

MEKONG

CIRCLE INTERNATIONAL

JULY 2011

216-27 Spencer Avenue, Queens Village, New York 11427 USA

www.mekongcircle.org

Welcome to the 20th issue of our Newsletter



I See You. Who Are You ?

This photo popped up as we rummaged through our archives. We figured it was noteworthy to publish it here for two reasons (1) it's pre-1960, only three years after our arrival in Laos; (2) it's rare that a photo from that period was able to get so many people (45 in all) assembled for a group shot. The only comparable photos in existence are those taken of our reunion picnics in parks beginning in 1995. And on a deck of the cruise ship Royal Caribbean International during our 2006 reunion cruise to Bermuda (see September 2006 issue of our Newsletter). Oh, and then there's that assembly of the office and hospital staff of OB Vientiane in the mid-1960s in the June 2004 issue.

Joe Barcelona won a prize at the 2002 New York reunion for identifying each and everyone of those posing on that last picture. We turned to him again to identify our members in this photo. Penny Villarica (No. 17) supplied additional names. If you can fill in the missing ones, we'll ship you a prize (not yet determined at this time). Said Fidel (No. 2, first row) "I know the faces. Forgot the names." Sorry, Fidel, no prize for lame excuses or non-functioning memory cortex. If the names are incorrect, please submit the right ones. As some of you are aware of, quite a number of our members in the photo have passed on.

First row, left to right:

1. Mel Granada 2. Fidel Padayao 3. Gerry _____ 4. Bill Comia 5. Fred Reyes 6. _____ 7. Gil _____
8. Viring dela Rosa 9. Wilma Jerusalem

Second row, left to right

1. Carlos Peralta 2. Bella Bulan 3. Rose Fuentes 4. Naty Granada 5. Lourdes Alberto 6. Joe Ambrosio 7. Sonia Ambrosio
8. Lourdes Reyes 9. Lourdes Caras 10. Irene Diaz 11. Rosemarie del Rio 12. Jovit Abes 13. Susie Gaddi 14. _____
15. _____ 16. Jovit Revilla 17. Penny Villarica 18. Primo Guevarra 19. _____ 20. _____

Third row, left to right

1. Gene Aguilar 2. Felix Valera 3. Pilo Ocampo 4. Pete Gonzales 5. Ruffi Asi 6. _____ 7. Cesar Leyran
8. Pete Barsales 9. _____ 10. _____ 11. Walter Voradeth 12. Amor Valiente 13. _____ 14. Nila Ferrer
15. _____ 16. Ducky Paredes

email your responses to: fuentecila@aol.com



Remembering on Memorial Day Mekong Circle's Own Dead And Our Last Day in Laos

The following feature was emailed to members on May 28, 2011 and has been updated.

Americans remember their war dead during the last Monday of May. This year 2011 the day is marked on May 30. Mekong Circle has its own roster of those who died in Laos. Many of them passed away there serving as volunteers, from 1957 to 1975, with Operation Brotherhood (OB). Laos was a war zone during those years. Indeed the entire region, once called Indochina by its original French colonizers, comprising of Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia (now Kampuchea) had never experienced a day of peace from 1954 when France lost its colony and 1975 when Communists took over all three countries.

In a very real sense then, our Mekong Circle dead were victims of a war-ravaged time and place. And we remember them as much as we remember another day in May 1975. On May 29 of that year, the last Filipinos left Laos. The victorious communist Pathet Lao had declared that all foreign nationals leave in the wake of their takeover.

How that historic day passed for OB Filipinos is remembered in the attachment – "Final Thoughts, Final Farewell" --first published in the June

2004 issue of our Newsletter. (Not reproduced here)

After almost two decades of war, the end crashed with surprising finality, like dominoes as often predicted by narratives of that period. On April 16, 1975 Cambodia's Khmer Rouge communists entered Phnom Penh, Cambodia's capital. Saigon fell on April 24. On May 9, high ranking Lao government officials and armed forces officers fled Vientiane. On May 12 to 14, the CIA evacuated to Thailand their Hmong "secret" guerrilla army from their northern base in Long Tieng. On May 20, the Pathet Lao occupied the USAID compound in Vientiane and its Km. 6 residences at the city's outskirts.

Compared to the capture of Saigon and Phnom Penh, the Pathet Lao occupation of Vientiane was described as uniquely Laotian, as befits their unhurried, let-it-be "bo pen yang" character, with none of the bloody, horrific mayhem of crumbling regimes. The Khmer Rouge forcibly emptied the capital in the first step of a murderous rampage that ultimately killed 1.7 million Cambodians; panicky Saigon's residents clawed their way up the American Embassy's 10 ft high walls to get to the evacuation helicopters (New York Times accounts of the last few days as the Vietcong

marched into the city described desperate mothers handing off their babies to departing Americans. U.S. marines used pistols and rifle butts to dislodge them).

In Vientiane, the 800 American civilian residents were given short notice to leave, instructed to carry only one bag each to the airport, leaving all their possessions that they were not able to ship out ahead of time. "The exodus followed organized student demonstrations that lasted about ten days," reported Robert Shaplen, a correspondent for the New Yorker, "and resulted in a few nasty altercations in the aftermath of which three Americans were locked up in the AID compound for several days." Other reports described Vietnamese businessmen permanently closing up their shops and hurriedly lining up at the French embassy for visas.

On August 23, 1975, a token force of 50 Pathet Lao women soldiers, flown down from Sam Neua, paraded into the city, to formally symbolize the "liberation" of Vientiane. We have no memories of this historic event because we were no longer there. But we do remember our colleagues who passed away in the kingdom, and for the record, we recite their names here lest we forget. Among the OB dead:

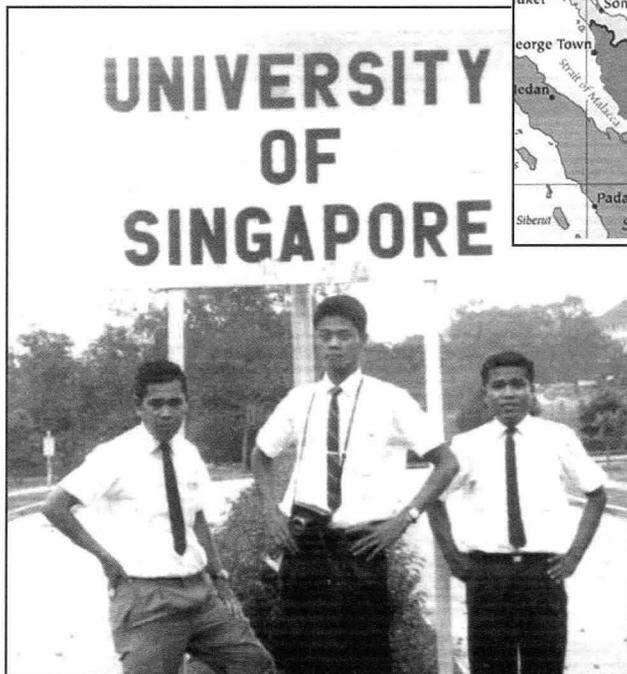
Abner Jornada, nurse, in Phongsaly April 1958; Bienvenido Natividad, accountant, from a bullet wound during one of those coup events that every now and then gripped the city. Three drowned together in Attopeu province, April 10, 1966 – nurses Aurea Joaquin and Violeta Salarda with medical technologist Emmanuel Canonizado; Dr. Cesar Medina died of a heart attack in Saravane province, January 29, 1967. In the following years, a plane crash claimed accountants Noel Extremadura and Brigido Garcia, medical technologist Rudy Villaroman in Savannakhet province; then Dr. Sining Azul and nurse Wilhelmina Comia passed away.

Air America technicians who perished from helicopter crashes: Ray Castillo, Augusto Calderon, Baltazar Reyes, Ernesto Cruz and Montano Centeno. – by J. "Pete" Fuentesilla (OB 1961-1967).

Road Trip: Vientiane To Singapore

At least once during your lifetime, you are expected to take this journey, from point A to point B. In between, you are supposed to undergo a transformative experience that will change the rest of your life. Movies have done their part to popularize the notion that if you have not gone on a road trip, you have missed half of your life. It is part of growing up, they say, like falling in love the first time, or getting sick from a gin and Coke mix, or marking your 18th birthday "getting introduced to society."

In the 2001 U.S. made comedy movie "Road Trip" (advertised as "The Greatest College Tradition of All") four



The end of the road: from left Jun Belicena, Tony Liwag, Sas Sayong

young men race their car from New York to Texas (about 1,444 miles) over three days. Why should a trip that would take perhaps a day and a half stretch twice that long? Along the way, the car falls from a bridge; then it explodes; the guys steal a bus; there are hilarious escapades in motels. The goal is to outrace a videotape mistakenly mailed from New York to a Texas girlfriend of one of the guys before it gets to her and she sees him having sex with a New York girl. From such silly plots, road trips transform not lives but bank accounts (it made money and spawned sequels).

Some real life road trips aspire to less than intercepting sex tapes. My son Eric, 24, accompanied a best friend across the U.S. continent in a Nissan Pathfinder SUV during the summer of 1997. "John wanted someone to drive with him from New York to Los Angeles where a

job was waiting for him, and we figured that if we took turns on the wheel, without overnight stops along the road, we could get there real fast." Fast was 80 to 90 miles per hour, barreling down interstate highways straight as arrows in the night, without traffic. They made the 2,840 mile dash in 52 hours, or in about two days and seven hours. No motel overnights. Short naps at rest areas. Each took six hours on the wheel while the other slept. Travel

technology then was Neanderthal-era -- no GPS. No iPads. No cellphones. The only life-threatening episode was when the engine overheated, and they turned the inside heat on (while the temperature outside was in the 90s as they crossed California's Death Valley -- how ironic) in order to draw the heat away from the engine, as the car manual had advised.

Far surpassing any road trip ever must be the eight-month, 5,000-mile South American journey of the Argentines Alberto Granado and Ernesto Guevara in 1952 -- yes, the 23-year old "Che" -- through Argentina, Chile, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela and Bolivia.

Documented in the much admired 2004 movie "The Motorcycle Diaries", the two medical students set out together astride an aging Norton 500 motorcycle christened La Poderosa ("The Mighty One"), for indeed it looked like a rhino. Their goal was fun and adventure, to see as much of the continent before they returned to Buenos Aires to complete their studies. And as

we all know now, their journey was truly transformative for Che. He saw the pitiful condition of the exploited peasants, igniting the revolutionary Marxist fires that rendered his silk-screened image -- black beret, mustache and curly hair -- onto a million T-shirts.

The point of this essay is to get to our very own road trip. In December 1962, four restless OB men in their twenties, urged by their adventurous spirits, decided to traverse the approximately 1200 miles from Nongkhai, Thailand (across from Vientiane, Laos) to Singapore. The cast included artist Tony Liwag, accountant Salvador "Sas" Sayong, engineer Jun Belicena, and administrative officer Pete Fuentesilla. The route -- from Vientiane, cross the Mekong to the Thai border town of Nongkhai, take the train to Bangkok, then onwards to Malaysia's Penang and Kuala Lumpur, finally crossing the causeway to Singapore, the ultimate destination. Along the way, visits to temples, caves, urban centers, a dip in the ocean, mile upon mile of rubber plantations. Tourism was not a major revenue source during that time for these countries. So foreigners like us had to contend with non-English restaurant menus. Tony sketched on napkins what we wanted cooked and handed it to the waiter.

The highlight of the trip was hiring a taxicab to drive us down the length of Malaysia into Singapore. The driver said "I agree, but first we have to drive to my village to tell my wife I will be away for several days with you."

A life-transforming experience? Well, Jun lost his



camera. Sas honed his auditing skills by tallying expenses to share four ways fairly. We spent Christmas on the road, in a Muslim country. And we gorged mostly on fried rice and fried chicken because they were the easiest to sketch when we were close to starvation and we could not decipher the menu. The fearless foursome, now in their late 60s and early 70s, would like to credit themselves with pioneering the road trip tradition among our Mekong Circle members. Sas passed away in 2003 at the age of 70 in New Jersey. Tony's handmade boat, built by himself over four years in his outdoor garage, is now on the water in

Ohio, he tells us, where he lives with former OB nurse Gina. Jun plays golf and golf as well as golf in Manila. He and wife OB social worker Bing hosted a dinner party at their residence in Paranaque, metro Manila, for members who attended our 2010 Manila reunion. Pete walks the leafy, tree-canopied silent, deserted streets of suburban Tenafly in northern New Jersey and in Queens Village, New York, listening to the chirping birds and, he swears, hearing at times some sweet Lao sounds rustling from the leaves.

Our 9th Reunion 2012

It's going to be in San Diego, California. Sometime in early August. The venue was decided at a meeting of our southern California chapter on June 19, 2011 (Happy Fathers' Day!) at the residence of Mekong Circle president Pat Gonzales in Los Angeles, California. Traditionally, reunion venues are set during board meetings at our biannual gathering. But at the Anaheim, California 2010 board meeting, no chapter volunteered to host 2012. But wherever it would be, our Lao members were designated to take charge. At the dinner dance, there was talk of Vientiane, Laos. Days later, the idea of holding it on a cruise ship to Mexico was floated (we celebrated our 2006 reunion aboard the Norwegian Cruise Line to Bermuda).

Elated at the prospect of a 2012 Vientiane reunion, Bounthan Oudom raised a rousing call during the picnic "I'll see you all in Vientiane!" before she departed for Laos where she lives. Don't despair Bounthan. Your colleagues have accepted the challenge to organize as memorable and enjoyable an event as Mekong Circle has mounted during each of the last eight reunions. Co-chair of the 2012 organizing committee are Sam Malaythong of Merced, California and Khamsy Siharath of Oceanside, California. Indeed Bounthan, with Sivilay Sivonxay, coordinated the dinner dance held on the grounds of the Philippine Embassy in Vientiane to welcome the Mekong Circle "Return To Laos" travellers in November 2008. Together they round-

ed up some 70 former Lao colleagues who worked with Filipinos between 1957 and 1975. Some crossed the Mekong from Thailand, excited at the opportunity to reunite for the first time not only with former Filipino coworkers who left some 30 to 40 years ago. For many, it was also their first meeting among themselves when they disbanded after their American employers left in 1975 when the Communists took over the country.

In another demonstration of the organizing prowess of our Lao members, consider the first ever reunion of the students of the OB School of Nursing held simultaneously during our 2004 Chicago reunion. Out of about 148 Lao graduates from 1963 to 1969, most dispersed after 1975 to unknown addresses. We were able to track down some 35 in the USA, Australia and Thailand. Twenty came to attend (together with their spouses and children -- 32 in all). Who would have imagined they would meet again after perilous escapes, refugees from a war-torn homeland. Let us remember too the Bermuda reunion: 55 Lao members out of 179 Mekong Circle passengers (30 percent) boarded the ship. And so we look forward to 2012 with high expectations of yet another big turnout from our Lao, Filipino, Thai, and American members. Bounthan, come back! We promise a really generous donation to your favorite wat. And who knows, in 2014, our historic 10th reunion, it will really, really be in Vientiane, in your lovely, lovely country where we all came from.



Khamsy and Bouadeng Siharath



Sue and Sam Malaythong

Meet Our Reunion Chairpersons

Khamsy Siharath

When all the Filipino nurses evacuated on May 29, 1975 the OB Hospital in Vientiane, their Lao counterparts had to staff the hospital by themselves. They had no choice. While many Lao skilled professionals fled the country, fearful of their future with the new Communist government which took over in 1975, many others had reasons to stay. (As many as ten percent of the population, or 350,000, fled or would flee in the next three years). The escape route across the Mekong River to the nearest country of refuge, Thailand, was increasingly dangerous as both sides of the banks tightened with patrols. Elderly parents and children were at risk to join the exodus.

"My husband did not want to leave our home and land," Khamsy, a 1964 OB nurse graduate said. "And we had three young daughters, ages 9, 12 and 14. The new government, short of

skilled healthcare workers really needed us. Bounthan Oudom, another OB-trained nurse, was moved to the government Mahosot Hospital. I took her place at the OB Hospital."

But life became harder to bear as the government imposed Marxist economic and social policies. Khamsy saw no future for her family. A secret letter sent by an OB lab technician from a refugee camp in Thailand, outlined an escape plan. Desperate, Khamsy told her husband that she was willing to take the chance even if it killed them all.

"It was a night in October 1979. The swollen Mekong was at its highest level that month. And the currents were strong. The boat was meant for two persons only. There were five of us and the boat man. Only my husband in our family knew how to swim. The boat's edge sunk inches from the river's surface. We made it across to the Thai bank, onto a cemetery field and spent the night in a hut. In the early morning, we found the road, hitched a ride on a truck, pretending to be Thai villagers on the way to the town (Nong Khai) market. There a monk who knew my husband, led us to the refugee camp."

Published accounts of life in the Nong Khai refugee camp which confined Lao, Vietnamese and Cambodian war-displaced victims depict a harsh existence. "There maybe parents in the Southeast Asian American community who don't want to talk about this. It's too painful. It's too depressing," said Cristina Woo, a researcher at the Southeast Asian Refugee Archive in the University of California's Irvine campus." It's an experience other OB nurses who made it out of the camps into the U.S. would prefer not to go into detail.

After 11 months and 18 days, the U.S.-based International Rescue Committee resettled Khamsy's family in California. "I knew nothing much about America," she said. Her husband's cousin

in San Diego and her OB-learned English and nursing skills started them off to their second lives. She pursued Associate and RN degrees – "I thank Madame Cecile for the OB school documents she presented to the colleges to show our previous training."

In 1986 she was hired as a lowly "mental health worker" by the Union of Pan Asian Communities, a San Diego city-funded program assisting Southeast Asian refugees cope with health, behavioral, educational and housing problems. But once she earned her RN degree she was promoted to Program Director of its Adult Day Health Care. Today at 67, she is the licensed Administrator of three rest homes in Oceanside, California for the elderly, handling the care of 18 residents, staffed full time by two Filipinos and two Lao. One daughter (all are in their 40s now who have blessed her and her husband with six grandchildren) has her own rest home business. Khamsy tells them that the river crossing on that dark October night was a decision she would take again today for their sake.

Sam Malaythong

The fourth child among ten siblings, Sam arrived in Los Angeles, California in 1972 from Laos, earlier than the exodus that would decimate his country's small professional elite three years later. No refugee status for him. In fact he carried an electrical engineering degree earned in 1971 from the Lao-German Technical College in Vientiane. To insure his future in his new homeland, he completed a business administration education from the California State University in Fullerton. During the same period, he met and married Sumatra ("Sue"), a former OB nurse who happened to be in California pursuing her U.S. degree in registered nursing. She is now a practicing intensive care unit RN.

With his business skills, Sam plunged into various sectors of the finan-

cial field -- insurance, securities, import and export of Asian grocery foods. But before the entrepreneurial bug bit, he had volunteered in 1976 to help out with the Catholic Welfare Bureau's Indochinese Resettlement Program. Thousands of fleeing Asians had chosen California as their preferred refuge. Sam had his hands full attending to the social service needs of incoming Lao, Vietnamese and Cambodian families. The Bureau hired him for four years as Project Coordinator. Hmong and Lao refugees benefited from his vocational courses in basic electricity, plumbing and carpentry.

In 1990, he opened his restaurant Sam Cafe in Merced, California, specializing in Thai cuisine. Trip Advisor, the well-regarded travel website rated it this year as No.1 among 32 restaurants in the city. At the same time, he continues his various business projects, expanding into real estate and consulting on telecommunications deals that involved travels to China, Thailand, Hong Kong and the Netherlands as well as the Philippines. He and Sue attended our 2008 reunion in Manila.

They have three children, a son in Oahu, Hawaii operating his clothing and surfing equipment store; one daughter is an RN and another daughter owns a fitness gym in Fresno, California.

Sam and Khamsy are members of the current Mekong Circle board. Our southern California chapter, fresh from their triumphal hosting of our 2010 Anaheim reunion, will be working with both of them on the 2012 reunion. At a June 19 chapter meeting, it named a new set of officers, among them Pol Custodio as president, Tony Atienza as vice president and Tacing Atienza as secretary.

"In addition to our traditional hotel reception, dinner dance and picnic, we are considering other activities, perhaps a cruise after the land-based festivities," Sam said.

Pai dee, sok dee

Fare thee well and good fortune, so intoned Chantha Sivongxay who presided over the sukuan, the Lao baci ceremony June 19, 2011 that wished Cecile and Manding Datu safe travel to the Philippines on July 4, 2011. After 36 years in the USA, they will return to the Philippines. They met in Laos in 1960, she a nurse educator with OB, he an engineer with the Office in Charge of Construction of the U.S. Navy. Among the project he worked on was the Wattay airport in Vientiane.

When they came to California in 1975, word circulated among her former students at the OB School of Nursing in Vientiane who settled in the USA. Some were in need of certification to prove that they had the skills to



Cecile Datu (right) at farewell baci. Beside her is husband Manding.

work as health care workers. Cecile had brought with her the school curriculum to show their employers the two-year training they had completed. "We would not have made it

here without her help," wrote Chanthamaly and Viengsay Pathammaboun, husband and wife, working as practical nurse and nursing aide, respectively in Illinois. It is a sentiment shared by many other Lao who call "Madam Cecile our mother" from the days when she shepherded them through school. The sizable turnout of former students at the Chicago school reunion and the Bermuda reunion was due largely to her persuasion. Their long-time home in West Covina, California has been the site of many a

Department of Lost and Hoping To Find



Romy Maypa and bride Jacqueline during wedding ceremony. in late 1960s in Vientiane. in a photo sent by his son Romulo.

Calling all those whose memory neurons are still zipping and sparking and jumping around as merrily today as they did some 40 to 50 years ago in Laos. Two researchers want you to remember back to those times because each is writing a book about us. Simeon Man, a graduate student in the American Studies Program at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, is doing his doctoral dissertation on Operation Brotherhood in Vietnam and Laos. "I find the concept behind OB and the context in which it operated very fascinating," he wrote us, "that is, the idea of an Asian people, as representatives of the Philippines 'model for democracy in Southeast Asia', assisting another Asian population during the early period of the Cold War...I will also write about the role of Filipinos and South Koreans in military civic action during the Vietnam war. I am very much interested in thinking about the Vietnam War not only as a U.S. war but one involving other Asian actors, most notably from the Philippines and South Korea."

Simeon contacted us through our website. We have provided him with pertinent documents from our archives and directed him to persons to interview. Two OB veterans in particular were identified -- Melgre Granada (in Manila) and Mart Martell (in Jersey City, New Jersey) -- both of whom served with OB Vietnam and OB Laos, as administrative officers. All those who wish to help out with their recollections can reach Simeon at simeon.man@yale.edu. He resides at 400 NE 45th St.,

potluck occasion for Mekong Circle meetings and parties. Manding was a founding member and officer. Another despedida party was hosted by Narding and Bella Hilario on June 25 at their North Hollywood residence, California.

In the Philippines, they can be reached at Cecile's sister address -- 10 Cavalry Drive, Cavalry Hill, EREMBO, Makati, Metro Manila -- before they move to a condominium at Global City in Manila.

Apt.238, Seattle, Washington 98105 USA.

Jonathan Clemente, a physician practicing in Charlotte, North Carolina, emailed us to say that he is "researching a history of U.S.-supported medical activities in Laos from 1955 - 1974. In the course of my research I have learned of the work of several former Operation Brotherhood medical personnel at a hospital near Pakse, Laos and Nakorn Sing called PS 18 in 1970 -71. The hospital was supported by Prince Boun Oum."

Jonathan is seeking to reach the following doctors -- Valentin de los Reyes, chief orthopedic surgeon; Jose Anacleto, internal medicine; anesthetist Joaquin Andrada and surgical nurse Benjamin Rivera. We told him that our OB personnel records do not show up those names. I referred him to our USAID-Laos Public Health contacts. If any member knows them, they may email him at jonathan_clemente@yahoo.com.

(Related story: "Lao Health History: OB's Role" in the January 2011 Newsletter issue, about an Australian scholar doing her dissertation on this subject).

Over the years our website has served as a resource for those seeking truth as well as people. We have received deep expressions of joy and gratitude when long lost souls are finally entwined, thanks to the magic of cyberspace. But there have been searches that turned up nobody. We remember a Fr. Romulo Maypa, son of former OB pharmacist in Vientiane Romeo Maypa, emailing from Poland in 2005:

"After my father left Laos, he got married to my mother in 1973. He had his business and farmacia in our town in Makato. Later on he went to Benghazi, Libya and worked in a hospital there for about 10 years. He died there of a heart attack and he was buried in our municipal cemetery. It is now 13 years that he passed away.

I got interested to look for my half-sister as my mother told me that my father had a first wife in Laos. I am hoping that you can help me and my family members to give us information or any lead about her situation. What is important for me is that she is alive and we can make a contact. I do not have any information about the first wife, Jacqueline. I even do not know her surname and address."

He emailed a faded wedding picture, which we figured must have been taken in the mid-1960s. We had circulated it years ago in our appeal for information. So far, going on six years now, none has been received. In an email received this June, the Philippine Embassy in Vientiane has begun to search for Jacqueline. Contact Fr. Maypa at makatosvd@yahoo.com if you can provide some leads.

Update: Tribal Schools Project

Location of schools: Villages of Ilian and Kitorok, town of Sta. Maria, Davao del Sur, Mindanao

Opened: 2008-2009 to serve the children of the Taga-Kaulo tribe of Davao del Sur

Population: 203 pupils (7 to 14 years old); seven teachers

Sponsor: Catholic Diocese of Digos City. The schools receive no government funding

Contact: Fr. Nestor Lisondra, Home of the Clergy, Aurora Extension St., Digos City, 8002 Philippines
email: frneli@yahoo.com

We wired the sum of \$2,050 to the bank account of the Diocese on June 2, 2011. This represents donations as well as the leftover funds from our Iskolars Ng Mekong. Our fund raising

was launched to our members on March 10 by sending out solicitation materials together with our January 2011 Mekong Circle Newsletter. The names of School donors are listed below.

By a majority vote on January 29, 2011, the Mekong Circle Board resolved to adopt the Tribal Schools as our educational project. On April 30, another majority vote by the Board approved to transfer the unused balance of the Iskolars fund to the schools.

Located in mountainous terrain too far from public schools for the children to attend, the villages constructed classrooms out of bamboo and cogon grass, then hired local teachers. "Each teacher is paid 5,000 pesos a month. The two schools need

at least a thousand dollars a month to operate," said Fr. Lisondra. That's about five dollars per student. "The parents are too poor to finance the school by themselves." The parents themselves, isolated from towns, were never able to attend schools. Hence the Diocese has started a weekend literacy program for 130 adults.

Mekong Circle donations received as of March 25 came from Tony and Cora Sazon, Maria Aguilos, Juanita and Aida Calalang, Patria Gonzales, Erlinda Masibay, Penelope Flores, Rustico Ramos, Tacing and Tony Atienza, Victor and Eufrosina Capili, Denis Hebreo, Leopoldo and Catalina Daulo, Anita Marquez. Many, many thanks to all of you. We will continue with our fundraising from more members and other sources.



A donation form is on the next page. Cut out or copy and mail to our Treasurer:

Bik Marquez
Mekong Circle
1200 Bayhill, Suite 119
San Bruno, California
94066 USA

BikMarquez@hotmail.com
Tel. 650 589 3522



MEKONG CIRCLE

216-27 Spencer Avenue
Queens Village
New York 11427 USA

Date _____

Here is my tax-deductible donation to Mekong Circle for the Tribal School Project

\$ 20

\$ 30

\$ 40

\$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Email: _____

Please make your check payable to Mekong Circle International
Indicate "Tribal School Donation" on the note space.