

cialists and representatives of Transparency International. The corruption problem is a pernicious legacy from the period of Soviet occupation of Lithuania. U.S. officials regularly raise it as part of our dialogue on building civil society, and our assistance program funds several programs to improve ethics and to promote a better understanding of conflict of interest at all levels of government. This event is one of a series of issue-oriented lunches my staff and I are holding. They give us a chance to explore complex topics in a relaxed setting, where we can offer American hospitality and build our network of contacts.

| **3 p.m.** | Joe Bader, an energy security expert, pays a call. He is involved in organizing an upcoming NATO-sponsored conference on Lithuania's long-term energy security. Joe is very interested in having Lithuania purchase a modern, new reactor to replace the old Ignalina RBMK reactors.

| **4 p.m.** | I meet with my administrative staff to discuss our comprehensive embassy building and renovation program. Then I sign out several telegrams. Among them is a cable reporting on our implementation of recommendations from the inspection team that reviewed our work about six months ago.

| **5 p.m.** | I meet at my residence with Julijus Smulkstys, advisor to Lithuanian President Adamkus, on issues concerning the Holocaust and the Jewish community. We review a number of current problems, including the process for restoring the Vilnius Jewish Quarter and amending existing laws to provide for Jewish communal property restitution.

| **7 p.m.** | Mariella and I have dinner with former Minister of Culture Gintautas Keivicius and his wife, Ruta, at their home. Gintautas is a pianist and also the business agent for world-renowned cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, and has just been appointed director general of the Lithuanian Opera and Ballet with a mandate to inject new blood and ideas into the opera and ballet. It is an enjoyable dinner that provides a good chance to catch up on Lithuanian cultural affairs.

| **11 p.m.** | After watching CNN International News and looking over the *International Herald Tribune* and *Financial Times*, it is time for bed. But first, one more walk for Lui the wonder-dog.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

The Regional Environmental Affairs Officer for Southeast Asia and the Pacific Region

EMBASSY BANGKOK, THAILAND

By Ted Osius

| **8 a.m.** | As car engines idle outside Ambassador Darryl Johnson's residence, his wife emerges, wearing a broad straw hat. "We're going to the jungle," Kathleen Johnson says, beaming.



WILDAID

Ambassador Darryl Johnson gives traditional Thai greeting to Khao Yai Conservation Project staff, May 1, 2002.

| **10 a.m.** | We are at the Khao Yai National Park Visitors' Center. I am biting my nails. Our well-rehearsed program should have started, but the media aren't here yet. Dozens of Royal Forest Department officials, forest rangers and non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives mill about, waiting for the program to begin. I am relieved to see that the ambassador and his wife, drinking coffee with our host, the top Forest Department officer, don't seem bothered by the delay.

| **10:30 a.m.** | Finally, an enormous double-decker bus pulls up. Four journalists climb out. Twenty were scheduled to come, but Bangkok is awash in rumors that today

Burma's military junta will announce Aung San Suu Kyi's release. Five television stations and most print journalists have canceled our event to focus on the Nobel Prize winner in Rangoon. Two conservationists stop squabbling long enough to ask me who should speak first. Are my careful plans coming unglued?

| **12 p.m.** | We're back on track. Forty uniformed forest rangers demonstrate training drills: how to subdue a poacher, assist an injured comrade. Our Royal Forest Department host glows with pride. A controversial figure who frequently makes headlines in the local press, he designed the uniforms himself and brought discipline to a rag-tag crew of rangers. Three firefighters whiz down a rope from a hovering helicopter. Their team of 60 waves shovels, squirts at an imaginary fire, and sings in unison. One NGO trainer who frequents the park whispers, "I've never seen these people in the park before. Those shovels are newly painted. I don't think they've ever been used."

| **1:30 p.m.** | The ambassador announces grants to the Forest Department for environmental law enforcement. I wrote proposals four months ago, which Washington formally approved just days before this event. Sixteen embassies vied for funds, and we were awarded two-thirds of the grant money. I will make this program work if it kills me. Standing before a newly planted tree, the ambassador takes questions. Predictably, journalists ask about a debt-for-nature agreement scrapped by the Thai government. It's rubbing salt in a wound: I spent my first five months at post negotiating this deal, and groundless fears of biopiracy brought it down. The ambassador is a pro, fielding each question smoothly, yet I can't help imagining how sweet it would have been to sign that \$9 million agreement here, surrounded by the trees we're trying to save.

| **3 p.m.** | It's raining heavily. Guards toting sawed-off HK-34s accompany us on our "quiet" hike through the forest. Our group of 40 probably won't be spotting any wildlife on this visit. Leeches crawl on my shoes. Still, the trees are majestic. Hundred-foot trunks loom like pillars in a cathedral. Roots are tangled into ghostly shapes. Thirty feet up, a ranger spots a hornbill nest. Jungle fowl cry out, and I can smell the bark of aloewood, pungent and exotic.

| **4:30 p.m.** | I'm no longer annoyed at the conservationist who has been delivering an

endless brief on wildlife protection as we trek through the jungle. After all, the ambassador has remained polite, unflagging, interested in each aspect of the program. We're treated to a rare sighting of Asian wild dogs stalking a small herd of deer. These dogs are fierce: a pack will chase a tiger off its kill.

| **5 p.m.** | The ambassador jokes in fluent Thai with kids at a youth conservation camp. He tosses out a soccer ball, stamped with the embassy seal. A former Peace Corps volunteer, he won't allow bad weather or scheduling delays to dampen his good cheer.

| **7 p.m.** | We dine on steak and fresh fruit under the stars, while a band plays "As Time Goes By." The lead singer wears camouflage pants: he is a ranger from the morning's demonstration. We're on the lawn of a house built 40 years ago by a Thai prime minister, General Sarit. Our host declares his preference for military governments, since they're "more efficient."

| **10:30 p.m.** | Our truck swerves to avoid a seven-foot python on the road. It slithers into the underbrush. We've seen deer, fisher cats and a few civets — weasel-shaped mammals with ringed tails — on our "night safari." A herd of nine elephants emerges from the dark to eat and frolic 20 paces from the road. "I never expected I'd live to see wild Asian elephants in the forest," Mrs. Johnson muses. All in all, a pretty good day in Thailand.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

An Office Management Specialist

EMBASSY ABUJA, NIGERIA

By Llywelyn C. Graeme

| **7:20 a.m.** | I arrive in the front office, where I work as the office management specialist for the deputy chief of mission. I open the safe, turn off the hideous overhead fluorescents, and turn on the computers. Then I check my e-mails and print out the DCM's schedule for the ambassador. The ambassador, his office management specialist, and his staff assistant all go on leave tomorrow. The embassy will be closed for Eid-al-Maloud, the Prophet Mohammed's birthday.

| **7:30 a.m.** | I read all the cables addressed to the DCM and send notices to any sections that need to respond to urgent requests from Washington or other posts in the West Africa region. Then I watch a cleaning crew clean the front office. Personnel without top secret clearances are not allowed in secure areas of the embassy unescorted.

| **8:30 a.m.** | I prepare the cable and diplomatic notes announcing the ambassador's planned absence from post and noting that the DCM will become chargé d'affaires during the ambassador's absence. After the DCM approves the note, it goes to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as to each of the 45 recognized diplomatic missions in Abuja.

| **9 a.m.** | Now that I've emptied the DCM's out-box, I fill up his in-box with new