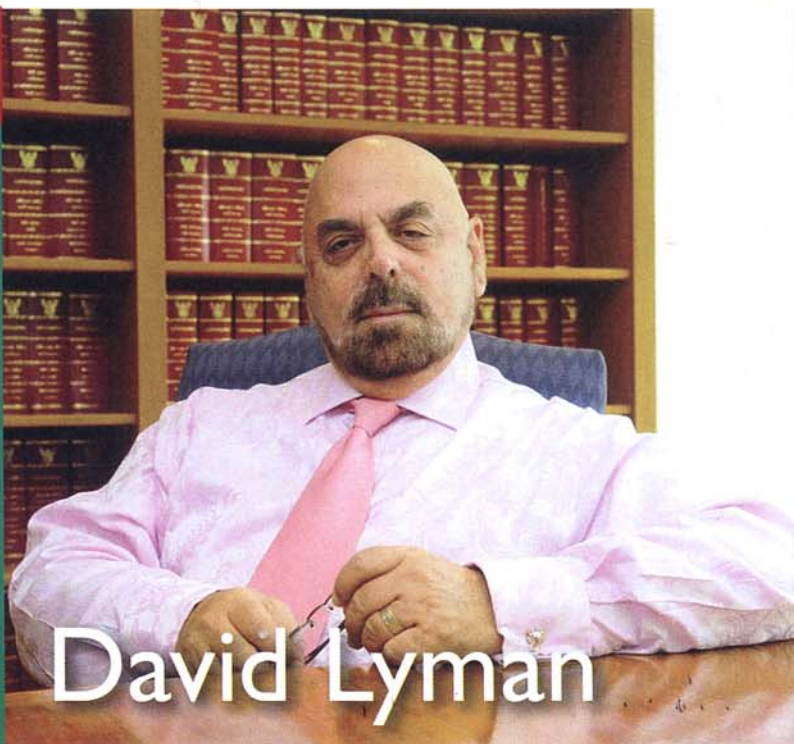


I on I

American David Lyman is chairman of Tilleke & Gibbins, a law firm with a history in Siam dating way back to 1890. Carrying on his family's legal tradition (his father was a founder of the American Chamber of Commerce and Stock Exchange of Thailand) he arrived in Bangkok in the late 60s, when the city's "skyscrapers" were still only about as tall as your average beehive hairdo. Since then, he's not only distinguished himself in law but has also become one of Thailand's best-known US residents through his many interactions with the Thai government, business and communities. Tom Mintier met him at T&G towers for an informal chinwag.



You've lived here a long time. Jesus, don't remind me. Professionally I came here in Sept 1967. But my family came here way back in May of 1949.

Is Bangkok the same city it was back in '67?

Hell no. In 1967, the Dusit Thani hotel was the tallest building in town and before that there were a couple of places in Chinatown that were 7 to 9 storeys high. Those were considered skyscrapers and people used to come from upcountry just to see them.

Favourite Bangkok hidden corners?

Off the main roads, behind the facades of modern buildings and the trappings of advertising and modern life, old Siam still thrives. It is fun to find such places. Try the flower market by Pak Khlong Talad. Try the temples along the river and the klongs, try the green areas in "Bangkok's Lung".

Describe Bangkok's political scene in 5 words or less.

Developing, growth, pangs of democracy.

If you could wave your magic wand to change three things about Bangkok, what would they be?

1) Traffic – make more cross streets; 2) Protection of animals, wildlife and domestic; 3) More trees and parks and green areas developed and protected by the people.

What do you most look forward to on your return to Bangkok?

Being home at my "House of the Rainforest" and seeing my 10 dogs. And then going to Ayutthaya to visit our elephants.

Which events stand out during your 40+ years here?

Too many to list – some good, some difficult, some enthralling, some depressing, some lovely, some ugly.

What and where do you eat in Bangkok?

At home we eat mostly Thai. My

wife can smell a Japanese restaurant anywhere within 500m and that is where we head. I like Italian, German and Indian. Bangkok is a paradise for the food lover. So many places to enjoy good food and company; hence I am now on a strict diet.

When I escape Bangkok I head for...

My "House of the Rainforest" in Nonthaburi. It is my place of respite and I am forever grateful I was able to build a house and plant my thriving rainforest almost 15 years ago. If I do leave town then it is to Phuket and Krabi where my wife and I scuba dive and commune with the sea. Our plans are to start touring Thailand by car to see all the natural beauty of this amazing land.

It's your last day in Bangkok ever. Where do you go?

The Grand Palace and the temples adjacent thereto, followed by a boat ride on the Chao Phraya River and then north to Ayutthaya to say goodbye to our elephants.