

## Obituary: Dr. Athasit Vejjajiva and I (1952-2023)

**Emeritus Professor Dr. Somchai Bovornkitti, The Royal Society of Thailand**



The passing of my friend Dr. Athasit Vejjajiva is a sad event indeed. Our friendship started in London on the morning of my arrival in the United Kingdom to further my studies. It was a very special day: Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was being coronated.

However, I best remember the day for another reason. In the dining room of my home stay in Cromwell Road, London SW7, I encountered a well-dressed young man, who introduced himself as Athasit Vejjajiva, a first-year medical student at University College London.

We met again about two years later in London during my studies at the Royal Brompton Hospital, which was then known as the London University Institute for Chest Diseases.

Following another year of medical practice in the United Kingdom, I took a residency post in the United States at Bellevue Hospital, which was affiliated with New York University, best known as NYU.

Both of us eventually returned to Thailand. Dr. Athasit initially worked at the Faculty of Medicine Chulalongkorn University and later at Ramathibodi Hospital of Mahidol University. I was a member of the medical staff at Siriraj Hospital, Mahidol University.

Back in our home country, our association and friendship progressed steadily. Both of us became members of the Medical Association of Thailand. I was appointed Chief Editor of the journal of the Association, and Dr. Athasit was my strong associate.

Dr. Athasit prospered rapidly. He became Dean of the Faculty of Medicine Ramathibodi Hospital, where he often invited me to deliver lectures. I was once honored to be speaker for the second “Kalayanakit Kitiyakara Memorial Lecture”, which was presided over by Her Royal Highness Princess Soamsawali. My respected achievements as writer of a chapter in the Oxford Textbook of Medicine, was likely due to Dr. Athasit’s support.

Both of us became much closer friends during the time when we were Fellows of the Royal Society of Thailand. Dr. Athasit became Chairpersons and I was honored with the post of Chief Editor of the Journal of the Royal Society of Thailand and Chairpersons of two committees: one for preparing dictionaries of medicine and the other for environmental science.

Dr. Athasit and I remained close friends up to the last minutes of his life. As the famous Roman poet Cattulus stated on the death of his brother: “*Atque in perpetuum, frater, ave atque vale*” (And forever, brother, hail and farewell). I do hope that in our next lives we will be friends again.