

Tales From Thailand, 2019, #4



Hello, dear readers.

Honestly, I'm not sure where to take you, at this point in my journey. I've had too many adventures to relate them all...and I'm acutely aware of how easily I can sway your opinions just by turning my camera or perspective one direction or another.



I've just returned from seven days in a rural orphanage in Kanchanaburi. It was pretty much pure chaos, since the staff and the director, MC Jutipak, were all away at a conference, leaving a struggling skeleton crew to maintain the 85 children.

I don't know if it was because of, or in spite of their freedom, that the children seemed incredibly cheerful and creative...

I can affirm that these kids are much stronger than the more privileged kids at MC Sansanee's

kindergarten or the kids who live here at S.D.S. For one thing, they've been carrying the smallest children around, since they were five or six.

Most of these kids were climbing up large trees ...and onto the rooftops. (I suddenly remembered doing the same thing at Camp Netimus, when I was eight... In fact I initiated an exclusive club at this conservative Quaker Camp in the Pocanos).. Among the

entrance requirements: climbing onto the rooftop of our cabin...uhhh, naked. We were eventually caught, and proper Quaker retribution was meted out.

And these orphanage kids are so alert!

I, for instance, am a one-woman Amusement Park. It took me back to the small Tanzanian village of Lamadi, where the albino children had few commercial distractions.

Here are some of the starring attractions at the Pa Joy Amusement Park:

**Flabby wrinkled skin on the back of my arms and around my neck... you can play with it!
**Moles and dark skin spots were a continual delight and source of wonder
**The gold caps on my molars were a big hit.
**The roll of flab that hangs around my mid-section..I identified it as “Dough/big”...and any reference to anything big would thenceforth circle back to my belly.
My (apparently) over-sized wrist bones.



Friends, if you are self-conscious or have anything to hide, don't hang out with rural Third World children. And, what a marvelous Buddhist opportunity.

And perhaps ten percent of these gorgeous children were desperate to be held. They would chase away other contenders, and try to monopolize my attention.

One little girl, about 11, was driving me crazy, since she was a bully and starved for contact, to the point of constantly bursting unannounced into my little bedroom, where I would periodically take refuge.

As I watched my own animosity and aversion building, I had to consult St. Wisty, the patron goddess of compassion and troubled children. Some of you know her as Wisty Wrorabacher, who now lives in the frozen northeast. She gave me some useful pointers. And the bottom line, of course: to keep expanding my heart, while I created reassuring, yet feasible levels of support and boundaries for her.



Here's the kiddo in question (on the left), who came racing over when she saw I was taking someone else's photo.

There's a certain class of Lost Children here at the orphanage. They're the ones who didn't pass the entrance requirements to go on to the higher education institutions..and are awash in the orphanage's makeshift classrooms....which are insufficient to meet their behavioral learning disabilities.

This pulls my heartstrings mightily, since I too was that right-brain dyslexic, A.D.D. kid who couldn't read or pay much attention to anything. But I got tested, and was given private tutoring, by a saintly woman named Mrs. Angel, with a aureola of pure white hair surrounding her beatific face. You can't make this stuff up.

So I focused on these Lost Children:

We did yoga and dance every day, while I reinforced their abilities, and encouraged spontaneous movements of their own. We would take



turns leading the group. This child in particular was fearlessly creative.

We did clapping games all day, until these A.D.D. kids started lining up to get their turn. After a couple days, I'd start talking to the kids, either in Thai or in English, WHILE we were clapping. (e.g. what's your name? How old are you? Are you happy today?)

Then we would recite the English alphabet, while clapping. 🙌

You won't see any photos of this, cause there was no one to take photos, until the last evening of my visit, when the staff returned.

After yoga/dance, everyone waited for me to pull out my flute. I'm not sure if the music or the beautiful blue velvet casing that housed

the flute, was the bigger attraction. But within a couple days, some of the littlest kids unearthed nice recorders, and wandered around playing single-note concertos, for hours:

Likewise, a couple of the Lost Children have an amazing penchant for rhythms, so I shared some African and Middle Eastern riffs with them



The director, Maechee Jutipak, was kind enough to let me use her own cabin, while she was away, and even after she returned. Not only was it lovely, but there was an added “sati/mindfulness” opportunity built in: There were at least four spots where one could fall through the floor, because it consisted of thin linoleum stretched over the wooden beams... and that linoleum was giving up the ghost.....

Ahhh, only THIS step.



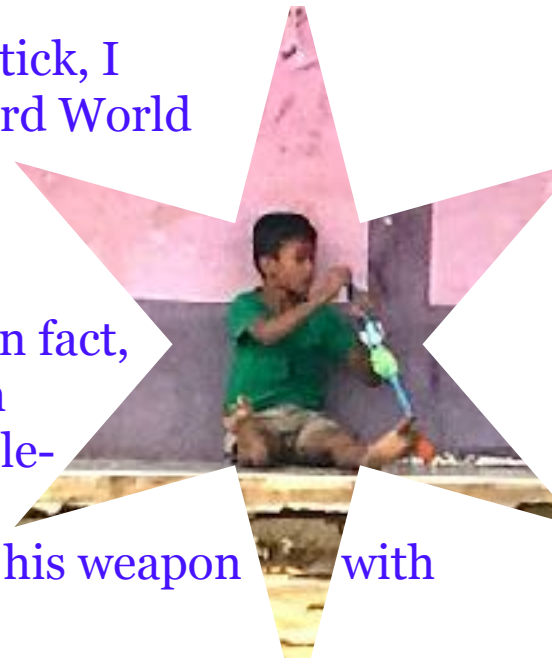
I knew that MC Jutipak wanted me to try to work with the Lost Children in their classrooms, teaching English. But just like in Tanzania. I couldn't hold their attention for even a minute.

As they sloughed into napping, tinkering with toys, giggling, hitting, and wandering out the door, I witnessed my own desire to punish them somehow. MOI - my persona was being diminished!

Isn't life fascinating?

And the regular teachers are never far from a stick, I notice. This is still standard behavior in poor 3rd World educational systems, wherever I've been.

So my classes were short-lived or non-existent when the Bearer of the Stick was not nearby. In fact, I noticed that there is often a young marksman stationed outside the door, with a kind of pebble-driven Slingshot to encourage escapees to return to the classroom. Here he is re-loading his weapon with fresh ammo.



And I told this class that I would send their photo to my friends in America, so here it is, dear readers.

Perhaps my happiest memory of all was seeing Boon looking so content and healthy.



Boon came to the orphanage when she was about ten years old, six years ago. She was

overweight, and had no coping skills, except to hit the other children and run away, laughing. She'd been severely abused, as a young child, and to this day, she does not speak.



But to my delight, this year she was calmer, healthier, non-combative, and seemed to delight in doing chores or relating to the many dogs and cats..AND she came to my yoga/ dance class



and participated, for the first time this year.

Perhaps you'd like to send a special blessing to Boon (which actually means "blessing" in Thai)?

Speaking of Lost Children, I have a confession to make, dear readers:

I know that many of you have been waiting for years for me to

find little Coy and perhaps rescue her. But between Spirit and Coyote Trickster, every single avenue has been blocked for several years now. Not only would I not recognize Coy if I saw her, now five years later, and I don't know her real name...but Anna's most recent instructions to me have been not to MAKE anything happen.

Anna told me there is still a strong arc of energy between us. I realized last week that I'll just have to invest in that arc, to bless and keep dear Coy safe. I feel a great sadness and some tears nearby, as I write this... but my physical mission has ended.

