



Jim Drummond Reports from Southeast Asia

Jim Drummond is a regular attender at Crossroads Friends Worship Group, and lives in Flint, Michigan. He is traveling in Southeast Asia during Second Month 2006, and is sending back reports by thee-mail as way opens. (He is a retired college dean, and the necktie has pictures of the actor James Dean. James Dean. . . James the Dean. . .?)

Thailand

I will be leaving Thailand in just a few hours, and I thought I would send a few thoughts. Today took us into rural Thailand, and that was really worthwhile. We saw Thai agriculture in action. The big crop is rice, but we also saw multiple kinds of fruit being grown and occasional livestock. I steered clear of the poultry!

We visited a village elementary school, and the English students performed for us. They did a wonderful dance, and their teacher told us that this was the high point of the month for the children. The children, by the way, were absolutely gorgeous. We also visited a 14th Century temple and numerous other religious and historical sites. It was obvious that one of the temples had been strongly influenced by the Khmer people.

Food continues to be astonishingly good, as long as one avoids that which is too hot and spicy. We had lunch about a boat designed to serve meals. Let me give you a little idea of how we are being treated by Elderhostel: The following were the courses in the meal:

1. Seafood soup -- very spicy
2. Fish cakes in sauce -- excellent
3. Chicken and vegetable dish in sauce
4. Vegetables in something like an oyster sauce
5. Peanut butter encrusted fish
6. Thinly sliced beef in sauce
7. Pork sliced more thickly and in sauce
8. A kind of salad with shrimp
9. A fried chicken dish
10. Several different kinds of fresh Asian fruits

for dessert. Wow!

Before I left, Dennis McKenzie persuaded me to buy two pairs of hiking socks at \$10 per pair. I never bought any socks at \$5 per pair before. I am now sorry I didn't buy ten pair. They are wonderful.

Traffic in rural areas is awful, too. There are far, far fewer vehicles, but the roads are pretty primitive. It will be an adventure tomorrow to arrive in Laos. We are constantly being made aware that Laos is at least 40 years behind Thailand in development, and it is truly a third world country. We will be going to Luang Prabang, the ancient capital, but it is a small city, and that will make for a huge change from Bangkok, any way.

The Elderhostel leaders are truly excellent, and my fellow travelers are generally very bright and pleasant people. I have met one fellow (and his wife) who is truly weird. He is a Quaker who spent more than 35 years of his life teaching English in a college. No wonder he is strange.

Amidst all the traffic, there is not a single American vehicle (nor a married one either, for that matter). There plenty of European cars as well as Asian, but none made in the USA.

Sleep, or the lack thereof, has been a problem for me, so I will close, now that I have put you to sleep, and head for bed myself. We leave early in the morning on Saturday (tomorrow here). I didn't have to re-set my alarm clock. It is exactly 12 hours later here than in EST.

Hang by your thumbs, and I will try email from Laos, but it is not clear that I will be able to.