

TOM'S FAREWELL

Here's some news from the ACHR secretariat in Bangkok, which you might already have got wind of. After seventeen years with ACHR in Thailand, and a quarter-century in Asia, I have surprised myself by experiencing some unexpectedly intense pangs of homesickness - for my family, for the four distinct American seasons, for the twang of American English, for being able to understand what everyone is saying, for blackberries and garnet yams, and for all kinds of things I never thought would be so longed-for a few years back. And after giving it a good bit of thought, I have decided it's time to go back to the USA, while I'm still not quite too old to start a new chapter.

I'm not sure what I'll be doing once I get there, or what kind of skills I shall be able to flog on the American job market, in order to pay the rent. But what I do know is that I'll be making Portland, Oregon my landing pad. Portland is a smallish, bookish, rainy city in the Pacific Northwest corner of the country, surrounded by mountains and forests, and filled with coffee houses and vegan bakeries and blessed with a progressive and multi-cultural population and history. A close friend from college days has lived there with her family for decades, and whenever I've been able to visit Victoria, I've been charmed by the place. Portland also has the advantage of being just a few hours train ride away from my sister and her extended clan in Olympia and from my father and a whole bunch of other Kerrs in Seattle, and a short plane-ride from my mother in Boise. Plus, the city is a famously serious bicycle town, and I fully intend to join the ranks of Portlanders who propel themselves around on two wheels - something I've never been brave enough to do in Bangkok! *(the photo on the right isn't me or anybody I know, but it conveys the atmosphere of Portland's streets)*

But before I get on that Korean Airline flight to Seattle (aisle seat, lacto-ovo-vegetarian meals), I want to send a last little thank-you to all of you extraordinary, lovely, talented, energetic, kind-hearted, and big-thinking people who have made this great adventure of the past 25 years in Asia such a fertile one for me, and who have welcomed me and allowed me to come and snoop around your marvelous work and to try to add a little value to it by way of all the newsletters and reports and agitprop I've had so much fun putting together. It has been the adventure of a lifetime, and I'm leaving with a heart brimming with admiration and gratitude and affection. *Thank you everybody! Thank you so much!*

*Little birdie, oh little birdie,
come and sing me your song,
I've a short time to be here with you
and a long time to be gone.*

(from an old American folk song)

