of our world and a new appreciation of the cultures that comprise it. Those virtues were extolled upon our students, family, and friends throughout the years.



Stanley Shipp, Thai 34

The smell of wood charcoal still transports me back to days of rising at dawn and taking a motorcycle ride down to the fish market to buy breakfast of “patongkoh” and strong coffee. Magical memories. I wish I had been a better volunteer. Feel amazingly fortunate to have been included in such a group of folks. Retired now in Mansfield, Tx. Being a granddad.



Don Starzyk, Thai 35

I have always felt that I received more from my Peace Corps experience than I ever gave. A twenty- four year Air Force career and an adopted family and good health - what a life!



Sandy, Pat, Bob, and Dennis at the Hilo Seaside Hotel



Thai 34 at the JFK Memorial at the University of Hawaii Hilo



Thai 35 at the JFK Memorial at the University of Hawaii Hilo



Tom, Steve H, Don, Tracy and Bob Adele, Steve H, Sandy and Tracy at the Hilo Hawaiian Hotel



Tim, Steve, Chuck and Jan at the Hilo Hawaiian Hotel



Sue and Carolyn above the Kilauea Caldera



Halema'uma'u's "main pit"



Dinner at the Thai Thai Restaurant in Volcano



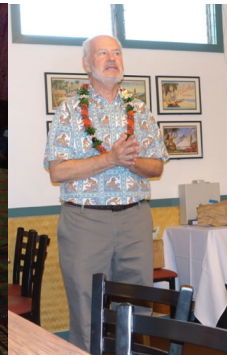
Jim, Chuck, Carolyn and Jeanette at Low's in Pepékeo



Carolyn, Larry, Geri and Dennis at Thai 35's Honomu training site



Larry, Dennis, Sandy, Tracy, Nancy, Dallas and Mark at the New Chiang Mai Restaurant in Hilo



Bob welcoming everyone to the reunion



Pat and Sandy playing around at Pepékeo



Trish, Linda, Pat and Dennis at the Hilo Hawaiian Hotel



Chuck, Sandy, Bob, Dennis, Carolyn, Don, Tracy and Steve F in the Hilo Seaside Hotel lobby



The microphone Steve used to record our stories



Tracy, Sandy, Chuck, Dennis and Carolyn relaxing at Thai 34's Pepékeo training site



Graves at the cemetery behind Thai 35's Honomu training site



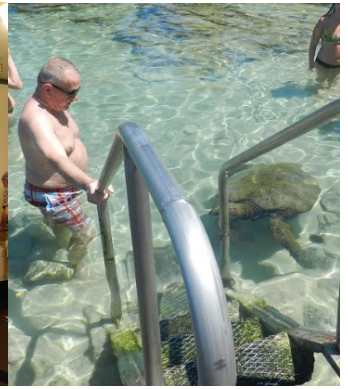
Tom, Don and Tracy before their first bike hike for the week



Larry and Geri at Thai 35's Honomu training site



Steve at opening dinner



Dennis with the turtle at Carlsmith Park near Hilo



Dallas and Nancy at the JFK Memorial



Sue and Roseanne in the lobby of the Hilo Seaside Hotel



Ellen and Tom above the caldera



Waipio Valley



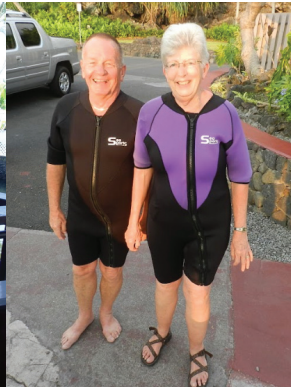
Sue, Pat, Sandy Dennis in Kona



Jeanette and Jim, Beverly and Jim, Dennis and Chuck in the Hilo Seaside Hotel Lobby



Gerri, Nancy and Dallas, Larry and Steve on the Hilo Seaside verandah



Dennis and Trish preapring to swim with the manta rays



The old Hilo Hospital



The women of Thai 34



Thai 35 on a hike

See You in St. Pete...