

The Phuket Gazette

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Pian ordered to get moving

Worry that Patong is 'slipping back into old ways'

By Kamol Pirat

PATONG: Phuket Vice-Governor Winai Buapradit on February 21 ordered Patong Mayor Pian Keesin to pick up the pace in carrying out orders to make Patong Beach more orderly, remarking that the Patong beachfront area appears to be slipping back into pre-tsunami chaos.

The order came during a meeting of a special committee set up to oversee the redevelopment of Patong Beach in line with government policy to make it more safe and attractive for tourists.

The 15-member panel, set up by Governor Udomsak Usawarangkura and chaired by V/Gov Winai, met for the first time on February 21.

Other committee members include Mayor Pian, Kathu District Chief Khantee Silapa, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Region 4 Director Suwalai Pinpradap and Phuket Tourist Association President Pattanapong Aikwanich.

In his opening comments, V/Gov Winai said there had been little progress in imposing order on beachside businesses and gave the Mayor until October to put things right.

He noted that jet-ski operators were now back in their old locations, despite a ruling limiting their operation to the south end of the beach, near Klong Pakbang.

Unlicensed drink vendors continue to operate both along the beach and Thaweewong Rd, de-



Patong pre-tsunami: there is concern that the old chaos is returning.

spite having been banned, he said.

The number of beach lounge-umbrella sets for rent appears to have surpassed the interim 2,000-bed limit allowed by the government while the TAT redevelopment plan for the area is being drawn up, he added.

PTA President Pattanapong agreed with V/Gov Winai, saying failure to impose order would hurt Patong.

"Tourists from many countries have started to visit Phuket again, many coming because they want to help out by spending their money here.

"However, most of them are staying at Kata and Karon Beaches instead of Patong. If we don't redevelop according to the

plan, Patong could lose its attractiveness to tourists forever," he warned.

Gov Udomsak earlier ordered Mayor Pian to organize the beach so that all sun loungers and umbrellas would be of the same design, thereby giving an impression of orderliness.

Images of the new and orderly Patong were to feature prominently in tourism-promotion "roadshows" abroad designed to help Patong's tourism industry recover.

When asked about the lack of progress, Mayor Pian said Patong Municipality was committed to carrying out the government's policy, but lacked the legal and financial tools to do so.

Continued on page 2

Probe into missing aid millions to be complete by March 5

PHUKET: Vice-Governor Supachai Yuwaboon has pledged that the commission set up to investigate the theft of more than 2 million baht intended for tsunami victims will complete its deliberations by March 5.

The commission has already summoned two people for interview but, V/Gov Supachai said, "To be fair to everyone, we cannot give any more details until we have finished the investigation process."

The commission's primary role is to establish the facts surrounding the case, and its inquiry is separate from the criminal investigation being carried out by the police.

The money - 2,050,000 baht in total - was reported missing from a safe in a strongroom at Phuket Provincial Hall on February 15 by the Chief of Phuket Office for Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (ODPM), Metha Mekarat.

Only two people are believed to have had a key to the safe, and the strongroom was under video surveillance. However, the police have yet to make an arrest.

The Deputy Commander of Phuket Provincial Police, Pol Col Kokiatt Wongvorachart, told the Gazette the ODPM had asked for more time to re-check accounts relating to the money, which was part of the 45 million baht given to ODPM by the government for tsunami relief.

The chief police investigator Pol Lt Col Sian Keawthong, added that police had eight video surveillance tapes to view, and that it would take time to watch them thoroughly.



The Gazette Guide 2005 is now available at more than 50 vendors across the island. See www.phuketgazette.net/guide/vendors2005 for full list!



Rehabilitation center helps disabled, free

PHUKET: Doctors from the Bangkok-based Sirindhorn National Medical Rehabilitation Center (SNRMC) visited Phuket on February 15 as part of a project to assess the needs of the region's physically-disabled people.

During their visit to the Phuket Disabled Association, the team measured up more than 10 people for new prosthetic limbs.

The team will return on March 7 to fit the replacement false limbs. The entire service is provided free to the disabled people.

Sunthon Khunlarn, who heads the SNRMC's Department of Physical Equipment, said some 89 people are registered as disabled in Phuket and 10 in Krabi. The team are still assessing the number in Phang Nga.

Chokchai Jumpathong had his right leg amputated three years ago following a road accident. "I [recently] broke my artificial leg and I needed a replacement," he told the *Gazette*. "This new one will be replaced - for free. I am very grateful."

- Kamol Pirat

Deal reached on homes for Kamala victims

By Kamol Pirat

KAMALA: More than 70 families in Kamala have agreed to rent state land near the beach from the Phuket Provincial Administration Organization for minimal rents ranging from 20 baht to 1,000 baht per rai per year.

The families - all of whom had been encroaching on state land before the disaster of December 26 and whose homes were destroyed by the waves or later demolished - may be able to rent a plot for decades and even hand it down to future generations.

The initial one-year contract for each plot was agreed by Kathu District Chief Officer Kantee Sinlapa. Under Thai law, tenants on government land rent initially for one year, then five, then 20, although the decision whether to renew the contract for the subsequent periods is up to the provincial governor.

The signing of the agree-

ments appears to mark something of a victory for the Kamala residents, who were told on January 14 that they would not be allowed to build anywhere near the beach and would certainly not be allowed to occupy state land.

At the time, Gov Udomsak said that he welcomed the plan to relocate the villagers, describing it as "...a good opportunity to move people who had illegally occupied state land".

The Governor also said, "If they don't move voluntarily, the government will take them to court to get them removed."

Then, four days later, Gov Udomsak made attempts to appease disgruntled Kamala villagers by offering land for rent at low rates.

He told the residents that they would have security of tenure and that the land could be handed down from generation to generation, with the rental contracts being checked every five years to ensure they stayed in order.

He said, "There will be no problem in renewing the contracts. You can live on the land for 30, 60 years, and on into the future."

Sanoh Ploykho, the *kamnan* (headman) of Kamala Village, told the *Gazette* on February 21 that he expected the remaining Kamala residents who had been illegally on state land to agree to rent land under the same terms.

He noted, however, that one area that no one will be allowed to occupy will be in a "no-build zone", a strip 20 meters wide, east from the high-tide mark.

"This area will be forested - as part of a plan from the Office of Tourism Development - to offer protection against any future tsunami," K. Sanoh told the *Gazette*.



Some of the 720 divers prepare to descend into the depths.

Divers claim record

SURAT THANI: More than 720 people from at least 35 countries have set a world record for the most divers diving simultaneously off Koh Tao, as part of the Koh Tao Underwater Day festival.

The event was held to promote awareness of how global climate change is slowly killing coral and to mark the coming into effect of the Kyoto Protocol, an international treaty signed by 136 nations, and aimed at reducing the amount of carbon dioxide produced globally. Carbon dioxide is one of the greenhouse gases that produce global warming.

Paul Foley, a consultant to

the event's organizer, Koh Tao Dive Operators' Club, said, "We have chosen to focus upon climate change - more often called global warming ... with current trends, there may be no coral left in 20 years."

"The glaciers and icecaps are melting. The time for action from policymakers and consumers is long overdue. We need change now."

Rico Stapel, of nearby Koh Samui's *community* magazine, told the *Gazette* that thousands turned out for the event, which also featured a Miss Dive Shop contest, a longtail boat race and a naval exercise by the Royal Thai Navy.

Free US IRS tax consultations

BANGKOK: The US Consulate has announced the dates for its annual Internal Revenue Service (IRS) consultations for US nationals living abroad.

IRS representative Elizabeth Kinney will provide free consultations on weekdays from March 17 to 25.

Mrs Kinney is scheduling 15-minute individual consultations between 7:30 am and 11 am and between 1 pm and 3 pm on these days.

In addition, she will present

two one-hour seminars on tax issues at the American Citizen's Services (ACS) offices on March 21 and 23, starting at 4 pm. No reservations are necessary for the seminars.

Commonly requested tax forms are available at ACS or can be downloaded from the IRS website (www.irs.gov).

For more information or to book a consultation, contact the ACS (Tel: 02-2054049, Fax: 02-2054103, Email: acsbkk@state.gov).

Bypass to be closed for blasting

PHUKET CITY: Parts of the bypass road (Chalermprakiat Ror IX Rd) will be closed for two afternoons a week until April because of construction work.

Phuket Provincial Highways Office Chief Thanit Sakiya announced on February 15 that traffic will be barred from various parts of the road between 1

pm and 3 pm on Mondays and Thursdays until the first week in April. Drivers will be directed to an alternative route.

K. Thanit explained, "We are expanding the bypass road and there are some areas that need to be cleared with explosives before construction can go ahead."

Pian told to get a move on

From page 1

He said the Municipality had yet to receive the 700-million-baht budget earmarked for the TAT redevelopment plan for the area.

He also warned that the Municipality risked being sued in the Administrative Court if it tried to exert authority over the beachfront. The Municipality had already sent a letter to the Land Department asking for such authority, he said, but was still awaiting a reply.

Mayor Pian added that when the TAT plan was finalized, the Municipality would go ahead with the plan to color-coordinate beach chair-umbrella sets and limit their operation to specified zones.

"We will allow only beach chairs and umbrellas provided by the Municipality to be used, and we will allow local businesses to bid for the right to advertise on them," he said, adding that the Municipality stood to gain needed revenue from this.

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King of Sweden thanks Thais

PHUKET CITY: Sweden's King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia visited Phuket Provincial Hall on February 18 as part of a state visit to Thailand to thank the Thai people for their efforts in the aftermath of the December 26 tsunami.

The royal couple, accompanied by Thai Foreign Affairs Minister Surakiat Sathirathai, were greeted by Phuket Governor Udomsak Usawarangkura and 20 government officials.

The King and Queen later paid a visit to Bangkok Phuket Hospital, before flying off to inspect the devastated Ban Nam Khem area of Phang Nga.

In the evening, they returned to Phuket, where they met the Governors of Phuket, Krabi and Phang Nga at the Pearl Village Hotel in Nai Yang.

After a closed meeting with the

Swedish royals, Gov Udomsak told the press he had briefed them on local efforts immediately after the tsunami.

FM Surakiat said, "His Majesty the King of Sweden praised the Royal Thai Navy ... He also thanked police officers, other military branches, and everyone else who had worked so hard to help survivors."

About 230,000 Swedes visit Thailand annually. The latest figures show that 569 Swedes are still missing after the tidal wave, with 169 deaths confirmed.

It later emerged that the Swedish king offered to help replace four cold storage units housing the unidentified bodies of tsunami victims in Phang Nga.

The units, at Wat Yan Yao and at Wat Bang Muang in Takuapa, are malfunctioning, causing rapid decomposition of

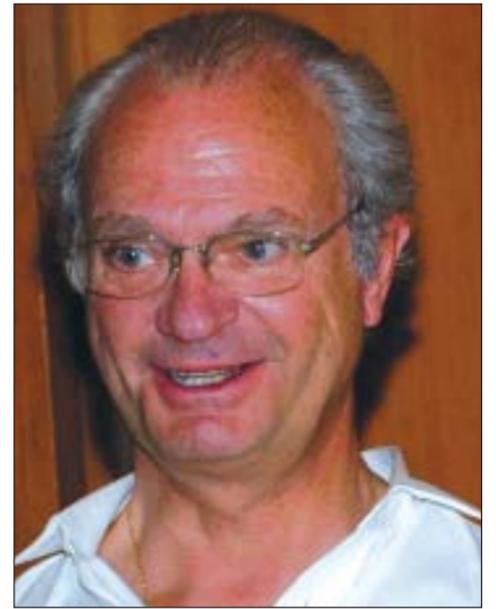
corpses and spreading a stench in the areas where they are located.

Pol Gen Noppadol Somboonsab, head of the Thai Tsunami Victim Identification Centre (TTVI), said the TTVI hired Phuket-based mechanics to carry out urgent repairs, but some of the units were found to be damaged beyond repair and need to be replaced.

He added that Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra had discussed the issue with the Swedish king, who had offered his country's help in providing replacement containers at both sites.

Gen Noppadol added that cold-storage containers at Mai Khao Cemetery, where the bodies of unidentified victims thought to be foreigners are stored, continue to function normally.

- Gateao Phetsawang



King Carl Gustaf offered Sweden's help in replacing malfunctioning refrigerated containers holding corpses in Phang Nga. Photo by Olinto Barletta

Festival to boost tsunami provinces

PATONG (*The Nation*): Music, sports, a swimwear fashion show and even a bodybuilding contest will be among the highlights of a project to help restore international tourists' confidence in the Andaman coast provinces.

The "Loving Andaman" campaign, organized jointly by Thai Airways International (THAI), the Office of the Supreme Commander and the UBC Group, will also include a damage survey, and coral-recovery and clean-up operations.

The climax will be a festival on March 5 at Patong Beach, from 1 pm until midnight, and consisting of beach sports, jazz, rock and hip-hop concerts, and a

beachwear fashion show organized by Chic Channel.

Other activities at the festival will include a beach-volleyball match between RS Promotion artists and a team from Dutchy, and a game between Channel 7 stars and an ad-hoc team of actresses and members of the national volleyball team.

A bodybuilding contest and sports will be staged, and there will be food stalls and a One Tambon One Product fair featuring items from the six provinces.

Organizers have also asked that all yacht owners bring their boats into Patong Bay on March 5 to add to the festive atmosphere.

338 bodies sent home

PHUKET: A total of 338 tsunami victims buried temporarily at Mai Khao Cemetery have been identified and returned to their families.

Thai Tsunami Victim Identification Centre (TTVI) head Pol Gen Noppadol Somboonsab said he expects all 1,890 bodies at Mai Khao to be identified within three or four months.

The general revealed that dental checks, fingerprints and physical characteristics rather

than DNA have been the main methods of identification.

"In 95% of cases, we have used dental records for identification, and 5% have been identified from their fingerprints. We have used DNA for matching in just one case so far," he said.

DNA identification was the most difficult method to use, Gen Noppadol explained, mainly because the TTVI computer cannot handle the very large amounts of data involved. - Kamol Pirat

Clinton, Bush stress local approach to tsunami recovery

By Dhirarat Boonkongsaeen

THALANG: Projects to rebuild tsunami-ravaged areas should be "locally-driven" former US presidents Bill Clinton and George Bush Sr declared after touring parts of Phuket and Phang Nga on February 19.

Thailand was the first stop in a four-country tour by the ex-presidents, aimed at encouraging private and corporate donors - particularly in the United States - to continue giving to the relief effort.

The duo visited Baan Nam Khem in Phang Nga, which was devastated by the tsunami, and saw a small project to repair and rebuild fishing boats.

Later, ex-President Clinton told a press conference at Blue Canyon Country Club that he had been impressed by the Thai government's progress in rehabilitating the tsunami-stricken region.

The performance, he said, had "far outstripped the predictions" of what could be done, and this was an illustration of

why international donors should keep their distance in the rebuilding.

"They might help to increase the capacity in some areas, but it has got to be locally driven, with the rest of us just showing up to help," he stressed.

"It is the lives of the people here, their future, their economy, their children."

Former President Bush agreed, saying: "The international officers have to respect what the locals need. We should respect the local expertise and knowledge of the countries which are receiving assistance."

President Clinton, who had described Thailand as "our oldest ally in Asia", said one in three American households had donated to the tsunami appeal.

Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who joined Mr Bush and Mr Clinton for dinner at Blue Canyon, told the press conference that Thailand was "very grateful" for the US's support after the tsunami.

En route to Blue Canyon, the former presidents stopped at Mai Khao cemetery and mortuary. There, after walking along the international wall of remembrance, they laid a wreath before the section devoted to American victims.

After the press conference at Blue Canyon, Thai Government Chief Spokesman Jakrapob Penkair said both former leaders had said they were impressed by the way Thai people had helped victims, regardless of race or creed.

"It gave a good image of [Thailand] when compared with other countries, even with American society," said K. Jakrapob.

The Bush-Clinton visit should help resuscitate tourism in the region, said K. Jakrapob.

"People around the world see two leaders from different political sides working together to help people in Thailand and other tsunami-affected countries," he said.

"That can say more about Thailand than any marketing campaign."

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Queer News

For your nose only

BANGKOK: Doctors performing the wrong operations on their patients are the stuff of medical malpractice lore, so perhaps it was inevitable in plastic-surgery-obsessed Thailand: a woman who went in for cosmetic eye surgery emerged from the operating theater with a nose job instead.

Nattha Masa, 40, paid the Ruamphaet Clinic in her home province of Samut Prakan 8,000 baht to have an extra fold surgically added to each of her eyelids, thus giving her a more Occidental appearance.

On the morning of February 15, she reported to the clinic, where she was given three sedatives and told to sleep for two hours.

Later, a driver arrived from the MD Clinic on the first floor of the popular Mahboonkrong shopping center in Bangkok. He said he had been told to transport the patient there, where her procedure would be carried out.

Arriving there in a dopey state at about 2 pm, K. Nattha was given three more pills and told to get changed and wait for plastic surgeon Dr Pradit Charoenpong, who would carry out the delicate procedure.

The doctor arrived at about 6 pm and soon K. Nattha was on the operating table, where she received local anesthetic injections to her face. Once she was comfortably numb, the doctor started cutting away.

"During the surgery, I heard his mobile phone ring three times. I thought it was strange that he kept telling the callers, 'I can't talk to you now, I am doing a nose job.' But I was just too groggy to say anything," K. Nattha explained afterward.

When the work was done, K. Nattha was told to rinse out her mouth. But when she did so, it was full of blood – just as it had been when she had nose surgery eight years previous.

The full extent of the botch-up became evident when she looked into the mirror and saw that it was her nose, not her eyelids, that was covered in gauze.

When she complained that she was in for eye surgery, not a nose job, the doctor said, "Oh, why didn't you tell me that in the first place?"

"He told me my nose was bad luck, and that's why he had to fix it," she said, adding that he then simply walked away when she tried to get an explanation, refusing to take any responsibility for having performed the wrong operation.

She went to the clinic counter and picked up a bag of pills – you can't leave a clinic in Thailand without doing so – and then went back to the first clinic to complain. Dr Pairoj said he would take responsibility, and got on the phone with his colleague at the shopping mall.

Later the same evening, Dr Pradit told the press that the first clinic had sent the patient to him without any information. Seeing the state of the patient's nose, which was out of alignment from her first surgery, he naturally assumed that a nose job was the order of the day.

"I asked her how long it had been since her first nose surgery and told her I was going to fix her nose – but she didn't say anything," he explained, adding that he would refund 4,000 baht, do the eye surgery, and do any further work she wanted done on her nose free of charge.

It was not reported if K. Nattha planned to take him up on the offer.

Reports of such medical malpractice among Thailand's plastic and reconstructive surgeons raises some frightening prospects.

Given the rising popularity of "gender reassignment surgery" in Thailand, one can only wonder how long it will be before some poor male patient goes in for a face-lift and ends up losing his family jewels.

Source: Khao Sod

FLYING IN THE

It's not only Phuket's pirate DVD producers who have been hard at work putting together DVDs about Phuket and the tsunami. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has been busy making discs too.

But while the DVDs on sale at market stalls in the island's tourist hotspots concentrate on what was lost to the tsunami, the TAT VCD is about what survived – and about why tourists should feel safe to come here.

The TAT is also championing post-tsunami package deals from budget carriers such as AirAsia and Singapore's Tiger Airways; inviting journalists on press junkets; organizing special events for the tourists who do come here and taking stands at local and international travel fairs, all with the aim of showing the world that Phuket is firmly back in the tourism business.

One event at which the TAT is due to have a presence is ITB in Berlin in mid-March, said to be the world's biggest travel trade show.

TAT Region 4 Director Suwalai Pinpradab describes ITB as, "the stage from which we can convince the world that we were not destroyed, as the international media has portrayed us."

However, Opas Netraumpai, Deputy President of the Tourism Council of Thailand (TCT), believes that airlines, by slashing flights to Phuket, may actually be helping re-inforce that image of Phuket as a no-go zone for tourists.

"The airlines may have suspended their flights to Phuket for financial reasons but to the outside world, it gives the impression that things are still so bad here [that people] should not come here," he explained.

Another danger, according to K. Opas, is that even people who believe Phuket is safe and want to come here for their holidays may be put off because of difficulty in getting flights.

"Flights should be as they were before the tsunami," he said. "Canceling flights inconveniences people who want to come here."

"For example, someone might choose to come here be-

Until December 26, indications were that this was going to be the best high season on record, with more visitors than ever arriving in Phuket. But, after the tsunami, this went from being the best ever year to probably the worst, with restaurants and shops empty and hotel and guesthouse occupancy initially languishing at between 0% and 10%.

Airlines, perhaps understandably, responded to the slump in the number of people wanting to come to Phuket by canceling or suspending flights to Phuket. Even the Thai national carrier, Thai Airways International, drastically reduced its services to Phuket.

The tourism situation is improving, with hotel occupancy predicted to reach up to 40% this month, and the Tourism Authority of Thailand is putting considerable effort into trying to encourage tourists to return to the Andaman provinces.

But how effective will this be while the number of flights is still so drastically reduced? The *Gazette's* Dhirarat Boonkongsan and Gategaeo Phetsawang find out.

"The airlines may have suspended their flights to Phuket for financial reasons but to the outside world, it gives the impression that things are still so bad here [that people] should not come here."

– Opas Netraumpai, Deputy President of the Tourism Council of Thailand



cause Phuket is served by a direct flight, but if they have to go through Bangkok to get here, what is to stop them deciding to go to, say, Chiang Mai instead, or even another country?

"Airlines, especially those that offer scheduled flights, should think about the convenience of their passengers. The easier it is for people to get here, the easier it is for Andaman tourism to recover."

A look at the figures from Phuket International Airport may help explain the airlines' decision to reduce flights.

In January the airport handled around three-quarters as many flights, international and domestic, as it did during January 2004, but less than one third as many passengers.

While 509,841 passengers

passed through the airport in January 2004, just 181,511 went through this January.

Those figures cover all arrivals and departures on domestic and international flights. The slump in international passengers was even more dramatic – from 241,513 in January 2004 to just 27,026 this January, or a drop of 89%.

Phuket Airport director Pornchai Eua-aree said, "Most passengers who arrive here are tourists. [Normally] 70% of the tourists would be coming to stay in Phuket while 30% would go on to Khao Lak or Krabi."

"Khao Lak has suffered far more damage than Phuket, and places there are not ready to attract tourists back yet, but Phuket itself is recovering. However, I don't expect flights to Phuket to

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FACE OF PHUKET'S NEED



The Swedes are back: The first NovAir flight to Phuket since the tsunami taxis to the arrivals gate.

increase to pre-tsunami levels, not at the moment, anyway.”

The most high-profile airline to have axed services to Phuket is the Thai national carrier, Thai Airways International (THAI). Flights from Japan, Australia and Hong Kong, which used to stop in Phuket en route to Bangkok, have been re-routed direct to Bangkok. The re-routing will apply until March 26 at the earliest.

Kalayapha Panich, the company's Phuket-based District Sales Manager for Upper-Southern Thailand, told the *Gazette* that the company had decided it could not continue to operate the routes at the losses it was sustaining.

“So few passengers are wanting to come to Phuket,” said K. Kalayapha. “People might say that we can afford to continue to stop at Phuket as usual, but, really, it costs too much when so many passengers have canceled their bookings. Head office has decided it is not worth our while to stop here.”

K. Kalayapha added that, even before the tsunami, the company had decided to cut some flights because of a lack of demand. For example, THAI had decided in December to suspend

the Bangkok-Phuket-Singapore route between January 15 and March 26.

The good news is that some airlines – particularly charter airlines – are resuming flights to Phuket. Finnair, NovAir and others have started to bring passengers – particularly from Scandinavia – to Phuket and will continue to do so until March or April, when the high season ends.

Low-cost carrier Orient Thai Airlines has resumed direct flights between South Korea and Phuket after suspending them after the tsunami. At present, the company is offering two flights a week, on Saturdays and Tuesdays, but by March, the service is expected to be back to its pre-tsunami level of four per week.

Orient Thai Chairman Udom Tantiprasongchai said he expects the South Korean, Chinese and Hong Kong tourist markets to be back to 50% of their normal level by April, partly as a result of a drive to bring tour operators to Phuket to see the damage – or lack of it – for them-

selves. But, K. Udom added, it will probably be six months before the market recovers fully.

An indication of just what that could mean for Phuket is the fact that, last year, Thailand received 600,000 tourists from Hong Kong. Of these, around a third arrived on Orient Thai flights.

“Before the tsunami we expected to increase the number of flights between Hong Kong and Phuket from one a day to two. Flights were canceled immediately after the tsunami hit Phuket, but we have been running one scheduled flight a day since February 1,” K. Udom said.

The TAT's K. Suwalai believes that direct flights to Phuket are only one part of the picture when it comes to getting the tourists back.

Pointing out that it is still fairly straightforward to reach Phuket via Bangkok, she said, “The canceled flights are just one factor affecting people's decision to come here.”

She noted that Thai people

Domestic Services to Phuket/flights per week.			
	DECEMBER	JANUARY	FEBRUARY
Bangkok Airways	42	42	35
Orient Express	7	7	7
Phuket Air	28	28	20
Thai Airways International	60	60	60
Thai Air Asia	21	21	21
Nok Air	21	21	21
Blue Water Air (Charter)	7	0	0
Total	186	179	164

International Services to Phuket/flights per week.			
	DECEMBER	JANUARY	FEBRUARY
Thai Airways International	37	10	10
Air China International	2	0	0
Air Asia	7	0	0
Austrian Airlines	2	0	0
Bangkok Airways	7	7	7
Britannia Scan	4	0	4
China Airlines	11	0	7
China Eastern Airlines	4	0	4
China Shanghai Airlines	1	0	0
Condor	3	0	3
Dragon Air	3	0	3
Korean Air	6	0	0
LTU Asia Tour	1	0	1
Malaysia Airlines	14	12	12
Orient Express	7	0	7
Silk Airways	24	18	18
Uni Airways	7	0	0
Thai Air Asia	14	0	0
Tiger Airways	7	7	7
Total	161	54	83

Charter Services to Phuket/flights per week.			
	DECEMBER	JANUARY	FEBRUARY
Asiana Airlines	2	0	0
Finn Air	7	0	7
Mytravel Airways	7	0	7
NovAir	2	0	0
Transaero	5	0	0
Air Finland	1	0	0
Total	24	0	14

may be reluctant to visit because they think Phuket is too expensive, or that they will be treated as second-class tourists while they are here. The TAT hopes to change such perceptions through a new marketing campaign.

She also noted that ethnic Chinese may have been reluctant

to come here within 50 days of the deaths of so many people. Now that the 50-day period has passed, she said, more Chinese visitors should arrive.

However, it is still anyone's guess as to how long it will be before Phuket's tourist numbers are back to “normal”.

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By Anongnat Sartpisut

One of many organizations giving time and effort to help after the tsunami is the Groupe de Secours de Catastrophe Française (GSCF), which arrived in Phuket on December 29.

A second GSCF recovery team arrived in Phuket at the beginning of February with an altogether different squad of aid workers: a troupe of clowns.

The clowns – brothers Thierry and Rodrigue Malaquin, and Stephane Bierla – from the French Anima group of performance artists – were also involved in recovery: recovery of the spirit.

The project – called Smile and Care – was organized by The Lions Club of Phuket Andaman, Central Karon Village GM Alexandre Glauser and Anima.

The clowns did not arrive in a rescue vehicle from which the doors, wheels and bodywork comically fell, but with the precision of a military operation, bringing 1.5 tons of supplies to distribute to those in need, though custard pies were not, sadly, on the manifest.

The three clowns are: Riri (Stephane) who wears an oversized pair of glasses and acts the fool; Roro (Rodrigue), in white and silver and with a somewhat somber demeanor, the straight man of the trio; and the chief clown, FanFan (Thierry), resplendent in a garish wig and yellow hat.

Their performances were a mixture of singing, dancing, simple magic tricks and clowning around. Participation by the audience – whether children or adults – was expected, and laughter reverberated throughout the crowds.

Riri said, “For us, the most important thing is to make children smile again because what happened [here] was very terrible.

“Children should be happy and the greatest thing you can do is to try to bring joy into a child’s life. We are happy to try to do this,” he added.

“People have great fun at these shows,” said Frank Couture, Fundraising Chairman of Lions Club of Phuket Andaman. “But some children don’t laugh. They don’t even smile. They are still too shocked,” he noted.

Mr Couture explained that



WHO ME, DOCTOR? Even the nurses get in on the act entertaining children in hospital, with (from left) Riri, Roro and FanFan.

THE BEST MEDICINE

the group distributed toys, clothing and equipment to around 3,500 children in Phuket and Khao Lak.

“We ran out of items to distribute,” said Mr Couture. “We had to split up into an entertainment team and a purchasing team. The purchasing team assessed what the children needed – school uniforms, medicines, even simple items such as pens and paper – and bought more items locally.

“It wasn’t a problem because buying things here – rather than in Europe – helps the local economy,” he added.

The clowns packed a lot into their four days in Thailand, including a whole day touring the displaced persons’ camps in and around Khao Lak. Then they did three days of three shows apiece, playing to audiences of as many as 800 children a time.

Their performances at locations such as Baan Nam Khem

School in Khao Lak, Koh Sireh School and Wachira Phuket Hospital were much appreciated by all, children, adults and even the aid workers.

The mother of two-year-old Nong Muk said, “My daughter had never seen a show such as this. She really enjoyed it and liked the clowns’ costumes.”

Little three-year-old James agreed. “It’s fun. I like it,” he said.

Mr Couture said that Smile and Care is a short-term project and gave details of the Lions Club long-term project – a child-care center in Phuket for up to 100 orphans or children otherwise in need.

“There are so many projects [in the region] at the moment and we don’t want to repeat what has been or is being done elsewhere.

“Our project is still in the assessment stage at the moment – we are looking for a suitable

WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT:
A little girl, one of the 3,000 children the clowns entertained, enjoys one of the shows.



plot of land to buy – and we hope to set up a home that is as close to ‘real’ family life as possible.”

Smile and Care will return to the region in March with more supplies – medicines and medical equipment will feature high on its list of items – and surprises for the children.

The supplies may be deliv-

ered as freight, but the joy the clowns bring with them flies first class.

For more details on the Smile and Care project or the child-care center, please contact Frank Couture. at Tel: 01-8235410 or email: frank@andamanlions.org or website: www.andamanlions.org

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PM committed to zoning plan

Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra strongly defended his controversial decision to grade villages in the Deep South by their perceived level of cooperation with the authorities – and to deny government sympathy to those thought to be sympathetic to the insurgent cause.

The government plans to designate villages in the region as green, yellow or red zones, with villages in the yellow and red zone facing cuts in state funding.

Speaking in Pattani, the PM said the zoning plan was necessary now that insurgents in the southern border provinces had declared some villages to be under their control.

“Those people have declared that they have won in those areas. The local residents are too scared to resist and have sided with them,” said PM Thaksin.

He said separatists in the Muslim-majority Deep South started “seizing control” of the region village by village over a decade ago and promised to “seize back” the villages under the separatists’ control.

Critics labeled the policy unconstitutional and said it was more likely to increase violence in the region than reduce it.

The day after PM Thaksin left the region after making the announcement, Thailand’s first-ever car bomb ripped through a restaurant in the tourist area of Narathiwat’s Sungai Kolok District. Six people were killed and some 50 others injured, several of them critically.

Porn tip: Teenagers in the northern province of Chiang Rai are enjoying easy access to pornography from a market in Mae Sai, on the border with Burma, a Culture Ministry watch center warned.

Yongrat Meesat, a ministry official in Chiang Rai, said “cultural diversion” problems in the area were getting serious.



PAPER CHASED: Dutchman Thomas Diependaal, left, and Spanish national Miguel Egias appear at a Crime Suppression Division press conference. The pair were arrested during a sting operation in front of Robinson Department Store on Bangkok’s Sukhumvit Soi 19 with 110 fake European passports.

Teenagers were developing “a mania” for pornographic material and he feared they might be influenced by unconventional attitudes towards premarital sex.

X-rated material had mushroomed at the Mae Sai border market, which was easily accessed by local students and beyond the control of police or officials, he said.

Freedom of speech: *Hat Yai Post* editor Pongkiat Saetang was shot dead in the center of Haad Yai in what his relatives believe was an act of revenge prompted by the paper’s negative coverage of certain local politicians.

Lt Col Samart Boonmee, an inspector at Haad Yai police station, said K. Pongkiat, 54, was

shot dead near the Thungsao Market.

Eyewitnesses told police that K. Pongkiat was turning into the market on his motorcycle at about 8:30 am when two men on another motorcycle approached him from behind and fired three shots. Two of the shots hit K. Pongkiat in the back, killing him.

K. Pongkiat’s widow, Sujin Saetang, 44, said her husband had earlier received an intimidating phone call, telling him to “be careful”.

Explosive devices: Leading cell-phone supplier Nokia (Thailand) said it had not yet received any official notification from the Consumer Protection Board (CPB) regarding the case of

Prasit Srileung, whose Nokia phone exploded while he was working under high-tension power lines last March.

Nokia issued a statement denying that it had agreed to pay 1 million baht in compensation requested by the CPB, and said it intends to strongly and vigorously defend any claim or action made against it.

K. Prasit was severely injured – his right leg and left toes were amputated and his right hand badly injured – after the cell phone blew up while he was in-

specting welding work at an Ang Thong factory last March.

Gang rape: Four wardens at Bangkok Special Prison were charged with gang-raping a drug suspect in their custody, police said.

The 23-year-old woman, charged with trading Ecstasy pills, filed a complaint at the Huay Khwang Police Station, accusing the men of sexually assaulting her on January 18 while she was waiting to be fingerprinted before her release on bail.

Wardens Praput Wongwian and Parinya Daengsai turned themselves in to police, but denied the charges. The two others, Pichet Chiewchuyay and Chaiyos Promthong, said they were ill and would surrender at a later date.

Unframed: British businessman Kevin Quill was acquitted by the Pattaya Appeal Court after a bitter five-year fight to clear his name after his 2002 conviction for possession of 100 *ya bah* (methamphetamine) tablets.

After his conviction, Quill, 43, was subsequently removed as a director of a hotel and bar business by his Scottish partners, who also own the gay go-go bar Boyz Boyz.

A letter was later provided to the court by the British Embassy stating that documents and a video relating to Quill’s arrest had been studied by Police Special Investigation Department Director-General Noppadol Somboonsap, who allegedly apologized to the embassy, admitting that Quill had been “framed”.

Around the Nation news roundup is sourced from the pages of The Nation and Kom Chad Luek newspapers.

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Focus shifts to Phi Phi Islands

On February 13, Krabi Vice-Governor Tiratthep Sriyaphan chaired a meeting of NGOs and Phi Phi Islands residents to discuss progress in the islands' rehabilitation after the tsunami.

V/Gov Tiratthep outlined in general terms the preliminary plan for the Phi Phis' redevelopment, noting that it must still be submitted for approval by the central government in Bangkok.

In fact, three separate plans are to be submitted. All share the goals of improving the main islands' safety, increasing wastewater treatment capacity and upgrading the power supply.

More stringent zoning laws – which will be enforced this time – are to be drawn up with the help of experts from Europe, America and Asia.

One idea is to establish a "green zone" or park across the central isthmus of Phi Phi Don, which is susceptible

to flooding. Another zone, to one side of the park, would be allocated for luxury resorts and hotels.

On the other side would be a "commercial" zone, for restaurants and bars, keeping them at a distance from hotels and thereby reducing noise pollution at resorts.

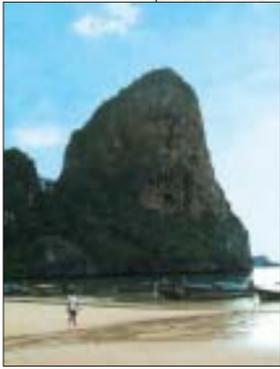
The government also plans to move the island's school, clinic and other municipal buildings to a separate area of the island, away from the beach.

The Vice Governor also reviewed the work being done to rebuild residents' homes. A total



Left: Work continues in cleaning up Phi Phi Don.

Below: Krabi Vice-Governor Tiratthep Sriyaphan speaks to NGO representatives and Phi Phi Islands residents about progress in the islands' rehabilitation.



ACROSS THE BAY

By Gus Reynolds

of 278 officially-registered homes were destroyed, with another 85 damaged. Many of the survivors have been relocated to homes in the Klong Hin section of Krabi Town, while 60 homes have been rebuilt.

In addition, some 200 homes without registration papers were destroyed; the government is making plans to provide public housing for residents of these dwellings as well.

The remainder of the meeting was taken up with trying to coordinate the various organizations providing aid to the Phi Phi Islands.

With many diverse groups and individuals all pursuing their own agendas, numerous examples of waste and inefficiency have come to light.

For example, it was pointed out that many kind-hearted people have donated sums of money for materials that are inappropriate or are no longer needed.

Often, the timing of the donations has been miscalculated, for example, the arrival of medical supplies that are no longer required.

Many items bought overseas and shipped to Thailand could easily have been sourced locally, thereby supporting local businesses.

In some cases, where government aid had already been provided, generous donors unwittingly provided some individuals with multiple aid packages. Others had gone empty-handed, the meeting heard.

Dutchman Emiel Kok, of Help International Phi Phi, is coordinating with local government officials, school administrators



and aid organizations. There is a clear need to organize all the foreign aid that is flowing into the area and improve coordination with government programs already underway.

A representative of Thai Together, a coordination agency set up in Phuket to help organize and structure aid programs, described the situation using the following analogy:

"A wealthy homeowner has his garden trampled by a herd of buffalo. The homeowner has the tools to replant his garden, but before he has a chance to plan his new garden, his well-meaning neighbors bring over their own tools and start replanting his garden without consulting him.

"In addition, the neighbors are not communicating and are working independently of each other. The homeowner now sees his garden has been planted with crops that his neighbors prefer, and in a disorganized and poorly-integrated manner completely at odds with his own intended plan."

That garden is Phi Phi Don Island.

Foreign residents, volunteers and donors should understand that the government is still in the planning stages of redevelopment. Most aspects of these projects will be the responsibility of the central government, working with local officials.

So before foreigners make donations, they would be very well advised to make sure they investigate what the authorities have planned.

People interested in donating money or volunteering time can contact info@hiphiphi.com for more information about the practicality of their intended donation.

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This week



DOING IT FOR THE KIDS: Thai singing sensations Nathan Oman (right) and girl band The Sis (2nd to 4th from right) bring smiles back to the faces of pupils at Patong Municipality School kindergarten following the tsunami.



NOT FORGOTTEN: Present at a memorial service held at Dulwich International College for those who died in the tsunami are: David Fall (center), the British Ambassador to Thailand; Christer Asp (2nd from left) Swedish Consul General to Phuket; and David Cook (left), Headmaster of the school.



BACK IN BUSINESS! The smiles say it all at the recently re-opened landmark Starbucks along Thaweewong Rd in Patong, a sure sign that the devastated beach road is on the way to recovery.



COURT ACTION: Steve Church (rear, left), the Courts Megastores Commercial Director presents computer equipment to Baan Kamala School, which was hit by the tsunami. Damrong Bunchoti (rear, 2nd from left), the Director of the Phuket Provincial Education Office, presided over the presentation.



GALLERIA GLEE: (from left): Christophe Imbert, MD of Comte de Sibour; and Rapan Kaewsiriwan and Ratchanee J Sopaak, respectively Sales Manager and Spa Manager of Pacific International Resorts & Spas, at the opening of Galleria Aleanta at The Plaza Surin.



ROTARY RESULT: Charin Chamrongkiatikul (right), the recently-elected president of the Rotary Club of Tongkah, Phuket, delivers essential supplies to Kamala residents on behalf of the Greater Huntsville Rotary Club, USA, several schools in Alabama and North Carolina, the Rotary Club of Lebach-Wadern, Germany, and Apha Detkaew and Mel Newton.

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FROM COAST

I was with clients at work when the tsunami struck. We were heading for the pool when suddenly we heard a sound that can only be described as an explosion, followed by screaming. I told my clients to go back inside; I went to the pool area.

Everything on ground level was destroyed. The pool area was just a mass of brown water with debris everywhere. People were in panic. Two American teenagers were looking out to sea with tears in their eyes – their father was missing.

Then a man shouted, “Second floor! Second floor!” We ran as fast as we could as the second wave came crashing in, bringing with it everything in its path.

After the wave receded, the resort was evacuated and staff searched for the missing. The pool staff had cuts and bruises, but in true Thai spirit they immediately went about helping others.

Amazingly, no one was killed at the resort and eventually all guests were accounted for; the injured were taken to hospital.

I called my wife, Keo, but my calls were unanswered. So I jumped in my car and headed straight home to Bang Tao. What I saw on the way was disturbing: ambulances, fire trucks and lots of pickup trucks full of injured people.

I feel extremely lucky to be alive. Keo was all right, as our house is not close to the sea. We had moved there just six months earlier from a beachfront house – which was destroyed by the wave.

Although the Marriott escaped with minor damage, occupancy there dropped dramatically; we were told to take time off if we wanted.

I read entries posted on online forums and I couldn't believe the *nam jai* (sympathy) from people from all over the world who wanted to help.

Stewart Cliff, who has lived in Phuket for four years, hails from the town of Hastings, on the southern coast of England. A sales executive for the Marriott Phuket Beach Club, he was at the Mai Khao resort when the tsunami struck. He has since rallied his hometown to provide support for victims of the disaster.

Realizing that the people of Hastings, like Phuket, rely heavily on fishing and tourism, Stewart made plain to them how the town, with its beachfront hotels and fishing fleet, would have fared if a tsunami had struck there.

The response has been outstanding, with the generous Hastings community responding to the opportunity to provide direct aid for tsunami victims who need it most. Here Stewart explains how it all came together.



Stewart and Keo Cliff – organizing help for one fishing community from another on the other side of the world.

At Bang Tao, a relief effort was already being drawn up. I felt a burning desire to help, but I didn't know what to do. I spoke to the landlord of our previous rental house and he said he was fine; he had insurance.

I asked him what I could do to help, and he told me to be careful that my help went to those who really needed it – many Thai fami-

lies in the area are wealthy, he pointed out.

I went home and thought about how I could help the poor families. I appealed to my hometown of Hastings, reasoning that it is also a fishing town with the largest beached fishing fleet in Europe.

In a report in the local paper, the *Hastings Observer*, I described what would have hap-

pened to Hastings if a tsunami of the same force had struck there. It would have been catastrophic; I think the devastation would have been worse than here.

For a start, it is a pebbly beach, not sandy. The pebbles alone would have injured many people. There are many more cars parked along the beach road. There are wooden deck chairs everywhere, no trees to cling onto,

many shops and fairground attractions, not to mention historic sites that would have been destroyed.

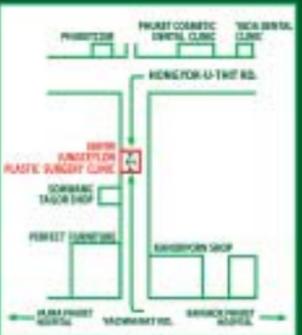
This obviously struck a nerve, because it made front-page news. The newspaper is read by about 70,000 people, so I hoped it would have some kind of impact.

My mother, Susan Day, told me about a meeting that had been



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TO COAST



Stewart Cliff's mother, Susan Day, with boxes of aid for tsunami victims, the day before she flew out to Thailand, thanks to Phuket Air. Below, Stewart's account of the tsunami made front-page news

set up with all the local fishermen and top businessmen in town to discuss ways to help. She went to the meeting and explained that I wanted to help the fishermen of Bang Tao, and that I was setting up a special account for the people of Hastings to donate to the cause of fixing the fishermen's boats.

Those at the meeting voted unanimously to support my cause. They quickly set up a charity called the Hastings SEA (South East Asia) Fund, and my mother was elected Vice-Chairman.

My initial role was to provide logistical information, and as this was reported in the press, more and more people got involved. Posters were made and a website set up, www.seaf.co.uk

I met Tony Rees, part of the Bang Tao Recovery Group, and I quickly realized that the expected amount of aid I was going to receive would be excessive for Bang Tao, which was already receiving help. I didn't want to step on any toes or make

the local people rich; I just wanted to help get them back on their feet.

I thought of other places that could do with help. Then I heard about the project being organized by Wayne "Red" Graham and Ken Abday to help villages in Ranong province. Those villages supply seafood not just to Thailand, but all over the world. Without their boats, the villagers cannot support their families.

I started to think how Hastings, as a vital part of the UK fishing industry, would relate to this.

Studying the project further, I noticed a village called Talay Nork, which means "Village by



the Sea". In this village, many lives were lost. The school was completely flattened, with only the Thai flag on the flagpole remaining. Twenty-two homes and around 42 boats were destroyed.

I put an aid proposal

for this village before the Hastings committee, which agreed that this should be the village to support. They believed tourist areas would be well looked after and had seen news reports about logistical problems charities were having distributing funds.

With myself as coordinator, the fund would distribute financial aid directly to the village, thus ensuring that every penny would

go toward relief aid. It would be one fishing community in the UK helping another in Thailand.

The Marriott management were totally supportive. They agreed that I could work full-time on the project until the end of February, while still receiving pay to support myself and Keo.

My old school, Claremont, agreed to dedicate their annual fund-raising events to help rebuild the Talay Nork school, and hopes to raise about 1 million baht.

My mother was invited to the school to speak to the children, who range from four to 13 years old. She told the story of Ning Nong, the hero baby elephant at the Sheraton Grande Laguna Resort, and the children were transfixed.

It had maximum effect and their fund-raising is in full swing already. Aid also started to come in from many shops in the town, including big chain stores such as Tesco, Boots and Co-op.

Two donations were outstanding. A four-year-old boy gave his Christmas presents, saying, "These are for the children of Thailand." The other was from an elderly lady who receives UK£200 (14,600 baht) every year from a trust fund. She gave it to my mother, saying she would like it to go to the children of Thailand every year for as long as she lives.

Despite being stricken with shingles, my mother worked tirelessly. "It helps take my mind off the pain," she said.

As donations poured in, her house began to resemble a warehouse, storing 25 boxes of goods for children at Talay Nork and other nearby villages.

I asked Thai Airways International (THAI) if they would fly the boxes to Phuket, free. To my shock, the reply was an emphatic "No". As the national carrier, THAI should be ashamed of the way it has turned its back on Phuket.

I then called Phuket Air. What a different response. Not just in terms of the outcome, but also in attitude. They were so polite and I instantly had the feeling that they really wanted to help. Phuket Air does not have its own staff in London, as THAI does, but it made all the necessary arrangements.

During all this, the Hastings SEA Fund organizers had really been gathering steam. They are now organizing a memorabilia auction to be held in March. Many celebrities, including local resident Paul McCartney, have been contacted and have indicated that they are willing to supply memorabilia.

In a report in the local paper, the *Hastings Observer*, I described what would have happened to Hastings if a tsunami of the same force had struck there. It would have been catastrophic; I think the devastation would have been worse than here.

The town was plastered with posters and the local newspapers gave extensive coverage to the story. An ITV news team interviewed us, asking if we thought this aid concept could be used by other UK towns to sponsor tsunami-affected villages.

The story reflected the frustration people in the UK felt; they wanted to help, but didn't know where their money would really go. The Hastings SEA Fund is proof that, by direct commu-

nication, aid can be distributed to the families who really need it.

ITV would now like to follow the progress of yRed and Ken's project with a documentary, which I will film.

For four years I have enjoyed a life here in Phuket that I never dreamed of having back home. It is truly a harmonious place, with special people who touch the hearts of the thousands of people who visit - as evidenced by the aid that has poured in from around the world.

I am happy to be able to do my bit for the people here, and am honored to take on this task.

I believe that in the end, the spirit of cooperation we have seen will help Phuket and its people emerge stronger than ever.

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Spanish flying at the Café del Mar

EAR CANDY

by Andy

Ibiza might not be the sublime boho bolthole it once was (nor are Goa or Phuket, for that matter) but the loss of exclusivity has resulted in greater accessibility to far more than the tabloid-press image of Ecstasy and sunburned Eurotrash throwing up everywhere.

Take Café del Mar, for instance. Designed by the renowned Catalan architect Luis Güell, and opened in 1980, it became the place on the island for those with discriminating taste.

Jazz, blues and classical music were the favored choices then, while the rest of the Western world was listening to disco, rock or post-punk.

Styles and tastes evolved at Café del Mar with the interest in world music and ambient house music in the late '80s. This was reflected in the first official Café del Mar release in 1994, which followed years

of cassettes – I still have one from 1989 – made by resident deejays under the guidance of José Padilla (not the suspected terrorist).

Fast forward to 2004, when two *Best of Café del Mar* CDs were released. The selection of tracks on the second CD released is as eclectic as the café

which, with its Gaudi-esque resonances and a clientele ranging from gap-year kids to the now 60-year-old original patrons remains at the cutting edge of contemporary music and style.

Track 1, *Music for a found harmonium*, is by the Penguin Café Orchestra, a loose collaboration of musicians led by the late Simon Jeffes. This track – which is actually a lively Scottish reel – has been used in countless commercials and films, most famously the 1986 film *Malcolm*.

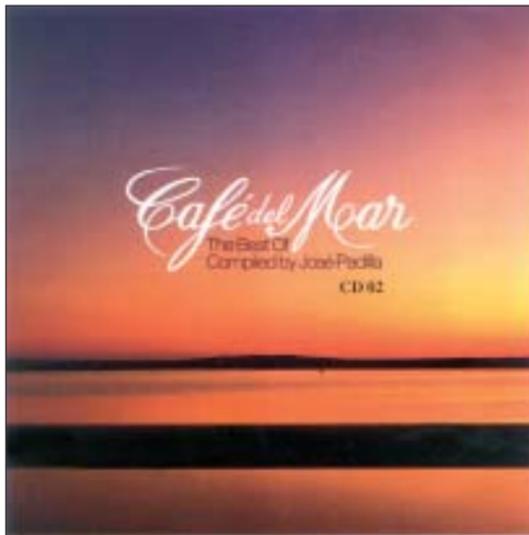
A stunning Talvin Singh remix of *Sunshines Better* by John Martyn – the seminal folk/blues guitarist and creator of the 1973 album *Solid Air* – is track 6.

Sunshines Better features the killer opening line, “If I call you sugar, if you call me honey does this mean you got a hand in my fate?”

Rich barely describes the warmth of the production or the spirit of this song, which is a piece that always brings a slight dampness to the eyes. It permeates the soul and offers a feel of that famous Ibizan sunset.

Whispering Wind by Moby and a remix of U2’s *In a little*

I first listened to the CD six months ago en route to a hotel in Khao Lak. Most of the hotel is no longer there but the music – almost a soundtrack – is.



while sit perfectly alongside Padilla’s *Come back*, an down-tempo, jazzy delight.

I love this album but not just for the music nor the memories of Ibiza; I first listened to the CD six months ago en route to a hotel in Khao Lak.

Most of the hotel is no longer there, but the music – almost a soundtrack – is.

• *Best of Café del Mar CD 02*, Mercury Records, 9811934. Playing time: 78 minutes, 39 seconds.

More music for when the sun goes down can be found on *Ballads 2003*.

This soulful collection of

tunes contains everything one would expect from Nagel Heyer Records: sterling choices of the perfect introductions to some of the new generation of jazz tune-smiths.

Lyambiko, named after their strikingly beautiful vocalist, provide the self-penned *Tenderly* as Track 3. Lyambiko, the singer, is a newcomer to the international jazz scene, but sounds like a reincarnation of Sarah Vaughn in her heyday.

Eric Reed provides the mesmerizing *I love you Lord* from his *Mercy and Grace* album. Reed, an intelligent writer and daring

pianist, is one of a number of rising jazz stars who first cut their teeth in Wynton Marsalis’s various bands. This track – a nod in the direction of Arvo Pärt’s *Spiegel Im Spiegel* – is serenely minimalist.

Track 8, a live recording of *Wave* by the late Harry “Sweets” Edison – the trumpeter on the theme to *The Odd Couple* – is a joyful Latin piece full of “yeahs”, finger-clicking and shouts of appreciation from the audience.

He even breaks off into *Summertime* halfway through and keeps the emotional vibra-

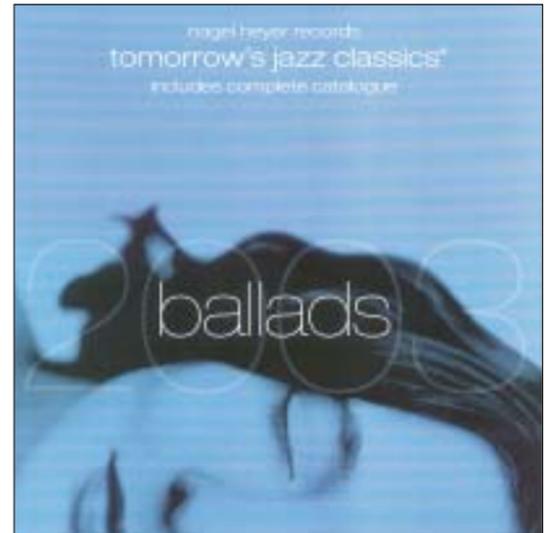
tion of the trumpet going for almost nine minutes. Simply stunning work.

The standout track – if for the title alone – is *Ballad for the very tired and very sad lotus eaters* by the Ken Peplowski Quartet.

Peplowski provides a well-rounded swing/bop arrangement that glides from the lyrical to the exhilarating with every note of his sax.

He has an eye on the past with this tune – a little-known Billy Strayhorn piece from the early '50s – but adds just a touch of the zeitgeist to reward the very sad and the very tired.

• *Ballads 2003*, Nagel Heyer Records NH 1019. Playing time: 77 minutes 20 seconds.



Albums reviewed courtesy of CD Warehouse Asia. Website: www.cdwarehouse-asia.com; Email: info@cdwarehouse-asia.com.

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YOUR HAIR

with Sangkhae

There's a saying that you are what you eat, and health experts agree that diet has a significant influence on our health, the shape of our bodies and the condition of our skin – and our hair.

Hair is formed in follicles in the scalp, and the better “fed” those follicles are, the healthier the hair they produce is likely to be.

So what should one eat – or drink – to maintain a healthy head of hair?

Water: Essential for keeping our bodies functioning properly. Health experts recommend drinking at least eight glasses of water a day to flush out toxins and keep body tissues hydrated,

Eat your way to beautiful hair

including the follicles where hair is “made”.

Iron: Helps make red blood cells, which carry oxygen – essential “food” for the follicles – around the body.

Good sources of iron include liver, meat, beans, nuts, dried fruit, whole grains and dark green leafy vegetables.

Copper: There is a theory – as yet unproven – that eating copper-rich foods, such as sunflower seeds and cashew nuts, can stave off the appearance of gray hair. Copper, so the theory

goes, encourages the hair follicles to produce melanin. The more melanin there is in the hair, the richer (though not darker) the color. Conversely, the less melanin, the paler the color.

Zinc: Found especially in seafood, meat, milk and other dairy products, and cereals, zinc helps keep the hair strong and staves off split ends.

Protein: Essential for making the keratin that coats each hair strand. Good sources of protein are: meat, fish, eggs and pulses such as lentils.



Dark green vegetables such as spinach are a good source of iron.

HEALTHY SKIN by Dhira

A BURNING ISSUE

One reason many people come to Phuket – whether to live or on vacation – is the sun. People with pale skin, especially those from northern Europe, often spend many hours on the island's beaches or by its swimming pools, being baked by the sun as they strive for the perfect tan.

Health experts are constantly stressing to Westerners – especially those with pale skin – the dangers of too much sun.

Sometimes the warnings are heeded, sometimes not. One person who has seen at first hand just what happens when white-skinned Westerners spend too much time in the sun is Jitnipa Swangiang, Managing Director of the Anda Spa at Patong's Club Andaman Beach Resort.

Like health experts, she recommends spending a maximum of 15 minutes in the sun when it is at its strongest, between 10 am and 4 pm.

But not everyone gets the message. K. Jitnipa says, “We get European customers here who



The government may not want the umbrellas back on the beaches, but pale Western skin needs them.

have burned their skin, even when they have used sun lotions.

“We usually use soothing treatments on the skin. We start by cleaning the skin very gently – which can take around five minutes.

“Then we gently massage the burned skin with aloe vera gel

that we keep in the refrigerator, and cucumber extract. We don't scrub the skin, we're trying to re moisturize it.

“The idea is to cool the skin and take away the pain; we spend about 20 minutes doing this.

“We try to help the guests relax, though some guests want

to have their faces ‘lifted’ at the same time, so we may add spirulina gel to the ingredients too.

“After cleaning, we cover the burned skin with more aloe vera and cucumber, to which we sometimes add rose essential oil; rose is especially good for mature skin, as well as aiding relaxation.”

How effective is this stage of the treatment? According to K. Jitnipa, it is not unknown for guests to fall asleep during the 40-minute treatment, which includes a head, shoulder and hand massage.

K. Jitnipa continues, “Then we do the same thing with the body. We add lavender oil to aloe vera and half a kilogram of crushed cucumber. We cover the skin with it for 15 to 30 minutes, then shower it off.

“Sometimes we let the guest lie in a bath of milk and warm water for about 10 minutes, before applying the aloe vera body lotion.”

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Small but perfectly formed

Travel snobs spout sayings like: "Where you stay is as important as where you go", clocking up their five-stars like misers hoarding coins.

Few of them can truly appreciate where they stay, mind you; which is ironic, considering that all around Asia bright, smart boutique hotels – beautifully designed, and kept just on the right side of intimate – are springing up like so many mushrooms.

The Savoy in Yangon is a case in point, overlooking the "Glistening Wonder", the golden Shwedagon Pagoda.

While the hotel is colonial in appearance – all wood and rattan – and endowed with the kind of service that seems to belong to the past, it is a cultural potpourri of international inspiration, juggling Mexican fare with English-style afternoon tea and a humidior that is renowned throughout the capital.

Sundowners by the palm-fringed pool or the terrace with

its Shwedagon backdrop are practically *de rigueur*.

The hotel's 24 rooms and six suites are large, light and airy; in-room massages are available to ease the day's stress and strain; and the hotel's limousine makes getting around town a breeze.

Still on the subcontinent, Udaivilas in Udaipur is rather more upscale.

Visits start with a chauffeur-driven ride from the airport to the jetty and then a short trip across Lake Pichola in Udaivilas' private launch.

The architecture takes its cue from the rich heritage of the Rajasthani region, recreating a royal palace built in the grand Mewar style, using traditional materials and construction techniques.

Guests' eyes are drawn naturally to panoramic views of the Aravelli mountains, the City Palace, two 17th Century island palaces and the Jag Mandir temple.

Nothing has been spared to make the rooms supremely com-



Bigger than your average boutique: The stunning Udaivilas in India, reached by motor launch.

fortable, and all feature exclusively designed, handcrafted furniture, hand-knotted carpets and local works of art.

The concept of a boutique hotel is radically new in China. Qingdao – which will host the 2008 water sports Olympics, and which is home to the Tsing Tao brewery – is also where you will find the Surf Plaza Resort.

All the suites look out to sea and the 70-meter swimming pool is lined with white marble. The Mirage Restaurant dishes up the finest international cuisine, and has views over the Yellow Sea and the Lao Shan Mountains. There's also a wealth of choice in the Lincoln Bistro, which showcases Chinese and Western seafood.

Finally, for those really bored with the bland uniformity of the big chains, Les Suites in Taipei offers an interesting boutique alternative. There is – gasp – no restaurant, though the residents-only lounge serves breakfast, all-day drinks and snacks, and complimentary cocktails. It is also a cyber-café, with free-to-use Wi-Fi computers.

Rooms are smartly fur-

nished, with mood lighting and muted color schemes, and are extremely high-tech, with touch-button curtain control and world-time clocks.

They also have amazing toilets – three wash cycles and a warm-air dry! Get your head, or perhaps the opposite end of your anatomy, around that and you definitely qualify as an ablutions geek.

Service is impeccable – some of the staff even speak Spanish, as well as Mandarin, Japanese and English. But be warned: occupancy is high, as savvy Asian travelers have long been in on this "secret".

Boutique hotels may be a tad more expensive, of course, but you certainly get what you pay for.

TALES OF A TRAVELER

By Ed Peters



"Phuri Phimaan" Nai Yang Beach - Phuket



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KIDS THE FUN PAGE FOR ALL THE FAMILY

Hidden Words

Hidden in the grid below are the names of at least 20 insects. The names may read vertically, horizontally or diagonally. They may also read right-to-left or down-to-up. See if you can find more than your family or friends. Score: 10 or more, good; 15 or more, very good; 20 or more, excellent.

C	H	H	X	L	W	T	U	I	S	P	Y	I	G	T
E	T	C	N	Q	E	G	A	Z	I	L	M	U	F	E
N	O	A	U	O	F	L	H	R	F	B	B	S	R	K
T	M	O	B	U	I	C	T	R	A	Y	E	M	B	C
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P	D	K	G	Q	O	T	R	A	O	N	T	S	B	R
E	E	C	Y	P	T	W	L	O	T	B	A	U	H	C
D	I	O	C	U	K	H	F	I	C	W	E	E	L	G
E	G	C	B	D	V	A	S	L	C	S	L	U	S	A
D	R	A	G	O	N	F	L	Y	Y	E	M	C	L	L
X	O	G	A	M	J	M	Z	C	F	D	J	G	U	B
T	E	R	M	I	T	E	R	M	J	K	R	A	C	J
Q	S	Y	J	I	Q	N	I	T	X	E	Y	M	I	F
B	A	R	A	C	S	L	U	U	E	Q	E	H	C	R
J	A	Q	Z	R	L	S	G	N	I	W	E	C	A	L
S	M	E	L	I	N	M	B	F	P	H	U	F	D	O
M	D	J	P	T	G	O	X	X	U	N	M	O	A	A
J	M	E	E	O	T	X	S	F	P	A	N	T	V	E
L	D	E	H	T	J	F	D	D	Z	I	H	E	N	Z
E	R	Y	L	R	E	P	P	O	H	S	S	A	R	G
X	P	E	D	M	J	D	W	L	I	A	J	R	O	V
R	T	P	D	A	G	S	Q	E	E	C	P	Q	G	X
M	H	P	H	I	E	Q	K	G	E	G	B	K	V	C
D	J	S	R	E	P	B	E	V	K	I	G	O	B	G
Y	L	U	E	D	G	S	U	I	G	O	S	L	D	W

Get your brain in gear with The Monster Quiz



- Which famous political work was first published February 26, 1848?
- Who were the authors?
- Complete this quartet of aliases for *Harry Potter* characters: Prongs, Wormtail, Padfoot and...?
- What are their "real" names?
- What is *waterzooi*?
- What was The Watusi?
- How many countries compete in the baseball World Series?
- If, in Latin America, you were given raw fish marinated in lime juice and chilies, chopped tomato and herbs, what would you call it?
- Which designer is credited with inventing the "little black dress"?
- Where would you find the river Ob?
- In Greek mythology, what or who were Acheron, Cocytus and Phlegethon?
- What is the correct term for words that are spelled the same but pronounced differently?
- A dish served *Véronique* includes what?
- What is the basic monetary unit of Bangladesh?
- Feta cheese is usually stored in what liquid?
- Which, to a Spaniard, is the largest river in Spain?
- Which poet wrote *Tagus farewell*?
- The mnemonic acronym MRS GREN refers to what processes?
- Collectively, these are the characteristics of what?
- Approximately how many people live in the European Union?

Answers next week

Never a Cross Word!

Across

- Mal de mer.
- House unit.
- Lenin's successor.
- Study of plants.
- Heart of a computer.
- Malfunctioning bomb or firework.
- Thin covering of wood.
- Non-stick material.
- Earth satellite.
- Jumbo-sized.

Down

- Rapidly-flashing light.
- Fuss.
- Ego counterpart.
- "Go fly a ****!"
- Solar blackout.
- Performed in the karaoke club.
- Social insect.
- Expensive underground fungus.
- Between Cancer and Virgo.
- Any of three novel-writing sisters.
- Eye affliction.
- Lake in Midlothian?
- Yes, in Marseilles.
- Above.

1		2		3		4		5		6
7					8					
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10		11				12				
						13			14	
	15				16					
17				18						
19							20	21		
						22				
23										

Brain Buster!!

Read the following, then identify the word:

- RED has no common letter with it;
- END has one common letter, but not in the correct place;
- TIN has one common letter, in the correct place;
- TIP has one common letter, not in the correct place;
- AIR has one common letter, not in the correct place.

Answer: Pan

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S MONSTER QUIZ

- She set a new record for the fastest solo yacht circumnavigation of the world;
- Queen Latifah;
- No Doubt;
- The phonograph;
- Norway;
- Sir Tim Berners-Lee;
- <http://info.cern.ch>;
- 921;
- Genocide;
- 37 years;
- Königstein, at 2,606 meters;
- Gabriel Batistuta;
- 156;
- Alfred Bester;
- Sebastien Loeb;
- Tungsten;
- Wolfram;
- Jim Carrey;
- Daniel Handler;
- Scotland, England, Ireland, Wales, France and Italy.

SOLUTION TO LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD

S	O	C	K		C	L	O	C	K	S
A	Y	B	A		A					E
G	I	L	B	E	R	T		T	A	N
A	I	T	V		A					I
	O	N	E		D	I	E	S	E	L
S	D	A	A		T					E
P	I	R	A	T	E		A	R	C	
E	I		T		S		O			O
E	S	C		I	N	S	I	P	I	D
D	A		L		T		H			I
S	U	L	T	A	N		V	E	I	N

Solution next week



Avoiding trouble and strife in a divorce

This week I want to touch on the subject of pre-marital, or pre-nuptial, agreements and their validity in Thailand.

Mr A, who works as a business adviser in the US, decided not to marry his fiancée without entering into a pre-marital agreement with her.

As it was his intention to marry in Thailand but register the marriage in the US, he wanted to be sure the agreement would be legal in Thailand.

The agreement was prepared in Thailand and had to be filed with officials at the local District Office at the same time as the marriage was being registered in order for it to be effective and legally binding in Thailand.

As the laws in Thailand and the US are not the same, law offices were employed to draw up an agreement that would be valid in both countries.

This was a very difficult task, and in the end, Mr A decided to register the marriage in the US, as he planned to live there with his wife, and was more concerned with the the agreement being binding in the US than in Thailand.

He therefore arranged to have the documents prepared in Thailand and signed before a Notary Public. His future wife was represented by her own lawyer and had the agreement read out to her, in English and Thai, before she signed it.

Mr A also recorded the whole procedure on tape, to prevent any future prob-



LAYING DOWN THE LAW

With Friedrich
'Sam' Fauma

lems over the legality of the agreement, or any argument from his wife that she had not understood what she was signing.

The whole procedure was photographed, and there was well-documented evidence of the agreement being signed, and of its legality.

A few months later, the marriage was registered in the US, and the couple lived there for some time.

Two years later, however, they decided to get a divorce. As the agreement was legally binding in the US, where Mr A lived at the time, his wife, who had moved back to Thailand, had no choice but to accept the terms of the agreement.

Both agreed to the settlement laid out in the pre-marital agreement and the divorce was filed in the US without any complications over compensation payments to the wife.

In Thailand, a pre-marital or pre-nuptial agreement should be signed before the marriage and shown to the District Office at the time the marriage is registered, or, better still, be signed at the local District Office at the same time as the marriage is registered.

In The Stars

by Isla Star

PISCES (February 20-March 20): Pisceans who are celebrating a birthday this week will be delighted by the creativity of those close to them. Even if you don't open your front door to a surprise party, there are certain to be one or two unexpected moments. Romance is in the air on Tuesday, when Cupid is poised to shoot an arrow in your direction. Leo is impressed by your talent for keeping a cool head when doing business.

ARIES (March 21-April 20): A carefree mood brightens your world until mid-week, when a mild spell of negativity takes you unawares. Don't waste time wondering where these pessimistic feelings come from; they will disappear as quickly as they arrive. Those who have recently lost an important possession will be cheered up when it turns up out of the blue on Tuesday. The number 7 is especially meaningful on Thursday.

TAURUS (April 21-May 21): Important financial news is winging its way toward you and could mean that you will finally be able to realize a goal that was previously unattainable. You should not trust everyone you meet this week; there is a snake in the un-

What the week holds in store

dergrowth that has a devious plan in mind. You can, however, rely on good friends who have proved their worth in the past. Wear the color cherry red to warm your soul.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21): Geminis who are inclined to believe that they are the cats' whiskers may receive a reality check this weekend. Rivalry is brewing in the jungle and you will need to pull out all the stops to make sure you come out on top. On the home front, a close relationship appears to be under some pressure at the moment – an immediate injection of romance is called for.

CANCER (June 22-July 23): There seems to be no rhyme or reason to a friend's strange behavior on Saturday. You will need to use some tact when trying to ascertain what is really going on.

As for matters of work, you are ready for action but you will have to wait a while longer before others decide to commit. Use this free time to go over personal administration; it appears that an overdue bill has slipped your mind.

LEO (July 24-August 22): A situation that seemed crystal clear last week starts to look as murky as mud, but appearances are deceptive in this case. Leos who are adept at slashing and burning will get to the bottom of the matter without too much trouble. If you want to make a mountain out of a termite mound, you can do that, too. On Monday, appointments are likely to be rescheduled at the last minute.

VIRGO (August 23-September 23): You should coast through this week without a care in the world. Until the end of March, you will receive more than your fair share of golden opportunities and there will be no excuses for not improving your lot in life. The only cloud on the horizon occurs on Wednesday, when a friend confronts you with an un-

just accusation. You should state your position calmly and honestly to avoid this blowing out of proportion.

LIBRA (September 24-October 23): Important people seem determined to put you through your paces at work this week. If you can meet these expectations, the rewards will be more than fair. Librans who are single and happy to be so will have to dig their heels into the sand when a matchmaker friend won't take no for an answer. Travel plans start to occupy your mind; this is the year to head for previously unexplored destinations.

SCORPIO (October 24-November 22): Scorpios can look forward to an eventful week, with at least one dream set to come true. Personal relationships will be subject to misunderstandings and you are advised to avoid confrontation during the coming days. Make the most of a unique opportunity to further your career on Thursday. Pisces asks your advice at a social gathering this weekend – keep your answer ambiguous.

SAGITTARIUS (November 23-December 21): Many Sagittarians will be feeling dissatisfied with progress made so far this year. Now is the time to become more assertive. If finances are part of the problem, auspicious astral conditions are ready to back you up, so try setting your sights higher. Casual relationships are about to become more settled; if you are ready to pop that important question, this is the right week to do so.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 20): Capricorns are not usually prepared to meet people halfway without putting up a fight first, but you should back down gracefully this week when a compromise is called for. A tired relationship gets a new lease on life and sensual sparks are sure to fly this Saturday. At home, harmony prevails until Wednesday, when you are faced with teenage traumas – deal with these now before matters escalate. The color midnight blue promotes honesty.

AQUARIUS (January 21-February 19): Your thirst for knowledge is piqued this weekend, but others will not share your enthusiasm. Those who are prepared to go it alone are about to set off on a solitary voyage. A stroke of financial luck enables you to splash out next week, but keep something by for rainy days ahead. While such days may seem far off now, you will experience a few next month.

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A dig at the Day of Love

It is around this time of year, with Spring advancing upon us (does it really do that in Phuket?), that a half-naked cherub supposedly comes down from the heavens, bow and arrow in hand, ready to shoot unsuspecting couples with indicators of love.

Or so the story goes. Cards with messages such as "Be My Valentine" are handed out, and chocolates and flowers are given to those we love as young and mature alike convey their devotion to their sweethearts.

But where exactly does this "festival" originate from? I mean, the majority of us seem to celebrate it, yet we appear to have no idea where it comes from.

There are several different theories as to the origin of Valentine's Day, but two of the most notable date from the days of the Roman Empire.

The first is that February 14 was the date of an ancient Roman festival to honor the goddess Juno. In addition to being the queen of the Roman gods and goddesses, Juno was also the goddess of marriage.

The other story is that the festival evolved from the commemoration of the life and death of the Christian martyr St Valentine. According to church tradition, St Valentine was a priest near Rome in about the year 270 AD. At the time, the Emperor Aurelian was imprisoning Christians for not worshipping the Roman gods, and Valentine was one of those arrested.

Some say he was arrested because he was performing Christian marriages, but others say it was for helping Christians escape prison. While imprisoned, Valentine continued to preach the word of God. One of his guards had adopted a blind girl. He asked the priest to bless his daughter and pray for her sight. Miraculously, it was restored.

Valentine converted many people while in prison, and when officials heard of this, he was immediately beheaded. He died for the love and faith that he held in his heart and it is this love that inspired St Valentine's Day.

There are, of course, cynics who believe that Valentine's Day was established by greeting card companies to boost sales during the period between Christmas and Easter, and that it is nothing more than a marketing gimmick.

In the end, it's up to the in-



Youth 'n ASIA
By Lauren Moorhouse

dividual to decide what he or she believes. If we are going to manufacture a festival, isn't it best if we build it around the love that we have for each another, especially in these uncertain times?

While researching this article, I came across some Valentine's Day traditions from various cultures.

In Wales, for example, wooden "love spoons" were carved and given as gifts on February 14. Hearts, keys and keyholes were other decorations, conveying the message "You unlock my heart," to the recipient.

In England hundreds of years ago, children would dress up as adults and go door-to-door singing Valentine songs.

In some countries, a young woman may receive a gift of clothing from a young man; if she keeps the gift, she signifies that she will marry him.

There were also several superstitions associated with Valentine's Day. For example, one belief was that if a woman saw a robin flying overhead on Valentine's Day, she would marry a sailor. If she saw a sparrow, she would marry a poor man yet be very happy, but if she saw a goldfinch, she would marry a millionaire.

Even those who don't celebrate Valentine's Day shouldn't ruin it for those who do, as they may need the festival to express the way they feel. After all, as the Bible points out, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

How you interpret that quotation is how you should celebrate Valentine's Day, as it sums up the essence perfectly. As for the cynics, try to be a little more open and maybe Cupid's arrow will be aimed at you next year.

Keeping your cool

Dear Momma Duck,

After the tsunami hit the Andaman Coast, the emotional composition of the Thai people in coping with such a tragedy was simply outstanding.

I have heard that this "coolness" is called *jai yen* (cool heart) in Thai.

Where did *jai yen* originate? How did it become such a central aspect of Thai culture? Furthermore, have there been other instances in Thailand's history when *jai yen* played a critical part in the Thai people coping with a crisis, such as the tsunami?

In Awe
Phuket



Momma DUCK

By Wanida Hongyok
momma@phuketgazette.net

Dear In Awe,

Perhaps *nam jai* (showing sympathy) for the tsunami victims is a broader concept for describing the community spirit and help that has been pouring in from all over Thailand, as well as from abroad.

Kindness, sharing and helpfulness toward other people is a very strong theme in Thai culture and, in this case, was also extended to the tourists who died or were injured in the disaster.

The *jai yen* you mention (reacting with "cool control" rather than anger) can also be seen as a part of *tang sati* (consciousness) that applies when we try to carry on with our everyday lives, even in the face of tragedy.

This value originates from Buddhism and is also central to Thai culture. Monks always preach about understanding and accepting (being aware of) a problem and its cause as a way of moving toward finding a solution.

Thai communities are also very close-knit and people are always concerned about the family and group, not just individuals. We also deeply value "how" something is done, not just the action itself. These ways of thinking help us to understand and deal with problems in our everyday lives as well as with a major crisis, such as the tsunami.

These ways of thinking help us to understand and deal with problems in our everyday lives as well as with a major crisis, such as the tsunami.

Another local instance in Thai history when *jai yen* played a critical part in the Thai people coping with a crisis was the victory of Thao Thepkrasattri and Thao Srisoonthorn over the Burmese 220 years ago.

At that time only the old, the young and the sick were left in Thalang because the soldiers had been sent up-country, but the two heroines coolly managed to create the image of a fully-armed army prepared to fight and thereby succeeded in protecting the town, and perhaps the whole island, by frightening off the Burmese.

Dear Momma Duck,

Could you explain the different types of *wai* for me, and give me some idea of when to use them? I don't want to embarrass or insult anyone, so right now I try to play safe by not *wai*-ing anyone, and greet them by simply saying hello, even if they *wai* me.

Wai Oh Wai
Phuket

Dear Wai Oh Wai

The *wai* is one of Thailand's warmest gestures. We *wai* for several reasons, the most fre-

quent being to express a polite greeting, in a similar manner to the Western handshake.

In this case, the greeter usually smiles and says *sawasdee* while putting his or her palms together somewhere between the chin and the nose. The greeter simultaneously lowers the head slightly or, in the case of females, perhaps executes a slight curtsy as well.

The style of *wai* used is determined primarily by the age and status of the two parties.

In general, the younger or lower-status person initiates the *wai*, to which the other person responds. It is very impolite not to return a *wai*, in the same way it is considered rude to ignore a hand extended to you in anticipation of a handshake.

There are situations, however, when no response to a *wai* is given. Examples include when you *wai* a monk or a member of the Thai royal family. There are also times, such as when a young child offers a *wai* to an adult, when good manners allow a simple response of a nod, a smile, a lifted finger or simply a verbal response.

There is also a difference between the situations when you are expected to *wai* a person because you are acknowledging them as a distinct individual - a family member, a friend, an introduction by a third party, and so on - as compared with the public arena, where you would not be expected to *wai* a postal clerk, a waiter or a vendor, not even when they are older than you.

The two most common variations of *wai* are:

1. The normal *wai*. In this case both parties hold their clasped hands at roughly chin level.

2. A *wai* to a superior, or older person. The tip of the fingers of the subordinate person's clasped hands touch the tip of the nose with the head bowed down a little. The superior will respond with a *wai* holding his clasped hands under his or her chin.

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Tsunami memorial dome plan should be scrapped

In mid-January, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) said that it hopes to have "Tsunami Trail" tours up and running by March. Aimed mainly at the Thai market, the excursions would include tours of devastated areas.

To deflect criticism, the TAT was quick to offer reassurance that the tours would include visits to aid stations, temporary housing and centers for orphans, so that the tourists could make donations. Perhaps this might make the tourists feel less like car-crash voyeurs and more like philanthropists, but it is difficult to escape the impression that the main attraction would not be the orphans but the smashed buildings.

Nothing has been heard recently about this plan, and if it is canceled at least it will have cost nothing.

Much more troubling is the government's grandiose plan to remember the tsunami by building a dome-shaped memorial in the waters off Bang Niang Beach. One part of the plan is to build the walkway to the dome in such a way that it will hold seawater at all times, thereby creating a "more tactile experience" for visitors.

Is this intended to be a memorial to those who died? Or is it more an attempt to Disneyfy the event, to create a tourist attraction out of death and destruction? Compare the proposed dome, with its high-tech "crystal" prism to display the names of the known dead, with the simple dignity of the wall erected at the Mai Khao Tsunami Victim Identification Center. Is the dome really what the victims need?

Even if the project were not in dubious taste and were designed with the victims and their families in mind, rather than tourists, the massive budget must surely give pause for thought.

At the time of writing, a decision had yet to be made by the Cabinet on whether to go ahead with the plan but, according to its proponents, it would cost between 1.5 billion and 2 billion baht.

Compare that with the amount of money that has been allocated to help tsunami victims. In Phuket, for example, the aid received from Bangkok by the Office of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation has so far totaled just 45 million baht – equivalent to 3% of the lower figure proposed for the dome.

The *Gazette* continues to encounter people, mostly at the bottom of society, who have received nothing but promises from the government. How will these people react if the Cabinet decides to go ahead with this grandiose and horrifyingly expensive theme park? The idea should be scrapped now.

– The Editor

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Editor: Rungtip Hongjakpet
Managing Editor: Alasdair Forbes
Deputy Editor: Chris Husted
Chief Reporter: Sangkhae Leelanaporn
Investigation Team: Dhirarat Boonkongsaen, Gategaeo Phetsawang, Kamol Pirat
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Financial Controller: Benjawan Lukthan
Publisher: The Phuket Gazette Co Ltd

Contact us

Advertising Sales: adsales@phuketgazette.net
Classified Advertising: classads@phuketgazette.net
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Telephone: 076-236555 (10 lines) Fax: 076-213971

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Letters

The *Gazette* is pleased to receive mail from readers. Please write to us at 367/2 Yaowarat Rd, Amphur Muang, Phuket 83000, fax to 076-213971 or send an email to editor@phuketgazette.net

with your views for publication in our next issue. We reserve the right to edit all letters. Pseudonyms are acceptable only if your full name and address are supplied.

Who will benefit from memorial?

As a tsunami survivor who lost both parents in the tragedy, I would like to ask the following questions about the proposed 2-billion-baht memorial park [*Gazette* Online, February 11]:

Why aren't relatives and friends of victims, along with survivors, being asked for input? Is a person or committee not directly affected by the financial and psychological impact of this tragedy really qualified to make decisions on how best ease the suffering of those directly affected?

Why not take 299 rai of the proposed 300 rai and divide it into plots of 200 square meters each? These could be used to build houses worth living in for orphaned children and others who have lost families, homes or futures.

Would not a one-rai area with a marble wall bearing the victims' names be enough as a place to mourn? Will relatives and friends left behind even go to the proposed memorial? Or will they perhaps find their own place to mourn loved ones?

Wouldn't photos of the lost loved ones, along with their names, serve as a better choice than just a name inscribed in a high-tech "crystal" prism? Who will benefit from the construction of the proposed memorial, and what are those people planning to do with the profits?

Will be the names of dead VIPs and tourists be nearer to the center or higher up than the name of a dead Thai waitress or a Burmese construction worker?

Will there be souvenir shops renting space and selling those "wonderful and most amusing"

tsunami disaster VCDs and DVDs to tourists?

The proposed memorial looks like a win-win situation for the people least affected by the tragedy. Why is that?

Franky Gun
Khao Lak

No love lost on ugly sight of tuk-tuks

I was surprised to notice yesterday [February 14] lots of tuk-tuks parked along the beach road in Patong. There were more tuk-tuks than tourists or trees.

It was the same ugly sight [as before the tsunami] and the same annoying noise of drivers calling all the time: "Tuk-tuk? Tuk-tuk?" as they blocked the view of the beach with their red toys.

Why are vendors banned, but not tuk-tuks and jet-ski operators? Are these people too influential or are they, maybe, related to local politicians?

Rudi
Phuket

Encouraging news

We stayed at Karon Beach from January 10 to 20 (our first visit) and, of course, we were overwhelmed by the beauty of the island and the warmth of the people we met.

We hope it will encourage everyone there to know that – at last! – the travel supplements of major British newspapers are urging holidaymakers to return to Phuket, and giving details of places to stay.

In the February 5 issue of the *Daily Telegraph*, there was a half-page picture of Karon

Beach, almost deserted, followed by a page and a half of why and where tourists should visit.

In the February 13 *Sunday Times*, there was another full page in similar vein.

Sadly, of course, misinformation still exists and some faint hearts will continue to avoid Phuket for no good reason.

But, meanwhile, it would be a good idea for your readers to bombard the British press at every opportunity with letters to emphasize what a warm welcome Phuket has waiting for visitors.

Malcolm and Kirsten Bird
Halesowen, UK

Keesin and make-up

In the *Phuket Gazette* of February 5 [front page], I read: "Town is like a woman with no make-up".

By that, do you mean that a woman does not look good, or is ugly, unless she is wearing make-up?

I am sure you did not mean to offend all women, but that is how I think most women will take it.

Anastasia Sieburg
By email

We didn't say it. The Mayor of Patong, Pian Keesin, did – Editor.

Jettison the jet-skis

I have read with interest the discussion of which of the beach businesses will be restricted in the post-tsunami era. Unfortunately, not once have I read any reference to restricting the jet-skis.

These little noise-makers are much more irritating than any

Letters conveying views and suggestions are published here. Those seeking comment from government officials and/or business owners are currently published only online, at www.phuketgazette.net.

TRAPPED BY THE TUK-TUKS

FIRST PERSON

There are no parking restrictions on the road outside my shop, so it is – from the tuk-tuk drivers' point of view anyway – a good place to park, so lots of them park along the road, blocking my shop from view.

That wouldn't be too much of a problem, as there is a sidewalk in front of the shop, which customers could walk along freely.

But the tuk-tuk drivers congregate outside my shop between fares. Not only do the drivers block the entrance to my shop, but they drink beer and tout for trade by yelling at passers-by, and this puts potential customers off coming into my shop.

This isn't a problem for me alone; other traders are affected, too. They, like me, have tried to talk to the tuk-tuk drivers, but we have got absolutely nowhere – they will not budge.

Many times I have asked them to move, please, or to leave even a small space for customers to get past, but they just tell me: "This is where I work, and I will sit here if I want to. If tourists are that keen to visit your shop, they'll visit it, whether we are here or not."

Two years ago, the tuk-tuk drivers took to leaning against my window. I asked them not to do that, because it messed up the glass and it was difficult to clean.

The following day I got my staff to hang clothes outside the shop, in front of the window. The tuk-tuk drivers asked my staff what they were doing, and the staff replied that I had told them to put the clothes there.

The following day, someone had tam-

Imagine spending a small fortune on setting up a business and creating a shopfront that is attractive and welcoming for customers, only to watch potential customers be frightened away, and know that there is nothing you can do about it.

That's what one tailor in Karon claims has happened to him. Tuk-tuk drivers park their vehicles on the road in front of his shop and, he says, sit on the pavement outside his shop, intimidating customers who try to pass them.

The tailor, who asked not to be identified, says this has been a problem since he opened his Patak Rd shop in 1998, and that his is not the only business to be affected. However, no one – neither his neighbours nor the authorities – is prepared to take on the tuk-tuk drivers. He spoke with the *Gazette* on condition of anonymity.

pered with the lock on the door, so that I could not open the shop. I don't know who did it, but I have my suspicions. I went to the police for help, but they just said that if I didn't have evidence of who had damaged the lock, they couldn't help me.

The road outside my shop is a public road, but when any of my customers parks outside to come for a fitting or whatever, the tuk-tuk drivers come into the shop and demand that the customer moves his car.

I tried to discuss the situation with officers of Karon Municipality, but they

told me I wasn't the only trader who has a problem with tuk-tuk drivers. They said I should talk to the tuk-tuk drivers direct, but that if we still couldn't come to an agreement, then I should just leave it, as the tuk-tuk drivers aren't sophisticated enough to understand.

They did say, however, that the municipality has decided that there should be parking restrictions in this area, and that I should talk to the traffic police at Chalong, who are deciding where and what the restrictions should be.

Two weeks ago, one of my staff

parked a motorbike where the tuk-tuks usually park. The police stopped and told my staff that there was no parking there. I pointed out that there is no sign to say there are parking restrictions, and I also asked why it was all right for the tuk-tuks to be parked there, but not for a motorbike to be parked right next to them.

The police officer didn't seem too happy about me asking that, and got another officer to lock up the motorbike. I think the police are too afraid to tackle the tuk-tuk drivers, so they are unnecessarily harsh toward us instead.

I understand that the tuk-tuk drivers want to sit somewhere cool in the daytime, but, equally, they should understand that we have to make a living, too.

I know of one tailor, a Nepali, who put a sign reading "Please do not sit here" outside his shop. The tuk-tuk drivers told him "We are Thai, and if you come to work here, please don't make problems for us." The Nepali removed the sign.

Two other traders asked the tuk-tuk drivers to stop blocking their shops. That night, five men turned up in a tuk-tuk and hit one of the traders with a chair. Both traders have since moved.

I want to report my problem to the police, but I'm afraid that if I do that, my identity will be revealed, and I don't want that to happen.

So I stay here, paying rent and other expenses for my shop, watching the tuk-tuk drivers intimidate my customers and block the view of my shop with their vehicles, and racking my brain as to what I can do about it.

girl trying to sell me a nice, cold Singha beer.

Personally, when I go to Patong, I want a beach chair, an umbrella and a nice girl to provide me with pineapple and beer. The ultimate pleasure would be if this nice scenario didn't include the fear of being run over by some boy on a jet-ski.

John Corman
Canada

Finns were back earlier than thought

I have been eagerly reading your website in recent years, and especially after the tsunami catastrophe. Many of our friends were in Phuket when the tsunami hit and were lucky because they were saved.

My wife and I had booked a two-week holiday to stay at the Kata Thani Hotel from January 23 to February 6.

As you know, the Kata Noi area was not badly damaged and the hotel was back to normal in a few days. But we could not come, because charter flights from Finland were canceled until February 9.

I was surprised to read on your website that the first Finnish group since the tsunami would arrive on February 14 from Helsinki. In fact, the first charter from Finland, with passengers on an Aurinkomatkat-SunTours excursion, actually arrived in Phuket on February 10. The [Royal Andaman Travel Group] spokesman was incorrectly informed in

this matter.

I believe the arrival of this first charter flight was newsworthy. Finnish TV reported it, showing the Finns being very warmly welcomed by the local people. Local people interviewed said they were very happy when the Finns arrived because it would help them to get back to work as usual.

We hope that tourist arrivals return to normal levels soon and extend our warmest greetings to the friendly people of Phuket.

Petteri Iivarinen
Finland

Who will eventually own charity homes?

I have read with interest about the different tsunami relief actions described in the *Gazette*.

I was especially impressed by the multi-assistance approach by Ken, Red and Gene [*Gazette*, February 5]. It was very clear that all the money sent to them would go to their relief project.

However, I am not quite so sure about the end result of sending money to other private initiatives you have covered.

For example, in the February 12 edition, Andy Johnstone writes, "The Bang Tao Project (BTP) should have 20 houses ready for occupation by the end of this month..."

"... Organizer Robin Plant estimates the total cost of each house at around 50,000 baht. He stressed that the properties are

not intended to be permanent homes, just somewhere for displaced people..."

The same article refers to "temporary houses set up by charities", so I assume the reference to the BTP is an indirect request to the readers of *Gazette* to contribute to this project.

I have met several other foreigners who had the same idea – build houses and ask for donations. It is, of course, highly admirable that they want to build houses that for a short period can be used by displaced people.

But what is less admirable is if the end result of the donated money is to turn some people into new homeowners.

Observer

Robin Plant of the Bang Tao Project comments:

It is important to note that all the families who are to be rehoused were renting accommodation at the time of the tsunami, so the issue of who owns the houses is of no importance to the families concerned.

The land has been rented for three years because it is too expensive to buy it, and if it were bought, who would own it in the long-term and what would be the implications for on-going charity?

The landowner will continue to rent the units out after the three-year period covered by our project, and the families will have the option of continuing to rent or moving and renting somewhere else.

It is also worth noting that

these are only one-room houses, measuring six meters by four. Although this is sufficient living space when you have nothing, we hope families will be back on their feet before long, and will want to move into something bigger, leaving the unit for another family in need.

This is simply a two-to-three-year grace period to enable displaced families to be together under one roof, with rent and utilities paid, and to focus on getting back to work.

If you spread the cost of each house over two years, it is clear that, for around 70 baht a day, families can get housing now, and not have to wait six months or a year.

Why worry about who owns the houses when the priority is to get families housed as soon as possible?

Suggestions for the next time around

Full marks to the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) for organizing the multi-faith service for tsunami victims at Baan Bang Niang, for arranging efficient and comfortable, free transport from Phuket City, along with more than enough free food and drink for those who attended, and friendly support for non-Thai speakers.

Just two recommendations for any such event in the future. Please, please provide more shade. The coconut trees did offer some, and there were a couple of tents/marqueses, but it wasn't

anything like enough. The service lasted three hours, and that's a long time to be out in the sun.

Also, I've heard that around 5,000 people took part. Bearing in mind that many of them had traveled for some time to get there, were 10 toilets – five for men, five for women – really enough? Having queued in the baking sun for 10 minutes to get into one of them, I'd say not.

Sunburned
Phuket City

Unwelcome return

Again we see an example of who is in charge in Phuket ["Businesses back on Patong Beach – for now", *Gazette* Online, February 12].

Does [Kathu District Officer Kantee Sinlapa] really think these people who have just bought new chairs, umbrellas, cars and motorcycles are simply going to give up [when the government orders them to]?

Once a cancer sets in it has to be surgically removed, much as the tsunami did in December.

But apparently the "lipsync" government chooses to allow the cancer to return and grow on the beach of Patong, justifying it with a "temporary" label.

We all know what that means: Let the beach vendors do what they want because the government has no authority.

Good luck K. Kantee ... fat chance!

Dave
Patong

MS ups the ante in browser wars

COMPUTERS

By Chris Husted

The announcement by Bill Gates on February 15 that Microsoft will soon release Internet Explorer 7 (IE7) for the Windows XP Service Pack 2 (SP2) platform has sparked concerns that a browser war could begin later this year.

Although details have yet to be released about the new features in IE7, which will have "beta" test versions available during this summer in America, IE7 is expected to improve security to levels similar to those already made in SP2, which was released last August.

"Our primary goal is to improve security and safety for all our customers – consumers and businesses, regardless of size – through a balance of technology innovation, guidance and industry leadership," Mr Gates said.

"We're committed to continued innovation that addresses the threats of today and anticipates those that will undoubtedly emerge in the future."

With IE7, that's supposed to mean better safeguards against "phishing", malicious software and spyware – the bane of most computer users.

Security has been one of the major failings of IE in recent years. Last year, Microsoft released patch after patch, and even patches to fix problems created by previous patches. How's that for a patchwork approach to security?

Continually plagued with reports of yet another IE patch to fix yet another security flaw, large numbers of users turned to alternative browsers, with the increasingly popular open-source browser Firefox (www.firefox.com)



Microsoft's Bill Gates announces the impending launch of IE7.

com) being preferred by most IE dissidents.

The reasons for making the switch to Firefox, initially released as a stripped-down version of the Mozilla browser (www.mozilla.org), are many: it's simple to use, it was the first to make tabbed browsing popular and it has built-in security features, such as a popup blocker and a default setting that does not allow websites to install software.

In addition, over the past year hundreds of free plugins and extensions have been created by the international computing community, allowing users to customize Firefox to suit their needs.

Microsoft, by comparison, has struggled to develop extra features to keep Internet users keen on IE.

Although Microsoft has massive resources at its disposal, it would be a monumental task for its workforce to keep pace with a skilled global IT community that enthusiastically develops software for free – as is the case with Firefox.

Meanwhile, waiting in the wings are IE-based browsers Avant (www.avantbrowser.com) and Maxthon (www.maxthon.com).

Unlike Firefox, which uses the Mozilla engine, Avant and Maxthon operate using IE's core coding. This gives them the advantage of using the same code instructions as IE, and hence the same as used by Microsoft.

Theoretically, this should make them faster and more stable than non-IE-based browsers, though whether they actually are is a matter for debate.

However, even these browsers

now have custom-made plugins and extensions, including different looking "skins", automatic form fillers and custom key and mouse "power tweaks", so that users can surf the Internet in their preferred styles.

This all leads to one big question: With the release of IE7, will Microsoft follow the trend and start offering a diverse range of "value-added" options, driven by user de-

Security has been one of the major failings of IE in recent years. Last year, Microsoft released patch after patch, and even patches to fix problems created by previous patches. How's that for a patchwork approach to security?

mand?

Perhaps, but perhaps not. Despite the range of Internet browsers and the added options to choose from, most people – for want, fear or simply because they don't know better – continue to use IE.

We'll just have to wait and see.

Bringing It All Back Home

You'd expect Bob Dylan to be a good writer. After all, his epic narrative ballads – *The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll*; *Ballad in Plain D*; *Tangled Up in Blue*; *Lily, Rosemary and the Jack of Hearts* – are masterpieces of concision, clarity and lyrical brilliance.

It turns out that Bob Dylan is a great writer. His *Chronicles Volume One* (Simon & Schuster, New York, 2004, 293pp) does for New York's Greenwich Village in the early 1960s what Ernest Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast* did for Paris in the early 1920s.

Just as Hemingway portrayed the famous literary figures of his time, Dylan immortalizes folk singers only old fogies like me remember: Dave Van Ronk, Len Chandler, Odetta, Mike Seeger, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, Cisco Houston, Carolyn Hester, the Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem.

He rambles freely over time, amiably pursuing tangents, but the book is divided into five parts, the first two and the last about his early days in Minnesota and Greenwich Village, his hangouts and his influences. The question he's asking is how he became Bob Dylan.

The third section is about his post-success life, starting in Woodstock, and the fourth is about the making of his album *Oh Mercy* in New Orleans in 1987. The question here is what he's going to do with being Bob Dylan.

The writing is wonderfully relaxed, vivid, idiosyncratic, full of enthusiasm and humor. Here he is describing Chloe, one of the many people on whose living room couches he slept during his early days in New York:

"Chloe had red-gold hair, hazel eyes, an illegible smile, face like a doll and an even better figure, fingernails painted black. She worked as a hat-check girl at the Egyptian Gardens, a belly-dancing dinner place on 8th Avenue – also posed as a model for *Cavalier* magazine... Chloe had her own primitive way of looking at things, always would say mad stuff that clicked in a cryptic way, told me once I should wear eyeshadow because it keeps away the evil eye."

His first great influence was Woody Guthrie. After hearing a

complete collection of Woody Guthrie songs for the first time in Minnesota, Dylan adopted the entire repertoire as his own.

"Guthrie had such a grip on things," Dylan writes. "He was so poetic and tough and rhythmic. There was so much intensity, and his voice was like a stiletto. He was like none of the other singers I ever heard, and neither were his songs. His mannerisms, the way everything just rolled off his tongue, it all just about knocked me out. It was like the record player itself had just picked me up and flung me across the room."

Dylan's first songs were a homage to the Oklahoma master. He picked up many other influences during his years of performing in the Village. Two that came very late, on the cusp of his epic song-writing spree between 1964-1966, were blues singer Robert Johnson and Kurt Weill/Bertold Brecht songs such as *Pirate Jenny* – an obvious direct precursor to *When the Ship Comes In*.

Of his great three-year creative peak, Dylan is silent. Perhaps he will address this period in *Chronicles Volume Two*. But he is clear-eyed about all the seismic influences that finally cause his personal volcano to blow. He is equally clear-eyed about his falling off in inspiration since then (with the exception of the great 1975 album *Blood on the Tracks*).

Coming off a tour with Tom Petty in 1987, he reflects: "I felt done for, an empty burned-out wreck. Too much static in my head and I couldn't dump the stuff. Wherever I am, I'm a '60s troubadour, a folk-rock relic, a wordsmith from bygone days, a fictitious head of state from a place nobody knows."

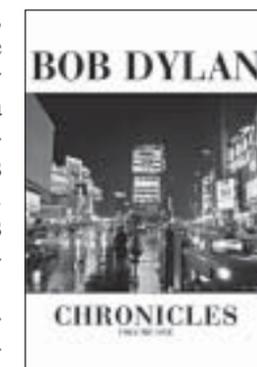
But he triumphs over this and other setbacks to become today's hard-working elder statesman of music. I've read a half-dozen biographies of Dylan but there's so much in his book that I never knew before: for instance, that he sailed a 62-foot schooner around the Caribbean with his family for 10 years before it was wrecked off Panama.

Chronicles proves the infinite superiority of autobiography over biography.



Off the SHELF

By James Eckardt



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Few tsunami ripples in pool industry

By Dhirarat Boonkongsan

PHUKET: The trend in the island's swimming pool industry appears to be decidedly upward for 2005 despite the tsunami of December 26.

One of Phuket's major pool companies predicts turnover on the island this year of up to 80 million baht while another expects to see income of around 100 million baht.

Wongkarn Karnjananopinit, the MD of Phuket Desjoyaux pools said that the company is doing so well that it has no time to launch any promotions.

"We began to use a distribution company from France in November 2004 for our five branches in Thailand. The locations – aside from Phuket – are Bangkok, Samui, Chiang Mai and Haad Yai."

She said that the Bangkok branch generates the highest revenue because the population there is higher than all other four locations combined. Phuket comes a close second, however.

K. Wongkarn forecast that Desjoyaux (Thailand) will make around 200 million baht this year, with as much as

40% – 80 million baht – coming from Phuket.

"The tsunami has made people think twice about building a house, but not about pools," she said. "I am optimistic about the potential for growth in the market."

She was unable to specify the exact number of customers in Phuket but said that the average price for a Desjoyaux pool is around 390,000 baht.

She stressed that the international reputation of the French parent company – which has been designing and building pools for 40 years – instills confidence in potential customers.

"The Desjoyaux brand sells itself. Our existing customers provide the best public relations," she added.

Another well-known company, JD Pools, has four branches in Thailand – Bangkok, Koh Samui, Pattaya and Phuket – and plans to export its technology to neighboring countries, including Myanmar, Malaysia and Vietnam, in 2006.

Thanusak Phuengdet, MD of JD Pools, said that his company has around 1,300 customers in Thailand at the moment but predicts that around 1,000 more

will be added to this tally before the end of 2005, each paying around 390,000 baht for a pool.

"We have forecast profits of 400 million baht for the whole of Thailand [for 2005] and Phuket will generate around 25% of that, even though Phuket was hit by the tsunami."

K. Thanusak said that JD Pools provides a one-stop service for customers. "We design the pools, construct them and offer full after-sales service."

"Although we import 60% of our equipment from foreign companies, such as water-pump systems made by Onga from Australia, the remaining 40% is manufactured in Thailand by Thais."

"The company plans to go public in 2010, or possibly earlier," he added.

K. Thanusak pointed out although there has been a moderate slowdown in the property market, projects are still continuing.

"The situation will be better for property developments – and the swimming pool industry – by around July," he concluded.

Navinda Swimming Pools, founded in Phuket five years ago, has also felt little effect from the tsunami.

Marketing Manager Nadege Annaert told the *Gazette* that although most of their existing customers are in the south and west of the island – Chalong, Rawai and Patong – as the pace and expansion of building development increases, so do the areas in which Navinda is getting orders for pools.

"We now have projects in the north of the island and have continued to receive many inquiries for quotations. The tsunami does not seem to have had any effect on our business."

She said that Navinda expects to design and construct around 22 pools – typically priced at around 295,000 baht – in 2005. "This year should be better than 2004," she added.

As with the other companies, Navinda, which imports pool equipment from Astral of Spain and Hayward of the US, is involved in the design and construction of pools in new developments as well as installing them in existing properties.

ON THE MOVE

The new Inspector of Phuket Tourist Police is **Pol Maj Budit Khaosutham**, 33, from Nonthaburi. A graduate of Mahidol University, his last posting before Phuket was as the Inspector of Tourist Police at Surat Thani for three months. Before this, he was an investigator with the Bangkok Tourist Police.



Gregory Seddon, 53, from Australia, has been appointed Senior Director of Sales for all Hilton hotels in Thailand. A graduate of the University of New South Wales, he also holds an IATA/



UFTAA diploma. A veteran of 34 years in the travel and tourism industry, his most recent position was as Director of Sales, Thailand, for Evason Resorts.

Danny Sukumol has been appointed National Director of Leisure Sales with responsibility for leisure sales for all Hilton properties in Thailand. In addition to a bachelor's degree, K. Danny also holds an MBA from Bangkok's Sripatum University. Formerly Director of Sales at the Hilton Hua Hin Resort & Spa, he has 18 years' experience in the travel and tourism industry.



Made a career move? Know someone else who has? Let us know by email to onthemove@phuketgazette.net

Commercial property looks good

One investment that has not been covered in this column so far is commercial property in the Eurozone.

Commercial – as opposed to residential – property, is an interesting and viable investment option. Individual investors often choose to invest, rather than live, in residential property. This is understandable; people feel comfortable with the concept of residential property as an investment and the procedures are relatively straightforward.

Residential property can be very profitable, if the investor's timing is right. It does, however, have complications should the investor not live in the property. Tenants are a necessary complication.

Property investors rarely look at commercial property. One of the reasons for this is the very high initial entry cost. In addition, commercial property investing often requires speculators to move out of their "comfort zone" of experience.

Savvy investors in commercial property must have both substantial amounts of capital and good knowledge of the market.

That said, one of the great advantages of commercial property is that it has not been subject to the massive price hikes that have occurred in many residential property markets.

The reason for there having been no boom in the commercial property market is that most investors in this field are institutions – rather than individuals – who have their eyes on rental yield. It is also, as previously stated, not been an area in which the private investor "herd" have focused.

For the investor who does



MONEY TALKS

By Richard Watson

not have huge amounts of money to invest in commercial property, but would like to give it a try, there are mutual funds.

This column has previously mentioned the Glanmore Property Fund (GPF). Now there is a new rival, the Money Penny Mediterranean Property Fund.

This fund currently invests in Spanish commercial property although its remit is to cover such property anywhere in the Eurozone.

The base currency of the fund is the euro; no other currency classes are currently available.

The fund managers are Abacus Financial Services, registered in the Isle of Man. Through their own operations and that of a subsidiary, Protected Asset Management (PAM), they are already prominent in the traded endowment market.

Of note is that PAM introduced both euro and US dollar classes to its funds about a year ago. My speculation is that it may take the same approach to this property fund.

The fund has an independent property valuer, CB Richard Ellis, a member of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors and a household name in property. The auditors are PricewaterhouseCoopers and the custodian bank is the Royal Bank of Scotland.

The fund itself considers investment in a wide range of properties including office, pro-

fessional, retail and industrial buildings. The aim is to provide diversification, to lower the fund's exposure in any one property or type of property.

It buys commercial properties and leases them to quality business tenants. The income pays the continuing costs of property ownership and management, and provides profits.

The intended philosophy of the fund is to sell the properties it owns between three and 10 years after purchase, depending on market valuations and conditions.

Proceeds will then be reinvested in additional commercial properties, establishing a cycle of buying, leasing and selling.

The strategy is designed to allow investors to benefit from profits from the sale of the fund's property portfolio on a continuing basis.

What the fund managers have not stated is that when a commercial property fund is in its early stages it frequently in-

vests in smaller commercial properties.

For example, the longer-established GPF initially took this route but as its size grew (it currently has holdings worth approximately US\$1 billion, around 35-40 billion baht), small properties of approximately US\$2.5 million to US\$7.5 million became inconsequential in the greater scheme of things.

GPF has sold some of its smaller properties at very significant capital profits. This is no doubt part of Money Penny Mediterranean Property Fund's strategy. More about this next week.

Richard Watson runs Global Portfolios Co Ltd, a Phuket-based personal financial planning service. He can be reached at Tel and Fax: 076-381997, Mobile: 01-081-4611. Email: imm@loxinfo.co.th.



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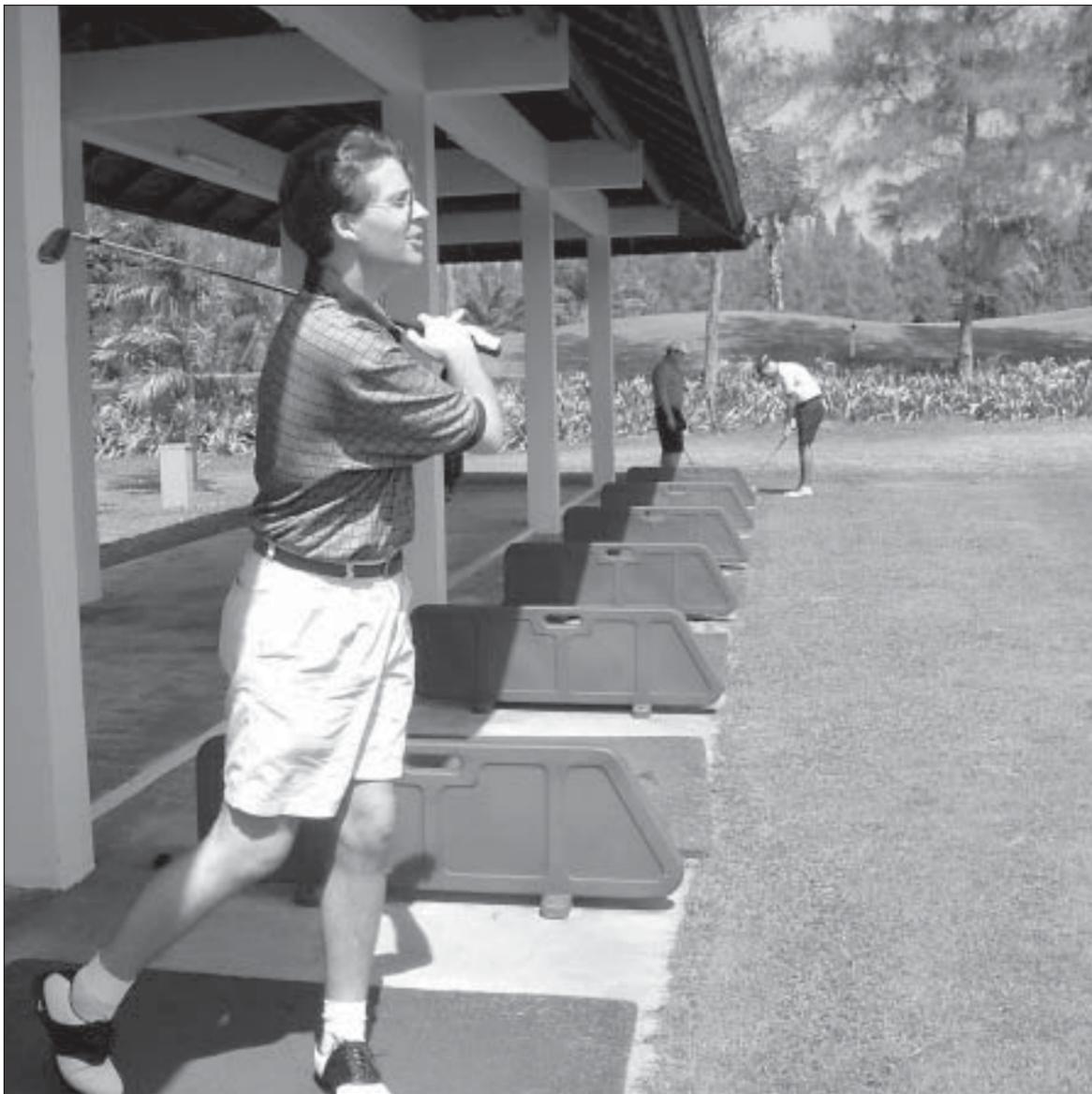
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Woah! Look at that sucker fly! Andy Johnstone caught at the moment of addiction.

Just five seconds to addiction

The Grip is perfect, so too The Stance. The body twists round, building kinetic energy and the arms and club swing upward, then down in a perfect windmill action. The ball begins its graceful arc toward the pin. The arms continue on their follow-through, the ball touches down a few yards from the hole and The Hit is complete.

That was how Andy Combe, Laguna Phuket Golf Club Pro, hit the ball.

My first attempt at using a golf club in anger, forgetting crazy golf and that annoying boy from school who now walks with a limp, was a little more agricultural.

I was all arms. I brought the club up in a high parabola and brought it down the same way. Whereas Andy swung gracefully, I was chopping wood. The chorus of *I'm a Lumberjack* began running through my head.

Worse was yet to come. In Andy's gentle post-mortem of my attempt, he pointed out that my wrists were too flexible.

"Does 'flexible wrists' equate to limp-wristedness?" I wondered. I've challenged men to duels for less than that before.

Andy asked which sports I play. A little cricket, badminton, fencing, fly-fishing... pastimes where supple – though not limp – wrists are essential.

I began my mantra: *arms and club straight, arms and club straight* and so on.

I did hit the ball though, and sent it a risible 45 yards or so. I asked my mentor for his opinion.

Andy said, "I've seen complete golf virgins start whacking balls further in two days than an utter novice – with a pro – can in the same amount of time.

"But the solo beginner will reach a ceiling quickly – repeating the mistakes – and not improve beyond that. A beginner with a pro will learn by having the faults ironed out and the good techniques tweaked until they become second nature," he said.

"I believe that anyone can be a 5-handicap golfer. Anyone."

The power to hit the ball is not from the arms; I have seen lovely young fillies with barely an ounce of flesh or fat on their arms loft a ball 100 yards with a 9-iron. How?

"The power comes from the tension created by twisting the upper body away from the legs. It's the difference between flicking a rubber band 10 feet or winding it up – like in one of those balsa-wood model planes – and watching it fly 100 feet," said Andy. "It's not about brute strength."

I address the ball again. Andy takes me through the motions very slowly. My stance is good, back and neck straight and

By Andy Johnstone

aligned. My shoulders are back – almost exaggeratedly so – my eyes are on the ball.

Andy guides my hands/club fusion up to the right. I can feel the tension in my abdominals and latissimus dorsi. Approximately 75% of my weight is on my right foot.

I begin the downswing into the ball with my hips, transferring the weight back onto both feet, then onto the left. Andy brings the club down, my arms are straight throughout.

My right foot is now turning to point to the flag some 200 yards distant, my eyes follow the head of the club.

Andy brings the club round and up into the follow-through and the finish. A slow-mo swing in 10 seconds.

"This is a 'feel' game," said Andy. "Pause and remember that feeling."

My turn again. I address the ball ("Hello"), begin the backswing, feel the kinetic energy being wound up and then pause momentarily at the zenith of backswing.

Around comes the club. The sweet spot connects with the ball – producing that satisfying *thwock* that says "nice".

The dimpled sphere is away on its trajectory, pulling a little to the left – I didn't keep my arms straight enough – before landing 100 or so yards away.

"Blow me!" I say, somewhat surprised and pleased with myself, even though none of the aforementioned lovely young fillies are around.

And in the five seconds between me addressing the ball and it landing, I became addicted to this game.

For more information about Laguna Phuket Golf Club's special Beginner's and Improver's golf lessons, contact Andy Combe or Bruce Whitehead at the Pro Shop at Tel: 076-270-991 or email: golfteaching@lagunaphuket.com



We would like to express our warm thanks for all your generosity...

A total of 1,247 local and overseas victims of the tsunami were admitted to Bangkok Phuket Hospital from 26 December 2004 to 9 January 2005. Bangkok Phuket Hospital would like to express its cordial thanks to the team of doctors, nurses and staff in the Bangkok Hospital Group, BNH Hospital, Samitivej Hospital, DTAC, TOT, Pop Cottage, Sodexho, PHT, Boonrawd Trading Co., Ltd., Phuket Provincial Administration Organization, Phuket City Hall, Laguna Phuket, Seng Ho bookshop, countless volunteers, every member of the press and everyone else who offered their kind support and sincere help.

We still need your generosity to rekindle the dreams of children whose lives were shattered by the waves.

Kamala Child Development Center, Phuket, was severely hit by the tsunami and as many as 182 children are still in desperate need.

You can help to secure their future by making a donation to the new Kamala Child Development Center via Kamala Child Development Center fund account <tsunami victims>, Thai commercial Bank PLC, Savings Account no. 805-2-04770-5, tel, 0 7625 4425 ext. 1282-6 or visit www.phukethospital.com



Before the tsunami



After the tsunami

Your help will give them hope...

Please don't let them suffer alone through this ordeal.



Shooting for tsunami recovery

Six teams – three Thai and three foreign – took part in the recent Bang Tao Recovery Project Cup. The Thai teams showed their mettle by finishing 1st, 2nd and 3rd in the round-robin contest, with the final between Safari and Under Mango proving to be a nailbiter. The score was 2-2 at the end of extra time, with Safari emerging victorious in a best-of-three penalty shootout.

Photo copyright Jadu, 2005.

Big guns confirmed for Phuket Rugby 10s

PHUKET: Some 20 teams, including defending champions the Christina Nobel Children's Foundation from Dubai, have confirmed they will play in the 7th AirAsia Phuket International Rugby 10s at Karon Municipal Stadium on May 28 and 29.

These are teams confirmed so far are: the Phuket Vagabonds; Christina Nobel Children's Foundation from Dubai; Melbourne Cruiser Rams (2002 champions) from Australia; Pot Bellied Pigs, Old Bill and Typhoons, all from Hong Kong; Manila Nomads and Alabang Eagles from the Philippines; the Jailers from the UK; Tulsa RFC from the US; Penang All Blues and Selangor Dogs from Malaysia; Seoul Survivors from South Korea; the Wanderers and the Bucks from Singapore; as well as the Pattaya Panthers; the Simians from Koh Samui; and British Club RFC (2003 champions), the Southerners and Bangkok Japanese, all from Bangkok.

Phuket Vagabond RFC veteran and tourney organizer Patrick Cotter, said "We would like to get a total of 24 teams so spaces are still available."

Already exceeding last year's tally of 18 teams, the event

this year is shaping up to be one of the most popular to date, probably not least because profits from the tournament will go toward providing scholarships for children orphaned by the tsunami.

"We are also going to start a rugby clinic for Bangsak Beach School, north of Khao Lak, which was completely washed away by the tsunami.

"We are looking for teams to donate shirts in kids' sizes and [sports] equipment that the kids can use. We will be bringing the kids down for the weekend of the 10s and teams can present the shirts to them directly and also adopt kids as team mascots and/or follow their progress through the years."

Mr Cotter added that he would like to see a separate competition for the more mature rugby players. "For all us old buggers, we are hoping to get at least four veterans' teams to play in a separate tournament on the Sunday."

He urged any people interested in joining the "old buggers" tourney to contact him. For more information or to enter the Phuket International Rugby 10s, contact Mr Cotter by email to: phuketvagabondsrfc@yahoo.co.uk

PATONG DARTS LEAGUE

February 15 results: Pickles 8 Champs 1*; Happy Days 4 Didi's 5*; Piccadilly 7* Valhalla 2; Shakers 5* Amigos 4; Two Black Sheep 1 OffShore 8*; Queen Mary 3 v Nag's Head* 6 (*= winners of beer leg).

Standings: Amigos (8 pts); Pickles (7); OffShore (7); Champs (7); Didi's (7); Piccadilly (6); Shakers (6); Nag's Head (5); Queen Mary; (5); Happy Days (5); Valhalla (3); Two Black Sheep (3).

March 1 fixtures (home teams first): Pickles v OffShore; Happy Days v Valhalla; Queen Mary v Amigos; Piccadilly v Didi's; Shakers v Champs; Two Black Sheep v Nag's Head.

Rest of World scrapes win over Phuket cricketers

KARON: With no shade until late in the afternoon at Karon Municipal Stadium, players in the second Phuket Cricket Union (PCU) 11-a-side match – Phuket vs the Rest of the World – had to resort to large amounts of liquid refreshment to remain cool in the glorious sunshine of February 19.

Phuket batted first and had made 164 when bowled out in the final over. Seemant Raju starred at the crease, as did Mark Burns.

Mark Whetton gave a very good captain's contribution with the bat and kept the innings to-

gether late so that a good score could be posted.

The Rest of the World (RoW) – captained by Asian Cricket Sixes Tour Chairman Michael "Cat" Maher – started well chasing the runs, but the order collapsed and were nine wickets down while still needing 30 runs.

The RoW squeezed past Phuket with one over to go, ending on 165 for nine, a good win.

All agreed that what the game lacked in terms of cucumber sandwiches in the pavilion, it more than made up for in camaraderie and international flavor.

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Don't take it to the limit

Drunk driving is a serious law enforcement and societal concern in Thailand. The toll drunk drivers take on families here is horrendous. Now that the holidays are over, many people have belatedly asked me how to determine if they have enjoyed too much alcohol to drive safely.

The effect of alcohol on a person's ability to drive a vehicle depends on how much alcohol they have consumed and how quickly, whether or not they have eaten recently, whether their drinks are carbonated, compounded by the person's body mass, age, sex, race, physical fitness and other individual factors.

In most countries, a person's blood alcohol concentration (BAC) is used to determine fitness to drive. Breath analysis tests used by police forces to measure blood alcohol levels are based on an assumed correlation between alcohol in the breath and in the bloodstream for an average person.

Unfortunately, BAC is not a reliable measure of the impairment of one's faculties at relatively low levels of alcohol consumption, because of the large number of variables involved.

There are simply no clear-cut or definitive answers as to how much alcohol is – before driving – too much. Scientific studies have repeatedly confirmed the variability of individual tolerance of alcohol.

I won't bore you with the mathematics used to calculate BAC, but just consider, for example, that I am 1.96 meters tall and weigh about 90 kilograms.

Were I to drink one large glass of a red wine containing 14% alcohol during one hour, I would have consumed about 15 milligrams of ethanol, the intoxicating agent in fermented alcoholic drinks and

WINE



By Steven Roberto

distilled liquors. By the end of the same hour, I would still have around 8mg of ethanol in my blood.

Theoretically, this would make my blood alcohol content a mere 0.014% and I would be legally fit to drive a car.

But if I were tired, had a cold and had taken antihistamines, which can cause drowsiness, I know that same glass of wine might noticeably impair my ability to drive a vehicle. I would, however, remain – legally – able to drive.

Someone younger, weighing more than me, would likely not be impaired at all by that glass unless, for example, the person were a woman who had not eaten recently.

Women generally produce less of the enzyme alcohol dehydrogenase, which

helps the liver to metabolize alcohol, and it is likely that this woman would be affected by even just one glass of wine.

Drinking before driving requires a great measure of self-discipline and awareness. For the expatriate, a motor-vehicle accident in a foreign country can be an especially harrowing experience of helplessness. A drunk-driving conviction can lead to deportation, if not actual jail time.

There is enough mayhem on Phuket's roads from all the self-important, reckless sober drivers one encounters, without wine lovers adding to the havoc by driving after drinking.

So, how much alcohol is too much? In the end, that is for you to decide.

Steven Roberto is a winemaker and restaurant consultant from California. He is the Wine and Beverage Director for the award-winning Baan Rim Pa restaurant in Patong. Email: stevenroberto@lycos.com

There are some restaurants where one goes to be seen, and a number of them where one goes to most definitely *not* be seen – the type of place beloved by people indulging in a little *liaison dangereuse*, for example.

GPS is usually needed to navigate to such establishments and night-vision goggles tend to be useful for finding one's way around.

Café & Restaurant 346 in the center of Phuket City, however, is a place where one cannot help but be seen. It is another of the stylish conversions of Sino-Portuguese shophouses that are bringing fresh life back to the island's capital. Think of China Inn Café or Baan Garn Vela restaurant.

346 has floor-to-ceiling win-

dows on both the ground and first floors, and its location on the corner of Phuket Rd and Ong Sim Pai Rd offers the diner, drinker or amateur sociologist a perfect view of life in the busy town.

The large window frames seem more like picture frames, so well do they capture – if only fleetingly – glimpses of people passing by.

The analogy with picture frames does not end with the windows: 346 is – again following a trend here – also a gallery (a “galeria”, to be precise) displaying some superb exhibits with a series of monochrome pho-

On the menu with Andy Johnstone

346

gallery (a “galeria”, to be precise) displaying some superb exhibits with a series of monochrome pho-

tos being among some of the most imaginative seen in Phuket recently.

But the art will have to wait; I'm ravenous.

The food served in 346 is traditional Thai, so no prizes for guessing that *tom yam gung* and

gaeng phed feature on the menu. But this is no bad thing; these are the dishes that foreigners here tend to know and love.

“Diners,” said 346 director Surat Kanthanakit, “usually begin with the old favorites and then experiment with something a little different.”

Precisely. Instead of *tom yam*, I go for *gai baan tom pret*, which loosely translates as “village chicken soup” although the *pret* part refers, supposedly, to a particularly nasty kind of ghost.

Set in the City



The big windows at 346 turn the world outside into an art show.

No one can tell me why, but mysteries are the spice of life. Anyway, it tastes just dandy.

Restaurant manager Densak Cheeplek recommends the *nam prik gung seab*, a spicy dip of dried prawns and chili paste pounded together. Top nosh and the accompaniment of steamed vegetables takes the edge off.

There is a bass dish I'd like to try but K. Densak says it's off the menu. “We went to the market this morning but couldn't see any that looked good enough to buy,” he said. I appreciate the man's candor and dedication to only the finest ingredients.

Another fish arrives, steamed with tons of lemongrass. A bargain at 160 baht.

Time for the art. The gallery upstairs is not crowded with pieces but good use is made of all the nooks and crannies – one can turn a corner and stumble upon a piece one swears was not there two minutes before.

An authentic and balanced menu, an interesting wine list, excellent cocktails and the gallery feed both body and mind.

346 is an intriguing restaurant and concept – on a multitude of levels – that well deserves success.

Restaurant 346 & Galeria 346. 346 Phuket Rd, Phuket City. Tel: 076-216332. Open noon-11 pm.

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Home of the Week

Chalong

INTERESTINGLY EUROPEAN

Of appeal to those with European tastes, this well-built 250-square-meter home in a small estate in Chalong sits on a 500sqm plot in a small cul-de-sac.

The short driveway through the well-tended tropical gardens leads to a single-vehicle garage that could also be used as a laundry or storage room.

A spacious ground floor with living and dining areas, as well as a snug den, is bright and airy. Patio doors lead to a 36sqm swimming pool at the rear of the property, which also has an exterior shower.

A well-proportioned and fully-equipped kitchen offers the gourmet chef plenty of space to conjure up culinary delights. The ground floor also boasts a bedroom with en-suite bathroom, which could also be used as a family room or an office.

The property as currently configured already has an office, interestingly situated on the landing at the top of the stairs. The property's other three bedrooms – two of which have en-suite bathrooms and built-in wardrobes – lead off from this area. The master bedroom has an air conditioner and most rooms have ceiling fans.

Utilities include UBC TV, a water-filtration system – which makes the property's well water potable – and a septic tank. The house also has three-phase electricity, water heaters and a security system.

The house is four years old, is in excellent condition and has a Chanote title.

The price for it, fully-furnished, is 9.7 million baht.

The design of the home offers a touch of Europe in Thailand.

Below: The fenced boundary offers seclusion by the pool.

Below right: The home is fully furnished, ready to move into.



For more information, contact Richard Lusted at Siam Real Estate at Tel: 076-280805. Email: info@siamrealestate.com Web: www.siamrealestate.com

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Construction Update

PHUKET: In the 1960s, NASA needed a simple and reliable water-purifying system for its manned spaceflights. A joint venture between NASA and the Garrett Corporation resulted in a silver-ionization purifier weighing just 255 grams and only a little larger than a cigarette packet.

Fast forward to the 1980s and Caribbean Clear of South Carolina was one company that used this technology for more down-to-earth uses – swimming pools and spas.

Caribbean Clear uses a computer-controlled system that produces copper and silver ions in minute quantities. Copper kills algae while silver kills bacteria and viruses, thereby purifying water.

The level of copper and silver in the water maintained by the system is much lower than maximum safe standards set for drinking water. But the levels are still sufficient to almost eliminate the need for chlorine or other toxic sanitizers, says Andy Andersen, a retired airline pilot who has brought Caribbean Clear to Phuket.

According to the company, the major benefits of using the



INTO THE CLEAR: Andy Andersen with the Caribbean Clear water-sanitizing computer unit.

Caribbean Clear system are: toxin-free water, no offensive smell of chlorine; no bleaching of hair; no ruined swimsuits, no irritated eyes and no cumulative carcinogenic effect of chlorine.

Other reported benefits include a significant reduction in the need for algaecides and other chemicals, as well as less corrosion damage to pool equipment.

Caribbean Clear is reported to be the world's largest manu-

facturer of these systems, and satisfied customers all over the world have helped to build the company's reputation.

That reputation has been hard won. In 1992, Caribbean Clear Inc was subject to a US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) order prohibiting it from making unsubstantiated claims about the effectiveness or safety of their spa or pool purifiers.

In 1996, Caribbean Clear

USA, the successor to the earlier company, again made claims as to the effectiveness of its system. The FTC brought a civil action against the company, which was ordered to set up redress fund of US\$70,000 (2.8 million baht) for those who bought its system.

Mr Andersen told the *Gazette* that he remembers the company changing its US advertising in the 1990s. "We used to say 'chlorine-free swimming', by which we meant that you did not need to use chlorine specifically as there are other chemicals that will do the job," he said.

"I still advocate the use of a minute amount – 10% of the amount that would be required if chlorine were used as the sole sanitizer. Therefore, there is virtually no chlorine present [in the pool]."

Mr Andersen said that he became involved in Caribbean Clear as a part-time business in Florida 18 years ago.

It is now a full-time business for him in Thailand and he claims that the system will "bring relief to those who want higher-quality pool water and reduced maintenance costs."

"It's amazing," said Mr Andersen. "People who never used their pool due to the chlorine have discovered an entirely new environment when they can swim in drinking water."

Difficult to swallow? Mr Andersen said that he is happy to demonstrate the benefits of this space-age system to all comers.

"Drop by and have a drink of pool water with me," he said.

Mr Andersen can be contacted at Tel: 06-6822639; Email nomochlo@yahoo.com

PHUKET: A trip to the Dubai property investment show earlier this month gave property developer Norbert Witthinrich the chance to dispel a few impressions about post-tsunami Phuket.

"Most people thought Phuket had gone in the tsunami, but when we told them what had really happened, they became interested in our project, and now we've sold half of the 22 units we're half-way through building," he said.

The 22 villas will cover 80 rai of a 250-rai site at Ban Prangthong, where Mr Witthinrich's SEA Property Phuket plans to build a total of 92 homes.

Construction on the current 22-villa phase started in April 2004 and should be completed by 2006. This phase alone represents an investment of 250 million baht.

There are three styles of villa. All have swimming pools, tall windows and Balinese-style roofs, along with 25cm-thick walls to keep noise and heat from outside to a minimum.

The Wichit design is a two-story 230-square-meter villa on 320sqm of land, with a living room, dining room, kitchen, laundry room, storage room, bedroom, two bathrooms and double car parking space on the ground floor. The upper story has a foyer, two bedrooms and a terrace. Prices start at 8.4 million baht.

The Montien is also two-story but offers 275sqm of living area on 640sqm of land. Although the Montien has the same rooms and facilities as the Wichit, the emphasis is more on the grounds and landscaping; there will, for example, be six ponds in the garden, as well as the swimming pool. Prices start at 11.9 million baht.

The largest villa available will be the Piman, with 350sqm



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by Anongnat Sartpisut

Ban Prangthong enters new Phase



The smallest of the Phase 3 villas, the Wichit style, will feature 230sqm of interior space, and cost from 8.4 million baht.

of living area, also on 640sqm of land. Piman villas have three bedrooms and, in addition to the other rooms, an office, pantry, maid's room and storage room. Prices start at 12.9 million baht.

Quality materials such as granite, slate and sandstone are being used in the construction, and the bathrooms feature American Standard sanitaryware or equivalent products. The homes come unfurnished, although there

is a furnishing "package" available.

Services such as electricity cables and water are run underground, and the development will have a 24-hour security service.

Mr Witthinrich, who is Managing Director of SEA Property Phuket, stressed, "All our properties come with full Chanote titles, which we currently own outright, and which were thor-

oughly checked by lawyers in Bangkok when we bought them."

He said the Montien and Piman villas were so far proving most popular with customers, probably because they are spacious yet reasonably priced.

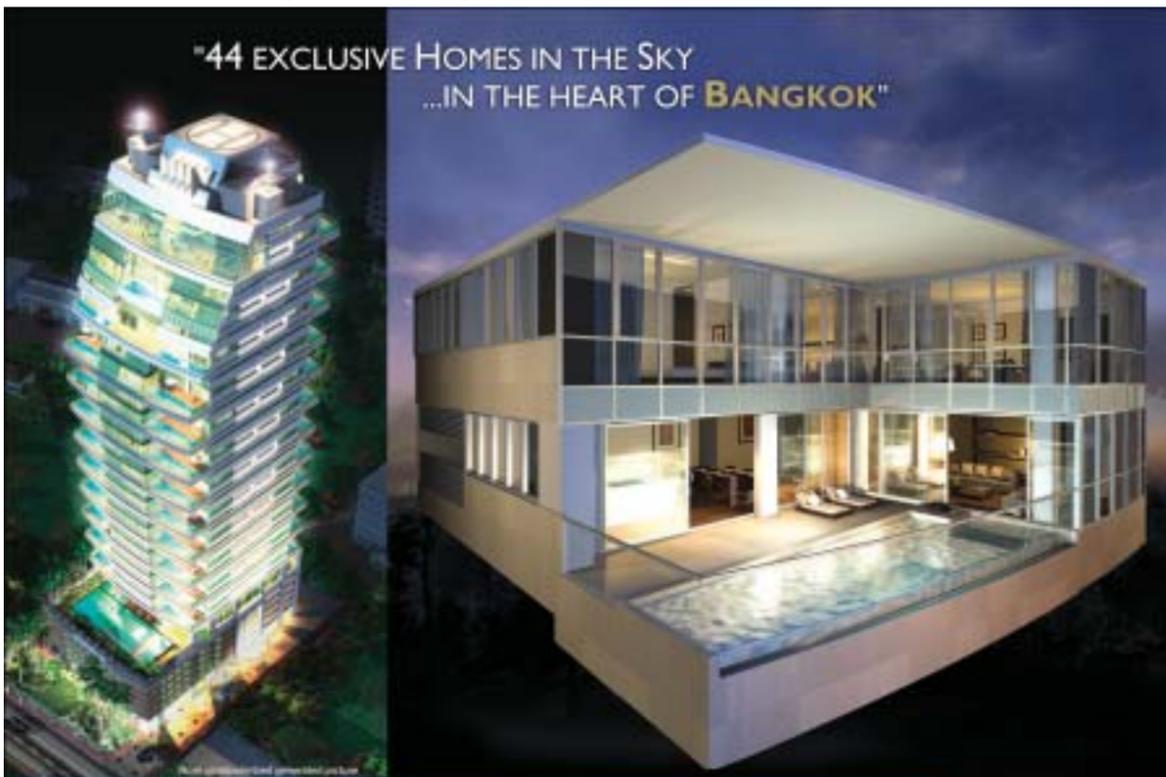
He added that another selling point was that all the villas face a 16-metre-long lake. "It creates a beautiful, tranquil atmosphere," he said.

He continued, "We're not looking to compete with other properties, we just offer a quality product at a good price, and while we don't have a sea-view, we don't charge for a sea-view either.

"This is a good location, though, close to Nai Harn Beach and only 10 to 20 minutes away from the bypass road shopping district."

He said most inquiries so far have been from the UK, Switzerland and Germany.

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Size DOES matter

What is it with big stuff that I like? It doesn't matter what it is, really. Big cars, big furniture, big bikes; anything big. I even write with a big pen. Is it some kind of deep unresolved, psychological link to my physical girth? Perhaps, as our transatlantic cousins may suggest, I have "issues".

I don't see the problem, personally. There's something quite reassuring about being able to go to McDonald's and get the slightly bigger version of those set meals, and not feel guilty. I'm a bit of a bloater, and rather proud of it.

However, my "big" perspective does have its limits. We live on a big island, and we drive on big roads – roads that seem to be getting bigger with each day.

Do we really need every carriage-way in Phuket to become a four-lane superhighway? This is supposed to be a tropical island paradise, rather than a paradise for those who want to drive that bit faster.

It's at roadsides where I put my gardener's hat on and get a bit riled at the people who decide to hack away at whatever was there before and pave it over.

The problem is that they always cut back a bit more that they need to, in order to give themselves room to work.

This leaves an unfortunate bare patch at the side of the road. Often it will naturally attract some form of plantlife that will help to keep the soil in place and stop it migrating elsewhere in the first decent rainfall that comes along.

But there are areas on the island where the rain has had exactly that unfortunate effect. Going from Patong to Kamala, look to the right near the top of the hill. You'll see large areas of bare ground that have been literally sucked out of the side of the hill. I'm not sure what's being built up there – though clearly it's something big – but they have paid little regard to the soil around it, or the greenery that got in the way. Big chunks of the hill have gone AWOL.

Plants do a lot more than just sit there and make the place look tropical – in many cases



MAKE IT BIG: The leaves of the macaranga denticulata, which resemble elephants' ears, can grow to about 30cm long.

they are what's holding the fabric of the island together. If we remove them, then the ground where they once stood will simply disappear.

There's a simple answer to this problem – plant trees. A perfect tree for this purpose is the macaranga denticulata, or *tong-tao kalo* in Thai. It's not the most beautiful plant in the world, but it's incredibly effective at laying down, very quickly, roots that spread over a wide area and bind the soil together.

Clever road planners use macaranga all the time. Rather than cover the banks at the side of the road with plastic netting, or acres of concrete, they just plonk a few hundred of these things in the ground. As a result, the banks will stay in their proper places, with absolutely no maintenance.

I am a big fan of macaranga denticulata for another reason, and this is where we go back to the beginning of the column and my liking for big things. Its leaves are absolutely huge, about 25 to 30 cm long. They look a lot like an elephant's ears.

A few years ago, researchers at a university in Chiang Mai

set about working on deforestation in the area. What they needed to do was encourage the regrowth of plantlife, and find trees that would develop and mature as quickly as possible. They wanted to attract seed-dispersing animals back into the area so that, once everything was in place, they could just leave the area to look after itself.

In the first 18 months of the project, the macaranga denticulata trees that they planted increased in height by about 4 meters. That's going some.

All we need in Phuket is a few more of these around the place. If we do that now, then when the rainy season rolls around, there's at least a chance that some of the soil that's been exposed during the recent excavations and "improvements" will actually stay put.

In the meantime, I'll work on my size issues.

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Property Gazette

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Property Gazette

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1- or 2-bedroom apartments with kitchen and pool, and only 350m from the beach, for rent at 7,000 baht per month. Tel: 09-4740227. Email: chotip_5@hotmail.com

LONG TERM RENTAL

Luxury, furnished, one-bedroom, ground-floor poolside apartment at the end of a quiet soi in the heart of Patong, within easy walking distance of shops, restaurants, pubs, clubs and the beach and adjacent to the new shopping and entertainment center Jungceylon. Available for long-term rental from mid-March 2005. For more information or to book this luxury apartment. Tel: 07-8879070. Please visit: www.phuket-guide.com

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12,000 baht/month. Clean, cute house, safe area, across from lake, 15 minutes to Patong or Phuket City. 3 bedrooms, 2 baths, kitchen, living room, air conditioned. Tel: 06-6828010. Email: pritchah@hotmail.com

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HOUSE 4 RENT

Kathu. 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms kitchen living room, 2 aircons, furnished, 8,000 baht per month for long-term rental. Tel: 09-2909567. www.brommathaihouse.com

HOUSE FOR RENT

85sq wah, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, in Land & Houses Park, in Chalong. For rent 20,000 baht/month, with furnished kitchen, hot water, cable TV, telephone, parking area. Tel: 01-892-6005.

HOUSE FOR RENT

20 sq wah. 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms and a big garden. For rent at 15,000 baht/month. Tel: 01-9560473.

STUDIO APARTMENTS

in central Patong. Luxury accommodation, new decor, big fridge, aircon, TV, big beds, pool and parking. Contact for more information. Tel: 01-0825707. Email: ask@phuket-accommodation.info

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Single house, on Chao Fa Rd, with 4 bedrooms, 4 baths, big living room, nice kitchen, and a small garden. Located in a safe and quiet estate. For rent at 25,000 baht/month. Tel: 01-7872201. Email: phuket8@hotmail.com

KATA PENTHOUSES

Furnished apartments with UBC or cable TV, aircon or fan, 2 or 3 rooms, balconies, views and cleaning. Pls call for more info. Tel: 06-2766597.

Property Wanted

LOOKING FOR

a place to rent. I'm looking for a place to rent 2-3sqm in Patong: Bangla, Rat-U-Thit, Thaweewong Rd, to install an ice-cream machine. Pls contact for more info. Tel: 06-9928026. Email: violetanikol@abv.bg

ANDAMAN BEACH

suites condo. Apartment/condo in Andaman Beach Suites, Patong Beach, wanted to buy. Of any size, in any condition. Email: onejohan@hotmail.com

HOUSE WANTED

Looking to purchase a house in southern part of the island - minimum 2 bedrooms, maximum 3 million baht. Please email description and photos to above address. Email: lamsai@yahoo.com

SMALL PLOTS

of land wanted for house construction. Preferred size: between 200 and 800 square meters. Preferred area: Karon, Patong, Kamala, Surin or Kathu. Tel: 06-2688061. Email: schendl@loxinfo.co.th

LOOKING FOR KATHU

house/apt. Clean, quiet, budget-minded American male looking for house or apartment in Kathu area (the closer to Phuket Country Club the better). My budget is about 7,000 baht/month. Kitchen (private or shared) preferred. Thank you. Email: npxm@excite.com

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Property Gazette

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PATONG BLUEPOINT

seaview. Nice apartments, just outside Patong, in Baan Suan Kamnan (24/2), a nice, green residential area. Great seaviews. Available from April onward. Take beach road toward the "Amari Hotel", once over the bridge keep left. Just before Viewpoint Bluepoint go right and enter Baan Suan Kamnan, then follow arrow. Tel: 06-7866350. Email: buurmanb@hotmail.com

BIG ROOMS 4 RENT

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Patong center. Nice Nederlandstallig guesthouse, bar/café in the center of "party-town", Patong Beach. We're in Bangla Square, a relaxed cul-de-sac next to famous Soi Bangla. Rooms available from March. Tel: 01-0801370. Email: amsterdampatong@yahoo.com For further details, please see our website at: www.amsterdam.be.tf

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Two rooms available, 56-36 sqm, aircon, cable TV, hot shower, 6,000-8,000 monthly. Tel: 07-1904584.

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houses in Kata/Karon. Fully furnished, aircon, TV etc. 5 mins from the beach. Tel: 06-9488139. Email: jefdejong@hotmail.com

Accommodation Wanted

APARTMENT/CONDO

I am looking for an apartment to rent in Patong, from the beginning of March to the end of April. Email: gson1@home.se

HOUSE, VILLA

or apartment. Retired Swede with Australian wife, moving to Phuket in early April, looking for long-term rental. Prefer at least 2 bedrooms, close to water. All suggestions are welcome. Tel: 02-65839855. Email: cppaul@bigpond.com

APT/ROOM

in Patong. Seeking a 1-bedroom or studio in an apartment or guesthouse in the Patong Beach area. Length of stay would be from 1-3+ months, beginning March 1st. Would prefer air-conditioning and a full kitchen. Also would strongly prefer a place with a Wi-Fi or LAN high-speed Internet connection in the room. Please send photos and rates. Email: thomasde3@aol.com

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in Patong. Looking for a shop to rent in Patong for an Internet business. Will consider any kind of offer. Please contact by email or telephone. Tel: 09-5593161. Email: hugli@gmx.net

HOUSE WANTED

A 2-bedroom, furnished house wanted in Phuket City, with occupation from April 1. Long-term lease required. Must have aircon and garden. Tel: 27-114651274, 27-82652668. Fax: 27-11465124. Contact Melanie at Email: hmellet@hotmail.com

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Tel: 076-420627

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- ▶ Good command of spoken English would be an advantage

II. REPORTER

The successful candidate will be a Thai national with initiative, an outgoing personality and plenty of curiosity about the world and how it works, and a keen interest in sports.

Also essential are the ability to communicate in English, both spoken and written, and a car drivers license.

Qualified candidates are invited to send a CV to Passara Kaewbumroong, Human Resources, by email, fax or post to:

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367/2 Yaowarat Rd, T. Taladyai, A. Muang, Phuket 83000
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RESERVATION

manager (1 position). A lovely, small boutique resort located in Patong has a vacancy for a highly-qualified, ambitious and committed Reservation Manager to strengthen our team.

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 - Hotel experience, more than 3 years
 - Excellent command of spoken and written English language; additional foreign languages preferable
 - Excellent organizational skills and ability to work independently
 - Positive, confident, outgoing personality, good interpersonal and communication skills
- Tel: 076-345345-7, Fax: 076-345099. Please submit your CV with photo to: agm@clubbamboo.com

FINANCIAL

controller. Asia Debit, a leading provider of international Internet merchant account and online secured credit card payment solutions, is seeking a Financial Controller

Qualifications:

- Male or female, age not over 40
 - Bachelor's degree in any related field
 - A very high level of written and spoken English
 - Familiarity with Thai and international accounting standards
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- Tel: 076-264445. Fax: 076-264447. Please submit resum  stating qualifications and experience, expected salary and a recent photo via email to: oil@asiadebit.com

PROJECT

secretary / sales. For residential property development

- Female (Thai citizen)
 - Degree in Accounting, Secretarial College or any other related field
 - Minimum 2 years' working experience in related field or as property administrator
 - Good command of English
 - Computer literate
 - Good personality, hard working and able to work in a team, service-minded
- Tel: 076-239837, 09-4741332. Fax: 076-239837. Send resum  and photo to the project manager at thierry@capeyamu.com

NEEDED URGENTLY

Maid & cook. Please call for more information. Tel: 076-273427, 01-8295388.



www.lagunaphuket.com

The largest hotel and resort group located in Phuket, and a listed company in Stock Exchange of Thailand, is currently seeking qualified candidates to fill in the below position.

CHIEF ACCOUNTANT

1 position

- ▶ Thai nationality, age between 25-35 years.
- ▶ Bachelor's Degree or higher in Accounting.
- ▶ A minimum of 2 years' experience, preferably in a land development environment.
- ▶ Able to work in MS Office applications and particularly in ACCPAC.
- ▶ Good in spoken and written English.
- ▶ Able to relocate to Phuket.

Applicants are invited to send a full detailed English resum , stating current and expected salary, together with recent photo, to:

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RESTAURANT STAFF

Rockfish restaurant & bar, Kamala, is looking for an assistant manager & barmen. Must speak good English & have experience. Good money for right people. Tel: 04-8446808. Email: eat@rockfishrestaurant.com

OFFICER - URGENTLY

needed. We are looking for an officer who can speak English and has bookkeeping and computer skills, to work at the management office of our Lakewood Hills project. Tel: 076-316800, 01-9707019. Fax: 076-075089. Email: admin@lakewoodhillspuket.com

NANNY NEEDED

to take care of 2-2½-year-old 9 am - 5 pm 5 days/week. 9,000 baht/month. Must have car. Please call for more info. Tel: 01-0546100, 09-748-0782.

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for 3-year-old in Rawai 9-5, 5 days/week. 4,500 baht/month. Must speak good English. Tel: 09-7480782.

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Island Job Mart



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Employment Wanted

ENGLISH TEACHER
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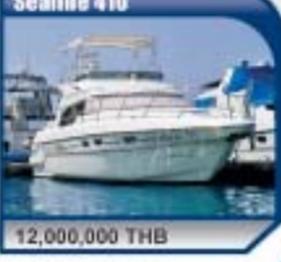
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PHUKET CHESS CLUB

will be established soon in the restaurant/guesthouse Southern Fried Rice in Kata Night Bazaar. You will be able to play chess every day in a permanent chess room or in the restaurant. Please contact for details and to register interest. Tel: 01-8948446. Email: sfrkata@hotmail.com

2ND-HAND BOOKS

I want to buy secondhand books for children in Thai and English. Please contact by email or phone. Tel: 01-891-8689. Email: villathani@hotmail.com

FELLOW CANADIAN

expats living in the Phuket area: A group of your fellow Canadian expats would like to start breakfast/lunch networking meetings. If interested please contact me. Tel: 04-8429640. Email: mow449@yahoo.com

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Tout, Trader & Trumpet

Business Opportunities

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Amsterdam eatcafé, bar & guesthouse for sale. Good turnover & profitable place. In center of Patong. Well-established and well-known place. Contact for full details. Tel: 01-0801370, 06-7866350. Email: amsterdampatong@yahoo.com For further details, please see our website at: www.amsterdam.be.tf

HOTEL FOR LEASE

Consistent income all year from solid guest base. Easy to manage. Tel: 01-8922824. Email junaworn@hotmail.com For further details, please see our website at: www.kohjoy.com/building

REST/GUESTHOUSE

in the heart of Patong. Over 10 yrs in business; lowest price in the market. Tel: 04-1924170.

SCANDINAVIAN

restaurant/guesthouse for sale in Krabi Town. Same owner for 15 years. 6 rooms, freehold land. 6.5 million baht. Tel: 075-620407, 09-5910-584. Email: henrik_krabi@hotmail.com

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3 bedrooms, aircon, cable, shower. Long lease, 150,000 baht key money; 19,000 baht monthly. Call Tel: 07-190-4584 for more details.

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Beautiful art gallery, 250sqm, tourist area, 6-year contract, 15,000 baht per month. Asking 1.7 million baht including all stock, or 900,000 baht without stock. Email: art1info@yahoo.com

BUNGALOWS

for sale. 9 bungalows and restaurant for sale at Koh Lanta. 1.5 million baht. 10 years left on lease. Tel: 01-4897822.

MIMMI'S BUSINESS

with great potential due to extensive property development in Rawai and the surrounding area. More than 150 seats, spacious terrace area, large car park. Private, with Chanote title. 1 rai (1,600 sqm) of land freehold. Saiyuan Rd, Nai Ham. Tel: 01-8913095. Email: mimmi@loxinfo.co.th

HOTEL FOR SALE

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BAR/RESTAURANT

for sale. In good location opp Jungceylon & Burasari hotel. Fully equipped, seating for about 60, 3-year lease, 35,000 baht/month rent, price 700,000 baht. Three-month deposit. Tel: 076-342194, 09-8716176.

20-ROOM GUESTHOUSE FOR SALE

Located 120m from Karon Beach, a 20-room guesthouse/restaurant, is for sale. Freehold Chanote title, easy foreign ownership, owner's suite. Email: hotelinparadise@yahoo.com For further details, please see our website at: www.geocities.com/hotelinparadise

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Hotels with more than 50-100 rooms for sale. Pls call Diana at Tel: 01-8918082 or K. Siti at Tel: 09-6491963.

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GUARDIAN ALARMS HAVE MOVED

Please note that we have now moved to the Plaza-Del-Mar located at the entrance to the Laguna Hotel complex. We have also a new shop located at The Plaza Chalong. This is on the Jetty road from Chalong roundabout. Our telephone numbers will remain the same. Please contact for all your security needs. Tel: 076-383277, 01-8954480. Fax: 076-381225. Email: Guardian@loxinfo.co.th

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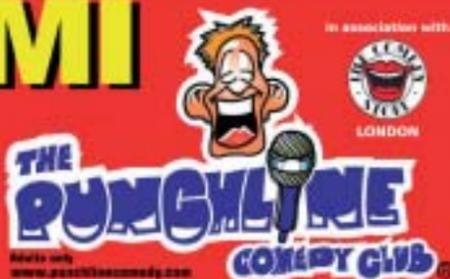
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VOLVO 850
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HONDA CIVIC VTEC
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Pickups

ISUZU SPACECAB
 Diesel, year 2001, detachable hard top, 105,000 km, white, 320,000 baht. Tel: 09-5887170, 09-727-5149.

ISUZU D-MAX
 Privately owned 2002 D-Max. Only 28,000km, gold color, good condition vehicle, 550,000 baht. Please call for more details. Tel: 076-286-476-80, 09-2180854.

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4 x 4s

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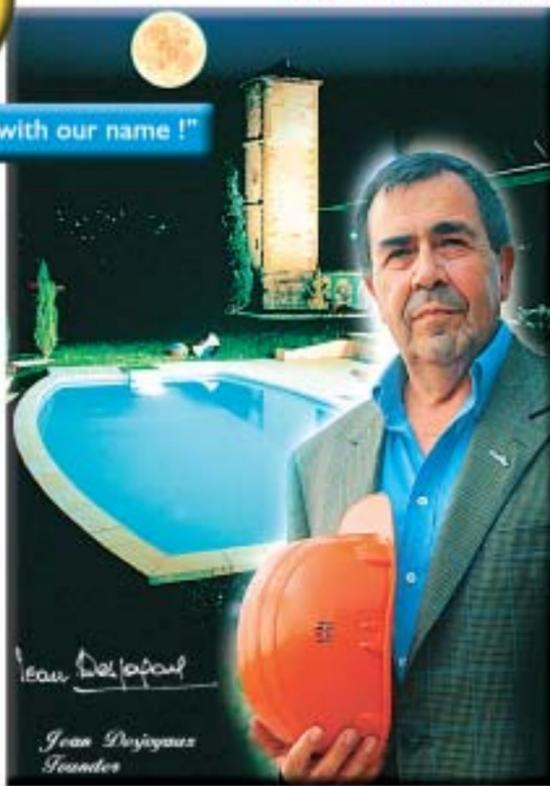
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