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THE SON OF HIS MAJESTY THE KING'S TUTOR IN SWITZERLAND PUBLISHES A NEW BOOK COVERING THE ROYAL FAMILY'S STAY IN LAUSANNE

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THE SUNDAY NATION

SEVERAL BOOKS have been written about His Majesty the King of Thailand in recent years, among them Nicholas Grossman and Dominic Faulder's excellent tome "King Bhumibol Adulyadej: A Life's Work". Few though have done more than touch on his years in Switzerland, the country in which the Kings spent much of his youth and where he and his siblings were educated.

Lysandre C Seraidaris is bridging that gap with his book "King Bhumibol and the Thai Royal Family in Lausanne", which was presented to the press last week at an event in Bangkok.

Seraidaris is the youngest son of Cleon C. Seraidaris, a young lawyer who became the private tutor to two monarchs of Thailand, King Ananda and His Majesty King Bhumibol.

The book, which has been translated from French into both English and Thai, has two main parts. The first focuses on the memories of the tutor while the second covers the relationship between Lausanne and Thailand.

Written in narrative style, it provides a chronology of the events in the older Seraidaris' life and comes with illustrations at the end of each chapter, making it easy to check back for reference. All photos in the book are from Seraidaris senior's private collection and have rarely, if ever, been seen elsewhere.

Cleon C. Seraidaris was working towards his law degree at the University of Lausanne when he was introduced to Princess Mahidol and her three children by his close friend Rasmi Suriyong, a Siamese Prince, in 1935.

"A grandson of King Rama IV told my father that he would like to introduce him to his cousin, just in case he could help them. Shortly afterwards, Princess Mahidol asked my father if he'd be willing to become the tutor of the boys," says Seraidaris, who is Honorary Trade Adviser to Thailand's Ministry of Commerce.

"Lausanne is a charming university city. Today everyone comes to Switzerland for holidays or business but in those days people came for education and especially to Lausanne. Other cities have industries and international organisations but Lausanne has prestigious schools and universities and that's why the royal family decided to come to the town. You can be a famous person but live a quiet life in Lausanne. People do not bother you."

Seraidaris says that his father steadfastly refused to write of his experiences prior to his death in 1997, saying that his professional life and his memories did not belong to him but to His Majesty.

"My father always said 'I will not write if His Majesty does not ask me to do so'. It just happened that His Majesty encouraged me to write. I was very proud that His Majesty trusted me. He thought this book would be good for history.

The King offered to make corrections if there were any mistakes but he didn't need to correct anything," he says.

"I am neither a writer nor a historian but I happened to have information about the past that had never been made public, so I decided to write the book. I am extremely proud of the trust His Majesty placed in me, but it was a delicate undertaking because I knew there could be no mistakes. There are many things I chose not to develop as I preferred to stick to facts of which I have evidence both in my memory and in my papers."

Seraidaris Senior was also proficient in woodworking having learned at l'Ecole Nouvelle and with his father-in-law, a professional cabinet-maker. He passed on the high art of woodworking, known only to the elite elderly craftsmen to the young monarchs.



King Ananda, King Bhumibol and the Princess Mother

Learning by THE LAKE



King Ananda and the Princess Mother at the skating rink, Arosa, March 1939



King Bhumibol is riding a folding US Army Parachutist motorcycle received in Bangkok in the spring of 1946



King Bhumibol with his Fiat Topolino



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King Bhumibol and Cleon show the royal children how hockey is played.



The two Kings with Cleon at Champex in 1937



Cleon congratulates HM the King on his interpretation on the trumpet of one of his compositions.

"They learned to make things by hands from my father. My father was acting in a way like a father, passing on his knowledge to the children.

"They used to talk about sports and ask the same sort of questions that children pose to an adult. My father was there everyday from early morning until late evening to answer all their questions, supervise their education, lead them to the right schools and to the right teachers as well as to help them learn about life.

"My father took them to school, talked to the teachers, collected them from school and taught them some sports. The two kings loved the outdoors and enjoyed skiing, cycling, skating, climbing the mountains and picking mushrooms. They were interested in everything. My father called them perfect students. You can see in

my book the weekly reports on which the teachers commented 'extremely good'.

"I remember my father as a kind and well-respected person. Even at 90, he was always keen to learn something new. He used to say he wanted to learn one thing everyday. That's why he got along so well with the royal family. They share the same outlook. My father and the two kings, they developed together.

"My father considered himself so privileged to be a tutor of two kings and on top of that, one of the most admired kings in the world. It was a



Author Lysandre C Seraidaris

privilege that fell to no one else. That's why I think it is worth writing a book."

Unlike other heads of state, the two monarchs didn't attend boarding school as their mother felt it was more important for them to understand life outside the palace.

"They behaved like kings but they were living with their mother because she wanted them to have a normal family life.

This, she felt, would help them to understand the lives of ordinary people and thus be able to work for the people. By knowing what the prob-

lems are, they can find solutions.

"I don't know whether it also comes from Swiss education but King Bhumibol likes perfection. He likes work to be well done, which is a Swiss quality. Actually, I think Prince Mahidol of Songkla and Princess Mahidol were also like this and their children inherited that trait. That's why they coped so well with Switzerland. I think they felt at home."

The royal family was greatly appreciated by the people of Lausanne and often stopped on the street to say hello to the people they knew.

"The wife of the owner of the Chinese restaurant told me that King Bhumibol had picked cherries at Vadhana Villa and brought her a basketful. She was so touched because, as she said, the King could

have told any of his people to buy cherries and deliver them but he chose to do this himself. She also told me how she slipped and the King helped her up. She never forgot that moment," he says.

Seraidaris also hopes that the young generation in Lausanne will read his book and be proud that their home played host to a royal family for more than 50 years.

"The King's works has been inspired by his studies and the way of life in Switzerland. The older generation in Lausanne knows this but the young people are ignorant of this history. I consider it my duty to tell them that one of the most admired monarchs in the world studied in Lausanne and that the royal family feels close to our city. They should be hugely proud."

