

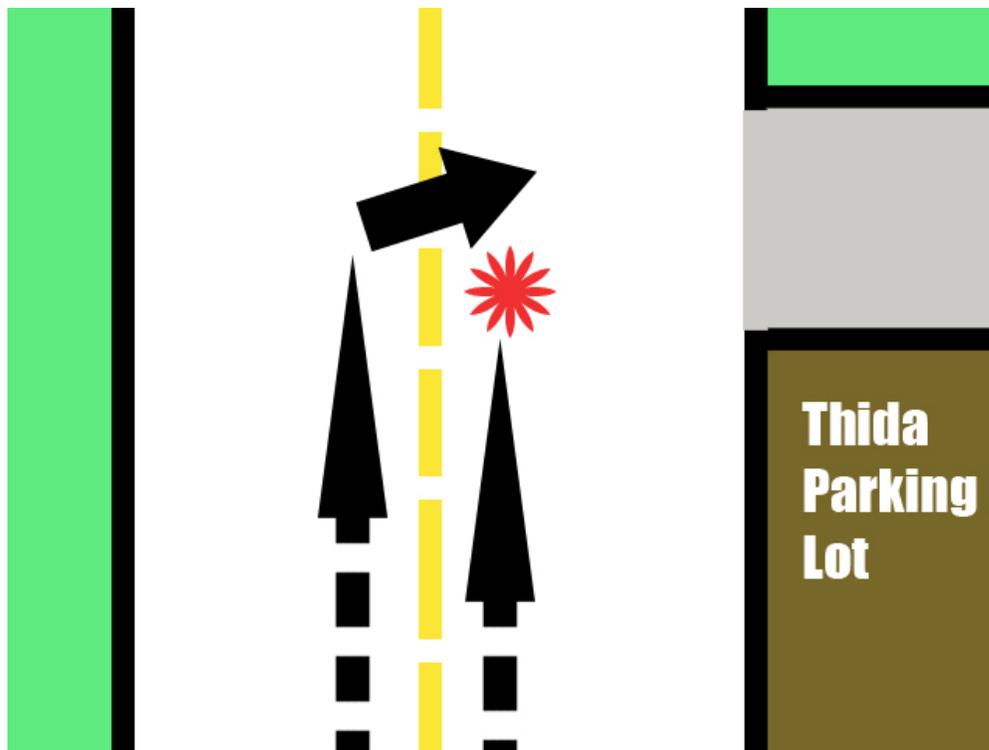
My First Motorbike Accident

There have been small things: the time I let my foot swing freely as I turned into a parking lot and I kicked a metal divider with all the force and speed of low second gear. There was blood. I stepped on a woman's foot while maneuvering through dense traffic. Probably she didn't bleed. My first real motorbike accident, a collision, resulted in a good deal of blood loss for the other party and a stinging hospital bill I had to pay simply because I'm a foreigner. Here's how it happened.

I first noticed the old man following me at a typical distance as I was passing in front of Old Thida's gate. To enter the parking lot, which I intended to do, I had to turn left at a road which runs north from the gate all the way to the river. I did so and kept my turn signal on, with the intention of showing that I was slowing to pull into the gravel lot. I had forgotten already about the man following me, and had no idea that he had turned north with me.

I twisted the handlebars to ease into the right turn, when I hear a motorbike horn way too close. Instantly I turned my head but it was too late; I saw the old man going over as his bike T-boned mine at a measly 15km/hr. That low speed was enough! His bike landed on top of him and as I kicked down my kickstand, horrified, I could see that he was bleeding in several places.

He had tried to pass me on the right as I was making a right-hand turn. We were alone on the road, and the decision to pass me on the left would have saved us both the forthcoming trouble.



Without removing my helmet I pulled his bike off of him and stood it up with one hand, while with my other hand I help him lift himself off the ground. He was furious, in shock, and speaking in rapid bursts of angry Thai. His old skin was removed around his joints, and an especially visible flap the size of a sand dollar was lapping over itself on his forearm.

He looked me in the eye and pulled that flap of skin off and without breaking eye contact, flicked the pulp onto the ground.

At that point, I don't know who was more shocked. The idea of taking him to the school nurse popped into my mind and gesturing, I motioned for him to follow me into the school. We parked our bikes in the parking lot and began to walk in. He was trailing blood drops and one of his sandals had filled up with it. The receptionist, Kai, her face turned white when she saw me and this blood-spattered old man standing in the doorway.

The nurse came and cleaned his wounds a little, but it was decided we'd make the trip to the hospital. One teacher nearby had opined that someone ought to call the police, but luckily an onlooker, a student, quieted that opinion and said a little louder that someone should call Pla, the teacher in charge of foreigner relations, to come translate my explanation to Thai so that someone could hear my side of the story. Pla came and we rode together to Thaksin Hospital to meet another teacher who had driven the old man there in her truck. I had agreed to pay the man's hospital bill in lieu of calling the cops.

Pla told me various stories and kept me talking and cheered me up while we waited for the old man to come out in wraps. She told me that if the police had become involved, the price of the fiasco would have skyrocketed because they take opportunities like these to wring money out of foreigners. Finally the old guy came out and said "*mai pen rai*", which means "it's all good". He was himself again, happy as he could manage, and calm. He told Pla that any other person would have left him to bleed out on the street and that he was thankful and impressed that I had owned my part in the accident. He said of lot of other things, too, that Pla didn't translate. He admitted that he didn't know a person could enter the lot at that place.

Take a look at that diagram above. My turn signal was on and I was making a legal turn at a safe speed. This accident, by all standards save those of southeast Asia, was not my fault. The rules that *farang* must keep in mind when driving are those of the antique store (as we are guests in the homeland of another) rather than those of the road: "Do Not Touch" and "If you break it, you buy it." It's as simple as that. A foreign driver in Thailand will always be in the wrong regardless of what evidence there may be to the contrary.

The best course of action for a foreigner involved in an accident is to pay remuneration on the spot or else, if the situation is grim, call on your phone for help. If the police become involved, a foreigner will pay through the nose in inflated fines and compensation. My hospital bill below came to about 1,700 baht but I know now that had the police come in, the hit would have been much heavier. My choices were "lose money" or "lose a lot of money", and I swallowed the impulse to argue and chose the former.



โรงพยาบาลทักษิณ Thaksin Hospital

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ใบเสร็จรับเงินผู้ป่วยนอก

หน้า 1/1

เลขที่ 1155143353
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ชื่อผู้ป่วย นายบุญโต แซ่เจ็ย

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การวินิจฉัยโรค

รายการ	ราคาเต็ม	ส่วนลด	สุทธิ
1.1.1 (3) ยาผู้ป่วยนอก	989.50	0.50	989.00
1.1.2 (1) เวชภัณฑ์ 1	330.00		330.00
1.1.12 ค่าบริการพยาบาลของผู้ประกอบวิชาชีพการพยาบาลแ	75.00		75.00
1.1.14 (1) ค่าบริการชุดหม่าซาย	85.00		85.00
1.2.1 (1) ตรวจรักษากรณีผู้ป่วยนอก	200.00		200.00
รวมเงิน (ตัวอักษร)		รวมยอดทั้งหมด	1,679.50
เงินสด (หนึ่งพันหกร้อยเจ็ดสิบเก้าบาทถ้วน)		รวมส่วนลด	0.50
		รวมสุทธิ	1,679.00

(ลงชื่อ)

เจ้าหน้าที่การเงิน

เอกสารฉบับนี้จะสมบูรณ์ต่อเมื่อมีลายเซ็นของผู้รับเงิน และหากเป็นการชำระเงินด้วยเช็ค ก็ต่อเมื่อโรงพยาบาลได้เรียกเก็บเงินตามเช็คครบถ้วนแล้ว
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