

A UNIQUE PIE DRIVE FOR CHARITY

Phuket Plus, TV Program Transcript, 14 April 2007

Reporter: Rod McNeil

[LOCATION: PHUKET]

ROD MCNEIL: This lady and her husband very much enjoy the Phuket lifestyle. But when she's not sailing, Susan Usher, better known as Lady Pie, is hard at work with her Thai ladies in her Cherngtalay pie shop making traditional Australian meat pies and other farang favourites for more consumers every day.

SUSAN "LADY PIE" USHER: Steak and kidney and you've got the pork pies there. They're looking good. Well, you're doing a good job, girls.

ROD MCNEIL: This lady, Khun Pen, has been quietly helping poor families in Phuket for about the past eight years.

KHUN PEN: This family – I have been helping for about two and a half months now. I am doing it because I think it is the right thing to do, to help the poor people here and I feel more happy to see them get better. I think there are a lot of rich people in Phuket and they spend a lot of time busy with their own life but not too many people spend time to look after the poor people like this. And sometimes when I go to the expensive restaurant and I cannot eat because I am thinking about them all the time. Sometimes I bring the medicine to them and sometimes they have serious problems I take them to the clinic.

KHUN PEN: Hi Sue, how are you?

SUSAN USHER: Pen, lovely to see you. It's been too long. Come and tell me all about it.

And this is the gentleman. So Pen, how have you been helping them?

KHUN PEN: His back is broken and around the front is broken. Three months ago. So I went to visit him. So he says the first thing he worries about is his children. I say, okay we can do something about that. And also they don't have drinking water. They have no electricity. So I bring candles.

SUSAN USHER: So it's just wonderful what you've been doing, Pen.

KHUN PEN: It's just something small I can do. So what have you been doing?

SUSAN USHER: Well, Pen, I've been very busy and for a good cause as well. In Bangkok, there's a lady called Sister Joan Evans and she helps the poor people in the slums of Klong Toey. So one of the expat ladies, Genevieve, she approached me to do a pie drive which has worked out to be more than successful. So how that works, Pen, is we go around and get orders from all the expat people in Bangkok and then we have a meeting point, once a month, and they come and collect their pies. And so far we've raised enough money for the children for all their school lunches for a month.

Actually, it all started when I met Pen some years ago. I was totally inspired by the way she helps the needy and when I was approached by Genevieve in Bangkok to help Sister Joan Evans to do this pie drive, I didn't hesitate and it's been a great success so far but next week is really the beginning of it when we're going to really get the numbers in to help the people of Klong Toey.

[LOCATION: BANGKOK - BRITISH CLUB, SILOM ROAD]

[The Pie Drive]

ROD MCNEIL: The Pie Dive arrives in Bangkok. Lady Pie, already an institution in Phuket, is welcomed at an institution in Bangkok, the British Club.

This lady is Sister Joan Evans who is very pleased to see Susan and her trademark pies meet the market in Bangkok. Once the truck is unloaded, the ladies go into full speed pie drive, with just a little help.

This lady is Genevieve Bulluss, the igniting force of the pie drive.

ROD MCNEIL: What is the favourite pie do you think?

SUSAN USHER: Definitely the Aussie and then comes the sausage rolls.

ROD MCNEIL: It's nice to have a pie drive at the British Club, don't you think?

SUSAN USHER: It's very nice to accept us Aussies in here.

ROD MCNEIL: So how did this dynamic duo get together?

GENEVIEVE BULLUSS: I heard all about Lady Pie pies after Phuket race week and then I was in Phuket for the King's Cup Regatta in December and, on the last night party, what do I find – Lady Pie pies. And so that's all I ate all night.

ROD MCNEIL: Did you know where they had come from?

GENEVIEVE BULLUSS: Yes. Well, I'd heard all about Lady Pies so then I was looking around trying to find her. I think I met her husband first and then I finally found Susan and said 'please can I get your pies in Bangkok'.

ROD MCNEIL: And could she?

SUSAN USHER: Well I jumped at the opportunity. And especially when she told me what it was for. I said 'sure let's give this a go'.

ROD MCNEIL: Well, when did you think of the pie drive idea?

GENEVIEVE BULLUSS: The pie drive came up over Christmas. I still hadn't organised to get the pies yet and so asked her could we do it as a fundraiser. I had been working with Sister Joan a little bit and I knew she always needed money. Her big aim is to get the children out of the slums and into school.

SISTER JOAN EVANS: This is going towards education, education of the children, who are all very poor. It may contribute to the uniforms but, on the other hand, it will most probably go into books and school fees and even fares and food that will enable them to go to school every day.

ROD MCNEIL: Sister, can we say that this is an all Australian effort?

SISTER JOAN EVANS: I think it is an all Australian effort.

ROD MCNEIL: Certainly something associated with Lady Pie's pies sounds it, doesn't it?

SISTER JOAN EVANS: It does.

ROD MCNEIL: I'm sure you've had some other people help you with funds before but have you ever had a pie drive to assist?

SISTER JOAN EVANS: No, never had a pie drive.

ROD MCNEIL: I hope you like pies, do you?

SISTER JOAN EVANS: I do, I love Australian pies.

ROD MCNEIL: And so do these expat ladies living in Bangkok. What did you order?

JILL: This time I ordered apple pies and Aussie pies but last time I had steak pies, sausage rolls and party pies.

ROD MCNEIL: That sounds like a very good recommendation for them if you're still buying.

JILL: That's right and I understand the chicken curry is very good but I have missed out on those this time. So, next time.

ROD MCNEIL: What was your selection?

KAREN: We only have the Aussie pies. We ordered 20 last time, 30 this time. Yes, and this is our monthly buy now.

ROD MCNEIL: It looks like they've certainly made a little rod for their backs. They have to keep them coming.

KAREN: I think they have to. And it's not us, it's our children that are driving the market. So, they're the noisiest.

ROD MCNEIL: Excuse me, Sharon, did you get your order?

SHARON: I have certainly got my order.

ROD MCNEIL: Where are they going from here?

SHARON: To home, here in Bangkok. For me and my two daughters, and my husband.

ROD MCNEIL: He'll want a look in for sure.

SHARON: He will for sure, they're beautiful.

ROD MCNEIL: What did you select?

SHARON: Pork pies, Aussie pies and chicken pot pies.

ROD MCNEIL: Maybe we should explain to the uninitiated what an Aussie pie is.

SHARON: Bloody good pie. Meat pie.

ROD MCNEIL: What kind of funds have you raised at this point?

SUSAN USHER: Well, we were originally hoping to raise 30,000 and now 104,660 baht, all on pies, and to go to a very worthy cause.

ROD MCNEIL: It certainly is. Sister, you've been working to this same end for a long time now, haven't you, in Bangkok?

SISTER JOAN EVANS: I have. I've been working with the children for 15 years now.

ROD MCNEIL: I suppose when people get to hear of your work, they really want to assist if they can.

SISTER JOAN EVANS: I think so. They seem to be moved by the fact that particularly children are being educated and given an opportunity. And they are the children of the poor and mainly the children of the very, very poor. Children that otherwise would get very little opportunity.

[The T-shirt Project]

ROD MCNEIL: Well, it's a good thing that so many people living in Bangkok like to help Sister Joan in her considerable endeavours. I like your idea of the t-shirts. How did that come about?

EDWARD DEVER: It was an idea that Sister and I had approximately 12 months ago, to design a t-shirt which could raise money for Sister's work. They were designed by an English artist, Karen Wightman, who lived here for a number of years and her design reflects the help that Sister gives to people in the Klong Toey slum community.

ROD MCNEIL: Well, your artist has done a very nice job on that. What do the little squares depict?

EDWARD DEVER: They depict the help that Sister gives people in the Klong Toey slums. For example, she helps children get to school. She helps them with their learning at school. She is in the process of raising money to rebuild a home in the slums. She helps babies through the Milk Run. This was actually a photo taken of a young mum at the Milk Run. And, of course, the back to school project with uniforms, school shoes, books and bag.

ROD MCNEIL: So you've been able to assist Sister Joan on quite a few occasions?

EDWARD DEVER: Wherever I can, in terms of helping with her website and the t-shirt project to help try and raise awareness of Sister's work and raise funds for her.

ROD MCNEIL: The Bangkok press also turns up to record events and the healthy cheque is proudly on show.

SISTER JOAN EVANS: Thanks very much. Take care.

SUSAN USHER: You too. Bye-bye now.

[LOCATION: BANGKOK - KLONG TOEY]

[The Milk Run]

ROD MCNEIL: And so Sister Joan's work continues, assisting the needy in the poor part of Bangkok where she has made her home.

[Distributing milk formula - Thai conversation]

ROD MCNEIL: One regular appointment comes on a Friday and it's a great help to some of the young mothers in Klong Toey. Babies arrive by the armful.

Sister Joan's supporters, usually from Australia and New Zealand, are there ready to assist with the record keeping as well as helping fund the supply of milk formula, mainly through their organisation, the Australian and New Zealand Women's Group. The atmosphere is both friendly and helpful and life-supporting.

What's it costing to set up a truckload like this to give away on one morning?

SISTER JOAN EVANS: A truck load of this would be about 24,000 baht - 25,000 baht.

ROD MCNEIL: Is that how much is here this morning?

SISTER JOAN EVANS: That'd be right, yes.

ROD MCNEIL: That's quite a lot to give away in one morning isn't it?

SISTER JOAN EVANS: It is. It is.

ROD MCNEIL: Has it taken a lot of organisation to get this flowing in a proper manner?

SISTER JOAN EVANS: Well, it's grown. To begin with, I used to carry the milk, just in a bag. In a bag - to the mums, two or three and then four and five. That goes back to about 1992, 1993.

ROD MCNEIL: So then you devised this system where they would come here.

SISTER JOAN EVANS: We've had various venues. They come every two weeks. I can't afford milk every week. We had a book one year, a big exercise book. We've had other sorts of cards other years. But now we've come down to this.

ROD MCNEIL: So you've really got a proper record of what's going on, haven't you?

SISTER JOAN EVANS: Yes, we have and we need that because people donate the money for the milk and it needs to be spent properly.

ROD MCNEIL: What's the one thing you would change here if you could? Anything?

SISTER JOAN EVANS: I believe that people have the right to proper housing and a proper wage. Many women work in the fish factory that's just down there. By the time they pay their rent, their water, their electricity, there's barely enough to feed the family let alone do something else in the month. And that's not fair. That's not justice.

End.

Copyright 2007

Phuket Plus (<http://www.capitaltv.co.th/phuket-plus.htm>)

Capital TV Group (www.capitaltv.co.th/)