

Thailand diary

Janita Bond & Michelle Long

2006 Avondale BSc / BTeach (Secondary), and BEd (Primary) graduates, working as overseas mission volunteers in Mae Ramut, Thailand

From: Janita Bond & Michelle Long
[mailto:janitamisha@hotmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, 10 January 2007, 2:35 PM
Subject: Arrived

Dear All,

This is just a little message to say, yes, we have finally started our Thailand adventure! Both Janita and I arrived safely in Bangkok on Sunday night. We will be picking up our visas and then travel on to Mae Sot, where Helen Hall will pick us up and take us to our new home in Mae Ramat.

If all works out OK, we will possibly start teaching on Monday! It's all so very soon, but it will be good to get started.

Note: Above is our new email address.

We hope that your new year has started well; a prayer for you all.

Love,
Janita and Michelle

From: Janita Bond & Michelle Long
[mailto:janitamisha@hotmail.com]
Sent: Sunday, 18 February 2007, 2:05 PM
Subject: Tak visit

Dear Everyone,

It feels like ages since we last wrote. We've been busy with school, and travelling. We were fortunate to have a long weekend off, and took the opportunity to travel to Tak province. We stayed in Mae Sot for the night, before hiring a motorbike on Sunday and heading for two beautiful national parks, visiting many waterfalls and enduring steep climbs. By Monday afternoon, we were exhausted!!!

On Tuesday we took it easy, walking through Mae Sot and the border markets (between Thailand and Burma—approx 8km from Mae Sot). There, we purchased some bed rolls (so that we can sleep on the verandah when it gets really hot) and 1kg of cashews. We ate the nuts in four days!!! Carrying the bed rolls on the motorbike was an interesting experience and made us feel like true locals. I think you could see more bedroll than person!!

And hiring the motorbike was a real blessing. It allowed us to travel much further than having to rely

on local transport. One day, we were riding along a dirt road to what felt like the middle of nowhere (just jungle), in search for the elusive 'Natural Rock Bridge'. We ended up not finding it, but had fun trying to get there. The road was quite steep and rutted in one spot, resulting in us stacking the bike. We thought we hadn't done any damage to the bike, but when Janita returned the bike to the hire company they managed to find enough damage to ask for 500 baht repair costs. This was more than what we had paid for the three days' hire!!! (All ended well though.)

While searching for the Bridge, we walked along a logging track and saw a sight that made our skin crawl! On hearing some rustling on the road-bank, we looked closer to discover thousands of 'swarming' spiders (looked like daddy-long legs). They were so thick and crawling over each other that the ground seemed to move. After taking some photos, we gladly continued walking.

Graduation is coming up next weekend, so this week is guaranteed to be busy. We are looking forward to a house full of visitors.

Best wishes, if you who are starting College this year. Make sure you make the most of your time at Avondale. It's a place for growing and creating wonderful memories.

Praying for you all, and wishing you God's blessing.

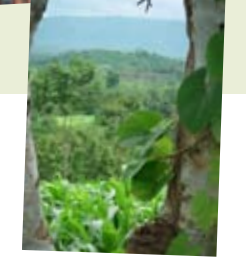
Janita and Michelle

From: Janita Bond & Michelle Long
[mailto:janitamisha@hotmail.com]
Sent: Friday 20 April 2007, 6:03 PM
Subject: Chiang Mai Holiday

Dear Everyone,

Howya! It's about time we emailed an update, as promised. We hope you all had an enjoyable Easter with lots of rest, including chocolate and family time.

We've just come back from a one-week holiday in the north of Thailand, enjoying the water festival (Songkran) in Chiang Mai. We were lucky to have K' Yeh Htoo, one of the girls who help Helen, come with us. To get around we caught local songthaews (taxis), motorbikes, and orange buses. In Thailand,



Reflections, Impressions & Experiences

orange buses rank as the lowest and cheapest way to travel. This means that the condition of the bus can be pretty bad! It also means that the seating capacity of a bus is only limited by the number of passengers that can be squeezed in!! At one stage of the journey to Pai, our 29-seater orange bus carried over 50 people. There were even people hanging out of the bus doors!!

It was great to see different parts of the country. As we travelled further north, the villages became more isolated (some hidden in the valleys below), the roads more winding (one beautiful section follows the Moe river which divides Thailand and Burma), and the hills higher, while traveling 100km took five hours! It's the dry season now; how beautiful the rainforest must be during the wet season.

Our travels took us to towns and villages, a large cave, and temples with lots of stairs. Because it was Songkran, we got absolutely drenched by people throwing buckets of water, as we travelled past in the open-windowed songthaews. And we laughed our heads off!

During Songkran, Chiang Mai streets were crowded: Vehicles piled with people and buckets of water; street vendors selling food and blocks of ice; and kids fetching water from the old city moat. Our hope of shopping quickly evaporated, as many of the shops were closed over the festival weekend.

All that excitement is over now, and it's nice to be home again. There are three more weeks of teaching before the exams, and school equipment has to be organised for the new school year, starting in May.

Until next time,
Janita and Michelle

From: Janita Bond & Michelle Long
[mailto:janitamisha@hotmail.com]
Sent: Friday, 8 June 2007, 6:05 PM
Subject: Thailand update...teaching!!

Dear Everyone,

It has been over a month since we last wrote (oops!!). So much has happened. We've been here for five months, officially. The wet season has begun. This means lots of water, mud, humidity, sweat, and mosquitoes. We have started a new fashion! Our school attire includes gumboots, umbrella, and a minimum of two school bags each.

Some students at the local 'Sevvie' Thai school have just caught P.F. malaria (the bad one that can go to the brain). Luckily there are many clinics that can detect and treat the different forms of malaria. But unfortunately people still die, particularly in remote mountain villages. Don't worry, Mae Ramat is not in a bad 'mozzie' area and Helen always reminds

us to cover up. School started three weeks ago, even though it feels like yesterday. The students have been very excited about having foreign teachers. We are waiting for the novelty to wear off and students' real personalities to 'shine' through.

The school in the refugee camp is so different to what we are used to. Wide age spans exist in classes, as in grade 10. Some students are aged 15 years, while others are 22 years old. There are no programs; bell times are random (whenever the students feel like the period should finish); classes are often without teachers; and when it rains heavily young children can be seen dancing naked under the run-off from the roof. The classroom roof leaks and all teachers need a compulsory degree in yelling to be heard over nearby classes, noisy children, squealing pigs, and the rain. Even though, it's enjoyable and adds to the overall experience.

We have just started an English youth Sabbath School lesson, and we are praying that a lot of students will attend. Also, we've been asked to do a special item for the Sabbath School preliminaries every week.

Rueben Tierney, a new volunteer teacher has joined us from Australia. He wanted to get some experience before going to Avondale to study BSc/ BTch. It's been great having another Aussie around. He is able to connect really well with the boys. They play soccer with the students at Helen's each Sunday, but we haven't any girls playing, yet (apart from two). It's very rare for girls to play sport here. Possibly, participation is more common in the cities than up here in the 'jungle'.

There are few happenings, apart from school, but we're excited about the soon arrival of Brad Watson and students from Avondale College. Other visitors' names are also marked in our diaries for the next months ahead. Anybody is welcome to visit us, at anytime. We love visitors!!

We hope all is well with you. Thanks to those who have emailed and prayed for us, and also Dr Rogers' phone up-link promoting mission work. Thank you Kerrilyn McPhee, for sending all the yummy, delicacies. We appreciate these little thoughts so much!!! Stay safe and take care.

Love Janita and Michelle
P.S. Sorry for any errors, the keyboard is not working well!!! TEACH



[Photography:
Janita Bond +
Michelle Long]