

Sarnelli House

NEWSLETTER

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MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL!!

The Yuletide season has suddenly loomed up, as the rice harvest is safely in our granary, and the lads are busy baling straw for our Brahmin cows. Our Christmas celebrations will be muted this year, as the nation is still in mourning over the death of the King. The mourning period will last a year, with the first three months being quite strict. Government officials, military and ordinary folks wear either black or black armbands or ribbons. Rumor has it that the new king will not be crowned until the year of mourning is completed.

About the only thing I accomplished this year was to survive 50 years in Thailand. On February 2, 1966, feast of the Purification of Mary and Groundhog day, I stepped off the airplane in Bangkok with a black wool suit and an overcoat, and literally melted on my way to the small (at that time) airport. On the observation deck of the two storey building stood three Redemptorists clad in their robes, laughing uproariously at my sweaty plight.



Fathers Rog Godbout, Eddie O'Connor and Larry Patin. All three are gone to their reward, and I hope to find them waiting for me again , when the Grim Reaper makes his appearance.

We took in babies and broken girls this year. Young girls, really young, who were pregnant and had no place safe to give birth. Some stayed on to continue their schooling in the warm atmosphere of our houses. Little babies rolled in, who with good nourishment soon began to look like our piglets. They are at our House of Hope, together with our kindergarten kids. The 8 boys in kindergarten were too unruly and boisterous for the nursery, so we repaired and refurbished St. Patrick's Home, and now 11 little boys are there, and the two little kindergarten girls stay at the House of Hope. The babies sleep much more peaceably, and the stress on housemoms has lessened greatly. The women running St. Patrick's are laid back and easily seem to put up with the 11 boys. Some little girls, molested and raped, are also safe with us. Several of them contracted HIV from their awful experiences,



and are now dealing with that. All told, we have 156 children at Sarnelli, and 66 children we support on our Outreach Program.

Our college kids are now taking mid-year exams, and hope to get a break before the second term opens in January. The children are all in school, even our 15 boys at the Gary and Janet Smith House in the fields. Brother Keng keeps a close eye on the children and their studies, and on those who live at boarding houses and college campuses. He and Kate, our nurse, take the Outreach Program to more and more people, every year. Kate's husband Brian is our fund raiser, and teaches English to kids and is general factotum to all. Father Ole is very involved with the children, and has begun coaching soccer teams of boys and girls, which really is good for the kids. They have daily practices and games with teams in other villages, and are getting quite good, Our newly ordained priest, Fr. Ghee, helps coach the kids and also translates sponsor letters. Fr. Ole and Ghee have four parishes, and I help whenever needed.

I went home for two months this past summer. During this time, we had an amazing successful Ceboride, and also a huge amount of donations at our "Barn Mass"; which is held in a friend's machinery shed. A cousin is an auctioneer, and people donate handicrafts, etc., to raise money for the children. Fr. Chuck and I joined Fr. Dave Polek for a get-together with wonderful friends and donors in St. Louis. Other little parties were held, and the children of Sarnelli benefitted from all the generosity and sacrifice.

The farm is doing well. We are now selling young Brahmin bulls, and we raise so many pigs that we have to constantly sell some. We sold our surplus of rice this year for 80,000 baht (\$2,440). We bought a smaller tractor with a front scoop, so as to help with the plowing of the rice fields, but also to help with the mixing of ingredients for our fertilizer machine.

There is more building to do, and repairs have to be made constantly. Everyone is very busy. And the children help out all they can. As for newcomers; abandoned young boys; abused young girls, and sweet wee babies, we treat them as gifts from the Lord.

The days are shorter, and nights longer, and the winds are coming off the Lao mountains to the north, old folks are warning that we will have a bitter cold winter. I remember in the days of yore the thin sheet of ice on our water containers, and the frost on the windshields of our trucks. Banana trees would die from the cold. This old coot remembers those days, and hopes they will not be repeated.

In conclusion, may the Infant Jesus bless you and the Holy Family grant you good health, happiness and peace throughout the New Year!!

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

Fathers Mike, Ole, Ghee, Brother Keng and all the staff and children at Sarnelli House

