

The Cover Story

The King and Queen & I

by Scot Cornwall

I did my undergraduate studies at St. Olaf College (Betty White was not there when I was!). Toward the middle of my sophomore year there (1965-1966) several study abroad opportunities were newly announced for the following year. One jumped out at me—a term in Thailand. I spoke with my parents; I applied and was accepted. The term was from August through January 1966-1967. Two weeks travel to and from to visit various important places on the way over & back.

I immediately thought this would be a marvelous way to expand my stamp collection. I could buy stamps in every country we went to. The countries included Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, and Taiwan (Republic of China). We were scheduled a half day with nothing planned in each city we visited. I saw my opportunity to find and buy stamps from each country we visited. There was no internet and few resources I knew of to find the addresses of the local philatelic office. I decided to ask at the hotels where we stayed, as the staff would be bilingual, and could give me directions to the main post office where I hoped to find a philatelic window.

My group of 14 students met at the San Francisco airport. We flew to Honolulu for an overnight. The next day there was great fun at Waikiki Beach with Diamond Head nearby. Then on to Tokyo. As we were going to be coming back to Tokyo on the return trip, I put off my first trip to a post office until Hong Kong. While in Hong Kong I bought one of each of the stamps available, which included the current definitive series with Queen Elizabeth II front and center from 5 cents to \$20.00 (Scott# 203-217) **[Figure A1, on front cover]**. I also bought several commemorative stamps. Then on to Thailand. Since we were to be here for most of the time, I put off finding and going to the central post office for several weeks. The definitives available included two sets featuring the king, Bhumibol Adulyadej (Scott# 348-362A, and 397-411A) with values from 5 satang-40 Baht **[Figure A2.1, on front cover]**. The Asian Games issue was also available (Scott# 442-449) **[Figure A2.2, on front cover]**.

The Thai Central Post Office was in the middle of Bangkok with many official buildings surrounding a grand plaza, which included an equestrian statue of the king's grandfather, Chulalongkorn. Chulalongkorn was the king who assumed the throne at the end of "King and I" movie and book. The Philatelic Office was in a corner of the ground floor, not well signed. I visited this office several times buying new issues available from late summer 1966-winter 1966/67. There were few issues available while I was there.

I went with some other students to Vientiane, Laos for part of our winter break in December. I bought several issues there, many with waxed paper affixed to the gum side to protect the gum from the humidity of Laos **[Figure A3, on front cover]**. I mailed an airmail post card to my parents, which took several months to get to Wisconsin! It arrived after I had returned. The issues I bought included most of the 1965-1966 issues, generally complete sets.

On our way home in January 1967, we stopped in Georgetown and Kuala Lumpur. I was able to buy all the Malaysian states flower issues from 1965, the national definitives depicting birds (Scott# 20-27) and most commemoratives from 1965 and 1966. On to Singapore [Figure A5] from Malaysia! The bird definitives were available (Scott# 62-29) as well as most issues from 1963-1966 [Figures A4.1 & A4.2, on front cover].

Manila was next. The Philatelic Office was the most extensive I encountered on my trip. Issues from the late 1950s to the most recent were available.

Highlights include most of the semi-postals and most of the commemoratives from 1963 through early 1967 [Figures A6.1 & A6.2].



Figure A5



Figure A6.1 & A6.2

bought many commemorative issues from 1965-1966. Hong Kong and Japan rounded out our travels. In Hong Kong on the return trip I bought some prohibited stamps from North Vietnam, North Korea, and People's Republic of China. To get these illegal issues through Customs, I hid them in the toes of shoes in my luggage. They were never found by Customs. I had to wait for Nixon to visit Mainland China to



Figure A7

acknowledge I owned them. I also picked up a few issues in Japan, but nothing like I was able to buy elsewhere.

I had bought a large stock book in Thailand into which I put all my purchases to store until I had time and inclination to mount them in stamp albums. Sometimes a friend would come with me to one of these offices and buy stamps for relatives or to mail post cards to friends and family.

Many of these purchases brought me back to stamp collecting after college, graduate school, and a few years of settling into life in Boston.

Editor's note: Scot spent 36 years of his working career in the Boston cold and raised a son and daughter with his spouse Bill. In 2005 they relocated to the warmth of Tavares. While they do travel north on occasion, they do prefer the winters of Central Florida over the winters of the northeast.