

Tales From Thailand With the Peace Corps

By MARY LORRAINE SNAUFFER
Editor's Note: Mary Snauffer is serving a two-year assignment with the Peace Corps in Thailand. She is writing a first-hand account of her experiences in this column for *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*. Her columns appear periodically.

On the other side of the world, in Westfield, summer is just around the corner. Students and teachers alike are counting down the days in a frenzied anticipation that I remember well.

Here in Thailand, it's quite the opposite. Last week was the first day of school. The month of April and most of May is summer break.

I'm actually writing this on an old notebook inside an empty classroom at the school. I'm sitting on a hard wooden chair swatting flies. There is a mangy stray cat licking herself in the corner. Out the open, unscreened windows I see palm trees providing slight shade to a row of shanty houses. Behind those are mountains with heavy rain clouds hanging above.

When I told the son of the family I often eat dinner with that in America students wear basically whatever they want to school he and the entire family gasped. "Ah-ri-ga-di?" the mother repeated in a mixture of disbelief and horror. Yes, I said, they can wear "whatever."

Here, long calf length blue skirts and white blouses for the girls, brown shorts and button up shirts for the boys. This is the same uniform for all

students in Thailand. It takes a while to get used to, what my Western eyes deem as, the many contradictions of Thai culture. In Thai "rip-roi" means to dress nicely. It is much more than a word though it's a way of life.

This school is basically falling down and the students are often left unattended for long periods of time with nothing at all to do. It's almost as if it is more important for teachers to socialize with one another, to build relationships, rather than to teach the students.

And to build relationships you need to show respect for one another and to show respect here you need to dress "rip-roi."

"Mary, yesterday you did not look beautiful," an older Thai friend told me. "I saw you at market and you were wearing red skirt and white shirt. Not beautiful. Understand?" I smiled and nodded. "Mary, you have to be rip-roi." I told her yes, I know. I decided not to go into how I thought I was dressing formally.

This morning at 6:30 a.m., I hear yelling through my window. "Mary, Mary, what are you doing?" It is the woman and she is looking down at me in my bed. I'd like to ask her what it looks like I'm doing but instead I get up and let her in. She walks quickly into my bedroom and picks out my outfit for the day. A neon orange oversized button up shirt with seemingly random placed fruits, fish and tall buildings (a gift from my host family) and

a light pink skirt adorned with shimmers and doilies (another gift).

"OK, put on." I obey, awkwardly. She grins. "Good. OK. Bye-bye. Brush your hair." She walks out the door and leaves me standing there half awake and dazed looking like a deranged crossing guard.

Today at school I have never gotten as many, "Mary, you are so beautiful," comments in my life. I'm beaming. I look like an idiot but I feel like a million bucks. The teachers like me a lot more than usual. During school time we sit around making jokes and laughing, sipping coffee the students had poured for us earlier and munching on finger bananas and durian fruit. I feel like I have just been accepted into the club. I am careful not to spill coffee on my neon button up and for a quick, fleeting moment I wonder where in the world all of our students could be.

Ashley Tate Achieves Manhattan Dean's List

WESTFIELD - Westfield's Ashley Tate achieved the Dean's List at Manhattan College during the 2006 spring semester. Ashley graduated from Westfield High School in 2003 and will begin her senior year at Manhattan this fall. She studies English and has served for two years as submissions editor for the school's literary journal, *Manhattan Magazine*. Ashley is the daughter of Gene Tate and Karyn Oros.

Society Members to Relate Their 'Brush With History'

WESTFIELD - "My Brush With History" will be the topic at the Westfield Historical Society's First

More Education News

Behr Sisters Tara and Katie Receive Degrees

WESTFIELD - Tara Behr, daughter of Jack and Eileen Behr of Westfield, was awarded a Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing at the 130th commencement of Boston College on May 22.

Approximately 3,000 graduates received degrees. Tara participated in Overlook Hospital's Professional Development Program and will be working as a registered nurse on the oncology unit of the hospital.

Her sister, Katie, received her master's degree in public policy on May 15 from Duke University. Katie was awarded a Presidential Management Fellowship and has accepted a position with the Federal Government in Washington D.C.

Wednesday Luncheon at noon on June 7 at B.G. Fields Restaurant, located at 560 Springfield Avenue in Westfield.

According to Program Chairman Bob Miller, Historical Society members will present this program themselves. He is inviting all members of the society who have participated in or witnessed an historic event to relate their "brush with history" at the luncheon. Interested individuals are asked to call him at (908) 233-6360 so that they may be included and scheduled in the program.

Historic events may include having witnessed such milestones as the Giants' and Dodgers' battle in the pennant race at the Polo Grounds on October 3, 1951, when Bobby Thomson hit the home run known as "The Shot Heard Round the World" or a disaster such as the Challenger explosion. These events could have lasted just an instant or continued for a day or more.

A telephone committee of the society will contact regular attendees of the luncheon to verify their reservations. Space permitting, others may attend the luncheon as well. Those interested are asked to call (908) 233-2930 by noon on Monday, June 5.

PUBLIC NOTICE

TOWN OF WESTFIELD

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that in order to support digital wireless telephone service in the Westfield area, Verizon Wireless (the "wireless carrier") proposes to install a set of antennas and associated equipment on a building located at 241 North Avenue West, Block 3103, Lot 9, Town of Westfield, Union County, New Jersey. Antennas will be located on the top of the existing 48.1-foot high elevator bulkhead on the roof of the existing building. The top of the proposed antenna screening is 56.7-foot above ground level. The associated equipment will be on the roof of the existing 36.2-foot building, and will be finished to match the existing building facade.

The wireless carrier is seeking comments from all interested persons on the installation's impact on historic properties, defined as properties included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Comments from the public are requested as part of the review of this project before the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470f), the rules of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (36 C.F.R. Part 800), the Nationwide Programmatic Agreement on Collocation of Wireless Antennas adopted March 7, 2005, and the FCC's environmental rules (47 C.F.R. Part 1, Subpart 1).

Please submit all comments or requests for additional information about this project to ARCH2, Inc., 16 Wernick Place, Metuchen, New Jersey 08840, or electronically to nzerbe@arch2inc.com by [30 days from publication]. Any questions, call Ms. Nancy L. Zerbe at 732-906-5669. 1 T - 6/1/06, The Leader Fee: \$35.70

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Enjoy the "old world charm" and "today's conveniences" of this wonderful mini estate! Built in 1914, this custom home has eleven rooms...formal living room and dining room, eat-in kitchen, six bedrooms and three full baths. The newer family room addition blends beautifully with the original home. The home provides 6000 sq. ft. of living space, plus a garage large enough to house six cars. Lovely wrap-around porch overlooks in-ground pool and lush grounds (2.24 acres).

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Open House: Sun. 6/4 1-5PM



Westfield . . . Sunlit Split Level home on tranquil tree-lined street. This lovely home features an open floor plan for casual as well as formal entertaining. The sunny living room and dining room, cozy family room and updated eat-in kitchen are an irresistible combination. Moments from schools, New York transportation and delightful downtown Westfield . . . make it yours today! DIR: Central Ave. to Elizabeth #111 \$559,000 (052001127)

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Kathleen Alagna
 weichert.com



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Open House Sunday; 6/4 1-5pm



8 Village Circle, Westfield - Three bedroom, two full bath Expanded Ranch sits on a quiet cul de sac, with a large park-like backyard, and just a "stone's throw away" from Tamaques Park and Tamaques Grammar School. This home was updated in 2005, including, Andersen Windows and Doors, a large Eat-In Kitchen with new stainless steel appliances, granite countertops, new master bath, four (4) zone gas hot water baseboard heating, central air, all brick wood-burning fireplace in family room, finished basement, tiled laundry room, and much more!

Please contact Andrew Calcagno @ 908-721-7700 for a personal tour or visit

www.ForSaleByOwner.com, Listing No. 20613190

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Holly Cohen & Weichert Realtors are pleased to present 719 Harding Street Open House: Sun 6/4 1-5PM



Westfield . . . Lovingly maintained 6 room Ranch style home boasts a sun-lit, spacious floor plan, with flexibility to suit your family's needs. A classic wood-burning fireplace with dentil molding, detailed wood mantle & vintage tiled hearth enhances the appeal of the formal living room. A formal dining room, eat-in kitchen, 2 generous bedrooms plus bonus room, 1 1/2 baths, oversized 2-car garage and full basement complete the picture. Set on a wonderful 53 x 178 lot on a tranquil tree-lined street just moments from Washington School, picturesque downtown Westfield, shops and transportation. This one shouldn't be missed . . . call Holly for your personal tour today! DIR: E. Broad to S. Chestnut left Benson left Harding #719 \$479,000 (052001140)

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