



LIVING TRADITIONS

Newsletter of the Thai Healing Alliance International - Volume 5, 2008

Thai Massage Retreat & Conference

By Hillary H. Olsen

Extraordinary moments can arise when we stay present and remain open to things as they happen and unfold. The THAI retreat in June 2007 was a momentous and special experience because at every moment and at every turn there were wonderful "unfoldings" that took place. The Thai massage community came together in a non-partisan fashion for the continued growth and awareness of Thai massage at local, national, and international levels.

The retreat took place June 21-25, 2007 in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, at Camp New Hope, a lovely setting in the pine forest. In attendance were students, practitioners and teachers from 17 different U.S. states and 3 Canadian provinces, as well as Thai massage professionals from Sweden and Germany. It was rare and inspiring to see so many qualified practitioners gather together - leaving their egos at the door - to honor and respect each other. The instructors for the retreat were Janice Vitavec, Rose Griscom, David Weitzer, Hans Lütz, and Bob Haddad. Two workshops were held each day in different buildings, and one special presentation was given at mid day, where we all gathered together. Opening and closing ceremonies included chanting the *Om Namō* - not merely reciting it - which many of us had not done before. During the course of the four days, participants shared techniques, learned different approaches, and encouraged each other in the growth of our individual practices.

There were so many memorable moments during this retreat, and I'm sure each of us has a personal story to tell. These are some of my personal highlights:

The first evening we showed a Thai film, "*The Overture.*" Because of technical difficulties, the English subtitles did not appear on the screen, but instead of stopping the film, one of our Thai-speaking participants began translating. Not only did she translate what was happening in the movie, but she also educated us on aspects of Thai culture and history that were relevant to the story. It was wonderful to sit and listen to Sourī share her cultural knowledge with us. The experience was simply magical.

Our daily activities, workshops, and lunch took place at a retreat center called Camp New Hope. It wasn't until writing this article that the name's significance dawned on me: New Hope. Could we have asked for a better location name to typify and describe the inaugural THAI retreat? With the newness and freshness of a child - a blooming flower, dewy grass - practitioners and instructors held the first retreat with new hope at New Hope. With the beginner's mind that Buddhism emphasizes, we were doing this together, starting on a new path as unique individuals within a larger, supportive community.

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For the Friday evening social event, the Thai Healing Alliance organized local musicians and contra dancers to teach us how to shake and move the traditional way. Contra dance is a traditional early-American folk dance that incorporates partner movements and group formations, and all the dance steps are led by a caller. It was so much fun to let loose and to hoot and holler!

On Saturday there was a forum about THAI and about the future of traditional Thai massage. After a spirited discussion on relevant matters and legal issues, David Weitzer asked everyone to join hands. When people gather with different ideas, strong opinions often arise which may sometimes divide us, but David reminded us that regardless of our personal opinions, we should always maintain peace and love in our hearts for our fellow practitioners. *continued next page...*

Thai massage on an amputee client

By Bob Haddad

I am currently giving regular Thai sessions to a leg amputee, and I'd like to share my experiences with the THAI community. The client, a sixty year old man, had suffered from leg pain over a period of years and his cancer went largely misdiagnosed until it had already metastasized. The entire left leg and part of his pelvis were eventually amputated in 2007 in a procedure called hemipelvectomy, and flaps of skin from his buttocks were folded over each other and grafted over the stump. Currently on chemotherapy, he walks on crutches, and he has begun regular Thai treatments to aid in his recovery and to increase his mobility.

For our first session I wanted to get comfortable with the afflicted area and to be aware of any residual soreness or pain. A thorough visual inspection of the stump and the incision and skin graft areas helped me to feel more confident. I tried to feel where the sen lines were residing in the stump, and at which point each of the major lines had been interrupted. I tried to imagine how his energy might be stuck there, and which types of Thai manipulations I could use to increase energy flow to the affected area. As I thumb-pressed the stump, I realized that I could apply quite a bit of pressure to the area, and that helped me to relax, knowing I would not be hurting him. I covered up the stump, knelt at his feet and prayed silently for his well-being. As I rubbed my hands together and opened my eyes, suddenly I was faced with a dilemma. How should I begin my work? I couldn't palm press both feet. I couldn't even touch both of his legs at the same time. *continued next page...*



David Weitzer demonstrates an arterial compression at the THAI Retreat, June 2007.

THAI Retreat, continued....

With closed eyes, connected hands, and open hearts, tears and laughter enveloped and united all of us. We were reminded that beyond everything else, love is what will keep us united and growing as a community.

On Sunday there was a dedication ceremony to all of our teachers and lineages. The ceremony fell on the anniversary of Asokananda's death - certainly no coincidence. Everyone shared personal stories of their teachers, and we honored them each by name and expressed gratitude for those who have helped us on our paths.

It is through our honor and respect for the tradition and for our teachers that we have come together in THAI. It is clear that we have a responsibility to carry this tradition into a post-modern culture. Thai healing traditions must not be lost, and every lineage should be honored and respected. As we do this, we will continue to grow - spiritually, mentally and physically - so we can give our best to our clients and to the Thai massage community. Special gratitude must also be given to each of the teachers at this Retreat, and to Bob Haddad, for his vision and patience, and for all he has done to help bring us together as a community.



Regional Thai massage gatherings planned for 2008

Next International Retreat & Conference in 2009

Due to the success of the 2007 THAI Retreat, plans are underway to hold regional events in September 2008 in British Columbia, Canada, and the Midwest and Northeast USA. THAI hopes to sponsor a variety of events for its members and for the general community. For more information on the Canada event, see page 9 of this newsletter. For more information contact Kristin Nuttall: membership@thaihealingalliance.com

Amputee, continued...

If I worked only on the remaining leg, how would I balance the energy on the other side? After a few seconds, I decided that somehow, someway, I had to work with both of my hands. I needed to do my dance on his body, whether or not his leg existed in the physical realm. I rationalized that his energy existed on a metaphysical level in that truncated leg, and that it needed to be addressed, not neglected. I had often heard about phantom sensations in amputee victims - in fact, he had told me several times about strange sensations of tingling, pain and even itching at various points along the missing leg. I was curious and excited... and a bit apprehensive.

As if by natural impulse, I began to palm press both feet; one visible, one not. I started with simultaneous palm pressing, but I began to alternate at one point. My usual sense of rocking and movement helped to fuel me forward as I focused and imagined the missing leg there in front of me, needing to be touched and healed. As I proceeded upward, one hand on his right inner leg lines and the other hand on the floor, I had a strong sensation that something was wrong. I wasn't feeling connected to the energy on his left side. I reasoned that if his left leg were actually there in physical form, that his medial sen lines would not be lying flat on the floor... they would be about 6 inches upward and at an inward angle. I lifted my right hand off the ground, and I began to "feel" for his leg in the air, at the same height of his other calf. My palm presses suddenly became balanced, and my shoulders fell into alignment. I was actually palm pressing in the air, and the thought of it brought a smile to my face! Only a few days earlier at the THAI Council meetings in the mountains of Colorado, we were joking about making THAI t-shirts with the words "What Would Jivaka Do?" That thought made me focus on my Jivaka altar, and gazing at his bronze image and at the photos of my teachers Asokananda and Pichest, I felt a validation that helped me through this unusual session.

I began to work the phantom leg in exactly the same way I worked on the physical leg. When I palm pressed the real leg, I also pressed the phantom leg. And then, as I was walking up the physical leg, I felt a strong vibration midway up the medial thigh. As is customary in Pichest-style work, I stopped and directed all my energies to that area and located a big energy blockage with my thumbs. The energy was very strong, and it was rapidly intermittent, sending waves of vibrations through my hands and into the ether. I felt *sen kalathari* melting under my fingers, and I eased my pressure a bit in order to be more sensitive. As I released the pressure and focused inward, my client spoke. He had begun to feel his phantom leg come alive. It was tingling, he said, and it felt very good. There was no pain, no soreness, no itching, just a sense of presence that he hadn't felt since the amputation. As he said this aloud, his entire body immediately relaxed, and he began breathing deeply. His facial expression changed from apprehension and sadness to peacefulness and ease. Aside from the obvious physical restrictions, the treatment proceeded normally, and I felt much more at ease, knowing that his entire energetic body was being affected by our work together.

As I continue to work with him, I have felt much more confident, and he continues to open up to the work. I have also learned how to modify my techniques and to improvise in order to work with him more effectively. We've done assisted cobras in prone position, spinal twists with my leg draped over his stump, I've worked both sets of his back lines in side-lying position, and I've been using my feet and toes in creative ways to attend to his needs.

I am excited to be exploring *nud boran* with him and to be sharing this time in our lives together. Although I feel much more confident than I did during that first session, I suspect that from time to time a recurrent thought will come to mind when I work with him What would Jivaka do ?



LETTERS TO AND FROM THAI

Protecting the Thai Therapist's Energy System

Dear THAI,

I have received the THAI Basic Member welcome package with great honour and gratitude. When I entered the THAI archives, I also understood how and why I got my last injury.

One of my clients is a Parkinson's patient with serious leg issues and problems with his limbs in general. One day, after doing extensive work on his leg lines, I woke up the next morning and literally had to crawl to my front door steps and call for a cab. I simply could not walk, and I had to buy and begin to use cane. My leg was fully out of order, and the next day my arm and hand were numb. I couldn't write or type.

I found information about negative energy on the THAI website, I began using Asokananda's suggested exercises, and I was back in business within 5 days. It's now 4 weeks later, and I'm still a bit stiff but almost back to normal. What a great man and what a great vision! So for my next study I have the option to go to Sunshine Massage School, that's clear, and my very next time would be with Ajahn Pichet. Now I can plan for further study if time and space allows me.

Thank you so much for your helpful information. May Buddha bless you and may the heavenly spirits be with you and may they protect you. We will be in touch,

Kob khun kab,

Peter, from Holland

Negative experiences with a teacher that is not a THAI member (all names have been withheld)

Hi THAI,

I believe (you know about) my situation. I took a month long intensive with (name withheld) in March 2007. I completed levels 1-5 and level 6 (the final 2 days) was canceled due to his poor health.

I was promised hard copies of my certificates in the mail within a week of the class cancellation which I have not seen yet (I have emails from them documenting this assurance). I want nothing further to do with (this person) at this point. The majority of my experience ... was unsatisfactory and I feel the best thing to do is to walk away from the situation. I will go into further detail if you need me to but would prefer not to, at this point I can say that his behavior was unprofessional, erratic, and I would never refer anyone to him for instruction or bodywork due to my personal experiences with both.

I am hoping to further my Thai training with THAI Instructors as well as with teachers in Thailand, and I hope to...get recognition at some point through THAI.... I would greatly appreciate any advice you might have regarding my situation and how I might be able to go about getting connected with (THAI).

Namaste,

(name withheld)

Inaccurate information on traditional Thai massage

Greetings,

One of our members referred your web site to me, asking if I could help to clarify what she thought was a textual inaccuracy on your web site. I hope you don't think badly of me for contacting you. It is truly in the spirit of friendship, and with the hopes of providing some clarity for the sake of *nuad boran* around the world.

In several parts of your web site, you refer to traditional *nuad phaen boran* as having influences in Tibetan medicine. As far as is known, this is not true. The Tibetan medicine system was and is quite different than the Indian Ayurvedic system which paved the base of knowledge that would later evolve into traditional Thai medicine. The Buddha was born in what is current day southern Nepal, but spent most of his life further south, in India. He spent a long period of time in Rajgir, Bihar (current day India) where he befriended Jivaka Kumarbhaccha, who eventually built a monastery for the first *sangha*. Jivaka was born in northern India but studied medicine in Taksila (current day Pakistan) before he began his professional practice.

There seems to be no evidence of traditional Thai massage or the Thai medicine system having been influenced by indigenous Tibetan medicine. If you know something to the contrary, it would certainly be good to hear about it. Jivaka is indeed mentioned in ancient Tibetan books, (and in Chinese and other Asian cultures' books as well) but only with regard to his relationship with the Buddha. The earliest mentions of Jivaka's practice in early Ayurvedic medicine come from India, not Tibet.

We'd love to hear from you, and we'd like to take this opportunity to invite you to join the Thai Healing Alliance. THAI maintains an archive of historical information on Jivaka, Thai healing traditions, Theravada Buddhism and other related items of research. We hope we have been helpful in clarifying the historical information associated with what is known today as traditional Thai massage.

Best wishes,

Bob, for THAI

A THAI Member's respect for his teacher

I just wanted to let you know that my studies with Pichet are going really well - so well that I'm afraid the bad news is that I won't be able to make it to the THAI Retreat in June - but the good news...well...

My first meeting with Pichet was very positive. He sensed that my heart was open right away - and from this point on I have felt as if I have been adopted by him. By the end of the first week with him, he asked me to come sit in front of him while the other students were practicing - he then performed a ritual with chanting and moving his arms and writing letters/symbols on my forehead and top of head with a stick - had me repeat mantra many times and quickly and loudly. I felt myself breathing from my core for the first time - all of my tension gone completely.

This is the way Pichet chose to teach me how to meditate...he is teaching me how to take care of myself before I can take care of others...how to be strong and unmoving as things pass before my senses...and not to hold on to things...letting them pass away...I am very grateful...One of his assistants who has studied with him many years commented that this is a special experience...and that I am a gift to him and the class. I am blessed to be their gift. More blessings came for me as today I was asked to be involved in the daily course preparations - lighting candles and incense before each day of class - and also the preparations for the Monday class blessing ritual. It is a great honor for me to have this responsibility. Nevertheless, I continue to be blessed to learn many things about taking care of myself before I take care of others. My approach to the practice and teaching of this work has been transformed by Pichet's kindness towards me and his ability to approach this ancient healing tradition in a holistic, integrated way.

Thanks for your kindness in helping me prepare to experience this amazing season of learning with Pichet. My regrets for not being able to meet you in person at the retreat, but I trust our paths will cross in the future when the timing is right.

With loving kindness,

Jon



Chanting the Om Namō

Transcribed for Thai Healing Alliance International

3 Om Na mo Shi va go si-la sa a hang
2
1

3 ru-ni pa
2 ka ko sa sa ta-nang o-sa-ta
1

3 ti so ri
2 pa man-tang pa su ya-jan-tan
1

3 pa se mi
2 Go-ma-la to ka wan-ta
1 pa si

3 ta-so mi
2 ban to me ro-ha ma-na ho
1 ti su a su

3 wa ma-nu na-mu
2 yo-te nang yo-pro-ma mo
1 pi sa pi ta

3 ha na mi
2 yo-nak pa-na-nang pi-nin-si-ang hang
1 pi su

3 na Pu ya na na na na tien
 2 mo ta von vien sa tit sa
 1

3 na na-we na
 2 e ma-ma vien pai-tan-vien
 1 hi

3 na ha ma-ma na Pu ya
 2 vien-ma ku e ma-ma yong mo ta
 1 hi pi

3 na na-wa pa ti vi san
 2 ro-kha ya na ti
 1 a



Chanting the Om Namō

Most serious practitioners of *nuad boran* are familiar with the traditional prayer that is offered to the founding father, Jivaka Kumarbhaccha. This mantra, passed down over many generations in the Pali language, is often recited aloud by students, practitioners and teachers before the start of a Thai massage class or even silently before beginning a session.

But not many of us know the precise melody in order to chant this prayer. Many long term students and practitioners who have studied where this mantra is chanted (such as with Ajahn Pichest Boonthumme or at the Old Medicine Hospital) are familiar with the basic tones of inflection, but perhaps not the precise melody.

The Thai Healing Alliance has transcribed the melody so it can be made available to THAI members and the greater Thai massage community. It is transcribed from a version sung by Pichest Boonthumme, and is annotated in an easy, 3-line format that can be followed by everyone. The solid black lines guide you from one note to the next, and the dashed lines prepare you for the first note of the next line. The final syllable slurs slightly downward. Please photocopy these pages and share this traditional chant with your Thai massage teachers, colleagues and students.

Interview with Sunshine Massage School, Chiang Mai

The following are excerpts from an interview conducted by Bob Haddad with Max Scheuermeier, Founder of Sunshine Massage School (SMS) in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

THAI: Thank you for your time, and for agreeing to this interview.

SMS: And thank you for the opportunity.

THAI: You are the school's founder, but you don't have an extensive background in traditional Thai massage. How and why did you start Sunshine Massage School?

SMS: My involvement in Thai Massage began with a 12-day training program created by Asokananda, which was held in a Lahu village 70 kilometers outside of Chiang Mai. It was during this training that I met Asokananda, and we quickly became friends. As an extension of this friendship, I provided him with technical support for several books that he was preparing for publication. The programs that Asokananda established in the Lahu village offered a particular type of life experience to participants. I saw an opportunity to offer a similar type of training in a city setting, allowing students to study Thai massage while experiencing the vibrant city of Chiang Mai. Asokananda was a constant presence and source of guidance before and during the entire process of opening the school.



*The staff of Sunshine Massage School.
Max appears at far right. (photo courtesy SMS)*

THAI: In a short period of time, SMS has become well known for the quality and diversity of its courses and workshops. Please tell us about the programs of study at the school.

SMS: Our first goal is to offer high quality Thai massage teaching. I need to give credit to our teachers for the quality of training the students tell us they receive here. We are fortunate to have excellent teachers on staff. In addition to our standard 10-day courses, we help students determine their individual goals and then create individualized training programs for them, including private training sessions. Soon we'll be launching a training program for individuals that wish to teach Thai Massage. We don't believe that merely studying a given number of hours in a classroom automatically qualifies someone to be a teacher. Learning to be a good teacher is an organic process. Our program is built around the training curriculum that we use to qualify our own teachers at Sunshine Massage School.

THAI: Few people know about how things magically came together in order to construct the school building. Please tell us the story in your own words.

SMS: In late 2002, I made a commitment to start a Thai massage school in Chiang Mai based on Asokananda's teachings. I began soliciting funds from the existing network of people who had known or worked with Asokananda over the years, and from his own personal friends and business associates. But more money was needed before final plans and construction could begin. I was introduced to Jasmine, a spiritual healer and a builder of homes and buildings. After meeting Jasmine, I became convinced that she was the right person for the job, but I couldn't understand how she could possibly construct the school with the limited funds that I had available. Within two weeks, Jasmine had arranged bank financing for the balance of the construction costs, and had prepared an architectural plan for the building. Construction of the school was completed in five months and the school opened on 1 November 2004. The building is designed in traditional Thai style and *feng shui* principles are integrated into the design of the school building. The light and open feeling creates an environment that facilitates a relaxed learning experience for the students. Students frequently comment on the positive energy they feel while attending the school.

THAI: Tell us about the staff and the teachers at the school. Who are they, and how did you put the team together?

SMS: Magical energy is the only way that I can describe how the school staff came together. Ralph and Sicha were the first teachers when we opened our doors in November 2004. They were excellent teachers, and they set the standard for others to follow. Ohm was recommended to me by a friend of mine who was extremely pleased by a massage she had received from her. She is known for her perpetual smile and laughter in the corridors of the schools. Dot is known for her gentle Thai massage teaching style and broad knowledge of herbs and their healing qualities. Yan is a recent teacher with a tireless desire to improve his knowledge and to provide the students with the best possible training. Puk had taught Thai massage at other schools, and she inquired about a position because she had heard that the school had a good reputation. Rich has a background in Swedish massage, Yoga, and Thai Massage and he has a unique ability to assess students' needs and then tailor training sessions to meet those needs. Since Asokananda's passing, I receive professional advice from highly qualified teachers; Itzhak, Felicity, Robert, Arnaud, and many others.

THAI: What makes studying at SMS unique, and how are Asokananda's teachings reflected in the curriculum?

SMS: We strictly follow the structure of Asokananda teachings, which have proven to be an effective and efficient way for Westerners to learn the basics of Thai massage. But there are a few other things that make SMS unique. We have a defined core-training curriculum so that there is consistency in all classes. Beyond that, the teachers are encouraged to apply their own unique approaches to the teachings; each teacher has a spiritual foundation from which they teach.

THAI: Is there a direct connection between the Lahu village school and Sunshine Massage School, or do they operate independently of each other?

SMS: The Sunshine Massage School in Chiang Mai is a partner in the Sunshine Network. Like other Sunshine Network partners, the school is run independently following the spirit and tradition of Asokananda's teachings.

THAI: Aside from the beginners and advanced Thai massage courses, SMS often sponsors specialty courses and unique workshops. How did this come about, and what are some of the most interesting workshops that have been offered recently?

SMS: Three workshops that come to mind: *Thai Massage meets Osteopathy*: This class gives a clearer understanding of the types of manipulations that can be done with Thai massage and a greater awareness of firm yet sensitive touch during the practice. *Thai Massage - Western Therapeutics*. This class focuses on how to assess each individual body and determine how specific Thai massage techniques can be used to empower clients to help heal themselves. *Fieldwork*: This course allows the student to start to use skills in a practical environment - how to relieve pain, how to mobilize joints, and how to work with emotional issues.

THAI: How would you characterize students who come to take classes in Chiang Mai these days? Do you see a trend toward more serious ongoing study, or do you have the impression that many students come to Thailand looking to learn Thai massage in only a few weeks?

SMS: Our focus and reputation is that we offer quality education that is designed for serious students. We are receiving more and more requests for extended training programs. We sometimes facilitate educational visas that allow the serious student the time to extend their stay in Chiang Mai and to focus on their training needs.

THAI: Do you have any suggestions or advice for Thai massage practitioners and students who are planning a trip to Thailand in upcoming months?

SMS: There is not one school that can meet the needs of all students. Do your home work and find the school that appears to meet your personal goals but also look for a school that feels right for you. Researching the internet for information on schools and speaking to others that have trained in each place can help you reach a final selection. If time permits, visit each of the schools that you are considering.

THAI: How do you expect SMS to grow over the next few years?

SMS: To date we have grown through the recommendations of our own students. We are pleased that they feel strongly enough about SMS that they would recommend our school to others. Quality programs taught by excellent teachers are at the very foundation of our school. Aside from our regular programs, two special trainings will be offered in 2008 in Pai, a quiet country village in the northern mountains. I intend to provide similar trainings over the years. I am always looking to find interesting and innovative ways to offer unique educational opportunities to our students.

THAI: Is there any other information you'd like members of THAI to know? Do you have any suggestions or further comments?

SMS: I continue to see an increasing number of people from all over the world beginning to learn Thai Massage. I am delighted to be a part of the continued growth of this ancient practice. As in any professional practice, continuing education is the foundation of success. As Thai Massage grows and becomes more and more recognized, it is important that there be an organization to help guide and give direction to this growth. I feel that the Thai Healing Alliance can play a strong role in providing this guidance.



Sunshine Massage School in Chiang Mai. (photo courtesy SMS)



THAI HEALING IN ACTION



Mary (left) receives hands-on guidance in Jap Sen techniques from Janice at the 2007 THAI Retreat & Conference.



Please help THAI grow
Just a few hours a month will help

- Membership Committee
- Newsletter & Archives
- Graphics & Web Design
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If you have interest in any of the above areas, please contact:
info@thaihealingalliance.com



Janice Vitavec (Spirit Winds) and Rose Griscom (ITM-USA) relax during the THAI Retreat.

This is just to say thank you once again for the enormous effort, vision and commitment you and the others put into the THAI Conference. From beginning to end, I was so impressed with the handling of organizational details and of course the workshops themselves. As I grasped the level of sacrifice, making for the feeling of generosity and gratitude that permeated the Retreat, I was very touched. Beginning and ending each day with prayers was such a group-building experience. May THAI flourish!
Namasté -

Marilyn Hart, Massachusetts

Thank you so much for such a wonderful weekend. I can't thank you enough for giving me the opportunity to attend the workshop. I learned so much that weekend and made new friendships.

I felt the greatest presence of blue light and energy while I was at the THAI Retreat. This was the most egoless event I have ever attended. The teachers gave so selflessly. Everyone there was a healer. I felt their great energy and I was speechless most of the time, in awe of it all.

I was lucky to witness a great energy release. It happened so fast when she was adjusting her wrist, and we were gathered around her, I think 7 of us in all. Janice asked us to touch her and to be there for her and it was so powerful I actually felt the energy go through all of us as we held hands encircling her, I nearly squeezed Mary's hand off. (Sorry Mary!)

It took awhile for the block to release and leave her....(but) we were all involved in helping her come back. I don't know if I can put into words how wonderful it made me feel to see the eyes of this person clear up, becoming herself once again.

What you have done to maintain the integrity of the work is very much appreciated. Wishing you continued success and wellness!

Regards - Lee Raymond, Texas

The THAI Retreat in Chapel Hill NC was amazing. For me it was one of the greatest experiences I have had in my lifetime so far. I met so many wonderful people with the same interests and spirit. But maybe more important for me was that the Retreat allowed me to deeply know a spiritual guide - Jivaka That intimacy was missing in my work and practice. Now I can really focus. Special thanks to all of the teachers Rose, Janice, David and Bob who helped me to open up a lot and give me the support I needed to feel safe and loved.

Thank you. - Hans Lütz,
Bonn, Germany

This was such a great event and I wish it could happen every year.

Peace -
Kim Marie Cramer, Texas

Awesome! What a superb learning experience and time of sharing! I am already looking forward to the next THAI Conference. My sincerest gratitude to our teachers and fellow students.

In health and prosperity.
Dr. Dean, Florida

In my opinion, THAI's inaugural retreat and conference was a resounding success. I arrived in a fragile state of mind and health and I left feeling like a new person, thoroughly engaged in the art of Nuad Bo'Rarn, delighted to have experienced the warmth and vibrancy of the many people I met there, inspired and opened by the lessons shared by the teachers who graciously gave of their time, energy and hearts in order to bring greater learning and ideas to THAI members.

The energy we created, especially during the singing of the Om Namoh, was something we can all treasure, share and hopefully keep growing through our own practice and through the efforts of THAI around the world. -

Kob Khun Kha -
Kath Rutland, Alberta, Canada

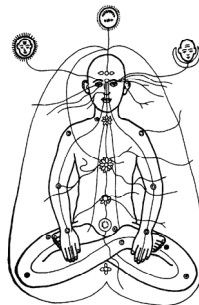
BECOME A THAI SPONSOR

THAI Sponsors contribute to the growth of traditional Thai massage around the world. They also help THAI grow stronger in order to provide more benefits to our members.

Thanks to our new and renewing sponsors, Jill Roberts (Delaware) Peter de Munter (Netherlands), Robert Gerry, III and Kim Cramer (Texas), Kristin Nuttall (Canada), Tanya Boigenzahn (Minnesota) and Rick Gold (California).

You can become a sponsor for as little as \$150 US. You will receive a listing on the THAI web site, the Living Traditions masthead and THAI letterhead. In addition, you can choose from a variety of gifts such as books, Jivaka statues, sen charts and Thai herbal teas.

Please see the THAI web (under the "collaborate" tab) for complete details on how you can become a THAI Sponsor. Please make a donation today —



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Tanya Boigenzahn

lives in: Minneapolis, Minnesota
studied with:
Jonas Westring and
Pichest Boonthumme



Tanya is a THAI-Approved Instructor who teaches and practices in Minneapolis. Tanya shares a touching testimonial: "I had a client I had been working with for eight months who was going through infertility issues. We worked together every week with a combination of Thai massage and energy work. After several failed attempts at fertility treatments, she finally opted to quit the drugs and focus on her own self healing. She became pregnant naturally and invited me to be her Thai massage therapist at the birth of her beautiful baby boy! Both she and I feel strongly that the sen line therapy of Thai massage was crucial in her ability to eventually hold a pregnancy to term."

Rebecca Hagman

lives in: Gilbert, Arizona
studied with:
Tanya Boigenzahn, and
THAI 2007 Retreat faculty



Rebecca is a Basic Member of THAI who owns White Crane Yoga Studio and practices Thai Massage in a new location in Arizona. She attended the THAI 2007 Retreat and hopes to travel to Thailand in the near future to study on a deeper level. She says: "I believe that Thai Massage is a unique, therapeutic modality because of the way it combines poses, stretching, and sen line techniques. As a practitioner, Thai Massage is beneficial for me because I don't experience any discomfort when I'm engaged in a session. I suffer from back problems and fibromyalgia, and I feel blessed to be able to practice a modality that enables me to feel free and open in my own body while being truly focused on the receiver."

Canada Thai Massage Retreat

Canada's first THAI-sponsored regional retreat is scheduled for early September 2008 in Whistler, British Columbia. This event will unite practitioners of all lineages to exchange Thai bodywork, share experiences, and receive supervised instruction. We will participate in workshops and try to create a network for client referrals and professional support.

All Canadian practitioners of Thai massage are welcome to attend, and non-THAI members and those from the USA and other countries are encouraged to take part.

Study and practice hours count toward advancing levels of membership in THAI, and certificates will be awarded.

Because of limited space, registration will be on a first-come, first-serve basis.

A short distance away from the renowned resort of Whistler, there is access to many lakes, hiking trails, waterfalls, all surrounded by old growth forest and majestic views. It will be a beautiful setting for a regional Thai massage summit and an autumn vacation in the mountains. The location is Sea To Sky Retreat Centre, between Vancouver and Whistler, BC. Their web site is www.siddharthasintent.org

For more information about this 3-day event to nurture your practice, contact Kristin Nuttall, tel: 604-905-9452 or e-mail: membership@thaihealingalliance.com

JIVAKA'S CORNER



The Jivaka cult: Some common misrepresentations surrounding the founding father

The source figure and patriarch of traditional Thai Massage is Jivaka

Komarbhacca, (sometimes spelled Kumarbhacca). In Thailand he is also known Shivaga Kormapaj or simply "Gomalapaj", and is claimed by the Thai people as the father of their healing and medicine traditions. Jivaka is mentioned in ancient texts as a renowned physician and healer who treated many important people of his day, and who became a devotee of his contemporary, the Buddha. It is written that he traveled with, and personally treated the Buddha, and that he donated food and free medical services to the *sangha*, the Buddhist monastic order. But there are several common misrepresentations about Jivaka and about the early spread of Ayurvedic healing principles in Thailand. One false claim is that Jivaka personally transmitted the earliest practice of Thai massage to Thailand. But Jivaka never set foot in Thailand, since Buddhism began to spread from India (now southern Nepal) to Southeast Asia hundreds of years after his own death. Another often-heard claim is that Jivaka taught Buddhist monks how to administer Thai massage, and that the monks in turn spread this healing art throughout Thailand. Jivaka, however, never taught monks how to practice medicine, and furthermore, it was probably not monks who practiced the earliest forms of *Nuad Boran* in Thailand, but rather the Ayurvedic doctors who accompanied and treated the monks as they spread Buddhism and sought converts.

It's not surprising that some confusion exists today regarding early Thai medicine and Jivaka, since disparate accounts of his life and work appear in early Buddhist scriptures from other areas of Southeast Asia, China and Tibet. These accounts are often colored by the indigenous healing traditions of each area. According to some early Chinese Buddhist paintings, for example, Jivaka is shown with a bag of acupuncture needles in his hand.

Jivaka is revered today as the father of Thai medicine, and most traditional practitioners, teachers and schools begin a session or a class with a prayer of homage to him, and a supplication that his direct intercession be channeled through the practitioner to the receiver.

- Bob Haddad



NEW STUDY REQUIREMENTS FOR THAI HEALING ALLIANCE

At the THAI meetings held at Shambhala Retreat Center in Colorado last September, THAI Executive Council members unanimously voted to raise study and practice requirements for all levels of membership in THAI - except Basic Members - effective November 30, 2007. All new members who join THAI are subject to the new standards. All current THAI members who upgrade to a higher level must also comply with the new standards.

Changes include a higher number of formal study hours, the submission of detailed session notes, and 25 hours minimum continuing education study for each two-year membership cycle.

The changes that take place are as follows:

Practitioner / Registered Thai Therapist [RTT] + Minimum requirements are raised from 120 to 150 hours. + Applicants must submit copies of 50 detailed session notes with the application. + Written descriptions of each session must include: a) client symptoms and complaints b) positions used (supine, prone, side, seated) and specific techniques employed, and c) general observations and findings. + Each member must complete 25 hours of continuing education training in Thai massage / Thai medicine, Thai herbal healing, or Thai cultural studies for every two year membership cycle.

Advanced Practitioner + Minimum requirements are raised from 240 to 270 hours. + An additional 10 hours of study must be related to Thai cultural disciplines. Applicants must comply with log requirements for RTT level (as above) unless they have already fulfilled that requirement by upgrading their membership in THAI. + Each member must complete 25 hours of continuing education training in Thai massage / Thai medicine, Thai herbal healing, or Thai cultural studies for every two-year membership cycle.

Instructor and Institution members + Minimum requirements are raised from 350 hours to 420 hours, and must include some study with THAI-approved instructors and schools. + No more than 30 of these 420 hours may be based on assistant teaching or apprenticeships. Signed certificates and transcripts for any such apprenticeships must be included with the application. + The applicant must have completed 20 additional hours of Thai cultural studies (such as those outlined in "Advanced Practitioner" above.) + Each member must complete 25 hours of continuing education training in Thai massage / Thai medicine, Thai herbal healing, or Thai cultural studies for every two year membership cycle.

Complete descriptions of requirements for each level of membership are available at www.thaihealingalliance.com

THAI welcomes new members

Dean Ribaud	Basic Member	Sharpes, Florida
Emely Weber, RTT	Advanced Practitioner	Little Current, ON Canada
Marilyn Hart, RTT	Practitioner	Lake Pleasant, Massachusetts
Nabila Welk, RTT	Advanced Practitioner	Las Palmas, Spain
Lynx Guimond	Basic Member	Maple Ridge, BC Canada
Sean Folster	Basic Member	Bronx, New York
Javier Levis, RTT	Practitioner	Buenos Aires, Argentina
David Roma, RTT	Advanced Pratictioner	Palm Beach, Florida
Kyra Russell	Basic Member	Cullowhee, North Carolina
Volker Nogradnik	Basic Member	Sulmeck-Greith, Austria
Jo Jensen	Basic Member	Armstrong, Iowa
Meg Turner	Basic Member	Sandy, Oregon
Mary Harris	Basic Member	Minneapolis, Minnesota
Sue Pfendler, RTT	Practitioner	Vancouver, Washington
Marnie See	Basic Member	Minneapolis, Minnesota
Souri Sisavath, RTT	Instructor	Houston, Texas
Clara Blennow-Nilsson, RTT	Practitioner	Stockholm, Sweden
Edward Kearney, RTT	Practitioner	Lewsburg, West Virginia
Katherine Pagels	Basic Member	Minneapolis, Minnesota
Tatyana Eaves	Basic Member	Antioch, Tennessee
Robert Halley	Basic Member	Unionville, ON, Canada
Mark Goldstein, RTT	Practitioner	Key West, Florida
Circle of Life Thai Massage	Institution	Fairmont Hot Springs, BC, Canada
Prasanga Lokuge	Basic Member	Minneapolis, Minnesota
Davor Haber, RTT	Instructor	Zagreb, Croatia
Nikolaos Christodoulou, RTT	Advanced Practitioner	Korinthia, Greece
Karen Foote, RTT	Practitioner	Orange Park, Florida
Peter de Munter, RTT	Practitioner	Amsterdam, Holland
Danielle Rainville	Basic Member	Chapel Hill, North Carolina
Colleen Connolly	Basic Member	Sebring, Florida
Sue Moyers	Basic Member	Chippenham, Wiltshire, England
Fiona Smith, RTT	Instructor	Stamford, Lincs, England
Rick Haesche, RTT	Practitioner	Chaplin, Connecticut
David Weitzer, RTT	Instructor	Beaverton, Oregon
Keely Higgins	Basic Member	Whistler, BC, Canada
Ralph Suba	Basic Member	Stuhr/Moordeich, Germany
Janice Moon	Basic Member	Poulsbo, Washington
Stacey Handleman	Basic Member	Houston, Texas
John Houston	Basic Member	Ukiah, California
Karen Stanberr	Basic Member	Parkstone, Poole, Dorset, England
Lee Raymond	Basic Member	Spring, Texas
Christine Kirby	Basic Member	Welwyn, Hertfordshire, England
Medical Aesthetics	Associate Member	New York, New York
Vickie Radovanic	Basic Member	Beachwood, Ohio
Luis Eduardo Musa, RTT	Advanced Practitioner	Buenos Aires, Argentina
Ana Killingstad	Basic Member	Orono, Minnesota
Erica Beichley, RTT	Practitioner	Raytown, Missouri

The above members joined THAI before September, 2007. Members who have joined since then will be featured in the next issue of the *Living Traditions* newsletter.

Thoughts on the THAI Retreat & Conference - By Paul Fowler

I participated in the first THAI Retreat & Conference and I wish to speak from my experience there. As a person not generally comfortable with 'organization', I went with a skeptical eye, wary of power, hypocrisy and bad intention. I also went because I love this practice of Thai massage. I am always looking to learn more and I am very interested in connecting to a larger community of practitioners; a group of people who all speak this beautiful language - a language of many accents, dialects and regional eccentricities. What I experienced was a profound immersion into the loving spirit of Thai massage.



Morning tai chi, in addition to yoga and silent meditation was available every day at the THAI Retreat & Conference. - photo: Bob Haddad

I first want to speak to the reverence that I felt there. Reverence for the teachers in Thailand who have passed down this work - Asokananda, Pichet, Mama Lek, and Chongkol, among many others, were all referenced and honored. Through ceremony and stories as well as through the teachers there that represented many of these approaches, there was the constant recognition that we owe our connection to this work to these and many others through the ages.

Next, by working with teachers who have trained under many of the current Thai practitioners in Thailand, we all got to experience a taste of what various teachers have brought to the table. In this way, many are more clear about what is possible in Thai massage and many have made decisions to study one lineage or another, based upon what spoke to them. This was a wonderful opportunity for people to get insight into various practices and see the connections between them. ITM teaches one style, Pichet another, Asokananda another, and so on. To see where they intersect gave us all a clearer and deeper understanding of Thai massage. To have strong, committed and open teachers of all these styles in one place was a wonderful opportunity for those of us who have only studied under one or two teachers - what a blessing that was !

What I found in speaking to the teachers themselves - Rose Griscom, Bob Haddad, Hans Lütz, Janice Vitavec and David Weitzer - was that they also were profoundly moved by the opportunity to meet with teachers that they had known about but had never met before, all of them practicing and teaching for many years. I believe that when we operate in our normal bubble, we tend to not trust those who are doing similar things, especially when they are doing it differently. Differences tend to get magnified, while what we all have in common tends to be less apparent. But when we meet and have a chance for face-to-face dialogue, those walls of ego and fear tend to melt....and that is exactly what happened at the THAI retreat. The spirit of Thai massage shone through so strongly. These teachers were all strong personalities, yet they approached each other with the utmost honor and respect, through their differences and similarities. All were deeply moved by their experiences and their connections to Thailand. By the way, none of the teachers were paid, and they all incurred their own travel expenses. I believe that they had no ulterior motives other than to share and be present at this seminal meeting.

Finally, I am not one to comment on the details of certification and all that. It is a difficult line to walk - to try to be an inclusive organization that respects all traditions, while at the same time creating standards that try to protect the integrity of the work as well as the public at large. As individual US states become more interested in licensure and regulation, it might be in our best interest to have a collective voice in that process. This is the society we live in, like it or not. I think that these are big issues that require input from everyone. But as we discuss this, we must remember to respect each other and constantly remind ourselves of the love that drives us all. If we can't do it, then who can?

We are all works in progress, we all have so much to learn, and at the end of the day, we are all walking together in the same direction. From what I can see, THAI is helping to create a Thai massage *sangha*. I recently read an interview in Tricycle magazine with Robert Sharf, Berkeley professor and Buddhist scholar. He was talking about how as Buddhism gets expressed in the west, the emphasis on individual experience has become primary. I will quote from the article. The question is asked, " What gets lost when primacy is given to individual spiritual experience? His answer - " the *sangha* gets lost! The community gets lost. If you view Buddhism as a matter of inner experience, you downplay its corporate dimension, those traditional resources that serve to deepen and extend the bonds of community and tradition." He continues, "the organized rule-bound and tradition-bound institution of the *sangha* provides a framework that, at least ideally, helps to efface egocentrism. The *sangha* literally embodies the Buddhist tradition; it transcends the self-concerns of any individual." He closes with this: "So we must ask whether Buddhism, when practiced without the ties of community and tradition, instead of mitigating our tendency towards narcissism, actually feeds it." Perhaps there is an aspect to this that deserves investigation, I don't know. But I do know that I feel much richer for the experience I had at the THAI Retreat & Conference and I, my clients and all who are and will be connected to me, will be better for it.



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Letters & Commentary

I am impressed with the idea that THAI is a non-profit, volunteer organization, whose main goal is to educate and share the true practice of Thai massage. - *Jennifer Barnett, Missouri*

I want to belong to a professional organization which supports practitioners and promotes good standards of Thai bodywork. - *Sue Moyers, U.K.*

Me inicié en la THAI para seguir avanzando en mi formación, y poder transmitirlo a otros de una forma responsable y conciente. - *Luis Musa, Argentina*

My teacher suggested that I join THAI. It shows my clients that I am serious about learning the art of Thai massage, and that I am dedicated to bettering myself and helping others. - *Vickie Radovanic, Ohio*

Continuing education is very important to me as well as maintaining the integrity of nuad boran. Thai massage has made a huge difference in my mother's health and the quality of life. - *Lee Raymond, Texas*

As a practitioner of nuad boran, membership in THAI gives me the hope that the integrity of these healing traditions will be preserved and protected. - *John Houston, California*

I had the opportunity to meet several members of THAI in Chiang Mai, and the benefits of becoming a member became obvious to me. - *Ralph Suba, Germany*

I believe that THAI can be a united voice that can protect and serve the sanctity of the work. Establishing guidelines and requirements empowers the individual and helps to protect the public. - *Rick Haesche, Connecticut*

THAI is the only group that has really got its act together to represent practitioners and teachers worldwide whilst upholding a high standard of practice and remaining true to the spirit and essence of the work - *Fiona Smith, U.K.*

I have chosen THAI because it doesn't impose schools or styles of Thai massage unlike other organizations. I have also joined because of the helpful information contained in the web site. - *Kamonchat Inthachomchuen, U.K.*

I joined THAI for enhanced credibility, since there is no organization in my country that recognizes Thai massage as a healing art. I want to be connected to like-minded people. - *Nikolaos Christodoulou, Greece*



Thai Healing Alliance International

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Inside you'll find great information on traditional Thai healing arts