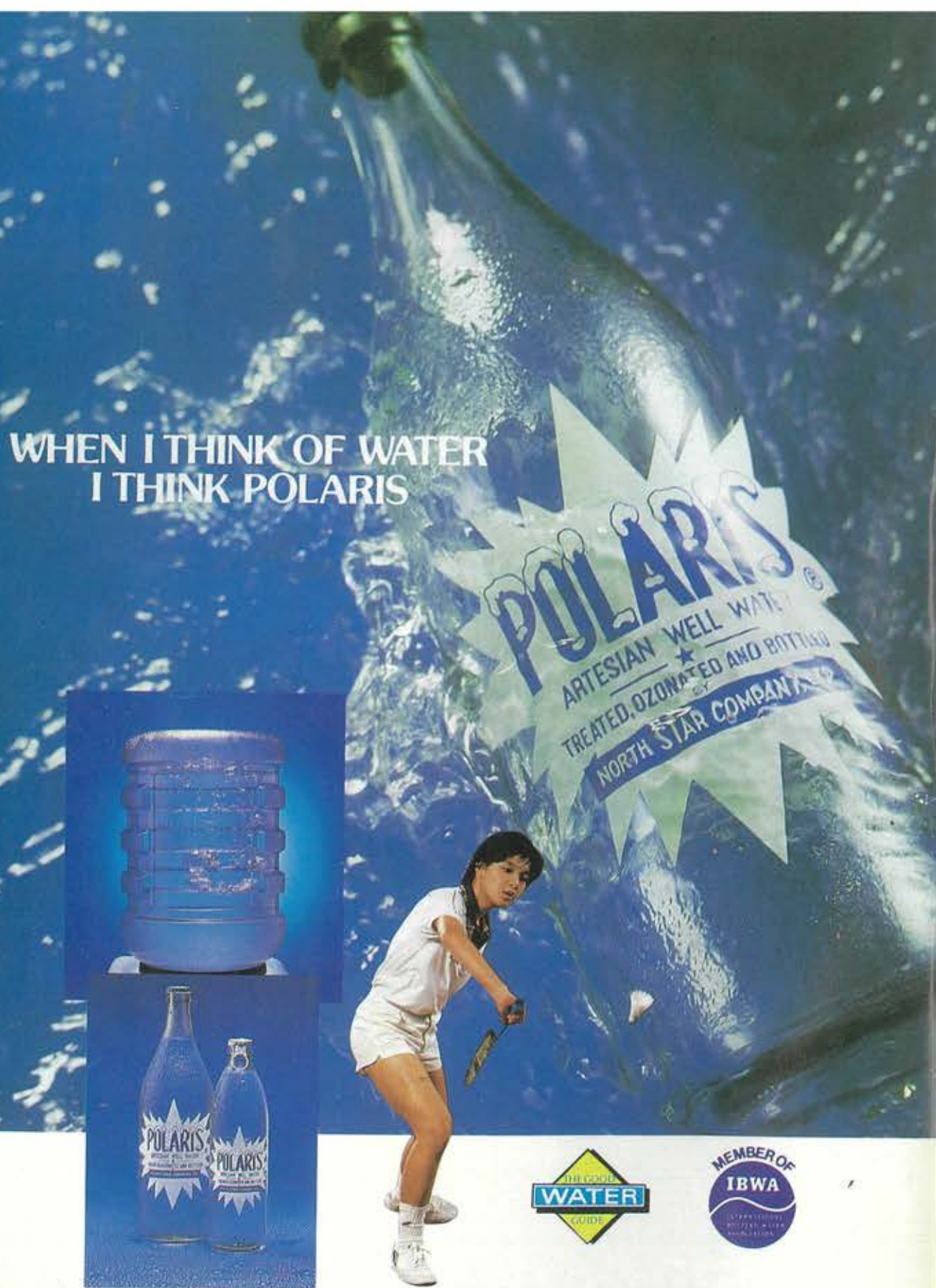


WHEN I THINK OF WATER
I THINK POLARIS



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Yuli Ismartono is off and running; indeed, the TEMPO of her life has been so frenetic lately that we, the Executive Committee, are substituting en masse as her President's Message author.

And here's what we remember best about the 1988 FCCT year: We wish to thank former Prime Minister and current Privy Councillor and Statesman Prem Tinsulanonda for the wonderful opportunity to enjoy his wit and wisdom over luncheon and we look forward with pleasure to our dinner meeting with Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan December 22 at the Oriental Hotel!

A royal book like none others! Our sincere thanks to Denis Gray, John Everingham and Owen Wrigley for master-minding this two-year project in honor of H.M. King Bumiphol Adulyadet's 60th birthday and longest reign. They, with an army of volunteers who supplied information, articles, illustrations, editing and proofing services, have produced one of the most note-

worthy books yet seen on the life of the King and the Royal Family. We are proud indeed that *The King of Thailand in World Focus* was selected by His Majesty as one of several gifts presented to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher on her visit here. We also wish to thank M.R. Kukrit Pramoj for making our launch of the book at a dinner party at the Siam Intercontinental Hotel such a special event.

The recent price increase on our buffets and a la carte menu were, fortunately, minimal — and they're still cheaper than hotel prices, making the FCCT diningroom a pleasant, inexpensive place to dine with friends or business associates — with the best view of traffic-jammed Bangkok in town.

Our Assistant Club Manager, Ms. Panjavilai Anwareepong (We all call her Vilai) is now Mrs., having married her long-time beau, Panya Song-Im. Married the morning of November 21, 1988, with the special blessings of Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn at the Palace, Vilai and Panya celebrated their future together with close friends and family at a private reception at the Club that evening (the only time we've closed the Club to members) and again with a bigger reception on December 3rd at the Oriental Hotel. We wish you much good fortune!

Unfortunately, for every beginning, there is an ending and we wish to convey our condolences to both FCCT past-president, Khun Paisal Sricharatchanya of FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW whose mother passed away unexpectedly November 17 and to Dr. Suvit Yodmani, Press Spokesman for the Prime Minister, and his brother and frequent FCCT guest, Police Maj. Gen. Chavalit Yodmanee, whose mother passed away November 14. Our sympathies on the loss of your beloved parents.

(continued on page 4)

1988 Executive Committee

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| PRESIDENT | Yuli Ismartono TEMPO |
| 1st VICE PRESIDENT | Yasushi Tomiyama JIJI PRESS |
| 2nd VICE PRESIDENT | Helen White ASIAN WALL STREET JOURNAL |
| IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT | Paul Wedel UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL |
| CORRESPONDING SECRETARY | David Storey REUTERS |
| CORRESPONDENT DIRECTOR OF MEMBERSHIP | (vacant) |
| ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF MEMBERSHIP | Ellen Lochaya PUBLIC RELATIONS CONSULTANT |
| CORRESPONDENT DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS | Paul Handley FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW |
| ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS | Dumras Rodjanapiches CROPS VENTURES |
| CORRESPONDENT DIRECTOR OF PUBLICITY | Philip Smucker INTER PRESS SERVICE |
| ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF PUBLICITY | Maxine North STARWAGON HOLDINGS |
| RECORDING SECRETARY | Karen Narula FREELANCE WRITER |
| TREASURER | Julian Spindler COMMUNICATIONS CONSULTANT |



All 200 of the members and guests aboard the FCCT cruise on Loy Krathong night agreed that it was perhaps the best one thus far! It was difficult to tell whether the boat was rocking from the waves created by the vast numbers of craft on the river or from the fantastic, danceable tunes by the band. It was also fun (and a death-defying act) to float our krathongs at Wat Chalermprakiat and to see the marvelous renovations being made at the temple! The only thing lost was a pair of glasses when intrepid Alan Dawson hit the mossy pier step and followed his krathong into the River of Kings! Luckily, wife Khun Tuk grabbed their son out quickly! A pair of glasses and a little pride — not too much to lose!

We want to wish all FCCT members a wonderful holiday season! May you enjoy every minute! Don't forget the Annual General Meeting scheduled for January 27, 1989 at 6:00 PM — Since it's a Friday, we know you'll want to attend and stay to chat and drink at TGIF prices! Also, the annual Lumpini Fun Run for charity is on for January 22nd — get out your jogging togs join us for a good time in a good cause!

Sincerely,
The Executive Committee

DATELINE BANGKOK

EDITOR

Philip Smucker
Inter Press Service
235-0200 ext 68

MANAGING EDITOR

Ellen Teper Lochaya
Boyden Associates (Thailand)
235-2450-9

IN-HOUSE PHOTOGRAPHER

Bill Mann

CLUB MANAGER

Eric Brighton
233-1130-9 ext 206

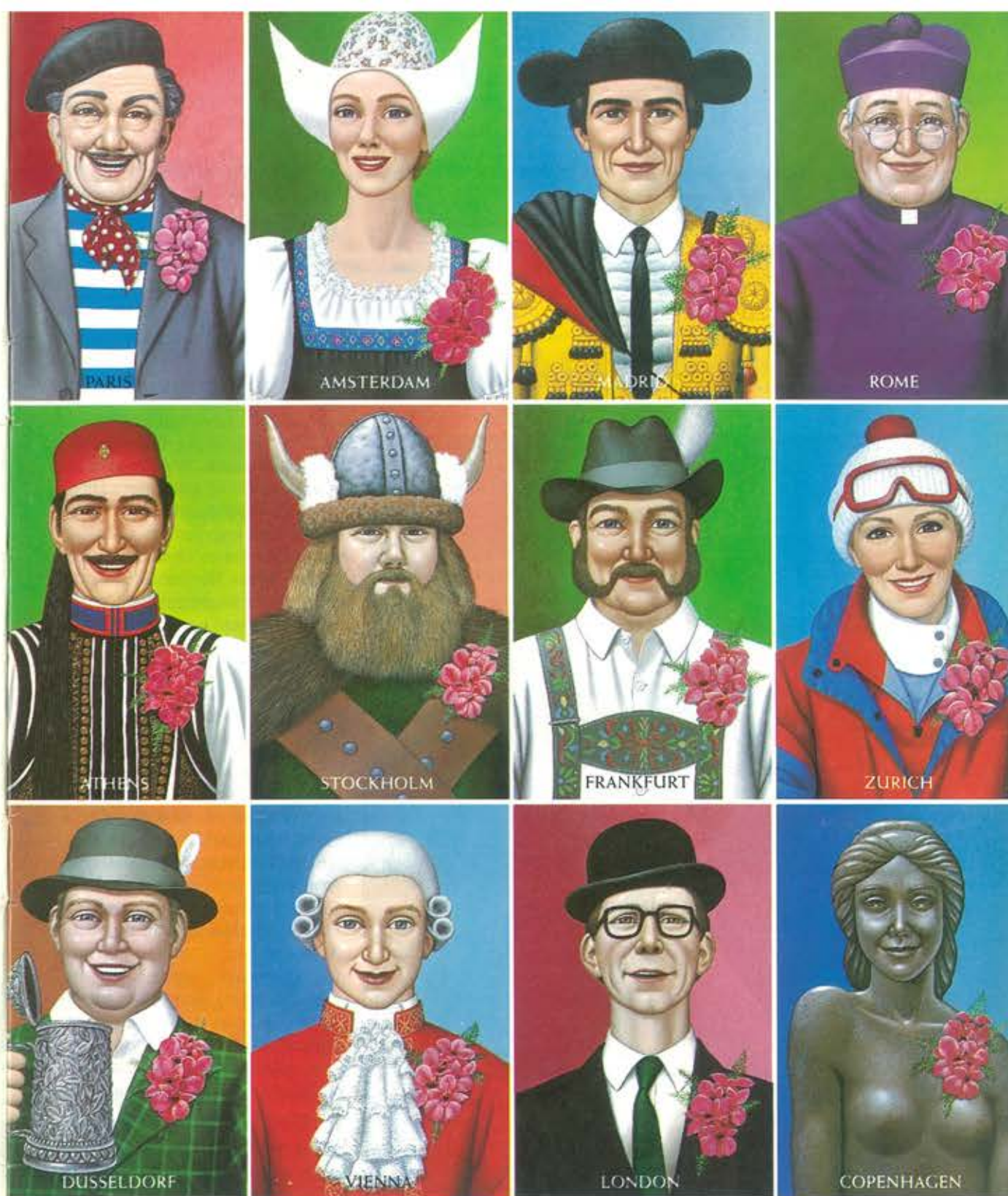
Many correspondents travelled to Vientiane with Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan, among them David Dyer, Voice of America; Molly Yong, AP; and Alan Boyd, South China Morning Post. David is pointing cheerfully to a street sign, apparently leading nowhere, that symbolizes the run-around the journalists felt they were getting from the Lao government. Alan, as you may have heard, has been getting a bit of a run-around from the Thai government lately.

**FOR INFO
ON ADS**
233-1130, Ext. 206

THIS ISSUE

- | | |
|----|-------------------------------|
| 6 | SAILING THE ANDAMAN |
| 9 | OCTOBER 6, 1976 |
| 12 | FOCUS |
| 14 | CLOSE CALLS |
| 16 | AN INDIAN DACOIT |
| 18 | ALMOST 20 YEARS IN THAILAND |
| 20 | BURMA OFFCUTS |
| 21 | 20 YEARS SINCE I LEFT BANGKOK |

Credits: Cover photo, Dominic Faulder, Bureau Bangkok



THAI'S ROYAL ORCHID SERVICE NOW EXTENDS TO TWELVE EUROPEAN DESTINATIONS.

Flying to Europe? Thai now gives you 25 flights a week from Bangkok to choose from, 19 of which are non-stop. Plus a lot more besides. Like being waited on by charming cabin crew. Like selecting from superb menus (French champagne and wines, of course). Not to mention a fresh orchid for everyone on board. Thai. Centuries-old traditions. Innovative thinking. State-of-the-art technology.



SAILING THE ANDAMAN



by John Hoskin

She's a dream. Trim and graceful, she has the classic good looks that make heads turn wherever she goes. You can meet her in Phuket, Thailand's island resort an hour's flight southwest of Bangkok, and let her take you to tropical paradises never seen in travel brochures.

This is no improper suggestion. Although named after the goddess of love in Welsh mythology, *Dwyn Wen* is a sailboat, one of the finest of an increasing number of sailing yachts that can be chartered out of Phuket. From November to April, when the northeast monsoon brings fine weather and perfect sailing conditions, you can hire *Dwyn Wen* and other large yachts for cruises in the Andaman Sea off the southwestern coast of Thailand.

Although Phuket is lovely, it does not compare to what lies in the waters surrounding it. Nor can you have Phuket to yourself. On a yacht, however, you can sail to uninhabited islands. From the spectacular granite formations of the Similan Islands, northwest of Phuket, southward through the Andaman Sea, a voyage will take you to tranquil, deserted beaches, primitive fishing villages and tropical hideaways as isolated and magnificent as Robinson Crusoe's refuge. I know, because I discovered all this on a recent six-day sail.

Built in 1906 as an Edwardian gentleman's cruising yacht, *Dwyn Wen* was never a mere rich man's toy. Her original owner took her from England to New Zealand, and after that she sailed around the world several times. Based in the Caribbean and Seychelles, she was bought by skipper John Guthrie and brought to Phuket in 1981.

Dwyn Wen is what sailing buffs describe as a fast but "sea-kindly" yacht, meaning she sails well but, because of her size, does not heel over so alarmingly that the landlubber feels he has to hang on for dear life. You would quickly find yourself at home on her even if you had never sailed before.

In fact, there can't be more than 20 to 30 yachts of similar size and age sailing today. Below *Dwyn Wen's* decks you'll find every creature comfort. The entire ship is air-conditioned, and the large saloon is elegant with polished dark oak paneling and a rosewood table for formal dining. Directly aft are port and starboard twin-berth cabins, where the bunks have thick mattresses, the cupboards are sufficient to keep things shipshape, and the washbasins are built in. A shared shower and toilet are located amidships. Beyond the twin cabins is a surprisingly spacious and luxurious stateroom with double bed and shower.

Forward are the captain's cabin, a galley with gas and electric ovens, and the crew's quarters. *Dwyn Wen* carries a crew of six, and their one-to-one ratio with passengers ensures both good sailing and attentive service.

Dwyn Wen is 37 meters long and attains a maximum speed of around 15 knots. With her motor running, she can cruise at 8.5 knots. She also has a radio telephone, allowing vacationing executives to keep in touch with the business world.

If you like to dive, *Dwyn Wen* is particularly well equipped for scuba, having a compressor and all the basic gear for six divers. (You must be certified, though you are in safe hands with John Guthrie, a most experienced diver.) Two windsurfers are carried, and two rubber dinghies with outboards for shore excursions and island exploration. Fishing lines

are available; the catch is likely to be tuna or kingfish.

A handsome yacht is all very well, but an ideal charter depends a good deal on the skipper. He needs to combine sailing skills with the social attributes of a perfect host. *Dwyn Wen's* John Guthrie, a square-jawed, six-foot Scotsman in his late 40s, fits the bill admirably. He's been

A VOYAGE WILL TAKE YOU TO TRANQUIL, DESERTED BEACHES, PRIMITIVE FISHING VILLAGES AND TROPICAL HIDEAWAYS AS ISOLATED AND MAGNIFICENT AS ROBINSON CRUSOE'S REFUGE

sailing since he was a lad of seven, made his first trans-Atlantic crossing in his teens and completed four years of nautical college. John's French-born wife, Nanou, herself an accomplished sailor and diver, is a charming hostess, attentive to passengers' needs. She is always smiling, even when keeping an eye on the cook in the galley.

On the first day of our voyage, we weighed anchor around noon and set course for Koh (which means island in Thai) Racha, 26 kilometers south of Phuket. As Phuket's green hills slipped away behind us, lunch was served on deck (with fine weather every day, we took all meals at the large deck table). Red snapper cooked in the spicy Thai style set the standard for the excellent cuisine we enjoyed throughout. Seafood and Thai specialties predominated, though menus were as varied as they were tasty. (Nanou's homemade pate is not to be missed.)

Since the wind was light, we cruised under power and reached Koh Racha by late afternoon. Wooded rocky headlands reach around like arms to form a perfect anchorage, with a lovely little bay fringed by a white sandy beach and backed by a coconut plantation. There was time for a dive and, for

this nondiver, a trip ashore to look around the island and its small Muslim fishing community.

At sundown we had cocktails on deck and watched the local fishermen prepare for a night's work. On angled spindly booms they set rows of lights that attract squid; after dark their boats resembled glowworms on the horizon. But

first there was the magic of sunset. Watching the big red balloon settle on the horizon before vanishing in a split-second flash of green was a lot more compelling than the nightly news.

Life quickly settled into a comfortable routine, with morning and afternoon dives separated by a sail to a fresh anchorage. The peaceful, musical swish of the sea when we were under sail was completely relaxing. Punctuating the day were breakfast (fresh papaya and eggs any way you like), morning coffee, aperitifs, lunch, afternoon tea, cocktails, dinner and, finally, a nightcap. Good food, good drink and good company out in the fresh air. The panorama of the sea was highlighted during the day by island scenery, at night by silver flecks of moonlight.

Our course over the six days was basically south-southeast and back, a route of some 209 kilometers taking in such islands as Phi Phi, Koh Ha and Koh Rok Nok, each providing a night's anchorage. The scenery was breathtaking, from the sheer 300-meter cliffs of Phi Phi (where intrepid climbers risk life and limb to collect birds' nests used in the soup so highly prized by the Chinese) to the five mysterious, uninhabited rocky outcrops of Koh Ha, each with its own distinctive

shape. In the dinghy we explored half-hidden inlets, landed at sandy coves and caves. Except in Phi Phi, visited by day-trippers from Phuket, we were the only visitors for days or months.

The dives, said my companions, were excellent. Gin-clear water was common, the underwater scenery varied, the marine life rich. But the climax of the voyage was undoubtedly our stay at Koh Rok Nok and its sister island, Koh Rok Nai. A narrow channel of turquoise water separates the two, and this was our anchorage for two idyllic days.

The islands, uninhabited and, during our stay, unvisited, are perfect tropical hideaways. So white was the powdery sand that the beaches glowed in the moonlight. Behind the welcoming strand rose a jungle hinterland, dense, lush and colored with all the hues of tropical greenery. The silence was pierced only by the calls of exotic birds hidden in the trees; the only movement was the graceful soaring of an occasional sea eagle.

On the second day we had a barbecue lunch on the beach. Imagine sipping a cold beer while sitting in limpid water, imagine dining on fish steaks and barbecued chicken and fresh watermelon. The sun shone in a cloudless sky, and there was nothing to say the world didn't belong to us alone. For an idea of the innocence of the place, picture six adults, all professional people, on their hands and knees cheering hermit crabs that they'd corralled into running races.

Back at Phuket's Kata Bay by late afternoon, our party had drinks and a farewell dinner at the Kata Delight, a small hotel that more than justifies its name. Situated on a headland, its open-air terrace commands uninterrupted views of the bay. As we sat there and looked down on *Dwyn Wen* riding at anchor, we all knew that dreams can come true.

How and Where

The Season: The yacht-chartering season in Phuket runs from November to April. During the rest of the year, you may cruise the Gulf of Thailand to Koh Samui, the South China Sea, Borneo and the Indonesian archipelago. The average length of a charter, for the best use of time and distance, is around seven days, though you can, of course, hire a boat for as long as you like.

Chartering a Yacht: Most yachts that sail out of Phuket are represented by **Asia Voyages**, a sister company of the Pansea Hotel chain. You may contact them in Phuket (64/1 Rasda Rd., Rasda Centre; telephone 216137; telex 69549 HKT TH) or in Bangkok (Ground Floor, Charn Issara Tower, 942/38 Rama IV Rd.; 235-4100-4; 87979 TAINTUR TH). Asia Voyages also has offices in Singapore (Unit 04-02, Podium Block, Ming Court Hotel, 1 Tanglin Rd., Singapore 1024; 7327222; 335245 OSFASS) and in Hong Kong (Room 403, D' Aguilar Place, Central; 5-211314; 76974 WRENC HX).

The following are some of the yachts currently available from Asia Voyages for charter out of Phuket. Prices are all-inclusive except for drinks. (Most people tip at least five percent of the basic charter fee, evenly divided among the crew). Each yacht takes groups of as many as six people.

Dwyn Wen, described above, costs US\$2,000 per day. *Onfekomnadi* is a modern 17-meter yacht with a French skipper. It's very comfortable for cruising. The high-season

(mid-December to mid-January) rate is \$620 per day; low-season, \$600.

A 19-meter motorsail yacht with a spacious deck area, the *Raden Mas* has an American skipper. High-season rate: \$920; low-season, \$869. *Buccabu* is a 15-meter sloop; its rate is \$500 per day. Scuba-diving cruises are the specialty of the *South Wind*, a 19-meter two-masted schooner. High-season rate: \$440; low-season, \$420. *Singa* is a new 15-meter cruiser, and its rate is \$620 per day.

Asia Voyages also operates a modern luxury junk, *Suwan Macha*, on two to five-day cruises with regular departures. This is not a charter because it's sold by the berth (\$130 per person daily, high season; \$120, low season). It's a good bet, however, if you haven't the time to make advance bookings.

Booking: To arrange for a yacht charter, you must first write to the broker for a brochure on all the available yachts. After you select the boat best suited to your needs, write for further details. Once dates have been confirmed, the broker will send a standard charter contract. Payment terms with Asia Voyages are 25 percent of the total amount on confirmation, 25 percent 90 days prior to departure and the remainder 40 days before sailing. Refunds for cancellation are generally not given. You are advised to take out travel insurance that covers indemnity in event of cancellation.

Advance booking: You should book three to six months in advance for the high season, at least 30-40 days ahead at other times. **DB**



Internationally-acclaimed South African author, Wilbur Smith, in Bangkok as keynote speaker for the SEA WRITE awards, graciously accepted our invitation to lunch at the Club. Sharing a light moment afterwards are FCCT member George Capps, President Yuli Ismartono, the Smiths and at right, an unidentified FCCT member.

WANTED!

We are seeking proposals from FCCT members who might wish to handle advertising sales and technical production for DATELINE BANGKOK on a paying basis. Philip Smucker will continue to handle editorial functions and the printer is already in place. If you are experienced in layout design and feel you can sell enough ads to successfully see a profit for both yourself and the FCCT, let Eric Brighton, our Club Manager, know! He will be glad to give you further information on costs.

PHONE NOW FOR INFORMATION
233-1130-9, Extension 206

BUY WITH CONFIDENCE

MADE IN THAILAND

Through its experienced team of merchandising executives and overseas-trained quality control inspectors EDC has put the confidence of major international retailers and importers into Thailand's exports. Confidence in



quality. Confidence in value.

Share in our commitment to excellence, and as your company's buying agents, let EDC introduce you to the best of Thailand's export industry.

EXPORT DEVELOPMENT TRADING CORPORATION
5th Floor Mahorom Building, 3354 Rama IV Road, Bangkok, Thailand
Tel: 249 8510 (13 lines) Tlx: TH 87249 EXPORT
Fax: (662) 249 8503, 249 4416

Thailand's Largest Buying Office

OCTOBER 6, 1976

Joseph DeRienzo, a correspondent for Reuters, was an undergraduate student at Thammasat University from 1972-77 and received a B.A. in History.

On the evening of October 6, 1976, people were pretty much in a daze. All of a sudden, they were staring at a hellish big question mark that had just been slapped on Thailand's future.

It was like Thailand had mooned itself that day and, except for the few cretins who did the deed, folks were generally revulsed by the ugliness of that backside.

I didn't witness the occupation of the Thammasat campus or the burnings and lynchings on the Sanam Luang. They were the big clichés. "Patriots" committed these and other travesties with relish in the name of the nation, religion and king.

It's satisfying to imagine the henchman of the Red Guard shock troops, now a has-been, removing his dentures and retiring for another sleepless night. Not out of any remorse, but because to his great chargin, the Burmese People's Armed Forces have made him and his boys look like sissies in retrospect.

To make sense of what was happening then, and to some extent what is going on now, you would have at least had to open the book at October 14, 1973. People had

gotten fed up with greedy and repressive rule by politician-generals, booted out the trio personifying the tyranny and tried to will Thailand a new constitution and democracy. Within three years, the country was truly going down the pipe.

Thammasat was the focus of activism leading up to the October 14 uprising, it remained the focus during the three-year interregnum of abortive democracy, and by October 6, it was a bulls-eye for the reaction.

October 14 had pumped students up with lots of hopes. For more than just reasons of authoritarianism, academic life had been stifled for a long time. After the 1973 uprising, Bangkok exploded with books, Jit Phumisak, translations of Marxist writings, reports of inquests into the death of the eighth Chakri monarch, lots of arty stuff and plenty of the mundane to browse through.

Thammasat had a sizeable community of activists, a few hard core but in general pretty tame. The great majority appeared to be do-gooders with fired-up social consciences and they revelled in the new freedom of the time. There were lots of campus exhibitions by various democracy-loving groups of students, often anti-American or anti-Japanese. For one, a huge poster went up on the wall of the Law faculty, it had Uncle Sam as a red, white and blue dog whose butt was being kicked by Thai, Khmer, Laotian and Vietnamese peasants. There were frequent concerts of "music-for-life" — what you hear listening to Caravan and Carabao. Periodically, there would be outings

to the provinces where Bangkok's elite young university kids would take democracy to the peasants and set up village libraries.

The person whose ideas most provoked students to take a critical look at society was probably Jit Phumisak who used his phenomenal inquisitiveness and scholastic talent to dissect Thai society. Jit, who would be in his 50's now if he hadn't been executed in Sarit's days, wrote a number of books, the most devastating to the establishment was "The Face of Thai Feudalism".

In the meantime, there was some heavy-duty organisation going on on the Left, but more was going on on the Right. The details are hard to recall (the governor and prime minister have established that). Attempts were made to organise the students and labour with some success, but for sure, anyone trying to organise the peasants was risking death. The murder of Dr. Boonsanong and several rural activists made that clear.

More importantly, the so-called democratically-elected governments couldn't cope and the events in Indochina had Thais really worried. America was not the flavour of the month after April 1975 and was told to end its military presence here.

The writing really went up on the wall when Thanom Kittikachorn did for his aging father what Marcos failed to do for his late mother — return from exile to demonstrate his filial piety before the nation. In this case, it meant coming back as a monk. From a wall poster, I jotted the following quatrain into a sketchbook:

by Joseph DeRienzo



The striped tiger furtively creeps, fierce bandit under saffron clothes, stealthily biting, again and again, aiming to set the stage.

Other big memories of the run-up to the show-down were the Village Scouts — just regular folks who were organised into a very powerful mass movement. Their de-facto anthem was the infernal "Nak Paen Din" about the need to excise "burdens on the land" sung to the schlock pop melody "Butterfly." The most rabid mouthpiece of the Right was Yan-Kroh, the armoured division radio with a colonel D.J.

As October '76 neared, it started getting progressively nastier. Periodically, Thammasat's P.A. system would announce classes were over for the day and to clear out because a column of vocational students (troops of the Right) was bearing down on Thammasat.

The wall poet was spot on, a stage was being set, or literally "situations were being created." It was clear the end was at hand when one of the sensational dailies front-paged pictures of students at Thammasat acting out a murder by rightist goons of two young electricians who had been pasting up leaflets. The papers said a student portraying one of the victims had been made up to look like the crown prince. A

police had seized from his Thammasat mob of village scouts was assembled to protect all that was just and sacred. The same morning, Red-Neck radio announced Thammasat students were roasting dog under the economics faculty. I decided it would NOT be a good day to go to school (My father had once pointed out that I was a foreigner in Thailand, would always be a foreigner and to steer clear of political events at the university). All patriots knew that only Vietnamese eat dog. And very quickly, it was ugly time.

It's hard to believe how Thailand got where it is now from October 6. As of that night, it seemed hopeless. The Thammasat rector, the immensely popular (among students) Dr. Puay was hounded into exile. Thousands of students and some lecturers went to the jungles. People were being rousted and jailed under the anti-communist act. One lecturer was summoned by the Special Branch to explain Marxist literature sat office — turned out it was a book I had lent him on Groucho, Harpo, Chico and Co.

I never expected a happy ending. The aberration of Oct. 6 really put the fear of the Almighty into some very capable and professional police and army officers who quietly set about exorcising the voodoo that allowed October 6 to happen and its



During the vigil to nurture democracy from October '73 to October '76, Thammasat was the focus of a lot of political activity. A student tramples a poster of former premier Thanom Kittikachorn that was intentionally pasted on the sidewalk and Saksan Prasertkul addresses a few students at the Larn Pho, rally-central outside the Arts faculty, December '74.

aftermath to stoke the CPT. This is why the military swells with pride when they talk about success of the 66/23 counter-insurgency programme, where outsiders tend to credit the cut-off of Chinese aid to the CPT as decisive. Thai officers look back to Oct. '76 and remember the place ripping itself apart very capably without any outside help. The polarisation was complete, youth had a choice between radical extremes. It's happening now in Burma in spades.

Most of the student activists of the period are more practically employed now, some lucratively so. The leftist jargon lives, spoken for the most part by Army officers engaged in civic affairs programmes.

Every once in a while, there is an outcry for an accounting and expose of what happened on October 6. I doubt it will ever happen. It was too ugly. Maybe too many people dropped their trogs to want to be reminded of it. **DB**

Hither

Denis Gray wasn't alone On The Trail With Karen Guerrillas. David Butler, John Everingham and Michael Adler slogged right along with him until they got to Mai Pan Le, which they were to climb "using bamboo ladders to scale vertical cliffs and clinging to vines and bamboo on hillsides turned to slick mud by monsoon rains," at which point David Butler turned around and went home.

David, however, waxes lyrical over the trip. Falls out of his chair over the fact that Karen President Bo Mya is a 7-Day Adventist who forbids the sale of alcohol in all Karen territory under his control, resulting in a night *without alcohol* for no less than four foreign correspondents! And he exults that there are now two borders. "Before," he says, "when ever a correspondent went to the border, it meant Aranyprathet, but now it can also mean Mae Sot!"

Denis came back to Bangkok to write fabulous stories datelined Mae Tah Waw and Manerplaw, Burma, and head for Sukhothai. John Everingham came back to steal the cover of Asiaweek, pick up his parents and head for Nepal. As DATELINE went to press, they were trekking in the Himalayas. John's parents, both in their sixties, are of sturdy stuff.

Michael Adler came back to repack the duffel and head for Vientiane to cover the provincial elections. Philip Smucker, Jeremy Wagstaff & Terry McCarthy went, too. Philip reports that on a guided tour, courtesy of the press department, the four guys were taken to visit a garment factory. When they walked in, all the girls stood up and clapped.

Headly stuff. But when the guys left, the girls all stood up and clapped again. ??? Not so headly.

Mary Kay Magistad, freelance for the Boston Globe, went to the border to find out why the Khmer Rouge refugees are disappearing from the camps and where they are going. She found that the Khmer Rouge are moving them out, to get them away from Western influence! Mary Kay is currently on temporary with the Club, but she's staying on.

Nick Williams was seen checking out the cuttlefish program in Saigon not long ago. Japan is their market, and it's a big one. Then he went to Indonesia to see about Jamu, the herbal health & beauty tonic that EVERYBODY drinks. Swears by it.

UPI's Sutin Wannabovorn caught a ride down to Phipun with Military Chief of Staff Gen. Sunthorn Kongsompong. At Khiriwong Village 30 houses were buried, but at Khatun 340 houses, a school, and a temple were buried, 80 bodies could not be identified, and according to the village head man, at least 400 people were still under the mud. Sutin said 300 people were jammed into a relief center, and helicopter drops of food and medical supplies were badly organized.

Many months ago, Dominic Faulder became Bureau Chief of his own Bangkok Bureau, and the joint is jumping. Freelancers are subscribing in droves, and if you want the scoops, that's where to get 'em. The service includes taking & sending messages, telexes, phone calls, filing copy, etc. We're not saying it's efficient, mind you, but it's bustling.

FOCUS by Tamerlane

Yonder



Denils, Michael & David on the trail (John on camera)



Denis at the summit of Mai Pan Le



Nick at the Squid Factory



Denis & Michael on the ridge



David Hatcher as FCCT Prez

From the How-old-is-this-news Department, we learn that Paul Lockyer resigned from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and is now with Gary Burns on TV Channel 9 in Sydney. The word is, he might come up to Bangkok in January with a shooting crew, and might take a suite at the Dusit Thani Hotel. In which case, we might get to see him!

Paul is one of the very few people in the world who can play the spoon. Many years ago, he gave a spoon concert at the Club, and we will coax for a repeat performance. TGIF with live music by Paul Lockyer on the spoon.

Latest news from Dave Hatcher in Washington, D.C., is that he took a look at himself and decided he wasn't really doing what he wanted, so he quit and entered a new field altogether. At the time we heard from him, he was getting ready to launch a newsletter from Washington on Asian business and economic opportunities, and the first issue was to come out just after the US elections. David knows he is taking a big gamble, but says he is excited (and scared). Well, if anybody can make another darn newsletter work, it's David. He is, after all, a West Point grad and he still wears the ring.

Barbara Crossette has always been a heavy-output writer, but India has lit her fire. She is getting one and sometimes two stories in the New York Times every day. That means lots of very hard work but also, lots of outstanding recognition. Nice going, Barbara.

Up in Seoul, on the other hand,

the dashing young Bureau Chief for Far Eastern Economic Review, John McBeth by name, no sooner got the hang of kimchee, tear gas, and students, than he received notice he was being transferred to Manila. He will be making the move in March, and it could well be the right move. John has always been big on military stuff, so what's on the slate for Manila? Meantime, FEER's roving Chief Correspondent Rodney Tasker is over there keeping an eye on things until John arrives.

Not much has been happening down Singapore way since Rodney was turned back at the airport, other than the emergence of an adage coined by Lee Kwan Yew that could become famous, i.e., "We have nothing to fear but FEER itself."

The Paul Blackburn saga is interesting. Paul's introduction to the Land of Smiles was a several-year stint in the de facto capital of Isan, Khon Kaen, where he learned to speak fluent Thai with a northeastern accent.

He then rotated back to Washington for a longish term before returning to Bangkok to spend four happy years as Director of USIS. The Thai staff at USIS marvel over Paul's fluency in their language.

So where is he now? He is working in Washington, D.C., as Area Director, Office of African Affairs. And there you have it.

If anyone would like to communicate with Paul, his address is:

Mr. Paul Blackburn,
Director, Office of African Affairs,
U.S. Information Agency,
301 4th Street S.W.,
Washington, D.C. 20547. **DB**

CLOSE CALLS... IN THE LINE OF DUTY

Call it what you will — flirting with disaster, a close call, a date with Mr. D — people in all professions will recount for you hair-raising brushes with their Maker.

For journalists, it is expected. Along with the low pay and cheap accommodations, there are, of course, cheap thrills: getting shot at by the Khmer Rouge; chased by a wild elephant; pummeled with bricks or swept down a raging stream without a life raft.

Local correspondents recently — reluctantly — agreed to tell DATELINE BANGKOK about their close calls in the line of duty. From our DATELINE survey, we learned:

1) that by far the riskiest span in any local correspondent's career is the three hours it takes to fly Air Vietnam to Hanoi and then to Ho Chi Minh City (see photo of recent Air Vietnam disaster); and

2) that some of our correspondents have an enigmatic impulse that makes them crave gunfire and rioting masses while others prefer sitting riverside at the Oriental.

Here are a few of the personal accounts (All copyrights have been surrendered to DATELINE):

NORMAN BOTTORFF, ABC correspondent: Norman's test of nerves came in 1973 when, as a soundman, he "reluctantly tagged along connected with a number of cables to a camera."

Standing on the second floor balcony of the Royal Hotel, Norman witnessed the bloodletting as ultra-rightists quelled radical dissent. When troops opened fire to disperse students, bullets sprayed a few inches above Norman's head.

Then in 1976, Norman was back at the Royal Hotel for more action. This time, he ventured inside the Thammasat campus, carrying 15 rolls of film. He was with Joe Lee, a Korean reporter, also with ABC (who lost his leg in South Thailand years later while filming a Communist ambush). Students began pelting the two journalists with rocks. Numerous beatings occurred and as night fell, rightists started hanging people from trees.

Later, as Norman retreated to his car with footage, a student nabbed his tape recorder and fled. "I started yelling 'kamoy, kamoy,'" said Norman. "They pounced on him and began kicking. I walked over and picked up the tape recorder." (After which he broke into sympathetic tears for the thief.)

That same day, students were still fighting out front of an auditorium and Joe Lee insisted that Norman come along and do the sound. Military personnel lobbed a hand grenade at the rioting students and "7 or 8 of them were killed." Fortunately, Norman was again just out of the line of fire.



For **JOE DERIENZO**, Reuters, a memorable close call came on the Kampuchean border when heavy shelling interrupted a casual reporting stint. Bangkok correspondents, including our Club president, piled out of a bus into a ditch. "We had faith in the accuracy of the Vietnamese."

Club Prez **YULI** (which in Indonesian means "fearless babe") **ISMARTONO** of Tempo dove into a ditch with Tony Davis, hitting the ground at about the same time as the Thais screamed "Untarai! Untarai!" (Dangerous!) Yuli stood up for a moment and a bullet whizzed between her legs so she decided to get back down, Tony not being such a bad ditch partner after all.

Nerve-racked after hours of endless reporting, Joe D. fell asleep at the wheel when driving back to file his story and nearly ended up on the M.I.A. count.

ROBERT KARNIOL, Jane's, may have the definitive adventure tale from Kampuchea in recent years. About two years ago, he decided it would be worthwhile to take a stroll in with K.P.N.L.F. rebels. Robert ended up wishing he was more adept at "dum nam" (rice planting or diving underwater) in the rice paddy. Fortunately, Robert escaped in one piece, thanks to the Khmer Rouge. His Australian mate was less fortunate — shot in the armpit, he slumped back to Bangkok and hasn't been heard from since.

NICK WILLIAMS, L.A. Times — Seoul, Korea, (Nothing like the gang warfare Nick was involved in walking home with his lunch pail from his L.A. editing job):

Having fled into the nearest police station courtyard, Nick found himself ducking bricks in a gas mask for one "uncountable minute" as he stood behind a car. The car was "dimpled" as the accomplished editor describes it.

"They weren't firing at anyone else. They probably thought we were cops." (Or some Alien being from the planet of L.A., there being no South Koreans who walk like John Wayne and look like E.T.) "Other than that, it was flying Air Vietnam."

TONY DAVIS, Asiaweek: Taking dirt bikes through Afghanistan, Tony and a few fellow holiday-makers decided they might be entering "no man's land." Tony, getting a whiff of the Ruskies, wisely stopped and let his fellow bikers ride ahead. Watching from a distance, Tony saw Russian copter "gunships" swoop down from the sky (Sylvester only got to make a movie about it) and open fire on his friends. Their motorcycles were soon being put aboard a ship as cargo bound for Siberia.

PHILIPPE DECAUX, French National TV TF1, on the Kampuchean border: "Walking with a gun in my ribs back to Khmer Rouge headquarters" and finding out that he had just walked through minefields! (Nearly had cardiac arrest laughing at anyone stupid enough to take a wild French journalist into custody. Philippe didn't understand what they were saying when they mentioned "pate de fois gras correspondent.")

DOMINIC FAULDER, Travelnews Asia: "Running from a 'white' elephant in heat at the Royal Stables and then, hiding behind the goalposts of a soccer field." **DB**

A First-Person Report

by UPI Correspondent Paul Wedel

NEW DELHI, Nov. 1, 1984 — Six young men were pushing a white, old-fashioned Indian car. It might simply have broken down, as they often do. But then, one man swings an iron rod, smashing in the window. Others gather at the rear near the petrol tank. There is a whoosh and they jump back from the flames that engulf the back of the car. As I drove through the city, more and more cars burned on the littered streets.

Outside the Rakabganj Sikh temple in the centre of the city, the crowd was larger, howling with hatred at the small distant figures of Sikhs hiding in the temple.

A quick crack of automatic gunfire from within the brick walls of the temple compound sent them running in fear and excitement. When the shots died, the men screamed their hatred and their exultation at having trapped something dangerous.

To the rear of the temple, a much smaller crowd of about 50 men set fire to a temple outbuilding. They hurled stones and chunks of pavement senselessly into the flames. Most of the men were in their 20s, dressed in rough, simple pants and shirts or grimy white Indian loin cloths.

At first, they paid no attention as I photographed them. Then a short, heavy-set man with a moustache ran at me, screaming. He grabbed at my camera and we had a brief tug-of-war until others joined him, ripping at my watch, my wallet, my shoulder bag of camera equipment, my glasses. Two of them waved twisted iron rods at me

as I tried to retreat to a distant line of riot police.

Others put themselves between me and the furious men. "You go, you go now, you should not be here," one told me. Another ran back to me with my twisted watch and apoligised. "Don't hate them, everything is crazy now."

In front of the temple, a long line of tan-clad police with five-foot-long clubs held back a jeering crowd. In front of the gate, something dark and twisted was smoking. I walked closer — it was the blackened body of a man lying on his back with his knees propped up and an iron stake protruding grotesquely from his neck. A man in the crowd told me he had fallen in a scuffle between Hindus and Sikhs. He had been beaten, doused with kerosene and set afire.

Trucks full of regular army troops in their broad flat steel helmets pulled into the streets around the temple and the energy of the crowd shifted.

As the police gained control, many of the men began slipping sullenly off into side streets, looking for something to destroy. Flames crackled from a taxi stand and two blackened taxis beside it. "A Sardarji (Sikh) is the owner," my driver told me.

The yelling men would press into the police lines towards the temple until an officer decided they had gone too far. Then the police would swing their long clubs at the legs of the pressing crowd, sending them swirling into sudden, scampering retreat. **DB**

AN INDIAN DACOIT

by Karen Schur Narula

In its heyday, Jaisalmer was a strategic trade centre, absorbing wealth from the caravans which passed on their way to and from the Middle East and Central Asia. Merchants and townspeople prospered, building magnificent shops and mansions, many exquisitely carved. Jaisalmer and its environs knew great wealth. And where the wealthy are, there are usually those well-skilled in the art of inducing them to share their bounty. Like other towns on the great caravan routes, over the years Jaisalmer gradually fell into economic decline. Not to be daunted, the dacoits of the surrounding countryside sucked in their belts somewhat and continued plying their craft.

Karna Ram Bhil was heir to that metier, if not by blood then certainly by tradition. When I first came across him, on a dusty Jaisalmer street, it was obvious that here was a man who believed in himself. And made sure everyone else did, too. The men grouped around the giant all seemed hunched, and in a land where physical proximity is inherent in most communication, it was apparent that none of them dared reach through the aura of power radiating from him to touch his arm, squeeze his hand. And in a region where mustaches are luxuriant and coifed with pride, here was a specimen spun into coils, thick black spirals on either side of fiercely-chiseled features.

When finally we met, face to face in the icy reception room of Jaisal Castle in the heart of the fortress, his reputation had already pre-

ceded him. Now he stood in the doorway, burning eyes moving over those of us who had gathered to meet Jaisalmer's famous outlaw in a gaze of frank interest and amused disdain. We in turn examined Karna Ram Bhil in his baggy salwar and torn shirt, a woolen shawl piled, like a folded carpet, atop broad shoulders. Rings covered his left hand and by his right side hung a nasty-looking sword.

It was apparent that a strange current was rippling through the room, and I was reminded of tales of the enigmatic Rasputin, whose effect on converts was often said to be overpowering. The faint crackling in the background could have been flames from the fire in the courtyard, where our stuffed sheep dinner was roasting on a spit, just as well as hairs rising on end. Attention was rapt as Karna Ram Bhil began to speak.

"For me, the call did not come until I was a young man with a wife and three children," he told us in rasping Hindi interspersed with the local language. "Why did I go? I already had twenty milk cows." But living as he did on the fringes of the desert, about fifty kilometres from Jaisalmer, he was restless. Telling his family, "You eat and drink the butter and milk, I'm going to be a dacoit," he took to the sand dunes.

An irresistible force seemed to compel him. "If Karna Ram Bhil had not become a daku, his name would not have become so famous. If I had stayed at home with my cows, you would never have heard of me," he said truthfully. "It is fate, not man, that decides what man should do."

For two decades, he was the terror of the border area. The sand dunes provided perfect hiding places, and it was to these that he and his passel of bandits would retreat after robbing travellers and their villages. Coming across a wealthy man's home, they would ransack the place

for gold and silver and occasionally kidnap a son if the former was insufficient.

As his reign of terror increased, so did the price on Karna Ram's head. Indeed, an offer for him—dead or alive and the equivalent of U.S.\$10,000, along with two maidens—was still valid when we spoke. His enemies were many, all waiting for him to step out of the sanctuary of Jaisalmer. How many people had he killed?

His laugh was luxuriantly full-throated; he was clearly enjoying himself. His eyes glinted as they moved, rather mischievously, over the women in the room. "I was caught for two."

On the first occasion, he was sentenced to fifteen years. The time passed comfortably as he was served generous portions of milk, meat and eggs. His reputation in mind, the prison wardens treated him well. Nevertheless, not long into the sentence, Karna Ram escaped, breaking down the cell walls with his bare hands. Life continued as before, a little marauding here, some ransoming there, until he was caught again. "This time, I was released after just four years."

While the authorities had since accepted the surrender of his weapons, and he was safe within, lawless enemies were lurking about. Karna Ram shrugged. "What's done is done. At home now, I dance with poisonous black snakes around my neck. They don't bite me." He was silent for some moments. "I'm thinking of taking another wife soon," he mused, "but this time I want a feringhi. Maybe one from Paris—I hear they've got fire in their souls—or wherever." He caught the startled deer looks of the women as this was translated, the suddenly stiff-backed postures of the men, and his guffaw ricocheted off the cold stone walls like bullets in a silent hall.

"Let me play my music for you," he said, his voice soothing now. From out of an embroidered carpet bag, he took a slender metal pipe, a handcrafted instrument never before seen. Outside, the moon had risen over the smokey courtyard of Jaisal Castle, and an icy winter draft blew through the cloth curtains atop the open windows, sweeping into the room and carrying out with it again the gut-tingling hum of Karna Ram's voice blended with the weird rasp of the pipe.

He sat on the stone floor, eyes shut, immersed in his music. We were free to examine the portrait he presented. No doubt he was a mustachioed scoundrel who would have robbed us blind had he met us in the open desert. He had said as much. Karna Ram was savage and unrepentant, a boasting murderer to boot. And yet. There was no denying a certain nobility, that of a man who makes and lives by his own rules. He glowed with vitality, was possessed of a pervasive charm that was hard to deny.

In the desert and villages around Jaisalmer, men waited for him to cross an invisible border of blood. He was free to leave the town limits but for his mustache, an instant giveaway. Yet he swore he would never cut off its five feet and eight inches. In Jaisalmer, he had become a living legend, a performer who made good money by posing for foreign travellers. Karna Ram was back in prison but this time there would be no escape.

One of these days, I might drop in on Jaisalmer, to climb the heights of the fort once more, casually enquire how Karna Ram is faring. Perhaps he is still peddling his past; perhaps he has already met his final enemy. Perhaps he and a French wench have opened a creperie in the Jaisalmer bazaar—after all, these days all sorts of characters are in the restaurant business. **DB**



Many travellers to India would agree that at least a snippet of its singularity are the convoluted, confabulating, sometimes fathomless characters one meets along the way. The locals are also not devoid of appeal. In some two dozen visits to India, one of those who stands out fondly in my memory is Karna Ram Bhil—murdering bandit, lover of spirited women and, perhaps, a figure of some tragic dimensions.

In the far western region of Ra-

jasthan, perched on the edge of the scrubland before the Thar Desert becomes a swell of sand hills, pale and pure, spilling out beyond the windswept border with Pakistan, lies the fortress town of Jaisalmer. Its walls, houses and narrow streets glow with the same dull gold as the surrounding land. The fort itself dominates Jaisalmer, towering above its citizens and their camels with stone block might, confirming its invincibility throughout eight centuries of princely warfare.

HAS IT BEEN ALMOST 20 YEARS IN THAILAND?

by Elizabeth Barnabas

What brought me to Thailand? Thai International! What kept me in Thailand? Destiny!

I landed on Thai soil in June 1969, obsessed with my insatiable infatuation for fantasy and freedom.

The Land of the Free had a fantasia I had to experience, and it had something to do with dainty Siamese maidens with super-long fingernails and the fascination of legends, and a movie called "The King and I."

After a week's stay in Bangkok, just as I was tossing the last Thai souvenir for my colleagues at Radio/TV Malaysia into my suitcase, the phone rang in my hotel room. It changed my entire life.

It was Mrs. Alisara Weera-boonchai, managing director of HSA Radio Bangkok. "I have an excellent job for you," she said, "but I need an immediate reply as you have to start working tomorrow."

I don't recall saying yes, but somebody did. That little old devil called "Destiny."

How did I manage to get around in a bustling city, armed with three expressions of fluent Thai, "Sawasdi kha," "Pai nai kha?" and "Khawb khun kha." The same way I learnt how to swim when I was a child. I leaned over to pick a flower and fell into the deep end of the pool. I drank a lot of chlorinated water... but I learnt how to swim.

They say if you survive six months of fast-paced Bangkok city life, it will grow on you. I didn't be-

lieve it. I refused to believe it. I wanted to go home...and desperately.

Coming from the serendipity of Penang Island, needless to say, city life was to me what a dolphin must feel like, trapped in a shallow reef, waiting for the tide to come in so it can swim out into the great big ocean.

After six hectic months of dashing off to work at the army station in Bangsue, endless cocktail parties and making new acquaintances, Mrs. Alisara said to me, "Dry your tears. Take two weeks' leave and...I'll keep your job open for you when you return."

Things had not changed when I got back home. Rather, I had changed. I had developed a kind of hyper-restlessness which was not compatible with the placid pattern of my hometown. There was a monumental ambition inside of me, and although I could not put my finger on it then, I realised that Bangkok had grown on me. There were things to do, which would lead to bigger things. Bangkok was calling me.

When the aircraft hit the first bump on Don Muang runway, I felt I was home.

Bangkok, with its influx of foreign expertise and entrepreneurial talent, became my moving university. When English radio went on the blink around 1975, I slipped into another executive job, and another and another...! Old timers meet me today and tell me I changed jobs faster than they changed their socks. Well almost...but changing jobs is the answer to boredom and stagnation.

Almost two decades in Thailand has got me accustomed to coup d'etats, how to cope with emergency floods (it wasn't fun when my car drowned in one), signing legal documents in a language I do not read, and being whisked off by my faithful agent on tedious trips to Immigration, the Labour Department, the Revenue Department.

I've learned the technique of walking on Bangkok pavements with one eye up and one eye down, and when a tumble is inevitable with high-heeled shoes, I have a knack now of falling on all four limbs. I get up with a few nasty bruises but not a broken leg or back.

Being a respected Thai resident means having to pay a 1,000 baht exit tax whenever I leave the country, getting a re-entry visa, re-entry permit, tax clearance (which expires after two weeks), plus a guarantee bond that I will return...to pay my debts. My debt to Thailand has yet to be paid...to a country that has welcomed me with wide, open arms and has accepted me into their society...purely on face value. I will endeavour to pay that debt when the time comes.

The Thais keep asking me why I cannot converse in their language after nearly 20 years. In the same way I cannot sing one line without going off-key, I find it safer not to attempt to speak a tonal language. Calling a Thai woman "devil" instead of "sister" is not very amusing...especially to my Thai sisters, who are still getting used to my brand of odd "farang" humour.

It is such a compliment when I am asked constantly if I am Thai, and the disappointed response when I reveal I am not. It is hard to explain that although I feel very much part of the Thai nation and Thailand, there will come a time when the phone will ring...and it will be time for me to leave, unexpectedly, the same way I was told to stay. **DB**



MOVING. The American-managed Transpo provides Thailand's only total Moving Service.

Which is characterized by a professionalism born of multi-million-mile experience.

Our Household Division regularly, economically handles smooth worldwide door-to-door moves for major multi-national companies and diplomatic organizations.

Our IATA-approved Air Freight Division maintains its own office near Bangkok's Don Muang International Airport and is the recognized leader in handling and forwarding imports and exports for Thailand's electronics industry.

Our Sea Cargo/Brokerage Division regularly manages import and export cargoes of up to 120 tons per piece, is a major handler of displays and exhibitions, and provides a

vital document storage and retrieval service for international companies and banks.

And our Housing Division helps clients locate choice houses, apartments and offices throughout metropolitan Bangkok.

Whatever your moving requirements, contact Bill Reinsch or Jim Yarbrough at Transpo.

They have all the details on Thailand's only total Moving Service.



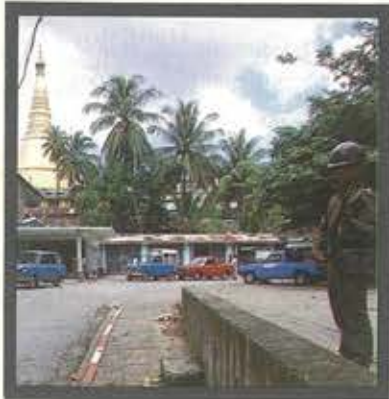
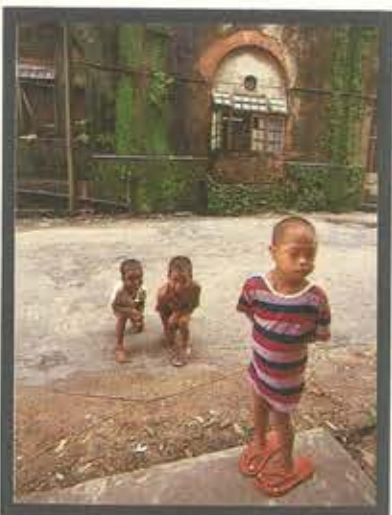
TRANSCO INTERNATIONAL LTD.
134/31 Soi Athakrabi 3, Rama IV Road,
Bangkok 10110, Thailand
Tel: 259-0116, 258-1110
Telex: TH 82915
FAX: (662) 258-6555, 258-6558

With Transpo, you can be sure.

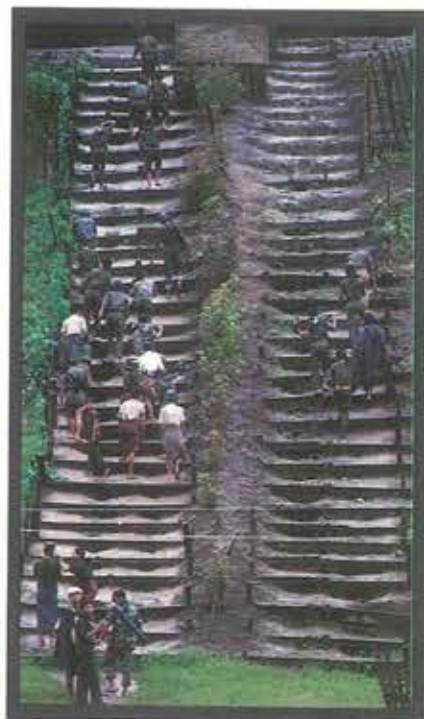


Burma Offcuts

BUREAU BANGKOK



Dominic Faulder (above & left);
Manit Sriwanichphoom (right)



HAS IT BEEN 20 YEARS SINCE I LEFT BANGKOK?

by Ellen Teper Lochaya

All I have to do is look around me to know I've been away from Bangkok for 20 years! There's so much more of everything... except klongs and trees which I sorely miss. Lumpini Park is perhaps more beautiful, particularly so when viewed from the FCCT on the top floor of a hotel that didn't exist then; nothing over five stories did.

New Petchburi Road was just being concrete-d when I left and had nothing more than a G.I. hotel or two and perhaps one or two massage parlors. Stepping into Don Muang airport — then open-aired with a fabulous restaurant and a wide terrace where you could overlook the tarmac and wave to your Aunt Mary as she disembarked, carrying her heavy fur coat (It was Christmas 1964 and at 60+, she was travelling 'round the world; she had plenty of cold places yet to visit) — was like stepping into a United States Army camp...uniforms everywhere. Visitors arriving were shocked at the "closeness" of the war, but we in Bangkok barely felt its danger in those days, except for the soldiers and the airplanes, of course.

Bangkok's gotten hotter. Tall buildings can do that to a "tropical" city. So can asphalt and concrete...and Bangkok now has miles of the stuff. I'm glad they're installing bamboo trees down the length of Sathorn Road but I miss the huge trees that were there, overhanging the klong without benefit of concrete buttressing. The potted trees will at least give all the stalled drivers something green to look at.

For some reason, I can't remember there being any traffic

lights in those days (but there must have been). I can remember being able to cross Sukhumvit, though! Now you have to keep an eye out for motorcycles (expletive deleted), buses (no longer made of wood and too low for a "farang" to stand in), tour buses (there weren't any then — and certainly not carrying hundreds of Japanese tourists) and millions of cars. You could usually out-run whatever traffic was headed your way and there weren't any of those Machu Picchu-like stairways to climb to get to the other side.

In those days, as a Peace Corps Volunteer, I made 1,500 baht a month! Now they make 5,000 with a differential for Bangkok — we didn't get one. After teaching at Thammasat in Thailand's first Liberal Arts Department, I taught at AUA. They didn't have air-conditioning or tennis courts then. When I started working at U.S. News & World Report as a "third-party national" at 5,000 baht per month, I thought I was rich!

The Little Home Bakery was in Gaysorn then, the only place in town with hamburgers and milk shakes. Nick's Number One was the in-place for expensive "farang" food; for entertainment, the Orchid Room, long since gone from Gaysorn (Rajaprasong) where Narcising Aguilar sang "Moon River" and "Yellow Bird," a veritable one-man band. The only Thai restaurant was D'Jit Pochana on Sukhumvit and there was a lovely Chinese restaurant on a boat in Lumpini Park.

My first home after I was married was off Soi 71, then a narrow, two-lane strip of concrete running through fields — like Topsy, "it just

grewed." Our little lane only had four houses on it; I'd never find it now.

The night I gave birth to my son Ned, there had been a monsoon downpour. When I realized the time to get to the hospital was NOW, our car wouldn't start — the engine had been inundated by the rain! So we walked out the wooden planking which flanked our fence, across a small field and down a clay road until we reached the concrete lane leading into Soi Ekamai. I've always wondered if anyone was looking out their window at 2 AM that night; we must have made a strange sight, a voluminous "mem" stopping to pant every five minutes while her Thai husband stared at his watch (He was timing the contractions). Not even a dog barked!

Somehow, we found a taxi on Sukhumvit whose pilot drove like a bat out of hell (See? Things haven't changed all that much!) until he realized we weren't kidding about my becoming a mother any moment; then, he drove like he was carrying a crate of eggs!

In the old days, very few cars (or homes) had air-conditioners. You can imagine what tempers would be like if that were still true! In those days, very few taxis had them and even fewer drivers wore shoes. Now, I relish the air conditioning, even when it's turned up too high. How else would one survive a cross-town trip that used to take 15 minutes (Soi 23 Sukhumvit to Thammasat University) and now takes an hour or more in a city that "progress" has turned into an oven?

Twenty-five years ago, Air France and a few other airlines abut-

ted the offices of AP, Time and U.S. News & World Report, a number of business firms and a few restaurants — like Mizu's Kitchen — on of all streets, PATPONG. There were no sleazy bars on it then; still, it attracted the then-enormous international press corps, even without them.

In those days, there were no big ad agencies and therefore, no Visit Thailand campaign. Tourists were few and far between and therefore, so were the vendors of all those fake watches and denim clothing. You could actually maneuver Silom Road with ease as a pedestrian, assailed by nothing more than the wonderful aroma of food!

You couldn't get Northeastern food anywhere but near the Boxing Stadium. It was an evening's event just to go out for *gai yang* and *som tom* — now, there are restaurants all over town specializing in *aharn isarn* and every second vendor is mashing lovely garlic buds for *som tom*. That's a change I'm thrilled about!

Don't be tempted to complain about today's phone system. In those days, making an overseas call meant a trip to the Post Office on New Road. And busy signals simply meant the lines were down. The current motorcycle-messenger service of today sprang up as a solution to the less-than-adequate postal and telephone systems and with any luck, the modern fax will lower their shrill, roaring ranks one day soon!

Malaria was a major problem then, even in Bangkok, and water was positively shunned by intelligent citizens unless they were absolutely sure it had been boiled and/or filtered. It was in those days that Maxine North started North Star's Polaris Water which quickly became the "in" drink. Restaurants in those days all served water tinted with tea so you'd know it had been boiled, though you couldn't verify what the ice was made from; now, only a few

shops serve it; almost all served bottled water.

Speaking of restaurants again, the Carlton on Silom was one of the few farang ones with dancing, too. You could even get New Zealand lamb there (it was mutton from the smell that I remember) and Tony Aguilar, Narcing's younger brother, entertained, with his fantastic jazz band. The first Japanese restaurant, a tempura bar, opened shortly before I left, '67, maybe late-'66, and walking down Thaniya Street now is a laugh. Almost every sign is in Japanese!

Talad Nud (Sunday Market) spread across Sanam Luang every weekend with lovely breezes to cool you as you shopped or ate — a far pleasanter experience than the heat of Chatuchak Park's crowded stalls (though that is changing even as I write).

Movies were big then (uncensored, too) and you could almost see them through the lines of Thai and Chinese translations. You were certain to be the only one in the audience laughing at a joke that had been mis-translated or which just didn't translate into Thai humor. Now everyone's huddled around their video machine, Thai and farang alike!

Today, despite some cultural differences in humor, the Thais are laughing at the same time as farang viewers. That's another phenomena

May 14, '67, Don Muang — Last day in Thailand. The child on my lap hasn't stopped travelling. Ned's now 23 and on leave from Yale, attending Universite de Paris III. The attractive woman at right is my mother-in-law, Khunying Samarng Kashetra—she'll be 83 in January. Happy birthday, Mother! Many more!

I've seen since I returned — the incredible number of people who speak good English (and other languages) twenty-odd years later!

Speaking Thai in those days was not only a good thing to do from a cultural aspect; it was a downright necessity if you wanted to eat, go anywhere, talk with anyone. I am amazed and delighted to see how proficient people have become in a language that isn't their own, although I must admit, it's not helping me to regain my earlier fluency in Thai very quickly.

So much has changed. The diesel fumes and soot are more overwhelming; the noise level has risen tremendously (I'll bet the motorcycles and amplifier systems here have caused hearing impairments in 80% of the populace!) — but one thing sure hasn't — the Thai smile! To me, it's the most glorious sight on earth and the reason I came back after 20 years away!

It's not a smile that's dumbly affixed, permanently glued to one's face. It's a sudden smile that springs from delight at a good joke, the sight of a friend; it's a smile that ameliorates the fact that someone just bumped into you on the street; it's a smile, on hearing bad news, that says: "I don't know what to say but I want you to know that I care"; it's a smile that you can't help but return. And so I did — return, that is! **DB**



Introducing the new Volvo 760. Where logic meets luxury.



Under the hood is a new turbo intercooled, fuel injected, 2.3 litre, 180 HP engine. That's perhaps more important to your driver than yourself.

What you may find more important is the new Multi-link rear suspension that provides greater passenger comfort — front and rear.

But beyond creature comforts, there is the comforting feeling that this is a Volvo — legendary for its safety features. One of the most remarkable of these is the ABS Anti-lock braking system that is standard on the new 760. This sophisticated system keeps your car under control, even in panic stops, in all kinds of road and weather conditions.

There is a long list of logical reasons why the new 760 is the finest Volvo ever and the perfect choice for the intelligent driver. But you have to see the new 760 in person to appreciate its elegant design. You have to drive one to discover its extraordinary roadability.

After you've experienced the Volvo 760, you may find that your choice is not only logical. It's emotional.

VOLVO

FOR ALL THE RIGHT REASONS. AND EMOTIONS.