

OBITUARY

In Memory of Mom Rajawongse Chirie Voravarn



It seems typical of M.R. Chirie not to have given her date of birth in her biodata when she became a candidate for the Council of The Siam Society. Age to her was irrelevant — what was important was living life to its fullest and making the most of each and every day. It was therefore all the more amazing to learn her age from her daughters; she could easily have subtracted 10 - 15 years from her age with impunity. This isn't going to be a sad memorial for I don't think she would want it to be. We laughed a lot when we talked. She was always fun to be with except on those very rare occasions when something or someone muddied the water. This is more a gathering together of memories — good ones.

M.R. Chirie earned her B.Sc. degree in economics from the London School of Economics, specializing in sociology. She was then granted a King's Scholarship to continue her education in England. Returning to Thailand, she taught English at both Mater Dei and Somthawil Schools and also worked as a secretary at the World Health Organization (WHO), Caltex, Amoco and Air India. A member of several clubs and organizations, Khunying Chirie was a Life Member of The Siam Society and a Member of the Council for several years. She was an active member, joining study trips, attending lectures and exhibitions, and rarely missing a Council meeting, if she was in Bangkok, until her illness. Even then she came more often than might have been expected.

M.R. Chirie was a tiny woman and I often wondered how she could hold so much energy, enthusiasm and pure *joie de vivre* in such a small body. She had a joyful sense of humor,

but could also be very opinionated! She was one of the most outspoken Thai people I have ever known, but there was no mean intention. She just told things as she saw them in a very frank manner — a refreshing difference from people who are only friendly to one's face.

Khunying Chirie had a most distinguished lineage, but conversations about some of her illustrious ancestors could be quite amusing, for she was very witty. I always learned from her — some point of history or background. She never quite gave up that teacher within herself. The informal gathering together of Council members before meetings was always interesting when she was there, especially if she had recently been on a Society excursion.

Knowledge of her illness was kept very low key. She didn't want sorrowing or people feeling sorry for her; she carried on the same as before as far as possible. In telephone conversations she often sounded tired, but never self-pitying. She kept hope alive, and life continued.

Last April she went to the United States to visit a daughter who works there. When she returned she was as full of enthusiasm as ever, saying she had had a wonderful time. She was so full of life and seemed so much better; the news of her death was a shock. Although a tiny person she has left a very large void at the Council table. I'm glad I knew her. With her death The Siam Society has lost a staunch supporter and I have lost a friend. Wherever her soul rests there is sure to be laughter.

BONNIE DAVIS

Member of the Council

The Siam Society