

Your Highness,

Mr. Ambassador,

Distinguished Guests,

Members of the Lao-American Association and Friends:

In absence of our President, Mr. Issara Sasorith, who is attending a conference in Japan, I have the privilege of reporting the Association's progress during the past year.

It was once said that "The goal of yesterday will be the starting point of tomorrow". With that in mind, let us briefly re-examine yesterday's goals, review our accomplishments during the year, and thus determine the starting point of tomorrow.

Our goal was to strengthen the bonds of understanding between the peoples of the Kingdom of Laos and the peoples of the United States. To accomplish this goal, our program of activities was centered around the following:

- the sponsorship of activities of other organizations having similar aims.
- the conduct of educational programs, especially those bearing on the language, cultures, history, institutions and the ideas of Laos and the United States.
- the organization of lectures, exhibits, concerts, and other cultural and artistic activities.
- the publication of bulletins, brochures, books and etc.

Those were our goals, now let me review our accomplishments during the year:

We continued to expand our program and focus more attention on our three Branches which were established in May of 1969. We were able to secure funds and to select two qualified people to be the Branch Directors of Luang Prabang and Savannakhet. Following their arrival on the scene, we have been able to establish local committees, which function much like our own Board of Directors, and we have located a home for our activities in Luang Prabang - a suitable building which we have leased.

Meanwhile in Savannakhet, a committee was recently organized and the Chao Khoueng has offered land to us ^{land} ~~which~~ we hope to find means with which we can erect a suitable building.

Mr. James Martois, a Fulbright Scholar, ~~has~~ volunteered to take the responsibility of our program in Pakse until a Branch Director can be recruited. At the present time, the program consists mainly of English Classes, which are taught in the evening at the Lycee. There is much to be done and we are actively searching for a permanent Branch Director, whom we depend upon for the development of our program.

Here in Vientiane, I am pleased to report that we have finished Phase II of our construction which called for improvements in the parking lot and for some final touches to the main building. We have also constructed an attractive sign and two flag poles on the side facing Setthathirath. The badminton court, which was donated by the American Women's Club, was also completed during the year.

Membership in the association has risen with the admission of over 900 members in Savannakhet and with a gradual increase in our membership here in Vientiane.

One of our principal activities continues to be the teaching of English. The total enrollment this year - country wide was 3,300 as compared to 2,300 this time last year.

Of the total, 2 300 were attending classes here in Vientiane alone and to meet this demand, we had 54 regular teachers on our staff. In addition to our regular classes, USIS again enabled over 100 selected secondary students from all parts of the Kingdom to study English here in Vientiane. Of the 114 who started the special 8 week summer course, 108 completed it. The course was supplemented with numerous field trips and activities.

Our activity calendar for the year has continually been filled with many interesting activities. We played host to the International Variety Show, Plays given by the Little Theater of Vientiane, the Khammouane Student Association Meeting, the Annual Meeting of the Ministry of Public Works, a Lecture on the Development of the Nam Ngum Dam and other activities which included art exhibits, lectures, musical and dramatic performances.

In connection with these activities and others that I have not mentioned, we wish to express our appreciation to the many people and organizations that have contributed to the success of our year ---- The Boy Scouts of Laos, the Lao National Mekong Committee, 555 Tobacco Factory, Air America and many others too numerous to mention.

The association has also sponsored monthly dances for our students; we raced in the Annual Boat Races and had a New Year's Day Soccer Match with the British Embassy and the Lao Australian Friendship Association.

It would be a grave error on my part if I did not cite the success of our Friendship Magazine, which continues to be a popular publication. To date, twenty-five issues have been published of which six were published during the past year. Much of the success of the magazine is due to the long hours and hard work that our editor, Mrs. Florence Starzynski, has devoted to the magazine to make it the informative and interesting magazine that it is. May I express our thanks for a job well done and also express our pleasure in learning that Mrs. Starzynski and her husband will be returning to Laos for yet another tour.

I would like to express on behalf of the Board, our appreciation to Mr. Richard Hughes, Director of the Association; Mrs. Penelope Khounta, Director of Courses; Mr. Somsanith Khamvongsa, Director of Activities; Mr. James Lemam, Branch Director/Luang Prabang; Mr. Sylvester Morris, Branch Director/Savannakhet for the fine job they have done throughout the year and to our office staff for their support. 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: Mr. Issara Sasorith, President; Mr. Chansamone Voravong, Treasurer; Mr. Saly Chittavong, Mr. Oute Khamvongsa, Mr. Frank Manley, Mr. Wilfred Allard, Mrs. Vivian Pennington - our devoted and hard working secretary, Mr. Manorak Luangkhhot, Prince Panya Souvanna Dhouma, Dr. Dwane Collins and Mr. James Chandler. We have enjoyed working together this year on behalf of the association and we hope that the new board members will enjoy the same fellowship that we did.

In conclusion, we have re-examined our goals, we have reviewed our accomplishments and thus, we have a starting point for tomorrow. So with the arrival of new era, let each and everyone of us do his or her part to strengthen the Cultural ties between Laos and the United States through cooperation, understanding and above all through FRIENDSHIP.

THANK YOU.