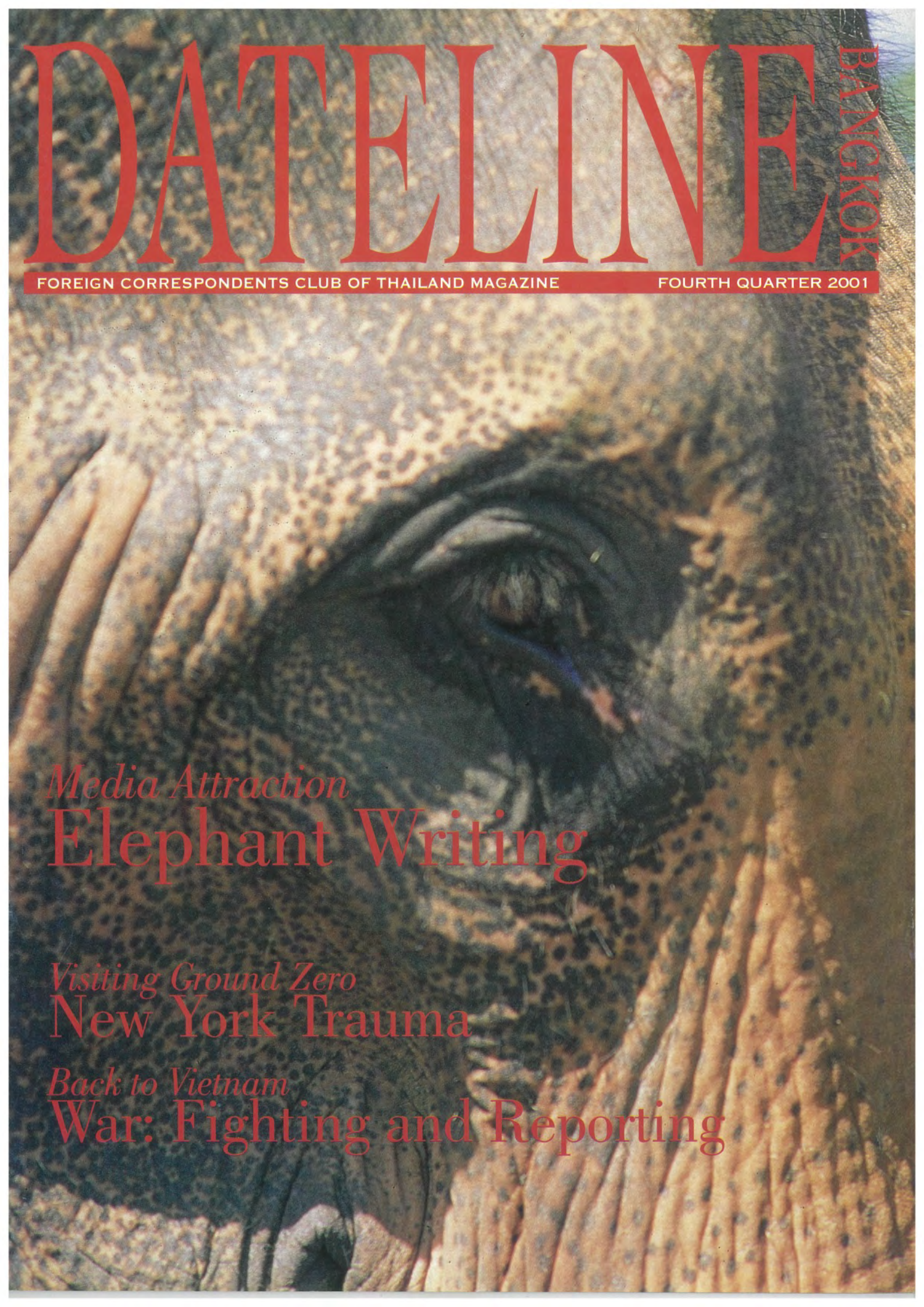


DATELINE



BANGKOK

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS CLUB OF THAILAND MAGAZINE

FOURTH QUARTER 2001

Media Attraction Elephant Writing

Visiting Ground Zero
New York Trauma

Back to Vietnam
War: Fighting and Reporting



World Wide Fun For Nature, Thailand Programe



Saturday, February 16, 2002 Come celebrate WWF 40th anniversary



**Come celebrate World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF)
40th anniversary with us
Saturday, February 16, 2002 at Benjasiri Park
(next to the Emporium) from 10.00 - 19.00 hrs.**

BANGKOK PATANA SCHOOL



The British International School in Thailand

Bangkok Patana School maintains the highest standards of the British curriculum, offering a comprehensive educational experience to children of all nationalities. Ages Nursery to 18+

Contact us for more information:

2/38 Soi Lasalle, Sukhumvit 105, Bangkok 10260

Tel: 0 2398 0200 Fax: 0 2399 3179 Email: reception@patana.ac.th

www.patana.ac.th

Dining or diving?
Enjoy great food and live entertainment in a unique beach atmosphere at **Larry's Dive restaurant and bar.** Larry's Dive Shop provides full professional diving facilities both here in **Bangkok** and at **Larry's Dive in Pattaya.** So dive into **Larry's** where the beach comes to the people!

Larry's DIVE
DIVE CENTER, BAR & GRILL
....bringing the beach to the people



**Bangkok's
Finest
Beach**



8 SUKHUMVIT SOI 22, BANGKOK 10110

TEL: 0-2663-4563. FAX: 0-2663-4561 e-mail: bangkok@larrysdive.com

www.larrysdive.com



THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS CLUB OF THAILAND

Penthouse, Maneeya Center Building
518/5 Ploenchit Rd., Phatumwan,
Bangkok 10330 Thailand
Tel.: 652-0580-1 Fax: 652-0582
E-mail: fcc@asiaaccess.net.th

President
Rodney Tasker
FEER
Tel: 253-5522 / 01-425-1034
E-mail: rodney.tasker@feer.com

1st Vice President
Christopher Johnson
Reuters (Thailand) Ltd.
Tel: 650-2118 / 01-825-6091
E-mail: christopher.johnson@reuters.com

2nd Vice President
Jeanne Hallacy
AsiaWorks TV Ltd.
Tel: 255-6800-1 Fax: 255-5919
E-mail: hallacy@loxinfo.co.th

Immediate Past President
Philippe Decaux
French TV
Tel: 255-4652 / 01-845-3654 Fax: 255-6840
E-mail: foghorn@asiaaccess.net.th

Correspondent Secretary
Costas Paris
Dow Jones Newswires
Tel: 266-0744 Fax: 238-2661
E-mail: costas.paris@dowjones.com

Recording Secretary
Sarah Stewart
AFP
Tel: 650-3230 Fax: 650-3234
E-mail: sarah.stewart@afp.com

Correspondent Director of Publicity
Mick Elmore
Colored Stone
Tel: 676-1463
E-mail: mickey@mozart.inet.co.th

Correspondent Director of Membership
Marc Laban
CTV
Tel: 255-5915-6 / 01-837-0196 Fax: 255-5919
E-mail: mlaban@asiaworks.com

Correspondent Director of Programs
Laurent Malespine
New Jones Newswires
Tel: 266-0744-5 / 01-822-5852 Fax: 238-2661
E-mail: laurent.malespine@dowjones.com

Treasurer
Julian Spindler
Spindler & Associates Co., Ltd.
Tel.: 241-0088 / 01-829-7153 Fax: 243-4296
E-mail: spindler@mozart.inet.co.th

Associate Director of Publicity
Lin Neumann
Tel.: 01-899-4202
E-mail: lin_neumann@compuserve.com

Associate Director of Membership
Karen Emmons
Tel.: 258-7572 / 01-496-9726 Fax: 258-7572
E-mail: emmons@loxinfo.co.th

Associate Director of Programs
Dumras Rodjanapiches
Krops Venture Co., Ltd.
Tel.: 381-0194-6 / 01-934-6325 Fax: 381-2264
E-mail: dumrasfilm@hotmail.com

DATELINE

Editor: Mick Elmore
Photography Editor: Jeanne Hallacy
Marketing & Production
Advertisements: Finn Balslev
Design & Layout: Phaisan Nangnoi

Scand-Media Corp., Ltd.
4/42 M. 3 Thanyakarn Village, Ramintra Soi 14,
Ramintra Rd., Bangkok 10230
Tel: 943-7166-8 Fax: 943-7169
email: scandmedia@scandmedia.com

The opinions expressed by writers in Dateline Bangkok do not necessarily reflect the views of the Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand or the editors.

Contents

FOURTH QUARTER 2001

COLUMNS

- 7 PRESIDENT'S DESK & SOI WHISPERS**
President's update and gossip from the Soi.
- 8 OBITUARY**
Journalists say goodbye to U Chit Tun
- 9 THINKING ABOUT BOB STEVENS**
A Bangkok journalist remembers a friend killed by anthrax.



FEATURES

- 10 NEW YORK TRAUMA**
Observations from ground zero.
- 12 ON AFGHANISTAN'S NORTHERN BORDER**
Don Pathan takes to the front line.
- 13 GETTING SWEEPED AWAY IN JAKARTA**
DPA's Peter Janssen considers his first week in Jakarta.
- 16 WAR: FIGHTING AND REPORTING**
A Vietnam veteran reflects on the gap between journalists and soldiers.



ELEPHANT WRITING 14
Richard Lair and Eric Scigliano consider elephants in the news.
Photo by: Mick Elmore



- 18 SLAVES TO POVERTY**
Portfolio by Nick Rain
- 20 A TYRANNY OF NUMBERS**
Bruce Hawke crunches numbers from Burma



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 Tong sai 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 Tong sai Bay, one must be in touch with it. That's the reason why we offer you

"Great Outdoor Living"



The Tong sai Bay
Kong Sai Bay, Thailand
84 Phrasa, 84 Phra, Phrasa
Suratthani, Thailand
Tel: 077 425015-28
Fax: 077 425442
Bangkok office
Tel: 02 254 0058-63
Fax: 02 314 0054-55
www.tongsai-bay.com
Email: info@tongsai-bay.com

Year's end may be a time when many people take stock. I'd rather look forward and dwell on areas where the FCCT has the potential to improve its image and attraction. One which has so far attracted the attention of far fewer members and others than it should have, in my opinion, is Friday night.

Many of you may regard the club as mainly a venue for interesting programmes each Wednesday, and the occasional activity at other times during the week. But those who show up for a Friday evening drink, and perhaps a meal, have been treated to some really good music of late. Apart from the regular slot with Stewart's jazz band, we have a newcomer in the form of a pianist who just likes to be known as Bob.

Anyone who has heard Bob at the club must have been impressed, I'm sure. Although the American's staple is jazz, he can turn his hand -- literally -- to just about any type of music you want to hear. He likes requests. And boy does he work his magic on those ivories. I'd say he is world class,

and I know many would agree. Bob is now a regular fixture, and we are also hoping to bring back another Bangkok band which knocked us out with its first Friday-night appearance, Flow. The band has its own style of rock, pop, whatever you want to call it, and it oozes class.

So please, at least give Friday evening at the club a thought. You will be glad you did. And remember, on Friday evenings in particular we like to throw open our doors to as many non-members who want to come as possible. Free of charge, because who are we to deny those who want to hear our music the chance to do so?

That's not to say we are in any way complacent about our level of membership. We are looking for new members all the time, as you must be aware. Friday may be fun night, but this does not detract from more serious events at other times during the week. That's mainly what the club is for. But do try to taste all the club offers.

Rodney Tasker

SOI WHISPERS

Some changes in the Bangkok journalism scene are anything but whispering. *Asiaweek's* demise came as a shock to most. The writing was on the wall but it happened sooner than expected **Dominic Faulder** who wrote about Cambodia and Burma for them said. As most *Asiaweek's* the news weekly was only a part of his job. Still adjustment must be made. Perhaps **Tony Davis** did it best moving from *Asiaweek* to *Time* early in the year. ■ The *Far Eastern Economic Review* and *Asia Wall Street Journal* downsized into one office and shed a few jobs in the process. *FEER* bureau chief **Shawn Crispin** got loaded down with new daily responsibilities for the *AWSJ*. But that might be better than some others who were shown the door. Several Bangkok based journo's have pointed out both the *Asiaweek* and *FEER-AWSJ* decisions were made in New York. But down sizing is an Asian thing, too. ■ Singapore *Straits Times* correspondent **James East** is leaving in January for a regional position with World Vision. The *Straits Times* for their part will not refill James position, but instead rely more heavily in bureau chief **Edward Tanb Yew Chai** who will be a one-man show. ■ *Agence France-Presse* hasn't shrunk but they did have a photo change. **Emmanuel Dunard** moved to Korea in preparation for the coming World Cup, and **Stephen Shaver** came on down from Beijing to Bangkok. So far he thinks it's a good move. ■ The *Associated Press*, in another New York City decision, will move some of their Tokyo desk positions to Bangkok in early 2002. And who knows, some of them might even join the club. ■ And while on *The Associated Press*, bureau chief **Denis Gray** had three false starts to go to Afghanistan before he finally left in December. But after two days with a toothache he returned from Uzbekistan, or was it Tajikistan? From one of those countries on the northern border he returned to Bangkok for a root canal instead of making it to Afghanistan. A root canal anywhere would be painful, but surely better in Bangkok than in Kabul. Seems about half the Bangkok foreign press corps did make it to Kabul, or at least Islamabad. ■ Oft-time *Dateline* contributor **Richard Erlich** went to ground zero in New York City -- he wrote about it in this edition -- then on to Islamabad and from there to Kabul, where his beard helped him fit in. If that's possible. ■ *Nation* reporter and one-time *Dateline* editor **Don Pathan** joined the northern alliance fighters for a couple months before Kabul fell. He wrote about it for this issue of *Dateline*. ■ And while on editing *Dateline*, the position is up for grabs at the coming Annual General Meeting scheduled for Friday, January 25.

Creative thinking

ADVERTISING • DIRECT MAIL
BROCHURES • ANNUAL REPORTS
LOGOS & CORPORATE IDENTITY
INTERNET WEB SITES THAT WORK



Zoom International

WEB @ctory Tel: 02-661 4467 • Fax: 02-661 4468
Web site: www.zoombangkok.com
Approved by the Creative Circle



Dulwich International College

British education at one of Asia's finest boarding schools



Co-educational day and boarding
Excellent purpose-built facilities
Active, caring boarding program
Safe, beautifully landscaped campus
From 3 to 18 years old,
KG 1 to Year 13
IGCSE and IB, Small class sizes
Boarding from 9 years old



Register NOW for the popular and innovative
Sports & Adventure Camp and English Summer School
31 March-20 April, 2002 and 7 July-4 August, 2002

tel. 0 2512 0466-7, 0 7623 8711-20; fax. 0 2512 0468, 0 7623 8750

Email: info@dulwich-phuket.com
http://www.dulwich-phuket.com

AGM set for Friday January 25, 2002

The next Annual General Meeting is scheduled for Friday January 25. The meeting will elect a new board and discuss pressing matters for the FCCT. Mark that date. Details will be in the bulletins in January

U Chit Tun, whose journalistic career spanned nearly half a century and included work for *United Press International*, the *Far Eastern Economic Review* (under the name M.C. Tun) and the *Financial Times*, died in Rangoon on Nov. 21 at the age of 88. Chit Tun's keen political insights, clipped British accent and wicked sense of humor will be missed by Bangkok-based hacks who relied on him for insights into his hermetic homeland.

Born in central Burma, Chit Tun received a BA degree from Rangoon University and then worked as a court stenographer. He began his journalism career writing for Rangoon's *Nation* daily, where he worked until Ne Win's 1962 coup nipped the country's free press in the bud. He is survived by two of his three children and a grand daughter.

Photo by John Hail



www.DomainNameForFree.com

Going online
has never
been so easy



SAVOUR THE FLAVOURS OF INDIA
FROM UP NORTH & DOWN SOUTH...
Opening shortly in your friendly neighbourhood hotel

Coco's Cafe adds a new dimension - Ethnic Indian cuisine for dinner
Award winning Coco's international and seafood buffet is one of the most popular dinner venues. We now add a new dimension by offering high quality Indian cuisine, a la carte for dinner. The only Indian restaurant offering a choice of Northern, Southern and Nawabi Hyderabad delicacies prepared by Indian master chefs.

Live entertainment every evening
Explore the magical diversity of Indian cuisine at down to earth prices from 7 p.m. onwards. Don't miss the special offer for all the American Express card members with a 15% discount on food from January 1 - February 28, 2002.

For reservations, please call 0-2261-0111, ext. 4900

On Sukhumvit
NOVOTEL
ACOR
LOTUS
BANGKOK

1 Soi Daeng Udom, Sukhumvit 33 Rd, Bangkok 10110 Tel : 66 (0) 2261 0111 Fax : 66 (0) 2262 1700
<http://www.acorhotels.com> e-mail: res@novotellotus.com

Thinking about Bob Stevens

The text message on my cell from my wife, Cherie Hart, was succinct and jarring: "Your friend Bob Stevens. Investigation underway."

Bob Stevens? My old buddy from my south Florida tabloid days with *The Globe* and the *National Examiner*? Someone I hadn't seen in perhaps 10 years, married to Maureen, a beautiful tall Irish redhead, father to Casey, whom I last remember as a bright-faced six-or-eight-year-old, now a grown woman whom he visited the weekend before he died?

Anthrax? Wasn't that something sheep got?

A quick reply back to Cherie, who was in Islamabad on mission for her agency, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), confirmed the sad news but didn't do much to clear matters and left me wondering, "Bob? Why?"

His death touched me deeply, and made personal all the horrors lately visited upon America and now the world. Even though Cherie and I had called New York City our home since the '80s



Photo by: Mick Elmore

The text message on my cell from my wife, Cherie Hart, was succinct and jarring: "Your friend Bob Stevens died of anthrax. Investigation underway."

before arriving in Thailand New Year's Eve, and have family and friends in DC, we'd lost no immediate friends September 11. Personal connections abounded - classmates of our friends, son whose father was on the 105th floor, an old friend of Cherie's, a high-school coach, who'd coached Jeremy Glick, one of the brave five who confronted their hijackers - but Bob's death drove home the murderous randomness of it all.

Bob, you see, was one of the sweetest men I've ever met. We worked together from 1983-88 for Globe Communications, the then-publisher of *The Globe*, *The National Examiner* and *The Sun*, and I hadn't seen him in over 10 years, but the picture *Time* ran of him rang true to my memories. Smiling a slightly bucktooth grin, a bit of a paunch (he did like a drink now and then), not looking a whole lot older than my mind's eye recalled, leaning back with laughing eyes, probably after having delivered one from his inexhaustible supply of bad puns to an unsuspecting colleague.

Bob was a Brit, but he loved south Florida and its culture-bending ways. This was a guy who loved gardening, the papers all said, but they didn't tell you that he was a cracker-wannabe, who loved going fishing and gigging for frogs in the Everglades or Lake Okeechobee with guys named Joe Bob and Skeeter. He was also the man who claimed to keep a scrapbook exclusively made up of fatal accidents involving one of Florida's ubiq-

uitous senior citizens. "No more frightening sight," he'd say, "than seeing an out-of-control Lincoln bearing down on you driven by a pair of white knuckles and a flash of blue hair." His personal favorite involved an 80-something gent who accidentally put his Buick into reverse in a Winn-Dixie parking lot and promptly crashed through the store's plate-glass windows killing a couple of cashiers and a customer.

Bob was brought over to Lantana, Florida in the mid-70s by the late Generoso Pope, the legendary owner of the *National Enquirer*, because of his photo-retouch skills. In those pre-Photoshop days, Bob's airbrush skills made him a valuable commodity in our tabloid world. This was the guy, after all, who could take two people, 12,000 miles apart, who'd never met, and make it look like they'd just crawled out of bed together.

Of course, that was before Carol Burnett's lawsuit tamed the American tabloids, before the PC revolutionized publishing and the internet allegedly brought us all closer together... and before the endless loop bad-news of crashing planes, pay-back bombs and anonymous murder-by-mail.

A different world, filled with a growing body of war stories and casualties, one of whom happened to be a friend who loved to laugh, and can still make me smile when I think of him.



John I. Blebo is General Manager of Thailand Tatler

New York Trauma

A clown finally appeared at Ground Zero, fullycostumed in red-nosed regalia, trying to cheer gas-masked disaster crews and thousands of visitors who circle the smoldering rubble that encases more than 3,000 bodies.

Pundits, meanwhile, predict no one will ever again care about Britney Spears's navel or other "frivolous" pop-culture ephemera. Respected human rights author Nat Hentoff, however, warned of new repression against any Americans who criticize the U.S. war against terrorism. He said it could become an updated version of the witch-hunt-

"Tomorrow when I go out, I will be wearing a nice red turban, white shirt and blue pants, our national colors, walking proud as a peacock, smiling at people I love and live with in our great country," wrote Narinder Singh, in Lenexa, Kansas.

Mr. Singh, a member of the Sikh religion, said he was donning red, white and blue because he feared neighbors would blame him for the suicide pilots' destruction of the World Trade Towers and Pentagon.

"Am I ashamed of myself, my ethnicity or my faith? Am I afraid of my fellow Americans? Did I

scars from the explosions.

Other people hurriedly printed postcards and posters of the towers on fire and sold them on sidewalks near the crash site.

One man stood staring at his hand near Ground Zero where the towers imploded into squashed, gnarled wreckage. He held a few shards of broken glass and plaster, apparently considering whether or not he should take it from the scene.

Next to him, a woman bent down and picked up small scattered pieces of sharp concrete and disappeared into the milling crowd of thousands of people along Broadway who jostled to take photographs of Ground Zero and the armed forces, police, firemen and emergency personnel working in the smoky canyon of the pulverized skyscrapers.

OK soon, but at a new level.

"It's like Japan after World War Two. Japan came back and rebuilt itself" after U.S. forces dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki 56 years ago, killing more than 300,000 people.

Others predicted more terrorist attacks in America, with future acts even more deadly than the suicide pilots' assaults on Sept. 11.

Fearing a chemical attack, thousands of people in New York City bought gas masks, priced around 85 dollars each. Officials went on television to calm residents, and said gas masks would only be protective if people wore them all the time -- because news of an attack might appear only after a biological weapon had already been unleashed.

Some mothers worried about the effect of the violence on their children, including a nine-year-



All photo by: Richard S. Ebrlich



ing, anti-communist "McCarthyism" of the 1950s.

"Continued terrorism could also easily return us to the era of the junior senator from Wisconsin, Joe McCarthy, who rode high and recklessly on the esteem of much of the citizenry -- and a significant portion of the press," Mr. Hentoff wrote.

"It could happen here again, especially with the Left so riven by its own wars of identity politics -- and meager regard for its internal opponents' free speech -- that it might be difficult to organize a united front against resurgent McCarthyism," he added.

Other intellectuals said new books and movies will be altered to reflect America's new, grim "reality" in a land suddenly splashed wall-to-wall with U.S. flags amid repeatedly broadcasted chants of "God Bless America."

Worried about the new mood in this diverse, rapidly militarizing nation, terrified people are disguising themselves or changing their behavior to avoid being targeted.

commit a crime of some sort?" Mr. Singh added in a letter to the *New York Times*.

In Dallas, Texas, Caroline Adams wrote to New York's liberal *Village Voice* newspaper to disagree with someone's criticism of President Bush. Referring to the critic, she suggested, "perhaps he'd be happier in Afghanistan."

The *Village Voice* headlined her letter: "A Load of Kabul."

Other Americans started buying and selling memorabilia which portrays the World Trade Center, including desk accessories, spoons, refrigerator magnets, keychains, paperweights and other souvenirs mass-produced before the horror.

In the bleak aftermath of the surprise atrocity, the tacky trinkets of the two towers now seemingly appear to rise like prophetic, miniature twin tombstones.

Some people went on Internet to sell gruesome shrapnel from the site, including damaged stop signs and anything else which displays charred

Wherever people meet, they invariably talk of the terrorist attack
and swap tales of what they were doing at the time

Wherever people meet, they invariably talk of the terrorist attack and swap tales of what they were doing at the time, how they reacted and why lifestyles, culture and civil rights are rapidly mutating throughout America.

"They thought I was dead because I was down there, real close, when the towers collapsed," one journalist said.

"I just ran for my life, but I couldn't outrun the cloud of debris raining down. I was scared. You didn't know how big the pieces would be and what would hit you."

One optimistic graphic designer, sipping beer at a pool table in a Lower East Side bar said, "These things come in cycles. Now it is bad, but it'll be

old boy who witnessed one of the planes smash into a tower and later exclaimed it was more exciting than viewing it on television.

Advertisers quickly unfurled U.S. flags above product logos in newspapers, magazines and on street signs, and printed eloquent prose about the value of life, the tragedy of loss and how America will endure and unite.

Others harkened back to the defeat of Nazism. Germany's Hamburg Chamber of Commerce said in a full-page *New York Times* advertisement: "We never forget your help and support in rebuilding our city after World War Two. We want to reciprocate."



Richard S. Ebrlich is a Bangkok-based correspondent for international media who has reported from Asia for the past 25 years. His website is at: www.ebrlich.tripod.com

On Afghanistan's Northern Border

On a dusty trail in Jabal Saraj in the Hindu Kush in northern Afghanistan, an unmanned roadblock sits in front of an entrance of an apparently deserted military installation.

A Russian jeep with four foreign journalists drives up and comes to a stop. The driver looked left. Then right. There was no sign of life.

He decided to go forward, climbing over a wooden log that functioned more like a speed-

ality it seems, could take some time.

Though the episode at the checkpoint may come across as something bizarre and quirky, other incidents along the road from the northern border of Afghanistan to the frontline near Kabul were not much different.

In the northern town of Khwaja Bahauddin, where well more than 100 foreign media covering the ongoing US air-strikes had based themselves, some westerners were given a quick lesson in Afghan civility.

Two journalists one male, one female, had gotten into a bitter war of words over the women's taking a shower, not knowing the water had been purchased by another news organisation.

But for their Afghan hosts, a man publicly cursing an unknown woman was intolerable. A council of elders was formed to hear the case. Its verdict: apologise to the woman or leave Afghanistan. The man apologised.

For a male-dominated society where women are mostly covered from head to toe, the decision was a testimony of the difficulties in employing one's sense of justice in dealing with a totally different society, especially one where faith, tribal code and social norms are inseparable.

Over the week, a few first-time-visitors to Afghanistan have discovered that dealing with lo-



Photo: www.afghan-web.com

In a society where one out of six men carries an assault rifle, life-threatening tales by foreign journalists are usually taken with a grain of salt.

bump rather than the roadblock.

Seconds later, gunshots went off and four armed men 50 metres down the road were seen striding against dusty wind as they made their way towards the vehicle.

"Goten tag. Sprechen die Deutsch?" asked a smiling 50ish bearded squad leader with a Kalashnikov rifle hanging over his shoulder as he poked his head through the jeep's door. One journalist shook his head side-to-side.

"So where are you from?" asked the man.

"USA, Thailand and Australia," replied the reporter.

"Welcome. You are our guests," he replied.

Immediately after the lengthy traditional Afghan greetings, the two parties parted.

"Peace be with you," said the man whose broad smile epitomised the hospitality of the Afghan people.

For those not accustomed to being greeted with gunshots, fully appreciating Afghan hospi-

cal has proven to be a mind-boggling experience.

A couple photographers have been scolded by the local men here for taking pictures of their women. One had his camera taken away, while another was brutally jolted after a man fired a few shots near his feet.

But in a society where one out of six men carries an assault rifle, life-threatening tales by foreign journalists are usually taken with a grain of salt.

Besides a few hiccups with the locals, life along the 250-kilometre track that runs from the northern border to the front line just north of Kabul wasn't all bad.

Eye contact with strangers on the road usually fetches a warm smile, while a stroll in the town's market will most likely attract the attention of the locals, many of whom are shy about initiating conversation.

Indeed, in a tribal society such as Afghanistan that is not corrupted by the pretentiousness of

modernity, what you see here is what you get.

And although the Afghans may be one of the most hospitable people on earth, the same can not be said about the geography of the country.

There were a few near tragic incidents along this road trip to Jabal Saraj, one of the last major towns before reaching the Taliban frontline. At one point, this outdated Russian jeep failed to make it over a big hump, forcing that vehicle to roll back down the steep slope.

The driver had to jump out as the weight proved too much for the brake. Luckily the vehicle slid left and slammed into the rock-solid mountain and not over the cliff into the Kokcha River far below.

It took four hours and two different drivers before the jeep was able to pass the barrier. Hours later at a lone teahouse in a valley near the famous Anjoman Pass where travellers stop for lunch and sip tea, a group of armed men sits and waits for potential suckers.

"There are armed bandits up on that mountain. You should take one of our armed guards with you," said one old man who presented himself as being the overseer of this pass.

Although there may be bandits roaming the area, what would be the most likely outcome if this armed escort has to go up against a group of bandits on behalf of four foreigners and an Afghan driver, asked one reporter.

He is no John Wayne, so better luck next time.

Upon arriving in the Panjshir Valley, the pivot of the Hindu Kush, burnt out Russian tanks and armoured vehicles taken out by Afghan snipers during the war two decades ago are scattered along the road side.

These graveyards of tanks are a testimony to the turbulent history this hospitable country has endured. And as the Americans carry out their strikes against the Taliban's positions, one can count on seeing more abandoned war machines along Afghanistan's rugged roads.



Getting Swept Away in Jakarta

I flew into Soekarno-Hatta International Airport on October 4th, fully expecting to be met by thousands of amok Moslem fanatics screaming for American blood, desperately seeking some newly arrived cowboy to impale on the Golden Arches of a McDonald's outlet in Jakarta.

Instead, my wife and I breezed through immigration and customs without a single Indonesian official stopping us to enquire with a smirk, "Soooo, you stinking American culturally insensitive type?" and out into the departure area, where the only hitch was our airport pickup—who was five minutes late. Even the airport taxi touts seemed unusually refrained on that day of "great expectations" come to naught.

Driving into Jakarta, a car smacked into our back bumper at one of the three consecutive tollbooths charging 25 cents each that are the first thing one confronts when entering the Indonesian capital (don't ask me why there isn't just only one charging 75 cents). But our attacker was not a crazed Osama bin Laden fanatic engaging in American-bashing, just a lousy driver. Welcome to Jakarta.

I admit to not being one of those frontline journalist types who thrives on danger and the adrenaline rush of putting one's life on the line "to get the story." Two weeks prior to my arrival in Jakarta, I had smashed up my car and cracked six ribs unintentionally putting my life on the line (and Mick Elmore's -- the editor of this illustrious magazine) in pursuit of a ridiculous elephant polo story in Hua Hin, Thailand. Consequently, arriving in Jakarta amid tales of Moslem militants threatening to carry out "sweepings" against American residents, I was feeling more courage-challenged (i.e. cowardly) than usual.



Peter Janssen is Jakarta Bureau Chief for Deutsche Presse-Agentur (dpa).

Luckily, U.S. President George W. Bush put off his air strikes on Afghanistan until the weekend, when I was already safely ensconced in the *Deutsche Presse-Agentur* (DPA) Jakarta bunker-cum-office. On Monday morning (October 8) the U.S. Embassy issued a bulletin to all American residents to stay at home and hide under their beds.

No problem for this frightened camper. I spent the day writing stories about protests (which never reached more than a few hundred "Moslem militants") outside the U.S. Embassy, burning Bush effigies and screaming threats of "sweepings," a new word in the Indonesian vocabulary coined by an insignificant Moslem group that was previously best known for crashing bars and other entertainment spots in great shows of self-righteous indignation at the creeping advance of hedonism.

On Monday evening the one American couple I knew in Jakarta called to say, "We're leaving." I started to wonder what I'd gotten myself and my plucky wife into. On Tuesday, another day of underwhelming protests outside the U.S. embassy, I called up a resident diplomat to get the low-down on what was really going on and he/she (protecting my sources here) said something like, "This is the most difficult society to really understand." Ah yes, the old unfathomable Indonesian shadow play. Was my gut feeling that these lack-luster demonstrations were proof that Indonesian Moslem militants were more talk than action, or was I missing some incredibly complex, behind the scenes political machinations that were about to blow this country apart to 16,000 pieces (the estimated number of islands that make up the Indonesian archipelago)?

I think the non-events that followed have obviously borne out that I have a great deal to learn about this place. For instance, at my next wave of demonstrations I'm going to be a lot quicker about putting in my request for a trip to Bali to do a story on "How will the recent unrest affect Bali-Island of the Gods?"

I noted that several hacks were quick to get their Bali features out during the October events, and I'm not going to be caught with my sarong around my angles next time. Yes, the famous "shadow play." Two can play at that game, and my editors had better beware. Oh yes, and about that combat pay...



Nation reporter and one-time Dateline editor Don Patban was in Afghanistan a couple months in 2001.

Elephant Writing



Photo: Mick Elmore

Eric Scigliano spent much of the last two years chasing elephants across Asia re-searching a book. The result, *Love, War and Circus: The Age-Old Relationship Between Elephants and Humans*, from Houghton Mifflin, is schedule for release in June 2002. Here Eric explains why he did it.

So why does anyone write a book? What ever led me to leave a cushy newspaper job and spend a year (which turned into nearly two) chasing elephants and elephant people around Asia and the States, and write a book about the tangled, adoring, exploitive, and sometimes fatal relations between the two species?

I recall encounters with particular elephants and wonder if one of them might have first planted the idea: the baby elephant at the Saigon zoo when I was a little kid, whom I fed peanuts and whom I imagined was my best friend? The elephants I foggily remember seeing when we drove around the Central Highlands (though I suspect I may be imagining them, based on old photos or old stamps)? The circus elephants that amazed me after we moved back to the States (and whose predicament I never stopped to con-

sider)? The American zoo elephants whose predicament (along with that of their keepers) I later wrote about?

My best guess is that the idea first glimmered a few months after the 1988 anti-democracy crack-down in Burma when, like so many other journalists, I crossed over the border from Thailand. I saw an elephant hauling enormous teak logs down to a jungle sawmill, and was even more amazed.

Then again, I've also told myself it was reckless folly and sheer hubris that led me to presume to write where experts fear to tread. Inspiration and unbelievable good fortune, I've said at other times.

Perhaps the hardened correspondents who read *Dateline* have already written their books and learned these lessons the hard way. If so, I hope they'll pardon my trampling over familiar ground.

Writing a book is like a marriage, an editor once warned me, and when it's bad it can be hell. I didn't think seriously about that--but then again, I didn't anticipate the consequences when I got married either.

Bearing down on one project and one whopping deadline for a year or two can make you ap-

preciate both the attractions and the shortcomings of overnight newspaper deadlines--journalistic one-night stands.

Elephant books especially seem to eat up writers' lives, just as elephants eat up gardens and rice paddies.

Richard Lair told me he expected to make a quick job of his encyclopedic, *Going Astray: The Care and Management of the Asian Elephant in Domesticity*, and it wound up taking more than three years and nearly bankrupted him.

I'm lucky; *Love, War, and Circuses* took only half that and left me only half-broke. Not that this was entirely a bad marriage. Arduous and protracted as the project sometimes seemed, it seemed most of all like too little of a good thing--and I just hope one or two readers will think the same of the finished product.

After turning in the manuscript and seeing it polished and praised by the editor (yes, there are still editors who edit, and praise!), I just wished I had another year and another hundred thousand words to spend on it.

The elephant/human knot proved an even bigger damn subject than I imagined going in. I learned more about paleontology and epigraphy; Porus, Pyrrhus, Perdicas, and a slew of other ancient warriors; Ganesha, Lakshmi, and Suriyothai; and infrasound and vomero-nasal organs than I ever imagined was there to be learned.

The cultural, historical, political, and ecological roles of elephants in Thailand alone are the subject of two books that I know of and could fill many more.

I spent a few weeks or a month in each of the elephant lands I visited--Thailand, Burma, India, Sri Lanka--plus past trips to Vietnam and East Africa and forays to one sanctuary and various zoos, research institutions, and historic sites scattered around the States, from Washington to Maine, Florida to California.

Horse-backing (or should I say elephant-backing?) through, I filed away as many ideas for future projects as I was able to pursue.

One lesson to be learned: However many words you're given for a good story, whether a hundred, a thousand, or a hundred thousand, they won't be enough.

One idea in particular intrigues me, though I'm far from the best one to do it. One Bangkok-based journalist (who, I should mention, was most generous with his time and knowledge as we chased elephants and elephant lore around Bangkok) wrote a fine account for a local magazine of a day spent trampling around the nighttime streets and daytime empty lots of the city with a family of Sui elephant keepers from Surin.

What a fine book it might be to follow them for a season, or a year, from the depleted forests in the Northeast to the mean streets of the city--the full story of their and their elephants' rich, hard, and imperiled lives together!

Elephants in the News

By Richard Lair



Photo: Mick Elmore, lonelyplanetimages.com

The world loves an elephant, and the media are happy to give the world elephants. Whether sad or happy stories, the universal fascination never wanes. I am given a perfect window on the media by virtue of being Advisor and International Relations Officer of the Thai Elephant Conservation Center (TECC) in Lampang, a model facility with 49 elephants. The TECC belongs to the Forest Industry Organization of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Beyond being beautifully sited and having the best show in Thailand, the TECC also runs many innovative Outreach Conservation projects, making it a magnet for all types of media.

The media has produced a slow but steady stream of stories on the TECC's pure welfare and conservation projects including a mahout training school, two mobile veterinary clinics, and a hospital; two release projects, and a sanctuary for unfit elephants. The *Bangkok Post* and *The Nation* have both been very good.

Internationally, most of these projects have at least once been the subject of a feature in a journal or newspaper, a major news story, or a TV documentary, as well as regular smaller pieces.

It is gratifying to note that without exception, every single journalist and presenter out of the great number over the past two years has been very environmentally aware, and has in their story scrupulously included information on the elephant's catastrophic plight. We elephant conservationists and welfarists can rest easy knowing that the media are solidly, and even better, knowledgeably on our side, for which many heartfelt thanks.

Recently, more "conventional stories" have been eclipsed by two other stories, the Lampang Academy of Elephant Art, the TECC's nine painting elephants, and the Thai Elephant Orchestra, the world's first pachyderm band.

A week or so after the well-covered recording sessions for the first CD in January 2000, journalists were starting to say, "Well, this story has been done to death" and seasoned observer that I am, I agreed.

But the articles and videos have just kept coming. One reason I think, is that whereas 20 years ago the media would invariably have treated elephant artists as a gag or a "man bites dog" story, the contemporary media have all treated the music and art as serious news, as a genuine artistic effort with solid conservation goals. Sure, everybody interjects some

(See more on page 22)

War: Fighting and Reporting

A Vietnam veteran reflects on the gap between journalists who cover wars and the soldiers who fight them.



Photo: Robert J. Ellison, Photo courtesy from Requiem

I celebrated Thanksgiving Day 1967 in an underground bunker at a U.S. Marine outpost called Con Thien on the southern edge of the Vietnamese Demilitarized Zone. It wasn't much of a celebration. I'm told that in Vietnamese Con Thien means "place of angels," but at the time I was there, it was just a muddy, rat-infested collection of bunkers, trenches and concertina wire. If there were angels in that place, they did not reveal themselves to me.

But there was fire from heaven, because Con Thien was well within range of North Vietnamese heavy artillery. We seldom ventured beyond our own perimeter. When we did, we were usually ambushed by North Vietnamese infantry or mortars.

We did not like leaving the relative safety and protection of the bunkers unless we really had to, but on this Thanksgiving Day, somebody far up the chain of command--President Lyndon B. Johnson himself, for all we knew or cared--had ordered that all of America's fighting men would get a hot turkey dinner.

Ours had been flown in by helicopter and was, we were informed by our intelligence chief, waiting for us at the battalion aid station. None of the four inhabitants of my bunker was eager to take the president up on his kindness, since it meant slogging several hundred meters through sucking mud a foot deep, all the while exposed to enemy artillery fire.

We were content to stay home and eat C-rations. But the gunny informed us that this was an order, not an invitation. And so--with much grumbling and profanity--we donned our helmets and flak jackets and set off down the aptly named Death Valley to the aid station, where turkey and all the trimmings were heaped into an indistinguishable pile in our too-small mess kits. It rained all the way down and all the way back. We didn't get shelled, but we did return to the bunker with food that was stone cold and heavily diluted with rainwater.

While we were still musing on the strangeness of life in wartime, a man we had never seen before stuck his head into our bunker and said cheerily, "Happy Thanksgiving, fellas! Mind if we interrupt your meal for a few moments?" Without waiting for an answer, he crawled in, no doubt eager to get under cover. Close on his heels came another man with cameras dangling from his neck. Taking a notepad out of his breast pocket, the first man explained that they were journalists on assignment for some magazine to do a story about Thanksgiving at Con Thien.

"A little something to warm the hearts of the home folks, huh?" my bunkermate Floyd Graves said. "Yeah, something like that," the journalist replied.

"Get out of our house. Now," Graves said with quiet menace. We got a good laugh out of how quickly they disappeared. It wasn't really all that funny, I suppose, but when you're having no fun at all, every little bit helps.

We did not like journalists very much. They would come to a place like Con Thien by helicopter, stay a few hours and then go away again, back to places with silverware and mixed drinks and clean sheets. They got paid a lot more than we did, and they came and went as they pleased.

You had to look out for them and take care of them and help them if they were injured, but they

did not carry weapons and therefore could not defend you.

Moreover, by November 1967 I had long since come to realize that what I was reading in *Time* and in *Stars and Stripes* and in my hometown paper bore no resemblance at all to what I was seeing and doing day in and day out. I did not then understand just exactly what was happening in Vietnam, but I knew what I read in the papers wasn't even close.

Today, journalists are credited with having focused attention on the war in a way that ended it sooner, but I don't recall ever reading a single article that didn't end with the implicit or explicit conclusion that we were making progress, moving forward, winning the war.

In his recently released book, *The Cat from Hue*, former CBS News correspondent John Laurence describes a brief visit (his second of three) to Con Thien in September 1967. Laurence who covered the war from 1965 to 1970 writes;

We did not like journalists very much. They would come to a place like Con Thien by helicopter, stay a few hours and then go away again, back to places with silverware and mixed drinks and clean sheets. **They got paid a lot more than we did,** and they came and went as they pleased.

"the biggest reason for going back to Con Thien was that ... I wanted to show Americans how costly the war had become, how brutal and wasteful it was, what it was doing to the individual young men who were trapped in it."

As his memoir makes clear, Laurence, after extensive exposure to the war, became thoroughly repulsed by it and tried to bring its horrible truths to the attention of the American people in whose name it was being fought. He was without question one of the most honorable journalists in Vietnam.

Yet, reading an advance copy of his memoir in conjunction with the recent re-release of former Washington Post war correspondent Ward S. Just's 1968 memoir *To What End* touched off a firestorm of resentment inside of me, however irrational.

Laurence writes about how CBS correspondent Harry Reasoner, safe in his Saigon hotel room, "could not stop his hands from shaking. Nothing in his life had been as terrifying, he said, as the few hours he [had just] spent" at Gio Linh, a Marine outpost similar to Con Thien.

A few hours. I spent 792 hours at Con Thien. While I was there, my best friend Gerry Gaffney had his knee shattered by North Vietnamese artillery while crossing Death Valley. My bunker companions Graves and John Wallace were both wounded by shrapnel. Another scout, Mike Bylinoski, was killed.

And when my battalion left Con Thien, we

did not repair to the air-conditioned bar of a Saigon hotel to drink gin and tonics; we merely took up new positions south of Quang Tri. Within five weeks, I was fighting in the streets of Hue, where I was wounded by shrapnel from a rocket-propelled grenade.

So what am I supposed to think when Laurence tells me how frightened Harry Reasoner was by his few hours at Gio Linh? When he tells me how frightened he himself was on more than one occasion during his brief and always voluntary forays into harm's way. How saddened he was by the deaths of colleagues. Am I really supposed to care?

For all that I am now almost 53 years old and 34 years removed from the war in Vietnam, there is still a wounded place deep inside that will forever be the 18-year-old Marine who watched journalists come and go as they pleased while I and my friends had to stay until we'd served our time--or were severely wounded or killed.

Certainly, through the long course of the war, reporting by the likes of David Halberstam, Malcolm Browne, Neil Sheehan, Jonathan Schell, Gloria Emerson and others--including Just and Laurence--helped shape public opinion and public perceptions in ways that discomfited and confounded the Washington powerful.

But very little of the total news coverage from the Vietnam War was in any way negative. For every Just or Laurence, there were many other journalists who questioned nothing.

Michael Herr, a correspondent for *Esquire* and *Rolling Stone* whose book *Dispatches* is considered a Vietnam War classic, wrote; "I was in many ways brother to those poor, tired grunts, I knew what they knew now, I'd done it and it was really something." It's a remarkable statement given that earlier in the same piece Herr wrote, "Sometimes you couldn't live with the terms any longer and headed for air conditioners in Danang and Saigon."

Maybe Herr felt like a brother to those poor tired grunts, but I doubt that any of those poor tired grunts ever felt like a brother to Herr.

In *To What End*, Just recalls how a soldier, when informed that Just would be accompanying his patrol, "became helpless with laughter at the madness of it all." But was the soldier laughing "at the madness of it all," as Just says, or rather

(See more on page 22)

Slaves to Poverty



Battambang, Cambodia: She's 15, lives with her mother and father, and they're the poorest of the poor. Someone offered to take her eldest sister to Bangkok to find work so her father could buy a water buffalo to plow his rice field. But she ended up being sold to a brothel—that was two years ago—and they haven't heard from her since.



Sihanoukville, Cambodia: A family of Aids. Husband 36, wife 33, and their 4 month son all have Aids. The husband was a long distance lorry driver who says he went with many prostitutes while working on the road. He thinks he contracted the virus in 1999. "the local people help us with food and the land lord has reduced the rent, I am not angry with my husband, it's too late now" said, the wife.

"Slaves to a job, slaves to a pimp, slaves to their parents, child slaves in a begging gang, it all comes down to one thing—money, or the lack of it," says Nick Rain about his new photo exhibition Slaves to Poverty, slated to run at Bangkok's Foreign Correspondent's Club of Thailand (FCCT) from the first Friday in March to the end of the month.



Poi Pet, Cambodian-Thai border: Vietnamese girls, all sex slaves.

Nick Rain is a Bangkok-based freelance photographer.



Phnom Penh, Cambodia: The trafficking of girls and boys is not only for the sex trade, because many slave away for gangs and spend long days begging in the streets. Other kids toil for nothing on construction sites or become domestic servants.



Phayao, Thailand: This boy is 5 years of age, his mother (in photo) lives and works as a prostitute in Bangkok and has Aids. The father died two years ago of Aids. The boy now lives with his mother's sister.



Battambang, Cambodia: A mother holds an ID card, the only photo she has of her 19 year old daughter who was trafficked to Thailand in 1999.



Xishuangbanna, China: A father holds photos of his missing girls, while his youngest daughter and wife look on.



Sihanoukville, Cambodia: She's a Vietnamese girl, enslaved by the local mamasan to work off a debt. The photo was taken in a bedroom of the knocking shop.

A Tyranny of Numbers

Most countries have trouble collecting and analyzing statistics. But the National Planning and Economic Development Ministry of the country previously known as Burma caused a few raised eyebrows last year when it announced the economy had achieved 10.5% GDP growth – making it the most dynamic economy in Asia. This year the Ministry announced provisional GDP growth of 10.8%.

Boomtown Rangoon (or Yangon as the gov-

needed to be accepted as a LDC was a literacy rate of less than 20%. Burma had previously won awards for its literacy campaigns. Overnight the official literacy rate magically dropped from 80% to 18% and the country joined Chad, Niger and Kiribati in a club for economic failures.

Burma currently claims to have a population exceeding 50 million people and Rangoon a population of four million. Strange then that traveling around Burma's capital, it doesn't feel like half the size of New York. And seeing that the biggest industry in the city is garment manufacturing, employing only around 100,000 workers, what would four million people be doing there? (When I first visited Rangoon in 1990, the official population was only two million.)

In 1993 the Ministry of Agriculture, with the technical assistance of the UN, took a census of agricultural holdings, covering a sample of 272 townships in all 14 states and divisions. The results suggested a total of 2.95 million households with agricultural holdings, each with an average of 5.4 persons. Hence a farming population of 15.9 million with direct access to at least some land and/or livestock. The government claims that 65% of the population is engaged in agriculture – there seems no reason to dispute this figure, which is probably an underestimate if anything; Burma is essentially a pre-industrial economy.

In 1993 the population was officially 43 million, based on the results of a 1983 census. That suggested that about 28 million people were engaged in agriculture. But it also suggests that 12 million people, or 40% of the agricultural population had no land or livestock at all, over and above the 4.4 million that lived in households with less than three acres, generally too small for subsistence. Given the large amount of uncultivated land in the country, to have so many landless rural poor would seem unlikely.

The government, for reasons best known to itself, appears to be over-estimating its population by perhaps as much as 10 million. The CIA World Factbook on Burma estimated its population in July 2000 at only 41,700,000.

As for economic statistics, every publication and website seems to have a different set of GDP figures. They vary from IMF figures of about \$130 per capita annually to the somewhat bizarre purchasing power parity statistics showing per capita income at \$1,200 per year. But to get the purchasing power parity they change kyat into dollars at the official rate of six point something then divide the total by the population – and the official kyat rate is roughly one hundred times the black market rate.

Burma's black market economy is probably as

large again as its recorded economy. As the population is probably a lot smaller than the official statistics suggest, the country's genuine per-capita income might be as high as \$300. A rule of thumb bears this out. Countries in Africa with annual per-capita incomes of less than \$150 tend to run as barter economies rather than money economies outside of main towns. Everywhere I have been in Burma operated on cash – even if the kyat isn't used as a store of value, it is used for trade. So given that there are roughly 42 million in the country, I would suggest that the GDP of Burma is in the region of \$12.5 billion.

How much does Burma export? Nobody really knows but we can assume that the country actually runs a slight current account surplus rather than the massive deficit the government posts every year. According to the official statistics, in the financial year ended March 31 1997, the country ran a trade deficit of \$897 million and imported \$1,831 million. It imported roughly twice as much as it exported (the current account

If we assume around \$150 tonne, illicit rice exports alone could be \$450 million – considerably more than net narcotics export receipts. (remember that while Burma's amphetamine exports may be worth as much as 200 million – it may be worth a lot less. No one really knows the size of the trade or how many speed factories are running inside Thailand, it has to import all the ephedrine, caffeine and other precursors). The country is exporting at most 40 tonnes a year of heroine. At about \$4,500 a kilo at the border, that's \$180 million.

Much has been written recently about the government being short of money. That simply isn't true – it is in the best financial position it has been in since it sold half its Tokyo embassy. It now has revenues from gas exports to Thailand and has become more zealous in collection of import and export taxes. In addition, garment factories running as joint ventures with government and military-owned holding companies are making big profits exporting to North America, Aus-

"There are lies, damned lies and statistics." attributed to Disraeli.

ernment has renamed it) is not immediately apparent on visiting the city. International-standard hotels dotted around the city have five per cent occupancy rates. Investment from overseas has virtually dried up and the expatriate community has dropped from a peak of about 3,000 in 1997 to a little over 600 according to diplomatic sources. The few foreigners left in town complain bitterly over government policy that seems to categorize investment alongside aid – money that comes into the country but isn't meant to make a profit.

Local lawyers and accountants complain that most of their current work mostly involves winding up companies – not business that generates many return customers. "The only factory working full-time in Myanmar is the mint," a local entrepreneur said derisively last year.

The story, as told by former deputy minister of National Planning and Economic Development, Brigadier General Zaw Tun, is that in 2000 Prime Minister Senior General Than Shwe took an interest in economics. He said he wanted to see growth of more than 10% for financial year 1999/2000 that ended March 31 – the previous year it was officially 5.8%. Burma's PM is a man used to being obeyed, so when the bean-counters finished their sums provisional GDP growth rate was an impressive 10.5% for the year. (Zaw Tun lost his job as a result of his frankness.)

This was not the first time, nor is it likely to be the last, that the government has massaged the statistics. All the figures for the country are suspect and subject to change without notice. In December 1987, while Burma was still a one-party state (as opposed to being ruled by a junta), the government applied for Least Developed Country status with the UN. LDC status entitled the country to some fairly generous loan write-offs and other benefits. One of the qualifications

Approved Foreign Investment (financial year runs from April 1 to March 31)

The figures are for approved MOUs only. Not all the investment that was approved actually took place.

95/96	\$668.166 million
96/97	\$2,814.245 million
97/98	\$777.394 million
98/99	\$29.455 million
99/00	\$55.610 million
00/01	\$82.433 million

[April through September 2000, includes a \$47 million petroleum investment, the largest since 1997. Most other investment is in garment manufacturing]

Source: Directorate of Investment and Company Administration

Inflation (1986 base)

95/96	22.38%
96/97	20.03%
97/98	33.54%
98/99	49.98%
99/00	14.65%
00/01	4% (provisional)

Source: Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development

GDP Growth

95/96	6.9%
96/97	6.4%
97/98	5.7%
98/99	5.8%
99/00	10.5%
00/01	10.8% (preliminary)

Source: Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development

US Garment imports from Myanmar [CIF]

Calendar years	
1989	\$7,054,777
1990	\$9,101,912
1991	\$11,474,261
1992	\$27,333,278
1993	\$29,736,204
1994	\$46,635,173
1995	\$64,354,372
1996	\$83,303,722
1997	\$85,569,912
1998	\$127,971,629
1999	\$185,113,236
2000	\$403,720,000

Source: US Department of Commerce

Note: These figures only include garments labeled "Made in Myanmar". Other garments are manufactured in Myanmar but labeled in third countries such as Thailand.

deficit was actually only \$568 million) as Burma recorded a lot of non-factor services (tourism mainly I think) and money sent home from Burmese working abroad.

Now imports are around \$2 billion with exports at around \$900 million. Subtract around \$400 million for net non-factor services and unrequited transfers and you're still looking at a current account deficit of \$700 million.

So, where's the \$700 million coming from? The usual – drugs, illicit timber exports, and perhaps more surprisingly, illegal rice exports. The government monopolizes rice exports. Burma produces around 10 million tonnes of rice, but exports very little (its best year in the financial year ended 1994-95 was 960,000 tonnes, but has only once exported more than a 121,000 tonnes since). According to a UN survey carried out in 1994, the average Burmese consumes 0.162 tonnes of rice a year. Multiply that by 42 million and the national consumption is 6.8 million tonnes. That leaves about 3 million tonnes to rot. It's much more likely that it's being trucked to Bangladesh, India and China.

Australia and Europe. Last year the US alone imported \$403.7 million worth of garments from Burma – making garments its biggest (legal) export and the US one of its biggest trading partners. In fact the material is all imported so the value-added content is probably less than half.

So is the country in recession or experiencing growth? It's likely that Burma is experiencing growth, albeit lower than the official figures. Inflation has been low the last two years (due in large part to bountiful rice harvests), though probably not as low as the government claims. And the authorities are likely to be able to keep it fairly low this year because it is financing about a third of its deficit by squeezing its wealthy narco/fishing/logging businessmen supporters to buy kyat-denominated bonds.

The fact that foreigners can't make any money there unless they are in garments or an extractive industry is only symptomatic of the fact that the government doesn't really like foreigners making a profit on anything unless it has a big chunk of the action, not that there's no business going on.

War: Fighting and Reporting

(Continued from page 17)

at the madness of taking an unarmed, untrained journalist on a dangerous patrol deep into enemy territory?

What soldier or Marine in his right mind would willingly accept someone whose allegiance was not to the men around him, but to a camera and a notebook? It is not easy for me to write objectively or with detachment about journalists and the Vietnam War.

And I understand that the job of a journalist is not, cannot, and should not be the job of a soldier. For the best journalists at least, their ultimate loyalty was to the truth, as nearly and accurately as they could determine that truth, and that is as it should be.

If too few journalists in Vietnam could be included among the best, and if the entire system of information gathering and dissemination worked only very imperfectly during the Vietnam War, the coverage of our wars since 1975 has given us cause to look back on journalism from the Vietnam War and wish for the good old days.

If, in retrospect, we realize that we can count the most disturbing images of the Vietnam War on one hand (a burning Buddhist monk, a Viet Cong suspect getting his brains blown out, a naked girl running down a road), try to conjure a single searing image from Grenada or Panama or Iraq.

The only shocking images Americans have seen since the end of the Vietnam War--a collapsed barracks in Lebanon, the bruised face of a captured pilot in Iraq, a body dragged through the streets in Somalia--are all of what is being done to us, not what we are doing to others.

Thus, memoirs like *To What End* and *The Cat From Hue* have value both for what they have to say in and of themselves and because they remind us of who and what journalists used to be before the print media were gobbled up by multinational corporations, and the line between television journalism and entertainment ceased to exist, and the greater portion of those engaged in the profession of journalism, recognizing which side their bread is buttered on, became willing instruments of our very own Ministry of Propaganda.

But even that is not the last word. In the midst of working on this essay, I received a letter from Edward Worman, a former U.S. Army combat photographer in Vietnam. He included a copy of a letter to the editor he had written that was published in a Rochester, N. Y. newspaper.

Worman was angry about *Requiem*, a powerful book of photographs from the Vietnam War, each one taken by a journalist who was subsequently killed in Vietnam or Indochina.

Worman bitterly noted that while the book includes photos by civilian journalists from all over the world, and even photos by Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army photographers, it includes none by U.S. military combat photographers.

"The names of four of my friends and fellow photographers are on the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C.," Worman wrote, "The editors of *Requiem*, Horst Faas and Tim Page, have been making money off the Vietnam War for 35 years. That's many more years than my friends had."

I had been struggling for weeks to separate my heart from my head in order to be fair to the journalists who covered the war. But then Ed Worman's letter arrived and reminded me all over again that those civilians with the notepads and the cameras could come and go as they pleased while we were stuck in the mud and madness to survive as best we could. I can't help it.

It still hurts. I suppose it always will. And if those two journalists from that long ago Thanksgiving showed up at my bunker again, I'd throw them out again just as quickly.



Elephants in the News

(Continued from page 15)

humour and whimsy, including truckloads of atrocious puns, but there is nearly always great respect for the music and painting -- and the elephants.

Many pieces have included both art and music although the orchestra has enjoyed easily five times the attention given to the painting, and the bigger venues too. I will sometimes coalesce the media venues that have covered them.

As for print media, a longish *Associated Press* story on the orchestra appeared, I am told, in as many as 2,000 newspapers worldwide. Feature stories on either the art, or the orchestra, or both, have appeared in *USA Today*, *Wall Street Journal* (twice), *Daily Mail*, *New York Times*, *Independent*, *Telegraph*, *Scotsman*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Sunday Times* (London), *Sydney Morning Herald*, and *Reuters*. Journals of mind-bending diversity have covered the *Orchestra*, *Economist*, *People*, *Time* (Asian edition), *Geographical*, *GEO*, and children's publications *GEO Lino* and *Ranger Rick*, as well as many smaller and regional publications such as *Thailand-Indochina Traveler*. A story in *New Scientist* will appear in December. Two in-flight have done feature stories, THAI Airways' *Sawasdee* and SAS's *Scanorama*. Even the monthly Danish railway magazine!

On radio, programs have been given on NPR (twice), CBC, ABC, on several BBC Services.

On television, news stories have appeared on Associated Press TV News in about 80 countries, on ABC's *World News Tonight* with Peter Jennings, BBC, CNN, Japan's *Asahi TV News*, and also as prime time news in Denmark, Germany and several other countries. A feature for *60 Minutes II* is currently in post-production. Both elephant art and music have been covered in TV documentaries.

"The Elephants of Thailand" presented by Meg Ryan, will be broadcast in the UK on December 27th, and on PBS in the US in February of 2002, as well as the BBC children's "Really Wild Show", and "Elephant Rescue" on Animal Planet.

How do you explain the phenomenal appeal of the Thai Elephant Orchestra? I have always known it as a happy story, but lately I have come to feel that the happiness comes from the audience sensing a uniquely free and non-coercive interaction between two species, between the torturer and the tormented.

Seeing elephants regimented in circuses and sequestered in zoos leaves many denizens of the 21st Century feeling uneasy, and watching television images of wild elephants, however thrilling, leaves a huge gulf between human and elephant, but to see twelve elephant musicians jamming with humans, is subtly heart-warming and hopeful.

Do you feel compelled to do the definitive take on the Thai Elephant Orchestra? The Worst Elephant Pun Prize is still up for grabs. Twenty sheets of paper made from elephant dung, the latest TECC project to hit print.



ISB
International School Bangkok
Established in 1951



About ISB:

ISB offers an academically challenging program, the highest quality professional teachers, small class size and encourages parents to actively participate in their child's education. Our teachers challenge all students to do their best by offering a rigorous curriculum and instructional approach.

Accreditation:

WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges) declared that ISB exceeds standards set by WASC.

College Acceptances:

ISB students are sought after and accepted by many of the world's best colleges and universities.

Message to Parents:

Please contact the ISB Admission Office for a personal tour, meet our teachers and learn reasons why ISB may be the very best school for your child.

Important:

Visit our website, then contact our Admissions Office at your earliest convenience to enroll your child.

- International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP) programs in high school.
- American Style Curriculum/Internationally - based
- Extensive co-curricular programs in sports, drama, art, music and IB dance.
- Highest quality dedicated and experienced teachers.
- State-of-art facilities on a 35-acre suburban campus.
- Premier housing near school.
- Convenient bus service from all parts of Bangkok.
- Professional development ensures "Best Practice" instruction.

<http://www.isb.ac.th>



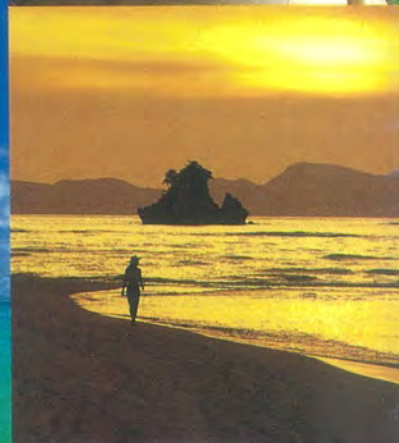
For more information please contact the Admissions Office (isbadmit@isb.ac.th)

39/7 Soi Nichada Thani, Samakee Road, Pakkret, Nonthaburi 11120 Tel: (662) 963 5800 Fax: (662) 583 5432

MORE Asian Enchantment



A perfect complement to an afternoon under the sun.



In Malaysia, thousands of kilometres of beaches encircle our many pristine islands. On Langkawi, Penang, Redang, Perhentian, Pangkor, Tioman, Sibul and others, you'll find powdery white sand endlessly dipping into crystal clear blue waters. You have the option to do everything - swim, dive, snorkel, fish and sail - or do nothing at all. A truly relaxing Asian holiday awaits you on Malaysia's shores.

Please send me more information on Malaysia.

Name : _____ e-mail : _____

Address : _____

State : _____ Country : _____ Tel No. : _____ Fax No. : _____

TOURISM MALAYSIA (BANGKOK OFFICE)

Unit 1001, 10th Floor, Liberty Square, 287 Silom Road, Bangkok 10500, Thailand.
Tel: 02-631-1994, 631-1995, 631-1996 • Fax: 02-631-1998

Malaysia
Truly Asia

Call your travel agent for more information or visit:
<http://tourism.gov.my>