

Tales From Thailand #1, 2018

Hello again, dears.

Thank you for your best wishes and your interest in my journey. I myself haven't more than a vague clue about what will be unfolding here. But all of my adventures seem to be grooming me for the same life lessons:

1. Nothing, nothing (!) is ever awry.
2. Be patient (5555**) and alert
3. Keep an open and refreshed heart, known here in Thailand as "jai yen." (cool heart)

I don't need to go charging toward my goals like a bull rhinoceros in heat...

Alternatively, I breathe deeply, and return to lesson #1, above. This Lesson Plan requires daily repetition, for me, like a cosmic Sesame Street re-run.

I am truly "home" again, here at Sathien Dhamma Sathan (SDS), perhaps more than ever before. I feel more able to accept the lovingkindness and graceful beauty that is offered me at every turn, with less urgency to prove my worthiness.

*(** The word for "5" in Thai, is pronounced "Ha"). i.e. I'm not very patient.*



I've begun to offer a bit more kindness to myself...

For instance, I've taken naps....lots of naps.

And I just declined an offer from Bam, one of the many young maechees (nuns) here, to meet at 6:00 a.m. and practice yoga every morning. I might have felt compelled to agree, years ago...just to be the grooviest yogini around.

Upon arrival here at S.D.S., I was shown to "my" usual dwelling. It's probably the sweetest residence here at the center ... certainly, to me.



And seeing my community family again, after four years, was equally dreamy.



Below left, Maechee Sansanee, the founder, (now known as Khun Mae/ grand - mother.)

On the right, my best friend Nawng Joy/ younger sister Joy, (who laughingly calls herself my personal secretary). Nawng Joy travels with Khun Mae around the world and all over Thailand, arranging every little detail..

On New Year's Eve, there was a huge celebration with many thousands of retreatants in candlelight procession. I, alas, was afflicted with the Dreaded Bangkok Goey Eye Syndrome, which seems to be an inevitable, albeit uninvited, tradition upon my arrival here.



It's exhausting, not to mention ogre-like in appearance. So, I went to bed at 4 p.m. and slept all night.

After fasting and quite a bit of turmeric and goldenseal, it receded into its shadowy lair again by the next day...thank goodness!

So New Year's Day was golden:

The nuns did their ritual alm's walk, with their begging bowls, and the five hundred retreatants made offerings. As the international volunteer, I helped empty the full bowls into my basket, as did many other staff members, and we ran laps back and forth. Literally tons of food is collected, and sent off to charitable institutions all over Thailand. Later, I helped with the sorting and packaging process.



I am the only falang/foreigner on site and in this community.



It was a constantly blissful day, capped off by the full moon rising...

here, over the new play-ground area. I'm told that a group of volunteer women did all the weaving for the decor.

I stop often to play ball with the kids and jump on the trampoline with them. Several of the children were born and raised here, and a few were abandoned at birth and raised by the community. I've watched them grow over the years.



By the second day, we had arranged for me to teach a daily yoga and qi gong class with the nuns and the others on retreat. There has been an extra surge in the number of retreatants this year, since many Thais want to pay respect and homage to the memory of their beloved king of Thailand, who died last year. The interment of his ashes happened in early December.



We have a lot of fun in these classes, which are a mixture of inter-active humor, dhamma and gentle stretching, with large disparities in participants' abilities. My specialty is demonstrating that, with a foundation of self-loving acceptance, perhaps there is also room for healing and growth.

As usual, Sathien Dhamma Sathan has continued to grow and blossom, in novel and thoughtful mutations. A famous landscape architect who is a devotee of Khun Mae has vowed to make this center the most beautiful in Thailand...

And she was apparently serious. The new landscaping artfully separates the ever-increasing density of building projects..... I, of course, am quite inspired, and taking mental notes. Thirty years ago, this place was a dusty worn-out rice field out in the countryside... My friend Chom, the chief gardener, has been studying green technology for decades, and is the main driver behind its magical transformation into a Garden of Eden right in the middle of a busy city. Chom has a gigantic worm and composting empire tucked away, plus a giant vaporizing still to collect all of the community's waste and re-cycle it into this fertile magical kingdom.



Chom would be shaking his head and denying his role, if he spoke English and could read this.

SDS is full of these humble, unsung heroes.



Some of you readers are probably wondering by now:

What about finding little Coy?

Please know that I haven't forgotten my initial assignment, and I am feeling my way through this maize, by braille and by instinct. After the Serene Mind Project this weekend, I will be going to Watkampramon next week, also known as Cancer Village. These topics will be chronicled in the next Tales, dear friends.

While I was out at dinner with Nawng-Joy last night, I sighed and said,

I'll just have to have faith that the right people and events will appear, to help me, or not.

When I returned home later, I saw on my cell-phone that a woman named Dr Judy had written me, after years of not responding to my emails....at the same moment I'd made that statement. She will be, perhaps or perhaps not, an instrumental person in my search.

Stand by.



Happy New Year 2018

May we step into the New Year with the wisdom of mindfulness.



Ven. Mae Chee Sansanee Sthirasuta
Sathira-Dhammasathan
Thailand