

# Telling Our EOP Stories

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Educational Opportunity Program



## A Reunion Through Study Abroad

by Nu Vang

Thousands of miles separated Theory Nov from her home and family in California as she studied abroad in Thailand, and yet she was closer to her family than she expected. Theory is a junior at Fresno State, who is currently majoring in psychology. She studied abroad in Pathum Thani, Thailand at the Rangsit University in Spring 2010. She was a recipient of the Gilman Scholarship, which funds students studying abroad. Theory attended the university with four other Fresno State students, where she took classes in areas such as Thai civilization, language, and religion.

As a Cambodian, Theory said when she went abroad she did not know any Thai but wanted to learn more about the culture. "You're in a different country," Theory said. "How often do you get to be learning their own culture and being able to see it and witness it." However, Theory was very near her own culture because Cambodia, her parents' home country, is right next to Thailand.

Before leaving for Thailand, Theory's parents had given her a single picture of her older half brother Rethy. On the back of the picture, Theory's mother wrote down the name of the town where he supposedly lived which was in the province of Siem Reap. Theory explained, "our family lost contact with him three years before leaving Cambodia." During the study abroad in Thailand, Theory received the opportunity to go to Cambodia to search for Rethy.

They arrived in the town that Rethy was assumed to be in, and started to ask whether the locals recognized her brother. "Luckily, we stopped in front of my brother's brother-in-law's house." They were only three blocks away from Rethy's house. As they drove towards Rethy's house Theory was so nervous. Theory said, "It was weird because I had never seen him and he didn't expect me." Theory was extremely happy to finally meet Rethy. She said it felt as if they had known each other for years. Before she came back home, Theory was able to meet with Rethy and his family one last time. Being able to reunite with her brother through the Study Abroad program is an experience that Theory will not forget.

Now back in the United States, Theory said she hopes to travel abroad again and encourages other students to study abroad. She stated, "It was the most memorable experience that I will take very far with me. "It's just different out there and any travel opportunity you have you should go for it."

Educational Opportunity Program (EOP)

California State University, Fresno

5150 N. Maple Ave

Fresno, CA 93740

Call: 278.1787 or Visit: [www.csufresno.edu/eop](http://www.csufresno.edu/eop)