

U Tha Saing

1903-1972

Dr. U Tha Saing died suddenly on 24 November 1972 in Burma. U Tha Saing was born in Thein-Zeit village of Thaton district in Burma on 7 November 1903. He graduated from the Rangoon Medical School in 1926. In the same year he joined the Burma Health Services and served as assistant health officer and traveled widely to all parts of Burma.

From 1936 to 1941, he was appointed as health officer in-charge of the rural uplift center in Tatkon township in the center of Burma. In his book *The Rural Uplift Works of Burma*, published in 1940, he emphasized the importance of the correlation between the country's economy and health services. In the later part of 1940 he began leprosy studies and research work in upper Burma where leprosy was most endemic.

After World War II in 1947, he was

appointed to the post of Chief Special Leprosy Officer of Burma. In this capacity his investigation into the leprosy problem in Burma revealed the true nature of the problem which was found to be many times greater than what the Burmese government had expected. Thus in 1951, with the cooperation of WHO he presented to the country the fact that leprosy was not just another health problem but it was actually a national health problem.

In 1953 he was promoted to the post of Director of Leprosy Control Project. He was the founder of the leprosy campaign in Burma. His devotion to leprosy work in Burma was much appreciated by colleagues all over the world. He was awarded a WHO fellowship in 1955 and he traveled to India, the United Kingdom, Africa, Thailand, Singapore, and in 1957 to In-

Indonesia. He represented Burma at the International Leprosy Conference in Tokyo in 1958, and in 1960 he served as a WHO short-term consultant in leprosy in Iraq for three months. After serving in the Burma Medical and Health Services for forty years, he retired from the post of the Director of Leprosy Control Project in 1966. During his retirement he wrote a book in

Burmese called *The Leprosy in Burma*, for which he became the second winner of the National Literature Prize.

In 1967 he served in India for a year as a WHO consultant in leprosy. Those who had the chance to know him will remember his very agreeable warm personality, tremendous energy, missionary spirit and a zeal for the work of leprosy.