

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Thursday, October 27, 1966

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I awoke early in the Manila Hotel. We were going to leave this morning. This was scheduled to be our day of rest in Bang San, Thailand. And from the very beginning, it was an off-beat day. We had struggled valiantly to keep to the schedule, and had nearly all the time. Today, not so. Lyndon kept on being tied up with telephone calls and conferences. Once I talked to Luci. Once when there was a lull I asked him to talk to Dr. Chandler.

Our visit there had been telescoped, shortened, so that we could get on to ^{Corregidor} ~~Karigadore~~ and then to Viet-Nam for Lyndon. And we had left in unseemly haste, not staying for the lunch they had prepared so beautifully for us.

Lyndon had been more impressed with it than nearly anything we had seen on the trip. So many hopes for progress rode with this. And I wanted him to talk to Dr. Chandler for a minute and thank him. Actually what he said was to me our whole visit to Asia in a nut shell. In a cheery, rather casual voice, after the amenities and warm thank-yous he said, "Well Dr. Chandler, you just keep on inventing better strains of rice and Margaret ^{Senger's} ~~Angus~~ folks keep on doing what they're doing and we'll save this old world yet."

Finally a little past 11:00 we left for the airport, riding for the last time under the great arches that covered the ceremonial avenue. Each one welcoming a different Chief of State. President and Mrs. Marcos were awaiting us at the airport along with most of the top-ranking people.

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of the country—~~The~~ Chief Justice and the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate and the Vice President and the Secretary of Foreign Affairs. And a coterie of Mrs. Marcos' blue ladies. Most of them had been out here since early morning. I felt so bad, so I tried to be all the more expansive in my expressions of thanks. Many of those waiting were U. S. Embassy employees who had been disappointed yesterday when Lyndon went on to Viet-Nam instead of making an appearance at the Embassy.

There were no speeches, but there were full honors. At the head of the steps I turned and waved and blew a kiss to the crowd. President and Mrs. Marcos accompanied us inside the plane for a last private word. They are a most remarkable couple -- this Chief of State and his First Lady.

And then at 12:00 it was wheels up for Thailand. It was nearly a 3-hour~~x~~ flight to Satterhip Air Base, and we were accompanied in by a sharp nose F-105's -- three on each wing. They were camouflaged in green and brown.

We landed in a drizzle. And Prime Minister Kittikachorn, with whom I have come to feel quite at home, (It was only night before last that we said goodbye at Maññāng Palace) ~~xxx~~ informed us that rain from the Thai point of view is an auspicious omen. We assured him that it was in Texas always.

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Our Ambassador and Mrs. Martin were also there to meet us. We waved at the small crowd that had gathered -- some American troops. Then we got in the helicopter and flew low over the fascinating countryside for the 40 miles to Bang San. We saw orange-roofed Buddhist temples and monasteries and coconut palms and an oil refinery. The Prime Minister was very proud of that. And fields of some sort of crop I couldn't identify. There would be white flat areas rather like a tennis court and farmers ~~would~~ ^{were} obviously spreading out this stuff to dry or else they were mounding it up in little white piles. I asked, "What is that?" ~~The~~ Prime Minister Kittikachorn says, "That's tapioca." I burst out laughing and said "here's your best customer." He told me that it grows as a root and it's one of the staples of their diet. They make a sort of a stew out of it with pork and put in a few vegetables. It's the main dish in the homes of most peasants. It can also of course be made into a ~~d~~^esert.

Our helicopter landed on the beach close to the Lam Phen guest house -- the Prime Minister's summer residence.

Bang San is a seaside resort which nestles between the wooded hills and the picturesque curving bay. There are resort cottages overlooking the gulf -- many of them used by Thai officials and wealthy people looking for escape from the heat of Bangkok.

Mrs. Kittikachorn was here to welcome us, and I was presented with a garland of jasmine -- white and rose and wine and apricot and yellow,

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in the precise formal pattern, made from a million tiny petals. They smelled so ~~xxx~~ sweet. The house could have been in Florida or California. It was low and rambling and white and very open. And the grounds were beautiful, with palms and bougainvillea and tropical flowers, and a lovely assortment of orchids. There were verandas and terraces. And right beside us the Gulf of Siam, ^{The} waters lapping right at the edge of the lawn. And some enormous picturesque ^{foulders} ~~beaters strung~~ along the beach. All the time that we were there we could see a ship plying in its path just a little off shore. Up it would go and then back. It took a while to dawn on me that this was a United States Ship -- a sort of an armor ^{ed} guard because of our presence.

After all the proper hospitable expressions, the Prime Minister and Mrs. Kittikachorn left, ^{or} And Lyndon went up to rest. This was the most personal day I had had on the trip -- the closest to the countryside that I had been. And I was not about to waste one minute of it!

Mrs. Martin asked what I would really like to do. And so I told her. I would like to get into a car and drive around, perhaps with somebody who could speak Thai. I would love to have her ^{if} she would care to go, but didn't want to dragoon her. Yes, she could supply the person who could speak Thai -- Mrs. [?] Muchi -- the wife of our AID man there. And Ashton went with us.

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So the four of us set out in a car for a ride around Bang San. It's an old village with houses made of teak, standing on their stilts on the edge of the water. And lots of little stores selling coral and straw hats. And spirit houses everywhere. These were brightly decorated little houses -- pink, blue -- elaborately ornamented -- about the size of a bird house standing on stilts -- one beside every residence nearly. These are to entice the spirits to take for theirs and leave your own house to you.

We passed a school house. It too could have been in any southern part of the United States -- long and low and open to suit the hot country. It was recessed, and there were dozens of children -- probably 6 to 10 years old running around squealing -- the girls dressed in navy skirts and white blouses, the boys in navy pants and white shirts. All the world, it seems, except us, wear uniforms to the public schools! They were as merry and lively as children anywhere. I went over to the fence and tried to talk to them. They gathered around curious, and one of them did say, "Hello".

Our car wound its way toward the top of the hill -- almost a mountain, thick, almost jungle vegetation. ~~We were~~ right up to the roadside on each side. Down below us were the orange-tiled roofs of Buddhist temples and the row of little teak houses following the water line.

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I asked the driver to stop. I would like to get out and use my movie camera. I stepped to the side of the road and was just putting my foot into the bushes when Mrs. Martin ~~barely~~ shrieks, "Snakes - don't - come back". I could see that she was really anguished. Feeling rather casual about it I explained that we had plenty of rattlesnakes etc. in Texas, but there was hardly one under every leaf out there. She answered "Very likely not, but these are kraits and cobras." I was duly respectful immediately. I have heard that if a krait strikes, it is instant death and there is nothing that can save you. So I stood in the road and got pretty good pictures.

The common lantana of the ^{Layan} hill country grows here in wild ^{no} perfusion like a hedge - long ^{yards} ~~long~~, 8 or 10 feet tall - but the same little flowerets. Kapok ^{tree} ~~seeds~~ from which that familiar pillow stuffing is made. And Tokay. Enormous lizards that make a sort of a singing sound at dusk. "Tokay, tokay." But are even more frightening than the snakes.

We stopped at one of the Buddhist temples, and I approached it. At the corners of the roof were the little points going skyward like the tails of snakes. Mrs. Martin told me that it had something to do with their myth of the flood, that seems to be a universal folk myth cropping up in civilization after civilization.

The temple itself appeared to ^{be} made of an infinite number of tiny pieces of tile, orange on top, green shiny ones and blue ones in

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a design along the walls. It was very open, almost like a pavilion or summer house. I saw a Monk in his bright orange costume. ~~He~~ paid me absolutely no attention, ~~And~~ there was a big fat plaster Buddha, grinning amiably under a little pagoda roof with some incense burning in front of him.

It was indeed the most exotic landscape and country I have ever seen.

On the way back to the main road we stopped by one of the little teak houses. There was an assortment of small naked children, some with shirts but no pants, running around. It had a thatched roof, a boat, some fishing gear stacked along side. I have no idea what sanitary facilities -- none evident. And beside each house two or three of the big clay jars about four feet high in which they catch rainwater. That is their drinking supply.

On the way back I said, "Stop. There's a monkey on the little wall." Sure enough it was ^a ~~A~~ gray monkey with a long tail right beside the road. I got out and took his picture, and several of his friends came and joined him and hopped along beside him, perching on the little wall. They are wild Mrs. Martin told me. They didn't bother the people, and the people didn't bother them. And then ~~was~~ when I turned to get in the car one almost followed me inside. I felt this is my most adventurous day. I am closest to the life of this land than I've been anywhere.

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When we got back to the house Lyndon was asleep. At any rate his room was dark and quiet. Mrs. Martin had presented me with a wonderful adventure, and I decided I would take advantage of it. Air Marshall ^{? De wee} ~~Darwee~~ and his wife Kun Ying Iree owned an Island just a few minutes by helicopter from the guest house where we were. They had glass bottom boats and a good sand beach. Would I like to go? In a few minutes Ashton and I ~~were~~ and Mrs. Martin were ^{winging} ~~wanning~~ our way over the countryside where we could see dark green hummocks. They were mango trees I was told. And then what looked like a series of little white moles ^{on} ~~from~~ the face of the earth and more and more of the tapioca being gathered and swept into piles. It was used for glue, Mrs. Martin told me, as well as a foodstuff. And then we were out over the gulf of Siam, looking down at the fish traps and the beautiful deep blue of the water. We landed on Crystal Island on top of a heavily wooded hill, and there they were, smiling and glad to meet us -- Kun Ying ^{sp?} Iree dressed in a bathing suit and looking like any American family having their afternoon off at the beach.

We walked down the hill past their little vacation cottage, airy and open, almost covered with lovely bougainvillia vines, through a grove of trees to a sandy beach. There were ⁱⁿ ~~en~~umerable dogs and some cats picking their way around, and even some chickens. I heard a rooster crow.

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De Wee?
Marshall Darwee had a glass bottom boat. He and Kun Ying Aree and Ashton and I took our seats on opposite sides of the boat and looked down through the glass into a forest of coral -- an underwater ~~jungle~~ ^{forest} of branches and cathedrals and spirals. They were all gray or white. And I am ruined forever by Caneel Bay! There were no bright colored fish doing a ballet among the coral. A steward passed a tray of fruit juice and beer and snacks -- most of them unrecognizeable items. I stuck to the beer. Presently we came back to the Island. There was a ~~Cabana~~ ^{Cabana} ~~kebonya~~ right on the beach and Kun Ying Iree asked me to come in and try one of her swimming suits and have a swim in the Gulf of Siam. They were relaxed and genial hosts, and I felt like I knew them better than nearly anybody I had met on this trip.

The water was very salty. You could float without trying. And calm -- little surf -- and very lulling. I swam far out toward a shrimp boat that had eyes and a face painted on the front of it. All the boats this afternoon in the little fishing village had had faces painted on the front -- some of them quite fearsome. But it's an amusing, gay custom. They look like a school of ~~fish~~ fish.

Ashton and Kun ying Aree stayed close to the beach. But Marshall Darwee followed me, pushing a rubber float chair, and when I was almost to the boat I turned around and got in the chair and he pushed me back to the shore. How unbelievable, having a swim in the Gulf of Siam at

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sunset with a companion named Day¹Wee. I asked him about the white mounds that looked like moles on the face of the earth. And he told me that they were Chinese burial grounds -- that the Chinese buried their dead close to the sea.

Back on the beach -- and it was a lovely white clean sandy beach -- I changed into my clothes, walked barefooted -- the sand felt so good. The servants had built a fire right out on the sand and were cooking shish-kebabs -- beef and tomatoes and onions and peppers on long ^{skewers} ~~skewers~~. They were delicious. And there was a huge table of fresh seafood that had been swimming around just a few hours ago in the Gulf. Big delicious shrimp, crab claws, and something I suspected of being octopus. I was determined to sample everything. And it was all good.

And then Marshall Day¹Wee asked me if I would sign in cement. That is what we always do ~~xxx~~ with the guests at the Ranch I told him! So they took our picture while we did it. Only here I put first my hands and then my feet and my name.

But it was time to go home. Lyndon must be wondering what had happened to me. This had been my most personal, romantic, close-to-the-land day on this whole trip. I said goodbye and climbed the hill and flew home over the sunset sea, looking down at the fish traps that looked like long arrows in the calm sea and the boats that were painted, and the great ^{billows} ~~billows~~ of pink clouds that gradually faded into gray and then into

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night and stars. It was as beautiful a sunset as I ever remember.

And then we were back at the Florida-like house. Lyndon was awake and ready for dinner. We called Lloyd and Marvin and Jake and Marie. And we had ~~the~~ ^{the} best meal of our whole trip -- wonderful steaks and coconut ice cream with pineapple. I took a last look at the garden with its frangipani and orchids and lowly ~~par~~ ^{le} winkle and roses. How unexpected in this climate! And the orchids and the coconut shells that the house keeper had placed for us in the rock garden. And then at 9:00 -- oh luxury -- we were in bed, a very low bed about a foot off the floor. And the furniture could have been from any Florida hotel. And the day was such a mixture of the exotic and the familiar that I shall never forget it. #