

‘Die, and it’s the vile earth; live, and it’s the golden parasol,’ went the old Burmese saying. Why not aim for the pinnacle with everything they had? The vile earth would be theirs soon enough. A year after Burma’s military coup in 1962, Ed Law-Yone, daredevil proprietor of the influential newspaper, The Nation, was arrested and his newspaper shut down. Eventually, his teenaged daughter Wendy was also imprisoned before managing to escape the country. Ed spent five years as a political prisoner, but the moment he was freed he set about trying – unsuccessfully – to stage a revolution, and never gave up hope for the restoration of democracy in Burma. Exiled in America, he died disappointed – though not before entrusting to his daughter Wendy his papers and unpublished memoirs: of a career that had spanned the full sweep of modern Burmese history – from colonial rule to independence; from the era of parliamentary democracy to the military coup that would usher in decades of totalitarian rule. Now, some forty years later, as Burma enters another period of transition, Wendy Law-Yone has honoured her father’s legacy by setting his remarkable career in a larger, more personal, story. The result is Golden Parasol, a unique portrait of a patriot, his family, and a nation whose vicissitudes continue to intrigue the world.

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