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## Professor Dr. Joseph F. Volker, Whom I knew Vinai Sirichitra

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After finishing the School of Pre-Medical Science, University of Medicine in 1960, I became a first year student at the Faculty of Dentistry on Snam Ma (Henri Dunant) Road. At the time, Professor Lieutenant Colonel See Sirisinha was dean of this faculty. I was lucky to meet Professor Colonel Luang Wajwittayawatana, the first dean of the Faculty of Dentistry, who came for his retirement pension at the office of the secretary. While I was a dentistry student, I heard many senior lecturers mention the name Dean Volker, the dean of the School of Dentistry, University of Alabama, U.S.A. He came to teach at our school and also helped arrange for a number of our lecturers to continue their studies abroad. When I graduated I become a dentist and a lecturer in the Department of Oral Pathology. Yet, I taught a class in Dental Anatomy, which was teaching students how to make teeth models from wax. Later on, Dr. Volker visited Thailand to be granted an honorary doctoral degree in Dentistry. Dr. Sirisinha organized a party to congratulate him on the occasion at Villa Flora restaurant. I was playing in the Dent music band at the party, and was introduced to Dr. Volker by Dr. Sirisinha. Dr. Volker was in a black suit, looking very smart. Through his sharp and powerful eyes, he looked very seriously absorbed in his work. By the recommendation of Dr. Itthee Sirisinha, I had a chance to further my studies in Pathology from 1969-1973, during which time Dr. Volker served as President of the University of Alabama. He liked the Thai people because of their sense of gratitude, their long-preserved traditions and their friendliness. He loved the Thais more than I thought. He could remember the names of all Thai students at the

University of Alabama. If he had time, he would come over to the ground floor of the Research building, connected to the School of Medicine, the School of Dentistry and VA-Hospital. Whenever he met any Thais, he would talk to them in a friendly manner. This caused resentment among some American students because he hardly greeted them. As for myself, he often asked me about the source of my scholarship since I was the only dentist who had applied for a position as a house doctor at the School of Medicine, and had not attended the School of Dentistry there. He might have been afraid that I would have difficulties. This proved that he really loved the Thais. In his office, I noticed that not only the degree from any American university was around; there was only the honorary doctoral degree in dentistry, conferred on him by H.M., the King of Thailand.

I met Dr. Volker again in 1983 when many places in Bangkok were flooded. On November 25, 1983, he visited the Faculty of Dentistry, Chulalongkorn University. He was pleased to note the speedy progress of the faculty. In 1987, he participated in the conferring ceremony of the MPH degree at the Faculty of Dentistry, Chiangmai University. He stopped over and gave a lecture at our faculty. When he went back to the U.S., I heard that he had become seriously ill. I visited him during my trip to a FDI meeting in Washington D.C. He could still recognize me. A short while after my return from that trip, I heard that he had passed away.

As far as my own experience is concerned, I cannot remember ever having met any foreigner who loved Thailand, the Thai people and the progress in the field of dentistry in Thailand more than Dr. Volker.