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MAY - AUGUST 2008

Revisiting the Ring of Fire

with Dr. Lawrence Blair

My Bali

by Wayan Bokong Besar

Local Hero

Nyoman Sutarma cleans up Bali

Kul Kul Greenschool

Environmental Sustainability
in the Classroom

PLUS 10 PAGES OF BEACHFRONT PROPERTY FOR SALE

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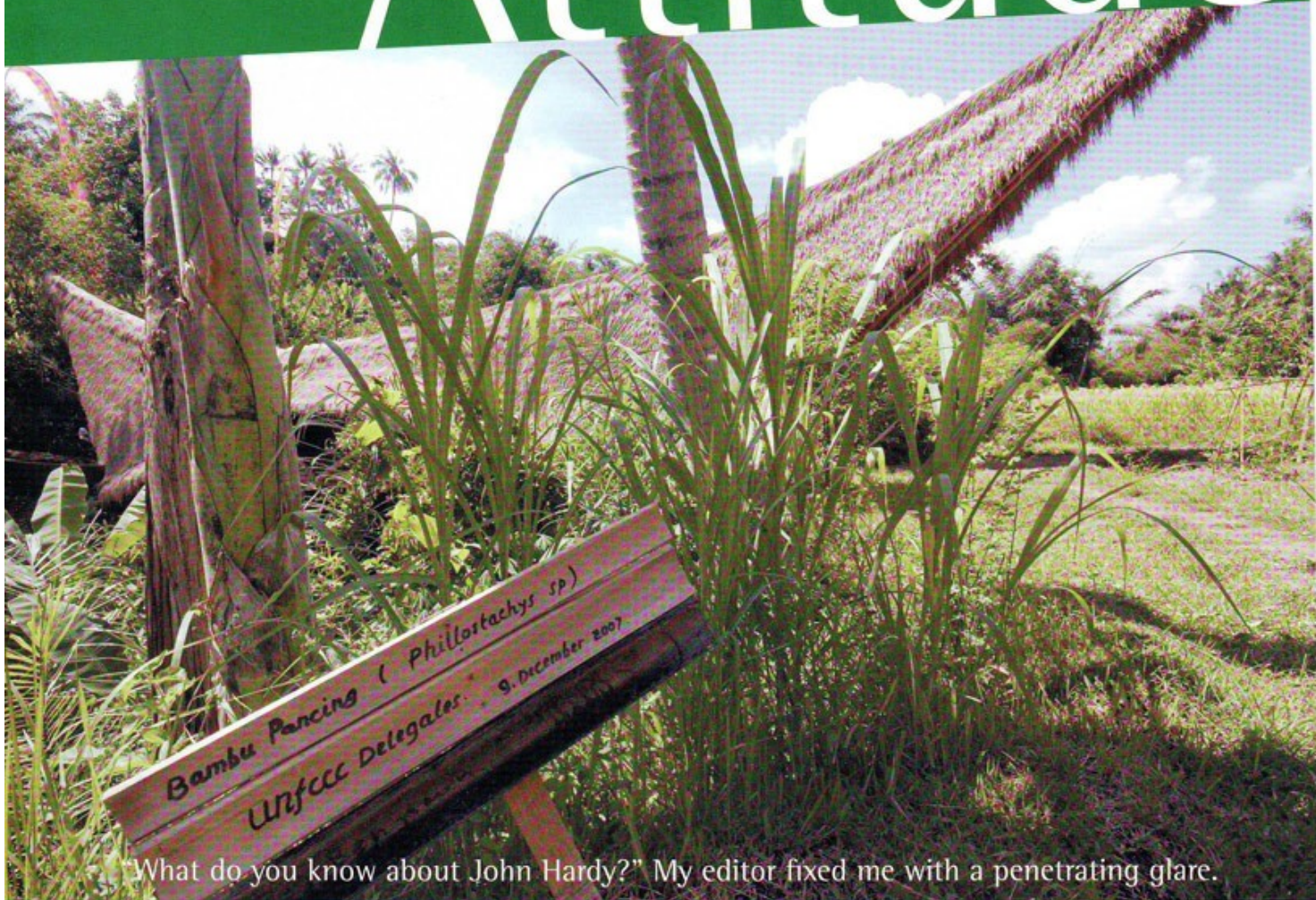
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Attitude



"What do you know about John Hardy?" My editor fixed me with a penetrating glare.

The Rolodex in my brain cranked over. James Hardy 1000, saloon car race; Thomas Hardy, bucolic English novelist and poet; huge Aussie wine company; English shipper of delicious port; Lord Nelson's second in command as in "Kiss me Hardy". None seemed likely. I looked appropriately blank.

"John Hardy, Canadian, probably one of the most successful jewellery entrepreneurs in the world. In fact, he was the largest private employer on Bali before he sold his business last year."

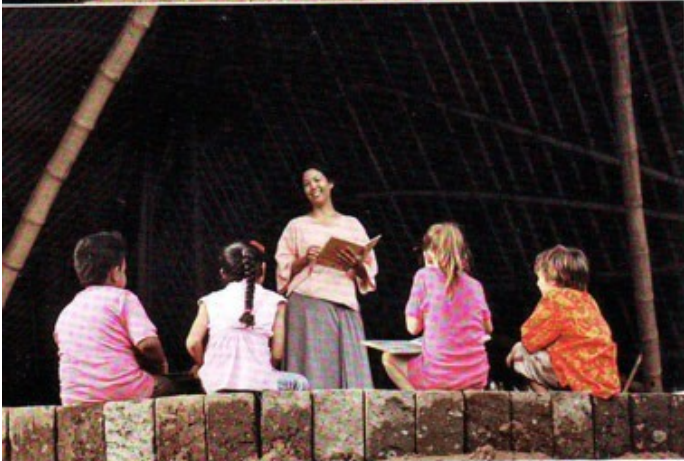
"He and his wife Cynthia want to give something back to the community so they've bought some land up by Ubud and they're building a school. It's the first environmentally sustainable school in Asia apparently, made out of bamboo. The teachers live like hobbits and the kids swing around like Tarzan. Go find out about it."

of Gratitude



Say what? First I had visions of a neat and tidy elementary school in the Indonesian style with the flag pole and the beaten clay playground, followed by the image of a transplanted Canadian multi-storey college with state-of-the-art computer labs, gymnasium, Olympic size pool, football fields and solar panels for floodlighting, but I couldn't quite fit Tarzan and Hobbits into the picture. Nothing could have prepared me for the truth.

For the reality of GreenSchool is quite extraordinary in breadth, depth and vision, and it really is made out of bamboo.



It truly defines the concept of giving back to the community, for literally hundreds, if not thousands of locals have benefited from being involved in the construction phase, and the school will go on giving and giving for as long as it operates.

Physically, the GreenSchool's eight hectares – more than 19 acres – straddles the Ayung River at Sibang Kaja, joined by two bamboo covered bridges on the fringe of Ubud.

It's a deeply cleft property, its eastern and western halves joined by a wonderful covered bamboo bridge, the design of which has nuances of the covered wagons that pioneered the American West, the communal houses of both Tanah Karo in North Sumatra and Tanah Toraja in Sulawesi, and to this film buff's eye, even the bridges of Madison County, made famous in that Clint Eastwood tearjerker of a generation ago.



The eastern portion of the property is given over to faculty housing and alongside this open community is the Learning Village where handicrafts and various small enterprises, including an organic chocolate factory, provide the entrepreneurial and experiential learning components of the curriculum.

To the west the campus is dedicated to spacious classrooms, libraries, a multi-media center, laboratories, kitchen, canteen, administration building, and boarding facilities adjacent to the playing field will be an Old People's Home which will also be sustainably built, growing its own organic food and following the same ecological principles as the school. Here, elderly Balinese people of limited means will live in peace, comfort and dignity and share their stories, culture and knowledge with the children of the Green School. This home, entirely funded by Tropical Homes, will be the first culturally and environmentally integrated old people's home in Bali, and possibly the world.

The buildings on both sides are astonishing.

All are built to be more than 98% natural in materials and fittings. Extensive use of bamboo demonstrates just what a versatile material this plant is. From sturdy foundation poles as much as a foot in diameter, to bamboo beaten and naturally processed to the softness of cloth for walls and flooring.

But more extraordinary yet are the building's designs. Architects from all over the world contributed their inspiration to create truly original, practical and surprisingly beautiful structures.

“This is not just about sitting around under trees looking at the leaves,” he says, “this is serious education with the added advantage of providing an absolutely transformative experience for our students.”



A design center staffed by bright-eyed and bushy-tailed young interns from a dozen countries, create designs for interiors, build websites, produce curriculum, design gardens, pathways and other infrastructure.

Among their many accomplishments are designs for solar power, an ingenious micro-hydro power station in the river, and bio-fuels which will provide the energy sources for lighting and electrical equipment.

Heading the youthful team is 30-something New Yorker Brad Choyt.

Brad is the type of young man that seems to radiate all that is good about the United States. He's clear eyed, direct of gaze, firm in the handshake and imbued with that honesty, intelligence, articulateness, enthusiasm and wholesomeness that is just so, well.... American. A Henry Fonda for the 21st Century, you might say.

And if he's embarrassed to read this, too bad. It's the truth.

Brad, like so many other of the staff and volunteers I met, is a true believer.

In his mind's eye he can see GreenSchool finished.

He can see the children – initially from pre-school to grade 8 – on their bicycles pedaling between classrooms and the canteen.

He can hear their excited chatter, he can see them growing to understand concepts like sustainability, teaching their parents about organic foods, how plastic bags are so unnecessary and so destructive. He can see them using their own little hands to build things for themselves.

He can see them graduating with the International Baccalaureate qualification and going on to take leadership roles in the communities they come from.

The principal-to-be is currently heading one of the more prestigious International Baccalaureate schools in New York, faculty members have been recruited from the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand.





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Elitist? Not a bit of it. The school is a yayasan which means that it's totally not for profit. The cost of tuition will be no more (and in some cases significantly less than) other international schools on the island.

And what about gifted but poor local kids? Do they just have to stand outside looking in with longing?

No, there'll be scholarships and assistance for Balinese and Indonesian kids.

An open day a few weeks ago attracted a large number of visitors and a gratifying number of enrolments

As the school prepares to open for its first semester in September 2008, prospective parents and those with a true interest in the environment and sustainability – and the will and stickability to actually contribute – are welcome to visit GreenSchool.

Contact Details:

admissions@greenschool.org or
call + 62 361 469 875, or
visit their website www.greenschool.org