

## APRIL 2013

### News and Updates

#### February 2013 Newsletter

This issue, the 23rd, was sent out by postal mail late February to all member and friends for whom we have addresses. The entire issue will be posted in digital form in the Newsletters section of our website. The issue carried a loose form, a survey to find out where you wish to do our 10th biannual reunion in the summer of 2014. Please fill it out and return as soon as possible. The survey lists three venues -- on a cruise ship to Mexico or a hotel in either Las Vegas, Nevada or San Francisco, California. We need your preferences as early as possible. If we decide on a cruise, the earlier we book, the better our opportunities to obtain our accommodations of choice.

#### Happy Lao New Year To All !

Sokdee Pee Mai Lao ! Our colleagues at Mekong Circle Philippines reported to us that on April 13, 2013 the Lao Ambassador to the Philippines, Madame Malayvieng Sakonhnhom, chose to welcome with a baci ceremony (and some Lao cuisine) the Lao New Year in their embassy office in Manila. Let's do away with diplomatic protocol, she was said to remark, meaning, it's more fun this way than in a formal reception in some hotel suite with a clutch of diplomatic people. In fact, those in attendance were just her and her staff together with Mekong Circle members, among them Jun & Bing Belicena, Cecile and Manding Datu, Toti and Letty de la Paz, Jovit and Ben Revilla, Sonia Ballo, Edna and Souphanh Savady, Eve Guevara, Johnny and Leny Asuncion, Dom and Jeanne Menguito, Mila Cuevas, Jun and Katly Lagleva. It was also the occasion to mark the 75th birthday (actually March 15) of Jun Belicena, who happens to be the current president of our Philippine affiliate. Also joining the festivity were some 10 Lao students from the University of the Philippines' College of Agriculture. The three-day Lao New Year began April 13.

#### Mekong Circle Member Attends Lao Conference

Maria Domingo-Kirk presented a paper at the 4th International Conference (April 19-21, 2013) on Lao Studies at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, Wisconsin, USA. Her topic on Theravada Buddhism was among more than 150 papers presented by scholars from around the world. Menchu (who is based in Berkeley, California) also attended the 2007 second conference in Tempe, Arizona. At the first conference in 2005 in Illinois, three Mekong Circle members presented papers on our work in Laos.

#### Third Tribal Schools Shipment

A box of books, school supplies and clothing was shipped to Mindanao, the Philippines March 29 to arrive there in time for the June 2013 opening of classes. This is the third batch of books we have delivered since we adopted as our educational project these two schools near Sta. Maria, in the province of Davao del Sur, altogether about 560 books in all. There are some 200 pupils learning in bamboo thatch classrooms, so remote that the government could not reach out to them. Hence a Catholic diocese

based in Davao City, Home For The Clergy, is taking over, with the help of donations, the task of educating the children (and their elders). The kids love the basketball and soccer balls that come with the pencils, pens and the books. In addition, Mekong Circle has been sending cash donations from its members. Many thanks to all. Keep those checks (payable to Mekong Circle) going to Vincent "Bik" Marquez, our Treasurer, at 1200 Bayhill Drive, Suite 119, San Bruno, California 94066. Tel. 650 598 3522. All donations are Federal income tax-deductible. Photos on the schools are in the February 2013 issue of our Newsletter.