

**Larry D. Woodson**

**From:** Edwin McKeithen  
**Sent:** Friday, September 17, 1999 9:25 AM  
**To:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** The first jar from the PDJ

Dear Ernie and Mac,

At least two jars were taken from the PDJ, the one at the Smithsonian that has been the focus of most of recent e-mail traffic, and another one which Ernie described in his e-mail of 1996. Ernie's e-mail referred several times to me and I have attached Ernie's text below for reference now that I have seen it (thanks, Mac).

I'm glad to hear that the history of the jar at the Smithsonian - VP's gift to Richard Helms - is now coming into focus. (Thank you Matthew Kirkpatrick and others). This was the second jar lifted from the PDJ.

I can shed some light on the first jar lifted from the PDJ, which has been in Vientiane since 1970 or 1971. I believe that it is presently in a courtyard outside the Museum of the Lao Revolution, the old Ministry of Defense Building, after spending most of the time in Vientiane in the grounds behind Wat Pha Keo, the National Museum, where I photographed it in 1991.

Ernie's account (below) of the unsuccessful attempt to sling the jar out with an H-34 is accurate. I can add a few things. The jar was brought out to Sam Thong before the PDJ fell to serve as a symbol of Chao Saykham's status as the last prince of Xieng Khouang. The jar was taken from the area near Talad Tham, on the western edge of the PDJ, and it was selected as the smallest, thinnest, shortest jar that could be dug out by hand and strapped in a sling load. Buddhist monks conducted rites at the site before excavation began.

Several days after the unsuccessful attempt to sling the jar with an Air America H-34, the episode that Ernie filmed, we engaged the services of a USAF jolly green for a second attempt. During the lift I watched in horror from the jump seat as the tach lost turns off the hover and the pilot staggered into translational lift. The jar was dense, perhaps 4500 lbs. I guided the crew to deposit the jar near Chao Saykham's place in Sam Thong. There the jar rested until Ed Neuman stole it.

Ed Neuman was the chief of the Requirements Office (RO) in Vientiane, responsible for military assistance to the regular armed forces of Laos. Some time after Sam Thong was recaptured (Ernie: do you have the date?) Mr. Neuman arranged to have a fork lift flown to Sam Thong and the jar loaded onto a C-123K and flown down to Vientiane, un-manifested, and stored in the back of the RO warehouse to await shipment in his household effects to the U.S. Ed had a souvenir of Laos.

Larry Martin, former drill sergeant of the year, former Assistant Attache in Sam Thong, then employed by RO, discovered the jar in the warehouse and alerted Pop Buell, who told the Ambassador, who asked the Prime Minister what he wanted done with recovered treasure, who said put it in the National Museum, Wat Pha Keo. Only much later did we hear the rumors of the second jar, now confirmed by sleuths Ernie and Jack.

Ed Neuman suffered horribly from the Curse of the Jars, or Malediction des Jarres, and never recovered.

In June 1998 I got a glance of a jar in the courtyard of the Museum of the Lao Revolution and was told that it had been moved from Vat Pha Keo. (Jim Chamberlain: do you know?)

Hope the above is helpful.

Cheers to all, Edwin McKeithen

Ernie's original 1996 e-mail text follows:

QUOTE For everyone about the Jars. Ok, here it is. In the summer of 1969 Win McKeithen thought that it would be a nice gesture to Chao Saykham if we brought out one of the jars to Sam Thong and put in front of Chao Saykham's house. Win and I took H-34, a new chopper with all the original metal etc, and a low tank of fuel. Pilot said that he could sling 4000 pounds. I have on movie film the attempt to move the jar. Because the soldiers we had could not lift the net around the jar and snap the hook (while the chopper hovered inches above one's head) I get under the chopper and hooked it up. Again, on movie film I have the chopper straining to lift this small jar...but it was too heavy and we had to abandon the idea.

Later Win did bring out one jar to Sam Thong. To my knowledge it was still there in March '70 when Sam Thong fell. Win might remember more.

I heard that there was, I am sure, a second jar that was taken to Udorn. The plan was to take to the Air Commando GHQ or something like that (not sure of that). Anyway, I think it Win who told Chao Saykham about it who was a little ticked. I think it was Win who brought it up maybe with the Ambassador or maybe Chao Saykham discussed it with Souvanna Phouma. My recollection was that it was brought back to Vientiane and that this is the jar that is in the yard at Wat Pra Keo in Vientiane. It was put there in 1971 or 1972. I had heard rumors that the jar ended up in the US but I think that instead it is the same jar that went from Udorn back to Vientiane. If there is one in the US it means that there were three jars taken from the PDJ and I doubt that. UNQUOTE