

# Tales From Thailand

#2, 2018



One of many children born here, whom I've watched grow over the years

Greetings, dear readers.

And again, I thank you so deeply for your insightful responses to these stories... They fuel the heart-pump, and inspire me to continue sharing my life here.

I'll have to choose two among the myriad magical events last week. Both will relate to the great circle of human life, its beginnings and endings. This has

been Khun Mae's (Maechee Sansanee's) focus for the past decade.

Last Sunday (and the first Sunday of every month, for many years), the Serene Mind Project happened again:

Many dozens of couples arrive in the morning. All of the women are pregnant. Everyone is encouraged to pay close attention to their mind-state, and how it might affect the growing embryo inside. Even our water-bottles here at the center carry the reminder:

*A mother's womb is the entire world to the child inside.*



Husbands and wives sing to the fetuses and practice massage. If I haven't shed tears already, in the midst of such conscious tenderness...I always blubber when the mothers-to-be turn around and comfort the fathers with song and massage. So much respect and honor is offered to these young parents-to-be. They receive information about nutrition, the stages of fetal growth, breast-feeding, how to hold and bond with the new-born infant.

If there's any institution this "ching-ching" (groovy) in America, I don't know about it.

I play pinch-hitter when Khun-mae needs relief from her many hours of speaking on the stage. It's an opportunity for the hundred participants to stand and laugh and be silly... since they sit for about two hours at a time, on the floor. The Asian ability to do this is always boggling to me, and also humbling...since I, the "meditation teacher," become a squirmy child after an hour or so.

So I teach a choreographed song, and a dance, and very mild yoga during the day. After lunch, everyone lies down for a nap, while a nun plays our giant crystal bowl, which is filled with water. I join in on the flute, strolling amongst the nappers. After the forty minutes of prayer bowl, everyone sits up and drinks a cup of the newly charged water from the bowl.

Finally, to end the day, all climb to the roof-top, the site of the Green Tara Temple. The couples make a wish to the Goddess Tara, while lighting a candle.



Wow.

Very early (well, early for me, though the nuns and retreatants arise at 4 a.m. to prepare for chanting) the next morning, I took a taxi to the airport and flew to a city in the north: Sakon Nakhon. From there, my friend Ott (the nursing director) escorted me to another amazing place: Watkampramon, also known as Cancer Village.

Thus began the rest of this week's adventures, dear readers...and a truly conscious focus on the other pole of our earthly existence.

I sometimes pretend that I have been to a place before, but in truth, nothing and no place is ever the same twice, nor am I the same.



The founder of Cancer Village, known as Luang-ta, had a stroke four years ago and is still regaining his balance and his voice. But he continues to be a force of genius and compassionate enlightenment (and humor!) within this earthy Buddhist hospice movement.

No one is denied entrance to this healing center, and the only requirement is that the patient must come with some sort of support team. Feeling supported and loved and whole is central to the theme of healing here, be it healing back to life or into a peaceful passage from this life. The patients eat only organic vegetables and drink herbal broths.

Vipassana and metta/lovingkindness meditation, chanting, dance, and music are the central techniques. Most of the staff are volunteers. Laughter is the central currency of the program.

Volunteers like me come and find their own place in the scheme.

I asked to share dance, yoga and qi gong in the mornings, and healing massage techniques in the afternoons. Again, I only appear to be the teacher, while I study the courage and wisdom and ease of these remarkable people.

The group's enthusiasm was infectious. It inspired me to find new levels of possibilities, and everyone contributed their movements to the dance.



Nothing is more joyful to me, than this kind of communion



In the afternoons, I visited with the patients, mostly in the latter stages of cancer, in their rooms. I was accompanied by the current staff of four, two of whom are young alternative medicine interns, studying under Ott, the head nurse.

My approach, which I've practiced for years at Watkampramon, is to massage the patient, while the caregiver watches, and then line up the caregiver to massage the patient, while I work on the caregiver.

Wherever I go, I choose to bring gifts that can be duplicated, and continue their vibrational impact long after I am gone.

I am singing a song here, and encourage the caregiver to do that as well, or play some wonderful music, to ease the flow of energy. Here, the younger sister is learning to offer intimate massage to her elder sister. Both of them were very very happy and peaceful afterwards, they reported.



Dying of cancer can be so isolating and lonely, for everyone.

Patients everywhere are often touch-deprived and starving for this essential human ingredient.

I am merely offering permission... and sharing simple loving massage techniques.



This patient, who was initially pretty depressed, cracked a little smile as soon as her daughter and I began massaging her feet and legs. One of our staff was playing the guitar and we were all singing, when mom burst into song herself.



These moments are etched into my heart.



Logic dictated that I shouldn't practice massage on this woman, because she appeared to be so brittle. But Spirit is the ultimate driver of choices in my life now. And a minute into this massage, she grasped my hands with such incredible intensity and strength, I knew that she was speechlessly grateful. Her brother was willing to work on her as well...he later told me that he had never massaged anyone in his life before.

They were both quite peaceful and happy about this evolution into a new form of bonding.



By the third afternoon, I realized that the resident staff needed to experience the qi/energetic qualities of loving massage themselves. It must be personally transmitted. We all practiced singing and humming to Yo's sweet guitar music, making up tunes and words. I tried, in my very limited Thai and with Ott's limited span of English, to explain that this is Dharma singing:

We open our jaws and throats and let nobody-special do nothing-special, from our own caring hearts. After working on them, I was pleased to be the recipient, adding suggestions and lots of encouragement. Thai culture is pretty shy about touch, outside the world of professionally trained masseurs.

I dubbed us the QI TEAM!!

And holding energy



between our hands was our trademark.





An inordinate percentage of supposedly terminal patients have healed and returned home. And among those who heal into a peaceful death, many seemed to need very little or no pain medication. It's phenomenal enough that the George Washington School of Medicine sent a team of interns to examine the situation, years ago. Yet this kind of healing is difficult to quantify, as it's founded on meditation and faith and heart energy.



After lunch, I often took a walk or rode a bicycle out into the lovely Issan countryside. Issan is the last outpost of old Siam, and it, too is now shifting into the 20th, if not the 21st, century.

This family is selling herbs, from their motorcar. But on closer examination,



not be distracted from his

Goodbye, dear readers.



I saw that the baby could  
cell phone.

I have just returned home to Sathien Dhamma Sathan....though so many places feel like home now.