



LEGACY INSTITUTE

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6 June 2012



Vimanmek Mansion near the Royal Palace in Bangkok ¹

Dear Friends and Fellow Laborers,

Last month I received a surprise telephone call from Queen Sirikit's deputy private secretary. She said that Her Majesty was inviting Gloria and me to come to Bangkok for a concert. I explained that Gloria was already in California taking care of her 96-year-old Aunt Gerda for a few months. She said she would get back to me. A short time later, the queen's secretary called back and asked if I would agree to accept the invitation and come alone. I said I would accept. Queen Sirikit was sponsoring a black tie concert at the palace spotlighting her daughter Princess Chulaporn Walailak singing several numbers, including a number of King Bhumibol's compositions. She was to be accompanied by an accomplished young Thai lady pianist who teaches piano in France. I was disappointed that Gloria would not be able to come along, but an invitation from the queen does not come

¹ Vimanmek Palace, Photo: Gisling

every day. I told Thanpuying² Pharani that I would be staying at the small hotel where we usually stay while in Bangkok (as it has always given us a special price). Thanpuying Pharani said: “No, Her Majesty already booked a suite at the Dusit Thani Hotel and insists you stay there.” I didn’t argue with her.

When I arrived in Bangkok, I was ushered off the plane by two Thai Airways staff who escorted me to meet a man in the palace uniform who collected my bags. The airways staff and the palace official then took me to a yellow Mercedes with the royal garuda³ on the door. I was beginning to feel embarrassed, but remembered that Queen Sirikit is an especially gracious hostess.

The room at the Dusit Thani was far bigger than I expected. When I spoke with Thanpuying Pharani on the telephone after I arrived, I told her that the room was far bigger than I needed. She told me not to complain about Her Majesty’s wishes. In situations like these, I always remember the words of the Apostle Paul:

Philippians 4:12

I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

I have been in just about every situation imaginable since 1978, when I began serving the King of Heaven in Thailand and Burma. I have slept overnight in the mosquito infested jungle and overnight in the king’s palace. I have traveled by elephant back over the mountains and forded rivers, and I have also had the privilege of being chauffeured in one of the king’s cars. I have had filthy water thrown on me during the water festival while lying sick in a dirty Burma train car heading south out of the mountains of remote Kachinland, and I have stayed in a suite at the Dusit Thani as a guest of the Queen of Thailand. I really do know what Paul meant when he said he knew how to abound and be abased. You do what is required to accomplish God’s Work. Sometimes it is exciting and fun; sometimes it is a very difficult struggle and you wonder when it will end.

When I read what Paul had to go through, I am ashamed to complain at all about any discomfort I might endure in the Lord’s service:

² A Thai royal title that is the equivalent of the English title “Dame”

³ The GARUDA is the royal emblem of the king and is a creature with the face and wings of an eagle and the torso of a man.

2 Corinthians 11:23-33

Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.

This time in Bangkok it was certainly not a hardship. I just missed having Gloria with me. She has shared in my trials and tribulations. She should also share in my indulgences as well. But she had agreed to take care of Aunt Gerda while her mother and sister were away visiting relatives in Germany. Gloria wanted to spend precious time with her while she can. In any case, Queen Sirikit said we should try to come see her when Gloria gets back.

That Saturday evening, Queen Sirikit invited me to a private dinner held at the Vimanmek Mansion, a royal residence that belonged to King Chulalongkorn, the Queen's great-grandfather. Guests included royal retainers, guests serving in the national police and military, and former Prime Minister and now Privy Counselor H.E. Surayut Chulanond. I sat next to Her Majesty at the table and we discussed the king's improving health and many other subjects. As always, the table was decorated with gold and silver objects crafted by master craftsmen once poor students trained at the Queen's Royal Support Foundation training school. Queen Sirikit is famous for resurrecting lost traditional arts such as gold and silver crafting and Mudmee, or traditional Thai-dyed silk weaving.

Before the dinner, I was escorted by a young palace tour guide who showed me around the five-story mansion. Vimanmek is the largest standing building in the world made entirely of golden teakwood. I learned that even the foundation pylons under the house are golden teak. Teakwood is one of those wonderful natural building materials invented by God for man. Teak is full of oil which insects find poisonous. That means the wood is impervious to termites and other wood-eating and wood-boring insects. Houses built of teak can stand for hundreds of years. In the case of Vimanmek Mansion, it was constructed before 1900, which means it is

now at least over 110 years old. I was fascinated at just how solid the building has remained. Queen Sirikit discovered the old house while it was being used as a storage facility for the Crown Property Bureau. She immediately saw the potential of the traditional teak mansion as a place that needed to be restored and preserved. Now it is one of the top tourist attractions in Bangkok and has been restored with furniture from the period when it was used by King Chulalongkorn as a royal residence. It is really something to see.

Some may wonder what goes on at a private royal dinner. I will give you two words: music and singing. Among the young military and police guests were some that had wonderful voices. One young man did a great job singing Elvis and country songs, accompanied by the five-piece band that attends all the Queen's dinners. During one song he had all the guests join in and it was quite something to hear the guests (all Thais and one foreigner—me) singing *Rocky Mountain High* at the top of our lungs! It was a wonderful honor for me to be invited. The next day I flew back to Chiang Mai to get ready for the opening of Legacy school and the start of classes.

The following week, Queen Sirikit took King Bhumibol on his first trip out of Bangkok since he entered the hospital in September 2009 (*see Legacy Institute Blog Posting May 30, 2012, <http://www.legacyinstituteorg.blogspot.com/>*). The king's health has improved enough to spend more time on excursions outside the hospital; and he is responding well to physical therapy. He now is able to walk short distances unassisted. It is a big encouragement to the Thai people who rely on the king for leadership during these difficult times, both politically and economically.

Please continue to pray for the king's health and the stability of the country. We are guests in King Bhumibol and Queen Sirikit's kingdom and God has blessed us with their patronage. We thank Almighty God that we can live here in peace and safety and continue to do His Holy Work. And please pray for the Work here in Southeast Asia. What we need most of all are young people chosen by God to work as harvesters in His Fields of Eternal Glory.

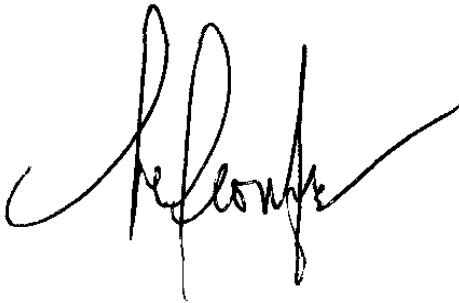
We are looking forward to the coming school year. We have four young people to help us as volunteer teachers. Three are here already and Hanna Reisdorff arrives next week. She will be concentrating on teaching journalism, basic computer, English Composition, and health and hygiene.

I had wanted to get back and spend some time in the U.S.A. this summer; but frankly, I am just plain overwhelmed with work. Even while I was in Bangkok, I spent every spare moment working on my computer, putting together class

schedules and preparing for student and teacher orientation. I also reviewed a new booklet we are translating into the Burmese language entitled “Enoch and Elijah Are Not in Heaven.”

God’s Work is never done. It amazes me that, even with the Great King and Savior Jesus Christ ruling in Jerusalem, it will take 1000 years to get the world back on track. We are right now getting our training for that time by carrying out His Work of taking the Gospel to the far-flung corners of the world. We will still be doing that in the Age of Christ’s Kingdom on Earth, until the Word of God covers the Earth like water covers the seas. May God’s peace and protection rest upon you.

A bond slave to Our Lord Jesus the King,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Leon Sexton', with a large, stylized initial 'T' and a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

T. Leon Sexton

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