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- **INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL MAPS AND BOOKS**
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AXIS OF EVIL MAPPING NEWSLETTER #12 OF 2018 – December – New Titles: see below for details

INTRODUCTION

December is always a month for reflection. The year was a busy one for us, with 65 new releases. We wish to extend our best wishes to all of our loyal distributors, retailers, libraries, and individuals; without your on-going support, we wouldn't exist. We greatly appreciate your orders and your input into helping us improve the quality of our product line.

VIETNAM and LAOS

Lan and myself spent the latter part of November and the first week of December in Asia. The purpose of this trip was two-fold: Lan's father was in hospital, so she wanted to spend some time with him, and we wanted to enjoy a unique travel experience. For this, I will have to provide some background.

In 1954, a famous battle was fought known as Dien Bien Phu. France had granted independence to Vietnam in September, 1949, and to both Laos and Cambodia by 1952. However, all three states were weakly led, to put it mildly. The French were particularly concerned about growing militancy in those parts of Vietnam controlled by communists. To protect Laos, the French established a large base in a valley on the border of Vietnam and Laos, close to the Vietnamese village of Dien Bien Phu. This incensed the communist-led Vietnamese in the north, who saw it as an attempt by France to continue dominating the region. They attacked the base and their ultimate defeat of the French has been written about extensively and was very instrumental in propelling the communists under Ho Chi Minh to dominance inside large areas of the Indochina peninsula.

What happened next is the story of legend. The weak Laotian government was powerless to control the border area with Vietnam. After the 1954 agreement to 'divide' Vietnam, supposedly temporarily, on the 37th parallel, pending some sort of agreement as to how that country would resolve its differences, civil war broke out and what we know as the Vietnam War escalated what would otherwise have a nasty civil insurrection into an international catastrophe involving 14 countries directly and the entire world indirectly, including the Secret War in Laos. My generation was torn apart by the conflicting realities of wanting to help but realizing that tragedy was tearing apart societies and it would be best to leave the Vietnamese to sort out their own realities. It was not a fun time for anyone.

That's the background, and I've tried to be as neutral as possible in synopsisizing an extremely emotional and controversial time. North Vietnam was completely dominated by the communists led by Ho Chi Minh. South Vietnam tried to carry on as the 'legitimate' government of all of Vietnam, but was severely de-stabilized by civil unrest led by various groups generally lumped together and called Viet Cong, or VCs. They were, of course, supported by North Vietnam. This support initially involved providing weaponry and supplies, as well as 'volunteers', moving south.

To ferry supplies to the south, North Vietnam built a road from the north to the south through Vietnam-controlled portions of Laos. This became known as the famous Ho Chi Minh Trail. It was a truck route, eked out of the jungle, far enough west of the border to be relatively safe from attack. It was constructed by thousands of NVA (North Vietnam Army) troops, assisted by 'volunteers'. Lan's father was one of those in charge of this enormous project, and spent eleven war years in Laos supervising the road while under heavy bombardment by American planes. A lot of men died, but a lot more survived. The children of many of these NVA troops were evacuated from Hanoi and were raised in camps located in villages. Lan and her sisters lived in Camp 959 from age 8 to 17. Not a fun way to go through childhood, being raised by teachers instead of parents. However, as a result of being sent to safety, almost all of the children survived and reached adulthood. Lan is one of the few to eventually migrate to Canada (as have her sisters Hoa), but that's another story.

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Fast forward to today. The children of these men are all in retirement mode by now, but many have kept in touch with each other over the past half century or more, and Facebook has made it much easier to keep in contact. Earlier this year, some of the 959 group organized a bus tour of Laos. Lan discovered this, and we flew to Hanoi to join this tour of 42 Camp 959 survivors, most of whom Lan had not seen for 50 years. Leaving Hanoi at 5:00am on Nov. 21st, we drove all day through Vietnam's interior mountains, crossing the Laotian border the next morning. For the next week, we visited various sites in Laos as a sort-of extended class reunion. This was Lan's trip and she enjoyed herself enormously and good for her. I just went along for the ride. From a business perspective, we saw a lot of Laos and a part of Vietnam previously not seen, and obtained valuable information for updating our various maps that include Laos, Vietnam, and Thailand. We saw the Plain of Jars, one of the great wonders of the world, and the former capital of Luong Prabang, which was notably interesting, and Lan visited a museum dedicated to Ho Chi Minh in Udon, Thailand. We proof-checked our ITM map of Laos, and found it to be accurate, so it was a worthwhile business trip as well as a memorable reunion for Lan.

VISITING THAILAND

The tour ended in Vientiane, Laos. We flew from Vientiane to Bangkok and rented a car to explore the northern half of Thailand for a week, checking our map of that half of the country. Although we have been in Thailand several times, this was our first opportunity to drive through large segments of the country (essentially ITM's Northern Thailand map). We also stayed with several couch surfing hosts, which led to some interesting experiences. The road network of Thailand is surprisingly good, and we will be noting several improvements on the next edition of our map. Many of the highways have been twinned, as divided roads, and apart from congested urban areas, serve as mini-motorways. We spent the first night in Suphan Buri, the next two nights in a former leper colony close to Chiang Mai, then two nights in Nakhon Sawan, all of which are sizeable Thai cities, and then spent two nights in the middle of nowhere, in a small Buddhist temple located in a forest close to a tiny village – truly a case of being in the middle of nowhere.

Road conditions were very good, with most main highways being 4-laned divided, and no one should be worried about driving, as we found local drivers to be courteous. Even the two-laned highways north of Chiang Rai were well paved. The weather was fine, with average temperatures in the mid-20s Celsius. Scenically, the more northerly region, north of Chiang Mai, was the most varied. We returned to Bangkok, intending to drop our car at the international airport. Unfortunately, Lan's GPS device oriented us to Don Muang, the old airport, not the new one east of Bangkok, so we had a frantic run through the centre of Bangkok, after dark, in order to end at Suvarnabhumi airport, where we arrived, frazzled, with enough time to turn over the car and check in for our return flight. Overall, we would recommend Thailand's north as a travel destination. Chiang Mai is already a major travel destination, but the north offers many other worthwhile experiences.

OMNI RESOURCES

Regretfully, I have to advise that a long-standing North American supplier of maps to both business concerns and retailers has closed its doors. Russell Guy has operated Omni for many years and reached a point where he decided that retirement seemed to be his best option. As he put it to me, he just didn't seem to have the drive necessary to carry on. All entrepreneurs can relate to that! This happens sooner or later to all of us and we wish Guy success in his future activities. He has sold his inventory to his long-time business rival, East View, in Minnesota. Apparently, that firm is in the process of moving Guy's remaining inventory, which is considerable, out of Burlington, NC into their warehouse. Whether East View has the competence to carry on all of the lines formerly carried by Omni remains to be seen, but it does leave East View as one of the last remaining distributing suppliers of maps inside the USA. There are publishers, and specialty distributors – and there is ITMB in Canada.

MAPWORLD SERVICES, CALGARY

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Mapworld, owned by David Pickering, has moved to new premises in downtown Calgary, Alberta. There are actually two retail map specialty stores operating in Calgary, and both are located within a few blocks of each other. Both have existed for many years. David has just moved in to new premises, as his former location was a structurally unsound building, which is now completely empty. His new address is 700 6th Ave at 6th Street. I assume that is SW. When David called, his move-in was so recent that he didn't even know the postal code. He advised that he has 1,700 square feet of showroom space, with office and storage space behind. Congratulations to another successful map retailer!

SOMEONE NEEDS A LESSON

Here are a couple of brief stories I noted in a local newspaper during November. In Simcoe, Ontario, a young girl dialed 911 to complain to provincial police about being told to clean up her room by her parent. Police are used to being on the receiving end of calls that are frivolous, and wasteful of vital resources, but in this case, they called her mother to advise her of the call, then issued a press release to advise all adults to talk with children about the proper use of emergency calls. Regardless, I'm sure that the despatchers had a chuckle or two.

NOT THE BRIGHTEST THING TO DO!

Here's another story out of Victoria, British Columbia, which proves once again that drinking and driving don't mix. Every year, police notice erratic driving behaviour and invariably find a drunk behind the wheel. In this case, local police had set up one of their roadside checkpoints and, sure enough, in entered a car with a seemingly drunk driver. The constable involved related later that the inebriated man offered him his hamburger instead of his driver's licence. Not the brightest thing to do! Needless to say, this encouraged the officer to question the driver further and eventually impound his car and fine the driver. Generally speaking, impaired driving charges are declining in Canada but incidents such as this are still sadly too common. Fortunately, this driver was removed before he killed someone, but his story does resonate – Don't Drink and Drive!

DUMB CROOK OF THE MONTH

This story comes out of Norway, and happened just before Christmas. Two crooks decided to steal an upscale Audi car. Unfortunately for them, they did not have the keys, and in attempting to 'hot-wire' the ignition cables, set off the car alarm and anti-theft protection, which locked all the doors. Unable to exit the vehicle, and apparently after exhausting efforts to smash a window and escape, they called police and asked them to rescue them. Guess where they are spending Christmas?

DON'T CROSS MOMMA!

A policeman, responding to a claim of shots fired, phoned his supervisor to report that an old lady had just shot her husband dead for walking across her freshly-mopped kitchen floor. 'Well, have you arrested her yet?' The sergeant asked. 'Not yet, the floor's still wet!'

PSYCHOTHERAPIST

This one is just a joke, a cartoon I saw in a magazine, but it tickled my fancy. A painter was trying to place the doctor's title on the glass portion of the office door. There wasn't enough room for such a long title as Psychotherapist, so the painter divided it into syllables. Psycho the Rapist; put them together and what do you have? You got it!

WORK IN PROGRESS ON CURRENT PROJECTS

We have 28 titles at the moment that have fewer than 100 copies left in stock. Most of these are being updated by Lan and her team of dedicated cartographers; others are being run down a bit further before we decide what to do. Please note the following:

Auckland/North Island is almost out of stock.. A new edition is being prepared; no ETA.

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Brisbane is almost out of stock (10 copies left). It will be out of print indefinitely as we re-work the artwork.

British Columbia is almost out of print (9 copies left). The next edition is being prepared and should be available in the spring of 2019.

France is now out of print. We are re-working this title into a rail/road map of France over the winter. The new map is scheduled for release in the spring of 2019.

Iceland is almost out of print. The new edition is being prepared and should be available in the spring of 2019.

Japan South is now out of print. A new edition is being prepared and should be available in the spring of 2019.

Jerusalem is almost out of print (4 copies). A new edition is being prepared and should be available in the spring of 2019.

Lesotho is now out of print indefinitely. We hope to publish a new map, combining Lesotho and Swaziland into a double-sided map in the spring of 2019.

Malta/Goza is almost out of print. A new edition is being prepared and should be available in the spring of 2019.

Mauritania is now out of print. We are working on a new map, combining Mauritania with Mali; for release in the spring of 2019.

Mumbai is almost out of stock. A new edition is planned for the spring of 2019.

North Korea is out of print indefinitely. In spite of recent political talks with South Korea over normalizing relations, the regime in charge of the country shows no signs of changing its erratic and isolationist behaviour, so the country remains extremely difficult to visit. We have decided to await developments and pause awhile before committing to a new edition.

Norway is almost out of print. A new edition is being prepared for release in May.

Panama is now out of print. A new edition is being prepared for release in May.

Paraguay is almost out of inventory (7 copies). A new edition is being prepared for release in May.

Philippines is suddenly almost out of inventory (5 copies). A new edition is being prepared for release in May.

Quebec is depleting quickly (25 copies left). We are preparing a new edition for release in May.

Quito/Northern Ecuador is out of print. A new edition is being prepared; no ETA is yet available. In the meantime, please use our Galapagos/Quito map.

Rio de Janeiro/East Coast of Brasil is almost out of copies. A new edition is being prepared; no ETA.

Samoa/American Samoa is out of print indefinitely (1 copy left).

Santiago de Chile is now out of print. A new edition is in preparation; no ETA.

Singapore is out of print. We are preparing a new title called Singapore & Malay Peninsula for release in the spring of 2019.

Slovakia/Hungary is almost out of inventory. We are preparing a new edition; no ETA.

Somalia is now out of print. We are preparing a new title called Somalia and the Horn of Africa for release in the spring of 2019.

Surinam has reached a low level of inventory. A new edition is being prepared; no ETA.

Swaziland is out of stock. We are working on a new combined map of the country, along with Lesotho, for release in the spring of 2019.

Togo and Benin is now out of print. The artwork is being updated; no ETA.

NEW RELEASES IN DECEMBER AND JANUARY

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Due to shipping delays at the Christmas season, several maps we were expecting during December will now arrive in January. Thus, we will record the two that did arrive in December and add the ones that arrive in January as they come into our warehouse.

Canada's Maritime Provinces – coming in January

Scotland Travel Reference Map, on waterproof paper 4th Ed. 2017 ISBN 9781553411000 (same as currently) UPC 815543110053 \$12.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – Scotland is an ever-popular travel destination, full of castles, battlefields, interesting urban areas, and the grandeur of space that is so difficult to find in crowded England. A separate country until agreeing to merge with other entities in 1707 to create the United Kingdom, Scotland is still fiercely independent and the worst insult one can offer a Scot is to ask what part of England he comes from. At the moment, Brexit is consuming all efforts in Scotland, so this edition of our map does not show significant changes, but we have added a Top Attractions list to aid users in finding the best of the best. We have not changed the ISBN with this printing (or the price), but have updated all necessary information and are pleased to be able to get this map back into print reasonably quickly. **AVAILABLE**

Uganda Travel Reference Map 6th Ed. 2018 on waterproof paper 1:600,000 ISBN 9781771298469 UPC 817712984692 \$13.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – The Jewel of Africa, Uganda is a lovely country to visit. Most of the development is in the south, close to Lake Victoria. To me, the most interesting parts are the game parks in the far west and in the far north, but the Mount Elgon area is interesting as well. This updated map also includes a large inset map of Kampala, the capital. The map has been updated to last for the next few years and, by being printed on plastic, is guaranteed to remain durable as well as waterproof. **AVAILABLE**

NEW RELEASES IN OCTOBER and NOVEMBER, 2018

El Salvador & Southern Guatemala Travel Reference Map 6th Ed. 2019 1:270,000/1:457,000 on waterproof paper ISBN 9781771292610 UPC 817712926104 \$12.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP - AVAILABLE

Inflatable Physical Relief 16"/41cm, Clear (transparent ocean) Globe ISBN 9781553417910 - AVAILABLE

Inflatable Political 16"/41cm Light Blue Ocean Globe ISBN 9781771299954 retail for \$16.95 each cdn/us, and for E12.98 and 12.95GBP AVAILABLE

Victoria & Vancouver Island South Half Travel Reference Map 1st Ed. 2019 1:10,000/1:270,000 ISBN 9781771298698 UPC 817712986986 \$9.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – AVAILABLE

Tahiti & Cook Islands Travel Reference Map 2nd Ed. 2018 scale varies ISBN 9781771297974 UPC 817712979742 \$12.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – AVAILABLE

Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, & Tajikistan Travel Reference Map 4th Ed. 2019 1:1,600,000/1:1,100,000 on waterproof paper ISBN 9781771298490 UPC817712984906 \$13.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – AVAILABLE

Vancouver's North Shore Hiking Trails & Fraser Valley Travel Reference Map 7th Ed. 2019 1:40,000/1:250,000 ISBN 9781771298681 UPC 817712986818 \$12.95cdn/us E9.50 8.96GBP – AVAILABLE

Western Europe Rail & Road Travel Reference Map 1st ed. 2018 1:2,500,000 ISBN 9781771292603 UPC 817712926036 \$13.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – AVAILABLE

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