

DATELINE

A person wearing a traditional Khampa festival costume. The face is painted green. The headdress is large and ornate, with a silver base and colorful embroidery of birds and flowers. The headdress is framed by a red border with silver studs. The background is a clear blue sky. The person is holding a large, round, silver drum with a red symbol on it.

BANGKOK

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS' CLUB OF THAILAND MAGAZINE

FIRST QUARTER 2003

Among Warriors:

Tibet's Khampa Festivals

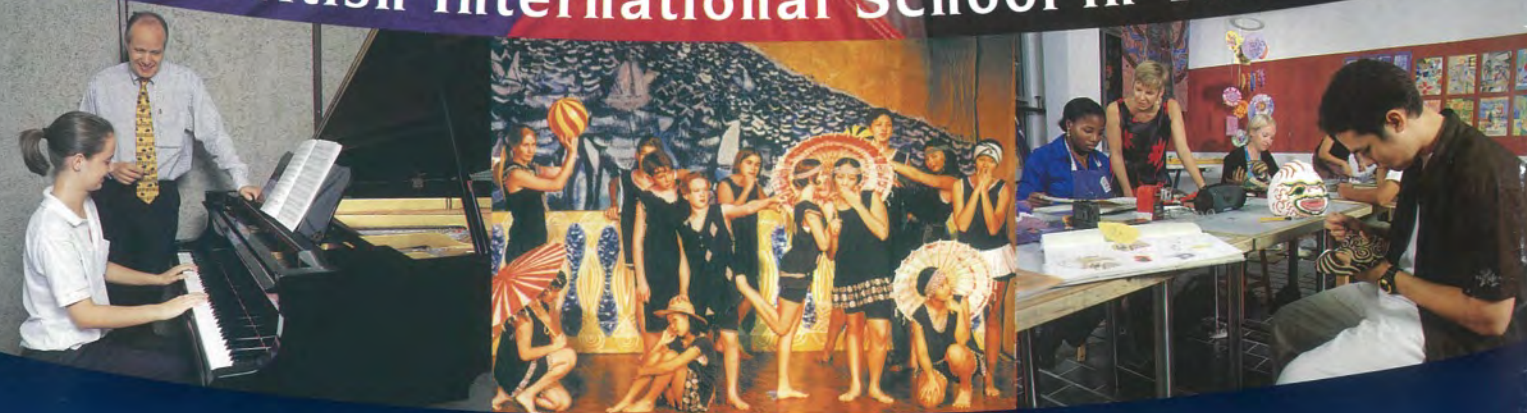
Covering Cambodia

Press Freedom

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

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FEEDING THE MACHINE

Dateline magazine looks at the stories behind the stories. All offerings will be considered, from articles and photo essays to letters, essays, haiku or sonnets. How you covered a story, what you think about how journalism works, or even some gossip for the Soi Whispers column -- send it all in, to editor Craig Knowles (cknowles@yahoo.com.au) or deputy editor Vaudine England (vaudine@attglobal.net). Submissions are paid for with glory and bar coupons.

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 PRESIDENT'S DESK

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Meet the New Board



The newly elected 2003 FCCT Executive Board members, from left to right: Outgoing President Rodney Tasker, 2nd Vice President Daniel Lovering, Correspondent Director of Membership Laurent Malespine, Correspondent Secretary Nopporn Wong-Anan, President Costas Paris, Recording Secretary Julian Spindler, Associate Director of Membership Amal Naj, Correspondent Director of Programmes Marc Laban, Correspondent Director of Publicity Craig Knowles, Associate Director of Programmes Karen Emmons, 1st Vice President Jeanne Hallacy, Treasurer Kid Choudhury.



Discussing the anti-Thai riots in Cambodia

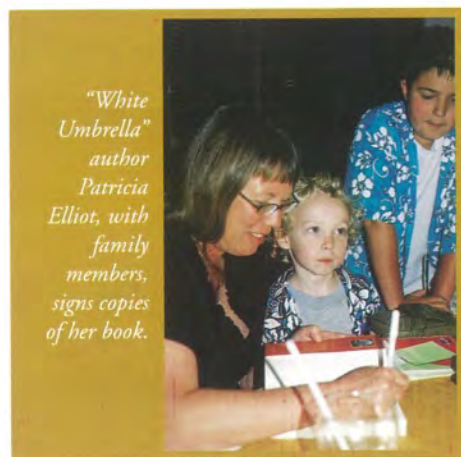
Left to right: Senator Kraisaak Choonhavan, The Nation's Kavi Chongkittavorn and Foreign Ministry Spokesman Sihesak Puangketkeow.



FCCT President Costas Paris with Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Prommin Lertsuridej following Dr. Prommin's address to the club on February 5.



AsiaWorks Television's Ratchada Chitrada, a demon on three wheels.



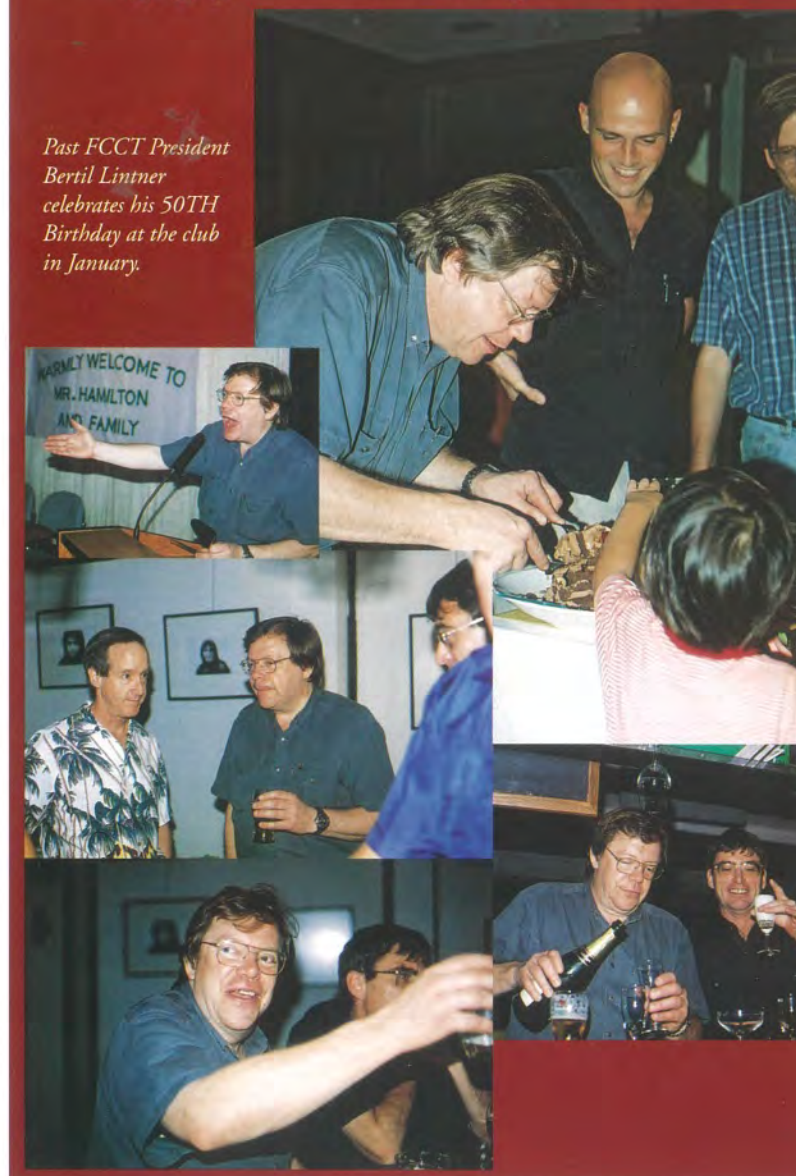
"White Umbrella" author Patricia Elliot, with family members, signs copies of her book.



Jhai Foundation Chairman Lee Thorn speaks to reporters after addressing the club on January 20.

Happy Birthday Bertil!

Past FCCT President Bertil Lintner celebrates his 50TH Birthday at the club in January.



SOI WHISPERS

Sightings of a pony-tail and a stylish waistcoat are set to drop markedly in the vicinity of Ruam Rudi 3, at the Shahrzad Middle East food hub, and at Bangkok's highfalutin receptions. **Roger Mitton**, veteran Asia-watcher, formerly with *Asiaweek* and most recently author of a weekly analysis column on regional affairs, has left us for Washington. He'll be at the heart of the (evil?) empire for the war, reporting for another, the *Straits Times*. We congratulate him and wish him well. ... Guess who's back? Star of stage and screen, well screen at least, **Ginny Stein** moved back to Bangkok after almost three years in Indonesia. Formerly with the *Australian Broadcasting Corp.*, Ginny is now roving correspondent for network SBS Australia's *Dateline* current affairs program. Ginny jetted in then jetted out again to her latest assignment in Pakistan and Afghanistan. ... The *South China Morning Post* displayed its "unique" management style, bringing Indonesia correspondent **Vaudine England** to Thailand to work as regional correspondent, then changing its mind. The Hong Kong paper now has no correspondents left outside China. Vaudine, with Kees the photographer, are showing a whole lot more commitment than the SCMPost, staying in Bangkok, exploring Laos, enjoying the FCCT and plotting a happy post-Post future. ... We tip our sombreros to **Jeanne Hallacy**, multi-lingual vice president who single-handedly saved Mexican night from imminent disaster. Who needs a film after half a dozen tequilas and a few burritos! ... Speaking of food, Treasurer and culinary talent **Kid Choudhury** has started introducing special dishes to complement Friday night jazz. He is planning more gastronomic adventures so watch this space. ... Altsean-Burma coordinator **Debbie Stothard** wins the prize for the best headline for a press release: "Earth to Burmese Junta: Dialogue Begins at Home." Quote of the Quarter: "This would be quite funny if it wasn't so tragic" – **Julian Spindler**, commenting on this year's FCCT AGM. ... As the world awaits war and drug suspects are murdered closer to home, a hotel owner on Krabi asked some Bangkok-based journalists: "Has anything happened in the world? The last I heard was that one of the Bee Gees died."



Press Freedom under Fire

Control of the media takes many forms – and the risks of speaking out in some countries are growing. In February, the FCCT brought together Malaysiakini editor **Steven Gan** and leading Thai journalists for an update on press freedom in both countries.

Photos: Peerayot Lakkananukul



On January 20, police raided the Kuala Lumpur offices of leading Malaysian news portal Malaysiakini, seizing files and dismantling computers at the online publication. Gan and his staff were interrogated.

The reason? The UMNO youth wing took offence to an anonymous letter, published by Malaysiakini, critical of government policies favouring ethnic Malays. Gan refused police demands to reveal the identity of the letter writer.

The situation has calmed down, but, says Gan, it serves as another reminder that media freedom is not to be taken for granted.

"When press freedom is being stifled, it is a warning sign that bad things are about to happen," said Gan.



"Malaysia is an Islamic state. We have freedom of speech, but no freedom after speech. There is freedom of movement, but no freedom of assembly. We have a

plethora of publications... but no free press."

Being an Internet portal, Malaysiakini does not need a publication license, but the government's wielding of about 35 other laws means Malaysiakini's survival is not assured. It went live three years ago and is today considered a leading news organisation. Its 100,000 visitors a day puts

it in the same league as major newspapers in the country, some of which are more than 100 years old.

In Thailand, meanwhile, journalist associations won a temporary reprieve from a regressive law proposing a government-appointed council to oversee, and issue guidelines to, the broadcast media.

"For the government to be in complete control of the airwaves is a perfect situation for them," Nation Group Editor Thepchai Yong told the press freedom night. "On the other hand, they know they cannot resist the reform process. So they join it – but with their own agenda."

"I'm afraid because of this concept of strong government, that many mechanisms are being used to manipulate press freedom. We really are a bit worried," added Kiatchai Pongpanich, senior editor of *Khaosod Daily* newspaper.

Pravit Rojanaphruk of *The Nation*, said that while the Thai press was generally freer than that of neighbouring Malaysia, it "is not as free as people like to think it is."

Financial imperatives and pressure from the government, often interlinked, are behind what Pravit calls the "dumbing down of newspapers."

Powerful links between the government and big business are actively whittling away rights journalists assumed had been won. And legal provisions are not strong enough.

But journalists cannot only blame their bosses, Pravit argued. He criticised the ignorance and



apathy of many journalists in Thailand's patronage-based society with its traditions of conflict avoidance.

"Journalists here also need consciousness raising," he said.

Gan concurs.

"There are journalists who are willing to draw a line in the sand and tell the government: This far, no further."



Special thanks to Reporters sans Frontieres for supporting the evening.

AMAZING NEW DEAL..

A Mass Mobilisation of Membership is now required – and will be rewarded. The FCCT board, determined to help us all have fun and get rich, has decided on two key initiatives to increase club membership. Take advantage NOW, or forever miss out.

- 1) Any new member who pays up before June 30 will have his or her enrolment fee (of Bt2,950) refunded in the form of chit-books. This is astoundingly generous. All you have to do is beat the deadline and, in effect, be given almost 3,000 Baht's worth of free food and drink. It applies only to those memberships which include an enrolment fee, that is, correspondent, associate and group memberships. This is clearly the moment for all those ditherers out there – all those who think they can pop by without joining and get away with it – to pull the finger and pay up.
- 2) Any existing member who brings in a new member will be given one free chit book (worth Bt500) per new member. It is thus time to rope in your friends, colleagues, ambassadors, legal advisers, bankers, artists, train drivers, whatever. Put the squeeze on, sign them up, and earn free food and drinks for yourself. Both these special deals expire on June 30, so get cracking.

HIGH-TECH HEAVEN..

Terrific generosity on two fronts has just transported the FCCT into high-tech heaven. Our president Costas Paris has coughed up for a new VHS/DVD player so those embarrassing moments when films don't play or screens jumble can now be avoided. Thank you Costas!

And, Eric Seldin has donated a computer, the FCCT has bought a dedicated line, and the club's first INTERNET CORNER is up and operating. Thank you Eric!

To use the INTERNET CORNER, members can buy usage cards from the bar with their bar-chits at a very reasonable rate. You will be able to check mail, surf the Net, find lovers or new jobs, all from the comfort of your own club, while you drink, eat and be merry.

Non-members will not be able to use the club computer – another reason to sign up your friends immediately!



Among Warriors:

The Khampa Horse Racing Festivals of eastern Tibet

Photo Essay By Leisa Tyler • Photographs Courtesy of AsiaWorks Photography

The horse racing festivals remain among the few vestiges of the great clan gatherings – annual parties where nomadic tribes of eastern Tibet once met to settle disputes over land, leadership and who had the fastest horse.

Banned during the Cultural Revolution, they are once again on the Khampa calendar in the former Tibetan kingdom of Kham, now Qinghai, China, and in Sichuan. But now they are under the strict control of the Chinese military.

The Khampa people had waged stiff resistance

against Chinese forces during the Cultural Revolution.

Some monks, like the one pictured on the cover photographed at the Ser'xu Festival, dress in the finest silk brocaded costumes, and paint their faces to depict other-worldly creatures. Tantaric dances aim to appease the Gods and bring fortune to the festival and its participants.

The festivals are also dancing contests and fashion parades. Dresses are of silk brocade, shirts have over-sized sleeves, there are ankle bells, fox



skin cloaks, and ribbons laden with amber, turquoise and Himalayan coral. Young women carry their family's wealth on their heads, a throwback to a time when a quick getaway was often necessary.

Khampa men are the original cavaliers, valiant horsemen who roam the grasslands. But the Chinese government's privatisation of grazing lands is forcing the Khampa out of tents and into settlements. The subsequent decline in social cohesion

and rising consumerism has left some Khampa pining for the tent. Many traditions are now only followed at the horse festivals, as daily life becomes ever-subsumed by the imposed "motherland".

As for the horse racing itself, daredevil exploits are the norm for these warriors: galloping through the makeshift arena, practising gymnastics on horseback, and twirling rifles above their heads as they ride, stabbing at small pieces of paper on the ground. Yak races are the most popular.





A Sense of Déjà Vu ...

By Joe Cochrane

In the spirit of tabloid journalism, Prime Minister Hun Sen has never let the truth get in the way of a good story.

Such was the case on January 27 when the Cambodian strongman once again went ballistic into an open microphone, this time targeting Thai actress Suvanan Kongying. In typical Hun Sen fashion, he berated and abused her, falsely claiming she said that Angkor Wat belonged to Thailand, and calling her more worthless than "grass".

There were the usual threats of violence – he warned that Cambodian mobs might destroy a Thai-owned TV station in Phnom Penh – accompanied by the jabbing finger and inflammatory tone that makes his rivals quiver and journalists smile at the prospect of a good yarn.

I was also smiling as I watched Hun Sen's speech on TV the next afternoon, sitting in a hotel room in Phnom Penh on holiday. It brought back a wave of memories from my three years as a correspondent in Cambodia in the late 1990s covering one of Southeast Asia's most controversial leaders: Hun Sen threatening to shoot down a commercial airplane carrying exiled Prince Norodom Sirivudh; Hun Sen calling the other famous royal, Norodom Ranariddh "Prince Runaway" after he bolted from Cambodia by helicopter on the eve of the July 1997 coup; Hun Sen warning the International Monetary Fund that he would cut down every tree in Cambodia to feed his people if donor aid were suspended because of rampant illegal logging.

I shook my head and chuckled at his latest rant to stir up Cambodian nationalism and perhaps garner some votes for the upcoming election. The play reminded me how lucky I was to have covered this country.

My opinion changed when I got a phone call the next afternoon: "You might want to get down to the Thai embassy," a journalist friend told me. "There's a mob of students down there." I rushed out the door, gladly putting my holiday on hold for a chance to relive some of the old days by covering a simple student protest.

How wrong I was. By the time I got to the

Thai embassy, the front section was already on fire, and looters were ransacking the lobby. Warning shots from riot police whizzed above my head as hundreds of people, mostly disgruntled teenagers and street thugs, threw rocks at the police and chanted, "Die Thai dogs, die!" Two cars on the street were set on fire as dozens more people joined the fracas.

The Cambodian police, as usual, did nothing. As dusk fell, three Policemen armed with AK-47s spent their time bumming cigarettes off me, while across the street at the embassy, rioters threw computer terminals out of a second storey window. Reports came in that rioters were razing the nearby Royal Phnom Penh Hotel and several other Thai-owned properties, including a mobile phone company owned by Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

"This is a big problem for Cambodia," my driver said in what proved to be the biggest understatement of the evening.

Yes, Cambodia has problems – many of which are of its own making. The culture of violence, ignorance and frustration with a government that couldn't care less about its people had all come together into an orgy of violence. My disgust only grew when several police officers and bystanders asked me if I had heard about the 23 Cambodian diplomats who had been "slaughtered" in Bangkok that afternoon by Thai mobs. I tried to explain that the story, which was broadcast on Cambodian radio, wasn't true, and that Cambodia didn't even have 23 diplomats stationed in Bangkok.

They didn't believe me, nor did they want to believe me. They wanted the 23 diplomats to be dead, probably to avoid losing face and justify their pointless rampage, which ended up costing the country massive humiliation and more than US\$50 million.

At this point I was fuming, at a loss for words about how a country that seemed to be on its way to better times could continue to shoot itself in the foot. Then it hit me: my anger, the whizzing bullets, fires and riots.

I was back in the Cambodia of 1997 and 1998. It's a surreal feeling indeed when as a journalist you can stand on a street corner amid utter carnage and ask, "Haven't I been here before?"

It was the same street corner where in August 1998 a car full of gunmen fired and threw a grenade at the nearby Interior Ministry compound as opposition politician Sam Rainsy was inside protesting the recounts of a national election a few weeks before. A driver for Kyodo news was struck in the head by a bullet and died. I walked over to the spot where he had fallen that night and wondered whether I had been transported back in time.

Other people, whether they realised it or not, were also experiencing déjà vu. The next day I went to Rainsy's office and spoke with his wife Tioulong Samaura, who is also a member of parliament. Her face was white as a ghost and she was shaking. "He's gone crazy," she said, referring to Hun Sen, whom the opposition accused of orchestrating the riots. She had the same look on her face as when I saw her the day after Rainsy narrowly survived a grenade attack outside Parliament in March 1997.

And as with the aftermath of that attack, the government immediately went after the opposition. Hun Sen never misses an opportunity to turn chaos into a chance to go after his opponents, and he certainly didn't let this one slide.

My senior police sources told me that Rainsy was spotted leading the demonstrators at the Thai embassy, even though neither I nor any other journalists on the scene saw him. As the looting and burning continued into the night, the police shut down Cambodia's only independent radio station

and arrested its owner, popular talk show host Mam Sonando, who is a vocal critic of Hun Sen.

By week's end, Prince Ranariddh, the national assembly president, joined the posse by saying that Rainsy was responsible for the riots. Hun Sen may have been thinking he had successfully shifted the blame onto "extremists causing political instability" – code words for the opposition – but the plan failed when Thai officials scoffed at the claims.

Thaksin continued to demand that Hun Sen fork over the money for the damage to Thai properties. So much for the benefits of stirring up Cambodian nationalism.

So who was behind the riots?

That question probably will never be answered. It's clear that Hun Sen did inflame anti-Thai feelings through his speech, which was replayed several times on state run television and radio. What's also indisputable is that Hun Sen warned that the Thai-owned TV5 television station could be attacked because of the Thai actress's alleged remarks – which it was during the riots. None of this proves he orchestrated the riots.

It's possible Hun Sen merely wanted to promote Cambodian nationalism, and the protests spiralled out of control. Perhaps rival members of the ruling Cambodian People's Party incited rioters to embarrass Hun Sen. Or maybe it was Rainsy's opposition party, also trying to embarrass him.

I learned during my years in Cambodia, at the cost of constant fits of anger and hundreds of greying hairs, that the truth rarely shows its head. Three years living outside has rejuvenated my love for the country and its people. But sadly, the anti-Thai riots have brought back my anger.



Joe Cochrane is the Southeast Asia correspondent for *Newsweek*. He covered Cambodia from 1996 through 1999.

The culture of violence, ignorance and frustration with a government that couldn't care less about its people had all come together into an orgy of violence.

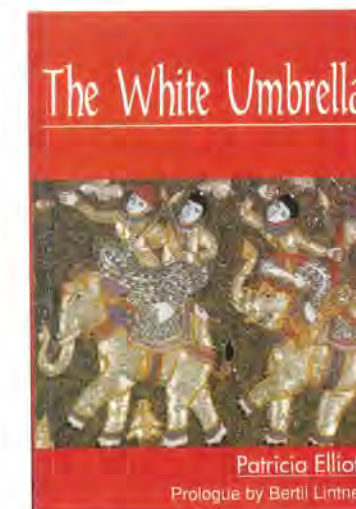
Death of a Princess

Sao Hearn Hkam, the subject of Patricia Elliott's "White Umbrella", died aged 86 on January 17, just three days after the author addressed a full house at the FCCT.

Born in 1915 in the Shan highlands into the shade of the White Umbrella – Burma's symbol of royalty – Sao held many titles during her life: Princess, Mahadevi, First Lady, Member of Parliament, rebel leader, refugee.

Sold into marriage in 1937 to Prince Shwe Thaike of Yawngwe, a man 20 years her senior who became independent Burma's first president, Sao became the first lady.

Over the next 25 years, as a privileged observer she witnessed the Japa-



nese occupation, Burma's independence from Britain, and the rise of the coun-

try's ethnic insurgencies.

That all changed in 1962 after General Ne Win took over and her husband and son were killed when the army opened fire on their house. She fled with her remaining children across the border to Thailand.

From there she was one of the founders of the Shan State Army and an active member of its War Council. For five years she sought outside help that never arrived.

In 1969 she migrated to Canada, where she died peacefully after 34 years in exile, just two months after the death of military strongman Ne Win. —Mick Elmore



Larger Than Life...

Philip Bowring, who served as Deputy Editor of the *Far Eastern Economic Review* under Derek Davies, before taking over the helm himself, contributed this obituary to *The Times*. He has kindly agreed to allow Dateline to re-print it.

Our thanks to Bob Davis for the photographs

Derek Davies was a man in the right place at the right time: Hong Kong, the mid-point of East Asia as it was being transformed by 50 years of war and peace. But few other non-Asians contributed as much to the transformation as this short, chubby Welshman. His 25 years as editor of the *Far Eastern Economic Review* saw the worthy, but ponderously titled and barely profitable, Hong Kong weekly gradually develop into a highly regarded, politically influential, often-criticised but profitable Asian regional publication.

The Review became the most successful regional weekly anywhere in the world, and by the time Davies left in 1989 it had some 20 staff correspondents in a dozen bureaux in Asia and one each in the US and Australia. It was not as slick as *Time* or *Newsweek*, or as glib as *The Economist*, but its political reporting and probing analysis of corporate and economic issues made it essential reading for professional elites throughout Southeast Asia.

Davies had a rare combination of keen intellect, fluent pen, pugnacious personality and sense of humour that made for good comradeship. He was the ideal man to lead a small but highly motivated group of journalists who worked mostly for professional satisfaction rather than their pay cheque.

His entry into journalism was itself a product of his independence. After National Service, Jesus College, Cambridge and a stint with Reuters, he joined the Foreign Office and served in Hanoi and Vienna. There he met his future wife Shizue Sanada, a Japanese pianist. British diplomats were not then allowed to marry Japanese, so he gave up his career to marry.

He moved back to journalism and to the *Financial Times*, from where he went to the Review, in 1962, becoming Editor two years later. The Review was not pre-destined to be a success. English-language regional publishing in Asia has seen many failures, and the Review's own star has since faded. So what was the secret of the increase in circulation from four figures in 1965 to 75,000 in 1990?

Two things made the Review uniquely successful, and both came from Davies. First was a willingness to give writers their head. He believed in



seeking out bright, inquisitive, energetic journalists and letting them get on with it. In the early days this could be a hit-and-miss business. But the best was very good, and even many of the poorer articles covered Asian countries and issues that other media ignored. Bright young journalists began to aspire to work for the Review. And correspondents preferred to defend what they had actually written, rather than have the homogenised product of a rewrite desk.

The second key was Davies's determination to print what the correspondents found, not what government or companies wanted. He never flinched from supporting correspondents under fire. He supported liberalism and democracy in broad terms but tried to avoid being ideological.

The Review covered too many countries to believe in one theory of governance or economy, and Davies abolished regular editorials for this reason.

The magazine frequently had issues banned or pages torn out, and some correspondents did time in prison. But this willingness to offend heightened its reputation. It took a generally critical view of America's war in Vietnam, and also boosted its reputation with its coverage of the 1967 Cultural Revolution confrontations in Hong Kong and those in 1969 in Malaysia.

Most famously, it was both restricted and pirated by the Singapore Government, and was sued for libel by the Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew. It lost, as is the norm in Singapore, but Davies declined to cave in. He was determined to live with

But life was never dull.

He wanted the staff and others around him to enjoy life, to eat well, drink well and enjoy robust conversation, serious or scatological. Hundreds of visitors to Hong Kong – politicians, businessmen and fellow journalists, as well as his own staff – enjoyed his unstinting hospitality. Often this took the form of Sunday boat trips, usually to Po Toi, a small outlying island with a fine seafood restaurant and good swimming.

He was certainly irked by the decline of the magazine he had built. Since he retired, its content had, he believed, been dumbed down, its political coverage castrated by fear of advertisers and governments. He was particularly saddened last year when its correspondent network, already much



the loss of circulation rather than operate under the Singapore Government's conditions. Later, Dow Jones, which bought control of the Review in the late 1980s, preferred revenue to principle and reached a modus vivendi with Singapore which all but neutered the news coverage of that country.

Dow Jones and Davies were always uneasy bedfellows. The US media group was big and bossy and often outraged by his weekly personal column, "Travellers' Tales", which combined pithy comments on events with reminiscences and humour.

Davies's numerous critics considered him self-centred, irascible and at times, ruthless. He could give out criticism but was less than ready to absorb it. The affection and respect that many felt for the magazine did not always extend to the man.

reduced, was merged with that of the *Asian Wall Street Journal*.

The identity of a magazine once notorious for its feisty independence was submerged in Dow Jones, its editorial line a carbon copy of the *Wall Street Journal's* right-wing editorial pages. Davies was hurt and contemptuous. He knew that the Review had been an example and inspiration to many in Asia who were working to improve journalistic standards. It had been an integral part of the great Asian boom of 1955-95.

Derek divided his relaxed retirement between London and a house near Nice. He died of liver cancer in Antibes on September 15, 2002, aged 71. He is survived by his wife, their two sons and a daughter.



Club to Re-Open in April

It's been a long time between drinks – 53 years in fact – but the Shanghai Foreign Correspondents' Club is opening its doors again in April to celebrate 70 years of foreign reporting from the eastern Chinese city. Committee members John Gittings, Fons Tuinstra and Crystyl Mo spoke to Craig Knowles, via e-mail, about the re-launch.

Dateline: What was Shanghai's early role in terms of being a media centre?

Gittings: Shanghai became the news capital of China for foreign journalism in the 1930s; it provided a freer atmosphere and a vantage point from which to watch Japanese aggression and Chinese resistance. It had four English-language publications providing employment for aspiring young journalists. They included Edgar Snow, Archibald Steele, Harold Isaacs and Tillman Durdin.

Shanghai-based correspondents filed the first reports of the December 1937-January 1938 Nanjing massacre. Cables from the Manchester Guardian's Harold Timperley were censored by the Japanese; he also published the first book on the massacre.

The local newspapers were closed down after the 1949 communist victory and during the Maoist decades the small number of resident foreign media were nearly all based in Beijing.

Shanghai remained an important place to visit. It was presented as a model of transformation to socialism, and later in the Cultural Revolution as a model of radical change. The corps of resident correspondents has grown steadily in the 1990s; it is beginning to be seen again as a city that offers advantages for reporting China from a different perspective.

Dateline: Why are you re-launching now?

Tuinstra: We are seeing a newly emerging civil society in China, especially in the industry lobby groups. Special interest groups and social activities are popping up. The Chinese government is withdrawing from many parts of social and economic life and that vacuum has been filled by a growing number of NGO-like groups. We are one of them.

Dateline: How has the Chinese government reacted to your re-launch?

Mo: We've found that the political climate has been

friendly, surprisingly so. When we approached Foreign Affairs about our organisation status they said we couldn't use the word "club" in our title, so we (technically) couldn't be the Foreign Correspondents' Club. However, on the spot they made up the name "Organising Committee of Foreign Correspondents" so we're very happy to have been officially christened!

Dateline: How do you plan to re-launch?

Mo: We've decided to hold this big event "Foreign Journalism in China – Celebrating Seven Decades" in order to announce our re-launch with a big bang and take some time to reflect on our history as foreign correspondents. The Fudan School of Journalism will be our co-hosts. The school's dean Huang Zhixiao said he was thrilled to have contact with foreign correspondents and he hoped to make our relationship long term.

Dateline: How will the club operate?

Tuinstra: We will operate on an ad-hoc basis, although we do have our first administrator. We have already received several offers for buildings to use as FCC headquarters, but right now it's too early with the relatively small membership we have.

Dateline: What does the future hold?

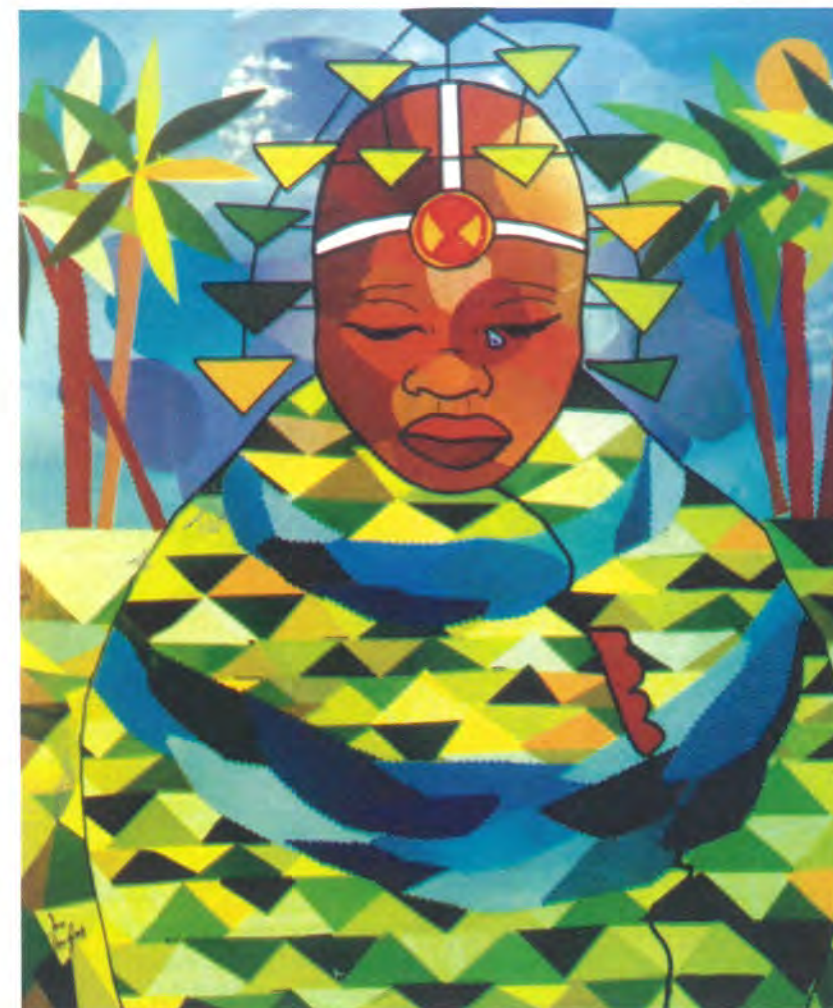
Tuinstra: We feel a new wind coming in. After the 16th party congress in November last year many personnel changes have taken place, putting new and enthusiastic young politicians in crucial positions. Shanghai published a major policy document in November stating it wanted to be on the same level as cities like Tokyo, London and New York in 10 years' time. Hong Kong will be put on the backburner and will remain a financial centre of the importance of Zurich.

We've been playing our cards very carefully, making clear that you cannot be a serious metropolis in this world without a FCC.



This Island Earth

Ian Douglas's exhibition of chromatic collage will be on display at the FCCT in June. His work has appeared in the Nation's "Best of the Week," the BK Guide, and on Thai television.



Artist Ian Douglas looks at Bangkok through the eyes of an infant. His exhibition, provisionally titled "This Island Earth," explores the needs and feelings of the city's smallest, and most vulnerable citizens.

"What started as a personal journey soon multiplied to encompass several themes: love, security, poverty, heartache," explains Douglas.

In this new collection, babies blossom from nurturing flowers, city kids play in the shadow of slums and par-

ents hug their infants, who face an uncertain future.

Douglas, who comes from Britain, has lived in Thailand for a decade. After years of travelling, he settled in Bangkok where he teaches English at Rangsit University.

Douglas says his unique technique, christened "chromatic collage" by the press, involves cut outs, old magazines, scissors and a lot of glue! How he achieves the detail and clarity, though, he chooses to keep secret.



Find out more about the artist and his work at: <http://angelfire.lycos.com/art/whatlaksi>

Hub Story

The just-released Time Out guidebook to 'Bangkok, Chiang Mai & the Islands' reveals Bangkok in a radically new light. Its editor, **Philip Cornwel-Smith**, explains how he assembled a large team of local specialist writers to get under the capital's skin to cater to a new breed of 'hub culture' global travellers who want to explore more than the historic sights.

The West tends to have knee-jerk impressions of Thailand, coloured by exotic notions of the traditional, paradisiacal East, and by sensational headlines about baksheesh, pollution, Patpong and various political and economic upheavals. So it's a revelation to see our capital bracketed among the chic elite club of cosmopolitan 'World Cities'. That's the implication

of London publisher Time Out releasing its guidebook to 'Bangkok, Chiang Mai & the Islands'.

Rival series by Lonely Planet or Rough Guides started with remote, 'untouched' destinations, seemingly 'discovered' by low-budget explorers. With palpable discomfort, they finally catalogued the 'familiar' cultures of the West.

By contrast, Time Out emerged from core Western cities and is only just starting to encompass remoter urban centres. Founded 25 years ago in London as the world's first city listings magazine, Time

Out has since launched magazines in Amsterdam, Paris and, most successfully, New York.

In similar style it's published some 40 compact, savvy handbooks to metropoli like Berlin, Barcelona, Milan, Prague, Las Vegas and Edinburgh. Bangkok is only the third Asian title after Hong Kong and Tokyo, so it's quite an endorsement of our capital's sophistication.

While Time Out Bangkok applies its ethics to the 'official culture' that dominate most guidebooks and tour itineraries – museums, monuments, temples, themed attractions – it spends

more energy offering imaginative ways to access the 'popular culture': dining, design, nightlife, shopping, social trends and each genre of arts and entertainment. These are placed in topical context, with an emphasis on the contemporary, suggesting places that newcomers would never otherwise find, and supplying full listings detail.

With the Lonely Planet tipping the scales at three times the size, Time Out has responded to today's predicament of too much information by discerning paths to navigate the culture. Plus, whole sections cater to children, gay tourists and specialist interests, from art, film and music to sport and spas.

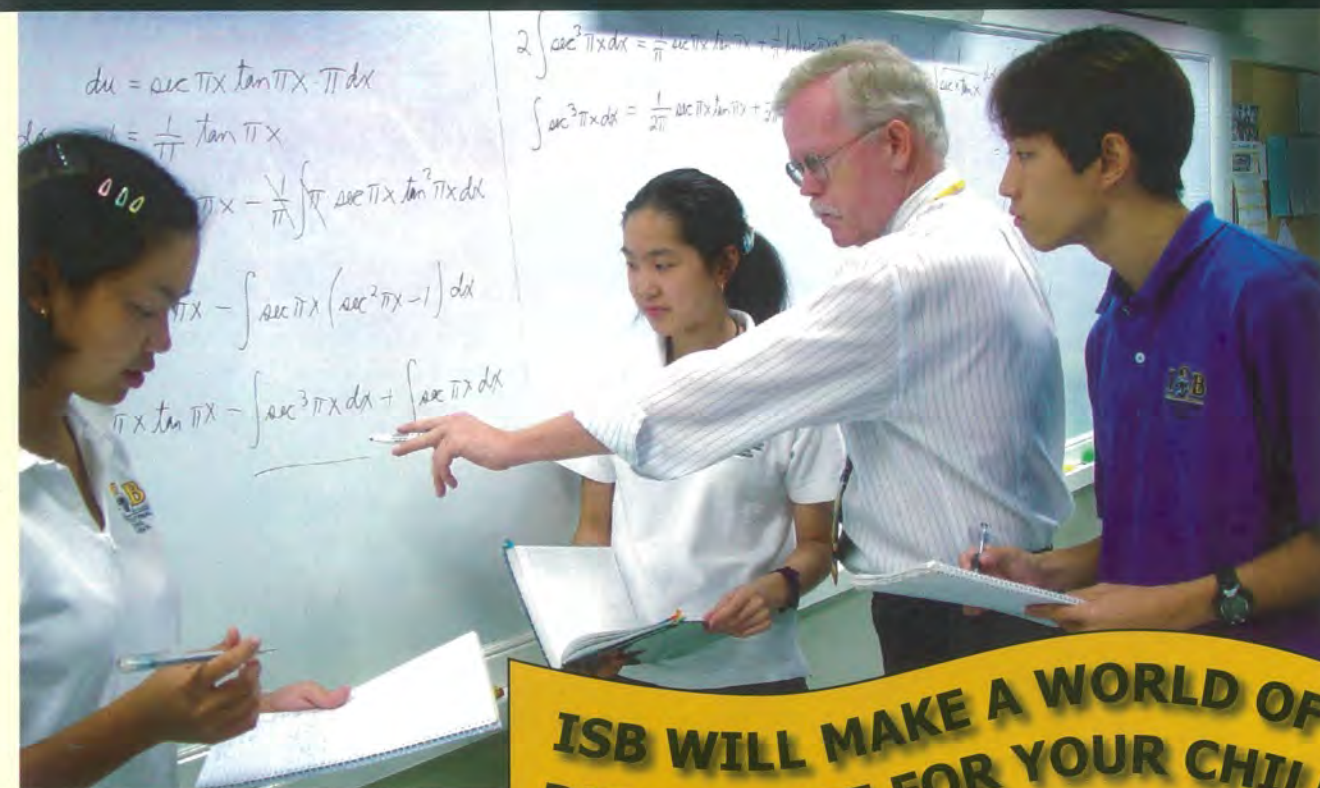
Part of the reason tourists have tended to treat Bangkok as an unavoidable stopover, boasting only a handful of must-see sights, is the predictable options presented to them. However, a new breed of urbanite traveller regards any city as ripe for finding like-minds and there's plenty in Bangkok that's appealing to these informed, individualist netizens of what pundit Stan Stalnaker has dubbed the "Hub Culture."

While Bangkok might now offer the trappings of hub status, conveying that to such a switched-on readership requires both new style and new substance. Guidebooks typically have just one or two authors, sometimes living abroad, whereas I commissioned no fewer than 30 Bangkokians, including eight Thais. It was like a literary laboratory, with each writer given much the same brief and deadline. The writing brief was not to regurgitate the standard blurbs or pander to history buffs, but to supply an up-to-date briefing so readers could have meaningful conversations with residents, which Time Out readers are the type to engage in.

This might just make being button-holed by tourists a bit more interesting for residents than the usual Groundhog Day trudge through oft-trodden attractions. And instead of being pestered for tips on where insiders go, you can simply tell guests to look it up. It may even be spotted in the hands of expats who normally wouldn't be seen dead toting a guidebook to their adoptive town.



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