

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH

SUTHAM CHEURPRAKOBKIT

CONDUCTED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT and DEDE YOW

EDITED BY JAN HEIDRICH-RICE

INDEXED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT

for the

KSU ORAL HISTORY SERIES, NO. 38

WEDNESDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2005

Kennesaw State University holds legal title and all literary property rights, including copyright, to this oral history. It is not to be reproduced without permission from the director of the Kennesaw State University Oral History Project.

Kennesaw State University Oral History Project
KSU Oral History Series, No. 38
Interview with Sutham Cheurprakobkit
Conducted by Thomas A. Scott and Dede Yow
Edited by Jan Heidrich-Rice; indexed by Thomas A. Scott
Wednesday, 7 September 2005
Location: CIE/CETL House at Kennesaw State University

TS: Well, Sutham, we thought we'd start with just asking you where you were born and when you were born.

SC: I was born in Bangkok, Thailand, in 1963.

TS: So you're a young guy then.

SC: Thank you! That's not what my wife says! [chuckle]

TS: I noticed that you got your bachelor's degree in Thailand. Why don't you talk a little bit about your education and whether there are any mentors that stood out from those years? Actually, you got your degree in 1986 at the Thai National Police Academy. Could you talk a little bit about your growing up and your education in Thailand?

SC: Thailand is different from the U.S. I think students back then, like myself, did not have the luxury of talking to some advisors or mentors. We didn't have that. So we pretty much went along with our friends. Sometimes our parents gave some advice, but my parents, Winai and Arpaporn, did not give me any academic or career advice. They were busy making money, just making ends meet. So I just pretty much went with my friends. I think one thing that attracted most students back then is the uniform: the soldier, army, navy, and police uniform. That's why I went and tried to pass the exam to be a cadet. Also, I think, among these people in uniform, you know, four of them—navy, air force, army and police—they have this school called pre-cadet school. It's like the last two years of high school. You have to pass an exam to go to pre-cadet school, stay there for two years, and then at the end of the second year you split into wherever you go of the four divisions: police, navy, air force, or the army. That's how we went through the system for two years called pre-cadet school. I chose police because police to me is the most attractive career in Thailand. Police still have a lot of authority and power and things like that. So my dad wanted me to be a police officer because to him I can help the family a little bit, fixing tickets and things like that. [laughter] That's what they think. I think it's still true today.

TS: So people looked up to policemen.

SC: They either respect them or they are afraid of them, one or the other. You have some good police officers who are doing a great job of helping and servicing people and some bad ones who sometimes abuse their authority. But they have a lot of power, so most Thai people respect [them] or are afraid of getting the ticket or being arrested.

TS: What did your father do for a living?

- SC: My father is a pick-up truck driver. We come from not a well-to-do family. My mom sells pineapples for the past fifteen or sixteen years until lately.
- TS: Does she grow the pineapples?
- SC: Well, pineapples would be delivered from outside Bangkok. They come in at night, like midnight, one o'clock. Those were the tough times that we had. We had to stay until three o'clock in the morning and arrange all these pineapples. We had to haul these pineapples in one big wooden barrel at a time from an eighteen-wheel truck to our house, and then we had to separate them into different piles based on sizes and the taste of meat—you know, sweet, semi-sweet. It's pretty tough.
- TS: So as a child you're doing that in the middle of the night?
- SC: Yes, I went to school late everyday. My school started at noon, but by the time I got up, it was 11:30 because I didn't go to bed until six o'clock or seven o'clock. Where we stay is a huge fresh market, so we have to do everything at night.
- DY: To set it up for the morning.
- SC: Yes. And people came and they bought stuff and went back home to set up for their business in the morning. As a matter of fact many buyers would come at night to avoid the big crowd in morning time.
- TS: What kinds of schools did you go to before you went to the pre-cadet academy? Were they private or public?
- SC: Public. I did not study English until the fifth grade; back then public schools did not offer English class until you're in the fifth grade. I'm not sure how they do that now. In private schools, they start [English] at kindergarten. Most Thai students didn't have that luxury, so they would have to go to the public school.
- TS: English is pretty common in Thailand because of the British presence there?
- SC: No, Thailand is the only nation in that region that has not been governed by any Westerners. The only one. You have Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia, India, all of them, that at one time or another was colonized by a foreign government.
- TS: Either English or the French.
- SC: Yes.
- TS: Okay. So then English is not something that everybody naturally knows?
- SC: No, I don't think so. But now it's becoming more common. I think we have more international schools in Thailand now.

DY: I was reading on the department Web site that you worked as a police officer for three years, did you not?

SC: Yes.

DY: So this would have been after the academy, right?

SC: Correct. They offered the pre-cadet school that I just mentioned, and we spent four more years in the police academy. So when you graduated from the academy, you earned this B.A. in police administration, plus a rank of police sub-lieutenant. And they send you to these stations over in Thailand, some in Bangkok, some everywhere. And we had 320 cadets in my class.

TS: So this would be equivalent to going to a military school here, correct?

SC: Yes.

TS: Where you come out and you've got a rank.

SC: Yes, we might have followed the West Point model.

DY: Then you went and taught for a year as an instructor?

SC: Yes, because I worked at a police station in Bangkok for three-plus years. I came here to get my master's degree. That was in Birmingham, Alabama [the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)]. Some of my seniors got their degree from there, and that's why I followed them there. It's easier when you have some ties there. So after going back to Thailand, I taught at the police academy.

DY: Oh, I see. You went back and taught as an instructor for a year after you got your master's degree.

SC: Yes.

TS: Did the police force over there pay for you to come over here to get a master's?

SC: Yes, I was fortunate that I came out on top of the whole class. They just gave one scholarship to one cadet per class each year. So I was lucky to get that scholarship. Otherwise, how could I afford to come here anyway? And that was the first time I thought I would have to try hard to speak better English. I still could not. That was in 1988.

TS: Yes, you got your master's in '89.

SC: Yes, so that's how I came here.

TS: Now, did UAB have a major criminal justice program?

SC: It offers both a bachelor's degree and a master's degree, but not Ph.D.

TS: I see. Is that one of their strengths at UAB?

SC: No. I guess it is just a regular criminal justice program. UAB's medical program is more well-known.

TS: So you went there because people in your police department had been there in the past.

SC: Yes. I was scared of coming here, you know. It is very scary coming here by yourself for the first time. I knew when I came here I could not at all speak good English. I was so afraid of saying anything in English. So during the flight coming to the U.S., when the flight attendant served us drinks, I just said I wanted "water"—water the whole time. I couldn't dare speak other words. Thinking back, it's pretty funny!

DY: Now that you speak English so beautifully.

SC: Oh, thanks. Well, I don't say that, but I'm trying. Also, I think as a Thai person I was pretty shy. Most Thai people that I know don't say much; we are quite reserved.

TS: Right; defer to others.

SC: Correct. But I have changed a lot. I speak more, speak louder. [laughter]

TS: How many languages can you speak?

SC: I speak English, Thai—that's my first language. I also speak one Chinese dialect. My grandparents came from China. I think many people in Thailand are like this, because Thailand is south of China, after Myanmar. Back then lots of Chinese people migrated to everywhere—Burma, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand. So we have a lot of people now, second and third generations of Thai, whose ancestors came from China. My grandmothers could not speak Thai at all, so we had to communicate in Chinese. It's nice because when I was at the police station, I could use my Chinese with Chinese people who came to report whatever and got help from the police. I was the only one in that police station who could speak Chinese to them, so Chinese people who knew me always came and reported their problems during my shift.

TS: Well, you got your master's, you went back, and you taught in Thailand. Then let's see; it's '96 before you finish your Ph.D. How long were you here at Sam Houston State University?

SC: About four.

TS: Four years?

SC: Yes. Before I went to Sam Houston in Texas, I stayed for four months in a city called Dracut; it's north of Boston next to New Hampshire. It's only a couple of miles away from UMass [University of Massachusetts] at Lowell. That was in '91. The weather is too cold up there. [laughter] So after one semester, my wife and I talked and I said,

“I think we better go further south where the weather is more bearable.” Because Bangkok is always hot. We have hot, hotter and hottest weather, always; low to mid-90s all year round.

TS: What’s the humidity?

SC: It’s a lot. It’s like here in July and August. Maybe a bit worse.

DY: Probably like New Orleans.

SC: Yes. And Miami, south Florida.

TS: Well, I can sympathize with you not wanting to stay in Massachusetts. So you came to Sam Houston State. Now was the police force in Thailand paying for that, or were you on your own by this time?

SC: Well, the reason I went there in the first place was because I was led to believe that I would get some kind of scholarship. Without that I couldn’t afford it. We went there and things didn’t work out (meaning there was no scholarship). The weather is too cold, and the money that we brought with us ran out. So we had to decide whether we wanted to go back to Thailand or we wanted to bite the bullet and see if we could survive and get the education. So I told my wife, “Well, it’s hard to come anyway, so let’s [stay].” As a police officer, I had to go through a lot of paperwork and get permission from the Royal Thai Police to study in the U.S. It took me almost a year to get that permission. I had to go through a bunch of signatures; you have to follow some rules and regulations; [you have to] apply and get accepted to a university; so it’s hard. My wife and I talked, and we said, ‘Well, I think we better stay and see what happens. We shouldn’t fail if we just maybe try.’ Since we didn’t get the scholarship, I would still get the salary from the Thai police force, which was not much back then, I would say only a couple of hundred bucks a month. My wife and I worked some—she worked more than I did—and that’s why we moved. The tuition in Texas was a lot cheaper then; I think it still is now, compared to other campuses in other states.

TS: But you were under no obligation to go back to Thailand after you finished up?

SC: Yes, I was. Before I came here, we had to sign a contract that [indicated], okay, you are allowed to go for three, four, or five years; whatever. And when you earn your degree, you have to come back and work at this position. We had a contract, but I broke it.

TS: You broke it?

SC: According to the contract, you either go back to work in Thailand twice as long as the time you spent to get your degree, or you pay them back money, twice of what they pay for you. In my case, part of [the money] I had to pay [was] double of what they paid for me, and part of it I had to pay triple because they changed the rule a few years before I graduated. Still, I did not plan to stay here in the first place. None of Thai police officers who came here stayed here after their graduation. I am the first one,

maybe the last one. I did not plan to stay here because as I said being a police officer in Thailand is not too bad maybe except for the salary. So I planned to go back and become a police general like my seniors now have become. But things changed after we had our son, Justin or Pawat for a Thai name. My wife and I talked, and we said, "Okay, let's see if we can find a job here." And that's why. But it took us awhile, about two months to make that final decision whether we wanted to stay or go back.

TS: So you were really thinking about not going back to teach but to be a top administrator with the police force?

SC: The way it works, usually we had to go back to teach. But because we have these degrees, this knowledge, police generals at the headquarters always wanted you to be their assistant. That's what happened with my seniors all these years, and that's how your teaching job can later change into an administrative one.

TS: I noticed you had certificates in parachuting and counterinsurgency.

SC: Those were interesting programs in the police academy. Way back then, the police officers were trained as soldiers. The police force had these tanks and heavy machine guns; you name it, we had those. As time went on, things changed, but the training in the academy is more or less the same. I don't know why; the high ranking police officials didn't seem to want to re-evaluate the training curriculum. However, it was challenging and fun at times; you got to jump off the aircraft six-seven times. You got to stay in the woods for a month on this survival course; it made a man out of you. [laughter]

TS: Well, they can put you in charge of counterinsurgency on the KSU police force. [chuckle]

SC: I don't know about that. But that training had helped me, though. I think I learned a lot from the academy. It gave me a solid foundation in life and made me who I am.

TS: As you were going through your doctoral program, were you leaning toward research? Or is there a time where you decide, "I really like to teach, and I want to teach for the rest of my life"? Just exactly how did it happen?

SC: Well, I never thought of being a researcher because I know to research you have to write [in English], which is my weakest part, being a Thai person. So I did not at all think about that. And teaching, I was not fond of it much either because I have to lecture in English. So since I have to teach, I learn how to speak, how to lecture, and things like that. I have to thank my good friend, Dr. Mike Vaughn; he's now chair of the Criminal Justice Department at Georgia State. He was one of my classmates back then at Sam Houston.

TS: Dr. Vaughn?

SC: Yes, Dr. Michael [S.] Vaughn. He's the chair of the Criminal Justice Department now. He's the one who always got me into writing. He said, "Just write something

out, and I'll help you finish it." He didn't know about Thailand and the Thai criminal justice system, so he wanted me to write about the Thai police. He got me started. I did not quite follow his advice then, but he still always helped me all these years. And he said that if you want to be more successful and a more marketable professor, you have to publish, because we all teach, but not all of us publish. That got me to thinking. I think also what got me into this more is that my first employment was in west Texas, the city of Odessa between El Paso and Dallas. It's a nice town, but there are not too many Thai people there. We wanted to move to a bigger town, and I talked to my friend Mike Vaughn for advice. He said, "If you do not publish, it's hard for you to move." I got to think more and more. Being a Thai person—being Asian, international and without these publications, I would have a tough time finding a new job. So that got me into [research] big time.

TS: Isn't Laura Bush from Odessa?

SC: Yes, from Midland.

TS: Midland. Which is about . . .

SC: About twenty miles from Odessa. They're more like twin cities in west Texas.

TS: I know when I was researching my book, there's an Air Force base out near there where they'd stored all the B-29s after World War II—all kinds of airplanes. When Lockheed came here, they started out renovating B-29s. They took them out of that base and flew them back here from Texas. They called it Rattlesnake Air Force Base, but it was a little bit west of Odessa.

SC: Well, if you drive a half hour west of Odessa, there's nothing.

TS: That's pretty much the description; there was nothing.

SC: Yes, a big flat land.

TS: That should have been good and warm for you out there.

SC: Yes, I liked it. Dry weather; not much humidity. No sweat. Pretty nice except there's not much there for us to do. We didn't see many Thai people.

DY: Yes, you were probably pretty isolated then, weren't you?

SC: Correct. Also, our son was three or four years old, and we wanted him to at least associate with the Thai culture.

TS: Right. Not too much chance out there, I wouldn't guess.

SC: Not much. There were a few Thai families, but husband American, wife Thai..

TS: What is your son's name?

SC: Our son's name is Justin.

TS: What's your wife's name?

SC: They call her Judy, but her real name is Jurairut.

TS: I can see why they made Judy out of that.

SC: Right. Probably the first syllable or first two letters.

DY: So your first research interest—or your first scholarship—was writing about your own experience in the police academy as a cadet. Is that what you were writing about or were you writing a history of it?

SC: It was about how police cadets viewed their police career, which was the topic of my dissertation. Every time I think back about my research experience, it was different. When you are a graduate Ph.D. student, most of American students would have the opportunity to be an RA [research assistant] or TA [teaching assistant], at least the last year in the program.

TS: A research assistant or teaching assistant.

SC: Right. And they could help their professors in research or teaching. Before they graduated, they would have one or two publications published with their professor, at least in my field. I didn't have that luxury because my language skill wasn't that great then.

TS: But you've got on your resume [that you were] a research assistant for the Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute.

SC: Correct. But my duties were more of a coordinator than a research assistant. So, title can be deceiving, right. [chuckle] The institute is like a training center that offers a number of training programs and workshop for police officers. These officers would sit in a classroom all day long and listen to these lecturers, one after the other, [and talk] about police leadership, management, etc. This was an eighteen day program from 8 a.m. to 9 pm daily, three times a year. So I would help them arrange the schedules and prepare the materials and take them to breakfast, lunch and dinner, (which was the best part). [laughter] I helped the lecturers if they needed some handouts or copies. It's a good learning experience for me. Also, I made some good friends.

TS: What was the title of your dissertation?

SC: "The Attitudes of Thai Police Cadets toward the Police Career"—either service or law enforcement.

TS: Did you have to keep going back to Thailand to research?

- SC: I went back only one time to gather all these data and some information, so just one time.
- TS: Why don't we talk a little bit about what attracted you to Kennesaw State?
- SC: Oh, like I said before, I would like to move my family to a bigger city. I also prefer the South where the winter is not too cold. You have several big cities in Florida, and Atlanta is the biggest one in Georgia. The thing that I like about Kennesaw is that it is in the Atlanta area. My friend Mike Vaughn was at Georgia State at the time—he's still there now—and he said, "Well, come; it's a nice city." So I did some more research. I found that Atlanta has two Thai temples. They have quite a few Thai people, and they have the Thai Association of Georgia here. I didn't know much about Kennesaw at the time because Kennesaw State didn't have our program yet.
- TS: It didn't have a major yet?
- DY: Criminal justice?
- SC: No criminal justice; they didn't have that at the time. There were only some criminal justice courses. But when I came for an interview, I knew more then because they had just submitted a proposal for a Criminal Justice program to the Board of Regents a few months ago. I also talked to my colleagues, and believe it or not, my colleagues are so nice. [Before coming here], very few—I mean, I can count—very few wanted to pronounce my last name. But here at this department, I mean the first day I came here, four people called me by my last name almost correctly. So I was impressed that they did that. Harry [Harold] Trendell, Betty [A.] Smith, Mel [Melvyn L.] Fein, and also our former chair, Lana [J.] Wachniak. That's nice; it makes you feel very welcome that they know your name. I also saw some potential growth that we talked about. I also like the location of our school because it's outside the city a little bit so it's not too crowded. So that's what happened at the time when I came for the interview.
- DY: So you came to Kennesaw in 2001; you came and interviewed, and then you were hired, and we had the major by that time?
- SC: I started at Kennesaw State in August of '01, and the proposal got approved in January of '02, like at the end of that year. Since then the program has taken off. I think we have now, I would say, about 350 majors.
- TS: For sociology?
- SC: For criminal justice.
- TS: Just for criminal justice, we've got 350?
- SC: About that.
- DY: And your faculty has grown also.

- SC: Yes, we have three full-time and two full-time temporary. We are hiring two more this semester. Yes, so it grows very rapidly.
- DY: I noticed that your research interests include police and minorities, so it must be very helpful that you have the three languages that you have. Have you had the opportunity to use your Chinese here?
- SC: No, because most Chinese here speak Mandarin, not the Chinese dialect I know.
- TS: Talk a little bit about the intellectual climate that you saw when you came here in 2001 to Kennesaw State. We've had a lot of interviews where people have been here a long time, and they talked about the changes in the intellectual climate over time. But in your case, there hasn't been a lot of time for a change to take place, I guess—or maybe there has. But in 2001 when you came here, what did you perceive the intellectual climate to be here?
- SC: I talked to my colleagues in my cohort who came at the same time I did. All of them said they would do teaching and research, so we already have that going, thinking that we have to do more on research. When I first came here, for the first few months I looked around for some funding sources. I found several of them here. So even though teaching is our priority still, somehow, I know there are faculty and organizations here that are trying to support research. So I saw that coming. And as I talked more and more with my colleagues about it, they pretty much, except for a few, think that we are making big progress on this toward research emphasis.
- TS: That's the direction we've gone?
- SC: Yes, I think so. I've talked to several of my colleagues who also want to publish, and that's what they think that it's a good direction, at least in my opinion. I think we have a lot of potential because more than 30 percent of the whole faculty that we have here right now were hired only in the past three or four years, and many want to focus on research.
- TS: I think it may be higher than that. What did they say at the opening of school? I think two hundred of our six hundred-odd faculty members have been hired since August of 2003 or something like that.
- DY: Did you find that your colleagues were helpful to you? Did you have some mentoring and some help from your faculty colleagues when you came in?
- SC: Oh, yes. Lana Wachniak and Mel Fein are the two persons that I always talk to and I can confide in. Mel is great. Oftentimes I would go and talk to him.
- DY: She was the chair!
- SC: She was Chair and now Associate Dean, but always I talked with these two persons. They've been great and very supportive of me and my career here.

- TS: Well, Lana's background is criminal justice, if I remember correctly.
- SC: Sociology. Both, yes, because she taught courses in both disciplines. I think her major was in sociology. Also, I think she might have taken some courses in criminal justice and criminology. [Her dissertation is entitled "Lion Den: A Case Study of an Isolated Community."] Her Ph.D. was from the University of Georgia, and her M.S. degree was from Florida State University.
- TS: There was a time, very early in this institution's history—back in the early '70s when we were a junior college—that we had a large criminal justice program that we did in conjunction with Georgia State. They actually sent professors out here to teach, and there were a lot of policemen that took the courses. In fact, my wife [Kathleen S. Scott] majored in criminal justice courses at Kennesaw in the early 1970s. After we became a senior college, Kennesaw hired two full-time faculty members [Robert H. Hedrick and Johnnie D. Myers] who taught criminal justice. Then for some reason, they decided in the early 1980s to eliminate it. It wasn't for a lack of students. I never understood why they terminated the program. I'm sure they had their reasons, but they didn't communicate them to me. So [the new criminal justice program] is reinstating what we actually had early on. It was a very popular program and was one of those areas where we really were doing stuff in the community early on. When you came in, were you the only one who was teaching the criminal justice courses before the major got in place? I guess Ed Clack [Edwin H. Clack, Jr.] was here at that time, wasn't he?
- SC: He was a part-time faculty for many years and was a full-time temporary for a year, but I was the only full-time tenure-track faculty for almost two years. We have Stan Crowder, who helped us teach some courses in criminal justice, and I think a few more people back then. But these are the two main guys.
- TS: These are full-time temporary [instructors].
- SC: Just Ed Clack was full-time temporary. Stan teaches two courses every semester for us. Both are really good.
- TS: Who are the students in these courses?
- SC: A mixed group of people. Almost every class, I have two or three police officers, some traditional students straight from high school . . .
- TS: Traditional and nontraditional students?
- SC: Yes.
- TS: So it's a mix in the classroom. It sounds like with 350 majors you're booming with the faculty that you've got over there now.
- SC: Yes, I think many of these students want to be FBI profilers! [laughter] That's why many have come to join our criminal justice program. But anyway, the program is

growing, so now we are trying to manage it so we don't grow too fast and collapse later on. At least in my opinion I want to make sure we have a solid foundation.

TS: When you were talking about the intellectual climate, you mentioned teaching and research. Were they telling you when you came in that you had to be good at both? Was there a balance between the two, or was teaching more important but research was second? How did you perceive it?

SC: As I saw it, teaching is important and is always our priority. It's true that we have to teach our students. For research, it is also essential for me. I usually apply my research to my classroom teaching. Research gives you the opportunity to keep up with the field, so I think teaching and research go hand in hand. They are equally important. My department, both Lana and Mel, fully support me in doing research projects. Mel said, "Just be the best you can be."

TS: What kind of teaching load do you have?

SC: We have three and four courses; four in spring. But like I said, Lana was very supportive. When I came here, I taught one double-section course, so that I would have a little more time to do research.

TS: But no course reductions so far?

SC: Not until later when I started serving as assistant chair.

TS: Oh, you do?

SC: Yes. So I have a course release because I also am area coordinator for Criminal Justice. I do scheduling and curriculum change; many things about the program go through me. Also I help Sam [Abaidoo], our chair, on some things. One thing that I know: Even though the climate is good—I mean, in terms of the support financially—it can be better. It can be better. Like in our department we have only five hundred dollars for travel per person a year, and to me that's not enough.

TS: You can't go far on five hundred dollars.

SC: No. But luckily every year I would attend one or two conferences. I managed to get to go to two of them.

DY: So did you go and present papers?

SC: Always, yes. And they usually become my manuscripts later on.

DY: Well, Sutham, do you find that your research and the papers that you're presenting tie in with your teaching? Are you able to apply those concepts and ideas in the classroom when you teach?

- SC: Most of them are used and applied to my classroom teaching. [One of the classroom topics is] about police and minorities and crime. So when I talk about that topic, I give some examples about studies that have been done, including mine. One thing I also do—when I went to Texas—I like to drop by and say hello and pay tribute to police departments and say hello to the police chief. I say, “I’m here with the faculty. I like to do research. If you think I can be any help at all, let me know.” So I did three projects with the Midland Police Force.
- TS: Are you’re still in contact with the police chief there?
- SC: Yes, yes. Chief John Urby is a very nice guy. One of them was not as nice; it’s weird. You go up there and talk with him, and you say, “I’m so and so. I want to introduce myself.” And one of them said, “Why are you here? Why are you coming to teach in this city?” He was not that welcoming, and I did not communicate with him since. But for Midland, we are good friends, and I had the opportunity to work with them on a couple of projects. I even wrote and submitted a grant proposal—a big grant, like six figures—but that did not get funded. When I came here, I did a survey study with six police departments in Cobb County. I also talked to the deputy chief of the Marietta Police Department. I did the same thing: I said, “Hello. If you think I can be of any help, let me know.” Sure enough, last year he e-mailed me and said, “Well, you said that day that if we need help, you could help.” So we talked, and I helped them with one project to survey crime victims about their attitudes toward the police. So I helped from step one with the survey design, the topic, how to gather data, mail out, input the data into the program, analyze them, and write a report that they can use for their accreditation requirement.
- TS: So they wanted to know what victims of crime thought about the police department?
- SC: Yes.
- TS: Whether the police responded and were polite?
- SC: Things like that, in general.
- TS: Did you actually conduct the research, or did you help them draw up their own survey instruments?
- SC: Both and more. We met three times to talk about research design, survey development, etc. Later on I entered the data, ran some analyses, and wrote a brief report for them. What they did in that project was that they sent out the survey questionnaire to the study samples.
- TS: They mailed them out?
- SC: Yes. And the mail would come back to them. I would like the survey to be sent directly to me, but because of the policy they have, the returned survey had to have their return address. They then gathered the surveys for me.

TS: What kind of percentage return did they have?

SC: We sent out about 120 surveys every Friday from April of '04 until September, like a six-month period.

TS: Oh, that's a lot of surveys.

SC: We got, I think, about 400 returned surveys, about a 15 or 16 percent response rate.

TS: Okay, so you're sending out 120 a week for six months. So that's . . .

SC: It's a couple of thousand.

TS: Yes, you'd have several thousand. And you got 400 back.

SC: Yes, about 400.

TS: That's not bad.

SC: Not bad for this kind of research because people always toss it. These are crime victims, so some of them moved, too. Some gave you the wrong address; like they give you their mom's address or girlfriend's or boyfriend's address. Many surveys got returned due to wrong address.

TS: What did you find?

SC: We found that most people like the police.

TS: At least of those who returned the surveys?

SC: Correct. However, some of them had a lot to say about how bad the police were to them. That's not surprising because there were some people who thought the police did not do a good job.

TS: These are the victims that thought that the police were rude, inattentive?

SC: Correct. The results of the overall study's findings are good. But if you analyze these data by race, age, education, etc., the outcomes are different.

TS: Did you get many back from Hispanics?

SC: We did even have two versions of the survey, Spanish version and English version. I haven't analyzed that data section yet, so I don't know how many of our samples are Hispanic. Most of the time from what I have read, minority people (including younger people, less educated people, minorities, and the low-income people) tend to dislike the police more than the majority people do—.

TS: So this is certainly something the police department can try to address for their accreditation.

- SC: Right. Also, they divided the survey based on precincts—you know, first, second, or third—and they have some precincts that have more problems than the other areas.
- DY: Right, [precincts] that are in lower-income areas and high minority population.
- SC: Right. So that's usually the area the police have to address more.
- TS: Well, this would definitely fall under the definition of applied research.
- SC: Yes.
- TS: Has that been what most of your research has been is applied research of this type?
- SC: Most of them are that way.
- TS: When you started out, you were talking about teaching and research, but service is the other area. Service and research kind of dovetail together when you're working with a police department for things that are in their interest, it seems to me.
- SC: Yes, correct. I also do a lot of service, some for our department and the campus, but I also help out outside, too. When I went back to Thailand these past three years, I did some service to the Thai police force via presentations. I also helped review the training curriculum of some police academies and public safety departments. I did several projects with Excelsior College in New York. They got this big grant, and they sent qualified faculty to police and law enforcement academies that were to be evaluated to see if courses in their curriculum, when these cadets graduated, can be transferred to a four-year college. We spent 2-3 days on this evaluation at a select site [to determine if] this can be credited toward a college degree. I think I helped assess three academies so far. Also, they invited me to join these national committees—to be on the advisory board on these projects. It's called the National Advisory Committee on Criminal Justice Training Assessment. Of course several of my research projects were initiated from this kind of service.
- TS: So how much time do you spend working with the Thailand police now?
- SC: I want to do more and more, but sometimes when I go back, I do not want to impose on them. I would like them to initiate the conversation on what I can do to assist them. I just try to do it slowly because some Thai people do not like [the perceived American attitude that] "Well, I got a degree from the U.S.; I know more." I think that's normal. So I try to change things slowly, and I try to work with my good friends who know that I can help them. Last year when I was there, it was fun and scary at the time, too. You might know we are having a situation in three provinces in the south of Thailand. Most residents there are Muslim (and we call them Thai Muslim). Some of them want to be independent from Thailand. Every week for the past five or six months now, incidents have happened. Many people, including women and even monks got killed. It's easy to know you're not one of them by the way you dress and everything. So one of my seniors asked me to go down there and give a presentation to this group of about sixty police detectives on how police here in

the states are trained and how they enforce the laws. The idea was for me to share my teaching and learning experience in law enforcement with these police detectives. So I went there to talk for two hours. From the airport to the location that they were, it was about two hours drive. On the way there, you would see these roadblocks every five or ten miles, guarded with 3-4 soldiers with heavy machine guns and sand bags—getting ready. The whole town was very quiet; you don't see anybody doing anything. It was scary. My wife was like, "Don't you dare go!" So my wife did not want me to go, but because of my being Thai and because one of my beloved senior officers would like me to go, I went and talked. Still now, the situation there has not been resolved. I hope it will get better soon.

TS: That seems so unusual for Thailand. My image of Thailand, at any rate, is that it avoided the communist movements of the '50s and '60s, and it stayed relatively unaligned all along.

SC: Well, the communist movements then happened in the Northeast region of Thailand where the communists tried to take over the whole country. This is different. From what I heard, these are very hard-core Muslims who want to separate themselves from Thailand and have their own country just like the Palestinians, I guess. I don't know for sure who are behind this group of people. For a long time, the Thai government allows the Muslim people in the south to have their own court system, education system, and cultural practices. We respect their right to religion and other freedoms.

TS: That counterinsurgency training you had, I guess, came in handy! [chuckle]

SC: Not quite because that was a long time ago. I think we have to resolve the problem strategically, and force should be used only as a last resort. There are a lot of people who still want to be Thai and be part of Thailand. A small faction of them, not all of them, tried to make waves and rock the boat, I think.

TS: Well, you said back here you worked with the police; we've got six cities in Cobb County. I guess each one of them has its own police force, doesn't it, plus the county police?

SC: Cobb has six police departments.

TS: Have you worked with the Cobb County Police Department?

SC: Not yet.

TS: But you have worked with each of the cities?

SC: Well, I did a survey with each of the local police departments; I helped one research project with the Marietta Police Department. I would like to extend and reach out to them more.

TS: You've only been here four years. Is that the direction that you want your research to go—to continue the applied research and what serves community needs? I notice you

had a lot of stuff on Web-based criminology that you're working on, too. Is what you're interested in the applied research, or are you thinking that somewhere along the line you want to just do basic research, whether it has an immediate application or not?

SC: Yes, I try to stick with the applied research, focusing on the law enforcement issues. That's my field. I was a cop for three years, and I think that also what I have done may be applied to the police in Thailand. So [it's] almost like a double benefit. But I am an open-minded researcher, so if anybody wants me to work with them on some project, I would do it if I can. That's why I expand my research to do more of a Web-based survey, Web-based education. I am now doing a study on international education with Susan [Dr. Susan S. Carley] and Dan [Dr. Daniel J.] Paracka. I'm also going to try to get more into the computer crime problem.

TS: So that's on a national scale of how people are using the computer?

SC: Well, it's so broad because with crime, you can define it in so many ways. But identity theft is the number one crime that grows the fastest. So I want to help the police to see how they handle these problems and how to improve their techniques and things like that so that they can make more arrests.

TS: I guess there are jurisdictional problems with computer crimes. Somebody might be in Marietta, but they may be committing a crime against somebody in California. So is the crime where the victim is?

SC: Well, we have a lot to do in this area because we don't have sometimes these international laws yet. One time we had this I-love-you computer virus, like four or five years ago, that was committed in the Philippines. It cost a bunch of money here with the New York Stock Exchange. But in the Philippines there's no law that they can enforce to penalize that computer criminal. So we still have a lot that we have to do and work together as a team internationally.

TS: Why don't you talk a little bit about winning the scholarship award this year? Certainly your work with the Marietta Police Department had to be part of it, but what was it that you think caused you to win the award this year? What research in particular do you think the committee was focusing on?

SC: I never thought of winning; I just do what I'm doing. I think what they looked at is the amount of what I have done and the consistency that I have done. I haven't rested much yet! It's not a single project that stands out.

TS: But you've got a resume that goes on and on of what you've actually published, what you've had funded, and what you plan on doing in the future. I think you've got at least one book in the works, don't you?

SC: Well, I have one that I'm thinking about writing, but it will be in Thai. There are more colleges and universities in Thailand now, but they don't have enough books for their courses. So, some of my friends talked me into this book writing idea.

DY: So this would be like a college textbook?

SC: I don't know yet. I'm thinking about it. Maybe it will be a semi-text that they can use and that can be updated every now and then.

TS: Maybe I should ask: How have you done all of this without a reduced teaching load?

SC: I would say that I just sleep less, which I did! I took so much time doing this. I felt very frustrated when I started my research projects and writing at the beginning of my teaching career. I didn't know much about writing, finding topics, organizing the paper, etc. So it took me so much time. I remember one time I wanted to write this nice paragraph, the first paragraph of my paper; it took me like four days to write that first paragraph. On the fifth day, I tossed it! It didn't read well! I didn't know how. As time goes on, I have become a better writer and can get more writings done. I try to have at least four or five projects at the same time; I don't have just one or two projects. But I would have two, three *active* projects that I'm working on. [For] the other projects I would collect data, collect articles, and just stack them up there. So when one project's done, I can move on to the next. When I come across something at the conferences—databases—I just stack them up into one folder. Some friends of mine in Thailand wanted me to work with them, and I did. Luckily, our field of criminal justice is so broad that I think we can find many topics for research projects. There are many criminal justice journals that like to see our papers, especially if it's about Thailand since there is not much research written about it. Also, I try to select research topics that are appealing to the journal editor and have potential to get accepted. But again, I guess just sleep less and do more! In the first three years, I think I didn't go to bed until one or two o'clock in the morning every day, six days a week, I think. In Odessa, luckily, we didn't have much to do; that allowed me to have more time for my research.

I would like to mention one name, Kellye Manning. She is the director of the Writing Center at the University of Texas of the Permian Basin. Without her, I wouldn't come this far today; I wouldn't be this successful. She worked with me on my writing; she saw that I was trying. I am working hard and committed myself to writing. So she worked with me one-on-one, corrected my grammar, and tried to help me—steered me to the right direction, told me about the writing style and the connotation, things like that. So I owe a lot to her. The other person is Dr. Michael Vaughn, one of my classmates in the Ph.D. program and a long-time friend. He always encouraged me to write and gave me helpful advice all these years. When I won the Scholarship Award, I called these two persons to let them know and to thank them.

DY: Have you sought any help in our Writing Center here at KSU?

SC: I tried twice but without success, so I gave up going there.

DY: Oh, I'm sorry!

SC: Because they wanted me to get in line with students and help me half an hour at a time. I understand why they are doing that.

- DY: Yes, they serve a lot of students.
- SC: Yes. One thing that I also do anywhere I go is to make friends with somebody who is nice enough to help me with my writing.
- TS: I noticed that a lot of your publications are co-authored, so I guess that helped, too, when you had somebody to work with that you were writing with.
- SC: Yes. A lot of my co-authors are from other disciplines. I worked with a psychologist, business faculty, sociologists, and four or five people that are not in my field of criminal justice. It's nice to work with someone. But it's not easy, as you might know. Working with people can be sometimes difficult and traumatic.
- TS: Absolutely!
- SC: It's not easy, so I am now pretty picky. I know how hard it is to have [an article] accepted. If you are with somebody who doesn't know about the courtesy, it can be a pain. It didn't help; it hurt.
- TS: You were talking about [how] the Writing Center here wasn't very helpful; what about the Office of Sponsored Programs and so on. Have you had help in finding funding for your projects at Kennesaw?
- SC: From talking to Jackie Givens and receiving her email about funding opportunities, the OSP seems to be helpful. However, I never sought for their assistance personally, so I couldn't comment on that. I applied one time for the incentive grant. It's in summer time—like five thousand dollars, and now it's eight thousand dollars. I think I applied in my second year, but my project didn't get funded. The reason I did not continue applying is because I am busy enough with the research projects I have.
- TS: So basically you've gone out and gotten your own money.
- SC: No. I just used existing resources available. Right now I have nine projects on hand that I'm working on, and I don't think I need substantial money to complete the projects.
- DY: So it's not theoretical; it's very practical and applied.
- SC: For the most part, that is correct. But I do apply a theoretical framework in several of my projects.
- DY: People will use the information that you're giving them.
- SC: That's what I hope for. I know that some of my articles have been cited as references. I know for sure that two of my articles were used in training workshop for law enforcement.
- TS: Have you involved students in research in your classes?

- SC: Always, when I have a chance. [Several] of my articles are co-authored by students. I have one in a trade journal that I wrote with Gloria [T.] Pena. I wrote two [technical] reports with students and one trade article with Gloria.
- TS: That's good. Obviously, if you've included students with your published papers, you must have high regard for them. What about students in general? Have you found them to be up to the task of research in your classes?
- SC: I'm trying to look for some potential students that would like to do research. I come across some, but they are so busy. By the time I met them, they would have one more semester to go before they graduated. So there are a number of good students, but we just haven't had enough time to work together yet.
- DY: I think as your program gets older and better known and you get more faculty in, you'll get maybe some help from your own peers, your faculty.
- SC: Yes. I know that's coming. I would like to work more with my peers, but I know we're just slowly getting there.
- TS: So you said that you're hiring two people now full time in criminal justice?
- SC: Yes, this fall.
- TS: What will that bring you up to?
- SC: To five full-time.
- TS: Five full-time? Tenure-track?
- SC: Tenure-track.
- TS: That's good. That's progress.
- SC: Yes, hopefully we can hire somebody. We did not hire anybody last year because they all were not what our program needs. So this year, hopefully we have a bigger pool of applicants that we can select from.
- TS: Where do you think Kennesaw is headed? Toward more scholarship? What do you see as the future for Kennesaw and your program in criminal justice?
- SC: Well, it's hard to say, but I think we are going toward being a research-oriented school, more and more. With Dr. [Betty L.] Siegel leaving, we will have a new president. So, that change in presidency can be a big impact. I have talked to many of my colleagues about this (especially faculty who joined KSU these past three or four years), and they tend to prefer research to service.
- DY: Your cohorts?
- SC: Yes, I think each has his/her own research agenda to pursue.

TS: Are they like you in that they want to do community-based applied research?

SC: That varies. In my field I can do more of the applied research, but in science it might be a little different. I never talked with them in detail about what direction they want to go, applied or pure research. But I think that's coming; I think it will be more and more toward that direction.

TS: Do you see that as a good thing?

SC: Of course, yes. That's what I'm doing! I like it because now I feel more comfortable doing this. I still have to get some help on editing, but I feel a lot more comfortable. I can write, and nobody will say: "This one was written by a foreigner." Which I was told a few times in my career earlier. They could tell that this one, this manuscript, was written by a non-native. As I mentioned earlier, teaching and research must go hand in hand.

TS: But you're hearing that less and less?

SC: Less and less!

TS: Now when you go back to Thailand, you're not sure whether you're accepted there either.

SC: Well, I'm lucky that all of my friends and my seniors still accept me. I hope they'll keep doing so. When I go back, I'm just a Thai. I dress like them; I speak Thai. It wouldn't be like some people who speak mixed words of Thai and English. So, most people couldn't tell that I was here in the U.S. for the past fifteen years. I guess I can still keep my Thai personality and characteristics pretty good.

TS: So they don't think of you as an American then?

SC: No, no.

TS: Some people, when they go to another country, absorb the culture to the degree that when they go back home, they don't fit in anymore.

SC: The thing is I came here when I was twenty-seven years old. So I was pretty much Thai all my life. So now I try to adjust myself so that I can be more American in a way that you guys see me as an American person in a cultural sense even though I have a Thai face!

TS: You mentioned that there were two Thai temples in the Atlanta area; what's the Thai population in this area?

SC: Well, based on the number that I know—because I serve as the president of the Thai Association of Georgia—I think we have about six or seven hundred households on the record. But one time we had these Thai officials from the Thai Embassy come

here for a visit last year, and one of them said that there are more than ten thousand Thai people here. I disagree.

TS: You think ten thousand is too high?

SC: Oh, way too high. I would say five or six thousand at the most. Maybe I'm wrong. But we don't have any accurate source that we can go and check to see how many Thai we have.

TS: Isn't there a Thai restaurant over near Town Center?

SC: Thai Peppers?

TS: Is it an authentic restaurant?

SC: No, not quite. That should be true with most Thai restaurants here because they have to adjust the recipe to match with Americans' taste. There's a new Thai restaurant near campus called Bangkok Cabin; it's on East Cherokee Road. Only about five to ten minutes drive from KSU. So now it is more convenient to go to Bangkok Cabin. It's more authentic, I think, maybe because I know the chef personally and I can ask her to prepare me a Thai authentic dish.

TS: Well, what do you see as your future at Kennesaw?

SC: I like it here. I'm not going anywhere soon. I think that as a whole, we will become bigger and stronger as a university. We will have some problems as we go along; when you get bigger, you have problems that challenge you—the structure, the classrooms, the parking spaces, etc.—but I think that will be dealt with and fixed as we go on. I think we will become a very good and famous university. I don't know, maybe in ten years. I would like to see that. I will try to be a part of that, helping enhance it.

TS: Do you see criminal justice becoming a separate department some day?

SC: That's what I want. That's what Dr. Wachniak advocates. I think that will happen. I don't know when.

DY: You certainly have the students coming to you.

SC: Correct. Now we're writing a proposal for this master's degree program. Also, we've talked with Dr. [Lendley C.] Black for, I think, almost two years now about splitting into two departments because we now have four disciplines in one department. Doing administrative work, including scheduling, has become more difficult.

TS: And you've got the longest name on campus: Sociology, Anthropology, Geography and Criminal Justice.

SC: Correct. So we might get divided into two departments. My department would be Sociology and Criminal Justice, and the other would be Geography and Anthropology.

DY: That makes sense.

SC: Yes, they fit.

TS: You've got international leadership in your department with Sam Abaidoo as the department chair, and I didn't realize you are the assistant department chair.

SC: Yes, for a year. .

TS: Great. I'm getting near the end of my list of questions.

DY: I've enjoyed this very, very much.

SC: Thanks.

DY: Thank you for your time.

SC: Oh, thanks for your time, too.

TS: It's been fun.

INDEX

Abaidoo, Samuel, 12, 23
Atlanta, Georgia, 9, 21

Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute, 8
Black, Lendley C., 22

Carley, Susan S., 17
Cheurprakobkit, Arpaporn, 1-2
Cheurprakobkit, Jurairut (Judy) 4-8, 16
Cheurprakobkit, Justin (Pawat), 6-8
Cheurprakobkit, Sutham
 Background in Thailand, 1-2
 Parents, 1-2
 Education in Thailand, 1-3
 Work as a policeman, 3
 Graduate work at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, 3-4
 Teaching at the Thai National Police Academy, 3
 Grandparents from China, 4
 Doctoral program at Sam Houston State University, 4-5
 Decision to stay in the United States, 5-6
 Wife, 4-8, 16
 Son, 6-8
 Training in parachuting and counterinsurgency, 6
 Reasons for focusing on research, 6-7
 Dissertation, 8-9
 Research assistant at law enforcement management institute, 8
 Reasons for coming to Kennesaw State University, 9
 Service as assistant department chair, 12
 Papers at conferences, 12
 Research on local police departments, 13-16
 Service activities, 15
 Current work with Thailand police, 15-16
 Research on computer crime, 17
 Research in international education, 17
 Distinguished Scholarship Award, 17-18
 Future research agenda, 17-18
 Research collaboration with other scholars, 19-20
 Research collaboration with students, 20
 Maintaining Thai identity, 21
 President of Thai Association of Georgia, 21
Cheurprakobkit, Winai, 1-2
Clack, Edwin H., Jr., 11
Crowder, Stan, 11

Excelsior College (New York), 15

Fein, Melvyn L., 9-10, 12

Georgia State University, 6, 9, 11

Givens, Jacqueline L., 19

Hedrick, Robert H., 11

Kennesaw State University

Collegiality, 9

Criminal Justice program, 9-10, 20, 23

Intellectual climate, 10, 12, 20-21

Criminal Justice program during junior college era, 10

Students, 11, 20

Integration of teaching and research, 12-13, 21

Applied research, 12, 15, 21

Office of Sponsored Programs, 19

Growth in size and stature, 22

Manning, Kellye, 18

Midland, Texas, Police Force, 13

Myers, Johnnie D., 11

National Advisory Committee on Criminal Justice Training Assessment, 15

Odessa, Texas, 7

Paracka, Daniel J., 17

Sam Houston State University, 4-5

Scott, Kathleen S., 11

Siegel, Betty L., 20

Smith, Betty A., 9

Thai Association of Georgia, 9, 21

Thailand, 1-3, 5-6, 15-16, 21

Thai National Police Academy, 1-3

Thai restaurants in Cobb County, 21

Trendell, Harold R. (Harry), 9

University of Alabama at Birmingham, 3-4

University of Massachusetts at Lowell, 4

University of Texas of the Permian Basin, 18

Urby, John (Police Chief), 13

Vaughn, Michael S., 6-7, 9, 18

Wachniak, Lana J., 9-11, 22