

# Asian Computer Man, Father of Thai Internet and Father of Thai eLearning

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**Abstract-** For the Celebration of Prof. Dr. Srisakdi's 72<sup>nd</sup> birthday, the author has written and dedicated "Paeon of Praise for Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman" who has shown a unique brand of leadership. With many distinctions such as being an Asian who earned an IT-related Ph.D. in 1964 when there was no IT-related Ph.D. program in the US, the first Asian to be appointed Director of Graduate Studies in Computer Science in a major US university, and the first Thai to earn the rank of full professor in any field in the U.S, etc., he was named "the Asian Computer Man 1981". As the first Thai to use the Internet when the Internet was born in the US, the one who made a Thai organization, AU, to be the only Founding Member in South East Asia of the Internet Society, the Chairman and Co-owner of "Internet KSC" which was the first and at one time, the largest Internet Service Provider (ISP) in Thailand valued at US\$ one billion, etc., he was named "the Father of the Thai Internet". As the one who drafted the first eLearning law in Thailand, the Program Director of the first complete eLearning Degree Program in Thailand, the founder of the first Ph.D. in eLearning Methodology program in the world, he was named "The Father of Thai eLearning".

**Keywords-** Srisakdi Charmonman, Leadership, Paeon of Praise, Asian Computerman, Father of Thai Internet, Father of Thai eLearning.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman association with Assumption University started in the year 1976 when Prof. Dr. Choop Karnjanaprakorn, the President of ABAC at that time, invited Prof. Srisakdi to become Honorary Vice President for Planning and Development. As a matter of fact, when Prof. Choop was the President of the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA), Prof. Srisakdi was the President of the Faculty and Staff Association as well as the first full professor appointed at NIDA and Chairman of the IT-related degree program.

Then Prof. Choop became the first Minister of Science of the Government of Thailand and Rev. Bro. Dr. Prathip Martin Komolmas became the President of ABAC. Bro. Martin fully supported Prof. Srisakdi to make Assumption University a Center of Excellence in IT Education. The author would like to propose correlation between the work of Prof. Srisakdi and the book entitled "The Leadership Pill" [1]:

- To lead is to find pathways with others which would initiate them into the flow of activities, pointing towards productivity, creating satisfaction in the ways in which results have been achieved.
- Leading people does not mean controlling them. It means setting challenges and working along with the team to achieve results. Leaders ideally motivate their teams to "overachieve." Satisfaction and pride result from such endeavors.

*The important factors of leadership include the following:*

- Leading means getting the commitment, trust and respect of the team. With these, high motivation results. The ideal situation is when teams function even without the presence of the leader. Creating the environment of proactive work is what is important.
- Integrity in leadership is a prime necessity.
- Integrity means creating a set of operation values and then living true to them. When a leader's actions embody the organization's values, this results in a value-driven culture.
- Integrity is the basis for trust and respect.
- Another cornerstone of leadership is "Partnership." Leaders help their teams to work, learn and grow together in unity. In summary, through creating factors of partnership, leaders harvest the potential of the team.
- Affirmation is "making people feel valued." A leader lets people know that what they do is important.
- Leadership is not "doing" something to or for people. It is something we do "with" them.
- It implies the architecting of the environment of active involvement and committed action. It also means that leaders live their credo of respecting others.
- Respect influences behavior and behavior with integrity signals the example in the leader's behavior of what he wants others to be.
- Value based leadership is essential for organizational prosperity. The breakdown in organizational values leads to the breakdown in trust.
- Within value and trust, the behaviors of leaders and teams/people become synchronous.

- Listening becomes more of a valued behavior.
- Interacting with people to support them becomes a priority.
- Accessibility becomes easy.
- With greater accessibility, uncertainties in functions and operations are reduced.
- Trust and respect for leadership becomes more feasible, when words match deeds.

*Key components of leadership in international settings:*

- Relationships.
- Creating and sharing visions: Showing the Big picture puts everyone on the same page.
- Collaborative actions can surmount even the most daunting of challenge.
- Praise efforts and initiatives. People love to know that their work is appreciated.
- Reward people for their outstanding efforts.

## **2. PAEAN OF PRAISE FOR PROF. SRISAKDI**

The author would like to dedicate his Paean of Praise for Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman as follows:

*Here in the halls of this hallowed center*

*We meet to discuss and deliberate over the cyber-world*

*And in this Center for Information Technology*

*Today we celebrate an anniversary of a great teacher and a good leader*

*Encapsulated in his seventy-two years*

*Is the work of a lifetime, by one willing to strive*

*To brighten his mind and to lead his loved and trusted ones*

*Towards the fruits of education--towards a better life*

*A preceptor in his heart, a great thinker  
in his field*

*The course of life, to him is a wholesome  
opportunity*

*To serve, to seek to find, but never to  
yield*

*To build a whole new network, a creator  
of possibility*

*To his learning he gave discipline and a  
sense of duty*

*Thus yielded he, stores of new learning  
for his country*

*His King and to the Royalty of his birth-  
land*

*Much admired is he in and out of this  
university*

*The Asian Man of Computer he has been  
acclaimed*

*And rightly so, for he has placed this  
continent*

*Through his brilliance, at the forefront of  
cybernetic learning*

*British Dukes and Duchesses attest that  
he is indeed brilliant*

*Builder has he been in no small measure*

*Of people, of programs of institutions of  
interconnectivity*

*Honing the values and the benefits of the  
Internet*

*He has placed Assumption University in  
founding the Internet Society*

*Through his innovative Knowledge  
Service Center*

*He has worked to proliferate the Internet*

*Delivering value and flexibility in  
business information systems*

*Much has he and others gained through  
careful enterprise*

*As the father of the Thai Internet he has  
shared*

*In the diffusion of the web, moodle, and  
blog*

*His promotion of the digital video  
conferencing techniques*

*Has connected the world of Assumption  
University with the globe*

*Omnipresent as the technology he  
employs in his brilliance*

*His is a presence that is felt in the air, in  
the cyber-world*

*In television and not much less in the  
board rooms of meetings*

*His intellectual facilities, paves ways and  
moves learning further*

*Much has he done, and much has he been  
praised*

*For his innovations and bold  
applications in academia*

*The Father of E-learning he has been  
acclaimed*

*In foreign lands as well as at home*

*Now at this time of our joyous  
celebration*

*Of the seventy-second anniversary of his  
birth*

*Here in this edifice erected to honor him*

*We have assembled to dialog on IT and  
his contributions*

*For the growth of the field in this abode  
of abiding knowledge*

*And what powers his growth and the  
enhancement of the field*

*Is his leadership and charm in taking  
people and programs forward*

*Man over material, and learning over  
aggrandizement is the thrust of his  
philosophy*

*As a leader, an intellectual, a planner  
and developer he is an optimist*

*Combining humor with wisdom, his  
words though simple*

*Lead to profound thoughts, emphasizing practicality and application*

*Serving this institution for thirty three years, investing this nation with his hard work*

*He has in his life etched a permanent memory, which will remain long*

*In the collective memories of humans and the cyber world*

*As an illustrious example of the power of the mind*

*He engages professionals and simpletons alike with intelligence*

*Of the professor, innovator and outstanding person he is*

*His life goes on with every day as a new blessing*

*For himself and others alike, through his hope*

*And through his never-diminishing support for friends*

*Through his loyalty for the Royalty of this land*

*He has perpetuated the virtues of his forebears*

*In bringing merit to himself, to his family and to others*

*In this, we know that what he has he shares*

*Long may he live to inspire and lead by example*

*Long may his work be remembered, and commiserated*

*Long may we be grateful for all he has done*

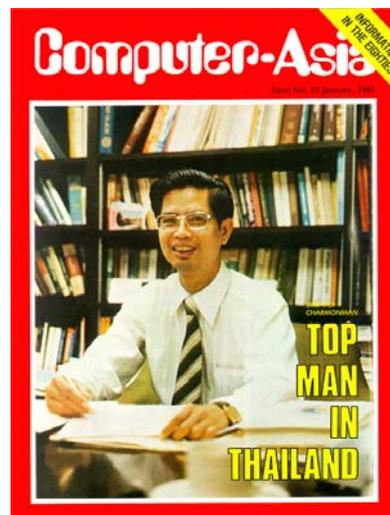
*Long in his life may there be the early morning sun*

### 3. ASAIN COMPUTER MAN

This part of the papers is adopted from Chapter 18 of the book “Asian Computer Man and Father of the Thai Internet”[2].

Computer-Asia published in Hong Kong established the title of “Asian Computer Man of the Year” in 1981. Candidates were shortlisted to a Japanese and a Singaporean, who got the same number of votes in three consecutive rounds. Someone proposed Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman as a way not to offend Japan and Singapore. So, Prof. Srisakdi was voted Asian Computer Man of the year 1981 and appeared on the front cover of Computer-Asia as shown in Figure 1.

Actually, several months prior to the voting, the editor of Computer-Asia contacted Prof. Srisakdi in his capacity as General Manager, Acting Sales Manager and Acting Director of the Computer Center of Bangkok Data Center Co., Ltd at the Royal Turf Club to interview him. He thought that it would be a good and free public relation and accepted the appointment.



**Figure 1.** Prof. Srisakdi as Asia Computer Man on the Front Cover of Computer-Asia.

The editor went to Prof. Srisakdi’s office at the Royal Turf Club and asked to see the documents to verify some of Prof. Srisakdi’s distinctions, e.g.

- An Asian who earned an IT-related Ph.D. in 1964 when there was no IT-related Ph.D. program in the US at that time. It was stated in his Ph.D. program at Georgia Tech that the specially-designed program was to prepare him to play a key role in running the very first computer center to be established in Thailand.
- The first Asian to be appointed Director of Graduate Studies in Computer Science in a major US university, and that was at the University of Missouri.
- The first Thai to earn the rank of full professor in any field in the U.S. and that was at the State University of New York, when he was 36 years old.
- The President of the Faculty and Staff Association as well as the first full professor appointed at the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA).
- The Chairman of many IT-related committees in the Government.
- The Asian who was director of projects funded by the Canadian National Research Council, the US National Science Foundation, the UN Center for Transnational Corporation, Ford Foundation, Asia Foundation, USAID, etc.
- The comprehensive list of other achievements.

One day, Prof. Srisakdi got a phone call from a friend in Hong Kong that he was on the front cover of a periodical called “Computer-Asia” as “Asian Computer Man of the Year 1981”. Prof. Srisakdi then telephoned the editor of Computer-Asia who said he was going to call Prof. Srisakdi to make an appointment to present to him the block for printing the front cover of Computer-Asia. The presentation as shown in Figure 2 was witnessed by Khun Charti Sophonpanich, the President of Bangkok Bank where Prof. Srisakdi was Advisor to the President of Bangkok Bank at that time.



**Figure 2.** Presentation of the Block for Printing the Cover of Computer-Asia.

#### 4. FATHER OF THAI INTERNET

This part of the paper is adopted from Chapter 22 of the book “Asian Computer Man and Father of the Thai Internet”[3].

On June 29, 1998, Bangkok Post published an article, as shown in Figure 3, naming Prof. Srisakdi as “The Father of the Thai Internet”.



**Figure 3.** The Father of Thai Internet.

As a matter of fact, Prof. Srisakdi has also been called “Father of Thai Internet” by several other publications:

- Yuppie, 20 February 1996, published 9 pages of interview with Prof. Srisakdi as the Father of Thai Internet.
- GM, Gentleman’s Magazine, No. 167, April 1996, published a lengthy interview with many questions Prof. Srisakdi, Father of the Thai Internet, had to answer. Also GM named him one of the ten Man of the Year 1996.

- Franchise, No. 185, 25 September 1996, published an interview with Prof. Srisakdi in his capacity as “Father of the Thai Internet”.
- GM Magazine, No. 208, December 1997 named Prof. Srisakdi in his capacity as “Father of Thai Internet”, one of 10 Man of the Year 1997.
- GM Magazine, Special 1997 Annual Press, declared Prof. Srisakdi in his capacity as “Father of Thai Internet” as one of 10 Man of the Year.
- Nation Newspapers, 25 July 2004, published a story on the Work of the Father of Thai Internet.

Actually, Prof. Srisakdi is the first Thai to use the Internet when the Internet was born in the US and that was when he was the Director of Graduate Studies in Computer Science at the University of Missouri in early 1970s. He also got to use the Internet when the Internet came to Thailand at AIT where he was President of AIT Alumni Association. He proposed and got approval from Assumption University Board of Trustees to require all students to use the Internet whereas it is optional at other universities. He made a Thai organization, AU, to be the only Founding Member in South East Asia of the Internet Society. He is the only Thai to be elected a Director of Asia Pacific Network Information Center (APNIC). He is the Founding President of Thailand Chapter of the Internet Society. He is the only Thai to be elected a Member of the Board of Trustees of the Internet Society. At the early stage of the Internet in Thailand, he appeared in many radio and TV programs to introduce and encourage people to use the Internet. Every Sunday, after people attend church in the morning at AU, some of them and other interested party, over a hundred, can attend Prof. Srisakdi’s “Internet church” in the afternoon. He is also the Chairman and co-owner of “Internet KSC”, the first and at one time, the largest Internet Service Provider (ISP) in Thailand, which was valued at US\$ one billion.

## 5. FATHER OF THAI ELEARNING

This part of the paper is adopted from the section “Father of Thai eLearning” of [www.charm.au.edu](http://www.charm.au.edu) [4].

In August 2000, Prof. Srisakdi was interviewed by the magazine “Corporate Thailand” that the next big thing he would do was eLearning which would be more profitable than eCommerce. On April 25, 2002, he proposed and got approval from the Board of Trustees of Assumption University to establish the first eLearning college in Thailand called the College of Internet Distance Education and announced that the College would eventually serve 100,000 students per year. If each student pays 100,000 baht per year, the fees would be 10 billion baht, making a net profit of about 4 billion baht per year. In the same year, he met Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and proposed to him that Thailand legalize eLearning. The Prime Minister agreed and advised him to start the process. So, he sent a letter to the Minister of University Affairs as well as authoring the first draft of the first eLearning decree or law in Thailand. The government established a committee to consider the law and he was invited to be a member.

Rev.Bro.Dr. Prathip Martin Komolmas who is the President Emeritus, Rev.Bro.Dr. Bancha Saenghiran who is the President, and Prof. Charmonman who is the College CEO, went to see the Minister of University Affairs and tried to convince him to support eLearning. In his capacity as the Founder and Chairman of ABAC Poll, he ordered an eLearning survey in 2003 which founded 77% of the sample interested in continuing their education through eLearning. On November 26, 2003, the Ministry of University Affairs organized an open hearing on the eLearning law. In his capacity as the President of the Computer Association of Thailand under the Royal Patronage of HM the King, Prof. Srisakdi presented the draft law in the morning and chaired the open hearing in the afternoon. The results were used in modifying the law. Then the

Government decided to merge the Ministry of University Affairs and the Ministry of Education, resulting in delay in considering the eLearning law. Prof. Srisakdi had to try to convince altogether 5 ministers, namely, H.E. Suwat Liptapanlop, H.E. Pongpol Adireksarn, H.E. Adisai Potharamik, H.E. Chaturon Chaisang, and H.E. Rung Keodang.

In August, 2004, Prof. Charmonman was elected Chairman of e-ASEAN Business Council. At that time, the Thai Government has not passed the eLearning decree. So, Prof. Srisakdi tried to get help from ASEAN. He proposed to the ASEAN Ministers that eLearning be promoted by all ASEAN member countries and the Ministers agreed.

Prof. Srisakdi sent many letters to the authorities. Dated 23 September 2002, he sent a letter to the Minister requesting permission for AU to offer eLearning. Dated 15 September 2003, he sent a letter to the Prime Minister to speed up the eLearning decree. Dated 14 March 2005, he sent another letter to the Prime Minister that Cambodia was ahead of Thailand on eLearning and Thailand should pass the eLearning decree as soon as possible to be ahead of Cambodia, similar to the case of the US trying and succeeding in being ahead of Russia after the sputnik incident.

After Prof. Srisakdi's having taken 3 years, having tried to convince 5 ministers, and many revisions of the eLearning law, it was published in the Royal Gazette in October 2005. AU became the first to offer a complete eLearning degree program in January 2006, i.e. Master of Science in Management and Prof. Srisakdi was the Program Director. In May 2006, AU also offered 3 more eLearning degree programs, namely, M.Sc. in Information and Communication Technology, M.Sc. in eLearning Methodology, and Ph.D. in eLearning Methodology. The Ph.D. program is the first such Ph.D. in the world and as of the year 2009 still the only such Ph.D. in the world. Then, in June 2006, the International Biographical Centre in Cambridge, UK, presented Prof. Srisakdi Charmonman a "Meritorious Declaration" as "the Father of Thai E-Learning" as shown in Figure 4.

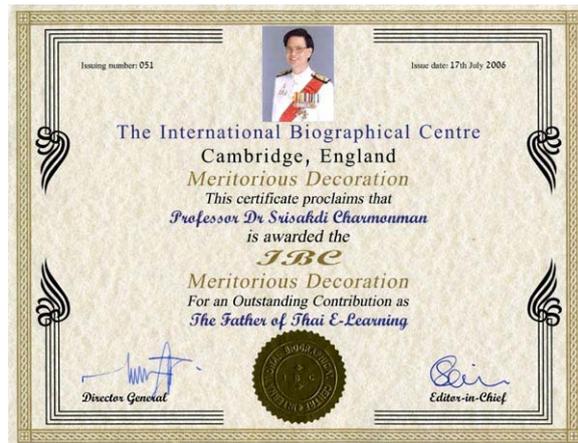


Figure 4. Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman: The Father of Thai E-Learning.

## 6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman", as a leader, an intellectual, a planner and developer, is an optimist. He always combine humor with wisdom. His words, though simple, lead to profound thoughts, emphasizing practicality and application. As of the year 2009, at the age of 72, Prof. Srisakdi has served Assumption University for 33 years, and served the world after his Bachelor's degree in 1959, for 50 years. He still work about 16 hours a day and 7 days a week.

Asked when he would retire, he said that like Peter Drucker, he would like to work until he is 96 or older. Many people said Prof. Srisakdi does not have time to get old. His life goes on with every day as a new blessing for himself and other alike. Long may be live to inspire and lead by example and long may we be grateful for all he has done.

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