

# OBITUARIES

## In Memoriam

### LUCIEN M. HANKS (1910 - 1988)

The world, or at least that academic corner of it which we inhabit, seems somehow a much smaller place without our dear friend and esteemed colleague, Lucien Hanks. Yet, in a sense, Dr. Hanks remains with us not only in our fond memories but in our very persons so vitally touched by his kindness and influenced by his intellect.

I always thought of Dr. Hanks as a typical New Englander, lean and hard in body and mind. I visualized him walking in those "lovely, dark and deep woods" of Robert Frost. To those of us who followed in his footsteps on the "less traveled by" academic road, Dr. Hanks was always ready to give not only advice and guidance, but encouragement, support, and hospitality. In providing never-ending rice and compassion (Asian equivalent of tea and sympathy), Lucien Hanks was always joined by his loving wife and valued colleague, Jane.

Lucien Hanks shifted his academic compass from the Blackfoot Indians to Thai villagers in the early fifties and maintained his interest and involvement in Thai studies until his death almost thirty years later. Anthropological studies of Thai rural communities were largely the province of western scholarship in the fifties, and Dr. Hanks was at the cutting edge of this community along with his Cornell University colleagues. His scholarly output over several decades was prolific, but, among Thai social scientists, he is probably best known for his article "Merit and Power in the Thai Social Order." His insights and analyses remain intellectually provocative to this day and continue to be the subject of academic debate and dialogue.

Dr. Hanks was both a wise, gentle man and a gentleman. Dr. Hanks kept his academic promises to his second home Thailand and travelled many miles here in both the physical and intellectual realms before he finally went to sleep in his beloved Vermont. The academic community remains in his meritorious debt.

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**Editor's note :** See also *The Siam Society Newsletter*, Vol. 5, No. 1, March 1989, p. 26, for an obituary notice regarding Dr. Hanks by David Scribner of Bennington College.

### ELIZABETH LYONS

Word has been received of the death of Elizabeth Lyons, last February in Philadelphia. This news will sadden many Siam Society members who recall her active participation in Society affairs during the periods when she lived in Thailand on various assignments. Countless others, too, will long remember Lisa, as she was known, for her efforts spanning more than thirty years on behalf of Thai archaeology, both in this country and in the United States.

A native of Michigan, she received her B.A. from the University of Michigan and her M.A. from Michigan State University; she also completed the courses and examinations for her Ph.D. at the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University, though she did not complete her thesis. Other studies followed at the Musée du Cinquanteenaire in Brussels, the Ecole du Louvre in Paris, and Columbia University in New York.

From 1948 to 1955, during part of her studies, she worked at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and she subsequently lectured at Queens College and Columbia University in New York and at Michigan State University. Her longest period of employment was with the University Museum in Philadelphia, where she served off and on from 1968 until her death, at which time she was Keeper of the Asian Collections. She worked in Thailand on three different occasions: from 1955 to 1957, when she was sent by the U.S. Department of State as consultant to the Fine Arts Department; from 1966 to 1968, when she was attached to the Fine Arts Department as an adviser on museum development and archaeology; and from 1971 to 1976, when she was a project specialist with the Ford Foundation, administering art and archaeology programs for Southeast Asia.

But this bare biographical outline of a life devoted to art history does not really explain why Lisa will be long remembered by a such a large number of Thais and foreigners involved in the culture of this country. The answer to that question lies in the friendships she forged and also in activities that were as often as not carried out behind the scenes and that were rarely included in official accounts.

Though her specialization was Chinese art, particularly jade and painting, she was immediately attracted to Thai culture on her first visit in the mid-50's. A booklet she wrote on Thai

painting, at the request of Professor Silpa Bhirasri, was one of the earliest to appear in English and has formed the basis for other, more detailed studies by subsequent scholars. This text was reprinted in the catalogue for a pioneering exhibition entitled *The Arts of Thailand*, which toured American museums in 1960-62; Lisa also served as an adviser to those who assembled the pieces for this exhibition, drawing on what was by that time an extensive knowledge of Thai collections both public and private.

During the time she spent with the Fine Arts Department, she not only helped initiate many new projects at the National Museum but also demonstrated a rare ability to work harmoniously with her Thai colleagues, nearly all of whom became lifelong friends as a result. The late Khun Chira Chongkol, director of the Museum, was one of the closest of these and together she and Lisa made numerous improvements to the Museum's collection and display techniques.

Perhaps Lisa's most important contribution to Thai archaeology came following the discovery of prehistoric sites at

Ban Chiang. She was responsible for sending the first pottery shards to the U.S. for dating and, later, played a crucial part in working out the joint archaeological effort between the Fine Arts Department and the University Museum in Philadelphia, with partial funding by the Ford Foundation. Indeed, it would not be inaccurate to say that without her efforts the scientific exploration of Ban Chiang might never have achieved success; certainly it would have been a very different story had she not worked so hard to bring the various parties together.

Nor did her association with Thailand end with her return to full-time work at the University Museum. She continued to serve as a kind of "den mother" to Thai students who went to the university for further study, having them regularly for meals, counseling them in times of trouble, and generally being ready to lend a sympathetic ear—services difficult to measure but nonetheless of vital importance.

To Elizabeth Lyons, Thailand was a "second home," and with her death the country has lost one of its most effective foreign friends.

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