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From the Editor

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The sky was flawlessly blue this morning, the view from the steps of Miller Library to the east reaching halfway to Belfast. With first classes still a day off, the campus was quiet, with a few early-risers crossing the academic quad. I stood for a minute taking in the morning, then went to write about another morning, half a world away but with a direct line to Mayflower Hill.

This one takes place in northern Thailand, near the Burmese border. The view is of cloud-shrouded mountains; the village is called Huay Pu Keng. For the past few months it was home to Colby students who have been working to bring attention to the plight of its other residents.

Rocio Orantes '07 and Mike Deheeger '07J wrote from Thailand this summer to tell *Colby* about their work documenting the lives of Karenni and other refugees who have been driven from their homes in Burma by ethnic conflict there. The refugees include Saw Sunshine Timothy '05, who first alerted his Colby friends to the situation in his homeland when they all lived together in the Mary Low Co-op.

Mary Low is a long way from Thailand but, in another sense, it isn't far at all.

Not to be too wide-eyed but it's gratifying to know there's no place in the world that is out of range. From a hilltop in central Maine, students and alumni dispatch themselves across the state, the country, around the world.

In the past few weeks, I've said goodbye to students, one bound for Peru to do development work, another traveling to Copenhagen to train to become a war correspondent. I've read a compelling interview with a recent alumna who is devoted to helping disadvantaged teenage girls here in Waterville.

These Colbians are undaunted and are determined to leave things better than they found them.

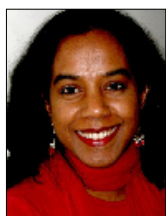
Case in point: Timothy told his friends at Colby about the situation in his homeland, where refugees have been fleeing the strife in Burma for more than a decade. Deheeger, from Winnetka, Ill., and Jayadev Vadakkanmarveetil '07J, from Kerala, India, won Freeman Foundation travel grants to intern with the Karenni government in exile last year. Landing in Thailand, they found their hosts for the internship had gone into Burma on a rescue mission. Not a problem.

Improvising, Vadakkanmarveetil set to teaching politics in a refugee camp. Deheeger taught English in Huay Pu Keng. He returned to Colby with a plan to return to the village to film a documentary about the exiles from Burma, and Orantes, who is from Guatemala, signed on. Awarded another Freeman grant (and partially funding the trip themselves), they filmed from May through July. They hope to alert the world to the plight of displaced people, including former child soldiers and ethnically unusual refugees exploited by local officials to attract tourists. Their report and photos are online at www.colby.edu/mag/thai

Their project, meanwhile, is just one of a steady stream of ambitious initiatives conceived here on the hill and executed in worlds that are both far away and not so far at all. Reports like theirs make the view from the hill, even on the cloudiest days, far-reaching indeed.

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