



DATELINE

BANGKOK

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS' CLUB OF THAILAND MAGAZINE

FIRST QUARTER 2008

In This Edition:

**Understanding
Thai Media**

**Inside Burma:
Winning a Pulitzer**

Philip Jones Griffiths



Amantee

House of Oriental & Tibetan Antiques & Arts

Amantee is already renowned for its unique garden ambience, and its choice collection of sensibly priced and regularly replenished Oriental and Tibetan Antiques and Arts epitomizing Asia's rich artistic heritage.



Amantee - Le Café is now offering a carefully designed French and Asian cuisine, sensitively prepared with French "savoir faire" by Jérémie Sebag and offering the better of two culinary cultures.



Amantee has also become a singularly attractive venue for memorable private celebrations, meetings, cocktail parties and the like.

If you haven't already visited Amantee, we cordially invite you to do so. We promise, you will be pleasantly surprised...

Map and details available on:

www.amantee.com

Open 365 days a year & merely 20 minutes from downtown Bangkok!..



Amantee
House of Oriental & Tibetan Antiques & Arts
131/3 Chaeng Wattana 13,
Laksi, Bangkok 10210
Tel: 02-982-8694-5



i think, therefore IB

kis
Inspired by community
Celebrates **10** Years
Knowledge Inspiration Spirit



www.kis.ac.th
TEL +66 (0) 2274 3444

KIS International School is an IB world school authorized for all three International Baccalaureate programmes for students aged 3-18 years (Primary Years, Middle Years and Diploma).

KIS guides students to be engaged global citizens and lifelong learners by offering a broad and balanced curriculum of high academic standards. Our curriculum, being truly international, incorporates the best aspects of many different national curricula. This not only provides an in-depth global perspective, but also facilitates the transfer of expatriate students from KIS back to their homes or elsewhere.

We believe that a socio-economically diverse student community contributes to the international educational experience of all our students. Our financial aid programme supports the goal of a diverse student body and is extended to students who show potential as IB learners.

KIS is a leading light in IB education. Contact us for more information or to visit our campus, located near Asoke-Ratchadapisek.



BNH Spine Centre Thailand's First Comprehensive and Advanced Spine Centre.



Here is the first Spine Centre in Thailand.
World-class technological advancements in spinal diagnosis, treatment and surgeries, are professionally offered by a team of highly qualified medical experts in the field.



Here, you will find a team of highly regarded bone physicians, who have been intensively and professionally trained to deliver the best and most affordable spinal treatment.



Here is Thailand's most resourceful Spine Centre.
A complete range of sophisticated and innovative surgical procedures is available, including Minimal Access Spine Surgery (MASS) which results in a smaller aperture, less pain and faster recovery.



Here is a world-class hospital offering world-class hospitality.
BNH Spine Centre is a centre of full-cycle, most up-to-date spinal treatment and research from around the world.

BNH Hospital (Sathorn-Convent) 9/1 Convent Rd., Silom, Bangkok 10500 Tel. 02-686-2700 Ext. 2201, Fax. 02-632-0579 www.BNHhospital.com E-mail: info@BNHhospital.com

Harrow is celebrating ten years... why not join us?

In 1572 a school was founded in Harrow, London that during its long history has surely become one of the most famous and prestigious schools in the world. In 1998 Harrow International School was founded in Bangkok with the aim of bringing the best of British day and boarding education to Thailand. Since then, Harrow International School has gained a reputation for academic excellence and a broad-based educational experience for students - it's what we call "the best that you can be."

For more information about your child's future please contact the Admissions Office

Tel: +66 (0) 2503 7222 Ext 1127, 1129, 1130

Fax: +66 (0) 2503 8286

Email: admissions@harrow.school.ac.th

Web: www.harrow.school.ac.th



HARROW
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL



Accredited by



THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS' CLUB OF THAILAND
Penthouse, Maneeya Centre Building
518/5 Ploenchit Rd., Phatumwan, Bangkok 10330
Tel: 652-0580-1 Fax: 652-0582
E-mail: fccthai@loxinfo.co.th
Website: www.fccthai.com

PRESIDENT
Nirmal Ghosh, Bureau Chief, Thailand
The Straits Times
Tel: +662-661-6207 Mobile: +66 89-897-0802
Fax: +662-260-0893 Email: tigerfire@yahoo.com

1ST VICE PRESIDENT
Jonathan Head, SE Asia Correspondent, BBC
Tel: +662-652-0500 Mobile: +66 81-988-7696
Fax: +662-652-0666 Email: jonathan.head@bbc.co.uk

2ND VICE PRESIDENT
Patrick Barta, Wall Street Journal
Tel: +662-254-8217, Mobile: +66 81-309-9109
Email: patrick.barta@wsj.com

TREASURER
Dominic Faulder, Asia-Inc.
Tel: +662-233-5587 Mobile: +66 81-837-2639
Fax: +662-236-7242
Email: dominic@mozart.inet.co.th

CORRESPONDING SECRETARY
Oliver Fall, Asian Disaster Preparedness Center
Email: oliverfall@hotmail.com

RECORDING SECRETARY
Henry J Silverman, Global Spectrum
Tel: +662-259-8559, Mobile: +66 81-889-4200
Email: henry@silverman.net

DIRECTOR (MEMBERSHIP)
Stephen Wright, Dow Jones Newswires
Tel: +662-266-0744 Fax: +662-238-2661
Email: Stephen.wright@dowjones.com

DIRECTOR (MEMBERSHIP)
Justin Moseley, Consortium UK
Tel: +662-231 3282 Mobile: +66 81-381-7941
Fax: +662-231-3281 Email: justin@consortiumuk.net

DIRECTOR (PROGRAMS)
Jeanne Hallacy, AsiaWorks Television
Mobile: +66 86-003-2316
Fax: +662-652-0582 Email: hallacy@loxinfo.co.th

DIRECTOR (PROGRAMS)
Karuna Buakamsri, TV11 News and AsiaWorks
Television
Email: karuna44@hotmail.com

DIRECTOR (PUBLICITY)
Marwaan Macan-Marker, Asia Correspondent
Inter Press Service (IPS) Asia-Pacific
Tel: +662-246-7877-78 Mobile: +66 81-413-8206
Fax: +662-246-7876 Email: marwaan@ips.org

DIRECTOR (PUBLICITY)
Daniel Ten Kate, Bangkok Post
Mobile: +66 81-771-2105 Email: dantenkate@gmail.com

PAST PRESIDENT
Amy Kazmin, Financial Times
Tel: +662-255-3609 Mobile: +66 81-827-3750
Fax: +662-255-3608 Email: akazmin@loxinfo.co.th

DATELINE BANGKOK

Editor: Patrick Barta
Deputy Editor: Marwaan Macan-Marker
Design & Layout: Phaisan Nangnoi
Advertisements: Finn Balslev

Marketing & Production
Scand-Media Corp., Ltd.
4/42 M. 3 Thanyakarn Village, Ramintra Soi 14,
Ramintra Rd., Bangkok 10230
Tel: 02-943-7166-8 Fax: 02-943-7169
E-mail: scandmedia@scandmedia.com

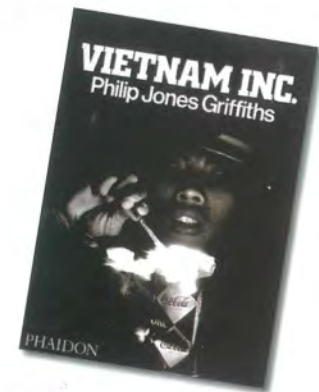
The opinions expressed by writers in
Dateline Bangkok do not necessarily reflect
the views of the Foreign Correspondents
Club of Thailand or the editors.

Contents

First Quarter 2008

PRESIDENT'S DESK
7 Free Speech, Free Media

CLUBBING
8 • Change of Personnel
9 • Soi Whispers
10 • In Remembrance: Philip
Jones Griffiths



UNDERSTANDING THAI MEDIA

11 Introduction
12 The Establishment
15 Alternate Voices

BANGKOK LIFE

18 Sexpat Lit

INSIDE BURMA

21 Winning a Pulitzer

FCCT EVENT HIGHLIGHT

24 Thai Movie Night

BANGKOK BEAT

24 Where's the Beef



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; 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.

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 Patrick Barta (Patrick.Barta@wsj.com) or deputy editor Marwaan Macan-Marker (marwaan@ips.org). Submissions are paid for with glory and bar coupons.

THE IMPERIAL LEGEND



" Small details, memorable moments,
each moment is to be savoured
for the pleasure it brings "

—THE—
IMPERIAL
QUEEN'S PARK HOTEL
BANGKOK

www.imperialhotels.com

199 Sukhumvit Soi 22, Bangkok 10110, Thailand
Tel. +66 (0) 2261-9000 Fax. +66 (0) 2261-9459

A member of Imperial Hotels Group Thailand

75th
Anniversary
THE IMPERIAL
QUEEN'S PARK
HOTEL BANGKOK

The Regent's School
www.regents.ac.th
Bangkok: +66 (0) 2690 3777 Pattaya: +66 (0) 3841 8777

Bangkok Campus Pattaya Campus

ROUND SQUARE WES

A fully accredited international school offering IGCSE and IB courses

Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial College, Stanford, MIT, Kellogg have offered places to our recent graduates

your partner in print
SCANDMEDIA



We have helped foreign companies and organizations with all sorts of graphic jobs in Thailand since 1994. In the process we have become friends with some of the nicest people in this part of the world.

Building trusting relationships with the people we work with is the only way we want to work in this business. Even it sometimes takes new clients by surprise. Chances are that you will like it.

Our account executives are champions in finding creative ways to maximize your outcome and make you look good. Sometimes, even a small change to the way you at first envisioned your printing job will make a big difference on the bottom line or maybe add new functionality to the job.

BROCHURE
FLYER
FOLDER
MAGAZINE
LEAFLET
BOOK
STATIONARY

ScandMedia -
your partner in print.

www.scandmedia.com Call 0 2943 7166-8

Free Speech, Free Media

By Nirmal Ghosh

With Thai politics continuing to ferment – and Myanmar simmering next door – our club is into an interesting year. It is a challenge to be president in the circumstances, but also a pleasure to work to support the Club along with my wonderful colleagues on the Board.

In 1999 I was president of the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines, but Focap was a small club without a clubhouse, which while consigning us to what appeared to be a life of fairly constant impoverishment, also gave us a lot of freedom and flexibility.

Our FCCT is a different matter altogether. Fortunately under the very able stewardship of past president Amy Kazmin, we ended our last financial year in the black. This was thanks to strong programmes on the back of continuing, interesting transitions in Thailand's political landscape; the sustained support of a handful of steady and much appreciated sponsors; and our world film series which has brought a new dimension to the Club, for which we owe the indefatigable Lekha Shankar.

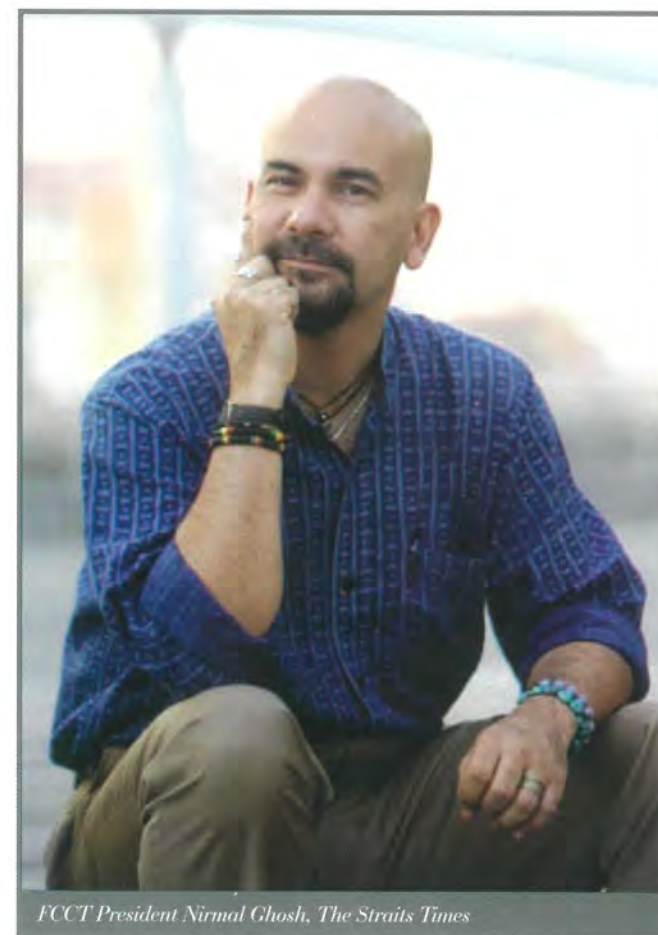
We had started last year on the concept and plans for a new look for the FCCT, involving a new logo and a refurbishment of the club. The idea is to give something back to members in terms of clubhouse improvements.

Only some of the plans got off the ground towards the end of last year, and this year we plan to move them along as best we can. How much we can do though, depends on the state of our finances.

Meanwhile in our own transition, Assistant Manager Thanutra Teerasuphaset took over as our very capable Acting Manager. We hope to sort out niggling internal problems and leave the FCCT a more modern and comfortable, and more well oiled (and of course still solvent) establishment for the next Board to inherit.

In April, some board members both present and past, and others involved in the production of the handsome volume *The King of Thailand in World Focus*, were granted the privilege of an audience with His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, in connection with the book and a donation to the King's charities from the proceeds of its sales.

We had an interesting and engaging conversation with



FCCT President Nirmal Ghosh, *The Straits Times*

His Majesty, who very graciously shared with us much more than we had expected, of his valuable time and thoughts.

In the course of the year, there is always the possibility for controversy, and even flak. This is nothing new to the FCCT, and in fact demonstrates how relevant we are.

We are proud to welcome distinguished speakers and newsmakers of all stripes, and will continue to uphold our tradition of – and commitment to – providing a forum for free, fair, informed and civil discussion on issues of the times. Free speech and a free media are indivisible from the profession of journalism.



Change of Personnel

TRANSITIONS: Khun Leng, our long-serving office manager, has moved on to a great new job in human resources at WWF in Bangkok. In her four years as the club's public face, she managed countless crises and kept her cool despite all the crazy farang around her. For all her help in keeping FCCT sound, we extend our deepest thanks to Khun Leng and wish her all the best in her new career.

With Khun Leng's departure, FCCT will be re-structuring its office management. Leng's assistant, Thanutra Teerasuphaset, better known as "Pink," will take on a greater role in running day-to-day affairs, managing much of the basic office administration. Also, the FCCT board has hired a second "co-manager" to oversee the food and beverage component of the club, including nightly programs.

The board believes this new, split management structure will help office business run more smoothly, while allowing each manager to focus on the areas they're most interested in.

Pink, who is 23, joined FCCT last year as an office assistant. She is a graduate of Ramkhamhaeng University,



where she studied English language. She held a number of jobs before coming to FCCT, including a stint at BBC's Thai news service and as an assistant coordinator for a local television program. She has also worked as a freelance translator and for a Thai magazine.

Pink enjoys traveling – over the years she has traveled to Los Angeles, Hong Kong and Singapore, among other places – and she hopes to someday visit Korea. She says she's looking forward to making FCCT run as smoothly and efficiently as possible. She also has journalistic ambitions of her own: Someday, she says, she'd like to be writer herself. Good luck Pink!

The new food and beverage manager is 32-year-old Sasithorn Worchnina. She studied management at Phranakhon Rajabhat University and later worked for six years helping manage a Japanese restaurant.

She visited FCCT for a recent program about Tibet and grew interested about the club, especially after she saw Chinese diplomats and human rights activists talking peacefully about Tibet. "No place in the world could bring such different people together," she says.



OUR SINCERE THANKS

The FCCT gratefully acknowledges the generosity of our sponsors whose contributions to the Club's programs and activities have ensured we remain Bangkok's premier public forum. Please support our sponsors when you can, as they support us!

- Coca-Cola (Thailand) Limited and ThaiNamthip Ltd., bottler of the Company's products, including Coca-Cola, Coke Zero, Sprite, Sprite Zero, Fanta, Namthip and Minute Maid Splash

- Pfizer Global Pharmaceuticals and Pfizer (Thailand) Ltd.
- Riche Monde (Bangkok) Ltd., exclusive distributor of fine spirits, including Johnnie Walker Scotch whisky
- Unilever Thai Trading Co. Ltd.
- Star Alliance
- Maneeya Realty, our long-suffering and ever-supportive landlord



SOI WHISPERS

Politicians in Thailand have traditionally worked on the assumption that the electorate has an effective memory functioning in nanoseconds rather than years. A quick survey of the current cabinet line-up might support this proposition, but it nevertheless got freshly incumbent premier **HE Samak Sundaravej** into some very hot water during a celebrated interview with *Aljazeera* English in February. After a bracing, somewhat revisionist tour of recent history in Thailand's troubled south, an emboldened Samak rather ill-advisedly disputed the notion that significant numbers of people were killed during the October 1976 unrest at Thammasat University. "Only one guy died in Sanam Luang," he insisted, dismissing any other account – filmed, photographed, reported or otherwise – as "dirty history."

••• The PM also suggested that *Aljazeera* correspondent **Selina Downes** had not done her homework and was far too young to know the truth of the matter. "Were you born yet?" he demanded to know. Though sorely tested, Selina deserves immense credit for not falling for this old ploy and divulging her age on air. Little did the PM know that stooped over the very camera filming him was genuinely veteran correspondent **Derek Williams** – who is almost old enough to be Selina's dad, and is probably the only foreign journalist still based in Bangkok to have actually witnessed firsthand the horrifying violence that black day. Derek really had to bite his lip to keep himself off mike as the interview went down – and down. Having come up lame on *Aljazeera* (and prior to that on *CNN* – can there be some coincidence here?), Samak joins General **Suchinda Kraprayoon** as one of only two Thai prime ministers in the past three decades not to address the FCCT upon taking office. Oddly enough, Suchinda is forever associated with the next major round of Bangkok bloodshed in May 1992, also in the vicinity of Thammasat. But, hey, who needs history lessons?

••• Speaking of which: "The...Pulitzer Prize in photography... recognizes that photography provides lasting images that chronicle the major events of our time." Thus reads the caption to an *Associated Press* photograph of a young man's corpse being battered at Sanam Luang in October 1976. One of many images of utter mayhem in Thailand that circulated to a horrified world at the time, it belongs in a series that won veteran Vietnam photographer **Neal Ulevich** his Pulitzer for spot news photography in 1977.

••• Keeping up this great tradition of recording history in the raw, congratulations once more to **Adrees Latif** of *Reuters* for his Pulitzer-winning shot of Japanese photojournalist **Kenji Nagai**'s terrible death in Rangoon last September. According to one account, it was Adrees's father, **Mahmud**, who encouraged him to make the submission. "When I saw the picture, I told him, 'This is a prize-winning picture,'" his father recalled. According to the report, Mahmud hoped "his son's next ayards come from less dangerous assignments, such as covering the Beijing Olympics this summer." Less dangerous? We certainly hope so, but remember to bring your own lighter.

••• Should the club have a policy on blue-veined cheeses? This rather delicate issue arose after an elderly member showed up for one programme in a striking translucent cheesecloth outfit topped off by what appeared to be a gold lame shower hat with uncertain solar power applications. The long-suffering board struggled for hours with the vexing issue of appropriate attire, and then courageously gave up. The real problem, it turned out, was not the cheesecloth attire but the cheesy ... Well, perhaps we had better leave it at that.

••• Former treasurer **Henry Silverman** was recently nearly back in the spotlight moderating a very successful programme on "sexpat" and other English-language authors who reside along the East Bank and in other parts of this fair City of Angels. Following his recent unexpected debut on YouTube (as reported exclusively in the last edition of *Soi Whispers*), Henry has continued frantically shedding weight to promote a sleeker, more suave appearance on the little screen. Alas, such has been his success that any footage of the FCCT's recent literary soiree is quite likely to show an apparently abandoned moderating rostrum topped off with a bunch of talking orchids. Please be assured that Henry was in fact there for the entire evening, though he again failed to control questioners. This time it was former *CNN* correspondent **Tom Mintier** asking a rambling question off mike from the floor, naughty fellow.

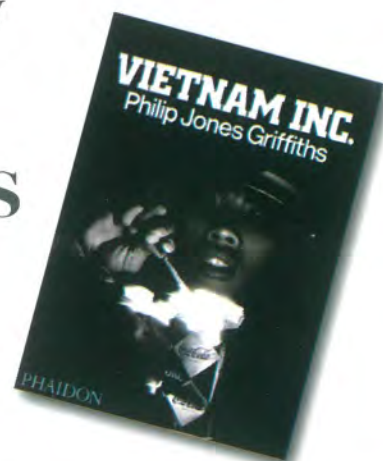
••• Readers who have been puzzling over the recent transmogrification of *The Nation* may be forgiven for wondering what the two-tone headlines and SkyTrain friendly micro inserts are all about. Not many people know this, but the fact is that the brave *Nation* editors thought it high time they asserted some intellectual proprietorship over those very mischievous little pirates at Not *The Nation* – The Website You Can Trust (www.notthenation.com). The idea was to launch a product that totally defies imitation. And, it must be said, they have succeeded beyond anybody's wildest expectation.

••• For anyone interested, the FCCT office still has a small cache of t-shirts for sale to the sartorially challenged and impecunious. Beneath a delightfully insane depiction of most of the membership riding a tuk-tuk is the caption "Chasing the story for fifty years." For reasons best known to themselves, some members have been asking incredibly irritating questions like, "What story?" or, "Why did it take half a century?" With hindsight, perhaps a slightly more edgy message was needed. Quite unsolicited, one member sent in an excellent suggestion by way of the headline on his email: "I was insulted in the FCCT and would like an explanation!" Brilliant – instant knockoff in Patpong guaranteed with obvious scope for international marketing in His&Hers matching pairs. Ladies, try this: "I wasn't insulted at the FCCT and demand to know why not!" It is original concepts of this calibre that make Bangkok truly the fashion hub of the world. Now, if the board could only agree on some suitably noxious colours ... durian, house red, blue cheese, sickly orchid ...



Philip Jones Griffiths

Philip Jones Griffiths, one of the pre-eminent photojournalists of the 20th century, passed away in March after a long struggle with illness. A much-loved face in Asia, he last addressed the FCCT in November 2006 in one of the highlights of the year. Karen Emmons, a longtime FCCT member, remembers her friend.



I never knew Philip Jones Griffiths as a giant in photojournalism that the obituary writers describe. He was just my friend of more than twenty years, a big man certainly who loved the pasta we typically cooked in the midtown Manhattan apartment where he used to live, the unmarried husband of another friend in a time that now seems so long ago. Considering he had a house in London and how often he repeated that the departure lounge of Kennedy airport was his favorite place in New York City, I was never quite sure why he stayed there so long. Love, perhaps. Even after she left him.

Philip was as difficult, bullying and generally obstinate as he was charming, hilarious and clever. All exasperation with him was easily forgotten with each greeting of "Ohhhhh my darling" in his mellifluous Welsh cooing that made me feel like some mourned dream arisen in human form from a poem written in backcountry Wales.

Of course that shard of sweetness would be crumbled under his constant rebuttals and challenges to whatever tripped out over my lips. There was no other side of an issue for Philip, only the "only" side, his side; all else was generally the "standard operating view". And that was the enemy.

"Defy the SOV" was his mantra. I

got courses in it, lounging on his well-worn black leather sofa of his tiny study stuffed with books, until I left New York. But it picked up where it left off with each return visit, even after my other friend and their daughter moved out.

It took me up in Cambodia, a not always-welcomed companion in a country where I had moved partly because of Philip's stories and Philip's enchantment with the people (the women more so, of course) of Indochina.

I did reject his insistence that the killing field of Cheung Ek had only been a Chinese cemetery. I also learned to ignore his tirade against the existence of AIDS. And as time flew by, I learned to ignore a lot of what I called his "clucking".

But I adored Philip as a story teller – my heart widens for any gifted teller of tales. Philip had a seductive Dylan Thomas cadence, a humorist's timing and his photographer's eye for tender detail.

He told me once, and not so long ago, of his first erotic experience, in church as only it would be for Philip, and the way the hairs on the back of so-and-so's neck (he remembered her name but I can't) fluttered as she sang in the choir and stirred his atheistic soul as much as other body parts.

He told me, as he pointed out the bushes in the Angkor Wat temple where he'd hidden, a long tale of his having snuck in before Jackie Kennedy was due to have a private tour in order to get the only photos of her strolling with a man believed to be her lover.

That story ended with him caught crawling away through the tall grass by a Cambodian officer of some sort who acknowledged him as "Mr. Griffiths" before asking how the war was going in Vietnam. To which Philip responded with his usual, "Ohhhhh," and without missing a beat, "you'll be pleased to know the Americans are losing." Upon which the officer departed, leaving him to dispense the only photos of a highly guarded private moment.

Philip returned not long after that to what was a passionate anger for him, America's war with Vietnam. Philip revered the North Vietnamese, as peoples go, largely because they had stood up to what he considered one of the most evil SOVs – the American government.

I saw many of his photos from those days before I left New York. But it was always Philip's words, "Report what you see" and "Beware of the SOV" that stayed with me as I lived and roamed and loved through the same countries he had as well.



Born in Rhuddlan, Wales, in 1936, Griffiths was a pharmacist in London, photographing part-time for the Manchester Guardian. In 1961 he became a full-time freelancer for the London Observer, cutting his teeth on the Algerian War in 1962, then moving on to Central Africa and Asia.

Griffiths was associated with the celebrated Magnum photo agency from 1966, becoming a full member in 1971. He covered the Yom Kippur War and then worked in Cambodia from 1973 to 1975. In 1977 he was based in Thailand, covering Asia, and in 1980 moved to New York to assume the Magnum presidency, a post he held for a record five years.

His most famous book, Vietnam Inc., was the deeply disturbing product of five years' photographing the country at war from 1966. The book went out of print within weeks of its initial publication, and

has only been reprinted in very recent years. To say it was a legendary event in publishing would be an understatement, for its impact continues to resonate down the years. Griffiths continued to take important photographs despite his bouts with ill health. His most recent book, Vietnam at Peace (Trolley, 2005), deals with the postwar years.

Through his photographs, texts and films, Griffiths continued to reflect on the unequal relationship between technology and humanity. His lifetime's work is summed up in his volume Dark Odyssey (Aperture, 1996). He is also the author of Agent Orange: Collateral Damage in Viet Nam (Trolley 2003).

FCCT members may be interested to know that a very limited number of signed copies of his books are still available from the clubhouse office, including Agent Orange, Collateral Damage in Viet Nam (1,850 baht) and Vietnam at Peace (Baht 3,000).

The Thai Press

Thailand has dozens of popular major newspapers, TV news programs and radio shows. And yet for many foreign correspondents, these Thai-language news sources are little more than background noise. Some ignore the Thai media because they don't speak Thai; others just don't care. But it shouldn't be that way. To get a true reading on Thai political and economic developments, tuning into the local media can be essential. So this quarter, the editors of Dateline provide the definitive guide on the local media scene – and how local correspondents can learn more from it.

The Establishment

Thailand's media is considered to be among the most free in the region. But with more than 35 newspapers that are registered with the Thai Journalist Association, there are some that stand out the most for their coverage. Here are some of the key players, compiled by our resident – and anonymous – Thai media expert.

Thai Rath:

This is the country's largest circulating newspaper and is one of the newspapers famous for changing its stance whenever and wherever it is required – including whenever a government is on the decline or about to be kicked out. Its pages offer the best indication of where the tides are shifting, and what's in the bag going forward.

Although it commonly carries gruesome pictures on the front page, it is the market leader and is among the most influential in terms of shifting the tide among the masses.

Daily News:

This is the country's second-largest circulating newspaper after Thai Rath, and it's also among the most sought-after reads in the mass market in the provinces. Once among the strongest supporters of the Democrat Party, it has gradually changed its stance to become more neutral as the tides of power have changed. Its circulation, although lower than Thai Rath, is still substantial, running close to 300,000 to 400,000 or more. (Thai Rath distributes around 1 million copies a day).

The main topics it covers are crime, entertainment news, and other colorful stories. It has a lot of local news about the various provinces.

Khao Sod:

This is the third-largest circulating newspaper in the country, and fills a niche market of covering one of the most sensitive areas in the country: religion. It is basically making money out of the much-hyped "Chatukham"

craze and by uncovering sex scandals in the monkhood and other areas of society. It does have some very aggressive investigative reporting – but the focus is on a different aspect of the social network.

Matichon Daily and Matichon Weekly:

Matichon is among the most influential papers in the country, at least for the middle class – which is basically who shapes the way things operate in the country. It is famous for investigative reporting and often helps reshape the thinking process of middle- and upper-class Thais, and in the process reshapes the economic and political outlook of the country.

The weekly section has more in-depth reporting and more investigative journalism, with some scoops that sometimes rock the political establishment. It also has economic-related stories.

Thai Post:

This is one paper that can be classified to be anti-incumbency, i.e., it's often against any government that is in power. It has the courage to fight anyone, be it the formerly all-mighty Thai Rak Thai, or the military.

Manager Daily and Manager Weekly:

Manager is a powerful player in the middle class that often has its own views. It has itself been in the headlines for the past few years – both for good and bad reasons. Journalists generally feel that it is a paper driven by agendas.

Krungthep Thurakij:

This is the money-making business of Nation Group, and is considered to be among the strongest financial papers in the market. The paper has been breaking economic and corporate news for years and now is gradually shifting its focus towards covering political news, with strong analysis and editorials.

Post Today:

This is the sister publication of Bangkok Post. It has gradually picked up in circulation over the past few years, thanks to its easy-to-read design and its coverage of a wide variety of stories that include economic news as well as political stories and items of interest to the common man.

The Dark Side of Thai Media

Thailand has a long history of strong, critical journalism and scores of tough, committed reporters whose work ensures Thailand has a more robust media than countries like Singapore. But there's a darker side to Thai journalism. A disgruntled Bangkok-based journalist reports.

Stuck in traffic on my way to the newsroom, my phone rings. It's P. Lek from the public relations firm.

"Hello Khun X," she tells me. "Company Y is having an initial public offering next week. We really hope you'll be able to make it. And by the way, we have 1,000 shares with your name on it. The stock is expected to climb from the IPO price."

Did this actual conversation occur? Not exactly. But Thai journalists say variations of it happen all the time.

It's a dark side of the Thai media that even local journalists acknowledge is all too common. As in many parts of Asia, reporters are encouraged to accept gifts or other goodies with the implicit agreement that favorable coverage will result.

A recent press conference held at the Four Seasons in Bangkok offers a case in point. Invitations for the event – held by a company that runs a loyalty rewards program – promised each

attendee a "kit" valued at "more than Baht 1,500." For journalists that stuck around for an after-party, the value would "be increased to Baht 2,500."

That ploy didn't generate much interest from local papers – coverage was notably scant the next day. Still, many Thai journalists admit that the line between what's acceptable and not acceptable can get fuzzy. Local CEOs have been known to stuff envelopes with cash – sometimes several thousand baht – in exchange for positive coverage. Companies regularly take journalists on trips, sometimes to resorts in Thailand or even overseas.

Western journalists are known to take their share of freebies, too, and policies to prevent hand-offs don't necessarily guarantee impartial coverage. Western papers have had plenty of whopper ethics scandals. In the 1980s, a *Wall Street Journal* reporter was fired for tipping off traders about stories before they ran, so they could

make money playing the stocks he mentioned. The mighty *New York Times* has been rocked by a string of scandals, including the notorious Jayson Blair episode in which a writer invented scores of fake stories.

For many journalists in Thailand, though, the temptation to accept meals, trips or other gifts is hard to resist, partly because reporter salaries are so low. In other cases, local reporters say they don't worry much about it because their colleagues participate, too.

In a country where questioning authority isn't as acceptable as in other places, some companies and government officials feel they have a right to demand – and get – favorable coverage. Many of the fine journalists in Bangkok ignore this.

But as in any country, readers have to keep a close eye on the possible conflicts of interest at the papers they're reading and apply the same tough standards they apply to their own reporting.



Surprise Yourself! Make Your Day with News Clipping on iQNewsClip

Enjoy a new and easy touch, and more effective way of working ... with iQNewsClip – an online news clipping service covering more than 30 local newspapers in Thai and English. Clean and clear formatted news clips are available online in color and black & white. Each and every clip is categorized to accommodate your specific requirements. Full Text Search functions also help you find a particular news clip even easier and faster!

Outperform with superior service

- Clean and clear news clips in color and black & white
- Full details of each clip – news source, date, section, page number and news locating, PR value
- Full-text search from the entire press coverage by using keyword, phrase, and conditional operators "AND", "OR" and "AND NOT"
- Customized search from a particular source or selected category
- Update every morning from 6:00am

Try the distinctive
online news clipping now
at www.iqnewsclip.com **FREE**

For more information, please contact:

InfoQuest Limited 888/178 Ploenchit Road, 17th Floor Mahatun Plaza Building,
Lumpini, Patumwan, Bangkok 10330 Tel: 0-2651-4700 ext.444, Fax: 0-2651-4701

www.iqnewsclip.com



Alternate Voices

All the news that's fit to print doesn't always show up in your local paper. To get a deeper understanding of the news, it's now necessary to go online to search the growing number of independent, "alternative" voices on the local media scene. Dateline offers a quick guide to some of the best options.

To keep up with news in Thailand and the world, freelance journalist Newley Purnell turns to a handful of usual suspects, including CNN, the *International Herald Tribune*, and the *Bangkok Post*.

But every day or two, he scans a few lesser-known sources, including bangkokpundit.com and 2bangkok.com. They include summaries of local news items – including many that escape the eye of mainstream journalists – and provocative commentary from observers whose main qualifications are their curiosity and willingness to post online.

Dozens of new publications, blogs, and underground radio programs have popped up in recent years to offer a different take on the news in Southeast Asia.

At their best, they provide compelling new perspectives on news that's already been reported, or even break news of their own. At their worst, they add noise to an already-crowded media landscape or circulate misinformation.

Collectively they make up the so-called "long tail" of the media world, proving that for every divergent interest, there's a Web-based outlet where like-minded souls can gather to exchange views.

Can they be trusted? Are the authors qualified? How do mainstream journalists cite them in print? Should mainstream journalists use them at all?

An informal poll of editors and reporters in Bangkok found that most do use some of the sites. But few name them in stories.

Instead, they approach them as Purnell does: He doesn't rely on blogs for basic facts, and he's wary about accepting their opinions without question. If he wants to quote something, he usually calls the author directly to conduct a proper interview and test his or her knowledge of a subject.

More often, he uses them simply to get leads and otherwise expand his base of knowledge, which ultimately will be backed up by further reporting.

"It's more about using them to discover ideas on Thailand and looking for more coverage I haven't seen," he says.

Perhaps the most closely-followed site is: bangkokpundit.blogspot.com. The author, who chooses to remain

anonymous, is a Thai speaker and focuses often on Thai politics and unrest in the South.

In an interview with Dateline, Bangkokpundit says there are three reasons why such sites are valuable: They provide different opinions from mainstream sources like The Nation and The Bangkok Post; they provide information from the Thai media through translations; and they can provide more up-to-date, live news during fast-moving stories like the 2006 coup and the recent Thai election.

Bangkokpundit doesn't do a lot of new reporting, but does spend a fair amount of time on basic research, including documents some reporters might not have seen or data that hasn't been viewed widely. By staying anonymous, the pundit can express opinions that other writers might not be able to put in print.

"By not revealing details of myself, I maintain plausible deniability, and in the environment of Thai politics with defamation suits and lese majeste charges, I prefer to keep it this way," pundit writes.

Here's a guide to some of the most interesting alternative news sources in Thailand.



BANGKOK PUNDIT
www.bangkokpundit.blogspot.com

It's regularly ranked as the top online source of commentary and analysis in Thailand. Diplomats, business leaders and Western journalists follow it

for summaries of local articles and editorials, as well as smart thinking that challenges the conventional wisdom. Because it's anonymous, the writer can take chances. Recent postings included one in which the pundit ripped apart a Khaleej Times op-ed about violence in the South and insights from readings of somewhat obscure Thai-language webboards.



2BANGKOK www.2bangkok.com

2bangkok is arguably the best compilation of local news, with valuable translations of Thai-language articles from Matichon and other local papers. There are also reprints (and translations)

of Thai-language political cartoons, opening up a new world to English-speaking correspondents. Managed by a curious expatriate named Ron Morris, the site also has the best collection of historical documents and other nuggets of general interest to residents of Bangkok, including photos of the city's long-gone streetcars, copies of old maps and planning documents, and even scanned versions of brochures from the former Erawan hotel before it was demolished to create the Grand Hyatt. Newer postings include satellite photos of Bangkok in 1997 and 2007; photography from inside taxis; and clippings from Western newspapers covering Thailand.



NEW MANDALA New perspectives on mainland Southeast Asia rspas.anu.edu.au/ rmap/newmandala

This website, set up by Australia National University, is an excellent source for academic research and commentary

on Southeast Asia. Contributors include an Australian anthropologist who's an expert on Thai rural development and an Oxford doctoral student who describes himself as an expert on "trans-border linkages in upper mainland Southeast Asia." It's not as dry as it sounds; recent chat room discussions have delved into sensitive issues such as lese majeste and the controversial book *The King Never Smiles*. Readers can find offbeat articles about the garlic trade in northern Thailand, among other topics, and there are links to academic studies reporters might not have noticed elsewhere.



LOST BOY www.whatismatt.com

A blog headed up by a Phuket-based U.K. native, this website summarizes a number of area news sources. Among its most useful features is its link to the "Top 100 Thailand blogs," an invaluable source for new, up-and-coming alternative voices.



IRRAWADDY www.irrawaddy.org

Most expatriates know about Irawaddy magazine, the leading news source on Burma. Fewer know about the magazine's excellent website, which has news groups and chat rooms that offer

deeper insights into what's happening inside the country. It also has fantastic multimedia offerings, including a collection of photo essays. Among the recent additions: A photo essay on Burma's rickety railway system, and an excellent article/photo collection from local journalist Mick Elmore about Burma's ruby trade.



ASIA TIMES www.atimes.com

This website is one of two well-known "mainstream" news sources online, with postings from 50 or so correspondents from across Asia. It describes itself as the

"successor" to the print edition of Asia Times, the long-deceased Bangkok/Hong Kong-based daily print newspaper that ceased publication in 1997 amid the Asian Financial Crisis. It continues to thrive online; lately it has featured useful articles on food shortages in China and Malaysia's political turmoil. Chat rooms are organized by region – including Southeast Asia, Greater China and Central Asia.



ASIA SENTINEL www.asiasentinel.com

This is the other "mainstream" online news publication, headed by well-known Asia hands Philip Bowring, John Berthelsen and Lin Neumann, a former executive editor of the Standard. Recent

stories include a valuable analysis of Malaysia's efforts to create a new "rice bowl" in Borneo and an entertaining read on Korea's effort to designate dogs as livestock. There are links to numerous other news publications.



THAILAND JUMPED THE SHARK thailand jumpedtheshark. blogspot.com

This is another blog known for its criticism and tough-minded analysis of Thai news. One recent posting railed

about "right-wing nationalist rubbish" the writer encountered in the Bangkok Post, while another announced that "The Thai media is incapable of noticing its own hypocrisy" in writing too much favorable copy about the Thai Democrats. The site has helpful links to a wealth of international newspapers and many other blogs.



AUSTIN BUSH PHOTOGRAPHY austinbushphotography. .com

It's hardly filled with hard news, but many expatriates consider this site, by Bangkok-based photographer Austin Bush, to be

the best source of information on a topic all journalists care about: food. Bush has shot photos for a number of major guidebooks, including Lonely Planet's Bangkok city guide, and he knows the city's streets inside-out.

Recent postings include a feature – illustrated with fantastic photography – about Krua Aporn, an institution favored by members of the Thai royal family that was once chosen as one of Bangkok's best restaurants. The blog has also written about food from Naay Uan, "arguably Bangkok's best hawker stall," according to Bush.



NOT THE NATION www.notthenation.com

A popular parody of the Nation, Not the Nation may not offer the real thing. But it sometimes is so real, it might as well be the news.

Among the recent headlines: "PAD Threatens to Resume Inflated Protest Numbers Next Month"; "Cryptosporidium and E. Coli Germs Planning 'Best Songkran Ever'"; and "Cheap Farangs Suffer As Rice Prices Rise." It's a must-read.

EXCERPT FROM "NOT THE NATION"

Foreign Reporter Finally Understands Thailand

BANGKOK – After reporting on Thailand for 36 years, Roger Snerdley, a foreign correspondent for Asia Weekly, was welcomed by the Bangkok media elite into the Journalists Allowed to Cover Thailand Association (JACTass).

The club's members, commonly referred to as JACTasses, pride themselves in their near cryptic understanding of the Land of Smiles. "We understand this place," said Ted Hacker, the club's president. "A lot of people think they can come in here and figure out what's going on, but it's not that easy. Thailand is a mystery that only the members of our

special club can really comprehend. And we will ruthlessly criticize those who we say don't really understand this country."

To correctly report on Thailand, Hacker said, a journalist must understand that coups are democratic, evidence is not needed to determine guilt, and the richest people in the country are the only people who really care about the poor. Suggestions to the contrary reflect a reporter's inability to grasp the nuances of the kingdom. "Snerdley was no shoo in for membership," Hack said. "Some of his early reporting was downright scandalous."

Back in 1981, Snerdley wrote a

series of investigative pieces that questioned why nobody questioned anything. What he got were only questions about why he didn't understand Thailand. "I basically just gave up," Snerdley told NotTheNation in an exclusive interview.

"I used to think critically about this place, but then the journalists and academics would all say I didn't really know what's going on. So I stopped caring, and now I write whatever doesn't rock the boat. To tell you the truth, I think I still don't understand this place – but what do I know."



Sexpat Lit

Ever wonder who writes those Thailand novels – the noirish tales of crime and sex set in Southeast Asia – that you see filling the racks in airports and bookshops around the region? Some Bangkok residents view the books as “Sexpat Lit” exploitation. FCCT’s **Henry Silverman** offers his own opinion.

Once upon a time, in places Far and East, an occasional under-employed Western expatriate whose preferred entertainment options started and stopped in the go-go bars of Bangkok and Manila turned his fingers to tapping out a chronicle of his real or imagined fantasies.

Several local publishers, hungry for almost anything in English, were quite willing to print and bind, so long as the royalties were small and didn’t start until all costs had been recouped. In the case of an author nobody had ever heard of before, that usually meant never.

Some of these writers came and went without ever getting a second book in print. Others lasted longer but eventually they, too, drifted down to form the sedimentary layer of a quite distinct local genre: Sexpat Literature. Populated mainly with go-go girls, their lovesick foreign boyfriends, and winding through plot lines of jealousy, theft, betrayal and revenge, they were typically nothing more than variations on the story of man’s search for a hooker with the heart of gold, and the ruin that befalls him along the path of that fool’s quest.

Nevertheless, the novels and short stories they produced were eagerly snatched up from bookstores and airport kiosks by legions of single male holiday makers.

But with rare exception, most of the sexpat stuff wasn’t very good, and some of it veered pretty close to unreadable. Luckily for the authors, though, it didn’t have to be good; the theme itself was the draw and it was a nice bonus if the story was well written besides. And while none of them got rich from their labor, for a few it was a nice bit of change on the side.

Asia has always been accommodating to Western writers, good and bad, since the early days of the European colonial adventure. The exotic cultures and the languid lure of the tropics have provided more than enough material for such iconic luminaries as Rudyard

Kipling, Joseph Conrad and Somerset Maugham. And in more modern times, serious writers such as James Michener, John le Carré and James Clavell have found a source here and written hugely successful works set in Asia.

So it was perhaps inevitable that a middle band of more serious writers would develop out of the ex-journalists, part-time playwrights and others who washed up on our shores. Some were permanent residents, and others came and went, but all used tropical Asia as their inspiration and their backdrop.

The FCCT played host on March 21st to four Thailand writers, in a roundtable discussion on the future prospects for expatriate authors in Asia. A few of them had churned

Asia has always been accommodating to **Western writers**, good and bad, since the early days of the **European colonial adventure**.

a little sexpat lit along the way, but all had made a name with more substantial products and all had survived as writers for several years.

First up was Dean Barrett, who arrived in Thailand on March 6, 1966, as a Mandarin Chinese linguist with the U.S. Army’s Security Agency. By his own account, he bought his first lady’s drink six hours later on Patpong

Road. Several thousand such drinks later he is still here, continuing to write novels and non-fiction set in New York, China and Thailand.

Along the way he lived for 17 years in Hong Kong where he wrote stories set in Ch’ing Dynasty China while managing a publishing company whose main client was Thai Airways International’s Sawasdee in-flight magazine. After his divorce from a Cantonese woman, and against the advice of friends, he moved to Manhattan where he spent the next 14 years as a librettist, lyricist and playwright, creating works for the stage that have now been produced in nine countries. Seven years ago, and again against advice from friends, he returned to

Thailand for good.

He continues to write, and write well. As he himself notes, the Retired Issan Mama-san’s Association voted his detective novel set in Bangkok, *Skytrain to Murder*, as the best novel ever written on Thailand with the phrase “Skytrain to Murder” in the title. More seriously, his next book, *Identity Theft: Alzheimer’s in America*, Sex in Thailand and *Tangles of the Mind* is due for release this autumn.

Along with his writing, Dean performs good deeds through the Thailand, Laos and Cambodia Brotherhood, an association of Vietnam War veterans who support schools in Laos and throughout Thailand’s Issan region.

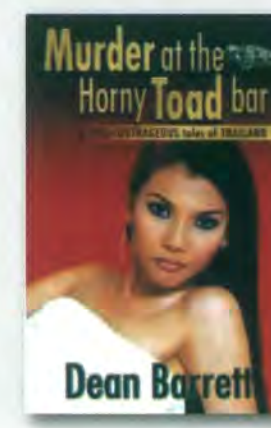
Sexpat Lit... or Another Genre Entirely?



STEPHEN LEATHER:

The Pattaya Mail says *Private Dancer* “is the best book regarding relationships with bar girls that you can ever read – should be compulsory reading for all first-timers in Thailand.” His other books have more in common with mass-market crime/thriller writers, with titles like *Hot Blood*, *Cold Kill* and *Soft Target*, and

are often set in Europe, not Southeast Asia.



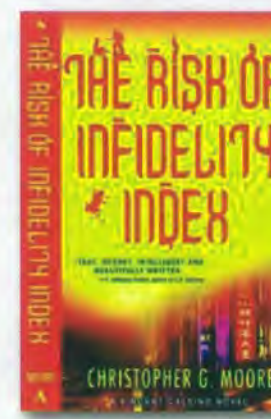
DEAN BARRETT:

His titles include “*Murder at the Horny Toad Bar*,” “*The Go-Go Dancer Who Stole My Viagra*,” and “*Skytrain to Murder*.” On his website, www.dean-barrettmystery.com, visitors can listen to radio recordings of old Raymond Chandler stories.



COLIN COTTERILL:

New York Times called “*The Coroner’s Lunch*” “A wonderfully fresh and exotic mystery.” “*Disco for the Departed*,” set in 1977 Laos, was called “evocative and entertaining” by *Entertainment Weekly*. “*Anarchy and Old Dogs*” rates five stars on amazon.com and was called “magically sublime” by *Entertainment Weekly*.



CHRISTOPHER MOORE:

The first page of “*A Bewitching Smile*” introduces a fifteen-year-old boy who caught a venereal disease from a “ripe whore” in a Thai bar called the Bangkok Nightshade. “*Spirit House*” begins in a bar with caged fruit bats, a hero “with a gun sloping out of his holster”

and a “whore in a silk dress slit up to her thighs” who is “purring like a civet in heat.” The *International Herald Tribune* says “he takes chances – lots of them.”

Next on the panel was Christopher G. Moore. Chris hails from Canada where he once taught law at the University of British Columbia. After the successful New York publication of his first novel, *His Lordship's Arsenal*, in 1985, he became a full-time writer and has so far produced 19 novels and one collection of interlocked short stories.

Making his home in Thailand for the past two decades, Chris is probably best known for his *Land of Smiles* trilogy, a behind-the-scenes look at his adopted land which, in the words of Gore Vidal, reveals "...those razor teeth at the back of the smile."

Lately, Chris has concentrated on his popular Vincent Calvino private eye series, of which the third novel, *Cut Out or Stunde Null* in Phnom Penh, won the German Critics Award for Crime Fiction in 2004. His latest novel is *The Risk of Infidelity Index*.

Third on our roundtable was Colin Cotterill. Born in London in 1952, Colin trained as a teacher, working in Israel, Australia, the United States and Japan before arriving here to do teacher training on the Thai-Burmese border. He subsequently spent several years in Laos, partly with UNESCO, and later wrote and produced a forty-episode language teaching series, *English by Accident*, for Thai television.

Along the way he became involved in regional child protection efforts, and it was his work with trafficked children that was the source for his first novel, *The Night Bastard*, published in 2000. Since then he has written nine more books, the last four of which were set in 1970s Laos, as well as working as a regular cartoonist for several national Thai publications, and lecturing at Chiang Mai University.

Rounding out our panel was Stephen Leather. A journalist by trade, Stephen started out on the city desk of the *Daily Mirror*. While there, he wrote his first book, *Pay Off*, which was bought by Harper Collins.

He moved to Asia to take a position as the business editor for the *South China Morning Post*, and while there wrote his next novel, *The Fireman*, and *Hungry Ghost*, the second of his books set in Hong Kong.

Well established by this time as a thriller writer in the style of Jack Higgins and Gerald Seymour, Stephen left Harper Collins and found a home with Hodder and Stoughton, who have been his publishers since 1992.

To date, Stephen has 21 books in print, which have sold over two million copies in more than 20 languages. But with success has come restriction as his publisher, unwilling to dilute a profitable brand, has discouraged him from venturing too far from readers' expectations.

Nevertheless, a few years ago Stephen stretched his craft a bit to create one of the classic works of Sexpat Lit, and one of the rare good ones: *Private Dancer*, for months available as a free download but now self-published in print.

The opening lines of that tale of love and lies in the relationship between a seasoned travel writer and a

Nana Plaza go-go girl are straight from the Sexpat Lit textbook:

I don't know if it was love at first sight, but it was pretty close. She had the longest hair I'd ever seen, jet black and almost down to her waist. She had soft brown eyes that made my heart melt, long legs that just wouldn't quit and a figure to die for. She was naked except for a pair of black leather ankle boots with small chrome chains on the side. I think it was the boots that did it for me.

Sixty thousand downloads put *Private Dancer* in a league of its own. But it was an anomaly, penned for fun by a serious writer with a track record of success over two decades.

Yet *Private Dancer*, and similar bits by Dean Barrett, are what sticks in certain peoples' minds as they lump these writers together with the typical sexpat chump

... our ever-seductive **City of Angels** is both source and inspiration for a wide range of **expatriate authors**, each one writing for a wider world.

and protest that what they produce is nothing less than exploitative prose about what they see as an even more exploitive industry, Southeast Asian prostitution.

Colin Cotterill has never published anything exploitative and Stephen Leather's sole output in the sexpat department was *Private Dancer*. When asked about just this point during our evening roundtable, the four authors invited anyone of that opinion to take a look at their work before rushing to judgment. Their collective view was that no one familiar with their writing would call them sexpat authors.

Neither Stephen Leather's near-two-dozen books, nor Chris Moore's *Land of Smiles* series, nor Colin Cotterill's novels, nor most of Dean Barrett's prodigious output, would much qualify as Sexpat Lit. But that aside, all of it taken together is mostly proof in print that our ever-seductive City of Angels, shimmering away in the tropical heat, is both source and inspiration for a wide range of expatriate authors, each one writing for a wider world.



Winning a Pulitzer

Long before Cyclone Nargis hit Burma, violent pro-democracy protests last September captivated the world. Many photographers were on hand to document the chaos. But one image stood out – the work of Bangkok-based Reuters photojournalist **Adrees Latif**. In April, the image won one of the most coveted awards in journalism – the Pulitzer Prize. In the article that follows, Mr. Latif describes the events that led up to that fateful photograph – and the first Pulitzer in Reuters' history.



The Photo: A wounded Japanese photographer, Kenji Nagai, lay before a Burmese soldier in Yangon, Myanmar, as troops attacked protesters. Mr. Nagai later died. Published September 28, 2007.

I landed in Yangon with some old clothes, a Canon 5D camera, two fixed lenses and a laptop. For four days in September last year, I went to the city's historic Shwedagon Pagoda and waited for the Buddhist monks who gathered there to lead the biggest protests against Burma's military rulers in 20 years.

Since I was at the same pagoda every day, dozens of people, including monks, asked me who I was and what I was doing. Not knowing who I could trust, my replies were guarded.

Barefoot in maroon robes and ringed by civilians, the monks chanted and prayed before starting their two-km march to the Sule Pagoda in central Yangon, formerly known as Rangoon. Each day their numbers grew, from hundreds to tens of thousands.

The first small protests in August, against a sharp spike in fuel prices, had ballooned into street marches in Yangon and other cities against more than 40 years of military

rule and economic hardship.

By Sept. 27, the city was packed with troops. Soldiers and government agents stood at street corners. The crackdown was underway.

Finding Shwedagon sealed off, I went to the middle of town to find groups of young people taunting soldiers at Sule. Within minutes, the crowd swelled from hundreds to a few thousand. The soldiers threw barbed wire coils across the roads.

Knowing that hundreds of people were gunned down in similar circumstances in a 1988 uprising, I climbed an old crosswalk directly overhead, to get to one of the few spots offering a clear view.

Below me, protesters were singing and waving flags. Young men were thrusting their pelvises at the soldiers in an act of defiance. Then two dark green, open-top army



trucks approached, followed by dozens more packed with riot police. They were hit by a barrage of water bottles, fruit and abuse from the crowd.

I had already locked on my 135mm lens and set my camera shutter speed to 1,000, aperture to F/7.1 and ISO at 800. With the camera on manual, I wanted to freeze the action while offering as much depth-of-field as possible.

Two minutes later, the shooting started. My eye caught a person flying backwards through the air.

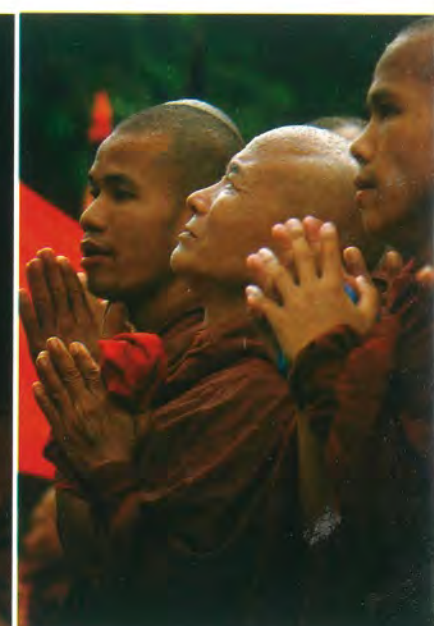
Instinctively, I started photographing, capturing four frames of the man on his back. The entry point of the bullet is clear in the first frame, with a soldier wearing flip

flops standing over the man and pointing a rifle. In the second frame, the man is reaching over to try and film.

More shots rang out. I flinched before getting off two more frames – one of the man pointing the camera at the soldier, and one of his face contorted in pain. Beyond him, the crowd scattered before the advancing soldier.

The whole incident, which went on to reverberate around the world, was over in two seconds.

I kept low on the bridge, capturing some more images from among a crowd taking cover. But with soldiers firing shots and smoke grenades below, I had to get off the bridge.

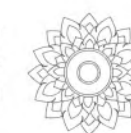


Adrenaline pumping through my body, I put my camera in my bag and followed the protests for another hour and a half. Then I made my way back to my hotel through backstreets and along a railway line.

My initial caption read: "An injured man tries to photograph after police and military officials fired upon and then charged a crowd of thousands protesting in Yangon's city centre September 27, 2007." Initially, I thought he was trampled.

I had no idea he had died. Two of the frames showed the man's face. A few hours later his colleagues in Japan had identified him as Japanese video journalist Kenji Nagai.

The images dominated front pages around the world, playing a role in the public outrage at the crackdown which the United Nations said killed at least 31 people.



Born in Lahore, Pakistan on July 21, 1973, Adrees Latif lived in Saudi Arabia before immigrating with his family to Texas in 1980. Latif worked as a staff photographer for The Houston Post from 1993 to 1996 before joining Reuters. Latif graduated from the University of Houston in 1999 with a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism. Latif has worked for Reuters in Houston and Los Angeles before moving to Bangkok in 2003 where he covered news across Asia.

Thai Movie Night

As many Bangkokians have noticed in recent months, the FCCT is rapidly becoming the top venue in town for intelligent cinema. For that, we can thank an energetic and eclectic film buff named Lekha Shankar, writes FCCT board member Dan Ten Kate

For Lekha Shankar, the FCCT's Contemporary World Cinema film series is a personal passion that morphed into a mission to prove that top films could attract an audience in Bangkok. Hailing from movie-mad India, Lekha was initially disappointed to find that Thai filmgoers didn't share her love for the cinema. After seeing Indians pack into old crowded theaters with uncomfortable seats and limited facilities, she couldn't grasp why Thais didn't show up for Bangkok's two film festivals – the Bangkok International Film Festival and the World Film Festival.

"Something I wanted to prove to both festivals is that there is an audience for good cinema in Bangkok," she says. "Both festivals have excellent films, but it's pathetic to go to the theaters and see barely a handful of people."

It's hard to imagine anyone better suited than Lekha to inspire passion for great films in a city where second-rate Hollywood blockbusters dominate the plush theatres at mega-malls around town. Her energy not only gives her an engaging and dominant personality, but also has driven her to write about film and travel for 24 publications in India and Thailand over the past two decades.

Born into a privileged family in Kerala in Southern India, Lekha more or less took up journalism as a hobby. She started as a film critic for the *Indian Express*, one of the country's oldest and most popular newspapers.

"My family was conservative and never allowed me to work in a regular company," she says.

But although Lekha was never writing to put food on the table, she worked as if she didn't have a penny to her name. She learned to show up early to every press event to beat her rivals and write the stories first, especially celebrity-interviews with movie stars and others.

Her husband worked for a well-known instrumentation firm in India, and moved every three years. Lekha followed, moving from Delhi to Chennai to Kolkata, securing contacts and writing for more and more publications along the way.

The freelance life afforded her other benefits. Impressed with her stories, many tourism organisations offered her sponsored trips to their countries, starting with British Tourism, which offered her London and Stratford-Upon-Avon, a trip the Shakespeare-loving Lekha recalls fondly. "Everything I read, I've always connected with Shakespeare," she says, adding "I must have written a dozen stories about that trip."



Other countries, eager to attract India's huge numbers of out-bound tourists, came knocking on Lekha's door. They preferred using her as she could give them multiple stories in various publications.

Lekha eventually traveled to 30 countries or so, often combining a trip to a film festival with other stories on tourist attractions. All was going well until 2000, when her husband suddenly decided to take a job in Bangkok. Lekha wasn't thrilled.

"I was frustrated and upset," she recalls. "I was one of the most prolific freelance writers in Delhi when this came through."

She started flitting between Delhi and Bangkok, but that became too expensive. Resigned to life in Bangkok, Lekha got a break when she landed an interview with Ms. Universe, an Indian at the time, which she sold to *The Nation* newspaper.

Soon enough she was back on her feet, selling stories

to *The Nation* and the *Bangkok Post*, as well as a range of English-language magazines. She also started contacting embassies about film festivals and travel pieces, and once again began traveling the world.

She covered top festivals like Cannes, Berlin, Rotterdam, Locarno, and also in Cairo, Iran, Istanbul and Tokyo, giving Thai papers priority, but writing for Indian papers as well.

Among the many film personalities she met were big-timers like Brad Pitt and Martin Scorsese; old-timers like Omar Sharif and Sophia Loren; great Asian directors like Zang Yimou, Jafar Panahi; and many of the big names who have come to the Bangkok International Film Festival, like Michael Douglas, Jeremy Irons, Willem Dafoe and others.

"During the last two years, I just freaked out," Lekha says. "It was just one trip after another and I knew there would be no limits! Finally my husband suggested I do a full-time job, and make some money for a change!"

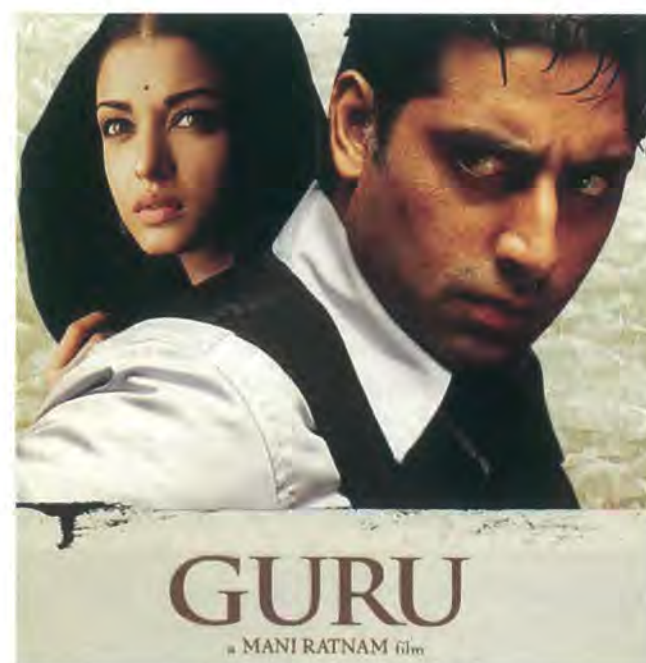
Lekha found a nine to five job at a financial marketing firm, but she still hasn't stopped writing about film. Often she works into the early morning hours, writing about Thai films, keeping up-to-date with Indian films, and helping the organisers of film festivals in India and Thailand.

"My problem is I don't have enough hours in the day," she says.

Thankfully for the FCCT, Lekha has also focused her relentless energy on bringing to the club award-winning films from all over the globe. Her extensive contacts with embassies ensures access to the best films, and her persuasive powers often lead to generous donations of food and wine – tequila, at the Mexican night, pisco at the Peru night, Korean bulgogi and rice wine at the Korean night, and Indian kababs and rices at the Indian night.

"I'm beginning to show new movies, which I couldn't do last year due to fears of video piracy and copyright issues," she says. "But this year, the embassies have taken the initiative and come forward to offer new films, which is exciting."

"The FCCT has an image and a reputation," she adds. "People are very excited to be connected with it, including many restaurants that are willing to provide free food."



Lekha has lined up a series of excellent films (and many wine and food offerings) for the coming months. The movies are usually screened twice a month, every second and fourth Thursday, although exceptions are made for films that are available for only a short period of time, or when actors or directors are available to come and speak about the films.

This happened when the Oscar-winning Czech Director Jiri Menzel was in Bangkok last year. She's also worked hard to get Thai film-folks to attend their film-screenings, and is proud that they proved to be big 'hits' with the audience- including individuals like Thai directors Ekachai Uekgrontham, Songyos Sugmakanan as well as actors Akara Amartayakul and Ananda Everingham.

Lekha even managed to secure a brand-new Bollywood film ahead of the prestigious International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) in early June, thanks to being in touch with the resourceful Bollywood-Thai Co.

The Indian Embassy agreed to provide a meal by the award-winning 'Indus' restaurant for this event in May. She's also excited by a new documentary on Pavarotti that the Italian Embassy agreed to screen at the FCCT, as well as films from Hungary and a rare movie from Singapore. Lekha welcomes feedback and suggestions for films, and hopes to build on the success over the past year, revitalizing Bangkok's film scene.

"We are getting genuine movie lovers, and I'm seeing new faces all the time," she says. "Many of them stop me on the streets or Skytrain and thank me for the FCCT-films, which is very rewarding. I want to share the passion for films with everyone – and believe me, there are many out there in Bangkok."

For more information, log on to www.fccthai.com.



Where's the Beef?

By Bangkok Chowhound

Last month in Singapore, I ate the best burger I've ever had in Southeast Asia. Actually, I didn't so much eat it as inhaled it – in less than 10 minutes, pausing to only take a few deep draughts of the Belgian beer that accompanied the burger in its short existence.

Let's talk beef. Forget for a moment about Super Size Me and rising rates of global obesity, mad cow disease, videos of animal abuse, and the FAO's assertion that raising livestock emits more greenhouse gases than driving cars.

Ever since an enterprising Texan began peddling a ground beef patty between two slices of bread at the 1904 World Fair in St. Louis, burgers have been enduringly popular. Americans alone consume about 12 billion burgers a year.

True, most of those are probably of the pre-cooked, frozen variety flipped by teenagers at fast-food joints, the kind which give burgers a bad name.

But that's not to dismiss the simple beauty of a good burger. It's more than comfort food. It's a comfort meal, with your protein, carbohydrates and vegetables (and sometimes dairy) all in familiar forms rolled into one.

But burgers sate something else besides hunger pangs, especially if you're an American. They're honest and unpretentious, and probably one of the few foods we Americans can unite over. It's the culinary equivalent of the New York City subway: a great social equalizer.

Twice a year, I get an all-consuming craving for a burger. Admittedly, as a pretty unconflicted omnivore, I get a lot of cravings during the course of a day. But there's something more visceral about the burger craving. A sudden longing for a bar of Green and Black chocolate or the wistful memory of a fresh chorizo consumed at a bar in Bilbao can be easily batted away.

When the hankering for a burger lands, I literally see red as I imaging biting into a burger, with charred marks outside but perfectly medium-rare inside, with the pink juices seeping into the white innards of fluffy bun. Maybe it's merely a case of iron deficiency, but when the craving hits, every meal is vaguely disappointing.

Thankfully, these cravings usually materialize when I'm in the United States, where the burger has been enjoying a bit of a renaissance lately. Beyond the gimmick of using foie gras and Kobe beef (a waste of both ingredients), big-name chefs and restaurateurs are giving burgers new respectability by throwing grass-fed beef, artisanal cheeses and organic, seasonal produce into the mix.

Last month, the burger craving crept up on me during

a trip to Singapore, the land of laksa, chicken rice and char kway teow. Fortunately, a friend had alerted me to a new gourmet burger joint, Relish, opened by Willin Low, a 36-year-old lawyer-turned-chef who helms one of the city's most consistently good (and won't make you bankrupt) restaurants, Wild Rocket.

A couple of years ago, Low -- who made his name by taking Asian and Western favorites and giving them a twist -- introduced a burger onto his Sunday brunch menu. "Every now and then you just crave comfort. And with a burger, you've got everything in your hands, between the bun: meat, sauce, veggies," says Low, a boyishly congenial man.

The burger became so popular that regulars begged him to add it onto his weekday menu. Low resisted, but the seeds of Relish were planted, and late last year, he opened Singapore's first homegrown fancy burger restaurant.

As befits a burger joint, Relish exudes casual: plain, long, pinewood tables, a chalkboard menu, youthful, eager waiters clad in bright yellow t-shirts. The menu is short and to the point. Yes, there are side dishes (including astonishingly good onion rings – crisp and tender at once), and salads for the contrite.

But the burger is the thing here, and the "Wild Rocket" burger that I ordered met my own personal requirements. The meat should be savory, but the sauce should be slightly sweet; the patty should be moist, but the bun should be toasted so it can stand up to the juices. The "Wild Rocket" burger included peppery arugula and a pepper sauce, giving it a kick that was balanced out by the slightly sweet, rich sun-dried tomato sauce.

To paraphrase Woody Allen, 70 percent of a burger's success is the meat, and Relish relies on flavorful, grass-fed Australian beef, which the staff wisely recommends that you order medium-rare.

Finally, it wasn't too big. Never trust a place that boasts about having manhole-sized burgers: larger patties are harder to cook properly and after a bite or two, it just becomes an unwieldy, disintegrating mess. You should be able to fit a burger comfortably into one hand, and Low's was a nice 180-gram lump. So I still had room for the fries.



Next Time You're in Singapore – Relish:
No. 02-01 Cluny Court, 501 Bukit Timah Rd.; 65/6763-1547

But Since You're in Bangkok – Though not imaginative,
The Garage Burger and Grill does a decent job with burgers:
2nd floor, All Seasons Place, Wireless Rd.; 02/685-3626

How To Reach Foreign Residents ?



Dateline

Magazine of the Foreign Correspondent's Club of Thailand covering international business executives, embassy staff and diplomats and foreign and Thai journalists and Photographers.



Advance

Australian-Thai Chamber of Commerce magazine covering Australian, British and New Zealand expats in Thailand.



Thai Sweden Review

Thai-Swedish Chamber of Commerce magazine covering expats and companies related to Sweden in Thailand.



Voyageur

Thai-Canadian Chamber of Commerce magazine covering Canadian and American expats in Thailand.



Danish-Thai Trade News

Danish-Thai Chamber of Commerce magazine covering expats and companies related to Denmark in Thailand.



ScandAsia

Magazine for Danes, Swedes, Norwegians and Finns living in South East Asia.

SCANDMEDIA

Finn Balslev

Scandinavian Publishing Co., Ltd.
4/41-42 Moo 3, Thanyakarn, Maiyalap, Ramintra Soi 14, Chorakaebua, Ladprao, Bangkok 10230, Thailand
Tel.: +66 (0) 2943 7166-8 ext.151 Fax: +66 (0) 2943 71669 Mobile: 081 866 2577
E-mail: finn@scandmedia.com www.scandmedia.com www.scandasiasia.com

For more
information
please
contact:

Surgery

is stressful business

for any patient, and it's made
worse when operating in vital
areas such as the spine, brain,
heart or a woman's reproductive

organs. At Samitivej hospitals, we use

Minimally Invasive Surgery techniques

with a precise Navigation System for

a smaller incision, minimal pain and

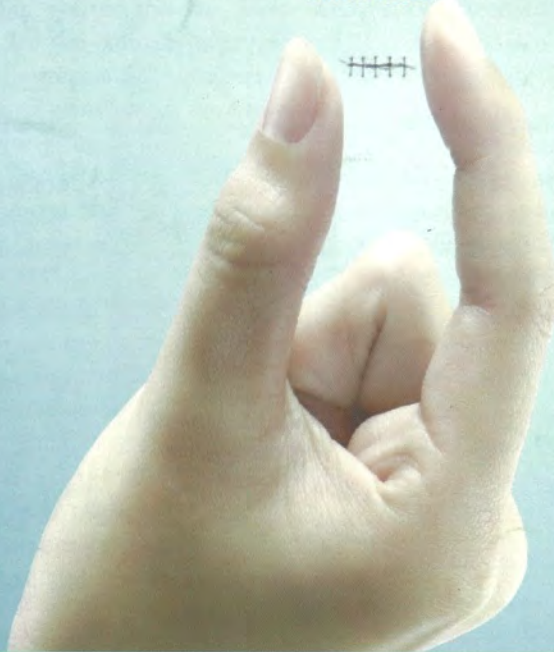
shorter recovery time. For our

patients' quick return to active

life, we do everything in our

power to make surgery

a trivial matter.



Samitivej... *We Care*

0-2711-8181

www.samitivejhospitals.com



สมิติเวช
SAMITIVEJ

- Sukhumvit
- Srinakarin
- Sriracha