



## A Gift That Lasts a Lifetime

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*When I was ten, my parents gave me a gift which at the time I had no idea how it would change my life. My parents had enrolled me into the 5<sup>th</sup> grade at RIS. It was heartbreaking for me to leave my friends at the old school, but somehow I had a good feeling about the change.*



The first two years at RIS were the hardest for me. As a student transferred from a Thai school, I had to attend ESL class. I felt inferior to the regular class students every time I heard them speak their perfect English and wondered if I could ever speak as well as they do. I am internally grateful to have been blessed with one of the best ESL teachers RIS had to offer, Mrs. Sylvia. Yes, she was tough, but if it wasn't for her, I wouldn't be speaking English the way I do today.

After two years in ESL class, I went on to 7<sup>th</sup> grade (first year of high school at that time), regular class. Again it was difficult for me to catch up, but in less than a year I felt right at home. I cruised through six years of high school and almost graduated with honors.

After RIS, I attended an international bachelor degree program at a university in Thailand. Again I sailed through four years of university, this time graduating with honors. I found a job almost immediately after I graduated. My boss was very impressed with my English, discipline and working skills. After a couple of years, I left Thailand to pursue my Masters Degree in Australia. Once again I cruised through the courses despite having two part-time jobs.

I found a couple of great jobs after I returned to Thailand, one of which was being the Public Relations Manager at RIS.

Now the journey has taken me to back to Taiwan, the homeland of my parents and the country whose language I can neither read nor write. Yet English doesn't fail me in finding a job. I now teach English conversation classes to local adults

In hindsight, I don't think would have gone through life thus far like I did if it wasn't for the gift my parents had given me 20 years ago. It wasn't only English that I learned at RIS. It was more...

*"Give a man a fish; feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish; feed him for a lifetime." – Lao Tzu*

The teachers at RIS didn't just expect us to get the correct answer to the question. **We were taught to think.** We were taught that there isn't just one answer to a question. We were expected to look at different angles of the problem and explore all possible answers or solutions. We were trained to think outside the box and to challenge status quos.

**We were trained to plan, organize and more importantly, take action!**

We were taught to believe that if we want anything done, we have to do it ourselves. And the fastest way to get it done is to face it, plan it and do it!

At RIS, getting good grades or not didn't really bother me. Somehow I felt that what I learned was more important than the grades I received. I didn't feel the need to be best in class. Nevertheless, I felt it was imperative be better, to improve. So my biggest competitor was, and still is today, myself.

At RIS I had the opportunity to be friends with children of the elites from around the world. It was then that I was fortunate enough to learn at such early age that **one's family wealth doesn't**

**define who they are.** Despite wealth and status, we are pretty much all the same. We are students, and we are friends...friends who arrived at school in Mercedes and asked to copy your homework every morning but managed to ace their tests every time. Friends who were trouble-makers, perfectionists, jokers, teachers' pets and even future opera singers. But above all, friends who still value your friendship up until today. Despite what our last name is or is not, everyone had to fight the same battle to be accepted and to be heard.

RIS also opened up my world to people; friends, teachers, and parents, of all races and religions. I learned yet another important life lesson that regardless of one's nationality or religion, we are all the same – human beings with dignity who deserve respect. RIS community and environment facilitated us to grow and become a true global citizen without discrimination and prejudice.

The Fathers also influenced us in many ways. Hearing the morning prayer at assembly every school day, witnessing Father Griffith's kindness, being around church all the time, and taking parts in the school's community services gradually developed our spirits of compassion and giving.

What I learned at RIS will continue to influence what I believe, the way I think, act and live. I am who I am because of what I learned here. I couldn't be more thankful to my parents for offering me this gift of a lifetime. To all past and present teachers of RIS, I truly think you are miracle workers. You have touched thousands of lives in ways you can't image. Fathers, thank you for establishing such a wonderful school and running it for over 50 years. Administrators and staff members, you are hinges that keep the school operating. Thank you for all your contributions to RIS.

RIS will forever be a part of who I am, and I will forever be a part of RIS.