

## Friendship Leads to Tropical Thailand

*Todd and Brenda Gerratt experienced a new culture when they visited their former exchange student*

By Dianna Troyer

Todd and Brenda Gerratt attribute their recent international travels to an impulse their daughter, Lyndsie, had in high school more than a decade ago.

“We kept getting these phone calls to host an exchange student,” says Brenda. “I had no idea how they got our number and mentioned it to Lyndsie. She told me she heard about the program at school, gave our number and thought we should do it.”

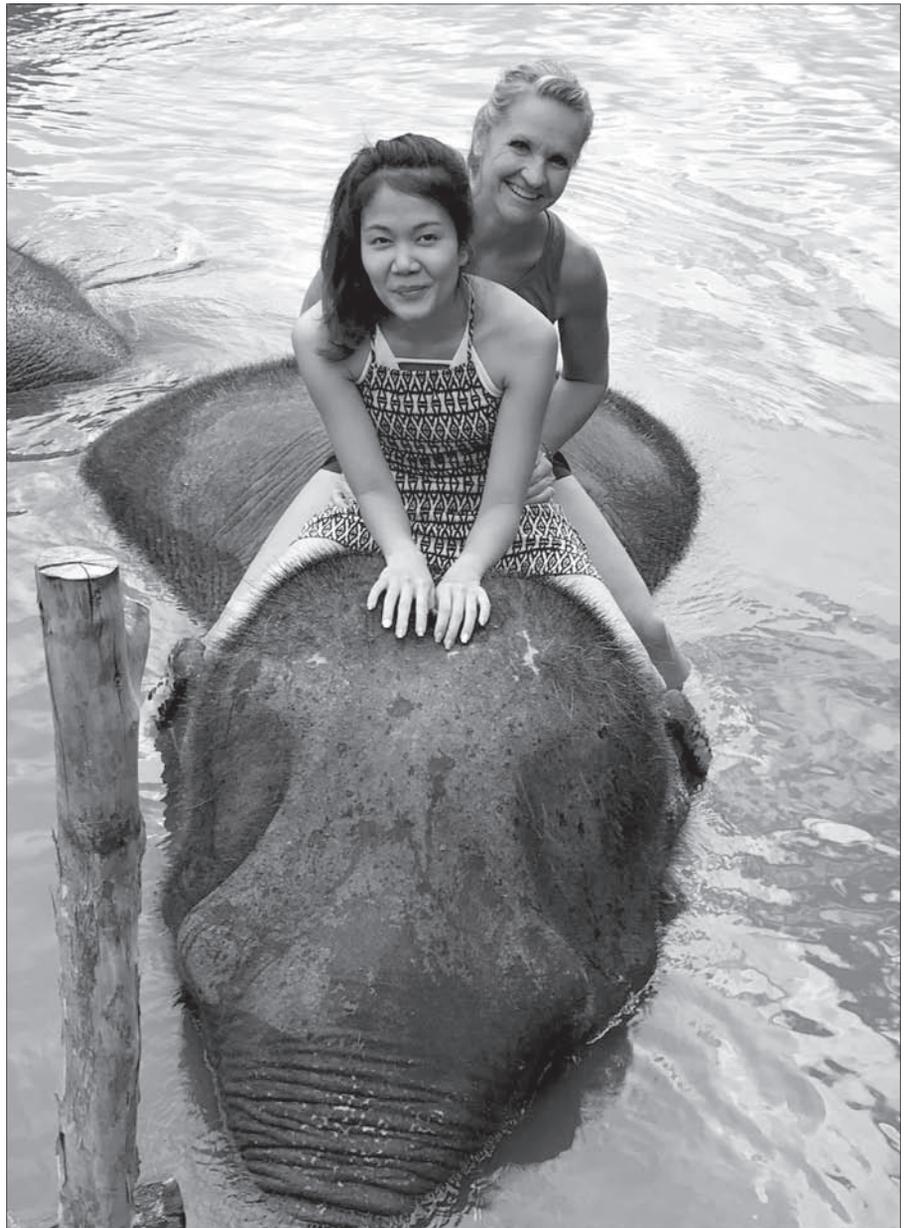
After hosting Pasinee “Fai” Bunkaewsuk during the 2005-2006 school year, the Gerratts became her second family and have stayed in touch.

“For the first six weeks she was here, Fai cried because she was so homesick,” Brenda says. “She was 15 at the time, a year younger than Lyndsie.”

Eventually, Fai’s bubbly, adventurous personality came out.

“She really liked an American high school compared to her strict private high school there,” Brenda says. “Then she cried the last six weeks because she wanted to stay.”

The Gerratts developed such a strong friendship with Fai, now 28, they visited



**Brenda Gerratt, back, and Pasinee “Fai” Bunkaewsuk, a former exchange student, bathed an elephant during the Gerratts’ trip to Thailand in February. Fai stayed with the Gerratts during the 2005-2006 school year.**

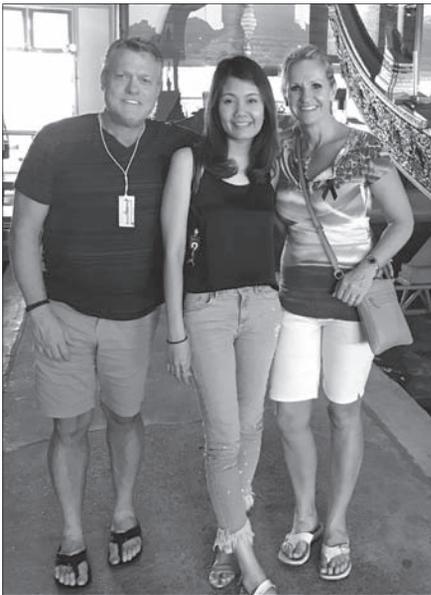
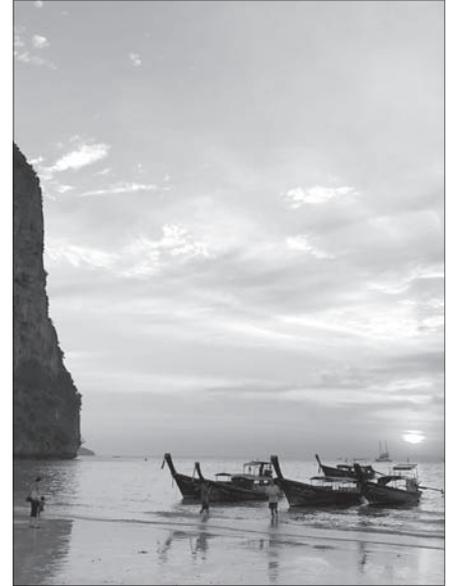
Photos courtesy of Brenda and Todd Gerratt

her in Thailand in February for more than two weeks. In July, when Fai earned her master’s degree in digital marketing, Brenda and her mother, Kenna, flew to England to celebrate Fai’s graduation.

“We really liked Thailand,” Todd says.

“The people are so respectful. They greet you with their hands pressed together prayerfully and with a slight bow.”

The Gerratts, partners in a family business called Ida-Gold Farms, could only travel to Thailand in winter after



**Clockwise from top left, it was Lyndsie Gerratt's idea for the family to host an exchange student. She and Fai have kept in touch through the years. Much has changed throughout Thailand, but it still is known for its scenic beaches. Ancient temples and artwork are found throughout the country. Todd, Fai and Brenda made the most of the family's time.**

their potato, hay and grain crops had been harvested in the Raft River Valley.

They visited Fai and her family at their home in Nakhon Si Thammarat, a city with a population of about 120,000 about 370 miles south of Bangkok. They toured ancient Buddhist temples, rode

and helped bathe elephants, scuba dived and sampled fresh seafood.

"The tile craftsmanship and mosaics are incredible in temples built in the 1500s," says Brenda. "Their textiles and silver engraved jewelry are beautiful. A woman showed us how she paints silk scarves."

When friends in Idaho ask about their trip, the Gerratts show a few photos.

"It's a 26-hour adjustment with travel and time changes," says Todd. "People ask if we would go again. We would. It was a great place to travel and experience another culture." ■