

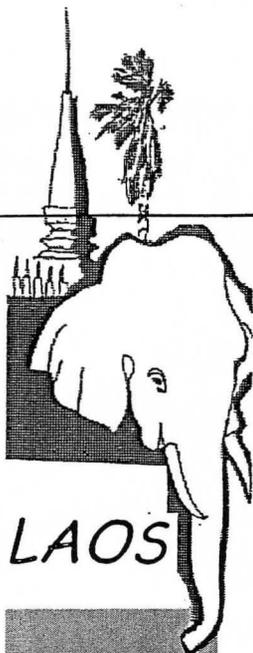
MEKONG

CIRCLE INTERNATIONAL

FEBRUARY 2006

145-60 Helma Avenue, Ohio 45013 USA

www.mekongcircle.org



LAOS

Our
2006
Reunion
will be
in
Florida
Aug. 11
to
Aug. 14.

Details
inside
and more
to
come.

ANNIVERSARIES & TEXAS MIGRATIONS

This 12th issue of our Newsletter comes to you compliments of our Texas chapter which is financing its production and mailing costs. Our Texas chapter is in one of eight regions – Southwest USA -- that comprises our Association. (See our March 2005 issue which breaks down the 487 names in our 2004 directory). The region has 23 members -- 21 from Texas, 1 from Oklahoma and 1 from New Mexico. It is neither the smallest (Australia has 9) nor the largest of our chapters (West USA which includes California's 117 members has 129 total). Texas' membership core resides in Houston. They represent OB, USAID, Continental Air Services. And how they got to band together there is illustrative of Mekong's migration patterns. One or two pioneers settle in one place. Then the call for companionship sounds across the land. Among the first to set roots in Houston were **Melody and Pete Barsales**. **Vivian and Rene Dimaunahan** followed from Chicago in the 1970s. Within a year fellow Chicagoans arrived – **Cely and Dickie Labao**, **Mario and Auring Dulyunan**, **Lucy and Lonie Landrito**, **Eula and Ernie Altamirano**. Other early emigrants included **Pedring Encarnacion**, **Myrla and Romy Agbayani**. These Houston residents reminisce during Christmas and Thanksgiving parties. **Dickie** (did you know his real first name is Isidro?) represents the chapter in our Mekong Board of Directors. Don't call him Sid).



Several recent anniversaries are worth noting because we lived through the events that mark their passage. The Lao government celebrated 30 years of independence on December 2, 2005, the day of its takeover of the Vientiane government in 1975. That was also the year when we all left Laos. Critics of the Communist government say there is not much to celebrate there. When we visited in 2002, we saw indications that although the government still has a lot to cover in order to get to where they want, the long road to recovery after almost 20 years of war has been laid. (see more comments inside). In the Philippines, the 20th anniversary of the People Power EDSA revolution of February 25, 1986 is being remembered. Lin Neuman, writing in the China Standard (of Hong Kong) questions, after two decades, "why so little has come of that historic flashpoint. It can be difficult now, with the Philippines mired in political decay and economic stagnation, to remember that the Philippines was an immensely hopeful event" that day. "It is hard to recall the hope sometimes because the Philippines is such a mess...It seems weary of itself and its best minds and strongest backs look abroad for a future." In another anniversary next month, we mark the founding 30 years ago of our Mekong Circle on March 20, 1976. Let us celebrate the occasion by migrating together, at least for four days, aboard a cruise ship to the Bahamas for our 6th reunion in order to rejoice, to remember and to reflect.



An update on our August 2006 reunion is inside. More members have registered. Ground transportation details are now available. A new website launched by the government of the Bahamas has extensive information on the islands we are visiting as well as visa requirements.



PARTYING IN 2006 & TALKING ABOUT 2008

Mekong Circle Philippines gathered its Air America, ECCOIL, OB and USAID members January 8, 2006 at the residence of Ben and Jovit Revilla in Los Banos, Laguna (above). The talk of the moment: the chapter's bid to host the 2008 reunion. Now that it's in the open, let other chapters be informed that at our August 2006 reunion, competing bids will be entertained. Among the 46 members who attended: **Nita and Fruto Bingcang, Toti and Letty de la Paz, Wilma and Fidel Padayao, Lily and Diknoi Abad, Violy Luna, Ching and Jose Marinas, Jr., Baby and Johnny Asuncion, Eve Guevara, Mely Marquez Cuyno, Mel Granada, Frisco San Juan, Bing and Jun Belicena, Cecile and Manding Datu, Fred Reyes.** They were joined by 12 sons and daughters.

RECOVERING IN AN ANCESTRAL HOME

Fred Mendoza is in Noveleta, Cavite, after a stroke suffered November 7, 2005. Now undergoing intensive physical therapy, he can be contacted at frmendoza425@yahoo.com. He has hosted several Mekong Circle Philippine meeting- parties at his Balete Drive, Quezon City office-residence which he has vacated after remodeling his ancestral home in Cavite. After our August 2004 Chicago reunion, he went the rounds of our USA chapters, staying with **Anita and Bik Marquez** in San Francisco; **Fenny and Tony Victa** in Danvill, California; **Edith and Red del Rosario** in New Jersey; **Pet and Pete Fuentesilla** in New York. He won't admit it but we all suspected he was campaigning for the 2008 Philippine reunion.

THE LIMBO SAVER

Dr. Laling Endriga of Nile, Illinois flew to the Philippines January 7, 2006 for an extended stay there. Laling was our pediatrician at the OB Vientiane Hospital; then an attending doctor at the USAID Clinic across the street in the Silver City compound together with OB-trained Lao nurses **Phikoun Keomahathai** and **Sengkham Pannhasith**. At the hospital she says she

"carried in her white coat pocket a small bottle of holy water. I secretly baptized patients who looked like they would not make it." At a St. Croix hospital in the U.S. Virgin Islands where she transferred after Laos, she continued the secret baptisms on infants. We told her that the Vatican has recently dropped its belief of a "limbo" for the souls of unbaptized, departed infants.

THANK YOU AGAIN

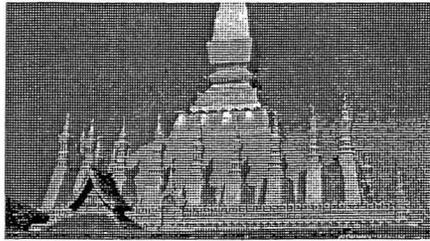
Here's the complete list of donors to our Katrina Hurricane Victims in Louisiana (our list in the December 2005 Newsletter was incomplete): **Raul and Puring de Jesus; Lina Tapiador Bautista; Mario Morales; Ian and Lucille Pagaduan; Rene and Vivian Dimaunahan; Luis and Gladys Tabano; Tony and Cora Sazon; Bik and Anita Marquez; Tony and Fenny Victa; Tony and Tacing Atienza; Bear and Brenda Joy McDaniel.** Mekong Circle collected and forwarded to American Red Cross \$745.

AVIAN FLU FIGHTER

Dr. Phengta Vongphrachanh, a 1969 graduate of the OB School of Nursing in Vientiane who went on to become a doctor was featured as Laos' "foremost epidemiologist" and one of two of the country's "top disease fighters." The recognition came from a long feature in the New York Times, January 15, 2006. Although Asia is the core of efforts against bird flu, Laos has confirmed no cases in humans and none lately in chickens, says the Times. (The government spends less than \$2 per person annually for health care. Mortality rates are high among infants and mothers giving birth).

SEEING EYES AND HELPING HANDS

A few days after our August 2004 Chicago reunion which she attended, former OB Lao nurse **Rabieb Vilayhong Roy** was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Then her eyesight faded ("I can only see shadows"). Worse yet, she was mostly alone at home in Springfield, Illinois. Last month, OB Lao nurse and classmate **Phoukham Phaengpong** moved from Tampa, Florida to keep her permanent company. "We talk the whole night and sleep in the daytime," Rabieb says. Both, by the way, are retired. To contact them, call 217 698 8335.



Lao Soccer Players Find New Playground

It's the unfinished grounds of Settathirath Park, former site of the OB Hospital in That Luang. After the hospital and the Administration beside it were razed in 2002 to make way for the park, the money ran out and work was suspended in 2004. But not before some 70 percent of the site was laid with grass turf, to the joy of soccer players who proceeded to trample it back to dust. A city official fumed. He had plans to "build a fountain, with trees, flowers and lights at night to make it attractive," he was quoted by the Vientiane Times of January 10, 2006. With funds and grass gone (as well as 270 residents who were relocated), can we still hope for a small memorial to mark a hospital that had served the Lao for 42 years and that some still remember "with affection" as the Vientiane Times once reported.

Malling Comes To Vientiane

Meanwhile in another part of town, a \$27 million shopping mall is rising. It will replace the Talat Sao morning market, a cluster of three two-story pavilions whose aisles resemble tightly packed bazaars rather than the real malls your U.S.-based daughters and wives adore. When we shopped there in 2002, the stalls overflowed with mostly Thai and Chinese made goods. The new Talat Sao will include a five-story car park for 400 cars. By 2007, the complex will be completed, said the Singaporean investor.

Lao-Made Hand Bags in the USA

They carry a "Be&D" label and they are found in Manhattan and other U.S. high-end stores – Bergdorf Goodman, Saks Fifth Avenue, Neiman Marcus. The designer is Brooklyn resident Be Inthavong who arrived in Texas from Laos as an eight year old in the 1980s. After graduating from a Texas university, he got a modeling job that introduced him to the world of fashion accessories in the U.S. and Europe. Before your wife and daughter dash out to buy one of his bags, tell them they are not Talat Sao merchandise. The Be&D Ava City Gold Bag model costs \$1,100. Less pricey Lao-made stuff is available at "Laolao Handmade", a small store we visited in the East Village section of Manhattan at 149 Ave. C between 9 & 10th Avenues. It celebrated their first year at the site last September with a ceremony presided by Buddhist monks. There's a gorgeous silk wall hanging for \$275. Naturally, there are stacks of "sinh" women's skirts, with elaborate intoxicating colors, hence the name of the store which refers to that potent Lao rice wine. For a look at some of their merchandise, log on to their website www.laolaohandmade.com.

"1,000 Places To See Before You Die"

That's the title of a hefty 972-page book by Patricia Schultz, published in 2003. For a time it was a New York Times best seller and received favorable mentions by CBS-TV and Newsweek. Some readers complained that the author recommended too many expensive hotels and restaurants. Others noted its "Eurocentric bent" – 400 of the places were located in Europe. I flipped the pages to read her three Lao selections: (1) Wat Phou temple in Champassak province, built from the 6th to the 14th century (really more Khmer looking than Lao) but the surrounding landscape is "fantastic" and "spectacular." (2) Luang Prabang – the entire town, with its 30 pagodas, "unpaved back streets exuding Buddhist calm, roosters roaming and children at play;" (3) a three-day Mekong River cruise aboard a refurbished barge Vat Phou, its 12 cabins and its richly varnished wood deck veranda. Shore excursions are included to Wat Phou and the waterfalls at Phapheng in the south. What are Schultz's places to die for in the Philippines? The Banaue Rice Terraces; Taal Volcano; a stay at one of Amanpulo's "bahay kubo"-style beach houses at Pamalian Island on the Sulu Sea (one night is \$575 in 2003 dollars).

30 Years of Rule And Counting

December 2, 2005 marked the day when the People's Democratic Republic of Laos was born 30 years ago. A mass rally of 25,000 was among the festivities in Vientiane. As expected the Western press sneered at the Lao government celebrations. "Most people live on less than \$2 a day" and there isn't "a single decent hospital to show for its billions in foreign aid," wrote the Associated Press. Ask the hordes of foreign backpackers why Laos is a tourist bargain; \$2 a day goes a long way there. And has the AP correspondent toured the new Settathirath Hospital in the outskirts of the city which I found more than "decent", in fact quite adequate to meet the needs of its patients? The Reuters correspondent described a "tiny economy hamstrung by a lack of enterprise and investment." True enough. But consider that 30 years ago, Laos had emerged from two decades of continuous warfare waged mainly by its neighbors and the West. It never got the chance to develop on its own. Basically it started on square one in 1975, its economy devastated, its resources scarce, its population depopulated by bombs and emigration. Other third world countries with more to start with have much less to show for it today. C'mon guys, back off a bit and give them a break.



THE MEKONG: HERE'S WHERE IT ALL BEGINS

One of Asia's mightiest rivers emerges as a creek from a glacier in China

To many Mekong Circle residents of Vientiane, the Mekong river was always there. Flowing along the western bend of the city – a muddy-brown-grey body of water — we remember it as a liquid border that we crossed on ferries from Tha Deua on the Lao bank to Nong Khai on the Thai side during shopping excursions. On other weekends, from the riverside Sala Kottane Restaurant veranda at Tha Deua, we gazed dreamily on its silver-streaked, shimmering surface as we sipped beer cooled by ice cubes. At other times, we did not give the river much thought or attention.

Not until the day it began to rise in August of 1966. Fed by nine days of heavy rains, its waters began to climb up its banks. Many parts of the city were submerged in waist-deep waters for three days – Wattay, Chinaimo, Nong Douang, the Morning Market, the commercial center. The That Luang district, the city's highest elevation, turned into an evacuation center and heliport for swarms of Air America and Lao government helicopters, depositing flood refugees, food and medicines. (High and dry inside their That Luang dis-

trict OB House and OB Annex quarters, OB personnel can thank That Luang's 14th century planners who had the foresight to build their national shrine on the highest rise of ground. Nonetheless, they were all confined to their living quarters and the nearby OB hospital in order to attend to the expected influx of patients suffering from flood-related dysentery and typhoid cases. Indeed during the last week of August, a vaccination campaign treated 1,000 persons).

It was said that the last time the Mekong inundated the city to these heights was in 1924. Yet a scant two months earlier in 1966, in fact every May of the year, the Mekong waters along the city recede so low, parts of the exposed riverbed serve as the setting for one of Laos' colorful, merriest festivals, the Boun Bang Fai – the Rocket Festival. Imagine it again on Thanon Fa Ngum street fronting the Lane Xang Hotel – the dancers, masked, garlanded, turbaned, faces smeared red, black and white; outsized spectacles; false moustaches; the incessant throb of drums; the jangle of cymbals; the whine of bam-

boo flutes; the throaty songs; the lamvong on the streets. Imagine the most riotous spectacle of all: the lighting of the gunpowder-packed, long, bamboo tubes poised to the skies atop bamboo scaffolds strapped into launching pads. Now we know why the festival is called Boom! Bang! Fire! to implore the rain spirits for the coming planting season.

How does the Mekong almost bare its bottom in May, then almost sink an entire city in August? How does this river, one of the longest in the world, its waters washing over five countries, ebb and flow? Begin by seeking the source of the river. Somewhere up in the north (or southern China) is that faucet that the gods must turn off and on to begin the mighty flow. Several early explorers took the challenge to find it. It was no picnic excursion. The Mekong flows across some of the most forbidding, unpassable, unavigable, unexplored geography in the planet.

Starting from Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh city) on June 5, 1866, six Frenchmen led by

Francis Garnier spent two years following the Mekong's upstream course. An account of their exploration said "the course of the Mekong had been established and areas of southwestern China visited that had not previously been by a European." In truth, their rudimentary map showed an imaginary line, presumably the Mekong's upper reaches. Below that line was their last stop. They never reached the river's source.

After crossing Cambodia and central Laos, they had reached Vientiane on April 2, 1867. They found the place still bearing the scars of the 1827 invasion and pillage of King Rama III of Thailand. Lao history tell of death by the thousands, survivors carried off as slaves. Destruction of buildings left only some major temples intact – Wat Phra Keo, Wat Si Saket, That Luang, among them. Forests had engulfed what used to be homes and neighborhoods.

After two days in Vientiane, the French proceeded up the river to Luang Prabang. It was described as a "princely town...a pleasing mixture of pagodas with glistening red roofs tiles and whitewashed walls, a vast palace compound...a population of 16,000" as well as a thriving market. During their stay of almost a month, from April 29 to May 25, 1867, they sampled the various religious festivals, and the "nights for dancing..." and "took some delight in rustic mating" with the locals. Five months later, they crossed into China, on October 18, at a place called Ssu-mao. Thus ends a description recounted in "River Road to China" by Milton Osborne (1995) of the first European exploration of the Lao part of the Mekong.

In 1884, two Frenchmen claimed they found the Mekong source at the headwaters of the Yangtze river in China at a pass below a spring. Ten years later, another Frenchman explorer Michel Peissel claimed that the source were springs farther west of that pass. In 1999, a team set out to confirm the location of the headwaters. Lest anyone dispute their findings, they represented the Commission For Integrated Survey of Natural Resources of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS). By international convention, the official geographic survey agency

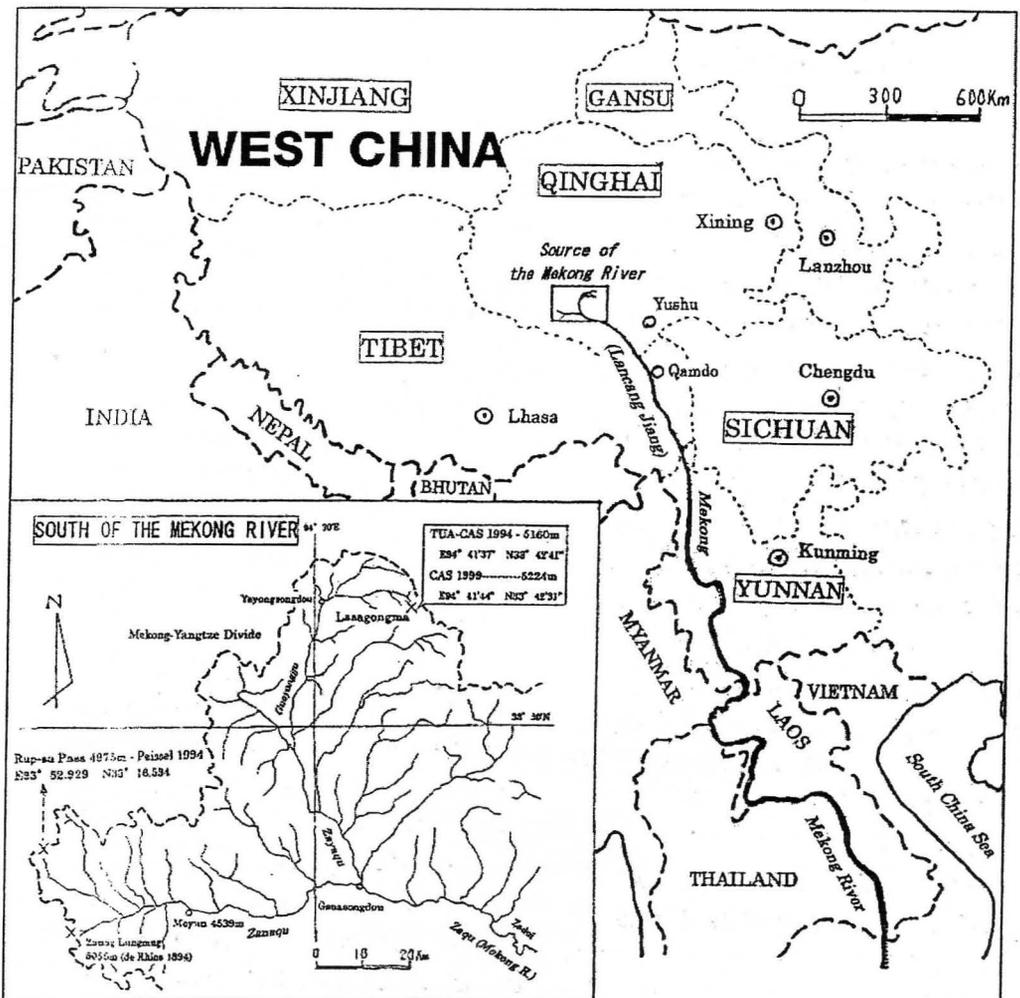
of the country in which a river source is located makes the final determination. Furthermore, the convention says that the source of a river is the furthest source of water from the mouth of the river, typically a spring or glacier.

At a spot (pinpointed with the help of remote sensing devices and global positioning systems), the team declared that the true geographic source of the Mekong is a creek called Lasagongma that emerges from a glacier at a mountain called Guosongmucha. For those of you who want to be more precise, plot this into your computer's Google Earth program: 94 degrees, 41 minutes, 52 seconds east longitude and 33 degrees, 42 minutes, 41 seconds north latitude, elevation 5224 meters.

On May 7, 2004, an Australian Michael O'Shea stood at that point. Here is how he described the view at www.wildside-asia.com/mekong_descent.htm " I turned around to scan a breathtaking view of the Mekong valley rimmed by glaciated peaks and rugged limestone

...It was a fascinating thought that the river catchment that started as a trickle at the base of that glacier would expand to become the lifeline for some 60 million people from over 100 different linguistic and cultural groups, that its waters would come to support more aquatic life than the Amazon basin and that its environments would house well over half of the world's biodiversity."

Where in the world is this place? Beijing's People's Daily locates it in the Jifu Mountains in Zadou County, Yushu Tibet Autonomous Prefecture of northwest China's Qinghai Province. Further tweaking of geological instruments has revealed that the Mekong is 4,909 kms long. The 2,198 kms section passing through China is called the Lancang River. The 2,711 kms section that flows across its borders into Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam where it empties into the South China Sea is called the Mekong, mother river. We can all sleep well tonight, now that it has been tracked from source to sea. -- by J. "Pete" Fuentesilla



INDEX TO NEWSLETTER FEATURES

This listing begins in 2002 with only two issues for that year, composed of 4 pages each. They were mailed mostly to OB names to encourage their attendance at the August 2002 New York reunion. Since then, our Newsletter has expanded to cover all the groups that make up our association. Weddings, visitations, reunions, birthday celebrations are staples of association newsletters, as they should be. But at each and every social gathering, the nostalgia that suffuses the merrymaking is rooted in our communal experience with a country, its people and with each other. It is an experience that we try to describe in many, other ways, as exemplified in "Historical Notes" and other similar features. To read the details of each listing, go to our website www.mekongcircle.org. We have posted all the issues as they originally appeared in print (except for the first two).

March 2002

Photo (13 of first 15 Operation Brotherhood Laos volunteers)
OB Personnel list by titles
Group photo (OB Vientiane Team & Administration 1960s)
List of Kingdom Royal Awardees
2002 Reunion Program

April 2002

Oh, If Only The Walls Can Talk (OB House & OB Annex)
Report from the 2002 Reunion Organizing Committee

August 2003

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A Visit to Ambassador Antonio Chua
Medical Mission To Laos Proposal
Iskolars Ng Mekong
Balik Laos: Another Return
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New Jersey Members Get Together June 14, 2003

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Sweet Memories of Potluck Lunches (by Connie Frias)
When Golf Was A Passion & Three Were A Club
How Golf Began, Laos-style (by Paeng Mapaye)
Where Have All Our Nurses Gone?
Filipinos In Laos: The Pioneers
Our Australia-Based Members Come Visiting: August 17, 2003

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History: ECCOIL A Remarkable Diversity of Skills
Vientiane: How Charm Gave Way to Commerce
Remembering Vientiane (by Rodolfo Sanchez)
Dreaming of Laos (by Noi Kosila)
Nang Seng, Thao Boun: Where Are You (Census of Lao in USA)
Memories: Some Gone, Some Intact (Balik Laos of 2002)
Christmas in Sam Neua 1959 (by Rodolfo Severino)
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Promotion trips for Chicago Reunion

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The Mother of All Reunions (Lao Festival in Virginia)
Splash! Splash! Splash: It's The Lao New Year
First Reunion of OB Lao Nurses
First Check For Iskolars Ng Mekong
Searching For A Real Lao Restaurant
Waiter, Bring Us The Khao Niao and the Pah Dek
The Mekong Circle Cookbook

Continental Air Services Reunion Feb. 20-21, 2004
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Uniting Via Cyberspace
10 More Reasons Why You Should Attend the 2004 Reunion
Final Thoughts, Final Farewell (May 25, 1975 Evacuation)

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A Fix-Up Look: ASEAN Summit in Vientiane
A Look At Some Lao Histories (2 book reviews)
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My Visit To A Refugee Camp (by Rabieb Vilahong Roy)
The New Khon Filipin (by Raul Dado)
Things You May Have Missed At Our 5th Reunion
At a School Reunion: Catching Up After So Many Years
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Agriculturists: Disease Control By Battling Lice & Leeches (by Sabina Fajardo Swift)

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Mekong Circle At Lao Conference
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Vang Vieng Then & Now
Lessons of Refugee Survival
To Build A Park & Perhaps A Memorial
Mission: Vientiane (by Ambassador Elizabeth Buensuceso)
Member News
A Look Back At Our 2004 Reunion (by Puring de Jesus)

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I Want My History!
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Historical Notes
Add These Members To Your Directory
Fiction & Memoirs (7 book reviews)
2006 Florida-Bahamas Reunion Update

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Welcome To "Goodbye Vientiane"
How I Eluded The KGB (by Casto Pingul)
An Interview With A Generation Who Never Heard of Us
All About Cruising

REUNION UPDATE

AUGUST 11-14, 2006

FLORIDA & BAHAMAS



CABIN RESERVATIONS AS OF JANUARY 2006

Abad, Angelita
Abad, Gilbert
Aberin, Evangelina
Aguilos, Maria
Alcudío, Ma. Luz
Alcudío, Quentin
Altura, Lerio
Altura, Francesca
Barcelona, Jose
Barcelona, Josefina
Bayani, Helen
Bayani, Domingo
Barsales, Pete
Bouthavong, Bounoum
Bouthavong, Inpanh
Brenzikofer, Lamphoune
Cage, David Jr.
Cage, Thongkhoun
Casher, Fe
Chinyavong, Anongsinh
Chinyavong, Chanthone
Chomthipe, Chuang
Chomthipe, Sameu
Chomthipe-Sheridan, L
Chookitngam, Malee
Ciborsky, Rebecca
Copoblanco, Daniela
Custodio, Apolinario
Datu, Angelito
Datu, Cecilia
Datu, Estelita
Datu, Orlando
Foster, Esperanza
Frias, Anecia
Fuentecilla, Florida
Fuentecilla, Jose
Gonzalez, Felicidad
Gonzalez, Pedro
Guevara, Ruel
Guevara, Eva
Guevara, Felicitas
Guevara, Joe
Hefferon, Penny
Hefferon, Rosemarie
Hefferon, Kevin
Hillmeyer, Patricia
Hillmeyer, Ryan
Hillmeyer, Aidan
Hillmeyer, Michelle
Hillmeyer, Patrick A.
Hillmeyer, Patrick R.

Hoyes, Julia
Hoyes, Alexandria
Hoyes, Maria
Keomahathai, Adul
Keomahathai, Phikoun
Kittisack, Bobby
Kittisack, Boulaphanh
Kittisack, Doungchanh
Kosila, Chester
Kosila, Noi
Ladara, Khamsacou
Ladara, Rath
Lapitan, Sounthaly
Liwig, Antonio
Liwig, Virginia
Luangrath, Cindy
Luna, Jose
Luna, Lina
Ly, Cuc
Mak, Cynthia
Malaythong, Sam
Malaythong, Sue
Malolos, Amparo
Marquez, Anita
Marquez, Brian
Marquez, Shelley
Marquez, Vicente
Matila, Racquel
Mendoza, Alfredo
Mistri, Khammone
Mistri, Thongsai
Naranjo/Josefa
Naranjo/Jovito
Orense, Bouchouey
Pablo, Josefina
Pacson, Remedio
Pacson, Rosario
Padayao, Fidel
Padayao, Wilma
Papa, Oscar
Papa, Teresita
Pathammaboun, Sivay
Pathammaboun, Viengsay
Phengphong, Phoukham
Puangmaly, Chantalom
Puangmaly, Phoxay
Quarterman, Vilma
Ramos, Jesus
Ramos, Nernia
Ramos, Rustico
Reyes, Eriberto
Reyes, Gloria
Reyes, Emil
Reyes, Eriberto D.

Reyes, Melanie
Ritter, Virginia
Salarda, Patricio
Sanguansack, Manit
Sareerat, Dallas
Sareerat, Dillon
Sareerat, Simmaly
Sareerat, Vanavit
Sayaphone, Boone
Sayasan, Phetje
Saythong, Dustin
Saythong, Lisa
Saythongkham, Davin
Saythongkham, Kayla
Saythongkham, Moe
Sazon, Antonio
Sazon, Antonio Jr.
Sazon, Corazon.
Sermpongpan, Sumitr
Sheridan, Gindala A.
Sihapanya, May
Sihapanya, Nhot
Siharath, Bouadeng
Siharath, Khamsy
Sisouphone, Phounsot
Sithisaiya, Khampheng
Sithisaiya, Smith
Sivongxay, Chantha
Sivongxay, Sivity
Stark, Lolita
Tapia, Pedro Jr.
Tapia, Josephine
Thongma, Phaiboon
Thongma, Vanessa
Valenzuela, Amelia
Valenzuela, Nestor
Van Lee, Jessica
Van Lee, Justin
Virabong, Prakiane
Virabong, Siphanon
Vongphakdy, Kim
Vongphakdy, Tayemphanh
Vongphakdy, Thongkhiane
Vongphrachanh, Noun
Vongsaly, Soutsada

Additional registrants as of Feb. 2006:

Imelda Fadul
Jay Fuentecilla
Ken Fuentecilla
Shane Fuentecilla
Lorena Guevara
Felina Holgado
Cynthia Matos
Domingo Menguito
Alfredo Reyes
Ellis Tavares
Elmira Tharp
Michael Tharp
Linda Sanguansack
Oudong Sananikone
Dao Sananikone

ABOUT NASSAU & THE BAHAMAS

If you will look at our itinerary at the bottom of the page, we'll dock at Nassau on the morning of August 12, after an overnight sailing from Florida. (Warning: we dock at 11 am; you have the whole previous night to sample the ship's extensive offerings. But be sure you still have the energy in the morning to sample the island's offerings which are just as extensive). The islands of the Bahamas is a cluster of 700 islands, populated by 300,000 people. Only about 30 of the islands are inhabited. Nassau is its capital on New Providence Island, a bridge away from the neighboring Paradise Island and its Atlantis resort. When Christopher Columbus landed on one of the islands in 1492, he observed that the sea was shallow ("baja mar") around the islands. Get it? Baja mar = bahamas. Nassau itself was first settled by the English which explains that quaint (to us U.S.-based motorists) "drive left" idiosyncrasy. The Bahamas was a commonwealth of Britain till 1969. It became independent in 1973. For more information, visit www.bahamas.com

NASSAU SHORE EXCURSIONS

In past issues of our Newsletter, we described what delights await us on the island -- the glass-bottom boat tours, sightseeing, powerboat sailing, snorkeling, scuba diving, "Close Dolphin Encounter," and so forth. These are activities that you sign up for aboard ship. A list showing how long each activity lasts, the adult and child prices can be viewed at Royal Caribbean's website: <https://shorex.rccl.com>. If a large Mekong group wants to do one thing, our travel agent Tess Papa, will consider arranging an exclusive tour. Or you can just stay on the ship and continue sampling its many goodies.

GROUND TRANSPORTATION

Transportation from Orlando Airport to Port Canaveral where our cruise ship is docked will be provided by Royal Caribbean Lines. It leaves from the airport from 10 am to 2:30 pm. When we return, the schedule to the airport is from 12 pm to 2:30 pm. Send Tess your arrival and departure flight information if you want to avail of this transport. Costs \$25 per person; \$50 round trip.

HOTEL INFORMATION

Details on discount room rates, transportation from the airport, as well as to the Port of embarkation are still being arranged. You will be informed well ahead of time. This will be the site for a welcome reception on Thursday, August 12, 2006 and the baci ceremony.

August 11, 2006 Friday	1 pm	Board Royal Caribbean's "Sovereign of the Seas", Port Canaveral
	5 pm	Depart Port Canaveral, Florida
August 12, Saturday	11 am	Arrive Nassau, Bahamas
	3 am	Leave Nassau
August 13, Sunday	7 am	Arrive CocoCay, Bahamas
	5 pm	Leave CocoCay
August 14, Monday	7 am	Arrive Port Canaveral, Florida

Website: www.royalcaribbean.com

Travel Agent: Magenta Travel Group

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Full payment of cruise charges are due by May 1, 2006. Every passenger will be receiving a statement.

2006 Mekong Reunion Coordinator:

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