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## Thai King Has Passed



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SUPPORT PLEDGED



THAILAND

On Thursday, October 13, His Majesty, King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand, the ninth king of the Chakri dynasty, passed away at the age of 88. As the longest reigning monarch, he had served the people of Thailand for 70 years. For those who do not live in Thailand, it's hard to imagine the impact such a loss has on the country.

This king was not just a figurehead. He was a good king. He was a rare gentleman who set the standard for decorum, dignity, and civility. He had a deep concern for poor, marginalized and handicapped people. When he was 20 years old, he was in a serious car accident in which he lost the vision in his right eye. This engendered a particular concern for the blind, and the royal family even hosted parties for blind people in their home. Even street dogs came under the umbrella of his care, as he took several mixed-breed mutts into his home.

The king was a global citizen, born in Massachusetts, and raised by his mother in Switzerland after his father passed away when he was 2 years old. He was fluent in English, French, German and Thai and could read Latin and classical Greek. He graduated from university in Switzerland with a degree in law and political science. On a trip to Paris, he met Sirikit, the daughter of the Thai Ambassador to France, and they married in a simple ceremony in 1950, a week before the new monarch ascended to the throne. He has been a faithful, respectful and loving husband to Queen Sirikit, and they have four children and 11 living grandchildren (one grandchild tragically died in the 2004 tsunami). The family enjoyed skiing, tennis, diving and sailing and King Bhumibol was an avid sailboat designer.

King Bhumibol excelled at everything he put his mind to. During his reign, one of his major emphases was the widespread Royal Development projects. He personally developed sustainable agriculture programs, devised water management and crop substitution projects, and regularly went out to rural areas to survey, teach, and promote development.

He built national infrastructure, and supported small cottage industries. He also developed a patented technology to seed the clouds and make it rain during times of extreme drought that is still used in Thailand today. Whenever we hear the king's jets fly over during dry season, it's a cause for celebration because rain is likely to follow. The king also promoted what he entitled the "Sufficiency Economy", an anti-greed policy promoting moderation, hard work, and self-sufficiency with the goal of ensuring that everyone in Thailand has enough resources to live on.

The king was also a great advocate for the arts. He practiced painting, writing and photography and was often pictured with his camera. He was also a very accomplished musician. He was proficient in piano, clarinet, trumpet, flute, violin and guitar, but his favorite instrument was the saxophone, which he used to produce delightful improvisational pieces. He was drawn to jazz, particularly Dixieland Jazz, and composed almost 50 songs including Love at Sundown, which you can listen to here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qFjDJ50d7eI&list=PL90Tvou-ufRZUKQDn7S2JM4yYEEExqGdpg&index=16>

He also composed patriotic music and theme songs for three major universities. And every Friday evening during his younger years, the King and a group of young musician friends in a group called the A.S. Friday Musical Band performed live on broadcast radio. They also went out into the community to play for the people. He took the jazz group out to play in universities and rural areas, and was sometimes heard playing jazz in the forest or out on boats in the river. He played with Benny Goodman, Stan Getz, Lionel Hampton, Benny Carter, and the Preservation Jazz Hall Band. In the 1980s, he formed another group made up

of doctors, court officials, royal guards and security staff, most of whom had never played an instrument in their lives. He personally taught them how to play and eventually they established a brass band. The king also promoted traditional Thai music and cultural heritage, and personally funded a project to document and record traditional Thai musical scores.

Education was also a priority for King Bhumibol. The king ensured that education in Thailand emphasizes knowledge, wisdom and moral virtue. He personally presided over graduations and handed out the diplomas for every public university in Thailand. And when he became too frail to continue, his children, the royal crown prince and princesses assumed this responsibility.

Thailand is a constitutional monarchy. It is a democratic country with a king and queen, parliament, senate and prime minister. The king promoted democracy and vigorously opposed communism throughout his reign. He expressed political restraint and intervened in Thai politics only when he felt necessary. For example, in 1973, when pro-democracy demonstrators were fired on by soldiers, the king gave the protesters shelter in the palace, a move which led to the collapse of the administration of the prime minister at the time. King Bhumibol intervened again in 1992, when dozens of demonstrators were shot after protesting against an attempt by a former coup leader, Gen Suchinda, to become prime minister. The king called the general and the pro-democracy leader to appear in front of him, both on their knees as demanded by royal protocol, and chastised them. Suchinda resigned and subsequent elections saw the return of a democratic, civilian government. A devout Buddhist, the king has sought to promote peace throughout his lifetime.

The people of Thailand feel that they have lost their beloved national father. He was a steadying force for development and peace. He was an advocate for the poor. But more than that, he was a man who brought us great joy and celebration of life through his music. The world has lost one of the great leaders of our day. We in Thailand will be wearing black for the next month. Please pray with me for our Lord God's guidance and comfort for the people of Thailand in the coming weeks and months.

-Kit