

CANDOER News



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Welcome to the latest issue of the newsletter dedicated to the **CANDOERS** (Communicators **AND** Others Enjoying Retirement). This newsletter will be distributed quarterly. New issues will be posted on the Web for viewing on or about, January 15, April 15, July 15, and October 15.

The **CANDOER** Web site and newsletter may be viewed by going to the following URI: www.candoer.org

The success of this newsletter depends on you. I need contributors.

Do you have an interesting article, a nostalgia item, or a real life story you

would like to share with others? If you do, send it to me at the following e-mail address:

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Please, NO handwritten submissions.

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The PDF file and Microsoft Word document will allow you to download and print the newsletter exactly as if I had printed it and mailed it to you.

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formatted newsletter, you can go to www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html and download the FREE reader. When installed on your computer, it will allow the automatic opening of any PDF file.

Q. If you're going to make a parachute jump, at least how high should you be?
A. Charley Weaver: Three days of steady drinking should do it.

Cat's Corner

All is quiet here in the house of Cat. We are finally settled down and caught up with all the things we had to do after spending three months in Florida. It took me two weeks to get the yard and flower beds back in shape and another four day to get the boat back on the river. I am usually out fishing by the 15th of March and did not get out for the first time until the 18th of April this year.

The article titled, Songkran was received from Tim Lawson. Tim states, "This is a pretty good article on the Thai New Year known as "Songkran," for those who wonder about all the wild and wet activities we will be besieged with here in Hua Hin and across Thailand for the next three or four days. Simply put, if you don't want to get wet, you better stay inside. Just another way the Thai people love to have fun and celebrate. Purin and I will be joining the fray shortly. Happy Songkran 2555 from the Land of Smiles."

One of the articles in this issue was sent to me by George Smiley. It is advice from a lawyer on how to protect your self from credit card theft.

The humor found between articles are questions and answers from the TV program, "Hollywood Squares". They were sent to me by Paul Del Giudice

Q. You've been having trouble going to sleep. Are you probably a man or a woman?

A. Don Knotts: That's what's been keeping me awake.

Songkran

By Tim Lawson



Imagine this scene: scads of Clampett-like hillbilly families crammed into the back of pickup trucks, chugging along in bumper-to-bumper traffic and squirting water at other vehicles and pedestrians. The water warriors use squirt guns, super soakers, hoses, buckets, garbage cans and anything else they can get their hands on in order to disperse their liquid ammunition. Drive-by squirts everywhere.

It might sound like a Hatfields versus McCoy's feud, but it's just another Songkran, the wild and silly Thai water festival that is held each April. Scowls are replaced by huge grins as people of all ages take to dousing one another with water for three solid days, from sunset to sundown. Sure, it sounds like a hackneyed way of venting your frustrations, but the water throwing tends to be done playfully with no malice or destructive intent. The sea of smiles you see everywhere supports that

theory. During Songkran - an official holiday throughout Thailand - there are parades, beauty pageants, singing, dancing in the streets and lots of water. Visitors should expect to become totally drenched - and love every minute of it!

The most famous spot for Songkran revelry is in the northern city of Chiangmai, where thousands of foreign tourists join the locals for a bit of watery mayhem. The moat-like canal that circumnavigates the city's old quarter, serves as both a source of water for Songkran participants and an inner boundary for the route used by vehicles that continuously drive the circuit all day. If you think you can escape the man-made showers by ducking down side streets, forget it: there will surely be a group of children waiting to ambush you! It's not until after sundown that the streets become clear of all water battles.

Conversely, the capital of Bangkok becomes pleasantly quiet during Songkran week, thanks to the large percentage of residents that leave the metropolis and return to celebrate the holiday in their home province. Even with this mass exodus, you will still find pockets of definite wet zones around Bangkok, particularly on Khao San Road and the Patpong nightclub quarter. Bus riders, especially those riding non-air conditioned models, also need to be careful. Eager water throwers have been known to board buses or hurl buckets of liquid through open windows.

Songkran marks the start of the Buddhist New Year and officially lasts from April 13-15, although a handful of communities postpone - or extend, in the case of Pattaya - their observances until the following week. Most business pretty much grinds to a halt during the festival period with schools, government offices and many shops shutting down. Airports, bus stations and train stations are jammed with travelers headed back to their home provinces. If you don't have a reservation, you'll find seats very difficult to obtain. It's quite common, thus, to see many passengers riding on the roof of trains during the days before and after Songkran.

The other down side is the frightening increase in fatalities due to bus accidents during the festival period.

Puzzled foreign observers are always curious about the reasons behind this soggy celebration. The origins of Songkran date back nearly a thousand years to when the Tai people (ancestors of modern day Thais) in China's Yunnan Province celebrated the start of a new farming cycle during the fifth full moon of the lunar calendar. Water is used in Songkran as both a symbol of cleansing and renewal. Although throwing large amounts of water constitutes the bulk of today's Songkran festivities, this was not always the case. In the past, Thai people would delicately sprinkle scented water from silver bowls or the hands of respected family members. They would also make pilgrimages to area temples and carefully bathe the Buddha images in a similar manner. Songkran is also a time when Thai people routinely do a thorough cleaning of their homes. Additionally, people make offerings to local temples and provide food and new robes for monks. Others build sand castles on the temple grounds as part of a merit-making ritual. Related to the water pouring is a ritual that involves tying strings around the wrists of elders and expressing good wishes. At Songkran a person could end up with dozens of strings on each wrist if they are around enough family members and friends. Customarily the strings are to be left on the wrist until they fall off of their own accord.

In recent years, however, the humble religious aspects of the holiday have given way to unrestrained water warfare. Surprisingly, considering the number of people and vehicles in the slippery mix, you will rarely observe any accidents or cases of road rage. Even police officers, stationed to prevent total anarchy from developing, become smiling, willing targets - though they are doused a lot more gently than the average citizen.

One less pleasurable element to Songkran is the dreaded white powder. Originally this powder or paste was applied

to the face, neck or torso of others as a sign of protection or to ward off evil. Nowadays it is smeared on indiscriminately and can sting the eyes of unsuspecting victims. When venturing out into the streets during Songkran, it's best to wear goggles or some sort of eye protection. It's also a good idea to keep your money and other water-sensitive valuables wrapped in a plastic bag - or better yet, left at home. Most people will want to take photos of the action, but unless you have a waterproof camera, or use a zoom lens from a safe distance, better to leave your equipment at home.

Don't let these few little negatives dissuade you from joining the party, however. If you decide to stay indoors you'll miss out on a great time. Joining a crowd of merry Songkran celebrants is intoxicating. The festival may not be as wildly decadent as more famous street parties like Mardi Gras in New Orleans or Carnival in Rio but it's highly unlikely you'll ever find yourself amongst a happier group of people. Certainly, they will be the wettest bunch you've ever hung out with!

Leon Trotsky and me on Buyukada Island, Turkey

By Charles Christian

I have just seen a Turkish film (Exile in Buyukada, 2000) on my TV with my Blockbuster subscription with Dish TV. It is a documentary with actors, file film, and the story of Trotsky being exiled by Stalin in 1929 to Turkey. It is in English with a Russian playing Trotsky who speaks Russian in the film, with English subtitles. All other actors have Turkish names.

Trotsky had a different idea of world Communism than Stalin did. His anti-Stalin writings and efforts, worldwide, with his many followers, made Stalin finally kick him out of the USSR. On a small Soviet ship, with GRU agents along, he went with his wife, son, and small entourage to Istanbul and stayed at the Soviet Consulate for awhile before moving into a nearby hotel. After a year, he had to leave

Istanbul for safety reasons from Stalin's agent's (he would not have had him killed in the consulate) and the danger from 34,000 White Russians still in Turkey after the exile, of give or take, a million to the south, west, and east from the USSR after their armies were defeated. They all had to flee to save their lives. The White Russians hated Trotsky as much as they did Stalin due to his brutal actions against them when he had the power during the early years of the Soviet revolution.

It was decided that the nearby island of Buyukada, about 12 miles to the west of the city, would be a safe location. It was well policed and very easy to monitor the entry and exit of everyone there. It is the largest (about 3-4 sq. miles) of the Princess Islands in the Miramar Sea and had been a long time exile, prison, and monastery location since Byzantine times. Trotsky stayed there for three years and then went to France in 1933, which was a country that gave him a visa, but under very strict conditions. In 1935 he was able to get a visa to Mexico and there a GRU agent, who had been allowed into the household under false colors, killed him with a pick ax in 1940 at age 61.

I had no idea that he had been in exile on the island until I saw the film. I watched out of curiosity, as I knew the island, having been a resident there in May 1956 for two weeks. I came down with hepatitis after six weeks in Turkey, due to my belief I could eat anything and any where a Turk could. I was very sick. I had a Turkish friend, Inci, who with her mother escorted me to the island via ferry. For some reason, someone had suggested I stay in a certain hotel, which I did. It was built in 1908 and very Victorian in appearance inside and out. www.splendidhotel.net/eng/genelbilgi

The only transportation on the island, then and now, is horse and buggy. I remember only the ride, getting off the buggy in front of a big, old, white hotel in an attractive park like district on a hill behind the village at the ferry landing. Here I took meals in my room at first,

which was bland food only and got plenty of fresh air and sleep. During the two weeks there were several times when my two Turkish care givers would visit me and bring me fresh fruit. I did recover and left the island one day to return to work in Istanbul at the U.S. Consulate General.

The island was Trotsky's most enjoyable location during his years in exile. I also enjoyed being there during a very sick time in my life.

Today the island is much more built up and a popular vacation and party location for Istanbul's citizens.

Incidentally, I use to see White Russians in Cossack dress perform unbelievable dance acts and throw three knives (one at a time) into a board on the floor from the back of their collars in one of the numerous little night clubs in Istanbul. They did not use their hands. Just with the toss of their heads, as they would twirl around the floor to Russian music by a band. I assume they were those who could never get visas to move on to other countries. Most did who initially went to Turkey from the SW of the USSR.

After my being forced to leave the county six weeks later, with only a few hours, I returned briefly on a cruise one day in 1992. I noticed the Turks were only looking at the outside of passports and the ship I.D. cards. I decided to chance it and we went ashore to visit my old haunts via a taxi. My wife said if I got arrested she would abandon me. "Lucky Charlie" escaped again out of the county.

Q. Jackie Gleason recently revealed that he firmly believes in them and has actually seen them on at least two occasions. What are they?

A. Charley Weaver: His feet.

When Money Turns to Crap

by John Lemandri

Having settled into our new, or should I say old digs in Baghdad, my wife Suzanne and I proceeded to make the rounds of

invitational dinners until one day we had lunch with Laurie, our consular officer. Our discussion eventually turned to history and ancient coins, for which I had a fondness since childhood. Laurie excused herself and a minute later returned to the table with a box full of flat green discs of various size and quality, which, upon closer examination turned out to be ancient coins of the Greek and Persian empires from the first and second centuries B.C. Intrigued by their uniqueness, I asked Laurie where they had been obtained. She remarked that they were surface finds from an ancient city called Seleucia. Seleucia was established around 301 B.C. by Seleucus Nikator, one of Alexander the Great's generals who received this portion of the empire after it had been divided upon Alexander's death at Babylon in 324 B.C.

Excited, I was determined to acquire as many of these historical coins as I could for my collection. The following weekend, after receiving travel permission from the Iraqi Government to depart Baghdad (the government approved all in-country travel in advance), Suzanne and I made our way to the desolate sands of Seleucia, about 24 miles due south.

Since tourists were not permitted in country, we had the site to ourselves. Seleucia was laid out for miles in all directions on a plain adjacent to the Tigres River. However, not much remained above ground, as time, sun and sand had taken their toll on the sun-baked brick. The first and only archaeological excavation of any significance was carried out in the mid 1920's by a team from the University of Pennsylvania. Since then the ruins virtually lay untouched, except for a few Bedouin who herded their sheep among its sparsely weeded knolls.

Having retained a picture in my mind of the flat green discs we had encountered at Laurie's, Suzanne and I located a 'hot spot' where a significant number of coins lay in abundance, and spent the next three hours stuffing our pockets full of what could only be described as a treasure trove. Like a child at Christmas, I could hardly retain

my excitement until we returned home to clean and examine our finds. Perhaps there may even be one of Alexander the Great or Seleucus Nikator himself. As we pulled these precious objects from our pockets for closer examination, one by one they broke in our hands. What we thought were ancient coins turned out to be nothing more than hardened green sheep dung, stomped flat by the grazing flocks and weathered to a fine green hue of lime.

Much to our dismay, our small fortune having disintegrated into dust, we reconciled ourselves with the thought that although we had no finds of historical importance and would never be rich, at this particular moment we probably had the largest collection of sheep crap in the world.

Q. According to Ann Landers, is there anything wrong with getting into the habit of kissing a lot of people?

A. Charley Weaver: It got me out of the army.

Some of the best advice

Received from George Smiley

Read this and make a copy for your files in case you need to refer to it someday. Maybe we should all take some of his advice! A corporate attorney sent the following out to the employees in his company:

1. Do not sign the back of your credit cards. Instead, write 'PHOTO ID REQUIRED.'

2. When you are writing checks to pay on your credit card accounts, DO NOT put the complete account number on the 'For' line. Instead, just put the last four numbers. The credit card company knows the rest of the number, and anyone who might be handling your check as it passes through all the check processing channels won't have access to it.

3. Put your work phone number on your checks instead of your home phone. If you have a PO Box use that instead of your home address. If you do not have a PO Box, use your work address. Never have your SS Number printed on your checks. You can add it if it is necessary. If you have it printed on your checks, anyone can get it.

4. Place the contents of your wallet on a photocopy machine. Copy both sides of each license, credit card, etc. You will know what you had in your wallet and all of the account numbers and phone numbers to call and cancel. Keep the photocopy in a safe place.

I also carry a photocopy of my passport when I travel either here or abroad. We've all heard horror stories about fraud that's committed on us in stealing a Name, address, Social Security number, credit cards.

Unfortunately, I, an attorney, have first hand knowledge because my wallet was stolen last month. Within a week, the thieves ordered an expensive monthly cell phone package, applied for a VISA credit card, had a credit line approved to buy a Gateway computer, received a PIN number from DMV to change my driving record information online, and more. But here's some critical information to limit the damage in case this happens to you or someone you know:

5. We have been told we should cancel our credit cards immediately. But the key is having the toll free numbers and your card numbers handy so you know whom to call. Keep those where you can find them.

6. File a police report immediately in the jurisdiction where your credit cards, etc. were stolen. This proves to credit providers you were diligent, and this is a first step toward an investigation (if there ever is one).

But here's what is perhaps most important of all: (I never even thought to do this.)

7. Call the three national credit reporting organizations immediately to place a fraud alert on your name and also call the Social Security fraud line number. I had never heard of doing that until advised by a bank that called to tell me an application for credit was made over the internet in my name.

The alert means any company that checks your credit knows your information was stolen, and they have to contact you by phone to authorize new credit.

By the time I was advised to do this, almost two weeks after the theft, all the damage had been done. There are records of all the credit checks initiated by the thieves' purchases, none of which I knew about before placing the alert. Since then, no additional damage has been done, and the thieves threw my wallet away this weekend (someone turned it in). It seems to have stopped them dead in their tracks.

Now, here are the numbers you always need to contact about your wallet, if it has been stolen:

1. Equifax: 1-800-525-6285
2. Experian: 1-888-397-3742
3. Trans Union: 1-800-680-7289
4. Social Security Administration (fraud line): 1-800-269-0271

Q. Paul, what is a good reason for pounding meat?

A. Paul Lynde: Loneliness!

See you next quarter!
