



LIVING TRADITIONS

Newsletter of the Thai Healing Alliance International - Volume 8, 2009

THAI announces new programs & discounts

In an effort to streamline operations and increase efficiency, Thai Healing Alliance is implementing new policies which go into effect before the end of 2009.

Automated registration for Basic and Thailand members

Beginning September, '09, all new Basic Members will register entirely online. A credit card must be used for all new registrations. Membership certificates and membership cards will be automatically generated and sent by e-mail to all new members. Basic Members will now register by making a donation at the level of their choice.

RTT and Advanced Practitioner

These two levels will be combined, and the study hours and requirements for RTT (Registered Thai Therapist) will be raised to a new level. Current RTTs will not be affected by this change. All RTTs, Instructors and Institutions will continue to pay registration fees, and will be prompted by e-mail to renew online via credit card. Paper checks and money orders will no longer be accepted after September, 2009.

Member Benefits Program

A new program is being launched for all members of THAI that provides discounts on study and travel in Thailand, discounts on hotels and guest houses in Chiang Mai, and special incentives to study with other THAI teachers around the world.

The following schools and companies in Chiang Mai, Thailand, have agreed to participate in the THAI Member Benefits program:

- * **International Training Massage (ITM)**
- * **Chiangmai Dental Hospital**
- * **Santitham Guest House**
- * **Bupatara Guest House**
- * **School of Massage for Health**
- * **Loi Kroh Massage School**
- * **International Hotel Chiang Mai (YMCA)**
- * **Timmy's Massage Training Center**
- * **Old Medicine Hospital (Shivagakormapaj)**
- * **Nerve Touch Massage School**
- * **Lanna Thai Massage School**
- * **Baan Hom Samunphrai**

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In order to receive discounts and special offers, THAI members must show an active THAI membership card. Additional discounts with THAI Instructors in the USA, Europe and around the world will be announced shortly. More details about the changes within THAI and the new Member Benefits Program will be sent to all active members in September, 2009.

We believe that these new programs will help to raise awareness of traditional Thai massage, and will serve to bring us closer together as a worldwide, professional community of traditional Thai therapists.



Khun Jack Paenthai Chaiya
(photo: Bob Haddad)

Khun Jack teaches *jap sen* Thai massage in the West

After several years of teaching in Chiang Mai, Jack Paenthai Chaiya has begun to travel outside of Thailand to teach workshops in traditional Thai massage. Trained by his mother, the famed master (Mama) Lek Chaiya, Khun Jack had never taught outside of Thailand before 2008, when he was invited to teach at the Thai Massage Circus, held in neighboring Laos. Later that year he also took an exciting trip overseas to teach three workshops in California, USA, sponsored by Spirit Winds School. Jack's work is based on the *jap sen* style of traditional Thai massage, wherein tendons and sen lines are "plucked" to achieve release and improve energy flow.

Janice Vitavec, Director of Spirit Winds, comments on Jack and Lek's activities while in the USA:

"I asked Jack to come this year mainly because he has been developing his teaching skills and his own techniques based on (Mama) Lek's work. It was Jack's first time travelling outside of Thailand (except to Laos a couple of months ago). Lek has had some health issues over the past few years and she has gone into retirement more so than before. Lek has retired from teaching in Thailand, but she is strong and she thrives on teaching and by doing her work in individual sessions. We decided that this time she and Jack would come together, and Jack and I could do the hard work and Lek could be free to be the queen and the goddess... and enjoy herself without having too much of a work load."

(continued, page 3)

Traditional Medicine and Healing Practices of Northern Thailand

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Northern Thailand Traditional Medicine is a living tradition with roots stretching back many hundreds of years. Its tradition is oral, with training passed from teacher to student with no formal institutionalized training. The current traditional medicine base exists in rural areas and within the smaller villages that make up larger centers such as Greater Chiang Mai. The medicine practiced here is different than the more formalized Thai Traditional Medicine which is centered in Wat Po in Bangkok and which has, in more recent years, attracted new students and certainly has the larger share of any official governmental support. In addition to Traditional Medicine folk healers from the hilltribes, who migrated to Thailand over the past few hundred years, also continue their practice. The healing traditions of tribes such as the Lisu, Lahu, Hmong, Karen and Akha are also oral. While each hilltribe group has their own healing customs, they all share commonality with each other and with Lanna Thai culture.

Traditional Medicine Specialities

Mor Muang is the general term for local doctor and includes different specialists including *Mor Ya* (Herbalist), *Mor Pao* (Bone Blower), and *Mor Suang* (Spiritual Healer). These roles are dominated by males, and outsiders must first be accepted by a "master" and then must pass an initiation ceremony before being accepted into a specific medicine discipline. Although an individual may be multi-skilled, most healers focus on one particular specialty. The *Mor Ya* (herbalist) covers the whole disease spectrum and formulates prescriptions for medicines based on herbs and other natural substances. The *Mor Pao* (Bone Blower) specializes in wounds or broken bones. He often manipulates the bones and applies splints or poultices to the area and he applies incantations to the affected area by blowing with his breath. The *Mor Suang* (Spiritual Healer) performs a series of ceremonies and incantations by calling on the spiritual essence of his patient and connecting with his spirit guides for assistance. Sometimes the healer may refer the patient to another traditional healer or may prescribe specific actions to alleviate the underlying cause of the ailment.

Other traditional Lanna healers include *Mor Nuad* (Massage Healer). Thai massage is an integral part of traditional medicine, most often carried out within the family, but there are *mor nuad* who have special styles and offer unique treatments. *Mor Nuad* may be male or female. *Mor Tam Yae* (Midwives) are predominantly female and specialize in childbirth. Unfortunately, the regular use of midwives is decreasing in Thailand, especially in areas where western medicine is favored or most accessible.

Mor Cao Baan (astrologers) are part of a mainly female healing tradition. They divine the cause of a particular ailment and may engage in "rubbing" ceremonies to effect a cure. They may also refer the client to another traditional medicine specialist once the cause has been divined. The village Shaman (*Mor Pi*) and Soul Retriever (*Mor Kwan*) play essential roles in each village. The *Mor Pi* (Shaman) is a direct connection with the spirit world where ancestors and spirits dwell. The healers are believed to be chosen by the spirits themselves through a serious illness or a near death experience or by divination among a group of village elders. Mostly, these healers use trance as a medium to connect with their ancestor spirits, and the treatment is either carried out in the spirit world or specific ceremonies are recommended to the client. The *Mor Kwan* (soul retriever), rescues the spirit of the client when it has been "stolen" by a vengeful spirit, thereby resulting in illness. Sometimes, very specific curative ceremonies are performed which may involve the extended family or the entire village.

Concepts of Traditional Medicine Causality

There is no tradition of surgery among traditional healers and therefore their concepts of causality of disease differ strongly from those in the western medical tradition. Wind and blood are two strong causative factors and are often closely connected.

The wind (*lom*) surrounds us all and is easily affected. There may be too much wind or too little wind...or it may turn poisonous. Diseases that cause fainting, uncontrolled movement and heart pain are indicative of too much wind and are by far the most common. Certain foods and outside odors are often the cause of too much wind. Too little wind affects the mobility of limbs and is sometimes characterized by paralysis. Blood (*lyad*) is recognized as the basic fluid of the body but since healers have no tradition of surgery, the circulatory system is not well understood from a western sense. Blood may be considered to be normal, hot, cold, too much or too little and it can be the cause of many wind diseases.

Many diseases are affected by poison (*pid*). This could be poisoning from a venomous bite or ingestion of bad food but also the less tangible concept of "poison spirits". This poison also has an effect on blood and wind. Treatments involve isolating the poison, restricting its spread, and using herbal treatments to expel it from the system. This may also involve a prescribed diet. Diet restrictions are very integral to the whole curative process.

Hot and cold - the two opposites - are important in the classification of illness as well as the types of cures to apply. The client's perceptions of heat and cold are an important diagnostic tool for Thai healers. A fever, for example, may turn out to be hot, cold or neither of the two, and the healer proceeds with treatments indicated by these diagnoses. The general rule is that hot diseases are treated with cold medicines and vice-versa. The opposites of left/right and male/female are also important in diagnosis as well as the presence of "mother". The "mother" is an entity that enters the body and must be located and "killed" before a cure can be carried out. Most important is withholding the food that supports her and so diet becomes very important as part of the cure.

The Future

Traditional medicine was once outlawed with the advent of western medicine in Thailand a century ago. As a result, ancient knowledge was cast aside because practitioners were afraid of being arrested as charlatans. When the ban was lifted, what had continued underground came slowly out into the open. Knowledge continues to be passed on by word of mouth with no centralized teaching. Herbal remedies are closely held secrets, even to the extent that when certain recipes are written down, some of the most potent ingredients might be deliberately left out. Will North Thai Traditional Medicine survive? Among some middle class and educated Thais, traditional medicine has become trendy. But in many circles, the support is ambivalent at best. Some see traditional medicine as a way of extending medical coverage without much added cost or investment, yet in some areas traditional clinics are appearing alongside western medical clinics.

From the consumer's point of view, more is always better. The trend points toward most patients first seeking treatment by visiting a pharmacy, second by visiting a western style medical clinic, and third a traditional healer. Anecdotal evidence shows that some patients use all forms of medical help simultaneously. In the words of one healer, Phra Khru Uppakara Pattanakij, abbot of Nong Yah Nang Temple: "We want to offer ordinary people more choices in health care. And we can do this by respecting the wisdom of our ancestors and keeping it alive by practicing it."

Although it is struggling, North Thai Traditional Medicine has every chance of survival and new growth. One key to its success may be converting some of the traditional secretive practices into a centralized knowledge base, in addition to offering more training programs. The west has gone through a similar process in recent years and now alternative healing and traditional medicine are gaining popularity each year. There is every reason to hope for a similar pattern of growth in northern Thailand.

Arthur Lambert - Pioneer teacher of Thai massage in the USA

By Rose Griscom

Arthur Lambert was a musician, teacher, intellectual, and lover of *nuad boran*. Raised in the Midwest United States, he taught music in Japan for many years before settling in San Diego. He was a music professor, he also composed and performed on the piano, and had a vast assortment of indigenous musical instruments.

After a personal health crisis he became interested in alternative medicine. This culminated in receiving a Holistic Health Practitioner certification after 1,000 hours of training. With his curious and intellectual approach, he studied many types of treatments, including various massage modalities, hypnosis, reiki, the indigenous medicine of Peru, and shiatsu. Then he was introduced to *nuad boran*.

Arthur was introduced to Thai massage when he was in his late 60s, during Chongkol Setthakorn's inaugural teaching at IPSB in San Diego in 1991 (which was the first class taught in the US by a native Thai teacher). He resisted taking the class, although everyone else at the school thought he should. There was room for only one more student in the course, so he decided to sign up. He liked to tell the story of driving home after the third day of class when he realized that his foot moved differently as he pushed the clutch on his old Chevrolet. He realized that his whole body moved, and felt, differently than it had before. That is when he made the commitment to learn all he could about Thai massage.

Arthur spent every day he could with Chongkol for the six months he was in San Diego. He became enthralled with the work. After Chongkol left, Arthur went to Thailand at least twice a year to continue studying with him, as well as with a number of other Thai teachers. Arthur was one of the first westerners certified from the Old Medicine Hospital in Chiang Mai. Chongkol encouraged him to open a teaching institution in the US, and in 1992, ITM-USA was born in his home in West Palm Beach, Florida.

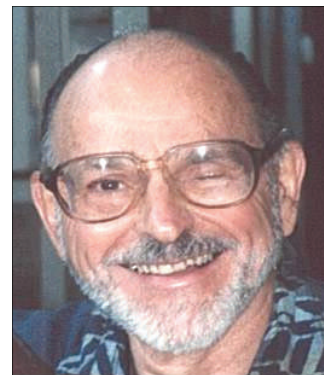
Being one of the first Thai teachers in the US, Arthur did much to spread the knowledge of *nuad boran*. He gave many demonstrations at national and local bodywork conventions, wrote the first book about Thai Massage in English co-authored with a native Thai. He produced a number of teaching and demonstration videos, did research on the history and philosophy of Thai massage, and generously gave of his time and energy to anyone interested in learning about the work.

Arthur fell in love with Thailand, and he felt most at home there. After teaching in the US and traveling back and forth many times a year, he finally made arrangements to make a permanent move to Chiang Mai. It was at that time he gave his teaching materials to me, sold his house in Florida, and said goodbye to his children scattered around the USA. Despite the sudden and rapid appearance of a serious illness, Arthur moved to Chiang Mai early in 1997. Friends who saw him a few months later said he seemed at peace. One of his wishes was to have a traditional Thai burial, and that wish was granted when Arthur passed away in Chiang Mai in August later that year, just a few months after he moved there.

I was blessed to be Arthur's protégée, to experience him as my teacher, mentor, and friend. He led me to the work that I love. He gave me the gift of his Thai massage practice. He shared mountains of wisdom about *nuad boran*, and about life in general. Whenever I had a confusing session, or reactions from a client that I didn't understand, he would listen closely, nod his head, and often utter a simple concise observation, which made it all so much clearer. Once I remember telling him about a session—"When I felt the spine, it seemed so different as I was thumb pressing down compared to how it had felt seconds before as I thumb-pressed up." He smiled, nodded, and said, "You're starting to come along."

At times, he was an unexpected task-master in class, like the time he shocked everyone with a sudden burst of "STOP!" — when he spotted a student doing a move dangerously. For the most part, he taught with clear directions, encouragement, and sensitivity. He was never afraid to respond to a complex question by saying he didn't really know the answer. He was incredibly knowledgeable and experienced, but he remained open and curious, and always ready to discover something new.

Arthur Lambert's body has been gone for years, but his spirit lives on in many ways. Not only through the things he wrote, but also through the people he touched. I am glad I was one of them.



Khun Jack teaches in the West (continued from page 1)

Over a ten day period in September, 2008, Jack taught workshops in Thai Foot Massage, Basic Nerve Touch and Advanced Nerve Touch (*jap sen*). Mama Lek and Jack were well received and loved throughout their entire time in the USA, and THAI hosted a reception on the first day of each workshop.

Janice added: "I think it was a great confidence builder for Jack in his teaching abilities and a wonderful stepping stone towards more international teaching for him in the future. Of course it was a blessing to have Lek come here gain after her illness, and, as always, a real honor to be with her. It was fun to have them both staying in my home with me and my 5 year old daughter. It was a nice blend of work, family and fun."

In his first teaching trip to the West, Khun Jack demonstrated a great knowledge of subject matter, a willingness to teach variations of techniques, and a great sense of humor, which kept the students interested and happy. Perhaps most importantly, it signaled a new beginning for Jack as an important teacher of *jap sen* style Thai massage. The torch has been passed from Master Mama Lek.

Photo right: Mama Lek doing morning yoga alongside students in their twenties. (photo: Bob Haddad)



LETTERS TO THAI

Safe practice with heart disease patients

I have a question about Thai Massage and how it can help alleviate, heal, and prevent heart dis-ease... My Father had two heart attacks over 6 months ago. I have since given him numerous Thai Massage sessions and he does well with them. He experiences some pain in the back, under the shoulder (where the heart is)... I'd like to know if there are more techniques into the healing of the heart through Thai. Have you had any experience with heart disease clients?

Blessed be,

AM

Regarding your father's heart weakness, it may be possible to contour a Thai session in order to help relax your father and slow down his heart rate by encouraging deeper, slower breathing patterns as you work. We are unsure of any particular routines in traditional Thai therapy that can be aimed directly at the heart, except, perhaps to work the lines that run past the heart itself. There are a few things you might try to focus on in your routine, however, and obviously, there are things you should always avoid with heart patients.

- 1) Avoid "blood stops" in the groin, arms or neck.
- 2) Avoid prolonged pressure (more than a few seconds) near major arteries.
- 3) Do not sit or kneel on the patient for long periods of time, or otherwise constrict the flow of energy, blood or oxygen.

On the other hand, you could consider integrating some of the following techniques and concepts into your routine:

* Gently but thoroughly work *sen kalathari* to stimulate and open blockages along this line (second inside leg line, crossing at the navel over across the chest) This line crosses right over the heart.

* Do lots of gentle work up and down *sen sumana* (from the navel up the middle chest, the collarbone, and up to the chin). You can use light pressure, small circles with index fingers, gentle butterfly compressions (work always with his exhalations, never against them)

* Try to find the very epicenter of his back discomfort, and then work the sen line moving away from that point, (on both sides of that point, but always moving away from it). Try to sense if you can work out blockages as you do this, and encourage your father to take full breaths and to try to relax as much as possible while you're doing this.

* Once you locate the very center of the back spot, try to expand (open, stretch) the surrounding areas of his body while supporting the painful spot with your hand (or foot, or knee) and open him up a bit with gentle rocking and stretching. Try to keep slow but steady rocking movements going all the time, to help lull him into a zone of comfort, and verbally remind him, if necessary, to relax and visualize the pain and discomfort moving out of his body every time he exhales. Fresh oxygen and peace on the inhale, and release of the discomfort from his body with his exhale.

Naturally, take a calming, relaxing approach with him, rather than a vigorous approach. And always encourage his natural (not forced) deep breathing.



A Lotus Palm student asks about his teachers

Why isn't Lotus Palm school of Thai Massage listed as an approved provider? They are well recognized by thousands of their students. This appears to be a rather large oversight on your part to negate the contribution towards Thai massage that Kam Thye Chow has provided over the years. What is up with that?

Namaste,

BR, Canada

This is not an oversight. When THAI was first founded, Kam Thye was asked to be on the THAI Advisory Council, but he declined. Other Lotus Palm teachers have not been responsive to communications. THAI is based on voluntary membership, and THAI regulations state that all members must have studied, at least in part, with a THAI-approved provider, even if it is just for a few hours. So technically, a Lotus Palm students who has never studied in Thailand, and who has never studied with an instructor other than those in Lotus Palm, cannot receive the title of Registered Thai Therapist (RTT).

THAI is the only non-partisan, non-profit organization in the world dedicated to the study, practice and standardization of traditional Thai healing, and the whole idea is to bring people together in order to spread knowledge of our beloved Thai massage. THAI is poised to take a place of prominence in the world of Thai massage, and to give traditional Thai medicine the dignity and cohesiveness it deserves as a unique and separate healing art. Most major schools in Thailand and many important instructors around the world have already endorsed THAI, and we hope Lotus Palm does too.



Teacher training programs questioned

On THAI's approved course list, I've noticed that there are asterisks indicating that certain course aren't valid toward membership. This seems to be the case for TMC's 300 and 600 hour teacher training programs. Is there some issue with the quality of training they provide? Thanks for any information that could help me learn more about this. I was hoping that by attending the 300 hour program I would be getting one of the best educations available.

Sincerely,

HD

Thai Healing Alliance does not automatically grant Instructor status for "teacher training" programs offered by any of its member instructors or schools, but these course hours are certainly valid toward membership. To attain Instructor level, other requirements, such as session notes, previous teaching experience, Thai cultural studies, etc. are also required. Other types of courses such as foot massage, herbal compress therapy, "table Thai" and *ruesi dat ton* are not valid toward RTT status. In other words, there are other "asterisks" in our official course lists.

THAI is a non-partisan organization and we encourage members to study with a wide variety of teachers in small increments, rather than taking one "program" from only one school or teacher. In our experience, it is often best to take a slower, natural process of learning in small increments, spending much time to practice, and then returning to study again with the same teacher or a new teacher. All too often, the problem with "programs" is that they don't allow adequate time for the student to truly learn by doing, to learn from one's own mistakes and to learn from one's own clients, who are often our best teachers.

Alternate translation of the Om Namo Shivago

All homage to Jivaka, I bow down. He is kind to all beings and brings to all beings divine medicine, and he shines light like the sun and the moon. I worship he who releases sickness, the wise and enlightened Komarabaccha. May I be healthy and happy.

He is beneficent to gods and human beings, and beneficent to Brahma. I pay homage to the great one. He is beneficent to *naga* and *supanna*... I pay homage. Homage to the Buddha...

Honor to the Buddha. May all diseases be released.

I pray for the one whom I touch, that he will be happy, and that any illness will be released from him.

“*Bpert Lom*” - Opening the wind gate using feet and knees

By Bob Haddad - with descriptions by Asokananda

Opening the wind gate (*bpert lom*, in Thai language) is a common technique in traditional Thai massage used to stimulate energy flow between the lower and upper torso. This technique is unfortunately known in English as “blood stop”, though the blood is not stopped, it is simply slowed down. In supine position, the most common time to perform a “blood stop” is after a complete lower body routine, including feet, and medial and lateral leg lines. The most commonly taught ways to perform “bpert lom” are with the hands, either in yoga plank position, fully kneeling, or half kneeling.

But certain situations may call for alternate types of blood stops. Obese or extremely muscular people often need more pressure to effectuate this technique. Things can become complicated if the client is physically much larger than the therapist. And some Thai therapists have a hard time applying steady pressure without shaking their body and hands. Excessive shaking from a therapist transfers directly to your client, and can make the client feel uneasy or anxious. In these cases and in these situations, it may be an option to attempt “*bpert lom*” using your feet or knees. The following descriptions are from the late Asokananda, who taught his students to vary their approaches to Thai work, and who often stressed that a therapist’s comfort is critical to the performance of an effective Thai massage session.



An alternative to stopping the blood flow to the legs with the hands is doing it with the feet. Be very careful as it is difficult in the beginning to get a good feeling for the amount of pressure needed and it is easy to overdo it, causing unnecessary pain. Do one leg at a time, not both legs together. Place your foot below the groin. Leave a few centimeters of space between the groin and the spot where you place your foot to avoid pressing on the glands. The inside of the instep is pointing towards the groin (see photo, above). Shift your weight towards your foot. Get your patient’s feedback to help you to find out when to stop increasing the pressure. Hold for up to 50 seconds and release the pressure slowly.

Another option you have is to stop the blood with the knees. Place both of your knees below the groin on the upper part of the thigh (see photo, left). Shift your weight towards the knees. This version can be helpful if you work on people with big muscular legs. It is not recommended for skinny patients as it might be rather uncomfortable or even painful.

Remember: Avoid blood stops on clients with high blood pressure or heart conditions.

The photos and text in italics are used with permission from “*Thai Traditional Massage For Advanced Practitioners*”, by Asokananda, DK Books, 1996.

THAI Online Course List

As a service to Instructor and Institution level members, THAI has established an international Thai massage workshop and class listing on the THAI web site. To access the list, go to the THAI home page - www.thaihealingalliance.com - and click on “Upcoming Courses and Workshops.” All THAI-approved Instructors and Institution members may list their workshops here free of charge. The list is accessible to members of the general public, as well as all members of THAI, in order to search for current and future workshops and courses worldwide.

This program helps to promote courses offered by our Instructor and Institution members, and helps members and the general public find qualified teachers for their continuing studies. To view the course list, go to the THAI web site and click on “Upcoming Courses & Workshops.”

To list a course:

- * You must be an active member of THAI at the Instructor or Institution level in order to post course listings.
- * Enter the THAI member area and click on “Add a course listing”. Follow the steps to list the dates & information for your workshops.
- * If you own or operate a web site, you must also participate in the THAI web link exchange program by placing a THAI logo/link on the home page of your web site. THAI logos for your web site are available in the Member section, a blue box on the left of screen after you log in to the THAI site.

NOTES FROM THE MAT

I recently returned from a month-long yoga teacher-training where we devoted much time and energy to meditation and spiritual development. My teacher at this retreat was an amazing individual, I describe him as a self-realised human being; he is a gentle wealth of knowledge, love, inspiration and an opener of windows into the constant presence of joy that is within each one of us.

I was fortunate enough to arrange a Nuad Boran session with my teacher. At first he wanted to pay me for the session, but I would have paid *him* for the opportunity to work on such a yoga body – whose spiritual awareness is so obvious and ever-present. The session lasted over 2 1/2 hours and moved into total darkness as the sun set outside our palm-roofed pavilion. The last 30 minutes or so I worked by touch and intuition, ending with a comprehensive head massage. When I brought my thumbs to his third eye point, I felt such an intense rush of pure light energy pass through my hands and up through my body that I had to make a determined effort to ground myself and keep my own energy centered. The sense of euphoria and completeness at the end of the session was overwhelming for both of us.

This experience is carried with me now into my work with clients back home. I have felt a greater awareness and sensitivity since my return. I am more physically aware of alignment, tension, contact, due to the *asana* education I received and the meditation that ran through the entire experience. I have always explained to people that Nuad Boran is meditation for me, now it becomes more profound.

I enjoyed reading Volume 7 of Living Traditions. Paul Fowler's article on the emotional release his client experienced and Robert Henderson's "Thai Massage Beyond The Physical," (referencing Bob Haddad's earlier piece about work with an amputee client) both rang true with me. I went to work yesterday with these articles fresh in my mind.

My first client of the day is an older man who has been coming to see me every two weeks for almost a year. He doesn't really appreciate the meditative aspect of Nuad Boran, he often talks during a session, he keeps me updated on his wife's health too, and he arrives & departs quickly.

One day he told me his wife's health was deteriorating and that the only touch he receives is massage because all he & his wife can do is hold hands because she is in so much pain.

As I worked on his left hip/adductor area which is chronically tight, a thought drifted through me: "feminine side" - and as I moved deeper I realised my client had begun to cry. As I continued to work with deep gentle movements that emphasised the 'cradling' aspect of Nuad Boran, he continued to move in and out of emotions.

Before he left my office I offered a parting hug – my new year's resolution is to offer this to even my 'brisk' clients – he accepted it with enthusiasm & I was privileged to be able to offer my support and to receive his acceptance and feel a release of tension. He made a reference strikingly similar to Paul's client before his departure... along with a heartfelt "thank you".

These daily revelations - shared moments of release, relief of pain, joy in our bodies and supporting relationships - are why I love my practice of Nuad Boran.

*Kath Rutland, RTT, RYT
Alberta, Canada*



Letter to the Editor of Massage & Bodywork Magazine (USA)

Perry Garfinkel wrote an article for a major massage magazine that contained some erroneous information about traditional Thai massage. The following letter to the Editor was never printed by the magazine, though we feel it is important to share with the THAI community.

To the Editor,

I was pleased to see that Massage & Bodywork featured two articles on traditional Thai massage (*nuad boran*) in the January/February 2008 issue. The first one, written by Martin Misenhimer, a Registered Thai Therapist, conveyed the author's passion for his work and helped to dispel some common misperceptions about the practical applications of this ancient healing art.

The second article unfortunately lacked similar substance and effect, and conveyed some inaccurate information about the historical evolution of *nuad boran*. The author, Perry Garfinkel, claims that Thai massage "is said to have been brought to Siam" by the revered Ayurvedic doctor Jivaka Kumar Bhaccha, but in fact, Jivaka never set foot on Thai soil. The famous physician who attended the Buddha died in Rajgir, Bihar, India, hundreds of years before the earliest monks reached Southeast Asia to spread the Buddha's teachings.

Another incorrect inference is that traditional Thai massage "draws mostly on Ayurveda from India and acupuncture from China." While it is clear that Thai traditional massage and Thai medicine have been directly influenced by early Buddhist medicine, including ayurveda, it is highly unlikely that Chinese acupuncture had any influence at all on the practice of traditional Thai massage, and there is no proof to support such a claim.

I am surprised that the author would quote western-born spa managers at fancy tourist hotels in Thailand as if they were knowledgeable sources of information about traditional Thai massage and Thai medicine. The prominent header quote by the Four Season's regional vice president that "Thailand's spas are the new churches...meditation centers and... health clinics...all rolled up into one" is not only misleading but may also be construed as offensive to Thai culture and Thai Buddhism in general.

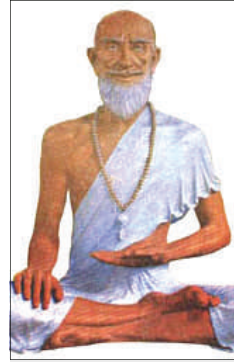
Five star hotels cater to rich westerners and pay their massage therapists a small fraction of the highly inflated costs they charge their wealthy guests. A treatment in a fancy western spa should never be compared to an experience at a "meditation center" or a traditional Thai "health clinic." The Thai massage therapists who give treatments at tourist hotels are usually trained to offer no more than a relaxing session of acupressure and stretching. On the other hand, traditional Thai doctors study for many years in regimented programs, and are trained to set bones, carry out *dosha* analyses, prepare and prescribe medicinal herbs for their patients, treat specific illnesses according to traditional guidelines, and also administer therapeutic Thai massage.

It's unfortunate that some of the bites of information presented to the general public in this article are neither historically accurate nor culturally or spiritually deferential. In the future, I hope Mr. Garfinkel takes better care to convey information about traditional Thai massage that is accurate and more respectful of Thai culture and traditions. - *Bob Haddad, RTT, Director*

THAI Welcomes New Members — as of Jan, 2009

Carrie Meyer, British Columbia, Canada
 Karin Welti, British Columbia, Canada
 Gary Bradley RTT, Devon, England
 Arlene Vogt, Cape May, New Jersey
 Lisa Stevens, Washington
 Tirza Bottema RTT, Valkenswaard, Netherlands
 Cynthia Smith, Park Rapids, Minnesota
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JIVAKA'S CORNER

Jivaka was the most celebrated doctor in India during the Buddha's time. Immediately after his birth, Jivaka was placed in a wooden box and left by his mother, a courtesan, on a garbage heap beside the road.

The same morning baby Jivaka was abandoned, Prince Abhaya, a son of King Bimbisara, happened to pass by the rubbish dump on his way to the palace. When the prince discovered that the baby was still alive, he was moved by compassion and ordered it to be brought up as his adopted son.

When he grew up, Jivaka studied medicine for seven years under a famous teacher. Soon his unusual skill as a physician and a surgeon became known. He was called upon to treat kings and princes, including King Bimbisara himself. But of all the distinguished people Jivaka attended to, his greatest pleasure was to attend to the Buddha, which he did three times a day. Jivaka helped in many ways. When Devadatta threw down a rock splinter and injured the Buddha's foot, it was Jivaka who healed him.

Realizing the advantages of having a monastery close to his house, Jivaka built one in his mango garden. He invited the Buddha and his disciples to the monastery, offered alms and donated the monastery to the Buddha and the monks. After the blessing ceremony of this monastery, Jivaka attained the first stage of sainthood (*sotapanna*).



Thai Culture Spotlight: Giant Catfish of Chiang Rai

Every April and May in Hat Krai Village in Chiang Rai, Thai and Laotian fishermen become busier than usual. During this period they cast their 250 meter-long nylon nets in search of the giant Mekong catfish known as *pla buk*. This "king of the Mekong River" reaches a size of 3 meters (10 feet) and at 15 years old can weigh up to 300 kilos (620 pounds). During this period of the year, the fish migrate up the river to mate and spawn. Unfortunately, they also become victims of the traps laid by fishermen from two countries.

Before beginning the hunt, Brahmin rituals are held in order to please the *pla buk* Father spirit. It is believed that the success of the entire fishing season depends partially on the opening ceremony. After performing the rituals, the fishermen build temporary bamboo shelters on islands in the river. After each boat crew sacrifices a chicken and home made liquor to the guardian spirit of their boat, they burn a special herb to drive away the evil spirits from their net. Now the hunting can finally begin.

It is said that the flesh of *pla buk* is rich in protein and nourishes the brain more than any other animal, and it is believed that anyone who tastes the fish will become more intelligent and live a long life. Because of this, the meat has become a favorite and expensive dish, which is served in leading restaurants in nearby provinces and also in Bangkok. Each season 25-30 giant catfish are caught by fishermen of the two countries.

The fishing season also attracts a lot of attention from both local and foreign tourists who are eager to catch a glimpse of the freshwater monster. Unless there is over-fishing, the annual ceremony and hunt of the giant *pla buk* will hopefully continue for many years to come.



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Inside you'll find great information on traditional Thai massage



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*Ajahn Pichet performs an arm stretch
sometimes known as the "water pump."*