

# THE GENTLE TOUCH

## @ CAPE HOUSE

Khun Teeraya's time studying at Chiang Mai University taught her many things other than the English course she was taking. She lived in the University dormitory for four years. This experience taught her to be independent and self-reliant. Khun Teeraya's first intention was to become an air stewardess but she was just a little too short.

It was then that she entered the hospitality industry by becoming a guest relations officer, concierge and finally a sales executive to the Assistant Director of Sales at the Sheraton Hotel.

Wanting to progress her career she then moved to the Kempinski Hotel (now the President group of hotel and serviced apartments) taking the position of the sales executive to the assistant director. Expatweekend met Khun Teeraya at the Cape House Serviced Apartments where she, recently, was promoted to General Manager—the year that the Cape House is celebrating its 10th anniversary.

**EW: This is the 10th anniversary of the Cape House. What celebrations are planned?**

**TS:** We are not planning any great celebrations for the anniversary, we have to remember that many people are suffering in this financial downturn and it is inappropriate to have lavish celebrations. But we will have the apartments blessed by monks from our local temple and a re-dedication of our spirit house on the 9th of August.

**EW: What does the Cape House and the Kasemkij Company do to help the wider community?**

**TS:** The Cape House and the company are very active in charitable causes. For instance, we support a group involved with animal care, by rescuing feral street dogs to give them a better life. I believe this helps the community and the dogs by taking them off the streets so that people are safe from them and there is less noise and other nuisances, and the dogs live a more contented life.

The company is very active in helping schools in the north of Thailand with donations and we are always ready to offer assistance for disaster relief just as we did in the tsunami of a few years ago. The company and I believe that this is a way of *giving back* to the community and to those people less fortunate or those who are in difficult circumstances.



After graduating from the faculty of humanities at Chiang Mai University one of Khun Teeraya Samintinont's first jobs was in guest relations at the Royal Orchid Sheraton Hotel in Bangkok: a job she relished. Now Khun Teeraya is the General Manager of one of Bangkok's more exclusive serviced apartments.



**EW: What is your new role as GM like?**

**TS:** It can be challenging but I enjoy a challenge, not only am I responsible for the good running of the apartments and for staff moral but I am also a little like a house mother because people look to me to be helpful to them. I like to think that my colleagues are like family and, just as in any family, there are some naughty people and well behaved people. It is my job as head of the family to keep things on an even keel and to steer a smooth course through the days and weeks.

**EW: How is the present economic climate affecting business?**

**TS:** The Cape House is in a very popular location and so has always had at least an 85-90 percent occupancy for the last ten years. But, of course, like every other apartment or hotel, occupancy is down this year but not as much as one would expect. We are still running at 70 percent occupancy and those are mainly long-term tenants. We are, of course, looking to other ways of increasing our occupancy rates and one of them is to attract the short-term tenant who is in Bangkok on holiday or just for a few days. So the tourist sector is our next target.

The airport closures at the end of 2008 affected us greatly too by affecting confidence in the country.

But as a matter of company policy every property in the Kasemkij group cooperates to maximise the occupancy of each property.

**EW: Are there any developments happening at the Cape House?**

**TS:** Yes, we are refurbishing all of our rooms to make them more contemporary in style, and that will attract younger tenants but we must not forget our more mature tenants either. The refurbishment will include the best of contemporary styling with the best of what we offer now — comfortable and classic design.

**EW: What advantages do women at the top of a business have over a man?**

**TS:** I think it is a matter of personality mainly. Women in the top jobs are more positive in their approach to their employees and colleagues. We know what to say, when to say it and how to say it. This makes a great impression on people's attitude.

You know men are stronger in their approach to business and that gets results but women take a different approach. We are more *gentle*, more *sweet*, and we try to win people over with our good arguments and logic (smiles and chuckles).

But, the female executive, though talking in a sweet way and acting gently, still has to be as strong as her male executive counterpart. The strength, though, comes from a different direction.

**EW: If you were not the general manager of Cape House what would you like to do?**

**TS:** I really like my work here at the Cape House and with the company and before my present role I was the sales executive for Cape House. And my heart is still in sales so I am luckily to still enjoy working the Kasemkij Group sales team; this is the ideal job.

**EW: One last question. If you had one wish what would it be?**

**TS:** Oh, that is easy to answer. I would wish for good health because from good health all else flows.

**EW: Thank you very much Khun Teeraya for taking time out of your busy day to talk to our readers in Thailand and Singapore.**

**TS:** Thank you very much it has been a pleasure.

