

2008-09 Global Alumni Service to Humanity Award

Recipient Remarks

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In 1959-60, I was lucky enough to be one of two Rotary Ambassadorial Scholars at the Iowa State University, USA. The other one was Achmad Birowo, an economist from Indonesia. We had a great year. We studied hard but also had visits together to Rotary clubs, district assemblies, and district conferences, and were entertained, educated, and hosted by Rotarians and others from all over the district. It was a wonderful experience in a new land.

Back in Australia, my degree from Iowa State University opened the door for me to make a career change and become a food researcher with Australia's premier research organization, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization. That enabled me to develop a high-protein "milk" biscuit, widely used by the Australian government and others for needy infants and for disaster relief around the world.

The success of the biscuits led to my going to Thailand for two years (1973-75), where we developed a new, low-cost, infant-weaning food based on local raw materials, which suited the local eating patterns. Today, 35 years later, Aharn Dek Orn is still being manufactured and distributed from health centers throughout Thailand.

While I was in Bangkok, Australia decided to help develop the recently formed ASEAN — the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which then comprised Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Australia offered \$5 million for technical cooperation between the five ASEAN countries. The first project they started was what we were doing in Bangkok: research into simple, practical protein-rich foods. So our Thai research and development project turned into an ASEAN project.

Before this, the ASEAN researchers had not even visited one another's laboratories, but this project allowed them to genuinely work together on common problems. As an exercise in international cooperation, it worked like a charm.

The result was that the Australian government quickly increased their contribution from \$5 million total to \$15 million per annum. The ASEAN countries kicked in even more, with much increased support for their local national research organizations. Everyone benefited and the results were excellent.

The modus operandi we developed for each project was for the project leaders to meet every six months in one of the ASEAN countries, to expose everyone to the others' local conditions, laboratories, problems, solutions, and even the culture.

The second project was on food handling. Very soon, we had a project meeting in Jakarta. We had the usual meetings over a few days, then a dinner including everyone who was anybody. At the dinner, I sat with the project leaders of the five ASEAN countries, including our host

from Indonesia, the chief economist from the Indonesian Department of Agriculture, Achmad Birowo. Of course, we soon started reminiscing about our days at Iowa State 20 years before, including all those Rotary functions we had attended together. We were interrupted by the leader of the Philippines delegation, Elisa Cabahug. She said, "Were you both Rotary Ambassadorial Scholars? I was too. I spent a year at Claremont College in California."

It dawned on me that for this very successful international cooperation exercise, three of the six country leaders were ex-Rotary Ambassadorial Scholars. Thank you all involved with The Rotary Foundation for making this possible.