Ali Smith (center) is all smiles as she spends time with some of the children at the Street Dwellers Outreach.

Going Beyond: More Than a Job

Princeton in Asia is very proud that our cadre of fellows now has the opportunity to live in a wide range of places and serve a wide range of needs in Asia. PiA fellows’ commitment to serve their communities goes well beyond the classroom or the office. Oftentimes with only a small idea or an invitation in passing, our fellows get involved in a multitude of projects and activities. The following is a brief sampling of what some of our current fellows have told us about engaging with their communities outside of work.

Ali Smith
Reporter at ABS-CBN,
Manila, Philippines

Growing up in Bozeman, Montana and attending Princeton, we learned, read, and talked about poverty quite a bit. But, as I approached a small church in a rundown area of Manila for the first time, I was actually seeing it with my own eyes. As I peered beyond the entrance gates I saw children, lots of them, half-clothed or completely naked, running around matted with dirt, grime, and sweat; infections and head sores; rotted teeth; severe undernourishment; pregnant teenagers; toddlers digging through garbage; a stench of urine and sewage so strong I had to fight the urge to plug my nose. I was stunned.

A man at the gate named “Alfredo” (yes, as in the sauce) founded “Street Dwellers Outreach Ministries Inc.” ten years ago to provide for Manila’s poorest children and families living on the streets. Alfredo and I became acquainted via email before I arrived in Manila, through a friend of mine who coincidentally sat next to him on an airplane. He sent me information about the program, and I became eager and excited for the opportunity to engage with the Philippine community at the grassroots level. Though these “grassroots” were initially shocking, I soon discovered that beyond the less than pleasant sights and the smells were children filled with so much love, laughter, warmth, and joy. They were loving and affectionate and craving the same attention back. I was hooked. Ever since that first day I have spent almost every Saturday morning over the past two years with the Street Dwellers kids and it has been a blessing. We get anywhere from 30-60 street children and families coming for hot chocolate, singing, and learning, topped off with a hot meal to fill their tummies before they head back into the streets to wander around or collect junk to sell. Many of them are in school, but just as many are not. Since they are used to freedom and independence at a very young age, the structure of school is a challenge for many, especially when they have to think about how they are going to get their next meal.

Every week we do an art project, and I have been amazed at the level of creativity and raw artistic talents of these children. My apartment walls are covered with their beautiful creations. We even organized an art exhibit to showcase their work. This is just one of the ways in which I cherish the experiences I have with the Street Dwellers. It is an experience that is on the one hand very fulfilling, but on the other hand, terribly heart-wrenching. Many joyous and fun-filled times are accompanied by feelings of utter helplessness, hopelessness, and despair on the childrens’ behalf.

But the one thing I have learned is that what these kids need and desire most is not clothes or money or other valued material goods, but rather the love and attention that can only come from a consistent and genuine investment of one’s time. And that alone keeps me coming back every week.

(continued on page 3)
Program Update

The senior theses are in, the magnolias have bloomed, and the 2008-2009 PiA class is beginning final preparations for their year of chugging fermented mare’s milk, singing John Denver songs, and either sweating through thin cotton or freezing through heavy wool (there is no in-between on PiA). This year, PiA’s program is comprised of 130 fellows and 22 summer interns bound for 18 countries and 43 cities in Asia. The first PiA fellow in this year’s class will inhale the Asian air in fewer than three weeks, and we are jealous. As always, we are proud of this new crew (they make us look interesting!) which boasts a former national skating champion, a fellow whose middle name is Hydrogen, a yoga instructor who has sailed around the world, a trained clown, a student who can juggle seven items at once, a writer who completed a novel for her thesis, and a teacher who speaks Thai with a northern Alabama accent. As this newsletter goes to print, we will be finishing up our annual orientation in Princeton and sending these fellows off on their adventures. This year’s Annual Dinner on Monday, May 19th is dedicated to celebrating our fellows and the new PiA opportunities and sites available to them.

New Partnerships
In January, the Ministry of Education in Singapore invited PiA to participate in an innovative pilot program placing humanities teachers in secondary schools throughout Singapore. As one of the few organizations selected to participate, PiA was honored to be asked and moved quickly to explore the possibilities for an accelerated launch. Working closely with a team from the MOE, PiA is very pleased to be launching in June with seven inaugural fellows who are excited to teach Singaporean students. This will double PiA’s presence in Singapore and give seven more lucky people the chance to try roti prata!

PiA has also partnered with two of the fastest growing and most dynamic programs at Princeton: the Princeton Environmental Initiative (PEI) and the Center for Innovation in Engineering Education (CIEE). Both programs are expanding their summer internships and are interested in creating international internship opportunities for their concentrators. These interests dovetail perfectly with PiA’s desire to give talented young people a chance to broaden their perspectives through meaningful experiences in Asia that may influence their course of study. As a result, PiA has teamed up with CIEE, offering two internship in Delhi, India and two in Shanghai, China for computer science engineers, and with PEI offering environmental internships in China.

New Posts in Kathmandu (Nepal), Aceh (Indonesia), and Xinjiang (China)
As Asia develops and becomes more prosperous, it continues to be important for PiA to find opportunities to serve Asia’s neediest areas while still serving our long-standing partners in locations that have benefited from the rising economic tide. We hope our growth this year reflects our history of a grassroots approach to working in Asia and fulfilling the PiA mission of serving the greatest needs.

Having left in 2003 due to the Maoist conflict, PiA is re-establishing our program in Nepal with three fellowships. The organizations—Wild Earth, Save the Children, and the National Democratic Institute—are groups we have worked with for many years. After a careful risk assessment and a field site visit that included a flight around Mt. Everest (our jobs are rough!), the PiA Board of Trustees approved this move in April. With the successful conclusion of recent elections, a peace agreement, and the promise of a new constitution, it is an exciting time to be serving institutions working on such critical political and social issues.

Like East Timor and Nepal, the NGO work being done in post-tsunami Aceh provides PiA fellows with limitless opportunities to make an impact in a community that is truly in need. PiA plans to place three fellows in Banda Aceh this year to work on public health issues and conflict resolution.

PiA is also sending two teachers to the town of Shihezi in Xinjiang—the farthest northwestern province of China. Right along the old Silk Road, it is defined by the Tianshan Mountain range and the wide expanse of the Taklamakan desert. A place in China where blue skies are still blue and Uyghur culture intermingles with Han Chinese is a very rare opportunity. Our trailblazing fellows have already packed their long underwear.

Putting the “Asia” back in Princeton in Asia
The PiA staff and Board of Trustees is currently moving forward with plans to reopen a field office in Singapore in 2009. With our program growing, the move is an important step in bolstering our ability to address health and safety issues as effectively as possible and to provide expanded support infrastructure in emergencies. A field office also allows us to better serve the needs of our fellows and partners, responding in real-time, providing additional professional development, and evaluating new opportunities more quickly and comprehensively. In addition, the office will provide great opportunities to expand our network (read: have parties) and reconnect with PiA friends and alumni in the region. A sumo-wrestling match is scheduled to determine which PiA director will be the first to staff the office!

PiAers in the Field
Meanwhile, our current fellows in the field are enjoying their last tastes of fish sauce, slurping up their last bowls of pho (as Vietnam fellow Nate Edgerton demonstrates below), receiving their goodbye marriage proposals, and desperately trying to fit in that last trip to Angkor Wat. More than once the office has received email pleas of, “please, help me never leave Asia,” (Liz Skeen, Khon Kaen ’07). As this year’s class finishes up, we are once again inspired by the impact each PiAer can have in the field, both at work and in their communities.

—Leslie Medema
Senior Program Director

Mark Dalgarno looks on as roommate Nate Edgerton experiments with an innovative noodle-eating technique in Can Tho, Vietnam.
Michael Collins  
Law Assistant at Orrick, Herrington, & Sutcliffe LLP, Beijing, China

I’ve worked on a Beijing travel guide for about a year now. Initially, I thought I might be able to sell it as a stand-alone travel guide in bookstores and airports. And, well, that didn’t work. I switched game plans and focused on the Olympics, hoping to market the guide to official Olympic sponsor companies such as GE and J&J as their custom-made guide to the Olympics. Again, that didn’t pan out. Instead of letting the project die, I decided to put the whole thing online. This turned out to be the best format for the guide, as it allowed me to make www.beijing-travel-guide.com an interactive guide to Beijing and the Olympics. Slide shows, Chinese audio features and links to other sources of China related information made the online guide much more dynamic and valuable to users than it ever could have been on paper. A few PiAers helped me put the guide together and contributed everything from pictures and advice to content and criticism. Liz Skeen, in particular, was an invaluable editor of the guide, spending hours making me look like a decent writer. I don’t know where I would be without her. It’s been exciting to build something of my own, and I hope the rest of the PiA community finds the guide worthwhile.

Caroline James  
Publishing Editor at KEEN Media, Bangkok, Thailand

Though I had never done any theater before, I had this powerful urge to pursue acting after participating in a contemporary dance workshop. Bangkok, a city with so much going on and such little English-speaking competition, was the perfect opportunity. The audition process: WOOOH! Speaking competition, was the perfect opportunity. The audition process: WOOOH! Speaking competition, was the perfect opportunity. The audition process: WOOOH! Speaking competition, was the perfect opportunity. The audition process: WOOOH! Speaking competition, was the perfect opportunity. The audition process: WOOOH! Speaking competition, was the perfect opportunity. The audition process: WOOOH! Speaking competition, was the perfect opportunity. Teaching at an isolated, private, international school on a misty mountaintop didn’t initially seem to provide many opportunities for exploring Indian culture. On top of the isolation, everyone is preoccupied with work and students, students and work. So you have to squeeze things in as best you can—and I’ve found that the best way is simply to take advantage of what the school has to offer. I go to yoga twice a week in the middle school courtyard to learn about proper breathing, exercise, and diet. Three times a week I wrangle through the language barrier and take tabla drumming lessons with the school music teacher, yielding mixed results—“last semester you veeeery bad,” my teacher explained. “But this semester you good.” I’ve filled in as a bassist for musicals and choir performances; I’ve gone on backpacking trips through the forest and hauled out flip-flops in a nearby village. And I managed to score the part of Puck in the school production of “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”, which was my grand theatrical debut. Basically, I’ve tried to take the opportunity to learn Indian arts where I can and have otherwise continued to be the hopelessly overcommitted kid I’ve always been!

Peter White  
English Teacher at University of the Humanities, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

In the eight or so months that I’ve been in Mongolia, I’ve gotten used to being approached by all manner of people—entrepreneurs, opposition politicians, geologists—who want me to help them with various projects. Indeed, the fact that I am American gives me a degree of undeserved celebrity and perceived qualification that my CV alone might not merit. Some Mongolians also assume that as I am American, I have connections to other Americans, perhaps all the way up to the director of USAID! This is understandable in a country of 2.5 million people, where ties of kinship mean that it is fairly likely that any given Mongolian is more than three degrees removed from a member of parliament or a ministry head.

While the focus of my time in Mongolia is teaching at the University of the Humanities, I have found that having a diverse range of side projects has made my time all the more rewarding. In the fall I worked with a friend at Mercy Corps, a nonprofit which does a great deal of development work for USAID, to assess the effectiveness of several ongoing projects in the Mongolian countryside. This effort saw me off to Khenti province, the birthplace of Chingis (aka “Genghis”) Khan, where...
Savoring the Lunar New Year with PiA

Traditional Taiko drums beat in the background as the friends, alumni, and supporters of PiA filtered in from the cold, snowy landscape of New York City. For a few hours on February 12, 2008, PiA’s Lunar New Year benefit transformed The Rubin Museum of Art into a colorful world representing all parts of Asia—from Bangkok to Bali, Phnom Penh to Penang.

The Rubin Museum, which boasts the most thorough collection of Himalayan art in the Western world, was a magical backdrop for the evening, opening several galleries of its permanent collection to guests for a late-night browse. Photography by Ann Waddell, PiA’s Carrie Gordon Tribute Fellow, was also featured, giving guests a unique glimpse into rural China.

Taste buds delighted in the daring and delicate wine pairings of award-winning sommelier Joshua Wesson, who had carefully selected wine to complement each of the Japanese, Chinese, Thai, and Indian dishes being served. Take-out style boxes of Thai noodles were offered for those seeking a flavorful yet comfortable dinner while others chose to use their chopsticks to handle an array of freshly made sushi. For many, bite-size samosas were a favorite way to spice up the night.

The event enjoyed 200 guests, many of whom were spiritedly outfitted in their best and brightest Asian formal wear. Beautiful red and black embroidered silks glimmered under soft lighting while orange, yellow, and purple saris livened the mood.

The event raised over $50,000 to help support the opportunities that PiA provides to recent college graduates and young professionals. Many thanks go out to all our volunteers, who made the event possible with their ready and helping hands, and a special debt of gratitude goes out to our enthusiastic and dedicated committee members: Elizabeth Chandler (chair), Melanie Kirkpatrick, Elise Van Oss, Nozomi Terao, Megan McGowan, Sarah Mankes, Tess Soroka, Mariah Mulvihill, Susan Fou, Stephanie Teachout, Alli Berliner, and Tavia Danch.

Celebrating its 110th anniversary this year, PiA proved once again that some traditions—good friends, good wine, and good food—never get old.

What do PiAers do best? We eat! In conjunction with the 2008 Lunar New Year benefit, PiA released its inaugural edition of the PiA food guide, “East Meets West: The PiA Guide to Asian Eats in NYC.” With production and editing leadership from Sue Fou (China ’95) and Allison Berliner (Thailand ’07), the guide includes anecdotes and memories from many PiA alumni through the years, as well as restaurant reviews from dozens of New York City eateries. From the hot spots to the little known gems, PiA hopes that everyone in the area can take advantage of the closest thing we have to a hot-cooked Asian meal. The PiA food guide was featured in an article titled, “A Culinary Journey from Asia to the Five Boroughs” in the New York Sun, and is available for $20 through the PiA homepage at http://www.princeton.edu/~pia. Happy eating!
SAVORING THE LUNAR NEW YEAR: THANKS

We are grateful to the following sponsors who helped us color this vibrant evening:

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With special thanks for their continued support:
PIA’s Annual Odyssey Around Asia

What better way to justify a five-week trip to Asia to the Board than to invite the Trustees to join! Three years ago PIA introduced a new (and self-serving!) form of due-diligence, in which PIA Trustees join the Executive Director on an annual trip to visit PIA fellows, assess sites, and touch base with partner organizations. In addition to ensuring that the ED doesn’t spend all the PIA funds on massages, PIA Trustees bring a wealth of knowledge, contacts, and perspective to assessing new sites, advising fellows and better serving our partner institutions. Their wisdom (and gray hairs) has proven a huge help in Asia. (Not that any of our Trustees have gray hairs. Just saying, if they hypothetically did, it would help). The trip also provides Trustees and friends of PIA with the opportunity to see firsthand the impact PIA fellows can make, the communities in which they live and learn, and the compelling opportunities for growth in the field. This past fall, I had the pleasure of being joined by PIA Trustee Elizabeth Chandler, whose hiking pace left me in the dust of the Gobi, and PIA friend Isabella de la Houssaye, who wowed local textile mavens with her knowledge (and gate agents with the weight of her textile-laden luggage). PIA is lucky to have such committed Trustees and supporters, willing to donate significant time and effort to help us build and strengthen our program in Asia, and I have been incredibly lucky to have such lively and spirited traveling companions.

—With great thanks to both Elizabeth and Isabella— Anastasia Vrachnos

Asia Trip Roundup
By Elizabeth Chandler

I have a confession to make. When Anastasia drafted me to the Board a few years ago I had no real clue about PIA. I hadn’t been a PIA Fellow—though I had spent many wonderful years in Asia and had the distinct honor of knowing a number of PIA alums. So when she asked me to join, I thought… PIA has a compelling mission, and I can hang out with people who not only love Asia but also love to eat Asian food. Count me in!

After attending several Board meetings and listening to our fellows report from the field via skype teleconference, I was hooked. I quickly elbowed my way up the long queue waiting to follow in the footsteps of trustees Jon Wonnell and Richard Van Horne as trusted bag draggers for our fearless leader, ATV.

From out of the board room to two exhilarating weeks of travel through PIA time… From the moment we touched down in the Beijing airport, I felt bear hugged by the warmth and generous hospitality of the PIA network. We traveled to Beijing, Ulaan Baatar, Hong Kong, Manila, Yogyakarta, Jakarta, and Singapore—with a few memorable side trips to sleep in a ger in the sub-zero Gobi Desert and savor dawn on the steps of Borobodur. In each place I was overwhelmed by the amazing fellows and alumni who regaled us with their stories, gave up their beds, and—at most importantly—treated us to the best local cuisine. As we moved from classroom to classroom, met with environmental NGOs, organizations for cultural preservation, law, microfinance, I was struck by the richness and diversity of PIA’s partnerships. The partners were so articulate in explaining the high value that they placed on the PIA fellowship, not just for its role in their day-to-day activities but also in serving the much greater goal of bringing East and West closer together.

I was having a great and fascinating experience, a witness to the strong, wonderful legacy of PIA and the incredible opportunities for growth. But for the first time, I could also appreciate the high wire act that our staff performs every year as it chooses PIA fellows and partners and matches them up just so. There is no cookie cutter approach—it is a tough job, and it is really important that we get it right, year after year. And while my trip only touched the tip of the true PIA experience, it was enough to energize me and send me back to that big table in the board room with enthusiasm and commitment to help ensure that PIA has the resources it needs to keep doing what it’s doing so well.

Reflections on PIA
By Isabella de la Houssaye

I’ve made countless trips to Asia over the past 20 years—many for business and many for pleasure—but none has been as exciting, inspiring, and exhausting as the trip I made with Anastasia this past fall. We traveled to Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Laos, and East Timor meeting with PIA fellows, partners, and potential partners along the way—nonstop, 24/7. We were fueled by the energy and enthusiasm of the PIA fellows who hosted us, as well as the urgency of the various “needs” they are addressing as part of their mission to promote goodwill and understanding in their respective countries. Whether the meetings focused on democracy building in East Timor, public health issues in Laos or conservation issues in Vietnam, the take away was the same: there are urgent needs to be met in these countries and PIA is doing a remarkable job addressing them. A tremendous THANK YOU to Anastasia and all of the PIA fellows who I met along the way for giving me the opportunity to experience firsthand the wonderful work that you are doing.

—Anastasia Vrachnos

~ 6 ~
The PiA community lost a friend and visionary with the passing of Bob Goheen, the 16th President of Princeton University. Dr. Goheen was born in Vengurla, India to Presbyterian medical missionary parents and lived for fifteen years in the hills of Tamil Nadu. Growing up in southern India, he attended the Kodaikanal International School (KIS) before coming to the United States in 1934. He went on to become a renowned scholar in Classics but never lost touch with his Asian roots.

The youngest elected president of Princeton University since the Revolutionary War, Dr. Goheen oversaw a significant change in the complexion of Princeton by admitting women, expanding the physical campus, making the hiring of minority faculty and presence of minority students a priority, and encouraging the campus to think in more international terms. And all throughout, Dr. Goheen kept his ties with India and greater South Asia.

Following his sixteen-year tenure at the helm of the university, Dr. Goheen took his leadership skills and experience to serve as United States Ambassador to India from 1977-1980. Dr. Goheen worked tirelessly to build bridges between the two countries.

Dr. Goheen’s lifelong connection with India once again benefited Princeton students when, in 2007, he helped PiA reestablish South Asia programming after a thirty-year hiatus. He inspired the creation of a fellowship at his alma mater, the Kodaikanal International School, and advised PiA in several other locations. The PiA community was honored to hear Dr. Goheen speak at the 2007 Annual Dinner. With Dr. Goheen at the podium, Dana Dreibelbis in the crowd, and former Ambassador to India Frank Wisner ’61 as our honored speaker, the outgoing PiA fellows became a part of eighty years of history bridging India and Princeton, East and West. The three PiA fellows on the subcontinent are part of Dr. Goheen’s legacy and PiA’s best way of honoring his memory.

“If you feel that you have both feet planted on level ground, then the University has failed you… One aim of the University is to teach students to continually question who they are and where they are headed.”
—Dr. Goheen at Princeton’s 1961 Baccalaureate address

(continued from page 3)

I met with various community and local government leaders to assess the impact of a new well that had been built during the previous summer. Coming on the heels of administering exams to over 100 students, it was an interesting change of pace.

Currently I am pursuing my academic interests, which tend more towards the Middle East, by working with the American Center for Mongolian Studies (ACMS) to write articles on the period of Mongol rule in the Middle East for a comprehensive online encyclopedia on Mongolia and all things Mongol. Also at ACMS, I am writing a short guide to Mongolia for visiting American scholars. This will also serve as a guide for future PiA fellows on such key topics such as where to get non-lumpy fermented mare’s milk.

The end of the academic year at the University of Humanities is bringing a flurry of activity, such as the National Shakespeare Competition and the National TOEFL Conference. I have been asked to give presentations at both of these events, which will probably necessitate me brushing up on my PowerPoint skills. Overall, I find that there is simply too much to be done and not enough time in the day!
Jill Bolte Taylor is a neuroanatomist who experienced—and remembered—a very massive stroke. As a recovered stroke victim, with a highly specialized background in neurology, she now travels the country giving lectures on what a stroke feels like, how she recovered, and what she gained from the experience. I recently came across a video of one of her talks online (http://www.ted.com/talks/view/id/229) and weirdly enough, I TOTALLY related to what she was describing.

So what does a 24-year-old recent PiA alum have in common with a recovered stroke victim? I think—and I hope I’m not being insensitive—that we have both discovered what it feels like to exist in a self-reflective and temporally flexible space, and are also aware of what it feels like to wholly exist in the present moment. For Jill Bolte Taylor, the distinction between these two modes is located and controlled in our heads: the right side of our brain is about the immediate, the tangible, and the energy that we pick up in a million sensory impulses every minute; the left side of the brain makes sense of these feelings, puts the moment in the context of the past and present, senses the boundaries of space and time, and separates the self from the fabric of everything else. For me, the distinction between these two modes is a much simpler, and more geographical, construct: New York vs. Bangkok. And while some people might say that escaping to a foreign country would translate into more present-mindedness, for me, the opposite has been true.

[A disclaimer: not only am I drastically (and probably wrongly) simplifying the functions of the human brain, I’m also creating a binary out of my personal experience which may seem superficial. But, give me a break! This is a newsletter, not a novel.]

Backtrack—let me give you a brief sense of who I am. I graduated from Princeton in 2006, having only ever lived on Amtrak’s Northeast Corridor Line. I spent the next year in Bangkok working at KEEN Media, which, in my opinion, is the best ever PiA post. Unlike all of my friends who had moved straight to New York, I was constantly conscious of the fact that I’d made a real decision about my life. I had actively chosen to move to Asia. On a daily basis, I thought about what this meant and how I interacted with the people and places around me. And even when it became second nature, and I stopped thinking about things so much, I always had the space to be self-reflective because—as I read somewhere in a guidebook—things just move a little slower around the Mekong.

I’m not trying to say that I found myself: I most certainly did not because what does that even mean? But, it is a weird thing to come back after a year or more abroad—16 months in my case. While the typical American things like strip malls and traffic laws and high, high prices have not phased me, the one thing I cannot get used to about living in the states is that I no longer have this feeling that I’m doing a really good job at being me. [If you’ve never felt this, you should probably listen to more angsty music while on public transportation, preferably involving waterways.]

I’ve now been back in America for just under six months. I’m living in New York City, where I have many awesome friends and a dream job in sustainable development. My life is truly wonderful, and I’ve been incredibly lucky in almost every respect. But, unlike the Bangkok-me that viscerally felt every decision, I’m pretty sure that I’m a little more cog-like than I was a year ago. For now, this is fine—I’ve got my Asia time stored inside my head and am hoping that, like Jill Bolte Taylor, I will be able to control which mode I employ in my daily life. As soon as this stops working, I’m hopping on the next plane out of here.

Allison Berliner was a Princeton in Asia fellow from 2006-2007 and was instrumental in organizing the PiA Food Guide that was released for our annual benefit (see page 4). She looks forward to connecting with more and more PiA alumni out in the real world and reliving memories from her time abroad.

“I just wanted to formally thank PiA for the truly life-changing opportunity and inspiring experience that you have provided to me in both Indonesia and Timor-Leste over these last years. I will not presume to assume what impression I made upon you, nor what benefit you thought I could offer to the program when I submitted my application as a senior in the fall of ’04, but I hope that I have both realized and surpassed your expectations and hopes of me. For my part, I feel that I have gained above and beyond what PiA states that it offers to its curious and uncertain applicants. In my two years as a PiA fellow, I have had the privilege of living in two countries, working with two great organizations and sets of people, obtaining fluency in two cultures and languages, and experiencing countless comical, confusing, and quirky situations. More importantly, I have had the opportunity to develop within me a deeper understanding of and commitment to the ideals of service and cross-cultural, lingual, and racial understanding. Please, please, please, keep fighting the good fight and sending fellows over to this area of the world!”

—Cal Kennedy

Atma Jaya University, Indonesia & Belun, East Timor ’05-’07

Cal Kennedy in situ on the beaches of Indonesia.
Last week I rode in an Econoline van down US-61, the Blues Highway. I looked out the window over the alluvial plain that stretched for miles, and I thought about how Princeton in Asia deserved full credit for bringing me to the Mississippi Delta. On my left sat a Sudanese woman, behind me a Rwandan man. In our two-van convoy there was also a Pakistani woman, a Nigerian man, an Indian, a Hong Konger, a Hungarian, a Turk, a Cambodian, a Tunisian, a Czech, a Namibian, a Palestinian, a Zimbabwean, a Ghanaian, and a Somali-Dane. Oh yes, and dearest to me, a Singaporean named Khartini.

I met Khartini on my first day of work as a teacher for PiA in Singapore. A reporter for the Malay-language newspaper Berita Harian and a fellow teacher, Khartini took a journalistic view of life, and I liked her instantly. She was observant and honest—she helped me understand the history behind many of Singapore’s more baffling policies, adding interest to even the most mundane committee meetings or bureaucratic procedures. It had been almost two years since we met in Singapore, and our rendezvous in Mississippi was the first time I had seen her since I left Asia.

In Singapore, Khartini had shown me all over the city-state, teaching me where to find the best nasi lemak and introducing me to my now favorite fruit, the mangosteen. We hiked Bukit Timah together after work and sometimes took weekend bus trips up into Malaysia, listening to the funny Singaporean podcasts she had stored on her iPod. During my year in Asia, I rarely understood more than 60% of the humor. Whenever we sat on the bus to Malaysia, each listening to these podcasts with one earphone, Khartini would pause the story to explain each and every Singlish word so that I could fully understand the joke. And when I understood the jokes, I felt less isolated 10,000 miles from home—I felt like myself again.

It was on a trip to Malacca when Khartini and I realized we had a mutual appreciation for the roadside kopitiams where the bus drivers would stop for 20-minute breaks. There was a certain endearing kitsch to the way these food stands looked, and we soaked up the atmosphere as we hurriedly ordered roti prata and iced Milo in time to get back on the bus. Now Khartini and I were in Mississippi, and I was trying to coax her into a Sonic Drive-In for hamburgers (hoping that the carhops would be on roller skates for full effect).

The State Department had sponsored Khartini’s trip to the U.S. with a group of 16 other foreigners. When I heard about this trip, I decided to meet up with Khartini in Mississippi. Her group had already toured Seattle, Kansas City, and Washington DC, the last of which she deemed “similar to Singapore—hot, clean, and full of government.” Now the group was in Jackson to study citizen participation and to meet with local officials and nonprofit workers. In PiA circles, we often talk about the “ripple effect” of the program—how the lessons learned in Asia extend far beyond the year or two we were there, the territory we covered, or the specific people we met while on our post. This ripple effect seemed quite clear to me at lunch the next day when the Zimbabwean man in Khartini’s group described to me the differences between the three languages spoken in his country and asked me about my time in Singapore. Without a second thought, I rattled off an explanation of the four languages spoken on the Malay Peninsula, citing facts and figures I would have never known were it not for my PiA fellowship. The cultural exchange that PiA made possible between Khartini and me was now widening into a cultural exchange between Khartini, a young Zimbabwean, and me. The social bonds that I saw forged when I visited PiAers in Hong Kong and Chiang Mai and met their local friends seemed akin to the friendships I saw late at night in a Delta juke joint, as the Namibian, the Czech, and the Turkish women laughed together.

In this packed hall, a bluesman in his late 70s called out to the crowd, asking Khartini where she was from, and then sang a deep lament to the room full of Mississippians.

She’s gonna leave me.
Baby don’t go back to Singapore.

I smiled as I thought to myself: Thank you PiA. Thank you for bringing me here.

Suzanne Welles (Singapore ’05–’07) taught in the Interdisciplinary Studies Department at Ngee Ann Polytechnic before returning to help out at the PiA office in just about every way imaginable. She is currently working down in Atlanta, GA and contemplating if it is feasible to import a few Singaporean hawker stalls to set up outside her office for lunch breaks.
PiA at Work

Melissa Tritter (Singapore '02) is living in Boston and trying her hand in the corporate sustainability field, much like Amy Lehn (Thailand '00), who is working on Business and Human Rights, all while trying to pronounce “park the car” in the local dialect.

Trying his best to pretend that exploring New York is as much fun as gallivanting around Asia, Shandon Quinn (Singapore '02) is working as Chief of Staff to PU alumnus Y.S. Chi ’83, the Vice Chairman at Elsevier Publishing, and rooming with Alexis Burakoff (Laos ’04), who somehow managed to bring back her dog from Laos.

Reentering the world of finance, Nicola Fritz (China ’87) is now working with Lim Advisors, an Asian-based multi-strategy investment group. Though still based in Connecticut, she appreciates the link to Asia and hopes to find time to meet with fellow PiA alumni in the area.

Marc Fogel (China ’98) is still working in consulting for a software company in Shanghai and recently came back to the States for a quick visit with grandma. Despite her age, she still beat him in every card game known to man.

Putting her degree to good use, Nina Henning (Nepal, ’00) will be working with Acumen as a Summer Portfolio Associate with their Renewable Energy portfolio, which “jives nicely” with her business/environmental science studies.

Holly Hetherington (China ’02) is one of the many PiA alums in NYC these days, working for Oxford Analytica, a political risk consultancy, on East Asian issues. She likes to daydream of her days in Dalian and her “rosy memories” of that year.

In and Around the World of Education

Helping many students prepare for higher education, Edward Boland (China ’89) works now as Vice President of External Affairs at Prep for Prep, preparing his staff to assist others in their preparation.

Alex Wood and Meg Crouch (Vietnam ’02-’04) have given up access to the Mekong River to be by the Charles—both teaching humanities in the Boston public school system. They put over 9500 miles on their car camping and hiking across the States this past summer in a vain attempt to find a new overland route to Asia.

Unable to escape his two-year stint in Shanghai, Matt Kawecki (China ’04-’06) continues to work as acquisitions editor for the academic publisher Brill, developing Brill’s contemporary China studies publication.

Mike Old (Taiwan ’62) continues to defy his last name. Retired from working at Orange Coast College, he is still teaching part time and conducting online economics courses. He enjoyed seeing everyone at Reunions ’07 and hopes to meet up with folks again soon.

Reentering the world of higher education, Christi Gambill (China ’05) will be starting her M.A. in Religious Studies at University of California at Riverside. She promises to let us know when she reaches enlightenment.

Heading Back to Asia

David Galef (Japan ’81) is finally heading back to Japan after leaving Osaka over twenty years ago, this time to teach in Tokyo on a four month Fulbright fellowship. He hopes to use the time either for academics or to become a world famous sumo wrestler.

The PiA community in Boston now has Judy Chen (China ’02) to add to its steadily growing numbers. She has relocated to Cambridge from DC and is working with the Clinton Foundation HIV/AIDS initiative. Her work travels will take her to China, India, and Ethiopia.

Julian & Jessica Marshall (Singapore ‘98) relived some of their PiA memories traveling overland from Hanoi to Paris this past fall after researching air pollution in Jakarta and public health in Indonesia.

Media Moguls

Former PiA Program Director Mira Manickam (Thailand ’01-’03) is finishing up graduate school in New Haven and working on several projects including a memoir about Southern Thailand and a documentary film.

Adam Aston (Indonesia ’90) covers energy and environment for Business Week Magazine and encourages PiA to “keep on keepin’ on.” We will do our best to do just that.

The PiA office is always looking to reconnect with our growing body of alumni. Email us at pialum@princeton.edu for information about upcoming events, alumni in your area, and ways to help out. We love to hear those stories about how you shared a motorcycle ride with a goat while eating noodles!
Covering the food and drug safety beat for Bloomberg in Beijing, **Dune Lawrence** (China ’98) is enjoying China these days, especially with the birth of her new son, Lawrence Cyrus Donohue, affectionately called “Cy.”

**Jenny Macaulay** (Nepal ’02) is ecstatic that PiA is returning to her old stomping grounds of Kathmandu. She is currently living in Virginia with her husband (who she met on a blind date while in Nepal!) and is halfway through her MBA from the College of William and Mary.

**Bina Venkataraman** (Vietnam ’05) enjoyed the last holiday season in suburban Ohio and was pleased to report that she was awarded the James Reston Reporting Fellowship for this coming summer with the New York Times.

Having completed a memoir of his time in China that was excerpted in the most recent edition of Traveler’s Tales, **Tony Brasunas** (China ’96) decided to take a vacation to Mexico, where he gorged on gorgeous guacamole in Guadalajara, tasted tequila in Tequila, and perused posole in Puerto Vallarta.

**Expanding PiA Families**

Love is in the (polluted Beijing) air for **Eric Peng** (China ’94) and **Lucy Hornby** (China ’95), who recently got engaged. Double congratulations to Eric for being selected as the first non-Chinese national to be hired by Beijing University in the Astrophysics Department.

Also preparing to put on the shackles of holy matrimony are **Sue Fou** (China ’94) and **Nick Anderson** who are both in Princeton and graciously stop by our office on occasion to entertain us. Yay for them!

Is it something in the water? Congratulations to **Cady Carlson** (Vietnam ’04), yet another PiA alum who is getting married, to James Michelich this August in Nebraska, a long way from their current home in Thailand.

**Michael Richardson** (Korea ’04) wins the prize, though, for getting married in Korea this past January on his way to Japan. Talk about a layover! A hearty congratulations from everyone in the office.

Mazel tov to **Blake Locklin** (Macau ’88) and husband Jon Kay on the birth of their son Robert Daniel Lockay this past June. I’m sure he looks forward to growing up and visiting his mom’s old stomping grounds in the S.A.R.

Congratulations to **Sara Keckler Rutledge** (Singapore ’94) and her husband Jeremy on the birth of their son Ian last year in June. The little guy is already crawling around at light speed and getting into everything.

Finally, congratulations to PiA Trustee Robert Knapp and his wife Kris who welcomed Calvin Harris Collins-Knapp (PiA class of 2030) on September 16th, 2007.

> **“I began my travels in Asia in 1978 with a PiA program in Osaka and following graduation took a PiA post at Gadjha Mada University in Central Java, Indonesia. I think of those experiences every single day and they have been essential to my thinking.”**

–Ted C. Fishman ’80

Author of the critically acclaimed “China, Inc.: How the Rise of the Next Superpower Challenges America and the World”

**The Lawyers**

Through some sort of clerical error [editor’s note: his words, not ours!], **Will Boothby** (Thailand ’06) has found himself at Harvard Law School in Cambridge, which he describes as having really mediocre ersatz American-Thai cuisine. He also reports that **Ed Wu** (Thailand ’04-’06) is still with AIG and just completed a microfinance feasibility study in Sichuan Province.

University of Michigan Law School has stolen **Will Leahy** (China ’04) away from working in the China policy division at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, but he plans to travel back to Asia before, during, and after law school.

Trying her hand at law, **Vanessa Wu** (China ’06) has moved to the Bay Area and is a first year law student at UC Hastings. This summer she will be working at the San Francisco Civil Division Government Office and continuing to explore San Francisco’s massive Chinatown in search of the perfect baozi.

**Lily Samet** (Hong Kong ’06) is spending her days as a workaholic first year law student at George Washington University. She did manage to squeeze in a quick trip to Beijing during her winter break and is currently “missing Asia like woah.”

PiA Alumni gather in March to reminisce about Asia at the home of Steve Persky (China ’80) in Los Angeles.
Congratulations to the over 150 new PiA fellows and interns heading out to 18 countries all over Asia! We look forward to hearing about their discoveries in food, travel, language, and the inevitable cultural faux pas. Safe travels to all...

Phil Witte (Thailand ’79) works as an attorney by day and moonlights as a political cartoonist.