

Mr. Puang Has Busy Weekend Here, Wins Warm Place In Local Affections

By VALERIE NICHOLSON
(See pictures on page 1)

Southern Pines came under the spell of Old Asia last weekend, in the person of a charming, friendly and soft-spoken little brown man.

And, making friends with Governor Puang Suwanarath—"Mr. Puang"—of the province of Songkhla, Thailand, it was revealed that the Far East and this country have much in common.

He was the first person many here had known from the land once called Siam. They found he came from a modern country; that this one holds few surprises for him; that Thailand has its diesel trains, passenger airlines, modern schools and stores, and most of the conveniences which are sometimes thought of as purely American.

"Very Like Yours" However, in saying that what was there is "very like yours" he frequently added, "but not so big." Schools, health services and many other phases of living, especially in the rural areas, need much improvement. And that was one thing he was here for—to see all there was to see in this country, to learn how things are done here and to carry back knowledge which would help his people.

Visiting Southern Pines as a friend of a local young man, Lewis R. Pate, who is teaching in Songkhla province under the teacher exchange program, he was "adopted" by friends and relatives of Lewis' and shown practically everything there was to see here.

He came to Raleigh by Eastern Airlines Friday afternoon, to be met by Mayor C. N. Page, Mrs. Fred Woodruff (Lewis' sister) and Valerie Nicholson of The Pilot.

On arrival here he became a guest in the Page home until his departure by Piedmont Airlines Monday afternoon.

At the Pages' he found a typical holiday family group—Barbara and Chan Jr., home from college for Christmas, and David, a high school student. The first evening there "we sat up till 1 o'clock he was so interesting, and we had so many questions to ask," said Mrs. Page, calling him a "model guest." Neighbors and friends dropped in throughout the evening.

Visited Downtown Saturday morning Mr. and Mrs. Woodruff and Mrs. Nicholson took him downtown, dropping into various stores and introducing him around. Wherever he went, passersby smiled and spoke to him. In the Citizens Bank and Trust company Miss Emile Mae Wilson came up. "I was Lewis' first grade teacher and taught him in high school too," she told him, immediately establishing a bond.

Mayor Page took the group to the Coffee Shop for lunch, and afterward the plan was for the Governor to be driven to Fort Bragg. However, he said he preferred to stay in Southern Pines and get acquainted with the Woodruff household, which includes four young people. The Woodruffs also took him on a tour of the town.

Saturday night, a festive dinner was held at the Hollywood hotel, given by the town board and including town and school officials and members of the Pate and Woodruff families. There was no program other than an informal welcome from the Mayor, to which Mr. Puang made a gracious and appreciative response.

Appointed By King His English, slightly hesitant, his unassuming manner and soft voice gave him the appearance of a shy youth rather than the ruling official in a province of 360,000 people. A graduate of Bangkok university and a lawyer, he has been in government service for 20 years. He was appointed governor by the King, approved by the Premier and House, for lifetime service, in whatever provinces he should be assigned

to. He has governed four or five, and came to Songkhla in September.

After the dinner, he went for a visit to the home of Lewis' brother, James, and Mrs. Pate. There he met young Jimmy and Linda, who promptly annexed him as another beloved uncle, with whom they felt quite at home.

Sunday, Mr. Puang, a Buddhist, with the Woodruffs attended the morning service at the First Baptist church, where he found many welcoming hands extended.

Admires Hospitals Sunday afternoon Lewis' folks took him on a tour of the Sandhills, with Mrs. Nicholson along. He visited both St. Joseph of the Pines and Moore County hospital, expressing great admiration for both; also the Pinehurst Country club, and other beauty spots of the golfing resort. There are several courses in Thailand, he said, but the only one to compare with those of the Sandhills is the one "at the King's Palace."

Coming home, they stopped at the Southland for him to meet a former resident of Thailand—Mrs. Ellsworth Tompkins of Hyattsville, Md., who had been there with her husband on an official tour of duty. Mrs. Bernice Harrington, the hotel owner, served coffee and cakes in the lobby, and much enjoyment was found as Mrs. Tompkins and Mr. Puang spoke together of mutual friends, and the land they both loved.

Sunday night, the Governor was guest of honor at a supper party at the home of Mrs. James Boyd. Other guests were Brig. Gen. and Mrs. W. M. Gross, Mr. and Mrs. Jere McKeithen, Mr. and Mrs. Amos C. Dawson and Mrs. Nicholson. The group sat long before the fireplace in general conversation, interested in the comparisons of one land with another and glimpses of life in a Far Eastern land.

Visits Schools Monday, the Governor visited both the Southern Pines and West Southern Pines schools, going into many classrooms, pausing here and there for a smiling word with a boy or girl, and appearing interested in everything he saw. Supt. A. C. Dawson conducted the tour at both schools and in West Southern Pines Principal J. W. Moore served as guide.

In almost every classroom the children's faces sparkled with interest, and their hands waved for question after question, concerning the climate, population, customs, mode of travel and other things about Thailand.

His country's name was changed by law some years ago, Mr. Puang told them, because "Siam has no meaning in our language, but Thailand means the 'land of the free.'" "The people have always been known as 'Thai'—'free'—and they hope and plan to remain so always, he averred.

In the afternoon he paid a visit to USAFAGOS at Highland Pines Inn, where he was shown around by General Gross and sat in on a class with this week's newly-arrived officer group.

Mayor Page put him aboard his plane at 4:21 for his next stop—Knoxville, Tenn.

Urged To Return Goodbyes all around were said. "Come back some day!" Mr. Puang's new friends urged him. "Bring your wife and the children—all five!" "I hope to," said the smiling little brown man, giving warm farewell handclaps, "and you must come to see us."

He told them, "I have seen much of your country in the past three months—California, Buffalo, Boston, Chicago, Phoenix, Miami. I like the Sandhills best of all. It is so beautiful—not too crowded, all so pleasant, so green. You have everything here—fine schools, fine hospitals, sports. I will never forget my visit to you."

As he went he carried—along with many messages for Lewis—

Phone Offices Start Move To New Location

The Central Carolina Telephone company will start this weekend moving its business offices to their new location at 232 South West Broad street, the building formerly occupied by John C. Parrish, plumbing contractor.

Beginning Monday, the Central Carolina's "front office"—for payment of bills, application for installations, etc.—will be open to the public in the new building. For the past two years this office has been in the WEBB building on North East Broad street.

As remodeling in the back part of the building is completed the other offices will be moved there—those of President John E. Cline, General Manager George M. Thompson, Commercial Manager E. C. Small and Auditor Bob Strouse, with their secretarial staff.

The move will concentrate in one place offices which are now in the WEBB building and the main Central Carolina building on East New Hampshire avenue. After the move is completed, expansion of equipment in the main building will go forward. Considerable new equipment to take care of the increasing load in the area is to be installed.

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