

DATELINE

A close-up photograph of a person wearing a black gas mask with two large circular lenses and a filter canister on the right side. The person is wearing a grey jacket. In the background, other people are visible, some holding cameras, suggesting a press event or a conflict zone. The overall tone is somber and journalistic.

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

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Cover Photo:
Siwaporn 'Jiab' Tee
of Fuji TV in Kuwait

Photo: Tsuyoshi Tsuda



Take a front line seat at world events and be part of the buzz in the region by joining the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand. Found at the heart of Asia's news and providing a hub of conviviality and professional commitment, the FCCT is a must for anyone wanting to engage in our times. Frequent programme nights reveal and explain current affairs. Meet friends, colleagues and leading figures from the region's business, government, diplomatic and media circles at the bar. Press conferences, film nights and international receptions all happen here. Members have special privileges: exclusive internet access, including reading rights of the Dow Jones newswire; this unique quarterly magazine for free; a weekly bulletin detailing upcoming events; insight into path-breaking photography and art. Jazz on Friday nights, special gourmet nights, and more. For street cred and sustenance in these trying times, the FCCT is the only choice. **Join now.**

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 (cknowlesau@yahoo.com.au) or deputy editor Vaudine England (vaudine@attglobal.net). Submissions are paid for with glory and bar coupons.



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Things Are Looking Up

Things are looking up at the FCCT. Our membership drive has attracted a number of new members, although we would have liked more. Our programmes have proven timely and newsworthy and, after a long break, the club hit the road again with a successful trip to Angkor Wat.

I'm happy to inform you that Prime Minister Thaksin has agreed to address the Club in September, just before the APEC Summit which this year will be held in Thailand. Our two programs on SARS made headlines around the world back in May and guest speakers over the past three months also included the Thai and Pakistani foreign ministers and the U.S. and Indian ambassadors in Bangkok.

The Executive Committee sent a letter of protest to the Lao government over the detention of two of our colleagues in June who were arrested while on assignment covering the Hmong



minority in northeast Laos. Fortunately both have now been released, though their Hmong colleagues remain in jail.

We managed to get two sponsorships for our Friday night jazz events, from Phillip Morris and Johnnie Walker, thanks to the efforts of Julian Spindler and Amal Naj. We thank them both and hope that more such cash injections are on the way.

The trip to mighty Angkor became a reality thanks to the efforts of Noi and Don Filipe, whose program included the Khmer temples, and meetings with senior Cambodian government officials.

Finally, I'm sorry to inform you that our manager Khun Noi will be leaving us in August. Noi has accepted a fellowship in the United States which is a step forward in her career. On behalf of all of us, I want to thank Noi for her relentless efforts at the Club and wish her the best of luck. We will arrange a farewell party at the Club shortly before she goes.

Costas Paris

Stop Press

WINE TASTING

While some members may be more at home guzzling a beer or socking back a scotch, others have asked for a more sophisticated tittle.

Always eager to please, The FCCT will launch a Wine Basics appreciation course in September. David Swartzen-truber, one of the few true wine professionals in Thailand, will offer a four-class series in the basics of tasting, together with a fascinating history of the fruit of the vine and the development of modern wine culture.

Exceptionally well qualified, David has more than 40 years experience in the wine trade and was trained at the Institute of Masters of Wine in London. Three different wines will be poured at each week's class, with notes and discussions during the tastings.

The emphasis will be on wines readily available in Bangkok. The course will run on Monday evenings on September 8, 15, 22 and 29.

We are limiting the course to 12 people, so please contact the office to reserve your place. The cost is 3,000 Baht for members and 3,800 Baht for non-members. This price includes all wine.

CHIT BOOKS

There has been some confusion, yet again, over the chit book system, especially on Friday nights when we have been pulling in quite sizable crowds.

As the FCCT is a not-for-profit organization, we are unable to operate a cash payment system. This means you must buy a book of chits or settle your bill with a credit card.

The chit books are 500 Baht for members and 600 Baht for non-members. They are available at the bar or from the office. The chit book pricing system effectively means non-members pay a 100 Baht surcharge, yet another reason to join the FCCT.

Visiting the Prime Minister



FCCT Executive Committee members (left to right) Julian Spindler, Nopporn Wong-Anan, Daniel Lovering, club manager Porntip Prommart, Amal Naj and President Costas Paris pay a courtesy call on Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. Thaksin will address the club in September. Inset: Costas and Thaksin.



Foreign Minister visits the club

Foreign Minister Surakiart Sathirathai mingles with the crowd after addressing the club.



New French Ambassador to Thailand H.E. Laurent Aublin introduces himself to the foreign press and club guests.



Ajarn Jaran Ditapichai shares his thoughts on the war in Iraq and its repercussions for Southeast Asia.



SOI WHISPERS

A sad day for the Top Floor, but presumably good news for Tokyo, is the departure from Bangkok of the BBC's **Jonathan Head**. He's sad too. Not only is he leaving the Land of Smiles, but Southeast Asia, his home for almost a decade. But a BBC career cannot be sniffed at, even if it means moving to the cooler streets of Tokyo. And Jonathan deserves it all, not only for being a good journalist, but for beating the BBC system hands down. For not quite "being one of us" in the beginning, as Auntie Beeb would say, Jonathan was rejected for the Jakarta job until the third time he applied for it – which placed him in Indonesia just in perfect time for the fall of President Suharto. As he handled the hot story with aplomb, the Beeb finally realised that whether our Jonathan had gone to the right school or not wasn't the point after all. Institutions are odd, eh. One wins, despite them. • Maybe that's how **Bertil Lintner** feels about the rumoured whopping advance he is alleged to have scored for his forthcoming book on Korea, north and south. For years the *Far Eastern Economic Review* could have made one of their more interesting writers a staffer, but never quite pulled their finger out. Now, who's afraid of FEER? • Some warm welcomes are in order: to **Jan McGirk**, incoming Southeast Asia correspondent for *The Independent*, fresh from years in Mexico, the subcontinent and more. Meanwhile, her darling man **Tim**, of Time mag fame, pops in between trips to the Stans. And to **Nirmal Ghosh**, incoming scribe for the *Straits Times*. Rumour has it that despite being from Singapore, our Nirmal is a great guy, who likes to jam with the jazz band. He's also environmentally in tune with several conservation-minded web pages to his name. • And welcome back to **Sarah Stewart**, now mother of a baby boy called **Charlie**. Sarah had thought she would break herself back into desking at *Agence France Presse* gently, doing just two days work one week and three days the next. But then came The Call, about the latest detention of Burma's Aung San Suu Kyi, and hard-working Sarah's been on the job every day without break since. "We've always joked that the next big Burma story would likely break on a Saturday afternoon, just when it's least convenient," a tired Ms Stewart confided to Soi Whispers. "Sure enough, that's what happened". • Strangely, amid such pressures, Ms Stewart found time to administer a foot massage to **Andrew Marshall**, who claimed the treat on the grounds that he had been traversing the war zones of Aceh, Indonesia. "I was traumatised. No, scratch that. How's this: It was trauma, trauma, trauma," said Mr. Marshall of his Aceh experiences. "It was lifesaving," said he, of the massage. As for the demise of Jayson Blair, the New York Times' famous fabricator of quotes and more, the real news lies in the fall of his editor Howell Raines. Here's a rare case of where intense unpopularity of an editor among his/her journalists can actually lead to that editor's demise!



Iraq War Examined

By Vaudine England

Ask any professional what they thought of the way the Iraq War was covered and expect impassioned debate, at best.

There will also be shocking tales of who made up what "news" in the pressure of the moment, or of how one correspondent might have ignored a colleague's distress in his urgency to get on air, how another missed everything through bad planning, or how yet another took time out to loot.

There are tales too of how a print journalist on the spot when seven women and chil-

respondent Yevgeny Belenkiy.

Top of the list of controversial subjects is that of "embedding", the term coined by Pentagon war planners to describe their decision to allow journalists to travel, sweat and risk death with almost every group of troops, US and British, on the ground.

FCCT member Philip Blenkinsop firmly feels any journalist of integrity should refuse to be embedded, as to him it implies consent to the US war plans and complicity in governments' efforts to control the news.

The majority argued, however, that no one way to cover war is ideal and journalists must grab what access to the action they can get, maintaining an independent mind throughout.

"The Iraq war I found gruelling and distressing. Also frustrating," wrote in a friend in British television. "In my view we were gullible about the official version of what was going on, and too ready to extrapolate from the accounts of individual embedded reporters to draw conclusions about the overall picture.

"That's typical of the fog of war probably, but damaging to credibility if what you say one minute, you're contradicting the next...which happened over and over," she noted.

A key point to remember in all the debate about covering war is that dilemmas over how to cover armed combatants are nothing new. In Alan Moorehead's seminal trilogy "Desert War", based on his three years in North Africa in World War II, he and his small team of colleagues sometimes travelled with British forces for protection, and sometimes alone.

They wore army-issued uniforms and he writes of when "we" took this town or lost that one, indicating which side he was on. But he questions officialdom throughout his odyssey, giving a rounded picture of events, not forgetting the occasional "ten days lost due to lack of transport out of Khartoum".

What is new is 24-hour television's rolling news. Our FCCT experts concurred that one cannot expect too much from such a medium which at first seems so liberating, offering unlimited time (and sometimes money).

"Reporting was lost. It became analysis of a sporting event," said Derek Williams. "It's all about how did you rate your performance

tonight, it's not really what reporting's about.

"Any war you have breast beating and flag waving. Up till Tet 1968, the US press, by and large, was behind the (Vietnam) war. In any war, reporters tend to be patriotic, reflecting peoples' general attitudes. When you're embedded, there's no time to reflect," he said.

So true. Anyone who listened in as journalists tried desperately to fill the time with talking as they spent days in the desert, heard something like a commentary on a cricket match over too many days. Where once the thwack of ball on willow at least gave shape to the utterances, now it's interspersions of scripted comment by a soldier, preferably with flag, or an occasional background thump of artillery. As journalism, it's just not cricket.

A basic fact of television remains that if you try to put more than two facts out in two minutes, the audience will lose it. We may decry such realities, but we cannot deny them.

What every speaker that night agreed on was that when television becomes 24-hour, the need to fill time is the imperative, from which everything else follows.

Ian Williams, in the happy position of reporting for the nightly news on Channel Four in Britain, knows how lucky he is not to be called on for the 24-hour warbling competition.

"The 24-hour news machine is a hungry beast. You do the best you can within the constraints, particularly with rolling news. But it's the very nature of rolling news that it is news on demand," said Ian (who is no relation to Derek).

This means TV correspondents will concentrate on spending about 50 words to say what 5 words could do in print. They will repeat themselves endlessly, finding new ways to say the same thing, and they will simply not know enough to converse intelligently into a satellite frame for more than a few minutes at a time.

Is this the individual journalist's fault? Or the shape of the medium? Can we change it?

"Never has a conflict anywhere been covered like this, it is new ground. But I'm not sure it's new ground in terms of journalism. The imperatives of 24-hour news are of instant analysis which produces all manner of speculation. It's easy to get drawn in when you're doing it, it can be better than a video game. But I'm still much more comfortable with a news bulletin at the end of the day to get a better overview," said Ian Williams.

As the advance on Baghdad began, he took his walking boots, a radio and his children to the Khao Yai National Park, believing he'd get a better perspective on the war from there. He went to Iraq later in the conflict.

Concern about how far conspiracy or mere

cock-up affected what television consumers were told about the war dominated question time and our panelists' answers.

In the first Gulf War, restrictions on coverage sparked immense criticism, as "combat pools" travelled with troops but without communication devices, only able to report the action once it was all over.

"So embedding created a positive for governments," said Derek Williams. "When you're sleeping with the troops, of course you create bonds which can be reflected in the reporting."

The result was "a mosaic", in Yevgeny Belenkiy's view, of some very good, and some very bad reporting.

His experience highlights how mass media can be easily controlled. Travelling with a Thai doctor, a columnist and a Thai TV show, he arrived in Iraq on the second day of the Battle for Baghdad.

"It's better to say we were war zone tourists rather than journalists. We had four days in Baghdad," he notes.

But they were a different four days to the norm in which mainstream journalists were confined to a very small area, from the Palestine Hotel to the Sheraton Hotel and back.

"Our gear was listed and taped at the border of Iraq, and could only be opened at the Palestine Hotel (in Baghdad). We would have to pay US\$250/day for a minder plus hotel bills. Everyone was paying lots of money and not going anywhere.

"So we left the gear at the hotel, unopened. Then we met up with some Thai students living in Baghdad, staying with them, and borrowing cameras from them," Belenkiy said.

The BBC and CNN created more individual stars, such as "scud-stud" Rageh Omar in Baghdad, while Qatar-based Al Jazeera operated with better teamwork. People watching the war in Europe and the Middle East saw a stronger anti-war tone in line with their government's positions.

"The correspondents in Baghdad saw anger and carnage, while those who were embedded saw the pornography of war if you like, the guns going off," said Ian Williams.

The conclusion, from TV pro Derek Williams, was to follow the war through some exceptional print journalism, leaving TV to the entertainment moments – such as that statue collapse in Baghdad taken as the symbolic end of the war, which happened live just as our panelists stopped speaking.

"While we're in instant news mode, we're stuck with what we've got. It's not an easy choice," said Derek. "Far more than any television pictures, it was the word pictures that gave the better view."



Fuji TV's Jiab in Kuwait

dren were shot by US troops at a checkpoint could immediately betray the US government's line about how the car load "ignored warning shots". There were no such shots, reported the Washington Post's Bill Branigin, in an example of how the business should work.

Journalism is one of the hardest trades to judge objectively – there are few quantifiable measures of when someone did well. And we all have often virulent personal feelings even as we try to rise above and deliver a balanced product to our audience.

The FCCT tackled the subject head on with its event night titled "Covering War" featuring veteran cameraman of wars since Vietnam for CBS and now Asiaworks, Derek Williams, ITN correspondent Ian Williams, and Russian cor-

The Day CNN Shot Back

By Lynne O'Donnell

What should have been one of the few real and stunning scoops of the war in Iraq, Brent Sadler's entry into Tikrit ahead of allied forces, has instead presented a crucial turning point for the way war correspondents do their job.

Because CNN shot back.

By doing so, CNN has removed the barriers of non-aligned objectivity that had offered some protection for reporters who go into war zones believing that they are doing an unbiased, non-partisan, albeit high-risk job.

By coordinating its movements with the United States' central military command headquarters in the Gulf, CNN plucked its reporters, producers, translators, drivers and other back-up staff out of the news business and plopped them down into the mire of military intelligence gathering.

By shooting back, CNN transformed its staff from reporters to combatants. The implication that correspondents in the field can now be identified with the enemy, indeed as the enemy, has put every one of us in danger of being shot at precisely because of who we are and what we do.

At least 13 reporters were killed covering the war, most of them in tragic accidents like the minefield explosion that claimed the life of a BBC cameraman, or because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time, as when a car bomb exploded and killed an Australian cameraman.

CNN's actions, in employing former soldiers as bodyguards who shoot to kill, takes self-protection beyond the Max Hastings theory of carrying a gun because a soldier is unlikely to look at your press card before pulling his trigger. It removes the assumption of objectivity that has for many war correspondents been their only protection in hostile situations.

I woke up early on the morning of Sunday, April 13 and, according to what had become habit, immediately turned on the television in my room at the Dim Dim Hotel in Irbil.

CNN was broadcasting live video-phone footage from inside Tikrit, where Brent Sadler and his team had entered in a convoy after

spending the night huddled under a bridge outside the city.

They had sent their GPS coordinates to central command headquarters in Dohar the day before, Sadler said, to ensure they weren't hit by bombs being dropped by the fighter jets that were shocking and awing the city into submission.

Many reporters in the north had plastered the roofs and windows of their cars with the letters 'TV' in the hope that by marking themselves as journalists, they'd make known their benign role in the war. I'd decided against such a move because I didn't want to be targeted by any scoundrels who saw unarmed journalists as easy pickings for wads of cash, laptop computers and satellite phones.)

I'd spent the better part of the day before on the highway linking Tikrit to Kirkuk, the northern city that had fallen a few days earlier. The looting and vigilantism that had been unleashed across the north had turned the area into a no-go zone where residents of the villages along the road shot at any approaching vehicles for fear they were about to be robbed, raped and murdered.

At the final checkpoint south of Kirkuk, about 60 km outside Tikrit, I'd stopped cars and talked to people who had been shot at by the frightened villagers, including a Japanese news crew whose windscreen had an impressive bullet hole and whose very lucky photographer had a bullet graze tracing the side of his bald head.

I decided not to take the risk but to wait until the next day. I filed for the *Sunday Times* on the allied push from Baghdad towards what was still considered would probably be the final stand for Saddam loyalists and headed back to the comfort of the Dim Dim.

Of course, my mind was made up the following morning as soon as I tuned in to see Sadler's extraordinary, compelling live report.

The city that had been the bastion of support for Saddam Hussein's government, the one that he had showered with money and privileges, and from whence he derived the name of what would become the most pow-

erful clan in Iraq, the al-Tikriti, was a ghost town.

Military bases had been deserted, seemingly minutes earlier, as doors swung creekily in the breeze and tanks stood row upon row with their hatches open. The city that had been expected to present the American military machine with a real battle was shown by Sadler's cameraman to be yet another walkover, just waiting for the allied forces to march in and declare it a Saddam-free zone.

Back at TV Central, one of the battalion of retired military types embedded with CNN told Sadler he was collecting some great on-the-ground intelligence. Where are you now, he asked. Sadler answered by reading out his GPS coordinates.

Then the inevitable happened. The CNN convoy was fired at.

As bullets met their mark – hitting at least two – Sadler didn't react as I might have, with a string of expletives. No, he seemed to hold onto his cool and said: 'Under fire. Under fire.'

As the convoy sped out of the area, the bodyguards who are now an inextricable part of the CNN war-reporting crew, fired back at their assailants.

It was not reported whether or not CNN had killed anyone, but as these guys are usually former British Special Air Service personnel, they are trained to kill and it should come as no surprise to anyone if they left the place littered with bodies as the convoy raced to safety.

What had begun as a sensational scoop has, in my view, become a shameful episode of grandstanding that threatens to change the way we cover war, perhaps forcing us to arm, travel in armoured vehicles, forego the colourful, spontaneous quotes from locals, and certainly negating the scant protection afforded by such small measures as pasting the letters 'TV' on the side of the car.

Granted, things have been changing in recent years as insurance companies have demanded that news organisations send their reporters on so-called hostile environment training courses.

One Dutch colleague in Irbil said that an Amsterdam radio station she had filed for from innumerable hostile environments for more than a decade refused to take her reports on the assumption that she did not have insurance. Of course, she does have insurance but telling them that didn't change the minds of the station managers. They still wouldn't take her reports, but they did have the temerity to call her satellite phone to take reports from another reporter for whom the issue of insurance was never raised.

Some, like CNN, now employ former military men as a matter of course and barricade themselves in hotels they block-book and allow no one outside the company to enter without permission.

Others, like Reuters, employ former soldiers



Lynne O'Donnell (centre) is a freelance journalist based in Istanbul.

as 'safety Consultants' who, as in the case of the chap in Irbil, are more concerned with telling the reporters what not to do, like enter areas that haven't been pronounced clear of landmines.

The presence of military personnel amongst their teams obviously provides CNN and others with the confidence that they need to perform to the maximum on the battlefield. But reporting with all the hallmarks of a military mission can, and inevitably will, run into trouble.

The pay off, as ever, is more kudos back home. It's not encouraged, but if it comes off it's viewed with great kudos, a CNN staff reporter told me after Sadler's exploits. But that they got shot at was inevitable. It went on so long that something had to happen.



Humanitarian Crisis

By Boonthan Sakanond, Inter Press Service

The month-long detention of two European journalists in Laos, the ensuing global outcry and their sudden release is emerging as a classic case study of how media, diplomacy and so-called 'dissidence' work in contemporary times.

The ethnic Hmong 'insurgents' the journalists went to cover turned out to be a group of starving villagers desperate for help.

After the arrest of the journalists, overseas 'dissident' groups of Hmong who publicly 'condemned' it secretly rejoiced at the publicity the episode brought to their campaign. Then, Western governments initially trying 'diplomatic' channels finally used old-fashioned methods of arm-twisting against the Lao government to secure their release.

"The real story of what happened and how it happened is fascinating but I don't think anybody has the patience or time to listen to it," Vincent Reynaud, the French journalist released from captivity, said in an interview with IPS.

Reynaud, a video cameraman and Thierry Falise, a Belgian photographer – both based in Bangkok – were arrested on June 4 while returning from a trip to cover what was ostensibly an ethnic Hmong insurgency in north-eastern Laos. Also detained was Naw Karl Mua, an Hmong pastor who is a U.S. national and accompanied them as an interpreter.

Charged with complicity in the killing of a village guard by a Hmong tribesman during their trip, the two journalists and the pastor were first sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment in a show trial on Jun. 30 by a provincial Lao court.

Within a week however, all of them were released and deported from the country following intense pressure from the French, Belgian and U.S. governments.

Of immediate concern to both Reynaud and Falise is the plight of the Hmong 'insurgents' most of whom were old men, women and children with no food to eat – and the fate of two Hmong men who were arrested with them but are still languishing in jail.

Contrary to the claim made by Hmong exiles based in the United States and France that these groups are waging some 'rebellion' against the Lao government, they are really more in need

Hmong groups and prefers to call them 'bandits'.

"We will continue to campaign for the release of two Hmong men who were arrested with us and now face an uncertain fate in the abysmal Lao penal system," said Reynaud.

But it is unlikely the journalists will get any help in this cause from their governments, which are relieved to be off the case now that their nationals have been released.

While the media campaign for the release of the three foreigners has proved successful, there has been criticism of some of its aspects, mainly the hyping up of the case against the Lao government.

"Laos has been described in recent weeks as a 'rogue state', as a 'Taliban regime' in a U.S. Senate inquiry, as a state engaged in 'ethnic cleansing' against

its Hmong minority. All of the above allegations are untrue," wrote Grant Evans, a well-known scholar of Lao history writing in the Bangkok Post.

"While such allegations appealed to simple-minded senators from Texas, he said, "this disturbing proliferation of White House-inspired 'newspeak' is now applied to Laos even by usually level-headed journalists".

"There is much which needs reform in Laos, not least its judicial system. And it needs a free press," wrote Evans.

"But when the 'free press' outside is so cavalier in the way it reports Laos, then it sets a poor example for Laos, and sets back the cause of an open society here."

Inter Press Service is a global news agency that focuses on events and processes affecting the economic, social and political development of peoples and nations, especially in the global South. Its World Service can be seen at <http://www.ipsnews.net/>



Reynaud and Falise after their release. Photo by: Soranai Nontpiyakul

of urgent humanitarian assistance, said the journalists.

"The overseas groups are using these poor people to fight a proxy battle with the Lao government and are not bothered about bringing about a solution that will help save them," said Reynaud.

The United States in particular has a large overseas Hmong population numbering over 200,000, almost all of them exiles from Laos. Hmong rebels were hired by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) during the war in Vietnam in the sixties to fight communist North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao troops.

The Hmong continued their 'insurgency' after the communists took control in Laos in 1975. But in the eighties and nineties, they were reduced to small bands of men, women and children fighting for survival.

The Lao government refuses to use the term 'insurgency' to refer to these

Going it Alone...

Recently back from the West Bank, Ginny Stein reflects on the difficulties of being a solo operator in conflict zones.

As a "solo" operator there are few times when you really are completely solo. In most countries you work with a translator/fixer who, for most of the time, is actually with you. A lot of time that means having an extra pair of eyes, and someone to bounce things off in terms of safety, security and the story itself.

But every situation is different. In Israel, due to the unique nature of the place and the story I was working on, I found myself at times working alone. My Jerusalem-based Palestinian fixer was not able to cross over with me to the West Bank. Although I was a legitimate journalist, the Israeli military would only let him cross to work with journalists who had an Israeli press card. I didn't have one as they weren't being issued due to a general strike that began two days before I arrived and was still going on the day I left. So I ventured to the West Bank alone, hitching a lift in an ambulance.

Once in the town of Tulkarem, things got tricky. I suddenly found myself in a situation where I was trying to film a group of foreign activists in a confrontation on the street with the Israeli military.

This is where I found myself taking risks I hope I will never be stupid enough to take again. I had crossed into the West Bank without my flack jacket, thinking I would not be going anywhere where I would need it.

There were no other journalists, camera operators or photographers around. It was a conflict in which I had absolutely no experience in covering and no way of knowing the "rules," or how to immediately interpret the situation.

There was an armoured jeep in the middle of the street, firing live ammunition over the heads of children trying to get home from school. They were in breach of an Israeli-declared curfew. Four international activists were operating as "human shields" trying to get the kids home. The soldiers were taunting the kids, who were throwing rocks.

Hamas militants, who had threatened



Ginny Stein is a video-journalist for SBS Australia.

me earlier when I tried to film them, were hiding out of sight of the military, but they were visible to me, and me to them. There I was, thinking, "Shit! Do I stand out in the middle of the street and film and hope that because I am clearly visible as a journalist/camera person that they won't shoot me? Knowing that's exactly what happened to a British cameraman who was killed only days before. Or do I keep out of sight?" I went for a bit of both, but all the time I felt I was a marked woman.

I may have been unnecessarily unnerved. If I was with someone who knew the ropes I would have been able to at least ask how things are done, but as I was completely solo, it was a rather unpleasant experience that I would hope to never repeat. I was out of my depth being there alone. I should not have allowed myself to get into that situation. Perhaps part of the problem is that I was working solo. There was no one to pick me up on it. I work for a program that has few resources. Once assigned to a story, you are left pretty much entirely to your own devices until you finish.

Before leaving for Israel, I had been talking to SBS about the station's inadequate insurance coverage for video journalists employed on contract. It was agreed the insurance cover was inadequate,

and we were told we should try and get our own insurance (but no-one will cover individuals in war zones), for which we would be reimbursed.

Going to Israel, under SBS's current policy, I had been told that in the event I was killed, my beneficiaries would get 300,000 Australian dollars (normally it would be A\$500,000 but because I willingly went into a war zone it was A\$200,000 less). If I was injured and couldn't work I would receive a limited period payment of A\$320 per week.

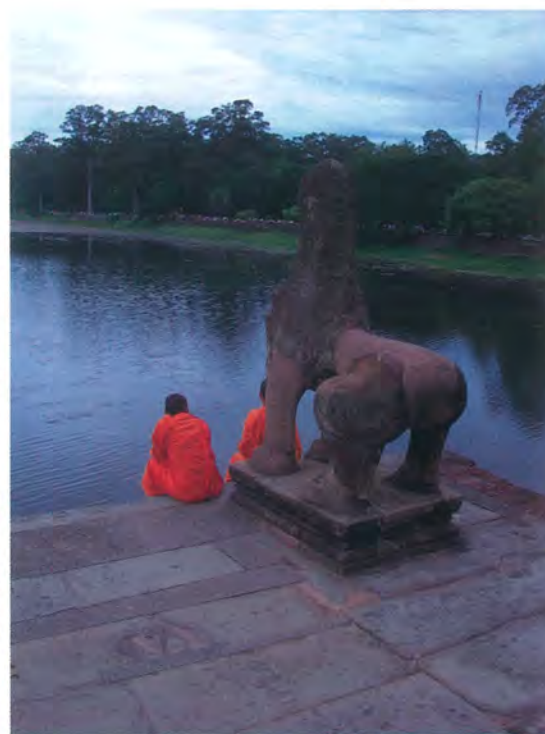
So, there I was standing out in the middle of the street, having just spent days speaking to victims of what activists call the military's deliberate targeting of media and activists, wondering what the hell I was doing? I still don't know.

I guess it's all about whether the media is considered, or considers itself a target, and on the weapons that are in use. In East Timor there were times you felt threatened but you also knew that out of sight, you were mostly OK. In Afghanistan, the danger was different again. Assurances/safe passage could be sorted out going into certain areas. In the occupied territories, it's high-tech, sniper-central. It is urban warfare. There is nowhere to hide.



Visiting Angkor

Photos By Tom Mote



The FCCT's "Angkor without the Crowds" visit to the famed Cambodian temples in late June proved highly successful, thanks to host Don Philippe's contacts and special insight.

More than 40 people visited the ancient ruins, courtesy of Bangkok Airways, and stayed at the luxurious Sofitel Royal Angkor. Our guests were able to visit sites such as Bapuon, which largely have been closed to the public in recent years.

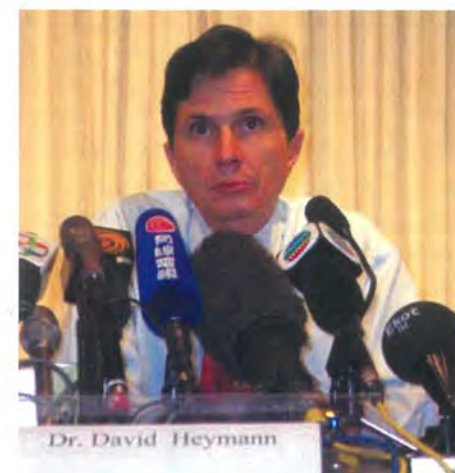
Other highlights included an informal briefing with H.E. Khieu Kanharith – Cambodia's Secretary of State and Information – and H.E. Dr. Thong Khon, Secretary of State for Tourism. Specially arranged mini-buses meant our guests were able to travel between temple sites at their leisure and were not herded from place to place as is often the case on other package tours.

Our thanks to Bangkok Airways, the Sofitel Royal Angkor – especially its owner Khun Supachai Verapuchong and General Manager Marc Begassat; Dr. Pascal Royere and Gerald Difloth from the Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient, and of course, Don Philippe, who told Dateline the club can expect similarly fabulous trips in the not-too-distant future.



SARS Coverage

By Craig Knowles



At the height of the SARS crisis in April, the World Health Organization dispatched its head of communicable diseases, Dr. David L. Heymann, to Thailand, as Bangkok hosted a meeting of ASEAN leaders.

The FCCT hosted an evening with Dr. Heymann before the meeting, which, from a news perspective, turned out to be one of our most successful events in recent years.

In his only major address during his time in Thailand, Dr. Heymann told a packed clubhouse that SARS seemed to have been contained in Vietnam.

"Hong Kong, Singapore and Toronto are also making great efforts, and we believe we've seen a peak in the number of cases that will occur in those countries and that they're on the down slope as well," he said.

Within minutes, wire service reporters were calling in urgent headlines "WHO says SARS has peaked in Hong Kong, Singapore;" "WHO says SARS has been contained in Vietnam" and so on, which were being transmitted worldwide as news alerts.

It became one of the biggest non-Iraq sto-

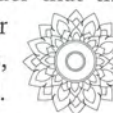
ries in the world that day. Within an hour The Associated Press, Reuters and Agence France-Presse had it at the top of their news summaries.

The next day it was front page of newspapers across the region and further a-field.

When Asia's financial markets reopened that day, countries that had watched in dismay as their stock markets tumbled in previous weeks, saw a sharp rebound. Some airline stocks, battered by the crisis, gained a startling 6 percent. Analysts attributed the surprising turnaround to "the WHO's comments that the SARS outbreak seems to have peaked in Hong Kong and Singapore."

Before addressing the club, Dr. Heymann gave several one-on-one interviews to major television networks, including CNN. These were beamed from the studios of AsiaWorks Television, directly opposite the club on the Penthouse floor.

The evening served as a reminder that the FCCT is an important conduit for news. We can bring in the big-hitters, make and break news, and do it well.



Remembering Greg Davis

By Murray Sayle in Tokyo

Big and burly, Greg Davis had only to walk into our club wearing his customary boots, windcheater, open-necked shirt and wide grin and we were transported to some dusty Central Asian dictatorship or clawing Cambodian jungle, reminding us that the FCCJ started off as the correspondents' mess after the Second World War, and was once the haunt of journalists who knew more about combat rations than capital adequacy ratios.

general who had escaped to the United States and started life again as a humble cobbler—a heritage both artistic and heroic in which Greg took much pride. After a footloose Californian childhood Greg enlisted, at 18, in the US Army and was assigned to intelligence. He arrived in Vietnam in 1967 and served there until 1970, a time covering some of the most intense fighting of the war.

Vietnam marked him, as it did everyone who spent much time there, with a sense of the futility of war and the folly of relying on good intentions not guided by knowledge. Not that Greg was a teenage spy, an unlikely role for such an open and honest man.

His job was technical, ranging from climbing telegraph poles to recording radio traffic and, as he later said, he killed no one. But his unit was stationed in South Vietnamese bases and later in a defoliated rubber plantation, arousing suspicion that Agent Orange might have had some connection with his fatal illness. In Vietnam, Greg lived among Vietnamese and made many friends, whom he contacted years later (some of his ashes are to be scattered there). He bought a Nikon in 1968 and, on a visit to Kyoto on R and R, began to take photos.

In 1970, his hitch up, he returned to Kyoto with a 'Nam buddy, Mark Lundgren (who gave me some of these details) and soon after met his wife, Masako Sakata. Japan was to be their home base for the rest of his life.

Greg had an eye, a Nikon and not much else, and freelance photography is a tough yen. His break came in 1977 on a typical Greg assignment, when he spent a week with the famous volcanologist Harun Tarzieff inside the crater of just-erupted Mount Usu in Hokkaido. For once there was no competition around and Greg's photos made Life magazine, which got him through the door at Time Inc. I met him at the FCCJ about then, and as

old 'Nam hands (I was there '66-'75) we had a lot to talk about, and stories to plan. Our first started at 4 a.m. one winter morning in a brewery in our village, a pictures and words essay for a food magazine on how sake is made. The brewer, Oya-san insisted that we sample more and more of his contest-grade brew and by 6 a.m. we could hardly stand up.

Devotion to duty paid off and we did many more in our village and Further a-field – in 1982 we accompanied Pope John Paul II to Hiroshima (where we were thrown out of the Pearl Harbor Bar on racial grounds) and on to Nagasaki, resulting in some memorable spreads in the London Sunday Times magazine (and in my case, most of the New Yorker of July 30, 1995.)

Greg had mastered not only photography, but, much rarer, how to use photos to tell a story, sensitive to the feelings of his subjects.

Between 1988 and 1998 Greg was a contract photographer with Time, based in Tokyo. He covered stories in Cambodia, Vietnam, Burma, the Central Asian republics cast adrift by the disintegrating Soviet Union, two long assignments in North Korea – Greg often spent years applying for visas and sometimes got lucky and went just about everywhere in one of the most tumultuous decades Asia has known. He was twice injured by rioters in South Korea, with a head wound and a broken arm.

Masako has received stacks of condolences from writers who worked with him. Ned Des-

mond, former Time Tokyo bureau chief who was with him in the Kobe earthquake, the Soviet Kuriles and many another hot spot, speaks for us all: "Greg was the best partner a reporter could ask for. He was always ready to go, and always ready to take chances. He was a great guy that you could always count on to do the right thing, by his partner as well as by some poor soul he didn't even know". In those years Greg and Masako renovated a magnificent old farmhouse in Tsukiyono, Gumma, which soon became an R and R retreat for road-weary writers and photographers – a natural aim for a couple who treasured friendships as carefully as the rest of us save clippings or collect contact sheets.

Greg left Time in 1998 to concentrate on black and white documentary photography, without the pressure of a deadline. The first fruit was a study of the people of Gumma, his adopted prefecture, for which he wrote his own thoughtful captions. Had he lived he planned more books, and was experimenting with Internet magazine photography, which he saw as the new outlet for an independent eye but it was not to be. His widow Masako, his friends and partners, all of us in the FCCJ and the cause of compassionate journalism have suffered a great, an irreparable loss.



Courtesy of the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan.



Photo from the FCCJ

Greg was only two weeks short of 55 when he died on May 4, after a short illness at the Sanno Hospital in Tokyo, but he had already packed a lifetime of compassion and adventure into all too few years.

Greg's courage, intelligence and commitment to the truth made us feel that our trade had some lasting value after all, and might even be worth dying for if and when, on a battlefield or in a hospital, luck ran out.

Gregory Byron Davis was born in Los Angeles on May 17, 1948. His father, Byron, was a professor of architecture fascinated by Oriental cultures; his mother Tania, born in Harbin, China, was the daughter of a White Russian

Farewell Wong

Paitoon 'Wong' Kittidachanubhap died on May 12, aged 47, after battling lung cancer for several months. Friends say he slipped away peacefully, tapping his hand to music playing in the room. Over the years, many a club member has spent many an evening enjoying Wong's company, his cheap beers and the best collection of music videos in town. Wong was cremated at Wat Hualumphong surrounded by friends and family. His younger brother Sam has taken over the bar. We miss you Wong. Bangkok will never be quite the same.



Photo: Luci Standley

New Era for FCCT Golf

By Jeremy Colson



Past-President Rodney Tasker prepares to vent his frustrations on a small white orb.

The FCCT is very much an in-house club with programmes, press conferences, parties, films, seminars, wining and dining, jazz and more. But all these take place atop the Maneeya Centre. There's only one club activity, golf, that regularly takes place outside the club. For that reason, club golfers see themselves as ambassadors for the club.

Whether we're playing in Bangkok, Chonburi, Kanchanaburi or Khao Yai, we book in the name of FCCT, and proudly so. Our last outing at Suphaphruek Golf Club attracted five full flights, and was our largest to date.

We presently go by the name of The Hackers. It hasn't always been so. The original FCCT Golf Club started in 1991 but lapsed for almost a decade. It was reconstituted in February 2000 as The Swingers, but several of the founding members felt that the implications of marital infidelity were wholly inappropriate. The name was changed to The Hackers in July 2001.

So far, the name, with its connotation of modest sporting talent, has been quite appropriate.

Life Member Charles Hyland, now playing off 10, has shown the most dramatic improvement – but by sneaking in up to six games a week and a major private coaching programme.

Other stalwarts, such as Dominic Faulder, Rodney Tasker, Lee Miller, Robert Horn and myself (who also have to make a living) have progressed more modestly.

Changes are in the wind. Some of the new Hackers are young and promising. Notable among them is American Tom Birsinger. Fairly new to Bangkok, he holds a key position with a well-known local pharmaceutical firm and with a bit more practice may soon be in a position to challenge Charles Hyland as our top regular player. (Former Club Treasurer, Doug Logan, plays to a much lower handicap than Charles, but is often abroad.)

Other new hackers, such as Siam Landmark managing director, Paul Elliott, and On Green managing editor Harry Scott, add quality to our ranks. Our two new lady members, Anne Elliott and Pen Jayavelu, are both very talented.

There are also some excellent guest players in the wings, and we hope very much they will join the FCCT.

The Hackers may soon be strong enough to take on other teams in the Bangkok League – and maybe they will even have to change their name. The Scoopers? The Deadliners? The Paparazzi? All suggestions welcome.



Peter Shuler, Daniel Wyborn, Stephen Simmons and Charles Hyland prepare to do battle out on the links.



Thai Country Club Pro Daniel Wyborn, right, presents a Lufthansa broly to FCCT Life Member (and slightly above average golfer) Charles Hyland.



FCCT stalwarts at the start of a recent game with a good sprinkling of journalists for once.



Suphaphruek Golf Course, the FCCT Hackers' home links, was recently the scene of a record five-flight turnout.

The FCCT Hackers are grateful for kind sponsorship from Accor Hotels & Resorts, Thailand Golf Guide, Au Bon Pain, Bangkok Airways, Lufthansa, Air France and Groovy Golf Map.

Beautiful Boxer

By Richard Ehrlich



A transvestite kick-boxer who endured vicious fights to earn money for a recent sex change is now immortalized in a new film, "Beautiful Boxer."

The true story of Parinya Charoenphol, who now appears as an elegant woman with long hair and a shy smile, provides a rare glimpse into the psychology of Thai transsexuals and their role in this Buddhist society.

"A walking paradox: a girl trapped in a man's body, who fought like a man to become a woman," waxed Thailand's GMM Pictures and Spicy Apple Films upon the film's release.

Before undergoing a sex change operation in 1999, Parinya was a young male transvestite who showed up for kick-boxing bouts wearing lipstick to kiss male opponents, despite their shock and embarrassment.

Outraged boxers vowed to beat Parinya to a pulp amid claims that a transvestite kick-boxer was a disgrace to the professional sport and a kinky "tarnishing" of pristine Thai culture.

Parinya, however, knocked them out, won prizes, and soon gained a following among cheering fans.

After saving enough for a sex change in a Bangkok hospital, he became a she, with a life story that caught the attention of Ekachai Uekrongtham, a Thai-born film director and producer.

Boxing, Buddhism and the biology of gender

profoundly influenced Parinya's life.

"In my next life, I want to be born as a real man in my heart and soul because now, in this life, I was born with the body of a man but with the heart of a woman," Parinya said in a taped interview.

Parinya is famous throughout Thailand and received widespread international news coverage when, before her sex change, she fought men while wearing make-up.

"I was able to wear make-up while boxing, nobody stopped me. I wore foundation, powder, lipstick and so on."

When Parinya kissed male opponents at the end of boxing bouts, audiences went wild. Affectionately nicknamed 'Nong Toom'

by Thais, she broke new ground for transvestites and transsexuals in a society where many people claim to be sexually conservative while simultaneously tolerating widespread prostitution and alternative sexual lifestyles.

Thai TV often includes transvestites in soap operas, comedies, talk shows and other programming though they are usually portrayed in absurd slapstick or as lonesome characters.

Liberal Bangkok officials allow an annual "gay pride" parade in the Thai capital.

Parinya, however, said she was never gay.

"For me, I'm sure who I am. I'm now a transsexual. I always wanted to be a woman. I've always been a woman in my heart and I want everything about me, physically, to be a woman. It is not the same as being gay." Parinya, 21, began kick-boxing as a 12-year-old boy.

In 1998, when a teenage Parinya was about to fight – and win – his first major bout, he started to cry when doctors said he had to strip for the weigh-in to confirm he physically qualified as a male.

Today, Parinya can no longer fight in Thailand because women are not allowed to kick-box. "Maybe I will box overseas," Parinya said. "I received some offers from America and Japan to fight." Her future, however, will focus on "modeling, acting and singing," she said.



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