

LAO-AMERICAN ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
February 7, 1970

address by Mr. Louis Connick, President

Mr. Minister, Mr. Ambassador, Distinguished Guests, Members of the Lao-American Association:

As President of the LAA Board I am pleased to report that the Association has made very substantial progress during the past year.

First of all our physical plant has been greatly improved. At the General Meeting last year His Highness the Prime Minister expressed the hope that the next LAA meeting would take place in our new buildings. That hope, we are proud to say, has been realized.

The new buildings were occupied on June 20, just as our ten-year lease on the old building expired. Following a month of intensive social and cultural activities, they were dedicated by the Prime Minister on October 31. The final phases of work on the new buildings and property will get under way in a few weeks time and should soon be finished. These include the construction of a parking area and drainage system, and the final installations of the electrical system, the projection equipment for motion pictures and the voice amplification and playback systems.

During the past six months the Little Theater of Vientiane gave us overhead curtains for the stage and Mr. Lou Weber donated the attractive abstract iron sculpture on display in the breezeway outside the auditorium. The American Women's Club just recently agreed to provide funds for the construction of a badminton court to be located behind the auditorium, just behind the stage area. We are fortunate to have had such generous support and would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to all those who have contributed.

In speaking of our center here in Vientiane, we must not forget the branch LAA's. As of May 1, the Association established three of them--in Luang Prabang, Savannakhet, and Pakse. Full-time directors were assigned in September. Their duties include the administration of the English classes, which have been given in each of the municipalities for several years, and the development of programs of extra-curricular activities, which include sports, art exhibitions, lectures and discussions, and hobbies classes. We are now looking for suitable buildings for each of these three branch associations which will enable them to extend and to improve their program of activities.

The principal, although by no means the only activity of LAA, is the teaching of English. There are now 2300 students studying English with us in four municipalities. Last summer USIS enabled 100 selected secondary school students from Vientiane and other parts of the country to study English

intensively for six weeks at the Vientiane Center. This English instruction was supplemented by a program of social and cultural activities under LAA auspices.

The program of activities carried out here in Vientiane during the past months has been extremely full and interesting. There have been badminton and ping pong tournaments, art exhibits, lectures, films, and musical and dramatic performances. The LAA direction is constantly searching for opportunities to improve the quality and quantity of our activities program in order to serve the comprehensive interests of our student and nonstudent members. Your suggestions of additions and improvements are most welcome and I hope you'll continue to submit them to us.

All of you, I know, have been impressed by the Association's Friendship magazine. Nineteen issues have now been published; six of them this past year. We are extremely grateful to the editor, Florence Starzynski, for the long hours of hard work that have made each issue so interesting and informative. Luckily for us, Mrs. Starzynski will not be leaving Laos for some time and we should be able to count on her for at least one or more years.

Finally, I would like to report to you on the Association's Constitution. Our original Constitution, although basically sound, was in need of revision to make it more precise and up to date. A special committee of the Board reviewed it in detail and recommended changes they felt were necessary. The full Board discussed the committee's recommendations and finally approved the changes that seemed justified. A draft of the revised Constitution we proposed was then mailed to all members and was approved by the Membership during the first half of this meeting, I am happy to report. It will now be sent to the Lao Government and the American Embassy for their final approval. Once they have approved it, the revised Constitution will be put into effect.

As outgoing President, I would like to express on behalf of the Board our appreciation to Mr. Richard Hughes, Director of the Association; to Mr. Matt Rettinger, Director of Courses; and to Mr. Somsenith Khamvongsa, Director of Activities for the fine job they have done throughout the year and for the cooperation they have given the Board at all times. LAA is fortunate to have had such able leadership. I would also like to say thank you to my fellow members of the Association's Board of Directors: Miss Sisophon Sirimanotham, Mrs. William Center, Mrs. Walter Johnson, Mr. Oute Khamvongsa, Mr. Issara Sasorith, Mr. Manorek Luangkhot, Mr. Somsenouk Luangsisongkham, Mr. Saly Chittavoravong, Dr. Dwane Collins, Mr. Frank Manley, and Mr. Larry Woodson. We have enjoyed working together this year on behalf of the Association and we will sorely miss the monthly luncheon, and not only because it was free.

A year has passed and both we and the Association are now a year older and, I hope, wiser. In the many years to come, the Association should continue to grow in strength and contribute even more effectively to Lao-American friendship.

Thank you.