

Your Story: International love



Photo above courtesy of Dr Pummy Krittaphol Bailey.

International students Chom Pirayavaraporn and Thanathat Kaewsermwong travelled to Otago separately to study and met at the Otago Language Centre. The rest, as the saying goes . . .

After Chom completed her PhD (Pharmacy) in 2012 and Thanat gained his Bachelor of Applied Science in Energy Management through Otago's Department of Physics in 2011, the couple returned to Thailand.

Chom says they both miss Dunedin and the University – so much so that they returned earlier this year to do their wedding-day photography – before they have set a date for the big day – at Otago's iconic Clocktower building.

What have you been doing since you graduated?

Chom: I've been working as a research and development Pharmacist for a reputable Thai pharmaceutical company, Thai Nakorn Patana Co. The company makes many of the generic drugs that are sold in Thailand and neighbouring countries. It's a pretty large company with more than 1,800 employees. The job is fascinating, challenging and I'm very happy with it.

Since returning to Thailand Than has challenged himself by trying many jobs; he was assistant manager in a trading company, then worked as a product executive in a well-known online gaming company. He also recently graduated from Thammasart University with postgraduate real estate qualifications.

How did your studies prepare you for your career?

We think that study at Otago was not only academically fulfilling, but that it also prepared us well to be adaptable professionals. We also developed other skills through many university support services and activities, and this helped prepare us for dealing with a diverse range of people in our professions.

What did you enjoy about studying at Otago?

Apart from great library services, friendly staff, and a very nice environment, we also enjoyed lots of activities arranged by OUSA and other clubs, which made our student life very lively and attractive.

What did you enjoy outside of study while at Otago?

While we were studying we also travelled a lot, especially throughout the South Island. We love New Zealand and see it as our second home country. We loved the gorgeous scenery, but were also impressed by the strong community support and were surrounded by wonderful people everywhere we went.

Did you have any stand-out staff or lecturers?

Chom: As a PhD student, I have to acknowledge my supervisors Professor Ian Tucker and Professor Thomas Rades. They were very helpful and supportive; without them I certainly couldn't have come this far.

What was a favourite place on campus, or in Dunedin?

Our favourite place on campus was, undoubtedly, under the willow tree by the Leith, opposite the clock tower. Sadly, the tree's now gone. We just loved Dunedin; last May we went back for our [wedding] photo shoot and we just wanted to walk along George St, and Cumberland street where we used to live to bring back the unforgettable memories. Omg, I'm gonna cry!

What advice would you share with undergraduates or people who may think of studying at Otago?

Chom: Well, as I mentioned above, there's no place like Otago. The academic and student support resources are excellent. The atmosphere is just marvellous, especially for an international student. The language centre is a good start to prepare yourself for study, and is fully supportive. Plus, there are so many exciting activities. For postgraduate study, there are many opportunities available for international students. Also, I have to express gratitude for the postgraduate scholarship, as well as the School of Pharmacy's stipend, which I received for my PhD study.

What does Otago mean to you now? Will you take part in any alumni events, or keep in touch with friends you met at Otago in future?

Otago means a lot to me. I don't really know how to explain it. From the opportunity Professor Tucker gave me to pursue my study, then those generous scholarships, as well as all the friendly staff – I think Otago helped make the "Me" I am today. Than and I still keep in touch with friends from Otago, including those from UOLC who are now living all over the world. We are looking forward to a reunion someday. We've been to the NZAA Thailand networking dinner and are looking forward to the next one soon.

To confirm how much I love Otago – if I have a child I would take them to study at Otago!



Above: Chom and Thanat inside the Clocktower building. Photograph taken by Dr Pummy Krittaphol Bailey.