

รายการอ้างอิง

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ภาคผนวก

ภาคผนวก ก.

ประวัติความเป็นมาขององค์กรหนังสือพิมพ์บางกอกโพสต์

ประวัติความเป็นมาของหนังสือพิมพ์บางกอกโพสต์ (Bangkok Post Newspaper)

กิจการหนังสือพิมพ์รายวันภาษาอังกฤษในประเทศไทย ได้เริ่มขึ้นเมื่อปี พ.ศ. 2411 คือหลังจากที่ พระบาทสมเด็จพระจอมเกล้าเจ้าอยู่หัว รัชกาลที่ 4 ทรงเปิดประเทศแล้ว (จำนง วิบูลย์ศรี. ดวงทิพย์ วรพันธ์, 2530: 39)

หนังสือพิมพ์บางกอกโพสต์เป็นหนังสือพิมพ์รายวันภาษาอังกฤษ ที่ตีพิมพ์และออกจำหน่าย หลังสงครามโลกครั้งที่ 2 โดย บริษัท โพสต์พับลิชชิง จำกัด (มหาชน) (The Post Publishing Co., Ltd.) ซึ่งบุคคลที่มีบทบาทสำคัญและถือว่าเป็นผู้ให้กำเนิดหนังสือพิมพ์บางกอกโพสต์ ก็คือ นาวาตรี อเล็กซานเดอร์ วิลเลียม แมคโดนัลด์ (Lieutenant Commander Alexander William Mc Donald) เขาเดินทางเข้ามาในประเทศไทยในสงครามโลกครั้งที่ 2 เพื่อปฏิบัติการเสรีไทย โอ.เอส.เอส. ของอเมริกา (45)

เมื่อสงครามโลกยุติลงแล้ว นาวาตรี อเล็กซานเดอร์ แมคโดนัลด์ ผู้ซึ่งมีอาชีพเดิมเป็นนักหนังสือพิมพ์อเมริกัน ได้ปรึกษากับเพื่อนผู้ร่วมก่อตั้งอีก 6 คน คือ ดร.ทวี ตเวทิกุล ร้อยเอกวิลาศ โอสถานนท์ นายอาจินต์ อูณหนันท์ หลวงดำรงศุริตเดช นายชวาลา สุกุลนันท์ และนายประสิทธิ์ ลุคิตานนท์ เมื่อพิจารณาเห็นว่าขณะนั้นประเทศไทยไม่มีหนังสือพิมพ์ภาษาอังกฤษ จึงได้ก่อตั้ง บริษัท โพสต์พับลิชชิง จำกัด ขึ้น และเริ่มตีพิมพ์ฉบับปฐมฤกษ์ เมื่อ วันที่ 1 สิงหาคม พ.ศ. 2489 และพิมพ์จำหน่ายเพียงวันละ 500 ฉบับ ผลปรากฏว่าเพียงในระยะ 1 เดือน ที่ตีพิมพ์ออกจำหน่าย ก็ได้มีผู้สมัครบอกรับเป็นสมาชิกถึง 200 คน (45)

หลังจากที่ได้ดำเนินกิจการมาได้ 2 ปี ผู้ถือหุ้นก็เริ่มขัดแย้ง และบางคนได้ถอนหุ้นออกไป "นายแมค" จึงต้องซื้อหุ้นที่มีผู้ถอนออกไปทั้งหมด แต่ในปี พ.ศ. 2492 "นายแมค" พบมรสุมทางการเมือง และต้องเดินทางออกนอกประเทศไทย ตามคำสั่ง พล.ต.อ.เผ่า ศรียานนท์ อธิบดีกรมตำรวจสมัยนั้น จึงจำเป็นต้องขายหุ้นทั้งหมดแก่นักลงทุนชาวเยอรมัน และมอบตำแหน่งบรรณาธิการให้แก่ นายแฮร์รี่ เฟรดเดอริค (Harry Frederick) และอีก 15 ปีต่อมา ลอร์ด ทอมสัน (Lord Thomson of Flect Street) ซึ่งเป็นเจ้าของกิจการ London Times และหนังสือพิมพ์ทั่วโลกมากกว่า 150 ฉบับ ได้ซื้อหุ้นใหญ่ ๆ ไว้ กล่าวกันว่า ลอร์ด ทอมสัน ได้

วางรากฐานทางการหนังสือพิมพ์ให้กับบางกอกโพสต์เป็นอย่างดี และปัจจุบันนี้หนังสือพิมพ์บางกอกโพสต์ เป็นหนังสือพิมพ์รายวันภาษาอังกฤษที่มีอายุเก่าแก่ที่สุดในรัชกาลปัจจุบัน โดยมีผู้ออกหุ้นที่เป็นคนไทยประมาณ 80 % และหุ้นทั้งหมด ชื่อ-ชาย โดยผ่านตลาดหลักทรัพย์แห่งประเทศไทย (45)

ซึ่งสาเหตุของการที่ต้องเข้าตลาดหลักทรัพย์นั้น คุณประสิทธิ์ ลulitanนท์ (อ้างถึงในดัชนี กานจนศิริ, 2531: 56-57) กล่าวว่า

ประการแรก เพื่อให้ บริษัท โพสต์พับลิชชิ่ง จำกัด มีลักษณะเป็นบริษัทมาตรฐานอย่างแท้จริง

ประการที่สอง เพื่อลดภาระทางด้านภาษี เพื่อจะนำเงินส่วนนี้มามอบเป็นสวัสดิการแก่พนักงานทุกคน

ประการสุดท้าย เพื่อช่วยส่งเสริมภาพพจน์ว่า บริษัทโพสต์พับลิชชิ่ง จำกัด เป็นบริษัทที่มีคนไทยเป็นเจ้าของโดยส่วนใหญ่

ธุรกิจหนังสือพิมพ์ก็เช่นเดียวกับธุรกิจอื่น ๆ ที่ต้องมีวัตถุประสงค์ของการดำเนินการ ซึ่งหนังสือพิมพ์บางกอกโพสต์มีนโยบายในการนำเสนอข่าวดังนี้

1. เสนอข่าวให้ผู้อ่านรับทราบข้อเท็จจริง (Fact) ของเหตุการณ์ที่เกิดขึ้น ข่าวเป็นอย่างไรก็รายงานไปตามสภาพความเป็นจริง ไม่มีการเติมสีสันของพาดหัวข่าว หรือเนื้อหาข่าว เพื่อเพิ่มยอดขายให้สูงขึ้น

2. เสนอข่าวโดยตระหนักถึงความมั่นคงของชาติโดยรวม ข่าวอันจะก่อให้เกิดความกระทบกระเทือนต่อความมั่นคงของชาติ หรือทำลายขวัญของประชาชนในประเทศจะต้องผ่านการพิจารณาก่อนการเป็นพิเศษก่อนนำเสนอ

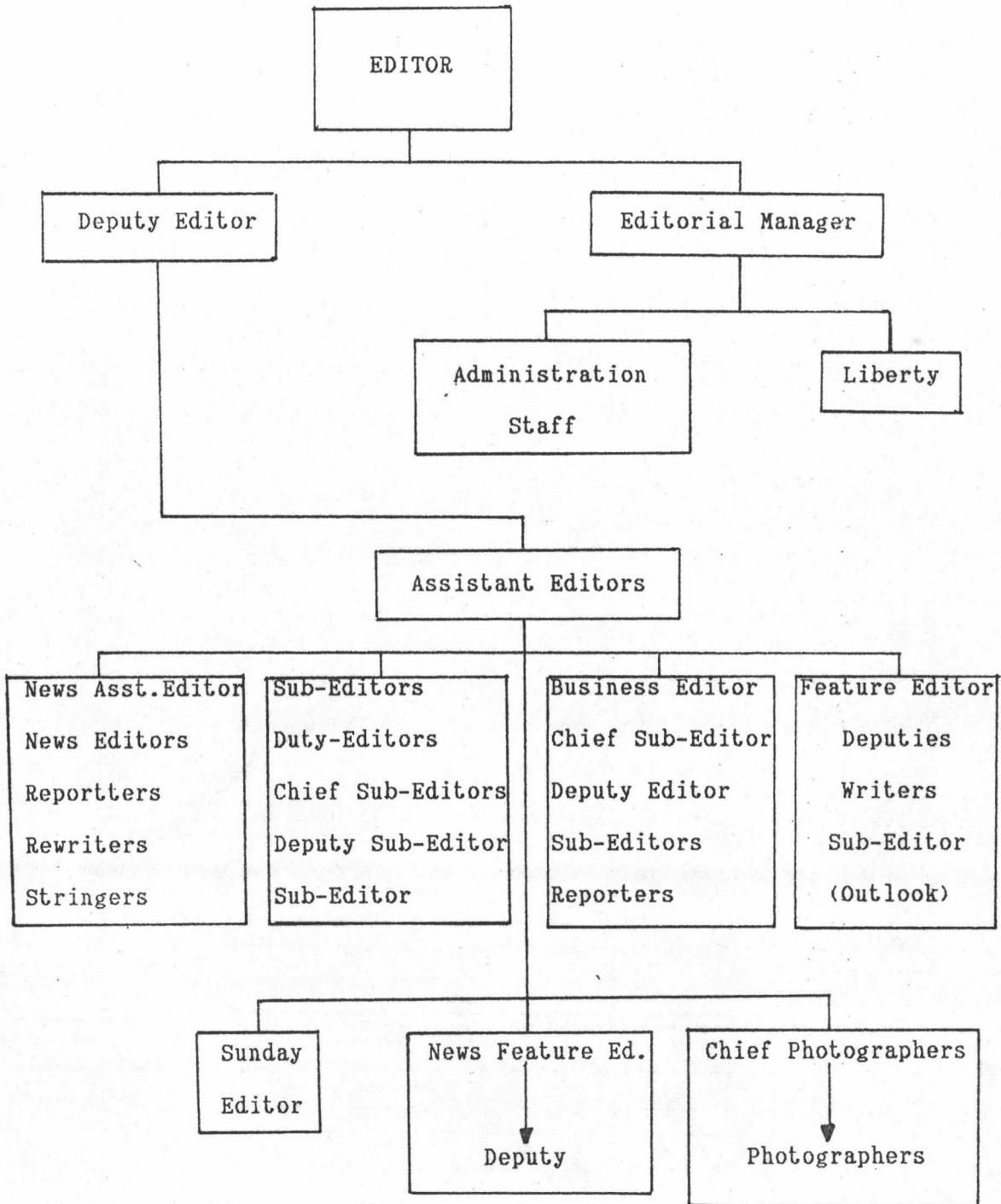
3. เสนอข่าวด้วยความเป็นธรรม โดยให้ความยุติธรรมแก่คู่กรณีทั้งสองฝ่าย ไม่มีการนำเสนอข่าวโดยมีการให้ข้อมูลจากฝ่ายใดฝ่ายหนึ่งด้วยความอคติ
4. ชำรงไว้ซึ่งระบอบการปกครองแบบประชาธิปไตย
5. เสนอข่าวที่ให้ความรู้แก่ประชาชนโดยส่วนรวม เช่น ข่าววิทยาศาสตร์
6. ไม่ให้ความสำคัญต่อข่าวอาชญากรรม จะเสนอข่าวอาชญากรรมก็ต่อเมื่อเห็นว่าข่าวนั้นมีผลกระทบต่อประชาชนส่วนรวมเท่านั้น

การจัดองค์กรบริหารของหนังสือพิมพ์บางกอกโพสต์

หนังสือพิมพ์แต่ละฉบับ มักมีการจัดองค์กรที่สอดคล้องกับหลักการสากล ยกเว้นหนังสือพิมพ์ท้องถิ่นที่มีองค์กรที่อาศัยพื้นฐานจากบุคคลากรจำนวนน้อย แต่จำเป็นต้องดำเนินการหลายด้าน (Fused Organization) ส่วนหนังสือพิมพ์ในส่วนกลางแล้ว ส่วนใหญ่จะมีการจัดองค์กรโดยจำแนกงานตามความชำนาญ (Differentiation & Specialization) เพื่อสะดวกในการดูแลจากผู้ชำนาญการหรือกรรมการผู้จัดการในฐานะผู้บริหารซึ่งมักเป็นเจ้าของบริษัท (สุรพงษ์ ใสรณะเสถียร, 2533: 167-168) ซึ่งการจัดองค์กรบริหารงานของหนังสือพิมพ์บางกอกโพสต์นั้น แบ่งเป็น 2 ระดับ คือ

1. ระดับกรรมการบริหารบริษัท (Board of Directors)
2. ระดับผู้ปฏิบัติการ ในระดับผู้ปฏิบัติการนี้จะชอกล่าวถึงรายละเอียดโครงสร้างในส่วนของบรรณาธิการ เนื่องจากฝ่ายบรรณาธิการเป็นฝ่ายสำคัญอันเป็นมันสมองที่ทำให้กระดาษเปล่ากลายเป็นบันทึกแห่งประวัติศาสตร์

แผนผังโครงสร้างการดำเนินงานฝ่ายบรรณาธิการหนังสือพิมพ์บางกอกโพสต์



ประเภทธุรกิจของบริษัทโพสต์พับลิชชิ่ง จำกัด (มหาชน)

ในปัจจุบันนี้ อุตสาหกรรมการสื่อสารมวลชนได้เปลี่ยนแปลงโดยรวดเร็วในศตวรรษ 1990 ยิ่งกว่ายุคใด ๆ นับตั้งแต่โทรทัศน์เริ่มมีบทบาทเมื่อประมาณ 60 ปีมาแล้ว ดังนั้น นอกจากกิจการหนังสือพิมพ์ที่เป็นกิจการหลักของบริษัทโพสต์พับลิชชิ่งฯ แล้ว ยังมีธุรกิจอื่นอีก (Annual Report 1993. The Post Publishing Co.,Ltd.) ได้แก่

1. โรงพิมพ์อัลลายด์พริ้นติง (Post Printing) เป็นโรงพิมพ์ที่รับพิมพ์งานนอกเป็นจำนวนมาก ซึ่งมีลูกค้าที่สำคัญ ๆ คือ หนังสือ นิตยสาร แผ่นพับโฆษณาสินค้าจากซูเปอร์มาเก็ต และห้างสรรพสินค้า

2. นิตยสาร (Post Magazines) ได้แก่

- นิตยสาร Signature เป็นนิตยสารที่ออกสำหรับลูกค้าภัตตาคาร Dinner's Club ซึ่งเริ่มออกวางฉบับแรกเดือนธันวาคม 2535

- นิตยสาร BMW เป็นนิตยสารที่ผลิตในนามสำนักพิมพ์ Ringier ซึ่งเป็นสำนักพิมพ์และโรงพิมพ์ของประเทศสวิตเซอร์แลนด์ นิตยสาร BMW นี้เป็นนิตยสารที่ออกสำหรับลูกค้ารถยนต์ BMW

- นิตยสาร Golf News ผลิตเพื่อให้ผู้ที่ เป็นสมาชิก Royal Bangkok Sports Club

- นิตยสาร Thailand Traveller เป็นนิตยสารสำหรับนักท่องเที่ยว และบริษัททัวร์ต่าง ๆ

- นิตยสาร Thailand Tatler เป็นนิตยสารซึ่งมีเนื้อหาสาระเกี่ยวกับข่าวสังคม ชีวิตบุคคลสำคัญ ๆ อาหาร และแฟชั่นจากทั่วทุกมุมโลก

- นิตยสาร Motorcar & Boating นิตยสารเล่มนี้เป็นนิตยสารเล่มเดียวที่ตีพิมพ์เป็นภาษาไทย ซึ่งมีเนื้อหาเกี่ยวกับเหตุการณ์ต่าง ๆ อุปกรณ์รถยนต์และเรือ

3. หนังสือการ์ตูน (Post Comics) ธุรกิจการ์ตูนของ บริษัท โปสต์พับลิชชิ่งฯ เข้าสู่วงการในเดือนกันยายน พ.ศ. 2536 โดยการซื้อสัญญาซื้อ-ขายลิขสิทธิ์กับ สำนักพิมพ์ Warn Brothers สำนักพิมพ์ Turner Publishing Inc. และสำนักพิมพ์ United Features ขณะผลิตการ์ตูนทั้งหมด 11 เล่มต่อเดือน โดยนำเสนอการ์ตูนที่เป็นที่รู้จักกันดี เช่น การ์ฟิลด์ ครอบครัวฟลินส์โตน และบั๊กส์ บันนี่

4. หนังสือเล่ม (Post Books) หนังสือที่ได้ผลิตและวางจำหน่ายไปเมื่อปี พ.ศ. 2536 คือ "Speak English Clearly" ซึ่งเป็นหนังสือสอนภาษาอังกฤษเล่มแรกที่ผลิตจากแผนกบริการการศึกษาของทางบริษัทโปสต์พับลิชชิ่งฯ หนังสือชุดนี้ประกอบด้วยหนังสือที่มีคำอธิบายทั้งภาษาไทยและภาษาอังกฤษควบคู่ไปกับการอ่านหนังสือพิมพ์บางกอกโพสต์

5. แผนกบริการการศึกษาของโปสต์ (Post Education Service) โปรแกรมหลักของแผนกคือ "การเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษทางโทรสาร" (Learn English By Fax) ซึ่งโปรแกรมนี้จะส่งโทรสารจำนวน 1 หน้า แก่สมาชิกโครงการทุกวัน เพื่อเสนอข่าวที่น่าสนใจบางเรื่อง que เลือกจากหนังสือพิมพ์โดยใช้ภาษาง่าย ๆ เพื่อเป็นการช่วยในการอ่านหนังสือพิมพ์ประจำวันนั้น

6. หนังสือไดเรคเตอรี (Post Directories) จุดมุ่งหมายของงานด้านนี้ คือ การผลิตหนังสือประจำปีและไดเรคเตอรีประจำปีแก่อุตสาหกรรมและวงการอาชีพต่าง ๆ งานส่วนนี้ได้รับการก่อตั้งในปี พ.ศ. 2536 โดยจุดประสงค์แรกเริ่ม คือ การเพิ่มผลิตหนังสือประจำปีสำหรับแทรกแต่ละวันของหนังสือพิมพ์บางกอกโพสต์ อาทิ Thailand Telecommunication Yearbook และ Computer Directory สำหรับ Post Database ซึ่งเป็นฉบับแทรกประจำวันพฤษภาคม และ Thailand Property Guides สำหรับ Investment and Property ฉบับแทรกประจำวันจันทร์

7. งานบริการการพิมพ์ด้านต่าง ๆ (Post Publishing Services) หลังจากบริษัทโพสต์พับลิชชิงฯ ย้ายเข้าสู่อาคารสำนักงานใหม่ที่ อาคารบางกอกโพสต์ ถนนสุนทรโกษา เขตคลองเตยนั้น บริการก้าวแรกของบริษัทฯ คือ เป็นตัวแทนจำหน่ายหนังสือพิมพ์ต่างประเทศหลายฉบับ ได้แก่ Economist, South China, Morning Post, The Straits Times และ Business Times นอกจากนี้บริษัทโพสต์พับลิชชิงฯ ได้ร่วมลงทุนคนละครึ่งกับบริษัท Martin Clinch & Associates เพื่อเป็นตัวแทนขายโฆษณาในประเทศไทยให้แก่สื่อสำคัญ ๆ ทั่วโลก อาทิ CNN, Business Week, Sydney Morning, Stern, House & Garden, The Daily Telegraph, Architectural Digest เป็นต้น

8. หนังสือพิมพ์ (Post Newspapers) หนังสือพิมพ์บางกอกโพสต์เป็นรูปแบบธุรกิจที่เก่าแก่ที่สุดของบริษัทโพสต์พับลิชชิงฯ ซึ่งลักษณะโดยสังเขปของหนังสือพิมพ์บางกอกโพสต์ มีดังนี้

ลักษณะพอสังเขปของหนังสือพิมพ์บางกอกโพสต์

หนังสือพิมพ์บางกอกโพสต์ฉบับปัจจุบันในปี ค.ศ. 1994 (พ.ศ.2537) เป็นหนังสือพิมพ์รายวันฉบับเช้าที่มีขนาดมาตรฐาน กว้าง ยาว เท่ากับ 5" x 22"

การกำหนดหน้าในบางกอกโพสต์ ขึ้นอยู่กับโฆษณาในแต่ละวัน แต่อาจจะกล่าวโดยประมาณได้ว่า บางกอกโพสต์มีความหนา 40 หน้าต่อวัน โดยไม่รวมฉบับแทรกหรือหน้าแทรกเนื่องในโอกาสพิเศษต่าง ๆ (Supplyment)

หน้าแรกมีหัวเรื่องหรือหัวข้อหนังสือคือคำว่า "BANGKOK POST" เป็นตัวอักษรสีดำขนาดใหญ่ หัวข้อดังกล่าวบอกปีที่เริ่มพิมพ์จำหน่ายเป็นตัวหนังสือสีแดงขนาดเล็กกว่า "ESTABLISHED IN 1946" ถัดลงมาเป็นเล่มที่ เลขที่ เมืองที่พิมพ์ วัน เดือน ปี ที่พิมพ์ และราคาจำหน่าย เช่น VOL.XLIII NO.49 BANGKOK Thursday September 15 1994 PRICE 12 BAHT ทางด้านซ้ายและด้านขวา (EAR) ของหัวข้อหนังสือพิมพ์เป็นตัวล้อมกรอบโฆษณา ขนาดกว้าง ยาว เท่ากับ 1/2" x 2" ค้นด้วยเส้นตรงคู่สีดำ แล้วจึงเป็นข่าวและโฆษณาเพิ่มเติม

เนื้อหาของหนังสือพิมพ์บางกอกโพสต์

หนังสือพิมพ์บางกอกโพสต์ 1 ฉบับ จะแบ่งออกเป็น 3 ส่วน คือ

ส่วนที่ 1 เป็นข่าวการเมืองทั้งในและนอกประเทศ

ส่วนที่ 2 เป็นข่าวเศรษฐกิจทั้งในและนอกประเทศ

ส่วนที่ 3 เป็นส่วนของ Outlook

ส่วนที่ 1 (Section One) เนื้อหาประกอบด้วย

- ข่าวการเมืองและข่าวทั่วไป
- Column Nine
- ข่าวภายในประเทศและข่าวต่างประเทศทั้งในภูมิภาคเอเชียและทั่วโลก
- ข่าวพยากรณ์อากาศ
- บทบรรณาธิการ
- การ์ตูนการเมือง
- บทความ บทวิเคราะห์ สารคดีข่าวจาก Staff ของบางกอกโพสต์หรือจาก Wire Service นักเขียนอิสระ Special Correspondent
- จดหมายจากผู้อ่าน

- ข่าวกีฬาทั้งภายในและนอกประเทศ

ส่วนที่ 2 (Section Two) เรียกว่า Business Post ซึ่งประกอบด้วย

- ข่าวเศรษฐกิจทั้งในและนอกประเทศ
- บทความ บทวิเคราะห์ ข่าวเศรษฐกิจ
- ข่าวการตลาด การเงิน รายงานสภาวะหุ้น
- Shipping Guide

ส่วนที่ 3 (Section Three) เรียกว่า OUTLOOK ซึ่งรายละเอียดของเนื้อหาจะเปลี่ยนไปทุกวัน ตั้งแต่วันจันทร์ - เสาร์ ซึ่งเนื้อหาใน Section นี้จะประกอบไปด้วย

- สารคดีหน้า 1
- ข่าวโปรแกรมเหตุการณ์ นิทรรศการ และรายการบันเทิงอื่น ๆ
- ข่าวแจกจากหน่วยงานต่าง ๆ
- ภาพข่าวบุคคลในสังคม
- ภาพข่าวแฟชั่น
- บทความสัมภาษณ์
- ข่าวสุขภาพ

- การ์ตูนบันเทิง
- พยากรณ์ชีวิต
- จดหมายถึง ANN LANDERS และ MISS MANNER
- เกมสัอักษรไขว้ (Cross Word)

ส่วนประกอบในหนังสือพิมพ์บางกอกโพสต์ นอกจากจะมีเนื้อหาทั้ง 3 ส่วนแล้ว ยังมีปริมาณเนื้อที่โฆษณาประมาณ 30 % ของเนื้อที่ทั้งหมดต่อวัน

สำหรับหนังสือพิมพ์บางกอกโพสต์ ฉบับวันอาทิตย์ จะมีเนื้อหาทั้งหมด 2 ส่วน คือ

ส่วนที่ 1 เนื้อหาประกอบด้วย

- ข่าวการเมืองและข่าวทั่วไปทั้งภายในและภายนอกประเทศ
- Column Nine
- ข่าวพยากรณ์อากาศ
- บทความ บทวิเคราะห์ สารคดีข่าวจาก Wire Service หรือ Special Correspondent นักเขียนอิสระ

นอกจากนี้ยังมีหน้าแทรกเป็น Sunday Classified

ส่วนที่ 2 ฉบับวันอาทิตย์เรียกว่า Extra Sunday Leiser เนื้อหาประกอบด้วย

- บทความหรือสารคดีและเรื่องราวที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการท่องเที่ยวที่น่าสนใจ
- ข่าวโปรแกรมบันเทิง สารระ และเหตุการณ์ต่าง ๆ
- เรื่องราวของต่างประเทศ
- คอลัมน์หนังสือ
- คอลัมน์อนุรักษ์ธรรมชาติ
- พยากรณ์ชีวิต
- เกมส์อักษรไขว้
- จดหมายถึง ABBY
- หน้าแทรก Sunday Comics

ภาคผนวก ข.

บทสัมภาษณ์นักเรียนนักข่าว Outlook

การสัมภาษณ์เกี่ยวกับแนวคิดเรื่องความสำคัญและความน่าสนใจ รวมทั้งเกณฑ์การ
คัดเลือกประเด็นต่าง ๆ มานำเสนอในรูปแบบสารคดีในทัศนะของนักเขียนนักข่าว Section
Outlook

สำหรับแนวคิดเกี่ยวกับ ความเด่นและความสำคัญ นักเขียนนักข่าว Outlook ได้ให้
 ความเห็นว่า

... ประเด็นที่จะเขียน ก็ควรจะมี ความน่าสนใจ และ ความสำคัญ อยู่บ้าง แต่สิ่งสำคัญ
 งานเขียนนั้นควรให้ประโยชน์และให้ข้อคิดแก่ผู้อ่านด้วยเช่นกัน (ภัทร ตำนอดุตรา. สัมภาษณ์,
 24 สิงหาคม 2537)

... ความสำคัญ ความน่าสนใจ ก็จัดว่าเป็นองค์ประกอบอย่างหนึ่งในการคัดเลือก
 ประเด็นต่าง ๆ ของพี่ด้วยเช่นกัน (นิลุบล พรพิทักษ์พันธ์. สัมภาษณ์, 25 สิงหาคม 2537)

... ใน Section Outlook นั้น ความสำคัญ หมายถึงเหตุการณ์เรื่องราว และ
 ประเด็นอะไรก็ตามที่มีความสำคัญและมีผลกระทบกระเทือนต่อความเป็นอยู่และชีวิตของบุคคลโดย
 ส่วนใหญ่ นอกจากความสำคัญแล้ว ประเด็นต่าง ๆ เหล่านั้น ยังจะต้องมีความน่าสนใจภายใน
 ตัวของมันด้วย ดังนั้นในการคัดเลือกประเด็นต่าง ๆ นักเขียนนักข่าว จะต้องใช้การพิจารณาใน
 การเลือกเหตุการณ์หรือสภาวะการณ์อันไหนที่จะให้ความรู้และสาระประโยชน์ ซึ่งนอกจากนักเขียน
 นักข่าวจะต้องรู้จักผู้อ่านแล้ว ยังจะต้องมีความรู้พื้นฐานเกี่ยวกับคุณสมบัติข่าว และองค์ประกอบของ
 ข่าวมาประกอบการพิจารณา เพื่อให้ได้เรื่องราวที่จะนำมาเสนอเป็นสารคดีที่มีคุณค่าอย่างแท้จริง
 มาสู่ผู้อ่าน (พงษ์เพชร เมฆลอย. สัมภาษณ์, 21 มิถุนายน 2537)

... ความสำคัญ ความน่าสนใจ ของประเด็นต่าง ๆ ก็จัดว่าเป็นสิ่งสำคัญในการ
 คัดเลือกประเด็น อย่างไรก็ตาม ประเด็นธรรมดา ๆ ก็สามารถหยิบยกมาเขียนเป็นสารคดีได้
 เช่นกัน (ทัศนีย์ เวชพงศา. สัมภาษณ์, 23 สิงหาคม 2537)

... ความสำคัญ ความเด่น ก็มีความสำคัญบ้าง แต่สิ่งที่คิดว่าสำคัญที่สุดนั้นนักเขียน

นักข่าวต้องมีความรับผิดชอบต่อสารคดีที่ตนเขียน (กรรณจรีชา สุขรุ่ง. สัมภาษณ์,
26 สิงหาคม 2537)

... ปกติแล้ว ประเด็นที่นำมาเสนอนั้น หากมีความเด่นและความน่าสนใจเป็น
องค์ประกอบก็อาจจะทำให้สารคดีที่นำเสนอออกไปนั้นเป็นที่ดึงดูดความสนใจของผู้อ่านได้ไม่ยากนัก
ส่วนประเด็นธรรมดา ๆ นั้น ก็จะมาพิจารณาดูว่ามีจุดเด่นที่พอจะดึงออกมานำเสนอได้หรือไม่
(กุลชรี ต้นศุภผล. สัมภาษณ์, 27 มกราคม 2538)

... งานเขียนสารคดีเรื่องประเด็นที่เลือกก็มีความเด่นและความสำคัญประกอบอยู่บ้าง
แต่อยากให้นักเขียนนักข่าวเน้นที่การเขียนให้ผู้อ่านรู้สึกคล้อยตามในสิ่งที่เรานำเสนอ มากกว่าที่จะ
ยึดถึงแต่ความสำคัญและความน่าสนใจเพราะเรื่องที่ธรรมดา ๆ ก็สามารถนำมาเขียนเป็นสารคดี
ได้เช่นกัน (วิภาวี โททกานนท์. วันปฐมนิเทศน์นักเขียนนักข่าวใหม่ Section Outlook,
3 กันยายน 2537)

... ความเด่น ความสำคัญของเหตุการณ์ เรื่องราว และประเด็นต่าง ๆ ก็อาจได้ว่า
สำคัญเพราะอาจจะดึงดูดความสนใจของผู้อ่าน แต่นั่นก็ไม่ได้หมายความว่าประเด็นทั่ว ๆ
ไป (ประเด็นธรรมดา ๆ) ไม่สามารถนำมาเขียนได้ (ศุวรรณ อักษรเรืองชัย. สัมภาษณ์,
24 มกราคม 2538)

... ในความคิดเห็นส่วนตัว ความสำคัญและความเด่น ก็จัดว่าเป็นองค์ประกอบที่
ค่อนข้างจะสำคัญในการที่จะเลือกประเด็นต่าง ๆ มาเขียน อย่างไรก็ตามประเด็นธรรมดาก็
สามารถนำมาเขียนได้ ซึ่งจะต้องหาจุดเด่นก่อน แล้วค่อยเรียบเรียงโดยใช้สำนวน ภาษาที่
สละสลวย เพื่อทำให้ประเด็นต่าง ๆ เหล่านั้น ดูน่าสนใจและน่าอ่านมากขึ้น (ปฎิมา ชาร่า.
สัมภาษณ์, 25 มกราคม 2538)

ส่วนหลักเกณฑ์ของการประเมินและคัดเลือกประเด็นต่าง ๆ เพื่อนำมาเสนอนั้น
นักเขียนนักข่าว Section Outlook ได้ให้ทัศนะว่า

... ประเด็นที่หยิบยกมานำเสนอนั้น ส่วนใหญ่จะเลือกจากความสนใจและความถนัด
 ของตัวเอง ส่วนความสำคัญ ความเด่น ความน่าใจของประเด็นต่าง ๆ เหล่านี้ อาจจะต้องมีบ้าง
 แต่ไม่ใช่ปัจจัยหลัก เพราะประเด็นธรรมดา ๆ ก็สามารถนำมาเสนอได้ หากเราหาจุดเด่นในตัว
 เรื่องต่าง ๆ เหล่านี้ได้ (ปฎิมา ชาร่า. สัมภาษณ์, 25 มกราคม 2537)

... การเลือกประเด็น เหตุการณ์และเรื่องราวต่าง ๆ มานำเสนอแก่ผู้อ่าน นอกจาก
 จะเลือกจากเกณฑ์ความสนใจ และความถนัดของตัวเองเป็นหลักแล้วยังจะต้องมองจากด้านผู้อ่าน
 ด้วย ไม่ใช่จากตัวเราฝ่ายเดียว เพราะไม่เช่นนั้นประเด็นที่นำเสนอออกไป... ประเด็นที่เราคิด
 ว่าน่าสนใจ อาจจะไม่มีการอ่านเลยก็ได้ เพราะสิ่งที่เราคิดว่า เราสนใจ อาจจะไม่ตรงกับความ
 สนใจของผู้อ่านโดยส่วนใหญ่ก็ได้ (พงษ์เพชร เมฆลอย. สัมภาษณ์, 20 มิถุนายน 2537)

... การเลือกประเด็นมานำเสนอนั้น ก็จะประกอบไปด้วย ความเด่น ความแปลก
 ความน่าสนใจ ความสำคัญ ซึ่งสารคดีเรื่องหนึ่งควรจะต้องมีสิ่งเหล่านี้เป็นองค์ประกอบอยู่บ้างไม่
 มากก็น้อย (กุลชรี ต้นศุภผล. สัมภาษณ์, 27 มกราคม 2538)

... เกณฑ์การคัดเลือกประเด็นเพื่อนำมาเสนอนั้น โดยส่วนตัวแล้วจะเลือกจากความ
 สนใจของตัวเองเป็นพื้นฐาน อย่างไรก็ตาม ก็จะต้องคำนึงถึงผู้ที่ได้ประโยชน์จากการอ่านสารคดี
 ของเราด้วย (ผู้อ่าน)... คือคำนึงถึงความรู้สึกของผู้อ่าน และนอกจากจะใช้ความสนใจของ
 ตัวเองเป็นพื้นฐานในการเลือกประเด็นแล้ว ประเด็นต่าง ๆ เหล่านี้จะต้องประกอบไปด้วย
 ความสำคัญ ความน่าสนใจ ความเด่น หรือความแปลก... ก็คล้าย ๆ กับนักเขียนนักข่าวคนอื่น
 (กรรณจริษา สุขรุ่ง. สัมภาษณ์, 26 สิงหาคม 2537)

... การเลือกประเด็นนั้น หลักเกณฑ์ที่ใช้ก็นักเป็นองค์ประกอบพื้นฐานแห่งการประเมิน
 คุณค่าข่าว ซึ่งโดยทั่วไปนั้น เรื่องที่จะนำมาเขียนเป็นสารคดีจะต้องมีความน่าสนใจ มีความเด่น
 ความแปลก เป็นเรื่องที่มีสาระและประโยชน์ควรค่าแก่การนำเสนอแก่ผู้อ่าน นอกจากนี้ ยังควร
 เป็นเรื่องที่ผู้คนสนใจ (Human Interest) เช่น เรื่องที่เกิดขึ้นในชีวิตประจำวันของเรา ก็
 สามารถนำมาเรียบเรียงและนำเสนอเป็นงานเขียนสารคดีได้เช่นกัน (สนิทสุดา เอกชัย.
 สัมภาษณ์, 25 มิถุนายน 2537)

... เกณฑ์ที่ใช้เลือกนั้น จะต้องเป็นเรื่องที่บุคคลทั่วไปสนใจ และต้องไม่เป็นวิชาการมากนัก เพราะคนเราปกติแล้ว อ่านสารคดีก็เพื่อผ่อนคลายความเครียด และที่สำคัญตัวเนื้อเรื่องของประเด็นต่าง ๆ เหล่านั้น จะต้องมีความน่าสนใจในตัวเองด้วยเช่นกัน (วิภาวี โอทกานนท์. สัมภาษณ์, 24 สิงหาคม 2537)

... หลักเกณฑ์ในการคัดเลือกประเด็นที่จะเขียนเป็นสารคดีเพื่อนำเสนอแก่ผู้อ่านนั้น ปกติแล้วจะเลือกตามความสนใจของตัวเองโดยส่วนมาก แต่อย่างไรก็ตามก็ต้องประเมินด้วยว่า เรื่องราว เหตุการณ์ต่าง ๆ เหล่านั้น มีคุณค่าและมีประโยชน์เพียงพอ สมควรแก่การนำเสนอหรือไม่ และที่สำคัญประเด็นต่าง ๆ เหล่านี้จะต้องมีความน่าสนใจในตัวของมันด้วย ส่วนที่จะเป็นประเด็นปัญหาสำคัญหรือไม่นั้นไม่สำคัญเท่าไรนัก (ทัศนีย์ เวชพงศา. สัมภาษณ์, 23 สิงหาคม 2537)

... สำหรับหลักเกณฑ์ในการเลือกเรื่องนั้น ก็จะประกอบไปด้วยองค์ประกอบหลาย ๆ อย่างรวมกัน ไม่ว่าจะเป็น ความตื่นเต้น ความแปลก ความสำคัญ ความเด่น ผลที่ตามมาซึ่งอาจมีผลกระทบต่อตัวผู้อ่านหรือบุคคลในสังคมโดยรวมและที่สำคัญประเด็นต่าง ๆ ที่นำมาเสนอเหล่านั้น จะต้องมีความน่าสนใจในตัวเนื้อหาของมันด้วยเช่นกัน (ภัทร ด้านอุตรา. สัมภาษณ์, 24 สิงหาคม 2537)

... ประเด็นต่าง ๆ ที่หยิบยกมาเขียนเป็นสารคดีนั้น โดยปกติแล้วจะเลือกจากความสนใจของปีก่อน อย่างไรก็ตามประเด็นต่าง ๆ เหล่านี้ ก็ควรจะต้องประกอบไปด้วย ความเด่น ความแปลก ความสำคัญของเหตุการณ์ ความสนใจของผู้อ่าน ความเกี่ยวข้องกับสังคมปัจจุบันและความน่าสนใจของตัวเอง (นิลุบล พรพิทักษ์พันธุ์. สัมภาษณ์, 25 สิงหาคม 2537)

การสัมภาษณ์เกี่ยวกับการมอบหมายงานเขียนสารคดี รวมทั้งความรับผิดชอบอื่น ๆ
ภายใน Outlook Department ซึ่งนักเขียนนักข่าว Section Outlook ได้ให้ทัศนะไว้ว่า

... ในช่วงแรก Junior Writers โดยส่วนใหญ่จะได้รับการมอบหมายจากบรรณาธิการ (คุณสนิทสุดา) เสียเป็นส่วนมาก ซึ่งจะเป็นเฉพาะแต่ในช่วงของการเริ่มทำงานประมาณ 2-3 เดือนแรก เนื่องจากยังไม่มีประสบการณ์ทางด้านการเขียนสารคดี นอกจากนี้ การมองปัญหา หรือประเด็นต่าง ๆ ของนักเขียนนักข่าวใหม่ อาจจะมีมุมมองไม่กว้างพอ รวมทั้งยังไม่ทราบความถนัด และความสนใจของตนเองจนกว่าจะลองเขียนงานไปชั่วระยะเวลาหนึ่ง โดยในระยะแรกพี่ ๆ Senior (นักเขียนนักข่าวรุ่นพี่) จะลองเสนอหัวข้อหรือประเด็นต่าง ๆ มาให้ก่อน โดยจะบอกแนวทางและมุมมองในแง่ต่าง ๆ รวมทั้งบอกให้ทราบถึงแหล่งข้อมูลที่สำคัญ ๆ ที่ควรจะไปศึกษาและค้นคว้า ซึ่งอาจกล่าวได้ว่า แนวคิดหลักส่วนใหญ่จะมาจากพวกพี่ ๆ Senior ต่อมาช่วงหลังพวก Junior (นักข่าวนักเขียนรุ่นน้อง) ก็เริ่มจะมีมุมมองของตนแล้ว ดังนั้นเมื่อมีการประชุมเรา (นักข่าวนักเขียนรุ่นน้อง) ก็สามารถที่จะเสนอหัวข้อ เหตุการณ์ และประเด็นต่าง ๆ ตามที่เราสนใจและอยากเขียนได้บ้าง ซึ่งการคัดเลือกเรื่องที่จะเขียน จะเกิดมาจากการประชุมก่อน หรือบางทีนักเขียนนักข่าวอาจจะไปเสาะหา หรืออาจไปประสบพบเห็นประเด็นเหตุการณ์ที่น่าสนใจ แล้วนำมาเสนอในวันที่มีการประชุมของแผนก (ทัศนีย์ เวชพงศา. สัมภาษณ์, 23 สิงหาคม 2537)

... การมอบหมายงานเขียน รวมทั้งการจัดความรับผิดชอบให้แก่ักเขียนนักข่าว นั้น มีทั้งที่ได้รับมอบหมายมาให้ปฏิบัติ และที่เลือกตามที่เรานัดและสนใจอยากจะทำ (กุลชรี ดันสุภผล. สัมภาษณ์, 25 มกราคม 2538)

... การมอบหมายนั้น ก็มีทั้งได้รับมอบหมายมาให้เขียนและเราเสนอเรื่องราว ประเด็นต่าง ๆ ให้แก่ที่ประชุมแผนก (ภัทร ด่านอุตรา. สัมภาษณ์, 24 สิงหาคม 2537)

... ส่วนใหญ่แล้ว การมอบหมายงานเขียนหรือความรับผิดชอบนั้นก็จัดแบ่งตามความถนัดและความสนใจของนักเขียนนักข่าวเป็นพื้นฐาน ก็มีบ้างที่ได้รับมอบหมายเรื่องที่ไม่ถนัดมา แต่ก็ต้องทำให้ได้ ซึ่งอาจจะต้องถามผู้รู้ หรือศึกษาค้นคว้าจากแหล่งต่าง ๆ เอง (ปฎิมา ชาร่า.

สัมภาษณ์, 25 มกราคม 2538)

... การจัดความผิดชอบ และมอบหมายงานเขียนนั้น จัดแบ่งตามความถนัดและความสามารถ รวมทั้งความสนใจของนักเขียนนักข่าว ในกรณีที่เป็นักเขียนนักข่าวรุ่นพี่ ส่วนสำหรับนักเขียนนักข่าวรุ่นน้อง ก็อาจจะยังมีการถูกมอบหมายให้บ้างเป็นธรรมดา เนื่องจากประสบการณ์ทางด้านกาเขียนยังมีน้อย จึงเป็สิ่งจำเป็นที่พี่ ๆ นักเขียน จะต้องมีการแนะแนวทาง สร้างมุมมอง รวมทั้งวิธีการแก้ปัญหาในรูปแบบต่าง ๆ ในระหว่างการทำงานให้แก่ักเขียนนักข่าวรุ่นน้องบ้าง (นิลบุต พรพิทักษ์พันธ์. สัมภาษณ์, 25 สิงหาคม 2537)

... การมอบหมายงานเขียน และความรับผิดชอบส่วนใหญ่ ก็จะจัดตามความถนัดและความสนใจ แต่นั่นก็ไม่ได้หมายความว่า เรื่องที่ไม่ถนัดจะไม่ทำ ซึ่งถ้าหากเป็นเรื่องที่เราไม่ถนัดก็อาจจะใช้วิธีการสอบถามผู้รู้ในเรื่องที่เราไม่ถนัดเหล่านั้น ซึ่งตามความคิดเห็นของพี่แล้วนักเขียนควรจะพยายามให้ได้ทุกอย่าง... คือหมายถึงเขียนให้ได้หลาย ๆ สไตล์ (ศุวรรณ อธิวเรืองชัย. สัมภาษณ์, 24 มกราคม 2538)

... ปกติแล้ว การมอบหมายงานเขียนให้แก่ักเขียนนักข่าวนั้น ก็จะจัดแบ่งตามความถนัด และความสนใจของนักเขียนนักข่าว แต่บางครั้งเราก็อาจจะต้องทำในสิ่งที่เราไม่ถนัดก็ได้ ซึ่งในกรณีนี้เราจะต้องทำการบ้านให้มากขึ้นเป็นเท่าตัวเลย (ทำงานหนักขึ้น) (พงษ์เพชร เมฆลอย. สัมภาษณ์, 20 มิถุนายน 2537)

... โดยปกติ ก่อนที่จะมอบหมายงานให้แก่ักเขียนนักข่าวนั้น จะต้องมีการประชุมก่อนเสมอ ซึ่งการมอบหมายงานนั้น ก็มีทั้งที่มอบหมายไปให้นักเขียนนักข่าวไปทำ และมีทั้งที่นักเขียนนักข่าวนำสิ่งที่ตนเองสนใจมาเสนอเองบ้าง แต่อย่างไรก็ตามการที่มอบหมายงานไปให้นักเขียนนักข่าวทำนั้น หากมีปัญหา หรือไม่อยากทำก็สามารถพูดคุยกันได้ โดยอาจจะพูดเป็นการส่วนตัวกับพี่ก็ได้ เพราะถ้าหากเรามอบหมายงานไปให้ แล้วนักเขียนนักข่าวเกิดเบื่อ ไม่อยากทำ ก็อาจจะส่งผลกระทบต่องานเขียนของพวกเขาได้ ซึ่งการกำหนดหรือวางตัวนักเขียนนักข่าวให้เหมาะสมกับประเด็นหรือเรื่องราวต่าง ๆ ที่พวกเขาจะเขียนนั้น เนื่องจากในทางปฏิบัตินั้น ความรู้ความสามารถของนักเขียนนักข่าวแต่ละคนนั้นแตกต่างกัน นอกจากนี้พวกเขาแต่ละคนก็ยังมี ความถนัดและ

มุมมองในการกำหนดในเรื่องที่จะทำการเขียนแตกต่างกัน เช่น นักเขียนนักข่าวบางคนจะมีความถนัดในเรื่องของสิ่งแวดล้อม เรื่องประเภท Human Interest หรือมีความสนใจในเรื่องบางเรื่องเช่นเรื่องของปฏิมากรรม หัตถกรรม (สนิทสุดา เอกชัย. สัมภาษณ์, 25 มิถุนายน 2537)

...สำหรับปริมาณงานเขียนสารคดีที่นักเขียนนักข่าว Outlook ได้รับมอบหมายนั้นในแต่ละวันที่มีการประชุม จะมีการคัดเลือกประเด็นที่จะนำมาเขียนเป็นประเด็น 4-5 ประเด็นซึ่งเท่ากับว่าได้ประเด็นมาแล้ว 4-5 วัน อย่างไรก็ตาม สารคดีของ Section Outlook จะต้องนำเสนอทั้งหมด 6 วัน คือ วันจันทร์-วันเสาร์ ดังนั้น 1-2 ประเด็นที่เหลือนั้น ก็จะนำ Long-Term Period Feature มาลง ก็จะได้ครบทั้ง 6 เรื่องต่อสัปดาห์ (โดยปกติสารคดีของ Section Outlook นั้น หากแบ่งประเภทโดยใช้ความยาก-ง่ายของเนื้อหาของสารคดีเป็นตัวกำหนดแล้วจะได้ 2 ประเภท คือ Short-Term Period Feature (สารคดีที่ใช้ระยะเวลาเขียนประมาณ 2-3 วัน) และ Long-Term Period Feature (สารคดีที่ใช้ระยะเวลาเขียนประมาณ 2-3 อาทิตย์) ซึ่งผู้ที่ประเมินความยากง่ายของเนื้อหาสารคดีนั้นก็คือบรรณาธิการ... ส่วนกรณีของการได้รับมอบหมายงานและหน้าที่ความรับผิดชอบในแต่ละวันหรือในแต่ละอาทิตย์นั้นพบว่าทุกคนได้รับมอบหมายงานและความรับผิดชอบโดยเฉลี่ยแล้วเท่าเทียมกัน กล่าวคือ สำหรับสารคดีหน้า 1 (Front Page Feature) ที่มีเนื้อหาไม่ค่อขยาก อัตราส่วนของความรับผิดชอบก็จะเป็น 1 เรื่องต่อ 2 อาทิตย์ ส่วนสารคดีหน้า 1 ที่มีเนื้อหาค่อนข้างยาก ก็จะใช้เวลาประมาณ 3 อาทิตย์ต่อ 1 เรื่อง สำหรับสารคดีหน้าหลัง (Back Page Feature) อัตราส่วนความรับผิดชอบจะเป็น สารคดี 1 เรื่องต่อ 1 อาทิตย์ (ปฏิมา ชาร่า. สัมภาษณ์, 25 มกราคม 2538)

การสัมภาษณ์นักเขียนนักข่าว Section Outlook เกี่ยวกับแหล่งข้อมูลและการรวบรวมข้อมูลเพื่อนำมาประกอบการเขียนสารคดี ซึ่งนักเขียนนักข่าวได้ให้ทัศนะเกี่ยวกับเรื่องนี้ว่า

... ในส่วนของการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลนั้น หากว่าเราจะทำเรื่องเกี่ยวกับคนตรีคลาสสิก ไม่ว่าจะเป็นพี่ ๆ Senior หรือเพื่อนนักเขียนนักข่าวด้วยกัน ถ้าหากใครทราบว่ามีแหล่งข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับเรื่องนี้ที่ไหน หรือควรถาจากแหล่งใด รวมทั้งไม่ว่าจะเป็นแหล่งข้อมูลที่เป็นข้อมูลข่าวสาร หรือข้อมูลที่เป็นตัวบุคคล และข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับสถานที่ที่จะพากันแนะนำให้ นอกจากนี้การเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลก็ต้องจะแยกว่าเป็นข้อมูลเก่าหรือข้อมูลใหม่ถ้าเป็นสารคดีหรือข้อมูลที่เคยมีผู้เขียนมาแล้ว หรือเป็นข่าวเก่า ข้อมูลส่วนนี้ก็อาจจะยังค้นคว้าได้บ้างที่ห้องสมุดของเรา (ห้องสมุดของบางกอกโพสต์) ส่วนถ้าเป็นเรื่องใหม่ที่ยังไม่เคยมีใครเขียนมาก่อน ก็จะออกไปทำข่าวหรือแสวงหาข้อมูลตามเราหามาได้บ้าง หรือหาตามที่พี่ ๆ เพื่อน ๆ นักเขียนนักข่าว หรือผู้รู้แนะนำมาบ้าง (ทัศนีย์ เวชพงศา. สัมภาษณ์, 23 สิงหาคม 2537)

... สำหรับแหล่งข้อมูลนั้น สามารถรวบรวมได้จากหลาย ๆ แหล่ง ไม่ว่าจะเป็นห้องสมุดของโพสต์ฯ เอง หรือห้องสมุดตามสถาบันการศึกษาต่าง ๆ นอกจากนี้ข้อมูลจากสื่อต่าง ๆ ก็มีประโยชน์ด้วยเช่นกัน ทั้งสื่อสิ่งพิมพ์ สื่อวิทยุ และสื่อโทรทัศน์รวมทั้งจากแฟ้มเอกสารของ Outlook (File ข้อมูลเก่า ๆ) ด้วยเช่นกัน (พงษ์เพชร เมฆลอย. สัมภาษณ์, 20 มิถุนายน 2537)

... ข้อมูลนั้นก็ได้จากสิ่งที่อยู่รอบ ๆ ตัวเรา เช่น เหตุการณ์ที่เกิดขึ้นในชีวิตประจำวัน พวกสื่อต่าง ๆ ไม่ว่าจะเป็นสื่อสิ่งพิมพ์ วิทยุ โทรทัศน์ได้หมดค่ะ และที่สำคัญข้อมูลที่ได้จากการประชุมกับนักข่าวนักเขียนด้วยกัน (ปวีณา ธาว่า. สัมภาษณ์, 25 มกราคม 2538)

... การเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลนั้น ก็ได้จากหลาย ๆ แหล่งรวมกัน อย่างเช่นตามองค์กรต่าง ๆ สื่อชนิดต่าง ๆ นอกจากนี้การเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลยังขึ้นอยู่กับเนื้อเรื่องหรือประเด็นที่เราจะเขียน ซึ่งถ้าเราเขียนเกี่ยวกับประเด็นนี้ เราก็จะรู้เองว่าเราจะต้องออกไปหาแหล่งข้อมูลหรือค้นคว้าข้อมูล และติดต่อกับบุคคลใด องค์กรใด (ภัทร ด้านอุตรา. สัมภาษณ์, 24 สิงหาคม 2537)

... ข้อมูลที่ใช้มาประกอบเขียนนั้น ก็ได้จากแหล่งข้อมูลหลาย ๆ แหล่งอย่างเช่น พวกหนังสือ นิตยสาร สื่อวิทยุโทรทัศน์ การพูดคุยกับบุคคลต่าง ๆ (ศุวรรณา อ้าวเรื่องซัส. สัมภาษณ์, 24 มกราคม 2538)

... ปกติข้อมูลต่าง ๆ นั้น พี่ก็จะได้จากพวกหนังสือต่าง ๆ ที่อ่านผ่านตา สื่อทุกสื่อ ไม่ว่าจะเป็นสื่อวิทยุ สื่อโทรทัศน์ นอกจากนี้ การพูดคุย ปรัชญาหรือระหว่างบรรดานักเขียน นักข่าว ไม่ว่าจะเป็นในเวลาว่าง คือในช่วงการประชุม หรือหลังเลิกงาน ก็อาจจะได้ข้อมูลบางส่วนที่เป็นประโยชน์ซึ่งสามารถนำไปประกอบการเขียนสารคดีของเราได้ด้วยเช่นกัน (นิลกุล พรพิทักษ์พันธ์. สัมภาษณ์, 25 สิงหาคม 2537)

... แหล่งข้อมูลที่ใช้ในการเขียนสารคดีนั้น โดยปกติก็จะได้จากสื่อโทรทัศน์วิทยุ และสื่อสิ่งพิมพ์ต่าง ๆ อย่างเช่น หนังสือทั่ว ๆ ไป นิตยสารต่าง ๆ เช่น City Life สารคดี หรือคอลัมน์อย่าง Focus ซึ่งจะอ่านคอลัมน์เพียงเพื่ออยากทราบว่าช่วงนี้ Focus กำลังพูดถึงอะไร เหตุการณ์ใด และประเด็นใดอยู่ ซึ่งแหล่งข้อมูลนี้สามารถนำมาประกอบเป็นแนวคิดเพื่อใช้เขียนได้ด้วยเช่นกัน และนอกจากนี้เหตุการณ์หรือเรื่องราวต่าง ๆ ที่เกิดขึ้นในชีวิตประจำวัน หรือสิ่งที่อยู่รอบ ๆ ตัวเราก็สามารถนำมาประกอบการเขียนได้เช่นกัน ยิ่งถ้าเรานำเสนอเรื่องราวในชีวิตประจำวันเท่าไร ก็ยิ่งจะทำให้รู้สึกว่าเป็นเรื่องใกล้ตัวมากขึ้นเท่านั้น และจะเป็นเรื่องที่ Sensational มาก ดังนั้นเราจะต้องเขียนไม่ทำให้ผู้อ่านรู้สึกว่าเราสอดแทรกความคิดของเราลงไปนิตยสารที่เราเขียน ควรจะทำให้ผู้อ่านรู้สึกสะเทือนอารมณ์ หรือประทับใจจากการอ่านเอง อย่างเช่น หากเราจะเขียนเกี่ยวกับเรื่องจำนวนป่าไม้ที่นับวันจะลดน้อยทุกวัน เราจะไม่นำเสนอโดยการเขียนประนามผู้ที่ตัดต้นไม้ แต่จะเปรียบเทียบให้เห็นถึงจำนวนหรือสถิติของต้นไม้อดีตกับปัจจุบัน ว่ามีจำนวนแตกต่างกันมากน้อยเพียงใด เหลือเท่าไร แล้วให้ผู้อ่านตัดสินใจด้วยตัวเองจากข้อมูลที่น่าเสนอออกมา (กรรณจรีชา สุขรูง. สัมภาษณ์, 26 สิงหาคม 2537)

... สิ่งสำคัญ นักเขียนนักข่าวจะต้องอ่านหนังสือมาก ๆ แล้วนำสิ่งที่ได้จากการอ่านนั้น มาปรึกษาพูดคุยกัน ซึ่งการพูดคุยกันมาก ๆ ถือว่าเป็นแหล่งข้อมูลที่สำคัญอย่างหนึ่งของนักเขียนนักข่าวด้วยเช่น (สนิทสุดา เอกชัย. ปฐมนิเทศนักเขียนนักข่าวใหม่ Section Outlook, 3 กันยายน 2537)

...ควรอ่านให้มาก ๆ เพื่อเป็นการสะสมหรือเป็นการสร้างคำศัพท์และสำนวนใหม่ ๆ เพื่อนำมาใช้ประกอบการเขียนได้บ้าง แต่อย่างไรก็ตาม การที่เราจะนำพวกคำศัพท์ สำนวนหรือข้อมูลต่าง ๆ จากที่เราอ่าน จะต้องระมัดระวังให้มากเพราะอาจนำไปใช้แล้วเกิดผิดความหมาย นอกจากนี้ แหล่งข้อมูลจากแผ่นพับที่แจกจ่ายโดยทั่วไปก็อาจจะนำมาใช้ประกอบการเขียนสารคดีของเราด้วยก็ได้ (วิภาวี โอทกานนท์. วันปฐมนิเทศน์กเขียนนักข่าวใหม่ Section Outlook, 3 กันยายน 2537)

... นอกจากลีลา สำนวนต่าง ๆ และการใช้คำศัพท์ต่าง ๆ ซึ่งเป็นคุณสมบัติเฉพาะบุคคล รวมทั้งคุณสมบัติสำคัญของการเป็นผู้สื่อข่าว อาทิ ความตื่นตัว การสนใจ ในเหตุการณ์ปัจจุบันหรือสิ่งรอบตัว การมีความคิดสร้างสรรค์ และความสนใจในด้านการอ่านอย่างสม่ำเสมอ รวมทั้งความช่างสังเกต สิ่งต่าง ๆ เหล่านี้อาจจะนำไปสู่การได้แนวความคิดใหม่ ๆ เพื่อนำมาพัฒนาและเรียบเรียงเป็นเรื่องราวในแง่มุมที่น่าสนใจน่าติดตาม มีคุณค่า เกิดเป็นสารคดีเรื่องใหม่ที่แปลกและน่าสนใจอีกแนวหนึ่งได้เช่นกัน (พงษ์เพชร เมฆลอย. สัมภาษณ์, 3 กันยายน 2537)

การสัมภาษณ์นักเขียนนักข่าว Section Outlook เกี่ยวกับลักษณะเนื้อหาสารคดี
ของ Outlook ซึ่งนักเขียนนักข่าวได้ให้ทัศนะดังต่อไปนี้

... เนื้อเรื่องของสารคดีที่จะเขียนนั้น จะต้องทำให้น่าสนใจ ประทับใจโดยจะไม่เน้น
 ความเร็ว ควรจะเน้นว่าสารคดีที่เราเขียนนั้น จะอยู่ในความทรงจำของผู้อ่านได้อย่างไร คือจะ
 ต้องประทับใจผู้อ่าน นอกจากนี้ในปัจจุบันจะพบว่ามีงานเขียนประเภทสารคดีตีพิมพ์อยู่มากมาย ซึ่ง
 ส่วนใหญ่งานเหล่านั้นจะเน้นไปที่เรื่องหนัก ๆ ใหญ่ ๆ ดังนั้น Outlook ควรจะเน้นไปที่ความ
 สนใจของบุคคลทั่วไป (Human Interest) และควรจะมีการแปลงจากเรื่องใหญ่ ๆ หนัก ๆ
 ให้เป็นเรื่องง่ายต่อการอ่าน รวมทั้งเป็นเรื่องที่เราพบเห็นในชีวิตประจำวันของเราด้วย
 (สนิทสุตา เอกชัย. วันปฐมนิเทศนักเขียนนักข่าวใหม่ Section Outlook, 3 กันยายน 2537)

... เนื้อเรื่องของสารคดีที่น่าอ่านนั้นจะต้องกระชับ ชัดเจนและสมบูรณ์ให้มากที่สุดเท่า
 ที่จะทำให้ได้ (ปฎิมา ชาร์ว. สัมภาษณ์, 25 มกราคม 2538)

... การนำเสนองานเขียนนั้น ให้นักถึงว่าคนที่อ่านงานสารคดีของเรานั้นเป็นบุคคล
 ธรรมดาทั่วไป ซึ่งไม่ควรที่จะเขียนเป็นงานวิชาการมากเกินไปเพราะโดยปกติ คนทั่วไปนั้นมัก
 จะให้ความสนใจในเรื่องของคนหรือเรื่องที่ใกล้ตัวอย่างเช่น การเกิดไฟไหม้ที่ชุมชนคลองเตย
 การเขียนก็ควรจะเน้นไปจับประเด็นที่คนที่ประสบภัย... นอกจากนี้ การเขียนสารคดีควรจะเขียน
 แบบ "Writing By Ears" (การเขียนให้ไพเราะจับใจ) ทำเนื้อเรื่องให้ไหลไปเรื่อย ๆ รวม
 ทั้งพยายามหลีกเลี่ยงพวกคำศัพท์ยาก ๆ หรุ ๆ ควรจะใช้คำศัพท์หรือสำนวนที่ง่าย ๆ สั้น ๆ และ
 ควรจะใช้ Bullet Sentences เพื่อทำให้เกิดความสนใจจากผู้อ่านซึ่งส่วนที่จะใช้ประโยค
 พวกนี้ก็จะเป็นส่วนที่เป็นบทนำ เพื่อดึงดูดผู้อ่านให้ติดตามส่วนที่เหลือสารคดีที่เขียน
 (วิภาวี โธทกานนท์. วันปฐมนิเทศนักเขียนนักข่าวใหม่ Section Outlook, 3 กันยายน 2537)

... เนื้อหาของสารคดี ควรจะมีข้อเท็จจริง กระชับ เรียบง่าย และมีสีสัน
 (ภัทร ด่านอุตรา. สัมภาษณ์, 26 สิงหาคม 2537)

... การนำเสนองานเขียนสารคดีนั้น จะต้องมองให้ลึกถึงลักษณะของผู้อ่านเนื้อหาที่นำเสนอไม่ควรจะเป็นวิชาการมากนัก เพราะวัตถุประสงค์หลักของ Section Outlook นั้น ก็เพื่อนำเสนอข้อมูลข่าวสาร และเพื่อความบันเทิงแก่ผู้อ่านเท่านั้น (กรรณจรีธา สุขรุ่ง. สัมภาษณ์, 26 สิงหาคม 2537)

... เนื้อหาจะต้องชัดเจน และมีความสมบูรณ์ และควรจะเรียบง่าย เพื่อสามารถเข้าถึงผู้อ่านให้มากที่สุด (นิลกุล พรพิทักษ์พันธ์. สัมภาษณ์, 25 สิงหาคม 2537)

... เนื้อหาของสารคดีที่เขียนจะต้องให้ความรู้ทางอารมณ์ซึ่งจะต้องใช้ภาษาที่สามารถสัมผัสความรู้สึกของผู้อ่านได้ทันที นอกจากนี้ เนื้อหาควรจะกระชับชัดเจน สมบูรณ์ และถูกต้อง (ศุภรณา อีศวเรืองชัย. สัมภาษณ์, 25 มกราคม 2538)

... การนำเสนอสารคดีนั้น จะต้องนำเสนอเรื่องที่ไม่หนักจนเกินไปเพราะผู้อ่านของเรา ก็เพื่อต้องการความบันเทิงและคลายความเครียด (ทัศนีย์ เวชพงศา. สัมภาษณ์, 25 สิงหาคม 2537)

... สารคดีที่น่าอ่านนั้น จะต้องมีเนื้อหาที่ชัดเจน เรียบง่าย และประกอบไปด้วยข้อมูลที่เป็นข้อเท็จจริงซึ่งผู้อ่านสามารถเชื่อถือได้ (กุลชรี ดันศุภผล. สัมภาษณ์, 27 มกราคม 2538)

การสัมภาษณ์เกี่ยวกับการนำเสนอประเด็นธรรมดา และประเด็นข้อโต้แย้งของนักเขียน
นักข่าว Section Outlook ซึ่งนักเขียนนักข่าวได้ให้ทัศนะว่า

... การวิเคราะห์ประเด็นทั่ว ๆ ไป ปกติก็จะนำเสนอตามกระแส หรือตามความคิด
ของคนทั่วไป เพื่อเป็นการลบลอคติของนักเขียนนักข่าวเอง ส่วนการนำเสนอประเด็นของข้อโต้แย้ง
นั้น จะทำโดยนำเอาความคิดหรือข้อมูลของทั้ง 2 ฝ่ายมานำเสนอ แล้วให้ผู้อ่านพิจารณาเองว่า
ข้อมูลของฝ่ายใดน่าเชื่อถือมากกว่ากัน (ทัศนีย์ เวชพงศา. สัมภาษณ์, 23 สิงหาคม 2537)

... เมื่อมีประเด็นของข้อโต้แย้ง โดยส่วนใหญ่แล้วก็จะนำข้อมูลจากการสัมภาษณ์ของ
ทั้ง 2 ฝ่ายมานำเสนอ แล้วให้ผู้อ่านพิจารณาเองว่าข้อมูลฝ่ายใดมีน้ำหนักน่าเชื่อถือมากกว่ากัน
ส่วนถ้าเป็นประเด็นธรรมดา ๆ ก็นำเสนอตามกระแสไป (นิลกุล พรพิทักษ์พันธุ์. สัมภาษณ์,
25 สิงหาคม 2537)

... การนำเสนอประเด็นข้อโต้แย้งนั้น ตามหลักแล้วจะต้องนำข้อมูลของทั้ง 2 ฝ่าย
มานำเสนอ ทั้งเพื่อให้ความยุติธรรมแก่ผู้ถูกกล่าวหาและผู้กล่าวหา ส่วนประเด็นธรรมดา ๆ ก็
เสนอตามกระแสไป (กุลชรี ต้นศุภผล. สัมภาษณ์, 24 มกราคม 2538)

... ถ้านำเสนอประเด็นธรรมดาทั่วไป ก็ไม่ค่อยจะมีปัญหาเท่าไรนักก็พยายามเสนอ
ตามกระแส ส่วนประเด็นของข้อโต้แย้งนั้นก็ต้องระวังมากหน่อย ซึ่งจะต้องไม่พยายามสอดแทรก
ความคิดของเราลงไป ก็นำความคิดของบุคคลทั้ง 2 ฝ่ายมานำเสนอ แล้วให้ผู้อ่านพิจารณาเอา
เองว่าเหตุผลใดน่าเชื่อถือ (ปฏิมา ชาร่า. สัมภาษณ์, 25 มกราคม 2538)

... สำหรับประเด็นของข้อโต้แย้งนั้น ก็จะใช้ข้อมูลจากการสัมภาษณ์ทั้งฝ่ายที่เห็นด้วย
และไม่เห็นด้วยกับประเด็นต่าง ๆ เหล่านั้นมานำเสนอให้แก่ผู้อ่าน แล้วให้ผู้อ่านพิจารณาจากข้อมูล
ที่เราเสนอเอง (กรรณจริษา สุขรุ่ง. สัมภาษณ์, 26 สิงหาคม 2537)

... การลดความมีอคติที่อาจจะเกิดขึ้นแก่นักเขียนนักข่าว เวลานำเสนอประเด็นแบบ
Controversial Issue นั้น นักเขียนนักข่าวจะต้องพยายามไม่เอาตัวเข้าไปเกี่ยวข้อง ไม่ว่า

เป็นการให้ความคิดของตัวเอง หรือตกแต่ง ตัดทอนเพิ่มข้อความต่าง ๆ ที่สัมพันธ์มาซึ่งวิธีที่ดีที่สุดในการจะนำเสนอประเด็นเหล่านั้นนั้นนักเขียนนักข่าวจะต้องนำเสนอข้อมูลของทั้ง 2 ฝ่ายทั้งที่เห็นด้วย และไม่เห็นด้วยกับประเด็นที่เราได้ถามไป แล้วทิ้งให้ผู้อ่านพิจารณาเองว่าความคิดหรือเหตุผลของฝ่ายใดมีเหตุผลน่าเชื่อถือมากกว่ากัน (สนิทสุดา เอกชัย. วิกาวิ โลกทรรศน์. วันปฐมนิเทศนักเขียนนักข่าวใหม่ Section Outlook, 3 กันยายน 2537)

... วิธีที่ดีที่สุดสำหรับการนำเสนอประเด็นโต้แย้งนั้น คือเราจะต้องไม่สอดแทรกความคิดของเราลงไป นำเสนอแต่ความคิดของฝ่ายที่เห็นด้วยกับฝ่ายที่ไม่เห็นด้วยกับประเด็นต่าง ๆ เหล่านั้น (ภัทร ดำนอตตรา. สัมภาษณ์, 25 สิงหาคม 2537)

... การนำเสนอประเด็นข้อโต้แย้งที่ไม่ให้เกิดปัญหาตามมาก็คือการเขียนด้วยความ Balance คือนำเสนอทั้งข้อกล่าวหาและผู้กล่าวหา (สุวรรณา อักษรเรืองชัย. สัมภาษณ์, 25 มกราคม 2538)

... สำหรับการนำเสนอประเด็นของข้อโต้แย้งนั้นจะนำแง่คิดจากบุคคลทั้งสองฝ่ายมาเสนอ โดยจะไม่เสนอหรือสอดแทรกความคิดเห็นของตนเองเกี่ยวกับบุคคลทั้ง 2 ฝ่ายนี้ และทิ้งให้ผู้อ่านคิดและพิจารณาจากข้อมูลจากทั้ง 2 ฝ่ายนี้เองซึ่งข้อมูลที่นำมาเสนอนั้น สามารถอ้างอิงแหล่งข้อมูลได้ และการนำเสนอสารคดีของ Outlook นั้น ไม่มีจุดประสงค์ที่จะโน้มน้าวความคิดเห็นพฤติกรรมของผู้อ่านแต่จะพยายามให้ความกระจ่างในสิ่งที่ผู้อ่านยังคลุมเครือหรือยังไม่ทราบกันส่วนประเด็นทั่ว ๆ ไป อย่างเช่นการเขียนถึงพิธีกรรมสำคัญ ๆ พวกความบันเทิงต่าง ๆ หรือสิ่งแวดล้อมต่าง ๆ เหล่านั้น ก็จะนำมาโดยละเอียดรายละเอียดยที่นำเสนอในงานเขียน ซึ่งรายละเอียดบรรยากาศของข้อเท็จจริงเหล่านี้ อาจกระทบกับอารมณ์ ความรู้สึกของผู้อ่าน และทำให้ผู้อ่านติดตามประเด็นที่นำเสนอต่าง ๆ เหล่านั้นอย่างใกล้ชิด (พงษ์เพชร เมฆลอย. สัมภาษณ์, 21 มิถุนายน 2537)

การสัมภาษณ์นักเขียนนักข่าว Section Outlook เกี่ยวกับปัญหาและข้อจำกัดในการเขียนสารคดี รวมทั้งทัศนะของนักเขียนนักข่าวเกี่ยวกับ "ผู้อ่าน"

... ปัญหาที่พบในการเขียนสารคดีของตนเองนั้น ก็คือบางครั้งเมื่อมีการมอบหมายงานเขียนให้ แต่พอเราไม่มีความรู้เกี่ยวกับเรื่องที่เราเขียนเพียงพอ ซึ่งวิธีแก้ปัญหานี้โดยส่วนตัวจะอาศัยทางลัดเอา คือ อาศัยการถามข้อมูลบางส่วนจากพี่ ๆ Senior ซึ่งส่วนมากก็จะเป็นการบอกข้อมูลที่สำคัญ ๆ ทั่วไปค้นคว้า และศึกษา เพราะเราไม่มีการหวงข้อมูลกันอยู่แล้ว และถ้าหากยังมีปัญหาอีก ก็ไปปรึกษาพี่ ๆ Senoir อีก นอกจากนี้ ปัญหาเกี่ยวกับระยะเวลาในการเขียนสารคดีไม่เพียงพอ เพราะบางครั้งเรื่องบางเรื่องหรือประเด็นบางประเด็นจะต้องรีบเร่งในการหาข้อมูล เพื่อให้เสร็จทันเวลากับข่าวที่เด่นและน่าสนใจ หรือมีผลกระทบมาก ๆ กับผู้อ่าน หรือสังคมโดยรวม เพื่อให้รับหรือทันกับเหตุการณ์ เพื่อเป็นการช่วยโดยการให้ความกระจ่างในบางสิ่งบางอย่างที่ยังเคลือบแคลงอยู่ ซึ่งอาจจะเป็นการช่วยให้ผู้อ่านอ่านแล้วเข้าใจเกี่ยวกับประเด็นต่าง ๆ ได้ดีขึ้น จึงจำเป็นอย่างยิ่งที่ผู้เขียนจะต้องรีบเร่งหาข้อมูล รวบรวมข้อเท็จจริงที่เกิดขึ้นทั้งหมดเท่าที่จะทำได้เพื่อนำมาเสนอแก่ผู้อ่านต่อไป

... ส่วนปัญหากับแหล่งข่าว ก็เป็นปัญหาที่สำคัญปัญหาหนึ่งเช่นกัน ซึ่งส่วนใหญ่ก็จะเป็นในแง่ที่ว่าไม่ได้รับความสะดวกจากแหล่งข้อมูลมากเท่าที่ควร ซึ่งจะมีผลให้ข้อมูลที่จะนำมาเขียนไม่เพียงพอ ซึ่งส่วนใหญ่ก็จะเป็นในแง่ที่ว่าไม่ได้รับความสะดวกจากบุคคลที่จะให้สัมภาษณ์ อาจจะไม่ให้สัมภาษณ์บ้าง หรือเวลาสัมภาษณ์ไม่暇ตอบคำถาม หรือตอบไม่ละเอียดเท่าที่ควร ซึ่งบางครั้งจากที่เคยตั้งเป้าหมายว่าจะเป็นการเขียนสารคดีเกี่ยวกับเรื่องนี้ อาจจะต้องล้มเลิกหรือเปลี่ยนเป้าหมายในการนำเสนอบ้างในบางกรณี ซึ่งสืบเนื่องมาจากการสัมภาษณ์คือข้อมูลจากการสัมภาษณ์ที่ได้มานั้น ไม่ตรงกับเป้าหมายที่ตั้งเอาไว้ (ทัศนีย์ เวชพงศา. สัมภาษณ์, 23 สิงหาคม 2537)

... สำหรับปัญหาที่มีผลกระทบต่อ การเขียนสารคดี สำหรับตัวผมนั้นก็ มี อย่างเช่น ปัญหาจากแหล่งข่าว คือบางครั้งไม่ได้รับความร่วมมือจากแหล่งข่าวบางแหล่งมากเท่าที่ควร ดังนั้นข้อมูลที่ได้มานั้นจึงไม่เพียงพอที่จะนำมาประกอบการเขียนสารคดี นอกจากนี้ระบบการทำงานของเจ้าหน้าที่รัฐ ระบบข้าราชการของเรา มีการจัดระเบียบค่อนข้างที่จะซับซ้อน กว่าที่จะสามารถเข้าไปติดต่อขอข้อมูล หรือขอความร่วมมือในบางเรื่องก็ต้องผ่านขั้นตอนหลายชั้นตอน อีกกรณีหนึ่ง

ของระบบราชการ คือในส่วนข้อมูลของราชการนั้น ในเรื่องที่เป็นความรับผิดชอบของหน่วยราชการในการเก็บข้อมูล เช่น สถิติทางประชากร ปริมาณพื้นที่ป่า สภาพน้ำต่าง ๆ เหล่านี้ ส่วนมากจะค่อนข้างหายาก มักมีความล่าช้า และล่าหลังต่อสถานการณ์มาก ข้อมูลที่ออกมาจึงอาจจะมี ความคลาดเคลื่อน หรือเปิดเผยข้อมูลแต่เพียงบางส่วนทำให้ข้อมูลที่ได้นั้นอาจจะบิดเบือนไม่สมบูรณ์ และไม่ตรงกับสภาพปัจจุบันที่ดำเนินอยู่ ความน่าเชื่อถือของข้อมูลก็อาจลดน้อยลงไปด้วย นอกจากนี้ ในส่วนข้อมูลของนักวิชาการต่าง ๆ ก็มักเป็นข้อมูลทางวิชาการที่สลับซับซ้อน บางครั้งก็มีการใช้ ศัพท์เทคนิคเฉพาะซึ่งยากเกินกว่าจะเข้าใจ ซึ่งก็จะแก้ไขโดยการขอคำอธิบายจากแหล่งข่าวหรือ จากนักวิชาการที่ให้ข้อมูล ให้คำจำกัดความด้วยคำพูดธรรมดา สามารถเข้าใจง่าย ๆ และปัญหา สุดท้ายที่พบก็คือ ปัญหาการจราจร ซึ่งนับว่าเป็นปัญหาที่สำคัญประการหนึ่งเช่นเดียวกับปัญหาอื่น ๆ (ภัทร ด่านอุตรา. สัมภาษณ์, 24 สิงหาคม 2537)

... ปัญหาที่เกิดขึ้นนั้นโดยส่วนตัวแล้ว อาจจะแบ่งเป็นปัญหาที่เกิดขึ้นในระหว่างการ เขียนและการดำเนินเรื่อง กล่าวคือปัญหาระหว่างการเขียนนั้นจะเกี่ยวกับวิธีการที่จะเขียนให้เข้าใจ เรื่องได้ดีทำได้อย่างไร เพราะสารคดีแต่ละเรื่องนั้นไม่เหมือนกัน ดังนั้นรูปแบบของการเขียน เริ่มต้นเพื่อจะนำเอาเรื่องนั้นย่อมาแตกต่างกัน ส่วนช่วงการดำเนินเรื่องสารคดี ปัญหาจะอยู่ที่ว่าทำ อย่างไรผู้อ่านจะไม่สับสนกับการดำเนินเรื่องของเรา สำหรับปัญหาที่อาจเกิดกับแหล่งข้อมูลนั้นก็ มีบ้าง ส่วนใหญ่จะเป็นประเด็นของการสัมภาษณ์แนวความคิดจากบุคคลต่าง ๆ เกี่ยวกับประเด็น ต่าง ๆ ซึ่งปัญหาที่พบก็จะได้แก่ บางครั้งบุคคลที่ให้สัมภาษณ์ไม่ต้องการให้ระบุชื่อบ้าง หรือ เวลาที่ เรานำเอาข้อมูลจากการสัมภาษณ์มาลง บางคนที่เขาให้เราสัมภาษณ์ก็กล่าวว่าเราเขียนข้อมูลไม่ ตรงกับสิ่งที่พวกเขาพูดบ้าง (ศุวรณา อธิวเรืองชัย. สัมภาษณ์, 24 มกราคม 2538)

... สำหรับปัญหาที่พบบ่อย ก็จะมีแต่เพียงแค่เขียนงานไม่ออก และวางโครงสร้าง ของงานเขียนไม่ได้ ส่วนปัญหาอื่น ๆ ไม่ค่อยมีค่ะ (นิลบล พรพิทักษ์พันธ์. สัมภาษณ์, 24 สิงหาคม 2537)

... ปัญหาที่พบก็จะมีมาจากแหล่งข้อมูล ซึ่งได้แก่การไม่ให้ระบุชื่อของผู้ให้สัมภาษณ์รวมทั้งผู้ที่ให้สัมภาษณ์บางคนไม่ค่อยเต็มใจตอบคำถามของเรา ซึ่งบางครั้งทำให้ได้ข้อมูลมาไม่เพียงพอ นอกจากนี้โดยส่วนตัวแล้ว พวกคำศัพท์ ไวยากรณ์ และสำนวนต่าง ๆ นี้ ก็จัดว่าเป็นปัญหาสำคัญ

เพราะเรื่องที่เขียนส่วนใหญ่จะเป็นด้านศิลปกรรม และโบราณคดี ดังนั้นคำศัพท์ส่วนใหญ่ก็จะเป็นคำศัพท์ทางด้านวิชาการและคำศัพท์เฉพาะ ซึ่งจะต้องระวังมาก เพราะเกรงว่าเราจะใช้คำศัพท์ต่าง ๆ เหล่านี้ผิดความหมาย (ปฏิมา ชาร์วา. สัมภาษณ์, 25 มกราคม 2538)

... สำหรับปัญหาที่เกิดขึ้นและคิดว่ามีความสำคัญ ต่อการเขียนสารคดีของตนเอง ก็ได้แก่การถูกห้ามไม่ให้บอกแหล่งข้อมูล คือ ผู้ให้สัมภาษณ์บางคนไม่สะดวกที่จะให้นักเขียนนักข่าวระบุชื่อของพวกเขาในการเขียนสารคดีนั้น ๆ ด้วยอาจจะเกรงว่าจะมีผลกระทบตามมาก็ได้ นอกจากนี้การกรองคำพูด คือคำให้สัมภาษณ์ก็จัดเป็นปัญหาสำคัญปัญหาหนึ่งเพราะคำบางคำ หรือคำพูดบางคำพูด หากเรานำเสนอจะก่อให้เกิดความสับสน ความไม่เข้าใจซึ่งกันและกัน อันจะนำไปสู่ปัญหาที่ตามมา ... นอกจากนี้ระยะเวลาของการเขียนสารคดี ดูเหมือนจะน้อยไป คือมีเวลาเขียนแค่ 2-3 วัน เท่านั้นเอง และปัญหาของการเขียนไม่ออก รวมทั้งไม่รู้ว่าจะเขียนอะไรดี ก็เป็นปัญหาหนึ่ง ซึ่งสามารถเกิดขึ้นได้บ่อย ๆ ด้วยเช่นกันนะคะ (กรรณจรีธา สุขรุ่ง. สัมภาษณ์, 26 สิงหาคม 2537)

... ปัญหาที่พบก็จะคล้ายคลึงกับนักเขียนนักข่าวคนอื่น ก็คือ ปัญหาจากแหล่งข่าว ซึ่งได้แก่การไม่ระบุชื่อของผู้ให้สัมภาษณ์ หรือเวลาขอข้อมูลเพิ่มเติม เพื่อนำมาใช้ประกอบการเขียนนั้นไม่ได้รับความสะดวกเท่าไรนัก (กุลชรี ดันศุภผล. สัมภาษณ์, 28 มกราคม 2538)

... บุคคลากร (นักเขียนนักข่าว) นั้น อาจจะถือได้ว่าเป็นองค์ประกอบสำคัญขององค์ประกอบหนึ่งของ Section Outlook แม้ว่านักเขียนนักข่าวของ Outlook เราจะมีไม่มากนัก แต่นั่นก็ไม่ใช่อุปสรรคใหญ่สำหรับการเขียนสารคดีของเรา เพราะแม้จะมีจำนวนบุคคลากรไม่มากนัก แต่ก็ยังเป็นจำนวนที่มีคุณภาพและประสิทธิภาพ มีการแบ่งงานให้ถูกต้อง ให้ทุกคนมีสิทธิในการทำงานเท่าเทียมกัน รับผิดชอบงานกันอย่างเต็มที่ ซึ่งจะส่งผลให้ผลงานที่ออกมาค่อนข้างจะมีคุณภาพ ซึ่งการแบ่งงานกันอย่างถูกต้อง จะช่วยเพิ่มประสิทธิภาพและประสิทธิผลของงานให้ดียิ่งขึ้น ส่วนปัญหาที่พบสำหรับตัวผมนั้น ส่วนใหญ่จะเป็นปัญหาจากแหล่งข่าว คือ แหล่งข่าวไม่ให้ความร่วมมือเท่าที่ควร กล่าวคือ บุคคลที่เราขอสัมภาษณ์ไม่ให้สัมภาษณ์บ้าง หรือไม่ค่อยเต็มใจตอบคำถามบ้าง และไม่ให้ความระบุชื่อของพวกเขาในงานเขียนสารคดีของเราบ้าง ซึ่งผลก็คือได้ข้อมูลไม่ครบถ้วนสมบูรณ์เพียงพอ (พงษ์เพชร เมฆลอย. สัมภาษณ์, 20 มิถุนายน 2537)

ทัศนะของนักเขียนนักข่าว Section Outlook ต่อผู้อ่านสารคดี Outlook

... ผู้อ่านนั้นจัดว่าสำคัญเช่นกัน ซึ่งการนำเสนอสารคดีนั้นมักจะต้องคำนึงเสมอว่าเรากำลังนำเสนอสารคดีไปให้ใครอ่าน ผู้อ่านของเราเป็นใครเพื่อจะได้นำเสนอเนื้อหาได้ตรงกับความต้องการของพวกเขา (กุลชรี ตันศุภผล. สัมภาษณ์, 27 มกราคม 2538)

... ผู้อ่านนั้นจัดว่าเป็นสิ่งสำคัญนะคะ ซึ่ง Feedback จากผู้อ่านนั้น ก็ได้มาจากทั้งจดหมาย และโทรศัพท์ ซึ่งทั้งจดหมายและโทรศัพท์ที่เข้ามานั้น ส่วนมากจะเป็นการสอบถามข้อมูลเพิ่มเติม เช่น กรณีที่เรานำเสนอสารคดีเกี่ยวกับผู้ประสพภัย ไม่ว่าจะเป็นจากไฟไหม้หรือน้ำท่วม ผู้อ่านก็จะสอบถามเกี่ยวกับหมายเลขโทรศัพท์หรือสถานที่ที่พวกเขาสามารถให้ความช่วยเหลือและบริจาคสิ่งของให้แก่ผู้ประสพภัยต่าง ๆ เหล่านั้น (ทัศนีย์ เวชพงศา. สัมภาษณ์, 23 สิงหาคม 2537)

... Feedback ที่มีมาจากผู้อ่านส่วนใหญ่ จะออกมาในรูปของจดหมาย และโทรศัพท์ ซึ่งมักจะเป็นการสอบถามและขอข้อมูลเพิ่มเติมเสียเป็นส่วนใหญ่ (นิลุบล พรพิทักษ์พันธุ์. สัมภาษณ์, 25 สิงหาคม 2537)

... ผู้อ่าน ก็จัดว่าสำคัญและเป็นเป้าหมายหลักในการนำเสนอสารคดีของเรา ส่วน Feedback ที่ได้ก็จะได้จากทั้งทางโทรศัพท์และจดหมาย ซึ่งส่วนใหญ่จะเป็นขอข้อมูลเพิ่มเติมบ้างหรือให้คำแนะนำบ้าง (ศุวรรณา อีชาเรืองชัย. สัมภาษณ์, 24 มกราคม 2538)

... ผู้อ่านนั้นจัดว่าเป็นบุคคลสำคัญที่เราควรคำนึงถึงเวลาเขียนสารคดีส่วน Feedback ที่ได้รับมาก็มีทั้งทางโทรศัพท์และจดหมาย ซึ่งถ้าหากมีคำแนะนำก็จะมาพิจารณาแล้วพยายามนำมาปรับปรุงให้งานเขียนสารคดีของเราให้น่าอ่านมากขึ้น (ปฎิมา ชาร่า. สัมภาษณ์, 25 มกราคม 2538)

... เนื้อหาของสารคดีเรา จะต้องทำให้น่าสนใจและประทับใจผู้อ่าน ... จะอยู่ในความทรงจำของผู้อ่านได้อย่างไร (สนิทสุดา เอกชัย. วันปฐมนิเทศนักเขียนนักข่าวใหม่ของ

Section Outlook , 3 กันยายน 2537)

... เวลาเขียนงาน บุคคลที่เราจะต้องคำนึงถึง ก็คือ พระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัวของเรา เพราะท่านทรงอ่านงานสารคดีของเราเช่นกัน ดังนั้นเวลาเขียนจะต้องระมัดระวังให้มาก (วิภาวี โภกทกานนท์. วันปฐมนิเทศน์เขียนนักข่าวใหม่ ของ Section Outlook , 3 กันยายน 2537)

... ผู้อ่านนั้น ก็จัดว่าสำคัญ เราจะต้องรู้ว่าผู้อ่านของเราเป็นใคร อยู่ในระดับใด เพื่อจะได้นำเสนอเนื้อหาให้ตรงกับความต้องการของพวกเขา ส่วน Feedback ก็มีทั้งทางโทรศัพท์และจดหมาย ซึ่งส่วนใหญ่จะเป็นในแง่ดีมากกว่า อย่างเช่น ขอข้อมูลเพิ่มเติม หรือให้คำแนะนำบ้าง ซึ่งเราก็รับฟังข้อเสนอ ซึ่งคำแนะนำบางคำแนะนำมีประโยชน์มาก ซึ่งก็จะนำมาปรับปรุงในเนื้อหา และรูปแบบการนำเสนอสารคดีให้ดีขึ้น (พงษ์เพชร เมฆลอย. สัมภาษณ์, 21 มิถุนายน 2537)

... สิ่งที่ต้องคำนึงถึง ก็คือผู้อ่าน ... ประโยชน์ที่เขาควรจะได้รับจากการอ่านสารคดีของเรา ซึ่งความคาดหวังนั้นก็เพียงแค่ออกมาให้สารคดีที่เราเขียนนั้น มีสาระและประโยชน์แก่ผู้อ่านบ้าง ส่วนปฏิกิริยาตอบสนองจากผู้อ่านนั้น ก็มีในรูปของโทรศัพท์ และจดหมาย ซึ่งส่วนใหญ่ Feedback มักจะเป็นในแง่บวกเสียมากกว่า เพราะเนื้อหาสาระในสารคดีที่นำเสนอส่วนใหญ่นั้น มักจะเป็นการให้ความรู้และข้อมูลต่าง ๆ ข้อเท็จจริง โดยนำเสนอเหตุการณ์หรือประเด็นต่าง ๆ ที่เกิดขึ้น เพื่อเป็นพื้นฐานให้ผู้อ่านเข้าใจความเดิม และทราบถึงเรื่องราวที่เกิดขึ้นมาแล้วอย่างคร่าว ๆ เพื่อจะได้สามารถทำความเข้าใจสิ่งที่นำเสนอไปอย่างกระจ่างชัดเจนมากขึ้น ซึ่งถือได้ว่าเป็นสิ่งจำเป็นสำหรับผู้อ่านที่ไม่เคยมีพื้นฐานความรู้เกี่ยวกับเรื่องราวหรือประเด็นนั้น ๆ มาก่อน ก็จะได้สามารถติดตามสิ่งเหล่านี้ต่อไปได้อย่างเข้าใจและไม่สับสน (กรรณจริยา สุขรุ่ง. สัมภาษณ์, 24 สิงหาคม 2537)

ภาคผนวก ค.

ตัวอย่างสารคดีที่นำมาใช้ประกอบการศึกษาวิจัย

Monday July 10, 1995

Against all odds



Even when the body
is disabled, the spirit
can remain
untouched. PATIMA
THA HLA spoke to
a handicapped
woman who has
gone against
society's
expectations to
prove these words
true.



I've never for a moment felt ashamed of being handicapped. It's not my fault that I'm disabled. Handicapped people have nothing to be ashamed of, and we shouldn't be blamed by society for something we didn't do. My mission is to act as a role model for other handicapped people. I want to give them something to look up to and make them feel that they, too, can live active lives.

RATCHANEE PANMAI

Ratchanee Panmai is not a great athlete when she plays tennis or goes swimming. Neither is she an excellent singer when she croons into the karaoke microphone.

But whenever she does these things, people admire her performance — not for its perfection, but for the courage and determination behind it.

Ratchanee, whose right leg is in a brace due to a childhood bout of polio, has worked hard to achieve what most disabled people never dare to do: win acceptance from others, and prove that both she and other handicapped people are legitimate members of society.

"I've never for a moment felt ashamed of being handicapped," said Ratchanee, 35. "It's not my fault that I'm disabled. Handicapped people have nothing to be ashamed of, and we shouldn't be blamed by society for something we didn't do."

Ratchanee is among a handful of handicapped people who are trying to make their presence felt in society by participating in public activities that are generally considered off-limits to them. At present, handicapped people number about one million nationwide.

Most of them, Ratchanee said, hide themselves away at home due to embarrassment and fear of society. Also, the lack of facilities to accommodate the handicapped is a hurdle preventing them from taking an active role in society.

"My mission is to act as a role model for other handicapped people," she asserted. "I want to give them something to look up to and make them feel that they, too, can

live active lives."

Ratchanee's efforts not only benefit others suffering from disabilities, but also bring her a great deal of personal fulfillment. "I enjoy the way I spend my life," Ratchanee said, smiling broadly. "It's a lot of fun."

One of the leading figures who in 1992 successfully pushed for legislation granting the handicapped legal rights and financial support from the government, Ratchanee is still active in demanding rights for the handicapped.

"Our main priority now is to demand the right to access public facilities," she urged.

Proper access to public places and facilities, she said, is essential in making the handicapped feel secure about venturing outside their homes. Sidewalk kerbs, for instance, are too high for people with crutches or in wheelchairs to access. Pedestrian traffic lights without voice signals also pose a treat to the blind.

"Our call for equal access may not be heeded in the near future, but we hope it will yield results for the disabled of the next generation. We have the right to demand access, because we pay taxes like everyone else," she said.

The holder of a bachelor's degree in Communication Arts from Bangkok University, Ratchanee works as a volunteer with many organisations that address the problems of handicapped people — the Deaf Association, Disabled Women's Association, and Disabled People International of Thailand, among others.

She is also a freelance sign language translator, as well as a life insurance salesperson.

Afflicted with polio when she

was two-and-a-half years old, both of Ratchanee's legs are weakened. Her right leg cannot function without a brace, while her left, though strong enough for light walking, is not as strong as a normal leg.

Despite her physical disability, Ratchanee grew up with a healthy mind as a result of her supportive family. "My mother always treated me with loving care, and my siblings never left me out when they played games," recalled Ratchanee, the youngest of three children.

Little Ratchanee attended Bangkok's Srisungwal School for handicapped children until she was ten. Her first adventure in the "real" world began when she moved to an ordinary school near her house.

While many other handicapped students opted to attend special schools because they could not stand being teased by normal children, Ratchanee rose to the challenge of a regular school. Determined to ignore all the teasing, she managed to persevere until she had received her university degree.

One of the difficulties she faced during her school days, she recalled, was travelling by bus with her books in one hand and a crutch under the other arm. In order to catch the bus and get to school on time, she couldn't wait for strangers to offer assistance. "I would just push my books and crutch onto whoever was standing in front of me so that I could get on the bus," she recalled.

Sometimes, she even had to crawl up the stairs because the door handles were too high for her to reach. "When that happened, I completely ignored the

staring eyes of the other commuters on the bus. My only thought was that I had to do it. And I did," she said triumphantly.

"We don't need that much help. We don't want people to pick us up and carry us up the stairs. We just want them to help out in little ways, like carrying our belongings so that we can step up conveniently on our own."

Unlike other disabled people, who remain silent and shy in public, Ratchanee speaks out whenever she needs help. "I feel that people in general are willing to assist us, but sometimes they don't know where to begin or what we need."

By making her needs known, she said, she breaks the invisible barrier that separates the public from the disabled.

"Ever since I was young, I've never waited for anyone to invite me to join in an activity. I always volunteer first," she said. "I don't want others to make decisions for me. I want to judge for myself whether or not I can handle something."

Juggling several jobs at once, Ratchanee gives priority to her work for the deaf as an interpreter between spoken language and sign language. She said she cherishes the job as a valuable contribution a handicapped person like herself can make to society.

"I'm proud that even

though I'm handicapped, I'm able to help others," she said.

As an interpreter, Ratchanee sometimes has to work odd hours, when she is summoned to assist in situations where the deaf need help, often involving the police. Her regular work, though, entails interpreting during international meetings.

Ratchanee communicates with the blind as well as the deaf.

"I consider myself luckier than those who can't hear or see. But then blind and deaf friends say they are luckier because they can move around more conveniently," said Ratchanee jokingly.

One thing that enables Ratchanee to remain so active is be-

ing able to drive. For ten years now, she has driven a two-door Datsun Sunny equipped with automatic gears and hand control devices. "I'm the first handicapped person who drove in Thailand," she said.

Ratchanee got the idea to drive when she attended a conference in Hong Kong as a Thai representative ten years

ago. She saw handicapped people behind the wheel, and decided to attend a driving course herself.

Following her example, more and more handicapped drivers have taken to the Bangkok roads, in cars bearing stickers of a person in a wheelchair.

A sticker on the back of Ratchanee's car reads: "The disabled are people too. Don't treat us as the rejects of society."

Ratchanee's message might still be greeted with apathy by many, but eventually, with her unflagging determination, it will be echoed throughout society — a society in which the handicapped, too, will have the right to participate.

Wednesday May 25, 1994



The establishment of the Dramatic Arts College has long enhanced the progress and preservation of Thai drama and music. Still, improvements need to be made to accommodate drastic changes in culture and society. **Kulcharee Tansubhapol** reports.

Keeping Thai arts alive

THE NOTION of Thai dramatic arts and music as a scholarly subject is not new to Thais. It was in May 1934, as part of Gen Marshal P. Pibulsongkram's government's policy of cultivating a love of indigenous arts among the Thai people, that the first national art teaching institute, Nata Duriyankhasatra School, was set up in Bangkok.

The school was later promoted to the status of College of Dramatic Arts of the Fine Arts Department, and now has branches in several provincial areas.

A number of graduates from the Dramatic Arts College have since played a significant role in preserving Thai works and bringing them to the public. Aside from art education, cultural promotion remains one of the college's top priorities.

But over the past 60 years several new forms of arts and entertainment have taken hold in Thailand. Many institutes have had to adjust in response to new social demands in the arts.

In celebrating its 60th anniversary this year, the College of Dramatic Arts held a seminar entitled "Trends of the College of Dramatic Arts in the Next Decade" to review and generate improvements in the college's work.

Dr Suwit Rassamibhuthi, depu-

ty Permanent Secretary to the Education Minister, said that the Dramatic Arts College has been in existence for 60 years, but it has not made much progress. The college should brace itself for changes in response to social development.

"The college's site, for instance, should be expanded to include a dormitory for students, so that they can practise in the evenings or on weekends. Also, the students should be provided with a place to stage performances.

"Dramatic arts students require attentive training to accumulate experience.

"It's good to see more college expansion in rural provinces: But there is no need to set up colleges in every province. Ang Thong Dramatic Arts College, for example, has faced a problem of under-enrolment because another college for dramatic arts has been opened in neighbouring Suphan Buri," he said.

Dr Suwit also said of the college's curriculum that rather than concentrating solely on the arts, it should provide a good foundation in general subjects as other schools do. "We should balance the courses to enable students to master both. Dramatic arts graduates should master the arts, but additional subjects such as languages are also important."

Acharn Seri Wangnaitham, of the Fine Arts Department's Division of Music and Drama, agreed

that many improvements need to be made to the Dramatic Arts College. "The college's curriculum is designed to train students to become either artists or art teachers. But the curriculum hasn't been updated since 1974. What was taught 20 years ago is still being used now.

"There should be separate programmes for teachers and artists so students can gain the specific skills and knowledge necessary for their future work," he reasoned.

Acharn Seri added that the Ministry of Education has allocated a big budget for the construction of local museums in rural areas. "Would it be possible to allocate some of the budget to build stages where dramatic arts students in the provinces could stage public performances?"

"Public performances would not only allow the students to gain valuable experience. They would also give the arts-interested public a chance to see cultural

works," he said.

According to *Arts and Culture* magazine editor Sujit Wongthes, the top priority of the College of Dramatic Arts should be to promote national arts and culture among the public.

"The college must focus on the quality rather than the quantity of its graduates. It should expand its curriculum to include bachelor's and master's degrees and PhD's at all of its branches. If possible, colleges of dramatic arts should be established as centres of regional culture," said Sujit.

"There should be a central dramatic arts college in each region. Each of the country's major areas should have its own institute representing its own arts and culture."

Commented Sujit: "Today the Dramatic Arts College is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, so it can't function independently from the Government. It should be more autonomous, getting assistance from

both the private sector and state agencies.

"The arts need to be practised more professionally and without strict controls," he said.

The *Arts and Culture* magazine editor said that the work of both the Dramatic Arts College and the Fine Arts Department are still limited to a narrow audience. They need to greatly increase publicity for their work.

Yippan Promyothee of the

Tourism Authority of Thailand added that the Dramatic Arts College should cultivate foreign language skills among its students, as this would make their work more lucrative, enabling it to be related to the promotion of Thai culture.

She also proposed that the college adjust its curriculum to encourage students to stage performances that are both interesting and affordable for the public.

Taking education in the arts seriously

IN ADDITION to the Dramatic Arts College, several universities have begun offering bachelor's degrees in dramatic arts. Such programmes, however, have had limited success due to inadequate personnel and lack of resources.

"We're short of knowledgeable staff. Few recognised dramatic artists have entered the academic sphere," said Dr Pol Kampang, rector of Bangkok's Suan Sunandha Teachers' College.

"In rural areas folk artists have been invited to teach at dramatic arts colleges. But despite their strong knowledge, they have not been well received." Educational institutes, he said, do not treat artists as well as they treat academics in other fields.

He said that Suan Sunandha Teachers' College has tried to persuade its new graduates to become instructors. However, it takes time for new teachers to become as highly qualified as experienced artists.

"Artists are better qualified than professors to teach art, because they have a genuine desire

to transfer knowledge to students. Professors who are not artists may take the subject matter for granted, or even try to cash in on the arts. So their teaching methods fail."

Dr Pol noted that lack of financial support is a critical problem. "At Suan Sunandha, we have limited space for rehearsals and our own performances. The National Theatre cannot accommodate us, as it is mostly reserved for Fine Arts Department performances.

"Singapore, on the other hand, has made the promotion of culture an official project. Its government has taken strong action in bringing the arts to the public. Thailand should be doing better, because we have a richer culture, but we aren't."

Acharn Jamnong Saengwichien, dean of Chulalongkorn University's Fine and Applied Arts Faculty, said that it is of tremendous importance to study about trends in the dramatic arts in the next decade.

He commented that his faculty has found it difficult to develop

programmes in all areas of fine and applied arts. But the dramatic arts curriculum has created the most difficult challenge of all.

"The characteristics of dramatic arts are not in line with government systems. Artists, be they teachers or officials, can feel uneasy working under strict control. The system doesn't allow these people to work efficiently."

And the students, although highly skilled artistically, have problems in other subjects, especially languages. Their speaking and writing abilities are generally poor. Most Dramatic Arts College students cannot pass their English examinations. The faculty has to organise a special tutorial class for them, said the dean.

Acharn Jamnong said that instructors are scarce. Most living masters of Thai dramatic arts are old, creating a generation gap between teachers and students.

"The development of education should be continuous. The shortage of teaching staff has culminated in educational institutes competing for the qualified in-

structors. Even more critical is that skilled staff of government agencies are being attracted to work in the private sector," he said.

Dr Wichai Wongyai of Srinakharinwirot Prasanmitr University suggested that if the Dramatic Arts College's curriculum aims to preserve Thai music and dramatic arts, it should broaden the variety of its performances, which are currently taken mostly from ancient Thai literature. More current Rattanakosin-era works should be performed more, so the next generation will be able to study and perform them.

Said Dr Wichai: "The teaching of dramatic arts should be designed for students of all ages — children, teenagers, adults, and aged people. People at each level have varied interests and abilities.

"The curriculum must be modified for the next decade. The dramatic arts discipline needs to be improved, combining the current curriculum with modern research," he said.

Monday November 27, 1995

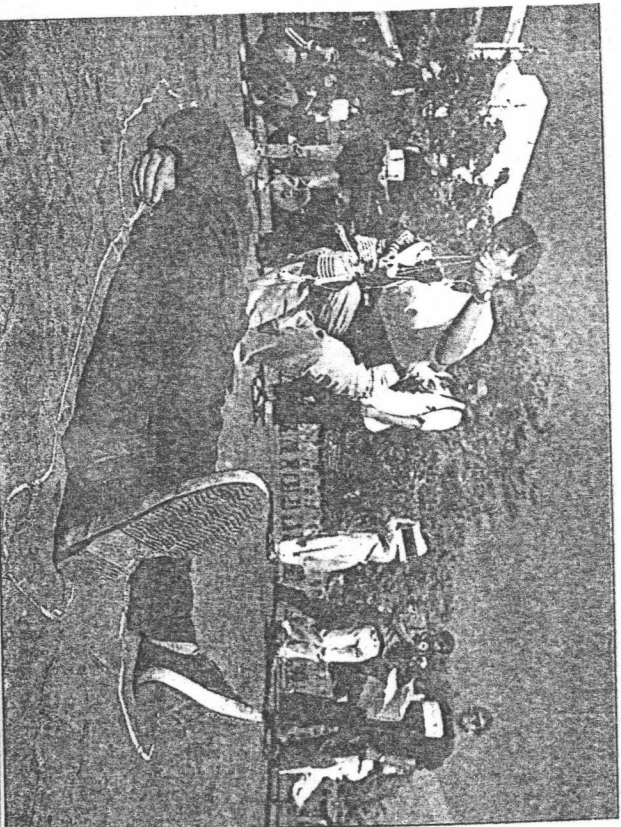
Art, art

everywhere

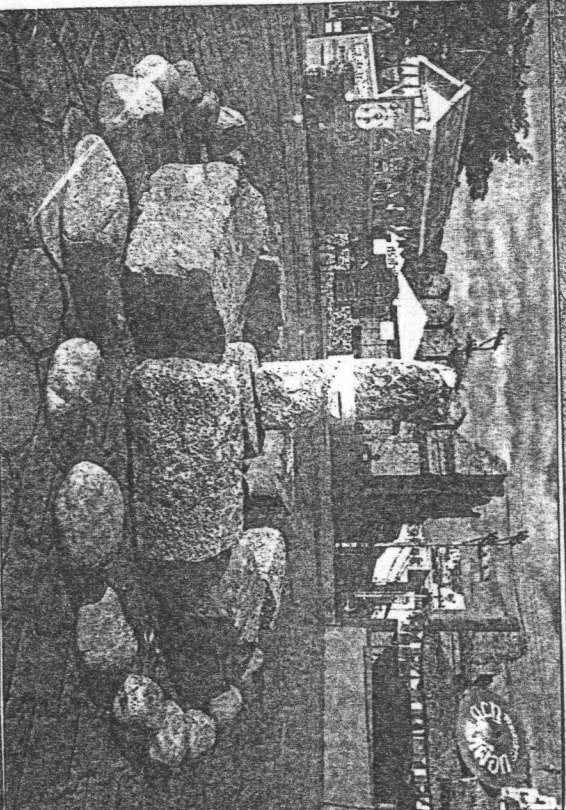
The third Chiang Mai Social Installation project has turned the city into a huge outdoor art gallery. This year, its aim is not only to expose local residents to art, but also to create harmony and awareness on an international level.

KARNJARIYA SUKRUNG reports.

Pictures by SMITH SUTIBUT.



In his performance art piece titled *Neo-Baba*, Singaporean artist Lee Wen portrayed a dead man and had his co-performer draw a line around his body before covering the spot with leaves.



Isan artist Ekachai Laudsongnem and his rock installation, *Khai Nai Hin*.



Wallop Manyum's *Buffalo-Buffalo*, a modern dance-inspired performing art piece, was presented at Tha Phae Gate during the opening ceremony.

Could there be any relation between shark fins emerging from Chiang Mai's city moats, a fiery anti-nuclear protest, and a woman standing surrounded by candles at a Buddhist temple?

The answer is yes: they are all "art", and they are all part of a three-month festival which began in the northern capital last week. Through the creativity of 64 artists, both local and international, Chiang Mai has been transformed into an enormous art venue where anything goes, from traditional to modern and beyond.

The artists have gathered to present paintings and sculptures, installations, and performance art at the third Chiang Mai Social Installation project (CMSI) art festival, which was kicked off last week with a three-day opening ceremony.

While the performance art pieces were performed only once, installations will remain in Chiang Mai until the festival ends in February.

Indeed, the festival has far more to offer than mere aesthetic beauty. Many of the featured works carry thought-provoking messages of Buddhist philosophy, social criticism, and feminism.

As most of the installations are on view in open public spaces, city residents have no choice but to be drawn into the gigantic open-air art gallery.

"This festival is definitely more ex-

citing than the two previous ones we've had," said Uthis Athimana, a fine arts lecturer at Chiang Mai University and the coordinator of the project. "Participation is much greater, both from local and foreign artists. This is a positive sign that contemporary art is becoming a more widely accepted presence here."

Taking place concurrently with this year's SEA Games and the 700th anniversary celebration of the city of Chiang Mai, the festival has gone international this year, with 27 local and 37 foreign participants filling Chiang Mai's municipal spaces with their artistic visions.

Among the 63 creations scattered across the city, one of the most eye-catching and amusing are shark fin-shaped structures emerging from the city moat.

Art is everywhere, from temples to zoo cages, from a dental clinic to a camera shop, from electric poles to a cemetery.

Oddly shaped cut-outs painted with reflecting colours are affixed to the electric poles on one street, brightening up commuters' way to work; a mixed-media installation in a dental clinic waiting room puts an interesting twist on a visit to the dentist; and collages decorate empty wall space on buildings.

"Local residents and shopowners have been quite understanding about

Continued on page 38

Continued from page 31

letting artists instal their works around their homes and businesses. And by so doing, they are indirectly exposing themselves to art," said Uthis.

In addition to the unveiling of art installations, the opening event also included cultural performances, seminars and discussions, and other activities.

Temples proved to be among the most popular venues for both performance art and installations.

Singaporean artist Lee Wen, who presented the idea of reincarnation and enlightenment in his performance art piece, is among them. "Buddhism is very strong here, and I try to incorporate the local cultural environment into my work." His work was performed at Wat U-Mong, where nine other artists also have installations.

Japanese artist Masato Nakamura has set up an installation in the *viharn* (chapel) of Wat Phra Sing, which is generally off-limits to the public. The difficulty of viewing his work serves as a way to draw viewers, he said.

"It can only be seen from eight to nine in the morning, and anyone who wants to see it has to obtain the abbot's permission first," said the artist. "This is a way of showing that monks still play an important role in Thai society."

Set against the temple's Lanna backdrop, his three-foot-high installation — an illuminated keyhole-shaped lamp — creates an air of sacredness by diffusing a yellow light.

At Wat Pa Pao, young Thai artist Toeingam Srisubat displays a controversial work. In her installation, a number of small unlit candles are glued onto the wall at the entrance to the temple's pagoda. At the opening of the installation, a performance element was added by a woman standing solemnly there.

A group of foreign women artists interpreted the piece as a protest against the religious institution's exclusion of women; its presence turned the temple grounds into a forum to discuss the issues of feminism and Buddhism in Thailand.

Young avant-garde artist Mitra Jai-in, meanwhile, plays on the Buddhist philosophy that artworks are auspicious objects. In his quasi-performance art presentation, he distributed original paintings and handouts of a Pali sutra for free to passersby at Tha Phae Gate. His point? "I wanted to show that artworks are as sacred as religious items.

"An artwork should be seen as an auspicious object, like a lucky charm that people can keep at home. This idea is also a way to bring contemporary art to ordinary people in their daily lives," said Mitra.

Other themes addressed range from consumerism to capitalism to politics; given the heavy presence of foreign artists, issues are approached from a global as well as a local perspective.

One of the most talked-about of these issues is nuclear weapons. Wasant Sitthiket, a prominent local artist known for his outspoken and often radical social criticism, presented an interactive installation addressing the nuclear issue. He placed 38 sheets of brown paper on the ground at Tha Phae and encouraged passersby to draw or write whatever came to mind when they thought about the sea. Interestingly, many of the contributions expressed anti-nuclear sentiments and concern about the destruction of the natural environment.

Later, all the papers were put together into a square piece which, coincidentally, made a rather coherent image. The artist then

turned on a recording of a siren and burned the paper in protest.

Some works ventured far from conventional perceptions of what art should be, raising more than a few eyebrows. Chiang Mai-based artist Navin Lawalchaikul's contribution, for example, was to offer driving lessons to interested spectators. Throughout the three months of the festival, his "Navin Driving School" will offer free driving lessons to a limited number of students in an effort to make a social statement. What exactly is that statement?

"Artists commonly criticise real subjects or events in their art, presenting them in a format that is far from the reality. But this work is itself a reality that people can touch," said the artist.

During the opening ceremony, students from the Faculty of Theatre and Communication Arts of Chiang Mai and Payap Universities staged nighttime open-air performances around the Tha Pae Gate. In addition to drawing the attention of passersby, their

shows also carried messages about nature, community, and life.

In the "Mother Earth" performance, the earth was shown suffering at the hands of her human children. Five women in beige costumes represented Mother Earth, dancing to mournful music with tortured faces and gestures and letting out cries of agony.

"I've never seen anything quite like this before. It's so spiritual. I wouldn't have expected to see something like this in Thailand. It seems like something you would see in my country. I like it very much," said Nicole Shaw, an Australian artist travelling in Chiang Mai.

The festival's opening ceremony has ended, but thought-provoking installations remain all over the city. The third CMSI event has brought local and foreign participants together, emphasising the role of art as a universal language. Even after Chiang Mai returns to its regular, unadorned state three months from now, the city will still be enriched by this explosion of creativity.

Saturday September 16, 1995

For Thai theatre buffs, the name Ekachai Uekrongtham may draw a blank. Among their Singaporean counterparts, though, the 32-year-old Thai is well-recognised as a producer and director of original plays. ALONGKORN PARIVUDHIPHONGS reports.

Taking centre stage



Thailand's Ekachai Uekrongtham has found success as a leading light in Singapore's theatre scene.

Ekachai Uekrongtham, it seemed, was all set to climb to the top rung of the corporate ladder — the son of a well-to-do family, a straight-A student, a business degree from abroad, and an executive job in Singapore with one of the world's top corporations.

But alas, he dropped business for drama, formed a theatre company, and produced a play that thumbed its nose at the corporate world he had left behind. Stranger yet, everyone, businessmen included, applauded.

Corporate Animals — the latest production of his Singapore-based Action Theatre, packed the Jubilee Hall at the Raffles Hotel in Singapore during its two-week, 20-show run in August.

A re-staging of the two-hour musical is already scheduled at Raffles for later this year. There is also discussion of sending it on a regional tour that may include a stop in Thailand next year.

Critics praised the show for its strong cast, snazzy choreography, and witty, interesting plot — the story of a man transformed into a corporate animal as he claws his way to become the King of the Jungle.

The show's theme song sums it up best: "Office politics, back-stabbing, passing the buck, and sucking up to the boss," the lyrics go.

"The story idea has been brewing in my head for five years. I've worked in multi-national corporations and seen this kind of office politics up close. People are so competitive to get to the top," said Ekachai.

So Ekachai, now Action Theatre's president and artistic director, commissioned Singaporean playwright Desmond Sim to turn the idea into a script.

It clicked. Audiences were tickled by the play's allegorical cast of office characters, which includes Lucas the Lion, Veronica the Viper, Helen the Hyena, Max the Monkey, and Olivia the Ostrich.

The production also won acclaim as a well-balanced collaboration of people from several Asia-Pacific countries — a Singaporean playwright and choreographer, Malaysian composer, Australian voice coach, and Thai director.

"I try not to pat myself on the back too much for all this positive feedback. That might make me too proud, and then I'd stop learning," said Ekachai, 32, a compact Chinese-Thai who seems to share several traits with the show's main character, David: young, enthusiastic, and intelligent, if a little naive.

"Also short, and not so handsome," laughed the five-foot-five Ekachai, his eyes dancing behind gold-rimmed glasses.

"My mother flew to Singapore to see this production — the first show of mine she has seen here. Afterwards, she asked why my leading actor wasn't handsome. It never occurred to me that good looks were necessary." His all-Singaporean, 19-member cast was made up mainly of experienced amateurs, with only a few professional actors.

Before *Corporate Animals*, Action Theatre staged 20 plays in Singapore, most of them directed by Ekachai. All but four featured original scripts by Singaporeans.

"My shows are relevant to the lifestyle here. They're not high-brow entertainment that no one understands. We've attracted an eclectic audience — students, young professionals, old people. Some aren't even theatre fans.

"Were the plays a success? Doing them certainly felt great." He laughed, sidestepping the issue with aplomb.

"For me, theatre is a living thing. It can stir emotions, evoke thoughts. It can tell a story that affects viewers in different ways."

So he gave up a well-paid executive job at American Express to "stir emotions and move thoughts"? Ekachai laughed boyishly. His switch from business to theatre, he insisted, was not out of character. "I've loved acting since I was young."

At Prasert Tham Primary School, he excelled academically and was also a sought-after entertainer for school activities.

"When I was in Prathom One, I did a Hawaiian dance in a school Christmas show. It was embarrassing, but it's a childhood memory I remember clearly."

At Assumption College Secondary School, he got together with a few classmates who shared his passion for performing. They set up a team and began putting on shows. Altogether they did three, all staged at the now-defunct Silp Bhirasri Institute of Modern Art.

"We called our troupe 'Dramatic Amateur Productions'. I laugh looking back on those days. We were amateurs all right. In *The Black Castle*, a thriller we did to raise funds for charity, we got a few real actresses to join our cast, and they ended up instructing us.

"We never made any money, but it was fun."

Despite his love of theatre, after high school Ekachai enrolled at ABAC (Assumption Business Administration Col-

lege). The potential financial rewards of a business career, he confessed, motivated his decision.

During his freshman year, Ekachai, then 17, got a scholarship to continue his business studies at a university in Singapore. In the four years he studied there, his only association with the performing arts was singing in the university choir.

"My English wasn't very good then, so I failed at the few auditions I went to," he said.

After graduating with a Bachelor's degree in business, he worked as a management trainee with Berli Jucker in Singapore for two years. He then joined American Express as a marketing executive. The job allowed him to exercise his creative talent as he was also asked to help organise corporate functions and presentations.

In 1987, a year after joining American Express, Ekachai and a few of his Singaporean friends formed Action Theatre as a side job to help a bank organise its cultural programmes.

"We were commissioned to stage two plays and one concert. Our group became recognised, and we were invited to join a drama festival, which brought us further work."

The group's first play, an original comedy titled *Confessions of Three Unmarried Women*, got good reviews. It later became part of the syllabus for drama courses in Singapore and was redone by other drama groups.

Then came Ekachai's chance to act again. He was invited to join the cast of *Touch the Soul of a God*, in which he played a 70-year-old father of a man facing a personal crisis.

In 1990, the surreal comedy *Long Green Socks* called an audition, and Ekachai, then Amex's executive marketing manager, went for it. He landed the lead role, playing a man

who returned to his mother after hiding in the television, literally, for a long period.

"I was just crazy with acting then. I'd work during the day, grab a bite, then rush out to rehearsals at night. It was exhausting, but great fun."

At this point, Ekachai had never received any formal training in acting, although he had taken script-writing and directing courses, the latter with Singaporean theatre master Kua Pao Kun.

"It's good for a director to have acted before, since acting teaches what is possible and what works well on stage."

With his colleagues at Action Theatre, he developed and presented several new works by Singapore playwrights. "Our focus is on original, locally produced plays based on contemporary situations. It's a challenge to create something new. It's also interesting to see if these plays can move audiences emotionally as much as the classics can."

To encourage original playwriting, two years ago Ekachai set up the Action Theatre Foundation of New Singapore Plays. The foundation encourages original playwriting by holding an annual contest. Winners get to see their works come alive on stage with the help of the Action Theatre team.

Last year, another opportunity to combine his marketing and directing skills came his way. Cameron Mackintosh, an international musical producer, offered him the position of Director of Marketing and Operations. He accepted it and left

American Express after eight years there.

"It was a tough decision. The Amex job was stable, but I'd rather follow my heart than play it safe," said Ekachai, sounding like a true-blue romantic.

He ran Cameron's Singapore office, and brought the famous Broadway Show *Les Miserables* to Singapore in 1994.

His marketing work for Cameron, he said, does not stretch his artistic capacities as much as his work at Action Theatre.

"Both are exciting. At Cameron, I get to bring good theatre to the Singapore market. But I love my work at Action Theatre more because it allows me to express my creativity."

As a Thai living and working away from home, does he feel proud of having made a name for himself abroad?

A pause, then a shy smile.

"Actually, I don't think about it much. I'm just happy with what I've done. If my work has brought a good name to any Thais, it would be my parents, who are very proud of me."

Asked whether he has ever considered returning to work in Thailand, he said: "I go where the opportunities are. Right now, it just so happens that I'm established here in Singapore, so I can do better here."

Since *Corporate Animals* closed, his work at Cameron has kept him busy. Later this year, he will travel to the US to direct a short play at the Annual Showcase of Ten-Minute Plays at the Actors' Theatre in Louisville, Kentucky.

Besides repeating the success of *Corporate Animals*, what else does Ekachai dream about?

"Moving to Tasmania when I get old. It's nice and quiet there."

A Thai thespian on the international scene

Since 1987, Action Theatre has staged a wide range of both original and Western plays, most of them directed by Ekachai Uekrongtham. His directing highlights include:

● **Confessions of Three Unmarried Women:** A satirical piece about three Singaporean female friends who make fun of the government's policy of encouraging well-educated women to get married.

● **Procedure:** A ten-minute play about a veteran nurse who helps a newcomer prepare a patient's corpse for its final journey to the morgue. The final twist comes when it's revealed that the corpse is her own father.

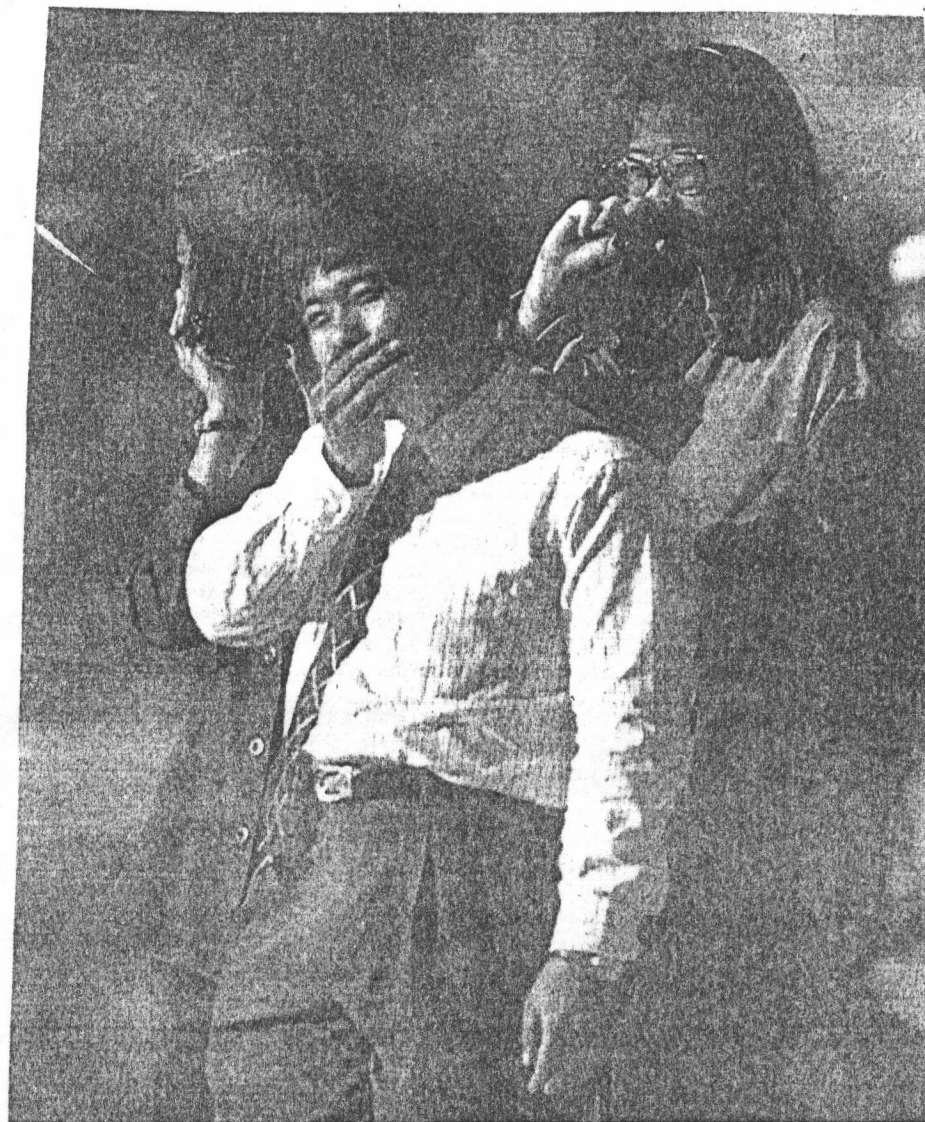
● **Mental Reservation:** A witty piece about a young couple and the games they play. It is one of the four Western plays Ekachai has directed. The others are *Procedure*, *Prelude to a Kiss*, and *Love Letters*.

● **Drunken Prawns:** Another ten-minute play. Over a dinner table, a family let their emotions — love, anger, and pain — flow, with live "drunken prawns" as witnesses.

● **Corporate Animals:** David joins a top multi-media company ruled by Lucas, the Lion King of this corporate jungle. The naive newcomer wants to play fair as he climbs to the top. But to survive, he must battle with other colleagues clawing for the same post.

The musical was staged with international assistance from organisations such as the Australian High Commission, Qantas Airlines, and Citibank.

Saturday September 9, 1995



UNDER SIEGE

Bangkok residents are being suffocated by increasing levels of dust, filth, and toxic gases in the urban environment. Many wonder if travelling the streets is even safe anymore. PATIMA THA HLA provides some unsettling answers.

Vichuda Pongkaew's eyes began to itch every morning when she took to the streets on her way to work. During her bus trip, tears flowed as though she were crying.

They didn't stop until she got to her office. The strange symptoms persisted for several months until the Sukhothai-born Vichuda, 24, decided to consult the nurse at her office, who told her that she was allergic to air-borne irritants.

After a period of taking antihistamine tablets, the symptoms disappeared. But Vichuda's eyes remain highly sensitive to wind, dust, and any irritants.

"I think it's the terrible air pollution in Bangkok that has weakened my eyes," she says, adding that the teary-eyed symptoms remain even after spending days in the provinces with cleaner air.

Many residents of Bangkok share similar problems to Vichuda's, while others develop different symptoms, including coughing, appetite loss, and a variety of skin conditions. Most are the result of respiratory problems related to air pollution.

Dan Penyindee, 35, lost his appetite for weeks and lost weight dramatically. His doctor told him he had no antigens to fight bacteria in the air. Like Vichuda, Dan blamed his ailments on the filthy air he was exposed to during his daily bus trips in Bangkok.

"The air is too dirty to breathe. One of my friends had to quit her job and move out of Bangkok because the foul environment had seriously weakened her health," says the office worker.

Dan also decided to find a new workplace on the outskirts of Bangkok, and he has started driving his own car to avoid being bombarded by irritants in the air.

About a million people of a total of eight million in the city went to state hospitals last year for breathing problems, according to Dr Debhanom Muangman, dean of the Faculty of Environment and Resource Studies at Mahidol University.

A recent study by the Public Health Ministry revealed that 185.9 in 1,000

people in Bangkok suffer from breathing problems.

Also, a high proportion of city residents suffer from asthma, diarrhoea, and skin problems as a result of exposure to impure air. Obtaining exact figures is difficult, though, since most patients do not seek medical help when they develop such symptoms.

The number of patients affected by air pollution is increasing every year, says Dr Oraphan Metadilokkul, president of the Occupational and Environmental Association of Thailand.

"The largest group of patients are children and the elderly, because their systems are sensitive and highly responsive to irritants," she says.

One child developed respiratory problems because the child's father parked his diesel pick-up truck on the ground floor of their narrow row house, backing the vehicle into an inside room. The fumes emitted when he parked were trapped inside the house, and the child inhaled them over a long period of time.

"Medication has only eased the child's symptoms. The lesson is that people shouldn't park their cars in living areas, especially by backing in, as this traps fumes inside."

Children aged from four to ten are the most vulnerable to Bangkok's air pollution, according to Dr Oraphan. Those who walk to school in traffic-congested areas face especially high health risks.

Although children who travel to school in air conditioned cars are less exposed to toxic exhaust fumes, many still develop pollution-related problems

because their open-air schools are located on busy streets.

"The severity of symptoms caused by pollutants depends on an individual's existing health conditions," says Dr Oraphan.

Although lead-free petrol has reduced the amount of lead in the air, city residents are far from safe from lung cancer and other chemical-related diseases. Many other poisonous substances remain uncontrolled despite their increasing concentration.

Carbon monoxide emissions are increasing steadily as an average of 500 to 700 new cars hit the streets each month. Nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide, although not primarily emitted by automobiles, are steadily increasing due to the increased use of chemicals in factories.

At present, dust causes the most serious concern among environmentalists. The amount of dust in the Bangkok air is three or four times greater than the standard safe level set by the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Environment.

A study by the ministry's Pollution Control Department shows that 40 per cent of the dust and particulate matter in the city's air comes from cars, another 40 per cent from construction and transport activities, and the remainder from factories.

Dr Debhanom of Mahidol University says: "Dust is the most dangerous pollutant because it is a carrier of diseases. It carries a variety of bacteria, viruses, fungi, and other micro-organisms."

"Infection is highly likely if one has

exposed wounds or scratches. Those who travel by public bus have an especially high chance of infection, as toxic substances become trapped and concentrated in the bus.

"If bacteria enter an open wound, the chances of developing a skin condition are high. Eye irritation and respiratory problems can also result.

"A densely populated city like Bangkok generates a high concentration of dust, which heightens people's risk of contracting airborne diseases."

Dr Debhanom believes those who travel by air conditioned bus are even more exposed to irritants than those who use ordinary buses, because pollutants that enter the bus when the doors open are trapped inside when they close.

While general street pollution affects people on a large scale, some Bangkokians are suffering from more severe and immediate health problems caused by factories located in residential areas.

Factories that pose health risks are engaged in activities such as car painting, wood-sawing, alloy making, and printing, which require high doses of chemicals.

A 1989 study by the World Bank estimated that a 20 per cent improvement in air quality in Bangkok — which would still leave levels far above most international

standards — would generate profits of over one billion US dollars.

Pollution should not be viewed only as the problem of those who are physically affected by it, stresses Dr Oraphan. "It is the problem of society as a whole. Polluters — be they factory owners, drivers, or construction developers — should start paying serious attention to people's right to protect their own health."

Before seeking medical attention, sufferers should look around their surroundings to determine what might be causing their symptoms, she advises. This way, they can eliminate the causes or avoid contact with the offending pollutants on their own.

Physicians, she adds, can only help to ease the patients' symptoms. The only real cure is keeping the environment healthy. Unfortunately, though, this goal is becoming less and less realistic.

"We have laws, but they aren't enforced. Doctors, meanwhile, can do nothing about the cause of the problem. It's the government's responsibility to protect people from such hazards."

A study of carbon monoxide levels in bus drivers' blood:

Dr Sawang Saenghirunvatana of Ramathibodi Hospital's Faculty of Medicine conducted a study of carbon monoxide levels in the blood of 31 Bangkok public bus drivers aged 25 to 58, with five to 13 years working experience.

Of the total percentage of gases in the bus drivers' blood, carbon monoxide accounted for 2.19 per cent before work, as compared to 5.26 per cent after work. Also, most of the drivers experienced drowsiness and headaches during their shifts.

Carbon monoxide levels exceeding five per cent can cause headache, dizziness, and fainting due to lack of oxygen. Acute carbon monoxide poisoning, with levels exceeding 30 to 50 per cent, results in permanent damage to the heart and brain.

A study of lead levels in Bangkok children's blood:

Dr Suwanna Ruangkanhachatr of Ramathibodi Hospital's Department of Paediatrics studied the lead in the blood of children aged six to 12. She found that in 27.4 per cent of the Bangkok children surveyed, blood lead levels exceeded the standard safety level of ten microgrammes per decilitre, compared to only 5.7 per cent of children in Sing Buri Province.

Lead poisoning results in stunted physical growth, circulatory problems, and mild brain damage that can affect children's learning ability.

Blood lead levels of more than 20 microgrammes per decilitre result in a drop in IQ. Levels in excess of 40 microgrammes per decilitre can result in blindness and permanent brain damage.

Tuesday September 19, 1995

A voice from the slum



FATHER JOSEPH MAIER, 55, has been living and working with slum dwellers in the Kluai Nam Thai Slaughterhouse community for more than 20 years. Here, the dedicated Catholic priest shares a highly personal view of the violence, injustice, and dehumanising poverty that make up daily life in the slums.

C rime in the Slaughterhouse — we're talking about street crime here; the violent bloody stuff you can see and that fits into a newspaper picture. Not the uptown kind, like fiscal years and large purchases being timed according to retirement dates.

Unsolved crime is fashionable in the Slaughterhouse, or *rong mu*. The rape of a 13-year-old girl a few months back, for example. They haven't found the bad guys... the lost-and-found game is usually based on finance: the financial prowess of the victim's family, or friends.

If the victim has a "loud" name, as we say, or has money in the bank rather than a simple one-baht weight gold chain around his or her neck — then the bad guys get found. Otherwise, they usually stay lost.

And the unreported crimes. You can't do anything if it's not written down in a day ledger somewhere, and it all depends on how it's written down in the ledger. Just reporting an incident, or filing a complaint.

Then there is the little stuff — little to the uptown folks and the authorities. The Three K's (rubber cement glue), the Snake



In the crime-infested slums, it is the innocent children who suffer most.

Picture by SOMKID CHAJITVANIT

(thinner), and the biggest of them all — the Horse, or *ma* (amphetamines). Keeps you awake, lets you work more hours — kill more pigs, drive your truck longer, keep your drinking going longer. And the ten-baht bottles of Red Bull elixir — this time, the Red Bull you see on the bottles is legal.

More little stuff. Money lenders slapping around someone late with their debt payment, plus the loud verbal abuse. A money lender in the slums is only mouth, no ears — no listening to woeful tales of why they cannot pay.

It's really that you have no protection. Nowhere to turn. No one to help you. Some say that's how those folks in Italy began a long time ago: someone to protect you — at a cost — but a lower price than the alternative. "To ride on the back of the tiger," as we say in Thai — to stay on is lethal, and to jump off is suicidal.

The power game all over again — exactly the garbage that American and Thai movies are pushing. Some hero comes in and kills the bad guys....

But you, the individual slum dweller, sit and moan and wring your hands and take no responsibility, no stand. Or more accurately, your stand is not to take one.

Give them money, and everything will be all right. "All right" means that we can go on doing what we are doing and live in peace, and no one will bother us.

You see, I was taught that to steal, for example, is wrong in itself, no matter whether someone sees you or not, no matter whether you get away with it or not...

But crime in the Slaughterhouse, and the consequent payback, is based on face.

After any incident in the slums, when someone gets caught with their hand in the cookie jar, it's not that this is wrong, but WHO snitched, who told... and the guilty party will shoot the one who told, with no remorse or guilt about committing a theft, but simply about being caught. The guilt, it seems, is a Western way of looking at things.

You Westerners have your guilt and we Easterners have our shame.

We like to think that we need a benevolent mafia in the Slaughter-

house, a good guys' gang, because the strong here are the takers and the users.

But that's all wrong also, just a variation of "might equals right" — except this time, its MY might. It's simply a matter of time before the good guys become the bad guys and we have to go and find another set of good guys.

And the authorities are that way also. They don't go out to catch bad guys because they are bad, but simply because they make the authorities look bad. Lose face.

So the Slaughterhouse lives day to day and survives on the un-written laws. Laws that no one uptown really knows about or wants to know about. If you wrote them down, they would say, "this is not true." Or maybe it's best to look the other way.

Like Bu — the 13-year-old rape victim. Tied up and raped in the Water Buffalo section of the Slaughterhouse. Bu is wild and out of control and her mother's doing long years of hard time because she's been caught three times. And Grandma isn't the lovely-dovey, sweet and cuddly type — Grandma simply isn't a very nice person. You wouldn't invite her to tea, even in your best moments.

She yells a lot and rants constantly at Bu, her granddaughter, that she's no damn good just like her mother, and that Bu is even worse because her mom was stupid... that Bu should know better because she is in the third grade, plus she did kindergarten. Anyway, some neighbours bombed crazy on booze and *ya ma* used and abused this little girl. They used and abused her badly.

Grandmother went to the Police Station herself four or five times, and it seems that things became a bit muddled as the topic of discussion somehow changed from the rape of her granddaughter and why nothing was being done about apprehending the bad guys, to something about the policeman's parents.... Never did quite get the complete story, but Grandma is about as welcome in that Police Station as a bad case of the measles.

But this is crime in the Slaughterhouse. Two months later, and the bad guys are still loose.

We even asked a highly respected law firm for free advice, and

they sent a high-class lawyer who knows how to win just to show that Grandma had a bit of clout. But money makes a louder sound than clout, and Grandma is poor.

And we are waiting to see if these bad guys gave Bu the ultimate "jackpot", which is HIV. All tests so far show that she is not HIV positive.

Lots of taxi drivers are still afraid to drive into the *rong mu*, but that's just pure reputation. I don't think there has been a taxi driver robbed or abused there in 20 years, at least not that anyone talks about. But we in the Slaughterhouse feel a bit of mystique is always good. Keeps the curious away.

Violence is always real. It's a way of life. The way you walk with your head down, don't look people in the eye. If someone talks to you, you hurry on by without answering, and if it's a curt remark or a curse, you hurry along even more quickly, without a peep.

Some of the most vulnerable in the Slaughterhouse are the young widows, usually with two or three small children, trying to make it on their own. I call them widows because they are. No man around. Gone. Disappeared. Usually for debt. And the wife pays, or she loses the house. And if her children are older, the money lenders tell the mother to send her daughters out to find some men.

About all they can do is sell food. There are lots of small food stalls here and the Slaughterhouse never sleeps, so there are always customers.

But profits are not great, and if it rains, no one comes because our Slaughterhouse restaurants are one-table affairs, and the real profit is in the booze, especially the local equivalent of "Red Eye" — no tax. But they don't call it Red Eye, but rather "28", for its 28 per cent alcohol content. To sell booze, you need to be established — a community leader, ruffian type. Or have enough capital to give credit.

Slaughterhouse credit usually goes to the Northeasterners. The single men. They buy booze and *Krating Daeng*, Red Bull elixir, before they go to work in the early evening, and pay back at two in the morning when they finish killing the pigs. With no interest.

The anger over insults of days ago explodes later, over a bottle of

whiskey and talk among peers and fellow boozers. That's when the hurt begins, and the booze and talk are like salt in the wound. Usually it takes four or five all-night sessions to bring action. But a Northeasterner would never take on a local man, someone established here. He would be afraid to do that, no matter how drunk. He would only trash his peers.

These are the real rules and laws, and to break them is costly, even fatal.

But the women, especially the unprotected, simply bow their heads, do not look anyone in the eye, and suffer in silence, usually in front of their kids. My goodness, how that hurts — to take all that abuse and lose all that dignity in front of your children and neighbours.

I can't think of a single violent act in the Slaughterhouse that hasn't happened without a booze or *ya ma* foundation.

Except for a hired killing now and then. Or a case of someone stealing from a heroin drop. That's really suicidal.

You never steal another person's drug drop.

And the Uniforms. It's a different concept than what I grew up with in the West. Here they are usually dealers in the game, and the rules are strict. Uniforms are efficient in the slums. Nothing goes on without their knowledge, so they simply get in on some of the action. The rules are simple: not too much — don't disturb the big boys uptown. Keep them happy, and keep the area quiet.

Any idea of a crime-free Slaughterhouse is a joke and not part of the equation. "Keep it all quiet and tidy" is the basic rule. Everyone wins, no one loses, everyone is cool. Except for the Uniforms; they are the wild cards. They control all.

And they keep things quiet. But sometimes, not often, it gets too stifling and there is a crackdown, but crackdowns are also a joke. Because to crack down, you need the locals to identify the locals — and the locals to feed and nourish the locals.... These Uniforms are funny. They are hungry, and seem to simply stay hungry.

Here in the slums, real crimes simply do not get solved. But we go on — we survive.

Wednesday September 13, 1995

The Dream

When secretary KURUVIN BOON-LONG chose a hamburger as the focus of her first short story, she bit into success in a big way. Her poignant story 'The Dream' earned her the first prize in this year's UNESCO/PEN Short Story Competition. Here is the story, which tells of a boy's dream come true.

He had always wondered what it would taste like. It looked such a joyous thing to eat. All those lovely shades of brown, the sprinkling of seeds on top, and that juicy-looking chunk of meat.

The little boy turned his gaze from the poster glued on the inside of the shop window. He looked over to his mother standing behind her makeshift food stall. He was glad that she was busy. There were three customers hunched over their bowls of noodles, perched on the rickety stools set by the road. A man had ordered a take-away and his mother was ladling the broth into a plastic bag. She then gathered the bag holding the noodles and meatballs and deftly tied the two together, reached out for smaller bags filled the night before with sugar, chilli powder and vinegar, and put them all into a big plastic bag.

He thought the pale green plastic bag did not look as appetising as the big brown paper bags that people carried out of the shop. Those paper bags held so much promise.

He was seven years old. Only the other day he heard his mother discussing his age with the woman selling garlands. He wished he had a younger brother because then being seven would mean something.

His mother called. He ran to her. "Aren't you hungry yet, son?"

He shook his head. He was hungry, but not for noodles. His mother pulled him towards her, ruffled his hair and looked at him thoughtfully. He loved her and wished that they could walk into that shop together to feel what it was like. He had asked her about it and she said that they would, one day.

He knew that the wait had to do with money. He knew that his mother did not have very much because they were not dressed like the people he saw in that shop. Their clothes were always colourful and the children had happy eyes. A lot of them wore very fancy shoes, and when he watched them swinging their legs, waiting for the trays to arrive, he wondered whether he would like wearing shoes. He liked his rubber slippers, but preferred to go barefoot. He liked to feel where he was going.

The shop was getting busy. People were queuing before the counter, looking up at the list. The illuminated pictures of the food looked even better than the paper poster.

Laden trays were carried back to the tables. Children waited. Paper cups

were lifted off, followed by little bags trying to hold in the pale yellow sticks. He noticed that children's hands always reached out for these. Then came the little bundles, wrapped in paper.

The boy salivated although he did not know what it tasted like. His imagination made his stomach rumble in hope.

He watched as a little girl quickly unwrapped hers. She spread the paper out and picked up the food with both hands.

He swallowed.

The two hands were raised to her mouth, which was wide open. He watched her as she bit into the food. A bit of the red sauce oozed out and dropped onto her lap. She put the food down on the paper and, with her index finger, flicked the sauce up and licked it.

He turned to his mother and saw that she was looking at him intently. He smiled and walked to the makeshift kitchen. He pretended to be a customer and ordered a *sen mee nam mai sai phak*. His mother lifted the wire net strainer and made to pick up a fingerful of the thin white noodles. Her gaze went to the shop, and then down at her son. His eyes so bright and brave.

"I'm sorry, but we've sold out of *sen mee*."

The boy laughed out loud. He continued with the game and asked for *kao lao luk chin*.

His mother put the huge tin lid over the steaming broth holder. She walked to the garland lady who was mechanically folding rose petals and threading them on the long needle. His mother squatted down beside her and said something. The boy saw the woman nod, her face pulling up into a crinkly smile.

His mother straightened up, undid her *pha sin* around the waist, pulling out one end to a tension and bringing that end back to the waist and tugging it in. She smoothed down her blouse and pulled back her shoulders, at the same time smoothing her hair. She walked back to her stall and picked up the money tin. It used to hold powdered milk. His mother said it was the first tin of baby milk that she bought for him.

She unscrewed the lid, straining against it till the veins showed on her hand. Rust had taken over but his mother refused to part with it. Inside there were four 20-baht notes and three 100-baht notes, and some coins.

Out came a 100-baht note. She then took the tin to the flower lady for safe-keeping.

His mother called to him.

"Let's go in and find out, shall we?"
The boy looked at his mother to make

certain that she meant what she said, although she had never given him any cause to think otherwise.

She walked over to him, took his hand and together they went up the steps, passed the grinning figure dressed in yellow and red, pushed open the door and walked in.

It was very cool inside. His hands were already cold from anticipation. His mother tightened her grip as if to reassure him.

They stood behind a college student with long dark brown hair tied in a ponytail and both were impressed by the confidence with which she ordered her food. With the exception of iced coffee, her order meant nothing to them.

The girl paid and stepped to one side of the counter to wait while her order was arranged onto a tray.

His mother felt his hand tremble as they moved to stand before the till. The girl behind the counter smiled and said "*Sawatdee Kha.*"

His mother looked down at him, questioning with her eyes what he wanted to order. He could not read. He did not know what it was called. He looked at the girl behind the till and pointed to the picture. She said the word that millions of people all around the world took for granted to confirm his order, but to him that word had a magical ring to it. It was not a Thai word and he repeated the sound in his head to memorise it.

The girl asked whether he wanted anything else. He shook his head but asked his mother with his eyes whether she would want something. She, in turn, shook her head almost imperceptibly.

It arrived on a brown plastic tray. A dream wrapped in not-quite-white paper.

The boy reached up for the tray and proceeded to find a table, as he had seen so many people do, his mother following behind.

He clambered onto the swivel seat, thanked his mother, again with his eyes, and reverently unwrapped the little package.

The smell was wonderfully different. Admittedly it did not look as plump as it did in the picture but he did not mind. He picked it up with both hands and, very slowly, bit into it.

He grinned at his mother and loved her even more in his young heart.

Outside, people were looking into the shop. Looking at him. He felt that he was like the other children, all sharing the same liking for this handful of warm, delicious lump of meat and bread. Except for his bare feet.

He curled his toes and uncurled them. No, not having shoes did not bother him. He was living a dream and in dreams shoes did not matter.

ABOUT THE WRITER

By ALONGKORN PARIVUDHIPHONGS

What an umbrella did, a hamburger could do better. Two years ago, in the first UNESCO/PEN short story competition, Thailand's Supasiri Supanpesaj was awarded the second prize for her short story *The Umbrella*. This year, Kuruvin Boon-Long jumped one step ahead to grab the first prize for *The Dream*.

An avid reader, Kuruvin Boon-Long, 37, has long dreamed of putting her own pen to paper. So last August, she decided to enter the UNESCO/PEN competition, which promotes works by non-native English-speaking writers.

The Dream that Kuruvin wrote about impressed the committee. The first-time writer was awarded the 1995 first prize, which she flew to London to receive in March.

"I imagine you will be very proud of this second success for Thailand in the only two competitions held to



date. The judges thought the story enchanting and touching and the decision was unanimous," read the letter sent to the Thai PEN Centre by the competition organisers.

Kuruvin spent her early primary

school years in Bangkok, attending Sacred Heart Convent and Somthavil School, Ratchadamri. From 1976 to 1986, she studied at Mount Hermon School, Darjeeling SP, India. In 1979, she completed a secretarial course at Camden Secretarial College in Bath, England.

Married to English businessman David Paul Toogood, she is the mother of two daughters — Alexandra Charmsiri, 7, and Cassandra Rose, 4. The whole family lives in Bangkok.

Kuruvin currently works as executive secretary to M.L. Pakakaew Boonliang, president and chief executive officer of GS Asset Management Co, Ltd.

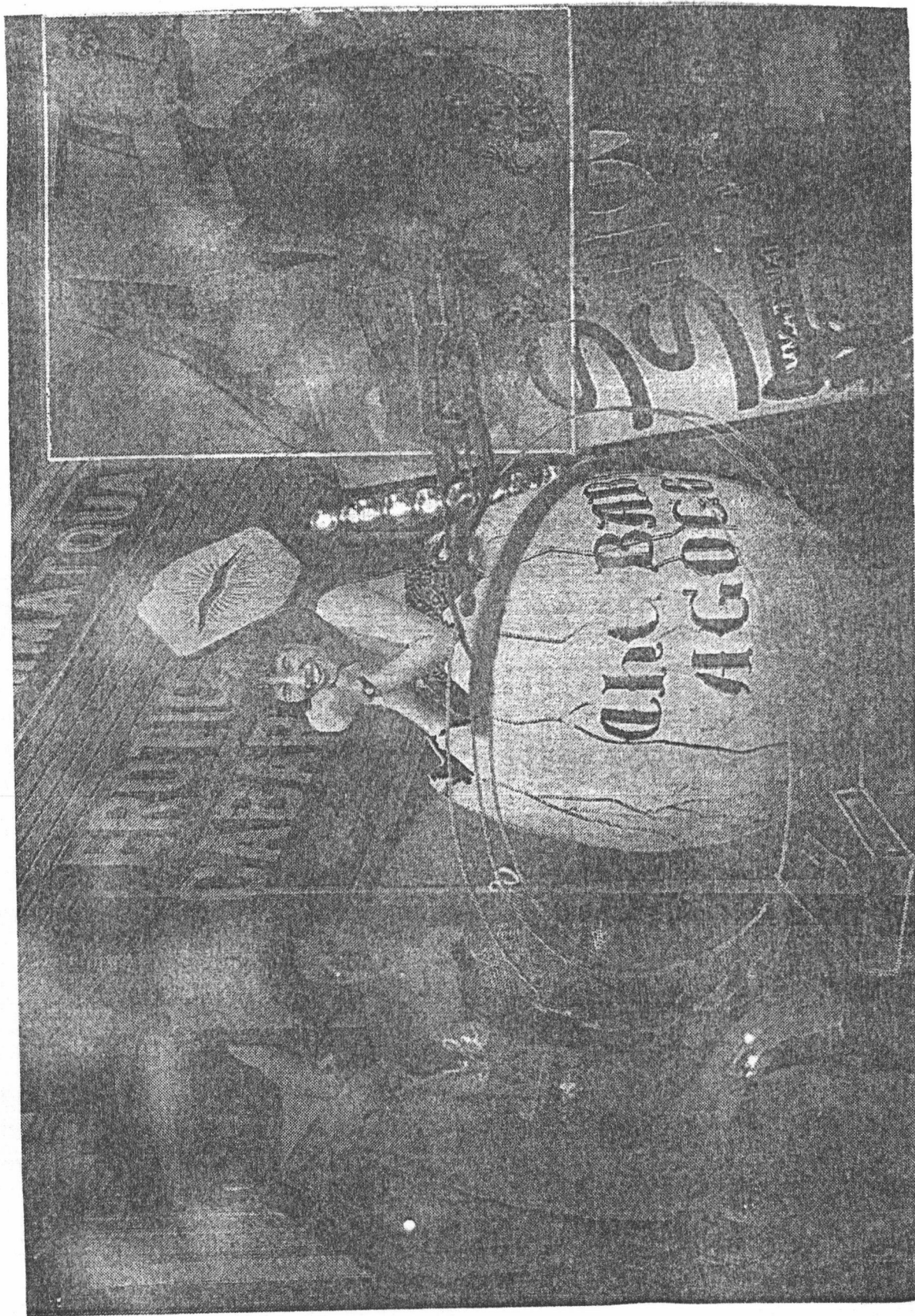
After the international success of her short story, Kuruvin is at work on her first novel. For now, she prefers not to give a hint of what the story is about.

Monday September 18, 1995

VOICES

RARELY

HEARD



Asia's commercial sex workers have long been without a voice and without solidarity. But a network is now in the works that will link them with their counterparts in the Pacific to discuss ways of improving conditions for those working in the sex trade.

Sex workers and support groups from throughout Asia and the Pacific have been invited to Thailand to discuss the forming of this network. More than 72 representatives from 16 countries are meeting in Chiang Mai from September 16 to 21 to discuss "Creating an Asia Pacific Network for Commercial Sex Workers".

"I've been to meetings like this before, but this is the first time I'll have the chance to talk about these issues on an international level," says Doe, a worker in Soi Cowboy, a hub of the Bangkok sex trade, who hoped to attend the conference.

"It will be interesting to talk with other sex workers about their work. I'd like to ask them what their customers are like and why they come to commercial sex workers," noted Doe, who always asks her Western clients why they decide to seek out Asian women.

Chantawipa Apisuk, director of Empower, a Thai foundation which promotes sex workers' rights, sees the meeting as a milestone. "There are networks working against trafficking in women and sexual exploitation of children, but they work on prevention and rescue — not on helping sex workers while they are actually in the sex trade. This will be the first international meeting of its kind," she added.

The international nature of prostitution makes such a network essential. Thailand's sex trade employs members of many different ethnic minorities and nationalities, including Burmese, Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, hill-tribe, and even Russian women.

Other countries in the region are no different. India's sex trade lures Nepalese and Bangladeshi workers; in Hong Kong and Singapore, Indonesians, Thais, and Filipinos make up the migrant labour force, which includes sex

As social norms and legal systems dictate that sex workers keep their source of income quiet, only a few in the industry have come forward to tell their stories. ETAIN MCDONNELL reports on an effort to increase solidarity among these workers.

workers. Australia and New Zealand, too, have seen a rise in immigrant women from Thailand and the Philippines working in their brothels.

Organised with the collaboration of non-governmental organisations AP-CASO (Asia Pacific Council of AIDS Services and Organisations) and AIDS-CAP (AIDS Control and Prevention Project), the meeting is a satellite event attached to the government-run Third International Conference on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific now being held in Chiang Mai.

The spread of AIDS is clearly one of the main issues affecting the sex trade. A primary aim of the conference is to pool ideas on AIDS prevention among sex workers, and ensure that these ideas reach across borders.

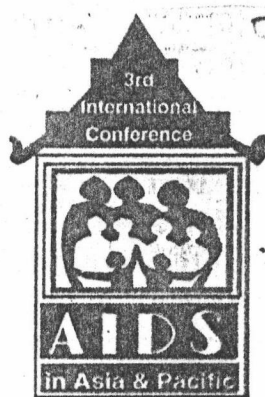
"AIDS should be considered a health and safety issue in the workplace. Much research has been conducted on ideas and strategies for AIDS prevention. Sex workers' role in prevention has been talked about but there has been no real effort to map out strategies," said Chantawipa.

The social position of sex workers has been compromised by the onslaught of the HIV virus and the phobia that surrounds AIDS. "AIDS literature has led people to view sex workers as spreaders of disease," said an AIDS worker in Chiang Mai who attended a pre-conference meeting last month.

"But it is the customer who transmits the virus to the worker, and it is the

**I try to use a condom every time I have sex,
and I tell others to do the same. For me, it's an
easy decision. I'm the head of a family in crisis.
I'm the only support they have.**

DOE, A SOI COWBOY SEX WORKER



September 16 - 21

customer who is in the strongest position to enforce safe sex practices."

"When I talk with the girls, I tell them that every man they sleep with has also slept with many others, and that they could catch diseases from him," said Marissa, an AIDS educator working with street children who support themselves by selling sex in Samut Prakan Province.

In one case, a volunteer with a Chiang Mai group accompanied a sex worker to the doctor to treat a skin infection. The doctor, immediately assuming that she was a sex worker, tested for HIV, and the results were positive. Not only did the doctor violate her right to informed testing and pre- and post-test counselling, he then refused to tell her in person that she was HIV-positive, leaving this up to the volunteer.

The doctor also refused to diagnose or treat her skin infection, dismissing her as HIV-infected and therefore incurable. A nurse later identified the woman's face rash as scabies, and it was successfully treated.

"Are sex workers overseas also at risk of disease and abuse? When they go with a customer, can they insist that he use a condom?" asked Jeni, a Patpong sex worker. "I want to know if sex workers in other countries think their work is risky, and if they believe condoms can really protect them," said Doe.

Condom quality is a sensitive topic in

Patpong and Soi Cowboy, as the government condoms distributed free in those areas have come under fire for being below standard. "It's embarrassing to hand them out," said one Empower worker, "when we know there is a good chance they will break."

"I try to use a condom every time I have sex, and I tell others to do the same. For me, it's an easy decision. I'm the head of a family in crisis," said the single mother, who also supports her aging parents.

"I'm the only support they have, so if I put myself at risk, who will help my family? It would only make our problems worse. But there is a difference between what should happen and what really happens. Who can help with this?," asked Doe.

"We must help ourselves, that's the only answer," said Jeni, restating her life motto. For many, helping themselves means working in the sex industry, which provides the income needed to put children through school, pay rent, medical bills, or mortgages, or send money home to parents.

Contrary to popular belief, sex workers have a difficult job, and working conditions in Thailand are often poor. Pay can be extremely low or non-existent, and payments can be brutally dangerous to extract.

Employers require their workers to put in long hours without days off or withhold pay, and often levy fines for minor infringements such as putting on weight, arriving late, or failing to service a minimum number of clients. Employers force sex workers to undergo health check-ups, then fire those who are found HIV-positive.

Brothel rules are even

stricter for the worker, often ruling out any negotiation with customers. As the rules of one brothel state, "Workers are absolutely forbidden to disagree with a customer."

"I want to know if sex workers in other countries have the right to speak up for themselves," said Jeni. She mentioned the 1994 Interior Ministry proposal the closing time for places of entertainment be pushed to 3 a.m. from 2 a.m. Workers in Patpong, Soi Cowboy, and Chiang Mai protested the proposed extension, as they would not be compensated for the extra work they would have to put in.

Office or factory employers have a much different concept of responsibility toward their employees than bar operators do, says Jeni. "If you work in an office, your employer takes responsibility. He makes the rules and the decisions, but he is also the one who gets into trouble if the company does something wrong. When a bar is raided by police, though, it is the sex workers

who are arrested — not the owner."

The police are considered a major source of problems for sex workers. When police conduct raids, underage girls and those without ID cards hide, as closure of bars and brothels means lack of income and more debt. As for women who are arrested, they have to bail themselves out, or the owners loan the bail money to the women and deduct it from their salaries.

Sex workers object to the policy of rescuing child prostitutes while arresting adult sex workers. Participants at pre-conference meetings in Bangkok and Hat Yai felt that the police should be concerned with protecting both women and children.

The participants agreed that repressive measures such as brothel raiding and random arrests of prostitutes should be used only in cases where brothels are abusing or confining women, and that sex workers should not be arrested in any case.

Health workers argue that police raids push the sex industry further underground, making health services even less accessible and putting the workers at greater risk.

Operators of underground brothels often indenture their workers, requiring them to repay costs they claim to have incurred in providing them work, such as commission to the agent, travel expenses, clothing, accommodation, food, and the provision of false identification.

Rarely are the provisions

of these "contracts" considered within the context of labour laws, although police often side with the owner despite the questionable legality of the debt.

The illegal and closed nature of the sex trade leaves its workers no without the option of complaining to government agencies about poor working conditions.

"Open brothels" — bars or massage parlours, which are considered legal places of entertainment — register their employees with the police. These workers, though, are rarely recognised as employees under the labour laws, so while they still have no access to government channels for protection, they can be easily monitored by the police.

Fear of being arrested makes illegal immigrants even less likely to lodge complaints against exploitative employers.

Sex workers at the meeting disagreed with the idea of legalising prostitution through registration, arguing that such a move would be motivated by a desire to protect the customer rather than by concern for sex workers.

Instead, they wish to examine existing laws that would give sex workers the same rights as workers in other industries, and to inform their peers of which laws are of benefit to them.

Workers in Patpong also complained of injustice on the part of tourist police. "Tourist police are only there to help tourists. If a tourist abuses a woman, they won't take the complaint."

They suggested that special booths be set up to field complaints from sex workers against customers, operators, and police.

For many women, prostitution becomes the only viable option for a variety of reasons. Without government support, single mothers are unable to support their children on minimum-wage salaries. Unable to find work in drought-afflicted or deforested rural areas, women and men, boys and girls enter prostitution to help pay off mortgages and debts or send younger family members to school.

Offensives by Slorc (State Law and Order Council), Myanmar's ruling military junta, are filling brothels throughout Thailand with pretty-faced cheap labour. Fear of military fines, torture, rape, or forced labour as road builders or Slorc porters, lead desperate Burmese families to believe that sending their children to Thailand is the way to a better life.

Migrants and minority groups carry an extra burden due to their lack of Thai language skills and official status, which limits their access to legitimate jobs, making work in dangerous and unsafe conditions the only option.

"If there are an estimated 400,000 sex workers in Thailand and the police rescue an average of 800 women a year, how many years will it take to 'save' all these women?," asked Chantawipa. "The best thing we can do for now is to help them empower themselves, even if that means they stay in the sex industry. At least they have the dignity of working and providing for their families."

Friday September 29, 1995

AIDS's final frontier

The impact of the AIDS epidemic on children was explored in depth at the Third International Conference on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific, recently held in Chiang Mai. WIPAWEE

OTAGANONTA talks to a paediatrician who believes that with enough compassion and commitment from society, infected children can lead comparatively long and full lives. In related stories on the back page, health experts and educators look for ways to lessen the impact on the children of infected parents.



September 16 - 21



Dr James Oleske: Lengthening the lives of HIV-positive children.

When it comes to treating children infected with HIV, Dr James Oleske has proven that loving

care is just as important as medicine.

As medical director of the Children's Hospital AIDS Programme in Newark, New Jersey, Dr Oleske, 50, has spent more than a decade developing a programme to care for infected children. His model of care is now in use throughout the state of New Jersey.

Here, he talks about the necessity of his kind of care programme — one that combines the best of medicine and humanity.

Q: By training, you're a paediatrician?

Yes, with special training in infectious diseases and immunology.

Q: What led you to start a programme for infected children?

Early on in the epidemic, I realised that as a doctor, I couldn't provide all the care needed for my patients. Children with HIV have such a chronic and complicated illness, and their families are so negatively affected by it. AIDS is what we call a multi-generational disease.

So the only way to really help a child was to support his care in the home. To do that takes a lot of people, not just a doctor and a nurse. You need a social worker, a nutritionist, a case manager, and other health care specialists.

We developed the concept of a multi-discipline case management team that includes a doctor, a doctor trainee, a nurse, and a social worker, working together to supervise a child.

In the beginning our team was myself, a nurse, and a social worker. In the early 80s, as the programme grew and more infected children were identified in Newark and the rest of New Jersey, we had to find the money to fund another team. Our AIDS Programme now has three teams, each responsible for about 100 patients.

Q: The children are scattered all over the state?

As part of our educational programme, in the late 80s we were able to get government funding to use the model we had developed at the Children's Hospital at five other sites throughout New Jersey. So now the children don't have to come to Newark. We work together to make sure that children throughout the state get good care.

Q: How does the HIV virus affect children physically?

Infected children usually are not sick when they're born.

There are two types of infected children. Those with a rapidly progressing form of the disease become sick when they're two to three months old.

They get pneumonia and infections. They get diarrhoea and thrush, a throat and mouth infection, that won't go away.

Early on they begin to lose weight and not develop normally. After that, they develop encephalitis — inflammation of the brain — that makes it difficult for them to walk and talk normally. Many of these children will die by four, five, or six years of age.

The second type are children who don't show symptoms until they're four to six years old, and they may not be diagnosed until then if they are not tested. I think you will see some of these cases in Thailand soon. We're ahead of you by about five years. These children develop a less serious type of pneumonia, and get more ear and throat infections than normal children. Generally they live past eight years old and are able to go to school. With good supportive care and medication, they may live to early adolescence.

Q: How do you deal with this second type of children?

Now that we know infected children are able to live longer, we've tried to set up networks of adoptive and foster care families.

We've trained them in how to care for the children, and we're there to help them. The need is there because the children will see their parents die before them.

We also train grandparents and extended family, but after a while, there aren't enough of them. Some children will need foster or adoptive care.

Although such a programme is difficult to start, there are probably families who, if they are taught about the needs of these children, can help. In Thailand, as the number of cases goes up, you'll have to look at the possibility of setting up such foster care programmes.

In all the cases we've worked with, we haven't seen any children spreading the disease, so it's safe.

Q: Why foster care and not hospital care?

It's better for a child to be in some type of family setup, living in a home. The hard part is to convince people that it's a safe and worthwhile experience — and to support and help them while they do it.

Doctors also need help in finding families and training them so that children who are relatively well can move to a family setting, leaving room for doctors to care for other children who have no one.

Q: What guidelines do you use to treat these children?

While we wait for that great cure, everyday care is important. We must pay attention to the children's quality of life.

AIDS is a painful disease. Physically, it hurts. And medicine, treatment, and tests are also painful. That physical pain should be treated, and it doesn't cost much money. Pain management with such pain relievers as morphine is inexpensive and widely available. We need to make sure the children receive good pain management. This also means we can carefully choose drugs and consider their side effects.

There is also the psychological pain. Children suffer seeing their parents die of painful illnesses. Morphine doesn't help relieve that kind of pain, but foster care and help from other people can.

Q: You also talk about infected children having kids themselves. How is that possible?

There are two types of infected adolescents. The first type become infected when they are adolescents through sex or drug injections. They need to understand their re-

sponsibility not to infect others. Also, they need to recognise that with good care they can live for up to ten years, so they need to take care of themselves with good nutrition and medicine.

Type two are the long-term survivors among those infected at birth. They, like other adolescents, start becoming sexually active. We need to provide them with the same education.

We don't know if many children infected at birth will survive all the way into adolescence and be healthy enough to have children, but it's a possibility. In the US, it has happened one time that I know of, in a programme in California. A 17-year-old infected girl had a baby, but we don't know yet if the baby is infected.

In a way, it's a happy problem, because it shows that children can live this long with AIDS. But it also poses a new problem, and we have to face it.

Q: People tend to assume that children infected at birth will die soon.

Many doctors have the attitude that if the baby has AIDS, he's going to die and there's nothing you can do. While it's true that AIDS is still a uniformly fatal disease and there's no cure yet, these babies are living longer.

And paying attention to things like nutrition, pain management, educational support, and foster care can add

Continued on page 34

Continued from page 27

to their quality of life. So doctors need to recognise that children with HIV can live longer than they expect, and they have an obligation to try to make those lives as high-quality as possible.

There are inherited and acquired chronic diseases in Thailand, and most doctors don't give up on those children. AIDS should be treated like any chronic disease that infects a child.

Q: Should parents let a child know about his infection? If so, how old should the child be?

There are parental rights and there are children's rights. You have to respect both of them. But if a child older than eight years old has a chronic disease which requires him to see doctors a lot, I think it's unfair for him not to be told what's going on.

Keeping that secret from a child keeps him from talking about it. I think it's better to tell children than to keep it a secret.

Q: What should be done about infected children's education?

If they're well and strong enough to go to a regular school, they should.

We've found that there is no risk of spreading the virus in school, so it's safe for other students. Going to regular school gives children a more normal life and brings them some joy. They are not isolated.

Q: Is there a particular case that stays in your mind?

One of my first cases, Aisha. She is now 17, and I've been seeing her since birth. She's a twin, but her twin sister is not infected.

She was one of those who developed symptoms by three to four months old, and we worked hard to help her. After her mother died, she was adopted by a nurse aide, Mrs William. She gave Aisha love and kindness and a home. She gave her good nutrition and made sure that Aisha took her medicine.

There were many times when Aisha was in the hospital, very sick with pneumonia, and Mrs William and I worked hard to see that she could be helped and saved.

There were many times we thought Aisha was going to die, and each time she pulled through. She has gone to school most of her life, and she has had a happy life even though she's sick.

She has survived and become a wonderful girl. So it's not hopeless. There are cases of children infected at birth who can live for a long time. It just takes a lot of work.

And it takes a family or a guardian to love the child as well as a good team to provide care.

Q: What is your advice to parents of infected children?

First, they need to work closely with doctors and nurses.

They also need to ask what's best for

their child. And they must provide a loving environment. A child who is abandoned dies much more quickly than a child who has a caring environment.

Good nutrition is also needed to keep the child healthy. Work with doctors to lessen the child's, and also to decide on the best therapy. For example, if a study is being done of a new drug, decide whether the child should be in such a study.

Q: Does being a father yourself influence your work?

When I look at my own children, I thank God that they are well. I appreciate how important health is, and what a wonderful gift children are to us.

But whether as parents or non-parents, we have obligations to children and their rights. I think people in every country with infected children need to look into themselves and ask if they can help. You can't rely on the state or a specific place to do it for you.

Gabriel Mistail, a Chilean Nobel Prize-winning poet, wrote: "Our greatest fault is to abandon our children, fountain of life." He said, to them we cannot say tomorrow, for their name is today.

Direct impact of HIV/AIDS on children

- Risk of infection from birth, breastfeeding, contaminated blood transfusions, and/or sexual activity
- Poor health, malnutrition
- Discrimination and isolation in classroom and community

Indirect impact:

- Psychological trauma of seeing parents ill or dying
- Abandonment and orphanhood
- Family poverty and deterioration of the home environment
- Poor health care and nutrition
- Ostracism and discrimination
- Less financial support for education from community and government
- Dropping out of school
- Pressure to enter labour force

Suggested measures to reduce impact:

- Family networking
- Improvement of orphanages and foster care programmes
- A more "caring" education system
- Campaigns to inform every sector of society of the above impacts and of children's rights
- Concentrated efforts in heavily affected areas
- Research in concerned fields such as education and health care

Pointing out potential impacts of the AIDS epidemic on children, public health experts urge all sectors of society to think ahead and act now, WIPAWEE OTAGANONTA reports.

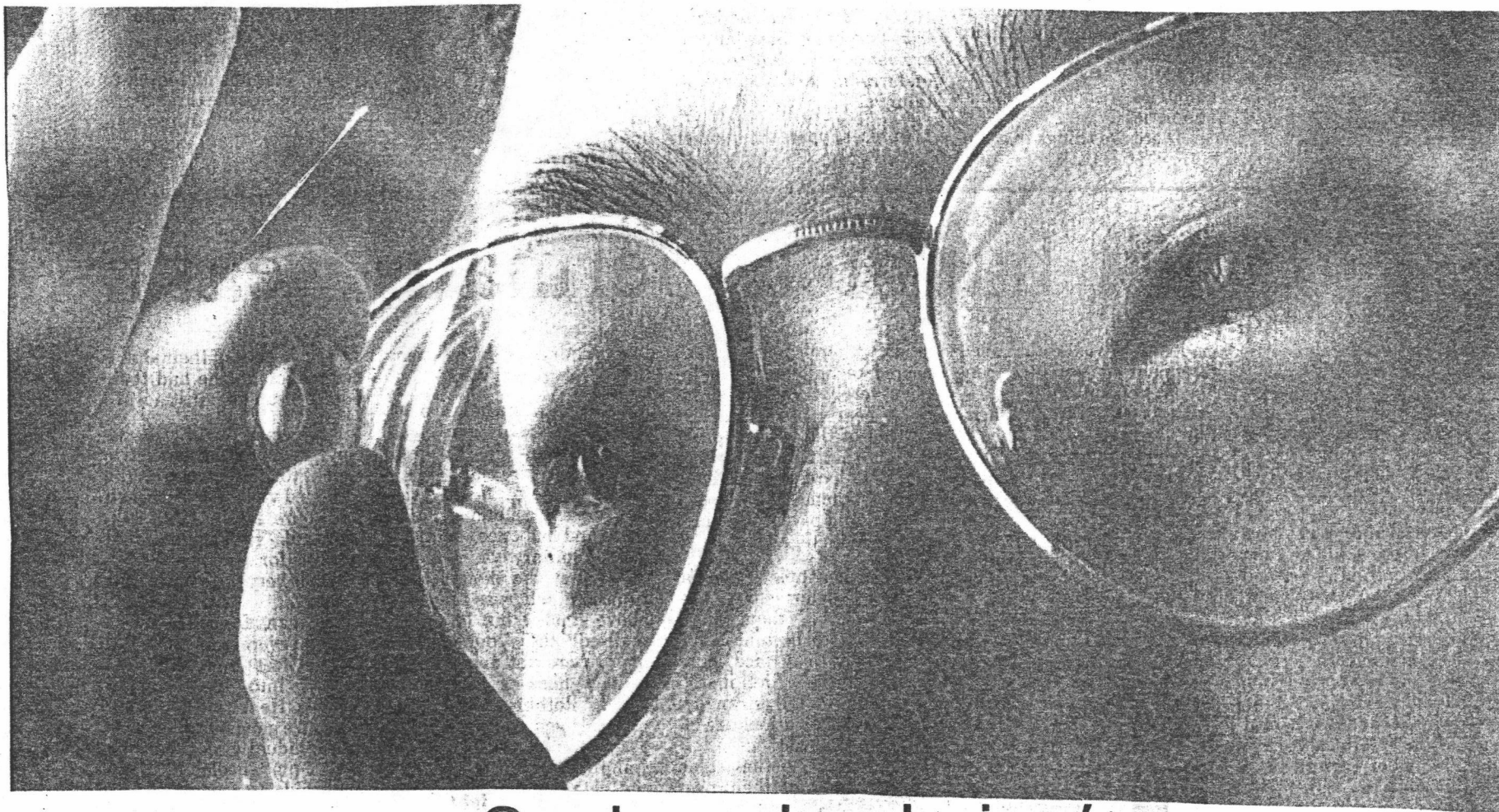


Monday September 25, 1995

Good eyesight for sale

Pictures by SOMKID CHAJITVANIT

For Bangkokians, nothing could be more convenient than getting a new pair of eyeglasses or contact lenses. A customer can walk into any optical shop with blurred vision and emerge half an hour later wearing a new pair of glasses. But as clear vision becomes just another product for sale, safety standards are being overlooked.



Seeing clearly isn't
as easy as it seems

Today, unlike a mere generation ago, wearing eyeglasses is no longer something to be ashamed of. On the contrary, modern eyeglass frames are trendy enough to make a fashion statement, and often even elicit envy from the non-spectacled.

But this growing trend bears a high cost for wearers of glasses, not only in monetary terms, but possibly also where their optical health is concerned.

The optical business is clearly a lucrative one, judging from the burgeoning presence and increasing luxury of eyeglass outlets.

As many as 90 per cent of eyeglass frames sold locally are imported. Due largely to import taxes, the price of each pair is marked up about 200 to 300 per cent from the original cost, according to Dr Kawee Lopansri, president of the Thai Optometric Association.

These factors have sent the price of glasses skyrocketing, leaving consumers little choice but to spend more and more for clear vision.

As for those who wish to buy cheaper, locally made glasses, they are usually met with low quality and limited choice — if they are able to find them at all.

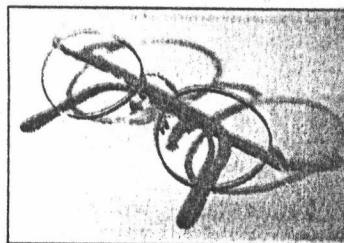
Today, lenses alone can cost up to 5,000 baht, and the variety is overwhelming.

Worse still, most optical shop technicians, who are responsible for fitting customers with the proper lenses, are not ophthalmologists. At most, they have received basic training in giving eye examinations, cutting lenses, and making glasses. Patients' eyes are examined and glasses are prescribed right in the shop, so a prescription from an ophthalmologist is not necessary.

But since turning a profit, not ensuring good vision, seems to be the primary aim of most optical shops, concerns have been raised about potential dangers to buyers.

"Many people believe the recommendations made by optical shop attendants simply because they themselves know little about glasses. Besides, they don't want to risk buying cheaper lenses. They are willing to pay more for their own health and safety," said Dr Kawee.

Consumers, he suggested, should bargain for the lowest price and acquire as much information as they can about each type of lens before making a



By **TANIDA
SIRORATTANAKUL**

decision. "Don't take advertisements at face value. You should know what type of lens suits you best. In many cases, expensive lenses are not necessary."

He also recommended that buyers visit several optical shops to find the best prices and most reliable service before settling on a pair of glasses.

And before they even start to shop around, they should first visit a licensed ophthalmologist to make sure that their vision problems are not caused by a serious eye condition.

Most people with poor vision assume that they are either near- or far-sighted, and that glasses are the obvious solution. "Few consider the possibility that they might have a serious eye disease and need to see an ophthalmologist," said Dr Kawee.

He added that many people seek medical help only after the condition is aggravated and treatment is almost impossible. In severe cases, blindness is the result.

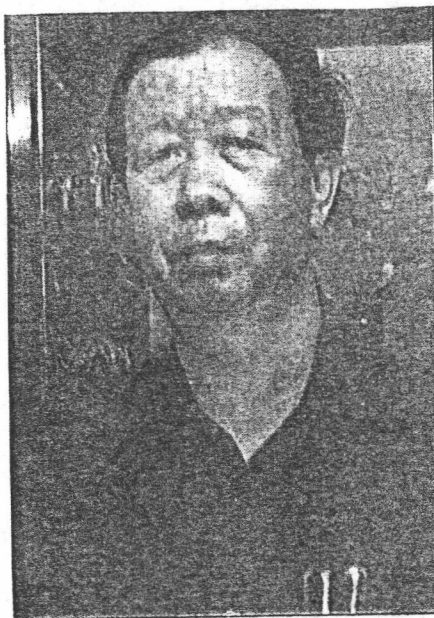
In most cases, though, ophthalmologists will not prescribe glasses for patients, as they generally concentrate solely on the treatment of eye diseases.

After being reassured by an ophthalmologist that their eye problems are not disease-related, patients must help themselves by seeking out information on the lenses or contact lenses best suited to their needs.

"At present, finding glasses is very easy, but finding an optical shop you can rely on is very difficult," said Dr Kawee, who is also the owner of a long-established optical shop in Bangkok.

"Consumers should arm themselves with information before going into a shop. Otherwise, they can be easily de-

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Don't take advertisements at face value. You should know what type of lens suits you best. In many cases, expensive lenses are not necessary.

DR KAWEE LOPANSRI

Seeing clearly isn't as easy as it seems

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ceived." He mentioned several eyeglass shops that lure consumers by offering 50 per cent price reductions and free gifts. "Customers should be wary of such gimmicks, because sometimes these 'drastically reduced' prices are higher than the regular prices at other shops. And the quality of the products is bound to be lower." Some shops sell imitations of popular brand name frames and lenses at high prices.

The Thai Optometric Association issues certificates to optical technicians who have completed its course in giving eye exams and prescribing and fitting glasses. Shops which have such certificates on display tend to be more reliable than those which don't, said Dr Kawee.

The association runs occasional training programmes on prescribing glasses for its members, which comprise about 500 shops throughout the country.

Many shops hire technicians who have graduated from Don Muang Technical College of the Ministry of Education's Department of Vocational Education, which offers a programme in working with eyeglasses and lenses. Inquiring about the qualifications of a shop's technicians is one way for consumers to make wiser choices about where to buy glasses.

Dr Kawee said that he has been lobbying the Ministry of Education to establish a required training course for optical technicians.

"In the future, technicians might have to pass a test before working in

order to guarantee that consumers get a minimum standard of service," he said.

Under such a system, optometric technicians would be regulated in the same way as professionals like engineers, doctors, architects, and lawyers, who must pass a test and receive a certificate before practising.

Trendy or not, eyeglasses are becoming increasingly common as the number of people suffering from poor vision increases.

Said Dr Kawee: "Starting from primary school age, children these days are putting great strain on their eyes by studying too hard or spending too much time in front of the TV or computer.

"For many patients, though, the problem goes away when they stop doing activities that strain their eyes."

For those with permanent vision problems, there are also ways that they can improve their eyesight on their own. Visual exercises such as focusing on faraway objects — especially green scenery, which helps to relax the eyes — can be effective in aiding near-sightedness. Gently massaging the eyes with the fingers before bedtime and after waking up can also help clear up blurry vision.

Glasses will always be a necessity for some, and the fact that they can now be a chic fashion statement rather than an embarrassing necessity is a welcome change. But in today's over-saturated market, buying the right glasses is no easy task. And making the wrong choice might mean losing not only your money, but also your vision.

Light as a feather, but heavy with risk

Though eyeglasses are certainly more chic and attractive than ever before, if given the choice, most people in need of corrective lenses would opt not to wear them. For them, contact lenses — an invisible, convenient solution that fits right into the eye — are an obvious, and increasingly popular, choice.

There is an ever-growing variety of lenses to choose from, even including tinted ones that allow wearers to change the colour of their eyes.

But as harmless as the tiny, feather-light lenses may seem, they can be hazardous if not chosen and worn with the supervision of specialists.

"Contact lenses are much more dangerous than glasses. If wearers do not take proper care of them, their eyes can easily become infected. These infections are difficult to cure, and in severe cases they can result in loss of eyesight," said Asst Prof Dr Patthanee Samsen of the Faculty of Medicine at Siriraj Hos-



By **KARNJARIYA
SUKRUNG**

pital.

Contact lenses are sold in optical shops in the same way as glasses — a technician at the shop examines the patient's eyes and prescribes the lenses, which are then sold on the spot. This easy procedure, which requires no prescription from a doctor, is even more unsafe with lenses than with glasses.

"Theoretically, contact lenses and the products used to clean and care for them are a kind of medicine. So

they should be prescribed by doctors," said Dr Patthanee.

"The opticians at these shops," she warned, "are not doctor, or even ophthalmological technicians. Usually they are simply employees who have been trained to use optical instruments and make glasses.

"They do not have the expertise needed to detect abnormalities in the eyes of customers. They simply measure their eyesight and prescribe lenses accordingly. If a patient is suffering from an eye disease, by the time he or she recognises it, it has usually become far more serious."

Since an ophthalmologist's prescription is not required in order to buy contact lenses, the vast majority of patients spare themselves the inconvenience and expense of seeing an eye doctor beforehand.

For most, simply walking into an optical shop and buying lenses is a far more appealing option than going through the complicated procedure of a medical eye exam.

Ophthalmologists ask their patients why they want to wear lenses and inquire about their medical history. They then conduct a detailed eye examination, checking characteristics such as the curvature of the eyeball, protein content, and tears to the optical tissue.

Dr Patthanee said that the ophthalmologist also assesses whether the patient seems able to care for objects as delicate as contact lenses.

"I don't usually prescribe lenses for teenagers, because they are often not careful or responsible enough to take care of them, and this could be very dangerous," she said.

Most consumers, though, are impressed enough with the sophisticated equipment used in optical shops, especially a computerised system for measuring eyesight.

Many shops have installed this computerised equipment as a selling point, rightly believing that it will

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Light as a feather, but heavy with risk

Continued from page 35

increase their credibility in consumers' eyes.

But according to the doctor, these computers are not always accurate, especially when used on children.

"In order for the results to be accurate, patients must keep their eyes completely still. Children are not likely to cooperate, so the results are often incorrect. In addition to the computer, ophthalmologists use special medical instruments to confirm the computer results."

Even getting an ophthalmologist's prescription, though, does not guarantee safety if one fails to take proper care of contact lenses.

Most contact lenses and accompanying products are imported from the US, and their quality and safety standards are strictly enforced by the US FDA (Food and Drug Administration). But users who ignore the instructions for wearing, cleaning, and storing lenses could pay a steep price for their carelessness.

"Some lens wearers are allergic to the liquid component used in the cleaning process without knowing it. Lens allergy, like general eye diseases, does not have symptoms that can be immediately detected. Only a visit to an ophthalmologist, then, can diagnose such an allergy. For this reason, ophthalmologists generally recommend that their patients return for a follow-up visit after wearing the lenses for one week.

"Generally, the body's immune system will fight off unwelcome germs in

Even getting an ophthalmologist's prescription does not guarantee safety if one fails to take proper care of contact lenses.

the body. If it cannot overcome the germs, though, symptoms such as redness and irritation show up. At this point, users should stop wearing their lenses to keep germs from spreading. In cases where the spread is serious, the entire eyeball might have to be removed."

In cases of a scratch to the cornea from a fingernail or other sharp object, wearers should also stop using the lens temporarily and promptly consult an ophthalmologist. This will allow the wound to heal. But if the cut is deep and the patient continues to wear the lens, permanent loss of vision can result.

Even for those who take the best care possible of their lenses and strictly follow lens usage directions, long-term wear of 15 years or more causes permanent changes to the eyes of users, such as a lack of oxygen in eye cells and a hardening of eye tissue.

"In some changes, contact lenses change the eye so much that it is hardly recognizable. And changes are often seen only when it's too late to do anything about them."

TIPS FOR LENS WEARERS

- Cut your fingernails short to avoid damaging eyes and lenses.
- Wash and dry your hands before handling the lenses.
- Strictly follow the directions on lens cleaning product packages.
- Avoid places with a heavy concentration of chemical substances in the air, such as car repair shops or hair salons.
- Wear sunglasses when exposed to dust, wind, and sunlight to avoid irritation.
- Use eyedrops when your eyes feel dry.
- Stop wearing your lenses if your eyes feel irritated or become infected.
- If you wear mascara, put your lenses in after it dries.
- If you wear other make up, put your lenses in before applying, and take them out before removing.
- When using hairspray, wait a few moments for the spray to dissolve before opening your eyes.
- Visit your ophthalmologist twice a year for a check-up.

According to Dr Kawee Lopansri, president of the Thai Optometric Association, research has shown that wearing lenses for 15 years can result in blurred vision. Lifelong wear of 40 years or more can seriously weaken the eyes or make them permanently red and inflamed.

Contact lenses, however, are the only viable option for some, especially extremely near-sighted people, who

would otherwise have to wear thick glasses.

"The safest way for lens wearers to keep their eyes healthy is to follow an eye doctor's advice strictly and go for regular consultations to check for changes to their eyes. If any irritation develops, or if your lenses simply don't feel as comfortably as they used to, you should stop wearing them to avoid potential danger," said Dr Patthanee.

Tuesday September 26, 1995

Nature

at its peak



**The sight of mist-shrouded pine trees makes
the hard uphill trek to Phu Kradueng's peak worthwhile.**

This Sunday, after a long rainy season break, Phu Kradueng — one of Thailand's favourite mountain paradises — is set to reopen. Once again, even elephant tracks will vanish under the heavy tread of visitors, who stream from all corners of the country into this Loei Province national park.

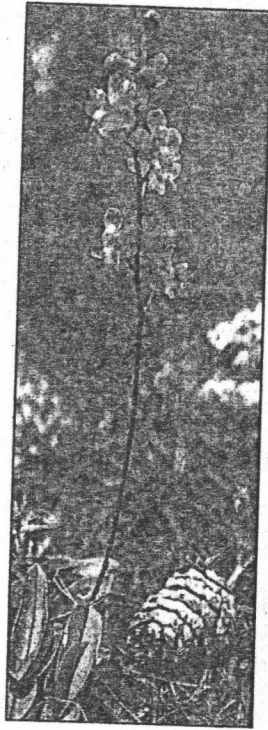
Last year alone, more than 65,000 people visited the park; the number of Phu Kradueng "conquerors" has reached more than half a million over the past decade.

Rising 1,288 metres above sea level with a steep, sometimes slippery, forest trail the only access to the mountain's scenic flat top, Phu Kradueng poses a great physical and mental challenge for its visitors.

For the extremely fit, the uphill trek may take less than a couple of hours. For most others, it can take much longer, sometimes even from dawn to dusk.

A few never make it at all; and they never come back, either.

Tumbling rocks and trees add an element of danger to an already arduous journey. This is why, since 1989, Phu Kradueng has been the only national park officially closed during the



LEFT:
A ground orchid in bloom, a common sight at this time of year.

monsoon period from the beginning of June to the end of September.

Still, the number of travellers arriving each year is steadily increasing. Lovers come in search of the perfect setting for romance, a mountaintop meadow dotted with clusters of mist-shrouded pine trees. But before they reach the top, the tough mountain trail puts their love to the test.

Many urban dwellers come here to get in touch with nature and gain peace of mind. Others, meanwhile, make the trip up the mountain just to drink and have fun — things they could just as easily do back in the city.

Artists travel here for inspiration, while photographers find a wealth of camera-friendly scenes. Creative directors and production crews choose the picturesque mountain as a backdrop for magazine fashion spreads, music videos, and TV commercials.

Local farmers join in the climb to

earn extra money by selling food and beverages to visitors along the way and at the top. The rice they serve is grown down the mountain with water from the Phong River, which originates from Phu Kradueng itself.

Other villagers make a living offering porter services. They tie visitors' backpacks to both ends of bamboo poles and carry them on their shoulders up the steep mountain path. Along the way, they often overtake their exhausted customers, who have set out long before them.

Park rangers patrol the route to ensure the safety of the forest, its wildlife, and visitors. Some of them lug large cans of petrol up the mountain to fuel the power generators at the peak.

Hunters sneak in to prey on the wildlife.

Monks also tread this same trail, seeking a quiet corner of the forest — some to study and follow the Buddha's teachings, but some to neglect them. Monks with long hair can be seen marching up and down the mountain to receive alms.

Phu Kradueng attracts so many different types of people for so many different reasons. Nature seems to have everything they want. And as long as the mountain's natural splendour remains intact — though no one can be sure how long that will be — none of them will ever be disappointed.

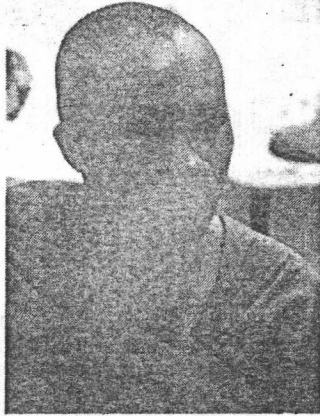
Thursday November 30, 1995

Sanctuary under siege

Protected for more than two decades by the sacred saffron robe, nature has been allowed to thrive on a patch of public land near downtown Khon Kaen. But there is no time to celebrate, as the plot is under serious threat from land developers. PANNACHAI KHONGSANIT reports.



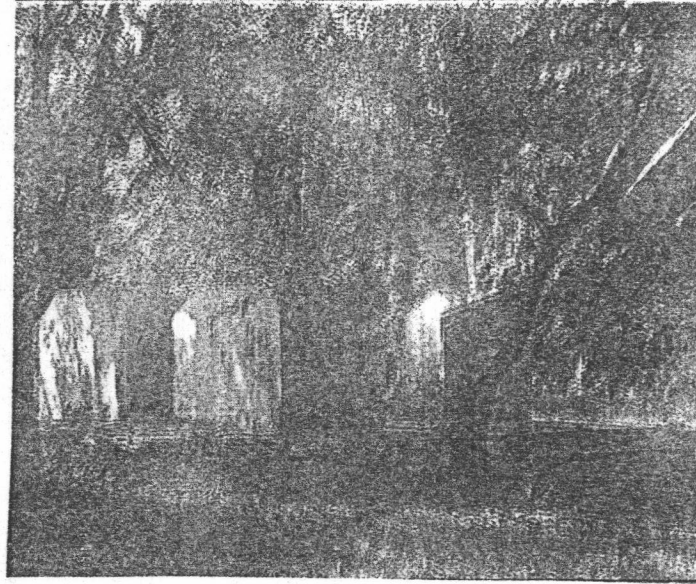
**The temple's
simple
crematorium,
almost hidden
amongst the
trees.**



There have been offers to buy the land at very high prices, but we've turned them down.

We are just the caretakers. The land and the trees belong to the people of Khon Kaen.

PHRA ATHIKARN ANEK
TECHAWARO



To avoid clearing the area of big trees, monks live in small *kuti*, or huts.

The people of Khon Kaen's Muang District regard this place as a temple. Yet unlike other Buddhist monasteries in the area, Wat Mokhawanaram is distinguished not by the roofs of the traditional ordination hall and other temple buildings, but by a lush canopy of densely growing trees that sets this piece of land apart from its dry, urban vicinity.

The 40-rai plot, located only 1.5 kilometres from Khon Kaen airport, is part of a degraded deciduous forest which used to cover the area. In the past, it served as a village cemetery and was often visited by Buddhist monks seeking a peaceful place to meditate.

The land became an organised religious ground in 1968, when villagers, fearing they would lose the plot to growing urbanisation, decided to hand it over to religion. Wat Mokhawanaram was then set up with no traditional temple structures but a few small wooden *kuti*, or huts, to accommodate the monks.

Since people respect the place as a temple — despite the fact that it is not registered as such with the Religious Affairs Department — they no longer cut down trees there for firewood or other uses. Trees and plants are allowed to grow undisturbed. In the empty spaces between the old trees, villagers and monks have also planted saplings of native varieties like *pradu* and *makha tae*, and several kinds of edible plants.

Today, Wat Mokhawanaram is not just the only remaining woodland in the area, but also a rich one.

"The secret of its success is nature itself," says Phra Athikarn Anek Techawaro, the abbot of the temple.

He explains that initially, he and his fellow monks were unaware of the role fallen leaves play in maintaining the natural balance, so they would clear away the leaves to keep the place tidy. But the practice left the bare ground to be parched by direct sunlight, resulting in very high temperatures during the hot season. In the rainy months, much of the unprotected topsoil was washed away.

Several years ago, a villager suggested that the leaves be left alone to cover the ground, keeping it humid, and to decompose into humus.

"It worked. Nature heals itself if we allow it to. The air in the area became cooler, even at noon. And we didn't lose the topsoil to water runoff anymore," says the abbot.

He adds that villagers were of great help in restoring the soil's quality. "We didn't build any large structures at this temple, so all religious ceremonies are held under shady trees. Villagers have to sit on

the ground, so they bring some hay from home to sit on. After each ceremony, the hay is left on the ground to decompose, like fallen leaves."

Apart from a religious sanctuary, the wooded compound of Wat Mokhawanaram also serves as a park for villagers from nearby communities and a quiet reading place for students. It is also a refuge for several kinds of birds as well as squirrels and ground lizards.

But because of its location on the main road, just a few kilometres from downtown Khon Kaen, the temple is being targeted by land developers.

"There have been offers to buy the land at very high prices, but we've turned them down," the monk reveals, adding that one developer recently came up with another proposal. He wanted to rent the part of the land facing the road in order to build shophouses on it; he would initially pay a million baht per rai, then let the wat collect 500 baht a month from each of the 50 shophouses he planned to build.

"But we couldn't accept this or any other offer because we are just the caretakers. The land and the trees belong to the people of Khon Kaen," says Phra Athikarn Anek.

"That land developer was very angry, and he said that even if he didn't get the land, someone else would get it one day."

As a result of his lack of cooperation with this particular developer, the abbot was allegedly threatened with poisoning and framed in a sex scandal.

The fact that Wat Mokhawanaram has been set up on public land, albeit with public consent, makes its status illegal. According to the law, only government agencies can move onto such areas. The threats facing this piece of land, then, come not

only from businessmen but also from the government.

According to Phra Athikarn Anek, the monastery has already given three rai of the land to the Institution of Skill Development. Several other agencies are eyeing the rest of the land. The latest is the Department of Vocational Education, which has requested 20 rai on which to construct a vocational school.

These takeover efforts have stirred resentment among villagers in surrounding communities.

Charoon Pilanon, a resident of the nearby Supatra housing estate, expresses his view: "Villagers gave this public land to the wat. Then the monks returned it to nature, with the support of the villagers.

"Now it is a place where people from Supatra housing estate, Ban Hua Thung, Ban Kham Hai, and several other villages in the area come to study *dharmma* and seek peace of mind. For many of us, the woodland is also a source of food and herbal medicine."

"Villagers and monks have taken good care of the land for so long, we wouldn't let anyone destroy it," he says, adding that in order to preserve the land's natural condition, villagers once signed an agreement that no other uses of it would be allowed.

But as long as Wat Mokhawanaram's status remains illegal, there is little hope. The only way to enable the temple to register with the authorities would be to legally hand over the land ownership to the wat.

The person authorised to act in this case is the provincial governor. The future of this rare piece of urban woodland, then, depends on whether he, like the monks and villagers who use and care for it, is able to recognise its importance.

Friday September 22, 1995

Progress with a human face

Though she reached the top of the government ranks in economic and social planning, Srisavang Phuavongphatya is better known as an advocate for the rights of women and children. KULCHAREE TANSUBHAPOL talks to her about her life's work, her views, and her hopes for the future.



Activist Srisavang Phuavongphatya:

A long life of tackling women's issues

from all angles. Picture by SOMKID CHAJITVANIT

Few women are given a chance to fill the top positions in government administration. But just as such a coveted job was within arm's reach, Srisavang Phuavongphatya decided to leave her high-powered career to become the voice of oppressed women and children.

The decision came after 30 years of government service. Srisavang, now 64, was then director of the Technical Service Division at the Department of Technical and Economic Cooperation.

Her work involved her closely in the nation's economic planning. "But I've come to realise that what I knew about the country's problems were only figures and statistics. I never knew what kind of life villagers were living and the problems they really face.

"I finally admitted to myself that I couldn't solve the root causes of their problems — that despite all my planning work, all I could do was to sit in my office and wait for unknown results."

She also admitted that bureaucratic red-tape and inertia kept positive changes from being made.

"So I quit," mused the mild-mannered technocrat, who turned into an activist at the age of 52.

A staunch advocate of women's and children's rights, Srisavang takes a critical view of cultural norms and traditions which exploit women and children. This stance and her systematic plans for action have won her much respect among feminists of the younger generation. With her soft-spoken manner, gentle smile, and patient diplomacy of an "old hand", however, she has rarely angered even the toughest of macho men while lecturing him on women's rights.

Since 1983, Srisavang has chosen to work with non-governmental organisations because of their flexibility and efficiency, first focusing on women's and children's problems and later on rural development.

Last year, Thai NGOs chose her to be the chairperson of their nationwide network and to act as their bridge with the antagonistic government.

"The underprivileged are gravely mistreated. They need help, and NGOs can assist them in forwarding their causes. It is unfair that whenever villagers gather amongst themselves to voice their grievances, they are branded protesters and violators of social order.

"Small people need understanding and concern from the government too. They should have the chance to present their problems the way city people do, through a public hearing system."

Growing up the only child in a middle-class Bangkok family, Srisavang attended prestigious girls' schools such as Satri Maha Pruktharam School and Saipanya School as a child. The bright young student finished high school at 16, eager to study medicine and become a physician.

Back in 1945, however, girls under 17 could not enrol in universities.

"While waiting for my 17th birthday, I changed my plan and decided to study accountancy at Thammasat University with some of my friends," she recalled. "After graduation, I got a job with the National Economic Development Council, where I learned about policy analysis and became involved with projects that gave me a good foundation in development work."

During that time, she said, she had the opportunity to work for several prominent technocrats, namely Dr Puay Ungpakorn, Dr Khamhaeng Palangkura, and Acharn Supab Yossundara. Known for their integrity and dedication, they inspired her to work for the cause of the underprivileged.

"I gradually developed an interest in education and in women's and children's affairs," she recalled, adding that she then became more interested in the work of NGOs, especially in women's development.

Initially, due to lack of interest, there was no central government body responsible for planning, coordinating and monitoring women's development policies. In 1980, with Srisavang's help, the Long-Term Plan for Women's Development was initiated and chaired by her.

The National Commission on Women's Affairs was then set up in 1979. It has since been the central government body which coordinates policies that affect women and advises the government on women's issues.

Today, women's issues are getting more attention from Thai society than they used to, she said. "There are now more women's groups working to improve the plight of needy women. We are also seeing an increase in women's participation in society as a whole."

"I'm not talking about competition. The point is that if men and women were given the chance to work together, they would learn how to share their roles and serve society more completely."

Such cooperation would also automatically ease existing gender prejudices.

"I want to see women using their full potential," says Srisavang. "They should stop confining themselves to the traditional mould of women and take up more new roles."

At present, Srisavang is falling back on her old expertise in policy planning. She has been busy assisting the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) in the drafting of its Eighth Five-Year National Plan, which will be implemented from 1997 to 2001.

She commented that the NESDB's first seven development plans focused more on economic than on social improvement.

"The eighth plan will be the first time ever that national planning has focused heavily on social aspects," she said. "Under the plan, people in rural communities — traditionally the voiceless — will be invited to present their problems and share their ideas on how to solve them."

At 64, Srisavang still juggles many obligations, meeting with both NGOs and government agencies during the week and sometimes also on weekends. Experience has taught her to

realise her own limitations, so she has ceded her leadership role in many NGOs to members of the younger generation and now works as a consultant to these organisations instead.

Despite her busy work schedule, Srisavang always sets aside time to study Buddhist teachings, which she sees as essential to maintaining her inner stability.

"I'm interested in Buddhism, but I don't go to the temple regularly," she smiled.

"I think those who work for the less fortunate have already internalised basic Buddhist principles such as empathy and compassion. Buddhism also teaches us not to take advantage of others — a principle relevant to our work for human rights protection."

Asked what she wants to do after she retires, Srisavang says: "Probably become a writer. I've lived a long life and seen so much. Like any old person, I'd like to share them with young people."

“ ”

What I knew about the country's problems were only figures and statistics. I never knew what kind of life villagers were living. I finally admitted to myself that despite all my planning work, all I could do was to sit in my office and wait for unknown results. So I quit.

SRISAVANG PHUAVONGPHATYA

Yet women's problems continue to escalate as they become more complicated, she said. And many of the basic problems that perpetuate the oppression of women remain unsolved.

"One major obstacle is persisting sexist attitudes and a lack of understanding of women's problems and gender differences," says Srisavang.

"These problems exist even among people working in women's affairs, not just among the general public."

Despite the efforts of various women's groups, little progress has been made in improving women's lot, she commented.

"This is because we can only tackle the results of the problems, not their root causes."

She raised prostitution as an example.

"Frankly speaking, efforts by both government agencies and NGOs to protect young rural girls from being lured into prostitution have little chance of competing with flesh trade operators.

"The flesh trade is big business, a vast network that involves powerful figures from the village to the national level," she explained, adding that social workers working against prostitution often receive threats from sex trade operators.

Poverty, said Srisavang, is just a minor cause of prostitution. It is rather traditional social values which perpetuate women's subjugation to men that are to blame.

"Women are still seen primarily as sex objects. Without changes to that attitude, I don't think the prostitution problem will ever be completely solved," she noted. "But I'm an optimist at heart. I believe that as long as we don't give up, the situation will improve, although it will take a long time."

She pins her hopes on the strengthening of the family institution. The way parents raise their children is highly influential in moulding young people's characteristics and attitudes, she explained.

"My parents set a good example for me. When I was a schoolgirl, my mother always brought poor children in our neighbourhood to our home to teach them. My father, who worked as an accountant for a Swedish company, lived a modest life."

Apart from pushing for national women's development policies, the veteran activist has also helped found the Friends of Women Group, the Foundation for Children's Development, and the Foundation for Disabled Children.

"Interest in women's rights is still

limited to a privileged group of people with high education, open attitudes, and good living conditions," she observed.

"Meanwhile, poor rural women are ignorant of their rights and lack equal opportunity. Severe economic hardship resulting from the environmental degradation of rural areas has made their plight even more difficult."

The Thai women's movement, she suggested, should embrace women from different backgrounds and social classes so that it can better respond to their needs.

As a longtime NGO leader, Srisavang is satisfied with the growth and progress of these grassroots organisations. She admits, however, that the NGO movement suffers from a perennial shortage of personnel and a high turnover rate. Funded by donations, NGOs offer low pay and little job security.

"This problem is especially grave in the area of rights and welfare for the elderly and the disabled. The situation is better in children's affairs, perhaps because giving children hope and opportunities in life is a more fulfilling kind of work."

Society stands to gain from increased women's involvement in decision-making, she noted. According to research conducted by the Thailand Development and Research Institute and the Population Research Institute, women give more importance than men to children's welfare and quality of life.

The election of some 900 women as *kamnan* (sub-district chiefs) and *phuyai ban* (village heads) in rural communities in the last local elections, says Srisavang, is a positive step toward preparing local women for more active roles in local administrative and social development work.

"By nature and upbringing, women are more consistently responsible, and more sensitive to people's needs, than men. If given the opportunity, Thai women have the foundation needed to become community leaders.

Wednesday September 20, 1995

Giving
something
back



Hard labour in a rural village may not be everyone's idea of a fun holiday, but for these civic-minded university students, the rewards of giving are well worth the sacrifice.

Pictures Courtesy of Srinakharinwirot University's Bamphen Prayot Club

With eager enthusiasm, most Thai students from kindergarten to university have begun their countdown. The October school vacation is around the corner, and many have big plans to pursue.

While some look forward to London, Singapore, or Sydney as their holiday destinations, others have their eye on remote rural villages. Their peers may be looking forward to relaxation, but they are looking for a challenge — this time, building water tanks for villagers' use.

In today's increasingly affluent society, more and more students are opting for commercialised "language courses" abroad — expensive trips geared toward learning a little bit of English, seeing the sights, and shopping.

But among some, the spirit of giving is still intact. Volunteer camps are organised by groups of university students who realise that the classroom is not their single source of knowledge, and for whom a diploma is not the only goal they expect to achieve in university.

"It's a dream come true for me," said Kanokporn Wiwattanakorn of Thammasat University. "Doing something to help the poor is one of my prime objectives while studying at university," added the senior in the Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy, who has par-

ticipated in volunteer camps every year since she was a freshman.

Before entering university, she promised herself that if she passed the entrance examination, she would not miss out on a chance to help the poor. "I do volunteer work because I don't want to be useless. And just as importantly, it gives me a sense of pride and happiness."

Today, as a camp leader, Kanokporn still finds her work very challenging. "Coordinating and dealing with people who come from such different backgrounds is even more difficult than the hard work of the camp," said the 21-year-old student. As the camp leader, Kanokporn is carrying out an advanced survey in an impoverished area of Chumphon Province to prepare for next month's project, in which she and about 30 other students will build water tanks for the villagers there.

"We have to choose the activity that suits our capabilities best. We don't have enough manpower to build a building, so the best we can do this time is build the tanks," she said.

At all universities, both state and private ones, the volunteer camps are initiated and run by the students themselves, while teachers act as project advisors.

Classrooms, libraries, latrines, water tanks, and playgrounds are among the contributions the students make to the rural poor during their school vaca-

tions. What gets built where and when depends on the number of students and their abilities, Kanokporn explained.

Recently, however, camp activities have been adapted to cater more effectively to the needs of villagers, who, because of their minimal knowledge, are vulnerable to all forms of exploitation.

"Originally, we helped them by building permanent structures — fulfilling their external needs," said Punsak Chanreang, a university official who oversees Thammasat's volunteer camp programme. "Now, we're trying to equip them with the information they need in their daily lives, especially in areas like public health and the law," he explained.

At some camps, students teach rural children basic knowledge and share with them interesting experiences that they would not otherwise be exposed to. After strong bonds have been forged between two groups of people from such different walks of life — urban university students and rural children — the camps usually end in tears.

Many students have kept these bonds intact by revisiting the village during their next vacation to see the fruits of their efforts. Some send money to support the children's education, while others decide to take the students under their wing, offering long-term financial support or bringing them to Bangkok to live with them.

The student volunteers may differ in their approaches to camp activities, but Punsak believes that they are all motivated by the common goal of helping the poor.

There is no curriculum that teaches students how to be good volunteers. Their successes are the fruits of their own inspiration and, sometimes, the help of their predecessors.

"Strong determination is the most important tool needed to overcome obstacles," added Kanokporn. "It's a voluntary job, so we have to put our time, energy, and sometimes money into accomplishing our goals."

For some students, heavy involvement in volunteer activities takes a toll on their academic performance.

Students, Kanokporn insisted, must learn to plan well so that they can successfully juggle their volunteer activities and their academic obligations.

In recent years, university budget cuts have forced student volunteers to work harder than ever to see their projects come to fruition. "We have to have a good plan in order to bargain for funds from the university," she said.

"This year, we need about two million baht to run 15 camps, but the university has approved only 700,000 baht. We don't know yet how we'll get the rest," she said, obviously concerned.

Many Bangkokians may be familiar with the sight of students standing on the sidewalk, holding a collection box and asking for donations from passers-by to help support their volunteer camps in the provinces. Some play the guitar and sing in exchange for money.

"It's a way of getting money other than asking private companies to sponsor us. But it tends to be more difficult, because we have nothing to give people in return except a 'thank you very much,'" said a Ramkhamhaeng University student volunteer.

Interestingly, while volunteer work might affect students' academic performance, their volunteer certificate could also earn them extra points when they apply for jobs after graduation. Employers are beginning to recognise

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volunteer activities as a valuable experience that makes students more flexible and better able to work with others in high-pressure situations.

This, however, has led some students without genuine interest to become volunteers. Although most volunteers are genuinely devoted to their work, some participate just so they can get the university certificate guaranteeing that they did volunteer work — and make themselves more attractive to prospective employers.

At the end of each academic year, Punsak is often approached by graduating seniors who suddenly wish to participate in volunteer ac-

tivities.

"But that's better than doing nothing at all for the public," commented Punsak, who has worked with Thammasat students for more than 20 years. He noted that after graduation, students who have participated in volunteer activities — even if just once — tend to adapt to their new situations more quickly than those who have never experienced working at a camp.

"They know how to work as a team. They are more flexible and outgoing," he said, adding that many parents have told him that their children were transformed after participating in a camp. "They are surprised that their kids can wash dishes and cook."

Every volunteer has his or

her own designated duty at the camp, so everyone has to work. "At the camps, we do without the comforts of home. Sometimes, we don't have a bath for three days because there's no water," Kanokporn said.

Volunteer leaders have admitted that it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit volunteers. Few students from middle class families feel enough obligation toward society to make them sacrifice comfort and luxury and spend a hard time in a rural village.

"But before every camp, we tell the participants what kinds of hardships we'll face so that they can decide if they want to go," said Yokwisai Kongpan, a third-year student at Thammasat's Faculty

of Law and a camp leader.

Thorough preparation is essential, he said, especially for big camps. Participants have to be interviewed by the camp's organisers to make sure that they can handle the camp conditions.

"The camp location is also a significant deciding factor for students," he said. If it is located at the seaside or in a scenic mountainous area, it will attract more volunteers. But if we're going to Isan, it's harder to convince people to go with us."

Punsak agreed that the number of student volunteers is steadily decreasing. Most students opt for lighter recreational activities, while others steer clear of any extra-curricular pursuits that

might affect their academic performance.

"I don't want to say that they are selfish, because the environment has changed. There is now a wide choice of activities that may be more attractive to students than the camps. So today, only those who are really devoted take part in volunteer activities," said the student advisor.

The spirit of volunteerism has certainly been shaken in today's materialistic society. Yet as some continue to look for ways to help others rather than themselves, the true merit of their contributions is there for all to see — as solid as a water tank, as strong as a classroom.

Monday September 11, 1995

Not as
GREEN
as
it looks

Today's health-conscious consumers are willing to pay the price for chemical-free vegetables. But with minimal safety controls in place, most produce on the market is soaked with pesticides and other toxic substances. Consumers, then, must arm themselves with the knowledge needed to make safe and healthy choices. TASSANEE VEJPONGSA and TANIDA SIRORATTANAKUL report. Pictures by SMITH SUTIBUT





Two milligrammes of DDT might seem like a very low amount. But if you consume it over a period of ten years, its toxicity is bound to have an effect on your health.

VITON PANYAKUL

As health-conscious attitudes sweep through society, consumers are doing their best to ensure a wholesome diet for themselves. Knowing that their bodies are already being assaulted by pollution, many opt for what they believe are natural and pesticide-free foods, even if they have to pay more for them.

The problem, however, is how to prevent consumers from being cheated. How can they know for sure that the vegetables or fruits they buy at higher prices are really all-natural? Is there a way for consumers to test these products for themselves? Or can they count on any government agency to do the checking for them?

Several companies sell produce labelled "pesticide-free" in supermarkets. In addition, there are over 20 "green" product shops in Bangkok selling a variety of agricultural products. These shops claim that their goods come directly from farmers who do not use chemicals.

For the time being, it seems that consumers can depend only on themselves to get the information they need to buy these products wisely.

It is useful to know that there are three groups of vegetables available on the market. The first group are those most commonly sold at fresh open markets or supermarkets, which go through no screening process of any kind. These pose the most serious health threat because they have usually been exposed to an enormous amount of pesticides and fertilisers.

Second are vegetables that have received safety labels from the Ministry of Agriculture's Department of Agriculture and Department of Agricultural Extension. Both agencies, using the same standards, occasionally test vegetable samples to see whether the amount of chemical residue exceeds the safety limits set by the Ministry of Public Health.

Products that pass the test receive an official label that reads *phak anamai*, or "hygienic vegetables", and are sold primarily in modern supermarkets.

But this guarantee is less reassuring than it appears.

In fact, the standards used to test the vegetables allow a certain amount of pesticide residue. The labels, then, do not mean the products are pesticide-free.

"Consumers should be aware that even vegetables that pass the government's safety test contain a considerable amount

of residue of pesticides like DDT," says Vitoon Panyakul, Director of the Green Net Group, a non-governmental organisation which promotes chemical-free farming among small-scale farmers.

Indeed, the standard set by the Ministry of Public Health is a very loose one. The highly toxic pesticide DDT, or Dichlorodiphenyl Trichloroethane — which has been outlawed in many countries and banned by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation — is permitted at levels of up to two milligrammes per kilogramme.

In addition to DDT, the Thai authorities are generous in their maximum allowances of more than 20 other toxic substances. This leniency arises from the belief that chemical pesticides and fertilisers are necessary to farming, and therefore avoiding residue altogether is unrealistic.

"Two milligrammes of DDT might seem like a very low amount. But if you consume it over a period of ten years, its toxicity is bound to have an effect on your health," says Vitoon.

"These labelled vegetables are certainly safer than those without the official labels. But consumers should not be misled into thinking that they are chemical-free and totally safe for consumption."

Instead of simply issuing labels, both departments should provide consumers with more information on the testing process and the standards they use.

"People have the right to know what they're buying and eating," he stresses.

Apart from the "hygienic" vegetables available in regular markets, another option for consumers is natural products sold at shops run by non-governmental organisations like Vitoon's Green Net Group.

Green Net is a network of some 50 Thai NGOs that are currently working with small-scale farmers to

switch from chemical to natural farming in the belief that natural methods will benefit consumers, farmers, and nature in the long run. The network also helps these farmers find a market by buying the products and distributing them to their outlets in Bangkok.

Green Net's agricultural products, which range from fresh vegetables to rice and herbs, do not undergo government testing, so they have no official approval.

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Cool Season (December to January)

- Cabbage
- Carrots
- Tomatoes
- Broccoli
- Kana (Chinese kale)
- Pumpkin
- Cauliflower
- Green beans
- Green peas
- Wing beans
- Onions
- Bell peppers
- Tang-o
- Puay-leng (Spinach)



Hot Season (February to May)

- Lettuce
- Cucumber
- Phak bung (Morning glory)
- Buab (Luffa)
- Cha-om
- Dok Khae
- Kwang tung (Chinese cabbage)



Rainy Season (June to September)

- Cha-om
- Phak bung (Morning glory)
- String beans
- Cucumber
- Lettuce
- Chillies
- Buab (Luffa)
- Tam lueng (Ivy gourd)
- Bamboo shoot
- Mara (Bitter melon)
- Phak Chi (Coriander)
- Ton Hom (Spring onion)



Food Graphic: Vitoonchai Kaewwong

Not as green as it looks

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The only information provided to consumers on the package is where the products were grown, and in some cases, the names of the farmers' groups which grew them.

Asked how the group ensures that the products are really pesticide-free, Vitoon responds that its members, NGOs which work closely with the farmers, are able to effectively monitor the farming process.

These natural products, however, are not available to the general public on a large scale.

According to Vitoon, it is difficult for non-profit organisations such as his to compete in the mainstream market, which requires a big capital investment for fancy packaging and mass distribution. Also, small organisations cannot afford the months-long wait to get the returns on their invest from department stores supermarkets.

"Only big suppliers or agricultural companies can do that," he explains.

Although Vitoon is confident in the agricultural products sold by his group, he admits that the lack of a central agency with the legal power to ensure the safety of food products such as fruits and vegetables creates much headache for consumers.

The buying public must decide for themselves from whom they wish to buy and whom they can trust.

Fortunately, in addition to the official safety labels, there are measures consumers can take to protect themselves from chemical-soaked vegetables.

First, check the vegetables' appearance. Organically grown vegetables normally have holes in them, indicating that they have been eaten by worms or insects. Beautiful, perfect-looking vegetables are the most dangerous kind.

If buying green products isn't an option for you, clean vegetables thoroughly before eating them to help reduce the risks posed by toxic residue.

According to Vitoon, though, safety-conscious consumers need to do more than this: they need to change their eating habits. In the past, certain types of produce were available only at certain times of the year. But since consumers want to be able to buy their favourite fruits and vegetables all year round, farmers have responded by using heavier doses of chemicals to grow them out of season — at the cost of their own health and that of consumers.

Vitoon urges consumers to be aware that eating their favourite produce when it is not in season is actually a dangerous habit, and one which promotes the use of unsafe farming methods.

"It is useful to know which fruits and vegetables can be grown without dangerous chemicals during the cool season so that you can buy them in the market with some confidence."

It is best, he says, to eat indigenous vegetables because they grow naturally. Unfortunately, most modern Thais have lost touch with what these indigenous vegetables are.

In a country with no systematic screening process for agricultural products, eating one's vegetables seems to be a risky proposition. Consumers, though, can minimise the risk by exercising their power to buy and consume wisely. Rather than simply accepting what the market has to offer, they need to educate themselves about how to select vegetables that are as healthy as they look.

Wash those chemicals away

If you cannot buy chemical-free vegetables or plant them on your own, the right washing and cooking methods can help reduce the toxicity of produce bought at fresh markets or supermarkets.

— Wash vegetables in a solution of one spoonful of sodium bicarbonate per 20 litres of warm water. Soaking for 15 minutes will neutralise 90 to 95 per cent of toxic substances.

— Soak the vegetables in a mixture of water and vinegar for 15 minutes. This should reduce toxic levels by about 60 to 85 per cent.

— For leafy vegetables, remove the leaves one by one and rinse them in clean water for two minutes. This should wash about 55 to 65 per cent of pesticides off the vegetables.

— After washing the vegetables, soak them in clean water for 15 minutes. This should get rid of an additional seven to 35 per cent of toxic substances.

— Parboiling the vegetables in hot water can reduce toxic substances by about 50 per cent.

— To avoid the heaviest pesticide contamination, dispose of the outside leaves of leafy vegetables.

— Mix half a spoon of chlorine powder with 20 litres of water and soak the vegetables in the mixture for 15 to 30 minutes.

— Wash vegetables in four litres of water mixed with a few drops of potassium permanganate (*dang taptim*).

— Wash vegetables in clear lime juice.

— Wash vegetables in salt water (two spoons of salt per four litres of water).

— Wash vegetables in *nam sao khao*, the water left over after washing rice before cooking.

Monday December 4, 1995

Paying up to slim down

As Thai people become more affluent, they are also becoming fatter. Feeling weighed down by excess kilogrammes, many pay large amounts of money to slim down at commercial weight-loss centres. But their programmes are often ineffective, or worse, dangerous. JUTARAT TONGPIAM reports.

Is your weight
where it
should be?

According to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), adults' optimal weight can be assessed by calculating their body mass index (BMI).

The BMI is a measure of fatness or leanness, and is determined by dividing one's weight in kilogrammes by the square of their height in metres.

The formula is: BMI equals (weight) divided by (height x height).

For example, an adult who weighs 75 kilogrammes and is 1.70 metres tall has a BMI of 26.

If your BMI is:

- below 18.5, you are underweight;
- 18.5 to 25, you are within the normal range;
- 25 to 30, you are probably overweight;
- above 30, you are probably obese.

This is only a rough guideline. Desirable body weight is related to age and sex as well as height. Generally, men are heavier than women of the same height because they tend to have larger bone structure and greater muscle mass.

Extremes of weight loss or weight gain should be avoided. The real risk to health comes from being over-fat, not just from being overweight. It is much harder to lose and keep excess weight off than never to gain it.

Tips for healthy weight loss

Losing weight means consuming fewer calories and exercising more. It does not, however, mean starving oneself; everyone's body has basic nutritional requirements which must be met every day in order to stay healthy. Rather than skipping meals altogether, the best way to lose weight is to modify the diet and exercise on a regular basis.

Those who wish to lose weight should make the following adjustments to their diet:

- Avoid foods high in calories, especially calories from fat.
- Increase intake of fibre-rich foods including fruit, vegetables, and whole grain products.
- Substitute starchy foods such as rice, pasta, bread, and potatoes for fattier foods
- Eat regular meals; starving yourself will only make you eat more in the long run.
- Drink water with meals to help increase your feeling of fullness.
- Reduce alcohol intake.

Perhaps the most important element of weight loss is consistent exercise, which burns excess calories. Start by simply walking more, then gradually increase the intensity of the exercise and incorporate it into your daily routine.

As in any increasingly affluent society, Thais find themselves eating an ever greater amount of high-calorie foods full of fat and sugar. At the same time, modern comforts allow them to live a sedentary life; for a growing number of people, their most strenuous physical activity is lifting a steady diet of fast-food hamburgers to their mouths.

The results of this abrupt change of lifestyle are obvious: expanding waistlines and climbing levels of body fat, especially among younger people.

While most of us are spending more to gratify our tastebuds, there are also those who pay to reverse the results of their unhealthy habits at expensive weight-loss centres.

Nanthika is one of them.

For three years, she battled her weight with diets, but she always put the weight back on. Eventually, she tried another technique: visiting a slimming centre.

"I was unable to control my eating habits

on my own, so I went to a well-known slimming clinic in Bang Phlad," said Nanthika, who asked that her surname not be used. "Doctors there gave me a physical examination and several kinds of medicine to take. I was allowed eat whatever I wanted, except for dairy products, coconut milk, and sweets."

Nanthika was confident that she had made the right decision. The clinic looked modern and clean, and there were professional-looking personnel in white doctors' coats taking care of her. There were also plenty of other overweight clients lining up for services.

But slick appearances soon gave way to suffering and danger.

The "doctor" had ordered Nanthika to take two different kinds of pills twice a day, in the morning and before bedtime. "Initially, the drugs made me feel extremely energetic, almost hyperactive. I wanted to keep working and working and never took a rest. After a few weeks, I began feeling sleepy during the day but I couldn't sleep at

night. My appetite was certainly under control, but I was always thirsty and I suffered from diarrhoea. I felt awful," she recalled.

The pills did succeed in reducing her weight. Within several weeks, her weight had gone down from 48 to 40 kilogrammes.

While taking the medication, she became ill and had to seek medical care several times. After two months, she decided to stop her weight-loss course there. Soon afterward, she returned to her original weight.

She later returned to the clinic to seek advice about weight control from her doctor at the clinic. He told her that her failure to lose weight was her fault, because she had stopped taking the medication. He suggested that she begin another course of medication, but she refused.

The two weight-loss drugs commonly prescribed in Thailand are legally defined as hazardous substances under special control by the FDA. According to Assoc Prof Kampil Sriwattanakul of Mahidol University's Faculty of Science, "Technically, a doctor's prescription is required to buy either of them. But in practice, they are easily available at drugstores, and weight-loss clinics provide unlimited amounts of them to their clients."

Weight-loss drugs, which work by suppressing the appetite, are in fact a kind of amphetamine. They cause loss of appetite, insomnia, and abnormal heartbeat, and long-term use can lead to addiction. Although new, safer weight-loss drugs have been developed, these have side effects such as drowsiness, diarrhoea, and constipation.

Assoc Prof Kampil further explained, "Patients who use these drugs should do so under close medical supervision. They should also work on developing healthy, moderate eating habits. After a few months of practice while on the medication, they can improve their habits enough to keep their weight down permanently without the use of drugs."

Physicians and patients alike, though, tend to base weight-loss programmes solely

on the drugs' effect. Patients continue with their unhealthy eating habits, and physicians often pay insufficient attention to them. Quick results as proven by the needle on the scale seem to be their only concern.

According to a 1994 nationwide health survey conducted by the Ministry of Public Health in conjunction with the BMA and several state universities, 16.7 percent of Thais in their 20s are overweight, while four percent are obese, or extremely overweight.

As people get older, their weight generally increases; the age group with the highest instance of overweight and obesity was 50 to 54 years.

A greater proportion of women than men were found to be overweight or obese, and these conditions were more common in Bangkok than in any of the country's four provincial regions.

Despite Nanthika's frightening experience at the first clinic, she continued in her quest for a slimmer figure. She became a member of an upscale fitness and slimming centre at Central Plaza shopping centre.

"I was determined to lose weight without jeopardising my health, so I tried every weight-loss programme they offered: vibration therapy, hot and cold massage, electronic stimulation, aerobics classes, and exercising with modern fitness machines."

Since the first commercial weight-loss centre opened in Thailand in 1968, countless others have followed, gaining a strong foothold among Thai consumers, mostly women. Today, an ever-increasing variety of techniques are used to achieve results.

As the weight-loss business booms, there are of course those who take advantage of the opportunity. Some weight-loss clinics are operated by non-medical personnel who prescribe diet medicines to their clients, which is illegal.

The FDA has control only over weight-loss establishments which use medical techniques such as electronic massage machines and liposuction.

To protect themselves from substandard service, consumers should make an effort

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After a few weeks on the pills, I began feeling sleepy during the day but I couldn't sleep at night. My appetite was certainly under control, but I was always thirsty and I suffered from diarrhoea. I felt awful.

WEIGHT-LOSS CLINIC CUSTOMER NANTHIKA

Paying up to slim down

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to find out if the staff prescribing medicine at clinics are actually doctors.

Many consumers are lured into paying high prices for programmes that promise results, but often fail to deliver them.

The rates charged by the centres for their services vary depending on the duration of the programme, the part of body that needs to be slimmed down, or the client's body weight compared to his or her target weight.

Unfortunately, there is no government agency responsible for regulating these fees, which can range anywhere from 700 to millions of baht.

According to the Department of Internal Trade, this type of business is classified as a "luxury service", meaning that it is not a necessity and can therefore be left up to consumers' own judgement. Accordingly, it does not fall under the Department's jurisdiction.

Nanthika shelled out almost 100,000 baht on organised weight-loss programmes, but ultimately she found herself back where she started. Her weight decreased for a short time while she was on the programmes, but it crept back up as soon as she went off of them.

After her second fruitless foray into the world of commercial weight loss, Nanthika gave up on the centres altogether. She began consulting a dietitian and learning more about nutrition and health. She eats a well-balanced diet and swims three times a week for exercise. She now weighs 48 kilograms. Her figure may not be ideal, but she is happier than ever.

Having come to terms with her body type and accepted that good health is more important than a slim figure at all costs, Nanthika no longer feels any stress about her weight.

But she is worried about one of her young cousins: "She weighs 100 kilograms, and it's taking a negative toll on her life. She hasn't been able to find a job since she graduated from university recently. I only hope that she won't make the same mistake I did, looking for a quick fix."

□ Consumers who feel they have been cheated by weight-loss centres can lodge a complaint with the Consumer Protection Board in person or mail it to the following address: Office of the Consumer Protection Board, Government House, Thanon Nakhon Pathom, Dusit, Bangkok 10300.

In addition to the complaint, consumers should enclose all relevant evidence as well as any printed advertisements for the establishment in question.

□ Note: Some information in the above story was provided by Smart Buyer magazine.

Monday November 20, 1995

Picking the perfect pooch

When it comes to love and attention lavished on man's best friend, Thai dog owners are unsurpassed by their counterparts anywhere in the world. Still, love at first sight isn't enough when it comes to choosing your pet wisely, reports VARALEE SINLARAT.



I AM FROM SA...

He'll always lend you an ear. He doesn't outtalk you. He's eager for a cuddle whenever you are. And he never complains about your cooking.

It's no wonder that dogs top the list of man's best-loved companions. In Thailand, as in many countries, the pet dog trade is a lucrative one that brings in tens of millions of baht each year.

But even though the market clearly belongs to the buyers, not every buyer gets a good deal. Customers face all kinds of problems, including false pedigrees, "odd breeds", and most disturbingly, apparently healthy puppies that die soon after they get them home.

Potential dog owners, then, should arm themselves with essential information like how to tell true breeds from impostors, and how to pick the healthiest of the litter.

As to where to shop, the dog market area in Chatuchak Weekend Market's Section 13 is a clear favourite among Bangkok residents, with choices ranging from street mutts on sale for five baht to blue-ribbon champions that fetch hundreds of thousands.

Before starting your search for a future Lassie or Benji, take heed of the following advice from the experts.

Don't go on looks alone

Especially if you're looking for a pedigree companion, do not base your decision solely on the dog's appearance.

The majority of Chatuchak dog stores, targeting consumers who favour bargain prices over fancy bloodlines, do not carry pure-breeds, although they may claim to.

"Half-bred terriers are often passed off as poodles. At two months, it's very hard to tell what the puppy will look like when it grows up," said San Suprasert, a well-known champion breeder from Heroland Kennel, which has a shop at Chatuchak.

To make sure you get the breed you're looking for, familiarise yourself with the specific features of your dream dog beforehand.

"A terrier pup might have its muzzle shaved to make it resemble a poodle. A pure-bred poodle should have a sharp muzzle and a round forehead. Terriers, on the other hand, have wider muzzles and flatter foreheads," advised San.

Those eager to own pedigree dogs should be aware that pedigrees are becoming an increasingly rare commodity in Thailand.

A pedigree is an official description of the dog's family and ancestry — a certificate that guarantees the dog's breed, legalises its existence, and helps trace the whereabouts of lost dogs. All pedigreed dogs have a registration code tattooed on their ears or undersides.

The sole agency authorised to issue such certificates here is the Dog Association of Thailand. This gives rise to several obstacles, the biggest one being time.

According to Thailand's major canine distributors — Heroland Kennel, Patama Farm, and Bualuang Canine Farm — obtaining a pedigree for a dog can take up to a year.

"This delay means that most kennels don't bother to apply for them even when their dogs are eligible," said Pornsak Sutheerat, a founder of the Dog Association of Thailand.

To make matters worse, the association is now having administrative problems and has postponed the issuing of such certificates.

"Most farms, then, rely instead on their own reputation and customers' trust. For instance, Patama Farm, a major kennel with more than 500 dogs, has been issuing its own pedigrees since it began operating in 1981.

"We mate our dogs, so we're in the best position to confirm the puppies' bloodlines," reasoned owner Patama Asavanich. "It's a waste of time to wait for someone else to license our dogs. Some breeders don't agree with our policy, but it's between us and our clients."

However, if you insist on an officially certified show-quality puppy and can afford its steep price, your best option is to buy an imported dog.

Canines from the United States are pedigreed by the American Kennel Club (AKC), while European dogs are vouched for by the Federation Cynologique Internationale (FCI).

According to the owner of Bualuang Farm, a two-month-old imported boxer ranges from 30,000 to 50,000 baht in price, while a locally-bred one costs from 3,000 to 10,000 baht. Despite this large discrepancy, the majority of Bualuang's buyers purchase imported dogs.

"Customers who buy imported breeds want top-quality dogs. They're usually aware of the expenses that go into transporting them," said Patama. "The airfare, based on the weight of the dog and the size of the cage, can run high. Most customers understand this."

Checking the bloodlines

Even if you don't care about pedigree, you should check the family lineage of your potential pet as thoroughly as possible.

"It would be better to wait for a litter of puppies from parents you know, or adopt a dog whose owners you are acquainted with. Then you have an idea of where the dog came from," advised Dr Boonchu Poolporn, director of the Thong Lor Pet Hospital.

"Buy from friends, if possible, or check the bulletin boards at veterinary hospitals. They usually have boards where sellers post pictures and information about the pups they want to sell."

Your pet's lineage is a clue to the creature's genetic character, so checking it is important.

"A dog's disposition can be directly related to its ancestry," said San. Ignore the lineage, and you may end up with a temperamental pooch

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Picking the perfect pooch

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when you expect a tame one.

"When a doberman attacked and killed its owner in a Bangkok suburb last year, dobermans were labelled a dangerous breed. Later, it was discovered that the dog was descended from warrior-dog grandparents. It probably inherited their killer instinct."

Good health is everything

Before making a decision, check the dog thoroughly for signs of poor health.

While Chatuchak Market offers the best selection for dog buyers, it is also an illness-prone zone for puppies. Because the dog market area is cramped and often crowded, most dogs for sale there — with the exception of those lucky enough to be kept in air-conditioned shops — live in a poor, badly ventilated environment.

In a typical shop, five to ten pups are kept in each pen. In an effort to lure potential buyers, shopkeepers allow, even encourage, petting. This means a particularly cute puppy may be picked up, petted, and put down by dozens of strangers in an hour — a stressful situation for a dog.

The area's poor ventilation also makes dogs tire easily and lowers their immunity, making them more vulnerable to illness, said Dr Boonchu.

The cramped quarters, added Dr Boonchu, also allow canine diseases — for example distemper (canine measles), kennel's cough, and paro-virus (which causes intestinal inflammation) — to spread quickly.

Said Dr Somboon Sutteerat, Pornsak's wife and a veterinarian at Taling Chan Pet Hospital: "Most of the sick dogs that are brought to the hospital were bought at Chatuchak. We get all kinds of problems, from distemper to pneumonia."

Even if your new pet appears healthy, check for vaccination papers anyway.

"Don't trust the salesperson. Many owners come here wondering why their newly-bought puppies are ill," said Dr Somboon. Ask for proof of vaccination, and if none is provided, start over with a new set of vaccinations, she added.

"Basics for a two-month-old pup include three combination booster shots against distemper, hepatitis, paro-virus, leptospirosis, and paro-influenza," said Dr Boonchu. "When the pup is three months old, two rabies vaccination boosters should be given." A course of preventive tablets against heart worms should also be taken. For puppies that have contracted intestinal worms, medication is also necessary, with costs varying from vet to vet.

"A comprehensive programme at Thong Lor Pet Hospital, which covers the puppy's first year, costs 1,900 to 2,200 baht depending on the size of the dog," said Dr Boonchu. "But it's a worthwhile investment."

PAYING THE RIGHT PRICE

Since every dog has unique personality traits, bloodlines, and anatomical structure, don't expect to find a fixed price for a particular breed.

The popularity of a breed can also fluctuate with canine movie characters, disease epidemics, or even the stock market. Here are some broad price ranges for locally bred dog breeds.

- Alsatian: 8,000-15,000 baht
- Rottweiler: 6,000-20,000 baht
- Doberman: 2,000-8,000 baht
- Poodle: 2,000-20,000 baht
- Shitzu: 5,000-25,000 baht
- St Bernard: 10,000-30,000 baht
- Miniature pinscher: 2,000-10,000 baht
- Mixed terrier: 500-5,000 baht
- English cocker spaniel: 2,000-10,000 baht
- Boxer: 3,000-15,000 baht

A CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH

Dr Boonchu of the Thong Lor Pet Hospital offers a few pointers on how to choose a healthy dog.

- Eyes should be clear and mucus-free.
- Gums and eyelids should be red.
- The rump should show no traces of diarrhoea.
- Proof of vaccination should be provided.
- Family background should be thoroughly explained. If no pedigree is available, bombard the salesperson with questions.
- The dog should be active and energetic. Though "naughty" dogs may be bothersome, it means they are strong and healthy.
- The body build should be neither too thin nor too fat.

GOOD BREEDING IS EVERYTHING

Dr Somboon Sutheerat of Taling Chan Pet Hospital offer the following suggestions on how to select the best-bred dogs.

- Consider where and for what purpose you want to keep your pet. If you live in a condominium, toy breeds are more practical. If you want a night-watchman, go for a larger breed.

- Take body measurements into account. The body should not be too long, but should rather have a squarish shape. The shoulder height should be two-thirds of the body length from the head to the rump.

- Check for coordination. Observe how the dog walks — you should be able to see muscles move. When the dog jumps, see whether the hind legs can carry its weight.

- Test the dog's responsiveness. Call to it and watch whether the ears perk up and the tail wags. As with a human child, curiosity reflects personality and intelligence.

DECIPHERING THE PEDIGREE

Pornsak offers tips on how to make heads or tails of a pedigree.

A pedigreed dog should have a registration code tattooed on its ear or underside. The first four letters and digits of the code contain valuable information. Here's how to read them:

- If the dog is registered in Thailand, the first letter indicates which region: A for Bangkok and the central region, N for the north, E for the east, and S for the south.

- The second letter indicates the breed.

- The third and fourth spaces indicate the year of registration.

- The remaining digits are the dog's personal identification number.

For example, if the code reads AB931234, the dog was registered in Bangkok or the central region, is a boxer, was registered in 1993, and has the ID number 1234.

A final note: consumers should beware of false photocopied pedigrees. Owners have brought cases to court over supposedly pure-bred puppies that grew up to be mutts.

Thursday September 21, 1995

A two-fold tragedy

The use of the corpse of a murdered boy in a recent police crime re-enactment has shocked the public, raising questions of whether the procedure is still necessary and how far the police can go. PATIMA THA HLA reports.

Boonsom Klai-in was shocked to see his youngest child, aged only four, become a crime statistic last Saturday. Worse yet, he was forced to see his son's accused murderer, also just a boy, re-enact the brutal scene with his son's dead body.

"It was like someone was twisting a knife in my heart, seeing my dead child being repeatedly carried up and down by the accused at the crime scene, his brains oozing from his head.

"It was the most tormenting moment of my life," says the grief-stricken father.

On Saturday morning, his four-year-old son, Thawichai, escaped his parents' notice as he left home with his new bicycle to enjoy a ride in the village. He was later brutally beaten to death by an 11-year-old, who saw a chance to get the bicycle of his dreams.

The murderer, whom neighbours described as strangely quiet and emotionally troubled, confessed to Boonsom after being promised a new bicycle by him. Police then took the boy to the spot where he told them he had buried his victim and asked him to re-enact the murder scene by scene, using Thawichai's dead body.

The boy carried his victim's blood-stained corpse, arms dangling, brains oozing from his head wounds, to demonstrate the killing. He also re-enacted the way he beat the four-year-old with a stick to finally silence him.

Like other re-enactments, it was a public affair. Parents of the murdered child, relatives, and neighbours flocked to witness how it had all happened, too stunned to stop the police from using the child's body.

The public was treated to a rude awakening on Monday morning, when several newspapers carried two shocking pictures on their front pages — one of the boy carrying the blood-stained corpse, and another of him pointing a long stick at the head of the child victim lying on the ground.

The ill-fated four-year-old was cremated last Thursday at the village temple in Tambon Lad Ya in Kanchanaburi Province's Muang District. For now, the accused is being jailed with adult prisoners, without the protection juvenile offenders are legally entitled to, because Kanchanaburi does not have its own Juvenile and Family Court. After the provincial court pronounces its verdict, he will be sent to the Central Observation and Protection Center in Bangkok, a facility for juvenile offenders.

Although reports of violence are the daily staple of newspapers, readers were still shocked by this tragic incident. It has raised serious questions about what has become of Thai society, which can produce a cold-blooded murderer in an 11-year-old boy. The murderer said he had copied the killing from a Chinese martial arts film he had seen on TV.

The handling of the crime, too, has raised criticism of insensitivity and lack of ethics on the part of the police.

Although the re-enactment was not yet finished, Boonsom said he decided to cut it short: "I couldn't bear it any longer."

When the body was laid down on the ground, he rushed to his child and held him, forbidding the other bystanders from disturbing him any further.

Pol Capt Piyapat Disakul of Kanchanaburi's Muang District police department, the officer in charge of the re-enactment, said he decided to use the child victim's body because he was pressed for time. A re-enactment, he said, must be conducted as soon as possible after the confession, and he could

not find anything to use instead of the actual corpse.

Although this was the first time ever that the victim's corpse was used, previous crime re-enactments have always created a media sensation — a motorcyclist-gunman showing the way he shot a driver point-blank in the heart of town, a teenager demonstrating the position in which he raped a girl in a bush, or a killer giving a replay of the way he stabbed his victim to death.

In this case, the graphic photographs released by the media have raised questions as to why the re-enactment had to be so thorough and detailed, and why such a sensitive procedure was allowed to be witnessed by the public — particularly curious reporters.

Pol Maj Tawee Sodsong, a Crime Suppression Division inspector, explained: "According to the Police Investigation Regulations, a re-enactment must be conducted immediately after the accused has submitted his confession. It must be done at the exact crime location and include a detailed replay of the crime so that the judge can have a clear picture of how the accused carried it out."

Pictures from the re-enactment, he said, are considered important evidence in support of the confession, especially if the accused recants his initial confession in court.

Since the re-enactment is done at the real location, police said they simply could not stop curious onlookers and reporters from watching the replay of the crime.

The police normally use volunteers as victims, and they ask the accused to re-enact the details of the crime, said Pol Maj Tawee.

["But the methods and procedures of the re-enactment depend on the police officer in charge.] I admit that some officers do not understand the concept

To protect the rights of the accused, police should stop holding re-enactments in public places. It is enough to locate the scene of the crime after a verbal confession. Such a detailed re-enactment is not necessary.

CRIMINOLOGIST DR SERIN
PUNNAHITANOND

of re-enactments and therefore conduct them incorrectly."

According to criminologist Dr Serin Punnahitanond, the re-enactment violates the rights of the accused, as it publicly condemns them before they are tried in court. It also serves to satisfy the public hunger for sensationalism, he added.

"To protect the rights of the accused, police should stop holding re-enactments in public places," he said.

The police, he said, have a duty to protect the accused from being publicly humiliated or assaulted by the victims' relatives and the angry crowd.

A number of law experts including criminologists, prosecutors, and academics, agree that the Thai police need to rethink their re-enactment procedures.

"It is enough to locate the scene of the crime after a verbal confession. Such a detailed re-enactment is not necessary," pointed out Dr Serin.

"A verbal confession combined with

other evidence such as the murder weapon is usually enough to give the judge a clear picture of the crime.

"If it is necessary to explain the crime in visual form, pictures and maps drawn from the confession are enough to make the judge understand what took place," he said.

To prevent sensationalism and protect the rights of the accused, Dr Serin suggested that in cases where re-enactments are required, they be conducted in a private place set up to resemble the crime scene.

But Pol Maj Tawee still argues that re-enactment at the crime scene is necessary, saying that the detailed police report of the event is crucial in determining the criminal's punishment. "If the evidence from the police cannot convince the judge of the guilt of a confessed criminal, then he can go free. Do you think that should happen?"

Charnnarong Praneejit, deputy secretary-general of the Justice Ministry's Office of Judicial Affairs, says the need for a thorough re-enactment of the crime varies from case to case.

"The amount of detail required depends on the individual case, but the judge usually considers pictures of the re-enactment as strong evidence to support the confession."

According to Assoc Prof Narong Jaiharn of Thammasat University's Faculty of Law, there is no law stating that the re-enactment must be conducted immediately after the defendant's confession.

After conducting a two-year study on the Thai legal system and the rights of the accused, he and a team of law scholars from several universities came up with two proposals to improve re-enactment procedures in Thailand. One is to abolish re-enactment all together, and the other is to conduct re-enactments in private locations, allowing no access to reporters or public onlookers.

"I wish the police would learn from the way Judge Pao handles his crime cases," said Narong, referring to a legendary ancient Chinese judge now featured in a popular TV series.

Judge Pao collected all the evidence and testimony relevant to the case before interrogating the accused and arriving at his judgment.

"If the evidence points clearly to the accused, then a confession or re-enactment isn't necessary," he said.

Unfortunately, the Thai police tend to press the accused for confessions, then collect evidence that sup-

ports their guilt. "In the view of police, this is why re-enactments are necessary," said Assoc Prof Narong.

The research team sent questionnaires to the police, prosecutors, lawyers, and the concerned authorities to find out if they agree with the idea of moving re-enactments to private places.

About 70 per cent of the police disagreed with the idea on the grounds that it would create public doubt as to whether or not the re-enactment was done voluntarily by the accused.

Among the other groups, most respondents agreed with the proposal, said Assoc Prof Narong, although many judges declined to answer.

While the police should reconsider their re-enactment procedures, Dr Serin said the media should also rethink their policies on publishing sensational pictures. He pointed out, though, that the implicit collaboration between the

police and the media makes re-enactment procedures difficult to change. Sensational pictures from re-enactments boost newspaper sales; police officers also benefit by getting recognition from their superiors when their work is publicised.

In addition, if the accused ends up being punished by the court, the officers in charge at the crime scene take the credit for catching them, and their work could be rewarded with a promotion.

Likewise, if the prosecutors reject the case or the court does not punish the accused due to insufficient evidence, this damages the work record of the officers in charge.

"Like people in other professions, police sometimes overlook their professional ethics, principles, or even simple morality in order to get ahead," said Dr Serin.

Boonsom's family, meanwhile, continues to nurse the wounds left by a double tragedy. "There must be something wrong with our society. What are the authorities doing to our children, to our people? And the police. I hope they never again use a victim's corpse the way they did my son's, that mine is the first and last case of this kind. And I hope something gets done to improve our failing society," said Boonsom.

THE PROS AND CONS OF RE-ENACTMENT

PROS

- It shows that the accused confessed to the crime voluntarily, not under pressure from the police or others.
- It makes victims or their survivors feel that the police are fulfilling their duty of catching the criminal.
- If the re-enactment supports other evidence, it proves that the accused is the real criminal and not a scapegoat.

CONS

- Re-enactments in public places violate the rights of the accused, humiliating them and finding them "guilty until proven innocent".
- In most cases, the police cannot guarantee protection of the accused from assault by an angry crowd.
- Crime re-enactments may serve as an example to the criminally-minded, especially teenagers.

Source: Assoc Prof Narong Jaiharn of Thammasat University's Faculty of Law

Wednesday September 27, 1995

What's in a name?

The existing law forces Thai married women to adopt their husband's surname. Some, though, are speaking out against the law and its inconsistent, unfair enforcement. As more and more women make it on their own, they are demanding legal changes which take their independence into account.

SANITSUDA EKACHAI reports.

Yupa Ratanajand. Who? Say Yupa Petcharit, and Thais will immediately recognise her as one of the country's favourite media personalities.

"I was extremely hurt when I was forced by law to change my surname when I got married," said the former TV reporter, now a TV production company executive.

Her own family name had become an important part of her professional identity, said the 32-year-old, who has been married for two years. It also brought pride to her hard-working parents in the countryside.

"Every time they heard the name Petcharit on the air, it made them happy that I had made a name for our family. It saddened them to think that it would have to change."

Adopting her husband's lesser-known surname would surely affect her career. Refusing to do so, though, meant being punished by infuriating red-tape procedures and obstinate officials' insistence that she change her

name every time her company entered a legal transaction.

"It involved so much headache that I finally gave up," she said. Yupa's way out is to use her maiden name in her professional life while using her husband's surname for legal purposes.

Yupa's resentment echoes the way many other modern Thai women feel about the outdated law which still demands that married women subjugate their own identity to their husbands'.

According to the 1962 Name Law, married women must legally adopt their husbands' surnames; they can only return to their original names if they are divorced or widowed.

Like their counterparts in other Asian countries, many Thai women wish to maintain their family allegiance after rising to prominence in business or politics with family support and connections. Meanwhile, better education and a more active role in public life have allowed Thai women to become successful in their own right. They often marry late after establishing their public identity, or stay single altogether.

Winners, losers in the red tape war

Khunying Kanok Samsen Vil, social worker: "I was a well-known athlete and wanted to keep my maiden name after I married. District officials refused, but I got around them by registering my family name as a middle name. Since then, I've advised other women in my position to do the same."



Khunying Kanok

Anchalee Vanich Tepabutr, politician: "Many educated women these days marry very late. They have developed their own identity and have a strong attachment to their immediate families. They feel they have made it in their own right, with their own family identity. Giving it up, then, is an emotional decision."



Anchalee

"A change of last name can also have an adverse effect on women's careers, especially in professions such as business, politics, or show business, in which they are public spotlight."

Ruengaew Kuiyayanont Brandt, women's rights advocate and businesswoman: "Women who marry Westerners face doubly serious problems. Once we marry, we lose our rights as Thai citizens to own and buy land. This often means losing out on business opportunities too."



Ruengaew

"In practice, there are ways to bypass the rules and regulations. It would save a lot of time and trouble, though, if married women were given the same rights as their male counterparts."

Dr Samira Jittaladakorn, law lecturer: "My parents supported my education until I received my doctorate degree."



Dr Samira

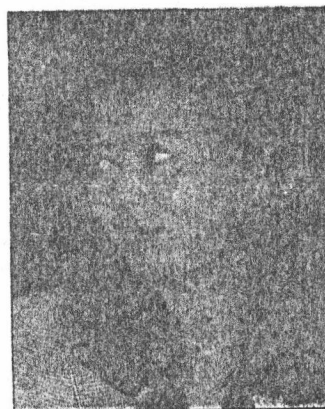
Naturally, I wanted to honour them by using my own family name on my PhD certificate, but university officials refused because I was married.

"I made my case by appealing to the Office of the Juridical Council. They ruled that I could use my maiden name only if I divorced my husband."

Yupa Petcharit, media personality: "I was extremely hurt when I was forced by law to change my surname when I got married.

"My parents were also sad. Every time they heard the name Petcharit on the air, it made them happy that I had made a name for our family. It saddened them to think that it would have to change.

"Fighting officialdom on this, though, is infuriatingly time-consuming. It involved so much headache that I finally gave up."



Yupa

Asst Prof Malee Pruegpongawalee, women's rights advocate: "We had to register our marriage in order to travel as legal husband and wife when I got a grant in the US. If we didn't, officials would not issue the necessary documents.

"I managed to put off changing my title and last name until my husband and I had to carry out a land transaction. If we didn't register our marriage, the transaction might not have gone through because we didn't have the necessary legal documents.

"I tried to hold on to my own identity, but I couldn't fight the system, so I gave up."



Assoc Prof Malee

The debate as to whether a married woman should be obligated to adopt her husband's name reached the Office of the Juridical Council for legal interpretation in 1979. Dr Samira Jittaladakorn appealed to the office after officials at her university refused to let her use her maiden name on her PhD certificate.

"I was married only shortly before graduation. My parents supported my education until I received my doctorate degree. Naturally, I wanted to honour them by using my own family name on my certificate."

The Juridical Council ruled that she could use her maiden name only if she divorced her husband first.

Insisting on keeping her maiden name after marriage, politician and women's rights activist Khunying Supatra Masdit tried in 1986 to change the Name Law on the grounds that it fails to take social realities into account. Her proposal lost by only two votes in Parliament.

MP Anchalee Vanich Tepabutr is now trying again. "The 1994 Constitution stipulates that all men and women are equal under the law. Any law that contradicts the Constitution needs to be amended."

In the spirit of equality, her proposed law would allow both married women and men to adopt their spouses' last names or to retain their own.

Anchalee, a Democrat MP from Phuket, is the daughter of an influential family — an important factor in her election victory. She married into the Tepabutr family, another wealthy Phuket family that was implicated last year in the Sor Por Kor 4-01 Land Reform scandal that toppled the Chuan Leekpai government.

Anchalee's proposal received strong support at a women's meeting — comprised mostly of educated and well-to-do women — recently organised by the National Commission on Women's Affairs to push for changes to the Name Law.

Last names are a recent phenomenon in Thailand. In 1917, just 78 years ago, King Rama VI promulgated the Name Law to adopt the Western usage of surnames in Thailand. Before this, people had only first names, which were further specified by their parents' names or their professions.

According to legal expert Assoc Prof Wimolsiri Cham-

narnvej, the King's intention was "to officially tell which family people belonged to, not to make women the property of their husbands."

Daughters, she said, have long been discriminated against and denied educational opportunities because they cannot carry on the family name as sons can.

"Allowing married women to keep their maiden names would mean women could continue their family lineage. This would automatically improve their status and opportunities."

Social problems that arise from the taking of *mia noi*, or minor wives, would also decrease, she predicted. "Many husbands leave their wives for other women on the grounds that they cannot bear them sons."

Many find it absurd that the present Name Law gives children more right to choose than their mothers.

The vague wording of the law says that if the father's identity is known, then a child has the right to use his father's surname. If not, he or she can use the mother's surname. Officials, however, usually interpret this to mean that if the father's identity is known, his children must use his surname.

After a legal dispute in which district officials refused to allow the children of a divorced couple to use their mother's surname, the Supreme Court ruled against the officials, saying that the children have the right to choose which parent's surname they will use.

Mature married women, meanwhile, are legally obligated to use their husband's

surname. "This is what the law says. If you want to change the way things are, you must change the law first," said judge Pradit Ekmanee.

He cautioned against the erosion of the family institution that might result if members of the same family could use different last names as they wish.

His concern, which reflects opposition to the change from the all-powerful and conservative Interior Ministry, seems to contradict social realities. The divorce rate last year in Bangkok was 25 per cent, while in the provinces the figure was ten per cent.

In most divorce cases, the mother takes custody of the children and raises them with little or no support from the father. Despite court orders, fathers are rarely punished when they fail to pay child support due to Thailand's weak Child Support Law.

A law meant to protect family ties is in fact hurtful to both women and children. Despite the Supreme Court ruling, many officials still refuse to let the children of divorced parents use the last name of their mother, with whom they usually live.

Forced to use a different surname from their mother's, children of divorce are constantly reminded that they are the product of a broken home, and their

Continued on page 32

What the 1962 Name Law says:

- Married women must use their husband's surname.
- Divorced women must return to using their maiden name.
- Widows can use either their late husband's surname or their maiden name.

What the proposed new Name Law says:

- Both married men and women can use either their original family name or that of their spouse.
- Divorced men and women must return to their original family name.
- Widows and widowers can use their original family name or retain that of their late spouse.

Continued from page 31

pain becomes public information.

Meanwhile, divorced women are never allowed to forget their family failure. Every time they enter a legal transaction, they must carry with them a divorce certificate and explain their past to inquisitive officials.

Stories abound about officials' rude behaviour, inconsistent handling of cases, and infuriating insistence that the law be followed to the letter.

Prominent social worker Khunying Kanok Samsen Vil, now in her 70s, is among the first generation of women to question the law that forces married women to give up their identity.

A well-known university athlete from an established family, she stood up to district officials when they refused to let her keep her Thai maiden name after she was married. They then made it difficult for her to register it as a middle name because, as they claimed, "the word Samsen does not have any meaning."

Procedural red tape proved too much for even an ardent feminist to overcome. Women's rights activist Asst Prof Malee Pruegpongswalee did not register her marriage. When she and her husband had to travel overseas as spouses, her single status complicated matters and threatened to abort their travel plans.

But Malee stood her ground — until she and her husband had to carry out a legal transaction with the Land Department. "Inconsistencies are rampant in government agencies. Some said my marriage certificate would be enough. Others said it wouldn't.

"I eventually gave in and changed my last name. I couldn't deal with the bureaucratic headaches and inconsistencies anymore. I tried to hold on to my own identity, but I couldn't fight the system, so I gave up."

At present, when a woman marries, district officials immediately change her title from *nangsao* to *nang* (Miss to Mrs) and her surname to her husband's on her home registration document. If she fails to change her last name on her identity card, she will be fined 200 baht every time she enters a legal transaction. Some officials might refuse to carry out the transaction all together.

Many businesswomen, then, choose not to register their marriages at all so that they can retain their independence in making business decisions.

BEYOND THE LAW

Short of legal change, here are some measures married women can take to retain their own family name:

- **Register the maiden name as a middle name**

The current law allows women to register a middle name at their District Office. Many women, including Khunying Kanok Samsen Vil and Ruenkaew Kuivayanont Brandt, have done this.

- **Continue to use the maiden name in social and business situations**

Although this is technically illegal, the law cannot punish women for doing so. If you are legally married, though, you must use your husband's surname on legal documents.

- **Not legally register your marriage**

If you are not legally married, you can carry out business and legal activities independently, without spousal consent.

Some government agencies cover educational and medical expenses for the children of female employees who are not legally married. The Revenue Department also allows them to claim their children as dependents on their tax returns.

suggested.

Due to their neutral title, men are able to register several marriages with different women, as long as they do it in different places.

Only the first registration counts legally, however. The subsequent wives, then, lose their right to the husband's assets because their marriages are considered illegal. "Many women have suffered because of this," said Assoc Prof Wimolsiri.

With no immediate change in sight, Assoc Prof Wimolsiri urges the Interior Ministry to indicate men's marital status on their IDs.

"This change would be timely, as the ID system is about to be computerised nationwide, making it easy to

Kobsook Iamsuree is one of them. After seven years of marriage and two children, she could not escape state intervention in her family affairs when she wanted to take her children overseas. The Foreign Ministry refused to issue the children passports.

In an effort to find a way through the red tape, Kobsook's husband asked the court for reaffirmation of his status as the children's father. Despite the court order, district officials still refused to issue the necessary legal documents verifying this status. They told him Kobsook's last name and marital status must first be changed, although they were not legally empowered to do this.

Kobsook's situation has raised the question of whether Anchalee's proposed new law would be enough to ease the plight of married women in practice.

According to Assoc Prof Wimolsiri, many married women lose more than their personal identity — they are also robbed of real economic opportunities.

For some, it becomes impossible to continue their career at all. She cited the case of a successful businesswoman who, in order to keep her professional autonomy, did not register her marriage. After separating from her partner, she registered her children as hers. District officials immediately changed her title to "Mrs", and her problems began.

"It is difficult for a woman to do business with the Mrs title, but without any legal documents like a marriage registration or divorce certificate to prove her status.

"Her ex-partner also refused to sign anything for her. As a result, her business suffered badly," related Assoc Prof Wimolsiri.

Assoc Prof Wimolsiri would like to see a neutral title like "Ms" for Thai women. "Instead of *nangsao* (Miss) and *nang* (Mrs), women should be given a title that does not indicate their marital status," she

check men's marital status," she said.

Likewise, changing the Name Law to allow married women to keep their maiden names is urgent in the face of the computerisation of IDs, which will begin next year, said woman judge Prapapan Udomjanya.

At present, inconsistencies among government agencies enable some women to retain their maiden name and title after marriage. "This will be impossible after the computerised network is in place. The law will be strictly enforced, leaving women no room for choice," said Prapapan.

The law should be updated to keep up with times, said Chaiwat Wongwatanasarn, deputy secretary-general of the Office of the Juridical Council.

"A family should share one last name, but this should be dictated by choice rather than legal obligation," he said.

But urging for changes to both married women's surname rights and their title as demanded by some feminists, insisted MP Anchalee, is the wrong strategy for now.

"Male MPs would feel we are pushing them too far. It's better to work for change step by step."

She admitted, however, that she does not know when, or if, her proposed new Name Law will be accepted for parliamentary discussion.

"When it is, though, I'll make sure that there is an open vote count so that we know which MPs are not supporting this cause.

"I will also send their names to their canvassers, who are mostly women."

Like many women, media celebrity Yupa Petcharit has no choice but to pin her hopes on Anchalee's new Name Law.

"I want to use my maiden name legally without having to divorce my husband. If and when the new law passes, I will immediately return to my own family name, and my own identity."

THE LAW IN OTHER COUNTRIES

THE NETHERLANDS: Married women are legally required to retain their maiden name. Socially and professionally, however, most use their maiden name followed by their husband's surname.

UNITED KINGDOM: Women have the right to choose, but most adopt their husband's surname.

FRANCE: Married women are legally required to retain their maiden name, but most use their married name socially and professionally.

GERMANY: A husband and wife must share the same legal surname. If not otherwise specified, the wife must take the husband's name.

ITALY: Wives must legally adopt the husband's surname. A woman can present a case to the authorities for retaining her maiden name, however, if she can show that a change of last name will cause her problems.

Source: Chaiwat Wongwatanasarn, deputy secretary-general of the Office of the Juridical Council.

Thursday September 14, 1995

The good, the bad and the ugly

The Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing, to end tomorrow, has come to a relatively smooth close. But for many, the more energetic NGO Forum on Women, which ended last Friday, embodied the true spirit of a women's forum. SUWANNA ASAVAROENGCHAI and APHALUCK BHATIASEVI share some of their most interesting observations of the forum.

Neither driving rain, sweltering sun, nor chilly breezes could dampen the spirits of the almost 30,000 participants who came from around the world to attend the NGO Forum on Women in Huairou, China. Despite differences of race, language, and culture, the majority of the participants managed to bridge these gaps and achieve mutual understanding.

There were, of course, those who were unwilling to compromise, and those who were insensitive to others' beliefs. Yet the positive outweighed the negative at the forum, and most of the women — and men — who attended left enlightened and uplifted.

THAILAND'S ROLE AT THE FORUM

With more than 300 delegates at the forum, Thailand took an active role in the international NGO scene. It was one of the few countries which successfully managed to bring a large group of grassroots participants — almost 100 — to the event.

Their voices were heard and their courage recorded in several workshops on a range of subjects including health, leadership, and politics.

Sa-Ing Thawaisin, a grassroots representative from Roi-Et Province's Phothichai District, said she was very excited to attend such a big meeting.

"I only just realised that even *farang* women have problems like ours," she said.

Sa-Ing said she had learned several problem-solving tactics from her foreign friends, which she would try to implement in her locality.

At one workshop, Sa-Ing gave a moving account of the hardships she faces as a construction worker and farm hand, which was translated from Thai into English by an interpreter.

Yet even if Thailand's women proved their strength and ability in many areas, the country was defined more by its negative image as a hub of the sex trade. Thailand was mentioned repeatedly during workshops on sexual abuse, prostitution, and trafficking in women.

In one session, the country was blamed for the plight of Burmese women and children who are trafficked into Thailand and abused by pimps, procurers, and corrupt officials. In other workshops, it was again criticised for failing to stop

the flow of Thai women into Japan's sex trade.

At one workshop, a suggestion was made that women from all over the world should protest the Thai government for allowing exploitation of Burmese as well as Thai women in the country's sex trade. "We should write letters to the Thai Prime Minister, Police Chief, and other officials involved as a gesture of protest against bad treatment in the brothels," said Mary Jane Sullivan of the United States.

During that session, stories were told of the horrid conditions of brothels where Burmese women are held against their will, accompanied by a videotape of such an establishment. There was also a report of abuse of Burmese women at the Detention Centre in Mae Sot, where six Burmese women were stripped of their clothes when they failed to hand their money over to corrupt officials.

Japanese NGO participants, too, spoke of the miseries endured by Thai prostitutes in Japan, and of the fact that there are many more innocent prostitutes eager to pour into Japan despite efforts to warn them of the potential exploitation that awaits them.

Thailand also had a prominent place on a map of the world's pornography routes.

Clearly, then, Thailand's image has not improved since the last forum was held ten years ago in Nairobi. In fact, its reputation has gotten worse, judging from the extensive range of Thai-related problems discussed at this forum. The country was often mentioned as both the originator and receiving point of trafficked women.

Forum participants demanded that the Thai government and those of other countries involved in trafficking in women take more responsibility for these victimised women by relaxing their immigration laws to accommodate them. Forced prostitutes, it was emphasised, are victims in need of protection — not criminals.

WOMEN WHO LOVE WOMEN

Love hung thick in the air at the Lesbian Tent, where "women who love women" held hands, embraced one another, and expressed their love to their female partners.

It was the first time that lesbians were given their own territory at the forum, where activities from video presentations to group discussions and casual talks between lesbians took place from morning till evening.

Asian lesbians, including Thais, were warmly

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was Akio Kawamura of the Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Centre in Tokyo, who said that in order to gain access to the event, he had to continuously explain to the Chinese that it was a "conference on women's issues, not a women's conference".

The male participants included human rights activists, development workers, reporters, members of religious groups, and volunteers. The largest number of men came from Japan.

Mitami Tamo of Kyodo University said he attended the forum because he was particularly interested in issues concerning Japanese women, specifically sexual violence and the phenomenon of "comfort women" forced to provide sexual services to Japanese soldiers during World War II.

Another man spotted at the conference was Chris Karlton of the No Limits for Women Project in the United States, who said it was important to address women's issues on the global level in order to solve them on the local level.

Karlton, also a social worker at a hospital in New York, added, "I felt quite awkward while attending some of the workshops, because when you're sitting in a workshop surrounded by women, they tend to make you feel like you're the target of criticism," he said.

Karlton said he recently began a project to encourage fathers to group together and work toward the liberation of women, because the cause can succeed only if men and women work together.

Alberto Rubio, a Spanish architecture student, came to China to accompany his girlfriend, who is attending the UN Conference on Women. But he decided to make the trip to Huairou for a day to listen to the issues being discussed, for though equality exists in theory in his country, women's actual status is still lower than men's.

Dagva Gankhuyag, a Mongolian NGO worker, said he had made his way to several workshops, though he also felt somewhat uncomfortable being one of so few men.

Suleman Abro of Pakistan's Sindh Agricultural and Forestry Workers Cooperative Organisation said he was at the forum to get ideas from other countries on how to help women in rural areas in his country.

INNER PEACE AND HEALING

Of the various tents at the forum, one was decidedly different. Named the Healing Tent, its goal was help women attending the forum relax and get in touch with their

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welcomed into the international lesbian community, making the tent well-balanced in its racial and cultural mix.

The group calling itself the Asian Lesbian Network drew a large crowd when it conducted a workshop to share the problems faced by Asian lesbians with others.

Asian lesbians, they agreed, are restricted by the Asian family value system, which curbs their freedom of self-expression.

A Malaysian lesbian spoke of repression in her country, where lesbians are denied public acceptance.

Thai lesbians described how society forces adult women into marriage against their will. Members of the Anjaree Group, a Thai lesbian network, related that their primary task is to provide moral support to suffering lesbians who have to hide their sexual orientation from society's judgmental eyes.

Lesbians from the Philippines spoke of their uphill battle against widespread prejudice against lesbians.

"In the Philippines," said a young Filipina lesbian, "gay men are admired as the shining stars of the film and advertising industries. But lesbians do not receive such treatment."

In fact, prejudice against lesbians is so strong that those who admit their sexual orientation stand to lose their jobs.

Stories from India was even more tragic. A woman who dressed like a man and lived with another woman was arrested by the police. Another was fired from her job and arrested after having achieved success in a top position wearing men's clothes.

During the discussion, one Indian participant changed from her bright yellow sari and women's slippers into an Indian men's long-sleeved shirt and trousers and black boots in the middle of the crowd — a challenge to a society that forbids such an act.

EXPLOSIVE BELIEFS

Public demonstration is an act we take for granted among women of Westernized ideas. But a group of Muslim fundamentalists took the forum by surprise when they organized a demonstration and shouted their slogans on the streets of Huairou.

"Say no to abortion! Say yes to family life!" cried about 20 veiled women as they marched, carrying banners denouncing adultery, homosexuality, abortion, and other issues brought up at the forum which went against their religious beliefs.

As they neared the convention cen-

tre, they were confronted by pro-choice activists, who quickly held up their banners to counter-attack. "Freedom, freedom, freedom!" they shouted back.

"Why let men control you?" a pro-choice woman asked, challenging a veiled woman at the top of her voice. "We have the right to our own choice," one of the veiled women barked back. Verbal abuse continued as hostility mounted between the two sides. The veiled demonstrators were booed and jeered by the crowd before they finally marched away, still shouting their slogans.

Rifts between women of the same religion or country were also created at the forum.

While some Iranian women joined in the anti-abortion march, their sisters in exile in Europe launched a different demonstration, which addressed Iranian women being stoned to death as a punishment for adultery or premarital sex.

Speaking of the penalty, Haldeh Daragah told the crowd, "most of the time, those doing the stoning are women, too."

In 1984, when Ayatollah Khomeini took power and demanded a return to fundamentalist Muslim values, many Westernized women fled the country after being forced to wear veils. "The rule was so strict that women would be punished on the spot if they let just a strand of hair out of their veil," she said. Stoning to death, she said, is the legally accepted punishment for women who commit adultery or have sex before marriage.

During her campaign at the forum, Daragah was threatened by other Muslim women participants, who said they would pursue and kill her in Europe, where she is in exile.

Not only Daragah, but several other women have found themselves at risk because of their "controversial" ideas. Hnin Hnin Pyne, a Burmese woman in exile, said she was constantly followed and photographed by unknown people when she campaigned for Burmese democracy in the States.

Pyne said that during the forum, she and her group made an effort to discuss women's issues with delegates from the Burmese government. "But they refused to talk to us," she said, perplexed.

MEN WERE INVITED, TOO

Among tens of thousands of women, some men could also be seen making their way through the forum.

Among the 1,550 men in attendance

inner wisdom.

The tent was run by Capacitar, a Spanish-based international women's empowerment project aimed to help women rediscover the inner wisdom of their own bodies, re-integrate the body, mind, and spirit, and help regenerate their energy both individually and in their communities.

Women taught natural healing and stress reduction techniques and traditional healing practices from a variety of cultures.

The Capacitar group included union leaders, feminists, professionals, religious women, and grassroots leaders from poor communities.

With a group of weary women chanting their way to well-being with the words "I am the universe" in the background, Pat Cane — a psychologist and former Catholic nun, and the director and founder of Capacitar — explained the group's activities.

Among the 25-strong Capacitar delegation were nine Latin Americans, mostly grassroots leaders working toward healing in their communities.

One of them, Sister Magdalena Castro of the Comedor Family Kitchen Movement in Peru, teaches kitchen workers how to give each other healing shoulder massages and relax with Tai Chi, an ancient Chinese exercise.

At the forum, Tai Chi was taught every day at 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. in the Healing Tent.

"Many women living in underdeveloped countries suffer from headaches, stomach disorders, and other stress-related maladies. Due to poverty and social instability, many of them have little access to simple medical and psychiatric care," said Cane.

Cane learned Tai Chi from a Chinese teacher in California 16 years ago and simplified it so that women could learn and use the exercise easily.

During her sessions at Huairou, she urged exercisers to visualize their bodies as trees with roots planted deeply in the ground. She asked them to imagine the tops of their heads being connected to the light of heaven, so that they could feel the energy of the earth and the heavens flow through their bodies.

"This exercise gives people time to find their inner energy and inner wisdom, and bring unity to their bodies and minds and spirits," said Cane.

HARASSMENT OF THE INNOCENT

Who says Chinese security officers were the only culprits of harassment? Forum participants, too, were guilty.

The McDonald's kiosk gained instant popularity at the forum, as a large number of participants tried to avoid the ubiquitous Chinese box lunches made available to them.

In front of the kiosk, a smiling, life-sized Ronald McDonald sat cross-legged on a bench, where participants could sit and relax their aching legs.

But Ronald's smile seemed out of place a few days later, when he fell victim to harassment by forum participants. It started with a picture of him in the forum's daily paper, with a caption cynically questioning how he had gotten into the forum with neither a visa nor a pass.

The next day, passersby found poor Ronald in the area opposite the kiosk, knocked onto his side on the ground with ketchup smeared on his face and neck. Signs condemning the invasion of transnational corporation had been hung around his neck and body, one of them demanding, "Get Back Big Mac."

Passersby were both amused and saddened by the sight of the bullied yet defenceless Ronald. That evening, he completely disappeared from the scene, and business at the kiosk went on as usual.

Wednesday November 29, 1995

Life in the athletic limelight



The SEA Games are what make or break many of Thailand's top athletes. With the 1995 games soon to begin in Chiang Mai, three local heroes talk to TASSANEE VEJPONGSA and TANIDA SIRORATTANAKUL about what it means to be a sports star.

In Thailand, which has no professional football league, players know that they cannot count on making a living off the sport forever. They will receive a salary only if they are selected to play on the Thai national team. Most football players have other jobs or attend university.

"You have to think about your future, too. Even though studying in addition to playing football means doubling my work, I have to do it," said the recent graduate of Thurakit Bandit Business School, where he received a full scholarship.

Saddled with more work and responsibility than most people his age, Kiattisak has had to trade his youth for the pursuit of success. Since he started to play on the national youth

team at the age of 16, his life has revolved around football. Most of his close friends are football players, and he spends his free time at practice while most of his peers are going out and having fun.

"I know I've missed out on a lot of things normal people have. But looking at the opportunity I have right now, to be a national football player, I think, how many people have this opportunity? Only one in a million. I'm very happy that I'm one of them," he said. He admits, though, that the rigour of the sport has sometimes made him consider quitting.

"Sometimes, when I'm practising hard, I envy people who don't have this kind of com-

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KIATTISAK SENAMUANG

Kiattisak Senamuang

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mitment. But it's only a passing thought. I would never quit. I love football," he said with conviction.

The sport itself is only one part of the experience — being part of a team is also a valuable part of being an athlete. At the age of 20, Kiattisak has experienced extremes of joy and sadness that many people never experience in a lifetime.

"I faced bitter disappointment when I lost at the World Youth Soccer Cup three years ago, and I had to learn how to accept it. But the lows are offset by moments of sheer triumph, like when I came back to Bangkok after we won the gold medal at the SEA Games," he recalled.

He said he was surprised by the crowd waiting for him

at the airport. They were clapping, calling his name, and shouting congratulations at him.

"People hardly knew me before I went to Indonesia. And I had no idea that the goal I scored would become such a big deal," he said.

His status as a national star also means greater opportunity. Contracts have been offered to him by foreign professional teams, but he said he had not yet considered them. All he knows for certain is that he will continue playing for the Thai team as long as he can.

"Things couldn't be better for me. Playing football has brought so many great opportunities my way. It's something I love, and there are a lot of other people who appreciate what I do. What more could I ask for?"



Kiattisak Senamuang

As far as he can remember, Kiattisak Senamuang always knew he wanted to be a football player. And he always knew he could do it.

"I don't remember exactly when I started to play. But I knew from the beginning that I had a special gift for the sport," said 20-year-old Kiattisak with confidence.

While Kiattisak had known he was gifted for years, the Thai public noticed it when he scored the final goal in the SEA Games football finals against Burma in 1991, winning the team a gold medal.

Before that, he had played on the Thai national youth football team for several years, and his name was known among only a few followers of the sport. That single goal, though, turned a no-name provincial boy into a national star who became both the centre of attention and the target of criticism.

"While many people saw me as the hero of the SEA Games, there were others who said my success was just luck. That's not true — I've become what I am now because I love what I'm doing and I'm devoted to it," Kiattisak said.

He added that anything that happens on the football field could be seen as luck, because nothing is certain in sports. But the most important thing is to enjoy the game and play your best.

According to Kiattisak, in addition to passion for football, responsibility is another essential trait for a good football player, especially one playing for the national team.

"Responsibility falls on your shoulders the minute you become part of the team," said Kiattisak, sometimes called "Sico" after a Brazilian football player. He will be playing centre on the Thai team in the upcoming SEA Game matches in Chiang Mai. A great deal of time and sacrifice is required of him. Kiattisak, like his fellow team members, is on a tight and demanding schedule. He has to fit in at least four hours of practice each day, as well as time for his education and his personal life.





Rewadee Sritao

Fun and friends are a thing of the past. Coaches, pressure, and hard work have replaced them, changing a young girl's life.

More than ten years ago, Rewadee Sritao, a teenage student from Lop Buri, raced past her peers to become the country's fastest female runner. Yet the price she paid for fame and glory was the loss of her teenage life.

After she won six gold medals at the 1985 SEA Games in Bangkok, she became a heroine who was expected to win.

"The greater the success you achieve, the more pressure you're under. Every time I race, I have to do my best because I don't want to let down Thai fans or myself," said Rewadee, one of Thailand's top 400-metre runners.

In addition to her physical strength, her strong determination to become a champion makes her a great runner.

"I compete with myself, not my rivals. When I'm on the track, I think only of beating my old record. It helps me release the pressure," said the runner, now 28, who is known for her dark brown complexion, long curly hair, and tall, strong physique.

Unintentionally, she has arrived in a position where millions of eyes are watching her.

"I never dreamed of being a runner. My life changed so fast. At the beginning, I did it because I felt I had to, not because I wanted to," she recalled, watching a group of junior national team runners training on the track at the National Stadium in Bangkok.

She recalled that her irreversible course to stardom began when she was chosen to be a school runner at the age of ten. For years, she came first in competitions with other schools and provinces.

In 1983, she was finally chosen to be a runner on the national team.

"At that point, fun and relaxation disappeared entirely from my life. I had to eat, sleep, and practise according to the team schedule and the coach's orders. I didn't have many friends because I spent all my time training and competing," she related, her face saddening as old memories surfaced.

But the rewards were great for this 16-year-old girl: she had a chance to participate in the Olympic Games in Los Angeles in 1984. She returned home without any medals, but with plenty of experience and inspiration.

"After the Olympics, my first international competition, I was inspired to practise harder than ever. I did very well at my first SEA Games a year later," she remembered with pride. Though she was the youngest runner on the Thai team that year, she won the most medals.

Her tight training and competition schedule meant she often had to miss school. But she made a point of never missing her examinations, and she earned a bachelor's degree from Srinakharinwirot Prasarnmitr University's Faculty of Physical Education within four years.

"I realise the importance of education. I never thought of quitting school or university just for running. I know I won't be able to run when I get old," she said with a laugh.

Today, in addition to her running, she works for the Telephone Organisation of Thailand and is married to Wisut Wattanasin, one of the country's top male runners. She is also the mother of a three-year-old girl named Namkhaeng.

"Having a family has never been an obstacle to my career. On the contrary, my husband and daughter have encouraged me to go on," said the runner, who hopes to work as a coach after retirement.

"You can't be a good runner without discipline, patience, and strong determination. No matter how strong, healthy, and fast you are, if you aren't responsible or you don't respect the rules, you won't have a future on the racetrack," she said.

Today, Rewadee no longer devotes her entire life to training and lives by her coach's rules. But even so, she rarely misses the routine of practising with her fellow team members, especially with the SEA Games around the corner.

Despite the sacrifices her running career has forced her to make, Rewadee said she has never regretted it.

"If I could go back in time, I don't think I would change anything. My running career has given me so many valuable experiences. But I've never thought of myself as a heroine," she chuckled good-naturedly, before running off to join the team practice.

Pictures by
SMITH SUTIBUT

Theeraj Pohpanich

Former Thai gymnastics star Theeraj Pohpanich achieved instant recognition as a national sports hero when he struck gold at the 1987 SEA Games in Jakarta, winning six gold medals. But today, asked if the monetary rewards for his success were worth the effort and sacrifice, his answer is a resounding "no".

It was his sincere dedication to gymnastics that allowed him to overlook financial compensation and focus instead on excelling at his sport.

"If you compare the time and effort I invested with the meagre support I got, you would understand why it wasn't worth it," said the ex-athlete. Now 27, he is a sports commentator for TV Channel 7, and is covering this year's SEA Games in Chiang Mai.

During his training with the national team, Theeraj said he received only a meagre allowance from the government. There was no pension plan and no job security for retired athletes. "There is nothing but short-term fame and personal pride," he said. "And that's for the athletes who succeed. For those who don't, there is no compensation at all."

Athletes are entitled to a 50-baht per diem allowance during the three or four months of training after they are selected for the national team and before an international competition. "Obviously, it wasn't enough to survive on," he said.

At the peak of his gymnastics career, from 1986 to 1991, Theeraj was attending Chulalongkorn University's Faculty of Education as part of a special programme for national athletes. Like most Thai athletes, he had to juggle his studies and his sport. He attended classes from the early morning to the afternoon, then braved traffic to make it to his intense evening practice at Hua Mark stadium.

"For most students, the stress of studying and travelling to and from school was enough to wear them out completely. But on top of that, I also had to go to gymnastics practice every day. It was hard, but I managed," said the athlete, who got involved in gymnastics at the age of ten.

"I don't feel like I missed out on my teenage years, since I made a point of setting aside time for my personal life. I felt that gymnastics and my social life were equally important," said Theeraj, returning from Chiang



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THEERAJ POHPANICH

Mai stadium after covering a story on the Thai national gymnastics team.

He admits that his social life did sometimes distract him from both his gymnastics and his studies. But he feels that this was only natural.

"People would sometimes comment on how I didn't do well in this or that competition. I would just tell them the truth — I'd say, 'I know, I've been spending time with my girlfriend', or 'I didn't have enough time to prepare'. There's nothing wrong with that. After all, I'm human like everybody else," he said.

With such a laid-back attitude, where did Theeraj find the drive to win six gold medals at the 1987 SEA Games and four golds at the

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Life in the athletic limelight

Theeraj Pohpanich

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1989 games? "My love of gymnastics is what drove me. You can achieve anything you want as long as you love what you're doing," said Theeraj.

As a young child, Theeraj stumbled into gymnastics by accident: his legs were weak due to a bone virus, and his doctors said that he had to be more athletic. His older sister was a competitive gymnast on the national youth team at the time, so his choice of a sport was easy.

"I saw her doing gymnastics every day at the stadium and I was jealous that she got to go abroad for competitions. My dad told me that if I wanted to travel like her, I had to start doing gymnastics. That was what got me started," said Theeraj.

A few years later, as a young teenager, Theeraj became a member of the Thai youth team. He quickly

moved up to the national team and went on to compete in four SEA Games competitions, which are held every two years.

His career, however, came to an end when he had a serious accident at the 1991 SEA Games, falling from the rings while competing. He broke his back and legs and dislocated his shoulder, and was unable to compete in the next SEA Games in 1993.

"After the accident, my body wasn't as strong as before. I realised it might be time for me to quit. I felt that I had done a pretty good job already, and my teammate, Amornthep, was getting better every day. I was confident that he could take my place," said Theeraj, explaining his absence from the Thai team since 1991.

He has been working as a sports commentator for almost a year, and he enjoys the work very much.

"I like working with

sports, because it's something I'm very familiar with. I know that the reason why I got this job and am good at it is because of my experience as an athlete, and more importantly, because of my name. People know who I am. Another factor could be my education," he said.

Covering Thai athletes who are now in the same position he was once in, Theeraj has some words of wisdom to share with them.

"I hope they love what they are doing, because that's the only way they can do their best. They shouldn't think about what they should be getting in return. Once they have been selected to play for their country, they have a responsibility to do their best.

"They have to think about their own futures, too, but not too much. I believe that if you do something with good intentions, good things will eventually happen to you."



People would sometimes comment on how I didn't do well in this or that competition. I would just tell them the truth — I'd say, 'I know, I've been spending time with my girlfriend', or 'I didn't have enough time to prepare'. There's nothing wrong with that. After all, I'm human like everybody else.

THEERAJ POHPANICH

ประวัติผู้เขียน

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