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# 0.3

## PREFACES AND INTRODUCTIONS

### Preface to the First Edition

*Claralice Hanna Wolf*

My twin sister, Rosemary, and I were born in Thailand, the daughters of Presbyterian missionaries. Thailand was home for sixteen years. No one could have predicted in 1937, when we came to the United States for high school and college, what part our homeland would play in our future lives. I expected - then - to return soon as a missionary, but I heard a different call and remained. Rosemary, who wondered - then - what God had in mind for her, had, within a few years, set her heart steadfastly to preparing herself for ministry in Thailand. Twelve years later, 37 years to the month after her mother, Hazel Brunner, first left for Siam, it was Rosemary who returned home as the missionary.

Like her mother, Rosemary had a pioneering spirit. In Hazel's day, travel was as primitive throughout all of Thailand as that which Rosemary encountered forty years ago in the western provinces where the Worldwide Evangelization Crusade assumed responsibility for mission work. But no mountain path was too difficult to be faced, no river too swift to be crossed, no cry for help too daunting to be met.

Like her father, Loren Hanna, who was an ardent Bible student and teacher of pastors, Rosemary became active in leadership development, and in preparing study materials. She spent countless hours writing and editing in the quiet of her home, and worked tirelessly, even with the most humble folk, helping them acquire the skills to spread the gospel.



Whereas this book is her personal record of the history of W.E.C.'s ministry and growth in Thailand, it will be meaningful to family and friends. Throughout the years, her letters have been full of stories of the people she came to know, tales of their courage, their trials, their miracles, but only a modest view of her life and work, her adventures, her accomplishments. This book reveals the perils she endured, the courage, the long, patient waiting for results. In it, we discover the depth of her commitment. Her love for the people is reflected in all she says, and we recognize how it was they came to know the love of Christ.

It has been a privilege and a joy to prepare this book for Rosemary. It has been a greater privilege and joy to have had her all these years for a twin sister.

Claralice Hanna Wolf  
December, 1989

### **Author's Dedication**

At the close of this book the story is far from finished. The earth is no longer cracked and dry. Parts have been watered, plowed, and sown. Of the seed sown, some has borne fruit; Thai and Karen Christians, brothers and sisters in Christ, have joined us in the plowing, planting, and watering.

To our faithful fellow workers, both nationals and expatriates, who continue to labor after we are gone, I dedicate this book with the prayer and firm expectation that as they have sown in tears, they will come again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them.

### **Editor's Introduction**

The first edition of Cracked Earth was published during my mother's lifetime.

The manuscript itself was completed many years earlier -- I vaguely remember her working on it when we lived in Thoen. Her writing wasn't of the style that the publisher thought would sell so it collected dust for many years. I expect she had given up on it. Much later, my aunt, her twin sister, persuaded her to let her go over it and edit into its present shape. It was henceforth published via a roneo



copier, in a limited edition, enough copies for relatives, close friends and colleagues. By then, my mum's energies were focused on other things -- things that probably ought to have been included in this book.

Then she passed away in 1990.

I had actually lost my copy, and so had my aunt. On my asking her, my aunt managed to obtain a copy from the WEC library in Fort Washington, and sent it to me. Thence, my idea for an e-book version.

Since it's been many years since my mum's passing, It occurred to me that an expanded edition might be appropriate, including updates and personal accounts to fill in some of the gaps.

I suppose that technically, this would fit the definition of an autobiography. However it's quite obvious that she didn't intend it as such. If she had, she would have certainly begun her chronology much earlier, during her childhood, or at the point she felt the call to missions -- whatever. Instead, she appears as one of the characters in her own story -- a story about the WEC, Thailand field as she experienced it. Her entry into the story is her entry into WEC Thailand.

Therefore, in doing this edition, I'm not making it a memorial to my mother -- anyone who knew my mother would know, she wouldn't have wanted that -- rather, I'm trying to remember what my mum would have had us remember through this story, the team that WEC Thailand was, and how it began to evolved into a multi-prong, multi-faceted force that exists today. I'm doing what my mother would have done with it had she the chance. I've asked various ones to submit what they can, and some have.

In searching for material, I found out that Nancy Ashcraft had written a book which would have paralleled what I was trying to do with this. As she hasn't published her work, she has graciously given me permission to use what I can to fill in.

As of this writing, I'm still looking for more material.

I've included many of our family photos. Some of the photos I've scanned include the notes that were scrawled on the back, which I thought too good to miss -- like the photo of me you see at the right. I still have some old slides I'd like to scan. Paul Moss has very kindly sent me some of his photos as well. Besides being one of the major players in the early WEC work, he was a professional photographer.

The right hand margin will be where you'll see the supplementary material, the photos, as well as all the original footnotes.



*...perhaps that line could also sum up my writing career...?*

In re-reading my mum's book, I've been inspired, and reminded of a lot of things I had forgotten -- important things.  
I hope you are likewise blessed and inspired.

Robby  
[bobcharters.blogspot.com](http://bobcharters.blogspot.com)



# I

## A THIRSTY LAND

The heat and air were oppressive as we lay on our mattresses on the back porch after the evening evangelistic meeting. Dim rays from our neighbor's little oil lamp silhouetted the motionless shadow of an intervening tree branch against the mosquito net around us. We fanned ourselves to the rhythm of the buzzing locusts in the surrounding trees, trying to dry the perspiration and to get a little air to circulate under the mosquito net.

It had been a long, hot, dry season. What little green foliage remained was thickly coated with red dust. The sky was so murky with dust and forest fire smoke that no stars shown through at night. By day, the rays from a hazy sun were refracted by the dust, making shade and sunlight almost equally hot. The hard, parched earth was covered with a net-work of deep fissures, called in the Thai language, *rahang*. These cracks had grown deeper and wider as the season had advanced. Our town, Rahang, took its name from the cracked earth.

Indeed, this seemed to symbolize the hardness, dryness, and barrenness of the whole province of Tak, and our attempts to break the soil for the planting of the seed of the gospel had seemed like the futile swinging of a hoe against the sun-baked clay. An outstanding evangelist visiting our province had declared, "Rahang is a hard place! I've seen fruit in every other province of Thailand where I have preached, but not in Tak."



*photo from Charters family collection*



So there we lay, fanning ourselves in the dark and discussing the evening meeting and the events of the day. Far away we could hear the rumble of thunder. We had been hearing it for many days, but as the rain never came, we had learned to ignore the thunder rather than allow ourselves to be tantalized by its empty promises.

"What do you think about Rean?" I asked.

"I don't know," Bill replied. "He seemed so promising at first. He is certainly zealous about preaching, and he's a gifted speaker. But there's something puzzling about him. I keep wondering more and more, and I feel he doesn't ring true."

"I agree. If only he were all that he first seemed to be. I had thought that now, at last, we had our first Thai worker."

As we talked, we could hear the light snoring of the young man in question as he slept in the meeting room on the other side of the knot-holed wall.

As my mind gradually drifted into a dream state, I was back in the dark, cobweb-draped coffee shop where we had been that morning, looking into the hopelessly blank face of a small boy, clothed in nothing but dirt, sprawling on the dirt floor, leaning against a mangy, emaciated dog. As we stepped across the shallow gutter up into the little shop, we knew by the contents of the gutter that some child in that place had an advanced case of amoebic dysentery. The illustrated scripture tract we had handed him had not produced the slightest smile. The old man who had served us our coffee had hurriedly left the shop saying, "I have a religion already." The boy's mother, obviously upset by some incident prior to our entry, was as busy with her mouth as with her hands. She squatted on the floor chopping meat on a wooden block and scolded a group of children at the back of the room.

Perhaps the tract in the boy's hands would be picked up later and read by his parents. Perhaps even yet the seed might be buried in some heart. But even as I thought this, his little one-year-old sister toddled up, chuckled to see the colored tract, and tearing it in two, crumpled half of it into her mouth.

Bill was talking again, and I was suddenly back in the mosquito net.

"Isn't it a coincidence about Raywadee living beside us last year across the river, and again this time on this side. You know, I don't think she's as crazy as we thought she was last year."

"She really seems to be a seeking soul. But she is so ec-

centric, I hardly know how to deal with her. And she has such a terrible reputation."

"But she's faithful. She's at prayer and Bible study every morning. She seems to know that this is where she can find answers. I wish we could go up river with her to her old home as she keeps asking."

"Maybe we could go some time after our baby arrives."

Just then we were startled by a loud clap of thunder overhead. As we lay in silent but longing suspense, a deliciously cool breeze suddenly shook the mosquito net. The neighbor's little lamp flickered and went out. A far-away roar of wind and rain grew louder and louder until large drops began pounding noisily on the iron roof.

We lay still a moment enjoying the luxurious coolness and the smell of the newly wet earth. The wind thrashed the mosquito net; spray blew in on us, so we got up and moved the mattress over against the wall. Then by the light of our torches (flash lights) supplemented by the frequent flashes of lightening, we emptied the large earthen jars along the edge of the porch. They were full of muddy water which we had paid dearly to have carried from the river. What a short while before we had held as of great value, we now hilariously threw out as worthless, making room for the pure, clear water that was pouring so generously from the heavens.

As we sat on a trunk waiting for the rain to wash the dust from the air and from the roof, I thought about the trees and shrubs gradually becoming clean and green, and of the cracks in the earth filling with rain and gradually closing up as the water soaked into the hard clay.

Soon the water coming from the rain trough ran clear, so we got up, washed our jars, and filled them.



# II

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

It was a September morning in 1949. The shouts of the stevedores, the puttering and chugging of small boats, and other typical harbor sounds, brought me to consciousness at day break. The excitement of a new venture rushed in upon me as I realized that the voices were speaking the Thai language. The month's journey was ended and I was about to enter the land I had left twelve years earlier, the land of my birth and childhood.

I dressed quickly and went out to the deck to look around. It was a hot, sultry morning. As I watched the stevedores open the holds, maneuver the derricks, and prepare to unload, I strained my ears to hear what they shouted to each other. But I could not identify a single word of the language I first spoke as a child.

The freighter had entered the Gulf of Thailand the day before, and during the night had drawn up as near the mouth of the river as a ship of its size could safely go. As the sun rose over the eastern horizon, it cast a rosy glow on the palm-fringed shore about half a mile away. On the hills near by, the Buddhist temples, with their white, pointed *chedees*, sparkled in the morning sun.

Several launches, barges, and sampans made their way toward our freighter, and I wondered if one of them were coming to take me ashore. Hearing feminine voices among the others, I leaned over the rail to see the mass of small

boats that crowded around. On one barge were about twenty young women. My first thought was surprise that women should be employed in unloading ships. But as I observed them, it dawned on me what these women were waiting for. More arrived in other boats. Some, in stylish western clothes, sat in sophisticated dignity. Others in shorts or play suits, frolicked and climbed about like monkeys, joking and making everyone merry. One bought a bunch of bananas from a passing sampan which she distributed to all the other girls. She offered some to me, but I was too far up for her to throw them. Some of them knew pertinent English phrases which they called unashamedly to the sailors.\*

After breakfast, a crowd of immigration, customs, and health officers were ushered into the dining room, and the questioning began, followed by baggage inspection. It made me feel very important, as I was the only passenger disembarking.

A small launch came to take me ashore, but owing to the rough sea, a larger one had to be substituted. By the time it arrived, there were so many small vessels tied to our ship that I would have to cross quite a number of them. At the top of the gang plank, as I said "Good-bye" to the captain, the steward thrust a bag of lunch into my hands, and I hurried down after the launch pilot. The waves tossed the wee boats three feet above, then plunged them three feet below the gangplank landing. As I waited for the right moment to jump across, several of the girls reached out and pulled me up onto their barge. Then with a friendly, patronizing, big-sister air, they escorted me across the boats to my own.

A company car waited at the pier and took me to Bangkok, a journey of about four hours. Although the driver spoke fair English, I tried out my recollection of the language by asking questions in Thai. Each sentence was laboriously worded and reworded. I was glad to find that he was finally able to grasp my meaning - part of the time.

When the car stopped in front of the American Bible Society building, the Rev. Peter Voth and Wilf Overgaard, with his little son, Paul, came out to meet me. The Voths, missionaries of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, were at that time in charge of the Bible Society headquarters in Bangkok. They were old friends of my family. Wilf was the leader of the Worldwide Evangelization Crusade (W.E.C.) in Thailand, and had come a two days' journey from Tak to meet the new missionary.

The next day, Mrs. Voth took me shopping. She ordered two *sam laws* to take us. A *sam law* is a three-wheeled bicy-

- Of the more than twenty sea ports I have seen in my life, this has been the only one where such undisguised prostitution was carried on. Yet this incident is by no means typical of the majority of Thai women.



*New Road (Charoen Krung)*

*photo courtesy of Nancy Ashcraft*

cle, the back part of which resembles a rickshaw. Built for the short-legged Thai, it made me feel like an octopus in a match box. But it is the cheapest way to get where you wish to go, if you don't know which trams to take.

Throughout the busy city, many streets were under construction. All the klongs (canals) were gradually being filled in and converted into streets. I recalled being a child going about Bangkok with my family in a small boat or canoe. What was formerly known as the Venice of the East was fast becoming a modern city with broad streets and heavy traffic.

One thing stands out in my memory - the hordes of thin, mangy dogs everywhere. There seemed, almost as many dogs as people, all wandering about the sidewalks and streets, snarling, fighting each other, and barking or growling at people.

"You'll see them all over Thailand like this," said Mrs. Voth. "The Buddhists, of course, can't kill animals, so when their pet dog has a litter of puppies, they keep the fiercest one for a watch dog and take the others to some far part of town, or to another village, where they release them to become street dogs, belonging to no one."\*

Among the friends whom I met during my wait in Bangkok were the Seigles and the Fullers. They had been close friends of my parents, and had also been a great help to the first W.E.C. missionaries who had arrived in Thailand just two years before me. They, among others, invited me out to dinners and teas.

It was on such an occasion that Ernie Fogg, a Presbyterian missionary, told me of an organ which had been my mother's, but which she had given to the Sumray church many years before. The church had obtained a new organ, so they decided that I should have hers.

Wilf was buying a motor boat from Mr. Fogg, and they decided that a trip to the Sumray church to get the organ would give Wilf an opportunity to test and learn to drive the boat. We started off in the rain. Little Paul went along. Mrs. Fogg had given me a toy parasol, about a foot in diameter, to keep my head dry. The others simply got wet. We started off from a pier in front of the Fogg's residence. It was a long trip, down one water-way and up another, under bridges, between grassy banks and busy streets. All along the way, naked children would shout, "*Farung, farung!*" (foreigners) and drop from the bridges into the klong and swim around dangerously close to the boat. The men in the boat would shout, "*Rawung! Rawung!*" (be careful) and try



*Sathorn road when it was still a "klong"*

*photo courtesy of Nancy Ashcraft*

- In the past few years, the Thai government has made great strides toward the control of rabies by poisoning all unowned dogs once a year, in all parts of the country. The dog population of Bangkok has been cut down to a small percent of what it was.

to keep them from the spinning propeller or from capsizing the boat. The incident recurred so frequently that the two new words, *farung* and *rawung*, were permanently imprinted on my mind that day.

After some time, we got to the Chao Phaya River, the main water way of Thailand. It is a wide and sometimes rough river, for it rises and ebbs with the tide.

"They are dredging and deepening the river," Mr. Fogg told us, "and soon ocean liners will be able to come up to Bangkok."

House boats were tied up all along the shore. Some were shops and places of business, others were purely residential. A heavy shower came on, and we drew up to one of these floating houses for shelter. As soon as we got under the roof, we discovered it was an opium den. Men lay in rows on a low platform with their heads on wooden pillows, smoking opium through long pipes. Here and there were smoky little lamps for lighting their pipes.

The rain slackened and we went on down the river and entered another klong. This was a quiet, peaceful canal, with trees meeting overhead. Suddenly we heard fire cracklers and native music. Around the corner came a line of four canoes, each with a gaily decorated canopy, and all the occupants dressed in colorful silks and satins. Some wore flowers in their hair or around their necks; many held silver bowls, each with a little tree standing in it, made of flowers and paper money. In the front boat sat the musicians with flutes, drums, xylophones, etc.

"They are on their way to the temple to make merit," Mr. Fogg explained.

When we reached the church, the Thai pastor and his wife came out of their house to greet us. Several people helped carry the small organ out. I sat on a bench and talked as best I could with people who had known my parents. but the mosquitoes swarmed about and stung me so fiercely that I was quite distracted from the conversation. I noticed that they did not bother the other folks much, which added to my embarrassment. (Later I learned that mosquitoes usually concentrate their attacks on newcomers.)

Soon we and the organ were crowded into the boat and it was puttering down the winding canal with very little clearance between the water and the edge of the boat. That trip up the river was a terrifying experience for me. A wind had risen which made the water rough, and because we were going against the stream, the engine stopped several times and we had to paddle furiously to hold ground until it

**Beginnings of WEC Thailand--  
an excerpt from *No Turning Back*  
by Nancy Ashcraft**

At the close of World War II, Siam seemed a secret, hidden world. It was not yet a tourist attraction nor did it excite missionary interest. In fact, comity of missions seemed to be a door, closing Siam to any mission other than the one working there. Comity was the agreement among missions that we would respect the work of any other Bible-believing, evangelistic mission that was established and would not invade their territory. The Presbyterian Church had long had work in Siam under the name, "The Church of Christ."

The Department of Religious Affairs was satisfied with the schools, hospitals and large leprosy colony the mission provided. Only the Catholic Church was given visas and permission to send workers and establish centers of work besides the Presbyterian church.

But Norman Grubb was challenged to look into the situation in Siam. And phoning, writing and questioning, he found that the Presbyterian Church was concerned that so much of the country had never been evangelized and they did not have the workers to expand their work. They could just barely staff the large hospitals and schools they had started. The Presbyterians were willing to sponsor other missions under their own name, The Church of Christ.

The Church of Christ in Thailand opened a wide door for WEC, C&MA, OMF, New Tribes and other missions. And for many years that was beautiful harmony and helpfulness among the missionary working areas.

It was October 2, 1947 when the first

started again. Then as we approached the mouth of our klong, the traffic had grown so thick it was hard to get through. We found ourselves between two large, Chinese rice boats. (They hold about a ton of rice besides the living quarters for a large family.) Their sides towered above our heads and the wind and waves dashed them about so that I was sure our wee craft would soon be crushed or capsize. Paul was crying, and I'm sure we were all praying as we pushed against the sides of the big boats as hard as we could. Finally we squeezed through unharmed, and arrived home wet, but in the end glad for the adventure.

When my trunks finally arrived and we had taken them through customs inspection, we boarded an early morning train headed north. It was a long, hot day on the overcrowded train, and Paul had a fever. Wilf bought a cup full of chipped ice at a station with which to cool him. At ten o'clock that evening we reached the town of Pitsunaloke, from where we would have to continue our journey by bus. We took rooms in a hotel near the railroad station.

I had been advised beforehand to take my own sheet and pillow slip along, and I now saw the reason why. The bed had only one sheet, and obviously neither the sheet nor the cover of the cube-shaped cushion had been changed after the last occupant or occupants. Laying my suitcase on the table, I got out my bathing equipment and went to the bathroom. It had a cement floor, with a drain in one corner. The wall was about six feet high. The water was in an onq (an earthen jar about three feet tall and two and a half feet in diameter) with a tin dipper floating on the top. A small shelf held a battered enamel wash basin, and on the door, one peg on which to hang my towel and clean clothes. Being new, I did not realize how grateful I should be for that peg and for the shelf and basin, which many up-country hotels do not provide. I shone my flash light down into the ong. The water was cloudy and greasy looking. How could I put that water over myself? Yet a daily bath is a real necessity in the tropics, and much more so after a long hot day on a dirty, crowded train. I turned on the tap, out of which came a trickle of water into the dipper. After waiting for quite a while, there was enough water for a scanty sponge bath. I brushed my teeth with what was left in my canteen. Afterwards, Wilf took the canteens to a restaurant and had them filled with boiling water for the next day's drinking supply.

When I stepped out of my room the next morning, I saw a little marble-topped table on the veranda all set for breakfast. Wilf had risen early and bought a large papaya from a

four WEC missionaries arrived at the port of Bangkok aboard a small coastal steamer that had carried them the last lap of their journey from Hong Kong. Wilf and Evy Overgaard with their two small children, Sharon and Paul, along with Ellen Gillman and Fern Berg, were the first WECers in Siam.

Peter Voth of the C&MA on loan to the American Bible Society met the boat and provided rides to the home where he and his wife lived above the Bible Society offices. The Voths extended hospitality to our missionaries for almost a month before they, with the help of Mr. Fuller of the Presbyterian Church, were able to find adequate housing and helped us move to a new bungalow in a section called "The Field of Clouds". They helped us find the furniture we would need and even hired a teacher to help us get started on language study.

During the six months the WECers remained in Bangkok, they were not only introduced to the Thai language but also to the Thai diseases Dengue and Malaria. Ellen even became acquainted with Paratyphoid and spent some time in Saint Louis Hospital.

In fellowship with missionaries and several Thai national Christians, the WECers considered areas the Presbyterian mission was offering to them for their permanent work. This narrowed at last to consideration of two areas, each covering three provinces. Nakorn-sawan, Chainat, and Antong was one area under consideration. The other included Tak, Sukothai and Kampheng-phet.

A Thai pastor, Boon Mark Gittisan, joined Wilf and Peter Voth on the survey trip that brought Wilf to see Tak, Maesod and the cities of Kampheng-phet and Sukothai as WEC's homeland

passing fruit vendor, a can of sweetened condensed milk, and three dishes of rice from the hotel. He had his own tin of instant coffee. The dampness had turned it hard and tarry, but after much stirring, we had two good cups of coffee.

While we were breakfasting, a bus driver came to tell us the bus would leave in a few minutes for Rahang. He took two of our suitcases and disappeared down the steps.

"There are two buses that go to Rahang," Wilf said, "and this one wants to be sure that we get onto his. I'm sure he won't be off for at least another hour."

Some boys came and took the rest of the suitcases, and soon we were all on the "bus."

An occidental looking at it would have called it a truck. The body was built locally of wood. The only bit of glass was in the windshield. Passengers sat on two long boards running the length of the bus, and between these were piled cargo. In fact there was so much cargo that the passengers could not put their feet down. They didn't seem to mind having their legs doubled up and sitting on their feet. We three foreigners had the seats of honor beside the driver - hard wooden seats, to be sure, but with space for our feet. After we got on, the back seats were not quite packed to the full, so the bus was driven around the town for about forty five minutes. Each time another passenger was found, the bus boys urged the people to squeeze up a little tighter. Children had to sit on laps, even if the lap was tilted nearly to the chin. In the days to come, I became well experienced in sitting in the back, but today it did not occur to me to question my right to the luxury of the - front seat.

When at last we had what the driver deemed a profitable load, we left town and began jolting and bumping along the road to Rahang. The rains had subsided for a few days, so the riding that day was quite good. It was a two-lane highway - that is, a lane or track for the left, and one for the right wheels, with grass and weeds growing between. If we passed another vehicle, which was seldom, one had to get off the road, which was sometimes difficult. If we overtook a line of elephants, we stopped while the elephant drivers lined their animals up, off the road and facing the bus, then we proceeded slowly in order not to alarm the creatures. The road led through jungles, rice fields, and many small towns and villages.

At noon we came to the town of Sukothai. Here we had lunch on the upstairs veranda of a Chinese restaurant built on the river bank, from where we could see much of the

in Siam."



In the early days of travel in Thailand, one day was usually

spent on the Bangkok to Pitsanloke train and the second day on a bus between Pitsanloke and Tak. The train was fueled by burning logs and hot ash. Burning sparks and soot blew in the open windows of the coaches. No one thought of closing the windows as there was not yet an air conditioned coach and the wind of their moving was necessary, absolutely necessary. The bus trip was no luxury ride either. The early buses were without real seats and cushions. Instead, two long bare boards ran the length of the bus and as many passengers as could crowd on to these two, faced each other across baskets of live animals and sacks of food-stuffs and sometimes goods that moved suggesting life ... Between the train trip and the bus trip there was always the same hotel in Pitsanloke. The beds were almost as hard as the bus seats and the rooms were cooler than the bus and train only because the night air was usually cooler than the daytime air ... The road on to Tak was no highway, but simply a country road without shoulders or unnecessary lines down its center.

The bus road ran strait to a crossroad with the Ping River flowing by its side. Every bus that would bring the WEC family into Tak, for several months would turn North at the riverside road. For the rented property was in Hua Diat (Boiling Head - in northern Thai), to the north of the Tak market. The first home for WECers in that area had been the rented Borneo House. This was a



town. Wilf pointed out an enormous image of the Buddha towering over the central market place, and ruins of ancient temples here and there.

"Sukothai used to be the capitol of Thailand hundreds of years ago, The people of Sukothai are ardent Buddhists, and very proud of their ancient temples, traditions, and history. There are no Christians here, and we haven't had a chance even to visit this place yet. It's just one of the many places that needs a missionary."

It was a squalid, thickly populated town. All the houses stood on stilts in scummy water. The river was crowded with craft, large Chinese rice boats, barges from Bangkok, all inhabited by families or teams of coolies. The tops were loaded with furniture and other merchandise from the city to be sold or bartered for rice, coconuts, sticklac, and other raw products.

We were soon on our way again, and at about four in the afternoon, we reached the town of Tak. Paul had been getting more and more excited as he neared home, looking forward to seeing his mother and to telling his sister, Sharon, all about his long journey. I think I was more excited than he, though I tried not to show it too much. After unloading most of the passengers and cargo in the market, the bus went up to Huadiat, the northern part of the town.

We came . to a stop by a large wooden gate set in a long green hedge. Behind the hedge was a broad lawn and, about fifteen yards back, a large, unpainted wooden house with a veranda all the way around it. Red-haired Ellen Gillman and five-year-old Sharon Overgaard were the first to come running out to the gate. Ellen was to be my working companion for the next few years. Close behind them came Evy Overgaard holding wee Mark. Then came Fern Berg and Dorothy Caswell. Fern had been in the original party with the Overgaards and Ellen two years before (1947) and Dorothy, a nurse, had come a year later.

After the preliminary greetings and embraces, we went up into the pleasant, spacious house. From the front veranda, which served as living room and dining room, we could see a beautiful, broad view of the river and, beyond it, trees and mountains, behind which the sun was beginning to set.

The parts of the veranda that extended around the sides of the house were partitioned by bamboo screens. The north side was the Overgaard's living space, the south side for the single women. In between were two dressing rooms, separated by a breeze-way leading from the front to the back ve-

very large bungalow used by a British Company that was licensed to harvest teak from the rain forests behind Rakheng and in the blue mountains stretching between the plains of Thailand and Burma.

Later as the family grew with missionary candidates from America, Britain and Europe, several houses in the Tak area would be rented for the language students but the Borneo House would be rented for annual conferences, wedding and any special meetings. The huge high porch was just the right size and open on all sides, it caught every breeze blowing.

As with every missionary who would follow them, the original four had as priority, language study.

According to Wilf's memory, Dorothy Caswell arrived in the Fall of 1948. Dorothy had worked in Siam just before the war. She was with the Presbyterian mission for one term, working in Chiangmai. Dorothy had a head start on language and understanding of Thai culture. And the nationals appreciated her gifts as a nurse. Wherever she lived during her one term with WEC, she earned the title of doctor. She was sought out by all who had physical needs. But Dorothy never found the ministry that satisfied her and she did not return to the field after one term with WEC.

In April of 1949 Evy and Wilf made a special trip to Bangkok leaving Sharon and Paul with Ellen and Fern back in the Borneo House. Again the couple stayed with the Voths and enjoyed the coolness of the ocean breezes that swept in to the city most evenings. They had left Tak sweltering in temperatures hovering around 104 to 110 Fahrenheit for weeks on end. But it was not just to escape the heat of Tak

randa. The walls of the two rooms rose about two thirds of the way to where the ceiling would have been had there been a ceiling. The kitchen and store room were in a separate building reached by a bridge. Ellen showed me around.

"We rent this house from the Borneo Company," she said. "It had been unoccupied since before the war, and was in a state of decay. Very gloomy. But it was surely the Lord's provision for our need; large enough to hold all of us, and at a very low rent. We spent days scrubbing, cleaning, and repairing it. Now we all feel very much at home here."

The next day was a busy one throughout the house. I unpacked while Fern and Dorothy finished packing to move to a new station the following day. Evy unpacked, laundered, and repacked Wilf's things, as he was to go with Fern and Dorothy to help open up the new station.

It had been decided many months before that Fern and Dorothy should start a new work. After a number of reconnaissance tours on the part of Wilf and the others, Kampangpet had been selected as the most suitable location. This town was situated about a half day's journey down the river from Rahang. During the dry season, the trip was made by bus most of the way, but in the rainy season, one had to go all the way by boat. In the course of several visits, Wilf had made arrangements with a land-owner to build a house for which the mission supplied plans and materials, and which we would use rent free for six years. The house was nearly complete, and Fern and Dorothy had just been waiting for Wilf to return from Bangkok, as they were eager to be off.

That day, too, I un-crated and assembled my bicycle.

Wilf worked on my radio, trying to get it to work. Someone in Bangkok had given it to me, saying it had belonged to my father. The folks here were thrilled to have it, as they hadn't had a radio for these two years.

"Now we will know what's going on in the world."

"And at Christmas we'll be able to hear some Christmas music."

Several agreed that that was what they longed most to hear. But it was several months after Christmas before we got the radio to working.

The next morning, after breakfast, a small motor launch pulled up to the bank in front of the house where boxes, trunks, and furniture stood waiting. After all the things were loaded on, and the dog, Jip, tied and seated on the front platform, the group of missionaries stood in a circle

nor to rest in a home where meals were prepared for them or to have their laundry delivered, washed and ironed each day. No, they traveled for a special doctor's appointment with Dr. Marshall Wells who helped them welcome the arrival of Mark Overgaard born in early May. Mark could not know that his parents took a special evening express train and traveled in a luxury compartment with berths at the urging of the Voths and Dr. Wells.

The next arrival to be met in Bangkok and escorted upcountry was Rosemary Hanna...



L2R: Fern Berg, Ellen Gillman, Dorothy Caswell, Sharon Overgaard, Rosemary, Evie with Paul, Wilf holding Mark  
*photo from Charters family collection*



Dorothy and Fern in Kampaengphet  
*photo courtesy of Nancy Ashcraft*

on the bank, surrounded by a crowd of on-lookers, to pray for Dorothy and Fern, and for the opening of the new station. Then they and Wilf got into the boat, the engine started, last farewells, instructions, and words of wisdom were shouted across the widening expanse of water, and the boat went puttering down the river out of sight.



# III

## BREAKING IN

I was working at a small writing table between our two beds on the veranda, where bamboo curtains had been rolled up to let more light in, when a sudden peculiar sound behind me made me turn around. My startled gaze fell on a large black gibbon. I had never seen a gibbon loose and close up before, and was not sure whether or not his crouched position meant that he was about to jump across and bite me.

Some boys shouted from the yard below, and the gibbon got up and walked upright along the railing, keeping one eye on me and one on the boys below. Wilf was down there, too, but he came up and, after some chasing around, caught the gibbon and took it back to the neighbor from whom it had escaped.

Comparative quiet reigned again as we all, in our separate parts in and under the house, got back to our studies. Evy, besides learning the language and taking care of Mark, was teaching Sharon the second grade of the Calvert course. So the house became a school every morning. Soon after breakfast, our teacher would arrive. She was an intelligent, middle-aged woman from a wealthy home near by. Evy and Ellen each spent one hour a day with her, and I two. Wilf studied at more irregular intervals with some young men who came from time to time.

I always looked forward with dread to my two hours with the teacher. They were spent in reading aloud, repeating



*The Borneo House*



*Ellen Gilman*

*photos courtesy of Nancy Ashcraft*

sentences after her, writing as she dictated, and trying to carry on a conversation with her. She was an exacting teacher, and sometimes I felt strained almost to the point of tears, trying to please her. The others were surprised that I had to study so much, since I had spoken Thai as a child. But that was the northern dialect, often called Lao, which is quite different in many ways. And whenever I let a Lao word slip out by accident, it met with shocked disapproval on the part of the teacher, or amused smiles on the part of other Thai friends. But one day I overheard the teacher speaking with our cook, who always spoke to us in the purest Thai, and their conversation was in the despised northern dialect so familiar to me.\*

Never-the-less, not being a natural-born linguist, I studied as hard as anyone else. At night, after the rest of the household had gone to bed, I lay on the floor of our large dressing room with two small kerosene lamps, one on each side of my book. This was to get away from the insects which would have been attracted to the light had I sat at the table on the veranda. Some did get into the room - insects of all sizes and colors. One night an owl flew in and perched on the top of the wall. Bats were frequent visitors.

Our household boasted a retinue of servants: a cook, a wash woman, and a coolie. The coolie, an elderly man named Si, carried water for the bathroom and kitchen, scrubbed the enormous expanse of floor, and cut the grass. The last is done by squatting on the ground, swinging a long knife about an inch above the ground until a circle of grass is cut, then moving over about two feet and making another, overlapping circle. As our compound was a big one, and since Si had to stop every half-hour for another banana leaf cigar, it took many days to cut the lawn, and by the time he had finished the last section, the first was badly in need of cutting again. Because of the imminent danger of snakes, it was necessary to keep the grass as short as possible. During the rainy season, elephant grass can shoot up six or eight feet high in just a few weeks. At a later time, we learned the penalty of neglect when a woman was cutting our much over-grown lawn. She felt a cutting sensation on her arm and saw two long parallel scratches. Seeing no snake, she concluded that it was a grass cut, and went on working. Ten minutes later her arm was aching up to the shoulder, and she called out. I ran out and sucked the wound, tied a tourniquet above it, and we rushed her to the town hall where snake bites are treated. By the time we got there, she was having abdominal cramps and becoming

- The Thai language is in the Sino-Tai family of languages with influences from the Pali and Sanskrit, Cambodian, Peguan, (Mon) and Chinese. In about 1283, the language was reduced to writing by King Ram Kamhaeng, who adapted the Cambodian alphabet to suit the Thai language. The Thai alphabet, as now in use, has forty two consonants and fourteen vowels. The language has five tones which, in the written form, are governed by tone marks and the combinations of vowels and high, middle, and low-class consonants. These have been reduced to a set of complicated rules. Very few Thai people even know that such rules exist, but the foreigner, in order to master the language, has to memorize and learn to apply them.

### **An MK\* Perspective** **Sharon Overgaard**

*\*Missionary Kid*

I remember a lot about those days. Some of my favorite memories are the beginnings at the Borneo House; I was sick to learn on my first return trip to Tak many years later that it had been long torn down to give room for other houses. I wanted to touch and feel the space and the view from the front porch again.

I remember the huge yard, the two goats we had to keep the grass mowed, and our dog named Jip. I remember the wonderful second floor porch from which we could see the river and the little sala across the street. I remember the hub-bub as everyone rushed around to pre-



dizzy. But after two shots of antivenum serum, she recovered.

Inn was our cook. He was young, slight of build, weighing probably 105 pounds. His delicate facial features were set off by a high pompadour of beautiful shiny black hair. When neatly combed back, it added a couple of inches to his stature. When not combed, it fell over his ears and covered his cheeks, adding to the impression of daintiness which was part of his personality. Inn was a real prince charming, and his life was already tangled in triangular knots. Never-the-less he was a good cook.

One day while Inn was standing on the back porch washing dishes, a neighbor walked down the lane beside the house. When she looked up and saw Inn, she started screaming and ran down the lane, exclaiming that she had seen Inn without his head. Inn was frightened at this. He came trembling to the Overgaards and told them he must stop work for a while and go into the priesthood. Not long afterwards he was ordained as a priest. His head was shaved, he put on a yellow robe, and went into the temple for a few months to avert the disaster which otherwise would surely have come upon him. \*

After his time was fulfilled, he came out of the priesthood, resumed normal life, got a wife, and started cooking for us again. I do not mean to say he got married. There was no kind of ceremony, either religious or legal. She was just one more in a series of wives, but she has continued with him until the present. This is just the beginning of the story of Inn, of whom you will hear more later.

Evy was in charge of the servants, since her family responsibilities kept her constantly at home anyway. This made her doubly busy, and required real resourcefulness. A Thai cook is a great help once he has been thoroughly taught, but it is hard to conceive of how one must literally start from the very beginning. For instance, if a new cook is asked to butter a slice of bread, he just scoops a handful of margarine out of the tin with his bare hand and thickly smears it onto the bread. Nor would it occur to him to use soap or hot water for washing the dishes, nor to wipe them dry with a cloth, unless he were specifically shown how.

Substitutes had to be found for many of the ingredients in the cook book. Many things which elsewhere one would buy ready to use had to be prepared from raw materials. Salt, for example, came in large, dirty, wet crystals. It had to be dissolved, filtered, boiled down, and dried out for table use. Drinking water had to be drawn from the well, boiled,

pare a gospel booth for the annual fair, the music and the carnival atmosphere in the evenings. I remember the location of the big garden along the fence we had there, and how sick Dad was having caught a bad cold from having been working in the rain. And nearly died. ... *continued*



*The Overgaard family*

*photo courtesy of Nancy Ashcraft*

- There are many possible reasons for a man going into the priesthood. The chief and most conventional is that of making merit for himself or for his mother. A woman cannot become a priest, but if she has her son or some other young man ordained into the priesthood, she gains merit for herself. It can be a very elaborate, expensive ceremony (including the price of much alcoholic beverage) thus accruing the more merit and social prestige.

Sometimes after the death of his wife, a man becomes a priest for a time. The saffron robe protects him from the spirit of his wife which might otherwise harm him, even if she was a good, loving wife while living. Or perhaps some other violent spirit might be threatening him as was probably the case with Inn.

A priest lives a celibate life, so if a man were married before, his ordination automatically dissolves the marriage bonds. Many have taken this way out of an unsatisfactory partnership, and some are said to have been ordained as priests with a view to getting another wife after coming out of the priesthood.

strained, and stored in large clay pots to cool. Splinters of kindling wood had to be chopped for starting the charcoal fires on which all the food was cooked. The little tin oven had to be balanced on the rim of the charcoal brazier and then the hot coal on top of it had to be kept burning till the bread was baked. Powdered milk had to be mixed every time it was used, as it would sour quickly with no refrigeration.

So Evy was always "on the stretch," instructing the servants day after day, with little time left for language study. She did, however, get a practical working knowledge of the language through constant use, often by the trial and error method.

In fact all of us learned by error. Although I made more than my share of ghastly mistakes, I prefer to tell one of Ellen's.

One day while walking in the market, she met a man with a monkey who tried to sell it to her. When he named the price, she said, "That's much too expensive. And besides, I'm not interested in a monkey." Like most people in those early days, he associated us with the only other foreigners he knew of, the men of the Borneo teak company, who had the reputation of being fabulously wealthy. He replied, "Oh, you can buy it; you're very rich."

"But I do not belong to the Company," answered Ellen. The man looked at her in astonishment and walked away.

Later at dinner, Ellen was recounting the incident, and the others at the table, in the usual manner, inquired what Thai terms she had used.

"I said I was not a *kone borisoot*," she replied. Then, even as she repeated it, a look of shocked horror came over her face as she realized she had used the wrong word. She should have said *borisut* rather than *borisoot*. She had told the man, "I am not pure."

I always looked forward to the afternoons when Ellen and I went out visiting the sick in homes to the north of us. The hospital, which was at the opposite end of town, was quite new. Most people were afraid to go there, and in most cases, a sick person would have a hard time getting to the hospital. There was only one Thai doctor, and he would not make visits except to wealthy patients who would be able to pay him.

So Ellen, though she had had no medical training, was much in demand to care for many kinds of ailments. Her small medicine kit contained aspirin, soda mints, quinine, eye and ear medicines, sulfaguanadine, vitamins, bandages,

#### Sharon Overgaard -- continued

I remember our getting frequent boxes of wonderful children's book classics from Ellen's dad to which we owe our gratitude and our deep love of reading to this day. The Calvert School books, "A Child's History of Art," "Smiling Hill Farm," the Bobbsey twins series, and many others are still some of my favorites. Mom looked far and wide in old bookstores over the years to find copies of books for us to read.



Wilf with Sharon and Paul

photo courtesy of Nancy Ashcraft

Dad took Paul and me all around town on his bike; Paul in front on the bar and I sitting sidesaddle in the back. I didn't always like being so close to folks when he stopped because they would touch us and wonder why we were so white, our towheaded blonde hair stood out especially against our suntanned legs and arms as we spent a lot of time outdoors.

Though not during the hottest time of day; for a while I remember we wore the David Livingstone helmets.

We played in the river when it was low enough to show sandbanks and though we were not allowed ever to eat the candy offered in the market since it was made of river water, of course we often accepted candy from friends.

and supplies for sores, burns, itches, etc. There was always at least one patient who had to be visited every day for a period. And when we were on our way to or from that home, there would be others who stopped us along the road to ask us to treat them on the spot, or to visit a home where someone was ill. I often watched a row of children lined up along the road, with red, watery eyes, while Ellen went along the line putting a drop of medicine into each eye. Even the tiny ones were remarkably good about opening their eyes.

Another common ailment was boils. Often Ellen had to use her surgical blade to lance a badly swollen hand or foot, draining off great quantities of pus. Then she had to visit day after day to dress the wound. The gratitude and relief from pain produced an open friendliness which gave Ellen great opportunities to give them the message of salvation. Often neighbors and friends gathered in the house to watch the treatment and to hear the story.

One of the homes we visited most frequently was that of Mother Egg. A warm friendship had grown up with her family about a year before my arrival. It started when Mother Egg, then a stranger, came to the house and asked the missionaries to go to her home to see her son, who was ill. They went with her and found a house full of people busily engaged in funeral preparations. Wood had been brought with which to make the coffin. The young man, Duan, (meaning Moon) was still alive, but apparently in a coma. The village doctor had said he would not live.

After sitting a while and taking in the situation, Wilf said that if they would remove the spirit strings from Duan's wrists, he would pray to God to heal him. The strings were removed, Wilf and the others prayed for him, and very slowly Duan started to recover.

For many weeks Ellen, and sometimes the others, went day by day to see the patient, give him medicines and vitamins, wash him, and do what they could for him. As they sat by his bed, they talked to the other members of the family and to the neighbors that gathered, about the Lord Jesus. As Duan became stronger and his mind cleared, he listened, too. He and his mother both believed we told them the truth. They were given scripture portions and tracts which Duan read aloud in the evenings to Mother Egg. She could not read.

By the time Duan was well, he had become convinced that Jesus Christ is the Way, and was determined to walk in this way. Mother Egg and Sympathy, Duan's younger sister, also believed. The three of them prayed and received the

On my first return to Tak I was taken down the street a ways and introduced to a gentle senior lady who upon finding out my identity, burst into tears and fell upon my arm and kissed it up to my shoulder and down again, saying "I am so glad I lived long enough to see you again." That alone was worth the price of the trip. Paul had been a favorite of hers, and he always knew where to find the treats. She asked of his welfare as well, and was sad to hear he had not made the visit with me.



*photo courtesy of Sharon Overgaard*

I took piano lessons from Grandma Hazel down at her house along the river, where I first started playing by number. She would write little lyrics to certain pieces so that I could get the rhythm. One went "Listen here, Markie dear. Cease your fretting and peeping, Sister's here, do not fear, keeping watch while you're sleeping." And, "Fairies down in the garden green, dressed in garments of silk sheen.. With their partner the wee elf man, dance all night long in our garden." Years later, Mom asked Ma Hanna to send me copies of some of her poems including the classic one on dengue fever. She sent them to me handwritten on Camp Hill letter-head.

When we moved to the south-of-market house our sleeping quarters were on a covered porch facing the front yard. We had to nap in the afternoons and we would practice keeping our eyes closed without wiggling and some-



Saviour.

Mother Egg loved to talk about the Lord and to hear more about Him. Ellen visited her frequently and prayed with her. She was an energetic person with a large family to feed. There were seven children, some of whom were already grown. Her husband had a weak heart and was unable to do any heavy work, so he stayed home, did the cooking, and looked after the children.

Mother Egg was glad to have it so, as she much preferred going about selling things to working at home. She would buy soap, matches, lime, combs, spoons, and other cheap commodities which she carried in two baskets hung on the ends of a carrying pole balanced on her shoulder. She would walk many weary kilometers, usually with a company of other women, to some isolated villages over the hills where the people were glad to pay a good price for her things. Spending a night in the village, she would tell the people all about the Jesus whom she had come to know; how He had saved her son from death, and how He had saved her from her sins and brought light and peace to her heart. And she kept telling them that some day the missionaries would come to their village to tell them more about this Jesus. Early the next morning, she would gather the peppers or tobacco or bamboo shoots which she had bought from the villagers into her baskets, and return to Rahang.

On Saturdays, Ellen and I visited villages along the farther bank of the river. When we first started these weekly trips, it was at the end of the rainy season when the roads were still deep in mud. We were usually well spattered and caked with mud after wading ankle deep and pushing our bicycles. Then we had to carry them down a steep, slippery bank at the boat landing and balance them across the edges of the boat. By the time we had thought it out and decided that the bicycles were a waste of time and energy, the roads had become dry and hard, and the bicycling was better. But the ferry boats stopped running then, so we carried the bikes across or left them at a home near the ford. The river had receded to waist depth by the time the boats stopped, and toward the end of the dry season, it was almost down to our knees. We arrived on the other shore with dripping skirts, but it did not take the hot sun long to dry them.

Walking the length of a village, we stopped at homes, or in yards, or on the river bank, wherever there were people. Sometimes we chatted with individuals, and sometimes we had a full-fledged meeting with singing and preaching. We almost always sensed a greater response and friendliness on

times hardly breathing, so that Dad would think we had really slept longer than we had. Dad would come up real close and lean into our faces to figure out if we were really sleeping so we tried not to blink our eyelids. We would also have handfuls of rice from lunch I suppose that we would flick across to each other in our twin beds during nap times.

And I remember leaning over Mark's crib, singing him to sleep and purposely yawning in the middle of a line in order to psych Mark into getting sleepy, which very often worked.

Our school room was down below our sleeping porch; for our break times we had to jump around on the grass to get some exercise, and I would have to hold my nose to get down a glass of evaporated milk. Arrggh ! And then back to studies.

I remember once we had been disobedient on some issue, so Paul and I went into Mom and Dad's closet, got one of Dad's rubber slippers and spanked ourselves; never did tell anyone what we had done.

We never had money for Christmas stuff, so I remember one huge palm frond Dad tacked up against the wall in our family quarters and we must have hung some small decorations from that.

During rainy season, the river would gush down the alley in front of our house, pour through the front gate and rush around the corner of the house to the back yard. 'Way in back of our yard past the well and little laundry house was a pretty large grove of banana trees. We would jump on an air mattress, catch the current and paddle around to the back until the current calmed down in the middle of all the trees, then I suppose we would paddle or splash our way back for another great ride. The downstairs living area was always buried in mud and silt after the river washed through. We have a picture of our cook paddling around in a little canoe inside the the downstairs meeting room.

One of Dad's favorite activities was to plant himself in a room off the second floor balcony which faced the street and watch as folks would look up at our place, be distracted, then stumble chest deep into the hole the river dug as it crossed the street to our place. Dad would be laughing so hard he would have to duck behind the open window. After the flood went down the hole in the street would be filled up until the next rains.

And oh the sound of torrential rains on a tin roof in the tropics. Something many MKs find

the second or third visit.

Ellen and I had one inhibition in common. We both hated to eat or lie down when anyone was watching. So we always planned, when reaching the end of the village, to find a sequestered glen. Often the best we could find would be the hollow center of a brambly old bamboo clump. Never-the-less, it afforded the shade and privacy we required for eating our lunch. Then there were moments of relaxation as we lay on our backs and gazed up into the leafy mosaic of the bamboo.

On our walk back along the village path, we stopped and visited the parts we had passed over on the way up. In every village we each had a dreaded foe. Ellen's was the dog, and mine the water buffalo. Upon approaching a village or group of houses, we always looked around for a "trusty cudgel." We usually ended up each with an innocuous little bamboo stick, but it still went by the same name. When a pack of watch dogs came bounding out of a yard towards us, it was I who stepped bravely forward, hissing, "*Pai!*" (go) wielding my trusty cudgel, driving them back step by step. But sometimes we faced a herd of water buffalo coming down the narrow path, their long, sharp horns extending across every available bit of passageway. Ellen, seeing me weak with terror, would step up to them with a calm, authoritative "*Pai!*" and would drive them back through a little gap or side alley so that we could pass by.

Late in the afternoon, as we sank wearily into our rattan chairs and Evy served us a cup of tea, we were glad to be home again.

"*Mem*, when are you going with me to Dead Elephant Ford?" Mother Egg looked inquiringly into our faces. She had asked this question before, but had only received a vague assurance of sometime in the future. Now we both agreed the time had come.

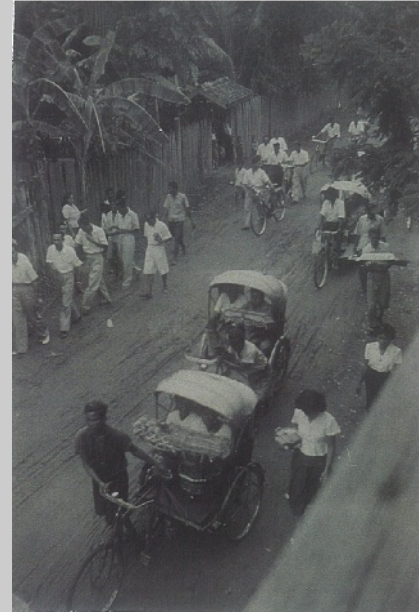
"How about this Saturday?"

"Good! We must start before sunrise," she said. "Sympathy and I will carry your things in our baskets with the things we are taking to sell."

The rising sun that Saturday saw us in a dug-out canoe approaching the farther bank of the river. Mother Egg and Sympathy wore their dark blue homespun jackets, striped black and red skirts, and large palm-leaf umbrella-like hats. Each sat between two large baskets, with the carrying poles balanced across the tops. When the boat came to a stop on the sand, we got out and waded across the remaining shallow water. They adjusted their basket ropes and balanced

themselves waxing nostalgic to hear again some day.

Across the street from us and a little kitty corner going north was a Borneo man I believe and his lovely Thai wife we called Mrs. Monroe. Even then young as I was I was never quite sure that she really was Mrs. Monroe, but I liked her and even more so when she gave me a



*photo courtesy of Sharon Overgaard*

pleated white clutch purse for Christmas once. I thought she was the loveliest person to acknowledge me in such a young lady way.

I have now paid tribute in my current home to the colored glass windows I remember being set in a row near the ceiling in that house. I would lie on the floor with part of my body in the beautiful blue square of light, another in the yellow or rose shade and enjoy whatever imagination I was into that moment. Earlier this summer a friend installed rose, yellow, blue and pale green squares of colored glass in the six windows in my dining and kitchen area; looking at them takes me back to that house south of market.

When I got a little older and needed more privacy than the dorm room style sleeping porch Mom set up a little bedroom for me near the main upstairs living area; she used crayons on white fabric to decorate a bedskirt, bedspread and vanitieskirt with freeform daisies. I was pretty close to the action in the living room and sometimes wandered out late at night saying I was thirsty in order to see what was going on.

I remember really enjoying was the

their loads on the poles while we put on our shoes and socks. We headed toward "Two Brothers," two outstanding hills behind which we had watched the sun set every evening at supper.

After going through a village by the river, our path led along the narrow ridges of rice fields, through another village and more rice fields, until we reached the foot-hills. Then we were in the wilds. Mostly it was barren country with small, scrubby thorn trees and bushes, but toward the end of our five-hour walk, as we climbed higher up into the "Two Brothers," we were in luxuriant jungle with giant trees festooned with heavy vines. Our narrow path brought us around a sharp corner, and we looked down at a broad, shallow stream flowing swiftly over rocks. On the hill-side beyond it lay "Dead Elephant Ford."

It was mid-day, and people were bathing and washing clothes in the stream. Children ran about catching frogs, playing, and swimming. The houses on the hillside were typical village houses, all of bamboo, built on high posts, and with thatch or leaf roofs. There were no windows, except on some houses a six-inch-square hole. Each house had a partly covered veranda on a lower level than the enclosed room or rooms, reached by a rickety ladder.

As we descended the path toward the stream, someone shouted, "Oh, they've come!" All activity ceased and everyone watched us wade across the stream. A few came and walked with us up the hill to the nearest house. Indicating a low side porch detached from the front porch, they said we could stay there. Mother Egg had told them we like to sleep outside, which seemed strange to them as they, like most spirit worshipers, crave the safety of numbers in a crowded room at night.

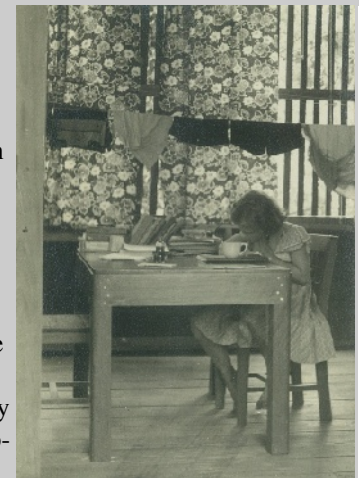
Wearied with the unaccustomed climb, we set our bags on the porch, stood on the rail which ran along the ground on three sides of the porch, took off our shoes, and hoisted ourselves up onto the platform where we lay down. But the group of people standing on the three sides of us was growing, and my self-consciousness exceeded my weariness. I sat up and got out some Bible story pictures. How glad I was that these simple, warm-hearted people spoke the Northern Thai, and that I need not worry about the language as I told them the story of Jesus. People began coming with sore eyes, boils, fevers, dysentery, skin diseases, and a multitude of other ailments. Ellen got out her medicine box and for the rest of the day was busy treating patients or talking to the people.

monthly? singalongs we had at our place where the singers topped each other singing "Wonderful Grace of Jesus," and whoever sang bass parts in the chorus always did a great job.

It was a very big deal one day when Fern made cream puffs for some special occasion and I remember that either the cream inside or the topping was a pale green. She was highly regarded for her cooking talents. I couldn't stand cooked, fried, anything in the shape or taste of pumpkin for years after living in Thailand because we had it so much in different ways. I get dried mango packages now from Cost Plus and love grapefruit. I have located a little Thai restaurant near where I live which has fried bananas on the dessert menu. My favorite meal remains yellow curry and rice.

There was the amazing trip we took by ox-cart, getting up and loading the carts at 2 or 3 am and the long ride it was to get to our first vacation in Lansang. The ride was very bumpy and long through the moonlight until our arrival at the little camp near the water. Our little houses were split bamboo and we could hear the falls nearby, and it was delicious. Dad cut into some coconuts and tore down husks on a couple of coconuts, tied them to another coconut and those were our "pool noodles," and how we learned how to swim.

One early evening as a friend and I were playing in the front yard we heard a low hummmmmm sound and looked up to watch a strange sight puffing along in the sky overhead, I suppose 15 feet



above the trees. ...*doing the Calvert Course*  
It was a round photo courtesy of Sharon Overgaard ball, puffing a little smoke in its wake, nothing human looking about it especially. No windows that I noticed either. Now I wish I had stared at it longer than we did. Maybe the diameter of a room 10 x 12 ..I can't picture the size of it now, years later but I will always remember the look and sound of it. It didn't seem to be controlled by anything but it hummed along over the trees and I suppose crossed the river and toward the

At meal times, our food was brought to us on a tray: two large plates of rice and a few small bowls containing fish sauce, egg plant, boiled yams, or a fried duck egg. Whenever the food arrived, the people went away or just turned their backs so that we could eat in privacy. Then they returned.

Seated there on our stage, surrounded by spectators, we naturally had to sit in proper Thai style. \* By the middle of the afternoon our legs were stiff and aching, so we excused ourselves and went upstream to a shady, secluded place where we washed our faces in the cold, refreshing water, laundered our socks, and had a time of prayer together. Returning to the village, we sat down again and talked, sang, showed pictures, and treated sick people for a few more hours. After supper, when the sun was setting and the air grew cool, we got out our sarongs and towels and excused ourselves again. This time we went further upstream where we found not only a "sequestered glen," but a pool deep enough to swim in. Fastening our sarongs around us Thai style, we shed our other garments and plunged into the delightfully cool water where we swam and rested and washed away the grime, the heat, and the weariness of the day.

When we got back to our porch, it was dark. A little home-made lamp with a rag wick had been lit, and a crowd of people was waiting for us. Sympathy had taught a simple Gospel song to some of the younger ones.' As many as possible sat around us on the porch, some stood on the three sides of the platform, and the rest sat on the edge of the main porch of the house where they could look down at us.

Several people asked us to stay a few days longer and teach them more, but we said we must go back the next day. Some day, we said, we would come again. We gave tracts and gospel portions to those who could read, treated more sores and sicknesses, taught them another song, and talked far into the night. The little lamp burned about as brightly as a candle, so we could scarcely see beyond the innermost circle of faces. Our legs and backs ached fiercely, but the folk kept asking more questions and coming for more medicine. One young woman told us she was a believer. She had been to Mother Egg's house at Rahang, had read the tracts, heard some of us talk of Jesus, and had put her faith in Him. We asked her several questions and were thrilled to see how much she understood and how earnest she was.

After a long while a man said, "I must go home and read this book." An old woman said, "Oh, I must go along and

mountains. Have no idea what it was. Often wanted to mention it in a late night talk show phone call but I don't wish to be written up in People magazine.

In the interest of full disclosure, I need to say that, after my first trip back to Thailand I spent over two years being suicidal from delayed grief, and homesickness for Thailand. Nothing I could do about it; the kindness and gentle guidance of my therapist and special friends got me through it.

I would go back tomorrow but God has me in another assignment for the present.

- In Thai etiquette, there is only one acceptable sitting posture for a woman. She must sit with her knees on the floor in front of her, doubled, and both her feet to one side. Men also sit in this position in formal gatherings or in the presence of their superiors. In more casual situations, men may sit cross-legged, but never with their knees up or their feet in front of them. Those accustomed to sitting on the floor from childhood find this position quite natural, but to those initiated in adulthood, it is pure torture after the first ten minutes, and until years of practice finally limber the joints and callus the ankles.



hear it." (They always read aloud.) Gradually the crowd thinned out. A woman said, "Mem, aren't you tired?" Yes, we were unspeakably tired, but there were still many people sitting around us, so we talked a while longer. Then Mother Egg said, "Mem, you must sleep now." So we spread our blankets and lay down. The lamp was taken into the house. Still a wall of people remained, silhouetted against the starry sky. They sat still and silent, just waiting. Then gradually they went away. Mother Egg lay down beside us on the porch, but Sympathy went into the room with the family, as it is considered improper or unsafe for a young girl to sleep outside. The lamp light shone faintly through the woven bamboo walls of the room, and we could hear the voice of a young man reading the Gospel of John. The musical voice of a young girl in a house farther up the hill sang a song we had taught them. Dim little oil lamps flickered on in many of the houses along the hill-side. I wondered how many of them were lighting the pages of a Gospel.

Lying on the bumpy bamboo floor, my feet hanging off the edge of the porch and my head half off the edge of the short blanket, I fell asleep to the jingling bells of pack ponies which grazed through the night close by.

Early the next morning, while the village was still asleep, we started on the path back to Rahang. At sunrise we stopped in a lovely spot beside the stream to cook and eat our rice. Whenever we stopped we had interesting chats with Mother Egg and Sympathy. Though the loads they carried were much heavier than ours, they seemed less tired than we. And their bare feet were not blistered as ours were with our shoes. I wondered what they thought of us, tender cream puffs that we were. We saw no signs of civilization along the way except an occasional pony train or a company of weary looking men carrying big loads on poles over their shoulders, going to or from Maesod, several days journey to the west, on the Burma border.

When we thought we were nearly home, we met two women who were very thirsty and had no water. We gave them the rest of what was in our canteens. But the way was much farther than 'we thought, and we soon felt dehydrated.. The tropical sun has a way of pumping all the liquid out of one's system in a very short time. Our footsteps lagged, and from time to time we sat down by the road and sang, "For All the Saints Who from Their Labors Rest." Needless to say, Mother Egg and Sympathy soon got far ahead of us. We each picked a leaf from a passing bush and hooked the stems under the nose pieces of our dark glasses



*Market scene -- Photo by Paul Moss*



as shields for our sun-burnt noses. As long as no human was in sight.

Finally, rounding the top of the last hill, we saw the river in the distance. The sight of it gave speed to our feet, and we caught up with our friends as they were putting their baskets into the boat. Soon we were relaxing in our rattan chairs on our own veranda, telling the Overgaards all about our trip. Evy brought us each a cup of hot tea and a basin of water for our blistered feet. Then she sat down and listened eagerly to the story. Whenever we came to a pause, she plied us with more questions and drew all the details out of us. She had been praying for us while we were gone, and the Lord had worked on our behalf through her prayers.

I knew that Evy longed to get out and do the same sort of things we were doing. She was as concerned for the souls of the Thai people as we were. And she was a lover of nature and adventure. But here she was, cheerfully waiting on us, encouraging us, praying for us, and rejoicing in the things we did. Later on Evy had plenty of excitement and adventure, and best of all, the joy of leading souls to the Lord. But this was her time of waiting.



Ellen at Ta Chang Tai (Dead Elephant  
Village)

# IV

## ROCKY SOIL

At the end of 1949, we received notice that the Borneo Company needed its house in Rahang, and that within a few months we would have to move out so that they could begin remodeling it. A search began for a new place to live.\_ At once we saw how hard it would be to find another house that would accommodate us all and give us the desired privacy. As all houses had walls only part way up to the roof or ceiling, there was no privacy of conversation. A whisper could be heard throughout the house. The Overgaards had already learned how difficult it is to keep family relationships - discipline and personal problems - happily resolved without private talk.

Quite aside from the problem of housing, we came to the decision that there were now enough of us for two teams, and, in this large, spread-out town, we could-"accomplish much more if we divided and worked in two different places. After more searching and inquiry, a suitable house was found for Ellen and me just a short distance from the Borneo house. It was on the river bank, and at the foot of a hill on which stood a temple. A somewhat larger house was found for the Overgaards, south of the market, surrounded on every side by other houses, but with a large fenced-in garden.

Our house at Hua Diat had two levels. The ground floor was all one big room, the whole front of which was com-



*Photo by Paul Moss*

posed of folding doors opening onto the street. This was ideal for meetings, and soon after, we started a children's meeting and an evangelistic meeting, each once a week. Wilf was kept more than busy those days, screening a part of the upper story for our bed room, and making benches for the meeting room.

The Overgaards moved only a few days after us, and their house needed more carpentry. It was all on one floor, about eight feet off the ground. Parts of the house were without a railing, and Mark had just learned to walk.

Of the three servants, the cook and the wash girl both chose to work for us, being unwilling to go to the far end of town every day. And Si, the gardener, was really a servant of the Borneo Company, but went to work at the south house temporarily.

During the days of moving and unpacking, I had been going every three days to visit a home in Ban Chalat where a man had a badly infected foot. Ellen's feet were still so badly blistered that she could not hobble that far. The people of Ban Chalat were friendly and interested in the Gospel. They asked to have Christian songs written down for them to learn. Some of them would walk back with me till we got in sight of the river, as they said there were many bandits around there. They frequently gave me gifts of eggs or palm sugar to take home. One day, (I thought it would be my last, as the man's foot was nearly well) someone asked me to go and see an infant that had a bad case of diarrhea. The baby was in a terrible condition and looked as though it would not last through the night. He was not more than a month old. I gave them some sulfadiazine pills, with instructions for regular doses.

That night as we were going to bed, I talked it over with Ellen, and when she heard what I had given him, she looked shocked. I should have given him sulfaguanadine, not sulfadiazine.

I suddenly felt an icy chill go up my back and into my scalp. My first thought was to run out through the dark and find my way to the Ban Chalat, but there would be no way of getting across the river. I spent a wakeful night, and oh, how I prayed.

Early next morning, Ellen and I set out for Ban- Chalat. As we neared the house, I almost expected to see a funeral in preparation. We asked how the baby was.

"Oh, he's well now," was the happy answer.

In fact the mother had gone to work in the garden and taken the baby along with her. After visiting around the vil-



*photo from Charters family collection*



lage and having a "street meeting," Ellen and I came home.

Soon after the Overgaards had settled in their house, the children began having fever. As they had no cook or wash girl at the time, Ellen and I took turns going down to the south house for the day, and often stayed over night. Then Wilf became ill, too. It was diagnosed by the local doctor as dengue fever.

By this time the rains had devastated the roads and bicycling was very difficult. A baby across the river was having convulsions. We revived her during several attacks, but during the night when we were not there, they let the fires go out, and when she had another attack, they were not able to treat her in time, and she died. A woman several miles up the road was shot by her husband's first wife, and we were called to the scene. The first wife was among those who stood by and helped us to administer the treatment. There were many other calls for help, many which we could not answer.

Hardly had Wilf recovered from the dengue when Evy came down with it. In fact she was severely ill. Several days later when Ellen came home after spending the day with the Overgaards, she felt extremely tired, and the next morning she too had the fever. It was my turn to go to the south house, but how could I leave Ellen in such a condition? Her stomach threw back everything that reached it, and then still refused to give her peace. After doing what I could for her, I left her with Som, the wash girl. (Our cook had gone to work for the Overgaards for a few days.) Feeling heavy and depressed, I got on my bicycle and went to the Overgaard's house, trying to look cheerful. After bathing and massaging the patients and making up the beds, I broke the news about Ellen. They insisted that I hurry back to her, which I did.

Ellen, tortured by the symptomatic pains in her back and joints, was tossing about on the springless wooden bed. In sympathy, my joints seemed to cry out, "The air mattress!" It was down stairs in a trunk. But first I just had to rest a while. As I lay down on the couch in the living room, I picked up the thermometer, shook it down, and put it into my mouth. It registered 103 degrees. But my stomach was perfectly all right, so after a few minutes I thumped heavily down the stairs, found the air mattress, and after what seemed like endless blowing and puffing, got it inflated. That evening I told Ellen I had it, too.

I don't know how many days we lay there in silence. Some times one of us would feel a little better for a while and would get up to fetch things for the other. We ate almost



*The Overgaards' house*

*photo courtesy of Sharon Overgaard*

nothing, which was fortunate, as we had no cook. But at last we decided we must eat something whether we wanted to or not. Ellen remembered a tin of tomato soup stored away in a cupboard for just such a time as this. Ordinarily our mouths would have watered at the thought of American tinned soup. Right now I could not have cared less. But Ellen called Som and very laboriously gave what she thought were clear instructions about finding the tin, opening it, and serving us the soup. After a long time, Som appeared with the tin opened.

"It must be heated and served in dishes," said Ellen.

After another long wait, she slowly walked in, carefully balancing two tea saucers filled with partly warmed tomato soup.

After he got the news of our illness, Wilf visited us and reported that Evy was getting better. He sent a telegram to Fern asking her to come and help us. Her arrival three days later was like a ray of sunshine. Cheery conversation, clean sheets, bed baths, and dainty morsels on a neatly set tray did wonders in reviving us.

Fern stayed with us for two weeks. When every one had recovered from the dengue, the weekly meetings and language study were resumed.

There were a number of young girls, including Sympathy, who had never been to school and could not read, but were interested in the Gospel. Ellen was concerned that they should learn to read, so offered to teach them. Several evenings a week they came to the house. We all sat on the floor around the lamp and Ellen and I gave them individual lessons. Soon some little boys started coming, too. They could read well, but had nothing at home to read. So we lit another lamp and there were two circles. Each one had a different book, and every one read aloud at the same time. Besides the primers, we had books of the Bible, Pilgrim's Progress, and several other books and sermons. Three of the boys who came regularly, prayed and said they believed in Jesus. They were regular attendants of our weekly children's meetings. This went on for some time, till their school teachers started forbidding them to come to our house or to read Christian books. One of the boys was sometimes beaten by his teacher because he refused to give up being a Christian. Of course this is against the law, as the constitution of Thailand guarantees religious liberty. But the steady pressure of teachers, parents, and friends finally prevailed and they left off coming.

That year, in September, Paul Arnold, a Presbyterian



*Photo by Paul Moss*

missionary who had been working with the McKean Leprosarium in Chiangmai, was making a survey of leprosy in Thailand. He came and spent a few days with the Overgaards. Each day he went out to a different part of the town and examined as many people as possible for leprosy. Never, he said, had he found an area with such a high incidence of the disease as here in Rahang. Even some of our neighbors had it. The fact came as a shock to us. We had seen a number of advanced cases of leprosy; people with fingers, toes, or noses missing, eyelids sagging, faces lumpy and swollen, sitting and begging, or hobbling slowly along the road. We had often wished we could help them, but did not know how. We had never noticed or recognized the incipient cases all around us. As we sat around the dinner table, Mr. Arnold answered many of our questions about leprosy. How is it spread? No one knows. How is it diagnosed? The first symptom is anesthesia (loss of sensation.) Then macules.

"But anesthesia is a sure symptom," he said.

Ellen and I looked at each other, and in spite of an amused laugh, she looked thoughtful.

"Shall I tell him about my anesthesia?" she asked in the tone of voice with which one might question whether or not to tell one's favorite joke.

A couple of times Ellen had mentioned to me an area on one ankle that had no sensation. We had joked about leprosy, but as there was no visible sign of change, we had given it little more thought, and had mentioned it to no one. Now everyone looked at her in startled horror as she indicated the area on her ankle where there was no feeling. Just to make sure, she went through the routine blind-fold test, and beyond a doubt, she had the first symptom of leprosy.

"It does look rather bad," said Mr. Arnold.

We discussed at length what should be done about it, and all agreed that Ellen should go as soon as possible to the leprosarium in Chiangmai for laboratory tests and treatment. But we would first have to write to Dr. Buker, who was in charge of the leprosarium, asking his advice. In the mean time, all possible precautions should be taken to prevent the spread of the germs.

We also agreed that we should not make the matter known to anyone, even in letters home.

The next few days were days of anxiety for all of us. Evy had a hard time keeping her children segregated from playmates whom she now knew had leprosy; children with white spots on their faces or backs; children who had been

in the yard every day playing with Sharon and Paul. All of us were morbidly conscious of any skin discoloration in ourselves or others, or any variation in tactile sensation. And Ellen, most of all, was preoccupied with keeping herself and her things strictly segregated.

It was the height of the rainy season. Floods and swollen rivers hampered both transportation and postal service, but finally a letter came from Dr. Buker inviting Ellen to visit the leprosarium as soon as she could. When she left a few days later, we all wondered whether she would be staying on there as a permanent guest. In any case, we shared with her the conviction that the Lord had a definite purpose in her going to Chiangmai, quite aside from her own health. If we were so surrounded by leprosy in this place where God had sent us, was it not His will that we should help these afflicted people? Perhaps this was His first step in moving us in that direction. Ellen intended to learn all she could about the diagnosis and treatment of leprosy while at Chiangmai.

Her departure was just before another flood. I had gone with her to the Overgaard's house the evening before, where she was to get the bus early next morning. After seeing her off, as I returned to Hua Diat, I found the water had risen again, and was two feet deep on the road. Ellen's trip, we learned later, was like a nightmare, as the bus went through flood waters, and at some places they had to change buses because bridges had been washed out.

Three days after her departure, we received a telegram from Ellen saying the results of the test were negative. She did not have leprosy. How gladly we praised God as the heavy cloud of worry rolled away.

Ellen was gone for about ten days, during which I did many things alone for the first time. The thing that really gave me a sense of having grown up was leading the children's meeting and giving the lesson. For the adult evangelistic meeting, Wilf came and spoke as usual. He had to come by boat part way. After the meeting, when he started for home, he found the boat had gone. It was very dark and he could not find the ferry man. Yet he could not go back to Hua Diat, so he set out through the water and was chest deep before he got through. The current across the road was swift, sweeping toward the river which ran beside the road. I think if God had not had His hand on His servant there in the deep dark waters, we would have lost our field leader that night.

After the river was back within its banks, Ellen came home. We had dinner at the Overgaards that evening, and

Ellen gave us an account of her trip, examination, and the things Dr. Buker had taught her about leprosy. One thing she told us, which Mr. Arnold had also written to us, was that anesthesia alone, without macules, was not a conclusive indication of leprosy.

In the mean time, another event was drawing near to which I had looked forward for a long time. My mother, Mrs. Hazel Hanna, was coming to Thailand. After thirty six years of service in Thailand with the Presbyterian Mission, and after the death of my father in 1948, she was retired. Now she was coming to visit.

In preparation for her coming, she had sent money which we used to get a desk and a bed made, and some screening with which Wilf created a bedroom on our front balcony.

While Ellen and I were cleaning the store room and making room for more trunks, we looked into our own trunks and found them alive with termites. They had done such a thorough work that there was no possibility of salvaging anything. We had to carry the trunks out to the river bank and burn not only the contents, but the trunks themselves. We stood there on the sand under the hot sun, prodding the fire till every scrap of cloth, paper, and wood was consumed and every termite dead. That was only the first of many such bonfires.

In November, 1950, I went to Bangkok to meet my mother. I arrived the night before her ship was due, but when I got off the train, there at the station Mother was waiting to meet me. Her ship had arrived a day early. Not only was it a happy reunion for the two of us, but also between her and many old friends whom she had not seen for many years: missionaries, pastors, church workers, and former students from the school at Lampang where she had been the principal for many years.

Wilf and Sharon came to Bangkok before we left, and as Wilf had to stay on a few days longer, we took Sharon back with us on the train. While traveling with Sharon, I was impressed once more with a problem which confronts missionary children. Wherever we were, in a train, on a street corner, in a restaurant, people crowded around her. Motherly older women, gushing teenagers, friendly children, all would stroke her blond hair, hug her, feel her white skin, pat her cheeks, and ask her all sorts of questions, trying to get her to talk.

That night, before arriving at Pitsanuloke, the train stopped for a prolonged period out in the rice fields far from any town. We were unable to turn off the lights in the



*The street during a flood*

train, and they attracted a dense swarm of insects of every variety. As they buzzed about us, lighting on us, clothes, Sharon became so frantic I had to put a pillow slip over her head and shoulders and hold it around her waist. She must have been nearly suffocated, but she preferred it to the bugs. Some of the passengers stood on the arms of the seats and held papers over the lights to darken the coach, which helped somewhat.

As soon as "Ma Hanna," as everyone called my mother, had unpacked and settled at Rahang, she began going out visiting people. She frequently rode her bicycle along the road, stopped and sat down on a stump or bench under a tree, and when people gathered around her, began telling them the Gospel story.

By this time the rainy season was over, but the river was still high. One night when everyone was asleep, I was awakened by the far-away sound of shouting and wailing. I got up, sat on the window, and looked out at some little lights across the river in the direction of the sounds. Though I could see nothing but the lights, I could tell by their movement that some men were going slowly down the river in boats while women stood on the shore wailing. We had never stopped at this village, Stone Head, to visit, though we had been through it many times on our way to other villages. Now I sensed that there had been a tragedy: someone was drowning.

I prayed, promising God that I would go the next day, and asking Him to save the man from drowning.

The sounds of the men and the boats grew fainter as they drifted farther and farther down the stream. A fire was built on the bank at the point opposite our house, from which they had started, and by the light of it, I could dimly see the figures of people sitting and waiting. I went back to bed, but kept listening. Finally I heard the voices again. They shouted, "*Tdai laow*" (He's dead.) Or was it "*Dai laow*" (found him?) I strained my ears, but though the phrase was repeated several times, I could not be sure which they were saying.

At the breakfast table the next morning, I was telling Mother and Ellen the incident of the night, and saying that I felt bound to go over today. Just as I finished, Som came in to tell us there were some people down stairs to see us. A group of women sat on the floor with their market baskets. They asked us if we would please go across the river to see a young man who was out of his mind. He had been ill for a while, had become irrational, and had had to be tied. Last

night he had broken loose and had run and plunged into the river. They had rescued him from drowning.

Ellen and I went over right away. The man's home was just at the boat landing. It was also a place where travelers began their difficult trip across the mountains to Maesod and the Burma border. A train of ponies was being loaded in preparation for a trip, and a number of men, pony boys, and travelers, were sitting around ready to go. When we arrived, many of them followed us into the house. The young man was lying in the enclosed room with ropes tying his hands and feet to the posts of the wall. He looked passive and calm while we were there. We could not diagnose his illness, and strongly urged them to get a doctor to come, or take him to the hospital. We did tell them of the God Who is able to heal from sin and also to make our bodies and minds well.

"That is why we sent for you," they said. "We heard what your God did for the son of Mother Egg."

So Ellen explained the way of salvation to them while I prayed. When we left, we gave them tracts to read. We visited them several more times, and often found a crowd of travelers preparing for the trip to Maesod. We felt this was one way the Lord was using us to get the message of Salvation to that isolated city, too.

One Saturday morning, Ellen and I were going on one of our regular visits to a village up north. We decided to cross from our house and visit the people at Stone Head on our way. We found the young man had grown worse, and was chained with thick elephant chains.

"When he gets violent," said his mother, "four strong men cannot hold him. He broke the ropes."

He lay on the floor with his eyes half closed, but looked at us from time to time.

"We will pray for him if you will have those spirit strings taken off his wrists," said Ellen. "You cannot trust in God and the spirits, too. The spirits can do you no good. They only harm you."

"Yes, let's take them off," answered his mother.

A pair of old rusty shears lay on the edge of the porch, and Ellen picked them up.

"Oh, you mustn't go near him," cried his mother in horror. "Especially with those shears."

Seeing the problem, Ellen laid the shears down and asked, "Are you trusting those strings to help you?"

"No," said the mother, "we want Jesus to heal him. We only trust Him."



So we sat down and prayed for the young man, asking the Lord to deliver him. Then we went on our way. We had heard reports that this man was part of a gang of bandits that lived in the wilds along that side of the river and robbed, or even killed travelers, and terrorized all the villages in that area. We prayed for him that day as we walked along the path and as we sat at noon under the trees. In the afternoon we came back the same way stopped at his house again. This time he greeted us with a look of friendly recognition.

"He has taken the spirit strings off his wrists," we were told by the people who sat on the porch. "He broke them off, thread by thread. He said he wanted Jesus to help him."

We prayed for him again. From that time on, we saw him only a few more times. His mother, during all this time, had seemed to come very close to the Kingdom. She said she believed and wanted to be a Christian. She also said her son believed. But we were not certain whether he wanted to be saved from his sins, or only from his affliction. After the worst of his illness was over, he was no longer interested in the Gospel.

He went through many months of mental depression and physical weakness, but he did finally recover. At a later date, when we visited the home again, we were told he had married and moved to another village far away. A year or more after that we heard that he was again practicing banditry, and was believed to have committed a murder. His mother also gave up all pretense of interest in the Gospel.

How hard and rocky the ground seemed. Would there ever be a harvest?

But soon after that, we began to see a few people coming to the Lord. Sunday morning worship services were held in our living room at Hua Diat, and, in the evenings, an evangelistic meeting in "the chapel," a garage next to the Overgaard's house which they had rented and made into a meeting room. Gradually the number of Christians at the morning meetings increased. Though Mother Egg never came, her son, Duan, did. Our old gardener, Si, came faithfully. Ma Hanna had led him to the Lord soon after her arrival. A middle-aged, distinguished gentleman who was the guard for the Bombay Burma Teak Company, also became a believer. Both these men regularly led in prayer during the Sunday worship. Then our cook, Som, Si's daughter, became a Christian, also.

Inn and his wife, Boon Tee, had been going through serious marital problems. Boon Tee was a talkative, quick tem-



*The story of the Little Red Hen.  
On the roadside.  
Kumpuang, Pet  
1954*



pered, and domineering woman. Inn sought escape by leaving and reverting to an old love affair with Ta, who although an attractive personality, was well known as a bad character. Ellen had been teaching Boon Tee to read, and had, over a long period of time, taught her the Gospel. One day she decided to put her trust in God. We induced Inn to return to Boon Tee, and immediately he noticed a great change in her. Her new faith had had an effect upon her personal life. She became meek and quiet, not at all like the old Boon Tee. One day Inn told Ellen that he, too, needed Jesus. From that time on, he and Boon Tee came to church together, and several times during the week, he came to study the Bible with Ma Hanna. An eager student, he made good progress.

One time Wilf needed a companion on a trip up into the mountain villages, so he invited Inn to go with him. During the trip, Inn learned much from Wilf through their conversations as they walked along the mountain paths, and by listening to him talk to the people they met. He also learned to tell others of his new-found faith, and after their return, Inn gave a report on the trip to the Christians in church on Sunday morning.

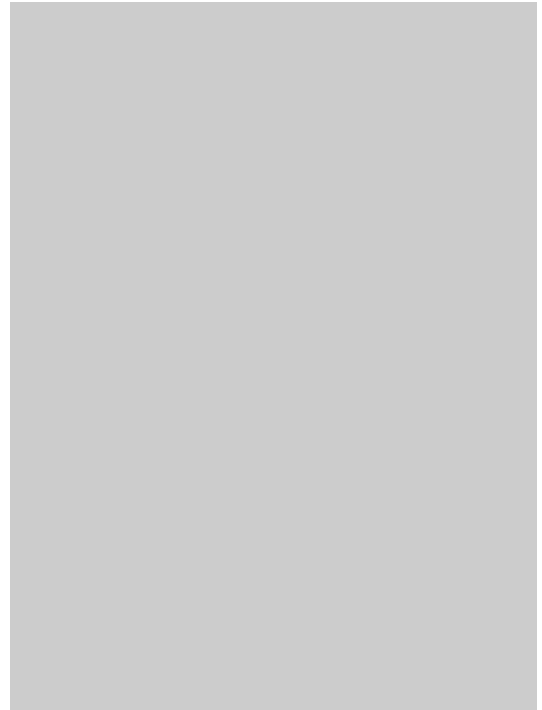
Now we began to feel that the gospel was being heard and accepted, and rejoiced for our labors began to seem worthwhile.

However, as time went on, something seemed to happen to each of these new converts. Later we realized that the ground was by no means softened yet. These were but cracks in the still hard, rocky soil into which the seed had dropped and sprung up, only to wither away. Duan drifted away, and his mother grew cold toward the gospel, although always friendly toward us. We found that many members of that family were involved in opium smuggling, with the many forms of crime and intrigue that go along with the opium trade. Two of the sons were killed as a result of these activities. Mother Egg protested that they were all very good boys, but word from their neighbors indicated otherwise. In fact, they seemed to hold the whole community under a spell of terror. We were learning how strong and awful the power of darkness is which holds those spirit worshipers in its grip. The house of Mother Egg grew bigger and wealthier through ill-gotten gain, while the five members of the family who once professed faith in God and had begun to walk in His way were now far from Him.

One by one, other believers fell away. Som found that she could not resist going to the temple when all her friends

went. All their social life was centered around the temple, and as a Christian, she was isolated and ridiculed. One day she told Ellen she could not be a Christian any longer.

Inn's turning back was not as abrupt or purposed, but more in keeping with his moral texture. Boon Tee reverted to her old nagging self, and lost her temper a few times. Inn, in an effort to escape, went back to visit Ta frequently. Gradually he stopped coming to church. Boon Tee, in her frustration, became more and more quarrelsome, and drifted away from God. Watchman Moon went back to drinking and came to church less and less. Si, after making a bold stand for Jesus, having of his own volition given up smoking and having started learning to read, suddenly became discouraged and turned aside. Thus the church dwindled until finally there was not one Thai Christian coming to the worship services on Sunday mornings. We prayed and worked on, but all seemed bleak and barren.



# V

## A CRY FOR MERCY

Just north of the district of Hua Diat lies the village of Beautiful Woods, which stretches about a mile along the narrow river path. Behind this village and parallel with it lies a strip of deep jungle, and on the other side of that, a long swamp area that extends the whole length of the village of Beautiful Woods and the town of Rahang. In the rainy season, the swamp becomes a lake and the forest a swamp. In a slight clearing of the dark jungle at Beautiful Woods stood three tiny thatch and bamboo huts, each about six feet square in area, and elevated on poles about four feet off the ground.

The three men who lived in these little huts were outcasts from society. A quick glance at them would tell why. Their swollen, lumpy faces, flattened noses, sagging eyelids, their badly mutilated hands and feet, shouted "leprosy." Nai Pun, Nai Som, and Nai Leo, each sitting on his own rickety ladder or on the small platform in front of his door, were talking earnestly together. They spent a lot of time in conversation, for the one thing that these companions in misery had in plenty was time. They could not work. Had they been able to hold tools in their hands, there would not have been enough bodily strength or energy to use them. Had they been able to produce anything, no one would have bought their produce. From time to time a wife or relative would bring a pot of rice, a bucket of charcoal, a bunch of bananas, or some other donation. On a small ant hill in their clearing, they had planted two papaya trees; a few sickly bean stalks and pepper bushes grew between their houses. Nai Leo, the youngest, who had the best fingers, would build the fire in a charcoal brazier on one of their narrow



*hands disfigured by  
leprosy*

porches, and they would help each other prepare a meal.

It was the rainy season. The rain had stopped, but the trees were still dripping. The ground was covered with an inch or two of water. In the dim light that filtered through the thick trees, one could see small fish darting about in the water around the poles of the ladders on which the three men sat commenting dejectedly on their situation. Nai Leo rubbed his swollen elbow and wrist joints as he moaned, "I hardly slept at all last night. My joints ache worse than ever in the rainy season when the wind blows. I wish my mother would bring me another blanket."

Nai Pun, the oldest of them, a tall, lean man with gray hair, was winding a much-used rag around his foot. He had only three toes left on that foot, and it looked as if one of them would soon be gone. A sliver of bone protruded through the oozing flesh, and he probed to see if it was ready to come out. As he worked, he continually brushed flies off it.

"If my wife comes today, we'll all tell her to persuade your mother. I hope she brings me some more rags to wrap around this foot. That wretched spirit doctor! With all the money she has given him, he only makes me worse!"

"I'm convinced that no one can really help us," said Nai Som. "Any one who says he can is just trying to get money out of our poor relatives. These traveling doctors that say they have such wonderful cures - do they ever stay after they've gotten all the money they can out of us poor, stupid people? Of course not! They're careful to be gone before we discover we've been duped. It has taken me many, many years to learn that. I also thought religion might help. People with other sicknesses go to the temple and get holy water from the priests, and sometimes it makes them better. My home is right behind a temple. But they won't let me go into the temple any more because of the leprosy. The priests aren't the least bit interested in helping me."

The men sat in a long, meditative silence, but the sounds of nature went on. The buzz of the locusts in the trees drowned out the lesser buzz of the flies swarming around the houses. An occasional gust of wind shook the rain drops from the trees, causing a momentary shower on the water on the ground. Mosquitoes hummed about over the water, and now and then there was a splash as a small fish leaped out.

Nai Pun broke the silence.

"It seems to me there should be some high power or authority that could help us, that we don't know about. Some

good spirit that is in control of things. But how could we find such a one? Where would we look?"

"And if we found such a one," questioned Nai Som, "do you think it would have any sympathy for our cause? Since our affliction is the just reward of our misdeeds in the previous incarnation, as the priest tells us, would not the Supreme Spirit, if it is a good, righteous Spirit, require us to continue in the paying of our penalty?"

There was another long silence. It was raining again, and the men moved backward a little into their doorways. Then Nai Pun spoke up.

"No," he said slowly, "a good and powerful being isn't all we need. We need mercy and love."

Young Nai Leo uttered a hollow laugh. "Is there really such a thing as love or mercy?" he cried above the increasing sound of the rain.

"If there is such a Spirit in this universe," said Nai Som, "a good, powerful Spirit with love and mercy, how can we reach to Him? Would He hear us if we cried out to Him?" His voice was drowned out by the loud roar of the rain. Conversation ceased. The men drew all the way into their shelters and held their blankets around them as the wind whipped through the trees, tugged at the fragile thatch and bamboo of the huts, and drove the rain in between the woven slats. But through the noisy tumult, invisibly and inaudibly, a prayer went up to the heavens: "O good and powerful and merciful Spirit, if you are there, please help us!"

# VI

## RESPIRE

In the hot season of 1951, my mother told us all very firmly that we should take a month off for vacation. We had never thought of a vacation before, but now when she spoke about it, the idea seemed very appealing. We were all weary, and the temperature was about 105 in the shade. But where could we possibly go for a vacation? Any of the summer resorts we knew of were expensive, and would take at least two days to reach, and we simply couldn't afford it. For a long time we had been going through difficult times financially, buying only the very cheapest of native food and often having nothing to spend on postage stamps. How could we possibly think of going away for a vacation? But the Lord seemed to have it in His plan for us to go, for He sent us a special gift for it.

On a trip to Dead Elephant Ford, Ellen and I had heard of a place called Lan Sang up in the hills where there were beautiful water falls. Perhaps we should investigate this place. So one Saturday while I stayed with the children, Ellen, Wilf, and Evy took a lunch, got on their bicycles, and rode to the village of Lan Sang. It was situated on a road that was being built to Maesod. Although the road did not extend to Maesod till many years later, it helped greatly in bicycling to the village of Lan Sang.

Leaving their bicycles there, they climbed a steep trail up into the hills till they reached the beautiful, high water falls. Wilf went exploring further upstream, but Evy and Ellen sat down wearily with their feet in the cool water.

"We almost wept for joy," said Ellen later, "to see such beautiful scenery and to feel that fresh, cool air."

For a small sum of money, a man in the village agreed to



build three shacks for us of bamboo which grew there plentifully. Mother decided she would not go with us as there would be too much mountain climbing. She would hold the fort while we were gone, and perhaps take a trip north some other time. I did not want to go for a whole month, as I had not been in Thailand for two full years yet, and was not as run-down as the others. So I agreed to go the last two weeks. Dorothy had been invited by some friends to a mountain resort, so Fern went with us to Lan Sang.

It was truly a good vacation, so close to the beauty of nature, and a blessed relief from the heat. At the main site, the Overgaards little house stood beside a large pool, into which the water fell from a series of falls between two rock cliffs. The dining room consisted of a bower of bamboo with a long table and two benches, all of bamboo. Just out of sight above the first fall was another house for Fern, Ellen and me. It was reached by a steep ascent through a narrow crevice between two cliffs, and was built on poles over the stream, close to another high series of falls. It was so beautiful and wonderful, I felt for the first few days as though it were all a dream. The floor space of the house was just large enough for the three of us to lie down. I had forgotten the key to my suitcase, so was limited to the few garments I had contributed for packing around the jars of food. My Thai books, vocabulary lists, etc., were in the suitcase. The others laughed with glee and hoped I would not get the key for a while.

The children enjoyed the vacation to the full. We all helped to dam up the stream, making the pool deep enough for a good swim, and about twenty feet in diameter. A huge vine hanging from a tree at the top of the cliff nearly reached the water, making a gigantic swing by which we could glide from one end of the pool and land on the rock at the other end.

Near the end of April, Wilf had to leave for Bangkok to meet another new missionary, Bill Charters, from North Ireland. Bill joined us for the last few days at Lan Sang.

At the end of the month, we broke camp and all went back to our various duties. Bill stayed with the Overgaards and began his language study, spending six hours a day with the teacher, a young man who had just come out of the priesthood.



# VII

## TENDER ROOTS

In the village of Beautiful Woods there lived two sisters, both of whom had leprosy. Their parents had both died of leprosy when they were little girls. Some relatives had sent Moon, the younger sister, to the McKean leprosarium at Chienmai, where she stayed for many years. While she was there, she became a Christian and was baptized.

During Ellen's stay with the Bukers at the leprosarium, she met Moon, who was now much better, though not completely healed. It was arranged that when the leprosy clinics were started in Rahang, she would come back home to help. So she was trained to give injections of chalmulgra oil. Later, when Paul Arnold was making another trip to Rahang, he brought Moon back to her home.

Having been gone since childhood, Moon felt a stranger among her own people, especially since she was now a Christian and they were all spirit worshipers and strongly opposed to her being a Christian. When Mr. Arnold left to return to Chiengmai, she wept bitterly, and for many days was inconsolable. Like a tender garden plant transferred to an arid wilderness, she wondered how she could ever survive.

Ellen spent much time with her, and eventually she forgot her loneliness as she got involved in contacting the people who had leprosy and in making preparations for the clinic.

Among those contacted were the three men who live in the jungle about half a kilometer behind Moon's home. They were overjoyed at the thought of being treated for their disease, and helped to build a small sala (a bower or shelter) in the center of their jungle clearing. As it was so

secluded that any new patients with mild cases of leprosy would feel that they could come secretly, this site was selected as most suitable for the clinic. It was now the end of the dry season, and the once swampy ground was hard and dry. The roof of the *sala* was of thatch on a bamboo framework, and held up by four wooden posts. Around the edges were long narrow benches and in the center, a crude table and two roughly made chairs, contributed by the relatives of the patients. The chairs were the seats of honor, kept clean, they said, for us to sit on.

The first clinic, May 12, 1951, was a special day. When Ellen and I arrived, the patients were all waiting, sitting on the benches. Behind them, squatting on the ground outside the *sala*, were a number of relatives - Nai Pun's wife and small daughter, Nai Som's mother and sister, and a few other friends. On the table were dishes loaded with rice cakes and various kinds of sweetmeats, a bottle of rain water and two glass tumblers. Nai Pun explained that the women had brought them to refresh us in our work, and that none of the patients had touched them.

The first thing on the program was the presentation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Ellen had brought along a flannel-graph board, and using the colorful illustrations, she told a story of Jesus and explained to them the love of God and the way of salvation. We sang a few songs to them, helped by Moon. As we tried to teach them the songs, they made a hearty effort to join in, but as their vocal cords had been badly damaged by the disease, and as, like most Thai people, they had never been accustomed to singing, their efforts produced very strange sounds. Then we prayed, asking God to heal their bodies.

The medicines were then brought out, and Moon began the chalmulgra injections. The heavy oil is difficult to administer and very painful to receive. But Moon's hands had been well trained and the patients were stoical. Two of the patients were little girls, one of them Nai Pun's daughter, whom her mother held on her lap while she was injected. All the patients were given a week's supply of vitamin and iron tablets.

While we ate the dainties and drank the rain water, we had a time of friendly conversation with the patients. This informal chat became an important part of the weekly clinic. It was during these visits that our hearts became knit together in a close friendship.

When the rains began, the patients built a larger *sala*. They brought more soil to elevate the dirt floor so that later



Bya, an earnest little Christian leper

when the ground became swampy and we had to wade through water to get there, the sala floor was fairly dry.

When we started the weekly clinic, there were four men living in the three little huts. The new comer was also named Nai Som. They called him Nai Som Help, as his wife's name was Help. Nai Pun's house was larger than the other two, with room enough for two to lie down, so he had invited Nai Som Help to share his house. Though he showed no signs of permanent deformity, Nai Som Help's face was badly swollen, discolored, and covered with nodules.

Moon's older sister, Kao, was not one of our regular patients at the clinic. Her feet were so badly damaged that it was hard for her to walk to the sala. Besides that, she was often not on speaking terms with Moon. Sometimes she allowed her to give her shots of chalmulgra oil at home, but most of the time she chose to go untreated. She exerted all the pressure she could upon Moon to induce her to turn away from Christianity and to take part in spirit worship, to eat food before the shrine, and thus feed the spirits of her deceased parents, etc. Both sisters had volatile dispositions, but Moon, realizing her Christian responsibility, and being continually encouraged by Ellen and the others, did her best to control her feelings and to show a spirit of love and forgiveness.

After several months of treatment, we began to see a gradual improvement in some of the patients. Nai Som Help showed the most rapid progress. He had contracted the disease more recently than the others. As time went on, we were surprised to see how young and good-looking he was. He was also among the first to confess Christ as his Saviour. Within a year, all of the four men had made a profession of their faith. Nai Som was the last to believe, but he was to become the most staunch and dependable of them all.

Over a period of time we saw in the little group a spiritual growth. As they studied the scriptures and prayed together, they increased in love and in strength against temptation. Moon especially was growing in her zeal to serve the Lord. When a brochure came from the C. & M. A. Bible School in east Thailand, telling of their special branch for students with leprosy, Moon was eager to go so that she might prepare herself to serve God better.

It was an exciting occasion for us all as we talked over and helped in the preparations for her big journey, and finally said good bye to her. That was May of 1953, two years



*Wilf baptising Nai Som -- 1950*

*Photo courtesy of Nancy Ashcraft*

after the beginning of the clinic.

After Moon was gone, Nai Som Help assisted in the clinic work. By this time he was living with his wife's family again, as he looked nearly normal, and he came to the church services at our house on Sundays.

Along about 1953, the treatment of leprosy became revolutionized by the introduction of the sulphone drugs. This medicine, taken orally in tablet form, was very much more effective than chalmulgra oil, and thus it became possible for Nai Som Help to dispense the medicines to patients who were unable to come to the clinic.



*Back: Nai Bun, Nai Leo, Pi Gaow, Gaow Moon*

*-- two unknown*

*front: Alma, Marta, Elly*

*Photo courtesy of Nancy Ashcraft*

# VIII

## ROMANTIC INTERLUDE

The arrival of Bill Charters was a mile stone in the history of W.E.C. Thailand, from my present perspective, although I did not realize it at the time.

Not many months after he came, Ellen's sister and brother-in-law, Dave and Betty Woodward, who had just left China, due to the Communist take-over, stopped to visit Ellen for a few weeks before proceeding to America. They were with us when we had our first W.E.C. Thai field conference. Dorothy and Fern came from Kampangpet to join us, and the conference lasted for five days. We formulated many policies and plans concerning our work in all its phases. It was also a time of prayer and spiritual refreshment. As we waited for God's leading, and as we consulted to make a budget and financial policies for the first time, we took courage and our faith was renewed that God's providence was with us.

At the end of the conference, Bill and I became engaged. Of course this had nothing to do with the conference. Bill said the decision had been made in his mind long before the conference. In true oriental style, we had a go-between. Dave Woodward was the one who carried the many letters and dropped words of encouragement or advice.

One of the decisions of the conference had been that I should go to Kampangpet to work with Fern, and that Dorothy should come to Rahang and work with Ellen. This had been decided before anyone knew or foresaw the possibility of our engagement. But it also fitted in with our mission policy that en-

### Bill's Story

In my childhood days on an ex-service mens' estate on the Cregagh Road, Belfast, we all learned to play together and like each other fairly well. We had Catholic neighbours who were Just as free, and poor, as we were. It was, after all, in the days of the great worldwide depression. So all working men were equally poor! But rents, and food, I remember were cheap. If it were not for the consumption of alcohol, smoking and gambling, there would have been few problems. But because many fathers loved drink more than their wives and children a bad situation was made worse. Some children could hardly buy their school books, yet their dads smoked more cigarettes a month and bought more pints of beer than would furnish a whole class with books and still have money over for gym shoes! Still they blamed others for their poverty. Rarely did they think of reforming except once a year, on New Year's night when they threw beer bottles at the Albert clock and made good resolutions which were almost forgotten except at odd times.

A life shaking experience happened to me in 1943 not long after I joined the RAF. I had been through a few close encounters with trouble especially in the blitz. One night I sat in a shelter when Coventry was almost destroyed. Bombs rained down close by. We knew what it was to tremble with shock. In the morning we walked about dazed watching the truck loads of bodies. The big cathedral still giving off smoke. In another raid a bomb fell so close that I felt the blast against my face. Questions like, 'What if it had been a direct hit, where would you spend eternity?' arose to make me ponder. What a change today when I can say 'Sudden death, sudden glory.'

gaged couples should not be stationed in the same town.

During our engagement days, Bill and I learned what an oriental courtship was. Among the conservative higher classes, young people are never allowed to be alone together, but are always closely chaperoned. Even a husband and wife never touch each other in public. The people who do not hold to these rigid standards are regarded as those of loose morals who may never get married but live in a state of promiscuity.

Our houses were so constructed as to afford about as much privacy as an aquarium, and being foreigners made us always the center of interest. So, whenever Bill and I met, even after months of separation, we greeted each other with a brief hand shake and sat down on our properly spaced chairs for a friendly chat in view of the spectators standing down on the street and looking up through the railing.

After our engagement was announced, the Overgaards had a party for us. A white three-tiered cake was brought in, on the top of which stood a little china statue of a bridal couple, saved from the Overgaard's wedding. At the end of July, Bill and I said goodbye and I went to Kampangpet. Mother remained with Ellen and Dorothy in Rahang.

My five years in the forces passed quickly enough. It was a fairly tough school for a new Christian. But under God's help many good things happened in spite of the horrors of war. He taught me how to watch and pray, to study the Bible and he led me to enjoy good fellowship in York, Suffolk End India with forces Gospel teams.

My interest in missionary work increased as I studied the word. I saw it as the outcome of our love for Christ. Paul said, 'Present your bodies a living sacrifice.'

Great biographies about missionaries showed how God could use lives that were consecrated to Him. I had no doubt that this was His way for me.

At one missionary meeting I asked God to send me to the mission field even while I was still in the RAF. The war in Europe was just over and most men were looking forward to being demobbed. So I had not much hope of an answer. But the first news I heard on returning to camp was, "Hey, you're on the boat." The fellows were sorry for me, but I could only smile. I went to India for six months and enjoyed working with missionaries as well as good times with forces Gospel teams.

Arriving back in England (after an operation for appendicitis on the troopship!) I was accepted for training at Emmanuel Bible College. For the next three years, with a big class of many ex-forces men we received a good foundation upon which to build. I had my share of practical work when we went on treks to preach the gospel in England and Wales. May 1951 found me on a ship again heading East to Thailand with the WEC, a mission started by C. T. Studd to spread the Gospel of God's Salvation through Jesus Christ worldwide.





# IX

## DIAMOND WALLS

Our eight -hour trip came to an end as the motor launch glided past Kampanget, "The City of Diamond Walls." It was a long town, strung along the river bank. I saw no diamond walls at all - only unpainted, weather-beaten, wooden houses with rusty corrugated iron roofs. In the center of town, the buildings were closely packed together and leaned far out over the river bank on rickety crutches. A brewery, a rice mill, and a few other utilities were surrounded by corrugated iron fences. The dominating pieces of architecture were the temples with their tall, pointed, white-washed *chedees*, enclosed by white-washed brick walls.

The last house at the end of the town was the mission house. It was a wooden building on posts about six feet off the ground, and surrounded by a bamboo fence. The middle part of the front of the house had a railing instead of a wall, revealing an open porch clear through to the back. The stairway led up to a bridge in the back which connected the main part of the house with the kitchen. On the middle veranda I could see the table set for tea. As our boat came near the bank and the shouts of children announced our arrival, Dorothy and Fern appeared at the railing and waved to us. By the time the boat was tied up to the roots of a tree on the shore, they and all the neighborhood were on the bank to meet us.

This was not my first trip to Kampanget, so I already knew some of the people who crowded onto the porch to visit after they had helped to bring the trunks up. I was moving here to stay, and Wilf had come along to help and to see how the new station was progressing. Dorothy was all packed. The next morning after her things were loaded on



the boat, she and Wilf went on their way up the river.

For the next few months, Fern and I worked together, doing mostly evangelistic work. Dorothy had developed a thriving dispensary, for which the building next to us had been rented. Many patients had been coming every day. But as neither of us was a qualified nurse, we had to close the dispensary, then use the building only for meetings twice a week. The adult meetings on Sunday evenings were well attended, sometimes crowded, which was quite a contrast to our meetings in Rahang. How we wished there were a man to speak to the people who came! But in the children's meetings we had a hard-to-manage crowd and often despaired of teaching them anything. On Sunday mornings we held road-side Sunday schools in two or three places around the town. One woman invited us to use her house every Sunday, and later she and several of her family became believers and prayed with us.

Once or twice a week, Fern and I visited villages around the province. Most of these villages were reached by river as long as the boats were running, and by bicycle during the dry season. We usually took sandwiches along for our noon meal, and sometimes had breakfast on the boat. The larger launches were two deckers. The motor, the kitchen, and the cargo were on the lower deck. The boat went as far as Paknampo, where the Ping river joins the Chao Phya. There, passengers could transfer to a larger launch that took them to Bangkok. We never went anywhere that we could not reach before noon, otherwise we could not have caught a boat back home. As it was, we often took the last boat back, arriving after dark from a twelve or fourteen-hour day's outing. If we had forgotten our flash lights, as we sometimes did, we had to grope our way to the house and fumble around in the dark till we found one, or a box of matches to light a lamp.

Even the boat rides were excellent opportunities for the spreading of the Gospel. We gave tracts to our fellow passengers and sometimes sold scripture portions to them, and as interest was aroused, we often had good conversations with them about the Saviour of the world.

Going to the farther villages, the long boat trip was the most tiring part of the day, as we had to sit in proper Thai style in a limited space for several hours. But it was pleasantly broken by a tasty breakfast. One of us would make her way down to the kitchen and order two dishes of kow put. About ten minutes later, a little boy would make his cautious way through the crowd of passengers bearing two

steaming plates of rice fried with bits of meat, onions, tomatoes, and egg. Kow put is the standard dish served on trains and boats in Thailand. It is a Chinese dish, easily prepared and universally liked.

When we reached our intended village, the boat men would pull up to the landing, we would get off at one end of the village laden with our books and tracts, our water bottles and lunch, and then we would walk through the village, sometimes about three kilometers in length. At places where the houses were scattered, we tried to visit each home. Where there was a thicker population, we held street meetings. Sometimes upon nearing a group of thatched houses in the midst of a large clump of coconut palms and banana trees, we would stop under a shady tree and hang up a picture or chart. Fern would produce her concertina, and sitting on a stump, play "I have Come from Alabama with my Banjo on my Knee." Soon a large crowd of people would be gathered, and we'd begin telling them the good news of salvation. For the large majority of these people, it was the first time they had ever heard the Gospel.

One drizzly day we sloshed along the muddy path, bare foot, covered with mud, stopping each time we saw a house with people in it. I saw a house a little way back from the path where a young girl sat alone on the porch. Fern and I were both very tired, and had had several discouragements that day. As we passed by the gate of this house, I said to myself, "Just one girl . . . probably bashful . . . probably thinks we are fools . . . maybe won't even take a tract." We continued plodding on.

Suddenly my mental imagery changed. We were standing before a great judgment throne, and that girl stood there, about to go down into perdition, pointing a finger at me. I held out for a moment.'

"She will certainly think us fools if we go back now. And how can I explain it to Fern?"

We were getting farther and farther away. But still that finger pointed at me. I could stand it no longer.

"Fern," I said, "we've got to go back to that last house."

Fern did not think it strange at all, and turned back immediately. When we got there, the girl jumped to her feet and ran down the ladder to meet us, and begged us to come up into her house. Just then her father and mother came in from the jungle. They all listened with keenest interest to our story.

Then the man, Nai Dang (Mr. Red) exclaimed, "Why, that's just what is in a book that we have here!" He went

into the room and brought out an old, much worn, Gospel of John.

"Where did you get that?" we asked in amazement.

"Many years ago a man came up the river from Bangkok selling books, and we bought this one. We have read it many times. Partly we believed it, and partly we do not understand it."

After we had talked together for a while, Nai Dang and his wife both declared their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and their wish to be forgiven and to become His children.

The next time we visited Nai Dang and his family, we took them a Bible. We went to their village often after that, but one day we noticed a sudden cooling of their welcome when we arrived, and a reluctance to talk about spiritual matters. The village chief had told them that he would have no Christians in his village.

We were shocked. We ourselves had visited the chief in his wealthy home at the lower end of the village. He had two large houses, one for each of his wives. He had done many things to improve the village; a good school, elevated path ways (at least in his south part) and boat landings. And he had been interested, in an intellectual way, in talking about Christianity. But the fact remained, he did not want Christianity in his village.

The next time we visited Nai Dang, he was visibly downcast. He said that he definitely could no longer be a Christian. He could not live in that village and be a Christian. And of course he could not move away.

Is that the end of the story? Hopefully not.

Another village we frequented was Garden Village, a short way up the river. Our first visit there was while the water was rising and all along the banks men were busy making log rafts to send down stream. At Garden Village we saw a good open place under a large tree, suitable in every way for a meeting. Just at that spot, a wide raft was being made, which we would have to cross to get to the shore. The raft was for transporting a heavy, non-buoyant wood that required bamboo floats. The bamboo framework was all that was visible above the water. As we stepped off the boat, we had to balance on the long, bobbing, half-submerged bamboo poles. One of the men on the bank saw Fern's predicament and ran out to give her a steadying hand and carry her load. This is quite unusual for a Thai man. We will call him Mr. Helpful.

Soon a crowd of people gathered, drawn by Fern's concertina, and we sang them some Gospel songs. As we told

the story of the great Creator, of man and his fall, of God's love in coming down to earth in the form of man and dying for our sins, Mr. Helpful stood in the front of the group with a look of awe and wonder on his face.

Finally he exclaimed, "I'm a sinner too, and this is good news! Please come to my house and tell my wife about it."

We agreed and he led us up the path to his little bamboo house farther along the river bank.

"She is not well," he said after introducing his wife. "She has a disease because of my wickedness. I have been living in immorality."

After we had explained again God's plan of salvation, the wife, too, confessed that she was a needy sinner, and both agreed that they wanted to be Christians. They still did not know how they could speak to Almighty God. So we told them how to pray, and they repeated the words after us. Then Mr. Helpful asked, "Could you please write a prayer for us so that we may pray every day?"

We explained what prayer is - simple conversation, as of a child with a parent, thanking God, asking His pardon, confiding joys and troubles to Him, asking guidance, and praising Him. We did write out a simple prayer for them, but after that, Mr. Helpful learned to pray without our suggestions. He frequently visited us at Kampangpet. When he thought it was time for him to leave, he would say, "Let us pray," and would go directly into a long prayer.

In February of 1952, my mother came to stay with me while Fern went to Rahang. Mother and I visited up and down the river together. One thing I learned from her was the dispensibility of privacy. When it came lunch time in a village, I said "Come, let's find a secluded place to eat."

"Why not eat right here?" she asked, sitting down on a bench in the center of a group of houses. "It's one way of attracting an audience." And with a sandwich in her hand, she spoke to the growing crowd of people who came to watch us eat. The lunch over, she lay down on the bench and was soon in a deep sleep. After the nap, she sat up and talked to the new crowd which her sleeping had attracted.

She was able to get close to the hearts of people, young and old, in a way that I never could.



*WEC team with Norman Grubb (top left) next to Hans and Bill; Second row: Ma Hanna; Front: Alice, Fern, Rosemary, Evy, Alma, Marta*

# X

## THE WEDDING

At the end of February, Bill came to Kampangpet to man the station alone while Mother and I went to Rahang. The Overgaards, Ellen, and Fern were to be away for about three weeks on a tour of Maesod and the area along the Burma border on the other side of the mountain range. I was to stay at the Overgaard's house with the children and teach Sharon and Paul, who were then in the third and second grades. Mother was busy at Hua Diat making me two wedding dresses: a long one for the real wedding, and a short one for the civil wedding at the British Embassy in Bangkok.\*

The houses had to be made ready for the six wedding guests who would come from a distance. Chairs were sanded and painted, curtains made, tables varnished, etc. When the weary travelers returned from their trek, they, too, plunged into the work of preparation.

The day before the wedding, all our old friends arrived: the Seigles and the Voths from Bangkok, and Dr. and Mrs. McDaniel from Chiengrai (a Presbyterian station in the far north, a two day journey from us.) Never had Rahang seen so many white people. It was a wonderful treat for us.

The wedding took place on the evening of March 25th, at the Overgaard's home. The end of March is usually unbearably hot, but an unseasonable rain the day before the wedding had made the atmosphere pleasant. Fern and Mrs. Voth made a wedding cake, Charlotte McDaniel and Mrs. Seigle made the corsages and bouquets, and Mr. Seigle the punch.

Ellen was the maid of honor, and Sharon sprinkled flower petals from a silver bowl. Wilf was best man, and Evy hostess. Mr. Seigle and Mr. Voth each gave a message,

- In those days, a British citizen was not considered legally married unless he has a ceremony performed by a civil magistrate. In foreign countries, the British Consul officiates.



*Bill & Rosemary*

one in Thai and one in English, and Mr. Voth performed the ceremony. Ed McDaniel took pictures. There were about fifteen Thai guests. I was rather in a trance and unconscious of many of the details, but I do recall how handsome Bill looked in his white suit, with his deep blue eyes and dark wavy hair.

All our guests brought gifts. Moon brought four glass tumblers. Others brought silver bowls, lamps, cooking pots, etc. Bill's teacher brought a talking myna and a parrot. The parrot had no cage, and he handed it to Mother, who was receiving guests. She was obliged to have it perched on her finger while she received the rest of the guests.

Early the next morning, we started on our journey to Bangkok by bus. The two older couples, Seigles and Voths, sat in the front seats, the McDaniels and Bill and I sat in the back part. The floor was loaded with lumber nearly to the level of the seat, which was just another board. So we all sat with our knees almost up to our chins and our back bones grating against another narrow board along the back, and thus we bumped and jolted along. We ate a Chinese dinner on the balcony of the restaurant at Sukothai, and after stops and waits here and there to mend tires, fix the engine, etc., we reached Pitsanuloke in the evening. Here the McDaniels took a north-bound train and the rest of us went south to Bangkok the next morning.

After the civil ceremony at the embassy, Bill and I stayed in Bangkok for several days as guests of the Voths, enjoying the refinements and luxuries of civilization. On our return to Rahang, we joined the rest at Lan Sang where they had gone again for vacation, at the same site as the year before.

Vacation and honeymoon over, we gathered our wedding gifts and Wealth, and returned to Kampangpet. Wealth was a young man of about twenty who was to be our cook. The parrot had to perch on one of our fingers all the way.

Settling down at Kampangpet, I felt like a different version of a bride. I had to teach Wealth how to cook. We had long before dismissed our former cook because he was drunk so much of the time. Wealth was a willing worker and eager to learn. And he had everything to learn. About the time that he was becoming a good cook, he became ill. He was living in the little building next to us, in the room behind the meeting room, and doing his own cooking. I don't know whether his illness was a result of his own cooking or homesickness. We brought him soups and such foods as we thought suitable for an invalid. But I think he poured

### **The Girl Who Sprinkled the Flower Petals Remembers...**

I thought it was a fairy tale that when Bill arrived they should be attracted to each other and I was honored to have been able to participate in their wedding as the flower girl. I wore a pale yellow organdy dress and had my hair curled. I've no idea who might have sewn my dress; I don't know whether Mom did it, Fern I think was a skilled home ec person. Mom did usually sew my clothes. I think I carried a classic Thai silver bowl of flower petals. I remember Peter Voth being there I believe, and somewhere is my copy of their wedding picture with me standing in front.





them out of the window as soon as we left the room. He finally said he would have to go home. After he was gone, while cleaning his room, we found a bowl of soup and other food under his bed.

Bill was still spending full time on language study, but he also carried water and charcoal, scrubbed the floors and washed the dishes. I did the cooking and laundry. Later, I became ill and he had to do the cooking and buying, too. This meant that he had to go early in the morning to the market where all the merchants, farmers, and butchers brought their produce, and make his way through the jostling crowd from one basket of produce to another, bargaining for everything he bought. One day when he went to the butcher section, he found them all sold out except one, who had a tray full of liver. He bought half a kilogram. At home he discovered it was not liver, but congealed pig's blood.

After some months, the old cook came and begged us to take him back, promising not to drink anymore. We were so happy at the thought of having a good cook that we hired him again, and he lasted several more months.

As Bill got a better command of the language, we began getting out to the villages. Near the end of the rainy season, there was to be a field conference at Rahang. A few days before it began, we decided to go up by bicycle, along the river path, and visit all the villages on the way. The idea occurred to us in the morning, and we were off after lunch. On the backs of our bicycles we carried books and tracts, song and picture charts, a mosquito net and blankets, a towel, one change of clothes, and a few groceries in a cooking pot. We spent each of the four nights with whomever invited us into their home. During the day we stopped at various places in each village, selling and distributing literature and speaking to individuals or to crowds. The people were all interested and friendly and hospitable. We both had to develop skill in bathing Thai style at the village well, Bill garbed in a loin cloth and I in a sarong.

Sometimes we had to cross the river to get to a village. At one such place, there was only one very small canoe. The owner took our bicycles and bed roll across first while we stood on some floating logs with our box of literature and a few other things. When he came back for us, we both stepped into the canoe together. Immediately the small dug-out began rocking, shipping water with each rock, and getting lower and lower, till the next thing I knew, I was looking through muddy water at the sun which appeared to be



Off on our honeymoon - on the back  
of a truck. March 26, 1952

between my feet. When I got my head out of the water, I found that my feet could touch bottom. I caught my sun helmet and the brief case, which were floating away. Bill was holding the dripping box of literature over his head. Handing the things to some men on the logs, we clambered awkwardly up onto the slippery, rolling logs.

The men laughed a sympathetic laugh. (Typically Thai.)

"I guess you didn't know," said one. "We should have told you the second person must never get into the boat till the first one has sat down. Just as you do not know how to ride boats, we do not know how to ride bicycles."

The other side of the river was a desolate wilderness, for which we were glad. In the brief case were about two thousand *ticals* in 100 and 20 *tical* bills, which we were taking to Wilf as we had sold his boat. They were all wet. We spread them out on a log to dry. We changed into dry clothes and washed our wet ones as they had been caked with mud the day before. We had long rows of books spread out on the sand. While things were drying in the noon day sun, we built a fire and ate lunch.

That night we arrived at another little village where we stayed in the house of the head man, sleeping on his porch with the rest of the household. The next morning he advised us not to continue on the river path as it was overgrown with weeds, but to go out to the highway, which was not very far away. We discussed the matter between us.

"What are a few weeds to us? We want to go the way that leads through the villages, and there are no villages along the highway."

Spurning the advice of the wise old head man, and feeling bold and adventurous, we struck out along the river path.

For some time as we went along, we noticed a swamp along the left side of the path. The river was to our right. The path became more and more overgrown till we found ourselves on the end of a little peninsula which divided a swampy inlet from the river. We would have to go back a long way to get around the swamp, so we looked for an alternative. On the other side of the inlet was a narrow, steeply rising piece of ground forming another peninsula where, at the top, the path seemed to continue. Bill carried the bicycles and other things across, making three trips in waist-deep water. Under foot, the ground was so boggy that our feet sank way down. When at last we got up onto the other path, the riding was good until it ended in a sesame field. We asked the way of some women who were working

on the edge of the field and were told the path continued through the jungle on the other side of the field. Looking where they pointed across the broad field, we saw the jungle in the distance. The only way ridges between sections of the sesame field.

We set out. The bushes were straight and tall - higher than our heads - and planted close together, but did not meet at the top over the narrow path. A strip of sky was always visible through which the noon-day sun beat upon us unmercifully. The ridge was not only wet and slippery, but too narrow to ride a bicycle on, and the plants so close that the bicycle peddles hooked onto them continually, and left us very little space to walk beside the bicycles. Before we were half way through, I was so weary, my breath was coming in sobs. I longed to sit down, but there was no place to sit. Besides, with the swarms of mosquitoes and insects, we had to keep moving. So we pulled and tugged the bicycles along. Our shins were bruised by the peddles, and we were scratched all over by the bushes. Bill had gotten out of sight, but called back to say he would come for me after he got his bicycle through. I struggled on, endlessly, it seemed, wondering when I would collapse with exhaustion. At last Bill reappeared. He took the bicycle and I walked ahead of him. When we reached the edge of the field where his bicycle was, we found a clump of bamboo on a bit of dry, sloping ground. I burst into tears of relief, and lying on the ground with my head on the blanket roll, I took a long rest. Then, after boiling some water and eating a lunch, we continued.

That evening we came to the village of Wang Chow where a big concrete bridge was being constructed over the river. There was a Highway Department house where they gave us an enclosed room all to ourselves. Wang Chow was about half way between Kampangpet and Rahang, and there were very few villages between Wang Chow and Rahang. Since our time was almost up, we decided to go the rest of the way on the highway. By starting out very early in the cool of the morning, we arrived at Rahang about noon.

# XI

## ONE SMALL DIAMOND

There were other villages in Kampangpet Province that were neither on the road nor on the river. One group of villages were in a hill district, and we heard there were Karen villages among them. They were connected by a foot path which, starting from the mouth of a stream near Kampangpet, led up into the hills, and in a semi-circle back to the Wang Chow bridge where the highway crosses the Ping River.

Bill, upon learning of these villages, determined to visit them as soon as the rainy season was over. But Hans, who had just arrived in Thailand a few months before, and was living with us while he studied the language, was eager to get out on a trek.

"Let's go now!" he urged.

So they loaded their bicycles with food, mosquito nets, water bottles, tracts, scripture portions, and a change of clothing, and started off up the path that led along the stream.

At first the trail was not too bad, but gradually it got more and more muddy, until they had to abandon the idea of going by bicycle. They came to a small house where a man agreed to carry their things, letting them store their bicycles under his house. Still fairly fresh and encouraged by this provision of a guide, they set out along the jungle trail. After about two hours of plowing through swamps and climbing small hills, they came to a village on the bank of the stream. The guide advised them to spend the night there, but as it was not yet noon, they elected to go on. After giving out some tracts and speaking to a few people, they resumed their walk. The way became more difficult.

They crossed precarious little bridges over deep streams. The mud increased until it seemed almost impossible to go on, and yet they were reluctant to turn back, having come so far.

At last, when the sun had set and it was quickly growing dark, the carrier put down his load and confessed that he was lost. They looked around for a place to camp for the night, and chose a small mound of solid earth that arose from the swamp. Here they ate what food they had left, and put up their mosquito nets. The guide went to sleep immediately, but Bill and Hans were soon on their feet again, after being bitten by hordes of fierce ants. Their nice dry mound was an ant hill.

They decided to make a cup of coffee. Hans lit the fire while Bill got water from a hole made by an elephant's foot. The bright fire and the anticipation of a hot drink relieved the misery of the situation. However, as they sat by the fire, they heard a noise that sounded like an express train moving over the tree tops. Soon they were wet to the skin in a deluge of rain, and the fire died with a hiss. After that the mosquitoes took over, biting them from head to foot. Hans wrapped himself in a plastic coat and tried to sleep sitting on a stump. Bill, not liking to be steamed, simply walked to and fro, swatting the mosquitoes hour after hour. At dawn, they hastily broke camp and found the village of Pong Nam Ron only about one mile farther on.

The people of the village took them to the village temple, which had no resident priest. There they sat in the sala while groups of people came to them throughout the day to hear the Gospel. They preached, answered questions, and gave out tracts till all their literature was distributed. By evening it seemed that nearly everyone in the village had heard the message. Then the missionaries were offered a ride in a dug-out canoe which was traveling to Kampangpet the next day. So, instead of another nightmare trek through the swampy jungle, they had a swift sail down the flooded river to the village where they had left their bicycles.

Mr. Helpful of Garden Village had often asked us to come and stay in his home for a while. We finally accepted the invitation, and stayed for five days. During the day, we visited people in that and other near by villages, and at night we held meetings in some part of Garden Village. Each morning we had a period of prayer and Bible study with Mr. Helpful and his wife. We loaned them a phonograph with Gospel recordings. Later he bought himself a phonograph, borrowed more records, and went about to



*Photo by Paul Moss*

other villages playing them for whomever would listen. He also took tracts along to give to those who were interested.

During the next dry season, Bill decided it was time to make another trip to Pong Nam Ron and the other villages beyond. This time I accompanied him. We planned to visit villages over the mountain along a path that led in a curve to Wang Chow, and there catch a bus to Rahang, arriving in time for our Christmas conference.

Mr. Helpful, as in the past, offered his services as a carrier, and he brought a younger man, Nai Som, along to help. We paid the young man, but Mr. Helpful would accept nothing for his service. He did it for the Lord.

We went by foot, and arrived at Pong Nam Ron late in the afternoon. As we deposited our loads at the deserted *sala*, folks started coming. By the time we had bathed in the river and prepared and eaten our evening meal, it was dark, and a crowd had gathered around closely to watch us. While I washed and put away the eating utensils, Bill started talking to them. We took turns speaking all evening, and sometimes Mr. Helpful added his testimony. Sometimes I showed them pictures by the dim light of the storm lantern, then for a while we sang songs, or Bill played a tune on the accordion. Then we talked some more.

When I was too tired to talk any longer, I strung up the mosquito net and made our bed while Bill continued. The Thai men made their bed at the other end of the platform. Finally the last lingerers went home, we put out the light, and went to sleep.

Early the next morning, after breakfast, we packed up and were on our way again. That evening found us at the village of Na Baw Kum, in the hills. We inquired about a place to stay, and some people took us to a vacant one-room house and told us we could stay there as long as we wished. That evening we were both so weary that after supper and a bath we decided to go to bed, intending to spend the next day visiting the folks and holding meetings. After the mosquito nets had been strung up at the two ends of the room, several men came in to talk. We sat between the nets for some time, but Bill had a bad headache, and was beginning to shiver with the cold, so he crawled under the net. I followed soon after, leaving our companions to talk far into the night with two or three other men.

But neither of us slept. My joints, already painful from the two days' walk, became rheumatic with the cold, and Bill was having violent chills. We had forgotten how cold the December nights could be up in the hills, and had not



brought enough blankets.

In the middle of the night, I went to the water pot to get Bill some water to swallow an aspirin. Mr. Helpful heard me and asked what was the matter. I told him Bill had a high fever and a pain in his chest.

"Oh," he said, "I have just the thing for that."

He fumbled through his bag and brought out a little bundle containing a powder. He dropped some of it into the cup of water I had gotten, stirred it with his finger until it was dissolved, and slipped it under the net to Bill. Bill took a taste of it there in the darkness, then moved to the opposite side of the bed, lifted the edge of the net, and poured out the liquid through one of the wide cracks in the floor. Later, when Mr. Helpful seemed to be asleep again, I sneaked out and got some more water for Bill. He was now very hot with fever, while I was shivering with the cold.

Next day, during periods when Bill's fever was down and he felt better, we walked about the village, giving out tracts and talking. He even made plans for continuing the journey the next day, and made inquiries concerning the names of the villages and how to get there. But the pain in his chest grew worse, and that evening the fever was higher than ever. We decided the thing to do was to return while it was still possible.

The first streak of dawn found us ready to leave, but Mr. Helpful and Nai Som wanted to cook their rice and eat breakfast before leaving. Bill and I wanted to cover as much distance as possible before the day became hot, so we agreed to meet them at a certain village about two hours walk from Na Baw Kum.

When we reached that village, we sat down to rest and wait for the carriers while we talked to people. We waited for over an hour, but they did not appear. It was already getting hot. Leaving a message for them, we proceeded slowly, hoping they would overtake us. We had to stop and rest frequently, due to Bill's high fever.

All day we met no one. Sometimes we wondered whether we were still on the right path. Early in the afternoon I sat on a stump watching Bill, who lay on the ground, and wondered if he would ever get as far as Pong Nam Ron. His eyes were shut and his face a deep crimson. What if he couldn't get up again? Would I wait on and on, hoping someone would come along? Or would I leave him lying alone here in the jungle while I went on to get help? How far were we? Our carefully hoarded water was nearly gone, and he should be drinking a lot. For some time I sat there

praying. Finally he opened his eyes, got up, and we walked on.

Toward evening we began to pass fenced vegetable gardens and banana plantations, and realized we were near the village. In front of the first house was a pumalo tree full of ripe fruit. A young boy on the porch was glad to sell us two. We sat on a fence, tore one open, and devoured the contents. Having been without water for some time, and without breakfast or lunch that day, that fruit, we agree to this day, was the most welcome and delicious we have ever eaten.

The heat of the day had passed, and it was getting decidedly cool as we arrived at the temple rest house at Pong Nam Ron. We had hoped that perhaps Mr. Helpful had come by another path, but there was no sign of him. As we arrived quietly at dusk, very few villagers had seen us. Bill, with his fever, was unaware of the cold, and laid down immediately on the bare, dirty floor. I walked up and down, wondering whether and how I should go about borrowing some blankets and asking for some rice.

Then two dim figures appeared through the twilight and the river fog. As they approached, I saw that they were our friends, limping along wearily. When they reached the rest house, the younger man collapsed onto the floor beside Bill. Mr. Helpful sat down and untied the baskets.

"We got lost," he said. "Before we left Na Baw Kum, someone told us of a short cut to the next village. We never got to that village at all. We found ourselves over on another mountain many kilometers away. We've been walking as fast as we could all day."

Nai Som was unaccustomed to carrying, and his legs ached badly. I was glad that they had eaten breakfast before leaving that morning; gladder still that we had not waited and gotten lost too!

"We do not want to cook rice now, do we!" said Mr. Helpful. "I'll go find some."

He took the rice pot and went off in the dark while I lit the lamp and fixed the bed and net for Bill. Soon Mr. Helpful came back with the pot filled with rice, and with a man to massage Nai Som's legs.

As the people heard of our arrival, they began to gather around again. Bill was already asleep, but I talked with them briefly. There was a man among them who had an ox-cart, who agreed to take us to Kampanget in the morning. Nai Som was overjoyed to hear this, as he was quite sure he would not be able to walk at all the next day.

Early next morning we all piled into the oxcart - all but Mr. Helpful, who insisted that he would rather walk. So did I, part of the time, as a relief from the jolting of the springless cart.

What a welcome sight the Ping river was! There we unloaded the things from the oxcart into a pole boat, said good by to our companions, and glided home down the river. Hans and Bob Peters were surprised to see us back after only five days.

Bill was ill for many more days, but well in time to go to Tak for the conference.

\* \* \*

There were many more trips in our lives, to many other villages up and down the rivers, by bicycle, by boat, and- later by bus. There was one time when the bus broke down and we slept on the ground beside the road. Another time the boat got stranded on a sand bar and we slept on the boat. On a trip farther afield, we arrived in a town at night and were given lodging in a large room which turned out to be an opium den with quite a number of customers coming in during the night. Leaving another village by the dry-season path by mistake, we got so bogged down in the swamp that when we finally got out to the main road, we had to wash ourselves and our bicycles in water from the car tracks, and turn our muddy clothes inside out before going on into town. Once we arrived at Kampangpet at about three in the morning, and Bill could not rouse any of the ferry men in the many boats tied to the dock. He just sat on his suit case beside the boats and played the Thai national anthem on his accordion until dawn, while I balanced myself on a long narrow bench in a temple *sala* on the bank and slept. Several times we got lost in tall, thick elephant grass, or in thick jungle, or brambly wilderness, having no idea which direction we were going. But always the Lord brought us through without any serious mishaps, and we came to realize more than ever our dependence on Him.

# XII

## ON THE MOVE

In December of 1952, we went to Rahang. for Christmas and the conference. At that conference it was decided that we should make certain changes, such as putting up a ceiling in the Kampangpet house, after which Mother, Elly Hansen, and Marta Persons should move to that station and Bill and I to Rahang. Elly and Marta had recently come from Denmark and Sweden respectively.

So for the next three weeks in Kampangpet, Bill was busy with carpentry, taking down a wall between two small store rooms to make a bed room, and putting up bamboo mat ceilings in the three bed rooms to keep them cool from the heat of the sun on the iron roof. The bamboo mats were oblong with wooden frames and square corners. He had taken for granted that the house was built with square corners. But after the ledges were in place to support the ceiling, and he tried to fit the panels in, he found that the corners of the room were far from equal. The job was prolonged and complicated. One day I heard a terrible crash from the bed room. I ran in to find the whole ceiling on the floor and Bill standing on it looking sheepish.

"What, happened?" I asked in alarm.

"I was crawling along that rafter to put some more nails in to hold it more securely, but I lost my balance and fell onto the ceiling."

In early February, the repairs completed, we all made our moves. A few days later, we and the Overgaards started out over the mountains to the villages along the Burma border. This time it was Alma who stayed with the children.

We were gone almost a month. Three ponies carried our things over the mountains, after which we hired two ox-



carts. Some times we camped In the jungle with our tarpaulins fastened to trees over us to keep off the dew. Other times we stayed in a school house , a temple *sala*, or in someone's home. Except for a week spent in Maesod and two or three days each in a few of the larger towns, we were at a different place each night. The evening meetings were well attended, and often all the people in a village would come to hear us.

Usually we cooked over an open wood fire and washed our clothes and bathed in streams or by village wells. During the first part of the trek, we all had blistered feet, but later our feet got toughened as well as our muscles.

On the fourth of March, we were sitting on the roots of a big shady tree in Mae Tow Klang, eating our noon day meal of rice and fish. Evy asked, "What would you like for your birthday, Rosemary?"

"Some strawberries," I answered. We had seen very little fruit for many days, and had not seen a strawberry since leaving the U.S.A.

Just then a woman came along the dusty road with a pole balanced on her shoulder. On each end of the pole were several pumeloes, tied together.

"Are you taking those to sell?" we called to her.

"No, I'm taking them home to use." We persuaded her to sell us two. And we all agreed, upon eating them, that they tasted like strawberries. That was my birthday party.

\* \* \*

In March, the Overgaards left for furlough. Ellen and Fern had gone several months before. Bill had been chosen as field leader in Wilf's absence.

During the next few years, while based at Tak, we visited quite a number of towns and larger villages in the provinces of Tak, Kampanget, and Sukothai, staying for two to four weeks in a rented house or room. One of our visits was to Sawankaloke (Heaven on Earth.) We were surprised to find it such a large town, and determined to go there to live for a while. So in September we returned and for two months, rented a little shop with a room over it. It was part of a large wooden building that had five rooms opening onto the street, designed for shops. Each had an upper room reached by an almost vertical ladder. We made the upstairs our home and the downstairs the meeting room. Using packing boxes for tables and seats, we made one corner of the upstairs room our kitchen and dining room. On the other side of our room, beside the one window, we strung up our mosquito net and laid our mattresses. The single layer of



Ready to set off from Maakoo. Ox cart in the foreground, not yet hitched. Temple being built in background

wooden wall that separated us from our neighbors was full of large cracks and Knot holes through which they liked to watch us.

Each Friday or Saturday, we returned to Rahang for the week end, to attend the Sunday meetings, and see to mission business. Bill was in charge of the bookkeeping.

The evening meetings in Sawankaloke were very well attended, but on the last night of the first week, a policeman walked in during the meeting and asked in a loud voice, "Where is your permit for starting a school?"

"We have no permit. This isn't a school," we answered.

"Your're teaching, aren't you? It's a school, and you must have a permit."

"All right, we'll go to the sheriff tomorrow and get a permit."

"But you haven't one now, so the meeting must be closed immediately."

So we sent the folks away and closed the doors. When we went to the sheriff, he said, "Of course you may hold meetings. You do not need a permit."

At Sawankaloke there was a railroad leading to the main line running between Bangkok and Chiangmai. Along this branch, as well as along the highway, there were many small towns we could visit. Throughout all this area, people were eager to buy Scripture portions and Christian literature. One day we went to the junction and took a main line train to Uteradit. This city was outside our province, but we had learned that there were no missionaries in this province. We took a room in a hotel, then went around the town from shop to shop, talking to people, giving them tracts and selling books. Several people told us that there was a Chinese Christian family in the city; that the man was a dentist; and that every Sunday he closed his shop and they sang hymns together while he played an organ. We kept on visiting from shop to shop till we came to one with a display of false teeth in a show case. Along the top of the wall all around the room were large pictures illustrating Bible stories. At the back of the room were the chair and dental equipment. A little old man came out of the back room and greeted us warmly. He invited us to sit down, poured us a cup of tea, and called his wife and sons out to meet us. Soon we were all good friends. Hai Kieng and his wife spoke broken Thai, and we often had trouble understanding them, but they were eager to have us come again when we could stay for many days. We promised to come back. The next morning, in the hotel restaurant, when we started to pay for our breakfast,

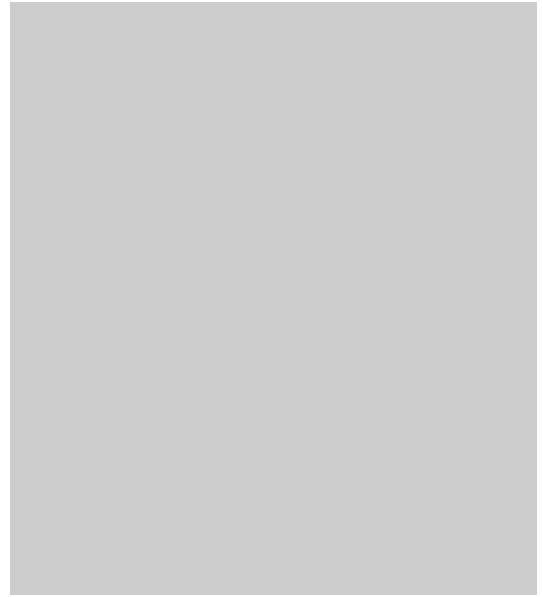


*...on a trek*

we were told it was already paid for. And when we went to settle for our night's lodgings, they told us the Chinese dentist had paid it. His son came in just then, picked up our suitcase, and walked with us to the railroad station. When we arrived there, he handed us our train tickets back to Sawankaloke.

My mother came to visit us for a week at Swankaloke. We hung her net in the main room each night after the meetings were over. At meal times, she climbed up the long steep ladder to the upper room. She spoke at the meetings and went with us to the villages.

After this, from time to time we rented houses in other towns, as we had in Swankaloke, for periods of two weeks to two months.





# XIII

## A GRAIN OF WHEAT

Moon's year at Bible School was coming to a close. We were thrilled one day to receive a letter from her saying she was engaged to be married to Nai Pow, one of her fellow students. The wedding would be at the school at the end of the term. A letter came also from the director of the school telling of the engagement, and commending the young man as a fine Christian character. He had been asked by his home church to come back after graduation to be their pastor. However, upon learning of the new church at Beautiful Woods which had no pastor, he felt that that was where he should go.

Moon and Pow arrived early in January. All of us, including the folks at Beautiful Woods, were delighted with him. He was a lovable person, and earnest in serving the Lord. Living with Moon and Kao would be hard for any one, but Nai Pow had such a cheerful, meek, and unselfish disposition that the atmosphere of the home became bright and happy.

Soon after their arrival, we were to go to Sukothai for two weeks while Alma and Elly went to East Thailand to study the treatment of leprosy. Rather than lock up our house, we asked Pow and Moon to live in our down-stairs spare room for the two weeks.

On the weekend, we came home for the Sunday church service. The young couple had thoroughly enjoyed their stay in our home. They went back to Beautiful Woods for the weekend, but said they would return on Monday morning. Pow also consented to Bill's request that he give the Sunday morning sermon the following week. They had not yet arrived when we left on Monday morning, but we took

for granted that they would be there before night. They had the key to the room.

When we returned the next Saturday, we discovered that they had not been there. Moon arrived before long and told us that Nai Pow had become ill on Sunday night, and had been growing steadily worse ever since. We went to see him, and found him very weak, aching all over, and yellow. The next day we went to the hospital and asked the doctor to come visit him. Pow lay on the porch, and we sat with Moon on the floor beside him. When it was time for the doctor to arrive, Kao hid in the bed room, and we covered Pow's feet, as they bore the only visible signs he had of leprosy. (Actually Pow and Moon were not at that time infectious, but we would have had a hard time explaining that to the doctor who knew very little about leprosy.)

The doctor examined him and pronounced, "Infectious haemolytic jaundice. Bring him to the hospital as soon as possible."

As soon as the doctor left, Bill rushed off to find a *sam law* (three wheeled conveyance.) In those days, *sam law* drivers were reluctant to go to Beautiful Woods because of the dust and sand which make it hard to peddle the tricycle taxi. Kao came out of hiding with tears in her eyes, helped Moon to gather together things she would need in the hospital. Nai Pow looked frightened.

"Oh, my sister," he moaned. "Don't forsake me in this strange, lonely land."

"I'll stay right by you always," she said softly, pressing his hand.

At last Bill got back with the *sam law*. Every movement was painful to Nai Pow. Bill gathered him up in his arms and carried him. As he came down the frail, shaky ladder, I prayed desperately that nothing would happen. If the ladder broke, or Bill lost his balance, I thought, that would surely be the end of Nai Pow. But the Lord kept His hand on them.

Pow was so weak that he could not sit in the *sam law*, so Moon sat with him and held him. When we reached the hospital, he was carried to a bed in a long ward with about twenty beds. Each bed had on it a thin mattress covered with one sheet. The heavy muslin sheets were far from white, and full of holes and patches. About half the beds were occupied. Along one side of the ward was a veranda where the attendant relatives stayed. Each patient must have someone along to take care of him - bring him water, wash his clothes, etc. Many of them had their charcoal stoves and cooking pots there on the veranda.

After prayer and words of comfort from the Bible, we departed, but took turns visiting them several times that day.

The next afternoon we found him in a private room. He was asleep. In fact, we realized after a while that he was in a coma. Bill spent hours by his bed, praying continually. That evening after supper, I went to the hospital and Bill went home to eat. During the evening, Pow's breathing took on an ominous rattling sound. I had tried several times to find a nurse, but now I found one in another building. I tried to be as urgent as possible.

"I'll come soon," was all she said.

Fifteen minutes later, she still had not come, but I was sure it would make no difference whether she came or not. The only thing to do now was to comfort Moon. She wept silently.

"He had one last request," she said. "It was while he was in the other ward. He said, 'Oh, my sister, hold my hands. Kiss me!' But I said, 'How can I do that with all these people in the room?' And soon after that he was unconscious. I've kissed him and embraced him many times since we came into this private room. But it was too late. Oh, if only I had not worried about what people thought!"

Now his breathing was louder, and suddenly it stopped. Immediately Moon threw herself down to the floor and wailed loudly.

"Oh, my brother, my brother! I want to go with you! I don't want to live any longer. Oh, oh, if I could only die!"

Apparently this was the sound the hospital attendants were waiting for. Several of them whom I had been unable to find before, came immediately. And just then Bill arrived, also. Afterwards he told me that on the way to the hospital, the song, "Hallelujah, 'tis done," had suddenly burst forcefully in upon his mind and he knew immediately that Nai Pow's suffering was over.

Moon, kneeling beside the low bed and with both arms around his neck, was crying hysterically, "Oh, don't take him away. Oh Pow, come back to me!"

It was hard to get her away. After obtaining a sedative from the nurse for her, we led her out to a sam law and took her home. Our guest room had two beds. I fixed one for her, and I slept in the other. Moon did not cry aloud after we left the hospital. She had had almost no sleep for several nights. But even with the sedative, she awoke several times during the night and I could hear her weeping silently.

The next morning was a busy one. We set the time for

the funeral at three in the afternoon. After sending telegrams to the Bible School and Nai Pow's family, Bill went to get wood and hire a carpenter who came and made the coffin in our front yard.

Next Bill went to the Town Hall to ask for a piece of ground on which to dig the grave. They granted us an area of land to be used for a Christian cemetery on a hill about two kilometers up the Lampang road. Then grave diggers were hired. I went to Beautiful Woods to tell Kao and the others there. I told them a bus would call for them to take them to the funeral. Bill had made arrangements with a bus owner to pick up the people, the coffin, and last the body, to take them to the cemetery. When the coffin was completed, we covered it with white paper, with a cross of red paper on top.

About six people gathered at the house just before time to start. Bill went out to get the bus, but soon came back with word that the bus owner had changed his mind. He could not carry a corpse on his bus. It would become haunted and cause a serious accident later. The only condition upon which he would consider it would be if we paid the price, about 700 *ticals*, for the ceremonial cleansing to exorcise the spirit. Of course we could not think of paying money for such a thing, even if we had that much.

Now what would we do? We prayed. Then while the rest of us continued praying, Bill went back to the market. In about an hour he returned with a bus, and sitting in it were all the Christians from Beautiful Woods, as well as many of their pagan neighbors and relatives.

"This bus belongs to the Borneo Company," Bill said. "The clerk there let us use it free of charge."

We all boarded the bus and drove to the hospital where the bus was backed up to a separate little brick building with heavy doors. Inn and an old Chinese tin smith opened them, then helped Bill lift the coffin out of the bus and carry it into the little room. Shortly Inn hurried back to the door.

"My wife is pregnant," he said, so I dare not touch the corpse, or she will have a miscarriage."

The others lifted Nai Pow's remains from the table in the middle of the room, laid it in the coffin, and carried the coffin back to the bus.

The cemetery was in a hilly place with gravelly soil and huge rocks. Turning off the main highway onto a rough road that led to a small temple and cave, we found the grave not far from the side road, but hidden by thorny bushes. The

grave diggers had gone away. We placed the coffin beside the pit and stood in a large circle. We sang several hymns. One of the Christians read from the Bible. Bill spoke about Christ's victory over death and of the eternal life we have in Him. He spoke of the grain of wheat which fell to the earth, died, and brought forth life. Nearly all the Christians prayed. Then, near sun set, we sang, "Jesus Saves." As we sang, I saw joy in the faces of all the Christians. Moon looked radiant. The non-Christians who stood in back seemed intensely interested throughout the whole time. I wondered what they were thinking. Later, Moon told me that they had been more positively influenced for Christianity by the death and funeral of Nai Pow than by anything else.

The coffin was lowered with ropes into the grave, which was about six feet deep. We had not thought to bring shovels along, so we just started picking up dirt and gravel with our hands and dropping it into the pit. Later we found pieces of wood, coconut shells, and other things that saved our hands. With everyone working together, there was finally a mound where the pit had been. On this we set up a white, wooden cross which we had brought along to mark the grave. Around the cross we sprinkled the seeds of marigolds and zinnias, hoping they would spring up when the rains began.

On the bus, as we returned, we sang hymns.

Moon told us, "Nai Pow seemed to know before he went to the hospital that he was going to die. He was sad to be so far from his father, but he said he was glad to be here and die with you because you loved him so. I myself used to be very much afraid of death, but now, since the funeral, I can never be afraid again."

# XIV

## THE GOLDEN BOOK FOR THE KARENS

It was on treks over the mountains to Maesod in 1952 and 1953 that we first became aware of the large number of Karen tribes scattered about the mountains. Walking along the narrow, winding trails through dense jungle, we would suddenly come upon a cleared slope where hill rice was planted. Upon looking a little farther through the trees, we would find a village of bamboo and leaf huts and hear a chorus of dogs as they sounded the alarm of approaching strangers. If we came near enough to the village to see people, there were no words exchanged, for we did not know their language, and they spoke no Thai. Tracts or scripture portions would have been useless, as the Karens of Thailand are illiterate, so we only smiled at them and passed by.

At the village of Maw Tah, the head man, Maw Tah, for whom the village was named, spoke Lao. He was an old Burmese Karen who, with his wife, had been baptized many years earlier by the Baptist missionaries in Burma, and who still professed Christianity.

It happened to be early Sunday morning when we arrived at Maw Tah's village, so we pitched our camp under a tree just outside the village and spent the day and night there. That evening we went up to Maw Tah's house. He got out his old Karen hymnal and, to the accompaniment of our auto harp, we all sang hymns; the old man and his wife in Karen, and we in Thai. All the village gathered to listen, as many as possible crowding up onto the large veranda.

As we looked around at the crowd, we saw as great a variety of personalities as one would see in any Western group. An old, white-haired man whose hatchet features were wrinkled into grim lines of worry, fear, and annoy-



Sharon + Paul came to see us off



A temple rest-house at Maikaw where we stayed

ance, sat staring into the reflections in the base of the pressure lamp. A plump young mother, in the traditional black and red costume of the married woman, nursed a sickly one-year-old baby as she puffed at a huge banana leaf cigar. A group of high-spirited young men wearing Burmese skirts and flourishing city cigarettes, sat in the shadows at the back of the crowd. Two beautiful belles wearing lace head scarfs, the traditional long white tunics of maidens, and their necks and arms heavily adorned with silver and bead ornaments, sat beside the lamp. Back in a corner sat a group of little girls ranging from about six to fourteen, their winsome faces alive with curiosity and excitement, and all of them smoking cigars or beautifully carved bone pipes over-laid with silver. One of them had a cigarette lighter among the ornaments that hung around her neck. With the poise of a natural-born socialite, she lit the pipes of her little friends who had only matches.

As we looked about at the faces of all these very human characters, we longed with all our hearts to be able to speak to them, telling them of the God of love, and of the Saviour who could deliver them from the power of the dreaded spirits.

Two weeks later, we were spending a few days in a Thai village farther south, on the Burma border. On Saturday afternoon a group of Karens from a village in Burma came across the river to visit us. Several of them were Christians, one being the pastor of the church. They begged us to go over to their church on Sunday morning to preach to them. As we had no permit to enter Burma, we dared not risk crossing, \* but agreed to have a service in the school house of the village where we were staying.

We had long conversations with different ones of the group that afternoon. They could all speak Lao, and one of them spoke good English. He was not a Christian, but was a general of the Karen army. The Karen nation had for some years been in a state of rebellion against the Burmese government, and those who took part in it lived in hiding most of the time.

The general told us an old Karen legend about the white man and the Karen - a legend which we have heard many times since:

Far back in the dim past, the Father God gave three books, one to each of his three sons. The eldest son was the Karen, and to him he gave a black book. The second son, representing the Burmese race, received a silver book, and the youngest, who was white, was given a gold book.



- A permit for an American or European to enter Burma must be obtained in Bangkok, in person, and even then does not allow one to cross the border from Maesod, but only through the sea coast towns or by plane. The Thai, Burmese, and Karens, however, can easily get permits locally to cross for one day. Most of them go without bothering to get a permit, except at times when the political situation is temporarily precarious.



The eldest brother, busy with gardening, was little concerned with his book, which he lay on the top of a fence post, intending to read it when his work was finished. A chicken flew up onto the fence, knocked the book to the ground where it was trampled and destroyed by the pigs, so the Karen never knew what was in their book. The silver book of the second brother had to do with riches and prosperity. By the wisdom gained from that book, he became prosperous and oppressed his elder brother. The golden book was the book of God. The youngest brother took it and went far away to a strange land. That was a long time ago. Some day, the Karens say, the white brother will bring back the golden book and give it to his elder brother, and then the Karens will know the way of God.

"And what about this Golden book, sir?" we asked the general. "What do you think it is?"

"I think it is the Bible, without a doubt," he replied. "A great many of my people in Burma have received it, and there are large groups of Christian Karens throughout Burma because Adoniram Judson brought them the Golden Book. They have greatly raised their standard of living. They can all read and write. It was the missionaries who reduced the Karen language to writing and who gave us not only the Bible, but other useful books on hygiene, farming, education, child care, and many other things. Christianity has so influenced us that our civilization is far above that of these hill Karen in Thailand. These folk over here are so superstitious and primitive! They've never seen a book. They can't even speak good Karen! Yes, the Golden Book has helped my people tremendously."

"And are you yourself a Christian?" we asked.

"No, I'm not what you would call a Christian, although I try to follow the principles of Christianity. I was brought up in a mission school and learned all about it. But my business is war, and I have much work to do. I do not have time to be religious or to read the Bible. We are fighting a holy war. If we were to capitulate to the Burmese, they would soon make Buddhists of us all. We military men have all been educated in mission schools, and received many great benefits from Christianity. Now, are we to stand idly by and see our children's heritage of education, civilization, and religion snatched away? No, we must fight and defend it! This is a holy war!"

Before he left that evening, we gave the general a small Bible. It was not gold; it had a black leather cover, and was much used. With a nod of thanks, he put it into his pocket



saying, "Perhaps I'll have time to read it one of these days."

In my mind's eye, I saw it being laid on a post around which chickens and pigs were feeding.

The next morning a large group of Karen men, women, and children waded across the Mui River and we all gathered in the little bamboo school house. Most of the folks were second or third generation Christians. It was a real thrill to hear congregational singing again after so many years. Most of the hymns they sang were to tunes familiar to us, and we joined in, singing in English. The Burmese Karens are exceptionally good singers and sing in parts.

A young man who was with us translated the sermon into Northern Thai, and the Karen pastor repeated it in Karen.

The next morning we were on our way again, trekking the mountains, stopping wherever we found a village. During the following years, many of us had contact with Karens from time to time, in their villages, walking through the jungle, or visiting the city market. Throughout the villages, great spiritual darkness manifested itself in the social and physical aspects of these people's lives. How long would it be before we could come to these dark places, bringing them the Golden Book from which the light and love of Jesus Christ would radiate to their hearts?

Who would go?



# XV

## WHOM SHALL I SEND? WHO WILL GO FOR US?

That searching question, which has rung down through the centuries from the time of Isaiah, was heard in Tak as we thought about the Karen people. Every one of us had come to Thailand in answer to that question, and was engaged in a work that could not be left without great loss. The nine of us were spread out so thinly over the vast area of our three provinces, ministering in the more heavily populated regions, that it seemed out of the question for any of us to take on more work.

In 1954, at the end of the rainy season, my mother, who had been living with us at Kampangpet, returned to the U.S. During her four-year visit, she had completed four booklets in Thai which have been used throughout Thailand ever since. She had made a real contribution to our work in helpful advice and in encouraging us to start things which we ourselves would not have thought of during those early years. She had led many souls to Christ, and had been a source of blessing and instruction to young Christians.

Before her departure, all the missionaries came to Kampangpet to say good by.

In January 1955, Wilf and Evy Overgaard returned from America. It was not without heaviness of heart and great sacrifice, for they left Sharon and Paul in Canada. In answer to prayer, a home had been established at Three Hills, Alberta, for missionary children, and Evy was confident that hers were well cared for. None the less, it is hard for a mother to tear herself away from her children, knowing she will not see them until five years' growth has changed them almost beyond recognition.

C.T. Studd's motto was, "If Jesus Christ be God and died



for me, no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him." I have never heard Wilf or Evy quote this motto, but I saw it unmistakably practiced in their lives.

In February, we all gathered for our annual conference to discuss mission matters. Wilf and Bill had made another trip to Maesod. This town seemed a strategic location for reaching the Karen, as well as many more large Thai areas. Wilf felt that Maesod was the next place to open a station.

Hans Seirhuis from Holland, Alice Williams and Bob Peters from America, Elly from Denmark and Marta from Sweden, were all still studying the language, and so less than half our number were actually in the work full time.

Bill and I had felt the need to continue an itinerant ministry to reach the towns where no permanent station could yet be started. At this conference, all concurred that we should go on with this, staying in Rahang between trips with Hans and Bob as they continued their studies. Marta and Elly were encouraged to start leprosy clinics at Prankraktai, and Overgaards would move to Maesod in May.

The road to Maesod was almost complete, but it was strictly a dry weather road, and would be closed during the rainy season. It was a narrow, one-way road. On odd days of the month, vehicles went west, and on even days they returned. Moreover no vehicle could go over without a written permit from Bangkok for each trip, and these permits were hard to get. When Wilf consulted with the driver of a truck about going to Maesod, he said, "If you can get a permit for me, I'll take your family and all your goods free. A permit to go means I can come back again. Even if you completely fill my truck, it would be worth my while because of the merchandise and people I could bring back from Maesod."

Wilf promptly wrote the letter to Bangkok.

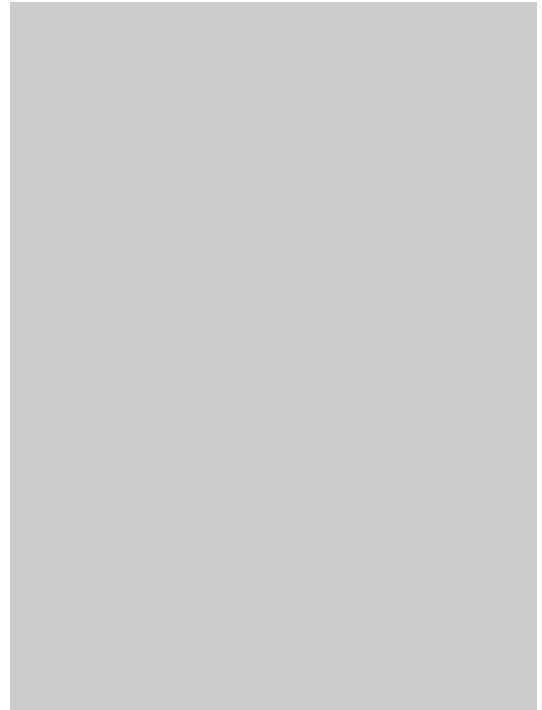
The oppressively hot month of May was almost running out. The dark clouds thickened every day above the mountains. Everyone wondered when a sudden deluge would close the roads for the next five or six months. The truck owner came periodically to find out whether the permit had arrived. The Overgaards and Alice, who was to move to Maesod, too, were packed and ready to leave at a moment's notice. The uncertainty of waiting became tedious.

But for Bill and me, they were days of joy. A prayer had been answered. For years we had prayed and longed for a baby, and now one was promised to us, due to arrive in December. The following months were in many ways trying. It

was the hottest year I remember ever having experienced; and often living conditions were less than favorable. But through it all, the joy of what was in store for us made everything seem all right.

At last the road permit came and there was a mad scramble to get last minute packing and business attended to. Early the next morning the truck drove up to the front of the house. The back part, which had no cover, was already half full of people and boxes. They all got out while the trunks, furniture, etc., were loaded on. By the time everything was securely fastened., the load was higher than the driver' s cab. The passengers clambered on top. The seat in the cab beside the driver was reserved for Evy and Alice. Every conceivable spot or ledge was covered with passengers, holding tightly to keep from falling off. As we waved farewell, the bus started rolling off toward Maesod.

As for the Karens, God had his vessels chosen.



# XVI

## HERE AM I, SEND ME

Bob Peters and Alice Williams came to Thailand as an engaged couple. They were asked whether they would be willing to go to work among the Karens. Though they knew what it would involve, the added years of language study, a hard life in the most primitive conditions, and long periods of loneliness because of isolation from their fellow missionaries, both felt that this was God's call to them. Both answered, "Yes, we will go."

In many ways they were well qualified to work among the Karen. Their quick grasp of the Thai language had proven their linguistic aptitude. And, like the Apostle Paul, they had disciplined themselves to the state of being able and glad to live under any condition to which the Lord called them. Yet neither of them was robust. At the time of their wedding, Alice weighed less than one hundred pounds. Ordinarily one would choose only those who are unusually strong of body, in view of the long, strenuous treks, the privations, and the inaccessibility of any medical help in case of illness. However, God often chooses to prove His all-sufficiency by choosing those who are insufficient for His work.

The two were married at Tak in December of 1955, and then moved to Maesod where they continued their language study. At the time, there was only one very brief text book for the study of Karen. There was no Karen-English dictionary, and those who could teach the language were hard to find. But in spite of these handicaps, the young couple spent every available moment in studying Karen.

In March, though still feeling inadequate in the language, they went on a trip through Karen villages to the



*Bob and Alice Peters*



south of Maesod. With them went Saw Bobo, an old Karen refugee from Burma, as their guide and interpreter. Indeed a guide was quite necessary through the winding, steep, thickly overgrown paths.

One day, at the village of Klaw Taw, some Thai police came to question them regarding the purpose of their trip, their relationships with the Karens, and the places which they had already visited. That night, while all the world was asleep, Saw Bobo quietly slipped out in the darkness and ran away. The next morning there was no clue as to his whereabouts.

Many days' journey from home, Bob and Alice had no idea how to get back to Maesod. They waited a few days to see if Saw Bobo would return. Finally a messenger came bringing a letter from him.

Having suffered from shell shock in the Karen war, Saw Bobo was frequently thrown into a frenzy when any kind of tense situation arose such as might cast suspicion on his political integrity. He wanted to have nothing to do with the insurrection, nor to be involved with the Burmese army or police. Yesterday's police interrogation had so frightened him that he had fled, presumably back across the border to some obscure place in which to hide until any suspicions were forgotten. In the mean time, he had written a letter to the missionaries, apologizing for deserting them and expressing the hope that they would be able to get along without him. They were successful at last in finding some people who were able to take them back to Maesod, and in fact, elephants were provided for them to ride.

Later in the same year, on another trek, they found responsive hearts in the village of Tee Kableu. It was in that place that Bob became ill with malaria, necessitating a prolonged stay. The folks there showed a real interest in hearing the Gospel, and even invited them to come back to live there.

This was the invitation that the Peters had been waiting for. In a closely knit, almost family-like group such as a Karen village, outsiders do not move in and live among them unless the people of the village express a willingness for them to come. Tee Kableu seemed a strategically located place from which to reach other areas. But several months later, when the Peters were ready to return and start building a house, they found that the people had changed their minds. They no longer wanted Christians in their midst.

This was only the beginning of many disappointments in



*Photo by Paul Moss*



working among the Karens. They were to experience many more. Time after time, a soul, catching a glimpse of the light and liberty there is in Christ, would turn eagerly to that light, glad to shed the bondage of the demons. But after counting the cost, the weight of opposition of relatives, the fear of retaliation from the evil spirits, and the threats of the witch doctors, that person turned back sadly, saying it was impossible to leave the old ways.

In May of 1957, Bob and Alice went to live at Paday, a village of about forty houses which was only a three hour hike out of Maesod. There they built a leaf and bamboo hut like all the others in the village, on stilts, with a steep ladder for entrance. Like all the others, they slept and sat on the floor. Yet, in spite of the sameness of their wee house, there was a vast difference which drew crowds of spectators. There were no smoky, greasy pots stacked about the fire place, but a row of brightly polished ones hanging on the wall. In stead of the stack of dirty blankets tossed into the corner, there was a neatly made up mattress with clean white sheets and carefully folded blankets. Although the split bamboo floor caught and chewed the scrub rag to pieces, it was kept immaculately clean. The general cleanliness and order attracted many. Others came to get medicines or advice in sickness. The people soon discovered that this medicine was far more effective and less costly than the blowings, incantations, and magic signs of the witch doctors. Medicine was paid for with eggs, rice, a couple of big frogs, a squash, or whatever they were able to bring. Some patients were too poor to bring anything at all. But the medicine was primarily a means of reaching the people with something far more precious than physical healing.

Day after day, they repeated the simple story of Jesus to those who came to the house. Day after day, they spent hours in prayer and intercession for the souls of the Karen. They made long, strenuous trips, sometimes lasting for weeks, to distant villages, but there always seemed more villages where Chirst had never been named.

One evening after the Peters had lived in Paday for a little over a year, Naw Ka Pa\* came to visit them. For months the message from God had been echoing in his heart, and now he felt he must respond to it. Once more Bob explained as simply as possible the Way of Salvation, and read him the verses from the Bible. As they knelt together, the Karen prayed and received Jesus Christ as his savior.

A song of joy rang in the hearts of the two young mis-



*Photo by Paul Moss*



*Photo by Paul Moss*

- Naw Ka Pa means literally, The Father of Miss Ka. A woman's or girl's name is pre-faced by "Naw," and a man's or boy's by "Saw." After the birth of the first child, both of the parents lose their original names and become simply the father and mother of their eldest child. Pa means father and Mo means mother, and so when little Ka was born, her parents took her name. Naw Ka now has three brothers, but her parents are still called by her name.

sionaries that night. How long and how earnestly they had prayed for Naw Ka Pa,' He had been ready to believe long before this, but his wife, Naw Ka Mo, had held him back. At last he had decided for Christ. Bob and Alice had at last seen the first Karen come to the Lord, and it made all the months and years of toil and tears seem worth while.

The Peters hastened to write to their friends and faithful co-workers who had been praying for the Karens, and in particular for Naw Ka Pa, to tell them of the answer to their prayers.

Two evenings later, Naw Ka Pa came again. This time there was no joy beaming from his face. Now he looked dark and sad.

"I have come to tell you I cannot be a Christian," he said. "If I'm a Christian, my wife will kill herself and our children."

When the Peters went home on furlough after six years in Thailand, they had not seen one soul born again. They were both very tired and disheartened. Was it all worth while? Could the Lord expect them to come back again? Were they not just throwing away their lives uselessly? These were the questions that would naturally come into the minds of many, but the Peters had no thought of giving up. They felt sure that God had called them to the Karens in Thailand, and that He still wanted them there. None the less, there was profound physical and spiritual weariness after years of hard toil without fruit.

But during their furlough, God spoke to Bob and Alice, refreshed them physically, and within a year they were back on the field again, looking forward joyfully to another term.

They had hoped to live in a different village during the second term, to establish contact with other Karens farther afield, but there were several unavoidable delays, and when the rainy season was almost upon them, they found that they would have to settle down in Paday until the next dry season, as there was not time to make arrangements, find the materials, and build a house in a new village. They would have to wait to see what villages opened up to them, and perhaps move the next year.

Bamboo and thatch decay quickly, so their little house had disintegrated, and parts had been removed. A new house had to be built. Alice had looked forward to having a more substantial house with a smooth wooden floor, but in view of the fact that it was to serve for only one year, they had the flimsy, shaky, split bamboo floors and walls again.

The very day that the Peters moved to Paday with their



*Photo by Paul Moss*



*Photo by Paul Moss*

oxcart loads of belongings and food supplies, the monsoon rains began. In a downpour, they arrived at the village and moved into their nearly completed house. Soon after that the oxcart trails became impassable, and so, for another five months, they were confined to the village.



# XVII

## THE BEGINNINGS OF A CHURCH IN MAESOD

In the mean time, two more young workers joined forces with the Peters to bring Christ to the Karen. First, Nancy Ashcraft from America, and a year later, Mary Lewin from England, felt God calling them to this particular work.

Having completed a year of Thai language at Tak, they lived in Maesod for another year or two to study Karen while they ministered to the young church that was beginning to grow there. With only a beginner's knowledge of Thai, and now ministering to people who spoke and understood only the Northern Thai, they never-the-less saw many added to the church during those days. Nai Laang, the first of them, came one day when Ellen Gillman and Nancy had just arrived at Maesod, and the front room was still filled with their trunks and furniture. He sat on one of the trunks while they were unpacking, and began talking to them in an extremely colloquial drawl of the Northern dialect. They listened to him for a while, but unable to understand anything he said, concluded that he was either drunk or mentally abnormal, and continued with their work. Nai Laang, having come this far, was not easily put off. After meditating a while, he tried it again. Again they listened without understanding anything of what he said. Still he persisted. Finally Ellen caught enough of the words to understand that here was a groping soul seeking the Light.

It is one of God's gracious miracles, and I cannot explain how Nai Laang and the two missionary ladies finally got across the language barrier. It was not long before he had prayed, confessed his sins, and received the Saviour.

Nai Laang was a farmer from the village of Mae Tow Klang, about three miles from Maesod. He told of a group

of foreigners who had come to his village one day about five years earlier, preaching about Jesus, singing songs, and distributing tracts. He, Nai Laang, had not been to the meeting in front of the school house that night, but his little daughter had gone and had brought home a tract. Nai Laang had read the tract from time to time through the years, some times to his wife, Nang Pang, who could not read, and had discussed these new ideas with her frequently. The two of them became more and more certain that though they could not understand much of it, there was something here of deep significance for their own lives. The old way in which they and their neighbors and their ancestors had been following seemed all wrong. It became altogether imperative that they should look into this new way. But how could they find out more about it? Who would tell them what they must do? Where was this Jesus of whom the tract spoke?

One day they heard of some people who had come to live in Maesod to teach people about Jesus. They were foreigners, like those who had come many years before. Nai Lang decided to go to Maesod and ask them about Jesus. He went, and by asking in the town, found out in which house they lived. He walked past the house several times, but could not pluck up courage to go in and so returned to his village without having met the foreigners.

Some time later, he returned and tried again. This time he got into the house. It was in God's providence that Ellen had just arrived, because she had a better acquaintance with the northern dialect than did most missionaries, though that acquaintance was still but slight. Nai Laang, in his desperation, was like the importunate widow of old, and God had to grant his request. That day he found Salvation - he and his house.

A few weeks later, Nai Pronnma came to church on Sunday with Nai Laang. Nai Promma was a farmer from Mae Tow Klang, but he had been a priest for a number of years. He had heard the missionaries when they preached at the village school house that night, and he had bought a set of booklets from them. He and his wife had read and re-read these booklets, and they, too, recognized that they held the truth. It was not until they met Nai Laang after he had prayed, that they knew what to do about it.

Nai Promma and his wife were the next two to bow their hearts and receive Jesus Christ into their lives, and then the mother-in-law of Nai Laang, Nang Kawana, and her son, Nai Ai. Three or four of the teen-aged children of Nai Laang and Nai Promma came to the meetings, believed, and



prayed.

During the next few years, the missionary personnel at Maesod changed from time to time, but the number of Christians steadily increased. Most of those who believed had been influenced primarily by the witness of the newly converted Thai Christians. Those who lived in Mae Tow Klang and Mae Tow Tai walked into Maesod to worship with the other Christians every Sunday morning, regardless of the weather. In the rainy season, they often had to walk through sticky mud half way up to their knees and to cross streams waist deep in order to get there. In such weather, the mothers and children usually stayed at home, but the men seldom missed.

Of the believers that lived in the town of Maesod, more than half were Karens who had moved from Burma. One of them expressed the feeling of most in saying, "I was a Christian from my mother's womb." Some, we felt, were Christian only in name, but many were sincere believers who were truly born again.\*

One of these was an old woman known as Massay Mo (Massay's Mother) to whom we refer as M.M. Many years before, she had come from Burma with her husband who had been appointed as a missionary to Thailand by the Burmese Karen church. They had been given a large plot of land on the edge of Maesod on which they built their home. Later, when a cluster of Karen Christians formed around them, they put up a small church building on the same land. I do not know how long this church lasted, but during the war and the Japanese occupation of Thailand, the Karen Christians all returned to Burma. The pastor, M.M.'s husband, went astray, going to Burma with another woman. M.M. stayed on alone, earning a living for herself and her four children by midwifery, raising pigs, and gardening. The four children had been baptized, but they left the faith. The little church building fell to ruins and was dismantled by the government. The land was used as a camping place for elephant caravans.

Massay was Massay Mo's second child. At sixteen, her parents wanted her to marry a wealthy Karen, the owner of several elephants. He was one of the church members. He was too old to appeal to Massay, and she confided her dilemma to an aunt who advised her to leave home. So, unknown to her parents and financed by her aunt, Massay fled to Burma and entered a Baptist Bible school in Rangoon.

During that year at school, she learned about the Bible and about Christian service, and dedicated her life to be a

- I would certainly not wish to give the impression that we doubted the salvation of most of those who came from other areas and called, themselves Christians. Many of these were very fine Christians. Others, although they had certificates of baptism and church membership, were such that I am sure the missionaries in the areas from which they had come would not have recognized them as Christian in their present state. On the other hand, there are those here in our area who have professed to believe, and who call themselves Christians, but who, we are sure, are not born of the Spirit, and who, if they were to move to other areas, would give a bad impression of the church here.

missionary to Thailand. As she looks back now on the experience, she says, "I was not really a Christian yet. I was sincere, but not born again. I did not know the way of Salvation. I thought of Christianity as a more admirable way of life than spiritism or Buddhism. But I did not realize my need of a Saviour, or know Christ as a living person."

At the end of the first school year, Massay returned to Maesod. There she met a young government accountant with whom she fell in love, and soon they were married.

"Government workers," says Massay, "like their wives to dress stylishly and to lead a gay, sophisticated social life with them. It appealed to me. I gave all my thought to dressing well and pleasing my friends. I thought less and less about God and lost all thought of serving Him. I spent a great deal of time playing cards and gambling."

After the first thrill of romance had faded away, Massay was jolted to cruel reality. Her husband's social prowess was not confined to her. Although she was the keeper of his house, she was not his only "wife." (In the Thai language, the word for wife applies also to concubines, paramours, etc.) He spent too much money on drink, which added to her gambling, brought them into financial difficulties.

In the mean time three children had been born. The eldest, Dara, (Star) was, like her mother, an exceptionally attractive, vivacious girl. The children spent much of their time with their father's mother, a well educated woman and an ardent Buddhist school teacher.

Massay's health broke and she was frequently in bed, ill. One day she lay on her mattress on the floor, unable to get up, wondering where her husband was, and in a deep depression because he seemed utterly unconcerned about her illness. Her eyes fell upon a rifle standing against the wall at her feet. A thought that had occurred several times since her marriage returned with overwhelming force. Hooking her bare foot around the butt of the gun, she manipulated it toward her hand. The barrel fell with a startling crash to the floor, but she was soon holding and examining it. It was loaded! Bending sideways, she pushed it, butt first, back against the wall so that the muzzle was directed toward her. She lay still for a moment, thinking. Which foot should she use? What would be the best position? Where would it hit? How long would it take? After that what? Is hell worse than this? She was afraid it would be. Suddenly her foot shot out, kicking the barrel with a blow that sent it ricocheting sideways along the floor till it lay full length against the wall.

Massay recovered from that illness, and many months



elapsed uneventfully until one day shocking news was brought to the house. Her husband, the government accountant, had been arrested on charges of embezzling a large sum of money from the town treasury. He was sent to prison, but before he had served his sentence, he escaped and fled to east Thailand where he lived in hiding for some time.

Meanwhile, Massay had to get work to support herself and her children. She was acquainted with the Overgaard family, who had lived in Maesod about ten months, and with Bob and Alice Peters who had just been married. She offered her services in their home to help with the laundry.

After the fugitive assumed that the excitement of his escape had died down and his captors had given up the search, he came back to the Maesod area and lived alone in the jungle. Massay went to visit him from time to time, and took him food. When asked by Wilf whether she had seen her husband lately, she denied having seen him since his escape from prison. One day while Massay was working, a messenger came to announce that her husband had been found and shot by the police.

After the shock and sorrow of that tragedy died down, her life resumed its usual routine. Massay worked, and both mother and children learned to manage without the head of the family.

Shortly after this, Evy became seriously ill, and the Overgaards had to leave Maesod. Hans and Alma Seirhuis, newly married, moved to Maesod to replace them.

One night Massay had a vivid dream. Judgment day had come, and the Lord descended in power and glory and stood before her with a terrible countenance. He spoke to her and said, "You cannot go to Heaven in your present condition. You must be punished for your sins."

She awoke, cold and trembling with fear. She fasted and prayed, confessed her sins to God, and received His pardon. She renewed her long-forgotten vow to serve the Lord. She made a quick trip to Rahang to tell Wilf and Evy what had happened and to confess to them the falsehoods she had told them.

At last she had peace in her heart, and from that time on began to grow in Christian character and in the assurance of her salvation. Daily prayer and Bible reading with Alma Seirhuis helped her to progress in fellowship with God and the knowledge of His will.

After Bob and Alice moved to Paday, Massay went to live with them for a while. She helped with household work

and preached the Gospel, both in Paday, and in other villages. She was a great encouragement to the Peters. More than the household help, they enjoyed the fellowship of another Christian and the help of one who could speak the Karen language so well, and who was zealous for the souls of the Karen people.

In the mean time, Massay's children continued to live with their Buddhist grandmother, encouraged in Buddhist practices. When the responsibilities of a Christian mother were pointed out to Massay, she realized that her first duty was to take care of the children God had given her. She moved back to Maesod where she rented a home in which her children could live with her. Daily she read the Bible to them, and prayed with them. On Sundays they all went together to church, which was still held in the home of the missionaries.

About two years later, through a gift from a Christian friend in America, Massay sent her children to the mission school in Lampang. Thus, not only was a good Christian education provided for them, one she herself could never have paid for, but also she was freed to go with Mary Lewin and Nancy Ashcraft\* to the village of Maw Ta to start a new station in March, 1960

Nancy Ashcraft has written about her experiences with the Karen in her book, *At the Scent of Water*; Christian Literature Crusade (June 1987) available at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)

# XVIII

## OUT OF THE PIT

Moon burst into tears as she dropped into a chair on our porch.

"Oh!" she moaned, "My sister Kao! She is worse than ever. The neighbors had to come help me fasten her with a chain to the wall. You must come and do something about her!"

For a long time Kao had been going out of her mind. She had become more and more fanatical in her spirit worship, and had made desperate efforts to get Moon to make offerings to the spirit shrine. Her leprosy had grown worse, till her feet had deteriorated so much that she could no longer stand on them. Even so confined, she was able to make Moon's life miserable with her constant loud scoldings and curses. For weeks she had refused to be washed, or to have her hair combed. Now she shouted night and day, and hardly ever slept. She had taken her clothes off, and was threatening violence to anyone who came near her. She had given her allegiance to evil spirits, and now they seemed to have full possession of her.

What could we do for Kao?

What could anyone do?

"We'll pray and fast," we promised, "and this evening we will come."

Hans was with us at that time. The three of us spent the afternoon and the usual dinner hour in prayer. Then, as we were getting ready to leave, the sky, which had turned dark and overcast, exploded with a loud crash of thunder, and rain began pouring down heavily.

We hesitated a moment, wondering whether we should proceed in such a downpour. Shafts of lightening were hurled across the dark sky as if the power of the air were

### Local Beliefs

We were told of certain people who are quite normal most of the time, but are possessed by a spirit that causes them to get up in the night and go out wandering. In this wandering state, they are called "*Pee*" (spirits.) Two of the most common, of which my nurse told me when I was a child, and which, I was amazed to find, these people actually feared, were the pee pong and the *pee seu*. All the details of the story were the same, although coming from distant, isolated parts of the country. The pee pong has a reddish light shining from her nose. (It is usually a woman.) She mostly wanders in the rice fields. The *pee seu* goes out at night, catches frogs, builds a fire, and holding the frogs with

trying to keep us back. Could we afford not to go? Putting on whatever bits of rain proofing we had, we rode our bicycles out into the deluge. Through the flooded streets of the market, where the shop fronts were all closed, I saw little gaps here and there, with people peeking out at us in shocked disbelief, no doubt thinking that we had all gone crazy.

By the time we reached Moon's house, it was nearly dark. She lit a lamp, but the wind blew it out almost immediately. We could barely see Kao crouching against the wall. One end of a dog chain was fastened to her ankle, the other end was nailed to the wall. She muttered constantly, and sometimes shouted disconnected phrases that made no sense. Frequent flashes of lightening showed us the details of the picture as clearly as broad day light.

We sat on the floor in silence and prayed for some time. Hans, newly arrived from Holland, could not yet speak Thai.

"The demon would understand English, wouldn't it?" he asked.

We agreed that it probably would. He stood up, and with a voice that sounded above the roar of the storm, commanded the evil spirit, in the name of Jesus, to come out of her.

Kao rose up with such violence that the chain broke away from the wall. She had not been able to walk for many months, but now she ran, dragging the chain, to the edge of the porch and would have thrown herself over the low railing had not Hans caught her and forced her to sit down again. It seemed as if the powers from the underworld were trying to snatch her life away.

I had brought along a syringe and a vial of streptomycene just in case we should think she needed a shot. Now I did not dare try it for her violence could break the needle. Besides, the darkness made it unsafe. But Bill and Hans insisted that we must not withhold anything that might help. So, after more prayer, and with the help of timely lightening flashes, I filled the syringe. She sat perfectly still until the injection was completed, and then resumed her raving and thrashing.

When we left that night, we could see no change in Kao, but we had confidence that something had been transacted. As we rode our bicycles along the narrow road, one stretch of which had been partly washed away by the river current, intermittent flashes of lightening showed us the way, and seemed to assure us that God was watching over His chil-

his toes, roasts them over the fire. Before morning, he goes back to bed, and when he awakes at day break, he knows nothing of what he has done during the night.

One time, I had the opportunity to see the powerful effect of the fear of spirits. We were sitting by the river on a crowded boat landing, waiting for a boat. A group of "smart" young men sat beside us, laughing and joking together. A thin woman with a wild gleam in her eye passed us to draw water from the river. Her pails hung in the usual way from the ends of a pole which she balanced on her shoulder. As she worked her way through the crowd, the young men joked about her and knocked on her pails. She said nothing, but her face registered a frantic hatred. Again and again she passed, and each time they ridiculed and knocked on her pails. Finally she set the pails down in the middle of the floor and picked up a dry banana leaf from the top of a basket of vegetables awaiting transportation. With amazing dexterity, she whisked it into the form of a conical vase - the type used for offering incense. Then snapping three bamboo sticks off the edge of the vegetable basket, she shook them defiantly at the young men and stuck them into the banana leaf vase to look like incense sticks. She put the simulated incense offering between two boards in the wall so that it stood upright. Then she squatted down before it, put her hands together in the position of prayer, and her silent lips went through the motions of a short incantation. All this took only a moment or two. Picking up her buckets, she went down the ladder to the water. As she left, I noticed that the laughing had stopped and some of the young men had vanished. She went by several more times unmolested.

dren, even in the darkest places.

Next day Moon came and reported that soon after we left, Kao had gone to sleep and had slept all night and through most of the day. When she awoke, she was in her right mind.

Soon after that, we moved away, but the missionaries who took our place reported a steady improvement in Kao. Everyone noticed the change in her appearance. She kept herself clean and tidy, and her hair well groomed. She was able to walk with a staff all the way to the Beautiful Woods church to attend meetings. She acknowledged Christ as Saviour and Lord, and often led in prayer, and though she could not read, she knew most of the hymns.

Kao began to speak to others about her new found faith. She told them of how the Lord had lifted her out of a deep pit.

"I would not be living now," she said, "if Jesus had not come to me."

The little church in Beautiful Woods had been growing. The three original men, Nai Som, Nai Pun, and Nai Leo, had been baptized in the river, together with Tong By, a beautiful, bashful little girl, who had been coming to the clinic for some time. Her father, a widower with several other children to support, did not want her because she had leprosy. Moon took her into her home, taught her to read, and taught her the Bible. Soon she was a believer. We had judged her to be about eight years old, so were surprised when they told us she was thirteen. When we heard her pray, and when others testified to her earnestness, we knew she was ready for baptism.

The river had been low at that time. We had had to go out to the middle of the river bed where a shallow channel still ran. The neighbors stood watching along the shore. We sang hymns and finished with the doxology.

Soon after that, Nai Som left to attend the Bible school in eastern Thailand. When he returned, he became the pastor at Beautiful Woods.

Nai Pun, who had never been able to give up smoking, stopped the habit cold from the day of his baptism on. He was a real strength to the church, teaching and encouraging others week after week.

Tong By was taken to the leprosarium in Chiangmai where she lived in a children's home and went to school, church, and Bible classes with other children.

Kao continued to grow in grace, and was baptized a few years later.



# IXX

## BAN TAK

The town of Ban Tak, about fifteen miles north of Rahang and on the same river, has the alarming appearance of being about to topple over. As we approached the main part of the town by pole boat/ we saw the houses on tottery posts, leaning far out over the river, each seeming to dare the others to lean a little farther. Among these was the house we had rented for the month. The post office, police station, and sheriff's residence, though not on the river, all leaned over at the same crazy angle, as if some playful giant had been tilting the foundations to see how far the houses could slant without falling flat, and had stopped just in the nick of time. The street of the town, though broad enough for an oxcart, was cut into deep gullies which had to be crossed by bridges or planks. There were no motor vehicles in this town as it was on the west side of the river and the highway was on the east.

As we arrived at the wee house, our new neighbors crowded about to get acquainted. The front door was barred from the inside, and there was no ladder to the back porch, so they showed us how to get in by going through our neighbor's house and climbing from his porch to ours. If our neighbors' houses should all be locked, they said, it was possible to climb up a pole onto a neighbor's porch and then from there onto our own.

When we finally reached the back door and opened it, everyone thronged in, carrying our boxes, bedding roll, stoves, buckets, etc. Some opened the two windows and the front folding doors. Another began filling the water urn. A tall, thin, middle-aged woman who walked with a decided limp, was sweeping the dusty, littered floor. She ordered a



young girl to bring a bottle of rain water from her house.

Later we learned her name". Raywadee. She had a sewing shop and beauty parlor next door, and two young girls for her apprentices.

Our house was one large room with a small closet-like enclosure in one corner in which to put things away. A narrow porch along the back had no roof, but we used it for our kitchen, dining room, and sitting room, when the sun was low in the early morning or late afternoon. From it we enjoyed the river scenery, the sun sets and sun rises, and the stars at night. We only prayed that the porch would not drop into the river while we were sitting on it. Of course we had no furniture, but a ledge ran along the porch which we used both as bench and table.

Each day our neighbor, Raywadee, brought us some offering of food: a fried duck egg, dried fish on rice, or a bowl of curry. Each evening during the evangelistic meetings, she listened intently, often interrupting with questions and comments. Some times she seemed much too talkative, and at other times we were sure she was a bit intoxicated. One evening during our second week, she stood up during the meeting and with dramatic gestures amounting almost to a dance, she began reciting many of the things we had been teaching, interspersed with snatches of the gospel songs which were printed on a chart on the wall. I looked around at the audience and noted that they did not seem to think it at all strange; in fact they listened to her as seriously as they did to us.

During the day time, whenever she had a moment to spare, Raywadee came over to talk and ask questions. Some times she told us she was a Roman Catholic, and she called me "Sister," using the English word to prove her knowledge of the protocol of that religion. But as she understood more of the scriptures and the way of salvation, she said she believed and wanted Christ as her Saviour. She prayed with us daily. A long time later she confessed that she had never been a Roman Catholic at all, and in fact, had known almost nothing about Christianity. Not knowing the difference, she had pretended to be a Catholic in order that we might accept her as one of us.

Raywadee was born of an upper class family in Tak Province. As a beautiful young woman, she had been married to a wealthy, high-ranking army officer in Bangkok. Later, like most men of his rank, he began accumulating other wives. Very much an individualist by nature, Raywadee resented being one of many wives, even though she

## **Raywadee**

*Bill Charters*

At a village on the banks of the river Steeping we rented a tiny bamboo house for 40 baht a sonth and set up camp. During the day we went out with literature holding small gatherings. Interest could hardly have been better because the people had seen only a few foreigners at a distance. Now they had two in their midst who could actually speak to them. So we had all the outreach we could manage and some. Our neighbour turned out to be a dress maker who taught sewing. She seemed to enjoy our presence and all she could do to help us. She always sat in our meetings and helped control the children. I think of Raywadee as Lydia whose heart the Lord prepared by the riverside to receive His truth. Twice we visited her village and each time she thanked our neighbour. Later others helped in teaching her. She started her own meeting and even branched out to another village.

was the chief wife, and she left him.

Making her living by sewing and hair dressing in various places, she eventually settled down at Ban Tak, just a few miles down river from her original home. Her polished manners, upper class background, and strong personality gave her a place of distinction in the community in spite of the fact that she had taken to drinking and gambling.

Gradually she was reduced to poverty, her beauty and health wasted away, and she became disillusioned and bitter toward life. At one time she attempted suicide, but was found and taken to a hospital. To this day she has the scars of the knife wound in her breast. Stomach ulcers, arthritis, and a dislocated hip made her a semi-invalid. But she worked hard at her trade and acquired many customers. She always had several students working for her while she taught them the art of making blouses and jackets, as well as dressing hair.

During the month that we were in Ban Tak, Raywadee took advantage of every opportunity to hear more of the gospel, and by the end of the month, she had decided for Christ. When she prayed, we believed she was sincere, but our rejoicing was with moderation. Many more promising conversions had ended in dismal failure. But we prayed with her and for her, and taught her all we could.

About a year and a half later, in 1955, we went back to Ban Tak and rented another house, this time on the east side of the river. It was a new house, larger than the first, and not on the river. The back porch was covered with a roof, so we made it our living quarters, while Boon, a young man who came with us, lived in the meeting room.

Almost as soon as we arrived, Raywadee came limping joyfully in to see us. She told us she had moved across the river since our last visit, and was now living in the house directly across the street from us. Again she came in nearly every morning for a time of prayer and Bible study.

Boon was part of our little circle on the floor. He had arrived at our house in Rahang shortly before our coming to Ban Tak. He told us he was the pastor of a church in east Thailand, but had been sent out by his congregation to preach in the western part of the country. Now he felt led to minister here in Tak province because there were so few Christians, and asked if he might work with us. He was a handsome young man, with a fine physique and a charming personality. Bill had written immediately to one of the missionaries in the east, asking about him. He had also taken him out on a couple of street meetings and found that he

was a gifted preacher. In our conversations at meal times, we tried to find out about his past life. He was single, he said, had been a Christian since his youth, and had worked with other missionaries whom he named. We knew them to be very fine missionaries who would have given him the best training. So we brought him with us to Ban Tak to help in the work.

Boon was quite an entertainer, and drew crowds with his singing, jokes, and tricks. He was also good at telling Bible stories. But he was not enthusiastic about practical work. We had divided the labor. I did the cooking; Bill washed the pots and dishes; Boon washed his own dish by pouring cold water over it and setting it to dry on the edge of the porch. We hired a woman to carry water from the river to fill the big earthen water jars. Boon's only job was to clean the meeting room, which was also his bed room. But he only did this when reminded.

Attendance at the evening meetings was good. During the day, we went around to other parts of town or to villages farther north. On Saturday, Bill and I returned to Rahang for the Sunday meeting and to attend to mission accounts. (Bill was treasurer at that time, and had to spend many hours each week on the ledgers. ) As we were leaving, Boon handed us a sealed letter, asking us to deliver it to our cook, Boon Nak.

Boon Nak had been a Christian for only a few months. She was an attractive, modest, and quiet young woman. A mutual admiration was developing between the two young people. But the romance was doomed. Upon our arrival at Rahang, we found a letter awaiting us from the missionary in east Thailand to whom Bill had written. He was glad to learn the whereabouts of Boon, who was the pastor of one of the small village churches. He had suddenly left his wife and children and the church without letting anyone know where he was going. His family was without money and no one knew whether he would ever come back.

We destroyed the letter to Boon Nak, and when we returned to Ban Tak on Monday, we had a long talk with Boon. He seemed hardly perturbed at what the missionary had said about him, and gave an excuse for everything he had done. But finally he confessed that, like Jonah, he had been trying to run away from God and had found that he could not. We told him we had destroyed his letter. We gave him enough money to get home, and the next morning he left by bus. Some time later we heard that Boon was reunited with his family.

After two weeks in Tak, we went to Ta Kae where we rented another little house and carried on much the same program of visitation and evangelistic meetings as at Ban Tak. Next we went to Utteradit for a second stay. These months away from home became very tiring. Living like a Thai in the midst of Thai spectators, cooking and trashing dishes while squatting on the floor, bathing in a sarong on the back porch, eating food that was often unappealing, sometimes to the point of being nauseating, I sometimes wondered whether we were accomplishing our purpose. It seemed to me that if only we could show Christ to the people in such a way as to focus them on Him, it would be worth all this weariness and discomfort. That is the purpose of every real missionary, to turn people's eyes to Christ, not only by preaching Him, by demonstrating Him.

Several years later an incident occurred one evening on shipboard as we crossed the Pacific. Bill and I had been standing at the stern of the ship watching an unusually colorful sunset. When we returned to the main deck, we met a fellow passenger who said, "Wasn't that a beautiful sunset! Do you know how I got to looking at it? I was on the wrong side of the ship to see it, but I could see you standing at the stern facing westward. I could tell by the expression on your faces that you were looking at something very beautiful, and I knew I wanted to see it too."

There is nothing about us that can attract people. We are neither of us socially gifted. We dress and live much like the ordinary people around us. In fact, my face was covered with prickly heat to the extent that I looked repulsive. Yet our very plainness, perhaps, made it easier for people to come and talk to us.

My pregnancy gave me something in common with women. They came in and sat around, talking. They shared their problems and interests and asked me all about mine. One of mine at that time was morning sickness. They understood and gave me sympathy. Some native wisdom, too.

"You will surely have a son," they said, "because you look haggard and worn. An unborn daughter always makes her mother more beautiful than she usually is. Yes, just wait, you will have a son."

# XX

## PERSONAL GLIMPSES

Raywadee was the first believer, aside from the leprosy patients, who really stood the test of time. After we left Ban Tak, she began coming to Rahang every Sunday for church. By that time, our little group of believers had again expanded.

Boon Nak, our cook, a sweet girl of eighteen, an old Chinese tinsmith from the market, and Ta, the young woman who had been the cause of Inn's domestic turmoil, whose little boy was the son of Inn, all came regularly. Inn and Boon Tee had gone to Sukothai to work for Fern and Alma, but Inn's two sisters, Nuan and Tiang were believers. Nai Som Help's leprosy had been arrested to the point that he was able to get a job with the highway department. He came every Sunday to the service in our home. Two young men with leprosy, and the mother of one of them became believers and came often though they lived across the river. They had a special bench reserved for them, and after the worship, when everyone had left, we used lysol to wash the bench and the parts of the floor across which they had walked.

With a few others who came from time to time, we had about ten or twelve in our meetings.

On Wednesdays, some of them came for prayer and Bible study. During this time, we talked of ways of leading others to Christ/ then once a week a few of us would go to some place on the outskirts of town, or to the village across the river, and hold street meetings. Some of the young women especially showed signs of real growth in Christian witnessing.

Ta was witnessing in her own neighborhood in spite of

the taunts of many who had once been her friends. Sometimes she came to us in tears because of their cruelty. However, for the most part, she was radiantly happy. Strange it was, that those who used to be friendly and kind to her even when they gossiped about her immorality (she had lived with several men besides Inn) should now turn against her and persecute her because she had renounced her former way of life and showed a real change of heart. Inn, who now had two children by Boon Tee, had stopped sending Ta any money for the support of his eldest son, even though he and Boon Tee were both earning good wages. Both of them were now far from the Lord.

Nuan also showed a great change. A fragile woman (she only weighed about eighty pounds) with a lovely face, she had been extremely timid, quiet, and moody. Her policeman husband had been shot by robbers just before the birth of her second child. Soon after that, Evy led her to the Lord. Now she was bright and cheerful, bold to lead in prayer at Sunday meetings or to speak of Christ to a crowd of unbelievers.

Boon Nak, though bashful, learned to give flannel-graph Bible stories in street meetings and in our weekly children's meeting. She gave a clear, bold message when our little gospel team spoke in her home village.

One time after Bill had been preaching about baptism, Ta, Boon Nak, Tiang, and Tirapun, a high school girl who had believed ever since the days when Evy held children's meetings here, all asked to be baptized. Boon Nak and Tiang's parents were strongly opposed to their being Christians and would not give permission. Tirapun we felt was ready spiritually, but knew that her parents were so violently opposed to Christianity that she hardly dare to ask them. We thought it wiser not to baptize her. A few months later, she was sent away to live with an uncle in a far off town so that she would not come into contact with Christians. Then we wished we had baptized her. We heard through a school friend to whom she wrote, that she was still trusting in Jesus.

So that left Ta. She was the first "well" (non-leprous) Christian to be baptized. The place she selected for the ceremony was near her home. We had to walk through some of her neighbors' yards to reach a spot where the water was deep enough. As the Christians all walked along the path, we were joined by curious neighbors. They stood along the bank listening to the hymns, Bill's brief words of explanation, Ta's testimony, and then witnessed their first baptism.

Afterwards Ta told us of their reaction to the immersion. Some asked her, "Why did you let the teacher push your head under the water like that?" Others were genuinely interested when she told them of the symbolism of baptism - that she was buried and risen with Christ, separated from the world, dead to her old life, and risen to a new life in Christ. It also brought down greater persecution upon her, which she took gladly. I was with her once when an acquaintance walked up to her little boy and said with a loud, mocking voice, "Hello, little fellow. And where has your father gone?" The once fiery Ta ignored the taunt and talked quietly to the woman about other things.

One day, in answer to a summons from the Post Office, we went to speak by telephone to Elly, who was calling from Kampangpet. Suapee, a lovely Chinese Christian girl, had taken a whole bottle of sleeping pills in an effort to end her life, but had failed. The reason for her attempt at suicide was that she had leprosy.

It seemed impossible for us to believe. Suapee had been a Christian for over a year. She was a beautiful, clean, well-dressed young woman whom none of us would have suspected of having leprosy. She had been a great joy to us all because of her very decisive conversion, her love for studying the Bible, and her warm friendliness.

Elly persuaded us both to go to Kampangpet to see Suapee, and also to visit the work at Prankratai where she and Marta were establishing several leprosy clinics. We went on the afternoon bus. By this time a bridge spanned the river, the roads and the busses had been greatly improved, and the journey to Kampangpet was a quick one.

That evening Suapee came to the house. I was shocked to see her pale, expressionless face. Unlike her usual charming, warmhearted self, she seemed to be in a trance, and answered our questions in barely audible monosyllables. We talked about going to a special Bible school in east Thailand for people with leprosy. She wanted, to go, but her widowed father was unwilling for her to leave him. After we talked, to him, he agreed that she should go to the leprosarium in Chiangmai. Before we left, she seemed to be taking a new hold on life.

We learned that it had been several years before this that Suapee had first discovered the symptoms of leprosy on her ankles. She had been a teacher at the time, and so had to wear the western style, short, blue skirt prescribed for teachers. As the marks on her legs grew worse and she lived in daily, hourly fear of being detected, she decided to give



up her beloved profession in order to hide the ugly marks under the traditional ankle-length Thai sarong. She went secretly from one doctor to another. Some tried to burn off the macules (a standard witch doctor practice) but only succeeded in adding black scars to the white macules. Others gave her medicines that made her ill. Each took as much money as possible but made her no better.

Keeping the secret from her family, she brooded over her affliction for months which, lengthened into years. How much longer could she keep her shameful condition hidden? Would it spread to the rest of her family? Her aged father was disgusted with her for giving up teaching for no apparent reason, but he sent her to a trade school where she learned sewing and hair dressing. When she came back section of his store for her work shop.

She did a thriving trade, for she was popular with everyone, but her conscience gave her a bad time whenever she set someone's hair, knowing that she was a leper who would some day look no better than the noseless beggar who sat on the street holding out his fingerless palms for food or money. Instead, of beautifying her patrons, she was probably giving them her dread disease. How they would hate her when they found out! How she hated herself!

One Sunday morning as she sat in front of her shop listening to the missionaries who stopped near by to sing and tell about Jesus, her heart was unusually stirred by the stories about the One who could heal both body and soul of any who came to him believing. Surely she needed healing in her soul,too. After thinking it over for many weeks, she went to the home of the missionaries and there she prayed, receiving Jesus as her own savior.

Though those missionaries were transferred and replaced by others, she went regularly to the mission home for instruction in the Bible and for Sunday morning worship. She also went to Rahang and became acquainted with the Christians there. She was especially delighted in meeting with the Christians at Beautiful Woods. It seemed marvelous to us that such a beautiful, sophisticated young woman should have such a heart of love and sympathy toward these poor, maimed, ignorant leprosy patients.

She still could not bring herself to tell the missionaries that she, too, had leprosy and needed the medicine they were giving to the others. She was afraid that she would lose their close friendship if they knew of her disease. This made her mental anguish and her sense of guilt greater than she could bear.

Early one Sunday morning, before the rest of the family awoke, she arose and got a small bottle of sleeping pills which she had bought from a medicine shop. She filled a silver bowl with water, sat down and took the pills a few at a time, gradually washing them all down her throat. Then she went back to bed.

Hours later her older sister realized what had happened. With drastic measures (red hot coals on the soles of her feet) she aroused Suapee out of her sleep of death and kept her moving until the effect of the drug had diminished.

That evening Elly and Marta came to see if she were ill, as she had not been to their house as usual that morning. The final result was an examination in the privacy of Elly's bedroom, a shocking discovery, and the unburdening of a long oppressed heart and mind. About a month later Suapee was baptized, then went to Chiangmai to spend several months in the leprosarium during which time she studied Bible courses and helped in Christian work. After her discharge, she returned to Kampanget

We had hoped that Suapee would help in the leprosy clinics at Prandatai, and at first she seemed enthusiastic. But shortly after this she fell in love with a non-Christian Chinese. Anxious to keep him from learning that she had leprosy, she stopped coming to meetings and carefully avoided all association with missionaries or with people who had leprosy. The last time I saw her, she was polite and friendly, but she did not want to talk about the Lord. After her marriage we completely lost contact with her. Some years later a woman whom she had known as a fellow patient met her in Chiangmai where Suapee had a beauty parlor not far from the leprosarium. But she would not recognize her old friend.

Recently I was in a church in a small, isolated, government-controlled leprosy colony up north. While talking to some of the members after the service, when they learned that I had once lived in Kampanget, they said, "Then you must know Suapee. She came to our village recently and spoke in our church." You may be sure I rejoiced to hear this.

\* \* \*

In the Rahang market, there lived a young boy named Ouan, which means "fat." Perhaps he had been fat as a baby, we knew him. The conspicuous thing about Ouan was a tongue which was so large it protruded from his mouth and hung down about six inches beyond his lips.

During Fern's first year in Thailand, she had trachoma,

and not yet having learned to ride a bicycle, had to walk every day to the hospital, about three miles, to have her eyes treated. As she walked through the market, she often noticed eight year old Ouan sitting in front of his house. The flies swarmed about his monstrous tongue. The other boys would not play with him. Eating was difficult, and he could scarcely make himself understood when he talked.

One day as she passed by, Fern called to the boy, "Come along with me to the hospital."

He went. Fern asked the doctor whether anything could possibly be done about his tongue. After examining the boy, the doctor replied that nothing could be done; he would have to remain that way as long as she lived.

Fern could not forget the "boy with the tongue." She kept hoping and praying that some help could be found for him.

Years later, after the leprosy work had been started, Ouan and his older brother, Help, were among those who were examined and found to have leprosy. In fact, one authority said, the abnormal growth was a result of the leprosy. With several months of treatment with the new sulphone drug, it began to decrease in size until it was about two inches shorter. But there the improvement stopped.

Some time later, Dr. Ed McDaniel of Chiangmai became interested in Ouan's case and said he would operate on the boy if he came to him. Next time we went to Chiangmai, we took Ouan and his brother Help with us. Help was to stay with Ouan in the hospital to care for him, according to the custom of all Thai hospitals.

A successful operation was performed and Ouan's tongue was reduced to normal. It was then discovered that he could not close his mouth. The weight and bulk of the tongue over the years had so affected the shape of his jaw that it could not come together. Dr. McDaniel planned an operation on the jaw bone, but during the few days of waiting in the hospital, the boys became homesick and early one morning disappeared.

Ouan was glad to be rid of the tongue. He and Help began coming regularly to the Sunday morning worship. Both professed to believe and Help sometimes led in prayer.

# XXI

## THE END OF A TERM

The Christmas of 1955 was the happiest in all my memory. Two weeks before Christmas our little angel came to us. We were at Chiangmai when he arrived. Four days later I left the hospital to stay in the home of Dr. Ed McDaniel. Bill returned to Rahang, as it would be ten days before I could take little Robby on the rough two-day trip. In fact, Dr. Ed said I should wait three weeks, but I kept thinking of the Christians at Rahang and wanted more and more to be with them at Christmas. So it was finally decided that I should go by plane the day before Christmas.

The night before I left, the McDaniels lit their Christmas tree. It was a beautiful one, the first Christmas tree I had seen for seven years. Charlotte McDaniel put little Robby, basket and all, on a small table under the tree. Propped up by a pillow, he blinked contentedly at the flickering colored lights while we ate our evening meal by candle light. The beauty of Christmas, the kindness of Ed and Charlotte, the unbelievable wonder of a little baby, and the staggering thought of the Creator of the universe becoming such a little one as this, all mounted up in my heart till I could not contain myself.

There were only two planes a week to Rahang, and I arrived on Christmas morning. By the time the airport car stopped in front of our house, it was eleven, and the worship service was in session. Hearing the car stop, the whole congregation jumped up in the middle of Bill's sermon and ran out to see the baby. Such happy greetings and exclamations of wonder over the little one. I had been away for six weeks and it had seemed like a long time to be away from these dear people. Nai Som was home from Bible School

and had walked all the way from Beautiful Woods (about four miles) to meet with the rest of the Christians. Others were there with beaming faces. We went inside and finally quieted down so that Bill could finish his sermon.

Yes, this was my happiest Christmas, up to that moment. As I sat there it began to dawn on me that several people were missing. Where was Boon Nak? Tiang? Then I learned the sad truth.

Boon Nak's parents had arranged for her to be married to a wealthy middle aged Buddhist. To avoid it, she eloped with the handsome young postman who brought our mail, and now lived in Hua Diat. And Tiang had a husband, too. There had been no wedding ceremony. She had gone to his home during the Winter Fair and his mother had encouraged her to stay and be his wife. Her sister, Nuan, had started living with a policeman, and had moved with him to Maesod when he was transferred, leaving her two small children behind, with her aged mother.

Nai Som Help had drifted off some time back. Having been healed of leprosy, he had begun working on Sundays instead of coming to church. Now he was going to great lengths to avoid meeting any of the Christians.

Ouan, the boy with the tongue, had a job with a truck company, and was never again seen at church.

Ta embezzled some money that a man at Ban Tak had left in her keeping. Although the church forbade her to take an active part in public worship until she made restitution and confessed some proven lies, she continued coming to Sunday service, glibly reaffirming her innocence.

Thus, by the time we were to go on furlough, the church had dwindled, one by one, till there remained only a few staunch souls.

# XXII

## OVER RUGGED WAYS

1956 was an eventful year for many of us. The first big event was Hans and Alma's wedding. It was our third W.E.C. wedding, and took place in the same house as ours and the Peters'. Wilf performed the ceremony and left the next morning for Chiangmai in order to be present at what was for him a more important event - the birth of a son who was expected within a few weeks. Evy had been far from well, so he was going ahead of time. He left Mark with us, and I was teaching Mark and Shiela Petterson, since I had to stay home anyway with three-month-old Robby.

A few hours after Wilf left, we received a telegram addressed to him. According to our usual agreement, we opened and read it. It was from Dr. Ed McDaniel, announcing the birth of the son.

It had been such an emergency that Evy had had to carried to the hospital on a stretcher in the middle of the night. Had she been staying any farther than the McDaniel's home across the street from the hospital, she would never have reached it alive. Dr. Ed operated on her immediately, and gave her several pints of his own blood to save her life.

Evy and wee Daniel were brought back to Rahang the night before we went on furlough.

When we left for furlough, I was in excellent health. Several times during the six and a half year term, I had been tired, thin, and anemic, but on the whole, these years had been the healthiest of my life. As a young person, I had always been physically below par; malaria; heart trouble; t.b.; an annual bout of flu. But now, despite this enervating climate and often unwholesome circumstances, the Lord had granted me an abundance of good health.



*The Charters with Robby*



*The Overgaards with Dani*

Our furlough of a year and a half was spent partly in Great Britain and partly in America. During the furlough, we received letters from Thailand, telling of the progress of the Christians and the growth of the church. This was especially true at Prankratai, where Marta and Elly had a large clinic for leprosy. Several of the patients had been converted, and a home had been established for the "clean" children of leprous parents.

Not all the events were pleasant. On one occasion, Elly was driving to Tak with a number of patients when their Land-Rover broke down and they were unable to repair it. Leaving the men to watch the car, Elly and the women took a bus to Tak where she asked Wilf to go fix the car. They left by bus at four o'clock the next morning, taking with them the money that would be needed for the Kampangpet and Prankratai stations during the next two months. When they had gone only a few kilometers, some shots rang out, and the driver came to a stop. Immediately a gang of bandits boarded the bus. At the point of guns, the passengers were all commanded to get off and lie in a row, face down on the road, without looking up. The first man in the row looked up and was immediately shot through the head. While some of the robbers searched through the bus, the others searched the passengers, taking any money, jewelry, or valuable articles they found. One ruffian, having ransacked Elly's purse, began looking for the gold chain on her neck. Most Thai women, unless very poor, wear gold chains. Finding none on Elly, he concluded that she must have hidden it, and expressed his chagrin by giving her a sharp blow on the head with the butt of his gun. After they had taken all the loot they could, the robbers disappeared into the jungle.

In that same year, Evy became ill again. This time it was cancer. And while in the hospital at Bangkok undergoing an operation, she also suffered, a desperate siege of amoebic dysentery, during which she nearly lost her life. She was still in the hospital when we arrived back in Thailand.

Another sad item of news concerned Moon. She had met a young man from Chiangmai named Pun, who told her he was a Christian. They wanted to get married. When the Overgaards and others became acquainted with him, they strongly doubted his sincerity and did all they could to discourage her from such a marriage. He was younger than she, seemed utterly lacking in character, and showed no signs of being a Christian. But Moon was lonely, and when he persisted in his suit, she consented.



From then on, Moon's life was one continual heartache. Pun worked now and then, but drank and gambled so much that he used up far more money than he earned. Moon earned almost all the money to support the family. During the next few years, five little girls were born into the family. There was much sickness, and frequently one of the babies was dangerously ill. Moon's leprosy, which had been almost well, returned in spite of continued medication.

One evening when Pun came home intoxicated, Moon, in a fit of temper, slashed at him with a large knife, wounding him severely. He fled to the missionaries at Hua Diat saying that Moon had tried to kill him. All the neighbors at the scene agreed that this had seemed to be her motive. After recovering from her rage, she was most repentant and sorry for what she had done. However this was not the only such incident. Pun was drunk so often that Moon wished he would never come home again. Never-the-less, when she learned that he was living part of the time with a woman in another town, her grief was intensified.

Kao hated Pun with all her heart and could not refrain from scolding and shouting at him continually. This in turn often drove him to further extremes of dissipation. Strong resentment arose again between the two sisters. Moon's love for the Lord cooled off considerably and darkness seemed to reign once more in the little house.

# XXIII

## THE ANCIENT CITY

Towering over the market place beside the river at Sukothai sits an enormous image of the Buddha. It seems to dominate the whole of that city, the first capital of Thailand, which is surrounded by the ruins of temples and palaces of long dead dynasties. These old ruins spread out over an area of many miles and are mostly covered with tropical vegetation.

The gigantic image gazes serenely on both the scene of past splendor and the contrasting sordidness of the present city with its rusty tin roofs, its filth-littered market square, its decrepit, unpainted houses, and its rickety bridges over scummy green pools. The whole area is swampy and during a large part of the year, is submerged with water. The streets are built up with dirt and gravel carried in from a distance, and the few brick buildings sit on land fills. The majority of the houses stand above water on stilts, and are connected with the street by a series of bridges and porches.

The lips of the ancient giant curve into a complacent smile. Though the glory has departed from his city, he holds unquestioned sway over the swarms of impoverished people living in the wretchedness of prostitution, gambling, and opium addiction, and steadily increasing in number and thronging piously to the temples every eighth day to give their offerings for the building of more, of bigger, and of richer temples.

This is the town to which we came at the beginning of our second term. Fern Berg and others had been there for about five years and had established leprosy clinics in Sukothai and other towns of that province. They also held English classes which were attended by high school stu-



dents and government officials.

The house in which they lived was a very old one, having once been the stately home of a wealthy family. But now it, too, was in a state of decay. It had once been surrounded by spacious gardens and orchards, but little by little the land had been given over to other things until now it was closely hemmed in by a garage and mechanic shop in front, a rice mill on the left, pig sties and small shacks on the right, and in back, a wild, overgrown swamp. The rice mill used the chaff for part of the fuel, and burnt chaff was continually pouring from the tall smoke stack down onto and into the house so that any uncovered food or water, the beds, furniture - everything had burnt chaff in it. Our water supply was the slow, muddy river which served as the city's bath and laundry as well as for the disposing of garbage, dead animals, and sewage. Herds of pigs wandered and wallowed about the miry yard, rubbing their muddy backs against sheets or clothes that hung too low on the clothes line. The roar of the rice mill, the riveting and pounding in the mechanic shop, the squealing of pigs and the blaring of radios all combined in the hot steamy atmosphere to make what I thought to be a totally undesirable environment. Fern and the others took it cheerfully and were satisfied to stay in that location because it was easily and inconspicuously accessible to high and lowly, to leprosy patients and scholars alike.

On Sundays, a small group of believers gathered on the veranda to worship, study, and pray. They also had rented a small shop in the market where they held weekly children's meetings and evangelistic meetings. Each week there was a trip to one of several out-lying towns where they had leprosy clinics, conducted meetings, and distributed tracts.

A few months after we arrived, Fern moved to Kampanget and we moved to a new house in another part of town. Robby was now nearly two, and it was essential that he have a dry place to play and protection from contact with leprosy. This new house was smaller, but more convenient, was surrounded by solid ground, and had a cleaner water supply. Beside it we built a little sala to use as a dispensary for the local leprosy patients so that they need not come into the house.

Before we were completely settled into the new house, we rented another large room in the market of Sri Sumrong, about twenty kilometers from Sukothai, where we stayed five days a week through December and January. Our room there was one of a long row of one-room apartments with

the whole front wall opening onto the street, and inhabited by large, low income families. We used the room both for meetings and living quarters.

When crowds filled the room during the evening meetings, I put Robby to bed in his little play pen out in the small court yard behind the house. A mosquito net with solid muslin top was draped over the pen. The neighbors on both sides made comments of pity and reproach at the thought of a child sleeping out in the dark court yard, but he was safe and comfortable. It was the Christmas season, and in the early mornings the top of his net was wet with dew. My mind went back to the beautiful Christmas hymn:

*Cold in His cradle the dew drops are shining,  
Low lies His head with the beasts of the stall.  
Angels adore Him in slumber reclining,  
Maker and monarch, and Saviour of all.*

From Heaven's glory, God had sent His own Son down into far deeper poverty, filth, and discomfort than this.

Then it was Christmas night. Bill had been teaching an English class every afternoon to the teachers at the government school, and this evening he planned to tell them the Christmas story. He was later than usual in getting home, so when I had finished feeding Robby, since it was getting dark, I decided we should go and wait for Bill at the restaurant where we often ate supper. It was a little Chinese restaurant with rough, unscrubbed wooden tables and benches. Soon after I had ordered the fried rice, Bill arrived with a beautiful little basket of roses which the teachers had given us for Christmas. How delightful to have someone realize that it is Christmas! How much more wonderful it would be if they could truly celebrate Christmas.

We ate our fried rice quickly and hurried back to our room where a big crowd of children waited outside the door to hear the Christmas story for the first time.

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In Sukothai, as in Tak, there were quite a number of those who believed, prayed, and worshiped with us for a period of time, but who could not stand the tests and fell away. But one true, faithful Christian was a sweet little old woman whom we called Pa (Aunt) Fong Kum. She had leprosy, and had become a Christian many years before when she was a patient at the leprosarium in Chieng Mai. Now she lived with a married daughter whose husband was opposed to Christ. The whole family did all it could to discourage Pa Fong Kum from going to church, or from talking to anyone about the Lord. In fact they showed their resentment against



Robby, playing with the neighbour boy, "Fat".



"Now, where did I  
leave that cat?"

Rosemary put the  
cooking, charcoal stove  
and charcoal stove  
out for you to see.

They do all their  
cooking + baking  
on the little stove  
seen just over the  
left shoulder

her in every way possible. Even her grandchildren were encouraged by their father to hold her in contempt. He was an alcoholic who had at different times spent thousands of baht on institutional cures in Bangkok, only to sink back again into his old state. Still he ridiculed and fought against the faith of his mother-in-law.

Fong Kum came to Sunday services faithfully. Many times she was the only Thai worshipper. Later, when we were a larger group and had a Sunday school, she taught the class of younger children. She still had leprosy, so she kept her shoes on in the house, and she sat aloof in a chair, taking care not to touch the children who gathered around her feet on the floor.

Three roads lead out of Sukothai: to Rahang, to Sawankaloke, and to Pitsanuloke. These roads have many villages all along them. If we had a car, we thought, we could reach these towns easily. Being quite sure that this was the Lord's will, we started praying for a car. Just about that time, a very dear friend in America living on a small widow's pension, felt that the Lord wanted her to give us some money. From her savings, the result of her frugal living, she sent us money saying she thought we ought to have a jeep. This was a great thrill to us, as we had not told anyone about our need of a car, except for a few poor Thai people who knew we were praying for one. And now we were able to demonstrate to them that God answers prayer.

The car was a great help. We were able to visit villages in our area frequently. Villages in the jungle were still hard to reach, but the jeep was able to get to some of them. Sometimes as we started out along an ox cart trail in search of a village of which we had heard, we would get hopelessly lost. Tall bushes and stumps grew up in the middle of the trail, things that an ox cart could pass over easily, but which caught the axle of the jeep. Much time was spent cutting away stumps, digging out little hillocks, or filling in deep ruts. Sometimes the path faded away and we discovered that we had wandered off it. Bill had to get out and disappear into the jungle, looking for the path, while I sat and read "Peter Rabbit" to Robby and honked the horn occasionally to give Bill his sense of direction. After some time, much prayer, and several times through the antics of Peter Rabbit, we always found, our way back to the main road - sometimes without having found the village for which we had searched. Some of those villages have not yet, to this day, been reached with the Gospel.

One evening in a tiny village on the highway about

twenty kilometers from Sukothai, after the preaching, Bill announced, as we often did, that if anyone had leprosy, or knew of people with leprosy in the vicinity, they should tell us or come to our home in Sukothai and we would give them medicine. Some of the folks pointed to a small hut and said a woman lived there who had leprosy.

We climbed a flimsy ladder into a wretched house. A thin, emaciated middle aged woman lay in filth on a dirty mattress. Her hands, feet, and face were badly corroded by the leprosy. Her legs had deep ulcers, and, unable to straighten them, she had been bedridden for a long time. Flies, maggots, and the strong smell of rotting flesh added to this dismal scene, and to her desperate plight. Her husband had left her long ago for another woman, and the only person to help her was her eight year old son. He carried water for her from the nearest pond. He begged for fish and rice, or stole what food he could. But in this isolated village, food was hard to find, and his emaciated little legs could not take him far. He, too, had macules of leprosy on his face and back. The disease progresses rapidly in half-starved bodies such as his. The woman's name was Cobweb. Her gratitude for the medicine and vitamins we gave her was touching. She could read, so we left her with several tracts and booklets.

During a later visit, Mrs. Cobweb told us that she was a believer. Both she and her son prayed every night. A few months later, she came with the others who gathered under a tree where we held regular meetings. Next we knew, she was working at little jobs to earn money, and the last time we went to that village, she had gone away to work picking peas.

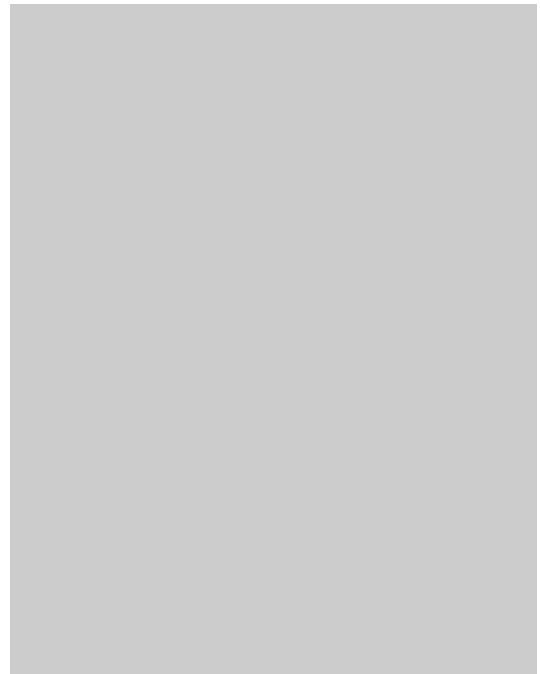
These outings to the villages we often called picnics. We took sandwiches and a thermos of coffee. Sometimes we found a pleasant, shady, attractive place where we rested while Robby played. Other times we just drew up to the side of the road and sat in the car to eat.

One day a leprosy patient came to the house for medicine. I went down and found a woman, not in the dispensary, but sitting on a bench under the house, embracing a little boy on her lap. And that little boy was our Robby. I sent him upstairs and invited her into the dispensary.

This was not his first contact with leprosy by any means. In spite of our most watchful care, unforeseeable incidents would occur. But our Heavenly Father kept him, delivering him from all infectious diseases. Robby had sore trials, but not from tropical diseases.

After we had been in Sukothai for two years, Bill had occasion to go to Maesod, and from there to Paday to visit Bob and Alice Peters. It was one night during this brief visit that he began to feel strongly drawn to the Karen people. We had been praying that the Lord would send more missionaries to the Karen. Perhaps He meant us to go ourselves. After coming home, he felt this more and more strongly. He decided to contact some Karen villages on our side of the mountains and start studying their language. But when he mentioned this at the annual conference, the missionaries at Maesod felt convinced that we should move to Maesod and minister to the young church there while studying with a Karen teacher who lived in that town.

As Fern's return from furlough was imminent, it was decided that she should work at Sukothai again, with Kay Baxter as her partner.



# XXIV

## PRANKRATAI

It was a hot day. We had had car trouble along the way, and were sunburned, drenched with perspiration, and plastered with dust as we climbed the stairs of the mission house at Prankratai.

Marta and Elly had started work here years ago, and had later been joined by Elsa and Hanna, both from Denmark. Elly had recently returned from furlough, and Marta had just left for hers. We sat on the rattan chairs on the porch, and gazed out across the green rice fields that surrounded the compound on three sides and extended to the purple mountains in front of us.

Bill, Duane, Robby, and I had just come from Sukothai on the other side of those mountains. We had spent a night on the way at Toohn Luang where we had a leprosy clinic, then had explored our way across rice fields, over oxcart trails, along river beds, until we reached Prankratai.

Several wee children stood watching us from across the porch. One charming three-year-old came and leaned her elbow on my knees and looked up into my face with her big black eyes. I remembered her. This was Tongbye, whom I had cared for when she and Robby were only a few weeks old. And there stood Moses and Timmy, peeking around the edge of the door. Hanna was dressing a baby, Elly was spreading a cloth on the tea table, and Elsa was scurrying to make lime juice for us.

"Where's that block of ice?" Elsa called from the kitchen.

"The prince is still lying on it, isn't he?" answered Elly. She lifted the edge of the plastic under an incredibly small baby on a table, and there, sure enough, was a block of ice. "I guess he'll let you have a piece, though." She lifted the



baby with the padding under him while Elsa chipped a few pieces off the block.

"Is he really a prince?" I asked.

"No," she said. "We just call him that because we all spend so much of our time waiting on him. He is premature, and weighed only one kilogram when he was brought to us. We were so sure he would not survive that we had a little box ready and a place picked out for the grave. But by keeping him warm at night and cool during the days and feeding him every hour through a tube, we've kept him alive and he is gaining weight." She arranged the plastic and padding on the ice block and laid him down again. "He can't suck or swallow yet."

The afternoon shadows were lengthening across the fields. A refreshing drink, a cool bath, and a little rest, and we felt ready for what had brought us to this place.

Bill had been asked to come to Prankratai to baptize the first group of Christians. Now they were beginning to gather in the *sala* beside the house. There was a young carpenter named Nai Payone and his wife; a boy named Chalerm whose face was sadly disfigured by leprosy; his mother; and another young man named Chalong. They all had leprosy except the wife of Payone.

Someone had located a place in the rice fields where there was a good clean pool of water. Elsa remained home with the babies so that the nurse maids could come and watch the baptism. We all helped to carry the other children. I carried Moses. We walked along the tops of the dikes that separate the fields. Most of the way, the rice was as high as our heads, but whenever we reached a spot where it was lower, or where the dike was higher, I stopped a moment to look out over the sea of brilliant green at the beautiful sunset. One could not look around while walking for fear of stepping off the dike. In fact nearly all of us did fall, baby and all, into the rice at least once. When I did, I had quite a time getting Moses out of the bull rushes.

At last we came to the pool. There was enough open space around it for us to stand together and sing a hymn. Then the five were baptized. After that we wound our way back to the *sala* where we had a Bible study.

The church at Prankratai was a growing one, though there were casualties. Two of the greatest temptations in Prankratai were gambling (government lottery) and the smoking of marijuana. And leprosy offers more than physical handicaps. The social stigma and the mental depression caused by the disease call for greater dependence upon

God. Some, like Chalome, stumbled and floundered, miserably. Others learned to lean upon Him. Though Payone, the carpenter, found it hard to support his large family with his crippled hands, yet he plodded on with determination and was a source of inspiration and blessing to the whole group. Others were added to the church from time to time.

More children came to the home, too. Although there were never enough helpers, and the missionaries were greatly overburdened with work, there was always one more child in such a plight it simply could not be turned away. After the "prince" passed out of danger, a pair of twins was brought in, in the same condition, each weighing about two pounds. Both had to be fed through tubes and kept on ice. Sometimes all the babies were sick at once. Someone had to be on duty all night.

"Have you had any deaths among the babies?" I asked Elly.

"Yes, just once," she said. "A woman found a baby out in the jungle. Its father and mother had died and it had been taken to the grandfather, a witch doctor. He sacrificed it to the spirits. He put clay into its ears, over its eyes, and in all the openings of the body. After that, he took it into the jungle and laid it on an ant hill - you know those red biting ants. A woman came by later, picking bamboo shoots. She heard a faint cry so she searched until she found the baby. It was covered with ants and large parts of its flesh were eaten. She put it into her basket and brought it to us. We got it cleaned up and put ointment on it, but it died during the night."

The tender mercies of the heathen! Many folks at home have tried to persuade me that these people don't need missionaries.

About two years later, we were at Prankratai again for a Bible study conference. This time Marta was there and Elly was gone. She returned to Denmark because of illness. The newly married Duane and Jackie Olsen were living in a house in the market.

All the children had been adopted by Christian parents in various parts of the country, except for two who were decidedly retarded, and they had been accepted by a government institution in Bangkok. So now the missionaries had more time and strength for evangelistic work and the leprosy clinics.

One of the maids who helped care for the children was Tonbye, the girl who was baptized about five years before at Beautiful Woods, and who had gone to the leprosarium in

Chiengmai. She had been cured completely and sent back. Now she was a lovely young woman, though still very tiny and shy. And now she had an admirer! Merit was a near neighbor. In spite of his pock-marked face, he was handsome, had a self confident, graceful manner, and a winsome personality. But he came from a family of drunkards, gamblers, and drug addicts. They were notoriously "black hearted" and pugnacious. Merit shared in all these vices. He bought Tongbye a gold neck chain and asked her to marry him. Little Tongbye was attracted and thrilled by this first admirer in her life, but she told him that she was a Christian and could not marry anyone but a Christian.

"All right," said Merit, "I'll become a Christian."

He went to Duane and Jackie and told them he wanted to become a Christian and marry Tongbye. One is usually skeptical about such motives for conversion, and Duane explained to him not only the way to Salvation, but the dangers of making a false stand. Never-the-less he encouraged him to study the Bible and to come to a conference which was to begin soon. Thus Merit was among those who sat in on all the classes.

The conference was for Christians with leprosy, and they came from several other stations. There were a few well folks, too, and Merit. At the end of the conference, several more of the Prankrathai Christians were baptized. By this time the church had grown considerably. Elders and deacons had been elected, and it was they who decided who was ready for baptism. During the conference, Merit had testified to faith in Christ, and confessed his many sins and vices. At the end, he testified that the Lord had given him the power to overcome strong drink and marijuana. His voice had a convincing ring, corroborated by the radiantly joyful look on his face. The elders were convinced of his earnestness, but they felt that he had not had time for testing. However, several months later, the change in his life and witness were so convincing that Merit was accepted into the body of believers and baptized.

Not long after this, there was a beautiful, though simple, church wedding, and the establishment of a happy Christian home.

# XXV

C.L.C.

Muriel Sjoblom sat at the dining room table with stacks of envelopes and lists of addresses before her. It was the time for sending out the periodical "shop letter." But more than addressing envelopes, Muriel was praying. It was only a few days till Thanksgiving day. Her brother, Paul Davis, with his family from East Thailand, were in Bangkok for a visit. Muriel had promised that, after their years of separation, they should have Thanksgiving dinner together this year.

But there was nothing in the kitchen purse. The only money she had was for the cook's wages, which had to be paid on the Monday after Thanksgiving. And in order to have good meat for the dinner, they had to order in advance. Yesterday Muriel had worked out a good but inexpensive menu which would cost only one hundred baht. (\$5.) Did she dare, would she dare, go ahead and order the groceries, trusting the Lord to supply the money?

The question in Muriel's mind, was not, "Can God provide?" but "Should I use the wage money for special things and trust God to provide more before the end of the month?" The Sjobloms had already proven that God can and will provide, and the harder lessons, that of waiting to find out His will. But what was His mind in this situation? To test them by providing the mere essentials - rice and soup - that would merely satisfy the hunger of four adults and nine children? Or was it His pleasure to give them extra treats for a Thanksgiving celebration?

It was a time of heart searching for Muriel. Was she willing to undergo the humiliation of serving her brother's family the kind of dinner she usually served her own and confess that they had no money to buy anything better? So far

the Davises knew little of their financial situation. She and her husband, Bob, had faced this question before they joined the Christian Literature Crusade less than a year ago. They had told each other and God that they would do His will and serve Him regardless of the kind of life He led them to live.

And now Muriel found that her heart had not changed. The peace of God ruled there. But she also had the assurance that the Lord wanted them to have a celebration dinner with her brother and his family this Thanksgiving. This morning she had ordered the groceries. Now she was praying in confidence that the Lord would answer.

Just then footsteps echoed up the stairway and Bob's tall figure appeared around the corner.

"What else do you want for the Thanksgiving dinner?" he asked.

"No! Really!" she exclaimed. "Tell me."

"Someone has sent us a gift of three hundred baht (\$15.) designated for our Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners."

Muriel leaned back in her chair with a sigh of gratitude. Bob continued speaking.

"That's one prayer answered, and here's another. We have our book store now."

For several months the Sjobloms had been praying for a building for their book store. This was the work for which they had come to Bangkok. After some searching, a suitable two-story building had been found in a busy shopping district. But the rent, like all Bangkok rents, was extremely high. They had not enough on hand to pay even a part of the first month's rent. Was this the store that God wanted for them?

Bob and Muriel had prayed for guidance, asking God that if this were the place of His choice, He would set His seal on it by providing several months' rent for it. Now a letter from America promised twelve hundred dollars, enough for a year's rent.

Around that Thanksgiving dinner table, the missionaries were able to tell of the many wonderful ways God had blessed them that year.

The Sjobloms started their work with the C.L.C. in Bangkok in June, 1958. This was by no means the beginning of their missionary career. Eleven years before, they had gone to China, but a year and a half after their arrival there, the communists had taken China, and Sjobloms went home. Later they went to East Thailand and worked with the Christian and Missionary Alliance. During that time,

Bob saw the great need for Christian literature, so while on furlough, they joined the Christian Literature Crusade.

Although this mission originated in the W.E.C., has the same principles and practices, and shares the headquarters, it is now an independent organization, committed to serve all missions alike in the production and distribution of Christian literature.

To leave the C. & M.A. was a hard step for the Sjobloms to take. Muriel had grown up in China under that mission, and most of their friends and some of their family were in it. They had always had the happiest relationships with the mission. Also, it meant giving up a comfortable allowance and joining a mission which guaranteed no support. In the CLC and WEC, each missionary looks to God only to supply all needs, and agrees not to make his needs known to man.

Most people would think it insanity for a couple with four children (and a fifth one on the way) to go to a foreign country under such conditions. The Sjobloms had learned that the only safe place for us and our children is in the center of God's will.

One of the greatest tests of faith in Bangkok was the high rent and high cost of living. Bangkok is known to be one of the most expensive cities in the world. Buildings are in great demand and hard to find.

Homes are hard to find, too, and the Sjobloms needed a better place to live. They sought, and the Spirit led them to the right house for a family. It happened at a time when Bob was ill. Their small, crowded temporary quarters were far from the book shop, requiring a waste of time and money traveling back and forth each day. Now the owner of the house demanded a new lease to be agreed upon, so they felt it was time to move.

One day, Muriel was in the book shop. During a lull in the work, she prayed about the need of a house, then stepped out into the street, leaving the Chinese helper to keep the store.

Oblivious to the throngs of people rushing along the sidewalks, the unceasing din of heavy traffic, the rows of big shop windows filled with merchandise, Muriel walked away, praying for guidance. She turned into the first small street, then into another, until she found herself in a quiet lane. The bustle and din were left behind. Through high green hedges, she could see attractive homes surrounded by green lawns and flower gardens. One small house caught her attention because all its shutters were closed. She in-

quired of a woman hanging clothes nearby who summoned a little boy to take Muriel to the owner of the closed house. This was the house to which the Sjoblom family moved.

As the work in the bookstore expanded, there was more need for help. Bob and Muriel prayed for Thai and Chinese helpers. The Lord sent a Chinese Christian named Tak Dow. He had been the pastor of a church, but now he and his wife, Soyung, felt the Lord was leading them into the same kind of work that the Sjobloms were doing. They also had five children, and had been accustomed to a good, income. Of course it was hard for them, too, to decide to leave their old position and take a job which guaranteed no salary. But, like the Sjobloms, they decided to go with God all the way, and trust Him to provide for them and their children. They moved into a flat above the book shop.

Soon after that a Thai couple also joined them.

In order to conserve both time and money, the three families started eating their noon and evening meals together. Soyung was a good cook, and knew how to make the tastiest Chinese food from whatever was cheapest and most available. She took charge of the cooking and buying. Each day the Sjobloms went to their apartment and sat on stools with little rice bowls and chop sticks or Chinese spoons. They felt quite at home with the Chinese family.

With three different nationalities living and working together, there were naturally problems in personal relationships. Many differences in customs, diet, language, and personalities can easily lead to an unhappy situation. But as the group gathered together regularly for prayer and discussion of their mutual problems, the Lord taught them many things about love, forbearance, and faith. It was agreed that when the Thai were present, only Thai should be spoken, even between Tak Dow and the Sjobloms, although they were more fluent in Chinese.

Besides the work of the book store, which included a growing mail order department, a full time job in itself, Bob and Muriel became involved in many other activities around Bangkok, such as Bible classes, English classes, and substituting in various pulpits. This made their days and evenings very full indeed.

But one hour a day was sacred, the family prayer time right after breakfast. It was a time for singing favorite songs, a Bible reading, followed by a question for each child to answer, an explanation, or application to daily life, and prayer in which each child took a turn.

There were often visitors at the morning prayer time as

### **Ongoing Work of Prasert Bookstore** *by John Moorhouse*

I worked in Prasert Bookstore for two years - 1967/68, while looking after WEC's customs and immigration setup.

Prasert was a 2 storey building on SILOM ROAD. The Chinese and Thai books were downstairs and the English

the Sjoblom home was always open to those of us who lived, up country, and who had to come to Bangkok on business. In spite of their crowded quarters, they always made room for us, and there was never a word of complaint from the children if they had to double up or sleep on the floor.

Bob became our "official representative" in Bangkok for helping with negotiations and red tape in government offices whenever a new missionary arrived or when others returned from furlough.

Each year saw a satisfactory increase in the business of the bookstore. The rents were always the greatest problem. Keeping the store well stocked with the right books and the translation and printing of new books and tracts also required money. All this involved "high finances on a shoe string." With no margin of capital to fall back on, every undertaking had to pay for itself within its allotted time. As they sent large consignments of literature out to various parts of the country, they had to trust the Lord for prompt payments.

For the sale of books, Bob set a goal of \$1,500 per month.

"This," he said, "is the amount that would be required to put the store on a proper business basis. Each year we are getting closer to this goal. Our goal is in sight."

There are other plans and goals for the future, including setting up book centers in other large towns of Thailand, using book-mobiles to reach rural areas, and a closer coordination of the literature work of the various missions working in Thailand.

Bob and Muriel look back with thanksgiving for all the ways the Lord has blessed, guided, and provided, and look forward in faith and anticipation to the broadening horizons of the ministry of Christian literature in Thailand. Their testimony is, "With God, nothing is impossible."

language section upstairs. A Chinese couple (have forgotten their names) were there. Mary Leuwin was seconded to the bookstore to look after the English section, along with me. We also did the extensive Mail Orders. Bob Sjoblom was overall manager.

Rusty Walters from New Tribes Mission also put in several months during 1967, keeping me with the Thai dept. while Bob took a break.

Mary had worked with Nancy Ashcroft for a long time in the Karen Ministry.

Bob and Muriel lived on SOI PILKUL. Bob and I daily negotiated the traffic on his little motorbike, from there to SILOM RD and Prasert.

Rosemary and I married in 1967 and lived in the small 2 bedroom cottage adjacent to the Sjoblom's house. We lived in one room, the other being for the schoolroom for the missionary kids.

Sharon Wenberg was the teacher and Rosemary helped, also teaching guitar to some of the youngsters - Billy, Danny, Beth & Ruth. Brad came into it too as she was teaching him English vocabulary before the Olsens returned to the States for a furlough.

Another young man helped in the bookstore - his name was Somchai I think. We also had a Thai colporteur who visited the tours and markets. He presented me with a huge teak elephant when we left. It sits beside my desk, so I can't forget him and Prasert, could I?



# XXVI

## A CHURCH GROWS AT SAWANKALOKE

When Hans and Alma Seirhuis and their two little daughters returned from their first furlough, they moved to Sawankaloke (Heaven on Earth.) They rented a room in the market for church meetings. It was the very room we had rented and lived in about eight years before. Now it was cleaned, decorated, and made a suitable meeting place for the Christian Church.

It was a church beset by many problems. All the members had things in their past lives that needed to be remedied. Many of the new Christians had to learn the principles of honesty and business ethics which once were taken for granted by the western mind. Two men were deeply in debt.

Nai Seng supported his family by means of a "shop on wheels" a large, movable booth which he rolled to the market every day, loaded with plastic toys, cheap, gaudy jewelry, knives, trinkets, and cheap books. Among the books, Hans noticed, were a selection of the kind that Christians ought not to look at. When asked about them, Nai Seng replied that these were his most popular items, the most profitable things he sold. It took a long time and a real spiritual struggle before he could dispose of them and trust God to make his business succeed in a way that would honor Him.

There were moral issues, too. One young man who had



*Hans and Alma Seirhuis*  
*photo courtesy of Nancy Ashcraft*

been a Christian for several years, and had even traveled about as an evangelist, left his wife and went to live temporarily with another woman. The church dealt severely with him. He confessed his sin and was restored to the fellowship. He told us that after that he had greater joy than he had ever experienced before.

In most young churches in Thailand, getting the national Christians to the point of assuming responsibilities and leadership has been a problem. In Sawankaloke there were several persons with strong leadership qualities. The problem here was more one of getting the brethren to submit to one another and to study and learn in meekness before seeking leadership and authority. There were sometimes sharp contentions and factions in the church. But there were also blessed times of confession, reconciliation, and close fellowship.

Some of the Christians accompanied Hans as he visited neighboring towns and villages, and then started going out on their own initiative. Soon there were believers in other places around Sawankaloke.

In one town, Sri Sumrong, Hans met a young priest named Sanit. Sanit listened to the gospel many times and became more and more interested. One day he came to the Seirhuis home at Sawankaloke and said he wanted to confess his sins and become a Christian.

There were several problems confronting him. He had been a priest for four years and had attained to a high degree. He had no home but the temple, and no means of earning a living. When he laid aside his priestly robes, where could he get money to buy ordinary clothes? Jobs were hard to find. His parents, who had helped him financially to enter the priesthood, would not be willing to help him leave Buddhism. Would Hans be willing to help him in some of these problems?

Hans and Alma had no money laid aside for emergencies. Was the man sincere? If he were, Hans would be willing to sacrifice anything that would help him. We had all seen many false converts, and it would not be strange for a priest desiring to leave the priesthood to choose this method of getting reestablished in laity. After seeking guidance, Hans was convinced that he should believe Sanit and help him. So the saffron robe was exchanged for a shirt and trousers.

Not long after this, it was arranged for Sanit to move to Rahang to teach in the language school. Twelve new missionaries each needed two or three hours a day of instruc-

tion. During the days that Sanit taught Thai, he investigated the Bible, and talked with his students, the missionaries. He grew in spiritual truth and knowledge, and learned to apply Christian ethics to his life, and to get guidance from the scriptures.

Sawankaloke had a large Chinese population. Sometimes Hans went to the Chinese graveyard, a secluded place where he found the solitude he needed to pray. One morning as he sat on a tomb, a young Chinese man named Seng saw him there, and turned in to the cemetery to ask how to become a Christian. Nai Seng and Hans soon became fast friends. Seng and his wife both became Christians. They joined the small group of Thai Christians.

After them came others. Nai Hoo, a charcoal dealer, became such an ardent witness for Christ, speaking to all of his patrons about their souls, that he lost several of his good customers. Nai Un, a young bachelor, after becoming a Christian, went to Bible school, then was called to minister to a church in southern Thailand. There were two Chinese families that had been Christians for many years, and some of them also came to the church services.

Thus the little church grew, one by one, until there were about twenty baptized believers. Later on, the Chinese Christians in Uttradit sent some people who started a church in another part of town for the Chinese. So the word of God has been spreading with increasing speed.

# XXVII

## MAESOD

On the western border of Tak province, where the clear, north-flowing Muy River separates Thailand from Burma, lies the city of Maesod. It is isolated from the rest of Thailand by two steep, rugged mountain ranges. The narrow strip of plain between the mountains and the river is fertile rice land where a preponderance of the inhabitants are simple, northern Thai farmers. The surrounding mountains on both sides of the river are populated mainly by Karen tribes people.

Maesod is a cosmopolitan town, inhabited by Indian, Chinese, Burmese, and Mon traders. Where these merchants get all their wealth is a source of wonder to those who do not know about the lucrative smuggling that takes place all along the river, despite the border police and customs inspection stations at the point where the river dissects the highway from Maesod to Miawadi.

The Overgaards moved to Maesod in 1955 when the road over the mountains from Rahang was first completed. They worked there for about a year. Bob and Alice Peters went there to prepare for work among the Karen. Hans and Alma worked there till their furlough. When we arrived in 1959, the Peters were at

Paday, and Nancy and Mary were in Maesod studying Karen. They moved to Maw Ta about three months later.

Upon moving to Maesod, we sold our Jeep, as the Maesod roads were so bad that the vehicle was useless a good part of the year.

During the next hot season, we went to Chiangmai for a vacation. Two days later, we heard rumors, then news on the radio, that a large band of Karens had crossed the border from Burma and raided the town of Maesod. They had burned buildings, killed people, and looted the whole town. Having cut all wires and lines of communication, they had held the town in a reign of terror from three in the morning till nearly noon, when they had loaded the spoil onto all the ox-carts they could seize, had taken all the bicycles possible, and had returned across the border back into the jungle with about twenty hostages.

Three weeks later, when we were back home, we found that the report was more or less true. We half expected to find, a large part of town, including our house, wiped out by fire. Actually, only the police station, post office, and sheriff's office were burned to the ground.

At our house, we found the hasp had been broken from the door of the back porch (the only door that can be locked from the outside) and a board had been nailed across to keep it shut. Our neighbor ran over with a hammer and wrenched the board off for us.

"They shot the hasp apart with a gun," he said as he led us into the house. "And you should see all they did inside! Your bicycles are gone. No one has bicycles any more."

By then it was dark. We turned on the light and scores of neighbors came in to tell all the details of that terrible day. Our porch, which separated the kitchen and store room from the rest of the house, was littered with stacks of our belongings all mixed together: table cloths, books, clothes, stationery, bedding, etc. Two roofs meet at this point over the porch, and all the stuff had been rained on, and were now all moldy. In the other rooms, we found the same conditions. The contents of cupboards and trunks had all been emptied onto the floor and trampled on. Books were left open in piles.

The neighbors told us that everyone had lost hun-



*Behind our house in Maesod. The brush area to the right later became the site of the Gualtieri's house.*



*Some of the kids who came to play at our house in the evenings. Rosemary often used the opportunity for a children's meeting.*

dreds of dollars in bicycles, silver bowls, radios, jewelry, etc. Most of our possessions were not the sort that the Karens could use or sell, but they did take a few articles - Robby's old ragged mosquito net (they left our new one) one brown and one black shoe of Bill's, hair clippers, phonograph, camera, and a few new articles of clothing. Our sewing machine and typewriter had been taken, but discarded in a ditch on the edge of the fields, and the neighbors had brought them back, rusted, bent, and almost unusable.

We noticed that our kitchen, guest room, and storeroom doors had not been opened. Apparently the robbers had missed the fact that there was a row of rooms along that side of the porch, so none of the trunks belonging to Mary, Nancy, and the Peters had been touched. And there were our bicycles, safe in the storeroom.

Our house was full of bullet holes, and we picked up many home made bullets. Some of them had gone through the wall of the guest room, leaving a hole in the middle of each of the garments hanging in the closet.

One thought had made us glad: our house had been broken into along with all the others. Our neighbors confirmed us in our opinion as they stood there telling us about the raid.

"Many people say those Karens are Christians. But now we know they aren't. If they had been, they would have left your house alone."

Had our house been left untouched, it would have been a subversion of the gospel of Christ. Furthermore, we would certainly have been questioned as to why we left town just two days before the raid. And had we been in town, some of the bullets lying around the house would surely have found their way into our skulls. Or we might have been taken as hostages into Burma.

As it was, none of the things lost were essential, and we realized afresh how good had been the Lord's care and guidance in our lives.

That evening, Naw Manu, a young Karen woman, came to tell us that Saw Ukong, our Karen teacher, had been taken into custody at the police station. He was kept for over two weeks and questioned by many investigators, but finally they pronounced him innocent and released him.

"They treated me kindly," he told us afterwards. "The food was good, and they brought me an English newspaper every day."

When we first came to Maesod, there were three families from Mae Tow Klang, and several Christians in Maesod coming every Sunday to worship in our large front room. Now and then a new person would appear in the meeting, and Nai Laing or Nai Promma would announce that *Nai* so-and-so wanted to confess and pray. In the majority of these cases, the decision had been made before the person came to the meeting.

One woman who lived in Maesod started coming while she was still an unbeliever. Nang Toon was a quiet, shy, attractive young woman. Her husband, Nai Ta, had once had leprosy and had been to the leprosarium in Chiangmai years before. He regarded Christianity as a good thing, and felt a measure of indebtedness because of the care he had received from Christians. So when missionaries came to Maesod and started meetings, he felt he should go. But he was a busy man, so he sent his wife instead. As she attended, the meetings, she became more and more interested. She invited the missionaries to come on Sunday afternoons to sing hymns in her home, which was near the home of Massay and her mother, Massay Mo. Later, Nang Toon prayed and confessed Christ as her savior.

Nang Toon and Nai Ta had a son, Oot, whom they loved dearly. But now he was nine years old, and there were no more children. For years they had longed for another child. As soon as she became a Christian, she prayed and God answered her prayer with another son. Although Nai Ta still remained an onlooker, he rejoiced and acknowledged to all that God had answered his wife's prayers.

Nai Ta was a jovial, likable person, but he had enemies. One day while riding through the jungle in his ox-cart, he heard a gun shot, and a bullet whizzed past his head. He could see no one. Many days later, he had the same experience as he walked through a lonely place. He told his wife about the two incidents and she became alarmed.

"You mustn't go anywhere alone any more," she said.

"How stupid," he replied. "How can I support the family if I don't go anywhere?"

"Don't go anywhere without me," she insisted.

"You know they wouldn't shoot a woman. And if I am with you, they won't dare shoot for fear of shooting me."

The rains came, and the time of rice planting. As he did every year, Nai Ta moved out to a tiny bamboo hut in his fields. This year his wife, Oot, and the baby went with him. They were a happy, close-knit little family. Nai Ta and Oot, now ten, worked hard at the rice planting, while Toon sat on the porch singing, "When the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there." and nursed her baby.

Evening came. After supper, Nai Ta lit a fire under the edge of the hut to smoke the mosquitoes away. Then they laid bananas on a little wire grate over the fire to cook. Toon sat on the top of the ladder with the baby asleep in her lap. When Ta took the roasted bananas off the fire, he gave them to Oot to hand to his mother. She was just reaching down for them when a shot came from the thickets a short distance away. Nang Toon fell over backwards with a bullet in the base of her throat.

In stunned silence, Ta and Oot examined her for a moment and tried to do something for her. Then Oot darted into the darkness toward the trees from where the shot had sounded, shouting, "Who did this to my mother? Come out from there!"

The gunman was never found. But this tragedy was the beginning of a new life for Nai Ta.

"She didn't have to be there," he told us. "She was willing to risk her life for mine. She died for me. Isn't it just what Jesus did? Did He not give His life that I might live?"

Nai Ta had started coming to the services shortly before this incident, but from that day on, a real change could be noted. One of the first signs was a new attitude toward his enemies. His close friends and relatives came to ask, "Shall we take vengeance for you?" This is the usual procedure. Almost every murder is in retaliation, or it sparks new feuds. Vengeance is the unwritten law.

"No," said Nai Ta, "God is the Avenger. He will repay. All I can do is forgive, for God has forgiven me."

One of the Christians in Maesod was Nai Sang. He had many ailments, including leprosy and venereal diseases. He first came for help while Hans and Alma were in Maesod. They treated his sicknesses, and led



him to the Lord, and since he was a homeless beggar, they let him stay in a little house across the street which had been built by the town council as a rest house for weary travelers. It was a sturdy house, small, but solidly built of teak wood, with a tile roof. Here the Seirhuises were able to care for him when he was ill and helpless. Later the people of the district complained about the presence of a leper, so the council tore down the little house and rebuilt it beside the road just out of town, and allowed Nai Sang to continue using it.

After we came to Maesod, Nai Sang continued to come to the house regularly for medicine. He had a painful eye disease which never seemed to clear up. Before he left, we always had prayer with him, and whenever we heard him pray, we knew that he loved the Lord and knew Him in an intimate way.

Once, when we returned to Maesod from a trip, we noticed that Nai Sang did not appear. We went to his house. We left four-year-old Robby standing out by the road with our bicycles while we went into the little hut. Nai Sang had been ill, and his feet were so bad that he could not walk many steps from his house. From that time on, we had to visit him regularly, had to take him food, charcoal, medicines, and other necessities. Having no one with whom to leave Robby, we usually went one at a time.

Nai Sang grew steadily worse. Although he was now a saint whose sins were forgiven and forgotten in God's sight, yet his body bore the natural results of his early life. His whole digestive system was devastated and he had a severe case of dysentery. He had had several wives in the past, but they married other men and cared nothing about him. A young son had brought him food from time to time, until forbidden by his mother and step-father. Sang, the outcast, seemed completely alone. But he was not cast down. He still read his Bible, prayed, and maintained his trust in Gog. It seemed impossible that he would ever get better, and his greatest desire was to die and go to be with the Lord.

One evening as we sat by his bed, we prayed with him that the Lord would take him home soon. Such a prayer is a hard one for a strong, healthy person to pray, and the emotional strain was, for me, so great that we had to walk out in the rice fields for a while

till I composed myself enough to go back through town.

Nai Sang did not go immediately. There were still days of agony and waiting. He became so weak that we paid a woman in the nearest house to bring him warm sweetened milk twice a day. But we discovered that she left it at the door, just out of his reach, because she could not bring herself to set foot in his hut, so we had to go several times a day to feed him with a spoon.

Sang's dysentery was so virulent that his whole house reeked of it, especially his bedding and mosquito net. When he had still been able to buy and cook his own food, he had thrown the refuse into one corner. His dirty clothes and bandages were stacked in another corner. Both stacks were alive with maggots. Thousands of flies swarmed about the little hut. One day we left Robby with the cook and had a day of house cleaning. We carried out trash and burned it. I had tried to wash some of his clothes, but ended up burning them. Bill scrubbed the floor and walls with disinfectant. He had to control himself not to be sick in the process. We put clean cloth on the bed, but could not do much about the blankets and mosquito net. Finally we spread newspapers over the patient and sprayed the flies.

As we worked, neighbors who had always passed by Nai Sang without seeing him, came and stood staring in amazement.

"What do these foreigners think they are doing? How can they stoop so low as to contaminate themselves with this filth?"

Yes, it was strange from their point of view. Yet not strange at all. Had not the Holy One come down from the glory and purity of Heaven and borne what to Him was far worse filth than this - even our sins?

During those days, we washed our hands and arms so often with disinfectant that our skin became crackly and paper-like. If we took Robby, one of us tried to keep uncontaminated, and handled the clean things, thus could lift Robby on and off the bicycle. Robby was concerned about Nai Sang, though he was not allowed to see him, and often prayed for him. One day as we were going out to see him, Robby said, "Today Nai Sang is going to heaven and get new eyes."

Early the next morning, Bill left for the airport. He

had to go to Rahang for a meeting of the Committee. Soon after he left, a woman who Lived near Nai Sang came to tell us that he had died during the night. After going to see, and draping a clean cloth over him, I went around to the homes of all the Christians to tell them. We agreed, on a funeral in the afternoon. Saw Ukong, our Karen teacher, offered to provide a cart-load of wood for the cremation. He agreed to read a scripture message in English (he cannot read Thai) and to pray in Karen. Some of the women offered to bring flowers and wreathes. I went to the township office to tell of the death and to ask permission to use the little louse as a funeral pyre. That was before we had a church building and it had no burying grounds. They saw that this was the only solution, as no one would ever go into that house again. But we would have to have the fire engine there during the burning.

When the time came, all the Christians in the town, many of the neighbors, and the town fire department all gathered for the funeral in front of the little wooden house. The message of the funeral was that our brother, Sang, was now in heaven because he had had his sins cleansed by the blood of Jesus.

Finally everyone helped to load the fire wood into the house and under the floor. Several folks had brought bottles of kerosene, which they poured over the wood. A match was lit, and soon there was such a roaring fire that the crowd had to stand a way down the road.

I went home rejoicing that Nai Sang had gone to glory.



# XXVIII

## FRUIT AMONG THE KAREN

About one third of the Maesod congregation were Karen, and two or three of these did not understand much Thai. Bob Peters came down from Paday every few months, and while with us, preached a sermon in Karen. With our limited Karen language, we had been giving very brief talks after the Thai sermon. Without Bob's help, we could not have ministered effectively with the Karen Christians.

A few months after the Peters had returned from their furlough, they had the great joy of seeing their first converts. Naw Kha Pa and Naw Kha Mo became Christians. For Alice and Bob, life in Paday took on new meaning. Instead of just pleading and preaching to deaf ears, they could now minister to Christians, could teach new-born babes in Christ, and could have the spiritual fellowship they had longed for.

Naw Kha Pa and his wife removed their spirit shrines and took the fetishes down from their walls. At the start of the first rice planting season after their conversion, they took a big step, which cut them off from the rest of the village: they did not join in making the spirit offerings



*Mary Lewin with Robby on an ox cart as we were setting off for Maw Ta*

which are made every year to ensure a bountiful harvest. Instead, they made special prayer to God, asking for an abundant yield. This prayer was shared by our whole mission, for at this crucial point we were all eager to see God's children provided for, their faith strengthened, and Christ exalted in the eyes of the people of Paday.

Every step of this kind that the couple took meant renewed opposition on the part of their neighbors and kinsmen. Naw Kha Mo's father was a spirit doctor who especially loathed having them turn from the customs and religion of the tribe. When their last child was born, they had a struggle. The relatives came to perform the different ceremonies that have to do with the birth of a child. Bob and Alice were a constant source of encouragement to them as they spent much time in the little home, praying with them, helping and advising them. The Lord answered prayer, blessing them that year with a bountiful harvest of rice.

Like most of the Karen, Naw Kha Pa and his wife were illiterate, so one of Bob's first jobs after their conversion was to start teaching them to read. The man made more progress than his wife, but they both persisted and were eventually able to read their Bible.

I visited once with Naw Kha Mo while she sat at her loom weaving a dress for her daughter. She was a tiny woman, probably in her early thirties. Though her teeth were black, like all the other Karen, from a life time of chewing beetle nut, she had a beautiful, fine-featured face and a lovely smile. With my limited knowledge of Karen and her shyness, there were many long gaps in the conversation while I just sat silent beside her on the bamboo floor watching her weave, and her two naked little boys tussled and romped on the porch.

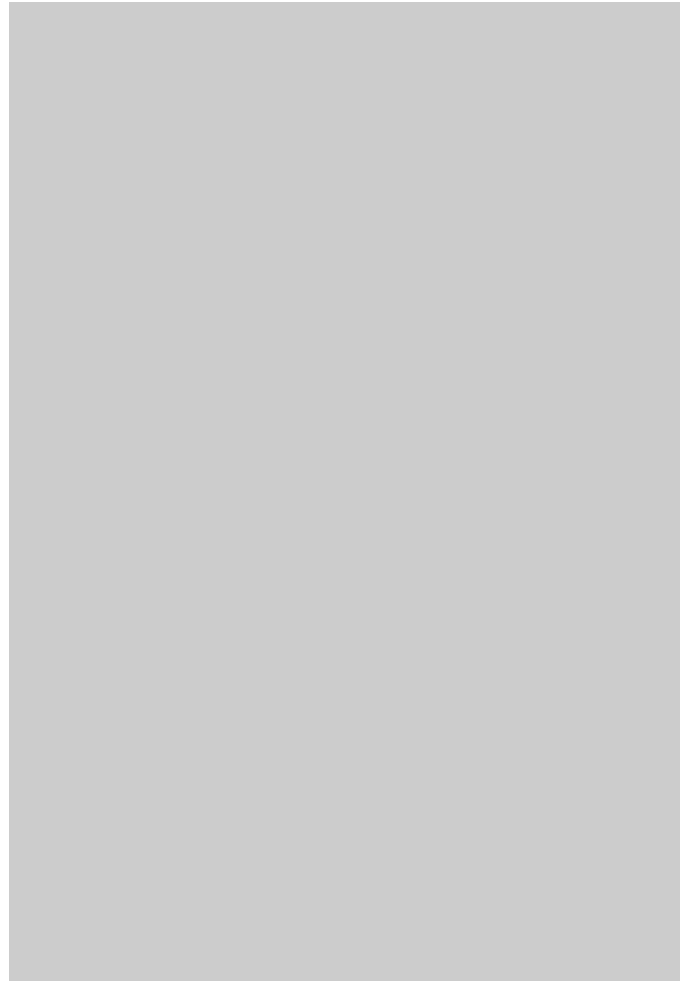
Naw Kha Pa went out on treks with Bob. This was not only a help and encouragement to Bob, but the testimony of a Christian Karen carriers more weight with the hearers. It was also a source of strength and growth for the new Christian. He learned to witness to the saving power of Christ, and increased in general knowledge by

his close association with Bob.

Soon after returning to Paday from a long trip, Naw Kha Pa got a chill which quickly turned into pneumonia. Bob and Alice sat by him continually, doing all they could for him, but he died the next day.

A few weeks after the death of her husband, Naw Kha Mo came to tell Alice and Bob that she could not be a Christian alone. It was too hard. In spite of anything they could say, her mind was made up. With a very sad face, she went back to the ways of witchcraft.

Everyone who saw Naw Kha Mo after that said she looked the picture of misery and darkness. At first she studiously avoided Alice and Bob. Lately she has become friendly with them again, and comes to their house from time to time. She has not come back to the Lord, but we believe that she will. We have faith that she is one of those of whom Jesus said, "No one shall pluck them out of my hands." We believe that the many Christians who prayed for that couple for years are still praying for this lonely, frightened little widow as she sits in the dark, demon infested house of her father.



# XXIX

## THE GROWTH OF A CHURCH

As the group of Christians at Maesod was growing, they decided it was time to build a meeting house. They had saved up money toward this for a long time, and land was already available, a large wooded lot beside Massay Mo's house. She had been paying taxes on the land ever since the Burmese Christians had returned to Burma during the war. Now she eagerly offered it to the church.

The men of Mae Tow Klang found a house for sale in their village one built of teak wood. They purchased it, dismantled it, and moved it on ox carts to the ground in Maesod. A day was set for us all to meet, make measurements for the post holes, and start digging them,

When the meeting house was nearly complete, lacking only the side walls, we held a Bible conference. The Olsens and Marta Persons came from over the mountains to help teach the classes, which lasted for five days. We brought the benches from our house for people to sit on, but they sat in rows behind them and used the benches to lay their books on. Everyone brought food, and at noon we put it all together and sat on the floor to eat. It was a happy time of fellowship as we got to know each other in a more personal way. We had church dinners from time to time after that.

During the conference, several Christians asked to be baptized. It was decided that they should be baptized in their own communities as a witness. On the Sunday that ended the conference, Nai Ta, his





parents, Fai Kaw and Nang Kum, and Sanay, M.M.'s granddaughter, were baptized in the stream near the church building. It was the first baptism service in Maesod. It was dry season, and the stream was low. We stood on a sand bar and sang hymns between each baptism. Over head, where the road ran long a high bank, stood passers-by witnessing what, to them, must have seemed a very strange ceremony.

That afternoon the whole church went out to Mae Tow Klang, about an hour's walk. Here nine more were baptized in the creek in front of Nai Laang's house. It was a beautiful, deep-bedded, shady creek with a sandy bottom, also nearly dry. The water was so low that the confessors had to kneel and be dipped forward.

The Sunday after the baptism, Bill preached about the Lord's Supper. He explained in detail the symbolism, the spiritual application, and the practical aspects of the ordinance of remembrance which we would observe the following Sunday.

When we arrived at the church the next Sunday, the whole congregation was there. The room was filled. On the floor in front of the pulpit lay a plate with a pile of what we would call cookies, and several bottles of orange pop. I wondered, as I sat down at the back of the room, whether the brethren had decided we should celebrate with some refreshments after the service.

During the sermon, Nai Ta, in the front row, turned around, surveyed the congregation, and beckoned Oot to come to him. I saw him give him something and whisper in his ear. Oot went out and rode away on a bicycle. A little later, he returned and made his way up to his father with a plastic bag filled with more cookies. They were a type then in vogue, made in Bangkok, cut and stamped to look like a pistol, which made them popular with little boys. The Thai call cookies by the same word that they use for bread. Under his arms and protruding from his hip pockets, Oot carried a few more bottles of orange pop. Nai Ta added these to the collection in front of the pulpit. Then it dawned on me what they were for.

Bill finished his sermon and during the hymn that followed, Sanay and I poured the tamarind

**reinforcements:** The Gualtieris were the first of a group of reinforce Lord sent out in answer to a united prayer. Soon after them came Jim from Scotland, Stan from England, Joekey from Holland, Agnes from Canada, Emma, Paul, Audrey and Diana from England, Bob, Shirley, and John from Australia, Cyril from Wales, Peter and Ruth, "Vigo and Ketti from Denmark, and Barbara from England. Within four years, twenty one had arrived. Most of these studied the language at Rahang for at least a year, under Ellen's and then Elsa's supervision. I might add that we also had five weddings within two years.



*Cyril and Barbera's wedding. Standing with them, L2R: Robby Charters, Ruth Gualtieri, Brad Olsen, Beth Gualtieri*

## Another MK Perspective

### *Beth Gualtieri*

My earliest memories -- must have been within months of being in Thailand -- I don't remember the states or the trip over at all -- are of the North House in Tak. They were building the bathrooms out at the back and were pouring concrete and the dogs walked on the wet cement and left footprints. I remember the big rocks out back.

I just read Cracked Earth again, and a couple things strike me --- it sounds scary and a bit dangerous -- they got sick, they had some physical sufferings with dengue and with just the difficulties of riding bikes everywhere and walking and



*Gualtieris: Art, Ruth, Beth (behind Ruth), Gini. Photo taken by Robby Charters at age 7 with a tiny camera he got for Christmas*



juice which we had brought along that morning into tiny Chinese cups, and cut bread into small morsels on a plate. After the reading of the scripture, Bill instructed Nai Laang and Nai Promina in distributing the elements to all who had been baptized. This included the thirteen who had just been baptized, four Karen Christians, and Bill and me.

It was a worshipful experience, and a blessing to the whole church as we prayed together in silence.

After the benediction, we talked together as usual before leaving. It was then that the men began to chuckle heartily as they told us of the "elements" they had brought for the remembrance supper. The dear brothers! We had forgotten to mention that we would bring the bread and drink. We had a time of good fellowship together as we sipped orange pop and munched on pistol cookies.

There was a small group of young people in the Maesod church which met together once a week, usually on Sunday afternoons. Saw Thoolay and Pisan took an active part. Star, Massay's oldest daughter, was the live wire socially, though not much interested in spiritual things. Sanay, the eldest of the group, was elected chairman. Naw Manoo, a cousin of Saw Thoolay, came regularly and enjoyed the fellowship in spite of the fact that she did not understand much Thai. Pon, son of Nai Promma often came from Mae Tow Klang. All the young people except Pon and Manoo took turns in leading the meetings and giving little talks. There was also a devotional message or Bible lesson from one of us. They practiced a choir number for the next Sunday, which we found was a good way to introduce new hymns, or to correct old ones that were incorrectly sung. None of the congregation could read notes and we had no piano to help the singing.

Meanwhile the church as a whole was growing slowly. We could see signs of development in each one as they took turns teaching lessons or leading meetings. To some, especially to Nai Laang, this was a great effort, for they had had little education, and he in particular felt that his brain had no ability to organize thought and retain knowledge. Bill helped them prepare messages from time to time. With effort and mental exercise, they all improved, and they progressed, spiritually.

sleeping on floors.

I don't remember *ever* being afraid, even when I broke my leg or when my mom was so ill and was at Manorom. I don't remember sensing fear from my parents. I know they were there 15 years later -- I'm sure by the '60s, everyone knew what they were doing. I remember an idyllic childhood, at the Yan-



Ruby, Isaac, Ruth. + Beth  
(It's kind of old)

hee Dam, swimming in the pool. On vacation at the place with the bamboo houses (the one where everyone got typhoid later) swimming in the stream. Playing with you next door with your pet gibbon in Maesod. I remember going up to the church at the end of town there -- again, I think we have at least a couple slides of that one. I

remember sitting on the benches trying to be quiet for ages.

I recognize the names -- Dara, Sanay, Sanit, Pa Raywadee, and many others. I guess I never heard their whole stories.

Again, I do NOT remember physical hardships. Sure it was hot sometimes, and we didn't have air conditioning. I never noticed not having hot running water. It seems normal to me to bath in a cement outhouse with an *ong* (earthen water jar) and a basin and a dipper. I remember helping the wash girls scrub clothes and rinse in basins. But that was fun (at least for me). I remember that our fridge, when we lived in Kampaeng Phet made *one* tray of ice cubes in 24 hours, so they were precious, but I never thought about missing anything -- it just was. I think our parents were very matter of fact and content with what they had and didn't have, so we felt the same. I remember in Chiang Mai that the other missions seemed to be "rich" but that was just an observation -- I never wished for anything.

I do remember the years of my parents' first term pretty vividly. I remember deciding as a little kid, during those years, that grown-ups must have forgotten what it was like to be child, and I was pretty determined to remember as much as I could. I remember Maesod and your family living next door, and your pet gibbon and how your house had the folding wooden doors across the front. I remember our house was up on stilts with a verandah

Nai Laang read an article on fasting and became so concerned that he came to discuss with Bill whether he should try fasting forty days and forty nights as Christ did. A hard-working farmer, he found it hard to fast even one day, but he did not want to miss out on anything.

At different times and in different ways, they experienced victory over besetting habits, such as smoking. Although we spoke in the church about presenting our bodies as a holy sacrifice to God, yet it was in individual, private experience and in reading their own Bibles at home that they really learned. Their faith was becoming existential, and at the same time, more articulate. They learned the thrill of witnessing to their neighbors and of going out to far-away villages to preach the Gospel.

Nai Ai came from Mae Tow Tai where spirit worship was especially rampant. One day he came to us in great distress. His neighbors had seen making incantations against him, and he had been having severe stomach pains and dizziness. With a dose of sodium bicarbonate, a talk about the power of God, and a time of prayer, he went away comforted.

In conversations at our gatherings, we learned about some of the beliefs and superstitions that had always been an integral part of their Lives, and about which they still wondered. We could not always tell them which of these things were real and which were merely a result of fear and imagination. But we could assure them that a true child of God has nothing to fear, and also warn them to have nothing to do with the works of darkness.

During our third year in Maesod, we were joined by another family of missionaries. Art and Gini Gualteiri, with their two little girls, Beth and Ruth, had been in Thailand a year when they came to live in the house beside ours. Their coming was a real boon to us, and to Robby, who now, for the first time had play mates. Sanay became their language teacher, and Star cooked for them. This was a source of spiritual help to both of these young women, as they took part in daily prayer and Bible study with Art and Gini.

One Saturday evening at the end of a Bible study conference, Robby was watching me prepare the el-

that ran almost all the way around, and that my dad had constructed a wooden toilet seat to go over the squat toilet so he could sit (the rest of us never used it -- I thought it was dumb). I remember playing with the neighbor kids and my friend Lapipan and how her toe was almost cut off once and they had to sew it back on. I remember my mom having leprosy clinics and how she would put all the chairs out in the sun afterward. I remember washing clothes with the helper girls -- my job was to rinse from one tub to the next. I remember mom trying to bake bread in a tin oven that sat over the charcoal stove. In Tak at the Middle House, I remember when everyone was sick, including Uncle Cyril -- and how he was so sick they had to buy market ice to put all around his body in the bed to bring down his fever -- they were afraid he was going to die. I remember that I didn't get sick until nearly the end and really wasn't as sick as everyone else. I do remember you living with us, I guess I didn't think about how your parents weren't there too. I remember the kids at the Chinese school next door -- we'd climb up in the trees overlooking their classroom salas -- and I think we threw pebbles down at them sometimes. There were a bunch of cement ongs in the back down towards the river and I think we crawled inside some of them once (they were empty). I remember playing hopscotch shaped like a rectangle -- when I got to the states and they did it their odd way, I missed the way I knew how. I remember playing blow the rubber band and if your rubber band landed over your friend's, you'd get to "capture" it -- some kids had a whole arm full of rubber bands. I remember your dad playing the accordion. I think Kay Baxter had one too. And Uncle Wilf had a guitar. The men sang WONDERFUL quartet music -- with Uncle Cyril, and Uncle Duane and my dad. Irish tenors are famous, but your dad didn't sing much, did he? *[Editor's note: Being that the quartet already included a Welsh hymn singer (Uncle Cyril), and an Italian opera enthusiast (Beth's own dad), my dad probably felt the addition of an Irish tenor would have been superfluous.]*

Anyway, yes. When I went back to Thailand in 1978, I spent the summer at the OMF bible school at Phayao, and I had no problem living in the girls dorm and pretty much spent all my time with the Thai girls -- there wasn't any language barrier to every day stuff. They wanted me to give my testi-

ements for communion the next day. He asked, "Mother, may I be baptized tomorrow and take communion too?"

He was seven, and had prayed some time before, asking Jesus to forgive his sins and be his Saviour. But he was afraid of water, so I was surprised that he should ask to be baptized. After asking him several questions about salvation and baptism, I sent him upstairs to ask his father. Bill talked it over with him, and gave his consent.

The next morning at Sunday school, Bill announced that before the main service, we would go down to the stream to baptize Robby. He asked whether any one else wished to be baptized. Oot did. Oot, we learned later, had wanted to be baptized before, but his father had thought a twelve-year-old was too young. Now Tai Ta gave his consent, and the two boys were baptized. We returned then for the rest of the service and the remembrance supper, and I'll never forget the unspeakably happy look on Robby's face as he took his first communion.

During the following week, four members of the church, including Saw Thoolay, went to Pitsunaloke to attend a conference of Christians from all over Thailand. This was a wonderful experience for folks who had never been out of Maesod. They met many Christians and learned in a new, though small way, some of the ecumenical aspects of the church. They all came home with different new lessons which they shared with the church. Nai Promma had been shocked, and distressed that a few men had come apparently with the purpose of bringing about division. But they had left after the second day, and from then on there had been a sense of unity and mutual love. Saw Thoolay had heard God's voice speaking to him clearly, and had felt the power of the Holy Spirit coming down upon him with overwhelming force. When he returned home, he seemed like a new person, a released individual. With tears, he asked his father's forgiveness for his past waywardness, and said that he was now ready to be baptized, and to prepare his life for full time service for the Lord.

The Sunday on which Robby and Oot were baptized, the stream had been so low that it had been

mony in chapel, so I did, but for that I had to use an interpreter because my Thai was/is too ordinary -- not very many good religious words. I remember LOTS of umm, vernacular, terms for things that I'd be embarrassed to ask if they were northern Thai or just plain rude. I was trying to think about language the other day, and I think I used to think in Thai as well as in English. I have a hard time *translating* -- it feels like I know a lot of synonyms for saying things, only some of them are Thai and some are English. If I try to think "what is the Thai word for ....." I can't think of it. But if I picture something ordinary and start hearing Thai people talk in my head, the words are there. But as you saw year before last, it is really almost all gone. That's very very very sad for me. I wish I could keep it somehow. I think that in some ways the language I do have it pretty good, but in other ways I hold all of the misconceptions about what some words mean (on grown-up topics like police and government and such) that a little kid would have. I can string together "preaching" terms in my head that are familiar, but I have really no idea what they are about -- words commonly used in prayers and things like that.

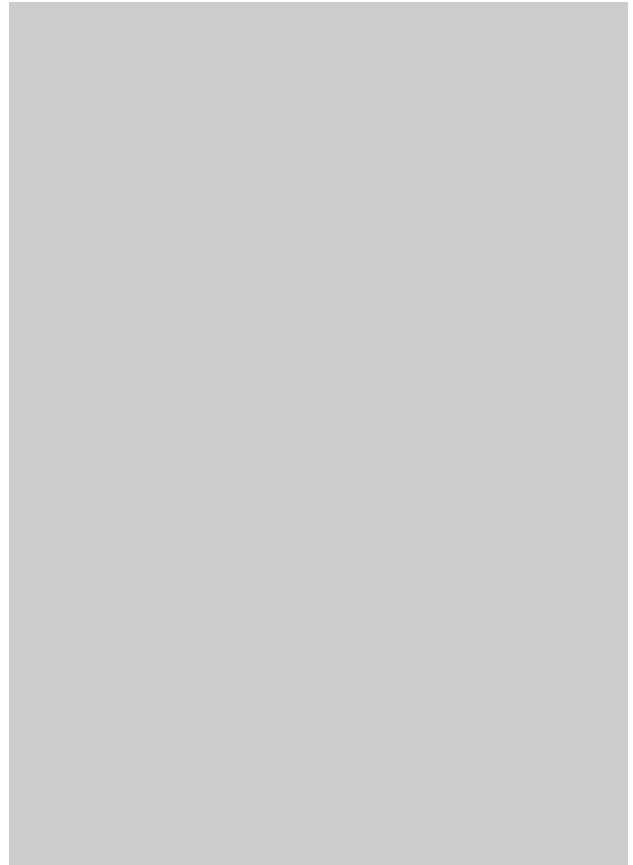


*Beth with the cook and cleaning lady*

hard to find a spot deep enough. Now it was almost completely dry. We suggested waiting till the rains began for Saw Thoolay's baptism, but Saw Ukong was not going to let anything stand in the way. He hired a small bus to take the whole congregation down to the Muy River on Sunday. That morning, Nai Laang's eldest daughter requested baptism, too.

So a bus load of Christians left for the border river. Just before reaching it, however, the bus was stopped by officers who announced that no one could go any farther who did not have a certificate of vaccination against cholera. No one had a certificate, so every one had to get out and be vaccinated by a nurse in a booth beside the road. Then the bus proceeded to the river. There, witnessed by the Thai on one side and the Burmese (Thoolay's native country) on the other side, two more Christians received baptism.

This was the last Sunday before we left for our second furlough. Jim and Emma Mitchel, newly weds, moved in to take our place.



# XXX

## A MYSTERIOUS MESSAGE

Shortly before the end of our second term, we attended the annual field conference at Rahang. We almost always saw a new face or two at our conferences, but this year there were twelve.

When we looked over the agenda before we went, we could see several matters on which there would be strong, divergent views, leading to heated discussion. Bill, as chairman, faced the coming meetings with trepidation.

The first session each morning was a time of worship, spiritual challenge, and prayer. Different men in the group brought messages that were a great inspiration to us all. The love and compassion of Christ was emphasized, and our hearts were stirred, to ask God to fill us with more of that same love.

One morning as we all prayed, one person began to speak in an unknown language, a message that lasted not more than a minute. It was the first time anything like this had happened in any of our meetings. No one was expecting it, and no one knew what the language was that they had heard, but it sounded musical and pleasant. A moment later, another person gave what was apparently the interpretation of the message. He was a European who normally speaks broken English, but now he spoke in flowing, almost poetic English. After a brief pause, the prayers continued.

The people in the WEC come from every conceivable denominational background, and most of us, myself included, had considered the speaking in tongues as belonging to the "Holy Rollers." Now we seemed

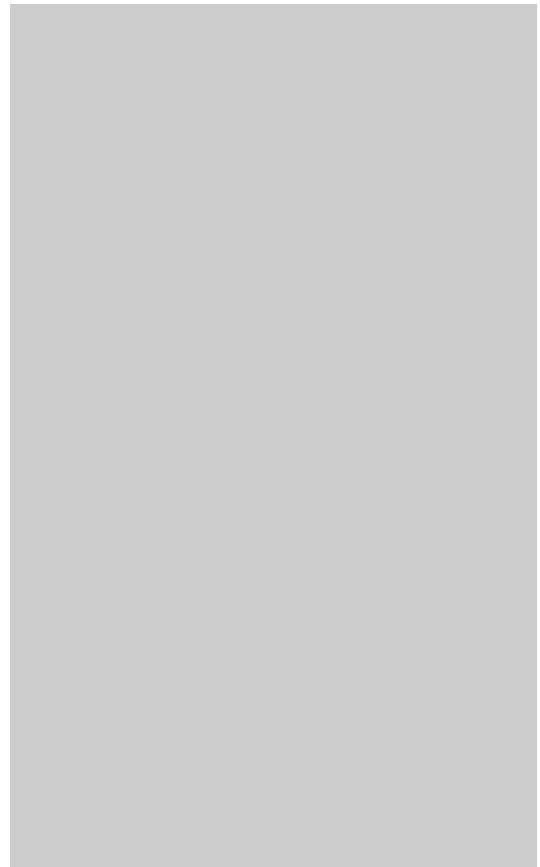


*1962 Conference photo by Paul Moss*

tacitly agreed that God's Spirit had spoken to us, for in the prayers that followed, there sounded a new ring of faith and expectation. In my own heart there was a thrill of certainty that the thing spoken would come to pass.

I cannot remember the details of the short message, but the main thrust was that, as waters flow down, flood the dry ground, and refresh it, even so a flood of blessing would soon flow from on high, water the thirsty, waiting earth, bring great joy, and cause abundant fruit to spring forth.

A greater portion than usual of our conference time had been taken in prayer, and there was little time for the long agenda which had seemed would take forever. But to our surprise, we all came to agreements in a remarkably short time in all these matters, and at the appointed end of the conference, the last subject had been happily resolved. Surely our prayer to be filled with the love of Christ had been answered, and this in turn had been the solution needed for many complex problems.





## BRANCHING OUT

When we returned from furlough in June of 1965, it seemed as though the whole mission were crippled. Apparently everything that could possibly go wrong, had gone wrong.

Marta and Elsa had been in a bus crash, and had suffered, from various injuries, as a result of which, Marta was having severe, continuous headaches. At about the same time, Bill and Kath Devine, camping in a village in the north, had been caught in a cholera epidemic and had both been stricken. In spite of immunization, seven-missionaries at Rahang became ill with typhoid, some of them dangerously so. Those who were not actually ill or convalescing were exhausted with the care of the patients and with assuming the work of those who had been incapacitated.

The Overgaards had returned from their extended furlough, and Wilf was once more our Thai field leader. They had searched a long time for a suitable house in Rahang, but nothing was available except for a vacant hotel, which was much larger than they needed. The Overgaards could rent it fairly cheaply because it was haunted.

The hotel owner had murdered his unfaithful wife and her paramour there early one morning. This is apparently the proper and accepted thing to do, but a short time later, he shot his father-in-law, too, and fled the country with a large part of the family's wealth. The hotel, in the meantime, stood empty and desolate because it was haunted by the

### An MK's Formative Experience *robby charters*

My early upbringing was very much within the influence of C. T. Studd, who believed that if it were God's will for one to go somewhere as a missionary, God would also provide for expenses without having to ask anyone for donations. He set the precedent himself and made it a policy in WEC, that missionaries not even leave broad hints regarding their financial needs, apart from the unavoidable submitting of plans for prayer. It worked for him and for my folks.



*Our little pilgrim, soon reading John Bunyan.*

To make matters worse, my parents didn't just settle for the relatively inexpensive task of church planting and coaching; rather, they felt the burden to begin a literature ministry as well. This also entailed printing and shipping costs. The only thing the newsletters could say, after the initial announcement of their intention was, 'Praise God for the response to our last issue, we are planning another one for July,' etc. -- no list of expenses, no letting on that the printers in Thailand don't provide their service free of charge, nor that postage stamps don't grow in our back yard. Yet, the money always came in on time to pay the printing bills and other expenses. Some dear granny in Ireland, England or America would feel the urge to send us just the amount that we needed, and it would arrive just a few days before, if not right on the deadline. It happened all the time.

When I referred to the task of church planting as rela-

evil spirits of the first two who had been murdered there.

Unable to find a smaller place that was suitable, the Overgaards concluded that this was the place the Lord wanted them to take, and they moved in. They named it "The Christian Gospel Center." The large downstairs front room, open on two sides to the street, made an excellent meeting room. Another large room adjoining was furnished with chairs, tables, and an attractive assortment of Christian books, and became a reading room. Evangelistic meetings, English classes, and children's meetings were held in these rooms.

Upstairs, a room was equipped as a school. Three small desks and chairs were built, and a black board and library books were donated. Evy had undertaken to teach the missionary children until a teacher, for whom we were praying, should appear. The Gualteiris, who had offered their service as house parents, had moved to Rahang, and lived not far from Overgaards.

Soon after we returned from furlough, Robby went to live with the Gualteiris. Robby and Danny were in the third grade, and Beth almost ready for second grade. A small beginning, to be sure, but we knew of several others who would soon be needing our school.

At this time, Bill and I moved to Tern, a town about sixty five miles north of Rahang, in Lampang Province. In the city of Lampang, sixty miles further north, there is an old, large congregation of the Churches of Christ in Thailand. They were unable to send workers to Tern, and were glad to have us come to work there. Upon settling in at Tern, we began work on a bi-monthly evangelistic paper, Kow Duan (Urgent News) which the mission had asked us to edit for distribution throughout Thailand.

A few months later, Jim and Emma Mitchell opened up a new station at Maramat, a day's journey north of Maesod.

In the first seventeen years of our mission in Thailand, eight stations had been established. Now, within eight months, four more were opened.

But a more significant development than this was the presence of Thai Christians among us who

tively inexpensive, that was because it was usual practice with the Thai WEC mission teams to begin with what we today think of as house churches. They would go to some village or other where the gospel had never been preached and begin sharing via tract evangelism, open air meetings, children's meetings, house to house visitation, or even doing medical work (in the days before public health became widely available). Then, they would begin holding regular meetings in the home of whomever was the most interested. That's how the church started. The most mature members of the new group were soon appointed as elders, and church would carry on with no budget -- no rent, no pastor's salary -- apart from a small offering taken to get whatever they needed, like song books etc. The missionaries and Thai volunteer workers would fill the pastoral gap by showing up on whatever day of the week was convenient for them, and giving foundational teaching. Thus, church wasn't always on Sunday morning, but it could be Tuesday, Wednesday, or wherever they fit on the worker's schedule. Every few months or so, local leaders would meet at some convenient location for training. That way, no one thought of themselves as 'reverend', nor deserving of a fat pastor's salary. They all continued to work at whatever they had been doing to keep themselves alive, in addition to feeding their flocks. It was only when some of them would meet pastors of other denominations at national conventions that they would hear how others did it, or fall prey to someone suggesting, 'Join us! You'll get lots of money!', and fall for the tragic misnomer that for a church to 'grow up', means to get a professional to do all the ministry that the members were doing before.

Now, we would call them house churches. Then, they would have probably been thought of as resembling the Plymouth Brethren style of doing church. The missionaries themselves were from just about every group *but* the Plymouth Brethren (who had their own missionary organisation working in the South -- though I do remember a visit by Peter Ferry, their mission leader, who was good at walking on his hands!). Our field leader, Uncle Wilf, was Lutheran, Auntie Ellen was Congregational, Uncle Art and Auntie Gini were Baptist, my mum was Presbyterian, and my dad's background was a mixture of things. Only later did I learn that interdenominational-ism was associated with the Charismatic movement, but WEC was already so, even before Charismatics had anything to do with it. The Pentecostals and Charismatics began joining the field fellowship relatively late. Uncle Hans, from Holland was the first Pentecostal to be accepted by WEC Thailand. Later, there was Uncle Cyril, who went to the same Bible School as Rienhard Bonnke, Uncle Paul Moss, and others.

Even without the Charismatic/Pentecostal influence, there was still the sense of God speaking to people individually, doing financial miracles, and even a miraculous healing on occasion. Worship during the field conferences was something that could be felt, even without tongues



had devoted themselves to the Lord and were serving Him.

Sompit came to us from Bangkok. A woman for whom she had formerly worked as a household servant and who had introduced her to Jesus, sent money for her support. Sompit, in her mid forties, was a tiny, fragile woman with unusually dark, hatchet-like features, and wavy hair that betrayed a strain of Indian blood in her veins. Although delicate in health, her vivacity, keen wit, and zeal for the Lord made her an effective personal worker and a help to many new Christians.

Sanit, the young man who had been converted while a priest at Sri Sumrong, was now a recognized leader of the small group of Christians at Rahang.

Other Christians in each province were giving more and more of their time to preaching, visitation, and evangelizing. Mr. Hoo and Mr. Un at Sawankaloke, Mr. Serp and Mr. Luang at Klong Klung, Mr. Chooti at Tern, and many others, were proving themselves to be good soldiers of the cross. As a result, the seed of the Gospel was being sown more intensively and over a greater area.

Another arm of service had been raised up in the form of a radio ministry. Viggo and Ketty Sogaard came from Denmark with a vision for broadcasting the Gospel, and now their vision was being transformed into sound by the "Voice of Peace." In answer to prayer, one piece of equipment after another had been supplied. A Volkswagen van equipped with an insulated air conditioned compartment became a traveling studio. With the help and cooperation of workers from other missions, Viggo has been able to record hymns in several languages, the finest of choir music from the seminary in Chiangmai, hymns sung to native tunes with native accompaniment, sermons, and Bible teaching by leading Thai preachers and teachers. Sanit became a valuable help as an announcer, singer, and interviewer. Hundreds of tapes have been made in Thai, Lao, and several tribal languages. Some of these are used in regular radio programs broadcast from FEBC in Manila, as well as on local Thai stations. Others are sent upon request to missionaries or Thai Christians

and prophetic experience. Auntie Kaeomoon sister (chapter 8), Phi Kaeo found the Lord as the result of a deliverance from severe demonic possession -- so bad she had to be chained. There was also the miraculous healing of Duan (chapter 3) without a single Pentecostal or Charismatic within a 100 mile radius. Prayer, especially during annual prayer conferences was fervent and mountain moving. For some Thailand WECcers, it was a very natural transition when the Charismatic movement made itself felt in Thailand. There were the usual dividing lines drawn, of course, but as time went on, the non Charismatics learned to live with the Charismatics, and *vice versa*. Even then, there was the occasional word in tongues with an interpretation.

But now, I'm getting beyond myself. My formative years were back when traveling back and forth from one field station to another was like visiting members of an extended family. It was almost a communal atmosphere. In Tak, there was the 'North House', run by Auntie Ellen, and a turnover of new missionaries studying the language, including a family



*The sandy area next to the North House -- Auntie Ellen also kept spare toys around for playing in the sand.*

or two, and others staying over on business. The 'South House', run by Auntie Hanna, was more of the same. Then, there was the 'Middle House', next to the Chinese school, at one point run by Uncle Art and Auntie Gini. I stayed there for one year, with their two daughters, Beth and Ruth, while Beth and I attended the little school run by Auntie Evy. I, and her son, Dan were in the third grade together. That's just a snapshot in time.

I began to recognise a pattern quite early of single uncles and aunties pairing off and getting married. I would notice that a particular uncle and an auntie would be together a lot, and then suddenly, there would come an announcement of their engagement. I don't remember it specifically, but I was told much later by Uncle Stan, that one day I went to him and whispered, 'Are you going to marry Auntie Audrie?' He thought no one had noticed!

So, communal living that came with some aspects of the Jesus Movement later on, wasn't such a new thing to me. We were from all backgrounds: English, Irish, American, Canadian, Scottish, Welsh, Australian, New Zealand, Holland, Denmark, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Pentecostal, Baptist, Reformed -- My own family was a case in point. My dad was raised in a working class family living in a low cost housing estate in Belfast, Northern Ireland, married to my mother, Presbyterian, from U.S.

That's the WEC part of me.

throughout the country for use in evangelism, in visitation, in hospitals, and among the mountain tribes.

This work is continuing to develop and to expand. \*

- Viggo Sogaard has written in detail about the beginnings of VOP in his book, *Everything you need to know for a cassette ministry: Cassettes in the context of a total Christian communication program* ; Bethany Fellowship, inc (1975); available at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

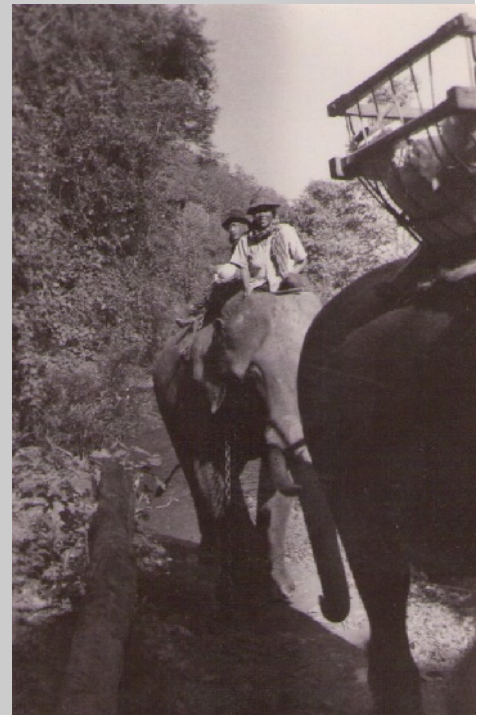
# XXXII

## A VISIT TO MAW TA

"How can I possibly climb up on that elephant!" I wondered as I stood on the bridge at our front gate that rainy morning, watching men load bundles onto his back. Cyril stood on tiptoe, lifting things up one by one, while the driver leaned down as far as he could from the elephant's head to reach them and put them into the howdah. When everything was in place, everyone turned and looked at me. It was obviously my turn to do something, but what? I thought frantically of various methods of getting up - leaping, flying, climbing hand over hand up the tail - but they all seemed unworkable.

Then the elephant driver shouted something, and swiftly the great creature put his two front feet down into the ditch so that his head was about two feet lower than his back, almost even with the picket fence. I shook off my sandals, climbed onto the fence, (about five feet high) placed one foot on the hump between his eyes, then scrambled on up past the driver to the howdah and sat down. Someone handed me my sandals and umbrella, then, with a terrifying heave, the elephant rose up out of the ditch and started lumbering down the street. Bill walked along behind.

It was early morning, about the time of the feeding of the priests, and all the devout of the town stood at their front gates holding silver bowls of rice. A long line of stately yellow-robed priests, each with a black rice bowl, filed down the street, stopping at each gate where a representative of the family served a large spoonful of rice into each bowl.



As we lurched along, the elephant's bell rang and its chains clanked to the rhythm of its gait. Children, hearing the sound, ran to their front porches to watch and to shout to everyone, "A foreigner is riding an elephant!"

We were on our way to Maw Ta. Before settling into our new work at Tern, we thought it would be wise to live among the Karen for a few weeks, getting a fresh grasp on the language as well as sharing in the work with Nancy Ashcroft who was alone there temporarily. The trip took nine hours through rice fields, jungles, villages, and rivers, and then up into the hills. We had been to Maw Ta before, but always in the dry season when we could walk and take our belongings in an ox cart. During the rainy season, an ox cart cannot make the trip. I rode most of the way on the elephant while Bill plowed through deep mud or skidded along steep, slippery paths.

When we approached Maw Ta that evening, Bill was on the elephant, and I was walking on ahead. I had grown weary with the swaying - back and forth, up and down, side to side - and as the elephant had gotten slower and slower all day, I could keep ahead of it. When we came within sight of Nancy's leaf-roofed house, some children on her porch shouted, "Foreigners are coming!" Nancy came out of her kitchen exclaiming, "How marvelous! How wonderful!" and so excited that she met me half way up the ladder and caught me in such an enthusiastic embrace that I nearly fell through the rungs. The elephant came swaying up the path and stood beside the house while Bill climbed in through the window and pulled our bundles in after him.'

Of course many of the people of the village had to come in to greet us. We recognized some whom we had known before. Pala Mo, the young widow, was there with her frail two-year-old son tied to her back and her little daughter tagging along behind.

Since our last visit, old Maw Ta, the patriarch of the village, had died, and had had a Christian funeral. Because of his life and witness, other villagers had become Christians. Of these, one had died, two lived in a far away village, and two more had believed for a season and then turned back. Yet there were eight who were ready for baptism.

When Sunday morning came, people began gather-



ing on the porch before we had finished washing the breakfast dishes. We sat and talked with them for a while, then started singing hymns, which led to the worship service. After that we all went down to the stream where three adults and five children were baptized. It was the first baptism the village had seen, and other villagers came down to watch.

After everyone left and we were on our way up to the house, we looked at our watches and were surprised to see it was not yet ten o'clock. A few minutes later, a Karen family, all dressed in their brightest, newest homespun clothes, came up the path and turned in at our gate. We recognized them as coming from Din Tat, a village where we had been two days before, and which Nancy and Mary had visited often for years. They were soon followed by two other couples from the same village. They had all come hoping to see the baptism. They were interested in the Gospel, and were seriously considering becoming Christians. We talked a long while, read Bible verses, sang hymns, and played Karen Gospel records. The men could understand Lao, so we were able to speak more to them.

Before they left, two of the women went out into the garden and found Nancy's gardenia bushes loaded with beautiful, white, fragrant blossoms. They picked every one of them and brought them in. When the party started home, they all, men and women, wore gardenias in their ear rings, in their turbans, and on their shoulder bags.

Everyone felt free to help themselves to Nancy's flowers and vegetables. (Even the neighborhood pigs ate her garden vegetables.) Everyone was also good about bringing her things from their own (or someone else's) gardens, or from the jungle. While we were there, people came bringing bamboo shoots, cucumbers, and other produce, sometimes for sale and sometimes as a gift.

Once in a long while a man came around selling meat - that is, bits of animal - strung in bunches on bamboo strips. She had to buy a whole bunch at a time, which included intestine, lung, fat, skin, meat, and all. Friends at home had given her a small kerosene refrigerator during her furlough, so now she was able to buy enough meat to last several days. When the meat was gone, there were many kinds of



jungle vegetables she could live on.

One day a little boy brought a bunch of *pukala*, a strange, strong-smelling leaf from a tall bush. I laid it on the table where I sat alone, writing. As the *pukala* wilted in the early afternoon heat, I pushed it farther and farther away from me, toward the bamboo wall. After a while, I heard stirring on the other side of the wall, and Bill came out onto the porch. His eyes fell upon the *pukala*.

"So that's what it is! And there I was, dousing myself with deodorant."

Two of the newly baptized Christians were Maw Ta's youngest daughter and her husband, Turner. The morning of the baptism, just before the service, Maw Ta's next youngest daughter, Manguay Mo, said she, too, wished to be baptized. Since she had never prayed, had seldom come to the meetings, and since Nancy had never seen any indication that she believed, she was told that if she really believed and showed, it by her living, she could be baptized later. Her twelve-year-old daughter, Manguay, had been baptized that morning. The following day, Nancy and I went to visit Manguay Mo. After talking and singing for a while and reading verses from the Bible, we prayed together. With Nancy's help, Manguay Mo prayed her first prayer and received Christ as her Saviour.

An older daughter of Maw Ta lived near by. Like all the older members of the family, she had been baptized as a child in Burma. She loved to sing the hymns, so she often came to the meetings. But, like her mother and older brothers and sisters, she was given to drunkenness, illicit brewing of whiskey, witchcraft, and living a life that caused her heathen husband and neighbors to say, "Why should we become Christians? We live more virtuous lives than they do." We joined Nancy in prayer for her conversion.

"Those who were baptized long ago but are living like heathens," said Nancy, "are the greatest drag to the village. But there is a man at Tee Law They ..."

"You mean Pa Kwa, whom we visited Saturday?"

"Yes. He went to Burma when he was young and was baptized in the church there, but he came back and took up spirit worship. Aside from calling himself a Christian he was not a bit different from the heathen



around him. But a few months ago, he came and told me he knew he had been living in great darkness. He was crying as he confessed his sins and said he wanted to be reconciled to God. We have seen a real change in his life since. He wanted his wife to learn about the Gospel, too, and now she wants to be baptized. He says that after harvest, he is going to build a little house here in Maw Ta where he and his wife will live during the dry season so they can learn more about Jesus. This year, for the first time, he didn't make spirit offerings when he planted his rice. His neighbors tell him his crops will fail. We must pray that God will give him a really good harvest this year."

It was evening during the second week of our stay at Maw Ta, and we were sitting at the table on the porch during this conversation, reading, studying, and writing this book. From somewhere up the hill close by, behind the trees, the sweet chiming of bells sounded.

"What are those lovely chimes?" I asked.

"That's the 'Tree man.' He worships the spirits of trees and rings those bells at sunrise and sunset when he feeds the spirits."

"What about the man up there whom we hear coughing so much?" Bill pointed to the house nearest us, which was all but hidden by trees.

"He trades in opium," said Nancy, "and I don't know how many men in this village have become addicted because of him. When they're sick, or in pain from some injury, he visits them and takes them opium for relief. He's the one who built that big spirit shrine on top of the hill over Din Tat. It looks like a *chedee*, so the Buddhist priests have taken it over as a Buddhist shrine. People make pilgrimages to it from quite far away. The old man has sclerosis of the liver and probably won't live much longer."

Just then we heard a high-pitched shriek and yelps, accompanied by the familiar slow, rhythmic clanking of chains. An elephant appeared, walking majestically down the path, a driver on her head. Her frolicking offspring followed her, herded by a man with a long stick. It was the baby, getting into every conceivable kind of mischief along the way, that was responsible for the shrill trumpeting. Seeing the elephant, we remembered the letters we wanted to mail.

"Are you going to Maesod soon?" we all shouted to the elephant driver.

He looked up with a sullen face, but did not answer. The man who acted nurse maid to the calf was more helpful.

"No, he's going to the mountains with the loggers tomorrow."

Several days before, Nancy had hired Mr. Lazy Bones to take our mail to Maesod. He was about the only man not busy planting rice.

"I'll go for you," he promised. But the next day he had a headache. The following day, something else hindered him. This morning he had started out, but returned before noon saying that before he had gone a quarter of the way, a deer had crossed his path. He had had to come home to avoid getting a fever. Now we sat in the evening, wondering how to communicate with the outside world, especially thinking of Robby.

Before we had said much more, Mr. Lazy Bones himself came up the ladder.

"I'll go tomorrow," he said.

We gave him the packet of letters and the twenty baht payment, and he left.

It was entirely dark now. Suddenly, from down the hill a little way, we heard a loud clatter, as if someone were striking something violently with a thick piece of bamboo. We also heard a man's angry shouts.

"It sounds as if someone is drunk," we speculated.

"That's about where the elephant man lives," said Nancy.

"He must be knocking his whole house down."

"Could it be the baby elephant on the rampage?"

Soon our questions were answered by a neighbor who walked past, going up the hill. "It's the elephant man," he explained with a laugh. "He's fighting with his wife."

"He must be terribly drunk." We continued to hear the crash of bamboo against bamboo.

"But it doesn't sound as though his wife were getting hurt too badly."

It was now raining, and myriads of tiny insects were swarming around our little oil lamp. They crawled all over us, and all over the books we were pretending to study between the bits of conversation. One by one, we gave up and shuffled off to the inner sanctums of our mosquito nets.



The next morning, before daylight, we heard a noisy coughing on the front porch, and a man's voice called, "Mu Ga Pa Taw!" (Tall Auntie, which is what they call Nancy.)

I went out, and there stood Mr. Lazy Bones.

"I can't go," he said. "They have hired me to go with the loggers to cut trees. We're leaving today. Here's your money."

He handed me a bill, but it was dark, so I couldn't see what it was.

"It's a hundred baht." Nancy had given him twenty. "You'll have to give me back eighty."

Change is very hard to get in the mountains. Nancy had most of her money sent to her in one baht bills, but so many people had come asking her to change one hundred baht bills that she soon ran out of small change.

"I haven't enough left," Nancy told the man. "You'll have to give me back the twenty I gave you last night."

"It's all spent," he replied.

"I think we might have a hundred in small change," said Bill.

After examining the man's bill by flash light, he counted our money and found we had just one hundred and five baht in small denominations. The man took his eighty and hurried, away.

"No wonder he's not anxious to go to Maesod," said Bill. "He's not that hard up, with eighty baht in his pocket."

After the party of loggers left, Mr. Lazy Bones was still seen wandering aimlessly around the village. He left half a day later to follow them, but came back the following evening. Some of the neighbors told us that he had been unable to catch up with the timber crew, and had spent a night alone in the mountains. He had been paid one hundred baht in advance. That accounted for his paying Nancy back - simply to get his hundred baht bill changed. Now, they said, he had spent the whole hundred. We were glad to hear that at least he had bought his wife a new skirt, and a sack of rice for his family.

We also learned the rest of the story of the elephant driver. We had been mistaken. He was not the intoxicated one. His little wife, eighteen and the mother of two children, had bought a bottle of whiskey that day, and drank it all herself without saving him any. Hence

his indignation and near destruction of their wee bamboo home. She was back with us the next day, her same sweet self, doing her writing lessons with all the young ones at Nancy's table, and with her baby tied to her back.

The day came for us to leave for home. With our umbrellas and shoulder bags, we started down the slushy village path, carrying our sandals. Sanay was going with us for a brief visit home, after which she would return to Maw Ta with Joeky deWolf. Nancy and some of the children accompanied us as far as the first rice field beyond the stream, where they stood and watched us slither along the narrow dikes between the fields till we were out of sight.

Whereas it did not rain most of that day, it had been raining every day for over a week and the paths were deep in mire. We could not wear our sandals as the mud was both slimy and sticky, sometimes half way up to our knees. Underneath the muck there were often sharp stones, thorns, and pointed sticks. Although the distance was only twenty miles, it took us two days two days, walking about six hours a day. Sometimes we had to work our way along very narrow, irregular, slippery dikes with no flat top. At one such place, Bill's foot slipped, the heavy bag on his shoulder shifted, and he fell into a slough of thick, black mud almost to his shoulders. He had to stop at the next river to wash his shirt and bathe all over, trousers and all.

We had chosen a route home that we had never used before. At one point on our journey, while still in the mountains, we emerged from a dense jungle and came upon a group of houses on the side of the hill. We asked a young girl there if we were still on the path that led to Maesod.

"No," she said. "The Maesod path is way up there behind those white-trunked trees."

She pointed across the valley to the side of a thickly forested hill. We realized then where we had gone astray, and knew that we would have to go back quite a distance. The way had been through dark jungle, dense with undergrowth.

We were extremely weary, so sat down to rest a while before turning back. As we sat, an old man came to us. We told him about Jesus, and he was immediately interested. Sanay, whose mother tongue is

the Lao, was delighted to talk with him and explained the Gospel very simply. He told us he had left the old way of worship, and had been trying to find, the supreme God.

"This is He," said. Sanay. "It is the Lord Jesus who made all things, and there is no other."

"I think this is "the one I've been looking for," he answered.

He conducted us by a short cut to our path, one so thickly overgrown that we could not see it at all until we pushed away the tall grass and bushes with our umbrellas each step of the way.

"We thought we were on the wrong path," I said, "but really, I think we were right where God wanted us to be."

This was a new thought to Sanay, and her face glowed as she thought about it.

"Yes," she said finally, "I'm sure God led us to that man because he was seeking for Him." The weariness of her body was richly repaid.

Late that afternoon, we reached Mae Kert, a village on a river which we had to cross. There is a bridge strong enough for trucks to cross in the dry season, but now the two ends of it had been washed away, and water covered the middle. It seemed that all the force of the river was directed through the gaps at each end of the bridge. As we struggled through the fierce current, I prayed frantically for strength. We would surely have been washed away had not the Lord been with us through those deep, swift waters.

Mae Kert is the home of two brothers, Nai Promma and Nai Mee. They had moved with their families from Mae Tow Klang about two years before. It was a happy reunion. We spent the night in the home of Nai Mee. His wife killed a chicken and made a simple but tasty curry. He spread mattresses on the tiny veranda and brought out home woven blankets for us.

That evening we all gathered around the two flickering, smoky lamps next door at Nai Promma's house, and sang hymns, had a Bible study, and everyone prayed.

The brothers told us they had not even begun their planting, as there was not yet enough water in the fields. The rains start sooner in the mountains than on the plains. Rice was already being transplanted in the higher regions. The wild swamps through which we

had just traveled were still vivid in our minds, so it was astonishing to think that the rice plains could be so dry. But we had seen the brown and barren fields ourselves. Very few farmers had planted yet. If it didn't rain hard before the end of the month, it would be too late to plant at all this year.

The people of the village had held a cat parade, but it had done no good. In times of drought the farmers have a parade which is supposed to appease the spirits which have held back the rain. A ladder from a widow's house is carried in the procession, and also a highly decorated structure of branches and leaves in which is containing a cat. As the procession of banners marches down the street with these two objects, to the accompaniment of music (strictly local talent) they stop from time to time along the way for people to pour water over the captive cat.

In this case, they failed to produce rain, so they concluded that this year the drought was caused by a big serpent in the Malamow Valley. Its body is about a foot in diameter, and its eyes as big as a man's fist. It laid eggs this year, and is coiled around them, protecting them till they hatch. Every time it starts to rain, the serpent lifts its head up high, and the rain stops. The men of Malamow sent a message to the sheriff of Maesod asking him to come and see whether it were not true. They had seen it themselves. And if it were not true, they said, they would give him an elephant. But the sheriff did not take them up on the challenge.

So we joined together in prayer for rain - hard rain and soon.

We left early next morning, hoping to get beyond the slimy flats of Mae Kert before the rain started. It held off until we reached Maesod. Then it rained. It poured heavily every day for the rest of the time that we were in Maesod.

# XXXIII

## REAPERS FOR A WHITE HARVEST

Sunday morning, and the meeting room at the Gospel Center was filled with worshipers. There was an unusually large gathering, because it was the last day of the second term of the Christian Workers Training School, and eighteen students, many from other areas, had spent a week preparing themselves for the Lord's work.

Wilf had started talking about such a school eight months before this. There was a real need of leaders, pastors, and teachers for the little churches that had been established in many places, and for evangelists who would carry the gospel on beyond their own towns and villages.

But the members of these congregations were simple folk, working people who had families to support. Farmers who could not leave their fields for long periods. Loggers who must go to the jungle in timbering season. People who had never been very far from home, who had never met other Christians. Any training program we designed would have to fit this reality.

We planned for eight-day terms, to be held once each quarter, each term to cover six courses. Over a period of three years, the prospective

leaders would study Bible, doctrine, public speaking, personal evangelism, Christian ethics, teacher training, singing, and many other subjects. Between terms, the students would read assigned books and put into practice what they had learned.

While we prepared for the first term, we asked ourselves, "Will anyone come? Will they themselves see their need for instruction? Will some be bold enough to accept the challenge?"

The response was hearty. As the time for the second term neared, we again wondered if the students would feel that the first term had been sufficiently beneficial to come again. They did, and also five new students, forming a second class.

I looked over the group gathered to worship on this last day, and thought of the struggles, the defeats, the victories that each of them had been through. Each of them was a miracle of the grace of God, though there were more trials and tests yet ahead, and He would have to continue to perform miracles of grace to turn each one into the kind of reaper He needed for His harvest.

Sanit, the leader of the service, invited those who wished to give a testimony to what the Lord had done for them, to stand.

Udon, a new convert, was the first to rise. He had been a robber and a murderer. He told how the Lord had been restraining him from evil, and was teaching him a new outlook on life which was possible only through Jesus Christ.

Merit, from Prankratai, also had a word to speak. Saved years before from a life of drug addiction, drinking, and gambling, he had stumbled, and for over two years had gone back to the sins from which he had been saved. But lately he had repented and found forgiveness.

Our old friend, Mr. Helpful, was next. About fourteen years had passed since he and his wife first prayed in Garden Village. We had left Kampangpet, so had seen him only twice in all those years, but he had been telling the Gospel of Salvation as he traveled up and down the river on his logging business. He had often shown more zeal than knowledge, so we were delighted to have

him in the Bible school. With his hands clasped, he bowed his gray head low three times before he spoke, then gave a short and simple testimony of the Lord's help and blessing.

Then Pun stood up before us. Yes, I mean Pun. Moon's husband. He was a changed man! Till about six months before, he had been a spineless slave to sin, and a burden to everyone, especially to Moon. Although we had been praying for him for about seven years, we had almost given up hope that he would ever be converted. Then, one day, at Moon's urging, Pun went to a series of meetings at Prankratai. There the Spirit of the Lord convicted him in a way he had never experienced before. He went home transformed. As a result, Moon was revived, and now had a glow of joy on her face. Pun had even been telling his old companions of his Saviour, sometimes going out to surrounding villages with the Gospel. Pun and Moon both came to the training school together. Sister Kao was taking care of the children to make it possible.

Moon testified, "The day the school was to start, we had no money at all. We considered together whether we should go fishing, or work somewhere first, to earn enough money to buy more food for the children for the week. But we both thought we ought to come to school. We agreed to obey God and trust Him in this matter. We came to school that morning, then in the afternoon when we got home, a man came and hired Pun to do a job for him. He earned enough money that afternoon to last us all week."

A young blind man told us this story.

"I come from Wang Hin, about five miles south of Rahang. There is a woman, a Christian, in Rahang, Chalui is her name, who used to ride her bicycle to Wang Hin to talk to people about her religion. After a while, I believed in this Jesus she talked about, but I did not want to become a Christian. I fought against it.

"One day a woman who lives near me and who is a Christian because of Chalui, asked me and a few other men to help move a big log out of her front yard. We worked very hard, but we could not move it. In ridicule I said, 'You better

get God to move it for you.'

"'He can,' she says.

"Then we heard the clinking of elephant chains. Everyone was surprised because elephants never come through our village. The woman ran out and asked the elephant driver to move her log. He would have to cross her vegetable garden to get to the log, but she was willing to have a few vegetables destroyed for the sake of having the log moved. But you know, this elephant was not like any other we have ever heard of. It picked its way carefully across the garden and did not break one plant! It moved the log to where she wanted it, and went on its way.

"That was enough for me. I gave up fighting against God, and have been happy ever since."

This young man now attends a school for the blind at Chiangmai

After a hymn, Ajan Boon Mee, a pastor from Chiangmai who had come to help us with the teaching, gave a message. He encouraged the students to go boldly forth and proclaim the Gospel in all their areas, regardless of what hardships or rebuffs they might encounter.

After the worship service, we ate our last dinner together. Then we gathered in a large circle and sang, "God be with you till we meet again." As we bade each other farewell, there were tears in many eyes. Preparations for departure were made, and the following morning, the last of them were on their way home.

There were more reapers than the few who came to the Christian Workers Training School. From little villages to larger towns, Christians were going out and telling the story of Jesus Christ to their friends and neighbors, bearing witness to God's love and mercy.

At Sawankaloke, Nai Hoo and Nai Un go out preaching with Cyril Davies, "and sometimes by themselves. Their witness has born fruit, both in town and in the surrounding villages. Farther south, around Klong Klung, where several Christians go out with Duane, many believers have sprung up.

A group of Christians meets regularly in the home of Raywad.ee at Ban Tak for worship and



Bible study. There are no missionaries there, as Elsa and Agnes were needed more urgently elsewhere. But from Ban Tak the seed has been cast farther north to other villages where it is taking root, especially in Toong Kachaw where six new Christians have been baptized, and others are looking forward to baptism.

Over on the Maesod side, the church has increased greatly through the witness of the local believers in four little churches. Among the Karen especially, beginning at Maw Ta and spreading out to distant villages, whole families, and sometimes almost whole villages, have turned to the Lord. Karen pastors from Burma, upon hearing of the great turning, have come over to help in the work of teaching and preaching. Some have even left lucrative positions to serve the Lord as evangelists among the illiterate, newly converted Karens, without any salary, and in primitive conditions such as they are not accustomed to

Within a radius of about five miles around Rahang, there are now six little groups of believers that gather in their individual areas for worship on Sundays. Once a month, they all come together for united worship at the Christian Gospel Center, except for the group at Beautiful Woods who have leprosy.

Nai Pun, Moon's husband, has gone across the river from Rahang to witness to friends in Pak Hui, one of the villages that Ellen and I visited in earlier years, but where we never saw any result. Now, upon hearing the gospel from a Thai Christian, one family has turned to the Lord, and through them, others are being reached. Nai Pun has stumbled and failed miserably several times, but when he has repented, the Lord has restored him and his witness is bright and effective.

Mr. Helpful of Garden Village had been praying for his only child, Chuy, who was a profligate gambler and drinker. Once during a Christian Training School term, Chuy was on his way down the river, taking a log raft to Bangkok for a teak company. The water in the river was decreasing, and when the raft reached Rahang, it was stranded on a sand bar, unable to go farther.

The young man, having nothing to do while he waited for the river to rise, came in to see his father at the Bible school, and stayed to listen. The river did not rise for several days, and before Chuy left, he had prayed and confessed Christ as Saviour.

Chuy's wife came from Na Baw Kum. About ten years before, we had gone there with Mr. Helpful. We had thought the trip unfruitful, but one little girl named Rose had received a book, had read it over many times, and had thought a lot about it. She grew up and married Chuy, a drunken rascal. She herself had an ungovernable temper. Her life was almost intolerable. When Chuy came home from a logging trip and told her he had become a Christian, she was mildly surprised, but when she saw the drastic change in his life, she, too, prayed and received Christ. She, too, was transformed.

Now when Chuy goes out with his ice cream cart each day, he gives out tracts and tells the gospel story to his customers along the streets of the town, on the paths of the villages, wherever they sit eating their ice cream. Now the congregation in Garden Village is growing, and new Christians are coming over from the near-by town of Nakon Choom.

Garden Village has no church building yet, but the posts have been bought and paid for. Mr. Helpful made arrangements to sell a plot of land, and ordered the wood for the posts. Before the posts arrived, the buyer of the land changed his mind, so there was no money with which to pay for the posts. As Chuy sold ice cream, he prayed, asking God to provide the 400 baht for the posts. Soon he met a man who had shot a tiger. Chuy bought the tiger skin from him for one hundred baht, took it into the city, and sold it for five hundred. So the posts for the church were paid for.

The story does not end here. God's rain still falls, still softens the hard, cracked earth. Through radio, through Christian literature, through the training school, through dedicated missionaries, but most of all through the witness of His people to their own people, the seed is sown, and the harvest cut and gathered.

"The Lord gave the word, and great was the company of those that published it."



# I



CHAPTER TITLE



I



A THIRSTY LAND

