

SO SETHAPUTRA

1903 - 1970

A mining graduate from England
who found his vocation in prison





Previous page: Sor's identification tag, prisoner number 1000. There was no Thai language stamping machine in the camp.

Above: Sor was always well groomed on Tarutao during his prison sentence from 1939 to 1943.

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How to Write a Dictionary in Prison

The prows of two small steamers thrust through the dark rippling waters of the Talo Udang Bay and laid anchor three hundred metres off shore. Their aim was out to the island. It was much too low for the *Adang* and the *Rawi* – converted Japanese fishing boats – to see. The prisoners – waded ashore in complete darkness.

Prisoner number 26, thin, weary, yet in good spirits, was the last to disembark. As he moved slowly through the waist-deep water, a heavy cardboard box precariously balanced on his head, his main concern was the safety of its contents: 22 tins of State Express cigarettes, one tattered 1924 edition of the Concise Oxford Dictionary (minus cover), several English language classics, sixty exercise books, 5 pens and 3 notebooks, but not a single word of English. Precious of all, a partially completed manuscript in longhand.

Today, the lonely, untouched island of Tarutao is the headquarter of the island's forest. Hills rise seven hundred metres above the intense blue Andaman Sea on the west, while the craggy limestone cliffs on the eastern side of the island plunge dramatically into the ocean. Numerous streams

and waterfalls cut through the mountainous interior. A thick canopy of rainforest up to forty metres high provides a secure retreat for wildlife and a floating market on the island's lagoon. In the lush undergrowth, the rarest of plants and animals, including sponges, thrive undisturbed. The coral reefs of the marine park are some of the world's most spectacular. For holidaymakers, it is paradise.

In 1939, however, for the newly arrived political prisoners who were transferred there from Bangkok, Tarutao was grim and forbidding. They spent the night shivering on the beach, huddled uncomfortably together in an open makeshift lean-to, with just a flimsy palm thatch roof to protect them from the wind and rain. Behind them, the jungle and its dark menacing forest were foreboding. The piercing screams of the wild boars and the eerie shrills of the macaws put fear into their hearts. The cold, wet monsoon wind was slapping noisily against the palm thatch, keeping them awake for most of the night. By the time it was dawn, they were told to rise and march with their gear to the prison, their eyes meeting the eastern sky with shafts of pink and gold.

The prison camp at Talo Udang Bay, located at the southern end of the island, had been established as a penal colony for political prisoners in 1937. There was an existing prison camp for hardened criminals and murderers on the east coast at Talo Wao Bay. These two prison camps were separated by a 12-kilometre track built by the common prisoners. The two classes of prisoners were kept apart, although some of the less dangerous inmates were often called upon to work for the political prisoners.

Tarutao had been chosen for its distance from Bangkok – over 1,000 kilometres – and for its treacherous shark-infested waters. The southwest monsoon that battered the western shore from May to October and the northeast monsoon that hit the eastern side from November to April made the island a very difficult and dangerous. Escape was not an option.

So Sveshthaputra (pronounced Sor Sethabud and now written Sethaputra) – Prisoner 26 – had no intention of escaping, although escape had become the main topic of discussion for the political prisoners. Sor had his own gentle plan to escape.

Sor's life, like those of his fellow political prisoners, had been drastically altered by the events of a decade earlier, on 24 June, 1932, when a group of French and German - educated officers and civil servants positioned a few tanks in front of Dusit Palace and staged a successful coup d'état against King Rama VII, demanding a constitutional monarchy.

King Prachathipok had, in his own words, long "considered making this change" himself and was already preparing to give up absolute power "for the good of his people." As it transpired, the military forced the king to set up a true democratic constitutional monarchy. Much of the literary and academic intelligentsia of the time, including Sor, had long suspected that many coup leaders were not concerned with the "good of the people."

Back in 1923, Sor, a mining engineering student in England, had learned that the students in France were plotting against the monarchy and even then he had his reservations. He commented in a letter home: "I am afraid that they are not interested in democratic change." He later wrote when he returned to Siam that parliamentary democracy cannot be instituted by military rule; it is a gradual process.

When Sor returned to Siam in 1926, he did not pursue a career in mining. He was a gifted writer and was more interested in journalism. He worked at the Daily Siam political correspondent. In 1928 he was recognised by His Majesty the King

1 To avoid confusion, So's name will be spelt as it is pronounced - "Sor" - in this chapter.

for his communication and language skills and was appointed Royal Spokesman and a yeomanly adviser. He was given the royally-bestowed title of Luang Mahasit Worn, the "man of great eloquence."

Soon he became a leading adviser on current diplomatic affairs, foreign trends and local person and the main interpreter of the official secretariat of the Royal Household. Sor also shared the same ideals as His Majesty, that a constitutional monarchy supported by a true democratic parliamentary system would soon prevail in Siam. After the 1932 coup replaced absolute monarchy, Sor resigned his government commission and became a prominent anti-coup activist.

No matter how difficult the situation, Sor remained a firm supporter of the monarchy. He was a close friend of the King, Prince Bhoradej, popular among the royal family, and a close friend of the anti-coup loyalists. He was able to raise the victorious royal standard in the provinces of the north and northeast and expected loyal support from the troops in Bangkok.

On the morning of 11 October, 1933, Prince Bhoradej woke up early. In the predawn chill at his Saraburi command post, he prepared for the battle of his life. After reviewing the loyal battalions from the north and the army, he decided to lead them to Bangkok. He was able to raise the victorious royal standard in the provinces of the north and northeast and expected loyal support from the troops in Bangkok.

The objective, and the ultimatum, was simple but naïve: to obtain a more democratic government. The much hoped-for support from the Bangkok garrisons never came. On the evening of 13 October a young and up-and-coming colonel, Plaek Pibulsonggram, opened a heavy artillery attack on the rebels' positions, and two weeks later the rebellion was crushed.

On 4 November, 1933, Sor was arrested with 300 other supporters. He had acted as the rebel's political spokesman. Three months later he was found guilty for ostensibly publishing and distributing "Save the Country" pro-rebellion pamphlets, although the authorities claimed that he had been a member of the rebel army. These facts were simply a legal pretext and Bovoradej's rebellion an official excuse. He was already deemed guilty for his political commentaries and sentenced to life imprisonment for sedition.

Surrounded by a high concrete wall and topped by an electrified razor wire, Ban Kwang was, in some respects, a fortress sentence, was impregnable. Originally a high-security prison built in 1931 for common criminals, after the 1932 coup, Ward Six was rebuilt and redesigned for political prisoners. Each chamber was widened to 20 square feet to allow prisoners to sit on the floor and connect all 50 chambers, to enable the guards easy access.

Many of the political prisoners were members of the educated class, and boasted university degrees from Europe and America. Thirty-three of them decided that the best and only way to use their time in prison productively would be to teach and share their knowledge and learning with other less fortunate inmates. Some even opted to learn new skills. For example, His Highness Prince Sithiporn Kridakorn, brother of Prince Bovoradej, and *eminence grise* of this elite group, was a professional agronomist and a gentleman farmer. His experimental Bang Berd plantation south of Hua Hin had yielded a variety of exciting new produce, including larger eggplants, cayenne, and other vegetables. He decided to conduct classes in agriculture and husbandry. Many young hopeful inmates from the countryside became devoted students. Phraya Saraphai Phipat, a naval captain, chose to learn Mandarin from a Chinese prisoner suspected of being a communist. Another senior prisoner gave Japanese lessons.

Sor volunteered to give English-language reading and writing classes in his small cell. One of his ex-students recalls Cell 42 being transformed into an English language classroom: "Professor Sor Sethaputra, small and frail, with huge eyeglasses that framed his face, sat cross-legged, propped up by a folded mattress against the wall, his students forming a half circle around him." To augment his students' English reading experience, Sor ordered non-political books and magazines from the American and British consulates in the Neilson Hays Library in Bangkok. Ward Six soon became a small university campus, with daily book readings and classes.

His ability to read in English, or for that matter Latin, French, Spanish or Italian, having learned the Roman alphabet from a very early age at school. But there, their skills ended. They understood very little of what they read. Sor was so not able to read in English. He had to use a dictionary. The first time he read in English, he was so confused that he had to use a dictionary.

At 30, Sor was still in his prime. Realising that he could very well be inside for the rest of his life, he made the momentous decision to embark on what he called his "Life's Work." This immense undertaking kept him focused for the next eleven years and provided him with both intellectual stimulus and a regular income.

For the first time, Sor was able to read in English. He was so not able to read in English. He had to use a dictionary. The first time he read in English, he was so confused that he had to use a dictionary. He thought about all the obstacles that had to be overcome to read in English. He thought about all the obstacles that had to be overcome to read in English. He thought about all the obstacles that had to be overcome to read in English.

All writing by political prisoners intended for outside readership – other than letters – was strictly forbidden at Bang Kwang. The fundamental problem of writing in secret, often at night, hid it from the prison authorities. The problem of writing in secret, often at night, hid it from the prison authorities. The problem of writing in secret, often at night, hid it from the prison authorities.

easily deceived the guards. Every nook and cranny under the poorly constructed ceiling of Ward Six became perfect hiding places. Even the most painstaking praepharator of a manuscript was furtively integrated into Sor's English writing class. The delivery of writing paper and instruments into prison was simply a matter of negotiation with the guards.

Thien got his first breakthrough to be over come smuggling the completed manuscripts past the guards of Ward Six and the high security checkpoint at the prison gates. The solution came later.

The easy part of writing a dictionary in prison for Sor was its actual execution. Here, Sor was in his element. What better way to occupy his fertile mind than to fully explore his extensive knowledge of the arts and sciences and to use his creative talent to write good English and Thai prose? Sor ingeniously designed and built a functional writing desk and comfortable chair from packing crates. Never short of assistants to do the meticulous physical transcribing, copying and calligraphic work, he instituted a strict daily routine for himself and his team. Up at six, start work at seven-thirty until lunch break at eleven-thirty, back to work at two-thirty until dark. He would often get up in the middle of the night to write a word or phrase that had been bothering him all day.

Hirsgani zaki and his fellow prisoners began to work on the dictionary in Ward Six. A young member of his team recalls those magical moments: "Sor was the brain and we were the labour. He would sit there, cross-legged, and suddenly burst out with a word or phrase; and we would immediately transcribe it onto paper."

When he reached the letter "G", Sor decided the time was right to market his grand dictionary project. He secretly got in touch with Phraya Nibhon Pojanart, one of his old connections, owner of Krungdheub, Bangkok's leading bookstore.

Sor and Phraya Nibhon came up with a brilliant marketing approach and a public sale of the dictionary was held.

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published in weekly instalments over a period of two years and when the collection was complete, subscribers could bind them together into two volumes, a total of 2,400 pages. Sor was to be paid by instalment, providing him with much needed income.

The first instalment was published in 1927. Sor was to write the dictionary between 1927 and 1932, long before he went to prison.

The first instalments of *The New Model English - Dictionary* were an immediate success. It was like no other dictionary so far published in Siam. Sor wanted his dictionary to reach out to his readers. Each English word was explained by a simple sentence that involved his own life experiences, his education in England and events in Siam past and present. Here are some examples:

abdicate	His Majesty abdicated
absent	Freedom of the press is absent
accuse	They were accused of treason
alma mater	Suan Khularb was his alma mater

As a qualified linguist in Siam, Sor was a sharp mind, in her lifetime she had acquired a wide knowledge of the English language. In the 19th century she was one of the few Siamese women at the turn of the last century who could read and write. It was from his mother that he developed a passion for literature, books and writing. Sor was blessed with his mother's support and encouragement; she devoted her entire life to him after his father died.

mother	Motherly love can never be destroyed
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It was his mother Gaysorn who smuggled his manuscripts out

of prisoners, throughout the night, to insert and hide the materials. In order not to arouse suspicion by using the flask once too often, a false bottomed basket was also introduced. Sor must have chuckled to himself when he wrote this entry:

false The documents were concealed under the false bottom of the box.

Gaysorn was to smuggle almost 2,000 pages out of Ward Six.

After 1937, Sor and his co-inmates were lucky to have Major General Chlor Srisarakorn as their liberal-minded prison warden. He built a small garden for prisoners to work and had a physical exercise. More importantly, he allowed political prisoners out one day a week. Some went to the cinema, others visited friends, but most went home. Sor himself was able to date a young girl working with her sister who owned a grocery store opposite the prison. Sor's friend, a retired surgeon, told this writer it wasn't until 5 years later that he met Sor at Bang Kwang by 6 p.m., they were treated humanely and respectfully.

More personal freedom had made life slightly better, though conditions inside were becoming much worse. The guards had been instructed by the paranoid government to make more thorough searches, not just at the prison gates checkpoint, but also inside the cells. Smuggling Sor's material out of prison had become more difficult. Before being allowed out of Bang Kwan.

These measures were taken, in part, because the political prisoners of Ward Six were increasingly becoming a liability to the state. Their proximity to Bangkok and their political activity in the prison had made them a threat together in prison than they ever were before they went

inside. When the prison authority found a radio in Sor's cell, he was falsely accused of communicating with Bovoradej, the rebel prince, who was miles away in exile, in Vietnam. Now that they had more personal freedom to come and go, many were accused of subversive activities and the government decided the only way to exercise full control would be to send them as far away from Bangkok as possible. The Department of Corrections conducted a feasibility study of the most inaccessible islands in Siam. In May 1937 Tarutao was selected. It took a further two years for the Department to get Tarutao ready for the prisoners' transfer. By early September 1939 when they started their journey south to Tarutao, Sor had been incarcerated at Bang Kwang for nearly six years. The dictionary was now up to the letter "T".

Sor was never one for big breakfasts. A cup of tea and the obligatory rice gruel were sufficient for him, but the rice gruel and the meat were sickening. The rice gruel was gritty, hardly warm enough to fuel their weak, shivering bodies after a cold night on the beach. The accompanying salted meat was putrid and the preserved vegetables were inedible.

Right from day one the prisoners split into two distinct groups: those who wanted to escape to Langkawi island five kilometres south across the sea in Malaya, and those who were too old or too frightened, or not prepared to take any further risks.

Sor had been part of an original escape committee formed at Bang Kwang, which also included two of his former colleagues at the Daily Express, Loo Kitiwat, the editor, and Naval Captain Phraya Saraphai, a contributor. They invited many of their close friends and family to join the cause. Sor also persuaded his friend, Prince Sithiporn, a man he respected highly, was also asked to join, but asserted that at 60 he was too old and did not want to be a burden to the group. After much soul-searching, Sor also decided

not to join the escape group, even though he was one of the early planners.

On the morning of the escape, Sor and his four companions decided to make their escape to Langkawi by boat, led by Captain Phraya Saraphai. The other four were Louis Kiriwat, Sor's old colleague, Colonel Phraya Suraphan, Chalam Liamphetchrat, a lawyer who was also a keen astrologer and selected the auspicious date for their escape, and Kuhn² Asaniratakarn, a railway engineer. It was a sad moment for Sor when they made their farewells on the beach. They had to work together to get the boat off the shore.

Why did Sor decide to stay on? He later admitted that he suffered from a conflict of interest. His mother, Gayorn, who had suggested the idea was from his mother, Gayorn, who implored him with two simple words, "Don't go". She had communicated to him from Satun on the mainland where she was staying in order to be near Sor. Gayorn was a practical woman and she was concerned for her son's safety. She also realised that a regular income from the dictionary was the most important priority. After all, Sor was the only breadwinner in the family. He was supporting both his younger brother and sister at university.

Sor also chose to stay in order to complete the unfinished dictionary. He felt a moral obligation to his publisher and subscribers to finish the work. So he said to himself, "I will not let the attention of the authorities, Phraya Nibhon's printing press would certainly be shut down. After all, how could the government tolerate a book written by a political fugitive and allow it to be published, even if it was just a dictionary? Sor had also received royalties amounting to several thousand baht, thanks to his loyal subscribers. He could never let them down. Sor's friend and mentor Prince Sithiporn fully supported Sor's decision to stay on. He told Sor that the dictionary would be his gift to future generations.

2 A minor royally granted title, not to be confused with "Khun", Mr.

Those who had made the decision to remain on the island responded with a conscious effort to rebuild their lives. Over the next few weeks they set about improving their living conditions by fr but i l dne nly v i qn g r t d e r c æ k n t t c h a e d c l s e d a n t r i n e s . Fortunately, fresh water was freely available from the many streams on the island. Prince Sithiporn put his heart and soul into the land, making the earth more arable and eventually produced enough vegetables and fruit to keep everyone healthy. The prince became the spiritual leader of the former inmates of Ward Six and continually boosted their morale. He treated Sor like a son and uplifted his spirits, which were now at a low point after the departure of his friends for Langkawi.

It was difficult to work on his dictionary under these trying conditions. Sor was missing his privileged status at Bang Kwang and pining for Sompong, his newly wedded wife. Since he was not a religious person and he did not believe in God, he did not seek holy guidance in prayer or spiritual meditation like many other prisoners. Instead, Sor took solace in his work, and through sheer determination and strength of character, Sor was soon able to return to his "Life's Work." He hired the common prisoners to build a separate hut for his workplace and designed a new desk. He started to take special care of his personal hygiene and appearance. He never allowed himself to become demoralised. He was always well-groomed and he made sure that even his threadbare clothes – white shirt and Chinese silk trousers – remained impeccable and well-laundered. His hair was always combed and he got one of the common prisoners to give him regular haircuts. He always made sure he felt good about himself.

By June 1940, Sor reached the letter "Z". The giant library edition dictionary was finished at last. It ran to 4,000 pages, 1,600 more than was originally conceived. He could start work right away o r a d e s k z d e c t i o n n a r l y e r r s i f o o r m i , g s t h o s t l u d e n t s . Now better organised and more mentally alert, he hired some of

his fellow inmates to transcribe his notes onto school exercise pads, paying them 25 satangs for each completed book.

In time, Sor came to prefer life on Tarutao to Bang Kwang. The island was beautiful, the air was fresh and clean, and the surrounding waters were a peaceful haven. Apart from the constant threat of malaria and other tropical diseases, Sor and his fellow prisoners led a relatively healthy life.

Morale also improved. Everyone chipped in to make prison life as pleasant as possible. Prince Sithiporn, with the help of a group of common prisoners, produced enough vegetables and fruit for the island's consumption, and a surplus was marketed at Satun on the mainland. He also baked bread and cakes on an oven that was sent from the mainland by his wife.

Not to be outdone, Sor started to manufacture soap, essential for someone as particular about personal hygiene as he was. He soon ran out of State Express cigarettes and started experimenting with different blends. Since he was not a gourmet, he enjoyed cooking and he prepared shark fin soup for his friends. He liked mushrooms and created many new recipes. Other inmates joined in the communal spirit and contributed their individual skills, like weaving and basketry. Soon the prison's production earned an income and a small bank was opened. Talo Udaeng was a successful businessman.

The general health of the inmates improved, and the prison's population grew. From the mainland in Satun, Sor's mother managed to visit him once a month. She had only five visits.

Visits from friends and family were strictly forbidden, a major aggravation for the inmates, making life on this beautiful island less pleasant. Throughout the period of Sor's imprisonment at Tarutao, his stoic mother patiently remained at Satun on the mainland, so near, yet so very far. Many relatives on the mainland were in dire economic straits and there were cases where prisoners had allowed their wives

to find the whole world. He was one of the very few inmates who received a regular income.

In 1942, Siam declared war against the Allies and the war in the Pacific. Bangkok was bombed by the British and the Hua Lampong railway station area was badly hit. Martial law was declared and the prisons came under stricter supervision. Sor's publisher, Phraya Nibhon, was killed during an air raid and Sor's completed portable edition did not get published. Sor kept the unpublished manuscript for another 6 years, carrying it with him wherever he went. It was not published until well after the war, in 1949.

Although they were shut out from the outside world, the prisoners at the Talo Udang camp were fully aware that there was a war going on. They learned from the prison guards that Siam had been invaded and occupied by the Japanese and that Siam had put up a heroic stand against the invaders in the southern peninsula where many soldiers' lives were lost on 8 and 9 December, 1941.³ Being as close to the sea as the Andaman Sea, they knew instinctively that it was not the sound of thunder, as the rains never came. Now, there were continuous Japanese sea and air patrols over the thousands of islands that made up the archipelago of the Andaman Sea.

By 1943, the tide of the war was beginning to turn and, aware that the Allies would soon be in control of the Andaman Sea, the government decided to move the political prisoners once again, across the peninsula to Koh Tao, a tiny, uninhabited island, save for a small population of hawksbill turtles, in the Gulf of Siam.

3 See Chapter 5

There were only 55 political prisoners left on Tarutao. The anti-Japanese Free Thai resistance was gaining grass-roots acceptance among the populace and the government was afraid that these highly educated and high-ranking prisoners from Ward Six would join the resistance.

Sor spent the next fifteen months, from April 1943 to July 1944 on Koh Tao Island. Like Tarutao, Koh Tao is also a paradise for holidaymakers, with long stretches of white sandy beach fringed by miles and miles of coconut palm trees, surrounded by clear waters and beautiful coral reefs. Unlike Tarutao though, Koh Tao was much smaller and less fertile, with little freshwater resources. The prison compound had a perimeter fence. A watchtower with a machine gun emplacement was positioned on top of a hill overlooking the compound, allowing the prison guards to keep constant surveillance. Escape was not a possibility.

The newly arrived prisoners would soon discover that Koh Tao was hell on earth. The Department of Corrections had changed their liberal policy and political prisoners under 60 were forced to work like slaves. They were no longer allowed to wander around freely and at night they were locked up.

There was an acute shortage of essential medicines and American submarine patrols in the gulf curtailed regular delivery of basic foods and supplies. Malnutrition became a major problem and there were more malarial cases than on Tarutao. A combination of exhaustive work, sunstroke, severe hunger and malaria killed six prisoners a month. Two of them died of starvation.

These harsh conditions were not conducive for Sor to continue his work. He was planning to write the life story of King Rama V, but the lack of research materials, the rough conditions in the prison camp, and the ill health of Sor made it impossible for him to do so. He was down to 30 kilos and so weak that his friends stood in for him to do the strenuous task of chopping logs for

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To make up for the lack of intellectual activity, Sor started new exper ienthatrsbpla nhtosp,i togn dasu bst ifotmut æh ne ed qudi ni Bo è J bonrga pæd shatterstone plants together producè d tiegruth dith cre apse sp i ram dur b n a t i o n and also reduced the fever, but it was no cure for malaria. Sor became chite s tfo m e r b l s a v e s w e a n s d f o r j u s a b o u e v e r y t h i n g that could be converted to food and medicines. Diced and sun-dried camphor leaves, he discovered, was a poor substitute for tobacco.

Like many thin people, Sor was not one to suffer from acute pangs of hunger. But his hungrier friends ended up eating boiled buffalidopy th om o n i t i o z r a r g e s k a n s d f o r s e a f o o d enthusiasts, the occasional mudskipper. The most sought-after del i w a s y r n e d a t r t i f o i f a s made by combining red rice grains and borapet leaves.

Accused of participating in a second royal rebellion that failed in 1939, two new prisoners, M.R. Nimit Mongkhon Nawarat and Dr. Chote Kumphan, arrived at Koh Tao from Bang Kwang in late 1943. Th e v e r h o r r i b l y w h a t t h e f o u n t h e s a w p r i s o n e r s y that when they sat down, their kneecaps and elbows protruded from their emaciated bodies. Their bulging eyes popped out from their skeletal sockets. At night they shivered uncontrollably under thread-bare blankets. Koh Tao was not a prison, but a concentration camp.

Dr. Chote was moved to say in his memoirs: "If we were animals we would all have died. Being human made us more resistant and hopeful."

An amnesty for all political prisoners was declared after a change of government in September 1944. By 20 October, the prisoners were put

4 A type of cactus.

on the Bangkok-bound train at Surat station. The news of their release had been broadcast, and overnight the political prisoners became national heroes. Throughout their journey, people came out to greet them at each stop, bringing them food and clothes, and fêted them with garlands.

Sor discovered two things after his long absence. First, that the Siamese hadn't changed at all. They were the same gentle and kind-hearted people that he loved before he went to prison eleven years earlier.

He also discovered that the Thai spelling of his family name had been simplified from "Sveshthaputra" to "Sethaputra" by the Pibul government, who unsuccessfully tried to modernise the Thai alphabet. Sor decided that he would adopt the new, simpler spelling of his name, in keeping with his modest style.

He wanted people to associate him with simplicity and to remember him as a common man, one who loved his fellow human beings, and he did not want to be confused with the wealthier branch of the family that had reverted back to the original spelling. He often boasted about being the "poor relative."

When Sor arrived at Bangkok Noi station, he was greeted by his old friend Matsuwat, who had been appointed directorship at the Sri Krung newspaper and publishing company.

Also at the station, standing out among the throng of friends and well-wishers, despite her petite stature, was a thinner, older but happier Gaysorn, Sor's mother. He broke down and cried.

After ten years, eleven months and twenty days in prison, Sor was exhausted. He took time off to move into his new house and catch up with Sompong, his wife, and their little boy Chaiya, who he had to see for five years. He joined Chotaforn, his inmate, on a rehabilitation program to get back his health. He rested and then started thinking about his next dictionary project.

Production of the manuscript for the library edition of the "New Model English-Siamese Dictionary," from "A" to "T" took

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all most of the year. But a Bangkok printer said he would not accept the manuscript unless it was completed in less than a year. The portable version took him another year.

The two-volume 4000-page New Model English-Siamese Dictionary was a new kind of dictionary. Previous works were compiled by American missionaries for foreigners wanting to learn Thai. So's "New Model" dictionary was written for Thais wanting to learn English. In the introduction, he wrote that it was to be a "dynamic passport to the English language for native Thai speakers" to help them to understand the character of English." The New Model Dictionary became the best selling English-Thai dictionary in the last century, including library, desk, school and pocket versions.

In the "L" section of the New Model Dictionary, this is what he wrote to illustrate "labour":

"I did it as a labour of love."