



ISB NETWORK NEWS

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Purpose: The ISB Network Foundation, Inc. is a not-for-profit, 501-C-3 organization, dedicated to bringing Alumni of International School Bangkok together to support, maintain, and create contacts between people who shared similar experiences in Thailand. We serve as the Official Alumni Association for International School Bangkok.

Dues & Benefits: Membership fees are \$40.00 for 2 years and are tax deductible. Our goal is to provide you with three newsletters per year and access to contact information of all known ISB Alumni. You do not have to be a member to be listed on the website/directory or to attend a reunion.

Your paid membership helps support the activities performed by the all-volunteer Board of Directors responsible for maintaining the database, publishing the newsletters, maintaining presence on the web, and planning the biennial reunions.

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Life as a Missionary Kid in Southeast Asia

By Keith Hatton '70 (khatton@aol.com)

It was 1953 and I was six months old when my parents joined the Overseas Missionary Fellowship. The OMF is an offshoot of the China Inland Mission founded by Hudson Taylor in 1865. My paternal grandfather and grandmother were CIM missionaries. My father and his siblings were sent to a CIM boarding school located near the little fishing village of Chefoo on the northern China coast. The school was closed down when the Japanese invaded China during World War II and the kids, including my father, were sent to a Japanese concentration camp near Shanghai. All missionaries were eventually told to leave China in 1951. The CIM missionaries scattered around Southeast Asia eventually forming the OMF.

So, it was off to Singapore and the OMF mission training school. My parents tell me I was the kid from hell in my early years, which is an interesting label coming from missionaries. Remembering very clearly my activities later in childhood lends some credence to that label. My only two memories of Singapore were parking myself underneath a classroom window during class and singing the Mikado at the top of my lungs until someone had to physically remove me (apparently I knew the entire Mikado at the age of one and a half – not something I'm proud of), and seeing one of the school cooks burn to death after her clothes caught on fire in the kitchen. Other than those specific things, the rest is just a mindscape of a very beautiful country.



Keith – age 2

Lopburi

After graduation from the OMF mission training school in Singapore, my parents were sent to Chiang Rai in Northern Thailand for their first assignment, then to Chiang Mai, and finally to Lopburi in Central Thailand where they lived and worked until the late fifties. I remember nothing about Northern Thailand. My time in Lopburi on the other hand, I remember like it was yesterday. I certainly lived up to my parents label during these years. While my parents were doing their missionary thing, I was plotting my escapades, a lot of which involved our landlady. I won't go into any details about what I did. Let's just say that she was out around twenty baby chicks that were the subject of a breathing-under-water experiment using a foot bath, all of her banana trees, and a large quantity of her Betel Nut. I won't take too much credit for the latter because I gave her back a good bit of it all over her floor. There was much more, some of which resulted in death threats from the locals – I'm sure just to scare me, but you get the idea. I'm amazed that we were allowed to stay in our house after our landlady had to put up with so much grief from me.

Misdeeds aside, Lopburi was a fantastic town for a young kid to live. I could speak Thai fluently and had many Thai friends. I never saw things as American vs. Thai. As far as I was concerned, I was a Thai. Across the street from where we lived there was a half-mile square area that contained the ruins of many Buddhist temples, some of which

were still being used by the priests for prayer. It was loads of fun exploring the place and playing games there with my friends.



Our house in Lopburi



Me with my sister Marilyn and our dog Brownie



The ruins across from where we lived in Lopburi

My first taste of raw Tamarind occurred in Lopburi as there are Tamarind trees growing all over the place. Tamarind trees have large seed pods that look like pea or bean pods. Tamarind is the meat that covers the seeds. On its own it is quite sour, but I really liked it and frequented the trees often. I've always loved the Thai Tamarind Candy that has had sugar and chili added to it. I still order it online by the boatloads. We almost always ate Thai meals, which I prefer to this day. Thai fruit was a highlight for me throughout my years of living in Thailand. There was nothing I didn't like. To this day, I have never understood the western aversion to Durian.

The local wildlife consisted of snakes (notably Cobras and Banded Kraits), large red centipedes (up to a foot long), large scorpions (as big as your hand), red army ants and rats. Generally the snakes left us alone. I on the other hand, having an appropriate label, didn't reciprocate. My mother claims she once went outside and I was face to face with a King Cobra. It had its hood spread and was rearing up as I waved my finger six inches from its face. She snatched me away whilst the gardener took care of the snake. I don't remember that incident, but I do remember bringing a Banded Krait into the house on the end of a stick. Banded Kraits were nasty snakes with venom many times more potent than a Cobra's. The only problem for these snakes is that they had small fangs so they had to chew on you for awhile to get the venom under the skin. I remember being schooled in how to look for them when out playing barefoot and to get them off you quickly if they did try to bite. We had to keep an especially sharp eye out for some of the other critters as well as they could wind up in your shoes, clothes or bed and do a real number on you if you weren't careful.

The coolest of the local wildlife were the "plate" spiders. You can venture a wild guess as to why we called them that. If I remember correctly, their legs were longer than a Tarantula's with a smaller body. They were very rare for Central Thailand (more bountiful in the south from what I hear) but when we came across one, it was always an event. They were generally harmless but could bite if you didn't handle them gently. The land lady's son and I used to take some of the ones we found down to the local market, tie string around them and pretend to take them for walks as pets much to the horror of the people at the market. My mother hated spiders, so it was always a joy to bring one of those monsters in the house and watch her go ballistic. Why did we do such things to those we loved when we were young?

Boarding School

When I was old enough to attend school, my parents sent me to the OMF Boarding School located a mile up in the Cameron Highlands situated on the Malay Peninsula. The school was called Chefoo School after the CIM boarding school in China. To get there was a three day train ride in the care of several of the school teachers. It's always been a huge insult to a Thai person to either point the soles of your feet at them or be in a position where your feet were above them, so there were no sleeper cars on the trains back then. Sleeping was always done sitting up and it was very uncomfortable. Sleeper cars were finally permitted beginning in the mid-sixties. The train ride was sheer boredom for many of the kids, but I loved watching the world go by and never tired of it.

Our disembarkation point in Malaya was Tapah, a small town south of Ipoh. There we were herded into yellow Mercedes cabs and driven the 40 or so miles to the school. The cabs always took the climb into the mountains on the extremely

winding roads a little too fast. If you were sitting in the back seat it was a nauseating experience for a kid so we always had to pull over at some point to let a kid puke.

I will always remember my first sights, sounds and scents of the Cameron Highlands. It is one of the most beautiful spots in the world. The climate is in the 70's year-round. Most of the area at the time was lush jungle and the scent of flowers and the vegetation permeated the air. Clouds would often meander through the valleys. You knew when it was going to rain because you could hear it a mile away pounding on the jungle tree leaves getting louder and louder as it approached.

The Cameron Highlands provided all the tea for Malaya (and now Malaysia) so most of the deforested areas were tea plantations. The British military had a small presence there and used the Cameron's as a vacation resort after they built a golf course. The other inhabitants of the area were the local town folk, jungle tribesmen, the occasional Malayan Sultan vacationing with his family at his palace, and, of course Jim Thompson the Thai Silk King who loved to vacation in the Cameron's as well.

Chefoo School was nestled in a gorgeous 5-acre valley surrounded by mountains and jungle with a stream flowing through the middle of it. The closest town, Brinchang, was a 15-minute walk away so we weren't too isolated. The school was run by a headmaster who was required to be married and have his family there as the teachers were all single missionary women. For the most part the adults were really nice to the kids, but if you got in trouble, out came the cane (lovingly referred to as "my switch" by the headmaster), and you got a beating in front of the entire school bending over and touching your toes with your pants down. This only happened to the boys, which was quite unfair! I had quite a few visits from "my switch" during my years there, which shouldn't surprise anyone considering my label, but it never deterred me from the pursuit of fun.



Current picture of Chefoo School taken from a dorm/classroom building showing the headmaster house on the left and dorms in the background



Wide angle shot of all the school buildings from the playing field.



The headmaster's house

Where the headmaster's punishments were swift, predictable and, in most cases, just, several teachers were a different story entirely. These sadistic cretins reveled in coming up with different ways to deal with the kids who got out of hand. The head bang against a wall for talking after "lights out" was in the top five favorite teacher punishments for a while. I saw stars many a cloudy night with that one. Fortunately, these personalities were few and far between. Thinking back on it, it is now readily apparent that these particular individuals wanted to be off doing their missionary thing rather than dealing with us brats and were the exception rather than the rule. The rest were excellent teachers and caring individuals who did their best to make the kids feel at home.

Other than those few bad memories, I had a blast at Chefoo. It was a small school – never more than 50 to 60 kids and 10 adults. We were always done with class in the early afternoon and were out playing on the grounds. You were allowed into the jungle, but you had to stay close to the school grounds. The area was quite safe with the exception of the rare tiger visit and the pit vipers. The pit vipers were all over the place, but stayed out of the way of people so you just had to keep your eyes peeled. As far as I know only one kid was ever bitten by one in the 46 year life of the school and that's because the idiot stuck his finger in its face (who does that sound like?). The jungle tribesmen always knew if there was a tiger in the area, so would warn the local villages and police who would then hunt it down and kill it. In spite of that, we did have several tiger happenings at the school over the years that occurred between the warnings and the police actually finding the animal. I came face to face with one while playing by the jungle. I stood stock still and it seems like we were looking at

each other forever. Eventually it just turned around and left. I never knew why I survived that confrontation. Just recently, tiger experts have determined that younger tigers will not attack prey that is facing them. In fact, people in India have begun wearing masks on the back of their heads to avoid tiger attacks and it seems to work. Maybe the reason it didn't attack is because I was facing it or maybe it had just eaten.

An interesting aside regarding the Cameron's and tigers: people have speculated that Jim Thompson was killed by a tiger when he was vacationing in the Cameron's. I take exception to that theory. If he had been, the local jungle tribesmen trackers would absolutely have found evidence of it. No doubt in my mind! I have personally seen them at work. The last people to see Jim Thompson alive were several Chefoo students who waved to him as he passed the school gates walking towards Brinchang. He never arrived at Brinchang. When you consider the fact that Brinchang is only a third of a mile away from the school, it's not much of an area for the trackers to search. Tigers always leave stuff behind close to where the kill is made. Since the trackers didn't find anything the only conclusion in my mind is that Jim Thompson never left the road.

During my life in Asia up to this point in time I had never experienced cold or hot running water. Chefoo School had both. My first bath in hot water in an actual bathtub was a monumental happening. It sure beat dishing cold rain water out of a gong in the hong naam and pouring it all over oneself before and after soaping down with a big orange-yellow brick of hard soap. The meals took some getting used to. This was a British boarding school and so was the menu. Breakfast was usually porridge with canned milk and sugar, a one-minute egg with the top lopped off, and toast with Marmite. Marmite is an acquired taste that I managed to acquire over my years there. I love it and still buy it – much to the chagrin of my family. The other meals weren't notable with the exception of Wednesday lunch, which was a fantastic Chinese menu.

The education I received at Chefoo was generally excellent. I was reading C. S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia series after the first term. We were never graded, neither were report cards sent home. The only thing missing was pre-algebra which had been added to the grade school education curriculum in England. This came back to bite me later. Since Chefoo was a mission school we spent a lot of time after supper in prayer meetings, hymn sings and learning complete chapters of the Bible which we had to recite ad nauseum to the headmaster. If I remember correctly, there were two terms a year and between terms we traveled back to be with our families for six weeks. Somewhere during this period of my time in Asia, while traveling between countries and being locked away in boarding school, my fluent Thai disappeared and I never picked it back up again: not because I couldn't, but because it was never a priority for me to do so.

Bangkok

Chefoo School provided the equivalent of an elementary school education. When I graduated from Chefoo, my parents had to decide whether or not to send me to the OMF mission house in the States (foster care) for middle and high school or keep me home to attend a school in Bangkok, where they had been relocated by the OMF. Fortunately, they decided to keep me home. It was also fortunate that my parents stayed in Bangkok for the remainder of their work in Thailand. From this point on, my life was, with a few minor exceptions, just the same as any other kid who spent their teenage years with his or her family.

I'm sure you all remember the Ruam Rudi School. I'll bet most of you have never heard of the Bangkok Patana School (<http://www.patana.ac.th/>); a British School founded in 1957 (another international school about to celebrate its 50th) that was located in south/central Bangkok at the time. I say "was" because Bangkok Patana has now become one of the largest international schools in Bangkok, second only to ISB, and had to move out to its current location on some ridiculously high Soi number off Sukhumvit Road (115, I think) due to its size.

I attended Patana School for grades six through eight. The curriculum was excellent as were the teachers. As I mentioned previously, the Chefoo curriculum and the "modern" British system taught in Patana at the time weren't in sync. At Patana, pre-Algebra was taught in the lower grades and in grades six through eight the assumption was made that you knew what was required to take your first Algebra class. Since I had never had pre-Algebra I had real trouble with Algebra. The switching between the various curriculums left me behind in math-related subjects and I was never able to catch up until college.

Around the time I graduated from Patana in 1966, my parents left the OMF. My father was very interested in cultural linguistics and was offered a job with the American Bible Society as a Biblical Translations Consultant. He returned to the States in the early 70s to earn a PHD in Cultural Linguistics from the University of Pennsylvania. He eventually became one of the world's leading authorities on the Bible and wound up doing translations work in Micronesia for the ABS after living in Thailand for almost 30 years. The job change meant that my parents had a little more money so they could afford to live in Bangkok and send my siblings and me to ISB. ISB was the first time in my life I had ever been around that many American kids. It took my entire freshman year to get over the mini culture shock that occurred. In spite of that, my ISB experiences were a high point of my life in Asia.



ISB Senior Picture

My parents were never puritanical in how they treated their children, even when they were in the OMF, which I was always thankful for. Consequently, I had a lot of freedom in Bangkok. I was allowed to play in rock bands and listen to rock and roll. My father came to hear us play often and he'd drag some of his missionary friends along with him who also seemed to have a good time. In fact, my father introduced Beatle tunes to the Youth Sunday School class he taught at the Bangkok Wattana Church – which I'm sure raised some eyebrows, but how cool is that! My parents never flinched when I went on USO tour gigs, played at the military USO club near Don Muang Airport for New Years Eve, or went to Red and Blue to "listen to the band".

As a non-military family, we answered only to the Embassy and the Thai Immigrations Office. We had no PX privileges so we bought our food at the local market. We couldn't purchase some items locally that you could get at the PX, but you can't miss what you've never had. My parents were still relatively poor, even with the job change, so we didn't have air-conditioning until my senior year in high school. Even then there was only one air-conditioning unit and it was in the master bedroom. After living in Thailand for many years, I was pretty heat resistant so the lack of air conditioning never bothered me. We never had a phone the entire time I was there – which was really inconvenient at times for a teenager. It was too expensive to have one installed.

On the other hand, because of the length of time my parents had been in Thailand, they had many friends in high places, including Thai royalty. It was always fun to visit the palaces and mansions and get pampered. A wealthy Chinese businessman took our family under his wing and he often picked us up for an umpty-course Mandarin meal at the Hotien Lao restaurant. This continued until his death in the mid-sixties. We vacationed at Hua Hin every year we lived in Thailand. The OMF had a vacation resort there and we were able to stay there for free even after we left the mission. Hua Hin in those days was for people who wanted solitude and gorgeous 100-yard-wide beaches with clean white sand. You could look up and down the 2-mile beach and not see a soul. I never went to Pattaya the entire time I lived in Thailand.

You have probably noticed that I have said very little about religion to this point. So why did the missionary life not rub off on me, in spite of my label? I was never involved much with the work my parents were doing. The only chance the OMF had to groom me in carrying on the missionary tradition in my family was at Chefoo, which obviously had a responsibility to provide not only a scholastic education, but a religious one as well. Quite frankly, Chefoo shoved religion down our throats.



Keith Hatton today

I'm not the kind of person who reacts well to that. Most importantly, I think that being able to stay with my family in Bangkok and experience life outside of the narrow confines of the missionary box allowed me ample freedom to make good decisions about my spiritual life. Even though many other OMF kids are now in the mission field, I was one that never felt the call.

So, my graduation from ISB in 1970 meant that I was to finally return to the States to attend university after 17 years in Southeast Asia. My reaction to leaving Thailand and my memory of being there is very different from some who were there for a short period of time. I certainly left with many wonderful memories of a great time growing up there, but I was more enthralled with the prospect of experiencing life outside of Thailand. Some day I'll probably go back and visit, but, as a missionary kid, I experienced Asia to its fullest – I was a Thai for awhile – then a second adventure began and I've never looked back.

Objective Myanmar, 2005

MW Brougham '70 (mbrougham@juno.com)



Rangoon and Adaptation to Myanmar

The first impression one will have of this land called Myanmar (Me-Anne-Mar), is that it may as well be an island, even though it is surrounded by India, Bangladesh, China, Laos, Thailand, and Malaysia. It seems nothing like the adjacent countries in most ways, yet possesses the more positive or traditional aspects of Asian life as similarities. Try to picture a lush tropical hilly city, almost jungle, so dense with vegetation, you barely see the buildings that comprise the capital of Rangoon. Your eye is forcibly drawn upward to a magnificent cluster of golden pagodas within other glittering, or stark white temple structures at the highest point of the city. Most of the buildings you do see are of an architectural style of centuries past. Much of what Kipling had described over a century ago still holds true in many respects. Despite being in an environment of great age, it would still not be fair to say that Myanmar is frozen in time since there are a few modern conveniences blending with the ancient surround. The pace is very relaxed yet most people seem to enjoy working hard as a way of life.

Unlike many Asian destinations that have been overdeveloped, the lush vegetation is exquisitely everywhere in Myanmar. Rangoon is no exception to this, as the annual rainfall here is equal or greater than other regions of the country. For the visiting outsider, the different foliage is a rare treat. Huge Banyan trees grow without limitations. Palms, colorful orange and red blossoms, large Bamboo trees in clusters, Plumerias in bloom, Teak trees with their large leaves, ferns, Mangos, Papayas, and an endless array of flowers and orchids, are some of the different plant life that make the country rich in oxygen and beauty.

There is something else quite different about Rangoon. It is not noticeably apparent at first but after being informed of two city laws it all makes



sense. It is illegal to use the horn of a vehicle and all motorcycles are prohibited within the city limits. This is in stark contrast to a city such as Mandalay, which is bustling with everything including hundreds of motorcycles. Outside of Rangoon, the horn it seems, is used for communication, not provocation. As odd as the well-enforced laws seem in Rangoon, this also creates a very calm flowing atmosphere that is quite pleasant in a strange way.



As in most areas of Asia, people crowd into buses, trucks, or whatever is available as a taxi. In Myanmar, people are so used to sharing transportation that it becomes an activity of everyday life, and they are content to do so. Out in the rural areas they use a crude exposed fuel efficient tractor motor that can be attached to almost anything with wheels. It is very common to see farm workers crowded on one of these vehicles coming home from work in their very colorful clothes and headdress.

The country is blessed with an abundance of water, delivered with significant amounts of rainfall via numerous major rivers. From these water sources, many lakes have evolved also. As you pass through Rangoon there are several lakes that make this enchanting jungle metropolis that much more scenic. These elegant lakes are surrounded by relic structures including traditional homes, temples, covered docks, and old wooden walking bridges. The view at these lakes is enhanced by the abundant lilly pads and other surface growing species of several varieties.

A visit to the largest temple in the Rangoon area, known as the Shwe da Gon Paya, is a great place to immerse oneself into the culture and customs of Burmese traditions. Everyone at this ancient temple has settled in, to a tranquil orientation of quiet and calm. Many are meditating with family members, presenting offerings, or praying to Buddha. A man and woman are observed walking together under an umbrella with their arms intertwined, which defines there matrimonial union in a society quite modest by tradition.

People are welcomed to the temple regardless of religious belief. In fact, there are monuments to other religions here that were intended to draw those of other faiths to the temple in order to convert people in a subtle way of making them feel comfortable initially. This is an interesting concept that would otherwise make one feel uncomfortable in a foreign place of worship. In addition, you must always shed your footwear upon entering any temple, which creates a humbling consequence for all that are present.

The traditional clothing fashion, which usually consists of a lyongi (wrap around cloth or sarong), a local style shirt or top, an umbrella for downpours or too much sun, and an Asian style bag (with the shoulder strap and two tails), is worn by ninety percent of the population, not only at the temples, but throughout all aspects of life including work and sport. Sandals are worn by just about everyone including many in uniforms. Mixed into this equation of elegant style are the Buddhist monks in dark reddish orange robes and nuns in pink and red robes. Many people protect themselves from sun and rain with either an umbrella or a large hat made of leaf weavings. Monks are known to hold a large circular fan, which can protect them from the elements, as well as assist in gaining relief from the heat. Many people, especially women and children, will wear a sunscreen and complexion preserver made of a thick white root. The paste is made by rubbing it in water then applying it artistically to the cheeks and forehead. It is not uncommon to see older women smoking a cigar like leaf, called charuup.



Out in the countryside, people are wearing the traditional clothes of their region and they are usually very decorative. The people here are proud of their heritage and this is depicted in their colorful and graceful attire. One might certainly feel alien in western dress among such exquisite traditional wear. Perhaps the past history of political isolation, as well as ethnic pride, has contributed to the island feeling of unique qualities preserved in time.

The language does not sound like Thai or Chinese but more like it came from Africa. The food is not as hot or spicy as in the surrounding countries. Many of the ingredients are the same but prepared in a more organic manner. A curry is not necessarily hot and spicy but could be a sauce that is mild and subtle in flavor.

The Burmese are a very intelligent group of people. In some cases where school was not available to young children, they were able to learn to read or write while attending the Buddhist monastery. It is a tradition for everyone to join the monastic experience at some point in one's life. One must be at least five years of age to experience this humble existence of study, worship, and begging for offerings from others. The tradition of monks lining up from shortest to tallest first thing in the morning in order to collect offerings door to door, is quite a sight for outsiders to observe. The monks walk single file from their monastery until they reach their individual neighborhoods and fan out until they are all separated. Homeowners, as well as businesses welcome the custom. Since most of the populations are Buddhist, the tradition is merely a daily routine. It is apparent that the temples and devotion thereof are thriving in this part of the world.

The shopping in Myanmar could easily manipulate the majority of one's leisure time. The country is known for its richness in gems such as rubies, teak carvings and furniture, and an endless array of handmade products such as fabrics, umbrellas, and a whole industry of lacquerware crafts. The lacquerware factories can be a great place to gain knowledge of the tedious but intricate process. The hand painted crafts and furniture are detailed to the size of a pin's head. The curing process takes months, if not years, to cure in a cellar before the final finishes are completed.



The products come in all shapes and sizes, from a petite bowl to a large chest, all done with exquisite detail. Another medium thrown into the mix is the art of gold leafing. As the practice is done throughout the temples as an offering and rich decoration, it is also applied in the art of lacquerware painting and detailing. The lacquerware is similar or influenced by other Asian cultures such as Japanese, Thai, and Chinese products, but is also unique in style to Myanmar.

Shopping for the various arts and crafts is available throughout the country whether it may be in the vast marketplaces of the larger cities or along the most remote roadway or temple. All the factories have a feeling of artisan pride and they welcome anyone to browse through the establishment. Touring factories of woodworking, bronze sculpting, lacquerware, jewelry making, glass production, and fabric weaving are great ways to experience the process as well as the exchange with the creative people doing everything by hand or perhaps with the help of basic non electric machinery.

Bagan

A visit to Myanmar would not be complete without a visit to Bagan and Enle Lake. Bagan is an ancient city comprised of thousands of temples. Many temples are of original construction of at least 1500 years in age. Most temples were made of brick and then covered with a layer of plaster. There are some made of sandstone which have also survived the wear of time. A few years ago, most residents of the Bagan temple area, were directed to move outside of the temple city and build a dwelling city next door. This transaction has created an aura of the ancient within the temple city that will take your imagination back to such times when the region was thriving. It is actually considered disrespectful not to maintain the temple monuments throughout Buddhist regions. Many temples have been rebuilt tastefully and with the ancient designs in mind. However, there is no comparison to the ancient temples' decaying beauty. The original bricks have weathered to a soft face look that only time can create.

The photographic opportunities in Myanmar are extraordinary and Bagan is a magical place to capture a unique ancient land. There are several temples one can climb (similar to an Aztec temple), and following a very pleasant tour by horse and buggy on dirt roads around many ancient temples, it is well worth the climb to experience an extraordinary view of the entire valley. There are temples as far as the eye can see with a river meandering through a forest of pagoda steeples. It's an ideal spot to enjoy the sunset and mix with some worldly hosts or travelers.

There are a handful of hotels and restaurants here that are engulfed in a tropical garden or placed along the tranquil river. Hotels always have a warm welcome, usually a cold drink or a cold towel to freshen from the journey. Most entrances have two large pottery vases with fresh flowers floating on the surface.

The observance of the usage of teak is an incredible experience in itself throughout Myanmar. In the hotels one might see some incredible teak carvings, doors with ornate sculptures surrounding the passage, thick round columns of solid teak sanded and varnished to a fine detail that comprise open air structures. The quality of hand made arts and crafts is excellent. The atmosphere is very calm and relaxing and this contributes greatly to a memorable Bagan experience.



Enle Lake

Enle Lake is a fascinating place and a great change of lifestyle as everything is now done by boat. All of life's provisions are built out on the water including, homes, hotels, temples, restaurants, factories, and farms. The lake is not very deep in general and therefore land can be filled in, to create growing mounds of fruits, flowers, rice, and vegetables, all in great abundance. It is not unusual to see people harvesting crops while paddling in a boat. Fishermen use a cone shaped apparatus that nets the fish against the floor of the lake. Then a spear is used to capture the fish.

Enle is a huge lake in the heart of Myanmar. The surrounding tropical mountains and vegetation are similar to an island such as Hawaii except the mountains are somewhat smaller. It still has that same feeling of a lush tropical surrounding. Staying in a hotel in the middle of the lake, is a special way to enjoy the whole spectrum of lake life. Boats go motoring or paddling by, providing a vehicle for daily activities. Besides the soft motor sound of an occasional riverboat, the lake is quiet and slow. There is not a better place on Enle Lake to watch a sunset than from your hotel room balcony. Since you are in the middle of the lake, the view is as good as anywhere. The boat and guide stay with the visitor for the duration of the time spent on the lake and therefore the group can venture off on excursions such as a visit to some temple ruins way up a river, to a monastery, or to a floating market. The people throughout Myanmar are quite extraordinarily pleasant and friendly. Many speak English and are usually not shy about engaging you in conversation. On Enle Lake one will pass boats going the opposite direction and there will be some sort of friendly gesture such as a smile or a wave. The children will wave from boats or from their homes as you pass by. It is not uncommon for children to sing songs as they paddle along.



Summary

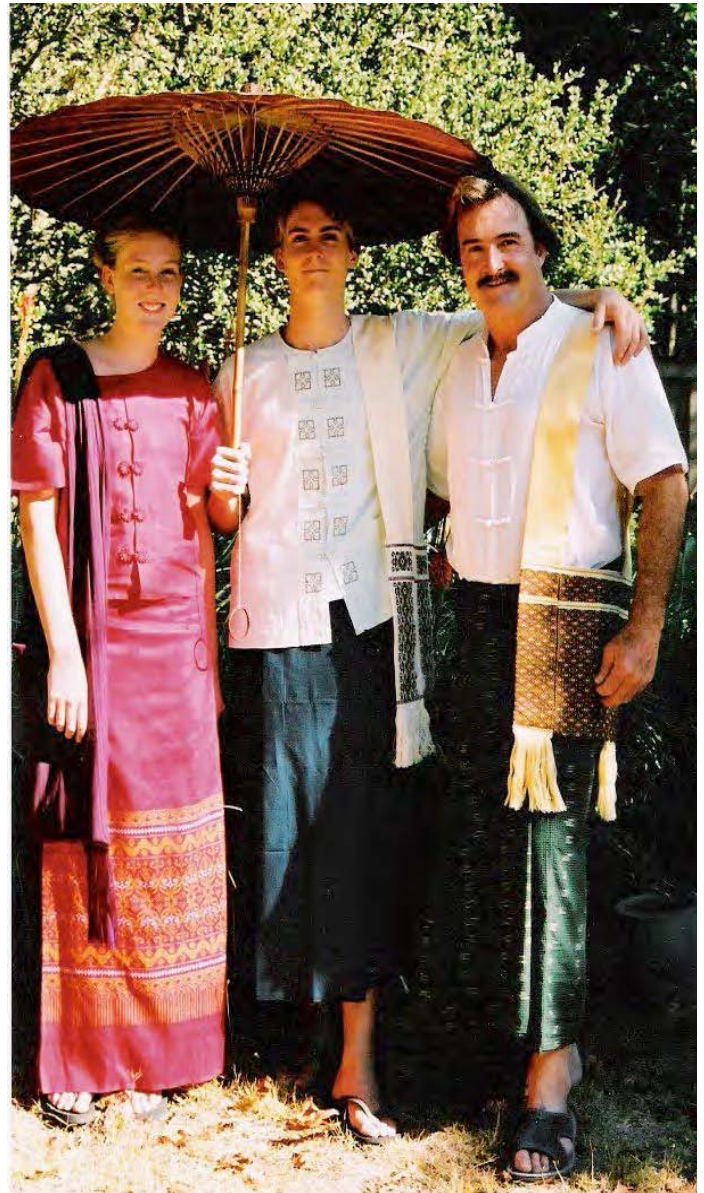
One could write volumes of the atrocities, misgivings, and rogue dealings of the regime government of Myanmar. However, in light of the spirit of the common hard working individual of this antiquated society, one must evade the underlying force of evil that silently abounds, so that one can immerse oneself into the soul of the people that will not let you forget the true understanding of this unique culture. Hopefully, this is the spirit that one shall remember and not the collaborations of the political injustices of the past and present. This region has seen political instability since at least the tenth century (ACE). Indeed it is curious and ironic that it might take such a rigid paradigm to preserve the unique ethnic traditions isolated by rules, as an island is isolated by the sea.

The true culture blossoms out of this political irony and is remembered in a land of grace and dignity. What will be retained from the experience will be those subtle aspects of life and nature that are uniquely preserved in this virtual island surrounded by land and some ocean. In a country where the average person currently (2005) only makes about ten US dollars a month (10,000 Kyat), there is still plenty of wealth in the land and spirit of the people. Blessed with monsoons, rainy seasons, and many rivers and lakes, there is more than enough food to go around for the populations and for export. Farming of cattle and other animals is widespread and thriving also.

The traveler will observe the use of oxen and waterbuffalo in the chores of farming. The horse and buggy or oxen and cart are still a major mode of transportation. The rich red earth in harmony with lush green vegetation will paint a striking picture along the country roads occasionally dotted by colorful ethnic attire worn by the farmworkers. These hardworking humble men and women toil for the richness of the land, not for monetary richness. There is also a richness of family unity that is evident through the immediate family as well as the pride of their ethnic ancestry. Rural lifestyles, defined by Mother Nature's seasonal change, have remained the same for centuries.

The welcoming hospitality of the people is a great part of the experience. In a land of lyongis, robes, fans, umbrellas, and sandals, the casual atmosphere is translated to making oneself comfortable and relaxed within the easiness of being part of a slower pace of life. The people of Myanmar are known for their exuberant celebrations, whether it may be a traditional holiday, or a festive wedding. The outsider is always welcomed to these events and may even be acknowledged as a luck symbol.

Whether one recalls the rivers and pagodas of Mandalay, the ruins of Bagan, the mysterious caves of Pindaya, the graceful life of Enle lake, or the enchantment of the lush tropical city of Rangoon, one will definitely be mesmerized by this land called Myanmar and its people.



MW (right) with his daughter Lauren and son James

The careful placement of the temple on the highest point above any dwelling area reflects the gold leaf in the sunset of a land of grace and the face of many thousand Buddhas in abstraction. As the sun sets over the golden temples, there is hope and promise that the spirit of the people will prevail, notwithstanding the ruling order of the day.

Tsunami Project Update:

Rajaprachanagroh School 35 – UPDATE

[\(\[http://www.isb.ac.th/Tsunami_Project_Update\]\(http://www.isb.ac.th/Tsunami_Project_Update\)\)](http://www.isb.ac.th/Tsunami_Project_Update)



Dormitory



The Library



ESL Staff

The ISB Tsunami Relief Network/Cendant Cares Building is complete. The halls and classrooms are filled with children laughing and learning.

The R35 campus is almost fully operational. An ISB team visited the school on August 22nd. Overall the school looks more and more like a school and less like a construction zone. The children and staff are settling into their new R35 home. Our team witnessed many smiles in the halls and engaged children in the classrooms.

The ISB Network/Cendant Cares Building offers two floors of classrooms and an open ground floor for student recreation and group activities. The classrooms are in full use.

The nurse station has at least six beds and cabinets of supplies donated with the guidance of the ISB Tsunami Relief Network. Our network has also paid for a full time nurse who is very busy.

Six of the eight dormitories are complete. Most of the 878 students now enrolled at R35 are able to board at the school.

A spacious canteen seats all of the students and staff. Three meals are prepared and served everyday. The ISB Tsunami Relief Network funded a cleaning and storage addition to the canteen. When the addition is finished in early September, the students may wash their own dishes and store their personal hygiene items here.

A centrally located library will be completed in the next month or two. Boxes of books donated by the ISB Tsunami Relief Network are waiting to be shelved in the stacks.

Two basketball courts are complete.

The open-air/temporary classrooms have new permanent walls. Another small set of classrooms was constructed for a new hotel service-training program.

A teacher housing facility, a storage building and guest quarters are also being constructed.

The foundation and support columns for the administration annex of the ISB Tsunami Relief Network have been laid.

One of the great successes of the ISB Tsunami Relief Network is the ESL program that was developed last school year. Six volunteers are now teaching English at R35 full time and have committed from 3–8 months to our project. Our volunteers are native or near native speakers of English and several of them have master's degrees in Education. They come to us with many talents and high recommendations. It is a pleasure to now have conversations in English with many of the R35 students, which attests to the success of this program.

Over the year ISB and R35 have truly connected. On any given day at ISB there will be a secretary on the phone to Khun Jan at R 35 asking questions about the students' current needs. In the classroom an ISB teacher will set aside a book, or a game that might be useful to the students at R35. An ESL volunteer at R35 will email the curriculum office at ISB for some guidance and references.

A group of ISB high school students will be planning a Bangkok Adventure trip for a group of students from R35.

The Rajaprachanagroh School 35 is a part of our daily lives.

For more information, please contact:

Leanne Chadwick (leanec@isb.ac.th) or

Marcia Kelly-Gerritz (mkelly_gerritz@hotmail.com).



Computer Lab



Nurse's Station



Because of the overwhelming interest in the "Klong Krui" at the San Antonio reunion, Kate Johnson was able to make a small profit on ticket sales for the boat ride. All profits were donated to the ISBN Foundation Tsunami Relief Project. Thanks for your support!

More ISB Couples

By Debby Stinemetz Caulfield '70 (cauldeb@hotmail.com)

In the July 2006 issue of the ISBN Newsletter I wrote about a few ISB alumni who have married other ISBers. Here is one more.

Brenda Clawson Wilks '72 and Roger Wilks '72

Brenda and Roger went to their high school prom together, but there is more to the story than that. After graduating from ISB in 1972 Brenda went to Ohio State University (OSU) and Roger attended the University of Miami (Fla.). They continued a long-distance relationship throughout their college career. As Roger says, he "came out of college stupider than when he went in" and he let Brenda slip away.

Brenda found a new life after graduation from OSU, married, had two kids, and became a Spanish and French teacher in the small rural town of Tonganoxie, Kansas. The marriage ended in 2000.

Roger began his own company, Montgomery Solar, Inc. in Gaithersburg, Maryland, a residential design and building firm, in the early 80s. Although Roger periodically searched the ISB website for signs of Brenda's whereabouts, he was unable to make contact as she continued to use her married name.

Following 9/11, Brenda sent an inquiring email in her maiden name to the website concerning the safety of her friend, Patricia McMahon, who worked near the Pentagon. Roger saw the email and communication began once more. Roger eventually made a trip to Kansas and their lost love rekindled! They mutually agreed, after many trips between Kansas and Maryland, that a long-distance relationship would not be repeated.

More than thirty years after their first date (at the Teen Club!) they were married on November 30, 2002. Also, you'll be happy to know that Patricia was safe and sound and announced that she was responsible for their reunion at the wedding!

Roger still owns and operates Montgomery Solar, Inc. and Brenda is an assistant principal in Gaithersburg High School. They happily reside in Germantown, Md.



Brenda and Roger in 1972



Their Wedding – November 30, 2002



And congratulations to Jolli Sidon '71 and Greg Merritt '71 on their engagement. We're told they plan to marry October 13, 2007.

BRATS

Our Journey Home

A DONNA MUSIL FILM Featuring Narration and Music by **KRIS KRISTOFFERSON**

One of the highlights of the reunion in San Antonio was the showing of the movie, *BRATS: Our Journey Home*, a film by Donna Musil. This touched many of our alumni and spoke to their experiences growing up as a Military Brat. Donna was on hand during the reunion to talk to alumni and answer any questions they had about the film or just to listen to their experiences growing up.

If you missed the showing in San Antonio, the ISBN Board of Directors plans to show the movie again at the San Diego reunion in 2008. For those of you who have not yet seen the film, here is a brief synopsis, taken from their website:

"It's hard to imagine a military Brat's childhood. Moving from base to base around the world, they are at home everywhere – and nowhere. There are 1.2 million children being raised in the military today. An estimated 15 million Americans are former Brats. They include actors Jessica Alba and Robert Duvall, Senator John McCain, and basketball star Shaquille O'Neal.

"BRATS is the first cinematic glimpse into a global subculture whose journey to adulthood is a high-octane mixture of incredible excitement and enormous pain. Make no mistake – BRATS is not about the U.S. military – it's about their children, who grow up in a paradox that is idealistic and authoritarian, privileged and perilous, supportive and stifling – all at the same time. Their passports say "United States," but they're really citizens of the world.

"Singer/songwriter and Air Force brat Kris Kristofferson leads us through the heart of their experiences, sharing intimate memories with fellow BRATS, including General Norman Schwarzkopf and author Mary Edwards Wertsch. Their stories reveal the peculiar landscape of their childhood, the culture that binds them together, and the power it exerts over their lives.

"A seven-year work of passion by independent filmmaker Donna Musil, BRATS features rare archival footage, home movies and private photographs from post-war Japan, Germany, and Vietnam."

I asked alumni to send me their thoughts about the film (whether they saw it at the reunion or on their own) and how it related to their own experiences growing up as a Military Brat. Here are their comments:

If you would like to purchase your own copy, go to <http://www.bratsourjourneyhome.com/order.htm>

Vince Bennett '67 (ISB 1965-67); (bennett.vb@pg.com)

The following is what I sent out to my extended family after watching the documentary for the first time. The viewing in San Antonio was my third time seeing it. I must admit that watching it with the group was a more powerful experience. It was interesting to see how absorbed people were watching the documentary. I know it has helped my wife understand me better. She lived at the same home address until she went to college. Her mother lived in the house for 61 years.

I watched the documentary *Brats: Our Journey Home* and found it to be an emotional experience. I think the subtitle sums it up "Because Everybody Needs Place to Call Home".



There were two things that struck me about the documentary:

1. Not one of the Brats regretted growing up in a military family.
2. None of them had a place called home. As a matter of fact, many of them laughed when asked the question.

They interviewed about 500 brats and feature 15-20 in the documentary. I'm not sure how 'typical' these are of the general group. Some of them seemed extreme, but there are certainly some very powerful truths in the documentary.

Military brats are a sub-culture that isn't appreciated even by most military brats. I realized this when I went to my first ISB reunion. It was the first time I was surrounded by people who really understood how I was raised. No one asked me "how did it feel to live in Bangkok as a teenager?" or "how was it to move so often?" Everyone there already knew the answer. I've also found that you can't really explain it to people. It's just something that is. In a sense, I felt like I was "home" at the reunion even though I have very few fond memories of high school. Military families sacrifice for the Nation. This is a given. Wartime or peacetime, the family gives up stability for the good of the nation. But this instability brings a strength and resilience to military brats. They learn to read people and how to fit in. On the other hand, they learn that relationships are time-based. You make friends. Two years later you move. You make new friends and the cycle continues. On a personal note, this probably explains my initial thinking when I first started dating Murielle. Permanence wasn't on my mind. I figured we'd date a few months then move on. I guess almost 34 years of marriage gives lie to that train of thought. On another note, I think this trying to understand how social systems work translated into my current career. I've got a knack for figuring out how a complex process works. I'm sure part of that is grounded in trying to figure out how the new school worked. I can also get along with most anyone at work. I'm always looking for common ground. (Perhaps this goes back to the 'where was your father stationed?' questions of my youth.)



Vince Bennett with his wife Murielle and some of their grandchildren

Military kids tend to be goal oriented. The military is all about the mission. That translates into the family culture. I don't know how successful we are as a group compared to the rest of the population, but several brats talked about not quitting. They needed to 'finish the mission'. While military kids may not see race as a factor, they may view rank as a factor. Sometimes officers' kids were told not to date enlisted kids and vice versa. But the military was the first place that Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians regularly gave orders to Whites and no one blinked. One Afro-American brat who is now a college professor stated that it was military schools that told him he was college material. The civilian schools told his parents that he was a good student and dressed well, but there was no mention of college.

Military kids can be slow to give trust, but are very loyal. I think this relates to the concept of mission and the fact that they moved often. Why invest trust when you know you are going to move? The military relies on trust (loyalty) expecting that everyone will do his or her job when ordered without hesitation.

There was an interesting split. Some brats get the fever to move every two to three years and live much of their lives overseas. Others, like me, want to plant themselves somewhere. Even though I have planted myself here in Cincinnati for 23 years, I still don't consider it 'home'. I could pack up and leave tomorrow. I would be sorry to leave this area, but I wouldn't be leaving home. I suspect my kids have a different perspective. I also don't mind going somewhere where I don't know the language. It was disconcerting for Murielle when we went to Europe and were somewhere that our English and her French were not understood. For me it was 'normal'.

I agree with my fellow brats that I wouldn't trade my military upbringing. I've been places and developed a global view when I was still a teen. How could you live in Thailand and not be profoundly affected by the poverty of people living just down the street? How could you not appreciate the freedom we have when you get the Bangkok Post and the front page has a large white block because the government has censored an article?

The internet has made finding people who belong to this sub-culture easy. There are alumni organizations and military brat organizations. There are plans for a museum in Wichita, KS for International Schools. It's a way for us to find our way 'home'.

At my first reunion, I had resolved that I wasn't going to be intimidated by my high school memories. When I saw my first classmate, I introduced myself. He apologized because he didn't remember me. I replied, "Don't worry about that. I was an introverted nerd in high school." He replied "And look at you now!" "I'm still an introverted nerd. I just don't care anymore", was my response. We had a very nice conversation about how the experience affected our lives.

Gary Kokensparger '69 (ISB 1968-69); (Gary.co@comcast.net)

I found it to be very moving and relevant to my experience. It is a powerful and sometimes emotional film that resonated with me. The psychological analysis and insights offered were quite interesting; and in several instances, helpful. I thought it was very well done; and would highly recommend it to anyone who has lived a portion of their life abroad. The sense of community created by shared experience can be very beneficial and healing to those who had difficulty fitting in after returning to their "home" country. Overall I think it's an important film, which makes a significant contribution to the TCK world...

Mary Griest '69 (ISB 1965-67); (maryg33@earthlink.net)

I have always been rather proud of being an army brat – earned it. When I was asked where I was from, I would respond, "Just ask when." I did not expect the movie to really 'get to me', but I found myself crying when I walked out. It was very powerful. Just before going to San Antonio, I had looked at some home movies that had been put on a videotape for my father. He had taken them mostly in Germany, where I was born, and had my older brother, sister, and mother in them (and me, tho I didn't do much except look cute). My mother's father was a general in Germany so he and my grandmother and uncle were also in some of the pictures. It really reinforced the international aspect of our family's background.

My older sister has never forgiven my father for all the moving, although she has put her own family through a lot of moves both around the country and across town! She graduated from high school in Taiwan. She and her family are now living in San Antonio, so I bought a copy of the movie for them to see.

I found a lot of advantages to the moving, and some disadvantages. One of the main advantages is an interest in other people – how they live and think and just enjoy talking with them regardless of their 'station in life'. I go places with friends and they think it is really strange that I will talk with the person working in the yard or waiting on us or someone just walking down the street or waiting at the bus stop. I find it strange that they don't.

The movie summed up a lot of my experiences. And the reunions (that I found out about a few years ago) help me keep in touch with that part of my life. I don't move very much any more (I have a lot of cats and other pets, so they are hard to move around), but I do get the urge to just pack up and go someplace.

Hearing others talk of their experiences, especially those whose experiences were different, gave new insight into what was going on in our lives during that time. How little we know of others, both then and now. Why we handle stress and love and other emotions in our lives were shaped by what happened then.

I am grateful for the experiences and the insight and the life that I have had, even though I have at times not handled them well. I have figured out that a lot of the problems I have had would have happened anyway, and that I probably survived them because of the things I learned.

Thank you for showing the movie and giving us the opportunity to look back at our lives and see what is happening now.

Maria Bennett Hock '70 (ISB 1965-67); (mhock@cox.net)

I watched the movie and thoroughly enjoyed it. I always stay away from people who put a negative spin on growing up in a military environment. I think everyone grows up with good and bad experiences. I was skeptical of the movie, but was pleasantly surprised. I think it showed good and bad. I kept looking at the screen and pointing and saying to myself "yes, that's me!" It really spoke to me. I watched my brother, Vince's copy but plan on purchasing a copy for myself and my two sons.

Cinde Schmidt Cates '71 (ISB 1965-67); (ccates@grandecom.net)

The Brats movie finally made me feel... "hey! Someone has been reading my mind!" Especially the parts about growing up with the "white glove inspections." No one but another "brat" would understand that. There were so many memories that I could identify with that it was almost eerie. I wish I could have had the opportunity to see this movie a long time ago – there are so many "cultural" differences in growing up in a military family. You really do grow up fast and sometimes very alone in a civilian world. You have no power over where you live or how long you live there. You make wonderful life friends and then you really enjoy the physical presence of them for such a short time. Hurray for the ISB Network who know how important it is to be able to keep in touch with your "roots" and "times" only another "brat" would understand!

Barb Fletcher Ledbetter, '72 (ISB 1965-67); (nmdesertcats@msn.com)

I didn't attend the San Antonio reunion, but I have seen the "Brats" movie. As a matter of fact, I found out about it from the ISB network and found the Website from which to order it. My family had its own reunion this summer, so I took the DVD along and we all watched it together (I have five siblings).

I have to say that we did not agree with most of the sentiments expressed in BRATS. All six of us were born after my father was already in the Air Force, and back in those days he was transferred every couple of years. (There were two or three assignments that were just one year and only one that was three years.) We didn't think anything of that way of life because we really didn't know much about civilian life, that there was another way of life. After watching the movie, we all agreed that the only negative thing about moving so often was having to leave old friends and then make new ones when we arrived at our next destination. That may have made some of us a bit shy, but so many of our friends were in the same situation we were. And after looking back on our way of life, we agreed that we're probably more culturally advanced from having lived all over the country and around the world.

Even though Dad was in the Air Force, we didn't always live on military bases. For one thing, most military installations didn't have houses big enough to accommodate our large family. Of the 12 places I lived from the time I was born 'til I graduated from high school, we lived on base at only four of them. I guess the point I'm trying to make here is that we weren't necessarily sheltered by always living within a military community. Because we did move so often, I think it made us more adaptable to things we would experience later in life.

To sum it up, I guess I'd have to say that we were surprised by the number of Brats who expressed so many negative things about growing up as a "Third Culture Kid."

Susan F. Molthen '72 (ISB 1964-69); (sausanacademy@yahoo.com)

I really enjoyed this documentary. And for the most part, I could really identify and relate to it. I was disappointed that there was not much more of Thailand, of course, but that was just a personal thing and did not deter from any similar experiences of those who share theirs.

When I was looking at it, what the interviewees were addressing and relating were amazingly similar to my own, right down to thinking that I was the only one experiencing those thoughts and feelings. When I got back to the U.S., I, too, felt extreme isolation and culture shock. Even to this day, it is a struggle to make it a point to keep in touch with those I met after my return because I had always lived with the sense that I would be moving on again or with the sense that my friends would be gone tomorrow. And in effect, these events have occurred throughout my life even after I returned.

The first year after I graduated from high school, I moved to Sacramento, and in the five years I lived there, I moved five times. Then I moved to San Francisco. Additionally, although I began my career with the safety and security of government jobs, first with the State, then with the Department of Defense, and then with the United States Postal Service, I left those jobs and moved on, teamed up with someone who shared a similar vision about Egyptian art and culture, and we opened an Egyptian restaurant in San Francisco and later an Egyptian dance school, also in San Francisco. I don't think I could have done either had I not first experienced the subtleties and nuances of another third-world culture, the learned respect of those cultures, and the desire to bring that home to America and to educate the Western public. I took this knowledge which I had gotten in my youth and applied it to another third-world country – Egypt.

I also made the leap and joined the Armed Forces Reserve soon after my move to San Francisco; and because of that, I was able to travel all over the world and found that I could blend in with many if not all of the places I visited.

Having lived overseas during my former years, I believe, set me apart from my peers and has really allowed me to be more resilient and open in my dealings with people from other cultures. Perhaps that's the primary reason why my restaurant and dance school are successful.

I loved this documentary. I found out that there is a country out there that doesn't have geographical boundaries but that it is inhabited by people like me. It is called the Internet. After viewing this documentary, I felt like I had come home.

Tony Grady '73 (ISB 1967-73); (gradyjr@earthlink.net)

I was a Foreign Service child, so some of my outlook may be a little different. The UN and USAID, two organizations that my father worked for, were not as structured hierarchically; however I did have many military friends and I spent 20 years in the military raising my own children. There was a pressure to conform overseas; however, I do not think my parents ever

asked me to do anything that was way out of the ordinary. They merely reminded me that I represented the U.S. and to act accordingly in public.

Sarah Vessey Kraczyk '73, daughter of General Vessey, and I talked for a long time about this movie. The more we thought about it together, the more we felt that it gave a skewed view of the military child. We agreed that both of our home experiences were very positive and were not reflected in the movie. To validate the findings in this movie, there would need to be an analysis of general American society during the same time period. I think that the lack of this in the movie put some things out of context.

A positive point the movie brought out was that on race. Overseas racial issues were dealt with much quicker and more favorably, in general, than at home, though some tensions did exist and in some cases there were race riots. However, overall there was a more accepting atmosphere.

Though I like Donna Musil, the author, after talking with her for a few hours I felt like there was some hidden agenda or some attempt at some different catharsis. There definitely was a bias in her thinking. Therefore, I think this was reflected in the movie.

Kasia Wasilewski Keebler, '73 (ISB 1965-70); (kkeebl@earthlink.net)

I had read all the previews about "BRATS" on the ISB Network Bulletin Board before seeing it in San Antonio, so I knew the movie was going to bring out a lot of pent up emotions, but I never realized how many.

I am not a true "BRAT", as my father was a civilian working for ARPA, but since coming back to the States 35 years ago I've always felt lost. We didn't even move around that much, but I spent grades five through 10 in Bangkok. For a kid that's a long time. For me most of the loneliness I felt was my friends, many of them true Brats, coming and going. I always felt left behind. At the same time living in Bangkok was the first time I felt I had a hometown. My parents were immigrants to the United States and we had very little family in the States and, therefore, we had never established a hometown. I thought I'd live in Thailand forever. It never occurred to me that we would leave one day. Then on the day before Christmas Eve I came home from the Teen Club to find the house packed-up and my Dad telling me we were leaving the next day. It had happened so fast. I didn't have time to be angry or cry, or get used to the idea we were coming back to the States.

The culture shock I experienced is something I cannot explain. I felt like such an outsider. Over the years I learned to suppress my emotions about it, but I could never suppress thoughts in my mind. When the ISB reunions started, I wouldn't come to any because I feared the emotions would surface again and I didn't know if I could handle a rerun of those emotions I felt when I came back.

Finally in 1992 I attended my first reunion. I finally felt like I came back to life a bit. People who finally understood exactly how I felt surrounded me. But I attributed it mostly to the fact we all spent time in Thailand. Here too, it never occurred to me that there could be an entire sub-culture of kids who experienced the same lifestyle and never lived in Thailand. Then I saw "BRATS". Imagine.... there are thousands of "us" running around the world. Suddenly I didn't feel lonely or out of place anymore. I did have a long, hard cry, but it was a good cry. Almost as if I let all the negativity of being a "BRAT" wash down the river.

I bought a copy of the tape and showed it to my 17-year old son. His comment at the end of the movie, after shedding a few tears himself, was; "I finally understand why you feel the way you do." That comment made me realize just how powerful *BRATS Our Journey* proved to be.

Mimi Drake Wetherington '73 (ISB 1970-73); (mimiweth@bellsouth.net)

I thoroughly enjoyed the movie. So many of the comments made during the movie touched me. The movie was well made and poignant. It was interesting to hear people say in a public forum, the same things I have thought for many years. Although, most of the clips and home movies were from the 1950's and 60's, they were still easy to identify with. As a teenager of the 70's, I have found that Vietnam changed not only military families but the military father also. Consulting with others around me during the movie, I don't think our fathers were as harsh as those portrayed in the movie, but those of us a decade younger than the writer still experienced some of the same things (i.e., Don't get into trouble in school or it will reflect on your father's promotion; God, country, and family – in that order; the family will be sent home if you mess up). It was also interesting to hear others talk about how children in the same family reacted differently with moves, deployments, or temporary duties. That was certainly the case with my siblings. I enjoyed the movie so much that I bought a copy for my parents and other siblings who didn't see it.

Joe Haggerty '73 (ISB 1971-73); (afjoe1@aol.com)



Joe Haggerty and Family

Growing up as a "brat" for 18 years of my dad's 22 year career, I could relate to most of what they spoke about in the movie. In fact, I especially agree with the statement that one of the participants made when they stated that they didn't think of the term "military brat" as being derogatory; rather, I think of it as a "badge of honor". I did feel that at one point in the movie, the focus changed to look at some of the negative experiences of those they interviewed (rape, drugs, alcohol abuse), which certainly wasn't my experience.

I think that the best thing that the movie did was to focus on the "tolerance" that "brats" learned in growing up with people of other races and cultures. For example, my formative years as a "brat" took place in Biloxi, MS, in the early to mid-sixties; not exactly a place of tolerance for those of color. I still remember the water fountains in the JC Penney that were for "whites only". So, I thought that it really related to my experiences of learning to not only tolerate, but befriend folks from many different backgrounds, races, and cultures.

Jane Drake Poole '76 (ISB 1970-73); (janeepoole@nc.rr.com)

Yes, I did watch the movie and enjoyed it. I always knew that we had a different lifestyle than most kids, but this movie really did touch on how different it was, especially when they talked about, "where are you from?" Even today (at our age) this question still makes me pause before I can answer.

I would like to see the movie again. One thing though, I thought it was too long. Maybe because I was ready to do other things at the reunion, but also I had that "okay, already" with the whole "military brat way of life".

Shirley Kennedy '77 (ISB 1970-77); (thaisilk@springmail.com)

Although I wasn't a military brat, I enjoyed the movie and could relate to some of what the participants experienced and understand a little more about why all overseas brats feel a common bond. I also got to remain in Thailand for 7 years – a relatively stable existence compared to the more transient military lifestyle. While it portrayed both the good and bad sides of being a military brat, I prefer to remain nostalgic about only the good stuff.



Dear Maile, Kate, Vince, Todd and all the rest of the gang at ISB:

Thank you so much for inviting BRATS to be a part of your reunion in San Antonio. Hopefully, I can make it to San Diego, too! Thanks, as well, for all your kind words and comments about the film. It's been a very long labor of love, and I really do appreciate it. I think Vince Bennett was right when he said we are a subculture that's not even appreciated by most military brats. I certainly didn't appreciate it, until I re-connected with my brat friends from Taegu, Korea, in 1997. It gave me such a sense of peace and belonging – the same way I felt at your reunion, and all the other reunions I've attended with BRATS. I'm accepted, I belong, I don't have to explain. It's a nice feeling.

Of course, like all things in life, there are good and bad, positive and negative aspects of "being a brat" – all at the same time. I thought it was very important to tell all of our stories, to try and understand why we are the way we are, and feel compassion for those who experienced more difficult circumstances than others



ISBN President Maile McCoskrie Lindley with filmmaker Donna Musil at the San Antonio reunion

might have experienced. The film is not meant to be a reflection of the military – it's a reflection of us, the brats. Whatever can be learned from our experiences to benefit future brats, all the better. But there's no hidden agenda or biased thinking – just a (hopefully) balanced reflection of the feelings of more than 500 brats who spoke with me over the course of my research.

All I've ever wanted to do in this world was "make a difference." Perhaps that's a result of being raised a brat, perhaps not. Every time I show the film, there's always someone in the audience who lets me know – with a nod, a hug, or just a look – that *BRATS: Our Journey Home* made a difference in their life. And that makes it all worthwhile.

Thank you for having me. Thank you for showing BRATS. I think you're all wonderful!

Love, Donna



You Know You Are a Military Brat if You . . .

1. Actually like the clothes at the BX and don't mind that 100 other people are wearing the same thing.
2. Answer the question, "Where are you from?" with "I'm kinda from all over the place."
3. Are amazed at people who have lived somewhere more than 3 years.
4. Are brought to tears by military music.
5. Are going to a grocery store, but call it a commissary.
6. Avoid visiting the doctor because you don't trust civilian hospitals.
7. Cannot speak the language of the country in which you were born.
8. Didn't see a TV until you were almost a teenager.
9. Draw a quick map of the world to show someone where you last lived.
10. Get complaints from everyone about your name being the most scratched out in their address book.
11. Think you see someone you went to school with everywhere you go.
12. Feel like you should be visiting the States rather than living there.
13. Felt like a part of history that was happening around you.
14. Find yourself with friends throughout the world.
15. Get nostalgic when seeing O.D. Green.
16. Give someone a break because they are in the military.
17. Graduated from a high school you only attended for a year.
18. Had a father who was always telling you to "police the area."
19. Had Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners in a mess hall.
20. Have been asked just where in NY "APO" is.
21. Have driven four hours to Munich for the taste of a poorly done Big Mac.
22. Inexplicably have the urge to move to a new place every year for no reason at all.
23. Noticed that Tom Cruise was in uniform, outside with no hat, and having a non-regulation haircut in Top Gun.
24. Put your hand over your heart at 5 pm knowing the flag was coming down somewhere.
25. Realize that the latest fashions in the States are not the same clothes you bought on base.
26. Start a major portion of your conversations with "When I was in . . ."
27. Stand up and recite the national anthem at the start of movies.
28. Still do yard detail.
29. Use words like "hit the deck," "visit the head," and "pogey bait."
30. Are asked more than once by your civilian boss not to say "Yes, sir" and "No, sir."
31. Graduated from 12th grade and it's your 13th school.

One Degree of Separation – Stilwell Family Sells Horse to the Stahlman Family

By Kris Stahlman '71 (kstahlman@earthlink.net)

Now here's a Thailand story with a twist....

It was the summer of 1965 and my parents were doing everything possible to pretend we were French while living in Saigon. By this time the military dependents had been evacuated from Viet Nam, but a handful of Air America dependents remained (the Stahlmans).

Our father was an avid horseman. One of the first things he did when we moved to Saigon was to join the riding club (the Circle Hippique) so he could go riding during his days off from flying. One day our mother noticed a small sign on the club's bulletin board, "Arabian Mare for Sale, inquire at the bar for details". Mom, thinking this would be a great birthday present for Dad, inquired further.

It seems that General Stilwell's family had owned a feisty Arabian mare named Tinou while they lived in Saigon. Unfortunately when the family moved to Bangkok in 1965 they had to leave Tinou behind. The horse was boarded at the stable but was rarely ridden.

One day in August 1965, a stable boy brought the horse around to the veranda bar at the club so that Mom could surprise Dad with Tinou for his birthday. Upon presenting the horse to dad, the stable boy explained that the Stilwells had taught Tinou a "trick" that the stable boy wanted to share. It seems that after each ride, he would bring the horse around to the veranda bar. I'm not sure if it was the bartender or if it was one of the Stilwells, but someone brought the horse a martini, served up in a martini glass, for her to drink. I would not have believed it if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes. With one swoosh of her tongue, Tinou lapped up the entire drink without eating the martini glass! There was no way my Dad would think of depriving Tinou her "after ride" martini, so we proudly carried on the tradition.

We owned Tinou for 2 more years before we were forced to leave Saigon and move to Thailand. By the time we arrived in Bangkok the Stilwell family had left. Thirty years later I found an email address for Barbara Stilwell (class of 1969) thanks to the ISB Network. I emailed her the "One degree of separation" story about us owning Tinou. She emailed me back almost immediately letting me know that she shared my email with her family and they laughed and cried because they never knew what happened to their horse when they moved to Thailand.



One Monkey Connects ISB Families

By Mimi Drake Wetherington '73 (mimiweth@bellsouth.net)

Our family arrived in Bangkok in August 1970. We lived in the hotel for three months while awaiting our household goods. My father was in the Army and stationed with SUPTHAI. His boss was General Ott. Some of you may know Judy and Nancy Ott. Nancy and I were the same age and although her family did not stay in Bangkok much longer, we became friends and shared mutual friends. When the Otts were in the process of moving back to the States they needed to find a home for their white faced, black gibbon "Bimi". We lived a few sois over from the Otts and went to visit Bimi. All six of us, my parents, brother, and two sisters, fell in love with Bimi. Her antics amazed us and we could not stop talking about her.

You can guess that we ended up adopting Bimi as a member of our family for the three years we lived in Bangkok. Bimi was three when she came to live with us. She provided hours of entertainment for us and visitors to our house. We have many reels of movies starring Bimi with all her antics and high jinks. The maids, driver, and gardener were terrorized by her. She would swing down from the trees and take all the clothespins off the newly washed clothes. She would swing into the kitchen and steal root beer candies and fruit. When the gardener would work around her, he would end up chasing her because she would swoop down, grab his hat, and swing up to my parents' balcony. I can remember us sitting outside and laughing ourselves silly watching her pull the dogs' tails and swing away whooping with that Gibbon cry of hers. We would bring her into the house, dress her in diapers, and doll clothes sometimes. Every once in awhile she had to get a bath and we'd get our bathing suits on and it would take all four of us to get her in the shower and bathe her.

When it was time for us to PCS back to the States, we checked into the regulations for bringing a monkey back with us. Bimi was on the endangered list, too old by then to travel and we worried about the climate and whether she could survive in colder weather. In the end, we found another family, the Holliers who were able to "adopt" Bimi. At our first reunion in San Antonio in 1990, Debbie Hollier told me Bimi provided her family with as much fun and love as she had ours. Bimi melded in with their other gibbons, taking care of two babies, Scotch and Soda. Their other gibbon Charlie was retarded, having bitten through an electrical cord. Isn't it amazing how families can be connected with one pet?



Do you have similar memories about passing along your beloved pet to a family that was just arriving in Bangkok when you were leaving?

Please email Kate at isbkate@yahoo.com to tell your story.



www.English.com

Kate Johnson '76 (isbkate@yahoo.com)

There is a really funny website called English.com that collects humorous misuses of English from around the world. Most of the contributions come from Japan, but every now and then there are a few from Thailand. What I really enjoy is the author's dry commentary.

Here are a few samples:



Can I see the vegetarian menu?



The crocs are getting pretty grossed out...



Whatever floats your boat



If you're a pyro, it's the stairs, bub...



Cafeteria sign found in Thailand.



Hell, I got two at home...

And from China . . .



OK, who's going to use this one?



Don't even ask about the rules...



I took this in front of the Temple of the Dawn.

Back in the 1970s there was a sign up in front of the Erawan Hotel that read:

No parking except sometimes.

Does anyone have a picture of that?

If you have any photos of your own of humorous signs from around Thailand, please send them to Kate at isbkate@yahoo.com.