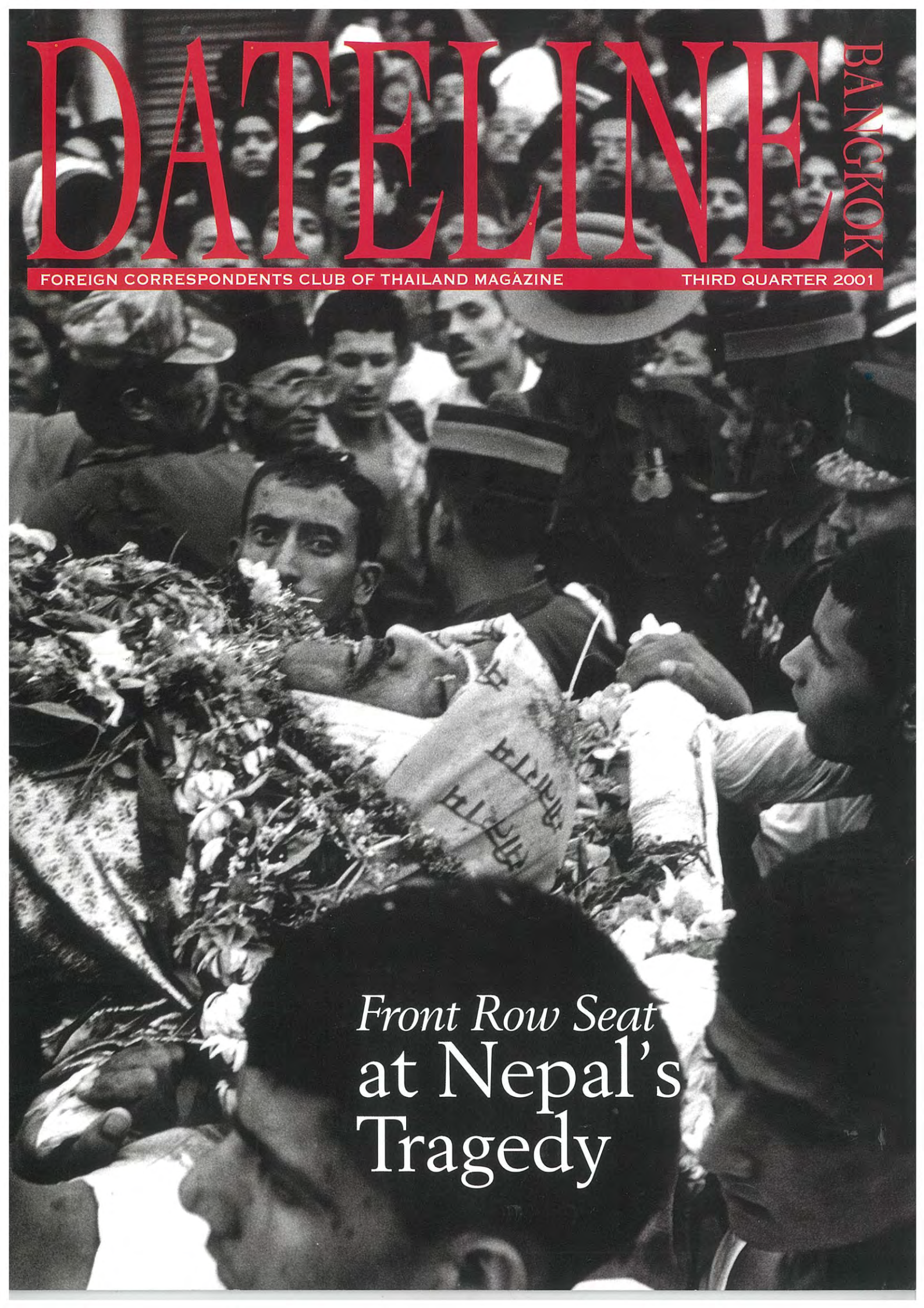


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THIRD QUARTER 2001

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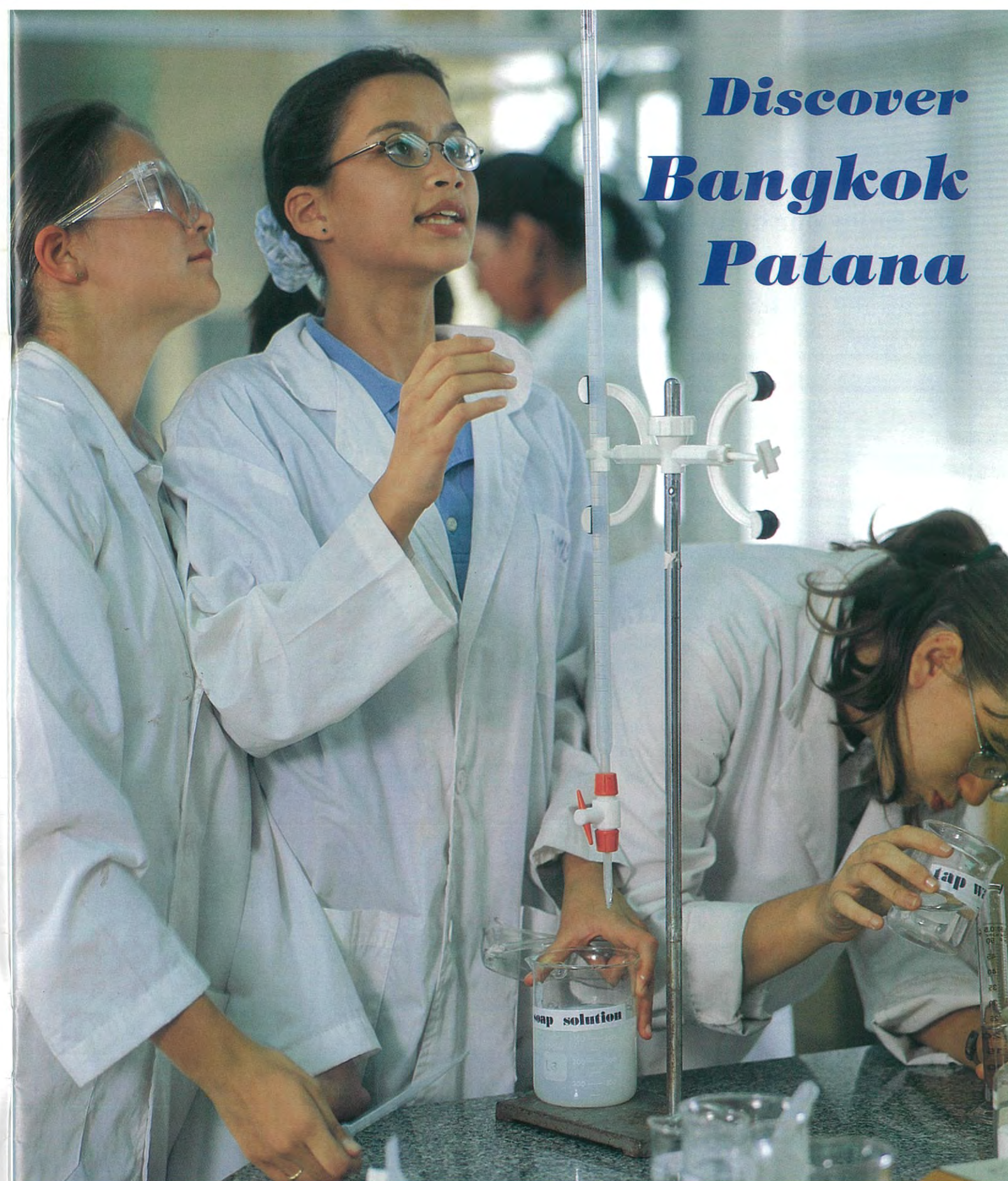
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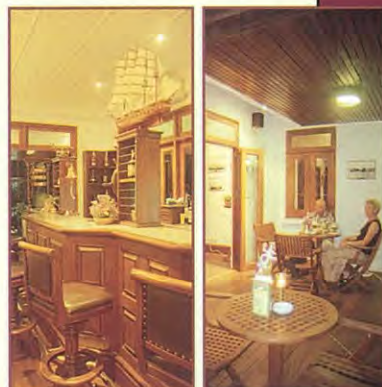
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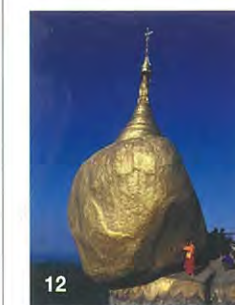
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Join Us

You don't have to be foreign and you don't need to be a correspondent to become a member of the Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand. Membership has its privileges: The club frequently hosts breaking news panel discussions with the leaders of government, private sector and non-governmental organizations. Each month the club exhibits work from a different photographer or artist, and the last Friday of each month there is live jazz music at the bar. Each member also gets a subscription to this magazine for absolutely free. So why aren't you a member? Don't forget that the Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand is one of Bangkok's most prestigious addresses for press conferences, social gatherings and product launches. The club is outfitted with all the latest techno-gizmos, from wireless microphones to remote control television cameras, and can provide all types of catering, from light snacks to full meals. Impress your guests with the well known hospitality of the Foreign Correspondents Club.

Got a tale to tell?

This is your club's magazine and we welcome letters to the editor, articles, photographs, drawings, poetry or just about anything to help us fill up each issue. Submissions should address journalism or the story behind getting the story. All ideas considered, but please contact Mick Elmore before doing too much work. Submissions are paid for with glory and bar coupons.

Because the land of Tongsal Bay was so pristine and heavenly beautiful when we bought it, we did not dare change anything mother nature has so delicately given us. Instead of cutting down trees to make way for spectacular sea view, we simply blended our Cottage and Beachfront Suites in with the surrounding nature. Not a single tree was downed where our cottages stand. You can still see coconut trees sticking up through the terrace of Chef's Chom Thai Restaurant and some of the suites. In order to enjoy and appreciate the nature of Tongsal Bay, one must be in touch with it. That's the reason why we offer you

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The FCCT programme on the evening of Wednesday, August 15 brought back a note of nostalgia. It also augured well for the club's future, which had been buffeted by a variety of financial and other problems early in the year.

On the panel sat three solid, sensible politicians answering some solid, sensible questions: former Finance Minister Tarrin Nimmanahaeminda, former Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan and former Prime Minister's Office Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva. In front of them, an audience of more than 100 members and guests, eager to hear the three speak and also to toss them questions about Thailand's political and economic future.

Interest in the programme was so great that for a change we didn't have to ask those around the bar to keep their voices down if they didn't want to hear the proceedings.

No matter that the three speakers are leading lights of the opposition Democrat Party. Or that they were deeply critical of the current government's style and substance. They were there, and had been

more than willing effectively to use the FCCT as a vehicle for their party's first post-honeymoon blast at the Thaksin Shinawatra government.

This is what the FCCT is all about, of course, on a totally politically neutral basis, and has been since its inception. People,



not just journalists, join the club to enjoy the privilege of being briefed by the likes of Surin, Tarrin and Abhisit on what is happening behind the scenes of politics, not only in Thailand but often elsewhere in the region. Three months earlier, Prime Minister Thaksin seemed happy to take the FCCT floor before an audience of some 600 to deliver his version of Thailand's destiny.

Politics aside, the club serves up an enticing array of local and regional topics, explained by the main players and observers, as well as interesting visual displays on the walls. This is what the FCCT is here for, as well as being a social meeting place for those who want to keep abreast of the latest, and perhaps meet some interesting characters.

There will be more August 15s to come. It doesn't matter which side is doing the talking, as that Wednesday night showed, the club is a preferred platform for those affecting our lives, one way or another. It was a coming home.

Rodney Tasker

SOI WHISPERS

Financier **George Soros** finally made it to the Club, life via video-conference. He personally was a safe distance away in Hong Kong but past FCCT President **Thomas Crampton** asked if he would visit Bangkok. George said next year. • Speaking of no-shows, Cambodia's Warrior Prince, **Prince Norodom Ranariddh** left Bangkok-based journalist and author **Harish C. Mehta** high and dry at the launch of the book of the same title on September 20. Harish writes about the book on page 18. • And speaking of on-shows and books, turns out one of the photographers in *Requiem*, a collection of Vietnam War era photos by photographers who died during the conflict, is indeed not dead yet. **Tim Page** who with **Horst Faas** put the book together said a book about the photographer from the north is now in the works. Maybe he'll show up at the book launch. • Chasing elephants proved painful for **DPA's Peter Janssen** and freelancer **Mick Elmore** on September 15 when they had an auto accident on the way to an elephant polo match in Hua Hin. Yes, elephant polo, but that's another story. Peter walked away with seven fractured ribs and Mick limped away with no serious injuries. No one in the other car was injured. Despite the fractured ribs Peter is off to Jakarta in October to man the desk there for a couple years. After 20 years in Bangkok Peter said he is ready for a change. For a while anyway. His wife **Suni** will also move to Jakarta with him but the two plan to return to their extended Bangkok tribe after a couple years. • Hawaiian shirt model and **UPI** veteran **John Hail** will move from the **DPA** editing desk to man the bureau in Peter's absence. • The big guy from **VOA**, **Gary Thomas**, left the Bangkok bureau in August after five years covering the region. Although the biggest journalists on site Gary was the only one to seek into O'Smach in late 1997 when **FUNSINPEC's** commander **General Nhek Bun Chhay** held his ground against **Hun Sen's** **CPP** forces just across the Thai border. **VOA** veteran **Scott Bobb** has arrived to take over for Gary who returned to the Washington D.C. bureau. • Freelancer **Karen Emmons** found **Meg Ryan** doesn't always like "People" asking her questions. Ryan was taking a break at the **Regent Chiang Mai** during a visit to film part of an elephant documentary. Karen with her six-year-old son and a friend in tow also took a room at the resort for *People* magazine because Ryan is a big story where ever she goes. After Karen approached Ryan for a comment about Thailand and elephants, the film's producer interrogated her about why she was there. Then just before midnight, the **Regent PR** called and "politely" asked Karen and crew to vacate their room. Right then. Seems elephants are a touchy subject. Karen refused, saying it was too late to take her sleeping six-year-old elsewhere. The **Regent** gave her till early morning to leave, but no chance for breakfast. And then charged her for the night's stay. • *The Australian's* new South-East Asia Correspondent has taken up residence in Bangkok. And **Kimina Lyall** has already joined the FCCT. • **Mary Kay Magistad** zipped through town on her way back to America to work on her book. She and *The Nation* managing editor **Kavi Chongkittavorn** will be neighbours while he studies having won a **Nieman Fellowship** and **Mary Kay** works on her book.





Jose Antonio Martinez the Varig Brazilian Airlines General Manager for Southeast Asia shakes hands with grand prize winner Scott Davis who won the return ticket to Rio.



Latino Night brought representatives from six Central and South American embassies to the FCCT. They included Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Panama and Peru.

The Ambassador from Argentina Carlos F. Garcia.



The Silva brothers provided music.



Hackers swinging

Thanks to the unfailing diplomacy and hard work of Jeremy Colson, the FCCT Golf Society continues to flourish. Meeting on the afternoon of every first Saturday of the month at our new "home" course, Supaphreuk, it usually attracts from two to four flights.

At a recent meeting, it was decided that we would no longer refer to ourselves as "Swingers" because of the word's unfortunate connotations for everyone except possibly Austen Powers. We now call ourselves "Hackers", which better reflects the generally dismal, but nonetheless cheerful,

A hacker in action

standard of play as well as the professional calling some of us claim to have answered. Be warned, the Hackers are in search of both more players and commercial sponsors. We are extremely grateful to Air France which came up with a superb golf bag that was won by Lan Pajasalmi.

Lan has won so many bags in tournaments over the years that she felt it should go to a deserving cause. It was duly donated to the FCCT's chef, Jeff Fehr of Pickle Factory fame (whose old bag should have been cremated on his barbecue years ago).

If you would like to join the Hackers, it's only an e-mail away: Jeremy Colson <jerjc@bigfoot.com>



Deputy Democrat leader Aphisit Wejchachiva gets a laugh out of former finance minister Tarrin Nimmahemmin and moderator Laurent Malespine when the Democrats addressed the FCCT August 15.



Suriyothai director M.C. Chatrichalerm Yukol speaks to some of the audience after he addresses the FCCT on August 29.

Back in the Woods Camping Trip

Members of the FCCT plan to take a group of girls and boys from Father Joe Maier's Human Development Centre for a weekend away again this year.

This is a priceless opportunity for slum children to experience life in the country. Last year photographer Peter Charlesworth, his wife Tik and their two sons Jamie and Thomas graciously opened their home in Rayong. Priceless for the children, but it costs real money.

There is a donation box in the club to pay for this year's and any contributions are welcome.

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Goodbye to Webb's First Drafts

JAKARTA, Aug 9 (AFP) – Few people have the opportunity to read their own obituary, and veteran foreign correspondent Kate Webb, who retired from *Agence France-Presse* this week after a career in journalism spanning four decades, describes the experience as quite unnerving.

The year was 1971 at the height of the Vietnam War, when Webb, aged just 28 and working as the bureau chief for *United Press International (UPI)* in Phnom Penh, was captured by North Vietnamese forces during a battle for the strategic Highway Four.

A woman's body was found a few days later, and Webb was feared to have become another casualty of a conflict which had already claimed so many lives, including those of several friends and colleagues.

retiring as AFP deputy bureau chief in Jakarta -- the city where her foreign correspondent career began as a cadet for the Sydney paper, *the Mirror*, covering the bloody 1966 ouster of Sukarno.

Webb, a New Zealander, has had an uncanny ability to be where the action is and covered most of the events that shaped Asia's modern-day history.

The fall of Saigon, the rise of the Khmer Rouge, the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, the Tamil Tiger rebellion, the "People's Power" ouster of Ferdinand Marcos, the Gulf War, the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the Hong Kong handover, the vote for freedom in East Timor -- few journalists have notched up such an impressive list of stories in their note-books.

her acts of quiet generosity, (she has unofficially adopted several Asian children, paying for their education), and her tireless defence of the vulnerable and oppressed.

A stickler for accuracy and fiercely protective of her staff and their copy, more than one editor has felt the full force of her anger over the years.

On Friday, some 100 hard-bitten hacks, not usually given to such displays of adulation, gathered in Jakarta to pay tribute at a Foreign Correspondents' Club dinner to "Asia's Legend."

But in her speech of thanks, delivered in her distinctive whisper, the unfailingly modest Webb deflected the praise saying it had always been a matter of team work.

Her career is all the more remarkable given that back in the early 1960s, women



*Newsweek's Ron Moreau said:
The evacuation was another bit of history
that Kate covered with her usual brilliance
and flair. Kate can't retire. Without her how
else are historians going to see the real first
draft of history?*

UPI announced her death, and the *New York Times* ran her obituary. But on the day a memorial service was to be held in Australia, where most of Webb's family had moved from their native New Zealand, Webb and five fellow captives walked out of the jungle miraculously freed by their captors after 23 terrifying and exhausting days. The group was met by an amazed Cambodian officer who stared and said: "Miss Webb, you're supposed to be dead."

Reflecting years later on her obit, Webb said: "You feel like going back and arguing with people, and saying you've got me all wrong. But I guess that isn't done."

For Webb it was to become but one episode in a spectacular career which has seen her cheat death, beat the odds and overcome personal tragedy while always getting the story. Now she is bowing out,

Tales of her courage under fire, her contempt for the "suits" and cut-the-crap approach are legendary and have spawned a wealth of Webb folklore among old Asia hands.

There's the time she was almost scalped by a drug-crazed mujahedeen in Kabul and hid on a hotel window ledge for hours while he hunted for her, still clutching a handful of her hair.

Or when she emerged unscathed from the rubble of a rocket attack in Vietnam, dusted herself off and went straight back to work.

Or during the 1975 scramble out of Saigon, when for 24 hours she filed ceaselessly (in the days before mobile phones and laptops) as helicopter after helicopter carrying hundreds of panicked refugees landed on the deck of the USS Blue Ridge.

The tales of her bravery are matched by

were supposed to stay at home, get married and raise the kids.

Webb was the first woman bureau chief to be posted in a war zone and her then foreign editor at UPI took much flak for the decision to appoint her after the world feared she was dead.

Webb has never seen her gender as an issue though -- she was just doing her job. Only later did she come to realise that she had been the inspiration for many young women to follow in her footsteps.

Journalist Ronald Moreau, who covered the exodus from Saigon alongside Webb, wrote in a message to the FCC dinner: "The evacuation was another bit of history that Kate covered with her usual brilliance and flair. Kate can't retire. Without her how else are historians going to see the real first draft of history?"



Paul's Last Vogelization

Paul Vogle, a foreign correspondent legend for his work in Vietnam and a source of inspiration to his colleagues in Bangkok, died on August 6 in his home town of Plymouth, Michigan in the U.S. His Vietnamese wife, Kim, and two of their three children were at his bedside when he finally succumbed to cancer and emphysema. He was buried next to his parents.

Paul was born in Anadarko, Oklahoma, but grew up in Detroit. He began reporting for United Press International in South Vietnam in 1967, following service there as a U.S. Army interpreter and later as a special correspondent for various U.S. radio networks and news organizations.

What set Paul apart from every other journalist I've ever known was his humility. In a profession dominated by ego, Paul's was all but invisible, a trait that one would think would have ingratiated him with the Catholic hierarchy in his salad days as a Jesuit seminarian.

But maybe he was even too humble to be a priest. He seemed genuinely more interested in the people around him than in himself. He was a good listener. In a world of "me me me", Paul was "you you you". "Woh-gun", as he was known to his Thai friends, was "no boon chit."

It took a while to realize that Paul really did not give a damn if a person was a cabinet minister or a peasant. He treated them exactly the same. I first met him in 1976, when he was manning the Bangkok UPI bureau, then under the bureau chiefdom of another foreign correspondent legend, Alan Dawson.

Paul had some good advice for young journalists at that time: Become the expert in one thing. Be the guy everyone must go to in order to learn about that one specialty.

Al Dawson, now the back-page editor of the *Bangkok Post*, recalls Paul's initiation to what would be his lifetime love affair with Southeast Asia, particularly Vietnam:

"This Michigan native came to Vietnam totally by accident, when an army sergeant offered him a language course in 'Annamese'. He was a member of the early U.S. military teams that were authorised by the Geneva accords.

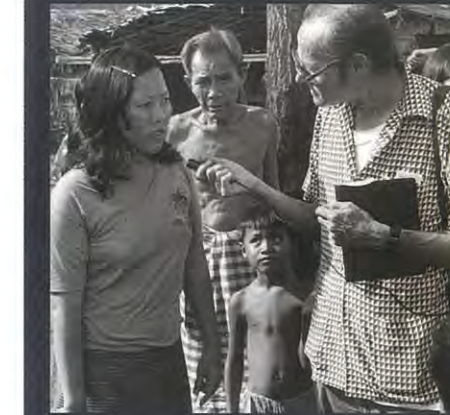
"Paul's professional claim to fame was a magical ability in the Vietnamese lan-

guage, any dialect. He could translate or simultaneously interpret for hours, with calm and aplomb that few professionals can match for their 10-minute stints in a U.N. booth. As a freelancer, he was the man behind many tremendous stories from UPI in Vietnam, more than a few of them carrying my byline.

"But the personal Paul Vogle was a superior person. Paul was the most selfless person I have met. Paul seemed unaware of social, racial, religious or gender divisions.

"Paul will be remembered for his Da Nang freedom flight story. Rightly so."

The American paper *Newsday*, highlighting some of the most memorable stories of the 20th Century, posted the following on its website:



namese unit."

Dawson adds: "Affection for Paul was universal, and all of us who knew him realised and celebrated some of his quirks. Intensely shy -- yes! -- Paul gave his name to a minor and yet recognisable English word: Vogelization, which means a sudden disappearance, even from his own parties.

"Standing in the FCC of Hong Kong one evening two decades ago, I heard one Englishman ask a Chinese colleague: 'Where did John go? He just seemed to Vogelize.'"

Another former UPI colleague, Hong Kong-based Paul Anderson, also recalls the fine art of Vogelization:

"One of my fondest memories of Vogle (if you can call it that) is his Vogle-izing (or however you spell it). You could be

*The passing of
"a kind, gentle and
courageous man"*

Story by: John Hail

"Among the multitude of media reports about the Communist juggernaut, perhaps none captured the terror and chaos spawned by South Vietnam's collapse better than the dispatch filed by Paul Vogle, a United Press International reporter aboard the last evacuation flight from the strategic port of Danang...

"It seemed peaceful enough as we touched down at the airport 370 miles northeast of Saigon," Vogle wrote on March 29, 1975. "Over 1,000 people had been waiting around a quonset hut several hundred yards from where we touched down.

"When the aircraft stopped, however, all hell broke loose.

"Nearly 300 people managed to board, Vogle reported, but only two women and one baby were among them. The rest were armed members of the elite South Viet-

sitting in a bar having a conversation with Vogle, who would excuse himself for a moment, never to return! Asked later what happened to him, he would simply reply, 'Oh, I went home' as if it were the most natural thing to leave without saying goodbye. You'd been Vogle-ized!

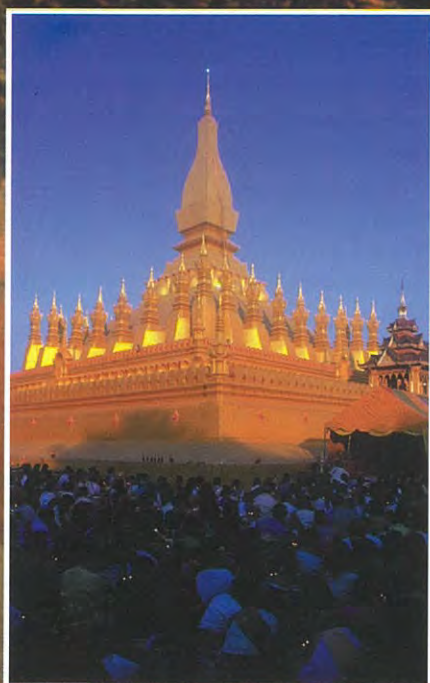
"Paul had made a lifelong impression on anyone lucky enough to spend time with him and he is missed by many. Raise one for Paul. Cheers."

An email message from another giant from UPI's glory days, Leon Daniel, mourned the passing of "a kind, gentle and courageous man".

"I can see him now on the day Saigon fell, calmly providing Al Dawson with an instant translation of the radio broadcast that made possible our FLASH and BULLETIN on the war's end."



Following Stupas in Asia



for a key to the gate, bribe a guard or obtain a permit. Stupas aren't closed on Sundays, or Saturdays or full moon days, in fact they're more dependable than the neighbourhood 7-eleven. You don't have to be Buddhist to approach one, and in even the strictest religious settings they're open to all, regardless of race, nationality, gender or social class.

Some stupas require more effort to reach than others do. For a glimpse of Kyaiktiyo Paya in Myanmar, best seen at dawn, you'll have to climb a mountain at least part way (or hire a sedan chair if you don't mind sharing the religious merit – and a fistful of kyat – with local carriers). Some of the Tibetan chorten pictured in *Buddhist Stupas: The Shape of Perfection* lie several days journey from the Tibetan capital of Lhasa, and getting to Lhasa itself requires some paperwork and not an inconsiderable sum of money.

Another hilltop stupa, That Xieng Tung in northern Laos, stands near the end of a rough road that crosses several unbridged streams. To experience some of Nepal's more atmospheric stupa sites will require several days of hiking. As long as Afghanistan is at civil war, some of Buddhism's earliest archaeological sites will remain off limits to most of us.

Access to many other impressive totes, however, has never been easier. In Japan the gorinto can be found in the most urban of landscapes, and every Thai stupa pictured in this volume can be reached within a day's travel of one of Thailand's provincial capitals. Hotel accommodations can be found less than 15 minutes walk from Java's world treasure, Borobudur, and electric lifts carry visitors to Myanmar's indescribable Shwedagon Paya.



Once you're on the stupa trail you can't stop. At first you're in awe of the size, the history, the simplicity of the whole and the complexity of the detail.

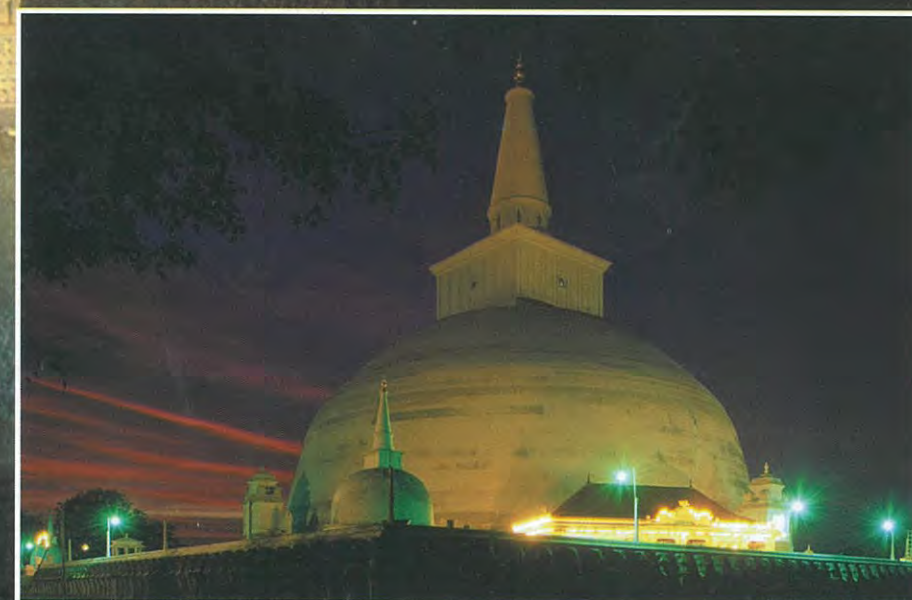


A roughly conical pile of fire-red-dened, dictionary-sized bricks, edges softened by time, stands in a green meadow on a slight rise overlooking a river. Bits of yellowed plaster, moulded into flower garlands, cling to where a brick line holds its shape, or lie amidst broken chunks around the base of the pile. Almost buried beneath drifting soil, tall grass and tangled fig roots, a few stone blocks reflect sunlight from neat ridges scraped into the surface.

One stone rectangle, larger than the others, has been tipped sideways. On its nearly level, rippling surface lies a cluster of fresh ochre-and-cream plumeria blossoms. You can detect their sweetness on the breeze, mixed with the perfume from a trio of burning incense sticks jutting from a ceramic bowl filled with sand. Whoever left the offering is nowhere to be seen, but in the stillness one can sense the devotion arcing across two millennia, from the artisan whose iron tools cut the stone to a visitor who retreated not more than 10

late the durable appeal of the stupa – one of the oldest and most persistent religious symbols still in everyday use – collide with the vast and varied history of stupa-building and stupa-worshipping, all but silencing the would-be inquisitor. Yet the stupa continues to inspire us to take photographs, sketch diagrams and write thousands of words, digging to uncover a key that might unlock its mysteries.

Once you're on the stupa trail you can't stop. At first you're in awe of the size, the history, the simplicity of the whole and the complexity of the detail. After you've stood before 10 or 20 or 50, you begin to notice the differences as well as the similarities. It seems unbelievable that a lone chandi in central Java could look so much like a stupa in southern India, that you can see a Bagan zedi reflected in a prasada at Angkor. You develop preferences and then, in a few years, abandon them. Gradually the solid, silent masses began speaking to you, and eventually you may find yourself talking back to them.



Buddhist Stupas in Asia: The Shape of Perfection, Joe Cummings (text), Bill Wassman (photography), Foreword by Robert A. Thurman

From Publishers Weekly

Lonely Planet presents *Buddhist Stupas in Asia: The Shape of Perfection*, exploring stupas (sacred structures that function as memorials of enlightenment) in 13 Asian countries. As shown in more than 250 color photographs, stupas are tremendously

Front Row Seat at Nepal's Tragedy



Photo-journalists **Philip Blenkinsop** and **Agnes Blerbeys** found themselves in the midst of a global story purely by accident when they were preparing to leave Nepal in early June.

After three weeks in May nearly running out of money waiting to meet the Maoists in Nepal, Philip and Agnes nearly gave up. But in the end they got their time in the mountains with the Maoists, their

photos and story.

And the Maoist actually did them a big favour because the delay left them in Kathmandu right as one of the biggest stories of the year unfolded.

And they were there before the journalists hordes could arrive.

The first reports out of Kathmandu were difficult to believe. The June 1 Nepalese Royal Palace massacre seemed like it

was more out of fiction than fact.

Crown Prince Dipendra reportedly shot his father King Birenda, his mother Queen Aishwarya, two of their other children and four relatives to death with automatic weapon fire and then turned the gun on his himself.

Following the massacre, he reportedly was in a coma and on a life-support system until he died.

During that three days he was named monarch by the State Council. So Prince Dipendra was King Dipendra of Nepal for the last three days of his life. He died at age 29 of wounds suffered in the Friday night Royal Palace massacre.

According to wire service reports, when the Royal Palace tragedy occurred on Friday, he was said to be going around with two girlfriends, one he wanted to marry and the other his parents wanted him to marry.

The Friday night Royal Palace tragedy purportedly took place because of differences between him and his parents over whom he should marry.

The carnage left 10 persons dead, including the crown prince, and incited a wave of protests in Kathmandu in which several people died and normal life was disrupted by a curfew for three successive days.

Most Nepalese refused to believe that a son would kill his parents and others for such a trifling reason. Few journalists were there to witness Nepal in mourning and the funerals for the two kings.

The first reports out of Kathmandu were difficult to believe. The June 1 Nepalese Royal Palace massacre seemed like it was more out of fiction than fact.



Photo-journalists **Philip Blenkinsop** and **Agnes Blerbeys** with Maoist in Nepal.



Photo-journalist **Agnes Blerbeys** wears a helmet during the tense times in Kathmandu



Liza Linklater is a Bangkok based photographer and writer.

Bangkok and Beyond: Portraits and Panoramas



A black-and-white photographic exhibition by Canadian photographer/writer *Liza Linklater* will be on display at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand (FCCT) from December 1-31, 2001.

During her journeys in Asia, Liza used medium-format cameras, one square and one panorama. The square portraits of Thai people form part of an on-going series on Thai society. The panorama portraits were taken on various trips in Asia over the last two years.

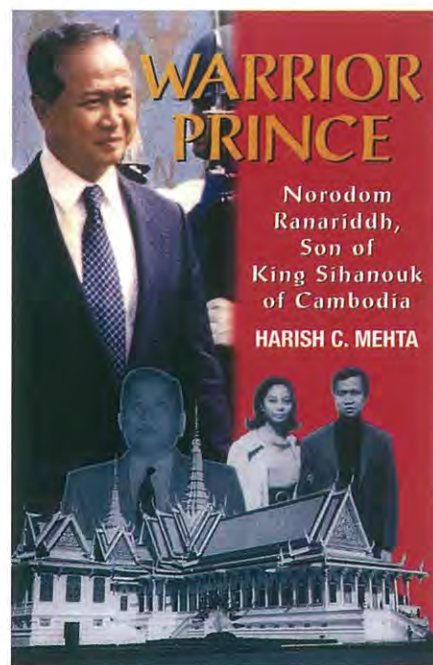
"I'm definitely an Asiaphile. I have a deep respect and affection for Asian cultures and I hope this is reflected in the photos. As an observer of these societies, I always want to know more about the people I see and meet when travelling, or just walking around the city where I currently live, Bangkok. Before taking these photos I always asked permission and the subjects graciously complied. If we shared a common language, we always had a fun conversation; if we didn't, there was always a feeling that we had spent an intimate moment with each other.

"The thing I love most about this style of photography is that it allows me to enter the lives of strangers even for a few minutes. I hope viewers will enjoy sharing these moments as well."

(During December, the FCCT will be one of the participating venues in "La mois de la photographie/Month of Photography" event being held at various art and photography galleries throughout Bangkok.)



Running with the Hare, Hunting with the Hounds



There were several common threads that ran through the two books. They were written at a time when the two men had fallen out. Hun Sen had overthrown Ranariddh.



Harish C. Mehta is a Bangkok-based correspondent for *The Business Times*.

Biographies have a way of taking on a life of their own. Take, for instance, my new book, *Warrior Prince, on the life of Prince Norodom Ranariddh*. The book is making a bit of a splash in Phnom Penh. Prince Ranariddh "criticised" his biography even before the publishers, Graham Brash, released it in August.

A news item in the *Cambodia Daily* said, "National Assembly President Prince Norodom Ranariddh criticised a new biography about him, saying the author interviewed him after the 1997 factional fighting and the book does not accurately reflect his current political feelings."

"Harish Mehta interviewed the Prince while he was in Bangkok after he had fled Cambodia just before the outbreak of the July 1997 factional fighting," the daily said on July 20, 2001. "At the time, the situa-

tion was different than now," Prince Ranariddh told the daily, which added, "Prince Ranariddh said he received a draft of the book, but didn't read it before it was published." The daily quoted the Prince as saying, "Mehta is responsible for this."

It went on to say, "In the book, the Prince calls Prime Minister Hun Sen 'brutal' and adds that Mr Hun Sen is a man who doesn't hesitate to use any means possible to grab power and stay in power." It was Reuters correspondent Hillary Jackson who first filed a report on July 11 on the Prince's 'sensitive remark'. Hillary's story was published in *The Nation*, and other newspapers. The *Cambodia Daily* picked up the story.

On seeing the *Cambodia Daily* report, I wrote to Prince Ranariddh, reassuring him that his quotes about Mr Hun Sen appeared in a chapter that dealt with his overthrow in 1997, and that the quotes would be seen in that context -- a time when more than forty supporters of the

Prince's party were murdered in Phnom Penh, the Prince's home was looted, and artillery guns boomed on the streets as the forces of Hun Sen battled Ranariddh's.

Since then, the situation had, indeed, changed. The book lucidly explained that the Prince and Mr Hun Sen were again allies and coalition partners in the government. I also advised the Prince that readers of his biography would view his life in its totality, and not on the basis of a single quote. After agonising over it for a week, I decided to remove the controversial quotes that would certainly have offended Mr Hun Sen, and worsened his relations with Prince Ranariddh. The blue pencil was used in the interest of maintaining peace and harmony within the coalition. The book, as a whole, was more important than a couple of quotes, I felt.

At that time, I was busy proofreading *Warrior Prince* that was about to be released, two years after the publication of my earlier book, *Hun Sen: Strongman of Cambodia*, which was co-authored by my wife, Julie. One of my editors, Stephen Troth, a veteran of Simon & Schuster and Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, asked me pointedly: "You've now written about both Hun Sen and Ranariddh. How did you manage to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds?"

That was a story in itself. As a reporter, you couldn't be one-sided. It only added to one's credibility that one covered both sides of a story. I had, indeed, interviewed both Hun Sen and Ranariddh many times. The hounds and the hare got equal coverage. I'll take you back to Phnom Penh in 1993. The United Nations-run elections were in full swing. I told Mr Hun Sen's aide, Uch Kiman, that I wanted to write a book on the life of his boss. The first time I interviewed Mr Hun Sen was in 1991, and both Julie and I had got to know him rather well. But Mr Uch Kiman was non-committal, given the immense pressures on Mr Hun Sen's time and the energy-sapping election schedule.

I went ahead anyway. I wrote several chapters based on my earlier interviews with the emerging strongman, but there

remained gaping holes in the book, which could only be filled in by the strongman. Four years later, the half-finished book lay dormant in my Apple Mac. I revived it in early-1997. Mr Hun Sen had recently overthrown Prince Ranariddh to emerge the undisputed strongman. His super-efficient aide, Prak Sokhonn, smoothened the path for both myself and Julie. He arranged interviews with Mr Hun Sen, and with his wife, Bun Rany. Julie met her, and wrote about her, while I spent several hours talking to the strongman. When the book was published, it stayed on the Bangkok best-seller list for eight weeks.

While the Hun Sen book was still in skeletal form, I called on Prince Ranariddh at his Soi Prapinij residence, off Sathorn Road, for a routine newspaper interview in November 1997. I proposed the idea of writing his biography. He readily agreed, and the book gradually began taking shape. What gave the book a touch of freshness was a final interview with the Prince that I conducted in May 2001.

There were several common threads that ran through the two books. They were written at a time when the two men had fallen out. Hun Sen had overthrown Ranariddh. There was no love lost between them. Yet, both recalled the comfortable relationship they had during their 1993-1997 coalition government, when Ranariddh was the First Prime Minister and Hun Sen, the Second Prime Minister.

The books brought me close to both leaders and their families. We visited Mr Hun Sen's residences in Phnom Penh, and his Tiger's Den fortress-home in Takhmau, 15 km outside the capital. We travelled with him to the provinces. We frequently spoke to his son, Hun Manet, who is studying in the US. We also dined with Prince Ranariddh, his wife Princess Marie, and their daughter Princess Rattana Devi, on more than one occasion.

Mr Hun Sen liked the book. He was not too upset by the criticisms it contained. He even presented copies to diplomats visiting him. He collaborated with us on a second edition of *Strongman*, due out in January 2002, and is expected to sell in the US through a major American publisher in Fall next year. I expect Prince Ranariddh, too, will grow to like *Warrior Prince*.

The two books were extensions of my work as a journalist, one who wouldn't rest until he'd covered both sides of one of the biggest stories in Southeast Asia. In the process, he may even have contributed -- a little -- to a better understanding of the two leading players in current Cambodian politics.

Sihanouk and Ranariddh: A Cambodian Political Dynasty

By Philippe Agret (AFP)

They share a passion for politics and a striking physical resemblance, but Cambodia's King Norodom Sihanouk and his son Ranariddh have at times been poles apart, according to the prince's first biography.

In his portrait of Ranariddh published this month in Singapore, Indian journalist Harish Mehta casts a sometimes harsh light on the often stormy relationship between father and son. "I still profoundly admire him. He's a good father to the people of Cambodia, but as a father to his children, he is not a real father," says Ranariddh. "He is rather the father of the nation, instead of the father of his own children," he says while recalling a childhood spent apart from the king. "I have seen several times that while he clearly does have affection for me, he is not very just. Not completely equitable. He is the greatest politician, a genius, difficult to match, difficult to try to resemble, and we should not try to do so," he reveals, with a hint of bitterness.

Titled "Warrior Prince: Norodom Ranariddh, son of King Sihanouk of Cambodia," the biography clearly sides with Ranariddh, and salutes his independence from the palace. The prince makes no secret of regarding the family likeness -- the same plumpness, the same high-pitched voice, the abundant energy of his father -- as "a big burden." "People adore the king and I look like him. It is not my achievement they are remembering, but the deeds of my father."

On the contrary, if I fail the people would say 'Oh you are the son, but you are not like your father'." Born in 1944 to Sihanouk's first wife, Princess Phat Kanhol, Ranariddh spent his youth first in Phnom Penh and then Paris, where his father accused him of living the life of a "playboy".

Chased out of Phnom Penh in 1973 by the republic of Lon Nol, who ousted Sihanouk three years earlier at the height of the Vietnam War, he was forced to spend a decade in the south of France with his wife Marie and their children as Cambodia descended into chaos. Under Lon Nol's regime, which preceded the

Khmer Rouge genocide, he spent several short spells in prison which, he says, marked him for life.

Ranariddh was a late convert to politics in 1983, when Sihanouk, exiled in China, asked him to reorganise the demoralised National Sihanoukist Army and the royalist FUNCINPEC party. The doctor of law at Aix-en-Provence succeeded his father as head of FUNCINPEC in 1991 and led the royalists to victory in the general elections of May 1993, held under the auspices of the United Nations.

However, after the ballot the prince mis-stepped by accepting a power-sharing arrangement with the ex-communist Cambodian People's Party, from which emerged powerful Prime Minister Hun Sen. Ranariddh never quit the turbulent Cambodian political scene, even though he was forced to retreat to the Thai capital for several months in 1997 as rivalries within the coalition government degenerated into armed confrontation with the "brutal" Hun Sen. The two rivals were reconciled in 1998 under the tutelage of Sihanouk, who famously describes them as his "two sons."

Under Cambodia's constitution, Norodom Ranariddh is regarded as one of the main favourites to succeed his father, along with Prince Sihamoni, the ballet-dancer son of the current Queen Monique. But the "Warrior Prince", who nevertheless admits to a distaste for "the noise of guns and artillery", remains divided between political ambition and the honour of the monarchy.

"Of course, as a human being I am facing a great dilemma. I don't want to praise myself that everyone acknowledges that among the members of the royal family, maybe I am the only one ... (fit to become the next king). "But at the same time FUNCINPEC needs me, and I am still fighting for the victory of my party, but it is up to the people." With this portrait, Mehta completes a chronicle of modern Cambodian history that began with a biography of "strongman" Hun Sen in 1998.

Land of Beautiful Women

Twenty-one years ago, when, in many ways, I was a much younger man, I enjoyed living in Hong Kong and, once a month, traveling to Thailand. I would give the blueprint of the next *Sawasdee* magazine to the people in the head office of Thai Airways International to check for cultural and other errors, and while those good people made certain I did not place a pretty girl's picture above a monk or commit some such typical farang editor abomination, for several days I would head out across the country, photographing temples, children, the elderly, rural scenes, klongs, fishermen, ricefields and, yes, women.

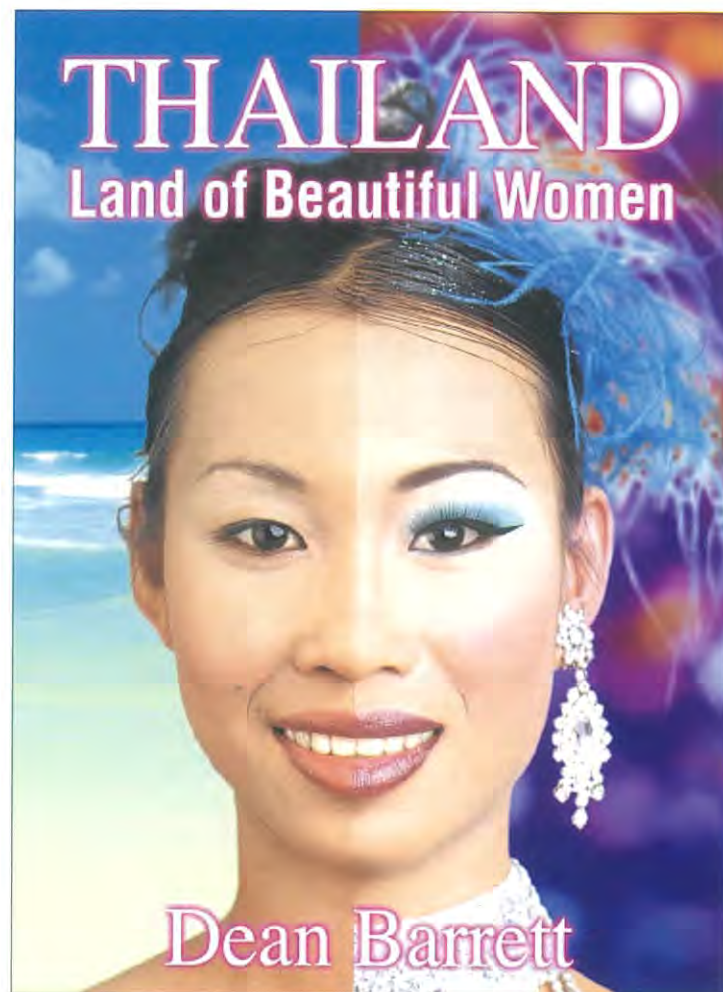
It wasn't long before I noticed that although I had quite a collection of Thailand shots, I also noticed that the majority were on, yes, women. It was my belief that – whatever their occupations – the women of Thailand were lovely, graceful, charming, etc., and wasn't it a shame that no one was doing anything to pass that message on? Also, I suspected that someday some fool was going to do a book on Thai women and, as I later explained to the photographer extraordinaire, Khun Shrimp, (slightly miffed because I had beaten him to the punch) I wanted to be that fool. I was. I am.

And so it was born: a 144-page, full color photobook entitled, *The Girls of Thailand*. I loved it, the girls loved it, men loved it, my mother and stepfather loved it. Uh oh, acclaim was not

The book appeared! And the book disappeared! Apparently, after seeing photographs of the dominatrixes and the ladyboys and the construction workers, someone in officialdom felt it wasn't the right image for Thailand. But then the book reappeared!



Dean Barrett is the one on the left.



paign in history * Singapore Girl: You're a Great Way to Fly, I was told by stern-faced Western women that "there are no girls in Asia, Mr. Barrett!" Right, whatever.

The book sold well but one day I noticed in shops at Hong Kong's old Kai Tak airport it was shrink-wrapped so no one could open it. This was strange, thought I, because there was no nudity in it. And certainly no obscenity. And then I understood: the vendors had shrink-wrapped it precisely because there was no nudity in it. And so *The Girls of Thailand* attained legend status (duly mentioned in Publish-

Dean's novels on Asia include *Kingdom of Make-Believe*, *Memoirs of a Bangkok Warrior*, *Hangman's Point* and *Mistress of the East*. *Hangman's Point* was acclaimed by Filipina bargirls in Wanchai as the best novel ever written on 19th century Hong Kong by an American living in New York's East Village on 10th Street between 2nd and 3rd Avenues in a lower floor apartment.

His detective novel, *Murder in China Red*, will appear too late for the Christmas season and will die a slow death on dusty, cobwebby, betel-stained bookshelves in used bookstores along Sukhumvit Road.

His lunatic cyber-radio show can be found on-line at <http://www.dean-barrett-thailand.com>.

ers Weekly) as the only book in publishing history to have been shrink-wrapped not because it was a dirty book but precisely because it wasn't.

Fast forward twenty-one years. 2000. After 14 years living in Manhattan as a novelist and playwright, I returned to Thailand. No one asked me about my novels or plays or musical or ballads. No one seemed interested in my more "serious" work. The only thing I kept getting asked was, "Hey, when you gonna do another *Girls of Thailand* book?" And finally I gave in: OK, give the public what it wants. Besides, I realized there is a whole new generation of khunyings and feminazis who know nothing about *The Girls of Thailand* book and the least I could do was to give them someone to focus their anger on.

And so I abandoned my "serious" novels and non-fiction and off I went rewriting and updating the old texts, adding new material, and photographing like mad. And, before too long, the 160-page, full color photobook, *Thailand: Land of Beautiful Women* was born. (Astute readers will not fail to notice I even changed the title from "Girls" to "Women." Who says men living in Bangkok don't have the capacity to change?)

I assured a local distributor (who still retained less than happy memories of the flak surrounding the first book) that there would be no nudity and just a few night-life pages in the back of the book. Well, actually, there are more than a few: 80 pages to be exact, but, hey, who's counting?

And the book appeared! And the book disappeared! Apparently, after seeing photographs of the dominatrixes and the ladyboys and the construction workers – not to mention the venerable Bernard Trink, someone in officialdom felt it wasn't the right image for Thailand. But then the book (in some places) reappeared! (In his review, Trink complained there were no stewardesses in the book. But I had replaced the stewardesses in the old book with dominatrixes in this one; from plane to pain, so to speak.)

The Girls of Thailand appeared in 1980, *Thailand: Land of Beautiful Women* in 2001. It is my intention to come out with the next one 21 years from now, and the final one 21 years after that at which point I will be exactly 100 years old, and can look back and feel good about having fulfilled what was obviously meant to be my life's mission.



UN plea for media balance toward developing countries

The UN's Media Division Director **Salim Lone** makes a plea for more sympathy toward developing countries. Too often entire societies get demonized when in fact it is their leaderships alone which should be condemned.

Should the international media make any special efforts to ensure that the weak and the poor do not completely go off the screen? Does the media have a responsibility in informing the world about how the rest of the world lives? The answer in both cases is a resounding Yes.

It's just a harder question to figure out how to do this at the international level. But the international media is a remarkably resourceful industry. It is in fact one of humanity's great success stories.

There are lots of ups and downs, and you hear lots of gripes, but your protected and privileged position in your own societies is matched by no other institution. More and more, media helps determine society's short-and long-term agenda.

The recognition of your enormous power was dramatically captured when the wife of the Chinese pilot who died in the accident with the American spy plane wrote a public letter to the President of the United States. And got a speedy response! That was a telling example of how the media has become a central instrument of public diplomacy.

The global architecture that we are building for a peaceful and democratic world will only be sustainable if the international media provides honest, serious coverage of the entire world.

At the moment, we are actually headed in the opposite direction: even as globalization proceeds apace, the foreign news hole continues to shrink dramatically in the major broadcast media of the very countries which are the most ardent advocates of interconnectedness and interdependence.

Secretary General Kofi Annan told last year's Newsworld meeting that he sometimes thought that NO coverage of Africa might be better than the kind it so often gets because the unrelenting focus on violence, devastation, corruption and hopelessness undermines even the most

committed supporters of the continent. And it also saps the self-confidence of the entire leadership class.

Countries so treated invariably find themselves on the defensive and unable to project their strengths. The cohesion and human solidarity that holds these societies together in the face of severe deprivation; their struggles to eke out livings against the toughest odds; the generosity and care they offer family members. Only rarely are such stories told.

This is not a plea to the international media to whitewash developing societies but it is a plea for more balance and more sympathy than is normally seen on TV. Too often entire societies get demonized when in fact it is their leaderships alone which should be condemned.

There is no greater challenge for the international media than to find ways of better reporting the poor and dispossessed.

Mr Annan has repeatedly warned that there is a growing backlash in poorer societies against globalization. "If globalization is to succeed, it must succeed for poor and rich alike," he has said. The truth of this message is incontrovertible. But it will only be recognized if the global media hammers it home in a way that will make policymakers pay attention.

You have fought fiercely to create a privileged place for the media in your own societies, and with it have accepted significant responsibilities in how you cover news: Objectively, balance, respect for your subjects, guarding against stereotyping communities. These principles must now be consciously extended to your coverage of the world.

The UN can help. Under Mr Annan, the UN has become a remarkably open and transparent institution. Indeed, last year Mr Annan issued the first-ever UN guidelines on how to deal with the media, and journalists were astonished to see that these permitted all staff members to respond freely to questions in the area of their work. Please approach us; you find us willing partners on a range of enterprises.

Story Behind the Sand

I was definitely feeling the effects of the local rice whiskey and I had a vague sensation that my fingertips were about to be burned from the Chinese cigarette I was holding, but I was determined to hold my microphones steady enough to get a good recording of the music. It started out with a mournful melody from a stringed Mongolian style fiddle and sped up to something akin to a Central Asian polka with the addition of an accordion.

Since I had a belly full of mutton and camel's paw and an eyeful of local party officials toasting their guests, I was pretty sure I had made it to Inner Mongolia. But I was still waiting for the story, which was

N.K. Lau turned out to be a real person and in a Beijing restaurant he pointed out Alixa on a map (which is alternately spelled Alxa, Alashan, Alishan, or Al ee sha, but never Alixa).

It was smack dab in the middle of nowhere. Once on the ground, our group (N.K. Lau, half a dozen members of his foundation, a half dozen teenage girls from a Hong Kong high school affiliated with the foundation, another American journalist - Steve Van Beek, and I) piled into some very plush Japanese four wheel drive vehicles, and sped through kilometer after kilometer of featureless desert, toward the nearest hotel.

After three hours we arrived in a little

"Shanghaied" all the scientists in the group. In interviews they talked about the grim situation - 2,500 square kilometers of land become desertified each year in China - and sandstorms cause US\$2-6 billion worth of damage.

They also described their desperate efforts to reverse the situation. Entire local populations "volunteer" their labor to stabilize sand dunes with straw nets, to plant trees and shrubs, and tens of thousands of herders are being relocated.

Miraculously we made it through the Gobi and the next morning we headed out in our well-wheeled vehicles once more to take part in the much anticipated tree planting.



Anne Marie Ruff is a freelance journalist based in Bangkok. Her stories about desertification in Inner Mongolia were picked up by BBC radio, American National Public Radio, International Herald Tribune TV, DPA Newswire and Biomednet science news service.

supposed to be "Hong Kong environmental NGO helps plant trees to staunch the expanding deserts of Inner Mongolia".

I had ended up in the middle of the desert because of a single message buried in a listserv for environmental journalists in the Asia Pacific region titled: Green Trip to Alixa Region, Inner Mongolia - Be the VIP Guest of the Alixa Regional Government.

It said that for the price of an air ticket I could get to the frontlines of China's expanding deserts and see what local officials and one regional NGO were doing to try to avert an environmental catastrophe in the making.

I signed up, pitched my stories and tried to find Alixa on a map. It didn't exist, nor could Yahoo, or Google or any other trusty search engine find this supposed region or the supposed Green China Foundation which was organizing the trip.

But figuring the mysterious N.K. Lau, who posted the message, wouldn't create such an elaborate travel scheme just to dupe foreign journalists out of their money and passports, I headed to Beijing.

town called Ejina where we were heartily received by local and regional officials, some of whom had traveled nearly a thousand kilometers to meet us.

For the next several days we were transported - no doubt at great cost - to the various far flung sights of the region.

Four hours into an eleven-hour drive across the Gobi desert we had used five of our seven spare tires in our seven-vehicle caravan. Of course we were completely unprepared to survive a night in the desert, but I was more despairing at the prospect that I would never get what I came here for, a story about tree planting.

Not that the trip wouldn't be worth it even without the story. The landscape was amazing, the sense of bigness strangely comforting. Traveling for hours on end without seeing buildings, or people, or roads, reaffirmed that the world is still a vast place.

And our hosts were great traveling companions, hardy, ruddy faced, quick to laugh and even quicker to drink.

In the absence of any tree planting I

At a line of sand dunes that had marched almost to the very edges of the Yellow River, local officials had organized a ceremony for the occasion.

There was an engraved marble sign that noted the Green China Foundation sponsored this project, there were tables with plates of fresh fruits for the Foundation's members, and there were at least two hundred people - adults dressed in their Sunday best, and children waving balloons and cheering.

As the local party leader shouted out rhetoric about the great efforts of the government and their gratitude toward the Green China Foundation, a dozen local women in skirts and good shoes dug holes for the trees, which lay nearby on the ground. These "trees" looked suspiciously like six-foot tall sunflowers, decapitated of their telltale yellow blooms. One of the women conceded they don't really plant these to stabilize the dunes, they plant six-inch tall desert shrubs. But she said "these are more photogenic".



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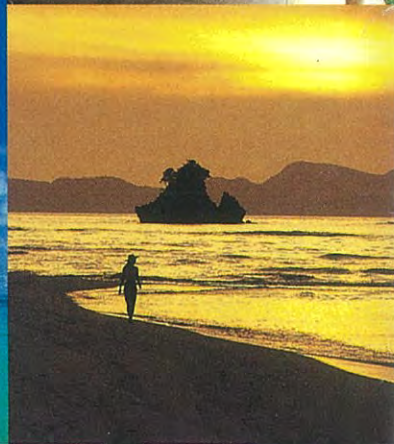
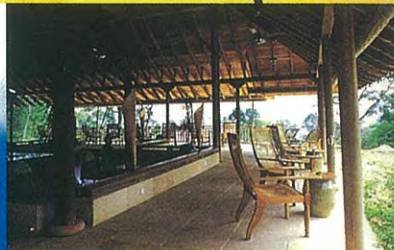
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