

**The Orchid Issue...and Other Stuff
in Bangkok & Kathmandu
November 2014**



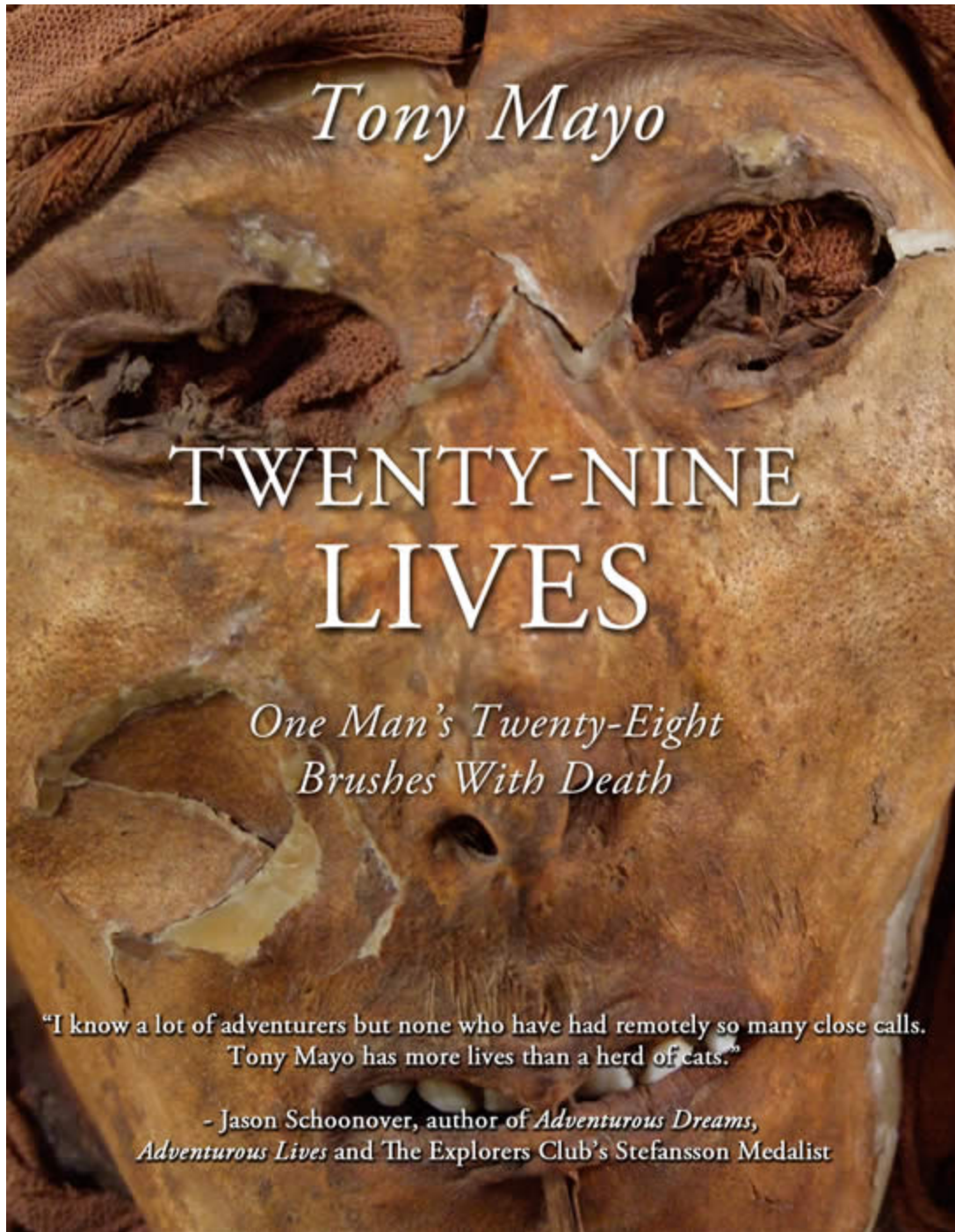
I *won* this original abstract painting! I'm a big fan of abstract - visual jazz, I call it, and I love jazz too - and have been following Candace's work for years. She's my favorite and when she put on an online contest for the best travel photo...



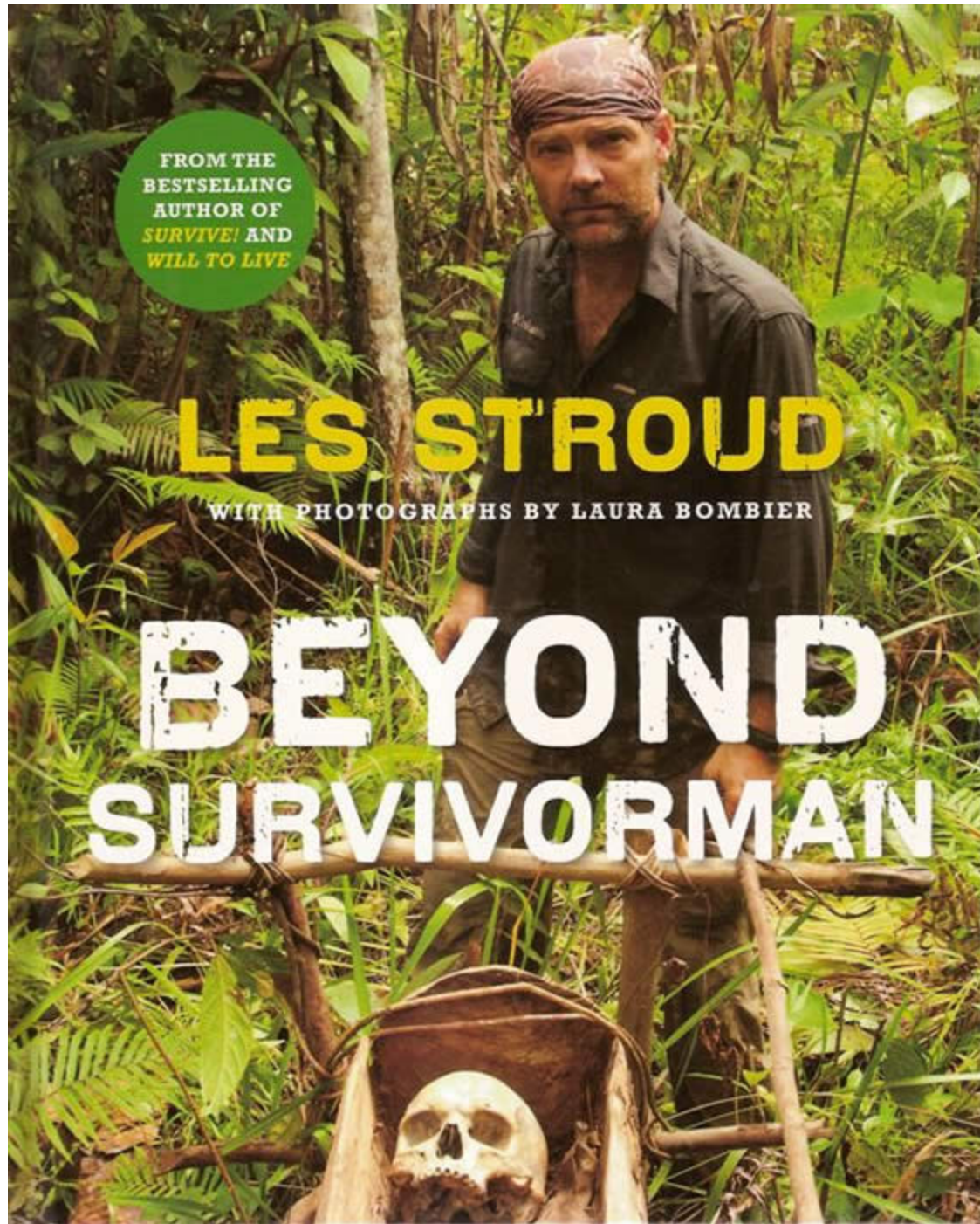
...I entered this shot (from the last Blah Blah) of Everest. She said it "won handily" (and I sure got a lot of positive feedback about it from Blahees, which is you). I already know which wall in our living room the painting will hang on and can't wait to see it. It's titled *Early Light* and it was inspired while traveling in Oman. Thank you Candace. We love it.



Another artist, Tony Mayo, took the photo and souped it up. Whew. Tony's also the chap who turned me onto ethnological collecting for museums when we shared a room at the crumbling YMCA in Columbo, Sri Lanka, in 1978. He had sold a large collection of Inuit art to our Museum of Civilization. A few days after parting I stumbled onto the Devil Dance cult - and I was off!



Tony's also the author of this unique book which I penned the front cover endorsement for. I think Tony's a little accident prone, he laughs, and damned lucky.... http://www.amazon.ca/Twenty-Nine-Lives-Twenty-Eight-Brushes-Death-ebook/dp/B00G6SXO7Q/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1415979911&sr=8-1&keywords=tony+mayo



Since I've started plugging friends' books, here's another, one Les sent me. The cover isn't quite as gory. If you're a fan of *Survivorman*, you'll love this because he's thoroughly candid about his thoughts while shooting *Beyond Survival*. In it he humorously recalls, when he was the patient in the middle of a dramatic all night Devil Dance exorcism, glancing over at me...and I was slouched and asleep in my chair. (I had fixed the shoot for "The Devil Dancers of Sri Lanka" which premiered the one season series.) <http://www.amazon.ca/Beyond-Survivorman-Les-Stroud/dp/1443404829>



This is from Pat and Baiba Morrow's latest book, *Heart of the Himalaya*. As I mentioned last BB, Pat pioneered the 7 Summits Quest and trekked all around the through the Himalaya. No one knows that range, and its cultures, better than he and Baiba and he's a helluva photog. When he summited Everest as part of the Canadian team in '82, he was shooting for *Equinox*. He never fails to make me laugh. When I asked him when he started out he replied that he graduated in photography from the "Banff School of Fine Farts" in the mid '70s.

Canada <https://itunes.apple.com/ca/book/heart-of-the-himalaya/id931957009?mt=11> and
US <https://itunes.apple.com/us/ok/heart-of-the-himalaya/id931957009?mt=11>

Forty Delicious Years 1974 - 2014

Murni's Warung, Ubud, Bali



Jonathan Copeland
Rob Goodfellow
Peter O'Neill

Murni is a presence in Ubud, Bali, and I contributed a chapter - reminiscences of Ubud, Bali. Mine recounts landing in Bali in 1979 in a stupor after being drugged on a train crossing Java and having my camera and cash lifted (but not my passport or travellers cheques fortunately). Arriving in Ubud, then (not now!) a quiet, peaceful village I found my way to the most beautiful spot in it, by the gorge, and it happened to be Murni's.... It left a lasting, beautiful impression - but so did my experience on the train and, bummed out, I flew on to Australia a few days later. It would be 35 years before I returned, and only because Ninja Hattori held me down and sat on

me. And I'm glad she did. Bali *is* magic. Java? I still in no hurry to return....
<http://www.murnis.com/index.php/ebook/ebook-3/product/6-forty-delicious-years-murni-s-warung-ubud-bali-1974-2014-from-toasted-cheese-and-tomato-sandwiches-to-balinese-smoked-duck>



INTO THE SILENCE

THE GREAT WAR, MALLORY, and the
CONQUEST of EVEREST

WADE DAVIS

I read Wade's brilliant tome before heading up to the north face of Everest a couple months ago. No wonder it took him 10 years to write. The research is exhaustive and the writing vintage

Wade. It's an instant classic, the definitive book on Mallory. He's now back in Canada teaching anthro at UBC. <http://www.amazon.com/Into-Silence-Mallory-Conquest-Everest/dp/0375708154>



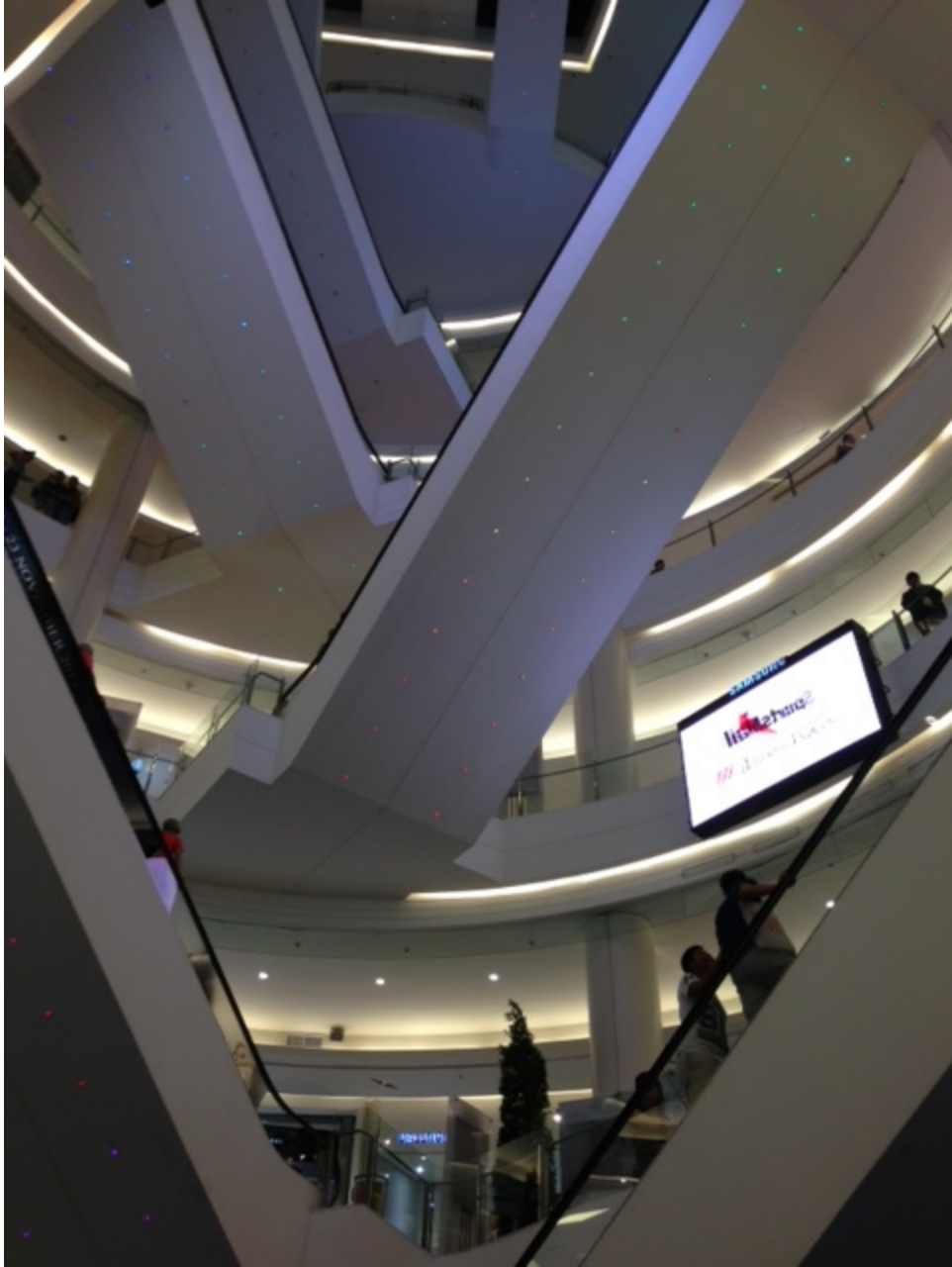
While on the Himalaya...want to have all doubt removed that we get ripped off in cell phone fees? This is an itinerant bottle collector in Kathmandu who stopped to answer his phone. You can guess he doesn't pay what we're forced to due to lack of competition....



Bangkok was also a poor city in 1979 when I first came here. There was no visible middle class. Bangkok was the ugliest city with the most beautiful culture in the world. It's rapidly becoming a beautiful city on the outside too. But inside is where the changes most surprise.



Now the Middle Class is so huge that incredible emporiums are being built to separate them from their baht.











It was at one we happened upon the ULTIMATE orchid display. The Dragon Lady was delighted, having been a member of The Orchid Society back home. And I was blown away too, especially as lady slippers have been my favorite since I discovered them daring to grow in the swampy drainage ditch by the elevators across from our house in Carrot River back in the '50s. I never picked a single one...but that didn't stop other kids and in no time they were gone bye bye. But they still proliferate in northern Saskatchewan in late June, big, gorgeous purple ones.... There were swaths of rare orchids here and these are just a few examples.



































It was an enormous display on three floors, all from Chiang Mai, the flower capital. I doubt if we'll see its kind again. It was one of those once-in-a-lifetime serendipitous encounters that makes travel so delightful....



Something for you flower loving, aging hippies, the sun glinting off liver spotted domes once covered by long hair..... This from back in Kathmandu.



The Thais are gearing up for that traditional Siamese holiday, 'Cistmas.' If there's a fun holiday in the world, they'll make it theirs.



After meeting Madame Su in Bangkok, she flying in from Toontown, me from Kathmandu, on November 7th, the first thing we did was head to our favorite spa. A four-hour treatment was \$85 each. Incredible.



But the majority of the time...which is 2-3 times a week...it's to our other favorite, a simple, traditional affair in our Sukhumvit Soi 8 area. Two hours, \$13.



Yes, there are actually massage parlors in the City of Angels that specialize in just traditional Thai massage (which has to be experienced to be believed).



But there's lots of others that are traditionally Bangkok in a different manner. The army junta a week ago shut down hundreds of these down Sukhumvit a mile or so but this is Thailand. They'll be up and bringing smiles again in no time. The reason for the shut down was power politics: the army wanted to show the local oinkers, who take payoffs (tea money) from the parlors, who was boss. Hopefully they'll shut down the cops in this same division from hassling tourists. For the last two years they've been stopping them on the street and in cabs at the corner of Sukhumvit and Asoke, demanding passports and searching them. No passport and you get fined on the spot. A shakedown. Now they're even making tourists piss in cups and they're testing them on the spot for drugs. I went through a passport check a year ago while in a taxi and they're hardly polite. No wonder tourism is down 9%. I've been writing travel for 40 years and this is the result: negative publicity.



The massage parlor shutdown won't matter to this guy. He gets his traditional Roman Catholic jollies elsewhere. This mural of a priest is on a century old RC Church by the Chao Phraya river.



This Nepali back in Kathmandu enjoyed me laughing at his t-shirt.



Waht the fcuk....? Obviously the person who named this product was dyslectic. Only in Thailand....

Not ALL Wheatgrass Are the Same



**Certified Organic
Wheatberry
from Australia**

เมล็ดคอรแกนิกจากออสเตรเลีย



**Grown Organically
in Greenhouse
away from pollution**

My farmer friends and relatives will be surprised to learn they've been combining merely a seed all these years....



Finally, I'm pleased to be back in my old studio suite that's been home since 1995 but closed for three years of renovations. It has everything a writer could want - great location on the best soi, or sidestreet, off Sukhumvit, lots of light, quiet, great vibes and a naked woman in bed. I wrote a screenplay and two-and-a-half books here and I'm closing in on finishing the current one. In fact, it might be the subject of the next Blah Blah. It's great to be back in our winter home in Bangkok...



...Because this is what our summer one looks like right now. This picture is so revolting and disgusting I have to end here to run to the bathroom to throw up.

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