



Jeff & Diane Brown working to lengthen the list of tribes, peoples, and languages that worship God

SNAPSHOTS FROM THAILAND

In this issue, we are going to share some experiences we have had during these last nine months in Thailand. We have three more months here, for we will move to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) at the end of July. We will keep our same people group assignment when we move. The UAE is a 96% Muslim country where some of our people group live, where the trade language spoken by many of our people is commonly heard on the streets, and where the majority of the country's residents are immigrants from ethnic groups neighboring ours (only 19% of UAE residents are really from the UAE, the rest are immigrants). Anyway, on to the snapshots...

☺ When we arrived at the airports in Thailand, first Bangkok then Chiang Mai, back in August, we immediately noticed some differences. For one, there was a "monks only" seating area. Alyssa thought the Bangkok airport looked a lot like the one in Caracas, Venezuela, except that there were a lot more elephants.

☺ Upon arrival in Chiang Mai, we began house-sitting for colleagues who were temporarily in the states. A meter behind the house is a five-foot high wall. The wall keeps out what during the rainy season (May through October) is a several-acre swamp, complete with head-high grasses and reeds. Alyssa soon said she wanted to play in the swamp, if only someone would "lower the mawn". For her 10th birthday she had some girls over. Being the rainy season, the neighborhood park was also half flooded, and the girls spent the afternoon there hunting snails, snakes, tadpoles, and berries, bringing their finds back to our house. Just a typical girly birthday party... maybe among Amazon hunter-gatherers! More recently, Alyssa has started a new company, Mud Products Inc. It specializes in... er... mud products. She's so prissy!



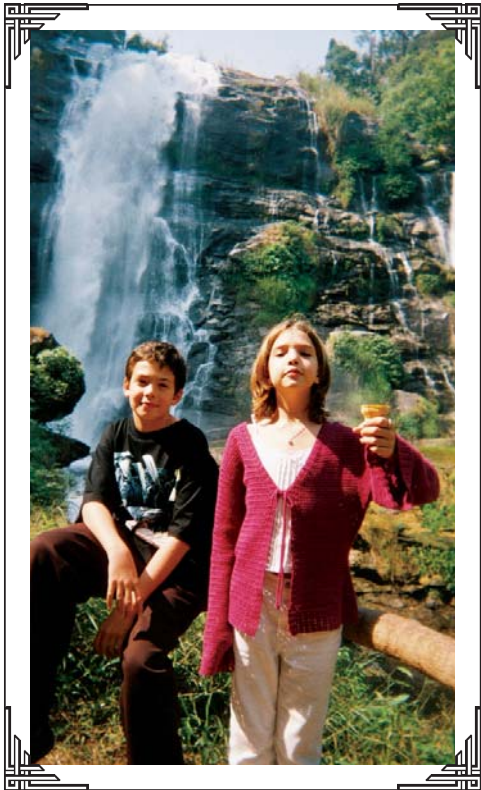
☺ In the fall we took a trip farther up north to Doi Angkhan. Doi means mountain. We stayed in a hill tribe village. While there we drove a few kilometers to the border with Burma/Myanmar. The Thai soldiers were happy to show us around, pointing out their machine gun turrets, their bunkers, and the Burmese soldiers' camp 100 meter down the hillside. There are lots of border problems in the area. We also rode donkeys at the King of Thailand's Ag Project, which helps poor rural tribes people profitably switch from opium growing to other crops. Diane, always up for a Thai massage (who can blame her!), stopped for one at the "hot springs" at the mountain's base, which is really more an area of geysers than hot springs, like at Yellowstone.

☺ Speaking of elephants, some other sites new to us here have been... Women and girls riding "side-saddle" on the backs of motorcycles as if they were sitting on living room furniture. Jeff saw a young child riding in front of his mother, who was driving the motorcycle, eating food...with chopsticks! Black rubber trash receptacles for each house in the shape of cauldrons with lids. Rows of shoes outside every entrance door. We now feel strange wearing shoes in the house. Buddhist monks in flowing saffron robes shopping for music CDs in department stores, talking on cell phones - stuff you don't see them doing on the postcards! "Squatty-potties" instead of sit-down toilets. (Nough said.) Driving on the right wrong side. Pepsi sold in a plastic bag with a straw. "I'll have a bag-o-pepsi please." This is the first time we've lived in a town with a moat. Parked cars left in neutral so that others can roll them out of their way when they are blocked in, especially in parking garages. What a cooperative society! We've done it several times with no problems. Our kids especially enjoy pushing the other cars around. Sepak Takraw. Wow, what a game! Visit www.asecint.org/takraw/takgallery.html and www.tntakraw.20m.com/photo.html to see action photos of it, then write to ESPN to ask them to broadcast a game. These people are doing these things on purpose! Daniel got one of the balls for Christmas, but we're afraid to use it! Blue braces. Daniel has them on his teeth. We may be out of touch, but last we knew, braces were one color - silver. Lizards throughout the house. They drive the cats crazy sometimes. An old man making rope by hand, and people making paper by hand from mulberry trees. Cooked insects sold in markets. And everybody's okay with this? In a Sunday school class, Daniel ate two bugs! Boxes of red-colored carrot-tomato-celery-pumpkin-apple-lemon-pineapple-orange juice. The same company sells green-colored asparagus-and-who-knows-what-else juice. Jeff actually likes this stuff, especially the red kind - and it's cheap. Nestle brand bottled water, yogurt, milk, breakfast cereal, orange juice, etc., etc., etc. They're taking over!



☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺

☺ Last fall Jeff went to Central Asia twice, and Diane once. The contrasts between Muslim central Asia and Buddhist Thailand are staggering, and too numerous to list. An indicator of just how different they are was when we got on the Thai Airways plane in central Asia to return to Thailand. At that point, we had lived in Thailand less than four months. Seeing the flight attendants smile (Thailand is nick-named "the Land of Smiles") and "Y" us (the traditional, prevalent Thai greeting, making an inverted Y with the hands and bowing), and hearing them say, "Sawatdiikhaa", was like coming Home, like crawling under the blankets on a cold night, like coming in out of the rain.



☺ We also traveled over the Christmas break to Doi Inthanon, which at 2,565 meters, is the highest point in Thailand. During that season, a typical high temperature in Chiang Mai is 85F, with a nighttime low of 60F. But on Doi Inthanon, we were cold! Not just chilly, but cold! We explored a large cave with bats.

☺ We moved on – yes, on – Christmas Eve to a different house two kilometers from the first, one that didn't already have other people's furnishings in it... didn't have much of anything in it, actually. We celebrated Christmas on the living room floor with a little fake tree. Yet another "Christmas to remember"! Understandably, Christmas isn't a big deal in Buddhist Thailand.

☺ The end of April marks the end of what Jeff calls burning season. There appear to be three annual seasons here: the six-month rainy season, warm-burning season (what some here call "winter" – yeah, right...), and hot-burning season (average April daily high of 97F). Mercifully, hot-burning season is the shortest, two to three months. The two burning seasons are called the "dry" season by people here. But its main usefulness is as a time to burn stuff because there is no rain: fields, roadsides, thickets, miscellaneous patches of plant life, trash, etc. It gets so bad that one has to take it by faith that the forested mountain just outside our side of the city is actually still there. Rainy season (almost as hot as hot-burning season) is thankfully here. Now Jeff will be able to go running without wondering if breathing the air does more harm than the exercise does good.

News from Jeff & Diane

Non Profit Org
US Postage
PAID
Lincoln, NE
Permit No. 968

New Covenant Community Church
6000 S. 84th
Lincoln NE 68516



☺ Speaking of elephants yet again, we rode 'em through the forest, at the Elephant Conservation Centre. Daniel and Alyssa took the lead beast, while Diane and Jeff came behind. We rode them and fed them, and saw a demonstration by more than a dozen of how they are used in Thai industry and society, especially in forest logging and transportation.

OUR NEW WEBSITE

We invite all of you to our new website, currently (and perhaps temporarily) located at:
www.incolor.inetnebr.com/dannyk/brown

There you will find other past **BROWNEWS**, more photos, our biographical sketches, information on Islam and Christianity, links to news about Central Asia and Venezuela, maps, and (as they say) much, much more!

If you know somebody without internet access who would like to receive BrowNews by mail, send their mailing address to Danny Keelan at:

dannyk@inetnebr.com

Contact Information:

Mail: PO Box 134, Chiang Mai 50000 THAILAND

Phone: (from the US) 011-66-53-838899, 011-66-1-9922544

E-mail: caracasbrown@bigfoot.com