

Friends

In my 1999 visit to Chiang Mai for the weather conference I met and became friends with Sunida, a receptionist at the Lotus Hotel. We corresponded by email and postal mail leading up to this 2002 Thailand visit. I had met her young son in 1999. This time I got to meet her mother and stepfather and stay in their home for about a week.

During those years I sent a cassette video copy of the Jesus Film in the Thai language for the family to view. The relationship between Sunida and her stepfather improved thereafter.

We also discussed the family's religion. It was not Buddhism but what I call a Japanese New Age utopian cult called Sekai Kyusei Kyo (SKK) following the teachings of the Japanese man Mokichi Okada. I read much of his book Foundations of Paradise. What I discovered was that Okada got much of his material from seance episodes, therefore influenced by evil spirits. He did, however, recommend to his followers to study Jesus. In Colorado that religious group is known as the Johrei Fellowship. My study of Okada's teachings became my project for my first Perspectives course (www.perspectives.org) in Fall 2001.

I was given a ride from Phayao Bible College to Chiang Mai, rather than riding the bus. After arrival Sunida's family took me back to the Mae Sa elephant camp that I visited in 1999.



Bath time at Mae Sa



Elephants about to arrive for show



Initial greetings



Playing with ball



Riding on tusk



Painting with brush



Sunida and her family at Mae Sa

Several years later, at the beginning of their honeymoon, our younger daughter, Maren, and her husband spent a few days in this Mae Sa elephant camp for a more involved time with these elephants. They returned with two different quality paintings by the elephants.

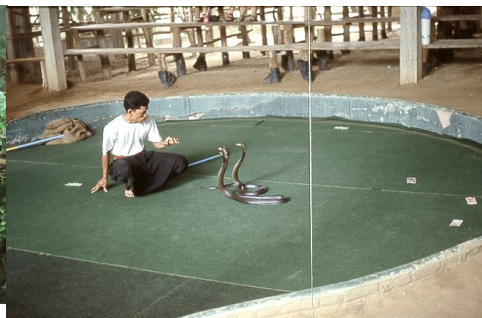
Nearby we also visited a snake exhibit, then went to the Chiang Mai zoo.



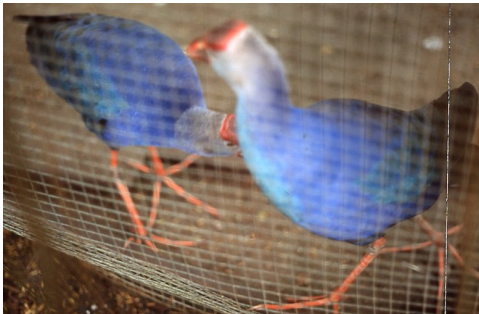
Snakes on branches



Snakes among leaves



Cobra demonstration



Purple Swamphen



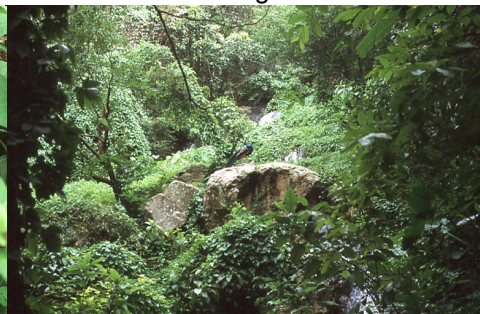
Black-collared Starling



Silver-eared Mesia



Lizard or amphibian



Zoo vegetation



Flamingos

I might like to return to the Chiang Mai Zoo with a better camera to photograph the birds in their huge walk-in enclosure. Next we went up into the mountainside to the Doi Suthep Buddhist temple area overlooking the city.



Doi Suthep



Chiang Mai and airport



Sunida's home, cycle on which we rode



View of adjacent field



Sunida's parents, outdoor kitchen. (Keeps heat, smells outside.)



Her parents are street vendors of food.



These are their food stand locations.



Rare house of teak

I went to a mid-week prayer meeting of their SKK group. Back home one of her parents revealed that their ancestors were Christians in Hong Kong but that faith was not passed down. During the night of 5 July Sunida and I rode in a bus chartered by their SKK group to Saraburi, the SKK headquarters in Thailand, for a national gathering.



Tops of SKK buildings beyond trees



Other SKK campus buildings



Main SKK temple building

We were inside the main building for perhaps two hours of observation. Then Sunida and I boarded a public bus to take me to Bangkok where I would join my next team. Part way through that trip Sunida declared to me that she decided to become a follower of Jesus Christ. When in Bangkok she repeated her declaration to my next team leaders (from Cru, with the Jesus Film organization). Within about the next two years her parents also became followers of Jesus.