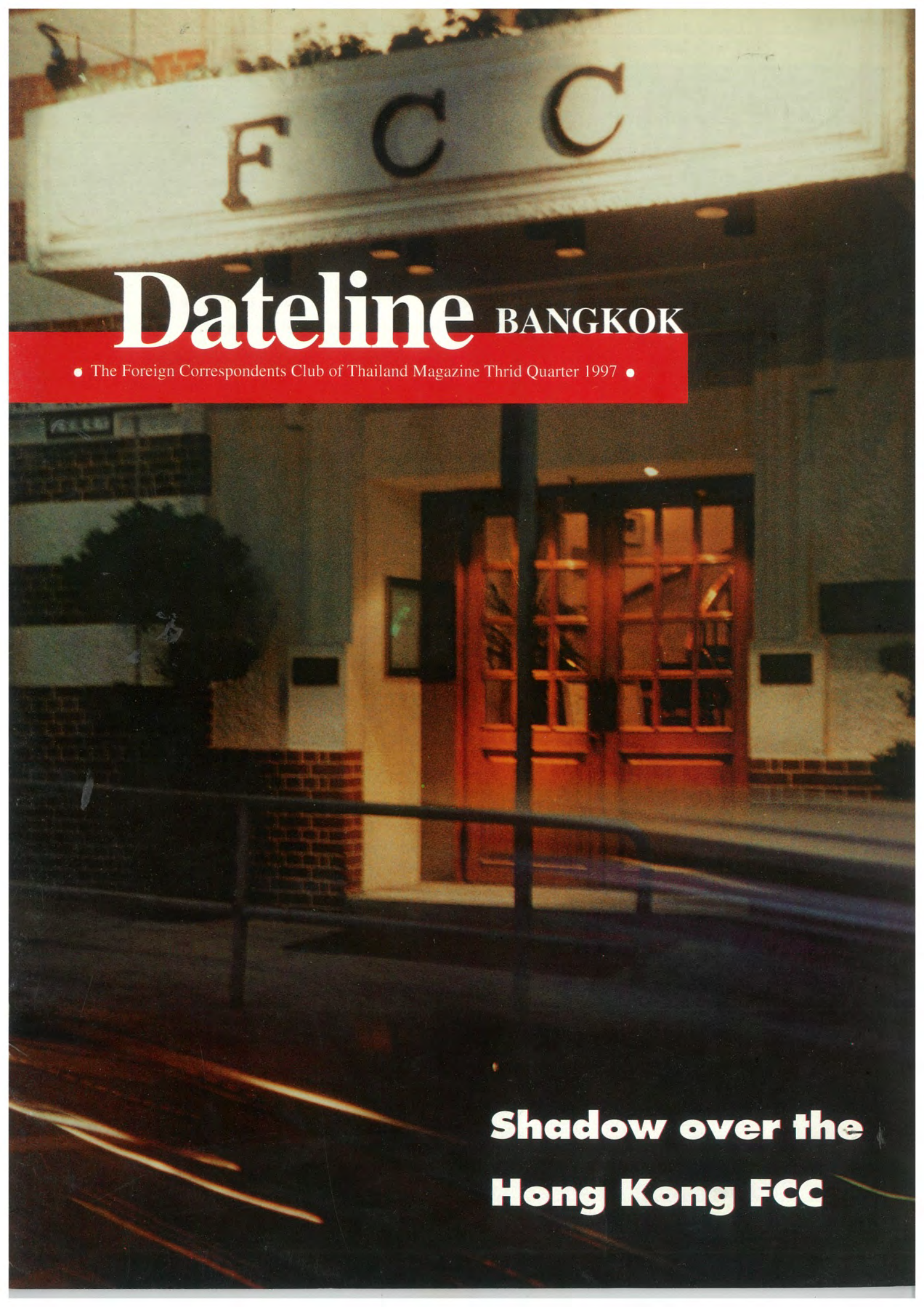




Dateline BANGKOK

● The Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand Magazine Thrid Quarter 1997 ●

**Shadow over the
Hong Kong FCC**

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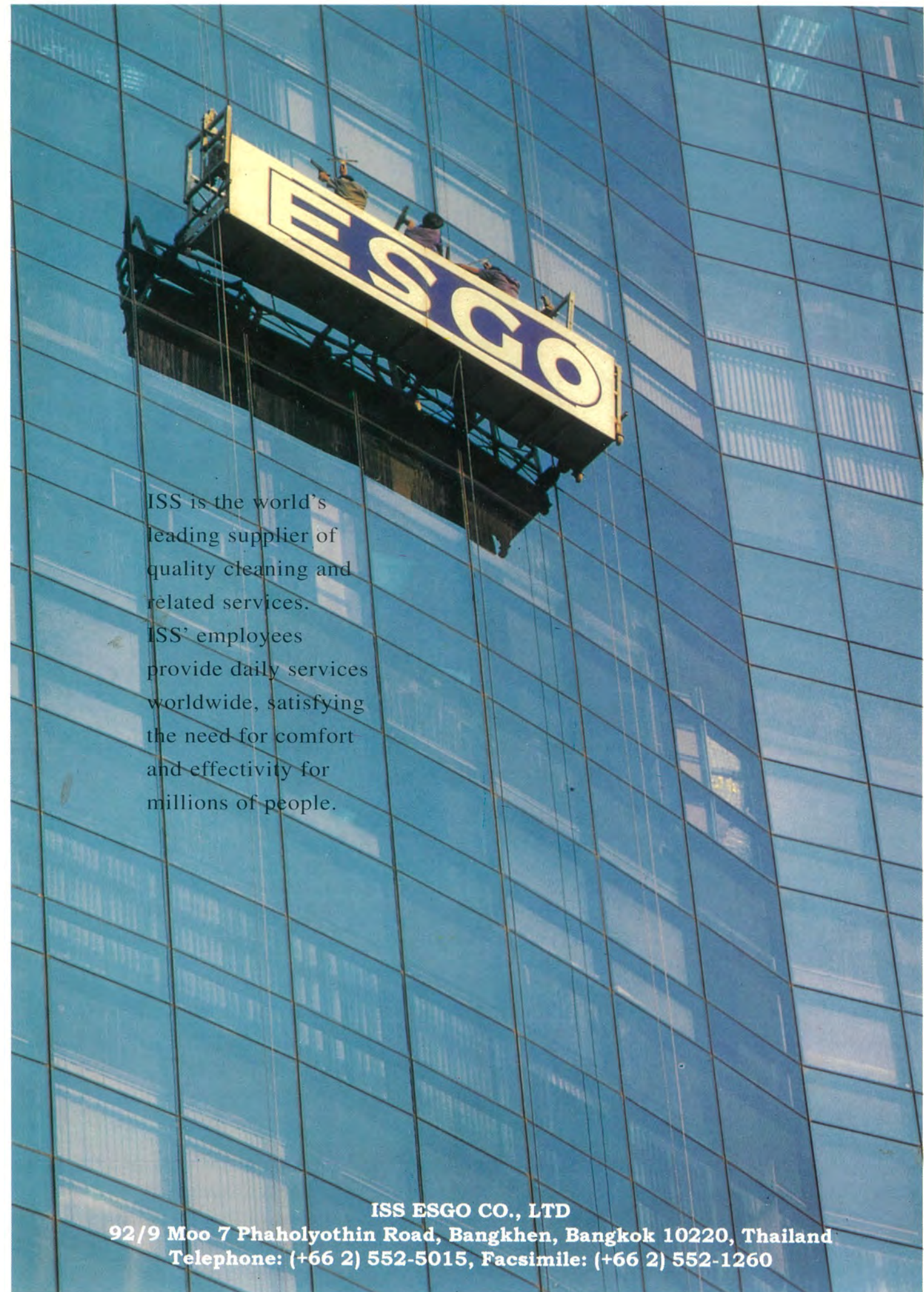
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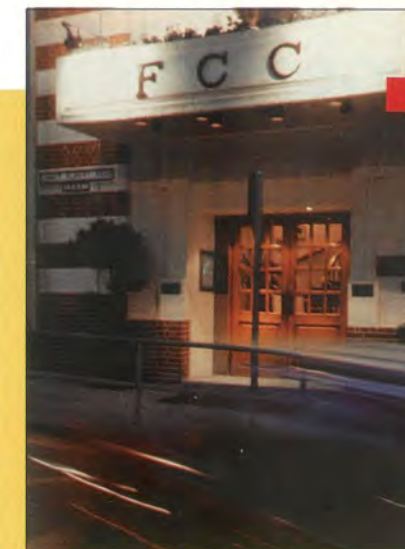
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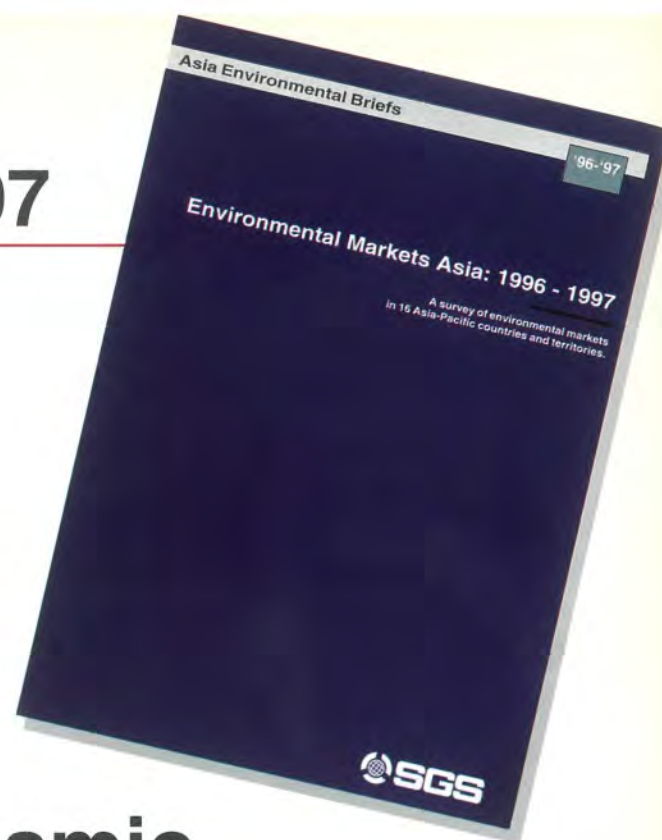


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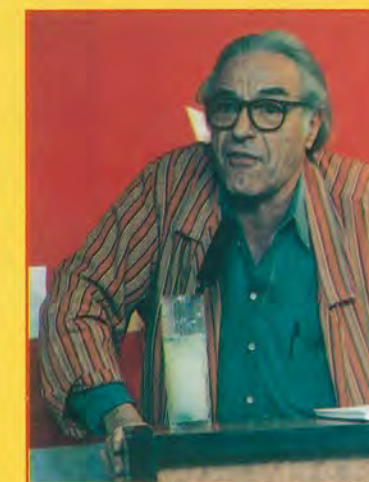
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FCCT/ 3-97

PHILIPPE DECAUX

Bonjour



“We will have to stay on and make the best of it, while looking for the most suitable place to relocate in September 1998.”

Our first problem is food and this is due to the unending waltz of

The other problem is traffic, but our contract does not allow for the use of a heli-deck. Therefore the Programme Committee will work harder than ever to provide our members with first class events, in or outside of our premises, so that the minds of our

Meanwhile, we will keep the negotiations afloat, hoping for a decent way out of the present plight and with your help, your understanding of the problems we face here, and your presence whenever you feel courageous enough to hit the Silom road (no Silk Road at that), we will be able to survive this unsavory situation.

MEMBERS & MEDIA

USIS LOSES USEFUL SUSAN

Anyone who deals regularly with America's propaganda ministry (a.k.a. United States Information Service) knows how difficult it can be sometimes to get a straight answer to a straight question. The "cover your ass" bureaucrat/diplomat mentality often seems to be the rule.

So it's a sad day when an exceptionally helpful and useful USIS employee leaves Bangkok. Susan Stevenson, who has helped countless Thai and foreign journalists, and also gained local celebrity status during the 1996 American election campaign. She appeared on Thai TV to explain the ins and outs of the U.S. electoral process fluently in the vernacular.

But alas, she'll have to hit the language books again. She's scheduled to leave in early August. Her next assignment will be as assistant cultural attache at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City in June of 1998. In the meantime she's considering a temporary assignment somewhere in the Middle East.

SLORC DOES A GOOD DEED - BY ACCIDENT

Reuters' globe-trotting correspondent Deborah Charles was set to fly to Rangoon to cover Armed Forces Day festivities, but the minions of SLORC had other ideas. They turned down her request for a visa, forcing Deborah to spend a rare weekend in homebase Bangkok. This turned out to be a lucky break when she was hit with an attack of acute appendicitis. She was rushed to a hospital where she underwent an emergency appendectomy. Would the operation have been any less successful if it had been performed in Rangoon?

Thanks to SLORC, she'll never know. She barely had time to reflect on the irony of this before departing on a five-week odyssey to the United States, Britain and Turkey.



*Deborah Charles
- fine, thanks
to SLORC*

ARABS URGED TO DUCK AND COVER

Our roving president, Don Filipe, was filming the Rocket Festival in Yasothon recently when he noticed a group of Israelis watching the festivities with particularly keen interest. Asked what they were doing there, one of the Israeli's replied, "We learned that the people here make very cheap and good rockets. So we came to study them because maybe we can launch them on Saddam Hussein or Assad."

Then he and his companions launched into a hearty rendition of "Ava Naguila."



FCCT - on the move?

Dubbed a "mini-AGM" by some members, the Board on May 21 briefed on the advancement of the plans to relocate the Club.

A lively debate between the panel and the audience showed the active interest members take in improving the Club and its functions.

The panel from left: Douglas Logan, Bertil Lintner, Philippe Decaux, Rodney Tasker and Derek Williams on the podium.



Continuing the discussing among themselves: Club House Committee members Derek Williams, CBS, Mark Leban, AsiaWorks, Tom Fox, AFP, Dominic Faulder, Bureau Bangkok and David McKaige, Reuters

Dennis Coday, Catholic News Service, making a point during the debate



Sam Rainsy going home

Upon his return from Europe to Cambodia, HE Sam Rainsy held a surprise press conference on Sunday, May 11 - the first time ever that the FCCT has been open on the Lords Day.

Evan Williams, ABC, didn't let Sam Rainsy get away with easy answers.



HE Ms Laetitia van der Assum, Dutch Ambassador, in discussion with HE Sam Rainsy.



HE Sam Rainsy explained, why he thought it was justified to call Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen a "criminal" and the "chief of a real terrorist network".

French Embassy Night

Domenica Piantedosi and her friends urgently requesting more wine.



The French Embassy Night provided a relaxed background for a talk between HE Thanat Khoman, former Prime Minister of Thailand, and HE Gerard Coste, Ambassador of France.



BASED IN BANGKOK

BY BERTIL LINTNER

Photos:
HSENG NOUNG & BERTIL LINTNER

I don't think anyone would have chopped your head off. After all, we feared the white people," said Khun Lu Maha, the son of the last Saohpa (prince) of the tiny Wa state of Yawng Bang, as he scrutinised this correspondent's blond, Caucasian features. "But for others it would have been different, especially Punjabis. A Sikh's head, complete with a beard and a turban, could have fetched several hundred silver ingots when I was a child in the early 1950s."

That the head-hunting Wa of the wild and remote Sino-Burmese borderlands found Punjabi heads particularly interesting, and therefore valuable, has also been documented by historians. The Shan writer Sao Saimong Mangrai relates in his **The Shan States and the British Annexation** that "during the Wa States tour of a British officer in 1939, a Sikh doctor had to be rushed out of the headhunting area under an escort of a platoon of troops when it was learned that the Wa had come and offered 300 silver rupees to some of the camp followers for his head which, with its magnificent beard and moustache, they said would bring enduring prosperity to their village."

Other unusual and fashionable heads were also appreciated, so the Wa prince's remark about a blond-maned head could have been made simply out of tact. When Queen Victoria dispatched a boundary commission to the Wa hills in 1899-1900, two of its members had their heads cut off - and as a punishment, the British put a number of Wa villages to the torch.

The colonial authorities had hoped that the British heads would have been destroyed in the fire. But 25 years later, several reports said that these valuable trophies had been hidden and smuggled out long before the British assault came. The heads were still being cherished in a Wa village with "affection and reverence," according to Sao Saimong.

But the Shan historian warns of over-simplifications; he says that human

heads were not sought for the sheer pleasure of hunting or collecting them, "as one collects curios or art objects." The heads were considered necessary by the Wa to protect their communities from evil spirits and to promote the general well-being of the villages.

The head-hunting season reached its peak in March and continued until the water festival - or Buddhist New Year - in April. In the early 1950s, when head-hunting was still rife among the Wa, there were already a few Buddhist converts but the head-hunting majority were certainly spirit worshippers and, for them, the water-festival marked the beginning of the rice planting season. Freshly cut heads, stuck on bamboo posts on either side of the approach to a Wa village, were believed to ensure good rice crops.

The origin of this agrarian Wa tradition is obscure and will most probably never be fully fathomed. One of the few foreigners to have travelled in the Wa hills during the head hunting epoch was Alan Winington, Beijing correspondent for the communist paper the Daily Worker in the 1950s - whose writers were also among the only foreign journalists allowed in China at that time. He ventured into the hills in Yunnan on the Chinese side of the border in 1956 and wrote a book called *The Slaves of the Cool Mountains*. The title actually refers to the Norsu tribe in northwestern Yunnan, but it also includes a unique account of the Wa.

In this book, Winington retells a Wa legend according to which decapitation began with a trick played on the Wa by Chu Ko-liang, the famous Chinese warrior at the time of the Three Kingdoms (AD 220-280). Chu is said to have given the Wa boiled rice to plant which, naturally, did not grow. He then told the Wa that their rice would grow only if they sacrificed human beings and cut off their heads. After tribesmen heeded this piece of astute advice, Chu gave the Wa proper rice seeds which grew.

The Politics of Headhunting in Southeast Asia

Human heads were not sought for the sheer pleasure of hunting or collecting them, "as one collects curios or art objects." The heads were considered necessary by the Wa to protect their communities from evil spirits and to promote the general well-being of the villages.



In this way, intra-tribal warfare with head-hunting expeditions became a yearly event among the Wa. This satisfied the Chinese, who wanted the Wa to be pitted against each other, thus making it easier to exploit them. And since the Wa depended on the Chinese merchants to buy daily necessities, Chinese heads apparently were not in danger.

If this story is to be believed, little has changed in the Wa hills for a millennium-and-a-half. Indeed, another Wa saohpa's son, Mahasang of Vingngun, during an interview in his jungle hideout some years ago, told me the very same tale. Whatever the real reason behind head-hunting, the story shows the bitter anti-Chinese feelings that the Wa have traditionally had, and the power they attribute to Chinese shrewdness.

The Chinese are said to have classified the degree of civilisation of the Wa by the way in which they collected heads. The most primitive ones were those who chopped off any heads, preferably belonging to strangers. Next came those who decapitated people with some pretence of justification: for instance heads of thieves. One step higher up on this social ladder were the Wa who bought heads without questions. The most civilised were those who were content with skulls of big game.

However, while tribal feuds and head-hunting weakened the Wa society and to a great extent also hampered its economic development, it seems to have worked to their advantage as well. The more "civilised" plains people feared them and, quite understandably, seldom dared to enter the Wa hills. The Wa were left more or less alone and they managed to maintain considerable autonomy in their areas well into modern times.

Their land was first surveyed by outsiders in 1935-36, when the Iselin Commission demarcated the border between the Wa states and China, which was finally agreed upon by the British and the Chinese in 1941. Even so, the Wa hills were

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Retired headhunters, Sarawak.

never fully explored and they were only nominally under British and later Burmese sovereignty. The first road into the area was built in 1941, from Kunlong near the Salween river in the northern Wa hills, eastwards along the Nam Tong river to the Chinese border.

The British-initiated Frontier Areas Committee of Enquiry – set up to ascertain the views of Burma's many minority peoples just before independence – reported in 1947 that the Wa states "pay no contribution to central revenues...there are no post offices...and the only medical facilities are those provided by the Frontier Constabulary outpost medical officers and by itinerant Chinese practitioners [non-certified]."

The Wa states, however, did send some representatives to the committee's hearings in Maymyo. Sao Naw Hseng came as spokesman for the Wa saohpa of Hsawnglong, Hkun Sai represented the chief of Mong Kong and Sao Maha was sent from Mong Mon. None of these principalities would be "states" in a modern sense, but the independence the Wa representatives demonstrated was quite remarkable. The hearings revealed the gap between the Wa way of looking at life, and the committee's perception of it:

"Do you want any sort of association with other people?"

[Hkun Sai] We do not want to join anybody because in the past we have been very independent. [Sao Naw Hseng] Wa are Wa and Shans are Shans. We would not like to go into the Federated Shan States.

"What do you want the future to be in the Wa states?"

[Sao Maha] We have not thought about that because we are wild people. We never thought of the administrative future. We think only about ourselves.

"Don't you want education, clothing, good food, good houses, hospitals?"

[Sao Maha] We are very wild people and don't appreciate all these things.

The aims of the enquiry was to unite the various parts of Burma into one political entity and discouraging head-hunting was part of this policy. In order to extend central, governmental power into the Wa hills near the Yunnan frontier, head-hunting could not be accepted – and that seems to be the main reason why the British in the late 1940s tried to put an end to it.

For, in a regional and historical context, there is nothing that really indicates that the British were against head-hunting as such: the Iban of Sarawak – another one-time British possession – were also headhunters, and though the British eventually abolished it there, they had used head-hunting to "pacify" (the usual euphemism for conquest in British Imperial terminology) this territory.

When a Chinese uprising in Sarawak in 1857 had been put down by an Iban force loyal to the British, Mrs. Middleton, the wife of the then inspector of police in Sarawak's capital Kuching, on hearing that a large number of heads had been taken, exclaimed: "That is music to my ears!" It was only later, when the British Brook family had taken full control over Sarawak, and proclaimed themselves rajahs of the land, that an order was issued saying that local chiefs who continued "illegal head-hunting" would have their houses burned down.

Thus, head-hunting died out in Sarawak, though it briefly was revived during World War Two – and then not at all discouraged by the exiled colonial authorities, provided the heads were taken from soldiers belonging to the Japanese occupation forces.

Head-hunting among the Iban of Sarawak differs from the Wa tradition in some respects. The taking of heads in Sarawak partly demonstrated the young Iban warrior's need to impress the young girls of his tribe. And no Iban girl with self-respect would take any young man into marriage without demanding at least a couple of skulls as proof of his love.

Moreover, the spiritual power thought to be in the head of the victim would be transferred to hunter. Strikingly similar beliefs existed among the Naga tribes of the Sino-Burmese border, where headhunting continued well into the 1980s in some remote corners of Burma's northwestern Sagaing Division.

While head-hunting was firmly rooted in the cultures of the Wa, the Naga and the Iban, other peoples in the region, from time to time, have also taken up this practice for political or commercial reasons, or sometimes both. Decapitation was common during the Japanese occupation of Malaysia and Singapore, and severed heads of resistance fighters – or, more often, civilians who had been found aiding them – were put on display in public places as a deterrent.

There is no tradition of head-hunting in Cambodia or Laos – or Thailand, for that matter – yet during the Indochina War it was certainly not unknown among ethnic combatants. In Laos, the legendary CIA adviser Anthony Poshepny – better known as "Tony Poe" – reportedly offered his Hmong hilltribe soldiers Kip 1,000 (US\$1 at that time) for an ear and Kip 5,000 for a severed Pathet Lao head – provided it was accompanied by an army cap. That, however, may have been much more the exception than the rule. But in Cambodia, it was quite common, judging from eyewitness reports and news pictures of soldiers carrying freshly severed heads.

Always, they belonged to North Vietnamese or Viet Cong soldiers, the reason being that the Vietnamese – like the Chinese – fear that such disfigurement will be carried over into the after-life. (The Cambodian taste normally runs to livers, and it is a practice continuing in warfare even today. If it is any consolation to the victim, the taking of his liver is a tribute to his heroism in battle.)

Head-hunting has now died out among the Wa, and the last heads are said to have been taken in the mid-1970s. Wa

While tribal feuds and head-hunting weakened the Wa society and to a great extent also hampered its economic development, it seems to have worked to their advantage as well. The more "civilised" plains people feared them and, quite understandably, seldom dared to enter the Wa hills. The Wa were left more or less alone and they managed to maintain considerable autonomy in their areas well into modern times.

Headhunting has been wide spread throughout South East Asia. In Burma, also the Naga tribe continued the practice until only few years ago.



Dancing Naga former headhunters, with automatic rifles.



who live close to the towns have adopted Buddhism and accepted Shan or Burman customs; others have been converted into Christianity by American Baptist missionaries.

But the real transformation of the Wa society was set in motion by the insurgent Communist Party of Burma (CPB), which took over the hills in 1972-74 and turned them into a revolutionary base area for its guerrilla struggle against the government in Rangoon. The warlike Wa made excellent soldiers for its rebel army and, at that time, military supplies could easily be shipped over the border from China. Persuading the young tribesmen to fight against the government was not a difficult task. For generations, they had been defending their hills from what they perceived as outside invaders no matter who they were.

In April 1989, the Wa at long last also decided to drive the CPB out of their territory. Hundreds of aging Burman Maoists fled headlong across the Nam Hka border river into exile in China, while the Wa transformed the CPB's erstwhile people's army into a nationalist Wa force.

Many of the old princelings – among them Khun Lu Maha – were invited back to head their new units. And some old skulls, which the Wa had kept hidden in their villages to escape punishment by their CPB commanders, are now back again on bamboo altars in villages along the Yunnan frontier, as Bangkok-based photojournalist Thierry Falise was able to document when he visited the Wa hills only a few years ago. Blood and old traditions, it seems, are a lot thicker than ideological consciousness.

Hong Kong's FCC

*- facing its
biggest challenge*



Hong Kong might continue to be a bustling city, but the handover has thrown some uncertainty over the future of the FCC Hong Kong. (Photo: Courtesy of AsiaWeek, special edition.)

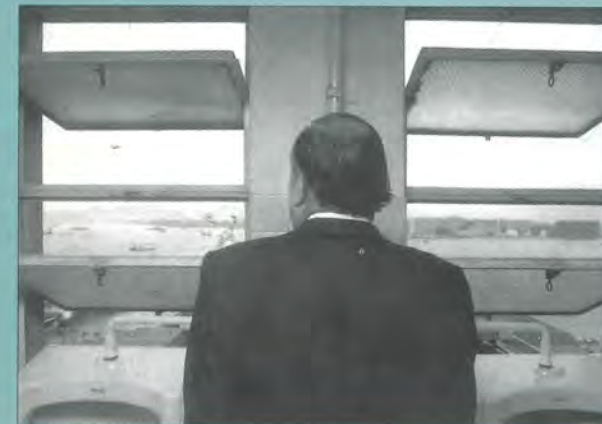
By JOHN HAIL

The sun was setting as I walked into the Hong Kong Foreign Correspondents Club for the last time before the Chinese handover. The crowd was sparse at the bar for a Saturday. The buzz was decidedly gloomy on the impending arrival of the communists, although there was none of the tension you'd have expected in, say, Saigon in '75, or Havana in '59.

Like the P.R.C. itself, the Hong Kong FCC was founded in 1949, although its origins go back even further. My first visit was to its previous premises in the high-rise Sutherland House, where I was able to confirm author John Le Carré's observation that the most breath-taking view of Hong Kong Harbor was, indeed, from the FCCHK's men's urinal.

The club moved to its present high-profile location on Lower Albert Road in Central in 1982. Its lease on the stately Hong Kong government-owned building runs until 2002. The impending handover has brought on an unprecedented period of soul-searching among club members, along with doubts about the direction of the club after July 1.

"Look around you. What do you see? Foreigners. Middle aged white guys. They're going and they aren't being replaced..."



The famous view from the Loo, when the FCC in Hong Kong was located at Sutherland House. (Photo: R. Ian Lloyd from FCCHK "Eyewitness on Asia")

"It's still the best deal in town... It's a club of substance, with a great location. It's a great place to hang out."

"People are suddenly realizing that 'one country, two systems' won't work," one FCC veteran muttered into his beer. "Look around you. What do you see? Foreigners. Middle aged white guys. They're going and they aren't being replaced. The FCC has always been foreign. But now the membership is shrinking. The locals — the Chinese — aren't coming. The life and soul of the club is diminishing."

The president of the Hong Kong FCC, photographer John Giannini, says club membership currently is stagnant at about 1,400. "We need 1,600 members to be healthy," he adds, a number that could well be within reach — at least for the short term — as swarms of incoming parachute journalists descend on the soon-to-be-former colony.

"We expect to be inundated with people coming in to cover the hand-over," he says. The FCC is printing a media handbook to make it easier for the newcomers.

But not everyone is thrilled with the prospect. In a recent Newsweek essay, Jonathan Fenby, editor of South China Morning Post, lamented the tendency of many of the outsiders to oversimplify the handover story: "For Western media, the Hong Kong story line is as simple as the Garden of Eden. The place is going to go down the tube after July 1; the only question is how fast. Anybody who says anything different is, at best, wearing rosetinted spectacles but has more probably sold out to Beijing."

Giannini, who is scheduled to be replaced by a new president shortly before the handover, says the club's membership will resist any attempts by the new regime to impose Beijing-like censorship. "We're not going to be doing anything differently after the handover," he insists. "We're still going to show documentaries that are deemed controversial. The FCC has to remain an open and neutral forum. As journalists, we cover the story. If the new government tries to rein us in any way, that's a significant part of the story."

No one is predicting a journalistic Tien An Men anytime soon, but some of the early signs of the possible attitude of the new government toward the venerable den of 'gwielo' hacks in its midst have not been encouraging. Giannini says the FCC invited chief executive designate Tung Chee-hwa to three events at the club, eliciting only a resounding silence. "His lack of response indicates his lack of experience in dealing with the press," Giannini says. "We told his representative it was insulting and a bad sign for us." Since then, he says, the incoming Chinese administration has shown a more conciliatory attitude. Tung has tentatively agreed to attend a club luncheon.

In addition to the uncertainties associated with the handover, the Hong Kong FCC faces a host of problems just to remain a viable business proposition. Last year the club was forced to spend the bulk of its reserves, around \$HK13 million (44 million baht), to upgrade its kitchen and other facilities to meet Hong Kong's rigid building and fire prevention codes.

The club remained open during the four months of renovation, but many members stayed away in order to avoid the hammering and drilling that are already a hard-to-avoid fact of life in Hong Kong.

"People got out of the habit of coming," Giannini says. To get them back, he says the club is concentrating on topical luncheon events, while continuing to offer a congenial place for tired correspondents and others to have a quiet drink.

Monthly dues are HK\$950 (3,200 baht), a price Giannini says is a bargain compared with competing Hong Kong clubs. "It's still the best deal in town," he says. "It's a club of substance, with a great location. It's a great place to hang out."

At present the FCC membership includes about 350 working correspondents and about 175 local journalists. But if it wants to thrive in the future, Giannini says, membership will have to broaden with new categories of membership.

"We want to get away from the image — the reality — of an old farts' drinking club," he says. "There's a lot of competition out there. We're going to have to diversify."

From Chungking to Shanghai... to Hong Kong

At the moment, the club is an important defender of media freedom. For example, TV documentaries on China which have been banned on local stations are shown to members. Xinhua invariably protests.

Long-time FCCT and FCCHK member Anthony Paul reminisces about the Hong Kong club's colorful past and speculates about its uncertain future.

BY ANTHONY PAUL,
FORMER FCC HK PRESIDENT

According to the FCCHK's web site (www.fcchk.org) the club had its origins in Chungking in 1943. This is imprecise: The Chungking Press Club, from which the FCC derived, was established at what was then the temporary capital for Chiang Kai-shek's fugitive government in 1937. In 1977, when I was FCCHK president, we celebrated the club's 40th anniversary at a special party at our former premises in Sutherland House.

The best source for our earlier history is 'one Captain Lai, for many years the Club Steward, who retired some years ago to help his son build a string of Chinese restaurants in Texas. Lai and I once figured out that he had joined the Chungking club's staff in 1937 about 18 days before I was born. When the club moved from Shanghai to Hong Kong after the communists took that city in 1949, Lai,

who was then purchasing manager, stayed behind to close down the FCC's pre-mises, at the top of what was then called Broadway Mansions, and bring anything useful with him to Hong Kong.

Lai was good for two things important to journalists: anecdotes and, now and then, free drinks. He knew the favorite potion of any Chinese leader who had passed through the club in either Chungking or Nanking. (Chou En-lai: orange juice. Chen Yi, later Shanghai's first communist mayor: a Manhattan). He had a prodigious memory for members' names and favorite drinks: A correspondent who had been out of Asia for decades would take a stool at the bar and hear a voice say, "Welcome back, Mr." and before there was time to speak an order, the right Martini mix, say, was placed in front of him.

There was another practice Lai had

which has, alas, lapsed with his departure, and perhaps the changing nature of FCCHK's main stories. He would know which correspondent had been near a front-line and had arrogated to himself the right to issue the member a free first drink at the club's expense once he returned alive to the club bar. When Old Saigon and Old Captain Lai were retired at roughly the same time, as I recall, that very satisfying little ceremony also disappeared.

These days the club has money problems. Not for the first time. Correspondents don't make the best businessmen, it seems. Legend has it that this need not have been so. I have never definitively confirmed the story, but even the hearsay is worth repeating: From 1951 to 1963, the club rented an old mansion at 41a Conduit Road, whose extraordinary ambiance may still be glimpsed in scenes from the

movie *Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing*. The club was used as an appropriate set for this story of London Times war correspondent Ian Morrison's brief Hong Kong fling with Eurasian author Han Suyin before a mine killed him in Korea. It's said that the Chinese landlord wanted to sell the building to the FCC for US\$25,000. As the story has it, the club's board offered \$20,000. The landlord proposed that they meet half-way: \$22,500. The board declined, electing instead to move to new rented premises at the Hilton Hotel.

Soon after, the building was torn down and replaced with Realty Gardens. This is a hideous high-rise condominium and it's probably worth something approaching \$300-\$500 million today. The only trace of the Conduit Road club are near the FCC main bar entrance: a couple of souvenir cement plant-pots which once graced the mansion's balconies.

Another possible problem looms. I haven't heard it discussed yet, but perhaps it should be. At the moment, the club is an important defender of media freedom. For example, TV documentaries on China which have been banned on local stations are shown to members. Xinhua invariably protests. Prominent pro-Beijing journalists are very seldom seen at the club these days. This is a discouraging sign, in my view, and an ominous pointer to the club's possible future.

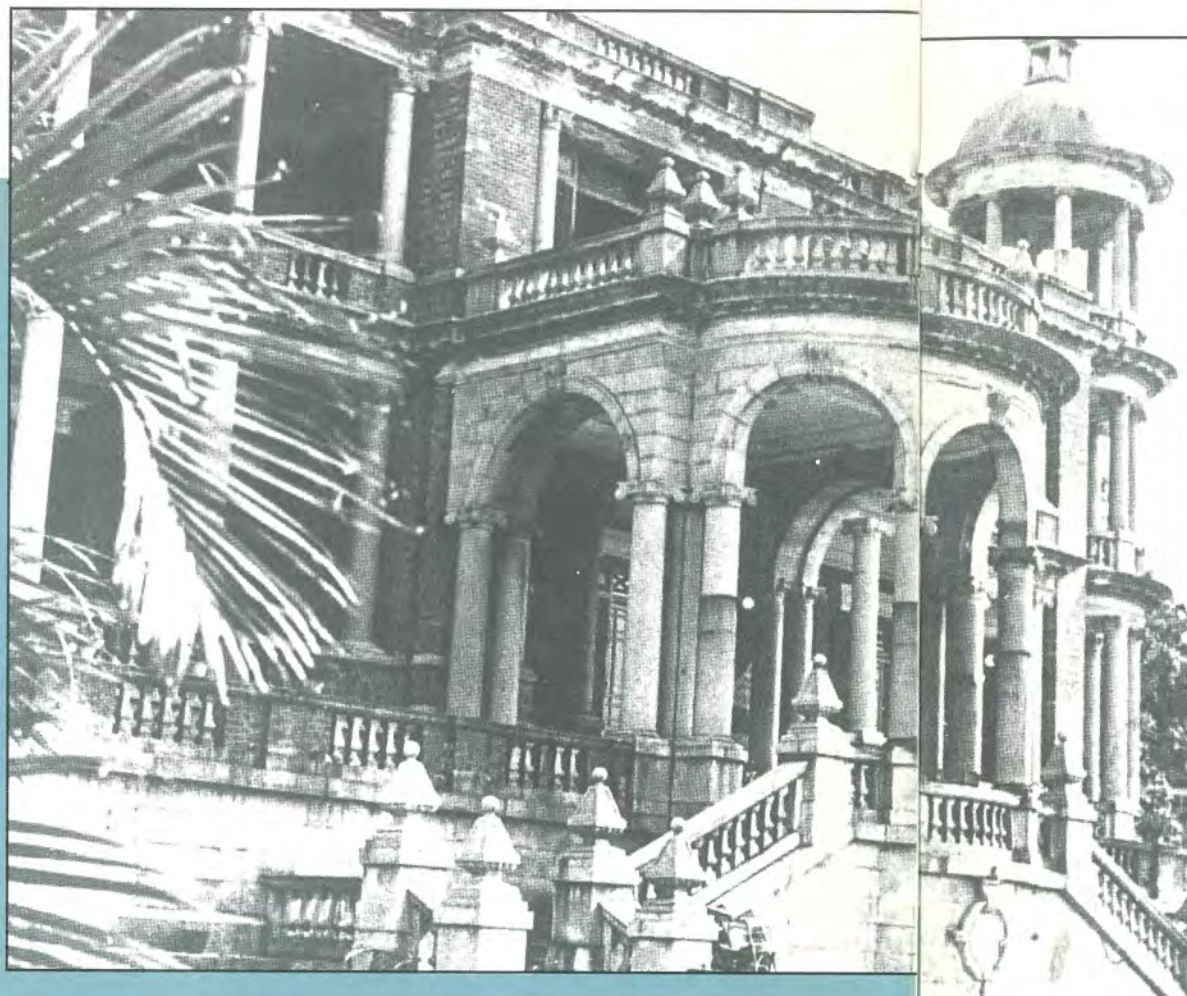
The reason for concern lies in a curious constitutional amendment passed back in the 1970s, when I first began getting involved in FCC politics. The club then defined correspondent members as journalists whose publications were headquartered outside of Hong Kong. However, editors of *The Asia Magazine* objected. This publication had been launched in Hong Kong and at that early stage its journalists, being locally based, were classified as associate members. Then for some cost-cutting reason, I think, the journal had moved its headquarters to Singapore, leaving behind in Hong Kong a substantial editorial staff who, under the rules, suddenly enjoyed cor-

respondent status. After some years, though, back to Hong Kong came the headquarters, thus tossing TAM journalists back into the associate member classification, to which P.R. flacks, bankers, Anglican bishops, the Risen Christ and other over-paid or over-privileged low-life were constitutionally consigned. The then board listened to the consequent uproar and was sympathetic. An amendment was proposed whereby a correspondent became a person who worked for a publication, the bulk of whose circulation was outside Hong Kong. Despite a recognition on the part of all that this would permit even the *Far Eastern Economic Review's* Hong Kong-based editors, even the tone-deaf Derek Davies, to claim correspondent status and thus generally lower the quality of singing and behavior in the main bar, the amendment passed. I can recall hearing of a prominent local hairdresser successfully claiming correspondent status because of his connection with a regionally-circulating hairdressing journal.

Consider the threat this constitution poses in a less-than-Brave New Hong Kong. If the likes of Ta Kung Pao and Xinhua were to elect to remove the clubs independent voice, or suppress the club as a venue for independent voices, pro-Beijing elements need only flood the FCC with members representing China's myriad journals. This would doubtless solve the FCC's revenue problems. But would such a club be worth joining?



Former FCCHK's president,
Mr. Anthony Paul.



The FCC HK
Clubhouse at the old
Conduit Road site.

The Legend of SIR GRANTVILLE WHITHERS

By Dirck Halstead *)
June 1, 1997

Last week, while covering the visit of President Clinton to London, Newsweek photographer Wally McNamnee and I found ourselves parked in a pool bus in front of the Churchill Hotel in Mayfair.

We both found ourselves saying the same thing: "do you remember Grantville Whither's last appearance?"

As we all know, news photographers spend lots of time waiting for their next picture. No matter how big the story, those long hours of tedium often lead to mischief. The White House Press Corps can be the naughtiest of the lot.

For the past two decades, one of the legends of the group has been Grantville Whithers.

Sir Grantville Whithers is one of the most distinguished photographers in the world. A member and former President of the British Royal Photographic Society, he has been an intimate of Kings, Queens, Prime Ministers, and Presidents. His access to the rich and powerful is unsurpassed.

Grantville Whithers also does not exist.

He is the concoction of photographer Robert Doherty, until recently the Washington Photo bureau chief for the Associated Press. Created out of boredom, Lord Whithers was designed to test the mettle of young photographers on the first foreign Presidential travels.

At least one of his targets quit the business following his encounters with Whithers.

Over time, Doherty found accomplices in spinning his web, including McNamnee, and I must admit, me.

In 1982, Nancy Reagan journeyed to England for the Royal Wedding of Diana and Charles. In her press corps were Doherty, McNamnee and I. Also making his first overseas trip was a young United Press International photographer, Chaz Cancellare.

Chaz was the nephew of famous UPI White House photographer Frank Cancellare, and had only been covering the White House for a few months.

Chaz found himself tossing and turning on his first night in London. Shortly after dawn his bedside phone at the Churchill Hotel rang. The groggy Chaz picked it up to hear the following lucid tones of a British gentleman:

"Mr. Cancellare..Whithers here ! Sir Grantville Whithers.

"I am a great admirer of your late Uncle Frank Cancellare. We were comrades in the press pool during the war, and his kindnesses to me, I must say I have never forgotten. I wonder if it would be possible for the two of us to meet for a bit of tea this morning ? I am very near your

"
Chaz's head was
spinning..oh my God,
the most important
exclusive of all time !!
And it can be MINE !
"

hotel, and if you could possibly be so kind as to meet me down in your coffee shop in the next half hour, and I would be most grateful."

Chaz stumbled out of bed, and threw on his clothes and made his way to the coffee shop. For the next hour he sat at a table waiting for his visitor. Finally, he went to the cash register to inquire if anyone knew of Whithers, and the waitress handed him a note that read, "I'm frightfully sorry, but I have been detained, but I will try calling you in the next few hours."

Chaz returned to his room, where he sat by the phone until finally it was time to join the pool for the first photos of the day.

By late that night, jet-lagged, Chaz went to bed, but no sooner had dozed off than the phone rang again.

"Mr. Cancellare, Whithers here, I must offer you the most abject apologies, but Lady Diana required my presence almost all day, and I'm just now free. I know you must be exhausted, but if you will be so kind as to meet me in the bar, I would like to make you a proposition".

Chaz again got dressed and stumbled into the lobby bar. It was deserted.

He sat down at the bar to wait. In a few minutes the bartender handed him the phone.

"Mr. Cancellare, Whithers here again. I'm just so dreadfully sorry for my rude behaviour, but I was called at the last minute by the Palace, and had to scurry off."

By this time, Chaz was steaming and he was about to say so, when Whithers continued.

"Mr. Cancellare, as I told you this morning, I have always felt an obligation to your wonderful uncle, and perhaps, with your indulgence, I have a way to repay my obligation. I must request your utmost discretion on this matter for reasons which I will soon make clear."

By now, Chaz didn't know what to think, as Whithers continued, "as you may know, as a past official of the Royal Photographic Society, I have been fortunate over the years to obtain the patronage of the Palace. As a consequence, I have been privileged to be allowed to put a remotely operated camera in the Royal Coach as Lady Diana and Prince Charles ride to the Palace from the wedding ceremony. My purpose of course, is to be able to record the event not for commercial purposes, but as my wedding gift to the Princess.

However, there is no reason why I could not allow your organization to process the film, and use the photographs, with the explicit understanding that you may never reveal how you obtained the photographs. You may claim all credit for them, provided that you return the original negatives to me later in the day. Of course, if anyone should discover that such a camera exists, the repercussions would be dreadful.

So, Mr. Cancellare, does this offer sound interesting to you?"

Chaz's head was now spinning..oh my God, the most important exclusive of all time !! And it can be MINE ! "

As Chaz bumbled how pleased he would be, Whithers concluded "Magnificent, Mr. Cancellare, your Uncle would have been very proud."

At this point in our story, accomplices were enlisted. The first was Charlie McCarty who was then in charge of UPI pictures in Europe. Charlie was filled in on the Whithers caper, so he would be prepared for the next developments.

After another sleepless night, Chaz called the London UPI bureau to tell them about the good fortune that had befallen him.

McCarty, who took the call, was suitably impressed, but he warned Cancellare, "Don't let this one fall your fingers, kid!"

For the next few days, Cancellare was, to say the least, distracted.

Another accomplice, who was drafted, was Brenda Draper, the London picture editor for TIME magazine. Brenda became Grantville Whither's loyal secretary, who was now calling Cancellare regularly with updates on his movements, and why it was that Whithers kept missing appointments with him, due to the pressures of conferring with the Royals in their country estates.

As the wedding day approached Cancellare was becoming frantic. No matter how hard he tried, he kept missing his appointments with Whithers. He began to see his future slipping through his hands.

In desperation, he called the UPI bureau, and this time reached Ted Majeski, the pictures managing editor. Majeski had not been alerted to the scam. Chaz blurted out that no matter how hard he had tried, he had been unable to get back to Whithers to make the final arrangements.

Majeski suspected that another organization had somehow gotten wind of the big exclusive, and they had made a better offer. At this point afraid that UPI would be scooped he called the Palace press secretary to demand access to Whither's photographs.

At this point, Scotland Yard was called in to the case. Who was Grantville Whithers, and how had he managed to infiltrate the Royal coach ?

Calls went out from Scotland Yard to all news organizations trying to find out who this Grantville Whithers was dealing with.

At this point, I got a panicked call from Brenda Draper, who had been called into the office of TIME bureau chief

Bonnie Angelo, to find out what she knew about this plot. Her instructions were if possible to get the exclusives for TIME, and if that couldn't be done to expose Whithers.

Now with the Royals, Scotland Yard, and all news organizations all frantically trying to find Whithers, and Chaz Cancellare near nervous exhaustion, Whithers decided to disappear.

He hasn't been seen since, but you never can tell, he might surface again one of these days.

*)
Dirck Halstead is a real person, known for his award-winning Vietnam photography. He began his career as a UPI shooter and still makes frequent visits to Bangkok. Currently, Dirck Halstead is Time Magazine's Senior White House Photographer. With a record 48 TIME covers to his credit, more than any other photographer, he is responsible for the magazine's direction and coverage of the Clinton White House.



Media Whores Amok



Wide-eyed and enterprising reporter JAMES ECKARDT gathering information for this explosive expose.

Photos:
LANCE WOODRUFF

in Pattaya

There's nothing they can do about fly-by-night journalists but if the Pattaya police removed their targets – specifically the paedophile Siren Bar and aggressive katoeys on Jomtien Beach, formerly a haven for Thai families – the fly-by-nights would have nothing to exploit.

Here we are in Pattaya – sunburned, stuffed with seafood, reeking of beer – a busload of journalists cruising like lords down a neon strip of beer bars pulsating with hookers. A police escort leads our bus, provided by the “Tiffany Show”. Above the bus driver’s head, a TV set is blaring a video of bare-breasted transvestites.

Our journalistic mission?
To clean up Pattaya’s image.

The idea was Peter Malhotra’s. A 22-year resident in Pattaya, founder of the Pattaya Mail, Peter became fed up that his adopted hometown is being constantly slagged in sensationalist headlines by sleazy, irresponsible, scandal-mongering, boozehound hacks. So he invited us to Pattaya.

“The cream of the journalistic profession!” he welcomed us 30 FCCT guests at the opening night dinner. We thumped our beer mugs in approval: “Fucking A!” “Damn Right!” “Cheers!”

We were in a good mood, having just settled into our B4,500 rooms at the Royal Cliff Grand. Rotund balconies loomed over a magnificent vista of the Gulf of Thailand and the sun setting behind distant Koh Larn. As I leaned on the balcony rail with my wife, I felt a warm glow, knowing that the cost of a single night in this room equals the monthly rent of our home in Prachinburi. And I wasn’t paying.

Michael Vogt hosted us on Friday night to a buffet feast by the pool of his Thai Garden Resort. He delivered a keynote speech, lamenting Pattaya’s bad press. Along with his wife, he has been running the hotel for seven years and is raising a family here and is embarrassed by Pattaya’s reputation as “the biggest whorehouse in the world” and wishes the press would focus on the positive side of Pattaya which offers great shopping, top quality cuisine, discos, water sports, horseback riding, go cart racing, paintball, archery, shooting, tennis, golf, bowling

“All you hear about Pattaya is murder, drugs, prostitution, I myself had three tourists drugged at my hotel. This, of course, received excellent coverage on CNN. But what about the ordinary, decent people of Pattaya. Who speaks for them?”

Ace freelancer and FCCT stalwart Kim Gooi takes a breather with his son, Boon Jin, age 5, during the Pattaya junket.



Philippe Plenacoste diligently checked the difference in the Pattaya coverage offered by Peter Malhotra’s Pattaya Mail



alleys, the zoo, the elephant village.

“And you can get laid too,” muttered a wag at my table.

“All you hear about Pattaya is murder, drugs, prostitution,” Michael continued. “I myself had three tourists drugged at my hotel. This, of course, received excellent coverage on CNN. But what about the ordinary, decent people of Pattaya. Who speaks for them?”

I was seated with old hands Rodney Tasker and Bertil Lintner. Joining us was Elfi Seitz of the Pattaya Mail, a bronzed Austrian 21 years in Pattaya. She echoed Michael’s line about Pattaya’s bad press. “Take all these horror stories about paedophilia,” she said. “The sighting of 8-year-old boys in gay bars is exaggerated. Thai boys look so deceptively young to Europeans.”

“I’ve been in Thailand over 20 years,” Bertil replied patiently. “I know what an 8-year-old Thai boy looks like.”

I felt sympathy for Elfi and Michael and Peter and the other good citizens of Pattaya who spoke with us that night. They reminded me of the classic Western cowboy scene where the good folks of Dodge City gather at the church to decide how to rid the town of Bad Bart and his gang of gamblers, prostitutes and thieves. All Pattaya needs now is Gary Cooper. And right this moment while we’re at Pattaya Church, is Bad Bart at the bar with his boys, plotting to get rid of us?

Saturday morning, I looked out from

my balcony at a huge flotilla of passenger boats heading for Koh Larn. This was another movie scene: the Invasion of Normandy.

We journalistic cream trundled down Pattaya pier and boarded a boat donated by another civic-minded city father. Wading ashore at Koh Larn, we stormed up the beach and flopped into deck-chairs. The beach was aswarm with pale, potbellied Russians. I promptly fell asleep.

“Jim! Jim!” my wife cried. “Wake up! Look!”

I jerked erect to the sight of a beefy Russian matron whose bare breasts, well, never mind. I flopped back down in my beachchair. “You woke me up for that?”

We were revived by a slap-up seafood lunch, washed down with frosty stubbies. Back at the Royal Cliff Grand, we were told to meet at the hotel lobby for transport to the Pattaya promenade and a gala alfresco dinner – promptly at 6:30. Now the problem with any group of 30 people, especially journalists, is to coral them together at the same time. All weekend, life was like the army: Hurry Up And Wait.

At ten minutes before the bus pick-up deadline, my wife was still in the shower. I observed the time, I complained, I remonstrated. She replied: “Shut up. I don’t go.”

Faced with this kind of wifely insubordination, I drew myself up tall and shut up. We got down to the lobby fifteen

minutes late. The bus hadn’t arrived.

The buffet dinner that night – Thai, Western and Indian – was on the Beach Promenade. From the stage, Peter Malhotra introduced the Pattaya City Manager, the TAT Deputy Director, the President of the Pattaya Business and Tourism Association, the President of the Thai Hotels Association, the President of the Thai-Sikh Community of Pattaya and the fabulous showboys of Tiffany’s.

Afterward, ladies and gentlemen of the Fourth Estate piled into a song taew and dashed off to do some serious investigative journalism. First stop was Play Skool which featured chubby essarn girls dressed in orange-and-black school uniforms. Naturally, the place was packed with Brits (What is it about the Brits? “Oo oo, Mistress, I’ve been a naughty boy!”) Skinheads sported T-shirts adorned with the Union Jack and the logo of the “Dog’s Bollocks Bar”.

Ian Crawshaw covered himself with glory by winning the bar quiz and downing a full yard of beer. Ian Crawshaw covered himself with disgrace by then leading us all on a desperate drunken shambling Long March to a totally nondescript bar called “Metro”. We fetched up finally at a third dive where we were treated to an educational display of cunning linguists.

Next afternoon, we got down to brass tacks at Municipal Hall. To one side

Continued on pg. 24



Beautiful girls from Sri Lanka in traditional dresses entertained the members.

Sri Lanka Night

Colourful dancers excited the FCCT members, when the Sri Lankan embassy and the Sri Lankan tourism authority hosted an evening at the Club.

For the gourmet members of the Club, a special buffet provided the spice of the evening.



The "Kandy man" dance...

President Philippe Decaux welcoming the members to the exotic evening.



The three women presenting their views to the guests, Khunying Supatra Masdit, Khunying Niramol Suriyasat and Dr. Suwanna Sattana.

Women at the Helm

Members were treated to a special evening on women's role in the Thai society on April 30, - a special report from the frontlines of the worlds of business, politics, higher education and social-political activism, where traditional values and roles are nose-to-nose with a new world of women.

Khunying Supatra Masdit, Democratic Party MP from Nakorn Sri Thammarat. Behind her, Mick Vanisse pondering on how to quote her.

Khunying Niramol Suriyasat, chairperson of Toshiba Thailand.



Paul Griffin, Bangkok Post/IMMF International School of Bangkok's photo instructor, explained the exhibition.

Photographer's Roundtable

Paul Griffin, Mikel Flamm and Thaksina Khaikaew put their experience and enthusiasm together for a thought-provoking evening of technical and artistic inspiration for new and old photographers alike.

May 1992

On May 7, members were updated on the still unresolved issues of the May '92 uprising, - five years after the event.



Alok Chopra, Program Director of the FCCT, listening to a sister of one of the still-missing persons.

....someone told me...

One of Pattaya's denizens struts her stuff for the edification of the FCCT junketeers



AT LAST, PATTAYA SLEAZE EXPLAINED

On the heels of the FCCT's triumphant junket to Pattaya in March, the Chonburi provincial police chief was quoted by Thai Rath as saying the seaside resort's sleazy reputation was merely a hoax perpetrated by the foreign media.

"The bad image of Pattaya is just an over-exaggeration plotted by foreign news correspondents in order to solicit funds from local Pattaya businessmen."

ARABS URGED TO DUCK AND COVER

Our roving president, Don Filipe, was filming the Rocket Festival in Yasothon recently when he noticed a group of Israelis watching the festivities with particularly keen interest. Asked what they were doing there, one of the Israeli's replied, "We learned that the people here make very cheap and good rockets. So we came to study them because maybe we can launch them on Saddam Hussein or Assad."

Then he and his companions launched into a hearty rendition of "Ava Naguila."

FROM CLICKING LAPTOP TO BUSY BEAVER TO ACADEMIA

Australian correspondent Sue Downie and her clicking laptop computer were constant features at UNTAC press conferences in Cambodia. She later gave up her duties with UPI, VOA and other media outlets to take up the cause of the Nam Theun II Dam in Laos.

Now she's put aside her laptop and her busy beaver persona to take up an academic track down under.

GEARING UP FOR A SWEDISH NIGHT?

HE Mrs. Inga Eriksson Fogh, newly appointed Swedish Ambassador to Thailand, surprised Thai and foreign dignitaries attending the Swedish National Day function at the Oriental Hotel on June 6 by wearing the traditional national dress of her home county in Sweden.

Hopefully, this folkloric interest will translate into a long awaited Swedish Embassy Night at the Club?

Media Whores...

cont. from pg. 21

sat the mayor, the city manager, PM Advisor Dr. Virachai Techavichit, Royal Cliff GM Panga Wattanakul, Michael Vogt and Peter Malhotra. Khun Panga listed the infrastructure projects completed since PM Anand came up with a B3 billion budget in 1992: the beach promenade, new roads, four reservoirs, a temporary pier and, most important, waste water treatment plants. Two plants now process two thirds of Pattaya's effluent and when a third comes on line in 20 months, Pattaya's water pollution problem will be licked for the next 20 years.

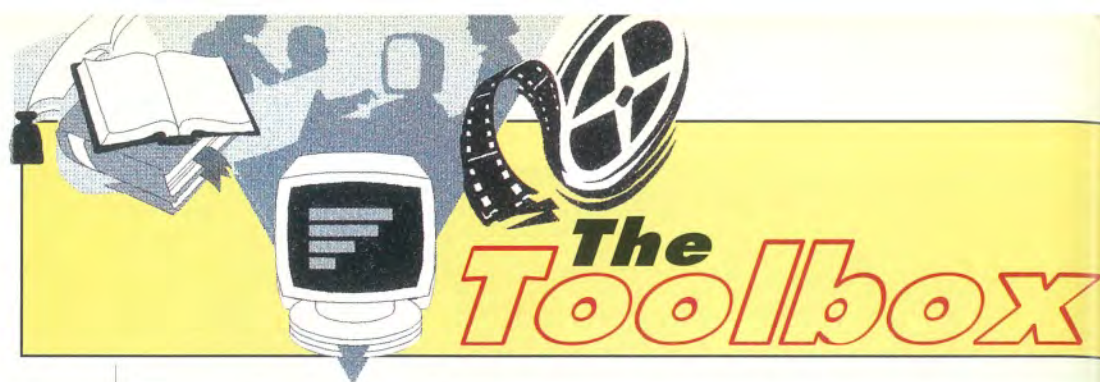
Michael Vogt again lamented the bad press Pattaya received from fly-by-night journalists. FCCT old hands replied, in essence, that there's nothing they can do about fly-by-night journalists but if the Pattaya police removed their targets - specifically the paedophile Siren Bar and aggressive katoeys on Jomtien Beach, formerly a haven for Thai families - the fly-by-nights would have nothing to exploit.

Dr. Virachai, founder of one of six international schools in the area, reported that he would bring his notes of the FCCT meeting to PM Chavalit's attention. On April 16, the Prime Minister was scheduled to convene a police conference to focus on Pattaya's law and order problems.

"We hope he will bring out the cane," commented Peter Malhotra. "We have risen from the ashes and now we want to fly high. Before Pattaya was not important, but now people are listening."

David Rice, MD of Foster Wheeler, concluded the meeting by staking out the middle ground. He put Pattaya in the context of the booming Eastern Seaboard:

"One bit of bad news cancels out ten of good. I've lived in Pattaya for five years and I've seen a lot of progress and believe the improvements will continue. There are tens of thousand of expat families who love it here. You've got excellent schools, facilities second to none, some of the best golf courses in the world, diving, fishing, jet skiing, windsurfing. As you can tell by my accent, I'm from Scotland. Twenty years ago, I wouldn't have been proud to say I come from Glasgow. Now I am. The city fathers turned Glasgow around. It's a fantastic place now, a world center of culture. I'd just like to say: give Pattaya another twenty years."



If you want to become the hard-core high-tech reporter that you visualize in front of your private mirror, go to Pantip Plaza and grab it: 200 grams of compact electronics, an installation diskette and your notebook!

NEW WEAPON FOR DIGITAL VIDEO WARRIORS

El Presidente and resident gadget-man Don Philippe reviews yet another piece of Hi-Tech hardware to astound the natives and confound the competition.

Now that you have your Sony digital baby well in hand, or at least seriously in your purchase list, here is another new gadget to help you spend that hard-earned money hidden under your mattress. It is called the "Grab It" and it will surely grab 5,000 baht from your life savings.

If you want to become the hard-core high-tech reporter that you visualize in front of your private mirror, go to Pantip Plaza and grab it! Providing you own a camcorder of any kind, a notebook and a portable printer, you can, with the "Grab It," render a lot of people happy when you wander in strange lands. The locals will be stupefied at seeing their faces, or your editor, appear on your note-book screen. Then, by a direct fax transfer, this scoop picture will earn you praises and bonus-points from the folks back home.

OK, stop dreaming, here comes the technical reality: With Windows 95, you need one small diskette to install the program in two minutes. Then you need the "Grab It," - 200 grams of compact electronics, powered by the notebook.

On one side, it receives signals by a video cable from your camcorder and after treatment sends them through a printer cable to the related plug of the notebook. Soon, appearing on the six screens of the program, will be sequences from your video. With the mouse, just click on the preferred frame to save it. And don't forget to give it a name.

What you now have on your hard disk is a picture in 16.8 million colors which you can print on the spot or fax back to base in black and white if the bosses are stingy on expenses.



You can also play tricky games such as changing the face of a politician, elongating a submarine to the length of an aircraft carrier, transforming a pussy-cat into a roaring tiger, whatever comes to your mind, thanks to a bonus program: Photo-Morph II. Or if you have Adobe Photo Shop 4, the real artist in you will exude in the final results. But for the simple-minded computer user, the files saved are BMP, so you can still crop the pictures and add some titles with very basic Microsoft Draw.

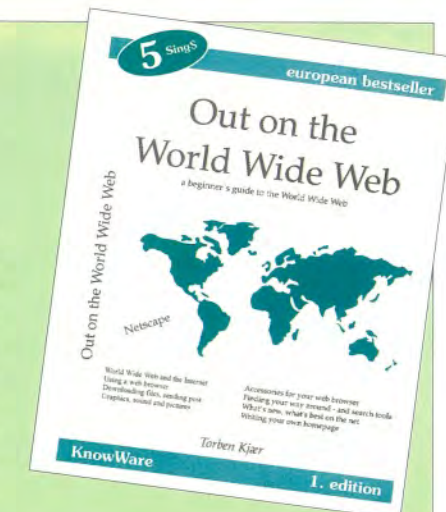
No need to go to Singapore this time to purchase the "Grab It." It is available at A.L. Computers on the ground floor of the Holy Pantip Plaza.

New book gives easy start on the Internet

I would never have read a book like "Starting out on the Internet" (even though I got it for free and consequently saved 5 Singapore Dollars), if I didn't happen to have this friend who actually read the thick brick of a book, that came with his software and he constantly annoys me with his usually correct advice on how I could in fact get more out of my computer if I had cared to read mine.

So I read this one and it's actually good. I learned that I could probably have saved myself a couple of hundred trial and errors, if I had read it a long time ago - before I got started already.

Luckily, the follow-up "Out on the



World Wide Web" is already out, although still only in Singapore.

Get them both directly from the publisher - fax +65 443 8312 - or contact the Thai distributor, DistriThai gm

Dateline:BANGKOK

- do you like the new look?

(Well, then maybe we should design your corporate publication too....?)

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BY JAMES ECKARDT

ILLUSTRATION:
KOEN OLLIE



Drowned in a Pond of Yuppie Scum!

With their mobile phones and designer jeans and gold Rolexes, jingling keys to Beemers and Benzes, yuppie scum are taking over my old neighborhood.

I used to have a quiet life. Five years ago, I moved into the Peachy Flophouse, on picturesque Phra Arthit Road. Running along the riverfront in the old quarter of Banglumpoo, Phra Arthit is bound on one side by Thammasat University, on the other by an crennelated fort bristling with antique cannons. Facing the Chao Praya are villas housing UN offices and the Buddhist Association of Thailand. On the landward side are two-story shophouses and a 70 year-old mansion, once the Goethe Institute, now headquarters for Manager Magazine and Asia Times. It's a snug neighborhood. Behind Phra Arthit, Wat Chanasongkram acts as our Great Wall of China, protecting us from the Euro-trash hordes of Khao San Road.

For a monthly B2,000, I have a room with bed, table, chair, cupboard, ceiling fan and four windows overlooking the beer garden of the Peachy Flophouse. To get to work in the morning, I have to walk a grueling fifty yards to the Manager magazine office. Back I go at noon for a siesta. At dusk, friends gather at the beer garden for sun-downers. Parties combust instantly, with

The old hands in our neighborhood are fighting back. Ham Fiske, S. Tsow and I have formed "The Freelance Writers' Athletic Association and Gun Club": FWAAGC.

tables jammed together and guitars brought out. With a high proportion of writers and teachers, the flophouse is Bangkok's Mermaid Tavern.

Som is to blame for the neighborhood's decline. A chubby, sad-eyed bachelor, Som lived with this mother above his roast duck-and-rice shop. One day he simply disappeared. His mother sold the shop to a syndicate of Thammasat yuppies. They ripped out the interior and screened the open front with plate glass. Up went the linoleum floor, down went stone paving. In went air conditioning, a stereo system, wine racks, ferns, wrought iron tables and a mob of mobile phone-toting yuppies. Thus was "Hemlock" launched. Savvy undergraduates tell their dates the meaning of the word: "You see, there was this

Greek philosopher named Socrates, see, and"

Two doors down, a noodle shop suddenly metamorphized into a folk-singing club. An abandoned house became the Chichi 108 Restaurant, a laundromat, the Joy Luck Club. Three new hole-in-the wall restaurants now pump Carlsberg Draught and overflow crowds out onto sidewalk tables. Among the human flotsam are posers, panderers, pimps and photographers. Photographers, in particular, infest Hemlock. They can be found passing prints from one grubby hand to the next, chattering knowingly about lenses and F-stops, and screaming into each other's faces over homicidal games.

What next? A katoey cabaret? A leather bar?

The old hands in our neighborhood are fighting back. Ham Fiske, S. Tsow and I have formed "The Freelance Writers' Athletic Association and Gun Club": FWAAGC. We have recruited an elite strike force to seize all the mobile phones on the street. These we will toss into a big pile and smash to smithereens with big baseball bats. Then we will beat the phone owners. We expect retaliation and are fully prepared to bear the brunt of their purses.

Die, yuppie scum!



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