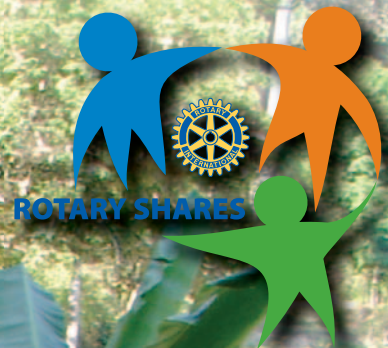


# ***District 6110 News***

**A Clear Vision for Service**

**April 2008**



**FRIENDSHIP EXCHANGE 2008**



# A Rotary Friendship Exchange with Thailand's D3360

By Larry Long and Richard Hudson  
Rotary Club of Fayetteville

In 2004, the Rotary Club of Fayetteville formed a partnership with the Rotary Club of Chang Puak Chiang Mai to provide aid for the hill people of northern Thailand. Last year our club joined forces with the Bentonville-Bella Vista Daybreak Club and District 6110 to purchase 231 water tanks for schools in the mountains of Thailand. Through our club's liaison, the Chang Puak (White Elephant) Club proposed a reciprocal Rotary Friendship Exchange and we accepted.

In October, 2007, neither of us knew much about RFE other than it existed. It turns out that we are not alone, so we'll preface our comments with a quick overview of one of Rotary's best kept secrets. RFE is Rotary's International exchange program for Rotarians and their families where participants experience other cultures and build friendships by staying in the homes of Rotary club members in another country and then reciprocate by hosting their hosts in their country. The different types of RFE options are explained at the Rotary International website. RFE, however, is very flexible so we chose one that reflects a mix of the various options.

Each district has a Friendship Exchange District Coordinator. Ours is Les Crider:

([les.crider@us.army.mil](mailto:les.crider@us.army.mil)). However, once contact is made between interested parties, it is up to exchangees to make all arrangements. The costs associated with travel and hosting are the responsibility of the participants. Our contact was Past President Dr. Surapong Lerdthusnee, a

thoroughly engaging retired geosciences professor. Pong and his wife Ku, a physician, would host Larry and Nancy the length of our stay in Chiang Mai, about 9 days. Dr. Jinda Sornsrivichai, a charming Emeritus Professor with a beautiful new home, would host Richard and Joanna. They, along with others who will visit us and D6110 in September/October,

planned an amazing agenda for us.

Our trip literally took us around the world, first west via South Korea, and on the return flight, further west via India. Our RFE adventure began in Chiang Mai, arguably the most beautiful and prosperous city in Thailand. Our Rotary colleagues in Thailand set the bar high! They were warm and generous hosts who made sure we felt welcome and saw dozens of interesting sights! When we mentioned an interest in getting into Laos and Myanmar (Burma), we found ourselves visiting both countries within a couple of days in the Golden Triangle area. An RFE truly is a "friendship" exchange. It's



Hosts Sumrit, Murakot, Ku, and Pong at Doi Suthep



surprising how you can become such good friends with people a half a world away in such a short time. Mostly, we and our wives were together with one or more of our hosts as we visited sites around northern Thailand. Occasionally, we saw things

independently with our host families, as well. We could easily write a book with hundreds of eye-popping images, but with such limited space, suffice it to say that we received an amazing and intimate tour of northern Thailand that transcended our very different

cultures. We enjoyed seeing the manicured gardens scattered liberally throughout northern Thailand. We ate exotic foods, toured a variety of factories, traversed the Mekong River in strange-looking speed boats, enjoyed learning about the history of Thailand at museums and at the ancient city of Sukhothai, saw stunning Buddhist temples, including Doi Suthep high atop a mountain and the amazing White Temple (Chapel of Wat Rong Khun), shopped at a thousand vendors along "walking street," and, yes, we rode an elephant.

Our RFE ended with an elegant banquet luncheon that doubled as a birthday party for Larry. From there, half of the Chang Puak Rotary Club members accompanied us to the airport to send

us off to Bangkok. We spent four days on our own as tourists in Bangkok, but it was quickly apparent that being a tourist pales in comparison to the RFE experience. While on the other side of the world, the Hudson's took in the sites in Hanoi while the

Long's conducted some business in northern India and then we met up in India to see the Taj Mahal and New Delhi sites before heading home.

The interest in another RFE between D6110 and D3360 is high in Thailand, so if you are interested in an adventure of a lifetime, we are happy to put you in touch with those who wish to do an RFE with you. If interested,

contact us at:

[larrylong@sbcglobal.net](mailto:larrylong@sbcglobal.net) or [rhudson@uark.edu](mailto:rhudson@uark.edu). You won't be disappointed.

Best wishes and thank you for your continued dedication to Rotary. I'll be looking for you at Mid America PETS. 🌀



**Larry and Nancy Long with Ku at Chiang Mai park**



**Richard and Joanna Hudson with friend**

