



**Larry Cashman, the
Unprincipled Schemer**

Chapter 10

The League of Distinguished Knaves

Arriving at the Honolulu airport, the first thing I noticed was the fragrance of tropical flowers. The scent from the plumeria, mock orange, white ginger, night blooming jasmine and puakenikeni trees pervasive in the islands, permeated the open-air terminal building and merrily assaulted my olfactory senses. The next thing I noticed was the breeze. In Hawaii they're called trade winds. These gentle currents carrying the aromatic scent of tropical flowers cooled the air. It was a beautiful sunny day when we arrived in Hawaii in July 1977. That would be the first of many beautiful sunny days we would experience on this Pacific island.

We knew no one in Honolulu, had no place to stay, and no idea where to go when we arrived in Hawaii. Some things never change. Only this time we were dragging along two year old Carmencita, who was in diapers and still breastfeeding; and we had limited funds that would dwindle rapidly in an expensive city like Honolulu. Finding accommodations was the first order of business. Then Sabrina had to find a job so we could obtain some income to cover our basic needs. If you don't know where to go when you arrive in Honolulu, just head to Waikiki Beach. That's where the action is. That is what we did.

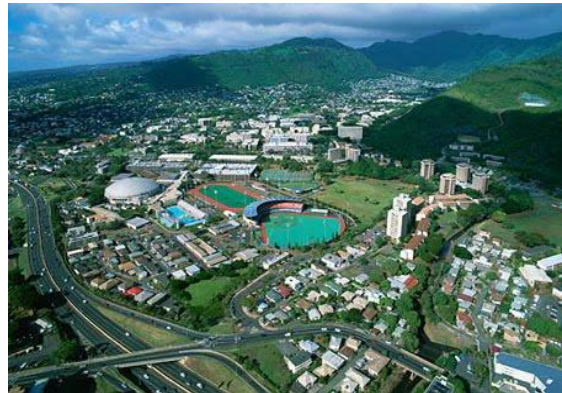


**Waikiki Beach with Diamondhead
in the background**

Within hours we found a hotel in Waikiki whose price was within our budget. Actually, "Hotel" is too kind a term to describe this dump. It was in a back alley two blocks from Waikiki Beach doubling as a hideout for criminals eluding Hawaii Five-0. The floors were concrete. The builders left a three foot space between the walls and the ceiling when they ran out of cement, filling the space with cheap chain-link fencing instead. There were no screens on the windows. The place was a dive. However, with the trade winds gently buffeting Waikiki at night, it was actually cool and pleasant for sleeping. While Sabrina was out looking for a job and a place to live, Carmencita and I hung out at Waikiki Beach.

I had never seen anything like Waikiki Beach. There were too many tourists, that's for sure. But the water was a clear, azure blue that rolled in as consistent sets of gentle waves with surfers riding their crest. The skies were a celestial blue and the sunshine was only occasionally interrupted by the passing clouds. The water was warm and Carmencita, who had never seen a beach before, fell in love with the ocean. Within a week, Sabrina had found us a decent place to live in Manoa Valley behind the University of Hawaii, and we bought a dilapidated jalopy that belched smoke and rattled annoyingly along the roads. At least we could navigate through the neighborhoods with the unpronounceable street names.

The next order of business was to find Dr. Martinus Papadopoulos. This guy was my perceived ticket to Bali, so I had to enlist him as my academic advisor, and convince him to send me to Bali for my fieldwork. Although the University of Hawaii is an urban campus in Manoa Valley, it is a pleasant diversion from the concrete jungle that surrounds it. The high rise buildings of Waikiki and Makiki that border the campus are juxtaposed with the huge, stately tropical trees that cloak the university's nondescript buildings. I found Dr. Papadopoulos' office in the School of Public Health. He was universally known as "Dr. P" at the university, and clearly was the most popular professor on the faculty. His secretary, a kindly, courteous and genteel Japanese-American woman named Ethel, guarded the approach to his office. I explained the purpose of my visit to Ethel and requested an appointment to see him.



The University of Hawaii campus in Manoa Valley

"I'm so sorry, but Dr. Papadopoulos cannot see anyone at this time," Ethel informed me. "He is the Dean of Academic Affairs now, and he is preparing to present the school's curriculum to the University's Board of Trustees. Also, he is not accepting any more students as Academic Advisor. His student roster is already overloaded." I had pinned all of my hopes for overseas travel and adventure on this guy. This was bad news for me.

Ethel was a sincere and sympathetic woman. It was obvious that it pained her to give me this disappointing news. Noting an opportunity for some Cashman mendacity, I fabricated a tragic story that would tug at her heart strings.

"This is very disappointing news," I responded dejectedly. "I traveled here from New Mexico with my sick wife and two year old daughter. We spent all of our money getting here. My dearest wife, Sabrina, has chronic glomerulonephritis and fibromyalgia and can't work." I had to think fast to come up with these maladies. "But she knew how much I wanted to study with Dr. P and agreed to make the arduous trip to Hawaii despite her medical condition. In addition to attending the MPH program, I will have to support my family and take care of my daughter. Because of Dr. P's reputation and his track

record sending students overseas for their fieldwork, I felt that it was worth the sacrifice. I hope this bad news will not be too much for Sabrina's fragile health."

Ethel was devastated by my fictitious concoction. It brought tears to her eyes. It almost brought tears to my eyes, even though there wasn't a scintilla of truth in it. As the story percolated with Ethel, it became clear that she was thinking of options.

"Wait here. I want to discuss your situation with Dr. P." Ethel disappeared into Dr. P's inner sanctum. At least I had my foot in the door. Within minutes the door opened, and Ethel emerged with Dr. P in tow. He was an impressive and imposing figure — tall and swarthy, late forties with a full head of black hair combed straight back. His most distinguishing features were an aquiline nose and blue eyes that looked right through you.

Ethel did the introductions. "Dr. P, I would like to introduce Dr. Cashman. He would really like to study with you."

"Just call me Cashman. Everyone does." I wanted that out of the way immediately.

"Well Cashman, Ethel has related your sob story. I've heard many of these over the years, but yours is in a class of its own. Chronic glomerulonephritis and fibromyalgia!!!! I wanted to meet the character who would make up a story like that." This was trouble. Dr. P didn't even pretend to believe my bullshit.

"You must have some set of balls to come in here and spin a yarn like that," he continued. "However, I admire your chutzpah and ability to improvise. Come into my office." I entered the inner sanctum. The bookshelves were packed with tomes on international development, public diplomacy, economics and public health. My eyes seized upon the pictures of Dr. P with indigenous people from Indonesia, Bali, Cambodia, and Vietnam adorning the walls. This guy had been all over the place. Dr. P sized me up and said, "Now tell me — why should I take you on as a student, and why should I take the risk of sending you to Bali for your field work?"

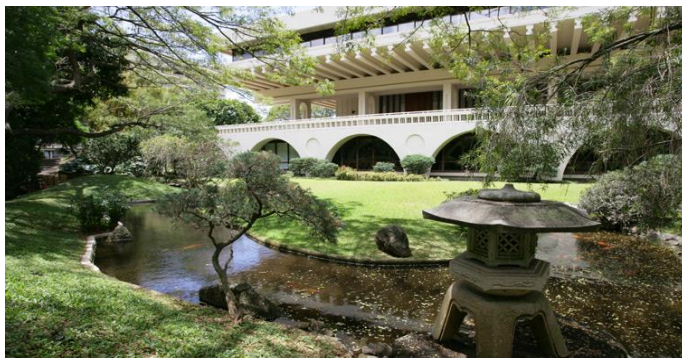
I realized that my response could decide my fate at the University of Hawaii. I had to think fast, and I decided to take the righteous route. I told him about my travels in Morocco, India, Nepal, and South America, and my empathy for the plight of poor people in developing countries. I told him about my work on the Navajo Indian Reservation, my pivot towards public health, and my realization that indigenous populations must take responsibility for their health. "I want to make International Health my career and devote my life to helping disadvantaged people in developing countries."

Dr. P listened attentively, paused briefly to consider my response, and then replied, "You have been around the block in developing countries, I'll admit that. And your unique experience with the Public Health Service on the Navajo Reservation is a good foundation for practicing public health in remote cultural settings. But I don't buy the altruism. You don't look like the benevolent type. So please, don't shit the shitter. Why do you want to work in International Health?"

I was in a bind now. Dr. P wasn't falling for the usual Cashman bullshit. I had no choice but to come clean.

"All right. You asked for it. My wife Sabrina and I have always dreamed about living in exotic places in developing tropical countries. Hawaii is the first stop on our journey. We want to experience more. But I don't want to do it as a low budget tourist traveling on a shoestring and staying in cockroach-infested hovels. I want to do it like the guy I saw in Marrakech who lived in a mansion with a driver and servants. I want to experience life in an exotic developing country, but I want to be coddled with services I could never dream of in the US. It seems to me that a career in International Health is a likely way to do that. When I saw that you lived and worked in Bali, I figured that you probably lived that life, and might be able to get me there. You wanted the truth, there it is."

Well, the jig was up now, and I was prepared to be thrown out of his office. Instead, Martinus Papadopoulos broke into a big grin. "That's more like it, Cashman. To be successful in this business, one must come to grips with one's motivations. While yours may sound venal and selfish, they are not uncommon. In fact, I share some of them myself. I think we can work together." He led me outside and said to Ethel, "Enroll Cashman as one of my student advisees. He's rough around the edges and prone to hyperbole and exaggeration, but let's see what we can do with him."



University of Hawaii School of Public Health

I could not believe my good fortune. Dr. P recognized me for the bolder and prevaricator that I was, yet he was still willing to work with me. In fact, he and I shared some of the same characteristics, on the border between respectability and impropriety. He outlined a program of study that even I found interesting – biostatistics and epidemiology, economics, tropical medicine, health policy and planning, and Dr. P's Seminar in International Health.

Sabrina landed an excellent job as a faculty member at the University of Hawaii Department of Dental Hygiene teaching radiology. We found an affordable play school for Carmencita where we dropped her off at 8 AM and picked her up at 5 PM. Everything was going swimmingly well – until I met Andrew Jackson Poole.

In the pantheon of reprobates and ne'er do wells that I have gravitated toward all my life, Andrew Jackson Poole holds a place of honor. Andrew Jackson, as he liked to be called, was finishing his undergraduate degree in Communications at UH when we met in a weightlifting class. He had joined

the Navy after high school, and was sent to submarine school in Connecticut. Best to keep guys like Andrew Jackson under water for six months per year, they reasoned. During his years in the Navy, Andrew Jackson continually ran afoul of the Navy's myriad rules and regulations, but he was one of those endearing scoundrels whose penchant for mischief was mitigated by his genuinely lovable persona. In submarine school he gave his classmates marijuana brownies before class. When the instructor showed up, all 20 students were high from the brownies except Andrew Jackson. He received a commendation for his temperance, and was rewarded with a position in the naval intelligence service.

In naval intelligence, Andrew Jackson navigated mini subs to the coast of North Vietnam during the Vietnam War. Under the cover of darkness, he disembarked and scoured the beaches for flotsam and jetsam that the Navy analyzed for intelligence purposes. One time, Andrew Jackson smuggled a metal detector on board the mini-sub to search for cash, jewelry, and war memorabilia in the sand. The Vietnamese picked up its signal. In the ensuing chase, he ditched the metal detector and received another commendation for his ability to evade the enemy.

Andrew Jackson was posted to Pearl Harbor in the submarine corps. The night before one deployment, he and his buddies drank beer, downed shots of Tequila, and smoked Maui Wowie, the local herb, until they had to report for duty. Andrew Jackson was plastered, three sheets to the wind, when he boarded the sub. He went directly to his bunk to sleep off the bender. When the sub left Pearl harbor for its deployment, it started rocking back and forth as subs are wont to do while on the surface. Andrew Jackson began vomiting so violently that they sent him to sick bay, where the Corpsman diagnosed his condition as acute appendicitis in need of emergency surgery. Andrew Jackson did nothing to dissuade him from this diagnosis. He flew back to Honolulu strapped to a litter on the side of the helicopter that traveled 100 miles from Honolulu to meet the sub. It was a nice way to see the islands.



Andrew Jackson had to be medevac'd to Honolulu with acute alcohol toxicity

Unfortunately, the doctors at Tripler Hospital, where he was taken for surgery, had a bit more training than a navy Corpsman. Not only did he not have acute appendicitis, but the alcohol levels in his blood were off the charts. It looked like it was curtains for Andrew Jackson this time. One of his greatest talents, however, is his sincerity when pleading his innocence. I've seen him do it many times, and almost believed it myself. He concocted a story that his drinks were spiked by a bartender who owed him money. I can imagine the cherubic look on his face when he recounted the story. It worked with the Navy, and soon he was honorably discharged and enrolled at the University of Hawaii.

Andrew Jackson and I hit it off immediately. After weightlifting class, we would go to the beach, or smoke pot with our buddies, or play poker, or smoke cigars, or drink whiskey, or play tennis and basketball, or watch sports, or all of the above. Since my classes were mostly at night, I would meet Andrew Jackson in the morning after dropping Carmencita at school, and we would engage in our

revelry and depredations the entire day. While we were having a grand old time, Sabrina and Sally, Andrew Jackson's wife, worked full time to support our respective academic studies. Unfortunately, the one thing we didn't do very much was study. Needless to say, Sabrina and Sally were not happy with our antics.

Then Andrew Jackson had a brilliant idea. We would take a tennis class in addition to weightlifting. We were both decent athletes, and Andrew Jackson wanted to hustle tennis players for money. The extra cash would assuage our wives' concerns about money, and leave us with extra funds to purchase whiskey, cigars, and Maui Wowie. It seemed like a good idea to me. There was one problem — the tennis class finished ten minutes before my thrice weekly seminar in International Health with Dr. P began.

After each tennis class I showered, changed, and rushed across campus to Dr. P's seminar class. Unfortunately, I arrived 20 minutes late, soaking wet with sweat and looking disheveled. There were only 10 students in the seminar, so it was difficult to enter unobtrusively. The first few times Dr. P just looked at me disgustedly, as if to say, "You're such an asshole." Since he never verbalized it, I continued the tennis. Plus, Andrew Jackson and I were getting pretty good and had started sandbagging some suckers.

After several weeks of this, I arrived at the seminar class quite late looking like a slob, and Dr. P had enough. "Cashman, I think you have to decide whether you are going to be a tennis player or an international health professional. You can't do both. From the looks of you, I wouldn't depend on tennis to make a living. What is it going to be?"

He was right. I couldn't keep up my derelict ways with Andrew Jackson and still convince Dr. P to send me to Bali for my fieldwork. I decided to go with International Health. I still hung out with Andrew Jackson, only we tempered our more irresponsible shenanigans. And I dropped the tennis class.

Marty Papadopoulos was an unconventional public health doctor. After completing his residency, he never practiced medicine in the US. Instead, he lived and worked in Cambodia, Vietnam, Jakarta — the capitol of Indonesia — and Bali. His experience in these countries made him ultra-critical of the over-reliance on clinical medicine in developing countries. It squandered resources on the few who could afford it and deprived the many poor people of the clean water, sanitation, vaccines, and reproductive health care that would save lives. He imbued his students with a healthy skepticism for the medical nemesis.

I absorbed his perspective like a sponge. This public health business actually made sense to me. Until now, the only things that made sense to me were basketball, football, basketball, baseball, smoking weed, and basketball. I had seen the medical nemesis in action on the Navajo Reservation — wait until people get sick, then spend exorbitant resources trying to cure them of their illness. Public

health wanted to reverse the spending paradigm – first and foremost, invest resources to promote good health; then focus money and effort on preventing diseases. Curative medicine, which sucked up so much of the limited financial resources, was only needed when prevention had failed and people became ill. When an illness couldn't be cured, the last option was to rehabilitate. Dr. P's philosophy had a profound effect on me and my future in the field of public health.

What really enthralled me were his stories about living the expatriate life in developing countries. He lived in a villa on the banks of the Mekong River in Cambodia in the late 1950s, where he and his wife watched the mahouts bring their elephants to bathe, while they sipped cool drinks on his veranda. In Saigon in the 1960s, while the Vietnam War was ramping up, he lived in a mansion in this exotic city with a driver and servants, just like the guy in Marrakech. He lived in Jakarta during the Year of Living Dangerously¹, when a genocide ensued after a coup d'état toppled a corrupt, authoritarian regime. In Bali he worked with the local medical school to establish a community medicine program that emphasized public health, infectious disease control, and preventive medicine. The more he recounted of his life, the more I wanted to do the same sort of things.



**Mahouts bathing their elephants on the banks
of the Mekong River in Cambodia**

Once again, I allowed fantasy to obscure reality. Dr. P was a world renowned expert in International Public Health and a distinguished professor at the University of Hawaii. On the other hand I, Larry Cashman, was an unexceptional loser who had graduated from Columbia Dental School by the skin of my teeth, spent three unremarkable years in the Indian Health Service doing everything possible to escape my clinical responsibilities, and came to Dr. P's classes late because they interfered with my tennis lessons, which I was taking so I could sandbag suckers for money. There was no earthly reason why Dr. P would waste his energy on a rapsallion like me, nor had I demonstrated the temperament and intellect that deserved special treatment.

But Marty Papadopoulos had a mischievous and rebellious streak. He defied authority wherever he worked. He abhorred the sanctimonious blowhards at institutions like the World Bank, The US Agency for international Development (USAID), the World Health Organization, and the University of Hawaii, who promoted a cautious, conservative status quo that protected their vested interests while thwarting innovation and change. He had students who thrived in that environment. But he also

¹ Indonesia was ground zero in the Cold War in the 1960s. The Communist Party of Indonesia exerted undue influence on its charismatic president, Soekarno, and seemed likely to win electoral power. When seven generals were assassinated in 1965, the next general in line, Soeharto, purged the Communists and anyone remotely resembling them, for the next year. The chaos of the year-long purge was called the "Year of Living Dangerously."

cultivated non-conformists like himself who would challenge the status quo by virtue of their unconventionality and eccentricities. Because I epitomized the latter, Dr. P and I formed a special bond.

I had enrolled in a directed reading seminar with Dr. P where we met once a week to discuss the readings he assigned. During one of our meetings, he leveled with me.

“Listen Cashman. I have gotten to know you over these last semesters. Despite your laziness, your callousness, and your wantonness, you have an innate understanding and propensity for public health in general and international health in particular. You write well, and I have never met anyone who can bullshit like you. However, you will never fit the mold of the traditional public health professional. You lack scruples, you lack principle, and you have no moral compass that I have been able to discern. You will suffocate in a conventional public health setting. That is fine, as long as you acknowledge your shortcomings and adapt. You might even change the stodgy bastards in those moribund agencies. I have other students like you, with similar personality traits and idiosyncrasies. They are mavericks existing on the margins of the public health profession. They have either found jobs or are being considered for positions in sclerotic but legitimate public health agencies where they will disrupt the status quo. The most notorious are Tim O’Riordan, Pete Lockery, and Seamus Campbell. They remind me of you. Find out about these misfits. If you have the chance, you should work with them.”

I sought out faculty and students who knew them. It wasn’t hard. These three constituted a League of Distinguished Knaves who were legends at the University of Hawaii School of Public Health. Tim O’Riordan came from public health royalty. His father had been the Health Commissioner of New York City in the 1960s, and the Dean of the UH School of Public Health until 1974. During medical school at the University of Hawaii (UH), O’Riordan took a sabbatical to study international health. His studies focused on sexually transmitted infections using a unique and innovative methodology — he would consort with bar girls and hookers in Bangkok, contract the diseases, and then treat himself with various drugs to assess the latter’s therapeutic effectiveness. He was run out of Palau for banging the wife of the village chief where he lived. On a fishing trip in Micronesia, he got so loaded that he tried to get a blow job from a 100 lb. live tuna that was just reeled in, and its jagged teeth lacerated his penis so badly that he had to be medevac’d to Guam to have this vital anatomical appendage repaired. O’Riordan was an inveterate rogue and ladies’ man. He was also an infectious tropical disease savant who would eventually be vigorously recruited by the Centers for Disease Control and the Navy Medical Research Unit as an epidemiologist.

Pete Lockery was a physician, but resembled a farmer from Nebraska. He had a handlebar moustache that he twirled incessantly. His love affair with beer produced a gut that made him look eight months pregnant. His belly was so prominent that he hadn’t seen his feet in years. He rolled into class every day wearing a tank top that barely covered his prodigious abdomen, ragged cut-off shorts, and his trademark sandals. He defied authority, and rebelled against any institution that engaged him — his medical school, the Navy, or Queens Hospital in Honolulu, where he did his internship. His defiance caused him untold trouble with the medical establishment. They tried to ban him, eject him,

and ostracize him. But Pete had an ace in the hole — his patients loved him. He made sure they got their vaccines. He made sure they had their screening tests. He made sure they sought care at the earliest signs of illness. When things got dire for Pete Lockery, his patients bailed him out. Dr. P hired Lockery to work on one of his public health projects in Thailand.

Last but not least was Seamus Campbell. He was an unreconstructed scammer. Being of Scottish descent and genetically predisposed to “frugality,” his scams usually involved money. While a Peace Corp volunteer in the Solomon Islands, where he was supposed to teach English, he ran a lucrative but illegal sideline taking unsuspecting tourists on fishing excursions. At UH he finagled a scholarship to learn Vietnamese, used the money to buy a condo, and rented it out while he lived for free in a senior citizens home as a night coordinator. He never learned Vietnamese.

But the piece de resistance was his escapade in Chile. Peace Corp gave him a ticket back to the US after completing his Peace Corp assignment in the Solomon Islands, which Seamus cashed in for a ticket to Chile. While carousing at a seedy nightclub in Santiago, he met a lady who responded affectionately to his blandishments. After a lively and athletically taxing joust in his hotel room, his lady friend demanded \$200 for a taxi ride home. Parsimonious by nature, Seamus refused, whereby his lady friend called the front desk and asked them to send the police. He tussled with the lady, but when he heard sirens approaching, Seamus decided to bolt. The open window of his second floor room seemed the only egress. But the police had already arrived, and were waiting below the window. So Seamus did the only thing he could to save his ass – he threw the woman out the window into the waiting arms of the police in the snow bank below. While the police tended to her, he escaped out the back. When it was time to cut and run, Seamus was like an Olympic sprinter. He hid out in a national forest until the heat died down, and then fled to Argentina.

To run a successful scam, you have to know how to plan, especially when the chips are down. Seamus was acknowledged as one of the school’s best health planners. He was recruited by the United Nations Development Program, and was on his way to Papua New Guinea.

I was honored that Dr. P placed me in the same orbit as these three scalawags. If they could make a career out of international public health, there was hope for me. As luck would have it, I would meet and work with all three during my career. Like attracts like.

As the time for my fieldwork approached, I became anxious about going to Bali. Dr. P was evasive. It was on, then it was off, then it was on again, then off again. Finally I confronted him.

“Let me be frank, Cashman. My Balinese colleagues are cultured, refined, and gracious people. They are also very provincial. I don’t think they’re ready for someone as crass as you. If you go there and do something stupid, which is easily in the realm of possibility, it could be catastrophic. I don’t want

to take the chance.” That was the end of our Balinese dream. Despite my arguments, Dr. P would not relent.

“But I have an intriguing alternative. I mentioned you to my colleagues at Mahidol University School of Public Health in Bangkok, Thailand. They are very urbane. Many have studied in the US. They could easily handle someone with your manifold idiosyncrasies. The Dean has an idea for a project which may be perfect for your field studies. He will be in Honolulu in two weeks for a seminar. I want you to meet him. Let’s see what he has in mind.”



Bali was out – but Thailand would be an interesting alternative

Here it was, dumb luck again. Bali was out, but Thailand would be an interesting replacement. It was in Southeast Asia, it was exotic, and it was tropical. Sabrina was ecstatic. When she traveled across Central Asia through Afghanistan and Pakistan in 1972, her objective was to visit India, Nepal, and Thailand before returning to the US. We had already done India and Nepal. Now we would be going to Thailand for six months.

When I met the Dean of the Mahidol University School of Public Health, I found him a bit odd. The fact that he regularly communicated with aliens, rode in space ships, and occasionally visited other planets, may have jaundiced my opinion. The Dean, Dr. Somsak Wattanapanit, was one of the foremost public health experts in the world. He did his medical training at the University of Pennsylvania and had a doctorate in public health from Harvard. He was also a UFO fantasist. During our first meeting to discuss my fieldwork, the walkie-talkie he carried in his pocket would occasionally crackle, at which point he would excuse himself so he could speak with an alien. “That one was from Alpha Centauri,” he explained as he nonchalantly continued our conversation. I glanced at Dr. P to see if this was a hoax. He motioned for me to relax and go with it.

Dr. Somsak had an unusual idea. There were very few dentists in Thailand in 1978, and most lived and worked in urban areas. The rural areas, where 75% of the population lived, had no access to dental care. Dr. Somsak wanted to train auxiliary health workers in rural areas to treat dental emergencies and provide rudimentary dental care. He wanted me to work with his faculty to get this program started. The dental profession in Thailand was firmly against this idea, but Dr. Somsak couldn’t care less. He disdained the medical establishment even more than Dr. P, and loved disrupting the status quo. He asked me what I thought.

As I was about to respond, his walkie-talkie crackled again. He excused himself for a brief conversation. “That was a Klingon. They’ll be in Bangkok in three weeks and offered to take me for a ride on their spaceship.” I didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. First, Dr. Somsak proposed an innovative field work opportunity, shortly followed by making a tentative appointment for a joy ride on a Klingon spaceship. So I decided to go with the flow. “Your proposal is very interesting and I would like

to work with your staff on it. Also, while in Thailand, do you think I could get a ride on a Klingon spaceship?”

“That might be difficult,” Dr. Somsak responded without acknowledging the sarcasm. “The Klingons come by so infrequently. However, the Romulans and Andorians visit more frequently. Would you mind taking a ride on one of their spaceships instead?” We shook hands to seal the deal. I had just arranged my field work, and booked passage on an alien spaceship.

When Dr. Somsak left, I waited for Dr. P’s reaction to see if this guy was for real. “Do you think you’re the only weirdo in public health?” Dr. P explained. “The field is loaded with them, and you have just experienced the apex of eccentricity. During his lurid moments, however, Dr. Somsak is a brilliant public health professional, and he is a risk taker with a huge set of balls. He will support your work and face down any opposition. This is a good opportunity for you. And who knows, you might get a ride on an alien spaceship in the process.”

We discussed logistics and timing for my fieldwork. Dr. P provided air tickets for Sabrina, Carmencita and me to fly to Bangkok. I asked about lodging. “Pete Lockery is living in Bangkok and working at Mahidol University. He’ll meet you at the airport and you can stay with him and his family in Bangkok. That will be an experience you won’t forget.”

It was settled. I would be doing my fieldwork in Thailand. I would be supervised by a brilliant public health professional who communicated with aliens. And we would be staying with the beer drinking, authority-defying, charter member of the University of Hawaii School of Public Health’s League of Distinguished Knaves. This should be interesting.