



The Ban Chiang

Newsletter for the
Friends of Ban Chiang

UpDATE

Preserving a **UNESCO** World Heritage Site Issue #12 Winter/Spring 2003

Another Busy and Productive Year-- at the Ban Chiang Lab

by Joyce C. White

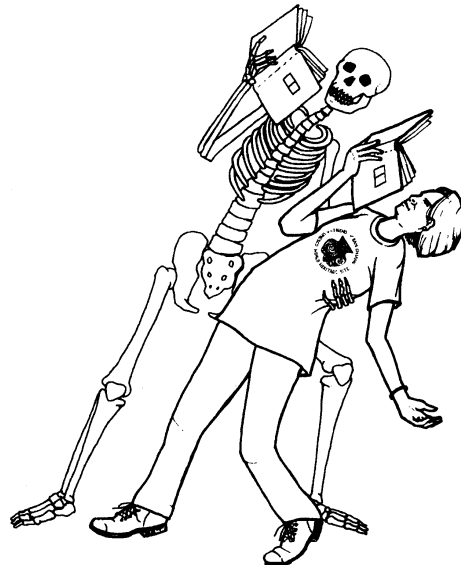
Where are we? It's a question every issue of the Ban Chiang *UpDATE* forces us to assess. The past year was a whirlwind of activity. We saw significant closures (yay!! The Ban Chiang Project's first monograph is in hand! And skeletal data posted on the website!); near closures on smaller projects (several papers presented at international meetings, four scholarly articles accepted for publication—see Lab Notes); a refocusing on the next big projects, namely the next two monographs; as well as initial steps toward future fieldwork in Laos.

Reception of the Skeleton Monograph

Mailed with this newsletter are two reviews by senior physical anthropologists of Michael Pietruszewsky and Kell Douglas's monograph *Ban Chiang, a Prehistoric Village Site in Northeast Thai-*

land I: The Human Skeletal Remains. Bin Yamaguchi of the National Science Museum in Tokyo, Japan in *Anthropological Science*, a Japanese journal, lauded the volume's comprehensive coverage and clear presentation. Clark Larsen in the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* states, "This is an important book" and used words such as "amazing" and "a must-read"

COME CELEBRATE!



The invitation to last March's book celebration: Joyce dancing with an "old chum."

that help our team feel that all our hard work was worthwhile.

On March 17th, 2002 we celebrated the publication of the skeleton book with a party in the Museum's Upper Egyptian gallery. (For more on this event, see Ardeth's article on page two.)

Endowment

The Ban Chiang Endowment Fund for the Museum's Southeast Asian archaeological research and publication now stands at \$47,900. FOBC contributions unless otherwise designated are currently added to our endowment. Please continue to help us build toward long term fiscal stability with contributions of any size!

World Travels

As you can see in Lab Notes (page seven), I and other Ban Chiang Gang members over the past eighteen months have attended conferences in Japan, Vietnam, Taiwan, and Sweden. Several publications are "in press" from these venues, and I am particularly excited about the multi-author summary of the Thailand Palaeoenvironment Project that will

continued on page two

F. O. B. C.

University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology
3260 South Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6324
www.upenn.edu/museum/Research/banchiang.html

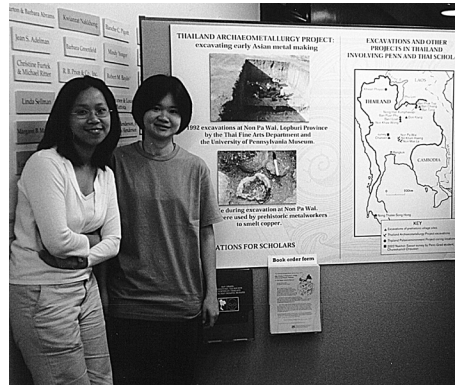
be published in Quaternary International. Bill Henderson's article on page four tells of his experience at the Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association (IPPA) meeting in Taipei this past September, where many of our Gang organized sessions and presented papers.

From Taipei, I traveled to Bangkok to review with Soi the progress of her dissertation research, for which she received a Wenner-Gren Fieldwork Grant. After that I made my second trip to Laos to discuss future collaboration with Lao Government officials on archaeological research in Luang Prabang province. During my first trip in December 2001 I conducted a rapid assessment survey in two Lao provinces, and the middle Mekong region around Luang Prabang showed evidence of 10,000 years of human occupation! Our hope is that settlements of societies preceding Ban Chiang can be identified in that region.

Thai Week and Good-byes

In June, the Royal Thai Embassy asked the Ban Chiang Project to contribute a display to "Thai Week" in Washington, D.C. Tens of thousands attended the weekend of Thai culture and cuisine, which was held on Freedom Plaza the second weekend in July. We submitted two large double-sided display panels that had information about UPenn Museum's collaborations with Thailand's Fine Arts Department on Ban Chiang, the Thailand Archaeometallurgy Project, the Thailand Palaeoenvironment Project, as well as the Southeast Asian Scholarly Website.

The display would never have been completed had it not been for the contribution of time and expertise of current and for-



Pui and Ri pose with one of the "Thai week" panels.



Panels on display under the tent on Freedom Plaza in D.C.

mer UPenn students, Saithiwa Ramasoot (Pui), Veera Leelapatnanaputi, Siriporn Phakdeephassook (Ri), Raween Wongsarochana (Ging), and Ardeth Abrams. Thank you all for your hard work! His Excellency, Mr. Sakthip Krairiksh (Ambassador of Thailand) also expressed "profound gratitude" to our "team" for the "beautiful and knowledgeable exhibits" on Thai archaeology and Ban Chiang for Thai Week.

In July we said goodbye to longtime volunteer John Hastings, who moved to California with his wife, Cricket. The article on page three pays tribute to the twenty-four remarkable years John, Ban Chiang Gang member extraordinaire, spent with us at the Museum.

Save the Date

On the evening of May 21st

2003, a photography show by Andrea Baldeck on modern day Southeast Asia will have a reception at the Museum's Curator's Party. I will give a talk entitled "Pioneer, Leader, and Achiever: Museum Research in Southeast Asia," which will also be the subject of plasma screen displays in the photo gallery. All FOBC will be invited to the event.

The Next Monographs

Not resting on our laurels, we have plunged forward into preparing the next two monographs: Ban Chiang Chronology and Stratigraphy and *The Archaeometallurgy of Northeast Thailand*. These are "works in progress," but we aim for volumes similar in quality and comprehensiveness to volume 1 on the Ban Chiang skeletons. We will keep you informed in the next *UpDate*. ❖

*Joyce C. White, Ph. D.
Director, Ban Chiang Project*

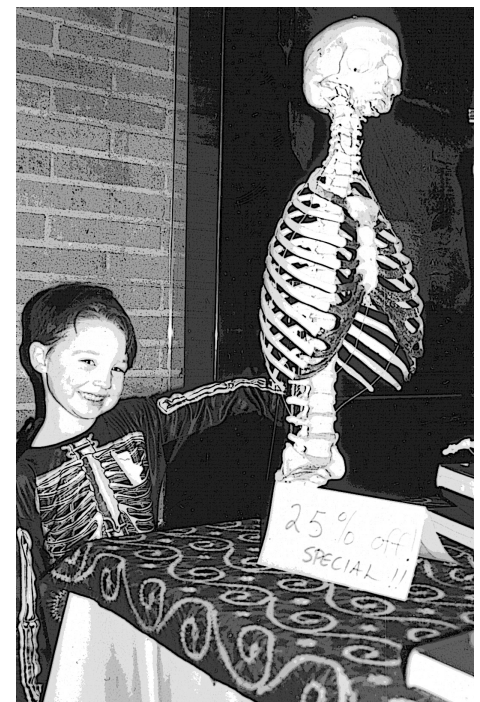


photo by Judy Voelker

Benjamin Abrams and friend at the "book party," March 2002.

A Celebration to Remember

by Ardeth Abrams

It was a rainy Sunday, March 17th, when the Friends of Ban Chiang gathered to celebrate the publication of the first volume in our monograph series: *Ban Chiang, a Prehistoric Village Site in Northeast Thailand I: The Human Skeletal Remains*. We were all treated to a late afternoon of festivities sponsored by **First Union Bank**, including remarks by Joyce, delicious and exotic Lao/Thai food, and a charming group of Lao performers who delighted us with their unusual music.

Over one hundred Friends of Ban Chiang, Thai community members, and museum employees attended the party in the upper Egyptian gallery from 4:30 until 6:30 pm. The Lao food was a first time experience for some, including myself. We savored the *laab* (minced beef with herbs), and *som tam esan* (green papaya salad), *khao neow* (sticky rice), as well as old favorites like *gai satay* (spicy chicken on a skewer) and *pad thai* (stir fried noodles with chopped peanuts and shrimp). There were also delicious buttered hors d'oeuvres and a wet

bar provided by the Museum Catering Company.

As at past Ban Chiang events, music was key to the well-rounded Southeast Asian experience. A group of Laotian musicians played traditional instruments and performed well past 6:30 pm (*see photo below*). Details such as the instruments played by the men and the shimmering silken attire worn by the women gave the audience a rare



Laotian performers performing traditional music in the Upper Egyptian gallery in March, 2002.

glimpse into this distant culture. By the end of the party, Joyce and some of the other partygoers joined the ladies in the group for some traditional Lao dancing!

After about 45 minutes of enjoying the music and food, our merrymaking paused momentarily for slides and remarks by Dr. Joyce White. Her presentation was lighthearted as well as informative, and the group listened as Joyce explained the significance of this milestone in our history and the contribution of the Ban Chiang skeleton book to archaeology and anthropology as a whole. She also took a few moments to describe her latest

archaeological survey in Laos. Lastly, Minister-Counselor Sompong Sanguanbun gave remarks on the Thai-American partnership with the goal of bringing this research into the public eye.

On display that afternoon were several exhibits from the Ban Chiang Lab and the Museum's Publications Department. Volunteer Bill Henderson compiled a computer slide show of the latest information on Ban Chiang research. A case displayed various Ban Chiang artifacts, and of course, the Friends of Ban Chiang had a table with FOBC information (*many donations to the Ban Chiang Project were made the afternoon of the party!*). Last but certainly not least, "the skeleton book," as we fondly call it, was on sale at the Publications table.

We at the Ban Chiang Project would like to thank everyone who helped make this delightful event possible. ❖

Ardeth P. Abrams
Illustrator, Ban Chiang Project

Special thanks to
Museum Catering Co.
and
Vientiane Café
see ad on page 8



photos by Judy Voelker

John Hastings: Volunteer Extraordinaire!

by Joyce C. White

This past July, we had to say good-bye to longtime volunteer and true friend, John Hastings. He and his wife, Cricket, would be moving later that month to California. The following is the speech I gave at his farewell party given by the Museum.

They don't get much more special than John. John has been a long time Museum member, but in 1978, John became a Museum volunteer with the Ban Chiang Project.

There are not many employees, never mind volunteers, who have become as much a part of the fabric of the Museum as John Hastings has over the past twenty-five years. During these years John has had intimate, often full time involvement with Ban Chiang as well as other Museum projects and later with Museum IT.

I cannot say how much John has helped the Ban Chiang Project over the years. Like a knight in shining armor, perhaps a quiet behind-the-scenes knight in shining armor, he has on more than one occasion saved the Project from oblivion. Where he has been most instrumental is in his efforts with the Ban Chiang computerized database. Imagine all this data in mainframe files, having been hand coded and key punched in 80-column format cards by a zillion volunteers and work study students in the late 1970s.

By the end of the 1980s the PC revolution was taking comput-

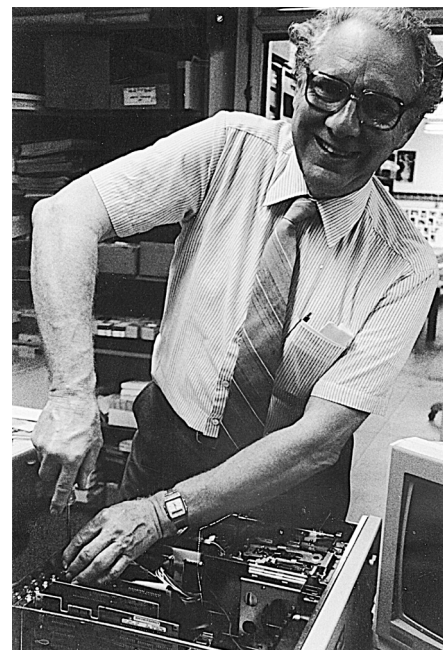
ing to the point where mainframe files might no longer be useable. NEH, National Endowment for the Humanities, had turned down a Ban Chiang grant proposal that included, among other things, converting this data, because their experts said conversion could not be done. *Well, what did they know?* John set about working with dozens of data files—miscellaneous stone, amorphous bronze, clay pellets—and file by file, field by field, converted the mainframe data to a desktop database called Paradox by writing Basic programs. Those rescued data are now in Microsoft Access files and we use them every day.

John's in depth involvement with Ban Chiang computer data laid the foundation for his larger involvement with Museum computing. Many will recall when John *was* the Museum IT department. Anyone remember Rainbow computers? John was instrumental in the first effort to outfit large numbers of Museum staff with computers. Whether it was ordering a computer with specifications perfect for each person, or designing ingeniously user-friendly databases for Membership or Education scheduling, John was exquisitely attuned to the individual's and the department's needs, and found great pleasure in satisfying those needs. *And this don't forget, this is as a volunteer!* Yep, they don't get much better or more selfless than John.

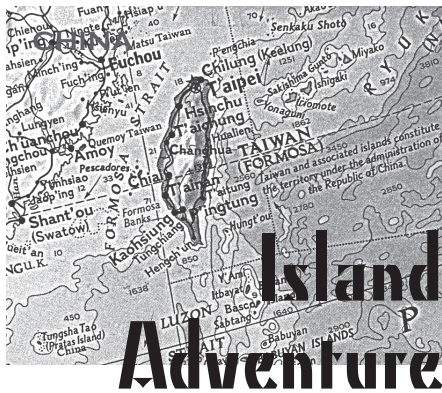
So with John's move to California, the Museum fabric is torn. He will not slip out invisibly and painlessly but will leave behind a painful sense of loss, mixed with a deep, deep appreciation for all he has done for the institu-

tion and many individuals here. While many of us will miss his calm presence when we feel we are facing our next computer meltdown, one of the things I in particular will miss is John's exquisitely clear thinking—about anything. From the best terminology to describe rim shapes, to the precise grammar and spin for a Friends of Ban Chiang pamphlet (he is a killer editor, by the way), John, with the clearest logic and most precise articulation, would help me think through any and every issue from the most picayune archaeological detail to overall strategy for dealing with scholarly nemeses.

Of course I could go on and on with examples of John's contributions over the past quarter century. There is no perfect way to sum this all up, but I can say for all of us, John, you *really* made a difference here. The Museum and certainly the Ban Chiang Project would not be what they are today without you. ❖



John Hastings, our very own computer guru.



by Bill Henderson

Most of the ten years that I have spent as a volunteer with the Ban Chiang Project have been occupied with the compilation of pottery rim data from the Sakon Nakhon Basin, the area of the Ban Chiang excavations in north-east Thailand. There have been several other excavations in that vicinity and data on pottery rims were recorded using a variety of methods by various excavators. These excavations all fall into the general time period of the first through third millennium BC. My task has been to construct a comparative database using the shape of the rim forms as a basis of commonality and comparison.

Using the Microsoft Access program, various data have been entered pertaining to the artifacts including scanned drawings of pottery rims and whole or reconstructed vessels, over 1600 images in all. Earlier this past year, Joyce suggested that I prepare a paper for presentation at the IPPA (**Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association**) conference held in **Taiwan** in September. Judy Voelker, who was going to chair a session on Thai ceramics at the conference, seconded her request, and I agreed.

Fortunately, this also provided an opportunity for a family gathering. My daughter-in-law, Sue, originally from Taipei, had a good excuse to accompany us along with my son and granddaughter to visit her parents for a couple of weeks. For my granddaughter this was a chance to become acquainted with her maternal grandparents and to meet two of her cousins.

An eighteen-hour flight and twelve hours of time change are about as much as anyone can absorb in one day. Thankfully, we were met at the airport by family members of my daughter-in-law. After a few hours of much appreciated rest at the hotel, we set out on the first of several informal city tours.

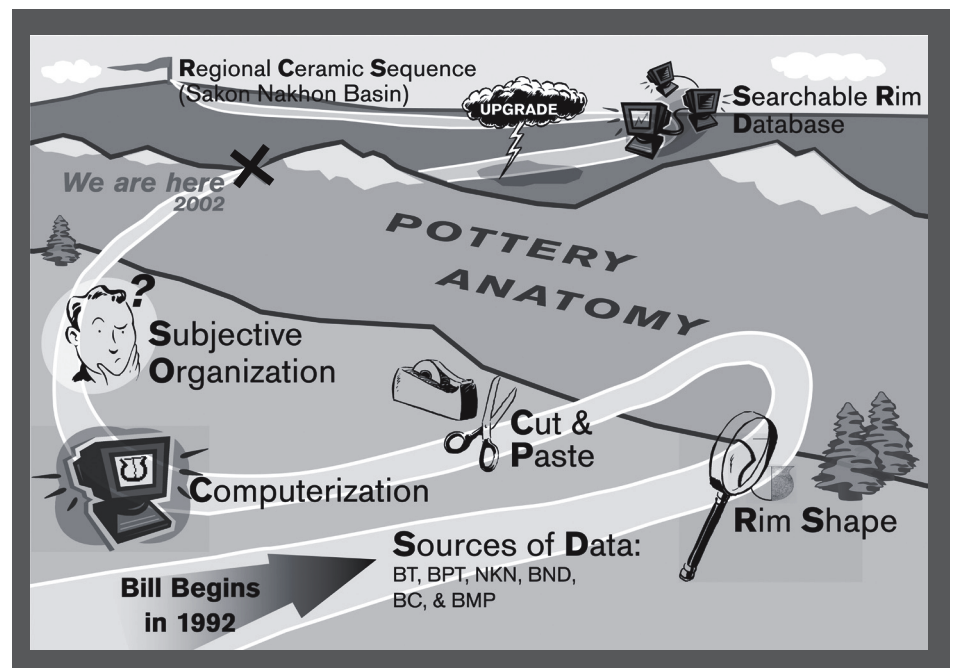
Prior to the conference we spent an evening with Sue's family and had dinner in a nearby mall, a highly unusual bit of architecture consisting of a twelve-story sphere within a sphere. Shops were on every circular

level and moving walkways on bridges led into the inner sphere. Inside the inner sphere were the really upscale shops and several restaurants; one was a fine steak house where we enjoyed dinner.

Taiwan is a prosperous and modern island. Taipei has a public transportation system second to none, subways, a monorail, buses and a limited access highway system that snakes throughout the city. Reasonably priced taxicabs are everywhere and tipping is not expected for any services.

There were 240 delegates to the conference, too many for them all to stay at the Academia Sinica, the conference venue. About half of them, including us, stayed at the Howard International hotel in Taipei, a half hour shuttle bus ride to the conference halls on the outskirts of the city. With over two hundred papers being presented, there were four concurrent sessions held during

continued on next page



"Pottery Anatomy - a journey," an artist's conception (by Ardeth Abrams) of volunteer Bill Henderson's long and often arduous task of organizing the pottery rim data since 1992.



Is it time for you to renew your support of the Ban Chiang Project? - every contribution is gratefully received!

-Levels of Giving:

- over \$1000 Bronze Caster
- \$500-999 Pottery Painter
- \$100-499 Iron Smith
- \$25-99 Stone Carver

-Send to:

Friends of Ban Chiang
University of Pennsylvania Museum
of Archaeology and Anthropology
3260 South Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104-6324



Become a Friend of Ban Chiang!

Enclosed is my contribution of \$___ payable to the:
TRUSTEES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

I would like to renew my contribution of \$___ to support the Ban Chiang Project.

I would like more information about the Ban Chiang Project.

I have changed my address. The following is my new address:

the weeklong event, covering many different aspects of Southeast Asian and Pacific island archaeology. The luck of the draw had my talk on the first Monday morning.

The presentation, being limited to twenty minutes, could only outline the problems encountered in constructing the database. It was presented in the context of a journey of several stages of progress. Aided in the oral preparation by the guidance of Joyce and accompanied by a slide show prepared by Ardeth, the talk was well received.

An expanded text is to be published in a future IPPA Bulletin (see Lab Notes). Later in the week there were demonstrations of the database, lively discussions, and some expected questioning of the usefulness of the whole project. But generally the idea of a logically constructed database of these artifacts was well received, especially by the younger generation of Asian archaeologists. The only surprise occurred when the data was loaded on a local laptop for a demonstration, and the computer's Access 2000 version was in Chinese, giving me quite a start when trying to decipher the drop down menus. Somehow I got through the demo.

Following the conference there was a three-day around the island tour, visits to archaeological sites, outdoor dinners (it's always a warm 82 degrees), and entertainment by aboriginal tribes. The dances, chants, and costumes of these Austronesian people sometimes had a distinct similarity to Native American ceremonies. We visited several modern and impressive museums usually without enough time

to really appreciate all there was to see.

One of the highlights was a tour of the Tokoro Gorge, a spectacular narrow canyon of white marble. This was followed by a visit to a marble factory, which gave me a clue as to why so many of Taiwan's hotels have floor to ceiling marble bathrooms.

Oh yes, every town has musical trash trucks! Because it is always so warm the citizens are alerted to put out trash for the approaching trash truck that sounds like the Good Humor Man coming. Trash then will not be left outside for too long and become smelly.

The Taiwan conference was a memorable cultural and scholarly experience for myself and several other Ban Chiang Gangers. Since returning, I have completed coding two easy categories of rims and am now developing the coding for more elaborate forms. Except perhaps for the experience of a mild earthquake that put the lights out during one of the talks, the Taiwan IPPA conference was smooth and enjoyable. Almost devoid of American and European tourists, Taiwan remains a destination seldom seen by the average traveler. ❖

*William Henderson
Volunteer, Ban Chiang Project*



Bill and Barbara standing in front of a museum in Taiwan.

CONFERENCE NEWS

❖ **Joyce** presented a paper summarizing the Thailand Palaeoenvironment Project at the third joint conference of the Asian Lake Drilling Program and European Lake Drilling Program in **Kyoto, Japan, November 2001**. Hers was the first and so far only report on research in mainland Southeast Asia presented at this conference series.

❖ **Chris King** presented a poster on the Southeast Asian Archaeology Scholarly Website (funded by the Henry Luce Foundation) at the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists at Sigtuna, **Sweden, June 2002**.

❖ **Joyce** attended the conference “One Century of Vietnam Archaeology” in **Hanoi December 2001**.

❖ **IPPA (Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association) Conference in Taipei, Taiwan had much representation from the Ban Chiang Gang:**

♦ The session “Cultural and biological adaptations during the ‘missing millennia’” was organized by **Joyce** and Michael Dega. In that session, Joyce gave the paper: “Human habitation of mainland Southeast Asia 5000-2000 B.C.: A review of the issues,” including a summary of the existing archaeological, palaeoenvironmental, and osteological data from that period.

♦ The session “Terra incognita? The maturing of archaeology in Thailand” was organized by **Chris King** and **Chureekamol (Soi) Onsuwan**. In that session, **Chris** gave the paper: “Paleodietary change in northeast Thailand: A stable isotopic pilot study.” **Soi** gave the paper: “Metal Age complexity in Thailand: Socio-political development and landscape use in the Upper Chao Phraya Basin” on her recently completed fieldwork for her dissertation at UPenn. **Joyce**

along with Daniel Penny, Bernard Maloney, and Lisa Kealhofer gave the paper: “Vegetation changes from the Terminal Pleistocene through the Holocene from three areas of archaeological significance in Thailand” summarizing results from the Thailand Palaeoenvironment Project. **Vince Pigott** and **Karen Mudar** gave the paper: “Subsistence changes and community-based copper production in prehistoric central Thailand” from their work on the Thailand Archaeometallurgy Project.

♦ The session “Thai ceramic studies—current research” was organized by **Judy Voelker** and Sawang Lertrit. In that session, **Bill Henderson** gave the paper: “Creating a typology of Sakon Nakhon Basin rim sherds—problems and potentials of the new technology” on his 10 year odyssey sorting out Ban Chiang rim forms.

PUBLICATIONS IN PRESS

❖ “Pottery anatomy: Review of basic nomenclature as a step toward a searchable rim form database for the Sakon Nakhon Basin,” by Joyce and Bill Henderson will appear in the next issue of the *Bulletin of the Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association*.

❖ “Vegetation changes from the Late Pleistocene through the Holocene from three areas of archaeological significance in Thailand,” by Joyce with Daniel Penny, Lisa Kealhofer, and Bernard Maloney will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Quaternary International*.

❖ “Paleodietary change among prestate metal age societies in northeast Thailand: A pilot study using bone stable isotope,” by Chris King and Lynette Norr will appear in *Bioarchaeology of the Prehistoric South East Asia-Pacific Region*, edited by Marc F. Oxenham and Nancy Tayles. Cambridge University Press. (*Chris used Ban Chiang as the pilot study.*)

❖ A paper on Hoabinhian stone tools

coauthored by **Joyce** will be published in an edited volume on Southeast Asian archaeology.

VISITORS TO THE BAN CHIANG LAB

❖ **Vince Pigott** visited the Lab in the fall to discuss the status of “The Metals Volume.”

❖ **Chris King** visited us for a couple of weeks in the summer 2002 to upgrade the bibliographic database and prepare the poster presentation on the Southeast Asian Archaeology Scholarly Website <<http://seasia.museum.upenn.edu>> for the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists at Sigtuna, Sweden.

❖ **Paritta Chalernpow Koanantakool**, Director of the Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre in Bangkok, visited the Ban Chiang Lab in September. Joyce was away, so **Chris Sherman** gave her an informative tour of the lab as well as the Museum.

GRANTS RECEIVED

❖ **Soi** received a prestigious **Wenner-Gren** grant for her PhD field work in Thailand this past year.

❖ **Vince** received a generous grant from the **National Science Foundation** for analysis of biological data from the Thailand Archaeometallurgy Project excavations in central Thailand.

OTHER NEWS

❖ We were deeply saddened to hear about the death of longtime Ban Chiang volunteer, **Sally Ann Yeager**, July 22, 2002. Our thoughts are with Sal’s family during this time of loss.

❖ **Joyce** was interviewed in spring 2002 by Martin Redfern of the **BBC World Service**. In the piece entitled, “Discovery: First Technology: Metals,” Joyce discussed the contribution of Ban Chiang to understanding global development of bronze smelting technology during prehistory.



GRAND OPENING!

The Vientiane Café

4728 Baltimore Ave.
Philadelphia, PA
215-726-1095



This Lao/Thai restaurant has been reviewed by the Philadelphia Inquirer Magazine as well as our own group of well traveled Ban Chiang Gangers. It is unbeatable for its authenticity and value.



FRIENDS of BAN CHIANG
3260 South Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104-6312

The Ban Chiang website:
upenn.edu/museum/Research/banchiang.html

The Scholarly Website:
<<http://seasia.museum.upenn.edu>>

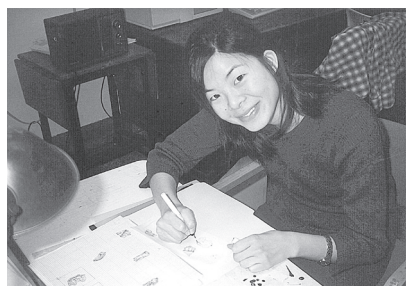
new faces in the Ban Chiang Lab



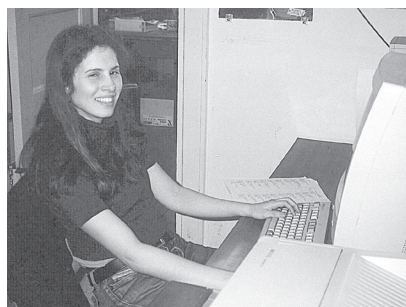
Bill Canning is a junior anthropology major with classical studies and English minors. For the course of this year, he has been moving the Ban Chiang pots collection in the cavernous sub-basement of the U Penn Museum to make way for sprinkler installation and has befriended a number of roaches and other subterranean dwelling creatures. After finishing his undergraduate degree, Bill plans on attending graduate school to study Historic Archaeology.



Daniel Agee is a freshman in the College who tentatively plans to major in biochemistry. Throughout the course of this year, Daniel has been moving pots in the Museum's sub-basement and meeting lots of Bill's roach friends. After finishing his undergraduate degree, Daniel plans to attend medical school.



Helen Chuang is originally from Atlanta, Georgia. She is currently a 2004 candidate for a MFA (Masters of Fine Arts) degree in painting at U Penn. Her work-study job is illustrating metals and clay pipes for future Ban Chiang monographs. She received the Susan Coslett Cromwell traveling scholarship and will be spending the summer in Western Australia painting landscapes and wildflowers. After graduation, she hopes to pursue a professional career in painting.



Dana Katz is originally from Tel Aviv, Israel. She served as a military analyst in the Military Intelligence of the Israeli Defense Forces for two years. She is an art history major and an Italian minor in the college. For the past year she has been the bibliographer for the Ban Chiang Project. Dana plans to continue her studies in Italian art history in graduate school.