

Sticky Rice



**Not Your
Peace
Corps
Postcard**

*Get to Know
Suthanya*

**Sticky Rice:
From the
Archives**

Year Two

Yoga on the Go

*Everything You
Wanted To
Know About
Lampang*

Channeling My Grandmother

From the Editors

Greetings, fellow PCVs and staff! Please enjoy our July edition of Sticky Rice!

Group 125 is two-thirds of the way through service and group 126 volunteers are finally starting to get used to things at site, so we are focusing this issue on what that means - Not Just Survive; THRIVE!

You could say that we're all at a pretty comfortable stage- many of us are feeling more included in our communities and many people in group 125 are even starting to make their post-Peace Corps plans.

Now it's easy to just go through the motions and enjoy everyday life as things seem more familiar to us. We're making friends, hanging out with kids and building and maintaining relationships with our fellow volunteers. Yet as familiar as things get, we are still able to stay out of a rut by remembering how our lives are now so different. We're interesting people and life is interesting!

In this issue, we have some creative writing, songs, our usual sections, horoscopes and a few heart-felt, creative non-fiction pieces for you to read. We hope this issue keeps you entertained, helps you stay out of that rut, and helps keep your life interesting! Enjoy the slightly-cooler weather and let's continue to thrive.

All the best!

Christine and Nancy

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yang?

In which we ask a staff member 5 pressing questions

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A reprint of a story that ran in a past issue of Sticky Rice

Cover Photo: Wat Phra That Lampang Luang; by Mayumi Rebeiro

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

stickyrice.newsletter@gmail.com

Gin Khao Ru Yang?

In an effort to help the volunteers get to know the Peace Corps staff better, the Sticky Rice editors posed five questions for the staff to answer. This edition we hear from Suthanya Sukphaisal.

Suthanya is the Executive and Communication Assistant, keeping everything in order and running smoothly, answering e-mails and is an excellent resource for volunteers, answering questions and helping make arrangements for a variety of things.

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

Suthanya Sukphaisal: My hometown is Bangkok. However, it might not be "Bangkok" in your thoughts because I live in the green zone of Bangkok (Thonburi side) about 20 km. away from Peace Corps Office. You still can see vegetable orchid gardens along the way.

SR: Where is your favorite place

to visit in Thailand?

SS: I like to go to Sam Roi Yot, Prachuap Khiri Khan Province. It's the marine national park. I have found a very unique and beautiful resort there, named Brassiere Beach Resort. I go



Photo from Peace Corps Thailand's Facebook Page

there a few times a year. It's just like my second home. I fell in love with a dog at the resort named Kang. He likes to jump into my kayak and enjoy cool breeze when I paddle. I feel very peaceful and foodful every time I,Âm there. It's such a good retreat after busy working schedule.

SR: Can you share a favorite

recipe?

SS: Usually, I don't cook. However, if I need to cook, an instant noodle dish would come into my first thought. Anyhow, I have my own recipe to make it fancy that I put Pla Kapong (tuna fish in tomato source), eggs and vegetables in Mama (instant Noodle) Tom Yum Koong. It turns very yummy though!

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

SS: I started working with Peace Corps as a CBOD Program Assistant about 3 years ago. The first time I interacted with PCVs was at the PST 123. I was asked by Khun Jaree to give training on Mind Mapping Tool. I was so new and very nervous. I finished that session in about 5 minutes out of 15 minutes. The volunteers looked at me with big smiles like I said hello and then good bye immediately. Some of my colleagues still tease me about that day.

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

SS: I see very often a whole family on one motorcycle. Sometimes they carry a dog as well.

Texts From Thailand

So the funeral I'm at right now is in the middle of a 'rain delay'. Not sure what happens next.

(20 minutes later)

If you guess my co-teacher would pass out & start drooling, and then a mostly bald guy w/ a tiny pony tail in the back of his head would show up wearing the white teacher officer's uniform complete w/ a sword and everything, then you are correct. What a guess, ha.

I want to make a music video with

can i kick it by a tribe called quest. About kicking stray dogs.

*that chase you.

My lesson for tonight just got laughed at saying the only reason youth show up is because they think I'm handsome and its funny to hear me speak thai.

In a completely not-creepy way, guess what i'm wearing right now. I'm at school, so it's still riap roy. But awesome riap roy. And again,

not creepy. any guesses?

I knew you were trouble. new theme song. and exactly how i feel when anyone starts talking to me about teaching english.

New to do list: get a neon orange fire retardant jumpsuit that the maintenance guys at my tessabaan have. With my name in thai on it. I'm pretty sure when that is completed everything else will fall into place perfectly.



Fast Facts

Above: Indra Ceramics factory and Wat Phra That Lampang Luang by Mayumi Rebeiro

Area: 12,534.0 km² (4,839.4 sq mi), the 10th largest in Thailand

Population: 757,534 with 2 Peace Corps Volunteers

Number of Ampurs: 13

Rainiest Month: September, with an average of 211.6 mm (8.331 in.)

Provincial Seal: The provincial seal has a white rooster on it because the god Indra thought people wouldn't wake up for the Buddha's visit here.

To get to Lampang from Chiang Mai, take the green rot baw kaw saw that leaves from the Arcade Bus Terminal. (53 baht!!, 2 hours). Or, if you are coming from Bangkok, purchase a ticket from one of the booths located on the bottom level outside the entrance. You can purchase a ticket directly to Lampang or one going to Chiang Mai. All buses en route to Chiang Mai, stop off at Lampang (8-10 hours). Taking the train is another viable option.

Some things to do in Lampang include the Thai Elephant Conservation Center, Wat Phra Kaew Don Tao and many natural parks with waterfalls and hot

springs.

Other things Lampang has to offer include horse and carriage rides. I haven't taken an actual ride on one around the city, but I have sat for pictures. There are also lots of ceramics due to the abundance of white clay in Lampang, which you can buy along the highways. But if you want high quality ceramics I recommend going to the Indra Ceramic Outlet or the Dhana-badee Ceramic Museum.

In my ampuhr, Koh Kha, is Wat Phra That Lampang Luang, which is a very grand and beautiful Temple visited by many Thai and Western tour companies. This Wat has it all; museums, old

murals, multiple Buddha images and a Buddha relic in the main pagoda. Across the street from the wat, there are horse and carriage rides, a great chai yen cart, decent noodles and multiple small shops that sell Lanna, or Northern Thai style clothing and gifts.

There is also Kad Kong Ta- a well-known walking street night market near the Wang River. Open Saturday and Sunday nights.

Other notable sights include the Clock Tower and Ras-sadapisek Bridge (well know white bridge of Lampang).

- Mayumi Rebeiro, YinD 125

Better Know a Province: Lampang

Game Corner

Phonics Phone Numbers is an activity that I learned from another Thai teacher in my district that we used at a teacher training. It is excellent to practice listening skills as well as those sounds that are extra tricky for Thai mouths.

Draw a telephone dial pad on a piece of paper and label each number with one of a rhyming word pair that begins with a letter sound that is difficult for Thais, such as L-R, V-W, SH-CH. There should be total of 5 pairs of words. Read out a telephone number, but use the corresponding words written on each number. Students must listen for the correct word sound and write down the phone number. Have the students share what phone number they heard, or use as a listening test. You can also have the students read out the words to practice pronunciation.

- Christine Bedenis, TCCS 125

1 Rip	2 Liver	3 Lamp
4 Lip	5 Ramp	6 Read
7 Lap	8 Lead	9 Liver
	0 Rap	

I Think I'm Gonna Like It Here

Jessie Larson, TCCS 125

(to the tune of "I Think I'm Gonna Like It Here" from Annie)

Host: Now, farang, what would you like to do first?

PCV: The English, then the social inequities, that way if my Thai is sub-par...

Host: No, no, no, you don't understand! You don't have to work while you're here with us!

PCV: I won't?!? But isn't that sort of the point?

Host: Why, you're our guest!

Host: You wear the color of the day

Yai: Today is yellow, why are you wearing green?

Host: The bucket shower has some frogs

PCV: I get to have pets in the bathroom? Oh, boy!

Host: We hung the mosquito net already

Nong: If you're afraid of ghosts, I can sleep with you

PCV: I think I'm gonna like it here!

(Dance sequence where PCV is squeezed and prodded by every member of the host family, then force fed a ridiculous amount of food)

Host: The rice fields are all around

PCV: I get to eat rice? Oh, boy!

Host: The kanom wan is always here

PCV: You mean I can eat all I want?

Host: We have a million more for you (These Americans are so fat!)

PCV: I think I'm gonna like it here!

(More food and mosquito attacks commence)

Pii: When you wake, take a shower, you have to take a shower!

Nong: When you come home, take a shower, you have to take another shower!

(PCV spins around in wonder as the host family shouts...)

Host family: Did you take a shower yet? Did you eat rice yet? Go to bed!

Host: And geckos chirp upon your walls

PCV: They'll sing me to sleep at night!

Host: Mosquitos come out around 6

Host family: We have but one request, please eat some more kanomes!

PCV: I know I'm gonna like it here!

(Montage of freezing bucket showers and overeating)

PCV: Used to live in a state where I'd eat some cheese. Get me now, holy cow! Could someone pass a kanom please!

(Thousands of kanoms are handed to PCV at once)

Host: Gin yert yert!

PCV: I didn't mean it!

(Still more eating of kanoms)

Host: We've never had an American

Host family: Farang, farang, farang, farang, farang, farang, farang, farang, farang, farang!

PCV: I'll be your first volunteer!

Host family: We have but one request, please eat some more kanomes!

PCV & Host family: I/We know I'm/your gonna like it here!

Homemade Deodorant

Christine Bedenis,
TCCS 125

- 6-8 Tbsp Coconut oil (solid state)
- 1/4 cup baking soda
- 1/4 cup arrowroot powder or cornstarch (arrowroot is better)

Combine equal portions of baking soda & arrowroot powder/cornstarch.

Slowly add coconut oil and work it in with a spoon or hand blender until it maintains a firm but pliable texture. It should be about the same texture as commercial deodorant, solid but able to be applied easily. If it is too wet, add further arrowroot powder/cornstarch to thicken.

You can either scoop this recipe into your old deodorant dispensers or place in a small container with lid and apply with fingers with each use. Makes about 1 cup. This recipe should last about 6 months for one person using regularly.

Important to note, coconut oil melts at 76 degrees Fahrenheit. Refrigerate the coconut oil before making this, so you can get the consistency right and when you are done, put your homemade deodorant back in the fridge to keep it solid.

Cilantro Lime Cucumber Salad

Laura Jones, TCCS 125

- 8 Thai-sized cucumbers, sliced finely
- 4 chopped shallots
- 1 finely chopped Thai pepper
- 1 bunch of cilantro, chopped
- 1/4 cup oil
- lime juice from 2 limes
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- salt and sugar to taste
- small handful of roasted peanuts

Just toss it all together in a bowl! Let it sit in the fridge for a bit so that all of the flavors meld together.

Jackfruit Carnitas

Christine Bedenis, TCCS 125

- 2 tsp ground cumin
- 2 tsp chili powder
- pinch cayenne pepper
- 1/4 tsp paprika
- 1/2 tsp oregano
- 1/4 tsp garlic powder
- 1/4 tsp pepper
- 1/2 tsp salt
- pinch cinnamon
- 1 tsp lime juice
- 1 tsp soy sauce (optional)
- 1 Tbsp cooking oil (Canola or something neutral)
- 1 small onion, diced
- 2 clove garlic, crushed
- 2.5 cups of jackfruit flesh, loosely chopped (try for not quite ripe)
- 1 Tbsp maple syrup

Pre-mix spices in a bowl. Place a pan on medium heat. Add oil, onion, garlic, and spice blend. Stir until onions are clear and coated with spices. Add jackfruit and maple syrup and stir occasionally to break up the jackfruit. It will be ready when the liquid is dissolved and the jackfruit darkens and starts to look like shredded meat. Serve in a homemade tortilla, recipes to be found in the January 2014 edition of Sticky Rice.

Better Homes
and Kanomes

Not Your Peace Corps Postcard

Madeleine Aggeler, TCCS 126

From 1984 to 1986, my parents served as Peace Corps volunteers in the Central African Republic. For most of my life I rejected the idea of joining the Peace Corps in the hopes of blazing my own trail. But, as it became increasingly clear with each discarded hobby that I would not become a prodigy in anything, and because I had neither the social connections nor the physical or psychological idiosyncrasies necessary to become a reality TV star, I found myself increasingly drawn to the Peace Corps.

I imagined myself as something on a Peace Corps postcard. There I would be, surrounded by smiling children, laughing and playing with them, my face glowing with the joy of service. In the next postcard, I would be out in the wilderness, running my hands through the rich soil. Sure, rolling around in dirt and “being outside” weren’t two of my favorite activities, but surely once I arrived at my site, free from the burdens of the Internet and flushing toilets, my inner outdoorswoman would awaken. I could hardly wait.

“Kruu Malee, why are you so sweaty?”

Three months at site and I was not looking like anything someone would want to see on a postcard. Sitting at the teacher’s table, I smiled, and returned to my task of trying to determine whether my calves had tanned or were just dirty.

“You should wear miniskirts to school,” an older male teacher said, grinning widely. Around the table, the other teachers were scrolling through Facebook and airbrushing selfies.

As I moved on to inspecting my other leg, ignoring the miniskirt comment, the computer teacher leaned in and asked me, in a hushed, urgent tone: “In America, do you know Tammy?”

“Tammy?”

“Yes, Tammy. She only has one leg.”

“Um, I don’t know Tammy. I’m sorry.”

He sighed and sat back in his chair.

This was not the postcard I had imagined. There were

far more smart phones, and the kids seemed confused by this tall, pale woman who made strange noises at them. I kept waiting for that moment where everything would click, when I could suddenly dip into a bottomless well of patience and goodwill. Instead I was testy and irritable, and I did not know Tammy.

I eventually settled into something of a routine. I became less of an oddity to the children who now call me Kruu Malee instead of Kruu Farang, and high-fived me in the halls. I made friends with some of the teachers, and at lunch we gossip and take selfies. Miniskirts and Tammy were never mentioned again.

So far my service is looking nothing like my parents’ service, and if it is a postcard, it’s one of those joke postcards your weird coworker sends you with a terrible pun on the front. But I’m starting to appreciate it because it’s so much more than a snapshot on a card. It’s difficult, complicated, wonderful and exasperating, and it’s entirely my own.

Year Two

Meredith Wipf, TCCS 125

So I am into my second year now (already?!?) and it is incredible and truly miraculous how different everything feels. It is like someone literally just flipped a switch and changed my reality.

Everything is different:

the relationships,
the co-teaching,
the student achievement.

My perspective,
my expectations,
my energy level,

my happiness.

My goals and priorities.

I now see clearly why this is a 27 month commitment instead of a 12 or even 15 month service. It is because you literally need the entire first year to wade through all the gunk. And when I say gunk, I mean the messiness of bringing an outside culture (yourself) into a foreign land. And believe me adjustment is messy and heartbreaking and sometimes ugly. And it takes time: like 15 months worth of time.

But it is necessary and ultimately rewarding.

What I see now is that we come here in the beginning with all of this baggage. The baggage of a narrow point of view; a narrow way of doing things; a narrow concept of right and wrong. This is not to say you or I are bad people, every human being has this baggage, the culture from which we come. But it can be dangerous when it goes unrecognized or worse, when it comes with a sense of superiority.

We bring this baggage with us into every situation we encounter, sometimes lugging it around like a badge of honor.

It takes work and perseverance to get to the point where we can be OK with leaving it at the door, without throwing it away. And once we can learn to leave it at the door, then --and only then-- can something true, and honest, and special take place.

And that, I believe, is the essence of year two.

Thailand Pro-Tip

We got this tip in our inbox of a way to cool off on those unbearably hot nights. Try it for yourself and see if you can guess which Isaan volunteer submitted this tip.

I got up one night to go to the bathroom, and wasn't very aware of where the shower head was pointing. I turned on the shower (which I use to wash my hands), and the water sprayed all

over my shirt. I was temporarily upset until I realized going to sleep with a wet shirt helps my fan blowing hot air to actually keep me cool!

If you have a pro-tip for surviving life in Thailand - something you have learned the hard way, a hilarious solution to a problem you've observed or a spin on a life lesson here - send it our way: stickyrice.newsletter@gmail.com

Channeling My Grandmother

Jeanette Clausen, TCCS 125

When I get discouraged about teaching in Thailand - coping with host families or critter-infested rental houses, dusty classrooms, battered furniture, irrelevant teaching materials, non-functioning copy machines and printers, student absences or student apathy - I try to channel my grandmother, Helen Hinz Clausen.

Helen Hinz was born in Wisconsin in 1887, one of 11 children of German immigrant parents. She completed a certificate at the local school to qualify as a country teacher when she was 16 years old, and taught at a one-room school in Wisconsin for a few years before moving to South Dakota. My dad once told me that she had an Irish boyfriend, but her father, old German patriarch that he was, put the kibosh on that relationship. My dad implied that there was a connection between the thwarted romance and her move to South Dakota. In any case, she went.

My grandmother's one-room school in South Dakota was on an Indian reservation that had recent-

ly been opened up for homesteading. Her students were the homesteaders' sons and daughters. There were no apartments to rent and staying in a hotel or even a boarding house would have been too expensive on a country teacher's meager salary. Teachers boarded with the students' families. My grandmother probably had a different host family every couple of months. That's how she met my grandfather Chris Clausen who had a homestead on the reservation. My great-uncle Will, 13 years younger than his brother Chris, would have been one of her students.

I've never seen the school where my grandmother taught, and most likely it no longer exists, but having attended a one-room school myself in the 1940s helps me imagine hers in the early 1900s. No electricity, of course, no running water, no "facilities" - at best, there would be outhouses, which are a lot stinkier than squat toilets. Books, paper, pencils and chalk would be in short supply. In cold weather, someone (read: the teacher) would have to start a fire to heat the room before the students got there, and keep it going all day. The students could be as young as five or as old as 19, all in the same room, with little or no correlation between their age and how well they could read, write or do arithmetic. Students would often be absent, either because they had to help their parents during the planting and harvesting seasons, or because they didn't have boots to walk to school in winter, or for many other reasons.

My grandmother never said much about her South Dakota teaching - and I was too clueless to ask, until it was too late. She died in 1963. My younger sister remembers asking her once if she was afraid of the Indians in South Dakota. No, said Grandma, but I was afraid of the snakes. Helen Hinz and Chris Clausen married in 1912 - Great-Grandpa Hinz couldn't object to the match, since the Clausens were German too. I'm lucky to have had my grandmother as a role model for teaching in challenging circumstances and as an intrepid woman who made her own decisions.

To Your Health

Christiana Lang, YinD 126

*Bus Yoga: How to survive long trips
wherever you're going*

People are going to look at you weird. But, then again, people always look at you weird. Good thing you are used to it. Long trips are hard on your body, so don't be afraid to bust out these yoga-inspired moves next time you travel.

Neck Rolls

Most Americans hold tension in their shoulders. Check yourself, even now are you are reading this. Relax your shoulders. Let your right ear fall gently toward your right shoulder just enough to feel a slight stretch. Let your chin point upward a bit too. Breathe with that for however long you want, really. Next, slowly shift toward your left shoulder/ear for the same amount of time. After right and left, move your chin to your chest and once more up toward the sky. These four movements are great to do before a series of the good ol' neck rolls. Don't get crazy with your neck rolls. Do it *sabai sabai*.

Cat-Dog

Not like the Nickelodeon cartoon. Bright orange is an unnatural color for a household animal, anyway. Sit up straight and tall so your spine is neutral. Place your hands on your knees. Inhale your chest towards and through where your arms are. Think along the lines of a puffer fish, or Jersey Guido. Then exhale, rounding your spine while pulling your belly button in. Inhale, chest through to dog (or cow pose) then exhale round into cat pose. Repeat this a few times making sure to breathe along with the movements. Stop at neutral and feel the difference.

Figure 4

Remember how they taught us *not* to sit in PST? You know, the way most men in America sit with a foot crossed over the knee? Well, do that. Bring your right ankle to rest on top of your left knee. Flex your right toes upward. Inhale deeply, then exhale as you bend at your waist so your

chest reaches your bent leg. Your head might hit the seat in front of you. If that happens, try pulling up on the leg placed on the floor, instead. That will give you a similar stretch. Hold and breathe, then do the same for your opposite leg.

Seated Twist

They say it is bad to crack your back, but it feels so good, doesn't it? And who are "they" anyway? Sit up straight and tall then cross your right leg over your left. Bring your left hand to your right knee. Inhale tall, then exhale twist toward your right side and look behind you. Use that right hand to leverage exhales deeper into a twist. Check in that you are not hunching your back or straining without breathing. With each breath, twist a little more. Then, switch to your other side.

Ragdoll

This one could be dangerous on a moving bus, but it's great for a plane (without turbulence) or a 7-11 gas station stop. Stand up and bring your feet to hip's width distance. Inhale, then exhale folding all the way forward so that your hands hit the floor and your head/neck are relaxed moving with gravity downward. It's

totally okay if your knees are bent. Grab your elbows with opposite hands and feel the back of your legs stretching. Slowly let your body sway right then left so your tailbone and spine soften. You can also sway front to back, but you might fall over. When you're ready to stand back up, roll up slowly with your head last.

For all long trips, make fidgeting your mantra. Listen to your body, move around and actually acknowledge a few rounds of breathing. Stay hydrated, bring a scarf, and when all else fails, do some Bus Yoga.

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, and the editors are pleased to announce that Christiana Lang from Group 126 will be taking the helm. It addresses health needs of volunteers and reminds us how to stay at our best while serving in the Peace Corps. If you have any suggestions for future topics, please e-mail ideas to stickyrice.newsletter@gmail.com.

New Year's Here

Jessie Larson, TCCS 125

(To the tune of "Over the River and Through the Woods")

Around the potholes and past dukduks
To Wat Ban Rai we go.
Whole family in truck, odometer stuck
AC is running low, oh!

Around the potholes and past dukduks
We putt 'round the countryside.
We hope our insides, survive the drive
As rough is the road we ride!

Around the potholes and past dukduks
To see of the building lore,
An elephant large, with snakes in charge,
Leave us wondering what's in store!

Around the potholes and past dukduks,
To pray, and hope, and learn.
Ancestors in urns, gods at each turn,
With Lam, Pigeon, Plum, and Pern!

Around the potholes and past dukduks,
Our fortunes we will seek.
The number leaks, curiosity peaks,
As it foretells coming weeks.

Around the potholes and past dukduks,
At dusk we venture home.
We're well impressed, and feeling blessed.
As 'cross rough roads we roam!

Tales from the Beyond

John Brocklehurst

*Smiles are Cheap ** Butterflies are Free*

Tales from the Beyond is a collaboration of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and Sticky Rice, to help share the perspective of someone who has been on this ride in Thailand with currently serving volunteers. This month, we are reprinting in its entirety, a piece that ran in a 1984/85 edition of Sticky Rice.

It was because of dissatisfaction with the status quo in their own countries that most of the original immigrants came to the United States; it is also possibly one of the reasons many volunteers join the Peace Corps.

The job market is overcrowded; the room for self-expression is limited in many lines of work. Taxation depletes initiative and ambition. Yet, thousands of people around the world still yearn to taste the "good life" in the States. Here in Thailand I have heard that many Thais have only two goals in life; one is to reach Nirvana and the other is to stop off in America on the way. I can well understand. As an immigrant myself I came to America at the age of 25 and now after the same number of years as a United States citizen, here I am, a Peace Corps Volunteer.

Why? Because I want to be useful.

At the recent Volunteers' Conference at the Viengtai Ho-

tel in Bangkok some people felt the necessity to express their dissatisfaction with the role in which they find themselves at their site. This is further evidenced by the Program Evaluation Questionnaire which appeared in the November issue of Sticky Rice.

I admire those people for speaking up at the con-

"It is my own feeling and conviction...that we are here mainly as quiet ambassadors, peace makers, vehicles in a parade displaying what is best about Americans."

ference. It is only out of expressed dissatisfaction and questioning that progress is made. After 20 years in Thailand the Peace Corps administration still doesn't have its act together. The most obvious proof lies in the poor choice of some sites and inadequate

briefing of Thai officials and co-workers as to the role and purpose of volunteers. Many arrive at their sites unexpected, no housing arranged and often their hosts have not the foggiest idea of what to do with the volunteer.

Peace Corps Washington itself seems hazy about our role and is certainly misleading. It was my impression and that of many other PCVs during recruiting interviews and directives received from Washington that we were accepted into the ranks for our work experience and or college training alone. It is my own feeling and conviction now after 20 months in-country that we are here mainly as quiet ambassadors, peace makers, vehicles in a parade displaying what is best about Americans (God knows, we are on display almost every waking moment whilst in Thailand).

At this point of my dissertation, some of my fellow PCVs may choose to differ with me, namely my interpre-

tation of our role and purpose here. I present it not condescendingly but rather sharing my own experience and observations.

I have heard some volunteers complain about lack of direction in their work, teachers with not enough classroom hours, Aggies with no projects and some English teachers assigned to vegetable production who don't know a trowel from a tomato. These may seem grounds for complaint. I agree, they are but assuming that you are not a quitter, have no insurmountable health problems and have resolved to complete your two-year assignment, what is your next step?

Use your "farangness." Each of us is unique. We are not Thai, never will be and no one expects us to behave like one despite what you may have assumed from cross-cultural training by sophisticated, well-educated and well-intentioned ajaans. (Denny Hamilton is trying very hard to find ajaans with more up-country background.) I have one advantage over many of my fellow PCVs in that I have lots of gray hair and the years to go with it; a status which is definitely worth something in this stratified society. Recognizing this I blatantly use it to the advantage of my Thai friends and poorer villagers to whom I direct most of my time, energy and project funds.

Up front in my mind is the fact that I came here to be useful, not to be loved by everyone. Thais recognize sincerity and good intentions just like anyone else and it is my experience that these qualities make up for my own language deficiency and occasional cultural errors. I have also found nothing but total support and encouragement from the Peace Corps staff in Bangkok.

The Tourist/Travel fraternity perhaps overuse the slogan "Land of Smiles," but up-country I have found a smile worth a damn sight more than an American Express card. Why don't you put it to work too? Although an Aggie, I have become friends with the English department at the Teachers' College and High School, by natural osmosis I suppose. I raised the problem of one of my TEFL PCV friends who is miserable because of the lack

of classroom hours. The Thai English department head's response was, "Hell, a PCV can write his own program."

Most of the PCVs in Thailand are under the age of 30, many are fresh out of college and have not held regular jobs. I fear that it may be many years down the road before some realize what incredible job freedom they have as PCVs. If you will use some initiative, imagination or "vigor" as the late John F. Kennedy once challenged, you can practically write your own ticket here.

Some readers may see a contradiction in my suggestion; i.e. "being a quiet ambassador" and "getting the job done." However, it is my contention that the Royal Thai Government, after 20 years' experience with the Peace Corps, welcomes the initiative, know-how and inherent capacity of most Americans for making friends. If I still don't make sense to some of you, then I gently suggest that you meditate on the meaning of the words, Peace Corps.



In Isaan, the hot season goes out with a bang. The *bun bang fai* festival, or rocket festival is held in localities throughout the region. The homemade missiles are a reminder to the Sky God that the last time he withheld rain (because the Buddha's sermon drew away the worshippers), he got beat badly by the Toad King.

Chris Gates, YinD 126, shares images from his local festival.

We Have Lift Off



Aries (Mar. 21- Apr. 19):

You will get bitten by a spider or a rat and take on the attributes of that creature. If you get bitten by a spider, you will be like Spiderman: crawling up walls and shooting web from your wrists. If you get bit by the rat, you will grow a tail, fur and start having cravings to eat garbage.



Taurus (Apr. 20- May 20):

You will fall into a hole that goes through the Earth on your way to work. You tell people that you have been through the Earth, but no one believes you. Your family will put you in an insane asylum, but you will escape.



Gemini (May 21- June 21):

Your father gets trampled by a stampede of wildebeests. Your jealous, evil uncle will try to take your father's job and kill you. You run away but will return home years later, take your father's job and kill your uncle.



Cancer (June 22- July 22):

You will meet the love of your life. At the end of the first date, your soul mate will propose and you will say, "yes." But, as soon as you agree to marry, they turn into a bird and fly away. You will not understand what happened and become deeply depressed.



Leo (July 23- Aug. 22):

You arrive at work and your co-workers tell you that the day's assignment is to make the biggest pizza for a pizza contest that is going on throughout Thailand. Whoever makes the biggest pizza gets a trip to Italy on the government's dime. Your workplace will win.



Virgo (Aug. 23- Sept. 22):

When you wake up, you find an arm has grown out of your side in the middle of the night. At first you are terrified, but then realize that having an extra limb can come in handy. You are able to finish your work before everyone else and treat yourself by eating three ice cream cones at once - one in each hand.



Libra (Sept. 23- Oct. 22):

When you go to your closet to pick out your clothes for the day, you will see a little fairy sitting on your shelf. She will want to come to work with you, so you put her in your pocket and bring her around with you all day.



Scorpio (Oct. 23- Nov. 21):

While you are cleaning the floor of your bedroom, you notice that one of the tiles is loose. Picking up the tile, you see that there is a small wooden box hidden under the tile. Inside the box, you discover the entire universe. You can get sucked into the box and explore the universe. You jump into the box and float around amongst the stars.



Sagittarius (Nov. 22- Dec. 21)

You find out that you have the ability to fly when you accidentally fall off of a roof. You fly to visit your family and friends. When you tell your PCV friends about your new-found super power, they ask you take them with them on your next trip. You develop back problems and when you refuse to give your friends rides, they decide to dump you and you make some new friends with some birds instead.



Capricorn (Dec. 22- Jan. 19):

You have taken up woodcarving and start working on a puppet. One morning, you will see that the puppet has come to life. You will play with and take care of him, but he runs away. Later you will go fishing and get eaten by a whale. You find your puppet in the belly of the whale too! You both escape and a fairy will your puppet into a human.



Aquarius (Jan. 20- Feb. 18):

A strange animal will find its way into your home. You hear it tapping all night but can not find it. Don't bother trying to fall asleep, because the second you close your eyes, the animal crawls into your bed and terrifies you.



Pisces (Feb. 19- Mar. 20):

You will do something heroic for the people around you. Everyone will agree that you are magnificent, giving you gifts as thanks for simply being alive. But, you let this all go to your head and will start dressing up in a superhero costume and wearing a cape. You tell everyone to come up with a theme song for you and command they sing it when you pass on your bicycle.

Horoscopes

Nancy Bunyea, TCCS 125