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From: ERNEST KUHN [REDACTED]
To: Larry Woodson [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, January 14, 2001 6:37 PM
Subject: Misc

Larry: Three things (1) I changed my email account last March. Thought That I had notified you. Wondered why I had not received anything from you till Tucker forwarded your Khao Lao notice to me today.

(2) Could/would you add Pop Buell's daughter to your list? I mentioned the newsletter to her last year and she said that they were not on the mailing list. We are leaving for Ohio tomorrow morning (hence the quick note here) and hope to see them while we are there.

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(3) Update on the Kuhn family. Daughter Christine received her Master's Degree from Columbia University last May. Daughter Kimberly is in her first year at Thunderbird (school for international management) working on her Masters. We drove her out to Phoenix last summer and then went on to California and visited Suphat Williamson and Tom and Sue Baranyi (not sure of spelling).

Phaythoune (my wife) and Kimberly went to Thailand and Laos in March. Visited Jigs Weldon in Chiengrai and Frank and Urai Bangkok plus all the relatives in Laos and Thailand.

I (Ernie) ended up in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK = North Korea) for six weeks + on a food monitoring project. As part of the overall agreement among DPRK, Japan and South Korea, each country provides the DPRK with food (US) and food and fertilizer (South Korea) and food (Japan but the grain is really US). In turn the DPRK has agreed to forgo further ballistic missile testing. As the DPRK has undergone severe famine the past five years these three countries, primarily the US, has kept the country going. There is also a large World Food Program under international staff but the food is mostly US also. However the DPRK will not allow an American to be the resident director! I was part of a small group allowed in to verify that the US food had gone to civilians and not the military. The food allocation was in short a food for work program. We visited the work sites to verify that work had been accomplished or was on going. I saw an incredible amount of the countryside and we were able to pick out workers at random and actually visit their homes. There was still some rhetoric about the Korean War and dead relatives, but on the whole we were well received. Each county that we visited (we made individual visits) were topped of with really great lunches...from lobster/shrimp to dog meat depending on where the county was located. It was not uncommon to be feted by 8-10 local officials and each of us would have 15 - 20 individual dishes! The Koreans are great drinkers and drinks ranged from Russian or Chinese "vodka" to a local brew made from the blood excreted when antlers from deer are pulled out. Bizarre. The country is in a "time warp". When Communism collapsed in Europe all financial support for the DPRK was stopped. For ten years factories have been idle...in one city that we worked out from for about 10 days we counted over 40 smoke stacks but there was never more than one which ever had smoke coming out. The government was trying to upgrade worker's housing and there are hundreds of unfinished apartment building with big cranes in front and many actually had slabs of siding ready to be hoisted up when the fuel ran out. Kim III Sung's development scheme was to have everything run by electricity...everything. With no more fuel from the USSR nothing works...trams operate a few hours a day in the cities but they tend to stop in odd places all over the streets when the electricity goes off. Depending where you are there may be electric all night, or just for a few hours. Always carry a flashlight and stay out of elevators if possible.

I am rambling on much to long here...but one last point. I am glad that Clinton did not go to the DPRK. Nether Kim III Sung not his son Kim Song III have traveled much out of the country...they expect foreign leaders to come to them. They have the philosophy of "Juche" which roughly means "self reliance". Up in the mountains there are vast underground complexes hundreds of meters into the mountains, some of which are maintained as museums containing hundreds of thousands of presents given to the both the Kims. There are room after room of this stuff everything from Lao baci bowls to Japanese fishing tackle to a 297 piece set of fumiture from a South Korean bed manufacturer. There is also a crystal ashtray from Jimmy Carter plus numerous small gifts from fringe organizations from the US. Billy Graham is bug in the DPRK. His son operates a mobile medical clinic there and his son stayed in the same guest house as we did in Pyongyang.

Again, bizarre as is the presence of Reverend Moon of the Reunification Church and owner of the Washington Times (a publican paper)! Anyway, I think that a visit by Clinton would have been construed by the DPRK as a supplicant coming to pay homage to Kim Song III. The Koreans are not yet ready for more normal relations. We were never allowed to go out by ourselves. we had to ask permission for non-work visits and were always escorted by a "minder/interpreter". The team leader, who was there for several months, was not allowed to send his daughter to the "International School" which has all Korean teachers! It was very interesting experience including the Easter church service that I attended!

Larry, hope to get back on your list again. I have missed all the notes that you pass on. Suppose that you knew that Doug Blaubfarb passed away three weeks ago. In his books he had nothing but praise for USAID and particularly the Refugee Relief Program calling it the best example of a counter-insurgency support program in the world. I have a good photo of him, me TQ and Hugh Tovar taken at a booksigning party Phaythouen and I for Roger Warner and his book *Backfire* in 1995. Screw Jesse Helms. Last year I attended Mary Washington College working on a Masters and I did a one term research paper on the relationship between the bombing in Laos and the generation of refugees. Basically I set out to refute the allegations by Branfman and Goldstein that the USG deliberately targeted civilians in order to get to leave their homes. Was really no contest because there was so many military records available plus tons of documents and material that I got out of Laos. I hope to expand it into a full study of the entire USAID mission and the support of the refugee program. Someday I may ask your help in asking your readers to allow me to use, copy or scan private letters or material that can round out my overall work. Will get back to you as I have several ideas about producing cd roms with documents and photos of the operations in north Laos.

Regards and best wishes for the coming year. Ernie

PS: If anyone has not read Jigs Weldon's book I strongly uge them to get a book from Fritz Benson at Tamarind Books.