

A Computerman's Neo-Roman House Valued at 100 Million Baht but Built at 25 Million Baht

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Abstract- With impressive names such as Asian Computer Man of the Year 1981, Father of Thai Internet, and Father of Thai eLearning, some of his students, friends, and relatives commented to Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman that his house should also be impressive. So, he asked an architect to design a house on a plot of land about 3,000 square meters. This paper presents a 41-room house which Prof. Srisakdi modified most of the architect's designs to be neo-Roman and reduced the cost by selecting the lowest bid for the structure and then bought the materials himself, negotiating with each group of labors directly, improvising and supervising the construction and furnishing by himself. Finally, he successfully reduced the cost from the estimated 100 million baht to about 25 million baht.

Keywords- Computerman, Neo-Roman house, Srisakdi Charmonman

1. INTRODUCTION

Computer-Asia published in Hong Kong named Prof. Srisakdi Charmonman Asian Computer Man of the Year in 1981. Later, Bangkok Post and several periodicals called Prof. Srisakdi "Father of Thai Internet". Then, the International Biographical Centre, Cambridge, England, named him "Father of Thai E-Learning". From those impressive names, some of his students, friends, and relatives commented to him that his house should not be ordinary but should be as impressive as the titles he got.

Three construction companies proposed the price of the structure at about 30 million

baht, 20 million baht, and 10 million baht. The lowest was from a big company with a lot of manpower on the payroll but did not have enough work to do at that time. Rather than paying the manpower to do nothing, it was better to get a job at the bare minimum price. So, Prof. Srisakdi was successful in negotiating the price for the structure at about 9 million baht, partly also because some relatives of the company owner were also Prof. Srisakdi's former students.

Shown in Figure 1 is a neo-Roman view from the garage to the main door to the building on the left, with golf putting field and swimming pool on the right. The figures are in black and white to save cost of printing this Proceedings of Charm72. However, some photographs are included in color in an Appendix at the end and more color photographs may be found in www.charm.au.edu by following the list on the upper left to "Photo of Residence".



Figure 1. A view from the garage to the front door of the building with the golf putting field and the swimming pool on the right.

The house has 41 rooms including 7 bedrooms, 11 bathrooms, one exercise room, one praying room, one main reception hall

about 100 square meters under 9-meter-diameter dome, one family room, one home-theatre room, one dining room, one breakfast room, one kitchen, one pantry room, one home-office room, one meeting room, one 22 KVA diesel generator room, 11 storage rooms, and one security guard room.

Prof. Dr. Choop Karnjanaprakorn appointed Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman to be Honorary Vice President for Planning and Development of Assumption University in the year 1976. So, Prof. Srisakdi has been influenced by the Roman style of the Catholic churches and palaces in Europe as well as the modification of the architects' design to suit the preference of Rev. Bro. Dr. Prathip Martin Komolmas. Prof. Srisakdi altered most of the architect's designs to suit his own preference and called it "Neo-Roman" style or "New Roman" style.

The Roman column used has the diameter of the size 50 to 80 centimeters. The price for the three parts are about 1,000 baht for the base (the part on the floor), 1,000 baht per meter for the shaft, and 6,000 – 10,000 baht for the capital (the top part) respectively. For a Roman column 6 meters high, the price would be about 13,000 – 17,000 baht. With the labor cost of 400 baht per day, Prof. Srisakdi had all of columns homemade at about 3,000 baht each. The capital of the Roman column was also copied at the cost of about 80 baht rather than 6,500 baht of the original. A homemade capital of the Roman column may be used as a pot for real or imitation plant, and as a vase for flowers as shown in the middle of Figure 14.

There are life-size statues on both sides of the road in Figure 3. The original statue costs about 20,000 baht. Prof. Srisakdi told a bricklayer or a plasterer how to copy the statue. The first step is to use liquid molding rubber to paint the statue and wait until it dries. The second step is to cut the mold into half from top to toe. The third step is to use steel rod in a free form to reinforce the new statue. Put the two parts of the mold together. Pour in concrete. Wait until it dries and take out the mold. The plasterer said he could make 6 statues a day. He used to get 400 baht a day but would like to ask

for 600 baht a day for this special job. In addition to 100 baht labor cost per statue, there would be about 200 baht for materials. With the overall cost of about 300 baht per homemade statue comparing to 20,000 baht if bought readymade from the market, Prof. Srisakdi decided to make several dozens of the statues.

2. THE FENCE, THE GARAGE AND THE GOLF PUTTING FIELD

Figure 2 shows the fence which is divided into panels. Each panel has a Roman-style alloy pattern as the center piece, with Roman stuccowork above and below, topped with golden statues holding white electric torches. The space in front of the gate is big enough for a car to park there waiting for the door to open when going in, and waiting for the traffic to clear to enter the city road when leaving the house. A low swing steel barricade is provided to be swung close once a year, otherwise the space may be said to be given to the public.



Figure 2. The fence and the gate.



Figure 3. From the front gate to the garage.

Figure 3 shows the road from the front gate to the garage. The road is wide enough

for two cars to pass, e.g. one going in and the other going out. Life-size golden statues line both sides of the road.

The garage is big enough for 5 cars. The garage wall is lined with golden statues playing musical instruments, one with a guitar, one with a violin, one with a handheld xylophone, and one with a horn. Standing on both sides of the walk way from the garage to the kitchen and the side door to the building are two statues in bright colors. The ceiling of the garage has hanging lighting fixtures. The roof of the garage has Roman trimmings and several golden statues.



Figure 4. The golf putting field surrounded by statues, shrubs and trees.

Figure 4 shows the golf putting field with three mini-hills. The golf field construction expert told Prof. Srisakdi that it would cost about 500,000 baht. Prof. Srisakdi searched from google how to design the putting field with draining pipes and etc. So, he supervised the construction himself at the cost of about 50,000 baht.

3. THE SWIMMING POOL, THE WATERFALLS AND THE FOUNTAINS

The golf putting field is separated from the swimming pool by trees and rows of bushes as shown in Figure 4 so that the swimming pool is not easily seen from the golf putting field. Actually, the architect suggested the service of landscaping architect who proposed the price of a few million baht. Prof. Srisakdi designed and supervised the landscaping of the 3,000-square-meter area by himself at a cost of less than 500,000 baht.

The trees at the fence as shows in Figure 2 and at the golf putting field as shown in Figure 4 were purchased when they were about 1-2 meters tall at about 200 baht each and after a few years they grew to about 6-10 meters. Other trees planted are the popular trees for Thailand, such as tamarind tree whose Thai name “Makam” pronounced in a similar way like “KrengKam” which means that people would pay respect to the house owner, star gooseberry whose Thai name is “Mayom” pronounced similar to “Niyom” which means “adore”, and etc.



Figure 5. The front of the house with landscaping plot.

Figure 5 shows the front of the house, from the left is the window to the pantry, the bay window to the breakfast room, and the window to the left side of the reception hall. In addition to the statues on the side of the road, there are statues on the wall and statues on polished rock in the garden. The size of each rocks is more than 1 square meter. The quoted price was about 10,000 baht a piece but Prof. Srisakdi found a seller going out of business and bargained until he agreed to sell four pieces of the rocks for only 10,000 baht, or 2,500 baht a piece.

The flowering plants in the front were purchased when they were a few inches tall at 2-3 baht per plant. After a few months, they grew to more than 10 inches.

Figure 6 shows another view of the garden in Figure 5. There is a walkway from the garden to the other side for ease of maintenance.



Figure 6. A garden in front of the breakfast room.

Figure 7 shows a fountain in the backyard. Gravels were used instead of grass in most of the backyard in order to reduce the maintenance. The walkway also uses gravel with limestone in circular shape to walk on. Open drainage is shown on the front left of Figure 7 for rain water to flow to the canal outside the fence. Figure 8 shows another view of the backyard with golden statues on the wall and on the fence.

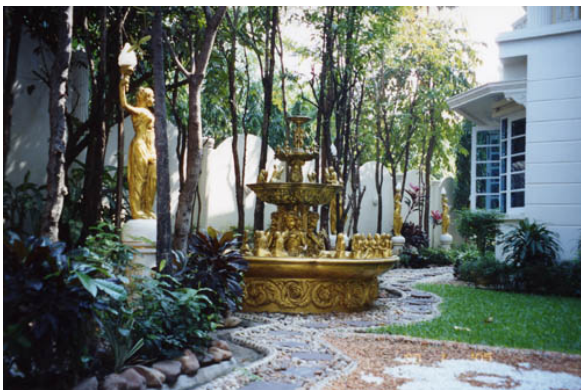


Figure 7. Fountain in the backyard.



Figure 8. Another view of the backyard showing statues on the wall and the fence.



Figure 9. The free-form swimming pool with large waterfalls.

4. THE SWIMMING POOL, THE WATERFALLS, AND THE FOUNTAINS

Figure 9 shows the free-form swimming pool. Seen in the front is a fence about 1 meter high but with rolling curve also shown in Figure 10. The fence is specially designed by Prof. Srisakdi using the shape of 0 and 1 to suggest that the owner is a Computerman. The shape of 1 is actually a Roman column. The shape of 0 is lined with roses. The builder said each Roman column would be about 1,000 baht because it has to be constructed in three parts, namely the base, the shaft, and the capital. Then the three parts have to be combined. Prof. Srisakdi told the builder to make the three parts together and reduce the cost to 100 baht. Standing on the fence are golden life-size statues holding white electric torch. The architect said that in a real Roman way, only pots of flowers should be on the fence but Prof. Srisakdi insisted on using the statues holding torch to light the area. One statue facing inside but the other facing outside so that the row of statues can be looked at from both inside and outside the pool area.

There are waterfalls with three sections and three levels. The face of the falls is covered with pattern of rose trees. Under the waterfalls, there are two full bathrooms and a room for pumps and electrical equipment controlling the pool, the waterfalls, and the fountains. The falls also have golden statues. Altogether in the area of the swimming pool, there are 50 golden statues. The contractor quoted a cost of 500 baht per square meter for laying the ceramic tiles with the pattern of whales. Prof. Srisakdi wanted to replace the whales by another pattern of flowers

and leaves. The contractor said it would cost a lot higher to design and construct the new pattern. So, Prof. Srisakdi used the computer to design the pattern he wanted. The printout was shown to the tile layer and explained that what he had to do was to use cotton yarn tying each end on each side of the pool and lay the tiles according to the illustration from the computer. Whatever the result the tile layer made, he would not have to be responsible. Prof. Srisakdi offered only 100 baht per square meter rather than 500 baht and the tile layer agreed.

Shown in Figure 10 is a two-storey high structure with 6 Roman columns and 7 golden statues on the top. The structure was designed by Prof. Srisakdi to block the view of a shophouse outside the compound to make the swimming pool look better. In the back of the structure is a storage room for tools for maintenance of the pool. The structure also provides shade for swimmers.

Figure 11 shows three fountains in a row. The central fountain is larger than the other two. Prof. Srisakdi designed and supervised construction of the fountains. He bought one statue similar to that at the fountain at Huamark campus of Assumption University at about 2,000 baht and make 8 copies at 200 baht each. Three statues hold the large tray, which in turn, hold a large vest supporting another tray, which supports the base of a lamp connected into the top of the fountain. Prof. Srisakdi bought a figure of fish spraying water and made several copies to be installed around the basin of the fountain.



Figure 10. A Roman structure two-storey high to block an ugly view outside.



Figure 11. The large water falls and the fountains.



Figure 12. Gazebo between the house and the swimming pool.

From the front left part of Figure 10, there is a partial part of a gazebo which is shown in full in Figure 11. The roof of the gazebo was made into a fenced area called “moon and star gazing area” connected to a walkway to the balcony of the master bedroom.



Figure 13. The front door to the main reception hall.

5. THE FRONT DOOR TO THE MAIN RECEPTION HALL

Figure 13 shows a view of the front door of the building. From the door, a visitor would enter the main reception hall as shown in Figure 14 with the area of over 100 square meters with 4 sets of Louis sofas for about 20 visitors. The

hall is under a dome with 9 meters diameter as shown in Figure 15. The contractor proposed the cost of 360,000 baht for the dome but Prof. Srisakdi told him that each of 16 copies of stucco on the dome could be easily constructed on the ground at about 100 baht each. The total cost should be about 50,000 baht and the contractor accepted 60,000 baht from Prof. Srisakdi. A view from the main reception hall to the second floor is shown in Figure 16. The view right above the front door is shown in Figure 17.



Figure 14. The main reception hall.



Figure 15. The main dome with a diameter of 9 meters.



Figure 16. A view from the front door to the second floor.



Figure 17. The view right above the front door.



Figure 18. The door to the home office.

6. THE HOME OFFICE AND THE MEETING ROOM

Figure 18 shows the door from the main reception hall to the home office. It should be noted that there are rose windows on both sides of the double door. When the door is open as shown in Figure 19, there is a big bay window to show the back yard.

A half of the home office is shown in Figure 20. There are two large sets of Louis desks and chairs with two coffee corners. There are also two computers with WiFi as well as a fax machine.



Figure 19. Looking to the backyard thru the home office.

Figure 21 shows the meeting room which Prof. Srisakdi designed the meeting table to be convertible to a ping pong table. Three chairs could be placed on each side of the head of the table. In total, the room could accommodate 20 participants. The two heads of the table could be moved to the two ends of the room and the table would become a ping pong table.



Figure 20. A view of half of the home office.



Figure 21. The meeting table convertible to a ping pong table.

7. THE BREAKFAST ROOM AND THE DINING ROOM

Figure 22 shows the breakfast room with a circular breakfast table and 6 Louis-style chairs. From the breakfast table, Prof. Srisakdi can watch television (not shows on the left side of picture). Thru the large bay window, Prof. Srisakdi could see the golf

putting field, the three fountains and a part of the swimming pool.



Figure 22. The Breakfast Room.

Figure 23 shows the Louis-style dining table with 12 chairs. The legs of the table and chairs are shown in Figure 24, and the ceiling in Figure 25.



Figure 23. The dining table and the highly decorated wall.



Figure 24. The legs of the dining table and chairs.



Figure 25. The ceiling of the dining room.



Figure 26. The pantry room.

8. THE HOME-OFFICE ROOM AND THE MEETING ROOM

The Thai style kitchen of about 25 square meters is in the back of the garage. It has a large refrigerator, a stove which can use both gas and electricity, plenty of kitchen cabinets and exhaust fan.

The pantry room is shown in Figure 26. The table in the pantry room was designed by Prof. Srisakdi with the shape of a large ping pong paddle.



Figure 27. The home theater.

9. THE HOME THEATER AND THE FAMILY ROOM

The architect said that the built-in cabinet for the television set and home-theater equipment is one of most difficult part to construct in the sense that the equipment to be purchased later may not fit into the built-in part. Prof. Srisakdi decided to use plywood attached to the wall costing only a few thousands baht. Then place the equipment on the floor or Louis-style tables. Eight reclining chairs are available.



Figure 28. Display panels in the home theater.

Figure 28 shows three panels for showing what are available to watch on television. The panel is indented into the wall with neon light inside. The advertisement can then be placed on the glass window.

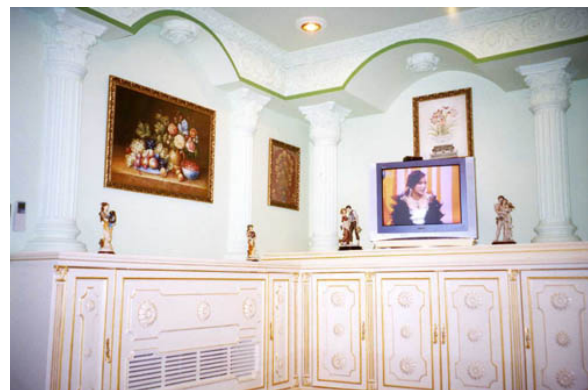


Figure 29. One corner of the family room.

Figure 29 shows a corner of the family room with a large television screen. Actually, there are more than 10 televisions in the house. Another corner of the family room with plenty of reclining sofas and chairs are shown in Figure 30.



Figure 30. Reclining sofas and reclining chairs in the family room.



Figure 33. A view on the second floor.



Figure 31. The half-circle stairs to the second floor.

10. THE MASTER BEDROOM AND MASTER BATHROOM

The stairs from the first floor to the second floor is half circle. One of the statues at the entrance to the stairs as shown in Figure 31 is the original one for making copies used all over the landscape. The top of the stair is shown in Figure 32. Shown in the wall under a 6-meters-diameter dome are photographs of HM the King, HM the Queen, HRH Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn and HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn.



Figure 32. The wall at the top of the stairs under a Roman dome.

Figure 33 shows the walkway connecting all the rooms on the second floor. The floor was covered with local granite called “Yellow Sand” at the cost of only 200 baht per square meter. It looked alright at the store but when placed on the floor it looked very ugly with stain all over. The architect recommended that the granite be removed and replaced by much more expensive one. Prof. Srisakdi decided to cover the granite with high quality epoxy paint. The architect said he had never seen any one painted the granite. The result was as beautiful as Italian marble at 10,000 baht per square meter but the painted granite cost only a few hundreds baht pre square meter.



Figure 34. The master bedroom.

Figure 34 shows the master bedroom with the size of 50 square meters. The bed is king size. The furnishing is Louis-style or Neo-Roman. The study desk and the dressing desk shown on one side of the wall in Figure 35 are also available on another side of the bed. A home theater set shown in Figure 36 is used for low-impact aerobic exercise which Prof. Srisakdi could select to dance

with any beautiful girl from any VCD he liked. He exercises at least three-time a week.



Figure 35. Dressing desk and study desk in the master bedroom.

The master bathroom is the same size as the master bedroom, i.e. about 50 square meters. Figure 37 shows his-and-her mirrors and washbasins. Figure 38 shows his-and-her toilet with a bidet, separated by a column and flower plant. A television set is available for viewing from the toilet seats.



Figure 36. Home theater set in the master bedroom.



Figure 37. His-and-her mirrors and washbasins in the master bathroom.

Figure 39 shows a large Jacuzzi about 2x1.5 meters with waterfalls and large mirrors. Prof. Srisakdi could be in the Jacuzzi while watching television.



Figure 38. His-and-her toilets in the master bathroom.



Figure 39. Large Jacuzzi with waterfall.

11. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Neo-Roman house with 41 rooms is impressive as intended. The estimated cost was 100 million baht but Prof. Srisakdi could reduce the cost to about 25 million baht by supervising the construction by himself and introducing many ways to reduce the cost such as reducing the cost of Roman column from about 13,000 baht each to about 3,000 baht, reducing the cost of the 9-meters-diameter Roman dome from 360,000 baht to 60,000 baht, reducing the cost of the 6-meters-diameter Roman dome from 240,000 baht to 40,000 baht, reducing the cost of the golf putting field from about 500,000 baht to about 50,000 baht, reducing the cost of the life-size statue from about 20,000 baht to about 300 baht, and etc. The Roman and Louis style has been modified to suit Prof. Srisakdi's preference and so called "Neo Roman" or "New Roman".