

From restaurateur to elephant conservationist

Charles Begley (1977 - 1982)

Charles attended UWCSEA from Grade 6 through 10, completing his GCSE before moving to the UK to complete his final two years of high school. After graduation, he attended the London School of Economics, where he felt he had once again "returned to an international environment," more similar to the one he had enjoyed while attending UWCSEA.

In 1988 Charles began his career in restaurant and pub management in and around London. At the end of four years, he decided to go the entrepreneurial route, and after moving on from his first small business, he set up his own pub from scratch in 1994. The pub, located in London, was called the Malthouse, and he ran it with great success until 2002 when he sold it and returned to Asia with his long-term partner, Rachel Jones, for an extended trip through Thailand on elephant-back. They signed up for a two week conservation course with Thai elephant conservationist Sangduen Chailert, which turned into months of working closely with the elephants in the Elephant Nature Park. They decided to use their trek across Thailand to raise awareness of the plight of elephants in Asia, including those forced to work on the streets of Bangkok. They spent six weeks in Bangkok studying the street elephants, buying three, one of which was driven to Sangduen by truck for care of a broken leg. The other two were trekked through the back roads of Thailand to their home at the park, gaining international publicity.

Upon their return to London in 2003, they set about establishing EleAid to help all Asian elephants, and they continue to manage, promote and build the charity. Another former student of UWCSEA, Sue Grossey, has since joined the Trustee Board.

In 2005, Charles and Rachel returned to Thailand to oversee the building of an elephant medical centre, and decided to make a permanent move to Chiang Mai, which they did in January 2006.



Charles travelled to Burma in March to investigate the elephants there, for which he has had a long-time interest. He reports that they are still worked in essentially the same way they were over 150 years ago, and according to him, it is the last place where elephant skills are passed from father to son. He produced a report of his findings, posted on the EleAid website noted below, in which he predicts that Burma may hold the greatest chance for the survival of a significant number of wild elephants.

He is now combining his elephant conservation work with his former vocation, by opening a pub/restaurant in Chiang Mai, called Tuskers, planned for early 2007. He has also recently been invited to take on the role of Vice President of the Chiang Expats Club.

For further information on EleAid, please visit the website at www.eleaid.com, and for information on Tuskers, please visit <http://www.tuskerbar.com>.

