

October 21, 2007

Trip into Jungle

Dear Family and Friends,

First, my best wishes and prayers for everyone in California. I pray that none of you are harmed by the fires.

The things in Myanmar (Burma) have quieted down, not because the government has changed but because the people are afraid of being prosecuted more and are just being quiet.

As for Daeng and I, we are working on a project here in northern Thailand which is to try and find a way to get water to a children's shelter up in the mountains by a little "Akha" Hill Tribe village named BAN AYO.



We have visited this shelter on four occasions. The first visit was in May, 2007 when I was asked if I could help with this water problem. At that time I was told that there was not enough water for the village and the shelter during the dry time in the spring.

At that time I felt that there was water below the land the shelter is located on and that a driller would have to drill down maybe 200-300 feet to hit the water. This is just a feeling I have and nothing to document that feeling.

I also emailed my friend Eric, The Pump Man, in California and he designed a way to pump water from the river below using two pumping stations.

The second trip was a few weeks ago when Daeng, Rev. Sunit, Pastor Lota, Brother Kruger and I visited the shelter again. On this trip we talked about running pipe about five (5)

Kilometers (3 Miles) from a spring in the mountains to this property that will take care of about 50-60 kids, many of them



orphans.

We drove up the dirt road above the area of the spring in a pickup truck and talked about the application. I agreed to return in a week or so to hike into the area and see the water source.

About two weeks ago, Daeng and I hopped on her 100 CC motor bike and drove to the area again. We meet with "Chon-nom" (spelled phonically) who lives there and took motor bikes to the road above the area of the water. We hiked down thru this jungle area about half-way and I became a real sissy. The mosquitoes were as big as 747 airplanes and the plants would just reach out and grab you leaving their teeth in your skin. I was dressed in shorts and a short sleeve shirt.

I did promise to return another day with long pants, long sleeve shirt and lots of mosquito spray. We stayed in a nice little resort located at the bottom of the hill on route 1130.

Chon-nom went with us into the town of Mae Chan and we plotted the water route in Google Earth. It got dark before we finished and Chon-nom did not have lights on his motor bike so he stayed at the resort we stayed in. He called his wife by cellular telephone and we had dinner.



The next day we went with him and became part of an "AKHA HILL TRIBE MUSIC VIDEO". I attached a picture but that is another complete story.



Now, last Sunday morning Daeng and I again hopped on her 100 CC motor bike and drove the 50 kilometers to the village of Ban AYO. We arrived during the service that was going on in the little church located at the children's shelter area.



After church we eat with the members of the congregation and then Daeng and I took a little ride down the hill and walked over to a little house that I



could see from the church. It was on top of this little hill all by itself. I thought it was a neat

little house by Thai standards. (No water or indoor plumbing and no electricity.) I attached a picture.



We then went back to the church and met Chon-nom. After putting our two back packs and my C-PAP machine in this little bamboo shelter for the kids, we hopped on motor bikes and rode up the hill two little villages to his Mother-in-law's house.



At Chon-nom's house we met his lovely wife who is about 4-5 months pregnant, his mother-in-law and half of the "Akha" village. There were as much interested in me, the old, fat, white farang (farang = Thai word for a round eyed tourist) as I was in the "Akha Hill Tribe" people.

We also meet a man that I call the "Water Man" as he is the person that knows where all the present piping systems to the three local villages are. He also takes care of the maintenance of the systems. Most of the people in the three villages, of about 60 houses in each village, pay around 200 Thai Baht a month for water to him. You can do the math and it turns out to be around 36,000 Thai Baht a month which is little over a thousand (\$1,000) United States Dollars.

He agreed to guide us into the area of the water source the following morning for 150 Thai Baht which is about \$4.50 USD.

Daeng and I took showers and changed clothes before dinner as traveling on the dirt road gets you very dirty. A shower here is a large tub of water in an enclosure which you take a quart pan of water and throw it on yourself, soap up and then a few more pans of water to rinse off. Since the water comes out of the mountain it is COLD and very refreshing.

We had dinner with Chon-nom's family that night. It was a great dinner and very tasty. We had mountain rice, fried



vegetables, fish and bar-b-que dog. Yes, bar-b-que dog! It does taste like chicken.

After dinner Chon-nom, his wife, Daeng and I went back to



the shelter and spent the night. We slept in this bamboo shelter on bamboo mats under mosquito netting and slept like a babies! There was electricity into the shelter so I could run my C-PAP machine that keeps me from snoring.

The next morning we all woke up about 5:50 AM as the chickens started to make the "cock-a-doodle-doo" noises. We

started a little fire and put on a tea pot to make coffee that we



had brought.

Camping is Fun!

We then went to Chon-nom's Mother-in-law's house and had breakfast. Around 9:00 AM the Water Man showed up. Well, along with him were about 15 people that all started talking about the water and if we took water from the same spring they wouldn't have water. It reminded me of the water wars in the United States Deserts.

They got quiet after a lot of talk and they got the idea that we were just looking. And, that we were interested in not only getting water to the shelter but to make sure everyone had water.

We hopped onto two motor bikes, Daeng riding with Chon-nom on his and the Water Man driving Daeng's with me as passenger. We drove up the road a short ways and then turned onto a dirt path thru a few tree stands and a couple of fields. I had to get off the motor bike once and it was to steep to make it with both of us. I walked up the hill and meet him at the top. Chon-nom and Daeng didn't have any problems and his motor bike is 125 CC and Daeng only ways 54 Kilo's (119 US Pounds). My weight is 114 Kilo's (251 US Pounds) and 100 CC bike. Go figure!

We parked the motor bikes about half-way to our destination



and started walking.

At first the walk

was very easy thru some rice and corn fields.



It was also down hill slightly as we were walking to the base of the stream and then up to the



springs. When we reached the stream we started up the grade and into the jungle.

The more we walked up the stream the darker it got as the



vegetation got heavier. The mosquitoes did not bite me as I had put a lot of repellent with DEET on before we left but I could see swarms of them in the jungle. The plants still reached out and grabbed you but they only left their teeth in the material as we were all wearing long sleeved shirts and pants along with hats.

One thing I did notice was that I was soaking wet even though I had not been into the stream yet. That was a good thing because just after that I slipped on a banana leaf and slid down the bank of the stream about 10 feet into the stream. No big deal as I was already wet.

Something that we did need to be careful of when falling is that our leader, the Water Man, was cutting bamboo out of

the way with a machete. When he cuts it is with a downward swing and leaves the cutting with a very sharp point. If you fall on the sharp bamboo it sticks into you and injure you.

We hiked up the stream farther until we came to the catch basin that had been built and were the piping to the one



village started.

We had passed another 3" pipe on the way that the Water Man told us was for the village below Ban AYO and that water source was over one hill and up a little higher. He also told us if the head person on the village of Ban AYO said that this stream could not be used for the shelter that we would have to go over the hill to that stream, as well.

Well, just about that time Chon-nom's wife and two other ladies caught up to us with fishing nets. I felt like a real sissy again as we had taken motor bikes half-way and they had walked the whole distance and caught up to us.

We hiked together up the stream a little and came to this



beautiful water fall in this dark jungle. We stopped for a little rest and then hiked up the side of the water fall. It was very steep and slipper. Daeng did not want me to go but if a girl that is 4-5 months pregnant can do it so can the old, fat, half-white plumber.

The guys and Daeng hiked up the stream above the water fall and the girls started fishing with their nets. The nets looked like bamboo basketball hoops with netting. They would put the nets in the water and than one of them would turn over some rocks a few feet above the nets and the little fish would swim down and get caught in the nets.

We hiked up about a hundred more meters (328 Feet) to find an area were two little streams come together to form the main stream. That would be the place for a new catch basin for the piping system if that is the way it is to be done.

We did hike up a little farther and the water was just oozing out of the ground to make the little streams.

We turned around and hiked back down and met the girls. The Thai girls are just amazing. When we got below the falls and the catch basin the girls said they would do some more fishing while we hiked over to the net hill. They would see us back at the house.



I was soaked and very muddy so I didn't want to do to much more hiking as I know we still had to hike back out of the area. I also didn't want to be a sissy and wanted to see as much as I could on one trip so I agreed to hike over to the next hill.

We said "see you later" to the three girls and Daeng, Chin-nom, Water Man and I hiked down the stream until we came to a little bamboo bridge across the stream.



We crossed over and hiked up the hill again. It was a good path thru rice and corn fields. We got to the top of the hill to a little bamboo



shelter and there was an older 'Akha" man that had fixed lunch and invited us in. (Picture)

We had a nice lunch of rice, moo (moo = Thai for pork) and vegetables also with some strong tea. We ate and talked with him telling us that many farangs had come thru to see the water over the last year.

This mountain man had a little wisp of hair growing out of the back of his head that was very long. It was rolled up into a ball about the size of a golf ball. I ask him how long since he had cut it. He told me that he stopped cutting it when he got married 50 years ago.

Now, when someone asks him how long he has been married he just takes it out of the ball, holds it out and says:



"This Long". Yes, a little "Akha" comedy.

I also noticed some funny looking contraptions and ask what they were. They were bird traps to catch the birds that eat the crops. The traps use bamboo worms for bait.



We went out of the shelter and he set one up to show me. They looked like they worked well.

We said thank you and walked up the next hill where we could see the jungle start again. The Water Man told us that the area of water up this valley worked the same as the one we were in so I said no reason to make the hike. Everyone agreed and we started back.

As we were coming back an old rotten tree fell over as we walked by and hit the 3" PVC pipe knocking one of the coupling apart. It was then that I realized that they had never glued this pipe, just press fitted it. They also never let the pressure build up on the system as they keep the other end with water running all the time into tanks, etc. When the tanks are full they just let it run on the ground, no big deal.

The Water Man hiked up the hill, knocked off a 3" cap at the top of the piping so the water would run out of the pipe there, came back down and put the coupling back on. He drove it with the back side of his machete. He they hiked back up and drove the cap back onto the tee. Pipe fixed and water running again.

We walked back to the motor bikes and rode back to the village. I was really glad to get back. I was pretty beat! We talked about the different ways of getting water to the children's shelter. We also talked about what could be done right now. The Water Man said he could borrow water from the village down the hill for a month or so if he did a little piping at a cost of around 200 TB. I gave him 400 TB for the temporary water hook up and being our guide for the day.

When we drove back to the shelter two hours later water was running out of a pipe beside the shelter, amazing.

Daeng and I got some clothes and went back to Chon-nom's Mother-in-laws place and took showers. We were really dirty



and smelly. After showers we went over to Chon-nam's sister-in-law's home and had dinner with about a dozen people from the village.

There was a great deal of talk about the water project as well as the people running the shelter and what has happened over the last year. I need to remember that I need to keep principals before personalities on this project so I am not going to discuss the personalities at this time.

There is another thing that can be done here. That is a pump added in the system that will move the water faster thru the piping system that is in place now therefore giving everyone more water including the children's shelter. The piping comes thru the village so it would be very easy to do with electricity.

We spent the night at the shelter and used the rest rooms that are already built as there is water now, even if it is temporary. We then went to the village, had breakfast and eat the fish that the girls has caught the day before. They fried them with vegetables and they were delicious.

I might also add that "Chon-nom" is an "Akha" song writer and singer who is shooting a movie this month about "Ahka" people. Last week they shot a music video that he tells me I'm in it dancing.

I have watched Chon-nom with the children and they all look up to him as do the people of the villages. I feel he is a very good man!



We said goodbye to all and drive back to Mai Sai with the understanding that I would do several things.

1. Tell you all what is happening.
2. Ask my friend and engineer, Paul Scaglione, in California to recheck the calculations regarding what size pipe would now be needed.
3. Ask my friend, Eric Skjarstad, The PUMPMAN in California if the pump idea will work okay.
4. Visit the site again this coming week.

I will try to keep you abreast of other projects, like the school being built in Myanmar (Burma). Please enjoy the pictures attached and best wishes to you all.

Our love to all!

Sincerely,

Terry and Daeng

