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VIEWING THE WORLD THROUGH MANY LENSES

An Olympic gold medalist known as a model of austerity, the late King's humility and passion for life was also reflected in his travels and photography



Travelling Kit

King Bhumibol Adulyadej roamed the country with a camera around his neck, or sometimes a pair of binoculars, and many times with a field radio and telephone. A mud-stained vehicle could often be seen taking him wherever his compass pointed. Throughout his reign, the objects the late king carried with him on his countless missions, traversing the rugged landscape of rural Thailand, bespoke his commitment to the course of development. They also signified his hands-on approach: Thailand was blessed with a King who was never afraid to get his hands dirty or sink his sandals into the mud; a King who surveyed the mountains and rivers — not vicariously through his aids — but with his own eyes.



Cameras

From his childhood to his final years, the late King Bhumibol was a dedicated photographer. Rarely did he step out without a camera in his hands or around his neck, either during his tireless journeys across the country or when attending official ceremonies. From the late 1930s, the late King taught himself about photography using a French-made Coronet Midget camera and Kodak Vest Pocket Montreux. Later, he switched to the larger-format Hasselblad and IkoFlex before moving on the Contax II, which would become one of his favourite cameras. Throughout his reign he would experiment with all kinds of cameras including the Leica, Nikon, Minolta, Ricoh and even the rarely seen, Soviet-made Kiev. With the arrival of the digital age, the late King was quick to adopt the latest technology and went around with a Canon EOS. Photography as art, leisure and history — King Bhumibol knew how to see the world through many lenses.



Sports items

King Bhumibol was well-known as an able sportsman, especially his prowess in sailing. His 17-hour trip on a single-handed dinghy across the Gulf of Thailand in 1966 has become the stuff of legend. In 1967, the late King, together with Princess Ubolratana, competed in the 4th SEA Games and won a gold medal in the OK Dinghy Class, cementing their reputation as world-class athletes. Besides sailing, the late King also enjoyed played tennis, badminton and other sports. Back in the 1950s, when badminton was not popular in the Kingdom, he worked hard to promote the sport and took the Badminton Association of Thailand under his patronage.



Toothpaste

The late King Bhumibol was famously conservative and worked tirelessly to avoid being wasteful. Hi tube of toothpaste, always milked to the last drop, serves as a symbol of his penchant for austere living. He valued every item, no matter how small — every drop of water, every ounce of resources. The image of his thoroughly-squeezed toothpaste tube continues to inspire the Thai people to follow the late monarch's practices in sufficiency, leaving nothing to waste and treasuring all, regardless of how insignificant it may seem.



ALL THE KING'S MEN

Four professionals who served His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej as his shoemaker, watch repairman, tailor and veterinarian for his dogs



KHONGSAK THIANGTUM

❖ Veterinarian

Khongsak Thiangtum first met His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej around 1991 when he and another veterinarian were tasked to reside at the Klai Kang Won Palace in Hua Hin.

For more than 10 years, Mr Khongsak did health check-ups for King Bhumibol's numerous pet dogs each morning, and would treat them if any emergencies or accidents occur.

"The King would often come to visit the dogs so we would have a chance to give him information about them," he said. "He would always ask many questions about how each of them were doing."

Mr Khongsak not only took care of the late King's pets but also helps advise the Hua Hin Dog Shelter, set up under the Royal Patronage of His Majesty the King in 2002. Located on the grounds of Wat Khao Ittisukhato, the spacious 22-rai shelter is now home to more than 800 stray dogs. The shelter provides vaccination and sterilisation services. It also helps them find new homes and organises blood donations. The shelter even has a pool for the dogs to play in.

"King Bhumibol was extremely passionate about dogs," said Mr Khongsak. "As a pet owner, he had a very high sense of responsibility when it came to taking care of his pets, which sets an example for all Thais. For example when Tongdaeng got sick, he took her to the vet himself. If you're thinking of raising a pet, you have to be responsible for it. Most of the cases of stray or abandoned dogs, or dogs with rabies, can be blamed on irresponsible pet owners. When [the dogs] are young and cute, they want to raise them. But when they outgrow that, people tend to abandon them at a temple or just stop taking care of them completely."

"King Bhumibol never explicitly said he loved dogs, and he didn't explicitly say why, but we can feel that from how he acted. It's something I witnessed firsthand — how he treated his pets. And the way he treated stray dogs — he fed them, got close to them, and asked how they were doing. When he played with dogs he was very happy. When he talked about his pets and stray dogs, he was content, he smiled."

— Apipar Norapoompipat



SOMPOP LOULARPPRASERT

❖ Tailor

July Tailor, a shop in Sala Daeng that specialises in making suits, was passed on to Sompop Loularpprasert by his father over four decades ago. Mr Sompop said his greatest achievement was serving as tailor to King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

Mr Sompop's shop can easily be spotted: Just look for the grand Garuda (a legendary bird-like creature) crest perched high above its entrance — a symbol of honour bestowed by the late King of the service this tailor's house has provided to the Thai royal family for over half a century.

King Bhumibol was a practical man and that was reflected in his choice of clothing. Mr Sompop said in the late King's younger days he liked to wear sports jackets, especially during his rural outings. And those jackets required numerous pockets to house his radio, documents, map, camera and other items.

As he aged, the late King's sports jackets morphed into colourful blazers for daytime events, and dark suits for more formal gatherings. Apart from King Bhumibol's daily wear, Mr Sompop also crafted his formal white uniform, as well as the red royal guard uniform used during royal occasions.

"He tended to keep his clothes for years. Some he wore for more than a decade. He'd send in clothes to be mended once in a while. It had to do with his philosophy of sufficiency economy," Mr Sompop said. "Wherever he could save, he would save."

Mr Sompop said he got to meet King Bhumibol



roughly once a year for measurements and fittings. He said the late King taught him an important lesson: To always do your work with care.

"He said one's work should always be done with precision, and that I should give my all for any task to save energy, time and money."

— Melalin Mahavongtrakul

ANULUCK TANAPANT

❖ Watch repairman

Late watch repairman Anuluck Tanapant was a man of few words, especially when it came to his A-list clientele which included members of the royal family, the late Supreme Patriarch, and movers and shakers in Thai society. Most prominently, he repaired the watches worn by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

"If you interviewed my father in person, you would not have got many details about his service to the King," said Mr Somsarit, one of Anuluck's eight children.

Anuluck passed away in 2013, but the story of his horological services has surfaced with much fanfare. Media coverage has noted his discretion about his royal clientele. Before he passed away, Anuluck was approached by several watch companies seeking his endorsement. They also wanted to know which brands of wristwatches the late King favoured. But he never spilled the beans, as he didn't want to be associated with any commercial endorsement or profit due to his ties with his famous customers.

Anuluck began providing watch repair services to King Bhumibol more than 40 years ago. One day an official from the Royal Household Bureau came to his

shop, *Aor Luck Technic Karnchang* (Aor Luck Watch Repair), on Maharat Road between Silpakorn University and Thammasat University, asking him to repair a small musical clock. He was told the clock had great sentimental value for King Bhumibol as it was a gift from his parents.

From then on, Anuluck had more royal family members sending their watches to him. He was also asked to repair and provide maintenance to watches and clocks in royal palaces and important temples, including the clock placed near the Emerald Buddha in Wat Phra Kaeo. Repairing watches for King Bhumibol provided life lessons for the Tanapant family.

"My father learned about King Bhumibol's sufficiency philosophy. He always told us the late King was prudent in spending money. Despite being the King of Thailand, he never threw things away easily. When my father proposed that a strap or some worn-out part be replaced, King Bhumibol would ask him to stick with repairing, not replacing. So my father would often caution us about wastefulness and overspending, using King Bhumibol as an example."

— Anchalee Kongrut



SORKKRAI NAENSRLIN

❖ Shoemaker

Sornkrai Naensrinil owns a leatherwork shop called Kor Premsilp. He can still remember the day 14 years ago when a man with an unusual manner brought a pair of shoes into his store.

"He came in carrying the shoes with care. He then put them on my working table, prostrated before them and said they were King Bhumibol's favourite pair," recalled the 69-year-old. His traditional shoe repair and leatherwork shop is located on Samsen Road.

"I asked him several times if they really were the King's. It's hard to describe how I felt. It gave me goose bumps."

The shoes' condition was such that they looked as though they had been worn for several decades, the cobbler said. Mr Sornkrai later came to suspect the late King wore them whenever he played music.

"If they had belonged to someone else I may have suggested the owner buy a new pair. But since King Bhumibol was willing to get them repaired, I devoted myself to them," he said.

"I told the courier it may take a while to fix them because I felt so honoured to have them in my store."

"A man like [the late King] could easily choose to have new shoes. People would be thrilled to offer him many choices. But I got the feeling that if there was something he could fix, he would rather fix it first," said Mr Sornkrai.

He ended up repairing four more pairs of shoes for the late King. All were worn from long use, he said. When one piece of padding had to be replaced, Mr Sornkrai secretly kept the old piece.

The shoemaker also made 15 pairs of new shoes that he offered to the late King. He said he tailor made them to fit perfectly by measuring the size of his old shoes.

Though the shoemaker never met King Bhumibol in person, he said he was inspired by the late King's thrifty nature and tried to apply this philosophy to his own life.

"There was a time when I was in dire straits, financially. But as I've tried to follow the late King's philosophy — to estimate my own capacity — it really helped me. I believe if other people did that they could all be happier, too."

— Patramon Sukprasert





THE ROYAL RESIDENCES

Four outstanding architectural works where royal duties have been undertaken for decades



Chitralada Villa

Chitralada Villa, located within the Dusit Palace in Bangkok, was the permanent residence of His Majesty the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej and Her Majesty Queen Sirikit. The villa was built in 1913 in the reign of King Rama VI on a former paddy field that lay between the Dusit Palace and the Phyathai Palace.

The villa is also home to several royal initiatives and experimental projects for the benefit of all Thais. Most of the projects centre on agriculture and related products. The royal residence therefore functions as a learning centre with rice fields, Nil fish ponds, a dairy farm, a mushroom cultivation unit, to name but a few, undertaking research and studies in various fields.

Several factories and manufacturing centres were also established inside the royal residence as a byproduct of the royal initiatives such as the Chitralada dairy industrial units, Suan Dusit milk powder plant, Suan Dusit milk tablet plant, experimental rice mill, rice-husk grinding plant, fruit juice pasteurisation plant and so forth.

Inside the Dusit Palace is Chitralada School, established in 1958 initially for the children of the royal family and palace staff.



Klai Kangwon Palace

After King Bhumibol was released from Siriraj Hospital following treatment for a respiratory condition from September 2009 to August 2013, he stayed at the Klai Kangwon Palace in Hua Hin in Prachuap Khiri Khan province. Klai Kangwon translates in English as “far from worry”.

Located on the coast, the palace was commissioned by King Rama VII for Queen Rambhai Barni in 1926 and completed in 1933. All of the construction work was overseen by Prince Itthithepsan

Kritakara. The palace was first called Suan Klai Kangwon. In 1929, King Rama VII unofficially renamed it the Klai Kangwon Palace.

The royal residence was built in a Spanish style and the gardens are beautifully manicured and full of art from Java.

The Klai Kangwon Palace served primarily as a vacation home for King Bhumibol and Queen Sirikit. The late King also made it his office to carry out his royal duties and other royal projects.



Bhubing Rajanives Palace

Located in Chiang Mai’s Muang district, the Bhubing Rajanives Palace spans 400 rai and was commissioned in 1961 by King Bhumibol. Half of it has been designated as a tourist destination where general visitors are welcome to stroll around.

The palace was constructed in a Central Thai architectural style, featuring traditional houses on stilts. Construction work took five months to complete and was supervised by MR Mitrarun Kasemsri, who served as both architect and interior designer.

The Bhubing Rajanives Palace served as their Majesties’ vacation residence when they paid a visit and carried out royal activities in the northern provinces. It also functioned as a place to welcome foreign dignitaries and guests who visited the country for diplomatic purposes.

The northern province of Chiang Mai was chosen because of its great weather conditions, stunning landscapes and beautifully preserved culture and traditions.



Phuphan Rajanives Palace

Tucked in the Phuphan mountains of Sakhon Nakhon province in the northeastern region, the Phuphan Rajanives Palace was built in 1975 with King Bhumibol choosing the spot himself. The late King used data from aerial maps and images as well as his surveys to help choose the best structure and site to build the palace, which comprises both an inner and outer court.

The palace was the royal residence of King Bhumibol, Queen Sirikit and the royal family during their missions in, and visits to, the northeast. ❖

