

Hello to all from Thailand,

Today is 1/5/2005. Things are looking up around here. I went down to the beach road tonight to check it out. The power is back on. Some places are actually open...kinda makeshift though. They're trying. It's like a tornado went through. One place is totally destroyed while the one next door was left standing (not unscathed though). Last night I went to a Rotary meeting for the Patong Beach club. They are a wonderful group of 37 members. They have good sound ideas on how to help and will do worlds of good. To give you an idea of the water that hit, The metal sign on top of a building which was about 18 or so feet high was all twisted up and destroyed. I asked a girl working at the bar (it was open!!!!!!!!!!!!!!) what was up with that. She explained that the initial wave hit the sign and destroyed it and then the resulting resting water level was about 8 feet. This was a group of bars right on the beach that from my experience of last year, was undoubtedly packed with tourists when the wave hit. It's hard to comprehend how anyone could have survived.

Tomorrow I will go back and get pictures. Last night I spent the night at the bars on Bangla Road. This is the party center of town. It was very sad for the owners and employees as they were for all intents and purposes empty. There are (no exaggeration) about 200-300 bars on this road that is about 3 city blocks long. My experience last year was that each and every one was almost standing room only. At least 30 to 50 patrons in each one. Last night, as I walked through, in most of the bars I was the only one there. They need tourists and the money that comes with them. It will be months before the tourists return. There will be so many employees out of work and the poverty will certainly rise.

Nanette and I have decided to help through the Patong Beach Rotary Club. We are asking all the clubs in our district at home, Family and Friends to contribute anything they want or can. Nanette and I will match any donations made through us/Rotary going to the Patong Beach club up to \$10,000.00US. I was overwhelmed by an e-mail from my own club that they will be contributing \$2000.00 to kick it off. I am hoping that we will raise at least \$10,000.00 in donations and that I can send a check for \$20,000.00 or more to be used directly in this area distributed by locals who will unselfishly work to see the money gets the most bang for the bucks.

I have now through the help of computer wizard Art Preusser got most of my pictures on a web site. Go to the following and check it out. Anything labeled Picture###.jpg is one I took. The others were taken here but by other people. The pictures are at www.artpreusser.com/lindland (note - these pictures are VERY large right now)

Don't worry about me, I'm doing fine. As a good friend of mine clued me into.....maybe this was meant for me as a vacation for my soul. Joe