

Thai 66, 1979-1981

Agriculture Extension, Fisheries, Secondary TEFL, Health, Parasite Control, Village Development, District Agriculture, Agriculture Education, Livestock Production Extension Agent, Crop Production, Community Health, Medical Technology, 4-H Extension, Water Resources



Harry Richard Hushaw

A Remembrance by Mark Oshiro



Rick with my landlady's cat in Ubon.

Rick Hushaw and I met at the Thai 66 staging in Seattle. When I found out he'd served in N. Yemen, I told him about my year in Afghanistan, so we hit it off. We were also older than the other guys in the room, so it was pretty natural to hang together. It's odd being the old men at age 30 and 27. I remember one of the 'kids' asking why we weren't very excited about the whole deal. After N. Yemen and Afghanistan, we both figured Thailand might be 'okay.'

Harry Richard Hushaw, 'Rick,' was killed in a tour bus crash on March 10, 1981, while traveling to his spill

way construction project in Amphur Nagae, Changwat Nakorn Panom. He was 31 years old.



Rick heading to Cha'am for a language workshop, 1980.

Rick was a water resources engineer in Thai 66 (July 1979 – September 1981), based with Accelerated Rural Development in Changwat Buriram. He was on temporary assignment as a construction engineer building a spillway on the Huay Gut stream for Community Development in Amphur Nagae.

Rick graduated from Purdue University with bachelor's degrees in Engineering Technology and Industrial



Rick on the beach at Cha'am thinking of new ways to get himself and friends into trouble, 1980.

Psychology. Prior to joining the water resources program of PC Thailand, Rick served as a PCV in North Yemen for one year, supervising pipeline construction.

When his project ended, Rick terminated early to spend time with his seriously ill father in Indiana. After his father died, Rick wanted to complete a full two year term as a volunteer, so he applied as an engineer with Peace Corps Thailand.



Upstream from project site, Amphur Nagae, January 1981.

After Yemen, Thailand was a piece of cake. Rick appreciated the opportunity to eat pork in a hundred different dishes, drink an ice cold Singha, eat a hamburger at

the kiosk behind Siam Square in Bangkok, look at and talk and laugh with women, and drink Mae Khong with his co-workers. He liked his coworkers and neighbors in Buriram and enjoyed his work, which included projects for ARD and Food for the Hungry.



Draining site, Amphur Nagae, January 1981.

He also found time to help his fellow volunteers erect a windmill, construct a cistern water system, and survey and consult on various water projects for

other volunteers. Rick also worked on the Peace Corps Thailand Engineering Newsletter which was distributed to Peace Corps and CUSO (Canadian Volunteers) engineers.

Rick also had the patience and cross cultural skill to persuade his wonderful Thai sweetheart, Prawait Danprakom, to marry him, and he had the ability to persuade the Peace Corps Thailand Director to give him permission to do so. Prawait and Rick were married in November, 1980.

Rick was a humorous and mischievous fellow, who found ways to make life fun for himself and his friends. The peculiarities of Thai

culture always amused him even when they affected him adversely. He was always prepared to have a good laugh, especially at his own expense.

Rick was a great motorcycle rider who tore through the Peace Corps motorcycle training course at Bang Saen. But unlike most of the other Ag/Rural Development volunteers, he never bought a motorcycle. Instead, he pedalled through Buriram on his used girl's bicycle, which always amused him and the Thai passersby.

The spillway at Huay Gut was dedicated to his memory in a ceremony on May 28, 1981. Rick's mother, Rosemary, and Rick's wife, Lynn, attended the ceremony as did many Peace Corps Volunteers and staff, including PC Thailand Director, John Darrah, and Jim Ogata, representatives from the United States' and Canadian Embassies, which funded the project, officials from the Local Administration Department, the Puwarachagan Nakorn Panom, the Nai Amphur of Amphur Nagae and the villagers who built the project.

The last time I saw Rick was at Hualompong train station. I told him he didn't need to go to the station with me, but he wanted to help me carry a water pump we'd checked out from the Peace Corps office. Then he paid back a few hundred baht that I'd lent him. I told him he didn't have to do that, told him to just keep it and have a good time in Bangkok, and that we'd see each other in Nagae in a few days. He insisted I take the money. We shook hands and said goodbye, I boarded the train, and that was that.



Setting benchmark with Khun Sopa, Amphur Nagae, January, 1981.



Rick checking elevations, Amphur Nagae, January, 1981.



Excavation, Amphur Nagae, January, 1981.

Rick was a good man, a great friend, and a fine volunteer. He is missed. My son's middle name is 'Harry' in Rick's honor.

Memories of Rick Hushaw Mark Raabe

This past March was the 30th anniversary of the tragic death of Harry Richard Hushaw, 'Rick', a member of the 66th group of Peace Corps volunteers who served in Thailand.



The people of Nagae, and family members, who built the spillway with Rick's assistance, May 1981.

Memorializing Rick at this juncture requires more than just reconnecting with memories of our association during the brief period as fellow volun-

teers and friends. It means recalling who I was at that time and the Thailand that existed back then. So much has changed in the interim.

Much can be written about the 'hand of fate' in a person's life. In regard to Rick, it is the historical period in which he lived that played a central role in his untimely death. It is a story that should be told to fully understand the man Rick was and the significance of his service to the people of Thailand.



Rick with the Puyaiban in the foreground, Amphur Nagae, February, 1981.

Rick was the second of three volunteers to die during the long association of Peace Corps and the people of Thailand – Lowell Dunn (Thai 12)

died previously in 1966 and Danuta Kassowska (Thai 87) died in 1988. Rick was also one of thirteen volunteers throughout the world

to die while in service in 1981. I do not believe that he and other members of Thai 66 thought seriously about the potential dangers of living and working in Thailand, even in the face of risks that existed around us. For instance, during a session of language/cross-cultural training, a Thai journalist explained the degree of lawlessness in the country, stating that arrangements could be made to assassinate anyone for as little as 1500 Baht. [Note: The exchange rate at the time was about 25 Baht to the US Dollar.] Yet, this seemed

more like a 'side show' to the work ahead as volunteers. Similarly, during the period we served at our respective sites, Thailand had to contend with Pol Pot

and members of his regime who were in hiding on the Thai-Cambodian border, after forcibly being removed from power by 200,000 Vietnamese soldiers. The possibility of an invasion by Vietnam and overthrow of the Thai government was taken lightly by the Thais because it was widely assumed that the Vietnamese tanks would be stopped by traffic gridlock on the streets of Bangkok. The more immediate concern of volunteers was dealing with intestinal infections caused by the local bacteria, and perhaps the rising price of Singha beer.

Rick and his fellow volun-



Checking elevations, Amphur Nagae, February, 1981.



Construction survey, Amphur Nagae, February, 1981.



Khun Sopa and Rick enjoying the sun and each other's company during a work break, Amphur Nagae, February 1981.



Khun Sopa, Rick, and several very hardworking women moving a rebar mat for placement.

teers arrived in Thailand approximately four years following the Vietnam War. The United States had been given permission by the Thai Government to relocate its military bases in the northeastern region of the country. This was in response to increased insurgency by North Vietnamese military and paramilitary forces, which threatened bases originally located in South Vietnam.

Air force bombing missions

with fighter escorts were routinely conducted from Thailand. Immediately after the war officially ended in 1975, the Thai Government requested the US military to remove all of its men and equipment. All that remained was the legacy of the relationship between US



Rick observing preparations for a concrete pour, Amphur Nagae, February 1981.

soldiers and the Thai people. Overcoming negative perceptions, attitudes and stereotypes was a major obstacle facing volunteers in Thailand at that time. In addition, Thai culture and values were increasingly eroding due to the dominating influences of multi-national companies and western culture.

Rick died while in transit from Bangkok to the city of Nagae, the administrative seat of Nagae District in Nakorn Panom Province, located in northeastern Thailand. He and fellow volunteer, Mark Oshiro, were engaged in a special assignment to provide construction management services for



Spillway project nearing completion, May, 1981. Backfilling remains to be done.

a proposed dam and concrete spillway on a seasonal stream called the Huay Gut. A common mode of transportation linking Bangkok with the rest of the country was buses that traveled through the night. The buses were luxurious, providing air conditioning, packaged meals, and the services of a stewardess. Seats were assigned at the time a reservation was made.

During the course of Rick's journey, the bus encountered a semi trailer transporting a load of large logs. The logs were held on the trailer using chains. Often, the trailers were overloaded, with some



Lynn, Mrs. Prawait Hushaw, 1981.

of the logs cantilevered over the length of the bed on either side. This made for dangerous encounters with buses traveling from the other direction. It was suspected that either the bus driver or the semi driver was drowsy and crossed over the median line of the road. The answer was never confirmed; both drivers were killed in the resulting collision.

The overhanging logs crashed through the entire half of the bus adjacent to the trailer, killing all who were seated on that side of the bus. The passengers



Lynn, Mrs. Prawait Hushaw, Moon River, Amphur Pibun Mangsahan, Changwat Ubon, 1981.

seated on the other half were able to evacuate the bus before diesel fuel from erupted tanks ignited. Rick was reported among the deceased; however, on review of the seating chart, it was discovered that he was originally assigned a seat on the left (exterior) side of the bus. [Note: Vehicles in Thailand travel on the left side of the road.] This was consistent with the preferences of most volunteers and many Thais, based on the frequency of bus crashes reported in the news, and personal encounters with bus drivers who drove recklessly. The person who occupied the seat originally

assigned to Rick survived and was later interviewed. It was learned that Rick exchanged seats with a Thai located on the right side of the bus. This was requested by a young woman who occupied the seat next to the one Rick originally reserved. Due to cultural norms – and in particular the prevailing view of American men at that time – she did not feel comfortable seated next to a foreign man through the night. Rick was likely sensitive to her concerns and agreed to move to a new location, regardless of the fact that he assumed the risks of sitting on the right side of the bus.

Rick's body was never recovered. His remains and those of all other deceased passengers were completely burned after the bus ignited. This was tragic for the surviving families, who were denied the opportunity to identify the bodies and conduct proper burial rites according to Buddhist customs. It was decided that



Lynn, Rick, Mark van Koevering, Rob Thompson, Kevin Kamp and Ajaan Orasa at the Candle Festival in Ubon, 1980.

the appropriate response was to collect the ashes from the wreckage and divide them equally among the families. In conjunction with gathering the ashes, a watch was

found with the initials H.R.H. etched on the back cover plate. This provided further evidence that Rick was a passenger on the fateful bus. Given Rick's penchant for detail, this was something that he would have done.

The response by Peace Corps Washington, Peace Corps Thailand and the Government of Thailand to this tragedy was commendable. Arrangements were made for Rick's mother to travel to Thailand to attend a memorial service to Rick in conjunction with the dedication of the completed project. Rick's father passed away in 1978. Other people in attendance were Rick's Thai wife, Lynn, officials from Peace Corps Thailand and the Government of Thailand, fellow volunteers and the many Thais who participated in the project. A memorial plaque was placed on the side of one of the concrete walls.

The memorial service provided Rick's mother and Lynn the opportunity to meet people who were clos-

est to Rick during the time he was a volunteer. He would have completed his tour of service in the Peace Corps at the end of October that year, about eight months after he died. Rick's mother stated that he was already discussing in recent letters his anticipated return home. He had not completed the paperwork necessary for Lynn to obtain a visa for her to reside in the US. Thus, Rick's mother returned home alone and without knowing whether she would ever see her new daughter-in-law again.

Mark and I provided additional support to Rick's mother and Lynn thereafter. I made a promise to Rick's mother before she departed Nagae that I would visit her again on my way home to Wisconsin. She lived in Lafayette, IN. Mark and I kept in touch with Lynn during our remaining period in Thailand; and, after returning to the US, collaborated in making arrangements for Lynn to travel to the US to visit her mother-in-law.



L to R: Mark Raabe, Mark Oshiro, Lynn's friend, and Mark van Koevering, Sakon Nakorn, 1981.

My visit with Rick's mother did not occur until over a year later. I was received very warmly by her. I was introduced to Rick's sister, Gay, and her family. Rick had another sister, Patty, who lived in California. Rick's mother still grieved greatly for her son. My visit may have provided her with closure because she was deprived of seeing his body when she traveled to Thailand. My presence in place of Rick likely dispelled any false hope that eventually he would return home.



L to R: Mark van Koevering, Lynn's friend, Lynn Hushaw, and Mark Raabe, Sakon Nakorn, 1981.

Mark traveled to Thailand in 1984 to visit his site and Thai friends. He then made arrangements for Lynn



At the spillway dedication in Rick's memory (note: dedication plaque is at right of photo) are, left to right: Jon Darrah, Kevin Kamp, Mark Oshiro, Ajaan Orasa, Mark Raabe, Lynn Hushaw, Nancy Ellison, Rosemary Hushaw, Patrick McSween, Michelle Miller, unidentified, George Costa, and Jim Ogata. All the identified volunteers are from Thai 66.

to travel back to the US with him. This was necessary because of Lynn's limited competency with the English language. She initially visited with Mark in California. Mark then made arrangements for her to fly alone to Milwaukee, WI, where I met her at the airport. I then drove her to Lafayette to visit her mother-in-law. Lynn stayed with her for several weeks before traveling back to Milwaukee. I then made arrangements for Lynn to visit with Mark Van Koevinger and Kevin Kamp, two other former volunteers and friends of Rick.

Before returning to Thailand, Mark took Lynn to Escondido, CA to meet Rick's sister, Patty, and her family. Thus, Lynn was able to meet all the members of Rick's immediate family. Lynn then returned to Thailand. She lived in the city of Sakorn Nakorn, not far from where Rick died.



From left to right are: U.S. Deputy Ambassador, Burton Levin, Rosemary Hushaw, Lynn Hushaw, and probably a Thai representative from the Local Administration Department with whom the PC engineers were attached.

Rick's mother retired from the US Fish and Wildlife Service in 1988 and moved to Escondido, CA to live with her daughter. She passed away in 2004. Lynn never visited the US again. Mark and I corresponded with her until about 1987; thereafter, we never heard from her again. All attempts to contact her from the US were unsuccessful.

I remember Rick as a jovial, kind-hearted soul and good friend. I respected him initially because of the technical knowledge gained previously while a Peace Corps volunteer in North Yemen, and his prior experiences adapting to a much more difficult social environment. I later admired him for his willingness to help others. He was well liked by volunteers and Thais alike; thus, he helped to forge the relationship between Thais and Americans that exists today.

Rick's legacy exemplifies the character of a fine man and friend, whose greatest contribution to Thailand was unknowingly saving the life of one of its citizens – a person he never knew.