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[Education of the
Blind, Braille, Notable
Blind]



In 2009 there was issued by the Bangkok School for the Blind, **Thailand** a customized sheet of 40 3 baht stamps (two children holding a red heart between them) for the **70th Anniversary of the Bangkok School for the Blind.**

The tabs show photographs of the founder of the Bangkok School for the Blind, Miss Genevieve Caulfield (1888-1972) with her blind students; receiving the Roman Magsaysay Award for international Understanding from Ramon Magsaysay Foundation of the Philippines; a blind student looking at the statue of Miss Caulfield at the Bangkok School; activities at the school: student reading a braille book, student playing a saxophone and students walking using mobility canes.

Bangkok School for the Blind

The Bangkok School for the Blind, now known as such, had its first beginnings in a rented house in Sala Deng Road, Bangkok on January 2nd, 1939.

It was on this memorable day that Miss Genevieve Caulfield introduced to the first blind youth of Thailand the braille system which with the assistance of a Thai university student she adapted most successfully to the Thai alphabet. It was certainly no small achievement when we consider that the Thai alphabet consists of 44 consonants 32 vowels and 8 accent sign compared with the simple Roman alphabet of only 26 letters.

Slowly and timidly other blind boys and girls joined the class or classes supervised by Miss Caulfield and her assistants.

On May 10th of the same year the first Board of Directors of the Foundation for the Blind in Thailand was legally established assuming full responsibility for financial and other matters. Thus Miss Caulfield and her helpers were free to dedicate themselves more fully to their students.

However, unforeseen events slowed down the work considerably. Because of World War II and a major flood which turned Bangkok and surroundings into a vast lake, the blind students with a teacher in charge were evacuated up country while Miss Caulfield remained in Bangkok under house arrest. Eventually she was allowed to join her blind students in Hua Hin.

In 1943, in appreciation of the good work undertaken by the Foundation, the Department of Public Welfare kindly allotted an initial subsidy of Baht 20,000 which has now increased to Baht 200,000.

With the war over, Miss Caulfield, teacher, and students lost no time in returning to Bangkok. Classes resumed and more blind individuals were becoming interested. However, the need for a permanent abode with some spacious grounds was becoming an absolute necessity.

In 1947 with the approval of the Board of Directors of the Foundation, Miss Caulfield requested the assistance of the Salesian Sisters in supervising the running of the school which they had been doing up to the present.

Happily in 1950, thanks to the Thai Government then headed by Premier Philboon Songkram, the eight rai of land in Payathal district where the Bangkok School for the Blind now stands was assigned to the Foundation together with some modest buildings sufficient to house the students and personnel. The Foundation as well as the School for the Blind will always retain sincere appreciation of that timely and kind gesture of the government,

OBJECTIVES OF THE SCHOOL

First and foremost

- To develop the child's maximum potential
- moral – mental – physical and social so that he or she will be prepared to take his or her place in society as independently as possible.

Secondly

- To aim at integrating the more capable students for higher courses of study on completion of their elementary or secondary education at the School for the Blind.

Genevieve Caulfield (1888 – 1972)

Blind since infancy, Miss Genevieve Caulfield never questioned her share of responsibility as a member of the human race. Born in Suffolk, Virginia in 1888 Miss Caulfield received her early education at the Perkins School for the Blind, Boston and the Overbrook School for the Blind, Philadelphia.

She then studied at Trinity College, Washington D.C. and graduated from Teachers College, Columbia University, New York city.

To prepare herself for work in Japan, she taught English for seven years in New York city to Japanese businessmen, government officials and others living in New York, and went to Japan in 1923 as an English teacher and a student of Japanese political and social institutions. She lived and worked in Tokyo and travelled in other parts of Japan until 1937.

After a year and a half in the United States, lecturing and brushing up on methods of teaching the blind, she came to Thailand and opened the first school for the blind in 1939. She remained in Bangkok during the war, supervising the School for the Blind. Five years after the school started the Thai government began to provide financial assistance. The school, under the Foundation for the Blind in Thailand, is now partially supported by government and private donations.

The school has expanded from its small beginnings to become the largest education institution for the blind in Thailand and is now serving over 230 students.

In 1958 Miss Caulfield was involved with setting up a modest program for the blind in Vietnam.

In 1960 Miss Caulfield was decorated by the Japanese government. She also published her autobiography, "*The Kingdom Within*" published by Harper Brothers, New York, in that year.

In 1961 she received the Roman Magsaysay Award for International Understanding from the Ramon Magsaysay Foundation of the Philippines and was decorated by the Thai government.

In 1963 she received the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Miss Caulfield died in Bangkok in 1972 but the work she started continues to grow.

From: booklet "Bangkok School for the Blind". Foundation for the Blind, Bangkok, 1992