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• The Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand Magazine Third Quarter 1998 •



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Cover Story

As part of its worldwide birthday celebrations, the Associated Press' Bangkok office threw a birthday bash on May 19th. The party was honoured by the presence of PM Chuan Leekpai.

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FCCT Meeting the Foreign Ministry

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was in late June host to a gathering of foreign journalists, diplomats and representatives from other government bodies. The relatively informal occasion was a seminar deliberating "International Press in Thailand".

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Reporting Indonesia

On the first day there was almost a sense of camaraderie amongst the media and the rock throwing rioters, but as the day drifted into night the mood changed... "Ginny Stein, ABC, Jakarta"

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FCCT Travels & Tours Inc.

The FCCT trip to Angkor Wat in Cambodia attracted an interesting mix of journalists, PR-hacks, businessmen and their relatives.

The success of the trip has led to another series of travel offers from the hastily formed FCCT Travel & Tour Inc.

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THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS CLUB OF THAILAND

Penthouse, Maneeya Center Building
518/5 Ploenchit Road, Tel.: 652-0580-1
Phatumwan Fax: 652-0582
Bangkok 10330
email: fcct@asiaaccess.net.th

PRESIDENT
Philippe Decaux Tel.: 255-4652
French TV Fax: 255-3040
Mobile: 01-845-3654
email: foghorn@asiaaccess.net.th

1st VICE PRESIDENT
Dennis Coday Tel.: 583-6047
Catholic News Service Fax: 964-2679
email: jamesc@ksc15.th.com

2nd VICE PRESIDENT
Alok Chopra Tel.: 253-5072
Shilpa Co., Ltd. Fax: 253-0593
email: shilpaco@infonews.co.th

CORRESPONDENT SECRETARY
Heather Kelly Tel.: 255-5915
AsiaWorks Television Ltd Fax: 255-5919
email: asiawork@loxinfo.co.th

CORR. DIRECTOR FOR PUBLICITY
Don Pathan Tel.: 266-0740-2
The Associated Press Fax: 237-6283
email: dpathan@ap.org

CORR. DIRECTOR FOR MEMBERSHIP
Michelle Cheung Tel.: 255-5915-6
CNBC Fax: 255-5919
email: mcheung@loxinfo.co.th

CORR. DIRECTOR FOR PROGRAMS
Nate Thayer Tel.: 251-1139
Far Eastern Economic Review
email: nate.thayer@feer.com Fax: 254-4843

TREASURER
Douglas M. Logan Tel.: 231-3692
CitiCapital Fax: 231-3692

ASSOC. DIRECTOR OF PUBLICITY
Preedawadee Laksanawisit Tel.: 526-9240
City Media Co., Ltd. Fax: 526-5525
email: pree@loxinfo.co.th

ASSOC. DIRECTOR OF MEMBERSHIP
Ron Webb Tel.: 637-0270
Bozell Paterson Fax: 637-0280
email: ronwebb@loxinfo.co.th

ASSOC. DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS
Philip Cornwel-Smith Tel.: 679-9130-1
City Media Fax: 677-6383
email: philcs@loxinf.co.th

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
Bertil Lintner Tel.: 271-3599
Far Eastern Econ. Rev. Fax: 271-3599
email: lintner@ksc15.th.com

Dateline BANGKOK

EDITORS:
Don Pathan Tel.: 266-0740-2
The Associated Press Fax: 237-6283
email: dpathan@ap.org

Preedawadee Laksanawisit Tel.: 256-9240
City Media Co., Ltd. Fax: 256-5525
email: pree@loxinfo.co.th

ADVERTISEMENTS:
Finn Balslev Tel.: 943-7166-8
Scand-Media Corp. Ltd Fax: 943-7169

DESIGN & GRAPHIC PRODUCTION:
Geggers Moller Tel.: 943-7166-8
Phaisan Nangnoi Fax: 943-7169
Scand-Media Corp. Ltd
email: scandm@mozart.inet.co.th

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ALLEZ! FCCT!



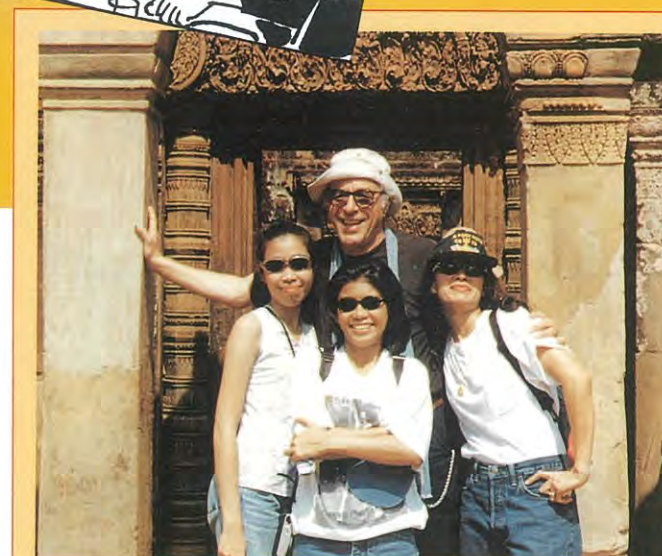
If this is the way Ayme Jacquet, the French coach treated his footballers on the way to the summit of a World Cup, this is certainly not the way the FCCT works it out towards success...

No 'No's in our rules for members training except in the case of Scrabble, but this is because we have not tried any Scrabble contest at the Clubhouse, yet! However any one willing to organize an educational evening of this sort within our premises is more than welcome.

We are always looking for new activities to keep our members hooked up to our bar and kitchen (Chef George just received new recipes from 'La trattoria del Casino' in Porto-Fino). As more new members join (..over 50 new members in the past two months!) the Club will become like a Champs-Elysee of partying.... all flags confounded, save the hooliganism, no risk of a crazy car crashing into the Clubhouse... Allez ! Allez ! Allez!

Proof of this is on the weekly *Bulletin*, as Ministers, bankers, surgeons, environmentalists, writers, etc. knock on the door of the *Programme Committee* to get a slot on our weekly events. Others set up monster parties like the one for our friend ABC's Evan Williams send-off to Down Under, or the monthly *Photo Exhibition* launches, organized with lots of talent and patience by Jeanne Hallacy. Even the Foreign Ministry is lending a helping hand (see Dominic's report in this issue). Thirty club members have signed up for the *Rediscover Pattaya Week-end* where club member Peter Malhotra and his brother had set up a series of special events.

On the travel front, Bangkok Airways and hotels like the Meridien are keen as ever to give us the best deals



THIS IS THE NEW FCCT-STYLE... COOL, Oh, so COOL ON THE STAIRS OF THE ANGKOR WAT IN CAMBODIA - A TRIP WHICH WILL SOON BE FOLLOWED UP WITH A 'FULL MOON' PARTY ON KOH SAMUI! FOR PLEASURE ONLY...

possible, so we are planning two more trips for this year.... one *full moon party* in Koh Samui on the first week-end of september (this is totally non-cultural, pleasure only) and the *Angkor Wat Part II* for the first week of November. As for the more distant future, we are planning for a fantastic event centered around the end of the 20th century as well as, hopefully, the recession for Thailand and South-East Asia.

Meanwhile, have a lively Summer!

DON FELIPE

MEMBERS & MEDIA

COVER ME BABE.....

Once you are on the cover of Dateline there is no stopping. Our last issue pin-up Marc Laban ended up on the cover of ThaiRath filming the badly made statue of Pumpueng - the dead Thai country music singer. Yesterday Dateline, today ThaiRath, tomorrow - who knows - it could be Playgirl? He has proved one thing: you don't have to be dead to hit the cover of ThaiRath.



It is Marc to the right..



and Mr. Decaux to the right.

Another FCCT star, Philippe himself, also got the Thai-Rath fame. No, he's still alive and well enough to

scream at everyone at the club, - but apparently the Prez didn't get enough of Prince Ranaridh when he was hosting him at the club. As for Philippe, we however seriously doubt that he will be on the cover of Playgirl tomorrow.

Police General Seri Temeyaves - a.k.a. Thailand's Elliot Ness, - was recently the guest of the FCCT to talk about his career on the force and his problem with facing the Thai Police Department. The general is - among others - known for his habit of rubbing fellow officers the wrong way with his provocative statements about corruption in the ranks of the police corps.



Pol. Gen. Seri



BIASED?

Another recent guest at the Club was Abhisit Vejjajiva, a rising star of Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai's Democratic Party. The evening, announced in the Bulletin as "Ladies! Book early to get a seat in the front row", attracted no more female members than usual. Hmmm...! Who wrote that?

headline: Year of Leaving Dangerously

buddytext: We can hardly believe it! Mourning is broken amongst the Majored In American chicks of CM2 and Spasso; ABC's Evan (Rev-The-Bev-Ev!) Williams has broken the terms of his parole and must now return to H.M. Prison Australia. Well, Mel Gibson himself was warned "one more postcard like that an' you'll find yer self back in the ABC newsroom in Sydney, and that's a bloody graveyard!"

Actually, our Ev will now find himself with Walrus Man George Neagus on ABC's Foreign Correspondent. His brief, 'The World' is vague enough to allow his occasional return to Thailand's sunny shores. Seems he just can't get enough of Bangkok's fresh air, healthy lifestyle and friendly locals, having already extended his tour of duty here twice.

Sadly, ABC have finally said "Enough Already!" Fearful for his mental health, not to mention his liver, body weight and testicles, they have tempted him back with a new brief "The World Is Your Oyster", (knowing full well oysters to be his favourite midnight feast).

Never again will myself and Nikki Trash convince a drunken Evan to throw open ABC's palatial house and grounds for our legendary "Fall In The Fishpond" all-night raves and crime-a-thons;

Nic Dunlop's portrait of Aung San Suu Kyi

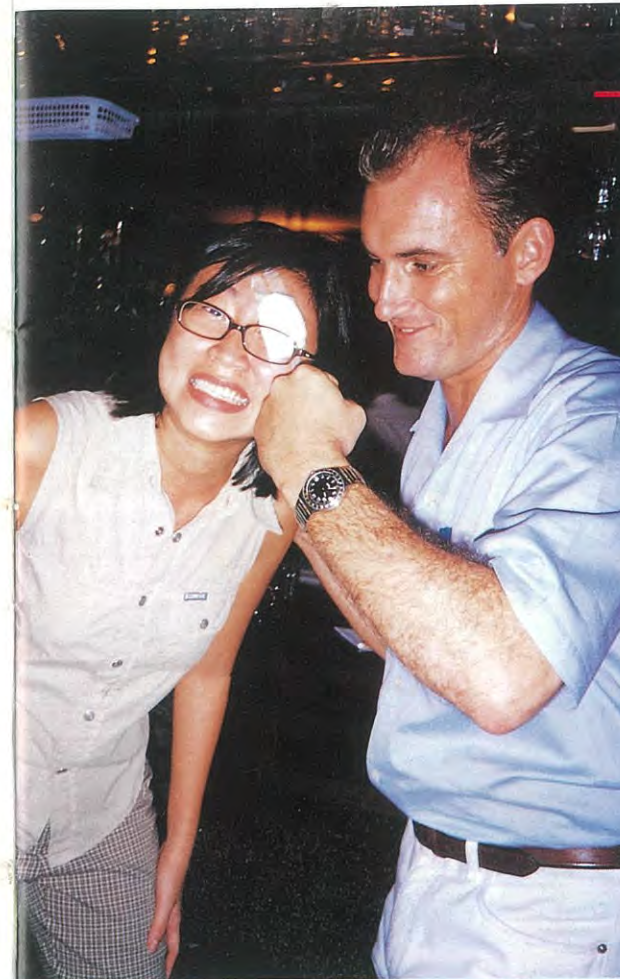


More photo exhibitions

Correspondent Jeanne Hallacy has tirelessly organized another round of FCCT Exhibition/Special Events for members to enjoy in the coming months at the Clubhouse.

August Exhibition

The FCCT is hosting a special evening of politics and culture to mark the 10th Anniversary of the student led uprising in Burma. A group photographic exhibition will be on display for the entire month featuring contemporary images from Bangkok based photojournalists as well as archival photos portraying the



This is how you got that eye, Evans insisted when he saw Pree ('Preedawadee Laksanawisit') at his farewell party, refusing to listen to any of her explanations of the actual cause ("It's a sort of bacteria, ...no, not that kind!").

no more will katoeys flaunt surgery scars from his patio, nor his maids enthusiastically prepare somtam at 4.30a.m. for 300 surprise guests. Backpackers will never again wake up naked under computer desks and Les Vampyres de Bangkok will no longer chain correspondents to his bed for three days and three nights, forcing Live Feeds to Sydney & New York whilst bound and blindfolded.

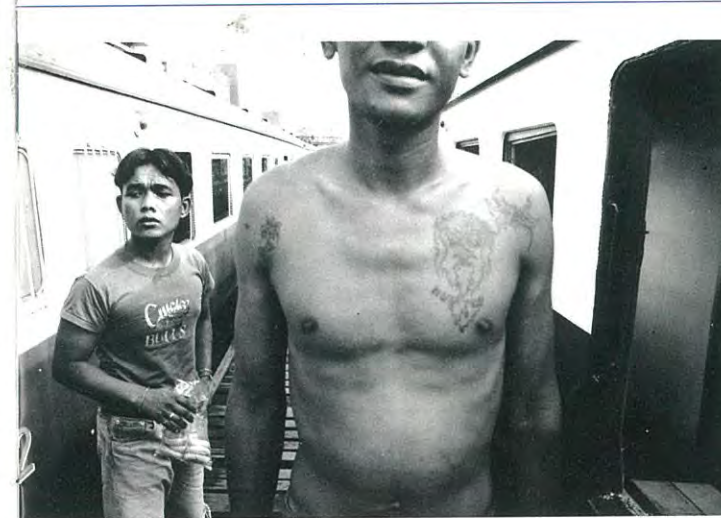
I missed Ev's farewell bash at the Club deliberately. The dangerous thing about Goodbye Parties is that it could actually turn into a real Goodbye - and I am sure I speak for most Club Members that a Final Farewell from Ev the Bev is simply not acceptable.

Williams! Listen up, now! Make sure you come back and see us all, okay buddy? Ya baaastard! See ya later and good luck with the new job. And watch out for Warden Hanson's enemas!

P.S. As requested, I've changed your name in my book to William Evans, so your reputation is safe. Trust me - I'm a journalist.

IAN CRAWSHAW

PUBLICATIONS DIRECTOR & INTERNATIONAL BARFLY
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Piyavit Tan's "Big Brother of the Street Kids" from the June Exhibition.

demonstrations for democracy in Rangoon. The exhibition includes documentary photographs of refugees along the Thailand-Burma border, Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and a special designed collage of classic wire service pictures filed during the tumultuous events in Burma.

Entertainment will highlight a traditional Burmese dance performance and live music by renowned singer Mun Awng who has just released a new album of Burmese songs entitled "Path to Freedom". Traditional Burmese noodle and tea leaves salad will be served at 7:30 p.m. - including entertainment - at Baht 200.- For more information and table reservations contact the FCCT: 652-0580-1

September Exhibition

"Never My Land - Part II" - a group exhibition by Thailand's leading artists best known as catalysts of social debate and incisive satire. The paintings and photographs by thirteen artists are a contemporary commentary on Thailand's on going tourist promotion campaign, *Amazing Thailand 1998-99*, and current socio-economic situation in the country. This is a chance to share some of the more provocative vision of modern Thai artists. Jointly curated by Akko Collector's House. Opening night, Friday, 4 September 7:30 p.m. For more information and table reservations contact the FCCT: 652 0580-1.

Manit Sriwanichpoom's postcard for the *Amazing Thailand* campaign: "Pink Man on tour #3"



Meeting *the* Ministry

"Give us fairness, balance, enough cultural sensitivity, and realistic political correctness."

That was the message conveyed by Mr. Kobsak Chutikul, Director General of Information Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the meeting with the foreign press in June.

Club Highlights

BY DOMINIC FAULDER

At one of the last major functions at its present Saranrom Palace site, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was in late June host to a gathering of foreign journalists, diplomats and representatives from other government bodies. The relatively informal occasion was a seminar deliberating "International Press in Thailand". It was the first time the MFA had made such a large non-social approach to foreign correspondents since just after the coup of General Sunthorn Kongsompong in early 1991.

MFA's then director general of information, Sakthip Krairiksh, rolled up at the old FCCT in the Dusit Thani with a posse of colleagues on an urgent damage assessment mission. The encounter was cordial, and set the tone for closer relations between the FCCT and MFA. In fact, one former FCCT board member, Margo Towie, even went as far as marrying the MFA's Tomwit Jarnson, today the resident celebrity at Radio Saranrom.

Sakthip's visit paved the way for three addresses by Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun during his two brief terms. Anand brought a refreshing openness and candour after the wily "no problem" evasiveness of ousted Prime Minister Chatichai Chonhavan. Anand's first successor, General Suchinda Kraprayoon, was hardly in office long enough to evade the FCCT. Chuan Leekpai, Banharn Silpa-archa and Chavalit Yongchaiyudh all addressed the

club gamely enough. This second time around, Chuan has been more elusive. Instead, members of the foreign chambers of commerce got first call and were suitably punished by an ineffectual moderator who allowed long questions in Thai in the brief period available. So much for cross-cultural dialogue. Staging such events has always been difficult, and the FCCT still does it best.

If Sakthip's important 1991 visit was prompted by a crisis, the June encounter was not - at least not directly. True, Thailand is going through unprecedented economic turmoil, and this has attracted intense scrutiny. Thailand's woes are one of the most important stories to come out of Southeast Asia since the appearance of SLORC in Burma in 1988 and the 1993 UN involvement in Cambodia. What did trigger Asia's economic crisis? The baht flotation? The Rakesh gang? The property bubble? Soros? Was Thailand to blame in some way or simply the first casualty of a fin de siècle economic malaise threatening to engulf the whole world?

Such questions make the nature of the "International Press in Thailand" quite topical. A subject not on the agenda: Did it fail to blow the whistle in time? In his concluding remarks, Sakthip's latest successor, Kobsak Chutikul, who guided the afternoon with cosmopolitan humour, did not beg that Thailand be spared the whip or threaten dire consequences for unflattering reports. The message was more sophisti-

cated: give us fairness, balance, enough cultural sensitivity, realistic political correctness. He also put the MFA's place in the great scheme of the Thai universe into useful perspective. Its budget is miniscule; its only real powers are persuasion and reason. Kindly, he never even hinted that the foreign press might be its rod.

Other Thai luminaries, notably Foreign Minister Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, Dr. Somkiat Ornvimol and Kavi Chongkittavorn (journalists all), spoke about some of Thailand's major media plus points: its importance regionally, its history of openness, the implications of recent constitutional changes, how local and foreign journalists genuinely complement each other. Kavi commented that a press can never be too free, but responsibility comes with that privilege.

It was all lofty, encouraging stuff. But perhaps Thai speakers failed to make enough of the very important position Thailand already holds, practically and spiritually. Bangkok and Manila are the two great bastions of press freedom in Asean. Thailand, however, is far more important than the Philippines as a reporting hub. This dates from at least the Vietnam War era, possibly even to French emissaries paddling up the Chao Phraya to meet King Narai. A great part of the reporting of Indochina and Myanmar/Burma is still channelled through Bangkok, even with resident foreign press corps now established in both Phnom Penh and Hanoi.



Mr. Kobsak Chutikul (top insert, left) guided the debate which featured also representatives of among others the Armed Forces and the Ministry of Interior.



Foreign Minister Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, formerly a journalist himself, spoke about some of Thailand's good points for foreign media.

Thailand's freeness was a matter almost taken for granted in the seminar's open discussions. It did get slightly tangled with the issue of press cards and which areas these should entitle their holders to enter. Correspondents pushed the boat out a little here, suggesting that one card should be sufficient for access to parliament, government house, or even insecure border areas.

Personally, I found it hard to imagine a foreign journalist getting access to 10 Downing Street or the Diet in Tokyo simply by waving a press card. There is a clear security issue here, and perhaps the real agenda should be streamlining outdated procedures for issuing supplementary clearances.

FCCT President Philippe Decaux urged government agencies to get the e-mail and www habit. A huge amount of routine releases and statistical data can be sent or posted almost instantly at minimal cost — and without killing trees. But official bodies should remember to include kill instructions for those who don't want to receive every release under the sun.

David McKaige of Asiaworks noted significant recent improvements in satellite uplinks. Predictably, everybody grumbled about Thailand's erratic and costly telecommunications. Whilst this affects every member of the press, it also affects everybody else living and working in Thailand. Like the traffic, it is part of the local scenery and will simply be one of

the negative factors that must be taken into account for a good while yet. Poor infrastructure, congestion and inconvenience must be the main reasons Bangkok has failed to parlay its considerable importance as an observation perch into an editing and production centre. Hong Kong and Singapore will remain streets ahead, certainly while there is no coherent policy on international media in place. The bottom line is that the foreign media in Thailand ought to be a larger, much more diversified sector pulling in very significant foreign exchange.

Money flows many ways, of course. Lee Miller of Bloomberg pointed to arcane regulations inhibiting services such as his own entering the market. With no false modesty, Miller argued that Thailand is fighting the economic meltdown with one hand tied behind its back if it isn't open to all information sources. He was nicely vindicated by Malaysia's Prime Minister Mohamed Mahathir, who suddenly flourished a printout during an interview with the Far Eastern Economic Review.

"This is Bloomberg's report," Mahathir declared. "Who said what, who did what that made this currency shrink." It's nice to know someone got their ringgit's worth that day.

Dominic Faulder is Managing Correspondent of Bureau Bangkok and Special Correspondent for Asiaweek.



Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan attended the celebration and was greeted by Denis Gray.

AP Bureau Chief Denis Gray took the podium and told the many participants celebrating the 150 year anniversary of the agency some company history and a few anecdotes from the agency's past.

AP's 150 Years Party

As part of its worldwide birthday celebrations, the Associated Press' Bangkok office threw a birthday bash on May 19th. The venue chosen was, of course, the Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand.

One hundred fifty years ago, a half dozen New York City publishers looking for ways to cut costs — especially the exorbitant telegraph fees — came on the idea of pooling their international news gathering efforts.

One of their first moves was to dispatch a correspondent to Halifax, Nova Scotia, where he could meet ships coming in from Europe, get the hot stories and scoop competitors by telegraphing them out before the ships docked in New York.

A decade later news from Europe began to arrive directly by trans-oceanic cable. Addressed to AP, the first cable contained 42 words summarizing five stories and concluded: "Mutiny being quelled. All India becoming tranquil."

Thus was born the Associated Press, which today operates 237 bureaus worldwide to deliver news, photos, graphics, audio and video to more than 15,000 news organizations around the globe. Its reporters produce an average of 20 million words a day; its photographs capture 1,000 images. A far cry from the Halifax days.

As part of its worldwide birthday celebrations, the agency's Bangkok office threw a birthday bash on May 19th. The venue chosen was, appropriately, the Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand.

Among the more than 100 who attended we were pleased to host Prime Min-

ister Chuan Leekpai, Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan and his spokesman Khun Kobsak Chutikul, and the ever-helpful Ms. Somlak Songsamphant of the Prime Minister's Office. Social critic Khun Sulak Sivaraksa arrived with cane and traditional Thai garb while American Ambassador William Itoh sported a Hawaiian shirt. Other guests included academics, businessmen and members of the Thai and international press corps.

The prime minister spent about an hour at the club, chatting informally with guests and taking questions from some members of the press who never seem to go off duty. Foreign Minister Surin sounded out ideas about closer cooperation between the Thai government and foreign media, which have since been followed up in a major seminar at the Foreign Ministry.

For a number of Thai government officials and others the night was their first at the new Clubhouse. Hopefully, as a result of the positive introduction, they'll feel comfortable about dropping by in the future — and maybe sign up as members. In fact, a few VIP guests felt so comfortable that they stayed at the bar way past the official party close (i.e. when the free drinks stopped flowing).

Although he had a text prepared in his coat pocket, the prime minister chose,

as he said, "to rather talk with friends." So I had to take the floor for a short speech in which I noted the "wonderful welcome and warm support the AP has always received in Thailand — from its subscribers, from its sources and yes even from the government, or to put it more honestly, from most governments — and I certainly would include the current one."

I noted some of the changes I had witnessed over my 20 years here in the Thai press, which has been transformed from an often timid, unprofessional institution into a "major force in healing the still deep social, economic, political and environmental scars in this country."

And since the AP was paying for the drinks, I figured I could subject the gathering to some company propaganda and history. A rather impressive one, if I dare say so.

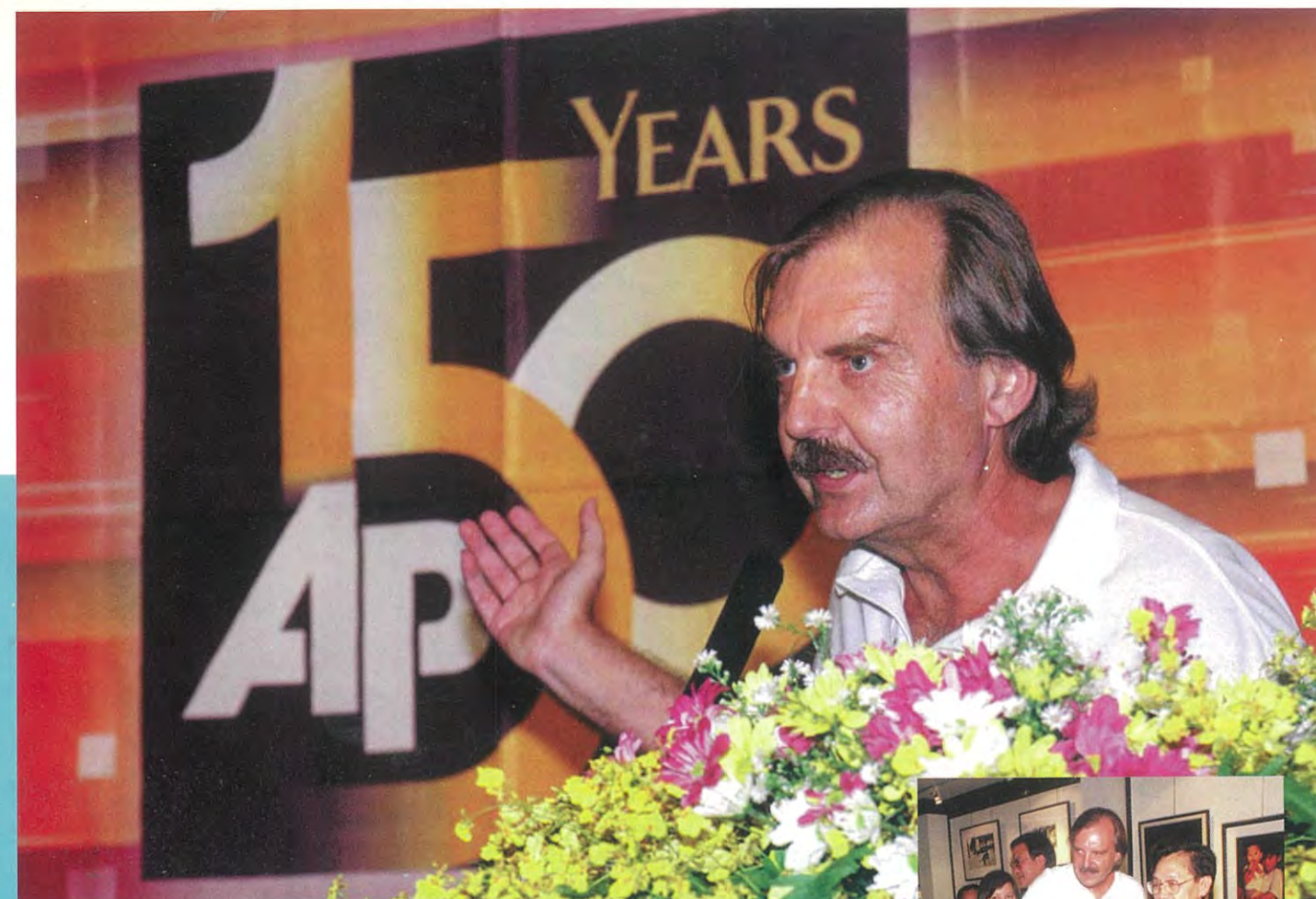
Since its foundation, back in 1848, the AP has recorded every milestone in history — from the American Civil War to the Allied landings in Normandy Beach to coups in Thailand. Some of its photographs have been stamped into the world's consciousness — the raising of the American flag after the bloody battle of Iwo Jima, the screaming girl running down a road in Vietnam after being seared by napalm, the orgy of violence at Sanam Luang in 1976.

Being there has exacted its price.

Twenty-three AP staffers along with a number of so-called 'stringers' working for us have lost their lives covering some of these stories. The first was Mark Kellogg who was killed in 1876 as American Indians decimated the U.S. Cavalry at the battle of Little Big Horn. The most recent was Farkhad Kerimov, an AP Television (APTV) videographer shot and killed three years ago covering the war in Chechnya. Others died in the Spanish-American War, Russo-Japanese War, Spanish Civil War, World War II, Korean War and conflicts in Indochina, Afghanistan, Somalia and South Africa.

Company histories like to quote Mahatma Gandhi, who ran into an AP reporter at a remote railway station in 1932 in India. "I suppose when I go to the Hereafter and stand at the Golden Gate, the first person I shall meet will be a correspondent of the Associated Press," said the father of Indian independence.

The AP has had a continuous presence in Thailand for one-third of its 150 years. Although our agency reported from time to time from pre-war Thailand (and earlier Siam), it set up a regular bureau right after World War II. The first bureau chief was Jorge Orgibet, a co-founder of the FCCT whose bust is found at the entrance to our clubhouse.



Denis Gray escorted Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai through the crowd of never resting journalists.



For some reason The Associated Press has always attracted young, beautiful journalists, - so who is that fat guy in the picture?

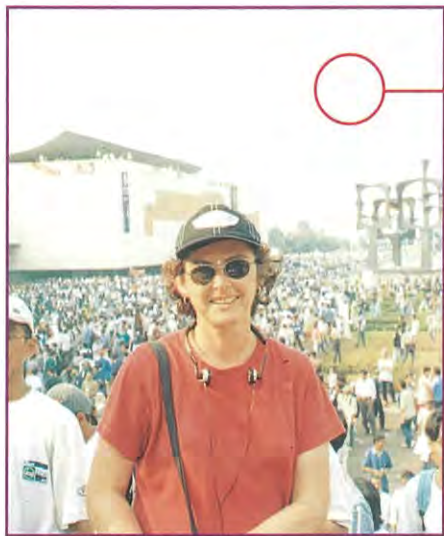
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Based in Bangkok



Reporting Indonesia

BY GINNY STEIN

Ginny Stein is South East Asia correspondent for Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)



Soeharto's last days read like a journalist's dream script. Action, desperation, tragedy and a dash of political intrigue and then the man who ruled Indonesia with an iron fist for more than three decades took the dignified soldier's response and fell on his sword.

We all have a "story behind the story" when we travel the region - why don't you tell us yours? We pay in coupons for drinks and meals at the Club!

Give our editor Don Pathan a call on tel. 266 0740-2 or email him at: dpathan@ap.org

"Welcome to Jakarta, are you getting off here?" That was how latecomers to the fall of President Soeharto were greeted on arrival at the International Airport.

At that time parts of the city had just been destroyed by rampaging mobs, the military was on the streets in force and there was a sense that more violence was likely to follow.

President Soeharto had flown back from his first overseas trip in many months into a city on fire. For a leader who lived his life an almost virtual recluse from the media, Soeharto's last days read like a journalist's dream script. Action, desperation, tragedy and a dash of political intrigue and then the man who ruled Indonesia with an iron fist for more than three decades took the dignified soldier's response and fell on his sword.

It took less than a month, but at the time there was no way to calculate the days. They rolled into each other at a frenetic pace. The tragic shooting deaths of at least four students at Trisakti University in part sparked the riots. But there was barely enough time to write the story and attempt to convey the significance before the riot-

ing took hold.

"Come to Jakarta and run," was how one correspondent put it. He wasn't far wrong.

On the day of mob violence that spread across the capital the extent was at first hard to calculate. At any one of the flashpoints there was a sense that it was more widespread, but it was hard to know how extensive it was. From high up on a rooftop, smoke plumes ringed the city.

On the first day there was almost a sense of camaraderie amongst the media and rock throwing rioters, but as the day drifted into night the mood changed. Looting had begun in earnest and those reaping the benefit from their actions didn't want to be seen, let alone recorded or filmed by foreign media. Just driving by a shopping mall as dusk was falling our vehicle was chased by two men wielding sticks. The city centre began to empty out, public buses stopped running and taxis disappeared off the street. It contributed to a sense of unease that the target of the mob violence was about to turn. It was no longer inanimate objects such as shops, businesses and banks, but people.



But almost as soon as the violence had begun, it ended. There was just enough time to write the mop up stories and ever so briefly contemplate the long-term implications, - when the story turned again.

The students had taken on the Parliament with their calls for President Soeharto to resign growing louder and bolder by the day. The sight of a group of joyful, chanting students, lined up and in unison spitting on the ground as they cried "Hang Soeharto" and "Soeharto is a dog" would have been unthinkable just six months before. Coming as it did then, the thought that Soeharto could possibly survive had moved one notch further up the scale of the unthinkable.

For five days the Parliament became the new centre of the story. From early in the morning, (Australia's three hour time zone difference has a lot to answer for) until early in the afternoon, we sat, we talked, we filed radio reports and we sweated.

The "riot diet" of Jakarta had well and truly set in. Finding time to eat was one thing, finding a shop or a restaurant to buy something to eat that hadn't burnt down was another.

The mood inside Parliament changed many times over those days. From demands from students that the world be told what was happening, to concern being offered about journalist's own safety, and ultimately to euphoria mixed with a sense of disbelief that the student movement's calls for Soeharto to resign had won.

Outside the gates of the Parliament it was a different matter. Getting into the grounds of the building with your belongings intact was becoming a rare feat. The word must have got out that this was the place to be if you want to "lift" a mobile

phone. So many phones were stolen in those few days it became almost impossible to contact colleagues in the field.

But, it wasn't just mobile phones; the odd camera tripod and even a beta-camera were stolen, either through force or seizing that unguarded moment. But there were other incidents during this time that made up for those moments, of Indonesians desperate for change, helping journalists at work.

In Jogjakarta, a cameraman under threat of having his tape confiscated was led to safety inside a home and hidden for hours in a back room until it was clear for him to return to his hotel. His camera was broken down and smuggled out in pieces. When the time came for him to leave he was led through backstreets to his hotel where his camera was waiting for him.

In the same city a week earlier at the funeral of a man who had been killed by security forces at a demonstration, his family and friends had welcomed journalists and camera-operators, making way for them at the crowded cemetery. The young man on the motorbike who picked me up as I was trying to escape a rampaging mob under attack from security forces and drove me back to my office to file. And my most enduring memory, on the night following the shooting deaths of students at Trisakti University; families rushing in to find out if the students killed were their own.

It seemed such a senseless attack. As the Dean of Law who led them onto the street remarked, I had gone home, (from the rally) I thought it was all over."

But did he regret calling students out onto the street? "No."

He was convinced as so many others, that there was no turning back.



Angkor Trip

Following up on the success of its first member travel arrangement to Angkor Wat, FCCT is now planning another trip - this time to Koh Samui. The dates are chosen to coincide with the full moon on Saturday September 5 and Sunday September 6, to give members the chance to discover the famous Full Moon celebrations on the island. In that sense, you might call the trip a cultural event...

BY GREGER MOLLER
SCAND-MEDIA CORP. LTD.

The FCCT has always been proud to bring the World to its members. Through screening of members TV-reports from various parts of the region, through live panel discussion with personalities and experts from Asia, Europe or the US and through press conferences with top names within world politics.

News is, as of this year the FCCT has started bringing its members to the world! By the plane loads.

The first trip was a successful visit earlier this year to Siem Reap and the famous Angkor Wat in Cambodia in cooperation with Bangkok Airways. Overwhelming member interest made it possible to fill up a whole plane for the three days - two nights trip featuring - apart from the impressive Angkor Wat and the local scenery of Siem Reap - also a surprise encounter with Cambodia's then Second Prime Minister Hun Sen.

Koh Samui Full Moon

Following up on the success, FCCT is now planning to arrange another outing for members, this time to Koh Samui off the coast of Surat Thani in the South of Thailand. Again the trip is being organized in cooperation with Bangkok Airways. Once on location, the members are accommodated at the Royal Meridien, Baan Taling Ngam Resort.

"This weekend will be pure relaxation and fun," Philippe Decaux assures.

The dates are chosen to coincide with the full moon on Saturday September 5 and Sunday September 6, to give members the chance of discovering the famous Full Moon celebrations on the island. In that sense, you might call the trip a cultural event...

The trip will include a sunset cruise with drinks, a dinner party at the beach below the resort with an entertaining show and dancing to the

The full group of FCCT cultural travellers outside the amazing Angkor temple.



(Below) On the specially chartered Bangkok Airways, the atmosphere was building up as the flight started to descend on Siem Reap airport.



(Left) The trip also provided a brief meeting with Second Prime Minister Hun Sen.



moon until the wee hours of the morning.

The full weekend including flight, Samui airport transfer, accommodation in 2 room bungalows, cruise, party and breakfast next morning (if you stay awake...) is 9,950 Baht per person. The last 50 Baht you may wish to keep for tips.

Angkor Wat Part II

Further to the success of the Angkor Wat experiment, the FCCT is already planning a follow up: One more trip to the ancient Cambodian capital to take place in November this year.

"We were flooded with requests when we had closed the booking for the first trip, so obviously, there should be good reason to repeat the success," Philippe Decaux says.

The president urges inter-

ested members to call the office and state their interest in the trip as soon as possible. That way, the club has a chance to secure a deal almost as attractive as the first trip. Especially, the president hopes it will be possible once again to organize a flight only for FCCT members as it turned out to provide a special atmosphere on the first trip conducive to establishing the kind of informal contacts between members of the Press and other member categories which is so vital for the functioning of the club.

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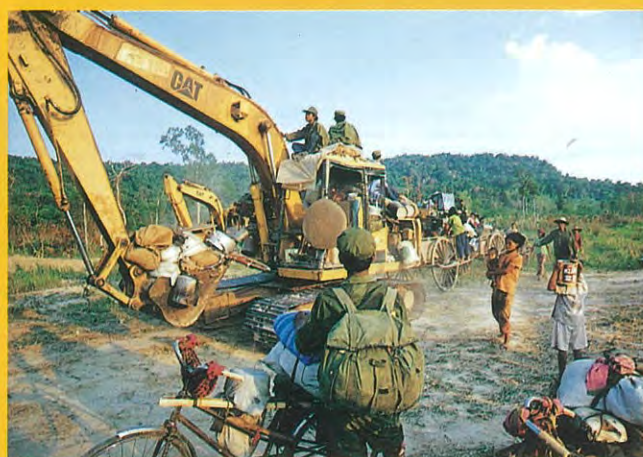
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The long journey..

The thumping sound of distant artillery inside Cambodia just a few kilometers away created an eery soundtrack as thousands of Khmer Rouge made their way down the range into Thailand.



It was an unusual exodus. Amidst the clouds of dust in the sweltering heat, thousands of Khmer Rouge soldiers and their dependents made their way down Dong Rek mountain range into neighboring Thailand. The thumping sounds of distant artillery inside of Cambodia just a few kilometers away, created an eery soundtrack for the moment, as the exhausted, sick, and weary made their way to the safety of Thailand. For most the journey has been a near month trek through the jungle. Exhaustion showed heavy on the faces of the refugees. The dust, heat, lack of water and malaria took its toll.

In the valley of the Huay Samran reservoir makeshift camps were set up by some families as tractors and earth

movers once used to clear roads and forests inside of Cambodia now carried entire families and their belongings, tied together by rope and tree twines.

The makeshift camp first set up at Huay Samrang some seven kilometers from the border, proved to be too small for the 16,000 refugees. Within a week they were moved to the now "permanent" camp at Phu Noi, one of the exit points from Anglong Veng.

For the refugees, it is another story. One of uncertainty. The years of fighting and the loss of their villages have made even the toughest weary of the continued struggle. One family who have lived at Anglong Veng for the past three years expressed the need for peace.

"We are tired of the fighting, the fear and the uncer-



Still on the Cambodian side of the border, Khmer Rouge soldiers struggles to pull a cart with its heavy load of personal belongings up the Dong Rek mountain range.

Arrived at the refugee camp the same day, a khmer girl goes on with her daily chores.



Story and Photos
By MIKEL FLAMM

tainty. We have nothing, and to explain our needs they are too great. My husband died fighting. My children ask me when it will all end and I say I have no answer. We are caught in the middle with no way out. We all want peace but when this will happen, I have no answer."

For the Khmer Rouge, is it the end of their struggle? Even as they made their way to Thailand escorting their families to safety, there was no indication of backing off - nor one indicating surrender.

Hitching a ride up the mountain pass with Prasit Sangrungleung on a Ford tractor into Cambodia with a group of Khmer Rouge soldiers and a few villagers already returning, we passed the fallen push carts abandoned alongside the road. Makeshift camps and KR

soldiers sat in small groups. One listened to a small transistor radio playing Thai rock and roll.

A ranking Khmer Rouge officer greeted us in a clearing just one kilometer from the front line. Prasit spoke with him as he drew a map on the ground of the areas still under their control and the strategy he was planning to keep it that way.

Smiling he said, "This is not the end. We are prepared to continue our fight and will not give up."

MIKEL FLAMM IS A FREELANCE PHOTOGRAPHER BASED IN BANGKOK

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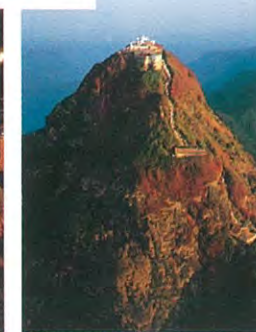
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Off With Your Hats, Hacks!

Bangkok's loose-knit community of expatriate hacks lost one of its own on June 21 with the death of Errol de Silva. He was 55, and survived by his wife, Sukanya, and two grown children, both living in Australia.

Errol was a hack in the most complimentary sense of the word. Working for a wide variety of publications, wire services and as a freelancer, he served up stories by the word or by the line, for baht or dollars or yen or marks, whoever was paying.

The small but distinguished Sri Lankan branch of our community has given us such legends as the sports writers Anton Perera and Edward Tangaraja. Errol branched off into jewelry and came to be regarded as the leading Bangkok journalist in this field.

He may not have been as prolific as, say, Harold Stevens or Bernard Trink, but Errol was a tenacious and hard-working hack right up to the end. Errol's long-time friend, UPI veteran and present back-page Bangkok Post editor Alan Dawson, says he was taken aback to see Errol out and hustling for news soon before kidney disease and other complications finally got the best of him.

During his approximately 30 years of work in Bangkok, Errol pulled off more than his share of scoops, including some of the first cross-border journalistic forays into Khmer Rouge Cambodia after 1975. I first met him in 1976, when he interviewed me for a job at the short-lived Bangkok Express newspaper. In the years since then, I could always count on Errol for a smile, a joke and a

After 30 years as a Bangkok based correspondent, Errol de Silva left a lot of friends among members of the FCCT when he died June 21.



"Bangkok without Errol will never be quite the same," says Tony Davis, a close friend and colleague of his, who organized a fund to help pay medical expenses for the ailing journalist during his last months.

BY JOHN HAIL

JOHN HAIL IS A SENIOR EDITOR OF DEUTSCHE PRESSE-AGENTUR (DPA) AND BANGKOK STRINGER (READ: LAST INDIAN) OF UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL (UPI).

round or three of drinks if he happened to be in the chips.

"He was a hell of a newsman," Dawson recalled.

"Dedicated to the trade. His work on the Express in the late '70s was really in the tradition. He worked himself into a sweat every day, and nearly all day, getting that paper out.

"In 1976, I had to cover the election in Sri Lanka. Errol had decided he would go as well. We took the Air Ceylon flight that was 24 hours late, and both hit the ground writing. Errol took me to see his buddy the chief of police and his buddy the editor of the Sunday rag, and his buddy the deputy chief of the PTT department at the post office. This latter worthy was among the most valuable of all contacts, of course.

"On the day of the election, Errol pulled some strings and we got in for a nice conversation with the loser, Mrs. Bandaranaike. She was a most gracious lady, although it was clear she was losing the election.

"For all his love of news and dedication to getting it out, Errol always really liked to live life. He would interrupt his own work to help someone, even a casual acquaintance. He gave away more news and contacts and help than most of us ever are paid for."

Kim Gooi, who has racked up nearly as many years hoeing the freelance furrow as Errol, understood his friend's seemingly schizophrenic prince and pauper personality.

"Many people who knew Errol described him as always broke. Borrowing money from his friends was a well-known

habit of his. But there are a few who knew that Errol was one of the most generous people on earth. As soon as he entered a bar he would buy everyone he met a drink. Probably that is the reason he was always broke."

I remember Errol as was one of the more colorful characters that used to hang out at the UPI office in the old U-Chuliang Building in the '70s. Sylvana Foa, later to become the mouthpiece for United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, but back then merely a whip-cracking UPI bureau chief, banished Errol from the bureau because of his bad influence on the editorial output of the legendary correspondent Paul Vogle. Errol shared Paul's enthusiasm for Mekong, and tended to make a lot of toasts.

But Errol's banishment didn't last long. Sylvana, a.k.a. She Who Must Be Obeyed, got a wake-up call late one night in 1979. It was Errol, politely asking if the slumbering bureau chief was aware that Vietnam had just invaded Cambodia. "NO SHIT!" she replied, or words to that effect, and her banishment of the well-connected Sri Lankan scribe was hastily rescinded.

Paul Anderson, who commanded the UPI bureau in the early '80s, recalled another, somewhat hazy memory of Errol:

"My earliest and most lasting memory was from one of my first trips to Bangkok to play fireman at the Thai-Cambodian border when the first of the starving refugees were turning up there. I (vaguely) remember sitting with Errol at

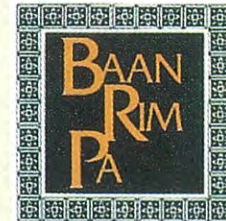
the open air cafe that used to be at the intersection of Rama IV and Wireless, drinking Mekong chased by Singha Beer. Nobody (least of all Errol) told me they were lethal together. I figured that out the next morning and never needed to be reminded again."

Errol's close friend and colleague Tony Davis, who organized a fund to help pay medical expenses for the ailing journalist, also was impressed by Errol's capacity to play as hard as he worked.

"What strikes me - will always strike me - when I remember Errol was his amazing zest for life and for the trade of journalism as a reflection of life. Errol was always on some story or other because he lived and breathed the job. And he invariably got good stories because he was close to his sources. Almost all Errol's best sources, both in Thai politics and later in the Bangkok jewelry scene, genuinely liked him and enjoyed socializing with him. He was simply good company. For me at least, Bangkok without Errol will never be quite the same city."

Errol was a fixture at the bar of every FCCT from the President to the Oriental to the Dusit Thani to the Jewelry Center. He had a lot of friends, hacks who reached into their pockets during his protracted illness to ease his financial burden. To them, he would no doubt say if he was holding forth tonight at the Maneeya Center, "Cheers, mate."

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Bangkok-based photographer Wally Santana was attacked during one of his recent assignments in Cambodia.

Reporters dying in war zones is nothing new. Bullets have never been biased. What has changed is the rate at which the men and women of the media are falling. Of the 1,000 names which adorn the Freedom Forum's memorial for journalists killed in action, almost half were killed in the last 10 years. That is almost one a week. In the Bosnian and Chechnyan conflicts alone 66 reporters lost their lives.

The reasons for the increase are many: the availability and accessibility of high powered firearms, the growing attitude that it's okay or even advantageous to kill a journalist, a new generation of maverick freelancers, TV crews needing to get ever closer to the action, and messier wars with more disparate front lines.

Whatever the cause, the effect is the same. What is becoming obvious to many is that journalists need more protection. The National Institute for News Safety (NINS) is taking steps to see this happen. The plan is to ensure that every journalist going to war is covered.

"This means providing all journalists, staff or freelance, with training and insurance," says John Owen of the Freedom Forum.

Back in the early 1990s the BBC started taking training very seriously, dispelling the myth that it was wimpish to talk about safety. Chris Cramer, the then head of news gathering, maintained that "proper safety training is as much a tool of the trade as a camera or hire car". They invested hundreds of thousands of pounds in armoured vehicles, protective clothing and training. Staff were banned from travelling

to war zones without the requisite battlefield and first aid training. Other broadcast networks followed suit. CNN, Reuters and CBC now all train their staff.

While networks are getting their safety policies together, Fleet Street, for the most part, remains ambivalent. News editors argue that print journalists, unlike film crews, are not on the front line, so they don't need training. Supplying an ill fit-

More and more journalists are being sent into war zones and returning injured or worse.

ting flak jacket and a plane ticket out is as far as most go. The one exception is the Financial Times. With the largest foreign desk in Britain, foreign editor Quentin Peel says: "We are not always sending experienced people into war zones... therefore [we] have a responsibility for people who by definition are not war correspondents. [...] I recognize they should be trained and at least have first aid experience."

Even with this dire situation, newspaper staff reporters have the advantage of being insured should things go wrong. Freelancers are increasingly hired "on the cheap" by both papers and networks. They often go to war with no more idea or insurance than when they book a package holiday to Malaga.

"Freelance [insurance] rates are very bad. Freelancers can't afford to pay for their own training or for insurance," says John Foster of the NUJ.

Frontline cameraman Vaughan Smith,

who recently survived a sniper when a bullet bounced off his mobile phone, says: "The industry has a responsibility to ensure that freelancers are covered. This will not happen unless [responsible broadcasters] pressure insurers to provide something sufficiently cheap and good enough for freelancers."

Robert Mernard of Reporters Sans Frontiers says "I know some journalists who lost an arm or a leg in Yugoslavia, and when they came back they realised they had no protection whatsoever. We are not talking small fry [broadcasters] here we are talking major radio stations and major French newspapers too."

NINS, with the help of Skill Set, the Freedom Forum, Reuters and the BBC have set up a fund which hopes to make Robert Merand's experience a thing of the past. A seminar late in 1997, attended by distinguished journalists, editors and safety experts, discussed safety in the field. Now they have set up a pilot scheme to sponsor freelancers on training courses. The journalists taking part, 53 in 1998, will be accredited for the course. In turn they will be eligible for reduced insurance.

"Eighty per cent of the course is subsidised, making the cost to the journalist around 154 pound instead of 1500 pound. Insurers RGB will then insure them for around 345 pound per year instead of over 2000 pound," says John Owen. If the project is successful in Britain this year we hope it will spread around the world."

TEXT BY FLEUR JACKSON
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