Clarion Review

Biography

A Broad Abroad in Thailand: An Expat's Misadventures in the Land of Smiles
Dodie Cross
Ernie Towler, illustrator
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Four Stars (out of Five)

In 1990 author Dodie Cross put her life into storage and moved to Thailand with her new husband. Dick had been offered a construction job in the town of Pattaya and Cross experienced at living abroad was excited for the opportunity. In this entertaining memoir her first book Cross introduces readers to the country with its friendly citizens crazy drivers and *mai pen rai* (“don’t worry about it”) attitude. Meddling bosses a sexaholic husband a car accident and botched bladder surgery put a damper on her adventure but Cross still comes to know and respect Thailand and its people.

In Bangkok the couple’s first stop our brave heroine braves the 100-degree heat and rides in a *tuk-tuk* (picture a motorcycle with a back seat) haggles with street vendors for items including custom-made boots uses the Eastern toilet (picture a hole in the floor) and watches a movie in Thai language while rats and roaches roam the floor at her feet.

Once they arrive in their newly built home in Pattaya life improves. Pon the couple’s live-in maid becomes a faithful friend. Things begin well for Dick at the job site and Cross makes friends among the wives of the company men. Soon however she learns that life with the company is not carefree. The boss’s controlling wife organizes the ladies’ schedules including shopping trips social gatherings and compulsory meetings. Cross is admonished when she begins socializing with another local group of expatriate ladies and is blacklisted when “Mrs. A” discovers that she has been writing the club’s newsletter. As things deteriorate at home because of Dick’s insatiable appetite in the bedroom Cross finds out that there is trouble at the job site as well. She realizes that her son who also works in construction in the States will not be offered a job with the company—a “carrot” that had been dangled in front of the couple to get them to

Thailand months before. Less than a year after the couple arrives Dick is fired and the two find a home elsewhere while they work out a lawsuit and avoid tax complications that would result from cutting short their stay in Thailand. Cross maintains a positive attitude—and plays a lot of golf—even as she ponders what to do about her marriage:

> *I loved the country its people and the friends I'd made. I had no doubt that without Dick I would have stayed longer but now that was not an option.*

Minor punctuation errors and a sometimes distracting number of metaphors are small flaws in an otherwise engaging memoir. With a few exceptions Cross's anecdotes are entertaining and well-organized. Only occasionally do stories stray from the chapter's theme or fade off without proper resolution as when the author attempts to learn bridge. Endearing black and white sketches at the beginning of each chapter complement the book's lighthearted tone and illustrate humorous points.

The author's conversational yet informative style developed during her career as a journalist invites readers into her life. They will blush laugh grumble and cheer along with her. At the story's end just as Cross believes she has developed the *mai pen rai* way of life readers may feel influenced as well.