



The Great Asian Concert Tour of 99



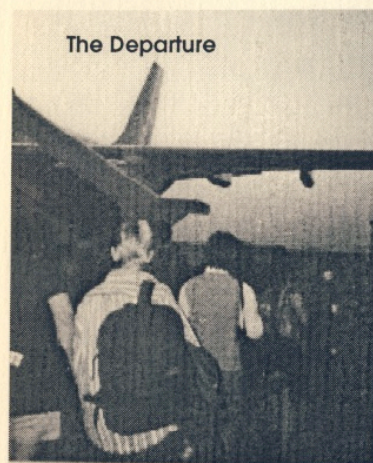
*Memoirs of the
UVic Chamber Singers:*



Saturday, April 24 & Sunday, April 25

The plane finally taxied down the runway at about 2:15pm PST. I was terrified and kept a death grip on the arms of the chair (sorry Shannon and Dan for stealing the arm rest) until the plane almost reached its cruising altitude. Once in the air for half an hour I finally decided to rest! and it finally registered in my mind that the guys sitting at the back of the plane had cheered when the plane took off. When the flight attendants started to do their rounds I asked if I could talk to Merrill Perret, the first officer on the flight, and say hi for my dad. It would be almost 10 hours before I would get up to the cockpit. About 3 hours into the flight it was obvious what the others behind me were doing (sorry guys, but the smell of alcohol is easily recognizable) and it cemented in my mind the reason the group has been christened the "Chamber Drinkers". Other than that the flight was pretty uneventful. The flight attendants complained about our rowdiness and there was a lot of

nerve-racking turbulence, but that's about all. Even the movies were boring. The high point of the flight was actually meeting Merrill; my dad was telling me on the way to Vancouver how great an F/O he is (and he also met Kevin Eubanks when my dad did). After nearly 12 hours of flying, we landed in Seoul at 5:40pm on Sunday (I really hate losing a day like that). In the airport we went through immigration, another thing I hate, and we all got through successfully (well, we are all here so it must be obvious) with yet another stamp in the passport (YAY!). Then it was money exchange: \$1.00 CDN = 782.4 WON (Happy, Happy, Joy, Joy!) Finally on to a bus that took us all (assuming we didn't forget anyone) to Hanyang University where we were greeted by our billets bearing welcome signs with our names. I don't know about everyone else, but I thought the idea was nifty. Alexis and I arrived at the home of our billets just after 10pm. Our hosts suggested a walk in a park nearby, but I chickened out and stayed in to shower and read (just another evening in the uneventful life of Nala).



The Departure

Deb

Monday, April 26

6:30am and I awake to sunshine after sleeping on a comfortable bed with a "stone" pillow. Of course I didn't need to get up until 8:00am, but my body decided otherwise. I lay in bed wondering what this tour of South-east Asia would bring. Finally 8 o'clock comes and I get up and have my shower and wash up for breakfast. Breakfast was a variety of different traditional food, (strangely similar to last night's dinner). After breakfast we departed to catch the subway to Hanyang University. Once we had arrived, we waited for the others to join us. Shortly after was our first rehearsal of the tour in the concert hall of the university. Next we had our tour of the campus, one of the many "interesting and educational" school tours we would have. The campus tour ended in the office of the President of the university. Here we were met by the dignitaries of the universities and got the token political speech about the relations between the schools. When this was finished, we were presented with gifts (scarves for the women, and ties for the men). Our meeting with the dignitaries concluded with a picture outside. Being that the concert was not until 5:00pm, we had an hour and a half to do what we wished. Shannon, Jenn, Dan, Rick, Dallas, Mark and I went to the pub at the campus gate. Here I obtained my first gift, a 1 litre beer mug. Holding my mug proudly, we returned to the concert hall for warm-up. Our first concert went well, and we all headed out to the lobby to meet our hosts and go to the reception. While waiting, my host introduced Dallas and I to 5 beautiful Korean friends of his. Needless to say, we were quite happy about this. After chatting for a bit with our hosts and being showered with flattery, we headed to the reception. Along the way, Mark and I were told that we looked like Mr. Bean and Tom Cruise respectively.



After the reception, which included some wonderful food, we went to a dance/karaoke place called Rockape. Here we hung out with our hosts and their friends and danced. We also had a few not so masculine men dancing with us. Close to midnight, the girls went home and Dallas, Dan, myself and our hosts finished off with our first bout of Karaoke.

Felipe

Tuesday, April 27

Today we left our first hosts from Hanyang University. I think most of us could agree that they treated us much better than we expected. Most of us received gifts for staying with them. Hmm! kind of backwards from what we do, but oh well. I was the first person to arrive at the school today, as my host had a early class. I sat around, had a chilled coffee from the machine and patiently waited for everyone. Yawn! Finally people started showing up and we start to find out that Starcraft is BIG in Korea. A few members had procured time in an internet cafe and were playing Starcraft until the wee hours of the morning. Suddenly out from our large group of people came the hacky sack. A necessary item on a Chamber Singers tour. Cross cultural bounds were forged as both Koreans and Canadians began to hack. I think only one complete hack was done, this was completed by passing the hack from crotch to crotch. It looked quite interesting :). Anyhow, on the bus and one big damn Jon cheer for everyone in Hanyang. We took a bus into the city and went to the "Secret Gardens". I'm not clear on all the history. But I did catch that it was a royal palace at some point in its history. During our walk through the gardens, we found a very nice spot to take a group picture. We posed and had some Mormon guy take the pictures (sorry I don't remember his name). Well, little did we know that it seemed to be an extreme offence in Korea to take pictures in this spot as one of the tour guide started yelling at us through a mega-phone. Take a chill! We then proceeded to Duksung University. This happened to be an all women's university. Looking good so far! Dan and I were billeted together once again and our host just happened to be the president of the student government of the university. She had a meeting right after she picked us up, so she sent us into the internet cafe on their campus and we were e-mailing and picking up hockey scores and the lot. Turned out, we were staying only 1 1/2 blocks off campus so we didn't have far to go. Hyun-Min was our host, and her friend joined us for the evening. We went to a little pub like restaurant for dinner. Nice but expensive. The beer came with little KKK hats on the bottle tops. They were little napkins, but folded the way they were, look like Klan hats. Dinner was fine except for the waiter who spilled the leftover food on me. Great, kimchi on a white shirt! After dinner, we went to Karaoke, or Noreban (I think) as they call it in Korea, a singing room nonetheless. I never knew that these karaoke machines actually scored you. Well, I would just like to say that Dan and I scored the first 100 by Chamber Singers in Korea to the tune of Kokomo by the Beach Boys. Our host was so self conscious, she would always quit the song before her score would come up. Well, an enjoyable night, tomorrow, more sight seeing and the first concert in our 8 concert marathon.

Mark

Wednesday, April 28.

Darryl and I get up, and eat lunch with Young-Joo and her mother. It was the traditional Korean breakfast, rice (again), kimchee (again), vegetables, rice, tea, and rice. When we first met Young-Joo and her friend Sung-Jou the night before, I knew we would have some fun. We went to a traditional Korean restaurant then Bowling. Today would be fun too.

To get from Young-Joo's house to Duk Sung, we first had to take a taxi to get to the bus stop, then a thirty minute bus ride. Traffic in Korea is a little frightening. There doesn't seem to be any speed limit on busses: they seem to take great joy in frightening the tourists. There were a few times I thought the bus wouldn't stop! Young-Joo and Sung-Jou were kind enough to give us a tour of the campus. It is very beautiful, with brick

buildings and magnificent views of mountains. The university had put up two very flattering banners announcing our concert, but the only words I could read were "Victoria Chamber Singers," & "University of Victoria," According to our hosts students can only study accounting and Tai Chi, although I think that is a result of broken English.

We had a rehearsal in the concert hall, then lunch with the university's administration. They were very gracious hosts.

Our concert went incredibly well. The audience was thrilled with "Le Chant de L'Oiseau," where the choir leaves the stage to sing in the audience. At the reception after the concert, our hosts all gave us gifts. Darryl and

I got some candy; most of the other people were given flowers. The university put on a wonderful banquet of traditional Korean desserts as well as crackers and things.

Lots of us went out for dinner that night. To get to the restaurant, we had to take the bus. Some of the other riders looked a little scared to see so many white people on a bus, but they were very nice. Our hosts took us



to a wonderful tiny restaurant. We got three tables put together. The first thing we ordered were pitchers of beer. Beer pitchers in Korea are about five litres, but the glasses are tiny little things.

After dinner and too many pitchers of beer, we left the restaurant. I think they were glad to see us leave. Carmina Burana sung by drunk Chambersingers didn't go over very well to anyone but the drunk Chambersingers and our hosts. It was still early, so we decided to go out on the town. Sung-Jou took us down the street to a place known only as "The Mokoli Place."

As you step down from the street into the bar, you first notice the ceilings are six feet tall. Then you see the dirt floor, the wooden picnic tables, the smell of the fish, the graffiti covering all the walls, and very happy people. We sat at a table and were served mokoli in kettles, which you pour into soup bowls and drink. It tastes like white wine, but is very creamy. It's made from rice and is very creamy. And nothing goes better with mokoli than an entire fried fish, served with salt. I had a great time there, just getting to know my billets. They are wonderful people. I hope to see them again some day.

When the mokoli place closed and we were kicked out, it was time to go home. We had a fantastic day, but it was over.

Things to remember from Duk Sung:

"Oh, in Canada, only girlfriend do that!" — Darryl

"Oh boy, another day in the womens' university" — Michael

"Oh boy, another day in the womens' university" — all the other guys

"Darryl, did you brush your teeth?" — Young-Joo

"Darryl, did you wash your hands?" — Sung-Jou

Michael

"1=2, for sufficiently large values of 1" - anon.

Michael

Thursday, April 29

Today is my dad's birthday; happy birthday dad.

Last night was our last night with our DukSung host families; we gave a 5 o'clock concert and then we all went to Noraebang: " traditional Korean singing room" with our billets. Carrie and I sang "We Are The World" and Hugh kicked ass singing almost every song. We really liked our DukSung billets, especially Graham and John's....

Anyway, today we met at the university and a bus picked us up around 10am to take us to Yonsei University. We arrived at Yonsei and sang for their choir (or was that tomorrow?) then went over to Seoul Foreign School to sing for the bratty kids who didn't appreciate us one bit. We ate lunch in the cafeteria at SFS - good western food (Jenn was happy). In the afternoon we got a tour of the campus and then went shopping in a district right around the university. John bought a lot of stuff for Risa and the boys drank really big beers in paper bags. We returned to Yonsei to have dinner - which was a HUGE buffet of yummy things (Carrie and I were all over the sushi). Remember the dining room? Those nice round tables with white table cloths? Well it impressed me. We met our host families after dinner and went home. That was pretty much it for that evening - all in all, a good day.

Trish

Friday, April 30

Today was day 2 at Yonsei University in Seoul. Yonsei is a 2nd class university, opposed to Hanyang and Doksung which are 3rd class. It is a beautiful university, built in the European style. The only unattractive feature of Yonsei was all the stairs! When we arrived at Yonsei mid-morning, we sang for the concert choir. Afterwards, they sang for us. They were amazing!! What beautiful voices and control!! Us girls are tempted to bring the mens' section home with us :). Mr. John Park conducted them. He's a great guy. As usual, we were treated like royalty by him. After singing for the concert choir, we had a brief concert in the foyer of the hotel that Bruce and Alex stayed in, located on the campus. Following we ate in the restaurant in the hotel. Everyone enjoyed the buffet, even I'll of me who doesn't like Kimchi! After



Felipe Sequeira, Director, Office of International Affairs

lunch we were given time to shop around Yonsei. Many people went off on their own, but some of us girls went shopping with Sunny. Sunny was our guide at Yonsei. She is currently looking for a school to attend for doctoral studies in Voice. She completed her Masters at Indiana, therefore she had excellent English. She was a lot of fun! Dinner was hosted by Ahndong Church. We were served raw hamburgers and fries. Somehow beef wasn't very appealing after that. Oh well, most people were too hungry to care, except for a few of us picky eaters. Our concert began at 7:30. The audience loved us! We got 2 standing ovations!!! Many of our billets brought us flowers after the concert. Koreans are so generous to their visitors!

Jenn

Saturday, May 1

Today was the much awaited bargain shopping day in "I Tae-Won" market. It was the first of many such trips in the next weeks. Some memorable purchases were made today. The first of many extra suitcases was purchased by Marnie. She was soon to be outdone in quantity by Alex, but on the flight home, her new suitcase won the heaviest suitcase award according to the airline. Another singer bought an item that would eventually find it's way into his tour award name. Dan "Damn! I look good I a trenchcoat" Hogg was also joined in his leather purchasing by Jon Park. Jon's students will never look at him the same way again after seeing him in that "too cool" getup. After shopping we were taken to a church for rehearsal and dinner. The hall was good except for the odd balcony. The dinner was one of the cooked at your table Bulgogi experiences. The concert went very well and the space was good to sing in. The audience was responsive

and the traditionally dressed women at the door made the atmosphere. The uneven staircase from hell which nearly claimed a few lives was a big hit. Overall a great time was had by all, especially the singer who yelled indignantly during the photos for some unknown reason.

Alexis

Sunday, May 2

This day was relatively uneventful if memory serves me correctly. That afternoon we bussed to Kwanju where we stopped at a strange mall with some clowns and really loud pop music. We broke for lunch where the more discreet members of the group had a safe soup or a greasy burger. Shannon made the unfortunate choice of a "Tasty Handbar" for lunch, which consisted of some unidentifiable fried substance on a stick. After a couple of bites and a sour face, we decided on a wager. I would award her five bucks \$US if she asked one of the many American soldiers at the mall if they wanted a bite of her Tasty Handbar. When the time came to board the bus, Shannon was still deep in conversation with the GI's. There was some unfounded speculation that she had told the Privates "me love you long time." After arriving in Kwanju we gave what I'm certain was a lovely afternoon concert although I truly can't recall the performance.

Later, we met the hosts for the evening, many of which could not complete an entire sentence in English. I believe it was at that phase of the tour where Pigeon English became the official language of the '99 UVic Chamber Singers Tour. Even though our group spoke English in varying degrees of fluency, we all began speaking in a halting, broken dialect which added a distinctly Asian flavour to the proceedings. And while I honestly can't remember any further details of the day, I would like to chronicle some of my most treasured memories of the trip in ChamberSingersSpeak: Me and Haley eat the boiled silkworm at Buddhist temple - taste like chicken.

We elephant ride in Chaing Mai where big big spider run into Graham's pants. I buy dried worms for eat at Bangkok airport. Later, hot weather make snacks no good. Me put into Shannon's bed.

I can no eat chicken foot in China. Later, me go to play guitar for concert. Open up case and chicken foot try to get out. Why Shannon and Karen do this to me?

We go naughty nightclub in Bangkok. Me no can say things there.

Eat the barbecued crayfish from the Hong Kong street. Later, stomach feel not so good.

Me throw up before nice concert in China.

Many winds on a plane ride home.

I hope I haven't omitted any important items. All in all, the trip taught me one thing: bring your own toilet paper when you go to the Orient. Thank You Chamber Singers for an unforgettable experience!!!

Alex



Shannon and Trish's friend: Dick

Monday, May 3

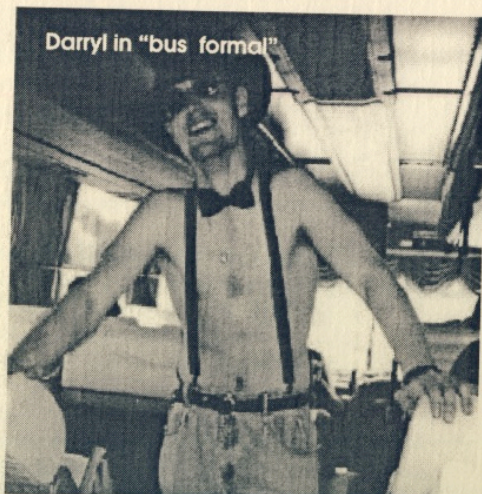
Here we are, 6 days into our 7 day, 8 concert stretch. A lot of us were a little tense at this point. We were all under the assumption that we were in dorms by ourselves at this point, however, there was a miscommunication. But, we are all toughing through it. We went to a large arts centre in Kwangju and had a tour around. It was fairly boring as most people weren't really paying attention. Unfortunately, my mind has gone blank one the most of the afternoon, so I'll continue where I remember. We had a rehearsal with both the chamber singers and the Honam choir. Our portion went fine, but when we combined and Mr. Ingi Min took over, there was definitely a different mood. It seemed like he was on a power trip almost. That combined with the fact we were singing Rutter (ugh) didn't make for a good combo. We were intermixed with the Koreans so to provide a more blended sound, but there's no way we could blend with their sound. They were so loud, and not really reading the music. I think they had already learned it, but they learned sections wrong because the tenors at least were consistently singing some wrong notes in the same place. Anyhow, Ingi also took artistic liberty when it came to the dynamics. Koreans like loud, and did we get loud. The piece didn't call for a ffffff, but that's what we sang. What do you mean decrescendo, no, crescendo! The concert went well and that's all that matters. Time to relax! We managed to get almost everyone together to go to this club "Titanic". They served beer in 3L pitchers - nice. We just sat around talking and drinking, a little bit of eating. Hugh and Deb started dancing - I believe we have a picture of that :). Once again the generosity of the Koreans came through as I didn't end up paying for anything I drank. My host told me not to worry, in broken English of course. I couldn't have left Korea without going to one of those silly picture places. You know the ones where you can get the stickers and button and who knows what else. So my host, Hugh's host and Hugh and I crammed into the little picture thing and had some rather bizarre looking pictures taken. I don't look good with green hair. Well, that pretty much wraps it up, oh, to recap my favourite two words this day as well. "Tomorrow, Bangkok. Bangkok, tomorrow!"

Mark

Tuesday, May 4

This morning I was awakened by my last host of Korea from Honam Theological University in Kwangju. Barely speaking English, she kindly attempted: "This morning, last time with me". Peering out from my cramped Korean chamber on the breakfast table sat apparently my favourite meal (at least understood by my host). Humming last night's melody sung with the university's concert choir, we flew down the 10 flights of her apartment building and outside to the calling of my new Asian name: "Harey" from one lift to school.

Having just barely missed a head-on collision with a large bus, we remarkably arrived at the music school in one piece dragging our luggage behind us. Upon entry into the choral room, we were stampeded by frantic chamber singers and concert choir member preparing for one brief and final concert in Korea along with long good-byes. After the church service and concert, we began our dramatic departure for the airport. It was then that I witnessed one of the most touching scenes in Korea when we were given the warmest goodbye triggering many emotions. Looking back at the first day we arrived in Kwangju, many of us were disappointed to discover we



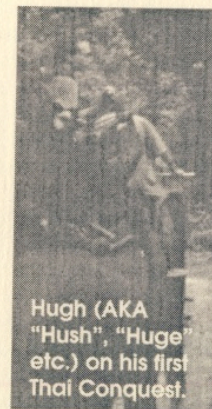
were being hosted again; however, quite the opposite occurred. This Christian choir of such power and energy whom we had the opportunity to perform with, strived to be the most facilitating and fun hosts. Through taking us to a wicked night club, karaoke, shopping...anything our hearts desired, we were able to learn a lot about the culture. Actually, I would agree that all our hosts and university ties were extremely hospitable and generous. Back on the bus, it was a touching scene waving goodbye to some rather attractive Koreans who we had the opportunity to bond with. Leaving them behind as a memory, began a 5 hr. bus ride to the Seoul airport for Bangkok, staying at our first hotel yet. Now accustomed to stripping clothes as a group, flying bras and briefs across the bus was nothing atypical. While we're on the road, I should comment on the vehicles - mostly Korean brands. There are cool mini vans created from government pressure tactics called Atoz and Matiz, not to mention a superfluous amount of Kia and Hyundai vans. After a relatively uneventful 5 hr. flight except for Wade's cry fest during the feature film who oblivious to us proudly announced his news flash later. Furthermore, upon arrival we encountered a large tropical rain storm with large amounts of water in the streets, and lightning. Walking out of the airport, the most hot and humid air clung to us like a steam bath to be experienced for the next 2 weeks. Sludging through 3 ft. of water in one colourful Thai street, we headed for our hotel "Rama Gardens". Unfortunately, because our stay was short, we were unable to fully enjoy the amenities the hotel had to offer. Since it was 2 am, we retired to our rooms for a short slumber before our next set of adventures in the morning.

Haley

Wednesday, May 5

Today was a wonderful day because we were all awoken by Professor Bruce E. More (said in a weird - no offense - accent). We woke up insanely early today - 6.15 am - , brought our bags down to the lobby, and ate an "American style" breakfast buffet. We then all piled onto the bus and we waded, submarine style, through the swimming pool that was the highway. We arrived at the airport and flew to Chiang Mai. What can I say but that it looks like a tropical paradise. It is mountainous, HUMID, hot, and gorgeous. We drove on the wrong side of the road to the hotel. As we entered the hotel, a receptionist greeted us with leis and some juice. There was even a sign that said, "Welcome Victoria Chamber Singers Group". The hotel sort of reminds me of the hotel in the movie Parent Trap 3 - the latticed wood, the feeling that you're on a long vacation in a wonderful place. The rooms are nice and they're all air conditioned. As soon as we checked in, most of us went down to the pool and relieved ourselves of the almost unbearable heat. A few of us then went to the dining room for Thai lunch. blah dargh!!!! Thai food is incredibly spicy. After lunch, most of the singers requested massages - need I say more - (unfortunately the receptionist signed us all up for 3 p.m., then the massage room flooded - whatever). Basically, the rest of the afternoon was spent loungin and relaxin, chillin an maxxin and shootin some b ball..... haha funny. It seems almost unbelievable that WE are in THAILAND listening to a monsoon outside the doors. shock me shock me. Someone then got the bright idea that we should all get dressed up to the nines so that we could go and wade through the streets and get drenched. So we did. I had the pleasure of going to the front desk and asking the receptionist, "hi, we're all hungry and we're all cheap but we're all expert food connoisseurs - where can we eat?" She gave me directions to this place called the Riverside. Everybody agreed, after we got there that it was definitely a great recommendation; great food, good prices, spectacular setting. We sat on a barge on the water while crocodiles and snakes eyed our food and mosquitoes ate us for food. The musk in the background and the blue lagoons definitely made this trip worthwhile!!!! After dinner, most of us went to the night market - definitely an unforgettable experience - and we bargained our \$\$\$@es off. Most of the vendors tried to sell us jack for a million (exaggeration) but we held strong - OK, most of us did. Then we came back to the hotel and crowded in to people's rooms for drinks and facials. What a wonderful day. That is all. Good night and a good rest to all.

Karen



Thursday, May 6

After last night's deluge, I was anticipating another day of sloshing through the streets in search of e-mail access and more shops, but everything was miraculously dry and the sun was out to tan us once again. Group plans for the day were quite varied. Shannon, Tricia, Alexander, Graham, Hugh and Haley (sorry if I forgot anyone) spent the morning on an elephant safari, which included a guest appearance for Graham from one very large spider. Fortunately, Graham managed, with the brave help of whoever happened to be telling the story later, to dissuade the spider from doing anything more than taking a cursory tour of his upper body. The spider was gone, but its legend will live forever. Hmm...sounds like more material for Sharon, Lois, and Bram.... While Graham and his crew were busy on their jungle expedition, and others of us were e-mailing our families and buying souvenirs, Mark, Felipe, and Darryl were taking their newly-rented motorcycles for a test spin. They didn't get too far before running into myself, Alexis, Connie, Deborah, & Michael. In a flash, it was decided that Deb and I would join the boys on the bikes, Deb doubling with Mark and I with Darryl. Thus began my Great Tour Adventure. I feel that it is important at this point to stress the fact that I had never before in my life ridden a motorcycle or scooter of any kind. After spending a couple of hours riding all over Chiang Mai, and out the speedway, I was convinced that motorbikes were the funnest things ever. I hated to go back to the hotel for lunch, but the boys were hungry, and they were talking about getting together with the others to go to the Go-Kart track again. So after lunch and a swim, Mark, Deb, Felipe, Darryl and I were joined by Rick, Graham (fully recovered from his "spider attack") and Haley, who decided make a solo ride with us. I must say that in retrospect, Haley did a great job of learning to ride a motorbike. Not all the boys would have agreed with me, but it didn't take her long to get the hang of it, and she kept pace with the boys pretty well. We left the rest of the group lounging pool-side and waiting to "feel fly" during massages by the hotel "lady-massage" staff, and cruised down to the Go-Kart track. Go-Kart racing was great fun, although Rick crashed into my cart and destroyed the steering mechanism, which put me out of the race. I would like to say that I would have been in the lead if Rick hadn't broken my cart, but sadly tis not the case, as there are couple of speed demons in the tenor section. After a fun hour or so at the Go-Karts, it was time to head back and meet the group for dinner. I don't know what got into me, whether it was all that adrenaline from driving the Go-Kart or whether it was the fact that Haley was riding her own motorbike, but I got the idea that I would just take Darryl's bike for a quick trip around the parking lot all by myself before we went back to the hotel. At this point I find that the narrative isn't quite as clear to me as it should be. I remember listening carefully, but impatiently, as Darryl showed me how to operate the bike, and I remember putting on my helmet and revving up the bike. After that, all I remember is thinking that I was definitely going to run into one of the two bikes parked in my path, and that I had better head for Rick's bike, as Mark's bike was occupied by both Mark and Deborah, and Rick had left his unattended for the moment. I like to think that I was airborne after I ricocheted off Rick's bike, but I can't verify that. I also like to think that after I remembered how to stop the bike and did so, that I dismounted with a semblance of grace, but I suspect that this was not the case. I am convinced, however, that my damaging the hand-brake on Rick's bike by ploughing into it was a simple act of Karma, and that what you do on the Go-Kart track does not go unnoticed by the forces that be. Rick's bike and I each sustained a minor injury, neither of which was enough to really hinder us on the trip back to the hotel. I held on a little tighter on the ride home, and wasn't quite as excited about seeing how fast we could go, but it was still a nice ride. A few wrong turns made the nice ride even longer for us, but eventually we found the hotel and were able to

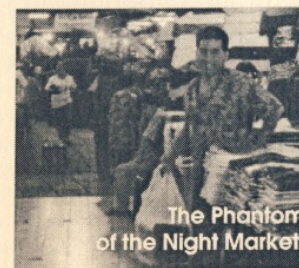


Born to be wild...

join up with the rest of the group in time to head out for dinner. Singing and drinking and good food and the amazing tropical atmosphere of Thailand made it an enjoyable evening, and afterwards there was the Night Market and other "entertainment" to round off a great day of R&R. And it turned out that the repairs for Rick's bike only cost me 100 Baht, which is about \$4.00, and an X-ray of my finger done back in Canada didn't turn up any signs of a broken bone.

I think that each of us in our own way felt the romantic spell that this tropical country seems to cast upon its visitors, and I'm sure that most of us would go back in a second if we had the opportunity. In fact...well, perhaps I've said enough.

Marnie



Friday, May 7

Well, today's the day we left Chiangmai to return to Bangkok.

This morning, as I slept in, I missed going out with whatever crowds actually went out in this great city with the little time we had left. My usual grogginess wore off quickly and a touch of sadness entered my mind as I made my way down to the Suriwongse restaurant. Chiangmai was my personal favourite place on tour, and yes, maybe I was prejudiced towards it because we suddenly had all this R&R time to use, but I had been looking forward to Thailand and all it could offer since

ever hearing about this tour, and Chiangmai simply blew my mind away. Indeed, it's not the megapolis Bangkok is, but I'm not a big city person, and I loved all the "little" goodies Chiangmai had to offer. Most importantly, the food lived up to its (my) expectations and more! I can not get enough of it, and I believe Graham quoted me on, "There ain't a bad chili pepper in Thailand!" Checking out of the hotel went as usual, the medium of all tours' "hurry up and wait" policy, and there were the usual announcements to everyone as we gathered in the lobby downstairs concerning what was happening that day and stuff. It wasn't entirely annoying the way certain people kept asking the stupidest questions (yet), but it got outta hand when other people got all pissed off at those other people and therefore people got into bad moods. Bad moods suck on a long, really close tour like this, but they are of course totally understandable. I just wish more people other than me, Leah, Dan, and Darryl tried to live everybody's bad times like we seem to be doing so far... Ah, so people didn't complain too much about the heat this morning, as I guess we're all used to it now. The transfer to and check-in at the airport was uneventful through my eyes. Everybody split up into their respective "groups" and went off, some going to the fast food places, some pondering playing their favourite sport inside the airport mall, some as always going off shopping for real goodies and all the other things you shop for when wasting time, and the rest either sleeping, bathrooming, or phoning. Somebody did manage to find an international phone, of course there was only one it seemed, and so the long line started for people calling home or wherever else they needed to if it was international. However, the flight had to fly away, so the line of people was cut way short. I like how nobody seems to be too bitter if they can't make "one of those phone calls home" 'cause we have to leave suddenly or something - everything appears understood as it's just the way it is. Ah, Thai Airways again. I'd never thought airlines could serve such good food. Wow. I didn't get up and walk around the plane this time, so I'm not hip on what other people were doing (other than sleeping, drinking, and talking?). It seems Leah and I 'cause of surname co-incidences are going to be sitting next to each other for the rest of tour. That's fine with me 'cause we have a best of seven "count-down crazy eights" thing going. She won the first one, which meant dinner not including alcohol on me at that amazing smaller "Family Thais" (!!!) restaurant the other day. We arrived in Bangkok not according to the schedule (time wise, I mean), which didn't really matter today. A sweaty-smelly bus picked all of us up and drove us to the city. Along the way, we all got a great free tour of the city, and people took pictures where they could and we saw everything from mother-high buildings to "usual" crazily dense residential areas to shopping centres and markets to actual natural scenery. I think everybody made some comment about the size and business of Bangkok at some point. Oh yah! Leaving the airport on the bus, we were driving up the on ramp to Bang-

kok's "super freeway" or whatever and all "ramping-on" traffic was halted. We couldn't see a moving vehicle all the way up and down the upper freeway...and then I noticed and of course yelled something intangible about the mass of flashing lights WAY back near the upper part of the airport. Sure enough, those flashing lights started getting closer, and soon there was a movie-like progression of police and non-descript vehicles going by, and we all exclaimed and saw what we assumed were high-ranking uniformed people inside the unmarked SUV's and stuff. Cool guy-stuff, if you ask me. The Siam City Hotel! Holy mother-hell! Wow, this place is intensely-starred, and it definately deserves those stars. We were all super-anxious to get to our rooms and see the pool, the restaurant, and everything else this hotel had to offer. Graham and I found out we were rooming together, and ahhh, there was much rejoicing (while other people said something along the lines of "oh-no"). So, we all pile up to our rooms after the usual check-in and evening plans announcements, and Graham and I pull our little stunt of nothin' but bowties, underwear, black socks, and his two traditional umbrellas that he brought. And of course for good measure, we do the "willy-warmer" thing with one sock each just for Leah and Trisha. Again, everybody split up into their groups, and I joined the ones who went straight to the pool. On the way, I saw Rick in the work out room and popped in to chat it up with the man as he ran. I think Rick's getting just as much and even more out of this whole tour-far-away-experience-thing as anybody else, as some people don't give him enough credit for being a human being like the rest of us and all. He's a great guy, and I got outta there before I got annoying, and jumped in the pool where we all talked and played around as usual. Somebody decided a great thing for the evening was to get as dressed up as we could without the guys being in their tuxes (which was GREAT for the ladies as they had the first opportunity to all dress in their new-found attires, and good for most of the guys, too, as some of us had gotten new clothes as well). I vote Mark as the best dressed for sure, and I'd have to say (to cover my ass) it's a tie for all the women. This did not include people like Rick, for instance, as he's Rick, or me, as I neglected to bring even semi-fancy clothes, or Graham, who cheated any ways and borrowed somebody's purple dress shirt. So, all of us dressed up for a fancy evening met in the restaurant, where we scarfed down our meals quickly in preparation for Alex's concert. Wow, that restaurant! The services I found terrible, what do we look like tourists or something? And so, Alex's concert. Wow, that guy can play... I wonder if it bothers him or his playing that he perspires so much? He seemed really nervous, especially for his last song when he forgot the piece's name, which is nothing to be nervous about in my eyes, 'cause it was funny and it got the audience to actually show some emotion other than, say just living and sitting there... I believe some people in the choir were blown away by his playing, although why they'd expect otherwise is beyond me. I think everybody finds

it super cool that was Alex is like, a prof that we all didn't really know before, but now realize he's just a person like the rest of us and that he's actually super crazy and fits right in with some of us! After the recital we all went back to the restaurant and "encouraged" them to let us all back in for free because it was obvious who we were and that we all had to rush off to the concert and that we loved the hotel and that we wouldn't do this normally and ... blah. This is when most people got a good look at the buffet. The BUFFET. Holy, that buffet I believe is the likes of which God has not seen in a while...at least in North America. Can't wait to hit it tomorrow! So, we all laughed some more, and I bought Alex one of those Lychee Slings or whatever, I liked 'em 'cause they actually had Blue Curacao in them! I got all my drink for free, however, 'cause the waiter majorly screwed up my order and forgot about my meal, so I didn't have supper. Here's where the day ends in my eyes, 'cause I got really angry

It's a Watt???



and just...left. I said, "fine, then I'm not paying for these drinks" and went up to my room and complained to the assistant manager on the phone and then fell asleep. WAH. So there's my sour experience on tour, which isn't really fair 'cause these things happen, but I was REALLY hungry, and we all know what I'm like when I get hungry. I talked my actions over with different people, some of who said it was all good, and some who showed me some more sense, I think. I didn't know if being "guests" at the hotel made up for me missing a meal? I don't know... Thailand rocks, and there's more to come, that's for damn sure!

Jon

Saturday, May 8.

I remember little of the morning. I think it may have been the day we left Chang Mai. Actually, now that I think about it, I'm fairly certain it's the day we left Chang Mai.

Hmm... where to begin... Bangkok is a city to remember. There are some amazing building, one we saw was shaped like giant 'M', three large towers connected at the top by another tower that looked as if it was on it's side.

We stayed in a beautiful four and a half star hotel. While we were checking in, they gave us free drinks and food. The hotel had a large, heated, rooftop swimming pool, spa, gym, and sauna. For the first time in 8 years, I went swimming. I even had fun.

Dinner that night was in a little dive somewhere up the street with bad service and questionable food. Everybody who ate there got sick in the next day or two.

Alexander's guitar recital was that night, in what is normally used as a dance club. Art Deco decorations, black marble, and a small room all gave the concert some magical mystique. It was wonderful. His playing was great too, he got a standing ovation from the audience, which was full.

After the concert, some of the guys decided to take Alexander out on the town. We asked the concierge at the hotel, "Where is a good bar to go to?" but he didn't understand. After about fifteen minutes of broken English, he called us two taxis and said, "They take you to bar." I think he only understood that we wanted to go, "bar, ladies, cheap." That is almost what we got.

The cover charge was \$24 Canadian, but we bartered him down to, I think, \$15. We went in. Before we sat down, we had met some new friends. They were very nice, very interested in what we do, who we are, where we come from, and would we buy them drinks? I said, "No, I don't have much money to buy drinks." She left in quite a huff.

And oh, what a place it was. The shows started. There were ten of them all together. Naked women with all kinds of implements: ping pong balls (she had amazing aim)

- razor blades
- glow in the dark string
- dart gun (a multipurpose tool, also good for putting out candles on a birthday cake)
- seltzer bottle
- cigarettes
- horn
- coca cola bottle (full, empty, then full again)
- banana

Finally, a man and a women on stage together in just about every position I could imagine. The men's room was something else, it also served as the change room for the ladies. They, the ladies, were very aggressive. At one point I had to throw one of them out of the way just to get out of the bathroom, she wouldn't let me leave! I was a tinny bit scared at that point.

None of the women smiled when they were on stage.

After that, we went back to the hotel in rickshaws, three wheel taxis that look more like golf carts. The two taxis were racing each other back to the hotel, with us hanging out of them yelling from one taxi to the other. It was a sight to remember, but then I don't think I will forget anything from Bangkok.

Things to remember:

- "What can I get for 350 Baht?" -- anonymous
- "I can't believe I smoked a cigarette that was inside a woman's..." -- also anonymous
- "Oh my god, she put that there?"
- "Fun for you!" -- our new lady friend at the bar
- "eeewwww"

Michael

Sunday, May 9th

00:07 It's just past midnight, and we're leaving the Saxophone Club. The band played bad facsimiles of blues and rock covers and that's no way to spend your last night in Thailand. And for the record, guys, we did go to Bangkok. At this point, Shannon, Jen, Felipe, Alex, and myself are heading for some other club with



Hong Kong, our first culture shock.

some old guys we picked up at the reception earlier that night. One of them seems to be rich. His driver picks us up and we start driving. After some time we arrived at a hotel that might be fancier than the one we're staying at. Inside, the Club Riva awaits. A Canadian band called Tall Beat plays North American Top 40 covers. They feature a drummer, a guitar player, a keyboard player, three singers with too much energy and the whole eighties step dancing thing going on, and a MacPlus picking up the slack. Oddly enough, if memory serves me right, this is the only instance of anybody going out dancing on the trip. Shame on the rest of you. Us young people pushed our way onto the crowded dance floor. Frighteningly enough, we knew all the words to everything. No matter. Later on, Alex "Dancing Machine" Dunn came and joined us on the floor. After a quick scout around, we send him after a major blonde in her mid thirties. Don't ever stop dancing, Alex. The night's revelries ended around two thirty or three, I think. Back at our hotel, we came to the grim realization that we've got to be up by 6:30 to get packed for check out tomorrow.

Oh my god it's early. I can't remember what time I woke up, only that everything became one big blur. Somehow I arrived downstairs for breakfast, which was eaten all too quickly. And once again, I didn't get any strawberries. I think Jen ate them all. Again, no matter. We took the bus to the airport, where we boarded to fly the friendly Thai skies. It's a good thing we all love flying so much, we seem to be doing it an awful lot.

Wow. Hong Kong has a big-ass airport. It looked like they had been building new hangars for the planes, but then somebody said, "Oh, screw it. Let's make this the terminal instead." It was huge. The bus ride into Hong Kong was mildly interesting, and we were given the low down on everything by our guide. Arriving at the hotel Prudential, everybody seemed to be headed for downtime, so me and my favourite perma-roommate, Mark, headed out to check out the shopping. What we found was a never ending plethora of unpriced electronics and cameras. We also found our new home away from home, The Virtual Zone. It boasted to be the largest video arcade in Hong Kong, which it certainly seemed to be, and as far as I could tell, it was also the cleanest. Sorry, did I say cleanest? I meant the least disgusting. This place featured many bizarre games you wouldn't find in Canada, like the dancing game, the river rafting game, the armadillo races, and of course the horse racing game that would later give validation to the persona of a certain chamber singer.

For dinner, Mark and I met up with John, Leah, Karen, Graham, Darryl, Trish, Jen, Hugh, and Deborah. Okay, so that was a long time ago, and I think that's who came to dinner. We wandered around looking for a suitable locale that appealed to us both aesthetically and financially, and when that failed and we were frustrated for lack of food, we settled for the first dirty little greasy spoon diner we could find. Which in the end worked out, because as we all learned, those were the best places to eat in Hong Kong, far and away. Mind you, rumour has

it that some people went to McDonald's quite frequently. This particular dinner also introduced the mildly entertaining concept of Darryl eating spaghetti with a pair of chopsticks. After dinner, we spilt up to better satisfy all our shopping needs. Mark, Hugh, Deb, and Darryl and I went to check out the other end of the strip we were on, whilst the others went...somewhere. We walked around, just checking out the stores, and spotted an interesting place across the street that we would return to check out later: Caesar's Night Club. With promises of club dancing and packed singing rooms, we had visions of a wild chamber screamers party in our heads. After losing Hugh among the glories of the neon jungle, we returned to Caesar's. We entered the main doors to be greeted by the host, and shown to an elevator, where another host took us up to the first floor. Hmmm....intriguing. We stepped off the elevator beyond the entrance hall, there are walls in the

darkness. Music can be heard. This, at the time, all seemed very promising. The gracious host wished only 500HK\$ per person. What a deal. That's just under \$100Cdn, not \$10 as Alex would have you believe. Well, gee. We all shuffled quickly back on to the elevator, with a better idea of how one gets to sing in those rooms. With that, we made a healthy, informed decision to get to the Virtual Zone as quickly as possible, ready to immerse ourselves in a little cheap simulated pleasure. After living vicariously through street fighters, armadillos, and wild horses, we staggered back to



Complete circle: Korean banquetin Hong Kong?

the hotel, where everybody who was awake was pondering the tour old question "why aren't we doing anything?" Those who hadn't had anything to drink were left with the other age old tour question, "Why isn't Dallas wearing any clothes?" I don't claim to have all the answers, but I do know that if Darryl isn't going to hypnotize anyone, I'm just going to go to bed. .Good night kids.

Daniel

Monday, May 10

We had a free day today and it's mother's day (our time). Eight days 'till we have to go home. I never want it to end. Life at home is going to be boring, the food will suck, and we'll have to eat it with a knife and fork. I woke up late-ish, and had a few plans. #1: call mom. but that had to wait 'till later so as it becomes mother's day back home, and I don't wake them up in the middle of the night. A pile of people were going to use the phone today, so I was sure one of them would show me how. #2: do some shopping. Still had to find some chinese rum for my dad, (although in hindsight I never did.) Funds are REALLY low, but I didn't want to phone mom & dad to ask for more money. I asked anyways that night. They sent it to me too. Nice folks. Happy mother's day.

Had a bunch of emotional baggage floating around in my head like so much ship wreckage. That combined with the stomach troubles, missing my nephew, the threat of impending real life, and a somewhat controversial evening involving three people whom I'm sure everyone knows, I was kinda bummed to put it mildly. Needless to say, I had to jump ship for a while and be alone to sort some things out. Actually what ended up happening was I decided to sleep on the roof. Or, rather, the tower on the roof. So I got my bag, sleeping bag, hand painted Thai paper umbrella, alarm clock (because if I slept in the next morning I would miss an important engagement and be killed by several people) and my supplies. (A bottle of thai whiskey, a bottle of korean SOJU and a fresh pack of Marby's.)

Dallas says that I wandered in at 4am (the reason was that I had forgotten the alarm clock, and through the haze I was diligently ensuring that I would not miss the morning's important event. *Bruce, that was incredibly hard, so I hope it means a lot to you.* So against my better judgement, I knocked on my own door, having abandoned the key earlier (I hope that's how you spell "earlier"). To my surprise, Dal actually opened the door and the next bit is a blur. Apparently I was passing out on the bathroom counter with Dal standing naked over me rubbing my back or something. I may or may not have had any clothes when