



To All My Colleagues of the USAID Mission to Laos

First and foremost:

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

Mrs. Mann, Susie and I all wish you a warm and pleasant holiday season with your families.

At the year end, it has become a tradition to reflect for a moment on the past year's events, and to formulate a few wishes for the year to come. I should like once more to follow that tradition.

On the whole, 1971 would seem to have changed little from 1970. The Mekong rose a little higher and did a little more damage. The North Vietnamese invader continued his efforts, and, as you know, has recently renewed them after a period of quiescence. The Royal Lao Armed Forces gallantly and stubbornly defended the Kingdom as they are continuing to do as you read this. And life went on. Children were born, and men and women carried on the tasks, pains, and joys of their mortal existence.

But it is all too easy to find evidence, even under conditions in Laos, of the fact that mankind will, to the extent of his possibilities, pursue the even tenor of his ways.

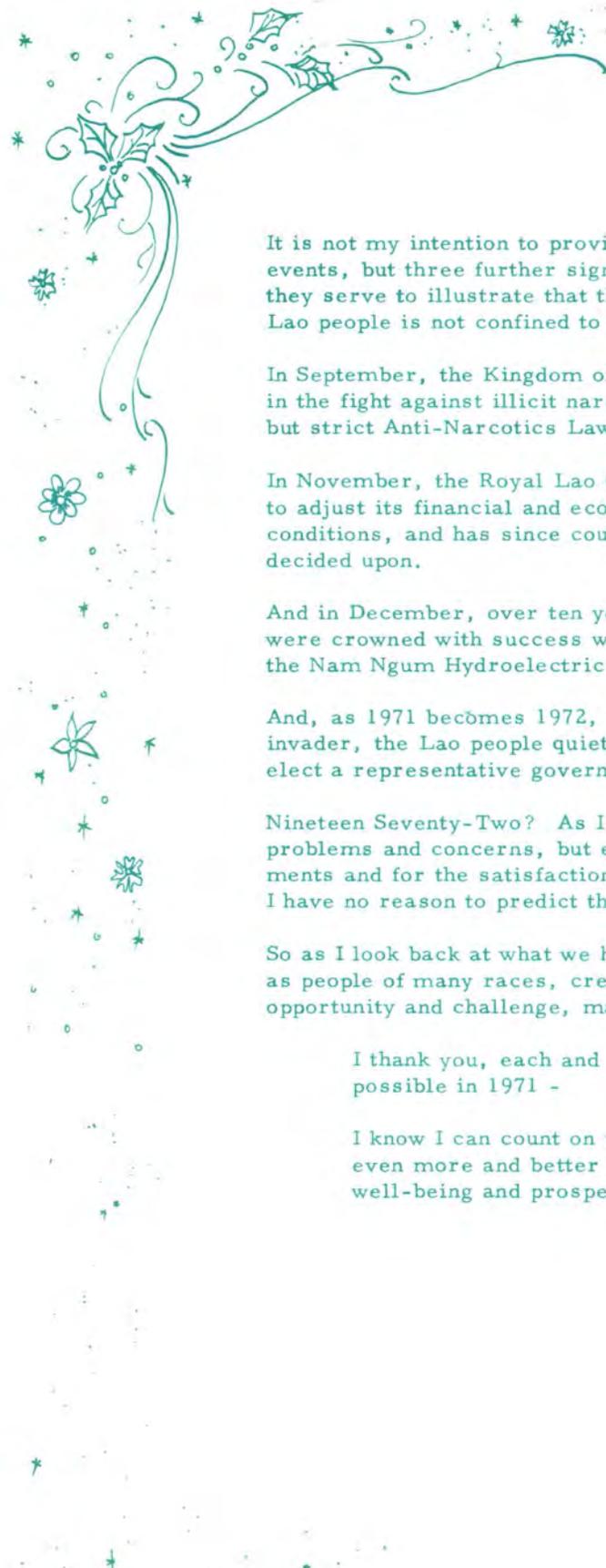
Let us therefore look at some of the events and evidences of change, in 1971, which, in my view, have on balance been changes for the better.

In January, the Prime Minister inspected refugee resettlement areas in the Vientiane Plain and found them good; yet at the year's end, we have seen very substantial further progress toward self-sufficiency, and permanent integration of these and other resettled refugee villages throughout the Kingdom.

In March, his Majesty the King dedicated the Nam Tan Irrigation Project to the welfare and prosperity of the Lao people; by the time you read this, all construction work on that system has been completed, and new rice is going into the ground.

In April, the Minister of Public Works dedicated a renovated airfield in Ban Houei Sai; by the year's end similar dedications had taken place in Savannakhet and Thakhek, and a new airfield had been completed at Paksane, together with many miles of new farm-to-market roads.





It is not my intention to provide a calendar of the fullness of this year's events, but three further significant occasions deserve mention, since they serve to illustrate that the courage, foresight, and diligence of the Lao people is not confined to the battlefield.

In September, the Kingdom of Laos joined with other nations of the world in the fight against illicit narcotics, by the enactment of a wise, humane but strict Anti-Narcotics Law.

In November, the Royal Lao Government took strong and responsible action to adjust its financial and economic affairs to current world and domestic conditions, and has since courageously and steadfastly applied the reforms decided upon.

And in December, over ten years of Lao and international cooperation were crowned with success when his Majesty activated the generators of the Nam Ngum Hydroelectric Dam.

And, as 1971 becomes 1972, in the face of increased pressures of the invader, the Lao people quietly prepare to proceed to the voting booth to elect a representative government to hold office for the next five years.

Nineteen Seventy-Two? As I remarked at the outset, life goes on, bringing problems and concerns, but equally bringing opportunity for new accomplishments and for the satisfaction which comes only from creative success. I have no reason to predict that 1972 should be different in this respect.

So as I look back at what we have done together as Lao, as Americans, and as people of many races, creeds, and nations, and as I look forward to new opportunity and challenge, may I express a pair of heart-felt thoughts.

I thank you, each and every one, for what you have made possible in 1971 -

I know I can count on you, each and every one, to make possible even more and better achievements together for the peace, well-being and prosperity of the Kingdom of Laos in 1972.

  
Charles A. Mann  
Director