

She was about to cross the street. Her grace and beauty emboldened me to stop and introduce myself. For some reason she has never been able to explain, she gave me her phone number.

Her name was Pratarporn Chiemwichit, from a prominent family in Thailand. She was here doing postgraduate work at Harvard.

We courted for six months. An extraordinary woman. She showered me with gifts. Asked for nothing in return except my love.

My parents were shocked. There had never been an Asian in our family, or anyone else's family they knew. They disapproved right up to the day we were married in 1963. Then – overnight – that ended. She was now their daughter-in-law and they quickly came to love her.

She returned briefly to Thailand to inform her family of our marriage. She wrote me that she would never leave me again.

The next year we went to Thailand together, touring Europe and the mid-East on the way. Then on to her homeland. A dizzying culture shock to me. Exotic customs, lush landscape and foods I had never eaten or even heard of before. My three year old Thai niece screamed in fright when we first met. She had never seen a 'foreigner' up close before.

I had a private audience with the King. His minister told me not to shake his hand but he came forward to shake mine. He was revered – still is – by all his people. His picture along with the national anthem brings everyone to attention at the end of every movie in Thailand. He told me of his great respect for teachers and his love for his people.

Our son, Ari, was born and we returned to Rhode Island. My wife resumed her medical career and I returned to teaching.

We had another son, Ricky, followed by a daughter, Leila. Work and kids. Those early years in Rhode Island sped by.

Then, my life was about to change again...

*(continued next month)*

