By Alan Bronstein
The story of The Golden Jubilee Diamond is more than the fact that it is the largest faceted diamond in the world and that its color is a blend of the brown family. In reaching out to my friend and the original owner, Henry Ho, it became apparent that the story of The Golden Jubilee was more about love and hope, than size and value. Always the ultimate gentleman, Henry’s response was so poetic and compellingly descriptive, that I must reprise his answers verbatim as a true legacy to the stone and its intention.

AB – How would describe the color of the stone in layman’s terms, for example cognac, mahogany, chestnut, etc.?

HH – The color of the Golden Jubilee in layman’s term may best be described as “cognac on the rocks” -- preferably on a big cube of ice! The colors you get are a very close approximation of the “real thing”!

AB – Could you compare it in size to another object, for example, a baseball, an apple, an egg?
HH– I would say the size is comparable to two chicken eggs.
AB– Could you describe the emotions of the king when you presented it to him?
HH– I presented the Golden Jubilee to The Royal Crown Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn who represented His Majesty. can only presume that His Majesty was happy to receive it as it came from the “hearts of Thais and friends of Thailand” who all wished him a complete and quick recovery from his grave illness at that time.
AB– Did you plan to give it to the king when you originally purchased the stone and is that why you had it blessed?
HH– During the time some 15 or more years ago, His Majesty King Bhumibol suffered a heart attack and was critically bedridden in the hospital. Royal Grand Mother had recently passed away and the country was still in mourning.

His majesty was to enter the 50th Anniversary of his enthronement, making him the longest serving monarch in the world. His Majesty, the King of Thailand, was a most respected and loved person of all the Thais and his illness shocked the country. Presidents, prime ministers, heads of states and tens of thousands of people Thais and foreigners alike sent their well wishes, came out to the streets with candles in vigil to wish His Majesty a quick recovery. It was at this time during a lunch meeting that the idea to purchase the diamond came about. Mr. Chirakitti Tangkatach, President of the Thai Diamond Manufacturer’s Association and I observed that our jewelry industry had yet to express our concerns and good wishes. Recognizing the seriousness and the unfathomable consequences for Thailand should His Majesty not survive, we were determined to do whatever was needed to His Majesty’s regaining his health! That something was a Thai belief and practice called “Lea-ek Kuan” or “calling of spirits” which equates to “the hand given when you are at your lowest!”.

A large part of regaining one’s health lies in having “the mental strength and will” to overcome the bad elements in your body. Mr. Tangkatach and I, thought that we would “lend a hand”. As a gesture and symbol of “eternal love”, we would lift His Majesty’s spirits by gifting the world’s largest faceted diamond (weighing 545.67 carats) called the “Unnamed Brown” to him.

After our lunch, I immediately wrote a letter to His Majesty’s. Principal Private Secretary outlining our intentions. The letter, first and foremost, relayed our wishes for His Majesty’s to get well soon and to remain with us “forever”, to christen the diamond and to allow us to take it around globally on exhibition.

The letter reached His Majesty while he was still in the hospital and about a week later I received a reply stating His Majesty’s thanks, appreciation and acceptance! At this point, we were thrilled and joyed to receive the good news!

This euphoria soon subsided as we realized the enormity of the task ahead. Two weeks ago, what was still a “mere intention” was now an un-retractable commitment! We took a deep breath, calmed our nerves and put on our thinking caps. The adage “where there is a will, there is a way” soon turned “vague ideas” into “plans of action”. From ground zero, we formed an advisory board with surprising ease and speed. Just about everyone we approached accepted our invitation! Soon the board looked pretty cool, consisting of
CEO’s, Presidents and captains of industries, Mayors, Ministers, Army, Navy, Air Force and Police Generals, Privy Councillors, Former Prime Ministers, Doctors, Bankers and your A list of Who’s Who in Thailand! The strength and diversity of the board members provided a variety of talents and resources. Still the money had to be raised and each step and action had to abide by proper royal protocol and procedures. As the project developed, we gained momentum and soon “eminent persons” of the international diamond community joined, offering various support and encouragement.

An activity deserving notice was the creation of a “We love our King” lapel pins to be worn by everyone who wished His Majesty well. The pins had to be purchased with the proceeds going to pay for the Golden Jubilee owned by De Beers at the time. Further funds were generated from private sources with the Ho (The Ho Group) and Chirathivat (the Central Group of Companies) families leading the contributions. The diamond was named “The Golden Jubilee” by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej and subsequently exhibited at Borsheim’s Jewelers belonging to Warren Buffet in Omaha, Nebraska. Other venues include the Jewelry Trade Center and Central Department Store in Thailand; the Basel Fair, Switzerland and Gleims Jewelers in Palo Alto, California. The diamond presently resides in the Royal Thai Palace.

One can only wonder what role the “Golden Jubilee” played in bringing back His Majesty’s health. Was it the inherent “magical” qualities of the diamond itself? Was it the blessings by religious leaders such as His Holiness Pope John Paul II, the Supreme Buddhist Patriarch and Supreme Imam in Thailand? Was it from the faith in prayers by the people? In reviewing the facts, it shows that His Majesty soon regained his health and remains to this day strong, attentive and responsive continuing his role as the best loved King in the history of Thailand!

The 545-carat Golden Jubilee is the world’s largest cut natural diamond. (Photo courtesy of De Beers Archives)