

EXPAT LIFE

IN THAILAND

February/March 2021

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Panamanian
Ambassadors
interviewed
inside
The Bowring
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Magnolias is a super-luxury residential brand that unites the finest architecture, locations, amenities, and design to offer Bangkok's ultimate quality of life.

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Scaling New Heights

Under this commitment to well-being, MQDC innovates to offer the most sumptuous lifestyles. Magnolias, for instance, not only scales the heights of style, comfort, and convenience. MQDC's luxury residences also contribute 3 of Thailand's 10 tallest buildings: Magnolias Ratchadamri Boulevard, The Residences at Mandarin Oriental Bangkok, and – the country's highest building of all at 318 metres – Magnolias Waterfront Residences at ICONSIAM. The architectural magnificence of the Magnolias portfolio is matched by an award-winning focus on detail, achieved through a pioneering application of technologies such as building information modeling (BIM).

MQDC sets new standards in sustainable well-being through an approach it calls "sustainnovation". The company's research hub, Research & Innovation for Sustainability Center (RISC), curates resources for the whole sector including the country's largest eco-materials library.

"Magnolias is a hallmark of excellence for expats who want to experience the very best of what Bangkok can offer," says Ms. Natenapis Sookbang, President of The Estate, MQDC's rental and resale specialist.

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Explore the Magnolias Portfolio

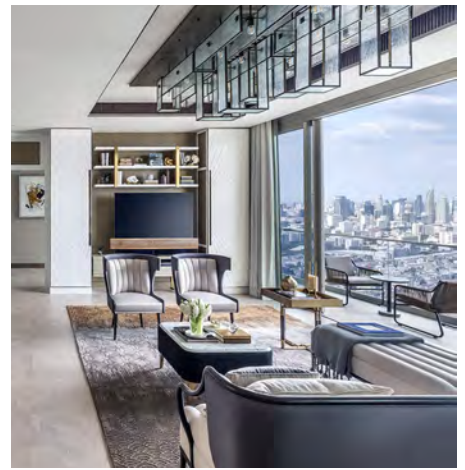
The Magnolias portfolio offers discerning expats a selection of distinguished lifestyles, each combining an exclusive location with outstanding architecture, design, and amenities.

The Residences at Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok

In a special collaboration between MQDC and the Mandarin Oriental, The Residences at Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok unites a stupendous riverside location with the immaculate services of Thailand's first luxury hotel.

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Magnolias Waterfront Residences at ICONSIAM

At ICONSIAM, with its glittering malls and stunning entertainment and cultural amenities, Magnolias Waterfront Residences offers a premium riverside lifestyle with inspired design to enhance each moment.

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Expat Life in Thailand is a CSR community project created by an ever growing group of expatriates resident in Thailand. They are all unpaid volunteers and are doing what they do for passion and because they love Thailand! Most have chosen to live their lives here or are extremely happy to be posted here by their company's and or government. They all have a desire to 'engage and connect' both with each other and with our Thai hosts. We hope that this comes through in this magazine.

If you wish to 'engage and connect' with us – to write for us, subscribe to and or advertise in the magazine, to be a friend and show your love for Thailand then please write to nick@elbkk.com



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H.E. MR. JYRI JÄRVIAHO THE AMBASSADOR OF FINLAND TO THAILAND

by Kathleen Pokrud

Expat Life felt honoured to sit down with H.E. Mr. Jyri Järviaho the Ambassador of Finland to Thailand and Cambodia find out more about his roots, his mission and his objectives whilst in post in SE Asia.



How long have you been the Ambassador to Thailand?

Since 1st of September 2020 as Ambassador-Designate and since December 6th as Ambassador to Thailand and Cambodia.

Did you arrive to Thailand from home, or were you posted somewhere else before?

I arrived to Thailand from Helsinki, where I worked for the last five years at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs as a Director in Human Resources. I have also served in Finnish Embassies in Belgrade in Serbia and Riga in Latvia and in the Finnish Permanent Mission in Geneva in Switzerland.

Where were you born and brought up?

I was born and brought up in a small village called Vimpeli in Western Finland. I later studied in Eastern Finland, University of Joensuu and lived and worked in Helsinki.

At which age did you decide you wanted to become a diplomat?

I have been interested in global affairs since I was a little boy. Being a diplomat was never in my thoughts until I joined a study abroad programme as part of my studies at the University of Joensuu. I studied political science at Newcastle in the UK and later international relations in Denver, Colorado in the USA.

These issues fascinated me and guided





me to a training programme at the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Do you have other diplomats in your family?

No, there are no diplomats in my family. My parents were officials at the local government and in a local bank.

How do you view Thailand today? Have you encountered any obstacles since you arrived?

Thailand is a wonderful country with a colourful culture and people. We have received a very warm welcome to Thailand. Of course I still have so much to learn about the country, its culture and its people.

I arrived to Thailand with my wife after a two week state quarantine at a ASQ hotel. Obviously the Covid-19 pandemic is causing travel restrictions and many connections with family and friends can only be done virtually for the moment. Hopefully, next year we could have a possibility to welcome our family and friends physically to Thailand.

Coming from the Northern hemisphere where the average temperature is 5C, of course the climate and especially the heat in Thailand is something that I need to adjust and get used to.

Do you see any similarities between your country and Thailand?

I think people's lives are somewhat similar in many countries. People grow up, go to school, they work, love, have their desires, hopes and dreams. In general people's lives have much more similarities than differences.

One special thing we have in common is that in both countries people take their shoes off when going in to houses or people's home.

Do you have children? What age and where do they go to school?

We have one son. He is already 31 years of age and has a family in Helsinki. Our grandson was born last April so my wife and I are proud grandparents.

How do you look upon your work here? What does an average day look like?

Each day varies a lot with what is going on in Thailand and across the world. I usually go to the office in the morning, meet up with Embassy colleagues and teams and receive briefings from Helsinki. Almost every day I have meetings with Thai partners, other Ambassadors or members of the international community or Finnish businesses.

I also take part in many meetings, seminars or conferences, of which many now are online. Usually every week there are some evening functions to attend, meetings with officials, business partners, colleagues or other international contacts as well.

It is very important to build up networks and relations with the Thai government and partners, the business community, academics and civil society in Thailand. At the same time I present Finland every day in many different ways, so I will need good knowledge and contacts in Finland as well.





How many of your countryfolk are living in Thailand? When and why did Thailand become a desirable destination for your people?

Before Covid there were some 2,000 Finns living more or less permanently in Thailand. Many returned to Finland because of the COVID situation. Currently we only have a few hundred left. I think some people are slowly returning when travel restrictions ease. Many Scandinavians escape

the harsh Northern hemisphere winter and come to Thailand for up to six months of the year and I am sure that they will return once the world gets a grip of the Covid pandemic.

Tourism from Finland picked up slowly from 1970s onward. Good flight connections by Finnair enlarged and encouraged that possibility. In fact, Bangkok was Finnair's first destination in Asia, with the first service in 1976. Lately Thailand has been a desired destination for some 150,000 Finnish tourists annually. Especially during the winter months, Finns love to come for the sunny Thailand beaches and resorts. Also the Thai culture, friendly people and the delicious food make the place very special and attractive for Finns.

Do your country and Thailand have any exchange programmes for students today?

As with every Ambassador, I am sure that you have some goals you really would like to fulfil before you leave Thailand. May I ask what they are?

I would be very happy if Finland became a partner for Thailand in the circular economy and education sector development.

Have you had the opportunity to travel around Thailand yet?

Not as much as I would have liked but I have been in Phuket, Khao Yai and Chon Buri, and we are planning to go soon to Koh Samui and Chiang Mai. We look forward to seeing more of this beautiful country.

May I ask if you have a favourite destination in Thailand yet?

All the places that we have been are very nice, including Bangkok which is a very interesting and colourful place! Far too soon for me to choose my favourite place yet.

When you have a day off, what do you do? Do you have any special hobbies?

I love to do exercise in my spare time, in the gym, to swim, or to go running in Lumpini Park. I also love music and I am trying to play and learn more on the guitar. When time allows it I want to travel extensively in Thailand and get to know the different places, cultures and regions.





Every year, there are Thai students that go to study in Finnish universities within the framework of the European Erasmus+ programme and or other similar exchange schemes.

There are very good English taught Bachelor's and Master's Degree programmes in several higher education institutions in Finland. Today there are actually over 400 such programmes available. All universities have scholarship opportunities for international students. We hope Finland will receive more degree students from Thailand in the future to as more Thais venture abroad to seek education opportunities.

If you could choose your next destination, where would you like to go?

Oh far too soon to even think about that – I am now very happy in Thailand. I will think of next destination when the time comes.

Is there any memory from Thailand that you'd like to share with us, an awkward situation, a fun moment etc.?

I tried to go to a seminar by taxi after a heavy rainstorm in Bangkok. We ended up moving few hundred metres in an hour. The seminar continued nicely without me. That was a good lesson for me to learn about the basics of Bangkok traffic.

Do you regularly meet up with your community?

I try to be present and reach out for the Finnish communities. For instance, we have regular meetings with organisations like Thai-Finnish Chamber of Commerce. I have participated in their events and we have had some very productive meetings. I have visited and met with several Finnish companies in Thailand, like Nokia, Huhtamaki, Fiskars, Kone, Valmet, etc.

One interesting visit was to Arkki School, which is a Finnish concept school for skills and creative education for children and youth. My wife and I also participated in the Most Beautiful Christmas Songs event organised by FELM, the international agency of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland. I am planning to visit different regions in Thailand and meet the local Finnish communities.





We have to deal with issues like climate change, biodiversity loss, debris and pollution in our land, sea and air. I believe technology will help us. Investing in new green technologies, clean transport systems and energy production, circular economy solutions, smart green cities and sustainable agriculture and forestry, will be the way forward. Through green investments we will boost jobs and growth, the resilience of societies and health of the environment. In addition, investing in green solutions will be and is already profitable.

What do you believe is your most important task as Ambassador?

In general, to work in expanding further the relations between Finland and Thailand and with this in mind there are many sectors and aspects I will work on.

In order to serve my government effectively, I will need to expand and grow good contacts and networks in Thailand and Finland. It will be most important to work on cultivating and building relations with all counterparts.

However, an Ambassador also leads the Embassy staff, and it is very important to get all staff motivated and moving to the same direction. Anything we accomplish is always a team effort by all colleagues in the Embassy. I am very lucky to have a very strong Embassy team working in various issues.

What else would you like the expat community to know about your efforts?

I think after the Covid crisis, our economies need incentives to recover. This will be our chance to steer our economies and societies towards green recovery and sustainable living. Shifting our societies towards more sustainable development paths is long overdue. The crisis created by Covid-19 could serve as a catalyst for new and more sustainable living.

One thing we should remember while borrowing funds for recovery, we take them from future generations. Whilst future generations will have to pay our debts, the least we can do is to leave a decent planet for them to live on.

Thank you for your time Ambassador we hope that you and your wife have a happy and successful post in Thailand.





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Panamanian Ambassador to Thailand H.E. Ambassador Ms. Itzel Karina Chen Chan

Expat Life in Thailand writer Kathleen Pokrud sat down with the Panamanian Ambassador to Thailand H.E. Ambassador Ms. Itzel Karina Chen Chan and asked her to share her story and path to Thailand.

How long have you been the Ambassador to Thailand?

I have been in Thailand since September 2020.

Did you arrive to Thailand direct from home, or were you posted somewhere else before?

I arrived in Thailand directly from Panama. Previously, I was assigned as Director of the Economic and Commercial Office in Hong Kong from 2014 to 2017, and the diplomatic relations between Panama and People's Republic of China (PRC) was established, thus I was promoted to Consul General in Hong Kong.

May I ask where were you born and brought up?

I was born and grew up in Panama in a Chinese family that migrated from mainland China.

At which age did you decide you wanted to become a diplomat?

I am not career diplomat, having a Bachelor Degree of Political Science and Law as well as a Master's Degree in Commercial Law.

With the intensive experiences in legal issues, in both private sector and, at the age of 36, I was assigned as the Director of the Economic and Commercial Office, and then, as the Consul General in the Consulate General of Hong Kong. Moreover, it is my great honour that, now,



I have been assigned as new Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Panama to the Kingdom of Thailand.

May I ask do you have more diplomats in your family?

No, I am only diplomat in my family.

How do you view Thailand today, have you encountered any obstacles since you arrived?

Due to the current world situation affected by the outbreak of the Covid-19, not only Thailand, but also all the countries that have imposed strict measures to protect their citizens, such as obligatory quarantine. Thus, it is normal that there are some difficulties for travelling to Thailand during this hard time.

Do you see any similarities between your country and Thailand?

In addition to the similar climates and temperature, Panama and Thailand are recognised for their widely known tourist attraction, such as historical sites and beaches, where many travellers come to visit there each year. On the other hand,



As with every Ambassador, I assume you have some goals you really would like to fulfil before you leave Thailand?

Since Panama is a small country located in Central America, which is almost unknown to the Thais, as Ambassador, I feel that it is my duty to make the people here learn more about Panama through diplomatic functions as well as cultural activities that the Embassy will be organising in the near future.

Besides, since Panama aims to develop itself in different dimensions, learning from others is a way to achieve this goal,

thus it is also my mission to bring new cooperation and knowledge via diplomacy, such as establishing relevant agreements and collaboration to elevate the bilateral exchanges of best practices and experience in various sectors, such as in agricultural, industrial and technological sectors, as well as to promote bilateral trade and investment, reviving the economy affected by this pandemic.

Have you been travelling around in Thailand?

Recently, I have been in Chonburi and Chumphon, where I learned various kinds of traditional ways of life and local cultures. Moreover, I have had a good

opportunity to visit the Royal Projects in Chumphon, which are interesting and valuable initiatives that Panama can learn and consider them as exemplary models.

Have you discovered a favourite destination in Thailand yet?

Due to the fact that I just arrived here a few months ago, I have not visited so many places that I can decide which my favourite one is.

If you do get a day off, what do you like to do? Do you have any special hobbies?

In my leisure time, I usually read a book, ride a bicycle, and have social interactions with colleagues and friends.



the cultures and tradition are quite different. Despite this, like Thailand, Panama is open to learn the differences and is ready to share its uniqueness to the world to make people know more about the country.

Do you have children?

No, I do not have any children.

How do you look upon your work here? What does an average day look like?

Working here is quite a new challenge for me as the work culture is so very different from Panama as well as Hong Kong, where I previously lived and served.



**How many of your countryfolk are living in Thailand?
When and why did Thailand become a desirable destination
for your people?**

Nowadays, there are not many Panamanian living here; however, in the perception of the Panamanian, Thailand is a safe and warm country to live in with moderate cost of living and an impressive quality of life, as well as spectacular beaches that are different from Panama. Despite the significant distance between the two countries, Panamanians are eager to explore Thai cultures and interesting places.

Does your country and Thailand have an exchange programme for students today?

Each year, there are Thai students going to Panama under an AFS exchange programme, where not only they will have

opportunity to learn Spanish but also, they will enjoy our traditional way of life, bringing back home unforgettable and memorable experiences.

Where are you planning to visit in Thailand?

As informed by colleagues and my staff that the Northern and Southern parts of Thailand are worth visiting because of lots of impressive and picturesque historical and natural sites. I plan to start from spending time in beaches in Phuket and then work my way up to Chiang Mai, where several elaborate Buddhist temples with unique styles are known worldwide.

Do you regularly meet up with the Panamanian community?

As there are not many Panamanian living here and some living in other provinces, I have not yet met with the Panamanian community here. However, in the future, I hope to be able to have interactions and share times with them via future activities.

Which is the most important task you want to achieve before you end your posting in Thailand?

I hope that the diplomatic relations between Panama and Thailand will be elevated and promoted to higher levels through potential cooperation and exchanges, which will allow both countries to learn from each other and move forward together.



BCT Christmas movie
marathon party 2020



HKLG





The joys of Chiang Mai

by Netra Ruthaiyanont

The year 2020 which ushered in the horrific Covid-19 pandemic has been a traumatic one for all of us. Having been cooped up in Bangkok for the last eight months, I was getting itchy feet and ready to travel. The invitation from the Thailand Incentive and Convention Association (TICA) to visit Chiang Mai in November for three days was a timely and welcomed offer.

It has been years since I visited this popular Northern city Chiang Mai. When I saw that the first item in TICA's programme was a visit to the indigo dyeing community of Lhong Him Khao, I signed up for the trip without hesitation. I remember fondly the happy times I had making tie-dyed T-shirts at the backyard of my friend's house as a teenager. I thoroughly enjoyed the art of tie-dyeing. The only drawback

Welcoming local band at Lhong Him Kao Village.

was that my family and friends, to their chagrin, had to tolerate seeing me in my vibrant creations for many years to come.

Those of us living in Thailand have been more fortunate than those living overseas in many ways. We are very grateful that we can move around quite freely to do our day-to-day activities and travel to other parts of the country, as long as we are careful of course – wear masks when we are outside, maintain social distance, avoid crowded places and wash our hands often.

On the day of the familiarisation trip, I packed my masks and alcohol and boarded the Bangkok Airways' one hour flight to Chiang Mai. There were about 30 of us in the group. After we landed and collected our luggage, we travelled by coach to Lhong Him Khao village for our indigo dyeing adventure. Our party was warmly welcomed by a Thai musical band and we were soon ready to get to work. Unlike my previous experience where we used strings to tie-dye our T-shirts, the equipment for this procedure was quite surprising. They had on the table for us, chop sticks, clothes pegs, paper clips, round and square boards and rubber bands. Each of us used whatever we fancied to tie the cloth however we desired.



Our cloths nicely tied up for indigo dyeing.





Art & craft shops of Mon community.
My attractive finished product on extreme left.



The travelling group pose of photos on second day of our Chiang Mai trip.



Beautiful view of the Mae Ping river.



Monks arriving at the Ratilanna Riverside Spa Resort to receive alms.



This is what a tea tree looks like.



Listening attentively to the briefing on how to pick tea leaves.



The inexperienced but enthusiastic tea-leaf-picking team.



Kneading tea leaves to start the process.



Roasting the tea leaves.

The finished pieces were then taken for dyeing and after that process, VOILA! I was quite pleased yet intrigued with the design that I created. Unfortunately, I will never be able to repeat that pattern again.

Soon, it was time to head for the Ratilanna Riverside Spa Resort for a short rest and to get ready for a networking dinner at Kiti Panit, a fine dining restaurant housed in a 132-year-old teak tree mansion which once operated as a General Store run by Chinese immigrants. We were served Lanna and Tai Yai dishes, many of which were tasty yet quaint. It was a marvellous gastronomic adventure, nonetheless.

Early the next morning, we early risers had the pleasure to offering alms to the monks at the hotel's beautiful riverside pier. Conveniently, the hotel staff has already prepared the alms for us. All we had to do was offer them to the monks. One of the TICA members gave a short explanation of the Buddhist ritual of alms giving to the non Buddhists in our entourage. Although I am a Buddhist myself, I even learned a thing or two from the narrative.

A lovely breakfast by the river followed. The weather was pleasantly cool, perfect for breakfast outdoors, but not cold enough for me to show off the several jackets that I had dug up from storage to wear them should it get cold in Chiang Mai.

After breakfast, we headed off to the Araksa Tea Garden located in the foothills of Mae Tang District. It took 90 minutes of driving on winding roads to get up there. The organic tea garden spanned over 100 rai of land. It was my first visit to a tea plantation and was pleasantly surprised that the tea trees, over 20,000 in number, were planted on fairly flat land and not on a plateau. That made it easier for us to carry out our assignment for the morning – picking tea leaves.

We were given a briefing on proper tea picking by the friendly staff. Thereafter, we each got our own basket and attempted to pick as many tea leaves as possible. We were going to make green tea, which meant we had to choose one bud with 2 leaves. For white tea, we would only pick the bud and for black tea, we would pick the bud and 3 leaves. Time passed quickly as we were having fun playing farmer and before we knew it, it was time for us to turn in our tea collections for the next step. Mae Jan, our tea expert, began kneading the tea leaves and thereafter began roasting the leaves. After some time, the big pile of tea leaves shrunk to perhaps one tenth of the original size. My earlier inspiration to become a professional tea picker also shrank in size in proportion to the roasted tea leaves. I then got the understanding of how many tea leaves must be collected to produce a small package of tea. It's a good thing I didn't give up my day job before I left for this trip.



The extensive tea presentation.

After all this hard work, we were invited to taste the 15 types of white, green and black tea at the plantation. Now, that was more my kind of thing and all of us happily obliged. It was very refreshing to sample the different tastes of tea, some more subtle than others. The aromatic “Kularb” or rose flavour was my favourite. I was pleased to hear that it won an award last year.

In a little while it was time for lunch. The Araksa lunch menu included Thai rice salad with condiments or “Khao Yum” in Thai. The colourful ingredients, once mixed together, had the sweet, sour and salty taste (and hot if you add chillies). This dish has

become very popular among health conscious diners since it has lots of fresh vegetables like purple cabbage, bean sprouts, coconut shaves plus flowers. I personally find that that this dish takes a bit of getting used to, since I still consider eating fresh flowers a bit bizarre. The fried crispy tea leaves with pork spicy dipping was quite delicious. It was addictive like eating French fries. Once you start, you cannot stop. Serving organic rice crackers made with watermelon juice (Khao Tan Nam Tangmo) accompanied by – you guessed it – hot or cold tea of your choice was a perfect way to end the meal.

Visiting Wat Umong, a 700 year old Buddhist temple was next on the itinerary. Located at the foot of Doi Pui Mountain, the temple was home of old ruins with meditation tunnels. After climbing



The art of making good tea.

up a multitude of uneven brick steps, we came to a large brick pagoda, made famous by a Thai popular soap opera. But honestly speaking, I would give this spot a miss.

We did a quick check in at the Shangri-La Hotel and got ready to go to dinner at *Food for You* by Chef Tutu. Chiang Mai is well known for its numerous restaurants and variety of international cuisine, and this homey restaurant did not disappoint. Soon after we arrived, the Chef, whose full name was Prapatsorn Na Chiangmai, started energetically cooking his signature dishes for us.



Kularb tea, my favourite.



Colourful Khao Yum.



Crab salad, fried duck, grilled shrimp, crab soup and steak... most dishes cooked to perfection. And a good selection of fine white and red wine served with the dishes made the dinner even more palatable. The only comment I would like to add was that the chef was too trigger happy with his chillies for someone like me who doesn't take hot food.

After whisking off his last dish for our group, Chef Tutu came out to greet his guests. We found out he has been cooking since he was 9 and has been serving special dishes to his clients for the past 30 years. He enjoys going to the local market daily to get the freshest ingredients for his dishes. He is very adventurous and is happy to concoct special dishes not on the menu for his customers. Just let him know.

The trip to Chiang Mai ended all too soon on the third day of our trip. After a leisurely breakfast at the Shangri-La Hotel, we headed for the airport amidst heavy traffic. We were amazed to find that the airport was very crowded. People are travelling again. The flight was also fully booked. After a one hour flight, we were happy to land in Bangkok and go home for a nice rest from our fun and informative excursion.



Art & craft community at Baan Kang Wat.



Chef Tutu cooking up a storm for us in his open kitchen.

Where in Thailand shall we go next? It took a lockdown for us to realise that we have so many interesting and beautiful places to visit right here in Thailand instead of going overseas for our vacation. Life's paradigm has changed drastically and going abroad for a holiday is a privilege that is not accessible to us for the time being. So why not rediscover the amazing wonders of Thailand instead?

However, always keep in mind that wherever we go, we must keep our guards up against the possible infection of the Covid-19 virus. Always social distance and keep our masks on and of course wash our hands often. The pandemic is not over yet. We must remain vigilant when we are in public areas, especially in crowded places.

About the author: Netra Ruthaiyanont is currently the Marketing Director of GT Auto Co., Ltd., authorised Volvo Car retailer. The former member of the print media enjoys writing stories about travel, education and the challenging lives of women.



The unpainted stupa of Wat Umong.



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THE FUTURE OF BOARDING

DLD College London Principal, Irfan Latif, shares an insight into the innovative boarding experience provided for overseas students in the heart of London.

British boarding schools are considered as some of the most sought after institutions in the worldwide education system, with students travelling from afar to reap the benefits of a residential education in the UK.

Located on a purpose built, state of the art campus set in the heart of central London opposite Parliament, DLD College London is exceptionally unique. With over fifty different nationalities represented in our student body, DLD is an incredibly enriched, internationally minded school. We aim not to assimilate students to a British way of life but instead, we ask for students to learn from each other.

In recent years, we have moved from a 'college with separate accommodation' model to an innovative, ground breaking boarding school for students from the age of 14. Boarders live in ensuite bedrooms located on campus and take their meals in our Global Kitchen, which was officially opened by world renowned Chef Atul Kochhar. Students are supported in their studies through staff with a wealth of experience of helping international boarders, which in turn leads to a better understanding and higher attainment. Daily study clinics are led by academic staff members and students



can often be found discussing and debating elements of their courses around the house, both at evenings and weekends.

Our 250 boarders are housed in five 'Huddles', each looked after by a 'Huddle Houseparent' – greatly improving DLD's community. Our nineteen Common Rooms have all been recently refurbished, and our recreational activities have been developed for evenings and weekends, contributing to the home-from-home atmosphere our boarders enjoy. By implementing advanced boarding software into our security and lockdown procedures, we have secured boarders' safety. In a recent survey, 100% of boarding students said they felt supported, safe and secure here in central London.

This year at the 'Independent Schools of the Year Awards 2020', we were delighted to win the award for 'Boarding School of the Year' and the Special Judges' Award for 'Independent School of the Year', in recognition of our school's superior student wellbeing and groundbreaking urban boarding provision. The judges recognised DLD as



Halloween, Harry Potter, film and quiz nights.

We place great importance on celebrating diversity and encouraging an understanding of the varying nationalities and cultures represented in our school. The students mark several events including the Lunar New Year, Nowruz, Russian Orthodox Christmas, Thai New Year, Chinese New Year, Thanksgiving, Ramadan (with students attending a local community Iftar at a local centre), Yom Kippur, and other religious events. Each year we hold a DLD International Day when students present their own countries to the rest of the student body through food (with specially curated menus in our Global Kitchen), music, language and dress.

Student support and wellbeing

We are proud of our work in student personal development and are often recognised for our proactive and targeted pastoral care. Our wellbeing provision extends beyond the school day. Through the use of AS (Affective Social) tracking, coaching methods, mentoring, nutrition, sleep education, and our new model of holistic pastoral care, our dedicated teams support our students in their studies, in creating and maintaining friendships, and learning the life skills necessary to progress. Students additionally have access to our award winning Wellbeing Centre.



a school that is “brimming with energy” and “offers something really special in the sector for its students, combining old and new approaches to education.”

Enriched Co-Curricular

At DLD College London we have a wide ranging co-curricular programme, with an extensive trip offering making the most of what London has to offer (Royal Albert Hall, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, Tate Modern, Wembley etc), in addition to a variety of inhouse activities such as open-mic,



One of our key aims is to develop an understanding of mental health for all students and staff and we have trained over 40 students in the Mental Health First Aid Youth qualification since 2018, aiming at destigmatising the mental health concerns. This is an incredibly important point, as students arrive with varying levels of acceptance of speaking and sharing their challenges. We are ensuring that the perception of education is not solely on academic grades but an understanding of themselves and each other.

To support students joining us, our in-depth Induction Programme for boarding includes visits from the local Police about keeping safe in London, a real life Monopoly Challenge to help boarders find their way around London using Oyster Cards for the first time, and a sleep induction programme intended to equip boarders with ways of improving their own sleep patterns – particularly helpful for those adjusting to a significantly different time zone.

School community

To ensure a full experience of living in London, we encourage our students to engage with the local community through various projects. These include working at the local city farm and food bank, supporting campaigns for the local community centre and children's charities, and raising money for our school charity, Evelina



London Children's Hospital. Our students reported to the ISI inspectors that that they see the value of 'serving rather than being served'.

Notably, throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, our school was proud to be declared as a 'Beacon of Hope'. The student response at the start of the first lockdown displayed excellent leadership and empathy when our remaining boarding students decided to create huge posters in support of key workers and NHS staff, displaying them in the school windows opposite





DLD College London is housed in highly contemporary, purpose built premises in the heart of London, on 199 Westminster Bridge Road, overlooking the Palace of Westminster and the River Thames.

The college offers students the chance to study a wide range and flexible combination of A Levels, BTEC courses, International Foundation Programmes (IFP) and GCSEs.

As part of the Alpha Plus Group, DLD College

provides a 'gold standard' of educational quality. Classes are small, enabling students and teachers to focus upon the most effective ways of learning and to provide them with the highest levels of pastoral care.

St. Thomas' Hospital. The initiative then evolved to children from around the UK and artists from around the world sending their NHS rainbow posters, which our students and staff collated and added to the gallery in the windows, with over 4,000 pictures displayed. During this time, their sense of social responsibility and sense of positive impact was central to their journey in support of those who supported the UK.

DLD is an inclusive and respectful community, where our core values of tolerance, respect and kindness are the foundations on what our school is built on – they permeate through everything we do. Our rich diversity is an excellent source of inspiration and allows for those values of tolerance and respect to embed, develop and grow.

An ISI inspector recently said to us that we have 'set the mould for Urban Boarding internationally'. Our facilities are fantastic, with some of the best boarding accommodation in the world. Our values and ethos are strong, our activities are endless, and our pastoral care and wellbeing is robust and student centred; we are a school which sets out to create the future leaders of tomorrow by enabling them to feel supported in their education today. Robin Fletcher, CEO of the BSA, said "The future of boarding is right here at DLD College London".

To find out more about DLD College London go to www.dldcollege.co.uk/





Exploring Global Campus Junior

Introducing our new features, exclusively created for Regents International School Pattaya early years students.

Story Stacks

Story Stacks is an exciting weekly staple for our youngest book lovers. This new audio book launches every Monday with story time favourites specifically aimed at children under the age of eight.

To keep our listeners excited, we have plenty of fun and educational follow up activities available to enjoy afterwards. Alongside each audio book are a series of tasks for children to complete. These are designed to complement the key areas of the early years curriculum: language, art and design, literacy, maths, understanding the world, personal development and physical development. Every task has been created especially to ensure early years students learn all they can from each week's story.

Forest School

Learning should be an adventure! Introducing the Forest School, an explorative Nord Anglia teaching tool designed to inspire curiosity in every young mind. Each week Nord Anglia students around the world share in the fun of a new leaf appearing on the Forest School tree. When the leaf falls it unlocks a new activity! This could be anything from a town and city scavenger hunt, to a mindfulness task or guided mini beast research. Combining outdoor learning with play, the Forest School has been created specifically to teach children important skills like investigation and observation whilst exploring the nature on their doorstep.

INTRODUCING GLOBAL CAMPUS JUNIOR: Learning made fun for early year's students

Nord Anglia Global Campus takes education beyond the classroom. Bringing together our 69 schools around the world, it is a fundamental part of how we teach our students to be truly global citizens. The highly personalised learning platform provides a safe space for students to connect and collaborate with each other, it offers a huge variety of engaging extra-curricular activities and is a part of how Regents students explore independent learning.

Following many years of success with our older students, we are thrilled to have now launched a version specifically for our youngest year groups. Whether in the classroom or learning at home Nord Anglia Global Campus Junior is now live for students to enjoy, wherever they are in the world.

"Many of our Primary students like to engage with the Global Campus challenges during lunch and break times in the STEAM Machine". Mr. Edwards, STEAM Coordinator & Teacher, Regents International School Pattaya.



Junior Elements

We know that engaging young children in many of life's most important lessons isn't always easy! That is why we have created Junior Elements to make the process simple for children and parents alike. This section of Global Campus Junior is all about helping early years students learn new skills through methods which encourage them to practice and retain what they've learnt.

Every project in Junior Elements is designed around a simple three step learning process: learning something new, practicing the skill and producing something afterwards to demonstrate what has been learnt.



Each month we launch a new themed project. This might be something like 'managing risk', for example. This includes lessons on how to stay safe at home, such as exploring which items are safe to touch in the house, and can be put into practice through a task like reading a book afterwards to identify all of the risks that can be found within the story.

Supporting Regents parents

Young children need lots of stimuli to stay engaged and we know that this can be a challenge for parents who have lots

to juggle. We have created our Global Campus Junior activities so that they can all be completed offline to reduce screen time, without the ongoing guidance of a teacher or parent.

We know our parents want to do all they can to help their children flourish. To support this, we've also created a top tips section with Global Campus Junior which is packed with useful information for parents on how to guide their children, understanding effective learning techniques and getting the most out of the platform.

The International Primary Curriculum (IPC)

The IPC, together with Global Campus, is the perfect springboard for Secondary school as children develop their academic knowledge, skills and understanding whilst also developing the personal qualities and characteristics to help them flourish in our increasingly connected and dynamic world. In short, the IPC unlocks student's imagination and transforms their education.

Find out more

To hear more about how we bring a world class education to our students at home and in the classroom, visit our school website: www.regents-pattaya.co.th

We are now open for school visits by appointment. Our Admissions team are happy to help you learn more about Regents and to guide you through the admissions process for your child.

Contact admissions@regents-pattaya.co.th to book a visit or a virtual discovery meeting today for a personalised virtual experience.



**REGENTS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
PATTAYA**
A NORD ANGLIA EDUCATION SCHOOL





FOR THE LOVE OF BOARDING...

by *Peter Hogan*
Hogan Education

“How can anyone who loves their children even think about sending them to boarding school?” asked the friend of a friend at a dinner party.

This was a farewell party, a week before I was to take on the headship of a UK boarding school. Perhaps the comments were understandable given her lack of knowledge and experience of such places. However, looking back now, having run boarding schools for 20 years I can attest that love is not something in short supply in residential education.

Boarding began in earnest in Victorian Britain, mainly as a means of helping the disadvantaged and the needy. 1855 saw the opening of the Manchester Warehousemen and Clerks’ Orphan Schools providing education and a home, of sorts, for children of local workers whose deaths had left their families in need. Six lost and lonely children were their first boarders and the new school took as its motto the little known Latin phrase “in loco parentis” meaning in the place of the parents. This paved the way to a law in 1870 making it a legal requirement that teachers act as would a reasonable and caring parent. The school may have changed its name to Cheadle Hulme School and now educates 1,500 boys and girls but the motto remains the same and this commitment

to children runs like a seam through all good schools everywhere.

Prior to headship I worked at a school in Nottingham that had a long and close relationship with Thai families. Among many Thais who boarded there were Prime Ministers Mom Rajawongse Seni Pramoj and Mom Rajawongse Kukrit Pramoj. In those early days a boarder may not return to Asia for years, instead remaining with their Housemasters in the holidays, living as part of their family. The men and women looking after Thailand’s future leaders carried a responsibility far greater than making sure they passed exams. Then as now, it’s all about care, guidance, support and... love!

Teachers who look after boarders do so much more than teach subjects. They build excellent relationships with parents, getting to know the strengths, weaknesses, problems and circumstances of every child. They become counsellors, mediators, disciplinarians, comforters, helpers, supporters, planners and companions for every child every day and night of every busy term. Nobody can do this and just see it as a regular job.

In my experience, families who don’t send their children to boarding school sometime have a distorted view of why people do it and what it’s like. This isn’t helped by the naïve and inaccurate media view of boarding, so maybe it’s time to untangle a few “nots”:

What it’s not

- It is not Hogwarts although the camaraderie among the children, the shared enthusiasm for sports, the sense of community in dining together and the high points of parties and visits are all real enough.
- It is not a fantasy of top hats, toffs and tail coats. The lazy media stereotypes of a few posh boys in fancy clothes

posing on the steps of grand old building exist today only in the picture libraries of some media outlets.

- It is not a world of cowering, enfeebled youngster and bullying, entitled older students getting away with horrible behaviour while the school is at the mercy of their wealthy parents.

Children are at boarding school for one core reason (explained later) but with a variety of purposes.

Why it is needed

- Families are on the move. Business, diplomatic, service and other highly mobile parents do not want to be transferring their children from school to school, country to country as their contracts, commitments or tours change. This can be traumatising for you people who will struggle to make and remake friendships and deal with different teachers, school environments and subjects. Boarding gives stability.
- Families need a place of safety. When we look at the lives of the famous and wealthy with their lovely houses, glamorous lives, celebrity events and international routines spare a thought for their kids. Typically, grownups choose the lives they lead but their children have little or no say in the matter. They do not want to do their growing up in the glare of the public and the scrutiny of the media. We can all be challenging, different, experimental and temperamental when we are young and should be allowed to do our growing up in



private. When a school community is familiar with these challenges and its community can keep school matters inside the school, keeping everyone safe and secure, a child can relax and grow up in a stable and supportive community. Kids can be themselves, not just the offspring of somebody rich and/or famous.

- Families need help. The world is increasingly open and accepting of the fact that we can't all do everything and that keeping a stiff upper lip or burying our feelings is good for nobody. It is not good for us and not good for our families. Admitting that our parenting skills might not be our strength and that we need help may be very difficult but sometimes being open to this can be the very best thing for parents and child alike.
- Families are remote. Farmers, island workers and many others live and work in environments where there is a lot to do but other children can be few and far between. If

ever you get away from it all and enjoy a few weeks of isolation or drive past the rolling fields in agricultural areas, think about how lonely this can be for a youngster who is there all the time. Many people are needed to keep remote resorts working and every farmstead is a home miles from any other. It is seldom healthy for children to grow up away from others their own age and a local school may not be an option.





- Families see it as the best type of schooling. Many boarders are from families where parents or grandparents boarded or they have close friends or family with boarding in their family. Families who have very happy memories of boarding life want their children to have the same experience. There is hard data to show the value added in terms of improved results for many who study as boarders with fewer distractions, more personal attention and closer supervision.
- Families are given a special opportunity. Although boarding schools charge fees, many are eager to offer free or discounted places to children with academic, sporting, musical or other potential. These scholarships can be as much as 100% off fees and can provide some talented children with opportunities that simply do not exist near to where their families live or are affordable for their parents.

At the core of all of these issues is one simple thing. Parents love their children and want to do the best for them. Their circumstances, location, lifestyle and earnings may be wildly different but this doesn't mean they don't feel the same way about their kids. A family who chooses a boarding school does not love their children any less or any more than somebody who sees their child every day.

In my office a few years ago sat the ambassador to one of the UK's larger, more important neighbours. We were talking about his son, who I will re-name Patrick in this article and his Dad had been seeing me for some advice. Running schools means you see a lot of family unhappiness and unfortunately, you tend to gain some expertise in teenage trauma, tantrums and torpor. Patrick's family situation was not so unusual but

this is no comfort to anyone in the heat of the arguments, harsh words, door slamming and the other high octane drama that some parents and kids go through. Patrick was pushing all the boundaries – big enough and smart enough to challenge his Dad and hurt his Mum but not so wise as to know what he was really doing or why. His recent school reports were awful, his grades had fallen off a cliff and he was just as disengaged at home. His parents were busy and knew they were not giving him the time he needed although Patrick seemed to want to spend as little time as possible with them.

Between us we decided to split the parenting. In term time we took over and made sure Patrick was up every day and that the work got done. We fed him, looked after him, gave him plenty of ways to get fit as well as express himself, make friendships and keep in touch with family and old friends. When Patrick went home it was for proper family holidays. His Dad was no longer the taskmaster, instead he took him fishing and to football matches. His parents had plenty to deal with as we all do as parents but at least they could focus on the positives and work with the school to navigate the difficulties. I only met Patrick's Dad one more time - four years later when he sat in the audience watching his son graduate and address the whole school in his role as Head Boy. Patrick has become one of my most reliable, role model students, one who could speak from the heart when younger boys were causing difficulty and one who I know had a loving and firm relationship with his parents.

Patrick's is just one of the many happy ending stories I could tell about the transformational aspect of a boarding education. Loving a child and allowing them to board are not opposites, for many they are two parts of a greater whole, developing the young person and extending the family.

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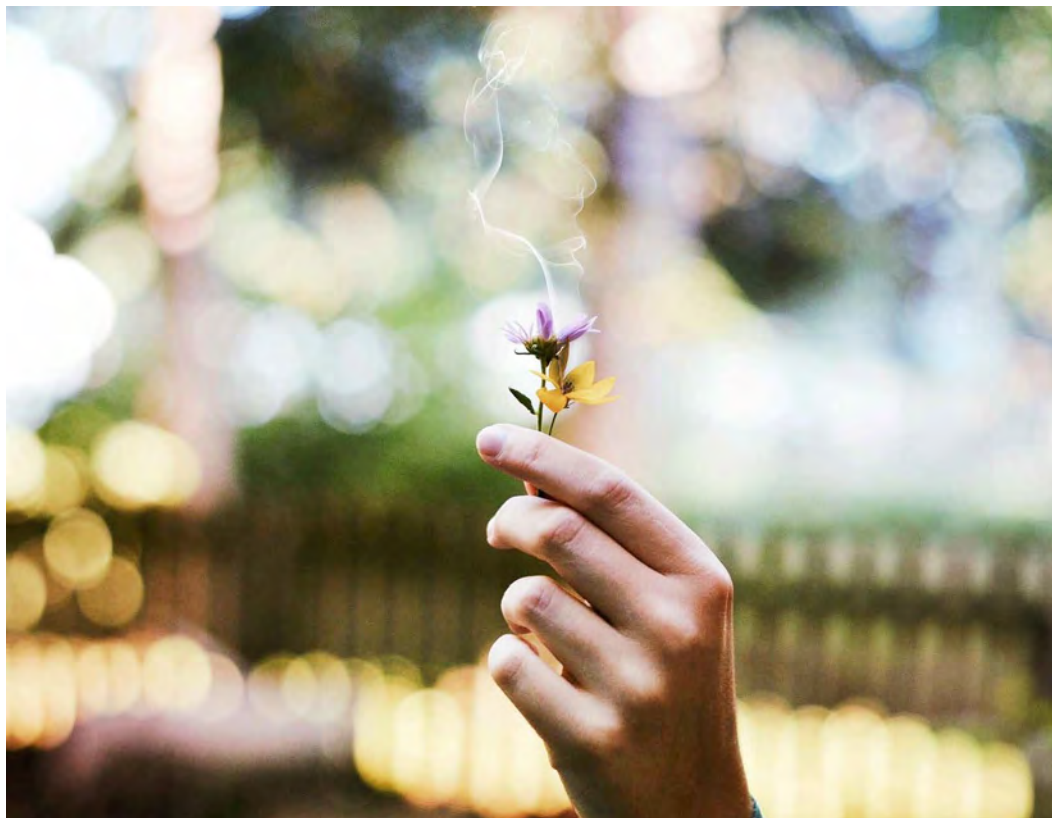


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Spiritual education: Foundation for true education

by Teerakiat Jareonsettasin
MD., MRCPsych (UK)
Former Minister of Education,
Thailand



This paper is about spiritual education as applied to the modern concept of the true education. The word Education is derived from the Latin root Educere, which means to bring out what is inside. What is it that has to be brought out? Every form of knowledge and capacity is latent in us. We are endowed with all types of potentialities – physical, mental, and spiritual.

The true aim of education is to make explicit the innate powers of humans. There are two types of knowledge: one relates to the knowledge of external world, and the organ that manifests this power is the head (brain). The other relates to the “internal world” and the organ that enables one to bring out the inner knowledge is the heart. The former relates to physical existence while the latter to the mental and spiritual realms. Life will become ideal only when both these types of knowledge are made to manifest in harmony.

Spiritual education is defined as inner study of humans: it is the study of what is beyond the mind – in order to discover our real Self. There are two kinds of study: inward looking and outward looking. The information that we learn by rote is the outward looking study. On the other hand, taking our studies into your heart, feeling its fullness and experiencing it is the inward looking study. These have been differentiated by the terms: Education and Educere.

All ancient wisdom traditions have one thing in common: Man, know thyself. We are taught by ancient wisdom traditions that in the depth of the mind we will find our inner Self, our real Self and we are all sparks of the same Self.

True education

True education, Educere, is the inward journey because it is the type of education that will help us discover our real Self. The word Educere means to bring out that which is within. Educere means to bring out human values. Human values are hidden in every human being. One cannot acquire them from outside; they have to be elicited from within. 'To bring out' means to translate them into action. The fundamental principle underlying the ancient wisdom traditions is: The source of all knowledge and experience is really within our own inmost Self. Within the heart lies the hidden splendid truth of both heaven and earth. All we need to do is to go within and tap this “knowledge” and experience. This is true education or Educere.

The path from body to mind to the Self

The most comprehensive and coherent steps, as described in most ancient wisdom traditions, are: The inward journey from body to mind to the Self. Here is the path:

1. We start, in our waking state, with the physical body. We have to prepare our physical body well so that it is conducive to our inward journey. We have to provide the body with the right type of foods, water, air and exercises. Imagine what a wonderful machine our body is and we do not know how to operate it and make the best results out of it. We must use our



bodies intelligently, to promote the welfare of ourselves and others; use them with moderation and with the idea of loving service to the community, to all.

2. Educere will have to deal with how to educate ourselves about right breathing: right awareness, rhythm, rate and depth. We have to train ourselves, and the young, on how to regulate our breathing. Activities like devotional singing and prayers are useful in promoting the awareness and rhythmic breathing.

3. Once we have prepared the ground work for the body, the next step is of utmost importance: the control the senses: both perceptive and action sense powers. The principles of training the perceptive senses are: to train the eyes to see the right things, ears to listen to the right things, etc. For action senses, the most important is right speech. We have to speak only what is true, kind and necessary. Only then will our eyes attain sacred power by which we will be able to visualise the Self.

4. We will now be ready to deal with the mind. The main function of the mind is to direct, focus and sustain attention. The mind should be trained to turn away from the senses and turn within to focus on the Self. The Kingdom of Heaven is within; the real knowledge worth knowing is within. Therefore, we should direct our mind to focus within on the real Self. This process is called concentration and gradually

it will move to contemplation which will finally give way to meditation. When we engage in this concentration, the two main obstacles, dullness and distraction, tend to overcome us. When we try to be silent and practice concentration to listen to the Song within, we either fall asleep or let the mind wander. But with constant practice, the Divine Song will be louder, clearer and sweeter. To be free from dullness, we have to be intensely alert and at the same time eliminate all causes of distraction by paying utmost attention to the task at hand. Distraction can be overcome by devotion to the object of concentration. The path of selfless action helps us tackle dullness and the path of devotion is the best remedy for the distraction of the mind. In concentrating one's whole mind on the Self within, one can be so fully conscious as to exclude all other thoughts and feelings. The Self transcends the mind; therefore, the mind cannot understand the Self. The mind can only look to the Self, period.

5. Interior to the mind is the ego. Ego is the fabricated I. It is the false sense of the real I. We can practice transcending the ego by consulting our discriminatory faculty. We must not identify with our ego. We have to be selflessly engaged in service activities, seeing them as a "training ground" to eliminate our egoism. We have now made our journey inward far enough to listen to our real Intelligence. Practice listening to the conscience. Be calm. Listen to the inner voice. Contemplative prayers accelerate this process.



6. We will now move to be centred on the Self. It is no different from Love. Love becomes the guiding principle of our life. If we stay focused on the centre of our being, Love and Joy spontaneously radiate from our being. We start to develop equal vision of seeing the Self in one everyone. If we hurt others, we hurt ourselves. We realise that we are one with all.

True education or Educere is a gradual unfolding of our inner consciousness; in other words, it is the process of bringing out the inner knowledge and values. It is comprehensive and scientific in that it can be tested by anyone who cares to explore his or her consciousness and to practise the above steps diligently.

Summum bonum

The ultimate result of Educere is that our true nature spontaneously manifests. We are awake, all loving, despising and fearing none. We know the Self and are no different from the Self. We ultimately come to the final stage of Self-realisation. We see our real Self in everything. Everything is divinely beautiful. When we behold the primordial beauty of everything in the universe, everything is an unending radiant of Joy and Love. This all inclusive, all pervading Beauty is not merely an exercise in creative imagination. It is the actual vision of the universe. At this stage, it is not something we have to put an effort to imagine, because it is the actual awareness.

Every object is an object of luminous Beauty there is only the Self, in all His or Her radiant wonder. All the good and the evil, the very best and the very worst, the virtuous and the devious, each and every one, are absolute manifestations of the Self. We will realise That.

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Care for children

by Jane Arnott and Heather Suksem OBE

A balmy breeze whispers through the grass as the sun sets over the fields in Northern Thailand. The sound of laughter breaks through the birdsong in the trees, and a small voice giggles “Hey Dad, I am riding a buffalo!” A man carrying a boy on his shoulders appears from the riverbank. The child, Gop, bounces up and down with delight as his foster father trots along, fishing gear in one hand, holding the boy securely with the other. At home, Gop’s Mother has prepared dinner with the eggs Gop collected earlier from their chickens. As they eat, Gop tells of his adventures by the river and there is much laughter and warmth in the household.

“When we have children around us, it brings us happiness,” says Gop’s Father, who, together with his wife, has welcomed twelve children from one of Chiang Mai’s child welfare homes into their family. Of these, some are now adults and married with their own families.

Gop’s transition from a child welfare home to a loving family has been a transformative, overwhelmingly positive experience. Gop is one of over 300 children currently in local foster families in Thailand who have moved out of government child welfare homes. He now has a family who love and support his needs, and a home where he can feel safe and secure. Sadly, however, many children living in child welfare homes don’t yet have this opportunity to live in a family. There are still over 5,000 children still living in the 29 government run child welfare homes across the country, but the majority of whom would flourish just like Gop if placed into a local family.

According to all leading child welfare organisations, foster care provides one of the best alternative

environments for children who cannot live in their own family. Furthermore, in December 2019, all 193 member States of the United Nations, which includes Thailand, passed a new Rights of the Child resolution pledging to increase the efforts to promote family based alternatives to institutional care (orphanages). A loving foster family provides the individualised care and support, acceptance, and belonging that children need to grow into happy, healthy adults able to live independently and contribute to their communities. However well run an institution might be, it can never replace the wholesome and nurturing environment created by attentive, loving parents.

Since partnering with Care for Children in 2012, the Royal Thai Government has made tremendous progress in developing foster care as a positive alternative to institutional care for orphans and vulnerable children, with over half of all child welfare homes now managing foster care placements in their local communities.

Malee, who moved from institutional care to foster care as a teenager, describes life in a child welfare home:

‘As much as they wanted it to be like a family it wasn’t, because we were a bunch of kids who were all the same age, and the people who were looking after us were people who we didn’t know. They didn’t understand us, and we didn’t understand them.’

Life in the institution left her restless and insecure. She wanted freedom, to see what the world outside looked like. She felt that she had been “living inside someone else’s box”. When she was placed in a foster family, she finally found what she had been looking for:

‘Love wasn’t this massive thing that I had always imagined it might be; but instead, it started out as something small and it made me happy and I realised that it was enough, and it was just what I needed.’

To ensure that as many children as possible can experience the transformative love of a family, Care for Children is working closely with the Department of Children and Youth to help them establish foster care services in every province of Thailand. A national media campaign is now needed to raise awareness amongst families across the country about the opportunity to foster.

Not everyone is able to welcome a foster child into their family, but there are many ways to support the development of foster care in Thailand. To ensure many more children like Gop and Malee will have the opportunity to grow up in a family, please contact Care for Children to learn how you can help.

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www.careforchildren.com





or daughter about your home culture's values while raising him or her in Thailand, so that when they return to your native country, they are well adjusted.

Take occasional family holidays back home

Frances Watthanaya, who heads a programme in Northeastern Thailand for at risk youth, is a Canadian native who now lives in a rice farming village in the Mueang Yang District of Nakhon Ratchasima with her Thai husband and 10 year old daughter. Unlike many of her compatriot families who live in Bangkok, Frances has almost no access to Canadian culture save for the occasional television show. Because of her extreme case, Frances believes there is only one way to teach her daughter about the cultural values of Canada.

"Spend time in both countries," she said. "Spending time in Canada is the most important and the only way I can really instil those values in her. She has to see it and experience it for herself."

You may not live in rural Thailand, but your child will still benefit from the occasional trip back home. They'll have time to play with cousins, listen to grandparents recount family stories, and see how people interact day-to-day. This will teach your son or daughter more about your culture's values than words or movies or music. If it's not possible to fly back home regularly, though, you can still expose your children to your home culture right here in Thailand.

Join clubs, societies, or international schools

Although the world is slowly moving away from tribalism, children need to feel like they belong to a group who shares similar values to form a healthy sense of identity. One way to accomplish this is by enrolling your child into clubs, societies, or international schools where he or she can associate with people from your native culture. By doing so, this will prepare them for life outside of Thailand if they choose to study or work in your home country.

In fact, it doesn't matter where you come from in the world, you will most likely be able to find a place to take your children to expose them to your home country's values. You can do this by enrolling them in one of the country's hundreds of international schools, or by visiting a smaller club.

Kevin Amlid, whose Norwegian father and Thai mother own a self-storage business in Pattaya, always found himself immersed in Norwegian culture when he was growing up. His father would take him and his younger brother to the Norwegian Seaman's Church for two main celebrations every year: the Norwegian Constitution Day and Christmas Eve.

How to instil cultural identity in your child – and why it matters

by John Wolcott

Just the other day while eating family dinner, my wife and I started talking about the idea of returning to America. The conversation then transitioned to the differences between Thai and American cultural values and the ways in which Thais and Americans differ. My 7 year old daughter, whose eyes darted between my wife and I as we took turns talking, swung her head and asked, "Daddy, do American people eat this too?"

I was confused, not at her question, but that she would speak of American people as being different from herself – especially since she was born in America. "You realise you are American, too, right?" I said. She tilted her chin into her neck and giggled, and although I chuckled as well, it got me thinking about how my daughter identifies – or does not identify – with the American culture of which I'm from, and whether that lack of identity may somehow affect her if we move back or she wants to study or work in the states.

Would my daughter grow up to be a culturally rootless soul, failing to connect with American culture? Or would she somehow benefit from being what I discovered are third culture kids, children who spend their developmental years in cultures other than their parents' home countries.

I asked other non-Thai families and people who were raised in Thailand about their experiences, and I discovered there are three primary ways that you can teach your son



Amlid didn't know it at the time, but he was picking up on the values of Norwegian culture through osmosis, so when he eventually left Thailand to study in Norway, he was able to adjust a little more easily than if he had never experienced anything about Norway while in Thailand.

If you live in one of Thailand's multi-cultural cities like Bangkok, Phuket, Pattaya, or Hua Hin, you should have no problem finding a place to bring your child to introduce them to your home culture. But with that said, the best place to instil your home country's values may be at home.

Highlight the positive aspects of your culture

The easiest way to teach your children about your home country's values is to talk about the positive aspects of your culture with them. After all, studies show that the family is the most important unit when it comes to children learning about culture¹. This means you as a parent can influence what your child learns about that culture, even if you're not currently living in it.

This was the case for Caitlin Lee, an American who moved to Thailand when she was 5 years old. Despite growing up in Thai society and relating more as a Thai, her American parents always taught her about the positive values that they themselves experienced while growing up in Southern United States.

"I'm still redneck and I haven't let that go," Lee said. "I come from a long line of farmers, and I've had that type of work ethic instilled in me from quite a young age, and I find that to be quite American."

Now that Lee has her own child, a 15 year old son, she now finds it valuable to teach him about the value of hard work. With that said, though, she also thinks there are more important cultural values to instil in her son, values that aren't always taught to kids in Thailand.

"Just because someone is your teacher or your boss doesn't mean they have the right to do or say anything to you," she continued. "That is a very un-Thai way of going about

things, which I'm currently learning with my son going to Thai school. And I'm trying to instil that value in him; just because someone is a teacher doesn't mean they're allowed to bully you."

The inverse of that value to stand up for yourself would be to comply even if you know you might be in the right. And perhaps this ties into the value of saving face in Thailand. And if that's so, Lee also wants her son to know that it's okay to make mistakes, even if someone points them out.

"I grew up with a very American sense of humour," she said, "and the whole thing with being able to look at yourself and laugh at yourself is a very American thing. The way I was raised is that you fall down, you laugh, and you get back up. I've had to work quite hard to teach my son the same thing because losing face here seems to be a little more severe.

"This teaches us how to grow and be humble and laugh in the face of adversity, and I think it's something that should be instilled in every culture, to realise your negatives points and be able to embrace them and grow with them instead of feeling you need to hide them or get angry when someone points them out."

Once thing's for certain, no matter what cultural values we want to instil in our children, we can only do so by consciously embracing them, acting them out, and talking about them with our sons and daughters.

About the author: *John Wolcott is an American who's been living in Thailand since 2014 with his wife and two daughters. When not writing or editing travel narratives, profiles, and feature stories, he likes to travel the country and practice photography.*

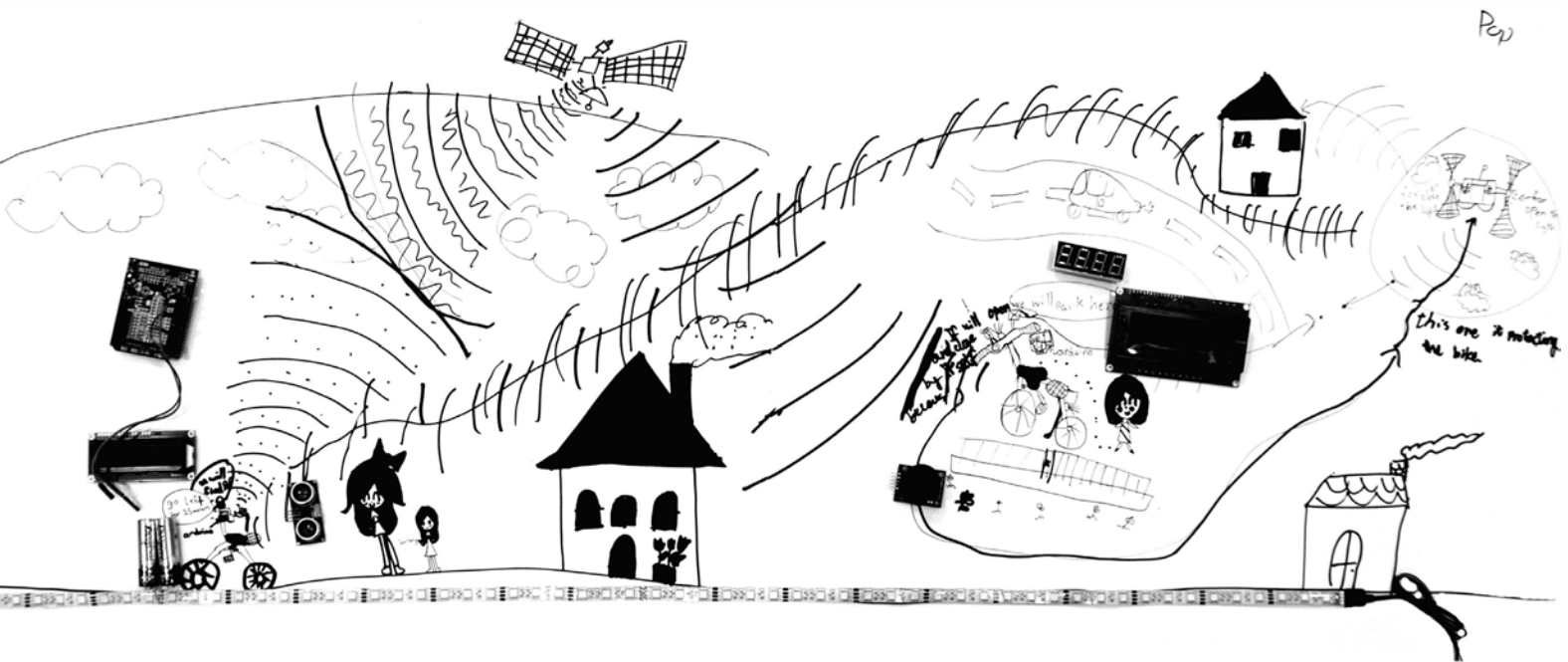
Sources:

Frances Watthanaya: frances.watthanaya@gmail.com

Kevin Amlid: <https://www.facebook.com/kevin.aamlid>

Caitlin Lee: <https://www.facebook.com/caitlin.haas>

¹ <https://www.nap.edu/read/9197/chapter/3#13>



DESIGN FUTURES

ELC international schools are places where children are active protagonists in their own learning. They comprise a family of unique schools where students base their research, discovery, and experimentation within the context of contemporary culture and learning. Those within strive to resolve dilemmas of individual and shared importance in their quest for knowledge and understanding but most importantly, imagine possibilities for a better future.

In the daily life of ELC schools, we can perceive a pronounced increase in children's creativity, the quality of their research, and their ability to access information. This facilitates the development of complex digital projects and products of knowledge, which are elaborated between children and between children and adults.



digital bicycles for enjoyment in the park using arduino technology
designed by
Pop and Anna
(ages 8 to 9 years)



automated solar and wind-powered street cleaner using arduino technology
designed by Caden, Fabian and India
(ages 10 to 11 years)

elc international schools

The City School
Ages 3-11 years

Area: Thonglor
18 Soi Sukhumvit 49/4
Bangkok 10110

+66 (0)2 381 2919
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The Purple Elephant 39
Ages 18 – 36 months

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+66 (0)2 662 4570
purpleelephant@elc.ac.th

The Purple Elephant 49
Ages 18 – 36 months

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The Purple Elephant 55
Ages 18 – 36 months

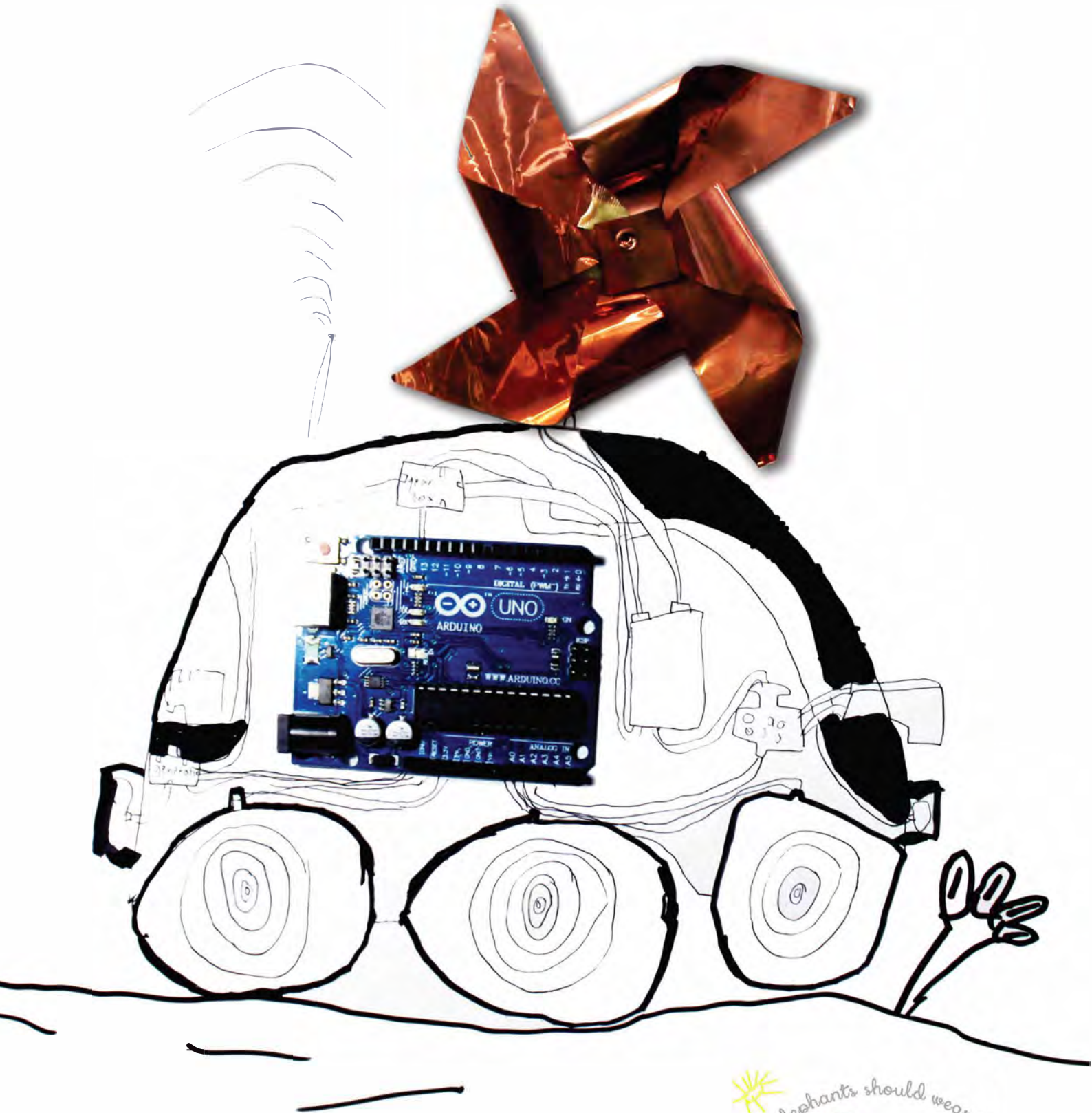
Area: Thonglor
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The Country School
Ages 18 months - 5 yrs

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The practice of religion in Nepal is a mixture of Hindu and Buddhist ways of life, which the Nepalese have merged. These beliefs are evident in their art as well as their surroundings.

Wandering into the heart of Kathmandu, up and down narrow alleys and passages, you pass little shops and old houses with intricately carved window frames. The shops sell thangkas (religious paintings) and shawls made from pashmina in different colours and quality. Their appearance startling in the dusty dimness. Every lane seems to lead to a little square. Soon you'll find roving in Durbar Square encircled by gilded spires and domes of countless

temples. I hate to think of the recent fire that gutted many houses, stores and temples in Kathmandu. I can just imagine the elaborately carved windows, pillars, domes and beams destroyed by the fire. Looking back, Durbar Square is an amazing sight. Every corner shelters a shrine which houses a God such as Ganesh (the elephant headed God) or Hanuman (the monkey God); carved on the side of a phallic representation of the Hindu God, Shiva is Buddha. All around, pigeons flutter from rooftop to rooftop.



The spirit of Nepal

by Arlene Rafiq

Nepal is a place associated with the distant and the incredible.

I've always wanted to return to this mysterious country if not for this pandemic which made it impossible to travel. I can still remember the thousands of visitors who savour the spirit of Nepal each year going home laden with things considered "Nepalese" – religious objects, antiques, carpets, pottery, embroidered clothing, gems and silver. You can see the excitement on their faces as they carry their amazing finds.

It was closed to autumn when we visited, so you can just imagine the cool weather condition. Even during summer time, the weather is unpredictable and it varies considerably with elevation. Looking at the photos we took then, the skies were clear and sunny, temperature range from warm in the lowlands to crisp in the mountains. We stayed a week so we ignored the weather and just seized the moment and enjoyed its mystique.

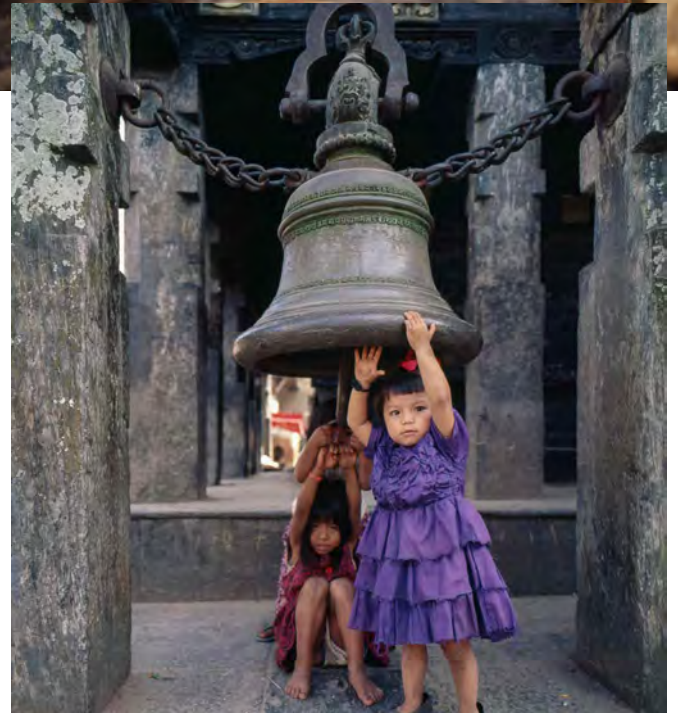
Nepal's splendour will forever be registered in your mind. As you walk through the roads and alleys, you experience the intense culture of the Hindus and slowly submerge into the quiet serenity of the Buddhists.



About thirty minutes from Kathmandu is the city of Patan. It offers a feast of diverse temple styles. The maze of temple shrines, small stupas and stupas, grinning Gods and Goddesses all intricately carved and ornamented give pleasure to the eye and bewilder the mind.

As you explore the Pashupatinath Temple area, you are surrounded by vendors selling all types of wares - from bangles to beaded necklaces with yak bone pendants to musical bowls. Swarming the temples are sadhus, Hindu holy men. Their bodies covered with yellow powder and ashes, they perform a myriad of self-mutilating feats as they go about their day to day existence. Saddhus have chosen to give up their material lives and walk about meditating in search for inner peace. They wander barefoot across the country on pilgrimage, receiving their sustenance from generous people.

At Bodnath Shrine stands the largest and most important stupa outside of Tibet. It sits on a flatland with the Buddha's eye painted on four sides. These eyes seem to follow and watch your every move.





Buddhists come from all over the world to visit this predominantly Tibetan shrine. Chanting can be heard from as far as five hundred metres reverberating around the site, adding to the feeling of peace that envelops the place. Colourful prayer flags have been strung by pilgrims. Even more fascinating than the impressive structure of Bodnath are the calm, spiritual people who throng to this temple.

At Nagarkot which is 2,195 metres above sea level with a magnificent panoramic view of the Himalayas, a splendid full moon covers the entire



valley below. It's breathtaking especially in the morning is the cleansing breeze,

accompanied by chirping birds and the aroma of wild and yet delicate flowers.

Golden yellow mustard flowers fill the fields around Bhaktapur. Walking the village streets paved with bricks and cobblestones, is quite an adventure. Black eyed children peering from window smile sweetly as I pass. Men are seen sitting or chatting quietly with each other while the women are working so hard gathering wood for cooking or carrying large baskets of ripened fruits and vegetables. I see an older woman bent over almost touching the ground, carries a load of dried twigs and a younger woman driving a flock of goats.

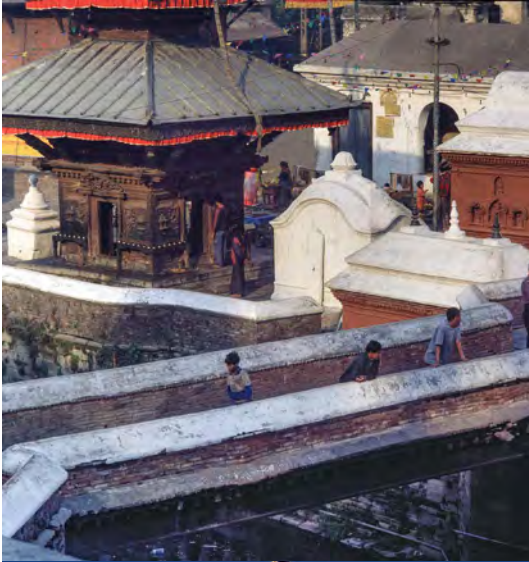
It is a long zigzag and dusty road inside the village but it is worth it. There are woodcarving shops, you can appreciate the intricate window frames, so different from the ones found in other parts of Asia. You can appreciate the warm and friendly people. Their faces show no sign of bitterness because of poverty, instead they seem to be happy and content.

My time in Nepal was a spiritual awakening

in some ways. Due to the sensitivity of the scene I have decided not to show any photos of what I had experienced... the cremation ceremony along the Bagmati River. I feel humbled to be able to witness how fellow humans with different beliefs, practice their faith at the time of returning the body to its creator. I watched the grief, a heartbreaking scene, and take the time to reflect on body, mind and soul.

After a week, I feel that I've barely scratch the surface. It will take me more than a month to fully understand the spirit of Nepal. Truly Nepal is a very interesting country. The uniqueness of the culture makes it an exciting place to visit. I have only begun.





Travelling throughout Colombia in the times of Covid

by Astrid Amaya Garcia

One of the most popular Ambassadorial couples to have served their country in Thailand over recent years were Andelfo and Astrid Garcia from Colombia. They were here for nearly six years but touched the heart of many with their warm embrace, exciting and convivial company. Expat Life caught up with them back in the Americas now and managed to persuade Astrid to share their recent travels with us.

After having the privilege of living almost six wonderful years in Thailand, as Colombian ambassadors to the wonderful kingdom, we both retired and began a tour for several countries, and on that journey, we returned to visit Colombia in January 2020.

We had an invitation to attend the Barranquilla Carnival along with some friends to continue travelling throughout the Caribbean region and then return to Bogota, to attend a wedding on March 11, and back to California, but on March 13 Colombia when many countries closed their international borders because of Covid 19, something unheard was going to change everybody's life.

We then spent five months in Bogota, confined, reading, writing, Netflix, experimenting with our cooking abilities,



and 'Zooming' with friends. We had time to work on many interesting projects that had been buried in our computers for years. The truth is, that it was a productive special time. Finally in August, Colombia opened local roads and we decided we had to reinvent our plans and since Colombia is enjoying the fruits of the peace process and the agreements of 2016, we decided that since we were in Colombia, we needed to organise 'Covid code' trips to explore Colombia by road. We did not use hotels, we used Airbnb to search and rent houses for a month in each region and from there we will go to the nearby towns using masks and with all the precautions recommended by the authorities. We will only attend open air restaurants for lunch, most restaurants anyway are working just by reservation, breakfast and dinner would be at home. We are lucky that everything had worked perfectly and we continued devouring roads, collecting experiences, and visiting pre-empty towns.

As a traveller always chasing places recognised for their cultural or natural value by UNESCO, as World Heritage Sites (WHS), this was a great opportunity to visit or revisit some of Colombia's nine recognised UNESCO WHS. They were





South following the course of the main river in Colombia, the Magdalena River that crosses the country from South to North. Our main purpose in this road trip was to visit Santa Cruz de Mompox (WHS). This is a beautiful city of historical value, founded in 1537 on the banks

of the river, a treasure that preserves intact the best Spanish colonial architecture, with its churches, its cobbled streets, and it's Caribbean flavour closely associated with the river.

Mompox was for many years the prime centre of gold and silversmithing being world recognised for its ancestral handmade Filigree Jewellery. Mompox still has many small family owned shops. I bought stunning filigree jewellery for my three daughters in law, my granddaughter, my sister in law, my sister, and for me.

We continued our road trip heading to Cartagena, the Heroic, (UNESCO WHS), named like that because the city resisted many attacks from Spain when trying to retake control of their colony and also many attacks from pirates. Cartagena amused us with its wall surrounding the old city, its plazas, houses, museums, churches, restaurants, fashion and jewellery designer stores, nightlife and it's warm people. After two wonderful weeks in Cartagena, we returned to Barranquilla to take our flight to Bogota to attend our friend's wedding.

That weekend the news struck us all Covid-19 was hitting Colombia and Colombia closed international flights. Like everybody else in the world, we had to confine ourselves. After our 5 months confined in the capital city, Bogotá, in August, the government opened roads and we decided there will be many months more waiting for a vaccine and we should get out of the city.



Cartagena, Santa Cruz de Mompox, The Coffee Cultural Landscape, San Agustin Archaeological Park, Tierradentro, Chiribiquete National Park, Los Katios National Park, Malpelo Fauna, and Flora Sanctuary, and the Tatacoa Desert (in the approval process). We will see how many we could visit before it is safe to return to the USA.

Going back to our story, before Covid, we went to Barranquilla, a city located on the coast of the Caribbean Sea. The Barranquilla Carnival was wonderful, well organised, it lasted for several days with music, dance, costumes, lights colours, and flavours. It was also a good pretext to get together with lovely long term friends. After this wonderful carnival, we rented a car and headed





So, we set off on our first 'Covid code' trip, it was to the Coffee Growing Region(WHS), to the provinces of Quindio and Risaralda. The region is a magical valley leaning on the central mountain range, one of the three mountain ranges of the Andean region of Colombia. This region is not only well known for the enchanting scenery of coffee farms but also for bird watching. Colombia occupies the first place in the world in a diversity of birds with almost 2,000 registered species, the coffee region has 35% of Colombian bird species. While in the region, we learned much about birds and we enjoy them every day, you could see them and hear their songs all day long from any place where you are.

Being an art lover and collector, and after hearing and watching birds every day, I sat with the native biologist and photographer Alejandro Grajales and selected from his hundreds of photos in his PC some photos to print a small

collection of indigenous birds from their four subregions, and now they are exhibited at the house where our friends graciously lent us and we enjoyed for a month.

I will enumerate just a few things from the most picturesque towns we visited. In Salento, The Cocora Valley is stunning with hundreds of Wax Palms, some of the tallest palms in the world. The area has its own bird sanctuary.

There we had the unique opportunity to see a condor flying just on top of us, it was very impressive. Another town is Pijao, which is surrounded by the most magical view of mountains, that we enjoy sitting at the Conrad Coffee place at the very top of the mountain. In Montenegro, you have The Paradise of Guadua and Bambu which is more impressive than the ones I have seen in other regions of the world. In Calarcá, the well kept Botanical Garden. Cartago is famous for exporting hand embroidery fashionable cloth, I bought lovely embroidered blouses for Christmas gifts.



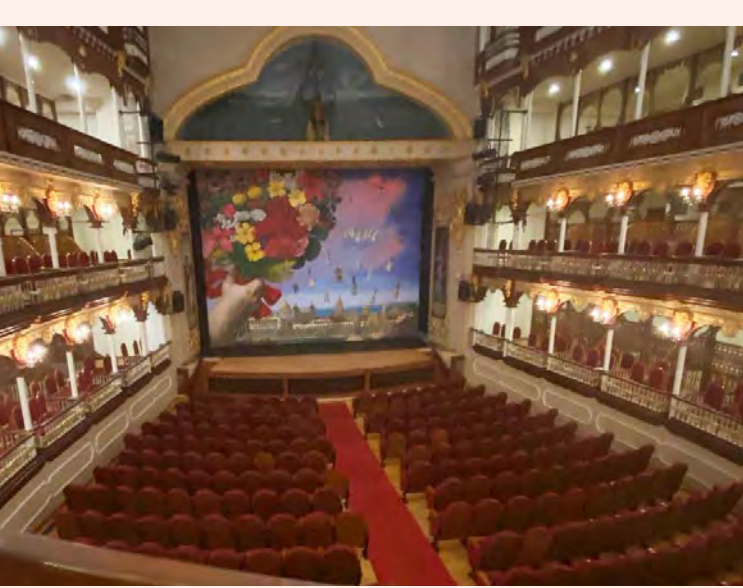
After one month of travelling throughout small semi-empty towns, again we returned to Bogota more in love with Colombia's nature and its people and once again departed this time to visit the province of Santander, located in the Northeast of Colombia, to settle in Barichara, another WHS.

Barichara is a city of cobbled streets and colonial architecture, in the heart of the town stands the Cathedral made of sandstone with an altar adorned in gold.

There are plenty of churches built in the 19th century. Each street has its own enchantment. You need to walk them all. All the streets are hill up or hill down, you will end with strong calves. At the top of the hill, it is the enchanting Bio-park, with many regional plants and a majestic view of mountains and the valley.

Again back to Bogota and then heading to visit the Southwest of Colombia, to San Agustín Archeological National Park (UNESCO WHS). The Park preserves hundreds of pre-Columbian statues, tombs, and utensils from hundred of





years before the arrival of the Spaniards conquistadors of America. The area is nestled in the Andes mountain range. San Agustín calls us for a reflection of the greatness of its original inhabitants and the enormous development and sophistication of their ancestral culture.

During that trip we discovered Villa Nueva, it was not in our plans, not even on the map. It is an undisclosed perfect small town paradise. Each house has a lovely front with plants and trees that provide shade. It has a cultural life of its own, the only school frames the plaza, revealing its importance. A well recognised national sculptor, Emiro Garzon made this town his paradise and has an incredible art internship programme for kids and soldiers from the army. All this happens without police or a mayor. The community has its own rules. Their inhabitants believe in their culture and in respecting each other.

We continue to the Tatacoa Desert (pending WHS) known for its ochre, grey and red sand dunes, and for being a perfect spot for star observers. It offers you every night an open sky spectacle of stars and constellations. We were lucky as a well known astronomer was there and gave us that very night a presentation and shared with us his powerful telescopes.

I conclude that the experiences lived throughout 2020 reaffirm that each challenge brings with it opportunities, but we have to search for them and we had to change gear. Covid-19 pandemic has taught us many things, yes, we had to be isolated, but we grew closer than ever. Never has so much happened to hit the whole world at the same time.

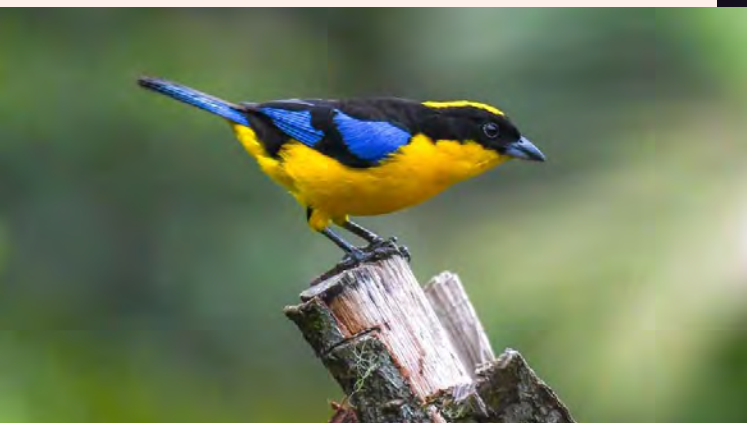
We are survivors of a time that blew up in our faces making us realise that it doesn't matter how powerful a country or a person is, we all live on this one the



only planet we all have and our actions affect the rest of the world. It is not only to take care of us but we need to be sure the others are taken care of too. We learned to hug each other and kiss with the soul.

This year is not a lost year because we are alive and if we learned to see things from a much more human perspective, then the world won more than ever. We could look around to help those who stayed behind, let's not waste time, let's not expect others to be better, let's all be better.

The post Covid era needs us united to keep moving forward and to love life as if it is our last day.





AROUND THE INDIAN GOLDEN TRIANGLE IN FOUR DAYS

by *Faristha Kanakkapillai*

I would always watch with envious eyes every time my friends posted pictures of themselves on Facebook and Instagram touring around the Golden Triangle of India – New Delhi, Agra and Jaipur.

My family is from South India and I am considered, technically speaking, an overseas citizen of India. So naturally, when I see my non-Indian friends exploring the Northern part of my ancestral home, I find myself thinking, “I should be the one there!”

About a year ago, when I flew to Chennai for a family wedding, I was determined to squeeze a trip to the Golden Triangle in my itinerary. It was a bit of a challenge as I only had a week off from work, and three of those days were automatically

blocked off for the wedding. Determined,

I contacted a travel agency, requested a tailor made four day tour package to New Delhi, Agra and Jaipur, and booked my trip without a second thought.

“Are you crazy?” was my Rajasthani friend’s initial reaction. I don’t blame her! After all, the three cities are huge and offer so much to see, do, and experience. Regardless, I did what most people around me thought was impossible.

Day 1: New Delhi

India Gate

After catching an early morning flight to Delhi, I headed straight for the famed India Gate, a memorial dedicated to the troops of British India who died fighting wars between 1914 and 1919. Standing 42 metres tall, the monument was majestic and well deserving of its title as “one of the best





attractions in India”. Fortunately, I had a guide explaining the history behind and significance of the monument as, if otherwise, I would not have had the appreciation I have now of the memorial or noticed the name inscriptions of over 13,000 soldiers who lost their lives fighting for the nation. It was an eye opener!

Humayun's Tomb

Originally built as a tomb for the Mughal emperor Humayun in the 16th century, Humayun's Tomb was truly a sight to behold. As I walked through the dome shaped entrance, I saw the red sandstone and white marbled exterior of the mausoleum and the contrasting greenery of the surrounding garden and let out a “Wow!”. It was beautiful!

After taking my time admiring the elaborate Persian designs and impeccable symmetry of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, I entered the mausoleum only to be blown away some more. The details were astounding. Personally speaking, Humayun's Tomb was the highlight of my day in Delhi.

Qutab Minar

Standing at an impressive 240 feet, Qutab Minar is another one of New Delhi's top attractions and UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The minaret was established in 1192 by Delhi's very first ruler Qutb-ud-din Aibak and was consequently named after him. Having spent a little longer than intended at India Gate and Humayun's Tomb, I, unfortunately, did not have time to see Qutub Minar as planned. However, I did admire the minaret in all its glory from a distance.

Day 2: Agra

Taj Mahal

On my first and only day in Agra, I woke up before sunrise and headed straight for the Taj Mahal, which is one of the most photographed monuments in the world according to my tour guide. I have seen the Taj Mahal hundreds of times in posters and magazines, but I had no idea seeing it in person would feel like my very first. As I entered the brick orange main gate, I saw the breathtaking white Makrana marbled mausoleum that was built by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in the 17th century to immortalise his love for his wife, Mumtaz Mahal. I was dumbfounded for what I was seeing was an architectural marvel. From the long watercourse reflecting Taj Mahal's beauty to the floral motifs made from precious and semi-precious stones etched on the white marbles, the monument was perfect in every way imaginable. If you are wondering, like I once did, whether the hype is worth it, I can assure you that it is. Taj Mahal is the epitome of love and beauty!

Red Fort

The Red Fort is one of the most celebrated monuments in India. Be it the architecture or history, its rich heritage makes it deserving of a spot on your itinerary. As I walked through the structures of the fort, I observed rare photographs, paintings, and objects such as pistols, swords, and shields that gave me a sneak peek into India's struggle for freedom. Needless to say, I certainly understand my roots better.





the palace is floating on water, almost drifting away, but it is just an illusion of the architecture. It was a pretty sight to see!

Jantar Mantar

If you are a fan of science, Jantar Mantar might interest you. It is an ancient observatory with a collection of 19 architectural astronomical instruments built by

the Maratha Rajput King, who was also the founder of Jaipur. The observatory features the world's largest stone sundial that can tell you exactly what time of the day it is. There are many more structures, like arcs and metal rings, with astronomical significance that are nothing short of fascinating.

City Palace

Occupying a seventh of the Old City, the City Palace is a beautiful attraction made of historic buildings, gardens, and courtyards. You will take a trip down history as you learn about the different figures that ruled the Old City of Jaipur, the clothes they wore, and the swords they possessed among other things. It is undoubtedly a paradise for those with a penchant for art and history.

Day 4: Jaipur

With just a few hours left to spare before my flight back to Chennai, I decided to go shopping. My first stop was the Saraogi Mansion, where I found beautiful traditional outfits

Day 3: Jaipur

Amber Fort

A fusion of Rajput and Mughal architecture, the Amber Fort is a UNESCO World Heritage site that is a must visit. While making my way to the top of the fort on a majestic elephant clad in bright colours, I relished the city's morning air and observed the rustic exteriors. Once I made it up, the interiors, in contrast, were intricate and in fine detail. As I walked around, I saw public halls of the past, the bedrooms in which the king's wives stayed, beautiful gardens, and much more, all of which were Instagram-worthy spots. One of my favourite places in the monument is Sheeh Mahal, the mirror palace. With glittering mirrors on the walls and ceilings, a single ray of light that enters naturally illuminated the entire space. It was magical!

Jal Mahal

The Jal Mahal is a palace that is entirely surrounded by water. It was built by Maharaja Madho Singh to serve as a lodge for his duck hunting parties. At first glance, you would think that



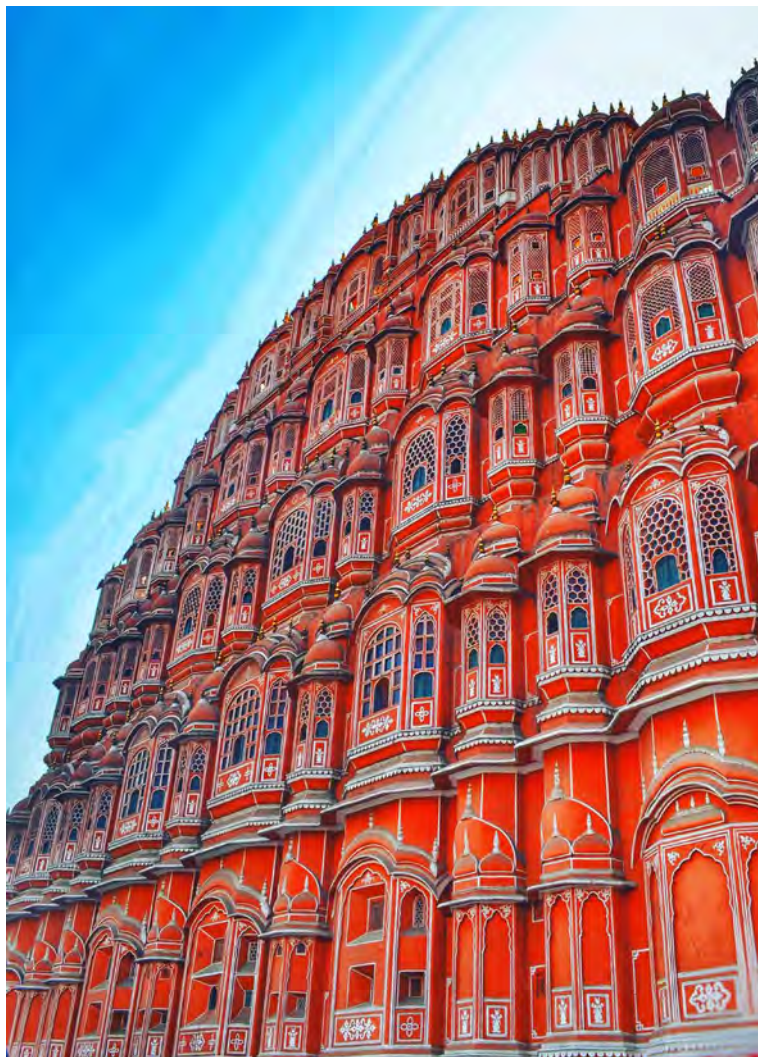
and jewellery to wear daily and on special occasions. Next, I headed to the Bapu Bazaar, a colourful market selling reasonably-priced jewellery, clothes, and scarves. You will also find attractive handicrafts that you can bring back home as souvenirs and ethnic printed rugs you can spice up your home with. It would be almost sinful to go to India and not indulge in the local sweets. So to end my trip on a sweet note, I went to Laxmi Misthan Bhandar (LMB), one of the most famous sweetshops in the city, and purchased kilograms of sugary Indian snacks, from sohan papdi to julebi and everything in between. If you must know, I devoured them all in just a few weeks' time.

Was my 4 day trip to India's Golden Triangle worth it? The short answer? Definitely!

Looking back, I am so glad I planned the trip even if it was just one that lasted four days. Exploring the Northern parts of India was a highly enjoyable and culturally enriching experience. Although I did not get to see as many places and do as many things as I had hoped in the four days I was there, I am not disappointed. I know I will go back to India for more, sooner or later.

About the author: Faristha is a Hong Kong-bred content writer who moved to the Land of Smiles in 2018. When she's not holding her pen, Faristha likes to explore the nooks and crannies of Bangkok, indulge in her all-time favourite kaeng khiao wan, and escape to the idyllic islands nearby.

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The Maldives is a picture postcard retreat

by Neil Brook

Visions of skimming through the water sipping Champagne quickly disintegrate as we board the dingy with two outboard motors, life jackets and hold on as we thump, thump, thump over huge waves, spray showering the bow, guided by satellite navigation.

A friend has extended an invitation to visit her in the Maldives where she is working. We arrive at the airport and I'm guided to the business class check in area. An amazing surprise. We are flying with Sri Lankan Airlines from Singapore via Colombo to Male, the capital. We often discuss the merits of upgrading. Is it worth it for a short flight, three hours thirty minutes to Colombo then a little over an hour to Male, on a single aisle Airbus A320. The answer smacks us in the face at check in. Queues a mile long and no one in the business class line. Yes, L'Oreal, we are worth it. Nice roomy seats and a Champagne greeting. Many flights

into and out of Male arrive and depart in the dead of night or at times in the morning usually reserved for lining up to get into clubs. Ours is no different.

Male airport is a runway on an island in the North Male atoll. Spectacular. At least we can see that from photos. In reality, we land in darkness, clear customs and make our way to our launch transfer. Two young guys at the helm, twenty years old if that. Is one of you the Captain? Maybe two mates taking turns leading the joy ride across the

Indian Ocean. I am comfortable on boats having grown up in exploring the islands and the Great Barrier Reef adjacent to Australia's Northeast coast. My partner however is not. We need to call the resort and order some double Vodkas to greet us please.

We arrive, are greeted, check in and find the bar. Our first two nights are in a beach house after which we move to an overwater villa. Sleep.

We have seen the photos and read the reviews. Nothing and I mean nothing can prepare you for the visual masterpiece that greets the eyes as the sun rises and the Maldives reveals its glory. Blue, blue, blue. White sand, palm trees swaying and an ocean so clear you can see, well everything beneath the surface. No need for polarised glasses. However using them creates an even more vivid three dimensional sea world opening up a playground to dive into and explore.

Our previous night's adventure slips away to the archives of the brain. Relax.

Staying at the Holiday Inn Kandooma like most in this archipelago, we are at the mercy of the resort. The island is the resort.

The ocean, a couple of metres from our room, opens its arms and beckons with a gentle lapping at the shore. We scuttle across the white sand, not yet hot to the touch and slip into the water in which was to become our daily morning ritual. This could be your home away from home. Have the resort provide catering and settle in, grilling lunches and dinners on your BBQ downstairs next to your beach level living room, oblivious to the rest of the world, which is out there somewhere. There are six types of accommodation scattered across the island all designed to allow privacy. The island is small, you can walk around it in 45 minutes.



However there are bays and lagoons where you can disappear into your own private island retreat. Although we see people, the resort is the perfect size and affords guests the privacy usually reserved for Sir Richard Branson and friends on Necker Island.

A seamless move to our overwater villa drops us into heaven. For me, this is the Maldives. Built over a lagoon. A manmade reef break allows the tides to ebb and flow creating an oasis of crystal clear water teeming with fish. The sound

of the waves crashing on the break is a constant reminder of where you are and a reminder of perhaps how fragile the world is. Without the intervention of man, our protected villas would be open to the seas and the uncertainty of the ocean and the weather. With global warming is it better to take steps to protect or change our lifestyles? An ongoing debate and the Maldives has been vocal in urging the world to act. Those most at risk seem at odds with land locked countries and those on higher ground, self interest in the foreground rather than seeing the world as a whole, populated by global citizens ensuing a future for all.

You can pick out individual grains of sand and follow the fish as they dart back and forth. Our villa sits on stilts allowing the ocean to rise and fall without lapping at the door. A ramp for easy access to the water, outside shower and bath, deck, uninterrupted ocean views... Waves glide towards you like the silhouette of the invisible man, distorting the shapes of objects as he walks by and you are not sure if you see anything or if your mind is playing tricks on you. With white sand made of desiccated coral the use of reef walking shoes is essential. Now an enjoyable experience rather than one treading carefully through the water balancing and negotiating as you go. Garfish huddle under our new home, parents sheltering their young. Mesmerising, all pointing towards the incoming current, motionless except for a slight flip of the tail to stay in formation.





Our lagoon is a playground for the rich and famous, sorry, for fish and villa guests. I have befriended a parrot fish, blue, pink, green and yellow. He weaves in between my legs – aren't most male animals the prettier of the species? I drag my

finger along the water as he swims up to enquire, getting close but not too close. Not one for fishing, I get the allure of fly fishing now, jousting with no eventual winner. I am having childish fun. I hope my new friend is too, as his other friends join in and loop around me in a game of catch, which no one ever wins. He is here everyday.

Our friend organises a dinner on a private beach as a surprise. Another boat trip worth every minute. Leaving in the late afternoon we arrive at a table and chairs set up on sand jetting out into the ocean, candles ready

to illuminate the evening as darkness descends. As night falls we rely on the dim of the night lights glowing on moored boats not too far away, the candles and the stars to guide our senses as we enjoy a meal of salads, meat, seafood, dessert and wine. All prepared somewhere in the trees, a catering set up just for us, waiter and chef. The boat ride back a sleigh ride over an ice rink of smooth water.

Joining other guests in the evening at the bar, sharing stories and adventures is a part of travel I love.



They can enlighten you and inspire you to take journeys you may not have considered, to try something new and to expand your horizons.

We share stories. Mine is the parrot fish and of a day wakeboarding among the reefs, others secret beach spots, reef shark encounters, dive trips and good books. Everyone has a story. Staff share their experiences, where they have worked, why they are here and where they hope to work next. Island life can get a little isolating if you are working here. Island fever can take hold and then it's time to move on, however with no regrets. Our friend has since moved to Thailand.

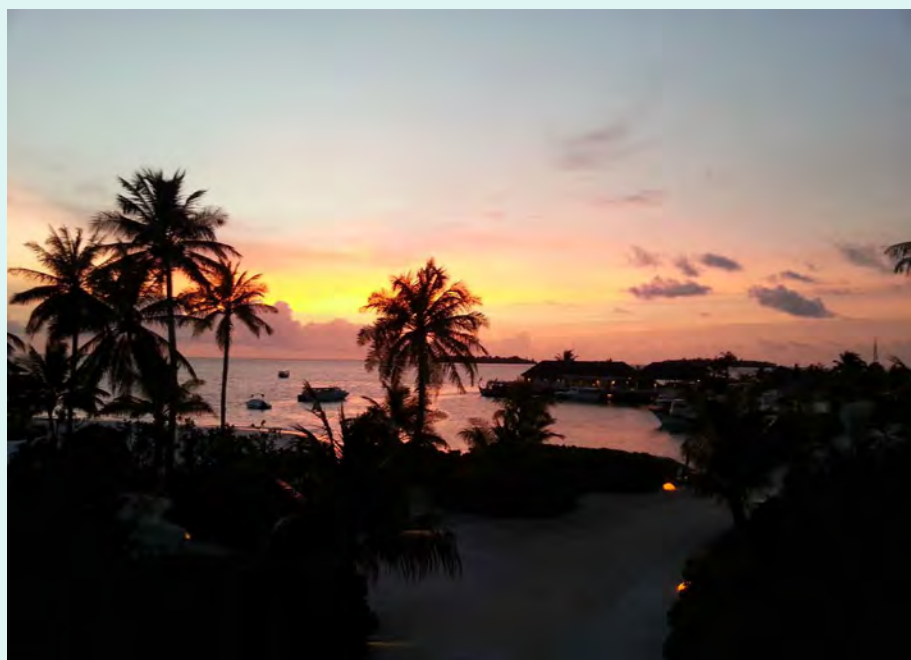
Leaving a vacation is always difficult, like pulling teeth as a child, something that needs to be done and the quicker the better. Our flight leaves at 1am so we can slip away without noticing the sand, surf and sun we are leaving behind.



We are prepared for the journey this time and others join for the 45 minute cruise to the airport. With the lights of Male airport approaching there is a sudden silence as we are plunged into darkness, set adrift, our engines exhausted not wanting to complete the journey. Even my heart jumps, suddenly all senses set to overload as eyes adjust and reality hits. Horror doesn't really capture the look on everyone's faces. OK captain, kids, do something! Drifting back to our resort could be OK but

swept out to sea washed up on a reef or captured by pirates is not. Engines up, open, screwdrivers out. Our boat driving cowboys are on to it. Problem fixed, thinking this may be a regular occurrence, we are off. Radio the plane, triple Vodka please.

We will be back to enjoy the Maldives, it's beauty and it's hospitality. Arriving and leaving in day light next time to really appreciate such a spectacularly beautiful part of the world.



Leading beauty brands under L’Oreal Group join forces to fight against domestic violence, street harassment and depression to help women

by Onanong Pratakphiriya

Domestic violence is closer than you think. It is often perpetrated by someone close or intimate with the victim. More than 600 million women live in countries where intimate partner violence or domestic violence is not considered a crime. Domestic violence and abuse do not discriminate. It can happen to anyone, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, or background. Women and children are often more vulnerable to domestic violence, which rears its head in various forms, including physical, sexual, financial and emotional as well as controlling behaviour. Domestic violence and abuse are used to gain and maintain control, keeping victims under the abuser’s thumb. There are many causes of domestic violence and abuse. It may start when one partner feels the need to control and dominate the other because of low self-esteem, extreme jealousy, difficulties controlling strong emotions or when they are under a lot of stress.

We at L’Oréal fully understand the seriousness of domestic violence and felt the need to take action against violence and stand up for those who are most in need. We



want to use our brands and partnerships with non-profit organisations as a platform for meaningful campaigns that spread knowledge and raise awareness about domestic violence and mental health issues, with the hope that it can be useful and further contribute to meaningful change as well as to help break the stigma behind domestic violence as well as ally the trauma of the abused victims.

During this difficult time we brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown situation, we hear and see heartbreaking stories of domestic abuse becoming increasingly prevalent. Many women are trapped living with an abusive partner during the lockdown and are unable to seek help from experts, organisations, friends, loved ones or colleagues.

One of our brands, Yves Saint Laurent Beauty in Paris, France, launched the “Abuse is Not Love” programme in November. It is a global programme aimed at helping combat intimate partner violence (IPV). Approximately 1 in 3 women will experience intimate partner violence in their lifetime and prevalence rates have increased from 30% to 60% as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the United States, United Kingdom and France, one woman is killed every three days by their partner. *Abuse is Not Love* is supporting the prevention programmes of its non-profit partners through funding academic research to develop thought leadership around youth and prevention, training YSL Beauty employees and beauty advisors on intimate partner violence in the





workplace as well as educating at least 2 million people by 2030 on common signs of IPV. If key warning signs can be detected early, we may be able to recognise it better and seek or offer help to the victims. *Abuse is Not Love* was launched as a global programme with 3 key partnerships in 2020: *En Avant Toute(s)* in France, Women's Aid in the UK, and It's on Us in the U.S., with more partnerships coming in 2021 in other countries.

"Supporting women, especially when it comes to their independence, is central to the way the brand acts. Intimate partner violence hinders the safety, wellbeing and independence of women," said Stephan Bezy, International General Manager at Yves Saint Laurent Beauty. "It therefore felt very natural to work on an issue that stood in opposition to our core values and beliefs."

Maybelline New York also felt the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic which has taken a physical and mental toll on everyone around the world. More than 284 million people experienced anxiety disorders. Depression affects more than 264 million people. Half of all mental health conditions start by age 14, and with the Covid-19 pandemic, these numbers are rising. With anxiety and depression on the rise, as the No. 1 international makeup brand, Maybelline

New York wants to provide the right support to help tackle obstacles that are in the way of women and young adults making their mark. With the help of leading mental health NGOs, experts and advocates are offering hands to help Maybelline during this programme which is the "Maybelline Brave Together Programme". It is a global cause that provides critical one-on-one support and helps everyone, everywhere.

"Maybelline has always believed in the power of making things happen in your life. And we know that mental health is critical in feeling ready to do that," says Trisha Ayyagari, Global Brand President, Maybelline New York. "We want to use our global voice to de-stigmatise the conversation around mental health and make support easily accessible. Now, more than ever, we need to be there for those living with anxiety and depression."

Maybelline's *Brave Together* programme aims to help teenagers and young adults who are struggling with anxiety and depression, to break down the stigma around anxiety and depression, and provide cross-generational support. By partnering with leading non-profit organisations, the programme has a specially curated online platform that gives people around the world access to an online community. The programme was announced on @Maybelline Instagram account and maybelline.com/bravetogether in September.

Over the past two years, Maybelline has commissioned an expert led research and conducted focus groups to better understand the topic of mental health. In the focus group, people need a globally accessible platform featuring resources and tips on mental health. Our online community will foster an open, diverse and inclusive destination with inspiration and stories from real people and experts worldwide. To let them know that they are not in this alone, Maybelline has partnered with leading non-profit organisation Crisis Text Line to provide increased access to free, 24/7 confidential crisis counselling via text message – those in need can text TOGETHER to 741741 to connect with a crisis counsellor. Maybelline also wants to expand this programme even further and has committed to investing \$10 million over the next five years to mental health organisations worldwide who share its goal of making a real difference. Maybelline Brave Together will continue to grow and develop with the current environment with support from its partners.

An international survey on sexual harassment in public spaces, conducted in partnership with L'Oreal Paris, Ipsos and researchers at Cornell University, reveals that 78% of women have experienced sexual harassment in public spaces. Only 25% of victims say someone helped them. Moreover, 86% of us do not know what to do when we witness it happening. Also, the survey found that 79% of victims of sexual harassment in public spaces say it improved the situation when a witness intervened. These results are extremely alarming.

Armed with information and the determination to stand up for all women and combat against everyday street harassment, L'Oréal Paris launched an international bystander training programme called "*Stand Up Against Street Harassment*" in partnership with NGO Hollaback! The programme aims to train 1 million people globally in bystander intervention to tackle street harassment. Stand Up aims to simultaneously discourage harassers, support victims, and encourage bystanders to intervene in a bid to overall effect a cultural shift in the global response to street harassment. With the brand's signature tagline, "I'm worth it", L'Oréal Paris has multiplied brand initiatives to break down the barriers that prevent women from fully believing in and realising their self-worth. Leveraging its global reach, today, the Stand Up movement takes the brand's support for women into the public space by tackling the intimidating behaviours that impact girls' and women's very sense of freedom to move through the world.

"L'Oréal Paris stands for empowerment in every walk of a woman's life. By removing obstacles preventing women from fulfilling their ambitions, we are committed to elevating their sense of self-worth. With Hollaback! and other local NGO partners we invite women and men to stand up, to



safely respond when they witness or experience street harassment. Together we can create a world for girls and women to march confidently forward into a future free from street harassment."

Delphine Viguier-Hovasse, Global Brand President of L'Oréal Paris.

The Stand Up programme was launched in five countries on International Women's Day, which is celebrated on March 8. It will be launched in more countries including Thailand. The programme aims to drive awareness of street harassment on a global scale to create a call-to-action. To prevent street harassment happening in the future — from schools to public transport to festivals to online spaces — Stand Up will grow a global community of 1 million

up standers trained in the 5Ds method: Direct, Distract, Delegate, Document, and Delay.

Thai women also encounter domestic violence, street harassment and depression. L'Oréal Thailand will activate the brands' global campaigns as well as provide tools and trainings in Thailand to help raise awareness and fight against these issues.



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How to use conflict to strengthen your relationships With your family and your partner and yes even with your parents

by Monisha Bajaj,
Founder of Ruam Chuay



When was the last time you had a disagreement with someone you cared about? Likely, not too long ago. Conflict in our relationships is a source of a lot of stress for many of us.

At Ruam Chuay, we run workshops on safer relationship skills as part of our interpersonal violence prevention programme. In one of our workshops, we spent some time exploring conflict in intimate relationships and families. At the beginning of the session, we asked the students what they think of conflict. Is it positive, negative, or neutral?

The responses were split across the participants, they either answered that they felt conflict was negative or neutral. No one categorised conflict as positive. Given that often when we experience conflict it is usually accompanied by heightened emotions and intense feelings, this response wasn't surprising to us.

How do you view conflict?

One of the reasons we are interested in how we respond to conflict and include this within our violence prevention programme is because it is important to distinguish between healthy conflict and emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is when someone uses their words or actions to control or dehumanise another person. This one of the four types of harm we work to prevent. Whereas, healthy conflict is a normal part of our relationships. One of our goals is to equip students with skills and help them learn how to navigate

conflict safely. When faced with a conflict with a partner, parent, sibling, or friend, we all react differently. Some people have a tendency to want to avoid addressing the issue, others want to deal with it right away, some need a little time, and others find themselves somewhere in the middle - wanting to address but not knowing exactly how to navigate the situation.

Our response is typically dependent on how we make sense of and understand conflict. How we understand conflict is based on a few factors. One of them is how we have seen conflict play out in our family and society before. Bobbie Harro describes this process as the cycle of socialisation. The cycle, Harro illustrates, begins in childhood on a personal level from our parents, relatives, and teachers. They are reinforced by institutions and cultural norms we grow up in, such as schools and the media. The result is that we often mirror what we are taught and our thoughts and actions are influenced by the messages we absorb. This cycle applies to many different parts of our lives, including how we perceive conflict.

This is why we posed the question about how the students feel about conflict at the beginning of the workshop. We want to understand what their current perception of conflict is. Which, as shared earlier, was either negative or neutral. While the response was not too surprising to us - given that, typically, socially and culturally, we see conflict as a problem to solve - it was one that we were there to examine together and begin to change.

Conflict in and of itself is not negative or positive. The emotions conflict triggers and the feelings surrounding it are what we categorise as negative or positive. A quick note that we define emotions as the neurobiological and physical response that happens in our body. Whereas, feelings are the



way we make sense of these emotions through our beliefs and perception, as described by neurologist Antonio R. Damasio, along with a handful of psychologists and researchers.

So, how do we view conflict? We see conflict as a signal.

Conflict is a signal that there is something deeper going on beneath the surface. It is the tip of the iceberg. If you have ever found yourself caught in the same argument over and over again, with the same person, you have likely experienced what we call only addressing the surface level issue.

When we think of conflict we see it in two layers: the surface level issue and, beneath this, the root cause. When we get into an argument with someone we care about, many of us resolve or deescalate the situation, without taking the time to examine the root cause.

For example, let us say two people who live together are arguing over a messy room. One person might be annoyed the other person always leaves their bags on the floor making the room look untidy. They argue over putting the bags away and decide that moving forward the bags belong in a closet. At that moment, the conflict is considered resolved. Until this happens again. This is because they only addressed the surface level issue.

What could be the root cause? After a conversation, they find out that the person who wants the bags to be put away cares about having a clean space because they feel their space is a reflection of who they are and they like being organised. Whereas, the person who leaves their bags on the floor does it because it's convenient and they like when things are easily accessible to them. The root cause is a difference in what they value. One person values organisation, while the other values convenience. If you

examine some of their other conflicts closely, you might find this root cause shows up in situations too, with different surface level issues.

This example is of a more common type of argument. But, this approach can be applied to more serious issues and topics too. Including the ones we consider taboo. At Ruam Chuay, we create safe spaces for us to discuss topics such as family violence, dating violence, and sex. Many of us instinctively consider these topics taboo. In large part, due to how we are socialised (recall the cycle of socialisation mentioned earlier). When discussing these topics, due to the personal and

sensitive nature, people often have disagreements with others about them. Especially if they have different perspectives and levels of understanding of the issue being discussed. Just as described earlier, we take the time to explore the surface level issue and then examine the root cause. Before moving into finding solutions.



Get to the root cause to create connection.

We have created these spaces with over 800+ people. The majority of the time, if we are able to get to the root cause, we are able to turn moments of tension into moments of connection. We build better understanding between people involved in these necessary conversations.

If we take our previous example, the argument over the bags, we might be able to see how people can understand each other better when they hear what the other person values, instead of where the bags will be stored in the house.

Building this type of understanding in our relationships, whether that is with a parent, partner, sibling, or friend, helps us begin to take steps towards actually addressing our conflicts for the long term. It is also the first step to forming better relationships and connection with the people we care about and creating change.

We understand that this is easier said than done. Navigating conflict safely, and effectively, is an essential relationship skill. Like any skill, it can be learned. At any age. Ruam Chuay's work is unique in that, not only are we the first and only organisation of its kind in Thailand, but we our work



is intergenerational – we work with young adults, parents, and grandparents. We run workshops on safer relationships skills where we explore what safe vs. unsafe relationships look like, understand the lens and perspective to help you strengthen your relationships, and go through tangible exercises to help you put this into practice.

Doing this work, we see firsthand how a seemingly simple shift in our perception looking at conflict as a signal instead of something negative, neutral, something to avoid, brush off, or deal with head on quickly, makes all the difference. It allows us to change how we approach conflict.

Making it less stressful, and more useful.

Enabling us to use conflict as an entry point to have meaningful conversations that can help us strengthen our relationships. And, importantly, create safer relationships.

If you would like to become an advocate for change and help create safer communities, we invite you to join us. After all, “Ruam Chuay” translated to English means “collective support.”

Refer us or bring a facilitated workshop and talk to your school or organisation by contacting us directly at hello@ruamchuay.org

¹Harro, B. (2013). The Cycle of Socialisation. M. Adams (Ed.), In Readings for Diversity and Social Justice (pp. 45-52). Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. Lenzen, M. (2005). Feeling Our Emotions. Scientific American.



The helpers

by Meghan Lynch

When I was little I was laid down to sleep by hands that have felt darkness and light, eyes that have seen grief and pain, yet never allowing us to see it in their gaze.

My pancakes were made extra doughy by a woman who has cared for children from third world countries and children from all over the New England states who needed specialised care. My body was hugged and felt safe by a man who rushed to houses in the middle of a cold dark night to save someone's dream home that was up in flames.

I grew up playing inside of a funeral home, my siblings and I played hide-and-go-seek behind caskets and thought nothing of the body laying in the room waiting for their family to come see him or her dressed and made up for their final goodbye. In my teenage years I would happily join my Dad on a ride to – pardon the harshness – “go pick up a body”



at the airport. The quiet ride together and the reality of life and death so profound at that age.

I was raised by The helpers. These helpers are my parents. Helen and Russ. When my father returned from the Vietnam War to find a ‘new normal’ way of life, he worked as a contractor and then later was hired as a funeral assistant at a funeral home, close to where he was raised.

Years later he went to school to become an EMT and then a full time firefighter. He worked at the funeral home and as a firefighter for 32 and 34 years, respectively.

My mother and her eldest sister became the first two of three sisters to become nurses. In her career she worked in a children's hospital, nursing homes and her favourite – which ended her nursing career on paper – a school nurse to elementary school aged children.

Our lives were filled with shift schedules. My Dad entered home in one uniform, to the “station” as it was said in our house. My Mom left once he arrived – to work the nightshift to help make ends meet. We heard beepers ring in the night, we were left staring at my father's empty chair where his Thanksgiving meal was sat, covered in aluminium foil awaiting his safe return from the massive warehouse fire he was helping the neighbouring city put out.

Our house did not have a study with a computer, or framed diplomas with their degrees and accolades lining our hallways.





Our house was not large, modern or trendy. It was cosy, filled with warm blankets for cuddling up, the smell of cookies and bread being baked in the oven. It was an open door, welcoming, loving, and healing you. It was filled with the noises that alarmed us, let us know something was happening, that there was an emergency, or someone had passed through to the gates of heaven.

This was my childhood. Early dinners we shared before Dad headed off to his shift just to simply be together. Secret “free” car washes in the back of the station garage that Dad would allow when we had our first car. I can still smell the soap they used. Mom was called on by neighbours, hurt children, ill parents needing home care – could she help? Did she have time to spare?

Each corner I turned I was praised for their goodness. Teachers, coaches, my friends’ parents acknowledging how my Mom or Dad had helped them through a death, a tough time, or a moment where they didn’t know where to turn and when they found them they were saved.

A gentle word said by my Dad to comfort someone’s loss at a viewing. My Mom’s support and referral to a hospital she knew someone working at, to help connect them to a Doctor and speed up a pending diagnosis. There would be late summer evening knocks at the door to see if she could clean

boo-boos from boys who fell off their bikes or out of the tree. She’d greet them with warmth and a tender touch, making you feel instantly better and safe with her voice and hands alone.

It meant something then, it was a feeling, undefinable until I was older. The feeling would run deep, even at six years old when I was watching my Dad in his fire gear teach my classmates how to “Stop, drop, and roll.” Lessons scheduled each month in our home to make sure we knew our escape route and how to execute. It wasn’t paranoia, it wasn’t overdone. It was simply natural – as if a chef would teach their child to sear a steak or a hairdresser teaching their daughter how to cut her fringe.

Right or wrong, too much or too little, this was how my older sister, younger brother and I were raised. It was a childhood with caution, awareness, stories of triumph and sadness, and exciting outcomes after heartbreak and fear.

We learned how to accept disappointment - if my Dad made it to our field hockey game we were lucky that day and never took it for granted. Understanding on that day he planned to drive an hour to see our championship game, he never arrived. I’d look for his face, his uniform perhaps to flash on the side of my eye as I dribbled down the sideline – when it didn’t come, I knew he tried. It was just that he had to

help and that support he’d be giving may be to someone suffering their greatest pain.

My parents have been retired for years. They’ve been able to have a huge hand in supporting my sister, Heather and her husband Sean raising their three children, Caitlin, Cara and Connor. They’ve made their home into my family’s only home in the USA for the past six years as we’ve lived in Bangkok. Reverting movie rooms back to play rooms, and reconverting bedrooms that had long ago been turned to storage rooms back into bedrooms with Star Wars adorned beds and closets filled with boys shorts and tee shirts from the house we sold.

Even though their careers ended, The helping did not and it far exceeds my immediate family. When COVID started to become more prevalent in March, I asked my parents while on a FaceTime call what it felt to be them right now. How were they coping, being the helpers of the past and now, unable to due to age and ability? They were quiet, they looked at each other while finding the words.

After some time Mom spoke and said “I wish I could do more, I wish I could help, I want to help.” Dad nodded, and said “I agree, it is difficult to sit here and not be doing.”

We talked more, sharing how the pandemic was impacting healthcare, essential workers, and funeral homes overrun so much so that bodies were placed in refrigerated





trucks in parking lots.

Both of my parents couldn't fathom what was happening and how to overcome it.

As the months have gone on (and on...) I ask my parents how things are and what they are up to, everyday we chat via text and when we FaceTime a few times a week I get the full rundown. They tell me they aren't doing much, other than keeping safe and following the rules. That doesn't surprise me one bit. Of course these two who have seen and experienced so much would understand that the cost of doing anything other than following the rules would be too painful if something did happen to them.

When they talk they don't realise they are helping. They stay upbeat, Dad always throws in a joke with sincerity sprinkled around. That is my point in all of this – so they aren't in the field, or on call, but in many ways they are. Their love and kind words help. They make bread and pass it on to the neighbours. They take walks and talk at a safe distance to anyone who passes by and seems lonely.

That helps. They support my siblings, nieces and nephew in the safest way they know how.

If you looked at them and peered into their souls, you would see all they've done for others has just made sense and has never been a compromise. There is a world full of these humans and they are to be treasured and appreciated. This pandemic is showing the amount of these selfless beings and in some way I hope we can look at that as a light, that we were able to see what the helpers are dedicated to and how many there are. If I can sure

say anything myself, they are capable of a whole heck of a lot.

“Don't be hard on yourself, or others. None of us have done this before, none of us know what we are doing. We weren't trained for this.” Russell F. McKenna Sr. My Dad's first words of encouragement when we went into lockdown in Bangkok and we talked about what it felt like.

Meghan Lynch
December 9, 2020

About the author: Meghan Lynch lives in Bangkok with her husband and 4 boys. She loves to contribute her stories of her life abroad, travels and deeply rooted love for family, traditions and making memories.



FAMOUS FOR BEING FAMOUS – ANNA HARRIETTE LEONOWENS

by Leonard H. Le Blanc III

If Constantine Phaulkon is the most famous (or completely notorious, at least definitely the most controversial, depending on your viewpoint) “farang” to ever reside in the Kingdom (Roger Crutchley excepted), then Anna Leonowens easily qualifies as the most famous (or completely notorious, at least definitely the most controversial) woman to ever live in the Kingdom. Throughout her life she completely “re-invented” herself more times than Madonna and Kim Kardashian put together. But she always lived by the motto (as we always say in Hollywood): “There is no such thing as bad publicity (unless you are Woody Allen, Mel Gibson or Bill Cosby).” In retrospect, and by all accounts, she lived a most convoluted, sometimes fascinating, life that still, if somewhat surprisingly at this late date, negatively affects Thailand today. (This woman will simply not go away from Thai history! And no one can get rid of her!) It is also completely ironic to note that the one person who did more than anyone else to publicise the Kingdom of Thailand throughout world history did it all wrong: mainly by using gross misrepresentations, made up lies, wild exaggerations, total inventions and legal libel against the country just to make a living. But she achieved a backhanded immortality in doing so.

Anna Harriette Leonowens was born Ann Hariett Emma Edwards in 1831 in Ahmednagar, India. From her earliest childhood days to when she first showed up in Bangkok in 1862 as an English teacher for the Court of King Mongkut (King Rama IV) and afterwards, it would take whole volumes (or libraries) written by forensic genealogists and the most dedicated historians to cover all of it. The problem is Anna Leonowens quickly realised that because she was of Anglo-Indian ancestry, that if that fact were known to the local British inhabitants, it would gravely hinder her and her children’s future prospects in life. This was due to the very rigid British social caste rules and inflexible societal customs against mixed-ancestry people. So she put in a tremendous effort to completely disguise or hide her origins in an effort to simply live a decent life and ensure that she and her children had greater opportunities to succeed in the face of any social ostracisation.

Although Anna Leonowens is also enshrined in



Hollywood film lore, she also can lay claim to being related to another Hollywood icon: Boris Karloff her great-nephew, the original Frankenstein monster actor and subsequent horror master of the genre. In 1845, her younger sister, Eliza, married James Millard in India. Their daughter, also named Eliza, married an Edward Pratt in 1864 in India. They later returned to London where they had a son born in 1887. His name was Edward. Edward Pratt, Jr. took the stage name Boris Karloff in 1912 and made cinema history in the 1930s by playing Frankenstein, The Mummy and other iconic screen characters for decades. He had a long, successful career in film, radio, TV and print media.

Anna married a British Army paymaster’s clerk named Thomas Leon Owens on Christmas Day 1849 in Poona, India. On their marriage certificate, Thomas merged his second and last names to ‘LeonOwens’ or later spelled ‘Leonowens’. In 1852, the couple emigrated to Perth, Australia with Anna’s uncle, W. V. Glasscott for work. Anna took up teaching. The couple stayed until 1857 when they abruptly left for Singapore then later moved to Penang. But her husband died in May 1859, so Anna returned to Singapore as an impoverished widow. She completely reinvented herself as a Welsh born widow of a British Army major and started teaching again by opening a school for children of British Army officers. Then stroke of fortune struck in 1862 when a job offer suddenly appeared to teach in Bangkok.



were very popular, so she began to run in good company with other literary luminaries on the lecture circuit. Her bank account fattened. In 1874 her son Louis had accumulated some debts, so he fled the U.S. for parts unknown. Since he and his mother grew estranged she did not see him for 19 years. In the summer of 1878 Anna was teaching Sanskrit at Amherst College in Massachusetts. That same year her daughter was wed to a Scottish banker in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. Anna moved there and used that as her base of operations while she periodically globe trotted until 1897. In 1880 she was back in New York City teaching and in the public eye once again. In

One might think that Anna Leonowens was King Mongkut's (King Rama IV) first choice for an English tutor for his young wives and children. Actually she came along later in the process. In the late 1850s King Mongkut decreed that his young wives and young princesses should start to learn English. He was the first Thai monarch to speak English and he wanted his royal family to learn the language so he could converse with them. Three wives of British missionaries were then employed as teachers. However they only used Christian books printed in Thai and insisted their students read them, no doubt along with some heavy Christian proselytising in English thrown into the bargain. No other English or Thai textbooks were used. Finally King Mongkut ended the lessons, no doubt in some exasperation. Several years later he directed his counsel in Singapore to find a suitable English teacher. One lady was found and recommended as a qualified candidate, Anna Leonowens. King Mongkut was very specific in his letter of invitation to Anna Leonowens in he did not wish her to use religious texts or introduce religion into her English language lessons.

Anna sent her daughter to school in England and took her son, Louis, to Bangkok. She served as a teacher and later as a language secretary at the royal court for six years until 1867. From all reports she was unhappy both at court and in Bangkok. Although she was welcomed by the American missionaries in social circles in Thailand, the British socially ostracised her for whatever reason. Anna was in England on leave when King Mongkut suddenly died in 1868. The new monarch, King Chulalongkorn (King Rama V) sent her a warm letter of congratulations and thanked her for her services, she was not invited back.

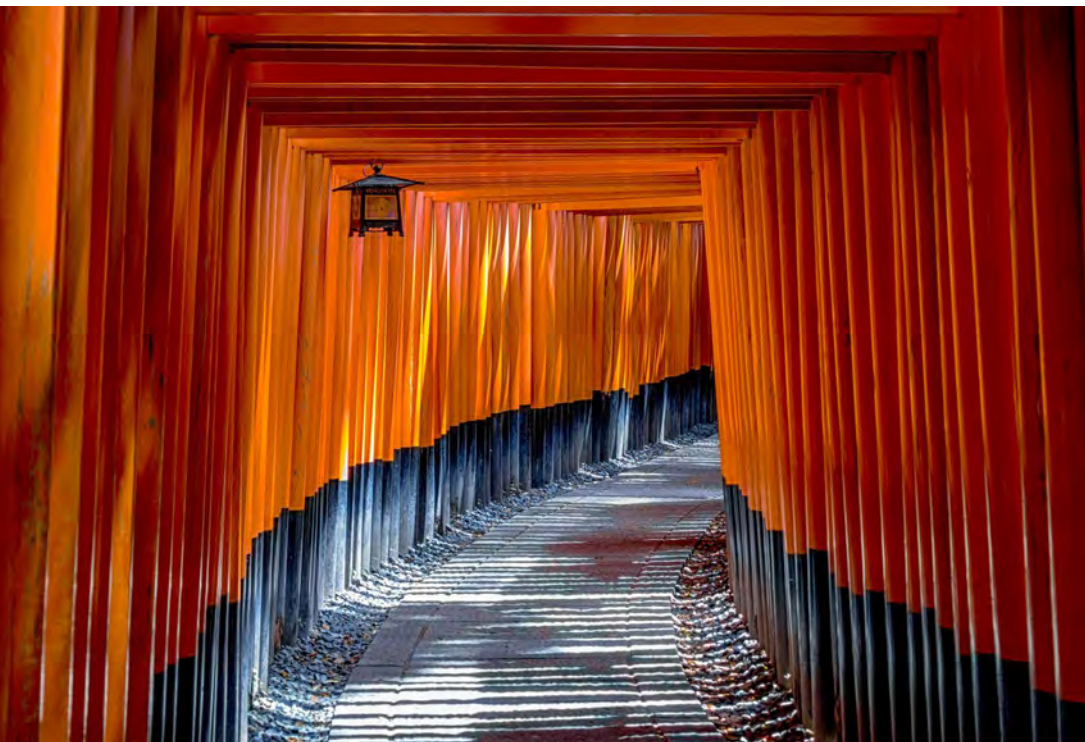
In 1869, Anna was in New York City running a girl's school. She wrote two highly erroneous, self-serving memoirs about her time at the royal court in 1870 entitled "The English Governess at the Siamese Court" and 1873 entitled "Romance of the Harem". They were immediately literary sensations but also highly controversial as they were filled with wild fabrications and sheer inventions where she proclaimed she was a governess to the royal princes and princesses and there was a dungeon in the Grand Palace. But her literary lectures

1881 she went to Russia and other European countries. She kept up with a stream of travel articles and books. She was considered an Orientalist expert by then. She returned to Nova Scotia to live until 1888 and then moved to Germany with her daughter and her family to live until 1893. At one point she met King Chulalongkorn who upbraided her for her completely false written portrayal of his father, King Mongkut, in her two books. Anna replied that her portrait of his father was an honest one.

En route to Canada she bumped into her son, Louis, who has returned to Thailand to seek his fortune. He was a successful teak trader and was named an officer of the Thai calvary. Since he was widower he dropped his two children off to his mother and returned to Thailand. Anna was back in Germany until 1901 with her granddaughter also named Anna. That year she moved to Montreal, Quebec, Canada and lectured at McGill University until 1909. She died on 19 January 1915 and was interred in the Mount Royal Cemetery.

Anna Leonowens would have no doubt remained a minor historical footnote from the time of her death, but fate intervened once again. An author named Margaret Landon wrote a worldwide, best selling novel entitled "Anna and the King of Siam" in 1944. It was a fictionalised look at Anna Leonowens at the royal court with an abolitionist theme that proved to be a hit with American audiences at the time. That book became the basis of the 1946 dramatic movie "Anna and the King of Siam" starring Rex Harrison and Irene Dunne. This material proved to be irresistible for Rogers and Hammerstein who created the "King and I", a long-running Broadway musical play in 1951. In 1956, the play was filmed with the same title that starring Yul Brynner and Deborah Kerr. The musical film version has proven to be both equally very enduring and completely wrong as far as the participants have been portrayed.

Anna Leonowens remains a minor historical figure, but she has had an outsized negative influence that unfortunately cannot be erased or forgotten.



Japanese expats living in Thailand

by Masako Tsuruta

The fourth highest number of expats living in Thailand after the Americans, Chinese and Australians are the Japanese. The Japanese expat community have chosen Thailand for the following reasons: 1. No worries for language 2. Family can live together 3. Good weather – no winter 4. Golfer's heaven 5. Japanese friendly 6. Good food 7. Low cost of living 8. Japanese senior citizens select Thailand as their second home 9. Buddhist country.

1. No worries for language

Most Japanese restaurants, cafés, and supermarkets have Japanese language support in writing and/or with translator service.

2. Family can live together

There are Japanese kindergartens and schools and international schools. Parents have many choices where to send their children. At all major private hospitals, there are Japanese doctors, translators and Japanese national insurance support desk.

3. Good weather – no winter

Every day is summer in Thailand, there is no winter. The average temperature is around 29 degrees. Japanese people love going to the beach to swim and relax with family and friends.

4. Golfer's heaven

The Japanese love playing golf. There are 250 good golf courses around Thailand. Most golf courses are situated around Bangkok and the Pattaya area.

5. Japanese friendly nation

Thailand is very Japanese friendly. The best Japanese restaurants outside of Japan can be found in Bangkok. Both the Japanese and Thais are similar in that they uphold some time honoured traditions and understand each other's respect for their royal families. After the Japanese government waived visas for Thai tourist, Japan has been the hottest tourist destination for Thai.

6. Tasty Thai food

The Japanese love Thai food. Both nations eat rice, lots of vegetables and fruit.

7. Low living cost

Most Thai likes to eat out, because it is cheaper than cooking at home. Food, transportation, clothes, houses are all much cheaper than in Japan.

8. Many elderly and retired Japanese have selected Thailand as their second home. After Malaysia, Thailand is the second most popular country for retirement. However, the Japanese who choose Thailand stay here far longer than in other countries.

9. Buddhist country

Thailand is Buddhist country. Around 70% of Japanese people are Buddhist. For Japanese to accept Thai Buddhist is not a problem.

Long history of Japanese migrations

Japanese migration started late 16th century during Ayutthaya Kingdom period. By 1620, around the East side of Chao Phraya river, there were between 1,000 to 1,500 Japanese habitants. In Ayutthaya, according to the official recording of French King, Louis XIV's diplomat, 600 Samurai lived there as the Thai Royal Court Guard. The most famous Samurai warrior who became King Songtham's (1590-1628) advisor was General Nagamasa Yamada. After King Songtham's death, he was assassinated by King Prasat Thong in Nakhon Si Thammarat in 1630. After General Nagamasa Yamada's death, King Prawat Thong ordered the destruction and burning of the Japanese village in Ayutthaya.



Japanese Chamber of Commerce Bangkok (Established in 1954, Sep 27)

At the Japanese Chamber of Commerce Bangkok (JCC), there are 1,736 (2020, April) Japanese companies officially registered as JCC members. There are 15 business category groups; Metal, Machinery, Textile, Agriculture and Fisheries Food, Financial Insurance, Transportation, Living Industry, Automobile, Tourism and Public Relations, Construction, Chemical, Electrical, Information and Communications, Distribution and Retail and Trading.

There are 22 committees; Public Relations, Japanese Language Supplementary Lesson School, Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology Committee, Thai Japanese Association School Management Support, General Affairs, Social Contribution Fund, Labour Relations, Editorial, Environmental, Human Resource Development, Investment Infrastructure Development, Small Medium Enterprise (SME) Support, Customs, IBC, Tax, Legal, GMS, EDC, FDC, Organisational Strengthening, Safety Measures, Economic Research Committees.

Japan is one of the biggest investors in Thailand

In 2019, 2.49USD Billion USD were invested in Thailand by Japanese firms. This is 24.6% of the total foreign investment of 6.13 Billion USD.

However, as has been experienced by almost all investors during this pandemic, most Japanese firms saw a drop in revenues by almost half compared to previous years. This, according to a 2020 survey conducted by the Japanese Trade Organisation (JETRO).

Tips on how to use Feng Shui to increase your luck in 2021

1: Use auspicious days

There are selected days to implement certain activities to boost your good luck, health, wealth, peace, and happiness.

February 3, 2021 (Li Chun, Beginning of Spring)

Li Chun is known as the Beginning of Spring. In 2021, this falls on Feb 3rd. It is the start of the New Chinese Solar Year. In recent years, it is believed to deposit money on Li Chun symbolises steady income throughout the year. The auspicious timing to deposit money is 03:00 - 11:00, and 17:00 - 23:45. With internet banking it can be done at any convenient time and place.

February 4, 2021

(Auspicious cleaning day to welcome good luck)

It is believed to clean the house before welcoming New Year to throw away the bad luck of the previous year, and welcome good luck from the coming year.

February 11, 2021 (Chinese New Year Eve)

Chinese New Year Eve represents a day to eliminate the old and welcome the new, by decorating homes/offices flowers, orange trees and spring festival couplets. In the evening, every family will enjoy sumptuous meal together, known as the reunion dinner. Some people will try to stay up all night for the longevity of the elders at home.



February 12, 2021 (Chinese New Year)

The Feng Shui calendar is closely associated with the Lunar Calendar. The year 2021, the year of “Golden Ox“ starts on Friday, February 12. This is the day to wear clothes in red (red is believed to be very auspicious colour to star the new lunar year), give and receive red envelopes (Hongpao/Angbaos: a symbol of good luck), and attend reunion dinner to exchange good wishes among family members, friends, and employees.

However, we cannot sweep the floor or do major cleaning on this day. This act is believed to drive away good fortune and results in wealth loss.

February 16, 2021 (The birthday of the Wealth God)

On this prosperous “Wealth God Birthday“, we need to send away the Poverty God and welcome the Wealth God. To get this Wealth God’s luck, many people likes to visit the Chinese temple to pray to the Wealth God to be prosperous.

February 18, 2021 (Tossing Day)

On this Tossing Day, all family members, close relatives and friends gather around the round dining table to have tossing (Yu Sheng) by eating colourful salad with raw fish. This acts symbolises good fortune, good health, greater achievements and wealth.

SSF Consultants original Feng Shui calendar

You can also check 2021 Feng Shui calendar by opening SSF CONSULTATION homepage, by clicking (<http://www.ssfconsultation.com/calendar/>) to find out auspicious and inauspicious things to do on that particular date. It is highly recommended to avoid the day marked X to start your new business/job, wedding, moving houses, signing important documents and moving into a new house/office.

2. Auspicious Vs inauspicious directions, activation and remedy

There are certain rules to use auspicious direction and time to increase your luck for 2021.

February 12, (00:00 – 13:00)

Between 00:00 – 13:00, going out the house towards, Southwest, Northeast and/or East directions. If you go to the Southwest direction, you will have a happy year, to the Northeast direction, you will meet your supporters, to the East directions, you will be rich in 2021. Ideal plan is to leave your house early morning to any of the three directions and stay thee at least two hours to get that particular directions lucky energy. Avoid time 13:00-19:00 for above practice.

Throughout 2021, it is better to avoid 13:00-15:00 for auspicious events.

Auspicious directions for 2021

South, West, Northeast, these three directions are very good for 2021. If your house/office entrance is located and facing these directions, you can have very good income at your office and happiness at your house.

If your entrance door is not located at these three directions, but facing these three directions, you can still have good result.

Not auspicious directions for 2021

Southwest, Northwest, North, Southeast, these four directions are bad for 2021. If your entrance door is located at these directions looking at the centre of the house/office/factory, there are certain objects to be placed on February 13, between 00:00-13:00, 19:00-21:00, 23:00-24:00.

For Southwest, red carpet, for Northwest, 3 water bamboos, for North, 6 coins, for Southeast, metallic wind chimes.

Directions to activate

Auspicious directions: South, West, Northeast, must be activated. If your office table is placed in the centre of the room, and if there are some empty spaces in these three directions, you can simply place a fan, printing machine, fax machine, telephone, and radio. By doing this, auspicious energy is activated.

Directions not to activate

Not auspicious directions: Southwest, Northwest, North, Southeast, must not be activated. Looking at the centre of your bedroom, if your bed is placed in these bad directions, you better relocate your bed to auspicious directions. If you cannot relocate your bed, you need to place red pillow for Southwest, three water bamboos for Northwest, six coins for North, and metallic wind chimes for Southeast.

3. Make a relationship with people with good moles

Face reading using moles on the face is one of the ancient technic to determine the person's fortune. Up to this day, this method is used for selecting future spouse, staff and friends.

Facial moles and their meaning

- 1, 2, 3. Poor relationship with parents, elders, and superiors.
4. Turbulent life, sometimes too blunt.
5. Worry about loved ones and spend too much money on them.
- 6: Intelligence, talents, wealth.
- 7: Poor family relationship, and pay attention to financial issues.

8: Optimistic character, good interpersonal skills, but be cautious on financial issues.

9. Very good money luck

10. Male: long life, Female: wealth accumulation

11. Male: long life, Female: wealth and status.

12. Health issues

13. Enjoy eating, but be cautious what you say and eat.

14. Children relationship luck is poor.

15. Be aware of food hygiene and food poisoning.

16. Can become a big landlord, enjoy fine things in life.

17. High romance luck, need to self-control.

18. Good career luck.

19. Male: can inherit fortune. Female: marrying into rich family.

20. Male: successful business man. Female: have a blissful family.

21. Prosperous life with smooth career luck.

22. Pay attentions to foot health, water related accidents.

23. Pay attentions to romantic relationship.

24. Intelligence, filial and helpful personality.

Female: Enhance spouse's luck.

25. Left: high status. Right: prosperity.

When I mentioned throughout 2021, or this year, it means between February 12, 2021, until January 31, 2022 (Chinese Year of Golden Ox).

About the author: Dr. Masako graduated with BA Honours from Ravensbourne (College), London, UK. After settling in Thailand, she obtained a M.Ed. from Assumption University, and was conferred a Ph.D. by the prestigious Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand. She has been practicing Feng Shui since the early 1990s and her appointments have taken her work to Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, UK, USA and Vietnam. Her

late godfather was the renowned Feng Shui Grand Master Yap Cheng Hai who recognised her talent and encouraged her to build a profession in this ancient Chinese metaphysical practice. Based in Bangkok, Dr. Masako's company "SSF Consultation Ltd" was established in February 2009 to serve her worldwide clients. The web address is www.ssfconsultation.com.



THE GOLDEN AGE OF REHABILITATION

Making new strides

Sukumvit Hospital's advanced walking robot can help patients who have suffered from stroke, paralysis, and other cerebrovascular complications, walk again.

Sukumvit Hospital has recently welcomed new innovation that has increased the potential of their Rehabilitation Center in helping patients who have suffered from stroke that has resulted in mobility loss and paralysis. These developments also aid with other cerebrovascular complications such as spinal cord and nerve injuries that have resulted in mental and physical damage. Recovery from these conditions require interdisciplinary advice, especially in regard to drug treatment and the rehabilitation process, which uses advanced methods under the supervision of doctors, physiotherapists, and occupational therapists to stimulate the movements necessary to help patients regain their ability to walk. An example is walking training, which is currently evolving thanks to technology. It has now reached a stage where a walking robot, an 'exoskeleton,' has been certified to help patients improve mobility by letting them imitate walking on the ground.

Dr. Pannawish Wongwiwattananon a Rehabilitation Medicine Specialist at Sukumvit Hospital's Rehabilitation Center, explains that...



"Most stroke patients have symptoms of hemiplegia, which describes paralysis of one side of the body, stiffness, weakness, and lack of muscle control. In severe cases, patients may experience paralysis in the entire body. Patients

who have hemiplegia can use the robot 'exoskeleton' after the acute phase of their condition (two to 48 hours) while in the subacute phase (approximately two weeks after). The robot is effective in aiding recovery because it can be used to practice walking. In the past, we would require two to three physicians

to support the patient while they practice walking. However, with the 'exoskeleton,' this is no longer necessary. "With this new technology, patients with cerebrovascular disease, paralysis, and injuries to their spinal cord and nerves, are able to practice mobility while also training their muscles to walk in real life. It allows the patient to twist their knees, hips, and waist, and tilt forward and side to side as normal. It also lets the patient walk on the ground and not a treadmill, which is more similar to real life. Unlike older models, this new 'exoskeleton' means the patient will not lock their waist or pelvis. It also aids in developing muscles in the waist, back, and hips, and helps brain cells recover too.



Dr. Pannawish Wongwiwattananon





Dr. Vorawat Eawsinphanit, another Rehabilitation Medicine Specialist at Sukumvit Hospital's Rehabilitation Center, provided information about... "After a cerebrovascular patient receives in treatment in the critical (acute) phase, approximately 70% will have residual abnormalities such as weakness and trouble swallowing water or food so it is imperative to begin rehabilitation as soon as possible. Many patients and their relatives do not know what the necessary steps are, so many will rely on massage therapy alone. But the six months after an individual survives a cerebrovascular problem are considered the 'golden period' of recovery so it is critical to seek all types of rehabilitation. "At our center, we

provide many services such as regenerative rehabilitation, integrated medicine, and modern medicine, delivered by a team of physicians, physical therapists, internal medicine doctors, neurological specialists, neurosurgeons, and others, all of whom use modern medical technology to aid every individual case. One notable example is the 'exoskeleton,' a robot that can help stimulate the muscles and cells in the nervous system that have been damaged. Another facet of therapy is Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS), therapy that focuses on the function of pulsed magnetic field to stimulate nerve cells in the brain. This non-invasive technique can help patients regain their ability to walk.

Similarly, Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT) helps increase supply of oxygen to the parts of the brain affected by cerebrovascular conditions like stroke. Patients must realise that even if recovery is slow after six months, it does not mean one cannot recover. Whether it is the first six months or the six months after, rehabilitation therapy is crucial."

Problems and solutions:

Dr. Vorawat discusses problems that patients often face and how the hospital can aid them. Firstly, depression. 80% of patients with cerebrovascular disease face psychological problems as a result of having limited mobility. The severity of the depression depends on each patient, but in cases of severe depression, a multidisciplinary team can help a patient recover both physically and mentally. Moreover, Dr. Vorawat advises caregivers of patients with cerebrovascular disease to not leave patients at home. They should seek consultation with a doctor so they can enter a rehabilitation programme as soon as possible. Every day that passes without doing anything is one less day spent towards making a full recovery. Only careful planning with a team of doctors, physicians, and occupational therapists can help an individual return to normal life as normal."



Dr. Vorawat
Eawsinphanit



Sukumvit Hospital began operations in 1977, recently completed a major makeover. Not only have they built a new building, but the entire team of doctors, specialists, nurses and assistants have all been trained with the singular aim of helping their patients maintain optimum health. Then there are the equipment, state-of-the-art MRIs, Cath labs and myriad of others, so that their specialists have the best available tools for diagnosis and treatment. Conveniently located on Sukhumvit Road with English speaking staff, Sukumvit Hospital is now ready for any emergencies or treatments.

Sukumvit Hospital

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THE SOUND HEALER IN CHIANG MAI

by Kay Natesan

Early July, I was invited to attend a sound healing session in Chiang Mai, a city I had barely visited. It's a pretty place, and we had been living in isolation since mid-March. Living in Bangkok, such a variety of opportunities fly around, waiting to be caught in my net. Given that the lockdown had completely shut us up, in our own gilded cage, this was a first trip we'd make out of town. What better way to break free than by riding sound waves? We thought it a sign from the Gods themselves, and were all ears, so to speak. There was not a moment of regret thereafter. I'm thrilled to say, it was more than worth our while to have chosen to venture into unknown territory, unaware of the triggers that awaited us.

At first, the question I asked myself, can sound therapy heal? Am I not already overburdened by sounds that abound? What would expedite the healing of an open wound (many wounds in fact)? Who isn't wounded, and if you aren't, I salute you; you've not needed wounds inflicted by life – by family, by friends, by lovers, and by any human that has entered your sphere, and to whom you have opened your heart? You are blessed, because it simply signifies that you are at a stage where you've learnt what there was to learn and are in a safe and sound place.

We are sound, I was told. Our breath, our heartbeat, our blood flowing, our pulse, our vocal cords – all of these are us.



We are water, and we are flesh and bones.

I read: "The frequency of the sound synchronises with the brainwaves and activates distress responses in the body. Sound healing can help you clear energetic blockages and thus facilitate healing on a physical and mental level."

Sound healing

I listened: During our first session we observe a number of instruments on the floor, and our facilitator, a gentle soul named Santiago, asked us to close our eyes after choosing one single instrument to play.

None of these were familiar. I wondered, as I looked closely, choosing a prayer bowl.

A prayer bowl speaks to me, and the stick strikes the bowl at different angles, emitting different frequencies of sounds that strike my heart. It was miraculous. I felt my body react in an entirely different way to earlier, since I was enclosed in an arena which held a mere four participants and the healer. All we heard were the instruments, and birdsongs. An occasional motorbike passing by, but we were taken by internal sounds.

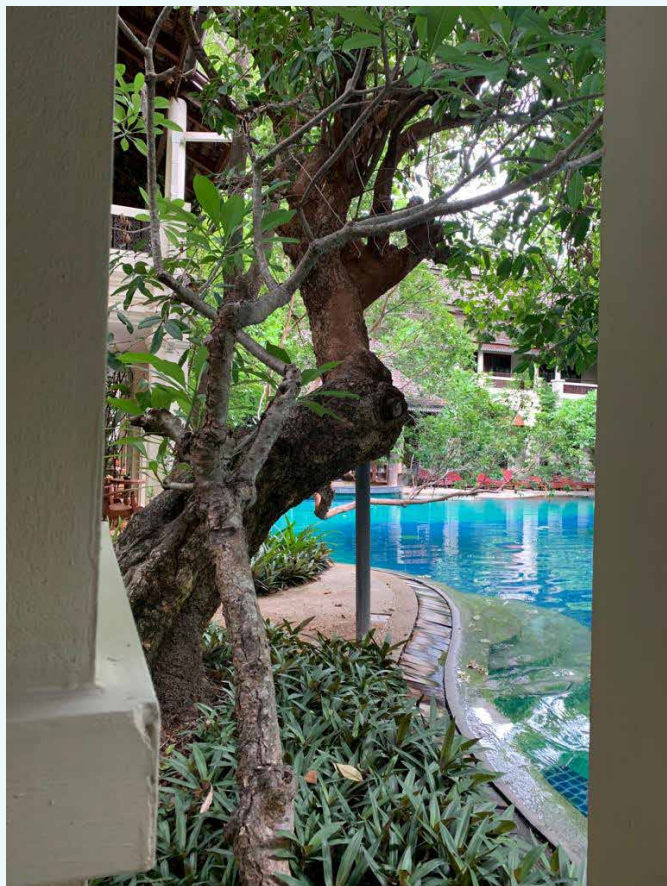
Santiago later informed us about an important fact: not all sounds work for each individual, and vibrations emanating from certain will either resonate with one's being, or not.

Turned out to be true. Some instruments weren't for me.

It is like Ayurveda – medicines prescribed must be customised to the individual, so is it with sound.

I remember a friend telling me that she heard strains of music blaring from a neighbouring car, at a crossroads. She was horrified by her bodily reaction to it. She told me her body rejected that particular brand of music immediately, and raced ahead, frightened. I was shocked by her reaction to music, no less! But there are certain vibrations, and frequencies that can be dissonant for an individual persona. I have come to grasp this as a fact.

The sounds that were later played, entered my sphere, my body, and enveloped my being in a gentle halo-like bubble. I turned into a foetus, allowing myself to



bathe in its amniotic fluid. I was bodiless, floating in liquid sound.

It was not easy to emerge, but when I did, I was fresh, rejuvenated and emptied of negative thoughts.

The experience itself needs to be lived, but words are, at the moment, all I have.

I absorbed: At dusk, I listened to sounds that another facilitator, Ali used as therapy – crystal bowls.

I had a similar experience, yet a lot stronger, fiercer and unrelenting. I absorbed all sounds, and wept copiously. So much cleansing was happening - and my way has always been to weep and sometimes cry out.

At a certain point of this particular experience of sound healing, I wanted to get out, run away, because the strength of the sounds that were piercing their way into my being, began to feel like hundreds of hands pressing upon me, albeit gentle, and they were squeezing and expressing the hurt I was holding tightly knotted within. I finally let go, and when I did, a quiet descended upon me. I then fell asleep with the crystalline sounds cradling me. When I awoke, I far lighter, renewed as it were. I've never slept better than that night.

I heard: healing with



sound happens and it can be made to occur both consciously and unconsciously. One can improvise musical acts, meditate, chant, and play musical instruments. There are other sounds one can focus on, and allow oneself to flow in it, go with it, and consciously listen.

It is no easy task, because our life is full of the noises we have created in our heads, and outside, we are constantly barraged and taken with it all.

I recall a field trip to a village in Germany. I was a bit dazed, and was rendered speechless by an unfamiliar sentiment – I call it a spurt of freedom. There was no one around. But for a breeze that rustled the leaves of tall trees, and an occasional whirring of a tractor far away, the sense of complete absence of noise, overwhelmed me quite suddenly.

It overpowered me so much so that I had to ask our host, “Where are the noises, and the people?” He laughed sweetly, a twinkle in his eye, rather bemused, he said, “Welcome to the world of positive sounds.” His beautiful smile left me wondering, why it was that we must surround ourselves with so much noise. Is it to deafen those thoughts that might otherwise disturb us? Is it simply to fill our lives with something – especially an acute sense of loneliness? Why must we always look to fill. It is in emptiness that one finds real meaning. But it's not for everyone. I now listen out for sounds: I hear them, I listen, I absorb, and I heal.

Even as I sit at my desk, I hear the humming of the table fan, which rides over a musical note, and I hum along. I hear nothing else. I'm quiet. Then I hear the knockings of a wooden panel somewhere out there, perhaps a building site - and it joins the orchestral harmony that is being created, even as I tap away at my keyboard – the sweet sounds of my favourite creative activity.

Listening in is a process, and an ongoing one. As we learn to quieten our inner mechanism, we tune into sounds that can help foster a mind that listens, and ears that observe. Lookout for the sign that says, “Sound and Safe!”





Foods and wines from Chile

by Waleska Nascimento

Mrs. Rose Marie Bedecarratz is the Trade Commissioner of Chile and Head of the Economic Department, ProChile, of the Embassy of Chile in Thailand. Commercial Counsellor and Head of Economics and Trade Office (ProChile) in Bangkok. She is a Chilean expert in the SE Asian market with over 20 years of experience. Below in an interview with this intelligent, smart and delightful lady she tells us about Chile, its products and the event at CentralWorld where there will be an exhibition and lots of free tasting of the very best foods from Chile.

For those who know Chile, it is a wonderful country. The nature and scenery is phenomenal and as for the food and wine products, the dried and natural fruits, wines, the

seafood, especially the much desired salmon, are all products of high quality flavour for export.

Please tell us a little about Chile and what products are most exported from the country.

Chile is a long and thin strip of land located in the Southwest of South America. Its 4,300 kilometres of coastline are filled with a variety of fish and shellfish that grow in outstanding climate conditions, due to the quality and coldness of the flowing waters from Antarctic. The best part is that the Andes Mountains, the Pacific Ocean and the Atacama Desert make Chile a phytosanitary island, which allows to produce all of our products with less risks of pests and diseases.

The Chilean Patagonia, located at the very South of Chile, is from where our greatest products come from. The Patagonia is worldwide recognised for its extraordinary pristine waters, beautiful glaciers and wonderful natural landscapes, which create the perfect environment for our salmon, sea bass and mussels to be produced.

At the moment, Chile is the second larger exporter of salmon in the world, and the number one exporter of frozen





salmon to Thailand. As for mussels, Thailand imported almost 4,000 tons from Chile last year.

Thai consumers demand delicious and healthy protein options that are nutritious and sustainably sourced, which is exactly what Chile offers worldwide.

As for fresh fruit, Chile is the number one exporter of cherries, blueberries and grapes in the world. Regarding cherries, which season is starting right now, we are the second larger exporter to Thailand.

During the 20 years working in the SE Asian market, what were the biggest economic challenges, and for being a professional woman representing a South American country, faced by you? (We cannot fail to mention the importance of women's empowerment in a world economic environment usually dominated by men).

I would say that the biggest and permanent challenge that our institution faces is to enhance small and medium enterprises and give them the tools and support they need to export to SEA markets. Big exporters can deal with the difficulties of this market in terms of logistics, export volumes and demand,

and most of them usually master the know-how, but most of the Chilean small and medium enterprises are new to these markets so they need us to know if they are well prepared and ready to succeed. This is our real challenge and for what we work hard every year at ProChile, to strengthen small and medium businesses for them to grow and develop more export capacity.

As for the second question, about being a woman in an environment usually dominated by men, I think I have been very lucky you know? ProChile is a very good place for women, there is absolutely no difference

on how they treat you, the respect is the same. In my work overseas, I guess it has always been good, I have never faced any struggles because of the fact that I am a woman and people have always respected me for the job I do, which is exactly what women around the world are trying to promote: that there should be no difference in the way we are treated or paid because of the fact that we are women. We should be judged for what we do, for our capacities and professionalism, not for being a woman or a man.

To me, the challenge was actually more personal, since I have a family and they have always been my top priority. When you work overseas and you are constantly moving from one country to another, it is a challenge to keep your family together and try to live the most normal life you can. In this sense I am very lucky to have one that has always supported me and the job I do. They always come with me to all destinations and their support has been key to thrive personally and professionally.

ASEAN (Association of SE Asian Nations) is a great economic partner to give support needed to all countries that want to make business in the region. What are the best initiatives promoted for development, cooperation and partnership with Chile? May I ask what is the level of Chilean products acceptance and what are the favoured imports from the SE Asian markets?

As the Chilean Trade Commission in Thailand, we are always working to strengthen the existing commercial relations between Chilean exporters and Thai importers, as well as finding new and effective ways to find new importers for our huge variety of products.

It goes without saying that importers are of outstanding value for us, since they are the ones that sell our products to final customers. In this sense, we try to include them in every event and promotion activity that we carry out.





Being cooperative and working together is the best way to enhance our relationship and find new and better ways to increase the local demand of the Chilean products. We work hard to come out with win-win programmes in which all parties end up satisfied.

As for initiatives, we focus our work in diverse matching activities aiming to connect Thai importers with Chilean exporters, as well as a lot of different promotion events in which we look to raise awareness about Chilean food among final consumers and the Thai market in general. In the first case, we usually work with regional strategies in SE Asia, picking different seasons to promote and focus on particular products and offers, such as the wine tasting we are going to host on November 25 at the Marriott Surawongse.

Regarding the Chilean food that Thais enjoy the most, we have seen a great trend in healthy food, which is very good news for our exporters and importers, because this is exactly what Chile offers: fresh, healthy, highly nutritious, tasty food. Anyways, our number one product here in Thailand is the Chilean salmon: if you had salmon in a restaurant in the last few days it was probably Chilean.

With the current Covid-19 pandemic, mainly, tourism and exports were affected. But what is your strategic vision for this challenge to be overcome?

Despite the impact the pandemic has had on various aspects of life, Chile's industry and supply chains have

remained active throughout these months, complying with the highest safety protocols and international commitments, while implementing a series of measures to maintain the standards that make our products available in the best restaurants and cuisines around the world.

As for business, as soon as we realised that this was going to be a hard year for the global economy and exports worldwide, we knew that a different approach would be required. As you may know, Chile has 56 Trade Commissions (ProChile offices) in different countries around the world, and the SEA countries are not an exception. In this context, we decided to work on a regional strategic approach in which we can work as regional teams, following almost the

same schedule in terms of promotion activities and mainly focusing in e-commerce. This was a great challenge but we needed to figure out a way to take the pandemic as an opportunity to innovate and be the first choice, and we found it in e-commerce.

With the pandemic and social distancing, many industries began to slow down, however, the healthy food industry, which is a big trend in Thailand today, has propelled thanks to the increased trend of consumers to order food through e-commerce channels. This is why our main strategy is to prioritise promotional activities and raise awareness among internet users in SEA, and it is going very good so far.



From November 4th to November 8th, 2020, ProChile ASEAN in Bangkok promoted an exhibition and tastings of Chilean foods at CentralWorld. Please let us know what products were available for free degustation.



Did you sell Chilean products as well?

Indeed, we had some interesting activities in November last year, both offline and online. On November 5 we hosted an activity in the Central Food Hall in which we counted on the participation of some Chilean seafood importers (particularly salmon, sea bass and mussels) and some important collaborators from the supermarket. We also invited the press and some influencers, which was actually the main objective: to raise awareness



tasty and of outstanding quality. It was a very good weekend.

As for the online activities, from October 27 until November 27, Fresh Living is going to be our commercial partner through different e-commerce channels. Its e-marketplace, Facebook, Line and Shopee are the channels in which Chilean honey, almonds, walnuts, raisins, prunes, frozen salmon and mussels are being promoted to enhance customer knowledge and demand of our products.

After the event where can our readers find Chilean products in Bangkok or Thailand? Are there any e commerce sites that we can obtain Chilean foods, wines and speciality foods in Thailand? If so, where and what?

Of course! Our seafood products are available in every supermarket: Central Food Hall, Tops, Villa Market, Tesco, Big C, Makro, Gourmet Market, among others. If what they are looking for is seafood, people will find salmon, sea bass and mussels, they just need to check our flag on the label and that is it, they will have a great flavourful experience.

As for fresh fruit, people will be able to find Chilean cherries, blueberries and grapes, as well as raisins, prunes, honey and walnuts. At the moment, I invite them to go buy Chilean cherries and blueberries straight away, since its season is

beginning now.

Regarding e-commerce channels, they can always check Tops or Central Food Hall websites, Fresh Living channels such as Facebook, Line, Shopee and its e-marketplace.

Please leave a final message for expat and our Thai hosts to know about Chile and its products?

First of all, thank you so much for this interview and for your interest in ProChile and our products, it is always great to share what we do and the variety of products we offer in this wonderful country.

As for my message for expats and Thai hosts, I would like to kindly invite them to try our food, to taste for themselves the quality and flavour of our seafood and agri-food and I am sure they will enjoy the experience.

Furthermore, everyone can follow us on our social media, @ASEANProChile on Instagram. There they will be able to find more information on our products and promotion activities in ASEAN.

Thank you Rose Marie.



among Chilean seafood consumers and potential final clients of what Chile has to offer in the Thai market. It was a very good activity and, of course, the food was delicious.

On Saturday 7 and Sunday 8 we had other 2 offline activities: 2 cooking shows in Central Food Hall Chidlom and CentralWorld. These activities were especially consumer focused because we have various offers and special prices for our seafood products, such as salmon, sea bass and mussels. People liked it a lot, since it was not just a stoic promotion but a show, with a presenter explaining why our food is fresh,





MR. ALAN MARK GRAYSON

by Leonard le Blanc 111

We are speaking with Mr. Alan Grayson, former three time U.S. Democratic congressional representative from Florida. He is also one of America's leading legal experts on U.S. government contract law, federal whistleblower lawsuits against U.S. defence contractors and American public policy. Additionally, Mr. Grayson is also one of the country's most perceptive political commentators and sharpest observers. Additionally, he is one of the most innovative entrepreneurs and international investors in the U.S.

When did you first come to Thailand?

In 1977, on my way to a summer spent in Malaysia, via Thai International Airlines.

What has changed here the most?

The economy. The first time I was in Bangkok, I went into a shop that had five refrigerators for sale, and a weary family waiting for someone to walk in and buy one. Same thing with another shop - one car for sale. That would not happen today, at least not in Bangkok.

What has changed here the least?

The beautiful, warm and charming character of people.

What got you into U.S. national politics?

The immediate impetus was the war in Iraq. I wanted it to end, and logically, the only way that I could try to do that was to be elected to Congress. I wanted to be a champion for justice, equality and peace. I do feel that I was instrumental in avoiding war with Syria, which would have made a bad situation much worse. And, along the way, I passed more laws than any other Member of Congress - good, progressive laws, that improved the lives of ordinary people, especially those in need.

You have lived a true 'Rags-to-Riches' life, a real 'Pull-Yourself-Up-By-Your-Bootstraps' Saga, a true 'Horatio Alger' story. What are your feelings looking back so far?

I am very, very lucky to be alive. Once you've been thrown under a moving bus, after that point, it's all gravy.

Your life has been dedicated to public service, always helping others who are less fortunate. Has that personal mission changed at all?

No. Modern life creates enormous inequality of every type - economic, social, racial, health wise, interpersonal and even psychological. Someone has to try to restore balance, fairness and justice in the equation of life.



You have been one of America's most prescient political commentators and observers. You must be disheartened to see the U.S.A. literally tear itself apart. What is your take on all the very disheartening daily unfolding of madness back there?

I hope it's all over. People used to wonder what it would be like if a lunatic became President of the United States. Now, we know.



The Chinese have an ancient curse: "May you live in an important age." We are surely living in that age now. What is your personal take on global events?

Some people have their stuff together. Some people don't. Covid-19 has shown us which are which. More generally, over the longer term, very large numbers of people are being enslaved by debt, from a young age, as we try to borrow from tomorrow to keep people employed today. Also, younger people in many countries are showing very little interest in having children.

Thanks to technological changes, the level of distraction in our daily lives is rising astronomically. How we deal with those three issues, and climate change, will tell the tale of the 21st century.

What does the future hold for you?

I don't know. I will continue to try to make reasonable plans, and then pursue them, which is exactly what human beings do.

You have travelled all over the world many times. Do you have any general observations from what you have seen?

I have been to every country. There are certain universals, in my opinion. For instance, almost everywhere, there is a taboo against violence. People in the market economy want to be safe, earn a decent living, own certain possessions like a car, and have a certain amount of privacy. Most people enjoy music, and smile when they see children. Everywhere, I think, people would like to fall in love.





Our family — a gift to each other

by Peter Hogan

We may feel that the pandemic, lockdowns and the closure of borders has been hard on families but spare a thought for the size and length of the separation felt by children when the world was at war.

The evacuation of children in England was a terrible business. The announcement 'Evacuate Forthwith,' was issued by the Government at 11.07am on Thursday, 31 August 1939 and within a few months, three million children had assembled in their schools, said farewell to their parents and been transported to new locations accompanied by one hundred thousand teachers. Each child had a gas mask and a brown label around their neck stating their name, address and medical condition. Hundreds of children arrived in the wrong places with insufficient rations, there were not enough homes in which to put them and most were away from their families for years.

Every child was a confused and somewhat lost soul trying to make sense of all the frightening changes around

them. In March 1940 a boy wrote, "Dear Mummy and Daddy, Thank you very much for this letter you have sent me, Actually I do not know whether I have answered it or not, probably not because I still have the unused stamped envelope." On arrival from Liverpool a girl wrote home to say, "Dear Mum, I hope you are well. I don't like the man's face. I don't like the lady's face much. Perhaps it will look better in daylight. I like the dog's face best."

The allocation process of deciding where each child would go can be summed up by one evacuee who spoke of waiting in an unused cattle pen in a farmer's market as men and women wandered amongst the hundreds of children and picked the ones they wanted. This stark method of allocating foster families made me think. If we could, would we want to pick our children through a selection process and if we were allowed to pick and choose would we end up with the ones we have?

Then I thought about it as a child might. As children if we could, how could we pick our own parents and whom would we choose? What if we could start again with new families picking whom we wanted? Would we want other parents and if so, who?

It is a cruel generalisation that when we are children other people's parents are cooler, better and more fun to be with than our own. Similarly, when we are parents it is the other children we meet (usually the friends of our children) who are better behaved, more hardworking and more polite than our own.

Have we really got it all mixed up? Everywhere else in the world we can stop and start again, change things, delete,



The family bond changes over time and depending upon who we are. As young people grow older, they learn to live independent lives and the relationship with grandparents, parents, brothers and sisters changes. As family members we have duties to each, we have a responsibility to each member. Together we are stronger, more successful and happier than we are apart and alone. Choice is important but so is each, eccentric, peculiar and wonderful family.

As Archbishop Desmond Tutu reminds us,

“You don't choose your family. They are a gift to you, as you are to them.”

reformat and recreate ourselves. Why do we not play real life Happy Families picking and choosing what suits us?

But we don't. The instances of children seeking legal separation from their own parents and parents disowning their offspring make national and international news. Despite the fact that our society is driven by consumer choice and the rights of the individual are paramount the family unit provides the strongest, oldest and most reliable bond there is. It is the one we rely on and the family unit is the model for many organisations including schools.

Evacuees cite the forced absence from their family as the greatest problem they endured. Parents, their children and their grandchildren have an invisible bond that holds them together and this is perhaps why the threat to this bond for whatever reason causes so much angst and unhappiness. This is probably why we parents worry so much about our children and why we seek a schooling that can support our family values and understands the value of the family.

About the author: Peter has been the Head of schools in the UK and Asia for 20 years. He writes about schools, teaching and learning here at hogan.education and can be contacted at peter@hogan.education



THAI SAMURAI – THE LIFE OF YAMADA NAGAMASA

by Leonard H. Le Blanc III

Thailand has had a fascinating history of unique “farangs” who came here to live and work throughout its recent history: Constantine Phaulkon – prime minister to King Narai of Ayutthaya; Jim Thomson – the American silk king of Thailand; billionaire William E. Heinecke – Head of Minor International, a huge regional conglomerate and Louis T. Leonowens – an early important English trader whose firm still exists as a major company, amongst others.

However, the Japanese merchant warrior, Yamada Nagamasa, can easily take his place on this unique list.

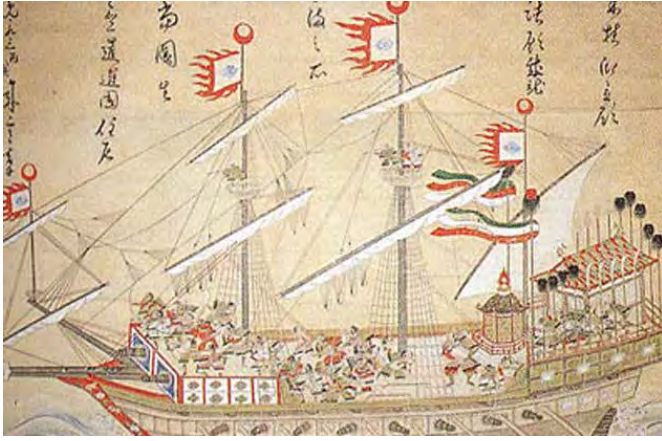
Nagamasa was born in Otani, Numazu, Shizuoka, Japan in 1590. Supposedly he started his career as a palanquin bearer for the Lord of Numazu. He eventually became involved in Japanese trade activities with SE Asia when Japan officially authorised ships to trade outside the country. He settled in the Ayutthaya about 1612. Nagamasa had a spectacular rise while there under King Songtham. From 1617 and beyond he was the head of the Thai village inside of Ayutthaya called “Baan Yipun” (or Japanese village). This village had roughly 1,000 Japanese residents. It was run by a Japanese headman who was nominated by Ayutthayan authorities. The village’s inhabitants were a combination of several hundred Christian



converts who had fled Japan following the religious persecutions of Tokugawa Ieyasu and Toyotomi Hideyoshi. There were also Rōnin (unemployed former Samurai) who had been on the losing side at the battle of Sekigahara (1600) or the Siege of Osaka (1614-15) and other merchant traders.

The Japanese colony was very active in trade. The most important export to Japan were deer hides. In return, Japan exported silver and highly valuable handicrafts like swords, high quality paper products and lacquer boxes. The Japanese were in





direct competition for regional trade with the Dutch East India Company's (initials V.O.C.) monopoly based in what is now Indonesia. Nagamasa supposedly carried on business as a privateer from the period of about 1620. He was said to have attacked and plundered Dutch ships in and around Batavia (now Jakarta). After more than 12 years in Ayutthaya, Nagamasa went to Japan in 1624 on a trade mission. He sold a cargo of Siamese deer hide in Nagasaki. He remained in Japan until 1627. He departed with the simple status of a foreign ship without an official trading license. On his return Nagamasa rose from the rank of "Khun" to the elevated rank of "Ok-ya Senaphimuk".

The Japanese colony also offered valuable military services to Ayutthaya. The King organised a group of Japanese military volunteers. Nagamasa supported the military campaigns of King Songtham as the head of a Japanese army. In 1628, his ships were carrying rice from Ayutthaya to Malacca. Nagamasa was arrested by a Dutch warship blockading the city on one journey, but once his identity became known he was immediately released. The Dutch knew Nagamasa was held in great respect by the King of Ayutthaya. They did not want to spark a diplomatic conflict.



He was also a supplier of deer hide to the Dutch. They sought more of his trade.

However, Nagamasa's luck finally ran out when he got in the middle of the successor war for the throne. King Songtham died in late 1628. The King entrusted Phraya Siworawong, or Prasat Thong, to be the regent to his son. Prasat Thong acted as "king-maker" and eventually executed both of King Songtham's sons and anyone else who opposed his reign, usurping power. Once Nagamasa heard King Songtham had died he objected. Now King, Prasat Thong sent Nagamasa as the Governor of Ligor (now Nakhon Si Thammarat) in 1630 to get rid of him.

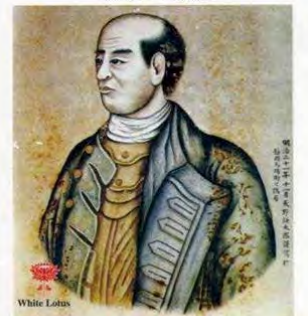
A few months later Prasat Thong then had Praya Chaiya secretly poison Nagamasa. Then the new King sent an army of 4,000 soldiers to destroy the Japanese settlement in Ayutthaya. But many Japanese managed to escape to Cambodia. In 1633 several hundred Japanese managed to return and reestablished another residence in Ayutthaya. In 1634, the Japanese Shogun was informed about these problems and refused to issue official authorisations for trade ships to Ayutthaya. The Ayutthaya King was

still desirous to retain Japan's trade and sent a trade mission in 1636. But the Shogun rejected the offer and formal relations between the two countries came to an end until the 19th century. Japan then closed itself off from the world. The Dutch promptly stepped in to fill the trading void.

Nagamasa's grave is now in his home town of Otani.

Samurai of Ayutthaya

Yamada Nagamasa,
Japanese Warrior and Merchant
in Early Seventeenth-Century Siam
Cesare Polenghi



White Lotus

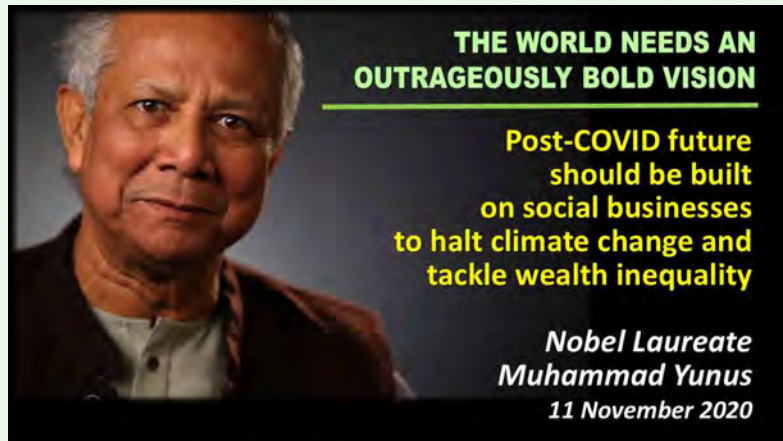
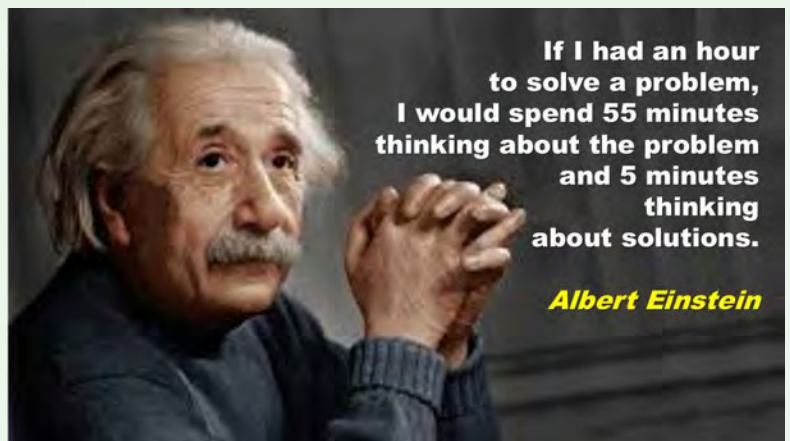


Enhancing sustainable development towards thriving

by Dr. Sandro Calvani, senior adviser
at Mae Fah Luang Foundation, Bangkok

With the beginning of 2021 the world is entering the last decade of the global race towards sustainability of the planet, as agreed by all nations in the United Nations' (UN) Summit on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SD). In 2005 in New York, on behalf of all the world's peoples, the UN leaders stated to be all "determined to end poverty and hunger, in all their forms and dimensions, and to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment".

A solemn declaration was signed.



It promised: "to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations." The declaration also made a strong commitment on achieving inclusive prosperity and peace. 17 sustainable development goals were agreed, accompanied by hundreds of specific actions required.

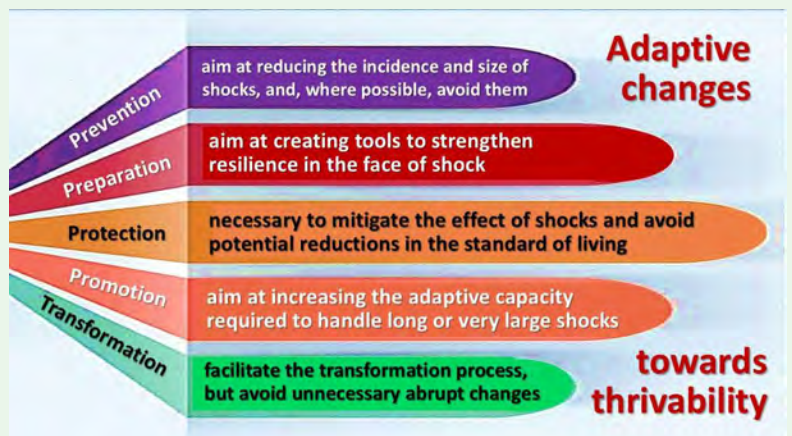
The Covid pandemic, which has ravaged the world in 2020, has fundamentally disrupted all socio-economic plans for sustainability, while – already in 2019 - intellectually honest reporting by the UN on the journey towards the 2030 Agenda

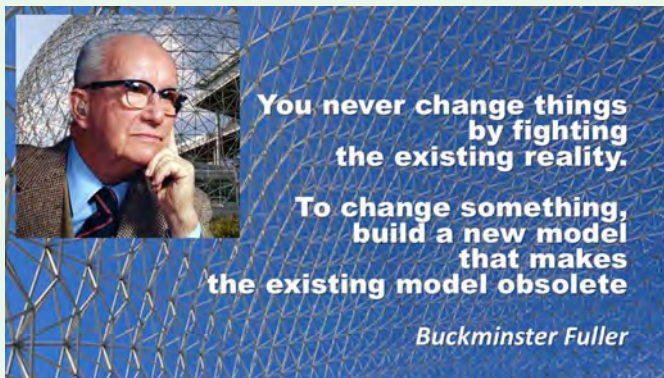
had fully recognised that the world was well behind schedule.

What could we reconsider of the global SD plans, which would facilitate and enhance an in depth transformation of governance, civil societies, entrepreneurship, finance and a regeneration of the compact between peoples and planet? First of all we should fully admit the order of magnitude of the disruption we are facing.

Then, all leaders of the world should facilitate an equally large (and a bit disruptive) deregulation of business and finance to give room to social entrepreneurship, with the same respect and support given to traditional business.

The next most urgent steps are five adaptive changes to nudge politics, economy, society and spiritual networks





to jointly shift their thinking and action towards inclusive thrivability in a holistic manner, instead of continuing to work separately in the present failed fragmentation of efforts.

When engaging in transformation and regeneration of all vital components of reborn societies, the collective focus on creating a new paradigm should be preferred to the concern of repairing the old and failing ones.

Systemic change can be achieved if proper attention is given to get rid of unsustainable practices in the three fields of assets resilience, power of the socio-economic engine and proper monitoring of the outcomes.

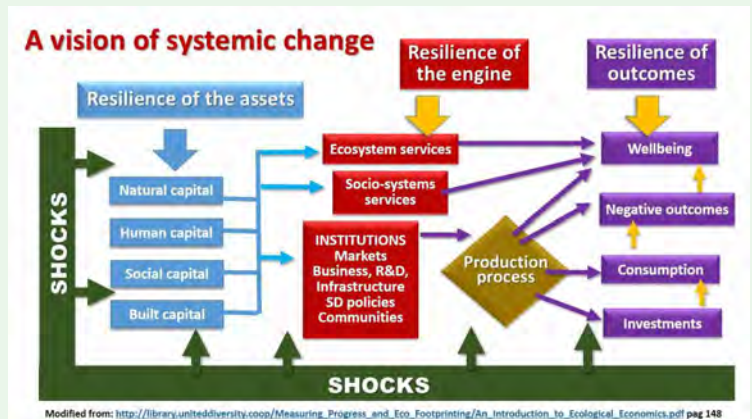
The GRIT skeleton is what makes all nudging on thrivability move faster and stronger.

It can be done. All communities who have engaged in a thrivable regeneration of their inclusive growth have become sustainable and happy through four major stepping stones.

This article is a summary of a presentation and speech with the same title given at the Thai Italian Chamber of Commerce on November 26th, 2020 in Bangkok.

The full presentation with 50 slides is available at:

<https://www2.slideshare.net/scalvani>



Are passion and resilience the secrets of success? **YES,**

But there must be consistency between the socio-political culture and the GRIT for action in the change of the socio-economic system



Major sources:

MFLF presentations and publications: www.maefahluang.org

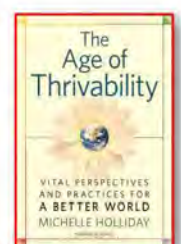


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Dear
Friends,

We are facing an unprecedented time in our history. The world is navigating through uncharted territory in the midst of this global pandemic which is impacting our health, our businesses and the global economy.

Over the last couple of weeks, I've watched how this pandemic has heightened and many businesses have been forced to close or cut back substantially.

Consumers are now staying home, businesses are losing revenue and laying off staff and unemployment levels are rising. Most likely large-scale quarantines, travel restrictions, and social-distancing measures will drive a sharp fall in consumer and business spending, producing a recession.

What does all of this mean for consumer confidence and the health of our businesses?

As we all continue to navigate through these unique and evolving challenges, we need to explore new innovative ways in which to reach our potential customers, continue to have a digital presence and find unusual creative ways to keep our businesses awake.

I am of the opinion that something good comes out of even the worst situations. In the absence of "business as usual", with so much fear and uncertainty surrounding us, we can't just allow our worries to distract our efforts. Instead, we need to proactively find ways to ease the uncertainty, so that new windows of possibilities and creative opportunities



may appear. We simply cannot let the tough times we are facing determine our approach to navigating through it, and businesses will need to work hard to fight against this.

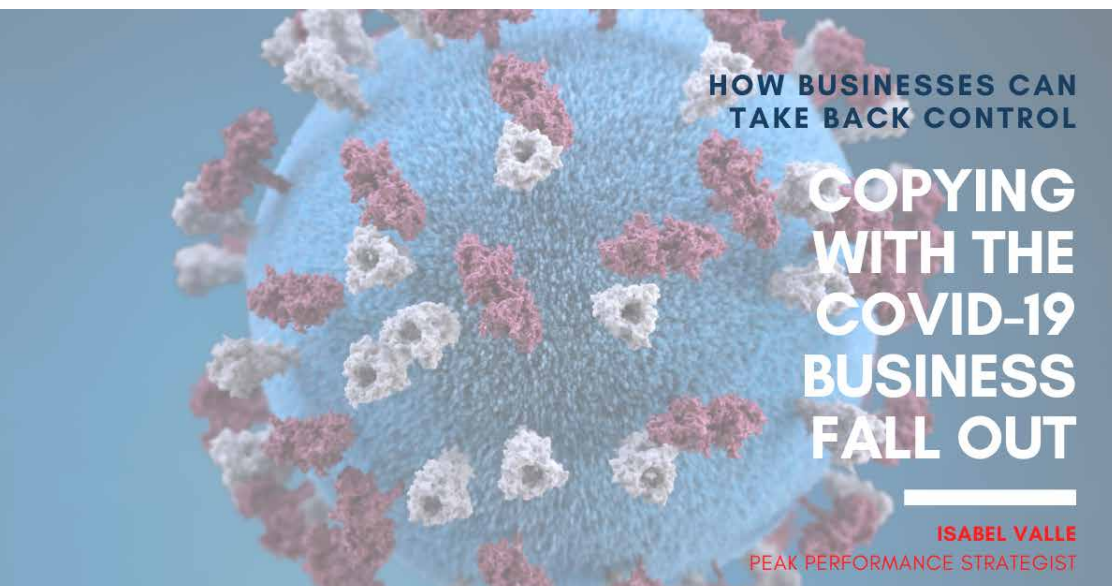
At times like these, it's not all bad news. With social distancing and self-isolation becoming the norm, this could potentially be the time to help us identify the weak links in our businesses so that we can fix them.

If for instance your business is over-reliant on a specific client or area, you rely on having a physical presence or have the need to attend trade shows and sales meetings, you may need to consider ways to invest in better digital sales and marketing initiatives, which would reduce your exposure to the risks posed by the pandemic, all while opening new opportunities.

Often my clients have been meaning to change things in their business but somehow never found the right time to do so. This could in fact be your opportunity to do it. It is human nature to get caught up in our daily busy lives, and we sometimes need to be up against the wall before we finally do what is needed to be done all along. So take this as an indication that your time to act on those areas is now.

So, what are we to do when the world is on edge – waiting to see what happens next? I wish I had a crystal ball to see into the future, but I'm in the same boat as everyone else. Waiting for each new day to find out which direction the landscape has shifted and how the general public will react.

So, what are the best moves for smart businesses to make in these uncertain times? What can set you up for success now and into the future, whatever that brings? I wrote an article for Austcham back in May 2019 with all details on how successful people overcome adversity that you can read here <https://austchamthailandadvance.com/2019/04/29/may-2019-how-successful-people-overcome-uncertainty/>.



**HOW BUSINESSES CAN
TAKE BACK CONTROL**

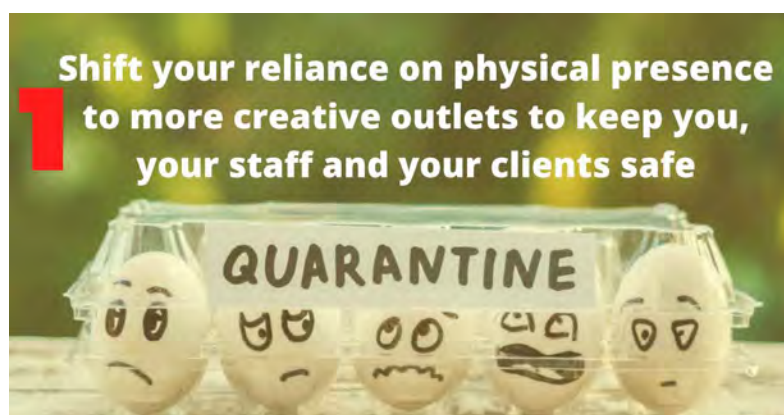
**COPYING
WITH THE
COVID-19
BUSINESS
FALL OUT**

ISABEL VALLE
PEAK PERFORMANCE STRATEGIST



The pandemic has added yet another critical layer of complexity. The way forward, no matter how ambiguous our circumstances, is to focus on the areas we can impact upon. I would like to share with you 3 areas to prioritise on your business. They are by no means exhaustive or detailed enough to substitute for a thorough analysis of a company's particular situation:

This is the time to practice social distancing, and it needs to be taken seriously. If possible, reduce the need for yourself, your employees and your clients to travel to a physical location by offering virtual attendance options.



Get into the daily habit of asking:
What can I do to be of service?
How can I continue to add value for my clients?
What expertise can I share?" ...and set about delivering that value via alternative methods.

In such a confusing and stressful time, I watch my clients in awe of the many creative ways they continue to add value. From medical online checkups, to Zoom physio treatments, to online mentoring group classes, etc. The possibilities are endless. These businesses would have never thought of venturing into online platforms, and yet at a time of need, they are putting themselves out there and continuing to service customer needs.

For most companies, business as usual is not an option. This is an urgent time to skill up. I don't think a lot of people truly understand how important it is to build up their digital brands and sales right now. It's not only a must as the whole

world goes virtual, it's the opportunity of a lifetime to add value to others virtually.

People feel connected to people who are 100% aligned with their values, and what they stand for. In this time of confusion with all that's happening in the world, life can feel frightening and the world can seem scary, shaky and unreal as everything we know seems to be changing at lightning speed.

During these difficult times it's important for business leaders to maintain an open and honest way of communicating to all of their stakeholders. You must be willing to face and share difficult times.

To be open to resolving conflict before it worsens. Open to having difficult conversations with the intention of finding a way forward. Open to working through changes that are happening on an hourly basis and open to listening, seeing things from others point of view and being kind and respectful to each other.

Firstly, you must protect your employees by providing them with clear, simple language on how to deal with the current changes while providing them with autonomy so they feel empowered to deal with any quickly evolving situation.

Establish two-way communications that provide a safe space for employees to express if they are feeling unsafe for any reason, as well as monitoring adherence to updated policies.

Maintaining an informed workforce helps ensure that business continues to flow as smoothly as possible. It also minimises the internal rumour mill that may lead to employees posting false reports on social media, impacting your reputation.

Secondly, you must stay close to your customers and suppliers. Businesses are only as strong as the communities of which they are a part. Companies that navigate disruptions better often succeed because they invest in their core customer segments and anticipate their behaviours. People have dramatically shifted toward online shopping for all types of goods, including food and produce delivery. You do not want customers and suppliers to learn about the effect of the crisis in your business through third parties. Information on any crisis pertaining to your organisation should come from you first.



3

Keep on track with your branding, advertising, marketing and strategic efforts

Staying transparent and offering authentic, real-time information to your stakeholders will go a long way in terms of trust and engagement, and it will continue to add on your reputation as an ethical, transparent brand.

When everyone is pulling back, you must continue to deliver on your core business strategies. Our current situation is forcing us to find different ways to live and interact, so we need to adapt. Even if production, manufacturing or shipping is not feasible right now, you must continue to engage with your audience, build on it, and continue to share your message to market.

Your clients will appreciate your continued engagement and will remain loyal to your brand. Also, don't be afraid to openly ask them for ways in which you could continue to do

business. I have been pleasantly surprised to find that by tweaking some details regarding delivery, production date, and loosening warranty and payment terms and conditions, many clients are still willing to continue to do business.

Strategically speaking, this could be the right time for you to increase your reach and opportunities into other markets, so you don't put your all your eggs in one basket. While everyone else is checking out, you can be sharpening your saw.

"The only thing we can be sure of in business is change".

Now's the time to ask some critical — potentially game-changing — questions to reflect on what you really want in business, such as the ones I suggest below:

This is a historic crisis. But that also means it is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for you to be a role model, to optimise your business, to demonstrate a positive attitude, to show compassion, to set the emotional tone for your circle of influence, to remain calm and conscientious, to lead authentically, to exemplify the values and service that your brand and your business stand for.

The underlying message here is clear: people before business. Our economy can recover over the long-term. We cannot bring back lives lost. Business will return, and until that happens, we need to do our best to protect ourselves and our people. Help keep them safe and protected.

Let's try and maintain a level of optimism. Success in this instance will look like an adaptation of life - and business - as we know it. Let's be proactive now and redefine our business activities so that when we conquer COVID 19 you are ready to propel forward decisively and with impact.

Sending virtual hugs to you all.

Let's hold on and give it our very best. Stay safe!

Isabel

GAME-CHANGING BUSINESS QUESTIONS

- How committed am I?
- What problem does my business solve?
- What's my value proposition? Does it need to be adjusted?
- Am I clearly communicating my value proposition?
- What is my pricing strategy and why?
- Which parts of my business are not profitable?
- How much time do you and your management team spend on generating revenue?
- Do I have the right people to drive my business?
- Am I developing the high potential talent for better results?
- Who are my most valuable customers (and which are the most costly)?
- What is my social media strategy?
- What differentiates my product / service from the competition?
- Do I have a plan for potential risk / crisis?
- Am I outsourcing the right tasks?
- Am I measuring the right things?
- Could I be reducing my current expenses?
- How could I better harness technology?
- Am I avoiding the tough decisions?
- Am I thinking big enough?

About the author:

Isabel is an experienced ICF Coach with over 20 years of international work experience holding senior positions within the hospitality industry in countries around the world, as well as Executive and Leadership coaching, mentoring and training. Isabel specialises in high performance strategy, leadership development and building organisational culture.

More available on www.isabelvalle.com





HOW SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE OVERCOME UNCERTAINTY

How comfortable do you feel being uncomfortable?

by Isabel Valle, Peak Performance Strategist

One of our most basic human needs is the need to feel safe. We crave certainty, stability and consistency, and yet, we have to live with constant uncertainty. Operating in a VUCA world, used to describe the rapidly transforming global business landscape, we are challenged by our ability to make sound decisions, lacking sufficient information, creating “best guesses” strategies knowing they may turn out badly, not fully understanding the constant changes and factors which could implicate our decision making and problem-solving abilities, and the overall success of our businesses.

The fact is that our brains are not hardwired to operate in today's complex times. This is especially true when it comes to dealing with uncertainty. When faced with it, our brain's automatic response is to proceed with overwhelming caution and fear to ensure our survival, pushing us to overreact. This strategy worked great eons ago, when cavemen were faced by constant threats, but that's not the case today, and it creates challenges and obstacles in the world of business.

On the bright side, if you know the right tricks, you can override your brain's irrational tendencies and handle uncertainty effectively.

In the face of uncertainty, we have to get good at making sound decisions, even when our brain fights us against this. Successful people are able to override this mechanism and shift their thinking towards a rational direction, whilst applying strategies that we will cover in this article.

So fear not, here are some proven strategies that

you can use to improve the quality of your decisions when uncertainty is clouding your judgment. What follows are six of the best strategies that successful people use to help their businesses with increasing levels of uncertainty:

1. Embrace uncertainty and accept what you cannot control

We all like to be in control. But this desire for control can backfire on us when we are overly focused on what we can't control. A big part of dealing with uncertainty is accepting the current situation and where you and your business are right now. You need to embrace things that are outside of your control as they are and focus on things that are within your control. People who excel at managing uncertainty aren't afraid to acknowledge what's causing it. They live in the real world and don't paint any situation as better or worse than it actually is, analysing facts for what they are. They know that the only thing they really are able to control is the process through which they reach their decisions.

That's the only rational way to handle the unknown, and the best way to keep your head on level ground. So we mustn't be afraid to acknowledge what we don't know, and move forward based on what we do know. We may make mistakes, but that's a lot better than doing nothing about it. Experts at dealing with uncertainty know they aren't always going to make the right decision, and that failures will allow them to learn from their mistakes and make better decisions in the future.

2. Assess your particular situation.

You need to get a clear understanding of where you and your business are right now. Make sure you have the up to date business and financial performance figures and that you understand your cashflow and forward sales position. Take stock of all aspects of your business and review your business plan often. While most business owners revise business plans once a year, the truth is there's no limit to how many times

you can revise it. It really pays off allocating some time and resources to sit with your key employees to revisit it, putting special attention to key indicators relating to the cashflow. This will help ensure your business goals are reached while working on combating the changes in consumer demands. More importantly, it will help your company to stay afloat in the event of a crisis. Frequently reviewing your business performance, making sure that all aspects of your business are working efficiently and effectively – including people, customer service, processes and procedures, sales and marketing, systems, etc. – will help you be ready to deal with anything.

3. Keep abreast of changing trends in your industry.

Understand what is happening in the outside world, including customer trends, economic changes, competitor activity and all areas that may impact your business, so you can make more well informed decisions. Gather information and facts from well known sources. Keep yourself abreast of the latest economic forecasts, current trends, and the general state of the economy. Ask yourself and your team how you can make better, faster decisions, even when you have less certain data will also help you create a proactive attitude towards the unknown.

You must also speak to others and reach out for help and support. In times of uncertainty it is good to speak to trusted contacts to share experiences, gain perspective and



gain support. You may also want to seek support from outside and consult the experts. There are future events you can't forecast even if you've been doing business for a long time. For this reason, it pays to lean on the expertise that experts and business advisors provide. While it looks like another expense for your business at the onset, you'll be surprised how much money they can help you save.

4. Prepare for multiple outcomes.

One of the most effective ways to combat uncertainty is to consider a number of possible scenarios and prepare contingency plans for all of them. As you are dealing with uncertainty about the future, you need to be prepared and plan for different possibilities or outcomes. You will need to think through the key risks that may impact your business, using up to date information, and where you assess the risk to be too high, look at spreading the risk, by making assumptions and preparing a flexible plan.

Keep revising the plan regularly as things change. Considering multiple options rather than concentrating on one right guess will be more beneficial to your business. When you proactively think through a variety of possible scenarios and work on strategies for all of them, you'll be better prepared and armed in the event that any of those occur. So instead of trying to make the one right guess as to what will most likely happen, make multiple guesses. This is the way any truly innovative process works, and innovation is a good analogy for prediction.

Staying on top of uncertainty is as much about planning for failure as it is about hoping for the best. Once you have a good contingency plan in place, there's no place for what ifs, stress and worry.





informed choices. It also removes the unnecessary pressure and distraction caused by a myriad of small worries.

"As you become comfortable with uncertainty, infinite possibilities open up in your life. It means fear is no longer a dominant factor in what you do and no longer prevents you from taking action to initiate change."

– Eckhart Tolle

5. Look for unexpected opportunities and possibilities.

Instead of expecting the future to deliver something specific, you need to focus instead of what you will do to create the outcome you want. Your actions and intentions are within your control. Uncertainty can create lots of opportunities as other businesses become anxious, indecisive and complacent. Know that new, unexpected opportunities will arise with the changes that are happening, so make sure you are being creative,

thinking outside of the box and looking for opportunities. Managing uncertainty requires a strong approach to creating mindset changes. Research into high performing teams globally reveals a common characteristic in that they welcome and are highly resilient to change. How you and your team view change is key here, specifically viewing it as an opportunity rather than a threat.

6. Take decisions and take action.

Uncertainty can lead to indecision and inaction. Successful businesses will assess the situation, plan, keep focused, make decisions and take action to stay ahead. Your business must remain agile and flexible, so you can take on a proactive approach and make changes quickly, reacting accordingly. Staying as you are and doing everything in the same way will lead to you losing your way and slipping behind your competitors. There's no substitute for awareness, listening, and identifying events as soon as they happen. Some decisions can make or break your company. You must focus only on what matters. When it comes down to it, almost every decision contains at least a small factor of uncertainty—it's an inevitable part of doing business. Learning to properly balance the many decisions on your plate, however, allows you to focus your energy on the things that matter and to make more

Uncertainty is inevitable, regardless of the industry where your business belongs. The ability to strategically manage uncertainty is one of the most important skills you can cultivate in an increasingly volatile business environment.

Try the strategies above, and your ability to handle uncertainty will take a huge step in the right direction.

Over to you now. How do your uncertainty skills measure up? What do you do when faced with uncertainty? Which strategy from above are you most likely to implement and why?

Here's to your success!

Isabel x

About the author:

Isabel is an experienced ICF Coach with over 20 years of international work experience holding senior positions within the hospitality industry in countries around the world, as well as Executive and Leadership coaching, mentoring and training. Isabel specialises in high performance strategy, leadership development and building organisational culture. More available on www.isabelvalle.com



Business at a crossroad: Are the right incentives in place?



by Chris Cracknell

Economists often say that the private sector is more efficient than government. This may be true, but it feels like a half-finished thought: More efficient at what?

Government has certain freedoms that most businesses can only dream of, such as the ability to think on longer timescales, change the rules of the economy, or pursue ambitious projects without any plan to monetise them. Although government has the power to fine tune the system of incentives across society – a delicate responsibility, if ever there was one – business can satisfy those incentives more efficiently than any other entity.

Stepping back from the day-to-day challenges of navigating through an economic crisis, the key questions become clear. Are the right incentives in place to achieve sustainable prosperity for all of society? And if not, then what do we intend to do about it?

Where profit and values merge

Sweeping generalisations about business are bound to mislead. Companies have dumped chemicals into rivers, cut down rainforests, and led us down the path of global warming... while other companies have made farmland vastly more productive, developed ingenious methods of recycling, and invested in charitable endeavours the world over.

The acceleration of technological progress in the modern era is well known, but a similar trend has followed in its wake in comparative silence. Environmental awareness and social responsibility now figure far more prominently

in corporate boardrooms than they did a generation ago – driven partly by genuine concerns, and partly by the need to demonstrate purpose driven leadership to an energised community of employees and customers who demand real initiative on issues in the public eye.

For varying reasons, the Covid-19 crisis has brought renewed attention to many of the Sustainable Development Goals outlined by the United Nations. A 2019 business survey by Euromonitor found that 53.2% of respondents had plans to develop sustainable products, and 48% intended to invest in sustainable sourcing of materials. The same survey conducted one year later saw

these numbers jump to 68.1% and 60.1%, respectively.

The context of these developments makes the numbers even more striking, as a recessionary period normally puts massive pressure on businesses to focus on their own bottom line to the exclusion of longer term goals.

Other findings from the Euromonitor survey shed light on the reasons for this shift in the business world toward greater social and environmental progress. When asked in 2019 about the barriers to sustainable investment, “lack of senior/board commitment” was near the top of the list – cited by 29.5% of all respondents. In 2020, only 24.7% gave this response. Another explanation, “lack of awareness”, fell from 23.1% to 17.1% during the same period. “Weak regulatory incentive/legal risks” dropped from 19.2% to 13.0%. “Does not create value for consumer” decreased from 14.7% to just 8.2% of responses.

Here, as elsewhere, culture is the prime mover. Society’s newly awakened concerns about sustainability have been clarified and amplified through social media, translating to public policy incentives geared toward greater responsibility. As incentives shift, businesses follow suit – just like a flower angling towards sunlight through the changing seasons.

Though many executives must continue to devote their efforts to surviving the current crisis, the path forward is increasingly centred around holistic measurements of success.

The other sustainability

The UN’s Sustainable Development Goals are as much about social improvement as they are about environmental

responsibility. Here, too, we find competing sets of incentives for business.

Public companies answer to their stockholders, whose emphasis on quarterly profits has historically tended to overshadow other priorities. On the other hand, even this long term trend seems to be undergoing a correction: Multiple surveys have found investors to be increasingly selective, putting their money into companies whose core values they share.

Moreover, other types of businesses have more nuanced priorities than solely maximising the bottom line at the expense of everything else. For example, family run businesses are often beholden to shareholders who are looking for a wider form of success. The priorities of these businesses are often driven from within the community in which they operate, and their fortunes may depend on maintaining harmony and good will within that community.

Just as importantly, private sector profit depends on a healthy and stable society. If inequality becomes too severe, jealousy will creep in. If personal debt grows too high – a very real concern in Thailand today – the resulting instability is likely to threaten market health as well. The danger is compounded by an increasing wealth gap between rich and poor around the world, a gap that is being accelerated by the economic challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. If left unchecked, the combination of these economic failures can only result in disharmony and social unrest.

One of the key lessons of the Covid-19 period is that we all share a common trajectory. Together we breathe the same air, work within the same economy, and determine what kind of environment our children will call home. These widespread realisations may have been prompted by the pandemic, but they increasingly hold true in a connected world such as ours.

We must preserve these insights, or together suffer their



loss. As argued above, business is extraordinarily effective at chasing incentives. Everyone else – employees, customers, governments, the general public – is in a better position to shape those incentives and ensure that they remain directed toward the greater good over the long term.

Fault lines and foundations

Each of us must take this responsibility of global citizenship very seriously indeed, as failing to maintain balance will sooner or later bring unfortunate consequences for us all. We see glimpses of such failures each time we open a newspaper, and we would be wise to learn from them.

If the upper class (for example) holds on too tightly to its gains, social unrest will surely follow. This new movement will usher in its own excesses, causing society to tilt too far in another direction. As the centre loses ground, each oscillation adds friction to the entire system.

Here, as elsewhere, prevention is easier and far more preferable than a cure. All we need to do, to encourage thriving for us all, is to make sure the right incentives are really in place. Let us celebrate genuine CSR efforts from businesses, and reward those companies that work for the public good. Let us demand social and environmental progress from businesses that can afford to invest in these types of improvements.

The way forward is through purpose driven leadership, guided by shared values. But it isn't just the elected or the powerful who can lead: In a connected world, where every voice makes a difference, we must all show the way forward.





THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS' CLUB OF THAILAND (FCCT)

by *Leonard H. Le Blanc III*

The renowned U.S. late night TV comic, Jay Leno, always jokes that: “If my mother hasn’t heard of you then you aren’t famous.” We have exactly the same gold standard to measure famousness here: If you haven’t given a speech, made a presentation, done an author’s book launch, sat on a discussion panel, or made a “personal appearance” at the FCCT, then you are not famous.

For anyone who “is someone”, or wants to “be someone”, must come to the FCCT to speak. There is not one spot in all of Thailand that has witnessed, or even remotely boasted of, more history, glamour (with the possible exception of the annual Miss Tiffany International Pageant down in Pattaya), serious gravitas plus locally and internationally famous people congregating than inside the FCCT (with the Author’s Wing of the Oriental Hotel a distant second). The FCCT has always been ground centre zero for rubbing shoulders with all the beautiful people, the powerbrokers, the influential, the well connected, the high-and-the-mighty, the big movers-and-shakers, the all powerful,

journalists and journalist wannabes plus anyone who wants to see real history in action.

The FCCT has been as peripatetic, interesting and varied as any early organisation in Thailand’s modern history including the Siam Society that has periodically moved from venue to venue, until they both finally came to rest in a permanent home where they now reside.

The FCCT informally coalesced in the mid 1950s at a place on Patpong Road called Mizu’s Kitchen when a highly colourful group of journalists and correspondents gathered to trade stories. This group of noteworthy characters, the earliest denizens of the FCCT, included Alexander MacDonald, founder of the Bangkok Post, Jorges Orgibet, the first Associated Press (AP) bureau chief, Alex Wu, U.S. Information Agency (USIS), editor Prasong Wittaya of United Press (UP) and Darrel Berrigan, Bangkok World newspaper founder.

Newspaper reporting and journalism in Bangkok in the 1950s and 1960s were not an overly glamorous career. In fact, the whole place was considered basically a backwater of news media. The FCCT congregated in the Oriental Hotel as some of the world famous lodging’s allure rubbed off on the members, since anyone who was anyone had to stay at the Oriental Hotel on their sojourn to or through Bangkok: Jackie Kennedy, Somerset Maugham, Grace Kelly, Peter Ustinov, Gore Vidal, James Michener, Pat Boone and other great international illuminati of the era. It was only in mid 1975 with the collapse of South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia to the Communists marking the end of the Vietnam War did the regional journalism scene get a great shake up with many war correspondents being abruptly shifted to Bangkok. It was now to be the main regional press hub, a position it has not relinquished nearly half a century on. It remains the largest press club in SE Asia.

After its sojourn at the Oriental Hotel, the FCCT continued its itinerant journey over the years to other



locations, mainly hotels and other buildings, including the Dusit Thani Hotel, now demolished. However, 1997 brought earth shattering economic collapse to Asia, and that devastating event opened up many rental spaces at giveaway prices in Bangkok. The FCCT quickly moved into the Maneeya Center penthouse on Ploenchit Road, close to the highly venerated Erawan Shrine.

The list of stellar luminaries and important notables who have graced the premises of the FCCT includes the truly famous, the famous, the great, the nearly great and those famous-for-being-famous. It would fill many books or at least dozens of magazines. Robin Williams, Jackie Chan, the Dalai Lama, most of Thailand's prime ministers including Prem Tinsulanonda, Anand Panyarachun and Yingluck Shinawatra, William Golding, and Cambodian Prince Norodom Sihanouk have all come to speak

Lively panel discussions cover the latest newsworthy topics such as the new changes to Thailand's immigrations laws, the future of Thailand's tourism, the plight of local migrant workers, Thailand's new national charter, and a post-mortem discussion on Cambodia's democracy.

Membership is more over 700. There is about 20% of the members who are active journalist or professional media people. But due to a dramatic seismic shift in how news is delivered the number of news professionals has fallen.

The FCCT has continued to be the place to see and be seen.

Parts of this article were borrowed from an article by FCCT Past President Dominic Faulder that first appeared in April 2015 in Number 1 Shimbun, the Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan (FCCJ) club magazine. My special thanks go to FCCT Manager Richard Holt for his kind assistance in producing this article.





Chinese new year

by Leonard H. Le Blanc III

Chinese New Year, or Lunar New Year, is the largest annual Chinese festival in the world. Some common names will also include "New Year Festival" and "Spring Festival".

In 2021 Chinese New Year starts on Friday, 12 February. It celebrates the start of the traditional Chinese calendar and the beginning of the new year. Also called the Spring Festival, Chinese New Year is based a lunisolar calendar that goes through twenty four solar cycles. The first day of the festival begins when the new moon appears between 21 January and 20 February. Depending on the country, the holiday may be termed differently. It is the Year of the Ox. According to ancient historical documents Chinese people have celebrated the harvest in what is now called the new year. Later, it gradually became an established annual traditional festival.

Chinese New Year has always been the most important celebration throughout Chinese history. The event has also influenced other new year days that are celebrated in

Tibet, Korea and Vietnam. It is celebrated wherever there are congregations of Chinese people around the globe. Chinese New Year is observed as a public holiday in some countries. Since Chinese New Year falls on different dates on the Gregorian calendar every year on different days of the week, some governments opt to shift working days in order to accommodate a longer public holiday. In some countries, a statutory holiday is added on the following work day when the New Year falls on a weekend, as in the case of 2013, where the New Year's Eve (9 February) falls on Saturday and the New Year's Day (10 February) on Sunday.

The festival has always been connected to ritual customs and ancient myths. These include a thorough housecleaning to ensure good luck or fortune, a time to honour ancestors and for large family gatherings at an annual reunion dinner. Also firecrackers are set off to scare evil demons and ghosts away. The celebrant's house is decorated with red paper cut outs and money is given in red paper envelopes.

Red is the primary colour used in all Chinese New Year celebrations. The colour red is most commonly worn throughout Chinese New Year celebrations. Traditional beliefs stated that red is best to ward away bad fortune and evil spirits. The wearing of new clothes is another clothing custom during the festival. New clothes means a new beginning in the year. So it also means that there are enough things to use and wear in this time. Red is also the emblem of happiness. This colour also symbolises truth, virtue and sincerity. On the Chinese opera stage, an actor with a painted red face means a loyal or sacred personage, even a great emperor. There are many other objects associated with the New Year festival. These red coloured items include candles, cakes, decorations,

candies and paper lanterns. The sound of the word “red” in Chinese is homophonous with the word “prosperous”. This means red is an auspicious sound.

Traditionally, red packets or envelopes are passed out during the Chinese New Year's celebrations. These are given out by married couples or the elderly to children and unmarried juniors. Customarily, the bills that are handed out should be new and crisp. Red packets are also known as “yasuiqian” which was evolved from “yāsuiqián”, or literally, “the money used to put down or suppress evil spirits”. Red envelopes almost always contain money. The amounts can vary from a few small denomination bills to notes amounting to several hundred. According to ancient Chinese superstitions, the amount should begin with an even number. For example, the word for the number eight (pinwin) is a homophone for the word “wealth”. The word for the number six (bā) is a homophone for the word “smooth”. However, the word for the number four is considered very unlucky as it is a homophone for the word “death”. Odd numbers are always avoided as they are connected to money that is given out at funerals.

Normally, the act of asking for red envelopes filled with money is called “hóngbǎo”. No married person would ever turn down such a request as it would mean that he or she would be “out of luck” for the coming new year. Normally, red envelopes are given by well established married couples to young children or unmarried young adults of the family. They can also be given by any older person to a younger person. It is traditional that children politely wish their elders a year of good fortune, health and happiness during the coming new year before accepting the red envelope. Then everyone

keeps their red envelopes under their pillow and sleep on it for seven consecutive nights after Chinese New Year before opening them. This symbolises future fortune and good luck.

In addition to red envelopes, there are other small gifts that can be exchanged between family members, relatives of different households, friends and people. These usually can include sweets, typical foods can be oranges (but never trade pears), cakes, chocolates, biscuits and candies and other small presents during Chinese New Year.

However, there are certain gifts that have been traditionally considered unlucky if given as presents. These items include anything connected to funerals; i.e., towels, handkerchiefs, chrysanthemums, and any items coloured white and black; any that show time is running out like clocks, timers and watches; any sharp objects that symbolise cutting a tie; i.e., knives, box cutters, cleavers and scissors; mirrors; and any symbol that indicates you want to walk away from a relationship; i.e., shoes, sandals and boots.

There are some homonyms that are very unpleasant and considered unlucky if spoken. Unpleasant topics include the word “clock” that is a homonym that sounds very much like “the funeral ritual”; “green hat” because to “wear green hat” is a homonym that sound very much like “cuckold”; “handkerchief” sounds very much like “goodbye”; “pear” sounds very much like “separate”; and “umbrella” sounds very much like “disperse”.

As the new year gets closer village fairs or holiday markets all over China are set up for the surrounding area. Usually these are open air markets that feature new year related products such as clothing, toys, flowers, fireworks and firecrackers.





Also taking a family portrait is an important ceremony. This is done after all the relatives in the photograph have gathered together. The photo is taken at the house or hall. It usually is shot in front of the house. The most senior male head of the family will sit in the centre.

As with all other cultures, the traditions of Chinese New Year fuse different elements that have a deeper symbolic meaning. One example of Chinese New Year symbolism is the red diamond-shaped “fu” characters. These mean “blessings” or happiness”. They are displayed on Chinese home entrances. This signs are usually seen hanging upside down since the Chinese word “dao” literally “upside down” This word is nearly homophonous with the word “dào” or literally “arrive” in all varieties of Chinese dialects. The word symbolises the arrival of happiness, luck and prosperity.

For the Cantonese-speakers, if the “fu” sign is hung upside down then the implied “dao” (upside down) sounds like the Cantonese word for “pour”. This will mean “pour the luck away” that usually means bad luck. This is why the “fu” character is not hung upside down in Cantonese speaking communities.

There is one system of continuously numbered Chinese calendar years. However, this system is not universally accepted as the traditional calendar is cyclical.

There is also a 12 year cycle of animals associated with each year. Alongside this cycle, is a 10 year overlay cycle of heavenly elements. Each element is connected with one of the five components of Chinese astrology: water, metal, wood, earth, and fire. The elements rotate every two years in a yin-yang pair. The combined cycle is 60 years.

For example, Yang-Fire Rat Year that appeared in 1936 reappeared in 1996. Although the Chinese calendar does not use continuously numbered years, outside of China the years are sometimes numbered from the mythical reign of the Yellow Emperor from sometime in the 3rd millennium B.C. There are least three different year systems or cycles numbered from year one that are now used by various scholars. The year 2021 correlates to the “Chinese Year” 4718, 4719, or 4658, depending on the yearly calendar system that is used.

In Thailand, Chinese New Year is divided into three days of celebration. The first day is called “Wan Chan” or “Pay Day”. This means people will go out to shop for traditional offerings. The second day is called “Wan Wai” or “Worship Day”. This means people will worship the gods or ancestral spirits. The day is divided into three sections dawn, late morning and afternoon. The third day is called “Wan Tieow” or “Holiday”. This means people will travel to see relatives or bless respected people and family members. They will often wear red clothing as they believe it will bring propriety into their lives.



RAMA IV ROAD

by Leonard H. Le Blanc III

There is only one road mentioned in the Christian Bible. “Via Recta” or “Straight Street” (Acts of the Apostles, 9:11). It is located Damascus, Syria where St. Paul was said to have stayed on a visit. That street still exists, although a far cry from two millenniums ago when the Romans constructed it. Bangkok had its own Straight Street in the 19th century, but no one wanted to use it after the road as constructed.

It is commonly known that “Charoen Krung” (“Prosperity of the City”) or New Road (as the foreigners at the time named it) was the first road in Bangkok built using modern construction techniques. It is also widely considered as Bangkok’s first road opening in 1864. But actually “Thanon Trong” (or “Straight Street” later to be called Rama IV Road) is older.

In 1856, a year after the Bowring Treaty was signed, western merchants were pouring into Bangkok. They proposed a trading community be established some distance away from the city proper at what is now called Phrakanong. They requested a canal be dug that would lead to a new warehouse site since everything in Bangkok had to move by water. They wanted a shorter water route from these proposed new warehouses to the city’s centre that would bypass the 20 kilometre sinuous journey up the Chao Phraya River to the wharfs at Songwat Road. In 1857 a 5.18 kilometre canal was dug from Klong Padung Krung Kasem to Phrakanong. It was called “Klong Thanon Trong” (or “Straight Street Canal”) by the locals since it did not have an official name. It was also called Hua Lamphong canal. The soil from the excavated khlong was piled up along the side it and a roadway was created at the same time. Some of the excess soil was later used to construct Charoen Krung Road.

But when the canal was completed the merchants refused to move to Phrakanong. They claimed it was too far away to do business at the city centre. So the roadway and canal remained unused for quite some time until the city

extended eastwards. In 1893 a small railway line, Thailand’s first railroad, was constructed from what was the original Hua Lamphong railway station Southeast to Paknam. In 1900 the Hua Lamphong canal was still bordered by the roadway, but now it was paved. In 1919, King Vajiravudh (King Rama VI) renamed the road King Rama IV Road. In 1947 the canal was drained and paved over to extend the roadway’s width. The train line was discontinued in 1960 due to falling passengers and increased roadway traffic. There was also a tramline that started in the 19th century along Rama IV Road and other routes, but all the tramlines were discontinued in 1965. The tram rails were all paved over with concrete. In the 1980s and 1990s several flyovers were added to increase the traffic flow including the Thai-Belgian bridge flyover and the Thai-Japanese friendship flyover. This explains why Rama IV Road is much wider than all the other streets in Bangkok having a canal, a roadway, a train route and a tram line simultaneously.

Rama IV Road (Thai: ถนนพระรามที่ 4) starts at the Mo Mi intersection in the Samphanthawong District of Bangkok’s Chinatown. The roadway then terminates at the junction of Sukhumvit Road in Khlong Toei District close to Khlong Toei Port. Rama IV Road is one of the most important city arteries. The road is always bustling and busy with heavy traffic. Rama IV Road is an important connector to all three parts of Bangkok’s central Business District, Wireless/Ploenchit Roads, Silom/Sathorn Roads and Sukhumvit Road. Along the way are Hua Lamphong Railway Station, Wat Hua Lamphong, the Royal Thai Red Cross, Lumpini Park with Rama VI Memorial Plaza, the New Sam Yan Market, 3HD and King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital. Although Rama IV Road is in a very geographical advantageous position, it has seen uneven urban development through the decades.

The Western section boasts many luxury commercial and residential developments including The PARQ, One Bangkok, Dusit Central Park, Samyan Mitrtown and are close to four MRT stations, while the Eastern section has seen less upscale development. This is due to the proximity to Klong Toey port, a loading bay for container ships. However, the whole road is expected to see major new developments over the next few years.



MAKE A LIFETIME RESOLUTION NOT A NEW YEAR RESOLUTION

by Gale Ruttanaphon

The New Year is often the time for a fresh beginning where we make goals to grow and improve ourselves.

Popular new year resolutions usually centre around health, whether it's to lose weight or to start exercise. Everyone starts the new year as hopeful as ever, motivated to make this year the best one yet. Gyms are full and buzzing with new members. You have to fight for a treadmill machine like your kid fights for a swing at Benjasiri Park.

Do you know that the first 3 months are the busiest months of the year for any gym? The effect of the New Year resolution is real. But, do you also know that more than 50% of people who start a new exercise programme drop out within the first 6 months? I'm sitting in a coffee shop as I'm writing this article. It's me and another guy sitting across from me. According to the statistics it's me or him, or both of us will call it quits, drop out, and stop exercise by mid year. So, what does it take for us to not become a statistic? What is

the saving grace that will help us push through the resistance when it's much easier to do nothing? Here are the 3 tips I want to share with you.

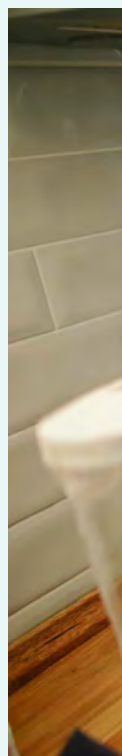
1. Don't exercise

Yesterday, I ran into an old client in the playground. As we stood there talking, she told me she hasn't been exercising just yoga and walking a lot. That sounds like exercise to me! What she told me really was that she hasn't been doing HIIT and weightlifting like when she trained with me. Many people hate to "exercise". The word "exercise" seems to conjure up images of putting ourselves through a painful experience doing whatever it is we hate doing. In this respect I must say I haven't been "exercising" either. My "exercise" is swimming, half drowning, half gasping for air as I try to do my interpretation of freestyle – not fun. You don't need to put yourself through something you hate to count it as exercise. Don't battle with it. Make it your friend. Don't "exercise" but pick whatever movement you enjoy and weave it into your life regularly.

2. Be your own laboratory

I used to be one of those people who counted my daily calories and tracked how much protein I eat. I tried to eat 1,500 calories and 50 grammes of protein per day. I eventually stopped. Why? Because I was eating so much protein it was getting expensive and I was becoming neurotic tracking so many things.

Today, I eat normally. I wake up, have 2 pieces of buttered honey toast and a Kinto of basil seed iced tea. For lunch, I have rice with 2 kinds of main dishes, one meat based, one veggie based. Sometimes these dishes



are home cooked or sometimes they are whatever I feel like from the street vendors like moo ping or spicy pork from a Korean shop next door. I enjoyed closing off my lunch and dinner with a sweet snack, my rule is no snack until midday, it's arbitrary but it feels reasonable to me. Dinner is whatever leftovers we have in the fridge. Last night was rice, grilled chicken with kimchi.

I know research shows you need to eat a ton of protein to make and keep your muscles. Today, I don't eat extra protein or supplements, and I can honestly say I can't see any difference in my body eating 50g of protein per day or eating normally like this. So, keep an open mind, experiment and be your own laboratory. At the end of the day, you know yourself best, distill it down until you find an approach that works for you. This goes for everything in life not just nutrition.

3. Add heat

When you are baking a cake, you have flour, sugar, eggs, baking powder, butter. You mix them together, but this does not make a cake. It makes goop. You have to put it in the oven and add heat. The heat transforms the goop into cake. In a sense this is what a lasting lifestyle change is like.

You have all these ingredients, the logical, rational reasons from your brain that tell you - "I need to make time for myself, eat better, exercise, and move more", but to know them is not enough. You must add the heat and the energy of your heart. The heat is your feeling, your internal drive, and your emotional sense why something matters to you. What difference would it make to your life if you can lose this weight? "Sia", one of my coaching clients, told me of her desire



to lose weight. In her own words, she wanted to be able to "rock a bikini in her 40s". As we peeled the layers back, it became clearer to Sia that her definition of rocking a bikini means a strong and lean body, an image she associated with health.

As a nutritionist who is an advocate for health, she wants to live a life that's true to herself and advice she gives to her clients. This was the heat, the fire that Sia discovered inside herself that day. She still wanted to lose weight, but she uncovered her internal drive to be in alignment and at one with herself. When you travel deeper inside yourself and when you're able to go beyond where your logical mind thinks you should go, you will touch down onto something real. This is the heat that will allow you to burn through your excuses and keep going even when it's easier to revert back to your old patterns.

Over the years, I've come to learn that it's harder to develop healthy habits if there's a part of you that's resisting the change. So, I invite you to find enjoyment in the way you move and eat, and meaningful reason that speaks to your heart. May this be the beginning of your lasting change.

About the author: Gale Ruttanaphon
Fitness coach with Pre/Post Natal Specialisation, Corporate Speaker, Life Coach, Mother of two #Get confident in your own skin. Founder of My Mummy First and the creator of The Mummy Reboot, a holistic programme that helps mums lose weight, become stronger, healthier and confident in their own skin.

More available on:
www.mymummyfirst.com/
[themummyreboot](#)
IG: MyMummyFirst





DR. DARRYL R.J. MACER

President of the American
University of Sovereign
Nations (AUSN).

by Leonard H. Le Blanc III

We are speaking today with Dr. Darryl R.J. Macer, President of the American University of Sovereign Nations (AUSN), Director of the Eubios Ethics Institute (EEI) and the world's leading expert on Bioethics and Global Public Health.

When did you first come to Thailand?

I first moved in October 2004 to work as UNESCO Regional Adviser for Social and Human Sciences in Asia and the Pacific, and then moved in March 2013 to the Centre for Ethics of Science in Society at Chulalongkorn University.

What has changed here the most?

The suburban Metro and Skytrain lines allow a wider range



of residents to pursue professional careers in the modern global city of Bangkok. This will assist in the development of a more egalitarian society.

What has changed here the least?

The dependence of many persons on the informal society and being the land of smiles. Over the decades we can see many constitutions being adopted and challenged in Thai society, and it is a healthier democracy to enable dissent. This is nothing new and will likely continue in coming generations. At the same time, people realise that they

need to maintain economic and social development, so the pragmatism and middle way is a secret of success in Thailand.

You are the President of a new online university based in the USA but with students studying with you here in Thailand. Tell us about that.

Actually, in March 2013 while in Thailand I cofounded the American University of Sovereign Nations (AUSN) (www.ausovereignnations.org), and we held our first AUSN International Conference in Thailand in May 2013 with one hundred persons from around the world. We launched AUSN in the USA on Native American land in the State of Arizona



How has Thailand changed you?

As a social scientist and philosopher, to learn about the middle way, and how religion and culture coevolve in Thailand, and ASEAN, makes me more capable to be able to change the things in the world to make it more peaceful, and to bring different peoples together to do this.

Most universities around the world are seeing falling attendance for many reasons, but you are seeing rising attendance. Why is that?

We accept students on a rolling basis from every discipline and background, and the learning is done interactively together, with all being respected and everyone celebrating the wisdom of others.

You are the world's leading expert on Bioethics and Bioethics Education. What can you share?

Bioethics is the love of life and is the art of decision making.

and held regular residential and virtual in person classes until June 2018 in Arizona. Since 2013 we have conducted residential workshops in a dozen countries around the world, including Thailand, UK, Japan, Turkey, Malaysia, Indonesia, and many countries. Thai students' study both in Thailand and other countries with AUSN.

You are running a series of online international conferences on the Covid-19 pandemic with many international medical professionals attending. Can you tell us about that?

Between March-December 2020 we have held 12 International Public Health Ambassador and Bioethics Conferences, and nearly 200 papers have been presented by experts in all disciplines and from all around the world, looking at realities, policies, and making recommendations. As we all live with Covid-19 under different situations, we try to exchange good practices for individuals and governments.



We need it ever more, and over the past decades gradually more citizens are able to apply ethical principles, balance them, and make more decisions themselves. In order to teach we have to be a student at the same time, listening to others.

What will the world look like post Covid-19 pandemic?

This is up to how we all choose, but let's be optimistic that it will make us more caring of how our actions affect others, less harmful to the environment, and have less discrimination to our fellow persons, because people of every colour and preference have died from this disease and know people who have died and are still sick.

What does the future hold for you?

As long as God wills me to be alive, I follow Gandhi – Be the change that you want to see in the world. Every two seconds someone dies early because of bad policy decisions, so we need to foster research and share that research with policy makers, to enact better policy in the world with more informed and empowered citizens.



A REAL BLESSING IN DISGUISE – THE BOWRING TREATY OF 1855

by Leonard H. Le Blanc III

After the 1688 Siamese Revolution, most foreigners were expelled from the kingdom; foreign influence dropped to minimal levels. That situation remained for almost 140 years. However, Western nations, especially the U.K. and the U.S., started looking for new markets for their exports. These countries showed in Bangkok in the late 1810s and early 1820s eager to resume trade and diplomatic relations. However, the Thais were wary since they saw the surrounding nations were being absorbed into European colonial empires: India, Burma, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, China seaports, the Philippines and Singapore. They did not wish to meet the same fate, so they initially resisted these commercial and diplomatic overtures and planned to move slowly. But foreign nations were determined to establish relations so the Thais knew it would only be a matter of time before they had to work out some agreements.

The Portuguese were the first to set up an embassy in 1820. The first agreement between the U.K and Thailand called the Burney Treaty was signed in 1826, but this was not about commerce. Thailand and the U.S. signed a treaty in 1833. It was the first treaty the U.S. signed with an Asian nation. but nothing much came out of it. Only a few European and other foreign traders appeared, but most of the Westerners who arrived during this time were Christian missionaries who doubled as teachers and doctors, both very prestigious professions in the eyes of the Thais. However, trade had always continued with China. Chinese junks of all sizes plied the waters carrying mainly rice and other local commodities to home and all manner of goods to Thailand including porcelain wares, teas, cutlery, silks and thousands of other little trinkets and useful objects. Trade between Thailand and the Dutch East Indies plus Singapore consisted of mainly European goods and textiles.

However, everything dramatically changed overnight when Sir John Bowring, the British Governor of Hong Kong, arrived in Bangkok. He negotiated a trade agreement with King Mongkut (King Rama IV) that was signed in April 1855. In short, the treaty was similar to the forced treaty signed between the U.K. and China, namely one that was unequal or heavily skewed toward the British. Although the agreement liberalised foreign trade between the two nations, the Thais were pressured to accept and not allowed to negotiate under

the veiled threat of armed force.

In the eyes of the Thais the treaty provisions included sweeping changes. It created a new system of imports and exports with fixed low customs duties. There would be one tax only, all other different taxes on the same goods would be abolished. All royal monopolies were terminated, heavy royal taxation on imports was ended and free trade guaranteed for all foreigners in Bangkok. Thailand reserved the right to prohibit the export of rice, fish and salt if these commodities

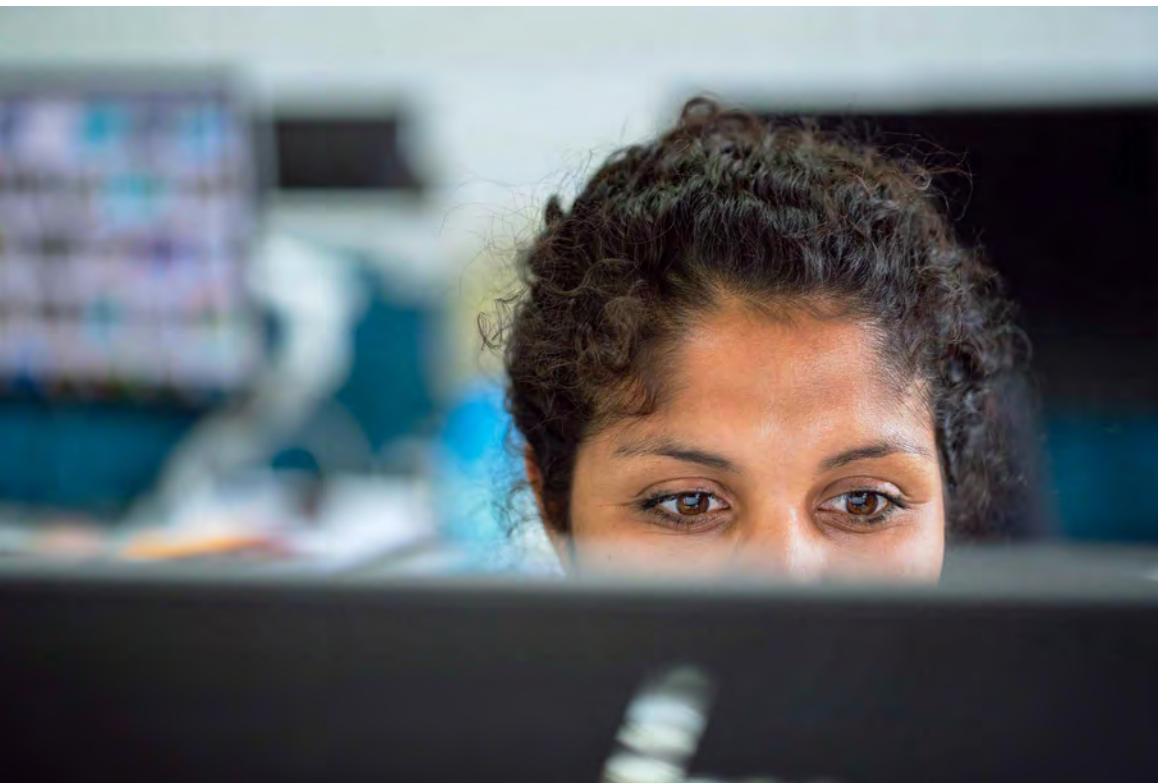
proved to be scarce. A British consulate was authorised, and British subjects could own land, subject to some restrictions. As with all such treaties at the time, British subjects were given the right of extraterritoriality in that local authorities could not prosecute British subjects without consular approval. British subjects could travel inside the country and trade freely with locals without interference. But the treaty also allowed British ships to import opium. The treaty was very important in one aspect. It prohibited all other

nations from interfering in Thailand's internal affairs thus guaranteeing the country's independence.

The effect of the treaty was dramatic. It created a framework for trade between Thailand and China and Singapore. Trade started to increase exponentially. Within two years there were 200 Western ships that called on Bangkok. Rice became a major export commodity to British India with sugar cane and teak becoming import exports. Quickly other nations signed bilateral treaties with Thailand, including the U.S. in 1856, all based on the Bowring Treaty. Foreign embassies started to be quickly set up and foreigners started pouring into Bangkok, although they had to live on boats along the river. Trade and commerce started to greatly accelerate. The Thai government eventually shifted to a tax farming scheme by granting concessionary licenses to make up for the loss of royal monopolies on such activities that included teak, gambling and opium. In the end of the Thai government gained in the bargain with much higher revenues.

The Bowring Treaty proved to be a great boon to the country as trade was greatly expanded.





but a few. Ignoring it, might not be the best remedy.

I see the eyes as a reflection of one's state of mind, physical and emotional health.

When you feel good, energised, excited about life, and have a good night's sleep, more often than not, someone will say, you look great. Your eyes are conveying how you feel.

During 2020, and now in 2021, masks are still being worn by

millions of people around the world. Your eyes are more than at any other time the first connection to communication. Of course, when we meet people, it is polite to look at them and greet them and we want them to see us, really see us.

The eyes have it

by Karla Walter

There is a long list of sayings and quotes about the eyes. The earliest account is from biblical times, in the King James version of the bible Mathew 6: 22 reads, "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. 23: But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great the light!"

The Roman philosopher, Marcus Tullius Cicero, was known to say: The face is a picture of the mind as the eyes are its interpreter. Most people have heard the quote: "The eyes are the window to the soul."

During 2020, more people spent time on computers, watching TV, playing video games, being on Zoom calls, learning online, talking online, browsing online, shopping online than in previous years. So many of the world's population had to make it their new reality. Once again, our lives have become so enmeshed in the computer and other devices that we are afraid not to have it "on." If we are spending so much of our time online, then what has happened to health of our eyes.

Are your eyes tired, sore, red, inflamed, scratchy, itchy, dry, just old fashioned tired perhaps? Do you keep going hoping that things will improve or is it time to step back and check in with yourself about the messages your eyes are telling you? These are symptoms that are telling you something is wrong. It is how we interpret the symptoms that will help resolve the issue. Possible problems that may be starting are presbyopia, glaucoma, dry eyes, age related macular degeneration, cataracts and temporal arthritis to name

Here are some simple steps to make sure your eyesight is at its best. When your vision is at its best you perform well at work home, play, sport, driving and watching beautiful sunsets, no matter what your age.

First let's look at food. Reducing sugar and staying away from highly processed foods will give your overall health a boost. Foods that can assist in eye health come in different categories, that have many of the different vitamins or minerals required for healthy eyes.

Vitamins and food

For eyes specifically the list starts with lutein and zeaxanthin. These are called carotenoids and are related to beta-carotene and vitamin A. Your body converts beta carotene to vitamin A, a nutrient that helps prevent dry eyes and night blindness. Beta carotene and vitamin A also may help reduce the risk of eye infections. These foods are carrots, sweet potato, eggs, especially the yolk, broccoli, spinach, kale, corn, butternut squash, orange peppers, kiwi fruit, grapes, peas, orange juice, zucchini, papaya's, squash and liver. Vitamin A plays an important role in maintaining a clear cornea, which is the outside covering of your eye.

Lutein is also thought to be part of the light filter, protecting the eye tissue from sunlight damage. Lutein is absorbed better when eaten with good fat, so a little extra olive oil will go a long way.

Vitamins C and E are powerful antioxidants, and these protect your eyes from what is known as damaging free



It contains catechins, which are responsible for antioxidant actions in the body, especially your eyes. Apples and cherries are also in this category and great to snack on.

Water: never underestimate the power of water and the impact that it has on the wellbeing of our cells. Not only for our eyes but our overall health.

Quit smoking. Smoking causes the optic nerve to become damaged, increases risk of macular degeneration and cataracts.

radicals. The reason vitamin C is so important it is required to make collagen, a protein that provides structure to your eye, especially the cornea and sclera. Ongoing studies suggest that vitamin C may reduce the risk of cataracts.

Foods high in vitamin C are citrus, tropical fruits, bell peppers, broccoli, kale, nuts, seeds and strawberries. Foods high in vitamin E are salmon, avocado, leafy greens, nuts and cooking oils.

Omega 3 fatty acids play an important role in eye health. The cell membrane of the retina contains a high concentration of DHA, a particular type of Omega 3. Omega 3 has anti-inflammatory properties which may help prevent diabetic retinopathy. Research continues in this area especially around macular degeneration and cataracts. Foods that are high in Omega 3 are fish, especially salmon, sardines, tuna, anchovies, flaxseed, chia seeds, soy and nuts, good cold pressed olive oil.

Zinc is an important mineral for the health of the retina, cell membranes and protein structure of the eye. Zinc has an important role allowing vitamin A to travel from the liver to the retina, to produce melanin. That is the pigment that protects the eye from UV light. Studies show decreased levels of zinc or zinc deficiency may lead to night blindness.

Foods high in zinc: oysters, beef, lobster, pork, yoghurt, naked beans, dry roasted cashews.

A healthy beverage to have next to you when working on the computer is green tea.

Preventative measures to help your eyes are to wear sunglasses. Wraparound lenses protect from both sides, look for a pair of sunglasses that block 99% – 100% of UV rays. Another helpful part of decreasing your chances of cataracts or macular degeneration. It is now possible to get contact lenses with some UV protection, however it is still preferable to wear sunglasses.

Never underestimate injuries that can happen to the eyes when performing odd jobs around the home, or at work if you are in a situation of machinery, etc. Safety goggles are to be worn with airborne materials or hazardous environment in a factory for example. Anytime chemical solutions are used, wearing protective eye equipment is a priority. In many sports they wear protective head ware and also protective sports goggles.





The computer, handheld devices, etc., are next on the list. Extended periods of time can cause any or all of the following.

- Trouble focusing at a distance
- Blurred vision
- Eyestrain
- Dry eyes
- Headaches
- Shoulder pain and tension, neck and back pain

Here are some helpful tips for working on a computer or devices:

- Make sure if you wear prescription glasses they are up to date. I have just received my new prescription glasses and they make all the difference, and the change was only minor. It is now possible to have computer glasses, that help with the distance between where you sit and where your computer is placed. It is best to get have this done professionally by your eye specialist.
- Set your chair high enough that you are in line with the top of the monitor. You should be looking ever so slightly down at the screen.
- Make sure your chair is comfortable and supports you. Your feet are flat on the ground or place a box or a foot stool, so your feet are not dangling under the chair. Be careful if sitting on a high stool. Make sure you have a rung that your feet are resting on.
- Blink if your eyes are dry or scratchy to see if that elevates the situation. If this persists, check the other items on this list and if no relief see a medical professional. Make sure there is no glare on the screen or use a guard if possible. I use a programme on my computer that changes the light depending on the time of day or night.

It works from your location. It has made huge difference in my eye health. From the early inception of the computer, the recommendation was to rest your eyes every 20 minutes. To rest your eyes, it is best to look 20 feet into the distance away from the computer or device. The next step was to get up every 2 hours and take a 15 minute break, to rest your eyes away from the screen.

- A simple way to balance all that is required for eye health is to follow a few simple health tips. Twice a week, have fish in your diet along with five servings of fruits and vegetables daily. When not eating fish, make sure you have protein every day.
- Take time to not only rest your eyes by looking away from a computer or device but take time to look around. Really look around. Answer this question. What is the colour of your front door? Could you answer the question immediately or did you have to think about it? What do we really see when we look around? Do we quickly glance and not take in that what is around us! There is so much to see, to really see, colours of the sky, buildings, clothes, watching children play or looking at another sunset. Give your eyes a gift and truly see what is around you.

"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes" by Marcel Proust

Health and Happiness

Karla Walter

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CLB December High Tea 2020





THE RISE OF ORDINARY HEROES

by Isabel Valle

The world is going through the biggest change in history. We are living in a new era with unprecedented conditions at all levels: unstable external environment, changing political and financial forces, technological advancements, global warming, etc. In this new phase of globalisation, the role of society is being reinvented and ordinary people are taking back their power; and in doing so, the rise of ordinary heroes begins.

Ordinary people blame their circumstances and make excuses. They give away their power and place the responsibility for their own happiness in the hands of others. They never stop to consider that they have choices. But we no longer can hide under the blanket. The world at large needs your help. Not only do you have the opportunity to take control of everything that you do, you have the responsibility to do it.

Ordinary heroes take responsibility for their lives. They own their thoughts, actions, decisions and feelings. They understand that they are responsible for how they respond to the environment they find themselves in. Ordinary heroes are people who rise above conformity to go beyond their

comfort zone and do extraordinary things.

This new breed of heroes does not need a title to make a difference. They are focused, motivated individuals, driven by a sense of internal direction and a sense of purpose that, in turn, is positively transforming the world we live in.

So, who are today's heroes? Irrespective of their jobs or life circumstances, there are some people





that have the ability to shine in their own right, and are able to impact positively every single person that they come in contact with. They are called heroes because they are able to use their unique gifts and powers and break through all preconceived ideas and moulds in order to create the changes needed to make a difference.

Most of us may not even realise the amazing gifts that lie inside us and may be afraid of our own unique talents. In fact, it is estimated that the average person only uses up to 8% of their full potential. But when we look and focus outside of ourselves we give away our power, which makes us feel lost and powerless, hindering our ability to tap into our greatness.

“Everything is impossible until you do it.” – J. Miller

But how do we find our power? Your journey starts within yourself. We all possess internal voices, what I like to call my big voice and my little voice.

Our little voice belittles us and tells us that we are not good enough, we are not worth it, we will never achieve amazing things, that we need to pretend to be someone we are not in order to be liked and accepted by others, etc – any of these sound familiar?

Our big voice however tells us not to let others define who we are; it tells us that we can achieve anything we set our mind to. It encourages us to pursue our passions, and provides us with limitless motivation and energy to pursue our dreams and life purpose, giving us room to fail and learn from our own mistakes without the fear of being judged.

Ordinary heroes listen to their big voice, as it is in that space that they learn about their gifts and purpose. Learn to ignore your little voice which keeps you stuck, lost and unaccomplished, and get to know yourself and what you have to offer. No matter how big or small your purpose, it is through individual personal accountability that you will make a big difference in your life and the lives of others around you. Find that role that is bigger than you, that role in which you want to be your best, irrespective of title. Become aware of your passions and what drives you to want to better yourself.

Don't give away your power. You cannot live an extraordinary life by making ordinary choices. Become a hero. Lead from the inside out and let the world see you for who you really are. What you do matters. Your gifts matter. Help us make the world a better place. So, do you have what it takes to be a hero?

About the author:

Isabel is an experienced ICF Coach with over 20 years of international work experience holding senior positions within the hospitality industry in countries around the world, as well as Executive and Leadership coaching, mentoring and training. Isabel specialises in high performance strategy, leadership development and building organisational culture.

More available on www.isabelvalle.com



CLEAR THE AIR FOR YOUR FAMILY'S HEALTH

Bangkok's winter haze and the hazards of air pollution

by Tina Haskins Chadha

If we can see a glimmer of positivity from the past year as the world grappled with the COVID-19 global pandemic, one can rank widespread acceptance of masks as a method to protect our health and those around us. Many of us have incredibly spent the last 12 months wearing facial masks outside of our home seven days a week. Young and old, we are all masked warriors doing our best to stay healthy. 2020 certainly saw the mask and mask accessory industry explode like never before. 2021 and it appears that necessity will continue long into the year. We have taken this step diligently as a way to help protect our health and halt the spread of COVID-19. What we have also accomplished by default is countless hours of cleaner air making its way into our lungs. The right mask that fits well helps protect us from Covid-19 and protects our lungs from the toxic pollutants that are in the air.

Over the past decade, I became uniquely and alarmingly acquainted with the hazards of air pollution on human health. Like a toxic friendship you just can't shake, even short term exposure to dirty air lingers on the mind and manifests across the body with nagging coughs, dull headaches and irritation of eyes and throat. The worry of air pollution on our health over these past years became so great it yielded personal action for me. In the early 2010's, I helped co-found an air pollution awareness and advocacy group called Care for Air. By 2016, my family had literally moved to another country, in large part, due to our search for cleaner, healthier air. I suspect we will not be alone in the years ahead to what may be a tidal wave of air pollution expatriates.

Today we know air pollution is on the rise globally. According to the World Health Organisation more than 80%



of city residents around the world are exposed to particulate pollution at unsafe levels. Seven million people are killed prematurely each year by air pollution in both rich and poor countries. Sadly, Thailand is no stranger to air pollution and it's not just Bangkok. Chiang Mai ranks among the top regions for exceedingly high levels of hazardous air. Saraburi, Chonburi and Samut Sakhon unfortunately also join this list. The Air Quality Life Index (AQLI) by the University of Chicago shows long term exposure to fine particulate pollution is shortening the average Thai's life expectancy by more than two years. In the most polluted areas that number grows to four years of reduced life expectancy. The AQLI found that 87% of Thailand's 68 million residents are exposed to air pollution levels exceeding WHO guidelines. This public health crisis of dangerous and toxic air hits children, the elderly and the most vulnerable people hardest. It is estimated that 10-15% of children in Thailand suffer from asthma.

So, what is going on with Bangkok's air? In recent years, there have been some improvements. Yet still the problem persists with air pollution levels reaching highest levels over the winter and drier months. Seasonal weather patterns and human activities combine to make the winter months here in Thailand particularly bad. Compounding that – Bangkok is

not a very windy city. The lack of wind is problematic in the cooler months as PM 2.5 pollution particles build in the air and there is not enough wind to disperse them. The cooler temperatures cause an inversion effect which results in the air pollution stagnating for days at a time. Thailand's air pollution problem comes from a combination of vehicular emissions, biomass burning, agriculture and industrial emissions, among other factors. Our location on our planet even plays a role in exacerbating this problem. A recent study from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill revealed that effectively where air pollution comes from is as important as how much is emitted. Air pollution generated in the areas closer to the equator where there is more heat and light yield more ozone than regions farther from the equator. That unfortunately puts SE Asia squarely in this hot zone.

Whether we know it or not, air pollution is shaping our lives. But we can get educated and take better ownership of the air we breathe to protect ourselves and to ensure we do not become major contributors. The problem of toxic air will not go away without sustained efforts – large and small. So, what can we do on an individual level to reduce our own personal air pollution footprint? Well a lot it turns out. Small changes at home snowball. The air around us improves and our example begins to set in motion a collective responsibility.

So, starting today, why not proudly become a clean air ambassador:

1. Wheels matter:

Go on two wheels when possible! Bike around town if that is safe in your area. If you own a motorcycle or diesel car, consider switching on your next trade-in or purchase to a hybrid or petrol vehicle. In the meantime, reduce your emissions by ensuring your car isn't the one idling for long periods in the driveway, at markets or school. For all vehicles, turn the engine off when not in motion.

When it comes to getting around, consider walking, biking, or public transport when possible.

2. Check readings daily and avoid outdoor aerobic activities during peak air pollution times.

Air pollution levels tend to be highest during early morning and evening hours. Sadly, this is also when temperatures are most pleasant for outdoor exercise, especially when wearing a mask. Check air pollution readings via your phone app, like IQ Air or Air Visual, before taking that power walk or run outside.

3. Become a compost convert! Dispose of garden waste eco-friendly

Learn how to compost and organise a neighbourhood composting group. Food from dinner leftovers to inedible waste like eggshells and garden waste can be composted which helps nourish the soil and in turn reduces what goes into landfills. Think it won't make a difference, well, consider this: Organic waste (food and garden waste) in landfills generates methane which is a potent greenhouse gas. Compost can also capture and destroy a significant portion of industrial volatile organic chemicals (VOCs) in contaminated air.

4. Clean green air inside your home

For most of us, the majority of our time is spent indoors, whether at home, work or now virtual school. Indoor air it turns out is as polluted, sometimes more so, than outdoor air. The air inside is compromised by both external pollutants (PM 2.5, ozone) that come in through every window and open door, as well as indoor air generated toxins (benzene, formaldehyde, xylene, ammonia and trichloroethylene) from paints, varnish, leathers, plastics and more. These indoor air pollutants are linked to headaches, eye irritation, dizziness and more. The good news is we have some natural remedies at hand. The use of several plants can dramatically improve our indoor air.

NASA's 1989 Clean Air Study set out to find the best ways to naturally clean the air in space stations. The result? They also determined the best plants to purify your indoor air at home. The Spider Plant, Mother-in-Law's Tongue, Peace Lily, Dracaena and Chrysanthemum make great natural air filters and they are pretty hardy for those of us who are not natural green thumbs. NASA research suggests at least one plant per 100 square feet of home or work space.

Learn more about air pollution causes and solutions. Join clean air movements such as www.careforair.org. Stay safe and healthy from air pollution and Covid-19.



Gung-ho! Guava and avocado

by Margaret Elizabeth
Johnston ND

As the month of February rolls in, we may be thinking of a few ways to lose some of the weight we may have put on with not only the lockdown issues and less freedom of movement in general, but also the holiday splurges we may of indulged in. Weight loss can be a lot easier to work towards if your diet is not only tasty but satisfying due to having a high fibre content and “good fats”. Minding sugar intake, even being careful of fruit sugars, can be hard if you are a fruit lover as I am, however, some of the fruits that are available to us in Thailand so readily have a remarkably high fibre content and very little sugar, one of them being the Guava, *Psidium guajava*. A few of these fruits, and you can feel very full. I will also include avocado, *Persea americana*, because there is a misconception that “eating fat makes you fat” but it is eating the wrong kind of fat along with too much sugar that can make you fat. Avocados also have a high fibre content and are considered a “good fat”. (There are four types of fats: saturated, monounsaturated, trans and polyunsaturated. The complete understanding of these can be a whole article unto itself and I just want to suggest some ways to incorporate both the guava and the avocado in this article but please know that in general, fat from non-animal products like avocados, olives, nuts and seeds fall into the “good fat” category. Yes, eggs too, but this is why I say it is a whole article unto itself! For now, let's just move forward with these two fruits to incorporate into your lifestyle for weight loss and health.

Both the guava and the avocado, along with potential weight loss, can boost the system for some great health and



fresh vitality as we come into 2021. I delight in being able to indulge in one of my favourite fruits, the pink guava, but I'll speak of the Thai guava first which more of us may be familiar with. In Thailand, one often eats Thai guava's sliced up raw and dipped in sugar with dried chilli, sliced up small and added to green papaya or green mango salads or even pickled. I prefer the sweet pink guava's to have plain as a delicious snack or to use in smoothies for they have a lot of pectin in them and create a real rich creamy texture for this. But both types of guava are full of vitamins and minerals for supreme health!

Thai guava's are fairly easy to find year round and they are a bit harder, not as sweet, and more yellow inside than the pink. The Thai guava is known as Farang in Thailand. This is rather funny because it is the same name the Thai's use to call foreigners. It refers to when this fruit was introduced by Europeans in the 17th century representing something foreign in any way being brought into the local community.

Pink guava is sweet and tangy! I have a smoothie idea here to share and did a painting of the pink guava I call “Gung-ho guava!” that I include in this article for your enjoyment. Some of you, my regular readers, may know I travel around with my suitcase full of art supplies and portray local fruits and flowers on my journeys and discuss medicinal ways to incorporate these “superfoods” into your

lifestyle. Hopefully, I can satisfy some of your desires for healthy ways and cater to your art culture cravings! Choosing guava to paint was a challenging subject because in watercolour, the white of anything is supposed to be the paper and the delicate guava flowers are white in general. I am pleased with the results finding that white can include





relax the body and contribute to great mental clarity. Vitamins B3 and B6 is present, B6 being proven to help with neurodegeneration. Ripe guava's emanate a divine scent, like a sweet vanilla/strawberry. When I buy guava's and they are sitting in my fridge, every time I open the fridge I get a waft of this sweet guava scent and I cannot help but to want to make a smoothie so my guava purchases run out quick!

As I mentioned, guava's have a high level of pectin so make very creamy and thick smoothies without the need to freeze the fruit. I added some papaya, also low in sugar/high in fibre, and some good seed fats (like Tahini/sesame seed butter) to my smoothie. Frozen banana is also a way to cream up your smoothie but if trying to stay low sugar, please use lightly or add some avocado! Both papaya and guava can go right though one's digestive system so with these added fat suggestions, it will make this yummy breakfast last longer, and the nutty flavour goes with this concoction very well.

Avocados are a staple in my diet when I can find them. They are considered a nutrient dense superfood due to being able to help increase the absorption of fat soluble nutrients such as vitamins A, D, K and E. Unbeknownst to some, an avocado is a fruit. Botanically, it is considered a large berry containing a single seed. This fruit matures on the tree but ripens off the tree and this is where I find my avocado selections stilted at times. Knowing when to pick is especially important, as with most fruits, otherwise you will have a hard avocado sitting around your kitchen for a week with no softening and then it just goes brown. Sometimes you can get lucky and by putting it in a brown paper bag with a ripe banana, you can speed up the process! Ripe bananas contain a natural plant hormone called ethylene, which can trigger ripening in mature fruit.

Originally from Mexico, there also are separate domesticated beginning versions of this fruit coming from Guatemala, Costa Rica, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. It was in 1526 the avocado began infiltrating into Europe, Hawaii in 1833 and California 1856. In Thailand, avocado production seems to be increasing every year. In the provinces of Chanthaburi, Songkhla, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Rayong, Chaiyaphum, Nakhon Ratchasima, Tak and Nan, avocados are grown.

It is in the Northeastern and Northern regions where the larger concentrations can be found. So, for just under 200 years this fruit has come a long way from a small variety of choice to the overwhelming 500 varieties! It can be a fussy subtropical species to grow needing lots of applied water, not just natural moisture from rain or run off. Low winds (so the flower does not get dehydrated) and well aerated soil is also needed plus this fruit is only partially self-pollinating so careful orchard space and care must be taken into consideration. I often can get discouraged trying to find avocados that ripen well and can be easily found but after knowing the care involved to delight in these fruits, I am pleased when I find my favourite market seller in my own neighbourhood.



light lavenders, greens and yellows when observed closely. This species of guava that can be found growing profusely in Thailand is green even when ripened with a touch of rose and light yellows showing through. Knowing when the fruit is ripe to pick is a skill one must develop since the guava can drop off the stem and then the fruit flies will "have it" laying their egg's in the fruit which will be disappointing when maggots are infiltrated into your well expected treat! So, making sure to get the fruit right off the tree or from a trusted guava seller is always best!

Guava, having loads of fibre, being easy to digest, having a high vitamins A and C content along with lycopene, a strong antioxidant, I can easily say this fruit is well worth our respect. For gut health, there are antimicrobial properties and with the level of magnesium in this fruit, it can help to



Once I cut an avocado and have it on my plate or in a recipe, squeezing some lime/lemon on it can prevent it from browning. (I have discovered that if you only eat half of the avocado, keep the pit in the other half of the fruit you refrigerate, and it will stay fresher longer!) I just love eating them in so many ways from straight out of the skin with some salt using a spoon to putting in smoothies, mashed on rye-toast, with tomatoes in salads and it goes on and on. One can even use it in stir fry's, it is divine heated! Avocados can range from 200-350 calories each depending on size.

The high level of diverse fats in an avocado is great for hair/skin/nails and for the whole body in general. The avocado is virtually the only fruit (also some nuts but we know they can be a fruit too) that contains heart healthy monounsaturated fat. Avocados are also a good source of vitamins A, B, C, E, K, copper and fibre, plus, the potassium content is high. Adding 1/2 of an avocado or more to your daily diet adds not only nutrition but helps to stay satiated throughout the day as mentioned above. Make some guacamole (avocado, lime, cilantro, then get creative with chillies and a bit of crushed salt) and enjoy using as a healthy dip for chips (blue corn), cream up your smoothies or toss into your salad today!

Before wrapping up these ways to use both the guava and the avocado I did want to mention that both these fruits can be used medicinally. Guava leaf extract is very potent as an antioxidant and is loaded with vitamins and minerals. The extract is antimicrobial and can help to relieve and neutralise harmful bacteria in your gut. Lowering blood sugar and cholesterol (as with the fruit also) is also noted, along with relieving menstrual cramps. A skin tonic can be made from the leaf extract to relieve facial irritation like acne or rashes. It is found that using a combination of both water and alcohol for a solvent is best leaving the highest potency available for use.

Boil 1 cup of water along with 50 guava leaves, strain, cool. Soak 25 leaves in 1/2 cup Vodka 1 wk, strain cool. Mix both, keep in fridge in brown/green bottle.

Apply to skin for outer issues (you can use just the water tincture if preferred) and/or take 1/2 tbs. a day under tongue when needed, regular smaller does if trying to relieve a chronic condition. This tincture has been created by me with much reading up on the subject and is safe for ordinary use, no alcohol for pregnant woman, just water tincture, same as for children. One can purchase the supplements in pill for also from local health food stores however fresh is best!

An extract of avocado leaves can be created similarly, using the tincture under the tongue. It has been shown to be of use to slow hyperactive activity for cancer, support liver function and can be used for dysentery. Even the bark of the avocado can be used for diarrhoea. For topical applications, the seeds are well known to produce an oil that is a healthy alternative to palm oil in cosmetics and can also be directly on the skin. In the past, the oil has been known to be used in dye for making clothes.

It is so easy to think of mango's, pineapples and bananas, all high in sugar, when we think of our local fruit markets along with some of the more exotic rambutan, dragonfruit and durian but let us not forget these two wonderful fruits and think of healthy ways to add them to our diets. I wrote this article in December 2020, after a long hard year for most, hoping that by the month of February 2021 we are all out and about getting our fresh air and exercise, having pushed through the harder times and reaping some clear visions for our future. May 2021 bring in some lighter days and easier ways.

About the author: Margaret enjoys learning about local fruits and flowers she stumbles upon during her travels and portraying them in her bright and bold watercolours educating us along the way of how to use these divine gifts in our own lives as food and medicine. Food is medicine in her world. One can follow her on her journeys throughout SE Asia and some of the rest of the world via her website at www.mejcreations.com. Her art and health blogs are fun and informative and one can sign up for a bimonthly newsletter too!





IWC Christmas luncheon



SNOWBOARDING IN THE ALPS



nothing for us to do. So they said to us, 'lads, you have a week off, enjoy'. This was the best thing about the Army, "leave!" (the word we use for paid holiday). No exaggeration, the very next day I jumped in my van, and drove to the Alps – it took me all day – I love long drives.

You may think, how did you get organised so quick? Well, My van was well used. Anywhere I went, I would always have it ready for sleeping purposes, just in case. If I was at a friend's house and there was no room, or the van was more comfortable

by *Pierre Lafayeedney*

This article is about how the concept of 'bornagaintriathlete' came to be. Firstly, that's what it's supposed to be, it's not. Secondly, it was not my intention to write an article about this. It was the editor of "Expat Life in Thailand" who suggested I write a second article for the Feb/March edition, about how I ended up in Chiang Mai. I was there in 2016/17 which is when I started triathlon.

And so I set out to do just that, and failed miserably. As you will read below I start the article with my time in the Army and by the time the article ends, I'm still in the Army. So, mission failed. But, I've tried to explain a paradigm shift that was happening during my time in the Army. A paradigm shift that led me to Chiang Mai and the concept 'bornagaintriathlete'.

"Bornagaintriathlete" is about making a mental paradigm shift from aspiring for 'greatness' to aspiring for 'happiness'. Life up to early 2015 had been about aspirations of 'greatness'. I then left the Army and took a different path. A path towards a life 'stress-free'. This does not mean a life of comfort, but one of 'happy struggles'.

Story

While in the Army, as a squaddie with no dependents, I had spare cash, and it all went into snowboarding. I had a van and on two separate occasions I drove myself to the Alps, lived in the van and snowboarded the pistes. Never spoke to anyone, never went to any bars, just me, in my van, on my roll matt, cooking with my small portable army cooker that I used on outdoor exercises, and a tarpaulin to keep the van warm, that I had 'borrowed' from the Signals Department stores, hahaha, sshhhh, don't tell anyone (I gave it back).

One time, it was late October, we were all in camp, but "heads-hed" (people in charge with lots of stripes or pips) had

than their floor. If I got too drunk and didn't want to drive home. There were a multitude of reasons. This time, it would be to save on hotel charges. And, if I was being honest, it added to the adventure, because that's what I was doing. I was on an adventure, an arduous one.

The same night we got told about leave, before locking up the stores, I checked out a tarpaulin and a 'donkey-dick' (what we called an exhaust extension) outside to pick it up later in my van. Got my snowboard kit packed, sleeping and cooking essentials, booked a ferry online, just about enough sleep, left with the sun cresting the horizon, luke warm mild coffee with too much sugar to compensate, all for little over 3GBP on route to Dover, yes! I knew I was alive, and had myself to myself for the next few days.

I got to 'Les Deux Alps' in the evening. I don't know why I picked that one. I remember a friend telling me about going there on holiday one time. And it sounded cool. translation: 'The Two Alps' – it doesn't really make sense, but it kind of does, because you kind of imagine a valley with two mountains on either side. Its poetic. A lot of poetry doesn't really make sense to me. Maybe I'm stupid or maybe artists write in a way that leaves the imagination to work out what they meant.

In any case, I picked out 'Les Deux Alps' and there I was. But it was pitch black by the time I got there. I parked in an empty car park. That should have been my first warning! I had nothing to do but wander into town and see what's what, to see "what may be a cooking'...". The only thing open was a bar. I went in. Got chatting with some guy. Very French. A 'Savoyard'. He owned one of the ski rental shops. He got me very very drunk on Genepi, apparently a local delicacy, I was expecting saucisson or some such, 'when in Rome...'

At some point in our ramblings, very likely mostly non-sensical, even to me if it were played back to me, I learnt that the pistes only opened next week. 'Tu es 1 semaine trop tot mon pote'. He must have initially thought I was a seasonaire a week early to help get things set up. Then secondly, a little

strange, and then thirdly downright stupid. I'm not sure which one is true, but it's definitely not the first one.

Luckily he gave me directions to the next valley where I would find Tignes which has a glacier and so offers off-season skiing/snowboarding. So the next morning head pounding, off I went, another 2/3 hours in the van, listening to some more 90's classics like Boyzone and Take That, courtesy of French music tastes. But I'd be lying if I said I didn't enjoy it.

But how did I get into snowboarding? Ah yes, this was the base point of why I'm writing. Why it is integral to my 'life journey'. Well, one time in the Alps, there were friends coming for holiday one valley over from where I had been staying. So I would happily spend two weeks in the Alps. One on my own, and the second with them. At this point it was in the earlier days of my Alps excursions and I was skiing then. But I have oddly shaped ankles, and one week is enough, after, my ankles can't take it anymore. So once I'd driven over to "The Three Valleys" where they were, I was forced to hire a snowboard with much softer, kinder shoes to my ankles. It was my only option. I'd never tried it before. But why not eh?

It wasn't obvious and like the paradigm shift there was no sudden revelation. I spent the first few days with a soaking bottom and a huge relief when the bars opened and it was time for 'Apres-Ski'. I remember one particular bar, 'La Folie Douce'. All the cool kids hung out there. I felt pretty awkward. I didn't have the chic new gear, the expensive sunglasses, and defo not the bottle of Champagne. But it was part of the fun. And the accommodation where we were staying, not only had a chalet guy to cook for us, my friends do this shit in style, but a swimming pool and Jacuzzi in the basement – gangsteeeeeer!

Back to the case in hand – snowboarding, why, Pierre! Stick to the topic! yes, yes, yes – despite the early 'Apres-ski', cramping in all the wrong places, and an awkward reluctance to sit down, I was learning to stand on a snowboard. Not quickly but at least quicker than when I went surfing with a friend for a week in North Scotland. I was on leave from the Army, again, and my reluctance to enter the water, or enthusiasm to get out, was not because I was unable to get out beyond the waves never mind actually stand on the thing, as I kept telling my friend, but because the water was absolutely freezing. I did eventually ride a wave, a rough ride, but

nothing like riding the waves of the pistes.

When I started getting into snowboarding and learning the ropes, that's what it felt like. Almost like 'this is what a surfer must feel'. You stand with your board 90° to the piste. This is the brake position. Then you slowly twist your upper body so the shoulder starts to point downhill. The board follows. It slowly turns from its 90° brake position to point down the hill, and you can feel the acceleration as this process takes shape. There is no rush quite like it. The sudden sense of liberation is quite unique. The normal thought processes disappear. The stomach sinks, the heart quickens and the only thought is to what lies ahead.

There was a sense of joy in this process, one which had been lacking in my life. I was going through the motions. Doing what I'd been brought up to do, fighting against any instincts that might be urging me to stop or rethink my course, banging my head against a wall hoping for something to give, it felt like I was in 3rd gear, trying to go at 100mph, and driving a 1990s Peugeot 309, with no TomTom, and regardless of the road conditions.

This feeling that snowboarding offered was a revelation. It gave me a glimpse to how life can be better if your emotions are better understood and catered to. Can I re find the feeling when turning down a hill out of brake position, riding the pistes like a surfer does a wave, during normal living? Can I live my daily normal life with that sense of joy, liberation and genuine curiosity? I had to try. I have to try. I am still trying.

Although throughout this article I have jokingly seemingly gone off topic, the point being, it was, it is, a long journey, with many exits, dead ends, roundabouts etc... and snowboarding was not just something I saw one time then suddenly thought, right I'm doing that. I had skied when I was younger and would watch the 'cool kids' snowboarding and watch snowboarding videos with a touch of yearning. They seem so at ease with themselves. They walk with long arms and an air of 'que sera, sera'. It speaks: I feel good physically in my skin, walking with ease and pain free, and focused only on their next snowboard run, anything else is superfluous. Something I aspire for today and hopefully every next day to come.



LEARNING TO DIVE IN THAILAND

by Jocelyn Pollak

There are plenty of hidden gems in Thailand and if you are an expat like me who has been doing a lot of domestic travel this year, chances are you've found a few of these gems yourself. I found my gem on a trip down to Koh Tao to get my SCUBA certification back in September, his name is Anthony Griffiths and he has been a dive instructor in Thailand for 25 years. Right in our backyard, we have the instructor who has PADI certified more people to scuba dive than anyone else in the world. I have been back down to dive a few more times since getting certified and asked Anthony to sit down with me and tell me his story and why everyone should give diving a try, especially now.

What did you do before you were a dive instructor?

I was a dancer with the Royal Ballet. I trained for 16 years and I danced with them for about 4 years; I toured the world. I was in Madonna's show when she came to England, I performed on Top of the Pops, danced in countless contemporary companies – Twyla Tharp, Pina Bausch, Sadler's Wells – I am going back 30 years though.

When did you first come to Thailand?

1991. I came with a girlfriend on holiday because I wasn't doing anything, I was just hanging around in London. My dance career had kind of wound down and I was about 28 years old. I had been travelling a lot before with my career but not really holidaying, and it just seemed like a good idea. So, she was coming to Thailand and I just came with her. And it was an absolutely brilliant decision.



When did you decide to make the move and why?

I didn't have a set day where you could say like "I moved to Thailand on...". It was a gradual transition. I was holidaying here for just 2 weeks and we changed our round the world tickets to make it 6 months. I did my PADI Open Water (Diving) Course, Advanced Course, Rescue Diving, Divemaster and fell completely in love with it. One thing led to another and the rest is history. Since 1991 I have pretty much been diving every day, besides my trips back home to the UK of course.

I have always used Koh Tao as a base though. I would go to Australia and Fiji, but I always want to come back to Koh Tao. It is a very special island with very special people. The local people are beautiful, and they have a lovely school and community. It has just been a great place for me to bring up a family.





25 years. I don't want to toot my own horn, but since you asked, I hold the most certifications of any PADI instructor in the world. It is roughly 18,000 people by now. The dive shop I work at, Ban's Dive Shop, is the biggest dive shop in the world by the number of people we have certified – over a quarter of a million. We were going to have a big celebration this year for our 300,000th certification but because of Covid, we had to stop the plan. I have grown my career at Ban's and even though I have been diving all over the world, this is the place I want to come back to.

Why should someone get certified to dive?

Diving is a way for people to reconnect back to the natural world that we all belong to. I believe people have become so disconnected because of technology (of course technology is a wonderful thing too) but when it gets to the point where it disconnects people from that natural way of being, it is concerning. How do you even put into words when a 6 metre fish with a mouth like a car front swims over your head, looks down and questions you. When you have that visceral feeling inside your stomach and your soul for one moment, everything disappears, and you have a brief moment of a connection back to nature. I am just happy that I can help people make a reconnection to the natural world.

What is going on with diving in Koh Tao right now? What is the good and the bad?

Well, the good is there are a lot of great instructors here that have held on. There's a lot of beautiful positive energy surrounding those who have stayed, and we are supporting each other during these difficult times.

What was it about diving that was such a magnet for you?

It is interesting, for me, diving was like a connection to dancing. I spent years trying to defy gravity and the weightlessness in diving was like a direct link for me. That's why today I am still totally in love with moving in three dimensional space. It is a magical unbelievable experience where you connect technology with nature, and it meshes so many things together. And then, I did not know I was a teacher, but I have a naturally outgoing personality and I have always been able to connect with people. Combined with what I had done on stage, performing etc., moving into teaching was just really natural; teaching diving connected all the dots. When I look at my life now, it's just a blessing how it all came together.

How long have you been an instructor? And how many people have you certified?





amazing time. Now is a great time to clean out some stuff in your mind. Get away from the city a little bit, get away from the job, the day-to-day blues of Covid and come get in the water and express yourself. Feel weightless, learn something new and fresh, learn new ways to move and think. I have just had a student do a course with me and he was good on the course but there were a few little things that were not quite right. And he's gone away and watched loads of YouTube videos and came back and now's he is diving like I couldn't believe.

There is a local market that's booming, and the government has done some good stuff to help. So, it is great that more Thai people are exploring the underwater beauty of their homeland. The conditions are fantastic. The water is clearer, and we are seeing more abundant wildlife.

The bad, economically, it is a catastrophe, not only for diving. Needless to say, so many people have lost their jobs in tourism and it has been hard for everyone. In terms of foreigners, a lot of people who came from abroad to realise their dream cannot do it now.

But as one door closes in diving, another one opens. People have had to leave and go back to their countries so in the dive shops, things have changed, people are taking on new roles and getting promotions. We are learning new ways of thinking about diving, how to promote diving, how to keep diving going. I myself have had time and gotten back into the books, back into the study. I have just had a wonderful move within our own company where I am teaching dive masters and professionals right the way through from open water to the instructor development programmes. Diving will never die, but it's definitely on a low ebb.

Why is now a great time to come get certified or dive in general?

Because we have got groups of people now who are even more focused and devoted to giving excellence and quality, they know how precious every customer is. When there was a mass of customers, you could argue that we weren't lax, but we would take it for granted that we had the next batch of people coming through the door. So, what tends to happen now, not saying that there was bad teaching before, but now clients just get an extra bit. People who are coming down from Bangkok, who are willing to come down here to give it a try are getting more bang for their buck. There are some great bargains and great deals to find now.

I'd say to everyone reading this article, please consider coming down to Koh Tao, get in touch with me directly, you can look me up at Ban's Diving and we will have an absolutely

Fantastic! Diving obviously had a positive effect on him. He learned something, went away and learned more, came back and now wants to get really good at it. Diving can be a great way to lift yourself out of a bad spot.

What do newbies need to know?

Get on a bus, get on a train, get on a plane, come down to Koh Tao and we will take care of you. You do not need any equipment or any training. There is only one credential, you need to be able to swim a little bit, but even that, we can teach you.

What are you up to these days to stay busy during this temporary lull?

I have become a barman! Like I said, this situation is giving us all a chance to try something new and different. My son and I have built and opened up a little bar here called DNA Bar. Now, I am on YouTube learning too, I'm just learning how to make killer cocktails. But I really just want to emphasise that diving is still open and as incredible as it ever was, so please come down and visit us and maybe come have a cocktail with me after your class!



BANGKOK GAMBLE

(Matt Chance Thriller
Book 3) by Tom Crowley
Down & Out Books,
218 pages.
www.amazon.com

by Leonard H. Le Blanc III

Our half-Thai/half-American, ex-U.S. Special Forces, locally based Bangkok hero is right back at it in the third installment of the Matt Chance series, entitled Bangkok Gamble. The first two, *Viper's Tale* and *Murder in the Slaughterhouse*, introduced our man of action to the world with rousing action and totally believable plot lines. Trouble always seems to find our protagonist like street beggars zeroing in on any "farang" along Sukhumvit's sidewalks.

Again the action never quits. The reader (and Chance) gets thrown right off the deep end into a continual set of turbulent situations and frantic action. This time our reluctant detective/man of mystery/action hero has to battle a crazy monk, gets a beautiful daughter of a gambling kingpin back safe and sound from a kidnapping, plus deal with assorted bad guys both here in Bangkok and Macao. Along for the ride with a few CIA types and Special Forces buddies all lending a hand here and there. Highly recommended!





Stepladder to bread heaven

Being Indian, living in India, bread is not our mainstay. We thrive on chapatis – which is freshly made flatbread, rolled out and grilled on a warm hotplate (tawa), fresh and fabulous. It is whole grain, and can also be made from a mixture of healthy grains, depending on the region you belong to. We eat it, much like bread, to go with our daals and curries. It's everyone's favourite bread. One fries it, one stuffs it and one makes a roll, on the go, with just about any available filling, including jams.

My bread, is it as good as yours

by Kay Natesan

Where has bread come from? Well, the earliest known form is as close to the Indian chapati as it gets, or tortillas from Mexico - the earliest bread was made in or around 8000BC in the Middle East, specifically Egypt. The quern was the first known grinding tool.

Crushed grain made flatbread. Voilà!

As a young girl, I do remember biting into white bread slices: untoasted, slathered with thick yellow Amul butter, and gobbling it down, barely chewing. Bliss.

Hunger wasn't what drove me to plunge into our Frigidaire – greed for the taste of that thin slice of white Britannia bread was the driver. I was very young and plump then. Perhaps the reason for my ever expanding girth was that bread, those empty calories as I now understand. At age five or six, who cares!

Now, in Bangkok, at a far later stage in life, I have such a variety of breads to choose from now, don't I! Bread and I, we've come a long, long way since.

Sukhumvit Soi 20's German bakery, Bei Otto, was the first bread place that I observed when we were out and about looking for a condominium to suit our needs. That was the street I so wanted to set up our home upon, and we did, much to my delight. I became a regular there, picking up all sorts of bakes to bite into. Oh! the joys of good bread! People talk about lowering one's carb cravings. In Bangkok, I can say that the cravings rose to newer heights, and I cannot deny myself the pleasures of biting into luscious warm bakery bread. Their rye bread is the best there is.



It's our bread.

At twenty five, I met someone who introduced me to five star bread. These fancy breads were sold at five star hotel bakeries, for those hankering after good bread. It transformed my outlook toward bread. I tasted a wholemeal bread sandwich for the first time, and It was divine, food of the Gods. Thus, began a whole new phase in my bread journey. I developed a hankering, where there had been none.

This was not bread I could afford to buy. I awaited this person's visit, for whenever she came, she never forgot to bring our family a loaf of bread – it was wholegrain, or corn bread, and once she brought along rye bread. I was left gaping. Once I had delicately sliced the bread, and tasted it, I saved it up, to let it see me through ten days of heavenly consumption. No one else at home cared as much. They were quite satisfied with industrial bread, neatly sliced by a machine, easy to slap and shape into a sandwich. I wanted the rough cut, the taste of graininess to dissolve in my mouth, I saw myself as some sort of rustic gentlewoman: every morsel was delicately savoured – its taste lingering for hours afterward, in my mouth, and in a content tummy.

Then I met a Dutchman at age thirty: he was a different

level of breadman. He was my boss, and I worked out of his home. He introduced me to more than just corn or rye bread – there was: Sourdough, Multigrain, Focaccia, brioche, Baguette, Cheesy bread, Ciabatta and Soda bread. I contained my excitement overall, never refusing a slice or two, when he made himself a delicious sandwich with Gouda cheese, ham and other exotic fare. It was addictive. I would wait for one pm, our lunchbreak.

An exchange offering was rapidly devised and I carried over chapati rolls in my lunchbox. We were both happy.

This joyful experience of unequal barter, left an indelible impression.

I never again bought bread from the local market, and waited to be wealthy enough to buy ‘five star bread’.

Later in life, a family friend travelled down South and returned armed with a ‘cake paatram’ (the word paatram means utensil). It was a strange and marvelous contraption – a Bundt cakemaker is the closest description I can think of. It was circular, shaped much like a Bundt cake with a round gap in the middle – and had a stand, upon which sat this holey cake mould. The stand held sand, which, upon being heated, served to warm up the batter, as an oven might do. In turn a beautiful aromatic cake was born, within a matter of forty five minutes. I tried making bread in it, and it was a decent attempt, but that’s all it was.

It inspired, and awakened in me, the dream of owning a proper oven someday. I would surely bake well when I had the right equipment, I told myself.

Not until very recently, have I begun my journey as a baker of bread. I have to admit, it took more than two attempts to churn out a bread that was healthy and soft, and one that could be sliced without crumbling. It has been a long while coming, but I can safely say, I can bake bread. It is exhilarating, when the home fills with trails of bread aroma; nothing short of heavenly. It isn’t as hard as I imagined it might be.

I had taken baking classes over four years back, and watched fascinated, as yeast worked on dough, followed by the rise of bread. I couldn’t wait to replicate the process, yet I didn’t follow through with success, at the time. Now’s my time it appears.

Why has bread been so vital to my sense of wellbeing? Is it something that stems from being denied good bread – as I see it?

Where I grew up, in Pondicherry, South India, the only bread we students were given was brown in colour, with a sweet aftertaste. It was wholesome and extremely filling. I would tear it off and plunge large chunks into a bowl of warm milk, and slurp it up with gusto; soft and beautiful as it was. It was comforting and it was all I needed after rigorous sporting activities, as was the discipline.

When I left Pondicherry, at the edge of my innocent years, I was denied this bread thereafter. I only ever ate bread in the city I was transferred to, when faced with extreme hunger. The five star bread still evaded me, as did the brown bread of Pondicherry. This longing, admixed with the taste of brown bread, has stayed with me. I wish

to replicate the experience.

Bangkok has more than fulfilled an innate need of consuming good, wholesome bread. I’ve partaken of wonderful sandwiches: two large slices slapped onto greens, tomatoes, some ham, some guacamole and I can’t complain. There is no dearth of variety, fillings in sandwiches, which was essentially created as an on-the-go meal for working people. It has come a really long way, and now this ubiquitous meal – is of such a staggering variety, that its reach and gamut will perhaps will never be exhausted.

Never again need I worry over how to and where to go for good bread, that fills me to the brim.

Holey Artisan Bakery is another favourite in this city of Bangkok, and there many others, difficult to keep track of. Clearly, this is the right country for diversity of cuisines, including European fare, where a humble sandwich makes for a perfect meal. Subway took the lead in customising sandwich needs, and I do love me a good BLT. The Subway sandwich takeout was founded in 1965, by in August 1965 by Fred DeLuca, a 17-year-old who needed money for college.

Americans, it is known, eat more than 300 million sandwiches a day. The first sandwich recipe appeared in an American magazine in 1815 - it is believed, much after it had already found its way into English homes. It’s also a school lunch staple around the world.

Sandwich – the name was adopted only in the 18th century for John Montagu, 4th Earl of Sandwich. It was something devised for him to eat at his gambling table, without having to move. And there we were, the first sandwich, named after him.

Yet, every new bread I find, I seek to somehow have it light up my being with its taste, hoping to find that girl, whose milk soaked bread filled her to the brim. Bread is not just an amalgamation of various grains, is it – it’s a whole life lost in history – wrapped in a yearning to return someplace, and spread its grainy perfume and never let go.

What’s your bread story?





A JOURNEY INTO LOEI THAILAND TO UNDERSTAND SLOW FASHION

by Aparna Sharma

Demand quality not only in the products you buy but also in the life of the person who made it. – Orsola de Castro

I met Patsy Tapasanan around eighteen months ago, I did not know much about her at that time. I came across her profile while I was doing some research on the work Fashion Revolution does in Thailand.

For those of you who have not heard of this organisation, it was founded on 24th April 2013 when the Rana Plaza building in Bangladesh collapsed. More than 1,100 people died and another 2,500 were injured, making it the fourth largest industrial disaster in history. Fashion Revolution works towards transparency and accountability in the fashion industry, particularly in what we now call fast and disposable fashion. This tragedy was preventable. In the aftermath, survivors told stories of how they noticed cracks in the building and knew the building was hazardous just days before the collapse. Multiple workers told their supervisors that they were afraid to enter the building and continue

working. The retail shops and banks on the ground floor shut down their operations, but the demand of an insatiable fashion industry forced garment workers to keep working. The ugly truth is that some of us may have bought and wore the clothes they made. People had to dig through the rubble looking for clothing labels in order to figure out which brands were sourcing from Rana Plaza. In some cases, it took weeks for brands to determine why their labels were found in the ruins and what sort of purchasing agreements they had with those suppliers.



The culpable brands weren't limited to fast fashion retailers but included mid-priced brands too. This is because the vast majority of today's fashion brands and retailers do not own their manufacturing facilities. Fashion supply chains are highly globalised, complex and opaque. Business relationships are often very murky and subcontracting is common. This lack of transparency costs lives.

Many people still remain in the dark, unaware that their clothes may be contributing to the climate crisis and human exploitation. I strongly believe that most people don't want to support or encourage modern day slavery and wanted to write more on the ugly side of the fashion industry to create awareness. The Rana Plaza incident definitely changed my relationship with fashion because fashion should be empowering. When fashion comes at the cost of social and climate injustice, it is deeply disturbing. I wanted to understand the work Fashion Revolution, Thailand is doing towards creating awareness and that is why I went to meet Patsy who is a part of the core team of Fashion Revolution, Thailand. At that time, I had read briefly about her but did not know the full extent of the work she has been doing towards empowering elderly women in Loei province through her social enterprise, Folkcharm.

Passawee T. Kodaka, aka Patsy is the Founder and Creative Director at Folkcharm, a 'farm-to-fashion' brand that uses locally sourced handloom chemical free homegrown cotton, aimed to empower rural artisans and to increase the appreciation in rural crafts womanship and slow fashion. She is active in the social enterprise scene in Thailand, cofounding a movement of craft social entrepreneurs, VolksKraft Ethical Crafts Hub.

Before founding Folkcharm, she worked in international and national level social development organisations for over 6 years. With the Royal Thai Government, ARC-MDG and UNIFEM Scholarship, she holds an MSc in Rural



and Regional Development Planning and has received a scholarship and completed the 'Trainee Programme for Asian Craft Works' in Textiles (Weaving and Dyeing) from Kanazawa College of Art, Japan.

During my meeting with her, I told her that I would love to visit the sustainable cotton farm and the weavers who make the clothes for Folkcharm and I was fortunate to go with her to Loei to learn more about her social enterprise and see the work she has done at the grass roots level. I went there in November, I met with a group of people there. We were

supposed to meet Patsy at the Loei airport at noon on 26th November, my flight landed early so I was at the exit gate by 11.50pm, I was 10 mins early so I casually walked towards Patsy and said, "I guess I am the first one to arrive". She said, "No, you are the last one" and we both laughed. We put our luggage in a minivan and went to visit a weaving community. We had lunch there and they showed us the process of making cotton into yarn, weaving handlooms is a beautiful and artistic process.





The joy of having achieved so much in a small village and the pain of all the hurdles she had to overcome. I bought a fabric woven by her and requested to take a picture with her and she was happy to pose with me. When you buy a fabric directly from a weaver, it is not just a piece of cloth, you are supporting the artistic process of farm to fashion. 100% sustainable organic cotton costs anywhere between 350 to 700B per metre, that is definitely expensive compared to fast fashion but you pay to ensure that the planet and the people working for the brand did not suffer in the process of making the fabric. Fast fashion is cheap because someone somewhere is paying the price for it so it's better to buy less and choose well.

My favourite part of my two day itinerary was picking cotton, I loved the open vehicles we travelled in to go to the cotton farm. The cotton in the farm is grown in a sustainable way and it is free of pesticides, it is also known as rain fed cotton. Most people are unaware that GMO cotton is extremely unsustainable because it uses pesticides and lot of water. There were also stories on how cotton farmers committing suicide in India a few years ago might have a connection with the process of GMO cotton. It was around that time many stories about the unsustainable nature of cotton started coming out, fortunately there are a lot of slow fashion brands which are growing sustainable cotton now.

From there we went to another community in the evening and stayed at the homestay option there.

I spent two days in Loei visiting different weaving communities, having lunch near a beautiful waterfall and going on an early morning trek to view the sunrise over a beautiful mountain. There was never a dull moment because Patsy had ensured that the entire day was filled with activities. It was heartwarming to listen to so many different stories from each person I met there. A lady who believes in his excellency King Rama 9's vision for Thailand has started her own social enterprise and she believes in the sufficiency economy model proposed by King Rama 9 which essentially focuses on developing the economy by ensuring fair paying jobs and coexisting in harmony with the environment.

I met a ladyboy who told us folklores and tales about how the villagers have learnt to coexist with the wild elephants and she uses elephant dung for dyeing the cotton that she weaves. Another lady we met had led the fight against a goldmine which had made the village toxic and cancerous and they won the fight after many long years. Another story was that of a local politician who is trying many projects to ensure that the future generation can find jobs in the village community. The underlying connections between all the stories I heard from people was their passion to develop a sufficiency economy which places the planet and people over profit.

Each of their stories came from a pure and honest space, it is hard for me to pick a favourite but something about Khun Jayor, the ladyboy really struck me. I was not able to fully understand her, her eyes were a mix of joy and pain.



If you are a conscious consumer who wants to build a sustainable wardrobe, I recommend that you download the application *Good on you*.

The most important thing to remember is to support brands which give you complete transparency of their supply chain and to read the label properly, this is easier with small local brands because their supply chain is not highly fragmented.

Consumer activism can be a strong tool to create a better planet. We definitely need strong government policies and regulations but each of us have the power to make a difference. Consumer activists are people who spend their money on brands which put people and planet over profit. I started the journey of building a sustainable wardrobe after reading and learning about how the fabrics used by the fast fashion industry is causing climate change.

Yes!! You read that right. The fashion industry is responsible for 10% of annual global carbon emissions, more than all international flights and shipping combined.



The clothes in your suitcase might have a higher carbon footprint than your flight miles. That is the level of environmental damage caused by fast and disposable fashion. My journey towards a sustainable lifestyle has been overwhelming at times, I am learning everyday and I am far from perfect. I have realised that it is better to try imperfectly than not try at all.

If you have any queries about how to build a sustainable wardrobe and what are the best options in Bangkok, please email me at aparna@stylishsuitcase.com or send me a direct message to my instagram inbox. Here are some simple rules to follow:

- Buy from secondhand thrift stores.
- Go for a clothes swap
- When you choose to buy new, try and support a small business which is sustainable.
- Clean your wardrobe and you will be surprised to find so many pieces of clothing you may not have worn a lot. Try and restyle them, up cycle them.

Lastly, there is no shame in repeating. The most sustainable outfit is the one you already own.





grew as a particularly cheerful lady whisked me off via a golf buggy up a narrow and rather steep path lined with exotic banana blossoms and tropical bamboo. Perched on the hillside, hidden amongst lush greenery we reached number 27 - my glamorous, very private tented pool villa with breathtakingly panoramic views.

Let's just pause for a moment and focus on that view, as it deserves to be celebrated. Upon entering the grounds of your tropical paradise, you are presented with a spectacular and unobscured panoramic seascape. This is one of

9 Hornbills Tented Camp

by Joanna Matlub

Koh Yao Noi may be one of Thailand's lesser known islands, however being located a mere 30 minute speedboat ride from Phuket, I thought it was about time to explore further.

After a short tuk tuk ride through this mostly rural island, passing the sleepy village and riding down winding coastline tracks, I arrived at the 9 Hornbills Tented Camp, (part of the Germinating Frey Hotels and Resorts Group). The rustic journey had manifested in me an excited feeling that this small island still had an unspoiled paradise about it; a little known gem perhaps?

Check in was efficient and friendly, which really is the combination of choice when you are edging to see your accommodation after days of stalking its beauty on Instagram. My overactive mind began to slow as I sipped on a fresh coconut, which was plucked, (or hacked to be more precise), straight from the palm on arrival for me.

Let's not forget that hotels right now are going through unprecedentedly difficult times, and this filters down to service issues from staff who are struggling to take on more tasks, often hand in hand with other challenges. However, I certainly didn't get the feeling that staff at this resort were anything other than invested in the place and happy to be there. This feeling

natures' spectacular works of art; the vast karst rock scenery that is Phang Nga Bay. 9 Hornbills even provides guests with vintage style binoculars to appreciate some of these formations further, as well as to help spot the rare hornbills in the area, for the bird lovers amongst us.

This luxury resort comprises 10 privately appointed safari style tented villas dotted around the rainforest scenery. Each villa is finished to a high spec with interiors showcasing locally made teak furniture, a king size romantic netted bed, comfortable seating area with (in my case, certainly) a practical and in style safari writing desk. In each villa, the private grounds feature a wooden decked terrace with relaxation and dining zones, viewpoint infinity pool, and when you want to freshen up you get to choose between your free standing indoor bathtub and/or outdoor bamboo surrounded rain shower.

The designs are reminiscent of a luxury safari escape, and are in keeping with the natural surroundings. I'm pleased





to report that design has certainly been considered with eco conscious elements; from the sourcing of teak wood from sustainable forests, to eco clever functionality such as being able to fully open up the front of the villa with see through mosquito nets firmly staying in place allowing for a refreshing breeze without being eaten alive. 9 Hornbills has also implemented a unique eco-friendly bed cooling system for a more energy efficient climate control system. In addition, there are a number of fans dotted around the villa if you desire more than the natural hillside breeze, and of course you can enjoy sleeping in complete comfort with a bed only zoned, cool air system – genius!

After spending a few hours relaxing in my villa I was impressed by the way in which the spaces have been designed entirely around the stunning view of Phang Nga Bay. You can literally admire this scenery at all times and from every area – from your bubble bathtub, infinity pool, relaxation



spaces and even, (my personal favourite), from your delicately netted bed, with the doors open. I ended up ditching my book and just relaxed staring out at the bay, entirely at peace. This is a fantastic resort feature; rather than visiting a viewpoint on your vacation, you are physically at the viewpoint at all times, from anywhere you chose to relax. This set up makes you feel like this picturesque heaven is entirely for you.

The hotel kindly organised a traditional long tail afternoon trip around the neighbouring islands including the tranquil Koh Hong, Krabi lagoon and the deserted beach on Koh Lao Lading island. With the rain starting to set in we headed back and to our amazement we spotted a rare whale shark and were fortunate enough to take a swim alongside this stunning creature. Feeling thoroughly blessed, I returned to shore eager to share the news of my precious encounter!

After a quick dip and relaxing bubblebath I headed down hill by buggy to Pum Pui Restaurant and Bar at the sister hotel, Koyao Island Resort. Whereas 9 Hornbills is adults only, the Koyao Island Resort welcomes families with open arms, so you can decide on your accommodation based on if you have little people with you or not.

I enjoyed a private beachside sundowner, followed by a sea breeze dinner of classic Thai sharing dishes including chicken satay, larb salad, green curry and grilled catch of the day. The food was accompanied with a rather nice crisp New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc. Alternatively, you could choose to dine under the stars at your villa, but I fancied a sea breeze. Fully content, I headed back up to my tented camp and let the gentle sounds of nature lull me to sleep.

I was greeted to a stunning pink sunrise from my prime hilltop viewpoint and settled into my outdoor relaxation lounge to enjoy the show. At the agreed time, my floating breakfast arrived and was gently set into the infinity pool for me to enjoy. Now, if I am honest, I am not the biggest fan of eating in a swimming pool, however it was beautifully set out and the food was decent, so I took it in my stride and must admit I got quite into the concept after a while. Granted it was novel, and let's not forget we are living in the age of #instagrammoments so I made the most of the photo opportunity provided.

It was soon time to leave my private oasis, and take the convenient speedboat back to Phuket; each step of the departure smoothly helped along by resort staff. I would have to say, there was an unfortunate negative to my time there... sadly it was all too short! I could have stayed another few days happily, and explored other private coves and nature trails, but with my little boy waiting for me at home it was time to return.

Upon leaving I had a chance to reflect on the little known gem of exquisite natural tropical beauty I had been lucky enough to experience – in both the 9 Hornbills resort and Koh Yao Noi island itself. Rustic charm, traditional fishermen, private coves, the magical Phang Nga Bay at sunrise – a beautiful and natural feeling destination which I believe should be celebrated. So, if you are looking for a luxury staycation, honeymoon or just somewhere to completely unwind combining utter luxury with nature, then 9 Hornbills is for you.



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HAVE YOU DISCOVERED THE YINDII APP YET?

by Aparna Sharma

Yindii is a mobile application to connect consumers with food cafes to tackle climate change.

It is an anti food waste application designed to help restaurants, cafes and grocery stores with their excess food which might go to waste. Yindii helps battle an escalating food waste problem and helps restaurants to gain potentially lost revenue. The food on the application is half the price, the consumer gets a good deal and a feeling of satisfaction for helping to reduce the carbon footprint of food wastage.

I met Louis-Alban-Batard-Dupre, Yindii founder and tech entrepreneur in an eco market in Bangkok when the application was launched. The business model which focuses on reducing carbon footprint immediately caught my attention so I asked him

what inspired him to launch Yindii and he told me, “33% of all food produced globally is wasted or lost every year. That is close to a billion and a half tons which is never consumed, accounting for 8% of total greenhouse gas emissions around the globe. This is an ecological disaster! The growing problem of food waste is challenging to solve for endless reasons including logistics, the complexities of short lived items and the lack of a set market which is what we are working to help solve. All the food available on Yindii is delicious and untouched, coming from premium places, that just cannot wait to be eaten”.

Yindii was established with a simple mission: to ensure delicious unsold meals are tasted and not wasted. It is Thailand's first food rescue application connecting consumers with restaurants and cafes which have excess food products at discounted prices. I have discovered some interesting cafes through Yindii and love that I can get surprise boxes at discounted prices.





diplomats – of which they are neither – I’ve also lost count of.

People can think what they like, but my parents didn’t come out to Asia twenty years ago as CEO’s or GM’s. They came as a loved up, middle aged couple attracted to the region’s sensational potential. It was actually Mum who told Dad to ‘go for it’ and pursue a career out here because ‘nothing ventured, nothing gained’. People can think what they like but I come from a conscientious family that have given me opportunity not money. Forever grateful to my Mum and Dad for providing this extraordinary start in life, which I’ve worked incredibly hard to maximise.

Just sharing with you how life can be

Maximising the opportunities in life

International schools
– UK universities – Year abroad
in Beijing – First job in Bangkok

by Alice Osborne

Hi there, my name is Alice! I’m twenty two years old and currently based in Bangkok. Not one for stereotypes, but definitely fit your perceived mould of a third culture kid – born in the UK but relocated to SE Asia at the age of two. I graduated from the University of Manchester in the summer of 2020 and now find myself starting a career in Bangkok with a blockchain company called SDLT. Exciting times!



To date, I have lived in a total of five countries: Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, China, and England. What I don’t tend to tell people upon first meeting them is that I’ve moved between these countries eleven times over the last twenty two years and can’t even begin to recall the number of times I’ve relocated to a new house... my intuitive guess would be to treble that eleven! How many times people have asked whether my parents are in the military or are

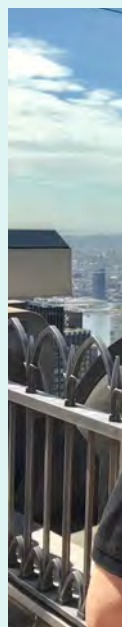
The article you’re reading today has no intention of being perfect, it’s about how I feel today and my journey. I’m not a journalist or a publicist, just sharing with you how life can be. My hope is that students, young professionals, and parents can read it and get some value about how they live their life going forward. If you’re a parent, that could be something as simple as loving your children or letting them grow into who they want to be.

This piece explores my recent experiences with university in the UK, a year studying in China, working life in Bangkok, and also reflects broadly on my fifteen years in international education.

Feeling like a stranger in my country of birth

Education is the most defining aspect of my life so far, having been immersed in it since starting out at Singapore’s Brighton Montessori at the age of three. Nineteen of my twenty two years have been shaped by the schools and university that I’ve attended. People say that third culture kids are the citizens of everywhere and nowhere. It wasn’t until I went to the UK for university that I understood what was meant by the latter...

Despite having spent the majority of my life in Asia, the feeling of being a stranger in my birth country was still surprising. It was the little things such as when native Brits would assume that I knew the staple TV show/musician/local pub they were referring to or casually used unfamiliar slang words. There were Western customs and normal ways of doing things that felt more unfamiliar to me than those in the foreign countries I had relocated to in the past. I preferred green tea to English breakfast for one. You learn to understand people from different backgrounds, adapt to situations, remove expectations, embrace new things. Fast forward four years and now the deep connection to Manchester and the feeling of longing to return is what surprises me! The down-to-earth people, vibrant city, and independent coffee shops are among the things I miss most.



It was difficult to have this chapter cut short so abruptly when the Covid-19 pandemic began. Hope to go back when it's safe so I can see my wonderful boyfriend who I miss a lot!

The proudest moment of my time in education was graduating (virtually) with a degree in Business Management and Mandarin, with first class honours and distinction in spoken Chinese. The icing on the cake to end this chapter was receiving the university's most prestigious extracurricular accolade, the Stellify Award. Receiving my certificates was still brilliant, regardless of the fact a DHL mailman handed it to me instead of the School Director.

Sure, I had a fair share of culture shocks when returning to the UK. Even more so when moving to China on my own – more about that to follow. But as any of us international students appreciate; the feeling is only temporary. We know it won't be too long until that familiar sense of belonging greets us like an old friend, making a new place feel like a second/third/fourth/fifth (you get the picture) home.

A phenomenal year studying in Beijing

The most demanding but inspiring experience to date was the year spent studying abroad in China. Going to Beijing was the first major personal decision and challenge to face completely solo. It has to be said that I thought my spoken Mandarin would be good having studied it for almost 6 years... But upon landing in Beijing Capital International Airport quickly realised that I could not speak Mandarin in a way intelligible to locals, nor could I understand their native accents.

I enrolled on the 'Intensive Chinese Language Programme' at Tsinghua University in Beijing, often referred to as the Oxford or Cambridge of Asia. The first month felt like it lasted a year. An unparalleled learning curve from a cultural and linguistic perspective. By the end of the two semesters, my command of the language

had progressed substantially, and I was proud to pass level 5 of the HSK Chinese Proficiency test with a score of 261/300! There are 6 levels in total.

At Tsinghua, the access to insightful panels, lectures and speeches given by highly esteemed professors and experts from around the world was phenomenal. In my second semester I sought an internship at the Global Communications Office to write articles about these current affairs lectures taking place on campus. It was a personal first, writing for enjoyment rather than for an educational requirement. I developed an attachment to accurately representing the opinions/arguments of the speaker, as well as a fondness for adjusting the style of writing and selecting appropriate content in order make the article accessible for a wider audience.

Overall, my time in China was incredible beyond expectation. Personal highlights include camping on the Great Wall, strolls around the Summer Palace, boating across Longqing Gorge, karaoke in Pingyao Ancient City, and pitstops to eat dumplings at 2am on the cycle back to campus. Even the daily 8am Chinese classes hold a special place in my heart!





Especially when followed by Hainan chicken rice for lunch in the canteen and a yummy bubble tea. Not such fond feelings towards the minus 20 degree extreme winter weather... The memory of renting bicycles for my parents to tour the campus on a minus 10 degree freezing cold day

does make me smile though.

It's incredible to be able to make friends and have contacts across the globe. The opportunity to continuously learn and explore through new people, places, and cultures is something I truly cherish. With age I've definitely realised how central language is to understand and communicate with people on a deeper level. Now that I plan to work in Bangkok for a while, the Thai lessons have begun!

Starting a career in Bangkok with my first full time job

When Covid-19 hit in March, I hopped on a plane back to Bangkok to be with my parents and finish university remotely. Made it just in time before the borders shut! Considering the turmoil plaguing the world and seeing the majority of my fellow graduates in the UK firmly unemployed, I felt extremely fortunate to find a job in Asia. The timing was ideal as the business had just begun rapid expansion. The company is called SDLT and specialises in distributed ledger technology aka blockchain.

Back in August at the start of the job, my technical knowledge was almost non-existent. Six months down the line

and I am becoming increasingly passionate about blockchain through regular research and related copywriting. Seems that I am realising its huge potential as businesses of the post-COVID environment do so too! As creative lead at SDLT, I have been responsible for writing original technical articles, developing company branding and marketing materials, designing graphic and digital media about distributed ledger technology. Now that the domestic and international markets are ready for cutting edge blockchain, work has been especially exciting with various press releases and networking events.

It's been great to work in a dynamic, start up environment within a team that is energetic and driven to the max. Flexible working habits which have become commonplace since COVID also mean I'm able to strike a great balance between professional and personal life. Many of my morning team meetings have been happily spent at Luka Moto with an oat milk matcha latte in hand! Please reach out if anything I've said strikes a chord with you, I'm always happy to meet for a matcha and a chat.

It's already been an outstanding journey to get to the point where my life as a working professional begins...

Looking back on the academic rigour of international education

Reflecting on my time at school in Asia, the biggest thing I've learnt is that being academically strong does not make you immune to the educational rigour systemically embedded in international schools.

In Singapore, I loved attending Tanglin and progressed to get excellent IGCSE grades during my eight years there. Teachers suggested that I would be suitable for the rigorous International Baccalaureate (IB) for post secondary education rather than A levels, the route initially in mind. Last minute my family decided to move us to Thailand, where IB was the only option at Bangkok Patana School. Although being an all rounder with strong IGCSE grades (6 A*'s, 4 A's), I found the academic transition very demanding. The support of

outstanding parents, teachers, and friends made all the difference!

The IB came with its own challenges, heightened by being the new girl again for my last two years of school. I struggled with maths and physics, two subjects that I had previously excelled at. On reflection, I could've been smarter with subject choices; 'higher level' physics, economics, and business with 'standard level' maths, mandarin, and literature was quite the killer combination. Not only for university applications but also my energy levels!

Regardless of academic prowess, the IB taught me the importance of playing to your strengths and making balanced choices to avoid burnout. This has greatly benefitted my approach to university and work. During the two year programme my brain held the largest quantity and diversity of information it has experienced to date, even university didn't compare. The personal growth I experience throughout my time in education also went beyond intellectual development and academic success. I can't believe I'm about to quote the 'IB Learner Profile', but it's true. We do become inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open minded, caring, risktakers, balanced, and reflective.

Upon review it's interesting to note that after leaving school, the greatest challenges I faced at university where not to do with the academics at all. Rather, they concerned cultural aspects of adjusting to independent life in the UK and studying abroad in China.

Throughout my education journey, I never knew what profession I'd like to go into in the future. All I knew was that my heart was in Asia, so wanted to specialise in Mandarin instead of choosing a specific career path as a lawyer, doctor, or urban planner. I had also loved studying business throughout school. The University of Manchester offered the course best suited to these requirements, and I went with it despite unconditional offers from higher ranking institutions like Kings College London, whose programmes didn't have the Mandarin component. I did seriously consider abandoning the Chinese portion of the degree to go to a more prestigious university but am so glad my parents advised me to stick with it!

Plans can change, but here are my reflections on 2020 and hopes for 2021!

It's refreshing to look back and realise that the writing skills I have developed from a steady stream

of academic essays can now be applied in my career.

Reflecting on the work so far with SDLT, I have written good copy that includes two of their entire websites, original blockchain insights, press releases, social media marketing posts, and materials for clients. This has prompted several realisations that 1. My writing skills extend beyond academic writing, 2. I enjoy writing, and 3. would really like to see where a career in this could go.

So here I am writing my first personal perspective piece for Expat Life in Thailand! It's not something I've done before and take my hat off to all the writers out there who use first person more than third. I've noticed there's a real demand here in Thailand for quality English copy, whether that be magazine articles, blog posts, press releases, website content, social media posts, marketing brochures, you name it.

So, my plans for 2021 are to explore the freelance potential in this arena, keep learning about blockchain, dabble in an online coding course, rent my own place in Bangkok, and perhaps train for a half marathon. I'm also working on honing my written Mandarin so I can incorporate it into upcoming writing endeavours as there's no doubt China will feature heavily in my future.

It's been a challenging time as of late. I feel so fortunate to be close to my family, have stimulating work and great friends to explore the bustling city of Bangkok with.

About the author: Alice has lived and been educated in Asia for 17 years. Recently graduated with first-class honours in Business Management and Mandarin. Currently working in Bangkok as the Creative Media Publicist with blockchain specialist SDLT and exploring the freelance potential for professional English copywriting in Thailand. Connect via <https://www.linkedin.com/in/alice-emily-osborne/>.



Events

What's been happening



30th Anniversary of
Kelab Malaysia of Bangkok







Pink Ladies Arabian Night charity event





The Pink Ladies, led by Chairperson Manjit Walia (far left), organized a charity event themed "Arabian Nite" to raise funds for The Queen Sirikit Centre for Breast Cancer Foundation (QSCBC) under Dr. Kris Chatamra (4th from left), Director & Honorary Founder of the Foundation, at Holiday Inn Sukhumvit Hotel Soi 22 recently.

Pictured from left are: Manjit Walia, Asri Bandat, Raymonde Lemieux, Dr. Kris Chatamra, Winda Braun, Clare Poon, Susan Lim and Susan Chan



THE FUTURE IS GREEN ENERGY

Why going green with solar power is good for business

by Stella Bella

With coronavirus restrictions now easing around the world, commercial and industrial operators that were affected by lockdown measures are now seeing a light at the end of the tunnel.

And the ascent of elective vitality, there are much more choices accessible to private and business clients. solar energy gives numerous advantages to entrepreneurs, including expanding their value.

Solar energy reduce your utility bill

Your organisation will consistently require power. Drawing on sources, for example, coal, flammable gas, or oil costs cash. Drawing on solar energy through sun orientation is free. The power picked up during the day is huge regardless of the effect of night and climate on vitality accumulation.

Solar energy offers the opportunity to lessen or dispense with your power bill as the power your framework produces balances the power you pull from the matrix. The more power your systems produce, the less you owe in utility expenses.

Solar power is low maintenance

Once introduced, your solar systems will require negligible upkeep. During the establishment procedure, the professionals



will enhance it to work dependably under guarantee for around 25 years, with a life expectancy more like 35 years. In the event that your framework won't utilise batteries, there is even to a lesser degree a requirement for upkeep.

Solar power helps your company go green

Posting your business as a "Green Company" energises the two buyers and different businesses to band together with you. Solar energy solutions is inexhaustible and economical without adding to air contamination during its activity. Working utilising sunlight based boards includes an earth agreeable position which fits into an in general corporate.

Good return on investment

As innovation builds up, the nature of items improves while the costs drop. Solar panel cost has dropped more than 70% since 2009, as per National Geographic. The expense of establishment still is a costly venture, however, assessment credits, imputuses, and discounts can help counterbalance the expenses. With these reserve funds added to the decrease of utility costs prompts a quick rate of profitability for picking sun based. When the establishment has been satisfied, your sun based boards will give free vitality to the remainder of their life expectancy

The signs are that 'clean' energy is paving the way for the future, especially after the catastrophic impact on the economy of the coronavirus in 2020.

Stella trained as a radiographer in Sydney before deciding to quit and buying a one way ticket to Thailand. With some soul searching started a factory manufacturing skincare, growing the business, and eventually selling it for a 7 figure sum. She is now solar girl at Zero Cost Solar helping businesses switch to solar. While she is not working, she is in nature trekking the mountains, kayaking the oceans, getting stretchy on a yoga mat, or cooking in the kitchen.



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Four Seasons Hotel

Four Seasons Hotel Bangkok finally opened its doors on December 18, 2020 and wow, was it worth the wait!

Officially named Four Seasons Hotel Bangkok at Chao Phraya River, the riverside urban resort is much more than a hotel. A true dining destination, the hotel launched four dining outlets and one bar led by Executive Chef Andrea Accordi.

Dine on stage at Yu Ting Yuan, the signature restaurant at the hotel serving authentic Cantonese cuisine in style.

The aromas and flavours of seasonally-inspired Italian dishes are served along riverside terraces reminiscent of Italy's Lake Como at Riva del Fiume Ristorante. Dinners are taken on a flavourful journey from the North to the South of Italy.

Also on the riverfront, the relaxed vibe of this French tropics-inspired café sets the tone for enjoying brasserie classics with an emphasis on fish and seafood, including a wine and oyster bar at the trendy Brasserie Palmier. Seafood towers and the fun and relaxed restaurant ambiance steal the show. At The Lounge, afternoon tea is redefined as a multi-course, multi-sensory experience. Executive Pastry Chef, Bruce Trouyet, delivers an eye-catching tea with surprises around each course.



The destination bar, BKK Social Club evokes the legendary glamour of Buenos Aires with a menu of bespoke cocktails, craft spirits, rare Champagnes and the finest cigars, (this newcomer to Asia's remarkable bar scene is set to make its mark). At the helm, innovative Beverage Manager Philip Bischoff, ranked #1 in Thailand and #21 in the world by Drinks International for the Bar World's Most Influential Figures, brings his talents to the bar.

Learn more and book your reservation today at [FourSeasons.com/Bangkok](https://www.fourseasons.com/Bangkok).

