

## Happy Thai memories.

I am just back after a month spent in North Vietnam during which I learnt the sad news of King Bhumipol of Thailand demise. In the sixties I was based at Bangkok. At that time AEROSIAM was our friendly competitor on some sectors of airlines telecommunications. Mr Watkins, the AEROSIAM Manager and President of the Varuna Marine Club kindly invited me to join his club located at Pataya..

King Bhumipol, a keen sailor, joined the club which then became the Royal Varuna Yacht Club. That is how I had some opportunities of racing with the King and for that reason I was invited a couple of times at the Royal Palace at Hua Hin.

One day, having been caught in a gusty wind both the King and I capsized. The rules of the game were such that to complete the race each crew had to get its boat in good order without any help from outsiders. So both of us became very busy bailing out in order to restart sailing as soon as possible and we managed to succeed at about the same time. During this event I can say that I never saw so many rescue boats turning around me at any time in my life. We were finally able to complete the race but of course far behind the winner

The King, who was interested in marine architecture, had designed a small boat approximately the size and shape of the present "Laser" class which is selected for the Olympic Games. On weekends I used to tune the boat while competing against Prince Bira the former car racing driver of "Les 24 heures du Mans" who had by then converted to sailing. At that time fiber-glass was not yet common for ship building and the sloop was a bit narrow for my size, however the skin I lost against the wooden hull would never tarnish the happy memories of such competitions.

Back to telecoms business, Thailand was at that time at the forefront among Asian countries and the circuits Bangkok- Manila and Bangkok-Hongkong were the first SITA circuits operated via satellite thus avoiding the interruptions caused by the fading out affecting the short waves propagation as it was the case for the ARQ (Automatic ReQuest) radio circuits..