

ISSUE 029 • JUNE 2009

# FACES

SPECIAL MONTHLY SUPPLEMENT WITH  
TIMES OF OMAN

FAMILY . ATTITUDE . CLASS . ENTERTAINMENT . SUCCESS

## ATTACK ANXIETY

Handle panic attacks,  
don't let it handle you

## HANGOUT SPECIAL

Our pick of places to dine  
out this summer

## THE PINK CLOSET

New and trendy fashions  
from Lebanon

## CAPTURING TALENT

Oman's gifted and award  
winning photographers bring  
a unique vision

# CLICKING OMAN





# THE LITTLE GRAND FAMILY

**Christoph K. Franzen, general manager at Grand Hyatt Muscat, is the genial face of the hotel and family man, a comfortable part of the Hyatt Hotels group for ten years now, and amidst his own little family**

Can't take your eyes off the cute kids? That's right, Christoph Franzen, general manager of Grand Hyatt Muscat, has one of the most photogenic families we've ever featured on our pages. Christoph, his wife Rachel and adorable children Ashley, three and Alexander, all of six months made for a pretty picture at their home, right there in a suite at the hotel.

"This way it's very convenient," says Christoph, "I can always pop up to see the kids, rather than spending little time with them at the fag end of the day if we had lived outside." Serving his second stint with the hotel—the first was between 2001 and 2005 – Christoph says,

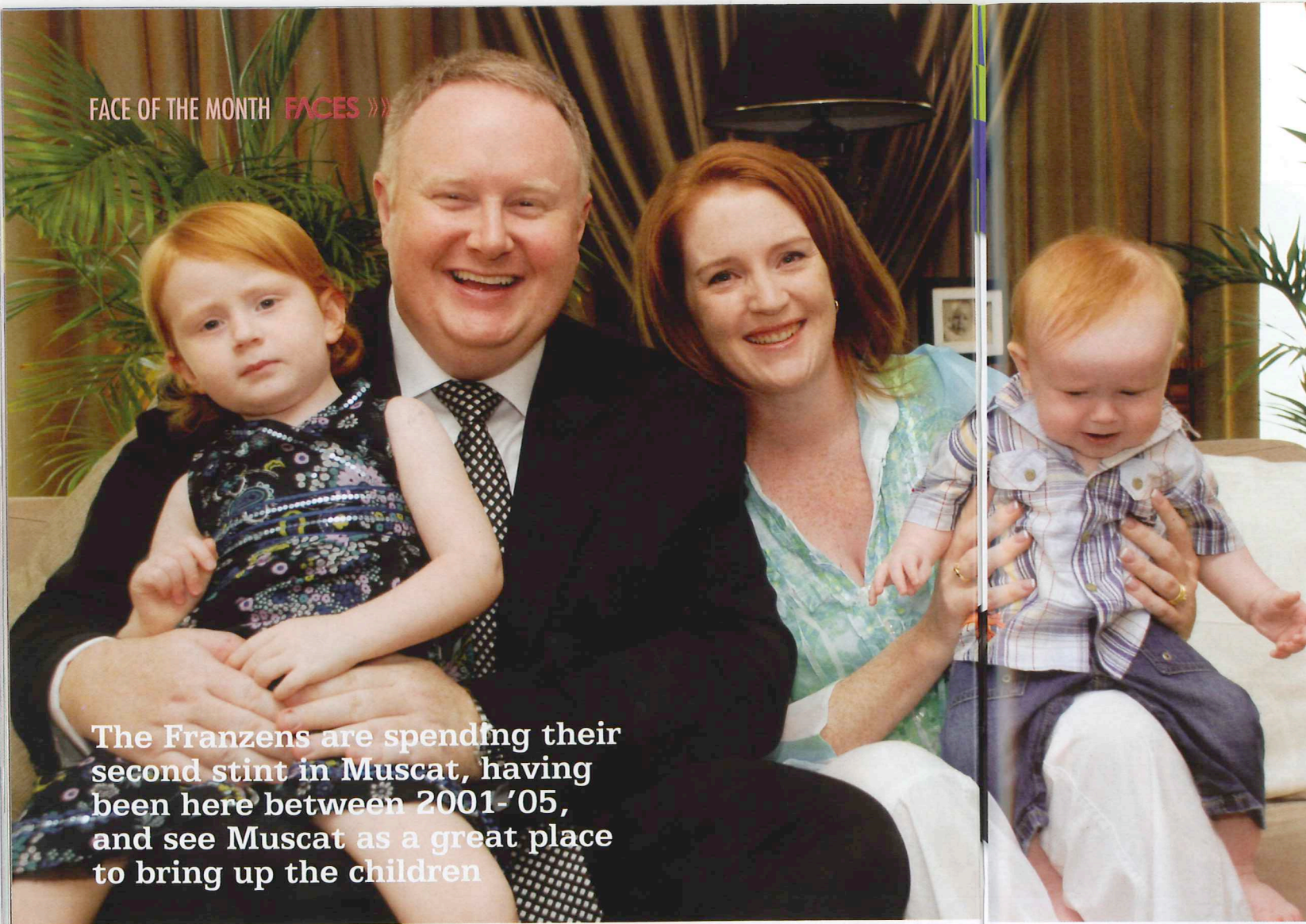
"Oman is so much more relaxed and friendlier. What I find the big difference in is, it's much easier to get in touch with the local population than it is, say, in Dubai, where I worked earlier. Here, Omanis make you a part of their everyday life. In the hotel too, we have a good 60% of Omanisation." He started his second term with the hotel in February this year.

"Our first impression of the place - when we were here on a three-day vacation and stayed right here in the Grand Hyatt - was 'very exotic.' I even told Rachel that if I ever get a job here, it would be fantastic. A year later, I got the job!"

Hotel occupancy at the Grand







The Franzens are spending their second stint in Muscat, having been here between 2001-'05, and see Muscat as a great place to bring up the children

Hyatt Muscat remains full, in spite of the world economic downturn and Christoph puts that down to a lot of government business and leisure guests, mainly from Europe. Some soft renovations and refurbishments are in the offing, as is the case every summer. "We are looking at some restaurant concepts, and maybe making the popular Safari Rooftop Grill an all-year round venue by putting up some kind of a roof to keep it air-conditioned during summer, but without losing its key feature of being an open venue to dine

under the sky and stars."

Christoph says he took the traditional route to hotel management, starting off as a chef apprentice in Switzerland, becoming a maître d' and then doing hotel school. Completing ten years and three months with Grand Hyatt on its various properties, he says the best thing about working for the Group is "the ability to call on anyone no matter how senior the person is. It's like working for a big family."

Christoph met Rachel, an Australian, while she was doing

a semester abroad as part of her hotel school studies; they were part of a six-student group on student exchange programme. Married in 2001, when they just moved to Muscat for the first time, "we thought it would be a nice place to have a family, but got transferred just as Ashley was born in 2006, to Dubai."

Rachel is an expert in Irish dancing, and is a commission certified Irish Dance teacher. Starting classes at just five years of age, she has been an open championship level dancer and

placed in the top ten in Australia. She also makes traditional Irish dance dresses and showcases them on [www.rachelfranzen.com](http://www.rachelfranzen.com), and has taught her dancing in Muscat, Dubai and Moscow. "I get a good mix of students here, children of all nationalities, ages, from different schools. Irish dancing starts off with simple steps and gets difficult as you progress. If you watch someone do it, it does look very difficult to master, but even our daughter Ashley is learning it!" says Rachel.

Christoph also indulges him-

self in an active hobby – riding motorbikes. "It's the one thing I do without the family," he smiles. "We have a sort of loose club, just a few friends basically together, and every year I also go off on a little bike tour – last year was in South Africa and this time in Europe."

On weekends, the family has Friday brunch, "not necessarily here in the hotel, we go to one of the other places and check out the competition," smiles Christoph. Soon, our interview comes to an end, and it's Ashley and Alexander's nap time, so off we go.

