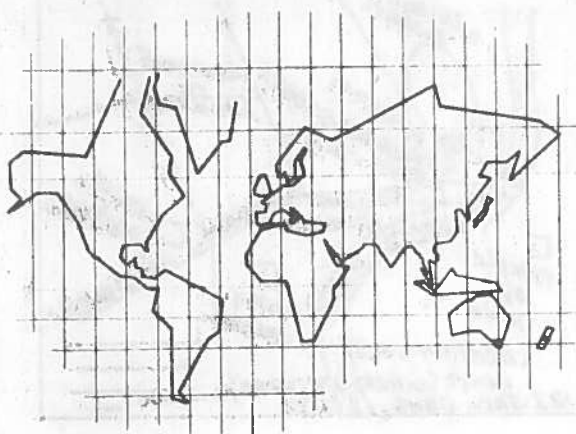


## GLOBAL ODYSSEY REPORT, DEC. 1972

*If I speak with the eloquence of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become no more than blaring brass and a crashing cymbal....Love knows no-limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. It is, in fact, the one thing that still stands when all else has fallen. (I Cor. 13.)*



Dear Friends,

A warm Christmas Greeting to you in this season of celebration and a promise of a care-filled New Year. I want to share with you a few events from the last month here in our International Training Center and then recall some delightful scenes from my time in Bangkok.

### A SEASON OF HOSTING

Since I last wrote we've found ourselves hosting many large groups of people. The longest time was with the 8 week training Academy for local churchmen which included 186 participants from 14 nations, 5 of the 6 urs and 6 of the 9 geo-social continents.

A second form of hosting has been with our business and political friends as well as with residents of our "Uptown" community. We hosted several congressmen, aldermen and a state senator, and provided space in our 8 story building for the general elections. About 100 businessmen from all over North America came for a weekend to do some edge planning on a "guild" system for the future of the North American Business world. Finally, we held an open house for teachers, churchmen and government officials in our community. All these events have helped build rapport with our new neighbors.

Thirdly, over a thousand people have gathered here this week for advanced training in local church renewal. They are from 188 local churches now in the Local Church Experiment and from another 50 churches planning to enter the experiment in January. The most dramatic event of the week was the gathering of the 1,000 in the local church across the street to celebrate the launching of the Movement's next 20 years of work in renewing the Church and Society. This "Convocation" in the church of one of Chicago's most influential and ecumenical elderly pastors is expected to have long term impact on the future of our community relations.

### A SEASON OF CELEBRATION

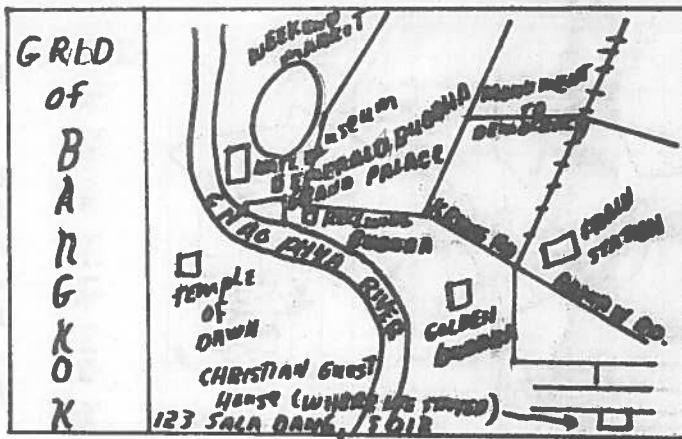
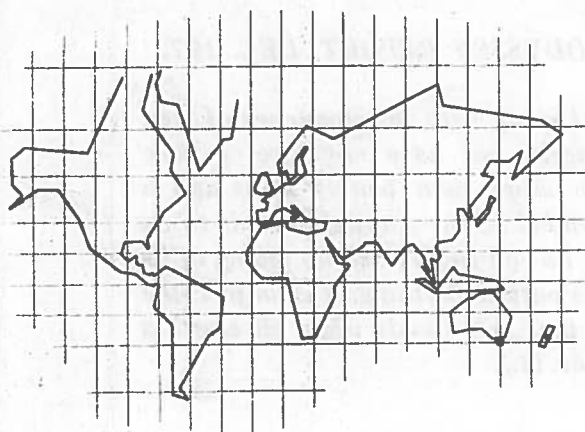
My experience of Bangkok, Thailand holds for me the celebrational aspect of the Christmas season. A "PEACE" and a "JOY" pervades the city in spite of the nearby war. And the people have a great ability to dance and create in the midst of a very mundane and earthly life style.

#### *The Dance on the River*

After the intensity of Mexico City, Tokyo and Hong Kong, Bangkok was an enjoyable relief. The 26 of us spent a morning travelling up an ancient waterway in two small boats to experience the famous floating market of Bangkok. I was delighted with the ride because I sat next to a guide and plumbed the depths of his wisdom about life in Thailand. One thing he mentioned is that there are no longer any heros the young can look up to and strive to imitate. Then he mentioned the people marry at a later age than in the States. Men, usually around 24 or 26 years old; women between 20 and 24 years. Before the time of marriage men are establishing careers (sometimes by going to the states to study) and women are helping at home.

The people and houses along the river were fascinating... I especially remember the confused and fear filled eyes of one scantily clothed fisherman as he watched us from his house on stilts... but the floating market was a disappointment, partly because bartering wasn't allowed, as in the shops in the city, partly because of a creeping sense of commercialism.

After the market, we floated on to the presidential palace and the Great Temple. The temples in Bangkok are especially elaborate and ornate. When I imagined the expense of baking the richly colored tiles for the roofs, remodeling collapsing pillars and polishing or gilding the hundreds of life sized golden sitting Buddhas I began to wonder where the finances came from. We were told that Thailand is enabled a lot by contributions and loans from he States and the World Bank but nobody could say for sure how that money was being used or how much of it would eventually help the poor in the land. At any rate, I was overwhelmed and gluttoned by the sight of so much gold throughout the city. Nowhere else in the world compared with so many golden and bright colored, beautiful buildings.



### *A Thai Night Club*

While on the river I met another guide, Veemar, and he said he was free that afternoon. As it was Monday and most of our order around the world has this one evening a week free for family and personal time, I was able to join him at his sister's silk shop, meet his friend, Supore, and, with these two "natives", tour the city. That is a privilege hard to come by because it's very hard to find a "native" in any city who will spend a half a day touring the city without trying to "take" you.

During our walking around we stopped at a night club and I was simply dazzled. I have been to exotic light shows in the States, but nothing to compare with the colorful variety and artistic beauty of the whole room responding to the rhythms and moods of the band. But even more impressive were some of the ancient dances the troupe put on. One was a sword duel dance that combined wild frenzy with precise timing. It was so wild one of the swords broke and one of the fighters was knocked off the stage into a group of guests. And it was so precise that a thrown dagger missed pinning him to the wall by less than a half inch. (No stunt men either).

On the quieter side, was the lovely 7 jewels dance. Here seven maidens danced the mood and sparkle of each jewel. Their exotic dresses, earrings, braceletts, broches, headpieces, belts and slippers were studded with the jewels of their color. This included a white dress with diamonds, red with rubies, yellow with topaz, green with emeralds, grey with moonstone, blue with sapphire and black with opal. I'm convinced the Thai people are one of the most colorful and creative people in the world.

### *A Thai Doctor at Home*

After this tour of the city the young men took me to Supore's home to meet his father, a prominent doctor who had emigrated from China 20 years before. We discussed the political situation. Briefly, he mentioned that the King was a puppet of a "benevolent" military dictator; that the people have little say in the running of their government and that summary executions of political insurgents were now taking place.

I had this last point confirmed in a newspaper article I read later in Egypt. It reported on the execution without trial of 6 political insurgents in Bangkok. There is no court of appeals for these cases. Moreover, the doctor (as well as several people with visited there) pointed out that there is extensive communist guerrilla activity in northern Thailand. Thus, a deep fear of China and a confusion over the war situation seems to predominate the political climate. And the massive presence of American military bases in Thailand have intensified this concern. The situation is quite tense so it's a wonder to the world the city can maintain an air of celebration and creativity in the midst of it all.

Let me again wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I especially want to thank those of you who shared with me your reactions and responses. As I'm sure you're beginning to see, the expanse and scope of our work and our deep concern to deal with the needs of every man requires your insights. History is being created here. Society and the Church is being renewed. The possibilities before us are wonderful. So keep your comments coming.

*Grace and Peace,*

*Ray C. Hawk*