

The Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand Magazine

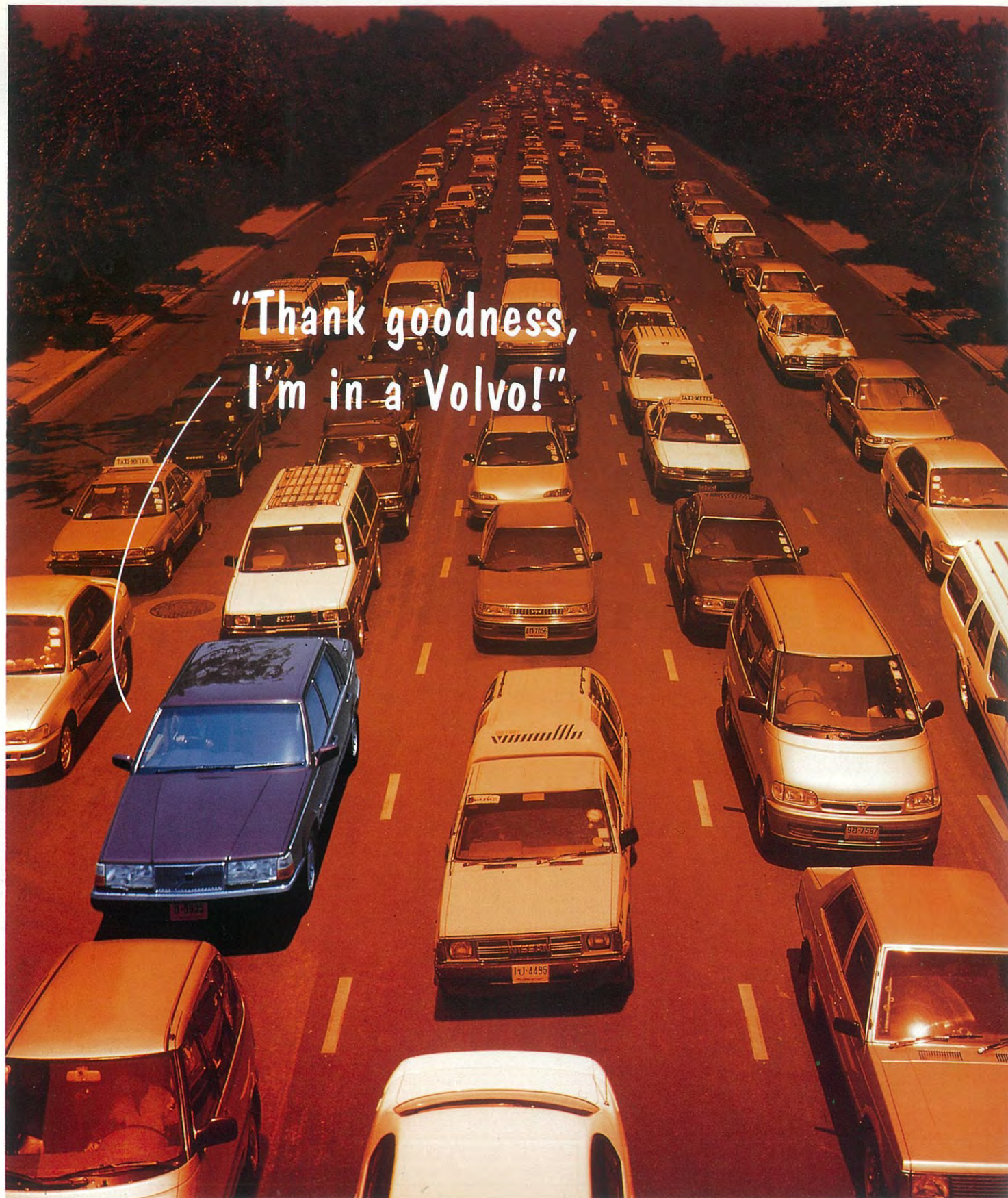
First Quarter 1995

Dateline

• B A N G K O K •



- **Desperately Seeking Leeson**
- **The Big Move: FCCT Finds a New Home**
- **Memories of Indochina; An interview with AP's Sheila McNulty**
- **Dateline Kobe**
- **Remembering Neil Davis and Bill Latch**
- **Plus Club Highlights, News Briefs, Wandering Eye and My Turn**



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Dateline

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When headlines across the world began automatically prefacing every mention of his name with the words "Rogue trader," Barings broker Nick Leeson wisely went into hiding. Like scores of other dedicated journalists, The Daily Telegraph's Phillip Sherwell joined the global man-hunt, bravely volunteering to stake out the Amanpuri and other luxury resorts in hopes of spotting the world's most-wanted fugitive.

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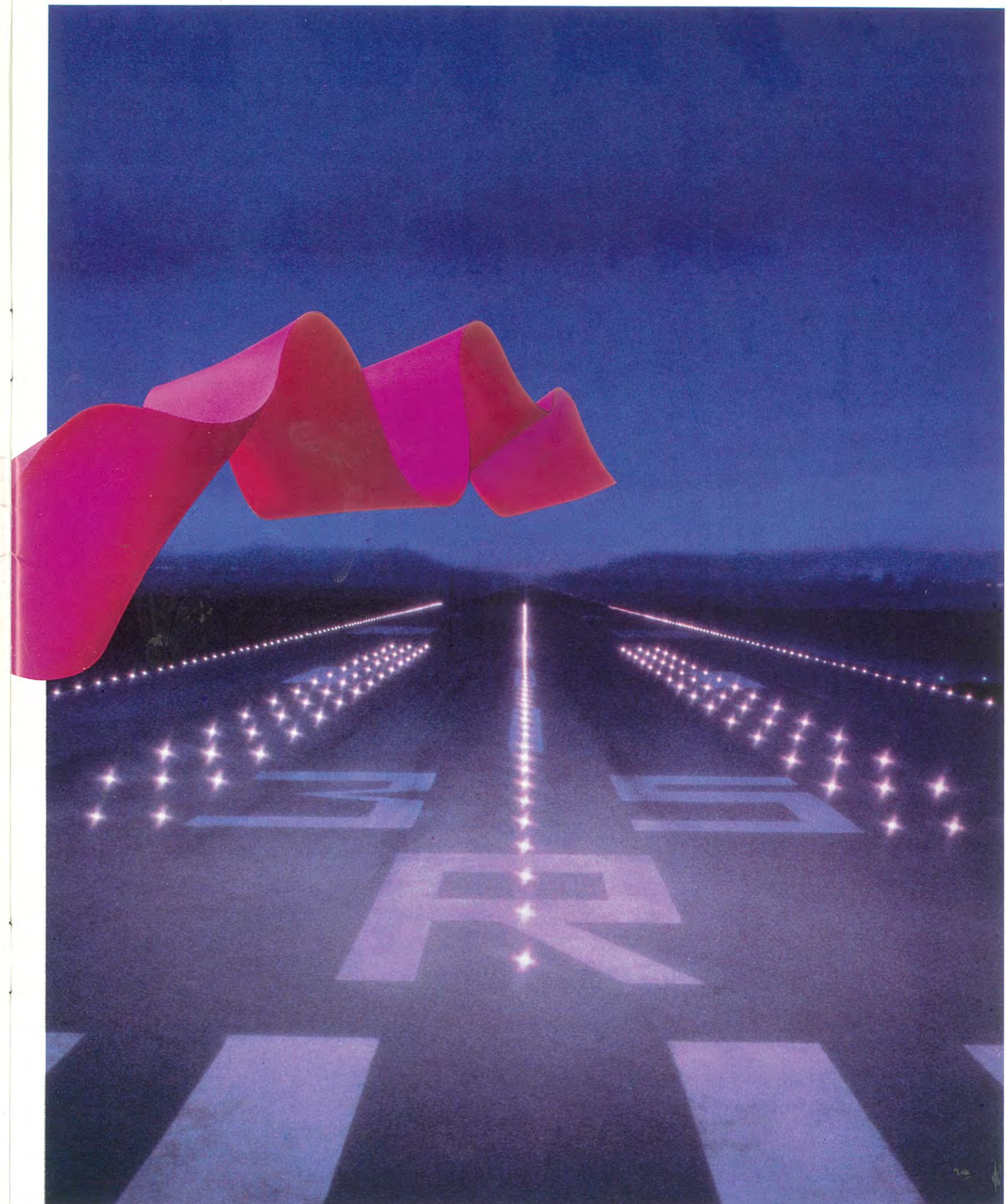
CONTRIBUTORS

Dateline Bangkok, the FCCT's quarterly magazine, welcomes stories, photos, opinion pieces and letters to the editor. Please contact Elizabeth Lu at 260-2644, or fax 260-2643. Payment is in FCCT chit books.

FRONT COVER

The Jewelry Trade Centre on Silom Road, soon to house the new FCCT clubhouse.

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A Letter from your President

It was absolutely through fate that the 1995 executive committee came to the helm at one of the most crucial periods in the club's history.

The clubhouse's viability at the Dusit Thani Hotel, where we have been since 1984, had received intensive but inconclusive debate at the Annual General Meeting on January 27. The new board, elected on that very evening, was entrusted with the responsibility of making a final decision on the clubhouse issue.

It was, indeed, a difficult decision that had to be made, particularly under the pressing circumstances we faced — financial constraint, chaotic traffic conditions in the city, and the urgency of the decision.

The new board, in addition to taking on the responsibilities of overseeing the club's routine activities, immediately took to task the issue.

The Committee on Clubhouse Relocation, led by my immediate predecessor Bertil Lintner, presented the board with two potential sites for a new clubhouse. Each and every board member, plus several active club members, visited both sites. The board engaged in several rounds of serious deliberations to evaluate the pros and cons of both locations, and a well-prepared presentation by interior designer Richard Wood of SDS Asia came in time to help the board's decision making.

As many of you know by now, the board voted in favor of moving the club to the Jewelry Trade Center on Silom Road Soi 19. (See story on page 11)

At this juncture, I must offer sincere thanks to our life member Henry Ho who made the generous offer for a potential club house at his new realty complex at the end of Silom Road. His enthusiastic support of the FCCT played a considerable role in convincing many board members that in the long run, moving to the



Panadda Lertlum-Ampai, our new president and a correspondent for Kyodo News Service.

Jewelry Trade Center would be in the best interest of the club.

Also to be mentioned is the time-consuming series of negotiations carried out between managers at the two potential new sites and the relocation committee. Special thanks go to our Treasurer Domenica Piantedosi, Associate Director of Membership Whitney Small and Past President Dominic Faulder.

The 1995 board had accepted the mandate to shape the next chapter in the club's almost four-decade long history. We take the future fate of the club firmly in our hands and promise to make the 1995 move to the new clubhouse a successful step for the FCCT.

Plans are being drawn to make sure the new clubhouse will become a lively and vital venue of informative and thought-stimulating activities, a refreshing and worthwhile getaway at the end of an exhausting work day, and a culturally-rich but relaxing place on weekends. More auxiliary devices for journalists are also being planned at the new clubhouse, which will have access to the most up-to-date telecommunications lines.

Although we decided not to choose the Imperial Queen's Park Hotel as our new clubhouse, we appreciate the

efforts of active member Lee Miller who had recommended the hotel for our consideration.

In the next several months, the board will be busy working with designers and contractors to build a club tailored to FCCT's needs.

While we all wait for the club's exciting grand opening, the board is already hard at work on the 1995 FCCT Annual Ball, scheduled now for Saturday May 20. Please join us at the party, which will feature a fun theme and be packed with good music, food, entertainment, and prizes.

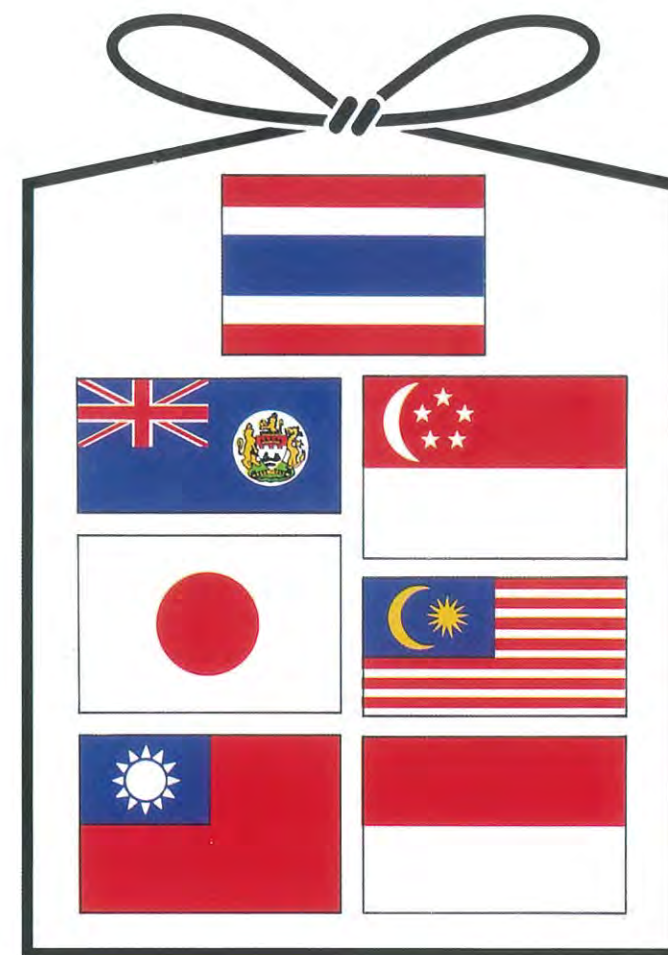
1995 is certain to be an eventful year for all FCCT members. Already, in late March, Finance Minister Tarrin Nimmanhaeminda spoke to members at a well-attended luncheon where he unveiled a new government project to develop the nation's human resources. Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai also addressed the club at a special luncheon in April, making him the first Thai premier to address the club twice during the same term in office. These special programs are to be followed by the inaugural ball and the big move to the new clubhouse.

Later in the year, the board is also planning a grand gala dinner to celebrate the 50th anniversary of His Majesty the King's coronation. Meanwhile, our active and always interesting weekly programs and occasional luncheon meetings with government and business leaders will continue to make the club a popular gathering place for keeping up with the latest in Bangkok.

Do take advantage of the many rewarding opportunities and activities open to you as an FCCT member.

Panadda L.

Pannada Lertlum-Ampai
1995 FCCT President



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The Hunt for Leeson

BY PHILLIP SHERWELL

It's hard to stay in hiding when a pack of international reporter sleuths are hot on your trail. Just ask Nick Leeson. Phillip Sherwell details the excitement of the chase.

Read all about it in The Daily Express. That's the Borneo broadsheet, by the way, not the better-known London version. While Fleet Street's finest trawled the beaches and hotels of South East Asia like a shoal of sharks in an increasingly frenzied hunt for their prey, it was the family-owned Sabah newspaper (circulation: 30,000) which scooped the world and tracked down fugitive futures trader Nick Leeson in March.

The runaway Brit was, I'm sure you recall, the Singapore-based wheeler-dealer whose colossal gambles on the Japanese stock exchange brought down Barings Bank, the blue-blooded financial institution which counted Queen Elizabeth II among its customers. By the time he finally turned up in Frankfurt, there seemed to have been more sightings of Leeson than Elvis Presley or Lord Lucan.

Scores of British hacks were dispatched to the region to search for the errant arbitrageur after the Business Desk of The Sunday Telegraph in London broke the news of the bank's collapse on February 26. Unfortunately, with the inevitable appalling timing, that was just the weekend I'd decided to sun myself on Ko Samet, and by the time I got back to Bangkok on Monday there were 17 messages on my answerphone from the foreign desk, telling me in ever-more desperate tones to get on the case.

But where? We knew he'd left Singapore and that was about it. There had already been a reported sighting the previous Friday in Kuala Lumpur and now we were hearing accounts that he'd been arrested here



in Thailand. This set the pattern for all of us over the next few days as rumours and speculation sent journalists criss-crossing Southeast Asia on a series of wild goose chases.

I eventually spent Monday night in KL before flying on to Singapore the next day. By this time, the British press pack was descending in all its glory - from London, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Delhi, Sydney, even Johannesburg. The BBC went into overkill, with five correspondents and two documentary crews variously covering Singapore, KL and Bangkok. The posse included veteran manhunters like the Daily Mail's Paul Henderson, who once found "Fergie" (the Duchess of York) hiding out in Phuket, and Don McKay of the Mirror, fresh from a trip to France in search of Stephen Fry, the English actor who did a bunk after bad reviews of his latest play.

By Tuesday, in addition to Leeson and his wife Lisa, we were also looking for a yacht (called Lisa) and either a red Porsche or a white Merc. Singapore cabbies made a killing driving reporters across the causeway to Johor Baru in search of the mysterious vessel, which subsequently emerged never to have existed.

We did know by now that he had spent Thursday night at the luxury Regent Hotel in KL on a corporate discount rate and had checked out on Friday morning. In the absence of any

other concrete developments, ever-wilder theories abounded. And you did not have to be on the spot to get in the act. That old Bangkok doyen Jim Pringle (now in Peking for The Times) displayed his well-known taste for literary allusions when he drew comparisons with Joseph Conrad's famous novel, Lord Jim, in a piece filed from China. Meanwhile, Chris Moncrieff, veteran London Press Association correspondent, wrote a

**BY THE TIME HE FINALLY
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LEESON THAN ELVIS
PRESLEY OR LORD LUCAN.**

colourful feature about his time as a British army conscript serving in the Malayan jungles in the 1950s, describing the choking forests and remote villages, and suggested this was ideal territory for our runaway to disappear in.

By the middle of the week attention had switched to Thailand, and in

"SHUCKS, TIME TO CANCEL THAT RESERVATION AT THE AMANPURI."

particular Phuket from where Leeson had reportedly sent a faxed apology to his bosses in Singapore (that turned out to be another fallacy - the fax came from KL). Our own Andy Drummond, no stranger to flushing out some compatriots of ours who would rather not be found, led the media invasion of the Rock, but still no trace of You-Know-Who. Not that that deterred various other journalists from taking a hardship posting to Phuket to check out the resorts and marinas. I was on the verge of joining them, standing at Singapore's Changi airport with a Silk Air ticket already in my hand when I made a final check - called to London - and was turned back. Shucks, time to cancel that reservation at the Amanpuri.

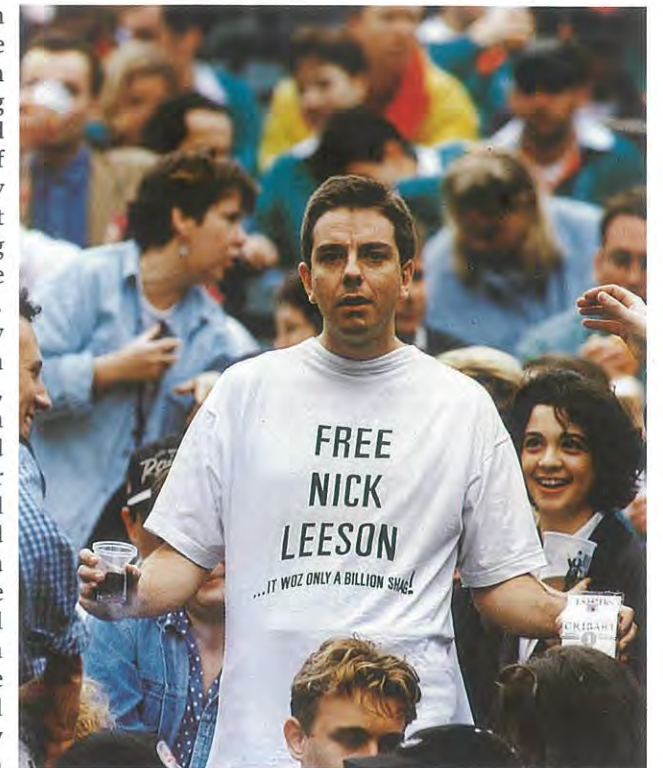
Meanwhile, the image of the man who broke the bank cruising away on the South China Sea on his (fictional) luxury yacht was an appealing one for news desks. Indeed, the day before its Borneo namesake located him, the London Daily Express had him dramatically sailing out of Songkla one step ahead of the Thai police. Thai television fuelled the speculation that he had sought refuge in the Land of Smiles, even reporting that the Thai authorities knew where he was.

Attention temporarily switched across the Pacific when the Singapore Business Times received an anonymous tip that Leeson was travelling on a false Canadian passport under the name of John Halls. The Mounties were called in, but - surprise, surprise - no trader. But a real Canadian named John Halls who works in Singapore was amazed

to get his Warholian 15 Minutes of Fame when he flew from Bangkok to Hong Kong and found himself the target of television crews. "My wife reckons I don't even look anything like Nick Leeson," he protested indignantly.

So it's now lunchtime on Thursday March 2nd, a week after Leeson disappeared, and news starts to filter through that a local newspaper had located him in Kota Kinabalu. Or, more precisely, on a Royal Brunei flight which originated in the Sabah state capital and was now somewhere mid-air en route to Frankfurt. Now, as you can imagine, "Kota What?" is not a familiar name in Fleet Street, although ironically, KK as the Sabah locals call it, was also in the London headlines a year earlier when five British soldiers on a training mission got themselves lost up nearby Mt. Kinabalu in a Bungle-in-the-Jungle escapade.

Maps and airline tables consulted yet again, a few of us headed off to KK via KL to try to piece together Leeson's movements. And of course we were duty-bound to stay at the same hotel as the Leesons did - the



A young Leeson fan expresses his support for the beleaguered trader. (Photo courtesy of AFP)

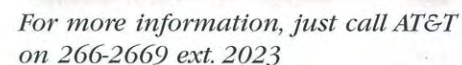
Shangri-La's luxury Tanjung Aru beach resort. In a novel development, the Guardian got there first, in the form of London-based reporter Laurence Donegan (Nick Cumming-Bruce was trekking down the Ho Chi Minh Trail). I was next into town, followed by the Sunday Times and AP-TV and then, at 3 am on Friday morning, by the Daily Mirror and Today. The Mirror's Don McKay joined us for some early morning beers, duly filed his colour piece about the sun setting on the South China Sea and left at the crack of dawn THREE HOURS later on the first flight back to Singapore.

The rest of us got a few more hours at the Tanjung Aru, gazed longingly at the azure blue pool and then boarded yet another plane and returned to Singapore later in the day. The Leesons had, it appears, had a less hectic time - they booked in under his wife's name, Lisa Jane, and spent four days incognito toasting their toes by the pool or relaxing in their \$150-a-night room where they would almost certainly have seen themselves

.....Continued on page 13



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DATELINE • FIRST QUARTER 1995

The Big Move



Clubhouse Design Committee member Dominic Faulder checks out the new clubhouse site with designers from SDS Asia. (Left to Right: Marc Pettibone, SDS Managing Director; Richard Wood, SDS Creative Director; Alan Lam, JTC International Sales Representative, Dominic, and a JTC assistant.

In addition, the club is considering plans to provide a reading room, bar, recreation corner, and a video/television/ radio room.

There is also good news for non-smokers. In response to recommendations by countless members through the years, the club is planning to provide smoking and non-smoking areas in the new clubhouse.

Immediate Past President Bertil Lintner said that during his tenure he received at least a letter a week from members urging the board to set up a no-smoking area in the club. Bertil, an avid pipesmoker who fervently believes in every man's right to pursue life, liberty, and a pouch of fine tobacco, personally recommended smoking/no-smoking areas for the new clubhouse and added that adequate ventilation should be provided through the installation of "Smoke-eaters."

A Clubhouse Design Committee is now working closely with SDS Asia, an international design and engineering firm based in Bangkok, to custom-design the new clubhouse.

Marc Pettibone, Managing Director of SDS Asia and a FCCT member, said his company will be offering its design services on a "severely discounted fee basis."

Anyone interested in submitting recommendations to the Design



JTC's multi-level shopping Galleria

Committee can do so by jotting down their ideas in a suggestion book provided in the current clubhouse.

Located off Soi 19 of Silom Road next to the Holiday Inn, the Jewelry Trade Center features a 55-floor North Tower that faces Silom Road and an 18-floor South Tower. FCCT's new clubhouse is on the South Tower's 12th floor, which it will share with the brokerage firm Thai Rungruang Trust.

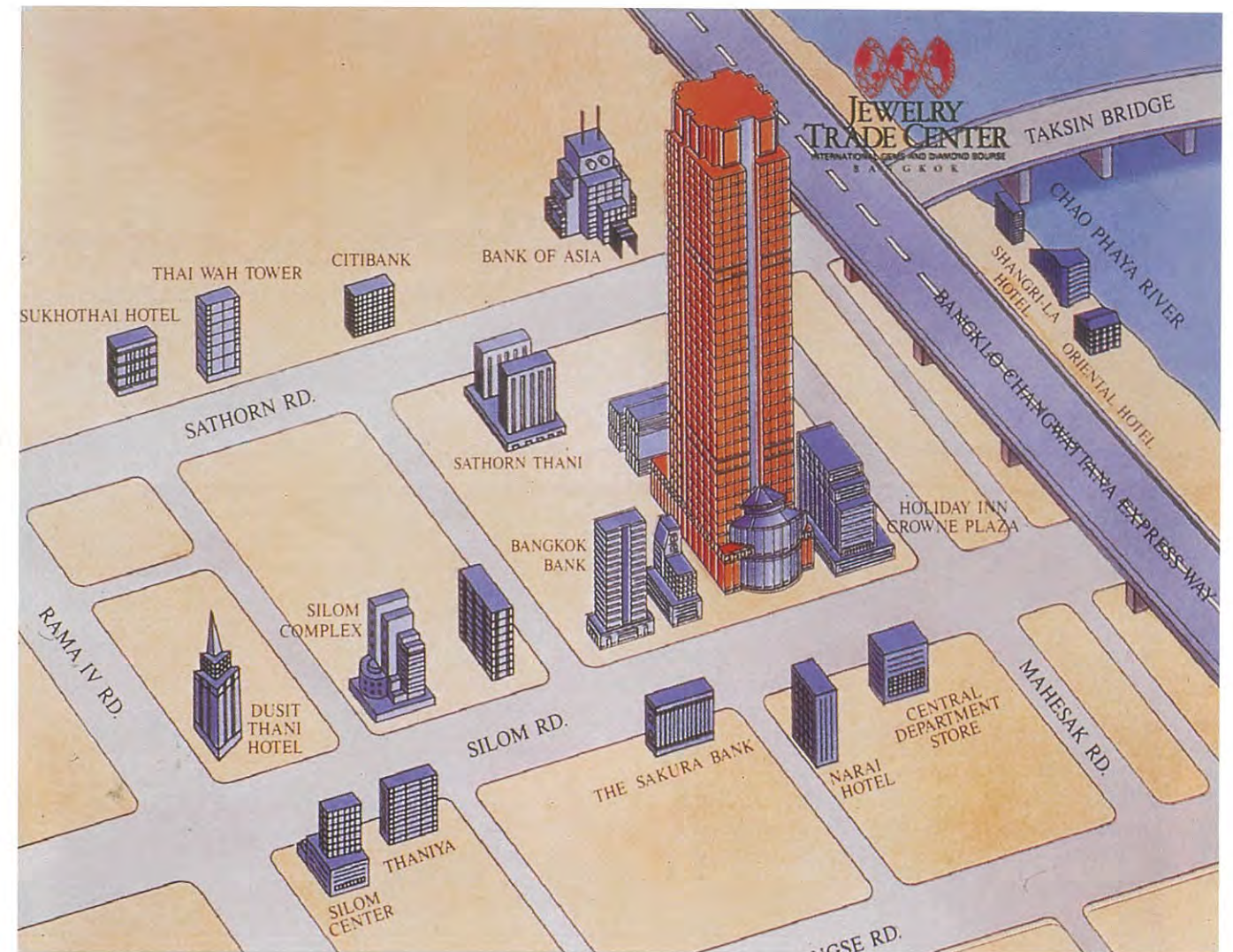
The club will arrange food and beverage services with a selection of restaurants in the building. Choices include Italian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Thai and Burmese food.

A post office and a Bangkok Bank branch office will be located in the North Tower, which will also feature a helipad offering 8-minute commutes to Don Muang Airport for a yet-to-be-determined price.

Members who are apprehensive about battling traffic down Silom Road please note: new roads under construction near Silom should soon help speed the commute to the club. Chongnonsri Road, next to the ITF building on Silom, is scheduled for completion this year. A new super highway with access and exit from Silom Road is also slated for completion this year.

Club President Panadda estimates that if all goes well, FCCT can move into its new clubhouse by September. With plans to hire a marketing consultant to create more member activities and services, the board hopes members will find the new clubhouse ideal for one-stop shopping, entertaining, and networking.

Freelance journalist Elizabeth Lu is FCCT's Correspondent Director of Publicity. After five years in Thailand, her secret to survival is to avoid going out into Bangkok traffic after 4 pm. She only makes exceptions for hospital emergencies and FCCT events.



.....Continued from page 9

dominating the headlines on CNN.

So how did the Sabah Daily Express get their scoop? Thanks to a tip-off from a reader, of course. On Tuesday Feb 28, wearing dark glasses and a baseball cap, Mr. Leeson walked into the Kota Kinabalu branch of Royal Brunei Airlines and bought two tickets for the next flight to Europe - to Frankfurt on the Wednesday - with wads of cash (credit cards leave tell-tale traces). In a moment of near-farce, the world's most wanted man even had to tell the airline staff that his name was Leeson, and not Lesson as they had written on the ticket.

Although the clerks thought it was strange for a Westerner to hand over such large sums of cash rather than pay by plastic, it was only when one of them was watching the television news coverage of the Barings debacle that night that she realised whom she'd served. As a dutiful citizen she

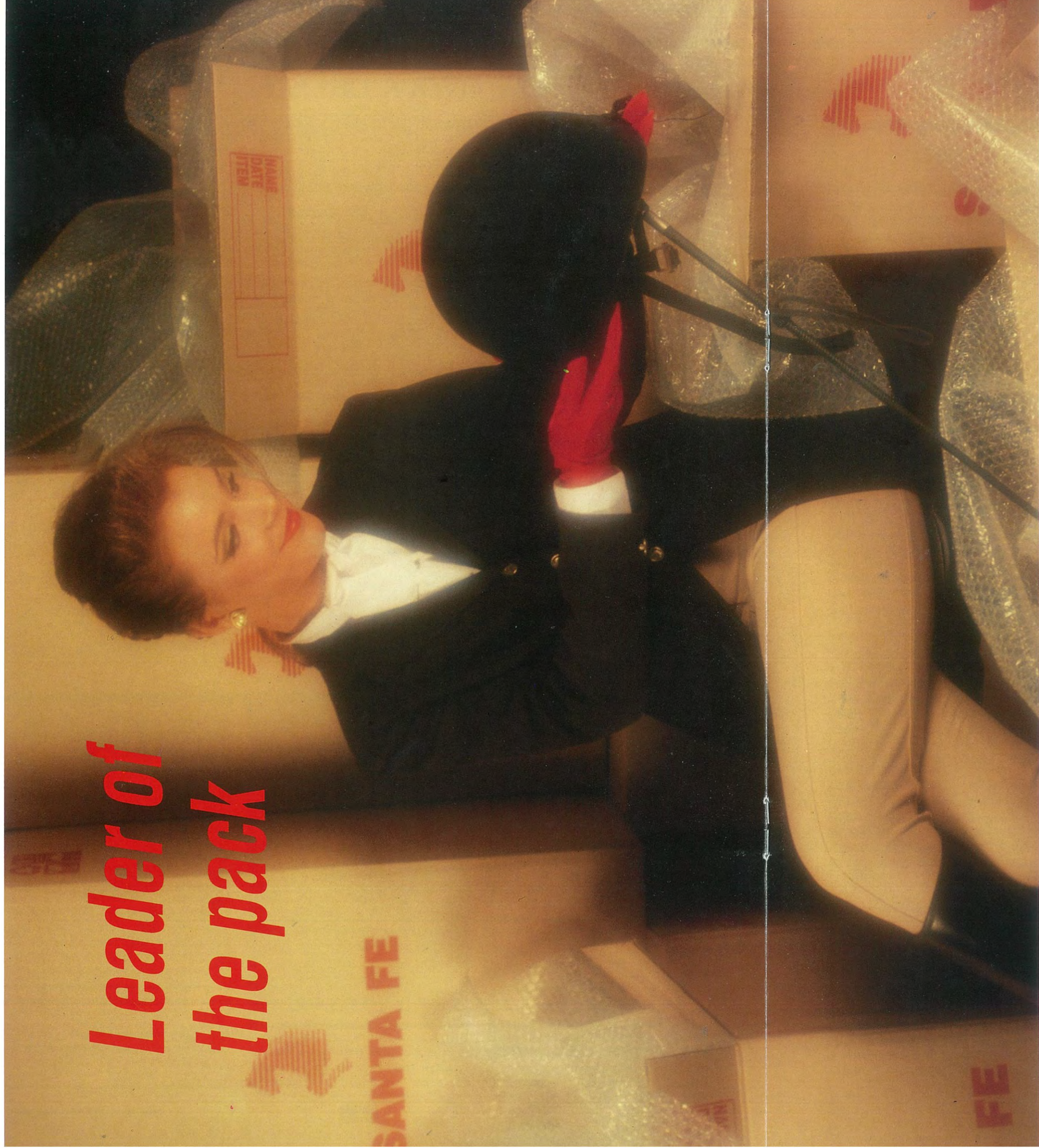
phoned the police the next day, only to be fobbed off with a show of disinterest. So the next call was to the local newspaper. The Express' crime correspondent, Clifford Santa-Maria, and deputy editor, James Sarda, were pretty sure they had stood the story up ("we knew it was either a great scoop or an enormous boo-boo," said Clifford), but by now the Leesons were already en route to Europe. So Sarda made a desperate call late on Wednesday evening to Bangkok airport, where the flight had a stop-over. For 20 minutes he tried to persuade security officials to stop the plane, but perhaps not surprisingly, they were unwilling to take such drastic action on the basis of a phone call from a man claiming to be a Borneo journalist. Which was a shame for the Bangkok press pack. As one English freelance based here said ruefully: "we could have made a

killing. With everyone else in Singapore or Phuket, we'd have had the story to ourselves."

With Leeson detained in Frankfurt, so ended the great manhunt. But, horror of horrors, we now had to concentrate on the incomprehensible Alice-in-Wonderland world of futures, derivatives and straddle strategies in Singapore instead. I guess we rather preferred the thrill of the chase, however futile!

Phillip Sherwell, who moved from Berlin to Bangkok in 1993, is the Southeast Asia correspondent for The Daily & Sunday Telegraph of London. He recently returned from the Leeson stakeout looking fit and tanned.

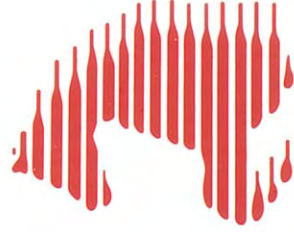
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Memories of Indochina

BY DEBORAH CHARLES

Sheila McNulty has been dispatched by the Associated Press to all corners of Southeast Asia. In pursuit of her journalistic craft, she has risked life and limb not only on the streets of Phnom Penh but also on Silom Road and other dangerous street crossings in Bangkok.

Have you ever badgered a prime minister on national television in front of a group of foreign journalists and dignitaries? Sheila McNulty has, and if you want to learn the best way to go about berating a national leader in public, you need to ask her soon because she's packing up for the States in May after a memorable three-year stint in Southeast Asia.

Having lived and worked in Thailand and Cambodia as a correspondent for the Associated Press, Sheila, 27, is leaving Asia in search of an exciting newspaper job in

the States. Her ultimate goal is to work her way back overseas as a foreign correspondent, but next time as a correspondent for a newspaper instead of a wire agency.

From Thailand she takes with her not only memories of putting former Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun on the spot at a standing-room only FCCT banquet at the Dusit Thani Hotel, but also of the 1992 uprising that led to her first big story in Bangkok and prompted the sticky question that Anand didn't want to answer.

Sheila had only been in Thailand a few months when she had her face-off with the prime minister. Anand, ever the smooth and eloquent diplomat, had once before deflected a question about crime and corruption in Thailand by turning the tables around and quipping how the crime rate in New York was no better. He had gotten some laughs that time and made the mistake of thinking it would work again that night.

For many of the banquet attendees, memories of the May uprising had already begun to fade, even though the local papers were still periodically printing lists of demonstrators still missing following the bloody riots. During the question and answer period after Anand's speech, there were all sorts of questions about the Thai economy and business

opportunities in the wake of the May demonstrations, but nothing about the missing people. That was, until Sheila, looking so young she seemed like a school girl in the crowd of evening gowns and suits, stood up.

What was the government doing about locating the hundreds of demonstrators, including students and professionals, still missing after the unrest, she asked the prime minister pointedly. Anand thought he could dismiss the question with humor and smiled as he said something to the effect that in the United States there was also a problem of missing persons. Many in the crowd chuckled and played along.

But Sheila wouldn't let him get away with it so easily. "With all due respect," she persisted, to audible groans from those in the crowd who resented this young reporter taking up more of the question and answer period. "Mr. Prime Minister, I don't think the families of those still missing would appreciate your taking the issue so lightly."

Anand, looking like a boy who had just been reprimanded by his mother, immediately turned serious. In a very apologetic voice, he reassured Sheila and the audience he had not meant to belittle the problem. He then proceeded to describe government efforts to help locate the missing.

With that landmark interview behind her, Sheila went on to even bigger and better stories. She had arrived in Bangkok with the goal of getting to Cambodia to cover the United Nations peacekeeping mission there.

After graduating from the University of Arizona in 1989, she and her boyfriend, fellow University of Arizona alum and freelance photographer David Portnoy, had spent a year traveling in Asia. The trip sparked their interest in the region, said Sheila, who was born and raised in Ghana where her father headed the West African operations for Texaco. Her mother ran a school for retarded children in Ghana. By the time the

family moved back to the States, Sheila was 16 and already knew she preferred living overseas.

During her first visit to Asia in 1989, she earned extra cash as a freelance writer and in order to get a better understanding about the refugee issue in the region, Sheila and David worked for three months in a refugee camp in Phanatnikhom, Thailand, near Chonburi.

"That's how we really got interested in Cambodia and Laos and Vietnam," she said. They visited all three countries and after traveling through Cambodia, both decided they wanted to go back and cover the UN peacekeeping force.

After returning to the states for a stint with the AP in New Jersey, she came back out to Thailand in March 1992 and landed a job with AP Bangkok the day after her arrival. Just a month later, the 1992 democracy demonstrations began.

"It was good timing. It made it all worthwhile," Sheila said. "I thought if I only got to cover this, it was worthwhile. And before I came all the editors in New York were saying, don't go out there, you're crazy. You'll never get a job."

After a few months working in Thailand Sheila got to do what she came back to Asia for — go to Cambodia — when the AP sent her to Phnom Penh to open up its Cambodian bureau. She ended up spending two years in Cambodia, covering the Khmer Rouge fighting, the UN peacekeeping mission, the election and its aftermath.

Sheila said she never had any major mishaps during her two years in Cambodia, except for some close calls in the Vietnamese neighborhood she lived in when the Khmer Rouge began shelling the Vietnamese in Phnom Penh.

She vividly recalls the night when someone threw grenades into a Vietnamese cafe, killing several people. Sheila and David were only a

block and a half away and at first didn't realize what had happened; both were already accustomed to hearing gunshots at night. When they realized it had been a grenade explosion, their reaction was instinctive. "We went over and covered it," Sheila said.

Whenever Sheila's mother read of unrest in Cambodia and called to check on her daughter, Sheila would simply say, "It's not near me."

"I never told my mom what was going on," she said.

Then there was also the usual harassment by King Norodom Sihanouk's North Korean bodyguards when she tried to get near him to ask a question. (They must have heard of her reputation from Thailand!) The bodyguards, though not tall, were very well built and did not hesitate to bully the 5-foot, 2-inch Sheila and the other dozen or so regular correspondents covering Cambodia.

"They kicked me before," an indignant Sheila said of the guards. "They were nasty." But Sheila said she simply fought back with all her might. Occasionally King Sihanouk would intervene and ask the guards to show some restraint.

With little else to do in Phnom Penh but work, Sheila's life there revolved around her job. "You miss books and magazines," said Sheila, who confessed to paying more than 250 Baht for a single copy of a woman's magazine air-freighted into Phnom Penh. "I'd actually buy it, I was so desperate. You want to remember there is a world out there."



Banished for asking impertinent questions at a press conference? Sheila hiding in a stone jar, Plain of Jars, Laos.

She occasionally stopped in at the Foreign Correspondent Club of Cambodia, housed in a three-story, partly open-air building overlooking the Mekong River. "It has more character," Sheila said. "I think the one in Bangkok is kind of stuffy."

Working with a Cambodian translator hired by the AP, Sheila covered her beat, often working until midnight. But soon the stories seemed more and more repetitive, and she also became disillusioned with the corruption and lack of progress in Cambodia.

After two years in Cambodia, Sheila decided it was time to move on. She went back to the States on home leave, but AP soon asked her to go back to Thailand to work in the Bangkok bureau for a while. So she returned to the City of Angels last August.



Battery Power: Sheila working without electricity in Phnom Penh

Memories of Indochina

Nowadays her favorite stories are those dealing with social issues, mostly to do with women or prostitution. "It really gets tiring to be in Asia and see how women are treated," she said. "That's why I decided when I moved to Thailand and didn't have the Khmer Rouge to cover that I would focus on that."

She is still appalled by parents who sell their daughters into prostitution. "The reason is money. It's just beyond me that they can do that." Sheila has written about her interviews with these parents up in the Chiangmai/Chiangrai area, but she is a bit dismayed that it isn't these stories, or even the Cambodian stories for which she risked her life, that catches readers' attention.

The biggest reader response she received was for a story about a "Power Ranger" toy factory in Thailand. She thought it was an insignificant story about how factory workers themselves couldn't even afford the toy robots exported to the United States. The story made front page in scores of American newspapers and readers even mailed Sheila "Power Rangers" which she dutifully delivered to workers at the Thai factory.

It was much easier for American editors and readers to identify with children without "Power Rangers" at Christmas than it was for them to comprehend the significance of a Khmer Rouge battle, Sheila said. "It's good that one of your stories gets so

much attention, but I'd like other stories to have gotten more attention."

What will Sheila miss most about Asia? She says it will be the opportunities to see and learn about the diverse countries and cultures in the region.

"In America where are you going to go?" she said. "It's not going to be the same."

Reuters correspondent Deborah Charles arrived in Bangkok in February. Prior to coming to Thailand, she was based in the agency's Montreal office. She has also worked for Reuters in New York and Buenos Aires. Elizabeth Lu contributed to this story.

Club Highlights

LUNCHEONS FILM FESTIVALS AUTHORS' NIGHTS

One of Club President Panadda's initiatives this year was to reintroduce regular luncheons featuring leading public figures. The luncheons provide an excellent opportunity for members to meet face to face with movers and shakers in Thailand. The March luncheon featured Finance Minister Tarrin Nimmmanhaeminda, and the one in April was honored to have as its speaker H.E. Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai. For future luncheons, the club has invited Foreign Affairs Minister Dr. Krasae Chanawongse and Khun Vichit Surapongchai, Minister of Transportation and Communication. We're waiting to hear back from the ministers, so please check



During his March 29 speech at the FCCT, Mr. Tarrin unveiled a new government proposal to improve private-sector education and develop Thailand's

the weekly bulletin for up-to-date details.

The luncheon program is but one of many regular activities designed to serve our members. The ever popular Wednesday night programs cover a wide range of intriguing topics and personalities. So far this year panel discussions have focused on subjects ranging from the infamous Bernard Trink to the 20th Anniversary of the Fall of Saigon.

Authors' Nights are also extremely well-attended, as evidenced by the more than 130 people who showed up April 21 for the launching of "A Passage Through Angkor" by Mark Standen and John Hoskin. Other special events such as the King Sihanouk Film Festival in April and French Night: A Pre-Presidential Election Party help make the club one of the most fascinating places in town for keeping up with cultural and current events.

Club Highlights



H.E. Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai arrives at the Regent Hotel for his April 26 luncheon speech and is welcomed by FCCT board members. (Left to right: Correspondent Director of Programs Gordon Fairclough of the Far Eastern Economic Review, Club President Panadda Lertlum-Ampai of Kyodo News Service, Prime Minister Chuan shaking hands with a well-wisher, and Second Vice-President Michael Vatikiotis of the Far Eastern Economic Review.) Approximately 270 members and guests attended the luncheon.



Stephen Simmons of Credit Lyonnais (left) chats with former FCCT President Dominic Faulder and Mrs. Caroline Faulder.



Deputy Prime Minister Supachai Panitchpakdi (left) answers questions from Lee Miller of Bloomberg News (center) and Mark Timm of Knight-Ridder Financial News (right) at the Prime Minister's luncheon.

Club Highlights

NEWS BRIEFS

SAVINGS ON LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP. SIGN UP NOW BEFORE RATE HIKE.

As of July 1st, the cost of a FCCT lifetime membership will increase to Baht 75,000, up from the current Baht 45,000. The Board approved the increase on March 15th at the recommendation of the Membership Committee. For long-term residents of Thailand, even the new price will represent substantial savings. But if you act quickly, you can save even more by signing up as a lifetime member before the deadline.

NEW MEMBERS' NIGHT SET FOR FIRST FRIDAY OF EVERY MONTH.

Mark your calendars and reserve the first Friday night of every month for FCCT's New Members' Night. You don't have to be a new member to enjoy these informal get-togethers. Everyone is welcome. It's a great way to meet the new folks in town. See you there!

CLUB SUCCESSFULLY LOBBIES TO KEEP CABINET MEETING SYNOPSIS.

At the suggestion of correspondent member Mark Timm, the Board contacted government officials and convinced them not to cancel English synopsis of weekly Cabinet meetings.

ANNUAL BANQUET SET FOR MAY 20.

Make sure you'll be free to attend this fun-filled gala affair. There will be plenty of door prizes. For more information, contact K. Vilai at the FCCT on 237 4764.

PEOPLE

Imtiaz Muqbil, who was elected Correspondent Director of Membership at the Jan. 27th Annual General Meeting, has resigned his board position due to professional commitments.



Tan Lian Choo, former Straits Times correspondent in Bangkok and FCCT president in 1992, has taken on a new job in Singapore. Remembered by many for her famous press conference question which ended the political aspirations of prime minister candidate Narong Wongwan, Lian Choo is now on the other side of the podium. When she first returned to Singapore in 1993, she worked on the Straits Times' foreign desk. In January, she began a two-year leave of absence from the Straits Times to work as Director of Public Affairs for Singapore's Foreign Ministry.

AP-TV is new in town, providing television footage of breaking news in Thailand and the region to subscribers. Their multilingual reporter is **Jane Lin**, a native of Taiwan and International School of Bangkok graduate who gets plenty of opportunities to put her English, Thai and Mandarin to good use while on the job.



Patrick Lescot, Deputy Bureau Chief of Agence France Presse and last year's FCCT Correspondent Director of Membership, is on a one-year sabbatical to research and write a book. The book will be a non-fiction saga based on people central to the Chinese Communist movement. Patrick will be doing research in China, Burma and the

United States before returning to France to write his masterpiece. At the end of his sabbatical, he will work for AFP in its Paris headquarters.

FCCT board member and Associate Director of Publicity **Hasan Basar** has left Presko, the public relations company where he was a partner and executive director. After 13 years with the agency, he is now taking a well-deserved break and is exploring new career opportunities.

Pamela Hongsakul, FCCT's former Associate Director of Programs, is a woman of many talents. In addition to her job as a freelance writer and photographer, she is active in local theatre. Last December in Bangkok Community Theatre's production of "Aladdin," she delighted hundreds of children with her portrayal of the beautiful "Spirit of the Ring."



Reuters correspondent **Sonya Hepinstall** (left), who served on last year's FCCT board as Correspondent Director of Programs, is now working for Reuters in Hong Kong. Her replacement in Bangkok is **Deborah Charles** from Reuters' Montreal office.

Cynthia Owens, Asian Wall Street Journal's former correspondent in Bangkok, has switched to television and is now a news editor for Asia Business News in Singapore. "I miss Bangkok," she said. "I don't miss the traffic. I miss the food."

Carol Clark, former editor of Jewelsiam Magazine, has also moved to Singapore, where she now works as an assistant editor for Asian Business Press Pte Ltd.

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—All members are invited to submit announcements of new jobs or assignments to Dateline Bangkok's "People." Please fax announcements to 260-2643.

Dateline Kobe

BY BERTIL LINTNER

While covering the aftermath of the Kobe earthquake and walking through the ruins of the port city, Bertil Lintner finds reassuring signs of compassion and discovers you can still count on the kindness of strangers.

Never before have the words of the classic American foreign correspondent H. R. Knickerbocker rung so true: "Whenever you find hundreds of thousands of sane people trying to get out of a place and a little bunch of madmen struggling to get in, you know that the latter are newspapermen". That was exactly how I felt as I descended on Kobe to report on the earthquake, which had devastated one of the world's biggest port cities. The Great Hanshin Earthquake, as it became known, killed more than 5,300, injured 27,000 and left 300,000 homeless.

It was not an easy task to get in to Kobe as all railway lines were disrupted and the elevated, four-lane Hanshin Expressway, lay toppled on one side, dividing the city like an instant Berlin Wall. Paralyzed traffic forced some of us to walk more than three hours to Kobe from Nishinomiya station, which was as far as the trains from Osaka could go. Others took a helicopter from Osaka, or — as I did — went by hydrofoil from Kansai International Airport, across the bay to Kobe.

This ingenious way of getting to the devastated area quickly was the idea of Kahori Sakane of the Daily Yomiuri, and we were joined by Helder Guimaraes, a Tokyo-based correspondent for the Brazilian newspaper O

Estado de Sao Paulo and Abraham Jansen, a Dutch reporter from the Reformatorisch Dagblad. As we arrived in Kobe, people were forming lines to take the same hydrofoil out of the disaster zone and back to the airport.

"DON'T WORRY. I DON'T THINK ANYBODY WILL BE AROUND TO COLLECT THE PHONE BILLS HERE FOR QUITE SOME TIME."

It was Thursday morning, and the earthquake had struck at 5:46 a.m. on Tuesday. Two days after the quake, the city's Nagata ward, once a tightly packed collection of flimsy buildings, resembled Tokyo after its 1945 firebombing. People old enough to remember that earlier cataclysm found themselves huddled under blankets on the cold stone floor of



Photo by Bertil Lintner

Kobe's City Hall. Thousands more were camped out in other public buildings and food, water and medicines were in short supply.

Many people were furious with the government's slow reaction to the disaster. It was more than 48 hours — and the first 48 hours after an earthquake are crucial for rescuing survivors — before the government sent in the army, or the Self-Defence Forces as they are called in Japan, and relief efforts began in earnest. The quake jolted not only the port city of Kobe, but also Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama's shaky coalition, which later had to take much of the blame for the extent of the destruction.

But the government's lack of initiative was contrasted by an immense — and very impressive — community spirit among the survivors of the quake. There was no looting, no riots, not even panic. As the government wasn't doing anything much, the population themselves organised relief efforts to the best of their ability and limited resources. And I have never before felt so honoured for being a foreign correspondent. Although I am sure they had more important things to do, everyone I met went out of his or her way to help me.

The worst crisis for me came when I had to file my first report from inside Kobe, and to meet my Stockholm deadline. There were no working telephones apart from those in the crowded City Hall, where hordes of mostly Japanese correspondents were keeping the lines busy. I was told there was another open line, at the local YMCA. It was dark and cold, the street lights were out, and I made my way gingerly through the debris along the narrow lanes of Kobe. Houses were leaning ominously over the sidewalks, but I was too tired to care.

I never found the YMCA. But I met a group of locals sitting outside their house, which

miraculously was standing upright. I asked for the YMCA, they asked me if I was a journalist. The YMCA was too far, they said, but I could use their telephone to file my story. In their apartment, I rigged up my computer and modem, and dialled Sweden. The story went through, and made the front page of Svenska Dagbladet the next day. I offered to pay for the call — 20 minutes from Japan to Sweden — but the owner of the apartment, whose name I don't even know, just laughed and said: "Don't worry. I don't think anybody will be around to collect the phone bills here for quite some time."

Although we visiting journalists tried to give a comprehensive coverage of the earthquake, and all its implications on politics and the Japanese economy, some of the local correspondents, who had lived through the quake were able to provide a much more in-depth account of what went wrong and went right during the first chaotic hours after the disaster. One of them was my colleague and friend, Brian Covert, also of the Daily Yomiuri, who lives in Nishinomiya. He, his Japanese wife and their newborn son were awoken in the early hours of Tuesday 17 January, as their apartment rattled and houses all around were crumbling under the full force of the earthquake.

But Brian kept his head cool, and

managed to produce some of the best coverage of the earthquake that appeared in the Japanese press. In a story in his newspaper on 26 February, he described how community groups plunged in to help the victims while the government waited. The local YMCA and YWCA especially stand out as examples of what actually went right: "By 8:30

**BERTIL! WHAT THE HELL
ARE YOU DOING HERE? THIS
IS NOT THE
BURMESE JUNGLE!"**

a.m. on Jan. 17 [less than three hours after the quake], the YMCA had established a headquarters to coordinate Kobe relief efforts among its 171 branches nationwide. By 2:30 p.m., a regional headquarters had been set up at the Osaka YMCA in Nishi Ward, Osaka."

Soon, volunteers were seen biking or walking supplies in to Kobe. Some started out on foot from Osaka at 10 a.m. and reached the Kobe YWCA ten hours later. Fresh water, dry biscuits and packets with instant noodles were distributed to the victims. As Brian pointed out in his story, the "The Ys" had good relations with the local

neighbourhoods — as well as long experience in hosting camps around Japan, so the "survival skills" of group leaders were strong and well developed.

After my first hydrofoil ride to Kobe on 19 January, I ventured into the city once again on Sunday the 22nd. Brian had lent me his bicycle, and his wife handed me a bag full of sandwiches. The Hanshin region had got its first rainfall since the quake, and the Kobe Municipal Government had distributed 10,000 plastic sheets to help people prepare for the deluge. There were fears of landslides, and even people, whose houses had been spared the actual quake, were flocking to local school buildings and community centres for shelter.

It took me more than three hours, in pouring rain, to cover the distance of 20-25 km from Nishinomiya to Kobe City Hall. All along the way, I passed endless lines of volunteers carrying supplies. Here and there rescue workers were pulling corpses out of piles of bricks, concrete and crushed furniture. I stopped to take a few photos, felt bad doing so, but realised that without dramatic pictures of the disaster, no one in the outside world would fully comprehend the extent of the suffering that the quake had inflicted upon the inhabitants of Kobe.

Wet, cold and hungry I arrived at long last at the City Hall. And who would be walking in to the same shelter a few seconds later if not Tiziano Terzani of Der Spiegel. "Bertil! What the hell are you doing here? This is not the Burmese jungle!" No it wasn't. It was much worse. But meeting an old colleague like Tiziano in circumstances like these was almost as heartwarming as watching the people of Kobe trying to make the best of their shattered lives. It is in moments like these I feel that being a journalist is the world's greatest profession.

Immediate Past President Bertil Lintner is a correspondent for the Far Eastern Economic Review and Svenska Dagbladet.



Photo by Bertil Lintner

My Turn

AMERICA AND DRUGS: A NEUROTIC OBSESSION

BY ANDRÉ MCNICOLL

In this issue, FCCT board member André McNicoll launches this new column, "My Turn," by challenging the premise behind America's drug war.

Is America's obsession with drug use more than slightly neurotic? Ask would-be prime minister Narong Wongwan, former Chart Thai M.P. Thanong Sipreechabong, and Khun Sa's ten "friends" who were arrested last December in northern Thailand.

Beginning with the creation of the Shanghai Commission in 1909, which was the first international conference on drug use, Americans decided that their drug problem was also the world's drug problem.

Powerful Christian lobbies pressured the U.S. administration into calling a conference that would draw attention to the "immoral and decadent use of opium in the United States and in countries like China."

And so it has been for nearly 100 years. As soon as a new "drug problem" emerges in Puritan America, another conference is called and everybody is bullied into joining in.

The reality, though, is that illicit drug use in the United States is not the same as in most other countries, and that the solutions Americans insist be implemented in source countries just don't work.

In the United States, illicit drug use is concentrated in large urban slums. In these nests of violent crimes, the use of drugs is focused on by politicians and police organizations eager to cash in on the public's well-founded concern for personal safety. But it is doubtful that the level of violence would diminish noticeably even if the demoralized denizens of

these slums — some of the worst in the world — would limit their drug use to an occasional tablet of Tylenol.

America's "war on drugs"—a silly, media-grabbing cliché—has been a losing strategy from the start. But it is a strategy that reflects the fact that America doesn't have a clue (or refuses to have one) how to reduce its demand for drugs, but will do everything possible to stop supplies.

**AMERICA IS A "VICTIM COUNTRY" AND WILL NOT BE
SAFE AS LONG AS THERE IS A SINGLE GRAM OF OPIUM
PRODUCED ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD**

One powerful American weapon in the supply-side strategy, which has been deployed repeatedly, is the threat of cutting off aid to countries that don't play the drug game according to U.S. rules.

The 92nd Congress, for instance, in an orgy of self-righteousness in the early 1970s, saw the introduction of fully 102 bills related to international narcotics control. Many called for the suppression of U.S. aid to countries that failed to demonstrate their resolve to suppress drug production. Three acts (PL 92-245, PL 92-246 and PL 92-247) contained clear provisions instructing U.S. representatives on the Asian Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the International Development Association to vote against any loan to countries that did not comply with American drug suppression strategies.

Supply reduction, which is usually based on quasi-military operations, invariably results in more serious problems as production is pushed into more remote areas or new regions and countries altogether, and users turn to more concentrated and harmful forms that are more easily smuggled because their volumes are smaller.

In the early 1970s President Richard

Nixon launched a disastrous campaign to stop Mexican marijuana from entering the United States. Disastrous because it was so successful that within months many thousands of users switched to cocaine. More recently, with the provision of "aid" in the form of jeeps, helicopters, and military "advisors" to authorities in Colombia, supplies of cocaine have been curtailed. The result: a crack epidemic in America's slums. And Marijuana production in Mexico and

Colombia (major suppliers to the United States), has been largely replaced by hashish, a more potent and concentrated form of the drug. Again, thanks to law enforcement.

America's drug supply strategy has long targeted Thailand in particular. That Thailand has managed to reduce its opium production from an estimated 100 tons in 1981 to only about 25 tons in recent years, is not enough. That Thailand is implementing exemplary opium crop substitution programs — often against American objections — is also not enough. America is a "victim country" and will not be safe as long as there is a single gram of opium produced anywhere in the world. Then, when there's no more morphine (which is made from opium), we'll all have to use synthetic pain killers produced by Western pharmaceutical companies.

When it comes to drugs, Americans' lapses of memory are extraordinarily convenient. For instance, that the Vietnam War was responsible for hundreds of thousands of opium users in Asia switching to heroin. (Thailand alone now has more heroin addicts than the United States, even though its population is only one fourth of that of the United States.) That in its peak years in the early and mid-1970s, much of the heroin trafficking out of

My Turn

the Golden Triangle was organized by U.S. servicemen who had been stationed in Thailand and Vietnam. Or, that in the U.S. psychotropic (mood-altering) drugs are produced in hundreds of clandestine laboratories for trafficking in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

One of the tragedies of this is that many countries are dragged into spending their scarce resources fighting drug problems that simply are not a priority for them.

Throughout Latin America, much of Africa, and most of Southeast Asia, tens of millions of children and adolescents are damaging their kidneys and their brains by sniffing toxic solvents. But this is of no consequence because what America wants is for everyone to fight heroin, cocaine, and marijuana.

America's obsession with illicit drugs is a blend of slick political gamesmanship and Christian Puritanism, so extreme that pleasure

in most of its forms is highly suspect. It's time that the rest of the world stopped playing along.

André McNicoll, a Canadian who moved to Thailand six years ago, is a Bangkok-based editor and writer whose many books and articles on drugs have been translated into several languages.

Contributions to "My Turn" should be submitted to Dateline Bangkok Editor, Fax: 260-2643.

Remembering Neil Davis and Bill Latch

REUNION IN CAMBODIA SEPT. 9, 1995

To mark the 10th anniversary of the deaths of Australian cameraman Neil Davis and American soundman Bill Latch during the abortive 1985 coup d'état in Bangkok, a group of their friends and fellow journalists are planning a reunion in Phnom Penh.

Why Phnom Penh? Because, the organizers say, Neil loved Cambodia and had he lived, he'd probably be living and working there now. It's also a good half-way point, and the city still retains some of the character and charm that had attracted Neil, Bill, and others to Asia years ago.

The informal get-together will begin with sunset cocktails followed by dinner of the banks of the Mekong River. The reunion is being planned for more than just friends and colleagues of Neil and Bill; organizers are also inviting all journalists based in the Asian region to stop by.

For more information, please contact:

- Rodney Tasker (Far Eastern Economic Review, Bangkok) Tel: 662-251-1139, Fax: 254-4843.

- John McBeth (Far Eastern Economic Review, Jakarta) Tel: 6221-384-7814; 386-0536. Fax: 3845-383

- Mark Dodd (Reuters, Phnom Penh) Tel: 855-23-27854.

- Lindsay Murdock, (Melbourne Age, Singapore) Tel: 85-475-4874, Fax: 471-2042.

On September 9, 1985, cameraman Neil Davis and soundman Bill Latch were killed on Phitsaluloke Road in Bangkok when rebel tank machinegunners opened fire without warning. Neil was killed instantly. Bill died later from internal injuries.

Many current FCCT members may recognize the men from their photographs in the clubhouse, but may not know much beyond that. So, as Neil and Bill's friends prepare to organize a tenth anniversary reunion tribute in their honor, Dateline Bangkok takes a look back by printing excerpts from a special 1985 issue in which friends and colleagues saluted the veteran journalists.

NEIL "THE FOX" DAVIS (1934-1985)



Excerpts from a tribute by Barry Wain of the Asian Wall Street Journal

...Eluding bullets, bombs and booby traps, Neil developed an uncanny ability to stay alive. While more than 80 fellow newsmen died on the job in Indochina, he defied the odds daily for 11 years, often being wounded but always recovering. After Vietnam, he covered revolutions and upheavals from Angola to Iraq to Lebanon.

His luck finally ran out Monday on the streets of downtown Bangkok. Caught by fire from soldiers trying to overthrow the Thai government, he died on the spot — camera in hand.

His death at the age of 51 has stunned his colleagues, not only because they regarded him as almost indestructible, but because he died on what for him should have been a safe, even mundane, assignment: a pathetic coup attempt by a bunch of ambitious, second-rate current and former military officers. Though modest and unassuming, Neil appeared larger than life to his colleagues: someone who had seen it all and done it all....

Born on the Australian island state of Tasmania, Neil arrived in Saigon in 1964, a year before the U.S. buildup. He worked for Visnews, a London-

THE DEATH OF THE TWO NEWSMEN WAS BIGGER NEWS THAN THE COUP ITSELF IN NEWSPAPER AND TELEVISION COVERAGE ABROAD

based TV news agency, as a cameraman-correspondent, which meant he shot his own film and wrote his own scripts. He chose to concentrate on South Vietnamese troops in battle because, as he put it, "It was their war. It meant a great deal to them."

And since the Vietnamese, contrary to popular belief in the U.S., did most of the fighting, he was often in the thick of it.

"I would always try and go to the extreme frontline," he said. "You can't get the spontaneity of action if you're not there. You can't get it if you're 100 meters behind the soldiers trying to get it with a telephoto lens. You don't see the faces, the expressions. You don't feel the compassion that they may show for their wounded comrades, or for their enemy for that matter."

Neil discovered that the quick reflexes he'd developed as a professional football player helped protect him on the battlefield. As he explained it, he would sense danger before it actually arrived.

Not always, though. He was hurt badly enough to be hospitalized six times, once within a fraction of his life. In Cambodia in 1974, a mortar exploded a meter away, killing a couple of soldiers and blasting shrapnel into his legs and back. Only a tape recorder strapped to his belt stopped the jagged metal from tearing his stomach apart. Surviving Cambodian soldiers gave him a life-saving transfusion of milk from coconuts taken off a nearby tree to overcome temporarily his loss of blood.

On April 12, 1975, Neil was evacuated on one of the last American helicopters from Phnom Penh — his home for five years — as Khmer Rouge revolutionaries encircled the city. He returned to Saigon in time to see it captured by the communists on April 30. As North Vietnamese and Viet Cong units advanced through the streets, he entered the presidential palace by an unguarded rear gate and

was waiting on the front steps when the victors arrived. He filmed — from the inside — the first tank crashing through the locked front gates....

Neil didn't inflict war stories on listeners, though he was often prevailed upon to tell them. He was more likely to be talking about boxing, cricket and tennis — and wagering considerable sums of money with friends on the outcome of those sports.

In fact, he counseled young reporters against following his lead and becoming war correspondents. "But if you must do it," he said, "do it because you believe in your work and want to do it well, not because you want to be famous."

BILL LATCH (1950-1985)



Bill Latch with his daughter Ann-Marie.

Excerpts from Dateline Bangkok article by his friends Neil Kelly of The Times and Nick Cumming-Bruce of The Guardian.

...When he came to Thailand in 1975 at the age of 25, he already had a deep knowledge of China, its history and politics, fluency in Mandarin and a grounding in Japanese. Those had been his subjects at university in Colorado. His objective was to make Asia, China, Indochina and Thailand his life's work.

His first 2-1/2 years in Thailand were spent teaching advanced English and the history of civilization at Kasetsart

University. At that time he and his wife, Porn, were living in Ayuthaya, Bill commuting to work by train. It was much cheaper living and, besides, they loved their modest house by the Chao Phya. Often Bill would catch their evening meal in the river....

In 1978 he started working for NBC as a radio reporter and two years later added the job of television soundman. The work of a soundman is among the least glamorous in the business but in his other capacity, Bill was nominated for a national media award for a programme he put together on the writing of Vietnamese boat people....

The day Bill died bore testimony to his many personal and professional qualities. Bill saw the tanks as he was driving his daughter, Ann-Marie, to school and his message to NBC's Asian headquarters in Tokyo that an attempted coup seemed on the way was one of the first news flashes on this story. Nothing was more characteristic of Bill than the other message he sent that morning. As he was hurrying out of the office he stopped to scribble a note asking someone to pick up Ann-Marie from school if he were not back in time.

And as the videotapes of the coup attempt relate, it was Bill, mortally wounded, who had the presence of mind to wave a white cloth and shout at Thai troops to allow those civilians caught in the shooting to get out of the line of fire.

One of the cruellest aspects of September 9 is that Bill Latch met his death on the streets of Bangkok, cruel and unfair for a man who knew and loved the Thai people so well.

.....

A year after their deaths, the FCCT established the Davis/Latch Memorial Award in the men's honor. The award grants scholarships to Southeast Asian journalists and provides them with professional training. The 1994 Davis/Latch award winner is Kers Hunthit of the Phnom Penh Post.

Wandering Eye

First Vice President Margo Towie has been having more trouble with airport taxis. In the last issue, Wandering Eye reported on her unfortunate encounter with a pushy businessman who won't be making the same mistake again. The latest incident involved a driver who it seemed had previously been employed delivering parcels for a courier company. Our Margo, who has been around a bit, gave the address of her well appointed Thonburi mansion set amidst acres of verdant orchards. Unsure of the exact destination, the driver starting using his two-way radio to get directions from his controller. A wonderful distraction from the traffic, the crackling exchanges were lively, protracted and immensely irritating. This is of course exactly what one would do if delivering a mute parcel, but not a live Margo who can be relied upon, usually, to remember where she lives. Over the river, and deep in Thonburi, the inevitable altercation ensued when the taxi sailed past Margo's familiar soi. The controller had passed on his own ideas about the location to which the address should correspond, and the driver was determined to ignore any protests from Margo that she might actually recognize her own front door. Suffice it to say that Margo, in her own inimitable, sweetly persuasive way, then demonstrated to the errant driver that she is more than a package of docile business documents. Doctors report some improvement in his condition.

Nate Thayer, the Far Eastern Economic Review's man in Cambodia, has been heard at the bar of the Foreign Correspondents Club of Cambodia railing against various distinguished members of the Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand. In the course of his work in one of the remotest spots on earth somewhere in eastern Cambodia, Thayer was quite naturally compelled to assume the identity of Donald Duck. Readers may recall that a portrait of Thayer working incognito graced the last cover of Dateline. (There is, by the way, no truth whatever in the rumour that Michael Vatikiotis, Thayer's colleague and the FCCT's urbane new Second Vice

President, was recently spotted masquerading as Goofy while on assignment in Mandalay.) Anyway, Thayer's wrath derived principally from the fact that nobody at Dateline had bothered to ask his permission before casually torpedoing his professional reputation, infringing his artistic rights, violating simple copyrights, upsetting his cat, etc. etc. Thayer was, of course, immediately offered the right of reply. He declined in favour of another neat Scotch. It was a proud moment. There is nothing nobler than a true martyr.



It should be said, by the way, that the extraordinary state of the last Dateline cannot really be blamed on its unfortunate past editor, **Imtiaz Muqbil**. Poor Imtiaz was so preoccupied doing voluntary community service among geriatric travel agents — a little publicized condition of his present liberty — that almost the entire last issue had been tampered with by some very large gremlins. Dateline's new editor, **Elizabeth Lu**, has alerted Club Manager **Eric Brighton**, whose career includes a stint as a distinguished Gurkha officer, to these miscreants with blue pencils, and he is standing by with his kukri. Effervescent **Whitney Small** has meanwhile threatened considerably worse if her name so much as appears in this column — so you didn't read it here.

Thayer knows better than most that dining out in Cambodia can be a unique culinary experience. He once penned an article for the

esteemed organ presently lying supine in your hands entitled 'Endangered Species I Have Eaten'. It was deemed extremely politically incorrect and therefore published immediately. Thayer is not the only one who has had his problems in this department. No prizes for guessing the former FCCT Supremo who was recently being entertained by a Cambodian general in Tbeng Meanchey, somewhere or other in darkest Cambodia. They were sitting in the rat-infested gloom of the finest eatery in the province and picking from a plate of dried meat. "Beef?" asked our intrepid hero conversationally. "No," said the general, chomping on another leathery strip. Panic stations. "I hope it's not kouprey," blurted our man. He sensed one of those embarrassing little moments that can trip normal cross-cultural social intercourse. "No," said the general, helping himself to another strip. Deathly cold sweat. The translator had no idea of what it might be in English, and was eager to change the subject. By the way, similar confusion has been caused by the schnitzels at the Grand Hotel d' Angkor. Pass it on, as Trink might say.

Auntie (aka the BBC) has finally decided to open a bureau in Bangkok, and is moving over its Phnom Penh correspondent, **Johnathan Miller**. Miller has been spotted with a mine detector scouting premises in the Sathorn area. No doubt they will be a bit quieter than his present abode located opposite a police station. The police have been friendly enough but do have a few odd habits. When gunfire erupts in the vicinity — not an entirely unknown occurrence in Phnom Penh — they have been known to roll out of the station firing in all directions. This is not really the kind of thing one wants going on during a dinner party. It remains to be seen if Miller will bring his ferocious cat. Much to the irritation of colleagues, he rescued the creature on Vine Mountain from the deserted digs of General Paet, a Khmer Rouge general with a dreadful reputation. Miller claims the cat is a dedicated 'miouwist' guerrilla. The little brute certainly knows how to keep guests in their place. You have been warned.

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