Narit Paul Jivasantikarn ’71 of Lampang, Thailand, graduated from Texas A&M with a bachelor’s degree in industrial engineering. He came to Aggieland for an education, but said he left with much more. “It’s my passion, the Spirit of Aggieland,” Jivasantikarn said. “I was proud to be a student at Texas A&M.”

Armed with undeniable Aggie Spirit, Jivasantikarn returned to Thailand after graduation to build the first private institution for vocational education in his hometown of Lampang Province. Since then, Lamp Tech College has educated thousands of Thai students, changing their lives and the country forever.

To honor Jivasantikarn’s joint dedication to educational excellence and Texas A&M University, he was recognized as the university’s 2008 Outstanding International Alumnus at a College Station ceremony Feb. 27.

Jivasantikarn’s story is extraordinary. Supported by his mother and father, and encouraged by a Peace Corps volunteer, Jivasantikarn left Thailand and enrolled in a junior college in East Texas. While accompanying fellow students on a tour of Texas A&M, he said, it didn’t take long to decide that College Station was where he belonged, and he transferred.

“I was a really gung-ho Aggie,” he said. “I went to every football game in 1967. I enjoyed it. Even when we lost a game, we stood tall.”

He said memories of singing the War Hymn and The Spirit of Aggieland still gives him strength in tough situations. “It made me successful,” he said.

Before launching Lamp Tech College 26 years ago, Jivasantikarn spent about 10 years in the Thai business industry working for major corporations and building a construction business. He said he noticed something during that time: Not everyone was getting a chance at an education in his hometown.

At that time, the government was the only avenue for higher education for technical employment, Jivasantikarn said. The number of students who wanted an education outnumbered the number of seats available. Jivasantikarn thought he could make a difference.

“So I went to the bank,” Jivasantikarn said. Using borrowed money, land donated by his family and Aggie tenacity, he built his the school from the ground up. Lamp Tech College now offers full curriculum in 14 major fields, including electronics, mechanics, accounting, architecture and marketing, gaining a national reputation.

Enrollment jumped from 400 the first year to 4,000 today.

In 2000 and 2004, Lamp Tech earned the prestigious King’s Award, a recognition given to institutions that achieve and maintain the highest standards in vocational education.

An accomplished artist, Jivasantikarn designed one of the buildings himself, and as a devoted Aggie, he made his school colors maroon and white.

“I have maroon and white everywhere in my school—buildings, flags, frames, offices. Even my office is maroon and white,” he said.

Texas A&M President Dr. Elsa Murano said Jivasantikarn is a wonderful example of the impact Texas A&M has around the world.

“His achievements embody the core values of Texas A&M that are so important to the Aggie family,” she said. “We appreciate all that he has done for his country and for the great example he sets for students and former students.”

To hear Jivasantikarn tell the chain of events, he’s just a regular Aggie. As an Endowed Century Club member, his work within The Association of Former Students improves Texas A&M University. Back home, Jivasantikarn’s hard work, passion and enthusiasm creates a new future for the people of Lampang Province, Thailand.