



THE PRINCESS MOTHER OF THAILAND





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On the Occasion of the Centenary Celebrations of the Birth of
Her Royal Highness Princess Srinagarindra The Princess Mother

UNESCO ACCOLADE: MISSION FOR INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL SOLIDARITY

The work of HRH The Princess Mother has had far-reaching effects and acknowledgements. Of these, one of the greatest honours was UNESCO's celebration of the centenary of her birth in the year 2000 as one of the world's great personalities. The honour was given for her lifelong dedication to the well-being and education of the people in remote and isolated areas, particularly hill tribes and the underprivileged.

According to UNESCO Director-General Koichiro Matsuura, UNESCO's mission emphasizes that the main foundation of lasting peace is the “*intellectual and moral solidarity*” of humankind, a term that is most applicable to the life's work of the Princess Mother. “*It explains why her legacy means so much, not only to her own people, but also to all the peoples of the world and to UNESCO. By starting small, she showed the way to reach one's goals.*”

The concept of integrating the improvement and protection of the environment and social and economic development, which was the basis of the Princess Mother's Doi Tung development project, was considered very innovative in its heyday, and was cited by UNESCO as a model of integrated approach to rural development. Education and literacy were some of the priorities in the Princess Mother's agenda for social welfare activities, one of which – the border patrol police primary school project – had already earned her a UNESCO award in the past.

Long after her death in 1995, the Princess Mother's legacy lives on in the hearts of all Thai people. The UNESCO accolade ensures that her name and achievements are forever etched on a global scale – as a truly outstanding personality of the century.



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On the Occasion of the Centenary Celebrations
of the Birth of Her Royal Highness Princess Srinagarindra
The Princess Mother

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FOREWORD

Her Royal Highness The Princess Mother, affectionately known by the people as Somdet Ya (Royal Grandmother), was the mother of two kings of the House of Chakri, both of whom have been most dedicated and benevolent towards the Thai nation. Her multifarious activities were carried out throughout her long life in a spirit of perseverance and generosity, and she was always willing to sacrifice her own comfort and happiness for the benefit of the country as a whole. Though she has now departed from this world, her kindness and virtue still live on in the hearts of Thai people.

On the occasion of the centenary of the Princess Mother's birth, and UNESCO recognizing her as one of the world's great personalities — a source of great pride to all Thais — the National Identity Office under the Office of the Prime Minister has deemed it most appropriate to publish a book in English in an effort to celebrate her life and achievements not only among Thais but also among the international community.

This celebratory publication presents an account of her life and work which attempts to capture her personality and ideals, centred on her lifelong dedication to the well-being of the people of Thailand.

The National Identity Office sincerely hopes that this book will not only celebrate the occasion of the centenary of the birth of the Princess Mother on 21 October 2000, and her being named by UNESCO as one of the world's most eminent personalities, but that it will also be a valuable reference for those who wish to gain a historical insight into Thailand. It is also to be hoped that the book will help to keep the Princess Mother's memory and values shining brightly and encourage future generations to pursue her mission in life for the greater benefit of the nation as a whole.

National Identity Office
The Secretariat of the Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
Royal Thai Government
2001



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HRH The Princess Mother at the age of 20, photographed in London just after her wedding.

INTRODUCTION

The Thai people believe in karma, the effect of past deeds on a person's life. One's destiny has been predetermined by one's own doing, in the same way that one's merits from the present life will influence one's future existence.

If that is the case, HRH The Princess Mother must have been truly blessed by copious accumulated merits that have led her down an unbelievable path, a path that originated in a humble goldsmith's family at the start of the 20th century, and ended almost a century later in the highest echelons of royalty. In typical fairy-tale fashion, the beautiful, virtuous, and highly intellectual girl marries a prince, and bears — not one, but two — equally virtuous kings.

Yet life can never be a mere fairy tale; real life comprises that which is uplifting, and that which is also distressing. There is a blend of happiness and sorrow, fulfilment and dejection. The tragic loss of the Princess Mother's beloved husband when she was still in her twenties, and the subsequent loss of her son, King Ananda Mahidol, was reminiscent of the ultimate of Greek tragedies. But in defiance of the tragic mode, the Princess Mother did not succumb to despair. In full control of her own destiny, she continued in her commitment to serve the country and the people, and remained a pillar of moral support for her youngest son, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, throughout her long and meaningful life.

Though she came into a position of privilege, she shunned all entrapments of rank and maintained the simple lifestyle. She spent much of her life mixing with the common folk in remote areas of the country, bringing to them whatever she could to upgrade their quality of life which included health and livelihood.

“Mae Fah Luang”, they called her — Royal Mother from the Sky. She descended out of the blue in her helicopter, a necessary form of transportation to reach the far borders of the country, bringing with her a wealth of goodness — good health, good education, good crops for which they would be eternally grateful.

May that merit reflect back upon our beloved Mae Fah Luang, and may she enjoy the fruits of her commitments and endeavours wherever she may be.



London - not long after her wedding.

CHAPTER 1

FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS



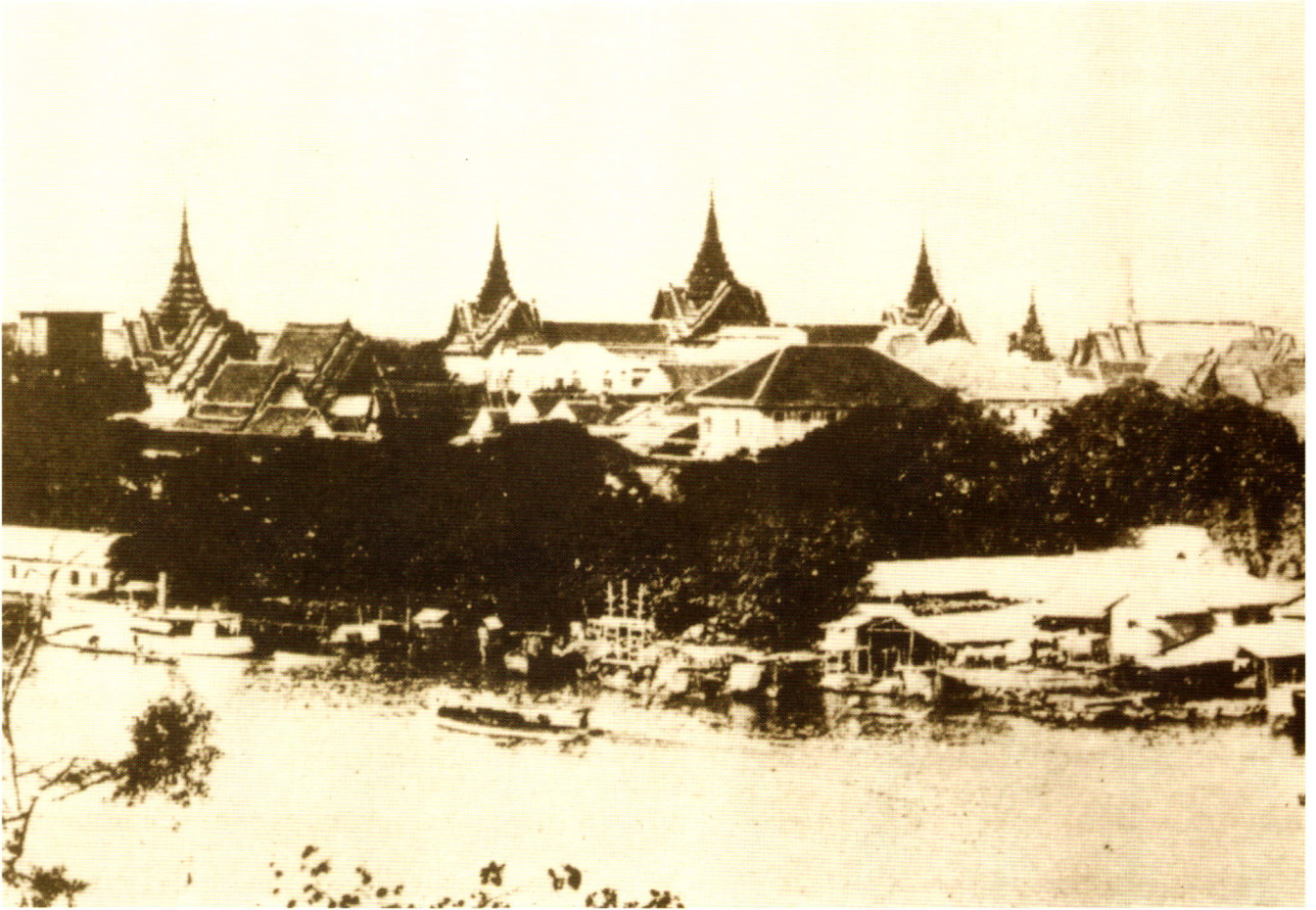
*In my stars I am above thee,
but be not afraid of greatness.
Some are born great, some achieve greatness,
and some have greatness thrust upon 'em.*

— William Shakespeare

BIRTH

In the old commercial area of Khlongsan, near Wat Anongkharam on the west bank of the Chao Phraya River, lived a man named Chum and his wife. One of their three children was the goldsmith Choo, whose marriage to Kham eventually produced a daughter by the name of Sangwan, destined to become known as the Princess Mother, mother to two kings of Thailand.

Sangwan was born in Nonthaburi province on 21 October 1900, the third child in a family of four children. Her elder brother and sister died while they were still young, and by the time she was nine years old, she had also lost both her parents, and had only one remaining sibling, a younger brother named Thomya. An aunt named Suay, who earned a living by making sweets and rolling cigarettes, became her guardian.



The Grand Palace, Bangkok, a century ago



View of the Chao Phraya River a century ago



Wat Arun Ratchawararam, a well-known landmark

In those days, a woman's place was in the home, and very few women learned to read and write. Mother Kham was one of the few, and she taught her daughter those skills. This love of learning was possibly the crucial element in her life that led her towards her destiny. Armed with elementary skills, she enrolled at the girls' school of Wat Anongkharam, the nearby temple whose abbot was far-sighted enough to

recognize the need for girls to have an education. Her next school was Suksanari, but she had to leave after only one month due to lack of funds.

Sangwan maintained her reading habits by regularly visiting Aunt Suay's friend, a neighbour by the name of Aunt Somboon, who ran a library of books for rent. There, she read up on Thai classics such as *Inao*, *Phra Abhaimani* and *Sangsinchai*.



Bridge over Wat Anongkharam canal



Wat Anongkharam pier, near the Princess Mother's original home in Thon Buri



Crossing the bridge in front of Wat Anongkharam.



Replica of the Princess Mother's original home in the Princess Mother Memorial Park



At the suggestion of a relative, the young Sangwan was sent to live with Chan Saengxuto, another relative and a nanny to Princess Valai Alongkorn, a daughter of King Chulalongkorn, Rama V (b.1853 ; reigned 1868-1910) and Queen Sri Savarindira, the Queen Grandmother.

And so it was, at the age of seven or eight, that the young Sangwan found herself presented to the royal court in the manner deemed proper for young Thai girls with the right connections and opportunities. Her only duty at that time was to present herself at a twice-daily audience with the Princess — when she woke up and again in the evening. Every now and then she would join the Princess's entourage when she went for an audience with her mother, the Queen, at Suan Hong (the Garden of Swans) Mansion in the grounds of Dusit Palace.

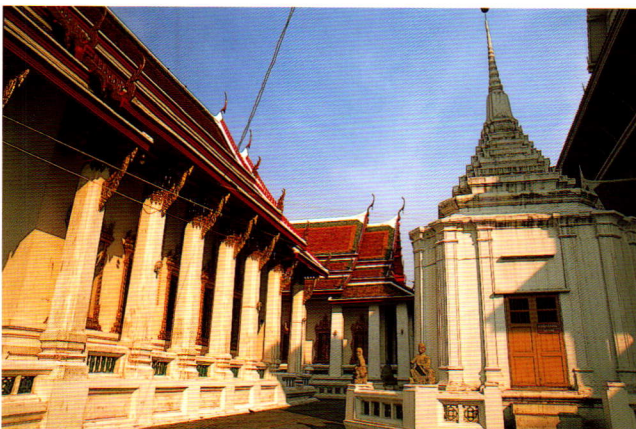
Shortly afterwards, she was sent to Satriwitthaya School, while she lived with Huan Hongsakula, the nanny of Prince Mahidol of Songkla, younger brother to Princess Valai Alongkorn.



The Buddha image in the chapel of Wat Anongkharam



The chapel, Wat Anongkharam



The chapel, Wat Anongkharam

An accident with a sewing needle proved to be a most opportune event. When a needle pierced her hand, Sangwan was sent to Phraya Damrong Baedyakhun, the court physician, for surgery. She ended staying at his house, while continuing her schooling at Satriwitthaya School. Sensing that she was feeling listless and unhappy, the good doctor enquired whether she would be interested in studying nursing, and she answered at once that indeed she would be.

Her options were limited; after six years of school, a young girl had no other choice for further education but to become a teacher. Siriraj Hospital had opened a school of midwifery and nursing, but despite the minimum requirement of being able to read and write, had not been able to attract many students. To add further incentive, each student was paid 15 baht a month, sufficient to live on for the entire month.

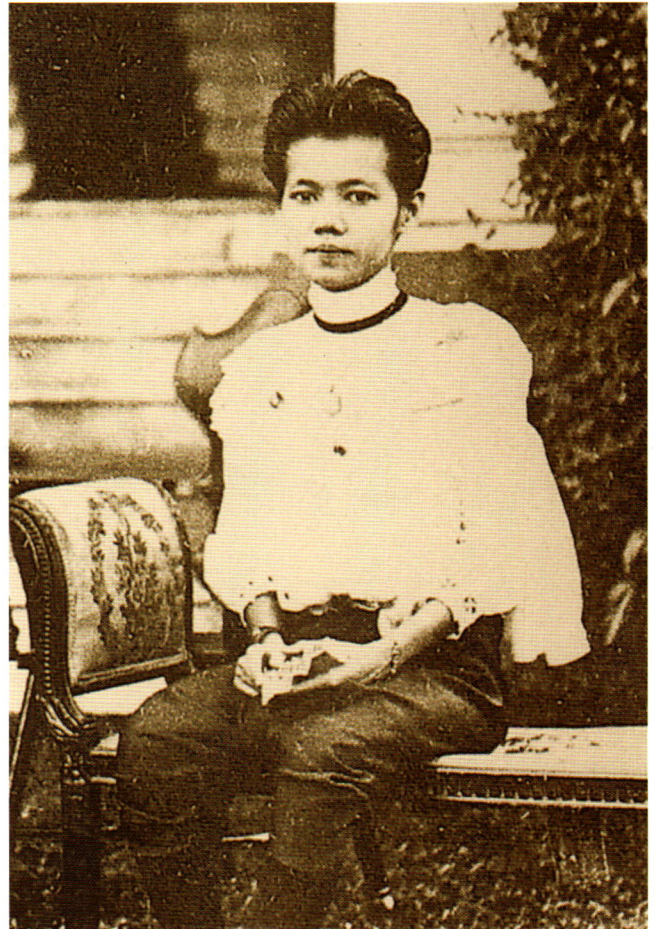
This proved to be a major turning point in the young girl's life. From this point she was to win herself a scholarship to study in the United States, and there, meet a handsome young medical student who was to become her husband.



Suan Si Ruedu (Four Seasons Garden) Villa



Satriwitthaya School



HRH Princess Valai Alongkorn, who resided at Four Seasons Garden Villa, and to whose court the young Sangwan was presented at the age of seven or eight.



Students of Elementary 1 class of Satriwitthaya School, 1909. The young Sangwan is in the second row, third from left.



The Princess Mother's first formal portrait, taken at the age of 14



At the age of 16



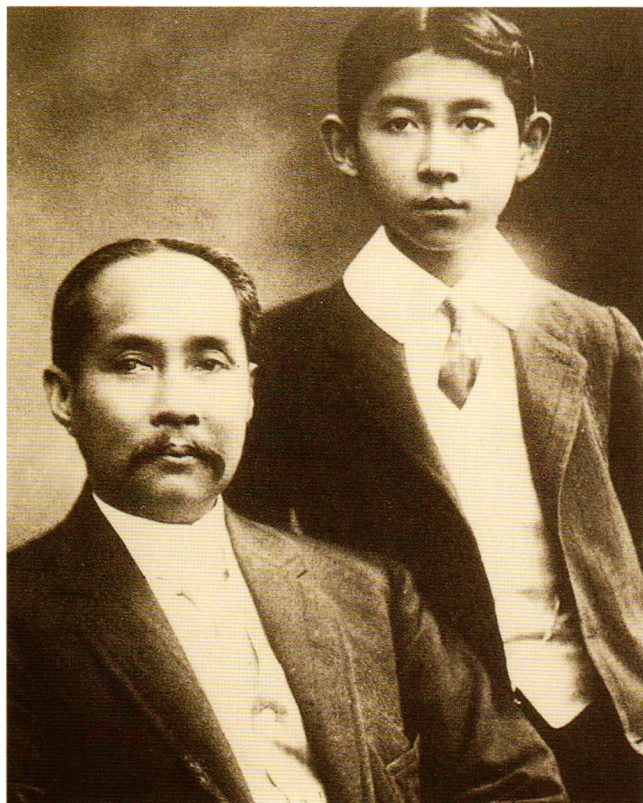
The Princess Mother with fellow nursing students, Nuang Chintadul and Chua

NURSING STUDENT

Sangwan enrolled as a student of Siriraj School for Midwifery and Nursing in 1913, when she was just 13 years old. She was two years under the minimum age requirement, but her qualifications more than made up for that and the school was able to overlook this discrepancy.

She was a scholarship student, and on accepting the 15 baht monthly stipend, she had to work for the hospital for three years, the same number of years she would spend at the nursing school. Upon graduation in 1916, she joined the nursing team at the hospital.

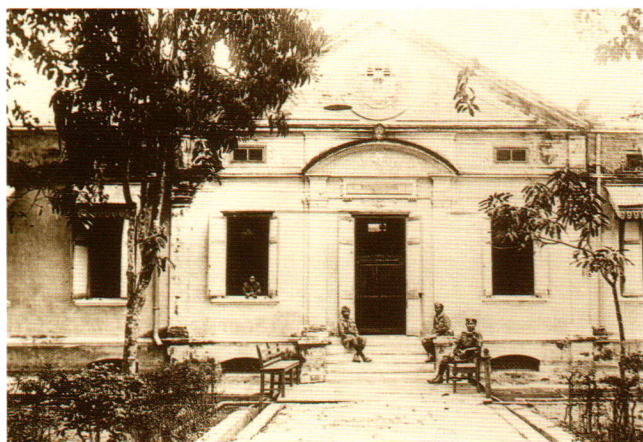
In the following year, the Prince of Chainat, director of the Royal Medical College at Siriraj Hospital, designated two doctors and two nurses to further their studies in the United States. These scholarship students were expected to return to teach future generations of medical students and upgrade the medical profession in Thailand. The medical scholarships were provided by none other than Prince



King Chulalongkorn and Prince Mahidol, photographed during the king's second visit to Europe in 1907.



Queen Sri Savarindira



The Royal Medical College



The nurses' dormitory



Mrs Edna Cole, headmistress of Kullasatri Wang Lang School for girls



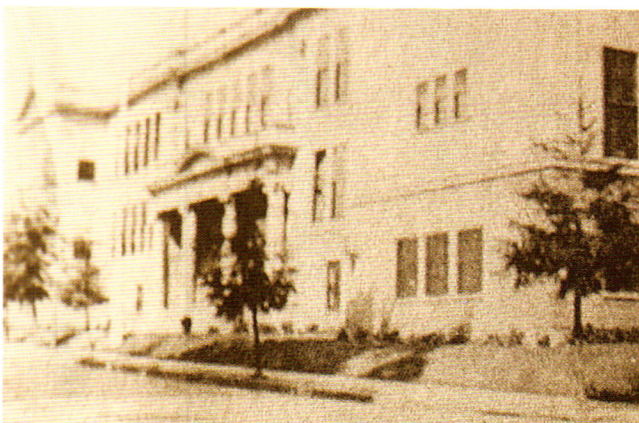
Passport photograph



The Strong residence, Hartford



Ubol, Dee, Sangwan, Prom



Emerson School

Mahidol of Songkla, son of King Chulalongkorn and a first-year student at Harvard Medical School, while the nursing scholarships were provided by his mother, Queen Sri Savarindira. And one of the two nurses selected was none other than Sangwan herself.

Preparations for this trip included a six-month intensive English course with Miss Edna Sarah Cole, headmistress of Kullasatri Wang Lang School for girls (later to become the Wattana Wittaya Academy).

For her passport, she also needed a surname, something that had not been a regular practice in Thailand until 1913, during the reign of King Vajiravudh, Rama VI (b.1881 ; reigned 1910 -1925). Since her father was dead, she took on the surname of Lee Talabhat (titled Khun Songkla Nagarindra), who was in the service of Prince Mahidol of Songkla. Her surviving younger brother registered himself as Thomya Chookramon.

Sangwan Talabhat left Bangkok on 13 August 1917 on the ship *Kuala* with almost twenty other Thai students. The trip took them to Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, Hawaii, and after six weeks the group reached San Francisco. From there, she went to live with an American family, the Adamsens of Berkeley, for a year,

*Prince Mahidol**Prince Mahidol with Sangwan and Ubol during one of his visits to Hartford, Connecticut**Uncle Henry, Ubol, Aunty Strong, Sangwan*

attending Emerson School with Ubol Palakawongse na Ayudhya. She also attended Sunday school to learn the ways of the Christian faith.

In 1918, the two joined eight other Thai students travelling to Boston, Massachusetts. As the train drew into Boston station on 21 September 1918, Prince Mahidol of Songkla was waiting to welcome them, though Sangwan had no idea who he was. Furthermore, she had no idea that her presence had already made an impact on the young prince, who, according to his roommate, Luang Sukhum Nayapradit, arrived home after two in the morning, shook him awake saying, *"The two girls have arrived. Sangwan is really very pretty, you know."**

* Luang Sukhum Nayapradit, *"A Short Story of My Life"*, p.32





In the United States, 1919



MARRIAGE

Prince Mahidol had arranged for the girls to stay with the Armstrong family in Hartford, Connecticut, and to attend North Western Grammar School to perfect their English reading, writing and speaking skills.

During this time, Prince Mahidol maintained close interest in Sangwan's development, making frequent visits to Hartford. Their strolls in the park to observe the flowers reflect Sangwan's love of plants and concern for the natural environment that were to remain all through her life.

It was clear to the other Thai students that Prince Mahidol was smitten with the young and vivacious Sangwan Talabhat. Her looks caught his eye when they first met, just as her warm personality touched him the more he got to know her. With no second thoughts about her background, he wrote to his mother, Queen Sri Savarindira, to seek her approval for their betrothal.

Approval was granted, and in 1919, in a private ceremony, Prince Mahidol of Songkla presented

Sangwan Talabhat with a diamond ring on a heart-shaped setting. Thirty years later, this same ring was to be presented by their son, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, to his bride, Mom Rajawongse Sirikit Kitiyakara.

After their engagement, Prince Mahidol bade his fiancée move to Cambridge where she lived with the Williston sisters, Emily and Constance, who tutored her in algebra, Latin, French and English.

The prince also assigned an American lady to take her on guided tours of museums and art galleries, with explanations on the significance of the various exhibits.

In October that year, the prince was called back to Siam for the funeral of Queen Sri Bajarindra. He requested royal permission from his mother to wed Sangwan, and when his request was approved, he sent for his fiancée to join him in Bangkok. The wedding took place on 10 September 1920, in a ceremony performed by King Vajiravudh at Sapatum Palace, the Palace of the Lotus Ponds.



Front view, Simmons College



Back view, Simmons College



63 Longwood Avenue, Brookline, a Boston suburb

*Egypt**Tour Eiffel, Paris, France, 1921**Royal Thai Embassy in Rome, Italy, 1922*

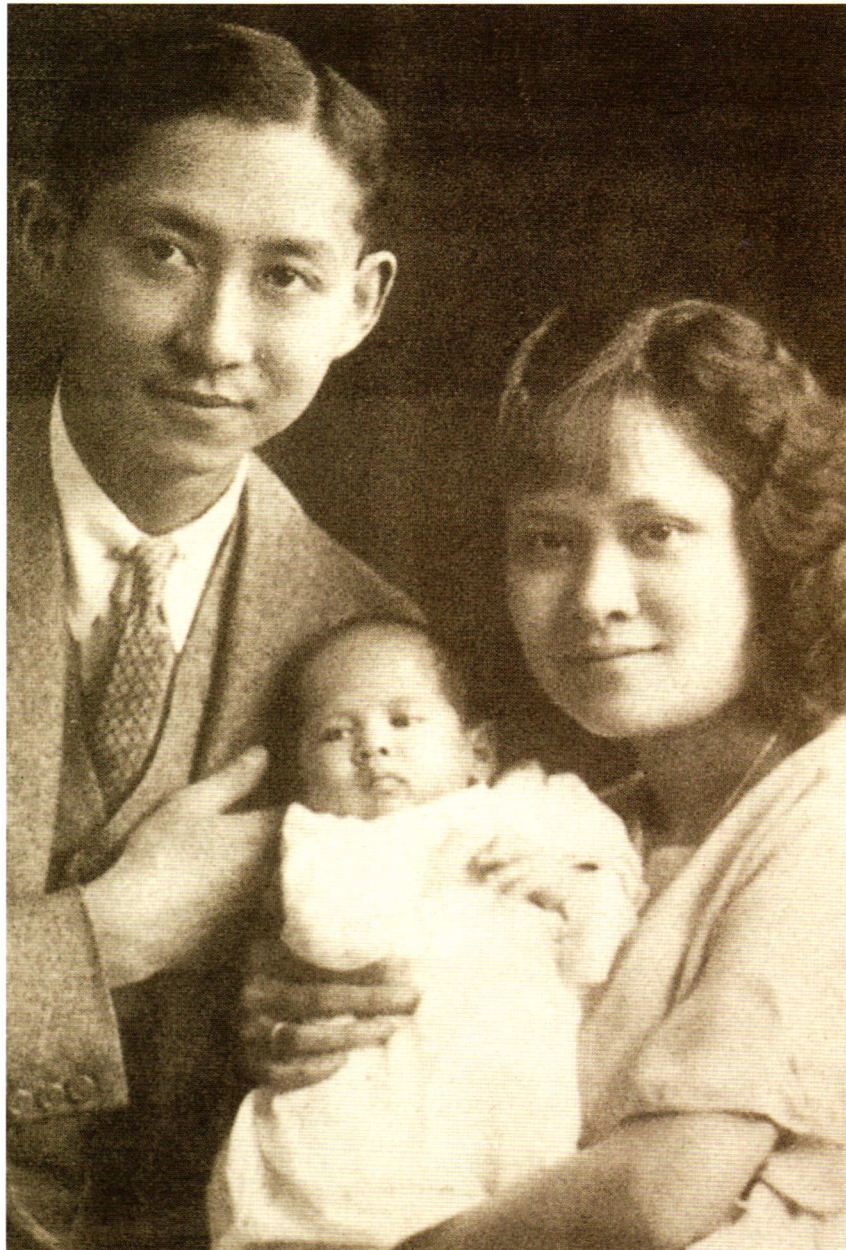
LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (1920–1921)

The wedding was followed by an extensive visit to various European countries, before the couple eventually returned to the United States. Prince Mahidol resumed his studies in public health at Harvard and at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Boston and arranged for his wife to take a preparatory course for nursing at Simmons College in the same town, where she studied chemistry and nutrition. Upon passing the tests at the end of the semester, she went on to study school health

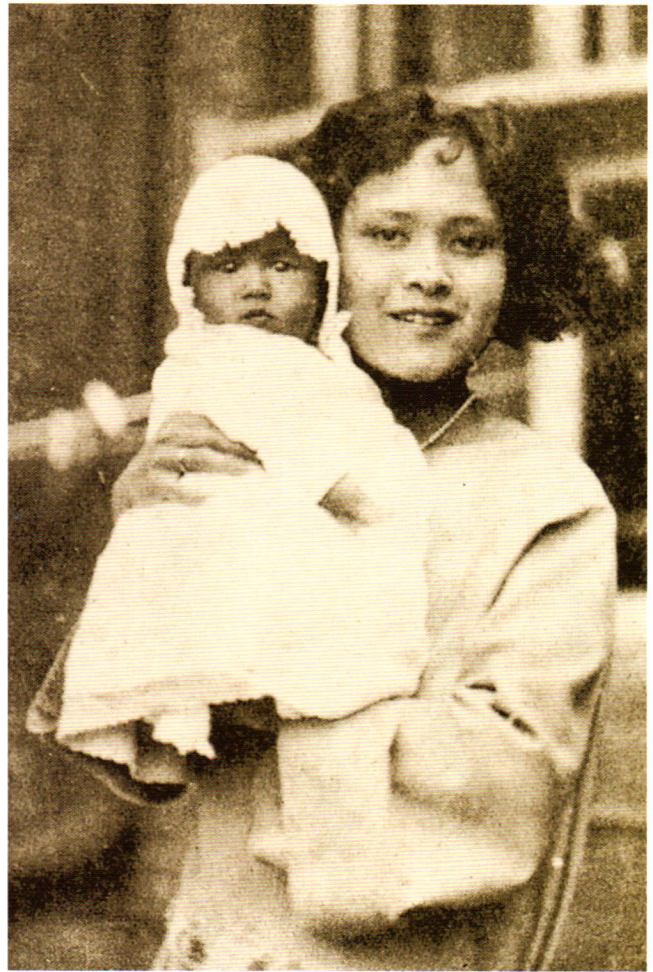
at MIT, entering in the summer semester.

In Boston, they were simply known as Mr and Mrs Mahidol Songkla, living in a two-bedroom flat at 329 Longwood Avenue. Apart from their studies, they were both closely involved in the activities of the Siam Association of USA under Royal Patronage, which had been established by the prince. They would often host meals for other Thai students — she did the cooking; he washed the dishes.

*Student days at MIT (front row, third from left)*



Firstborn child, HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana, London 1923



At Aix Les Bains, France

FIRSTBORN

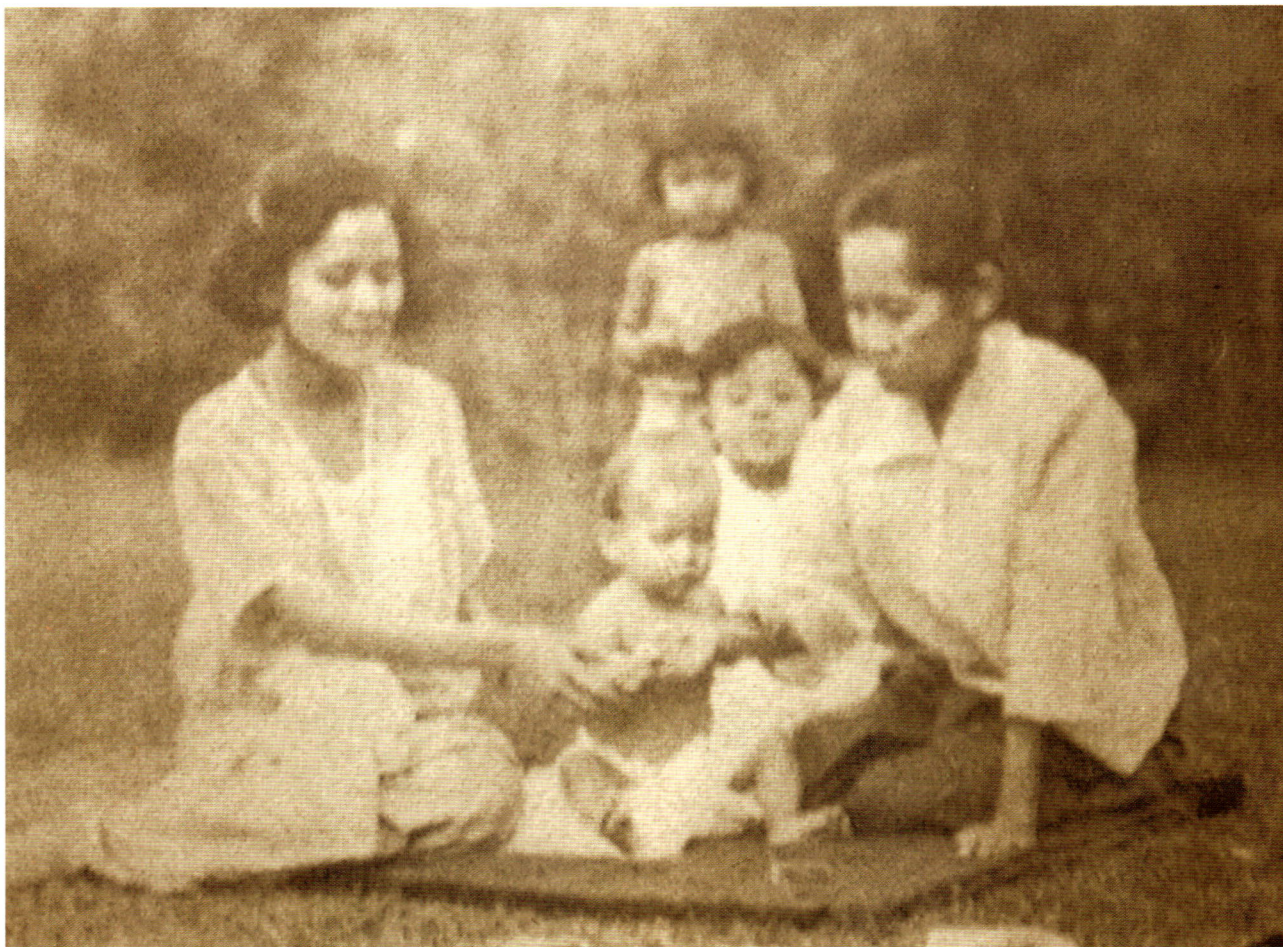
When Prince Mahidol received his Certificate of Public Health in 1921, the couple returned to Siam via Europe, combining pleasure with educational visits. Mrs Songkla spent a week observing the obstetrics ward at Queen Mary Hospital in London before returning to Bangkok.

This particular trip was also to make arrangements for Prince Mahidol's sister, Princess Valai Alongkorn, to travel to England to undergo surgery for a kidney disorder in 1922, after which she spent a few months recuperating in France.

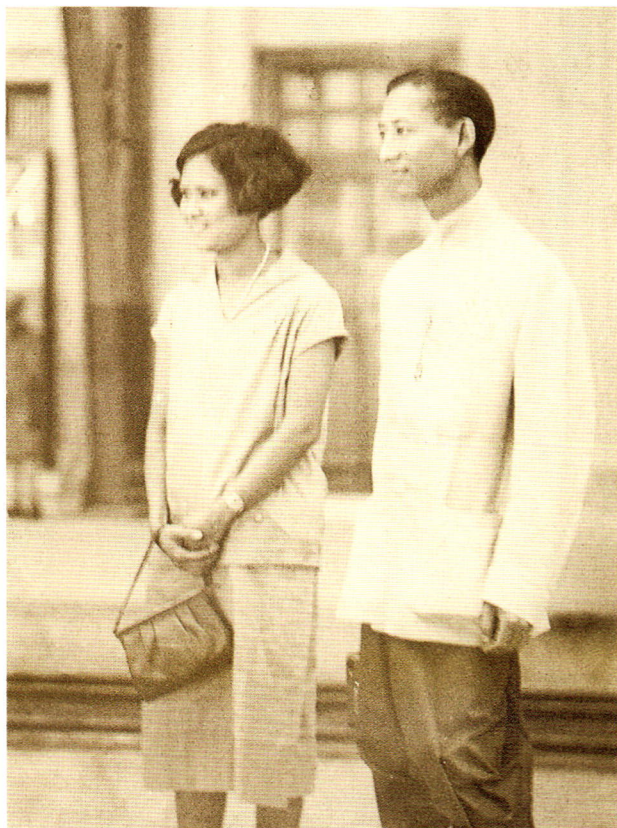
While in Paris, Prince Mahidol fell ill, and his wife was at his side to care for him. After he recovered

from his illness, they went to Edinburgh, Scotland, where the prince was to study medicine. However, the cold weather did not agree with him and he had to give up the idea.

During this time, Mom Sangwan gave birth to a daughter in London on 6 May 1923. The baby was named Mom Chao (Her Serene Highness Princess) Galyani Vadhana by her royal uncle, King Vajiravudh. During subsequent reigns, this princess was to rise in rank and now retains the title of Krom Luang Narathiwas Rajanagarindra, bestowed in 1995 by her brother, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej.



Leisure time with the Queen Grandmother, Queen Sri Savarindira, Sapatum Palace



Prince Mahidol and Mom Sangwan upon their return to Siam

RETURN TO SIAM IN 1923

In November 1923, the Songkla family made their way back to Siam, and the prince took up his position as director-general of the University Department, an appointment made by the king. In the following year, he became education inspector, a post which took him on various field visits upcountry. Mom Sangwan was able to travel with him to Chiang Mai when he opened the new McCormick Hospital, run by American Presbyterian missionaries, and the Red Cross Health Centre.



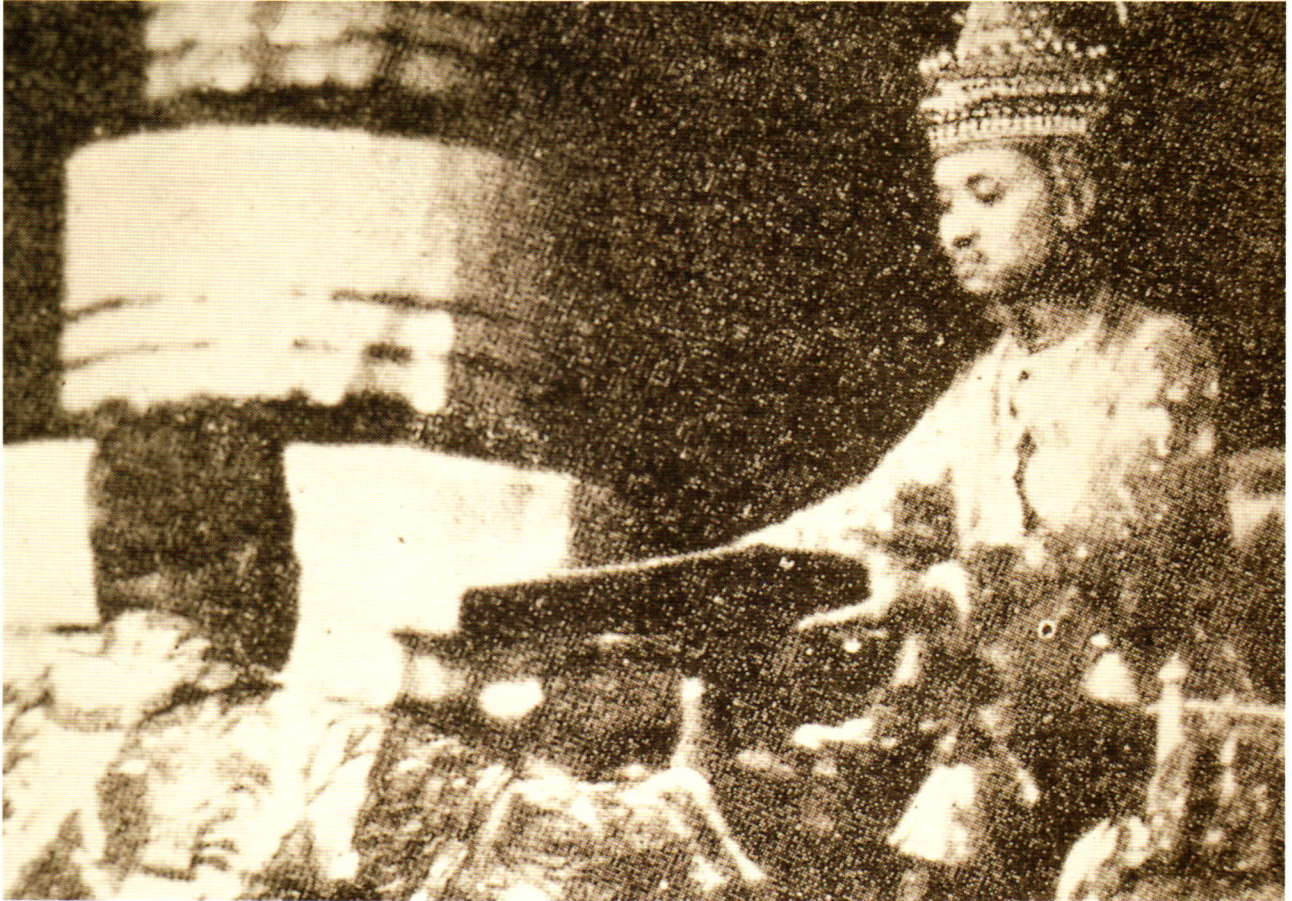
Prince Mahidol with his first son, November 1925, Heidelberg



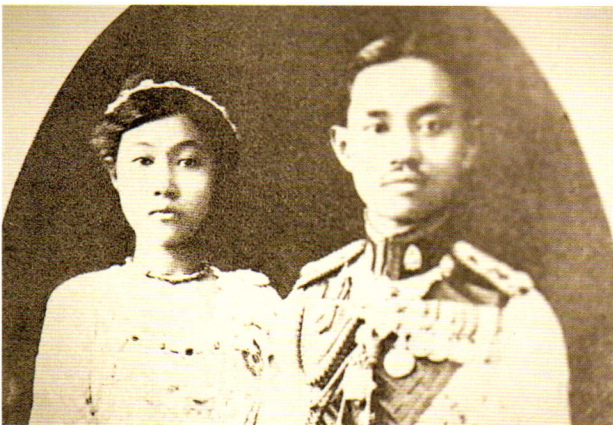
FIRST SON

Prince Mahidol worked tirelessly for 20 months, and the effort took its toll on his health. On the advice of doctors, the family went to Europe to allow the prince a break from his duties; the cool climate would also be better for his health. The Songklas took up residence in Heidelberg, Germany.

It was there, on 20 September 1925, that Mom Sangwan gave birth to a son. The news was received with great joy by Queen Sri Savarindira, who also noted that the baby's birth coincided with that of his grandfather, King Chulalongkorn. The baby was named Mom Chao (His Serene Highness, Prince) Ananda Mahidol by King Vajiravudh.



King Prajadhipok ascends the throne as the seventh monarch of the House of Chakri.



King Prajadhipok and Queen Rambhai Bharni

THE REIGN OF KING PRAJADHIPOK

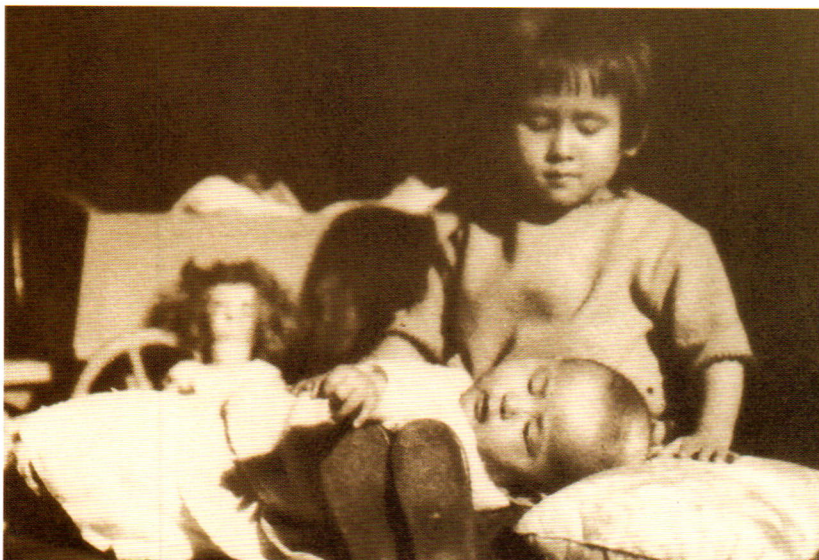
Once again, Prince Mahidol was forced to return to Siam under unfavourable circumstances — this time, the death of King Vajiravudh. He left his wife and two children in Paris. Not long after, they moved to Lausanne, Switzerland, where Princess Galyani Vadhana was sent to a nursery, Champ Soleil, in Lausanne. As soon as he was weaned, Prince Ananda Mahidol followed suit.



Prince Mahidol with his first son at Champ Soleil, upon his return from Thailand in 1926.



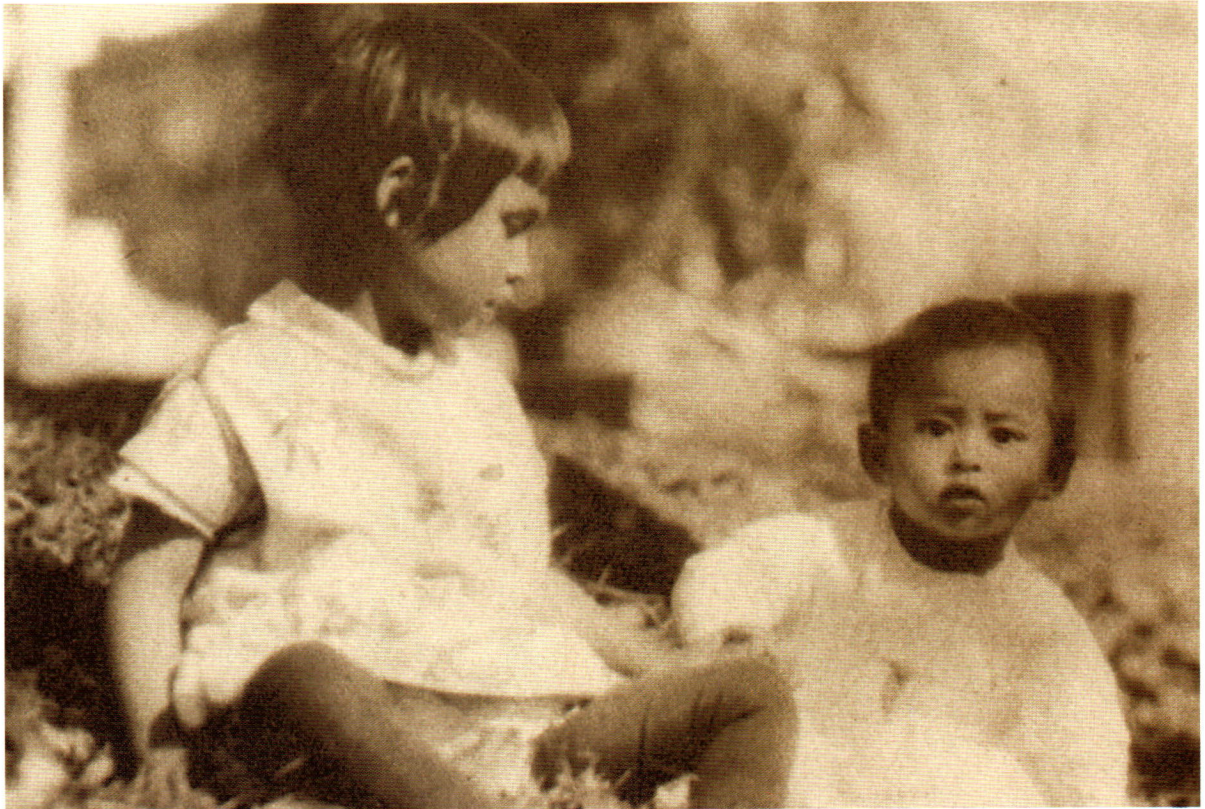
Lausanne, 1926



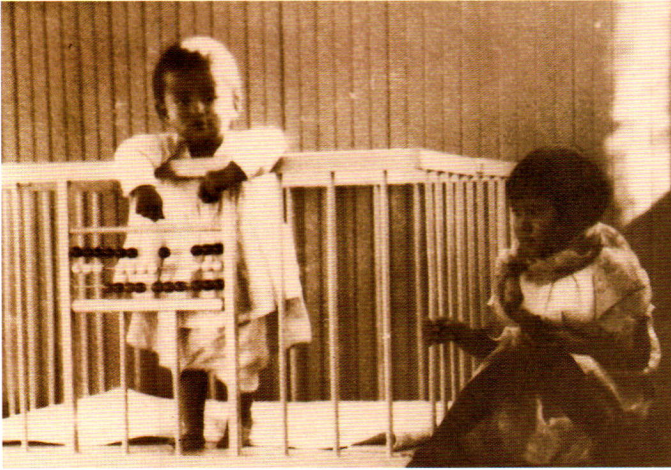
At the Royal Thai Embassy in Paris, 1 March 1925



With Nanny Nuang



Playing outside the apartment on Longwood Avenue, October 1926.



In the apartment on Longwood Avenue, Brookline, 1926



At Hotel Montana, Lausanne, 1926



On an outing at Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, 1927

*30 October 1925**Paris, 6 April 1926*

BACK TO THE UNITED STATES (1926)

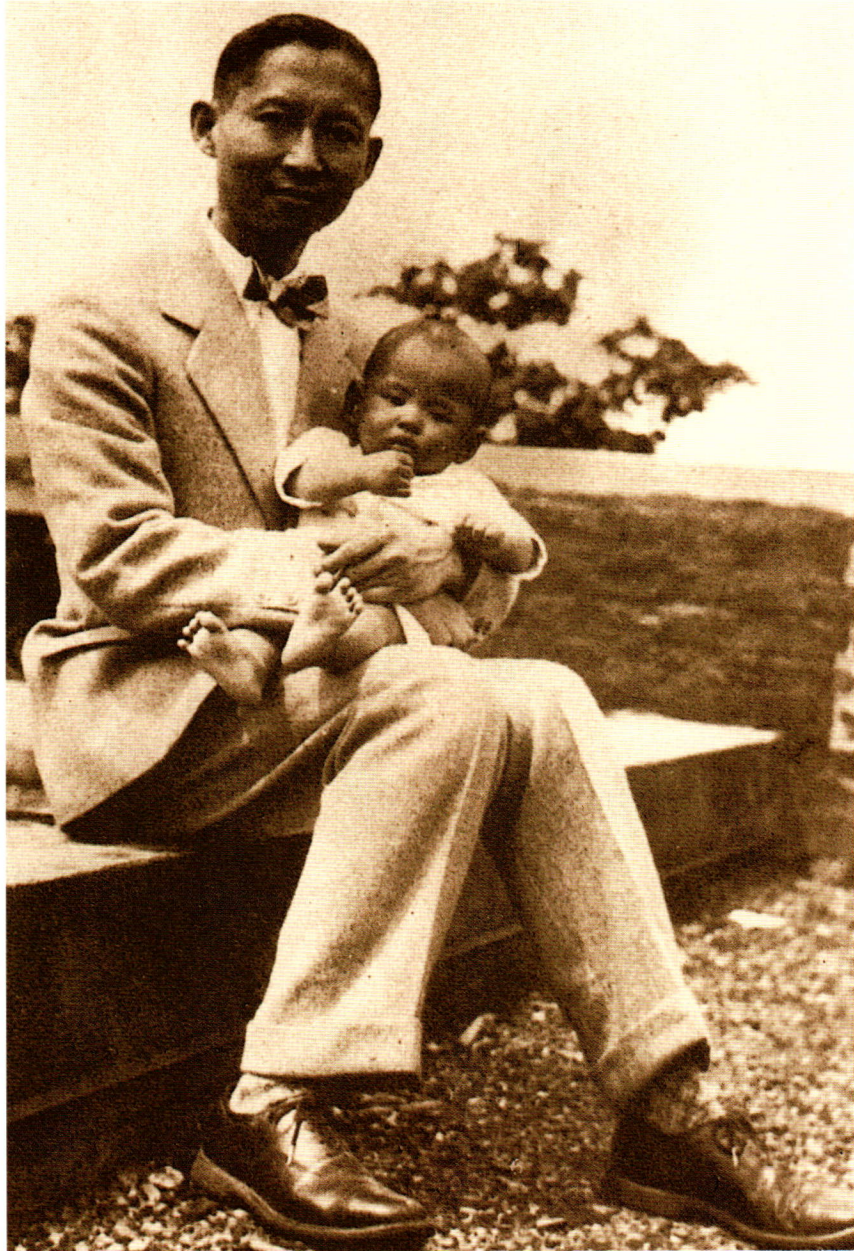
When he had duly completed his responsibilities in Siam, attending the funeral of King Vajiravudh and the coronation of his successor, King Prajadhipok, Rama VII (b. 1893 ; reigned 1925 -1935), Prince Mahidol rejoined his family in Lausanne. He remained with them briefly before going ahead to Boston, where he made arrangements for them to join him again. The new family home was at 63 Longwood Avenue, Brookline, in the suburbs of Boston.

This time round, Prince Mahidol enrolled as a medical student at Harvard, while Mom Sangwan returned to Simmons College to study psychology and nutrition.

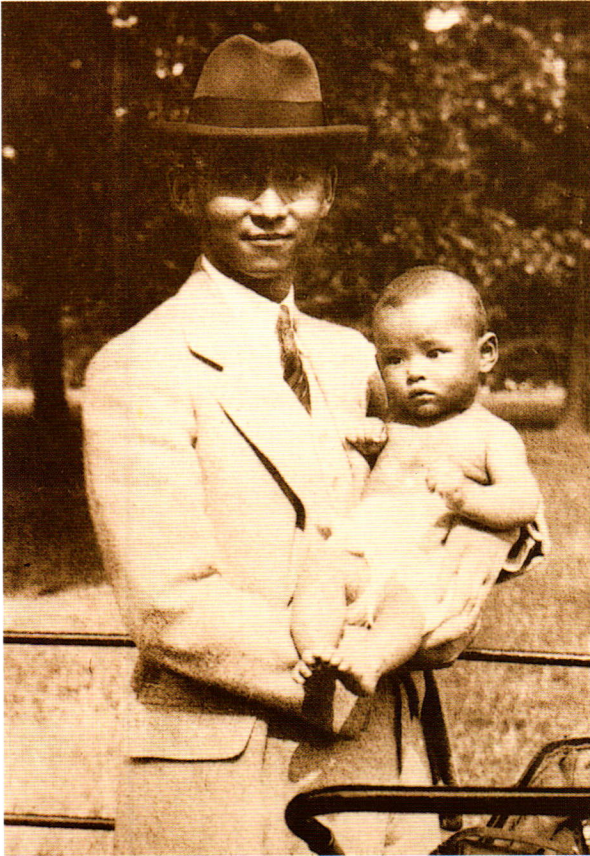
Princess Galyani Vadhana, already three years of age, went to kindergarten at Park School.



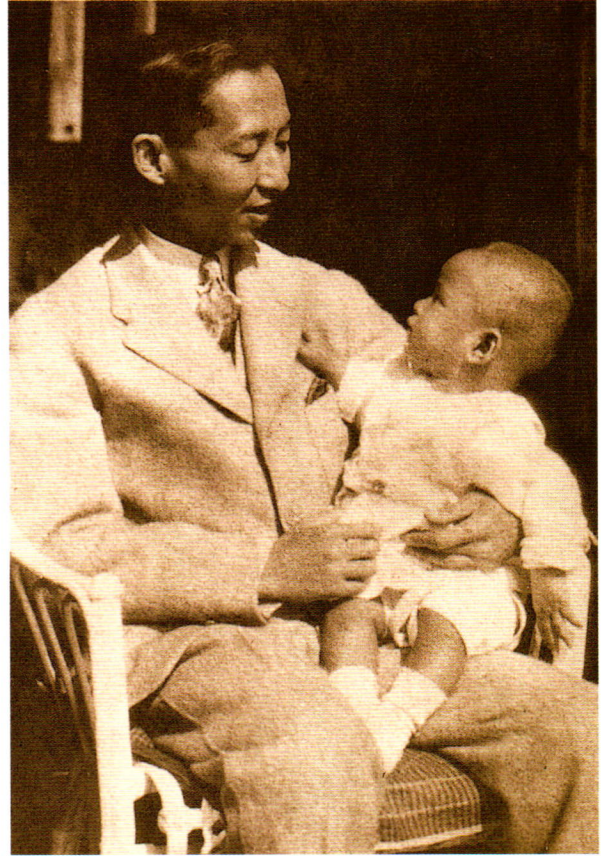
*Photographed at Alfred Brown's studio on the second birthday of Prince Ananda Mahidol,
20 September 1927.*



Prince Mahidol with his youngest son on the rooftop of their Boston home.



HRH Prince Bhumibol Adulyadej with his parents



SECOND SON

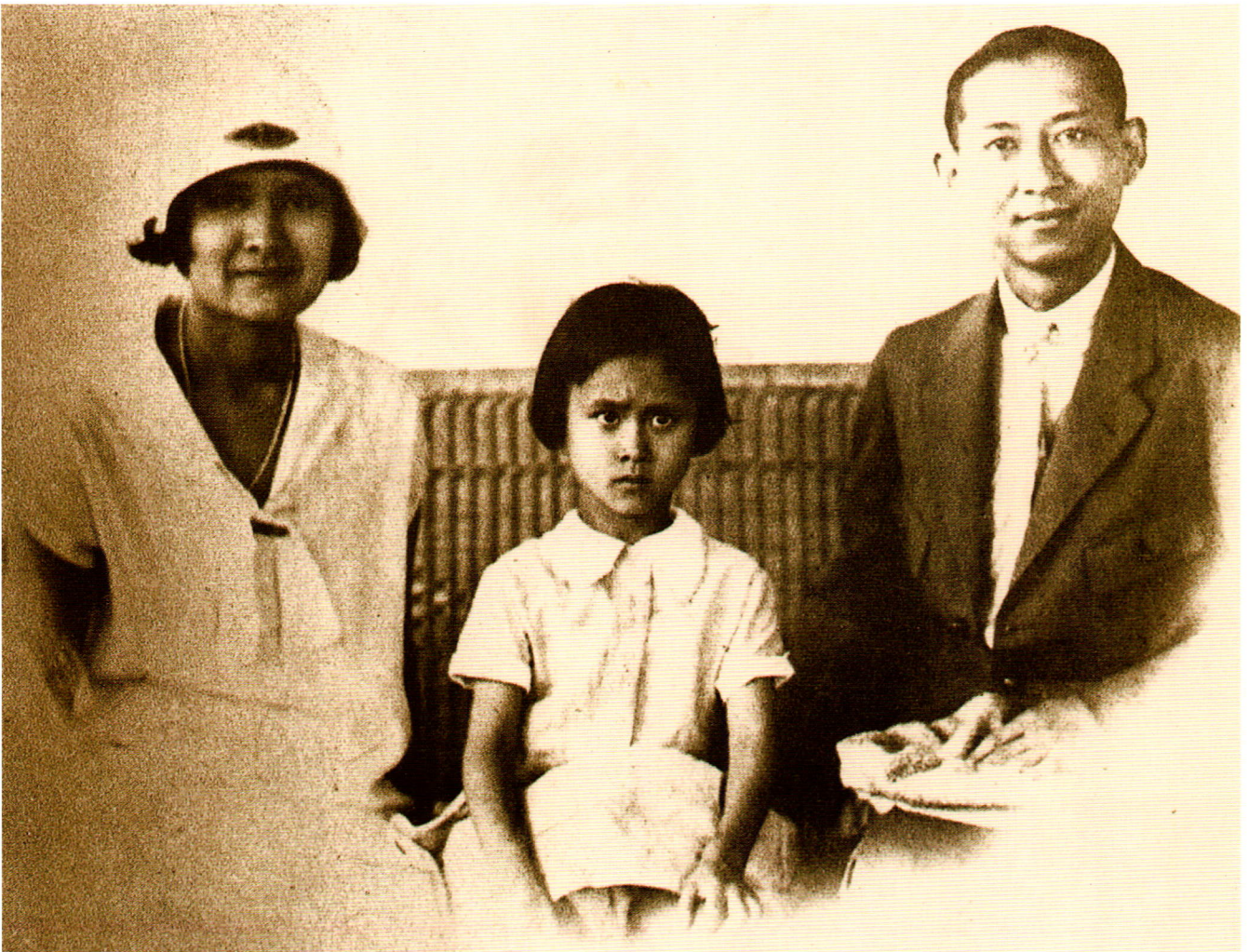
On 5 December 1927, at Cambridge Hospital (now Mount Auburn Hospital) in Cambridge, Mom Sangwan gave birth to her third child. The baby was HRH Prince Bhumibol Adulyadej, a name given to him by his royal uncle, King Prajadhipok.



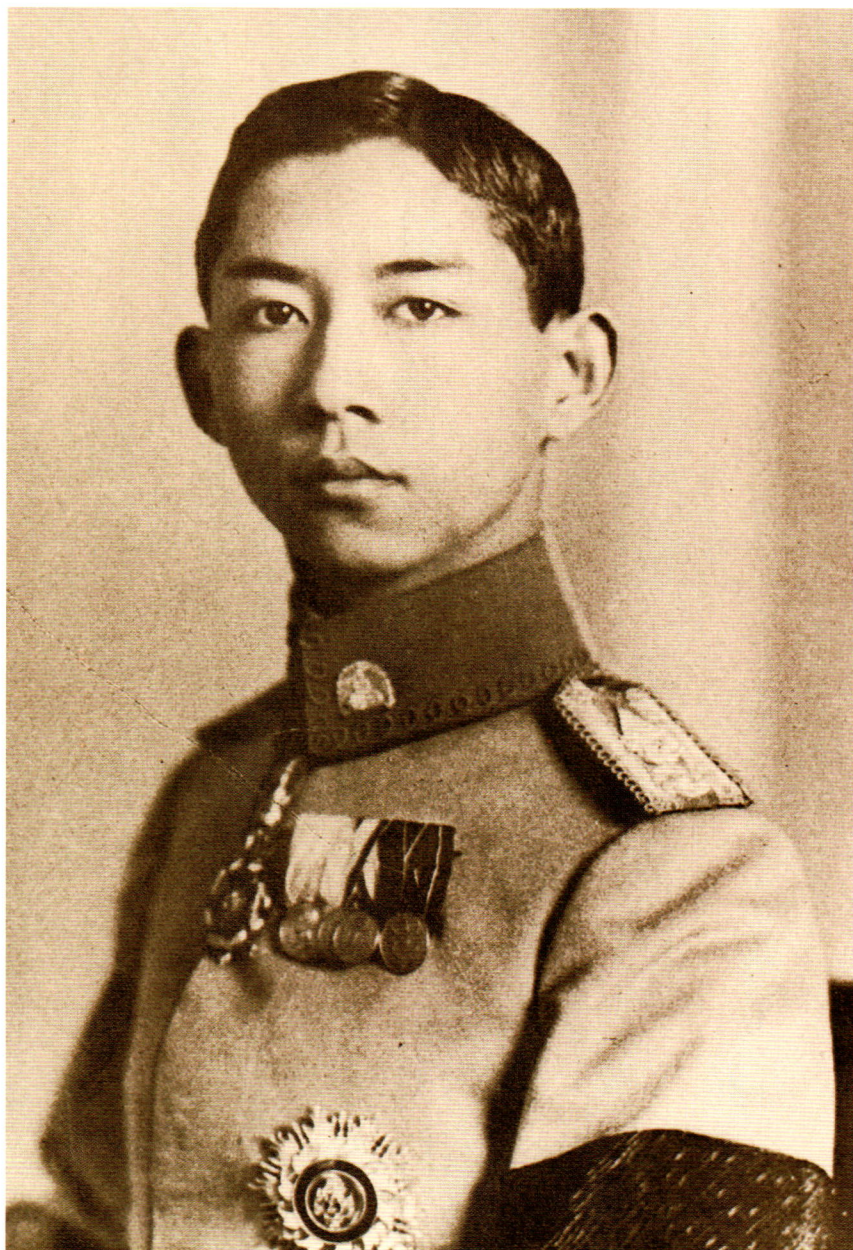
On the third birthday of Prince Ananda Mahidol, photographed at De Jongh studio, 20 September 1928.



On the roof of the Boston home



Prince Mahidol, Mom Sangwan and Princess Galyani Vadhana aboard the Kashimamaru on their way back to Siam, 1928.



HRH Prince Mahidol of Songkla



New Villa, Sapatum Palace

DEATH OF PRINCE MAHIDOL

Prince Mahidol was beset with kidney problems during his last year at medical school. Despite chronic health problems, he managed to graduate with honours. Immediately after his finals, he suffered from acute appendicitis requiring immediate surgery. As soon as he was well enough to travel, he and his family went to Europe again for an extended stopover, returning eventually to Siam in 1928 and taking up residency at Sapatum Palace.

In the following year, the prince took up an offer from McCormick Hospital in Chiang Mai to be their resident physician. He had planned to find a suitable house for the family so they could be there with him, but after a month he was taken ill and had to return to Bangkok.

Despite attempts to keep his illness in check,

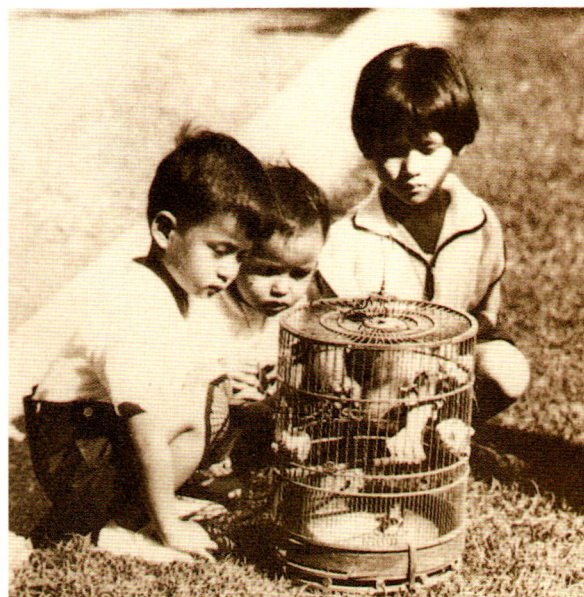
after four months, on 24 September 1929, he passed away at the family home.

For his wife, Mom Sangwan, it must have been a heavy blow. She was only 29 years old then, with three young children ranging in age from six and four to one year and nine months, for whose upbringing she was now solely responsible.

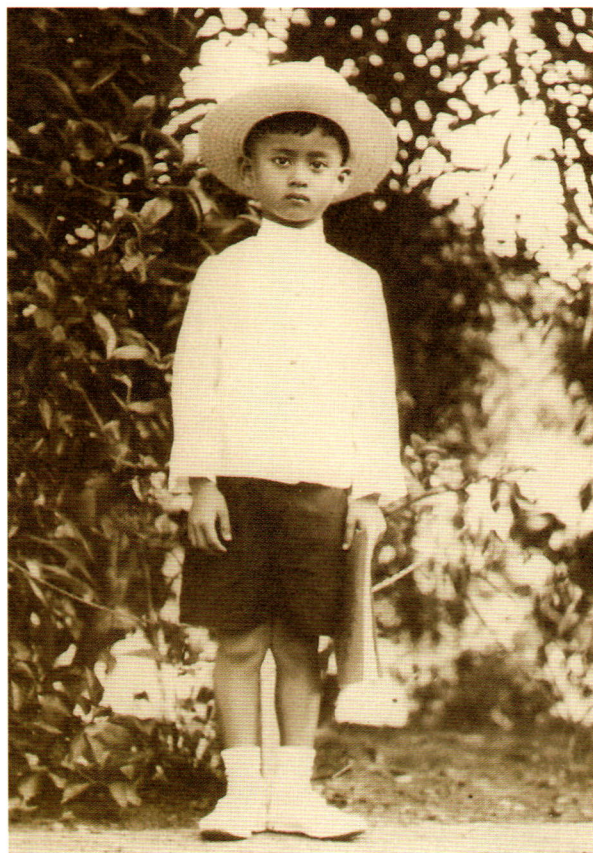
She had always been close to her children, personally supervising their daily activities, their meals, bedtime, playtime and education. At that time, her daughter was studying at Rajini School. As soon as they were old enough, her sons were also sent to school. Prince Ananda Mahidol attended kindergarten at Mater Dei School and transferred to Debsirin School, while Prince Bhumibol Adulyadej remained in kindergarten at Mater Dei School.



Prince Ananda Mahidol in the uniform of a Thai boy scout and Prince Bhumibol Adulyadej in the Pattani boy scout uniform.



Getting ready to release caged birds in a merit-making gesture.



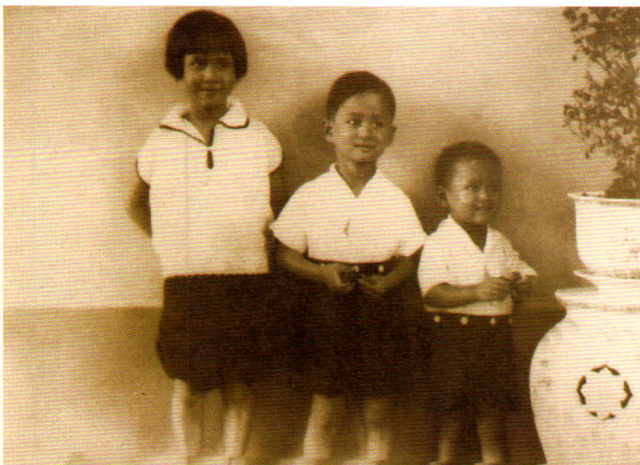
Prince Ananda Mahidol in his Debsirin School uniform



Water coolies!



Giving alms to monks at Sapatum Palace.



Three royal children, young and fatherless

All through their lives they had been moving from place to place, from country to country. Although they had finally returned to their homeland, expecting to stay, it was not to be. On 24 June 1932, a revolution brought about the end of absolute monarchy in the country and introduced democracy. The situation was tense; members of the Royal Family resigned from their government posts, while many left the country to live overseas until the political scene had settled.

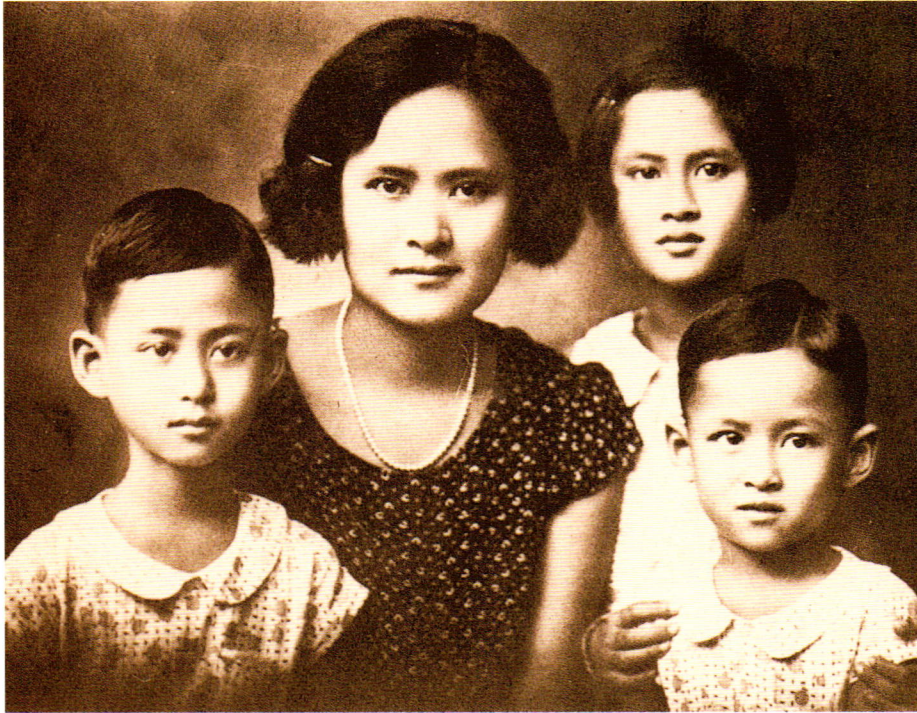
Queen Sri Savarindira, the Queen Grandmother, consulted with her daughter, Princess Valai Alongkorn, and her adopted son, the Prince of Chainat, about the suitable course of action for her grandchildren, especially Prince Ananda Mahidol, who was a rather frail young boy. The Prince of Chainat recommended Lausanne in Switzerland, a decision that greatly pleased Mom Sangwan because of the good climate, beautiful scenery and hospitable people. It was also one of the most favoured places of the much-travelled Prince Mahidol.



The Queen Grandmother gives a present to Prince Bhumibol Adulyadej on his third birthday, 5 December 1930.



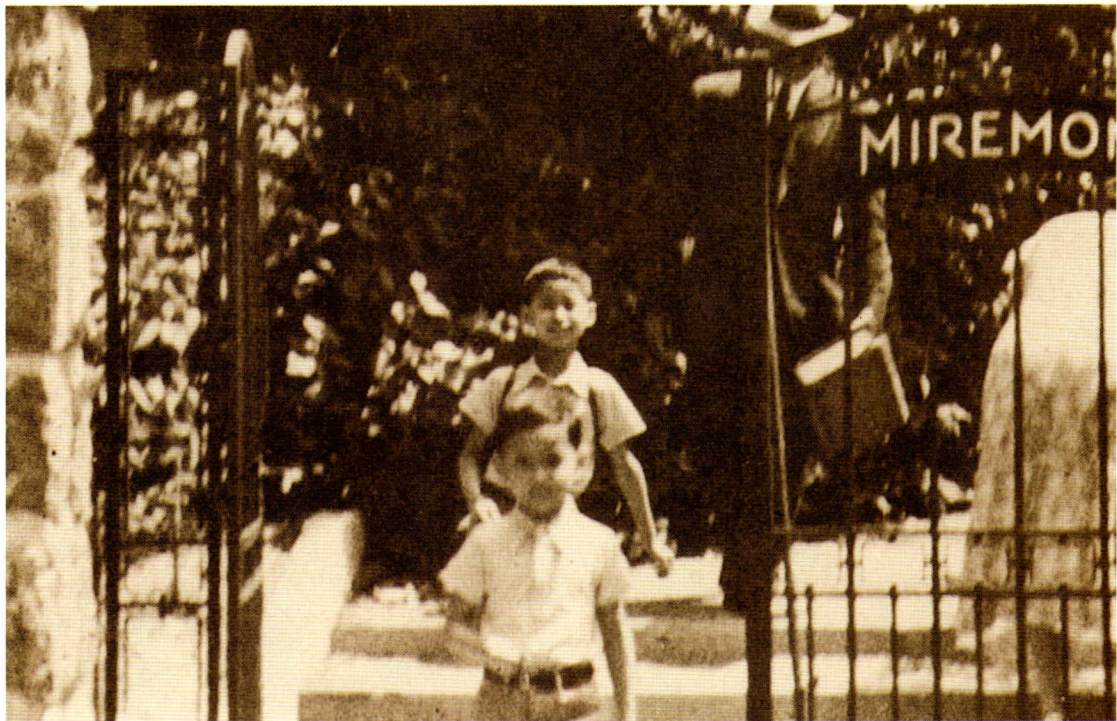
A hug for Grandmother!



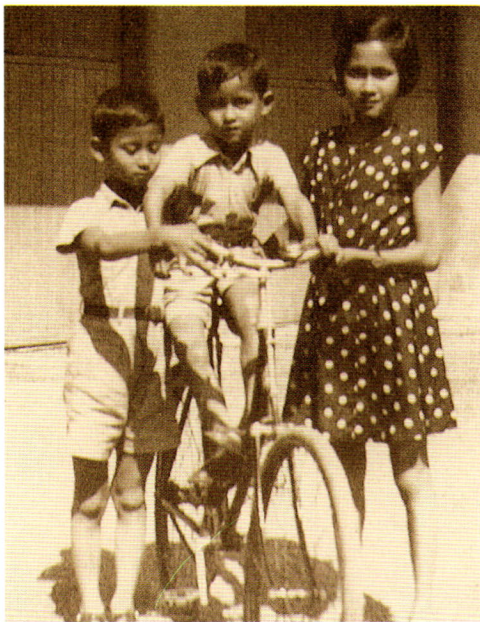
Passport photograph



All dressed up in classical dance costumes for Grandmother.



At Miremont School, Switzerland



Prince Bhumibol Adulyadej gets a lot of support as he learns how to ride a bicycle.

And so, in April 1933, Mom Sangwan and her children took off for Switzerland, together with a small entourage among whom was a young relative name Boonruen Sopo, who later became Thanpuying Boonruen Choonhavan, the widow of the late Prime Minister General Chatichai Choonhavan.



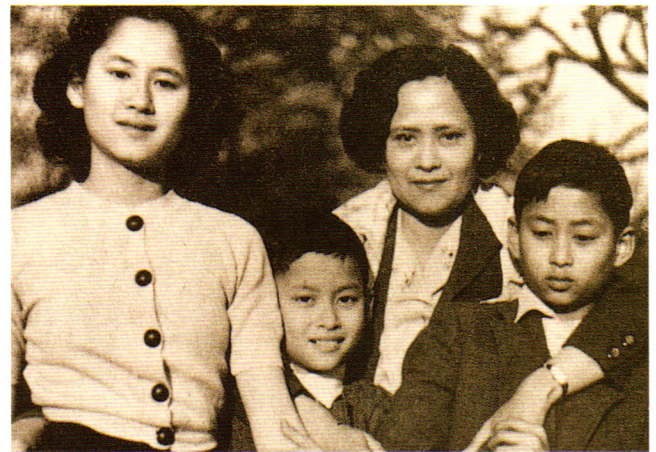
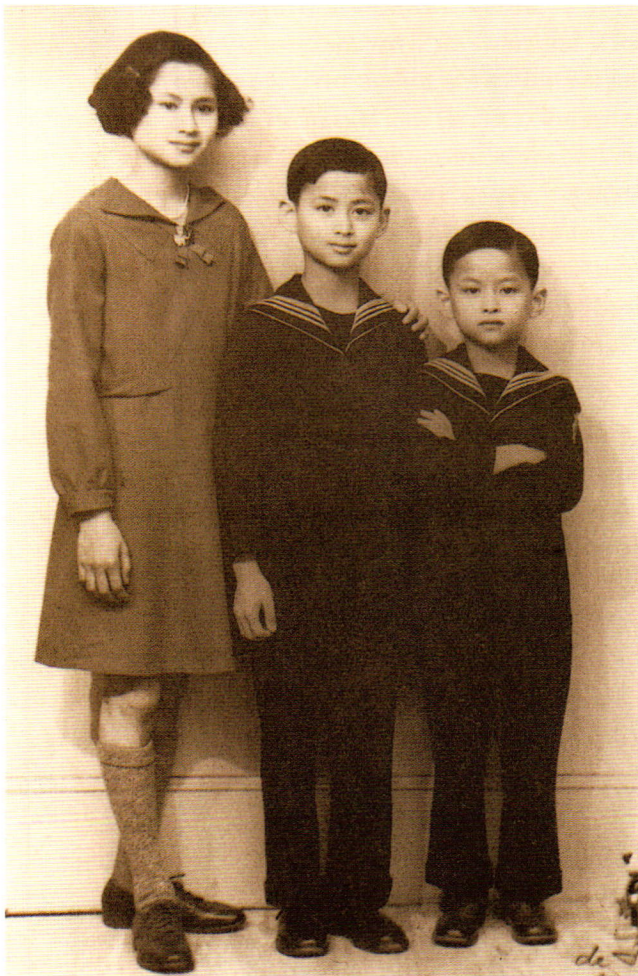
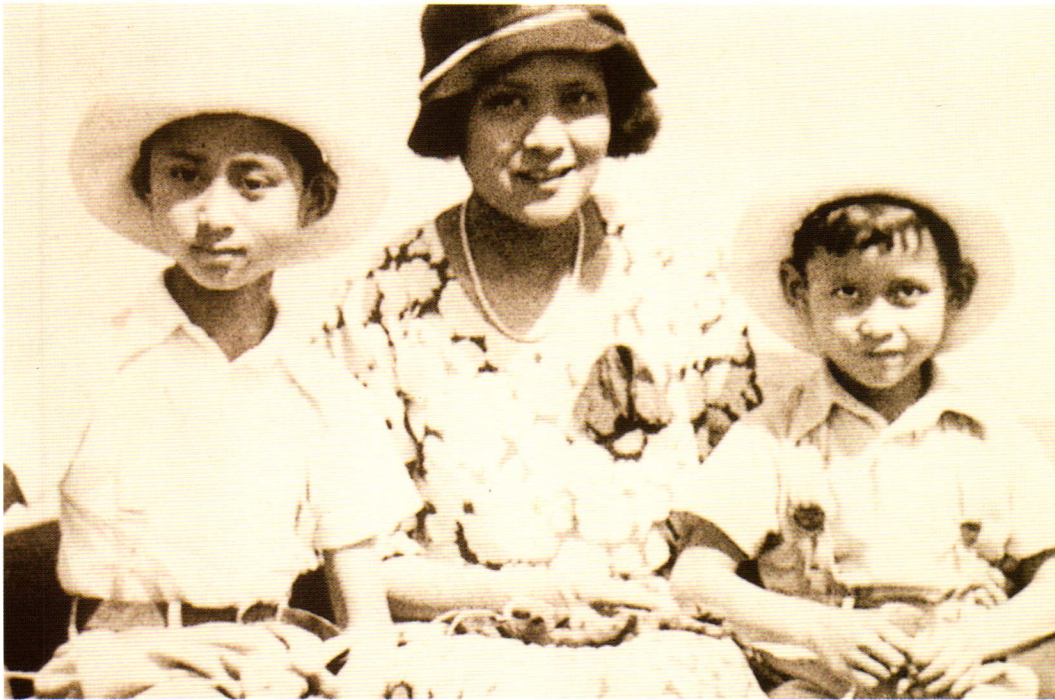
Formal portrait of King Ananda Mahidol in full dress uniform, taken at De Jongh studio.

ACCESSION TO THE THRONE

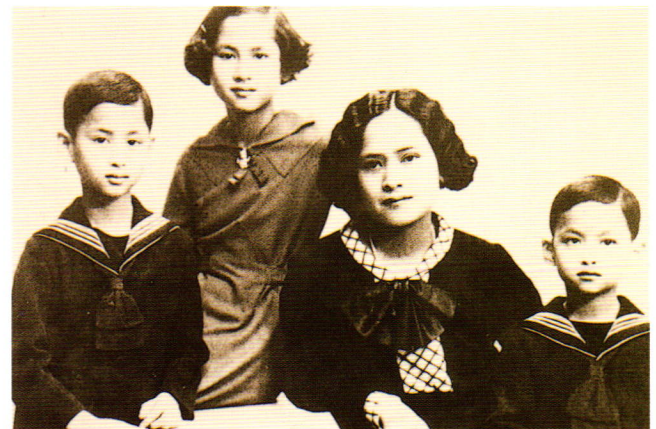
While Mom Sangwan and her three children were living in Switzerland, another turn of events brought about an upheaval in their quiet family life. On 2 March 1934, a year after they arrived in Switzerland, King Prajadhipok abdicated, relinquishing his right to appoint an heir to the throne.

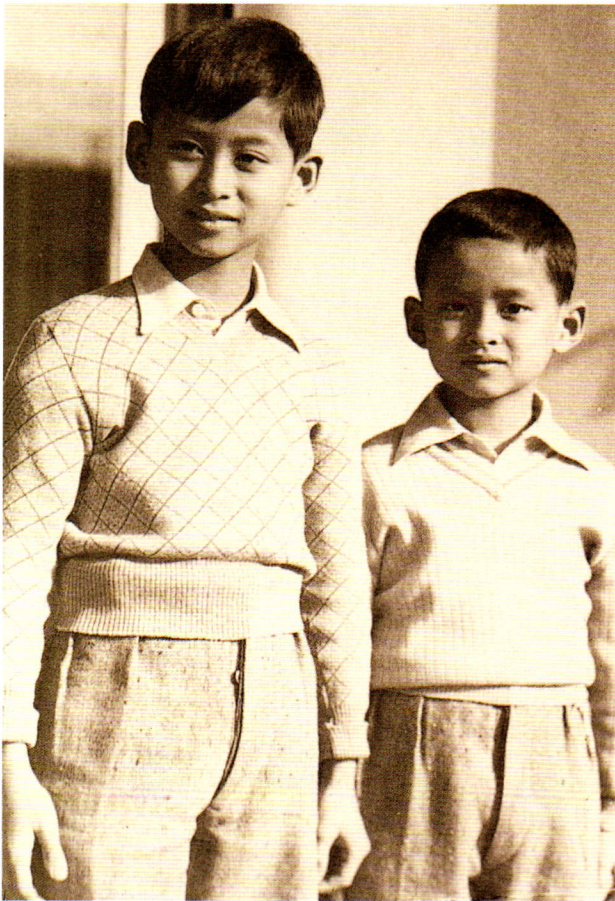
According to the Palace Laws regarding succession to the throne as promulgated by King Vajiravudh in 1924, the next in line was the son of Prince Mahidol of Songkla. And so it came to be that Prince Ananda Mahidol, as yet only nine years old, was declared the eighth monarch of the House of Chakri as of 2 March 1934.





Family portraits for the Queen Grandmother

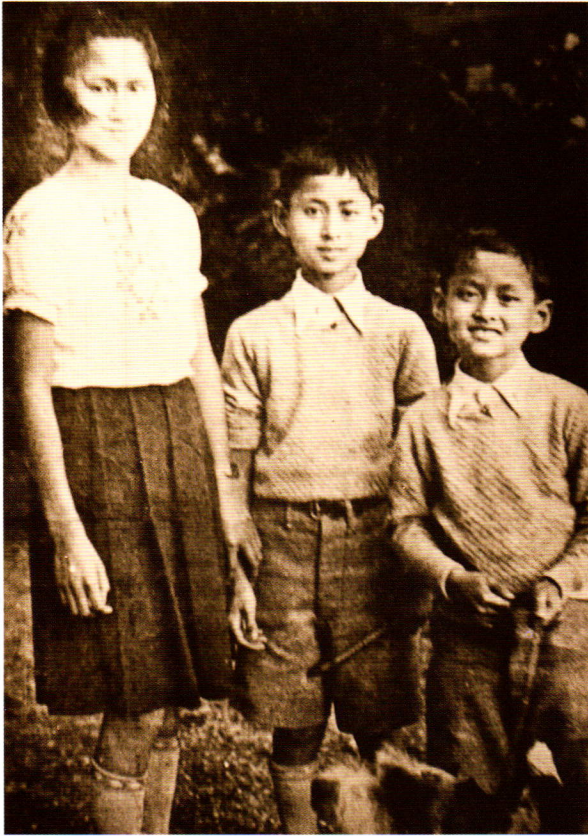




Two young princes in Lausanne, Switzerland, 1934



Newspaper photograph of Prince Ananda Mahidol



In the garden



At school



Villa Vadhana in winter, viewed from the orchard



The young royals visit the Nestle chocolate factory in Switzerland.

Since the new king was only nine years old, Parliament unanimously appointed Prince Arthit Thipabha and Chao Phraya Yomaraj (Pan Sukhum) as Regents until the king came of age.

On this same occasion, Mom Sangwan was conferred the title of Phra Rajajonani (Mother to the King) Sri Sangwalya, a title that still denoted her commoner status. Her already heavy responsibilities as single mother were immediately multiplied; she was nurturing not just a son, but a king, and he had to be brought up and educated as such.

For various reasons including security in line

with their new status, the family moved from their former home to a new house, named Villa Vadhana, in Pully, near Lausanne. Despite the loftiness of her son's new role, the Phra Rajajonani was determined to keep life simple, free from the formalities that would be inevitable upon their next return to Thailand.

The king and his younger brother went to a school called Ecole Nouvelle de la Suisse Romande. Although in his own country he was king, at school in Switzerland he was simply Ananda Mahidol, son of Madame S. Mahidol, a student receiving no more privileges than any other student there.



First visit to his homeland for the new King Ananda Mahidol

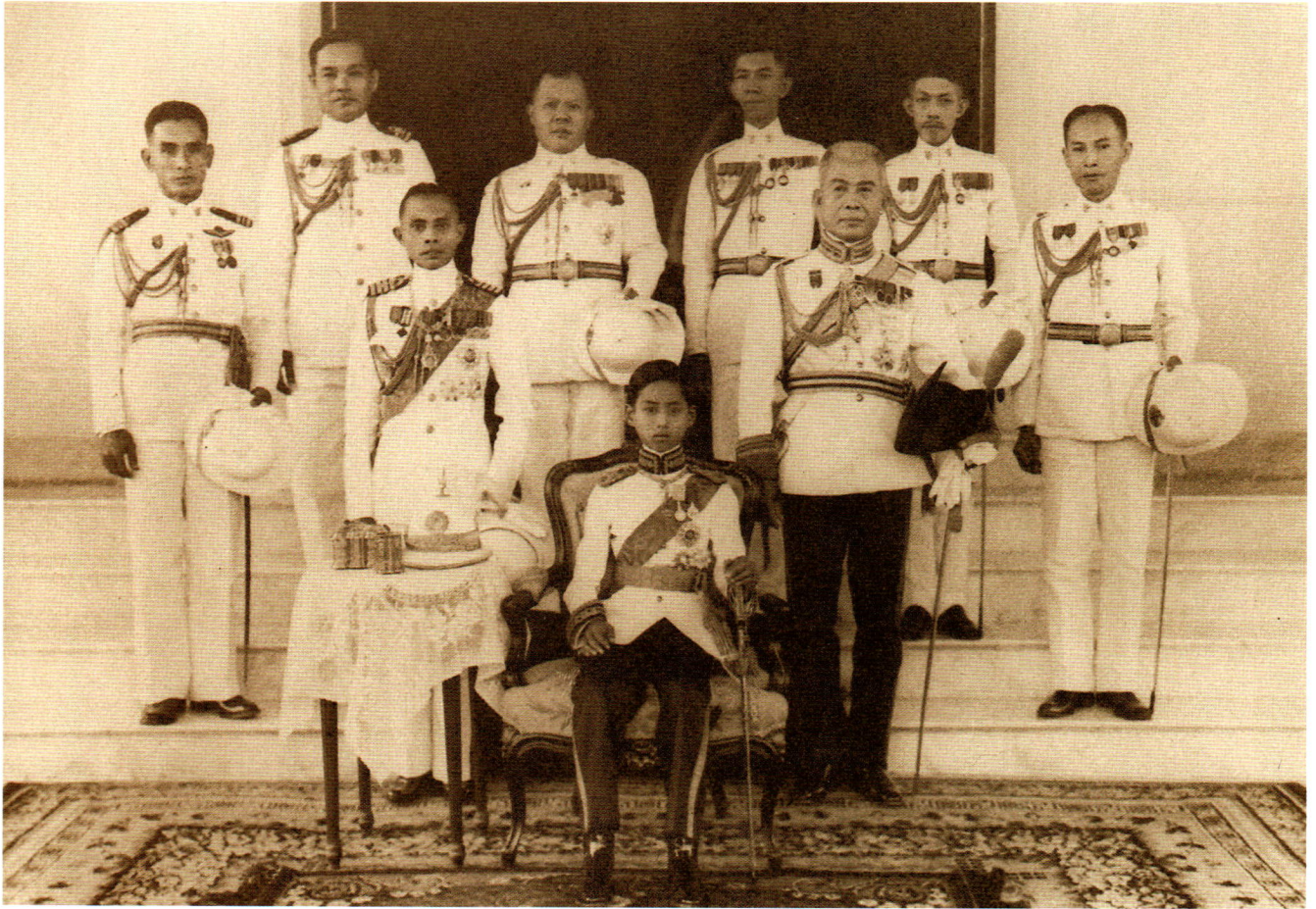


RETURN TO BANGKOK IN 1938

Three years after ascending the throne, the young King Ananda Mahidol returned to visit his country and his people for the first time. Upon their return, the Regents elevated the king's mother to the ranks of royalty with the title *Somdet* — Her Royal Highness Princess.

Throughout the two months that the young king appeared in the midst of his people, the Thais had a chance to admire his maturity and his demeanour, which was most becoming to a monarch and far beyond his years. For this, they could only credit the Princess Mother; she had moulded a monarch worthy of obeisance and respect single-handed.

The Princess Mother also took advantage of this brief sojourn in their homeland to make sure that the king saw as much as he could of the important temples and historic sites in Bangkok and the environs, and of the national arts and culture.



King Ananda Mahidol is photographed with the Regents, Prince Arthit Thipabha and Chao Phraya Yomaraj (Pan Sukhum), and aides-de-camp.

She also kindled his desire to help others, to contribute to charitable projects including public health and medicine. The king donated a sum from his Privy Purse to build the Ananda Mahidol Hospital in Lop Buri, while his siblings donated toward a health centre in Samut Sakhon.

In January 1939, King Ananda Mahidol and his family bade farewell once again to their homeland and returned to Switzerland.



Visiting the Queen Grandmother at Sapatum Palace.



The Queen Grandmother joins the birthday celebrations for King Ananda Mahidol.



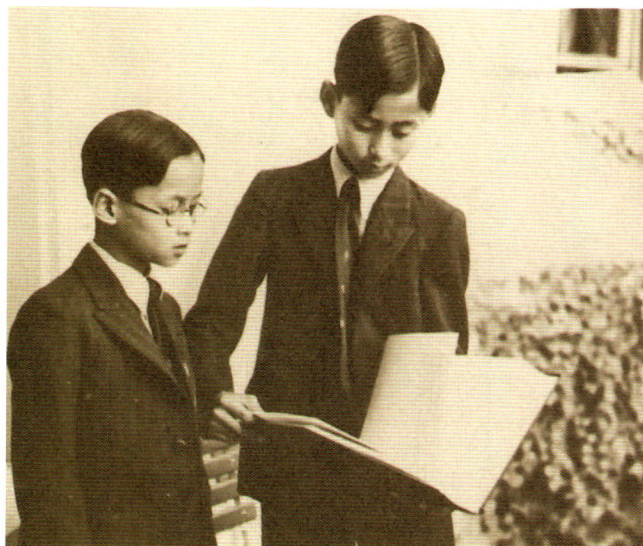
King Ananda Mahidol attends the Constitution Day celebrations.



On a visit to Wat Arun



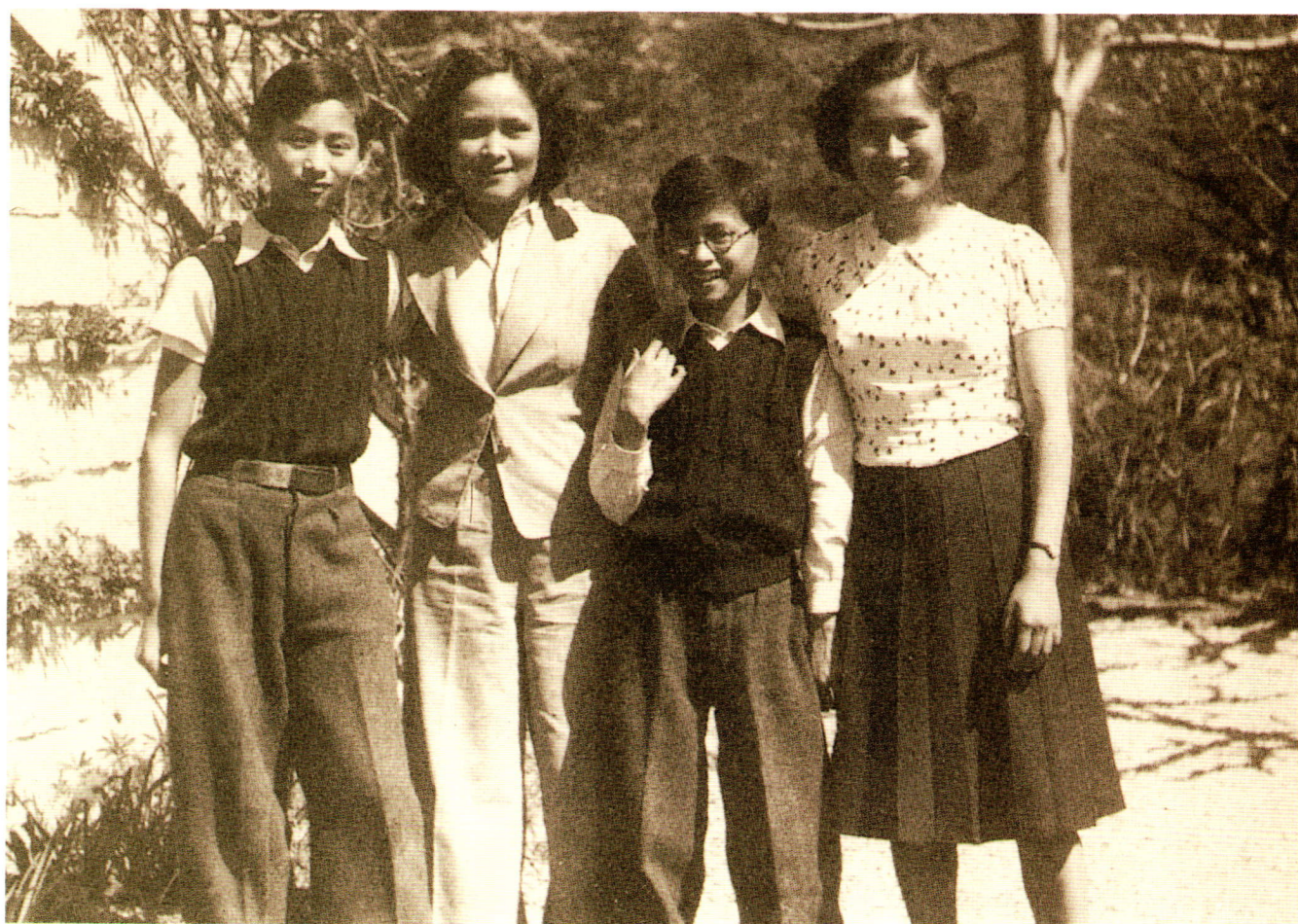
The family attends Constitution Day celebrations, with King Ananda Mahidol and his younger brother dressed in Youth Armed Forces uniform.



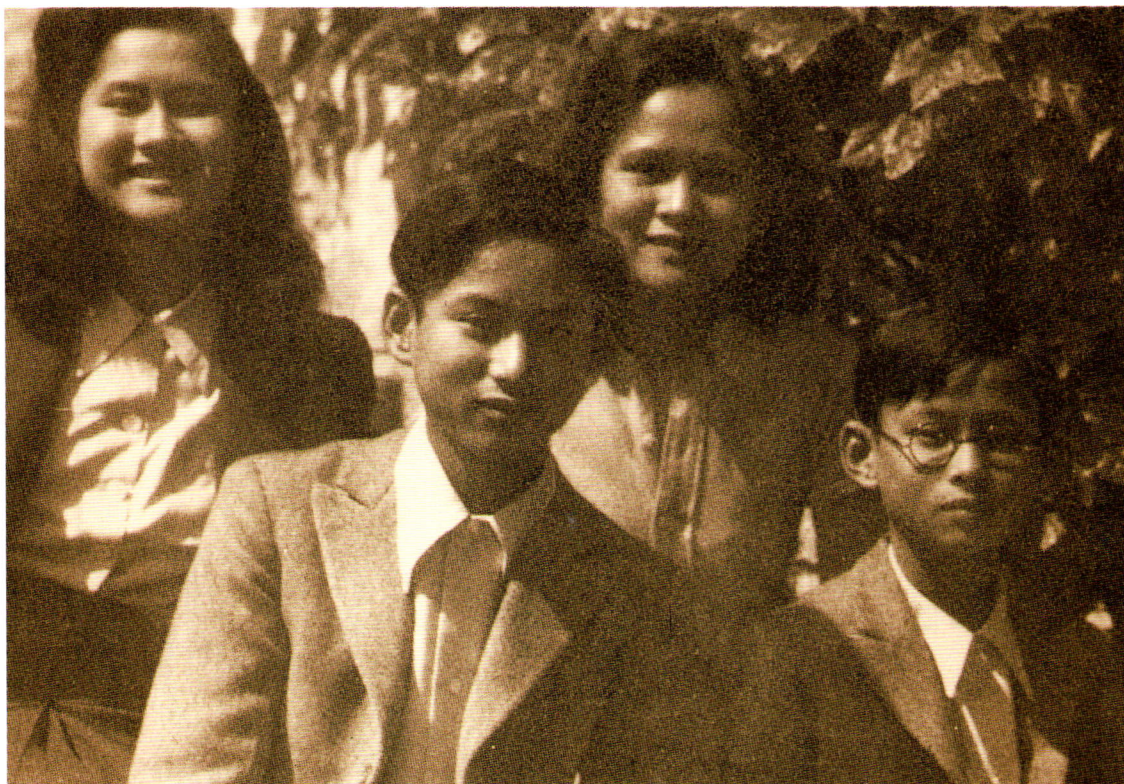
King Ananda Mahidol's birthday, 20 September 1938



Happy days in Lausanne



Family snapshot in the garden behind the residence



At Villa Vadhana, Switzerland

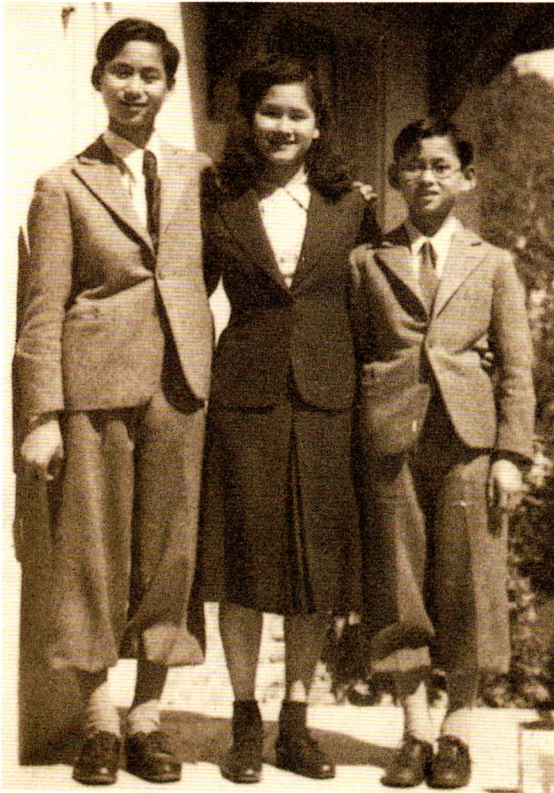


Skiing in Arosa, Switzerland.

WORLD WAR II (1939-1945)

The outbreak of World War II in 1939 had its repercussions on the Mahidol family just as on anyone else, and the Princess Mother's resourcefulness helped the family through the crisis. They received ration coupons like other Swiss families; they had to use ash for washing instead of soap, and the young king travelled to school by bicycle. The Princess Mother made her own jam from fruit such as strawberries, apples and pears that she picked from her own garden.

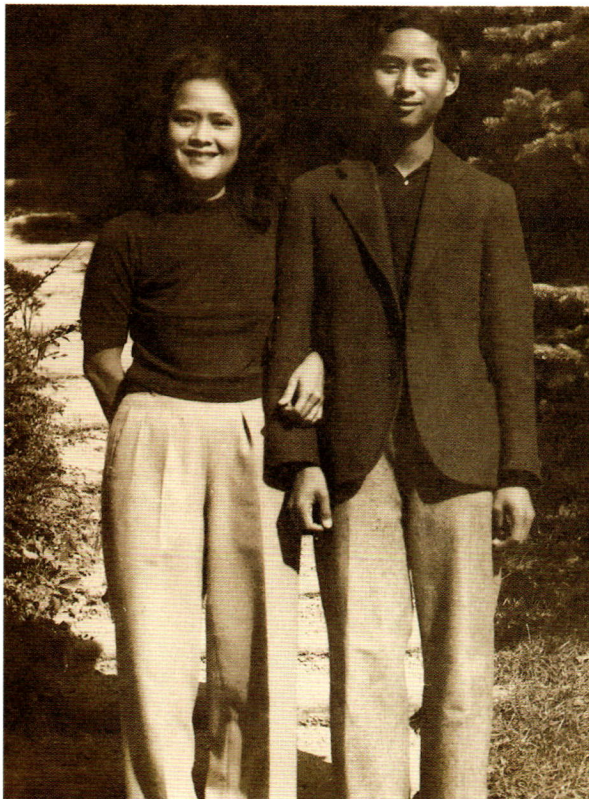
But even during such trying times, she kept up her late husband's tradition of inviting Thai students round for meals on Saturdays. The increasing number of Thai students in Switzerland, who had moved there from war-torn Belgium, France and Italy, meant that they had to take turns as guests of the Princess Mother. Her support to the students extended to lending, or even giving, them money if their funds from Thailand arrived late, though she always managed to keep the family going even when her own funds were delayed as well.



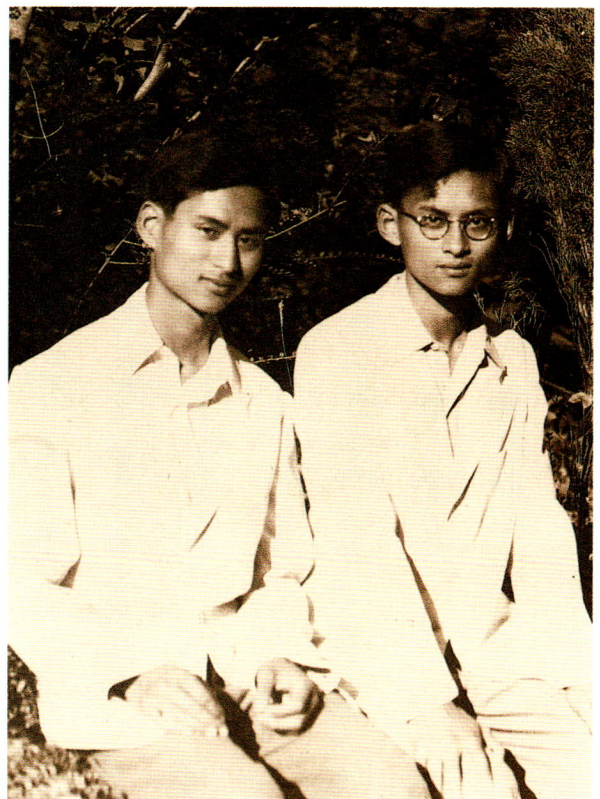
Brothers and sister



The 20-year-old king (centre) skiing in Davos just before his second return to Thailand.



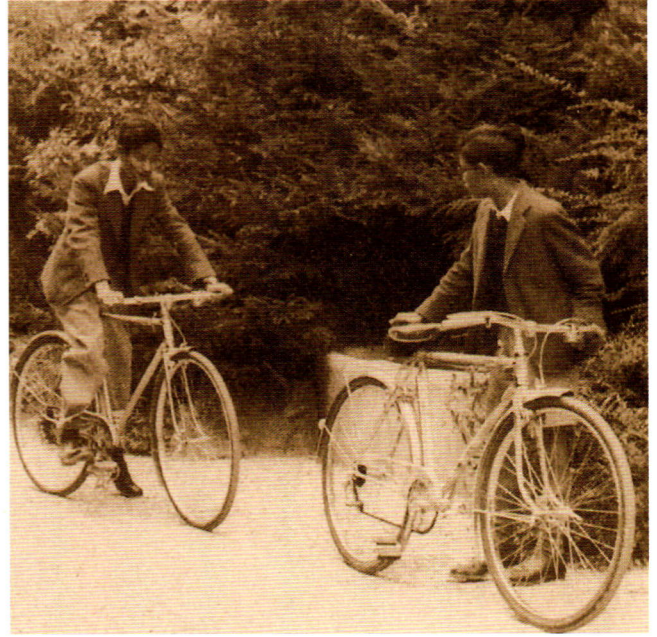
The Princess Mother and King Ananda Mahidol



Brothers and also the closest of friends



Running.



Cycling during war days when petrol was scarce.

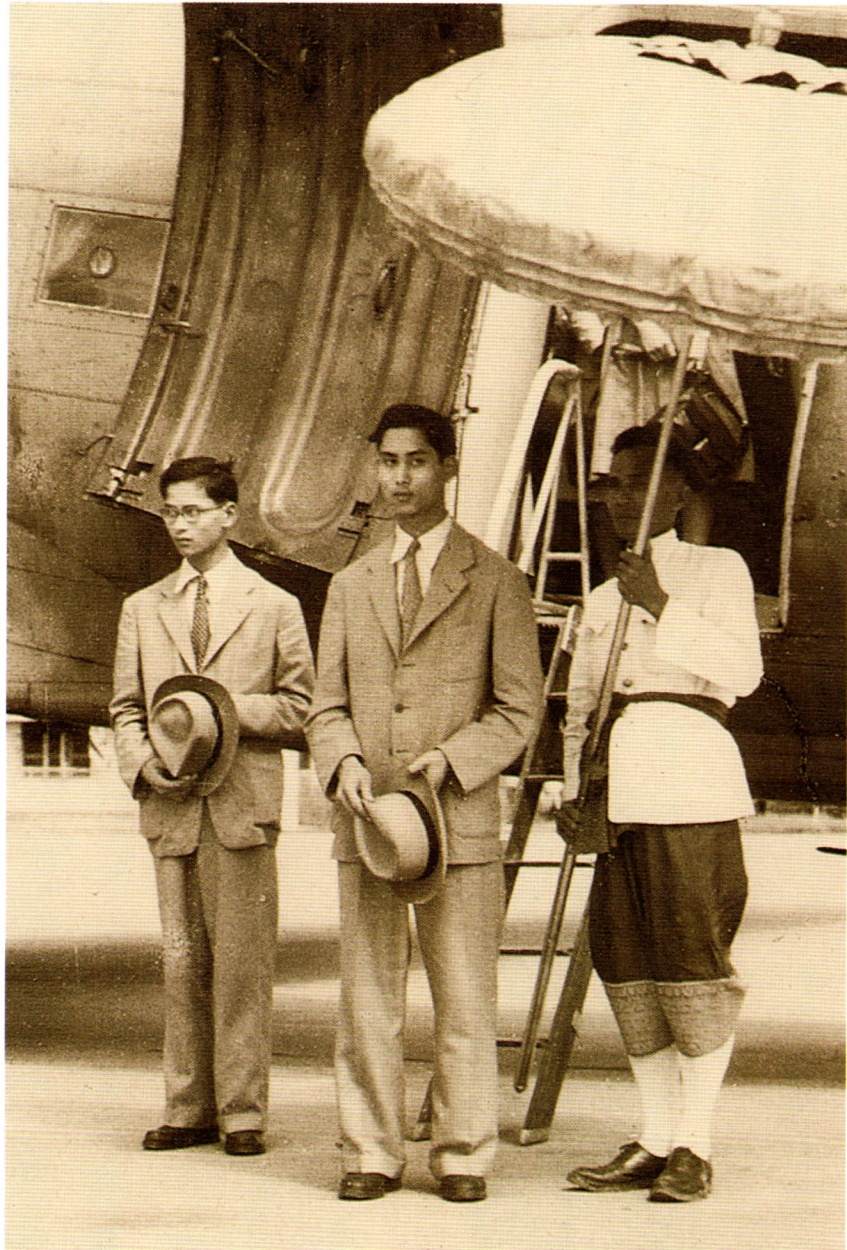
The young king and his brother remained at Ecole Nouvelle de la Suisse Romande until 1941, boarding at the school during their last two years there, since it was their mother's wish for them to learn how to take care of themselves. Meanwhile, Princess Galyani Vadhana was attending an international school in Geneva.

The Princess Mother also made a point of hiring an English governess to teach English to the king. She also made sure her children kept up with their Thai language and culture studies with a tutor, Prueng Siribhatra, who was sent by the Thai government.

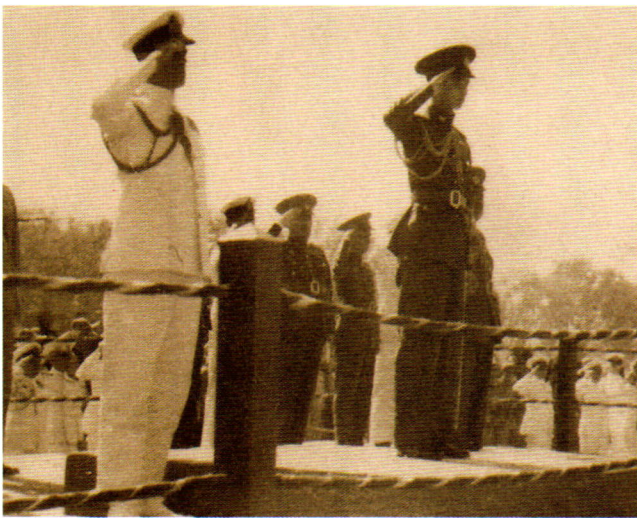
In 1942, Princess Galyani Vadhana passed her matriculation and applied to the University of Lausanne to study chemistry. A year later, at the age of

18, King Ananda Mahidol took up the study of law at the same university, and in 1945, his younger brother also enrolled at the university to study science.

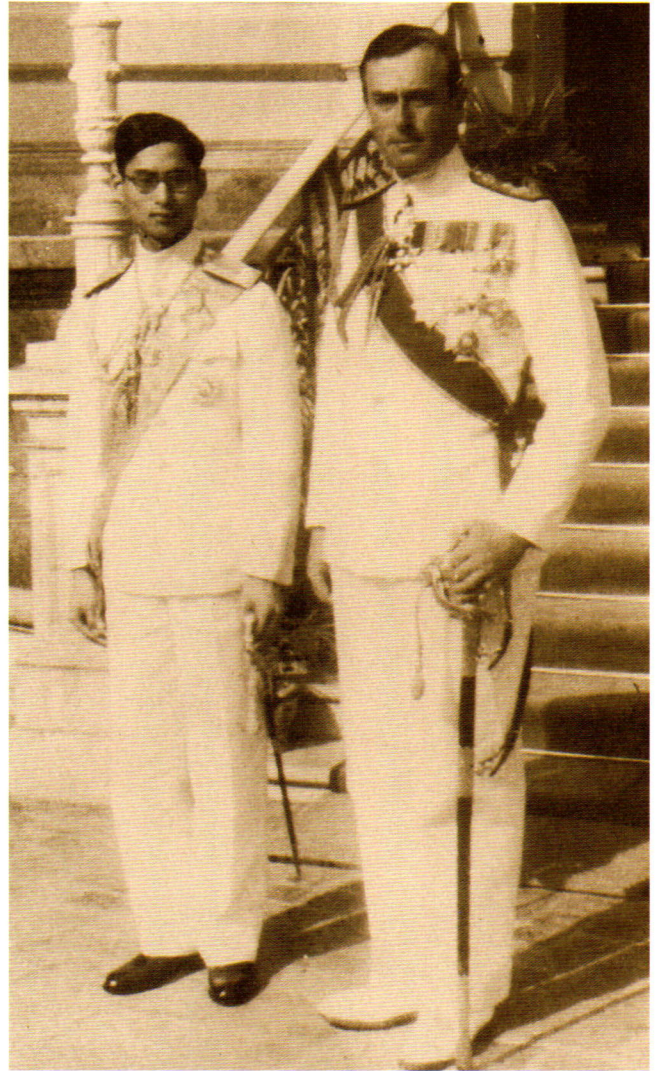
20 September 1945 was a very special day for the king — it was the day he celebrated his twentieth birthday — his coming of age. With the war having just recently ended, Villa Vadhana opened its doors to crowds of Thai people; members of royalty, students and government officials all made their way there in a show of respect for their king, and to help celebrate his special day. The tensions and fears brought on by the war had dissipated and everyone had a good time, playing music together in a jovial mood. The family was also preparing to return once again to Thailand.



Upon arrival at Don Muang airport



King Ananda Mahidol and Lord Louis Mountbatten preside at the presentation of arms by British and Indian troops at Sanam Luang and Ratchadamnoen Avenue.



Lord Louis Mountbatten is presented with a royal decoration from the Order of the White Elephant.

SECOND VISIT TO THAILAND (1945)

On 29 November 1945, King Ananda Mahidol started on his second visit to Thailand, this time travelling by plane with his mother and brother. Six days later, they arrived in Thailand. As they stepped off the plane, the Thai public witnessed, not two young schoolboys dressed in shorts as they had the previous time, but two mature and dignified young men, happy to be back among their own, yet understandably apprehensive about the responsibilities and expectations that lay ahead.



King Ananda Mahidol visits the Sampeng Chinese community, 3 June 1946.



The king talks to his people in Phrapradaeng district, Samut Prakan province.



The king visits the Muslim community at a mosque.



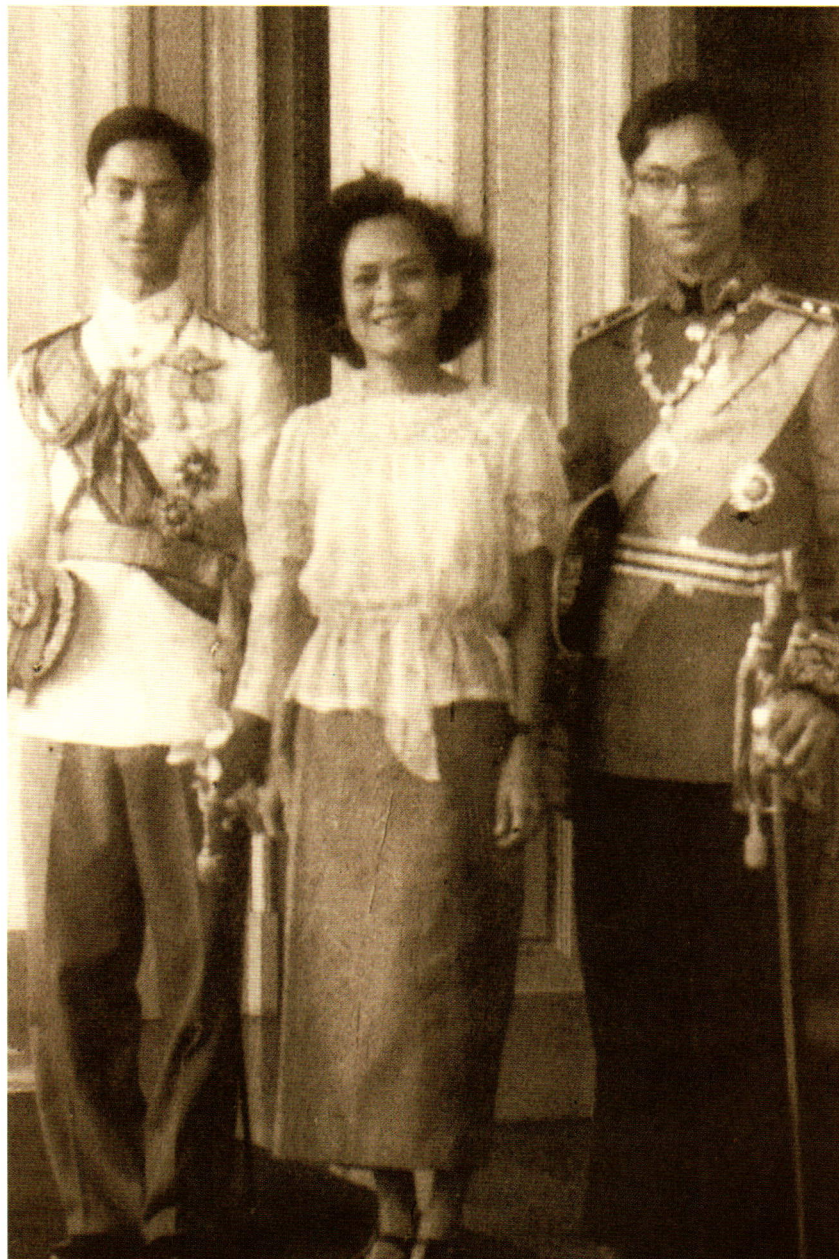
King Ananda Mahidol signs the Constitution, 9 May 1946.



Conferring degrees at Chulalongkorn University, 13 April 1946.



Steering a patrol boat during a visit to the Royal Thai Navy, 30 May 1946.



The Princess Mother with her two sons after Prince Bhumibol Adulyadej (right) was conferred the rank of lieutenant of the Royal Guards.

The Princess Mother, on the other hand, seemed more at ease than ever before. At the age of 45, she had successfully directed the paths of her children until they were all intelligent and responsible adults, commanding the awe, admiration and respect of the Thai people. King Ananda Mahidol especially was ready to take on the huge burden placed upon his shoulders.

Everywhere the king went, his mother and brother would be close by. Having grown up in a faraway land, there was much for them to see and learn about their country and their culture, and the Princess Mother made sure that all their questions were answered.



The Royal Cremation Ceremony at Sanam Luang

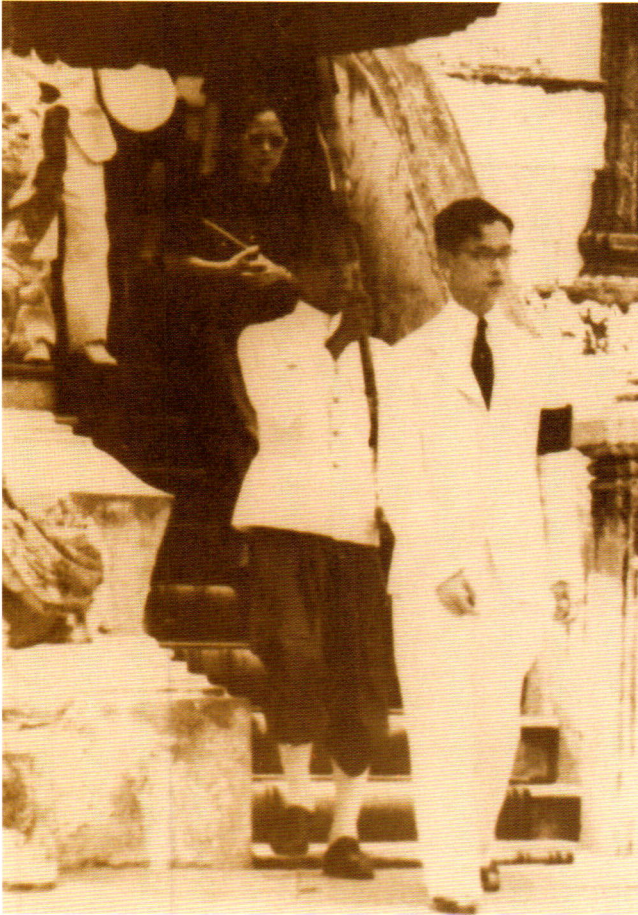
DEATH OF A KING

The Thai government requested that the king postpone his return to Switzerland in order to present the new Constitution to the nation on 9 May 1946, and to open Parliament on 1 June. He acquiesced, and the return trip to Switzerland was scheduled for 13 June 1946. But the trip was not to be, for an unforeseen calamity befell the nation. On the morning of 9 June 1946, only four days before he was due to travel to Switzerland, His Majesty King Ananda Mahidol met a tragic and untimely death.

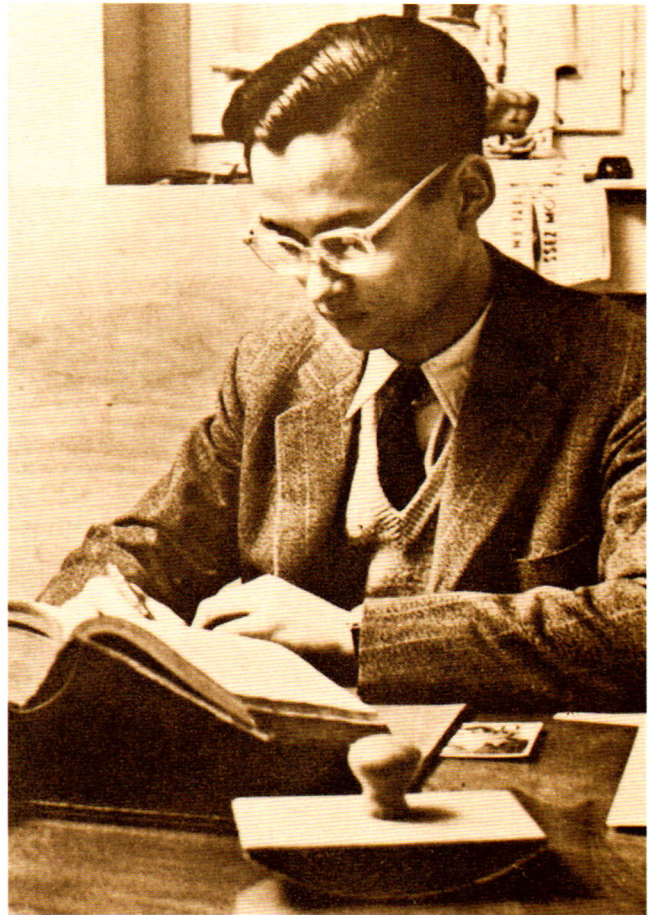


ACCESSION OF THE SECOND SON

On that very same day (9 June 1946), by Parliament's unanimous decision, Prince Bhumibol Adulyadej, the second son of HRH Princess Sri Sangwan, the Princess Mother, was invited to accede to the throne as the ninth monarch of the House of Chakri.



The new king, sombre and forlorn



Hard at his studies

RETURN TO SWITZERLAND

On 19 August 1946, the Princess Mother accompanied the new king back to Switzerland, where he resumed his studies at the University of Lausanne. He switched his choice of subjects from science to political science, law and economics, in order to better suit his new priorities.

During that time, the Princess Mother once more dedicated herself to her role of “housekeeper” of the Villa Vadhana residence, seeing to it that everything ran smoothly. She preferred to do things by herself, even driving on shopping rounds. After lunch, she would spend her time in the garden, digging the flower beds, pruning the bushes and sweeping the leaves. She would also attend lectures on topics of interest at the University of Lausanne. On days off from college, the king and his mother would go on drives out of Lausanne or to neighbouring countries such as Italy, France and Lichtenstein, visiting various places of interest or just enjoying the peace and quiet of the

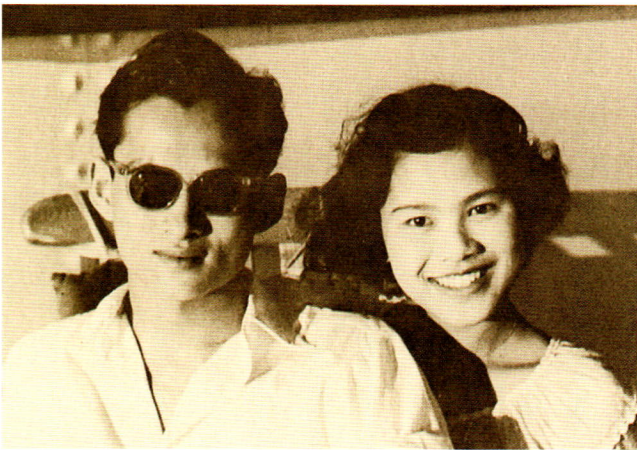
countryside. On these trips, the Princess Mother would often stop by the road and pick wild flowers to take back home.

On 4 October 1948, His Majesty the King was badly hurt in a motoring accident, requiring hospitalization. The Princess Mother committed herself to nursing her son back to health. Fear and anxiety for her son, together with the physical strain, must have taken their toll, and doctors eventually advised her to take a break in the country.

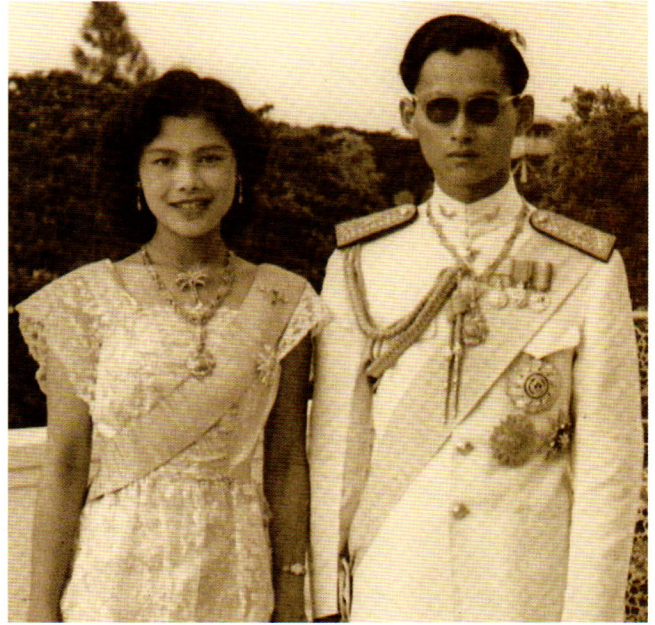
Not long afterwards, on 12 August 1949, the Thai people received joyful news that His Majesty the King had become engaged to Mom Rajawongse Sirikit Kitiyakara, the eldest daughter of Mom Chao (His Serene Highness Prince) Nakkhatra Mongkol Kitiyakara (who was later elevated to the rank of Prince of Chanthaburi), the Thai ambassador to the Court of St James in England, and Mom Luang Bua Kitiyakara.



King Bhumibol Adulyadej finds his smile in the beautiful Mom Rajawongse Sirikit Kitiyakara, his fiancée.



Aboard the Selandia en route to Thailand.



King Bhumibol Adulyadej and M.R. Sirikit Kitiyakara on their wedding day.

ROYAL WEDDING AND CORONATION

After the cremation of the late King Ananda Mahidol, a wedding ceremony for His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej was held at Sapatum Palace, the residence of Queen Sri Savarindira, the Queen Grandmother. The wedding took place on 28 April 1950, and a few days later, on 5 May, a coronation ceremony was held according to the royal tradition at the Amarindra Throne Hall, in the compound of the Grand Palace. During the ceremony, M.R. Sirikit was officially elevated to the rank of Queen.

The royal couple travelled back to Switzerland after the coronation, and one year later, they were blessed with their first child, HRH Princess Ubolratana, who was born on 5 April 1951 in Lausanne. She became the Princess Mother's second grandchild, after Tasna Valaya Rattanakul Serirerngrit (now Thanpuying

Tasna Valaya Sorasongkram), daughter of Princess Galyani Vadhana. When Their Majesties returned to Thailand for good, three more children followed, born at Amporn Gardens, Dusit Palace. HRH Prince Vajiralongkorn was born on 28 July 1952, and was subsequently elevated to the rank of HRH Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn in 1972.

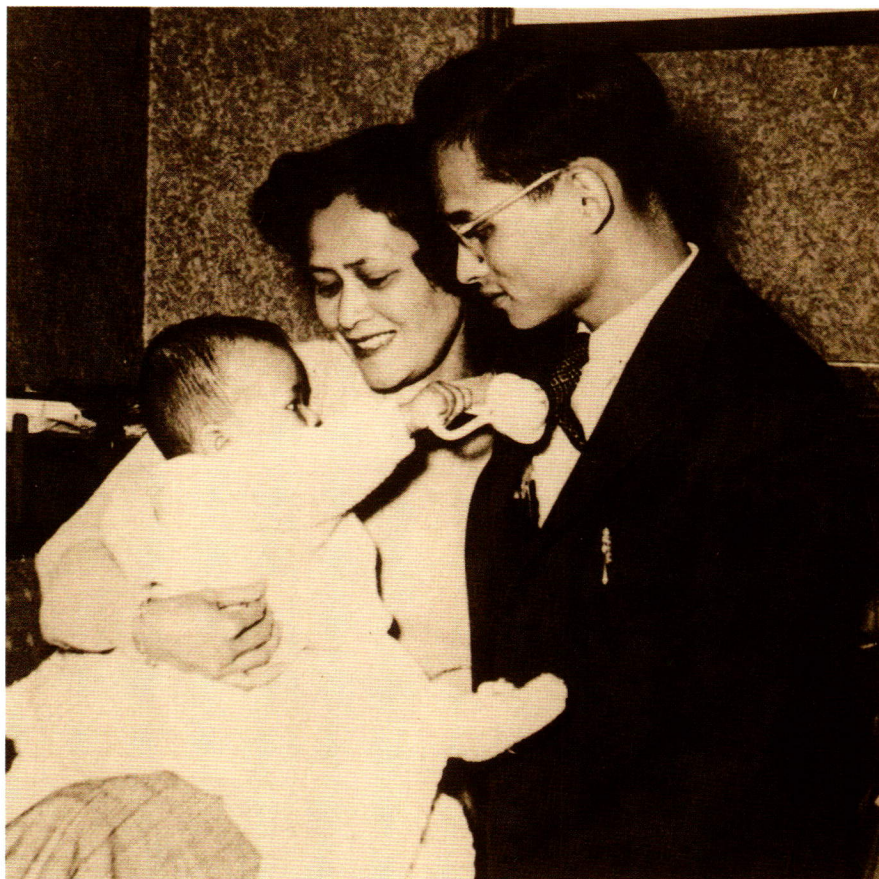
HRH Princess Sirindhorn was born on 2 April 1955; she became HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn in 1977.

HRH Princess Chulabhorn was born on 4 July 1957.

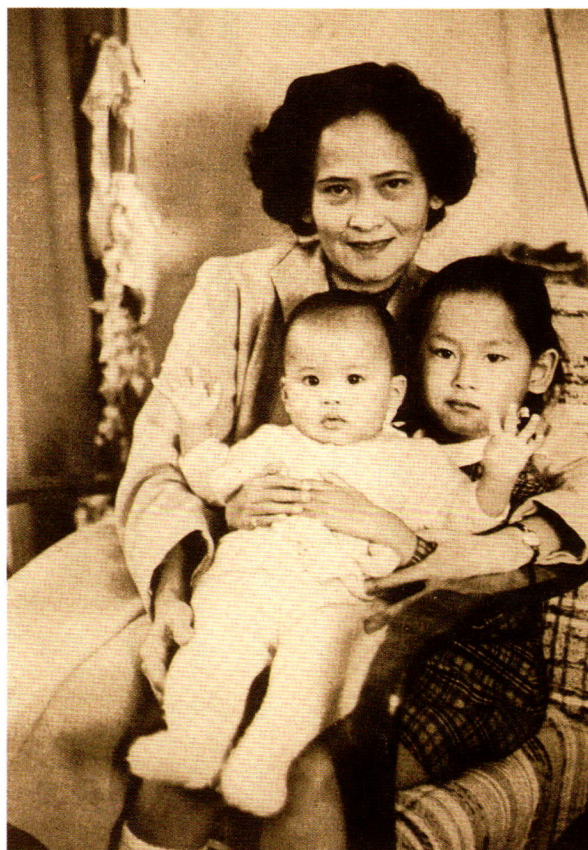
On 9 June 1970, the Princess Mother herself was given the rank of Somdet Phra Srinagarindra Boromarajajonani.



King Bhumibol Adulyadej performs a ceremony to confer the title of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit on his royal consort.



The Princess Mother gazes lovingly at her new granddaughter, Princess Ubolratana.



The Princess Mother plays with her two granddaughters, baby Princess Ubolratana and Tasna Valaya Rattanakul Serirerngrit.



The Princess Mother with Their Majesties the King and Queen, Their Royal Highnesses Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, Princess Chulabhorn and Princess Soamsawali.



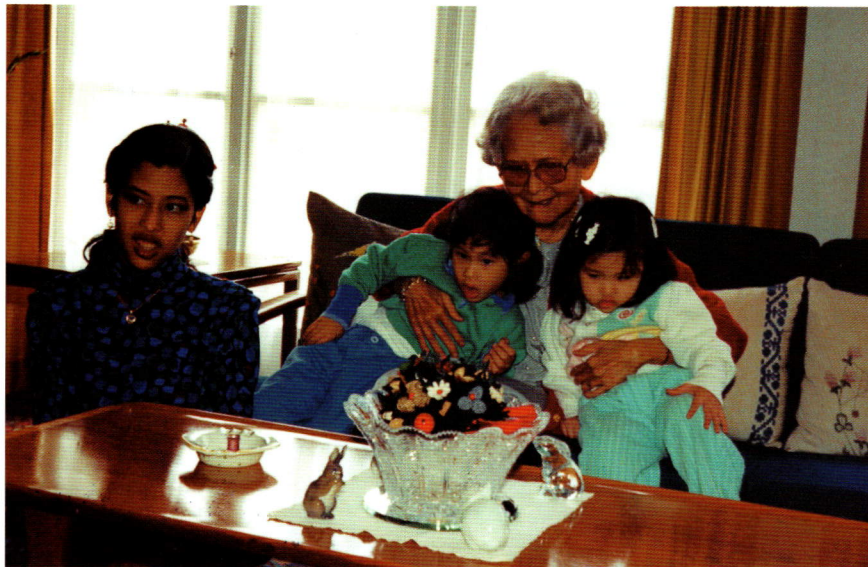
Four generations: the Princess Mother with her daughter, granddaughter and great-grandson.



The Princess Mother in Border Patrol Police uniform on a tour of duty with her grandson, HRH Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn.



The Princess Mother with Princess Ubolratana and her children



The Princess Mother with Princess Chulabhorn and her daughters



The Princess Mother with Princess Soamsawali and Princess Bajra Kitiyabha



The Princess Mother is conferred the title of "Somdet Phra Srinagarindra Boromarajajonani" on 9 June 1970.



The king welcomes his mother at the airport with an affectionate hug.

CHAPTER 2

HRH THE PRINCESS MOTHER'S LIFELONG ACHIEVEMENTS



During a visit to Thailand, the Princess Mother pays her respects to the abbot of Wat Anongkharam, near her former residence.

SERVING THE COUNTRY

Throughout her long life, HRH The Princess Mother served her country with love and dedication, providing her full support to her sons, the late King Ananda Mahidol and King Bhumibol Adulyadej, and to her daughter, HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana, while carving out her own role in activities of social concern.

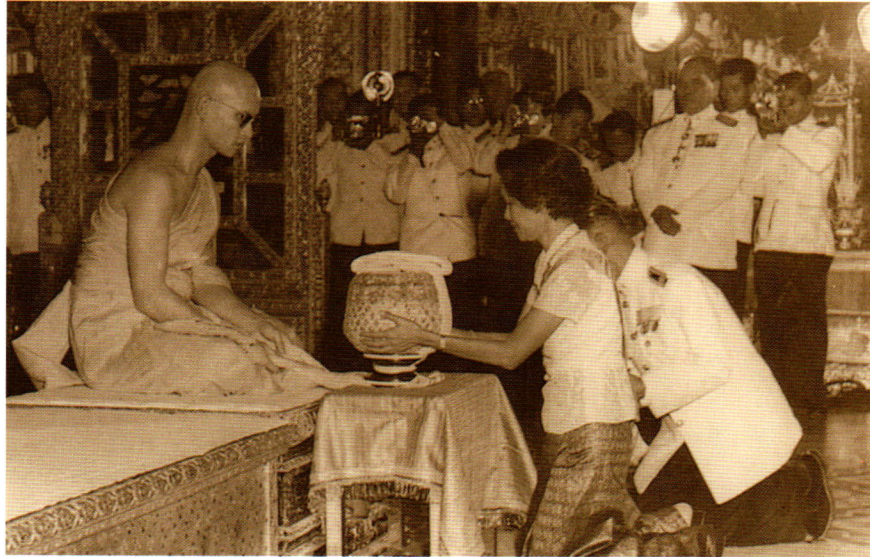
When His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej returned to Thailand from his studies in Switzerland in 1951 with his wife and daughter, the Princess Mother remained in Lausanne. She returned only periodically between 1952 and 1963 in order to attend significant functions or events, such as the birth of her grandchildren, the illness and subsequent death of Queen Sri Savarindira, the Queen Grandmother, or the ordination



HRH The Princess Mother



High-ranking members of the Royal Family, (from left) Princess Galyani Vadhana, Queen Suwadana of the 6th reign, Princess Bejaratana (daughter of King Vajiravudh, Rama VI), the Princess Mother, and Queen Rambhai Bharni of the 7th reign, at a reception to mark the Silver Jubilee of His Majesty the King's accession to the throne on 10 June 1969 at Government House.



The Princess Mother presents ritual amenities to the king as a newly ordained monk.



The public flock to pay their respects to the royal monk.



Upon leaving the monkhood, the king is welcomed by a happy mother and sister.



The Princess Mother takes an oath as Regent of Siam at Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall.



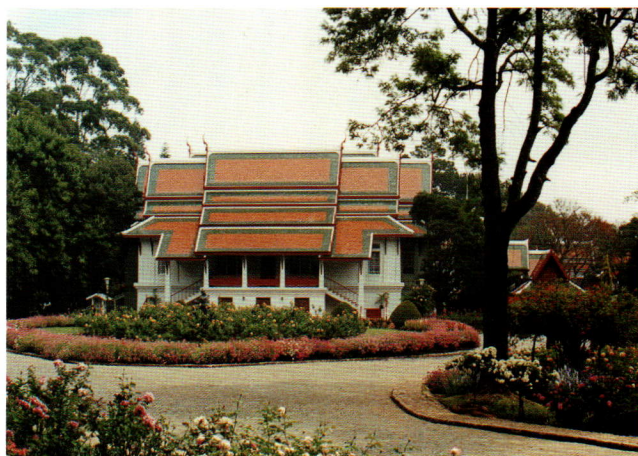
The Princess Mother acts as Regent on ten occasions.

of her son, the King. For these visits, she would stay only one or two months at a time, and only stayed for extended periods when the occasion demanded. On Their Majesties' state visit to 14 European countries and the United States in 1960, she remained in Thailand for six months, acting as Regent during Their Majesties' absence, just as she did during their subsequent state visits overseas until 1967.

As Regent, the Princess Mother carried out various official duties on behalf of His Majesty the King, including accepting diplomatic credentials from newly posted ambassadors, conferring degrees on university graduates, presiding at religious ceremonies and putting her signature to several important legislative acts. She was the third woman Regent of the Rattanakosin Era, the first being Queen Sri Bajarindra during the reign of King Rama V, and Her Majesty Queen Sirikit early on in the present reign. In that capacity, she put her signature to a number of important laws and declarations, including the Suppression of Prostitution Act of 1960, and the first National Economic Development Plan, 1961-1966.



Accompanied by her entourage, the Princess Mother strolls in the woods behind Bhubing Palace in Chiang Mai.



Bhubing Palace, Chiang Mai



She presents necessary amenities to hilltribe villagers.

A trip to northern Thailand in 1964 helped change her routine. Not long after the royal palace of Bhubing in the northern town of Chiang Mai was completed, His Majesty the King invited the Princess Mother for a visit. As was her habit in Switzerland, the Princess Mother went for long treks through the woods behind the royal palace, enjoying the flora and fauna, and stopping in little villages en route. It was then that she discovered the abject poverty of the villagers in remote areas. There was a sad lack of schools and health services or personnel, and even the border patrol police, who acted as guides and also provided security for her on those trips, were very poorly paid, and received no per diem for services rendered over and above their normal duties.

Having it in her heart to do what she could to help these disadvantaged people, the Princess Mother began making regular visits to the remotest areas of the kingdom, starting from 1964, despite the fact that she was already 64 years old. In border areas, she would make it a point to visit each patrol station to lend moral support to the soldiers.

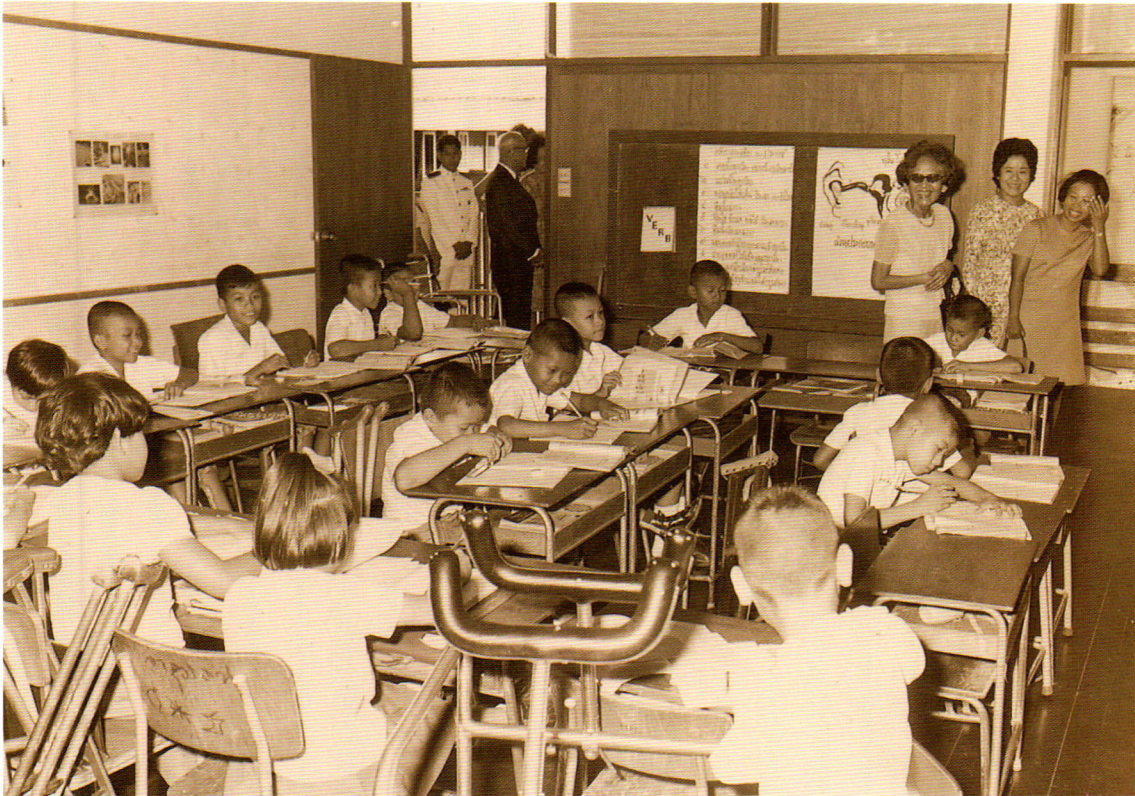
This was also the start of a number of projects to alleviate the problems of poor villagers and improve their quality of life. Ranging from education and health care, to environmental preservation, the social welfare projects have over the decades proved to be a unifying force for those in remote areas and have helped upgrade their lives.



On her trips to remote areas, the Princess Mother visits Border Patrol Police, government officials and villagers, and gives them medicine and other useful items, including toys for children.



HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana often accompanies her mother on her visits.



The royal visitor enjoys a laugh with school children.



The Princess Mother's "Sewing Circle"

SOCIAL WELFARE PROJECTS

Ever since she was still a young mother caring for her three children in the confines of the New Villa of Sapatum Palace, the Princess Mother proved that Thai housewives could make good use of their time and contribute to society. In 1932, when her children had started school and she had more time on her hands, she set up an American-style "Sewing Circle", inviting close acquaintances to join the group. Among the members of the circle were Princess Sipphanphansanur Sonakul, Thanpuying Prayong Snidvongs na Ayudhya, Khunying Chalaem Puranasiri, Khunying Srivisarnvaja, Khunying Perm Damrongbaedyakhun, Thanpuying Poa Anuraksh raja mondira, and expatriate wives such as Mrs Zimmerman, Mrs Davis, Mrs Langesen, Mrs Nedergard, Mrs Pendleton and Mrs Reeve, whose husbands were missionaries or lecturers at Chulalongkorn University.

The Sewing Circle members started off by making their own clothes, then gradually made clothes for poor children at various hospitals. They met once a week, each member taking turns hosting tea at home between 4 and 6 pm.



After listening to a briefing, the Princess Mother tours the Border Patrol outpost, showing interest in all aspects of the set up.



Handing out gifts and life necessities to hilltribe villagers.

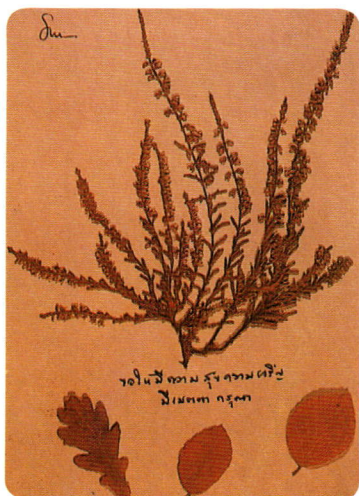
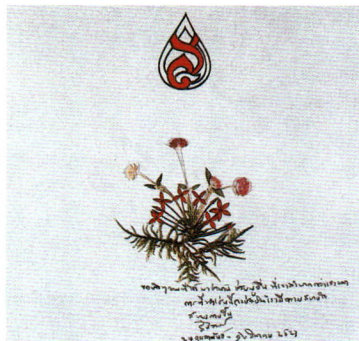
It soon became a procedure for the Princess Mother to set aside her own money to purchase necessary items for poor villagers during her increasingly frequent upcountry visits. These gifts included T-shirts, towels, multi-purpose *pha khao ma* cloths, and stationery for schoolteachers, school uniforms and stationery for schoolchildren, and *pha khao ma*, sarongs, needles and thread, medicine,

tinned food and dried foodstuff for villagers, while small children would receive various toys suitable for their age.

She also set up with her own personal funds a number of foundations, most notably the Border Patrol Police Support Foundation, and the New Life Foundation for those who have recovered from leprosy or mental illness.



The Princess Mother picks wild flowers which she presses to make cards and bookmarks.



Apart from her own personal funds, the money for these various projects came from the sale of handicraft made through projects initiated by the Princess Mother, such as pressed-flower greeting cards, which was her hobby, and brooms and brushes made from the sisal hemp, which became a very popular product.

In 1985, the Cabinet approved the proposal of the National Committee for the Promotion and Development of Social Welfare Activities that 21 October, the Princess Mother's birthday, be declared National Social Welfare Day, in honour of the Princess Mother, who devoted her time and efforts, in addition to her own funds, to the well-being of the people.



Visiting Border Patrol Police schools in various provinces.



The elderly are always greeted with gifts and kind words.

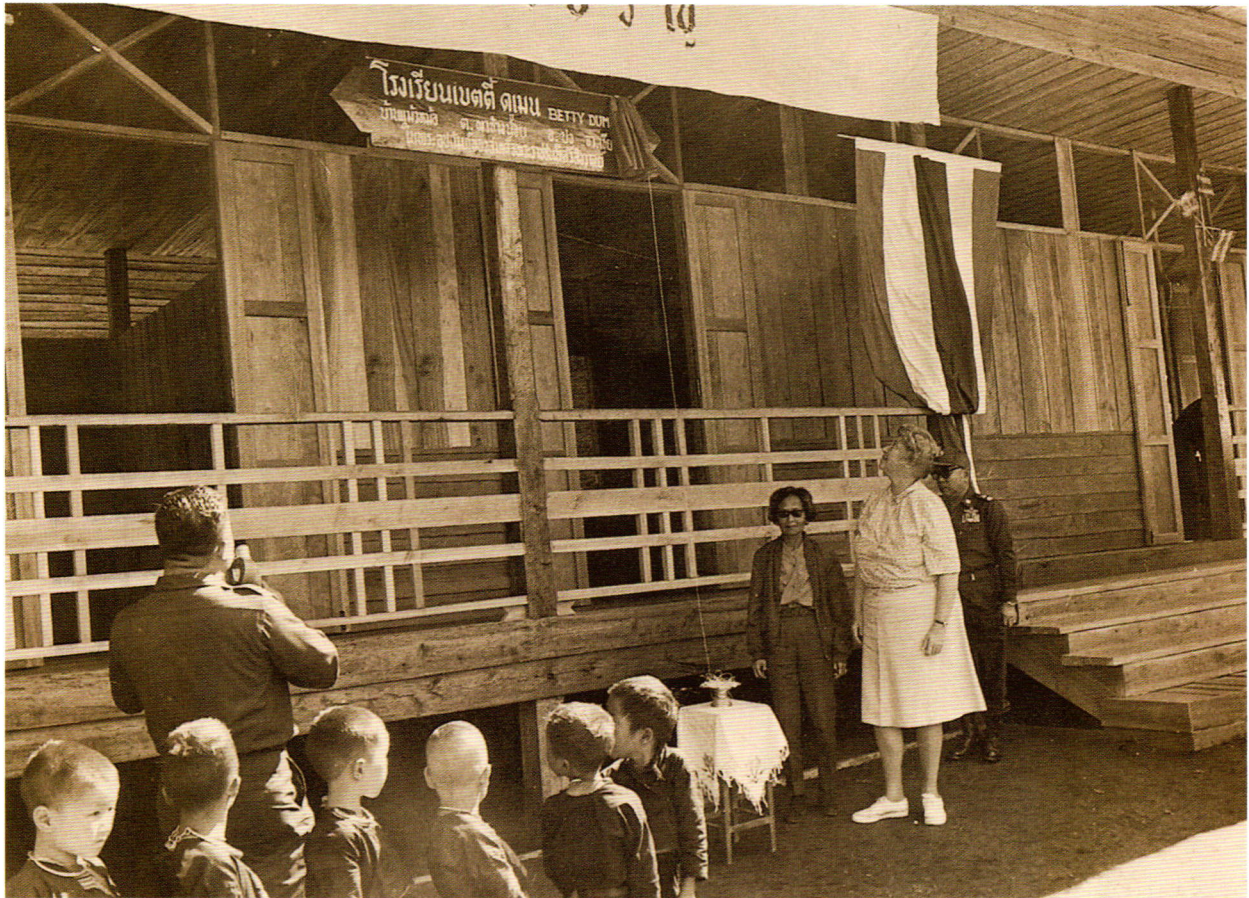


The Princess opens Sangwalyawit Border Patrol Police school, built from her personal funds.



She performs the ceremony to open one of many Border Patrol Police schools built from her personal funds, then distributes stationery and sports equipment to schoolchildren.





A frequent companion on these visits to Border Patrol Police schools is old friend Thanpuying Betty Dumaine.



Kullasatri Wang Lang school

EDUCATION

For Her Royal Highness The Princess Mother, education had always been a goal in life, and her thirst for knowledge remained with her throughout her long and fruitful life. This love for education also fuelled her desire to encourage, not only her own children, but the people she came in contact with, to further their studies to the best of their abilities. To this end, she continuously provided support when and where she could, most significantly in remote areas which the network of the central government could not reach.

Being a scholarship student herself, the Princess Mother was known to have provided scholarships as far back as 1920, not long after her marriage to Prince Mahidol of Songkla. The *Bangkok Times* issue of 21 September 1920 listed the names of donors to the Kullasatri Wang Lang School, which included the newly-weds, who had donated 5,000 baht.



Thanpuying Betty Dumaine, a friend from her days in the United States as a nursing student, helps to raise funds and build more Border Patrol Police schools, and often joins these upcountry trips.



The opening of Betty Dumaine School, Chiang Rai province

The publication noted that Mom Sangwan Mahidol na Ayudhya, having married into the Royal Family, was entitled to an annual stipend of 200 baht, and that she had decided to donate it in its entirety to needy students.

Her studies as a scholarship student had been under the direction of Prince Mahidol of Songkla. Her studies included algebra, English, Latin and French, in addition to her courses in nursing and public health. She also received tutorials in psychology, cooking and nutrition, knowledge she was able to apply, not only as a mother, but as a benefactor to those in much less privileged situations.

Through the influence of her royal husband, she had always considered it her responsibility to return to Thailand to help the nation. This sense of responsibility was also instilled in the hearts of her three children from the time they were small. According to HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana, *"it was almost an unspoken rule, a natural sense of priority to do what we could for the country."*



No one was too small or insignificant to benefit from the Princess Mother's warmth.

*"What Mother taught us came from Father. He was eight years older than Mother, and taught her a lot. Mother was very receptive, she learned so much from Father. What she taught us I later found to be almost quoted verbatim from Father...It was like Father teaching us through Mother,"**

Although her children were brought up in a western environment, the Princess Mother always made sure that they retained their contacts with their language and culture. She commissioned a jigsaw puzzle in the shape of a map of Thailand as an educational toy for her children. History and geography quizzes were a standard family game at mealtimes, and if the children didn't know the answer to a question, they had to look it up in a dictionary or encyclopedia.

This kind of environment created by the Princess Mother was greatly conducive to inquisitive minds like those of the three royal children, encouraging them to strive for the best in whatever happened to interest

them. When the two young princes became interested in World War I battleships, they would each study the subject matter in depth, the elder prince researching German battleships while his younger brother read up on English and American vessels.

Further examples of the royal children's quest for knowledge abound. When he was young, King Bhumibol Adulyadej was in possession of a **Book of Knowledge** set. The set of twenty volumes was in English, a language in which he was not yet proficient, so he would ask grown-ups to read it for him. The various fields of knowledge, combined with the fascinating illustrations, led him to view knowledge as a far-reaching and all-encompassing entity that became more and more complex the more you learned. This interest in encyclopedia led him to initiate the publication of the **Thai Youth Encyclopedia** which can now be found in most school libraries as a source of information for children in Thai.

* National Identity Board, "Somdet Phra Srinagarindra Boromrajajonani : Grandmother to a Nation," p.99



The two royal visitors watch two children at a board game.



The Princess Mother chairs a meeting of the Somdetya Charity Fund at Sapatum Palace.



The Thai Youth Encyclopedia, produced at the initiative of His Majesty the King.

As monarch, King Ananda Mahidol was automatically highest commander of the armed forces. It was not enough for him, however, to hold the position in an official capacity; he had to acquire sufficient military knowledge as well. When Prince Nakkhatramongkol Kittiyakara (who was later to become the father-in-law of King Bhumibol Adulyadej) completed his military studies from France, he was called upon to provide two hours of tuition on modern military procedures each week to the young king. This was conducted in French, while tutorial on Thai military history was provided by Prince Alongkot.

His Majesty also wished to carry out his duty as a good Buddhist by eventually entering the monkhood. To prepare for this, he wrote to His Holiness the Supreme Patriarch to provide him with a list of suitable reading material. But sadly, this was not to be; his religious undertaking was foiled by his premature death.



The Princess Mother receives an honorary doctorate degree from His Majesty the King.



A representative of Simmons College presents her with an honorary doctorate degree.





Common to every Border Patrol Police school are the three symbols of nation, religion, and monarchy, which the Princess Mother donated together with a map, a radio and dharma books.



Maps of Thailand presented by the Princess Mother to Border Patrol Police schools.

One of the Princess Mother's most outstanding initiatives with regard to education was the Border Patrol Police school project. As a result of her frequent trips to the remote corners of the kingdom, the Princess Mother learned of the extreme poverty of the villagers, especially those belonging to the hill tribes. One school had been set up by the Border Patrol Police Region 5 in their Dararasmi Camp, in Mae Rim district, Chiang Mai province. The school provided access to education for children in these remote regions, giving hilltribe children a chance to learn the Thai language and culture and instilling in them a sense of being Thai.

The concept was in line with the Princess Mother's own philosophy that education was the key to improving human resources, a necessary development tool. She therefore took the school under her royal

patronage in 1964, and donated funds to the Border Patrol Police to set up similar schools in remote areas. The private sector found this to be a worthy cause, and contributed its share in setting up more schools, which were named after their donors.

Each school — and there were eventually to be 185 — had proper classrooms, and a proper residence for teachers for added convenience and incentive. She personally went to open each of these schools, donating to them a set of symbolic items to bolster a sense of Thai identity, including a Buddha image to symbolize religion, a portrait of His Majesty the King as an emblem of the monarchy, and a flag to represent the nation. She also made sure that each school was equipped with a radio set to keep up with the news, and a map of Thailand to give students a sense of belonging no matter where in the country they were located.



His Majesty the King and the Princess Mother view a model of the Ratchapracha Samasai Hospital for lepers.



Ananda Sathan ward for tuberculosis patients, also built with private funds donated by King Ananda Mahidol.

PUBLIC HEALTH

To the Princess Mother, the health and well-being of her people were highest on the list of priorities. She believed that, with good health, they would be in the position to earn an income and help develop the country — a philosophy that no doubt echoed that of her royal husband, Prince Mahidol of Songkla, who had pledged his mental, physical and financial support to the field of public health of the country.

Upon the death of Prince Mahidol, the Princess Mother continued to provide scholarships to medical students so their studies would not be interrupted. When they returned to work, she also supplemented their salary if it happened to be lower than the set rate. A revolving fund of 500,000 baht was provided to Chulalongkorn University for 25 years, from which



After doctors examined patients during visits to remote areas, the Princess Mother often prepared the medication and wrote the prescription herself.

the interest could be used to send students for post-graduate studies overseas. After 25 years, the fund was transferred to the Faculty of Medicine, Siriraj Hospital.

In 1945, as she accompanied her elder son, King Ananda Mahidol, back to Thailand, she brought back with her the drug PAS which was used to treat tuberculosis. Subsequently, in 1951, her youngest son donated funds to construct a building named the Mahidol

Wongsanusorn Building at the Thai Red Cross Society.

In addition to providing scholarships, the Princess Mother continued to play a major role in the field of nursing in Thailand. She founded the Thailand Nursing Association, of which she was also a board member. With her funds, the first national nursing convention in Thailand was organized in 1960. Hospital buildings and nursing schools were built under her patronage.



Warm and loyal greetings from an elderly villager



While doctors are examining the sick, Her Royal Highness hands out toys to young children, and necessary items such as school uniforms to pupils.

THE PRINCESS MOTHER'S VOLUNTEER DOCTORS

Since the year 1964, when trips to remote areas to visit villagers and army personnel became a routine procedure, she saw how people there were plagued by health problems. Due to the lack of medical facilities, such basic illnesses as gastro-intestinal infections, tape worms, skin diseases and malaria would often lead to death.

In 1969, she established the first medical volunteer mobile unit in Chiang Mai province, called The Princess Mother's Medical Volunteer. The team was made up of doctors, dentists, pharmacists, nurses and health officers, who volunteered their time during week-ends to travel by car or helicopter to treat the ill, and offer consultative services to the public free of charge.



On her frequent trips upcountry, the Princess Mother travels by air and sea.



His Majesty the King assists his mother as she accepts gifts and flowers from crowds of people who wait to welcome her.



The elderly are sure to receive a box of basic household medication.



Chatting to members of a Muslim community.

All expenses for these visits were subsidized by the Princess Mother. If she happened to be on the trip with the medical team, she would help fill the prescriptions and provide advice to the sick. Those in critical condition would be sent to local hospitals.

Later, she experimented with the system of radio consultation between doctors in the hospital and patients at health centres in remote areas, following the system of the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia.

The project was well received, and within a few years the number of radio centres increased to 446 covering 25 provinces, with the centre of operations at Sapatum Palace. Over a million patients have benefited from this service.



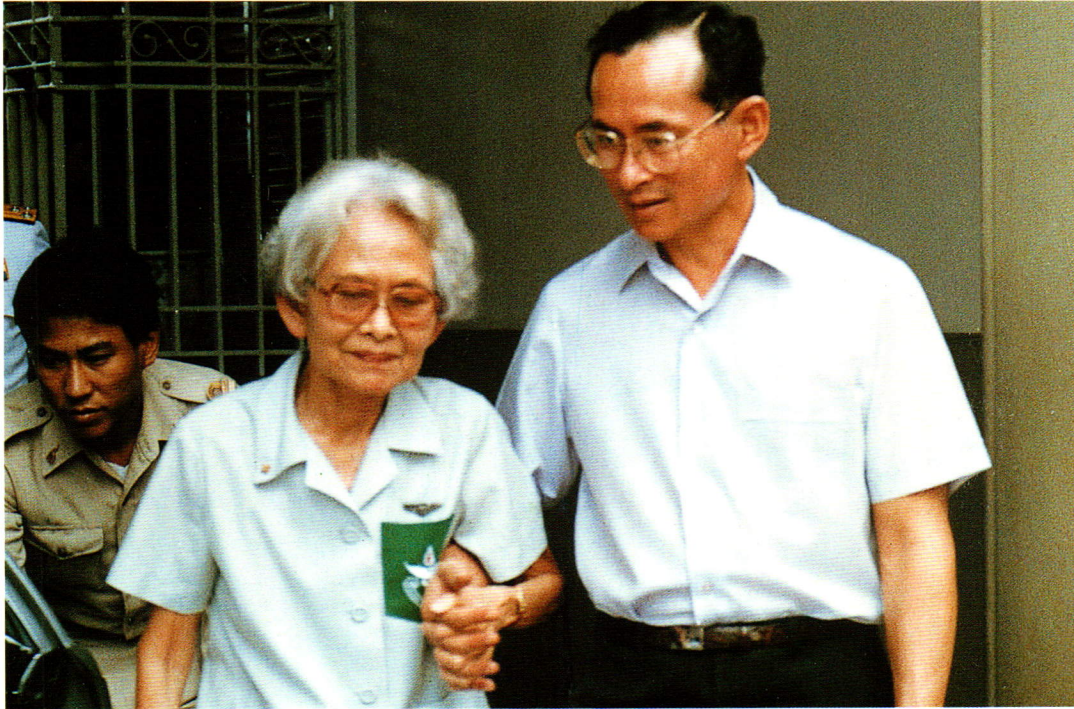
His Majesty the King offers a steady arm for support.



The Princess Mother is often accompanied by Their Majesties the King and Queen, or her daughter, HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana.



The Princess Mother in the green-pocket uniform of The Princess Mother's Medical Volunteer Foundation.



The king sees his mother off on another of her trips to remote areas of the country.



Lending a hand during an uncomfortable dental procedure.



Being briefed by a dentist during treatment.

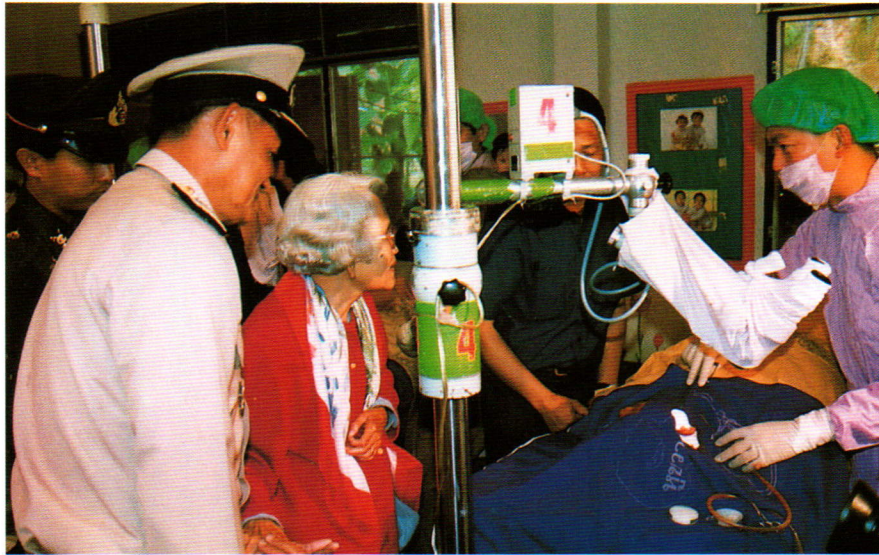


Toys for everyone!

In 1974, the Princess Mother donated one million baht to establish The Princess Mother's Volunteer Flying Doctor Foundation, which was subsequently changed into The Princess Mother's Medical Volunteer Foundation in 1985. Through the years, the foundation was to remain close to her heart, much like a mother who brings up a baby into a fully grown adult but still continues to keep a watchful eye on him in his maturity.



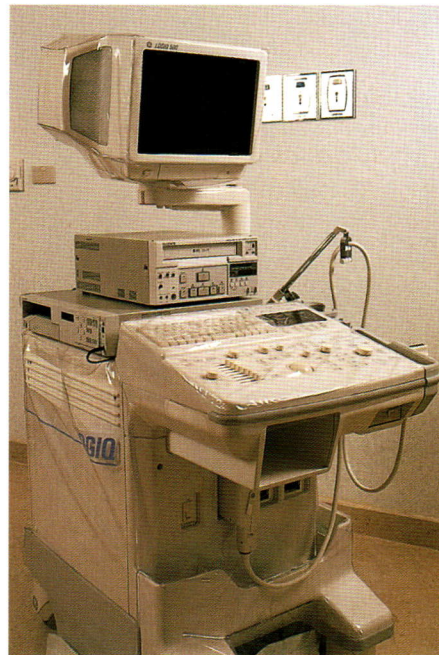
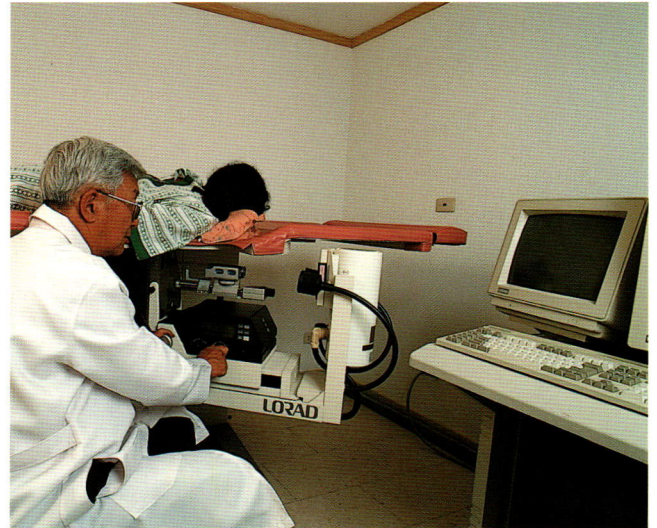
Artificial limbs can open up new opportunities for needy amputees.



The Ear, Nose and Throat Foundation receives a donation of two vans for its operations.

The Prostheses Foundation under the Patronage of HRH The Princess Mother, and the Breast Foundation under the Patronage of HRH The Princess Mother, were two projects that the Princess Mother initiated in her later years. The Prostheses Foundation was set up in 1992, when she learned that a doctor from Chiang Mai University had developed below knee prostheses from recycled plastic bottles which cost only 700 baht, and ones that could be used for agricultural purposes at a mere 300 baht. She saw this as an oppor-

tunity to provide artificial limbs free of charge to the poor to enable them to carry out a normal life. With initial funds donated by the Princess Mother, and further donations from her daughter, Princess Galyani Vadhana, and the general public, the foundation is now able to offer free artificial limbs to the needy regardless of nationality or religion. It also trains personnel, and carries out research to improve the quality of the prostheses.



The Breast Centre in Siriraj Hospital is fully equipped for diagnosis, treatment, as well as training.

The Breast Foundation was established in 1994, out of the Princess Mother's concern with the increasing cases of breast cancer among Thai women. Treatment was lengthy, not to mention costly. But if women were educated on the facts of cancer and were made aware of preventive measures and of the importance of periodical check-ups, the number of cases could be reduced.

Twelve million baht from the Somdetya Charity Fund was used to set up the Breast Foundation

under her patronage. The foundation was based at Siriraj Hospital as an independent entity, yet relying on the hospital's wealth of physicians. To provide an accurate diagnosis of breast cancer, the centre acquired the latest mammogram, ultrasound and stereotactic core biopsy equipment, and experts were invited to train local medical staff. Apart from diagnosis and treatment, the centre also carries out awareness-raising activities for the public, and training of medical personnel throughout the country.



His Majesty the King and the Princess Mother check out the facilities of the Ratchapracha Samasai Foundation at its official opening.



The entrance to the Ratchapracha Samasai Foundation building.

A royal project to which the Princess Mother was closely linked was The Ratchapracha Samasai Foundation, set up in 1961 by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej to combat the devastating blows of leprosy, a debilitating disease which crippled thousands of people, making them social outcasts. The foundation sought to give patients medical care and rehabilitation and to provide training to medical personnel. An important aspect of the foundation's work was to educate the public and create an awareness of the disease, in order to foster understanding, and thus compassion, among the public towards lepers.

The foundation has adapted itself with the times. With the eradication of leprosy in later years, it shifted its focus to more pressing needs, specifically the ravages of the new killer disease, AIDS. At present, the Ratchapracha Samasai Foundation works closely with the Thai Red Cross Society in helping victims of HIV/AIDS. Programmes include the distribution of AZT to HIV-positive pregnant mothers to prevent transmission of the virus to their children, distribution of milk powder to children of HIV-positive mothers, and schools for HIV-positive children.



Talking to volunteer doctors during a visit to Nan province.



One of the 19 villages on Doi Tung that are served by the radio network of The Princess Mother's Medical Volunteer Foundation.

As a result of her far-sighted vision, and her numerous public health initiatives, the Princess Mother was able to improve the general health of the public, especially villagers living in remote areas and marginalized groups of people such as hill tribes. They are now more aware of health care, less likely to succumb to illness, and have better access to medical services and facilities. With health concerns out of the way, villagers are able to devote their energy to improving their livelihood and quality of life.

The radio operations which she helped set up have also been beneficial, not only in terms of remote medical consultation between doctors and patients, but also by providing invaluable services in the broadcasting of news, emergency calls and weather forecasts. After a successful trial period, the system was handed over to the Ministry of Public Health, which now runs the operations as part of the government welfare service.



On Doi Tung Peak



On the ski slopes with Thanpuying Betty Dumaine



Gathering wild flowers.



Setting up camp at Pang Somdet during her hike to the top of Doi Inthanon, Thailand's tallest peak.

ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION

A love of nature was always deeply ingrained in the Princess Mother's character, and living in Switzerland served to give her an added respect for nature. In winter she enjoyed skiing down the snowy slopes, while in summer she would spend hours trekking along the hillsides, picking wild flowers for decoration or for making into pressed flowers.

In 1964, at the age of 64, she hiked to the top of Doi Inthanon, Thailand's highest peak. She had been used to taking walks from Bhubing Palace,

accompanied by border patrol police and two physicians. Soon she felt that she had covered all she could within the immediate vicinity, and yearned to conquer Doi Inthanon, which was visible from the palace windows. In those days there was no access road to the top, and Her Royal Highness spent two nights camping out during her hike, the first night before the ascent at Pang Somdet, and the following night at Ban Pha Mon. Here a large number of hilltribe villagers turned up to welcome her. Again, their lack of access to



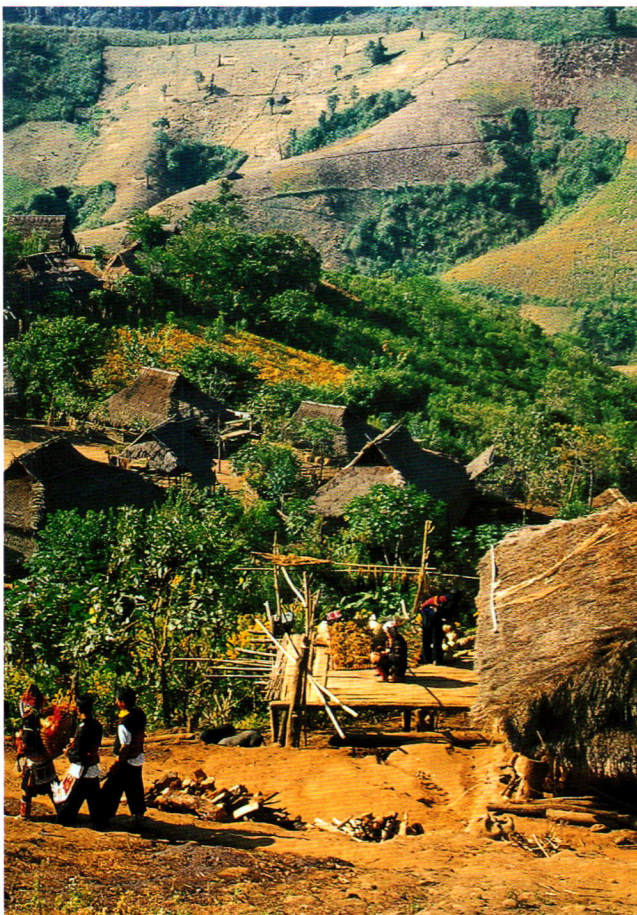
The Princess Mother visits hilltribe villagers by helicopter.



Her care and concern for the poor and marginalised keeps her going despite her age.



The denuded hills which prompted the Princess Mother to say, "I shall plant forests on Doi Tung".

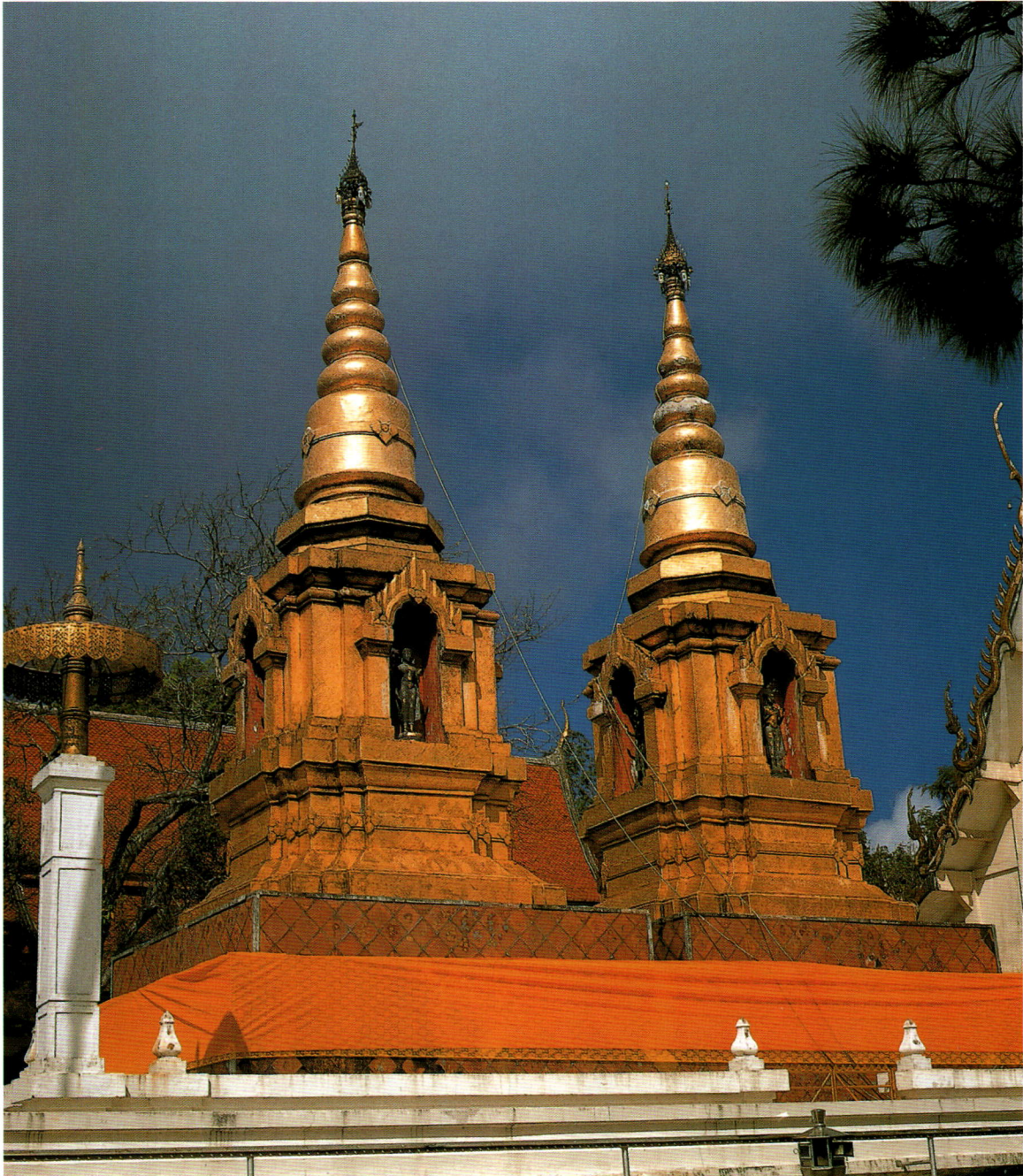


A hilltribe village surrounded by barren hillsides.

medical care gave her cause for concern. When she returned the following year, she brought with her two doctors, and her visits to these remote areas by helicopter eventually earned her the name "Mae Fah Luang" among the hill tribes, meaning *"Royal Mother from the sky"*, referring to her descent from the skies with doctors, nurses, medical equipment, food and clothing for them.

The more she visited the hill tribes, the more she realized that their slash-and-burn system of cultivation had inadvertently caused the destruction of the watershed forests. Over the years, they had moved from place to place, leaving behind them patches of barren hillside.

"I shall plant forests on Doi Tung," she pledged. This simple sentence led to a major undertaking, and the Doi Tung Development Project was born. In 1988, a total of 93,515 *rai* (14,962.4 ha.) in Mae Chan, Mae Sai and Mae Fah Luang districts of Chiang Rai province were targetted for reforestation and sustainable development to improve the quality of life of the local villagers.



The double stupas of Phra That Doi Tung



The Nang Non Ridge is shaped like a sleeping woman, and Doi Tung is the face of this reclining beauty.

Land was rented on a 30-year lease from the Royal Forest Department to build a private residence for the Princess Mother with her private funds. Doi Tung Royal Villa is located on an area of just over 29 *rai* (4.6 ha.), at 1000 metres above sea level. The palace offers a magnificent panorama of the Nang Non mountain range and the valley between Mae Chan and Mae Sai, not unlike the view the Princess Mother observed from her residence in Lausanne. The palace was completed in 1988, and it welcomed its owner on 23 November of the same year. From her Doi Tung home, she was able to oversee her plan to revitalize the natural environment in the area.

Doi Tung is part of the Nang Non mountain range, which stretches along the Thai-Myanmar border. The name Nang Non literally means “Sleeping Lady”, deriving from the silhouette of the mountains, which resembles a lady lying outstretched from north to south. Doi Tung is located in what is considered the lady’s face. At the top is the Phra That Doi Tung temple, highly revered by the northern people.



True to her words, the Princess Mother personally selects the seeds, waters the seedlings and plants the young trees as part of the reforestation project.



Visiting the Drug Rehabilitation Centre at Doi Pha Mi.



Her Royal Highness distributes seedlings to officials for planting. She also takes great joy and satisfaction in observing the fruits of her endeavours.

The Princess Mother played an active role in the Doi Tung Development Project, starting from nursing the saplings herself, planting the forests with support from government and the private sector.

Surrounding the palace are also experimental plots where temperate crops are tested, such as arabica coffee beans from Brazil and Costa Rica, macadamia nuts and chestnuts.

New plant-nursery technology is constantly being introduced for the promulgation of asparagus, bananas, orchids and strawberries. After successful trials, villagers are trained in the procedures to follow, and these extra activities are expected to provide them with an increased income.

A Drug Rehabilitation Centre was also set up so addicts could be treated and provided with vocational training to suit their way of life. Mulberry trees, the fibre of which is used to make *sa* paper, is just one of the crops they are encouraged to plant and grow.



Mushroom sheds and flower nurseries are all part of the Doi Tung Development Project.



Under the shady pine trees Flamingo flowers bloom.



Strawberry plants grown in tissue culture.



Fields of vetiver grass used to prevent soil erosion.



An Arabica coffee tree planted by the Princess Mother.



Macadamia trees in bloom.



Doi Tung lady slipper orchid



Krajiiao Doi (Curcuma sp)



Harvesting Japanese rice.



Paper mulberry seedlings and crafts from mulberry paper





His Majesty the King never hesitates to show affection for his mother.



Checking out the roots of vetiver grass.



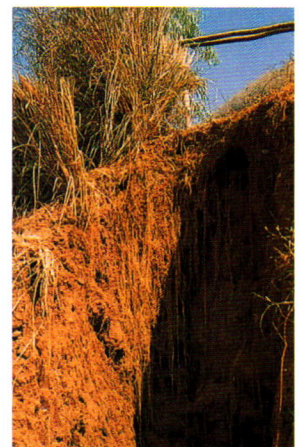
Land slippage caused by road construction.

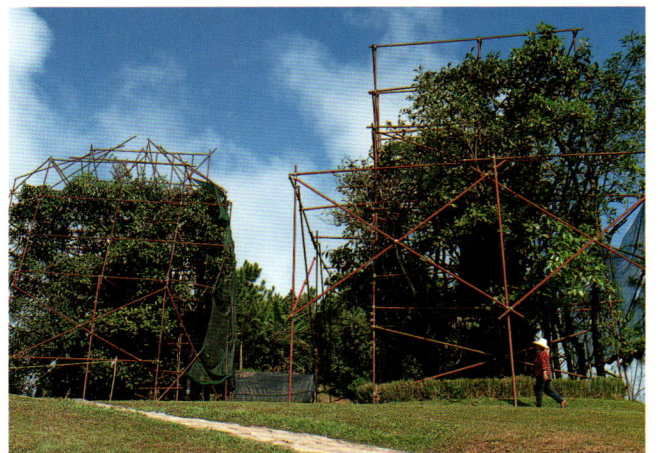


Transplanting vetiver seedlings



Vetiver is planted on hillsides to prevent soil erosion.





Trees of all sizes are replanted on Doi Chang Mup, including ficus trees and banyan trees hundreds of years old which were felled as a result of road expansion in Mae Sai. Previously, the area was totally deprived of any forest cover.



Unity attains heights — the theme of Misiem Yipinsoi's sculpture "Succession" — is a reflection of the Princess Mother's vision.

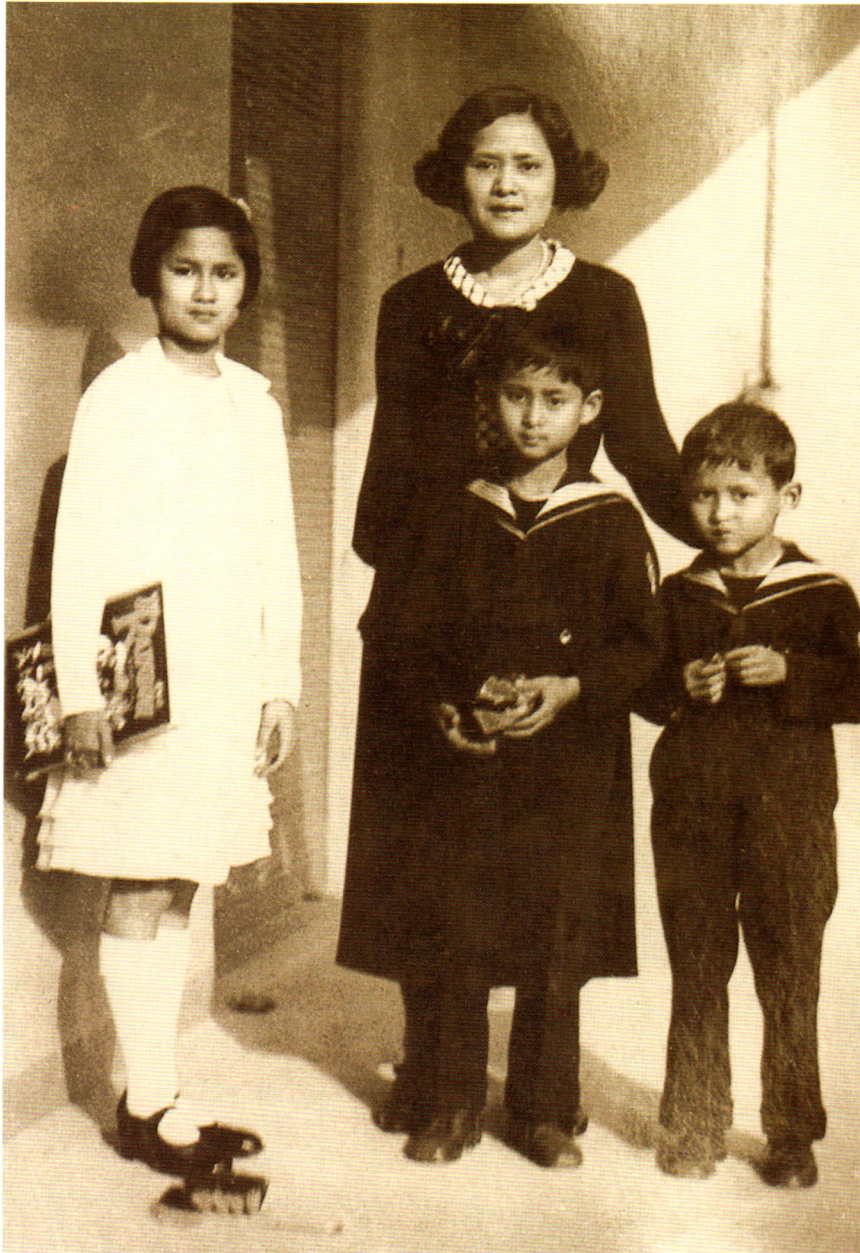
Soon, the project began to attract large numbers of visitors who came to enjoy the spectacular scenery and observe the plantations. With the support of the Chulalongkorn University Academic Services Office and the Tourism Authority of Thailand, a beautifully landscaped garden was laid out, with a nostalgic sculpture of children by Misiem Yipinsoi, Thailand's leading sculptress.

Atop Doi Chang Mup, the highest peak of the Nang Non range, is the Mae Fah Luang arboretum. A number of large trees, which were felled as a result of a road expansion project, were trimmed and replanted in this barren area which had been laid waste by slash-and-burn farming. Under the care of the Royal Forest Department, the trees — some of which are as old as 500 years — are now sprouting leaves, bringing life and vitality back to a formerly denuded land.

As visitors throng to Doi Tung in the month of December, as the temperature dips and the local version of the pink sakura blossoms (*Prunus cerasoides* D. Don) and rhododendrons bloom profusely on Doi Chang Mup, there can be no doubt that nothing short of a miracle has been achieved as a result of the Princess Mother's dream and of her love for the natural environment.



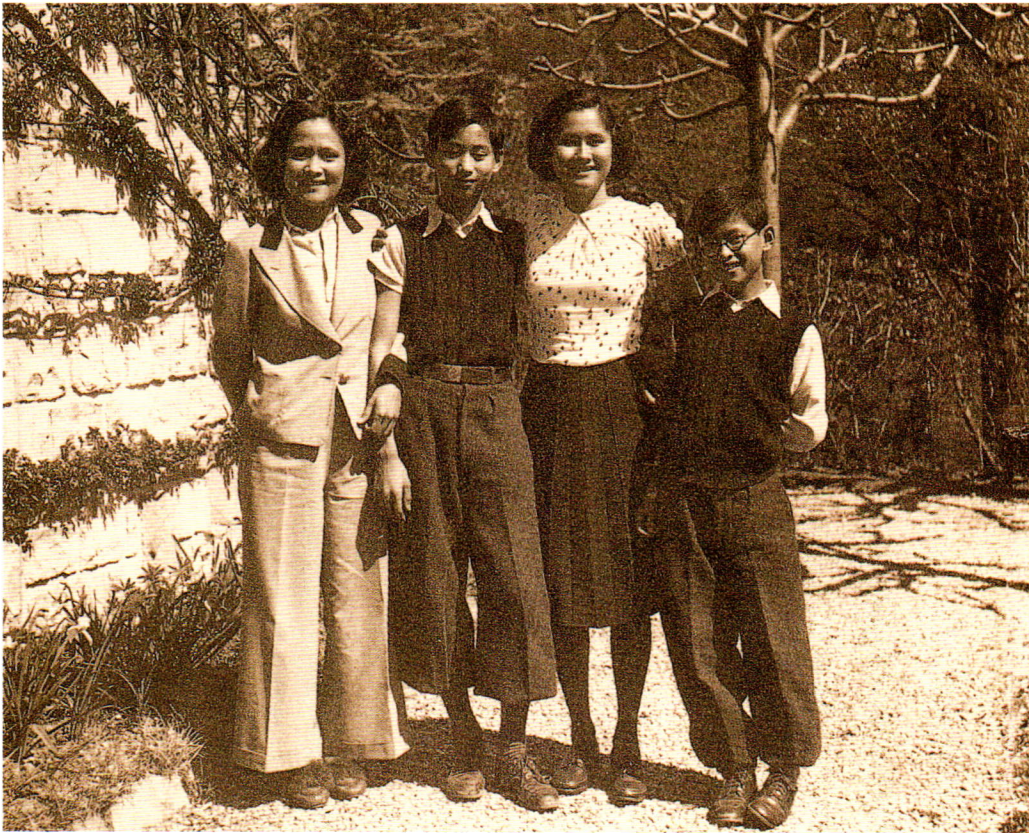
*The Nang Phya Sua Khong (*Prunus cerasoides* D. Don) blossoms profusely.*



16 Avenue Tissot, Lausanne, 1934

CHAPTER 3

PERSONALITY AND LIFESTYLE

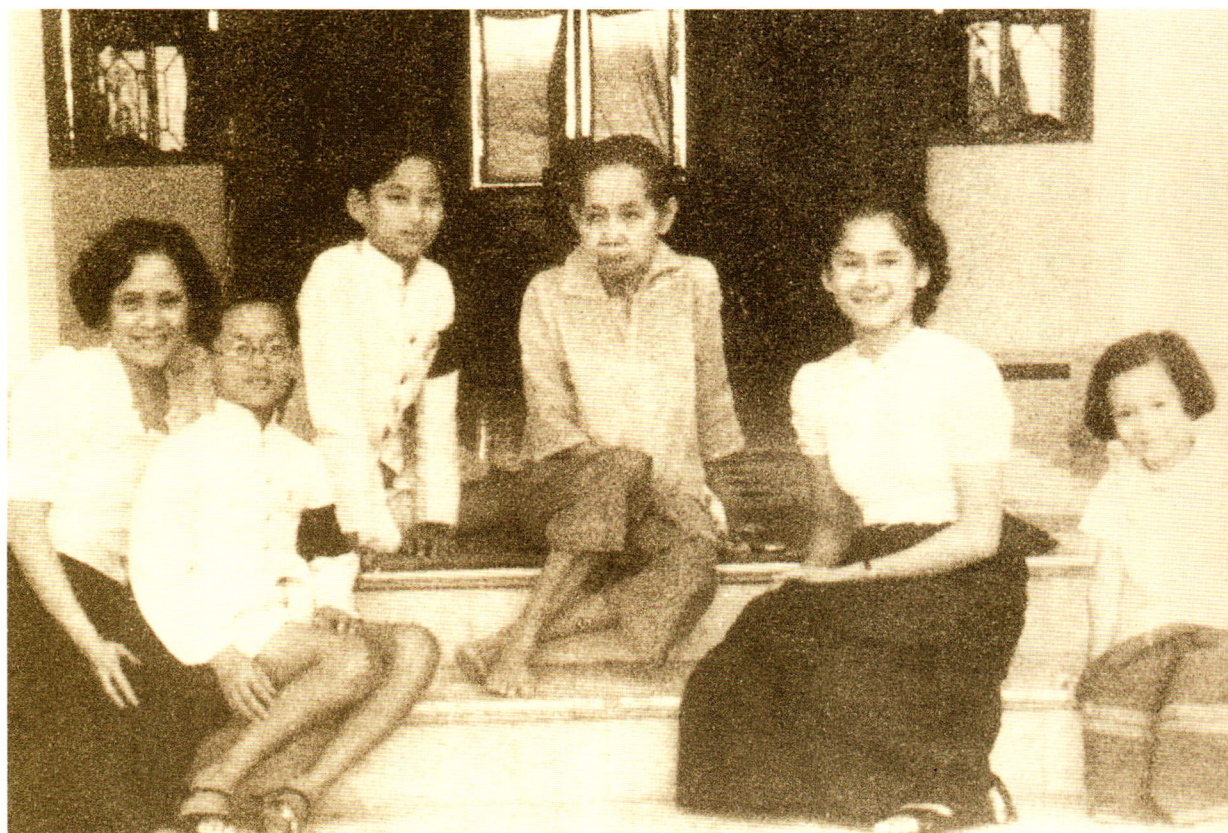


In the garden behind the villa

Unlike fairy tales, simple girls who marry princes do not always live happily ever after. HRH The Princess Mother was born a commoner, met and married a royal prince and bore two kings, yet her life was hardly a bed of roses.

She was to experience the loss of a loved one several times in her life, starting with her parents when she was still young, then her beloved husband, whose early demise in the prime of life left her to bring up her three young children on her own.

Having been widowed at the young age of twenty-nine, there was always the possibility that the Princess Mother would find new happiness. After all, her youth was complemented by a rare combination of beauty and intelligence. This thought must surely have crossed the mind of Queen Sri Savarindira as she sought to reassure herself of the future of her grandchildren.



Visiting the Queen Grandmother at Sapatum Palace.

And so it was that when the Princess Mother brought her youngest son to visit his grandmother, the dowager queen made a bargain with the young widow; if the Princess Mother promised not to change the direction of her life, Queen Sri Savarindira would not interfere in the upbringing of her grandchildren. Through her tears of grief at her recent loss, the Princess Mother gave her promise.

Queen Sri Savarindira is known to have remarked later to Princess Yaovabha Pongsanit, *"I've seen many widows in my lifetime, who cry their hearts out at first and pledge endless loyalty, but within a few days they have found another...Sangwan is a clever woman; even when she is deep in grief, she knows how to think out her answers carefully. This is a quality that is rare in most women, and I am quite impressed."**

Further tragedy was to follow. The abdication and death of the childless King Prajadhipok left her eldest son the next in line to the throne at the young age of nine, but she was determined to direct her children on a straight and righteous path, protecting

them against the stormy political upheavals besetting the country. The continued unrest led eventually to the most tragic of tragedies — the death of King Ananda Mahidol, her cherished son, followed only two years later by a car accident in Switzerland in which her younger son, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, was involved.

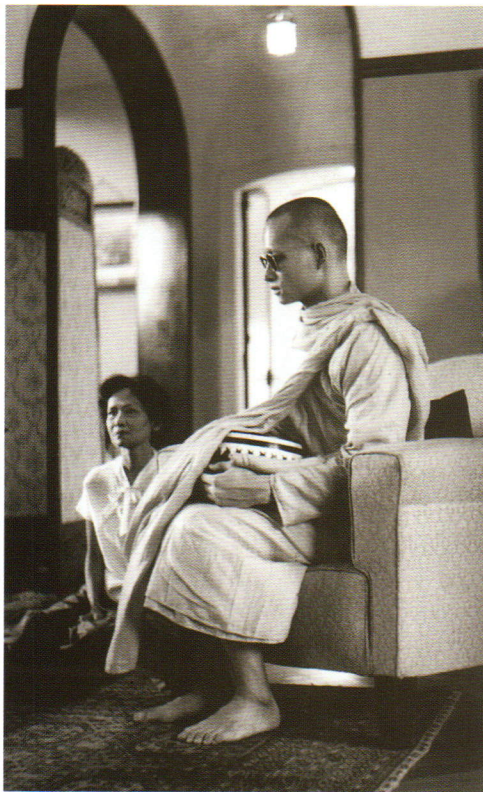
Yet, somehow, despite emotional burdens and responsibilities that seemed almost too heavy for a woman of such slight build, the Princess Mother found the strength to fight on, remaining as a pillar of support for her son and daughter, the Border Patrol Police, and the villagers in remote areas of the country to whom she dedicated her welfare efforts.

This stoicism stands out among her various qualities as one of the most admirable aspects of her personality. It derived in part, undoubtedly, from her deep regard and understanding of Buddhism, which stresses the impermanence of all things, the effect of *karma*, and the need to let go, to detach oneself of all worldly possessions and negative emotions.

* National Identity Board, *"Somdet Phra Srinagarindra Boromarajajonani : Grandmother to a Nation,"* p.173.



The Princess Mother pays respects to the Supreme Patriarch at Doi Tung.



The Princess Mother sits by the side of Bhumbalo Bhikku.

Having learned about the Christian faith at Sunday school and Methodist, Baptist and Congregational churches while she was living in the United States, she wished to gain the same understanding of the Buddhist religion as well.

Her deep belief in Buddhism also manifested itself in her handcrafted ceramic items. In her book **Busy Fingers**, HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana wrote, *“After many years of work on ceramics, Mother thought of sculpting Buddha images. She chose to sculpt images seated in a half-lotus posture to be glazed in green.”**

The Princess Mother practised meditation on a regular basis. Through meditation, she was able to control the strong emotions that would have rocked any other normal human being — emotions such as anxiety, fear, anger and loneliness. The ability to let go allowed her to maintain a peaceful frame of mind, and to dedicate herself to others with very little need for personal indulgence. Through helping others, she was fulfilled.

** Galyani Vadhana, “Busy Fingers”, p.90.*



The Princess Mother never lets time go to waste; helicopter or plane rides are perfect for finishing a piece of embroidery.



Buddha images cap the Princess Mother's work with ceramics. At left is a Buddha image she has sculpted for His Majesty the King. It is placed on a gilded tray on an alter above his bed. Beneath the image is inscribed "9 September 2515 [1972]. Sangwan 99 bis."

BUSY MIND AND BUSY FINGERS

Throughout the 94 years of her life, the Princess Mother hardly ever let any time go to waste. As a high-ranking member of the Royal Family, she dedicated the bulk of her time to her responsibilities towards her people, to improving the quality of life of the less advantaged. Whatever private time she had left she would spend on leisure activities that were always productive. These activities included gardening, doing needlepoint embroidery, porcelain painting, ceramics, sculpting Buddha images and making

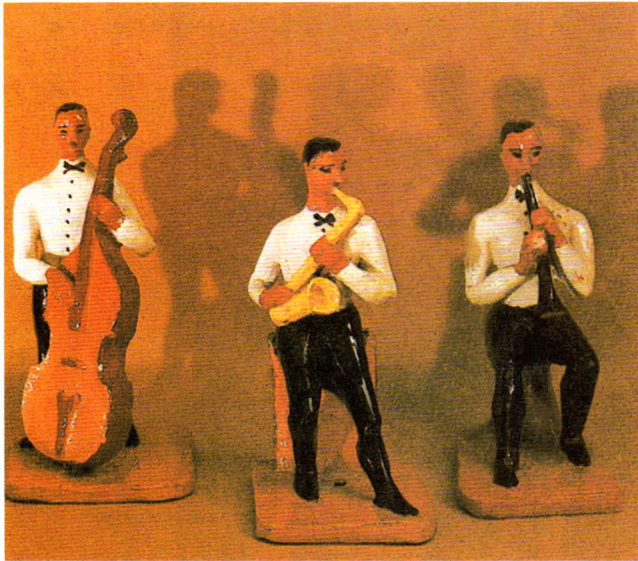
gifts from pressed flowers, all of which were recorded by HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana in the book **Busy Fingers**.

Underlying all these activities was the endless need to acquire knowledge, and though her formal studies were directed towards the sciences and medicine, her interests also covered such subjects as astrology and philosophy, subjects which she studied in depth on her own.



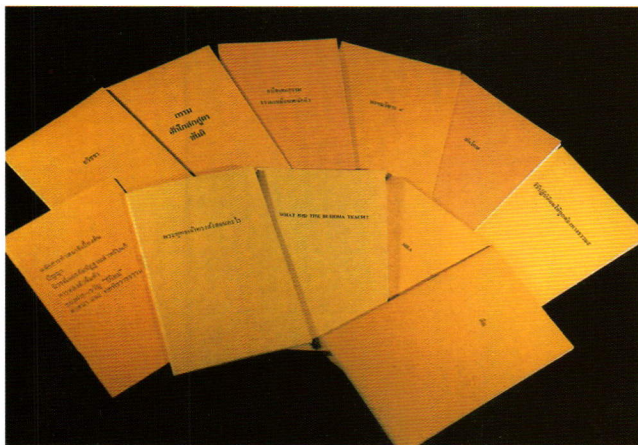
Needlepoint is a hobby that the Princess Mother enjoys wherever she travels. Her love of wild flowers influences her choice of design. Wild flowers are also pressed and made into bookmarks or greeting cards which she gives away or puts up for charity sales.

The Princess Mother was a voracious reader, a habit which she indulged especially while residing in Switzerland, where she was more in control of her time. In her book, **Mother Told Me**, HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana described her mother's infatuation with European philosophers, saying, "When she arrived in Lausanne, she started reading French books, and especially when the children were grown up (in 1942) Mother had time to attend lectures at the University of Lausanne. She studied literature, philosophy, psychology, comparative religion, social science and political economy. When she became acquainted with French writers, she became aware that many of her ideas were in the same vein as these philosophers. She once told me that one of her favourite lecturers in literature, Monsieur Bray, once said The French historian and philosopher Taine (1828-1893) said, 'The English are good in practical matters, but the French are universal'. At that point she understood why her ideas were similar to the French. Later she took up Sanskrit and Pali because she wanted to read the Tripitaka Buddhist scriptures, after she had completed several books on religion.

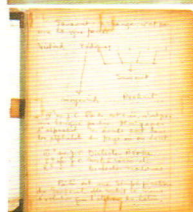
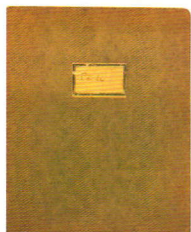
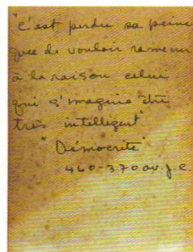


(Clockwise from top left)

"The Three Musicians", a set of sculptures inspired by His Majesty the King's passion for jazz music; the Mickey Mouse tapestry was made for her youngest son when she discovered he and his brother were very much taken by the Mickey Mouse toys she bought them when they were 6-8 years old; two samples of trophies made for mini golf competitions held at Sapatum Palace; the rabbit design represents the Year of the Rabbit, the year her youngest son was born.



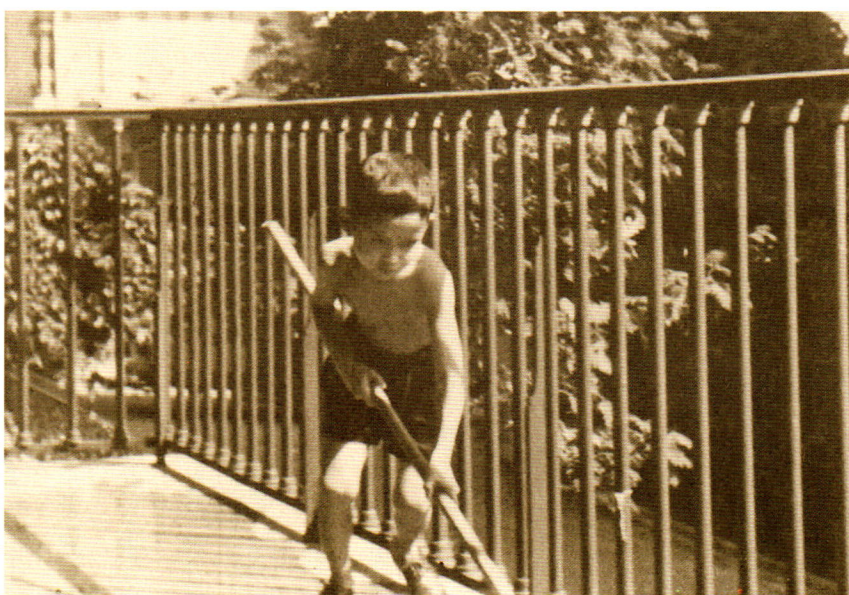
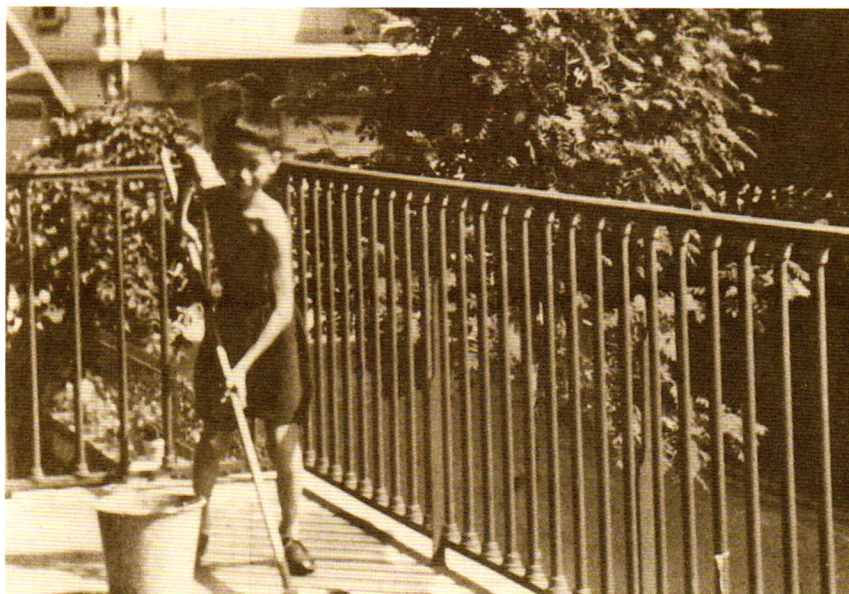
The Princess Mother's interest in the European philosophers can be seen through her much annotated collection of their works, many of which she copies onto slips of paper.



*"When reading, Mother would underline with a pencil the parts that she liked or that she found interesting...The writers of these texts were therefore like her friends or her teachers. I would like you to think of Mother according to the saying 'Dis moi qui tu hantes, je te dirai qui tu es' (Tell me the company you keep, and I'll tell you who you are)."**

She went on to explain how the Princess Mother won a prize at a church fair. Instead of choosing dolls or towels, she chose a small booklet entitled **Réflexions morales**, a compilation of philosophical gems from past and present by Democritus. Philosophers that appealed to her included Descartes, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Sartre. She had a habit of copying favourite poems onto slips of paper, just as she did with poems by King Chulalongkorn and other Thai poets.

*Galyani Vadhana, "Mother Told Me", p.157.



Despite their privileged background, the royal children are brought up in a very down-to-earth fashion. One of the brothers' chores is to mop the verandah.

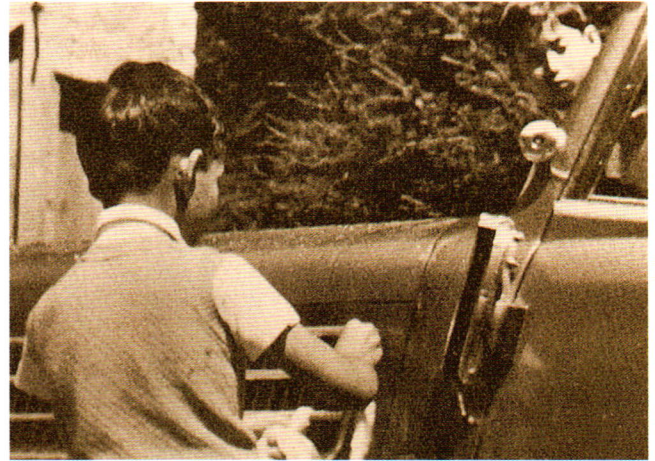
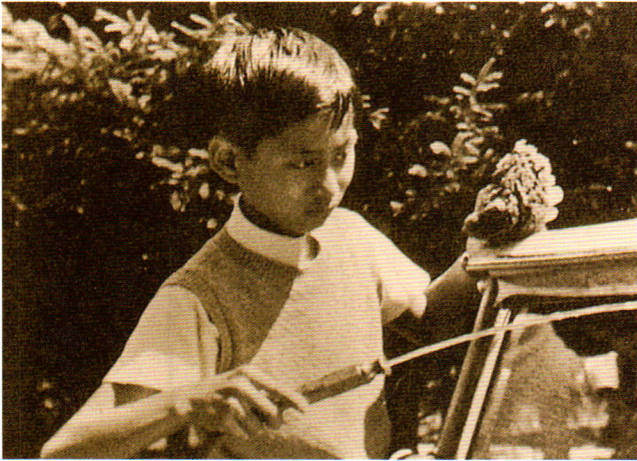
A MOTHER FIRST AND FOREMOST

While her children were growing up as members of the Royal Family in the days of absolute monarchy, it would have been so easy for the Princess Mother to bring them up to a life of privilege, surrounded by attentive staff eager to follow orders. But that was not the way of Prince Mahidol of Songkla or his wife.

HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana described her upbringing as being very much in the vein of any normal family, where the children are taught to be respectful of grown-ups, to be responsible in their duties, and to expect punishment when they are naughty.

Corporal punishment was applicable as the last resort. First-time mistakes would be discussed, and explanations given. However, if the children still persisted despite reasons and warnings, then punishment would be meted out. Often the Princess Mother would even discuss with the offender what level of punishment they thought they deserved. Then they would grimly face the consequences.

HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana recounted a particular episode in Lausanne when Prince Ananda Mahidol, despite frequent warnings, persisted in



Washing the car is another regular duty for the brothers.



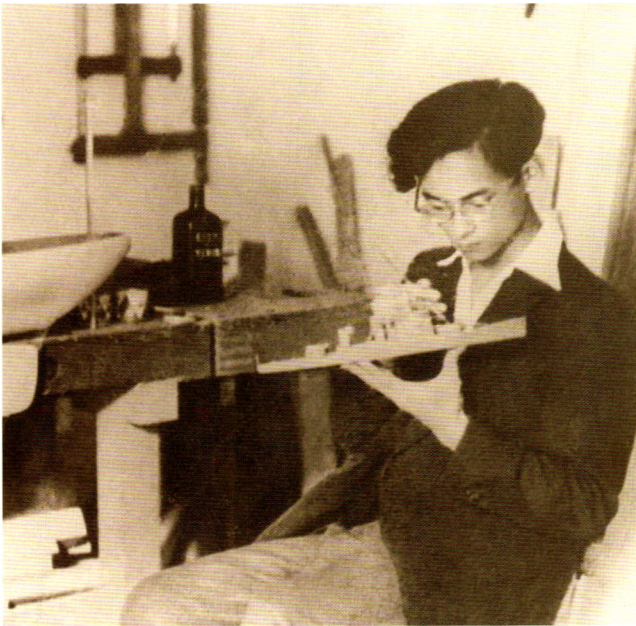
A car lover

picking on a youngster who was the son of the caretaker. On this particular occasion, Prince Ananda Mahidol pushed the boy near some stairs, which could have led to a disastrous outcome. The exasperated mother said to her son, *"I've warned you many times, this time I'm going to spank you. How many times do you think you should be spanked?"* Whereupon the young boy answered, *"Once."* *"I don't think that's enough,"* continued Mother, *"since you've done it several times now. I think it should be three times."*^{*} And with that, the punishment was carried out. Prince Ananda never picked on the little boy again.

The children had been taught from a young age to be thrifty. They each received weekly pocket money, the amount depending on their age, but never more than was necessary to buy themselves some sweets or chocolates. Other items, such as books and toys, also had to come out of their own pocket money; the Princess Mother only indulged them on special occasions like birthdays.

A sense of frugality was something that the Princess Mother practised throughout her life. Even when she was in a position to pamper herself a little, she preferred to maintain her simple way of life. Her

^{*} Galyani Vadhana, *"From Little Princes to Young Kings"*, p. 62.



His Majesty the King has always been a skilled craftsman, whether building his own dinghy or a model ship.

meals were simple dishes that emphasized nutritional value. She only had new clothes made when necessary, usually two outfits a year. She wore very little jewellery. A simple bracelet made of nine gemstones was the extent of her accessories; she said it went with any outfit. She also wore one particular ring — a diamond ring with her Thai initials “Sor Vor” etched on top. The initials stood for “Savang Vadhana”, the given name of Queen Sri Savarindira who had given her the ring.

Manners were an integral part of character-moulding. The children had always been taught to respect their elders and behave properly with other people, and this remained the same despite the change in their status later in life.

Along with manners came spirituality and religion. Though she learned about Christianity during her years in the United States, she remained a devout Buddhist, and brought her children up in the Buddhist faith as well. However, she was clever enough to introduce western religious rites such as bedtime prayers into their daily routine to make Buddhism more accessible to them. Instead of the usual Sanskrit incantations, they said their prayers in Thai, asking the Lord Buddha to protect them and lead them down the good and righteous path. Prayers would then be supplemented by stories on the life of the Buddha.



During her stays in Lausanne, the Princess Mother lives a very ordinary life, doing her own grocery shopping and cooking.

To encourage them to be aware of their responsibilities, the children were expected to do their chores like any other children. They had to keep their rooms clean, and even the young king had to make his own bed when he was in Lausanne. This habit remained in later years. When King Bhumibol Adulyadej was living overseas, he would drive, wash and even polish his own car without anyone's assistance. Similarly, after his music sessions, he would insist on putting away his own musical instruments and wiping them himself.

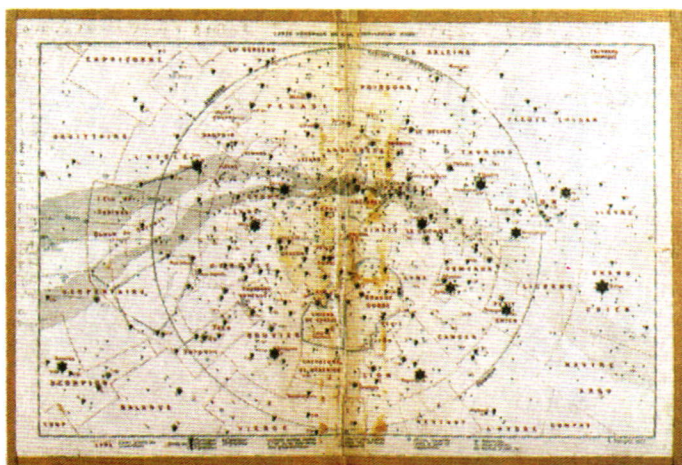
Her way of bringing up the children held her

in great respect from Queen Sri Savarindira, who had nothing but praise for her daughter-in-law. As HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana noted, *"Queen Sri Savarindira did not get involved in the everyday routine of bringing up the children, but only gave advice on important matters. That was because she respected Mother, seeing that she brought up her children with proper discipline and in the right way. Queen Sri Savarindira did not feel the need to interfere because Mother was doing such a good job already."**

* Community Health Foundation under the Patronage of HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana "90th Anniversary of Mae Fah Luang", p. 40.



The Princess Mother discusses astronomy with her daughter, Princess Galyani Vadhana, with a globe close at hand. The constellation chart below inspires many items of her handicraft.



STARGAZER

According to HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana, the Princess Mother had always shown an interest in astronomy. *“When she was in the States she had a copy of **Astronomy for Beginners**. Later on when her youngest son started astronomy lessons at his Lausanne school, Mother bought him a copy of “Le Ciel” (The Sky), Larousse edition. In this book there were some maps of stars and the Moon which she looked up so often that three pages fell out. These Mother took out eventually for separate use.”**

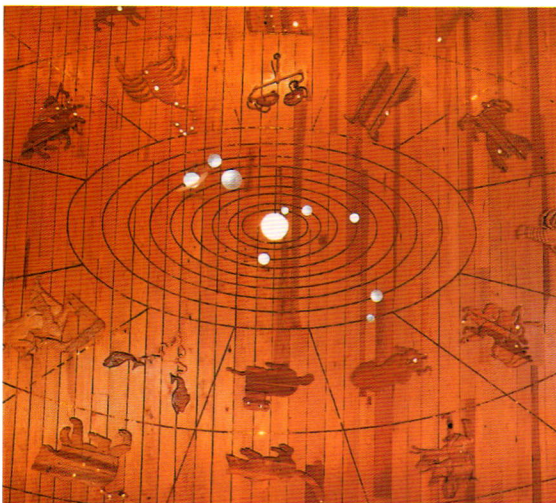
* Galyani Vadhana, “Busy Fingers”, p.24.



The Princess Mother photographed with the crew of HTMS Chantara, the Royal Thai Navy vessel from which she often observes the sky at night.



A selection of porcelain dishes which the Princess Mother has painted with designs of various constellations, with wild flowers in place of stars.



Instead of a chandelier, the ceiling in the lobby of Doi Tung Villa features the solar system, the 12 signs of the zodiac, and the constellations. Each star is represented by a light bulb giving off a comparative magnitude of light.

On boat trips, the Princess Mother was known to have enjoyed standing on deck at night, gazing at the stars without the use of a telescope. When the navy officials had explained the names of the constellations to her in Thai and English, she would give their French and Latin names, then proceed to astonish the officials with her knowledge of further constellations, until quite late into the night.

Her interest in astronomy remained a lifelong passion and was reflected in several of her other activities. The constellations appeared as part of her ceramics painting, on lamps, ashtrays and dishes, often in the form of flowers representing the stars, with the number of petals and the colours representing the magnitude of each star.

Her love of astronomy was evident in her Doi Tung Royal Villa. The ceiling of the main reception hall is decorated with the constellations as designed by the Bangkok Planetarium. *"I want a ceiling for the hall that is inexpensive,"* she instructed, opting for a carving of the solar system and the 12 signs of the zodiac, and 12 constellations rather than a crystal chandelier. Each star was represented by a light bulb giving off a comparative magnitude of light. Wood carvings of other constellations also adorned her private balcony and some of the doors.



Not only does the Princess Mother enjoy picking wild flowers, she also knows them by their scientific names.



The Princess Mother tends a flower pot on the balcony of her Lausanne apartment. Gardening is a hobby she indulges in both in Switzerland and in Thailand.

FLOWERS FOR THE PRINCESS

The Princess Mother's love of flowers was legendary. It was a defining characteristic that dominated her life from her youth through to her later years. This love of flowers reflected a sensitivity and a concern for nature that was not just enjoyment of its aesthetic qualities, but included the need to care and nurture them into full bloom with the same kind of attention and concern that she gave to her role as mother, and every other project in her lifetime.

"Plants are like people," she once said. "This particular zinnia I didn't grow from a seed, but bought a sapling from a nursery, and it is now strong and healthy. Why is that? Because the nursery owner knew how to choose a good seed, and the right soil. He knew how to nurse the sapling, which I couldn't have done as he did. When I bought it back, I had to attend to it, fertilize it constantly because the soil here is not so fertile. I have to constantly water the plant, turn the soil, pull the weeds and



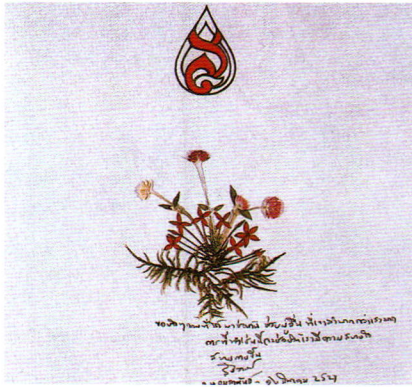
Gardening is always one of the Princess Mother's greatest passions. When she has no garden to tend, the terrace becomes her garden.

*pick the dead leaves. People are like that; if he comes from a good breed, the child will be healthy and intelligent. If the parents provide constant nurturing, picking out the defective bits and adding fertilizer, the child will grow up and prosper like these zinnias.”**

*“One of Mother’s greatest passions has always been flowers and plants,” wrote HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana in **Busy Fingers**. “At the age of 10 while she was staying with Khunying Sa-nguan, Mother dug up the backyard and grew some chili plants without any prompting. When she was in Hartford with Mrs Strong, she was given a small plot of land for gardening. There she grew some flowering plants such as cosmos. At Villa Vadhana there was a big garden where she did her own gardening. Now that she has moved to the flat at Avant-Poste where there is no garden, she has to do her gardening on the terrace.*

“But the flowers she likes most are wild mountain flowers. In Switzerland, when the blossom season arrived, we used to go out on Sundays to pick flowers at a particular time and place when

* “Wong Wannakhadee”, October 1947, p.11-12.



A selection of greeting cards, bookmarks and paper weights made by the Princess Mother from pressed flowers which she picks and presses herself. She often notes the scientific name, the place and date when they were picked.

they came out, from narcissuses to gentians. When she spends the summer months of July and August in the mountains, Mother likes to pick wild mountain flowers and arrange them in small containers, such as sugar and jam pots, bowls and so on. And if there are a lot of them, she will place her flower arrangements on the tables of the people she knows..."

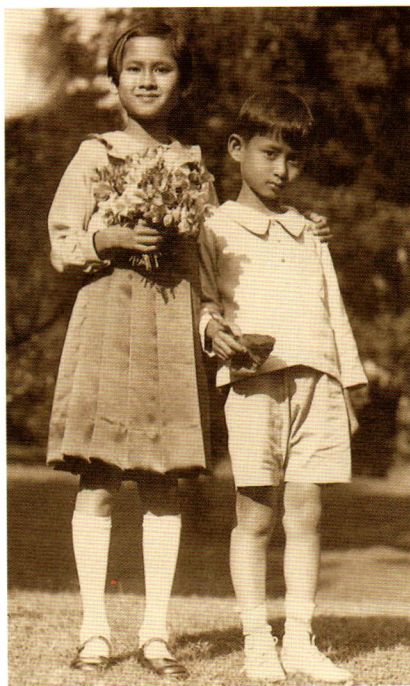
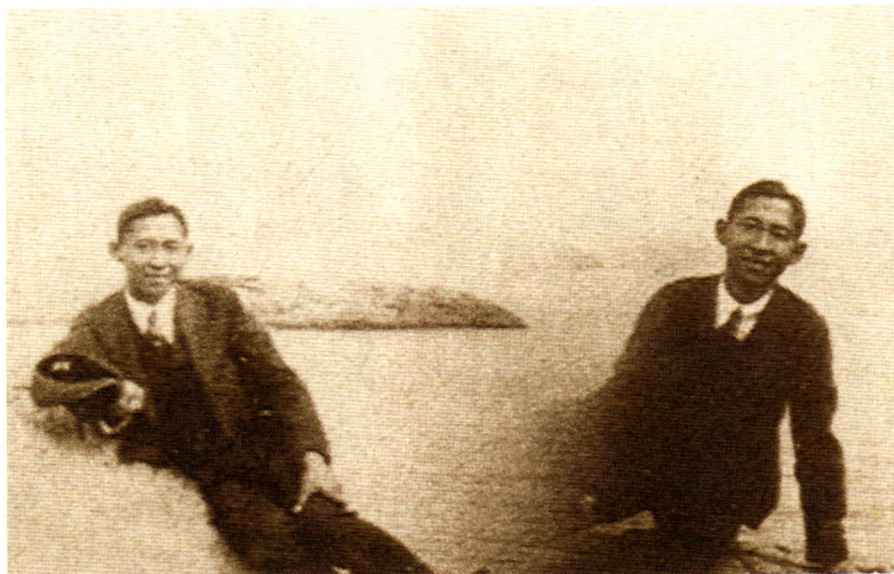
"Mother then thought of pressing all kinds of mountain flowers and using them as decorations. Her early works consisted of pictures and greeting cards which she put up for sale for the Red Cross Society. Whenever she is in the mountains, she gathers a lot of flowers which she presses and brings back to Thailand with her. When she runs out of flowers while in Thailand, she experiments with the local

varieties of garden flowers, such as khem (the needle flower, of the species *Ixora*) and phuang chomphu (the pink bunch, of the species *Malpighiaceae*)."

Her technique for pressing flowers was to put them between sheets of newsprint and tissue paper and toilet rolls, and cover them with some heavy books. She would also write the common and scientific names of the flowers, and the date, on the newsprint.

This particular activity was not simply for pleasure and decorative purposes. As most of her other activities, it became an educational process, not only for herself but also for others. She collected the pressed flowers into an album, indicating the names in both French and Latin, the location where they were picked, the altitude and the date.

* Galyani Vadhana, "Busy Fingers", p.124.



The Princess Mother first became interested in photography when she was a nursing student at Siriraj Hospital. The double exposure of Prince Mahidol is one of her experiments with photographic techniques.

CAMERA BUFF

A hobby she was very keen on since she was a nursing student at Siriraj Hospital was photography. When she arrived in California and started receiving her own pocket money of US\$5 a month, she saved up to buy her own box camera. She experimented with different photographic techniques, such as double exposure, and would continuously upgrade her equipment. Naturally enough, her husband and children were subjects for her camera, and as a result the country has extensive records of their

two kings as children.

In 1928, her interest was drawn to the movie camera. She was among the 50 members of the Amateur Cinematographic Society set up by King Prajadhipok at Chitralada Villa. Here she would show her own home movies to the other members.

The hobby was adopted by both her sons. Even now, wherever he goes, His Majesty the King can be seen with a camera round his neck, ready to record his experiences at the click of a button.



The Princess Mother is also a keen cinematographer. During one of her visits to Thailand, she becomes a member of the Amateur Cinematographic Society chaired by King Prajadhipok.



The Princess Mother is always an avid sportswoman, numbering golf and horseback riding among her pursuits. Here she is seen putting golf with His Majesty the King at a miniature golf course in Sapatum Palace, and riding with the Royal Thai Army Equestrian unit.



Skiing is a passion she enjoys well into her eighties. When in Thailand, she is a strong promoter of pétanque.

SPORTING ACTIVITIES

HRH The Princess Mother was always fond of outdoor activities. Apart from trekking along mountainsides enjoying the natural environment, she was an avid skier. It was a sport she used to enjoy with her children when they were in Switzerland. Badminton and horseback riding were also regular activities, and she continued riding well into her seventies. She only gave up badminton when she was 70, and skiing when she was 80.

In later years, she would enjoy a game of pétanque, which was good exercise for different parts of her body and her joints.

Through her knowledge of health care and nutrition, and regular exercise, the Princess Mother retained good health. A physical examination in 1988 showed that she was in perfect condition. *"If you were to look at the medical report, her blood tests, blood pressure, pulse, etc, without knowing who the patient was, I guarantee that no one would have guessed her age correctly, as the results were no different from those of any strong and healthy young man or woman,"** said Dr Chek Dhanasiri, one of her physicians.

* *Community Health Foundation under the Patronage of HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana "90th Anniversary of Mae Fah Luang", p. 111.*



A view of Doi Tung Royal Villa

CHAPTER 4

A STEP TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY



The Doi Tung Royal Villa is a harmonious blend of a Swiss chalet and northern-style architecture.

When HRH The Princess Mother started making regular visits to villagers, officials, soldiers and police in the Thai border areas in 1966, the scene from her helicopter showed barren hillsides devoid of trees, with occasional shifting crops, weeds and opium poppies. From these visits, she learned of the nomadic lifestyles of the villagers who had to grow crops through slash-and-burn cultivation methods which unwittingly destroyed the natural environment, the watershed forests, resulting in upsetting the ecological balance.

"I shall plant forests on Doi Tung," she announced, and with those words, a royal initiative was born, launching an attempt to revert the mountain to its original state. The Princess Mother was also determined to improve the quality of life of the villagers, provide education and health services, means of a regular income, and an awareness of the need to preserve the environment.



Scattered around the slopes of Doi Tung are numerous hilltribe villages, each with its own costume and way of life.





The newly built royal villa, surrounded by denuded hills.



Tung, or northern-style flags, mark the entrance to the royal villa.

Acting on this inspiration, the government under Prime Minister General Prem Tinsulanonda set up the Doi Tung Development Project in 1988 as a joint project between seven ministries. The Princess Mother was approaching her 90th birthday, and the Thai people were concerned that her annual sojourns in Switzerland were becoming too taxing for her age. A house on Doi Tung would be the perfect solution; its location at 1,000 metres above sea level, with temperatures ranging between 17 and 24 degrees Celsius, its climate and the surrounding scenery were not unlike the cool, mountainous setting of Villa Vadhana in Lausanne.



The pointed kalae roof decorations are typical of northern-style architecture.



The landscaped gardens outside the Princess Mother's bedroom.



A section of the vegetable patch that the Princess Mother used to tend herself.



A bird's eye view of the Phra That Doi Tung temple



The gables are covered with elaborately carved, Lanna-style kalae, whereas the window sills are typical of a Swiss chalet.

Doi Tung is part of the Nang Non mountain range, which stretches along the Thai-Myanmar border. Atop the mountain is the revered Phra That Doi Tung temple. Legend has it that King Ajutaraj built a stupa to house the Lord Buddha's relics here, and marked the area with a flag, or *tung*, hence the name Doi Tung.

The Mae Fah Luang Foundation acted as coordinator between the public and private sectors, and Doi Tung was slowly transformed. The land on which the house stands was leased from the Royal Forest Department for thirty years. The Princess Mother declined the title deed to the land, requesting no privilege for herself.

Doi Tung Royal Villa was built through the Princess Mother's personal funds. Designed by officials of the Irrigation Department, it incorporates the architectural design of a Swiss chalet with its log cabin exterior, and decorative details of a northern Thai Lanna house, from the superbly carved *kalae* atop the roof, to the wood fretwork along the eaves in the traditional *Meklai* design by northern craftsmen.



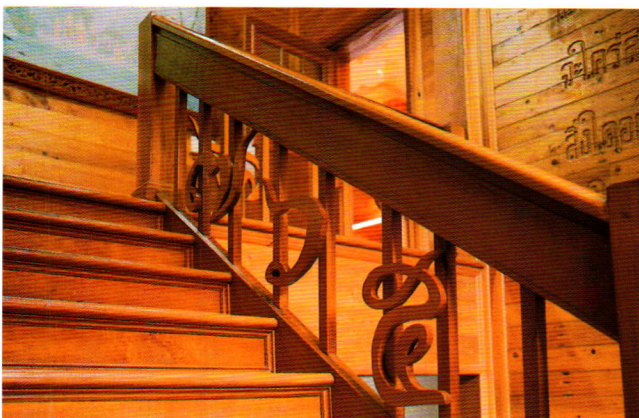
The ceiling of the main hall features lights that depict the solar system and certain constellations.



The verandah railings are adorned with scenes of elephants at work.



The wall of the royal villa's assembly hall is covered with a handwoven flower-pattern fabric made by villagers in Chiang Mai.



The railings of the staircase are carved in the Thai numerals.

The two-storey house is nestled against a steep incline. The upper floor is divided into four sections – the private quarters of the Princess Mother, HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana and Thanpuying Tasna Valaya Sorasongkram, and the reception hall.

Reflecting the Princess Mother's deep interest in astronomy, the ceiling in the reception hall is carved in the image of the solar system, with clusters of the different star signs. Instead of the usual chandelier, the room is lit with bulbs representing the stars in the system.

Walls are lined with Thai silk embroidered with flowers. Other decorative items are carvings of elephant herds in the forest, while the Thai alphabet lines the stairway to the lower level.

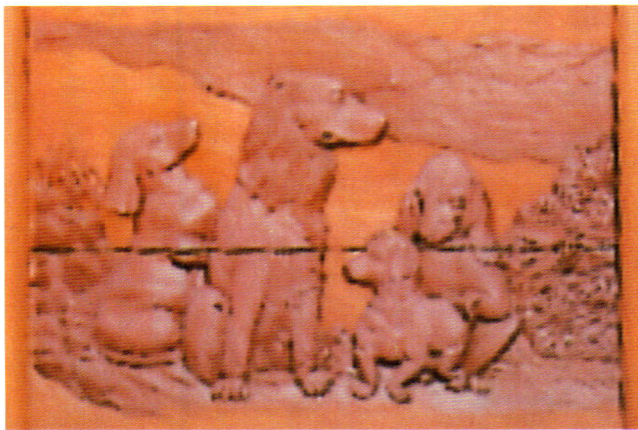
Behind the palace is a long balcony lined with flower boxes. It is here that the Princess Mother spent many a happy hour tending to the flowers herself. The lower level are living and working quarters for courtiers. In front is a wide lawn with flower gardens, which affords a wonderful view of the mountain range that stretches as far as the eye can see.



A panel above the front entrance is carved with images of heavenly trees. It also bears the date BE 2531 (1988 AD).



The walls of the stairwell have been etched with the Thai alphabet, complete with pictures as taught to young children.



A dog carving adorns the entrance to Princess Galyani Vadhana's private quarters.



On another wall is a well-known poem that teaches children the use of a certain Thai vowel.



The interior of the royal villa is panelled with mountain pine.



The Royal Family are regular visitors to the Doi Tung Royal Villa when the Princess Mother is in residence.



A hug for HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn



The Princess Mother and Princess Galyani Vadhana inspect the flower plots.



The Princess Mother observes the opening ceremony of the Mae Fah Luang Garden, organized by the Tourism Authority of Thailand.

The Princess Mother took up residence at the Doi Tung Royal Villa on 23 November 1990. *"This is my home,"* she said. After all, her other palaces had been official royal residences. It was her first true home and, sadly, her last.

Just a decade later, as the smell of fragrant flowers waft on the breeze toward the palace, visitors can see that Doi Tung has undergone an amazing transformation. The hillsides are lush with watershed forests, commercial forests, and botanical gardens that are second to none in Asia. Planting the seeds of awareness and responsibility in the people to help replant the forests and regenerate the environment on Doi Tung, as inspired by HRH The Princess Mother, has achieved its goal. Apart from being the site of an experimental agricultural project, Doi Tung is now one of the leading tourist destinations in Thailand.



Mr. Thammanoon Prachuabmoh, Governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand, presents Her Royal Highness with mementos.



The Princess Mother poses in front of a sculpture of children entitled "Succession".



Vividly coloured geometric shapes formed by flowering shrubs.



The multi-purpose hall



The ticket booth at the entrance



The Mae Fah Luang Garden is arguably the most beautiful in all of Thailand.



The Mae Fah Luang Garden receives the Pacific & Asia Travel Association Gold Award in the category of tourism development (1993).





A sculpture of the Princess Mother in a colonel uniform cast by noted artist Misiem Yipinsoi sits amidst the foliage at the Rai Mae Fah Luang.



The Ho Kham (Golden Hall) at Rai Mae Fah Luang is now a folk museum for indigenous arts and crafts, and a centre for Lanna studies.



Another view of Rai Mae Fah Luang

THE MAE FAH LUANG FOUNDATION

Parallel to the Princess Mother's project on the greening of Doi Tung was a plan to improve the quality of life of the local hilltribe villagers. No longer able to rely on their slash-and-burn method of cultivation, they needed alternative ways to feed themselves and earn an income.

In 1972, the Princess Mother established the Hill Tribes Products Promotion Foundation with an initial donation of 100,000 baht. The foundation, based at Sapatum Palace in Bangkok, would promote and market the beautiful and distinct handicrafts

produced by each village.

The foundation also provided training to hilltribe youth to enable them to lead the development programme.

The Princess Mother donated more money to buy 2.3 hectares of land in Chiang Rai, which became the centre for training in agriculture, weaving and dyeing. A Hill Tribe Youth Leadership Programme was set up to allow 50 youth to undergo training courses each year.



Hilltribe children who are being nurtured at the Rai Mae Fah Luang Development Project walk to school at the crack of dawn.



Sculptures made of dead tree trunks adorn the grounds of Rai Mae Fah Luang.

With its clear direction and purpose, the foundation received support both from local governmental organizations and overseas donors. In 1985, the foundation changed its name to the Mae Fah Luang Foundation under the Royal Patronage of HRH The Princess Mother.

Not only has the Mae Fah Luang Foundation been instrumental in improving the livelihood of the hilltribe villagers, it has also helped preserve indigenous cultures in different regions around the country. Festivals initiated by the foundation are now prominent on the tourism calendar, drawing large crowds of visitors, both domestic and foreign, every year.



Since 1984, the Wai Sa Mae Fah Luang festival, with its traditional Lanna processions complete with tung and elephants, has become a regular event to mark special occasions such as the Princess Mother's seventh-cycle birthday and His Majesty the King's fifth-cycle birthday.



Strolling down the pathway of the Princess Mother Memorial Park is like taking a trip back in time, to the days of the Princess Mother's childhood.

CHAPTER 5

RECONSTRUCTING THE PAST



The main gateway is marked by the Princess Mother's emblem at the top.

Nestled in the crowded and bustling community of Wat Anongkharam is a serene, landscaped park that is like an oasis in a concrete jungle. This four-rai (0.64 ha.) piece of land is located on the west bank of the Chao Phraya River, a neighbourhood which was inhabited during the reign of King Rama III by Thai, Chinese, Muslim and Lao ethnic groups who carried out their respective businesses in peaceful coexistence. It was in this neighbourhood that HRH The Princess Mother grew up, and the memorial park grew out of a vision of His Majesty the King, who wished to see his mother's home preserved for future generations.

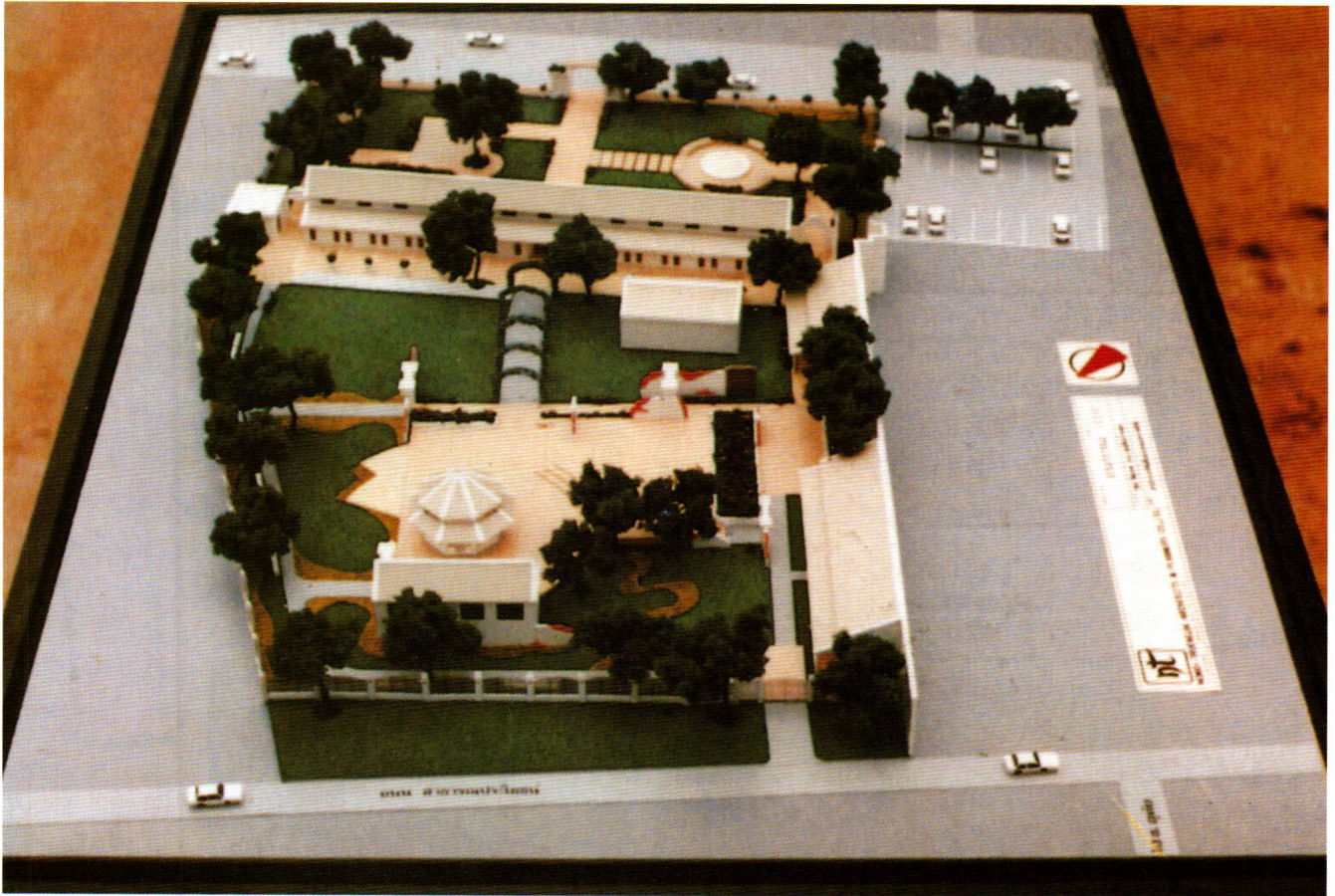


Original sections that have been preserved.

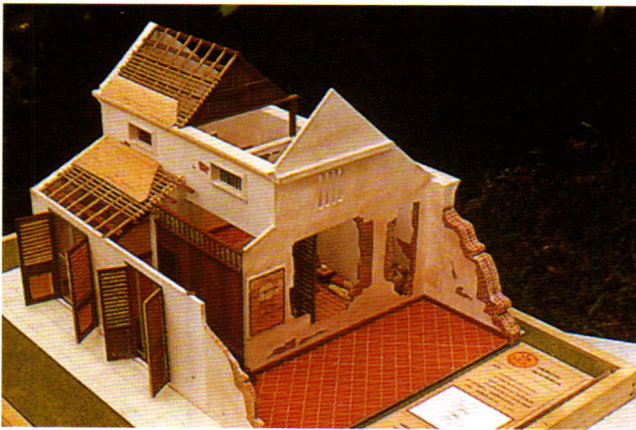
The actual residence had not been clearly marked, and the only indication of its exact location was from the Princess Mother's memories of her childhood as recorded by HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana in her book **Mother Told Me**. In 1983, a team of surveyors combed the Wat Anongkharam community, knocking on doors and questioning long-time residents. The search was finally narrowed down to a cluster of row houses with a one-storey row of 12 units in dilapidated condition, and a two-storey house which was formerly the residence of Chao Phraya Sri Phiphat (Phae Bunnag), director-general of the Cargo

Department during the reign of King Chulalongkorn. Over the years, the land had had several owners and now belonged to two brothers, Daeng and Lek Nana.

The row of 12 shophouses was a brick-and-wood structure with a Chinese-style roof, a style popular during the reign of King Rama III. The shophouses had no back doors, only a solid wall as in the kind of place the Princess Mother lived in when she was young. In front of the shophouses was a walkway paved with large slabs of granite that could have been brought by the Chinese trading junks which plied the waters between China and Siam during that period.



A model of the Princess Mother Memorial Park



A model of the Princess Mother's house



The replica of the house during construction

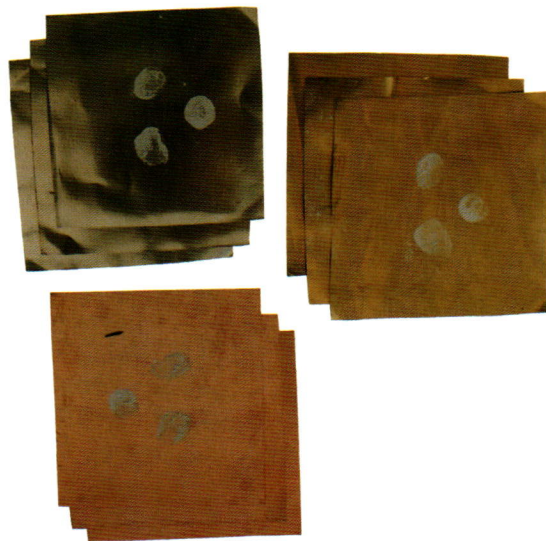
Upon learning of His Majesty the King's wishes, Lek Nana was more than pleased to donate four *rai* of land for the memorial park. The land is now owned by the Chai Pattana Foundation, which carried out the development project to make the area a memorial park.

In addition, the park would provide a recreation area for the Wat Anongkharam community, while preserving all the original structures — including an old gateway — and trees which formed the basic landscape of the area. The old house would be restored into a museum to display an exhibition on the life and work of the Princess Mother, and on the goldsmith community which originally inhabited the area. It would also offer an insight into the multi-ethnic lifestyles that coexisted there in the early days.

A model of the Princess Mother's childhood home would also be recreated, while the focus of the park would be a large block of sandstone carved into a bas-relief depicting some of the activities of the Princess Mother.



The commemorative coin, obverse and reverse



Sheets of gold, silver and copper, donated and anointed by His Majesty the King to be minted into coins.

FUNDING

To raise funds for this undertaking and to encourage donations from the public, the Chai Pattana Foundation created a commemorative coin. The coin, three centimetres in diameter, featured on the obverse the image of His Majesty the King with HRH The Princess Mother, together with their names. On the reverse side of the coin was the image of the Princess Mother Memorial Park, with a model of her childhood home. Surrounding the image was the name of the park and the year 2538 of the Buddhist Era (AD 1995).

For this purpose, His Majesty the King donated three sheets each of gold, silver and copper, which he personally anointed, to be minted into the three corresponding coins. The gold coins were each sold for 100,000 baht, the polished silver coins for 5,000 baht, the plain silver coins for 2,000 baht and the copper coins 50 baht.

Complete sets were also available for 130,000 baht each. The total income from the sale of commemorative coins went to the construction of the park, with a certain amount set aside for maintenance costs.



The original gable that remains of a contemporary house.



A shady walkway



The lush tropical foliage provides an oasis of tranquillity in a crowded area of Bangkok.



The front garden of the park

LANDSCAPING

The front section of the park was the area immediately outside the original cluster of buildings. This was designed as a courtyard with a round fountain surrounded by benches. Grassy lawns and flowering shrubs were added to enhance the existing lush bodhi and banyan trees.

The inner section comprises the two museum buildings, with permanent exhibits on the life of the

Princess Mother and a large sandstone bas-relief depicting her commitment to improve the lives of the marginalized, a vine-covered walkway, a multi-purpose courtyard, a jogging track, park benches, a lawn and flower plots, a contemporary octagonal Thai gazebo for music performances, the park office located in the original building, and a refreshment outlet built as an extension of the main building.

*The museum building**One end of the museum hall features a large painting by Pichai Niran highlighting the Princess Mother's religious activities.*

The two museum buildings were originally the satellite buildings of the home of Chao Phraya Sri Phiphat (Phae Bunnag). The buildings are in partly Thai, partly Chinese style. The first building displays an exhibition on the Princess Mother's life and on the background of the Wat Anongkharam community. The second building presents the activities of the Princess Mother and a touch screen displays the background of the Memorial Park.

In front of the museum building is a model of the Princess Mother's childhood home. Though her

home was part of a row house, only one unit was built. A small-scale model was devised by the Fine Arts Department for the Princess Mother's approval: she found it much bigger than her home had been. The model was scaled down and then the building was constructed in the grounds.

The interior was designed following the description provided by HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana in **Mother Told Me:** *"As far as she could remember, Mother lived in Thon Buri, in the soi that is now Soi Wat Anong. 'Home' was part of a brick structure*



The museum makes use of modern touch screen displays to present the life and work of the Princess Mother.



One end of the museum displays pictures and objects related to the Princess Mother's funeral.

with a tiled roof. It was made up of several units. On one side were 4-5 units where people lived; on the other side the units were derelict and deserted. The 'house' was rather old, and located in a neighbourhood which was run down because there was absolutely no maintenance. It was a rented house, but you rented only the walls and the roof. Any other part that was wood, such as the floor, had to be fitted by the tenant...In front of the house was a verandah enclosed on both sides, with a wooden floor and a thatched roof. Further on was a brick floor, then the road. As you

entered the house, there would be an open space, with a raised wooden floor on the right, sectioned off as a Buddha room and the parents' workshop. Every morning, the grown-ups would present food to the Buddha image, and after twelve noon, Mother would be the one to chant Sesang mangalang yajami to remove the food, and then eat what was in the tiny dishes. Next was the bedroom, and behind it a long kitchen, which was bordered by a wall. Behind the wall was an open space. To get there you had to walk all the way round because the kitchen had no exit.



A replica of the Princess Mother's childhood home, with an open verandah in front, a double roof of baked tiles on top and thatched nipa leaves on the overhang.



A water jar on the front verandah used for bathing.



Wooden stoves and clay pots made up the basic kitchen utensils.

There was no bathroom in the house. Bathing was done in front of the house — the water jar was on the verandah; or else you had to bathe in the Somdet Chao Phraya canal.^{**}

The model house was built following the above description. To avoid cutting down any trees, the roof was left open at one point to allow an existing tree to grow through. The side walls were fitted with glass to allow visitors to look in, and the interior carefully decorated with utensils, including goldsmith tools, that reflect the way of life during the reign of Kings Rama V and Rama VI.

^{**}*Galyani Vadhada, "Mother Told Me", p. 18.*



One side of the sandstone carving depicts the Wai Sa Mae Fah Luang procession.

SANDSTONE CARVING

The sandstone carving is considered a major sculptural work. It was undertaken by the Royal Thai Air Force for the project. A committee, headed by M.R. Disnadda Diskul, discussed in detail the aspects of the Princess Mother's life and work to be portrayed in the carving. Designers from the Fine Arts Department travelled to the Doi Tung Development Project, visited Border Patrol Police schools, and talked to individual Border Patrol Police who served Her Royal Highness during her lifetime in order to get a clear idea of how they should portray this figure.

Sandstone was used for the purpose, since its fine grain would allow for more details in the craftsmanship. It was sourced from a rock pit in Wang Nam Khiao district of Nakhon Ratchasima province. Measuring $1.60 \times 8 \times 0.90$ m, it rests on a base 80 cm high. It had been unanimously agreed that the bas-relief should portray the Princess Mother's commitment to relieve the suffering of people in remote areas due to illness,

poverty and a lack of equal opportunity in education, as well as her attempts to instil loyalty in rural youth to the nation, the religion and the monarchy.

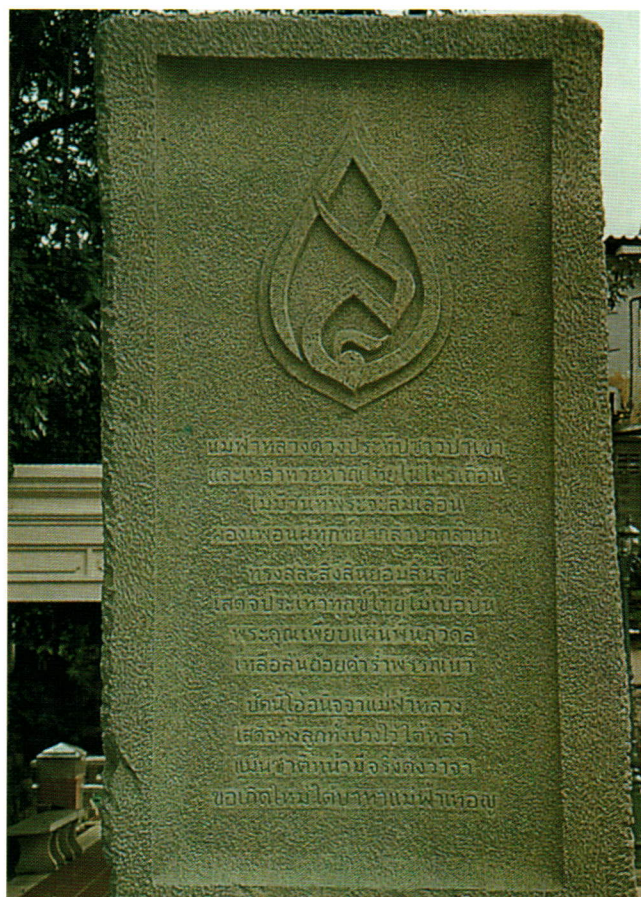
As a result, one side of the sandstone carving represents the life of people in remote areas, the work of the Medical Volunteers and the establishment of the Border Patrol Police schools. At the centre stands a large tree with the Princess Mother's initials in Thai. This, in effect, represents the Princess Mother, who is like a leafy tree that spreads its boughs to provide shade to the people of Thailand.

The other side of the sandstone carving shows a Wai Sa Mae Fah Luang procession in front of Doi Tung Royal Villa, reflecting the respect, loyalty and gratitude of the people towards the Princess Mother.

Finding the right piece of sandstone, cutting it out of the rock surface and moving it to the site of the park proved to be a major technical challenge. A perfect slab of rock measuring $15 \times 10 \times 2.50$ m was



On one end of the sandstone carving is the royal emblem with the initials of His Majesty the King and a poem relating His Majesty's initiative in setting up the Princess Mother Memorial Park.



On the other end is the Princess Mother's emblem and a poem lauding her benevolence.

found in Thai Samakkhi village, Nakhon Ratchasima. It protruded out of the hillside. When cut down to the desired size, it was estimated to weigh 34 tons.

Various ways of cutting the rock were considered, and the most expensive method, using a diamond-head cable cutter, was chosen as it would pose the least risk of the stone cracking.

A 40-ton truck would be needed to carry the stone slab to the park, and an access road had to be built up the hill, 100 metres long with a 20-degree incline. Hoisting the slab onto the truck required two 45-ton cranes.

A detour on the village road was also necessary to avoid a bridge which could only handle a 25-ton load, and another makeshift bridge was built using metal sheets for runways. Then the timing had to be just right to avoid the possibility of rain in March. Despite all the odds, the enormous slab of sandstone was ready for removal by the end of January 1995.

Upon arrival in town, the 8-metre stone slab had to be manoeuvred through the tiny side streets lined with shophouses, and eventually placed on its concrete base in the park.

Meanwhile, craftsmen of the Fine Arts Department had started on a clay model for the bas-relief in November 1994, from which a plaster cast was made in three separate sections. This was used as the basis for the sculpture of the sandstone slab.

Work on the stone slab started with a stencil of the design applied on to the stone to indicate where the stone had to be chipped away to three different depths. Then the details followed with the help of artists who drew facial features onto the rough outlines. With the artists and the sculptors working side by side, the resulting bas-relief was able to retain a uniformity of style that looked as if only one person had put his mark on the sculpture.



Like everything else in the Princess Mother's life, the Memorial Park has been created to benefit the general public.

A PARK FOR THE PEOPLE

The project took more than ten years to complete. In August 1996, the project committee were ready to welcome Their Majesties the King and Queen to officially open the Princess Mother Memorial Park, which stands as a testimony to the deep love and reverence that a son has for his mother, the love of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej for the Princess Mother. This testimony is not just a private symbol between the two but a public property to be enjoyed by all Thai people to whom they have both dedicated their lives.

The Princess Mother Memorial Park can be accessed by road or by boat. There are two access roads — from Somdet Chao Phraya Bridge and into Soi Wat Anongkharam, or from Phya Mai Road beside Buddha Yodfah Bridge. Parking is available beside the outer garden area.

Boats can stop at the pier in front of Chao Guan U Shrine, from which a walkway leads into the memorial park.



Statue of the Princess Mother at the Somdet Phra Srinagarindra park in Kanchanaburi province.

CHAPTER 6

PEOPLE'S PARKS



A quiet corner at the Somdet park in Kanchanaburi province

By the time Thailand celebrated the centenary of HRH The Princess Mother in the year 2000, twelve memorial parks dotted around the country had already matured into beautifully landscaped recreation centres for the local population.

These were the Somdet Phra Srinagarindra royal parks, a project initiated by the Thai government under Prime Minister General Prem Tinsulanonda in 1980 to commemorate the 80th birthday of HRH The Princess Mother in tribute to all her contributions to the welfare of the people.

The Ministry of Education was assigned to set up a park in each of the 12 designated education regions of the country. Initial funding for the project came from the sale of HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana's **Mother Told Me**, supplemented by government budgetary allocations and by donations from the private sector and individuals.



The Somdet park in Chumphon province



Landscape and fountains at the Somdet park in Chachoengsao province

Over the years, the parks were gradually completed and opened to the public in Ayutthaya, Chiang Rai, Chachoengsao, Chumphon, Kanchanaburi, Phangnga, Pattani, Phichit, Nonthaburi, Roi Et, Sakon Nakhon and Si Sa Ket. They range in size from an area of 50 *rai* (8 ha.) in Chumphon to 625 *rai* (100 ha.) in Chiang Rai.

Si Sa Ket was the first province to launch its park project; the Si Sa Ket Agricultural College handled landscaping, planting and maintenance. An area of 237 *rai* (37.9 ha.) within the college compound was set

aside for the park. The land has natural gradations, and two streams which join just north of the park, provide natural irrigation and a venue for leisure activities such as boating.

Much of the natural flora has been preserved, with trees indigenous to the northeastern region. The most outstanding feature of the Si Sa Ket park is the planting of 40,000 Lamduan (*Melodorum fruticosum Lour*) trees. The Lamduan is the official tree of Si Sa Ket province. It is a hardy tree that grows well in dry climates. It can live up to a century, provides shady



Various scenic sections of the Somdet park in Chiang Rai province



A serene lake in the Somdet park of Pattani province



The Somdet park, Phichit province

relief for passers-by, and its flowers have a fragrant smell. Lamduan trees are like respected elders whose experience and goodness make them role models and protectors of the younger generation.

Although the government allocated a budget for the initial development of each park, no budget was available for their maintenance. To keep the parks in well-maintained condition, the Princess Mother suggested setting up a foundation to provide funding to this effect. The Suan Somdet Phra Srinagarindra Foundation under the patronage of HRH The Princess Mother was therefore set up through her initiative in 1989. An initial fund of 1 million baht was earned through the proceeds of **Busy Fingers**, also written by HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana.



Lush foliage forms part of the attraction of the Somdet park in Si Sa Ket province.



While a statue of the Princess Mother is the central focus of each park, the deer are a feature of the Somdet park in Roi Et province.

The Princess Mother donated private funds to the foundation each year, and the private sector did its share in contributing to the project as well.

On 18 July 1995, tragedy befell the Thai nation with the death of their beloved Somdet Ya, the Princess Mother. As a memorial to this great lady, the Suan Phra Srinagarindra Foundation decided to install a statue in her likeness in each of the Somdet Phra Srinagarindra parks. Upon the approval of HRH

Princess Galyani Vadhana, the foundation assigned the Fine Arts Department to design 12 different sculptures of the Princess Mother in various casual poses.

In 1998, His Majesty the King designated HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn to preside at the ceremony to pour molten gold into the mould. Each of the statues was funded by the respective provinces where the parks were located, with full support from the private sector.



Their Majesties the King and Queen, together with other members of the Royal Family and other well-wishers, visit the Princess Mother at Siriraj Hospital.

CHAPTER 7

A VALEDICTION TO HRH THE PRINCESS MOTHER



The Royal Urn is placed high on a pedestal in the Dusit Throne Hall of the Grand Palace.

HRH The Princess Mother was beloved by all the people of Thailand, not only for the royal position to which she was destined, but most of all for her dedication and numerous achievements initiated for the benefit of the people.

Upon her death on 18 July 1995, the nation fell into a period of deep mourning, for we had lost a beloved and highly revered member of the Royal Family, a great benefactress, a virtuous lady who was not just a mother to two kings, but a “Somdet Ya”, or Royal Grandmother, to us all.



Their Majesties the King and Queen perform merit-making rites as part of the traditional funeral service.



Crowds throng the Grand Palace each day to pay their final respects to the beloved Princess Mother.

As her body lay in state within the ancient and cavernous hall of the Dusit Throne Hall, in the compound of the Grand Palace, mourners thronged to pay their final respects. These included not only members of the Royal Family, diplomats, government officials, and those living within the confines of the capital city, but also hilltribe villagers from the far corners of the kingdom. They filed into Bangkok by car, by bus, by train, their black-clad figures covering the vast grounds of Sanam Luang with a dark blanket of sorrow and grief.

The cremation took place in March 1996, for which an elaborately carved, traditional Thai-style

crematorium, or Phra Merumas, was built in the centre of Sanam Luang, symbolizing the mythical mountain abode of the Hindu gods. Crowds lined the streets as the golden urn of rank was transported on the Phra Maha Phichai Ratcharot (Great Victory Chariot) in a solemn procession from the Grand Palace to the Phra Merumas.

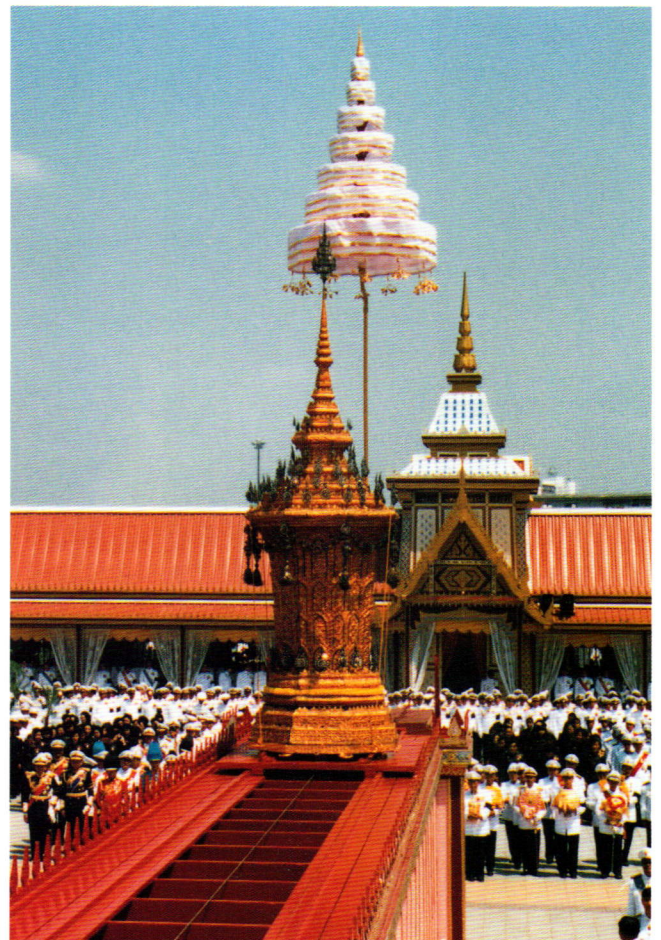
As the funeral pyre was lit by His Majesty the King, and smoke slowly billowed up into the sky, the nation seemed to be suspended in a vacuum of time. The Princess Mother was gone forever, but she had been immortalized within the hearts of all Thai people.



The Royal Urn is borne aloft on the Victory Chariot in a solemn procession from the Grand Palace to Sanam Luang.



Brahmin officials in traditional white garb and headdress hold the Royal Urn steady during the procession.



The Royal Urn is escalated on to the Phra Merumas funeral pyre.



A dramatic view of Sanam Luang and the Phra Merumas funeral pavilion at dusk.



Clouds of smoke billow from the funeral pyre through the night.



Their Majesties the King and Queen place sandalwood flowers under the Royal Coffin at the start of the cremation.



The following morning, His Majesty the King performs a ceremony to collect the Princess Mother's relics.

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