

Mrs. Esther Coopersmith,
My co-hosts, Dr Susan Blumenthal and Senator Ed Markey,
Your Honorables, Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,

Wanchana and I would like to welcome each one of you to our residence.

I would like everyone to know that there are two women who are responsible for doing all the hard work in planning, preparing and executing this dinner party, Wanchana, my wife and Dr. Susan Blumenthal. You know, when my wife asks me to do anything in this house, I will normally do it immediately. When my wife and Dr. Susan Blumenthal asked me to just say a few words and that would be all I need to do for this evening, I accepted it most immediately!

Tonight is not quite like the Alfalfa Club dinner some of you had just attended recently, although they bear some similarities, like the guests tonight are all as distinguished as there are elected and former elected officials, senior administration officials, ambassadors, philanthropists, fundraisers and media. There are however no ex US President or former First Lady among us tonight because they all are in New Hampshire at the moment!

And unlike the Alfalfa dinner, we are all seated at the main VIP table together.

Looking around the room, I was amazed that we can seat more than 74 people together. Initially, we thought we would do a sit down dinner for maximum of 40 people but then the number kept climbing.

I was relieved that the DC Mayor and Fire Marshall were not present tonight, so please let me make one important announcement. In case of emergency, there is only one exit which is the same door where you all came in and please let our honored guest Esther leave the room first!

Unlike the Alfalfa Club dinner, we are not going to have any political speech here, definitely not about politics in Thailand. Thailand's political system was broken, the country deeply divided, nothing got done in the House of Representatives whose members were only interested in fighting each other and shutting down government. There were complaints about money politics and voters were absolutely mad and angry with the establishment. No...no, I have been talking

about Thailand only! But the Thais will muddle through and get our democracy returning on a more sustainable path soon.

Unlike the Alfalfa Club dinner, we are here for one common and meaningful purpose only and that is to show our love and affection to Esther who only knows how to give without expecting anything in return. We have former Chiefs of Protocol in this room but I would like to say that Esther is the US only permanent chief of protocol. For successive ambassadors to Washington DC, I would like to say thank you on their behavior since it was Esther who graciously hosted parties to welcome and connect them with Washington and vice versa.

More important reason for me and my wife to have this honor to co-host this evening is the fact that over the past decades, Esther has become a great friend of Thailand. During my first post in the 80s, Esther would introduce my then Ambassador Arsa Sarasin and his wife to US senators and congressmen and their spouses, arranged them to visit Thailand and Esther herself has become one of HM the Queen's closest friends in Washington DC. When HM the Queen planned to visit Washington DC, Esther would have more details and information than the State Department!

So this is a very small way for Thailand to express its appreciation to Esther for what she has done to our bilateral relationship with the United States.

Thank you for joining us and I wish you all a very enjoyable evening.