



FIELD NOTES

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By Matthew Coomer (University of Montana) | September 22, 2011
(All photos by Matthew Coomer)

The floor is crowded as my friends and I attempt to dance. We're drunk and it's too late or early, depending on how you view the time, but the pop remixes of our favorite DJ are irresistible. No matter how I move though, I feel out of step with who I used to be. It's been three weeks since I returned from Thailand and reconnecting, with Missoula, friends, and this life, has become my goal. Somehow, being here again feels unfamiliar though. My internship passed quickly, even as my feelings about it swirl and change by the day. The life I left here in May is gone, the life I left there in August is fading, and, soon, whatever new existence I construct will irrevocably shift with graduation. I'm mainlining change, but crave consistency like a junkie.



I built something valuable in Chiang Mai, Thailand. I had a home, work, friends, favorite places, casual connections, nights out, days in, and all the trimmings of an existence. In my short time there, I became familiar to the smoothie lady at Chiang Mai Gate Market, the plump baker at Nice Sweet Place, the ditzy laundress down the street, and a cast of other zany characters. I'm curious if they remember me. If, in the next few weeks, any will wonder where the eccentric white boy with a predilection for passion fruit, croissants, and colorful shirts has gone. Will the memory of me register as more than a blip on the radar of their life? Will I conjure some sort of wistfulness, as their memories foster in me? Everything right now indicates that I'll never be back, and that I'll never know the answers.





Working for the Elephant Nature Foundation over the summer was the start to my hopefully long and illustrious career. It gave me an opportunity to explore and further develop my goals, while growing as an independent, confident adult. In the long term, the experience will no doubt prove itself crucial to anything I achieve. In its immediate wake however, I often lose myself in introspective wanderings. I'm an altered

adult, with fresh, exotic memories and a budding multi-cultural perspective, but I'm also the same person who left three months ago. The one that grew up moving, and that harbors an insatiable restlessness inside. Being abroad highlighted this tendency, just as it illustrated that hard work and a humble, open-minded worldview can help you find success anywhere. My Thai memories, from a cloudy day at the Royal Gardens and beautiful ornaments on the street to afternoons lost on the beach, also remind me that happiness always comes in the everyday moments we experience through being.

More and more when I remember my time abroad, I think of the little things. On how inconsequential they seem, but how much more they mean in retrospect. It's the simple instances and interactions, the ones occurring everywhere 24/7, which remind me life is a flow of the present, rather than an episodic chronicle of new beginnings. That I have one life with moments spread across an ocean, and everything moving, in step, towards an unknown future.

