

Small Town, Big World: When in Bangkok

By Britt Bensen Steele

My husband and I had a stint where we did a lot of traveling. We started in Thailand, and wandered around rural villages. We stayed in \$6 per night bungalows on stilts where the shower drain was a hole that revealed the jungle below, and also became the doorway for critters to enter at night. We stayed in places where geckos loved to sit on our toothbrushes, spiders were as big as my husband's outstretched hand, frogs surprised us by bounding across the kitchen counter, and four-legged hairy creatures (I refuse to acknowledge these as rats) ran across the beams in our bedroom.

I know. We got sick of it too. So, every once in a while we'd really clean things up and stay in a snazzy hotel with a high star rating for a two star American dollar price. Once, when we were staying in a hotel in downtown Bangkok toward the end of our time overseas, we decided to do a little shopping. We found ourselves in this huge mall, walking down a quiet hallway, sort of between shopping areas, when something caught my eye.

It was a full man-sized Ronald McDonald. He was standing alone in a mirrored hallway with nothing else but a janitorial closet in view. Now, we had never seen a McDonald's (yet) in Bangkok. They seemed to be fond of KFC and 7-Elevens, but we hadn't seen a McDonalds. But we did see Ronald McDonald himself, standing with his hands in prayer position, offering up a heartfelt "Namaste."

Of course! We were in Bangkok. And everything was centered around Buddhism, even the fast food market. So, there he was using the native language to coax some kid into eating a burger. Hhhhhmmmm... There he stood, doing his best to convince the people of Thailand that he has converted - to Buddhism. Marketing at its very best. Not sure that this same gesture would work so well in, let's say, Hillsboro, but it worked in Bangkok.

So, what's this all mean? I

suppose there are a lot of takes on this - what I know for sure is this: No matter where you go, there you are! And wherever you are, you are unequivocally influenced, impacted, and colored by the world around you. The choices we make, the conversations in which we participate, the stressors we embody, the faith we follow (or not) are all impacted by the concentration of people and perspectives around us. We like what "flows," and sometimes this means we find ourselves taking on things just because it's the status quo... even if it isn't really what you want, or what you know is best.

So, maybe the message here, is to choose consciously. Choose what is going to bring you more of what you want and less of what's not working. Choose what fills your life with good stuff and naturally sheds the bad stuff. Your body, your family and your community all wins.

Namaste.



Vernonia Baseball Team Takes Second Place in Tournament

The Vernonia 'Midget' Baseball Team competed in the 'Battle of the Tracks' tournament, hosted by Glencoe Youth Baseball, at the Washington Fairgrounds Sports Complex on May 16-17th. The Vernonia boys competed in a pool with eight other teams at the National baseball level.

Coached by Chris Wolf and Jason Busch, the Midget team played two games on Saturday, earning them their 4th place ranking position for Sunday's games. Winning the first and second games on Sunday then placed them in the Championship Final, playing against

The Dalles team.

The boys were tired and hot coming out of game two and into the final game, yet they held their own and ended up with second place after a 9-5 loss.

Coaches and parents were thrilled to see the boys play some excellent baseball, with only two weeks of the regular season under their belts. Most impressive is the sportsmanship displayed throughout, the obvious contentment of the players at their own improvements and the noticeable 'mentoring' of the younger players by the older

boys. The lineup includes 1st - 4th grade boys. Vernonia HS has some wonderful baseball potential coming their way in the next 5-8 years!

Notable plays during the tournament: A Grand Slam, home runs, double outs and some amazing throws. The various pitchers did great and there were two primary catchers.

Please congratulate these young men on this achievement and we hope the love of baseball spreads. The trophy is on display at the Vernonia Schools.





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