

Subj: NGO Aid to Laos
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From: [REDACTED] MacAlan Thompson)

From the Bangkok Post 14 Oct '98:

"The Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand is holding a panel discussion on "Projects Hearts and Minds - Laos" at 6:30 p.m. today

"The discussion will look at an outreach programme which aims to forge reconciliation between Laotians, refugees from Laos and native-born Americans, American combat veterans and other Americans deeply affected by America's secret war in Laos."

Unfortunately I was unable to make the show, living out on the Rangsit-Phnom Penh Road like I do, it's 60 km to town, a bit too far to return at night after several Singhas. However, here's a short report from someone who did attend.

"This is a medical aid and training project, involving the physical transfer and dissemination of needed surplus consumables (ie, syringes, catheters, bandages, Foley bags, first-aid medicines, etc) to specific villages in Laos. The project is the idea of Mr. LEE THORN, a US Veteran and co-founder of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. His main focus is to enlighten the American public towards the humanitarian situation in Laos through the facilitation of aid shipments and personal projects by veterans who wish to become involved themselves.

"He made contact with a Laotian woman, Ms. BOUNTHANH PHOMMANASATHIT, who was involved with her husband in Ohio in a Lao community organization, in 1997. She wrote to an organization he was involved with, Veteran for Peace, and relayed her experiences in Laos during the wartime bombings. After many discussions, he made his first trip to Laos in January 1998, bringing medical supplies in accompanied baggage. Since then, he has made 5 more trips this year, with increased supply loads, and with increasing assistance from the Ministries of Health and Education of Laos PDR.

"The policy is to bring only what is requested by the villages concerned with the program, so as not to create oversupply and profit-making sell-offs. Most important needs are construction of wells and water distribution systems, and malaria treatment prophylactics and education.

"Next phase of project is to coordinate a shipment of 14 tons of medical supplies through a medical relief organization in Ohio called IMPACT, Inc (Florence, OH). The shipment is packed there, and then brought to a nearby US Airforce base (don't know base name), where it would be transferred to Bangkok on next-space-available basis. Upon clearing Thai customs through assistance of Lao Embassy, shipment would be transferred via truck to Laos.

"Contacts:

Mr. LEE THORN [REDACTED]

Tel: [REDACTED]

Ms. BOUNTHANH PHOMMANASATHIT [REDACTED]

Tel: [REDACTED]

Mr. DAVID SANGER [REDACTED] (did photos of previous trip)

Tel/Fax [REDACTED]