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THE WASHINGTON POST

Thailand's Queen Sirikit Receives Humanitarian Award

Her Majesty Queen Sirikit of Thailand

Descended from a long line of Chakri Monarchs, Her Majesty Queen Sirikit was born on August 12, 1932, the same year that the present form of constitutional monarchy began in Thailand. Receiving Her elementary education in Bangkok, Her Majesty continued Her secondary schooling in Paris when Her father, H.H. Prince Chardaburi, was appointed Thai Minister to France. A little later, H.H. Prince Chardaburi was appointed Ambassador to the Court of St. James and Her Majesty was able, in London, to pursue Her advanced music and language studies She had begun earlier in France. It was in Paris that His Majesty King Bhumibol first met Her Majesty. The King was at that time studying in Switzerland. Subsequently, They returned to Bangkok where the Royal Wedding took place in 1950.

Since that time, Their Majesties' prime concern has been the well-being of all their subjects, the majority of whom are farmers living in rural areas. These people normally have a hard life already, but often they suffer even more from the ravaging effects of natural disasters such as severe drought and flooding. Because of this, His Majesty the King makes it a point to visit His rural subjects frequently. In so doing, He has come to know His people and their living conditions very well. His Majesty is, therefore, able to help His subjects more effectively to overcome the difficulties brought about by the harsh environment by initiating many irrigation and agricultural projects. Since Her Majesty Queen Sirikit always accompanies His Majesty the King on His extensive travels, She is able to complement the efforts of His Majesty by attending to the specific needs of poorer farming families in the areas of health, education and finding means to supplement their low income.

It was with this in mind that Her Majesty founded the *Support Foundation* in 1976. Her Majesty knows that simple charity will not alle-

viate the problem of poorer farmers leaving their land in search of other work after an unsuccessful harvest. Her Majesty advocates that the only lasting solution is one that induces the local people to help themselves. Her Majesty's *Support Foundation* meets these needs of the rural poor by teaching practical skills which enable them to supplement the income of their families. In this process, Her Majesty has also been able to revive or revitalize as well as to preserve the traditional Thai arts and handicrafts which faced the danger of extinction from the forces of modernization.

Another great concern of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit is the conservation of the environment. She emphasizes to Her people the environmental dangers caused by negligence, ignorance and selfishness. Thailand's forests have been the focus of much of Her Majesty's attention. It is Her desire that all Thai citizens realize that these forested areas form the watersheds of their country and that there is a strong linkage between the denudation of forests and the dwindling water resources which are the life-line of the Thai people.

Her Majesty has also expressed sadness concerning the destruction of animals which has resulted in the extinction of many species of wildlife. The efforts of Her Majesty to date have been several forested areas in the Kingdom designated as wildlife sanctuaries and nature reserves.

Her Majesty's compassion is not confined solely to the Thai People. During the long war in Cambodia, a great number of Cambodian refugees crossed over into Thailand at Trad Province. Her Majesty, as President of the Thai Red Cross Society, a position which She has actively assumed since 1959, set up the Khao I Dang Refugee Camp in 1979. Under Her Majesty's determined leadership and personal attention, the Camp provided hundreds of thousands of refugees with much-needed medical care, food and shelter.



Her Majesty Queen Sirikit of Thailand

In 1979, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations awarded Her Majesty Queen Sirikit the Ceres Medal in recognition of Her continuous efforts to promote the well-being of Her subjects as well as other people in need of humanitarian assistance. Inscribed on the back of the Medal is Her Majesty's motto "To give without discrimination." Her Majesty Queen Sirikit's first visit to the United States was in 1960. It was during this visit that a reporter asked Her Majesty what Her favorite hobby or pastime was. Her Majesty's reply was "looking after my children." It is obvious from Her deeds and actions that Her kindness and compassion are not limited only to Her Royal Children but extend to Her subjects and people in need everywhere.

The 1991 International Humanitarian Award

Upon invitation from the Chairman of the Friends of the Capital Children's Museum and the Chairman of the Best of Washington, Her Majesty Queen Sirikit of Thailand has graciously accepted to attend "The Best of Washington, 1991" benefit luncheon for the Museum on November 1, 1991, during which Her Majesty will be presented with the first International Humanitarian Award by the Friends of the Capital Children's Museum. This is the first time this international award is being given and will be made only on a special occasion to an individual of international stature who has made an outstanding contribution to improvement in the quality of life and the uplifting of large numbers of people.

Her Majesty Queen Sirikit has long been recognized for Her dedication and hard work for the welfare of the Thai people, for the preservation and revival of Thailand's traditional arts and crafts, and the promotion of Thai culture and heritage, as well as Her involvement in humanitarian causes, including Save the Children and the refugee problem.

During Her Majesty's visit to Washington, D.C., there is an exhibition of Thai arts and crafts from the Foundation for the Promotion of Supplementary Occupations and Related Techniques (SUPPORT), which was established in 1976 by Her Majesty the Queen to help rural families earn supplemental income and improve their livelihood. The exhibition, part of a larger "From the Hands of Thailand" exhibit, is now on view at the Capital Children's Museum.

In the past, national award recipients have included Mrs. George Bush for her fight against illiteracy, and Mrs. Ronald Reagan for her work in the prevention of drug abuse.

Exotic Thailand

Thailand, once known as Siam, is an exotic country in the heart of Southeast Asia. It is a land where the past and present meet to produce a kaleidoscope of stunning attractions, colored by a unique culture and enduring traditions. Giving life to this enchanted world are the gentle and genuinely hospitable Thais who extend a warm welcome to all visitors. Indeed a country of golden places and smiling faces.

With its population of 56 million, Thailand is bordered by Myanmar to the west, Kampuchea to the east, Laos to the north and Malaysia to the south. It is a tropical country with three seasons, summer from March through May, rainy with plenty of sunshine from June to September and cool from October through February. The average annual temperature is 28 degrees centigrade (83 degrees fahrenheit). Sights and scenes are rich and varied, from the golden spired temples and palaces of Bangkok to the majestic ruins of ancient cities; from the excitement of beach resorts to the quiet charm of tranquil rural towns. Nature has been generous with her gifts, too. As varied as the historical and cultural sights is the beauty of ever changing landscapes — idyllic tropical islands, unspoiled sandy beaches, jungle-clad mountains, rivers, waterfalls and fertile plains supporting a patchwork of rice paddies, all bathed in year round sunshine.

Giving a unique character to the land and people is a quintessential quality of "Thainess" which stems from a strong adherence to traditions that have evolved over more than 700 years of independent development. This is most readily witnessed in the practice of the Buddhist faith and in the deep respect and love accorded to the King, made manifest in numerous religious and royal festivals and ceremonies as well as pervading aspects of daily life.

At the same time, Thailand is a modern dynamic nation, firmly planted in the 20th century and eyeing the 21st century with confidence. Throughout the land there is a remarkable blend of the old and the new. This means that while the cultural heritage has been preserved to an

extraordinary degree, the visitor can also appreciate the comfort and convenience provided by the most up-to-date facilities. Because of this, coupled with the amazing choice of things to do and see, Thailand is the ideal vacation destination for all kinds of visitors—single travelers exploring the world, couples, families, and retired people who seek an extended stay in a place where it is always sunny and where there need never be a dull moment. Moreover, Thailand is inexpensive and affords the amenities to suit whatever the preference, whatever the budget.

For most visitors, Bangkok, the capital, is both Thailand's gateway and its principal destination. Initial impressions are of a modern metropolis geared to the needs of today's world. Joyfully exuberant, the city embraces latter-day and largely Western inspired development. You see towering office blocks, world-class deluxe hotels, and other thrusting highrise buildings.

Amazingly, this fabulous city manages at the same time to present wondrous images of its cultural heritage—the Grand Palace, Wat Phra Kaew (Temple of the Emerald Buddha), Wat Arun (Temple of Dawn), Wat Pho (Temple of the Reclining Buddha) and Wat Benchamabophit (Marble Temple) to name but five magnificent sights. Shopping, whether in typical Thai markets or in luxury department stores, offers a host of excellent buys—silks, jewelry and gemstones, tailor-made clothing, antiques and an enormous variety of handicrafts in wood, ceramic, bronze and other traditional materials. Dining out is another world of discovery with, in addition to spicy Thai food, virtually the whole range of other national cuisines available at a staggering number of restaurants in all price categories. As for entertainment, the choice is again plentiful, from cultural shows, theater, musical performances, cocktail lounges, discos, Thai-style boxing bouts, dinner cruises on the Chao Phraya River—there is something for everyone.

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Message from M.L. Birabhongse Kasemsri, Ambassador of Thailand

It is with abiding loyalty and pride that the Thai community in the United States and I beg to extend our warmest welcome to Her Majesty the Queen of Thailand on Her Royal Visit to Washington, D.C. After an absence of 6 years, Her Majesty has graciously accepted the invitation of the distinguished American hosts to come to Washington, D.C. to attend today's benefit luncheon for the Capital Children's Museum. This is no surprise, since Her constant concern has always been the well-being of, not only Thailand's, but also the world's children.

The happy surprise is that the hosts are presenting Her with their first International Humanitarian Award, in recognition of Her Majesty's involvement and endeavors in improving the human condition, particularly of the less fortunate and the displaced. This award is indeed a source of pride and joy for the entire Thai nation.

We in Thailand, by age-old tradition, hold our King and Queen in deep reverence and respect. Because of Their own innumerable accomplishments and proven dedication to the common weal, Their Majesties further enjoy the peo-

ple's heartfelt gratitude and loyal esteem. Moreover, They have evoked genuine admiration from other parts of the world for Their roles in a modern monarchy. Thus, His Majesty the King has been called "The Soul of His Nation."

It is also highly auspicious that, during the Royal Visit, Her Majesty is accompanied throughout by His Royal Highness the Crown Prince of Thailand, and also by Her Royal Highness Princess Chulabhorn, Their Majesties' youngest daughter.

Reflecting on the 158 years of cordial relations between Thailand and this great country, and the fact that His Majesty King Bhumibol was born in the United States, Her Majesty Queen Sirikit's visit is an appropriate occasion for mutual rejoicing, for it will further strengthen the bilateral ties of friendship and cooperation between our two countries and peoples.

I should also like to express, on behalf of the Thai community, my grateful thanks to the host country and the American people for your part in support of children everywhere.

Statement of Senator Bennett Johnston,

Published in The Congressional Record on Thursday, October 24, 1991

*Tribute to her Majesty Queen Sirikit
on the Occasion of Her Royal Visit to
the United States*

Mr. President, on behalf of all my colleagues, I am deeply honored to extend a warm and heartfelt welcome to Her Majesty Queen Sirikit on the occasion of Her Royal Visit to the United States and to our Nation's Capitol.

Queen Sirikit has traveled to our country to receive the Humanitarian award of the Friends of the Capital Children's Museum, the first such award ever bestowed upon an international dignitary. One need only consider a few examples of her interests and her accomplishments to understand how richly deserved this award is.

As an active participant in Save the Children, Queen Sirikit has helped many of those who are the most vulnerable among us, children in countries throughout the world. She has also taken a personal and prominent role in programs to ease the plight of

millions of refugees encamped along the Thai border.

Among her most notable achievements was the creation in 1976 of the Foundation for the Promotion of Supplementary Occupations and Related Techniques. Support has been highly successful in helping impoverished rural families and the disabled and handicapped citizens of her country to develop their talents as artists and craftsmen, providing a source of supplemental income, and an enterprise that helps promote the traditional culture of the Thai people.

During a visit to Thailand last year, members of the Senate wives delegation, including my wife Mary, had an opportunity to observe the Support Program first hand through a tour of the foundations' center at Mae Tum in the Serm Ngam District of Lampang Province. Members of the delegation were graciously received by Her Majesty at Chitralada Palace in Bangkok and toured the foundation's training center on the Palace grounds, where 500 students are enrolled in

courses aimed at developing their artistic and creative skills.

The delegation had the highest praise for the Support Program, not only as a source of additional income for those who participate in it, but as a source of tremendous pride for all the people of Thailand. Needless to say, the members of the delegation were also left with a profound sense of admiration for the woman who has made this program possible.

Through her tireless dedication to improving the quality of life for her fellow citizens and preserving the special heritage and rich culture of that nation, Queen Sirikit has earned a very special place in the hearts of her people.

She has earned, as well, the enduring respect of people throughout the world; people who share the fundamental values of human decency, kindness, and compassion that are so clearly reflected in her work. Her courageous, lifelong commitment to those values serves as an inspiration for us all.