



"THEY ARE THE CHILDREN" BY FAITH EAKIN

Sticky



Rice

July 2013

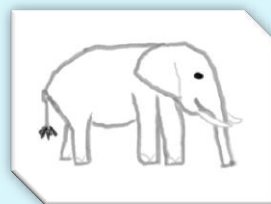
IN THIS ISSUE

A Note From the Editors

Sticky Rice welcomes your new Group 125 editors, Christine Bedenis, Nancy Bunyea, and Natalia Soto-Crespo!

**Christine****Natalia****Nancy**

Running, Thai-style.....	page 2
Communication is Key.....	page 4
They Are the Children.....	page 5
Peer Support Network.....	page 6



Elephant
Poetry
page 7

Horoscopes.....	page 8
Bowel Blues.....	page 10
"Thai"-ku Poetry.....	page 11
Notes: Michael Hamby.....	page 11
Recipes.....	page 13
Not-So-Novelties.....	page 14

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Call Me Prefon-“Thai”

by Jes Milberg Haydu

May 17, 2013

I've been running here at site pretty much since the second day I arrived. I've grown used to people smiling politely but secretly thinking I'm a freak of nature for venturing out in the oppressive heat wearing full coverage clothing (even while running, I'm still *riap roy*).

A few weeks ago, my host mom showed a spark of interest. It was barely even a flicker, but she commented on how healthy running is. Every day thereafter, she'd sidle up to me as I returned from my morning runs and casually ask how far I'd gone. "*Wan ni, gii gilo?*" Not long after, she asked if she could come with me. I tried to suppress my excitement at the idea of having an *actual* running buddy. We planned to run together the following evening.

It was over a month of hearing "*Wan ni, mai wai. Aja proong ni.*" 'Today, I can't. But maybe tomorrow?' I continued to ask her to join me for runs, but mostly to humor her since the chances of her coming seemed slim to none and every time I asked she'd comically respond "*Proong ni, proong ni*", 'tomorrow, tomorrow'. I taught her the word "procrastinator".

Then yesterday, a miracle happened. She came home from work, tore into the house and knocked loudly on my bedroom door. "*Bai wing, Jes, bai wing!!*" 'Let's go running!' I threw on my running clothes and laced up my shoes before she had time to change her mind.

It was her first time running. Ever. Despite her cries of "*Mai wai!*" (I can't do it) and "*Jep!*" (It hurts!) throughout the run, she never stopped smiling. I cheered her on in Thai-glish and together we completed a two kilometer run. I reassured her that if she

continued to run each day, it would become easier. She told me she wanted to come again tomorrow.

At 5 p.m. today, without any prompting, Pii Baa put on sweatpants and laced up her sneakers. I met her in front of the house and we started down our long dirt driveway towards the road. "*Ma dooay, ma dooay!*" we heard from behind us. Nong Biew, the middle of my three host sisters, was scampering along to catch up with us. Not far behind her was Pii Nok, my host dad.

During the run, Pii Nok had knee pains, Pii Baa got a stitch, and Biew developed blisters that brought her to tears. But my host family started and finished the run together. Boh, the oldest of the sisters, even came out on her *motosai* to ride with us the last 100 meter stretch. As we sat together on the patio after the run, stretching and drinking cold water, they looked at each other, then at me and said "*Proong ni, murren gan?*" 'Same time tomorrow?'

June 4, 2013

Tonight, I was told I'd be picked up at 5:30 p.m. to go with some friends from work to our co-worker's brother's wedding. I've *almost* learned that 5:30 never means 5:30 (or anything before seven), but I'm not quite over holding out hope that something, anything, just might happen on time here.



Prefon-“Thai” Cont. from p. 2

So in true 'American' form, I was ready to go at 5 p.m. I could almost hear the surprised gasps from those who know that I am never anywhere early, even in America. What can I say? Thai Time is a thing of its own (anarchy, in a word). Therefore anything that resembles the construct of time and being places when you say you will is by default 'American' simply because of how unheard of it is among Thais.

As I waited for my ride, I noticed Pii Baa heading out for a run. *Kon diao* (on her own)!! I was so excited to see her taking this initiative that I jumped up and started to walk with her to the end of our *soi* (little dirt road). Naturally, the entire family followed.

What ensued was one of the Top Five Moments I've had here in Thailand. The whole lot of us walked behind Pii Baa, cheering her on as she ran. When she stopped to rest, a spontaneous aerobics and stretching session broke out in the middle of the street. Cars went around us. And I even have pictures to prove it.



Barbara Price Davis: Communication Is Everything!

One Monday, as I was teaching, doing some sort of charades for my students, I noticed a man standing in the door of the classroom... watching. I looked over at my co-teacher, Supattra, and she went to see what the man wanted. I continued doing my thing.

After class, as I was getting ready to sit down with some luscious Thai oranges for lunch, which they call "*som*," Supattra came over and I could tell she had something to say. But Thais avoid confrontation. They avoid strong emotion all the way around. So I asked her what was wrong.

She blurted, "The policeman say there was an accident and foreigner was driving. I tell him he is wrong. But he wants Ba-ba-la to come to the station."

I sat for a minute trying to understand what she said. I asked, "He thinks Barbara was driving and caused an accident?" She said, "YES! I know he is wrong!" I grabbed my purse and said, "Let's go."

As a Peace Corps volunteer in Thailand, we are forbidden from driving a car. That and riding a motorcycle are "non-negotiable" and Peace Corps will send us home immediately if we break the rule. Even though I know I am innocent of this crime for which I am being accused, during the short drive to the police station, my active brain goes into overdrive. The conversation in my head went something like this:

"I can't drive. Don't they know that? I can prove it, right? But I saw the movie 'Brokedown Palace'—people go to Thai jail even when telling the truth. Tina said she was worried I would end up in a Thai prison. Crap. Maybe Supattra got it wrong. Maybe I caused an accident while walking around somewhere. Did I? I could have. Thai drivers are crazy. Maybe as I was crossing the street someone did something. Crap. Why would someone blame me? Don't they like me? Why don't they like me? I'm going to jail. I need a bathroom."

When we arrived at the police station, all eyes were on us. They sat us first at a long conference table and then brought us into an office with several policemen. The main guy asked if I spoke Thai.

I answered that I spoke Thai a little. I answered in English because at that moment, every bit of Thai I knew seemed to have vanished from my brain. My heart was pounding. I knew my face is red. I was actually praying for a heart attack versus a Thai jail. The policeman asked for my I.D. and for Supattra's. He took copies of them and said something to Supattra. She said to me, "The driver is Australian".

"What? Some crazy Aussie has accused me of doing something? Causing an accident? *^&%! "Tell them Barbara cannot drive. I would get sent home," I said to Supattra. She said, "I tell them. They are wrong." Thai people do not like to be wrong. There is this concept of "breaking face" and Thai people will go to extreme measures to not break face—admitting a mistake would be breaking face. I'm screwed. I'm going to jail. Where is that bathroom?

Fighting the urge to laugh maniacally, and the sister urge to run as fast as I can, I finally stood up and said, "I need to call Peace Corps." I stepped outside the office and called our security director, Kuhn Phanuthat. He answered on the second ring and as I tried to hold back the tears and the fear, I told him what was going on. He asked to speak to the policeman. I really needed to find a bathroom.



I walked back into the office, handed over my phone, and then sat frozen, trying to understand anything that was being said. All I heard was Charlie Brown's teacher, "Wah, whaha, wah, wah wa wah." After what seemed like an eternity, a time where I was trying to ignore the ever-increasing buzz in my ears, the policeman gave me back my phone and I walked to the corner, my heart in my throat, my head ready to explode. I heard Kuhn Phanuthat's voice.

"Barbara, no worries. They don't think you caused the accident. A foreigner was driving. They want you to help translate when they question him. It would be a big help to them."

Whooooooooosh. My blood was finally back in my head. I instantly felt my blood pressure drop. Supattra got it wrong. Either she didn't understand what they wanted, or communicated it wrong—I don't know. But for the first time in an hour, I took a full breath and suddenly didn't need a bathroom anymore.
Oh, Thailand... You got me again.

Run, Play, Laugh, Imagine: They Are the Children

by Faith Eakin

They run, they leap and they pedal by on their rusty, creaking bicycles. One bike used to be pink, now the paint is chipped and worn, exposing the brown metal underneath. The faded plastic tri-wheels are almost square from serving as support for years.

They imagine. They are the Power Rangers they watch on TV. They kick and strike, and envision themselves flying through the air. While they aren't confined to one room in a house or a manicured backyard, they never seem to dream up a world that stretches past what they know or have seen on TV.

They soar from grass to cracking concrete, and farther still to the edge of the Mekong River. They race, plummeting like small machines down the stairs. They end up standing at the river, wheezing and trying to

gain control of their breathing. Minutes later, they run back to the top.

They travel through the wildflowers and high grass that seem to swallow them up. Trekking through the hot afternoon hours, they explore a constantly shifting landscape that is both foreign and familiar to their young eyes. They sift dirt through their fingers, and they like how it tickles when it's stuck between their toes.

Every day their bare feet walk burning pavement and they think nothing of it.

They break things. Smashing an aged toy on the ground, screaming in hilarity at their ability to destroy. Then they find a way to put it back together again, better than it was before. They gather and collect seeds and fruits. They know what they can eat and cannot. They are street-smart in a rural country village.

They fight. Scream and argue over skipped turns and broken rules. They push and shove each other, landing hard on the ground. They begin to cry. Their eyes frantically search around and when they realize no one will rescue them, they stop crying, stand up and keep playing. When they get a chance to hug an adult, they hang on tight, and refuse to let go.

They fall. Frequent and hard falls. The result is a high tolerance to pain. A concerned inquiry to a dirty, blood-soaked bandage tightly wrapped around a 5-



year-old hand invokes the response "*Jai yen yen, krop.*" (Calm down, I'm fine). Battle scars decorate their bodies and bug bites freckle their ankles.

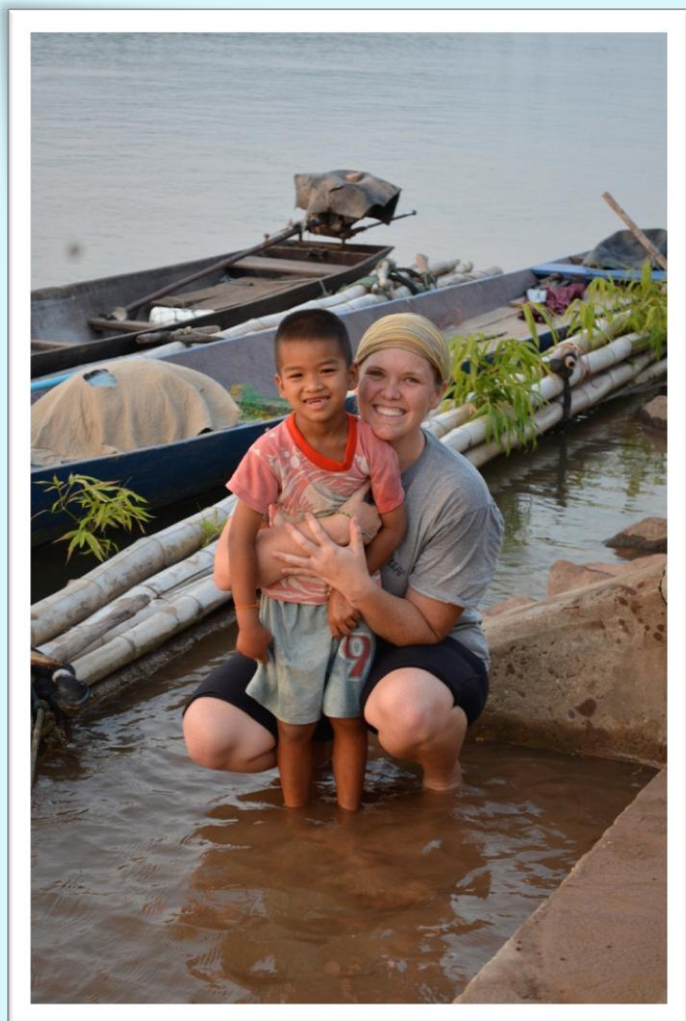
They stand. They wear "Ben-10" T-shirts, bright floral patterned shorts and flip-flops that every other child in their family has worn before they could even crawl. They wear a buzzed haircut or a short bob with sharp bands. When her hair becomes long, a perfect black wave that splashes down her back, her dad gathers it in his hand and chops it off.

They laugh. Loud, bursting laughs lined with a sweetness that is never expected, but that is present every time. They twirl and dance, balancing between childhood and becoming adults far too soon. Excitement fills their voices and reaches their eyes when they watch a balloon fill with invisible air or spot the picture they drew hanging on the wall, for everyone to see.

They are the children. They are happy and want nothing more than the freedom to run and the chance to feel love wrap them safely up at night. They may deserve more, but they don't expect it and they don't complain. They keep asking questions, even when they don't understand the answers. They are our present, our past and our future.

They run, they leap and they pedal by. They imagine. They soar and travel. They break things and fight. They fall and stand back up. They laugh.

They live.





PSN/Sticky Rice Collaboration: Call for Submissions

The Peer Support Network and *Sticky Rice* are announcing a collaborative project to share volunteers' stories from life and work during service. The idea behind this project is to publish one story from one volunteer in each issue of *Sticky Rice* that shines light on the days and moments of service that have tested our resolve, reminding us that life out here in the territories can be hardscrabble, but nevertheless endured.

Every one of us has a story to share. And every one of us benefits from hearing one of those stories. This project is a means of collecting and dispersing a wealth of experience to the Peace Corps Thailand community at large in which we're now and will always be a part.

PSN and *Sticky Rice* are asking for your stories not only to help this novel project

get off the ground, but also to support your brothers and sisters in service.

A few words on what it is we're asking:

PCVs speak to each other in a series of exchanged anecdotes and we're asking you for just one of those moments.

We want to be clear that this has **NOTHING** to do with the readings that have been done during 124's Reconnect or Mid-Service trainings. We're not asking for poetry or prose or anything perfect. If you fancy yourself a bard, then sing, but if not, then just tell it like it was. We realize writing isn't everyone's fondest pastime or strongest skill. But we're not looking for an author's letters – just a volunteer's voice.

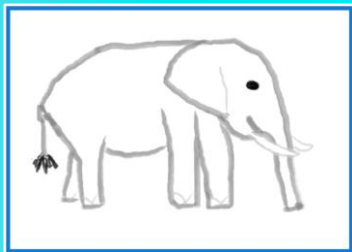
The **maximum** word limit for submissions is **500 words**.

Submissions can be sent anytime to michael.hamby@gmail.com.

However, we've found that simply asking this kindness is not the most reliable or efficient means of getting stories to press. With that caveat, we'll be calling on you to lend your hand and voice to this project. We hope you won't see this as an inconvenience or burden, but rather as a chance to let your friends know that we're all never further away from each other than a good story.

Thank you,
Your friends at the Peer Support Network
and *Sticky Rice*

What If I Was an Elephant?



by Jay Padzensky

What if I was an elephant?

Elephants aren't made to suffer bi-pedal indignities-
Ignorance, consumption, injustice.
Elephants set their own elephant agenda
with their elephant size.

Oh, to have a trunk!

No delectable fruit out of reach, no one safe
from a watery blast, and the sounds to be
made.

What an enviable appendage!

One plodding foot in front of the other,
elephants come and go as they please-
Mud, beach, jungle.

The world's a veritable playground,
wanting to be explored.

Gazing across the jungle, my mind runs
rampant.

try as I might, I'll never know that joy
Of all the elephants, why couldn't i have
been one?
just one, just one, any one...

what do i do today?

i liked yesterday! eat, nap, play, nap, eat,
play, eat

don't frustrate or anger me
i stampede first and think second

i'm not full of fruit
let's eat some fruit

marvel at my ears and eyes!
i'm cuter than any beast on two legs

i can't imagine not being me!

Classroom Management Tips: English Class Champions

by Jessie Larson



Straw Reward Program

I've had marble jars in my classrooms in the States as a classroom management tool. This borrows from that notion, but is lighter and more practical in my Thai classrooms since I have many classes as opposed to one. On the first day of class, we set about creating a short list of simple rules for each class to follow. With these rules in place and written in their English notebooks as well as on a board that I bring to class with me, there is no confusion. Each class that I teach is given a different colored straw, since I teach one class per grade level, P 4-6 and M 1-3, I found six different colors of straws at Big C for very cheap. The display is handmade, gluing a full straw and writing the grade level in the same color as the straw. For the bucket, I cut the straws into fourths and keep each color separate, bringing the class color with me. I also carry a few around school with

me, in case I see an opportunity to praise. When the class performs well, students are polite or helpful, everyone arrives to class on time, or things of that sort, a straw is added for the class. When the class gets out of hand, students arrive late or unprepared, or students speak in Thai, a straw of that class' color is taken from the bucket. When the bucket is full to the brim I announce that we'll be counting to find out who are the English Class Champions. Students can join me to join in the counting in the meeting hall, and in the end, the winning class enjoys an English movie and popcorn with me!

(Our "English Class Rules" are: 1. Speak English ONLY 2. Be Nice 3. Listen Carefully & 4. Try Your Best, just to give an example. The students wrote these in Thai and English in their notebooks and the students, my co-teacher, and I all signed the page.)

Continues on p. 9

Starstruck! Your Peace Corps Thailand Horoscope

by Shellie Branco

ARIES: (21 March – 20 April) Keep in mind that the way others see you isn't necessarily the way you are. Don't feel like you have to change direction to please anyone. Your only true responsibility is to you. Bizarre events may occur, urging you to change your thinking.



LEO: (23 July - 22 August) What's your motivation for saying the things you say? Truth is paramount and echoes through the cosmos, because truth is reliable and never changes. Balance truth with kindness and that will make you trustworthy.



meant to be. Life shouldn't always be a drama. Your job is to enjoy it. Remember that the next time you're in a long line at 7-11.

CAPRICORN: (22 Dec. - 20 Jan)

Realize that your independent and somewhat rebellious nature helps to keep the world in balance. Use your will and determination to inspire the stubborn ones.



TAURUS: (21 April – 21 May) Don't lose sight of the principles that make up your foundation. You could be shaken soon when you face a bump in the road. Stay in check and

be conscious of the way you project yourself, but know you are a solid, true person.



VIRGO: (23 August - 23 Sept.)

Independence is the key idea to keep in your back pocket. Make sure you're not becoming a victim to present

circumstances. As the landscape changes, you must also change. Stubborn actions could be the root of the issue, but be honest and grateful for the things you have.



AQUARIUS: (21 Jan. - 19 Feb.) You might be called upon to choose between two ways of handling a situation, Aquarius. The old way suddenly conflicts with

the new. Which way are you going to proceed? Don't be thrown off course by fast talk and neon lights just because they grab attention. Meanwhile, the cosmos is working overtime in your favor. A fun trip or care package is on its way for you! You'll make the other zodiac characters jealous!

GEMINI: (22 May - 21 June) Take time each day to tend to your soul and offer the nourishment it needs to radiate into the world. Unexpected people are likely to appear out of nowhere, so don't be surprised when a former crush shows up.



LIBRA: (24 Sept. - 23 Oct.) Hello, gorgeous! Your inner and outer beauty are shining this month. And some joyful news is sure to enhance it!



CANCER: (22 June - 22 July) A journey to one place may send you off to another, which may take you on an adventure to some completely different place. It may seem like

you're on a crazy scavenger hunt. The energy of the moment could leave you feeling ragged, but don't give up. Your persistence will pay off in the end.



SCORPIO: (24 Oct. - 22 Nov.) Your job these days is to infuse some levity and humor into uncertain situations. Your adaptability as a

flowing water sign will be put to good use. Be conscious of how you use your words. Other people don't have that tough Scorpio exoskeleton!



PISCES: (20 Feb. - 20 March) The moment's planetary energy is wonderful for creating an atmosphere of pure happiness at home! If you and your friends need a breather, get cooking with your favorite recipes and share some memories. This is surely the time to bring home goodness to our far-flung corner of the earth.



SAGITTARIUS: (23 Nov. - 21 Dec.) If things don't flow smoothly into place, then they probably weren't

Sticky Rice editor Shellie Branco has been toying with astrology since she was a Seventeen magazine subscriber in high school. She's since expanded into fortune cookie wisdom and reading tea leaves. (Kidding.)

Classroom Management Tips

Cont. from p. 7

Mystery Picture

(Puzzle Reward Program - Classroom)

Every class I keep track of student behavior with easy plusses and minuses on the board. When students are participating and on-task, a plus goes in the corner, when things aren't going well, they get a minus (I put these up more often than straws in the bucket). It gets kids on task faster, and becomes second nature. If I can feel their attention going, sometimes all I have to do is hover my hand over that corner of the board and we're back to work. Magic! At the end of the class period, if they have more plusses than minuses, they get a puzzle piece. The puzzles are made from pretty, old calendars I have received, found, or are sent to me. I cut them into about 20-30 squares/rectangles in a grid-like fashion, and glue them back together using plain ol' paper as a backing. If you want to keep it nice, put them in sheet protectors. When the class has finally filled in a whole puzzle, most will take a couple months to get there, I give them one class period to play games (UNO, Go Fish, Hangman, Heads Up 7-up, etc). Then, we start with a new puzzle. Good times!

Treasure Chest

(Sticker Reward Program - Individual)

Students have nameplates that are passed out and collected every class meeting.

Passing them out serves as a review time for the class, with my co-teacher and I reviewing simple questions and answers, vocabulary, sight words, letter sounds, or previous lessons. The students have to answer correctly before they can receive their nameplate. The same goes for exiting the class, only with review of that day's lesson. Stickers are given out on a regular basis for first or second volunteers, good tries (my "oopsy daisies" stickers – flower stickers given out if a student makes a mistake, a token of encouragement), great work, helping the teacher, winning games as a team, etc. I find a reason to give them to everyone at some point or another. At the end of each month, the students count their stickers, and for each set of five stickers, they can pick one prize from the Treasure Chest. I have all the prizes wrapped in paper from old bulletin boards, newspapers, what have you, so it's always a surprise and even more fun. Everyone picks out their prizes (each month most students get at least one) and then they open them and enjoy showing off their treasure (or trading it, as sometimes happens). I fill the box with mainly school supplies, pencil sharpeners, erasers, pens, pencils, small books, and some other doodads and toys that I find, am given elsewhere, or are shipped from the U.S. Next month, it starts up again with new nameplates. I have the nameplates saved on my computer, so it's just an easy print each month.

CLASSROOM GAME CORNER

Game Show

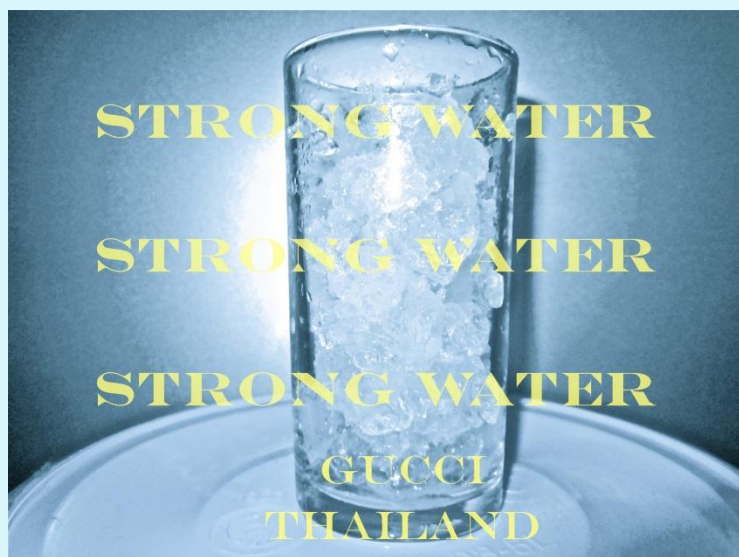
Time: 20 minutes

Materials: pictures of vocab or vocab words; cardboard or heavy paper (paper that is not see-through) with point values on them to fully cover the vocab pictures/words

Before class, teacher posts vocab words or pictures on the board in a "Jeopardy"-style grid. Create five rows and columns with point values ranging from 100 to 500; 500 being the most difficult vocabulary and therefore worth more points. Or you can use numbers that you want the kids to practice, numbers ranging from 1-20 or 1-30, etc. If you have more students, make more rows and columns so all students will have a chance to play.

Put the cardboard "point values" over the vocab words/pictures. During class, students form two teams. Students from each team will play "rock paper scissors" to determine who plays each time.

Winning student gets to choose a point value on the board. Teacher reveals the vocab word or picture underneath the point value that the student has chosen. If student can guess the vocab word, their team gets the point value. If the student can't guess it, the student from the other team (the one who lost the "rock paper scissors" match) can guess the vocab word to win the point value for their team. Teacher adds up all points values. Or teacher can have students add them to reinforce study of English numbers.



This friendly ad brought to you by Mike Hamby of Peer Support Network!

Spotlight on Volunteer Health

What to Know Before You Go: What Your Poo Is Telling You

This 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.



Hard, lumpy texture but retains healthy sausage-like shape

- + A sign of mild constipation. Indicates you aren't getting enough water or fiber.
- + Curb your protein and dairy until normal bowel movements return. Increase water consumption and boost fiber, fruit, leafy greens and brown rice.



Cylindrical with cracks on the outer surface

- + Cracks or dryness usually mean you're not drinking enough water or fluids.
- + Increase your fluid intake. Think water and low-sugar juices. Remember coffee and tea are diuretics (aka they'll increase urination thereby expelling your fluids quickly) so instead stick with the good stuff.



Stool has cylindrical, sausage-like shape with soft and smooth texture

- + Congratulations! This is the holy grail of healthy poo.
- + Keep up the good work. It's exciting but try to refrain from catching onto the American app trend Snapchat with this sharable news. Or what they heck, go ahead.

By the Colors:

BROWN	Normal
RED	Possible bleeding in lower GI tract or can indicate large intake of red foods such as watermelon or beets.
GREEN	Indicates a healthy consumption of green vegetables.
GREY	Could be a sign of pancreas or gallbladder problems. Check with your doctor first.
DARK GREY/BLACK	Possible bleeding in upper GI tract. Common side effect of Pepto Bismal/bismuth subsalicylate.



"Thai"-ku Poetry

by Keith Wingear

On Planning:

Flexibility-

Sometimes the best plan: expect...

...the unexpected.

Meeting counterparts,
Excited to be planning!
Wait, what just happened?

Food:

It's funny to me--

Thai food is so delicious,
except when it's not.

(Part 1)

Although I was warned,
It's true up here in Isaan,
They'll eat anything.

(Part 2)

So much sticky rice,
Ant eggs, chipmunk, tadpole soup,
And that was Tuesday.

Inspiration:

As the mist rises,
Thailand awakes once again
To pale morning light.

A wave and a smile
As I ride my bicycle
Through lush fields of green.

Light begins to fade
But before yielding to night,
Majestic sunset.

Peace Corps in Thailand:
Chaotic, frustrating, but...
Smiles make it worthwhile.

And "Conversation":

Why do Thai people
Seem to love talking about
"Tong Sia" so much?

"Yes, it's hot today."

"Yes, Thai food can be spicy."

"Diarrhea? Um..."

"Chai, wan-nii rawn maak."

"Chai, a-haan thai pet maak maak."

"Le tong sia? Um..."

Michael Hamby's Notes: Vol. II

These dates are complete fiction, and the notes beneath them are...

20 May

Random thoughts, current and recurrent Part 1:

a) Morning = ironing detergent and fire smoke

b) Song Taews are teleporting nap machines

c) Tak is a slow motion tangle of Kentucky and Mars. I ride the lengths of the highway just to watch them dance.

10 February

The death knell of my youth rings at midnight. The floorboards twist and groan under my feet as I walk from my bedroom to the refrigerator in the next room. Through the darkness I walk towards the shadow of the icebox. My eyes are still heavy with sleep, but the ambulatory shuffle is muscle memory now. I take the handle and open the door, feeling the cold, misting electric glow wash over me and passed me and along these midnight hours when I'm alone but for the hunger that wakes me. I reach the milk jug. My other hand finds a cookie. Midnight snack. Death knell of my youth.

On the way back to my bedroom the fulminating image of my indignant 18-year-old-self haunts me. I try to explain that a midnight snack is dessert for our day now, but the young man won't hear a lesson from the old man. He flicks a cigarette at my feet and lays me down with an expletive gesture I remember from the book I was reading as the sun went down. What page was I on? I'm asleep again before I can find it.

31 December

I'm watching my brother watch the train we're riding from Bangkok to Chiang Mai. He's never been to Thailand before, and I've never been on the train in this country before. It's been a year since the airport in Virginia, and in some ways it feels like we're meeting for the first time. We keep looking at each other like we're older than that last time we saw each other.

Through our window the country has grown dark, and the distance is darkness too. But it's New Year and soon the hamlets hidden along the horizon light fuse and send rockets into the sky. The rice fields and the dirt roads and the thatched rooftops illuminate in Technicolor. I've always been in love with that iris-expanding silence between the sound of the explosion and the sight of it, the moment just before convergence when there is no thought to wake. That hasn't changed in Thailand. I knew my life would change over here, and I expected to lose some of the good with the bad. Old debts get paid with new paychecks. It's only fair. I didn't expect to gamble on family, though, and how we talked to each other before.

Before this last year my brother and I never went six months without being in the same room, and after an entire year of never being closer than our computer screens I was worried we wouldn't know how to talk to each other at arm's length. But Thailand hasn't changed that either. Next to him the darkness isn't dark anymore, and soon I'm not thinking about anything other than watching fireworks from a train with my brother as we light the territories in a country we're traveling.

Notes: Vol. II (cont.)

16 March

I glimpsed Heaven in the pages of a magazine. The background was a blur of some rural Americana oasis rolling forth from a silo on a hill. The foreground was a summertime picnic tableau: a tablecloth checkered red and white, mint leaves and lemonade in a cold, tall glass, ruffled potato chips, white bread, yellow mustard, pickle, and baloney.

EVERLASTING PEACE! INFINITE LOVE!
THE GRACE OF A SANDWICH! But first:
ATONEMENT... Ah, Yes! PASS THE
CURRIED VISCERA!!!

28 February

At the zoo my kids run between the tigers and the birds, eventually stopping at the monkeys to watch orangutans and lemurs do remarkably human things. It's near closing time, which as it turns out is also feeding time at the zoo. I try to convince the meat man to let me photograph the tigers eating. He says no, but lets me stay.

The meat man coaxes each tiger out of their caged dens and into individual black, steel boxes where they eat alone and where I can't see them. The quiet of the sidewalk is swallowed by a dull gnawing of cartilage, a methodical gnashing of meat between claws and concrete, muscles tearing, tendons slapping, breathless and choking gulps of flesh – all the terrible sounds of big cat mastication, amplified.

The feeding would've been easy for me to photograph. Without the picture I was left

with the sound, and I was terrified, sick even. For the first time in my life I was happy to see the bars that mark zoos, separating animals and people.

WHEN the meat man reappeared he must've noticed the pall that had fallen over me, because when he looked at me he held his hands up to his face as if aiming a camera, and smiled.

25 December

My mother was worried about how I would spend my first Christmas overseas. I told her not to worry. Santa had come early, I said. I would make the *Macaroni & Cheese* dinner that Aunt Sheila sent over the month before, and watch a Redskins game I had downloaded earlier that week. It was going to be a good Christmas, I said. And it was.

30 May

Random thoughts, current and recurrent
Part 2:

a) The aquarium is a zoo of monkeys chasing sharks.

b) [The following is to be read in the epic voice of a movie announcer]:

Bangkok Goulash: A Novel...by Nicholas Cage

c) The zombie apocalypse will be hard to navigate in rural Asia

5 April

A friend called me today. He told me about walking into the grocery store for the first time after arriving back home in the States. I listened like I listened to my parents' bedtime stories on the spring-loaded cot in my old room in the first house. As he described the deli my mind called upon a spice stall in a Bedouin market hidden along the Sahel. OH, the antiquity, the exoticism of Price Chopper!

It's funny how we fly and watch the clouds and the earth below, and then we land and watch planes in the sky. We go so far only to leave and we leave only to go so far.

My friend had a panic attack in the grocery store. It wasn't the abundance or the decisions he had to make that got to him like you hear about now with soldiers coming back from Iraq or Afghanistan. He just didn't know how he got there. He had been out driving and then he was standing. He had been in the "Asian Foods" aisle the year before looking for the food he would be eating over the next two years. But a year had passed since then. His *Welcome Book* was still on his bedroom desk where he'd left it before Detroit, and now he was home again in the grocery store, reading the foreign script on the packages and the bottles. That's when my friend lost his breath.

He realized he was back at the beginning of it all, but it was harder now, harder because he'd been at the end of it all, or somewhere in between, he wasn't sure. He wanted to be in the States, he wanted to be on an eastbound plane over the ocean, he wanted to be back again on both shores, simultaneously, always. To calm himself he reached the familiar labels in between the Korean Food and the Chinese Food. This was it now. He was home. He was in Thailand. Maybe he was, he wasn't sure. Everything had changed and nothing had.

He said, "*Kop Khu*--...*Thank you*" to the lady behind the counter, and placed the unfamiliar dollars in his pocket.

3 March

I rode the *song taew* home with my students after school, took those winding, mountain roads with them, saw where they lived, met their parents, said *hello*. That was a good day, and that's what it was.

Better Homes and Kanomes! Yummy PCV Recipes

by Sima Pirooz



Yam Mamuang

Fry some minced pork and set aside.
Roast some shredded coconut and set aside.
Julienne some green mangoes and press and drain its water with your hand and set aside.
Roast some peanuts and crush them into a chunky texture and set aside.
Salt to taste
Sugar to taste

Mix everything together. Place some decorative leaves in a bowl and put the mixture on them, then top with some fried onion. Decorate with some roasted whole chili. Serve with sticky rice.

Lychee Smoothie

Clean some lychees and blend them with some water.
Add an equal volume of sugar.
Cook on low-medium heat for ten minutes or so.
Blend two cups of ice and ¼ to ½ cup of your lychee syrup (depending on how sweet you like your smoothie).

All Day Deliciousness

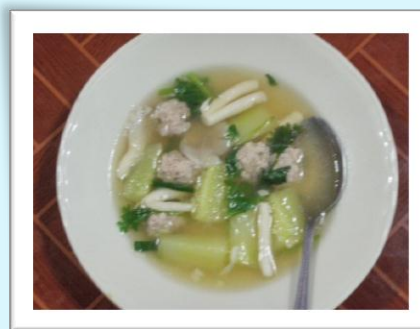
Mash cooked potatoes and use 1 ½ cups of the mash.
Grate onion and use ¼ cup (a big onion or three small onions).
Mash one small banana.
1 tbsp. coriander
½ tbsp. turmeric
2 eggs

Mix the ingredients and shape into patties. Fry and serve them with homemade pita bread (or any bread), or rice.

Thai Cucumber Soup

Boil ½ liter of water in a pan
Mix 100 grams ground pork with a couple of garlic cloves (grated) and make small balls (optional)
Put ½ tbsp. whole peppercorns and a vegetable bouillon cube and one chicken bouillon cube in the boiling water
Add meat balls (optional)
Add 3 big cucumbers chopped in 4 pieces lengthwise and chopped in 1-inch pieces (cook a few minutes)
Cut some cilantro, green onion and celery leaves in big pieces, ½ cup worth
Soak 40 grams hair-like (thin) noodles in water and cut
Add 2 tbsp. soy sauce to the soup (to taste)
Add ½ teaspoon salt and 1 tbsp. sugar (to your taste)
Add 100 grams cut mushrooms and cook a few minutes
Add noodles and greens and remove from the heat after two minutes.

I like to add just a drop or two of wood vinegar and a piece (1 inch) of cinnamon that you take out when the soup is ready. You can make your own soup by changing the greens (like Chinese cabbage or anything you have either in the fridge or in the garden) and the spices (like ginger, cardamom, garlic, chili), but don't overdo it with the spices. For example, if you like cardamom, use just one pod. You can also make a bundle of spices and put it in the soup and take it out when it is ready. (Use a piece of cheesecloth and put your spices in it, then make a bundle and secure it with an elastic band.)



Thai Cucumber Soup

See more Sima cuisine at SimamaCafe.com

Sweets by Krista Schilling



Peanut Butter Nutella Banana Muffins

2 ½ cups flour (you can use ½ rolled oats for a different texture)
¼ tsp baking powder
1 tsp baking soda
1 cup sugar
⅓ cup Nutella
⅔ cup peanut butter
2 eggs
2 cups mashed bananas.
1 tsp vanilla

Combine all wet ingredients and then slowly mix in the dry. Don't worry if you have banana bits that don't mix in entirely. They will bake into the muffin just as well. Fill greased muffin tins halfway with the dough. Bake at 170 degrees Celsius for about 15 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean.

Banana Snickerdoodles

3 cups flour
1 ½ tsp. baking soda
½ tsp. salt
1 cup shortening
1 cup sugar (plus extra to roll cookies in)
2 eggs
3 mashed *gluai naam wa* bananas (short, fat, sweet ... you know 'em)

Combine mashed bananas, eggs, sugar and shortening first. Next, mix in the dry flour, baking soda and salt. The dough will be pretty sticky, but don't add more flour. Scoop teaspoon-sized balls and roll in a mixture of sugar and cinnamon (whatever amount you like). Place on cooking surface (pan, tinfoil or whatever you're rockin' in the village) two inches apart. Cook for 8 or 9 minutes at 200 degrees Celsius.

The Not-So-Novelties of Life in an Odd Tropical Land

by Colin Johnson

Now, while it seems like a lifetime ago that I first arrived in Thailand, in the grand scheme I am still very much in the introductory phase of my time here. Nevertheless, the novelty of a few things is starting to wear off. That's not to say that this country doesn't consistently surprise me with its rich culture and amazing beauty, but some of the little things that at first caused a little stir in my mind I now barely pay attention to. So, before I completely forget about them, I want to make a little list. That way "future Colin" can go back and be like, "Oh, yeah, that was weird at one point," and anyone interested in moving to rural Thailand can get a better idea of what they're in for. Here goes:

Everything bites

No, that doesn't mean "bites" in the sense that things aren't good, it means that everything literally takes bites out of you. Things you formerly viewed as friendly (dogs, little kids, seawater ... or the tiny



"I can haz cheezburger? (I sick of insectz)." Colin's cat ponders Thailand's icky side.

little things in the seawater that bite, I don't know what they are, I'm not a scientist), things that have always been a nuisance but now pack more of a punch (ants, mosquitoes, some kind of poison ivy plant from hell) and then things that you probably haven't had to deal with before (monitor lizards, scorpions, etc.). All of these things should not be, but will almost definitely, at some point, be tangled with ... minus the lizards and scorpions, I'm doing my best to avoid them. And speaking of lizards ...

Lizards are a home's best friend

At any given time, I can pick enough geckos off my host family's wall to make 10-year-old-Colin pee his pants with excitement. (I had three lizards as pets when I was a kid, their names were Larry, Curly, and Moe ... they died). My current host family members are not fans of these reptilian intruders, but thanks to my host family during training, I know these little guys eat every insect in sight, and so in my book they are cool. Plus they're lizards!!! (All right, calm down, 10-year old-self.)

There's never not chickens

On the side of the road, in the middle of the road, crossing the road, in cages, in trucks, I have not gone anywhere in Thailand and not encountered a chicken. Most roam free, which makes me want to yell, "Just run away! Don't you know what awaits you? They're going to eat you! I am going to eat you! You're delicious! Nothing good is in your future!", but I don't because that would be weird and on the off chance they actually did run away, then I would have to eat fish every day.

Eat with caution

If you are consuming food in the space between the borders of Myanmar, Malaysia, Laos, and Cambodia, then chances are your food is going to be hot. If food doesn't look spicy, it is probably spicy. If food does look spicy, then chances are it will literally commit mass genocide against your taste buds. Once you've consumed one of these foods, the only hope is to scarf down as much plain white rice as possible, because water is no friend of yours. Don't get me wrong, the food is delicious, and if you like spicy food, then Thailand is a utopia of amazing flavors. But just know that the



Not-So-Novelties**Cont. from p. 14**

spiciness is a whole other level compared to what we are used to in the United States, and that should I become fully accustomed to it before I return to America, the first thing I am going to do when I get home is enter a hot wing eating contest.

Volvo makes insects

The bugs here get bigger and bigger by the day. I've already told people back home about Mothra taking up residence in my host family's bathroom, or the butterfly the size of an F-22 that attempted to break down the bathroom door when I had to make a late night pit stop. And then there are the scorpions and spiders the size of my hand, or the inch-long ants who pop by every time it rains when they don't want to get wet. Or the giant red and blue-ish caterpillar/millipede things I see whenever I go running. It literally looks like every bug here has been given some kind of growth hormone and then been sent on their way with the instructions: "Reproduce as much as possible! Seriously, just go nuts! Cross breed with each other, what do we care?" I'm not sure who it is that's saying that, just picture it as Doc Brown from "Back to the Future" or maybe Bill Nye. Yeah, so the giant bugs are pretty cool, just as long as they don't try to become buds with me, or use my skin as a nest for their 1,000 illegitimate kids.

Traffic laws

They just don't exist.

Plans

"When we said we were leaving at 4, we really meant 3, and when we said we were going to a temple, we really meant a temple, a funeral, a market, and anything else cool between here and there." Thailand is a country that definitely knows how to make the most out of a trip, and there is never any issue with deviating from a "schedule" for some *sanuk*. While it makes figuring out day-to-day activities difficult, the spontaneity of life here is pretty



refreshing, although that's not to say it isn't taking a lot of getting used to.

Moped minivan

The number of people that can fit on one scooter is limited only by that scooter's weight-bearing capabilities, and the imaginations and physical flexibility of all those on board. This is nothing short of artists when it comes to seating four to five people on a motorbike and still managing to navigate it successfully. At first, this was mind-blowing, but now if I see one person on a scooter, it just seems empty.

I'm sure as the time in Thailand continues to pass, more and more things will fall into the realm of normalcy. I'm sure one day I will wave to the occasional cobra in the middle of the road and address him/her by first name, which is probably Dave. I can almost guarantee that I will become as used to seeing people with pink goop on their teeth as I am seeing people with white teeth. And one day, if I am lucky, I may go to bed hydrated and wake up still marginally hydrated. I just hope that I never fail to appreciate what an interesting, bizarre, friendly, wonderful country this is, and I really hope it never stops surprising me.

COLIN'S TAKE-HOME TIPS

§ *"The number of people that can fit on one scooter is limited only by that scooter's weight-bearing capabilities, and the imaginations and physical flexibility of all those on board."*

§ *"If food doesn't look spicy, it is probably spicy. If food does look spicy, then chances are it will literally commit mass genocide against your taste buds."*

§ *"Lizards are a home's best friend. Thanks to my host family during training, I know these little guys eat every insect in sight."*