

## 10-27-07 Our trip to Burma (Myanmar)

As many of you know we, Daeng and I, along with some of you, helped with money to build a school about 40 miles up the Mekong River in Myanmar (Burma).



On May 3<sup>rd</sup> we visited the village at which time the site for the school was leveled but nothing on it.



Two weeks after our trip Luke, the owner/driver of the fast long tail boat we used was shot 32 times by local rebel soldiers. That was another reason Daeng did not want me to go again.

Luke was survived by his wife, who was pastor of the little church and his unborn child.

Although I was advised by several people and Daeng that I, as a foreigner, should not go into this area because of the illegal

drug trafficking and the recent problems with the government, I still wanted to see the new school.

In the morning we got up at 5:00 AM and took some pictures of the Buddhist Celebration of the rice harvest. It is kind of like a



Buddhist Thanksgiving.

People lined up in the street and at 6:00 AM the Monks, about 500 in this case, leave the Temple and walked single file thru hundreds of people that give them money and food.

We then had some breakfast at the morning market and rode Daeng's motor bike over to meet the other folks we were traveling with. Ten of us got into a pickup truck, five inside and five in the bed of the truck. I road with Pastor Lota, Daeng, Rev. Sunit's daughter and one other girl in back. Yes, the old, fat, white, plumber in the back of the pickup.

We traveled about 35 miles to the center of the Golden Triangle on the Mekong River. The Golden Triangle is where Myanmar (Burma), Laos and Thailand come together. It got its notoriety because, at one time, the area had the largest production of opium in the world. Myanmar (Burma) is now the second largest producer of illegal opium in the world.

Yep, you guessed it; Afghanistan is number one and increasing production at about 50 percent a year.

We met a couple of other people at the Mekong River bank, loaded the clothing, cookies, food and tooth brushes that we had brought into three long tail boats .

I was very happy to see Luke's wife and new born baby.



She had met us to travel to the village. After Luke was killed she moved immediately out of the area to be sure the rebel soldiers did not kill her, too. I am told that Luke was killed because he knew too much and wives usually know as much, if not more.



We got into the boats and headed up the river. The boats are very fast so it took us a little less than an hour to make the trip.

Everyone in the village seemed happy to see us.



Everyone, even the woman and children

shook hands with us. We walked up the bank of the river and



thru the village to the little church.



We came into the village from the south side this time as the river is about 20 feet higher than it was in May.

We all took a little potty break and looked at the new school and the pastor's little home next to the school. I was impressed



as this was all done, by hand with no electricity and in four months.

Everyone gathered in the little church.



Well, actually the church was not big enough and people stood all around the church while we had a little service to thank the lord for providing us with the new school and new lives.



I was very impressed and moved as Rev. Sunit got everyone in the church and standing around the church to say, in unison, "Thank you Lord!" in English.

After the service we all eat beside the new school. The



food was very good and most was cooked and wrapped in banana leaf. While the eating was going on two men started beating on drums



and dancing in a conga line type of step. The people of the village joined the conga style line and the dancing continued.



Now, give me a heavy beat and this old fat guy wants to start moving some of



this fat to the music.

I got up and tried to keep up



with the steps. In a few minutes of bumping into the people next to me because I went the wrong way at the wrong time I started to get into the beat.



Well, fun times from then on! The people of the village all laughed at me as I'm sure I did look pretty funny dancing.



I even became one of the drummers. It was a good time and fun was had by all.

Well, it was time to go. We packed up some of the food that the folks in the village gave us and walked back down to the "Mother River" and to the boats. When we got to the shore there was only one boat there. Fourteen people in one long tail boat were not going to make it. No telephone service, no cellular service, no electricity, what do we do?

I think what then happened is the one boat driver went out into the river just out of site and got into an area of cellular phone service, then called two of his fellow boat drivers.

We hung out on the shore waving at the big boats that were



China. coming down the river from

About 10-15 minutes later another boat showed up. We were told to go on as the other boat would be there in a few minutes. We make the trip back in about 40 minutes as we were traveling down stream with the flow of the fast moving river.



We all hung out by the Thailand Police Boat that patrolled



the river area waiting for the rest the people. While we were waiting Daeng said "Look there is a dead person in the river."



Daeng pointed it out to one of the “Water Police” and was told that they see about one person a day floating down the river.

No one seemed to want to do anything as I guess it becomes the problem of who ever pulls the body out of the river. The river starts in Tibet then goes thru China, Laos and Myanmar before Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam.

I then started to worry for the other folk’s safety and really feel powerless. I tried to call Rev. Sunit on both the cellular telephone numbers that I had for him to see if they were all right in the other boat but could not reach him.

Good news, about twenty minutes later two boat showed up with the rest of the folks that were with us. I guess they had battery trouble in the boat and had to borrow a battery from another boat.

**HALLELUJAH, EVERYONE SAFE IN THAILAND!**

I am very happy that WE were able to help build the school in Myanmar. I also want to thank everyone that contributed to this children’s project.

The only way to stop the revolving door of poverty, drug cultivation, drug manufacturing, drug usage and the crime that goes with it is EDUCATION.

**THANK YOU AND MAY THE LORD BLESS US ALL!**