



Madelyn

from Tillsonburg

to

Thailand

“Dorothy’s Way Home”

The longer I’ve been in Thailand, the more things I notice about the culture and way of living. When I landed in Thailand with Toto I was in awe of the differences and the similarities between here and back home, but the longer I traipse the yellow brick road behind me on my journey, the more I see.

The summer is coming to a close here and I couldn’t be more thankful for the turn in weather. Although The Mighty Umbrella might have to make a reappearance sometime soon, I’m grateful I’ll no longer be holed up in the air-conditioned house hiding from the 40°C heat.

The last few months haven’t been especially busy, but a few great things have happened that make up for the lack of constant activity. At the beginning of February, I went to a small fair that was happening in my town. I went with my host parents and one of my friends. It was great to see so many people around enjoying themselves. The fair was held on the grounds of one of the local temples and while we were at the fair, we all went in and got blessed by a monk. Another thing that I did with my host family in February is go to Had Sai Soong. It was similar to when I visited Sam Pan Bok with some of my friends on New Year, but with some sand and a small floating market.

School has also let out and started back up since my last Beaver Tale. The school year ended in February with a graduation ceremony for all the graduating students. Their graduation is much different than the one we have back home, with the whole school gathering to give presents and blessings to the new graduates. People sign their uniforms and pin on “lucky charms” to bring good luck into whatever they decide to do next. School has restarted only a few days ago and I am both happy and unhappy about going. It’s good to have something to do during the days and to see all my Thai friends, but it is still hard to understand what’s going on in all of my classes.

The 3340 Rotary District Conference was held at the beginning of March. It had members of Rotary from across the district and all of the Inbound and Outbound students were there. Although most of the Outbounds didn't know where they were going yet, it was great being able to see and talk to them before they leave for around the globe. I've also been on my third and final Rotary trip. On this trip all the Inbounds in my district went to the south of Thailand. We visited Phuket, the Phi Phi Islands, a couple beaches, and a pearl mine. It was quite the experience with many activities going on throughout our trip. We went scuba diving in the Andaman Sea, swimming along the beaches of the southern coast, and spent a few nights at a floating hotel in the middle of the Ratchaprapa Dam. The trip was breathtaking and packed full of activities. It was great to be able to spend one last time with everyone before we all go our separate ways back home in a few months.

In the last couple of months, I have been learning how to Thai dance. I went to lessons three times a week for about a month and then once before each time I have performed. I danced twice with others at Walking Street and it was a lot of fun. I also got the opportunity in the last few months to visit Laos. Laos is a small, less developed country on the eastern boarder of Thailand. My host mother and her friend's family took me on a small two day – one night – trip to Laos to see some of the tourist destinations and interesting things about their culture. Laos was very similar to Thailand in many ways, but it did have many other noticeable differences. Although it was a bit of a hassle allowing me to cross the border and back, it was an amazing experience and I am glad I was able to go.

Most recently, my host family took me to the rocket festival (Boon Bang Fai) being held in Yasothon. It is a traditional festival held to give offerings to the gods asking them for rain during the growing season. There was a wonderful museum there that had just been built explaining the story behind the tradition and how it all got started.

So now, I'm nearing the end of my journey. The yellow brick road is almost at its end and it's time for me to click the heels of my ruby slippers three times. If you haven't already, make sure to check out the first two parts of my Tale. The return to Canada will surely be bitter-sweet and just like Dorothy, I'm going to dearly miss the friends and family that I have made on this year long adventure.

Signing Off,

Madelyn